

Breathing Exercise
by Krista Lowe
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Mat, strap, bolster, block, 2-3blankets, eye pillow

Start in Tadasana.

Stand with the base of your big toes touching, heels slightly apart. Lift and spread your toes and the balls of your feet, then lay them softly down on the floor. Rock back and forth and side to side. Coming to a standstil, with your weight balanced evenly on the feet.

Firm your thigh muscles and lift the knee caps, without hardening your lower belly. Lift the inner ankles to stregngthen the inner arches, then imagine a line of energy all the way up along your inner thighs to your groins, and from there through the core of your torso, neck and head, and out through the crown of your head. Turn the upper thighs slightly inward. Lengthen your tailbone toward the floor and lift the pubis toward the navel.

Press your shoulder blades into your back, then widen them across and release them down your back. Without pushing your lower front ribs forward, lift the top of your sternum straight toward the cieling. Widen your collarbones.

Balance the crown of your head directly over the center of your pelvis, with the underside of your chin parallel to the floor, throat soft, and the tongue wide and flat on the floor of your mouth. Soften your eyes.

Now let's focus on our breathing. Counting to 4 as we inhale through our nose and exhale to 4 back out through our nose. Inhaling for 1, 2 feeling the belly expand as your diaphragm drops. Continue inhaling for 3, 4 as you breathe into the ribcage and up through the chest. Hold the breath in. Exhale for 1,2 feeling the navel come back toward the spine. Continue exhaling for 3, 4 as the ribcag comes back together and the diaphragm comes up.

Inhaling positive thoughts and exhaling all the tension throughout the body. The most important thing is your breath. Breathing deeply and slowly allows for greater circulation with less work. It also lessens stress on the heart and enhances the entire cardiovascular system. 70% of the body's detoxificiation is done just through breathing. Let's clear the mind and focus on the present moment. Enjoy this gift of meditation and relaxation.

Now cultivating our ujayi breath, inhaling through the nose hearing a 'ssss' sound as the breath vibrates in the back of the throat and sinus area. Then, hearing a 'haaa' sound as we constrict the back of our throat exhaling out of our nose. continue inhaling

in for counts of 4 and exhaling for counts of 4. Trying to breathe in and out of the nose only, since mouth breathing can be very dehydrating.

Because the ujjayi makes such a distinct sound it automatically brings one back to the awareness of their breath. When we all audibly breathe together as a class, we create a sense of community, helping each other focus.

Now that we have our breathing down, lets set the intention for class today. Today we will be practicing various types of inversions. Inversions shift our perspective and neuromuscular awareness to create an opportunity to further expand our sense of being in the world while reversing the effects of gravity on the body. The brain becomes flushed with nourishing blood, the mind clears, the nerves quiet down and everything becomes more still yet awake. Turning upside down, we offer a graceful invitation to meditation. Inversions also give us glowing complexions, decreasing the onset of grey hair, giving us a good sex drive due to the stimulation of the master glands and the equivalence of taking an antidepressant medication. Let's breathe for a few more minutes on our own and meditate on the numerous health benefits our yoga practice will bring us today.