

# The Balanced Body Shoppe News

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## Inside This Issue

**This issue is devoted to Your Breath. I keep hearing that people are so busy they don't have time to breathe and they are stressed out during the holidays. I hope that this information is timely for you and that you will use it as a natural help for stress and health!**

### Your Breath – How it affects your muscles and overall health

Ok, so let me first clarify that I am talking about breathing habits when I mention “your breath” above. Also let me stipulate that one cannot “breathe deeply” 24 hours a day and that it would not be normal to do so. Should you decide that you want to work on your breathing, first make sure that you have no medical reasons not to; then begin slowly and carefully to practice deep breathing. If you are not used to breathing deeply it can make you dizzy at first because your body is not used to getting so much oxygen at one time!

When I begin to talk to clients about their breathing, I sometimes get responses like: “Breathing is natural; how can you do it wrong? Or better? I even hear, “no, I've never thought about my breath”. So if you think these things too, you are not alone. And I was once that way myself!

In fact, the first time I was ever made conscious of my breathing was when I visited a chiropractor years ago. I was lying on his table and I heard the door open but no one said anything. After 45 seconds or so I heard “You know, if I didn't know you were actually alive, I'd think you were dead because your body doesn't move at all when you breathe”.

Unfortunately this kind man who knew I wasn't breathing properly or effectively tried but could not teach me how to breathe any better than I already was doing! So began my journey to teach myself to breathe.

You might ask why I was convinced I needed to do a better job of breathing. Let me first try to explain that to you and then see if my own instructions for teaching you to breathe more fully are helpful to you.

The explanation begs the questions: Why do we breathe? What does our breath do for us? The simple answer (and this

can be a very complex answer so you might want to Google or Bing the topic to read lots more) is that every cell in our body needs oxygen. Our cells use oxygen to produce energy and to fuel our body's needs. Each time you breathe special blood cells in your body pick up oxygen and deliver it to your tissues. Once they drop off the fresh oxygen, they pick up the waste products and carry them back to the lungs for exhalation. Without enough oxygen in your muscles, for instance, you cannot exercise aerobically for very long. Exercising aerobically means “with oxygen”. Once your cells run out of oxygen you are exercising “anaerobically “ (without oxygen) which causes muscle soreness, weakness and longer recuperation times.

Other beneficial results of proper breathing include physical and mental side effects. It is said that proper deep breathing creates endorphins in the body, clears your mind and can be helpful with headaches, other aches and pains and better sleep. It also helps to strengthen weak abdominal and intestinal muscles and may be helpful with such conditions as IBS or constipation because when you breathe with your diaphragm muscle, you automatically self-massage the intestines and other internal organs.

On the other side of the coin, shallow breathing fails to use your diaphragm muscles effectively and only fills up your lungs to about a third of their capacity, making less oxygen to send to your tissues. People who breathe shallowly all or most of the time may also tend to use their neck and chest muscles rather than their diaphragm muscle for breathing. Not only is this not the most effective way to breathe, it also can overwork those muscles in your neck which can contribute to their tightness, which can then contribute to headaches and neck/shoulder aches.

Now let me share with you the “visual” way that I finally was able to learn how to use my diaphragm muscles to breathe. Here is a good place to tell you that humans are negative pressure breathers. (See Wikipedia for full details). Essentially this means that when we contract our diaphragm muscle, it creates a partial vacuum which “sucks” air into our lungs. It then makes sense to say that the stronger our diaphragm muscle is, the more air we are able to inhale.

While I was trying to learn how to breathe deeply, I was continually told things like “use your diaphragm, not your chest”.

Unfortunately no one could tell me HOW to use my diaphragm muscle. The first best instructions I had were to lie on my bed or couch and place one hand above my breasts on my chest and the other near my belly button. I was to try to NOT raise the upper hand, but to raise the lower hand with my breath. This was actually a pretty good way to start the learning process but it involved overly exaggerating by pushing out the abdominal muscles. I find that, especially for women who have been told to tighten their stomach muscles all of the time, that this would not work well. So I started thinking about it and here are two suggestions I give to people to help them learn to breathe more deeply. Lying down is good. This allows your muscles to relax more and for you to focus on your breath.

Next, you have to use your imagination. Imagine that you have a “tube” running from the back of your nose, down your throat and deep into your abdomen. At the end of this tube is a balloon. Your job is to blow it up by directing your breath down that tube and into the balloon. Then slowly release the air.

The second imagination is to envision that you have an “elevator” that sits just under your ribcage, below the sternum. (I came up with this while thinking about pelvic floor exercises that are given mostly to women but are good for men too!) Your job here is to move that elevator from just below your ribcage to the top of your pubic bone and then back up to its original position.

A few words of caution before you begin practicing your breathing. First, make sure that you do not have any medical condition that would contraindicate deep breathing. Second, start slowly and only take a few deep breaths at first. As stated at the beginning of this article, if you are not used to deep breathing it can initially make you dizzy. Third, get up very slowly to make sure that you are not dizzy.

Now that I know how to breathe properly, I still find that when I am under stress or overly busy that I breathe shallowly. Some of my own ways of making sure that I take a deep breath throughout the day are as follows:

- When I stop at a stoplight, I practice deep breathing for two or three breaths.
- I have a “focal point” at the office. When I see it, I have conditioned myself to take a deep breath. This way, throughout the day I am sure to take many deep breaths.
- When I go to bed at night and say my prayers, I thank God for such a wonderful body and good strong lungs and use that thought to take a few deep breaths.

These are just a few things that might give you your own ideas about how to incorporate deep breathing into your lifestyle.

I hope that this article is helpful for you and that it is one more small way that you can improve your health and well-being.

As always, I appreciate any feedback (positive or negative) about these articles and their relevance to your lifestyle.

### Cancellation Reminder

Our cancellation policy is a **minimum 24 hours** notice. Those who cancel with less than 24 hours notice may be charged the full amount if the therapist is unable to reschedule the time that has been *reserved for YOU*. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation with this policy. If you must cancel with less than 24 hours notice,

*Consider sending someone in your place.*

### **Special Offerings for Email Clients ONLY**

Deleted from the internet posting – if you wish to sign up for my newsletter, email at [info@thebalancedbodyshoppe.com](mailto:info@thebalancedbodyshoppe.com) and request to be added to my email newsletter and offers.

### Basic Massage Therapy Prices

½ hr - \$35 \*    1 hour - \$60 \*    1 ½ hour - \$90 \*

\*Additional minutes @ \$1.00 per minute

\* Prices are for basic Swedish and/or Deep Tissue Massage.

\* Gratuities accepted but never required

[Ask about pricing for massage cupping, hot stones, specialty aromatherapy sessions, insurance cases, reflexology, etc.](#)

\*\***Outcalls** begin at \$120 / hour and includes up to one hour of travel & set up time. Add'l sessions/ same location \$75 / hour

\*\* **Four (4) Therapy Rooms.** \*\* **Appointments Encouraged** and are scheduled **by phone only**, please do NOT email. *We check the voice mail between EVERY session & will call you back.*

– *Walk-Ins welcome if a therapist is available.*

\*\* **All Therapists are Nationally Certified.** Several therapists are further certified in Pregnancy, Reflexology and other modalities. **See our Profile Book in the Lobby and try ALL of our therapists.**

Visit our website at <http://thebalancedbodyshoppe.com> for more information on our therapists, gift shoppe and past newsletter articles.