



# ***PYT Weekly Training & Support***

## Lesson #28 Using Your Breath

by Jim Katsoulis

Hello! Welcome to this week's lesson, and we're going to continue talking about things that are just essential to changing to your body long term. It's really setting the foundation. That's how I want you think about it, that when we set a strong foundation, it's going to make the rest of these a lot easier.

And so, what I'm going to talk about this time is breathing. Now, I remember when I first began learning yoga, hearing or reading in this book that most people didn't know how to breathe and I remember thinking at that time it was stupid. Of course, I knew how to breathe. And now looking back, I think about how ignorant I was then because, very often, specifically or especially in western cultures or in America, anyways, we breathe incorrectly.

One of the biggest reasons ... and if you've ever watched a baby breathe, you will see their stomach moving up and down and you'll see them breathing with their stomach. The reason being is that our lungs are bigger on the bottom and so, you can get more oxygen in your body when you use all of your lungs and when you use the biggest parts of your lungs.

Let's face it. In this country, we're always trying to suck our guts in. This is obvious but, very often, we are keeping our stomachs tight and we keep them in so that they don't stick out. Very rarely do we breathe in a way that we're allowing our stomach to move in and out and draw attention to it.

So what this does is it causes us not only to create a state of tension in our body but it also restricts the amount of oxygen that we're getting into ourselves. And after water ... I shouldn't say after water ... obviously, before water, oxygen is essential. It's not just essential to breathe. It's much, much more than that.

For your body and mind and emotions to operate at a peak level, you need to, and I really believe this, you need to intentionally and regularly oxygenate your body in an intentional way and I'm going to share with you in a second. It's so valuable because it changes everything. It will instantly change the way you feel.

So, if we put all these things together that we've been talking about – drinking enough water, relaxing our body and our mind, breathing deeply and regularly everyday – what happens is, it transforms us from the inside out, not just physically but also mentally and spiritually, whatever that means for you, but it changes us completely.

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So, what I want to talk about is very simple. Breathing is something that you do know how to do. So, I was kind of joking in the beginning. You do know how to do it but what I'm going to suggest to you is that you're not doing it enough. The type of breathing I'm talking about is deep diaphragmatic breathing.

So, in order to do this ... and what I would suggest is you don't need to do this all day long. You don't need to do this out in public if uncomfortable for you. But what we want to do is make it a habit to do it when you are alone for, at least, a few minutes every day.

I'm telling you that this technique and this exercise is so powerful that even if you only did it when you woke up in the morning or at lunch or when you went to bed at night, if you only did it one of those times everyday, I guarantee that you will feel a difference within yourself.

I'm not just going to say that your emotions will be different or you will think clearer because it's all encompassing. That's all I can say. It's really amazing what can happen to you. And I say this as someone who used to breathe very shallow, and if I get a little corny here or weird, I feel like, literally, it affected my life force and my energy that I was able to experience and give off.

So, the first thing you want to do to do this exercise is be somewhere where you're totally comfortable and where you can allow your stomach to go wherever it goes without having to worry about hiding it. The next thing is you want to relax. This is essential. So often, people get worked up, they are tense. It's almost like "take a deep breath," and they try to take a deep breath but when your muscles are tight ... practice this now for a second. Tighten all the muscles in your stomach, back, shoulders, and chest – tighten them up and take a deep breath – what happens? Nothing! Your lungs cannot expand because they are being pushed up.

So, when you find yourself tense or when you want to change how you feel, taking a deep breath is the easiest, quickest, most effective way, bar none. But in order to get the most of that deep breath, what you want to do is you want to relax the body first; specifically, the areas that are around the lungs – back muscles, stomach muscles, the obliques on the side, chest, and shoulders. Relax all these areas that are in the lung area. Relax them now and just notice your breathing.

Now, what I want to share with you is if you want to influence your breathing, the easiest way to do it ... again, a lot of people say, "take a deep breath." So, what they are unconsciously focusing on is the inhale. Very often, when people think about affecting their breathing or changing or influencing it, they are thinking about the inhale. But the problem with that is you can, depending on where you

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get yourself in the breath cycle ... if you get this much air in your lungs and you decide to change how you're breathing and you go to inhale, it can become this feeling like your forcing and fighting with yourself. You don't want that.

So, in order to avoid this, what we want to do is to focus on the exhale. The beauty of this is, if you have this much air in your lungs or this much air in your lungs, you can always exhale it all out of your body. Now, the beauty is this. I love this because breathing is really that doorway between the conscious and the unconscious mind because it is something you can control consciously or influence consciously but it also runs itself.

So the beauty of focusing on the exhale is you intentionally exhale all of it out of your body and then you just relax – you relax. Relax the muscles in your body. Relax your shoulders. Relax your mind. The inhale will happen automatically. So there's none of that fight. There's none of that struggle that can sometimes happen when you're trying to influence your breathing. This is essential. It is so powerful.

So, when you want to influence your breathing in any situation, you exhale it all out and then you can feel your lungs coming out, and the air from the bottom coming out, and then you just relax and allow your body and trust your body to do what it's going to do to fill your body back up with oxygen. That's one way to influence your breathing.

Now, what I would like to do and I do this regularly because I enjoy it so much and it becomes more and more enjoyable the more you do it, and it's almost like a meditation or a hypnotic induction. I call it kind of surfing your breath. The thing here is you are not forcing any of it. These aren't deep breathing exercises. They are kind of relaxing your body and allowing your body to breathe the way it wants to.

So in order to do that, ideally, if you can close your eye because you want to turn your focus inwards, relax the muscles in your body again, and all you're going to do is focus on two points. You're going to focus on the point in between the exhale and the inhale and the inhale and exhale.

Now, these are microseconds of moments that happen when you're in between one and the other. But it can be kind of a fun game and it allows your mind to focus on something so you can kind of go deeper into that experience.

So, just allow your breathing to happen as it is happening. You're surfing it. You're not trying to control the waves. You're just flowing with the waves. So, your breathing is just happening as it happens. You're influencing it by relaxing your body. Then, you are allowing your mind to focus on your breathing to just

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ride the waves of it and to notice with your awareness those split-second moments when you go from an inhale to an exhale, and when you go from an exhale to an inhale – and you just go on with that. So, it's just a cycle.

Now, this is the type of thing ... well, at first maybe you do it five to ten minutes because you will get better at it so you just want to kind of play with it initially. So, you do it for a few days – five minutes or ten minutes. What ends up happening is that you get good at it just like you've learned how to write and now you don't have to think about it; your body just knows how to do it. Think about this. There are all of these muscles working. There is all of this musculature in your body working to make that happen – very, very fine movements. You do it without even thinking about it.

As you teach yourself to breathe this way – to breathe in a relaxed, calm way – to just let it happen on its own. What happens is, you're training your body to do that the exact same way. So, eventually, you don't need to think about it anymore; your body just does it. That's the point of this.

Commit to it for a while and let it become a habit but this is one those things that you never really ... because we live in an over-stimulated environment, I believe you need to make this a part of your routine forever. You always need to bring yourself back to this place intentionally, relax yourself for a second, and move on. But the thing that happens is that you can make it a shorter and shorter period of time and still get a lot of benefits from it.

Now, the final one I'm going to tell you about ... I'm going to give you the explanation of it and it's something that you can go and experiment with on your own. And, basically, this is yoga. In yoga, there's a component of yoga called Pranayama, and they're basically breathing exercises.

But in yoga, they think of the breath as Prana which is a life force. So, the actual energy that is you is literally tied in with this breath; and so, they have a whole discipline about it. So, I would strongly suggest that you research it more because it's profound.

But one of the exercises that they do ... it's basically a cleansing breath and what you're looking to do is you're looking to do a ratio of breathing. So, you would inhale – I'll give you the ratios. You would inhale in for one; you would hold your breath for four; and you would exhale for two. So, if you inhaled for two seconds, you would hold it for eight seconds and you would exhale for four seconds. Does that ratio make sense? One-four-two. And you could tweak it a little bit. If four is a little bit long for you, you can make that a three. That's fine. Remember, everything is balanced against your own comfort and enjoyment of it.

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So, basically, what you do is you inhale and I usually do an average four to five inhales. So, I'm just going to go through it. So, I inhale for four seconds. Now, I hold the breath for 16. And now, I exhale for eight seconds. And now, I repeat the process.

So, that is the process of it, and you can do it as often as you like. I'm not going to try and articulate that the experience of it is different for each person, but this can be pretty profound and what it does is – again, it really brings you in deep with the process of breathing. It gives you a deeper understanding of it. If you don't have a deeper understanding of it, it's a nice experience to have that you can do that.

So, use this. Please experiment with this. You've some different ways to play with it, and don't make it a big project. You don't have to set aside a half hour to do this and have everything ready – that's fine, too. But practice with it all day long – driving in the car, sitting at your desk, sit up and notice how your posture affects your breathing.

Just bring some awareness to your breathing regularly. And the more you relax your body, the breathing will happen on its own. You exhale out the air, then relax, let the inhale happen. You're going to notice how much better you feel, simply.

Remember, you know, casinos and malls, I don't know if they still do this in malls, but they pump in oxygen because the more oxygen you have in your body, you get elated. It makes you happy.

So, would you like to be happier? Would you like to feel better? Breathe more. Most people are not getting enough oxygen in their body. They're operating at a deficiency of oxygen and it affects everything else – how efficient your body operates, your moods, your thinking, and all the rest of it. So, commit to your breathing. I promise you. It has a profound difference that it will make in your life. So, play around with this, use it, and I'll talk to you next week.

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