

MINDBRIDGE

Box Breathing and Semantic Satiation Meditation

Mindfulness is the intentional practice of bringing one's full attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity, and without judgment. It involves observing internal experiences and external surroundings as they unfold in real time. Rather than becoming entangled in thoughts about the past or anticipations of the future, mindfulness invites a grounded awareness of “what is” in the here and now.





How can Mindfulness Help us Cope with Automatic Negative Thoughts and Cognitive Distortions?

Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs):

ANTs are habitual, reflexive thoughts that arise automatically and often skew toward the negative. These thoughts can be self-critical, fear-based, or anxiety-provoking, and they frequently operate beneath the surface of conscious awareness.

For example:

- “They probably think I’m incompetent.”
- “I always mess things up.”

Cognitive Distortions:

Cognitive distortions are systematic patterns of faulty or irrational thinking that can distort our perception of reality. They contribute to anxiety, depression, and stress by reinforcing limiting beliefs.

Examples include:

- Catastrophizing: “If I fail this interview, I’ll never find another job.”
- Black-and-white thinking: “If I’m not perfect, I’m a failure.”
- Mind reading: “She didn’t say hi—I must’ve done something wrong.”

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Mindfulness Can...

Mindfulness can be a powerful method for interrupting and reframing these mental habits:

- **Creates Space Between You and Your Thoughts:** Mindfulness encourages noticing thoughts as mental events, rather than absolute truths. This awareness enables choice: you can observe a thought without reacting to it or accepting it as fact.
- **Reduces Emotional Reactivity:** By learning to pause and witness emotional responses with curiosity rather than judgment, mindfulness enhances emotional regulation. Instead of being swept up in distress, individuals can respond thoughtfully and intentionally.
- **Breaks Negative Thinking Cycles:** When the mind becomes stuck in loops of rumination or worry, mindfulness helps redirect attention to the present moment—what you can see, hear, touch, and control right now. This shift promotes grounding and reduces the power of repetitive, unproductive thought patterns.

How can you Practice Mindfulness?

b) Body Scan Meditation:

- Lie down or sit comfortably, focusing on each part of the body from head to toes
- Notice sensations without judgment, helping to ground in the present moment

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b) Breathing Exercises:

- **Belly Breathing:** Involves focusing on expanding the belly rather than the chest during inhalation, which can help relax the chest and abdominal muscles
- **Box Breathing or Square Breathing:** This technique involves inhaling, holding, exhaling, and holding again, each for the same amount of time

c) Mindful Movement:

- Engage in modes of movement that you enjoy such as walking or dancing
- While engaging in these activities, pay attention to each step and movement

d) Sensory Activities:

- Focus on the five senses during daily activities, such as eating or walking.
- Notice sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures

Exercise #1: Box Breathing

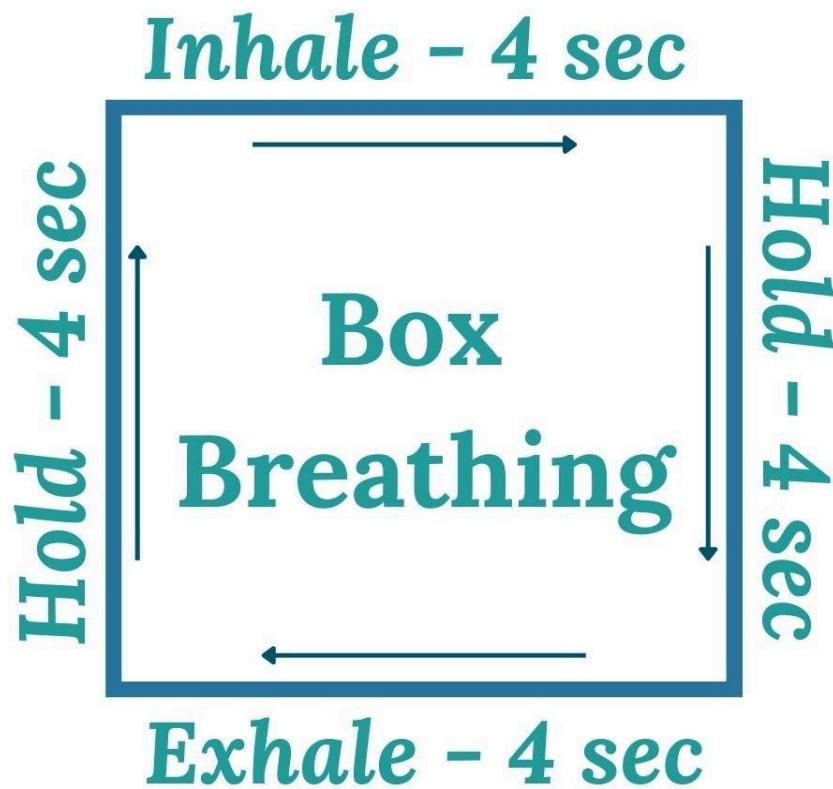
- Definition: Box breathing, also known as “square breathing” or “four-square breathing”, is a deep breathing technique that involves four equal parts: inhale, hold, exhale, and hold again.
- How to Practice:
 - Step 1: Inhale slowly through your nose for a count of four seconds, filling your lungs fully.
 - Step 2: Hold your breath for four seconds.

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- Step 3: Exhale slowly through your mouth for four seconds, releasing all air.
- Step 4: Hold your breath again for four seconds before repeating the cycle

Instructions:

- Practice the Box Breathing Cycle twice, and use this diagram to help follow along



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Exercise #2: Sticky Thoughts



1. Choose a Sticky Thought

- a. Pick a thought that shows up often and triggers emotional discomfort (e.g., “I’m failing,” “I’m a bad parent,” “I’ll never be enough,” “I’m stuck.”). Write it down.

2. Acknowledge the Thought Gently

- a. Take a moment to notice how this thought shows up in your body and mind. What emotions or physical sensations are linked to it? No need to change or suppress it. Just observe.

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3. Add Defusion Language

- a. Repeat the thought several times, but this time add distance by saying:

“I’m having the thought that...”

“I notice my mind is telling me...”

Example:

“I’m having the thought that I’ll never be successful.”

“I notice my mind is telling me I’m behind everyone else.”

Repeat it 10–15 times aloud or silently. Observe the shift in emotional tone.

Now repeat just the original phrase quickly for 30–60 seconds. Don’t focus on the meaning, focus on the sound. It will begin to lose its emotional charge and feel abstract or strange.

After repetition, pause and sit in silence for 30–60 seconds.

Ask yourself:

How do I feel about that thought now?

Did the emotional intensity shift?

Can I hold this thought more lightly?

For the Resource Journal:

What did I notice about my relationship to this thought?

Is this thought always true? Is it helpful?



What would I choose to do today if I didn't believe this thought?