



## **Homework: Relaxation Activity (Deep Breathing)**

**Estimated Time Needed to Complete Activity:** *Approximately 5 min*

### **Deep Breathing**

We have a tendency to not give much thought to breathing due to the fact that it is a natural function of our body. However, how we breathe plays a role in how we manage stress or other anxiety related symptoms. Deep breathing is particularly useful in helping us relax our mind and body. Specifically, deep breathing activates our parasympathetic nervous system, which helps inhibit the physiological effect of stress-producing hormones.

It is important to note the difference between deep breathing and shallow breathing. For instance, with shallow breathing, you usually only see your chest moving when you are inhaling and exhaling. On the other hand, when engaging in deep breathing, you are able to see your stomach expand while inhaling, and shrink while exhaling. This occurs while taking deep breaths as a result of our use of the diaphragm (muscles under rib cage).

### **Activity Goal:**

Learn to Relax!

### **Engaging in Deep Breathing**

- Find a comfortable position to practice deep breathing. For example, some prefer sitting, while others prefer lying down or standing.
- In an effort to ensure that you are taking deep breaths by using your diaphragm, place one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest. You should feel the hand on your stomach being pushed back when you take a deep breath in.
- Make sure you are inhaling through your nose.
- Breath out through your mouth, at which point, you should feel the hand on your stomach move back in.
- Continue taking deep breaths, as needed, to calm your body and mind. In general, three to ten deep breaths are recommended. If you experience dizziness, please stop the activity, and try again later.
- Practice deep breathing on a daily basis, or as often as needed to help increase relaxation.