

Ep #110: 3 Part Breathing: Calm, Clear, Grounded



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Susi Hatley

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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.

Welcome, and welcome back. With this episode, I want to dig into a breathing technique called three part breathing. It's also known as sectional breathing and it's a technique that focuses your attention, connects your body and mind, helps you to down regulate and relax.

It's also a great way to change your state in and around that time you start to have flagging energy. So for some people, it's around noon or 2pm and they feel like they need to have a pick me up, maybe a coffee or a cookie or something of that sort. This is a technique that can bring about a calmness that has both clarity and groundedness.

Now, if you Google three part breathing, you will learn that most techniques divide the parts of the body into the sections of abdomen, ribcage, and then the upper part of the ribcage, so around the collarbone area. And the reason why I think that is the division is because we often think about abdominal breathing and chest breathing and this is a way to flow from the abdomen up through the ribcage up to the collarbones.

For myself, I prefer to section the torso to include the lower belly and pelvis together, and then from the navel to the bottom of the breastbone. And then from about the nipple line, so the bottom of the breastbone up towards the collarbones. And the reason I like to do that and include the pelvis is because the diaphragm and the pelvic floor have this relationship that makes breathing really come alive.

The diaphragm is the top of the canister, the pelvic floor is the bottom of that canister. And both, we want both to be able to move when we breathe. Sometimes that's not the case and so this technique can help either bring awareness to that and it can help bring more relationship between the two so there is better movement between the pelvic floor and diaphragm.

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But by simply bringing the pelvis into the picture, we can at least bring our attention to it because we know that where we bring our attention, we bring our awareness and then energy grows and flows into that area. So as I walk you through three part breathing, we are going to be bringing our awareness to the pelvis area.

Before I get into the nitty gritty of the practice and of the technique, I do want to make mention that for some people coming into the pelvis might be really challenging. The pelvis is a sacred area, people may have had trauma to this area on any number of levels or degrees.

So if you find that coming into the pelvis area, there is like a numbness or like there's a wall or it's not available, same for coming up into any other sections that we walk through here, then you can simply press pause, or fast forward, or just shut this off completely.

If it's not a technique that works for you, then please don't do the technique. There are other breathing exercises that I've offered through the podcast show entirely and I'll put those other podcast episodes in the show notes so that you can practice other techniques. I certainly don't want to re-trigger or have a practice that is meant to be a relaxing practice not be that for you.

And as I like to say whether it's on my YouTube channel or on Facebook Live or here, I'm speaking into a mic, you are not in front of me. I don't know what's going on for you so I rely a lot on your ability to tune into yourself and decide for yourself if this is a technique that works or that doesn't work.

Now, one last thing about this is you might find that parts of this technique work or at different times of the day it might work. So you get to choose when and how to use it.

And as always, if there are questions that arise out of doing the practice or if you're a health professional or a teacher, and you're doing this with your students or your clients or your patients and questions arise, by all means,

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send us an email to health@functionalsynergy.com. I'd be happy to engage with you to the degree that I can over email and support you in the process.

Okay, so how we're going to get into the technique is twofold. The first is I want to walk you through each of the sections so you get an awareness of each of those sections. Then after I walk you through each, then I'll bring you into the practice that you can explore.

So we'll start at the bottom of the torso. So where I'd like you to bring your attention is to your legs and to your pelvis up to the point of your navel or your belly button. So can you get a sense, and maybe you want to bring your hands to this area as well.

Can you get a sense of the area from the navel down to the pubic bone? Down to the base of your spine, which is the coccyx. Can you feel the bowl that is your pelvis? Right, the pelvis is made up of two hip bones connected to the sacrum, so we can think of it as a bowl. Can you feel that as a bowl?

If you're sitting you might feel the two sitting bones on the chair. If you're standing, you might feel that bowl in space sitting in between the legs. If you're lying down, you might feel parts of the back, maybe the sacrum, or the posterior part of the pelvis, you might feel that resting on the floor or a blanket or whatever it is that you're resting on, maybe your bed.

Where do you feel, how do you feel this part of you? And as always, if you are tuning into this area and as you bring your awareness there, you're noticing a sense of unease or discomfort, then please grab something, whether it's a bolster or a pillow or a blanket, where you can bring about more comfort, maybe five or 10% more comfort to enable yourself to settle a little bit more.

So you are aware of the pelvis, the pelvic bowl, upwards to your navel. Now, take a moment and find the area about two inches below your navel. So this is about a third to a halfway between your navel and your pubic bone. And just notice where that point is in space. Maybe place your hand

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here are a block or a pillow, sometimes a child's stuffy just to bring an awareness to this area of the pelvis.

It's interesting, for some of my clients who have had C-sections there might be this general numbness that's in this area. Sometimes when people have digestive disturbances, whether it's a constipation or whether it's a bloating, or whether it's something further along like a Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, or something unnamed like irritable bowel syndrome.

Placing their hand or placing a stuffy or a light bag of rice or peas or something of that sort. Even just a blanket or a light pillow can bring an attention to the area, tuning into that area, that can bring some support to that area. Just by bringing that attention we can bring energy, we can bring awareness. And that brings our breath.

So now notice your inhale and your exhale. And the idea here is not to push the lower belly out or to push breath down into your pelvis, but simply to notice what your breath is doing when you bring your awareness to this area of your body.

So sometimes, and I've certainly had this experience myself, sometimes I notice that there's really nothing there. Sometimes there's some tightness there, sometimes there's some tension there.

I remember back in the winter when I had my almost wipe out when I was skiing, and I had caught the side of my ski on some exposed mountain where the snow had shifted off and I went flying but it didn't quite wipe out. For a number of days after that there was just a lot of like unnameable type of tension that was there. So when I brought my breath there, that's what I noticed. I didn't try and push through it. I simply just noticed it.

So you might notice it. Maybe you're after a heavy meal and you're noticing the heaviness in this area. So just whatever is there, try not to change it. You're simply noticing it along with noticing the quality of your breath, the pace of your breath, how the inhale and exhale are moving and how your

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body is moving in relation to that inhale and exhale. So does your body move with inhale? Does it move with exhale?

Now you can be here for as long as you'd like. If you want to stay here for a bit longer to experience and explore, then just press pause on this. And then when you're ready we're going to move to the next section between the navel and the bottom of your breastbone.

So this is the area of your upper abdomen, the lower section of your ribs, to the base of the breastbone. So if you want to place your hand on your ribs, feel where the ribs come up and then meet the breastbone to the bottom of that breastbone. There's that angle between both sides of the ribcage there, an area that is often called the solar plexus.

And you can slide your hand, if it's comfortable, between the area of your navel and that solar plexus. You can even spread your hand wide so the thumb is touching at the base of the breastbone and your pinky is coming close or on top of the navel, spreading the hand wide.

And then notice how your abdomen moves with your inhale and your exhale. And see if you can allow for the movement as opposed to making the movement happen. Just notice how the movement is occurring with the inhale and the exhale.

And allow your awareness to go to the sides of your ribs and the side of your body and notice if there's any movement wide or any movement behind into the back part of this area, so the back of your upper back, the back of your lower ribs.

A lot of people find this is a difficult place to feel. We don't tend to think about the back of our ribcage or the upper part of our back unless there's some pain or strain. And this is an area that can hold tension. So you get to just feel what's there.

What's curious about this area of our abdomen as we have the liver, and gallbladder, and pancreas, spleen, and the stomach. And as our hands

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come around in the lower part of the ribcage we have our kidneys. So if those organs exist inside of you, then that's what you'll have as well.

And so it becomes interesting to notice and just kind of play and kind of consider that not only is there soft tissue like muscle and connective tissue, fascia, there's skeleton, and there's also organ. We have the diaphragm in this area as well. And just take a few breaths here and explore how your breath is moving your body, how your body is responding to your breath.

And now for a moment take your gaze, your inner gaze, to both your abdomen, this upper part of the abdomen from navel to breastbone or bottom of breastbone, and from navel to pelvis. And I'm curious if you notice anything new or different. Not that there should be, but what's cool is after we do an awareness technique around the lower part of the belly and then connect that with the upper part, sometimes there is.

Sometimes that full feeling, or that numb, or that wall that may have been present in an area of the body might fade away. I don't want to bring the expectation that that will happen, it's more about being curious about the responses of your body as you bring awareness to more areas of your body and in this case, your breath.

You might even notice a shift in your being. And perhaps you're noticing some experience of relaxation. Okay, now you can stay here or press pause to explore. And I'm going to move next into the upper part of the ribcage. So when you're ready, join me there.

And feel the ribs now. Maybe placing your hands to your breastbone, finding your collarbones, and noticing this ribcage and the cylindrical nature of your ribcage so that the ribs are moving around your body so that as we breathe, ideally speaking, the ribs move forward to the sides and out to the back. We often use the idea of a bucket handle and the bucket handle moving wide.

I also like to bring back the idea of when you watch a little baby breathe, that the cylinder of the ribcage moves forward, side and to the back. Now,

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your ribcage may or may not do that. Sometimes when our stress goes up, the tension in our ribcage goes up. Sometimes when there's asthma or allergies or lung conditions, then our ribcage does not move as well.

So again, it's just noticing what exists. As you breathe how does the ribcage and move in relationship to that inhale and exhale? How does the inhale and the exhale move in relationship to the ribcage?

You can also draw your attention to the back of your upper ribs. So if we think about the part of your ribcage that's opposite your collarbones, so that's the upper part of the ribcage. It's an area that tends to not get a lot of attention. If we're sitting in front of a computer or leaning over at our phones we tend to round through that area and that can get a little bit tight, or tense, or lose contact with it.

So can you bring an awareness to that back part, upper part of the ribs? Maybe between your shoulder blades. And perhaps the shoulder blades themselves. Maybe into the armpits.

Now, if you'd like, bring your attention now lower to the abdomen and to the pelvis down to the pelvic floor and notice as you bring your attention through the upper part of your ribcage does anything change in the upper abdomen or back? Or down from the navel to your pubis or down to the pelvic floor? Does anything change in the bowl of your pelvis having gone through these three sections?

It becomes really interesting because so often in my work of helping people reduce and eradicate pain and all sorts of other symptoms, helping people come out of surgery and really progress and excel from being in spaces where they've been struggling post-surgery or post autoimmune diagnosis or other illness and injury. And helping them move through to get to an area that they feel way more comfortable in their life, it becomes interesting to notice the changes.

So maybe you're noticing more freedom in parts of your body. Maybe you're noticing different qualities now existing. Now you're starting to get a

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greater understanding of what the sensations are in your body and maybe how they correlate to symptoms. Maybe how they correlate to your state of mind, maybe how they correlate to the fluidity of breathing, maybe to your state or to your state of being.

So you start to recognize these relationships between your body and your brain, between your body and your mind. Just little glimpses, little bites, little ideas. And then as you start to recognize the more you really begin to see what is correlated to this idea of progress, step by step.

Okay, so now, we're going to move into the technique now of the three part breathing or the sectional breathing. You might want to stay simply with working with each section on its own, so I would recommend pausing or stopping the podcast and exploring here.

And if you want to continue on with the actual movement of the three part breathing, then here we're going to go. Just check in to see if you need any extra comfort or you need to shift your position so that you can feel these areas of your body more clearly. By all means, take a pause and then join me.

We'll begin down at the base here into your pelvis below your navel. So how it's going to go is as you inhale you're going to have your awareness into the pelvis, the pelvic floor below your navel. Then you're going to move and allow that awareness to go from the navel to the bottom of the breastbone. And then from the bottom of the breastbone up to the collarbones.

And then as you exhale, the idea will be your awareness empties out through the upper ribs, then the abdomen, then down through to the pelvis. Now, I just want to emphasize I know that breathing happens in the lungs. It's more about the somatic experience of how your tissue is responding to how you inhale and exhale. Because my experience has been that our body is like a mechanical pump.

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The tissue of our body from our pelvic floor, through up to the ribs, and we could say even other parts of our body, but for the sake of this episode from the pelvic floor up to the ribs, the tissue in this area impacts the way we bring air in and out, which will impact the respiratory system.

So we're just going to notice through our awareness as we inhale, bring the attention to the pelvic floor, the lower belly through to the navel, and then up to the upper abdomen, into the ribcage on the inhale. And then as you exhale, empty out through the ribcage, through the upper abdomen, and then down through to the pelvis.

So now I might be moving too fast or too slowly for you. So what I really emphasize is you to do this on your own rhythm. The idea is that as you inhale, your awareness goes into filling through the lower belly, and then the upper belly, out to the ribcage and collarbones, armpits. And then out through the upper ribs, armpits, out through the abdomen, out through the pelvis.

So it's a wave in, like the wave coming up to the beach. And then the wave going out, water goes back out off the beach. The waves come in pelvis, navel, upper abdomen, ribcage, collarbones, armpits. And then out ribcage, armpits, upper abdomen, navel, pelvic floor. You go on your own rhythm.

So just notice how you can sequentially breathe into these areas and breathe out of these areas. Now you want to make sure that if there's any increasing tension to ease off on this process. So maybe it's going slower, maybe it's allowing the speed to go up. Maybe it's not emphasizing so much your awareness on an area.

If you're butting up against a numb area or a wall or a knotted area, then just gently go up to it. Don't try and plow through it. Honor the tissue for where the tissue is at, even if you've heard the idea of breathing through something to release it. In this episode, I'd like you to simply meet it where it's at and then carry on.

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And then as you practice just meeting where it's at, notice if there is a change. The aim is not to change it, the aim is simply to do the practice and it becomes really curious what we start to notice is resulting from the practice. And it might surprise you, whether it's in the quality of tissue, or in your brain, or in your being, in your body.

So you can take this flow of lower torso, pelvis, navel, upper abdomen, ribcage out to armpits, collarbones and then out, you can continue to do this. And when you're re to bring it to a close, take about two or three more cycles, finishing up on the exhale. And when you finish that third cycle, or second cycle, however many you're doing, then come back to a regular breath where it's just you inhaling and exhaling, not thinking about bringing your pelvis into it or your navel into it.

Just allow yourself to sit back and notice yourself breathing. And then notice what you're experiencing. What's new? What's different? How? And recognize that this was your practice, that this was your result. And then simply ask yourself, alright, body breath, brain, when should we do this again? Should we do this later today? Should we do this tomorrow? Ask yourself and listen for what that answer intuitively is coming out of you.

Awesome. If you have found this to be really interesting and you want to explore more breathing, do take a look at the show notes because I have recorded previous episodes on breathing techniques that you'll really love. I also have a few episodes on yoga nidra that you'll probably really love as well, that all are sort of of that same genre. We'll put all of those in the show notes for you to explore.

We'll also put in some of the YouTube videos that have a breathing-esque experience so that you can explore that and actually see me in action and watch me and look at some other exercise or yoga techniques that you can explore to help improve your breathing.

And then if you want to take this deeper, we are re-launching Healing And Revealing. This is a fabulous program that helps you really reconnect body and mind, helping to explore and both mental health and physical health,

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helping you get to that next level. If you want to read more about it, then go to the website, functionalsynergy.com/synergy and you can read all about it there.

And if you've got questions for us or want more personal interaction, email us at health@functionalsynergy.com Have a great, great time exploring.

If this episode has resonated and you're looking to deepen this idea of getting your body back on board, of listening deeply to your symptoms, of listening to the whispers so you don't have to hear the screams and you're looking for one to one support or professional training, then reach out to us at health@functionalsynergy.com where we can customize your learning path. That's health@functionalsynergy.com. Looking forward to hearing from you.