



## Pranayama – yoga breathing practices

**Caution:** Your breath should never feel strained. If you feel light-headed, tension in your head or chest, or uncomfortable, immediately stop and let your breathe return to a natural breathing pattern. If you are trying these practices for the first time, try them for 30 seconds to 1 minute, then let your breath return to a natural pace. As you become more comfortable with them, you can increase the time, 2 to 5 minutes is often ideal to start with, but most importantly practice what is comfortable.

### Tips:

- For all of these practices, you can be seated or lying down.
- For all of these, you are still working with a normal breath. It doesn't need to be a deep breath and in most cases, the sound of your breath would not be audible to a person sitting next to you.
- For all of these, close your eyes and breathe through your nose with your mouth closed but relaxed.
- Always finish by taking at least a minute to allow your breath to return to a natural pace and observe how you feel.

### 1:2 ratio breathe (longer exhale to inhale)

This breathe is calming and cooling. It can be helpful for stress, anxiety or tension. It may be too quieting for low moods. The focus is keeping a relaxing inhale, but increasing the length of the exhale.

1. Start first with an even breath. Counting to yourself, count to 2 for both the inhale and exhale.
2. After a few rounds of this, try lengthening the exhale. Still count 2 when you inhale, but now count 3 when you exhale.
3. If this is comfortable, increase the count of the exhale to 4.
4. Try this for 30 seconds to 2 minutes. As you gradually feel more comfortable with this pattern, try counting the inhale for 3 and the exhale for 6.

### Nadi shodhana – alternative nostril breathing

Alternate nostril breathing is a balancing and calming breath. It can help even the length of your inhale to exhale. It can be useful for stress, anxiety, tension, low mood or depression. The focus of this breath is about alternating your breath through each nostril independently. You can use your fingers to control that.

1. Bring your right index and middle fingers to rest on your forehead between your eyebrows.
2. Rest your thumb on the right nostril.
3. Rest your ring finger on the left nostril.
4. Press with your finger to close or block your left nostril. Inhale through your right nostril.
5. Block the right nostril with your thumb. Open your left nostril. Exhale through your left nostril.
6. Inhale through your left nostril. Block the left. Open the right. Exhale through your right.
7. That is one cycle. You can repeat the cycle several times. Start with 30 seconds and work up to 2 minutes.

### Some helpful tips:

- If your arm gets tired, try lying down or prop up your elbow with a pillow.
- If your right arm is injured, use your left.
- If you have a blocked nose, allergies or a cold, you might not be able to breathe through one nostril. You can visualise this breath. With your eyes closed, imagine the air that you are breathing as a soft white light. Imagine inhaling this light through your left nostril to the spot between your eyebrows, and exhaling it down through your right nostril. Then imagine the light or breathe inhaling back up the right nostril and exhaling down the left.



## Dhyana – meditation

An excellent brief article on ‘how to meditate’ is available from Yoga for Healthy Aging:  
<http://yogaforhealthyaging.blogspot.co.nz/2015/09/yoga-meditation-techniques.html>

Meditation is as simple as stopping for just a few minutes to notice your breath, to close your eyes and observe your thoughts, or to take in a visual focus such as clouds moving or trees swaying in the wind. One minute might be enough, but 5 or 10 minutes can be very beneficial. Take the time you have and when you can, make more time.

### A few key tips:

- Choose a location: Pick a place that is quiet if you can, where you won't be distracted by sounds. But sometimes seizing the moment for a bit of calm is more important.
- Choose a comfortable position: It's important that your body is comfortable so that you are not distracted by aches and pains.
- Choose a focus: Focusing on your **breath** is often easy and gives just enough focus that you can stop thinking about other things. But some people find this can make them anxious or might have breathing problems that make this difficult. You can also try using a **mantra**, a phrase or word you repeat. Or try a **visualisation**, such as imagining your worries attached to a cloud and letting them drift away. Or try a **recorded guided visualisation**.

### So Ham Meditation (I am that)

This meditation is about focusing your breath on a sound. It's an easy way to have a gentle focus, that includes the breath, but without changing the pattern of how you breath.

1. Find an easy breath through your nose and then notice the sound of your breath.
2. On the inhalation, imagine hearing the sound of your breath as “Soooooohh”
3. On the exhalation, imagine hearing the sound as “hummmmmmmmm”

### A few free non-spiritual guided meditations (there are many, just try a google search):

- Guided meditation from Megan Sety - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYDXv4Sf3fA>
- Deep physical relaxation - <http://yogaforhealthyaging.bandcamp.com/track/deep-physical-relaxation>
- Mini yoga Nidra - <http://yogaforhealthyaging.bandcamp.com/track/mini-yoga-nidra>
- 3 short meditations (from 2 to 7 minutes): <http://yogaforhealthyaging.blogspot.co.nz/p/guided-meditations.html>
- Deep Relaxation and Guided Meditation - Yoga Nidra - <https://itunes.apple.com/nz/itunes-u/deep-relaxation-guided-meditation/id434139276?mt=10>
- Yoga Nidra for Sleep - <https://www.doyogawithme.com/content/yoga-nidra-sleep>

### Metta Meditation

This meditation is less about the quieting of your mind, and more about changing your attitude or feeling towards yourself or others to a more positive focus.

1. You say the phrases below to yourself, starting first with “May all beings....”
2. Then think of someone you love or care for deeply and think of these phrases directed to them.
3. Then think of someone you may not be close to, but you would like to share some compassion with.
4. Now think of someone you may not get along with or feel anger towards.
5. Now think of yourself, “May I...”

May all beings be free from pain and suffering

May all beings be happy

May all beings be at peace

May all beings be loved