

Breath Work

Breathing is so fundamental, and yet we often forget about it. We frequently constrict our breathing, limiting the vital nourishment that it brings us. Unconsciously we may hold our breath, or breathe quickly and shallowly. Becoming more aware of breath increases the energy available to us and frees up our ability to breathe naturally and fully. Constricted breathing is closely related to tension; freeing our breath will allow us physical ease. When the breath flows more freely, we can think more clearly and make full use of our capacities.

The Experiment:

For this work, you don't need to change anything about how you breathe. You are just going to notice. Sit comfortably and upright, in a way that allows full expansion of your chest. For ten to twenty minutes, just follow your breath. Allow the sensations of your entire body to come to life. Get the feel of yourself sitting there, breathing. Notice your weight against the surface you are sitting on, giving your weight pound for pound to the earth. Notice the tingling of your skin, the feel of your clothing against your skin, the sensation of any muscular tension.

Notice what moves in your body as you breathe in, breathe out. Notice the sensation of air moving through your nose, down your throat, into your lungs. If thoughts, feelings or judgments arise, simply include them in your awareness and let them go. Don't try to improve your breathing. Just follow and sense what you can.

Breathe in and out through your nose. Let your belly be relaxed, expanding as you inhale and retracting as you exhale. Notice the sensation of the inhale, of fresh air entering your body. Notice the natural pause before the exhale. Notice the feel of the exhale, allowing it its full sensation of letting go. And then rest in the pause. There is a natural rest between the exhale and the inhale. This pause is similar to the pause in music – there is vital preparation for what is to follow. It is not necessary to hold your breath. Let your inhalation arise by itself, when it is ready.

Let your breath engage and fill every part of your body, especially your belly, back, spine and chest.

When you are ready to end the experiment, pause a moment to simply enjoy the experience of being in your body and being in your breath. You are a breathing being, alive right now and here. Let yourself feel the mystery and miracle of your breath and your life.

Carry it with you

Through out the day bring your awareness to your breathing. Give yourself a small break to focus on your breath, freeing it up and resting in it. Notice when your breath becomes constricted or impeded. When do you hold your breath? When does your breath speed up? How does your breath respond to stress? How do you respond to movement? Just by being aware of the various ways your breath is impacted by your life, over time and without effort, you will begin to alter your breathing to be full, natural, and free.

Note: there are many approaches to breath. Experiment and enjoy those that work the best for you regularly!