

# BREATHING RELAXATION

## A Technique to Help You Calm Yourself\*

### Breathing Properly:

#### *Deep Breathing Is the Key*

Babies naturally know how to breathe. If you watch a baby on its back breathing, its tummy rises as if a beach ball is being inflated inside as it inhales. Then the beach ball seems to cave in as it exhales. The baby's diaphragm is doing all the work.

Whether it's called "baby breathing", "belly breathing", "abdominal breathing", or "natural breath", slow, deep breathing has been scientifically proven to help you calm yourself, relax, and reduce anxiety. This simple technique, described in the next column, can be used anytime you feel yourself becoming stressed, anxious, or even afraid.

- ❖ Sit comfortably in a chair. Find a balanced position with little or no strain on your lower back or abdominal muscles.
- ❖ Make sure that both feet rest comfortably on the floor. Place your hands on your thighs.
- ❖ Slowly close your eyes and just allow yourself to settle into this position for a few minutes.
- ❖ Place one hand horizontally about one inch above your naval.
- ❖ Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, feeling your hand rise as your abdomen fills with air, for a count of three (3).
- ❖ Without holding your breath, breathe out slowly through your mouth, feeling your hand fall as your abdomen releases the air, for a count of four (4).
- ❖ Continue this pattern for 5, 10, or 20 minutes. We recommend that you start with 5 minutes initially and gradually increase your time.
- ❖ When you are ready to stop, slowly stretch your arms and legs and your hands and feet. Gently turn your head and stretch your neck.
- ❖ Slowly open your eyes.

\* In rare cases, some people get more anxious when they pay attention to their breathing. If this happens to you, stop. Don't try it again unless you have professional supervision.

## OTHER RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

- ❖ *Close your eyes and count your breaths. Concentrate on the air going in and out. If you lose count, go back to "one".*
- ❖ *Walk briskly or jog for 20 minutes.*
- ❖ *Spend five minutes considering what's going right in your life.*
- ❖ *Alternately tighten and relax your muscles, starting with your hands and feet, then your arms and legs, and finally your shoulders, neck, chest and stomach.*
- ❖ *Take a mini-vacation by closing your eyes and revisiting a beautiful, relaxing place you have experienced.*
- ❖ *Get a massage.*

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John has been working with adults, teenagers, and families since 1986. He is a National Certified Counselor (NCC) and a National Certified School Counselor (NCSC), certified by the National Board for Certified Counselors, a certifying agency that recognizes counselors who have distinguished themselves through meeting the board's rigorous standards for education, knowledge, and experience.

John is a member of the Mississippi Counseling Association, the Mississippi School Counselors Association, the Mississippi Licensed Professional Counselors Association, the Internal Family Systems Therapy Association, and the American School Counseling Association.

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# Relaxation Breathing

*Lower Stress  
& Reduce Anxiety*

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