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Breathe vitality into your Life
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What's the first thing we do when we're born, the last thing we do before we die and the only thing we can't live without for more than a few minutes? BREATHE!

In emergencies paramedics immediately administer oxygen to distressed persons. In the E.R., a friend of mine was treated for severe headache with oxygen.

Brain cells have a high rate of metabolism, so the brain uses much more oxygen than other organs. Supplying the brain with increased oxygen is the greatest tool in stress relief and mental balance. Your heart requires the most oxygen of any muscle in your body.

Increasing your exhale automatically expands the inhale, flooding your system with life giving oxygen. In order to exhale effectively, the lower ribs must compress to release the tension and toxins that hang out in the lower lobes of the lungs. Rest your hands on the lower ribs. Feel the ribs fan out slightly as you inhale. As you exhale, imagine the lower ribs are wrapped with Saran wrap and feel the ribs knit closely together. Draw the navel in and up. The greater the exhale, the more air you are moving in and out. Deep exhale also provides more natural massage to your internal organs, stimulating and detoxifying.

Deep breathing increases metabolism, clears the mind and helps detoxify the body. It lowers blood pressure and can help a stiff neck or back.

Stressed? You can learn to calm your mind and emotions with these simple breathing exercises.

Three level breathing: Place one hand on your belly and the other on your upper chest. Exhale. Now inhale, feeling your lower hand rise up first, then filling your rib cage and last, lifting the upper hand with the breath. To exhale, feel the lower hand sink down first, mid chest and back release and then the upper hand released down to complete the breath. Repeat five times or more.

The counting breath: Inhale to a count of six. Hold for six counts. Exhale to a count of eight. This is the best breathing technique I know for insomnia and for strengthening the immune system. Any time you notice your self getting upset, try four cycles of the counting breath. It is very helpful for addictions. Try it when you crave the cigarette, chocolate bar, etc. Repeat when the craving arises again.

The deep peace breath: Focus on making your breath slower, deeper, quieter and more regular. Sound simple? That's the beauty of breathing!

The breathing/posture connection. Sit up tall with your shoulders back and chest open. Observe your breathing. Note the volume of breath. Where do your chest and back expand? Lengthen from the crown of your head. Notice muscle tension in the back of your neck and across your shoulders. How is the volume of breath now?

Now slouch gently. Again, observe your breathing. How is the volume now? Where are your chest, back and belly expanding now? How is the tension across your back and shoulders?

Now, please return to the lengthened spine and wide shoulders. Repeat the breath awareness observations in both positions once more. If you really want to see how this posture change helps you, practice in front of a mirror. Do you see how your tummy trims up instantly when you're lengthening your spine. Which looks better, the slouch or the long spine?

Train yourself to use deep breathing by taking three deep breaths every time you get put on hold, stop for a

light or have to wait in line, etc. Prepare yourself for a confrontation, a test or other stressful encounter by nourishing your system with oxygen to help you face the challenge calmly. A friend was being wheeled into surgery. She said she felt afraid but she thought of me saying, "Take deep breaths!" It works!

You have a breathing pattern as unique to you as your finger prints. No one else has exactly the same style of breathing that you do. Simply watching and feeling your own natural breath flow is a powerful breath exercise.

With regular practice these breathing tools become more automatic and your peace of mind is not as easily interrupted by ferry traffic, airport expansion or worrying about where city hall should be.

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Stressed? Headaches? Insomnia?

Kay Wagner LMP has a special talent for helping people relax and improve their health. Kay offers "R &R" private sessions, coaching breathing, stretching and relaxation. She is a Licensed Massage Therapist and Certified Yoga and Pilates instructor. Learn to relax and rejuvenate in Kay's studio overlooking the mountains and water at 828 2nd St. Mukilteo WA 98275.

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