

# Diaphragmatic or Deep Breathing

Diaphragmatic or deep breathing involves an in and out movement of the abdomen and helps to reduce anxiety and panic.

Infants and children naturally breathe diaphragmatically. People change breathing patterns over time as an adaptation to stressful experiences. When psychological and physiological defenses to stress are activated, the chest and/or shoulder muscles are used for breathing causing more tension.

Practicing diaphragmatic or deep breathing promotes a feeling of general relaxation and can be a very effective coping tool to deal with stress and anxiety.

When doing diaphragmatic or deep breathing, the abdomen rises with each inhalation and lowers with each exhalation. The rate of breathing is slow with approximately ten breaths a minute.

Use diaphragmatic or deep breathing any time you feel physically or emotionally tense. You may want to practice every time you come to a red light; a red light means to stop and deep breath. Once the light turns green, you may breathe normally.

## **Here are some steps to practice:**

1. Rest one hand comfortably on your abdomen.
2. Inhale through your nose while feeling your abdomen push out with your hand and hold your abdomen OUT for about 3 to 5 second before exhaling. If you have nasal stuffiness or other nasal difficulties, inhale through your mouth.
3. Exhale through the nose or the mouth while feeling your abdomen push in with your hand and hold your abdomen IN for about 3 to 5 seconds before inhaling.
4. Practice completing 10 breaths.