

Breathwork

Breathwork is a general term used to describe a variety of conscious breathing techniques that are used in many relaxation exercises and spiritual healing methods.

Overview

Available scientific evidence does not support claims for improving health; however, breathwork may help in relaxation and stress reduction.

How is it promoted for use?

Focused deep-breathing exercises, such as exaggerating the way you naturally inhale and exhale, are said to promote relaxation, awareness, and emotional release. Shallow breathing can be a symptom of stress or anxiety. The goal in breathwork is usually to take long, deep breaths. These breaths are said to be “cleansing” in that they free the body and mind from restrictions and release toxins that work against a healthy state.

What does it involve?

There are many types of breathwork and facilitators. Depending on the type of breathwork, the person usually lies down. Each session can last for an hour or more. Breathwork may be done as part of a group or in one-on-one sessions. Music may be included. Effects may include sleepiness; tingling in the hands, feet, or face; and a sense of altered consciousness that can be distressing to some. Unpleasant feelings that surface are “breathed through” to free up energy from the repressed emotions.

What is the history behind it?

Breathwork is a part of ancient meditation practices including yoga. It has also been adapted in modern times to include many different types of breathwork.

What is the evidence?

Available scientific evidence does not support claims that breathwork can improve health. There are indications that it may help in relaxation and stress reduction.

Are there any possible problems or complications?

Breathwork is considered safe as long as it is done with a skilled practitioner. Some people may find the effects distressing.