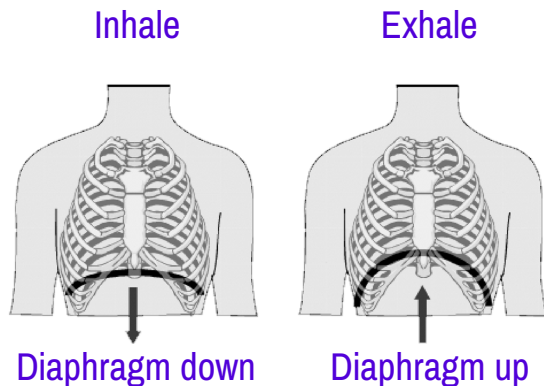


# Diaphragmatic (Belly) Breathing

Find a comfortable lying or seated posture. If you are seated, try to avoid slouching. Feel free to close your eyes as you practice each part on this handout.

As you settle into your comfortable position. Scan your body and notice any tension in your body and try to relax these areas. Specifically bring your attention to your abdominal area and release any tension in this area. The stomach muscles should feel soft, relaxed, and supple.

Next, bring your attention to your breath. With each breath, try to create a visual in your mind of the action of your diaphragm muscle. As you breathe in, the diaphragm moves downwards, flattening out, pressing down towards the abdominal cavity. As you breathe out visualize it returning back up into its dome shape. Do this for a few breaths.



Then notice as you breathe in a feeling of expansion in the abdominal area; a filling of the belly with air. Maybe you can notice a sense of rising and falling of the belly. If you are not sure you can place your hands on top of your abdomen to feel it. If this doesn't work, place your hands at your sides of near the lower ribs, as you breathe in, you should feel an outward movement of your ribs into your hands, and then a gentle return back in on the breath out.

Relax your face, neck, and shoulders as you do this. See if you can keep the upper chest area from moving as you practice the belly breathing.

Continue to take in natural, smooth breaths. With each breath in, sense the expansion of the relaxed abdomen. With each breath out, feel the gentle return back in of the abdomen. Simultaneously, continue your visualization— inhale and visualize the diaphragm moving downwards; exhale and visualize the diaphragm returning back up into its dome shape. Maybe you can even sense the moment of your diaphragm within.

Continue to breathe like this for another 3 - 5 minutes, gradually taking in longer breaths, keeping them smooth and slow.

At the end, take a moment to notice how this breathing exercise made you feel.

