



Diaphragmatic breath is a relaxed, replenishing breath that helps to lower heart rate, blood pressure, and stress hormones. It is generated from the diaphragm, a sheet-like muscle that attaches to the bottom of your rib cage, close to your midsection. When you are accustomed to working with this breath, you can speak for longer with less effort, can use your air more efficiently, and even use your breath to control feelings of overwhelm, anger, or anxiety by lowering your heart rate and reducing the circulation of stress hormones.

### *Breathing Exercise 1: Filling lungs from the bottom up*

- 1) Stand with your feet evenly placed on the floor, a little less than shoulder-width apart. Take a few moments to mentally and physically relax while breathing as you normally do.
- 2) When you are ready, squeeze all the air from your lungs, right down to that last wheeze. Use your abdominal muscles to wring out those last drops – it should feel almost like you are doing a crunch.
- 3) When you have no more air left, inhale slowly through your nose, focusing on dragging the air deep into your torso. Visualize your solar plexus or the bottom area of your lungs moving downwards towards your belly button.
- 4) When you can't draw in any more air in to the deepest part of your lungs, draw it into the middle of your lungs, allowing your ribcage to expand outwards.
- 5) When you can't draw in any more air into the middle part of your lungs, let the top of your lungs fill up, expanding your upper chest.
- 6) When you are comfortably full of air (not feeling as though you are about to explode), hold your breath for 5 seconds.
- 7) Breathe slowly out through your mouth with your lips slightly pursed; squeeze the air out of your lungs in reverse, starting from your upper chest, then moving to the middle, then ending with the bottom of your lungs.

Try this exercise in different positions – standing up, lying flat on your back, and bending over a table at about a 90 degree angle supporting your upper body on your elbows. Focus on relaxing.

After you have done this a few times, shake out any tension and breathe normally. *Do this several times a day*

## *Breathing Exercise 2: Controlling your air intake*

This exercise helps you improve your lung capacity and better control how long you inhale and exhale for. It builds up your breathing stamina. When doing this exercise, always breathe from the diaphragm first, dragging the air deep into your lungs before filling up the top of your lungs/chest. As in Exercise 1, exhale in reverse, from the upper chest first and ending with the bottom of your lungs.

- 1) Start with empty lungs. Inhale from the bottom up for a count of 5. By 5 you should be comfortably full of air.
- 2) Hold your breath for 5 seconds
- 3) Exhale slowly through your mouth (you may want to partially close your lips), emptying your lungs from the top down for a count of 7.
- 4) Repeat the exercise 5 times.

As you get better at this exercise, change the length of time that you inhale and exhale, taking shorter inhalations and longer exhalations. Work your way up to inhaling for 5, holding for 5, exhaling for 9. Then try inhaling for 3, holding for 5, exhaling for 9. Then inhale for 3, hold for 7, exhale for 12. Build up the length of time that you can spend exhaling.

## *Breathing Exercise 3: Breathing with vocalizations*

Different sounds need different amounts of air. You can use these sounds as practice to improve your vocal stamina. Just like in the previous exercises, always inhale from the bottom up and exhale from the top down - like a jug filling up with water and then pouring it out.

*Important notes for these exercises:*

- Fully vocalize these sounds, giving them plenty of air, strength, and volume (but don't yell!). Don't sacrifice strength or volume just to try to get them to last longer.
- Always start your sound with your lungs comfortably full of air. Start with strength.
- Stop making the sound when you feel like your abs and core are working just a little *too* hard, or when you can hear and feel your voice begin to waver or your abs and core muscles start to strain.
- If you like, you can pick a length of time you want to inhale for and then vocalize the sound for. eg: inhale for a count of 3, exhale while saying "aaaah" for a count of 10.

- 1) Inhale until you have a comfortable amount of air – approximately a count of 3. Exhale while making a 'sssss' noise for as long as you are able without your voice becoming weak or you needing to

squeeze that sound out by working too hard through your core. As soon as you feel your abs engage, cut that sound off nice and sharply. Don't let your voice trail off.

- 2) Now we do it again Inhale until you have a comfortable amount of air – approximately a count of 3. Exhale while making an “mmm” noise for as long as you are able without your voice becoming weak or straining. Again, you DON'T want to let your voice trail off, so cut off that sound nice and sharply before you lose that reserve of air.
- 3) Now one more time, this with an AAAAAh sound. Breathe in comfortably, let that sound ring out....and cut it off before you lose vocal strength or support.