Sample Mind, Body and Spirit Article
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Take It All In: Breathe Deep (623 words)

Breathing is one of life's most basic necessities. Adults take in an average of almost 25,000 breaths each day, and that's just at rest. While it's true that most of us don't stop to think about the breathing we do each day, it's important to recognize the health benefits of doing so. Take in a breath right now. It comes so naturally, doesn't it? You may not realize that you can greatly improve the way you feel inside and out, just by consciously controlling how you breathe, for even as little as an hour each day.

When you breathe in the air around you, your lungs transfer the oxygen into your blood. This oxygen is necessary for life's building block, our cells, to live and create within us. When you breathe out, carbon dioxide and other metabolic wastes are removed from the blood and back out into the air. For those with impaired respiratory function, such as cardiac patients or asthma sufferers, the result of improper breathing is a catastrophic build-up of toxins and extremely low levels of oxygen in the blood. The good news is that even those of us with impaired respiration can benefit from intentionally controlling our breathing.

Through maximizing each of your breaths in and out, you can increase the oxygen and minimize the wastes in your blood. To do this, sit up straight and tall, allowing your lungs room to fully expand with each breath in. Relax, and breathe in deep and slow, to the count of four. Don't just "nose breathe." Look down and watch your chest rise up and out as you fill your lungs, and then hold it for the count of two. Slowly release the toxins back out to another count of four. Your goal is 6 breaths per minute. Practicing this "yoga-style" breathing just an hour a day will increase your blood oxygen levels, something some scientists believe leads to greater heart and overall health.

Even beyond the physical benefits, proper breathing can have a powerful effect on your spiritual and mental well-being. Shallow, rapid breathing often accompanies a state of stress and anxiety, even if we're not consciously aware of feeling pressured. As a defense mechanism, stress and tension cause us to "constrict," not only our breath but every part of our bodies.

Unfortunately, this constriction also greatly dampens our creativity, inspiration, mental clarity and more. If we stay in this repressed state for too long, we find ourselves feeling increasingly confused, spacey and disconnected from our center – which only makes us feel more stressed and constricted, and the vicious cycle continues indefinitely.

Proper breathing not only refreshes and energizes your body; it also connects you more deeply with your spiritual self. In fact, you may be surprised to know that the word “spirit” is derived from the Latin word, “spiritus” which means “breath”. Many cultures and spiritual traditions around the world revere controlled breathing as a crucial aspect of spiritual ascension and connection with universal forces.

You may not think that spiritual fullness has much to do with your day to day life, but consider the difference between feeling scattered and depleted, or enjoying abundant creative inspiration, joy and peace. Being connected and fulfilled spiritually makes everything in your life seem to flow more easily. When you breathe properly, mental confusion is cleared away, your intuition is awakened, and every moment is infused with a welcome sense of clarity and purpose.

So go ahead, take it all in. Breathe deeply, love deeply, live deeply.

Breath Affirmation:
I breathe in clarity and creativity. I breathe out fear and worry.
I breathe in joy and abundance. I breathe out scarcity and stress.
I embrace the flow of abundant wellness and peace within me.