

## SUPPORTIVE GUIDELINES

Below are seven guidelines that will enhance your experience and assist you in your breathing practice.

**Deep in reference to Breathing refers to the placement of the air deep in your body, deep in your belly.** Taking a deep breath isn't about taking a huge gulp of air. We are born breathing deeply - belly breathing - as we cannot fill our lungs from the top down, only from the bottom up. To practice, place your hand on your belly. Breathe all the way out and notice how your hand sinks into your belly as your lungs deflate of air. Now, breathe in and notice how your hand rises as your lower lungs fill with air.

**Never work hard at deep breathing.** You might have just worked too hard at your belly breathing. It's normal. That said: it doesn't work well. When you work too hard at breathing, you activate your stress reaction. Your goal is to activate your relaxation response. Deep breathing for relaxation is all about ease. Don't work hard. Don't over complicate it. And, don't think too much about it.

**Play with your breathing.** Begin by just noticing - noticing anything and everything about your breath without judging it. It may be fast or slow, deep or shallow. Then, continue by exploring with your breath in a playful way - with an open curiosity. Explore expanding your breath just a moment at a time, while enjoying the moment.

**Begin with an out breath.** Beginning this way allows you to use your Exhalation to clear out. Take your time, and fully empty your lungs in order to create space for your "In Breath."

**Distractions are normal.** If at any time during your deep breathing practice, you become distracted remember that this is completely expected and normal in our fast-paced modern day world. You may experience intrusive thoughts - internal distractions - and you may hear external noises and distractions, as well. Do not try to fight these, as it will only make them worse. Instead, acknowledge them as normal and something to be expected. Return to noticing your breathing. Repeat this as many times as you need to until the distractions lessen. Do not become discouraged if this takes you some time. That too, is normal. To practice, begin by noticing your breath. Just noticing - no need to assess, critique, solve any problems. Just breathe into the moment. Hear any distractions? Your busy brain chattering away? The sound of people and phones outside of your space? Don't try to ignore them. Simply acknowledge them and, then return your focus to your breath. You may want to use a word such as "breatheeeee" to refocus.

**Unplug from technology for a moment, or two, or three.** Relaxation comes more naturally and easily when we turn off the "dings, pings, blinkers, lights, buzzers, and rings" for a little bit. Attention to our internal worlds - where relaxation and peace is found - is much more possible without technology. We need time to unplug in order to refresh and renew. We reboot, defrag, update, shut down, restart... our smart phones, tablets, PC's! Give yourself the same kind of attention and care.

**Early morning is prime time for breathing practice.** Beginning your day with moments of deep and calming breathing imprints a sense of ease and relaxation that you can return to again and again throughout your day. We invite you to make deep breathing your home place.