



Counseling Services

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Just BREATHE!*

Sounds simple, doesn't it? If you're feeling stressed, anxious, or uptight, someone is bound to tell you "just relax and breathe," "focus on you breathing," or "take deep breaths." Believe or not, though, most of us have forgotten exactly *how* breathe, or at least how to do it correctly.

Taking deep breaths refers to a specific type of breathing called "diaphragmatic breathing." When you engage in diaphragmatic breathing, you are using your abdomen to breathe all the way down into your diaphragm rather than taking more shallow breaths, which permit the air to enter your lungs only. By breathing into your diaphragm, you access more oxygen, which then enters your blood stream and facilitates relaxation.

Now that you know what diaphragmatic breathing is, here's how to do it correctly:

1. Sit or lie in a comfortable position.
2. Place one hand on your sternum (just above your chest) and the other just below your rib cage over your abdomen.
3. Slowly breathe in through your nose, allowing the lower hand over your abdomen to rise while keeping the upper hand on your chest as still as possible.
4. Once your abdomen has filled with air, then breathe additional air into your chest, allowing your upper hand to rise as well.
5. Slowly exhale through your mouth, first emptying your abdomen of air and allowing your lower hand to fall, then allowing the upper hand to fall as the air exits your lungs.

For best results, practice this technique daily until diaphragmatic breathing becomes a habit—you will likely find yourself feeling calmer and more relaxed, and all you did was BREATHE!

**The above article was written by Beth T. Cholette, Ph.D., and it appeared in the SUNY Geneseo student newspaper, The Lamron.*