



## David Swann: Breathwork for Pranayama



David Swann (David-ji) is a yoga teacher based in Rishikesh, India, who specializes in Pranayama practices. Discover how to return to the full, free, open and flowing natural breath and access your prana, or life force energy, with simple, yet incredibly powerful, breathing practices.

**TOP EMBODIMENT TIP:** The very essence of hatha yoga practice is prana, universal energy in the form of breath.

### What is Pranayama? The breath as a conduit of energy on the whole body

- Pranayama is often thought of as breathwork. However, it is much more. It is a way to access our universal energy. The main way we access this life force energy (prana) throughout the whole body is through the breath. This is why the breath is so important in hatha yoga practice.
- Breath is not about increasing the oxygen level in the blood; it's about increasing prana in the body.
- Our natural breath, the free, full, flowing breath we were born with and had as children, changes as we get older due to bad posture, negative emotions, and stress. It becomes constricted, restricting the natural flow of energy throughout our body.
- How are you breathing right now? Where do you feel it the most? Which parts of your body are moving with the breath? How would you describe your breath? Learn a process to free up and open your breath, and then apply this to various pranayama practices.

### The Body as a Vessel for Prana: Cultivating the open, full, free breath

- Imagine the torso as a cylinder that can expand and contract with the breath in all directions, front, back, and sides. This cylinder is divided into 3 parts. The lower part: base of the pelvis to the navel, low back and sides to waist. Middle part: navel to base of breastbone, waist to mid-back and side ribs. Upper part: breastbone to top of chest, mid-back to shoulders, and ribs under armpits.
- Breath mudras (hand positions) help us focus on the movement of breath in each area as it expands and contracts. *Lower part:* touching the little finger and ring finger of each hand together. *Middle part:* touching middle fingers of each hand together. *Upper part:* touching index finger and thumb of each hand together. *Whole torso:* touching all fingertips of each hand together.

### 3 Breathing Practices to Increase Prana: Applying the open, full, free breath to pranayama practices

- Practice cultivating this open, full, free breath as we apply it to three pranayama practices:
  1. Nadi Shodhana (alternate nostril breathing) using nasagra mudra (index and middle finger at third eye).
  2. Mental Nadi Shodhana (mental alternate nostril breathing)
  3. Ujjayi Pranayama



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