



Directions: Choose one exercise to practice for 5 minutes each day. Work up to practicing twice a day.

Exercise #1-Meditative Breathing

The ability to observe life, moment to moment, without judging, resisting, or reacting is essential to the success of Breath Therapy. The benefits of all breathing exercises are directly proportionate to this skill, this "meditative ability."

Sit comfortably in a chair or on the floor.

Close your eyes and focus on the breath.

Notice the sensations at the tip of your nose, or over the lips as the breath passes in and out.

Or pay close attention to the rising and falling of the chest.

Or observe the movement of the belly as the breath comes and goes,

Tune into the subtle details of each breath.

Don't control the breath. Don't breathe in any certain way. Don't "do" anything with the breath. Just be an observer.

Notice that your mind wanders constantly. Pay attention to the constant mental chatter, the internal self-talk, the judging, comparing, associating, remembering, projecting, fantasizing, etc. Notice how busy the mind is, replaying the past, imagining the future. This is the nature of the mind. Don't fight with it. Simply notice it and keep returning your attention to the breath.

Stay in the present moment, simply looking, listening, and feeling inwardly. Put all of your attention on this breath... and this one... and this one.

Do nothing else. Experience each in-breath and each out-breath fully, directly, completely, moment to moment.

Each time you notice that you are thinking or talking to yourself, that your mind has wandered, or that you have "spaced out," simply return your awareness to the next inhale... the next exhale.

Contemplative Prayer - To keep my mind on my breath, I like to repeat a phrase with every exhale to help center my heart and mind. "Be still & know that I am God." Or "Transform me by the renewing of my mind. With every inhale & exhale I quietly release the phrase inside of me. I oftentimes shorten the phrase down as I breathe through this practice – "Be still" or "Transform me".

Practice this for 5 minutes, once or twice each day. Be patient. Don't underestimate the power of this technique. Once you have the ability to focus for 5 minutes, increase to 10 minutes. The results are subtle and cumulative, yet profound, and tremendously **rewarding!**



Exercise #2- Exhalation Practice

Everyone can relax to some degree. But how quickly can you relax? How deeply can you relax? How completely? In the face of what situations can you relax? Maybe what you call relaxation is really your baseline level of tension. We all carry tension in our bodies. Some of this tension has been with us since birth and infancy. Throughout life, we frequently contract. We accumulate layer after layer of tension. But the process is so subtle, so gradual, and so "normal" that it seems like a part of who we are.

In order to get on with life, the awareness of this tension gets pushed back somewhere in our consciousness. Or, we deliberately grin and bear it, with the aid of alcohol, cigarettes, food, sex, or any number of activities or distractions.

Chronic muscular tension leads to pain and illness. It makes us prone to injury and disease. It causes fatigue and premature aging. It locks us into certain psychological states, and makes us prone to various emotional reactions. Tightness in the muscles of the chest and abdomen inhibit breathing.

This tension is so constant, so pervasive, that we don't notice it, and eventually we become numb to it. Like the hum of a refrigerator or the buzz of a fluorescent light, we notice it at first and from time to time, but for the most part, because it is there all the time, we tune it out.

Witnessing people get free of these tensions and relax for the first time, even for a few moments, is one of the most exciting and pleasurable aspects of breath work. It doesn't matter how much work you've done on yourself, or how relaxed you already are, the breath has the power to root out, dissolve and release lifetimes physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual tension.

The following breathing lesson has the power to root out, dissolve and release a lifetime of physical and psychological tension.

Inhale slowly through your mouth, giving the exhale an "aahhh" shape – it feels good to make the sound.

As you fill yourself, let the exhale fall out of you, propelled only by the internal pressure that builds up on the inhale. The key is to master a passive, yet powerful release of the exhale. It looks, sounds and feels like a dramatic sigh of relief – "aahhhhhh."

With every exhale set it free. Don't control it. Don't hold it. Don't let it out slowly. Release it completely, all at once, without hesitation. When you inhale fully into your chest, the elastic tendency of the muscles, atmospheric pressure, and gravity will do the exhale for you. Don't blow. Don't push. Don't force the air out.

Open and soften your jaw and throat. To start off it is best to breathe through the mouth, giving the exhale an "aahhh" shape. As you progress, you can focus on a specific muscle or muscle group, while you release the exhale, allowing tension in that place to flow out with the breath. In the beginning it is best to focus on releasing tension from the breathing mechanism itself.

Take one breath at a time, going deeply into the feelings triggered by the release. Notice the sensations as you settle into a quiet peaceful state following each release of the breath.



Exercise #3-Belly Breathing

When you fill a glass with water, it fills from the bottom up. This analogy holds true for filling the lungs. Yoga practitioners, martial arts instructors, and performers all stress abdominal breathing. Think of a baby's belly. Visualize how active it is during breathing. Babies only breathe from the tops of their lungs (like most of us do) when under stress (babies in a hospital setting neonatal ICU). The air fills the lungs, not the belly, but the belly pops out when the diaphragm moves down during the inhale. As your breathing mechanism reaches optimum function, the breath will settle into the belly naturally. Waking up the abdominal area and freeing up the belly so that the diaphragm can move freely is very important.

Lie down on your back and place your hands over your belly button. Inhale. Send the breath deep into your belly. As you do, your hands will rise up under the pressure of the breath.

Exhale through the mouth. Use a gentle "blowing" technique, pursing the lips, pushing with the belly as you do.

When practicing, it is best to take one breath at a time, making sure that you are coordinating the breath so that the initial movement is triggered by the abdominal muscles. With practice, no effort is required to maintain a smooth comfortable rhythm and flow.

Exercise #4- 5-count breathing

Inhale for a count of 5 seconds.

Hold breath for a count of 5 seconds.

Exhale for a count of 5 seconds.

You may start off this practice using a 3 or 4 count breath, aiming to breathe your way up to 7 counts.

Exercise #5- Funny breathing

Take a deep inhale through the nose.

Exhale through the mouth using forced "ha" exhalations, like laughter or fogging up a mirror. Complete 10 of these forced "ha" exhalations during the exhale (ha.ha.ha.....ha), allowing your belly to extend with each "ha" breath. To do this you will need to use the deep transverse muscles of the abdomen. You will feel your muscles contract deeply in the abdominal region if you are doing it correctly. These muscles are difficult to engage except when coughing (when you are sick & tired of coughing because your stomach hurts) or laughing (you laugh so hard your stomach hurts). Work your way up to 20 "ha" breaths. I recommend in between sets practicing 5-count breathing.