

**BENEFITS**

Calms, focuses, and helps to self-regulate. Oxygenates the body. Teaches healthy, diaphragmatic breathing and draws awareness inward.

**TIME**

1 to 2 minutes

**ACTIVITY**

- Students lie on their backs, stand, or sit in a chair with feet on the ground, hip-width apart. Hands are placed on the belly.
- Breathe into your belly so that hands go up and down with the breath like waves in the ocean.
- Relax all muscles to slow the breath even further.

**VARIATIONS & INTEGRATION**

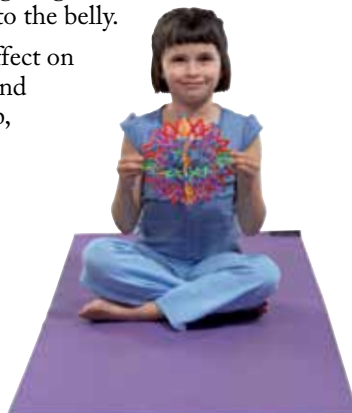
- Have a student demonstrate deep breathing while expanding and contracting the Hoberman Sphere as the class follows. This also develops group awareness and students' sensitivity to each other.
- Keeping one hand on the belly, bring the other hand up to the chest. Breathe from belly hand to heart hand.
- From seated position, place both palms on low back above hips. Breathe into the low back and hands (similar to Back Breathing, p. 61).
- From supine position, place a small flat stone or object on the belly. Move the object up and down with the breath.
- Take Pulse Count (p. 83) before and after Belly Breathing, and then do both at the same time to notice the relationship between breath and pulse.
- Use in health lessons on stress. Have students notice what happens to their breath during daily activities and when they are under stress.
- Use the imagery or sounds of slow-moving waves or wind to help slow the mind and breathing.
- Use slow, relaxing music (50 to 60 beats per minute).
- Teach a lesson or read a story about oxygen and why it is so important to the body.
- Anatomy inquiry: "Do you know what your lungs look like? Do you know where they are? What bones protect the lungs? What is your diaphragm?" Expand inquiry into the importance of clean air and protecting the environment.

**NOTES**

Even though the lungs physically extend only from under the collarbones to the lowest ribs, the abdominal organs move down and out with the diaphragm's action to help draw air into the body, giving the appearance and the sense that we are breathing into the belly.

Relaxed, diaphragmatic breathing has a positive effect on the cardiovascular, neurological, gastrointestinal, and muscular systems, and has a general effect on sleep, memory, energy levels, and concentration.

For more information, see chapter 4.



# BELLY BREATHING: SEATED, STANDING, OR PRONE



# TREE CIRCLE

## BENEFITS

Develops balance, trust, and teamwork in a fun way. Teaches how to stay centered when challenged.

## TIME

2 to 5 minutes

## ACTIVITY

- Students make a large circle, facing in and standing about 3 feet apart.
- Raise both arms and stretch them out, fingers pointing up.
- Place hands together with the person on each side and lift right leg up in Tree pose.
- Press into each other's hands and use each other for support.
- Switch legs and repeat.

## VARIATIONS & INTEGRATION

- Have several of the students come out of the circle to be "animals" in the forest. Then re-form the circle and have the animals challenge the others by making noises, running in and out of the circle, jumping up and down, and so on (but no touching or blowing on the others). Switch challengers.
- Drop hands and try again without the support of the circle.
- Great sequence: Star Pose/Galaxy variation (p. 88), then Tree Circle, then add animal challengers, then animal challengers without the circle.

## NOTES

In a forest, stands of trees shield each other from the wind, and intertwine their roots for greater support. Trees also provide habitat for animals. These and other themes can be developed from and explored through Tree Circle.



# VOLCANO BREATH

## BENEFITS

Calms and centers. Develops inner imagery. Develops group movement and awareness. Releases tension, regulates breath, and develops compassion and sensitivity.

## TIME

2 to 5 minutes

## ACTIVITY

- Stand with feet hip-width apart, or sit in a chair or cross-legged on the floor.
- Place palms together at the heart.
- Take a slow, deep breath through the nose and pause when the lungs are full.
- Hold the pause and bring the arms up over the head.
- Exhale and slowly “explode the volcano,” moving arms out to the side and then back together at heart.

## VARIATIONS & INTEGRATION

- Think of someone or something you would like to send your heart thoughts to. Get the image of that person, animal, or place strongly in mind. On the next Volcano Breath, send your thoughts out to that person. Allow students to share who they sent their thoughts to.
- Ask students to think of something they would like to bring into their life. As they exhale, they can shower this image around them.
- Use stories of children sending positive thoughts to one another.

## NOTES

Volcano breath with “heart thoughts” can also help to access and release underlying emotions that might inhibit the learning process (see p. 141).

