



freedom to unfold

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NourisHer

with Melissa Billington of MYOGA

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Breath

Spirare (Latin) gives us the words inspire, expire & spirit, & means *to breathe*. So how we breathe, how inspired we are (& hopefully not expired!), indicates our level of spirit. How awake & alive are you to your own life? “Breathe right; it’s your birthright.” --Yogi Bhajan

Ujjayi Pranayam, or victorious life force control. Inhale **and** exhale through your nose to clear, warm & moisten the nasal passages & also to filter the air before it reaches the lungs. Simply breathing through the nose can help alleviate asthma. Narrow the throat slightly to create a steady sound like wind through a tunnel (which it is!) or a *gentle* Darth Vadar or the sound of the ocean in a shell. Use the sound to keep you attuned to your inner reality & to calm & focus the mind in the fullness of the moment. This is used extensively in yoga to keep you aligned with your most authentic practice; if you can’t breathe in what you’re doing, change what you’re doing! So notice those moments or confrontations in your life when your breath becomes lost or shallow. It might not be appropriate to do a Darth Vadar on the poor soul, but you **can** breathe more fully into the moment & empower yourSelf even without making sound.

Dirgha Pranayam, or 3-part/complete life force control. Use Ujjayi Pranayam to slow your breathing & tune you inwards. While lying down or sitting still, rest a hand on your low belly & let the inhale expand into your belly & into your hand. Feel the release towards your spine with the exhale. Feel the inhale in your low back as well. After a few breaths establishing your belly-breath, bring your hands just below your bra-line & rest your palms & fingers flat on your ribs, middle finger tips touching as you exhale. Feel the expansion of your ribs on the inhale & you may find your middle finger tips separate. Keep the start of the inhale in the belly & continue to inhale upwards & outwards three-dimensionally into the rib-cage. Exhale from the ribs (under the hands) downwards until the belly releases at the end. Rest one or both hands near the collar bones & neck. Continue to inhale from the belly upwards, filling all the way into the upper chest, back & neck. Exhaling from the top back down to the belly. Even though your hands are on the front-body, feel the sides & back moving as well. This is a great practice before sleep & helps alleviate insomnia. It calms the heart, massages the internal organs, focuses & relaxes the mind & connects you with yourSelf! Once you get the hang of breathing consciously, try it while driving. Use the seatbelt to feel belly, ribs & chest expand & release, but keep your eyes open!

Suspended Inhales to help with cravings. If you see yourself pulled by a craving that you’d like to change, try inhaling fully & suspending the breath for as long as you *comfortably* can. Relax around the expansion. Do this 7 times in a row & then check in again with that craving! Think of feeding yourSelf with your breath.



Sitali Pranayam, or cooling life force control. Curl your tongue, if you can, or make a small pecking-kiss mouth & stick your tongue through. Inhale over your tongue & (without changing your mouth) exhale through your nose. Breathe slowly & evenly. You might start yawning as you change your breath, but stay with it. This helps cool the physical & emotional bodies, so if you ever happen to lose your temper find a place you can stick your tongue out & breathe over it for 1-3 minutes! This is also a detoxifying breath so you may find your tongue tastes metallic at first. Persist, clear & eventually you'll taste your own sweetness!

Sound

“You cannot hear past sounds, nor can you hear future sounds. The only thing you ever hear is the present...All direct awareness is timeless awareness. In other words, in your direct & immediate awareness, there is no time—no past, no future, only an endlessly changing present, shorter than a minisecond yet never coming to an end.”—Ken Wilber, Integral Institute

“Listen with the ears of a Buddha—all-encompassing & with great compassion.”—Melissa Billington

Play with both listening & sounding. Develop your ability to hear yourSelf & the “mantras” you may have been unconscious of in your mind. Mantra is a sound (internally or externally toned) that is often repeated. You cannot let go of something you don't know you're holding on to in the first place. Start with now, listen & look inside. What are you telling yourSelf? What is the story or the words you repeat over & over? Are they helpful for your personal empowerment & evolution?

Then notice the words you speak. Do they truly represent your confluence of heart & mind? Are you saying what you *think* you should say without feeling it? Or saying what you really *feel* without contemplating whether it helps you or others to iterate it? So often we babble on & fill space out of fear or habit. And so often we use words without realizing what story we are *creating* about our lives or others. Notice words like *should, want, can't, try, just, hard, hate* & phrases like *It's impossible. I'm not ___ enough. I'll be ___ when I ___.* *I've always/ never___.*

Many people shy from sound & particularly from meaningful sound like mantra & yet the very same people can talk the hind legs off a donkey & tell you all the latest goss. Experiment in places you feel safe—in the car or at home alone—with basic vowel sounds or with more sacred sounds like Ma, Ong, Hum & Sat Nam. These are all bij mantras, seeds that we plant for a future embodiment as well as a recognition of the current fullness of their qualities in us.

Ma—universal mother energy, a mantra of positivity & protection (& one I've found attracts sea animals!). Try it at a high pitch.

Ong--infinite, creative consciousness; the active form of Om/Aum. Very good for opening the sinuses & head. Place the tip of the tongue on the roof of the mouth so the lips never really close.

Hum—a mantra of the heart & throat, takes us from Me to We. Focus more on the MM than the HU sound & feel the vibration in your face, neck & chest.

Sat Nam—I name/bow to/acknowledge the truth that I am; can be broken down into Sa-Ta-Na-Ma, indicating “this too shall pass” since the truth of all things, including us, is cyclic change.