



CHANGE YOUR VIBE

And Breathe... And Relax...

Many people are unaware how the way they breathe actually changes their experience both physically and mentally.

If you have the chance to observe a young kid (say 2-5 years old). You will notice that when they breathe, it's their tummy that goes in and out – not their chest. This is the normal, relaxed breathing pattern that we are all born with.

However, as we get older and life becomes busy or stressful, we've experienced traumas, or we just hold our tummy in because our vanity gets the best of us, our breathing pattern starts to change. We start to use only half of our lung capacity and breathe fast and shallow. Sometimes we'll forget to breathe out, or perhaps we notice (or other people do!) that we sigh a lot for no particular reason. All of these are signs that our system is stressed – it's kind of like we breathe backward, with our chest coming out and our tummy going in.

This has negative consequences for our body chemistry. The stressful breathing pattern gives the brain signals to produce and secrete the stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline that put our system into a state of chronic, low grade hyper-arousal. Long term, these can affect our physical health and cause such problems as heart disease, stomach or kidney problems, high blood pressure, obesity and mental health issues. Although some stress is good in life, making it exciting, long term this is not a good situation.

Consciously changing our breathing also changes the neuro-chemistry in our system, with the release of serotonin – our happy chemical.

Diaphragmatic Breathing Exercise

1. Sit in a comfy chair in a quiet and relaxed place.
2. Put one hand on your chest and one on your tummy.
3. Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose. If you are good at visualising; imagine a round balloon being blown up and notice how the air goes to the bottom first before filling up the top of the balloon.
4. Notice which hand rises as you breathe in – it should be the hand that is resting on your tummy. If you find this difficult, physically push your tummy out as you breathe in and start to get the hang of how this feels.
5. Practice, practice, practice

Make time numerous times throughout the day to practice this. It could be when you are waiting in your car for the lights to turn green, or waiting for the jug to boil, or when you are sitting on the loo. After a while, you will notice that your body returns to this natural state of breathing.