

## Stress Management: Deep 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 to 10 minutes to become calm. It sends the message to your body and brain that functions can slow down now. It can take you out of the “alarm” or “reacting” stage of stress and into a more restful or calm state.

### To Begin:

If possible, but not necessary:

- Place both feet on the ground if seated in a chair, or
- Lie on the floor with your feet up on the chair or out in front of you.
- Find a quiet space with minimal interruptions.
- Place one hand on your heart center.
- Place the other hand below or 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). If you are breathing deeply, your lower hand, the one on your belly button, will move out slightly as your lower lungs fill and your diaphragm moves downward.

First, 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 three. Exhale to the count of three. 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, starting with your forehead, jaw and shoulders until your whole body is relaxed.



*Breathe2Relax app*

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.

Download the Breathe2Relax app, which includes practice exercises for diaphragmatic breathing.