The American Institute of Stress

# CONTENTMENT

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*In this Issue:*

## The Healing Power of the Breath


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# CONTENTMENT

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*Contentment* is a quarterly magazine published in March, June, September and December with news and advertising designed with the general public in mind. It appeals to all those interested in the myriad and complex interrelationships between stress and health because technical jargon is avoided and it is easy to understand. Contentment is archived online at stress.org. Information in this publication is carefully compiled to ensure accuracy.

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# The Health Benefits of Nose Breathing

*"For breath is life, and if you breathe well you will live long on earth."*
-Sanskrit Proverb

*By Dr. Alan Ruth, BSc, MA, PhD, MBA, FAIS, FRSB*

Breathing is one of the most fundamental things we do, day in and day out. Most people take it for granted that they do it correctly. Breathing is the only human act that we can do completely consciously or completely unconsciously. Most people, of course breathe unconsciously the vast majority of the time.

It has been estimated that approximately one-third of people don't breathe well enough to sustain normal health. These people do not get enough oxygenation of their cells, tissues and organs. In the book *Behavioural and Psychological Approaches to Breathing Disorders*, Dr. Chandra Patel describes the problem with breathing as follows:

*"We start life with a breath, and the process continues automatically for the rest of our lives. Because breathing continues on its own, without our awareness, it does not necessarily mean that it is always functioning for optimum mental and physical health. The opposite is often true. The problem with breathing is that it seems so easy and natural that we rarely give it a second thought."*

Although breathing is a tural function of human beings, it can be negatively influenced by many factors of modern living such as stress, sitting at a desk all day, eating processed foods, and excessive talking.

In the modern world, many people continuously over-breathe. Typical characteristics of over-breathing include mouth breathing, upper chest breathing, sighing, noticeable breathing during rest, and taking large breaths prior to talking.

## A Vital and Much Underrated Organ

The nose is a vital and much underrated organ. To realize its importance, we only need to reflect on when we last suffered from a bad cold. Nasal congestion and a runny nose have a noticeable effect on our ability to breathe, our energy level, our ability to sleep, and our general ability to function.

According to otolaryngologist Dr. Pat Barelli:

*"The role of the nose in health and in respiration has been greatly neglected by physicians."* (Timmons and Ley, 1994, p 47)

## Nose Breathing Versus Mouth Breathing

*"Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."*

-Genesis 2:7

The human nose was designed for breathing (and smelling) whereas the mouth was designed for eating, drinking and speaking. However, it has been estimated that up to 30-50% of modern adults breathe through the mouth, especially during the early morning hours.

Mouth breathing is common in individuals whose nasal passages are blocked or restricted. A deviated nasal septum or small nostril size can lead a person to breathe through their mouth instead of their nose. However, breathing through the mouth most of the time was not nature's intention.

Many studies have demonstrated that chronic mouth breathing can result in a number of adverse health consequences (see Table 1).

According to Jefferson (2010):

*"The vast majority of health care professionals are unaware of the negative impact of upper airway obstruction (mouth breathing) on*

### Chronic mouth breathing may contribute to:

- Introduction of unfiltered, poorly humidified air into the lungs
- Upper-chest breathing (inefficient and tiring)
- Chronic over-breathing
- Greater incidence of snoring and sleep apnoea
- Bad breath, dental decay, gum disease
- Dysfunction of the jaw joint (Temporomandibular Joint Disorders)
- Narrowing of the dental arch, jaw and palate
- Crowded and crooked teeth
- Open bite, malocclusion (teeth not fitting together properly)
- Greater potential for relapse of orthodontic corrections
- Dysfunctions of the muscles around the jaw and lips
- Loss of lip tone with the lips becoming flaccid
- Noisy eating, speech and swallowing problems
- Trauma to soft tissues in the airways
- Enlarged tonsils and adenoids

*Table 1: Possible Adverse Consequences of Chronic Mouth Breathing. Adapted From Graham, T. (2012)*

*normal facial growth and physiologic health. Children whose mouth breathing is untreated may develop long, narrow faces, narrow mouths, high palatal vaults, dental malocclusion, gummy smiles, and many other unattractive facial features… These children do not sleep well at night due to obstructed airways; this lack of sleep can adversely affect their growth and academic performance. Many of these children are misdiagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD) and hyperactivity."*

Mouth breathing adversely affects the way the tongue works. It develops a 'tongue thrust.' This affects speech, swallowing and chewing. A tongue thrust occurs as a result of the tip of the tongue resting against or between the front teeth, and the tongue is positioned low in the mouth. The tongue should rest in the top of the mouth (with mouth closed) and provide an internal support for the upper jaw.

Mouth breathing plays a critical role in asthma, especially exercise-induced asthma. In a study published in the *American Review of Respiratory Disease*, young asthma patients had virtually no exercise-induced asthma after exercising while breathing through their noses. However, they experienced moderate bronchial constriction after exercising while mouth breathing.

Mouth breathing results in the mouth becoming dry. This increases the risk of mouth and throat infections. Mouth breathing also results in pollutants and germs being drawn directly into the lungs. Cold and dry air in the airways makes the secretions thick, slows the cleaning cilia, and slows down the passage of oxygen into the blood stream.

Breathing through the nose has many health benefits (see Table 2). According to Cottle (1958), the nose has at least 30 health protecting functions/roles. These include the following:

- It warms, humidifies, and cleanses/filters air to prepare it for delivery to the lungs.
- The structures within the nose regulate the direction and velocity of the air stream to maximise exposure to a network of fine arteries, veins, lymphatics, and nerves, and to the mucous blanket.
- Nose breathing imposes approximately 50 percent more resistance to the air stream, as compared to mouth breathing. This results in 10 to 20 percent more oxygen uptake. There must be sufficient nasal resistance during inhalation to maintain elasticity of the lungs.
- Nose breathing results in the air passing through the nasal airway being slowed down by shelf-like bony structures in the nose called turbinates. This allows the mixing of the air with an amazing gas called nitric oxide produced in the nasal sinuses (see later).

- Nasal breathing (as opposed to mouth breathing) increases circulating blood oxygen and carbon dioxide levels, slows the breathing rate and improves overall lung volumes.

## The Importance of Carbon Dioxide

Contrary to popular belief, carbon dioxide is not just a waste gas because it performs a number of essential functions in the body. These include the maintenance of blood pH and the relaxation of the smooth muscles surrounding airways and blood vessels. It also in effect acts as a catalyst for the release of oxygen from the hemoglobin in red blood cells.

In commenting on a recent study carried out at the University of Warwick, Professor Nick Dale said:

*"The exciting implication of our study is that carbon dioxide is much more than just a waste product: it can directly signal physiological information, and our work shows the mechanism by which this*

## Nose breathing is beneficial because it:

- Warms, moistens and filters the air
- Traps large particles with the nose hairs & small particles via mucous membranes
- Facilitates inhalation of nitric oxide – a vasodilator & bronchodilator that increases oxygen transport throughout the body
- Helps prevent colds, flu, allergic reaction, hay fever, irritable coughing
- Retains some moisture from exhaled air, preventing nasal dryness
- Provides a sense of smell
- Regulates (slows) airflow because of the nose's intricate structures
- Facilitates correct action of the diaphragm
- Promotes activity of the parasympathetic nervous system, which calms and relaxes the body, slows the breathing and the heart, promotes digestion
- Allows the correct position of the tongue (against the upper palate) and lips (together), assisting formation of the natural dental arches & straight teeth
- Reduces likelihood of snoring and apnea

*Table 2: Benefits of Nose Breathing. Adapted from Graham, T (2012)*

*happens via Connexin 26 (a protein that in humans is encoded by the GJB gene).”*

*“As Connexin 26 is present in many tissues and organs, for example the brain, skin, inner ear, liver and the uterus during pregnancy, this discovery should herald a re-evaluation of the potential for carbon dioxide signalling in many different processes such as the control of blood flow, breathing, hearing, reproduction and birth.”*

There is only 0.03% carbon dioxide in the atmosphere today. Healthy human beings require about 6.5% carbon dioxide in the alveoli of the lungs. This means that the body has to produce and store carbon dioxide in the lungs and blood.

The major determinants of the oxygen content of arterial blood (CaO2) are the arterial oxygen saturation of hemoglobin (SaO2) and the hemoglobin (Hb) concentration. Over 95% of oxygen carried in the blood is attached to hemoglobin. When capillary PCO2 (carbon dioxide partial pressure) rises, there is increased unloading of oxygen in the tissues (the Bohr Effect). However, a reduction in carbon dioxide partial pressure strengthens the bond between oxygen and hemoglobin, resulting in less oxygen being released into the tissues and organs.

Mouth breathing is a typical characteristic of over-breathing. When an individual over breathes, too much carbon dioxide is lost from the blood and this results in reduced oxygenation of tissues and organs. In contrast, when breathing volume is reduced towards normal, through nose breathing, higher carbon dioxide in the blood decreases the affinity between oxygen and hemoglobin, resulting in greater oxygenation of tissues and organs.

## Nitric Oxide and Nose Breathing

Nitric oxide is a gas that is often only regarded as an environmental pollutant. However, in 1998, three American scientists were jointly awarded a Nobel Prize for their discoveries concerning nitric oxide as a signalling molecule in the cardiovascular system. These scientists originally named this gas ‘Endothelium Derived Relaxing Factor’ (EDRF) because they discovered that a continuous generation of it occurs in the endothelium of blood vessels. Sometime later EDRF was identified as nitric oxide.

Enzymes responsible for nitric oxide production have been demonstrated both in the nose and in the paranasal sinuses. Nitric oxide is a potent bronchodilator and vasodilator. Therefore, it helps lower blood pressure and significantly increases the lungs’ oxygen-absorbing capacity. It is also known to be antifungal, antiviral and antibacterial.

According to Lundberg (2008):

*“Nitric oxide gas from the nose and sinuses is inhaled with every breath and reaches the lungs in a more diluted form to enhance pulmonary oxygen uptake via local vasodilatation. In this sense nitric oxide may be regarded as an “aerocrine” hormone that is produced in the nose and*

*sinuses and transported to a distal site of action with every inhalation."*

Chang (2011) named nitric oxide the "Mighty Molecule" and noted that it is an active component of the cardiovascular, endocrine, and immune systems, and is an extremely versatile and significant factor within and throughout the human body. The fact that nitric oxide plays a significant role in cardiovascular health is evidenced by the fact that one of the Nobel Prize winners mentioned earlier wrote a book titled *No More Heart Disease: How Nitric Oxide Can prevent - Even Reverse – Heart Disease and Strokes*.

## Changing from Chronic Mouth Breathing to Nose Breathing

There is little awareness and understanding within the medical profession of the adverse health implications of chronic mouth breathing. A conscious effort to ensure that people predominately nose breathe would likely result in a healthier population and a resultant decrease in healthcare expenses. The earlier chronic mouth breathing is identified the easier it is to change to nose breathing. Such a change can be facilitated by 'breathing retraining.' This is a simple process of identifying incorrect breathing habits and replacing them with the correct ones. The best-known forms of breathing retraining are the Buteyko Method, the Papworth Method, and pranayama (in yoga, this is the regulation of the breath through certain techniques and exercises).

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## About the Author


Dr. Alan Ruth BSc, MA, PhD, MBA, FAIS, FRSB is an Irish based, stress and anxiety specialist. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Biology and a Fellow of the American Institute of Stress. Formerly, he was Managing Director (Ireland) for an American multi-national pharmaceutical company and CEO of a health products manufacturers' trade association.

# The Healing Power of the Breath

*By Marylou Gantner,*
*Scientific Relaxation Specialist*

This article is about something more personal to you than your name. The subject is something ninety-nine percent of us have probably never thought about. Most likely you have never read any commentary about it either. Yet your physical health and emotional well-being, even your longevity, depends on understanding and mastering its natural function. It is more precious to you than gold, and no matter where you go on earth you are never apart from it. It has been with you since the first moment of your life and it will remain with you until your last. If you live an average lifespan, you directly engage with it a billion times.

We are talking about your breath.

The moment-by-moment habit of 'hugging your heart' through proper breathing can save your life. Your heart is enclosed in a membranous bag attached to the top of the diaphragm. When you breathe correctly, it gets a gentle squeeze with each inhale. Another little-recognized benefit: Each time the diaphragm descends downward, it massages the liver, offering a gentle massage for all the internal organs, including many ductless glands. Breathing with the diaphragm creates a gentle therapeutic rhythm in this deep inner region of the body. Breathing this way, allowing the breath to soothe our bodies, is known as the 'relaxation response.' It has been the privilege of my long career to teach people how to access these two healing powers. But before we consider a new way of breathing, let's review the way we breathe now.

## The High Price of Over-Breathing

Without realizing it, most of us have modified this essential function, starving our bodies of nutrients and oxygen and destroying well-being. This modification is called shallow breathing. We don't notice we are using only our neck, upper back and clavicle muscles to breathe. We wear our shoulders high - as if defending against an unexpected threat. This chest breathing fails to draw oxygen into the lower lobes of our lungs where it can be distributed throughout the body. When the brain is under pressure, our body is eager to keep us alive by escalating our breathing rate. Many of the clients I see are on full alert, unaware they are living in the fight-or-flight response. Despite being warned by scientists and doctors for the past half-century of the deleterious effects of stress, we stay in a deadly whirlwind. We breathe rapidly and unconsciously, making ourselves sick and nervous. I find few clients understand the role of poor breathing in the downward spiral into physical disease and psychological disorders.

I have worked with thousands of stressed and anxious clients over the past 40 years. I have come to these conclusions: People are born breathing properly. Then in late childhood, they are thrust, unknowingly and innocently, into what I call the 'effort-fatigue' society. We work, or 'effort' at tasks until we drop. While we resist society's hard-driving customs and traditions, we participate anyway, thus building incredible tension in our muscles and tissues. On this subject, I agree with the great Catholic philosopher, Thomas Merton who said:

*"There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence... (and that is) activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form of violence, perhaps the most common form of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence."*

We react to this 'violence' with a vicious circle: anxiety, shallow breathing, more anxiety and more tension, and more shallow breathing. As you grew older, no one taught you the profound need to breathe using the diaphragm and through the nose. The good news, I tell my clients, is that it's never too late to begin healing themselves. A 90-year old client who learned to breathe properly began to sleep through the night for the first time in 20 years.

In an article by Heidi Hanna in the March 2016 issue of *Contentment*, she notes that the American Institute of Stress estimates that 75% to 90% of medical visits are stress related. Since I first came to my career in stress management in the mid '70's, I have watched studies slowly climb to these current figures. This is an alarming trend, and we know it is not sustainable. People are simply illiterate about their bodies and unaware of the healing benefits of correct breathing.

Dr. James Gordon wrote in the Fall 2003 issue of *Biofeedback Journal*: *"The illness, symptoms and conditions seen in health clinics today are most often related to lifestyle, nutrition, and stress. In my 40 years of experience in stress management education this calls for a kind of radical patient education we rarely, if ever, see."* I hope, in my lifetime, to see physicians and healthcare providers educating patients on the benefits of proper breathing for stress-related symptoms and illness.

As early as the 1930, three pioneer clinical researchers, Drs. Kerr, Dalton, Gliebe, reported in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* that America's economic, moral and social changes of the time were resulting in "ever increasing numbers of patients who manifest symptoms intimately associated with the struggle for security, for independence, or for whatever state presumed to assure the spiritual and material happiness of the individual." In the same article, Dr. Kerr stated that he frequently found the symptom of hyperventilation in his patients and this symptom stemmed from anxiety states. He further commented these anxious patients "haunt the offices of physicians and specialist in every field of medical practice."

One can readily see there is something in human psychophysiology that remains fearful and uncertain of one's well-being and safety no matter what the century, circumstance, or age. Dr. Kerr's 1930 report could just as well be the report of a contemporary physician - almost 85 years later. The unchanging, grasping need for security is built into human psychophysiology and does not change. I see it daily in my office. But there are well-researched relaxation techniques that can alleviate troublesome symptoms and prevent deteriorating health.

One of my early teachers, Edmund Jacobson, writes in his book, *Anxiety and Tension Control*, that we can continue to live in this ancient fight-or-flight body response, wasting as much 60% of our energy daily, and exhausting ourselves. We can continue to build an unbearable amount of body tension and anxiety, doing serious damage to our health. We can continue to age our heart muscle beyond our years.

I often remind my clients they can choose to be the cause of their own suffering and develop symptoms that force them to the doctor for a diagnosis. Many already suffer serious health issues. Some may even become one of the tragic statistics. Or they can choose to bring their 'past history' (their conditioned stress response) up to date and learn ways to calm themselves and live efficient lives.

You may need a breathing coach, but there's much you can do by educating yourself about your breath. The road to recovery of healthy body function and emotional self-regulation is possible. I tell my clients their lives will change when they become interested in the way they breathe. And many become fascinated by the journey. Nothing is more rewarding to me than watching a client master their life by mastering their breath.

Many scientists believe that chest breathing is the single greatest threat to our short and long-term health. Robert Fried says in his book *Breathe Well, Be Well*, "*The single most stressful thing we can do is to breathe with the upper chest muscles.*" When a new client arrives in my office, chances are they are chest breathing and very anxious. Their problems are exaggerated, lives are overwhelming, and they often feel desperate. Shallow breathing alters the brain's respiration center, producing chronic body tensions and depression.

## Your Wondrous Diaphragm

In my practice, I've found that few clients know where this life-giving muscle is located. When asked to identify the diaphragm, most hesitate. Sometimes using a circular hand motion, they point somewhere at the midsection, "I think, it's somewhere around here?" It helps to know the diaphragm's exact location, how to engage it, and its role in correct breathing techniques.

I tell clients that ignoring the diaphragm is perilous to their health. Simply put, shallow breathing causes us to breathe off too much carbon dioxide. The lack of carbon dioxide speeds up the heart and is a major cause of anxiety. I recall, during my training at Temple University's Behavior Therapy Unit, my professor, Dr. Joseph Wolpe, a world authority on anxiety, kept tanks of oxygen and carbon dioxide in his office. Often, he would gently administer a mixture of these gasses to calm a tense patient so therapy could proceed.

Understanding the value of carbon dioxide is essential to the student of breath: it is not entirely a waste gas and plays a vital role in health. We deplete this precious gas, a source of calm and stability, when we bypass the diaphragm and fall into rapid, shallow breathing.

Hyperventilation is the most common of the stress related breathing disorders. (Hyper, meaning rapid chest breathing) My educated guess is a large number of ambulance calls to emergency rooms is for this breathing disorder. A client of mine reported regular ER visits due to panic attacks fueled by hyperventilation. I can easily identify stress in people who frequently sigh; they are shallow breathing with little, if any, diaphragmatic action involved.

## Carbon Dioxide is Your Friend!

It's a fascinating fact that insufficient levels of carbon dioxide in the blood create an overly-strong electric bond between the red blood cells (hemoglobin) and the oxygen molecules. Due to this overly-strong bond, the red blood cells cannot release the oxygen to nourish the tissues. This is known as the "Bohr Effect." It takes as little three minutes of shallow, rapid chest breathing to dramatically reduce oxygen levels in the brain and heart muscle. The body compensates by raising the blood pressure and increasing the heartbeat to make up for these deficiencies. Years of breathing poorly can bring about a whole host of physical and emotional symptoms. When a new client arrives in my office for stress management, I'm always interested in their fatigue level, a sure sign that they are not engaging the diaphragm when they breathe.

But it's more than fatigue that should concern us. Carbon dioxide impacts metabolic processes and energy levels. It determines how the body utilizes vitamins and enzymes. Low levels of carbon dioxide increase the excitability and arousal of the nervous system, causing us to over-react in frustration to situations beyond our control.

Learning to breathe with the diaphragm has incredible benefits: With adequate carbon dioxide in our blood, we can do more exercise without feeling out of breath. We can accomplish more on our to-do lists, and remain calm and centered even when we're running to catch a flight in a busy airport. The diaphragm has a partner to help you to stay in maximum good health, and that's the nose.

## Nose Breathing: Home Base to Relaxation

The nose is home base for another important gas called nitric oxide which keeps the blood vessels relaxed. I teach my clients that the mouth is for eating and talking; the nose is for breathing. Nose breathing has been revered by the yoga traditions in their ancient writings that claim many functions take place in the nose. The one function that amazes me is how quickly a breath of air in minus zero temperatures can be heated to body temperature in a nanosecond. The lungs would turn to a block of ice otherwise!

I love to quote from a podcast where the Irish breath expert, Patrick McKeown, who trains world class athletes, says: *"Your first and best stress reduction skill and health care plan is learning to breathe slower, breathe less and a little quieter, and always breathe through your nose. It is reported by the experts who have made a life study of respiration that as high as 90% of people have unnatural breathing habits that lead to physical and mental symptoms. What (these people) don't realize is that they are breathing two to three times more than the medical norm."* It still surprises me to see children and adults breathing with open mouths. Our nose filters out dust particles, viruses and bacteria, keeping our lungs in pristine condition.

## It's Never Too Late to Learn to Breathe

I am not sure why so many aren't aware of the life-giving muscle, the diaphragm, and the healing power of slow breath. Or why they don't breathe through the nose. Few primary care physicians examine a patient for breathing disorders, yet every system in the body is connected to the breath. Perhaps this explanation in an ancient book titled *The Science of Breath* by Yogi Ramacharaka is true: "Our only fear is that its (proper breathing) very simplicity may cause some to pass it by as unworthy of attention while they pass on their way searching for something 'deep', mysterious and non-understandable."

When we watch our respiration closely, we can easily see how determined the body is to keep us alive. I tell my clients: As soon as you begin to take the time to practice - as few as five minutes, two to three times a day - the relaxation response begins to take root. The breath will slow down. Your body will begin to calm. After a few days, you may be better able to control your emotions. You'll probably discover you have more energy. Strangely, you may even feel happier. Life will begin to take on a different, saner pace. You may find, as clients tell me, "I get more done in my day and don't feel exhausted by mid-afternoon." And so often I hear, "Why hasn't anyone told me about this before?"

But the best response I ever got was from a nine-year-old client. I was reviewing the respiration function with him. He listened attentively. His attention to detail seemed remarkable for his young age. He was clearly fascinated by his own breath. When we finished, I asked him what he thought. He replied: "I think it's a privilege to be alive."

## Getting Started…

*NOTE: If you are being treated for any symptoms, please consult with your physician before beginning the following breathing exercises.*

- The first order of things is to locate your diaphragm. Start by sniffing three times and pause briefly. Repeat this until you locate a movement in your midsection. No hurry. You will feel your diaphragm move in your midsection each time you sniff.
- Relax the abdominal muscles. Try sitting at a table. Place your arms on the table and rest your head on your arms. Now let your stomach muscles relax. You will get this quickly. Recall this relaxed feeling as you do your breathing exercises.
- It is best to begin breathing practice lying down with a small round pillow under your knees and a small one under your head. You might also place your legs on a chair or couch. Experiment, determine which position makes you feel more comfortable.
- Now place one hand on your chest and one hand over your belly button where you felt the movement of your diaphragm. Watch your breathing come and go. No hurry. Soon you will notice your chest rising as you inhale. Just watch. After a few minutes of observing, apply light hand pressure on your chest and notice if your other hand at your belly button becomes a little more active.
- Next, place a three-pound book on your navel area. For a time let both hands rest lightly on your chest to discern if you are still using your chest muscles on the inhale. Then place your arms to your side and allow them to relax. Began to breathe into the book. Be patient, this will take a little time. Many times, your diaphragm is tight from inactivity. This exercise will begin to strengthen it.
- You may also do your breathing practice sitting in a chair. This will help to carry over your attention to diaphragmatic breathing as you go about your day at work, driving, having conversations, exercising, or watching television.
- For beginners, I suggest three five-minute practices a day. Later you can increase it to 12 minutes early afternoon and early evening.
- It helps to have a trusted partner place their hands on your shoulders from behind. If your shoulders lift, you are likely still doing chest breathing. Shift your awareness to your diaphragm and try again.

People need to understand everything we need to live a healthy life is hard-wired in our brain and nervous system. As a clinical educator and scientific relaxation specialist, it is my passion to educate people to use their innate ability to live productive lives without destroying their health. If this article has inspired you, take your time, be patient, and remember you are changing a lifetime breathing habit.

## About the Author

Marylou Gantner is a Scientific Relaxation Specialist with over 40 years in private practice in Orlando, Florida. She was certified by world renowned psychiatrist Joseph Wolpe, M.D., at Temple University School of Medicine Behavior Unit, in Philadelphia. She trains clients to restore mental and physical well-being by identifying and relaxing excessive neuromuscular tension patterns that create symptoms and illness. Many of her clients are referred by physicians, lawyers, and mental health therapists. Marylou graduated from Rollins College in 1973 and completed courses in her field at the University of Florida, Harvard University, the University of Central Florida, and Temple University. She has a passionate belief that people can develop a high level of wellness and personal excellence by practicing the basic skills of Scientific Relaxation in daily life.

# The Setup Breath:
## Exhaling Deeply First

*By Rabia Hayek*

It is common, almost colloquial, that when you ask someone to take a deep breath or relax and enjoy a sweet, conscious breath that they will begin on an inhale. As soon as you make the invitation to do so, the person almost instantly begins to breathe in. However, this may be counter-intuitive to what is actually most beneficial for stress reduction, creating relaxation and inducing states of calmness. When we inhale, our heart beats faster; as we exhale our heartbeat slows down. This is general but true and so, think about it. We live in a society where we are constantly moving fast and everything from our communication devices to the marketing in front of our eyes makes for a steadily fast-paced rhythm in our world. Therefore, wouldn't it make sense to exhale deeply first, so as to slow the heart rate down, empty the lungs out to create an excellent space and then breathe?

Beginning a conscious breathing practice on an inhale often keeps a person in the same state they were just in for a longer period of time, however, exhaling deeply first creates a feeling of letting go and releasing. Start to practice this consciously and take a few moments in the day that are comprised of just taking a few deep breaths to relax or put on a favorite breathing exercise. From here on out, however, I invite you to emphasize a deep exhale first, every time. In the modality Life Force Mastery that I teach, we call it a Setup Breath. After a slight inhale, let go and expel the breath inside you by blowing it out until you are empty. As you create space for the next fresh breath to enter and fill, check-in with your posture and adjust into what you would consider excellent posture. We all have different body types, shapes and sizes, but there is a relative excellent posture that allows you to expand your breathing apparatus correctly and efficiently. This allows you to deliver Life Force into your body efficiently.

Go ahead and apply the Setup Breath, compare and see which one feels more relaxing. Right now, just take three deep, slow breaths, BUT begin by exhaling a deep, long exhale by blowing the air out of your mouth as a Setup Breath to begin. When you're done, try the same thing again but do it without the deep exhale first and see how different it is. Once you try it for yourself, you may see why and choose to enjoy this one simple, powerful tip for the rest of your life.

# Re-Association:
## Fusing Awareness and Sound with Deep Breathing Practices

*By Rabia Hayek*

Dissociation occurs when the mind and body are no longer communicating or understanding each other. In cases of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and high levels of accumulative stress, the body and mind shut off communication and a feeling of alienation occurs that doesn't allow the person to understand what is happening to them, even in seemingly simple moments. Confusion, contraction, distraction, feelings of embarrassment, violence, anger and resentment can all be the result of what happens when the mind and body stop talking to each other because the person is too stressed.

How do we then create association where there was alienation? Deep breathing exercises create a dynamic change in the nervous system that can be detected by the breather. When these state changes are noticed from within, they allow the person to put their awareness on what they have detected as a visceral shift in the body. Accompanying a shift in the body with a shift in the mind and noticing both as they are happening, then acknowledging them again after the feeling cultivates, has been found to assist in healing alienation and has shown a powerful ability to create association.

In addition to the use of deep breathing practices and the awareness of what is happening viscerally, adding in the use of sound can be the ingredient that makes the mind finally let go. Entraining your mind to follow the sound of your breathing for longer and longer periods of time can give you greater power over mind chatter and the rhythms of an overactive mind. The use of Tibetan singing bowls or crystal bowls and gongs can also be very effective, but we are currently studying how the sound of one breath can bring back a primordial connection to having been in the womb. Allowing ourselves to lean back into the nature of hearing the sound of our own breathing and now using it to hone in on greater powers of awareness.

We are finding through this practice that there is something extremely potent about each time someone notices that they are in control of creating state change using

this fusion of breath, sound and awareness. It isn't as detectable when people use shallow breathing techniques or ones that are too slow in their movements. I used the word dynamic to describe the applications of breathing that move the nervous system into a visceral change or shift in a relatively short period of time.

In my own practice I have been guiding people through achieving these beneficial state changes. They are finding newfound control over their breath flow and then using awareness to heighten daily re-association. This approach has continued to show that there are pathways through the body and mind, using the breath and the sound of it, as a bridge that we are only beginning to understand.

The great news is that people that were suffering debilitating stress and feeling alienated in their own daily lives, are able to be guided back to an empowering knowingness. That they can feel in control of their nervous system and create beneficial state changes that nurture connections in the body, that ultimately lead to vibrant living and a higher quality of life.

## About the Author

Rabia Hayek is visionary founder and co-creator of Do As One and Omnibreath. As a speaker and breathworker, Rabia travels the globe teaching people how to use breathing in ways they never have, in order to awaken their life force to its full potential. In 2006, Rabia had a powerful vision to unite 1 billion people to consciously breathe together. On 7/7/7 (July 7, 2007) DoAsOne.com was born to facilitate this massive connection and give the power of breathing together back to humanity. Rabia is the driving force behind his breathing education company Omnibreath (Omnibreath.com) where they teach optimal and conscious breathing through his Life Force Mastery breathing modality. Hayek is passionate about developing ways to bring conscious breathing practices into daily life, using technology to connect us rather than separate us. Rabia is a member of the International Breathwork Foundation and is currently leading efforts to add 'breathwork' & 'breathworker' to the dictionary. Rabia is also a professional musician, spoken word artist and alchemic elixir inventor.

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# Take a Deep Breath

*By Jodi Sternoff Cohen*

Deep diaphragm breathing, with long deep exhaling breathes, is the easiest way to help calm the nervous system. As you exhale, your vagus nerve, which runs through the diaphragm, signals the brain to help you drop into the healing "rest and digest" parasympathetic state of the nervous system, calming the "fight or flight" sympathetic nervous system.

Take a deep breath, inhaling slowly into the diaphragm. Then hold it for a moment and slowly exhale. Slow, deep, intentional breathing is one of the best things you can do for your health. Deep breathing not only allows us to take in oxygen and expel waste, it can also help us drop into the parasympathetic "rest and digest" state. Slow deep breathing tells the nervous system that there is no emergency and that it's safe to downshift into the parasympathetic state.

Slow deep breathing can boost our physical and mental energy, help us release toxins and waste, and activate the parasympathetic state. To help you take advantage of all these benefits, I wanted to arm you with tools to help open your lungs and expand your capacity breathe deeply.

## How Essential Oils Help Breathing

The lungs are one of the most powerful channels into the body. When you breathe, air enters your body through your nose or mouth and transfers to the air passages, which carry oxygen to your lungs. Your lungs then pass oxygen into your bloodstream where is it transported to tissues and organs. Therefore, anything you inhale via the lungs quickly travels to every cell of the body. In fact, the entire process from the initial inhalation of an essential oil to a corresponding response in the body can happen in a matter of seconds.

The effectiveness of this delivery channel explains why cocaine is snorted through the nose and why anesthesia is delivered via inhalation. When remedies are inhaled, they go straight into the bloodstream via blood vessels in the nasal cavity. Upon entering the bloodstream, the remedy can travel quickly to the brain, thus eliciting a host of intense effects shortly after snorting.

In addition to it being the fastest channel into the body, the inhalation channel allows remedies to bypass the digestive tract and the liver, where it would be subjected to digestive processing. Read more about why inhalation is the most effective method of consuming Essential Oils HERE.

## Essential Oils for Breathing

Our lungs inhale and exhale an average of 16,000 times a day. If you're experiencing any respiratory problems, ranging from allergies, a cold or indoor air pollution to more serious conditions like asthma, sinusitis, bronchitis or pneumonia, you may have difficulty breathing which may leave you feeling mentally and physically fatigued and can compromise your immune system, ability to detoxify and to drop into the parasympathetic state. Essential oils, with their natural anti-inflammatory and decongestant properties, can help you breathe easily again.

Breathe™ blend contains three different types of Eucalyptus oil, a potent antiseptic, expectorant and decongestant that can help clean and strengthen the lungs. Breathe also contains Peppermint™ Essential Oil whose expectorant qualities may help support upper respiratory congestion caused by asthma, bronchitis, allergies, cold or flu.

To use, apply 1- 2 drops topically on throat and upper chest (Breathe™ contains a lot of hot oils and can turn the skin red. We therefore recommend diluting with castor oil, coconut oil or olive oil before topical application).

Breathe™ can also be inhaled using steam inhalation (Place 2 to 3 cups boiling water + 5 drops of Breathe™ in a bowl, cover your head with a towel, close eyes and bring face close to the bowl and gently inhale the steam) or used with a hot wet towel compress to the lungs and throat areas.

Lung Support™ The lungs serve as a fundamental source of life energy – transporting oxygen from the atmosphere into the capillaries so they can oxygenate blood – as well as an important channel of elimination – releasing carbon dioxide from the bloodstream into the atmosphere. Similarly, emotions like feelings of grief, bereavement, regret, loss, remorse can obstruct the ability of the lungs to accept and relinquish, impeding their function of "taking in" and "letting go." Grief that remains unresolved can become chronic and create disharmony in the lungs, weakening the lung's function of circulating oxygen around the body. When lung function is impaired, it leads to shortness of breath, fatigue and feelings of melancholy. Lung Support™ helps overcome grief and let go of negative experiences.

Apply 2- 3 drops over the lungs. Allow yourself to deeply exhale any grief as you apply the blend. A normal and healthy expression of grief may be expressed as sobbing that originates in the depths of the lungs, including deep breathes and the expulsion of air with the sob.

The parasympathetic state of the Autonomic Nervous System is influenced by external factors like breathing. In fact, deep breathing can trigger the parasympathetic state by stimulating the vagus nerve, which originates in the brain stem and winds through the throat and upper body,

connecting the lungs to the brain. This is a bi-directional signal, meaning that actively focusing on your breath and the movements of your diaphragm, can help trigger the parasympathetic state and that inducing the parasympathetic state can help enhance deep breathing.

To trigger the parasympathetic state, simply apply a drop of the Parasympathetic™ blend to the vagus nerve (behind the earlobe on the mastoid bone).

Sinus Support™ The sinuses make up the upper part of your respiratory tract from your nose into your throat. Any sinus-related issues that lead to restricted, congested or inflamed nasal passages can contribute to breathing difficulty. Sinus Support™ helps to clear and open the nasal passages and supports the relief of sinus pressure from chronic sinus infections and/or sinus issues related to allergies.

To help open sinus passages and improve breathing, apply 2 – 3 drops of Sinus Support™ to a Q-tip and swabbing the inside of the nasal passages 2 – 6 times daily. For optimal effectiveness, you can leave the Q-tip in the nasal passage for up to 20 minutes.

Histamine Balance™ Histamine is a chemical substance that can be released in the lungs and cause narrowing of the bronchial tubes and difficulty breathing. While the release of histamine is a normal defense mechanism, an exaggerated histamine response can contribute to chronic inflammation of the nasal passages, sinuses and lungs contributing to breathing troubles such as wheezing, severe coughs, asthma, or hiccups. The goal is to balance, not block, the histamine response as histamine performs critical functions in body, contributing to HCL production and neurotransmitter signals.

To help reduce over-active histamine reactions and allow healthy breathing patterns, apply 1 – 2 drops of Histamine Balance™ behind your ears, on the back of your neck, or on your sternum to open airways.

## About the Author

Jodi Sternoff Cohen is a best-selling author, award-winning journalist, and founder of Vibrant Blue Oils, where she has combined her training in nutritional therapy and aromatherapy to create unique proprietary blends of organic and wild-crafted essential oils that helped her heal her own anxiety, insomnia, and autoimmunity.

Her #1 bestselling book *Healing with Essential Oils* has been widely praised as one of the most well-researched consumer books in years. In it, Jodi synthesizes decades of leading scientific research to save you from years you might have spent researching your health issues, and gives you the knowledge and tools to 'take action' immediately.

Download a free chapter of her book, *Healing with Essential Oils* at https://vibrantblueoils.lpages.co/

# Yogic Breathing: Ancient and Modern

*By Dr. Alan Ruth, BSc, MA, PhD, MBA, FAIS, FRSB*

## Introduction

Yoga originated in ancient India about 5,000 or more years ago. The name yoga is derived from a Sanskrit word which means "to yoke or join together." The Five Principles of Yoga are the basis for attaining a healthy body and mind through the practice of yoga. One of these principles is proper breathing (pranayama). Today, there are numerous types of yoga and it is difficult to know how many types are being practiced around the world as different variations and/or combinations of elements could represent a 'new' type of yoga.

## Ancient Yogic Breathing

*"For breath is life, and if you breathe well you will live long on earth."* - Sanskrit proverb

Yogic breathing is called 'pranayama.' Pranayama means "to control the breath" or "mastering the life force." According to the ancient philosophy of yoga, breathing controls the flow of prana, the cosmic life force in the body. Also, according to ancient texts, the nose is the proper instrument for breathing rather than the mouth and breathing should be abdominal breathing in a slow and rhythmic pattern, rather than chest breathing. The ancient yogis and yoginis believed that this form of breathing facilitates the flow of prana.

Original yoga manuscripts, for example, Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Gheranda Samhita and Shiva Samhita advocate restraining, keeping in, calming, and holding the breath. They do not make any mention of deep (big) breathing.

To illustrate, below I have listed some translated quotations from Hatha Yoga Pradipika:

*"Respiration being disturbed, the mind becomes disturbed. By restraining respiration, the Yogi gets steadiness of mind."*

*"So long as the (breathing) air stays in the body, it is called life. Death consists in the passing out of the (breathing) air. It is, therefore, necessary to restrain the breath."*

*"Just as lions, elephants and tigers are controlled by and by, so the breath is controlled by slow degrees, otherwise (i.e., by being hasty or using too much force) it kills the practicer himself."*

*"The air should be expelled with proper tact and should be filled in skillfully; and when it has been kept confined properly it brings success."*

You may access an English translation of chapter 2 (on pranayama) of Hatha Yoga Pradipika via this link:

http://terebess.hu/english/HathaYogaPradipika1.pdf

Interestingly, Dr. Artour Rakhimov, a Canadian based Buteyko Breathing Method expert and author, has reported that Professor Buteyko, during one of his public speeches, mentioned that prana was simply CO2. Dr. Rakhimov has gone on to state:

*"... if one reads old Hatha yoga books, while substituting 'CO2' instead of 'prana,' deep physiological sense in traditional yoga teaching, can be found."*

There is an interesting book titled *The Hindu-Yogi Science of Breath* by Yogi Ramacharaka. Yoga Ramacharaka is a pseudonym for William Walker Atkinson (1862-1932) who left his law practice in Chicago to practice Yoga. It is thought that he had an Indian co-author. This book contains 2 interesting chapters on breathing. In one of these chapters (chapter 6, page 20) it states:

*"One of the first lessons in the Yogi Science of Breath; is to learn how to breathe through the nostrils, and to overcome the common practice of mouth-breathing. The breathing mechanism of man is so constructed that he may breathe through the mouth or nasal tubes, but it is a matter of vital importance to him which method he follows, as one brings health and strength and the other disease and weakness. It should not be necessary to state to the student that the proper method of breathing is to take the breath through the nostrils, but alas! the ignorance among civilized people regarding this simple matter is astounding."*

You may access this book via this link: http://www.arfalpha.com/ScienceOfBreath/ScienceOfBreath.pdf

## Modern Yogic Breathing

Recently, I visited Dublin's 3 biggest book stores and scanned the content (including the indexes) of about 40 modern books on yoga. In only 3 of these books was I able to find any mention of nose/nasal breathing. One of these books was co-authored by Dr. Georg Feuerstein, an internationally renowned Yoga researcher. Under the heading 'Breathing through your nose (most of the time)' this book, titled *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga* states:

*"No matter what anybody else tells you, yogic breathing typically occurs through the nose, during both inhalation and exhalation. For traditional yogis and yoginis, the mouth is meant for eating and the nose for breathing."*

Having said this, the book makes the point that a few classical techniques for breath control require you to breathe through the mouth.

The second book, by Adriana Sobi-Wilderman states, under the heading *Breathe correctly*:

*"Most pranayama exercises are done through the nose, and very rarely ever through the mouth. Further, almost all exercises require you to breathe into your abdomen, what is known as belly-breathing. Only in some cases will the breath be taken into the chest. You must therefore learn to isolate your breathing properly. Unless otherwise specified, keep your lips closed and your jaw relaxed. If you're doing the latter correctly, there should be a gap between your upper and*

*lower teeth. The tip of your tongue should also be pressed against the back of your upper teeth."*

The third book was written by Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar, better known as B.K.S. Iyengar. Bellur was the founder of the style of yoga known as "Iyengar Yoga." He was considered one of the foremost yoga teachers in the world. In the book titled *Light on Pranayama*, under the heading *Hints and Cautions* he states:

*"Breathing in pranayama should always be through the nose, except where otherwise stated as in Ch. 24."*

Chapter 24 of his book refers to two pranayamas in which inhalation is done through the mouth and not the nostrils. These are called Sitali Pranayama and Sitakari Pranayama. The pranayamas cool the system. In Sitakari Pranayama the breath is drawn with a hissing sound between the two lips.

While the other books I scanned made no mention of nose/nasal breathing; statements in the main text of some of these books advocated such actions as bigger, deeper breathing, breathing more, and expelling "toxins" like CO2. Indeed, in a book titled *Bikram Yoga* by Bikram Choudhury (described in his book, as

the world's foremost authority on Hot Yoga), he states:

*"For most of the postures I tell you to breathe normally: As you begin to move into each position, inhale as fully as possible, trying to fill the lungs 100 percent; then exhale the breath completely when you achieve the posture. Continue inhaling and exhaling fully while maintaining the posture – this is normal breathing."*

*"Pranayama breathing feels strange at first, because your lungs are not used to maximum expansion and contraction. They will feel tight and small, which is perfectly normal. It might even be impossible for you to inhale fully for six counts (roughly 6 seconds). But with each class, you will find that your breath becomes deeper and fuller."*

Following my 'research,' based on the books I found written by modern Yoga 'gurus' and my extensive research using the World Wide Web, I concluded that modern Yoga 'gurus' generally appear to lack knowledge on healthy breathing and they appear to equate 'breathing' with 'breathing exercises' performed in a yoga studio or at home. There appears to be no recognition of the importance of correct breathing on a 24/7 basis.

## Pranayama and Hyperventilation

Although numerous studies show beneficial health effects of pranayama breathing, some studies show that fast breathing pranayama can cause hyperventilation, which may hyper-activate the sympathetic nervous system, stressing the body more.

Indeed, according to Dr. Artour Rakhimov:

*"You can practice yoga for months and years (the way it is now taught by leading health yoga gurus), and your health may not improve or even can get worse. Why does modern yoga provide very limited benefits? Why was it successful in the past? To put it simply, modern yoga leaders and yoga teachers do not know how to breathe!"*

According to the Indian Yogi, Swami Rama (1925 – 1996), simple breathing exercises such as diaphragmatic breathing can be healthy and helpful. However, in order to really practice pranayama, the knowledge and application of the bandhas is important. Bandhas are "practices for unfolding, controlling, and re-channeling the finer force that is awakened through some of the vigorous pranayama exercises done by yogis."

Without the application of the bandhas, pranayama practices can be injurious to health. Importantly, Swami Rama also noted that the majority of breath practices and pranayama techniques are intended for relatively healthy individuals.

According to him:

*"..., the most widespread caution is that one must never force or 'overdo' any breathing exercise. Creating discomfort of any sort is an immediate cue to release the effort, return to natural breathing and only begin again if it can be done with ease."*

## Precautions and Contraindications

Dr. Shirley Telles and Dr. Nilkamal Singh of the Patanjali Research Foundation, India have noted that some pranayamas are associated with precautions and contraindications.

These include the following:

***Pranayama practices involving changes in breath rate*** e.g. kapalabhati. Based on clinical observations, the precautions and conditions which are contraindicated are:

- Hypertension
- Coronary Artery Disease
- Recent Abdominal/thoracic surgery, and
- Epilepsy (as it can provoke an attack)

The practice may result in over-breathing. Therefore, it should be avoided in individuals who have a tendency to hyperventilate e.g. individuals who have panic attacks.

***Pranayama involving changes in which nostril (left, right, or alternate) is breathed through –*** Based on research findings, of the 3 practices, there are contraindications for right nostril breathing alone. The technique should be avoided in those with, or predisposed to hypertension.

***Bumblebee breathing (Bhramari pranayama) –*** This practice is generally considered safe but based on clinical observations is best avoided in tinnitus.

***Bellows breathing (Bhastrika pranayama) –*** According to Telles and Singh, this practice results in over-breathing and is best avoided in individuals who hyperventilate or have an anxiety disorder. Also, according to the Chopra Center, other contraindications are: pregnancy, uncontrolled hypertension, epilepsy, seizures, or panic disorder.

***Pranayama with breath holding –*** Certain pranayama techniques involve breath holding. According to Telles and Singh, breath holding techniques are not recommended for beginners because if they are practiced incorrectly they can have adverse psychological effects. They also note that such techniques should be avoided in hypertension, coronary artery disease, and in people on a medication for a psychiatric condition.

According to Judith H. Lasater (in the book titled *The Joy of Yoga*):

*"The highest form (of pranayama) is to remain completely aware of the breath, allowing it to come and go without injecting control into the process… This ability to remain aware of the breath and yet not control it is at the heart of meditation. Virtually all systems of meditation begin with simple breathing exercises or with a technique to make you aware of the breath."*

Although Lasater considers not controlling the breath to be an aspect of what she calls the highest form of pranayama, from a health standpoint, such lack of control would seem inappropriate for someone with dysfunctional breathing habits.

Dr. Ines Steward, a New Zealand Buteyko Breathing Method expert has a lot of personal experience with pranayama. In June 2016, she posted an interesting piece on her website titled 'On Yogic Pranayama Breathing Practice.' Among the points she made in this article were the following:

*"Yogic pranayama at its best teaches healthy diaphragm use and at its worst strengthens a pre-existing breathing dysfunction or causes symptoms of ill-health. It all comes back to the knowledge a yoga teacher has about breathing mechanics, breathing physiology, breathing habit development and maintenance, as well as how perceptive he or she is and how much time he or she can spend to focus on an individual client."*

*"All too often, people with an unidentified breathing dysfunction attend a yoga class and believe the well-meaning but under-educated teacher. This may have undesirable and potentially harmful consequences."*

*"If a person has dysfunctional breathing habits with low CO2 levels then doing pranayama could reduce these levels further and symptoms may arise. This is particularly the case when doing an over-breathing practice at rest e.g. before meditation. Symptoms may include chest tightness, constriction in the throat, stuffy or runny nose, heart pain, feeling dizzy, headache, or trouble concentrating during meditation. Probably the worst-case scenario would be an asthma attack or an anxiety attack."*

Ines has outlined what she calls 'The Breathe Right and Live Better Principles for Your Yoga Practice.' These are:

- Breathing silently at all times – the steam train approach is counter-productive
- Use your diaphragm predominantly
- Breathe gently and slowly
- Breathe rhythmically – alternate nostril breathing is a great practice if the breath is not forced in any way
- Breathe evenly – when inhale and exhale are the same length then a coherent heart rate pattern can develop
- Enjoy a natural pause after the exhale
- Allow your own breathing reflex to decide when to breathe in again – after all your body knows better than your head how to self-regulate its chemistry
- See a breathing therapist if pranayama causes symptoms or if you know that your breathing is dysfunctional e.g. you know you are a chest 'breather'

## Conclusion

For the ancient yogis and yoginis, proper breathing involved nose breathing during both inhalation and exhalation. It also involved abdominal (diaphragmatic) breathing in a slow, rhythmic pattern, as opposed to chest breathing. Only a few classical techniques for breath control require breathing through the mouth. Unfortunately, many modern Yoga teachers lack knowledge on what constitutes healthy breathing and what constitutes unhealthy breathing. Also, they seem to equate 'breathing' with 'breathing exercises' carried out in a Yoga session, as opposed to correct breathing 24/7.

Some types of pranayama involve fast breathing or over-breathing (hyperventilation). Unfortunately, and somewhat worryingly, there appears to be a lack of knowledge among many Yoga teachers that pranayama's of this type may be contraindicated for individuals with certain medical conditions or have to be performed with caution. Most pranayama's are intended for healthy or relatively healthy people. However, individuals who do not fall into one of these categories, need to be wary of well-meaning teachers who are under-educated in relation to breathing and may instruct their students to perform certain pranayama's that could result in potentially harmful consequences. As a general rule, Yoga students who have a significant health problem should never overdo any breathing exercise or do one that is physically very demanding for them. A good maxim is "If in doubt, leave it out."

# One-Minute Relaxation Exercise for Busy People

*Dr. Rozina Lakhani*

Are you a busy person? Is it difficult to find long stretches of time to sit down and do long meditations to relax on a regular basis? How would you like to learn one of the most effective techniques to calm your body and your mind in less than a minute?

Let me share an exercise with you that you can do anywhere, anytime, and without needing anything extra. Something, that can bring more focus, more joy and more life to your life!

Although it only takes less than a minute (once you have practiced a few times) it combines the power of some of the most effective techniques. I call it "Feet to Floor" to give you a cue each time your feet touch the floor, especially when entering or leaving a place. It consists of three steps and three breaths.

1. Feel the body from toe to head.
2. Release the tension from head to toe.
3. Take a panoramic view from your brain's camera.

Why don't you follow along? Remember when I ask you to bring attention or feel a part of the body, don't just think about that, actually feel the sensations in that part of the body.

**Step 1:** As you feel your feet touch the floor, bring attention to your feet. Notice how it feels in your toes. Are they warm or cold? Notice how the floor feels under your feet. Is it soft or hard? Notice how your feet feel. Are they dry or sweaty? Notice if you are wearing shoes or slippers or socks or are your feet bare? Now move your attention to your calves and feel how they feel. Are they tense or relaxed? Next bring attention to your knees, then thighs and then hips. Feel the sensations and notice how each part of the body feels. Bring attention to your tummy. Does it feel hungry or full? Bring attention to your chest and notice how you are breathing. Bring attention to your shoulders. Are they hunched up or relaxed? Move your attention to your upper arms, then lower arms, then hands and fingers noticing each part how it feels. Bring attention to your neck, then your face and then your head. Enjoy a nice, smooth breath. Feels good? Right. Let's do the second step.

**Step 2.** When I ask you to take the second breath, I would like you to tense your whole body when you inhale and when I ask you to release, release the tension fast starting from your head to toe with an 'ahh' sound. Ok. Let's take a deep breath and make your body tight

as if you are a big piece of log from a tree. Hold the breath for the count of 3. 1,2,3 and let go while saying "ahh"! As you do that feel all the tension moving from your head, through your body, down your legs and into the earth through your feet. Feel all the tension and worries leave your body and mind in that instant. Feels good? Good. Let's move to third step.

**Step 3.** Now open your eyes and as if you are taking a picture from the camera, take a panoramic view of your surroundings. See everything as if you are seeing things for the first time (the colors, the shapes, the movement), hear whatever sounds you hear, smell and notice all the smells, notice even the absence of any smell, feel the taste in your mouth, is it dry or salivating, experience the kinesthetic feel of the air touching your body or the feeling of warmth or cold on your skin. Say a 'Thank you' in your heart for all your blessings (your life, your body, all your senses and abilities), bring a crescent moon smile on your face and you are done. Move on with whatever you were doing intentionally and mindfully.

How did you feel? Do you feel that your mind is clearer? Does your body feel a little more relaxed?

Most people feel less stressed and are able to focus on and enjoy their next activity better. It is like wiping the blackboard clean instead of writing over an already full blackboard. Although it took me 3 minutes to give the full instruction the first time, as you practice you would be able to do it in less than a minute.

I am sure you have your own ways to clear your mind and release the tension in your body. Use whatever works for you but keep breaking the cycle of stress by taking these breaks. It you don't, stress can increase to the point of causing illness and suffering. If you do, you would be able to manage your stress better and enjoy your life fully.

You can get a FREE audio guide for this exercise by signing up at https://drrozina.com where you can also get more tools like this from the blogs, the #1 bestselling book *Stress to Joy; Your Toolkit to Restore Peace of Mind in Minutes* and the online course "Stress to Joy in 21 days".

To your Health and Happiness.

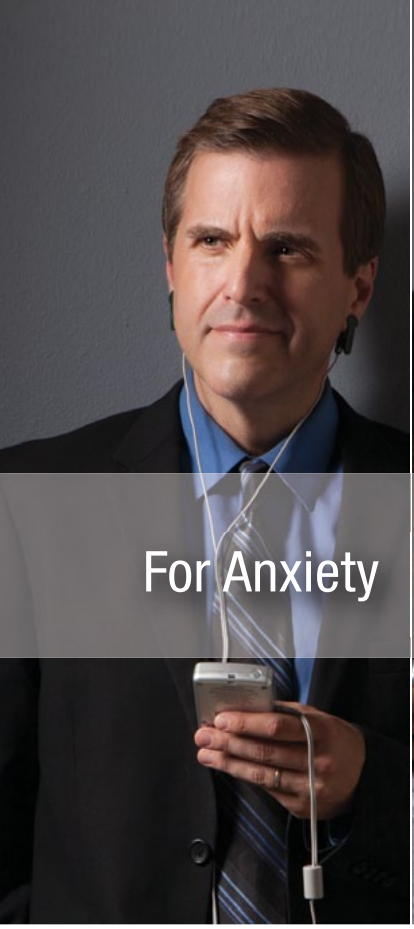
## About the Author

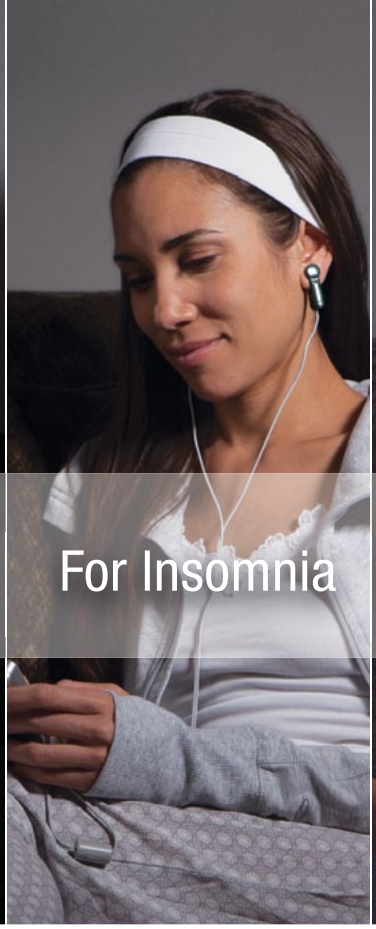
Dr. Rozina Lakhani's mission is to promote health and happiness. She is the bestselling author of the book; *Stress to Joy; Your Toolkit to restore Peace of Mind in Minutes.* She works as a psychiatrist at Shifa Health, a clinical professor at the University of Washington and Medical Director at Residence XII Women Drug Treatment Program. Dr. Rozina received her medical degree from the Aga Khan University in Pakistan and completed her Master of Public Health degree and her residency in Psychiatry from the University of Illinois in Chicago. She is a diplomate of American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. She is also a member of the American Stress Institute and offers talks and trainings to various groups.

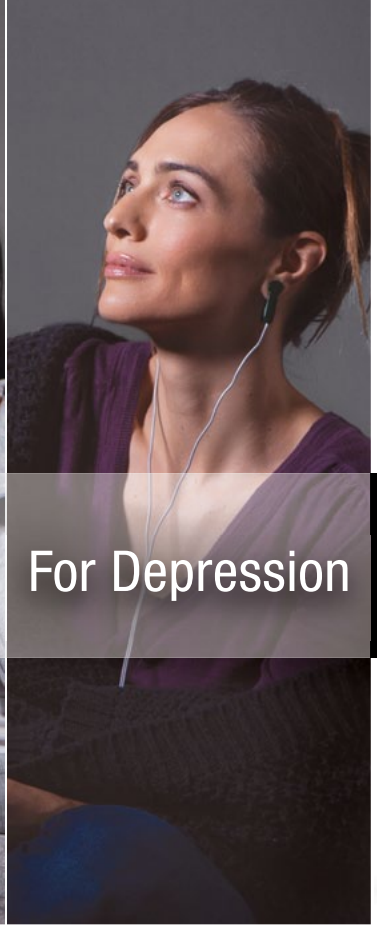
Today, Dr. Rozina lives with her husband and 2 children in the Pacific Northwest.

She is passionate about helping people reduce stress and dreams of a world where people pursue a happy life with love and purpose.

For more information visit Dr. Rozina's website at https://drrozina.com/.

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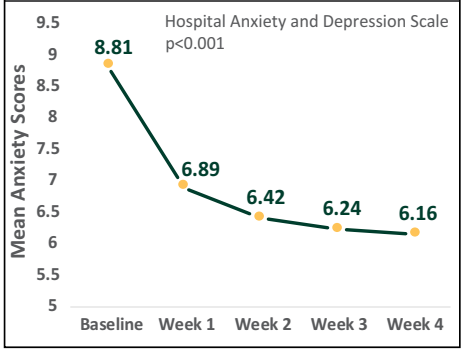
# Faster Than Drugs and Without Their Side Effects

Prescription drugs can come with a long list of nasty side effects. Alpha-Stim provides an option that is fast and safe, with no lasting side effects and no risk of addiction. It is proven effective in improving mood and sleep even in the most difficult patients, as evidenced by the recent study of advanced cancer patients at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

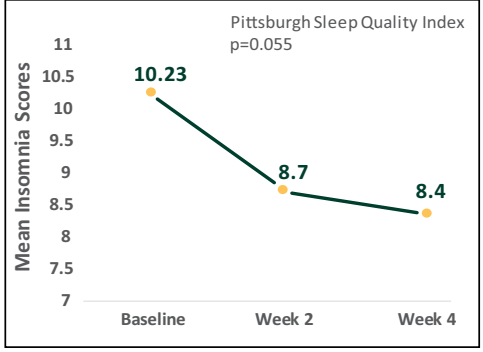
The brain functions electrochemically and can be readily modified by a mild electrical current. Alpha-Stim utilizes cranial electrotherapy stimulation (CES) to deliver the only patented waveform for a medical device of its class, with more than 100 clinical research studies over 37 years. It's easy to use by simply wearing earclips for 20-60 minutes a day while doing normal activities at home or work.

**LATEST RESEARCH: The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, "Cranial Electrotherapy Stimulation for the Management of Depression, Anxiety, Sleep Disturbance, and Pain in Patients with Advanced Cancer"**

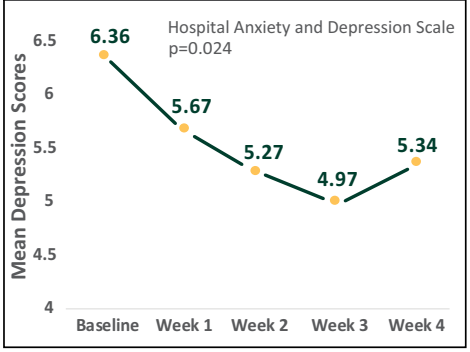
## DECREASED ANXIETY




## INCREASED SLEEP TIME




## DECREASED DEPRESSION




**REFERENCE**

Yennurajalingam S, Kang D-H, Hwu W-J, Padhye NS, Masino C, Dibaj SS, Liu DD, Williams JL, Lu Z, Bruera E. Cranial electrotherapy stimulation for the management of depression, anxiety, sleep disturbance, and pain in patients with advanced cancer: a preliminary study. *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management.* 2018 Feb; 55(2): 198-204.

## HELP FOR YOU IS HERE.

To get started and to see more clinical data, visit **www.Alpha-Stim.com/AIS** or call **940-463-5422**.

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