

Article by Jacqueline Herron of Evolve UK Ltd

Copyright reserved

Yogic Solutions Body Prayers TM

Living Breath

The bridge between you body and your mind

Have you ever noticed how your thoughts and feelings are reflected in your breathing patterns? Anxious, excited and erratic thoughts and feelings can speed up your breathing, whereas relaxed, peaceful thoughts will slow your breathing down. The reverse is also true. When you deepen and consciously regulate the breath, your thoughts and feelings will respond by becoming calm and more centered. Breathing techniques are an essential stress management tool, yet the knowledge of how the benefits of conscious breathing can release tension, encourage change, support inner strength, clarity and promote healing in our every day lives, is far less acknowledged.

Your breath is the only involuntary bodily function that you can voluntarily control. From the day that you were born, to this moment in time, your breath has created an unbroken link through all your life experiences. Hidden within its long and winding path lie the secrets of your health in body and mind. Your breath is your constant friend and ally, always at your service, a Master of Transformation. Your breath is completely free; available to you at any time, and serves, in fact, as your `portable balancing agent` giving us a `reality check` whenever and wherever we want. Its nature is to directly put us in touch with our thoughts, feelings and consequent actions in a very simple, yet powerful and easily accessible way.

From an early age unhealthy breathing habits can set in, which could be easily improved by a little training given to children as part of their physical education in school. Research has shown that by learning how to breathe correctly our faculties of memory retention, concentration, focus, patience and the ability to control emotions is greatly enhanced.

Not only does correct breathing support these more subtle elements of ourselves, it also provides the stimulus for circulating fresh energy through the physical system, with a vital resource of oxygen and prana (life energy) that nourishes and feeds all bodily functions.

Try this simple exercise right now.

Just put your right hand on your abdomen and your left hand on your heart.

Does your breathing feel too shallow or fast?

Are you breathing through your nostrils or mouth? (If your sinuses are blocked with a

cold you will find this difficult just now)

Close your mouth and try to breathe in and out only through the nose. (Close your mouth)

Notice which hand rises more. If your left hand rises more than you right breathe more deeply, more slowly, so that you feel your right hand gently rises.

Now breathe in for the count of 4 and breathe out for the count of 4.

Do this slowly 4 times. Now just sit and be aware of how you feel.

Breathing charges the electrical currents in and around the body, balancing the vibrational energy that nourishes the thought processes, heart beat and physical balance. The correct flow of breath into the nasal passages helps to balance the right and left hemispheres of the brain generating more clarity and enriching inner perceptions.

The flow of the breath has many associations and connections that influence the relationship between the body, mind and soul and is fundamental to our existence, yet is often taken for granted. The depths and levels through which breathing influences the conscious and subconscious mind is a science within itself and is at the very core of yoga, practiced as `pranayama`, breath control techniques.

The Anatomy of the Breath

As we are rarely taught how to breathe correctly, unhealthy breathing habits are common. Most people tend to breathe only into the upper lung, which not only puts pressure on the heart, but weakens the full functioning of the lungs, reducing the energy supply to the rest of the body. The whole physical system is short changed by shallow breathing which greatly impairs the vitality and energy within the body and mind creating many common psycho-somatic problems such as asthma, high blood pressure, heart disease, headaches, anxiety, insomnia, nervous tension and depression. Many people inhale and exhale through the mouth, instead of the nostrils. This poor quality of breathing bypasses the physiological inner structure that has naturally evolved to nourish and balance your whole system.

By breathing deeply through your nostrils vital nutrients and oxygen are taken into the full capacity of the lungs via the throat, then the windpipe, and finally to the bronchi in the right and left lung. The lungs then give up the oxygen to the red blood cells that carry it throughout your whole body depositing the oxygen as it goes. During this journey toxic waste in the form of carbon dioxide is picked up by the blood, which is then exhaled when the blood returns to the lungs.

The Abdominal Brain

The power of correct breathing directly accesses what is refereed to as your `abdominal brain` or `hara` (energy centre). It is your center of gravity and is located behind the navel and extends through the abdominal bowl. Here there is an intricate network of nerves and fibres that influence the management of the energy resources passing through this vital area that also govern kidneys and adrenal glands which are also a source of vital energy for the body. This center acts like a battery that stores and accumulates energy for

future use, recharging your body and mind, and sustaining you during times of stress. It is in effect your **`creative center`**. Yet it can also become the storehouse or **`waste ground`** of undigested waste, tired misdirected energy and emotional tensions that can fester and block the healthy circulation of vital creativity.

This energy centre responds with powerful spontaneity to emotional stimuli throughout our lives. During times of stress or conflict this is often the first place to react, and imbalances that affect our digestion and elimination are well known. Most recently medical research has identified **`abdominal migraines`** which are common in children whose mental faculties are not as developed as most adults.

Also, doctors, gynecologists and other health professionals have found that women who have previously been unable to conceive, have found success by using deep relaxation exercises that involve breathing deeply into this area.

When breathing is habitually shallow, or a build up of tension has caused the abdominal muscles to tighten, the hara becomes depleted and will drain the vital energy resources. As a therapist one has the added hazard of potentially absorbing the tension released by the client and therapists need to know how to let go of it. There are specific breathing techniques within the Yogic Solutions training that rebalance this point and recharge the therapists circulation of energy. Breathing consciously will help a therapists access the universal energy field without drawing on their own resources.

Breath within treatments

The magic of breathing deeply is all embracing. The more oxygen and *prana* that you absorb creates a chemistry that actually manufactures more alkalinity within your blood. All forms of tension, whether they be caused by injury, poor posture, anger, jealousy, anxiety or agitation promote high levels of acidity which eventually effect this vital nerve center, corroding its power to help you recharge. Your breath is a catalyst that can transform the way you feel. It acts as a bridge between your body and mind over which fresh energy and insights can pass.

Relaxation, massage, and other complimentary therapies also alkaline the blood as they calm your whole system. These therapies are designed to affect positive change not only physically, but on deeper levels that are intrinsically connected to ones overall sense of well being.

Dynamic changes happen when the body and mind are in repose, in a relaxed and receptive state of being. Stillness is not the absence of movement, it is in fact a fertile and intense environment for psychological and emotional integration. Movement is the *forerunner* of change. Real change occurs in stillness when energy is moving so rapidly as an inner vibration, that it can only be perceived through the senses and not the physical eye. Here the client has time to reflect and accept the sensations of change that are arising. The mind integrates change through stillness allowing the body to **transform itself**.

Deep relaxation is the perfect internal environment to support healing and regeneration. By combining breathing directives with still holding techniques deeper levels of relaxation are experienced. In a state of deep relaxation Theta Waves have been monitored flowing from the brain which signify a transcendent state of mind. This Theta State also influences the manufacture of feel-good factors **serotonin** and **endorphins**, that promote a true sense of balance in body and mind. It is within this still internal environment that the molecules of your psychological, emotional and physical make up have an opportunity to naturally re-align and restore themselves.

Breathing deeply therefore, can change your physiological chemistry, altering how you think and feel at any given moment. The benefits are also accumulative so that you will begin to feel generally more energetic and aware. By paying attention to the physical aspects of the breath you will naturally become aware of the more subtle sensations.

Pyscho-neuro-immunology

The term *psycho-neuro-immunology* has been coined by American neuro-scientists who have recently made huge breakthroughs in identifying that there are actual chemical links between our psychology (the way we think), the nervous system and the endocrine glands (which govern our immunity.) Though new to western thinking this knowledge has been the foundation of Yogic philosophy for centuries. This philosophy understands that all the internal activities of the body and mind are connected and therefore the importance of acknowledging the whole person is essential in order to achieve optimum health.

The nature of your thoughts carry a certain vibration which in turn stimulates the release of specific neuro-chemicals and hormones that influence the way we actually feel. Happy and contented thoughts will relax the central nervous system which then creates harmonio^{us vibrations of well-}being. These vibrations stimulate the body to manufacture essential hormones through the ductless glands of the endocrine system. As these hormones flow throughout your body via the bloodstream to all the organs and muscles these hormones contain the ingredients that alter your chemistry, sending messages of well-being to the body, mind and emotions. This whole process serves to regenerate your blood cells thereby boosting the immune system and improving your overall health.

The Breath is the key. It is always available to you and can become your friend and ally. In todays` demanding work environments it is a tool we should all know how to use. Everyone will benefit.

*Ten thousand flowers in spring, the moon in autumn,
A cool breeze in summer, snow in winter.
If your mind isn` t clouded by unnecessary things,
This is the best season of your life.*