

NADA YOGA TECHNIQUES FOR PATIENTS OF BREATHING DISORDERS

Yogacharya

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Chanting has always been an important aspect of the spiritual life in India. Chanting Mantras, performing Japa, singing Bhajans and the use of Nada Pranayamas such as the Bhramari and the Pranava are important parts of the Yogic life.

Recent studies have shown that chanting creates sound vibrations that encourage air to move back and forth between the sinus membranes and nasal passages. This air movement helps open the tiny ducts, or ostia, that connect the nose to the sinuses, allowing the sinuses to drain properly. This can help prevent infections from settling down in the sinuses and create a healthy environment therein. All the sinuses are effectively ventilated by humming and this is an important benefit as previous research has shown that poor sinus ventilation increases the risk for sinusitis. When the sinuses are well ventilated infections have no chance of settling down at all.

Recent studies have shown that humming increases nitric oxide levels fifteen fold, compared to quiet exhalations without sound. The exhalations of people with healthy sinuses tend to have high nitric oxide levels, indicating that more air is able to flow between the sinuses and the nose. The Nada Pranayamas such as the Bhramari and the Pranava are similar to the humming used in these studies. In the Bhramari Pranayama the nasal sound like a bee is used while in the Pranava Pranayama, the humming sounds of the Pranava A-U-M are used. This new light on humming and nasal ventilation can explain the scientific basis by which these Pranayamas can prevent as well as help in the management of sinusitis. This is another reason why practices like the Surya Namaskar should always be done with the chanting of the Surya Mantras and another reason why the chanting of the Mantras and scriptures should be encouraged in Yoga therapy and training.

HAKARA KRIYA: This activating practice combines the use of movement with sound to give vent to pent-up emotional and mental stress by way of an effective release. It is also a good Yoga warm up. Stand in the Samasthiti Asana with your arms by your side. Breathe in and at the same time jump with your legs apart while clapping your hands over your head. Breathe out and make the explosive sound HA while jumping back to the standing position with the feet together and hands by the side. Do this six to nine times in a vigorous manner. Hakara is the production of the HA sound which is related to the solar plexus. This plexus of nerves at the top of the abdomen is one of the centres where stress tends to accumulate. The strengthening of this area prevents the “butterflies in the stomach” feeling that occurs whenever we are stressed out. After completing the practice relax back in the Samasthiti Asana and perform deep and controlled breathing for a few minutes. Enjoy the rejuvenating feeling as the energetic circulation of fresh blood rushes through your entire body.

KUKKRIYA PRANAYAMA: Kukkriya Pranayama, the dog pant breath is an excellent cleanser and tones up the diaphragm and the abdominal organs that are in close approximation to the diaphragm. Sit in Vajrasana with the weight of your body firmly on both heels. Place your palms on the ground in front with your wrists touching your knees and the fingers pointing forward. Open your mouth wide and push your tongue out as far as possible. Breathe in and out at a rapid rate with your tongue hanging out of your mouth. After 10 or 15 rounds relax back into the Vajrasana and feel the blood flow into your abdominal area. Repeat the whole practice three more times.

BHRAMARI PRANAYAMA: Bhramari is one of the Swara Pranayamas and helps tone up the nervous system thus producing a state of extreme calmness and bliss. Sit on your heels in the Vajrasana with your spine erect. Perform Shanmuki Mudra with your thumbs closing the

external auditory canals. The first two fingers are then placed over the closed eyelids while the ring fingers regulate the flow of air through the nostrils. The little fingers are placed over the closed lips. This Mudra helps in uniting the energies of the nerves of the hands with the facial and trigeminal nerves of the face. Take in a slow and deep breath in for six counts. Then let out the breath very slowly while making a sound in the nasal passages like the high-pitched sound of a female bee. Perform nine rounds of this practice and then release your hands back to your thighs and enjoy a few minutes of deep contemplation while sitting in the Vajrasana.

BRAHMA MUDRA: Brahma Mudra is a gesture of the head and neck and is an excellent practice for one and all. Take up any comfortable sitting position such as Vajrasana with your spine as erect as possible. Rest your hands on your lap while performing the Yoga Mudra. Close your eyes and concentrate on this valuable practice that combines the use of physical movement synchronized with deep breathing and the usage of Nada or vibrational sounds involving utterance of the Bija sounds of AAA, UUU, EEE and MMM. Brahma Mudra is an excellent practice to prevent as well as relieve disorders of the head, neck and upper shoulder areas. It is important to concentrate on the area to be relieved, repaired, or rejuvenated while sounding the Bija Mantras.

PRANAVA PRANAYAMA AND DHYANA: This practice is a one pointed concentration on the form and Nada or sound of the sacred Pranava AUM, known as the Mantra of all Mantras. This can be done from any of the sitting postures but make sure that your back is erect. It is best to do this after performing a few rounds of conscious deep breathing so that the mind is in a calm state. Pranava Dhyana harmonizes the body, emotions and mind. It is an important part of the Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga tradition as taught by Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri. In this practice emphasis is first placed on making the sounds AAA, UUU and MMM separately and then in combination. This is followed by the performance of the practice mentally without the audible sound. A performance of three to nine rounds of the Pranava Dharana when done daily helps to relax the Body-Emotion-Mind complex and provides complete healing through the production of healing vibrations at all levels of our existence. This is the cornerstone of Yogic breath therapy and can produce health and wellbeing for all. When the concentrative aspect of the practice is taken to its peak, a state of mediation or Pranava Dhyana can ensue.

SUGGESTED READING:

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4. Pranava Pranayama with Dr Ananda.www.youtube.com/watch?v=kaJ1IUq7f3k
5. Yoga for Neck Pain. www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTN8cttLjIE
6. Yoga for breathing disorders (A DVD by Dr Ananda Balayogi). Super Audio, Chennai