

Our Breath

It's something we take for granted because we do it without even thinking. It's part of our autonomic nervous system, meaning it happens automatically.

Deep, refreshing, expanding, complete and stress reducing breaths... not so much!

Reducing stress in our lives begins with this simple basic tool. There are a number of breathing techniques available to explore.

For instance, try focusing on Belly Breathing or Hara Breathing as described below:

- Lie down comfortably on your back on your bed or on a mat or carpeted floor. Position yourself with your feet flat on the floor and your knees bent (pointing upward). Simply follow your breathing for a minute or two with your attention. See if you can sense which parts of your body your breath touches.
- Continue to follow your breathing as you rub your hands together until they are very warm.
- Put your hands (one on top of the other) on your belly, with the center of your lower hand touching your navel. Watch how your breathing responds.
- You may notice that your belly wants to expand as you inhale and retract as you exhale. Let this happen, but don't try to force it.
- If your belly seems tight, rub your hands together again until they are warm and then massage your belly, especially right around the outside edge of your belly button. Notice how your belly begins to soften and relax.
- Now rub your hands together again until they are warm and put them on your belly again. Watch how this influences your breath. Do not try to do anything. Simply watch and enjoy as your belly begins to come to life, expanding as you inhale and retracting as you exhale.
- If your belly still seems overly tight and does not want to move as you breathe, press down with your hands on your belly as you exhale. Then as you inhale, gradually release the tension. Try this several times. Notice how your belly begins to open more on inhalation.
- When you are ready to stop, be sure to sense your entire abdominal area, noting any special sensations of warmth, comfort, and energy. Spend a few minutes allowing these sensations to spread into all the cells of your belly all the way back to your spine.