



EXERCISE:

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EXERCISE

*Hara Breathing*³⁵

TIME: 30 MIN

REQUIRED MATERIALS: NONE

SUMMARY:

This is a simple breathing exercise that will help participants to become calm, centered, and clear. It should help to restore energy, and to set the tone for further exercises.

KEY EXPLANATION POINTS:

- Ask participants to get into a sitting or lying position (whichever is comfortable), close their eyes and quietly bring their attention to their body. The spine should be straight, in whichever position. If a participant is lying down, ask them to cover their navel area with their hands.
- Take a few deep breaths to clear your body and mind.
- Then, take a breath and bring it down all the way to your hara (literally your belly or your abdomen, the hara is a central area of power and essence – it is also referred to as the Sea of Energy). Explain that our hara is located about two fingers below your belly button, in your center, on the midline of your body and closer to the spine. This is your area of power in the body.
- Next, breathe in through your nose. While you're breathing in through your nose, place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth behind the front teeth. This is important as you're connecting the Yin Conception Vessel (runs up the middle of the front of the body) to the Yang Governor vessel (which runs up the middle of the back of the body, over the head, and terminates just above the upper lip).
- As you exhale, remove your tongue from the roof of your mouth and exhale through your mouth. As you inhale through your nose, have the tongue touching the roof of the mouth. As you exhale through your mouth, remove the tongue from the roof of your mouth.
- Practice inhaling and exhaling a few times. Now you're ready to start breathing from your belly. When you breathe from your belly, the muscles of the abdomen should be doing part of the work of breathing. You'll be able to feel your abdomen expand and contract while breathing just like you can feel your chest expand and contract while breathing. Practice breathing from your belly for a while. While you're doing this, air is getting into all of your lungs. When you breathe just from the chest, air does not always reach all places in your lungs. More important, when you're breathing from your belly, it encourages Qi (power) to flow smoothly through all parts of your body.
- Breathe through your belly, inhaling through your nose while the tongue is touching the roof of the mouth, exhaling through your mouth with the tongue not touching the roof. Practice for a while.
- Now you're ready for Hara breathing. You've already located the hara. Don't worry about not knowing exactly where this point is located, just so you know the general location. As you breathe from your belly, as you inhale with tongue touching roof of mouth, visualize a stream of golden particles entering through your nose



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and being sucked down to the area of the Hara. As you hold your breath, visualize the flow of golden particles circulating through your body, bringing energy and health to all parts of it. Now exhale. As you exhale you can visualize the breath taking black particles (toxins, bad Qi, etc.) out of your body. Now breathe in more healing, golden particles, circulate, and breathe out the negative.

- Do the breathing exercise a few times. You may want to start out with 5 breaths.

FACILITATION NOTES:

- This is a very calming exercise that can be used at the beginning of the day, particularly if no other centering techniques (such as yoga or qi gong) are used beforehand.
- It can also be used after an emotionally difficult session as a form of energiser.

Alternative option:

This exercise can be done more quickly if we focus only on breathing into and out from the hara, without teaching the technique of touching the tongue to the roof of the mouth on the inhale and removing on the exhale. In this case, the aim of the exercise is simply to help participants feel the location of the hara in their body, as a source of power and energy.

In this case, it can also be followed by teaching the martial art technique of 'ki-up', which is a self-defense form of shouting from the hara area. This can also be taught on its own as a quick energiser.