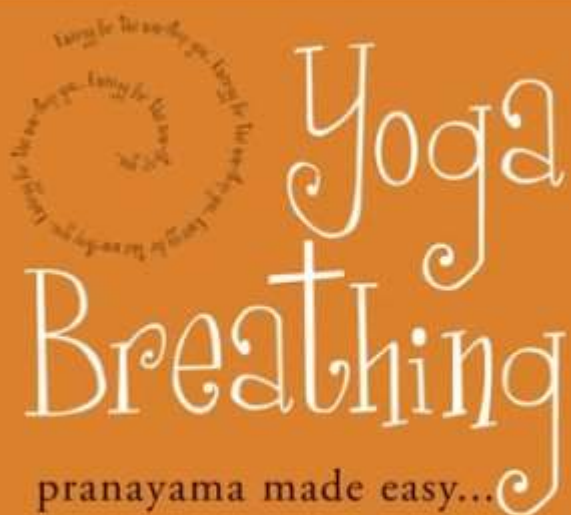


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The Little Book of



Yoga  
Breathing  
pranayama made easy...

— SCOTT SHAW —

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SCOTT SHAW

 **WEISER BOOKS**  
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specific manner. As such, though the overall effect of a certain pranayama exercise may cause your body and mind to calm down and become more internally reflective and meditative, this technique will still aid you in becoming a more physically and mentally invigorated individual.

This small book provides you with the necessary information to perform these simple yet very effective breathing techniques. From their practice, you will quickly realize that pranayama has the potential to rapidly change your life for the positive. You will be able to raise your energy level in times of need or calm your body and mind when you need to focus your attention or relax.

Revitalizing your energy and focusing your mind is only a breath away. Breathe out . . .



## Pranayama 101

The Sanskrit term *pranayama* consists of two components: *prana* (life force) and *yama* (extension). Therefore, the *pranayama* literally translates as “the extension of life force.”

From ancient times forward, we’ve understood that breathing does even more than supply the body with necessary oxygen for life. When controlled, the inhalation and exhalation of breath purifies and clarifies an individual—and it can calm the agitated mind or energize the overexerted body.

## Your First Conscious Breath

The most basic level of pranayama asks you to simply guide a few breaths deep into your abdomen. This technique is known in Sanskrit as *diaphragmatic breathing* (di-ee-uh-gah-sah-sah) or *diaphragmatic breathing*.

There is no time like the present. Right now, wherever you are, breathe deeply. Breathe through your nose slowly and evenly and feel the air into your abdomen. As you do, you will experience your stomach region expanding and a new life force that is inflating your body. Holding this breath for a second or two

it through your nose at the same pace at which you chew it.

This simple pranayamic exercise will greatly revitalize you when you feel tired, lackadaisical, or stressed — as well as provide an immediate dose of *prana* (pra'-na). Practice this exercise several times every day simply to cleanse your lungs of impurities and realign your inner being with the cosmic energy of prana. Then you can move forward with your life in a much more focused and invigorated manner.



## Breathing Essential

Breathing consciously is your first step to a refined and energy-filled life. It is essential that you become very aware of your breath in order to ensure that you are breathing correctly.

### WITNESSING YOUR NATURAL BREATH

Begin a conscious analysis of your breath right now. Close your eyes and take a few breaths or two to observe your breath as you breathe. Answer questions on the following page.

1. Are you inhaling through your nose or your mouth?
2. Do your chest and stomach expand or contract when you breathe in?
3. Does your in-breath travel deeply into your abdomen or does it finalize in your chest?
4. What do you feel as life-giving oxygen enters and exits your body?

Now that you have observed your natural breathing patterns, determine if any element needs to be altered and redefined. If you find you are breathing unnaturally, do not become upset with yourself. In each of these cases, unnatural breathing patterns are something that you have simply developed through habit. As such, you can take control and consciously breathe in a manner

providing you with enhanced physical and mental energy.

*1. Are you inhaling through your nose or mouth?*

If you breathe in through your mouth, you are not allowing your body to naturally filter and purify your intake of air. Airborne pollutants that are not filtered through your nose will end up in your lungs. This is unhealthy.

If you find yourself inhaling through your mouth, correct it by consciously guiding your in-breath into your body through your nose. With this gentle guidance, your body will eventually adjust to the healthier way of breathing.

*2. Do your chest and stomach expand or contract when you breathe in?*

If your stomach and chest contract (as opposed to expand) when you inhale, you are breathing unnaturally, hindering the flow of prana into your body. If this is the case, you must take control of your breathing to correct it. Several times a day, take note of your breathing pattern. If you find your chest and stomach are contracting as you inhale, guide your chest and stomach to naturally expand as you breathe in and contract as you exhale.

*3. Does your in-breath travel deeply into your abdomen or does it finalize in your chest?*

If your in-breaths only travel to your chest, you are not allowing prana to invigorate your body and mind with energy, and you will remain list-

less and lack energy. Thus, this should be corrected by deliberately reviewing your breath several times throughout the day – if you take your breath deep into your abdomen ten times, your body will develop this new breathing habit.

*4. What do you feel as life-giving oxygen and exits your body?*

By observing what sensations and emotions you experience while life-giving breaths enter in and out of your body, you raise your consciousness to a new level of understanding. In this position, you interact with the elements of life and how it affects you in all situations. You will become consciously aware of how the quality of the air you breathe affects your health, your overall energy level and recognize that your body is not receiving enough life-

prana due to polluted or poorly filtered air. You will also realize the point at which your body is not working in natural accord with your respiratory and circulatory systems and either increase your pranayamic or physical exercise to enhance your overall health or break from exercise for a period of time to allow your body to rest.

If you purposely utilize breath awareness throughout the day, not only will you correct any unnatural breathing patterns you've developed, but you will also embrace a more purified state of physical and mental understanding which is essential to a more refined and fulfilled life.

#### TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR BREATH

Now that you know how to breathe in the most beneficial and natural way, you can advance to the formalized techniques of pranayama. These

practices differ vastly from the natural way of breathing described above. In each pranayamic breath control technique you follow, you will be taught to breathe in a specific and refined pattern. With each technique you will learn how to control the intake of breath into your body while energizing specific elements of your physical and mental being.

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# The Energy-Enhancing Breath

Bringing large amounts of oxygen into your body in a rapid and controlled fashion is not only the most efficient way to increase your energy level, but it is also the healthiest. Whereas all forms of artificial energy stimulation have their side effects, breathing is one hundred percent natural. It is nature's way of giving you the energy boost you need, with no artificial stimulants. All that is required is a few conscious breaths.

## Basic Energy-Enhancing Breath

*Benefits:* This breath control exercise provides you with instant energy, revitalization, and enhanced mental focus.

*Technique:* Begin right where you are. Straighten your spine. Move your neck a little bit to relieve any initial tension. Close your eyes. Observe your natural breathing pattern for a few moments. Witness each life-giving breath enter your body through your nose. Watch it travel deep into your lungs. Your stomach expands. Consciously recognize that breath is your key to life—it is the uni-

that allows you to function. Observe this breath permeating your being with the essence of life.

After you have observed a few natural breath cycles, deliberately take in a very deep breath through your mouth. The moment your lungs are full, immediately release it through your mouth. As soon as the breath has been exhaled, take another deep breath through your mouth. Again, once your lungs become full, release it through your mouth.

Practice this for three or four breath cycles and then allow yourself to breathe naturally through your nose for a few moments. As you do, experience how your body instantly became revitalized through the rapid intake of air.

After a few moments of contemplation, take this breath control technique to the next level. Take in a powerful, deep breath through your mouth.

Let this breath expand your chest and abdomen. Breathe in as much life-giving air as possible as your lungs are filled with this breath. Close your mouth and hold your breath for approximately two seconds, consciously utilizing its power. Now, release this breath through your mouth in one smooth exhalation. Continue to exhale until your lungs are completely empty.

If you are like most people who have not consciously practiced formalized breath control, you will notice that a small amount of air remains in your lungs. Through the majority of this remaining breath goes unnoticed. Continue to begin to consciously practice breath control, however, you become acutely aware of your respiratory system. You must contract your abdomen muscles to force the remaining air out of your lungs. With this, you rid your body of environmental pollutants that have for-

way into your lungs, but you also begin to train your body to utilize the breath in the most beneficial manner — full inhalations and full exhalations.

Once all of the air has been expelled from your lungs, embrace this absence of breath. Experience the lightness of your body when air is completely absent from your lungs. After approximately two seconds of reflection, take in another deep breath and then release it following the same pattern.

Perform this exercise for three or four cycles. Once you have completed your final cycle, open your eyes, observing how the world possesses a new hue due to your body being revitalized by enhanced amounts of oxygen.



## Kapalabhati Skull Shining

In Sanskrit, *kapalabhati* (ka' pā' lā' a'-hā'-tee) means "skull shining."

*Benefit:* This exercise is an ancient lateral technique that, when used properly, not only instantly revitalizes your body but also highly accelerates the degree of your awareness.

*Technique:* While seated, move your upper back and neck around for a few moments to increase circulation to any tense muscles. Then, arch your spine and close your eyes. Concentrate

your breath and begin to observe the natural energy-giving life force entering and exiting your body through your nose.

When you are centered, take in a very deep breath through your nose. Let this breath fill your lungs. As you do, witness your chest and stomach expand. When your lungs are completely full of oxygen and it is time to exhale, force the air out of your body through your nose with a rapid, powerful push. Immediately inhale again, powerfully through your nose. As soon as this breath is in, push it out.

Each in-breath and each out-breath in the kapalabhati technique should take approximately one second to execute. You do not hold breath in your lungs at any time during this breath control method. Air is rapidly brought in and then just as rapidly expelled.

At the beginning stage of this breath control technique you should perform three ten-breath cycles. At the end of each ten-breath cycle, expel the final breath in a slow and controlled manner. Then, breathe in and out rapidly through your nose for approximately ten breath cycles. Once the final breath is controlled and released, again begin the rapid in and out breathing.

It is a common side effect in the early stages of this breath control technique for you to feel slightly light-headed. If this becomes uncomfortable for you, then limit this practice to one or two cycles. Once your body becomes accustomed to kapalabhati, you can extend this practice to ten cycles of thirty breaths each.



## Bastrika: Bellows Breath

The Sanskrit word *bastrika* (ba-stri-ka) means “bellows.” This word is used in reference to the tool a blacksmith uses to enhance his fire.

*Benefit:* The benefits of bastrika are rapid revitalization and enhanced blood circulation. It also helps your body warm up when cold.

*Technique:* Sit in a comfortable position with your spine straight. Close your eyes for

moments and watch your natural breathing pattern. When you are suitably focused, close your mouth and rapidly inhale and exhale ten times through your nose. Do not allow these breaths to travel deeply into your body. Instead, allow your breaths to be short and fast. The focus of *basrika* is on the exhalation. Like a bellows stoking a fire, allow each in-breath to be rapidly pushed out.

As soon as you have completed your tenth shallow rapid breath, draw a very deep breath through your nose. Allow it to travel into your body. At this point, bend your neck and allow your chin to rest on your chest, thereby holding the prana deeply in your body. Hold this breath and this position for as long as is comfortable. Then, raise your head and fully release the breath. Immediately repeat the entire cycle, starting with the rapid breaths.

Begin the practice of *basrika* slowly and gradually, witnessing how your body reacts to this pranayamic technique. In your early practice, *basrika* should be performed for one to three full cycles. Become comfortable with it before you extend its practice. If you overdo this exercise you may cause you to become light-headed. This is, obviously, not to your advantage.

*Basrika* is ideally performed for three full days. Even by performing this exercise for only a few days, however, you will instantly notice an increase in your energy.



## Murcha: The Retaining Breath

The Sanskrit word *murcha* (mur-cha) means “to retain.”

*Benefits:* The pranayamic technique of *murcha* is designed to enhance your mental clarity and provide you with a subtle sensation of bliss.

*Technique:* Sit down in a comfortable position, close your eyes, and take in a few very calm and deep breaths through your nose. Do not hold these breaths. Simply allow them to enter your body and be released in a natural pattern.



will immediately enhance your level of energy and cleanse your lungs.

When you feel you are mentally ready, draw another deep breath through your nose and guide it deeply into your body. This time, hold it. As you did in *Uastrika*, bend your neck, bringing your chin down to your chest if possible.

Hold this breath and bodily position for as long as is comfortable. Then, raise your head and release the breath through your nose. As soon as this breath is completely expelled, repeat the cycle, starting with a deep breath through your nose.

As in all pranayamic techniques, it is essential to never strain your body. *Murcha* should be performed from one to five breath cycles. Do not hold your breath longer than is comfortable. As

you progress, the amount of time you comfortably hold your breath will naturally be extended.



## Kumbhaka: The Pure Breath

In Sanskrit, *kumbhaka* (kum-bhā'-ka) refers to "pure breath."

*Benefits:* Kumbhaka is designed to stabilize both your physical and mental energy. Kumbhaka provides the practitioner with a heightened sense of mental and awareness.

*Technique:* Begin in a seated posture. Close your eyes, straighten your spine, and focus your attention upon your natural breathing pattern for a few moments. As you do, concentrate your

upon the energy that each in-breath naturally provides.

When you feel ready, close off your right nostril with your right thumb. Quickly and deeply draw your next breath through your left nostril. Rapidly draw the breath deeply into your body with a mental count of "one, two, three, four, five, six."

The moment your inhalation is complete, immediately release this breath via your left nostril (the same nostril from which it was inhaled). As you expel this breath, perform the same mental count of "one, two, three, four, five, six." Be sure to consciously push any remaining air out of your lungs.

When this breath has been completely released, experience the emptiness of no breath for a mental

count of "one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve."

When your count is complete, change and close off your left nostril with your left thumb and begin the process on the opposite

side. It is important to not strain or fatigue your body. When you begin to practice this technique, it should be performed in three cycles—even less if you find that three repetitions are too many. As you progress with this technique, increase repetitions to as many as twenty.



## Ujjayi: The Hissing Breath

In Sanskrit, *ujjayi* (u-jai-yee) means "hissing," the sound you make when performing this technique.

*Benefits:* Ujjayi is designed to solidify your energy and leave you feeling not only invigorated but also more mentally focused. From a metaphysical perspective, ujjayi is the body of respiratory ailments such as asthma and bronchitis.

*Technique:* Sit down, straighten your spine, close your eyes, and witness your natural breathing for a few moments. When you feel ready, very consciously take a deep breath in through both of your nostrils. Allow this breath to travel into your body. As you inhale, mentally lock this breath in the region between your central chest and your throat.

Retain this breath for as long as is comfortable. When it is time to exhale, do so by closing off your right nostril with your right thumb and exhaling through your left nostril.

Once the breath is completely released, immediately draw another breath through both of your nostrils. Allow it to congregate in the same region as your previous breath—between your central chest and throat.

Again, hold this breath for as long as is comfortable and then release it. As you do, close off your left nostril with your left thumb and exhale via your right nostril.

Ujjayi should be performed from ten to twenty repetitions, depending on your time constraints, at the early stages of its practice. When you are comfortable with this pranayamic exercise, increase to fifty or more repetitions. This is an ideal exercise to perform in the morning each day when you know your energy levels are up to the test.



## The Calming Breath

When you begin the practice of pranayama, remember that enhancing the overall health of your body does not only occur when you are feeling invigorated. At times, slowing down is the best way to focus and regenerate your energy. Perform the following pranayamic exercises when you need to become more insightful and sublimely regenerate your energy.

## Sukha Purvaka: The Easy

*Sukha purvaka* (sue-ka' pur-va' ka) means "the easy breath" in Sanskrit.

*Benefits:* Sukha purvaka is designed to calm your mind and lower your cardiac rate in times of stress. It is also an excellent technique to practice prior to meditation, invokes a clear and positive state of mind.

*Technique:* While sitting comfortably with hands in your lap, close your eyes, straighten your spine, and watch your breath.

come in and then leave your body. Embrace the life-giving force of each breath.

When you feel ready, close off your right nostril with your right thumb. Inhale slowly and naturally through your left nostril. When your in-breath is complete, allow this breath to leave your body naturally, also through your left nostril. Perform this exercise for twelve breaths.

When you have completed your final exhalation, place your right hand back down in your lap, raise your left hand, and close off your left nostril for the same twelve natural breaths. When you have completed this repetition, place both hands in your lap and relax for a few moments. You will rise in a very calm state of mind, and your mental clarity will be acutely focused.



## Sitkali: The Cooling Breath

In Sanskrit, *sitkali* (sit-ha'-lee) is the "cooling breath."

*Benefit:* Use this pranayama exercise to calmly cool down your body when it is in high temperatures. It is also used to reduce desire for food, water, and sleep when they cannot be had.

*Technique:* Sit down, close your eyes, and observe the natural incoming and outgoing process of your breathing for a few moments. Once you have achieved a relative state



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