



# Diaphragmatic Breathing

Deep or diaphragmatic breathing can be done most anywhere. Recommended places and moments include: driving in congested traffic, running late for an appointment, during a meeting, engaging in other stress provoking situations, to begin a power nap or a restful night of sleep, and any other time you have 5 or 10 minutes to practice.

It sends the message to your body and brain that functions can slow down now. Deep breathing can take you out of the “Alarm” or “Reacting” stage of stress into a more restful or calm state.

## To Begin: If possible, but not necessary –

- Find a quiet space (turn off your phone) and/or remove yourself from interruptions
- Place both of your feet on the ground if seated in a chair OR lie on your back on the floor with your feet up on a chair or out in front of you
- Close your eyes
- Place one hand on your heart center and the other on your belly button. By placing your hands in this manner, it allows you to note whether you are taking short, chest breaths (upper hand rises); or, if you are breathing deeply (your lower hand that is on your belly button will move out slightly as your lower lungs fill and your diaphragm moves downward)
- Sit with stillness for a few moments before trying to do anything. Notice your breathing. Notice your feet on the floor. Notice your heart beating.
- Take your first deep breath in through your nose, relaxing your abdomen to allow the breath to go deep into the lungs. Exhale completely and slowly through your nose.
  - Inhale to the count of 3
  - Exhale to the count of 3
  - Do this several times to set a slow, smooth rhythm. This brings your mind into a focused place.
- Once you have a rhythm, relax into each exhale. Let go of muscle tension in one part of your body while exhaling, then move through the body: your forehead, jaw, shoulders, and back.
- After 5 to 10 minutes of diaphragmatic breathing, gently wiggle your toes and fingers. Be aware of the space you are in. Open your eyes if they were closed. Stretch and slowly move forward with your day in this relaxed, refreshed state.

## To Learn More:

Visit the Navy’s web-site, “Relax-Relax Toolkit”: <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/psychological-emotional-wellbeing/relax-relax/pages/breathing.html>

The following recordings are easy and short enough in length to count towards your practice:

- “Breathing Relaxation Exercise” (#4, 6, or 8)
- “Deep Breathing Relaxation Sample” (#5)
- “Stress and Relaxation: Quick Fix Breathing Exercise” (#10)