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Simple Breathing to Reduce Stress

Have you ever felt so overwhelmed that you've had trouble catching your breath? This is our body's natural response to extreme stress. In the current state of our world with the pandemic, managing work responsibilities, and everyday stress may have become a part of your everyday life. The effects of everyday stress can suppress our immune systems making us increasingly susceptible to colds and other illnesses. While we cannot avoid all sources of stress, we can learn new ways to manage our stress and relaxation response.

One quick and easy way to decrease your stress levels is to utilize deep breathing techniques. For many of us, it may seem unnatural to take time to focus on our breathing and take deep breaths. According to the Harvard Medical School, body image has impacted the way we breath and that we hold in our stomach muscles. This allows us to only take shallow breaths, which actually increases stress and tension. When we take full deep breaths, we can slow your heart rate, lower blood pressure, and decrease our sense of anxiety.

The Harvard Medical School also provides us with this simple guide to quickly decrease tension and anxiety:

First step: Find a quiet, comfortable place to sit or lie down. First, take a normal breath. Then try a deep breath: Breathe in slowly through your nose, allowing your chest and lower belly to rise as you fill your lungs. Let your abdomen expand fully. Now breathe out slowly through your mouth (or your nose, if that feels more natural).

Breath focus in practice: Once you've taken the steps above, you can move on to regular practice of controlled breathing. As you sit comfortably with your eyes closed, blend deep breathing with helpful imagery and perhaps a focus word or phrase that helps you relax.

Interested in trying more techniques or having trouble with breath focus on your own? Please see these two videos for guided deep breathing sessions.

[3 Minute Mindful Breathing](#)

[5 Minute Mindful Breathing](#)

Take care and thank you for all you do!

PBIS Leadership Team