

# Deep Breathing Exercise (Belly Breathing)

## **Audience:**

Activity is appropriate and can be adapted for all levels K-12

## **Purpose:**

Students practice deep breathing techniques as part of stress reduction

## **Materials:**

No materials needed

## **Content:**

Teacher/facilitator introduces and demonstrates the concept of deep breathing as a stress reduction strategy that can be used in the present moment as well as an excellent skill to master to more effectively cope with future stressors. Teacher/facilitator has all students stand with comfortable space between each other or seated in a chair.

## Provide students with the following directions:

1. Stand straight up with feet shoulder-width apart
2. Arms and hands are relaxed downward
3. Body is relaxed
4. Eyes closed
5. Focus on lower abdomen (belly) and imagine a small balloon in that space
6. Breath in slowly and deeply through nostrils, imagining the balloon inflating (*getting bigger/larger/growing*) slowly, hold a few seconds
7. Slowly exhale through the mouth, imagining the balloon gently deflating (*getting smaller, shrinking*); blow out of the mouth as if blowing out a candle
8. **Tip:** Place a hand over the lower abdomen to feel it go up and down, and make sure you're not breathing with the chest
9. Repeat at least 10 times

Ask students how different their bodies feel after the exercise. (Are they more relaxed/calm? Do they feel lighter? Great? Tired?)

## **Extension:**

Practice several times with the class until they achieve a comfortable competence with deep breathing. Encourage students to practice on their own as well (e.g. while they are waiting in line for something, sitting on the bus to school, at bedtime, etc.). Have students teach the deep breathing technique to a friend or family member. Once students develop this habit, they will automatically go into deep breathing mode and relaxation.