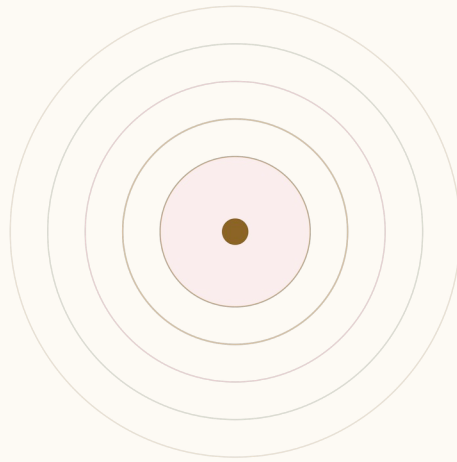




A BLACK MOM ISH FOUNDATION GUIDE



Weekly Breathwork Routine

*A simple, repeatable practice to reset your nervous system.
Five minutes, once a day, for one week.*

ROOTED IN EVIDENCE. WRITTEN FOR US.

A Note Before You Start

You don't need forty minutes, a silent room, or an app to change what your nervous system is doing right now. You need about five minutes and the breath you're already carrying with you everywhere.

This guide teaches one technique, studied at Stanford and shown in a controlled trial to calm the body faster than meditation, then shows you how to fold it into one week of your actual life. Not a lifestyle overhaul. One small, repeatable practice.

Do it the same way, at the same point in your day, for seven days. By the end of the week your body starts recognizing the pattern before your mind catches up, and that recognition is the whole point.

In your corner,

The Black Mom Ish Foundation

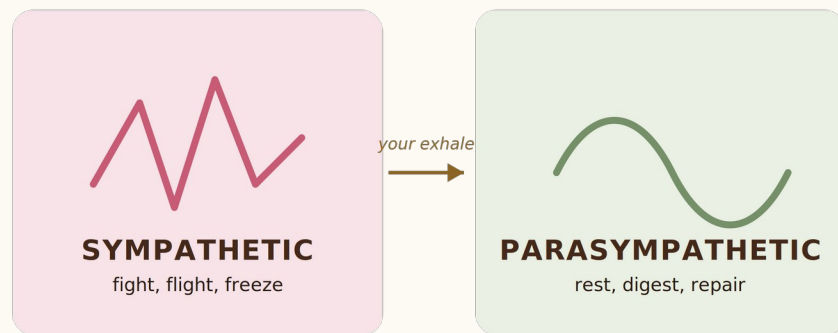
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PART 1 The Science, In Plain Language

Your body runs on an autopilot system that decides, without asking your permission, whether you're safe or under threat. That's your autonomic nervous system, and it runs on two main settings.



Sympathetic: the alert setting

Heart rate up, breathing shallow and fast, attention narrowed to whatever feels urgent. Genuinely useful when something is actually chasing you. Exhausting when it's the setting your body defaults to during a school pickup line, a group chat, or a budget spreadsheet.

Parasympathetic: the recovery setting

Heart rate down, breathing slow and full, digestion and repair back online. This is where your body actually rests, and a lot of us spend far less time here than we need to.

Here's the part that matters: you can't think your way from one setting to the other, but you can breathe your way there. A slow, extended exhale is one of the most direct signals your body receives that it's safe to stand down, carried through the vagus nerve, the same pathway connecting your breath to your heart rate. [Part 2](#) teaches the exact pattern.

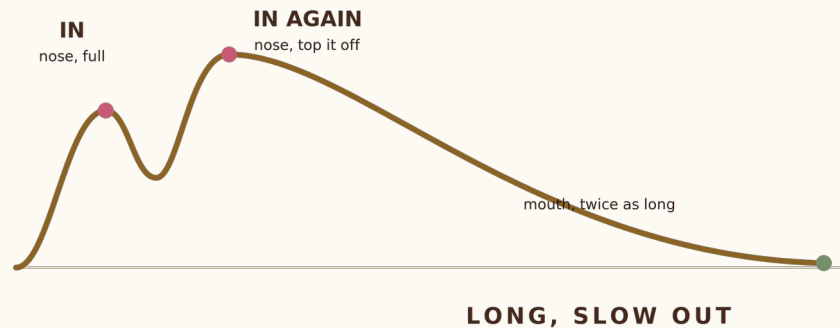
WORTH KNOWING This isn't a wellness trend. It's a randomized trial.

A 2023 Stanford study published in Cell Reports Medicine had participants practice different breathing patterns for five minutes a day over a month. The technique in this guide, sometimes called cyclic sighing, outperformed box breathing and outperformed mindfulness meditation at improving mood and reducing physiological stress. Five minutes, once a day, and it held up under real research conditions.

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PART 2 The Practice: Your 5-Minute Reset

This is called the physiological sigh. Your body already does this on its own when you're overwhelmed, that shuddery double breath before a cry. This is the same reflex, done on purpose.



One cycle, roughly 15 to 20 seconds

The steps

- Find a comfortable position, sitting or standing. Let your shoulders drop and your jaw unclench.
- Inhale through your nose until your lower ribs expand, a full, unhurried breath. About 3 to 4 seconds.
- Without exhaling, take one more short sip of air through your nose, just enough to top your lungs off completely.
- Exhale slowly and fully through your mouth, longer than both inhales combined. Let it be audible if that helps you slow it down. About 6 to 8 seconds.
- That's one cycle. Let your next inhale begin on its own, and repeat.

For the full daily practice, continue this pattern for five minutes. For a faster reset in the middle of a hard moment, one to three cycles, about thirty seconds, still measurably calms your body.

WORTH KNOWING A little lightheadedness in the first few cycles is normal.

If it happens, ease off the depth of your inhales rather than stopping altogether. It usually settles within the first minute. If it doesn't, breathe normally for a moment and try again smaller.

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PART 3 When to Reach For It

The five minute version is what builds the habit. But this technique works in thirty seconds too, which makes it usable in the actual moments your day throws at you.

- Before you walk in the door after a hard shift, so what you're carrying doesn't land on the first person who greets you.
- In the car, before you go back inside after drop off or pickup.
- Before a conversation you've been dreading, with a partner, a provider, or a child's teacher.
- After the kids are finally down, before you try to fall asleep yourself.
- In a waiting room, a meeting, or a line, anywhere your chest starts to feel tight.

None of these require anyone around you to notice what you're doing. That's part of what makes it usable.

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PART 4 Your Week at a Glance

Consistency does more here than intensity. Pick one anchor point in your day, the same one if you can manage it, and do your five minutes there for one full week.



Mark a day each time you practice

Ideas for your anchor moment

- Right after you pour your first cup of coffee or tea.
- In the car before you walk into work.
- The five minutes right after the kids are dropped off or picked up.
- Lying in bed before you reach for your phone in the morning or at night.

By the end of the week, you'll have real data on how your body responds, not just the memory of one good five minutes.

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PART 5 If Something Feels Off

Lightheaded or dizzy

Breathe smaller, not harder. Reduce the depth of your inhales rather than pushing through.

Your mind won't stop wandering

Normal, and not a sign you're doing it wrong. Bring your attention back to the exhale specifically. That's the part doing the actual work.

It doesn't feel like anything happened

The research behind this technique shows benefits building across the week, not always in the first sitting. Give it the full seven days before deciding whether it's working.

It makes you feel worse, more anxious, or panicky

Stop, and know that's useful information, not a failure. Breathwork isn't a replacement for real support if what you're carrying is bigger than five minutes can hold. Our *Maternal Mental Health guide* walks through what that can look like and when to reach out for more. If you need to talk to someone today, the National Maternal Mental Health Hotline (call or text 1-833-852-6262) is free, confidential, and available 24/7.

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KEEP THIS HANDY Quick Reference Card

The whole practice, condensed to one page.

- ☐ In through your nose, a full breath.
- ☐ In again through your nose, a short top-off sip.
- ☐ Out slowly through your mouth, twice as long as the inhales.
- ☐ Repeat continuously for 5 minutes for the daily practice.
- ☐ Or repeat just 1 to 3 times, about 30 seconds, for a quick in-the-moment reset.
- ☐ Same anchor moment, same time, every day this week.
- ☐ Lightheaded: breathe smaller, not harder.
- ☐ Mind wandering: refocus on the exhale.

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CLOSING A Final Word From The Foundation

So much of what gets asked of us happens in the sympathetic setting: alert, responsive, holding it together for everyone who needs us to. Five minutes of slow, deliberate breathing isn't going to undo everything on your plate. It will give your body a real, physiological break from carrying it, once a day, starting today.

If this practice helped, or if there's another topic you wish existed as a resource, we want to hear about it.

The Black Mom Ish Foundation

Chicago, IL



Five minutes. Your breath. Every day this week.

NEED MORE SUPPORT

1-833-852-6262 · National Maternal Mental Health Hotline
988 · Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, call or text, any time

THE BLACK MOM ISH FOUNDATION

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