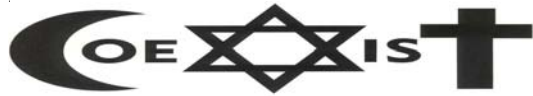


Jensen's Mobile Notes

Winter 2008, Vol. 2 No. 2

Wishing you Peaceful Coexistence



INVEST IN YOURSELF

Regular massage is a fabulous way to invest in yourself and your well-being. If you have any problem with chronic muscle pain or pain that comes and goes and then always comes back, if you have an injury that seems like it should have been healed ages ago, if you have strange aches and pains that have never really had a good explanation ... massage will help. Many would-be fans of massage cite cost as the reason they don't schedule appointments. The reality is that the effects of

frequent bodywork sessions far outweighs the cost per session. A 30-minute regular massage is much better than no massage at all. Please see the special offer on the back of this newsletter for information on discounts for those who have recently lost their jobs. Managing stress during this time is very important and massage is a wonderful way to invest in yourself.

Empower Yourself

Massage has the power to restore natural, healing breathing. This may sound like a nice but perhaps superficial benefit, yet look a little deeper: proper breathing is key to good health. Important in easing anxiety and boosting immunity, breathing may also contribute to intestinal health, restorative sleep, and emotional well-being. As environmentalist David Suzuki notes, "Every breath is a sacrament, an essential ritual."

Breathing is a process still categorized as "unconscious" by most medical texts, yet many of us need to relearn how to breathe properly -- both consciously and fully. It is our unawareness of this life function that may sap us of life-giving energy.



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In this issue

**INVEST IN YOURSELF
EMPOWERED BREATH
HOLIDAY SPECIALS**

Breathing involves the whole body, our whole being, in fact. The word "inspiration" comes from the Latin root "spiritus," meaning not only breath, but vitality, the animating principle, the soul. To breathe is not only to inspire, but to be inspired, to nourish our body and our spirit, to take into ourselves the vitality that is our birthright and to feel the creative energy that is our life force.

The Art of Breath

If breath is so essential, then why don't more of us do it correctly? Sure, we all know how to breathe, or rather, our bodies do. But breathing occurs on several levels.

The autonomic function creates the basic urge to breathe -- something governed by our nervous system. But often even this essential function is reduced to a series of shallow breaths if we're stressed, tense or nervous -- the makings of a typical day in today's society. Over time, this becomes a learned pattern so that even when the stressful situation has long gone our body is still functioning in shallow-breath mode, taking in a fraction of what it needs to be fully nourished.

Don't Hold Your Breath

Breathing incorrectly for three minutes is enough to lower the amount of oxygen to the brain and heart by 30 percent. If this goes on for years, there's an increased risk for conditions ranging from chronic headaches, digestive disturbances and neck, back and shoulder pain, to more serious illnesses such as high blood pressure, heart disease, asthma and chronic fatigue. In fact, some experts estimate that improper breathing can be associated with 50 percent to 70 percent of all diseases.

Emotional Breath

Emotional reactions also affect our breath: fear, anger, sadness and low self-esteem can make us

hold or limit our breathing patterns. However, breathing fully can have a positive effect by helping move these emotions through the body, instead of allowing them to constrict our breath, tighten our muscles, and affect other systems and organs in the body.

Replenishing Breath

"Every inspiration is an opportunity to resource and replenish ourselves," says Montreal musician and composer Étienne Larouche, who has worked with voice and breath since a young age. "As we inhale, we can release, so energy can come into the body, making our breath always available, without forcing."

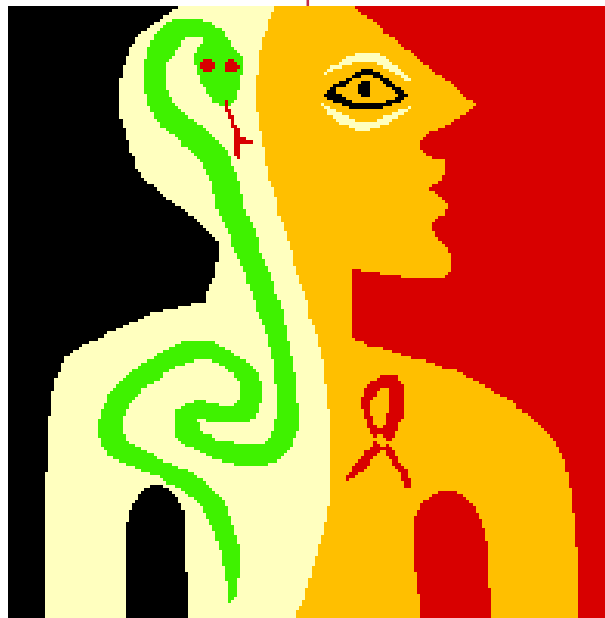
We may not think of inhalation as release, as that is normally associated with exhalation. But, breathing fully is precisely about release -- release not only of tension, but of control. Conscious breathing is not about controlling the breath, but about increasing our awareness of the process. It should leave us feeling revived by allowing us to

completely take in the oxygen we need to nourish our blood, muscles and brain as we inhale, and completely expel accumulated toxins and stress as we exhale.

Full, relaxed breathing can, among other things, improve our resistance to stress, lower blood pressure, improve sleep, ease pain, and help release muscular and emotional tension. And, it can calm and focus us. Studies have shown that when the breath is relaxed, brain-wave patterns change, the mind quiets and the body relaxes.

Calming Breath

Conscious breathing is not only calming, it has distinct effects on our blood chemistry and immune system. Studies have shown that the level of white blood cells, related to our



immune response, actually rise when we are in a calm, relaxed state. A recent study in the Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology found that participants who used techniques such as breathing, muscle relaxation and visualization had a 26 percent to 39 percent increase in their immune response.

Such techniques have also been of benefit to pre- and post-surgery patients -- reducing anxiety and pain, improving recovery times and reducing length of hospital stays. Women who learn deep-breathing techniques and apply these during childbirth have shorter labor times, less complications during delivery and faster healing post-delivery.

Conscious Breath

A Pennsylvania study examining brain-wave patterns demonstrated we can hold one thought for the length of one inhalation and exhalation, with each full breath, a new thought enters. This is one of the basic principles of meditation: single-focused attention, slow, full breath. Even a few minutes spent following our breath in this way -- breathe in, hold one thought, breathe out, release the thought -- can have dramatic changes on how we cope with stress and its effect on the body and the mind.

Beyond the physiological perks, there's an emotional and spiritual benefit to conscious breathing. We can use it to remind ourselves we are here now, in this body and in this moment, not ruminating about the past or worrying about the future. There's peace to be found in being present for ourselves: as we focus on our breath and our bodies, we can focus on our emotions, we can regain perspective and then take action from a place of calmness.

Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, who has written numerous books and lectured worldwide on meditation, peace and mindfulness, says: "Our breathing is the link between our body and our mind. Sometimes our mind is thinking one thing and our body is doing another, and mind and body are not unified. By concentrating on our breathing, we bring body and mind back together and become whole again. Conscious breathing is an important bridge."

It's a bridge many of us would benefit from crossing, a place of great perspective and of life-giving breath. A simple, inexpensive way to invest in yourself!

Good Investment

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Debborah Jensen, 2008



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