

Your Center of Healing

By Shoshanna Katzman, M.S., C.A.



Meditating and breathing into a place two inches below your umbilicus is called Dan Tien breathing. It is believed in Chinese Medicine that all of our healing emanates from the Dan Tien. It is therefore important to breathe into this area throughout the day and especially concentrate on it during a healing session.

As an acupuncturist and Tai Chi/Qigong teacher, I share this practice with my patients and students to help them obtain and maintain a healthy body, mind, and spirit. It is a simple, yet profound, breathing exercise that helps you center and heal yourself, maintain personal power, relieve stress, and increase breathing capacity.

As you stand or lie down, think about your Dan Tien by concentrating your mind's eye on this special place two inches below your navel. You may keep your eyes totally or partially closed during the meditation. I often suggest that people think of their lungs being down in their belly to help them breathe into this area more easily.

Take a gentle, full inhalation in through your nose and blow your belly up as if it is a big balloon. Next, gently exhale through your nose as if you are deflating this balloon. This breathing technique can be practiced 15 minutes per day. Be sure to breathe slowly and gently to avoid hyperventilating. I ask patients to begin each acupuncture session with three deep breaths to set the stage for a healing, peaceful treatment.

Remember to breathe in through your nose and out through your nose with your mouth closed so the hairs in your nose filter the air. Breathe in and out gently just like a baby breathes. Next time you are with a baby, notice how they naturally breathe from their belly! It must be the years of stress and being told to "hold out our chest and suck our belly in tight" that is responsible for unnatural ways of breathing. Years of a tight belly, deprived of energy flow can have an adverse effect on breathing or digestion.

You can also practice Dan Tien Breathing with a box of tissues on your tummy, watching it rise and fall as you breathe into your belly. It can also be used under stressful situations - remove yourself from the situation by taking a moment to breathe into your Dan Tien to collect and calm yourself. Nothing is worth getting that stressed out over. This simple breathing technique can help you remember this during those stressful moments. Eventually, you may incorporate Dan Tien Breathing throughout the day as you become more and more comfortable with it.

Shoshanna Katzman is author of Qigong for Staying Young: A Simple 20 Minute Workout to Cultivate Your Vital Energy, Avery/Penguin Group USA, October, 2003 along with a companion DVD and video-produced by Swing Pictures, LLC. She has been a Tai Chi and Qigong practitioner since 1974 and Director of the Red Bank Acupuncture and Wellness Center (healing4u.com) since 1988. Shoshanna is Ambassador and the first woman President of the National Qigong Association (nqa.org) and currently serves as an Editorial Adviser for Body & Soul Magazine. She is also Chairperson of the New Jersey Acupuncture Examining Board, producer of annual women wellness conferences (caringwomen.com) and co-author of Feeling Light: The Holistic Solution to Permanent Weight Loss and Wellness Avon Books, 1997.
