



## **HERIZEN™ Yoga for Women**

### **PRANAYAMA FOR HEALING**

#### ***The Healing Breath***

#### ***Introduction***

The knowledge of Ayurveda and Yoga was almost lost. When the British came into India there were 108 Ayurvedic colleges and when they left there were less than 10 in all of India. The knowledge of Ayurveda was systematically suppressed and much of the true teaching was lost to the world. We live in a blessed time when the knowledge of Ayurveda and Yoga is being revived and rediscovered. This knowledge is coming from families in India who held it secret and from individuals who are “remembering” or cognizing the knowledge.

One such individual is Elizabeth Haich. In her autobiography, this enlightened German Yoga teacher describes how she became aware of her past life in Egypt where she underwent training to become a High Priestess. Much of her current lifetime as Yoga teacher she remembered as a practice she had done in Egypt. Below is an excerpt of her book that describes how the breath can be used in healing. It is from her description of her training in Egypt:

*"Every morning at sunrise we have to assemble in the garden. We begin with physical exercises. The exercises involve strong concentration. We assume various body postures and, WHILE DOING BREATHING EXERCISES, MUST GUIDE OUR CONSCIOUSNESS INTO DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE BODY. Through long and patient practice in this way WE CAN MAKE THE ENTIRE BODY COMPLETELY CONSCIOUS, move at will, control and guide the smallest parts of the body AND ALL INTERNAL ORGANS. Patiently and persistently we thus develop the body into an excellent instrument."*

*-- Initiation by Elizabeth Haich*

## ***The Healing Breath***

### ***The Physical Mechanics***

#### **The Valsalva Maneuver**

It is well known that increasing the pressure in the thorax creates an immediate response by the heart and the autonomic nervous system. When the blood leaves the heart as a pulse wave in the aorta, it is under high pressure, around 120mm Hg usually. When it returns to the heart it is usually around just 10mm Hg. When we increase pressure in the thorax as when we bear down like when having a bowel movement, this causes the return of blood to the heart to slow. When we do this, the heart senses that it is not full and the autonomic nervous system sends out a stimulus to the parasympathetic nervous system to slow down the heart and wait a bit before the next heartbeat. Cardiologists use this “Valsalva Maneuver” to assess the heart’s response and to hear more clearly the closing of the valves of the heart.

When we do the ***Healing Breath***, we are stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system. This is the opposite of the sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for the “fight or flight” response. The parasympathetic nervous system creates a relaxation response.

#### **The Mechanical Vibration of the Body**

In addition, there is another mechanical aspect to the healing breath, important for both healing and for the development of consciousness. Normally, the pulse wave from the ejection of blood into the aorta shakes the entire body. When that wave hits the bifurcation of the aorta where it splits into the two blood vessels that go down each leg, the pulse wave slamming against the split creates a shock wave that echoes back to the heart. Normally this shock wave is out of sync with the pulse wave coming out of the heart from the next beat. But when we slow the heart with the healing breath or during deep meditation, the slight pause for the next heartbeat allows the two waves to come into perfect sync – at 7 cycles per second. This just happens to be the frequency at which the earth’s magnetic field oscillates. In this manner, we are able to entrain ourselves with the earth’s magnetic vibration.

## ***The Healing Breath***

### ***The Subtle Energetics***

In order to pull healing energy into the body from the higher energies that surround us, we must ground these energies into the physical vehicle. This is done by pulling the *prana* (breath) down the channel of the spine known as the *shushumna*. This happens spontaneously on the inhale of the ***Healing Breath***. In order to ground the energy from the higher vibration into the physical we must pull it down into the first three chakras. These are the energy centers most connected with healing the physical body.

In particular, the first and second chakras are important. We breathe on the exhale from the center of the second chakra (the area just below the belly button – the abdominal area) with support coming from the first (further down base of spine). This is important for healing because it is where our physical power resides – in our base (1<sup>st</sup> chakra - survival) and in our feeling sense (2<sup>nd</sup> chakra - emotions). And as many of the healing issues are intimately intertwined with emotional issues, the flow from the 2<sup>nd</sup> chakra becomes even more important.

Also, it is important to note that the 2<sup>nd</sup> chakra relates to the water element and the ability to flow energy in the body. As we practice the ***Healing Breath***, we will often notice an increase in heat in the abdomen and then an ability to direct this warmth and energy to specific areas, as we imagine the exhale of breath traveling from the abdomen to a specific part of the body (such as a painful elbow). By directing the ***Healing Breath*** from the abdomen to specific areas of the body, we bring more consciousness and awareness to that part of the body, thereby creating healing.

## ***The Healing Breath***

### ***The Practice***

1. Put your right hand on the abdomen 2 finger-widths below the navel.
2. As you inhale slowly, rather than raising the chest, start with expanding the abdomen, pushing the abdomen against your hand, then filling the chest.
3. Hold the breath for a pause.
4. Exhale very slowly, with your throat almost completely closed (as if making a noise like Darth-Vader in movie Star Wars, *pushing your abdomen against your hand*. (This last point is counter-intuitive as your initial tendency will be to pull the abdomen in, rather than pushing it out against your hand. You should feel a slight pressure in your chest and abdomen as you exhale in this manner.)
5. Repeat.

Once you feel comfortable with this, then practice it as a 7 – count inhale, hold for 3, and then do an exhale for a count of 12.

*Imagine the breath flowing down to your 2<sup>nd</sup> chakra on the inhale and then coming from the 2<sup>nd</sup> chakra on the exhale.*