

# IO Practices: On the Spot and Ongoing

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## **Abdominal/Diaphragmatic/ Belly Breathing**

This deep breathing technique uses the diaphragm, the large muscle below the lungs, to help you breathe more efficiently and regulate the nervous system. During diaphragmatic breathing, you consciously use your diaphragm to take deep breaths. When you breathe normally, you don't use your lungs to their full capacity. Diaphragmatic breathing allows you to use your lungs at 100% capacity to increase lung efficiency.

It takes a while to learn this technique but once you have mastered it, you can use it 'on the spot'.

### **Benefits**

This breathing technique offers several benefits to your body including reducing your blood pressure and heart rate and improving relaxation. It helps you use your diaphragm correctly while breathing to:

- Strengthen the diaphragm
- Decrease the work of breathing by slowing your breathing rate
- Decrease oxygen demand
- Use less effort and energy to breathe

Taking slow, diaphragmatic breaths does more than oxygenate the blood. At the physiological level, it helps to reset the parasympathetic nervous system—slowing down the heart rate and lowering blood pressure. At the musculoskeletal level, the contraction of the diaphragm muscles assists in blood circulation and helps to pump lymph, facilitating immune function. There are more benefits than can be listed here, but what I love about this practice, is it is accessible to everyone.

## **Instruction**

Sometimes it helps to have a weight or pressure to provide feedback. Lying down, place something with weight, like a book, on your belly. As you breathe in gently through the nose, see if you can expand your belly so it lifts the book. As you breathe out, the book slowly lowers.

If you prefer to sit, you can place a cushion or pillow on your lap so it presses gently against your abdomen. As you gently breathe in, see if you can feel your abdomen expand against the cushion. As you breathe out, feel the pressure lessening.

At first, practice this exercise for five to 10 minutes about three to four times per day. Gradually increase the amount of time you spend doing this exercise, and perhaps even increase the effort of the exercise by placing a book on your abdomen.

## **Resources**

[\[UCLA\] Diaphragmatic Breathing | UCLA Integrative Digestive Health and Wellness Program](#)

## **Aromatherapy**

The practice of using essential oils for therapeutic benefit. Aromatherapy has been used for centuries. When inhaled, the scent molecules in essential oils travel from the olfactory nerves directly to the brain and especially impact the amygdala, the emotional center of the brain.

## **Benefits**

Aromatherapy may help relieve:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Nausea
- High blood pressure"

## **Instruction**

Inhalation, local application and baths are the major methods used in aromatherapy that utilize these oils to penetrate the human skin surface with marked aura.

## **Resources**

**[Breastcancer.org]** [Research on aromatherapy in people with cancer](#)

## **Art Therapy**

Art therapy is a type of psychotherapy that uses different forms of art, including drawing, painting, and sculpture, to lift mood, awareness, and self-esteem. It allows people to express their inner thoughts when speaking is difficult or not possible. It's thought to provide benefit by using self-expression to improve mood and healing.

### **Benefits**

Art therapy has favorable effects on improving quality of life and depression among patients with breast and gynecological cancers. Arts therapy also has positive effects on improving anxiety, pain, and fatigue symptoms among patients with breast cancer.

## **Resources**

**[PubMed]** [Role of Arts Therapy in Patients with Breast and Gynecological Cancers: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis](#)

## **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I)**

A non-medication treatment that helps people sleep better by changing their thoughts and behaviors. It's an evidence-based psychotherapy that's usually delivered over several sessions with a therapist.

### **Benefits**

Most individuals who try CBT-I experience improvements to their insomnia (short-term and chronic) and better quality sleep.

### **Instruction**

Evidence to improve the quality of life for breast cancer survivors

## **Resources**

**[PubMed]** [Efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia in breast cancer: A meta-analysis](#)

## **Dance & Movement Therapy**

Nancy Herard-Marshall was a metastatic breast cancer thriver deeply engaged in integrative practices, advocacy, and empowerment through SIO, MBCA, METAvivor, LBBC, Project Life, and African-American and Afro-centric communities. She was a prolific dancer and choreographer who recognised and highlighted the importance of dance therapy and movement. She created an integrative expressive dance therapy practice

### **Instruction**

**[Instagram]** No matter how difficult, what are you willing to release physically, emotionally, mentally for your healing and peace of mind???

### **Resources**

**[Instagram]** Vested in Hope: Meet Nancy Herard-Marshall

**[YouTube]** Nancy Herard-Marshall: Celebrating her legacy

## **Exercise & Physical Activity**

According to research, movement is one of the most effective things to counteract cancer fatigue and depression and improve the immune system.

Yoga therapist, Bernadette Milan, whom I met at the conference and now work with, specializes in cancer and chronic health issues and teaches patients to do yoga on their own with simple moves designed to meet patients where they are according to their needs and physical function.

### **Benefits**

Studies show that physical activity is enough to improve cancer outcomes, and we don't need physical exercise. Even small body movements, like swaying to music in the kitchen or raising the arms or legs lying down, help with cancer-related symptoms and our health.

Physical Activity and Exercise help with sleep, build the immune system, and counteract fatigue and depression.

## **Resources**

**[LBBC]** Nancy Herard-Marshall - Patient Advocate, Dance/Movement Therapist

## **Guided Imagery or Visualization**

Guided imagery is a type of focused relaxation or meditation. Focused relaxation involves concentrating on a specific object, sound, or experience in order to calm your mind.

In guided imagery, you intentionally think of a peaceful place or scenario.

## **Benefits**

The goal is to promote a calm state through relaxation and mindfulness. The idea is that your body reacts to your own thoughts.

## **Instruction**

Sit or lie down in a quiet, comfortable area.

1. Close your eyes. Take several deep breaths. Inhale and exhale deeply and keep breathing deeply as you continue this relaxation technique.
2. Imagine a peaceful scene like a lush forest, a majestic mountain range, or a quiet, tropical beach. Or, think of a favorite place in nature that makes you feel relaxed.
3. Think of the details in the scene. Imagine the sounds, scents, and sensations of being in this peaceful, calming place.
4. Envision a path in your scene. Picture yourself walking along the path, imagining the details and sounds as you walk this path.
5. Relax in your scene for several minutes. Continue breathing deeply.
6. After 15 minutes, count to three. Open your eyes.

## **Resources**

**[You Tube]** Guided Imagery Johns Hopkins

**[PubMed]** A Randomized Controlled Trial for the Effectiveness of Progressive Muscle Relaxation and Guided Imagery as Anxiety Reducing Interventions in Breast and Prostate Cancer Patients Undergoing Chemotherapy

## **Kirtan Kriya**

A type of meditation from the Kundalini yoga tradition

### **Benefits**

Helps with calming and improves brain function. It is recommended by the Alzheimer's Association as it has been shown to improve memory and brain function.

### **Instruction**

**[Apple music]** Yes and Yoga Mantras SaTaNaMa

## **Meditation**

### **Benefits**

- Anxiety
- Stress reduction
- Depression
- Mood disorders
- Improve quality of life

### **Instruction**

**[UCLA]** Free Guided Meditations

## **Mindfulness**

Mind-body interventions include mindfulness and other types of meditation, as well as yoga, Tai Chi, acupuncture, and relaxation techniques. Dr. Julie a researcher at UCLA studies the impact of mindfulness in breast cancer patients on stress and the immune system - she defines mindfulness as "paying attention to our present moment experiences with openness and curiosity and a willingness to be with that experience. It's really about helping yourself come into the present moment. If you were to check in with your mind at any point in the day, it's probably lost in the past or lost in the future,

worrying about something that happened or that's coming—especially now. Mindfulness is an invitation to come back into the present moment and connect with ourselves in a way where we can see that actually, I can be OK. I can take a breath, I can pause". This is a skill that can be trained.

### **Benefits**

**[Psychology Today]** Neurological effects of practicing mindfulness on the brain

### **Resources**

There are free guided mindfulness sessions on the UCLA website and you can download the UCLA mindful app on itunes or google.

## **Prayer and Spirituality**

Prayer is becoming more widely acknowledged as a way to cope with cancer.

### **Benefits**

Prayer can be for petitioning, comfort, or praise.

### **Resources**

**[PubMed]** The benefits of prayer on mood and well-being of breast cancer survivors

## **Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise (PMR)**

PMR is a two-step relaxation practice to reduce stress and build awareness of sensations of tension and deep relaxation in various muscle groups. The first step in this practice is to create tension in specific muscle groups and begin to notice what tension feels like. By tensing and relaxing muscles in a certain order, one builds awareness of how to recognize and differentiate between the associated feelings of a tensed muscle and a completely relaxed one. This can be done for 10-15 minutes sitting or lying down.

### **Benefits**

**[BreastCancer.org]** Progressive Muscle Relaxation

## **Instruction**

**[YouTube]** [How to do Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#)

Tense each muscle group and notice how that muscle feels when it is tensed. Hold this tension for five seconds while breathing in. Then, release and relax that muscle all at once. Pay close attention to the feeling of relaxation when releasing each contracted muscle.

Fists Clench both fists and hold; Biceps Bend elbows, tense bicep muscles; Triceps Straighten arms, tense muscles in back of arms; Forehead Wrinkle forehead in a frown and hold; Eyes Close eyes tightly and hold; Jaw Gently clench jaw; Tongue Press against roof of mouth and hold; Lips Press together and hold; Neck Gently press neck back and hold. Then bring head forward to chest and hold; Shoulders Shrug shoulders as high as you can and hold stomach out as much as possible and hold; Lower back Gently arch up; Buttocks Tighten muscles in buttocks and hold; Thighs Tense by lifting legs off floor and hold; Calves Press toes downward, as if burying them in sand; Shins and ankles Bend feet toward head and hold.

## **Resources**

**[PubMed]** [Effectiveness of Progressive Muscle Relaxation, Deep Breathing, and Guided Imagery in Promoting Psychological and Physiological States of Relaxation](#)

**[PubMed]** [Progressive Muscle Relaxation and Guided Imagery in Breast Cancer: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Randomised Controlled Trials](#)

## **QiGong**

A traditional Chinese practice that involves slow-flowing movement, deep rhythmic breathing, and meditation to improve health. It's also known as chi kung.

**[Everyday Health.com]** [What Is Qigong? A Beginner's Guide to This Energetic Movement Practice](#)

## **Benefits**

- Improves well-being in people with cancer
- Decrease fatigue (SIO updated guidelines)



- Improve balance, flexibility, and muscle strength
- Improve mental and physical health
- Develop strength, agility, and endurance

## **Resources**

**[Everyday Health.com]** How Qigong Works

## **Yoga**

gentle yoga for breast cancer

## **Benefits**

- Anxiety & stress reduction
- Depression & mood disorders
- Improve quality of life

## **Resources**

**[Dana Farber Cancer Institute]** Gentle Yoga for Breast Cancer (30 min)