

## THE FACTS ABOUT BREATHING

1. Air hunger (hyperventilation): Recent research makes it clear that approximately 7 out of 10 people going to the doctor, go with complaints that relate to inadequate breathing, which is described as hyperventilation syndrome. However, they are often prescribed tranquillisers or other anxiety/mood altering medications due to the ignorance around the importance of proper breathing and its therapeutic properties. This medication does not address the problem and can in fact go on to create secondary problems.
2. Stress caused by events, real or imagined, causes breathing to go astray as people feel powerless. This in turn contributes to a feeling of 'dis-ease' and disharmony within oneself. This is why taking control of our breathing is so crucial. Breathing is sometimes referred to as a form of 'internal massage', because it is so soothing, both physically and emotionally. Practise abdominal breathing regularly and see how quickly it can change how you feel.
3. Breathing should not be from the chest; it should be from the abdomen. The less tension there is around the heart the better it functions. Shallow breathing, which is characterised by our chest moving excessively whilst we breathe, creates tension around the heart. Stress around the heart is relayed to the brain, which stimulates the release of various toxic hormones. Breathing properly releases this stress and allows the person to relax, therefore producing healing hormones.
4. 'Inner' control and stability can be initiated and sustained through breathing correctly. Correct breathing offers us clarity, it cools the mind and offers us access to our reservoirs of power. If we bring greater control into our inner world, we will bring greater control into our outer world too - relaxed breathing can help us achieve this goal. Breathing deeply increases the neurochemical production (dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin etc.) in the brain, which both elevates the mood and controls pain.
5. It is possible to relax 'out of the past' and into the present by making controlled breathing part of your self-empowerment plan. Relaxed breathing is a form of therapy, because it is about letting go of tension, which makes it possible for one to make greater contact with the 'authentic' self and promote the healing process. In order to let go of the past and live more in the present, practise breathing in what you need right now, and letting go of that which is no longer useful. For example, every time you breathe in, say in your mind: "I breathe in all that I need to make me happy, whole and well". And every time you breathe out, say in your mind: "I let go of all the negative influences that hold me back". You can personalize the phrases to suit yourself. By breathing in this way, you will more quickly reach your destination.
6. One of the chief functions of the blood is to help oxygenate the body and to deliver vital nutrients to our various organs and systems. A lack of oxygen and nutrients, leads to lack of vitality in the body and poor performance. Drawing air deeper down into the lungs greatly

increases blood flow and this increases energy and also improves stamina. The higher oxygen content within the blood cleanses the body, removing all the dead cells and toxins, which leads to better circulation, better sleep, stress reduction and your body working more efficiently.

7. The body is designed to release up to 70 percent of its toxins through breathing. Carbon dioxide is a natural toxic waste product that comes from the body's metabolic processes, and it needs to be expelled from the body regularly and consistently in order to keep us alive. It gets transferred from the blood to our lungs and we expel it with our breath. However, when our lungs are compromised by shallow breathing, the other detoxification systems in the body take over and have to work harder to expel this waste. This toxic overload can make the body weaker and lead to a variety of illnesses.

8. Deep Breathing stimulates the lymphatic system. The lymphatic system is a crucial system in our bodies that most of us are unaware of. We know much more about our circulatory systems, but we have twice the amount of lymphatic fluid in our bodies as we do blood! Our circulatory system relies on our hearts to pump the blood around our bodies, while the lymphatic system relies on our breathing to get it moving. The blood pumps oxygen and nutrients to the cells and once they absorb what they need they excrete their waste back out into the sea of lymphatic fluid that our cells constantly swim in. The lymph fluid is responsible for ridding the body of the debris the cells excrete and also dead cells and other waste. As our breathing is what moves the lymph, breathing shallowly can lead to a sluggish lymphatic system which is not detoxifying properly. Deep breathing will help get that lymph flowing properly so your body can work more efficiently.

9. The digestive processes rely on oxygenation of the food. Lack of sufficient oxygen means imperfect digestion, poor nutrition, inadequate elimination and imperfect health. Abdominal breathing means more oxygen is supplied to the digestive organs, thereby helping them to work more efficiently. Deeper breathing also results in an increased blood flow, which in the digestive tract encourages intestinal action and will further improve your overall digestion. In addition, deeper breathing results in a calmer nervous system, which in turn also enhances optimal digestion.

10. Many ailments are created by or added to by the way we breathe. Mouth breathing for instance, as opposed to nostril breathing, can contribute to colds, influenza, bronchitis and catarrhal infections, and even lung damage; so wherever possible, breathe via your nose rather than your mouth. Deep breathing expands the lungs and makes them work more efficiently. It also brings in more oxygen to the blood, which in turn gets sent to the heart. As a consequence, the heart does not have to work so hard to deliver oxygen to the tissues. Also, with the lungs working a little harder pushing oxygen into the blood it eases the pressure needed by the heart to pump it through the body. This improves your circulation, the function of the heart and your overall health.

11. Poor breathers often complain of feeling the cold. They lack the supply of warm blood to the extremities, such as the hands and feet, and so the cold is experienced more intensely in these areas. Shallow breathing can also cause and contribute to; muscle pain, paraesthesia (numbing sensations of the skin), tremor and tetany (muscular spasms caused by mineral deficiency), gastrointestinal dysfunction, aerophagy (intestinal gas), tachycardia (increased heartbeat), shortness of breath and excessive sighing.

12. Weak and erratic breathing patterns can induce a fear, panic, anxiety, or phobic response, and can also disturb our memory and concentration. With the stress imposed on the central nervous system by poor breathing, other symptoms can include faintness, dizziness and visual problems. Breathing deeply is the fastest way to stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system - generating the relaxation response. Stress is at the core of most diseases and most of us live stressful, busy lives, which is commonly accompanied with shallow breathing. When we breathe shallowly, the body does not receive as much oxygen as it needs and as previously explained, our muscles constrict. The sympathetic nervous system is triggered when we feel stress or anxiety and sends out spikes of cortisol and adrenaline. It is the parasympathetic nervous system, which counteracts this, and breathing is the fastest way for these two systems to communicate. With deeper breathing you can turn the switch from 'high alert' to low in seconds. Remember, if you ever feel anxious, to breathe deeply.

### **So, in summary...**

Hyperventilation and stress are inseparable, the performance of one directly influences the performance of the other. Therefore, where there is poor breathing, there is also a reduced ability to cope with stress. Equally, when one is under stress, breathing then goes astray. So, one way to regain mental and emotional control in the midst of a difficult situation is to control your breathing for several minutes. This naturally reduces the level of stress and anxiety you are experiencing as the body's chemical/hormonal response is altered to help you deal more positively with the situation.