

Guide for First-Timers in an Ice Bath: Breathing & Calming the Nervous System

Welcome to the Ice Bath Experience at State of Nirvana!

When stepping into an ice bath for the first time, your body and mind will go through a powerful response. Understanding how to control your breathing is key to calming your nervous system and getting the most out of this experience.

What Happens When You Enter the Ice Bath

1. Initial Shock (0–30 seconds):

- As you step into the ice bath, your body's **fight-or-flight response** will trigger. This is natural. You'll feel an intense cold shock, causing your heart rate to spike and your breathing to become shallow and fast.
- Blood vessels will constrict, pulling blood to your core to protect your vital organs. Your muscles may tense up, and you'll likely feel an urge to get out.

2. Adaptation Phase (30 seconds–2 minutes):

- After the initial shock, your body starts adapting. The adrenaline rush will lessen, and your nervous system will stabilize. This is when the breathwork comes into play.

3. Steady State (2–3 minutes):

- As you approach the 3-minute mark, your body will find a balance, and the intense cold will feel more manageable. The breathwork helps you stay calm, regulating your heart rate and allowing the body to work through the discomfort.

How to Calm the Nervous System Through Breathing

1. Slow Down Your Breathing:

- As soon as you enter the ice, you might start to panic which will cause you to start hyperventilating. Focus on taking **long, slow breaths** to signal safety to your nervous system.
- Aim for a **4-second inhale** through your nose, followed by a **6- to 8-second exhale** through your mouth. The extended exhale helps activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which calms your body.

2. Focus on Diaphragmatic Breathing:

- Breathe deep into your belly, not just your chest. If you are struggling with this you can place one hand on your stomach and one on your chest if needed. Feel your belly rise with each inhale and fall with each exhale. This type of breathing enhances relaxation and reduces the fight-or-flight response.

3. Mind Your Exhale:

- In my opinion this is the most important thing you need to remember. Make sure your exhales are longer than your inhales. A longer exhale triggers a calming effect and slows your heart rate. This will ease the tension in your body. You will be reminded of this on the day. I promise, it is not as bad as what you are thinking. And this exhale works.

4. Visualization & Mindfulness:

- Close your eyes and imagine the cold as an opportunity for growth and building discipline. How many people do you know that would never do this. You are doing something amazing for your body and your mind. Visualize your body adapting and embracing the sensation. Remain present with each breath, focusing solely on your breathing.

By practicing these techniques, you'll calm your nervous system, allowing your body to handle the cold much more effectively. Remember, the mind and breath are your greatest tools for regulating how the body responds to the ice bath.

The body does what it is told. You just have to control your mind.

You'll emerge feeling rejuvenated, focused, proud and deeply connected to your new ability to handle discomfort. Own this feeling, you have done something amazing and you will get to enjoy the feeling of a kind of Euphoria for the rest of the day