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Muscle involved in breathing

Breathing is something we all do, our entire lives, and something to which we rarely pay much attention. Focusing on breathing is one of the only ways to connect the mind and body, and is an essential tool for wellness.Breathing is particularly important for those who suffer from stress, anxiety, high blood pressure or digestive problems. These symptoms are in many ways the result of the body staying in a fight-or-flight state due to an imbalance of the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems.The nervous system is divided into two, balancing systems. The parasympathetic system is responsible for the day-to-day functions of the body such as breathing, digestion and elimination (both bowel and urine function). These are things that the body does without any conscious thought. This system also helps to counterbalance the sympathetic nervous system, which is in charge of the fight-or-flight response. If one were to encounter a bear in the wild, the body would shut down unnecessary things that could affect escape (i.e. urinating or moving the bowels) and stimulate the parts of the body needed to get out of the situation. The body kicks out stress hormones and adrenaline, gearing it up for battle, resulting in an elevated of heart rate and blood pressure.It takes just minutes to focus on breathing techniques. You can do them anytime during the day if you feel stressed or on edge. If you practice these methods routinely, you will notice over time that you're handling the day better, your blood pressure is lower and overall your body is more in balance.The inability to manage stress appropriately has caused many to be in constant fight-or-flight mode. Since we don't encounter bears all that often, our bodies have adapted to stimulate the sympathetic nervous system for less than life-threatening situations such as arguments with a spouse, issues at work, caring for the children or financial concerns. With time, our sympathetic nervous system is stimulated so often that it begins to dominate the parasympathetic nervous system resulting in chronic elevated blood pressure and heart rate, bowel problems, nervousness, anxiety and muscle tension.To help return balance, the parasympathetic system needs to be strengthened. The only way this can be done is through breath. Although breathing will go on whether we do it consciously or not, focusing on some specific techniques can help get our bodies out of fight-or-flight mode. They can be used short-term to help when experiencing a stressful situation, or daily (ideally multiple times a day) to establish a strong mind-body connection and keep the body in balance.Dr. Gladd's Breathing Technique:Find a quiet and comfortable place. Make sure the room is not too bright. If you choose to play music, be certain it's relaxing and set to a reasonable volume.Wear comfortable clothing that is not too tight.Stand, sit or lie in a position that keeps the back straight.Start by clearing your mind of all thoughts and focusing only on your breathing. Feel the air come into your lungs and go out of your lungs. Do this for several minutes, getting into a relaxed state.Try for several breaths to make your breathing as slow, deep, quiet and regular as possible.As you continue to focus on your breathing, try to exhale completely, pushing all of the air out of your lungs. You will need to use the muscles between the ribs to do this. Inhale very slowly and fill your lungs back up with fresh air.The next exercise is the most relaxing technique:The tip of your tongue should be against the roof of your mouth, right behind your teeth, during this entire exercise.Close your lips and breathe in for 4 seconds.Hold that breath for 7 seconds.Open your mouth and push your lips out, exhaling that breath for 8 seconds.Repeat steps a-d for a series of 4 breaths.Finish by breathing regularly, continuing to focus on your breathing.You should notice an immediate feeling of peace after completing this exercise.For more detailed instruction and other breathing techniques, listen to the audio CD by Dr. Andrew Weil, Breathing: The Master Key to Self-Healing. Jennifer was suffering chronic headaches triggered by a stressful relationship with a boyfriend who was seeing another woman. She went to a chiropractor and a physician; she had acupuncture. Nothing helped. Then she met Gene Dillman, director of the Breath Awareness Center in Lambertville, N.J., who uses breathing as a tool to unlock the emotional pain that causes physical ailments. During her sessions with Dillman, Jennifer did breathing exercises and talked about aspects of the relationship that troubled her.Gradually the headaches stopped, and Jennifer was able to break off the relationship, something she had tried to do in the past. Jennifer found that good breathing was critical for good health. She's not alone.An increasing number of healthcare providers and instructors of yoga and other movement techniques are emphasizing the benefits of proper breathing, which experts say reduces the effects of stress, a leading cause of physical woes. Slow, deep breathing can lower blood pressure, end heart irregularities, improve poor digestion and decrease anxiety.The focus on good breathing, which is also used in mind-body techniques like yoga and meditation, is part of the growing movement of alternative medicine. James Gordon, chair of the new White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy, explores breathing and other mind-body techniques in his book, "Manifesto for a New Medicine: Your Guide to Healing Partnerships and the Wise Use of Alternative Therapies."Gordon, director of the Center for Mind-Body Medicine in Washington D.C., has taught breathing techniques to cancer patients, children with attention deficit disorder and war refugees in Kosovo. His research over 30 years shows that slow, deep breathing slows down the heart rate, relaxes muscles and calms the mind.Everyone knows instinctively how to breathe but few of us do it properly. We come into the world as good breathers; babies inhale and exhale from their abdomens. Breathing deeply, which allows the abdomen to expand, brings into the lungs the amount of oxygen needed to nourish all the cells in the body.A Better Way to BreatheBut over time, stress causes our muscles to tighten up and our respiration rate to quicken. Most of us become thoracic breathers, using only the middle and upper parts of the lungs. The path to better breathing is just a breath away. Nancy Harazduk of the Center for Mind-Body Medicine recommends a simple technique to produce more efficient breathing. Ex-cop Neil Colleran is confident that he can get a lot of drivers off the hook for drunken driving charges. He isn't thinking, though, of fixing tickets or sweet-talking a judge.Colleran, a practicing attorney, is president of Med-Law Corp., a new company that is offering Massachusetts drivers an on-the-spot blood test, the results of which can be used as a second opinion to the potentially inaccurate Breathalyzer tests used by police. If the blood analysis comes out in his favor, the driver may be able to beat the rap -- no small matter in Massachusetts, which has some of the toughest drunken driving laws in the country. A conviction can mean stiff fines and loss of the offender's driver's license.But Second Opinion, as the Cambridge, Mass., company calls its product, will be a dicey proposition for some drivers. If the blood test confirms the Breathalyzer results, the prosecution can attempt to use the test as additional evidence against the driver. Second Opinion, then, is not for celebrants who belt down drink after drink at the local watering hole.The market opportunity for Med-Law exists because of the long-standing controversy over Breathalyzers. "They're defective, they're unreliable, they're wrong way too much of the time," Colleran says. "And I mean all of them, from the 20-year-old models to the latest state-of-the-art." He adds: "Blood doesn't make mistakes. An arrested motorist is entitled by law to a blood test. We're going to see that he gets it."After flunking the Breathalyzer test, a driver can call a toll-free number to summon a Med-Law nurse to the police station. The pinprick blood sample is rushed to a lab, which completes the analysis within three days. Med-Law's fee is \$150.To reach potential customers, Med-Law is placing about 13,000 signboards, complete with pamphlets and wallet-size cards, in bars, liquor stores, and restaurants in Massachusetts. "That's just the beginning," he said. "We're going across the country with this."Stephen M. Limon, an assistant district attorney in Massachusetts, however, doubts that a large market exists for Second Opinion. "The problem is that there's a great need for it, but on the part of very few people," he says. "The sober motorist who fails a breath test exists all right, but he doesn't show up in the average police station all that often."And, of course, Med-Law faces the risk that engineers may develop a better Breathalyzer. If that happens, it could be Colleran's company that ends up with a headache and a hangover. After less than a week on a new food-and-fitness plan, I'm already starting to see why I've failed — repeatedly — in the past. Why my attitude of, "Oh, what the heck. I'll just start again tomorrow" (or on Monday, or on January 1...) has doomed my weight-loss efforts for years. It hasn't taken a major life challenge to throw me off track. Just those little challenges that constantly nip at your heels. Recognize these two de-railers? * PMS days when I feel like a ratty, old cat toy with an attitude and I need some chocolate right this minute. * Regular days when I clean up breakfast, drive Matthew to school, do three loads of laundry, make two work deadlines, sort and file (yet another) stack of mail, go to the grocery store, pick up a prescription, pick up Matthew from school, take him to some sports practice, make dinner, clean up dinner, pay bills, straighten up the house — and then feel like I deserve to have a big stack of cheese and crackers while watching Paula Dean make something sinful on the Food Network. The PMS-driven, overworked-mom part of me was really feeling challenged by this new eating plan yesterday. So I turned to week one of Ellie Krieger's Small Changes, Big Results and followed her simple exercise: The 5-Minute Breather. (FYI, if you're following the 12-week program in Ellie's book, we'll be moving on to a new week in the book every Wednesday, on weigh-in day. This Wednesday we'll start Chapter 2.) "You probably can't remember the last time you sat quietly and simply focused on your breath," Ellie writes. How true. This exercise allows you to become aware of your breath, slows down your heart rate and reduces stress levels, she explains. And it's easy: Just sit and be aware of your breathing for five minutes. Inhale, exhale and repeat. Your breath may begin to slow and deepen, but don't try to change it. Just follow it without judgment, she advises. Doing this exercise did seem to make the PMS crazies a bit easier to handle — and my desire for a package of Hostess cupcakes a little less urgent. I hadn't realized how shallow my breath became when I was under stress. After doing the 5-Minute Breather at home and feeling surprisingly relaxed afterward, I started experimenting with "mini breathers," too, focusing on my breathing while stopped at a stop light or while working at my computer. I know it's not the same as stopping and really focusing for a solid five minutes, but even these mini-breaks gave me a lift and a gentle reminder: "Relax." I've also started using a simple, soothing photo (like the one above, which I took in Taos, New Mexico) as my computer-desktop photo to remind myself to chill out during the day and to take those relaxation breaks. What do you do when raging hormones — or everyday life — threaten to send you into an eating frenzy? Take some nice, slow breaths and then send me your tips. — Kathy Sena This content is created and maintained by a third party, and imported onto this page to help users provide their email addresses. You may be able to find more information about this and similar content at piano.io My job is safe, and my heart is heavy for my coworker. I can't even celebrate, really, but the breathing is good. I'll take it. Right now, I'm de-stressing in anticipation of having to take on a newly-doubled daily workload. Not ideal, but I'll manage. Lord knows I always find a way to manage. Really, more than anything right now, I'm feeling a lot of survivor's guilt. I tell myself that I still have my main source of income, that I still have medical coverage, dental coverage, orthodonture coverage (thank God!). I tell myself that I can call the divorce mediator and schedule the long-overdue financial session that had to be put on hold until this all resolved. We can move forward now. Everything is OK. Except it doesn't feel OK. It feels like I just dodged a bullet that took out a friend, I know this wasn't personal. This is business. Specifically, this is big, corporate business. Our bosses actually weren't where this decision originated, and we both know that. I've been a working woman since two weeks after I graduated college. I've sat in this chair before, and had the bad news delivered just as many times as the good news. It's just the way it is, particularly in this economy. But it seems like the stakes are so much higher now that I'm sole breadwinner in my house and have two kids that would have had to ride the catastrophe out with me if market exists for Second Opinion. "The problem is that there's a great need for it, but on the part of very few people," he says. "The sober motorist who fails a breath test exists all right, but he doesn't show up in the average police station all that often."And, of course, Med-Law faces the risk that engineers may develop a better Breathalyzer. If that happened, it could be Colleran's company that ends up with a headache and a hangover. 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You may be able to find more information about this and similar content at piano.io It's easy to take breathing for granted. But tune in to your breath-when you're, say, halfway through a sun salutation or gunning for a finish line-and you'll find that it not only feeds your muscles fresh oxygen but also clues you in to whether you can up your intensity. To get the most out of every breath, follow these breathing tips.The Activity - RunningThe Expert Danny Dreyer, author of ChiRunning: A Revolutionary Approach to Effortless, Injury-free RunningHow? With closed lips, breathe in sharply and deeply through the nose. Then purse your lips, as if you're trying to blow out a candle, and exhale through your mouth. As you run, breathe in for one step and out for two. Why? "The rapid inhale and slower exhale in this technique fills your lungs from the bottom," Dreyer says. "Breathing exercises help you take in more air when you inhale and empty your lungs completely when you exhale." The result? "Your muscles receive more glycogen, which lowers your chances of cramping up." The Activity - YogaThe Expert Elena Brower, owner of Virayoga in New York CityHow? Use the Hindu breathing method called ujjayi. First, inhale once with your mouth open and then exhale the same way, making a "ha" sound. Then close your mouth and continue making the same sound while inhaling and exhaling through your nose (you'll sound like Darth Vader). Why? "Your breathing is the barometer of all your poses," Brower says. Gasping for air? Back out of the pose. "Always give preference to deeper breathing over deeper postures." What's more, this breathing technique is largely responsible for the yoga buzz that keeps you coming back for more.The Activity - Strength trainingThe Expert Tom Holland, exercise physiologist and personal trainer in Darien, CTHow? Exhale through your mouth when you lift weights and inhale through your nose when you lower. Rule of thumb: Take two seconds to raise the weight and three to four seconds to lower it. Why? Focusing on your breath keeps your brain in the game so you're more likely to pay attention to overall form. Holland says. The Activity - Cycling The Expert Tom Holland How? "The key to breathing on a bike is to go in through the nose and out through the mouth-and to be as relaxed as you can be," Holland says. When your intensity increases on climbs or long rides, breathe more forcefully: deeper, quicker inhales through the nose and rapid exhales through the mouth. Why? "The more relaxed your breathing is, the more relaxed your entire body will be," Holland says. "Relaxed breathing conserves energy, prevents fatigue, and improves endurance." And using forceful breaths when you're beat will get more oxygen to your muscles. This content is created and maintained by a third party, and imported onto this page to help users provide their email addresses. 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