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BREATH IS LIFE, LIFE IS BREATH

by Rachael Claxton, FRYOG Yoga instructor.

Breathing is something we rarely think about and yet the power of the breath affects us both physically and mentally. The breath is our simple but most powerful health tool. Here are three breathing techniques to pick you up, reduce stress or energize. They can be practiced either, seated, standing or lay down.

The most important breath is where we move at 4-6 breaths per minute. This has an adaptogenic effect on your nervous system. If you are feeling down, it will lift you; if you are a bit hyper, it will calm you down.

This breath is often referred to as **Water** (balanced breathing). This is a fantastic breath to use before high-stress meetings or presentations, if feeling sluggish or throughout a yoga practise, and can be practised day or night.

Inhale through your nose to the count of 1-2-3-4. Exhale through your nose to the count of 4-3-2-1. Repeat for at least for 10 rounds.

The second breath I want to share with you is the **Down Regulating Breath**, often referred to as **Whiskey Breath**.

Breathing below 4 breaths per minute triggers a strong parasympathetic nervous system response, improving digestion (digest and rest). It also reduces our heart rate. It is useful to practice before bed to aid sleep also helps reduce stress/anxiety. This breath should be done while sitting or lying down (never standing).

Inhale through the nose to the count of 1-2-3-4. Hold 1-2-3-4. Exhale through the nose to the count of 4-3-2-1. Hold 4-3-2-1. Repeat for a few rounds with care.

Another breath that is beneficial is the **Up-Regulating Breath**, often called **Coffee**. When you breathe at the rate of 20 breaths per minute or more, it stimulates your sympathetic nervous system. It should be practiced for a short time with care because rapid breathing reduces CO2 in the bloodstream which leads to constriction of your breathing passageways and veins. The ideal time to practise is first thing in the morning or just before exercise/yoga.

Sit down on the floor or in a chair. Exhale sharply through your nose as if sneezing. Sneeze out the air (keep face, neck, shoulders and chest still if possible).

After forcing the air out, relax and let the partial inhale happen. Repeat for 10 rounds. Rest. Repeat again.

When you learn how to harness your breath it brings all sorts of health improving impacts.

ANYBODY CAN BREATHE, THEREFORE ANYBODY CAN PRACTISE YOGA.

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