Diaphragmatic Breathing Reset

NEW YORK STATE | Office of Mental Health

New York State Trauma-Informed Network & Resource Center

ABOUT THIS TOOL

Audience
Therapists, clinicians, counselors, case managers, peers, aides, support staff, administrators

Description
Diaphragmatic breathing is a slow, deep breathing exercise that helps calm both the body and the mind. It focuses on breathing deeply into the stomach area so the body can relax and return to a steady, balanced state.

This Tool May Help When
Try diaphragmatic breathing anytime you notice stress building, especially:

- Between client sessions
- After a difficult or emotional interaction
- When you feel overwhelmed or mentally tired
- During a short break in your day
- Anytime you need a quick mental reset

WORKPLACE STRESS

Behavioral health workers give a great deal of themselves every day — listening, supporting, and helping others through some of life's most difficult moments. That level of emotional involvement, while meaningful, can quietly build up over time and lead to fatigue or feelings of being overwhelmed. Taking short, intentional breaks to reset helps you release emotional tension before it accumulates. When you have easy ways to care for yourself throughout the day, you are better equipped to show up fully for the people who need you.

WHY THIS HELPS

Even a minute or two can make a difference. The goal of diaphragmatic breathing is to:

- Lower stress and tension
- Reduce strong emotions
- Slow racing thoughts
- Help you feel calm and focused

THE PRACTICE

1. Sit comfortably or stand in a relaxed position

- Let your shoulders drop and your body feel supported.

2. Breathe in slowly through your nose.

- Take a slow, gentle breath.

3. Let your belly expand as you breathe in.

- Your stomach should rise more than your chest.

4. Breathe out slowly through your mouth or nose.

- Let your belly fall as the air leaves your body.

5. Repeat for 1–2 minutes, keeping your breaths slow and steady.

- Keep your breathing slow, smooth, and steady.

WHY THIS WORKS

Deep, slow breathing sends a signal to your nervous system that you are safe. This helps shift your body out of stress mode and into a calm state. After just a few minutes, you may feel more present, balanced, and ready to continue your work.

Resources:
Find additional wellness information on the NYS Trauma Informed Network and Resource Center at traumainformedny.org

Looking to go deeper?
Explore BREATH-BODY-MIND™ (BBM) for weekly breathwork practice, expert tips, and a welcoming community.
Check out the website here for additional details.

Sources:
Cleveland Clinic. (2022, March 30). *Diaphragmatic breathing*.

Ma X, Yue Z-Q, Gong Z-Q, Zhang H, Duan N-Y, Shi Y-T, Wei G-X and Li Y-F (2017). The effect of diaphragmatic breathing on attention, negative affect and stress in healthy adults. *Front. Psychol.* 8, Article 874.