

Hyperventilation breathing techniques

The use of persistent fast or deep breathing (hyperventilation) to generate energy can be a dangerous practice if either we have a wrong understanding or if we do not practice correctly.

In terms of understanding, I do not believe that these techniques remove physical blocks to emotions, as many therapists claim. These techniques generate or recreate the states of mind experienced when the whole body-mind system has a considerably raised level of arousal. We are turning on the alarm systems of the mind in the absence of outside stress. This can be initially confusing to the mind, but if we understand that this is what we are doing, we can raise our state of arousal when we need to without believing in the content of mind generated. This will make our mental reactions less disturbing and they will gradually subside.

We also need to see clearly that what we are doing is stimulating the mind and body rather than generating energy. It could perhaps be likened to the use of caffeine – it is not the case that energy is actually added to your system, but you do get a bit fired up which could be useful. With this in perspective then, we understand that we need to learn also how to relax the system not to go on to over-drive.

Furthermore, it is not the case that our emotions are stuck in our bodies, we merely experience many of them there. They are stuck in our minds – in our memories and perceptions.

We also need to be careful to practice correctly and not induce a chronic over-breathing pattern and hence generate anxiety or even panic attacks in the mind. So the deep breathing should be followed by a return to a normal shallow breathing pattern.

Considering all the problems associated with these techniques I would be careful with them.

I offer this for your reflection.

Ajahn Kalyāno (ex psychologist and research physiotherapist)
<http://www.openthesky.co.uk>