

Ep. #351 - Extending the Exhale



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With your host:

Susi Hately

[From Pain to Possibility](#) with Susi Hately

Introduction (00:00.00)

You are listening to From Pain To Possibility with Susi Hatelly. You'll hear Susi's best ideas on how to reduce or even eradicate your pain, and learn how to listen to your body when it whispers so you don't have to hear it scream. And now here's your host, Susi Hatelly.

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Welcome and welcome back. I'm really glad that you're here today because I wanna walk you through a short lengthening-the-exhale practice. It's a shorty, less than 10 minutes, but it could have a significant impact on your body and your mind. Lengthening the exhale is known to activate the parasympathetic system and can also support HRV. Now, from a felt sense and receptively, a lot of people, when they lengthen their exhale, just feel lighter and more settled – down regulated, more easy – and they realize just how heightened they were previously. Maybe you were in a wired, wired state, and this can help take the edge off that wired or vigilant state. So let's get into it.

Susi (01:13.28)

And as I said, this is a short practice, so it's easy for you to come back to when you need to explore a practice to help you find that settled sense of ease. So let's begin with just noticing yourself breathing... and feeling your inhalation and your exhalation. And notice where you actually feel it. If you're someone who at this moment is feeling like you are wired, or you're really heightened, or you're in a vigilant kind of mode, you'll notice your breath in a certain pattern, and while every person's pattern is a little bit different, the tendency, though, from my clients and what they tell me—which might resonate with you—is it's kind of caught in the rib cage, or you might even feel like you're not really in your body, like there's a sort of an ethereal type of numbness that's in you that you can't really quite name. It just doesn't feel like your home.

But even so, where do you feel your breath? Like, do you feel it coming in through your nostrils and your exhale? Are you breathing out your nostrils? Or even, you might find that you're breathing out your mouth right now. The key is just to tune yourself to where you feel the breath now.

Do you feel any breath moving your rib cage or your belly?

So we're orienting your focus to where the breath is moving in you now.

Susi (03:18.14)

And now, let's watch your breath in terms of its length. So watch the breath on the inhale and watch the breath on the exhale. You don't have to count; you can just sit there and notice the general length of the inhale and the exhale. If it's helpful to count—inhaling 1, 2, 3, however many—if that helps, go for it, but you don't have to.

It's more that you've got a sense of what the length is, whether you number them or not.

You might even wanna notice the quality of your breath. Does it feel slim, full, cool, warm, ratchety?

Or really, I don't know... not really there?

And notice if there's anything different between the inhale and the exhale.

This is all about helping you to come home initially and to have a sense of what the baseline is. Just sometimes coming back to this experience can help take the edge off of vigilance or wiredness.

Susi (04:56.09)

Okay, so now let's focus on the exhale and allow your breath to slow down just a bit and lengthen just a bit.

Now, sometimes people will hold their throat, and that's what will cause their exhale to lengthen. Do your best to not add tension or grip or holding the throat or gripping your jaw. Try to make it happen from simply slowing the breath down. And that lengthening may be like a half a count. And as you lengthen, notice what's happening in your body, in your mind.

And as you continue this lengthening process—staying within the foundation of ease, of course—notice what happens with your inhale as a result of the lengthening of your exhale. In a sense, your inhale is staying passive, right? Like you're just going with the inhale; you're not really focusing on it. But nonetheless, the inhale responds to what happens with the exhale.

And often what people notice is that the inhale also lengthens or deepens. It doesn't always happen, but just tune into what's occurring in response to you slowing down and/or lengthening that exhalation.

Susi (08:03.66)

Alrighty, let's take this for two more cycles. And I'm assuming that you're continuing only if you feel ease, that you're not if tension is growing.

And when you finish that second cycle, then let the technique go and allow for whatever the normal breath is now to emerge.

You can come back to this practice at any time. If you're beginning with breath techniques, I recommend that you keep to less than five minutes for a practice. And of course, if any tension increases, any lightheadedness, any pelvic floor gripping, anything of that sort, to stop the practice.

And if it feels good—tune into truly noticing if it feels good—and you can always lengthen it by about a 10% length each time you practice. But be really honest with yourself. Trust in what

your body is saying and follow your body, because truly, what's internal to you interoceptively and proprioceptively—whatever that is that you sense—that's really good information to follow. So do follow your body's wisdom.

I hope you've enjoyed this practice. Until next time. Have a great time with it.

Susi (10:06.72)

Hey, if you've enjoyed this practice and you enjoy listening to this podcast and you're wanting more of my support in growing your skill as a yoga teacher or as a yoga student, I've got two opportunities for you. The first is in January; I'm running another round of the therapeutic yoga for shoulders and hips class, and you can learn all about it over at **functionalsynergy.com/shoulderships**. And that's 12 weeks of working directly with me to support how your body moves, to reduce and eliminate pain, and also to gain strength. If you're a teacher and you wanna build your skill and gain some mastery at helping people to reduce and eliminate physical pain, I would love to support you through our Therapeutic Yoga Intensive. And that's happening this April, and you can read more about that program at **functionalsynergy.com/intensive**.