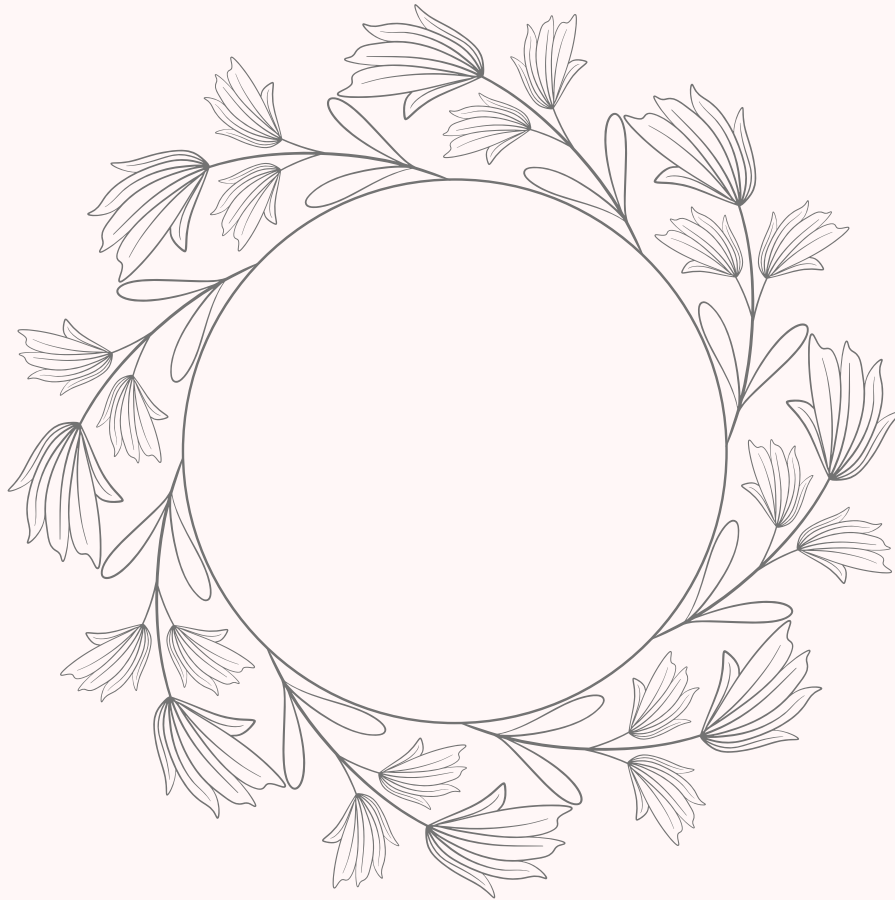


INTENTIONAL LIVING



STRESS REGULATION & THE BREATH





One of THE most effective ways we can help regulate our nervous system and stress response is through our breathe.

There are many different types of breath work and breathing techniques. What we are looking at for stress relief can be summarised as a breath that is taken through the nose which slows down and deepens both the inhale and the exhale

When we slow our rate of breathing down, breathing softly yet fully, we bring the breath all the way down into our belly thus employing diaphragmatic breathing and importantly, bring balance to the Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS) and Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS)

If we can breathe into the belly (diaphragmatic breath) we signal to the NS that we are safe, lowering cortisol levels in the blood. It also assists in moving emotions through the body and lets us release 'held onto' thoughts and feelings, bringing with it a renewed sense of clarity, improving mood and wellbeing

What follows are a few simple, but effective, breathing technique to help bring ease and wellbeing whilst assisting the nervous system to re-calibrate towards a place of rest rather than 'fight or flight'.



SAMVRITTI PRANAYAMA

Perhaps the most simple of breaths to begin with
Samavritti pranayama simply means equal breath. Where the inhale and the exhale are of equal length and depth.

This breath can be accessed at anytime in any situation where you need to come back to a centred and grounded place and if you are new to breath work this is a beautiful place to begin.

It serves to slow your breathing down to a rate that feels comfortable for YOU.
I suggest starting to the count of 3. Breathing slowly to the count of 3. Exhaling slowly to the count of 3.

Once you are comfortable with the count, you could try experimenting with a slightly longer count, but only if it does not leave a lingering sense of grasping or forcing the breath.

Be mindful if you are holding your belly in. Relax and soften here.

Also shoulders and throat....Are they feeling tense?

If so , take a moment, exhale softly through the mouth, jaw relaxed. Take a moment and then come back to the breath.

In and out through the nose for equal counts

Observe any effects it may have.....



ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING

Ultimate balancing breath.

Can be done anytime of day. Wonderful first thing in the morning/last thing at night. Helps to balance out the left and right hemisphere in the brain . In yoga philosophy left and right are connected to different energy sources ~ left: feminine, yin, cooling and calming energy(PNS) and the right: male, heating, energising and yang

~After finding a comfortable inhale/exhale through the nose, bring your right hand towards the face. Thumb hovering over the R nostril, ring finger over the L.

~ Exhale fully through the nose.

~Close L nostril with your ring finger. Inhale through the R nostril

~Close of R. Release L nostril and exhale through the Left.

~Inhale back through the L nostril.

~Seal of L nostril. Release R and exhale through R nostril.

(That completes One round)

~inhale back through the R.

~Seal of R. Exhale through L

~Inhale back through L

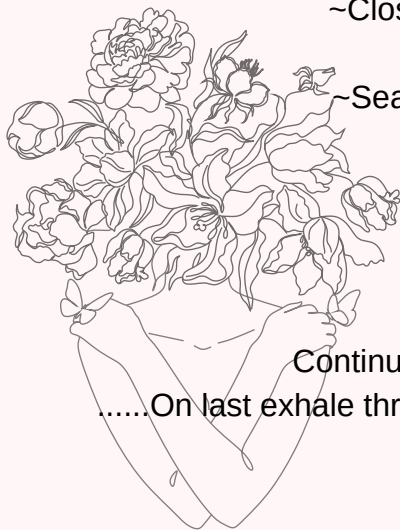
~ Seal L and exhale through R

Continue for at least 3 more complete rounds. Seven if you can.

.....On last exhale through R, release your hand inhale full through the nose. Exhale slowly.

Inhale fully, exhale completely.

Observe any effects you maybe noticing



GOLDEN EXHALE

This breathing technique, differs slightly from the others in that the exhale is taken slowly through the lips. The intention is the same as the previous techniques, in that we are looking to slow the rate of breathing down and breathe fully into the belly and diaphragm thus signalling to the NS that we are safe, down-regulating the NS to the rest and digest mode (PNS)

This golden exhale can be done sitting or lying down and is a beautiful breath to do at the end of a day or anytime one needs to find a moment of calm and come back to centre...

~Inhale and exhale fully through the nose

~Inhale softly through the nose, relaxing belly, throat and jaw.

~ Exhale through very slightly parted lips. Imagining the breath like a trickle of water or whisp of air. Exhale all the air out but using no force.

~Inhale fully through the nose

~ Exhale through softly parted lips (imagine a piece of tissue paper between the lips: this is the size of gap we are wanting to have)

Keep going for as long as you feel it is helpful

On completion, inhale and exhale through the nose for a couple of rounds. Observe any effects you may be feeling.



BOX BREATHING

Box breathing is a breathing technique that can help you slow down your breathing and anchor you to the present moment. By counting to 4, you are giving your mind something to focus and the slower breathing that counting to 4 gifts you with is calming for your nervous system decreasing the stress response in your body.

Box breathing is a simple but powerful tool that can be particularly useful when anxiety and overwhelm is present . It can help to return your breathing pattern to a relaxed easy rhythm clearing and calm your mind, improving your focus and bringing you back to the here and now.

~Find a comfortable seat. Both feet on the ground. Back steady. ~Inhale and exhale fully through the nose

~Inhale for a count of 4

~Pause for a count of 4

~Exhale for a count of 4 ~Pause for a count of 4 This is one round

~ Inhale for 4

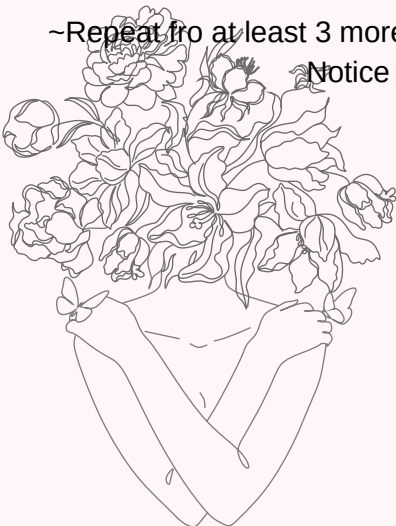
~Pause for 4

~exhale for 4

~Pause for 4

~Repeat for at least 3 more rounds but longer if you can..... To finish...Inhale fully and exhale completely.

Notice and changes you may experience in your breath and mind



INCREASING VAGAL TONE

By stimulating the vagus nerve, you can send a message to your body that it's time to relax and de-stress, which leads to long-term improvements in mood, wellbeing and resilience. All imperative for creating strong foundations as we enter the midlife transition we will experience as a peri or menopausal woman.

~COLD EXPOSURE

~DEEP SLOW BREATHING

VOCALISATION: SINGING, CHANTING, HUMMING, GARGLING ~YAWNING

~EXERCISE

~OMEGA 3 FATTY ACIDS

~MEDITATION

~MASSAGE

~CONNECTION & LAUGHTER



COMPLETING THE STRESS CYCLE

Physical Affection: You don't have to have a romantic partner, just someone you feel safe with to give you a long, strong hug (about 20 seconds according to the research) or time with a loving pet. Physical affection helps your body release trust and bonding hormones like oxytocin, and those can chase away the sense of danger your body was previously holding onto. As our hormones shift, our heart rate slows and our body begins to feel safe.

Physical Activity: Running, swimming, stomping your feet, screaming or punching your pillow into oblivion. All of these work. The point is you have to use your body. Since stress is physical, physical activity is a big part of ending stress cycles

It is about moving the stress out of the body

Laughter: Especially when you can laugh together with someone, laughter is a way to release and express all the emotions we're keeping inside

Deep Breathing: just a few minutes of deep breathing can stimulate the vagus nerve bringing your nervous system back towards the relaxation response and complete your fight-or-flight stress response

Creativity: Make something. Do you like to knit, paint, sing, write, or play with modelling clay? Whatever creative endeavour speaks to you, do it.

Sleep: While you sleep, your brain solves problems from the day, especially during REM.

Crying: Crying is for everybody. Crying is one of our body's mechanisms to release stress.





SLEEP~ CONTROLLING THE CONTROLLABLES

- ~ Get at least 30-40 mins of daytime daylight
DIRECT into your eyes.....Get outside!!
- ~ exercise, but not too late and not too hard as it will elevate your cortisol levels which will mess with your natural cortisol production cycle which should be low at night.
- ~ Indulge in a warm magnesium bath. Not too hot
- ~ Try using relaxing essential oils such as Lavender, chamomile, vetiver diluted in a carrier oil in the bath or on your pulse points or as a pillow spray.
- ~ Tryptophan is a pre-cursor to melatonin production, Check to see if you have sources of this in your diet
- ~ Dial in your light exposure in the evening and aim to minimise scree/blue light at least an hour before bedtime
- ~ Swap your phone for a book!
- ~ Limit alcohol as it disturbs the cycle of sleep (particularly the REM stage)
- ~ Try a short Restorative /yoga Nidra/ guided meditation in the evening
- ~ Calming breath work before sleep
- ~ invest in a good quality eye mask and ear plugs!

