

COMPLETE BREATH

The Three Part Breath

The key to our life force and energy is the breath. A person who has strong lungs and good breathing capacity usually has abundant energy. When the mind is clear and balanced, the breath is even and rhythmic. When the mind is nervous and tense, the breath is strained and erratic. This breathing technique can be used for calming, centering, and relaxation. Do these exercises through the nose unless the sinuses are congested. The best way to practice these techniques is on an empty stomach in a quiet place where there is a supply of fresh air. Create time in the early morning to practice so the mind and body are ready for the day. A regular practice creates a good habit and builds the benefits slowly. However, this breathing technique can be practiced throughout the day before, during, and after stressful situations or meetings or as a practice of relaxation.

COMPLETE BREATH

Lie on your back or sit comfortably with a straight spine and relax. As you inhale, the downward movement of the diaphragm should push your stomach outward. As you exhale, the stomach will sink back down. This correct breathing feels almost like the stomach is moving the air or is actually filling with air. Find the rhythm of breath that is smooth and most relaxing for your body.

Natural breathing relaxes the nervous system, reduces stress, massages and tones the heart and the digestive system. It is efficient breathing so the heart and the lungs work less and rest more. The breath is down in the abdomen, the chest is relaxed. After natural breathing like this for awhile then move on to the Complete Breath.

The next step is to learn to fill the lungs completely. Slowly inhale; bring the air into the bottom of the lungs with the diaphragm by expanding the abdomen. Then continue inhaling to open and expand the rib cage upward and out to the sides. Continue to inhale up under the shoulders to fill the lungs completely. Then exhale slowly from the top to the bottom of the lungs, exhale the shoulder blade area, the rib cage, and contract the abdominal muscles at the end of the exhalation to squeeze out all of the residual air.

The Complete Breath uses the full capacity of the lungs, removing stale air and toxins. It keeps the chest and lungs flexible and relaxed. Benefits of the Complete Breath include increases overall energy; revitalizes the entire system; improves digestion and elimination, helps to relieve constipation; brings oxygen to the farthest reaches of the lungs that do not usually receive a fresh supply of oxygen due to a habitual shallow breath; breaks down the old habit of shallow breathing and reestablishes a new habit of deep breathing and relaxation; strengthens the abdominal muscles, diaphragm, heart, and lungs; very soothing during menstruation, especially when there is discomfort; and can be practiced during relaxation, meditation, and throughout the day at any time and anywhere.

Adapted from Kripalu Yoga Teacher's Manual.

Benefits of the Complete Breath

- Relaxes the body and calms the mind.
- Revitalizes the entire system.
- Brings oxygen to the farthest reaches of the lungs that do not usually receive a fresh supply of oxygen and energy due to habitual shallow breathing.
- Breaks down the old habit of shallow breathing and Reestablishes a new habit of deep breathing and relaxation.
- Gives the abdominal organs a gentle massage with the rising and falling abdominal muscles.
- Improves digestion and elimination. Helps to relieve constipation.
- Strengthens the abdominal muscles, diaphragm, heart, and lungs.
- Very soothing during menstruation, especially when there is discomfort.
- Can be practiced during relaxation, meditation, and throughout the day at any time or anywhere.

Nancy Plumer, New Visions, P.O. Box 4092, Kingston, NY 12402
(914) 388-7155 email: nplumer@hvi.net