

**Diaphragmatic Breathing**

***The WHY!***

Breathing is critical to life. Breathing can have a direct relationship with our bodies ability to heal, gain strength, modulate stress, improve sleep, think more clearly and reduce pain.

***The WHAT!***

The diaphragm is our primary muscle for breathing and our lungs are our organ for oxygen/carbon dioxide exchange. We have accessory muscles that also help us breathe, but we do not want these to be the first responders. When our accessory muscles lead the breath, we end of up with a tight neck and shoulders and poor posture.

The diaphragm is a thin skeletal muscle that sits at the base of the chest and separates the abdomen from the chest. It contracts and flattens when you inhale. This creates a vacuum effect that pulls air into the lungs. When you exhale, the diaphragm relaxes and the air is pushed out of the lungs.

Our central nervous system (CNS) is directly stimulated by this action and specifically our Vagus Nerve is stimulated by the diaphragm. When your Vagus nerve is stimulated, it can reduce stress, anxiety, anger and inflammation by activating the relaxation response of your Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS.) When this pressure system is not coordinating properly, our bodies sense the stress and send us into “fight or flight” meaning our Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS) has taken over. The PNS creates the calm in our bodies, the relaxation so we can focus on our daily lives.

The diaphragm and the pelvic floor are directly related. When we inhale and the diaphragm descends, the pelvic floor also descends/relaxes. When we exhale- the pelvic floor contracts and the diaphragm moves up and back under our rib cage.

This is a very rough explanation of this system. You can dive much deeper, but my point is that we need to retrain our bodies to breathe properly so we can calm our nervous system, heal our mind and body, and strengthen our core and pelvic floor.

Forget belly breathing. We are done with that. We are done with putting outward pressure only on the front of our body.

We want to breathe through our entire rig cage- 360 degree breathing. Your lateral ribs and posterior ribs should move outward and expand making room for all four lobes of our lungs to fill with air.

Put your hands on your side of your ribs and wrap your thumbs around the back- take a deep breath in- do your entire hands move or only the front?

If you feel stuck on one side or in the back- lets work on this!

***The HOW!***

Lay on your back and bend your knees with your feet on the floor. Put your hands on your ribs and breathe.

Inhale- Feel your diaphragm descend toward your pelvis, feel your ribs expand on all sides (360 degrees) and feel your pelvic floor relax.

Exhale- your diaphragm returns to resting, your ribs come in and your pelvic floor tightens and rises up.

At the end try a cough- this will expel all of the air out of your lungs so you can start fresh and maximize the amount of air you take into your lungs.

I don’t want you to cough after every breath. I just wanted you to try it once. Too much coughing can cause other problems, which I won’t go into here…

Take 5 min every morning before getting out of bed and practice this good diaphragmatic breathing. Ideally this is how you should be breathing all of the time. But you have to train your system.

If you don’t have an efficient breathing pattern, you can’t have a strong core, you can’t fully heal your diastasis or prolapse and your body will stay in a state of stress. This is important.