



## My Favorite Breathing Techniques

Breathwork is known as pranayama in Sanskrit (which you've possibly heard referenced if you've ever attended a yoga or meditation class), is an amazing tool for health and overall wellness. Over the past few years, I've learned many breathwork techniques which I've used to replace most medications including anesthesia. For example, I recently had cosmetic surgery on my eyes. I had the choice of a local or a general anesthetic. I opted for a local anesthetic combined with breathwork and I made it through with flying colors. I was relieved that I didn't go under a general anesthetic, with all the risks that option presents. Even something as seemingly simple as getting my teeth cleaned was a cause for consternation for me in the past, always requiring numbing agents. Recently I had my teeth cleaned and I relied solely on my breathwork, and to my amazement, it was a breeze.

I also turn to breathwork for things such as headaches, motion sickness, other kinds of nausea, pain, and most important of all, stress, anxiety, and tension - all three of which are detrimental when long term and chronic.

There's a good reason that breathwork is effective. When you breathe properly from deep within from your belly, you're activating your Parasympathetic Nervous System which is a network of nerves that relax your body and calms you down. On the other hand, when you breathe more shallowly from the upper parts of your body (often shallow and with shoulders hunched), that activates our Sympathetic Nervous System. The Sympathetic Nervous System is responsible for our fight or flight reactions - much more stress inducing than stress relieving.

Below I share some of my very favorite breathwork techniques. They're easy to do, they don't take a lot of time, and they're accessible to you whenever and wherever you need them. No equipment needed. Next time you're tense, stressed, having pain or nausea, or just want to experience overall calm, try one the techniques described here.

- **478 breathing - (a/k/a Relaxing Breath)** - I learned about this technique from Dr. Andrew Weil, the most well-known and leading practitioner of integrative medicine. The technique involves breathing in through the nose for 4 seconds, holding the breath for 7 seconds, and exhaling forcefully through the mouth for 8 seconds (making a whooshing sound if you can). This type of breathwork is known to help with better sleep, controlling cravings, and to reduce stress and anxiety. [Click here](#) for a video of Dr. Weil explaining and demonstrating this technique.

- **Box breathing (a/k/a Four Square Breathing)** - This is a simple technique in which you inhale to a count of four, hold the breath for a count of four, and exhale for a count of four. It's a quick relaxation technique that you can practice anywhere, and in any position (sitting, standing, laying down, driving, etc.)
- **Alternative nostril breathing** - This is my go-to technique for headaches and nausea. It is better than any pain reliever. Sitting crossed legged on the floor or upright on a chair with your feet firmly on the ground, rest your left hand in your lap with the palm facing up and the thumb and middle finger touching lightly. Tilt your chin down slightly but not enough to constrict your breath. Place the thumb of the right hand firmly against your right nostril and draw in a deep breath through your left nostril (to a count of 6 or 7). Hold the breath for a count of 6-7 and then press your ring finger firmly against your left nostril, releasing the thumb from the right nostril. Slowly release the breath through the right nostril. Inhale through the right nostril to a count of 6-7, hold for a count of 6-7, then press the right thumb against the right nostril, release the ring finger from the left nostril and slowly exhale through the left nostril. Repeat the sequence for about 15 times, alternating the side you constrict each time.
- **Victorious breath (Ujjayi Pranayama)** - Ujjayi breathing is also called Ocean Breath because when done properly, the exhale sounds like an ocean wave. I often use this breathing technique when I am exercising, especially in yoga class, and want to maintain a challenging pose or activity. Sit on the floor or a chair, with your spine straight. If you're on the floor, sit with legs crossed. If in a chair, sit with both feet firmly on the ground. Rest your hands lightly in your lap or on your knees. Inhale a slow steady breath through both nostrils until you reach your full capacity and can't inhale more. Hold your breath for about 1-2 seconds and then constrict the breath at the back of your throat and exhale slowly through both nostrils making a sound like ocean waves as you breathe through the constriction. I prefer to do this type of breathing with my eyes closed if I'm doing it for relaxation. Repeat up to 20 times or as much as needed to calm you down or get you through the challenge you're facing.

**[Click here](#) to contact me for more information or coaching on using breathwork for better health and wellness.**