

## **DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING**

**Claire Paul, Harmony 4 Life©, 2006**

Physiology demonstrates that when a muscle is relaxed the nerve connected to that muscle relaxes. This in turn relaxes the cells in the brain connected to the nerve. By relaxing the diaphragm, through diaphragmatic breathing (aka “belly breathing”) techniques, you can relax the involuntary nervous system. Radio, TV and film stars; opera and concert singers; public speakers, etc use diaphragmatic breathing to ensure they do not suffer nervous stress or have their voice hampered in any way. They depend on diaphragmatic breathing to keep their voice in top quality and to stay balanced!

Make the commitment to practice this technique for a month and form this new habit. It only takes thirty days, and it will last a lifetime! Take at least 12 diaphragmatic breaths each day and record your results. Your rewards will be fantastic; you will probably see some or all of the following benefits:

- An improved quality of life
- Tension is reduced and life is more enjoyable
- Your intuition will be guiding you on a regular basis
- You have an improved voice (deeper and more resonant)
- The effects of over stress will be greatly diminished
- You will introduce an additional eight hours of relaxation into every day
- Your shoulders and back are more balanced
- Your thinking is more accurate
- You are more effective in all of your endeavours
- You feel better because it increases the amount of oxygen in your blood stream
- Exhaling old stale air cleans your lungs out
- You will bring much more oxygen into the lungs where the oxygen is transferred to the capillaries of the blood stream
- Results are renewed vigour, more energy and less fatigue

### **How do you breathe now?**

1. Place your left hand on your chest and your right hand on your stomach
2. Take a deep breath
3. If your chest comes out and your stomach pulls in when you inhale this is probably a learned behaviour...maybe at some point in your life a teacher said, “OK, now for some deep breathing exercises. Inhale - stomach in and chest out.”
4. Now, do just that and hold it for 5 seconds
5. Notice the tense feeling in your shoulders and back (that’s muscle tension, which creates nervous tension)
6. Now exhale, the chest goes down and the stomach puts the tension on the diaphragm

During the sixteen hours or more that you are awake each day, you place undue tension on your back and shoulders when you inhale and on the diaphragm when you exhale. When you lie down or are sleeping your body is in a much more relaxed natural position for optimum physical functioning. You can heighten awareness of how diaphragm breathing feels by raising your arms above your head or by lying on a bed; the only way you can breathe in these positions is from the diaphragm.

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## **The diaphragmatic breathing technique**

1. Place your left hand on your chest and your right hand on your stomach and inhale slowly through the nose for a count of 3
2. As you inhale, push the stomach out and fill the chest completely with the new air and hold the breath for a count of 3
3. Slowly exhale through the mouth for a count of 6 and as you do the stomach will naturally collapse and the chest will expand
4. Imagine filling a balloon - your lungs -they fill with air from the bottom up
5. Observe how much more comfortable you feel
6. There is no muscle tension in your shoulders or back
7. Between each breathing cycle wait for a count of 3 before repeating this again
8. Feel how simple it is!

## **Test yourself**

1. Place both hands at your waist with the fingertips touching
2. When you take a diaphragmatic breath - which means that you let your chest stay where it is, but you push your stomach out on the inhale - your fingertips will naturally separate as the air rushes into the belly and then fills the chest
3. As you exhale, the tips of your fingers will come together again and touch
4. Repeat this several times

Train the body how to do this and let go of the old hypnotic program of, “Chest out and stomach in.”

## **Side effect**

When you are learning diaphragmatic breathing and beginning to practice the technique you may get light headed. If this happens, it simply means you are changing the mixture of oxygen and carbon dioxide in your lungs. You are increasing the oxygen and lowering the carbon dioxide. The dizziness will end and you will feel refreshed.

## **Developing the habit**

As you can see, diaphragmatic breathing is easy to learn and to master. Get into the habit of taking these deep breaths at specific times each day...

- Every time you reach for a door handle
- Before you pick up the telephone to make or answer a call, take a deep breath and smile
- When you send an e-mail
- When you stop in traffic, for any reason, breath deeply several times to reduce your stress and remain balanced
- When you speak (to develop a better voice and reduce physical tension)
- Instead of yawning
- Take six or eight deep breaths when you get up, after lunch and dinner