

# Basic Belly Breathing

Breathing is a simple, but very effective method of relaxation. It helps stop the body's flight and flight stress reaction and increases the supply of oxygen-rich air throughout the lungs.

**The out-breath is the key! The golden rule is to prolong your out-breath to calm yourself.**

1. Lie down comfortably with your eyes closed. Let your arms, legs and feet flop out to the sides and let your mouth fall open if it feels comfortable.
2. Concentrate on the feeling of being relaxed. Try to let all worrying thoughts slip away from your mind.
3. Take your hands and place them on your stomach - the level of your bellybutton.
4. As you breathe in through the nose, push out your belly, moving your chest as little as possible. You should feel your hands rise up as your stomach expands. Breathe in as deeply as feels comfortable.
5. As you breathe out, feel your stomach fall. Try and breathe out as slowly as possible.

Sometimes when people first begin to use breathing exercises they can feel dizzy. This can indicate that the body is not used to a richer supply of oxygen. So for the first few weeks, as your body becomes used to having more oxygen, it is a good idea to practise your breathing exercises while lying down or sitting.

Consult your GP before you try these exercises or if you have medical concerns about the breathing exercises and your health.

# Advanced Breathing Techniques

Altering your breathing can instantly alter your state of mind! As you become skilled at changing your state through altering your breathing, your confidence to deal with stressful situations, will grow.

**Remember - The golden rule is to prolong your out-breath to calm yourself.**

## 1. The Sigh Breath

Mentally think or say to yourself Stop! Breathe in through the nose and, pausing only briefly, let the air out quite slowly through your mouth (or nose). As you let the air out let go and relax your muscles, especially your shoulders. Let go of tension in your body. Be sure to l-e-n-g-t-h-e-n your exhale.

## 2. The Complete Breath

Breathe in to the count of seven, through the nose using first the diaphragm, then the mid-chest and finally the upper chest. Then slowly release the air from the lungs through the mouth (or nose) to the count of eleven. Imagine the chest getting smaller rather than pushing the air out of the lungs.

## Useful Resources

### **Mental Health In Manchester Website**

[www.mhim.org.uk/resource\\_library.html](http://www.mhim.org.uk/resource_library.html)

*Download self help booklets from the library of resources.*

### **Manchester University Counselling Website**

[www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/personalsupport/counselling/self-help/downloads/](http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/personalsupport/counselling/self-help/downloads/)

*Download MP3s on relaxation and breathing exercises.*