

PART FOUR
Self Calming
&
Stress
Reduction
Techniques

Diaphragmatic Breathing is vital

- Step Two in the ABC Impulse Control Technique is to immediately switch your breathing to Diaphragmatic Breathing when you feel yourself getting worked up.
- So, unless you invest time in mastering Diaphragmatic breathing, your attempts to learn the ABC Impulse Control Technique will be seriously damaged.
- You will need to download the Diaphragmatic Breathing audio track and listen to it a few times.



Breathe differently when you want to calm down

- We are programmed by evolution to take a deep breath, or hold our breath, when faced with danger. If you take a deep breath now you will notice how your chest rises.
- When you breathe in that way you are sending a warning signal to your brain 'I am facing a threat, get ready for action: get ready to fight, run or freeze'.
- So when you want to calm down you need to breathe differently. This different way of breathing is called

'Diaphragmatic Breathing'

Use Diaphragmatic Breathing when you want to calm down

Diaphragmatic Breathing sends a different sort of signal to the brain because it is a way of breathing we would never naturally use when faced with threat. It's a way of breathing which sends a signal to the brain 'Everything is OK. It's safe to relax.'

In Diaphragmatic Breathing you fill your lungs from the bottom up by pushing your tummy out as you breathe in deeply. This allows the lower part of your lungs to fill first.

As you continue to breathe in and your lungs fill, your chest will rise too - that's OK, as long as your diaphragm expands first.

Diaphragmatic Breathing

WRONG WAY

Inflate chest first and signal to brain 'Danger! Get ready to fight, run or freeze'.



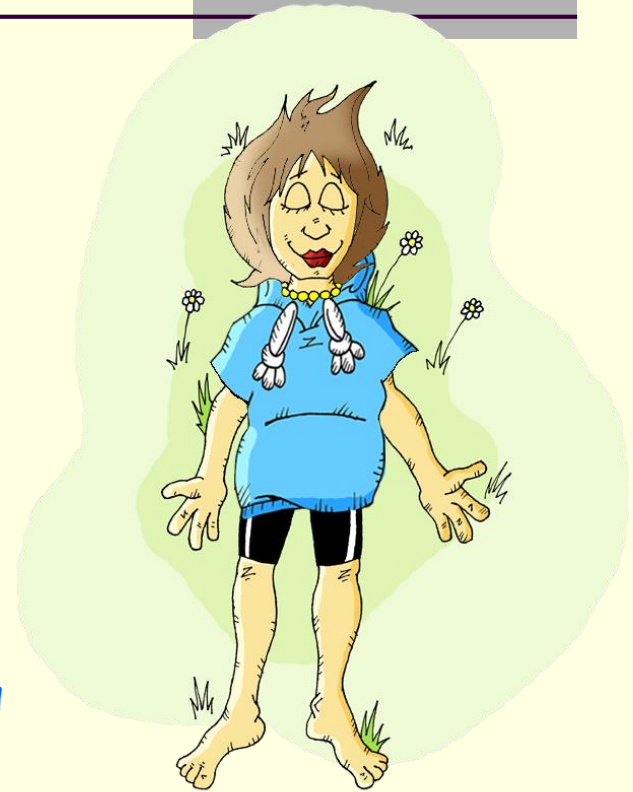
RIGHT WAY

Push out tummy to allow lungs to expand downwards. Send signal to brain 'I'm safe'.



How to practice Diaphragmatic Breathing

1. Lie down and make yourself comfortable. Put one hand on your chest and the other on your diaphragm.
2. Slowly take a deep breath, pushing your diaphragm out. Feel your diaphragm rising and not your chest.
3. Count to three before breathing out.
4. Breathe out fully, feeling your diaphragm fall. Pause for 3 seconds before breathing in again.
5. Repeat steps 1 - 4 for at least five minutes each time you practise.



To download a free audio version of the exercises in this book please see
'FREE AUDIO DOWNLOADS'.

Using Diaphragmatic Breathing to 'Anchor' a relaxed state



- An 'Anchor' is a physical thing you do to connect with a pre-programmed mental state. In this case, the Anchor is deep Diaphragmatic Breathing and the pre-programmed mental state resulting is calmness.
- To set your Anchor, in other words to make the neurological connection, practise the breathing exercise on the previous page while listening to a piece of beautiful music at a time, and in a place, where you are unlikely to be disturbed.
- You can download some music when you download the Diaphragmatic Breathing track



Intensify your Self Calming Anchor

- Put on a beautiful piece of music [no vocals please].
- Settle yourself comfortably and switch your breathing to Diaphragmatic Breathing.
- Each time you breathe in, imagine that you are gradually being filled with a beautiful white soothing light which is filling you with feelings of peacefulness.
- Each time you breathe out let go of any tension you are holding in your body. Feel yourself relax more and more with each out breath.
- Practise this at least twice a week for 20 minutes or more.

Visualise Anger Triggers while self calming

Part One:

Make time to practise this
at home

Make yourself comfortable, select one of your Anger Triggers, change your breathing to Diaphragmatic Breathing and imagine yourself handling the situation the way you have decided to handle that situation in future.

Part Two:

Practise this when out
and about

If angry thoughts about one of your Anger Triggers come into your head hold on to the thought and change your breathing to Diaphragmatic Breathing. Continue this until the angry feeling subsides. Repeat as necessary.

How to get stressful thoughts out of your head

- Stress and anger are fuelled by angry and hurt thoughts and by worries.
- If you try to push those thoughts out of your mind it won't work. Try not to think about your left foot now and see what happens.
- Although your brain won't let you get rid of a thought it will let you get it out of your head if you store it somewhere safe.
- One way of doing this is to write it down and keep the note safe.
- Strange isn't it! Keep it safe to forget it! Trust me! Try it!



Have an imaginary place where you keep stressful thoughts

Another very common way to get stressful thoughts out of your head is to have an imaginary place where you keep them until you might need them.

I teach my clients three main imaginary places to store unwanted thoughts

- Tomorrow Box [for short term worries]
- Filing Cabinet [for longer term worries]
- Yesterday Box [for stuff from the past]

You can download the audio tracks teaching these thought stopping techniques by visiting **'FREE AUDIO DOWNLOADS'**.



Another thought stopping technique

Sometimes the thought screwing up your day may be about something happening later in the day. Maybe an encounter you are not looking forward to? To get these short term thoughts out of your head you can use:-

'THE APPOINTMENT SYSTEM'

The Appointment Method of Thought Stopping

Supposing something is happening later in the day which is worrying you. Choose a time just before the event.

Then have a conversation with the thought. You make an appointment with it. Tell the thought, 'You can f**k off until so and so time [whatever time you have chosen].

If the thought tries to come back before the appointed time repeat the 'f**k off conversation. Refuse to think about it before the appointed time.

It works! Try it!