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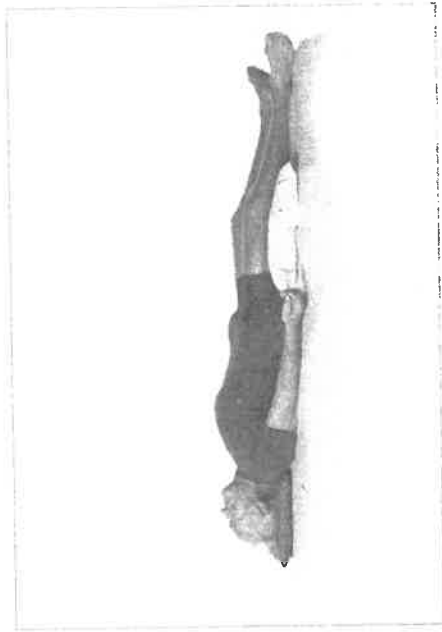
*Savasana*, Corpse Posture with Support

**START** lying on your back, arms to your sides, palms up, with a comfortable support under your head and your knees.

**CLOSE** your eyes.

**KEEP** your body and mind completely relaxed, having an alert feeling awareness.

**STAY** for at least 3 to 5 minutes or longer.



*Limb Four*

LOVE

DISCERNING THE DIFFERENCES

Love is the glue that holds things together as well as the boundary that defines and separates them. This discernment quality sees the difference between two things and holds them separate so that they may know each other. One end of love is absolute separation. The other end is absolute union. In our relationships, we discern our differences so that we may know both ourselves and one another.

To discern means to see, recognize, discriminate, or distinguish. When you discern something, you recognize that it's different from something else. You specifically recognize that it is different from *you*. As Limb Four of Emotional Yoga, Love is the ability to perceive yourself as the one who is discerning your emotions. When you connect yourself with an emotion, you hold it apart from you in order to perceive it as separate. In an emotional self-inquiry, you discern the difference between yourself, what you feel, and the discernment process itself. You exist on the cusp between yourself and the emotional experience. Within this state of clarity you discover the mean-

ing of the emotional grip. Then you can decide how much—if at all—you wish to link yourself to it.

This concept of love is obviously different from any idea of romantic love. But in order to have romantic or even spiritual love, you have to have discernment. You can't just merge with someone or something. No matter how close you are to someone, there is always something separating you. And no matter how distant you are from someone, there is always a connection between you. Love is a discernment quality, a recognition of the one *and* the other. It is the nexus between two dissimilar things, and this connection breeds hope, faith, and the possibility of a future. Although love acts as a unifying force between things, the strength of love lies in the differences.

#### DISCERNING THE SELF

When you discern your emotions, you become more aware of who you are. And it's important to be curious and playful about asking yourself who you are. *So, who are you?* Do you define yourself by your past, present, or future accomplishments; by your profession or your income; by your spiritual beliefs or your physical attributes? Or do you define yourself by something transcending all these things? If there was nothing you needed to do, create, add to, or separate yourself from who you are right now, who would you be?

Love says: You don't need to find yourself, you need to discover or perhaps uncover yourself. This is the real practice of discernment. When you discern your emotions, you can easily be aware of the one who is doing the feeling.

The truth is, *you are not your emotions*—or your thoughts or your fears. Having an emotion is simply having a powerful energy moving through you. Once you consciously discern the difference between you and the emotions you are having, your emotions will just keep on moving through. Feeling your body, feeling your emotions, and noticing the one who feels are all yoga techniques to help you recognize that there is a big difference between what you feel and who you are.

In the spiritual tradition of yoga, even the most elementary procedures are practices of discernment, helping us realize the degree to which we lose ourselves to the objects of our perception. When we actually experience this

realizing awareness, we are experiencing what yoga calls the "yoga state"—the state of pure discernment.

In the following inquiry, you are not processing information or analyzing something. You are standing back and viewing the whole, discerning what matters and what does not, feeling the depth, the meaning of things.

◆ Try pushing back into the source of your awareness and ask yourself: Am I the objects outside of me? Am I my feelings? Am I my thoughts? Or am I effortlessly aware of all these things?

◆ Say to yourself and feel: I am more than just my body. I am more than my mind. I am more than the emotions I see and feel. I am the one who sees, perceives, and feels. I am the one who observes.

◆ Dive deep inside yourself and discover what is real. Whatever happens, it happens to *you*. Whatever you do, the doer is in you. You are the one experiencing all of this. You are the one who is here right now. Feel the difference between the words you are reading, the experience of reading, and the one who is actually doing the reading.

◆ You are the observing self, the discerning self. But how deep, how high do you go?

◆ Go deeper, higher, wider. Push back into the very heart of your self. Become aware of your own field of attention. Realize it in yourself, in nature, in everyone, and engage it gracefully in everything you do.

#### IT TAKES HEART TO FEEL

It takes commitment to live from your heart. It takes patience to come back to yourself, to believe in yourself, and to discern who you are. Awareness of yourself opens your feelings. Awareness of your feelings opens your heart.

Your emotions are a tremendous source of energy and strength. Even the minor pains and anxieties flowing through you are opportunities to sense, touch, and be touched by your own heart when it is heavy with disappointment, loneliness, or fear. It takes heart to go into your own pain. But as you

meet each emotion, you will know that what it offers is the real chance to move closer to love.

There is an emotion deeply connected to the heart of love. That emotion is *courage*. When you feel insecure, uncertain, or stuck in aversion or fear, you can learn to investigate the emotion by sinking into the very moment of it. Remaining in your uncertainty or fear—not knowing what is going to happen—builds a reservoir of courage. The thing with fear is that you must do what you need to do even if it's there. The courage comes when you are honest with your fear, when you allow yourself to notice it and keenly observe whatever's there. This sense of truthfulness, perseverance, and inquiry into your emotional reality is courage. When courage comes, everything else follows.

Choosing to go headlong into the unknown comes with its own dose of fear. But fear is natural. It's human. Resisting your fear, however, creates even more fear. On one hand, trying to control the next moment negates the possibility for growth, because growth cannot be pushed or restrained. It needs the freedom to happen naturally. On the other hand, allowing total openness and freedom without boundaries can create an atmosphere of uncertainty, which is often frightening. But this is what keeps you alert to yourself and your emotions. It may take some time, maybe hours, even days to build emotional courage. Your heart might start beating faster, but this means you are *alive*. Every fiber is alive. And if you keep on moving through your fears by following them to their roots, you may feel more boundless. Then, no matter how new or strange your fears might be, they will gradually subside. Eventually, there will be no fear at all.

Love helps you discern your emotional Self, enhancing the energy and vitality of your body and mind.

According to the science of pranayama, prana has many levels of meaning, spanning the physical breath all the way to the energy of life itself. The prefix *pra* means "forward," and *na* means "to go" or "to travel." Therefore, prana is the basic life force or biological energy traveling throughout the entire nervous system, reaching every part, and is responsible for all physiological functions and their emotional effects. By deliberately changing the pattern of your breathing, you can affect change on all levels—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Simply put, pranayama is the conscious mastery of the various energies that give you life.

Limb Four of yoga teaches you to use your breathing as a vehicle for emotional healing and balance. Considered the primary tool for self-development in yoga, pranayama helps you to contact deeper and subtler emotional states by making conscious what is ordinarily an unconscious pattern of breathing. Creating a state of restful alertness, it promotes lucidity and mental clarity. It also calms agitated states such as anger and anxiety and improves the vitality of your body and mind. Directing your attention into the process of breathing becomes a powerful emotional tool to optimize health, increase longevity, dissolve fear, open your heart, and develop higher states of consciousness.

## CONSCIOUS BREATHING (PRANAYAMA)

Yoga Sutra, ch. 2, v. 49.

*Conscious breathing is the awareness, regulation, and modification of the various components of breathing.*

Your life is lived one breath at a time. Each breath is a point of consciousness, and each breath is a way of moving consciousness. When you breathe and listen, you can change how you think, feel, and express yourself.

Breathing calms your body. It also quiets your mind. It points out your agitated states and smooths them out. It gathers your mind's distracting chatter and teaches you how to focus in more deeply. Breathing *feels* good. It is emotional sanity.

## CONSCIOUS BREATHING (PRANAYAMA)

The fourth limb of yoga is conscious breathing, or pranayama. The Sanskrit word *pranayama* comes from the root *prana*, meaning "life," and *ayama*, meaning "to extend." Pranayama is the art of extending your vital energy or life force by regulating the natural flow of your breath.

Scientific research into the respiratory process confirms that the quality of your breathing has dramatic physical effects as well as psychological ones. Through slow, rhythmic respiration using the movement of your diaphragm, you can increase your relaxation response; decrease your metabolic rate and blood-sugar levels; lower your heart rate; reduce muscle tension, fatigue, and pain; and increase strength, mental and physical alertness, confidence, and emotional stability.

The ancient yoga masters developed the practice of conscious breathing to balance the emotions, clarify the mental processes, and integrate them into one functioning whole. While it is well known that breathing has a significant impact on the brain, through the yogic techniques of pranayama you can learn how to regulate your physical and emotional states.

According to yogic texts, breathing is the vehicle carrying the life force, or prana, throughout your body. But prana is more than breathing. Prana is life. It is vibratory power. Prana connects your body to your mind and to your consciousness and spirit. Through prana, you not only feel alive, but you are able to extend your life force to others, and guide your energy, thoughts, and desires.

As you regulate the flow of prana in your body, you affect the quality of your mind. When breathing slows down, the thinking process slows, and you attain steadiness. When the mind becomes still, breathing is calm. When breathing almost stops, your mind comes to a standstill and you enter a state of "restful alertness." This is the beginning of meditation.

Some people like to think they can get high from breathing in strange and unusual ways. What actually happens is even better, a deep revitalization on many levels—physical, emotional, and mental. Conscious breathing is considered the most powerful tool for emotional healing. It gets the molecules of emotion diffusing rapidly throughout your body's systems.

Breathing balances the mind and brings concentration, mental vitality, and the ability to discern more clearly how your emotions often distort your perception. Breathing thus reveals the essence of an emotion.

Breathing is also a mirror of the body and mind's reactions. It acts as a kind of safety valve: If you are overstressed, your breathing is irregular and short; if you are happy, your breathing is steady and long. Therefore, by ob-

serving your breathing you can be alert to what is happening within your body and mind. Once you learn about the infinite variations and modulations of your breath and how they affect you, you can balance how you feel at any time and in any situation.

#### **A BRIEF NOTE ON CRYING (AND LAUGHING)**

Crying—like laughing—is the most powerful and genuine emotional breathing release in your system. It frees and cleanses you.

Remember how babies cry? They take a big deep breath and let out their huge wail. They don't hold back. They just let go and sound out their breath. Their long, long exhale cries are followed by short, fast, inhale sobs as they begin to quiet down. Both laughing and crying clean out your emotions. They clean out your thoughts, and they clean out your body. Ever notice how you feel after you really laugh or cry? It's like a river has run through you.

Appreciate your breath the next time you laugh or cry. Allow it to support you and keep you present with your feelings. Give yourself permission to cry, like a child. It's okay. It's natural to cry. It doesn't mean you are weak. It means you are strong enough to take the risk of letting go. And when you open yourself up, your breath flows more easily through your system, flushing and rearranging your whole emotional structure.

#### **THE BASIC COMPONENTS OF BREATHING**

The simplest definition of pranayama is "to be with the breath." What makes the practices of pranayama unique is that your attention is fundamentally on the breath rather than on the body. This happens when you deliberately control your breathing cycle by regulating one or more of your breath's four parts:

1. Exhalation
2. Hold or retention with empty lungs
3. Inhalation
4. Hold or retention with full lungs

The pause, marking the point at which the collapse of the breath occurs, is called Kumbhaka ("pot") in Sanskrit. This pause naturally comes after each incoming and each outgoing breath. All yogic breathing exercises are created from the modifications of one or more of these four phases of breath and combining them in relation to one another. It's that simple. (Yet not always so easy.) The point is to learn how to use your breath intelligently and be conscious of how and why you breathe.

### USING THE MOVEMENT OF YOUR DIAPHRAGM

The yogic exercises of pranayama cultivate and train the movement of the diaphragm to participate with the abdomen, the intercostal muscles of the rib cage, and the upper chest. This happens with the basic breathing pattern that I call the Wave. (See page 72.)

The general instruction according to the Viniyoga approach is:

*Inhalation begins with the expansion of the upper chest and progresses downward toward the navel as the diaphragm moves down.*

*Exhalation begins as a conscious contraction, from the bottom upward, as the diaphragm moves up and the air moves out.*

Your attention should follow the natural flow of the breath—downward with the breath on inhale, and upward with the breath on exhale. Please note: This is *not* "belly breathing," which starts by filling the belly first on inhale and progressively filling the lungs from the bottom up.

In asana practice, the main focus is on the movement of your spine through the conscious control of your breath. In pranayama, bringing your awareness to the movement of your diaphragm activates, deepens, and extends the effects of your breathing.

### GUIDELINES FOR BREATHING

Here are a few important guidelines to conscious breathing:

1. *When you begin the practice of breathing, you must follow a certain order.* (See Warm-up Ritual, page 119.)
2. *Begin the practice of breathing according to your ability, concentrating on ex-*

*halation, inhalation, and retention, in that order. You can then work toward lengthening each phase.*

Never hold your breath on inhale or exhale with force. Be especially careful when holding your breath after inhalation, since pressure may build up in the muscles.

*Increase the length of your breathing gradually.*

If you feel any strain in your eyes, head, mouth, neck, shoulders, or spine, ease off and rest. Keep your hands relaxed and your mouth soft. Start with shorter breathing cycles and gradually work toward lengthening them. It's simple—advance slowly.

3. *Practice breathing while sitting straight, in a comfortable position, with eyes closed.*

Many breathing exercises can be practiced seated or lying down. Choosing one or the other changes the way you experience the exercise. Sitting supports more alertness. Lying down tends to relax or even put you to sleep. Find the best posture by asking your body what it wants to do. There is no one correct position for breathing, except when practicing alternate nostril breathing, in which case you must be seated. The longer period of time you practice, the easier the position you'll need.

It's important to cultivate good posture for breathing. Try lying down on a mat or blanket, or lying on the floor with pillows under your knees and head. Try a supported seated position on a couch or chair, or sitting on the floor with or without a blanket or pillow for support. Try them all. Be flexible. Sustain a good seated position for some time and stay comfortable, and you will unite your body and mind and start floating in the present moment.

4. *Keeping your mouth closed, breathe with a smooth and subtle sound passing from your throat through your nostrils.*

Close your mouth and breathe through your nose. Deliberately begin the Whispering Breath from the back of your throat. (See pages 71, 123.) If some phlegm develops in your throat as you breathe, it's normal. Simply take a little bit of warm water and gargle first to help clear your throat for breathing. You can also use the Whispering Breath when you work out.

5. *Breathing must be practiced on an empty stomach or at least two hours after a meal.*

6. *Only when your breath is smooth and long should you progress to altering the various components of the breath.*

It takes a little practice to make the breath long and smooth. It's worth taking the time, though. If you don't, you will miss something valuable. Slow down and notice what you didn't notice. Then you can begin to monitor the other components of your breath:

*Time and ratio* is the length or duration of the inhalation, exhalation, and retention, which creates an equal or unequal ratio of breathing.

*Number of breaths* is how many times you repeat a certain ratio or component of the breath. For example, inhaling for six counts, exhaling for six, then repeating this cycle four times.

*Building a ratio or breathing threshold* is a strategy that takes you step by step, progressively preparing your breath for the main goal, and then gradually bringing you out of it.

*The focus of your attention* often follows the flow of your breath. On inhalation your attention follows your breath as it comes into the chest area. On exhalation your attention is naturally drawn to your belly.

*The quality of your breath* should be long, slow, and refined, not too loud, and never rough. Use the sound of your breath to monitor any difficulty with your practice.

Pay attention, and ask yourself: What is the sound of my breath? Is it steady and smooth? Loud or quiet? What is the duration? Is it short or long? Am I aware of the pauses between my breaths? What is going on in my mind as I breathe? Is my posture comfortable? Do I feel hot or cold? Notice the way your body responds during and after your practice.

*Resting:* If you have time, lie down and rest at the end of your breathing practice. Stay a little while without getting up, and make a gradual transition into your next activity. Do this, and you'll feel better. If you feel any tension building in your neck and shoulders, in your upper back, between your shoulder blades, in your jaw, or around your eyes—or if you feel more irritated than when you began—you are probably going beyond what is comfortable for you. Stop, lie down, and feel where the tension is. Then go back

and find the natural ease with which your breath moves. If this tension happens with regularity, check with a qualified teacher.

Breathing is one of the greatest secrets of yoga—if you practice it with sincerity, you will obtain emotional healing powers beyond your imagination. Yet, breathing itself is not a secret. It's right there. If you train yourself in one area only, be awake to your breath. It's that basic. You can build your whole life around it.

## BREATHING LESSONS

When choosing a breathing practice, do it with the intention to regulate certain states of emotional and physical arousal or nonarousal. The simple introductory practices to follow include inhalation (tonifying) and exhalation (reducing) exercises, alternate-nostril techniques, and a combination of different inhale/exhale ratios.

Carefully choose from the practices and modify them to your needs. Do them alone or after asana practice. Pranayama is a detailed and profound science, and in the beginning it's always best to find a qualified teacher. Taking good care of yourself is essential for proper breathing. As the Zen master Katagiri Roshi once said, "When you take care of something, it lives a long time."

### STEP 1. Warm-up Ritual

Before you sit to breathe, always begin by moving a little, observing your breathing for some time, and then exploring the variations of your breath. If you have already practiced a program of asanas, proceed to step 2.

- ❖ Start your warm-up by lying on your back so your body doesn't have to fight gravity. As you lie down, get comfortable and close your eyes. Tune in silently to what is happening in your body right now.

When you are ready, gently place one hand on your lower abdomen and one hand on your chest. Start to breathe through your nose and pay attention to the flow of your breath. Gradually allow your breathing to deepen.

- ☸ As you begin to inhale, feel one hand move up with the expansion of your upper chest, observing how your breath moves in and down toward your navel. As you begin to exhale, feel your other hand move down toward the floor with the contraction of your belly, observing how your breath moves up and out. Stay with the flow of your breath.

### PREPARING WITH MOVEMENT AND BREATH

#### 1. *Tadakamudra*, Tank Posture

**START** lying on your back, legs straight out or knees bent, with both hands at your sides.

**INHALE** slowly raise both arms over your head to the floor behind you.

**EXHALE** tighten your belly and slowly bring both arms back down to your sides.

**COORDINATE** your movement with your breath, and keep your attention on your breathing the whole time. Allow the movement to actually emerge from your breath.

**REPEAT** 8 times, lengthening the inhalation and exhalation with each repetition, and holding for 2 seconds after both the inhalation and the exhalation.

#### 2. *Dvipada Pitham*, Two-Footed Posture

**START** lying on your back with your arms at your sides, both knees bent, feet on the floor, parallel and slightly apart.

**INHALE** lift your pelvis, bringing both arms up overhead to the floor behind you, keeping your chin down and your neck lengthened.

**EXHALE** tighten your belly, and bring your arms and your spine down, unwinding the spine from the top down, one vertebra at a time. **PRESS** down on both feet as you come up, keeping your neck and chin relaxed.

**REPEAT** 8 times, lengthening the inhalation and exhalation with each repetition.

#### 3.

#### *Apanasana*, Downward-Moving Vital Energy Posture

**START** lying on your back, knees bent, feet off the floor, with your hands on or behind your knees.

**EXHALE** gently, bringing your knees and thighs toward your chest.

**INHALE** move your knees away from your chest, straightening your arms.

**KEEP** your hands on your knees and your arms and shoulders relaxed. On exhalation, gradually tighten your belly, dropping your chin slightly as you pull your knees in.

**REPEAT** 8 times, progressively lengthening the exhalation with each repetition.

#### 4.

#### *Sukhasana*, Easy Seated Posture

**ROLL** over and come up to a comfortable seated position on the floor or in a chair.

- ☸ Close your eyes and wait for a moment, preparing the ground for breathing. As you settle in, feel your entire body—your limbs, your bones, your muscles, your ligaments. Sense your organs, your glands, your nerves, your fluids. Feel the whole, the relationship of the tissues and limbs.



*Grounding:* Feel the full weight of your body. Feel your "sit" bones making contact with the chair or floor. Dive deeper into yourself. Fill your body with your awareness, and sink your attention down to the ground. Meet with the earth.

*Ascending:* Sense the top of your head and your shoulders. Feel the length of your spine, vertebra by vertebra. Feel the flow of your attention projecting up through the ceiling toward the sky. Touch the sky and project yourself even higher. At the same time as you are rising, feel the ground below. You are sitting, and breathing, that's all. Total receptivity. Let go of what *was*, and open yourself to what is.

### Step 2. Breathing Awareness

**Effects:** Settling and soothing agitated states such as anger, anxiety, or fear.

- ◆ Shift your attention to the flow of your breath and observe how it comes and goes. Ride your breath like a wave. Inhale and pause. Then exhale and pause. Inhale all the way to the end of your breath, and feel the completion of the breath, waiting for the next breath to begin. Exhale all the way to the end and feel the completion of the breath, waiting for the next breath to begin. Lengthen your breath naturally, following it with awareness.
- ◆ Notice that as the physical breath ends a part of it continues on an energetic level. Feel it come to its completion in silence. Wait in that silence. With every new breath, allow your attention to rest more deeply into the pause. Feel how the breath begins as an energetic pulse, then moves into the physical body and takes you with it into the next inhaling breath.
- ◆ The breath comes in, and stops. The breath goes out, and stops. It is effortless. You are pouring the inward into the outward breath, and the outward into the inward breath. Then the breath ceases flowing in the silent space between each breath. Listen to the silence. Sur-

render to it, and breathe again. Be in that silence. Feel yourself turning back upon yourself as you breathe.

### Step 3. The Whispering Breath (Ujjayi Pranayama)

**Effects:** Helps control and deepen the flow of breath; focuses awareness; slightly heating.

- ◆ Practice the Whispering Breath (see page 71) in all exercises including throat breathing. You will not need to use it when you are breathing through alternate nostrils or through your mouth. Use it both when you are seated and when you are lying down. As you breathe, let your awareness follow the rhythmic motion of your diaphragm, and gradually lengthen each part of your breath until you reach your maximum length. Then progressively reduce the length of your inhalation and exhalation until you come back to easy breathing. Repeat for 12 to 24 breaths.

- ◆ Keep the flow of your breathing continuous as you proceed. Choose from the following lessons and use them as introductory guides.
 

**NOTE:** When it comes to practicing any breathing ratio, you can first begin without a plan to see what your body wants to do and where it wants to go. Then you can follow a particular ratio. All breathing ratios are a template for practice and experimentation.

### Lesson 1. (Sama Vritti) When the Components of the Breath Are Equal

**Effects:** (Bhramana, Samana) Balancing, slightly tonifying, stimulating. Good for low energy, depression, lethargy.  
Sama means "equal" or "same," and *vritti* means "wave" or "movement." Sama Vritti means that the length or movement of your inhalation and ex-



halation are equal. Normally, the length of your inhale is shorter than your exhale. But if you consciously make the inhalation and exhalation the same length, you increase the effects of the inhalation as well. Lengthen both parts of the breath simultaneously. Observe how you feel practicing this ratio. The important thing here is smoothness of breath. Do this breathing ratio a variation of it to energize, stimulate, and create more focus.

LENGTHENING BOTH THE INHALE AND EXHALE				
INH.	HOLD	EXH.	HOLD	
8	2	8	2	Repeat 4 times
8	4	8	4	"
10	4	10	4	"
10	6	10	6	"
12	6	12	6	"
8	0	8	0	"

**Lesson 2. (Visama Vritti)  
When the Components of the  
Breath Are Not Equal**

In this exercise, the length of your inhalation and exhalation are *unequal* and can be used to create different effects—either tonifying or reducing your energy.

Classically, *Brahmana* (tonifying) and *Samana* (balancing) are used in the morning or afternoon, and *Langana* (reducing) is used in the evening—building in the A.M. and reducing in the P.M. However, let the pranayama support what's happening in your system now.

**PROGRESSIVELY LENGTHEN THE EXHALATION  
AND HOLD**

**Effects:** (*Langana*) Calming, reducing of agitation, anger, fear, anxiety. Prepare your body by practicing several *asanas*, placing an emphasis on the exhalation. As you lengthen the exhalation, you will create a reducing and relaxing effect to your body and mind. Longer holds may bring up strong emotions. And lengthening the exhalation and holding after exhale can be very challenging. After you exhale, you are empty. There is nothing there, only yourself. Observe how you feel practicing this ratio, and use it as a guide. Modify it in any way you need to.

LENGTHENING THE EXHALE				
INH.	HOLD	EXH.	HOLD	
8	2	8	2	Repeat 4 times
8	2	10	2	"
8	2	10	4	"
8	2	10	6	"
8	2	12	6	"
8	0	8	0	"

**PROGRESSIVELY LENGTHEN THE INHALATION  
AND HOLD**

**Effects:** (*Brahmana*) Tonifying, energizing. Builds energy and focus. Prepare your body by practicing several *asanas*, placing an emphasis on the inhalation. Lengthen the inhalation and produce a nourishing and stimulating effect on your body and mind. Be aware that you may have a tendency to go beyond what is comfortable for you. Be cautious. *Never push your breath.*

Observe how you feel after following this ratio. Afterward, allow your head and neck to move with your breath to relieve any accumulated tension.

LENGTHENING THE INHALE				
INH.	HOLD	EXH.	HOLD	
6	2	12	2	Repeat 4 times
8	2	12	2	"
10	2	12	2	"
12	2	12	2	"
12	4	12	2	"
8	0	8	0	"

You can also progressively lengthen the hold or retention of the breath on both inhalation and exhalation. Depending on which part of the retention or hold you emphasize (after exhalation or after inhalation) you will extend the effects of either the inhalation (tonifying) or exhalation (reducing).

Options:

1. Use both the breathing ratios in lessons 1 and 2 as a seated breathing practice, or along with various asanas, lengthening the inhalation or exhalation as you move in the postures.
2. Create a practice using a combination of lessons 1 and 2 in a sequence. (This practice gradually builds and increases energy; then returns to calming, relaxing, and cooling.)
  - A. Begin by lengthening your inhalation until you reach your comfortable maximum. Your exhalation remains free. Finish and then rest for a few breaths.

- B. For the next 10 breaths, sustain the maximum inhalation and allow your exhalation to be equal in duration to your inhalation. Finish and then rest for a few breaths.
- C. Now lengthen your exhalation until you reach your comfortable maximum. Your inhalation remains free. Finish and then allow your breathing to come back to normal.

### Lesson 3. (Kramas) Breathing in Stages

Breathing can also be done in stages or steps. I like to think of going up or down in an elevator and stopping at every floor. For example: *Exhale, pause down in an elevator and stopping at every floor.* Or, *inhale, pause. Inhale, pause. Move Exhale, pause. Exhale, pause.* Or, *inhale, pause. Inhale, pause. Inhale, pause. Move with your breath to the bottom floor, or all the way to the top.* These have the same effects as lengthening each part of the breath, as in the preceding exercises.

### INHALATION IN STEPS

**Effects:** (Brihmana) Tonifying, energizing, nourishing.

As you take a breath in, inhale one-half of your breath comfortably, then pause. Inhale the other half of your breath, then pause. Exhale completely and fully. Repeat this for 4 breaths. This breathing exercise is called Viloma Krama. Repeat this again in three stages: inhale one-third, pause, inhale one-third, pause, inhale one-third, and pause. Exhale completely. You can continue this pattern four more times or stay with one variation for a total of 8 to 12 breaths.

Follow the inhalation with your awareness, as you emphasize the expansion of the upper chest first, then expand the middle and the lower rib cage. Progressively expand the inhalation from the top down.

### EXHALATION IN STEPS

**Effects:** (Langana) Reduces agitation, purifying, calming.

Exhale one-half of your breath slowly, pause, then exhale the remaining half of your breath, and pause. Inhale fully. Repeat 4 times. This breathing exercise is known as Anuloma Krama. Repeat this again in three states: exhale one-third, pause, exhale one-third, pause, exhale one-third, and pause. Inhale fully. Repeat 4 more times, continuing this pattern or staying with one variation for a total of 8 to 12 breaths.

Follow the exhalation with your awareness, contracting the abdominal muscles progressively from the pubic bone to your navel and from your navel to the solar plexus.

Options: You may breathe in stages as a seated breathing practice or along with various asanas—moving, then pausing, moving, then pausing, either on inhale or exhale.

#### Lesson 4. (Sitali/Sitalani) The Sipping Breath

**Effects:** (Langana, Samana) Cooling, soothing, balancing.

There are two variations of this exercise. It's all up to your genes. If you can curl your tongue, you can practice Sitali. If you cannot, you can practice Sitalani. I call this pranayama the Sipping Breath. I love this exercise, because it reduces tension, cools and soothes the body and mind, and opens the throat and jaw. I find it is also good for anxiety. As you breathe, the mild movement of your head and neck creates a fluid, wavelike motion reminiscent of a waterfall.

- ◆ For Sitali, curl and extend your tongue, creating a hollow tube shape, and inhale through your curled tongue. After inhalation, the tongue folds back on itself as you close your mouth and exhale. The tongue stays where it is until the next inhalation.
- ◆ For Sitalani, your tongue is flat up against the palate and your front teeth. Breathe between your tongue and palate.
- ◆ As you inhale (using Sitali or Sitalani), slowly raise your chin and head. After inhalation, close your mouth, bring your head down, dropping your chin (without collapsing your chest), and exhale us-

ing the Whispering Breath, breathing through the back of your throat. Repeat, beginning with the Sipping Breath. Your head and chin move up during inhalation and down before exhalation. Repeat for 12 to 18 breaths.

#### Lesson 5. (Brahmari) The Humming Breath

**Effects:** (Samana, Langana) Balancing, calming, soothing.

Like a hummingbird or a queen bee, in this exercise as you breathe, you create a soft humming sound with your mouth closed. Inhale using the Whispering Breath, then as you exhale, produce a humming sound as you let the air out, mouth closed. Notice when you hum, it resonates in your head, chest, and throat. Keep humming one tone until you complete your exhalation. Inhale using throat breathing, then hum again on exhale. The Humming Breath creates a calming and soothing effect on your body and mind. Repeat for 12 to 18 breaths.

Options: You may use the Humming Breath as a seated breathing practice or along with various asanas, making a humming sound as you move on exhale.

#### Lesson 6. (Nadi Shodhana) Balancing with the Sun and Moon

**Effects:** There are three practices—one for cooling, one for heating, and one for balancing.

For centuries, yogis have observed that throughout the day, regular changes occur in airflow dominance between the right and left nostrils, dramatically affecting how we think and feel. Every few hours, we breathe predominantly through one nostril more than the other, and, as the airflow oscillates, it creates rhythmic changes throughout the body-mind.

Recent scientific studies show that cardiovascular activity, cognition, the autonomic nervous system, concentrations of pituitary hormones, and even

insulin levels are affected by nostril dominance. All of this happens naturally. When you consciously alter nostril dominance—deliberately change the flow of air through the nostrils—you change the coherence of brain waves between the hemispheres of your brain, and either energize or relax your nervous system.

According to ancient scriptures, the left nostril conducts cooling energy to the body-mind, stimulating the right hemisphere of the brain, activating emotional and spatial performance. It is considered feminine and is associated with chandra, or the moon. The right nostril conducts heating or warming energy to the body-mind, stimulating the left hemisphere of the brain, activating rational and verbal performance. It is considered masculine and is associated with surya, or the sun.

Nadi Shodhana, an exquisite technique for emotional balancing developed by the masters of yoga, alters the dominant nostril in various rhythmic patterns.

*Shodhana* means “cleansing” and *nadi* means “stream, canal, or tube.” In yoga anatomy, the nadis are subtle channels for the circulation of vital energies or prana. In the *Gehandita Samhita*, a seventeenth-century yoga manual, the nadis are perceived as a network that conducts the invigorating energy of oxygen to places where it is used in vital processes. Biological energy enters the body and is distributed through the passages of the nadis, which are like the fibers of the lotus that fertilize the whole plant.

Ayurveda recognizes seventy-two thousand nadis, or channel systems, and specifies three important ones—the main one corresponding to the central spinal canal (*Shushumna*) and two others that spiral upward around the spine. *Ida* runs on the left and terminates on the right, and *Pingala* runs on the right and terminates on the left.

Nadi Shodhana is a sophisticated breathing exercise for cleansing the nadis. It extends the vital air of prana, moving inward, and *apana*, moving outward, and renews the biological energy and activity that keep us alive. According to yoga, Nadi Shodana is the *crème de la crème* of all the breathing exercises.

In this exercise, control of the nostrils comes from using a hand position known as *murgi mudra*, or the deer mudra. Create this by bending your index

finger and third finger to touch your palm. It does look like a deer. (See photo below.) Use your thumb and ring finger to control the flow of air through your nostrils. Regulate your breathing by gentle pressure, placing your thumb and ring finger on the narrowest part of the nasal passage, right where the cartilage begins. Use the pad of the thumb and the pad of the ring finger to seal or valve the nostrils. During the technique, one nostril is sealed down at the flap of the nostril, and the other is valved lightly at the upper part of the cartilage. When the seal is down, the valve is up, always creating some light pressure on both nostrils. Never force your breath if your nasal passages are blocked or obstructed in any way. If your breath is not flowing freely, practice throat breathing instead. Nostril breathing allows the breath to be longer, the sound to be subtle, and gives you better overall control. Practice the following exercises in a seated position.



**1. FOR COOLING WITH THE MOON  
(CHANDRA BHEDANA)**

Close your right nostril with your right thumb, using the deer mudra. Inhale through your left nostril, slowly, deeply, and fully. Close your left nostril with the ring and little fingers, and exhale through your right nostril.

Repeat for a few minutes or for 12 to 18 breaths. Inhale left. Exhale right. Feel the cooling effect throughout your entire system. Continue to breathe smoothly and easily.

*Left, Moon, Cooling*

Helps to calm your mind; regulates anger; eases insomnia; cools an overheated body; reduces restlessness, anxiety, and stress.

**2. FOR WARMING WITH THE SUN (SURYA BHEDANA)**

Close your left nostril with the ring and little fingers of your right hand. Inhale through your right nostril, slowly, deeply, and fully. Close your right nostril with your right thumb, and exhale through your left nostril.

Repeat for a few minutes or for 12 to 18 breaths. Inhale right. Exhale left. Feel the warming effect throughout your system. Continue to breathe smoothly and easily.

*Right, Sun, Heating*

Promotes digestion, good before eating; increases energy; enhances mental focus and concentration; enlivens the body for physical activity.

**3. FOR BALANCING WITH THE SUN AND THE MOON  
(NADI SHODHANA)**

Close your right nostril with your thumb, and exhale through your left nostril. Then inhale through your left nostril. Close your left nostril and exhale through your right nostril. Then inhale through your right nostril. Close your right nostril again, and repeat the cycle. Exhale left, and inhale left. Then close. Exhale right, and inhale right. Then close. Every time you complete exhaling and inhaling on both sides, you have completed one cycle of the practice.

Repeat for 8 to 12 cycles.

*Left, Moon, Cooling and Right, Sun, Heating*

Balances the left and right hemispheres of the brain; equalizes the pranic current flowing throughout the body; brings balance to all systems; refines, stabilizes, and cleanses the entire body-mind.

Depending on the breathing ratios you choose to practice, you can also create either a *Langana* (reducing) or *Brihana* (tonifying) effect.

After you have finished this breathing exercise, you may stay seated for a moment or lie down and rest with your eyes closed, having a relaxed, alert awareness.

