

Yoga and Positive Psychology for Managing Career and Life
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Pranayama as the Intervention for Managing Self and Career
Lecture - 78
Guidelines for Pranayama

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Guidelines for Pranayama



The Hatha Yoga Pradipika states (2:16):

पराणायामेन युक्तेन सर्व-रोग-कण्ठयो भवेत् |
अयुक्ताभ्यास-योगेन सर्व-रोग-समुद्गमः || १६ ||

All diseases are eradicated by the proper practice of pranayama; all diseases can arise through improper practice.

Every practice should be treated with respect and caution. There should be no violent respirations, no extended kumbhaka beyond a comfortable measure, no forcing of breath, body or mind

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Let us look at certain Guidelines about Pranayama. These are given in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika. It says that [FL]. When the pranayam is practiced as per the prescription we can get rid of all diseases. But all diseases can arise if we follow improper practice. So, every practice must be treated with respect and caution.

There should be no violent respiration, no extended kumbhak, meaning up holding the breath beyond the comfortable measure and no forcing of breath, body or mind should be done. That is a basic, that is a ground rule of pranayam.

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Guidelines for Pranayama cont..



The Yoga chudamani Upanishad State (v. 118):

यथा सिंहो गजो व्याघ्रो भवेदवश्यः शनैः शनैः।
तथैव सेवितो वायुरन्यथा हन्ति साधकम्॥

Just as the lion, elephant and tiger are brought under control slowly and steadily, similarly the prana should be controlled, otherwise it becomes destructive to the practitioner.

Preliminaries: In order to qualify for pranayama, one must undergo the process of shatkarmas.

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Next is taken from this Yog Chudamani Upanishad. It says that [FL]. Just as the lion, elephant, tiger are brought under control slowly and steadily, similarly prana should be controlled otherwise it becomes destructive to the practitioner. In order to qualify for the pranayama, must undergo the process of shatkarmas. Process of shatkarmas help us in controlling the prana, the movement of breath.

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Guidelines for Pranayama Cont..



The Gheranda Samhita states (5:16):

मिताहारं विना यस्तु योगारम्भं तु कारयेत् ।

नानारोगो भवेत्तस्य किञ्चिद्योगो न सिद्ध्यति ॥ 16 ॥

One who takes up yoga practices without observing moderation of diet obtains no benefit; rather, he gets various diseases.

Diet: The practitioner of pranayama should choose a balanced diet that is suitable to his constitution

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We are going to look at the shatkarma in a short while from now. Another guideline is given in the Gheranda Samhita, which says that [FL]. [FL] many diseases can happen, [FL] not a iota of yog can be can be realized, can be experienced without what? Without mitaharam, without control in ahar. So, control of diet is very important for pranayam to give result.

So, practitioner of pranayam should choose the balanced diet. We have had a previous session on ahar, you can refer that. And that is a kind of a initial condition a prerequisite from for us to be able to perform pranayam and get the benefit of that.

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Guidelines for Pranayama cont..





Place

1. Pranayama should be practised in clean environment to minimise the effects pollution.
2. Ideally ,the place of pranayama should be somewhat isolated, away from people, interruptions, noise.
3. Avoid practising in the sun or wind.
4. Rays of early morning sun are beneficial.

Time of Practice

1. Early mornings is the best time to practice, at the time of brahmamuhurta.
2. Should not be practised after meals.
3. Must wait for three hours after a meal before practising.



Guidelines about place and timing. So, the pranayam should be practiced in the clean environment to minimize the effects of pollution. Ideally, the place of pranayam should be somewhat isolated away from the crowd, away from the interruptions and noise. Avoid practicing in the direct sun or wind, rays of early morning suns are beneficial, but after that we should avoid practicing in the direction sun under the direct sunlight.

Timing is equally important. Early morning is the best time for the practice, at the time of the brahmamuhurta. Brahmamuhurt is approximately to us before sunrise. It should not be practiced after meals if you are doing kapalabhati or brahmani or sheetali. We must wait for 3 hours after meal before practicing the pranayam.

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Satkarmas: Preparation for Pranayam and Higher Practices

Neti: a nasal cleansing process intended to purify the nasal passages and bathe the sinuses

Dhauti: a cleansing process for the alimentary canal, including the oesophagus, the mouth, the stomach, intestines and rectum.

Nauli: a cleansing practice for the abdomen which uses the abdominal muscles to massage and stimulate the digestive organs.

Basti: a method for purifying the large intestine either with or without water.

Kapalabhati: a breathing technique which means "shining forehead." In this practice, the breath is forcefully exhaled through the nostrils by strongly drawing in the abdominal muscles after which the inhalation happens naturally. This is repeated 20 times in quick, rhythmic succession.

Trataka: is a technique for cleansing the eyes and improving mental focus. One method involves gazing at the flame of a candle.

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As we looked at the preparation is very important for pranayam. Shatkarma, 6 practices prepares our body for the pranayam and the higher practices like pratyahar dharana and dhyana. These practices are neti, dhauti, nauli, basti, kapalabhati and trataka. Neti is the nasal cleansing. It is a process intended to verify the nasal passage and bathe the sinuses.

It can be done with the pot, specially designed pot and using the saline water and it can also be done with the thread of a rubber band. It is it comes especially for this practice. Dhauti, that is a cleaning process for the elementary canal including the esophagus, the mouth, and stomach intestine, and rectum. There are a couple of methods by using cloth or by using the saline water, these are the different methods through which dhauti can be performed.

Nauli is the cleansing practice for the abdomen, which uses abdominal muscle itself to massage and stimulate the digestive organs. The picture and the videos of Swami Ramdevji performing nauli are very popular. You can watch that in video. I am not describing these practices in detail in this lecture because this lecture is not meant to guide for the practices, and particularly, little more complicated practices.

The purpose is to make ourselves familiar to the practices and connect all these things with the positive psychology and many more benefits which are beyond positive psychology. Another

method is basti. This method is purifying the large intestine either with or without water that is also a very important process.

Kapalabhati, many people think that it is pranayam, but in the classical sense kapalabhati is not pranayama. It is a cleansing process. And probably the easiest cleansing process which can be performed by all of us in the beginning before we practice pranayam. So, it is a breathing technique; that means, shining forehead. Kapal is the forehead, bhati means shining or cleansing.

In this practice, breathe is forcefully exhaled through nostrils by strongly drawing the abdominal muscles after which the inhalation happens naturally. And it is repeated 20 times in a quick rhythmic succession. In the literature, it is suggested that 48 per minute is the ideal speed for the kapalabhati, but if you are doing it first time, if you are doing it after long time, the speed can vary.

The important thing is that you should not exert the system and you should not try to go beyond your limits when you start the practice. The essence of yogic practice is that you gradually in a non-violent way in enhance your capacity. Tratak is again a preparation practice for pranayama. And it can be very useful for students because the additional benefit of tratak is enhancing concentration.

Our ability to focus on one thought. Swami Vivekananda said that, "Essence of education lies in ability to focus and pursue valued goals." If I am able to focus on something I can make it happen. Tratak is a practice of using different objects. The most popular way of performing tratak is keeping the lamp at the level of your eyes, is keeping keep watching it focusing on that.

And there are some other steps as I told you. I am not going to describe the whole technique, because I want you to go to the videos put up by the masters and Swami Ramdevji has put up lot of detailed videos about the tratak process as well. You can follow that. The essence of the practice is that you focus your attention on a lamp, on the light of the lamp which is at the level of your eyes.

And when you continue to observe that and keep your attention to that something happens. That is very good for not only building our capacity for the pranayam, but also builds our capacity for dharana, for dhyana and enhance our ability to focus on one thought or one object or one problem which is the essence of academic success and career success as well.

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Guidelines for Pranayama cont..

Sequence

Pranayama should be performed after asanas and before meditation practices.

The Seat

Natural fibres such as cotton or wool are best to sit on for the practice of pranayama

The Nose:

1. All breathing should be through the nose except where otherwise specified.
2. The nasal cavity should be regularly cleaned by jala neti for efficient operations of nostril.

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Few more guidelines for pranayama. This is probably a complicated process, so we must be aware of the guidelines sequence. So, pranayama should be performed after asana, should not be performed before asanas and should be performed before meditation practice. Natural fibers such as cotton or wool are the best to sit on for the practice of pranayama.

And all breathing should be through the nose except where otherwise is specified, and we will see there are few practices of pranayama where you can breathe and you are supposed to breathe through mouth, but for all other practices nasal breathing must be done. The nasal cavity should be regularly cleansed by jala neti for efficient operation of the nostrils.

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Guidelines for Pranayama cont..

SIDDHASANA
THE ACCOMPLISHED POSE



POSTURE

1. Ability to sit comfortably in a meditation asana is a requisite for the successful practice of pranayama.
2. Both concentration and technique are hampered by poor posture.
3. The chest, neck and head must be in one vertical line during the practice, so that the spinal cord remains straight.
4. Should not allow to become crooked or to collapse.
5. The best posture for practice are padmasana, siddhasana, siddha yoni asana and swastikasana.

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Posture is extremely important. This is asana. Ability to sit comfortably in a meditation asana is a kind of a requisite for successful practice of pranayama. Both concentration and technique are hampered by the poor posture. So, we must identify that posture, that asana in which we are comfortable and that posture is well identified in the classical yogic literature.

The chest, neck, head, must be in the one vertical line during the practice, so that the spinal cord remains straight. Should not allow to become crooked or collapse at the when we are sitting. The best posture for practice are padmasan, siddhas an, siddha yogi asan or as in the inner engineering program it is taught ardha siddhasan and also swastikasana. These are some of the postures which are most commonly adapted, most commonly held for performing pranayam.