

"I listen to the wind, To the wind of my soul, Where I'll end up, well, I think Only God really knows"

Yusuf Islam (previously known as Cat Stevens)

We touched upon breath control in an earlier article. Since breath is usually one of the more accessible ways to a meditative state – that you can apply in your meditation (or yoga) practice.

Breathing affects our clarity, our muscles, our nerves and our hearts. It is simple.

For all breath techniques, please contemplate that when we enter this world it is with an inhale (Puraa) and when we exit we do so with an exhale (Rechaka). Pranayama (or prana shortened) is the fourth limb of yoga documented in 400 BCE. Prana is so important to me, that it is my website (prana.rocks) – it is our life force.

The technique I will share this month is alternative nostril breath (Nadi Shodhana). You have two nostrils, this breath's impact changes depending on which nostril you inhale from. If we inhale through the left nostril – this is Ida, which is the lunar (feminine channel). If we inhale right, this is Pingala, and is the solar (masculine) channel. Moons relax us, suns energize us.

Here are the steps for Ida Nadi Shodhana:

1. Create a mudra (a grip) with your fingers. With our right hand, press our ego (our index finger) into our self (our thumb). This is how you will grip your, your right index finger will be on/near your left nostril, your right thumb will be on/near your right nostril. Ideally you want your thumb higher than your index finger on your nose.
2. Pressing down on right with thumb breath out with left nostril.
3. Keep fingers the same breath in on left nostril.
4. Before breathing out – press left index on left nostril to block it – then release thumb and exhale through right nostril.
5. Before breathing in – press thumb on right nostril and release index finger. Breathe in on left nostril. You have completed on Ida Nadi Shodhana.

Note: To practice Pingala Nadi Shodhana – use your left hand with left thumb and index fingers to have inhalation occur on right nostril.

The MoM is to practice Nadi Shodhana twice a day for three days. In the morning I would invite you to practice Pingala Nadi Shodhana seated for five minutes. In the evening I invite you to practice Ida Nadi Shodhana for five minutes. You can combine this breath exercise (pre or post) to any of the other meditations we have practiced as homework (or in class). My morning and evening suggestions assumes you are most active during daylight hours (if this is not the case reverse my order to give yourself energy when prior to it being utilized).

Contemplation Questions:

Did your days feel different when you practiced?

Did your nights feel different when you practiced?

Did you experience clarity during the exercise?

If you pre/post fixed this exercise – how did it affect the other meditation technique?