

## Seventh Breathing Theme

### Breathing with the Front of Your Chest

After mastering the *Sixth Breathing Theme*, you and your abdominals are breathing in harmony with breath-taking skill. Yet as you breathe, there are muscles sitting on the sidelines which can still be conscripted into breathing service.

Like – the muscles in the front of your chest. Chances are, when you're going about your day, you have been breathing with only the top section of your chest. (And of course, with your abdominals now.) Yet, all the muscles in your rib cage can be used for good, full breathing - from your collar bones, down to your belly.

The *Seventh Breathing Theme* is going to get your chest muscles more fully involved in breathing.

This is a good time to review the Discovery Exercise you did with the *Fifth Breathing Theme*.

Lie back for a few minutes and notice your breathing. Which parts of your body do you use now when you breathe? That's probably changed since you started using this book. No doubt, your abdominals are more fully

engaged. What about your chest? Which parts easily flow open as you breathe in? Which parts readily drop and relax when you breathe out? Use this time to notice what is natural and normal for you, today. Don't worry about fixing it yet.

To more fully use the front of your chest when you breathe, you're going to need to redevelop the muscles there and you need to gain control of those muscles. There are some good stretches and a Chest Breathing exercise for that.

## Redeveloping Your Chest Muscles



No matter what your physical ability, there are stretches that can help you develop the muscles at the front of your chest. My favourites are the **Bust Expansion**



and different versions of **Back Bends**. (Back Bends aren't recommended for pregnant women or for people with lower back problems or for people with some conditions of the spine. Fortunately there are other choices for you.)

Other poses that are great for this:

**Camel**



**Bow**



**Incline Plane**



**Cobra**



Including some of these in your regular routine will help you develop the breathing muscles in the front and back of your rib cage.

## Second Step – Chest Breathing 1 Practicing Breathing with the Front of Your Chest

This exercise is similar to the abdominal breathing exercise from *The Sixth Breathing Theme*. Do this for three minutes, once or twice a day. One of those times can be during your regular routine, were you set aside about 3 minutes to specifically spot train your muscles with this *Chest Breathing 1* exercise. Also, you can use it as your *Breathing Theme* when you're in your yoga poses.

### Chest Breathing 1 – Breathing Exercise

#### Start

Lying on your back, or standing or sitting. No matter what position you start in, see that your neck, spine & legs are lined up with each other.



#### A Good Start

Have your chin pointing forward. Take a minute to see that you have good air flow. If you bend your chin too close to your chest, or if you stretch your chin up away from your chest, you'll be cutting off some of your air flow. Experiment with moving your chin up and down until you feel your air passages in the back of your throat fully open.

#### Now

Put your finger tips on your collar bones. Right fingers in the center of the right collar bone.  
Left fingers in the center of the left collar bone.

**Now** slide your fingers down off your collar bones, to rest on your chest – on those hollow spots beneath the collar bones.

## The Exercise

### **Breathe in – breathing toward your fingers.**

(Allow the air to flow in any way that feels natural – through your nose, your both, both, neither. For this exercise, you only need to stay focused on the action of your chest. Also, for now, don't worry about what your chest is doing.)



- What parts of your chest do you feel opening up?
  - You'll probably feel the entire front of your rib cage blossoming open.

#### **Keep breathing in**

Notice how much of your rib cage can open up.

#### **To breathe out – let your chest drop.**

**Do this for 1 – 3 minutes, whenever you have a minute.** Keep your breaths around 2/3 full and around 2/3 empty.

#### **THEN – to Build Strength and Lung Capacity**

Breathe in.  
Keep breathing in – more and more!  
More! More!  
Feel your lungs filling up right to the top.

#### **Do that three times.**

And then go back to breathing normally. (If you can remember, at this point, what 'normal breathing' is!)

#### **If you get very good at that exercise add this step:**

After you breathe in, pause in your breathing. Relax your shoulders. Feel them dropping down. Then breathe out.

This exercise can feel very invigorating. Practice it whenever you're low on energy. You'll feel a difference very quickly!

## Working with The Seventh Breathing Theme

To develop your skills, here's how to work *Chest Breathing 1* exercise into your yoga routine.

1. Start your sessions with **Abdominal Lifts**. (Gotta keep those abdominals in shape while you develop your chest!) Also with a warm up breathing stretch like the **Complete Breath 2** or the **Wood Chopper**.
2. Work the **Bust Expansion** or a **Back Bend** into your routine. You'll need to follow the Bust Expansion with **The Hug**. And you'll need to follow your Back Bend with a **Puppy Pose** or a **Sitting Forward Bend**. (See the routines on the website for tips. 😊)
3. Take special time out during your routine (and throughout your day) to do *Chest Breathing 1*. Three minutes is good.

I recommend doing *Chest Breathing 1* in your warm up, after the Abdominal Lifts and Complete Breath. That way, you'll get your chest in motion for good breathing throughout your routine.

4. Do chest breathing when you're in your poses, using it as your *Breathing Theme*.

See the website for a routine to help you master *Breathing Theme Number 7*. Or you can develop your own routine. These poses are good for practicing Chest Breathing when you're in them:

Ankle to Forehead	Half Bow
Back Stretch	Half Bow Prep. Pose
Balance Posture 1, 2	Leg Fold
Butterfly	Leg Over
Butterfly Extension	Leg Stretch
Cat	Pigeon (simplified versions)
Child Pose	Wide Angle Pose

**What do you do about your abdominals while you're mastering all this?**

You're focused on your chest muscles. Your abdominals might feel neglected. A neglected muscle pouts by refusing to cooperate with you. So we need to give the abdominals some attention from time to time, so they'll still do what you ask when you need them to.

From time to time, practice abdominal breathing. Maybe three times a week, when you're out and about, stuck in traffic, or on hold on the phone, practice abdominal breathing. Don't do this during the same sessions when you're doing the chest breathing exercises and routines, or you'll get muddled and your training will slow down. Maybe once a week use the *Sixth Breathing Theme*, (abdominal breathing), during your yoga routine instead of the chest breathing and that should give you variety and keep those muscles happy.