

GENERAL KEYS TO REGULATING NORMAL BREATHING

(This document applies to normal breathing, where the abdomen expands during inhalation)

There are eight qualities for breathing which a beginner should remember during his normal breathing exercises. Once you understand them you will be able to substantially shorten the time needed to reach your Chi Kung goals. These eight qualities are:

1) CALM & SILENT

The mind is calm and the breathing is silent. When your mind is calm and peaceful, you will be able to judge what is going on correctly and will regulate your breathing more efficiently. Keep your breathing silent so that it is relaxed and peaceful.

2) SLENDER

When you breathe, it is like a tiny stream – it should be smooth, natural, and slender. This quality will lead you into deeper levels of meditation and relaxation.

3) DEEP

When you breathe deep, draw the air down into your abdomen. Draw the air in by moving your diaphragm down, rather than by expanding your chest. Only expand your chest if you are doing a chest expanding exercise. Deep breathing will lead you to abdominal breathing and build the foundation for your Chi Kung practice.

Deep and complete breathing does not mean that you inhale and exhale to the maximum. This would cause the lungs and the surrounding muscle to tense up. Which in turn would keep the air from circulating freely, and hinder the absorption of oxygen. Without enough oxygen, your mind becomes scattered, and the rest of your body tenses up. In correct deep breathing, you inhale and exhale to about 70% or 80% of your maximum capacity, so that your lungs stay relaxed. When they are relaxed, the rest of your body and your mind can also relax, which significantly decreases your need for oxygen. Therefore, when you regulate your breathing, the first priority is to keep your lungs relaxed and calm.

4) LONG

When you breathe you should keep the breath as long as possible. However, you should remember that **BREATHING LONG DOES NOT MEAN HOLDING YOUR BREATH**. In order to breathe long, your lungs must be very relaxed and your meditative mind must have reached a deep level. In this case, your heartbeat will slow down, and you will require less oxygen. Only under these conditions can your breathing be long.

Note: This does not always apply when performing Tai Chi because of the nature of the form, some breaths will be short as to co-ordinate it with a move.

5) CONTINUOUS

Your breathing must be smooth, natural, and most important of all continuous. And without stagnation. When you stop or hold your breath, your body will tense. Continuous breathing will help you relax and lead you to a deeper meditative mind.

6) UNIFORM

Your breathing should be uniform. As we mentioned previously, your breathing is affected by your emotions. In order to attain uniformity in your breathing, you must regulate your emotional mind. Only this will allow you to keep your breath uniform and smooth.

7) SLOW

Your mind must be slowed down and you must take your time with your breathing. Take it easy and be natural. Do not rush your inhalation and exhalation.

8) SOFT

Your breathing should be easy and soft. Soft breathing makes you relaxed and leads you to a deeper meditative mind.