

BREATH THERAPY

The art of breathing deeply is often referred to as "relaxed breathing", it is the essential ingredient of many deep relaxation techniques such as: progressive relaxation, some forms of meditation, autogenics and hypnotherapy. When practicing relaxed breathing the aim is to make full use of our abdomen rather than breathing from our chest, this way we ensure full inhalation and total exhalation.

To derive the benefits of breathing properly we need to ensure our "out" breath is slightly longer than our "in" breath, this guarantees full expulsion of toxic substances from our lungs, and also creates a series of electrical impulses that instruct the brain that all is well, which in turn creates a feeling of calm and relaxation. Anxiety cannot exist in such an environment. Hence relaxed breathing is an invaluable self-help tool, as it affects our chemical and hormonal balance in a way that allows us to develop greater self control, by working with our bodies rather than against them.

The facts about poor breathing:

1. **Air hunger (hyperventilation):** Recent research makes it clear that 7 out of 10 people going to the doctor, go with complaints that relate to inadequate breathing, which is described as hyperventilation syndrome. However, they are often prescribed tranquillizers or other inappropriate medication due to the ignorance around the importance of proper breathing and its therapeutic properties.
2. **Stress caused by events real or imaginary:** Breathing tends to go astray when people feel powerless. This in turn contributes to a feeling of dis-ease and dis-harmony within oneself. Hence why beginning to take control of our breathing is so crucial. Breathing is sometimes referred to as a form of "internal massage", because it is so soothing, both physically and emotionally. Use it regularly and see.
3. **Shallow breathing:** Breathing should not be from the chest but from the abdomen. The less tension there is around the heart the better it functions. Shallow breathing, which is characterized by our chests excessively moving whilst we breathe, creates tension around the heart. Stress around the heart feeds to the brain, which stimulates the release of toxic hormones. Breathing properly releases this stress and allows the person to relax, therefore producing healing hormones.
4. **Harmony and peace of mind:** Inner control and stability can be initiated and sustained through breathing correctly. Correct breathing offers us clarity, it cools the mind and offers us access to our reservoirs of power. If we bring greater control into our inner world, we will bring greater control into our outer world and relaxed breathing can help us achieve this goal.
5. **Letting go of the past:** It is possible to relax out of the past into the present by making controlled breathing part of our "self empowerment plan". Relaxed breathing is a form of therapy, because it is about "letting go" of tension, which makes it possible for one to make greater contact with their authentic self and promote the healing process. In order to derive the various benefits for both mind and body we need to employ relaxed breathing with some consistency in our life.

6. **The body is robbed of nourishment:** One of the chief functions of the blood is to help oxygenate and oxidise; a lack of oxygen leads to lack of life in the body and a reduction in energy.
7. **The body is poisoned and polluted:** The waste products of the body which are meant to be eliminated by a powerful exhalation are instead stored in the lungs and kept in the circulation, making it very difficult for good, clean air to do its job and help retain our health.
8. **Poor complexion:** Poor breathers have an 'anaemic look'. Good breathing supports good circulation, which feeds and nourishes the skin to promote a clear bright, healthy complexion.
9. **Poor digestion:** The digestive processes rely on oxygenation of the food. Lack of sufficient oxygen means imperfect nutrition, imperfect elimination and imperfect health.
10. **Physical illness:** Many ailments are created by or added to by the way we breathe, mouth breathing for instance, as opposed to nostril breathing can contribute to: colds, influenza, bronchitis and catarrhal infections, and even lung damage; so, wherever possible, breathe via your nose rather than your mouth.
11. **Poor circulation:** Poor breathers often complain of feeling the cold. They lack the supply of warm blood to the extremities, such as the hands and feet, and so the cold is experienced more intensely in these areas.
12. **Shallow breathing:** Can also cause and contribute to; muscle pain, paresthesia (numbing sensations of the skin), tremor and tetany (muscular spasms caused by mineral deficiency), gastrointestinal dysfunction, aerophagy (intestinal gas), tachycardia (increased heartbeat), shortness of breath and excessive sighing.
13. **Poor mental performance:** Weak and erratic breathing patterns can induce a fear, panic, anxiety, or phobic response, and can also disturb our memory and concentration. With the stress imposed on the central nervous system by poor breathing, other symptoms can include faintness, dizziness and vision problems.
14. **Lower resistance to stress:** Hyperventilation and stress are inseparable - the performance of one directly influences the performance of the other. Therefore, where there is poor breathing there is also a reduced ability to cope with stress. Equally, when one is under stress, breathing then goes astray. So, one way to regain mental and emotional control in the midst of a difficult situation is to control your breathing for several minutes. This naturally reduces the level of stress and anxiety you are experiencing as the body's chemical/hormonal response is altered to help you deal positively with the situation.