

Heart Breathing Technique

A grounding strategy for managing anxiety, stress, and cravings

What is Heart Breathing?

Heart Breathing is a simple mindfulness and regulation technique that helps calm the body and mind. By focusing attention on the heart area and slowing the breath, this exercise supports your nervous system to shift from a stress response (fight or flight) into a calmer state ("rest and digest").

Why does it work?

When you feel anxious or experience cravings, your body becomes activated – your heart rate increases, breathing becomes shallow, and your mind can feel overwhelmed. ★

This technique helps by:

- Slowing your breathing, which signals safety to your nervous system
- Activating the parasympathetic nervous system, reducing physical tension
- Improving heart-brain coherence, helping you feel more balanced and in control
- Shifting attention away from distressing thoughts or urges, reducing their intensity
- Building awareness and self-regulation skills over time

When to use it

- When you notice anxiety rising
- When experiencing cravings or urges
- During moments of stress or overwhelm
- As part of a daily relaxation routine

How to practice

1. Gently close your eyes (or soften your gaze if you prefer).
2. Bring your attention to the centre of your chest – the area around your heart.
3. Imagine you are breathing in and out through your heart.
4. Visualise each breath flowing in and out of this space in a slow, steady rhythm.
5. If helpful, place a hand over your heart to support your focus.
6. Allow your breathing to become slower and more even.
7. Keep your attention on the sensation of "heart breathing."
8. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back without judgment.
9. Continue for about 5 minutes, or longer if it feels helpful.

Tips

- It's normal for your mind to wander – returning your attention is part of the practice.
- You may not feel immediate results; benefits often build with repetition.
- Try practicing when calm as well, so it becomes easier to use during stressful moments.