



The Power of Pranayam For Expressing and Radiating Joy – Part 2

For December 22, 2020 Webinar

It is the season of joy, and we are continuing our focus on breathing techniques that, in addition to helping us increase our joy, enable us to express and radiate this joy out to others. We're reviewing some of last week's techniques and adding some new ones.

2 minutes – Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nara Shodan)

- Close your right nostril with the thumb of your right hand, and inhale through your left nostril for a count of 10 (You can reduce all the counts in this practice in half to 5.)
- Close both nostrils, using your ring finger and pink to close the left nostril, and retain your breath for a count of 10
- Keep your left nostril closed, and exhale through your right nostril for 10
- Then reverse, first inhaling through your right nostril for 10; closing both nostrils, retaining for 10; keeping the right nostril closed, exhaling through your left nostril for 10

9 rounds – Breath of Joy

Last week we did this pranayama for 6 rounds. This week we'll do the full 9 rounds. Through strong inhalations and synchronized arm movements, this practice awakens your entire system. It increases oxygen levels, circulates more prana, and, as the name implies, it opens your heart to greater joy.

- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and parallel, knees slightly bent
- Inhale one-third of your lung capacity and swing your arms up in front of your body, bringing them parallel to each other at shoulder level, with palms facing the ceiling
- Continue inhaling to two-thirds capacity and stretch your arms out to the side like wings to shoulder level
- Inhale to full capacity and swing your arms parallel and over your head, palms facing each other
- Open your mouth and exhale completely with an audible ha, bending the knees more deeply as you sink into a standing squat and swing your arms down and back behind you like a diver
- You can do up to 9 rounds of this breath

2 minutes – Mindful Breathing

- Put your awareness on your breath as you inhale and exhale normally. It can be helpful to put your awareness at the base of your nose, but it is not necessary to do that

- If your mind wanders, mentally say either “thinking,” or “wandering,” or you can say So Ham
- After 3 minutes of doing mindful breathing, at the end of this practice, we’ll do a deep full breath through the nose, and then exhale a double exhale – a short and long exhalation – through the mouth

6 minutes - Tonglen

- Stage 1
 - You visualize breathing in dark, heavy, hot and then breathing out white, light and cool. *(You may notice, when you become angry or jealous, that you experience that fixation as black, hot, solid and heavy. And when you experience compassion, love and peace, it is white, light and cool.)*
- In Stage 2 of tonglen you work with those textures
 - You breathe in black, heavy and hot through all the pores of your body and you radiate out white, light and cool through all the pores of your body
 - Work with the texture until you feel it is synchronized with black coming in and white going out
- Stage 3 is working with a specific heartfelt object of suffering.
 - You breathe in the pain of a specific person or animal (This can be yourself or someone else that you wish to help.)
 - You breathe out to that person spaciousness or kindness or a good meal, a cup of coffee, joy to uplift their spirit. Whatever you feel would lighten their load. You can do this for anyone including yourself
- Stage 4 extends this wish to relieve suffering much further.
 - You start with yourself or a specific person that needs help and then extend that out to all those who are suffering just as you or she is. Use specific instances of misery and pain as a steppingstone for understanding the universal suffering of people everywhere
 - Breathing out is like opening your arms and just letting go

2 minutes – Maha Veda Mudra

- Put awareness in the heart chakra and inhale a normal full breath
- As you exhale, sense that white or light blue light is expanding first a half inch out from your heart
- Inhale a normal breath, gathering the light back into your heart
- Exhale and let the light expand out from your heart to one inch
- With each inhalation, allow this light to expand a half inch farther until you get to four inches

5 Rounds – Ujjayi Breath Variation with hold

- Inhale fully through both nostrils while gently tensing the glottis at the back of your throat
- Retain your breath, applying Jalandhara and Mula Bandhas
- Release the locks, close your right nostril with your right thumb, and exhale through your left nostril