

Session 6: Working with Fear and the Head Center

Each Enneagram type responds to fear with a different breath pattern. We can learn to be with the sensation of fear without our automatic nervous system response by staying grounded, being fully present with the sensations in the body and using the breath practices below:

Breath Patterns for Enneagram

(from Peter O'Hanrahan, www.EnneagramWork.com)

Head Center Types

Type 5 - Expand inhale

Focus on slowly, expanding the inhale and deepening your breath. At first you may feel uncomfortable or even anxious, but take it one step, one breath at a time learning to tolerate the increased sensation in the chest with continued practice.

You will increase your capacity for vitality. Breathing more deeply into the belly will develop your physical groundedness. Breathing more fully into the chest will open up space for both your personal feelings and your empathy with more possibility of a connection with others.

Type 6 - full inhale and exhale

Take slow, deep breaths and stretch the actual muscle of your diaphragm, then release the exhale as much as possible.

It's important to notice when your alarm system is activated for the fight, flight, or freeze response. Breathing into the belly will help restore calm and reduce anxiety. Allow pleasurable sensations to build.

Breathing into the chest will provide more energy to handle difficulties and challenges when necessary. But this needs to be balanced and completed with a complete slow exhale.

When you find yourself thinking about problems or worries, and holding your breath, return to the practice of steady breathing.

Type 7 - Type 7 - complete exhale

Breathe into your belly, notice physical sensation in your lower body, and feel your feet on the ground. Imagine you are extending roots down into the earth.

When you notice you have left your body for the pleasures (or worries) of the mind, practice dropping back down to your belly and feet.

At first you may find that you can only do this for a few moments, but over time you will be able to hold an embodied state longer.

Heart Center Types -

Type 2 - full inhale/exhale

Bring your attention inside by following the physical sensation of your breath. Notice what is happening. For a few moments, try not to think about anyone else and keep your focus on yourself. Practice taking slow, full breaths down into the belly.

Send your energy down into your legs and feet in order to establish your contact with the ground. If you start to feel overwhelmed, bring your attention back out and notice things in your physical environment. You can also get up and move around a bit. When you are with other people, practice coming back to your own breathing and internal sensations.

Type 3 - Full slow exhale

Take a few moments (or longer) to follow the sensation of your breath. Focus on breathing deeply into the belly rather than the chest. It's important to soften your assertive stance and spread the energy around your body. Try to surrender as much as possible to the exhalation of the breath, letting yourself relax and let go. This practice is not so much about doing, but simply allowing the rhythms of the body. Here the goal is to feel the life force inside yourself without moving forward to accomplish anything. This will open up space for both your emotions and your emotional intelligence.

Type 4 - Balanced breathing

Focus on a balance between breathing in and breathing out. If you have a strong Three wing, you are likely to build up energy in your chest and hold back on the exhale. So practice taking slow, deep breaths and letting go on the exhale to release tension in the chest and diaphragm. If you have a strong Five wing, you may not be taking in enough air, so practice breathing into your chest (as well as your belly) to build more energy. Whatever your predominant wing, the goal is to access calm, steady breathing that does not over-charge your system but which can be contained inside the body.

Body Types

Type 8 - Soft belly breathing

Focus on managing your breath as appropriate to the situation at hand. Avoid "powering up" with chest breathing as an automatic response. Instead, practice breathing into your belly to calm down and relax (like taking ten slow breaths when you find yourself getting angry).

Before you react to a situation follow your breath and tune into what you are feeling and sensing on the inside. This pause will help you be less excessive and more flexible. When you have "big energy" in your body, practice relaxing fully on the exhale, letting go of control for moments at a time.

Type 9 - Complete inhale

Use conscious breath practice to tune into your body, your feelings and your intuition. There is important information and guidance close at hand. Being in touch with your own internal experience will also help create boundaries. You will know better what you want and need instead of simply going along with others.

Practice breathing into your chest to increase your physical energy and vitality. Resist the tendency to lower your energy level by belly breathing or by dispersing your energy through non-essential tasks, talking, or consuming food, TV, etc.

Type 1 - Full complete breaths

The key for type one is relaxing the diaphragm. Try going slow and steady on the inhale, gently stretching the diaphragm and rib cage. Then let go on the exhale as best you can, without pushing or holding back. If you experience anxiety, try to spread energy and sensation around the body. Or switch to slow breathing in the belly, not breathing up into the chest. If anxiety persists, practice the "counter-anxiety breath" described in this article. You can also try making movements or sounds that help you "shake out" and loosen up.

Wonder Questions for Working with our Avoidances:

- I wonder if I can meet this avoidance from my grounded loving presence?
- What if I've already survived and there is no need to fear this avoidance?
- What if this avoidance contains my own life force energy?
- I wonder what I would need to believe to let go of this belief?
- What if its not that overwhelming? What if there is nothing to fear?

Compassionate Inquiry:

If you are feeling resistance to allowing the avoidance to be there and make contact with it, you can inquire: what does this resistance provide that you think you need?

What's keeping you from dropping deeper into your essence and allowing all of your experience?

What's it like, in body, heart, and mind if you allow your direct experience to be exactly as it is?