

Pranayama:

Working with your Energy Body

Energy in yoga is called “prana”

- Prana (Pra = first unit, na = energy) can therefore be defined as life force or continuous movement.
- Prana shakti (creative force) is the basic fabric of creation, the subtlest form of energy. Prana is the infinite all pervading energy of the universe, sometimes called cosmic energy. Everything has prana – even rocks. Have you ever noticed when in nature, near large rock formations a sense of greatness – an almost spiritual feeling? Many aboriginal sacred places are associated with this great power.

The energy body is the subtle sheath of cosmic energy underlying our physical being, like a template. It forms our “aura” and prana is the subtle energy essential to life - we need it like breath, food and water. Prana is affected by mind, thoughts, emotions, and external influences. The energy body is interwoven with energy channels called nadis. They form a template with our nervous system.

The Nadis or Energy Channels according to Yoga

The ancient yogic texts describe a network of channels through which prana flows, which sustain and energise the whole body. Classically 72000 nadis are described, of which the first 3 are most important. These 3 nadis arise in the base of the spine.

- Pingala – flows through the right nostril and relates to the sympathetic nervous system and activation.
- Ida – flows through the left nostril and relates to the parasympathetic nervous system, and calming and recovery.

The ida and pingala travel up next to the spine, meeting or crisscrossing, and terminate at the nostrils.

- Sushumna – (when both nostrils flow freely without obstruction, and relates to meditation). The sushumna flows up the spine to the larynx, where it divides into an anterior and posterior portion, and both terminate in Brahmarandra (cavity of Brahma) or ventricle cavity on the brain.

Benefits of working with pranayama

Pranayama means to expand the dimension of prana and so awakens consciousness.

- calming the nervous system
- balancing the nervous system
- restoring energy
- aiding wellbeing
- quietening the Mind
- relaxation, reducing stress
- assists against colds and respiratory conditions
- increases awareness to release blocks, or increase functionality
- potential healing powers

First Practice - Observing Breath Flow

– sense of coolness

The relationship of breath to prana:

Through the silken thread of breath, we grasp the string of nerve impulses.

From these we grasp the twine of our thoughts, and finally we grasp the rope of prana.

Other Helpful Pranayama Practices

- Fire/Bellows Breath – Bhastrika
- Fire/Cleansing Breath – Kapalabhati
- Silk Breath
- Sun Breath – Surya Bheda
- Moon Breath – Chandra Bheda
- Balancing Purifying Breath – Nadi Shodhana
- Victorious Breath – Ujjayi
- Humming Bee Breath – Brahmari
- Breath Chanting – Om
- Relaxation – Awareness of energy