

## Seventeenth Breathing Theme

### Relaxing the Internal Organs

Relaxing the internal organs? Whew! This sounds very esoteric. That makes it sound like you're really doing yoga! Well, you *are* really doing yoga – every time you take a breath. Every time you have been noticing your breathing, or stretching purposefully or practicing deep relaxation techniques, or paying attention when you wash a dish, these are all doing yoga. These things can seem very ordinary, but that's what yoga is – discovering the joy and purpose in ordinary living. And making out-of-the-ordinary things seem very real, very possible, very – ordinary. Like, relaxing your organs.

Back to your stressed-out organs. They are working hard for you all day long. They are deeply affected by your change in state. As you become stressed or relaxed you release hormones that change the way your organs work. When you are tense, they 'tense', being pulled to and fro by muscle tension in your body. This interferes with their normal functioning.

The good news is, your body's messages run two ways. Relaxing your mind will relax the stress on your organs. But, also, relaxing your organs will relax your mind. As a bonus, your organs will function better and then you relax more and the cycle of relaxation goes deeper.

So, how do you relax something you probably don't even know you have?

Simple, using *The Sponge*.

By now, you're getting the idea of relaxing muscles that are stretching, by using *The Sponge* visualization. You might have a good idea of what that feels like, to feel a muscle letting go and relaxing. We're looking for that same feeling, *throughout your entire body*.

Most of the organs we're talking about are living between your neck and your groin, that is, your torso or body-proper. So that's the area we're going to concentrate on.

All you need to do to relax your organs is do *The Sponge* for your torso. As you do this visualization, notice any areas letting go. Notice the feeling of softening in your body. See how deeply it can penetrate.

At first you'll feel the upper layers, the muscles, letting go. As you continue, you might feel this relaxation penetrating deeper and deeper, until it feels like it goes into the very center of your whole body.

As you continue even farther, you will notice that each breath has several effects.

- Breathing in, your body opens up to welcome in the 'water'.
- Breathing out, the water is soaking deeply into your body.
- The muscles are letting go, softening, feeling heavier, loosening and expanding.
- The water feels like it is spreading back outward again, toward your skin, as the muscles and organs loosen, relax and lengthen.
- When the breath finishes, you feel heavier, like you're sinking down.

You can do this to the inside of your head, too. In time, you get a very real sense of your internal organs, your muscles, your blood vessels, lymph system, your whole body and all its systems.

This is the first step to discovering how much control you really have over your body, and vice versa. This step leads to those mysterious yogic abilities to control blood pressure, heart rate, alter the activity of body systems. These abilities may seem bizarre and unlikely, but they're really all based on some very simple skills that you are learning with this program and especially with the *Green Level Breathing Themes*.

## **Working with the Seventeenth Breathing Theme**

Next time you're doing your routine, hold your poses long enough that you can check throughout the inside of your body, relaxing your organs, your systems and tissues, one by one. You'll discover a deep sense of letting go, a comfort with the pose that you'd never felt before.

### **Office Break**

You can benefit from what you've learned so far and get more practice throughout the day, with quick body checks. Do this whenever it occurs to you.

Whatever you're doing, check in on where your body feels tense. Are you holding tension there unnecessarily? Can you just let that part of your body let go and relax? Can you imagine yourself being a sponge and sending warm, relaxing water to those tense muscles?

Do this for anywhere throughout your body – your muscles, your organs, your breathing. Especially pay attention to the muscles all round the edges of your eyes.

As go the eyes, so goes the breathing.  
As goes the breathing, so go the body and mind.