

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Correct Breathing



he lungs are to the body what the bellows are to the fires of the forge. The more regularly and vigorously the air is forced through the bellows and through the lungs, the livelier burns the flame in the smithy and the fires of life in the body.

Practice deep, regular breathing systematically for one week, and you will be surprised at the results. You will feel like a different person, and your working capacity, both physically and mentally, will be immensely increased.

A plentiful supply of fresh air is more necessary than food and drink. We can live without food for weeks, without water for days, but without air only a few minutes.

The Process of Breathing

With every inhalation, air is sucked in through the windpipe or trachea, which terminates in two tubes called bronchi, one leading to the right lung, one to the left. The air is then distributed over the lungs through a network of minute tubes, to the air cells, which are separated by only a thin membrane from equally fine and minute blood vessels forming another network of tubes.

The oxygen contained in the inhaled air passes freely through these membranes, is absorbed by the blood, carried to the heart and thence through the arteries and their branches to the different organs and tissues of the body, fanning the fires of life into brighter flame all along its course and burning up the waste products and poisons that have accumulated during the vital processes of digestion, assimilation and elimination.

After the blood has unloaded its supply of oxygen, it takes up the carbonic acid gas [carbon dioxide] which is produced during the oxidation and combustion of waste matter and carries it to the lungs, where the poisonous gases are transferred to the air cells and expelled with the exhaled breath. This return trip of the blood to the lungs is made through another set of blood vessels, the veins, and the blood, dark with the sewage of the system, is now called venous blood.

In the lungs the venous blood discharges its freight of excrementitious poisons and gases, and by coming in contact with fresh air and a new supply of oxygen, it is again transformed into bright, red arterial blood, pregnant with oxygen and ozone, the life-sustaining elements of the atmosphere.

This explains why normal, deep, regular breathing is all-important to sustain life and as a means of cure. By proper breathing, which exercises and develops every part of the lungs, the capacity of the air cells is increased. This, as we have learned, means also an increased supply of life-sustaining and health-promoting oxygen to the tissues and organs of the body.

Bad Effects of Shallow Breathing

Very few people breathe correctly. Some, especially women, with tight skirtbands and corsets pressing on their vital organs, use only the upper part of their lungs. Others breathe only with the lower part and with the diaphragm, leaving the upper structures of the lungs inactive and collapsed.

In those parts of the lungs that are not used, slimy secretions accumulate, irritating the air cells and other tissues, which become inflamed and begin to decay. Thus a luxuriant soil is prepared for the tubercle bacillus, the pneumococcus and other disease-producing bacilli and germs.¹

This habit of shallow breathing, which does not allow the lungs to be thoroughly permeated with fresh air, accounts in a measure for the fact that one-third of all deaths result from diseases of the lungs. To one individual perishing from food starvation, thousands are dying from oxygen starvation.

¹ Surprisingly, I have no objection to this statement. He may well be more correct than doctors today are willing to admit.

Lung culture is more important than other branches of learning and training which require more time and a greater outlay of time, money and effort. In the Nature Cure regimen, breathing exercises play an important part.

Breathing Exercises: General Directions

The effectiveness of breathing exercises and of all other kinds of corrective movements depends upon the mental attitude during the time of practice. Each motion should be accompanied by the conscious effort to make it produce a certain result. Much more can be accomplished with mental concentration, by keeping your mind on what you are doing, than by performing the exercises in an aimless, indifferent way.

Keep in the open air as much as possible and at all events sleep with windows open.

If your occupation is sedentary, take all opportunities for walking out of doors that present themselves. While walking, breathe regularly and deeply, filling the lungs to their fullest capacity and also expelling as much air as possible at each exhalation. Undue strain should, of course, be avoided. This applies to all breathing exercises.

Do not breathe through the mouth. Nature intends that the outer air shall reach the lungs by way of the nose, whose membranes are lined with fine hairs [cilia] in order to sift the air and to prevent foreign particles, dust and dirt, from irritating the mucous linings of the air tract and entering the delicate structures of the lungs. Also, the air is warmed before it reaches the lungs by its passage through the nose.²

Let the exhalations take about double the time of the inhalations. This will be further explained in connection with rhythmical breathing.

Do not hold the breath between inhalations. Though frequently recommended by teachers of certain methods of breath culture, this practice is more harmful than beneficial.

² Unfortunately, we find that today many patients, through poor diet and the improper treatment of nasal conditions, have lost most of these protective cilia and are wide open to whatever infective agent comes along. There is a treatment with a WaterPik® and a special tip that allows the patient to rebuild these cilia at home.

The Proper Standing Position

Of great importance is the position assumed habitually by the body while standing and walking. Carelessness in this respect is not only unpleasant to the beholder, but its consequences are far-reaching in their effects upon health and the well-being of the organism.

On the other hand, a good carriage of the body aids in the development of muscles and tissues generally and in the proper functioning of cells and organs in particular. With the weight of the body thrown upon the balls of the feet and the center of gravity well focused, the abdominal organs will stay in place and there will be no strain upon the ligaments that support them.

In assuming the proper standing position, stand with your back to the wall, touching it with heels, buttocks, shoulders and head. Now bend the head backward and push the shoulders forward and away from the wall, still touching the wall with buttocks and heels. Straighten the head, keeping the shoulders in the forward position. Now walk away from the wall and endeavor to maintain this position while taking the breathing exercises and practicing the various arm movements.

Take this position as often as possible during the day and try to maintain it while you go about your different tasks that must be performed while standing. Gradually this position will become second nature, and you will assume and maintain it without effort.

When the body is in this position, the viscera are in their normal place. This aids the digestion materially and benefits indirectly the entire functional organism.

Persistent practice of the above will correct protruding abdomen and other defects due to faulty position and carriage of the body.

The following breathing exercises are intended especially to develop greater lung capacity and to assist in forming the habit of breathing properly at all times. The different movements should be repeated from three to six times, according to endurance and the amount of time at disposal.

- (1) With hands at sides or on hips, inhale and exhale slowly and deeply, bringing the entire respiratory apparatus into active play.

- (2) To expand the chest and increase the air capacity of the lungs, jerk the shoulder **forward** in several separate movements, inhaling deeper at each forward jerk. Exhale slowly, bringing the shoulders back to the original position. Reverse the exercise, jerking the shoulders **backward** in similar manner while inhaling. Alternate the movements, forcing the shoulders first forward, then backward.
- (3) Stand erect, arms at sides. Inhale, raising the arms forward and upward until the palms touch above the head, at the same time raising on the toes as high as possible. Exhale, lowering the toes, bringing the hands downward in a wide circle until the palms touch the thighs.
- (4) Stand erect, hands on hips. Inhale slowly and deeply, raising the shoulders as high as possible, then, with a jerk, drop them as low as possible, letting the breath escape slowly.
- (5) Stand erect, hands at shoulders. Inhale, raising elbows sideways; exhale, bringing elbows down so as to strike the sides vigorously.
- (6) Inhale deeply, then exhale slowly, at the same time clapping the chest with the palms of the hands, covering the entire surface.

(These six exercises are essential and sufficient. The following four may be practiced by those who are able to perform them and who have time and inclination to do so.)

- (7) Stand erect, hands at sides. Inhale slowly and deeply, at the same time bringing the hands, palms up, in front of the body to the height of the shoulders. Exhale, at the same time turning the palms downward and bringing the hands down in an outward circle.
- (8) Stand erect, the right arm raised upward, the left crossed behind the back. Lean far back, then bend forward and touch the floor with the right hand, without bending the knees, **as far in front of the body as possible**. Raise the body to original posture, reverse position of arms, and repeat the exercise. Inhale while leaning backward and changing position of arms, exhale while bending forward.
- (9) Position erect, feet well apart, both arms raised. Lean back, inhaling, then bend forward, exhaling, touching the floor with both hands between the legs **as far back as possible**.

- (10) Horizontal position, supporting the body on palms and toes. Swing the right hand upward and backward, flinging the body to the **left** side, resting on the left hand and the left foot. Return to original position, repeat the exercise, flinging the body to the **right** side. Inhale while swinging backward, exhale while returning to position.³

Diaphragmatic Breathing

The diaphragm is a large, flat muscle, resembling a saucer, which forms the division between the chest cavity and the abdominal cavity. By downward expansion it causes the lungs to expand likewise and to suck in the air. The pressure of air being greater on the outside of the body than within, it rushes in and fills the vacuum created by the descending diaphragm. As the diaphragm relaxes and becomes contracted to its original size and position, the air is expelled from the body.

- (11) To stimulate the action of the diaphragm, lie flat on floor or mattress, the head unsupported. Relax the muscles all over the body, then inhale deeply with the diaphragm only, raising the wall of the abdomen just below the ribs without elevating either the chest or the lower abdomen. Take about four seconds to inhale, then exhale in twice that length of time, contracting the abdomen below the ribs.

Internal Massage

- (12) Lie on your back on a bed or couch, knees raised. Relax thoroughly, exhale and hold the breath after exhalation. While doing so, push the abdomen out and draw it in as far as possible each way. Repeat these movements as long as you can hold the breath without straining, then breathe deeply and regularly for several minutes, then repeat the massage movements.⁴

Next to deep breathing, I consider this practice of greater value

³ Obviously these last four are for the young and vigorous.

⁴ This is an exception to Dr. Lindlahr's admonition to not hold the breath. This is a very powerful and useful exercise but must be developed slowly. If it is done too hard at first the abdominal muscles will be very sore. I remember this from my youth when I overdid this exercise.

than any other physical exercise. It imparts to the intestines and other abdominal organs a “washboard” motion which acts as a powerful stimulant to all the organs in the abdominal cavity. Internal massage is especially beneficial in chronic constipation. This exercise may be performed also while standing or walking. It should be practiced two or three times daily.

Breathing Exercises to Be Taken in Bed

- (13) With hands at side, inhale slowly and deeply, as directed in Exercise Number (1), filling and emptying the lungs as much as possible, but without straining. Practice first lying on the back, then on each side.
- (14) Using one- or two-pound dumbbells, position recumbent on back, arms extended sideways, dumbbells in hands. Raise the arms with elbows rigid, cross arms over the chest as far as possible, at the same time expelling the air from the lungs. Extend the arms to the sides, inhaling deeply and raising the chest.
- (15) Lie flat on the back, arms at sides. Grasping the dumbbells, extend the arms backward over the head, inhaling. Leave them in this position for a few seconds, then raise them straight above the chest, and lower them slowly to the original position. Exhale during the second half of this exercise. As a variation, cross the arms in front of the body instead of bringing to sides.⁵

⁵ Many years ago we developed a breathing exercise known as the Breath of God. We have had so many requests for this exercise that we decided to include it in this chapter on breathing. (The exercise is given on page 274)

The Breath of God Exercise

Our atmosphere contains a force known as **THE BREATH OF GOD**. When this **BREATH** is consciously inhaled, it can bring health and strength to those who make use of it in the right spirit.

When this **BREATH** is sent out, with thoughts of love and peace, the resulting vibrations can change the world. We invite you to work with us in the practice of **THE BREATH OF GOD**, to help yourself and those around you, bringing true peace and brotherhood to all of God's creation. *Will you help?*

While **THE BREATH OF GOD** may be used several times a day, one of those times should be at 12:00 o'clock **NOON EACH DAY**. As we **ALL** do this, a powerful wave of love and peace vibrations will immediately sweep around the world from time zone to time zone.

Assume a relaxed, comfortable position. Now slowly draw in a deep breath from the abdomen holding the thought as you do so:

“I WILL DRAW IN THE OMNIPOTENT BREATH OF GOD.”

Retain the breath for five seconds as you hold the thought:

**“I SEND THE BREATH OF GOD THROUGHOUT MY
ENTIRE BEING TO HEAL AND TO STRENGTHEN.”**

Lastly, as you slowly exhale, and with all the feeling and dedication you can muster, hold these thought vibrations:

“I SEND OUT LOVE AND PEACE TO ALL HUMANITY.”

The entire exercise may be repeated several times a day if you desire, but to begin with do not force yourself or overdo. Practice no more than three minutes at a time.

The power and results possible from following this procedure are incalculable, and its value and benefits will be quickly proven if you but give it a **TRY**. After you have completed the practice, be at peace with complete trust in your effort, knowing that even though the world may appear to be on the brink of disaster, **WITH THE BREATH OF GOD THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY.**

