Alternate Nostril Breathing

This second breathing exercise can be used as a highly effective tool to balance your nervous system. In each of our nostrils, there are nerves that lead into the center of the brain. The brain has two sides. The right side is creative, inspirational, and relaxing. The left side is mechanical and calculating. The yogis have found that there is body rhythm in which every hour and twenty-eight minutes the sides of the brain alternate dominance. The nostrils reflect this. One nostril will also be dominant during this period. If the right side of the brain – the healing, resting side – is dominant, the left nostril will also be dominant. If the left side of the brain – the mechanical calculator – is dominant, the right nostril will be dominant.

In our typical fast-paced Western life style, most of our time is spent employing the mechanical and calculating activity of the left-brain. It is difficult in our society to structure one’s life for the creative, inspirational, healing, and relaxing activities of the right brain. These do not harmonize with the frenetic qualities of the American life-style, especially in the cities. Our very life-style forces an imbalance between the two sides of the brain, which creates a great deal of tension in our lives. By understanding that each nostril connects to the opposite side of the brain and using this information in a breathing exercise, you can actually balance the two sides of the brain, and the result is an amazing sense of equilibrium.

Sit in a chair or comfortably on the floor with your back straight. Essentially, what you will be doing in this exercise is breathing in one nostril and out the other, then in the second nostril and out the first. In other words, you will breathe in the left nostril to the count of six, using your finger to hold the right nostril closed. Hold the breath for three counts. Then release the right nostril and breathe out the count of six, closing off the left nostril with your finger, and breathing in the right for six counts. Hold for three counts. Then release the flow of air through your nostrils six times, you will experience an unbelievable sense of relaxation, and the balancing effect this will have on your brain will be miraculously tranquilizing. A tremendous peace and harmony will come into your being.

You can do this exercise as often as you wish, but you should try to do it at least once a day. It is especially helpful before a meeting or in preparation for a stressful and emotionally charged event.