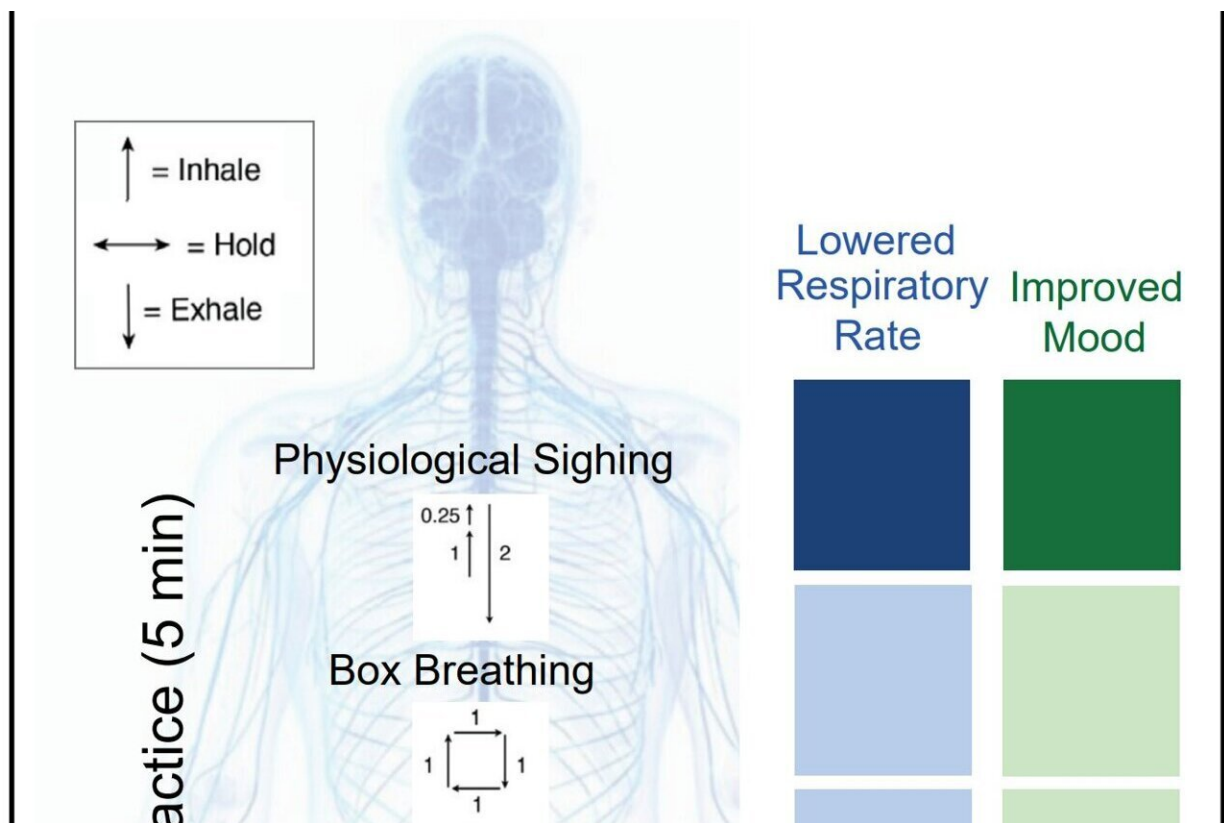


Study shows cyclic breathing technique more effective in reducing stress than mindfulness meditation

January 16 2023, by Bob Yirka



Graphical abstract. Credit: *Cell Reports Medicine* (2023). DOI: 10.1016/j.xcrm.2022.100895

At team of researchers at Stanford University reports evidence that

people who engage in cyclic sighing breathing exercises see a greater reduction in stress than those engaging in mindfulness meditation. In their paper published in the journal *Cell Reports Medicine*, the researchers describe their study of several different types of stress reduction techniques.

Prior research has shown that while stress can be a [positive influence](#) at times, such as when it prompts people to do things they know they need to do, more often, it is considered adverse because it can lead to [health problems](#) such as hypertension. Thus, stress techniques have been developed to help people reduce stress without resorting to drugs. One such technique is mindfulness meditation, during which a person attempts to relax by putting themselves in the moment in a nonjudgmental way for a period of time. Other techniques involve engaging in [breathing exercises](#). In this new effort, the researchers compared three types of breathing exercises and mindfulness meditation to assess their effectiveness.

The three types of breathing exercises tested included cyclic sighing, in which more time and thought is spent on exhaling than on inhaling or holding the breath; box breathing, in which breathing and holding are done for the same amount of time; and cyclic hyperventilation, in which inhalations last longer than exhalations.

Research for the study was conducted online during the pandemic when stress was unusually high for most people; 114 [volunteers](#) engaged in one of the stress reducers for five minutes each day for a month at the time of their choosing. Each volunteer kept a stress journal to assess the effectiveness of their stress reduction activities.

The researchers found that for the most part, the volunteers reported that they found the exercise a positive experience—90% reported positive feelings. They also found that those volunteers using breathing exercises

showed more stress reduction than those doing mindfulness meditation. And they also found that those who did cyclic sighing reported the greatest reductions in [stress](#) compared to the other breathing techniques.

More information: Melis Yilmaz Balban et al, Brief structured respiration practices enhance mood and reduce physiological arousal, *Cell Reports Medicine* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.xcrm.2022.100895](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xcrm.2022.100895)

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