



GUIDE FOR ABDOMINAL/DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

Before first practising this exercise, please read 'The Benefits' and 'Preparation' information.

Breathing into the lower chest is the most efficient way of breathing, as more oxygen is inhaled than if you breathe shallowly into the upper chest. It helps to reduce the respiratory rate, heart rate, and increases the ability to cough effectively.

It is an important tool for the management of stress, and is in fact the basis of all relaxation practices, as it promotes a natural, even flow of breath which soothes the body. Also for those experiencing breathing difficulties, this technique allows the correct respiratory muscles to work efficiently, particularly for those experiencing breathlessness as it helps to return to normal breathing, and so gain some control.

You may like someone to read this script for you.

If you feel any discomfort or light headedness – STOP immediately.

It's best to practise for just a minute or two and lengthen a little when you feel comfortable.

PREPARATION Take time to get as comfortable as possible and settle yourself. At first this exercise is best practised sitting on a chair so that your shoulders and upper chest can be released, but if this is not comfortable for you, reclining or lying is fine. There are some tips to help you on the 'Preparation' Guide.

If you are sitting, take your arms down to your sides and gently shake of your arms, hands and fingers. Really allowing your shoulders to drop. Now bringing your hands to your lap, or thighs, palms upwards if comfortable, or down if not, fingers softly curled.

If you are lying bring your shoulders down away from your ears, turn your arms outwards at the shoulders, so that your palms are upwards if comfortable, or down if not, with fingers gently curled.

Breathe in and out through your nose if this is possible, in order to filter impurities in the air, and optimum benefit, but do not force yourself if you are not able to do this.

It is very important not to consciously push or pull your abdominal muscles in and out, as you are often told to do. It is your diaphragm moving down with each in-breath to give your lungs space to expand, and with each out-breath you are experiencing the diaphragm returning to its resting position.

Rest your hands lightly on your abdomen, just beneath your ribs, above your navel. Become aware of your breath, your natural breath. Let it be as it is, don't do anything to influence it, and don't try to 'breathe deeply'. Just let the breath flow.

Let the breath arise spontaneously without 'pulling' it in. Let your out-breath travel out of your body till it comes to the end of its journey. Allow it to be full and complete. No force or effort.

Become aware of the movement of your abdomen under your hands – it will only be a very small movement. Feel that you are breathing into your hands, the tummy gently rising with each in-breath, gently sinking with each out-breath. Think of a balloon; as you put air into it, it becomes full; when you let the air out, it becomes flat. Gently, with no strain.

This is not deep breathing, but gently breathing with no strain. Becoming more aware of where you are breathing; into your lower chest. Comfortably and fully.

Now remove your hands from your abdomen and let your breath come and go in its own way and notice how you are feeling now. Sitting quietly and still for a few moments. When you are ready to get up, do so slowly and carefully.