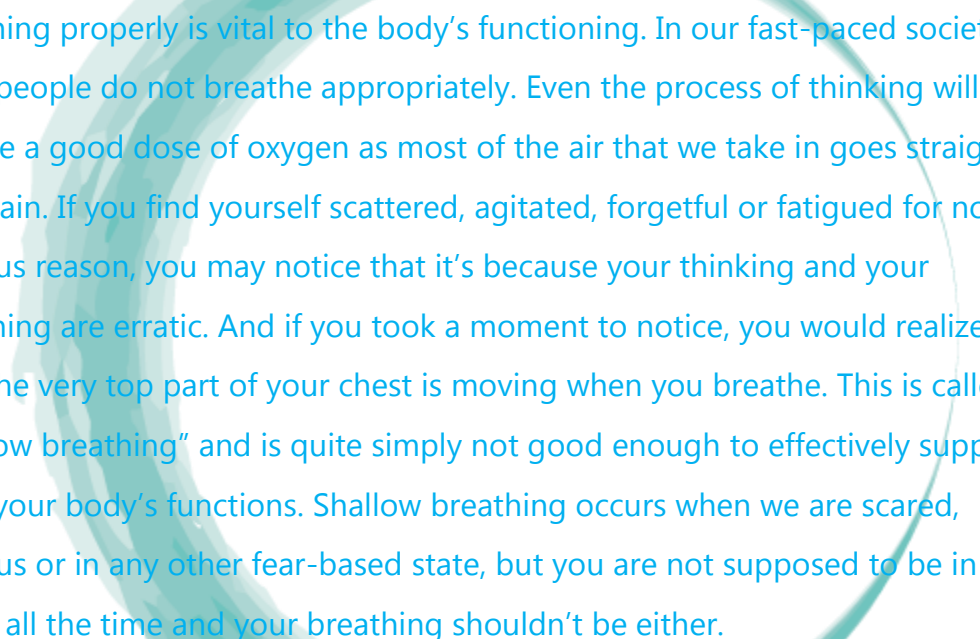




the Art of Deep Breathing

Why to Practice Deep Breathing



Breathing properly is vital to the body's functioning. In our fast-paced society most people do not breathe appropriately. Even the process of thinking will require a good dose of oxygen as most of the air that we take in goes straight to the brain. If you find yourself scattered, agitated, forgetful or fatigued for no obvious reason, you may notice that it's because your thinking and your breathing are erratic. And if you took a moment to notice, you would realize that only the very top part of your chest is moving when you breathe. This is called "shallow breathing" and is quite simply not good enough to effectively support all of your body's functions. Shallow breathing occurs when we are scared, nervous or in any other fear-based state, but you are not supposed to be in that mode all the time and your breathing shouldn't be either.

Essentially, you want to breathe six times a minute! I know that it doesn't sound like much, but it's true. It takes practice to get to only six breaths a minute and may not be feasible for everyone. Though you are able to take more purposeful, more relaxed breaths, more often - and that is more than good enough!

Specifically, you want to inhale and exhale deeply so you can move the old, used air out of your diaphragm releasing the carbon dioxide in your system, and allow

new, fresh air in. An easy way to notice if you are breathing correctly is to lay on your back and watch your torso, when you breathe deeply your abdomen will expand slowly upon inhale and contract upon exhale.

Benefits of Deep Breathing

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- ✓ Detoxifies and releases toxins
 - ✓ Relaxes the Mind and brings mental clarity
 - ✓ Relaxes the Body and releases tension
 - ✓ Relieves pain
 - ✓ Strengthens the immune system
 - ✓ Improves the nervous system
 - ✓ Strengthens lungs and improves respiratory health
 - ✓ Strengthens the heart
 - ✓ Assists in weight control
 - ✓ Improves cellular regeneration
 - ✓ Improves energy level
 - ✓ Elevates mood

How to Breathe Correctly

- Breathe deeply into your abdomen
- Breathe slowly and rhythmically
- Breathe through your nose when possible
- Honour your body, do what is comfortable, remember that this is for relaxation and health
- Aim for the rhythm of 3-4 seconds breathing in and 3-4 seconds breathing out

The Deep Breathing Process

- Inhale through your nose, first expanding your belly, then filling your chest; counting to 4 as you do so
- Hold and count to 3. Allow your body to fill with relaxing and healing energy
- Exhale fully from your nose OR from a slightly parted mouth, counting to 4

Additional Information...

Stress sends your body into survival mode which tells your body that there is an impending danger threatening you. Your body will then go into fight or flight mode, increasing your heart rate and blood pressure and tightening up your muscles. This process serves its purpose when one is actually faced with danger but realistically, this is a rare event. The habit of being stressed out and anxious all the time is incredibly unnatural. Stress leads to inflammation, a state which is linked to heart disease, arthritis, asthma and skin conditions.

There are two particularly detrimental things which occur when you breathe improperly. The first being is that when you are stressed out, your breathing will be very shallow and rapid and consequently, your body will tense up and you will feel even more stressed. You will exacerbate your already stressed out state... not helpful.

Second, air accumulates in the diaphragm, so if you do not breathe out fully then you have Co2 kicking around in your system. Ultimately, this will make you feel exhausted. Having low energy can lead to a lack of motivation, lack of clarity and an overall feeling of distraction. That can really put a damper on your day.

The air that accumulates in your diaphragm needs somewhere to go, and it requires your focused attention in breathing properly in order for the old air to successfully leave your system. It is important that you exhale slowly and purposefully.

The simple process of deep breathing allows your body to relax into a therapeutic state. The level of relaxation your body achieves from deep breathing is powerful in that it allows the body to heal at a genetic level. Researchers at Harvard Medical School discovered that those who practice relaxation methods such as deep breathing, yoga or meditation, have far more "disease-fighting genes" that are active than those who do not practice any form of relaxation at all.

The Harvard researchers found that genes which protect from disorders such as pain, high blood pressure and even rheumatoid arthritis, were switched on when individuals practiced deep breathing. The "switching on" of these genes is induced by what researchers call the "relaxation effect". A researcher working on the project stated that upon observing individuals who practiced deep breathing; *"After two months, their bodies began to change; the genes that help fight inflammation, kill diseased cells and protect the body from cancer all began to switch on."*

A separate study at Ohio State introduced a month of relaxation exercises to a group of aging individuals and the result was a boost in natural killer cells which allowed the aging group to have a higher resistance to tumors and viruses.

Also encouraging is that the benefits of the relaxation effect were found to increase with regular practice: the more people practiced relaxation methods such as meditation or deep breathing, the greater their chances of remaining free of arthritis and joint pain with stronger immunity, healthier hormone levels and lower blood pressure.

The state of relaxation is also linked to higher levels of the feel-good chemical serotonin allowing your mind and body to relax with greater ease as you practice. Essentially, the process of deep breathing relaxes you and allows your body to thrive!

The importance of deep breathing is also highlighted in A Course in Miracles teacher, Gary Renard's books, *Love Has Forgotten No One*, and *The Lifetimes When Jesus and Buddha Knew Each Other*.

"Breathe Deeply. This is vital. Whenever you think of it, take a deep breath. And exhale deeply, too. You want to get the used air out of your diaphragm and the new air in. You'll find that when you're tired if you breathe deeply for a while, you'll feel more energetic."

– Pg. 86 – *Love Has Forgotten No One*

"Pursah: For example, they realized the importance of breath. They learned to breathe deeply at all times, until it was second nature.

Gary: I notice I always feel better when I breathe deeply."

– Pg. 22 – *The Lifetimes When Jesus and Buddha Knew Each Other*

Creating the habit of breathing deeply is well worth your commitment and holds many benefits for you on your healing path!

Love and Healthy Thinking,
Fiona

