[**Breath Mastery Fundamentals Day 1**](https://www.o2collective.com/products/breath-mastery-fundamentals-2/categories/553605)

Module 9 **Basic Series Triangle Breathing**

The next exercise, is what we call the triangle breath; Inhale, exhale, pause.

This is nature’s way of breathing. When you are sitting at rest, this pattern represents natural biological, physiological, chemically driven breathing pattern. Inhale, exhale, pause. Inhale, exhale, pause.

So this is the first breathing pattern you really want to practice. Again, because it is how nature already makes you breathe. You’re coming into harmony with nature’s way. Before you start doing things with the breath, you are surrendering to the breath. You’re allowing the breath to guide you.

Why I left Swami rama, I loved this man. But on this particular visit, he was at the Himalayan institute in Homesdale, Pennsylvania. I was going back and forth there to see him, I loved the guy. I mean he’s a genuine yogi, in 1970 he came to the United States he went to this place called the Manager Foundation, he held his breath for 17 minutes. And there was a neural surgeon and a cardiac guy, who were kind of his sponsors, and it just blow them away. How is this humanly possible? 17 minutes, somebody holding their breath. What else is possible? They became instant devotees; Valentine and Heinze. And they formed, they established this Himalayan Institute, they parked Swami Rama there, set him up, that was his U.S headquarters and they had a bio-feedback lab set up. And so this is in the early 70s. So I was going back and forth because I was playing with lowering my blood pressure, making myself sweat, constricting blood vessels, raising my heat, you know controlling my heart rate. It was so cool that we can do this stuff. And so the bio-feedback equipment gave you real-time feedback. So I could see what visualising a certain thing, or relaxing in a certain way, or linking and syncing into my breath in a certain way was doing to my chemistry to my physiology, really useful. Because what lots of times we think a certain, especially in yoga, we think a certain breathing is causing a certain something, but then when you actually test, you find out, it’s not having the effect you thought at all.

So for the practitioners in the room, Dr Peter Litchfield, on my board of advisors, has the school of applied breathing sciences, has PhD program in applied breathing science and behavioural science and his big a-hah was bringing together respiratory physiology with the behaviour sciences. And realising that breathing is a behaviour. And how do you learn behaviours? Do you just take them on unconsciously? Or do you deliberately practice consciously, training in a certain behaviour. And we know that certain behaviours serve us, and other behaviours will land you in jail or dead or whatever. So we know behaviour is really an importation thing.

So people launch into different behaviours in different moments of stress and during performance and so on. And so managing behaviours and using respiratory physiology as what you’re watching, as you change your breathing behaviour.

So Peter makes it different between breathing and respiration. Breathing is the behaviour. Respiration is this autonomic activity that happens as a result of breathing. So if you were to hook yourself up to a monitor, that would track every breath you take, the rate, the volume, the rhythm. Monitor all of that. See while I’m speaking, I use my breath in the same ways I use my hands. My breath is serving me to communicate. And so if you were to look at my breathing pattern for the last 10 minutes, and with no context, you would see a chaotic breathing pattern; speeds up, slows down, it’s big, it’s stops. You’d go woah, that’s not healthy, jesus, look at this it’s a chaotic, crazy breathing pattern. Well because it’s serving something else. It’s not serving my physiology in that moment. It’s serving my desire to communicate.

And so what if you are a performer, an athlete and the way that you’re breathing is helping you to manage stress for example. Or manage anxiety. Or you have unconscious breathing habits connected to something, they’re serving you in one way, on one level but are actually getting in the way on another level. So when you start to look at breathing as a behaviour, and you merge that with respiratory physiology and respiratory chemistry, you come up with a new model for healing, for therapy, for counselling.

And so, in the membership area you will catch quite a few articles by Peter Litchfield. I also interviewed him, we’ve done webinars together and so those videos are also in the membership area.

So he really helped me with this a lot. You know you know something, you understand something, but then suddenly you really know it, you really understand. You though you understood it, and you kind of did, but then suddenly, a-hah, it’s an even deeper understanding.

So inhale, exhale, pause.

Nature put this pause here because he just made a cosmic journey. You inhaled, you exhaled and now you’ve come home. And so his mantra, his basic teaching is, make this pause a comfort zone. Make this pause a comfort zone. You should be able to relax into that pause, not rush into the next inhale. If you rush in to the next inhale, some people rush into the next inhale before they’ve even completed the exhale. So if I exaggerate that, here’s a normal inhale and a complete exhale. Now what happens if I don’t complete the exhale? Look where I end up.

So if you have an unconscious habit of behaviour, of not completing your exhale, you are constantly producing stress in your body. You are making your body feel like it’s in danger. You’re telling your body it’s in danger. Because what interrupts the breath? A fear, a pain, a danger, a threat. So if you have an unconscious behaviour, you’re interrupting the exhale, not completing the exhale. The diaphragm is the biggest muscle in your body. It’s the biggest guy in the room. And if the biggest muscle in the body is tense, imagine how all the little muscles must feel? Oh if he’s nervous, we must be in trouble. So, one of the practices we do connected to that second element in the formula, is connecting, relaxing the jaw, with totally relaxing the diaphragm. Here’s very little muscles but very powerful; you could bit down harder than you can grip. And jaw muscles are the first muscles you learn to use; sucking muscles, expression, chewing, what comes into you, what comes out of you, there’s a lot of memories in these muscles. These muscles are caught up in lots of stuff. And that’s why the average person, their jaw sets in a certain place, it’s locked when they’re not thinking about it, they have a certain amount of tension in their jaw.

If you’re a little baby, it’s loose and your jaw is soft and you’re dripping and drooling, and someone keeps wiping your face then you tense up, so you’ve tensed your whole jaw because you don’t want to look like a baby and its embarrassing to drool. So to somehow get over that, you created tension in this whole area.

So if you relax your jaw, at the same time that you relax your diaphragm, the biggest muscle in the body and these little muscles, which are really signal muscles. These are signal muscles, when the jaw relaxes, other muscles relax. Your neck relaxes, your forehead relaxes, your throat relaxes, your shoulders relax. The jaw muscles are connected to everything, and when they relax, you start this cascade of relaxation.

So very consciously releasing the jaw, as you allow that exhale to complete itself. And then you can feel the diaphragm reset. If you don’t feel the diaphragm reset and you start to breathe in, what that means is you didn’t allow the diaphragm to completely relax before you called upon it to contract again. When you breathe in, it’s because you’re diaphragm contracts. When you breathe out, it’s because your diaphragm relaxes.

So if you breathe in and the moment that your diaphragm contracts, you intuitively, you have a sense of that, and you consciously choose to breathe in, at exactly the same moment that your body wants you to breathe, you just come into harmony with you nature. You’ve had a practical experience of intuition and its verified in real time.

Audience member: So you wait until you have a diaphragm contraction?

Speaker:

You wait until you drop into this pause, you relax, relax, relax, open, soften and you wait. And at some point, before the diaphragm contracts, the moment before it contracts, it totally releases. The relaxation of the diaphragm completed itself and then it contracts immediately. So if you can be conscious of when the diaphragm resets, when it totally relaxes, you know that in the next moment, the diaphragm is going to contract and so you breathe into that moment. And you are consciously breathing in at exactly the same moment that nature, life, spirit, your body, wants you to breathe. You have made an intuitive connection. And you begin to feel it and recognise it.

And I might be contracting my abdominal muscles and forcing an inhale, and relaxing my abdominal muscles to force an exhale, but what’s happening in the diaphragm in that moment is completely different, it’s totally out of sync. And if I do that long enough, if that becomes a pattern, my diaphragm gets weaker and weaker and weaker over time. And so, this sensitivity, this awareness is really, really  important. So I take in a normal breath, inhale, exhale and pause. And you’re not holding your breath, you’re not locking up your system, it’s an open pause. And we’ll actually get into it further but you are continuing to relax. You’re actually continuing to exhale. It looks like a pause from the outside, but on the inside, the exhale is continuing.

Mentally, energetically. And at some point, the diaphragm relaxes completely and then it contracts, it’s ready for the next inhale. If you contract the inhale, if you make yourself breathe in before the diaphragm is completely relaxed, you are adding layer after layer of tension to the biggest muscle in your body. And your biggest muscle in your body is going to be carrying constant tension. The rest of your body feels that and acts accordingly. So the ability to relax the biggest muscle in your body, and to really let it relax completely before you call upon it to contract again.

Relaxing throat, relaxing jaw, soft open pause. Waiting. It’s a comfort zone, you’re enjoying this. There is no, ‘I need to breathe, I need to breathe’. Something different.

So, breathing in in that same moment that your body has chosen to breath, that’s an experience you want to have.

Alright so here is the basic breathing pattern. So let’s just practice it.

Notice that it’s not inhale, pause, exhale. It’s inhale, exhale, pause. We’re going to talk about this pause up here in a little bit. But right now, just relax into this breathing pattern, because it’s a natural, normal breathing pattern. You inhale, exhale and you pause. Inhale, exhale, pause.

Now this could be an equilateral triangle. You could start to play with the legs of this triangle or making the inhale twice as long as the exhale. Making the pause equal to the inhale and the exhale combined. You can play with it. You can make the exhale longer. So you can play with this triangle, and now you’re getting into conscious breathing. Lots of possible conscious breathing techniques based on this basic pattern; inhale, exhale and pause.

Audience member: So when I’m waiting for an actual diaphragm contraction but it seems to take a long long time, so are you actually, inviting me to wait for that or wait for an earlier kind of impulse

Speaker:

Even after the diaphragm relaxes, and because the diaphragm relaxes, you can pause even longer, because it’s not eating up energy. If you have a lot of really tight muscles, it’s very hard to hold your breath because the muscles are demanding energy. And the urge to breathe is really strong. But if all your muscles are relaxed, you can hold your breath fro a very long time. Ask Stig Severinsen, 22 minutes. So relaxation takes the demand, the energy demand off the body, and so the breath can remain suspended for much longer.

So you’re feeling for that total reset of the diaphragm, the completion of the relaxation phase. And there might be a lot of time between that and when you finally, the impulse to breathe in comes.

Audience member: So it’s not exactly a contraction like what a free diver is looking for? Because I work with that quite a lot.

Speaker:

Yeah yeah you want to relax into that, that’s a barrier right, so you start to feel the body try to make you breathe, and you relax into that, relax into that and you get longer and longer breath holds. You’re fighting off, you’re tolerating those powerful urges, you’re relaxing beyond them and you increase your breath hold

Audience member: So you’re saying on this, actually go to that stage?

Speaker:

You could, but what you need to do is go to the stage where the diaphragm has relaxed completely. And then, the diaphragm will actually cooperate with you. You allowed it to rest, you allowed it to reset and it’s at your instant command. Just the intention to breathe and the diaphragm will contract and cause the inhale. And it’s like a jockey on a horse, you know, I am a horrible horseback rider.

My baby sister was five years old and riding horses and I [bouncing motion] this is my experience of riding a horse. And when I finally get off a horse I am happy and the horse is happy. But if you can feel the horse and connect with the horse, it’s just this beautiful thing. The horse feels you and you just have a little intention and the horse feels it. And you’re sensing the horse, the connection is so beautiful. But this [bouncing motion] is most people’s relationship to breathing. They’re just, it’s a fight, it’s a battle, it’s exhausting. It’s wearing down the breathing mechanism and it’s making you tired. And it’s just a horrible ride, it’s an uncomfortable ride. But when you sync up to the breathing, when you really connect to it, and you can breathe big breaths and it’s very effortless, and you’re like that jockey, just perfectly in tune with the breath and the things you could do. The things you and the horse could do together is amazing. You’ve harnessed that power.

Audience member: Could you put that on the back end of a yawn?

Speaker:

[nods] So I give you the moment that my diaphragm completely relaxes [snaps fingers] and then when I breathe in, my diaphragm cooperates with me.  So yeah, good connection to make.

Inhale, exhale, pause.

Let’s do a few minutes of that. Just fall into this simple, natural breathing pattern. Inhale, exhale and pause. And just see what natural shape and size of the triangle occurs. Just based on comfort and ease and simplicity. Not trying to set records, not trying to do anything special.

Inhale, exhale, pause.

Inhale, exhale, pause.

Since you are choosing to breathe in a way nature has designed you to breathe, certain, really lovely benefits occur automatically. Now at some point you may have an urge to take a more expansive inhale, that would be a longer leg of that side of the triangle. Maybe the base of the triangle gets shorter or longer and changes the shape of the triangle. The size of it.

Inhale, exhale, pause.

Consciously practicing the natural breathing pattern. Resting, breathing pattern that nature hardwired us for. And you are actually consciously doing it, you are coming into harmony with your nature. And if you spend enough time living in harmony with y?our nature, you are alert when you go against it. You are alert when you get out of balance with it. Every physical, emotional, psychological pattern is preceded or comes with an imbalance in the breathing. The imbalance in the breathing is the very first sign that something else is coming out of balance in you. And so when you develop this very intimate relationship with the breath, you can begin to sense when it just doesn’t feel right. Something is pushing or pulling with my breathing or interfering with my breathing. It’s more difficult than usual to take a big breath. Or I can’t quite release the exhale completely. Or it’s faster than usual. Or it’s getting stuck at a certain point. The more conscious I am of the breathing, I can stay ahead of many issues and problems. Correct them on an energy level before they develop into a big serious thing.

Inhale, exhale, pause.

So you have something you can practice. And now you get creative, when would be a good time to practice that? When getting upset?  When getting overly excited? Getting uncomfortable? Afraid? Whatever. Come into this pattern; inhale, exhale and make that pause comfort zone.

If you rush into the inhale, if you gasp at the inhale, that’s an emergency reaction. And even though there is no emergency, and you just have a habit of grabbing at the inhale, gasping at the inhale, rushing the inhale, you’re sending emergency signals to your system. Why would you want to do that 20,000 times a day?

We have a lizard-brain that’s monitoring every breath you take. And it’s regulating the breath and it’s monitoring the breath. And so if I go through the day breathing like this [gasp, gasp] what am I saying to that poor lizard-brain? Be careful, danger, watch out! So if that’s an unconscious pattern, I’m exaggerating it, but even a subtle tendency in that direction of gasping at the inhale, grasping it, rushing it, jumping into it, that’s a subtle emergency signal. And hat ancient part of my brain has no choice but to interpret that as danger, pain, fear, something. And it’s going to cause certain physiological, chemical, emotional, psychological tendencies and patterns.

If I go through the day breathing like this, [soft slow breathes] what does that tell my lizard brain? I must feel very good, I must be very safe, everything must be ok. So we can trick our brain, we can hack into our nervous system, by choosing the way we breathe. You send information to the brain, to the nervous system, to that ancient part of our brain. And so you can manipulate it. You already are manipulating it. Every time you rush the inhale, every time you cut the exhale short, every time you can’t make that pause a comfort zone, you are sending information to that lizard-brain. But it’s not the kind of information you want to send.

Audience member: So I was playing around with the awareness of that total relaxation point in the diaphragm and I got it, I felt it. But then I feel like I can inhale with it completely, I can do a really shallow chest inhale with my diaphragm completely relaxed

Speaker: remaining relaxed, yeah, yeah.

Audience member: So is that like a good practice? Practice for full relaxation.

Speaker: Yes.

Yes. Good distinction right? Because we have a whole set of muscles that can do the breathing even with a paralysed diaphragm, with a non-functioning diaphragm, you can still manage to breath. Intercostal muscles and so on. So yeah, that’s really useful.

And it’s useful to be conscious of that because under stress, a person can shift into that kind of breathing which can be very inefficient. And it can reinforce anxiety and dis-balance and dysfunction. And if you have an unconscious habit of always using accessory muscles, neck muscles, shoulder muscles, back muscles, that are just tangled up in the breathing.

My very first session with Tony, working on Skype, I said take a couple of deep breaths, and I saw him do that. I saw him tense his jaw, and I saw tension even in his temples. I went, “holy crap, Tony, what are you doing?” “I’m taking in a deep breath” “Yeah, but who told you to tighten your jaw, who told you to tighten your temples, those aren’t breathing muscles”. He went “Holy fuck, Jesus”. And it was like, boom a light went off and he lowered his blood pressure by 15 points within a week, and all he did was practice relaxing muscles that don’t belong in the breathing. If you’re tensing muscles that don’t belong in the breathing every single time you breathe, 20,000 times a day, 20,000 emergency signals. Of course you’re going to have issues.

Audience member: some people clench at night time, when they’re sleeping.

Speaker:

Yeah some people grind teeth and yeah.

Audience: [inaudible]

Speaker:

Yeah, so you know, if you practice relaxing your jaw, you’re re-training it and it will get relaxed by itself at some point because you’ve trained it to relax. And the same way you’ve trained it to tense, you can train it to relax. The jaw is tense because you trained it to tense. You tensed it again and again, repeatedly in certain situations, until it became a habit. And you can create a different habit, one that will add years to your life. Because it’s sucking energy constantly, it’s a drag on your energy.

Audience member: So you mentioned several times, when we’re experimenting with our breathing [inaudible] but at the same time we’ve got all these techniques, let’s say you have a jockey riding a horse [inaudible] what’s naturally good or not? So when you mention that we experiment with our whole body, the way we’re breathing naturally, whether it’s fast or slow etcetera. But at the same time we have all these techniques in between. So when do you know [inaudible] and its natural and good for your body or not?

Speaker:

I guess you just have to feel it. You have to experiment and see how breathing one way causes or makes you feel certain things and how another breathing pattern will do different things. You have to explore, experiment, intuition. But also sensitivity, you can feel, you start to get more conscious of subtle feelings and sensations and that directs you and that guides you.

[End of video 9].