

## Tips for Relaxation

Tension and anxiety are common after disasters. Unfortunately, they can make it more difficult to cope with the many things that must be done to recover. There is no easy solution to coping with post-disaster problems, but taking time during the day to calm yourself through relaxation exercises may make it easier to sleep, concentrate, and have energy for coping with life. These can include muscle relaxation exercises, breathing exercises, meditation, swimming, stretching, yoga, prayer, exercise, listening to quiet music, spending time in nature, and so on. Here are some basic breathing exercises that may help:

### For Yourself:

- Inhale slowly (one-thousand one; one-thousand two; one-thousand three) through your nose and comfortably fill your lungs all the way down to your belly.
- Silently and gently say to yourself, "My body is filled with calmness."
- Exhale slowly (one-thousand one; one-thousand two; one-thousand three) through your mouth and comfortably empty your lungs all the way down to your stomach.
- Silently and gently say to yourself, "My body is releasing the tension."
- Repeat five times slowly and comfortably.
- Do this as many times a day as needed.

### For Children:

- Lead a child through a breathing exercise:
- "Let's practice a different way of breathing that can help calm our bodies down.
- Put one hand on your stomach, like this [demonstrate].
- Okay, we are going to breathe in through our noses. When we breathe in, we are going to fill up with a lot of air and our stomachs are going to stick out like this [demonstrate].
- Then, we will breathe out through our mouths. When we breathe out, our stomachs are going to suck in and up like this [demonstrate].
- We are going to breathe in really slowly while I count to three. I'm also going to count to three while we breathe out really slowly.
- Let's try it together. Great job!"

### Make a Game of It:

- Blow bubbles with a bubble wand and dish soap.
- Blow bubbles with chewing gum.
- Blow paper wads or cotton balls across the table.
- Tell a story where the child helps you imitate a character who is taking deep breaths.

Brymer, M., Jacobs, A., Layne, C., Pynoos, R., Ruzek, J., Steinberg, A., Vernberg, E., & Watson, P. (2006). Psychological First Aid. National Child Traumatic Stress Network and National Center for PTSD.