

Add in Goodness: Air

When we think of air, inevitably we think of the air we breathe in. Whilst we can survive for a time without food or water, our breath is vital—it's our life force. From a physical perspective most people think just of the air quality outside, however our indoor environment quality is just as essential for supporting our health. Further, our breath is a powerful tool in calming our nervous system and helping to release our emotions.

The Air We Breathe

Many sources of poor indoor air quality are lurking in cleaning products, cosmetics, and air fresheners. In particular, beware of products that contain the ingredient "Fragrance"—over 3,000 chemicals fall under this description. For those with allergies or asthma, this is of concern so when buying home product be sure to read labels carefully and consider switching to fragrance free or scented products using 100% essential oils (please be aware that you can be allergic to essential oils as well).

Calming our Nervous System

Everyday pressures such as work deadlines, ringing phones, or fear of failure can cause a stress response. If we forget to check in with ourselves, we risk breathing in short, shallow breaths from the upper chest that causes the brain to send an emergency response to the body ("flight or fight" response). However, by slowing down and taking long deep breathes from the belly, we can learn to calm ourselves down. Take a moment, deliberately breath in slowly and deeply through the belly and slowly exhale. Do this 10x or until you feel yourself calm down.

Letting Go

Sometimes we hold in emotion in the same way we hold in our breath. And just as we need to exhale our breath, we can learn to exhale out the tension or stress we feel. One way of doing this is by visualising the release of a particular stressor. This is particularly effective whilst doing your breath practice—as you breathe in, think positive thoughts and on the out breath, picture yourself releasing any negative energy that you're holding on to.

Tips

1. Talk a daily walk outside, preferably in a park or in a nature reserve. Fresh air boosts your mood, helps improve immunity, and we often experience our most creative thoughts in the outdoors.
2. When the air quality is poor outside due to extreme smog or smoke, stay inside until it clears up.
3. Stick to home products without synthetic fragrances, but if you insist on a particular cleaner, keep the window open.
4. New furniture, curtains, or rugs made from synthetic materials? Often these will have a strong smell when unboxed so place them outside in the fresh air to release any toxic smells. Use paint with low or no VOCs and work with the windows open.
5. Check for hidden dust and mould under, on top of and behind furniture during cleaning.
6. Make breath practice part of your daily routine—explore yoga-based or meditation-based techniques and find one that resonates with you.
7. Let it go—close your eyes and breath out negative emotions, thoughts, stress, or fear of loss of control and just "be".