

— FREE QUICK-START • STRESS

The Vagal *Reset Breathing* Cards

Four cut-out breathing patterns for four moments, and a ten-session log that adds up your before-and-after tension.

4

CARDS

6 / min

RESONANCE

5 min

A SESSION

10

SESSIONS LOGGED

STRESS • FREE CARD SET

The Vagal Reset

Breathing Cards

Four cut-out breathing patterns with exact counts and the moment each one fits, a ten-session log that adds up your before-and-after tension, and the situations in which breathwork is the wrong tool.

4 CARDS one for each moment	6 / min RESONANCE the daily dose	5 min A SESSION most days	10 SESSIONS logged and averaged
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How to use these cards

5 MINUTES A DAY

STEP 1 Cut out the four cards Keep the one for acute stress somewhere you actually get stressed: wallet, desk, car visor.	STEP 2 Learn the physiological sigh first Two nasal inhales, one long mouth exhale. It is the fastest tool and the easiest to remember under load.	STEP 3 Schedule the resonance card Ten minutes daily, same cue. This is the training dose the others borrow from.	STEP 4 Log ten sessions Rate tension 0–10 before and after; the log averages the drop. The number is what turns a technique into a habit.
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WHEN BREATHWORK IS THE WRONG TOOL

Stop and consult a clinician if breathing practice provokes panic, dizziness or chest pain, or if you have significant respiratory disease (such as severe COPD), unstable cardiovascular disease, or a condition where breath-holding is contraindicated. Breathwork is an add-on for stress physiology, not care for an anxiety disorder, and the 4–7–8 hold in particular is not for people advised against breath-holding. If you have thoughts of harming yourself, call or text 988 (US) or your local emergency number today.

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The Exhale Is the Brake

3 SOURCES

Exhalation is the brake. Heart rate falls on the out-breath through the vagus nerve (respiratory sinus arrhythmia), so patterns that lengthen the exhale or pace breathing near six per minute raise heart-rate variability and settle the stress response within minutes.

Different tools for different moments. A double-inhale physiological sigh is the fastest down-shift for an acute spike; slow resonance breathing is the daily training dose; extended-exhale patterns suit the pre-sleep wind-down. Matching the pattern to the moment is the whole system.

It is training, not magic. The acute cards work in a handful of cycles; the resonance card pays off over weeks of short daily sessions, as HRV biofeedback research shows. Neither replaces care for an anxiety or mood disorder.

Slow, low and easy. Nasal, diaphragmatic breathing (belly rising, shoulders quiet) is the form most studies teach. Keep the volume normal: slow breathing is not deep breathing, and over-breathing causes tingling and light-headedness.

THE EVIDENCE BEHIND IT

LABORDE ET AL., NEUROSCI BIOBEHAV REV 2022 Meta-analysis: voluntary slow breathing raised vagally mediated heart-rate variability during and after practice.	BALBAN ET AL., CELL REP MED 2023 Five minutes a day of cyclic sighing for 28 days improved mood and lowered resting breathing rate more than mindfulness meditation.
FINCHAM ET AL., SCI REP 2023 Meta-analysis of randomized trials: breathwork produced small-to-moderate reductions in self-reported stress.	

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Four Patterns, Four Moments

CUT OUT

ACUTE STRESS SPIKE, IN THE MOMENT

The Physiological Sigh

2 nasal inhales, 1 long mouth exhale

3–5 cycles

The second, shorter inhale re-opens alveoli; the long exhale is the brake. Fastest down-shift available.

DAILY TRAINING, BASELINE HRV

Resonance ~6 / min

In 4, out 6 (or 5 / 5)

10 min daily

The resonance frequency used in HRV biofeedback. The weekly practice that makes the acute cards stronger.

PRE-SLEEP WIND-DOWN, EVENING ANXIETY

Extended Exhale 4–8

In 4, out 8

5 min in bed

A long, gentle brake for the last hour. Keep it effortless; strain cancels the effect.

SLEEP ONSET, RACING MIND

4-7-8

In 4, hold 7, out 8

4 cycles, twice nightly

Popular, with little trial evidence of its own; it is an extended-exhale pattern with a pause. Skip the hold if breath-holding is not advised for you.

Breathe through the nose unless a card says otherwise. Keep each breath a normal size; if your lips or fingers tingle, the breaths are too big.

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FREE QUIZ

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Learn how telomeres and aging are connected. Discover what shortens telomer...

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Ten Sessions, Before and After

CALCULATES

Rate tension from 0 (relaxed) to 10 (overwhelmed) just before and just after each session.

#	DATE	CARD	BEFORE	AFTER	DROP
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
Averages					

A drop of one to three points per session is typical. If a pattern raises your number, use another card.

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FREE QUIZ

TEST WHAT YOU KNOW

FREE QUIZ

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Expert guide to the 10 best sleep supplements including melatonin, magnesiu...

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From Four Cards to a Thirty-Day Practice

COMPANION E-BOOK

These cards settle a spike. **The Stress Recovery Micro-Habits Workbook** explains the stress response, adds five more practices beyond breathing, and tracks thirty days so you can see your baseline settle.

The autonomic primer
what the vagus nerve and HRV actually are, in plain language, so the practice makes sense.

Seven five-minute practices
cyclic sighing, resonance breathing, muscle relaxation, cold water to the face, a green walk, worry postponement and a body scan, each with steps and evidence.

The 30-day tension log
a tracker that shows your baseline settling week over week.

No apps, no equipment
every practice works anywhere, in five minutes, with nothing but a timer.

THESE FREE CARDS
✓ Four situation-matched breathing cards
✓ Exact count patterns and doses
✓ A session log and the stop rules

THE WORKBOOK ADDS
✓ Seven practices, breathing and beyond
✓ The autonomic primer that explains why they work
✓ A 30-day log that shows your baseline settling
✓ Sequencing for acute spikes versus daily training

FILLABLE PDF E-BOOK
Print it or fill it on screen; the calculators work in Acrobat and most browsers, plus a free online edition.

EVIDENCE-LED
Practices from breathing, relaxation and nature research, with sources. An add-on to care, not a substitute.

ONE-TIME PAYMENT
One payment, no subscription, instant download after checkout.

SEE THE STRESS WORKBOOK →

SOURCES • FACT-CHECKED BY THE HEALTH SECRETS EDITORIAL TEAM

Balban M.Y. et al., Cell Reports Medicine 2023	Cyclic sighing versus mindfulness, 28 days.
Laborde S. et al., Neurosci Biobehav Rev 2022; Fincham G.W. et al., SciRep 2023	Slow breathing and HRV; breathwork and stress.
Lehrer P.M. & Gevirtz R., Front Psychol 2014	Resonance breathing near six per minute.

THIS WEEK

One sigh first. *Then five minutes.*

01 • SIGH

Two inhales, one long exhale, at the first sign of a spike.

02 • DAILY

Resonance breathing at the same cue each day.

03 • GO FURTHER

The workbook adds five practices and a 30-day log.

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20 Evidence-Based Stress Management Techniques That

Discover 20 science-backed stress management techniques including breathing exercises, meditation, PMR, exercise, an...
healthsecrets.com/mental-wellness/stress-management-techniques →

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Adaptogens like ashwagandha and rhodiola help manage stress. Learn clinical evidence, proper dosing, safety, side...
healthsecrets.com/mental-wellness/adaptogens-stress-guide →

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healthsecrets.com/tools/sleep-calculator →

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healthsecrets.com/immune-system/stress-immune-function →

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Magnesium glycinate (200–400 mg daily) reduces anxiety by enhancing GABA, blocking glutamate, and lowering cortisol.
healthsecrets.com/supplements/magnesium-anxiety →

SLEEP

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Learn 15 evidence-based sleep hygiene rules to fall asleep faster, stay asleep longer, and wake refreshed — with produc...
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Educational and organizational tool only, not medical advice. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. Talk to your doctor if stress, anxiety or low mood is affecting your daily life. If you have thoughts of harming yourself, call or text 988 (US) or your local emergency number today.