

# Spirit Vessel / Body Temple

## — Breathing & Inspiration —

*'In spire'* - Latin meaning to breathe in spirit. Inspiration, to take in a breath as well as to feel an elevated sense of creativity and purpose. The only prerequisite to inhabiting the body is to be able to take a breath. Practices such as meditation, yoga, chi gung, Tai chi, mindful exercise all begin with the breath. This is the first way in which to take in life force energy. Life is not an all or nothing thing, the amount of air you take in relates to the amount of life you are willing to live.



### Breath Awareness

Some consider breathing to be the most important of all the bodily functions because all other functions depend upon it. Life is dependent upon breathing. Breath is life. Yet, most people are unconscious of their breathing and take it for granted. In modern cultures, the number of people who actually breathe fully and consciously

constitute a small percentage of the whole population.

Proper breathing brings about healing and revitalization on all levels of being. Breath therapy is one of the most effective health maintenance and restorative techniques available today. Full conscious breathing is one of the best neutralizers of stress that anyone can use. With depression, one collapses over the diaphragm and breathes only enough to keep the body functioning. Lack of air leads to a build up of toxic by-products which leads to pain and inflammation and a downward spiral.

Breathing brings both oxygen and the life force to every cell in the body. Extended periods of oxygen deprivation can be harmful or fatal. Cells require oxygen to transform nutrients into fresh energy. Oxygen is essential in the general digestive processes. The body also uses oxygen to burn off or oxidize metabolic waste products and other toxins in the body in a combustion process leading to their elimination through the lungs in the form of various gases. 70% of all elimination from the body occurs through the lungs in the form of gases and particles.

Deep breathing stimulates and massages all the internal organs of the body, leading to better functioning. Deep breathing encourages the circulation of blood throughout the body, dilating the blood vessels and strengthening the expansion and contraction of the capillaries. Deep breathing cleanses the blood, promotes the functions of red and white corpuscles, and acts as a pump for the movement of lymph. Deep breathing stimulates the entire nervous system, both peripheral and central, and facilitates the actions of the ner-

vous system. With the conscious practice of deep breathing disciplines, control of nerve and organ functions is possible.

Fresh air is charged with the life force energy and breathing is one of the easiest and most natural ways of attaining the energy. Conscious, full breathing raises the metabolic and vibratory rates of our bodies. Oriental health systems universally recognize that the life force is essential to health, and breathing disciplines are emphasized in all of them. Chi / Prana / Life-force energy: this concept is found in Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine, and refers to the quality and quantity of vitality or life force which circulates through and supports all of life. Part of this is the vitality we are born with, part is what we have in reserve or savings, and part is what we can build through breathing practices as well as healthful eating, sleeping, exercise, meditation, and a loving and affirmative lifestyle. Mindfulness meditation (Vipassana), a meditation practice which is based upon following the breath is being taught for pain control.

### Conscious Breathing

#### **When Empty:**

"I focus on what is wanted, creatively imaging it with all senses."

#### **Inhaling/ Inspiration:**

"I focus on breathing it in and on where it goes. 'It will go to where my attention is.' Focus on breathing in what you wish to create and bring in to your life."

#### **Top of Breath -When Full:**

"I own/acknowledge whatever comes to my attention."

#### **Exhaling -To completely empty:**

"I am letting go."

"I am releasing."

"I am dissolving."

### Affirmations

**Positive:** frame your life as to what you want to move toward (not what you wish to avoid).

**Personal:** (yes, it is about you and your intention).

**Present Time:** (don't frame it in the future!)

**SAY** the affirmation and creatively image it using all senses.

**Own/ Acknowledge** any conflict or static or inharmonious thoughts, feelings, or sensations that arise.

# — Methods of Breathing —

**Nostril Breathing:** breathing in and out the nose. Make a habit of using your nose for the function for which it was designed: breathing. The nose filters the incoming air, taking out particulates and even bacteria and viruses before they can go farther into your body. You automatically reduce the chances of becoming ill. The nose warms the incoming air so that it does not shock the lungs as it enters them, and the lungs stay more relaxed and open. As you exhale through your nose, you expel the particles that were filtered out on the inhale. Your nose can become clogged and become a breeding ground for disease when you do not use it. The nostrils are your only protection for the sensitive respiratory organs from the outside environment.

**Mouth Breathing:** breathing in and out the mouth. The habit of mouth breathing is most unhealthy. The mouth affords no protection for the lungs and other breathing organs. Dust, cold air, pollens, germs, and contaminants have direct access to the body. Many diseases are contracted in this manner. Inflammation often occurs with the inhalation of cold air through the mouth. No animal except man breathes through the mouth, except in cases where mouth breathing is used as a means of cooling off, as in panting dogs and basking crocodiles. There are some breathing patterns used in oriental breathing disciplines which use mouth breathing; however, it is primarily used during exhalation.

**High Breathing:** breathing in the upper chest only. Those who breathe in this manner elevate the ribs, lift the shoulders, suck in the stomach and raise the diaphragm. This manner of breathing brings in the smallest amount of air, for the most effort. There is no true lung expansion and only the smallest parts of the lungs are being used.

**Middle Breathing:** breathing from the diaphragm up into the upper chest only. The middle and upper parts of the lungs are used in this pattern; however, the stomach is still drawn in and the diaphragm raised. While more preferable than high breathing, it is still inefficient.

**Low Breathing:** breathing into the abdomen only. This form is also called abdominal breathing. When you breathe in this fashion, the diaphragm is used in the proper manner. The diaphragm pushes out the abdomen on the inhale and pulls in the abdomen on the exhale. The lower and middle parts of the lungs are used. This form is more efficient than either high or middle breathing processes.

**Complete Breath:** breathing from the abdomen to the top of the chest with back expansion. This form of breathing incorporates all of the good aspects of high, middle, and low breathing, and eliminates any drawbacks. The complete breath fills the entire lung space and is of the greatest value in that it allows for the greatest absorption of oxygen and life energy.

**The Complete Breath is performed in the following manner:**

- Standing or sitting erect, inhale through your nostrils into the lower part of your lungs, pulling down the diaphragm and pushing out the abdomen.
- Then bring the flow of breath into the middle lungs, pushing out the lower ribs and breastbone and expanding the back.
- Next move into filling the upper lungs by lifting the chest and opening the upper sets of ribs, keeping the shoulders relaxed.
- The whole inhalation is completed in one even movement, lasting for several seconds.
- Exhale through the nose while holding the chest in its expanded position.
- Draw in the abdomen and lift the diaphragm allowing the air to leave your lungs.
- When the air is entirely exhaled, relax the chest and abdomen and begin again.

The average person moves a pint of air with each breath, while the average lung capacity is around five pints. With practice, full, relaxed, complete breathing soon becomes second nature, replacing habits of restricted breathing.

**Breathing to Calm The Spirit.** *Alternate nostril breathing.*  
**Breathing to Increase Energy and Joy.** *Continuous complete breathing.*

**Breathing to Initiate Core Engagement.**

Inhaling in the back and sides of the ribs, exhaling to isometrically contract the lower abdomen. Imagine a sphere in your lower abdomen at your center (hara) which narrows in diameter as you exhale.

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