



Abdominal Breathing

What it is:

- Contraction of the diaphragm, our main muscle of breathing, moves the diaphragm towards the pelvis as the lungs fill with air. As this occurs, the contents of the belly compress causing the abdomen to rise.

Focus on

- Rise in belly more than the chest.
- Breathing naturally, not forced
- Relaxing the body

Benefits:

- Reduce tension in neck, chest, accessory muscles
- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Reduce sympathetic nervous system activity (flight or fight response)
- Promote relaxation
- Helps sleep
- Energy efficient as diaphragm is the main muscle of breathing

How to:

- Lying on your back with your knees bent (or supported on a bolster).
- Breath through your nose, with equal length of your inhalation and exhalation
- Let the belly rise as you inhale from the lower belly up towards the chest
- (attempt to minimize movement in the chest)
- Feel the rise of the sandbag on the inhale, and descent of the sandbag as you exhale
- Attempt to smooth out the breath so it does not feel choppy, shallow or forced

Helpful props:

- Place a sandbag, yoga block or book on your belly, above the pelvis and below the ribs, which will help focus your attention to your abdomen (or use your hands, but this may cause unnecessary tension in neck).
- Use a bolster or rolled blanket under knees and make sure you are comfortable.

