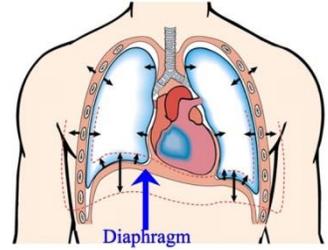


## Relaxing with *Abdominal Breathing*

The real muscle of breathing is the diaphragm, a dome-shaped muscle located just below the lungs and above the abdominal organs and muscles.



When the diaphragm contracts (moves down), it pulls air into the lungs (like opening a bellows) ... this is an active process (we do it)

When the diaphragm moves down, it also gently squeezes the abdominal organs, and this makes the belly expand outward

When the diaphragm relaxes (goes back up), air is pushed out of the lungs ... this is a passive process (we let it happen)

### Let's Practice

- ☯ Sit comfortably in your chair, feet supported, head balanced over your shoulders; close your eyes; place one hand over your heart and the other one below your navel [at home you can practice this lying on your back]
- ☯ Breathe in and out through your nose, if you can (air coming in through the nose is warmed and filtered)
- ☯ Take a few deep breaths ... notice what part of your body moves (chest or belly)
- ☯ Slow your breathing to a comfortable rate ... in ... and ... out
- ☯ As you continue to inhale and exhale, gently and comfortably, focus your attention on your diaphragm ... imagine you can see and/or feel it
  - move down when you breathe air in
  - relax back up when the air moves out
- ☯ Relax the muscles of your chest ... breathing is effortless
- ☯ Relax the muscles of your abdomen ... breathing is effortless
- ☯ As you continue to relax, breathing easily, you will begin to notice that as you breathe in, your belly expands outward ... all by itself; and as you breathe out, your belly relaxes ... all by itself ~ this is "abdominal breathing"