UJJAYI BREATHING FOR INNER PEACE

Arnie Shapiro, M.D.

Breathing techniques for Inner Peace date back at least 2000 years to India. Yoga teachings were compiled in printed form in the 4th Century A.D. from earlier oral traditions in "the yoga sutras of Patanjali." In this work, Pranayama, the practice of breathing, is discussed in detail. One of its key components is Ujjayi, the "ocean breath."

Ujjayi has two main components. The first is to make the sound of the ocean (at the shoreline) by compressing the vocal cords in the way you do a whisper. By doing so, through the inbreath and the outbreath, you can represent the sounds of ocean waves arriving and receding from the shore. The body's ocean waves are also very rhythmic.

The other aspect of Ujjayi is to have the abdomen and chest movements of breathing occur in wave forms as well. To do so, you start an inbreath with the abdomen expanding, then the lower ribs, then the upper ribs, to fill the lungs. The outbreath is the opposite: contract the upper ribs, then the lower ribs, then the abdomen, to empty the lungs. With practice, we create smooth waves of expansion and contraction, coordinated with sounds of ocean waves. The whisper amplifies the sound of breathing, and I sometimes use foam earplugs to make it even louder. Keep everything smooth and slow. Practice makes perfect.

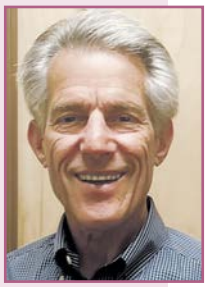
The very best breathing techniques keep your attention by having just the right amount of things to attend. Start with one to two minute sessions (5 to 10 breaths), enjoying the ocean waves, unrushed.

I have been doing and teaching Ujjayi breathing for many years. I find it to be consistently generative of the Relaxation Response, and counter to the stress response.

In my experience, Ujjayi simultaneously relaxes and energizes the mind and body. It is a reliable path to Inner Peace. I can mention ten words, all beginning with the letter R, that Ujjayi may elicit:

Rest Refresh
Respite Retreat
Recover Relieve
Restore Recharge
Reset Rebalance!

Here's to your Health in the New Year! *—Namasté*



Dr. Arnie Shapiro is a career clinic physician who has had a long-time interest in Wellness and Stress Management. He has a YouTube channel: Arnie Shapiro, MD, Breathing Easy.