

## **LONGEVITY BREATHING INTRO**

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### **A Journey of a Thousand Miles Begins with Six Breathing Lessons**

The six breathing lessons presented are designed to give you internal strength and to gradually enable your mind to settle and concentrate for long periods of time on whatever you choose. Moreover, this practice, done consistently, will awaken the energy of your lower tantien (the hara in Japanese, ka in Sufism), the fundamental energy center for all beginning Taoist practices of meditation, healing, or psychic development.

#### **What is Taoism?**

Many traditions based on ancient philosophies and religions have vibrantly continued into modern times. Taoism is one of these traditions, whose practical methods and techniques of implementation within daily life are little documented in the West. One branch of Taoist philosophy is about developing and using one's personal chi or life-force energy to strengthen, heal and benefit oneself and others. This branch encompasses two broad methods: the Water and the Fire. The Water tradition, based on the philosophies of Lao Tse, emphasizes effort without force, relaxation and letting go; like the flow of water slowly eroding rock. The Fire tradition, developed 1,500 years later, emphasizes force, pushing forward and breaking through barriers. The practices are of the Water tradition, which has received little exposure in the West.

#### **The 70 Percent Rule: The Foundation of All Taoist Water Method Practices**

Welcome to the Longevity Breathing Introduction Program. For all the lessons in this series, remember to take the limits of your concentration only to a maximum of 70 percent of your capacity (this is a general rule for all modes of practice). Inhale and exhale only 70 percent of what you could push yourself to do at your most extreme effort. This guideline allows you a comfort zone for your body, your central nervous system, and your ability to breathe and concentrate, so you can do the activity in a relaxed fashion that reduces, rather than increases, internal stress. Beginning from an effortless position, you may, over time, gradually increase the duration of the in-breath and out-breath, along with the intensity with which the mind penetrates the internal sensations of the body and its energy. With this gradual progression, the action of breathing itself will induce relaxation and calmness in your body. With the 70 percent rule, it becomes more relaxing, over time, as you extend your breath from ten seconds to thirty seconds, to one minute, to two minutes--a shift that should bring major benefits to you over the course of your lifetime.

#### FOCUS ON PRACTICE

#### Longevity Breathing, Lesson 1: Feeling the Breath



Stand or sit comfortably with eyes and mouth closed. Place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth and gently rest it there. Relax all the muscles of your face. Let your mind become aware of your breath entering your nostrils as you inhale and exhale. Feel all the sensations (physical and nonphysical) to the end of the inside of your nostrils, including the movement of your nose hairs.

After you can feel the movement of breath inside your nose, continue following the sensation of your breath in stages. As you become aware of the breath itself, let your breath penetrate progressively down the center line of your body and feel everything along the way. First, to the bottom of your throat. Next, to your lungs, your solar plexus, your navel, and then your lower tantien, which is approximately one-third of the distance between your navel and genitals. Practice five to ten minutes or more, keeping in mind the 70 percent rule, so you progressively relax, avoiding strain to either your body, breath, or mind.

This is a general breathing process. In the lessons that follow, the breathing process will be described in greater detail.

In all water method Taoist practices, the 70 percent rule permits you to become comfortable and relaxed when you do exert 100 percent of your unreserved, non-tension-bound effort on the activity at hand. As you get better and better and significantly extend your capacities with practice, if you stay with the 70 percent rule, you will be able to accomplish controlled breathing in a relaxed, comfortable, and effortless state of being. When you are satisfied that you can do one lesson, go on to the next. Progress at your own pace. The primary purpose of learning these breathing lessons is, then, to give you a technique to train your awareness so that you can use it to become conscious of the inside of your physical body and its energies. Remember to always breathe in and out through your nose unless some medical condition precludes it. In the beginning, perform the breathing lessons in a standing or sitting position and avoid drafty, cold, or damp places.

#### FOCUS ON PRACTICE

#### Longevity Breathing, Lesson 2



- Place the tip of your tongue on the roof (hard palate) of your mouth.
- Take a complete breath. A complete breath consists of a smooth inhale and exhale with no holding of the breath whatsoever after the end of either the inhale or the exhale.
- Gradually make your breath longer and longer. To the best of your ability, each breath should be quiet, soft, and relaxed. Practice for five or ten minutes.

#### **He Breathed from His Heels and Lived to be 800 Years Old**

The famous Taoist Peng Tzu is recorded in the imperial archives as having lived over 800 years. Even though this story is hard to believe, the penalty for forging an imperial archive at the time was death, giving this tale much more credibility. Whether you take the astonishing account of Peng

Tzu's longevity as fact or fiction, it is certain that many of the fantastic qualities of body and mind that the Taoists have been known to possess for millennia are rooted in their ability to take the art of breathing to what many would consider super human levels. © 2010 Energy Arts, Inc. All Rights Reserved. 5 I was diagnosed with emphysema in 1994. Like many people, I was a shallow breather. Longevity breathing taught me how to exercise unused portions of my lungs and strengthen them. In 2000, a lung function test showed an increase from 17% to 47%. --Walter Rapaport, Recording Engineer, Jerome, Arizona In the Tao Te Ching, Lao Tse says, "The wise man breathes from his heels." The full depth and meaning of this enigmatic statement goes beyond what can be covered here. What can be said is that there is more to breathing than air going in and out of your nose and lungs.

## **790,590,000**

Within this nearly incomprehensible number is a secret that has been right under your nose around 28,800 times a day since the time you were born. It is the number of breaths the average human being will take in a lifetime. Along with the heartbeat, the breath serves as a primary metronome for the functioning of your body. Imagine if you could use those 790,590,000 opportunities to become as healthy, clear and vital as possible. If there were only one thing I could do to help Westerners, and to mitigate the ongoing health-crisis, it would be to teach Longevity Breathing. If you do nothing else except learn to breathe well, it will dramatically improve the quality of your life as one of the most important portals to healing, relaxation, rejuvenating sleep, athletics, graceful aging and spirituality. It is also a necessary foundation practice for anyone interested in the arts of Tai Chi, Hsing-I, Bagua, Qigong or Meditation.

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## **The Slow Death of Shallow Breathing**

Doctors report that up to ninety percent of Americans do not fully use their diaphragms while breathing. They take shallow breaths and only use a portion of the lungs, even when they believe they are taking deep breaths. Not using the rest of the lungs is like starving the body from one of its most important rejuvenators. Holding the breath is particularly common when people are angry, fearful, tense or highly focused; it often results in the nervous system reacting to the pressure with a physiologically based stress response. © 2010 Energy Arts, Inc. All Rights Reserved. 6 When you contract, your energy is inherently blocked from moving freely and locks up somewhere in the body, most commonly the shoulders, stomach or jaw. Moreover, when people take shallower and shallower breaths or hold their breath, their bodies become more and more sluggish. Releasing stress becomes difficult so tension lodges in the body and cells. Over time, it takes progressively more energy to maintain the same amount of concentration or physical activity. Imagine what happens to your body as you age.

In one of my stress-reduction seminars, I asked business executives to type lecture notes on their laptop computers while simultaneously remaining aware of their breath. Within minutes, most of the participants' breath became shallower. Many of them stopped breathing for seconds at a time. Many were lucky if out of a minute, they actually breathed continuously for ten seconds. Executives, many of whom are high-functioning and extremely intelligent individuals, were surprised to learn they had such a difficult time maintaining the smooth flow of breath while working on their computers.

## FOCUS ON PRACTICE

### Longevity Breathing, Lesson 3



- Consciously count each of your breaths, first for 2 breaths, then 3, then 4, then 5, then 6, then 7, then 8, then 9, and finally 10 breaths, without losing count or spacing out.
- Begin with one set of 10 breaths. Progressively build to 2 sets of 10 breaths, then 3, then 4, then 5 sets of 10 breaths until, without getting distracted, you feel each inhale and exhale. Be sharply aware of your count.
- In the beginning, you can use your fingers or beads to keep count, but eventually you will want to keep track without any external support, thereby strengthening your mind's awareness and continuity.
- Do your best to breathe and count in a relaxed manner, without tensing up. While counting, do not project into the future. Concentrate on the breath going through your body at the instant it is doing so.

### **Why bother learning to breathe better?**

I frequently ask my students, “What is breathing?” The standard reply is that air comes in and out of the nose, thereby pumping more oxygen into the body. Although technically true, this story is far from complete. Longevity Breathing can help shallow breathers to:

- Fully engage the diaphragm, which physically causes air to enter and leave the lungs.
- Recondition the nervous system from the reflex of perpetually going into stress to the reflex of going into relaxation.
- Improve the circulation of fluids and the natural movement within the internal organs, making them less prone to disease.
- Help the body rest and receive the optimal benefits of sleep.
- Deliver more oxygen to all of the cells.
- Strengthen the movement of chi (energy).

Longevity Breathing can help make the inside of your body become fully alive and healthy. It cultivates your ability to relax at any time and to concentrate on what you are doing for long periods of time without becoming distracted. Put simply, Longevity Breathing gets your chi movin’.

### **Nobody is Going to the Hospital for a Relaxation Attack**

Longevity Breathing helps open up your body and counter the involuntary clench of tension with relaxation. Of course, it takes training to recognize the connection between your breath and your emotions, particularly when the negative emotions come crashing in.

Most have never considered that they are capable of staying relaxed and aware even in stressful situations. However, as you practice Longevity Breathing, you learn to use this important skill to calm yourself down, helping you to act with clarity, so you don’t make a negative event worse. The calmer you are, the more easily your chi flows and grows. The steadier and less inhibited the chi flow, the more oxygen the cells can absorb. As your cells receive reinforcement—continuous breathing over weeks, months and years—they become more efficient, improving your circulation. It

is a powerful synergy. Throughout a lifetime of activity most people have trained their bodies to be tense and hard, which in turn restricts their chi flow

### Your Nervous System Is Your Interface with Life

Your nerves govern the sensations through which you experience your life. When your nerves are smooth, those sensations are vivid and clear and add a great deal of joy to your daily life. When the rhythm of the nervous system is taxed and spiked, the quality of your felt bodily sensations is dramatically decreased. To make this point very obvious, clench your hand into a fist, squeeze it really hard and keep it there, and see if your ability to feel your hand goes up or down.

#### FOCUS ON PRACTICE Longevity Breathing, Lesson 4



- Be very aware of—that is, feel—every sensation of each inhale and exhale.
- Feel the movement of the breath as it moves your nose hairs. How does each bit of breath make the inside of your nostrils feel?
- Follow and feel the connection of each micromovement of breath to your conscious awareness.
- Gradually build to 1 set of 10 breaths, staying acutely aware of how your mind follows each breath.
- Increase to 2 sets of 10 breaths, then 3, then 4, then 5 sets of 10 breaths, all the while concentrating on your conscious awareness.

What happens to your mind when you clench your fist like this? What happens to your breathing? How long can you maintain this clenched fist before your mind starts churning with tense thoughts? How long can you maintain this clenched fist, period? The moral of the story is that tension is not sustainable, and as it goes further down the line it's negative effects increase.

This is a primary reason why stress is such an insidious plague of our modern age. Stress is really just a fancy word for tension. The hustle and bustle “hurry up and wait” lifestyles of our modern age are shredding people's nervous systems and in the process, numbing them to much of the happiness that is possible through the higher level of body awareness that relaxed nerves create. The reason that this becomes so relevant to breathing is that the breath is a direct portal into the nervous system. In fact, breath training is the easiest and most available tool for gaining access to the nerves and beginning to relax them into a state of clarity

It is this deep access to the nerves that is responsible for many of the spectacular feats of body control that masters are known for in the East. If you take your breathing practice far enough, it becomes a way to bridge the gap between your sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. This has the capacity to take you to whole new levels of body awareness and sensitivity.

Higher level training aside, you do yourself an enormous favor when you even begin to learn to use your breath to pattern relaxation into your nervous system. Doing so will allow you to continually shed the stress of your day and nurture a visceral feeling of well being that only a fully alive body and mind can provide. To accomplish this takes less effort than you might imagine and is well worth



the small investment of time and effort. You wouldn't put up with a fuzzy signal on your television or favorite radio station. Don't settle for a fuzzy second rate nervous system!

### **Increase Your Mental Stamina**

In Western culture, one image that seems to exemplify people in deep concentration is the sculpture by Rodin called The Thinker. Basically, he is hunched over and punching himself in the jaw—not exactly a poster child for relaxation. How long do you think that thinker could hold this position? Maybe ten or fifteen minutes? Probably not for three hours.

Now consider the figure of the Buddha sitting quietly and serenely while he is in contemplation. He could easily sit there for a week. And many experienced meditators do sit for weeks at a time. When you are relaxed, your concentration and focus have immense stamina. Conversely, tension eats stamina. Although it may seem counterintuitive at first, relaxation increases strength and stamina. Relaxed breathing nourishes and increases mental stamina.

#### **FOCUS ON PRACTICE** **Longevity Breathing, Lesson 5**



- Extend your conscious awareness of each micro-inch of breath from your nostrils down to the base of your throat.
- Feel the front, sides, and back of your throat.
- Begin with 2 breaths, rest, then take 2 breaths again, and repeat until you can do 2 breaths successfully, without breaking your awareness. Now do 4 breaths, etc., until you can do 1 set of 10 breaths completely, with continuous awareness and no gross tension.
- Now work on 1 set of 10, having each breath relax every muscle and nerve in your body.
- Next work on relaxing the mental tension of your mind's conscious awareness on each breath. Keep at it until your attention can remain focused in a relaxed, comfortable manner.
- Gradually increase your breath work from 1 set of 10 breaths to 2, 3, 4, then 5 sets of 10.

### **Your Blood is the Train, Oxygen is the Cargo**

Having more air in your lungs is only responsible for about 5% of the actual benefit that can be realized by increasing the quality of your breathing. The real benefits lie in the smooth flow of blood and fluids through your system and the smoothing of your nerves.

If you have discomfort, pain, or dysfunction in a part of your body, chances are that the flow of blood and other fluids through that area is less than optimal. If an area is starved of life giving blood flow, even in part, that area will be weak and not functioning to its designed capacity. The smoother and more unencumbered the diaphragm and breathing process become, the deeper the positive pressures caused by breathing can work their way through the tissues of your body.

By learning to breathe with your whole body, and having the sensation of the breath enter into every nook and cranny that you can perceive, those places inside yourself that have remained dormant will come alive. As this happens, chi, blood, and fluids can then flow freely. The blood is a

train that delivers the cargo of fresh, nourishing oxygen to the cells of your body. You can have all the cargo (air/breathing capacity) you want, but without the delivery mechanism of the blood it will do you no good. A smooth, even, relaxed breath provides the vehicle to move the oxygen that you're taking in to the deepest layers of your body.

### **Breathe Like a Baby**

Longevity Breathing begins with the belly. The basic nature of Longevity Breathing is to get everything inside your body—muscles, internal organs, fluids—to move in sync with your breathing. Belly breathing creates one rhythm using the metronome of your breath, patterned after that of a baby. Everything inside a baby's body moves in tandem with its breath, the secret to the infant's boundless, virtually limitless energy.

When you breathe from your belly, you pressurize the inside of your stomach cavity front, sides and back—thereby moving your diaphragm and drawing air into the entirety of your lungs. As your lungs fill with air, all your internal organs, tissues and blood vessels expand. Instead of feeling sluggish or contracted, this kind of breathing fully wakes you up, increases your ability to focus and gives you more energy without the buzzing sensation associated with caffeine intake or an adrenaline rush.

#### **FOCUS ON PRACTICE** **Taoist Internal Breathing, Lesson 6**



- We are now going, in stages, to continue the awareness of breath down to just below the navel.
- Begin with 2 breaths. With each, on the inhale, continue the awareness of your breath from your nose through the center of your body down to the bottom of your chest. Without breaking your conscious awareness of your breath, on the exhale follow your breath back up your chest, to your throat, and through and out your nose. Keep trying until you can do this without a break in your awareness.
- Next, with continuous awareness and body feeling, follow the inhaled breath from your nose to your throat through the center of your body to the bottom of your chest, down to the middle of your stomach, and on the exhale, back up to your chest, throat, and out your nose.
- Inhale downward through your nose, throat, and chest, ending at your navel. Retrace the same path on the exhale. Practice 2 breaths, rest, and continue over and over again until you can do so with a relaxed body and mind in a comfortable way with continuous awareness.
- Continue your inhalation (from nose to navel), breathing downward to the middle of your belly, about half the distance between your navel and pubic hair. The Chinese call this location the lower tantien. Practice until you can breath down to the lower tantien with uninterrupted concentration, feeling, and awareness in a continuous, comfortable, and relaxed fashion both mentally and physically for 2 complete breaths.
- Expand to 3 breaths, then 4, then to 1 complete set of 10 breaths.
- Increase to 2 sets of 10, then 3, then 4, then 5 complete sets of 10 breaths.
- This exercise will significantly increase both your ability to feel the inside of your body and the strength of your conscious awareness.

## **Give Your Organs an Internal Massage**

Breathing with the belly moves the diaphragm strongly, as is commonly found in many breathing systems. What is unique to this system, however, is that the beginning as well as the later stages of Longevity Breathing very gently massage your internal organs—liver, spleen, kidneys and the back of the heart. Gentle massaging is all that is necessary to improve blood circulation and lengthen connections between tendons and ligaments. Although many of us know the importance of exercising our muscles, the idea of exercising the internal organs is something we may have never considered. Illnesses rarely present themselves in the strongest parts of the body. But, as with any system, you are only as strong as your weakest link. Over time and without exercise, the internal motion inside the organs slows down and diminishes the flow of blood and other fluids within them. The connecting ligaments and tendons respond by contracting, bringing the organs closer together and limiting mobility and circulation. Eventually, they harden and complications arise. Using the breath to strengthen the internal organs is a big deal, not a small one. It will help you to stay healthy.

Follow Through These six practices can be done at anytime—just after waking up or before falling asleep, on the bus, taxi, plane or subway, during work, etc.—and in any position—standing, sitting or lying down. Take every opportunity you can to practice. A regular practice rhythm is essential when learning Longevity Breathing so that eventually you can maintain this breathing without effort 24 hours a day, even while you are asleep. Overtime this will make relaxation your nervous system's natural state as opposed to a rare occurrence.

## **Learn how to take your practice to the next level**

We hope you have enjoyed the Longevity Breathing Introduction Program. It is our goal to bring the wisdom of Taoism to the West so that practices like these will have real benefit in your daily life. If you are interested in learning more and taking your practice to the next level we invite you to check out some of Bruce's products. \* Longevity Breathing DVD Need a visual aid? Animations show you how these techniques work to massage your internal organs and give you greater lung capacity. You also get to see a Longevity Breathing class with Bruce. Then, at the end of the video, Bruce will guide you through a fifteen-minute practice session. An essential training aid for Longevity Breathing.

\* Taoist Breathing 2-CD Set Bruce Frantzis leads you through a progression of 24 Taoist Breathing practice sessions. CD-1 teaches you to feel your breath and avoid holding your breath. Next you learn how to inhale into different parts of your body to strengthen and massage your internal organs and spine. In CD-2 you will learn Taoist breathing techniques enabling you to become aware of your emotions and deepen your meditative focus. \* Tao of Letting Go Book In a down-to-earth, easily understandable style, Bruce Frantzis gives you powerful methods to let go of tension, fear, anger and pain. You can learn how to work with your chi—internal life-force energy—not only to improve your health and calm your mind, but also to reclaim genuine happiness and awaken the great spiritual potential inside you. \* Taoist Meditation Circle Online Group The Taoist Meditation Circle features guided audio sessions of Bruce with a new meditation each month. Each session will build upon the skills learned in the previous month. Clear, powerful and engaging, the Taoist Meditation Circle offers a step by step guide to move into stillness and the depths of your mind.

Bruce Frantzis is a Taoist Lineage Master with over 40 years of experience in Eastern healing systems. He is the first known Westerner to hold authentic lineages in qigong, bagua, tai chi, hsing-i and Taoist meditation. He has taught these Taoist energy arts to more than 20,000 students. Dr. Frantzis trained for over a decade in China and also has extensive experience in Zen, Tibetan Buddhism, yoga, Kundalini, energy healing therapies and Taoist Fire and Water traditions. You can learn more about Bruce and get free training tips on his website: [energyarts.com](http://energyarts.com)