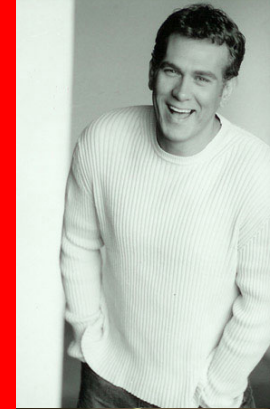


## Clear Mind for Better Living

In mind/body wellness, practitioners know that the quickest and most powerful way to clear the mind is to focus on the breath. The breath has been likened to a bridge that joins the mind with the body. When we become stressed, overwhelmed or angry, our breath patterns become shallow and turbulent. When we are relaxed and at ease, we automatically take longer, deeper breaths. This month's mind/body wellness exercise uses the breath to develop clarity and peace of mind. This type of breathing is known to Yoga students as Ujaii breath, or the breath of victory.

- 1) Begin by lying or sitting upright in a comfortable and relaxed position. Close your eyes and sense the parts of your body that are touching the ground. Take a few moments to consciously release any thoughts about the past or the future.
- 2) Bring your awareness to your breathing pattern. You may notice that some breaths are shallow, some are longer...don't worry, this is natural. Just take a few moment to become the observer of your breath.
- 3) Begin to use your entire lung capacity as you breathe, filling the lower abdomen, middle chest and upper chest with the breath.
- 4) Notice which part of the breath-the inhale or exhale-is shorter (you can count them in seconds in your mind). Then, shorten the longer part so that the inhales and exhales are now equal in length.
- 5) Gently constrict the back of your throat to make a "Haaaahhhh" sound with the inhale and exhale. You can practice this with your lips parted and then try to close your mouth. The sound is like an ocean waves, or water running through old pipes. Stay here and listen.
- 6) Next, imagine an ocean wave on the inhale washing into shore, and then as it receded with your exhale, feel as if the debris in your mind, much like on a beach, is being washed out to sea.
- 7) Stay here and enjoy for 5, 10, or 15 minutes. The longer you practice, the clearer the mind will become. The beauty of this exercise is that it can be done everyday, in many locations even while sitting in traffic (if you don't close your eyes of course).

The peace and clarity that you feel after practicing this conscious breathing is well worth the time invested. Enjoy!



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