

## Health Care Revolution

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It is rather unusual to many of us in the western world to give so much importance to breathing techniques and breathing development... After all, we are always breathing, aren't we? It seems rather silly to pay extra attention to something we do naturally? But, notice your own breathing. Isn't each breath actually very shallow? Don't you often hold your breath? Well, that obviously may not be the optimal depth, balance and ease! It is just like the taste of chocolate, if you have never experienced optimal depth, balance and ease of breathing, how will you know whether you have it or not?

The magnitude of crisis in modern medicine demands immediate and broadly pervasive consumer action to enhance health and curb medical expenditure. Simple but appropriate breathing development practiced diligently and on a daily basis, can precipitate a remarkable revolution in our personal lives as well as influence the history of human health care and medical evolution

### Physiological Benefits

The presence of special breathing practices in the ancient cultures has always been a mystery to people in the Western world. There are numerous beneficial physiological mechanisms that are triggered when we turn our attention to our breath and then increase its ease, depth, volume and balance.

When breathing volume, rate and awareness are all optimized, dramatic physiological, and even emotional changes can occur. Slow, deep breathing can be so relaxing. It acts as a quick stress reliever. Unknown to science until very recently, our lungs, diaphragm and thorax acts as the primary pump for lymph fluid and heart. In addition, breath is the source of oxygen, which is the key element in the body's ability to produce energy. Our brain uses more than 25% of that energy.

### Exercises Based on Health Parameters

Just because one particular breathing exercise or breathing technique feels good does not mean it is healthy or will resolve shortness of breath or a breathing development goal or result in a long term aid in a wellness or performance program. The Optimal Breathing® Development System is not so much about breathing exercises. We employ a few but we have found that "breathing exercises" mean many things to many people and as a grouping is a mixture of good, mediocre, bad, confusing and outright dangerously unhealthy ways for using the breath and breathing. We carefully choose what breathing exercises we DO employ based upon physical function, form and the health, peak performance, self expression, emotional balance and life extension goals of our students.

### Diaphragm of Emotions

In the areas of joy, fear, guilt, anger, depression and anxiety the breathing diaphragm is much more than a mechanical shifter of air. It is, above all, a muscle of emotional experience and expression. Most people have had experiences of just how infectious it can be when someone nearby suddenly and spontaneously laughs or yawns. We usually laugh or yawn right along with them. Why? Because there is both a physiological and energetic response in the diaphragm that causes it to react in sympathy with what is being expressed by someone else. Singing for instance (if you can breathe right you CAN sing), relies on the importance of wanting to express emotion. If the diaphragm is thought of only as a pump then such thinking will greatly diminish its function and limit its invaluable contribution to vocal expression. Negative emotions such as anxiety can be greatly controlled with proper breathing; anger and depression as well. It is a rule of those that work a lot with the breathing that any negative emotion you can breathe through long enough will lose its grip on you.

### Psychological and Emotional Healing

Altered states of consciousness are huge aspects of certain breathing exercises. Under the guidance of a skilled breathwork practitioner they can be most beneficial, but unlocking the life-force energy (chi, kundalini, prana, life force etc.) can be very powerful, must be done gently, and should be undertaken with trained assistance. Some early practitioners of transformational breathwork (i.e. rebirthing, Holotropic Breathwork, etc.) used cathartic, high-energy forms of over-breathing, paying little or no attention to proper breathing mechanics. In some cases, these produced states that were too overwhelming and ungrounding for the participant. Persons with unresolved trauma issues (PTSD) should be especially cautious with these forms of breathwork as they may trigger releases that can be re-traumatizing. I have collaborated with Denis Ouellette to develop Integral Breathwork® (www.integralbreathwork.com), which combines my Optimal Breathing® work along with transformational breath work in a safe, gentle, incremental and physiologically sound approach (see [www.integralbreathwork.com](http://www.integralbreathwork.com)). Other excellent breathwork approaches that I recommend include the work of Joy Manné ([www.i-breathe.com](http://www.i-breathe.com)) and Tom Goode ([www.internationalbreathinstitute.com](http://www.internationalbreathinstitute.com)).

### Holistic Health

Patients and those with performance or personal development goals, including as well speaking, weight loss and in almost all cases better sleep have

used our breathing development practices with great success. Many quickly gain progress where all else had failed as they had been missing the primary energy component of the way they should have been breathing.

Correct breathing exercises can also prove beneficial to many health disorders like asthma and high blood pressure. Research proves breathing slower for a few minutes a day in most where the HBP is not created by prescription drugs or stimulants can bring down blood pressure to normal levels.

#### Hazards of Incorrect Breathing Exercises

"Cautions to be judicious and respectful of breathing exercises abound in the literature on hatha yoga. And it does indeed seem from anecdotal reports of explorers in this field that the rhythm and record of our respiration resonates throughout the body. It seems to accentuate whatever is in the mind, whether is be benevolence, or malevolence, harmony or disharmony, virtue or vice. On the negative side, experienced teachers report that quirkiness of any sort, gets accentuated in students who go too far. It might be an abusive streak, laughing inappropriately, speaking rudely, flightiness, twitchiness, or nervous tics. Right to left physical imbalances also become exaggerated. Unfortunately, novices often close their ears to warnings; having become addicted to their practice, they will not be denied. Competent teachers of hatha yoga will be watchful of these simple matters and wary of tutoring refractory students. Even the beginning exercises discussed in this chapter should be treated with respect.

Apart from psychological concerns, the special physiological hazards of breathing exercises is that they can cause problems without giving us traditional signals warning us against doing something harmful. In athletics, the practice of asana, experiments with diet, or just tinkering with any subject in the physical world, we depend on our senses to tell us that we are exceeding our capacity or doing something inadvisable. But breathing exercises are different. In that realm we are dealing with phenomena that our senses, or at least our untutored senses, are often unable to pick up, even though they can still affect the body. And because of this, advanced exercises should be undertaken only by those who are adequately prepared." H. David Coulter, Anatomy of Hatha Yoga p 131

#### Fundamentals First

We counsel to develop the fundamentals first. Breath is life and practice makes permanent so we need perfect practice lest tensions build that cause distortions in our breathing and therefore our lives. Most important are grounding, sequencing, balance, smoothness, depth, ease, strength, integration and coordination from the throat, chest, abdomen, back, sides and crotch both front to back, side to side and diagonally. FIRST develop your breathing properly. THEN use/exercise it for what ever goals or purposes you might have. Proper breathing development techniques and exercises are for most easy to learn, easy to apply, require no special knowledge or training and can be practiced by most people (sick or well) daily with very little impact on time or energy. They are a great way to recharge your cellular batteries. We suggest you begin here. [www.breathing.com/176.htm](http://www.breathing.com/176.htm)

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#### About the Author

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