
How To Use Breath For Better Physical & Emotional Health

Christa: You're watching Food as Medicine TV, where we help you heal from the root cause. Today we have an easy, free, magical healing modality for you that you can do any time you want, breathwork with my good friend, Josh Trent. Hey, Josh.

Josh Trent: Hey, thanks for having me.

Christa: Thanks for being here. You guys, before I dive [00:00:30] in with Josh, I just want you to know that the breath is a remote control of the brain and the nervous system. Our energy level, digestive wellness, metabolism, and state of mind can be dramatically improved by the way we breathe. Slow, deep breathing helps to regulate pH by alkalizing the body, which allows for easier elimination of acidic poisons, less leaching of necessary minerals that are required to heal. This leads to much better sleep and less anxiety, and it activates [00:01:00] your parasympathetic nervous system, helping you recover the balance between the two branches of the nervous system, rest, digest and heal, and fight or flight. And when we have a balance between these two, our bodies get a better chance to recover, regenerate, and heal.

Christa: The amazing benefit about your breath is that you can always use it as a powerful tool to pull you out of what we call sympathetic dominance, living in fight or flight mode, and move you back into parasympathetic [00:01:30] dominance, rest, digest and heal whenever you feel stressed or triggered. Especially when you're healing your adrenals and your thyroid, you need more oxygen in order to continue converting your food into fuel efficiently as it works in combination with glucose and thyroid hormone to create more readily available energy to yourselves. But don't take my word for it. Josh is a thorough expert on this topic, and he is going to go through [00:02:00] some breathing demonstrations, and we are lucky to have him here with us today. Josh is the founder of Wellness Force Media and the host of the Wellness Force radio podcast. He has spent the past 16 years as a personal trainer, researcher and facilitator, discovering physical and emotional intelligence that humans need to thrive in our modern world. Two different types of breathing for stress management today, and we're going to practice those. Tell me what are they?

Josh Trent: There's the circular breathing [00:02:30] pattern and then there's the box . The circular is with no pause, so it's literally inhale, exhale with no pause. That's used for deep stress reduction. The box breathing is when you do a pause at the top and a pause at the bottom. That's used for performance. I actually learned about this from Mark Divine. It's called tactical breathing. One, the box is for performance, and the circular is for deep stress reduction.

Christa: All right, there we go. We've got one for the evening, one for the morning, right?

Josh Trent: That's right.

Christa: This is good. When we were starting this and when we said that [00:03:00] we were going to be filming this, you said, "I really want to talk about the physiological process that's happening and the power that we're harnessing through breathwork." And so, I'd love for you to expand on that.

Josh Trent: Yeah. Think about what's happening with our diaphragm. People know that this is the diaphragm. We're going to talk about the four diaphragms actually, but this main diaphragm, the vagus nerve, which runs all the way back to the spine, all the way down to where the diaphragm opens, this is what helps to regulate the ANS, the sympathetic, the parasympathetic. What's going on, when we take a deep breath and we fill [00:03:30] in the diaphragm, we're actually giving our body a chance to rest. Most people are breathing from their chest. They're shallow chest breathers. So if you think about it, we're forward flexed. We're doing this, we're breathing through our mouth, we're never really breathing through our nose. If you can open up the body and really get that deep belly breath-

Christa: Sit up straight.

Josh Trent: Sit up straight. This is when you get all the stress benefits and everything else from breathwork.

Christa: The vagal nerve connects the gut and the brain as well. The gut, brain access, right?

Josh Trent: Yeah.

Christa: So you'll get benefits there as well.

Josh Trent: Yeah, and what's really cool is the enteric nervous [00:04:00] system, which is like our second brain, which we'll touch on a little bit, it can actually function separately from the spinal cord and the brain, but it also receives feedback from the spinal cord and the brain, which is so fascinating to me.

Christa: That is fascinating.

Josh Trent: All these things, these systems, they all weave together, where everything is connected.

Christa: Right. Oh, it's beautiful. Okay. Are we going to start?

Josh Trent: Yes.

Christa: All right.

Josh Trent: The first one we're going to do is we're going to do this circular breathing technique. So we're actually going to do 21 warrior breaths. The reason I call them warrior breaths [00:04:30] is because we do them as if we were getting ready to do something serious, like go to war. But we're not going to war.

Christa: No, no.

Josh Trent: What it's going to be is we're going to breathe in through our nose and our mouth, and we're going to breathe in quickly. And actually before we do this, let's actually go through a side view of what it looks like to activate the diaphragm properly. I'm going to turn to the side, and so we can get a shot of me here. What happens for most people when they do breathwork is they don't have the hand placement, so they don't have the cue. When we breathe, we want to actually [00:05:00] feel the belly push out like this. So you can see, I'm kind of giving myself a distended belly. And then when we come out with the breath, we're going to place and push that hand right there. So it would essentially look like this. This is three of the warrior breaths.

Josh Trent: You see how I'm breathing through my nose and my mouth at the same time?

Christa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Josh Trent: That's going to get a lot of oxygen in and out.

Christa: In through the nose, out through the mouth.

Josh Trent: Well, it's actually going to be both at the same time, so the same time. So it's just like this.

Christa: Okay.

Josh Trent: [00:05:30] I'm breathing through my nose and my mouth, and watching my belly go in and out. We're going to do 21 of those.

Christa: Okay, get ready guys. Do this with us.

Josh Trent: This is going to super oxygenate your system. And then after that, we're going to do two, three count breathing. Two, three count is when we're going to breathe in through my nose for two, and we're going to breathe out through our mouth for three. We're going to do that four or five times. We do five rounds of that.

Christa: After.

Josh Trent: After that, and then we're going to do a one minute hold. The one minute hold,, which I don't know if we're going to film [00:06:00] the whole one minute hold. But the one minute hold is built so that we actually can be in that stillness, and this is what's breath retention. So this is the-

Christa: Holding your breath for one minute?

Josh Trent: Holding your breath for one minute. So again, we'll do 21-

Christa: Make us better swimmers.

Josh Trent: Yeah. We'll do 21 of those breaths, then we'll do the five rounds of the two, three breaths, and then we'll do the one minute hold. After the one minute hold, we'll go back to our breathing, and you'll feel the difference. This is again for that stress relief, right?

Christa: Yeah.

Josh Trent: So getting that deep stress relief, resetting the nervous system. Here we go.

Christa: All right you guys, you've gotta join us. You [00:06:30] don't need anything but your hands and your breath to do this, so let's do it. It's a workshop.

Josh Trent: Right hand is going to be on your belly, left hand is going to be over your heart.

Christa: Okay.

Josh Trent: This is going to be a coherence factor, which we can touch on later too. Coherence is when you're getting your heart and your lungs to physically and emotionally be connected together. What we're going to do is 21. You're going to watch myself and Christa's belly go out as we take that deep breath in. I'll count for us. We'll do 21.

Christa: Okay.

Josh Trent: [00:07:00] Now we're going to go to the two, three breathing. Two seconds in, three [00:07:30] seconds out. Five of those.

Josh Trent: Now hold for one minute in this position. Just tilt your chin, and you're going to pull in your bathroom muscle. This is your [bondalock 00:00:07:49]. You're going to pull in your stomach, and just be here for one minute, and just be in that stillness. If you need to let out more air, [00:08:00] just go ... and really let the air out of your system, and just go to the stillness here. See if you can pinch your chin lock. If you feel like you really need to take a breath, you can do one, but just be with that discomfort. This retention hold is where we really understand what it's like to just be in the stillness. If you get to a place where you really have to take a breath, you can do a quick [00:08:30] breath like this. But let's just keep holding here for another 20 seconds.

Josh Trent: Now take a big deep breath in.

Christa: I'm so glad. I was [00:09:00] like, I'm breathing like it or not.

Josh Trent: Take a big deep breath in. Stack your spine, be really tall, and just hold that full breath in. Feel your belly, suck in as much air as you can, and hold for 15 seconds. Feel how good it feels to just be in that space of stillness again. But this time you've fully saturated your body. Your diaphragm has expanded. And just give yourself one affirmation of gratitude. Like for me, I'm grateful to be here with you today, but your gratitude can be anything. Then just let it go. [00:09:30] That was one round.

Christa: Wow.

Josh Trent: Just from doing the one round, you can feel-

Christa: I feel totally different.

Josh Trent: It's almost like your body's like more gravity to the ground. We would do that for three rounds. Three rounds.

Christa: You can feel the oxygen, yeah, in yourself. Repeat that. This is the morning breath.

Josh Trent: Yes. This is the one where if you feel like you're in your head and maybe you're about to have a big board meeting or something, this can be something that really cycles you [00:10:00] down, especially if you do this for multiple rounds. For some people though, it can give them energy. Like for me, I have a little bit of perspiration right now. So it's giving you-

Christa: Yeah, I feel energy finally.

Josh Trent: What's cool about the breath is it gives you whatever you need. So if you need energy, it'll give that to you. If you need rest and relaxation, your body is this most intelligent piece of technology that's never really been studied in its fullest way. We're still finding out what the breathwork can really do for people, even though breathwork is literally going [00:10:30] back to the first century.

Christa: I know, and so much, I feel the healing modalities and the things that are happening and coming, they're circulating again.

Josh Trent: There's a resurgence.

Christa: Their time has reemerged. Yeah.

Josh Trent: We have this big resurgence in breathwork right now. And if you think about it, we're the most stressed we've ever been as a culture. Breath is this massive, it's really the only lever that we can pull voluntarily for our involuntary system. And I think that's why people are going to this because there's only so much talk therapy, there's only so many tactical [00:11:00] things you can do that don't involve us taking control of our own nervous system, and the breathwork does that.

Christa: Yeah. More so, I feel like I maybe took a GABA and organ complex at the same time. Right?

Josh Trent: Yeah.

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- Christa: Like energized and relaxed at the same time. We spend so much energy chasing the external things to give us the effect we want, when often I think this is a metaphor because it is, it's all inside of us, the breath. But the tools that we have, if we trust ourselves, [00:11:30] we trust the process of life.
- Josh Trent: Yeah. Trusting can be something that is challenging if the physical conduit is blocked because the trust can't flow through. There's nothing we can do if we're not controlling the very basal thing that we live in, which is our body.
- Christa: All right, so there we have it. We just did circular breathing, and now we're going to try box breathing?
- Josh Trent: Yup.
- Christa: Okay.
- Josh Trent: Box breathing is for more performance. This is from tactical Navy SEAL special warfare. Really what this does is this gets your mind very acute. So if you have something [00:12:00] you need to focus on or if you're feeling like maybe the monkey mind's taking you in left field, this is a really good three minute practice to get you very clear on what it is you're about to do.
- Christa: Great, three minutes.
- Josh Trent: Much different than the circular pattern. Yeah. We'll start again. We're going to put our left hand here on our chest, our heart. We'll put our right hand right here. Remember when we breathe in, we want to feel that belly to stand out. We're going to do 21 of these. After that 21, we're going to do five count box breathing. Visualize a box. Five second inhale, five second hold, five second exhale, five second hold. [00:12:30] We'll do three of those. Okay. Ready?
- Christa: Right.
- Josh Trent: 21.
- Josh Trent: Now [00:13:00] five second in, five second hold. Five second exhale. Five second hold. Take a really big breath in for five. [00:13:30] And when you hold here, feel how good it feels just to be in this space of stillness, and then breathe out this time with an audible sigh. Hold again.

Josh Trent: Last one. Five second in. Hold. Five second exhale. [00:14:00] Five second hold. Now we're going to do that same 60 second retention breath. Remember, you're pulling in and you're doing that throat lock. You're doing a throat lock, you're pulling in your bathroom muscles, and you're just being in that space of stillness. If you need to get all the air out of your system, you can just go ... and just really pull in your abdominal. You want to feel pressure, your bathroom muscles are pulled up. You're just holding for 60 seconds.

Christa: Like I say, your bathroom muscles.

Josh Trent: Bathroom muscles.

Christa: Ladies, this is like one long kegel. Okay, let's [00:14:30] do it.

Josh Trent: All right, so holding. If you feel discomfort, come up here. This is really the training of the retention hold. This is called the kumbhaka, and this is from pranayama. This is ancient, going back to the first century. Really what this is, is it's allowing you to be in a state where there's a stress response coming up, but you're signaling your nervous system that you're okay, you're safe, nothing can harm you here. Again, if you need to take a breath, you can [00:15:00] just simply do a quick one. Go back to your hold, pulling in the bathroom muscle, still having that energy lock on your chin. Let's hold for 10 more seconds.

Josh Trent: Now take a big breath in. Sit really tall. Feel how good it feels to just hold your body and breath. [00:15:30] Say that one great positive, maybe just loving affirmation about somebody you care about or yourself. Like I love my life, I love my body, I love being here. And then breathe out with a sigh after 15 seconds. You can see it makes your mind sharp, it makes your body relaxed. The cool part about that is you can do that for as many rounds as you need to, and it only takes three minutes or less. Both of our circle and our box take three minutes or less.

Christa: I love that. These are two really powerful [00:16:00] tools. It's interesting what you were talking about when you're holding the breath for 60 seconds, you get like a micro experience of not feeling safe and almost like re-parenting yourself that you are safe, which is so much of what we're working with in the Adrenal ReCode is building that resilience and that self-trust. This is such a beautiful way that you can do it every day, twice.

Josh Trent: Notice too where we go when we're feeling that strainer pressure. It's the same thing as preparation for meditation. A lot of people will use [00:16:30] the box

breathing technique to prepare themselves to meditate because what's the number one complaint about meditation? I can't sit still for that long. There's no way I can be able to sit still. Well, when we do the box breathing as a three minute exercise to prime your meditation-

Christa: It just grounds you.

Josh Trent: There's nowhere to go besides paying attention to your breath, so you can just be with your breath to prepare for your meditation. The research is proving that this is true. Breathwork and meditation combined, really, really powerful.

Christa: Yeah. Actually life changing.

Josh Trent: Life changing, yeah.

Christa: For people watching, [00:17:00] you would start off if you've never done breathwork before, what's the general prescription for the rest of this week?

Josh Trent: General prescription would be to do the 21 breaths that we did. If you look at some of the research on the Wim Hof method-

Christa: Those are the same for both the circular and-

Josh Trent: Yeah, same primer. And so what we're doing with that super oxygenation is we're getting as much oxygen into a system as possible. When we do the circular breathing, we're getting that downregulation of the nervous system. We're taking off the sympathetic load, we're turning on the parasympathetic. When we go to the hold [00:17:30] though, the hold is where we integrate all that super oxygenation and circular breathing or box that we just did. With the circle, it's really based on stress reduction. With the box, we're thinking about mental acuity. But the preparation for the two, it's exactly the same. So 21 of those breaths, then do two to three rounds of those circular, then two to three rounds of the box, and then go to your hold.

Josh Trent: People are going to find honestly what's better for them. Some people, their system doesn't do well with the box breathing, so they'll go to the circular. Play [00:18:00] around with them and see which one really feels best.

Christa: Make sure wherever you're watching this that you head over to the blog because we're going to type out the breathing in case you prefer to print it out and read it versus watching a video. Josh, thank you so much for being here. Any parting words of wisdom?

Josh Trent: Yeah, I think there's a lot of of sciency things that we didn't talk about, but the one thing I want to mention is when you do deep breathing, there is an immediate change in your body. And so whether you're a logical minded person or you're a spiritual [00:18:30] person, it's built for both of you. Anyone can do this. Breathing is very, very safe. So if you're looking for something that can be immediate for stress reduction, just go to your breath.

Christa: Go to your breath.

Josh Trent: Just go to your breath.

Christa: Josh is a breathwork teacher, and he's designed a breathe program, and I think you said you're combining it with CBD.

Josh Trent: Yes.

Christa: What's the deal with this program and CBD?

Josh Trent: The reason that I called it Breathe is because it's all the acronyms that I believe are [00:19:00] very similar to what you believe in with Adrenal ReCode of the pillars of wellness. And so, it's our beliefs, thoughts, feelings and actions, and the way that we eat, move and sleep. Those are our pillars that we designed this from, but based on my own life. I have this tattooed on my arm. It's [Italian 00:19:12], and in Italian it means, if I can breathe, I can choose.

Christa: Wow, that's so true.

Josh Trent: I got this two years ago because I thought, you know what? If I'm going into a space where I want to be in it, I want to be a space for love for someone else, or I want to be on a stage, or I want to be the best person I can [00:19:30] be, if I can just remind myself to take a deep breath and breathe, well then I can choose whatever outcome I want. And so, in my research I've been finding that the CBD, which CBD is very talked about, it's very hot right now I guess you could say.

Christa: Oh, yes.

Josh Trent: And so what I've been seeing in the journals and that we can link for your show notes is that the CBD1 receptor, it actually dovetails into where the end of that vagal nerve comes into our diaphragm. And so, what happens is [00:20:00] when we're doing a vape, and this is the organic safe vape delivery system, not

like some of the other stuff you've seen where people aren't caring about what the unit looks like. When you take in a vape and hold for 10 seconds, it gives an immediate response to turn those CB1 receptors off so that we can actually be innervated to the parasympathetic nervous system.

Josh Trent: What the research is showing is that it turns off the neuro adrenaline response for the sympathetic nervous system. So we'll have less neuro adrenaline from the CBD1 receptor, which is why I think combining [00:20:30] CBD, especially the vape, with the breathwork, we're already in a really powerful, relaxed state from the breath. So when we combine it with turning off that receptor, then we can have all the smooth muscles relax. It's a powerful combination.

Christa: That's wonderful.

Josh Trent: And I designed it based on my own experiences too.

Christa: Which is what we all do. That's where the magic comes from, right?

Josh Trent: That's right. Yes.

Christa: Okay. Well, you can find out a lot more about Josh's new program at thewholejourney.com/breathe. Josh, thank you so much for [00:21:00] being here.

Josh Trent: Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Christa: This was awesome. Yeah.

Josh Trent: We'll catch you next time on Food as Medicine TV.