



## DEEP (OR 'DIAPHRAGMATIC') BREATHING

This strategy is suggested in the 16-18 BrainWaves lesson:

### Managing stress

#### About deep (or 'diaphragmatic') breathing

Breathing exercises involve deep and controlled breathing to contract the diaphragm and expand the belly. Breathing exercises are shown to help relieve stress and anxiety by signalling to the brain and body that we are safe, and by activating our “rest and digest” system (or parasympathetic nervous system). This causes a noticeable reduction in heart rate and breathing rate, making us feel more relaxed, even just from a single practice.

#### The scientific evidence deep (or 'diaphragmatic') breathing

Research shows that breathing exercises, known as “deep breathing” or “diaphragmatic breathing”, is an effective intervention for emotion enhancement, which includes reducing stress, anxiety and depression. This is due to physiological mechanisms, whereby stimulation of the vagal nerve and reduced sympathetic nervous system activation cause improved breathing function, reduced blood pressure, reduced heart rate, and improved blood gases balance.

- MA, X. et al. (2017) The Effect of Diaphragmatic Breathing on Attention, Negative Affect and Stress in Healthy Adults. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 874, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00874

#### Further reading on deep (or 'diaphragmatic') breathing

This Headspace article offers a great guide to different types of breathing exercises:

<https://www.headspace.com/meditation/breathing-exercises>