

## **Breathing/relaxation exercise/Manage your thoughts exercise**

### **Purpose # 1**

Reduce tension in your mind and body

If you slow your breathing down taking a deep breath through your nose and exhaling slowly through your mouth, you will gradually reduce the tension in your body and mind.

### **Purpose # 2**

Learn to take control of your thoughts

When you do the breathing exercise your intention is to focus on or think about your breath, inhaling and exhaling from your body. However, your mind and thoughts will wander! You may hear a noise like a car horn and start thinking about the fact that you need to put gas in the car. Or you are worried about something happening today and you start thinking about a bad result. Don't "beat yourself up." As soon as you catch yourself thinking about something other than your breath it is important to bring your thoughts back to your breathing. This is not so easy at first. Your only task is to bring your thoughts back to your breathing as described below.

### **Procedure**

1. Decide how long you plan to practice (5 to 15 minutes is recommended) Write down date and time of practice in a journal or other place.
2. Decide or make an intention to think about your breathing for the duration of the exercise. As you inhale notice (think about) the air coming in your nose. Feel it, hear it, focus on it, slowly coming into your nose. Inhale, filling up your lungs, expanding your diaphragm and belly. . . . then take a short pause before slowly exhaling through your mouth. As you exhale notice the muscles in your body and let go of any tension. Be patient, keep breathing slowly until you begin to relax.
3. If/when your mind wanders and you start to think about anything else, be kind to yourself, and bring your thoughts back to your breathing.
4. In your journal write down any comments you may have about today's exercise (i.e. "mind racing today - had difficult time staying focused on breathing" or "was able to easily focus and relax today!")