

## 2. DIAPHRAGMATIC/ABDOMINAL BREATHING

### **Benefits:**

Breathing diaphragmatically promotes the efficient exchange of gases which takes place at the base of the lungs, inhaling more oxygen and nutrients than if you breathe shallowly. It helps to reduce respiratory rate and heart rate, and increase the ability to cough effectively. It is a very important tool for the management of stress.

It promotes a natural, even flow of breath, which strengthens the nervous system and relaxes the body; it is, in fact, the most efficient method of breathing, using a minimum of effort in return for maximum intake of oxygen. Use this way of breathing as much as possible throughout the day. If you feel any discomfort or light headedness — STOP and resume your usual breathing.

### **Preparation:**

Sit on a straight backed chair with both feet in contact with the floor (use a cushion or books if necessary) feet hip width apart.

Drop your shoulders, have arms relaxed, hands soft, release your abdomen, soften muscles in your face.

Breathe in and out through your nose if possible, but don't worry and don't force yourself to do so. If you notice that you primarily breathe through your mouth. Try a few through your nose.

Rest your hands lightly on your abdomen, just beneath your ribs, above your navel. Become aware of your breath, your natural breath. Let it be as it is, don't do anything to influence it, and don't try to 'breathe deeply'. Just let the breath flow.

Let the breath arise spontaneously without 'pulling' it in. Let your out-breath travel out of your body till it comes to the end of its journey. Allow it to be full and complete. Don't 'push' it out, just let it go.

Become aware of the movement of your abdomen under your hands. Feel that you are breathing into your hands, the tummy gently rising with each in-breath, gently sinking with each out-breath. Think of a balloon; as you put air into it, it becomes full; when you let the air out, it becomes flat. Gently, with no strain.

With each in-breath your diaphragm descends to give your lungs space to expand. With each outbreath you are experiencing the diaphragm returning to its resting position.

Observe the breath and its movement in the abdomen, starting with just a minute and lengthening time with practise.

With each out-breath, let your body release and soften.