

## Deep Breathing Exercise

*Directions for Facilitator:* If in person, turn off overhead lights; if virtual, invite students to turn off their cameras if they would feel more comfortable. Make sure to read in a low, soothing voice. Invite students to leave their eyes open or to close them.

### *SCRIPT:*

Sit in a comfortable position, with your feet flat on the floor and your back straight. Note the level of tension you are feeling. Then place one hand on your chest and the other hand on your abdomen.

Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose into the "bottom" of your lungs--in other words, send the air as low down as you can. If you are breathing from your abdomen, your hand should actually *rise*. Your chest should move only slightly, while your stomach expands.

When you have taken in a full breath, pause for a moment and then exhale slowly through your nose or mouth, depending on your preference. As you exhale feel your abdomen contract. *As you exhale, allow your whole body to just let go* (you might visualize your arms and legs going loose and limp like a rag doll).

Be aware of the natural short pause after exhaling and before beginning a new breath – this is a moment of maximum relaxation the entire body is at rest.

Do five slow, full abdominal breaths. Try to keep your breathing *smooth* and *regular*, without gulping in a big breath or letting your breath out all at once. Remember to pause briefly at the end of each inhalation. Count to 5, progressing with each *exhalation*. The process should go like this:

Slow inhale ... Pause ... Slow exhale (count "one") Slow inhale ... Pause ... Slow exhale (count "two")  
Slow inhale ... Pause ... Slow exhale (count "three") and so on up to ten. If you start to feel light-headed while practicing abdominal breathing, stop for thirty seconds, and then start up again.

You can pair up words like “calm” or “peace” as you inhale or exhale... or you can visualize all the tension leaving your body.



The University of Texas at Austin

**Longhorn Wellness Center**

*Counseling and Mental Health Center & University Health Services*