

Pranayama (Yogic Breathing Practice)  
for Anxiety and Depression\*  
A method used in MIND HEALTH YOGA<sup>sm</sup>

Stair Step Breath (Anuloma and Viloma Krama) is a mildly energizing breath that is safe for most people.

The activity in the practice gives the busy mind something to do, so it is appropriate for both anxiety and depression.

1. In a sitting or supine position, inhale through the nostrils little steps of breath, as though you are climbing a mountain (usually 4 to 8).
2. If it's comfortable, sustain the breath for four counts (at the top of the mountain). Imagine that you are looking out at something beautiful. If holding the breath is uncomfortable, breathe naturally through the nostrils.
3. Slide down the mountain. (Exhale slowly for six counts.)

Practice steps 1–3 two times.

4. Next take an elevator to the top of the mountain. (a smooth six-count breath in).
- 5.. Sustain for four counts. 6. Imagine you can see something that makes your heart smile.
7. Then step down the mountain (exhale through the nostrils in little puffs—usually 6 to 10).

Practice steps 4–7 two times.

Next take little steps up the mountain through the nostrils, as described above, pause for four counts with an image of beauty in your heart's mind.

Take little steps down the mountain, as described in #7.

Practice this version of stepped breathing in and out two times.

End by taking little steps up the mountain, sustaining the breath for four, then slowly glide down the mountain. You might wish to chant the mantra “so ham” (I am That) on the exhalation.

- By Amy Weintraub.

Edited by Amritari Martinez M.A.  
Certified Yoga Teacher and Mental Health Advocate  
Founder of MIND HEALTH YOGA<sup>SM</sup>