

Community
Well-Being
Fun

TWIST & Shout!

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I&S People

Tom's Travels

By Tom Ness

When I think back over my life and all the places I've visited, I realize how much I love to travel. I don't know if you can say the travel bug is genetic, but for me it began with my parents, Alex and Mary Ness. They gave up their lives in Scotland to move to South Africa after the war, where my father was offered a position with the South African Air Force. Thus began a life of traveling for me. I was born in South Africa, but we moved to Zambia, which at that time was known as Northern Rhodesia, when I was two and a half years old. I loved living in Africa; the amazing wildlife, the beautiful flowing bushes, the awesome scenery, plentiful tropical fruit, and the outdoor life. It was hard to leave when I was eleven, but things were very unsettled and my parents decided it was time. We had made several trips to the coast of Africa as well as back to Britain to visit relatives.

On one eventful trip, we sailed from Africa bound for England. As we were nearing a scheduled stop, there was an explosion in the engine room. Several of the ship's crew members were killed, but all the passengers were evacuated safely by lifeboat to the nearest port. This gave us a few unplanned days to visit the Canary Islands.

Eventually my parents settled on the island of Jersey in the Channel Islands between England and France. This was an ideal location for a traveling enthusiast. I remember taking family trips to France, Monte Carlo, Italy, Spain and Portugal. I really enjoyed one trip I took with some family friends. We were on our way to a wedding in Germany, which was a great excuse to do some touring around Europe. We began our driving trip from England, with a car ferry to Holland then on to Germany for the wedding. After the wedding we headed south through Switzerland to Italy. After a few days there, we went back through France to England. We covered a lot of miles in a relatively short time, but what a wonderful way to experience Europe!

A couple of years after finishing college, I received a job offer, a great opportunity, to manage a beachside hotel in the Seychelles Islands, (located in the Indian Ocean). On route, I'll never forget getting off the plane after we touched down in Nairobi, Kenya and being enveloped in the welcoming heat and sweet smells distinctive to Africa. After the Seychelles I took the opportunity to visit Africa again, driving through Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa before returning by plane to Britain. ...4



Tom at the age of 6

at the top of Table Mountain in Cape Town, South Africa



Breathing for a Healthier Life!

By David Wilson

The use of effective breathing to improve mental and physical health goes back many thousands of years. Natural, full body breathing powered by the diaphragm is our birthright. As infants our bones, muscles, organs and entire spinal column undulated with the pulse of our breath.

In "*The Breathing Book*", Donna Farhi states:

"Breathing affects your respiratory, cardiovascular, neurological, gastrointestinal, muscular, and psychic systems, and also has a general affect on your sleep, memory, ability to concentrate, and your energy levels."

As we are challenged by the rigors of life, we begin to tense our body and breath in order to "hold firm", just as we would hold onto a tree during a hurricane. Dealing with increased levels of psychological stress increases the tempo of our internal metronomes, and our chemical, cellular and neurological paces quicken. In an effort to sustain this hurried rate, our muscles often learn to remain tense, expending valuable energy. Eventually, we begin to constrict our primary respiratory muscles (the abdominals, intercostals and diaphragm), flooding the body with adrenaline in order to cope with the situation. The body then relies on the secondary respiratory muscles (scalenes, sternocleidomastoid, trapezius, and pectoralis minor) to sustain the pace. However, the secondary system exists only to assist with stressful situations; it is not designed to power our cardiovascular system on a constant basis. Furthermore, the continual tensing of these muscles weakens their strength, inducing other muscles to overwork in order to pick up the slack; this often leads to injury.

Society's ideal of the "flat, rock-hard stomach" also encourages shallow breathing, as we obstruct the diaphragm's natural descent into the abdominal cavity. This creates a lack of connection to our "font of strength" in our lower belly, decreasing our efficacy and self-confidence. As we gulp shallow inhalations and truncate our exhalations, we begin to feel as if we can't get a full breath. These harmful events eventually lead to the PH balance of the body shifting, favouring acids over alkaloids, which in turn creates more stress, and further weakens the immune system. Naturopaths, breath therapists and homeopaths have identified this vicious cycle with asthma, sinusitis, bronchitis, ulcers, high blood pressure, depression, anxiety, indigestion, hyperventilation, PMS, headaches and chronic fatigue. There is an alternative to ingesting sugar, caffeine, or other stimulants to artificially increase our energy levels. Consciously returning to natural, unhindered breathing allows us to release physical tension and revitalize our body and mind.

Breathing Exercises

Font of Strength Breath 1. Sit on a chair, eyes closed for inward concentration, with hand just below belly button. Breathe into this area for 10 breaths, quiet and focused. Belly expands outward on the inhale, relaxes in toward the spine on the exhale. Check that the impetus of the breath begins low, then expands outward and upward to the top of the lungs.

Font of Strength Breath 2. Same, but inhale with hands on side ribs (like an accordion), then move hands to belly, exhale by gently drawing the belly toward the spine. Repeat a minimum of 10 times. Over time, this will help train healthy breathing habits.

Folding Exhale. Encourages a full exhale from the abdomen. Seated, bend over slowly from hips as you exhale. Allow inhale to occur naturally as you sit up. Repeat for no more than 5 breaths. This is excellent for asthmatics, but only under controlled circumstances. Avoid if asthma is acute. Those with migraines or eye troubles should not do this exercise.

Lower Back Expansion. Good to do right after massage. Alone or in partners, depending on your comfort level. Seated, hands on lower back around the kidneys. Breathe, expanding this area. Partners can check for improper raising of shoulders on the inhalation, and that they fully, vocally sigh on the exhalation. Awareness here will lessen the chance of lower back injuries.

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Breathing cont'd

Stretches for Healthy Breathing and Softening the Mind

Neck Stretch. Calms mind, relaxes jaw, neck and tongue. Tilt neck gently to the left shoulder, lifting both sides of the face, as if bending around an imaginary grapefruit lodged between shoulder and neck. Reach diagonally up and out with the head, while stretching down with the right deltoid (shoulder muscle). Hold, sigh through the stretch for five breaths minimum. Come back to center on an exhale. Reverse. Secondly, turn to either side, chin parallel to the floor, pulling back on the opposite shoulder.

Field Goal. Arms reaching straight up past ears, shoulders relaxed. Hold for 5-10 breaths, set the ribcage, then bring arms down on the exhalation, keeping the ribcage lifted and expanded. This helps to discourage the "heave and collapse" ribcage breathing.

Shoulder Rotation. Hands clasped behind back, palms facing forward, lift as high as comfortable, gently roll shoulders. Breathe. Repeat with palms facing back.

Samson. Arms straight out to sides, attempt to point fingers toward ceiling, pushing through the heels of the hands. This is not as easy as it sounds.

Chair Twist. For ribcage awareness and expansion. Sit in a chair sideways. Place right thigh firmly against the back of the chair, feet and knees together. Exhale, put hands on either side of the back of the chair. Each exhale, you turn and twist farther around to right. Breathe into ribcage. Neck, jaw, shoulders are relaxed, only forearms work. Reverse.

Breathing is effortless, but after many years of ingraining unhealthy habits of tension, the breath becomes effortful; conscious relaxation techniques become necessary.

We should not force the body to breathe, but instead, learn how to get out of the way, allowing the body to breathe naturally. This restores the inherent calm of the mind, enabling us to better cope with the frenzied activity of the day.

Our lives today often lack equilibrium and poise, as we seem to rush headlong from activity to activity, living in pacified agitation. This makes life more of a chore.

These "full of repose" techniques offer an opportunity to deepen one's connection with one's own breath, voice, and body; slowing down and sensing our own inner world gives us an opportunity to balance our emotions, support our overall health, and to live life with more enjoyment.

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Have an idea you want to share? Some suggestions, concerns, etc?

Contact Lee Segall
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Or, visit the TWI ST website and drop something into our Suggestion Box!

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