



Breathe Through the Holidays

By Jacqueline Fields, MD and founder of Dr. Fields' Sacred Skin | October 2014

Research reported on by Georgetown University Professor Candace Pert suggests that deep breathing is an entry point to access an information network responsible for coordinating and governing the nervous, endocrine and immune systems, as well as the psychology of the human body.

Dr. Pert discovered the role certain neuropeptides play in carrying emotional chemicals to receptor sites found in cells throughout the body. Old traumatic emotions can literally block these receptors, altering the flow of the information network.

While these emotional peptide receptors are found all over the body, they are concentrated in certain areas. In the respiratory tract, for example, there are receptors for every type of peptide found in the body.

According to Dr. Pert, a wealth of data supports that the changes in the rate or depth of breathing can trigger the release of emotion-carrying peptides from the brain stem. Through the process of deep breathing techniques, this peptide-respiratory link can release peptides quickly throughout the cerebral spinal fluid, to release old emotions and restore balance.

Since many of these peptides are natural endorphins or opiates, they are capable not only of freeing up old emotional pain, they can relieve physical pain as well. For example, Lamaze Breathing Techniques are taught to mothers-to-be to help them control pain during childbirth. Yogis have used breathing techniques to control and manipulate bodily functions like pain, blood pressure, heart rate, and more.

Science has now mapped out a mechanism for how breathing techniques can give us access to this information network where hormonal, immune, psychological and nervous system control is possible.

Breathing is a key tool in the balancing of body, mind, emotions and spirit. My favorite transformation breathing technique is used in my One Minute Meditation. It is incredibly simple: 30 seconds of deep bellows nasal breathing followed by 30 seconds of sitting still with the eyes closed.

I'm going to teach you this technique – and it is a wonderful meditation for relief of anxiety. It starts with pumping oxygen into your brain, and it ends with a breathing technique called Ujjayi breathing, which is a kind of nasal breathing, deeply in through the nose and out through the nose after we pump prana, or life force into your nervous system. You start with about 30 seconds of bellows breathing, and follow that with about 30 seconds of silence and calm Ujjayi breathing. Often times this pumps enough energy into your nervous system to give you the ability to be calmer and settle your mind.

So you breathe for about 30 seconds using a Bhastrika or bellows breath. Then breathe for the next 30 seconds doing an Ujjayi breath.

Bhastrika (bellows breath): Breathe deep through your nose, in and out, using all five lobes of your lungs like a big bellows. Use your lungs in and out as much as you can, only in and only out through your nose. You do that for about 30 seconds. Our upper lungs have stress receptors that get activated when our breath is shallow, which is how most of us breath throughout the day. When we use our lower lungs, like in bhastrika, we activate calm receptors that soothe our nervous system.

Ujjayi breath: This is kind of the classic yoga breath where you actually do a snoring or ocean sound through your nose. Constrict your stomach muscles and force that snoring sound out through your nose. You do that for about 30 seconds. Then you just meditate.

Sit comfortably, sit up straight in your chair. Do bellows breath as deep in and as deep out as you can for 30 seconds and follow this with 30 seconds of silence breathing through an ujjayi or ocean breath.

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