

DEEP Breathing

Deep breathing is a calming strategy. Deep breathing can help relax your body and allow you to take a pause – this is especially important when your mind is racing or you are experiencing intense or tough feelings. When you breathe deeply through your nose, filling your lungs and causing your abdomen to expand, you exchange more oxygen for carbon dioxide than when you take shallow breaths. Deep breathing also evokes a relaxation response, lowering your heart rate and blood pressure.

Deep breathing is not just about the amount of air you take in and out – it's also about *how* you breathe.

As an educator, it is important to both model deep breathing (and other calming strategies), as well as teach and encourage youth to use this skill in everyday life. Below are some important steps when talking to youth about this skill.

STEP 1

Place one hand on your abdomen just above your belly button and the other on your chest.

STEP 2

Breathe in through your nose – the hand on your abdomen should move up, **like a balloon expanding**. The hand on your chest should stay still.

STEP 3

Slowly release the air out of your mouth so that the hand resting above your belly button goes down - like a deflating balloon. **Keep it slow**. You want to take twice as long to breathe out than you did to breathe in.

STEP 4

Practice five breaths in a row. Aim for being able to feel your breathing without using your hands.

It's easiest to learn (and teach!) this skill with your hands on your abdomen and chest. Soon, you'll be able to breathe this way by just imagining your abdomen rising and falling as you breathe (or by imagining a balloon inflating and deflating). **It gets much easier with practice.**