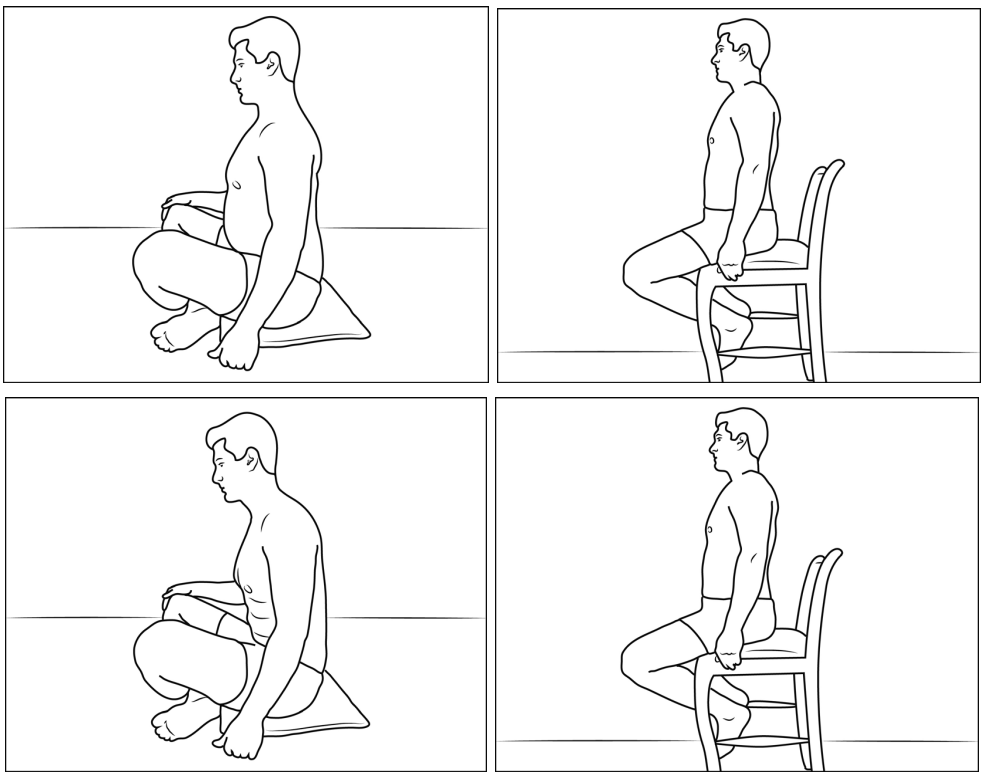
ROCK AND ROLL

Sit on a chair or cross-legged on the floor. If you're sitting on a chair, don't lean back against the chair. If you're on the floor, make sure that you're seated on a blanket or pillow to give you a little height. On the inhale, expand your belly as you lean forward. If you're very thin, you may have to "push" your belly out to get the right posture in the beginning; if you're heavier around the middle, the sensation is about "releasing" your belly or putting it on your lap. On the exhale, lean back as if you were slumping on a couch: contract your belly, narrowing your waist, and exhale until you're completely empty.

Floor **Chair**



Right now, do 20 repetitions of this exercise.

Two things that should be kept in mind when doing Rock and Roll are *watching* and *listening* to your body. In front of a mirror, *watch* your middle expand and contract while doing these exercises. Remember that you're striving to be a Lower-body, Horizontal Breather, so your neck, shoulders, and upper chest don't move; they stay soft and relaxed. An inhale now means your middle expands, and on the exhale, like a sponge, squeezes in. At first, this may seem like two unrelated movements—breathing through your mouth and moving your middle—but soon they'll be synchronized and it will feel normal. Remind yourself that this less-than-sexy belly bulge movement will actually strengthen your core and middle and help you lose belly fat in the long run (plus, remember that we're doing the exaggerated version now while you learn; later, it will be much more subtle).

Listen to yourself so that you aren't holding your breath at the end of the inhale or the exhale. Keep in mind that every time you move your belly, you're actually "teaching" your diaphragm (which is right above your belly) to get activated when you breathe. Be ready for the sensation of "I've got it! Yes, this feels right!" to wax and wane. It *will* get to the point where it feels normal. Why? Because you used to breathe this way and your body wants to breathe this way again (that is to say, with the muscles it was given with which to inhale and exhale, rather than with your shoulders).

Frequently Asked Questions:

Do you have to visibly rock forward and back?

Yes, in the beginning. This movement keeps the breath low in your body, and lets you start doing other things (e.g., talking on the phone, reading) at the same time. The hip movement helps keep you in a Lower-body Breath. Later, the rocking will be very subtle—just a slight, undetectable hip pivot will be enough—but for now, really move back and forth, horizontally, so that the whole concept of Horizontal Breathing sinks in.

Why don't you start by teaching me to breathe standing up first?

Standing and breathing is actually more difficult. Plus, right now we sit much, much more than we stand, so learning to breathe while sitting is more useful. The standing breath is one that we're going to refine in steps, integrating the center of gravity, posture, and pelvic floor. You'll end up with perfect posture

and perfect, healthy, beautiful breathing that will fuel your body and brain.

Will these exercises actually strengthen my core?

The abs exercises you do at the gym are usually ones related to your developing a six-pack. The muscles you use in exhaling are deeper core muscles. I've found that the athletes and gym enthusiasts with the most pronounced abdominals often don't have good exhale muscles, and even they are surprised when during Exhale Pulsations, an exercise we'll learn soon, they tire quickly.

You said belly breathing "teaches" my diaphragm to move. When did it forget? When you were younger, your middle would expand and contract as your diaphragm pushed your ribs open and closed. When you started sucking in your gut and bracing your middle it got stuck, and yes, even temporarily paralyzed. Right now, we're "nudging it awake" until you'll be able to move it on your own.

All exercises were developed by Dr. Belisa Vranich, author of **BREATHE: The Simple, Revolutionary 14-Day Program to Improve Your Mental and Physical Health** and creator of The Breathing Class. For more information about the mechanics and psychology of breathing, check out her book! If you are looking to improve athletic performance, check out Breathing for Warriors: Master Your Breath to Unlock More Strength, Greater Endurance, Sharper Precision, Faster Recovery, and an Unshakable Inner Game.

THE BREATHING CLASS