

Change Your Breath, Change Your Life!

by Tony Riposo

Breathing and life are intimately connected. Life begins with our first breath and ends with our last. In yoga, the life force energy that keeps the body alive and healthy is called “Prana” and the major way that we receive this prana is through breathing. Yogic breathing practices are called Pranayama. “Prana” means life force or energy and “yama” means to control, master or restrain. So the practice of Pranayama means to control the flow of prana or life force in the body through the practice of breathing techniques.

The practice of conscious breathing is foundational to the practice of yoga. As one of the limbs of Patanjali’s eight-limbed path, yogic breathing, or pranayama, is defined as the “control of life force,” and is aimed at increasing vital energy in the body and mind. Regular pranayama practice has many benefits; it regulates energy, reduces pain, improves sleep, fosters mental peace, and enhances your sense of well-being.

Try this simple breathing exercise:

Lie on your back and rest your right hand on your belly, noticing how your belly expands on the inhalation and contracts on the exhalation. Do this for several breaths.

Next, place your left hand on your lower ribs. Feel your ribcage expand as you inhale. Contract your abdominal muscles while you exhale. Do this for several breaths.

Finally, rest your right hand on your collarbones. Inhale, breathing into the lower, middle and then upper chest. Exhale while contracting your abdominal muscles. Practice this for several minutes, allowing your breath to move through you in a wave-like motion. Gradually increase the amount of time you practice this breath.

Practice this breathing exercise regularly and it will change your life!