

Pranayama & Relaxation

Full Relaxation

Lying in a comfortable reclining position, bend the knees if low back is uncomfortable or use a cushion under knees. Lengthen the back of the neck chin tucked slightly toward chest. Take a mental walk through the body down to the toes & back up to the top of the head checking how it feels. Now pull toes up toward the face tighten into the ankles tighten the calf muscles pull the knee caps up & press them towards the floor, tighten up the thigh muscles roll slightly hold the tension as you pull up into the abdomen tightening up the genital & anal area toward the rib cage, as if stopping yourself spending a penny. Hold the tension be really aware of it. Then let it go feel the tension flowing down from the abdomen through the legs & out of the toes as the relaxation flows into the body the legs relax & feet gently fall to the side. Take a moment to look at this. Repeat this 3 times.

Now make a clenched fist with both hands tighten up the fore arms press the elbows into the floor tighten up the upper arms as you press the shoulders into the floor the rib cage lifts as you tighten right up into the shoulders. Hold this tension be aware of it as it mounts up then release the fists relax the shoulders back to the floor, feel the tension flow down from the shoulders through the arms & out through the finger tips as relaxation flows in to replace it. Take a moment to look at this. Repeat 3 times.

Now lift the head from the floor a few inches feel the tension as it rises up the back sides & front of the neck building up into the jaws & the back of the head. Hold the tension be really aware of it. Then let it go gently bringing the head back to the floor slightly lengthening the back of the neck chin tucked slightly toward the chest. Feel the tension flowing out of the body the back of the head feels soft sinking into the floor as the relaxation flows in. Take a moment to look at this. Repeat 3 times.

Finally roll head gently side to side & then back to centre. Make a bubble inside the mouth & roll it around the cheeks the upper lip then lower lip around the roof & back of the mouth gently feeling & releasing

any tension that remains. Let the tongue rest gently against the roof of the mouth just behind the teeth that are slightly apart with mouth gently closed.

Let the body sink into the floor feel how light it is now take another mental walk through the body, check the difference from when you began the exercise, if you find any remaining tension just repeat the tensing & relaxing technique.

Full relaxation can also be done in one movement of tightening into all areas of the body mentioned above & then letting go, sinking into the mat. Repeat three times

Three Part Yoga Breath

To establish natural full yoga breathing we practice the three part breath in a reclining position first breathing into the abdomen then into the rib cage & then up into the collar bones, filling each part of the lungs gently extending the breath, like a bellows filling, without any strain this is important. Improving the way we breathe oxygenates the body efficiently improving our health & stamina. On a subtle level we can become aware of the prana, subtle energy, & the channels its flows through in the body.

Breathing through the nostrils, mouth gently closed the tongue resting against the roof of the mouth just behind the teeth that are slightly apart. Exhale & on an inhalation follow the breath with a feather light focus down to the abdomen extend the abdomen slightly as if filling a balloon, it should rise a little. Be aware of filling this balloon like space into the back as well as the tummy very gently & with no strain. As you exhale follow the breath up through the body & out of the nostrils feel the abdomen relax back toward the floor at the end of the exhalation gently squeeze a little back toward the spine to expel the last of the breath. As you practice this abdominal breathing it will become natural. Take a few breaths then relax.

Now move your attention to the rib cage exhale & on an inhalation gently follow the breath into the sides of the rib cage feel them expanding a little be aware of sending the breath into the back of the

rib cage feel you are filling the whole of this space, without any strain. Exhale gently following the breath out through the nostrils as the rib cage contracts & relaxes. Take a few breaths then relax.

After an exhalation then inhaling follow the breath toward the top of the lungs to the area just under the collar bones feel that you are filling this space into the top of the shoulder blades as well, without lifting the shoulders. There will not be much physical movement but with practice you will begin to fill this area of the lungs more efficiently. Exhale & follow the breath out through the nostrils feel the space below the collar bones gently deflate. Take a few breaths then relax.

Now put all three parts of this breathing together into one breath. After an exhalation inhale gently into the abdomen then let the breath flow up into the sides & back of the rib cage then up toward the top of the lungs under the collar bone. This should be done smoothly & without any strain so do not try to breathe deeper than you have the capacity for, with practice the breath will soon become naturally extended. Exhale gently following the breath feel the abdomen relax the rib cage deflate & the collar bones fall when air is fully exhaled begin the next inhalation. Repeat a few breaths then relax.

This is the basis for all Yogic Pranayama breathing it is also a great preparation for sitting on your cushion relaxing energising & focusing the mind & body ready for meditation. It is useful when you feel the body or mind sinking in meditation to revitalise it, it aids concentration & helps us become aware of the subtle spacious body we normally have no perception of.

Alternate Nostril Breathing - Nadi Shosana

Sit in a comfortable posture, with spine erect. Keep the breath smooth & without strain

Close right nostril & breathe out through left nostril.

Breathe in through left nostril, close left nostril & release right nostril

Breathe out through right nostril

Breathe in through right nostril, close right nostril & release left nostril

Breathe out through left nostril

Breathe in through left nostril, close left nostril & release right nostril
Breathe out through right nostril, breathe in through right nostril & so on
Continue with this alternate breathing keeping the breath smooth &
without any strain for 4 to 5 min to gain the best benefit of this
exercise, which is also called the Tranquilising Breath

Rythmic Breathing

Sit in a comfortable posture, with spine erect. It's important there is no strain when breathing so if you feel you are running out of breath at any time just speed up your count. Using the full 3 part yogic breath, allow the mind to gently focus on the channels that run from the two nostrils toward the spine connecting to the central channel that goes to the top of the head & down either side of the inner spine to the perineum tail bone as you inhale & exhale. Using the breath, letting the mind ride on the breath allows you to explore the subtle body so you become familiar with it.

Exhale gently through nostrils, mouth gently closed.

Inhale to a count of 4 hold to a count of 2

Exhale to a count of 4 hold to a count of 2 - do this for 3 rounds then increase the ratio to;

6; 3; 6; 3 - for 3 rounds then increase the ratio to;

8; 4; 8; 4 - for 3 rounds then go back to

6; 3; 6; 3 - for 3 rounds then go back to

4; 2; 4; 2 - for 3 rounds

Once you feel comfortable with this count increase the exhalation ratio as follows;

4; 2; 6; 3 - for 3 rounds then increase ratio to;

6; 3; 8; 4 - for 3 rounds then increase ratio to;

8; 4; 10; 5 for 3 rounds then decrease ratio to;

6; 3; 8; 4 - for 3 rounds then decrease ratio to;

4; 2; 6; 3 - for 3 rounds

Then increase the space between breaths - go very gently no strain;

4; 4; 6; 6 - for 3 rounds then increase ratio to;

6; 6 ; 8; 8 - for 3 rounds then increase ratio to;
8; 8; 10; 10 - for 3 rounds then decrease ratio to;
6; 6 ; 8; 8 - for 3 rounds then decrease ratio to;
4; 4; 6; 6 - for 3 rounds

9 Round Breathing

Using the full 3 part yogic breath without any strain, allow the mind to gently settle on the breath focusing on the air as it goes in & out of the nostrils. There are three main channels in the body; the central channel is like a transparent tube extending through the centre of your body from the crown chakra to the secret chakra at the base of the spine. The two side channels start from the nostrils going up into the head & curving back (like umbrella handles) & down running parallel to the central channel, meeting it just below the naval chakra (4 finger widths below tummy button) The left channel is white, the right channel is red & the central channel is transparent - sometimes seen as blue.

Breathe in slowly through the left nostril, gently focusing on the air the prana entering & flowing down the left (white) channel - tuck the breath & mind across into the right (red) channel as you exhale slowly through right nostril. As you breathe collect all your desire & attachment from every pore of your body as it is expelled it dissolves & disappears completely. Do this 3 times, for 3 breaths.

Breathe in slowly through right nostril, gently focusing on the air the prana entering & flowing down the right (red) channel - tuck the breath & mind across into the left (white) channel breathing out through the left nostril. As you breathe collect all your aversion impatience & hatred from every pore of your body as it is expelled it dissolves & disappears completely. Do this 3 times, for 3 breaths.

Then breathe in through both nostrils bring the breath & prana down both channels & tuck the breath & mind into the central channel just below the navel. As you breathe collect all the ignorance the not knowing or confusion (the cause of all our suffering) from every pore of

your body as it is expelled through the crown of the head it dissolves & disappears completely. Do this 3 times, for 3 breaths.

Extend this breath & visualisation by bringing the breath along with your saliva down the central channel. Hold the breath down at the level of the naval chakra. Gently tighten your pelvic & genital muscles bringing that energy up to meet the breath/prana energy at naval chakra. Hold this upward & downward moving energy until it feels slightly uncomfortable then gently release the breath. The breath is exhaled through the nostrils whilst you imagine all your ignorance energy is expelled through the crown of your head. Your energy winds, prana, disperse into the central channel & dissolve at the heart chakra instead of being exhaled outside.

Extra Resources;

‘The Breathing Books’ Donna Farhi

Breathworks - use Google search

‘Light on Pranayama’ B.K.S. Iyengar (the bible!)

Look out for any classes or courses by Phil Xerri a classical pranayama teacher who was the student of my pranayama teacher Phil Jones.

9 Round Breathing - extra notes

Using the full 3 part yogic breath - see previous pranayama note I sent to you. Allow the mind to gently settle on the breath focusing on the air as it goes in & out of the tip of the nostrils. There are three main channels in the body; the central channel is like a transparent tube extending through the centre of your body from the crown chakra to the secret chakra at the base of the spine. The two side channels start from the nostrils going up into the head & curving back (like umbrella handles) & down through the body running parallel to the central channel, meeting it just below the naval chakra (4 finger widths below tummy button) The left channel is white, the right channel is red & the central channel is transparent - sometimes seen as blue.

Breathe in slowly through the left nostril - **close the right nostril** - gently focusing on the air the prana entering & flowing down the left (white) channel - tuck the breath & the mind resting on it across into the right (red) - **release the right nostril & close the left nostril** - channel as you exhale slowly through right nostril. As you breathe collect all your desire & attachment from every pore of your body as it is expelled it dissolves & disappears completely. Do this 3 times, for 3 breaths.

Breathe in slowly through right nostril- **close the left nostril** - gently focusing on the air - the prana - entering & flowing down the right (red) channel - tuck the breath & mind across into the left (white) channel - **release the left nostril & close the right nostril** - breathing out through the left nostril. As you breathe in collect all your aversion impatience & hatred from every pore of your body & as you breathe out it is expelled from the body it dissolves & disappears completely. Do this 3 times, for 3 breaths.

Then breathe in through both nostrils bringing the mind the breath & prana down both channels to just below the naval where it crosses into the central channel. As you breathe in collect all the ignorance (the cause of all our suffering) from every pore of your body as you breathe out it is expelled through the crown of the head - or through the point in-between the eyebrows, the 'third eye' - it dissolves & disappears completely. Do this 3 times, for 3 breaths.

Extend this breath & visualisation by bringing the breath along with your saliva - as you swallow - down the central channel. Hold the breath down at the level of the naval chakra. Gently tighten your pelvic & genital muscles bringing that energy up to meet the breath/prana energy at the naval chakra. Hold this upward & downward moving energy until it feels slightly uncomfortable then gently release the breath. The breath is exhaled through the nostrils whilst you imagine all your ignorance energy is expelled through the chakra at the crown of your head (or the third eye). Your energy winds, the prana, disperse into the central channel & dissolve at the heart chakra instead of being exhaled outside - try to imagine this