

CARE Compass

Helping Navigate the Later Stages of Dementia



Mindfulness and Breathing

This project was made possible by a generous gift.

The goal of the program is to help provide tools and information so that you can navigate the later stages of dementia. We hope that you find these videos and resources to be helpful and encouraging.

This program is designed to be a guide only for the compassionate care and support of your loved one and is not medical advice. If you have questions or concerns, always check with your doctor.

We also want to acknowledge that late-stage dementia can look very different from person to person. Sometimes the ideas we share may not work or work for a short time. That is okay. No one person is alike, and what works today may not work tomorrow. We hope to provide tools that can be options for you to try.

This guide contains links and other resources that may not be provided by the presenter but are added to the guide to provide additional information and support.

Mindfulness and Breathing

“Our breath does give us life and can indicate how we are living our lives”

Finding time to focus on breathing can help promote comfort and peace. It can be a tool used to help find a little calm on a crazy day or in a stressful moment.

There is no wrong way to practice breathing, but there are some suggested ways to help make your breathing a little more impactful.

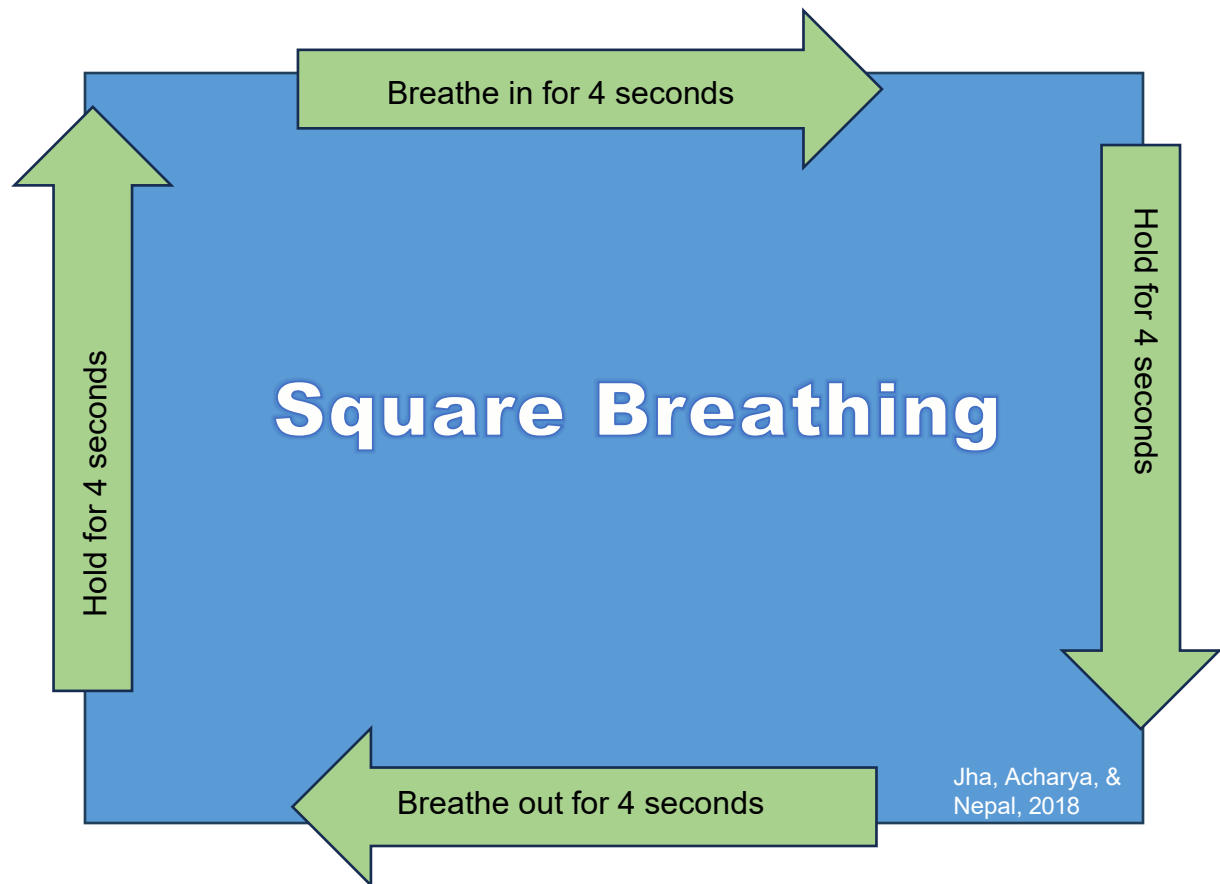
Here are two different types of breathing exercises you can try.

Diaphragmatic breath-place hands on your rib cage and take some deep breaths to notice your breathing- the rise and fall of your chest. As you breathe, think about inhaling joy, comfort and peace and exhaling things that no longer serve you or that are causing you distress. Take notice of your muscles and how they contract as you push air out. Spend as much or as little time as you need to take these deep breaths.

Tactical breath or square breathing- For this you will work towards inhaling for a four count (1,2,3,4), holding for a 2 count (1,2) exhaling for a 4 count (1,2,3,4) holding for a 2 count (1,2). Then repeat a few more times if you feel like it.

Quick breathing exercises like the ones above can help you center yourself or destress in the midst of a stressful situation.

Remember to be gentle with yourself and consider working on your breathing at different times throughout the day or as you are getting ready to go to sleep.



Square Breathing, also known as box breathing, is a technique for deep breathing, which has been shown to help relax the nervous system.

- Deep Breathing can aid in:
- Calming the nervous system
- Assist in helping the body cope with stress
- Bring more oxygen to the body

Pro Tips and Best Practices

Get comfortable

It is easier to relax and breathe when your body is in a relaxed and comfortable position.

Expect your mind to wander

You're used to scanning for other people's needs. During breathwork, your brain may keep jumping to your responsibilities. That's normal—just gently return attention to your breath each time.

Short Sessions Beat Long Ones

You don't need a quiet room or 20 minutes. Mindfulness can be 30 seconds of noticing your breath while washing your hands or standing in a hallway. Consistency matters more than duration. If you wait for ideal conditions, it won't happen.

Use “micro-moments” to try

- Feeling your feet on the ground while standing
- Noticing 3 things you can see, 2 you can hear
- Taking one slow breath before responding to a request
- These tiny resets add up to more than one long session.

Websites With More Information

The link below is a meditation guide from the editors of *mindfulness*.

<https://www.mindful.org/content/uploads/2015/10/Your-Guide-to-Meditation.pdf>

Mayo clinic provides mindfulness exercises

[Mindfulness exercises - Mayo Clinic](#)

The Veteran's Administration provides breathing exercises

<https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTHLIBRARY/docs/Breathing.pdf>