

STRESS MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT

Techniques for Reducing Stress and for Revitalizing the Mind

These methods are among the earliest known forms of mind body training and have been used for centuries. They are some of the better practices as used in Taoist and Zen schools. The purpose is to achieve a strong and healthful condition both physically and mentally, an overall tone and quality for better functioning. Each of the following practices can be done in less than five minutes and the results can be felt immediately.

Mind Control through Breath Control will enable you to achieve alpha breath and gain the benefits that accrue from it. This includes a relaxed and alert state of mind.

The Hone is used for sharpening tools. This practice is for sharpening the mind, thus improving your powers of concentration.

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Leaking Breath is a practice used to improve the imagination and visualization powers of the mind. It enhances mind and body harmony.

Mind Control through Breath Control

For this practice you will need a clock or wrist watch with a second hand or a digital second sweep. Sit in a comfortable position with a watch in the palm of your hand or if you are using a clock it should be in front of you in a position that does not require your straining in order to view it. Watch the clock and control your breath for five minutes, inhaling for exactly fifteen seconds and exhaling for fifteen seconds. You can increase the length of time of the practice as desired.

The Hone A Tool for Sharpening the Mind

This is an eye practice. The indications are as follows:

The double dots in Figure 1 are manipulated by doubling the image by looking cross-eyed thereby making 4 dots. (Figure 3) The goal is to bring the two center dots together by adjusting the focal length so that the two middle images come together, becoming one. (Figure 5)



Figure 1

Adjusting the focal length:

Use the index finger to make the proper adjustment of the focal point. This is done by placing the tip of the index finger just below the dashed line described in Figure 2. This is the focal point. You may get an image like Figure 3. Keeping the focal point at the finger tip, adjust the focal length by moving the finger as described in Figure 4 like a trombone slide until the two middle circles superimpose one on the other as described in Figure 5.

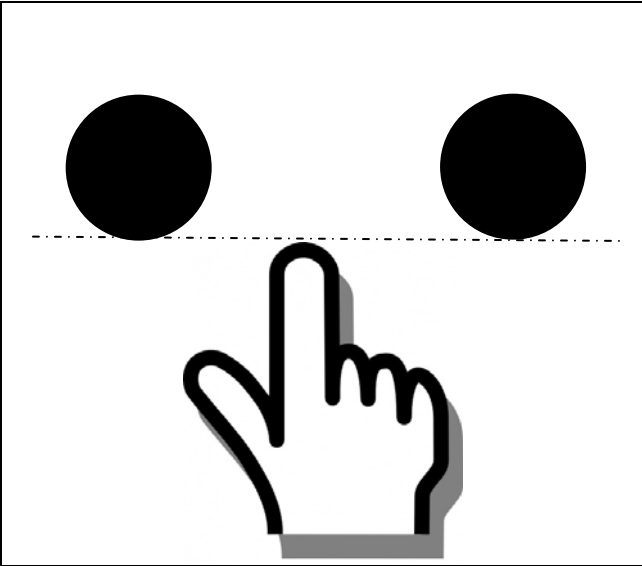


Figure 2 Line up the finger

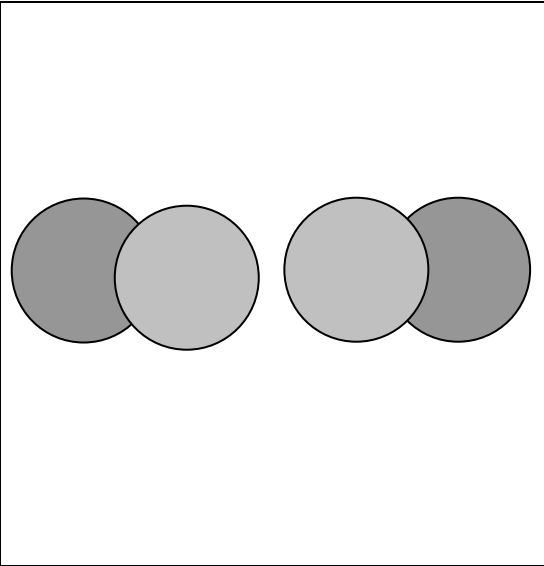


Figure 3 Seeing Double

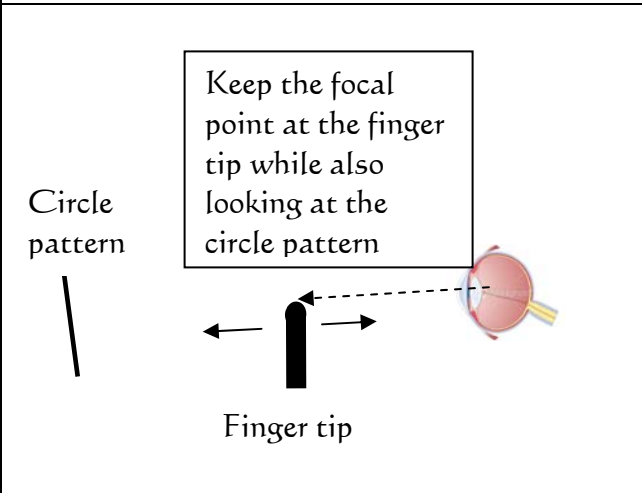


Figure 4 Adjust the focal length

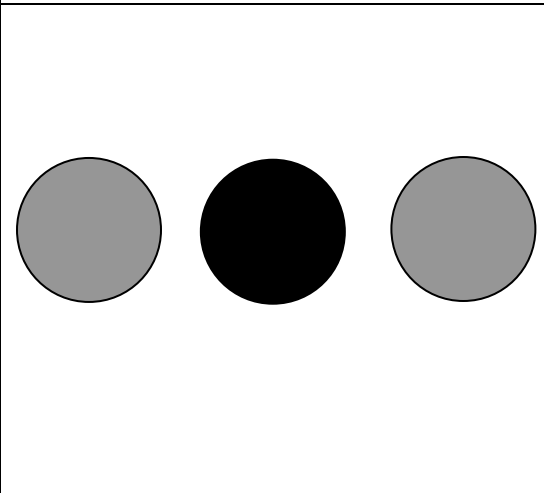


Figure 5 Final pattern (Hold for 5 minutes)

Also try the practice in figure 6. The object is here to get a black square (Figure 7). This is used to balance the eyesight.



Figure 6



Figure 7

BONE BREATHING

Excessive tension and stress cause disease. This practice enables you to give yourself a full body and mind relaxation. It also prevents energy blocks caused by the build up of tension.

Lie on your back with your feet slightly apart, your arms next to your body, and your palms turned slightly upward. Allow the floor or bed to support the weight of your body rather than using your muscles to hold you up. Keep your eyes closed and let your breathing become regular. As you inhale, feel the fresh, clean air and energy and vitality enter into and penetrate your entire body. As you exhale, feel all the toxins and stale air leave your body. .

Now begin to feel, as you inhale, the air as it comes in through your toes, flows up through the bones of your leg, and enters into your chest. As you breath out, imagine feeling the air descend through the chest, pass through your leg and out through the toes of your foot. Repeat the last two steps for a total of three times with each leg.

Now imagine feeling the air come up through your hands and arms and enter into your chest and head. On the exhale, follow the air back down through your arm and out through your hand. Repeat the last two steps for a total of three times with each arm.

Note: Once you have mastered the individual movements, you may combine the flow of the breath through both arms and legs simultaneously.

Note: If it is not practical to assume a prone position (at work or traveling, for example), then close your eyes and practice the exercise in a sitting position with your spine as straight as possible, and your arms and legs in a relaxed and comfortable position.

After completing the Bone Breathing exercise, your mind and body will feel completely rested and relaxed, and you will feel refreshed and ready to begin your work anew.

LEAKING BREATH

Concentrate on a small dim light. A low power bulb or a candle will do.

This practice is done with a repetition of a three breath cycle. The first two breaths are long and deep while concentrating the breath at a point two inches behind and below the navel. The third breath is done with the eyes closed. The exhale is controlled at a very slow rate through slightly opened lips while trying to visualize an exact replica of the light in your mind. Repeat four times.