

## Activity: Turn Off Stress

- When we feel we are under threat or in danger, our bodies react with an acute stress response--heart rate and blood pressure increase, muscles tense up, and the body releases stress hormones.
- The purpose of this activity is to learn how to turn off this acute response and turn on the "relaxation response" by practicing controlled breathing.
- When you start practicing, it's ideal to have a quiet place to can sit. With time, it will become easier to calm yourself quickly and you can use this technique anytime you are stressed or experiencing strong emotions.

### Exercise Instructions

- 1) Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- 2) Look around at your surroundings and close your eyes.
- 3) Put your hand on your abdomen.
- 4) Breathe in slowly through your nose and feel your abdomen rise. As you breathe in, count slowly to 4. Breathe out slowly through your nose to the count of four and feel your abdomen fall.
- 5) Repeat for several minutes.

*NOTE: If you can't breathe through your nose, that's okay – just breathe through your mouth.*

### Try This!

Practice this at home for 5 minutes once a day for one week.

On week two, continue to practice at home, but also try to use this breathing technique during the day when you feel yourself become anxious, angry, or overwhelmed.

**The Resilience Factor: 7 Keys to Finding Your Inner Strength and Overcoming Life's Hurdles.**  
Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatte. 2002.

**Dr. Herbert Benson's Relaxation Response: Learn to counteract the physiological effects of stress.**

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/heart-and-soul-healing/201303/dr-herbert-benson-s-relaxation-response>