

## **Yoga Breathing - Breathe Stress Away**

By Michael Rudd - Open Space Yoga

"Take a deep breath", a common response from loved ones as they witness us feeling overwhelmed or stressed. Your loved ones are completely correct. Working from the premise that "Life is breath, breath is life", yoga places great emphasis on making the breathing deep, rhythmic and effective. The principle here is that essential thoughts and messages are delivered more effectively when the body is relaxed and the brain is well-oxygenated, helping the body and mind to work more successfully while feeling less tired and less stressed.

Shallow or stressed breathing tends to be in the upper portion of the chest; this type of breathing does not use the primary respiratory muscles and may also cause tense shoulder and neck muscles. Yoga breathing lowers blood pressure and brings intense relaxation. Of course, shallow breathing does not always cause unclear thinking or low spirits, but has been medically linked with attacks of depression, mood swings and other various disorders.

Try closing your eyes with your hands around the lower portion of your ribs with relaxed shoulders. Observe where your breath tends to initiate, is it in the middle of the ribs? High in the chest? or more in the belly? With your hands firmly around the lower ribs draw the breath through the nostrils down into your hands. Allow your ribs to expand, feel this as your fingers also expand on your ribs. Imagine that you have a balloon in the centre of your rib cage expanding in all directions, top, bottom, front and back and notice how the breath instantly is calming to the nervous system.

In a yoga class setting, the breath is completely integrated with the movement and postures. The first step to a healthy stress-free being is to take control of your body, and bring it into its best condition which nature designed for you. Yoga is about breaking habits and getting back to your instincts, which you may have forgotten. Practicing yoga regularly in a calm serene setting can bring freedom back to your body and freedom of your mind will follow.

Michael Rudd is the owner and one of five certified instructors at Open Space Yoga Studio & Store in the Heart of Ladner Village just 15 minutes from Steveston. Open Space Yoga offers yoga classes, workshops and Tai Chi classes for all levels of ability. For more information call 778-858-9642 or visit [www.OpenSpaceYoga.com](http://www.OpenSpaceYoga.com)