## Handout: Breathing Exercises

**The Relaxing Sigh**

A sigh releases a bit of tension and can be practiced at will as a means of relaxing.

1. Sit or stand up straight.
2. Sigh deeply, letting out a sound of deep relief as the air rushes out of your lungs.
3. Don’t think about inhaling; just let the air come in naturally.
4. Repeat this procedure whenever you feel the need for it, and experience the feeling of relaxation.

**Complete Natural Breathing**

The following Yoga exercise will become almost automatic with practice.

1. Begin by sitting or standing up straight in good posture.
2. Breathe through your nose.
3. As you inhale, first fill the lower section of our lungs. Your diaphragm will push your abdomen outward to make room for the air. Second, fill the middle part of your lungs as your lower ribs and chest move forward slightly to accommodate the air. Third, fill the upper part of your lungs as you raise your chest slightly and draw in your abdomen a little to support your lungs. With practice, these three steps can be performed in one smooth, continuous inhalation in a few seconds.
4. Hold your breath for a few seconds.
5. As you exhale slowly, pull your abdomen in slightly and lift it up slowly as the lungs empty. When you have completely exhaled, relax your abdomen and chest.
6. Now and then at the end of the inhalation phase, raise your shoulders and collarbone slightly so that the very top of your lungs are sure to be replenished with fresh air.

**Purifying Breath**

This exercise cleans your lungs and stimulates and tones your entire breathing apparatus.

1. Begin by sitting or standing up straight in good posture.
2. Inhale a complete natural breath.
3. Hold this breath for a few seconds.
4. Exhale a little of the air with considerable force through a small hole between your lips as though you were blowing through a straw. Stop exhaling for a moment and then blow out a bit more air. Repeat this procedure until all the air is exhaled in small, forceful puffs.

**The Bracer**

This exercise will stimulate your breathing, circulation, and nervous system.

1. Stand up straight with your hands at your sides.
2. Inhale and hold a complete natural breath as described above.
3. Raise your arms out in front of you, using just enough energy to keep them up and relaxed.
4. Gradually bring your hands to your shoulders. As you do, slowly contract your hands into fists so that when they reach your shoulders they are clenched as tight as you can make them.
5. Keep the fists tense as you push your arms out straight again very slowly.
6. Pull your arms back to your shoulders and straighten them out, fists tense, as fast as you can, several times.
7. Relax your hands to your sides and exhale forcefully through your mouth.
8. Practice a few purifying breaths as described above.
9. Repeat this exercise several times until you feel its stimulating effects.

**Bending**

This exercise is useful when you feel stiff and tense. It also stretches your torso.

1. Stand up straight with your hands at your hips.
2. Inhale and hold a complete natural breath.
3. Let the lower part of your body remain stiff. Bow forward as far as you can, slowly exhaling completely through your mouth.
4. Stand up straight again and inhale; hold another complete natural breath.
5. Bend backwards as you slowly exhale.
6. Stand up straight again and inhale and hold another complete natural breath.
7. Continue this exercise, bending first backwards and then to the left and right sides.
8. After each round of four bends, practice one purifying breath.
9. Do four full rounds.