



BELLY BREATHING

A calming breathing technique to help students deal with or prevent stress and anxiety.

When to Use:

- In the moment, to calm anxiety or excitement
- While transitioning from lunch/recess to class
- Before tests or quizzes

Materials:

- N/A

Instructions:

1. Introduce the activity by saying: "I notice that you are/the class is feeling a little anxious/upset/silly. We are going to **take some deep breaths to help our bodies calm down and focus.**"
2. Have students **put their hands on their bellies.**
3. Have students take a **deep breath through their noses** and notice their bellies expand outwards. Remind them that they are aiming to **fill their bellies all the way up** (e.g., like a balloon).
4. Have students exhale slowly through their mouths, **feeling their belly muscles fall inward** as they let air out.
5. Repeat 3-5 times.
6. You may choose to have students complete this while standing, sitting, or lying down.

Meta-Cognition:

1. What did your body feel like before you took some breaths? (e.g., tense, heart beating fast, etc.) What about after? Did you notice a change?
2. What skills are you building by taking some time to do Belly Breathing?
3. When are some other times during the day that we could use Belly Breathing?

K-6

Tool

Extension Activities:

- This can be used in the moment, as suggested. It may also be used as a regular way to start/end the day to set a positive tone for the day and proactively encourage healthy breathing habits as part of an effort to prevent stress and anxiety.
- Students should also be encouraged to use belly breathing on their own.
- Other breathing strategies include (descriptions of these found online):
 - [Candle/Flower Breathing](#)
 - [Darth Vader Breathing](#)
 - [Sphere Breathing](#)

Adaptations:

- Incorporate concepts into your breathing that reflect students' development or interests (e.g., Sphere Breathing if you're learning about shapes or Darth Vader breathing if students are interested in Star Wars.)
- For older students, incorporate facts about the body and brain to help explain why deep breathing calms the nervous system, releases tension and stress, improves concentration and focus, and even helps them better digest their lunch! (See right, *Did You Know?*)

Did You Know?

Abdominal breathing for 20-30 minutes a day will reduce anxiety and stress. Deep breathing **increases the supply of oxygen** to:

- **The brain** → stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which promotes a state of calmness and helps with focus
- **The muscles** → releases tension and tightness in our bodies
- **The digestive organs** → enables them to work more efficiently
- **The heart** → improves cardiovascular health and helps burn fat cells
- **The immune system** → stimulates the lymphatic system, which removes dead cells and other waste from the body