

Welcome back to the podcast on stress. I hope you've already learned some new tips and techniques for dealing with stress. In this episode, you're going to hear from Dr. Gloria Deckro, a physician and counselor who specializes in stress management. Dr. Deckro's going to help us learn about something she calls diaphragmatic breathing. This is a special way of breathing that can help you feel more relaxed and calm and in control whenever you feel stressed out.

There are many small, quick things that you can do when you feeling stressed out but you just don't have the time or the space to walk or turn on your favorite music. I call these minis. One of the most effective minis is diaphragmatic breathing. One of the easiest ways to learn diaphragmatic breathing is to put one hand on your diaphragm, which is just below your ribcage and to put the other hand on your chest. And just to notice, as you're breathing, which of your hands is moving the most. As we get tense during the course of the day, we tend to switch over to chest breathing. And you might feel that the upper hand is rising and falling but the lower hand is still. So as you sit here just breathe into the belly so that you can feel your lower hand rising with each new breath and falling at each out breath. If you have trouble with this, you can try it at night when you're lying on your back in bed, when your muscles will be relaxed and you will be able to feel your belly rising and falling. The beauty of diaphragmatic breathing is you can use it any time, any place. For example, at the dentist's office, when you're on the other end of the phone and someone's being particularly annoying, you can use diaphragmatic breathing. You can do it standing in line at the bank or the grocery store. You can use this anywhere, any time.

Probably the simplest technique is just to count as you breathe. I like to start with the out breath and take a nice deep out breath and as you exhale, count down from four to one. And as the breath fills up your lungs again without any effort, count from one to four. So on the in breath, you're counting from one to four and on the out breath, you're counting down from four to one. Some people like to count a few breaths and if you've only got a short time, you might count three to five breaths or if you have a bit longer, you could count ten breaths. And one way to do this is just to count one after the inhalation during the pause before you exhale. On the next inhalation, you'll count two until you get all the way to five. That pause between the inhalation

and the exhalation is a little moment of peace. It is a quiet moment where you pause between the in breath and the out breath so you can bring your attention to that moment of peace.

Some people use other sorts of mini relaxations. It could be as simple as just stopping what you're doing, looking out of the window and noticing the color of the sky. Or if you're eating, just focusing on the taste of the food. The sensation of the food in your mouth. This breaks the stress cycle. It takes us away from worrying about the future and the past and brings us into the present moment.