

Reflections On Breathing

Compiled by Deb Karpek

Mindfulness is a state of non-judgmental, present moment awareness. When we practice mindfulness and develop a “calm” or “still” mind, we become aware of sensations, thoughts, feelings, our breathing and our environment, and we can then develop acceptance of whatever is present without trying to change a thing. By staying connected to the breath, we can experience - even for a moment - a release from the invisible chains of the mind with all its stories, judgments, worries and ruminations.

When teaching formal mindful practices such as sitting meditation for improved health, less stress, and greater peace of mind, I gently guide students to connect and reconnect with their breath. I can't emphasize this enough. So much of our personal unhappiness and discomfort can be alleviated simply by giving regular and mindful attention to our breath. The breath is a precious gift of life that restores balance and peace of mind and is the key to remembering who we really are.

Ian Baker Johnson, MS

Professional Coach, Mindfulness Teacher, Workshop Facilitator and owner of Mindful Life Matters

Breath. Until recently, something I never really thought about. Once I became aware of my breath, everything changed.

I had no idea how often I held my breath. When I hold my breath I hold things in. When I hold things in I become unwell on all levels – mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally. Things start piling up inside and they manifest in many unpleasant ways.

Never has this been so apparent as in the last year. After two years of chronic physical pain after the sudden and violent death of a loved one, I began monthly therapeutic breathwork sessions. My life was transformed as my body let go and unwound. Breath was the vehicle that took me to this transformation.

Something as simple as breathing in and out, something I've rarely given any thought to, changed my life in the most profound ways. Not only is the pain gone, but I am filled with peace and clarity, purpose and enthusiasm once again.

I am fond of saying we don't know what we don't know and sometimes I discover that I've forgotten the most simple things. Those simple things that are the most healing and life-affirming.

Take time to breath and see what bubbles up. You deserve it.

Deb Karpek

Reiki Master/Teacher

Peaceful World Reiki

Breath is Life...from the first inhale we take to the last exhale we release. Our days are measured not just by the quantity of our breathing, but by the quality. Our breathing reflects the ease and pleasure of our existence in a body, which can be labored and fearful or harmonious and joyful. Most of us vacillate between the two, but tend to develop unconscious breathing habits that determine the ongoing state of our health and wellbeing year after year.

I have been a conscious student and teacher of the breath since the mid 1970s. The spirit of breath has given me boundless lessons when I was willing to take the time to listen and feel. Like any educational endeavor, coaching helped me open doors of perception and pathways of exploration. This can seem so simple and elusive that it is dismissed by 99% of the populace, until perhaps there is a physical crisis or spiritual awakening. The breath nonetheless has been my lifelong companion, often ignored but always ready to inform me of my moment by moment physical, emotional and mental dynamics...and give me a ready means by which to positively alter stuck or dysfunctional patterns.

I have searched the world for answers and found them right under my nose, once I was willing to form a personal relationship with my breathing.

*Jim Morningstar,
InWellness Coordinator*

Since The Enlightenment Intensive, breathing has become a constant to who I am--One with God.

As a Bodyworker and Acupuncturist, a full connected breath keeps me out of my head and in my heart, cultivating instead of losing energy as I work in this space of unconditional love. When releasing stress or blockages to the powers that heal, breath is my partner.

Breathing is something we all share at every moment. We are both nurtured and cleansed through our breath. When we retain our breath it is a stress signal.

Breathing has become a Master teacher as I have become consciously connected to this creative energy with the help of many enlightened teachers. Thank You.

All study and action is more enhanced with the power of breathing fully. Being Human is very creative when we open ourselves to ourselves; it has a cumulative effect. With a practice of breathing fully, and Breathwork to let go completely...to again receive fully, I have experienced transformation.

I have let go of habits/addictions and thoughts of separation. I have more consistent energy and joy in my field. More love for myself and others.

It has been said that when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. It appears that this Grand Teacher (Breath) is and always has been with me. I am the Master of my breathing and everything else I can be conscious of.

Gary Chulkins, L.Ac., L.M.T.

A mindful focus on breathing can help you get to sleep when your head spins with thoughts. Notice your breath and focus on it. Gently guide your mind back to your breath when it wanders. If you're new to this practice or get anxious about not sleeping, it's better to take a couple of weeks to practice this during the daytime instead of when you're tossing and turning and the stakes are high. If that's the case, it's better just to get out of bed and do something else for awhile. Think long-term and don't expect immediate results. Mindful breathing is a great skill to practice over time to strengthen your general ability to fall asleep!

Catherine C. Loomis, Ph.D., C.B.S.M.
Restorative Sleep, L.L.C.
www.restorativesleep.net

I love to laugh almost as much as I love breathing! I teach Laughter Yoga in group presentations and also to my clients. Laughter Yoga has many benefits; increased respiratory capacity, lower hypertension, increased endorphins and reduction of anxiety and depression.

Most of us breathe shallowly into our chests, unless we are exercising. People are surprised by how much better they feel after just one session of laughter yoga, because they have introduced so much more oxygen into their bodies with diaphragmatic breathing.

A typical session involves having clients practice inhaling deeply and exhaling by pursing their lips and blowing. Then we add some ho hos, hee hees and ha has to the exhalations. By this time, the practiced laughter starts to become real laughter. Some laughter exercises actually get participants walking around the room and interacting with each other, which usually increases the level of laughter in the room. By the end of the session, participants report feeling very relaxed and refreshed.

I've found using laughter yoga can be useful for clients of any age and ability, including clients who require the use of oxygen. Laughter Yoga can help anyone learn to breathe more effectively and with more ease, and just as importantly can provide an opportunity to learn to take ourselves less seriously. A typical adult laughs about 15 times a day and a typical child laughs about 300 times a day. We all know what happens--grownups have jobs to attend to, bills to pay, children to raise--and it's all important stuff. However, it's one thing to take our responsibilities seriously, but we can choose to take ourselves less seriously.

If you'd like to learn more about Laughter Yoga, plan to attend the InWellness Awareness Free Seminar on April 13th at the Healing Space on Main in Menomonee Falls.

Elizabeth Boeck, LCSW and Certified Laughter Yoga Teacher

When teaching emotional intelligence, I tell every class and every person I coach that their most important EI tool is a deep breath, specifically in through the nose, out through the mouth, both gentle, full and relaxed. This energizes the frontal cortex, the logical, rational, executive center of the brain, and relaxes the body, the physiology where all the energy in motion (e-motion) is occurring - allowing it to flow freely. The emotion breath shifts the chemicals activated in the body, from adrenaline for flight, fight or freeze reactions, to dopamine and serotonin and other feel-good chemicals.

The more I remember to breathe when my emotions are activated, the more peaceful I am, no matter what the situation is. Try it, you'll like it!

Patricia Clason, EQ Coach

Breathing. When asked to reflect on this topic, I must admit I avoided it until the absolute last minute. Nothing came to mind. Nothing inspiring anyway. Then today I went for a walk in my neighborhood, and couldn't help but notice when my breathing picked up. With just my iPod and nature, it wasn't hard to become conscious of what was in my immediate vicinity, including my breath. It occurred to me that this awareness, this consciousness, sneaks up on you when you least expect it, yet when it does, you sort of don't want to leave.

Being alone with your breath is sort of like being alone for a walk. You begin by trying hard to think about the task at hand, and then you lose yourself in it. You really have no other way to entertain yourself other than using your senses, and it's amazing what happens when your blood starts pumping! As I walked, I not only breathed in the fresh spring air, but also noticed the scents of the homes around me, the melting snow on the grass and the strong wind blowing against my face. The simple act of moving (in my case, walking), is all I needed to get my juices flowing, in every sense. I became physically invigorated while my mind began to drift away from the daily stressors and float into daydreams, which segued into goals and finally led me to next steps of action to take in my life – today. It was an amazing feeling that I often take for granted.

I am in awe of how something that we do all day, every day, can be both a conscious and a subconscious act. Imagine what it would be like if we were able to tap into this consciousness more regularly. You already breathe anyway, so why not make the most of it!

*Jodie Niles, Life Empowerment Coach
Contemporary Abstract Artist
Professional Creative Writer*

