

Stress Management . . .

Deep Breathing

Have you ever watched a baby sleep? Did you notice the slow rhythmic breathing? Didn't it look peaceful and make you feel calm and relaxed?

Infants belly breathe. Belly or diaphragmatic breathing is actually a much deeper type of breathing that feeds our bodies with more oxygen and triggers us to relax. It is one of the easiest and most effective stress management practices. It can be done anywhere and without anyone knowing. Do it at least twice a day and also whenever or wherever you are feeling tense, angry, stressed, or just want to relax.

How do I start?

- Lie down and get comfortable. While learning the technique, it may help to keep your eyes closed to help concentrate on your breathing.
- For now, place your hands on your belly. This helps you feel your belly rise and fall. Once you learn how to deep breathe you can then position your hands where most comfortable.
- Take in a deep breath to the count of four either through your nose or mouth and feel your belly rise.
- Pause for a moment at the peak of your breath and then exhale through your relaxed mouth counting to four again. Be aware of your tummy falling.
- Pause again before taking the next breath.
- Continue doing this for ten minutes.

Points to remember:

- Do not try to hurry or breathe fast.
- Focus on the air you are taking in and how it is cleansing and refreshing your body. When exhaling, release out any tension, anger, or stress you are feeling.
- Once you are comfortable with the technique of using your belly to deep breathe, try other comfortable positions such as sitting or even standing.
- Start using deep breathing anytime during the day you are starting to feel stressed. Use it at work when the computer breaks down, at the store while waiting in a long line, or when running late for an appointment and the phone rings! ***Just get in the habit of using it!***
- You can do deep breathing exercises for longer periods. You can also do just ten deep breaths anytime you need to regain a sense of calm.
- Belly breathing is so easy to do that once mastered you might also try adding meditation, praying, mental imagery or progressive muscle relaxation during the exercise.

For more information about
stress management contact
OSF Saint Francis RiverPlex at 282-1624.

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