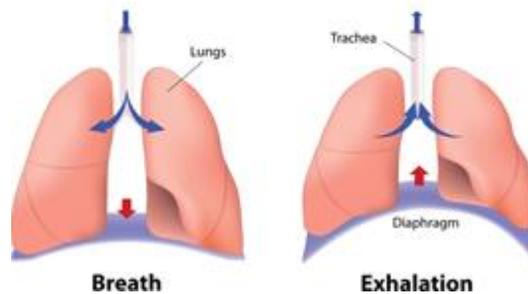


Belly Breathing Meditation Webinar Handout

Introduction to belly breathing

Belly breathing can go by a number of different names, including diaphragmatic breathing, abdominal breathing, deep breathing, or paced respiration. They all refer to the same thing, which is to breathe more deeply into your belly. Breathing this way is proven to increase oxygen to the body, decrease your heart rate and blood pressure, promote relaxation, and stimulate the immune system.

The diaphragm functions in breathing



How to practice belly breathing

The diaphragm and abdominal muscles are engaged with this type of breathing. The diaphragm is a large, dome-shaped muscle band located at the base of the lungs. Your abdominal muscles help move it up during exhalation, which gives you additional power to empty your lungs completely.

To practice belly breathing, place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. Close your eyes and breathe normally. Notice whether your chest or belly area rises on your inhalation. For those whose belly area does not expand, try to make a conscious effort to push your belly out — as best you can — when you breathe in. When breathing this way, allow your belly to relax during your inhale and then use the contraction of your abdominal muscles to help lift your diaphragm on your exhale. When you exhale, try to tighten your stomach muscles so that the air is efficiently pushed up and out.

Deepen your breathing to your belly by breathing in for a slow count of three, holding the air in for a count of three, and exhaling all the way out for a count of three. You can increase the count to be higher as you become more comfortable with this type of breathing. Try to practice belly breathing for 10 to 15 minutes, especially if you are feeling stressed.