

Science & Soul: Breathing Your Future into Reality

"Every breath is an opportunity to choose who you become."

By Dr. Mike Van Thielen, PhD.

Most people think of breathing as something that simply keeps them alive. Yet across both modern neuroscience and ancient wisdom traditions, breath has always been regarded as something far more profound. It is the bridge between the conscious and subconscious mind, between the body and awareness, between the visible and the invisible.

If thoughts create possibilities, breath creates the conditions in which those possibilities can take root.

Unlike your heartbeat or digestion, breathing is one of the few bodily functions that is both automatic and under conscious control. This makes it a unique doorway into the autonomic nervous system. Every conscious breath sends information to the brain. Slow, deep breathing communicates safety. The Vagus nerve becomes more active, heart rate slows, stress hormones decrease, and the nervous system shifts from survival into regulation. In this state, creativity expands, awareness increases, and the brain becomes more receptive to learning and change.

Ancient yogis understood something remarkable long before modern science began studying the nervous system. They observed that we rarely breathe equally through both nostrils. At almost any given moment, one nostril is naturally more open than the other. This phenomenon, now recognized by science as the **nasal cycle**, alternates throughout the day, typically every 60 to 180 minutes. Although the exact timing varies from person to person, your dominant nostril is constantly changing.

You can experience this yourself. Place a finger beneath your nose and gently exhale, or close one nostril at a time while breathing naturally. You'll almost always notice that one side allows more airflow than the other.

In yogic tradition, this is far more than anatomical curiosity. The left nostril is associated with **Ida**, the lunar channel, representing intuition, receptivity, creativity, and the parasympathetic qualities of rest and restoration. The right

nostril corresponds with **Pingala**, the solar channel, symbolizing action, focus, logic, vitality, and outward expression.

This ancient understanding has inspired various breathing practices intended to influence one's state of mind. Left-nostril breathing has traditionally been used to promote calmness and relaxation, while right-nostril breathing has been used to encourage alertness and energy. Modern research has found that unilateral nostril breathing can produce measurable physiological effects, although the mechanisms are still being explored.



Between these two channels lies a third pathway known as **Sushumna**, the central channel. Yogic philosophy describes this as the pathway through which kundalini energy ascends, connecting the seven major chakras and higher states of consciousness. Whether viewed as a literal energetic system or a symbolic map of human awareness, Sushumna represents balance, the point where opposing forces dissolve into unity.

This brings us to one of the most fascinating moments in every breath.

The inhale ends. The exhale begins. Then, after the exhale, something extraordinary happens. For a brief instant, there is nothing. No inhaling. No exhaling. Only silence.

Ancient yogis believed that during this natural pause, Ida and Pingala are momentarily balanced, allowing Sushumna to become fully accessible. In that instant, awareness rests beyond effort, beyond striving, beyond the constant chatter of the thinking mind.

Whether you interpret this spiritually or psychologically, the pause after the exhale is unique. The nervous system is deeply regulated, the mind is exceptionally quiet, and there is a profound sense of stillness.

This is the portal. This is the open doorway. This is the moment to plant the seed.

As you rest in that brief silence, gently visualize one clear intention. Not from a place of wanting or lack, but from the feeling that it already exists. Experience it with all your senses. Feel gratitude, joy, freedom, peace, as though your future has already arrived.

One of the oldest meditation mantras beautifully complements this practice.

With every inhale, silently hear the sound **So**. With every exhale, hear **Hum**.

Traditionally translated as "**I Am That**". So Hum reminds us that we are not separate from life but expressions of it. Every breath becomes a quiet remembrance that we are already connected to the intelligence and creativity we seek.

Why might this practice be powerful?

From a neuroscience perspective, repeated visualization performed in a deeply regulated state may strengthen neural pathways associated with attention, emotional learning, and goal-directed behavior. Mental rehearsal activates many of the same brain regions involved in performing real actions. When repeated consistently, these patterns can influence perception, decision-making, habits, and behavior. In other words, the subconscious begins to treat the envisioned future as increasingly familiar, making you more likely to recognize opportunities and act in alignment with that vision.

From a spiritual perspective, many traditions teach that the stillness following the exhale temporarily quiets the habitual activity of the analytical mind, the

inner gatekeeper or ego that constantly questions, judges, and filters our experience. In this silence, your intention is symbolically planted more deeply into the subconscious, where lasting beliefs and behaviors originate. According to many contemplative traditions and teachings on manifestation, thoughts infused with coherent emotion become energetic intentions that interact with the greater field of consciousness. Whether one interprets this as the subconscious shaping perception and behavior, or as participating in a deeper universal intelligence, the invitation is the same: plant your seed with clarity, conviction, and gratitude, then release the need to control how it unfolds.

SCIENCE & SOUL

BREATHING YOUR FUTURE INTO REALITY

The breath is the bridge between the science of your body and the power of your consciousness.

THE SCIENCE
Conscious breathing regulates the nervous system, shifting you from stress and survival into a state of safety, clarity, and receptivity.

- Activates the parasympathetic nervous system
- Lowers stress hormones and calms the mind
- Improves focus, emotional balance, and well-being
- Creates the ideal state for learning, healing, and change

IDA
Left Nostril
Lunar • Cooling
Intuition • Rest
Receptive Energy

PINGALA
Right Nostril
Solar • Heating
Action • Focus
Active Energy

SUSHUMNA
Central Channel
Balance • Integration
Spiritual Awakening
Kundalini • Chakras

YOUR NOSTRILS ARE CHANNELS
One nostril is always more open than the other. This natural cycle (nasal cycle) changes every 60–180 minutes.

HOW TO CHECK:
Close one nostril at a time and breathe out gently. Notice which side has more flow.

HOW TO USE THIS:
Left nostril more open? Slow down, rest, meditate, connect within.
Right nostril more open? Engage, create, plan, take inspired action.
Balance both through conscious breathing.

THE PORTAL
THE PAUSE AFTER THE EXHALE
In the natural pause after you exhale, all channels balance and the central channel opens. This is a moment of pure stillness—no breath, no thought, no gatekeeper. Your ego quiets. This is the open door. This is when you plant the seed.

THE 40-DAY MANIFESTATION PROTOCOL
40 DAYS
10–15 MINUTES / DAY
111 BREATHS
Commit fully. The repeated rhythm of conscious breath and clear intention reprograms your mind, regulates your energy, and aligns you with the life you are creating.
BREATHE. BELIEVE. RECEIVE.

INHALE
So
Breathe deep into your belly, then expand into your chest. Hear “So.”

PAUSE AFTER EXHALE
THE PORTAL
Rest in silence. Visualize what you truly desire as if it is already yours. Feel gratitude.

EXHALE
Hum
Exhale slowly and completely. Hear “Hum.”

FROM SCIENCE: You change your state. **FROM SOUL:** You plant your intention. **BY LAW:** What you send out, you magnetize.

Like every seed planted in fertile soil, transformation requires patience. The breath prepares the soil. The pause plants the seed. Your daily actions provide sunlight and water. Over time, what once existed only as an inner vision begins to express itself in the outer world.

For the next **40 days**, dedicate **10 to 15 minutes** each morning to this practice, completing approximately **111 conscious breaths**. Breathe deeply

into your belly, then allow the breath to expand into your chest as you silently hear **So**. Exhale slowly and completely while hearing **Hum**. At the natural pause after each exhale, rest in stillness for just a moment and gently place your intention into that silent space before allowing the next inhale to arise naturally.

Forty days from now, you may find that your greatest manifestation is not simply what has appeared in your life, but who you have become through the practice of conscious breathing.

References

Breathwork, Nervous System & Vagus Nerve

Brown, R. P., & Gerbarg, P. L. (2005). *Sudarshan Kriya Yogic Breathing in the Treatment of Stress, Anxiety, and Depression: Part I—Neurophysiologic Model*. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 11(1), 189–201.

Jerath, R., Edry, J. W., Barnes, V. A., & Jerath, V. (2006). *Physiology of Long Pranayamic Breathing: Neural Respiratory Elements May Provide a Mechanism That Explains How Slow Deep Breathing Shifts the Autonomic Nervous System*. *Medical Hypotheses*, 67(3), 566–571.

Laborde, S., Mosley, E., & Thayer, J. F. (2017). *Heart Rate Variability and Cardiac Vagal Tone in Psychophysiological Research*. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 213.

Porges, S. W. (2011). *The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-Regulation*. W.W. Norton.

Porges, S. W. (2021). *Polyvagal Safety: Attachment, Communication, Self-Regulation*. W.W. Norton.

Noble, D. J., & Hochman, S. (2019). *Hypothesis: Pulmonary Afferent Activity Patterns During Slow Deep Breathing Contribute to Relaxation via Vagal Pathways*. *Frontiers in Physiology*.

Neuroscience, Visualization & Neuroplasticity

Doidge, N. (2007). *The Brain That Changes Itself*. Viking Press.

Davidson, R. J., & Goleman, D. (2017). *Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body*.

Hebb, D. O. (1949). *The Organization of Behavior*.

Pascual-Leone, A., et al. (1995). *Modulation of Muscle Responses Evoked by Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation During the Acquisition of New Motor Skills*. Journal of Neurophysiology.

Decety, J. (1996). *The Neurophysiological Basis of Motor Imagery*. Behavioural Brain Research.

Meditation & Mindfulness

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full Catastrophe Living*.

Goleman, D., & Davidson, R. (2017). *Altered Traits*.

Lutz, A., Dunne, J. D., & Davidson, R. J. (2007). *Meditation and the Neuroscience of Consciousness*.

Nasal Cycle & Nostril Breathing

Eccles, R. (2000). *The Nasal Cycle in Health and Disease*. Clinical Otolaryngology.

Werntz, D. A., Bickford, R. G., Bloom, F. E., & Shannahoff-Khalsa, D. S. (1983). *Alternating Cerebral Hemispheric Activity and the Lateralization of Autonomic Nervous Function*. Human Neurobiology.

Shannahoff-Khalsa, D. S. (2007). *Selective Unilateral Nostril Breathing: Its Role in Medicine and Science*.

Ancient Yogic Sources

The Hatha Yoga Pradipika.

The Shiva Samhita.

The Gheranda Samhita.

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.

Vijnana Bhairava Tantra (particularly the verses describing awareness of the pause between breaths).

Mantra "So Hum"

Saraswati, S. S. (2002). *Meditations from the Tantras*.

Saraswati, S. S. (1996). *Prana Pranayama Prana Vidya*.

Kundalini, Chakras & Nadis

Saraswati, S. S. (2002). *Kundalini Tantra*.

Avalon, A. (Sir John Woodroffe). (1919). *The Serpent Power*.

Feuerstein, G. (1998). *The Yoga Tradition*.

Manifestation & Intention

Dispenza, J. (2012). *Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself*.

Lipton, B. (2005). *The Biology of Belief*.

McTaggart, L. (2007). *The Intention Experiment*.

Additional Reading

Pert, C. B. (1997). *Molecules of Emotion*.

Sapolsky, R. M. (2004). *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*.

Siegel, D. J. (2010). *Mindsight*.

van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The Body Keeps the Score*.