

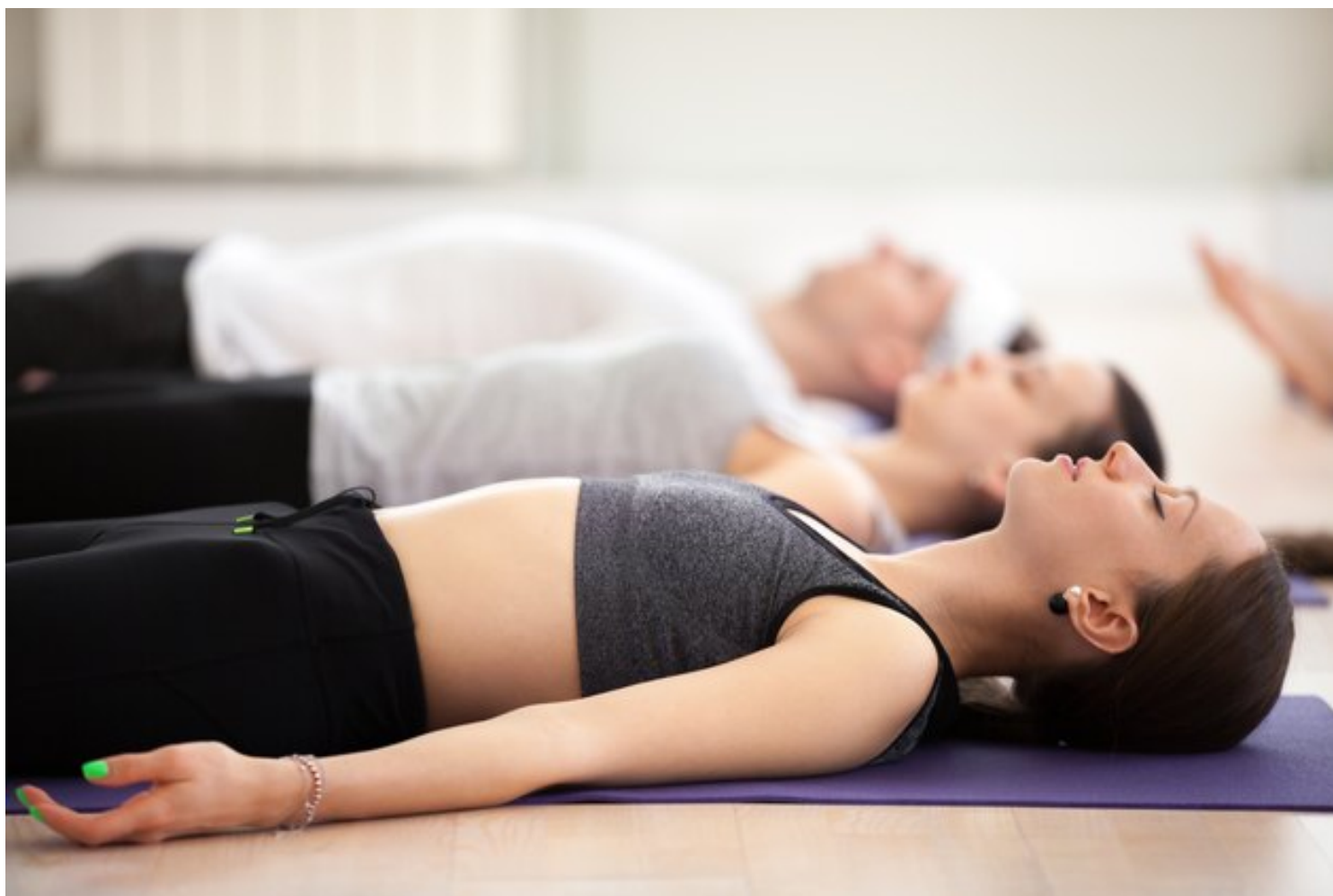


# Kriya Breathing Technique

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Yoga, which is the Sanskrit word for union, is the practice of connecting body and mind in order to achieve both individual and universal awareness. Kriya breathing and yoga are part of the [kundalini philosophy of yoga](#), which focuses on the awakening of energy that resides within the human body.



(Image: fizkes/iStock/GettyImages)

Kriya yoga poses make up the physical aspect of kundalini yoga, with breath playing an important role in all kriya yoga sequences. According to a January 2014 study published in the

[Journal of Clinical & Diagnostic Research](#) mindfully focusing on one's breath when moving from one yoga pose to the next results in the reduction of stress and improved cognition, including attention and memory retention.

**Read more:** [What is the Meaning of Raja Yoga?](#)

As yoga and meditation practices turn mainstream, knowing the difference between the [various breathing techniques](#) will help strengthen your yogic foundation. A survey conducted by the [Centers for Disease Control](#) in 2017 found that over 14 percent of U.S. adults turned to yoga as a means of holistic medicine.

There was also a threefold increase in the use of meditation, which, if practiced consistently, helps in [bringing awareness to the breath](#) and lessening the body's levels of cortisol, a major stress hormone.

## Benefits of Kriya Breathing

A kriya, which means action in Sanskrit, offers yogis both a purpose and desired outcome. Kriyas that aid in digestion or in alleviating [chronic lower back pain](#) are known as providers of physical health benefits, while kriyas that focus on mindfulness provide the practitioner with mental health benefits.

[Multiple studies](#) have found that mindfulness meditation has a positive effect on easing the psychological symptoms of depression and pain. There are kriyas that can even ease stress and anxiety, which according to [Harvard Health Publishing](#), works by lowering the body's blood pressure and heart rate.

A January 2013 study in the [International Journal of Yoga](#) explains that Sudarshan Kriya yoga — a popular style of kriya yoga — was originally developed by the Art of Living Foundation as a way of providing stress relief and alleviating the symptoms of depression.

Practicing this type of kriya breathing, which is sometimes called the shri shri breathing technique, involves alternating from fast breathing techniques to slow ones, resulting in a calm, stress-free mind and a much more relaxed body.

**Read more:** [Yoga & Sleep Apnea](#)

## Practicing the Kriya Breathing Technique

According to the January 2013 study in the *International Journal of Yoga*, there are four main kriya breathing techniques to follow while practicing Sudarshan Kriya yoga: ujjayi pranayama, bhastrika pranayama, chanting "om" and a purifying kriya pranayama comprising slow, medium and fast cycles of rhythmic breathing. The Art of Living's short kriya steps include:

### **Move 1: Ujjayi Breathing**

1. Begin in a comfortably seated cross-legged position on your yoga mat.
2. Rest your hands gently on your knees and close your eyes.
3. Turn your focus inwards as you begin to take a deep inhale through your nose.
4. Constrict the muscles located in the back of your throat as you slowly breathe out through your nose.
5. Repeat for five minutes.

### **Tip**

Constricting your throat while exhaling will let out a sound similar to ocean waves crashing against rocks.

### **Move 2: Bhastrika Pranayama**

1. Start in a cross-legged position with your left hand placed on your lower abdomen and right hand placed over your right knee.
2. Take a deep breath in through your nose, filling up your lungs and stomach with air.
3. Exhale forcefully through your nostrils in short breaths as you use your left hand to rhythmically push the lower abdomen inwards, expelling the inhaled air.
4. Continue for a count of 30 before releasing your abdomen.
5. Take a few relaxed inhales and exhales before starting another round.
6. Repeat for five minutes.

### **Move 3: Chanting Om**

1. Begin in a comfortable seated position with hands placed on the tops of your knees, palms facing upwards.
2. Take a deep breath in through your nose, followed by a deep exhale.
3. Take another deep inhale through your nose.
4. On your exhale, begin to chant "Om."
5. Repeat two more times.

## Tip

The length of your "Om" should be equal to the length of your exhale.

### Move 4: Sudarsha Kriya

1. Place your hands comfortably on the tops of your knees, with palms facing upward.
2. Begin with five rounds of regular breathing where your inhales and exhales are equal in length.
3. Next, double the length of your inhales and exhales. Repeat for five rounds.
4. For the next final five rounds, double the length of your inhales but keep the length of your exhales short.

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