

people, this would be enough to burn out at best or cause heart failure at worst. That's why NAVY Seals have learned a few tricks to let them tap into their nervous system to keep it balanced.

The nervous system

The nervous system is made up of two parts: The sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system. Each one controls different parts of the human body and what's interesting is that we activate both when we breathe.

When we inhale we stimulate the sympathetic nervous system. When we exhale we stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system. Each breath is designed to balance the nervous system out as the breath comes in and as it goes out.

As we breathe in our diaphragm lifts and our heart contracts. This sends an incredibly speedy message up to the brain that then sends an incredibly speedy message back to the heart that says, 'you must speed up' so it does. Then as we breathe out the reverse is true. The diaphragm drops and the heart opens. This sends an incredibly speedy message up to the brain that then sends an incredibly speedy message back to the heart that says, 'you must slow down' so it does.

This communication is all done at rapid speed via the pathways of nerves that run from our brain to our heart and then spread throughout our body via our nervous system. Whatever messages are sent thereafter create the thoughts we think, the emotions we feel, and the behaviors we act out. If the breath directly affects the nervous system, could every thought, every emotion, and every behavior be directly linked to the quality of our breath? It's an exciting question! And if yes, (which I believe to be true), we have the power to change these messages whenever we need to with a few simple breathing exercises!

The NAVY Seals believe so too.

The breath

Imagine a set of scales that tips from one side to the other with every breath that you take. Inhaling tips to the left, exhaling to the right. Oxygen is on the one side and CO2 is on the other. When we breathe in, the scales tip to the left as oxygen comes in. When we breathe out the scales tip to the right as CO2 goes out.

A simple explanation to how the breath and the nervous system interact would be to say that inhaling brings oxygen into our bodies and stimulates the sympathetic nervous system (responsible for the fight or flight response), it dilates our pupils and provides energy. Exhaling expels CO2 and activates the parasympathetic nervous system (responsible for relaxation).

The breath, heart, and nervous system are designed to perfectly and beautifully balance the nervous system out if the breath is steady. If it's not, all hell can break loose. The NAVY Seals have, among many things, mastered their breath. Here is the famous way in how.

Box breathing

This technique is great for building emotional resilience, relieving stress, and creating a calm inner state. Its simplicity is its power.

Box breathing has gained tremendous popularity in recent years ever since the NAVY Seals revealed they use it to relieve stress. It's also a powerful technique for anxiety.

How to do it

- Breathe in through your nose for 4–6 seconds
- Hold your breath in for 4–6 seconds
- Breathe out through your nose for 4–6 seconds
- Hold your breath out for 4–6 seconds
- Repeat for 5–10 minutes

I told you it was a lot closer than you might think!

And now, if you're wondering if something so simple can really work? Try it for yourself!

Oh and one more thing... here is another fantastic tool for finding peace and tranquility whenever you need it.

"Soft eyes"

This is a beautiful technique to calm the mind and create deep relaxation. Looking out at an open, expansive horizon has the same effect but that's not always available. The good news is that we can create this experience without an expansive horizon.

The tools I love to share are those that are free and accessible in every situation. They're for when peace and balance need to be restored quickly.

Like the breath, our eyes can reflect our inner state of being. Sharp, focused eyes often reflect high concentration or alertness. Soft, relaxed eyes often reflect a calm, open mind. When we're on high alert our pupils dilate, and we narrow in on a specific object. This has been evolved to keep us alive. This kind of alertness helps us to pay close attention to imminent danger by blocking out the surrounding environment. Wild animals do this a lot in real life and death situations (as do the NAVY Seals).

Humans do it more nowadays from high levels of stress, overwhelming workloads, and anxiety. The way to restore balance is to oscillate between these highly focused states to more open, relaxed ones. And just like how the different rhythms of our breath can support this process, so too can how "soft" we allow our eyes to become.

This practice is a great way to relieve stress, reduce anxiety, open up space for creativity and intuition, and for staying present.

Putting it into practice:

- Sit comfortably and allow your breath to relax and deepen
- Look straight ahead whilst also seeing what's in your peripheral vision
- Expand your awareness to the spaces up and down whilst continuing to look ahead
- Allow your focus to be on 'all things' as your eyes 'soften'
- Stay connected to your breath
- Stay here for as long as comfortable

We have all the tools available to us at every moment. The breath and our vision are here to support, nourish, relax, and uplift us. Creating 'soft eyes' can be done anywhere, anytime, and in any situation. By expanding our vision, we allow the nervous system to relax. This is a beautiful tool for whenever you need it and combined with the breath, it can be powerful indeed.