

Deep Breathing exercise

- 1. Get comfortable.** If possible, lie down on your back on a blanket or rug placed on the floor. Bend your knees and move your feet about eight inches apart, with your toes turned slightly outward. Make sure your spine is straight. If sitting, sit straight in chair with your arms relaxed at your side. Your hands can rest in your lap. Have your head centered and balanced so you do not cause any strain on your neck muscles.
- 2. Check tension.** Check your body for any tension.
- 3. Place hands.** Place one hand on your stomach and one hand on your chest.
- 4. Inhale through your nose.** Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose. You may count to four while you inhale. Inhale into your stomach to push up your hand as much as is comfortable. Your chest should move only a little and only when your stomach does.
- 5. Hold.** Hold your breath for a count of two.
- 6. Exhale through your mouth.** When you are at ease with step 4, smile slightly and exhale through your mouth, making a quiet, relaxing whooshing sound like the wind as you blow gently out. Your mouth, tongue, and jaw will be relaxed. You may count to four as you exhale slowly, and your stomach is gradually lowered. Focus on the sound and the breathing as you become more relaxed.
- 7. Repeat.** Keep deep breathing for about 5-10 minutes at a time. Do this twice a day.
- 8. Recheck tension.** At the end of each session, check for tension levels. Are you less tense than you were before you began?

Remember, mastering this relaxation skill will take time. That is why it is called a skill. Do not be concerned if the first session did not relieve all of your stress. As you keep practicing, your body will learn and you can have increased periods of stress relief.

Relaxation Tip: Practice deep breathing twice a day to reduce your overall stress.