

'Belly' Breathing Exercise

Some people tend to breathe high in the chest , taking short sharp breaths which mimic the shock or surprise response.

The emotional part of our mind, thinking we are in danger, then goes on red alert and tries to find the cause of the perceived shock.

This in turn, raises the level of stress hormones in the body.

What to do.....

- Sit or lie comfortable, with loose clothing.
- Put one hand on your chest and one hand on your navel ('belly button').
- Slowly inhale through the nose and let the air expand your belly so that the hand on your navel is pushed outwards, while the hand on your chest stays still.



- Slowly exhale through your mouth so that your belly deflates.
- Aim to make your out-breath twice the length of your in-breath. So if it takes you 3 seconds to inhale, allow 6 seconds to exhale.
- Repeat for 5-6 breaths and notice how you begin to relax.

Notes.....

You may find it difficult to keep your chest from expanding to start with – keep practising and you'll soon retrain the muscles so it becomes more natural again.

If you feel lightheaded, you may be breathing too quickly. Slow your breathing down and make sure you practise sitting or lying down.

Repeat the task as often as you can each day – in the toilet, at home, in the car, etc. As you get used to the exercise you can even discreetly practise in public by just using a hand on your belly!