

Innate Power of the Breath

by Shoshanna Katzman



Breathing is simple, natural and something that we typically do without thinking. However, taking time to learn and practice deep

breathing techniques holds the potential for life-changing results. Becoming more conscious of our breath provides a powerful healing tool right inside our body – an endless resource that can be called upon at a moment's notice.

During the process of breathing, air is pulled into the lungs where oxygen is extracted and dispersed throughout the body, while carbon dioxide is exhaled. Breathing is controlled by one of the most primitive aspects of the brain known as the medulla oblongata. This part of the brain automatically starts at the moment a baby enters the world and takes its very first wailing breath.

Babies have the natural tendency to breathe into their bellies which allows their breathing to function at maximum capacity. As they get older this pattern changes and

they begin to tighten their abdomen and breathe more from their upper lungs. Abdominal breathing techniques have been taught for centuries to reinstate “belly breathing” and thereby enhance overall health and healing capability. This type of enhanced breathing technique has become widespread in the United States due to the popularity of yoga, Tai Chi (Taiji) and Qigong which teaches students the importance of breathing into their bellies. A main aspect of such training is to heal the body, mind and spirit through integrating and harmonizing body, breath and mind.

The following is a belly breathing exercise that can be easily practiced on a daily basis:

PREPARATION: Assume a lying, sitting or standing position with palms placed over your lower belly. Close your mouth gently and rest your tongue lightly on the upper palate, just behind your upper front teeth. Allow your eyelids to close halfway. Then concentrate your mind on your lower belly, approximately three inches below your belly

button and inside your abdominal cavity.

STEP ONE: To begin with, breathe in through your nose and draw air into your lower lungs. Upon doing so, expand your belly like a balloon. Then as you continue this inhalation, feel the air gently expanding into your chest.

STEP TWO: Breathe out through your nose and simultaneously empty air from your chest and abdomen. Upon doing so, allow your belly and lower back to slowly collapse in toward the central axis of your body much like a balloon deflating.

This way of breathing allows one to draw in a maximum of air with minimum effort. It causes the diaphragm to move up and down which massages and stimulates the internal organs – thereby promoting healthy respiration, digestion, elimination, reproduction and sexual vitality. It also increases lung capacity, blood oxygenation and cellular metabolism. Belly breathing brings one into a meditative state, promotes stability and more grounded behavior. And quite importantly, it regulates flow of qi (vital energy) throughout the body and forms a solid bridge between the energetic and physical bodies.

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