

## **Deep Belly Breathing:**

Adapted from Conscious Breathing; Hendricks, 1995

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Healthy breathing is a powerful tool. It has a direct effect on our stress levels. When we breathe diaphragmatically we immediately begin the process of increasing our oxygen intake and reducing our body's tension.

When we are in danger our body responds with restricted breathing through shorter and shallower breaths situated more in the upper chest. Our body's automatic response to a threat is to prepare to fight or run. Adrenaline courses throughout bloodstreams, digestion slows and energy is diverted to our muscles. If we continue to breathe shallowly after the danger has passed, through habit or in response to ongoing stress, we deprive ourselves of a return to a fully relaxed state. We alter our body's response to stress through our breathing.

### **Breathing practice – How to do it!**

Pay attention to your breathing. Place one hand on your upper abdomen, the other on your chest. Take a full, deep breath in and notice whether your abdomen rises. If it doesn't and your upper chest and shoulders rise noticeably, expel the breath and this time, when breathing in, push out your stomach to release your diaphragm allowing your lung to fill completely. As you breathe in, your chest and shoulders should stay almost still. As you exhale, your belly settles inward. You may need to practice this way of natural, relaxed breathing a few times. Watch yourself breathe in front of a mirror. Remember, you want to see your shoulders and upper chest remain almost still, while you feel your upper abdomen moving outwards as you inhale and then relaxing inwards as you exhale.

### **Practicing conscious diaphragmatic breathing can:**

- Reduce your immediate and habitual stress levels
- Loosen and relax your sore muscles, especially those in your upper back, chest, shoulders and neck reducing stress related headaches
- Enhance mental concentration and increase physical health
- Face and manage your emotions without repressing them
- Contribute to ongoing health and well-being through simple self-care

**Take 2-3 tummy breaths, 12-15 times per day:** when you wake up, before and after you eat, when waiting in a line, at red lights, when you look at the time, during TV commercials, when you're feeling frustrated or angry or bored or unhappy. To relax your autonomic nervous system: lengthen your exhalations and shorten your inhalations: inhale (count 1, 2, 3) and exhale (count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Find your own best rhythm. To energize lengthen inhalations and shorten exhalations.

Deep at the center of my being there is an infinite well of **Love**.

I now allow this **Love** to flow to the surface—it fills my heart, my body, my mind, my consciousness, my very being, and radiates out from me in all directions and returns to me multiplied.

The more **Love** I use and give, the more I have to give—the supply is endless. The use of **Love** makes me feel good. It is an expression of my inner joy.

- ∞ I **Love** myself; therefore, I take loving care of my body.
- ∞ I lovingly feed it nourishing foods and beverages.
- ∞ I lovingly groom it and dress it, and my body lovingly responds to me with vibrant health and energy.
- ∞ I **Love** myself; therefore, I provide for myself a comfortable home, one that fills all my needs and is a pleasure to be in.
- ∞ I fill the rooms with the radiance of **Love** so that all who enter, me included, will feel this **Love** and be nourished by it.
- ∞ I **Love** myself; therefore, I work at a job that I truly enjoy; one that uses my creative talents and abilities, working with and for people who I **Love** and who **Love** me, earning a good income.
- ∞ I **Love** myself; therefore; I behave and think in a loving way to all people—for I know that that which I give out returns to me multiplied.
- ∞ I only attract loving people in my world, for they are a mirror of what I am.
- ∞ I **Love** myself; therefore, I forgive and totally release the past and all past experiences, and I am free.

I **Love** myself; therefore, I live totally in the now, experiencing each moment as good and knowing that my future is bright and joyous and secure—for I am a be**L**oved child of the Universe, and the Universe lovingly takes care of me now and forevermore.

And, so it is!