



Without the breath, life is non-existent. There is a Hindu proverb that states, “For breath is life, and if you breathe well you will live long on earth.”

What if we are born with a finite number of breaths? Shouldn't we use each breath wisely? Yoga teaches us to witness and to cultivate our breath. Through asana (yoga poses) pranayama (breath work) and meditation, we learn to expand the breath, to lengthen the breath, to explore and command the breath.

If we are only given a limited number of breaths, we should learn to lengthen and enjoy the breath, to allow each breath to enliven our experiences and keep us in the moment. Breath can

keep us present.

Yoga teaches us presence. By learning to harness the breath, we can also manage our emotions and reactions. Learning to breathe in a difficult yoga pose, and staying in that pose even when things become uncomfortable, can directly translate into our lives. When we find ourselves in uncomfortable situations, the lessons we learn in yoga can help us stay, and breathe, and grow. If we hold our breath, however, we become more tense, less malleable, and more likely to fight.

If the metaphorical strong tide sweeps us off of our feet, we can fight the current or move with the tide, saving our strength for the battles we can win, but more than likely, the tide will carry us where it will. With consciousness of breath, we can keep our heads above water during the riptides of life, instead of falling beneath the surface.

Exhilaration and joy feel best when we are breathing deeply. Pain and despair are comforted by slow, deep breaths. Anger subsides at the mighty power of breath. Fear is corralled by replacing it's fast bursts of breath with deep, controlled inhalations.

I like the idea that we are born with a finite number of breaths. As beings with free will, we still have the ability to control our own destinies through manipulation of the breath. As we learn to calm and stabilize the breath, the mind becomes calmer and more stable. Whether or not we extend our existence on the earth by breathing deeply, we certainly experience each moment

more deeply.

The great yoga Krishnamacharya said, “Inhale, and God approaches you. Hold the inhalation, and God remains with you. Exhale, and you approach God. Hold the exhalation, and surrender to God.” If that isn’t a good reason to breathe deeply, I don’t know what is.

Breathe, be strong and live long. Namaste.

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