

BREATHING

Breathing is not something that you 'do', more something that happens to you when you don't get in the way.

Breathing is a 'reflex activity'

You breathe as much as you need to automatically

The diaphragm is the strong muscle that separates the lungs from the rest of the abdomen

The diaphragm works automatically

You cannot actually feel the diaphragm; you can feel some of the effects of the moving diaphragm and what can get in the way of a freely moving diaphragm

The diaphragm domes up when it relaxes, this pushes carbon dioxide out of the lungs

The diaphragm tightens to flatten itself and so air comes into the lungs

After you breathe in it is healthy to breathe out

After you breathe out you only need to breathe in when the ratio of carbon dioxide to oxygen reaches a certain critical level

Your brain stem sends a message to the breathing mechanism to take a breath and it happens

The first part of you to move on an in-breath is your diaphragm next is ideally your abdomen, below the diaphragm

The lower ribs, starting with the floating ribs are next

The abdomen moves because your internal viscera is displaced by the movement of the diaphragm

Some internal organs are attached to the underside of the diaphragm so gravity helps the downward movement

If your primary control is not in good shape your breathing will suffer

If you arch your back you cannot breathe freely

If your emotional state changes, your breathing changes

If you are feeling anxious you are almost certainly tightening your abdominal wall

It is easier to release the abdominal wall in semi-supine, gravity helps

It is difficult to breathe freely if your eyes are over-focussed or darting about from point to point

You can stop reflex breathing in three places, the abdominal wall, the valve at the back of the mouth and nose and the intercostals muscles (between the ribs)

There is more lung tissue at the back of the rib cage than the front

The diaphragm tips up at the front, down at the back

In an ideal world, you breathe in through the nose, the air is warmed, filtered and moistened

If you breathe through the nose you get less throat infections

When you breathe deeply, you expand into the space behind, to the sides and in front of your thorax

When you breathe out your body lengthens easily

When you breathe in your body widens easily

You can encourage lengthening and widening by thinking 'directions'

The ribs are strong but moveable; they can move a lot when necessary

If you raise your chest when you breathe in you are restricting the freedom in your breathing mechanism. The chest is raised but the expanding lung tissue.

The 'whispered ah'

Raise the soft palette (think of something funny) as you release the jaw, the tongue is free in the bottom of your mouth, aspirate a long 'ah' sound (the most open vowel sound), listen to the quality of your 'ah'. Close your mouth and wait for air to go in your nose. Now you are ready for another one.

Notice your abdominal muscles and what you do with your eyes

Alexander was very keen on the 'whispered ah'