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MINDFULNESS-BASED POST-OPERATIVE CHRONIC SHOULDER PAIN MANAGEMENT

MODULE 1: BREATH WORK



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We will learn to breathe mindfully by observing the innate qualities of in-breath and out-breath and what it does to your body and mind. Then we will learn to control and adjust our breath patterns to be fully with ourselves and awake moment by moment.

You will need a room which is quiet, softly lightened, warm and undisturbed. Other than the device you use for this programme such as a mp3 player or your mobile phone, turn off all other electronics if possible. You want to make sure that the time of the day that you set for your practice is adequate so that you can be fully WITH yourself and BE yourself. In the initial phases of breath work, mindfulness meditation and cognitive training, you do not have to spend long time but rather set aside a time daily for it.

Now, find a position that you feel comfortable and relaxing. A well-supported posture allows you to be struggle and fidget free. Perhaps also close your eyes to turn your senses inward to look closely into what is going on in your mind and body. This sets the tone for your breathing exercises.

Now breathe....

Bring attention fully to your in-breath and out-breath without the intension to change it. Be curious of their natural tendencies. Just observe and notice its coming and going.

Start to feel the breath at the tip of the nose, at both left and right nostrils, the lips, or at the back of the throat, down to the chest or right down in the belly, and down below the navel centre.

Observe the way the belly rises, the abdomen wall stretches or expands on the in-breath; and falls away and recedes on the out-breath. On every exhale, simply allow your body to let go a little more, let your entire musculature be loose. You may notice your body becomes a little heavier into the floor, being fully supported by gravity without gripping.

Putting both in-breath and out-breath together, you are aware of each distinctive, vivid movement. Each cycle is unique and profound, that you can make use to the breaths as a steering wheel to bring you back on track of the present moment. Every time you find your mind is being distracted by thinking, planning, analyzing, fantasizing, dreaming, and what have you, you return to the breaths.

Adopt this technique whenever you wander off from time to time. As many times as you have to. Simply escort your mind back to your breathing and beginning again just like the first time.





Diaphragmatic breathing

It sets the foundation for all other breathing and mindfulness exercises that align your intention, awareness and focus. This is the very FIRST step.

Firstly, place one hand on your stomach and one on your ribcage or chest. Inhale deeply through the nose, letting the abdomen rise and the ribcage expand sideways. Feel your hands rise. Then exhale deeply through the nose, letting the abdomen soften and ribcage sink. Feel your hands descend. Repeat the cycle for at least 5 minutes up to 10 minutes.

Be fully awake and aware of what is going on in your mind and body. What thoughts are you having right now? Any feelings that come with them? What are the sensations of your body? You are not trying to change anything, but totally opening to what is already here and what might come and go. If at any time you notice that your mind starts to wander off, simply acknowledging where it went and gently escorting it back to the present moment and attend to your breath qualities again, such as its length, rhythm, depth, etc.

Equal nostril breathing

It intends to create an equal ratio of INHALATION and EXHALATION through natural flow of your breaths.

1. Allow yourself to be fully relax
2. Inhale through the nose to a count of 3, then exhale to a count of 3.
3. We gradually increase the counts to 8. Let's begin.
4. Try to keep your breathing natural, that the pace is even and smooth, and most importantly, you do not hold your breath.
5. Repeat for 8-10 rounds

Two-part 1:2 (2:1) breathing

It intends to deepen your focus on the moment by regulating the duration of your breaths. You will double the length of either the inhalation or the exhalation.

1. Allow yourself to be fully relax
2. Inhale through the nose to a count of 3, then exhale on 6.
3. Here we intend to double the length of the exhalation.
4. Repeat 8 to 10 times





5. The purpose of doubling the exhalation is to help release pressure, stress and any anxious emotions by switching on your parasympathetic nervous system
6. Now we reverse the pattern. Inhale through the nose to a count of 6, then exhale on 3.
7. Longer INHALATION can brighten your senses by activating your sympathetic nervous system to fight against fatigue, lethargy and low moods.
8. Repeat 8 to 10 times
9. You can experience a different count ration such as 4:8, 5:10
10. Make sure that you give yourself the time to experience both patterns

Alternative nostril breathing

It has powerful positive impacts to your mind. It is often used to settle a busy mind, flickering emotions, racing thoughts, and cure insomnia. The principle is to re-balance your brain hemispheres by regulating the airflow through your nostrils.

1. You will be using your right thumb to close the right nostril and middle or ring finger to close the left nostril while you are only breathing only through one nostril. Your left arm can relax on your lap throughout.
2. Remain sitting tall and your spine being upright. Feeling ease and soft in your musculature including your muscles and joints.
3. Now exhale fully, expelling out all the air in your system,
4. Raise your right hand slowly, close the left nostril with your middle or ring finger and INHALE through the right nostril to a count of 3
5. Close your right nostril with your right thumb and hold your breath for 3-2-1
6. Then open your left nostril and EXHALE through the left nostril for another 3 counts.
7. Then INHALE on the left side for 3, pause again for 3, and then release right nostril and EXHALE on the right side for 3 counts. This is one complete cycle (meaning you start the inhalation and finish the exhalation both on the right side)
8. Repeat 3-5 cycles at first, then try to extend to 10 cycles
9. It is important that you do not rush to complete all cycles. Take your time to experience each of them. It is about doing less but feeling more. Try to align the lengths of inhale, pause and exhale throughout. If holding your breaths seem to difficult, you can practice without it first. Then you add on the pause in between the inhale and exhale as you refine your practice and feel more at ease when holding your breath.





Cooling breaths

It is one of the mainstream breathing techniques in yoga therapy. When the body is under stress or agitated because of that, cool air entering into the body can create soothing sensations like summer breeze.

The first type of cooling breath is called “*Sitkari*”

1. Sitting and lying comfortably, take a deep breath in and out of your system.
2. Bring your top and bottom teeth together with your lips open
3. INHALE slowly through the space between the upper and lower palate of the mouth cavity. Bring your attention to the gentle sizzling sound of the breath
4. Then close your lips and hold the breath for a few counts for about 2-4 counts
5. EXHALE slowly and calmly through your mouth. This is a complete cycle
6. Repeat 5-10 cycles.
7. Embrace the cooling breeze in your system. And you are light, restful and free

The second type of cooling breath is called “*Sitali*”

1. Resume proper breathing posture as before. Take a deep breath diaphragmatically.
2. Curl the sides of the tongue inward by forming an oval shape with your lips, and slightly stick it out of your mouth.
3. INHALE through the tongue as though you were sucking through a straw. Pay your attention to the cooling sensation of the breath into your system
4. Then close your lips and hold the breath for a few counts for about 2-4 counts
5. EXHALE slowly through the nose, keeping your jaws relax as much as possible. This is a complete cycle
6. Repeat 5-10 cycles.

If you are not feeling comfortable when holding the breath before you exhale, you can first practice without holding the breaths. Once you begin to feel more at ease, you can resume all steps as I instruct you here.

If you cannot curl your tongue, it is ok to practice the first type only, and extend this exercise longer up to 10-minute. Because this type of breathing would reduce your body temperature, it is important that you keep yourself warm or you are settled in a warm place.

