



BREATHING FOR WELLBEING

By Joanne Rogers

BREATHING PATTERNS

Our Breath is essential for the life and function of every cell in our body. Our brain requires more oxygen than any other organ.

The normal breathing rate for an adult is between twelve and eighteen breaths per minute, more than this can indicate stress.

We don't have to think about breathing - it happens automatically, but over the years we tend to develop unhealthy breathing habits. Lifestyle, what we eat and our exposure to stress, all have an effect on our emotions, muscles and posture. This affects our breathing, causing it to be shallow and rapid, depleting our oxygen intake and draining energy from the body.

BREATHING PROCESS

When you inhale through the nose air is filtered, warmed, and humidified. The muscles in the chest wall contract, lifting the ribs and pulling them, outward. The diaphragm moves downward enlarging the chest cavity. Air pressure reduces, oxygen flows into the lungs. The lungs have a natural elasticity; as they recoil from the stretch of inhalation, air flows back out of the lungs.

A YOGA PERSPECTIVE

The breath and mind are intrinsically related, everything we do affects our breathing. When we are angry or fearful our breath tends to become shallow, fast and irregular, when we are completely focused on a task we tend to suspend our breath.

The yogis realized thousands of years ago the link of the breath to our nervous system and the vital importance of oxygen to all systems of the body. They developed various breathing techniques called 'Pranayama' (control of the breath), to increase vitality of mind, body and consciousness.

When we begin to focus our awareness on the breathing process we reverse our unhealthy breathing patterns and break the negative cycle. *By simply changing the way we breathe, we can literally change our physical, mental and emotional state.*

CONSCIOUS BREATHING

Observing our breath, we begin to focus and quiet the mental chatter of the mind. As a result, we think more clearly, which means conscious breathing is a valuable tool for self management. It draws the senses inwards and deepens awareness. Conscious breathing is a valuable tool for dealing with confrontations, fear, agitation anger and confusion.

The importance, therefore, of breathing to our overall wellbeing and effective functioning on a physical, emotional and social level cannot be overstated.

The beauty of good breathing is that it is easy to change breathing habits and you are able to use the calming techniques anywhere at any time.

Take a moment right now to observe the rhythm of your breath, is the breath fast or slow, deep or shallow, regular or irregular, forced or effortless, is the texture smooth or jerky, are you breathing through your mouth or nose.

Now, allow the breath to ease deeply in and out through your nose in a smooth, circular rhythm and feel the sense of calmness and clarity that will come over you.

Start pausing to take note of your breathing patterns throughout each day, and enjoy the massive boost to your wellbeing that will come from this tiny change of habit.