



## UJJAYI PRANAYAMA

### “Breath of Victory”

*Ujjayi* (Breath of Victory) pranayama is a very versatile pranayama. You can incorporate it separately into your pranayama practice, while you are doing yoga, as a pause in your day to center yourself, or refresh your mind and senses. Ujjayi comes from the Sanskrit prefix of *ud* (meaning “bondage,” as well as “upward” or “expanding”) combined with the root, *ji* (meaning “to conquer”). Thus this pranayama is spiritually about gaining freedom from bondage and acquiring an expansive state.

#### BENEFITS

- Slows the pace of the breath
- Promotes mental clarity and focus
- Supports the thymus, thyroid, parathyroid, and pineal glands
- Supports memory
- Infuses the mind-body with fresh *prana* (vital life force)
- Cleanses and refreshes the channels of the body
- Gives strength yet calmness and softness to the organs and the body as a whole
- Soothes and rejuvenates the nervous system
- Promotes sound sleep
- Improves skin color and complexion
- Releases deep-seated emotions

#### THE TECHNIQUE

1. Ujjayi pranayama can be practiced at any time of day, and as with most pranayamas, a focused practice is best done on an empty stomach. Choose a comfortable sitting or supine position (lying on the back).
2. Begin with a few deep, cleansing breaths. Bring awareness to the breath entering and exiting the nostrils.
3. Gently constrict the throat muscles slightly so that air can still flow through the throat while you take a deep inhalation through the nostrils and into the belly with the mouth closed. Your breath should sound similar to a deep “Darth Vader” type of breath.\*
4. Maintain the slight constriction as you slowly exhale.
5. Continue to breathe in and out evenly for as little as twelve breaths, up to ten to twenty minutes. Maintain a slow, gentle, fluid, and relaxed breath throughout the practice.
6. At the completion of the practice, release the constriction and take a few rounds of deep, cleansing breaths. **Note:** You should not feel any tension or strain in the throat or neck muscles.

#### \*MORE ON THE BREATH

If you haven’t practiced this technique before, this will give you a better sense of how to position your throat.

- Inhale fully.
- At the top of the inhale part your lips slightly and exhale through the mouth, making a quiet, whispered “Ahhhhhh” sound, noticing the position of your throat. Note that the “Ahhhhhh” sound requires a partial closure at the back of the throat, narrowing the breath’s passageway.
- Maintain this gentle constriction as you complete your exhale.
- Close your mouth and begin to inhale through the nostrils, allowing the faint whisper of sound to continue as the breath moves through the narrowed space at the back of the throat.
- Maintain the soft constriction in the throat as you exhale, breathing through the nostrils only.



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