

प्राणायाम

Praanaayaama

prāṇāyāma

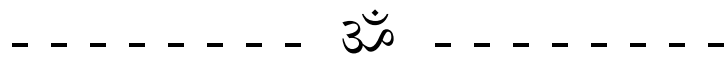
prāṇa - life force, vital breath, energy

āyāma - exploring, expanding, stretching, extending, restraining, stopping

Explore My Vital Life Force (Breathing Techniques)

yama	niyama	āsana	prāṇāyāma	pratyāhāra	dhāraṇā	dhyāna	samādhi
outer checks	inner checks	physical postures	energy explorations	senses inward	hold, focus (inward)	meditation	absorption
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

This is 4th of aṣṭāṅga (ashtaanga), 8 limbs / bodies / layers / rungs, from patañjali yoga sūtra.



Breath initiated movement forms (like t'ai chi, chi kung, yoga, pilates, even swimming) are as much for inner attainment and inner exploration as they are for physical development. In this way they are different than most Western performance based exercise.

The breath is the simplest link between the outer and inner body. Both yoga postures and yoga breathing techniques are breath initiated. Yoga postures help work from with the outer body toward the inner - like how work on the outer shell of a car or its tires can help the insides run more smoothly. Yoga breathing techniques work from the inner body to the outer - how work on the engine of a car helps the outer car actually move, and move with less jitter.

The breath is also a link between body and mind, especially the emotional aspect of the mind. Anxiety, fear, anger, frustration, grief, depression and overwhelm each have a distinct way of altering the breath, and even the heart rate.

In practicing breathing techniques, the yogi digests memories of past undigested emotional experiences by discovering and re-training discordant breath currents. In this way, breathing techniques can help heal old emotional wounds and prevent their recurrence.



4 Components of Vital Life Breath

1	INNER	I feel this especially during the inhale, and when I can track currents inside
2	OUTER	I feel this especially during the exhale, and when I visualize currents outside
3	TRANSITION	I feel this especially during the places between the inhales and exhales
4	<i>beyond</i> INNER / OUTER	I feel this great omnipresent vital energy in the background, after I allow for relaxed, long, subtle, and smooth versions of the above 3 components.

In the normal course of breathing, there are 4 easily identifiable components:

- (1) Inhale
- (2) Full place at the top of the inhale
- (3) Exhale
- (4) Empty place at the bottom of the exhale

Each of these (4) can be expressed, chopped, and focused upon in different ways - and the variety of yoga breathing techniques does just that.








The table to start this page is going beyond these 4 easily identifiable components.

The table to start this page is teaching (from the traditional yoga sūtra) that the 4 components are actually

- (1) Inner
- (2) Outer
- (3) Transition (full and empty)
- (4) Beyond inner / outer = a transcendent mystery to be discovered.





Breathing practice is like the ocean and it's waves:

		felt sense	ocean / wave metaphor	
1	inhalation inner	filling up	wave comes in	
2a	transition	the full place	wave pauses on shore	
3	exhalation outer	letting go	wave retreats	
2b	transition	the empty place	ocean pauses	
1	1..2a..3..2b..	cycle repeats	component 4 manifests as awareness becomes subtle	
4	profound subtle energy beyond inner/outer	a current beyond or underneath the breath	the still deeper ocean that remains the same as the tides move and change; "be the ocean not the wave"	



Breathing practice is also like space, air and a balloon:

		felt sense	air / balloon metaphor	
1	inhalation inner	filling up	balloon fills up - I lift	
2a	transition	the full place	I float	
3	exhalation outer	letting go	balloon empties - I descend	
2b	transition	the empty place	I keep descending under water and all the bubbles leave me...	
1	1..2a..3..2b..	cycle repeats	component 4 manifests as awareness becomes subtle	
4	profound subtle energy beyond inner/outer	a current beyond or underneath the breath	the still space that is full of energy the entire time	



From Gross to Subtle to Stillness

Yoga techniques, in this case breath tools, generally progress from the gross to the subtle.

Build energy ---> then **mobilize** energy ---> then **refine** energy --->

then relax in the **stillness** and feel the cosmic energy.

(1) BUILD ENERGY		(2) MOBILIZE ENERGY		(3) REFINE ENERGY		(4) STILLNESS: INTO THE MYSTERY
VIGOROUS TECHNIQUES		INNER MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES		SUBTLE TECHNIQUES		NO TECHNIQUE
bhastrikaa	bellows	ujjaya	upward victory	naadi shodhana	purify the inner rivers (alternate nostril)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • just sit with palms up • gaze gently to spiritual eye • tongue relaxed (soft smile) • trust what you experience • no need to describe it or share it, this receiving is for you alone • express gratitude in closing
lulita	flutter	cakra mantra	tone sounds	shan mukhi	closing the sense organs	
kapala-bhaati	clearing; or "glow to the head"	udgeetaa	upward song	bhramari	bumblebee	
nauli kriyaa	wave-like action	avayava	internal organ specific	so-ham	"i am the Holy Spirit"	
agni saara	spreading (digestive) fire	sangeetaa	chanting	sheetalee	cooling	

The more gross (substantial) you are, the more you may need to build + mobilize energy.

The more disciplined you are, the more you may need to sing and cultivate devotion.

The more subtle you are, the more you may need to do sense withdrawal and trust yourself.



Important Tips for the Modern Era

- Breathing techniques are best done on an empty stomach and after cleanses. At minimum wash your face, hands and feet.
- Indoors - claim a consistent place to practice where you only do your spiritual time. It can be as small as a corner of a room or a spot by a window.
- In focusing on long, smooth and subtle, there is no forcing any of the practices.
- Just allow the inhale and exhale to naturally get longer, smoother and more subtle.
- Just allow the places between the breaths (transitions) to naturally rest longer.
- If the breath has catches or jitters to it, allow them to express - this is past stuff releasing
- Other natural urge wind movements within you are expected and to be allowed to express- sighs, yawns, farts, burps, etc. In a group setting use discretion and step out if persistent.
- At any point, especially if in group situations, close your ears and stay within until you are comfortable inside yourself.
- At any point, re-adjust your physical posture to be more comfortable. You are using the inner breath techniques to free the body from the inside out - so trust if you need to move your spine. But don't fidget.
- Some days are more subtle than others. If, from your exploration, there arises subtle awareness of the 4th component of the vital breath, cosmic connection, great. If not, no problem. The most distracted days are often the most important ones to have practiced.

Breathing Techniques by Body Type

	vāta (air type)		pitta (fire type)		kapha (earth type)	
general qualities to promote	relaxing, calming, interiorizing, warming, consistent practice time		relaxing, cooling, softening focus, playful, using voice		invigorating, activating, strong, cleansing, with abdominal movements	
naturally strong qualities to celebrate	subtle, aware		sparkle, aware		strength, rich voice	
avoid	- overdoing rapid, strenuous or drying techniques - skipping rest between techniques		- counting - too much discipline - too much structure - overheating		- lack of discipline - falling asleep - losing focus during subtle techniques	
if just doing 2 specific techniques	nāḍī śodhana	alternate nostril	saṅgītā	chanting	kapāla-bhāti	clearing
	bhramarī	sense withdrawal	śītakara	cooling	bhastrikā	bellows



Basic 5 Techniques for 7-10 minutes

- Practice in order
- Skip vigorous breathing during menses / pregnancy / abdominal conditions.
- 7-10 minutes daily and you will claim your own nervous system.
- Every morning... or before lunch... or mid-afternoon... or before supper... or last thing.
- 40 days minimally will set a new pattern in your life
- Doing your breathing techniques in the morning is claiming your own nervous system, before you go encounter other human brains.
- Claim your own nervous system and then act in the world. Otherwise, you are likely to react to other's neuroses, or over-react.

	sanskrit	basic name	literal translation	how many / long
1	kapālabhāti	clearing	glow to the cranium	3 sets of 50 followed by relaxed full+empty places
2	ujjaya	restricting the throat	upward victory	12
3	udgītā	upward song	upward song	12
4	nāḍi shodhana	alternate nostril	purify the inner tubes	3 full minutes
5	bhramarī	sense withdrawal	bee	3
ॐ	sit receptively with palms up for at least a full minute			



I find it most useful to

share from the original teachings.

and allow students to grow independent relationships' to the material over practice time.

Teachings from the **patañjali yoga sūtra** on **prāṇāyāma**

from chapter 2, sūtras 49-52:

[\(learn sanskrit, including these, here\)](#)

2:49 तस्मिन् सति श्वासप्रश्वासयोर्गतिविच्छेदः प्राणायामः

tasmin sati śvāsapraśvāsayor-gati-vicchedaḥ prāṇāyāmaḥ

तस्मिन् सति श्वास प्रश्वासयोः गति विच्छेदः प्राणायामः

tasmin sati śvāsa praśvāsayoḥ gati vicchedaḥ prāṇāyāmaḥ

तस्मिन् tasmin - upon this

सति sati - existing, being established (referring to limb #3 = āsana, stable posture)

श्वास śvāsa - breath (implied exhale)

प्रश्वासयोः praśvāsa (ayoh) - inhale (of these 2 (exhale and inhale))

गति gati - going, motion

विच्छेदः vicchedaḥ - cutting, dividing, interruption

प्राणायामः prāṇāyāmaḥ - life force exploration

Upon that (stable posture (from the previous sūtras on āsana)) being established, life force exploration (prāṇāyāmaḥ) is the interruption of the motions of the inhale and exhale.



2:50 बाह्याभ्यन्तरस्तम्भवृत्तिर्देशकालसंख्याभिः परिदृष्टो दीर्घसूक्ष्मः

bāhyābhyantarastambha-vṛttir-deśa-kāla-saṁkhyābhiḥ

paridrṣṭo dīrgha-sūkṣmaḥ

बाह्य अभ्यन्तर स्तम्भ वृत्तिः देश काल संख्याभिः परिदृष्टः दीर्घ सूक्ष्मः

bāhya abhyantara stambha vṛttiḥ deśa kāla saṁkhyābhiḥ paridrṣṭaḥ dīrgha sūkṣmaḥ

बाह्य bāhya - outer

अभ्यन्तर abhyantara - inner

स्तम्भ stambha - fixedness, stoppage, stable point

वृत्तिः vṛttiḥ - existence, modification, spinning

देश deśa - place

काल kāla - time

संख्याभिः saṁkhyā-(ābhiḥ) number (by these (place, time and number))

परिदृष्टः paridrṣṭaḥ - perceived, beheld, from all around, in all facets

pari - fully, around, beyond, all about drṣṭa - beheld, known, seen,

दीर्घ dīrgha - long

सूक्ष्मः sūkṣmaḥ - delicate, subtle

(prāṇāyāma has) outer, inner and/or stable point modifications, (all 3 of which can become) long and subtle, when perceived in terms of: location, time, and number



2:51 बाह्याभ्यन्तरविषयाक्षेपी चतुर्थः ॥५१॥

bāhyābhyanta^{tara}-viṣa**yākṣepī** ca**turthaḥ**

बाह्य अभ्यन्तर विषय आक्षेपी चतुर्थः

bāhya abhyantara viṣaya ākṣepī caturthaḥ

बाह्य bāhya - outer

अभ्यन्तर abhyantara - inner

विषय viṣaya - topic, matter, category, sense enjoyment, object

क्षेपी ākṣepī - one who throws off, challenges, removes, gives up

चतुर्थः caturthaḥ - the fourth

the fourth (modification - which is not (1)inner,(2)outer,nor (3)stable point) throws off, or goes beyond, the matter regarding outer and inner



2:52 ततः क्षीयते प्रकाशावरणम् ||५२||

tataḥ ksīyate prakāśāvaraṇam

ततः क्षीयते प्रकाश आवरणम्

tataḥ ksīyate prakāśa āvaraṇam

ततः tataḥ - from that

क्षीयते ksīyate - is diminished

प्रकाश prakāśa - luster, splendor, renowned throughout

आवरणम् āvaraṇam - wrapper, shield, cover

due to that (the fourth),

the cover over the splendor (renowned throughout Creation) is diminished

