



LEARNING TO BREATHE PAYS OFF!



Breathing technique

Tension, excess stress, the consumer society (with its always more, faster and higher) and the emotions (anger, fear, envy and jealousy) contract our abdominal muscles and increase our breathing rate. Modern life changes natural deep breathing; it becomes thoracic and shallow. The lack of tone stems from poor oxygenation of the body and insufficient elimination of gaseous waste. To set the system straight, it is important to learn how to breathe properly. As well, proper breathing will enable you to control your emotions and find calm in stressful moments. If you breathe with your chest rather than your abdomen, you may have a sensation of heaviness and shortness of breath, even pain or hyperventilation. On the other hand, abdominal breathing produces a calming affect, thereby allowing stress sensations to decrease.

1. Stretch out and get comfortable on your bed or sofa, and close your eyes;
2. Put one hand on your abdomen and the other hand on your chest (you can also put a book there);
3. Be aware of the movements in your abdomen and chest that accompany your breathing;
4. Now try to reduce the movements of your chest as much as possible so that you only breathe with your abdomen;
5. Push out your abdomen when inhaling (through your nose, counting up to five) as if it were a big balloon slowly filling up and emptying, and contract your abdomen when exhaling (through your mouth, counting up to five slowly without effort or interruption). The hand on your abdomen should rise, and the hand on your chest should barely move;
6. Breathe through your mouth and push out as much air as you can while contracting your abdominal muscles. The hand on your abdomen must move as you exhale while the other hand must remain almost motionless.

Practice this exercise about three times in a row (three inhalations/exhalations) to start in order to avoid the risk of hyperventilation. Then gradually increase as you get used to it.

If you have trouble breathing with your abdomen, put a somewhat heavy object there (a book, for example), and try to raise it with your abdomen when inhaling and lower it when exhaling while controlling the movement, which must remain fluid and without interruption. The weight will help you to increase your sensations and encourage abdominal breathing.



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Abdominal breathing is intended to slow down the breathing process. With time and practice, you will realize that this slowdown occurs more and more quickly, that one abdominal breath may be enough to relax you. It is a form of quick relaxation that may be used in any circumstance.

Breathing properly pays off.

There are many advantages. The regular practice of relaxation increases:

- control of psychological reactions to stressful factors;
- concentration and attention;
- muscle relaxation;
- digestive system function;
- intensity of alpha brain waves, which promote rest and relaxation;
- creativity.

And decreases:

- stress;
- heart rate;
- blood pressure and hypertension;
- breathing rate;
- muscle tension;
- anxiety;
- heart disease;
- absenteeism due to illness.



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