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## Diaphragmatic Breathing or Calm Breathing

When we are stressed or feeling anxious, our breathing changes. We take shorter, shallower breaths that can lead to hyperventilation, or what is also called “overbreathing.” Overbreathing can actually make you feel even more anxious. Diaphragmatic breathing is a tool that you can use whenever you are feeling stressed or anxious, but it does require practice.

Calm breathing involves taking smooth, slow, and regular breaths. Sitting upright is usually better than lying down or slouching, because it can increase the capacity of your lungs to fill with air. Rest your arms, making sure they are supported to take the weight off your shoulders.

- Take a slow breath in through the nose, breathing into your lower belly (for about 4 seconds)
- Hold your breath for 1 or 2 seconds
- Exhale slowly through the mouth (for about 4 seconds)
- Wait a few seconds before taking another breath.

About 6-8 breathing cycles per minute is often helpful to decrease anxiety, but find your own comfortable breathing rhythm. These cycles regulate the amount of oxygen you take in so that you do not experience the fainting, tingling, or giddy sensations that are sometimes associated with overbreathing.

With its focus on full, cleansing breaths, deep breathing is a simple yet powerful relaxation technique. It’s easy to learn, can be practiced almost anywhere, and provides a quick way to get your stress levels in check. Deep breathing is the cornerstone of many other relaxation practices, too, and can be combined with other relaxing elements such as aromatherapy and music. All you really need is a few minutes and a place to stretch out.

The key to deep breathing is to breathe deeply from the abdomen, getting as much fresh air as possible in your lungs. When you take deep breaths from the abdomen, rather than shallow breaths from your upper chest, you inhale more oxygen. The more oxygen you get, the less tense, short of breath, and anxious you feel.

If you find it difficult breathing from your abdomen while sitting up, try lying on the floor. Put a hand on your stomach, and a hand on your chest. Try to breathe so that the abdomen rises as you inhale and falls as you exhale. Breathing techniques can be practiced almost anywhere and can be combined with other relaxation exercises, such as aromatherapy and music. All you really need is a few minutes and a place to stretch out.

## Rules for Practice

Practice diaphragmatic breathing for at least 5 minutes, twice a day. (Longer practice time is beneficial)

Do not wait until you feel stressed or anxious, you should start practicing breathing techniques while you’re feeling calm.

You will master the breathing technique with regular practice, THEN it will be effective in situations that cause stress or anxiety.