



KATIE BRINDLE

Breath Guide

Treatment techniques based in Chinese medicine



Breath

Our lives start with an inhale and end with an exhale. Breathing is a vital function that marks the start and end points of our lives. You can live for weeks without food and for days without water, but you can live for only minutes without breathing. It therefore stands to reason that breathing is the most immediate and powerful self-healing cure we have. It is at once so profound, so subconscious and so crucial to our very existence yet we barely use it to our advantage.

The single most effective way to reduce your stress levels is to take conscious, deep, abdominal breaths. By moving your awareness out of your head and into your breath, your heart rate slows, your mind is calmed, and your blood oxygenated.

Proper breathing is one of the best ways to stimulate the vagus nerve, which triggers the parasympathetic nervous system, your body's rest mode. Studies have shown that you can improve your vagal tone with practice - meaning the more often you trigger your rest phase, the easier it becomes.

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Stress

'Stress is at the root of so many of our common ailments. Under chronic stress, the body loses its ability to regulate the inflammatory response. Inflammation is increasingly being linked to all the major diseases of our time.

We're told not to get stressed but no one seems to know what to do to combat the problem. Breath is THE antidote to stress. Why is breathing deeply so important? Microforms (such as bacteria and fungi) cause acidity in the body – and they love anaerobic environments (those without oxygen). If you oxygenate yourself sufficiently, it becomes harder for acidity to thrive.

Proper breathing techniques can directly reduce the inflammation levels in your body. How? An anti-inflammatory neural control called the vagus nerve. The vagus nerve can be controlled with, amongst other things, conscious breathing. Take a moment and pay attention to your breath. You are almost certainly not breathing deeply, right down into your diaphragm. Whilst it's the default for most of us, by shallow breathing we are really missing a trick. Actually, several tricks!

Deep abdominal breathing can neutralise the pH balance and promote a relaxed state, whereas shallow and superficial breathing can lead to an acidic pH balance and stress in the body. It's a major cause of low vitality and insufficient metabolism, as breathing controls cellular respiration.

Chinese wisdom places huge importance on breathing because it is one of the two major ways we create quality Qi and blood (the other being food).

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The Solution

The simple practice of deep breathing is an easy and effective antidote to chronic stress, one that requires neither drugs nor doctors. The Chinese practise sitting in stillness and silence for a while and breathing deep into the abdomen. This automatically switches the nervous system over from the active Yang phase to the calming, restorative Yin phase. The Chinese Inner Smile breath (or Rescue Breath) embraces precisely this process.

The Inner Smile

There are two brains. The upper brain and the belly brain. We need to practice taking our attention down from the upper brain to the belly brain. How? It's actually really simple, and beautifully summed up by a famous Chinese proverb 'Where intention goes, Qi flows'. So simply hold your hands over the belly and focus your attention there.

Now we need to keep the intention down there, focussing on something to keep it there. And the most beneficial thing to focus on at that moment in time is a smile. Why? This sends positivity to the whole area. Imagining a smile tricks our constantly chattering 'monkey mind' into focusing positively into our centre, one breath at a time.

And now, the final ingredient, breath, or more specifically a relaxed long breath. This breath calms you, instantly moving awareness and energy out of the head and deeply into the energetic centre of the body. It can be as short as one inhalation or extended into an effective "Yang" meditation.

Deep abdominal breathing should lead to a more alkaline pH and relaxed state. Done slowly and mindfully, deep breathing will also affect the nervous system to relieve stress and anxiety. It works by triggering the release of neurohormones, which inhibit stress-producing hormones and result in a relaxation response in the body.

Taking time to breathe deeply and mindfully throughout the day is the single most important measure you can take to safeguard your health. Make them part of your daily shower, or attach them to a regular activity, like every time you boil the kettle or before making a phone call.

Ideally, take half an hour to join me on my lunchtime meditation on [Instagram](#). Once you've got into the habit, I promise it will become an effortless part of your life!

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Anxiety & Breath

Anxiety can manifest in a multitude of different symptoms, including tense muscles, headaches, feeling light-headed or dizzy, a fast, thumping or irregular heartbeat, sweating, raised blood pressure, insomnia and panic attacks.

In addition to these physical symptoms, anxiety causes negative thoughts and feelings which can feel overwhelming. Western treatments for anxiety disorders include relaxation techniques and sometimes antidepressants or relaxants, depending on the severity of the case.

[View the Anxiety Guide](#)

Qigong & Breath

Qigong is a fundamental pillar of Chinese medicine. It is classed as a form of internal exercise. Internal exercise is any combination of slow, considered movements with breath and mental engagement, it's often referred to as 'Chinese yoga'. Qigong is, quite simply, the ultimate selfhealing technique. Whatever your issue, qigong will help to rebalance the body. By learning to manipulate qi around the body, you rejuvenate and energise, lower the heart rate and blood pressure and support the immune system.

[View the Qigong Guide](#)

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Want to know more?

We will be delighted to support you as you continue along your Yang Sheng journey. The following will get you started:

'Yang Sheng: The Art of Chinese Self-Healing' available on Amazon, Waterstone and www.hayoumethod.com

Download Yang Sheng Book

Qigong Healing classes (3 x each week) for a more in-depth and healing practice – full details on www.hayoufit.com

Free Masterclass "[Master Your Health](#)" – understand the 3- step plan for preventative health. Find more Qigong Masterclasses [here](#).

Free self-care weekly content [@katiebrindle](#) on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.

Free regular gua sha demonstrations on [@thehayoumethod](#) Instagram & the opportunity to purchase the accompanying tools from www.hayoumethod.com

DISCLAIMER:

Please note that any of these Yang Sheng techniques are designed to support your overall self-care and wellbeing and should not be used as a substitute for any Western medical advice or treatment that you may be receiving. You should not use the information in this Guide or on our website for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease and must always consult your doctor if you have any health concerns. Additionally, please note that there are a few contraindications to Yang Sheng techniques, so please visit www.hayoumethod.com to view our comprehensive FAQs.

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