

Breathwork and Meditation

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When we were born, the first thing we did was breathe. When we die, it will be the last thing we do. In breath-based Hatha Yoga, we try and make breath the center of our practice; using breath for mental focus, and to magnify and expand the benefits of the asanas (postures). On its own, breath work is a powerful self-reflection exercise bringing dimension and depth to your being.



When I first started meditation, I would sit cross-legged on the floor or a hard surface in an attempt at austerity and discipline. This only distracted me, as my knees and legs would hurt and I couldn't get my mind to settle due to the pain. I finally got a meditation cushion and put it up against the wall, so that I could sit with my back straight against the wall. I tried straight legged and cross-legged positions, and various hand positions, until I found my place. When you find your place, practice can begin. I relate all of this to let you know it is okay to find your own unique place as you begin your meditation practice. There are tons of articles and internet guidance on meditation and breathing. What I offer below is an amalgamation of some of these techniques to help you get started. I find that consistency in this practice brings many levels of contentment and peace.

Grounding – Settling – Calming – Surrendering – Peace – Being – Depth - Communion

- ❖ Find a comfortable position – it can be sitting cross-legged, straight legged, in a chair or even laying down (without sleeping!). Your spine is straight and you are able to remain relatively motionless. If you have an itch or need to adjust as practice continues that is fine. I find that quiet is conducive to my practice.
- ❖ Gently close your eyes, drop your gaze, and come into your body. Feel your body and breathe into your body through your nostrils. Exhale through your nostrils. Feel the breath flow in and out, the lungs and chest expand and contract. Feel the place where you are touching the earth (the floor or your mat) and feel or imagine an energetic connection. Feel safety, comfort and grounding. Breath in, breath out.
- ❖ Calm your mind, sweep away thoughts and meanderings. If your mind wanders a lot, mentally count to 5 as you inhale. Pause. Mentally count to 5 as you exhale. As you become calmer and more settled, you will likely be able to return to a natural flow of breath. In Hatha Yoga we use Ujjayi breathing, essentially diaphragmatic breathing: Inhale deeply into your chest and then your belly, expanding lungs & then belly/diaphragm. Exhale fully, first from your belly, through your chest, and out your nostrils. Continue this for 8 breaths or 16 breaths.
- ❖ Find and imagine calmness throughout your entire body. Relax more with each breath. Allow the mind to slow, quiet, cease. Any thoughts that arise, they float out like clouds. Surrender to this state. Breathe in, breathe out. Cultivate stillness.
- ❖ Spaciousness arises from the quietude. Inhaling deeply, exhaling fully. Only the present moment is here with you. Spaciousness extends. Inhale peace deeply, exhale love fully. Find your balance. Spaciousness extends within and without. Find depth, dimension, self.
- ❖ As practice closes, begin a return to normal ordinary reality. Feel the breath in your lungs, belly and nostrils. Remember your feet, toes, fingers, limbs, head and organs, and be grateful for each cell and atom in your body. Give gratitude for the practice, for the breath and for this time. Slowly open your eyes, gently smile, and awaken to your new self. Breathe in, breathe out, begin movement.



It may take you a few sessions to feel grounded and calm, especially depending on your mood or how your day is going. This practice may be as short as 15 minutes, or much longer. If you only have 5 minutes, you can still perform the initial breathwork and that alone will provide very calming benefits.

Meditation and breathwork is “cumulative”, and each time you practice it will contribute to your overall well-being. I have found like Yoga, when I do not perform it, I feel like my day or week is missing something.

~Peace, healing and love~