

Ep #19: Breathing Through the Pelvic Floor



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With Your Host

Susi Hatelty

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Male Announcer: You're listening to *From Pain To Possibility* with Susi Hatley. You will hear Susi's best ideas on how to reduce or even eradicate your pain and learn how to listen to your body when it whispers so you don't have to hear it scream. And now here's your host, Susi Hatley.

Susi: With this episode I want to take you through an exploration of your pelvic floor and specific of a technique that I call pelvic floor breathing or orifice breathing. It's a really sacred and very powerful exercise. I remember teaching it initially to a female corrections officer who worked at a women's prison. She had told me that a lot of the inmates would target her to attack. When she started to orifice breathe that just stopped completely.

Or the stockbroker who I worked with who had a lot of back pain and a ton of stress-related symptoms. Now, the way I described it to him may sound a little more jocular, but I told him to breathe through his balls and when he did his back pain completely dissipated and his brain became clearer in a matter of about two minutes with his legs up the wall.

So, having shown it to just those two people way back when I first learned it I knew that there was something really powerful. Now, I initially learned the process from a martial artist when I was at a self-defense program. What was interesting is he would cue us to breathe through this area and then he'd come around and try and lift us and he couldn't lift us.

Of course, we didn't totally believe it because was he really utilizing all his effort? So, then he teamed up the smallest person with the largest and what we saw was very cool. When the smallest was breathing through her pelvic floor she could lift the largest no problem. When the smallest was breathing through her pelvic floor the largest person could not lift the smallest. So, that really won me over, but then when I had the experience of working with the correctional officer as well as the stockbroker it really cemented in for me that this was a powerful exercise.

I'm going to walk you through this exercise through this episode. Now, I did say that this is a sacred exercise. This is an area of our body that can have

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– or may have had for some people listening, a lot of trauma. Any number of things could have happened in this particular area. Many people will say that emotions can be held in this area.

So, I'm going to let you decide whether you want to continue to listen to this. You decide how much you participate through this recording or not. Only you can determine how safe and secure that you feel through this process. So, at any point you can press pause, you can press stop, you can walk away.

To bring us into the exercise I want you to find a really comfortable position. Now, the number of positions you could find yourself in are many. You can be legs up the wall, legs over bolsters, legs over a chair, you can be on your belly, on your side, on the couch, on your bed, in sitting, standing, really any position will work so long as you are comfortable and you can experience as much ease as possible.

So, find that place first, maybe press pause here. Then, once you're in that position ask yourself the question of can you be 10 to 15% more comfortable and then do what you need to do to find that place. I'll keep going on with the instruction and if you need more time just press pause.

Once you're in position connect with your breath. Just notice how your breath feels today, how your day has been with you, how you have been with your day, where you feel your breath moving through your body whether it's through your nose or your mouth or your ribcage or your abdomen or your back, maybe even in your pelvic floor. How does the general movement of your breath feel?

Does it feel full? Light? Empty? Ratchety? What words or colors or sounds or tones might you utilize to describe your breathing? The idea of being able to describe the picture now of your breath is that when we finish the exercise of breathing through the orifices is to notice what changes your breath has made, whether it's in quality or whether it is in pace or how fast you breathe, whether it's in tempo. It just provides a starting baseline of where you are now.

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Once you have that baseline then come down into your pelvic floor. If you would like to begin, bring your two index fingers to touch and your two thumb tips to touch and you'll see you've got a bit of a diamond or a triangle depending on how wide or narrow you've pushed your fingers. Where those index fingers touch that's your pubic bone. Where your thumb tip touched that's the backside of your pelvic floor where your coccyx is.

Then, where the webbing of your index finger meets your thumb those are closer to your sitting bones or your ischial tuberosities. And in the middle is your pelvic floor. Now, we can divide this pelvic floor in half. Left to right, as well as top to bottom. So, if we create that cross we can actually see a quadrant system here in your pelvic floor.

Now, keep that in mind because we'll be coming back to this later, but along the midline there are orifices of your pelvic floor, two or three, anus, vaginal for women, urinary. We're going to begin at the anal sphincter. The reason being is that it's larger and there's a lot more muscle around it and it's one that we tend to feel a little bit more than the others.

So, begin to simply feel in your mind's eye this idea of your anal sphincter. You don't need to push, you don't need to clench, just imagine. Just imagine that you could breathe through your anal sphincter. I know, it might sound a little funny, but just imagine you could breathe through your anal sphincter. That no longer do you breathe through your nose or your mouth, but you breathe through the anal sphincter and notice what you feel.

Keep it easy. Try not to force your will on this. Just allow your imagination to take your breath into the space of breathing through or into your anal sphincter. Then, move up forward and for women imagine you can breathe through the vaginal orifice. For men, imagine you can breathe through the testicles, or and as I said, this might sound jocular, but through the balls. I say that term because I had a good friend who once said to me, "You know, Susi, don't be afraid to use the word balls. It was when the physio told me to lift my balls that it all made sense."

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So, whichever terminology works for you. Breathe through the testicles, breathe through the balls, breathe through the vaginal orifice. Keep it easy, keep it light, stay connected, and now move up further to the urinary orifice. Now, this is a little smaller, so you might not feel this one as much.

But now, if you can, breathe through that ureter, the urethra, and then let all that go and just return to normal breathing. In through the nose, out through the nose. Notice what's happening through your ribcage, notice what's happening through your belly, and if there's been any change. What's fascinating about the process is that our orifices of our pelvic floor enable the passageway of fluid and matter.

The pelvic floor is also the floor of our torso, so this area needs to be both supple and strong. Those orifices need to be able to open, right? To enable that passageway of fluid and matter. So, we don't want it to be gripped, gripped, gripped, gripped. Think about agility, responsiveness. Now, be aware of your breathing again and breathing through that pelvic floor as a whole.

Breathe through the whole diamond that is the pelvic floor. Maybe you focus in on an orifice or maybe it's the full piece. Whatever is the easiest way to access. Now, if you want to take this to another step consider breathing through just the back half of your pelvic floor.

After about five of these breaths then imagine you can breathe in through the front half of your pelvic floor. Notice if there's any distinction between those two, between the front half and the back half. Then, when you're done the exploration of the back half and the front half, then imagine that you can breathe through the left half. And then the right half.

Just take your time exploring how you feel your breathe through the pelvic floor and what changes you're noticing through your body. Sometimes people feel their eyes softening or becoming tired or their feet warming up or their belly softening. Feel the experience of the breath wherever you're noticing it in your pelvic floor and then also notice the experience through your body. Feeling the impact of breathing through the pelvic floor

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elsewhere in your body so that you can be aware of what you're doing in the pelvic floor and also aware of the result through your body.

Now, you can let that go and simply notice how your body is experiencing this now or you can move through each of those orifices again from anal sphincter further up to either vaginal orifice to testicles or balls and then further up to urinary orifice. Or you can simply turn me off and just sit or experience the experience you're currently having now.

As I've mentioned, there can be some really powerful experiences that people have. In addition to the stories I've told you I've had people tell me that their baseball swing is more efficient so that the ball goes much further. Tennis games and squash games become stronger. Running becomes lighter. Breathing becomes better.

When one of my male clients became very much connected to this he even told me about how intercourse and sex with his wife just became that much more connected because he had greater connection with his own self and could feel that much more quietness inside of himself, he was that much more able to connect with her.

So, the power, really, that lies here is far-reaching and I encourage that as you practice this if you have stories or insights or awarenesses that come from this do send us a note and let us know. And if you want to dig into the power of this even further and how this relates to the overall nature of breathing you might want to join me in my upcoming Mechanics of Breathing course that'll be launching later in November. Just email us to say, "Let me know when you launch. I would love to be a part of it," and we'll put you on our priority list.

Just send us a note to health@functionalsynergy.com. If you want to help your students or if you're a health professional who wants to apply yoga therapeutically into your practice you may want to join us at the Therapeutic Yoga Intensive and you can find details for that at thetherapeuticyogaintensive.com. Both of these URLs are in our show notes. Have a really great time exploring.

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