

## Breathing to Relax the Pelvic Floor AND Calm the Nervous System

### **Diaphragmatic Breathing Technique (also known as Belly Breathing)**

- Lie comfortably on the floor or bed with a small pillow under your head if needed and pillow or two under your knees. Try to have a quiet environment.
- Place one hand on your chest and the other hand on your belly. Let them rest there just to monitor your body's movement. Once you feel the movement without touching your belly and chest you won't need to use your hands and they can rest comfortably to your sides.
- “Listen” to your breathing. Follow any movement you feel in your body. Notice if you feel it in your chest or belly.



- NOW, without trying too hard, begin to breathe IN gently through your NOSE



- Breathe OUT through your MOUTH this way—purse your lips as if you were trying to blow a candle out that is about a foot away.... You'll want to exhale very slowly, steadily, and you want to make your exhalation last as long as possible.
- Ideally, your exhale should be twice as long as your inhale. So if you count to 4 for your exhale, try to work up to exhaling for 8 seconds.



- As you breathe IN, try to feel your BELLY rise up. You'll also feel your lower ribs flare outward. This technique ensures you are using your diaphragm, our #1 breathing muscle. If you still feel mostly chest movement, don't struggle or worry, just keep relaxing the chest and trying to ask the belly to rise as you inhale. It takes practice.

- Breathe IN through your NOSE—Belly RISES—Lower ribs flare OUT
- Breath OUT through PURSED LIPS—Belly FLATTENS—lower ribs relax IN

-NOW, as you are belly breathing beautifully, try imagining that your pelvic floor muscles are a tight rose bud, but as you belly breathe, the flower opens up! Use this image or another one to your liking to send the message to those muscles to relax.

-Belly Breathing when in pain can help to decrease your pain. It works to calm our sensitive nervous system by engaging the part of our brain that helps us relax. This can actually reduce our pain!

-Do this breathing technique for at LEAST 5 minutes at a time, 4 times per day.

-Work up to doing this for as long as you want...15 or even 20 minutes 2/day.

-You don't have to do this lying down; you'll want to use this technique anytime during your day.

[Images from: "Diaphragmatic Breathing," Anxietypanic.com. 08/2010  
<<http://www.anxietypanic.com/breathing.html>>.]