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Breathwork Series

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Tips for Spring Cleansing: Stimulating Your Body's Natural Cleansing Capacity

Part 1: Breath

Part 2: Lymph

Part 3: Myofascial



Spring cleansing breathing practices include practices that help to energize (overcome lethargy), to stimulate mental focus, to alleviate internal pressure (aka anxiety), and to cleanse the subtle body (vital body).



Breathwork Exercise One:

Overcoming Lethargy: Arm Swings with brisk breath pattern (Shaking Off Cobwebs)

- As you may occasionally feel you have cobwebs in your brain (mental fogginess, old habits haunting your thinking), learning to shake off the cobwebs is very freeing.
- Stand up and vigorously swing your arms simultaneously from front to back and back to front, repeatedly.
- With each vigorous swing of the arms back, make your hands into fists and briskly inhale.
- With each vigorous swing of the arms forward, exhale briskly through your nose and spread your fingers wide.
- Do this rhythmically for 1 - 3 minutes. Then let your arms swing and slow down to stillness
- Take a deep, long inhalation through your nose and slowly, completely exhale out your nose.
- Notice any greater capacity in your lungs, or a sense of space in your mind or heart. Repeat as needed.



Breathwork Exercise Two:

Stimulating Mental Focus: Ujjayii breath

Benefits of Ujjayi Breathing and How to Do It.

According to Central Michigan University, ujjayi breathing is a technique that allows you to calm your mind by focusing on your breath. This helps you override thoughts that could possibly distract you from your meditative state.

Used in the practice of yoga, it also creates a sound that assists you in synchronizing your movements with your breath. It's the most common form of pranayama (breath control) used during asana (body posture/pose) practices.

In yoga, breath is equally important — sometimes even more important — as the physical pose.

Ujjayi breathing is also referred to as:

- victorious breath
- ocean breathing
- whispering breathing





Breathworks Exercise Two:

Stimulating Mental Focus: Ujjayii breath



How to do ujjayi breathing:

Both inhalation and exhalation are done through the nose.

As you inhale and exhale:

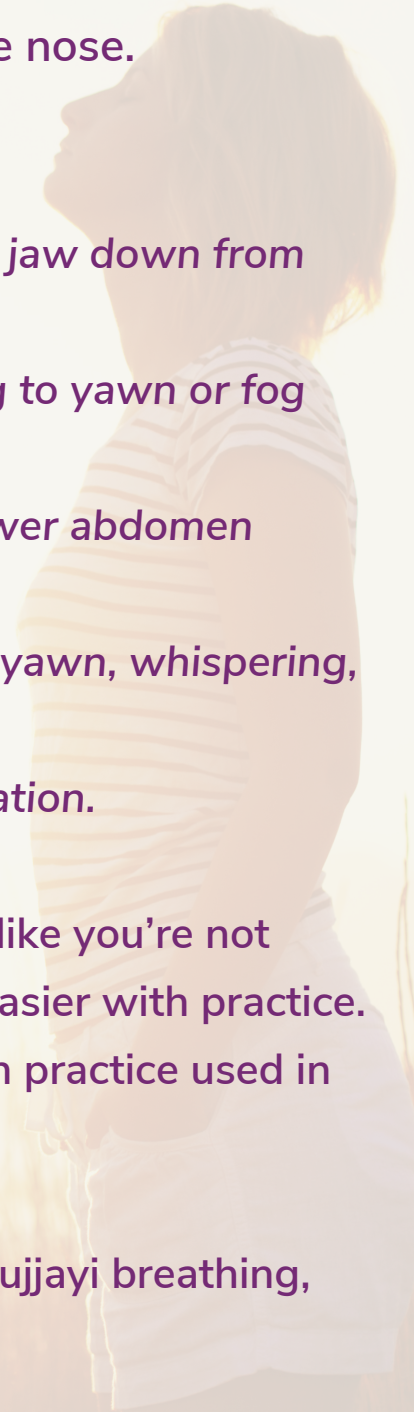
- While keeping your mouth closed, relax your lower jaw down from your upper jaw.
- Hollow the back of your throat as if you were going to yawn or fog your sunglasses.
- Breathe with your diaphragm (you will feel your lower abdomen moving out on inhale and toning on the exhale).
- The sound of the breath is described like a smooth yawn, whispering, or like the ocean.
- Keep your inhalations and exhalations equal in duration.

This can be calming and balancing. At first, it may feel like you're not getting enough air, but the technique should become easier with practice.

- Ujjayi breathing is the most common form of breath practice used in yoga asana classes.

There are a number of benefits that can be realized by ujjayi breathing, including:

- improved concentration
- tension release
- regulated body temperature





Breathworks Exercise Three:

Alleviating Internal Pressure: Pressure Release Valve Breathing

This practice can be done standing or sitting. It is intended to deliberately increase intra-abdominal pressure as a way to bring on a more profound release of body-based, Fight-Flight-Freeze-Submit symptoms (hard-wired nervous system reactions to stress).

1 Clasp your fingers and place your hands on top of your head.
This opens the chest.

2 Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose. Do your best to get a full-body breath filling the lower abdomen, mid-abdomen and chest.

3 At the top of your inhale, hold the breath in. To make this more doable, snug your lower belly in and up a bit and drop your chin slightly.
This seals the breath in the chamber of the torso.

4 Before you exhale, release the “seal” (like taking the lid off a jar), then exhale slowly through your mouth with pursed lips while simultaneously slowly lowering your arms. Make the exhale longer than the inhale.

5 Pause for a quiet moment while your body takes a few smaller breaths.
Do this sequence three times.

6 Now repeat the sequence three times without your hands on your head. At the end, sit quietly and notice any changes in your mind, body, and breath.



Breathworks Exercise Four:

✦ Cleansing the Subtle Body: Nadi Shodhana

Using your right thumb and ring finger, you will alternately inhale and exhale through the left and right nostrils. The pattern is:

Inhale Left * Exhale Right
Inhale Right * Exhale Left

This is considered one round of alternate nostril breathing. This breath cycle brings together the right and left hemispheres of the brain, cleanses the nervous system, slows down your breathing, and calms the mind.

- Bring your right hand up to your nose, with the index and middle fingers tucked in.
- Using your right thumb, close the right nostril and inhale left. Then using your right ring finger, close your left nostril and exhale right.
- Inhale right. Close the right nostril and exhale left.
- Repeat this for four rounds (eight breaths).
- Then sit quietly and explore any sense of inner wholeness and your place in the larger pulse of nature.