

Exploring Your Breath

Depending on whether you exercise or not, today you will breathe in and out between 17,000 and 28,000 times. Every breath is new and unique. Amazing! As you read this, can you notice your breathing? What does it feel like right now?

Breathing is a vital natural process providing healthy clean air to energise our bodies. When we breathe well, we're more likely to feel well. For example, consciously breathing in a relaxed rhythm will help make your body feel more relaxed. In yoga, certain ways of breathing can help you feel more connected to yourself and your life, as well as to all existence.

In the three-part breath you breathe in slowly and deeply as you visualise (and feel) your lungs filling from bottom to top - first by expanding the abdomen, or belly, then the middle rib cage, and finally the upper chest. When you breathe out, you visualise (and feel) the breath emptying in reverse, from top to bottom, gently pulling in the abdomen slightly at the end to empty the lungs completely. Try it like this:

1. **Put your hands on your belly and breathe in deeply and slowly.** Feel the hands moving outwards as you breathe in, and relaxing inwards as you breathe out. Feel your belly moving for five breaths.
2. **Now put your hands on your middle rib cage.** When you breathe in, be aware of your belly expanding as before, and feel the rib cage expanding after the belly has expanded. When you breathe out, feel the rib cage relaxing, and then sense the belly relaxing. Keep your hands in this middle position for five breaths.
3. **Finally, put your hands with the finger tips resting on your collar bones.** As you breathe in, be aware of the belly expanding, then the middle part of your chest, and finally, the upper part of your lungs, underneath your hands, will fill with air. This is harder to feel, so if you can't, don't worry: just be aware and visualise the lungs filling in this area. Breathe out and feel the emptying in reverse: upper chest, middle chest and belly. Do this for five breaths.
4. **Now rest your hands on your lap, and continue in the same way.** Feel the whole in-breath coming in, rolling like a wave up the body: belly, mid-chest, upper chest - and rolling out again in reverse. Sit and do this for five minutes.



While this is called the three-part breath, it's really just one continuous activity: breath, body and attention all at one with each other. Let us know how you get on with this. We'd love to hear from you!

“We must welcome the future, remembering that soon it will be the past; and we must respect the past, remembering that it was once all that was humanly possible.”

~ George Santayana, philosopher and poet, 1863 - 1952

