

Conscious Breathing

It's Not a Big Deal, and at the Same Time, It Is a Big Deal

By Anna Laurita

“Every breath we take, every step we make, can be filled with peace, joy and serenity”

– Thich Nhat Hanh

Breathing. It's Easy, We all do it. I mean, it is the very first thing we do upon entering the world, and the last thing we do when we leave. And in between, we breathe... a lot. So for most of us, we don't really have to think about it. It is automatic. We are unconscious breathers, unlike our sea faring friends the whales and dolphins. According to consciousbreathing.com, “we take about 1000 breaths each hour, that's up to 25,000 breaths in a day.” That's 10-20 kg of air passing in and out of our body every day. Wow. This is ten times more than the food we eat. That makes it kind of a big deal.

Yogis believe that we don't measure our age in years, we measure it in breaths. That certainly encourages me to slow down my breath. A traditional yogi adage is that at birth we are all given a certain number of breaths, like an assigned number, and when we've gone through all of those, well, our time is up! So if we were to think about our breath, would it make us live longer? What if we studied our inhale and exhale, how would that change our lives? Research is showing that it would do a lot for our mental and physical well being if we slow down to give our breath the attention it is due.

What is Conscious Breathing?

As I mentioned earlier we are unconscious breathers, and breath can be done both consciously and unconsciously. We often don't think about

breathing because we are busy doing other things, like getting to work on time, making lunch before the kids get home, and so on. So no wonder we don't pay attention to our breath. But, put simply, conscious breathing is finding the awareness and control of our breath to make a positive impact and change in both our physical and mental well being. According to Dr. Andrew Weil, "Breathing is the bridge between mind and body, the

connection between consciousness and unconsciousness, the movement of spirit and matter. Breath is the key to health and wellness, a function we can learn to regulate and develop in order to improve our physical, mental and spiritual well-being." By tuning into our breath, we become present, we know how to make changes, improvements in our lives and how to transform.



Positive Effects of Conscious Breathing

Everybody can make positive changes through exploration of their breath, or conscious breathing. Research (and there is a lot of it these days) is showing that on a physical level, we can lower high blood pressure, reduce migraines and chronic pain, improve our circulation, sleep better, have more efficient sports performance, and just have more focus and clarity in our day. Other research shows that conscious breathing definitely impacts our mental health. We can lower stress and anxiety, relieve depression through stopping and breathing mindfully. This mindful breathing brings us into the present moment, taking us out of worry, fear and help with grief. Conscious breathing helps to

oxygenate the brain and nervous system and bring balance to the hemispheres of the brain and bring us into our parasympathetic nervous system - the rest and digest nervous system. Our focused breath takes us out of the sympathetic nervous system - the fight or flight nervous system that, if we linger in too long, can lead to adrenal fatigue, and other stress related diseases.

How to Breathe Consciously

We will explore different types of conscious breathing in this course, but a simple way to practice being mindful of your breath is the following:

- Close your eyes, inhale deeply and pause to hold your breath. Exhale deeply after. It's simple. Please remember to do this through the nose.
- Some prefer to breathe in through the nose and exhale through the mouth (this one is better if there is greater stress you're trying to release).

How to Incorporate Conscious Breathing Into Daily Life

The only real effort is to put aside some time and stay aware. Notice. Look at your breathing as a check-in with your overall well being. Put a bit of breathing time into your work schedule. You can do this on a bathroom break at work or at home. You can enhance the effect by stepping outdoors if the weather is pleasant. What's 10 minutes out of your day? It may make a big impact on your personal and professional life! Even three minutes is fine. Do what you can. If you're experiencing a stressful period, make more time for this. Try it before a conversation with your boss or before giving a presentation. It will make a big difference. And your intention is very important. Try to remove negative thoughts and replace them with positive

thoughts while practicing. Just for a little while. It will have a great impact on your breath.

So My Leaving Tips:

- Find somewhere for just a little bit to sit or lay down - 1 minute, 3 minutes, 20 minutes. Don't make it about the amount of time. You get benefit from even a little bit of mindful breathing.
- Close your eyes
- Inhale as your belly expands and take that inhale into the belly, ribs and upper body, exhale from the top down. Slowly.
- Refocus any negativity into positivity.

Resources:

<https://www.consciousbreathing.com>

<https://www.drweil.com/health-wellness/body-mind-spirit/stress-anxiety/breathing-an-introduction/>