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Give me a high five

As we get older, our breathing becomes impaired with restriction of our rib cage and weakened supportive muscles. Deep breathing (abdominal breathing) allows the lungs to fill up with large quantities of oxygen enriched air by letting the belly extend naturally outward during inhalation. This causes the diaphragms to descend lower, which in turn, relieves the pressure on the lungs, giving them more room to expand. If one does not do this, or active physical exercise, the body partially compensates by unconsciously causing deep sighs, which enables the small air sacs to occasionally open so they will remain



**DR. J.E.
BLOCK**

ALL THINGS
MEDICAL

viable.

With slow, deep breathing and prolonged exhalation, there is also a reduction of the sympathetic nervous activity and an increase of the parasympathetic. This activates receptors in our vital organs, as well as in our brain, to release the healthy neurotransmitters (serotonin) with decrease of the unhealthy ones (adrenaline and cortisone).

The 20-count is a simple technique with fingers, whereby one inhales deeply through the nose for a count of 5, holds it in the lungs for another 5, and then exhales through the mouth with the tip of the tongue touching the roof immediately behind the front teeth for a 10-count, and then repeats the cycle. I use the fingers of my left hand to count 5, drumming them down one at a time, starting to breathe through my nose. The same is done with my other hand for a 5-count as I hold my breath. Then, as I start exhaling, I do the left hand and then the right hand (a total of

10). I wait 5 counts between breaths and repeat the sequence.

When first learning this technique, the time between fingers is rapid, so the entire cycle is about 10 seconds. As one improves the lung power and oxygenation, the time between fingers is gradually increased, and the total time lapse per cycle is increased to as much as 20 seconds.

For good posture, it is done either lying on the bed or standing straight. I recommend five sets (times) five repetitions (cycles) five times a day: the first thing in the morning; when going to sleep at night; and three times during the day when one thinks about it. This is especially helpful during times of perceived impatience (waiting in line, a phone to answer, the red light to change, etc.) and prevents the release of bodily damaging internal chemicals.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Views and ideas expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect those of The Coffeyville Journal.

