**Subject:** A Breath of Fresh Air

Unless you've been under a rock the last year, you're probably aware there's been an uptick in wellness content, products, apps and influencers due to the extra stress from the pandemic. While wellness is all well and good, it's often hard to weed out the bullsh** from the science-backed products and practices (ahem, looking at you, Goop).

So today I'm sharing one science-backed healthy habit that has kept me sane throughout the lockdown, helps me manage *all* kinds of stress and acts as a mini-mental reset anytime I need it… It's BREATHING!

Not the breathing you're doing at this moment, but *focused* breathing exercises that give your often overstimulated senses a brief respite throughout the day. If you're not sure where to start, I'm here to tell you the Calm app is the guru you never knew you needed. First, let's talk science:

Deep breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress because when you breathe deeply, it sends a message to your brain to calm down. As you breathe deeply to relax, all those bodily stress signals like increased heart rate, fast breathing and heightened blood pressure *immediately decrease*.

Now, this might not be news to you, but if you haven't made this a routine, then you haven't seen the lasting benefits. It's especially beneficial if you work in a high-pressure job, but the best part is that it's a small effort with an enormous, multi-faceted payoff. Now let's dive into the benefits I've experienced from daily breathing exercises with Calm:

- Improves my mood
- Increases my attention span and ability to focus
- Decreases feelings of anxiety
- Brings me back to earth when I'm stressed
- *Prevents stress!*

Yes, deep, mindful breathing makes me feel grounded and truly prevents some of my biggest stressors. But, don't *wait* for stress to hit! I made this a real habit by opening Calm as I'm waiting for my coffee to brew every morning. Then, the moment I close my laptop for the day, I open Calm again. And finally, I made Calm a part of my bedtime routine. At night my bathroom becomes a sanctuary of restorative healing and relaxation. I let all my senses be enveloped by a lavender candle, soothing music and tranquil breathing exercises from the Calm app… And once I'm in bed, I close my eyes for a peaceful escape to a twilight beach, a lakeside cabin, a summer rainstorm, a crackling fire, a babbling brook… Whatever soundscape I'm vibing with that night, Calm has it.

There are six customizable breathing exercises in Calm, at the end of which it will prompt a self-check-in, serve up other recommended activities based on the exercise and show your streaks and stats of app usage.

There are dozens of other features of the Calm app, so next week I'll share details on all the other ways I use Calm, like for focus mode at work, setting a date-night ambiance at home, Sunday meditations, yoga exercises and so much more!

Let's all breathe a breath of fresh air, for our health. ;)

Reference: https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/05/180510101254.htm

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