Box Breathing

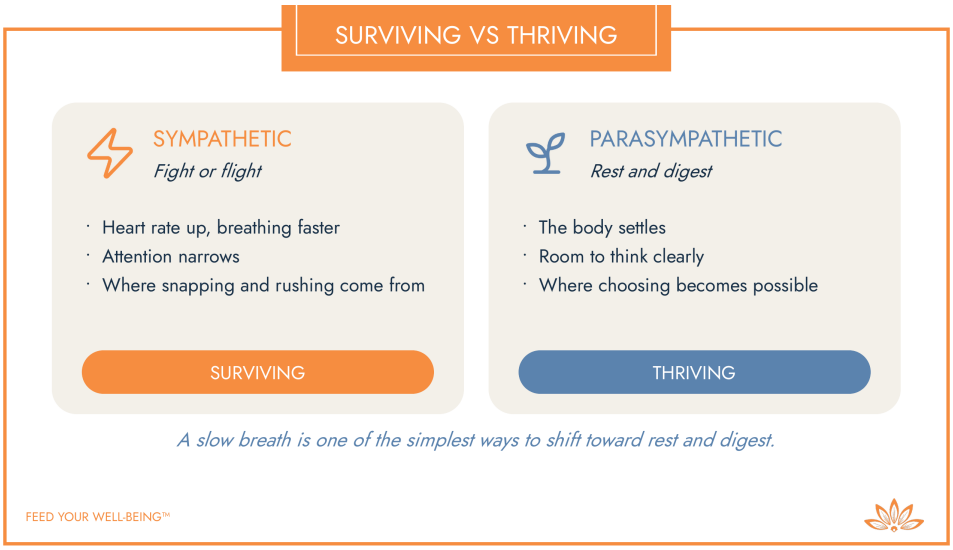
A four-count practice to help you shift from surviving to thriving

TIME	WHERE	BEST FOR
3 to 5 minutes	Anywhere, eyes open or closed	Stress and hard moments

Your breath is one of the few parts of your nervous system you can steer on purpose. When stress or anxiety switches on the sympathetic nervous system, slowing the breath helps activate the parasympathetic nervous system, so your body can settle and you can move toward responding rather than reacting. Box breathing gives that slowing a simple, even structure. It's taught to Navy SEALs to stay calm and focused under pressure, and it works just as well in the middle of a packed, hectic day.

We invite you to try it out in the laboratory of your own experience.

WHY IT WORKS



When we're surviving, the reaction runs ahead of us. A few slow, even breaths tell the body it's safe to shift toward rest and digest, and that's where thinking clearly and choosing our response become possible again.

THE PRACTICE



- **Settle:** Sit or stand upright but not uptight. Drop your shoulders and gently empty your lungs.
- **Breathe in:** Calmly through your nose for 4, filling your belly, then your chest.
- **Hold:** Gently keep the breath in for 4.
- **Breathe out:** Slowly through your mouth for 4, lips slightly parted or shaped like an "O."
- **Hold:** Rest with your lungs empty for 4.
- **Repeat:** Do five rounds, or even better, continue for 3 to 5 minutes.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

- **Shorten the count.** If 4 feels long, start with 3. Keeping the sides of the box even matters more than how long they are.
- **Keep it easy.** The holds should never feel like a strain. If you feel lightheaded, return to your natural breath.
- **Trace the box.** Following the edges of a window, a door or a picture frame with your eyes helps keep count, and you can do it with your eyes open, even in a room full of people.

WHEN TO USE IT

Before a big day or a meeting. After a tense moment or a hard exchange. Before a difficult conversation or giving feedback. At the end of the day, when your body has stopped but your mind is still running.

Box breathing is one way to pause. A few rounds widen the space between what happens and how we respond, and in that space lives our power to choose.

TRY IT TODAY

The next time you notice stress rising, practice five rounds of box breathing before you do anything else. Try it on and notice any shifts in your body, your mood or your focus.