

## Breathing Variations

*OP: Knees may be bent or leave legs long, whatever is most comfortable for you.*

1. Sense your head, how is it resting on the floor. Can you feel where there is tension in your facial muscles? Find a way to soften your tongue, now your lips; your eyes, cheeks, and forehead. As you let your face become softer, begin to sense your breath as it comes in and go out of the nostrils or mouth, whichever is easier for you. Where do you send your breathing... more toward your belly or more toward your chest? Observe your back on the floor, the upper ribs, the lower ribs, the bottom of your belly. Allow yourself to observe your breathing without changing or shifting it.

## REST

2. Bend your knees and think something you can recite – a fairytale, a speech, in any language. For example “Mary had a little lamb.” Just take a moment to speak it aloud to the ceiling and feel what you do with your breath. What happens to your inhale and exhale as you speak. You may find that you’re speaking on the exhalation and it goes on and on and then you take a much shorter inhalation.

Now try the opposite. Say the same thing but say it as you're inhaling. Feel how much work that is! There are people that have speech and breathing problems and that's how they have to talk. *The ability to speak has to do with the ability to regulate breath.*

## REST

3. Bend your knees, bring your feet to standing. Lightly inhale, don't exhale. Hold your breath. Play with pulling your belly in and letting the ribs expand, then pushing your belly out by flattening your chest - all while you are still holding your breath.
4. Exhale your air and pull your belly in, letting the ribs expand. As your ribs come in and down, push that pressure evenly to your belly.
5. Now *slowly* roll over and lay on your stomach. Let your arms be up around your head somewhere comfortably. (If you need to, one arm can be up by your face and the other down by your side. If you are facing L, put the L arm by your head and the R down by your side. Whichever way you're facing let that arm be up by your head.)

6. Explore pulling in the belly and letting your ribs move up and wide, and then push your belly big. Let your breathing be however it is.
7. This time as you inhale bring your belly in, and as you exhale make your belly big. You can use the whole floor to sense that.
8. Now try just the opposite. As you inhale, let your belly become big, and as you exhale let your belly come in and the ribs move out and wide.
9. This time as you inhale and your ribs expand, as you exhale, you're going to push the opposite side of your belly out. If you're facing right, the right side of lungs get larger and then you push the air into the left side of the belly. Can you sense a diagonal flow in your breathe?

## REST

10. Turn your head the other way, change over your hands. Change over which ever way you're facing, bring your hand up so that you're looking at your elbow. Let the other be by your side. Inhale into one lung and exhale into the opposite side of your belly, pushing the opposite side. If you're facing right, the right side of your chest gets larger and left side of belly gets bigger as you exhale.

## REST

11. Now bring both hands forward, put your forehand to the back of your hands, so your nose is to the floor. And now again with forehead on the floor, inhale letting your ribs become wide and full, and exhale letting your belly become big and full and your ribs come in. Is there a lengthening and rounding of the pelvis?

## REST

12. Bent Knees. Put left hand on ribs, right on the lower belly. Explore the asymmetry. Intend to inhale into your left ribs and exhale into the right side of the belly. You may find one side to be easier to imagine than the other.

Explore your head to one side and to the other side.

13. Then let it go, bring down your hands and lightly play with belly muscles and the ribs, leaving the lower back in touch with the floor as you explore sea-saw breathing.

Inhale a small amount of air, rocking belly in, ribs out and then belly out, ribs down.

See if you can do it faster now. Again it's not arching the low back, this is really a way to feel how you leave the back flat.

## REST

*Breathing is really a passive activity. You have no muscles in the lungs, they move because they are attached to the ribs and the diaphragm. As the ribs move outward, it pulls the ribs wide and that's what allows the air to come in. when we inhale, its active. When we exhale, its passive and just letting go of the activity.*

14. Come to sitting. Sit with the soles of your feet together, lean back on elbows, and again play with this see-saw movement. Push your belly out and your ribs in and let your head hang as far forward as possible. What does that feel like there? When you push your belly out, does your head go back? Or when you push your belly in, is that when your head tends to go back? Go slowly, several times.

15. Now if it's comfortable, let your head hang back and push your belly big and bring your ribs in and down, and then bring your belly in and let your ribs become wide and large and full. What happens to your spine?

REST ON BACK -- Again as you're lying there, observe the quality of your breathe. Is it the same rhythm as when we started? Can you observe your breath in more places?

16. Come to lay on right side, bend knees so they're comfortably up and you're supported. Let your head rest on your right arm lying long beneath your ear. What happens now with your back and belly and front lying on your side? What are you observing about your breathing now that part of your ribs are inhibited by the floor? The left side of you is really quite open and able to expand.

17. Bring left arm over the top of your head and pick up your head. Leave head in air for a little bit. What happens with the breath? Bring head down as you need to. But holding the head up, explore see-saw movements a few times. Is there some point where you realize the head goes back down towards the floor or to the right? Is there a point where it becomes easier to pick the head up a little higher? Make sure your hand is on top of your head, not behind head. Bring your head down. Now do the see-saw movement simply lying on your side without picking up the head.

*REST -- We're designed so that most of the big movement of breathing happens below the diaphragm and in the floating ribs (they don't attach to the sternum).*

18. Roll over on left side. Knees are bent up so you're stable. Start just by feeling your breath through your belly, your back, your nostrils. Are you

observing your breathe now in places you didn't feel before?

Bring the right hand on the top over your head. Pick up your head. Where does it become easier to breathe and where does it become harder to breathe? Take the right ear towards the right shoulder. Go back in, explore see-saw movements. You may find as the ribs come up and get bigger, your head moves toward the floor and as you pull your belly in, your head becomes a little higher. Bring the head down, simply do the sea saw movements – light, easy, quicker.

## REST ON BACK

19. And now on your back, bend your knees and come back to speaking your poem, quote, counting or whatever you tested at the beginning of the lesson. Notice the quality of inhaling and speaking this speech again. Now begin to slowly shift into a sea-saw breath... rocking see-saw movements while you're saying your little speech again. Can you differentiate speech from the movement as you are sea-sawing the ribs and the belly while speaking.

## REST

20. Just to explore this a little further, stand on your hands and knees. You want your pelvis to be high over your knees. Bring your head down to the floor

keeping your spine as long as possible, head on floor, and pelvis as high as possible, not on heels.

Now in this position, bring the belly in and let the ribs come wide and then the ribs come in and the belly come out and notice the quality of this movement. Explore bringing your belly in as you exhale and pushing it out as you inhale. Now go back to regular breathing, see if that's a little simpler. You really want your pelvis high, over the legs.

Now see if it's a little simpler to speak your words again. You may find there's a real difference in inhaling and exhaling as you speak.

Come back to being quiet and simply observe your breathing. In this position you actually reverse the passive part of breathing because the lungs are now lower than the pelvis.

## REST ON BACK

21. On your back, one last time, bend your knees. Exhaled all your air, and play with these see-saw movements. What can you do without a lot of air? *As you get more skilled with this, then you don't need to have so much air in there and you can still let the ribs and belly move.*



See if you can make the sea-saw movements smoother, lighter, less effort in the mouth, the jaw, and hands. Let your breath come back to easy, light, everyday breathing.

22. Now exhale all the air you can possibly exhale all the way down to the absolute end of your breath for as long as possible.

Don't inhale until you absolutely have to, and then feel the quality of that breath. Just do it a couple of times, let it go, stretch out again. And observe the quality of your breathing.

When you're ready, roll to your side and come to stand in your own timing, continuing to be aware of your breath.