

# FUNDAMENTALS OF WORKING WITH BREATH

Before you can begin experimenting with advanced breathing techniques, you have to become familiar with your breath and learn to regulate it on the most basic level. Here are the fundamental principles that underlie all other breath work and the steps you can take when you begin to work with breath.



## BECOME INTIMATELY FAMILIAR WITH YOUR BREATH

Observe your breath both in your daily life and in your yoga practice. Notice if you breathe through your nose or mouth, which part of the breath is longer, how the breath changes throughout the day, etc. Emphasize breath awareness in your yoga practice.

## CONNECT YOUR BREATH AND MOVEMENT

Make sure that every movement you do is guided by your breath. When you move through your yoga practice, first begin to breathe, then use your breath to animate the spine, then ripple the movement out into the body's periphery.

## INCREASE YOUR BREATHING CAPACITY

Deepen your inhalation and lengthen your exhalation to improve the tonicity of your diaphragm, maintain your lung elasticity and lung compliance, maintain ribcage mobility and strength of the respiratory muscles. Breathe deeply in yoga poses to promote better blood/oxygen exchange.

## MAINTAIN A STEADY BREATHING RHYTHM

Breathe at the rate of about 6-second inhalation and 6-second exhalation to synchronize your cardiovascular and respiratory rhythms. Use counting or mantra repetition to measure the length of your breath during your practice. Work toward making your breath long and subtle.

## LEARN TO REST IN THE PAUSE AFTER EXHALE

Lengthen your exhalation, be sure to finish it, and then let go of effort and rest at the end of the exhalation until the first urge to inhale. Practicing prolonged exhalation with suspension of breath can be an effective tool to increase the resilience of your system and to calm your mind.

## HUM IN THE COURSE OF YOUR DAY AND DURING YOUR YOGA PRACTICE

Humming has been shown to increase nitric oxide production in the nose, alleviate chronic inflammation or infection of the sinuses and lead to parasympathetic predominance (reduction in heart rate and blood pressure, improvement in cognition and reduction in stress levels).