

THE NINE BREATHINGS OF PURIFICATION

Assume the Five-Point Meditation Posture

Sit cross-legged, with your spine straight, chest open, and your hands in equipoise position resting about four finger widths below your navel. (With your palms facing up, keep the fingers together and bring the left fingers to rest on the right fingers, thumbs brought to touch the base of the ring finger of the same hand.) The chin is brought in slightly, allowing the back of the neck to lengthen.

If you are seated in a chair, cross your legs comfortably at the ankles. Keep your spine upright, free of the support of the back of the chair. (All else is as described above.)

Visualize the Three Channels

The central channel begins four finger widths below your navel, rises straight up through the center of your body, and opens at the crown of your head. It is a channel of light, blue like a deep sunlit autumn sky. In diameter, it is the size of your thumb. There are two side channels, one red and one white. They have diameters slightly smaller than the central channel. On your left side is the red channel, on your right, the white channel. The three channels form a junction four finger-widths below the navel. The side channels rise straight up the body on either side of the central channel. However, as they approach the crown, they curve forward under the skull, pass behind the eyes, and open, one at each nostril. The right white channel represents male energy and method or skillful means and opens at the right nostril; the left red channel represents female energy and wisdom and opens at the left nostril.

Reflect and then Select

As you settle into the posture and experience the presence of the three channels of light, connect with the stillness of your body, the silence of speech, and the spaciousness of mind. In this way you rest in the inner refuge.

Become aware of any tensions in your body, emotions, or mind in this moment, or reflect upon a challenge in your personal, family, or professional life, particularly as it relates with the three root poisons: anger, attachment, and ignorance. Feel your body; experience any raw emotion and how this affects your breath; observe whatever occupies your mind. Experience directly and nakedly without judgment or analysis. This is how you host your experience, and select what is to be deleted or released through the breathing practice.

With the first set of three breaths, we clear the obstacles of anger, releasing through the right white channel. With the second set of three breaths, we clear obstacles of attachment, releasing them through the left red channel. With the third set of three breaths, we clear obstacles related to the root poison, ignorance, and release doubt and lack of confidence through the central channel.

The First Set of Three Breaths

Raise your right hand with the thumb pressing the base of the ring finger. Close your right nostril with the ring finger. Inhale the pure air element as green light through the left nostril filling the red channel. Cross your hand over to the other side of your nose and close the left nostril with the right ring finger while exhaling through the right nostril. Imagine that the air travels up through the white channel and is released. With each exhalation, feel the obscurations associated with aversion and anger are expelled through the white channel and dissolve into space.

The Second Set of Three Breaths

Change hands and block the left nostril as you inhale the pure air element through the right nostril. Green light fills the white channel. Then block the right nostril and exhale through the left nostril, expelling the impure air that moves up and out through the left red channel and is released. With each exhalation through the red channel, obscurations associated with attachment, desire, and greed are expelled and dissolve into space.

The Third Set of Three Breaths

With hands in equipoise position as described above, inhale the pure air element as green light through both nostrils. While the gross exhalation of impure air moves out through both nostrils, focus upon the subtle wind moving up through the central channel and out the top of the head. This subtle breath releases through the crown. With each exhalation, obscurations associated with ignorance, lack of confidence, and doubt are expelled through the crown and dissolve into space.

Rest in Open Awareness

Bring clear attention to the center of the body, to the space within the channels, and rest in open awareness feeling the openness within the three channels of light.