

MANAGE MY EMOTIONS: BREATHING

Use this cheat sheet to start practicing abdominal breathing.

PURPOSE

- ☐ Breathe using the diaphragm muscle at the lower edge of the rib cage can increase the bloodstream's oxygen supply and create feelings of relaxation.

HOW TO PRACTICE ABDOMINAL BREATHING

- ☐ Sit in a comfortable position with eyes closed.
- ☐ Exhale completely by breathing out through the nose, pulling the belly in and upward
- ☐ Inhale slowly by relaxing the belly down and outward, keeping the ribcage still
- ☐ Repeat exhaling slowly to a count of 8 and inhaling to a count of 4
 - If this causes strain, you may use counts of 6 and 3,
 - As you become more relaxed, you may try increasing to a count of 10 and 5 but ONLY if it is not a strain to do so
- ☐ As an option, when exhaling, mentally say the word "relax" or "let go."
- ☐ Once you have become practiced at recognizing and using the diaphragm, it will be easier to do without exaggerated movements in the stomach
- ☐ Continue for several breaths or several minutes
- ☐ Bring this "settled" feeling with you into your day.

TROUBLESHOOTING

- ☐ If you are having trouble, you may practice lying on your back. This position will help direct the movement of the breath into the belly.

EXPLORE FURTHER

- ☐ Energizing Breath: Once you can readily practice abdominal breathing, you can also explore inhalations to a count of 8 and exhalations to a count of 4. You may find this variation more energizing and helpful if you are sleepy.
- ☐ Three-Part Breath: Once you can readily isolate this form of breathing, you may try a "three-part breath" in which you begin by 1) breathing into the abdomen, then 2) ribs (a slight open to the side of the chest), and 3) chest (a slight lift at the top front of the chest). Continue with the desired counts for inhaling and exhaling. This breath helps to strengthen the lung, oxygen flow, and practice awareness.

MANAGE MY EMOTIONS

What I Wish I'd Learned in School
about Anger, Fear and Love



Kenneth J. Martz, Psy.D.