OXY THERAPY:

The All Natural Secret To Great Health & Vitality

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Published by Kevin Richardson

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Table of Contents

Introduction

When it comes to the most basic wants and needs your body craves, you might think that food, water, and shelter trump everything and everyone. After all, going without shelter leaves you vulnerable to the elements, many of which can kill us in mere minutes (anyone living in extreme heat or cold can certainly attest to that). It's also no slight exaggeration to say that food and water is absolutely essential to our survival. Research has shown that the human body can only last 72 hours without water; without food, our bodies are in slightly better shape with a survival time of two to three weeks.

With this in mind, it's easy to see why people with food in their mouths, a roof over their heads, and clean water in their taps might think that they have all their basics covered. But not so fast – there's one other basic that's so critical to your survival, you might not realize its power until it's ripped away from your hands.

That, readers, would be oxygen.

Surprised by this reminder? Don't be: it's so easy to take oxygen for granted that we hardly consider it in our day-to-day lives, despite the fact that every minute of every day our bodies are taking in life-giving oxygen. But when we're no longer given access to oxygen – or worse, when we're literally unable to breathe – we're very quickly reminded of how critical oxygen can be to our happiness and health, as well as our survival.

Consider these two very different scenarios to see the link between the two:

Robert is an avid swimmer who enjoys competitive racing in the summer months. In order to train for these races, Robert often swims during the colder spring months, which physically prepares him for the start of the season. During one particularly strenuous training session, Robert is making his best time when suddenly he gets pulled under the waves by a strong undertow. Robert is surprised by the strength of this current; he's been swimming for so long that he's forgotten just how quickly these ocean currents can take over a swimmer.

As he kicks and fights his way to the surface, Robert is pulled under by a wave. While he was able to keep his head above water before, Robert finds that it's much harder work to break through to the ocean's surface. As he kicks and swims, Robert realizes with a panic that he's starting to run out of air. His lungs are beginning to burn, and his mind can only focus on the fact that he needs air as quickly as possible. With every passing second, Robert's body screams for oxygen as he swims his way to the surface. All he can think about is taking in that lifesaving breath of fresh air – and he's desperate for it.

Fortunately, Robert is able to break the surface of the water and suck in the air. He carefully treads water for the next few minutes, sucking in deep breaths of air before he continues swimming. With every breath he takes, he feels his body start to get back to normal. His head starts to feel clear again and the burning sensation in his lungs begin fading. Eventually, his muscles feel strong enough that he's able to keep on swimming to the shore. For the rest of the day, Robert thinks about his brush with death, and is grateful for every breath of oxygen he's able to take.

On the same day that Robert encounters his brush with death, Leti is working in Manhattan at her day job as a bike messenger. For this job, Leti picks up packages from offices all over the city, and delivers them as quickly as possible that same day. That means she's weaving in and out of traffic all day long, experiencing a great deal of air pollution, smog, and other damaging free radicals. During her first few months on the job, Leti wears a handkerchief over her mouth to block the air pollution. However, as soon as Leti develops a cough and begins to wheeze whenever she goes to the gym, she realizes that she needs to protect herself a little more during her job. She buys a facemask that's designed to prevent her from breathing in the pollutants from the city's traffic. Despite taking these steps to protecting herself, she's still encountering these troubling symptoms:

- *Whenever she coughs or blows her nose, she notices that her phlegm is black from air pollution. This worries her, as she knows that soot, pollutants, and other dirt are probably coating her lungs with every minute she's on the job.*

- *She keeps waking up with headaches, despite being in relatively good health. She also constantly feels dehydrated, so she starts drinking a lot more water. But no matter how much water she drinks, she's still*

suffering from the annoying headaches and dry mouth that's been plaguing her lately.

- *While Leti's job is very physical, she also finds herself running out of breath more often than when she was younger and living in the country. Her muscles fatigue faster, which means that by the time she's done with the work day, she's feeling so exhausted that she can barely cook herself dinner.*

Leti's concerned about her health, so she decides to take herself to the doctor's office to get some real answers. She's nervous for the appointment, as she expects to hear an awful diagnosis based on all of her symptoms. However, when her doctor conducts a breathing test and tells her she's not taking in enough oxygen, she's so surprised that she's speechless. Leti wasn't expecting the root of her problems to be so simple and yet so profound at the same time.

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As you can see, Robert and Leti are two very different individuals, each with their own unique experiences as to what can happen when the body doesn't take in enough oxygen. With Robert, we can see what happens in an emergency situation, where the body is cut off completely from oxygen and begins to shutdown. However, Leti's case is a much more intriguing one simply because most readers can probably relate to it more. As much of the world's population lives in cities – with the remainder greatly impacted by transport and growing communities – it's safe to say that we're constantly exposed to a similar scenario as Leti on a daily basis.

For example, take a look at the following scenarios to see just how poor oxygen quality is common in your own life:

- You spend your commute sitting in traffic.
- You take public transportation to and from work.
- You go for runs outside, or you regularly take bike rides with your family.
- You live on a street with a decent amount of traffic.
- You don't have the healthiest diet; in fact, you commonly eat junk food whenever possible.
- You spend a great deal of time indoors, watching television or surfing the Internet on your computer.
- You don't get as much exercise as you should.
- You feel constantly stressed out by your job, your lifestyle, or even your relationships with loved ones.

These scenarios are so common that it'd be extremely rare to find a reader who can't relate to what we've just outlined. Unfortunately, this all means that in some way or another, you're not getting the optimal amount of oxygen you need to ensure that you're functioning at 100%.

Think about it this way: every cell in your body craves oxygen. Your cells need oxygen in order to build more cells, maintain healthy connections throughout the body, repair tears and wounds, and keep your immune system strong against infections and bacteria. And those are just the cells outside of your brain; dive deeper into the folds of your mind, and you'll find that your neurons use oxygen to form the basis for the very thoughts in your head right now. Without oxygen, it'd be impossible to form opinions, use your senses, or even read the words on the screen right now.

Don't believe it? Take a deep breath and hold it for as long as you feel comfortable (we don't want you passing out in the middle of your page!). As you hold your breath, head to the top of this page and start reading as normal. Notice how difficult it is to focus on your reading as your lungs begin to beg for air? That's because your neurons, when starved for oxygen, are unable to do their jobs. You're no longer able to form intelligent thoughts or comprehend the words on the page you just read; instead, all you can focus on is how good it will feel to open your mouth and breathe in air.

In short, when your body is starved for oxygen, it begins to focus on *survival*; not on optimizing your body's health and happiness.

That's the primary theme that you'll find throughout the book – that by optimizing your oxygen intake, you'll take your body from a point of just going through the motions, to a point where everything is enhanced, clear, and vitalized. Think about it this way: instead of making it through the day with a wheezing cough or a constant headache that makes you feel like mainlining ibuprofen, you'll be at the top of your game. You'll feel much more energetic, alive, and able to take on your day. You'll be able to deal with common stressors without experiencing a significant impact on your health.

What's more, you'll be able to approach your job, your relationships and your *life* with the kind of enhanced attitude that can only come from providing your body with the fuel it needs to thrive.

While we've outlined the main theme that this book is going to focus on, it's also critical to share with you what this book is *not*. This is a book that will explore the scientific foundations of why oxygen is so critical to our survival – and why we're not getting enough of it in this day and age. Readers can also expect to learn about different techniques used in oxytherapy – a type of treatment that enhances a person's ability to take in more oxygen – while understanding the impact it can have on one's mental and physical health.

In this respect, this book is a scientific and medical guide that readers can use in their own homes to enhance their abilities to feel healthier and happier. While there will be some meditative exercises to enhance breathing skills, this book is not meant to approach oxytherapy from a spiritual or holistic standpoint. Instead, readers will understand how oxygen is used by each cell to enhance the body's performance, and undergo exercises to do just that.

While you're reading the very sentences within this book, your brain and body are practically buzzing with active and productive cells. Some might be busy repairing a muscle that's been weakened by exercise; others might be taking this very sentence and analyzing it within the folds and recesses of your mind. No matter what your cells are doing, it's important to acknowledge one simple truth: each cell is unable to operate at optimal capacity unless you provide it with the oxygen it needs.

And with this book by your side, you'll be able to do exactly that.

Chapter One:
Clearing the Air

Breathing, like blinking or swallowing, is such an unconscious act to us that we barely register its existence until it's threatened. Think about it: at this very moment, you've probably taken several breaths without even noticing that it has happened. That's just one of the miraculous ways our body was designed to operate – we don't have to think about every single process occurring within our body just to make them happen. Just imagine what it would be like to have a body that would only heal itself after willed each cell to repair your muscle walls, or to actively think about each blink of an eye just to prevent your eyes from drying out.

While this unconscious ability to breathe without thinking about the action is certainly just one of the amazing things our bodies can do, it also leaves us vulnerable to the day-to-day stimuli that can impact our breathing. When we're feeling stressed or overwhelmed on a daily basis, we're more likely to pay attention to the most conscious feelings and emotions that are competing for our attention.

For example, if your muscles are aching because you're overworked, you'll probably take care of your muscles through a combination of stretching, medication, and de-stressing techniques.

But what about the unconscious body processes that can be just as impacted by our daily stresses? Just because our breath can't be "sore" or "ache" like a muscle doesn't mean that it's not suffering under the weight of environmental pollution, a stressful lifestyle, or a lack of sleep. Unfortunately, in many cases, we're only aware that our unconscious body processes may be in trouble when they've produced symptoms that are especially troubling. When it comes to breathing, we might not be aware that we're not providing our bodies with enough oxygen, until we've encountered the following symptoms:

- Insomnia, or a constant feeling of exhaustion and fatigue;
- Constant headaches
- Dizziness and confusion
- A bluish tint to the body, especially around the ears, fingers, and lips
- Elevated blood pressure levels
- Elevated red blood cell count
- Rapid heart beat
- Rapid breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Lack of coordination

Each of these symptoms is our body's way of telling us that we're not breathing properly – however, many of these symptoms can easily be

hidden under a veil of stress and anxiety. How many times have you felt your heart beat faster, only to brush it off as being overly caffeinated or perhaps stressed about a big project at work? How many of us have shrugged off a headache, choosing to take a pain pill instead of wondering just what's at the root of the headache in the first place?

Fortunately, there are ways to get in touch with our breath, which can help us better understand when we need to increase our oxygen intake and quality. This begins by learning just why oxygen is so critical to our bodies, and how our bodily processes formed around such a simple yet overwhelming crucial task: taking in a deep breath of fresh air.

Oxygen and Your Cells: A Long and Elaborate Affair

The roots of one of history's greatest conundrums can be found right in the air that's circulating within your lungs. With every breath you take, you're breathing in a fascinating and lurid history of life on earth, with some of the most complex and fascinating mysteries that scientists are still puzzling over to this day. That puzzle is this:

If life could not exist without oxygen, and oxygen could not be created without life, how did life and oxygen become so entangled together?

This mystery has many different answers within scientific disciplines; even some religious scholars are involved within the conversation, as it's essential to understanding why humans came to be on this planet in the first place. However, a majority of scientists agree that life could form on an oxygen-free planet because simplistic organic compounds

didn't necessarily need oxygen to form. A compound simply needs carbon in order to be considered organic (hence, why organic chemistry is essentially the study of the carbon element's interactions with other compounds and elements). Without the presence of oxygen, life could slowly form and begin to build, as oxygen could have oxidized and destroyed simplistic carbon compounds. Keep in mind that life here would have resembled bacteria or a germ; nothing like the life we think of nowadays. As life began to accumulate on Earth – and began to develop simplistic cellular functions – the presence of oxygen began to increase, which marked the beginning of a symbiotic relationship between life and air.

It's thought that over half of Earth's lifespan had passed by the time life developed into a simplistic, single-cell compound. At this point, the presence of oxygen within Earth's atmosphere must have exploded, although scientists are still not sure if these single-celled organisms were responsible for the increase, or if the presence of more oxygen was responsible for the development of the single-celled organism. Regardless of who came first in this classic chicken-or-the-egg conundrum, these single-celled organisms began consuming the oxygen available within the atmosphere, which was ten times the amount previously available to life forms. Remarkably, this concentration of oxygen in the environment remained consistent for about two billion years, when the atmosphere began to change yet again by increasing the amount of available oxygen. Not surprisingly, life on Earth underwent a significant shift at the same time, resulting in more advanced compounds with a higher cell count. It's estimated that this cycle continued for two billion years, until it leveled out to the current atmosphere we have today (scientists' estimate that this occurred

approximately 100 million years ago).[1] This level has been relatively stable recently, thanks to the development of the ozone layer, which is responsible for protecting Earth – and the life forms on it – from the dangerous UV rays of the sun.

Despite the presence of an atmosphere that was welcoming to humans, man didn't appear on the planet until approximately two million years ago. To help visualize how recent our arrival was, consider Earth's history to be equivalent to 24 hours. That means that we've been in existence for a total of thirty seconds. When put into those terms, it's incredible to see just how much of an impact we've had on Earth in the extremely brief time we've been on this planet.

One can only imagine that humans formed on this planet due to a multitude of miraculously perfect conditions. With the atmosphere's oxygen levels balanced and stable – not to mention protected by the ozone layer – multi-celled organisms were able to rapidly evolve into the complex creations that were primitive man. Thanks to a combination of other environmental factors and developments, primitive man evolved over the course of time to become the unique, multi-celled, highly advanced organisms that we are today.

Needless to say, over the course of thousands – even millions of years – our cells became intrinsically linked to the presence of oxygen in the atmosphere. Scientists aren't necessarily sure when our cells became so dependent upon oxygen, but the outcome is this: without oxygen, our cells wouldn't be able to perform their most basic activities. At the most basic level, oxygen is necessary for what's known as "cellular respiration"; in other words, the cell's ability to obtain energy from glucose. This energy is critical for many of the cell's main functions, including the following:

- Cell growth
- Repair of muscle tissues
- Maintaining and controlling the body's movements
- Reproduction
- Excretion of toxic wastes from the body

Without the ability to break down the energy from glucose, our cells wouldn't be able to perform the above functions. Glucose – which is derived from the foods we eat – isn't available as energy that our cells can use right from the get-go; instead, our cells must break down glucose into usable and easily converted energy. To do this, our cells take oxygen and combine it with the glucose, which is then broken down by enzyme reactions. Without this process, our bodies wouldn't be able to repair itself, grow, move, or function as we know it.

What's more, our cells are responsible for processing and removing carbon dioxide from the body via our exhalations. Carbon dioxide is produced as a by-product of chemical respiration; if it's not removed from the body, it can affect its pH balance, which can be toxic to the cells and bloodstream. As the body's pH balance dips low, the body's enzymes and cells are no longer able to break down glucose into usable energy, which can have dire results. That's why removing carbon dioxide is just as critical to the body's health as breathing in oxygen itself; the two processes cannot be separated.

The bottom line is this: without oxygen, our body's cells are unable to perform even their most basic functions. That's why it's so important to focus on providing them with optimal levels of oxygen – the more oxygen you take in, the more fuel you'll be providing your body, and the better you'll feel as a result.

In other words, breathing ensures the majority of our body's ability to be healthy, happy, and successful. Not bad for an unconscious body process to which we barely give a second thought!

Using Oxygen To Cure Ailments

In today's society, medications and prescriptions are commonly used to treat a variety of ailments, no matter how severe or even common they might be. Think about it this way: when you're suffering from a muscle ache as soon as you wake up in the morning, are you more likely to explore the roots of why this ache is there, or will you just take a couple of ibuprofen and get on with your busy day? When you're suffering from a cold, are you more likely to sit back and relax, or will you simply take cold medicine and try to get through the day?

We're quick to medicate our ailments, especially when they get in the way of our day-to-day lives. While this might provide you with short-term relief, it's certainly not going to bring you long-term benefits. Over medicating our most common ailments can make it difficult for us to determine why these symptoms are occurring in the first place – and when they're getting worse.

For example, if you have a muscle ache, taking ibuprofen may make you feel better, but it could be hiding the real reasons why you're not feeling well. You're more likely to go to the doctor if your muscle pain feels worse – but if you're masking the symptom with pain medication, you might wait until your pain is so great that it's practically debilitating.

Fortunately, there's another way to treat your most common ailments – and it doesn't have to be found in a pill bottle or behind the desk of a pharmacy. In fact, the best treatment for your ailments and pains can be found all around you – because it's oxygen.

At this point, you know that your cells require oxygen in order to properly function. When you're not providing your body with enough oxygen (and for reasons we'll explore in a later chapter of this book), your cells aren't able to function at their most optimal levels. This could result in a host of problems, including the following:

- You're more likely to get sick when your cells aren't functioning at their best levels. Your cells are responsible for maintaining your immune system – and if they're suffering from a lack of oxygen, your immune system will be too weak to fight off germs, bacteria, and viruses.

- Your cells are responsible for repairing your muscles and tissues; when they're weak from lack of oxygen, you may find that aches, pains, and wounds linger for much longer than they should.

- Healthy cells help your body move without pain or weakness; however, when your cells are compromised, you're more likely to suffer from aches and pains as you move.

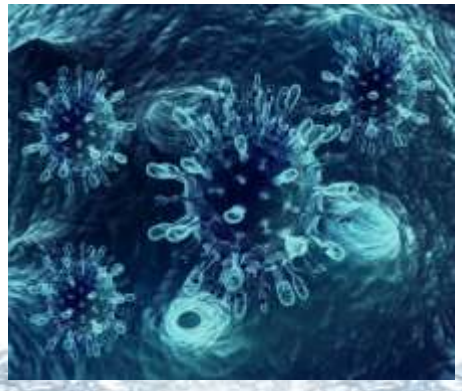
As you can see, cells that suffer from a lack of oxygen are unable to fulfill their most basic functions – and that will manifest as significant aches, pains, and illnesses.

If you constantly get sick or have muscle aches for no reason at all, it's highly likely that you're not supplying your body with the oxygen it needs to function at its most optimal levels.

Despite the fact that oxygen therapy promises exciting health benefits, it's still a relatively controversial topic, especially within traditional medical fields. Blame it on the fact that our society is so ready to treat all ailments with prescription medication; when research suggests that oxygen is just as effective at treating diseases as some prescription medications worth five-figures, it's no wonder many treat these findings with more than a hint of trepidation. However, as more research is being directed toward this new field of study, it's becoming even clearer that oxygen is going to be the treatment of the future.

Let's take a look at a few of these studies now to see why oxytherapy represents the medicine of tomorrow:

Dr. Otto Heinrich Warburg, a German physician, physiologist, and Nobel laureate, was one of the first medical pioneers to discover that oxygen therapy could have very real effects on severe ailments, including cancer. During multiple studies during his tenure as a doctor post-World War II, Dr. Warburg found that hydrogen peroxide therapy (a form of oxygen therapy we'll explore in a later section of this book) could be ideal for destroying anaerobic cancer cells and tumors. During his research, Dr. Warburg found that there were crucial differences between normal, healthy cells, and



cancerous cells that threatened to turn into fatal tumors. When Dr. Warburg used hydrogen peroxide therapy on his patients, he found that cancerous cells were more likely to be destroyed than normal, healthy cells. In a paper on his research, Dr. Warburg reached the following conclusions:

> ***"Both [normal cells and cancerous cells] derive energy from glucose, but the normal cell requires oxygen to combine with the glucose, while the cancer cells break down glucose without oxygen, yielding only 1/15 the energy per glucose molecule that a normal cell produces. This is why cancer cells have such a huge appetite for sugar, and also why people who consume excessive quantities of sugar tend to get cancer more often."***

While this conclusion is oversimplified – especially considering our new understanding of why cancer occurs and how genetic mutations play a role – it does reveal something incredibly crucial about oxygen therapy and its impact on cancerous growth. In studies conducted by Tiecher and Rose in 1984 and Tarpy and Farber in 1994, these researchers found that tumors have irregular blood flow, which prevents oxygen from getting to these cancerous cells. Researchers found that when blood veins collapse in cancerous growths, it cuts off oxygen levels, which evolves into hypoxia within cancerous growths. In an intriguing turn of events, researchers found that when cancerous growths don't have access to oxygen, it severely limits the effects of radiation therapy. This means that oxygen therapy shouldn't be regarded as a "holistic" or alternative therapy, but rather as a very real and necessary part of any effective cancer treatment.

It's not just cancer that shows compelling evidence that it can be treated by oxygen therapy; patients suffering from hypoxia and lung disease may also be relieved by oxygen therapies. In more research by Tarpy and Garber in 1994, these researchers found that the most important benefits of oxygen therapy (especially in the long-term) could be found

in the survival rates of hypoxemia, which is a disease that causes extremely low levels of oxygen within the blood. Patients who suffer from hypoxemia typically suffer from shortness of breath, and causes of this disease can range from living in higher altitudes from suffering from sleep apnea. Those individuals who suffer from hypoxemia are more likely to have shorter life spans, as this condition can lead to a host of complications and illnesses that may have fatal consequences. Naturally, oxygen therapy – which ensures that cells are provided the oxygen they need to function at a normal level – can help ensure long-term survival of patients who suffer from hypoxemia.

In a study that supports Tarpy and Garber's findings, the British Medical Research Council Study and the Nocturnal Oxygen Therapy Trial found that an individual's survival rate was directly in proportion to the number of hours he or she underwent oxygen therapy. This study concluded with the findings that "data from the DOTT showed that mortality in a group of patients receiving 19 hours of oxygen per day was one-half that of a group that received 12 hours of daily oxygen."[2] Again, these studies and findings support the fact that oxygen therapy deserves elevated status within the medical community.

Additional studies have even suggested that oxygen therapy could be a viable treatment for AIDS. However, these studies provided anecdotal evidence, rather than results from a controlled study. However, our understanding of AIDS today has shown that there is nothing yet that can be used to destroy the HIV virus, which causes AIDS. Oxygen therapy can help patients with AIDS by relieving complications caused by hypoxemia, which is common among patients with the HIV virus.

Finally, there are additional studies that have been shown to provide relief to patients who suffer from a variety of ailments, including the following:

Severe trauma to the limbs: When patients experience limb loss or other significant traumas, hyperbaric oxygen therapy has been shown to provide oxygen support to the damaged veins, thus encouraging prompt and effective vascular repair. Without oxygen therapy, physicians and researchers have found that a lack of oxygen therapy may increase the amount of damage that veins and muscle tissues experience during these traumatic events.

Headache relief: Headaches can often be caused by mild carbon monoxide poisoning, which is much more common than one might think. This is an important distinction between common headaches, which can occur for a variety of reasons. Headaches that occur from carbon monoxide poisoning can be treated with oxygen therapy; more specifically, by administering pure oxygen to the patients for four to six hours. This might seem like a rare occurrence; however, research has shown that carbon monoxide poisoning is the leading cause of poison-related deaths in the United States. That means that carbon monoxide is a very real and prevalent threat within households – and oxygen therapy can provide a quick and effective treatment for family members who experience this potentially fatal event.

With so many studies and research supporting the fact that oxygen therapy can provide significant medical relief for patients suffering from

cancer and lung disease to traumatic injuries to the limb, why isn't more research being dedicated to discovering the additional benefits that oxygen therapy can bring to the medical field?

Unfortunately, economic incentives play a real and powerful role in the development of oxygen therapy. Unlike prescription medications and other medical treatments, oxygen is free and cannot be turned into a profitable "drug" by hospitals, pharmacies, and insurance companies. While this might sound like a cynical stance to take, it's important for readers to realize that the economics of medicine play a critical role in determining which drugs are developed and marketed, and which are placed on the backburner in favor of more profitable strategies. Additionally, much of the secrecy behind oxygen therapy comes from the fact that a large majority of drugs, therapies, and treatments would be rendered obsolete, as it would be replaced by oxygen therapy. Again, this provides much of the medical community with a great incentive to keep oxygen therapy on the backburner, as it ensures that profits can still be made from the public.

While this book certainly isn't dedicated to becoming a whistleblower, it does demonstrate that readers need to understand just how critical oxygen therapy can be to maintaining a happy and healthy lifestyle. By incorporating better quality oxygen into your life, you may find that many of your most common ailments and complaints are minimized or even eliminated. Given the fact that our bodies are designed to take in as much oxygen as possible, this is one medical therapy that doesn't carry any risks or complications to try.

In fact, incorporating oxygen therapy into your own life represents the classic win-win scenario: you'll lose nothing by trying it, but you'll have everything to gain, including better health and a newfound zest for life.

Historical Examples Of Oxygen Therapy

One of the biggest hesitations that people have about oxygen therapy is that it's seen as a relatively "new" medical therapy. Like with all treatments that are new or "trendy," many people approach it with trepidation, as they're not sure about the long-term benefits of this medical treatment. While oxygen therapy may seem to be relatively new, it's been around for thousands of years – thus proving that this type of treatment is older than the invention of medicine itself. Let's take a look at how some of the world's oldest cultures have used oxygen therapy to treat their biggest ailments and diseases.

Hindu Philosophies on Oxygen: Perhaps some of the oldest examples of oxygen therapies can be found in ancient. Hindu philosophies, which establish the connection between life and air. Hindu philosophers – including Charaka and Susrata – regarded this connection as a "prana vayu," which regards air as the foundation for life on earth. In the 13th century, Hindu physician Sarangadhara took this philosophy further by describing the concept of respiration, which involves inhaling air, letting it touch the interior (or hydaya) and exhaling it. During this process, Sarangadhara notes that air "nourishes the entire body" and provides it with life-giving sustenance. Sarangadhara also described air as "the food of the gods," as he regarded it as vital to all organs that support life. Historians have translated Sarangadhara's medical texts and have deduced that when he refers to "nectar-like substance," he is actually referring to oxygen.

Greek Philosophies on Oxygen:

Like ancient Hindu philosophers, ancient Greeks had established philosophies on air's life-giving properties over 2500 years ago. In fact, Aristotle – one of the first and most famous of Greek philosophers – identified that there were four essential elements necessary to human life: earth, air, fire, and water. This philosophy remained stagnant until in the 3rd century BC, when Greeks began to share their philosophies with Egyptian medical researchers and teachers. Erasistatus, a medical teacher and philosopher living in Alexandria, the cultural capital of Egypt, first demonstrated to the Greeks that air and blood are essential to life. He showed that the blood to the vital organs within the body carries air, thus ensuring that life could be sustained. This basic theory was later expanded and explained in detail by Galen in the 2nd century AD, when he demonstrated that respiration was a quintessential two-way street: the body inhales life-giving air, and exhales waste vapors.

As you can see, much of ancient history's approach to oxygen is from a philosophical standpoint, not necessarily from a medical or physiological one. That means that much of history's ideas about oxygen are connected to life from a spiritual level. However, as the Renaissance began to spread throughout Europe and explorers came into contact with more medically advanced cultures (including those in East Asia and the Middle East), history's understanding of oxygen began to advance and shift into the modern medical comprehension we have today.

Here are a few significant developments that have helped advance the understanding of the relationship between oxygen and the body:

- In 1541, William Harvey "discovered" the circulation of blood; while this was a major development in medicine, Harvey said nothing about the connection between circulation, oxygen, and cellular functions.

- In the 17th century, four doctors from Oxford found that air was critical for life and was transmitted through the body by blood. These doctors found that when blood was oxygenated, it became bright red (experiments revealed that the darker colors of blood became bright red as soon as it passed through the lungs).

- A century after these important findings, history first discovers the mentioning of "oxygen," which is discovered and replicated in a laboratory. Antoine Laurent Lavoisier is the first person to develop the term "oxygen," which leads to an outbreak of research and study on this "new" gas.

- After the discovery of oxygen, doctors and scientists develop what's regarded as "miasma theory," which is the belief that sickness can be transmitted by smell. In other words, if you smell something sickly in the air, you'll develop a disease as a result of that foul smell. Miasma theory is later dismantled when John Snow, a former priest, maps out cholera outbreaks in Victorian London and proves that germs, not in the air aided by bad smells, transmit disease.

- During this time, oxygen therapy is developed in Victorian England to treat medical disorders. While doctors have long recommended that sickly patients take in the ocean air by traveling to the seaside, Thomas Beddoes used pure oxygen to help treat patients who were suffering from a range of ailments and maladies, from headaches and

nausea to hysteria and consumption (or what we know today as lung cancer). This is the first development of oxygen therapy, which will evolve and change over the next two centuries into what we know today as oxytherapy.

- Just twenty years after the dismantling of miasma theory, Pfluger discovered and described tissue respiration, which further encouraged the idea that blood was responsible for transmitting oxygen to cells and tissues within the human body. At the same time, explorers were attempting to climb the highest mountain peaks in the world, which led to the discovery of oxygen deficiency. While this discovery had fatal consequences for these brave explorers, scientists concluded that when oxygen is cut off from the body and brain, life-sustaining organs begin to shut down.

- Oxygen therapy didn't experience a significant shift in administration until after World War II, when the medical community became interested in exercise, lung disease, and other suddenly prevalent health conditions. Many doctors reversed common lung conditions with oxygen administration; others perfected the delivery process so that patients had access to the right amount of oxygen for their maladies and ailments.

As you can see, important figures throughout history have been focused on the study of oxygen and its influence on our bodies. This shows that oxygen therapy isn't a "new" or alternative therapy that should be treated with hesitation or trepidation; in fact, it's one of the oldest and most studied therapies that are in existence today.

The Different Oxygen Therapies Available Today

While oxygen therapy may not be as popular a treatment as, say, taking ibuprofen or undergoing a round of chemotherapy to shrink a tumor, there are many oxygen therapies that have been developed to treat a variety of ailments and health conditions. Patients with lung disease and hypoxemia have had great results after undergoing oxygen therapy, as it makes it possible for their bodies to experience the kind of normal oxygen levels that are necessary for repairing and maintaining bodily processes. As a result of the successes that oxygen therapy has produced, this treatment has evolved into different types of oxygen therapy, including the following:

Hydrogen Peroxide Therapy: This is a type of oxygen therapy that many people are probably familiar with; after all, how many times did your parent put hydrogen peroxide on a wound or scrape to clean it out? That's exactly why hydrogen peroxide therapy is such a popular treatment; this compound (which is regarded as a chemically active form of oxygen) is one of the most basic yet effective cleaning treatments, and is incredibly cheap. However, hydrogen peroxide therapies that involve more than simply cleaning a wound should be administered by a medical professional, as studies have shown that too much hydrogen peroxide can cause illnesses and, in some serious cases, even death. We'll discuss the intricacies of this type of oxygen therapy in a later section of this book.

Ozone Therapy: This alternative medical treatment increases the amount of oxygen that's circulated through the body by introducing it to ozone, which is composed of a unique oxygen compound known as

trioxide. This is an incredibly powerful version of oxygen that was developed for commercial and consumer uses, as it has been shown to quickly increase oxygen levels within the human body. However, like with a large majority of oxygen therapies, it's important to note that medical professionals should administer this, as too much trioxide can be dangerous. What's more, ozone therapy involves injections into the body, be they through the vagina or rectum, or directly into the veins. With this in mind, no reader should attempt ozone therapy without the direct supervision of a licensed medical professional, as it's too easy for complications to occur during the injection process. We'll discuss further details about ozone therapy – including how it's used within the medical community - in a later section of this book.

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy: This is perhaps one of the most common forms of oxygen therapy, and for good reason: studies have shown that this type of oxygen administration can have the greatest effect on common ailments, with little to no side effects. During hyperbaric oxygen therapy, a patient is placed into a sealed room that is pumped with pure oxygen. During the session, the room is pressurized at one to three times the normal atmospheric pressure, thus ensuring that the patient is able to receive the greatest amount of viable oxygen with a limited timeframe. Hyperbaric oxygen therapy is also surprisingly efficient; it can be used to treat one patient at a time, or, if the hospital has multiple chambers, it can treat dozens of patients in one session.

As far as oxygen therapies go, this is perhaps the most mainstream of all treatments, as it's used to help patients delay bone damage that can be caused by chemotherapy and radiation treatments. Additionally, there is some scientific evidence to support the fact that pure oxygen can destroy a variety of germs, bacteria, and other infections, thus ensuring that a patient is able to stay

healthy during treatments that could potentially eradicate the immune system.

Here's an interesting fact that might surprise you: fundamental concepts behind hyperbaric oxygen therapy is also used within the commercial and entertainment worlds. Many big-name theme parks find that pumping out pure oxygen – along with aromatic scents, like homemade cookies and cinnamon – can help patrons feel more energetic and hungry. This translates into bigger sales, as patrons are more likely to stay longer at the parks and buy more products (especially food). On a similar note, casinos in Las Vegas and other locations have been known to pump out oxygen onto the floors in order to increase the energy levels of their patrons. The reasoning behind it is simple: the more energetic and refreshed their patrons feel, the more likely it is that these individuals will stay on the floor and gamble.

It's certainly a surprising and, quite frankly, genius way of using oxygen to help increase profit levels.

As this chapter has demonstrated, oxygen therapies have been around since philosophers and scientists first drew breath into their bodies. Because there's such a delicate balance between the preservation of life and normal oxygen levels, it's not surprising that the medical community has begun to focus more on how oxygen can be used alongside mainstream drug treatments. Perhaps as the years go on, oxygen therapy will get its time in the spotlight, regardless of the lack of economic incentives that this treatment carries. Until that day, it's up to readers to educate themselves as to how oxygen therapies can help cure common ailments, aches, pains, and even some serious – potentially fatal – diseases.

And by picking up this book, that's exactly what you're doing.

It's time to make like a scientist and conduct a little research of your own. Hop online and find out which companies, casinos, or other establishments use oxygen ventilation within their business practices. Once you've made this list, make a commitment to visiting at least one of these locations to experience how your body reacts to breathing in better quality oxygen. Spend at least an hour within the business or establishment to ensure you've consumed enough oxygen to produce a noticeable change. Use the following questions to help pinpoint precisely how your body reacted:

- ✓ Do you feel more awake after spending time in the building, or do you feel the same energy levels that you felt before you walked in?
- ✓ How alert do you feel? Do you find it easier to concentrate? Do you feel sluggish at all?
- ✓ Notice the difference in your energy levels once you leave the building. How have they changed? How do you feel now?

If you'd like, consider taking notes to clarify the physical reactions between how you feel in a normal environment, and how you feel in one where oxygen levels are elevated. It's likely that you'll notice how energetic, clear, and focused you feel, which is exactly what breathing in better quality oxygen can do for you.

The change can be amazing – and if you've haven't experienced it for yourself, make a commitment to visiting an establishment that uses higher elevated oxygen levels to encourage spending. The change is palpable, which is exactly why oxygen therapy continues to be one of

the most exciting developments in the medical community. One can only imagine that as time progresses, medical professionals, researchers, and scientists will continue to discover new advances and treatments that further the idea that oxygen therapy should be the first resort for most ailments, diseases, and health conditions.

Finishing It Up: A Five-Minute Breathing Exercise

In order to encapsulate what you've learned throughout this chapter, let's take a moment to engage in a quick breathing exercise that will help you realize just how powerful oxygen can be. Find a quiet area in your home or office – this exercise can even be done in the privacy of your car during a commute. Use the following steps to master this exercise:

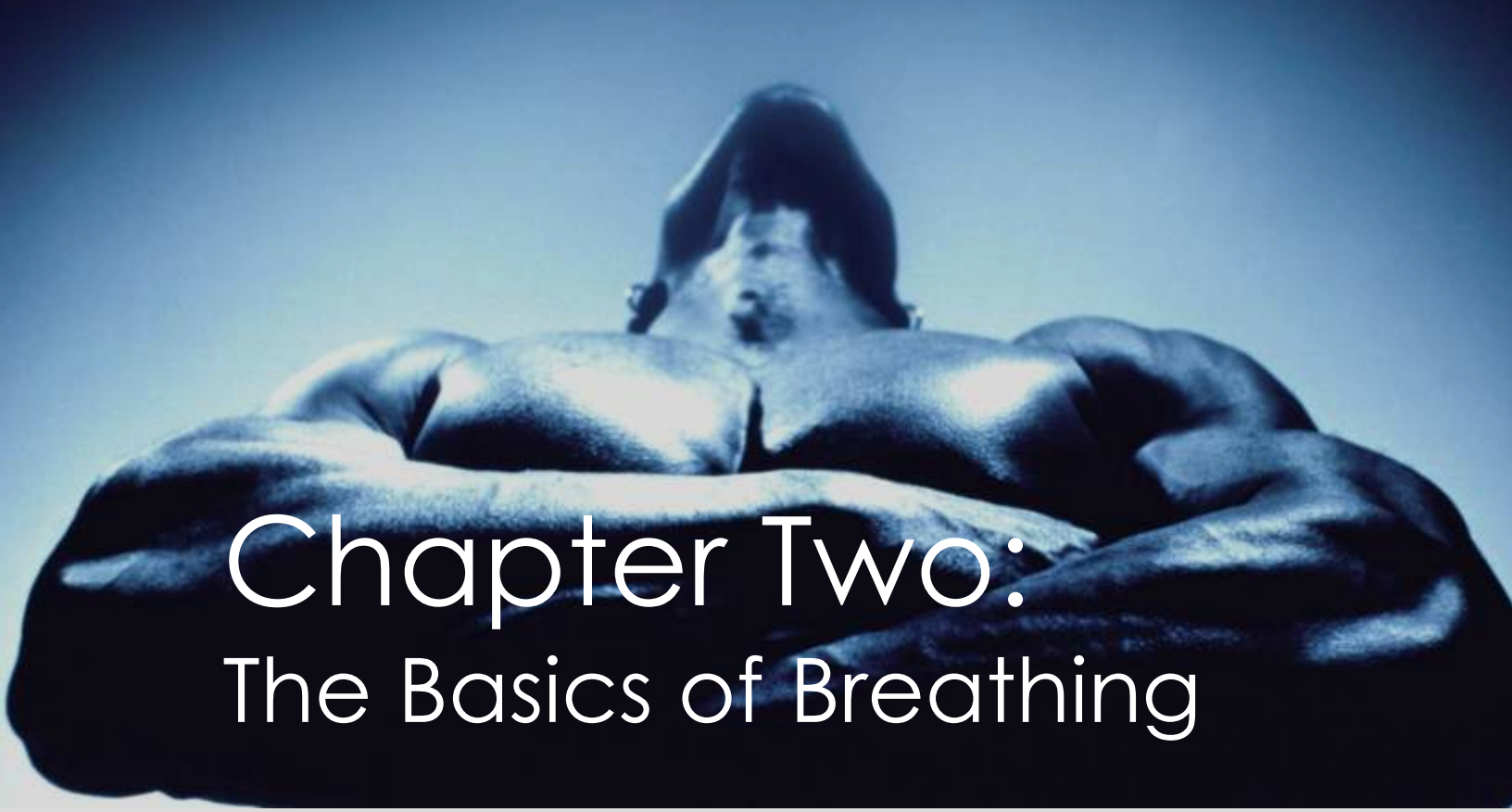
- Take in a deep breath through your nostrils. Inhale for a count of four. Ensure that you're pulling the breath from the abdomen, inside of from your chest; this promotes shallow breathing, which is a concept that will be explored in later chapters.

- Pause for a count of two seconds.

- Breathe out through your mouth for a count of six beats (if you can't do it for this long, consider breathing out for four beats).

- Repeat the process for five minutes.

Take a note how you feel after engaging in this breathing exercise. It's likely you feel a lot more relaxed, calm, and focused on whatever task is currently in front of you. That's exactly the benefit that comes with taking in more oxygen – suddenly; your body is primed for action, yet calm and in control. It's a wonderful feeling that only oxygen can make happen!



Chapter Two:
The Basics of Breathing

As mentioned throughout the course of this book, you don't have to learn how to breathe – it just comes second nature to you. This unconscious act is responsible for keeping us alive, and our bodies emphatically cling to it. If you've ever tried to see how long you could go holding on to your breath (as every child who has had a temper tantrum does), you would discover that it's impossible to asphyxiate yourself; instead, you would pass out, and your body would begin breathing normally again.

However, the breathing process is more than just a physical action that ensures we stay alive; it can be greatly influenced by external stressors and environmental stimuli within our lives. Without realizing it, these stressors might be making it difficult for you to breathe properly, which may be resulting in ailments, aches, and other difficulties that your body is currently struggling with.

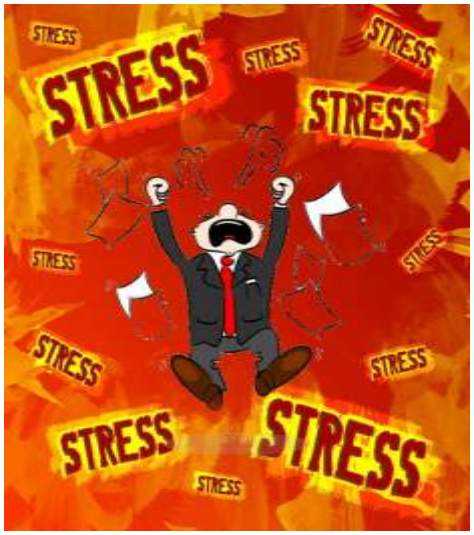
To emphasize this, let's take a look at an example of how stress impacts a businessman's ability to live a healthy and happy life.

Justin is a professional marketer with over two decades in the industry. He is exceptional at his job, which means that he's risen relatively quickly to the top of the ranks. However, with each job promotion and title change, Justin is finding that the level of stress he has to face is becoming more significant.

As a result, Justin begins to suffer from more physical ailments and complaints. When he wakes up in the morning, he constantly feels like his back is aching. He buys a new mattress, thinking that he needs better support; however, the mattress does nothing to cure him of this complaint. Justin's shoulders feel tense, so he decides to schedule regular massage appointments during his lunch breaks. While these massage appointments provide him with short-term relief, he finds that it's only a matter of time before the muscle aches and tensions return to his body. After a few months of suffering from these muscle aches and pains, Justin decides to medicate himself by taking ibuprofen each day.

When he tells his wife about how much pain medication he's taking to alleviate his physical pain, she becomes worried and decides to set up a doctor's appointment for him. At the doctor's office, Justin undergoes a breathing test and is shocked to discover that his oxygen levels are lower than what they should be. After conducting an interview about his sleeping patterns, Justin's doctor concludes that he's suffering from sleep apnea, which is why he's not getting the oxygen he needs to feel healthy, well-rested, and energetic. The sleep apnea is being caused by the stress of his new job – and the doctor warns that if Justin wants to improve his sleep, he needs to discover new ways to cut down on his stress levels.

Stress is something so common that many people tend to forget just how profound an impact it can have on our lives. After all, we're so used to expecting stress that it's become as normalized as the daily commute or weekend trips to the grocery store. We stress about our workday schedules, or that big meeting we need to have with the boss. We stress about our retirement funds, or if we'll have enough money to support ourselves when we enter our golden years. We stress about the health of the people we love, and whether or not they're happy. We stress about paying the bills, or what would happen if we lost our jobs.



With so much to stress over, it's a wonder that anyone is able to get through the day without collapsing from anxiety!

The human body is profoundly resilient, which is why we feel as though we can handle higher levels of stress and anxiety. However, that doesn't mean we're totally immune to the effects that stress can have on our lives. In fact, the longer we're exposed to stress and anxiety, the more likely it is that they'll have an extremely detrimental impact on our health and well being; particularly when it comes to our breathing processes.

The science behind this is surprisingly simple. When our ancestors had barely clawed their way out of caves, they faced a world filled with treacherous predators and dangerous, new situations. That means that with every passing second, there was some sort of danger that had to be quickly assessed and dealt with before it could cause harm. Over time, this led to the evolution of what's known as the "fight-or-flight" response, which is the body's way of alerting the mind that a decision needs to be made, and quickly.

During the fight-or-flight response, the body undergoes several physical changes. Adrenaline begins to pump through our veins, we start to breathe rapidly, and our heart rates suddenly become much more elevated. These sudden physical changes occur to help our minds choose between one of two choices: fight the threatening stimuli, or flee from it. No matter which option we pick, our bodies are prepared to help us either fight off the stimuli with elevated strength levels, or flee from the danger with faster speeds.

While this was useful in the days of hunting and gathering, our modern lifestyles have rendered us sitting comfortably at the top of the food chain. We no longer have our survival depending on our ability to go out into the wild and hunt down dangerous game; instead, we merely have to head to the local supermarket and plunk down cash to pay for our food. However, our bodies haven't forgotten about our caveman root, which means that we still experience the fight-or-flight response whenever we encounter something that we deem to be stressful.

The problem is that there are so many stressors in today's modern lifestyle that we often operated in a constant state of stress. This means that our bodies never come down from the fight-or-flight response; instead, we're constantly worried, anxious, or stressed about something in our lives. When our bodies sense that we're stressed about something – whether it's leading a big meeting in the morning or worrying about how to pay bills – it immediately kick-starts our fight-or-flight response, which means that adrenaline is constantly flowing through our veins.

In small doses, stress can actually be a good thing. It can help us focus more on our tasks, and it can ensure that we're alert enough to handle any stimulus that needs to be dealt with. Think about the last time you had to face a tough deadline and you were able to accomplish the task you were assigned. It's likely that the entire time you were up against the deadline; you felt energized and focused to the point where anything else that might potentially interrupt you fell to the wayside.

However, when stress is felt over the long term, it can have dire consequences. Our bodies aren't meant to deal with stress for a lengthy amount of time; we're programmed to deal with it as quickly as possible. Yet when we encounter stressful stimuli that are a constant in our lives, our elevated heart levels, rapid breathing, and tense body becomes permanent. Suddenly, we find that we're facing new body aches and pains, or our moods become depressed. This is what happens when the body undergoes stress for a long period of time – we begin to develop new health conditions and diseases as a result of being in the fight-or-flight scenario for far too long.

As you may have already guessed, one of the body processes that is most likely to be impacted by long-term stress is breathing. While it may be a subconscious activity – in other words, we don't have to think about it to actually do it – it's still greatly impacted by the effects of stress. In fact, you might not be breathing as optimally as you should simply because you're being burdened by the stress in your life.

Take a look at the following questions to see if this is the case with you:

- ✓ Do you have trouble sleeping?
- ✓ Do you find that you hold your breath when you're focused on something stressful?
- ✓ Do you often wake up feeling exhausted and fatigued, even though you went to bed early?
- ✓ Do you suffer from depression and mood swings?
- ✓ Do you find yourself running out of breath quickly?
- ✓ Do you find it difficult to sustain your breathing during exercise?

If you've answered yes to one or more of these questions, then it's highly likely that a stressful lifestyle is impacting your breathing processes. It might sound strange, but it's true: when you're stressed out, your body's ability to maximize your breath is going to take a hit. Blame it all on your physiological responses to the fight-or-flight syndrome: when you're feeling stressed out and anxious, you're more likely to breath in rapid and shallow movements.

Have you ever noticed how much more relaxed you feel when you're taking deep and fulfilling breaths? Maybe it's in the middle of a yoga class, or maybe it's after you complete a tough deadline, and you feel like you can finally relax. Either way, taking that deep breath is more than just an admission of your relaxation; it's actually your body's way of consuming as much oxygen as possible to optimize your bodily functions. Think about how you feel when you wake up in the morning after a long and restful night of sleep. You're not taking in

shallow breaths or holding your breath as your mind races over your worries for the day. Instead, you're breathing deeply and steadily, as your body is able to put your daily stressors aside and work on resting and repairing tissues and cells.

Deep breathing – like the kind you experience while you're sleeping or in a meditative state – is one of the best ways to relax your entire body. As you take in every deep and restorative breath, you're actually telling your mind to take a moment to calm down and reassess whatever situation you're facing. In that respect, your breathing is more than just a physical process that's necessary for your physiological wellbeing; it's critical for emotional and mental balance.

It might be surprising to find that something as simple as a deep breath can be so essential for cutting down on your stress and anxiety. Yet it's the very foundation of yoga and other meditative exercises, all of which are centered on helping the mind and body to relax so it can achieve calm and centered state. To help understand just how profound the impact a simple breathing exercise can be on your stress levels, try out the breathing technique below.

Exercise 2.1: A Revelation in Breathing

This breathing exercise is designed to help you realize just how much stress is *really* impacting your breathing process. After all, you might not be aware of the fact that you're experiencing the kind of stress levels that are akin to the classic "fight-or-flight" syndrome. It's only after undergoing this meditative exercise that you'll understand just how much your body might be suffering from your limited breathing.

First, find a nice, comfortable place to settle in. This should be a spot where you'll feel relaxed, but not necessarily sleepy (you can't undergo a breathing exercise when you're in the middle of your REM cycle!). Try placing a few cushions on the floor of your bedroom where you can lie down. If you live with others, let them know that you shouldn't be disturbed for at least fifteen minutes, as interruptions can disrupt this exercise.

Once you've settled into your comfortable position, take note of how you're feeling at this very moment. Perhaps your mind is buzzing about the meeting you just had at work, or maybe you're anxious about something that's taking place in the future. Focus on how quickly your heart is beating, whether your hands are sweaty or dry, and if you feel restless. All of these symptoms are indicative of the fact that you're stressed or anxious.

Place your dominant hand on your chest, with the other resting lightly on top of your stomach. Your hands will help you realize just how much

you're breathing from your chest, which produces shallow breaths, versus your stomach, which is where the root of deep breathing should be. Take a deep breath through your nose. Take note of which hand is moving while you're doing this. Don't think about it; just observe. If you notice that your chest is moving rather than your stomach (or both hands are moving), you're not properly breathing. This means that your body isn't experiencing the kind of optimal breathing that leads to a happy and healthy lifestyle.

If, on the other hand, you note that you're breathing directly from your belly, then congratulations – you have a robust and healthy breathing system.

No matter which outcome you discover, settle back into your comfortable position and take a deep breath through your nose again. During this time, make sure that your chest doesn't move as you're taking that deep breath. Breathe in for a count of five, then breathe out through pursed lips for a count of seven (you should feel like you're about to whistle). Repeat this process at least ten times. Don't feel like you're rushing throughout the process; remember, this is an exercise that's designed to make you feel more relaxed and at east.

Once you've completed the process, make note of how you feel now. Focus on how fast your heart is beating, how your palms feel, and how your limbs feel as you're lying there. Compare it to how you felt before you started this exercise. Chances are you'll be feeling much more relaxed and at ease than before you began.

There are plenty of other breathing exercises that you can use to help yourself feel more relaxed; however, this exercise was simply designed to point out how profoundly different you can feel after just breathing in deeply for a few minutes. That's how powerful stress can be on your breathing – and unless you take steps to correct the stress you're

experiencing in your life, your breathing will continue to suffer as a result.

Throughout the duration of this book, you'll learn new and exciting breathing exercises that can help optimize the amount of oxygen you're receiving in your body. That not only means you'll feel much more healthy and energized; you'll be feeling less stressed and anxious as a result.

What Else Influences Our Breathing?

Stress and anxiety aren't the only emotions that can impact our breathing processes; in fact, there are a number of factors that can make it difficult for our bodies to receive the oxygen we need. These factors can include the following:

Psychological Factors: While we've already discussed the impact of stress and anxiety on the body, other psychological factors can influence the breathing process. For example, if you're feeling excited, you may find that your breath is shortened and shallow, as this psychological emotion is similar to what we experience when we're encountering the "fight-or-flight" syndrome. Anger can also have an impact on your breathing, as you may shorten your breath or even hold it altogether. Another major psychological factor includes fear, which is one of the most powerful emotions a person can experience. Fear is an instinctual emotion that's designed to help us avoid dangerous situations. When we feel afraid, our heart rates speed up, our hearts start beating rapidly, and our breath becomes shallow as our bodies prepare to flee the object or person that caused us to become afraid.

Think of the last time you got cut off in traffic and it made you angry. How did you feel at the time? Did your heart rate start accelerating? Did you begin to breathe in a deep and calm manner – or did you find yourself holding your breath as the driver suddenly cut you off? No matter what reaction you had, it's likely that your breathing processes were disrupted, thus cutting off the amount of oxygen your body could receive.

Now picture what would have happened if the driver cut you off and you almost got into a very serious accident. In that moment where you feel that the accident is about to happen to you, picture what you're doing with your breath; chances are, you're holding it in. This is the kind of power that psychological factors can have over our breathing processes. Whenever we experience a strong and overwhelming emotion, our breathing becomes linked with the emotion. Whether we're sad and start breathing rapidly to avoid shedding tears, or we're excited and start taking deep and powerful breaths to calm ourselves down, our psychological state of mind can influence our breathing in a variety of complex and fascinating ways.

Physiological Factors: One of the main reasons why our breathing processes are so impacted by our emotional and mental states has to do with the central nervous system (CNS) and autonomic nervous system (ANS), both of which directly impact the speed of the heart. When the CNS and ANS are stimulated by powerful emotions, such as fear and anxiety, they send chemical signals to the heart to start beating faster by secreting hormones.

When our heart rates rapidly and suddenly rise, our bodies experience the following symptoms:

- Shallow breath
- Light-headedness
- Sweaty palms
- Nauseous stomach
- Restlessness, or feeling "jittery"

To help understand why this happens, it's important to understand that the heart doesn't operate on its own; instead, it's controlled by the medulla within the brain. The medulla can either send signals for the heart to speed up or to slow down; regardless of which signal is sent, our breathing processes change and adapt as a result. The ANS joins in with helping the medulla by using its two parts: the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS). The SNS secretes a unique batch of hormones and chemicals, which are produced and released when the mind encounters a rapid emotional change (for example, you feel fear, sudden anxiety, or excitement). These hormones send your heart the signal that it's time to start beating rapidly in order to get the body prepared for the "fight-or-flight" response.

If the SNS is responsible for speeding up the heart rate – and thus producing shallow and rapid breaths – then the PNS is like the brakes on your heart, in that it secretes its own hormone to help the heart calm down after being stimulated by the SNS. The hormone secreted by the PNS is so powerful that some yogis and meditates have been able to slow their heartbeats to an incredibly languished 20 BPM (this stands for beats per minute). To help put this into context, the average resting heart rate hovers around the 100 BPM mark; if someone can slow his or her heartbeat down to the 20 BPM level, he or she would need minimal oxygen in order to survive. In fact, this is a technique that Harry

Houdini mastered in order to survive in an airtight coffin for hours at a time.

When you feel anxious or stressed, your hormones tell your heart rate to speed up because it believes it's in a fight-or-flight situation. Therefore, it's not surprising to see that some people can encounter dangerous – even fatal – heart conditions when they add exertion on top of stress. For example, if you're constantly placed under stress and suddenly undergo significant exertion that you're not used to, you may find that this could result in a heart attack.

As you can see, your heart rate and your breathing processes are inextricably linked – and it's all because certain hormones within your brain tell your heart when to speed up and slow down.

Conditioned Response: There are some instances where a person may slow down or speed up his or her breathing simply because its expected. For example, let's say that you're an Olympic athlete who is preparing to run in a gold-medal event. When you approach the starting line, you begin to take deep and filling breaths, without your brain telling you to do so. It's not because you're out of breath or feeling anxious about the race; it's because you're so used to this experience that you've created a conditioned response.

Likewise, let's say that you're not the biggest fan of scary movies – yet you find yourself dragged to a movie theater with a group of friends who want to see the scariest horror movie in years. As the lights go down and the opening credits start rolling, you begin to take short and shallow breaths, as you begin to anticipate all of the scary moments you'll have to go through. This is another example of a conditioned response: you begin breathing rapidly because you *expect* to be anxious and scared throughout the movie.

Conditioned responses happen when you've approached a similar situation with the same responses. Like with Pavlov's dogs – who became conditioned to salivate at the sound of a dinner bell – you've become so used to breathing a certain way in a specific scenario that it has developed into a subconscious habit. Regardless of whether you learn to take deep breaths as soon as you walk into a yoga studio or you start taking shallow breaths when you get in line for a roller coaster, these conditioned responses can have just as much an impact on your breathing process than any psychological or physiological stimuli.

Voluntary Action: This is a unique type of breathing where you're focused on each and every breath you take. This is the heart of yoga and meditative techniques, as these practices teach you to become more mindful of how you're breathing, and how your body reacts to each breath. The fact that your breath – which is an automatic and subconscious process - can be voluntarily controlled is a unique action that cannot be found anywhere else in the body. You can control how deeply you breathe, but you can't

control your stomach's digestion or the blood that's flowing through your veins. This type of conscious control is characterized by the following factors:

- The breath is deep and controlled
- The breath resonates from the belly, not the chest
- The body begins to feel relaxed and calm
- Not impacted by stress and anxiety

Subconscious breathing, on the other hand, is much more likely to be impacted by psychological and physiological stimuli. What's more, automatic breathing is more likely to take place in the chest, which is a surefire sign that the body isn't getting the right amount of oxygen it needs.

Now that we've mentioned voluntary breathing actions and how they're used in yoga and meditative practices, let's take this one step further by analyzing the two types of voluntary breathing that one can engage in:

- **Thoracic:** We've already touched upon this type of breath, which is when you're breathing from the chest as opposed to the belly. During this type of breathing, the lungs expand and contract, while the abdominal area is left untouched (we'll discuss this phenomenon in just a few moments). Chest breathing may feel natural (after all, your lungs are pulling in breath), but it's actually detrimental to your health, particularly if you're training for an athletic event. This is the type of breathing that people undergo when they're hyperventilating (in other words, experiencing an emotion or reaction that's so strong you have to rapidly catch your breath). However, this type of breathing is characterized by low oxygen intake, despite the rapid breathing rates. This is because air is meant to be pulled in by the stomach, which leads us to our next type of voluntary breathing technique.

- **Abdominal:** Abdominal breathing (which is also referred to as belly or diaphragmatic breathing) is the healthiest breathing process, as it provides your bloodstream with a high level of oxygen without requiring you to engage in rapid breathing. During this type of breathing, the diaphragm interacts with the abdominal cavity by creating a pulling motion, which causes the lungs to inflate. While the lungs are fully inflating, the chest barely moves at all; instead, all of the work is being performed by the abdominals and diaphragm. This type of breathing takes longer than shallow chest breathing, as it often requires the person to focus on the breath. This is why yogis and meditates prefer this type of breathing process, as it's healthier for the body and more calming for the mind.

As you can see, there are multiple types of breathing techniques that can help provide your body with the oxygen it needs to perform at healthy and optimal levels. To finish up this chapter, we'll explore an exercise that will help you power up your diaphragm so that you take in as much oxygen with every breath.

Finishing It Up: A Five-Minute Exercise

In the first exercise in this chapter, you learned as to what type of breather you are: a chest breather, or a stomach breather. Now it's time to conduct an exercise that will help you strengthen your diaphragm to improve your ability to breathe via your stomach.

Belly breathing is one of the healthiest ways to take in oxygen, as it allows your lungs to fully inflate; additionally, belly breathing brings in more oxygen without requiring extra effort, as shallow breathing often comes hand-in-hand with low levels of oxygen. That's why it's important for readers to train their diaphragms to help inflate their lungs.

Your diaphragm is a strong wall of muscle that's located underneath your lungs and above your abdominals. With proper training and exercise, you'll help this diaphragm become stronger and healthier, which means you'll be providing your bloodstream with higher levels of oxygen. To help train your diaphragm, take the following steps:

- Find that comfortable spot again and lay on your back.

- Take a couple of books and place them on top of your stomach. Try to position them right toward the upper part of your belly, as this is where your diaphragm is located. Don't use heavy textbooks or hardcover, especially if this is your first time doing this exercise. Instead, use a couple of paperbacks.

- Take in a deep breath through your nose for a count of six. Isolate your chest so that only your stomach is moving. You should see the books move up while you're doing this.

- Hold the breath for a count, then breath out through pursed lips for a count of eight. Again, be sure that you're only breathing with your stomach, as this ensures that your diaphragm is being properly trained.

- Continue with this exercise for three to five minutes. Make a commitment to perform this exercise on a daily basis.

- As you become more familiar with this exercise, you could try replacing the lightweight books with heavier ones. This can help strength your diaphragm muscles, as you're constantly providing it with heavier and challenging weight. However, don't increase the weight if you're not comfortable with it. You don't want to injure your diaphragm, as this will certainly have an impact on your ability to breathe via your stomach.

As you can see, there are plenty of breathing techniques that can be used to help introduce more oxygen into your bloodstream. What's more, these breathing techniques can be useful for readers who are suffering from stress, anxiety, and other factors that impact the breathing process. It may feel like an automatic, subconscious process, but breathing needs your focus and attention to ensure that your body is properly healing and growing. By understanding the connections between your emotions and environmental stimuli – and how they impact your breathing process – you can gain better comprehension of why it's so critical to make breathing techniques a regular part of your daily routine.

Chapter Three:
Breathe Your Mind Free

When it comes to pinpointing the most demanding organ in your body, you might be quick to say that your stomach should take top marks. After all, your stomach is specifically designed to rumble (sometimes loudly and embarrassingly!) whenever it's hungry, until you eat a filling meal. Yet for all of your stomach's noise and protestations, it's not the "hungriest" organ in your body.

That honor belongs solely to your brain.

Think of your body as a car, while your brain is the driver. The car may have a variety of intricate mechanisms and complicated systems, but ultimately, until the driver gets in the car and turns on the ignition, it's just going to sit there unused. Without the constant chemical signals and neuron-firing that occurs within your brain, your body wouldn't know what to do with itself. This is why brain-dead people find their bodies in lengthy comas; without the electronic pulses and signals from the brain, the body is unable to operate.

Given the fact that the brain is constantly telling your body what to do, it should come as no surprise that it needs plenty of energy to operate. That's precisely where oxygen comes into play.

Before we explore the reasons why oxygen is so critical to the mind, let's take a moment to reflect on the times in your life when you felt…well…stumped. Maybe you were sitting in front of your computer, hoping to write up a best-selling novel – only to find yourself coming up empty. Perhaps you hold yourself up in the garage, hoping to create some amazing new woodworking creation, only to run into a creative slump. Even the office worker who just can't seem to summon up the creative energy to work on a report or write a product description could be said to be suffering from the classic "block," where it feels almost impossible to unleash creative and productive thinking.

New and exciting research is emerging to suggest that this occurs because the brain is being "starved" of oxygen. Just like how eating a healthy diet can help improve your overall wellbeing, supply high-quality oxygen to your brain can help you improve your mental performance, thus removing mental roadblocks and creative slumps.

One of the most compelling studies was conducted at the Human Cognitive Neuroscience unit at the University of Northumbria in Newcastle, England. In this study, director Andrew Scholey and his students found that although the brain only makes up less than two percent of the human body's weight, it demands over 20 percent of the body's energy. In order to help the brain function properly, oxygen is required to help blood flow through the organ. The study found that when the brain experiences mental strain (that is, the kind you

experience when mulling over a critical problem or creative issue), it starts to demand more energy – and that means your brain requires more oxygen to increase the flow of your bloodstream.

To make matters worse, the brain cannot store large amounts of glucose, which means it's in constant demand of oxygen to help it solve problems and overcome creative slumps.

Want further proof that oxygen is necessary for keeping your brain alert and feeling refreshed? Consider how you feel after a long trip in a plane with a limited oxygen supply. Chances are you walk off the plane feeling sluggish, tired, and ready for bed, no matter what paradise you might find yourself in. This is because your brain isn't getting the right quality of oxygen it needs to feel as it's absolute best – and that rests in the familiar traveler fatigue most of us have experienced at one point or another.

While you certainly can't strap an oxygen mask on your back whenever you go on an airplane, it does emphasize the fact that learning how to properly breathe can help ensure that your brain remains alert, clear, and highly energized.

As another example of how a fresh burst of oxygen can help your cognitive function, think back to the last time you were feeling fatigued or uninspired in the workplace. Maybe you were having trouble writing up a report, or you just couldn't muster up the energy necessary to write up the minutes for the last meeting you were in. Instead of reaching for a cup of coffee, you decided to go for a walk outside, as you've heard that a little exercise is good for getting your energy levels

up. After a fifteen-minute walk in the fresh air and sunshine, you come back to the office feeling refreshed, revitalized, and ready to tackle any problem that might come across your desk at work.

This might be considered "anecdotal" evidence, but it helps emphasize just how much of an impact oxygen can have on the brain. When you feel sluggish and tired, getting a breath of fresh air can help provide your brain with the energy it needs to enhance cognitive function. Suddenly, you're able to tackle complex problems and critical situations without feeling as though you're in a fatigued slump. It's not a coincidence: your walk outside gave you the oxygen you needed to give your mind a jump-start.

In the last chapter of this book, we discussed how psychological, physiological, and other environmental stimuli can have an impact on a healthy breathing process. In this chapter, we'll take this exploration one step further by evaluating the mental issues that often affect how our brains receive oxygen, and breathing techniques that can be used to minimize each problem.

Stress: Ah, our old friend stress has made yet another appearance. If you think this emotion – or curse – is being overemphasized in this book, it's important to keep in mind that stress is so endemic that it's worth mentioning multiple times. At this point, you now know that stress can make it difficult for you to breathe properly, as it can prevent you from focusing on taking deep and relaxing breaths.

What's more, it can make it difficult for your brain to take in the oxygen it needs to function at optimal levels, as much of your oxygen will be devoted to supporting your PNS and ANS as they speed up (and slow down) your heart rate. If you want to defeat your feelings of stress while enhancing your breathing techniques, try out this quick-fire exercise.

Exercise 3.1: The Stress-Buster

Find that comfortable spot in a quiet room again, because you're about to meditate and relax. Either sit or lay down (depending on what makes you feel more comfortable). Take in a deep breath through your nose for a count of six, and then release your breath through your mouth for a count of eight.

However, instead of doing it through pursed lips let your breath go as loudly as possible. Make any noise you want while you're doing it; for example, you could say "Ahhh," or you could make an "oooh"ing noise. Do whatever makes you feel the best, as you'll want to picture your stress and anxiety leaving along with your breath. Picture every single thing that's stressing you out, and picture your breath carrying it out of your body every time you exhale. Repeat this process for five to ten minutes, or until you feel relaxed. By the time you're done with this exercise, you should start feeling much more calm and collected.

Insomnia: Remember in the last chapter, when we explored how your body is much more likely to engage in a deep and relaxed state of breathing? This breathing process is critical for your body to repair any damage, as well as maintain your physical health. What's more, sleep is critical for maintaining your mental and emotional wellbeing.

When you suffer from insomnia, you're essentially denying yourself the opportunity to let your body repair and revitalize itself. What's more, you're not engaging in the type of deep breathing that's necessary for carrying oxygen into your brain. This means you could suffer from the following mental and emotional issues:

- ✓ You may feel much more tired and fatigued throughout the day;
- ✓ You're more likely to find it difficult to overcome problems and devise creative solutions;
- ✓ You may make several mistakes due to your ability to concentrate and focus; and
- ✓ You may find that it's easier to get sick.

To help alleviate your insomnia woes, try the following breathing exercise.

Exercise 3.2: Nodding Off to Dreamland

Insomnia can make it difficult to fall asleep, especially when you have anxieties and stresses on your mind. That's why you should take these steps right before heading to bed:

- Take a warm bath or shower right before bed. If possible, incorporate aromatic products, such as a lavender body wash or

vanilla shampoo. As you breathe this in, you'll begin to get into a more relaxed state.

- Turn off your electronics at least an hour before going to bed. That means turning off the TV, putting your Smartphone away, and taking the tablet/laptop out of the bedroom.

- Settle in to a comfortable position; if possible, try doing this while lying down on your bed.

- Begin to breathe in through your nose for a count of five.

- Hold your breath for a count of three.

- Release your breath through your mouth for a count of six.

- As you do this, visualize a place that makes you feel calm. Perhaps it's a beach with crystal-clear waters, or perhaps it's a meadow surrounded by a green forest.

- Visualize yourself in the middle of this calm and relaxing place. Try to feel the air around you as you continue breathing. Feel every blade of glass under your feet, or the sound of waves nearby. The more you visualize this happy place, the more relaxed you'll feel.

This breathing exercise is so critical to relaxing because it helps change your beta brain waves (the brain waves that indicate your mind is active) with alpha waves, which signify that your brain is in a deeply relaxed state.

What's more, complementing this visualization technique with breathing exercises can help ensure that oxygen is flowing to your brain, thus helping you to deepen your state of calm and relaxation.

Don't be frustrated if you can't master this exercise right away. It takes time to be able to effectively visualize yourself into a calm and relaxing state, especially when you're suffering from insomnia. With consistent practice, you'll find that this will become easier and easier, until one night, you're suddenly drifting off to sleep.

Anxiety: Like stress, anxiety is an emotional state that can make it extremely difficult for your brain to get the oxygen it needs to properly function. Anxiety can feel similar to stress, in which you feel nervous or worried about something; it can also be extremely detrimental, especially with regards to diagnosable social anxieties. No matter which type of anxiety you suffer from, it's important to acknowledge that it can prevent you from providing your body with the optimal oxygen levels it needs to properly function.

Think about it: when you're constantly feeling tense or under pressure, it's likely you'll feel as though you're on the verge of a panic attack. This probably means you're breathing in short, shallow breaths, which indicates that your lungs are getting minimal oxygen levels despite all the extra effort.

A breathing exercise for anxiety should do more than focus on getting as much oxygen into your body as possible; it should also help you learn how to let go of the anxieties that wrack your body. That's exactly what you'll learn how to do with this next breathing technique.

Exercise 3.3:
The Art of Letting Go

Anxiety can make it extremely difficult for you to optimize your breathing, as your mind is much more likely to be focused on the worries buzzing through your brain, rather than deepening your breath. That's why it's critical for anxiety sufferers to engage in the art of letting go; that is, combining a unique breathing exercise technique with a visualization exercise that helps give worries the heave-ho.

While it's unlikely you'll master this breathing technique in your first try – unless you already have significant experience with visualization – keep putting the following steps into practice, as you'll find that it can help relax and calm you:

- Find that comfortable spot again in a quiet area. Settle in and get as cozy as possible. You want to be in the kind of position that allows you to focus totally on your mind – and if you're not comfortable, you won't be able to focus yourself.

- Take a deep breath and let your mind relax. What's the first worry that pops into your head? Don't try to shuffle through your worries or attempt to pick and choose between your concerns. Whatever your mind thinks of first is likely the worry that's causing you the most anxiety.

- Once this worry has popped into your head, pay attention to the emotions and feelings that occur within your body. For example, do you suddenly feel sad or ashamed about the worry? Do you feel nervous or stressed out? Or do you feel angry? No matter what feelings come to the surface, pay attention to what they are. Don't try to name them or push them aside; the goal of this breathing exercise is to help gain focus on what's causing you so much anxiety.

- Now focus on how these worries and emotions make you feel in your physical body. For example, let's say you're worried about how you're going to pay your bills next month. As you think about this worry, your chest begins to tighten up and your palms become sweaty. Pay attention to these physiological reactions, and note if you experience a combination of physical symptoms.

- Don't rush to push these reactions and emotions to the side. Instead, feel the sensation for a few minutes. Don't try to calm yourself down; the point here is to fully feel this emotion so that your body and mind can begin to properly heal. There's no rush to this step – just feel these sensations for as long as you need to.

- Focus on where the physical sensations are, and imagine that a door is suddenly appearing in that part of your body. For example, if you feel your chest tightening up, imagine a door appearing right over your heart or lungs. Keep your eyes closed to help with this visualization technique. By the way, it doesn't necessarily have to be a door; it could be a window, a small opening, or even a cave. Use whatever comes to mind, as it can help make this visualization technique much easier for you.

- Now picture yourself opening that door or window. Make sure the action is very deliberate and outlined within your mind's eye. Picture yourself walking up to the door or window, opening it, and feeling the sunshine and fresh air on your face.

- Breathe in for a count of five. As you exhale for a count of seven, imagine all of the worries and feelings that you've just thought about leaving your body through the opening. Continue with this breathing process until you feel as though the bad feelings and emotions are completely "gone." This could take a short amount of time, or it could take an hour for you to do. Don't pressure or rush yourself before you're ready; the goal here is to do what feels natural for your body.

- If you need help incorporating your breath into this visualization technique, envision it as steam or smoke. Now picture your worries as a physical object, like a box. With every breath you exhale, picture the steam or smoke pushing the box out the door or window until it's completely gone from your body.

At the end of this letting-go exercise, you should feel more relaxed and tired by your visualization efforts. This is because you've given your body permission to feel the emotions that you've been struggling with, and you've also given yourself the time you need to envision these struggles leaving your mind and body.

Phobias: Phobias can be defined as an irrational and overwhelming fear of an object, person, or place. Phobias are perplexing and mysterious phenomena, with many psychologists and medical professionals still debating why they occur. It's generally believed that phobias were first seen in ancient man, when our bodies were designed to become fearful of objects and animals that could threaten us. The evidence to support this theory is compelling; after all, more people are likely to have phobias over dogs, snakes, spiders, and other things that could actually harm us back when we were barely out of our caves. However, this only presents us with half of the picture, as many people have phobias over safe objects and foods (some of the stranger phobias include those over hot dogs, clothing, and even leaving the house).

No matter how "justified" or irrational a phobia might be, it's important to note that this extreme version of fear can still present a significant breathing issue. When a person encounters the object or animal that is the subject of his or her irrational fear, he or she is likely to go into a full-blown panic attack, thus rendering it difficult to take in the deep breaths that are necessary for calming the mind and body. People with phobias are also more likely to hold their breaths when they feel afraid, as it's the body's way of attempting to conceal itself so that it doesn't attract attention. On the other hand, a person who is suffering from a panic attack over a phobia may breathe too much, as he or she feels that he or she isn't taking in enough air.

To help combat the breathing issues associated with suffering from a phobia, consider using the following breathing exercises.

Exercise 3.4: Holding Down Your Fears

When you begin to hyperventilate, you might think that you're body isn't taking in enough oxygen, and you might feel as though you're not getting any air. However, the opposite is actually found to be true during panic attacks: you're taking in too much oxygen, and your carbon dioxide levels are extremely low as a result. Remember, the breathing process is all about finding and restoring balance within your body; that means ensuring you're getting enough oxygen without sacrificing your body's CO2 levels. To help calm yourself down and restore balance, take the following steps:

- When you begin to breathe rapidly, cup your hands around your mouth and make a concentrated effort to breathe much more slowly. Try to make the opening in your hands as small as possible, as this ensures that any CO2 comes right back to your body. If you have a paper bag nearby, you can breathe into that for a much faster result.

- Continue breathing as you normally would until you begin to feel calm and in control again.

This breathing exercise is ideal for those individuals who are in the midst of a panic attack over a phobia. However, it's not the best way to relax your mind and body, which is what you need to do when you feel as though a phobia is taking over any rational thoughts. Nothing beats the relaxing power of deep breathing; unfortunately, it can be hard to do this when you're in the midst of a powerful panic attack. With practice

and a bit of mental fortitude, you should be able to use the following steps whenever you start to feel panicked:

- Take in a deep breath for five counts (you can count seconds, or you can count your heartbeat). Make sure you're breathing through your stomach, and not your chest.

- Once you've inhaled this breath, hold it in for a count of seven seconds.

- Exhale in a controlled manner for a total of seven to nine seconds. It's important to be as controlled as possible during this step, as you don't want to start hyperventilating.

It's clear that this exercise might be hard for an individual to do when he or she is in the midst of a powerful panic attack. However, make every attempt to follow these steps whenever you start to feel that overwhelming sensation. You could even practice this breathing exercise on your own time, so that when you encounter your phobia, you'll be able to automatically launch into this.

Burnout: Burnout occurs when you put your body through so much physical or mental demand that you just become too tired, exhausted, and/or sick to deal with anything else anymore. Burnout might not be the most sophisticated medical term, but it's something that has plagued almost everyone at some point in their lives, be they a college student studying for finals or a Fortune 500 CEO. As you learned in the beginning of this chapter, the brain requires a great deal of oxygen whenever it undergoes mental strain. That means if you're not getting the amount of oxygen you need during times

of hard work, stress, and physical demand, your mind could essentially "turn off," meaning it's too tired to deal with any critical thinking or creative problem-solving skills.

Burnout usually occurs when an individual is going through significant mental or physical strain without eating properly, getting enough exercise, or just putting the books down to give the brain a rest. Burnout can be often characterized by the following symptoms:

- A constant feeling of exhaustion, whether it's emotional, mental, or physical. If you feel like you can barely muster up the energy you need to do any task – no matter how big or small it might be – you're probably suffering from burnout.

- A lack of motivation, especially when it comes to doing the activities you once loved. For example, if you find it difficult to meet up with friends or aren't engaging in a hobby that you frequently enjoyed, you're probably on your way to suffering from burnout.

- A constant feeling of frustration and stress, especially when it's irrational. For example, if you feel incredibly frustrated at your barista for pronouncing your name wrong, you could be displaying a classic symptom of burnout.

- Trouble with critical thinking and/or creative problem-solving. You may also have issues with concentration or staying focused, even if you've never had these issues before.

- Your job performance is slipping. If your job performance has declined – especially when compared to recent years – you could be suffering from burnout.

- You're having problems with your relationships at home or at work. If you find that you're constantly getting into arguments with loved

ones or aren't in the mood to socialize with your coworkers anymore, you could be well on your way to experiencing burnout.

- You find it difficult to take care of yourself. This could range from ignoring your personal hygiene to engaging in unhealthy strategies to cope with the stress, like drinking heavily or smoking. Additionally, people who suffer from burnout are much more likely to ignore their sleep, which makes it even harder for the body to recover from the mental and physical strain.

- You can't stop thinking about work, even though you're not actually at work. What's worse is if your worries about work are keeping you up at night or preventing you from fully engaging with friends, family members and loved ones.

- You're experiencing a general sense that you're dissatisfied with your life, even if there's nothing particularly "wrong." When you're suffering from burnout, you're much more likely to be unhappy with your home life and career, even if these things previously brought you a sense of happiness and fulfillment.

- You're experiencing a number of health problems. When we suffer from burnout, the human body's immune system is weakened; this makes it much easier for germs, bacteria, and viruses to infect the body. Ever notice that you tend to get sick after a major deadline or a massive college final? That's your body's way of telling you that it's suffering from burnout – and it needs to rest.

When you're suffering from burnout, it's important to pay attention to what your body's telling you. Breathing exercises can help provide you with the relaxation you need to escape from the mental and physical toils; additionally, it can help you get some much-needed sleep, especially if you find yourself constantly worrying about work.

Exercise 3.5: Zen Out

If you're suffering from burnout – and believe us, you'll know when you are! – It's important to cultivate your deep breathing skills in a rich and relaxing environment. In other words, consider meditating or taking up a relaxing yoga class. This is ideal for keeping yourself happy and healthy; it can also teach you the breathing techniques you need to give your brain the oxygen it needs to stay on top of its cognitive functions.

Whether you consider yourself a devote yogi or have never meditated before in your life, try this breathing exercise to help you combat the stress and strain associated with burnout:

- Perform this exercise in the morning as soon as you wake up. Before doing so, however, make sure you're getting the amount of sleep you need. DVR your favorite nighttime TV shows, put the laptop away, and get to bed at a decent hour – you'll find you won't miss much.

- As soon as you wake up, head to a comfortable spot in your bedroom or studio.

- Play some music that makes you feel relaxed without distracting yourself from the overall activity at hand. Whether it's classical music or a collection of old folk songs, you should put on music that makes you feel at ease, not energetic or emotional.

- While the music is playing, take the time to get in touch with your body to see how you're feeling. Feel yourself actively relaxing every muscle in your body. Start from the top of your head and visualize each area of your muscles relaxing. As you do this, breathe in and out slowly and deeply. Make sure that you're breathing from the stomach, as this ensures you're taking in as much oxygen as possible.

- Keep relaxing each muscle until you get the tips of your toes. Once you reach this state, revel in your relaxation. Breathe in deeply through your nose, and out through your pursed lips.

- Picture how you want the day to go. Visualize yourself succeeding at work, all while feeling calm, relaxed, and capable. Picture yourself feeling confident and cool no matter what is thrown your way. You can also visualize yourself enjoy dinner with your family or catching up with an old friend over the phone. Whatever you have planned for the day, picture yourself mastering it without feeling tired, exhausted, or stressed out.

In order to combat burnout, you should make a commitment to undergo this breathing technique each morning. However, this breathing technique alone isn't going to help you overcome burnout; you also need to prioritize getting enough sleep and creating a rich life outside of work that's fulfilling and joyful. After all, when your entire life is about work – and it doesn't leave you time to enjoy your relationships and hobbies – you're more likely to suffer from crippling burnout.

Depression: Depression is a very serious and highly debilitating disease that impacts millions of people around the world. Depression can range in severity and impact; for example, some people suffer from mild depression during the winter months (when sunlight is limited), while others can be diagnosed with the kind of depression that occurs from a chemical imbalance within the brain. If you suffer from severe clinical depression, it's important to note that breathing techniques

alone aren't going to help you; instead, it should be incorporated into a daily regimen of medication, relaxation techniques, exercise, and a fulfilling life filled with family members and friends.

Those who suffer from mild depression – for example, they experience mood swings or they suffer from the classic "wintertime blues" – breathing techniques can help them get in touch with their bodies again. You see, people who are more likely to suffer from mild depression are those who have the following lifestyle:

- Work forms a type of structure to the day, but it's not fulfilling or engaging;
- They isolate themselves on the weekend, and rarely leave the house;
- They watch TV or sleep all day, and don't do anything productive with their free time;
- They don't cook for themselves – they order out or just eat junk food all weekend; and
- They might not even get dressed on the weekend, preferring instead to stay in their pajamas.

While this type of weekend might be warranted every once in awhile – for example, if you're suffering from burnout, a weekend spent sleeping might not be a bad idea – it can also lead to the development of mild depression. To combat these blues, use the following exercise to help ground yourself and find the joy in living your everyday life.

Exercise 3.6: Getting Back in Touch

This breathing technique involves four steps: breathing, containment, centering, and awareness. Let's walk through each of these stages to help you get back in touch with yourself:

- In order to get back in touch with yourself, it's important to relax your body so you can allow your breath's energy to flow through you. When you're in a depressive state, it can make it difficult for you to open up your body to receive the heightened energy and alertness.

  To help the energy flow through your body, take a deep breath through your nose and into your stomach. As you breathe, let the breath travel from your stomach and into your chest. At this point, your entire stomach and chest areas should be filled with breath. Slowly let your breath out in a controlled manner until you feel as

though the breath is completely out of your body. Once you've achieved this rhythm, move onto the next step.

- As you breathe, picture each breath as drawing in a ball of energy. As you exhale, visualize your body actively removing your sadness and depression from yourself. Close your eyes to help this visualization process. Keep that positive energy in your mind's eye until you feel that your entire body is filled with this glowing and beneficial energy.

- Once the energy is resonating through your body, picture roots exiting the soles of your feet, your hands, and your bottom. Visualize these roots making their way down to the ground and breaking through the earth. Picture these roots traveling through the ground until they snake their way around a giant glowing ball of energy. With each breath you take, picture yourself drawing up the energy from this glowing ball and taking it into your body through these new roots. Feel the connection between your body and the earth, and how this glowing energy is supporting you.

- As you breathe in and out, feel how present you are in this moment. Focus on the sounds you hear around you, and how they make you feel. Visualize the energy flowing through your body, and how it's impacting the objects around you. Notice how your body feels in this sitting or standing position. Being present in the moment means taking your mind away from the common worries and stresses of the day, and enjoying the here and now.

Whenever you feel sad or "absent" from your life, be sure to use this breathing technique to help enhance how you feel. Being depressed is often a result of going through the motions without really being involved in your life. When you take the time to feel everything around you – including how it's all impacting your body – you can help get more in touch with your body, your needs, and your emotions.

Trauma: Trauma can impact the body in a variety of psychological and physical ways, depending on the type of trauma that has been experienced. For example, war veterans often suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, in which the mind flash back to traumatic moment in the soldier's history and makes him or her feel as though he or she is actually in a warzone again. People who suffer from traumatic injuries often suffer from their own psychological stressors, which can include anxiety, depression, and even suicidal thoughts.

It might seem like an oversimplification to say that breathing techniques can treat trauma; however, there is a multitude of studies to support the fact that mindful breathing can help relieve symptoms of trauma. In a study conducted by Emma Seppala, associate director of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University, she found that breathing exercises could dramatically decrease post-traumatic stress disorder in war veterans. What's more, Seppala discovered that the breathing activities learned in just a single week had effects that lasted a year later; thus providing compelling evidence that breathing exercises can be effective for treating trauma.

No matter what psychological issue or disorder you're suffering from, it's important to make breathing exercises a regular part of your lifestyle. To help supplement these exercises, you may also want to consider engaging in the following:

- Yoga sessions
- Meditation
- Therapy sessions
- Massages
- Cardio exercises

These activities not only help you develop a healthy and fulfilling lifestyle, but they can also improve your ability to take in oxygen. What's more, they can help you work through any mental struggles you might be having. Whether you suffer from mild depression or clinical depression, these exercises and habits can help ensure that you lead a rich and fulfilling lifestyle, which can help loosen the hold your mental illnesses or struggles might have on you.

Finishing It Up: A Five-Minute Exercise

In order to combat the effects of trauma on your mind and body, it's critical to engage in meditative techniques, which focus on connecting your body to what you're experiencing in your mind. We've touched upon this in several breathing exercises already; however, it's worth exploring this technique again, especially within the framework of mental and physical trauma.

- Sit in a chair with your feet placed flat on the floor. Make sure that your spine is straight against the chair. If that's not comfortable for you, you can lie down with your back flat against the surface.

- As you settle into your position, check up on how you're feeling right now. Don't analyze the emotions or feelings; just acknowledge that they are there.

- Consciously release the tension in your body. Focus on your major muscles and see them relaxing in your mind. For example, focus on relaxing your feet, your legs, and then your stomach. Move all the

way up until your entire body – from your head to your toes – is completely relaxed.

- Begin breathing deeply as your body is relaxed. Notice how your sensations ebb and flow as your lungs fill with air. Don't judge your emotions; instead, feel compassionate and conscious of what you're experiencing. Pause between each breath to acknowledge your emotions. If you find that your emotions are getting overwhelming, focus again on your breathing.

- During this breathing process, picture a warm and glowing energy flowing through your body. Picture yourself breathing in energy, and exhaling your negative emotions with every breath. Allow yourself to relax with each and every breath. You'll want to keep breathing until all of the negative emotions have been exhaled, and your body is filled with a warm, glowing energy.

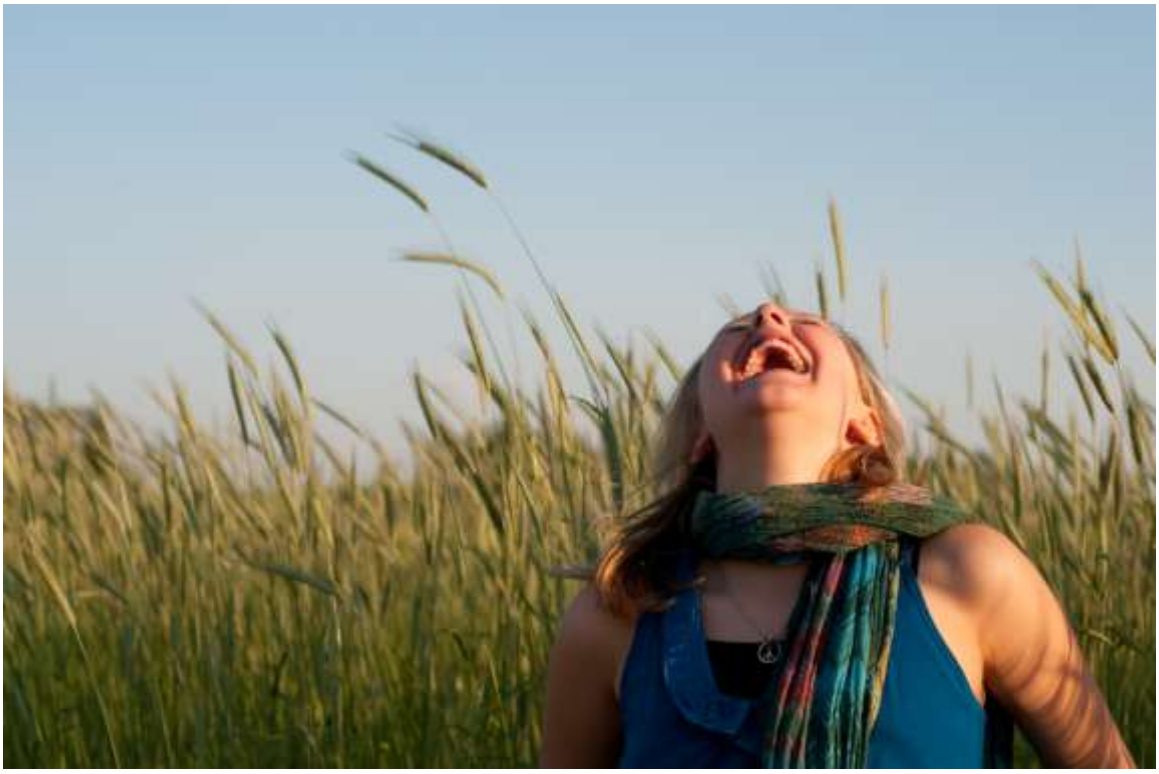
- If your mind begins wandering during these breathing techniques, just notice the thoughts that are happening and allow them to pass by without giving them much consideration. Consider it like watching clouds passing by through the sky; just acknowledge that they're there, and move on.

- Once you're comfortable with this breathing exercise, feel free to add a mantra. For example, as you exhale, you could say a word that you'd like to feel, such as "calm" or "relaxed." Focus on these words as you continue to breathe in a relaxed and collected manner. Eventually, your body will respond to this mantra and you'll begin feeling the way you need to feel.

If you've suffered from a trauma – be it a physical or mental trauma – it's going to take some time to use this breathing technique effectively. However, it's important not to give up if you don't feel better after the first time around. This technique takes plenty of time and practice.

Make a commitment to carve out a time each and every day to devote to these meditative sessions.

Breathing your mind free is absolutely possible; however, it's going to take time and commitment to enjoy the relaxation techniques that come hand-in-hand with every breath you take. Yet by providing your mind with the oxygen it needs to perform at optimal levels, you're helping yourself to enjoy the most out of your life, no matter how much stress you might be facing.



Chapter Four:
Breathe Away the Pounds

Mary and Liz are both getting married to their respective partners at the end of the year. In order to look amazing in their wedding dresses, they've decided to lose weight together. They decide to sign up for gym memberships, take group classes, and even report back to each other about how much weight they've lost.

Mary is determined to look fantastic in her wedding gown, so she decides to throw herself into getting fit and trim for her upcoming nuptials. She makes a commitment to go to the gym every day. She runs for a few miles on the treadmill, and signs up for weight training with a trainer. She also cleans her fridge out and replaces all her junk food with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. She cuts down on the amount of food she eats every meal; as a result, she loses five pounds in the first couple of weeks during her new diet.

While Mary is thrilled that she's encountering these results, she begins to plateau in her weight loss. She's only losing half a pound a week, and some weeks she doesn't lose anything at all.

As her wedding date draws near, Mary begins to panic that she's not going to look as good as Liz in her wedding dress. She's desperate for the key to losing weight fast – and considering she's already taking the right steps, she's not sure what to do next.

Liz, on the other hand, is enjoying steady and consistent weight loss; every week, she's losing about two to three pounds. She's taking all of the same steps as Mary, which means she's going to the gym as often as possible and eating a clean, healthy diet. In the eyes of Mary, there's nothing majorly different that Liz is doing – however, she's enjoying all the benefits of weight loss.

Over coffee one morning, Mary decides to ask Liz what she's doing differently. Mary's line of questioning runs the gamut from asking her if she's eating properly, or if she's taking dangerous weight-loss pills. Liz smiles and shakes her head to each question. Finally, Mary becomes exhausted and declares that Liz's metabolism must be faster than hers.

"It's not," Liz declares. "There's only one thing I'm doing differently to you, but it's made all the difference in my efforts to lose weight…

"I'm using breathing exercises to fire up my metabolism and drop the pounds."

.....

At first glance, the title of this chapter might make you want to do a double take, especially if you've struggled with your weight all through your life. For many people with weight struggles, they have to log in hours at the gym and eat a strict diet just to see any results. In fact, so many individuals struggle with the scale that an entire industry has been birthed from this universal issue, to the tune of $20 billion each year.

Yet as we've discovered in the opening story with Liz and Mary, sometimes the solution can be as simple as adjusting how deeply and effectively you breathe. After all, both Liz and Mary were following the same diets and exercise patterns, so in theory, they should have lost a relatively identical amount of weight over the course time. Yet because Liz gave her metabolism a boost by engaging in deep breathing exercises, she was able to give her body the boost it needed by supplying it with fat-burning, pound-dropping oxygen.

Whether you find it easy to lose weight or you've struggled with those stubborn pounds all of your life, it's important to note that your ultimate solution may be as simple as taking in deeper breaths. This is especially relevant if you've found it different to engage in weight loss or maintain your figure. Deep breathing exercises can give you that boost you need when dieting and exercises have created a plateau within your life.

Surprised at the simplicity of the solution? Don't be: the amount of oxygen that's available within the bloodstream determines the amount of energy that's available to our bodies. As you've read throughout this book, both your brain and your mind need plenty of energy in order to function at an optimal level. That means if you don't get the oxygen you need, you're much more likely to feel sluggish, fatigued, and downright exhausted. This can result in the following scenarios, many of which might be common to you:

- You might have intentions to go to the gym after work; however, you become so tired by the end of the day that you'd rather sit on the couch than work up a sweat.

- You're at the gym with every intention to work out. Yet you decide to take your workout down a couple of notches, choosing instead to do

an easy and relaxed workout, rather than something that would get your energy levels up.

- You know that if you want to lose weight, you need to cook more healthy meals at home, instead of relying on takeout and meals at restaurants. Yet by the time dinner rolls around, you're too tired or lazy to cook for yourself; instead, you fire up your computer and order delivery again.

These are common situations that nearly everyone can relate to, especially with regards to the struggle to lose weight. Logically, you know that eating right and exercising are the keys to diminishing those stubborn pounds; but sometimes you just feel like you're fighting a losing battle with your body. Instead of heading to the gym, you find it much more comfortable to lead a sedentary lifestyle. Besides, you're too busy to devote hours to the gym. And eating healthy is expensive!

These are the things we tell ourselves to justify why we simply can't work up the motivation to go to the gym or cook for ourselves.

Surprisingly, your body's oxygen levels might have a lot to do with your struggles. When you lead a largely sedentary lifestyle – where you're sitting throughout the workday, come home, and end up sitting on the couch – you're essentially cutting off the oxygen that's available to your body. Sitting for so long teaches us to breathe from our chests instead of the stomach – and as we've discovered throughout this book, breathing from the stomach is critical for increasing oxygen throughout your

body. That means the longer you sit, the more likely it is that you're breathing incorrectly, thus cutting off your oxygen levels and allowing your mind to make poor decisions instead of healthy ones.

To help emphasize this point, consider how you feel after spending hours sitting on the couch or at work. You didn't actually do anything to feel tired; you were just sitting all day. But yet by the time you stand up, you're so tired and exhausted that you can barely move. That's exactly what happens when you sit for too long, as it's creating a deficiency of oxygen within your body. This makes you much more likely to feel tired, mentally exhausted and drained – and when you're experiencing these feelings and emotions, it can be very difficult to make a decision that's good for your health.

One of the most fascinating connections between oxygen and weight loss is its impact on your metabolism. As a gas, oxygen is responsible for speeding up chemical reactions. When the body consumes oxygen, it helps speed up the flow of your blood, which increases your metabolic rate. In other words, the more you breathe, the higher your metabolism – and the higher your metabolic rate, the more calories you'll burn, regardless of whether you're working out or sitting at your work desk.

To help emphasize the pound-burning power of oxygen, let's take a look at a few case studies that prove an indisputable link between better breathing practices and weight-loss.

_ Oxycise! Is a unique weight-loss program that was developed due to the findings of a study released by the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. Dr. Robert Girandola, a professor of exercise science at this prestigious university, conducted a study that measured just how many calories participants burned when they exercised on the Oxycise! program, as opposed to a normal exercise routine. In this program, participants were taught specific breathing exercises to employ during vigorous cardio workouts, like running, biking, or swimming. For this

particular study, Dr. Girandola had participants ride a stationary bike for just 15 minutes. When compared against the metabolic rates of participants who just exercised as normal, Dr. Girandola found that Oxycise! participants burned 140 percent more calories than those who did not follow the program. What's more, Dr. Girandola discovered that participants who followed this simple 15-minute exercise and breathing regimen were able to lower their cholesterol levels, increase their metabolic rate even during rest, and improve their overall health.

While the specific breathing exercises used in the Oxycise! program require a membership purchase, there's no doubt that learning how to breathe correctly – and deeply – can help individuals increase their metabolic rates, which is key to burning more calories throughout the day. What's more, breathing deeply can help improve the body's ability to function properly, meaning exercisers may enjoy faster and stronger performances.

Losing Weight in Your Sleep: For many individuals, the idea of losing weight in your sleep is a compelling one (in fact, there's even a diet that encourages participants to sleep as much as possible to lose pounds). Unfortunately, we can't sleep forever; after all, we have jobs to attend, relationships to maintain, and lives to lead. Yet there is science to support the idea that we can still lose weight in our sleep – up to a pound overnight.

Does this seem too good to be true? If you're skeptical of these findings, try out this quick "exercise": weigh yourself before you tuck yourself into bed, and then weigh yourself as soon as you wake up in the morning. To preserve the findings, be sure to do it without your pajamas on. You'll notice that you could be anywhere from half a pound to two pounds lighter, depending on your length of sleep.

However, if you weigh yourself at the end of the day, you'll most often find that you've gained this weight back.

Wondering what's behind this phenomenon? As we pointed out in the beginning of this book, your body takes deeper and more filling breaths when you're sleeping. According to Derek Muller, a physics teacher in Australia, points out that as you breathe at night, you're breathing out carbon dioxide, which is composed of two oxygen atoms attached to a carbon atom. When you inhale, you're breathing in oxygen (which is actually made up of two oxygen atoms). For every breath you take, you're exhaling more carbon atoms than oxygen atoms, which slowly add up to carbon depletion within your body.

It doesn't seem like much; after all, how can exhale carbon atoms lead to over a pound of weight loss? It's actually quite fascinating: as every carbon atom weighs just a fraction of a fraction of a gram, it takes a lot of exhalations to deplete a pound's worth of carbon from the body. It's more than capable of the task: with every breath you exhale, your body is getting rid of ten billion trillion atoms (which looks like this: 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000). Add up all of these zeroes together over the course of a night, and you'll find that your carbon-depleted body can be over a pound lighter.

Other scientists have pointed out that the body does more than lose carbon atoms; we also slowly exhale water vapor overnight. Here's the short version of what happens: when we're sleeping at night, we're typically sleeping in a colder environment (the body sleeps more deeply when the room temperature is a few degrees cooler). When you breathe in the colder air, the heat of your body moistens the air inside you, which means that when it's time to exhale, you're breathing out a more (humid read: water vapor) breath. Again, add every breath up over the course of one night, and you'll quickly discover that your body is getting rid of over a pound of carbon atoms and water vapor.

So why do we gain this weight back? The reasons can vary: for example, some people may gain the weight back simply by drinking and eating, while others gain it back by being exposed to free radicals associated with pollutants, stress, and other lifestyle habits. However, this compelling evidence demonstrates that when your body is able to breathe properly, it can help your body loses weight without you even stepping on a treadmill. If you add a healthy diet and regular exercise to this process, you may just discover the kick-start you need to enjoy permanent and exciting weight-loss.

However, you don't have to rely on breathing during your sleep to lose pounds. If you harness the lessons you've learned throughout this book, you'll discover that breathing deeper throughout the day *and* night can add up to significant weight-loss. We'll explore the breathing exercises that can do just that in a later section of this chapter.

The Connection between Hydrogen and Fat: Over the course of this book, you've learned that your breathing processes make it possible for your body to release everything from carbon molecules to water vapor. At this point, it's important to point out that breathing deeply allows your body to release yet another critical atom: hydrogen.

Hydrogen plays a critical role within the body, as it helps form unique bonds and acts as a catalyst for many chemical reactions. Hydrogen is also responsible for allowing the body to store fat. This chemical reaction was formed thousands of years ago, when the human body needed to store onto as much fat as possible in order to survive. However, as our lifestyles became more sedentary and our diets incorporated more trans fats, our body still used hydrogen to hold onto

as much fat as possible. More specifically, the body uses hydrogen to form a bond with carbon, which is an energy-rich relationship that encourages the body to store as much fat as possible (this is because fat is an energy-rich substance). This is why you need to burn a lot of calories in order to lose a pound of fat; in fact, it's estimated that you need to burn at least 3,000 calories (a calorie is actually a unit of energy) to drop a pound.

Given this relationship between hydrogen and fat, it stands to reason that the more hydrogen you have in your body, the more likely it is that your body will form these carbon-hydrogen bonds, making it easier for you to store fat.

In other words, unless you can find a way to deplete excess hydrogen in your body, you'll find it difficult to lose those stubborn pounds, as your body is working against you.

So how do you get rid of excess hydrogen? Simple: you learn to breathe deeply. With every exhalation, you'll help your body deplete excess hydrogen – and at the end of this chapter, you'll learn the breathing techniques that will help you do exactly that.

One Important Note

While deep breathing and losing weight have strong connections, it's important to note that simply breathing will not help transform your body, especially if you continue to follow an unhealthy and sedentary lifestyle. For example, if you're still sitting for over twelve hours a day (trust us, working at a desk and enjoying a TV marathon at home adds up) and eating processed foods, even the most rigorous breathing exercises won't undo the damage caused by this lifestyle. That's why it's critical to incorporate these breathing exercises with a healthy lifestyle.

If you're serious about using deep breathing exercises to help you lose weight, make these changes to your lifestyle now – and watch as the pounds start dropping away:

Fight Oxidative Stress: Find a way to decrease the amount of stress in your life. This is especially important for decreasing the amount of hydrogen available in your body. You see, the more stressed you may be, the more likely it is that you may be exposing yourself to free radicals. This may be used as a blanket term these days, but free radicals can refer to any damaging molecules that can be found in environmental pollutants, poor diets, poor breathing habits, and other factors. When these free radicals enter your body, they use oxygen molecules to form toxic bonds with healthy cells, thus creating dangerous peroxides. This is known as oxidative stress, and it can be responsible for maladies and illnesses ranging from early aging, chronic fatigue syndrome, cancer, heart failure, Alzheimer's disease, autism, Sickle Cell Disease, and a variety of other dangerous diseases.

The more stressed you may be, the more likely it is that your body is consuming these free radicals and creating higher levels of oxidative stress. When your health is at risk like this, it's not only difficult to lose weight; it can also be extremely unlikely that you'll be able to maintain a healthy lifestyle without making critical changes.

If you want to cut down on any oxidative stress – as well as reverse any harm that might have already been done – it's important to find ways to relax yourself and reduce your exposure to free radicals. The breathing exercises contained throughout the course of this book can certainly help you relax; however, you should also make a commitment to eat better and exercise more often. With regard to environmental pollutants, find a way to decrease your exposure. If you live and work in a major city, try setting up a humidifier in your bedroom that can help enhance your breathing quality.

Take vitamins that are specifically designed to enhance your body's protections against free radicals. Ensure that your diet has as many antioxidants in it, as these molecules are specifically designed to help eliminate the chemical reactions in the body that create oxidative stress. A diet high in antioxidants can include fruits, vegetables, leafy greens, and juices. Be sure to read nutrition labels so you have a better understanding of what you're consuming, and how it can combat oxidative stress.

Above all of this advice, it's just important to take time for yourself to relax and get away from the rigors and stresses of life. If you constantly feel like you're running on empty, or you're always tired and exhausted, it may be time to look into how you can cut back on your obligations so you can take the time you need to heal and relax your body. You don't need to go to every social obligation, nor do you need to work late every night. Assess your life to see what can be cut out, as you'll be taking large steps to help your body combat oxidative stress.

Get Up and Get Moving: As previously mentioned in this book, no matter how many breathing exercises you invest yourself in, you're not going to lose weight and change the shape of your body unless you're complementing your breathing techniques with aerobic exercises. Take, for example, the research conducted by the British Olympic Medical Centre, in which Richard Godfrey, chief physiologist, analyzed claims that deep breathing alone could help a person lose weight.

While there was evidence that metabolic rates increased with deeper breathing, participants who wanted to lose a significant amount of weight needed to complement this metabolic increase with cardio activity to burn up fat levels.

In other words, if you want to lose weight but aren't willing to invest the metabolic increases caused by your deep breathing exercises, you may find it difficult to shed stubborn weight. Remember, each pound of fat is a dense medley of almost 3,000 calories of energy – and while deep breathing can help you burn that fat off faster, only aerobic exercises will provide you with the tipping point.

Fortunately, if you've harnessed the power of breathing correctly and deeply, you don't need to log in hours at the gym in order to melt away fat. Even going for a twenty-minute walk every morning can help your higher metabolic rate attack dense energy stores within your body. The point here is this: deep breathing and aerobic exercises have an inextricable relationship, especially when it comes to weight loss. One cannot substitute the other; instead, they need to work together to help you reshape your body for life.

Cardio exercises can be varied and fun, so don't commit to an exercise regimen that you're not interested in. For example, you could train for a 5K run or even a half-marathon; you could go for regular swims in the community pool; or you could even chase your dog around in the backyard for a half-hour. As long as you're moving and breathing, you'll find that the inches on your waist will melt away almost overnight.

Make Changes to Your Diet: Like with any weight-loss plan, you're not going to see the changes you want unless you make concrete changes to your eating habits. This is particularly relevant if you have a habit of eating unhealthy processed foods, and lots of it. After all, all those nights of snacking on the couch or grabbing dinner on the go introduces plenty of free radicals into your body. This means that as you make poor food choices, your oxidative levels increase, resulting in the kind of dangerous health conditions that can have a serious impact on your lifestyle.

You don't have to throw out every single tempting food that you've ever salivated over. This is a major failing that comes hand-in-hand with most diets, as they essentially teach the dieter to eschew all temptations and follow a bare-bones diet. This is not only unhealthy, but it's also unsustainable over the long-term; this means that you're more likely to fall off the proverbial wagon and pick up your unhealthy eating habits again. There's a wealth of research that supports yo-yo dieting (where you gain and lose a considerable amount of weight over and over again) can be just as bad for your heart as being obese.

Instead of cutting out all of your favorite foods, considering moderating what you eat. Allow yourself the occasional treats, but make sure you balance it out with low-carb meals with plenty of fruits and veggies. Cut down on your portion sizes to ensure that you're able to eat your favorite foods, and supplement your new healthy diet with plenty of exercise and breathing. These changes won't result in overnight weight loss, and that's exactly the point: studies have shown that losing one to two pounds each week is more sustainable, leading to permanent weight-loss.

When you lose too much weight too quickly, you're more likely to put it back on as you let go of unsustainable dieting habits and revert back to your old food routines.

Now that we've discussed some of the changes you need to make to support deeper breathing, let's examine the exercises you can use to jumpstart your metabolism and start melting off the pounds.

Exercise 4.1: The OxyBurn

This unique breathing exercise was designed by a master yogi to help overweight people jump-start their metabolisms. The reason why this exercise is called the OxyBurn is simple: it creates a warm, almost fiery sensation within the body, which means that your metabolic system is revving up for fat-burning success.

To start, sit in a comfortable area with your spine as straight as possible. If you have trouble supporting your spine in a sitting position, consider sitting in a comfortable chair or sitting with your back against a wall. Once you're in this position, visualize your body relaxing section by section. Picture your forehead actively relaxing, then move onto your face. Relax your nose, your chin, and your jaw. Continue this visualization and relaxation technique until you've reached the tip of your toes, and your entire body is relaxed.

At this stage, you're ready to begin the breathing exercise.

Follow these steps to master the weight-loss power of the OxyBurn:

- Place your legs in a crossed position. Put your hands on your knees and relax them. Spend a few minutes in this position so you can get comfortable. Connect with the floor, and feel your spine straighten into an unyielding, powerful rod. You may even want to visualize your spine as a steel rod, as this can provide you with the prompt your back needs to straighten even further.

- Place the thumb and the index of your left over your right nostril opening. To do this, place the tip of the thumb gently inside your nose, and use the index finger to hold your nostril tight against your thumb. You want to ensure that no air can escape from your right nostril, so breath out through your nose a couple of times until you've successfully sealed it off.

- Instead of inhaling and letting the air fill your lungs and stomach, try inhaling from your bottom and letting the air travel up. This may feel strange at first, as essentially you're reversing the direction of your oxygen flow. It's all in your visualization techniques; just tighten your rectum muscles as you breathe in, and push the air up as you finish inhaling. This may take practice, so don't be frustrated if you don't get this right away.

- Once you've finished inhaling, remove your left thumb from inside your right nostril and place it on the outside of your left nostril opening. Pinch the openings together until your nose is sealed off.

- Hold your breath until you feel a warm feeling growing from the pit of your stomach (also known as the solar plexus). Keep in mind that if you begin to feel dizzy or nauseous while you're holding your breath, you should immediately stop this exercise. This is a sign that your body isn't strong enough to engage in this breathing technique.

Consider starting with the exercises found in the beginning of this book until you're ready for more advanced techniques.

- When you feel that warm feeling in the pit of your stomach, release your finger from your left nostril and slowly exhale. Keep the right nostril closed the entire time.

- Repeat ten to fifteen times, and alternate which nostril openings you use each time. The point here is to inhale through one nostril, and exhale through the other.

- Throughout the breathing exercise, let the warm feeling travel up through the pit of your stomach and around the body. Picture this warm energy vibrating through your fat cells, shaking each cluster so hard that they eventually break apart. Visualize the fat cells leaving your body, until your body is streamlined and slim. Keep this visualization in your head until you've completed the exercise.

- After you're done with the breathing exercise, take a moment to inhale and exhale normally. Breathe deeply through your stomach, picturing each breath as a vessel that carries your fat outside of your body.

If you incorporate this breathing exercise in your daily routine, you'll find that it's much easier to lose weight. The combination of deep breathing, visualization and relaxation can have a powerful influence on your weight-loss journey.

Exercise 4.2: "Fire Up" Your Fat

There's a reason why popular culture refers to losing weight as akin to "burning fat"; in order to lose a single pound of fat, you need to create enough heat energy within your body to burn 3,000 calories. That's exactly why this breathing exercise makes it easier for your body to burn calories, as it essentially uses oxygen to fire up your metabolic rate. To perform this breathing technique, consider using the following steps:

- Sit or stand in a comfortable position. Avoid lying down for this exercise, as it will take much of the fat-burning power out of your breathing. If you're sitting, make sure your spine is straight; use the steel rod visualization technique to help you correct your posture and open up your lungs. Spend a few minutes in this position until you become relaxed, yet energized.

- Inhale slowly through your nose for a full count of four, or until you've completely filled your lungs. This involves breathing from the chest, so isolate your stomach.

- Once your lungs are completely filled with air, it's time to rev up your metabolic rate. Take ten rapid and tiny breaths during this stage. Don't pause between your inhalations and exhalations. Once you've completed the tenth breath, exhale to completely empty out your lungs.

- Repeat this process at least thirty times.

Keep in mind that rapid breathing might be difficult for many people, as it involves a great degree of control and effort. What's more, rapid breathing might make some individuals feel like they're

hyperventilating. If you feel dizzy, nauseous, or get a headache during this breathing exercise, it's important to immediately stop and regain control over your breath by using slow inhalations and exhalations. This exercise should leave you feeling energized and revitalized, not sick.

If you encountered the latter, consider using the basic breathing techniques that were introduced in the first two chapters of this book. Breathing may seem like a basic skill, but advanced breathing techniques can take a considerable amount of strength and control. Don't force yourself to engage in a breathing exercise you're not ready for; instead, build up your skills until you're able to control your breathing without feeling dizzy or sick. You may even want to consider taking yoga or meditative classes, as these focus on controlled breathing exercises. The more practice you put into these techniques, the more likely it is you'll enjoy significant weight-loss benefits.

Techniques to Help Bolster These Exercises

When you unlock the ability to lose weight with breathing exercises, you might feel like you've stumbled across the biggest secret known to mankind. However, that doesn't mean that every reader will be able to master the breathing techniques necessary for melting away fat. If you're finding it difficult to lose weight – even with the assistance of these breathing exercises – you can rev up your oxygen intake by using the following techniques:

- **Time Your Breathing.** While you may want to engage in these breathing techniques early in the morning before you start your day, we recommend using them right after you've engaged in cardio activity. The reasoning behind this is simple: when you engage in cardio exercise, your metabolism starts revving itself up to burn major calories. This effect doesn't stop once you step off the treadmill; in fact, your metabolism continues to burn calories in what's known as the "after burn." This means that your metabolism is in a prime position to enjoy an even bigger boost in the form of breathing exercises.

  If possible, consider using one of the breathing techniques after engaging in a vigorous cardio workout. Use the same relaxation and visualization practices to help get your mind into a calm and soothed state. When you give your metabolism the one-two punch (cardio exercises + breathing exercises), you'll find that your pounds will effortlessly melt away each and every week.

- **Break Up Your Breathing Exercises.** It can be difficult to devote time to your breathing exercises, especially if you have a busy lifestyle. If you find that carving out half an hour in the mornings or evenings as difficult as earning a PhD in astrophysics, try breaking up your time commitment between the mornings and evenings. For example, you could engage in one breathing exercise for ten minutes in the morning, and another breathing technique later in the evening. You could even use these techniques in the shower or in the car on your commute home; as long as you're able to relax and breathe correctly, you can do your breathing exercises anywhere.

- **Keep Reminders Around Your Home.** Like any new habit, it can be difficult to keep up momentum, especially when life starts to get a little too busy and hectic. If you're committed to losing weight, it's important to give yourself the reminders you need that ensure you engage in your new breathing routine. To help carve out time in the day, consider scheduling your breathing routines as you would any meeting or doctor's appointment. Place a notification in your daily agenda, or post a reminder in your Smartphone or computer that will alert you when it's time to engage in your exercise.

You can also post sticky notes around your home or office to give yourself visual reminders. Consider placing inspirational quotes on these sticky notes, or write out the benefits of just taking ten minutes to breathe deeply. You can even write down summaries on the case studies and research that has been explored throughout this book. Either way, give yourself the kick-in-the-pants you need to commit to this new routine.

Your trim new waistline will thank you for it!

- **Take breaks from the computer.** If you work at a desk or have a sedentary job that requires you to sit for long lengths of time, be sure to prioritize taking breaks as much as possible. Sitting for a long time can cut off oxygen from your body, as your posture might become slouched (this makes it harder for your lungs and abdomen to bring in oxygen). What's

more, staying sedentary for so long can cause you to breathe in a shallow manner, which can slow down the metabolic rate.

If your goal is to lose weight, you need to keep your metabolic rate revved up and your oxygen flowing. Therefore, consider taking five-minute breaks from your computer every hour. Get up and walk around the office for five minutes, or take a breath and head outside. Even getting up and going to the break room can be enough to correct your posture and deepen your breathing. If you find it difficult to take five-minute breaks every hour, make sure you take your allotted time for lunch and coffee breaks. Spending too much time sitting in one position is not only dangerous for your breathing and weight loss efforts; it's actually quite damaging for your health.

In addition to these breathing tips and techniques, it's important for you to realize that you shouldn't make an effort to do all of these exercises all at once. Too much oxygen intake can actually be bad for you, according to Professor Ian Macdonald, professor of metabolic physiology at the School of Biomedical Sciences in Derbyshire in England. Research shows that engaging in too many deep breathing exercises can actually disrupt the delicate carbon dioxide and oxygen balance within the body, which is necessary for neutralizing the blood.

If this balance is interrupted, it can cause someone to feel dizzy, lightheaded, and nauseous; some people may even faint as a result of these symptoms.

Fortunately, the breathing exercises found throughout the course of this book are safe to use; however, it is important to pay attention to how you're feeling during your breathing exercises, as you don't want to dismiss any dizziness or lightheadedness. Pay attention to how your body is responding to your deep breathing, and you'll find that you become much more aware of your health and well-being.

That's just the incredible power that OxyTherapy can bring to your life – as well as your waistline!

In the next chapter, you'll get up close and personal with more advanced breathing techniques that are designed to promote your best health yet. Whether you already have the good fortune to enjoy a healthy lifestyle or you're suffering from various ailments, aches, and pains, this upcoming chapter can provide you with the framework for enjoying a life that's filled with health, potential, and positivity.

Finishing It Up: A Five-Minute Exercise

Throughout the course of this book, you've learned that increasing your capacity for oxygen intake can directly benefit your metabolic levels. That means the more air your lungs can take in, the more likely it is that you'll increase your metabolism, thus making it easier for you to burn calories even while you're at a state of rest. What's more, increasing your lung capacity can help strengthen the muscles of your ribcage, leading to a much healthier and happier life.

To harness the power of The Lung Expander, use the following steps:

- Get in that comfortable position again; you can stand, sit, or even lay down for this exercise. If you opted to lie flat on your back, make sure your spine is in complete contact with the floor, as this contracts your abs and ensures that your whole core is engaged throughout the breathing exercise.

- Take a deep breath through your nose for a count of five seconds. Be sure that you're breathing through the chest, and not the stomach; this ensures that you're giving your lungs the workout they need to eventually increase their capacity.

- Hold your breath for five to eight seconds. If you feel dizzy during this exercise, immediately stop.

- After holding your breath, exhale slowly and in a controlled manner. Make your exhalation last for at least eight seconds. Empty your lungs completely of air.

- Repeat this process at least five to ten times.

- Once you've reached the five-to-ten milestone (whatever feels most comfortable for you), take a deep breath for seven seconds. Hold that air in your lungs for ten seconds, and exhale for ten seconds.

- If you're able to complete this step, continue to repeat this breathing technique another five to ten times.

The goal of this breathing technique is that with consistent practice, you'll be able to hold your breath for at least twenty seconds. The longer you're able to hold your breath, the greater your lung capacity – and that means you'll be able to take in more oxygen to the body. As we've explored throughout this book, increasing your capacity for oxygen can have a profound effect on your metabolic rate. Over time, you may find that the pounds keep slipping away - so get ready to buy a new wardrobe in a completely different size.

Let's face it: the idea of deep breathing for weight loss might feel like a bit of a scam at first. This is only natural, as the old "diet-and-exercise" routine is so emphasized in today's society that it might feel odd to think that it's as simple as taking a deep breath. However, if you use deep breathing exercises to supplement your healthy habits, you'll discover that it's easier to slip into those skinny jeans.

Chapter Five:
Breathe In Great Health

When it comes to living a happy and fulfilling lifestyle, you know that breathing can play an inevitable role. After all, common sense tells you that having strong and healthy lungs is critical to your lifespan (hence why cigarettes and other tobacco products are so bad for your health). What's more, your ability to draw in as much air as possible during each breath can help you jumpstart your metabolism, keep your mind alert and in charge, and even expand your lung capacity, thus improving your overall aerobic health.

While knowing these critical health factors is one thing, actually following through with them is quite enough. Life can often get in the way, which means we may not be optimizing our breath for a healthy lifestyle. What's more, living in modern society today practically demands that we expose ourselves to some sort of unhealthy environment. Take a look at the following scenarios to see how many you've found yourself in during the past week alone:

- You wanted to enter a bar, club, or restaurant; but in order to do so, you had to walk through a cloud of cigarette smoke from the smoking customers standing outside of the establishment.

- You commuted to work – and regardless of whether you were in a car, on a bike, or on a major subway, you exposed yourself to common environmental toxins.

- In order to calm your nerves after a big meeting, you decided to step outside and smoke a cigarette.

- You decided to go for a run outside, and multiple cars (and their emissions) passed by you on the street as you ran.

- You slept in a room with a poor heating/air conditioning unit.

If any of these situations sound familiar to you (and let's face it, many of them probably do), then it's important to note that your deep breathing skills – as well as your lungs – are already under duress. Throughout the course of the day, it's likely that you've exposed your body to a number of stresses and strains, many of which you may not have been directly responsible for. For example, it's not your fault that you have to commute in a mess of toxin-spewing traffic – you have to get to work somehow. It's not your fault that you had to walk past someone who is smoking outside of a store or restaurant. And it's certainly not your fault that you have to have cars and their emissions pass by you while you're trying to enjoy an afternoon jog.

As you can see, you don't have to be an avid smoker in order to expose your body to a variety of toxins and free radicals with every breath you take. Simply being a human being in today's modern world means that we're going to be around environmental stressors that can all have an impact on our bodies. As you discovered in the previous chapter, free radicals, environmental toxins, and a host of other components can form chemical reactions with oxygen and create oxidative stress within the body. This can lead to the development of many diseases, as well as demonstrate the signs of early aging within the body. In fact, oxidative stress is one of the biggest contributors to developing gray hair at an early age, which we'll explore in the last chapter of this book.

While readers may be quick to point out breathing as a contributing factor for why these toxins have entered the body, it's critical to note that breathing is just as crucial to eliminating these toxins. In fact, let's explore some of the amazing health benefits associated with deep breathing, including how it can reenergize and revitalize the human body.

The Body Beautiful: The Benefits of Deep Breathing

Throughout the course of this book, you've learned plenty of reasons why deep breathing is so important to living a happy and healthy life. After all, breathing exercises can help you feel more alert, restore your energy levels, and even rev up your metabolism for fat loss. If that's not enough to convince you to take up deep breathing exercises for your health, here are more than a few additional benefits to putting your lungs to work:

Breathing Releases Toxins.

Remember those toxins and free radicals we discussed in the beginning of this chapter? While breathing in polluted air does give these free radicals the reins to run around in your body, it's also worth noting that breathing is fundamental for pushing these toxins back out of you. Researchers have found that the human body is akin to a waste removal machine – and your breathing is responsible for removing up to 70% of the toxins that make their way into your body (one doesn't need to guess where the other 30% come out of). That means with every breath you take, you're effectively clearing out the toxins that could lead to a build-up of oxidative stress and other dangerous health conditions.

While this is certainly good news for those individuals who want to preserve their health, it comes with a caveat: if you're not optimizing your breath for maximum success, you're not clearing out enough toxins. Think about it this way: if you're slouched over at your desk all day and barely taking in a lungful of breath, you're not emitting 70% of the toxins in your body. That means these free radicals can snuggle up inside your organs, creating layer upon layer of toxic build-up until it creates an overabundance of hydrogen peroxide (the leading cause of oxidative stress).

Breathing Relieves Tension.

How many times have you found yourself feeling stressed out and tense, only to take a deep breath in order to visibly relax your muscles? That's just another healthy advantage to deep breathing, as it provides your muscles with the oxygen it needs to release tension. What's more, it also reminds your body that it doesn't have to be in the "fight-or-flight" mode, which often happens when our bodies become stressed or overly anxious (please refer back to earlier chapters for more information on this physical phenomenon). With every deep breath you

take, you're physically reminding yourself not to feel stressed or anxious, which is critical for preventing serious health issues from building up within your body.

Breathing Provides Clarity.

It can be argued that one of the biggest health risks that we face today is stress. As previously mentioned throughout this book, when our bodies are in a constant state of "fight-or-flight," it can lead to a variety of health conditions and diseases; many of these can even be seriously debilitating or fatal. With the aid of deep breathing, readers can learn how to undo the damage caused by stress and anxiety, thus preserving their health and well-being for decades to come.

What's more, learning how to handle stress in healthy ways can lead to a better feeling of personal satisfaction. Think about it this way: if you're constantly feeling miserable or anxious, chances are that you're not going to feel as fulfilled or happy as you could be. When you feel satisfied and happy in your life, your body is much more likely to mirror your emotions. Think of deep breathing exercises as the puzzle piece that helps you fill in the bigger picture of what life's all about.

Breathing Invigorates Your Organs

You've already learned about the diaphragm, which is a powerful muscle that's located between your lungs and your abdomen. When you take a deep breath that's aided by your stomach muscles – opposed to your chest – you engage your diaphragm, which expands to allow you to take in as much air as possible. With regular deep breathing exercises, your diaphragm actually begins to massage the surrounding organs, including the stomach, liver, pancreas, heart, and small intestine. Massaging is critical for improving the circulation within these organs,

especially within the powerful heart muscle. As you may know, a massaged muscle is more likely to be stronger, healthier, and much more relaxed than a muscle that's tense or seized up. Think of your deep breathing exercise as a way to treat your organs to a blissful massage – one that doesn't require a hefty spa price!

Breathing Strengthens the Immune System.

When it comes to keeping your body healthy and strong, your immune system is akin to a VIP athlete. Essentially, your immune system is made up of a group of special proteins and cells that are designed to protect the body against invading germs and bacteria. When a germ enters the body (usually through touching the eyes, nose or mouth, or breathing in an airborne germ), a healthy immune system immediately goes to work. It views the germ as a "foreign body," which must be removed as quickly as possible. It uses special cells to attack the foreign body until its destroyed, which is then eliminated from the body via natural waste removal processes. During the attack, you may encounter common symptoms that indicate you're sick. For example, a runny nose is the body's way of (messily) eliminating the cold virus; a fever is a sign that your immune system is attacking a virus; and acne is a symptom of your immune system's fight against certain bacteria within your skin.

In short, the immune system is an amazing process that's designed to keep you alive and fit – but only if you're supplying it with the oxygen it needs to properly function. Your immune system and oxygen are inextricably linked, as oxygen attaches to the hemoglobin in your red blood cells to travel through your blood stream (red blood cells are like the front-line soldiers of the immune system). As oxygen travels through the bloodstream, it enriches your body's cells, tissues, and

muscles, resulting in stronger and healthier organs that are capable of fighting back against the millions of germs and bacteria that make their way through your body every day.

Breathing Strengthens Your Posture.

At this very moment, while you're reading this book, it's likely that you're hunched over in a position that's not exactly ideal for your spine. Before you can think about what you're doing, notice your current posture and the strain it's placing on your back. Are your shoulders hunched forward and your spine in a curve? Are you leaning forward to the point where your shoulders are practically raised up against your ears? Have you been sitting like this for a considerable period of time?

Now that you've made note of your posture and your current stance, do yourself a favor and pull in a deep breath through your nose and into your stomach. Notice what happens to your posture as you perform this activity. Did your back immediately straighten up? Did your chest become raised and your shoulders pinned back? Did you lift up your head and straighten the hunch in your shoulders? As you can see, your posture is immediately impacted by your deep breath because your body needs to be in an ideal position to breathe in deeply. Think of a deep breath as the ultimate reminder to sit up straight. Perhaps it could even give your mother a run for her money!

Deep Breathing Improves Your Blood.

If the immune system can be equivalent to the front-line soldiers fighting a war, then your blood is the nurse that's keeping everyone healthy and fighting fit. Your blood is directly responsible for carrying

oxygen through your body, thus providing cells, proteins, tissues, and muscles with the fuel they need to carry out their body processes. What's more, highly oxygenated blood cells can help remove excess levels of carbon dioxide from the blood, thus maintaining the delicate oxygen-carbon dioxide balance that's critical for a healthy body. If the blood isn't properly oxygenated, it's safe to say that your blood will experience a build-up of carbon dioxide – and that can make it difficult for your muscles, tissues and organs to get all the oxygen they need to function at an optimal level.

Deep Breathing Helps You Digest Better.

Your oxygenated blood isn't the only bodily process that's supplying you with much-needed proteins and nutrients. As you know, your stomach is responsible for breaking down your foods and separating vital nutrients from non-nutrients that will later be turned into waste. Your digestive system is one of the most pivotal organs in your body; as you may have guessed, digesting food can use up a lot of energy, which comes in the form of – you guessed it – oxygen.

If you're not consuming enough oxygen, you're essentially starving your vital organs of the energy they need to conduct their basic functions – and that includes your stomach. When your stomach doesn't have the oxygen it needs to properly digest its food, you open yourself up to a host of digestive issues, which can include heartburn, irritable bowels, and other stomach-related health conditions. What's more, your stomach won't be able to provide the rest of your body with as many nutrients as it needs to function. This may result in your body feeling "starved" for nutrition, as your muscles, tissues, and cells won't be supplied with all of the proteins and essentials they need to perform. The more

enhanced your breathing, the more oxygen you'll be providing to your stomach – and that means your digestive functions will be performing for the better.

Deep Breathing Gives You a Mood Boost.

When it comes to your day-to-day life, chances are that your mood may suffer from all the stresses you deal with. After all, it can be tough to be in a good mood when you have innumerable deadlines to deal with, bosses that need catering to, and a demanding family life to come home to. Fortunately, there's a quick and simple remedy that you can use to elevate your mood in mere moments – and that's known as deep breathing.

By now, you already know that taking deep breaths can provide your brain with the oxygen it needs to function at maximum levels. If you feel alert and focused, you're likely already in a positive mood; however,

deep breathing has a secondary effect on your brain in that it encourages the production of neurochemicals responsible for your emotions. When highly oxygenized blood makes its way through your brain, your serotonin levels become elevated. Serotonin is often referred to as the brain's "happy chemical," and for good reason: the higher your serotonin levels, the more likely you are to be happy, positive, and calm.

Whenever you're feeling stressed or in a foul mood, consider taking a few moments to collect yourself and take a deep breath. Use your stomach muscles to take deep breaths through your nose, and exhale in a smooth and calm manner. Repeat the process until you start to feel your muscles relax. Within just a few minutes, you'll notice that your mood may have shifted for the better.

Deep Breathing Leads to a Healthier Heart.

If you want to improve the overall strength and health of your heart, nothing beats the power of deep breathing exercises. Deep breathing allows the heart to work at optimal levels for the following two reasons:

1. The more oxygen your lungs can pull into your body, the more likely it is that your heart won't have to work so hard to deliver oxygenated blood to the rest of your organs. The heart's primary function within the body is to pump blood through the body, thus ensuring that the muscles, tissues, and organs get the nutrients they need to perform at optimal levels. When the blood isn't properly oxygenated (in other words, you're not taking in enough oxygen), the blood becomes thicker than what it should be. As a result, the heart has to work harder in order to pump the blood through your veins. This can result in a fatigued and overworked heart, which may lead to a

variety of health issues and conditions, including heart disease, angina, heart palpitations, and even fatal heart attacks.

2. With every deep breathing exercise you engage in, you're strengthening your muscles to the degree where it's able to pull in more oxygen. This creates a significant pressure differential within the lungs, which provides a boost to your body's circulation (think of it as akin to a caffeine kick-start for your blood). This means that the heart doesn't have to work as hard to circulate blood throughout your body, thus reducing your risk of developing deadly heart conditions.

As you can see, your heart and your lungs are entwined in a symbiotic relationship; the stronger your lungs become, the more likely it is that you'll develop a healthy heart that's capable of quickly passing oxygen to the rest of your body's organs, muscles, and tissues.

Deep Breathing Empowers the Brain.

As we've explored in earlier chapters of this book, your brain needs oxygen in order to feel focused and alert. To help re-emphasize this example, think of your brain as a version of you. Let's say that you got a late night, and you wake up in the morning desperate for more sleep. You drag yourself out of bed, drink what feels like a gallon of coffee, and struggle throughout the entire workday, as all you can think about is going back to bed. If you don't supply your brain with the oxygen it needs to function at optimal levels, it's dragging its proverbial feet throughout the workday.

Oxygen provides your brain with the fuel necessary for performing its most basic functions. If you're not breathing at optimal rates, your brain will begin to struggle to engage in critical thinking skills and creative

problem-solving. What's more, you may even find that your body's most basic reactions are delayed by a few seconds. For example, you might find that your reflexes are slow to react, or it may take you time to register an event or object. This can lead to danger in situations where you need to have all your senses around you, especially if you find yourself behind the wheel of a car.

Fortunately, deep breathing (and plenty of sleep!) can help reinvigorate your brain quickly. Whether you're at work or driving home during your commute, engaging in effective deep breathing exercises can make it possible for you to feel engaged, alert, and focused again.

There is also interesting evidence to support that oxygen therapy can even restore the brain's basic functions after experiencing a traumatic injury. In a study published by online journal Plos One, a study was conducted to see if Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) could improve brain function in patients who suffered from chronic neurocognitive impairments. The study was prompted by the shocking finding that brain injury is the leading cause of death in the United States, and has the highest rate of disability claims. During the trial, HBOT was provided to patients who suffered from what is considered to be mild brain trauma. Over the course of the trial, researchers noted that significant cognitive improvement took place in the group of patients who received HBOT; in fact, SPECT imaging revealed higher levels of brain activity that demonstrated real and permanent cognitive improvements had occurred. Researchers concluded that increasing oxygen to the brain could induce neuroplasticity, leading to the repair of damaged cognitive functions as a result of brain trauma.

As you can see, deep breathing isn't just essential for leading a more relaxed and fulfilling lifestyle; it's also critical for keeping your organs healthy. The more oxygen you're able to supply your body, the more likely it is that you'll be able to fight off sicknesses, slash your risks of developing debilitating diseases, and enjoy superior cardiovascular

functions. However, engaging in deep breathing exercises can also improve your cellular regeneration – and this function is so fascinating that we've devoted an entire section to studying this phenomenon.

The Science (and Art) Of Cellular Regeneration

Open up any superhero comic or turn on any action blockbuster movie, and you'll often see one character or another boasting the ability to heal at lightning-fast rates. With a debonair smile, the hero often attributes to this healing process as rapid cellular regeneration; in other words, his cells are able to heal so quickly that any cut or wound is erased in mere months. The idea of cellular regeneration is so popular in the world of fantasy, action, and science fiction that even fans of *Doctor Who* will recognize the regeneration process, as the Doctor regenerates whenever he's near death.

While we may look at the process of rapid cellular regeneration with envy, the truth is that our bodies mimic a similar process – just at a much slower rate. Cellular regeneration can be defined as a biological process that allows a cell to replicate itself into a new and identically complex cell. Cellular regeneration forms the foundation for the growth spurts of our childhood; as we hit those pivotal ages, our cells were engaged in furious regeneration, making it possible for us to grow taller into the adult versions of ourselves. As we get older, however, this regeneration stage starts to become fatigued. As the aging process takes over, cells stop replicating themselves, which is why we stop growing (and in some cases, start shrinking; in fact, it's estimated that we shrink a few inches in our Golden Years).

Regeneration is such a complex phenomenon that it can baffle even the most inquisitive genius scientist. In fact, one of the reasons why a cure

for cancer hasn't been developed yet is because scientists don't understand why some cells regenerate and others don't. When a person develops cancer, it essentially means that a mutant cell within the body has received some sort of signal to start rapidly regenerating, thus creating more mutant cells. If the cancer cells aren't regenerating and replicating at a rapid rate, medical professionals are often able to put a stop to the cancer by using radiation and chemotherapy to destroy the mutant cells. However, if the cells are regenerating too quickly for doctors to treat, the cancer spreads throughout the body and destroys a patient's healthy organs, which often results in tragic death. Scientists are still trying to understand a myriad of reasons why cancer develops, including why mutant cells suddenly decide to regenerate, and what causes them to regenerate at rapid rates. One can argue that when scientists are capable of cracking the code behind cellular regeneration, a cure for cancer won't be too far away.

In order for a cell to regenerate (in other words, replicate itself into another healthy and complex cell), it needs to be supplied with a number of proteins before it can undergo this process. Cellular regeneration uses up a significant amount of energy, which means that cells need to be equipped with plenty of oxygen in order to make this process happen. Without oxygen, it's unlikely that a cell won't be able to produce the amount of energy it needs to replicate itself in a healthy manner. This is why so many proponents of oxygen therapy are interested in the connection between oxygen and the treatment of cancer. A cell may create a mutant version of itself if it doesn't have the oxygen it needs to function properly; therefore, providing the cell with optimal levels of oxygen can help ensure proper cellular regeneration. While theirs is plenty of evidence that supports this interesting theory, much research needs to be done before medical professionals place oxygen therapy alongside

mainstream treatments; additionally, pharmaceutical companies need to release the money-making ethos that they've embraced for several decades, as it's unlikely that they'll experience significant profits from low-cost oxygen therapies.

Before exploring how oxygen impacts the cellular regeneration process, let's take a closer look at how this process occurs in the first place. Essentially, a cell that is regenerating itself is replicating its own DNA strand. When a cell replicates its own DNA in a normal regeneration process, it creates a new cell that's healthy and functional (cells that created mutated DNA strands can create a range of diseases and genetic issues). During the process of cell replication, the shape of the DNA strand – which is a double helix – allows it to essentially "unzip" itself, allowing each side of the strand to become a template for the new cell. A variety of proteins are responsible for unzipping the double helix; once this happens, a special enzyme known as the DNA polymerase "walks" down both sides of the strands, adding new nucleotides to the existing nucleotides on each side. Once this process has occurred, another enzyme seals the old double helix back up, and the new DNA strand forms the traditional double helix shape. At this point, a new cell is ready to emerge from the old cell, thus creating an identical copy of the original cell. What's more, this process can take place in a matter of mere seconds, especially during the younger years of an individual's life.

It's also important to note that while some cells stop diving as the body gets older, other cells can be prompted to begin the process of replication given the right prompts. For example, cells in the liver are capable of kick-starting the cell division process if the liver needs to

heal. If you were formerly an alcoholic but stopped drinking before any permanent damage occurred, your liver's cells would begin to heal and regenerate the liver by replacing damaged cells with healthy new ones.

Needless to say, the process of cellular regeneration and replication provides the foundation for life as we know it. As you may have guessed at this point, this critical body process requires a great deal of energy to initiate – and that energy comes in the form of oxygen. Without oxygen, your cells wouldn't have enough energy to serve as a catalyst for the many chemical reactions that take place throughout the course of cellular regeneration. What's more, evidence is mounting that poorly oxygenated cells may be more likely to create abnormal cells during the regeneration stage. This means that deep breathing isn't just ideal for a happy and healthy lifestyle – it's actually critical for the building blocks that make up the entirety of your body right at this moment.

Why Are We Cutting Ourselves Off From Deep Breathing

Throughout the course of this chapter – and indeed, this book – you've learned that the benefits of proper breathing can be profound and life-changing. Learning how to take in deep breaths can help you feel more energetic, focused and clear; likewise, deep breathing makes it possible for your body to actively engage in its processes at optimal levels. At this point, you know that deep breathing is one of the most fundamental body habits you can develop *at this very second* – and yet many readers will find themselves taking in shallow breaths as soon as they stop reading the words on this page.

With so much evidence to support the notion that deep breathing can be critical for our health and well-being, it might come as a surprise to realize that many of us simply find the act of deep breathing (in other

words, taking a breath through the abdomen rather than the chest) to feel unnatural and even wrong. There are a variety of interesting factors that are at play here; for example, Harvard Medical School recently published an article in which researchers argued that many cultural beliefs and stereotypes can impact our deep breathing techniques.

For example, many cultures emphasize the importance of stifling one's emotions, especially if you're a young boy. While girls are often allowed and even encouraged to express any feelings of sadness and depression, boys are told to hold back their tears or to "deal with it like a man." Think back to the last time you tried to prevent yourself from crying: what did you do to hold back the tears? It's likely that you found yourself subconsciously holding back your breath until the feelings of sadness dissipated. This often happens with girls who are told not to express their feelings of anger. Again, you may find yourself subconsciously holding your breath in an effort to stop any tears or rage from spilling over into your conscious world.

Some researchers even argue that Western society's emphasis on body image plays a rule in undercutting deep breathing practices. Open up any magazine or turn on your TV screen, and you'll often see Hollywood heroes and heroines with impossibly flat washboard abs. These constricted muscles are considered so attractive that a billion-dollar industry has been developed around it – and the thought of inflating one's stomach might be a dissuading factor for many readers. Even though deep breathing can help individuals fire up their metabolisms and lose weight, the thought of even temporarily increasing the size of the stomach is an undesirable one. Keeping our stomach muscles

constricted in order to give the appearance of a trim and toned stomach encourages the development of tension and stress, which can make it difficult for our abdomens to fully engage in deep breathing exercises.

Perhaps one of the main reasons why people don't engage in deep breathing practices is because they don't know how to actively engage the diaphragm. As you've learned in this book, the diaphragm is a muscle that divides the chest (including the lungs and heart) from the abdomen. If your body is a two-story house, think of your chest as the upper floor, with the diaphragm providing the floor that separates the upstairs from the downstairs. When you take in a deep breath from the abdomen, you effectively engage the diaphragm. This strong sheet of muscle drops down, pulling the lungs in the same motion so that they're able to fill themselves with as much air as possible. When you breathe out, the diaphragm assists your lungs by creating a pushing motion, which helps eliminate all of the excess carbon dioxide. This is what healthy deep breathing looks like.

However, when we engage in shallow breathing – in other words, when we don't actively think about taking a deep breath with our abdomens – are diaphragms are essentially dormant. This is because the actions spurred on by the breathing process are taking place in the lungs, and not necessarily in the abdomen. You can even feel the difference right now: take a deep breath through your nostrils, and use your abdomen to inflate your lungs. Once you've exhaled, take a breath using only your chest.

Notice how much different that felt? That's because your diaphragm was essentially removed from the breathing equation. Therefore, your lungs couldn't take in as much oxygen as if you had used your abdomen to take in a breath. The bottom half of your lungs – the part that is most impacted by your diaphragm – never gets its fair share of air; therefore, you may end up feeling short of breath. What's more, taking your diaphragm out of the breathing process can make it much more difficult

for your lungs to eliminate carbon dioxide from your body. As we've previously discussed, your body's oxygen/carbon dioxide levels are precariously balanced at any given time. Shallow breathing means your body could produce an excess amount of carbon dioxide, which can greatly impact your ability to function properly.

At some point, readers might wonder why chest breathing is so bad for the health. After all, if your body naturally switches to chest breathing when you're not actively thinking about your breath, isn't it safe to assume that you're not necessarily doing something bad for your health?

Think again.

Chest breathing is one of the most inefficient style of breathing because it takes in the least amount of oxygen possible. As we've discussed throughout the course of this book, when you're not supplying your body with the oxygen it needs to thrive, you're much more likely to suffer from negative side effects, and even increase the odds that you'll develop a serious disease. Chest breathing only activates the upper half of the lung area instead of the lower half; ironically, much of the blood flow occurs in the lower half of your lungs, where a large majority of your lobes are located. As you know, chest breathing isolates the lower part of your lungs, making it difficult for you to draw in oxygen to this area. This not only means that you're not getting as much oxygen as you should be; it also means that your blood won't be as highly oxygenated as it could be if you breathed with your abdomen. This can have the type of domino effect in your body that looks a little something like this:

- Your blood isn't highly oxygenated, so your heart has to work harder to circulate it through the body. This means that your heart will beat faster, resulting in feelings of anxiety and stress.

- Your cells, muscles, and tissues won't receive the ideal amount of oxygen they need to function at optimal levels.

- Your organs won't function properly, meaning you'll feel slower, less energized, and sick. You may even put yourself at risk for developing serious health conditions and diseases.

If you continue to breathe through your chest, you'll only repeat this process over and over again. As a result, your body will suffer from the cumulative effects that can occur from a poorly oxygenated bloodstream – all as a result from simply breathing through your chest.

In order to enhance your breathing skills – and thus, improve the overall quality of your life – it's important to train your diaphragm so that it develops into a strong and powerful muscle. This is just like riding a bike or learning a new skill like playing an instrument: the more you practice, the stronger your breathing will become. And the stronger your diaphragm, the easier it will be to take deep, life-giving breaths without having to actively think about it. In the remainder of this section, we'll explore a few exercises that you can use to give your diaphragm muscle the boost it needs.

Exercise 5.1: The Sweat-Free Ab Workout

Think of the last time you performed an abdominal workout: chances are your stomach felt sore, stiff, and downright exhausted. While we're not asking you to engage in the kind of exercises that can lead to a six-pack, it is important to point out that these exercises can make your upper abdomen (in other words, your diaphragm) feel a little sore. Like with any muscle during strength training, this just means that your diaphragm is slowly and steadily improving. Keep up the good work, and you'll definitely notice a significant difference in your breathing skills!

1. Lie down on your back in a comfortable, quiet area. Place your back flat against the floor with your spine in a straight line, as this actively engages your abdomen. Bend your knees or, if possible, lift up your bent knees so that they form a ninety-degree angle with your body. You'll instantly feel your body contract, which means that your abs are now engaged and ready to work.

2. Use your hands to trace the bottom of your rib cage. When you reach the center of the bottom of your rib cage, place your hands on your stomach with your palms flat. Your fingers should be lightly touching one another. Where your hands are currently located is your diaphragm. Take a moment to get familiar with how your diaphragm feels; you may even want to take a moment to feel around the muscle (it's a big one – it stretches all the way

from the bottom of your rib cage to your sides). If you do this, make sure you return your hands to your center before you start this breathing exercise.

3. Take a deep breath through your nose. While you're taking this step, use your hands to feel how your diaphragm is expanding. If you don't feel your diaphragm expanding as much as it should, make sure you're not taking a deep breath with your chest. Your chest should be as still as possible, as your abdomen won't be actively engaged until you isolate the chest area.

4. Once you've expanded your stomach, slowly exhale through your mouth. While you're exhaling, imagine that your stomach is being hollowed out. You should push all of your breath out, until your stomach is empty and your abs are contracted.

5. Repeat this exercise for at least ten to fifteen minutes.

If you engage in this exercise regularly, you may find that this breathing technique becomes easy after consistent training. If that's the case, make it a little more difficult by sitting up during your practice. Make sure your spine is straight and supported, as hunching over can make it difficult for you to engage your abdomen. Sit against a wall to get the support you need, or sit in a chair with your back straight and your feel flat on the floor.

As you practice this exercise, you'll find that it's easier to take in deeper and more fulfilling breaths. You'll also notice that it will have a profound impact on your cardio activity. Perhaps you'll be able to run longer without running out of breath, or you'll be able to walk up a large flight of stairs without feeling exhausted by the time you reach the top. Regardless, it's important to note that as your diaphragm gets stronger, your lungs will start to draw in more breath – and that means you'll feel more energized, alert, and focused.

Exercise 5.2:
Taking It Up A Notch

With regular exercise, you'll find that your diaphragm will become stronger. If you've already progressed to sitting up and engaging in the above breathing exercise, you'll want to take things up a notch by putting a unique spin on this breathing technique.

1. Grab a hardcover book or a light weight that you can place on your abdomen without causing harm to yourself. Lie down on your back in a comfortable and quiet area, with the weight by your side. Place your back flat against the floor with your spine in a straight line to activate your abdomen. Bend your knees or, if possible, lift up your bent knees so that they form a ninety-degree angle with your body. This will cause your body to contract, which is critical for this additional weight training that you'll be performing with your diaphragm.

2. Use your hands to trace the bottom of your rib cage. When you reach the center of the bottom of your rib cage, place the weight on this area. This will be right on top of your diaphragm, which means you may feel some pressure. If this is uncomfortable for you, consider stopping this exercise until your diaphragm feels strong enough.

3. Take a deep breath through your nose. While you're taking this step, use your hands to feel how your diaphragm is expanding. Isolate your chest, and place your hands on the weight to ensure that your weight doesn't fall off. Remember, if you're feeling uncomfortable, you can stop this exercise or swap the weight for something smaller and lighter.

4. Once you've expanded your stomach, pause and connect with the weight that's on your stomach. Hold your breath for a count of five, and then slowly exhale through your mouth. While you're exhaling, imagine that your stomach is being hollowed out. You should push all of your breath out, until your stomach is empty and your abs is contracted. The weight should still be on your stomach; if it keeps falling off, try switching for something sturdier. Your focus should be on your diaphragm and breathing, not on balancing the weight on your stomach.

5. Repeat this exercise for at least ten to fifteen minutes. Stop this exercise if you feel in pain, uncomfortable, or short of breath.

By training your breathing with a weight, you'll be able to give your diaphragm the strength training it needs to pull in more oxygen. The more oxygen your lungs take in, the better you'll feel – and the better your bodily processes will function.

Exercise 5.3: The Chest Expander

As your diaphragm becomes stronger, you'll need to introduce new breathing exercises that can help challenge your growing muscle. If you've done the above two exercises and find that you're ready to move up a level, consider taking the following steps:

1. Lie down on your back in a quiet, comfortable space. Let your family members know that you shouldn't be disturbed for several minutes, so you don't have to deal with interruptions. Additionally, you should turn off your phone and minimize any electronic distributions, including any noise from televisions in nearby rooms.

2. Take a deep breath through your nose, filling up your abdomen. Expand your stomach as much as possible, filling every possible space with as much oxygen as you can.

3. Once your stomach is full of air, expand your chest so that it becomes filled with oxygen as well. Picture the air from your abdomen moving up from your abdomen and into your chest (this might feel strange at first, so you may need to practice).

4. Once both your chest and stomach are expanded, hold your breath for as long as possible without feeling dizzy or nauseous.

5. After reaching this point, slowly exhale through your mouth, emptying out your chest first. Feel the air move out from your chest, moving in a downward motion from your stomach. Hollow out your stomach until you feel that you're completely devoid of air.

6. Repeat these steps for just a couple of minutes. Because you're taking in a great deal of air and holding your breath, you mind find it difficult to engage in this exercise for a prolonged period of time.

As you practice this exercise, you may find it beneficial to keep increasing the amount of time you spend repeating the steps. Stay in tune with what your body needs; if you feel uncomfortable, don't keep pushing yourself to go through with the exercise. If you feel lightheaded or dizzy, it's important to stop right away.

The more diaphragm training you engage in, the stronger this pivotal muscle will become. That means as you become familiar with deep

breathing via your abdomen, your diaphragm will be able to draw in more oxygen without requiring considerable concentration on your part. As a result, you'll begin to feel more energetic, alert, and calm, thanks to the highly oxygenated bloodstream flowing through your veins.

Additional Breathing Exercises for Improving Your Health

While the above exercises were pivotal for training your diaphragm muscle, it's important to engage in diverse exercises to help promote your health and well-being. These breathing techniques can vary in length and skill, so don't attempt to do them all at once; instead, pick and choose which techniques appeal to your skill level and schedule. As you progress, you'll find it easier to use these techniques – and your health will improve as a result.

Remember; don't attempt to do all of these breathing techniques at once. Instead, choose one to perform each day. Keep a breathing exercise journal and record how each exercise made your body feel. Make note of any difficulty breathing exercises; for example, if you found yourself getting light-headed during a particular session, write down the exercise and push this technique to the side until you feel confident enough to engage in more advanced techniques.

Exercise 5.4:
The Bellows Technique

This is an advanced breathing technique that might not be right for all readers, as it could encourage hyperventilation. This breathing exercise requires that you take short and quick breaths through your nose without exhaling. For the first few times you do this exercise, you might feel strange by removing the exhalation process; however, with time and practice, you'll be able to master this exercise just as you would any other skill.

1. Find that quiet and comfortable area again, so you can effectively engage with this exercise without feeling as though you're going to be interrupted at anytime. Besides, this breathing exercise can make you look a little strange – and if someone walks in on you, you might be embarrassed about how you look (hey, we're looking out for you here!).

2. Sit or lie down to get into position for this exercise. Choose whatever position makes you feel the most comfortable. Here's a helpful hint: if this is the first time you've engaged in this breathing technique, you may want to lie down. There's considerable potential that you'll end up light-headed or dizzy, so lying down could prevent you from falling over. If you've done this before and have an accurate idea as to how you'll react, you can try sitting up.

3. Ensure your abdomen is actively engaged by straightening your spine and pushing your chest out. Don't contract your abs, as this can limit the movement of your diaphragm.

4. Instead of taking a deep breath through your nose, take three quick, short inhalations without exhaling between each breath. This is at the heart of the Bellows technique, which encourages active

diaphragm movement while training your abdomen to pull in as much air as possible with each short inhalation.

5. With every quick inhalation, raise your arms to correspond with your breath. This means you'll make three small upward motions with your arms.

6. Once you've completed the third installation, slowly exhale in a calm and controlled manner. If you exhale too quickly, you might become dizzy or light-headed. While you're exhaling, slowly lower your arms until they're by your side again.

7. Repeat this process for a few more minutes.

Again, this technique is liable to make some readers feel as though they're hyperventilating. If you feel panicked or as if you're running out of breath, don't keep performing this exercise, as you could become faint or pass out. Instead, mark this exercise down in your breathing journal and resolve to come back to it when you've become more experienced with the breathing techniques in this book.

Exercise 5.5: The Billowing Sail

Another quick-breath technique that can be useful for readers is the Billowing Sail technique. With this breathing exercise, you'll be breathing in shorter inhalations, and exhaling in a forceful manner. This closely resembles the kind of breathing you perform when you're in the midst of a cardio activity, like running or biking. With the Billowing Sail technique, you'll encourage your diaphragm to become stronger and endure more cardio activity. Whether you're at rest or working out, the Billowing Sail technique can make it possible for you to enjoy more

controlled breathing rates without becoming tired or feeling out of breath.

Like the Bellows technique, it's important for readers to be aware of the dangers of hyperventilation. Like with any quick-breathing technique, some readers may be more prone to hyperventilation than others. If you feel as though you're getting dizzy or feel panicked during this rapid-breathing technique, you should immediately stop and record how you felt at this time.

1. Sit in a cross-legged position, or lie with your back firmly planted on the ground. Straighten your spine so that it's actively touching the ground. Make sure that the small of your back isn't curved, as this means that your abdomen isn't actively engaged. If you're sitting, make sure that your back is as straight as possible. To help you get into this position, pull your shoulders back so that your shoulder blades are almost touching one another.

2. Take a quick, strong breath in through your nose. Make sure you're using your abdomen during this exercise, as using your chest can produce the kind of shallow breathing that might lead to hyperventilation.

3. Exhale in a similarly quick and strong manner.

4. Repeat ten to fifteen times.

While much of the deep breathing exercises throughout this book have focused on teaching you to take in as much oxygen as possible in a slow and controlled manner, the goal of this technique is to strength your diaphragm, abdomen and lungs with rapid breathing exercises. This greatly improves your cardio activity, and it also makes it easier to breathe through your abdomen when you're at a state of rest.

Again, it's important to note that if you're not breathing through your abdomen, you might start to hyperventilate. You can help ensure that your chest is isolated from this process by placing a hand on your chest. If your hand is moving up and down throughout the exercise, take a moment to stop and situate yourself before starting the technique again. If you're still having trouble, you might want to consider performing more basic breathing techniques until you've mastered the art of isolating your chest from deep breathing exercises. This can help ensure that you're not engaging in shallow breathing, which actually increases the chances that you'll start to hyperventilate.

Exercise 5.6: The Sing-Along Technique

Whether you consider yourself to be an avid singer or you've never uttered a note in your life, this breathing technique will encourage you to dust off your vocal pipes so you can enjoy the health benefits of deep breathing.

1. Find a comfortable place that's far away from any noise and ruckus that's going on in your house right now. You're going to be engaging in vocal exercises, so you'll want to find an area where you won't be disturbed by any interruptions from people curious about what you're doing. Similarly, you should turn off your phone and unplug any electronics that could interrupt you during this exercise.

2. Inhale deeply through your nostrils. Take the breath with your abdomen, which ensures that you're not taking a shallow breath. Let your breath fill up your body, from your abdomen up into your lungs. Picture the breath flowing through your body and around your most vital organs.

3. As soon as your body is filled up with air, begin to hum or chant (whatever you feel most comfortable with). You could chant the traditional "om" that's ubiquitous to yoga practices, or you could simply pick a note and hum it. Whatever you end up choosing, hum or chant until all the breath has been exhaled from your body.

4. Take a moment to pause before you gather your breath together again. Reflect on your body as a powerful mechanism that is of the earth and miraculous all at the same time.

5. Inhale deeply through your nose and repeat the process all over again.

As you may see, this breathing exercise is highly meditative and relaxing, so feel free to follow this technique for as long as you need to until you feel calm and collected. You may even want to supplement your deep breathing exercise with tranquil music (make sure it doesn't distract you from focusing on the breathing technique). If you don't want to lie down or sit for this breathing exercise, you could adopt your favorite yoga pose to help enhance the meditative qualities. Just make sure that it's a pose that engages your abdomen, as you don't want to engage in shallow breathing.

Finishing It Up: A Five-Minute Exercise

As we've progressed through the breathing exercises in this chapter, you might notice that many of them are focused on providing you with a relaxed and calm feeling. This is because dealing with stress in an effective manner is inextricably linked with living a healthy lifestyle. When you feel stressed and anxious, your body is much more likely to enter that dreaded "fight-or-flight" stage. If you can't relax your body so it can get out of this stage, prolonged stress and anxiety may cause you to develop considerable health problems, many of which can be fatal if left untreated.

That's why we thought it would be ideal to end this chapter with the Speak It. Feel It technique – a unique breathing exercise that harnesses the science of deep breathing with the restorative powers of meditation and yoga. In this technique, you'll utter words that describe how you feel, and use your breath to remove these feelings from your body. This can help you regulate any stresses you might feel throughout the course of a day, as well as provide you with coping strategies to deal with mental and emotional stresses.

1. Find a quiet area where you can relax and be calm. Create a space where you'll instantly feel comfortable. You could place a bunch of pillows on your floor, light some candles, and play relaxing music that instantly calms you. You should also wear clothing that makes you feel relaxed (in other words, don't wear tight clothing that cuts off your circulation or makes it difficult for you to sit). The point here is to create a space that will make you feel tranquil and relaxed.

2. In a sitting or lying down position, place one hand on your chest, and the other on your abdomen. Let your hands rest in this position for awhile to get a sense of how you're currently breathing.

3. Visualize each muscle in your body relaxing. Start with the very top of your head to the tips of your toes. Take your time during this process; don't try to rush, as you want to feel totally relaxed for this breathing exercise.

4. While you're relaxing, find a word that represents how you're feeling right now, in this very moment. For example, if you're feeling harried by deadlines, your word could be "stress" or "anxious." If you're sick of worrying about money or paying bills, your word could be "bills" or "worry." Whatever word you come up with, keep it in the forefront of your mind. Visualize everything that comes along with that word, including the feelings, emotions, and events that surround that word. Make this image as clear and powerful as possible, as it will play a critical role in this breathing exercise.

5. Take a deep breath through your nose. Imagine yourself sucking all of the air out of the room so that it's filling up your abdomen and lungs. Breath in for a count of seven, and let the air travel from your stomach to the lungs.

6. Hold your breath for a few counts, and let the word you've selected reverberate through your mind. Once you have that word in your head – and all the images that go along with it – say the word out loud.

7. Once you've said the word, exhale through your mouth in a slow and controlled manner. Feel the air leave your lungs first, and slowly move to your abdomen. Empty your stomach of the air until you've created a hollowed-out shape.

8. As you exhale, image the feelings associated with the word leaving on your breath. Close your eyes to visualize it. With every breath you exhale, picture one aspect of that word leaving your mind and body.

For example, if your word is "bills," you can exhale the frustrations of late fees with one breath, and the worry over paying your bills with another.

9. Keep up this breathing technique until you've exhaled all of the feelings and emotions associated with whatever is causing you the most significant amount of stress.

At the end of this exercise, take a moment to let your muscles revel in this newfound relaxation. Don't stop focusing on your breathing, but release the effort involved in taking such deep breaths. Keep breathing from your abdomen in a more relaxed and calm manner. With consistent practice, you should find that you're much less stressed and worried, which is key to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

As you can see, breathing plays a critical role in keeping your body functioning at an optimal level. Think of your body as a luxury sports car that constantly needs to be fueled up. If you're not putting the right amount of fuel in your body, it won't be able to run in a smooth manner. Oxygen is, without a doubt, the most indispensible fuel you need to perform at optimal levels. By embracing the deep breathing exercises in this chapter, you can ensure that your body gets the right amount of fuel it needs to live a long and happy life.

Chapter Six:
Breathe Away Your **Age**

In the early 16th-century, Ponce de Leon, a Spanish explorer, led an expedition into what we now know as southern Florida. Unlike early Spanish expeditions, Leon wasn't looking for Native American tribes to conquer, nor was he looking for silver or gold. In fact, he was after something much more valuable – and could potentially change the world forever.

Leon was after the Fountain of Youth.

You see, the quest for looking youthful forever isn't something that's limited to the modern age. For thousands of years, different cultures have been obsessed with finding the ultimate cure for aging and mortality. If you've never heard of the legend before, the Fountain of Youth was said to be a natural spring where one simply had to walk into the waters to be transformed into a youthful immortal. The legend was so ingrained in European society that Spanish royalty immediately funded an expedition to search for these fabled waters. It might seem silly now, but think about it this way: if you suddenly discovered a vast wilderness filled with strange animals, vast civilizations filled with

endless amounts of gold, and a land that seems to never end, you'd probably think that an ancient legend just might not be so far-fetched after all.

Unfortunately for Leon and his fellow explorers, they never found the Fountain of Youth; in fact, many died during the expedition, with Leon deciding to reside and govern in Puerto Rico so he could continue searching for the Fountain of Youth in Florida.

In today's age-obsessed society, we may not be searching for the allegorical Fountain of Youth – however, we're still searching for the ultimate cures that can help us turn back the hands of time. We spend billions of dollars each year on serums, creams, and a variety of skin care treatments, all of which claim to help us shave years off our visages. Cosmetic dermatology was relatively unknown thirty years ago – now it's boomed into a massive business where patients spend thousands of dollars during each session for anti-aging injections, laser treatments, microdermabrasions, and other anti-wrinkle treatments. Our society is obsessed with looking and feeling younger to the point where we've become petrified about every wrinkle that pops up on our facial features.

Fortunately for you – and your wallet! – You don't have to set out for southern Florida to pick up where Leon left off. In fact, you don't even have to gaze at any natural spring with the sneaking suspicion that it could hold the fabled waters of the Fountain of Youth. There's a way to help your body not only look younger, but *feel* younger as well – and that involves simply taking a deep breath and exhaling.

That's right: in addition to preserving your health, decreasing your stress levels, helping you lose weight, and a host of other benefits, oxygen can actually help you look and feel more revitalized and youthful. From refreshing the appearance of your skin (that's right – say good-bye to that expensive skincare cream) to optimizing your muscle repair (in other words, no more aches and pains), learning how to breathe correctly can make you feel like you're back in your twenties again.

Except this time, you'll benefit from the wisdom that comes from knowing that you're just a breath away from providing your body with the fuel it needs to fight the advancing clock!

First, let's take a look at compelling research that advocates the real reasons why your hair is going gray – and it's not what you think.

Oxygen = Your Gray Hair Cure?

You know the feeling. You're standing over your bathroom sink, carefully analyzing your face for yet another sign of aging when you finally see it – that awful gray hair. With a gasp of realization, you notice that it's not just one piece of gray hair that's decided to call your scalp home; there's a bunch of them. You're not ready to go gray just yet – but apart from investing in great hair color, you're not sure how to stop the slow march of time.

Gray hair might seem like an inevitable part of the aging process; however, recent research has shown that oxidative stress can play a

critical role in how quickly those annoying gray hairs sprout from our scalps. You'll recall that oxidative stress occurs when there's an imbalance between the free radicals that have found their way into your body, and the antioxidants that are used to isolate and destroy these free radicals. When you have too much oxidative stress in your body, this can create excess hydrogen peroxide – and that can lead to the development of gray hair.

But that's not the bottom line on what causes gray hair; in fact, you *can* slow down the march of gray hair, thus preserving the look of your luscious hair color for years to come. With that in mind, let's take an in-depth look at gray hair causes, and how oxygen plays a critical role in reversing the damage.

1. Popular opinion dictates that plucking your gray hair only leads to the development of more gray hair. However, gray hair isn't like the mythical Hydra; in other words, a bunch of hairs aren't going to sprout up and take the place of the single hair you've plucked. Next time someone warns you that plucking your gray hair is a recipe for disaster, feel free to look him or her steadily in the eye while you pluck away.

2. Many people believe that leading a stressful lifestyle is one of the biggest contributing factors that can make gray hair sprout from your scalp. In a sense, this is correct: too much stress can lead to the development of oxidative stress, which creates an excessive amount of hydrogen peroxide within the body. Because the body is already under siege from too many free radicals, it's unable to cut down on the excessive hydrogen peroxide. Having overly high levels of hydrogen peroxide within the body can be damaging, especially to our hair follicles: hydrogen peroxide is a killer of melanocytes, which are proteins located within our hair follicles. These proteins are responsible for giving each growing hair follicle its unique color – but when the proteins are killed off by hydrogen peroxide, the hair

follicle takes on a gray color. Therefore, the higher your stress levels, the more hydrogen peroxide you're creating in your body, which increases the likelihood that your hair will go gray.

3. Similarly, excessive use of hydrogen peroxide products can also be a contributing factor to your graying hair. Many cosmetic products – especially those that are designed to whiten teeth – contain hydrogen peroxide. If you add these on top of excessive stress levels you might already be suffering from, you have a recipe for going gray at an early age.

While these are just a few causes of gray hair – after all, genetics, junk food, and even environmental pollutants can cause hair to go gray – it's important to note that free radicals play a critical role in killing off healthy hair follicles.

So how can you help your body fight back against the free radicals that are searching for your precious hair follicles? Simple: you engage in healthy and fulfilling deep breathing exercises!

As we've explored in earlier chapters throughout this book, free radicals can be introduced to your body via a number of avenues; most commonly, these dangerous elements come from environmental pollutants that are brought in by breathing in fumes and toxins (other avenues include a poor diet and a stressful lifestyle). If you don't engage in deep breathing exercises, you're not providing your body with the fuel it needs to fight back against these free radicals. Your immune system is critical for combating toxins – and as you've learned, oxygen is critical to the optimal functioning of your immune system.

What's more, supplying your cells and muscles with oxygen can help your body quickly repair any damage caused by excessive levels of free

radicals. Every breath of oxygen you take is akin to supplying your muscles with protein shakes and medicine, all in the short span of just a few seconds. Without oxygen, it can be difficult for your body to fight back against the free radicals that are desperate to make you look older before your time.

In the fight against aging, it's not just free radicals that you need to worry about – you'll also find that a lack of oxygen can make it easier for your collagen levels to start sagging.

Oxygen and Your Skin = A Match Made in Heaven

Within your skin at any given moment, your collagen levels are fighting hard to maintain the elasticity and suppleness that's indicative of youthful skin. Collagen is a unique protein that your body produces to keep your skin healthy. As we age, our collagen levels start to break down, resulting in the dry, wrinkled skin that's indicative of our elder years. In fact, collagen is so critical to keeping skin looking young and healthy that cosmetic dermatologists have developed numerous skin injections designed to kick-start your body's collagen production.

However, you don't need to make an appointment with a Botox needle to reinvigorate your collagen levels – you just need to take a deeper breath.

Like with everything in your body, oxygen is the most essential element your skin needs to thrive. Oxygen makes it possible for your skin to receive vital nutrients necessary for repair; what's more, oxygen helps purify the body of any toxins, free radicals, and wastes that might cause collagen production to slow down or become sluggish. With this in mind, if you're not getting the oxygen levels you need to keep your collagen levels up, you might experience the signs and symptoms of pre-mature aging.

It's also worth mentioning that your muscles – especially those around your jaw line – play a critical role in your fight against aging. The reason why facial features tend to "sag" as we get older is because our muscles lose their strength; add to the fact that the skin isn't as elastic as in previous years, and it's no wonder many elderly people have jowls or drooping skin around the face and neck. Your muscles are akin to intricate machines with dozens of wheels and gears – and unless you oil the gears with oxygen, you'll find your muscles won't perform at their most optimal levels. That makes it much more likely that your facial muscles will lose their strength and shape, resulting in the sagging jaw line that's a hallmark of aging.

In addition to strengthening your muscles and maintaining elasticity within the skin, oxygen can have the following anti-aging effects:

- Oxygen can reduce the fine lines and wrinkles on your face. As we've noted in this chapter, oxygen is essential for increasing collagen production levels within your skin – and the more collagen in your skin, the more subdued your wrinkles will be. Elastic, firm, and supple skin can effectively "bounce" back from wrinkles and fine lines, which form over time through consistent muscle movements.

- Oxygen plays a critical role in repairing and growing the muscle within your visage. The stronger your muscles, the more likely it is that they'll resist the sagging that comes with the aging process.

- Oxygen can help reinvigorate your metabolic levels, which can help keep you feeling energized and alert. What's more, a higher metabolic level means you'll be able to burn off calories even at rest – and that means you can avoid gaining the kind of weight that often occurs as we get older.

Let's face it: if you want to look younger and reverse the signs of premature aging, you'll want to replace your expensive skin cream with more deep breathing exercises. While it's still important to maintain a regular skincare routine, deep breathing can provide your skin and muscles with the kind of vital nutrients that's not available in any cream or serum.

With that in mind, let's take a look at some of the deep breathing exercises you can use right now to start battling against the premature signs of aging.

Exercise 6.1: The Balanced Breathing Technique

This is perhaps one of the most basic breathing exercises within this book; however, the benefits are profound. With the Balanced Breathing technique, you're essentially providing your body with the kind of equilibrium that keeps your oxygen and carbon dioxide levels in check. This ensures that you're able to fight back against the signs of aging that come hand-in-hand with free radicals, toxins, and other environmental pollutants.

Save this technique for right before bedtime, as this is a highly relaxing and comforting breathing exercise. Schedule a time when you'll do this, and resolve to turn off your electronics an hour before bedtime. This gives your brain a chance to relax, as your melatonin levels will begin to drop (this is a chemical in your brain that's responsible for making you feel more "awake"). When your brain is exposed to light – even artificial light from your electronics – your body will think you should still be awake. By shutting off your electronics at least an hour before you're heading to bed, your brain should already be in the kind of relaxed state that makes this breathing technique so effective.

To engage in the Balanced Breathing technique, be sure to take the following steps:

1. Unlike other breathing exercises, you're going to want to be standing for this one. You can stand barefooted, or in comfortable socks. Wear loose-fitting clothing for this exercise (your pajamas certainly count!).

2. Place one hand on your stomach and one hand on your chest. This can help ensure that you're pulling breath through your abdomen, and not your chest.

3. Take a deep breath in through your nose, pulling from your abdomen. Inhale for a count of four beats.

4. Holding your breath for two counts.

5. Exhale for a count of four through your mouth. Make a hollowed-out shape with your stomach to empty out all the air in your body. This may involve exhaling in an exaggerated manner, as a four-count exhalation might not be enough to fully deplete your body of oxygen.

6. Repeat this exercise for ten to fifteen minutes.

The reason why this is called the Balanced Breathing technique is because it provides a sense of balance to your body. You're taking in the same amount of oxygen while exhaling a similar amount of carbon dioxide. This helps preserve the CO2/O2 balance within your body, thus ensuring that you're able to fight those aging free radicals roaming around in your body.

As you become more adept at this breathing exercise, you'll want to aim for higher counts. For example, you could consider inhaling and exhaling for a count of six beats, or you could aim for eight. The more breathing exercises you engage in, this more likely it is that your lung capacity will increase enough to achieve these milestones. Remember; don't push yourself to reach a count that's beyond your lung capacity.

If you're having trouble falling asleep, you can engage in this breathing exercise. It's similar to counting sheep in that it provides you with something to focus on; it's also calming and relaxing, which can promote sleep.

Exercise 6.2: The Rise and Shine Breathing Technique

If you find that you're constantly waking up in the morning feeling tired and groggy, this breathing exercise will make you feel revived and energetic. With regards to your effort to turn back the clock, the Rise and Shine breathing technique helps expand your lung capacity, reduce stress, and fire up your metabolism. As you already know, these benefits can help you stay trim and fit, while providing your collagen levels with the oxygen necessary for plumping up those wrinkles and fine lines.

To engage in the Rise and Shine Breathing technique, follow these steps as soon as you wake up in the morning:

1. Place yourself in a standing position; this will help enhance the energetic qualities of this breathing exercise. After all, if you're in a sitting or prostrate position, you might be tempted to fall back asleep!

2. Take a long, deep breath in through your nose via your abdomen. Take your time during this inhalation.

3. Once your body is filled with air, exhale in a quick and powerful manner. Ideally, the power for the exhalation will come from the lower abdomen; contract your abs as you're exhaling, as this will help put some "oomph" to this exercise.

4. Continue with the two steps until you've become comfortable with the sensations promoted by this breathing exercise. Once you've reached this point, speed up the pace to the point where you're inhaling for a count of two, and exhaling for a count of two.

5. Repeat this process for a total of ten breaths.

This is a bit of an advanced technique, especially for those readers who may not have tried out the intermediate techniques contained throughout this book. It might feel strange at first, but stick with this practice for a few mornings until it becomes like second nature to you. Eventually, you'll come to look forward to these exercises, as it's like chugging a shot of espresso. Your energy levels will peak, your metabolism will skyrocket, and your skin will practically start to glow with energy – and that means you'll look *and* feel years younger.

Exercise 6.3: The Visualize Your Youthful Self technique

When it comes to looking years younger – without hunting down the Fountain of Youth – visualization can help you achieve what no skin cream can do for you. After all, the mind has a powerful influence over how we feel and act – and if we feel old, we'll act old. That's why it's important to incorporate a visualization technique in any anti-aging breathing exercise, as it can help you feel years younger. With consistent practice, you'll notice that the younger you feel, the more likely it is that this will be reflected back at you whenever you look in the mirror.

To use the Visualize Your Youthful Self technique, consider taking the following steps:

- Find a quiet area where you can engage in this breathing exercise without becoming distracted by the noise and bustle around you. This visualization requires that you feel focused and alert – and that can be difficult to do when you're surrounded by electronics and family members loudly walking around in your home.

- Stand against a wall with your spine straight and your abs engaged, but not contracted. Place the palm of your hands flat against the wall. Take a moment to connect with the wall. Imagine that your feet growing roots and connecting with the earth. Breathe in deeply during this time by inhaling through the nose, and exhaling through the mouth.

- Close your eyes. While continuing to breathe slowly and deeply, begin picturing yourself in your younger years. Don't just imagine a basic image of your youthful self. Study your visage and body up close. Notice how few wrinkles you have around your eyes. Picture your waist looking trimmer and smaller. Visualize how you look with higher energy levels.

- As you perform these visualization techniques, really try to feel the difference in your body. Don't just picture yourself looking younger – feel the wrinkles practically dissipating from your body. Feel your waist shrinking until it's as trim and supple as it used to be. Really connect with these visualizations through your breath. For example, with every breath you take in, you could focus on one particular area of your face or body you'd like to feel younger. Do whatever feels natural to you, as you want to feel comfortable and relaxed while you're performing this breathing exercise.

This breathing exercise harnesses the visualization powers associated with the Law of Attraction, which mandates that if you want something badly enough, the universe will find a way to bring it to you. The more

you visualize yourself looking and feeling younger, the more likely it is that you'll actually start to feel energetic and alert again. That's the real secret of this breathing exercise: as soon as you start feeling younger again, you'll look happier, refreshed, and more positive – and that practically peels the decades off of your face.

As you can see, these breathing exercises can help you look younger. With every breath you take, you'll provide your body with the vital nutrients it needs to perform at optimal levels. Additionally, the more oxygen you supply your body, the better your muscles will feel, as they'll be able to repair, heal, and function at faster rates.

Before we wrap up this chapter, let's take a look at a few additional tips and techniques you can use to optimize the anti-aging power of these breathing techniques. These include the following:

- Make sure to drink plenty of water. If your skin experiences a significant loss of moisture, it can be difficult to maintain hydrated, supple, and elastic skin. What's more, water can provide oxygen with a significant helping hand, thus making it possible for your body to battle against free radicals, toxins, and other environmental pollutants. Aim to drink six to eight 8oz glasses of water each day; if you're not a fan of drinking that much water, commit to swapping each glass of water with a piece of fruit or a glass of low-calorie juice. As long as you're hydrating in a healthy manner, you'll provide your

skin with the hydration it needs to look firm and supple – just like when you were twenty!

- Get plenty of exercise, no matter what it might be. This, along with oxygen, can provide your body with the one-two punch: when you work out, your heart pumps harder, providing more oxygen to your body at a faster rate. You don't even have to engage in rigorous cardio exercise to enjoy these benefits; from gardening and swimming to walking the dog, you'll be providing your muscles and skin with significant amounts of anti-aging oxygen.

- Stimulate your brain as much as possible. As you've already learned throughout the course of this book, your brain consumes a significant amount of oxygen. When you keep your brain stimulated by learning new things, you'll be training your mind and body to use your oxygen effectively. What's more, learning new information can help prevent your mind from becoming sluggish. A recent study even showed that in a group of women, those who had higher levels of education – and displayed an active interest in learning – were less likely to suffer from Alzheimer's disease.

- Ensure that you're eating a healthy diet filled with fruits and veggies. While oxygen plays a significant role in combating the damage caused by free radicals, antioxidants can also prevent free radicals from causing damage to muscles, tissue, and cells. If you want to look *and* feel younger, make sure that at least half of your plate at every meal is filled with fruits, vegetables, or leafy greens. Keep up with this new habit, and you'll notice that you'll not only feel more energetic – your skin will look brighter, clearer, and more revitalized. It will make you look twice at your supermarket's produce section!

If you have trouble eating your five servings of fruit and veggies each day, consider taking a supplement. It shouldn't be a replacement for a healthy diet, but it can ensure that you're getting some antioxidants in your body. Read the label carefully to ensure you're getting your daily intake of vitamins and minerals, especially vitamin C, vitamin E, and folic acid. These are some of the most critical antioxidants that aid your oxygen intake in fighting back against free radicals.

- Consider engaging in deep breathing exercises while involved in prayer. Multiple studies have shown that prayer can help aging individuals feel younger and stress-free, no matter what religion that might be. If you're a religious person and engage in regular prayer, consider supplementing your time by using a deep breathing exercise from this chapter. You'll not only feel more revitalized – you'll look younger, due to your more relaxed and fulfilled demeanor. Speaking of which…

- Ensure that you're leading a fulfilling professional and personal life. If you're working at a job you don't like or are involved in relationships that cause you stress and anxiety, it doesn't matter how many skin creams you use: you're going to look old. Being happy is one of the best youth-enhancements you could ever use, as it makes

you look friendlier, younger, and much more vigorous. If you're working at a job you hate, consider finding work in an area that makes you feel more fulfilled. It doesn't necessarily have to be your dream job; even a career in an industry that helps others can make you feel happier and look younger.

On that note, it's important to reassess your personal relationships to determine the impact they're having on your life. When we're involved in relationships with negative people (be they family members, friends, or significant others), it shows on our faces in the form of aging. We stress and cry about these relationships, which can form wrinkles and fine lines. What's more, constantly feeling anxious or depressed after encounters with negative people can contribute to lower self-confidence levels, which directly impacts our oxygen intake. Think about it this way: if you're not feeling confident, you're much more likely to slouch over, cutting off your oxygen from your lungs. When you feel confident and positive, your posture reflects your attitude – and this makes it possible for you to take in as much oxygen as possible.

Consider keeping a journal that tracks how you feel after spending time with specific people in your life. Make note of how you felt when you finished your encounter with each person. If the experience with a certain person made you feel sad, depressed, or feeling poorly about yourself, look for ways you can minimize your time around that person.

- If you find that you haven't had the time to engage in your regular deep breathing exercises, make sure that you're getting plenty of sleep. Not only is sleep critical to staying happy and healthy; it gives your body the chance to heal aging muscles and skin by automatically engaging in deep breathing. Resolve to get at least eight hours of sleep each night. Don't stay up late to watch your favorite television shows; after all, thanks to the miracle of DVR, your daily dose of Jon Stewart will still be waiting for you in the morning.

The ultimate solution to looking and feeling younger won't necessarily be found in an expensive skin cream solution, nor will it be found at a cosmetic dermatologist's office. These "solutions" are actually just treating the symptoms of old age, and not actually treating the source. Only engaging in these deep breathing exercises – combined with the tips outlined above – can help you turn back the hands of time.

So start taking deeper breaths, and don't be too alarmed when you look in the mirror one day to see a much younger looking reflection staring back at you!

Conclusion

When it comes down to it, oxygen forms the very foundation of our lives; in fact, it's such a critical element that our bodies evolved to take in as much as possible. Without oxygen, life wouldn't be possible – so with every breath you take, be thankful for the life-giving source that flows through your body, energizing every cell and muscle as you inhale and exhale.

Like eating a healthy diet and getting exercise, deep breathing should play a critical role in a happy and fulfilling lifestyle. With this in mind, truly commit yourself to the exercises contained within this book. With each passing day, you'll notice that you'll become stronger, more energetic, and more *engaged* with your body. You'll feel more revived when you wake up in the beginning of each morning, and more satisfied with your day when you lay your head down at night. You'll become more aware of how your muscles interact with one another, putting you more in touch with the miracle that it is your body.

In fact, by engaging with regular deep breathing exercises, you'll almost feel a spiritual shift within your life – one that makes you appreciate how much of a difference a deep breath can make in your life.

Let's quickly recap what you've learned throughout the course of this book:

- While everyone understands how critical oxygen is to survival – after all, our bodies perish when we don't get enough of it – this chapter dived in a bit further to explore how oxygen is used by the cells within your very body right at this second. Optimal intake of oxygen can cure ailments, on top of regular maintenance of bodily processes.

- Centuries-old oxytherapies are still in practice today. From breath yoga (Pranayama) to Taoist breathing, you discovered the types of disciplines that were developed hundreds of years ago to tackle the same problem we face today: how to get more life-sustaining oxygen into the body.

- Over the course of thousands of years of evolution, our bodies developed into this particular form, with a very specific type of breathing process. Breathing is automatic and subconscious; in other words, you don't have to tell yourself to breathe in order to just do it. However, that doesn't mean it can't be consciously influenced by external factors in your life. Various factors might be impacting your breath, including psychological, physiological, conditioned, and voluntary factors.

- As you may know, your mental state of mind can have a serious impact on your body's ability to properly function. The same rule of thumb applies to your ability to take in as much oxygen as possible.

When you're feeling stressed, anxious, panicked, depressed, or even fearful, your breathing is impacted by your mind.

- If you've ever struggled with weight loss, you were probably intrigued to learn how proper breathing techniques can help you lose weight without making significant changes to your already-healthy lifestyle. Think about it this way: if you've done the gym routine and have a relatively healthy diet – but you're just not losing weight – you might want to look at your breathing habits as the culprit.

- Because oxygen is so essential for living cells, it's critical to the maintenance of your body's vital organs. Forget prescription medications or eating a raw diet; oxygenated cells are the ultimate secret to living a happy and energetic lifestyle. Better oxygen levels can improve the brain, lungs, heart, kidneys, liver, and other important organs.

- Highly oxygenated cells can help reinvigorate the body's skin and muscles, resulting in a more youthful and revitalized appearance. For example, oxygen can reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, and it can also play a part in the repair and growth of muscle tissue. Both benefits result in the reader looking *and* feeling younger, which is critical for leading a happy and healthy lifestyle.

Finishing It Up: A Five-Minute Exercise

This is an advanced breathing technique that is, without a doubt, going to feel odd when you first experience it. The reason why is simple: the Reverse Breathing technique makes you reverse the breathing process to become more aware of your body. If you're looking for a boost of energy, then this is the breathing exercise for you.

As you become more aware of your body, you'll begin to notice that your physical self because more alert and focused. For example, if you suffer from aches and pains associated with getting older, this breathing exercise can help you ease those pains simply by increasing awareness of the self.

It's amazing what the body can do when you're more aware of how your physical self responds to your breath – and that's exactly the purpose of this exercise. To use the Reverse Breathing technique, follow these steps:

1. Stand in a comfortable, quiet area. Breathe deeply through your nose, and out through your mouth. Take a few minutes to get in touch with your breath, as you're about to turn things on their head.

2. Take a deep breath through your nose via your abdomen. However, instead of expanding your belly as you breathe in, shrinks you stomach by making a hollowed-out shape. This is going to take some getting used to, as it's going against the very nature of your breathing process. It's also going to take a lot of focus, so don't breathe too quickly. Give yourself the time you need to master this odd technique.

3. As you exhale, expand your belly. Push your stomach out until your abs feel stretched out.

4. Repeat the process for ten breaths.

Remember; stay focused and conscious of your breathing throughout this entire time. It's easy to let your breathing slip back into what you're normally used to, so concentrate on your abdomen with every breath you take. As you practice this breathing technique, you'll become more familiar with the odd sensations – and soon, you'll be a master of this highly advanced exercise.

This reverse breathing exercise was originally developed based on the breathing that an infant does in the womb. When the fetus breathes in, it does so by contracting its stomach, which allows the fetus to take in nutrients through the umbilical cord.

When the fetus breathes out, the stomach expands. This type of breathing exercise gets to the heart of looking and feeling younger, as it connects you back with the type of breathing you engaged in before you were even introduced to the world.

What's more, reverse breathing can also provide you with the kind of abs exercises that help you trim your waistline. The act of consciously contracting and hollowing out your stomach increases metabolic rates and burn calories. Don't be surprised if regular practice leads to a trimmer waistline!

Ultimately, this book was dedicated to showing readers how optimizing one's breath can lead to better health. Because oxygen is so essential for living cells, it's critical to the maintenance of your body's vital organs. Forget prescription medications or eating a raw diet; oxygenated cells are the ultimate secret to living a happy and energetic lifestyle. This book is perhaps one of the most definitive texts on how the body uses oxygen to properly function – but it's much more than a scientific text. While you learned the fundamentals of just *why* oxygen is so critical to the human body, you also learned the powerful potential that each cell contains.

And all you have to do to realize that potential is to take a deep breath.