



## SIGNAL BREATH RELAXATION

The Signal Breath was designed to help you in the middle of stressful situations. We chose this simple but effective technique because caregivers often have limited time.

Signal Breath only takes a moment and can reduce a lot of tension. It can be used anywhere, at any time, as many times as you want. In fact, you could even use the Signal Breath in a crowded room and no one would know.

### **How to do the Signal Breath:**

1. Take in a deep breath, and hold it for a few moments. However, don't breathe so deeply or hold it so long that it is uncomfortable. About 3 or 4 seconds is usually long enough.
2. Exhale slowly while at the same time saying calming words such as "relax," "let go," or "easy does it" to yourself. Also, while you are exhaling, let your jaw, shoulders, and arms go loose and limp.
3. Repeat 2 more times, feeling your level of tension drop a little more each time.

*Remember to practice Signal Breath regularly.*

Try to practice the Signal Breath at least once each day. Some caregivers find it useful to practice when they are not stressed, because it helps reduce feelings of tension when stressful situations ultimately arise.

You should use the Signal Breath whenever you are in the midst of a stressful situation if possible.

*\*The Signal Breath technique was originally designed by Dr. Richard L. Hanson at the Long Beach VA Medical Center and has been adapted for use with caregivers of persons with dementia by Jocelyn Shealy McGee, MSG, MA at the Palo Alto VA Health Care System.*