

COPING KIT SKILLS: **Belly Breathing**

Helps with: Pain, Sleeping, Nausea, Anxiety, Worries, Anger

What is it? Belly breathing is a special way of controlling your breathing that can help you relax, feel better, and help your body to work its best.

What do I need? You really don't need any tools but yourself to make this work, but some things that may help are:

- A comfortable place
- Your hand
- Items such as a book, a pinwheel, bubbles, a harmonica

See the Tips section to see how these items can help!

When do I use it?

- Do this anytime you are feeling nervous, stressed, angry, or are in pain. You can use it when you first notice these feelings, while you have these feelings, or after the feelings to help keep them away.
- You can use it to help you feel more comfortable with many things.
- Try to practice 2-3 times per day. In order for this to work at stressful times, you must practice breathing techniques frequently when you are calm. By becoming aware of your breathing and learning to use belly breathing it will become more natural and automatic.

How do I do it?

1. Get into a comfortable position and let all of your muscles be soft and loose.
2. Imagine that your belly is a balloon and that right now it's deflated.
3. Put your hand on top of your belly.
4. Breathe in slowly through your nose while you count to 3. Feel the balloon fill with air as it raises the hand on your belly.



5. Breathe out slowly through your mouth, while you count to 5. Feel the balloon get flat as the hand on your belly lowers.
6. Try to breathe out for longer (5-6 seconds) than you breathe in (3-4 seconds).
7. Imagine that the uncomfortable feelings leave your body as you breathe out.

Tips:

- To check whether you are doing belly breathing or chest breathing, you may find it helpful to place one hand on your belly, and the other on your chest. The hand on your belly should be moving up and down while the hand on your chest shouldn't move at all.
- Some kids might want to lie down on the floor with a small toy, book, or paper cup on their belly. With each breath, the object should move up and down.
- While you are exhaling slowly, you can:
 - Keep a pinwheel spinning for 3-4 seconds
 - Blow out through the straw part of a pinwheel (take the top off) to help slow down your breathing
 - Blow long, slow streams of bubbles from a bubble wand
 - Hold a note while blowing on a harmonica for 3-4 seconds

How can this help me? Breathing calms the mind and produces a state of relaxation in your body. This is because when you breathe deeply, the message “calm down and relax” gets sent to your brain. Then, your brain sends this message to your body. Those things that happen when you are stressed, such as a fast heart rate and quick breathing, all decrease as you breathe deeply. For example, Belly Breathing relaxes your muscles, calms your nerves, and helps release chemicals (called endorphins) in your body that reduce pain.

