Just Breathe (Slide 1)

- Breathing is one tool to cope with stress

Objectives (Slide 2)

- Identify common, inefficient breathing patterns
- Identify evidence-based benefits of a variety of breathing techniques, including effects on mental and physical well-being
- Use simple breathing techniques in your own life to manage stress

The Sympathetic Nervous System (Slide 3)

- The sympathetic nervous system promotes our fight, flight, or freeze response and signals our heart and lungs to work harder
- When the sympathetic nervous system is activated, breathing becomes more rapid, and the small airways in the lungs open wider to take in more oxygen, which increases alertness
- Noticing changes in our breathing pattern may help us recognize more quickly when we are experiencing stress

The Parasympathetic Nervous System (Slide 4)

- After a stressful event is over, the parasympathetic nervous system, which promotes our rest, and digest or rest and repair response, is activated to help the body systems return to equilibrium
- When the parasympathetic nervous system is activated, breathing is characterized by slow, relaxed in and out breaths, and breathing shifts from the chest to the abdomen

Common Inefficient Breathing Patterns (Slide 5)

- When we breathe, we may not be doing it right
- The goal of this class is not to diagnose breathing pattern disorders
- If you feel that you have health concerns about your breathing, it is encouraged that you to seek help from a physician
- Demonstration of reverse breathing
    - Stand up for a moment, relax your body, and stand normally
    - Take a full, deep breath in, and hold it when your lungs feel full
    - As you hold your breath, is your abdomen drawn or has it expanded?
    - Exhale, let the breath go
- Tech neck is used to describe the posture and the accompanying discomfort that happens when the head is carried forward and is tilted slightly downward
    - It can create neck pain or headaches, and it can lead to breathing inefficiently
    - Our shoulder posture is also involved
- Demonstration of tech neck
    - Stand up, relax your body, and stand normally

- Imagine that you are at a keyboard or you are checking your phone
- Notice your posture, the position of your head, notice your shoulders
- Now take in a full deep inhale
- Stand up tall, bring up the chin level, and feel the base of your skull gently draw back an inch or two
- Just feeling as though the head is squarely on the rest of the spine
- Notice your shoulders, roll them down away from your ears and down the back
- The chest is open and the spine is long but not rigid
- Take another full inhale and hold it
- Notice what may be different from the breath you took a moment ago
- Release the breath with an exhale

- Chest breathing is when you breathe high into the chest
  - Typical reaction to being started – the abdomen is engaged, and the upper body may also be braced or engaged for action
  - It can occur when we use our computer keyboard
- Demonstration of chest breathing
  - Stand up for a moment, relax your body, and stand normally
  - Place your right hand on your abdomen and place your left hand on your chest below the collarbone and on the sternum
  - Allow you next inhale to be deeper than normal but do not try to change it other than that
  - As you breathe, notice
    - Which hand moves more?
    - Do you hold in your abdomen when you inhale?
    - Do your shoulders move up when you inhale?
    - Do your shoulders feel that they are tensing on the inhale?

The Basics of Efficient Breathing (Slide 6)

- Two important elements of breathing
  - Posture
  - Movement of the diaphragm
- Posture
  - Our breath is affected when our shoulders are rounded, the head is forward, and, if the abdomen is either held in and tightened or collapsed
  - Being aware of our posture and making adjustments to it can help us to re-pattern our breath
- Diaphragm movement
  - When we inhale, the diaphragm moves downward to create space for the lungs to expand and gives a massage to the heart
  - The reverse action refers to the movement of the diaphragm on inhalation and exhalation
  - In reverse breathing, when we inhale, we pull the abdomen in, which

causes the diaphragm to move upward rather than down

Benefits of Breath Exercises: Body (Slide 7)

- The benefits of breathing exercises on the body include:
  - Decreased heart rate and lower blood pressure
  - An ability to help the body return to a resting state after stressful events
  - A fostered sense of calm and relaxation

Diaphragmatic Breathing (Slide 8)

- **Exercise 1**: Diaphragmatic Breathing
  - Sit tall with your spine straight but not rigid
  - Feel the base of your skull reaching upward and roll your shoulders down and back
  - Allow your head to rest squarely and not too far forward or back
  - Place your hands on your abdomen just below your navel
  - Make small adjustments as needed to find efficient posture
  - Slowly, counting to 3, begin inhaling through the nose; feel the nostrils open, and feel the abdomen expand into your hands first then the chest gently expand
  - As you exhale, breathe through the mouth and, again, slowly count to 3
  - Count with the inhale, feel the abdomen expand and exhale through the mouth, feel the navel gently draw back toward the spine as you release the breath
  - On your final exhale, release that breath and allow the breath to return to its natural rhythm and pace
  - Exercise follow-up
    - What did you notice?

Benefits of Breath Exercises: Well-Being (Slide 9)

- The benefits of breathing exercises on emotional well-being include:
  - Reducing symptoms of PTSD including hyperarousal and re-experiencing
  - Reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression

Three-Part Diaphragmatic Breathing (Slide 10)

- **Exercise 2**: Three-Part Diaphragmatic Breathing
  - Sit up tall
  - Notice your spine, your shoulders, and the location of your head
  - Place one hand on your abdomen, just below your navel, and the other hand on your chest, below the collarbone and over your sternum
  - Make small adjustments as needed to find efficient posture
  - Slowly inhale into the abdomen and hold for a moment (count of one)
  - Continue to inhale into the middle chest (count of two) and hold
  - Inhale further until the breath feels full under the collarbone (count of

three) and hold
- Slowly exhale
- Release breath from the abdomen, first, then the middle chest, then the upper chest
- Notice how the front of your body moves during each part of the inhale
- Release the deliberate breath now and allow your breath to return to its natural rhythm and pace

Alternate Nostril Breathing (Slide 11)

- Alternate nostril breathing is inhaling and exhaling through one nostril at a time
- Recognize that this exercise may be a bit awkward
- **Exercise 3**: Alternate Nostril Breathing
  - With your right hand, make the hang ten sign by folding your index, third, and ring fingers into your palm; your thumb and pinky are left free
  - Bring your hand to your face, in front of your nose, and gently place your thumb to the outside of your right nostril and your pinky to the outside of the left nostril
  - Be sure to allow the breath to be relaxed, deep, and full for the inhale and the exhale
  - Close the right nostril and gently and fully inhale through the left nostril
  - Then, close the left nostril and exhale through the right nostril
  - Then inhale through the right nostril
  - Close the right nostril and exhale through the left nostril
  - Continue repeating and alternate nostrils after each inhalation
  - Release the deliberate breath now and allow your breath to again return to its natural rhythm and pace

Review of Key Points (Slide 12)

- Outcomes of practicing breath exercises
  - Can help you manage your stress
  - Return to a relaxed state more quickly when you experience stress
  - Alleviate some of the mental symptoms of stress

Review of Objectives (Slide 13)

- What are some common, inefficient breathing patterns that we explored?
- What are some of the benefits of breathing exercises on the body and our mental state?
- Which of the breathing exercises and techniques might you use to help you manage signs of stress?