

## Strategy #8: Deep Breathing: Technique

The purpose of deep breathing (sometimes called diaphragmatic breathing) is to relax your body by triggering the parasympathetic branch of your nervous system. A full, deep breath, also referred to as a belly breath, means your stomach rises when you take a deep inhale. If you are stressed, you may be taking very shallow breaths and only your chest will rise.

**Try the following exercise to make sure you are taking deep belly breaths.**

- Sitting in a chair, standing, or lying on your back, place one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach.
- Take a minute to breathe as you normally do.
- Check whether your chest is rising or your belly is rising.
- If your chest is rising and your belly is not moving, you are shallow breathing.
- If your belly is rising, you are taking full, deep breaths and will trigger relaxation in your body.
- Focus your attention on your breath until you are taking deep breaths and your stomach is rising.
- If you are sitting in a chair or lying down, you may feel your lower back press against the surface when you do deep breathing.
- You may have to play around and push your stomach out if this type of breathing is new to you. Aim for smooth, deep breaths.
- Practice until you can tell the difference between a deep breath and a shallow breath and you know how to shift into deep breathing as soon as you notice your warning signs.
- Fully exhale before you take your first deep inhale.

Practice this five times per day for two minutes when you are not stressed, and practice as soon as you notice your stress warning signs.



### AUDIO FILE

*Audio file #1: Diaphragmatic Breathing ([www.brushededucation.ca/stress](http://www.brushededucation.ca/stress))*