

HANDOUT 5-1

BASIC RELAXATION BREATHING

A breathing technique that is very helpful in deactivating the stress response consists of breathing in through the nose to the count of four and breathing out through the mouth to the count of eight. Thus, we activate the parasympathetic nervous system twice as long as the sympathetic nervous system with a net result of calming our physiology and stress response.

Try this simple technique as often as you think of it. Breathe in through your nose to the count of four and out through your mouth to the count of eight. When you exhale, purse your lips and blow gently like you are blowing out a candle or blowing a bubble. This will help you slow down the exhale. Don't worry if your nose is stuffy, just breathe in and out through your mouth instead.

Inhale through your nose: 1-2-3-4.

Exhale through your mouth with lips pursed, blowing gently, like blowing a bubble: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8.

Repeat 3-4 times.

Practice this breathing technique often throughout the day. You might choose to take a nice slow breath every time you answer the phone, when you get into the car, when you visit the bathroom, before you eat, and certainly if you are feeling stressed. Pick a few times that work best for you to help you get in the habit of doing one to three deep breaths in through your nose to the count of four and out through your mouth to the count of eight.

Another effective method:

Inhale for a count of 4 or 5.

Hold for a count of 2.

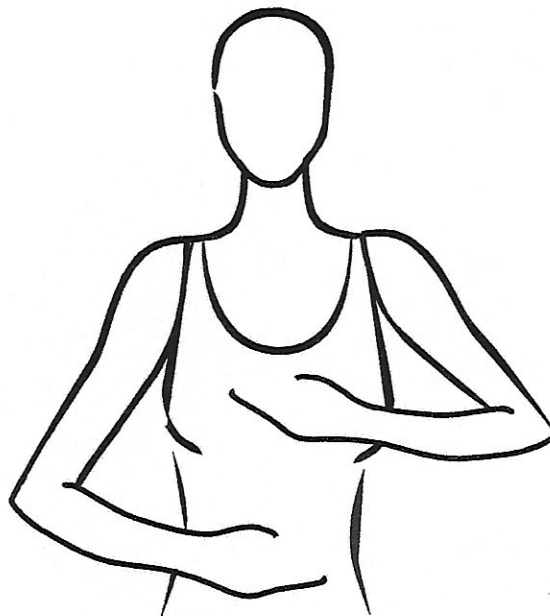
Exhale for a count of 8.

After you practice a while with breathing in through the nose and out through your lips, you can start breathing in and out through the nose.

HANDOUT 5-2

HOW TO BELLY BREATHE

1. Place one hand on your abdomen above your belly button and one hand on your upper chest.
2. Relax your abdomen.
3. Breathe in through your nose and fill your lungs.
4. Allow your lungs to expand downward and move the bottom hand.
5. Avoid shallow chest breathing or raising your shoulders.
6. Exhale slowly through pursed lips.



HANDOUT 5-3

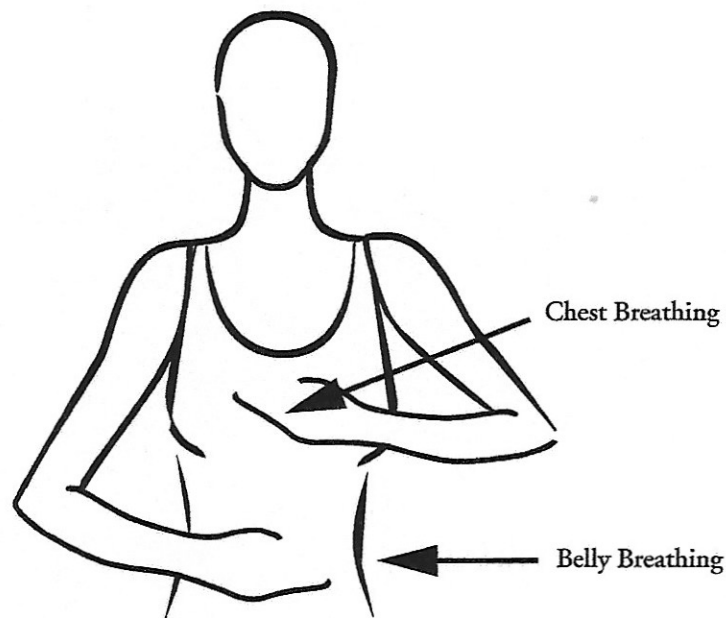
THREE WAYS TO TELL IF YOU ARE BELLY BREATHING

There are three easy ways to tell if you are belly breathing or chest breathing.

1. Place one hand on your abdomen above your belly button and one hand on your upper chest. Just breathe as you usually breathe and notice which hand moves more. If the bottom hand moves more, great, that's a belly breath. If the top hand moves more, that's a chest breath, which is the same as anxious breathing. Deliberately move your stomach in and out just below your rib cage and above your belly button to get the feel of a belly breathe. Notice when you breathe normally which hand moves more.

Bottom hand moves more = belly breath—great

Top hand moves more—chest breath = same as anxious breathing

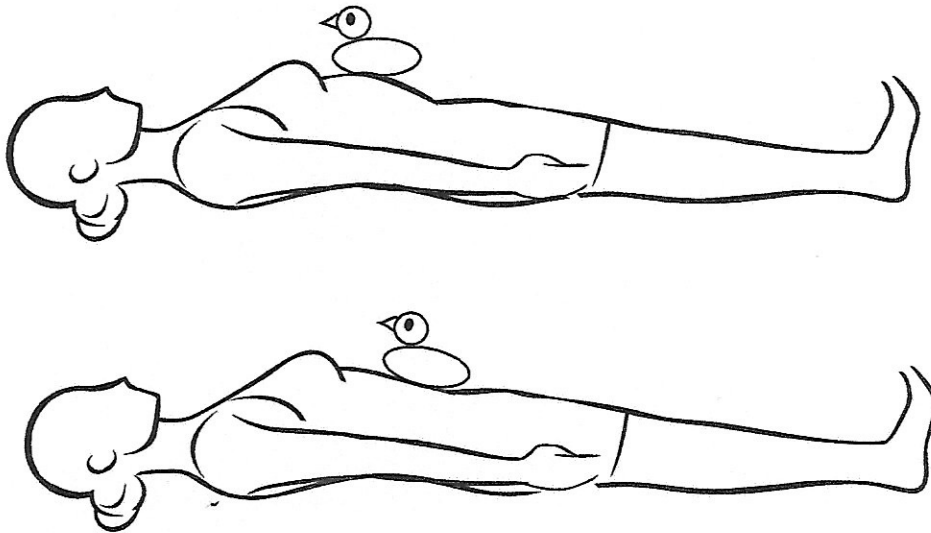


2. **Intentionally take a chest breath and blow on your hand.** Notice the temperature of the air as it flows across your fingers. Now, intentionally take a belly breath and blow on your hand. Again, notice the temperature of the air as it flows across your fingers. You will notice that the air feels warmer when it comes from a belly breath.

Chest breath → colder air
Belly breath → warmer air



3. **Lie down on your back.** Place an object on your belly such as a book or pillow. For children, you might use a small stuffed animal. Now make the object go up and down as you breathe.



HANDOUT 5-4

CORE PRACTICE

PAUSE → LISTEN → BREATHE

Find yourself a comfortable position.

Close your eyes.

Pay attention to your breathing.

Breathe slowly in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Imagine the air slowly filling your lungs and body and then flowing out again.

When you notice that your mind has wandered, acknowledge it, accept it, and then bring your attention back to your breath.

Notice your belly moving as you take slow belly breaths.

Continue for a minute (Note: shorten or lengthen as needed).

Open your eyes and return to the room.