

**...A courtesy practice written by Ginger Garner MPT, ATC...an imprint of Elemental Renewal & Living Well, Inc.**

**What's in it (breathing) for me?**

- Breathing has been supported by research to improve mood, energy levels, manage depression and depressive symptoms, & facilitate positive thinking.
- When combined with meditation, which is how I teach breathing, researchers at Harvard, Yale, & MIT report increased cortical thickness. (Lazar et al 2005; Kjellgren et al 2007; Kim & Kim 2005)
- Combat aging with simple breathing and mindful meditation. The prefrontal section of the brain tends to shrink with age, and Lazar et al's research from Harvard, Yale, and MIT found that over time, meditation caused the areas of the brain which process sensations, allow us to process information and emotions, to actually improve.

**Three (or Four) Part Breath**

**Intention**

1. Introspection and breath awareness
2. Alveolar ventilation – improving respiration quality and quantity of oxygen your body gets
3. Reduce “fight, flight, or freeze” reactions
4. Thorough inhalation/vital capacity increase
5. Metering of breath to calm nervous system
6. Elongation of breath to increase the time your body has with oxygen
7. Equalization of inhalation to exhalation to calm the self

**Starting position** – any posture

**Action**

1. Sit comfortably
2. Exhale completely
3. Inhale through the nostrils, as if your lungs were a glass of water and you were filling them with air.
4. Exhale through the nostrils, as if you were lungs were a glass of water and you were pouring out the air.

**Three part**

1. Inhale and on this breath take 2-3 counts of inhale into the lower abdomen and lumbar spine.
2. Continue the inhale and take 2-3 counts of inhale into the rib cage.
3. Continue the inhale and take the remaining 2-3 counts of the breath into the upper lobes of the lungs under the clavicles. Try to do this without using secondary muscles of respiration in the neck, such as the scalenes or sternocleidomastoid, for example.
4. Exhale in the exact reverse order. Empty the glass of the lungs from the top – exhale from the upper lobes of the lungs for 2-3 counts, followed by the middle lungs or rib cage and abdomen for 2-3 counts, followed by the lower lobes of the lungs in the lumbar spine for 2-3 counts.
5. Repeat for at least 3-5 breaths and then return to a normal full breath and notice any changes.

**Four part**

1. Inhale and take 2-3 counts of inhale into the lower pelvis.
2. The next 2-3 inhale counts go into the abdomen.
3. The next 2-3 counts go into the rib cage and clavicles/upper lung lobes.
4. The remaining 2-3 counts overflow into the upper lobes of the lungs and the skull, behind the eyes, and crown of the head.
5. Reverse the breath by exhaling out of the skull, then clavicles, then rib cage, then abdomen, then pelvis.

**Tips**

1. If you have a tough time with this breath, imagine the breath moving into the parts of the lungs. We cannot physically send the breath into only certain portions of the lungs, but we can increase the depth of the breath, which will send air to lower portions of the lungs.

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2. Do not hyperventilate here. Begin with only a three part breath. If you are a beginner, you may only choose 1 count in for each three parts of the body, for a total of a 3 count inhale and a 3 count exhale.
3. Experienced breathers – move to a four part breath, taking up to a 4 count inhale at each part of the body, which would create a 16 second/count inhale and a 16 count/second exhale.
4. Make the breath smooth and seamless.
5. You do not have to differentiate between the levels of the breath in the body by chopping up the breath. Make the breath one long smooth breath.

**WARNING: No breath holding at ALL for anyone, but especially those with high blood pressure, pregnancy, cardiovascular or cerebrovascular disease (history of heart disease or stroke), or if you suffer from anxiety or panic attacks.**