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Three-Part Breath - Dirga Pranayama

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Benefits: Focuses the attention on the present moment, calms and grounds the mind.

This [pranayama](#)¹ exercise is often done while seated in a comfortable, cross-legged position, but it is also nice to do while lying on the back, particularly at the beginning of your practice. When you are lying down, you can really feel the breath moving through your body as it makes contact with the floor.

1. Come to lie down on the back with the eyes closed, relaxing the face and the body.
2. Begin by observing the natural inhalation and exhalation of your breath without changing anything. If you find yourself distracted by the activity in your mind, try not to engage in the thoughts. Just notice them and then let them go, bringing your attention back to the inhales and the exhales.
3. Then begin to inhale deeply through the nose.
4. On each inhale, fill the belly up with your breath. Expand the belly with air like a balloon.
5. On each exhale, expel all the air out from the belly through your nose. Draw the navel back towards your spine to make sure that the belly is empty of air.
6. Repeat this deep belly breathing for about five breaths.
7. On the next inhale, fill the belly up with air as described above. Then when the belly is full, draw in a little more breath and let that air expand into the rib cage causing the ribs to widen apart.
8. On the exhale, let the air go first from the rib cage, letting the ribs slide closer together, and then from the belly, drawing the navel back towards the spine.
9. Repeat this deep breathing into the belly and rib cage for about five breaths.
10. On the next inhale, fill the belly and rib cage up with air as described above. Then draw in just a little more air and let it fill the upper chest, all the way up to the collarbone, causing the area around the heart (which is called the heart center in yoga), expand and rise.
11. On the exhale, let the breath go first from the upper chest, allowing the heart center sink back down, then from the rib cage, letting the ribs slide closer together. Finally, let the air go from the belly, drawing the navel back towards the spine.
12. You are practicing three-part breath! Continue at your own pace, eventually coming to let the three parts of the breath happen smoothly without pausing.
13. Continue for about 10 breaths.