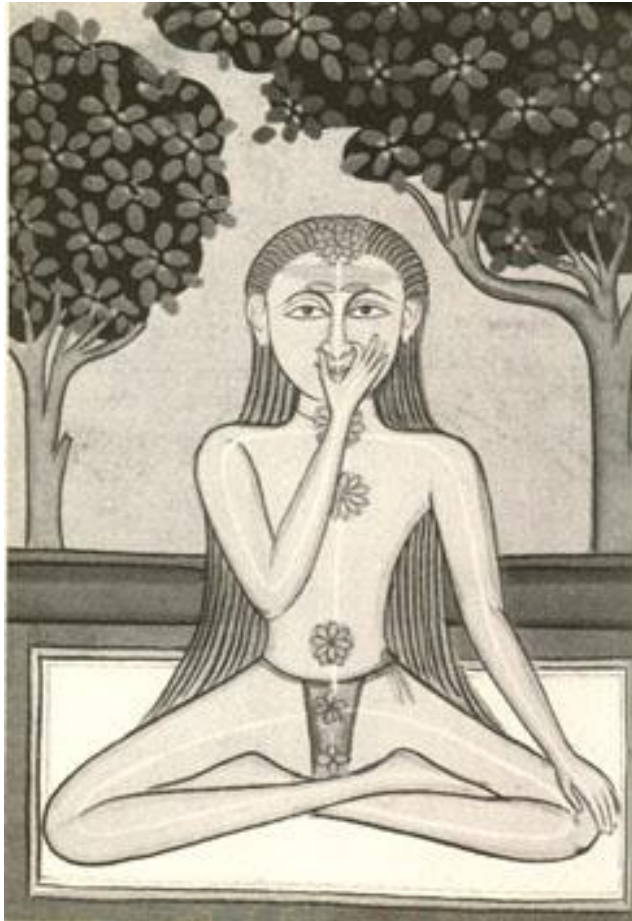




*The Healing Breath*



## The Healing Breath

Pranayama should not be considered simply as breathing exercises. Pranayama influences the flow of energy and nervous system balance in the body and mind. Pranayama provides methods where the life force is activated and regulated to attain a higher state of energy and awareness.

The practice of Pranayama could be described as being the voluntary control of your intake of air, exhaling and capability to retain the breath. The main objective is to create a new way to reconnect with the energies of the Universe and to facilitate the formation of a better harmonic breathing habit.

The transition between the initial efforts and into a habit is done through the education of

the mind, which can be a long process of re-adaptation, is nevertheless necessary.

All of those who cross through the “doorway without doors” of the philosophy of Zen know of the practice of teaching through an interesting tale or story.

It is said that there was once a man that went to learn some meditation and breathing techniques with a female Buddhist monk. One day he called another friend and said to him, “I learned this technique, it is called *Healing Breath*”. His friend, an avid student of spirituality, wanted immediately to know the details of the technique. They talked for a while and decided that they would both try the exercise that same night. The next morning the friend called the first man and said, “This exercise is too hard.” The first man answered, “The exercise was not designed to be easy and you just have to keep trying”.



The second man had tried many different exercises and techniques and the fact that the *Healing Breath* was so simple and at the same time presented a great degree of difficulty, made him think that there was something very special about it. It was only after many years that the same man re-found this technique and decided to practice it again, because he realized that when he was taught it, he did not have the right attitude or posture to receive and apply the technique properly.

The *Healing Breath* is all one may need to enter into a Zen state. Anyone that can breathe can practice it, and can do so without any knowledge of the sutras or philosophy. All that is asked is the correct attitude. What we are going to do here is, instead of presenting the details on how you can practice it, is to introduce the essential prerequisites necessary to be established before we start to practice it.



## The Obstacles

The most important guidelines for pranayama are that there should be no strain during any pranayama practice and there should not be any violent movements. Breath retention should not be introduced until the basics are mastered and do not force any breathing practice. The lungs are very delicate and easily injured. Regularity is always far better than doing a lot of practice once a week.

Students should never be in a hurry to progress to more difficult practices until they are ready. Different people have different capacities and many are accustomed to shallow breathing or breathing in a particular manner for many years. The full yogic breath can be difficult for beginners to learn, but once mastered, it is a great benefit.

Any learning process starts from the beginning. No math teacher will start with beginner students teaching calculus before arithmetic; in the same way a Zen Master will not teach advanced meditation techniques before the student learns how to control his breathing.

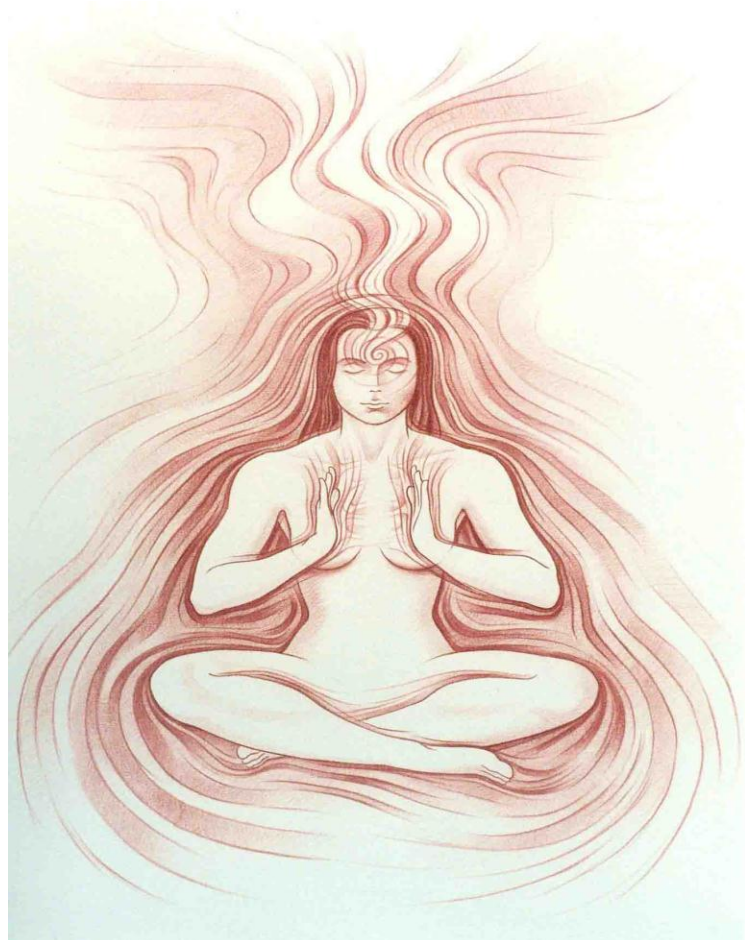
If you are already practicing a series of spiritual exercises but it seems like you are not having any success, go back and re-start with the Healing Breath. There is very little that can be accomplished without the knowledge of the control of breaths. The same statement is valid for other correlated spiritual disciplines and without this realization, we can lose the interest on the spiritual path.

The Ego is undoubtedly the biggest obstacle. Its influence can be felt when we start questioning why should we practice this technique and not another. Why is it a

rhythmic breath can cause so much resistance?

To have the correct attitude is to cultivate an unquestionable faith, dedication and an intention of success. The correct attitude means to follow the instructions with a good will disposition, without resistance, knowing that we will reach the final destination. Practice your spiritual exercises like your life depend on it. No spiritual practice will work if you are not committed to it at the heart level.

It is possible for the seeker to experience some physical limitation as medical conditions, such as the ones related to the respiratory system and the cardio-pulmonary. Because of this, we highly recommend for you to consult with your physician before starting any spiritual practice that involves dynamic breathing.





If there is cigarette addiction, or other types of addiction, they tend to be eliminated gradually with the persistence of this practice.

### **The Effects**

This technique will work on three different levels: the Psychological, the Physiological and the Spiritual level. In the beginning of the practice they are all interconnected, such as a tight thick rope; but with the practice, the interconnected structure refines itself and starts looking more like a fishing line, allowing the student to enjoy the rewards of practice.



### **The Practice**

The healing breath is practiced in a tri-fold pattern called “**1:4:2**” meaning one inhalation (1 second), one retention (4 seconds), and one exhale (2 seconds). These numbers are a just proportion, which means we have to retain inside of the lungs four times more units of time that was spent inhaling it. We suggest you to start with 4:16:8 and as the breath get stronger; it can be amplified by 6:24:8 and 8:32:16.

We recommend a gradual adoption of longer breaths, maintaining the intervals of one second. You should either use an audible clock to measure your performance or you can use your heart to do it.

It is not an option to stop the practice to admire the results, because continuous concentration is essential. With the correct posture and effort in a couple of weeks you will experience a significant change in your humor, physical energy and behavior. You will tend to be more calm and quiet. This is an important exercise to prepare you for any other “hard core” spiritual exercise and any Zen practice.