

BREATHING FOR LIFE

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Basically speaking, our bodies are sustained by air, water, and food. This shows the degrees of importance for these three essential elements: you can live without food for about 30 days, water for about 3 days, and about 3 minutes without air. We see these three elements established in the book of Genesis: food (Genesis 2:5), water (Genesis 2:6) and air (breath) (Genesis 2:7). Which would you say is the most important? The answer, of course, is air. Interestingly, most of us are not even conscious of this vital element. As a result, it is virtually neglected. The fact that we simply take it for granted is probably the reason it is not often talked about, at least not as much as we do about food or water. Yet, the breath of life is what makes you a living soul; and it is the definitive measure of your longevity.

Let's cut to the chase. This is a RBD, or a Really Big Deal, or maybe a RRBD, or a RRRBD! *This is your breath life.* It should be the first issue of importance in your body and healthy lifestyle. I'm into good diet, exercise, and rest; but come on—our breathing should be the basis of our health regimen.

I have some great news for you! This teaching, when applied, will literally improve your breathing and increase your lung capacity. And it's free! There is nothing to buy and there are no gimmicks at the end. It is simply a series of exercises that will train you to breathe properly and improve your health. There is proof also that this helps with weight control as well.¹ With increased breath comes increased oxygen, and oxygen is one of the three necessary elements of fire or combustion (fuel, heat, and oxygen). Lack of oxygen retards combustion, but an abundance of it will cause your fuel to burn more completely, with no residue of fat and poisons. Improper combustion at the cellular level leaves a residue of fat.

I told you that this is a really big deal. Someone should send this to Michelle Obama since she is on a campaign against obesity. Give me a call, Michelle, and I'll be glad to teach you these exercises and then teach them to every school teacher in America so they can instruct their students. We can burn some fat.

Relax, this is not yoga. However, it may give you similar health benefits as yoga breath training, except you don't have to take the demons that can come with that package deal. Let's face it, yoga works or people wouldn't do it. It is a good breathing technique, probably only second to this one. In this article, I'm going to teach you some exercises and then teach you how to breathe properly *all* the time.

Personally, I have had my body restored to me on the other side of bronchitis and asthma through these exercises. (The developer of this program had over 200 boxes full of testimonies documenting that his methods helped emphysema, asthma, and bronchitis sufferers.)² Plus, these exercises can be done sitting at your desk or anytime you feel fatigued. Did you know that the number one reason for fatigue is lack of oxygen to the brain? I will show you an exercise that I believe is five times better than a 5-hour energy drink. It will increase your air flow and shoot

oxygen directly to your brain—and it's absolutely free! (That is, at least until the government learns how to tax air.)

The Exercises

I learned these lessons from a Limey, a Brit, and an Englishman named William P. Knowles from his book *New Life Through Breathing*. This book chronicles his life story, telling how he contracted and was almost consumed with emphysema at the age of 24. A friend showed him the basics of breathing exercises, which he later developed into a regimen and taught to others. He became a hero to asthma sufferers in England, as well as in the USA, during the early and mid 1900s. The testimonies in his book defy description. He discovered that you could strengthen your breathing apparatus with exercise, just the same as you would your biceps or triceps. He developed six exercises to do in a five-week program that changed people's lives forever. It has changed mine and can change yours forever too.

Bill Knowles taught these principles and exercises to the British Armed forces during WWII and won national acclaim for helping to increase the stamina and immediate energy of British soldiers, especially the RAF (Royal Air Force). He taught their special forces how to cleanse their bodies and increase their endurance, especially their oxygen levels that are necessary for flying at high altitudes.

These exercises are not hard to understand or do. The progression of them will build your endurance; although you should be cautious not to overexert yourself, especially if you have ever had heart issues.

I like to say that “understanding is what is under your standing.” Therefore, before going straight to the exercises, I would like to give a brief anatomy lesson on the human breathing apparatus. If we can grasp the whole concept of what we are trying to do, we will have the conviction and determination that is necessary to faithfully practice all the exercises and complete the whole five-week program.

Our lungs are like bladders that we want to fill with air. They are inflated mostly by the downward flexing of the diaphragm but also by the flexing of the chest muscles, especially the ones between your ribs called the intercostal muscles. Most of us never stopped to consider that all of these muscles can be strengthened, but they can. However, the major muscle utilized in the respiration process is the diaphragm.

Of all the people I have ever talked to about strengthening these muscles, opera singers seem to be the most informed. They already understand the power of the diaphragm. These exercises (especially the exhalation part) will strengthen the diaphragm. They will also strengthen the intercostals—just as bench pressing builds the chest muscles or sit-ups strengthen the abdomen. The bottom line is that this breathing regimen will strengthen your *whole* breathing apparatus.

Basically, inhalation is air going in; exhalation is air going out. These exercises increase your intake (your ability to inhale) and out-go (your ability to exhale). They are great for athletes but

are also effective for those who are not since it is not necessary to physically exert ourselves to do them. As I already mentioned, we can do these—in our living rooms or offices.

Although these exercises are great for non-smokers, they are absolutely mandatory for smokers if they want to prolong their lives. These exercises can help the smoker to quit by ridding the tars out of the lungs, thus removing some of the addictive elements from the system. The oxygen levels are replenished as carbon *monoxide* is exhaled along with carbon *dioxide*. Smokers need all the help they can get.

Lying at the root of all these exercises is the increased expulsion of air. Carbon dioxide is a by-product of combustion in your cells and will be exhaled as residue. Insufficient exhalation is one of the major causes of emphysema because of the residual toxins of combustion that typically settle out in the bottom of your lungs.

Again, the salient point of understanding is that the diaphragm and intercostal muscles can be strengthened, especially during the exhale part of the exercises. During exhalation, poisons are expelled at the same time that you are flexing and strengthening these muscles. What a deal!

Your lungs are shaped like triangles that lie on either side of your chest. The surface area of air sacs (alveoli) inside the lungs is about half the size of a tennis court if stretched out.³ Since these expel toxins after respiration, they act as the largest elimination organ in the body. The bottom of the triangle of the lungs is the largest surface area and is where most respiration should occur. Not accessing these air sacs in the lower portion of your lungs is a major cause of accumulated poisons, and therefore, of sickness and disease.

Improper posture hinders us from utilizing the fullness of our lungs. Sitting at a desk with your shoulders slouched, rather than being held upright and back, allows only the top portion of the lungs to be oxygenated, while the lower section is cut off because the diaphragm is cramped and cannot flex. The failure to breathe deeply is a major cause of lung disease and guess what else? Obesity. Obesity is largely due to having improper fuel (food) to burn and insufficient oxygen for proper combustion.⁴ (Since this will help with obesity, now we need to call Oprah Winfrey too!)

As you go through the exercises, one thing remains constant: **proper posture is demanded for maximum inhalation and exhalation.** Sit in an upright chair with your back as straight as possible and your feet flat on the floor, thighs level between the knees and hips. Pull your shoulders back and try to pinch the shoulder blades together. Hold that position throughout all the exercises. This posture will expose the most air sacs to the oxygen. (The best way to improve your posture is to be aware of it throughout the day, not just during your exercise time.)

The order that these exercises appear in is significant, which is why they will be numbered. Following their descriptions, you will find William Knowles' five-week training program, after which I will show you some breathing techniques to employ all the time throughout your day.

As you go through these exercises, keep this in mind: once is good, twice is better, and thrice is best. Breathe through the nose preferably because the nose is closest to the brain, and there is an

appreciable amount of oxygenation for the brain that comes through the sinus cavities. Breathing in through the mouth is good, but the nose is better.

Relax and enjoy the feeling of being oxygenated and detoxified. Hyperventilating is taking a large amount of oxygen into your body in a short period of time. This might happen to you during these exercises. (That's why I said to sit down in a chair.☺) Don't worry. If you get light-headed, stop the exercise and relax. Realize that your whole body is tingling because of the oxygen that is going to each cell. When the light headedness ceases, slowly continue the exercise. You will build your stamina and tolerance as you progress in the program.

1. The Cleansing Breath

Sit erect and inhale gently but deeply, allowing the ribcage to expand outward, and then lifting the ribs for more expansion. Hold the breath for a few seconds to allow for gas exchange and then begin exhaling in short puffs. Continue to blow out gently by puffing until all the air is gone, then blow out a little more, and then a little bit more and then a little more. Then hold your breath for a few seconds and finally inhale slowly and fill up again.

This will blow the carbon dioxide out of your blood and oxygenate your whole body, especially your brain. Do this immediately when arising from sleep. Lying horizontal keeps the diaphragm from flexing fully, so when you wake up in this morning, you typically have an abundance of carbon dioxide built up within your blood. Blowing out continually expels it along with other bad stuff (like your morning breath) and brings in fresh oxygen. Out goes the bad, and in comes the good. Lack of oxygen and abundance of CO₂ is what causes morning grogginess. Similarly, lack of oxygen to the brain is manifested in fatigue throughout the day. When you first wake up in the morning, do this exercise three times and you will feel the grogginess leave.

This exercise is also good for daytime fatigue, and it releases stress as you exhale. It is great for the work place and for mothers with children.

2. The Slow, Deep Breath

Remember to sit up straight and pull your shoulders backward, exposing as many alveoli (air sacs) as possible.

Start with the cleansing breath (exercise 1). Then begin breathing in, preferably through the nose. Breathe in for a full count of 4 seconds; hold your breath for a second and then exhale for 4 seconds. Pause for a second and then slowly, but completely, inhale for 5 seconds. Hold it again for one second and then exhale for 5 seconds. Repeat this all the way to the count of 7 seconds. Then walk it back down by doing 6, 5, and 4 counts.

This should be done rhythmically, trying not to get as much air in 4 seconds as you will in 7 seconds. This way, you will gradually expand your lung capacity.

3. The Seven-Second Breath

Start with the cleansing breath (exercise 1) and the slow, deep breath (exercise 2).

After that, breathe in for 7 seconds; hold for one second, and then breathe out for 7 seconds. Breathe in again for 7 seconds; hold for one second, and breathe out for 7 seconds. Repeat this seven-second breath sequence 10 more times (for a total of 12 repetitions).

Both exercises 2 and 3 increase your lung capacity by stretching the intercostal muscles between your ribs. This allows for greater expansion of the lungs, exposing all the air sacs to oxygen. These exercises are also excellent for relieving fatigue.

4. The Exhalation Breath

This will probably be the first challenging exercise. Just remember that these are exercises and, as the saying goes, “no pain, no gain.” Although you may experience discomfort, do not overextend yourself, especially if you have a respiratory or cardiovascular condition. Be wise and grow into this one. It focuses on strengthening the exhalation process and is a major cleansing and detoxifying exercise.

This time, start with the cleansing breath (exercise 1) and then the seven-second breath (exercise 3) before beginning this exhalation breath (exercise 4):

Sit erect and breathe in fully for 4 seconds. Hold your breath for a second to allow for gas exchange, and then exhale for 12 seconds. Wait one second and then inhale slowly and deeply for 5 seconds, then exhale slowly for 15 seconds. Wait a second then inhale for 6 seconds, and then out for 18 (the multiple is three); then in for 7 and out for 21. Reverse the process going backwards to 6, then 5, and 4.

Count rhythmically, or better yet, sit still in front of a clock with a second hand. You will quickly learn to get as much oxygen in as you can because a whole lot of air is getting ready to go out. You will be amazed at the amount of air you have left in your lungs even when you think they are empty. In this exercise, *exhaling is the goal*.

This is deep cleansing. When I first began doing these, I found myself coughing a lot in the 6- and 7-second sections. Do enough to be comfortable with it. Enjoy the expulsion and maybe a little coughing.

If you get sputum out of your lungs from coughing, that is okay. Spit it out and continue. Sputum is the clear kind of foaming stuff. If you notice that it is yellow, it could indicate

an infection. Smokers hack up lots of stuff that is thick and has color to it, but the yellow stuff is dead white blood cells that are fighting some kind of infection. If the yellow color continues to show up in this exercise, you should consult your health professional. The exhalation breath cleanses all the areas and is great for overcoming respiratory infections. The coughing is somewhat expected—just don't overdo it.

5. The Inhalation Breath

The inhalation breath (exercise 5) should only be learned *after* you have successfully mastered and practiced the exhalation breath series of exercises 1, 3, and 4. In William Knowles' book, he recommends this inhalation exercise in the fourth week of the program. It takes will and endurance, so build up to it and grow into it.

Start with the cleansing breath (exercise 1) and then follow it with the seven-second breath (exercise 3).

As you sit in an erect position with shoulders held backwards, breathe deeply, expanding the lungs. Then exhale (like doing the cleansing breath in exercise 1) with short puffs, continuing until you have expelled a little more, and a little more, and a little more. Whistle the last breath out and hold it to the count of 10 seconds. Then gently inhale a full breath again and hold at the end for 15 seconds. Inhale once more and hold for 20 seconds. I admire people who can do this, especially in reps of 3.

Focus on inhaling slowly instead of gasping for air at the end of each count. This strengthens the intercostals between the ribs and increases your inhalation capacity.

This exercise builds endurance as well as your willpower over your body. However, do not force it. Remember that it is a week 4 exercise and is not for the faint of heart or breath.

A benefit of all these exercises is the flexing of the diaphragm, which is just on top of all your digestive organs. William Knowles realized that when the diaphragm is flexed, it aides digestion, often relieving constipation and indigestion.⁵ (This is probably because the flexing stimulates the digestive organs to work.) What a great way to end a meal—breathing in the air and life that God provides and relaxing while the oxygen burns the fuel.

6. The Holding-in Breath

This is an exercise that increases your breathing capacity and endurance.

Start with the cleansing breath (exercise 1) and then follow it with the seven-second breath (exercise 3).

After that, breathe in for 15 seconds and hold your breath for 20 seconds. Exhale slowly, then inhale for 15 seconds and hold your breath for 25 seconds. Inhale for 15 seconds again, and then hold your breath for 30 seconds.

This is a week 5 exercise, so you may need to build up your capacity day by day in order to successfully complete the whole exercise. As your breathing capacity improves, you may consider extending the time of holding your breath to beyond the 30 seconds. Please note, however, that we are not interested in breaking any world records on breath holding; rather, we are striving to strengthen our breathing apparatus.

The Five-Week Program

This five-week program (summarized in the chart below) was designed by Bill Knowles and is found on page 112 of his book.

THE FIVE-WEEK PROGRAM	
WEEK	BREATHING EXERCISES (1-6)
First week	Cleansing (1) and Slow, Deep (2)
Second week	Cleansing (1); Slow, Deep (2), and Seven-second (3)
Third week	Cleansing (1), Seven-second (3), and Exhalation (4)
Fourth week	Cleansing (1), Seven-second (3), and Inhalation (5)
Fifth week	Cleansing (1), Seven-second (3), and Holding-in (6)

We are all indebted to Bill Knowles for his contribution to respiratory exercises. These exercises give the best results if done three times a day. Once is better than nothing and twice is nice. You will increase your health and stamina by doing these.

Breathing Correctly

I have good news for you. This is really simple and does not take six exercises to learn. It is one lesson and only one: **“Breathe through your toes, not your nose.”** When you imagine the air coming in through your toes and not your nose, picture the lower portion of the lungs filling first.

To breathe correctly you must fill up the lower portion of your lungs. The lower part is where the largest surface area of alveoli is. Shallow breathing is incorrect breathing because it uses only the top part of the lungs, preventing air from fully reaching the lower part. *Correct breathing fills the whole lungs—top and bottom.*

The phrase, “breathe through your toes, not your nose,” is a simple reminder to breathe correctly and fill the lower portion of your lungs by using your diaphragm. This produces a constant, high level of oxygen in your blood, which will seriously help to burn your food and turn it into energy instead of fat.

When you breathe out, if you imagine pushing the air back out through your toes, it will help you to fully exhale. I am convinced that correct breathing is a major weapon in helping the fight against obesity.

Learning to breathe correctly has another benefit too. If you breathe this way habitually, it will decrease your pulse count (heart rate per minute) because the heart will be getting more oxygen out of each breath.

Employing the Knowles breathing exercises faithfully will strengthen and condition your respiratory system. Consistent, correct breathing will not only increase the quality of health in your body but will ultimately benefit your soul as well.

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Notes

1. The following quotes are taken from of a multitude of e-articles and websites listed as a result of conducting a simple Google search on the Internet for “breathing exercises and weight loss”:

(a) Jill Johnson, creator of the Oxycise weight loss program, conducted “a multi-year study on how the body actually loses weight. Then one day, like Archimedes of old, it happened. In a physiology textbook there it was: fat oxidizes into carbon dioxide. Wait a second, I read that line again: fat oxidizes into carbon dioxide. No way! So you’re telling me that all I have to do is breathe to lose weight. I can’t believe no one has ever told me this before. Fat leaves my body through breathing??” Quote taken from <http://www.oxycise.com>, accessed July 18, 2011.

(b) Johnnie D Jackow Sr., nationally known fitness expert and author, writes in an online article, “Breathing Exercise, Deep Breathing Exercises, Relaxation,” “Think about it . . . Oxygen is fuel for your body as is food. There are no calories in oxygen. You can breathe in all you want for as long as you want and still no calories! Not only that, but the extra oxygen you take in will cause the chemical reactions in your body to take place much faster, thus, you burn more calories than you take in. This in turn speeds up your metabolism and makes you burn more fat.” Quote taken from http://www.tbfinc.com/breathing_exercise.htm, accessed on July 18, 2011.

2. William P. Knowles, *New Life Through Breathing* (London, England: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1966) 118.

3. Robert H. Notter, *Lung Surfactants: Basic Science and Clinical Applications* (New York, NY: Marcel Dekker, 2000) 120. Retrieved from <http://books.google.com> on July 18, 2011.

4. “Since Oxygen is the main Fuel required to Oxidize your carbohydrates, sugars, and proteins into energy, a lack of oxygen will promote an inadequate Oxidation process (poor burning of foods), which will result in a lower percentage of your foods being converted into energy and high percentage of your foods turning into fat.” Quoted from the Technical Information webpage at <http://www.flo2w.com/technical-information.html>, accessed July 11, 2011.

5. William P. Knowles, *New Life Through Breathing* (London, England: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1966) 78–79.

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