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recipe for wellbeing

BREATHING CORRECTLY will assist in your daily wellbeing.

Focus on your breathing for a moment. Hmm amazing isn't it! Breathing is a continuous, rhythmic movement that lasts from the moment of your birth until your death. Take note next time you watch an infant sleeping. Infants breathe using primarily the diaphragm (abdomen), which is the correct way to breathe. Human beings breathe approximately 15 times per minute. The average person has a combination of abdominal and thoracic (chest) breathing. As we grow older, we breathe less fully. Some people use only one third of their lung capacity. Abdominal breathing is the most natural and efficient way to breathe. The diaphragm separates the lungs from the abdomen. When we use our diaphragm it massages the stomach, liver, intestines and other organs that immediately lay beneath it; it improves the lymphatic drainage from the bottom parts of the lungs. It has a positive effect on cardiac functions and the coronary supply, and it also improves the oxygenation of blood and circulation throughout our bodies. Abdominal breathing is quite remarkable don't you think! Poor posture, tension and tight clothing reflects the loss of abdominal breathing. Restricted breathing has been known to correlate with chronic anxiety, depression, or fatigue. Please note that I am not suggesting you try to breathe away these conditions. Without professional supervision, managing these conditions on your own could make them worse. However, your breath is a powerful tool in coping with your physical and emotional wellbeing. Notice the quality of your breath the next time you are stressed over a deadline, upset over an argument with a loved one, or you are anxious and running late for that all-important meeting. Is it short and shallow? Is it restricted to the chest? Is it retained? By simply becoming aware of the breath, breathing correctly will assist in your daily wellbeing. There are many types of "breath-work" and traditions. In yoga the name given to breathing practices is called pranayama, and there are numerous and varied techniques within the yoga tradition. However, today let's begin with first learning how to breathe and becoming aware of our breath.

The breathing cycle consists of four components:

- * Exhalation – the outward movement of the breath
- * Inhalation – the inward movement of the breath
- * Suspension of the breath after exhalation
- * Retention of the breath after inhalation

Breath Awareness/Abdominal Breathing

Although breathing is mainly an unconscious process, conscious control of it may be taken at any time. This forms a bridge between the conscious and unconscious areas of the mind. Conscious breathing is done through relaxing and being mindful of the breath. You become aware of your breath without doing anything.

To begin the process of breath awareness, in a quiet space lie down in savasana (on your back), arms by your side and feet slightly apart. The lower back should be relaxed.

If you have discomfort in your lower back, place a pillow under your knees. Make sure that you are warm as your body temperature will reduce.

Your head and spine should be in a straight line. Relax the whole body and stop any physical movement. Observe your natural breath and the quality and contrast between the inhalation and exhalation. Notice the air as it comes through the nostrils. Does it feel effortless or laboured?

Only inhale and exhale through your nostrils. Bring your awareness to the abdominal region and allow the gentle expansion as you inhale.

Now let the area contract and sink inward as you exhale. There should not be any tension in the abdomen. Do not force the movement of the abdomen in any way. Try not to expand the thoracic (chest) or move the shoulders. Feel the abdomen expanding and contracting as you inhale and exhale.

Repeat to yourself in your mind "I am breathing in, I am breathing out, I am breathing in, and I am breathing out". Simply become aware of your breath, breathe slowly and deeply. Continue for as long as your time will allow.

Anybody at any age or stage in their life with any condition can practice breath awareness/abdominal breathing. It can be practiced anytime during the day or night.

Next time you are stressed out, check out your breathing and see how it is moving.

I guarantee that the abdominal breathing is not present if you feel anxious or overwhelmed.

Practicing breath awareness for five minutes daily will help your breathing pattern and general wellbeing.

Enjoy and remember to breathe!



Complement your next meeting, event or your own workplace with sessions on yoga, wellbeing workshops, work/life balance, meditation, nutrition and massage. Gabrielle can be contacted on 0417 396 332 or email gabrielle@infinityyoga.com.au.