

Breathing Theme Nineteen - The Dance with Yourself

In *Yellow Level* you learned to move with the breath and you learned to pace your breathing. Now that you've done more yoga, you're ready to experience this on a new level.

With the *Nineteenth Breathing Theme*, you pace your breathing for the first few repetitions of a pose, then you simply focus on the dance between the movement and the breath. Each time you hold your breath, you hold the movement. Each time you finish breathing out, you hold still. In that moment of stillness, you'll begin to notice a sense of peace.

Working with the Nineteenth Breathing Theme

The goal of this practice is to discover stillness. At the end of each round, your body has stopped moving. Even your breathing has stopped for a moment. For a moment, your brain has even stopped. For a brief moment, your mind is not even worrying about breathing. Everything has become very still, in contrast to the constant repetitions of motion.

You include the *Nineteenth Breathing Theme* in your routine like this:

1. **Do your warm up breathing stretches**, like the Abdominal Lifts, the Simple Side Bend and Butterfly Breathing. (Those are my favourites for my students! ☺)
2. **Do a *Yellow Level* breathing practice for a moment.** Practice pacing your breathing (such as the way you did in the *Thirteenth Breathing Theme*, 1:1:2:2 Breathing).
3. **For your poses, you're going to do many repetitions of the pose, moving into and out of the pose as you breathe in and out.**

Each pose will have four stages to it:

- i. the stage that goes with breathing in,
- ii. holding the movement as you hold your breath,
- iii. the stage that goes with breathing out
- iv. and the stage that goes with waiting before you breathe in again.

Then you go into the next repetition as you breathe in.

For the first few repetitions

- Count your breath and match the movements with the breath. Start moving as you start breathing in. Finish moving as you finish breathing in, etc., just as you did in *Yellow Level*.
- Focus on the movement and the flow of the movement. Feel how the movement and the breath flow together.

For the next repetitions, switch your attention

- Don't worry about counting your breath.
- Breathe in, go into the stretch, matching movement with your breathing.
- Pause your breathing and enjoy the stretch for a moment
- Breathing out, release stretch, matching movement with your breathing.

After you've finished your repetitions, go out of the pose, finish breathing out, stop moving and stop breathing. Notice how still everything has become.

Then, after a brief glimpse of stillness, your mind will begin to wander and your brain will start talking to you again about how smart it would be to breathe again, hold the pose just a little longer and keep from breathing, just for a moment.

Do another round, and again, after you've finished your repetitions, go out of the pose, finish breathing out, stop moving and stop breathing. Notice how still everything has become.

After you've done several rounds of the poses, release the exercise with a big breath and a sigh and go back to breathing however you like.

Then, you can go on to another pose or get back into your day.

This kind of routine will calm you, train your mind to be more still, help you find your quiet center and improve your flexibility. It's also great if you're arthritic or have fibromyalgia or if you have chronic pain.

