



## ***Breathing Practice***

The breath is our most portable and accessible tool to reduce stress. The breath brings us right into the present moment at the most basic level. These breathing practices are effective in stopping the cycle of stress, reduce tension in the body and mind, and strengthen the relaxation response within the body.

### ***Instructions for diaphragmatic/abdominal breathing***

- Sit with the spine long, the shoulders back and relaxed and the feet flat on the floor.
- Place the palms of the hands against the lower abdomen and let that area relax completely. Allow the belly to round and soften.
- Notice any movement of the lower abdomen and focus on that movement.
- Begin to breathe into the lower abdomen. Allow the lower abdomen to expand with the inhalation, breathing into the hands, gently contract the lower abdomen with the exhalation, squeezing out the air. Continue...
- Notice if there is any tension created by breathing in this way and invite the body to relax. Continue to keep the focus on the experience of the breath.

### ***Instructions for the Three Part Yogic Breath***

- As that feels more comfortable you can begin to keep one hand on the lower abdomen and bring one hand to the side of the ribs. Inhale into the lower abdomen and into the ribs. Notice the ribs expand on the inhalation. Exhale, ribs move closer together and abdomen draws in. Continue, keeping the focus on the breath and the movement. As this two-part breathing becomes comfortable, you can practice the three-part breath.
- Keep one hand on the lower abdomen and the other hand onto the upper chest. Inhale into the lower abdomen, feeling the expansion into the hand, middle lungs and into the upper chest, feeling the chest rise.
- Breathe in and out of the nose, breathe comfortably without any strain. If you become lightheaded or dizzy, discontinue the practice and allow the breath to return to its own natural rhythm. With breathing in this way one brings more oxygen into the body and the body may not be able to accommodate it quite yet. Slowly with practice this will occur.