

## **Breathing Exercises\***

\*Please note: all breathing should be through the nose with the mouth closed, unless otherwise instructed.

### **Breathing Awareness Exercise:\***

Sitting in a comfortable chair with your back straight, put your attention on your breath. Don't try to slow it down or speed it up, just observe it. Notice where you are most aware of your breath—at the nostrils, chest, or abdomen. Place your hands on your belly and feel it expand on the in-breath and contract on the out-breath. This is diaphragmatic breathing. Following your breath, notice your thoughts and gently bring your attention back to the breath whenever your mind wanders.

### **Breathing for Relaxation:**

In a quiet place where you will not be disturbed, sitting or lying down in a comfortable position, close your eyes and observe your breath for a few moments. Consciously make your breath deeper, slower, quieter, and more regular. Continue until you feel very relaxed.

Another method: Inhale to the count of four/exhale to the count of 8 for several breaths.

### **Immediate Stress Reduction:**

Inhale as deeply as you can. Hold your breath to the count of four. Exhale as slowly and completely as you can through "pursed" lips. Do this several times.

### **Center Point Breathing:** (not recommended for persons with asthma, COPD, etc.)

Begin by breathing easily and focusing gently on the rhythm of your breath. Focus on the next in-breath, then exhale completely, using your stomach muscles to push all the air out. Hold for a second or two. Allow air to return naturally to your lungs. Don't suck air in, just allow the lungs to gently fill back up. Exhale and inhale naturally for one breath. Repeat this cycle three more times. At the end of the fourth cycle, just breathe comfortably in whatever rhythm feels natural and direct your attention to the pause that occurs at the end of each out-breath. Rest comfortably in the pause and wait for the next in-breath.