



Royal Flying  
Doctor Service

QUEENSLAND SECTION

# A GUIDE TO PRACTICING Three-part breathing

FROM THE RFDS

## COMPLETE BREATH FOR A FULL LIFE

Practicing Dinga Pranayama, also called three-part breath can have positive effects. You will soon discover the benefits of pranayama spilling over into all areas of your life.

**You can practice three-part breath in any comfortable position in which your spine is straight and your abdomen is not compressed. Some options include:**

- > An upright seated position, such as easy pose (Sukhasana).
- > A seated position on a chair with your feet flat on the floor.
- > Lying down fully extended in Corpse Pose (Savanana), or in a modified or supported Corpse Pose with your knees bent or with a bolster under your knees.
- > Lying in a Reclined Butterfly Pose (Supta Baddha Konasana), with your feet pressing together and knees dropped open.

1. Close your eyes, relax your face and body, and breathe naturally through your nose.
2. Place your left hand on your lower abdomen, a few inches below your belly button, and place your right hand on the outer right edge of your rib cage.
3. Begin to focus your awareness on your breath as it moves in and out of your body through your nose.
4. On your inhalations, feel the natural lift of your belly, followed by the expansion of your ribs.
5. On your exhalations, feel the slight compression of your ribs, followed by the drop of your belly. Exhale completely, pressing very gently on your abdomen to help expel air. Continue inhaling and exhaling for 5-10 breaths before moving on to the next step.
6. Next, bring your left hand to your chest, placing it in the centre, just below your collarbone.
7. As you inhale, breathe all the way into this area and allow your chest to rise slightly. Then, exhale completely.
8. As you continue to inhale and exhale, keep your awareness on the three-parts of your breath. As you inhale, your belly lifts, your ribs expand, and your chest rises. As you exhale, your chest drops, your ribs contract, and your belly softens and lowers.
9. Continue at your own pace, gradually letting the three parts of the breath flow smoothly without pausing.
10. Release your arms and focus your mind on your breath, continuing the three-part breath with full and complete inhalations and exhalation.
11. Continue for up to five minutes, or for as long as you feel comfortable.

## MODIFICATIONS & VARIATIONS

Three-part breath is calming and soothing during times of stress and anxiety. Once you are comfortable with this practice, you can slowly begin to modify it.

For an even more calming effect, begin to make your inhalations and exhalations the same length. For example, inhale for a count of five, then exhale for a count of five. Once you are very comfortable with that variation and have no dizziness or shortness of breath, you can gradually increase the length of your exhalations until they are twice as long as your inhalations. For example, inhale for a count of five, then exhale for a count of ten.

## TIPS

- > When practiced correctly, Dirga Pranayama will stimulate the vagus nerve, bringing a sense of calm and control.
- > Be careful never to force the breath or to breathe too deeply.
- > It's important for your lungs to feel comfortably full, but not strained. Let your breath be easy and smooth. If your breath becomes strained or you start to feel dizzy or anxious, stop the exercise and let your normal breathing pattern return.



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