TEEN HANDOUT:

# DEEP BREATHING

Boston Children's Hospital
Until every child is well™

Anxiety Skill 2

## What is Deep Breathing?

- Relaxation skills are ways to help relax our bodies and minds and increase feelings of calm and well-being.
- Our guide includes three different types of relaxation skills that can help you with anxiety. This handout provides an introduction to a skill called **deep breathing.**
- Deep breathing involves taking slow, deep breaths in which you fill your belly with air on the inhales (i.e., when you breathe *in*) and release the air on the exhales (i.e., when you breathe *out*).
- Try some of our strategies below and see if they help you feel calmer, more relaxed, and more in control.

## Here's How to Use Deep Breathing

- Making relaxation an activity that you teach your family could help you practice your relaxation skills more consistently. Pick a time when you could begin giving one person, or your whole family, "relaxation lessons" (e.g., before saying goodnight and getting ready for bed).
- Encourage everyone to point out times when they used their new deep breathing skills. If you notice a family member looking anxious before or during an activity, you can also suggest they try deep breathing to see if it makes them feel better.

## Deep Breathing Practice

**Deep Breathing Script:** "Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes. We are going to focus on our breathing. Start by taking some nice deep breaths, the same way you normally would. Notice how your stomach rises and falls as you breathe. You can put your hand on your stomach to help you feel the air going in and out. Now we are going to try to breathe in a way that will help us feel even more relaxed. Breathe in through your nose. This is the inhale. When you do this, make your stomach fill with air like a balloon. Now breathe out slowly through your mouth. This is the exhale and it makes you empty the air out of your belly balloon. Good. You can make a 'whoosh' sound on the exhale if that helps you. Now do that again, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to take in as much air as you can, slowly and calmly. Take your time and focus on the rhythm of your breathing. Try to make your belly balloon fill with air on the inhale and empty on the exhale. Great job. If other thoughts pop into your mind, that's okay. Just try to stay calm and start thinking about your breathing again. Now take three more slow, deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth, making your stomach rise and fall three times. One. Two. Three. You can do this any time you need to relax. Great job! When you're ready, you can open your eyes."



### Check Your Form!

To make sure you are doing deep breathing properly for maximum anxiety relief, place your hand on your stomach. When you breathe in, your hand should move up slightly as air flows in. When you breathe out, your hand should sink slightly as air flows out.




### Number Breathing

Once you understand how to breathe more deeply, try variations such as 3-1-3. This involves breathing in for a count of three, holding it for one, and breathing out for a count of three. You can try other numbers and combinations and use whatever you like and find comfortable.



### Bubbles

Break out some bubbles and spend a few moments relaxing like a little kid! Notice that when you blow out slowly and calmly you can make bigger bubbles. Now try out some fast, anxious-style breathing: it doesn't work as well.



### Pizza Imagery

A fun image that can help you practice this skill anytime, anywhere: Imagine you are breathing in the smell of a slice of hot, delicious pizza and then blowing out to cool the slice down. Or think of another hot food you love!