

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

- This type of breathing is the body's most efficient way to take in oxygen for nourishment. It uses about half as much energy as chest breathing. Regulating your breathing is the most basic of relaxation techniques.
- The most important part of diaphragmatic breathing is to remember to breathe into your stomach and diaphragm (located just below your rib cage), rather than your chest cavity.
- When your diaphragm is relaxed, it bows down and pushes your stomach out. If you are anxious, uptight, or tense, your diaphragm will also be tense. This prevents diaphragmatic breathing. Therefore, you cannot be anxious, uptight, or tense and breathe diaphragmatically at the same time. So learning to breathe diaphragmatically will help you to stay calm and relaxed.

Try diaphragmatic breathing

- Find a comfortable position in your seat so your breathing is not restricted from flowing into your stomach.
- Close your eyes and begin to focus on your breathing. Breathe through your nose or mouth, trying to breathe as effortlessly and comfortably as possible.
- Begin to notice the rising and falling of your stomach with each breath. When you breathe in, your stomach should rise. When you breathe out, your stomach should fall.
- As you breathe, allow each breath follow a natural rhythm.
- Take a deep breath and allow the air to flow out slowly as you exhale. As the air flows out, allow yourself to relax along with it.
- Continue to breathe effortlessly and comfortably for a few minutes.
- Notice yourself calming down and your body relaxing with each breath.
- When you're finished, open your eyes and stretch before moving to another task.

Practice and use this technique

- You can use this breathing exercise anywhere, anytime. It takes five minutes or less.
- Use it whenever you feel your stress level going up. Ideally you should use it three to five times a day, even when your stress level is not going up. Doing this exercise can prevent stress from reaching a noticeable level.
- As you practice this exercise, your unconscious mind learns that your body feels better when you breathe diaphragmatically. Eventually, your unconscious mind will take over and you will notice that you take diaphragmatic breaths even when not thinking about it. At this point you will become a much more relaxed person.
- This exercise, like all exercises, helps those who practice it regularly. Diaphragmatic breathing is a simple skill that anyone can learn. The relaxation effect increases as you practice it.