The connection of Breath to beauty and wellness

Breathing



Hello and welcome to week 258, thank you for all your support and feedback, we are very grateful for your visits to the blog from all of us at Isabel’s Beauty Blog.In this post we are sharing information on Breathing, We often get asked why do you have posts about health concerns, nutrition and spiritual matters, it is very a simple answer actually, for us it is a

connection of body, mind and spirit that we all share and there is not doubt in our minds about it. I grew up with that knowledge and in the history of the planet these facts are well documented, with that said, it is commonsense if you think about that if you are not happy it definitely shows in our overall looks, even when we are extreme beauties, the unhappy attitude won't really take us far when we have imbalances either internally or externally, there is something about that that is not so beautiful won't you agree? So breathing is one of those facts that is imperative to address. In Chinese Medicine the lungs rule skin!! so there is a great reason to keep the respiratory system in top shape. Posture plays a great roll on breathing and incorrect posture is not very beautiful, so as you can see the overall balance is what keeps our external and internal beauty in shape. Enjoy the post and remember to share with family and friends, we wish you health, happiness and ideal wealth.

What Controls Your Breathing?

According to http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hlw/controls

At the base of your brain is a respiratory control center that controls your breathing. This center sends ongoing signals down your spine and to the muscles involved in breathing.

These signals ensure your breathing muscles contract (tighten) and relax regularly. This function allows your breathing to

happen automatically, without you being aware of it, is pretty amazing don’t you think aside from al the work that the body does with us running around all day!.

To a limited degree, you can change your breathing rate, such as by breathing faster or holding your breath. Your emotions also can change your breathing. For example, being scared or angry can affect your breathing pattern, thinking, crying, excited etc,.

Your breathing will change depending on how active you are and the condition of the air around you. For example, you need to breathe more often when you do physical activity. In contrast, your body needs to restrict how much air you breathe, if the air contains irritants or toxins to protect us from it.

To adjust your breathing and changing needs, your body has many sensors in your brain, blood vessels, muscles, and lungs.

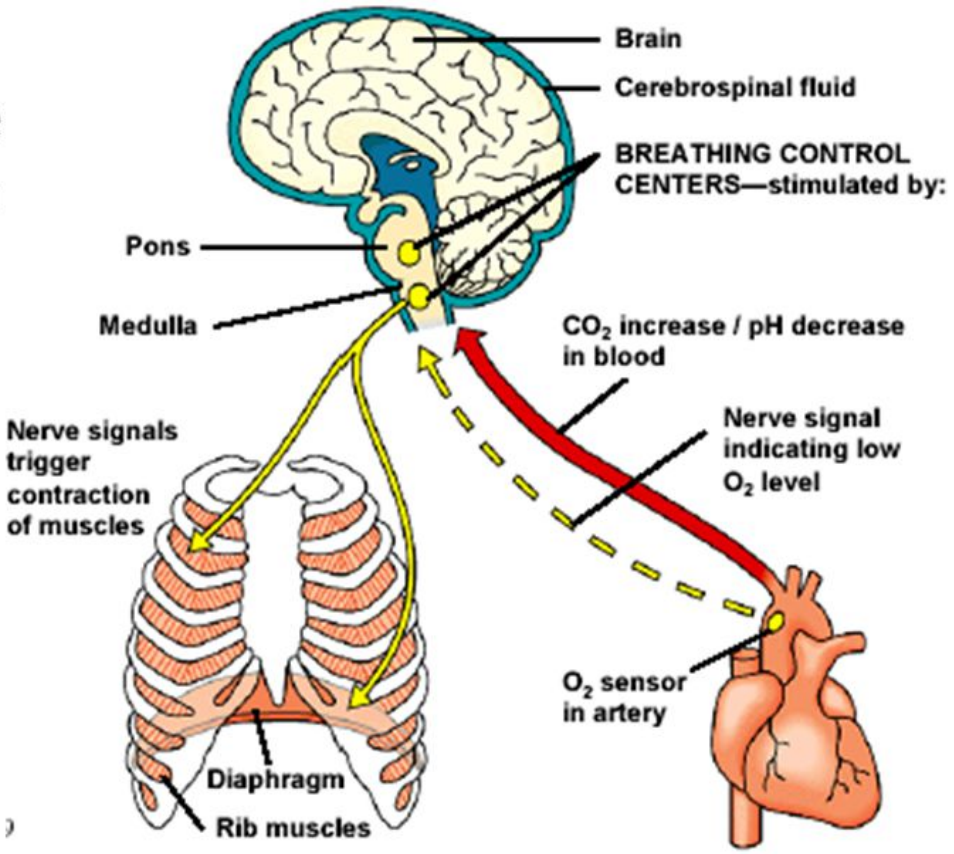
Sensors in the brain and in two major blood vessels (the carotid (ka-ROT-id) artery and the aorta) major blood vessels,detect carbon dioxide or oxygen levels in your blood and change your breathing rate as needed, it is just amazing what the body does and we are not even aware of its work.

Sensors in the airways detect lung irritants. The sensors can trigger sneezing or coughing. In people who have asthma, the sensors may cause the muscles around the airways in the lungs to contract and tighten. This makes the airways smaller.

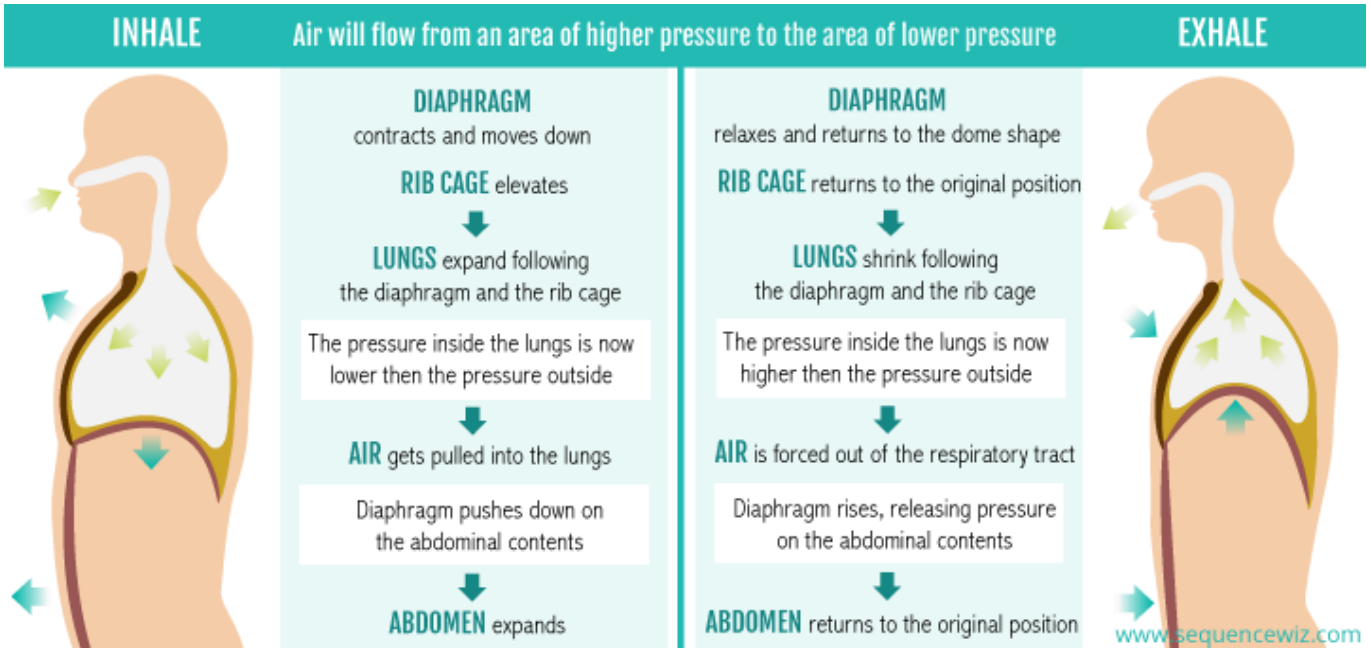
Sensors in the alveoli (air sacs) can detect fluid buildup in the lung tissues. These sensors are thought to trigger rapid, shallow breathing.

Sensors in your joints and muscles detect movement of your arms or legs. These sensors may play a role in increasing your breathing rate when you’re physically active.

Control cente in the brain regulate breathing



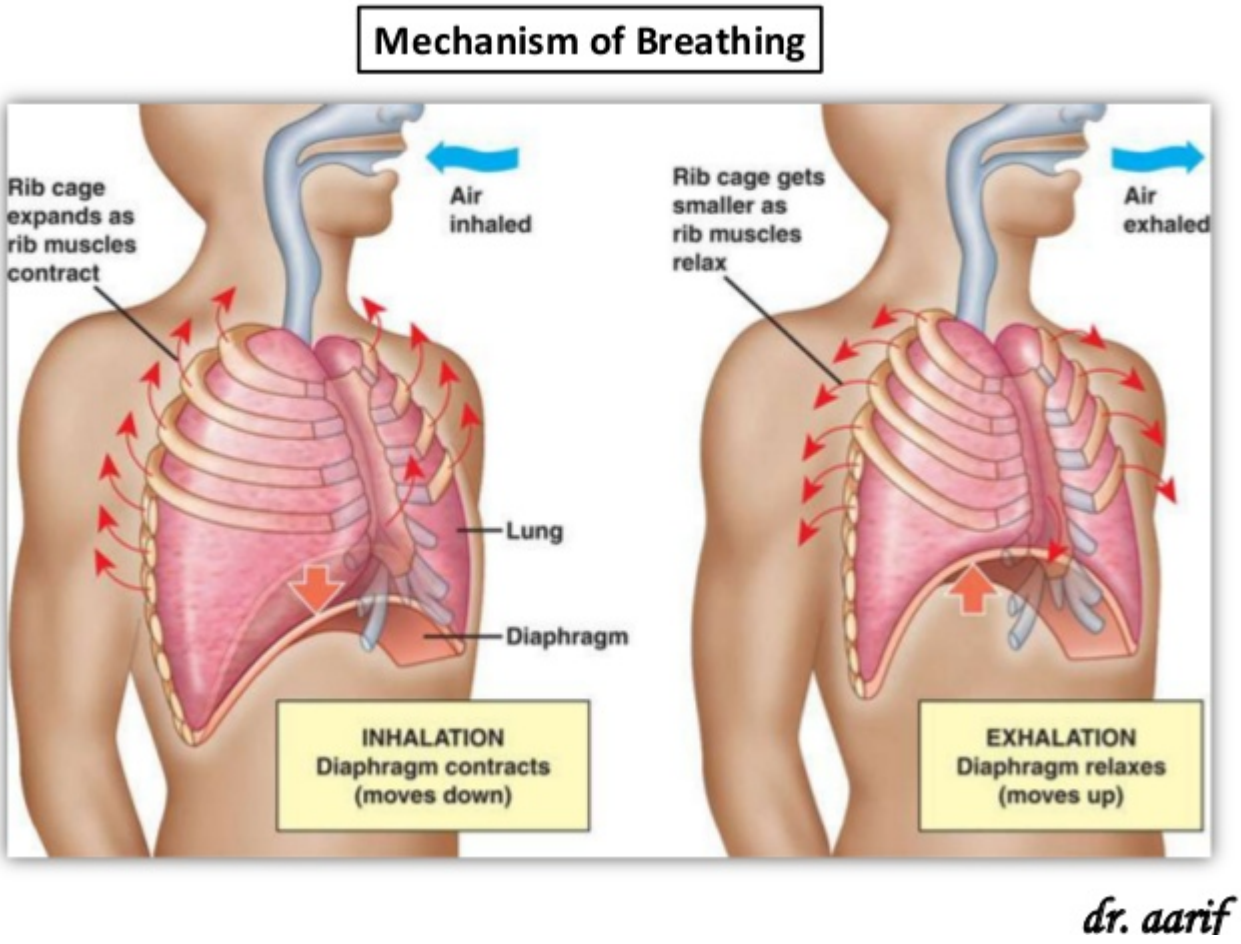
What Happens When You Breathe?



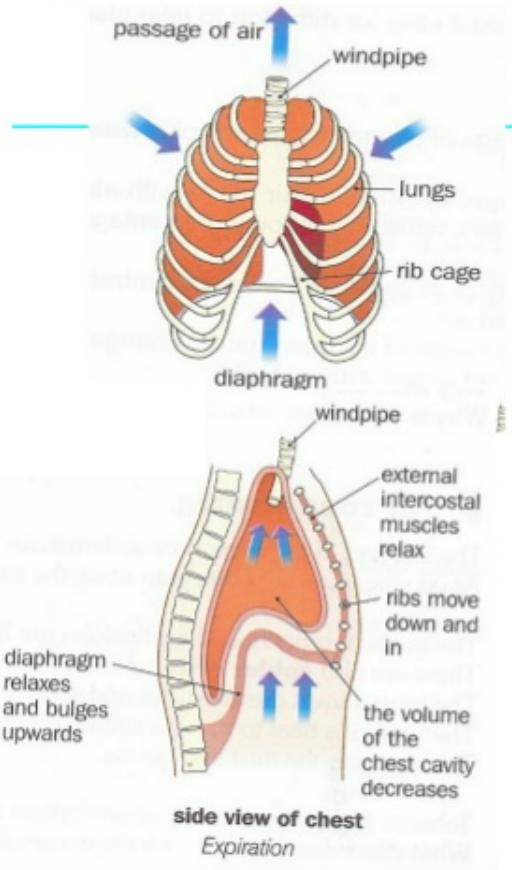
Breathing In (Inhalation)

When you breathe in, or inhale, your diaphragm contracts (tightens) and moves downward. This increases the space in your chest cavity, into which your lungs expand. The intercostal muscles between your ribs also help enlarge the chest cavity to contain your different amounts of air inhaled. They contract to pull your rib cage both upward and outward when you inhale.

As your lungs expand, air is sucked in through your nose or mouth. The air travels down your windpipe and into your lungs. After passing through your bronchial tubes, the air finally reaches and enters the alveoli (air sacs).



The mechanism of Expiration (exhalation)

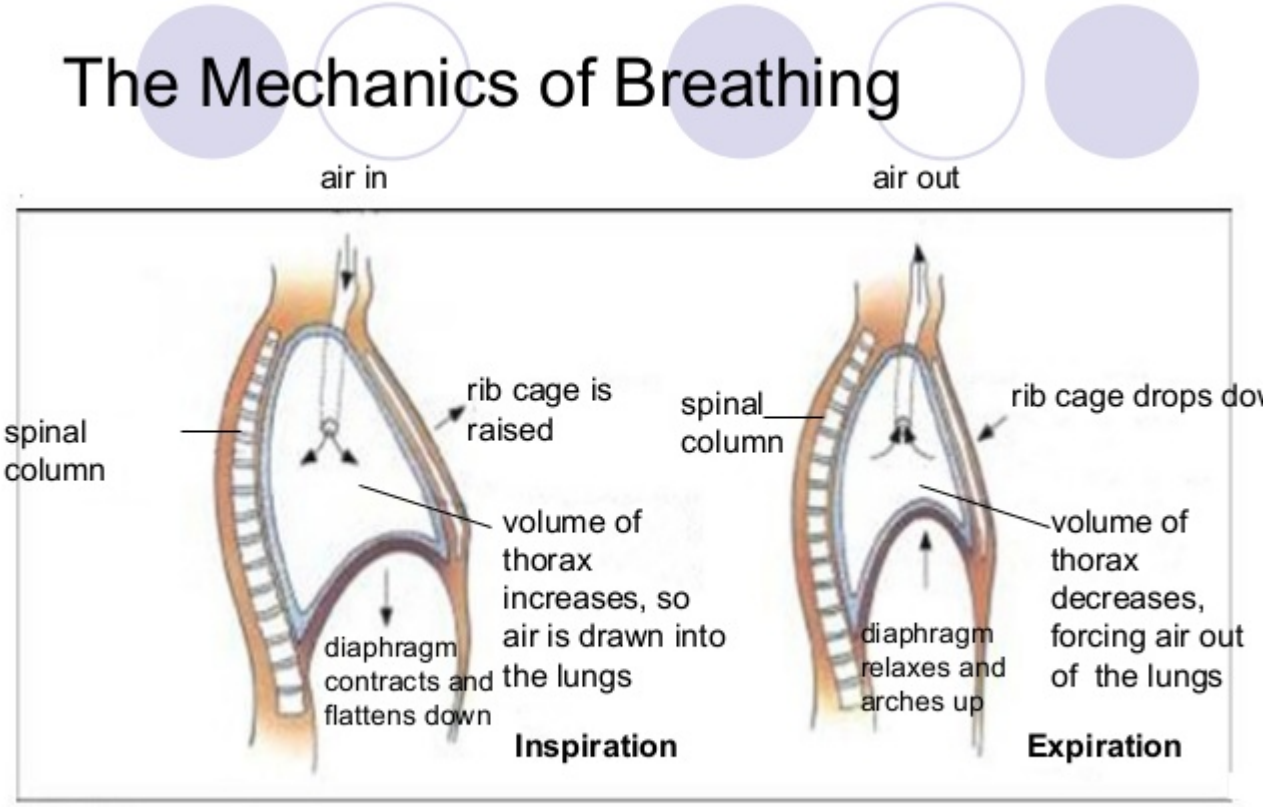


- **Describe the mechanisms involved in expiration**
- The diaphragm and **external** intercostal muscles relax. The **internal** intercostal muscles contract. So the rib cage moves downwards and inwards. The diameter and length of the thorax decreases.
- Overall, the volume of the thorax decreases which results in an increase in pressure in the lungs compared to atmospheric pressure.
- Air leaves the lungs – which deflate.
- The elastic fibres between the alveoli recoil and the alveoli return to their natural shape.

Through the very thin walls of the alveoli, oxygen from the air passes to the surrounding capillaries (blood vessels). A red blood cell protein called hemoglobin (HEE-muh-glow-bin) helps move oxygen from the air sacs to the blood.

At the same time, carbon dioxide moves from the capillaries into the air sacs. The gas has traveled in the bloodstream from the right side of the heart through the pulmonary artery.

Oxygen-rich blood from the lungs is carried through a network of capillaries to the pulmonary vein. This vein delivers the oxygen-rich blood to the left side of the heart. The left side of the heart pumps the blood to the rest of the body. There, the oxygen in the blood moves from blood vessels into surrounding tissues.



Side view of movements in the thorax during inspiration and expiration

Breathing Out (Exhalation)

When you breathe out, or exhale, your diaphragm relaxes and moves upward into the chest cavity. The intercostal muscles between the ribs also relax to reduce the space in the chest

cavity.

As the space in the chest cavity gets smaller, air rich in carbon dioxide is forced out of your lungs and windpipe, and then out of your nose or mouth.

Breathing out requires no effort from your body unless you have a lung disease or are doing physical activity. When you’re physically active, your abdominal muscles contract and push your diaphragm against your lungs even more than usual. This rapidly pushes air out of your lungs.

BREATHING BEGINS IN THE NOSE



When you own your breath, nobody can steal your peace.

Breathing is one of the basic human functions and yet it's the most powerful force that keeps us alive. When we focus on breath, we are at the source of our life.

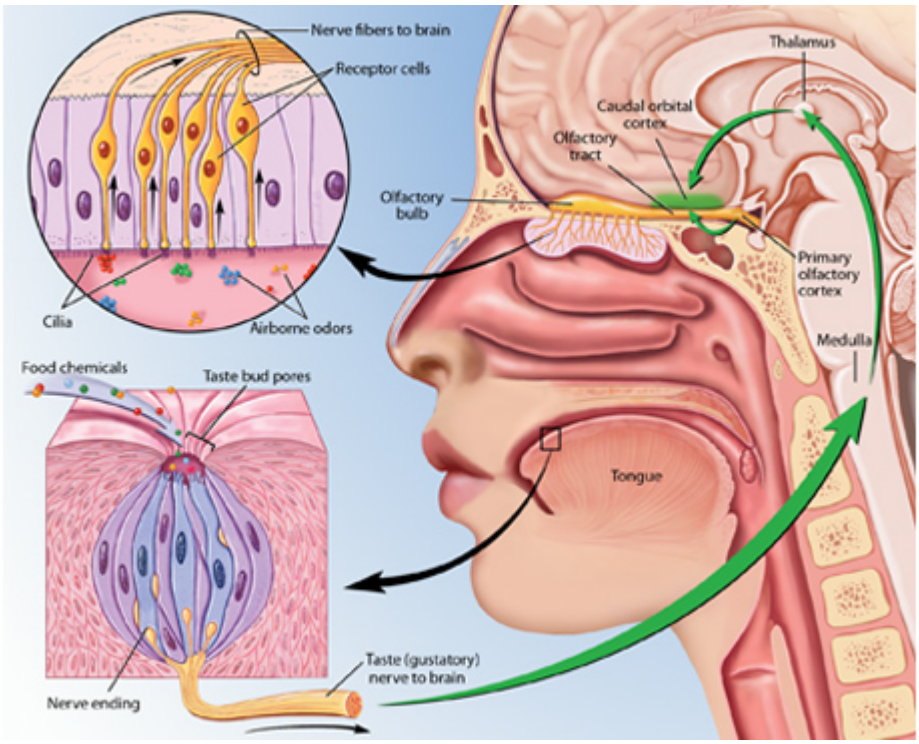
Breathing is at the source of all powers in human beings

Breathing connects our mind with the body. It helps us being in the rhythm of life. When our breathing isn't rhythmic, we fall apart.

According to: http://www.drstandley.com/bodysystems_respiratory.shtml

About 18 – 20 times a minute, you breathe in, keep in mind that this is an average count. When a doctor wants to know how are you breathing he or she puts his or her hand on your shoulder or back and looks at the clock, they are keeping track of how many times you breathe within one minute. This is how one of your vital signs is measured, called “respiration.”

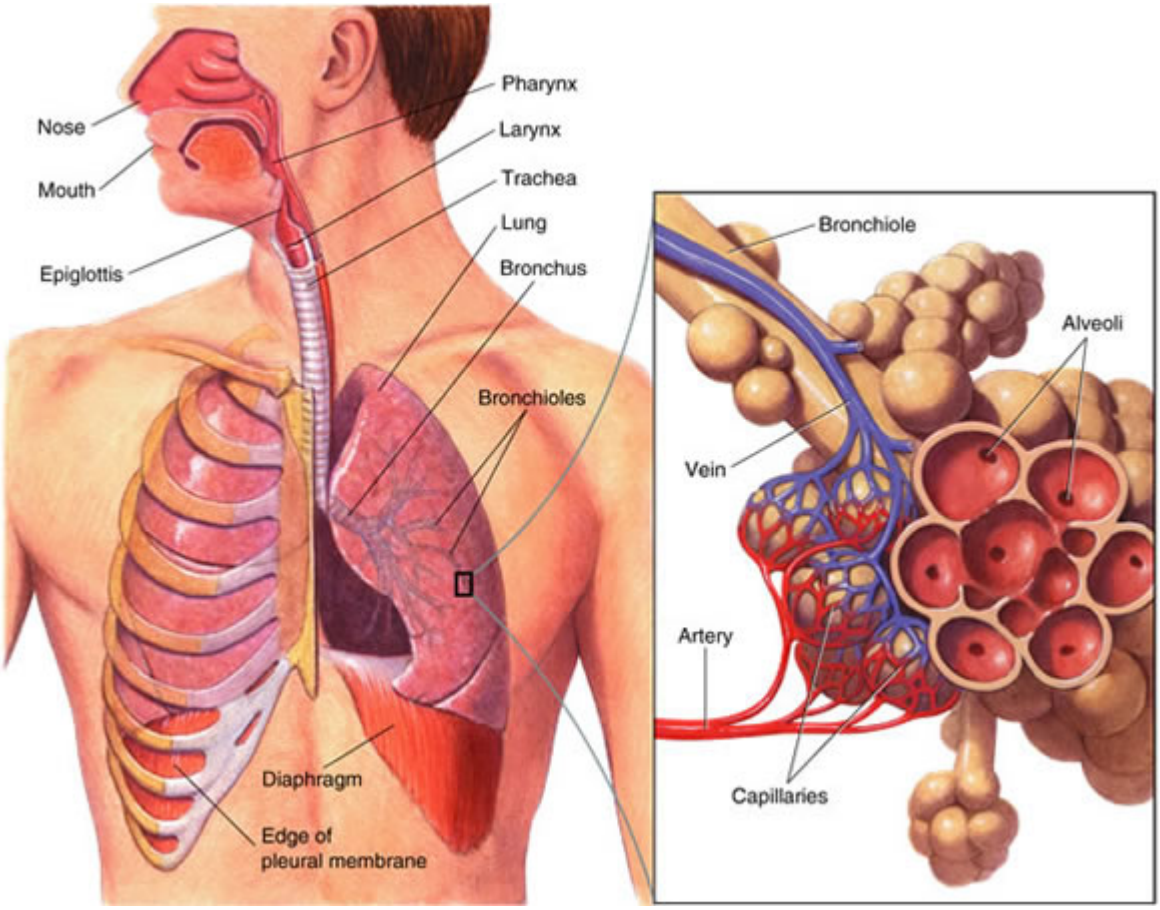
When you breathe, you inhale air and pass it through your nasal passages where the air is filtered, heated, moistened and enters the back of the throat. The esophagus (food tube) is located at the back of the throat and the trachea (windpipe) for air is located at the front of the throat. When you eat, a tiny flap called the “epiglottis” closes down to cover the windpipe so food won’t go down the wrong pipe. Here it is important to remember that breathing is meant to be done through the nose not the mouth for very specific biological reasons!.



WHAT ARE THOSE TINY AIR SACS FOR?

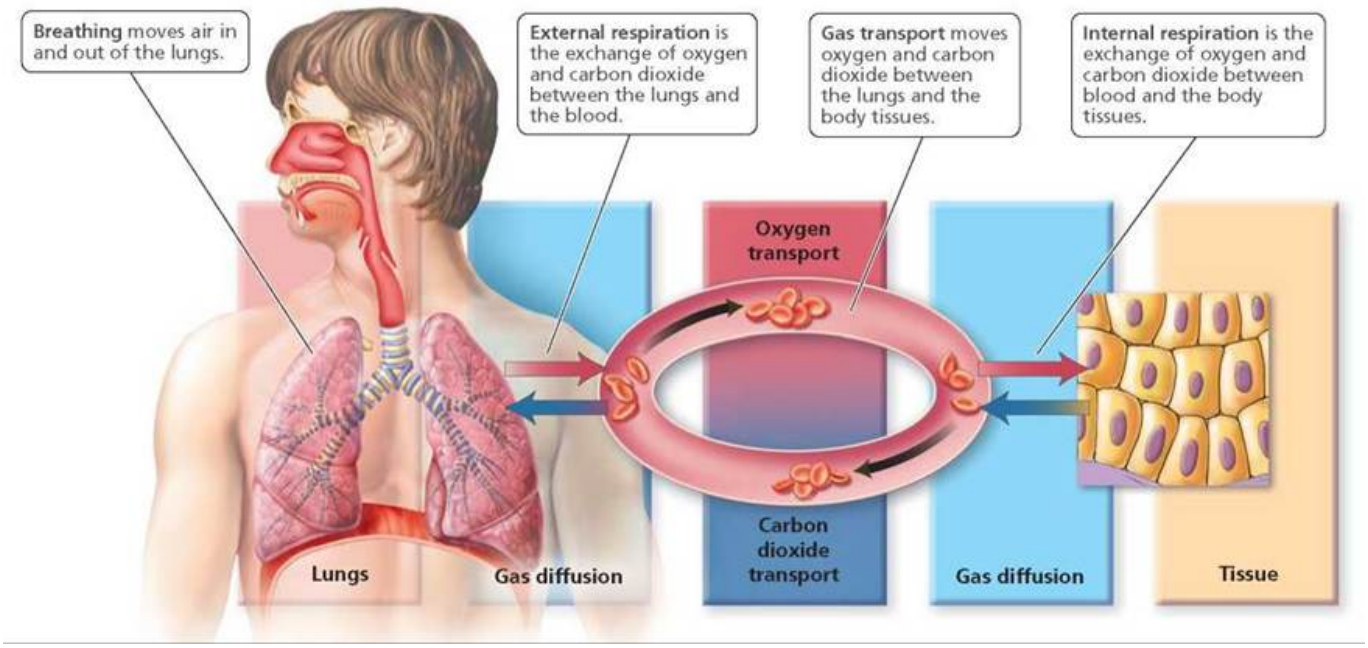
Air flows down through the windpipe, past the vocal cords (voice box), to where the lowest ribs meet the center of your chest. This is where your windpipe divides into two tubes which lead to each of the two lungs that fill most of your ribcage. Each lung feels just like a sponge. Inside each of

your sponge-like lungs, there are tubes called bronchi which branch into even smaller tubes just like the branches of a tree. At the end of these tubes are millions of itty bitty bubbles or sacs called alveoli. If you were to spread out flat all of the air sacs in the lungs of an adult, the tissue would cover an area about the third of the size of a tennis court.



HOW DOES THE OXYGEN/WASTE EXCHANGE WORK?

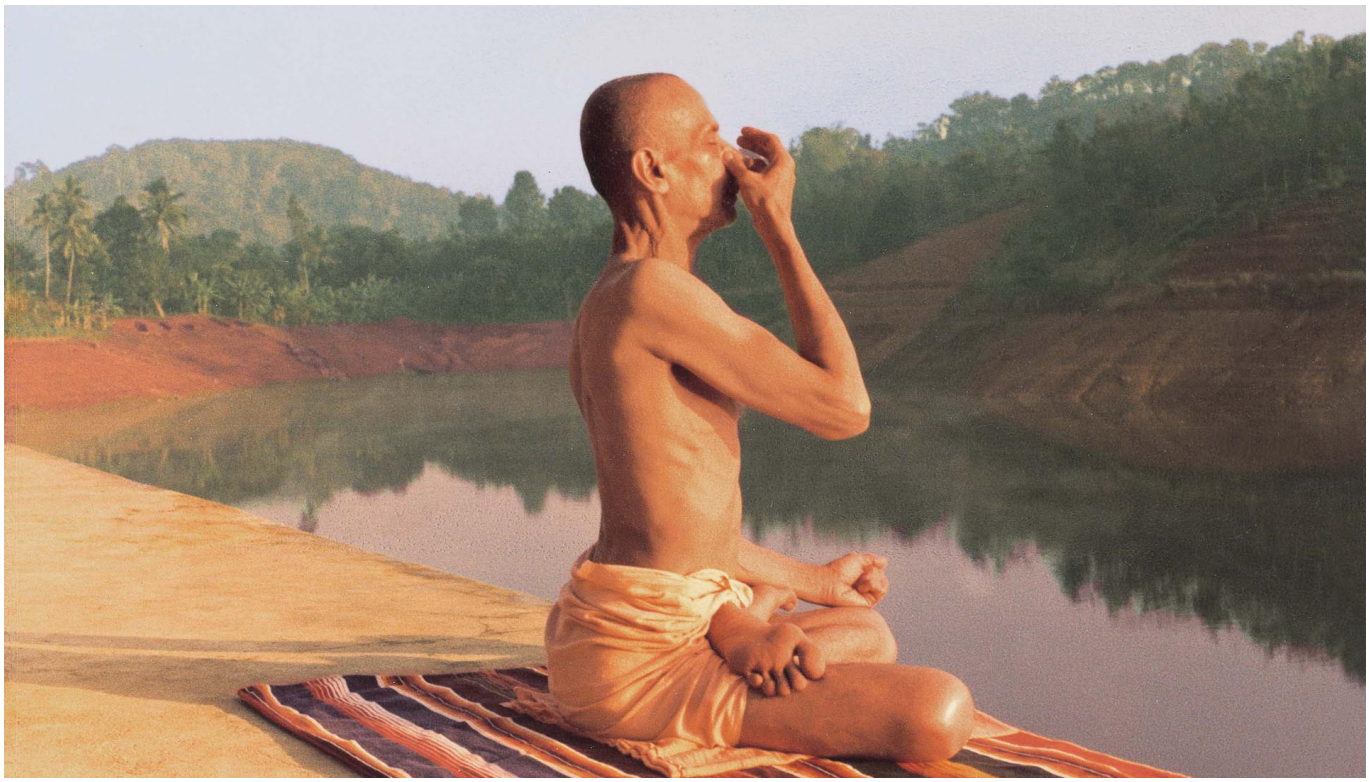
This phenomenal exchange works with the assistance of the red blood cells in your bloodstream. Your red blood cells are like boxcars on a railroad track. They will show up at the sacs at just the right time, ready to trade in old carbon dioxide that your body’s cells have made for some new oxygen you just breathed in. During this process, the red blood cells turn from purple to a sparkling red color as they start carrying the oxygen to ALL the cells in your body.



WHAT HAPPENS TO THE CARBON DIOXIDE?

The carbon dioxide (waste) that your body made and now can't use will go through the lungs, back up your windpipe and out with every single exhale. This is a chemical exchange of breathing in and out (inhalation/exhalation). This is an automatic process that you don't even have to think about. Unless of course, you smoke, then you'd be depriving ALL of your cells of oxygen.

Pranayama



What is Prana and Where Did Pranayamas Come From?

According to: http://www.artofliving.org/us-en/yoga/breathing-techniques/yoga-and-pranayama

In the ancient Indian system of yoga they identified prana as the universal life force or energy which distinguishes the living from the dead, wow that is a checking point isn't it?, and flows through thousands of subtle energy channels they called 'nadis' and energy centers called 'chakras.'

These original yogic seers observed the power of the breath to increase one's prana and developed special breathing techniques to increase life energy, maintain health and create a calm, clear state of mind that is conducive for meditation.

Where do the sources of Prana come from?

We get prana from food, rest, breath and by being in a calm, happy frame of mind.

There is more prana in fresh foods than canned (it really relates to life force), frozen or stale foods. Similarly, vegetarian foods a said to be generally of high prana, while meat, being dead, is considered low or even negative prana, the fresher the source the more life in it, doesn't that make sense?.

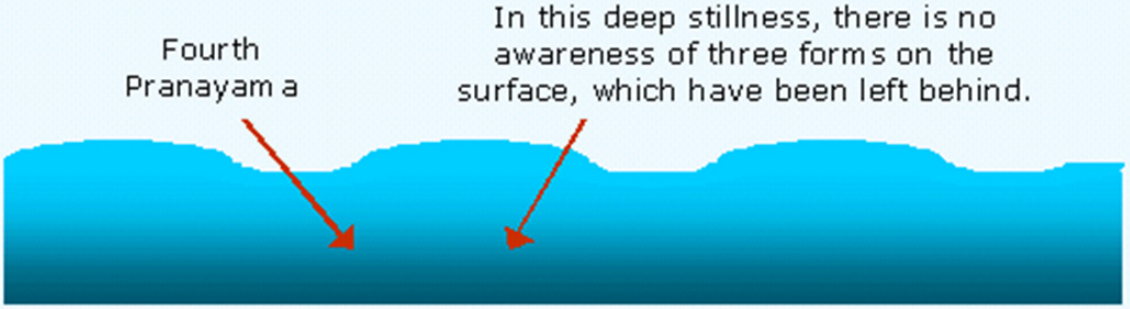
Sources of Prana can be found in fresh food than canned (it really relates to life force), frozen or stale foods. Similarly, vegetarian foods is said to be generally of high prana, while meat, being dead, is considered low or even negative prana, the fresher the source the more life in it, doesn't that make sense?.are And, as we will see in a moment, the way we breathe has a powerful effect on how we feel.

Four Aspects of Breath

First Three Aspects of Breath/Pranayama: There are three aspects to breathing or pranayama practices: 1) exhalation, 2) inhalation, and 3) the two transitions between them. These three are like the waves in an ocean, which have: 1) rising of waves, 2) falling of waves, and 3) the two transitions between them.



Fourth Pranayama: However, there is a fourth aspect of prana, the energy behind, or subtler than the gross breath. This is like diving deep into the ocean, deeper or beyond the three forms that are on the surface. This is the goal of all breathing practices, to enter into this fourth pranayama. It sets the stage for advanced meditation.



Yoga Sutras 2.51-2.52: The fourth pranayama is that continuous prana which surpasses, is beyond, or behind those others that operate in the exterior and interior realms or fields. Through that pranayama the veil of karmasheya (2.12) that covers the inner illumination or light is thinned, diminishes and vanishes.

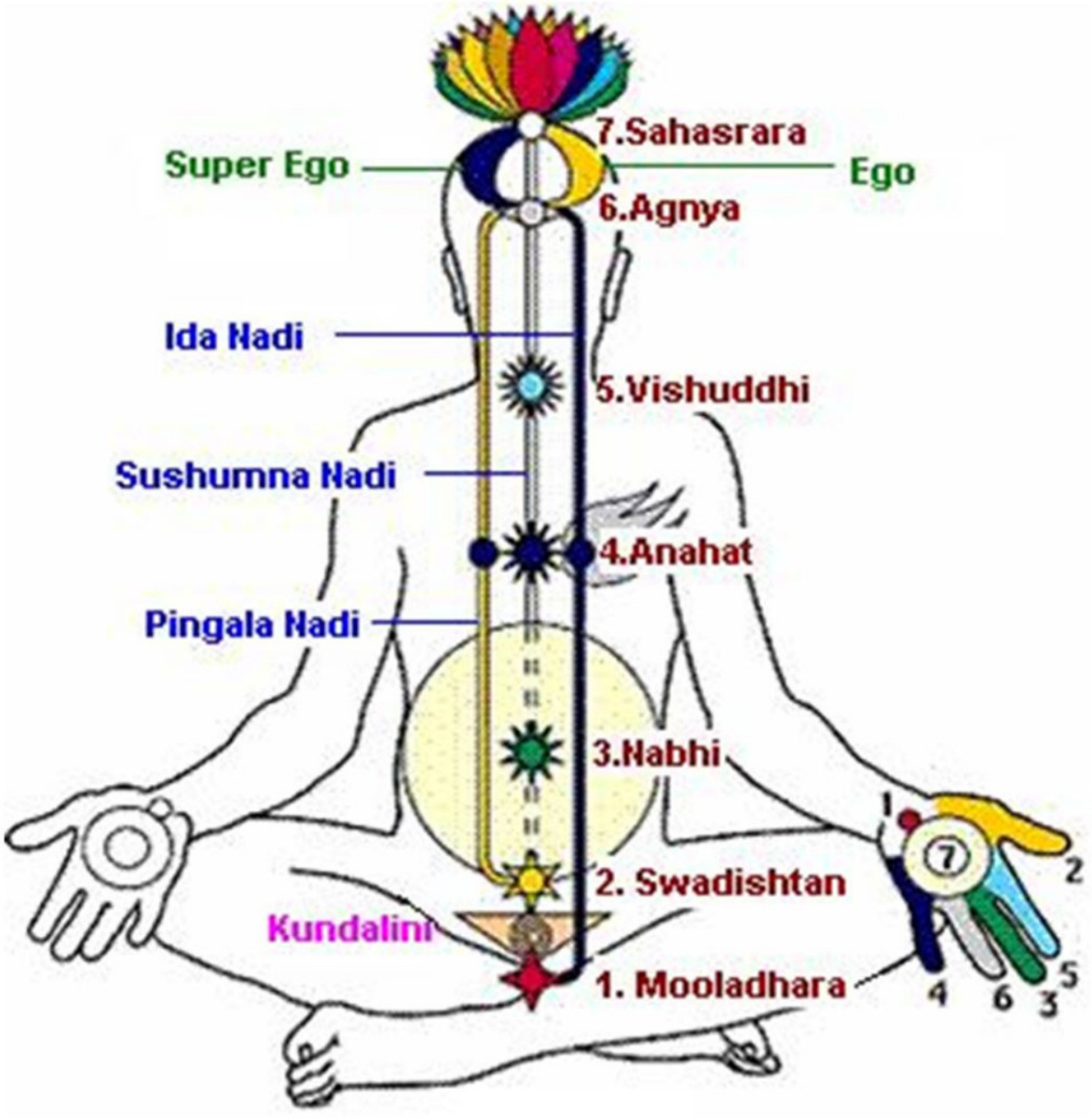
SwamiJ.com

The Effects of High and Low Prana

It was discovered thousands of years ago that the quantity and quality of prana and the way it flows through the nadis (subtle energy channels) determines one’s state of mind, if you notice when we are stressed we hold our breath and bread from the top of our chest instead of our lower lungs.

Due to lack of attention, the energy channels in the average person may be partially blocked, making the flow of prana broken and jerky. This results in increased worry, fear, uncertainty, conflict, tension and other negative emotions.

When the prana level is high and its flow is continuous, smooth and steady, then the mind is calm, positive and enthusiastic.


7.Sahasrara
Super Ego
Ego
6.Agnya
Ida Nadi
5.Vishuddhi
Sushumna Nadi
4.Anahat
Pingala Nadi
3.Nabhi
2. Swadishtan
Kundalini
1. Mooladhara
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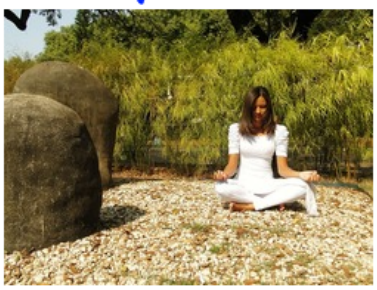
Breathing for Life: The Mind-Body Healing Benefits of Pranayama

From: http://www.chopra.com/ccl/breathing-for-life-the-mind-body-healing-benefits-of-pranayama

BENEFITS OF PRANAYAM

- RESPIRATORY- ELASTICITY OF LUNGS, ENHANCES VITAL CAPACITY, TONED RESPITATORY MUSCLES, SLOWER RESPIRATORY MUSCLES,
- CIRCULATORY- TONES THE HEART, DIAPHRAGM, REDUCES HEART RATE
- DIGESTIVE SYSTEM- MASSAGES LIVER, SPLEEN, PANCREAS, STOMACH

Pranayama Breathing:a Quick Definition



Pranayam is made up of two words Prana + Ayam.

Prana:

is the vital force present in whole cosmos.
We have been provided Prana, the supreme source of energy by the creator.
Proper utilisation of this free source of energy
can make remarkable changes to our physical and mental health,
vitality and self confidence. Prana is more subtle than air
and can be defined as the energy essence
that is within everything in the universe.

Ayama:

means to control or to give a rhythm or a definite flow.

In this sense Pranayama may be defined as a process and technique
through which vital energy can be stimulated and increased
and this brings about perfect control over the flow of Prana within the body.
Pranayama locks the scattering of pranic energy,
consolidates it at the centre of your body-mind complex
and laser-beams it to an intense awareness of the self.
In simple language Pranayam can be said to be: the right form
of breathing technique to control our energy.

The Chopra Center

by: Sheila Patel, M.D.

“For breath is life, and if you breathe well you will live long on earth.”
~Sanskrit proverb

Breath is essential to life. It is the first thing we do when we are born and the last thing we do when we leave. In between that time, we take about half a billion breaths more less every one is different. What we may not realize is that the mind, body, and breath are intimately connected and can influence each other in a very deep way. Our breathing is influenced by our thoughts, and our thoughts and physiology can be influenced by our breath. Learning to breathe consciously and with awareness can be a valuable tool in helping to restore balance in the mind and body.

Researchers have documented the benefits of a regular practice of simple, deep breathing which include:

- Reduced anxiety and depression
- Lower/stabilized blood pressure
- Increased energy levels
- Muscle relaxation
- Decreased feelings of stress and overwhelm
- Helps with sleep
- Helps maintain the structure that supports our body

In the medical community, there is a growing appreciation for the positive impact that deep breathing can have on the

physiology, both in the mind and the body. According to the research, many of these beneficial effects can be attributed to reducing the stress response in the body, by that reducing inflammation mentally and physically. To understand how this works, let’s look at the stress response in more detail.

Pranayama as a Tool to Counter Stress

When you experience stressful thoughts, your sympathetic nervous system triggers the body’s ancient fight-or-flight response, giving you a burst of energy to respond to the perceived danger. Your breathing becomes shallow and rapid, and you primarily breathe from the chest and not the lower lungs this action accelerates the heart beat influencing blood pressure, relating adrenaline now the Adrenal glands get compromised and so on. This can make you feel short of breath, which is a common symptom when you feel anxious or frustrated. At the same time, your body produces a surge of hormones such as cortisol and epinephrine (also known as adrenaline), which increase your blood pressure and pulse rate and put you in a revved up state of high alert the whole system is in alarm mode.

The Vagus nerve is a huge deal, and what activating this nerve does to the entire body system. We can activate this nerve with our breath, check the image below so you can get an idea how tremendous effect this nerve has on our wellbeing.



With deep breathing, you can reverse these symptoms instantly and create a sense of calm in your mind and body. When you breathe deeply and slowly, you activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which reverses the stress response in your body. Deep breathing stimulates the main nerve in the parasympathetic nervous system—the vagus nerve—slowing down

your heart rate, lowering your blood pressure, and calming your body and mind.

In addition, with deep breathing, you engage the abdominal muscles and diaphragm instead of the muscles in the upper chest and neck (when we spend long periods of time in stress mode or computer work etc. and we hold the breath in the paper region of our body we can definitely attribute a stiff neck resulting from this action). This conditioning of the respiratory muscles results in improved efficiency of oxygen exchange with every breath by allowing more air exchange to occur in the lower lungs. It also reduces strain on the muscles of the neck and upper chest, allowing these muscles to relax. In short, deep breathing is more relaxing and efficient, allowing higher volumes of oxygen to reach the body's cells and tissues.

As well as reversing the physical stress response in the body, deep breathing can help calm and slow down the emotional turbulence in the mind. Breathing can have an immediate effect on diffusing emotional energy so there is less reactivity to our emotions.

4 Deep Breathing Techniques

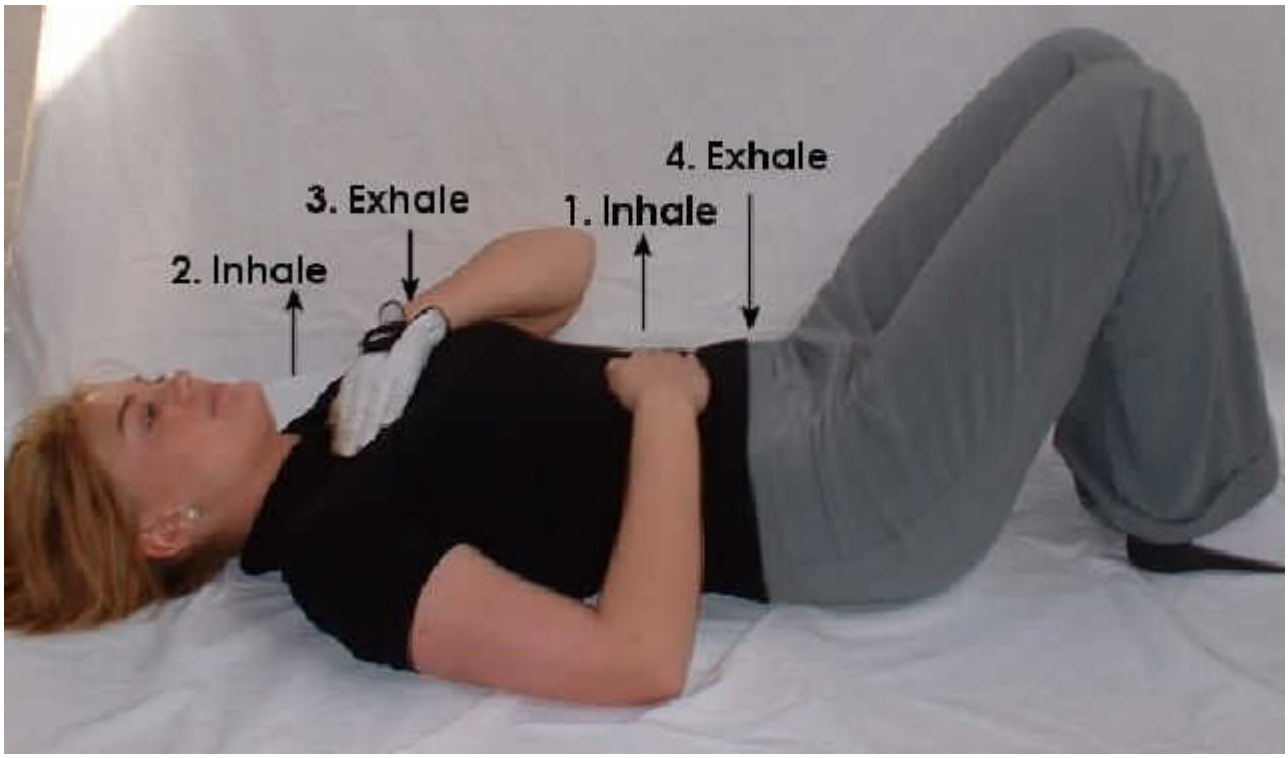
Beyond the practice of simple deep breathing, the ancient yogis described different types of rhythmic deep breathing

techniques that can have differing effects on the mind and body. In fact, many studies document the beneficial effects of yogic breathing in treating depression, anxiety, PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder), COPD (chronic destructive pulmonary disease), and asthma, aside from all the physiological benefits. There are also theories that support the notion that by slowing down and controlling the breath, we can improve our longevity.

The basis for all deep breathing practices originates in the science of yoga, specifically the branch of yoga known as pranayama. The word *pranayama* is derived from two Sanskrit words: *prana* (life force) and *yama* (control). By controlling the breath, you can influence every aspect of your life. You can train yourself to breathe in a way that has a positive influence on your health.

Each of the following simple yogic breathing techniques has specific effects on the mind-body physiology.

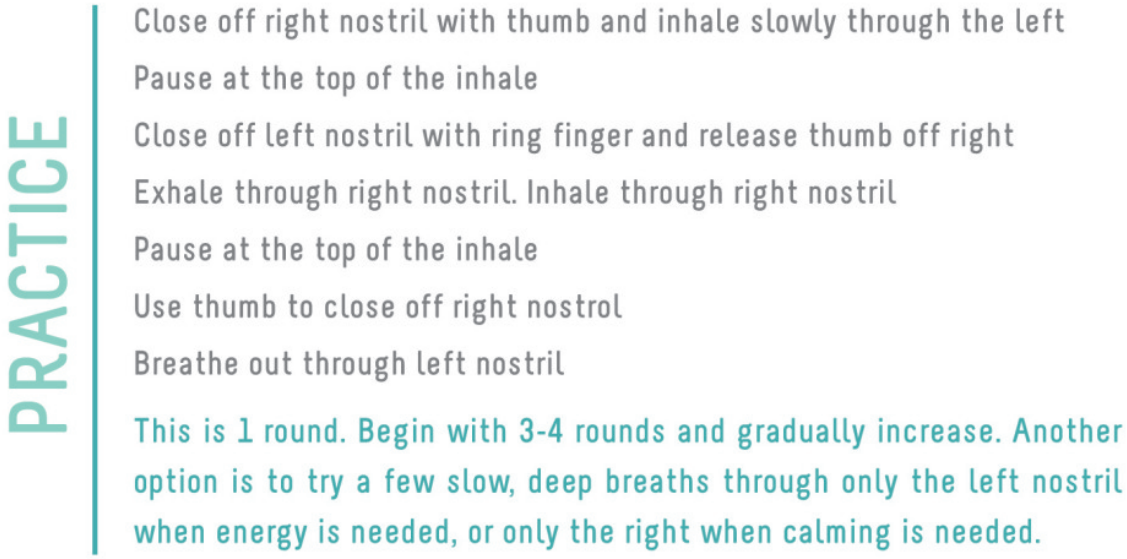
Complete Belly Breath


4. Exhale
3. Exhale
1. Inhale
2. Inhale

Place one hand on your belly, slowly relax your abdominal muscles, and inhale slowly through the nose, bringing air into the bottom of your lungs. You should feel your abdomen rise. This expands the lower parts of the lungs. Continue to inhale as your rib cage expands outward, and finally, the collar bones rise. At the peak of the inhalation, pause for a moment, then exhale gently from the top of your lungs to the bottom. At the end of exhalation, contract your abdominal muscles slightly to push residual air out of the bottom of your lungs.

Alternate Nostril Breathing





https://youtu.be/WxEqooqgCEs?list=PL4lXvdRDLPTW3tQ8dXFoXJf-XGFdUgqwL

When you are feeling anxious or ungrounded, practice Alternate Nostril Breathing, known as *Nadi Shodhana* in the yogic tradition. This will immediately help you feel calmer.

- Hold your right thumb over your right nostril and inhale deeply through your left nostril.
- At the peak of your inhalation, close off your left nostril with your fourth finger, lift your right thumb, and then exhale smoothly through your right nostril.
- After a full exhalation, inhale through the right nostril, closing it off with your right thumb at the peak of your inhalation, lift your fourth finger and exhale smoothly through your left nostril.
- Continue with this practice for 3 to 5 minutes, alternating your breathing through each nostril. Your breathing should be effortless, with your mind gently observing the inflow and outflow of breath.

Ocean's Breath

When you feel angry, irritated, or frustrated, try a cooling pranayama such as Ocean's Breath, or *Ujjayi* (pronounced *oo-jai*). This will immediately soothe and settle your mind.

- Take an inhalation that is slightly deeper than normal. With your mouth closed, exhale through your nose while constricting your throat muscles. If you are doing this correctly, you should sound like waves on the ocean.
- Another way to get the hang of this practice is to try exhaling the sound "*haaaaah*" with your mouth open. Now make a similar sound with your mouth closed, feeling the outflow of air through your nasal passages.
- Once you have mastered this on the outflow, use the same method for the inflow breath, gently constricting your throat as you inhale.

Energizing Breath

When you are feeling blue or sluggish, try Energizing Breath or *Bhastrika.* This will give you an immediate surge of energy and invigorate your mind.

- Begin by relaxing your shoulders and take a few deep, full breaths from your abdomen.
- Now start exhaling forcefully through your nose, followed by forceful, deep inhalations at the rate of one second per cycle. Your breathing is entirely from your diaphragm, keeping your head, neck, shoulders, and chest relatively still while your belly moves in and out.
- Start by doing a round of ten breaths, then breathe naturally and notice the sensations in your body. After 15 to 30 seconds, begin the next round with 20 breaths. Finally, after pausing for another 30 seconds, complete a third round of 30 breaths. Beginners are advised to take a break between rounds.

Although Bhastrika is a safe practice, stay tuned in to your body during the process. If you feel light-headed or very uncomfortable, stop for a few moments before resuming in a less intense manner.

Contraindications: Do not practice Bhastrika if you are pregnant or have uncontrolled hypertension, epilepsy/seizures, panic disorder, hernia, gastric ulcer, glaucoma, or vertigo. Use caution if there is an underlying lung disease.

A regular daily practice of deep breathing is one of the best tools for improving your health and well-being. Performing one of these breath techniques twice daily for only three to five minutes can produce long-term benefits. You can also use them any time you are feeling stressed or notice that your breathing has become constricted. By training your body with a regular practice of deep breathing, you will begin to breathe

more effectively even without concentrating on it.

“Healing is every breath.” ~Thich Nhat Hanh

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Three Breathing Exercises

Andrew Weil, M.D.

from: http://www.drweil.com/drw/u/ART00521/three-breathing-exercises.html

"Practicing regular, mindful breathing can be calming and energizing and can even help with stress-related health problems ranging from panic attacks to digestive disorders." Andrew Weil, M.D.

Since breathing is something we can control and regulate, it is a useful tool for achieving a relaxed and clear state of mind. I recommend three breathing exercises to help relax and reduce stress: The Stimulating Breath, The 4-7-8 Breathing Exercise (also called the Relaxing Breath), and Breath Counting. Try each of these breathing teachniques and see how they affect your stress and anxiety levels.

Exercise 1:

The Stimulating Breath (also called the Bellows Breath)

The Stimulating Breath is adapted from yogic breathing techniques. Its aim is to raise vital energy and increase alertness.

- Inhale and exhale rapidly through your nose, keeping your mouth closed but relaxed. Your breaths in and out should be equal in duration, but as short as possible. This is a noisy breathing exercise.
- Try for three in-and-out breath cycles per second. This produces a quick movement of the diaphragm, suggesting a

bellows. Breathe normally after each cycle.

- Do not do for more than 15 seconds on your first try. Each time you practice the Stimulating Breath, you can increase your time by five seconds or so, until you reach a full minute.

If done properly, you may feel invigorated, comparable to the heightened awareness you feel after a good workout. You should feel the effort at the back of the neck, the diaphragm, the chest and the abdomen. Try this diaphragmatic breathing exercise the next time you need an energy boost and feel yourself reaching for a cup of coffee.

Watch a video of Dr. Weil demonstrating the Stimulating Breath.

Exercise 2:
The 4-7-8 (or Relaxing Breath) Exercise

This breathing exercise is utterly simple, takes almost no time, requires no equipment and can be done anywhere. Although you can do the exercise in any position, sit with your back straight while learning the exercise. Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue just behind your upper front teeth, and keep it there through the entire exercise. You will be exhaling through your mouth around your tongue; try pursing your lips slightly if this seems awkward.

- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four.

- Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count ofeight.
- This is one breath. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.

Note that you always inhale quietly through your nose and exhale audibly through your mouth. The tip of your tongue stays in position the whole time. Exhalation takes twice as long as inhalation. The absolute time you spend on each phase is not important; the ratio of 4:7:8 is important. If you have trouble holding your breath, speed the exercise up but keep to the ratio of 4:7:8 for the three phases. With practice you can slow it all down and get used to inhaling and exhaling more and more deeply.

This exercise is a natural tranquilizer for the nervous system. Unlike tranquilizing drugs, which are often effective when you first take them but then lose their power over time, this exercise is subtle when you first try it but gains in power with repetition and practice. Do it at least twice a day. You cannot do it too frequently. Do not do more than four breaths at one time for the first month of practice. Later, if you wish, you can extend it to eight breaths. If you feel a little lightheaded when you first breathe this way, do not be concerned; it will pass.

Once you develop this technique by practicing it every day, it will be a very useful tool that you will always have with you. Use it whenever anything upsetting happens – before you react. Use it whenever you are aware of internal tension. Use it to help you fall asleep. This exercise cannot be recommended too highly. Everyone can benefit from it.

Exercise 3:

Breath Counting

If you want to get a feel for this challenging work, try your hand at breath counting, a deceptively simple technique much used in Zen practice.

Sit in a comfortable position with the spine straight and head inclined slightly forward. Gently close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Then let the breath come naturally without trying to influence it. Ideally it will be quiet and slow, but depth and rhythm may vary.

- To begin the exercise, count “one” to yourself as you exhale.
- The next time you exhale, count “two,” and so on up to “five.”
- Then begin a new cycle, counting “one” on the next exhalation.

Never count higher than “five,” and count only when you exhale. You will know your attention has wandered when you find yourself up to “eight,” “12,” even “19.”

Try to do 10 minutes of this form of meditation.

Watch a video of Dr. Weil demonstrating Breath Counting.

THE SCIENTIFIC BENEFITS OF BREATHING

For Greater Health & Happiness

Breathing is the single most important act that we do every day.

We cannot go even 3 minutes without breathing.

However, we do not pay much attention to breathing, it simply happens automatically.

There is a lot more to the breath than we know. In particular, it is a powerful way to control the mind.

We intuitively know this: it is why we commonly use expressions like "take a deep breath" when people are anxious or angry is common.

Scientific research is showing that breathing may just be the secret to better health and a more peaceful and productive mind.

HOW THE BREATH HELPS YOU CONTROL YOUR MIND

Neither in school, at work or at home have we been taught how to deal with strong emotions like anger, anxiety or fear.

We can try to "talk ourselves" out of these states but think about how successful you are at talking yourself out of a state of rage or nervousness. It's hard!

Research shows that the breath, however, can help! Since it is so difficult "talk" our way out of our feelings, we can learn to "breathe" our way through them.

One study showed that different emotions are linked to different patterns of breath and that, conversely, changing the breath can change our emotions! In other words, breath is a secret to regulating and gaining control over our emotions! We can change how we feel using our breath.

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT BREATHING PRACTICES ARE POWERFUL

- Decrease anxiety and depression
- Increase happiness and optimism
- Improve sleep
- Strengthen our ability to regulate emotions
- Improve trauma symptoms
- Reduce impulsivity, cravings & addictions.

Why? The breath is linked to our autonomic nervous system. Daily breathing practices activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which is associated with resting and digesting i.e. a more peaceful mind and body.

Research shows that breathing practices also benefit the body:

- Decrease stress & regulate our body's level of cortisol, the stress hormone.
- Strengthen our immunity by altering genes responsible for stronger immunity.
- Reduce pain and activation of pain centers in the brain.

TRY THIS SIMPLE BREATHING PRACTICE AT HOME

Alternate Nostril Pranayama:
a gentle breathing exercise to calm and focus the mind.

1. Relax your left hand on your lap, palm facing the ceiling.
2. Place the index and middle finger of the right hand on the center of the eyebrow.
3. Place the thumb of your right hand on the right nostril, and your ring and pinky finger on the left nostril.
4. Take a deep breath in, close your right nostril with your thumb, and breathe out using the left nostril.
5. Take a deep breath with the left nostril, and then close it with your ring finger. After that, exhale it with your right finger.
6. After every inhale, switch sides. Breathe slowly and deeply.
7. Repeat the steps for 5-minutes, and notice the effect on your mind and body. (5X)
8. Can be done anytime, anywhere for a quick pick-me-up or recharge session!

SOME PLACES YOU CAN LEARN TO BREATHE BETTER

General Population:	For Teens & Schools:	For Vets:	In Prisons:
http://www.art-of-living.org/	http://www.search-inside-yourself.org/	http://www.projectwarrior.org/	http://www.prisonmindfulness.org/

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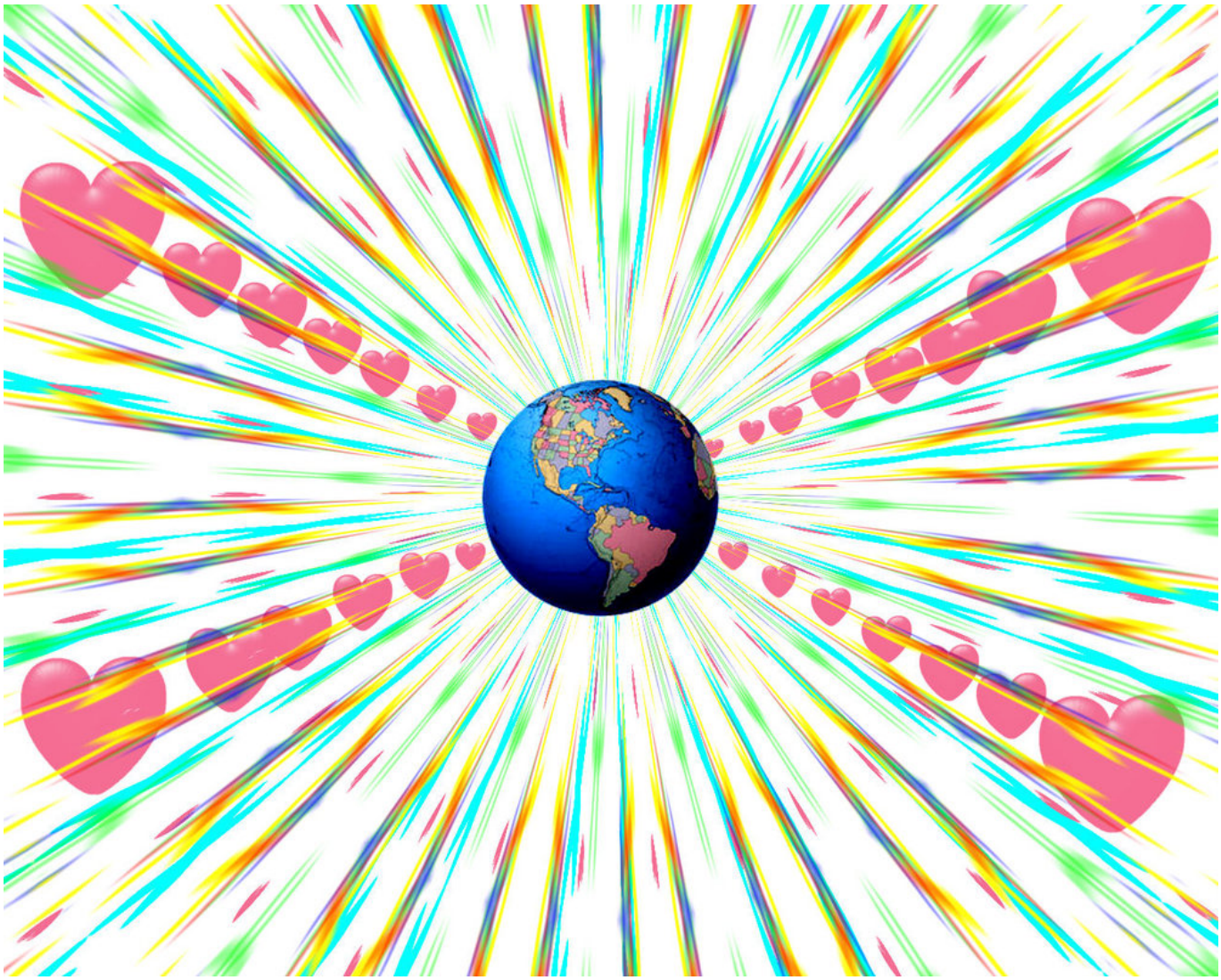


Prana Isadora Pant

Let your free spirited side show when you adorn these boho chic Isadora Pants,Relaxed fit pant offers a mid rise with a full leg.

SaveSave

Valentine’s celebrations from around the world



On week 257 Happy Valentine’s Day to the world!!!!!, we wish

you all the LOVE that you deserve. Enjoy the day and fell the love for everything around you, let your sense of love and joy expand to everything including the universe. We thank you again for the support, the likes, and shares. We are very grateful for them.

When I think of any celebrations I am always curious about the customs of people all over the world, so for that reason, we did this post in honor of many cultures. We would like to include every culture of the world, but for obvious reasons it is not a true possibility due to the fact that not all cultures celebrate Valentines day for one, and the other reason we discover along the years of sharing posts is that peoples attention span is short, so we decide to keep the posts to a certain length, so if we skip your culture celebration please contact us through email and we will be glad add it, it feels right. Many people have commented in how much they have learned in past years about different traditions and many are mixing theirs with the new information of other cultures and now they have a whole different unique way to celebrate their Valentine day.We love it being the fact that it should be unique, that's what love is about. We all have different perceptions and needs, that is why we are INDIVIDUALS, right? Anyway, we love to share these different cultures and their celebrations with you, and please share and like if you do.

When we look at the history of Valentine's Day we see is obscure, and further clouded by various fanciful legends. Research shows that the holiday's roots are in the ancient Roman festival of Lupercalia, a fertility celebration commemorated annually on February 15. Pope Gelasius I recast this pagan festival as a Christian feast day circa 496, declaring February 14 to be St. Valentine's Day.

Most scholars believe that the St. Valentine of the holiday was a priest who attracted the disfavor of Roman emperor Claudius II around 270. And at this stage, the facts ends and

the mythic begins. So according to one legend, Claudius II had prohibited marriage for young men, claiming that bachelors made better soldiers, how about that for control! Valentine continued to secretly perform marriage ceremonies but was eventually apprehended by the Romans and put to death. Another legend has it that Valentine, imprisoned by Claudius, fell in love with the daughter of his jailer. And before he was executed, he allegedly sent her a letter signed "from your Valentine." Probably the most plausible story surrounding St. Valentine is one not focused on Eros (passionate love) but on agape (Christian love): he was martyred for refusing to renounce his religion.

In the year 1969, the Catholic Church revised its liturgical calendar, removing the feast days of saints whose historical origins were questionable. St. Valentine was one of the casualties and that is one of many stores about St. Valentine that we came across.

http://www.infoplease.com/spot/valentinesdayhistory.html

Valentines Day in Middle Ages

Valentines Day festival gained much popularity during the Middle Ages.It is said that lovers began to celebrate the day by exchanging love notes and simple gifts such as flowers. The idea of linking Valentine's Day with love in Middle Ages was strengthened by the notion that birds began to look for a mate during this time interesting comparison wouldn't you say?. Various legends related to the festival including that of Feast of Lupercalia and martyrdom of Saint Valentine further lead to the increase in the popularity of Valentine's Day festival.

Beginning of Birds Mating Season

During the Middle Ages, it was commonly believed in France and England that birds mating season began from February 14. This popular notion added to the idea that the middle of the February celebration of Valentine's Day should be celebrated as a day of love and romance. Fourteenth and fifteenth centuries English and French poets and litterateurs through their romantic verses further promoted the concept of linking Valentine's day with romantic love. For instance, a verse by **Dame Elizabeth Brews** says,

And, cousin mine, upon Monday is Saint Valentine's Day and every bird chooses himself a mate, and if it like you to come on Thursday night and make provision that you may abide till then, I trust to God that ye shall speak to my husband and I shall pray that we may bring the matter to a conclusion.

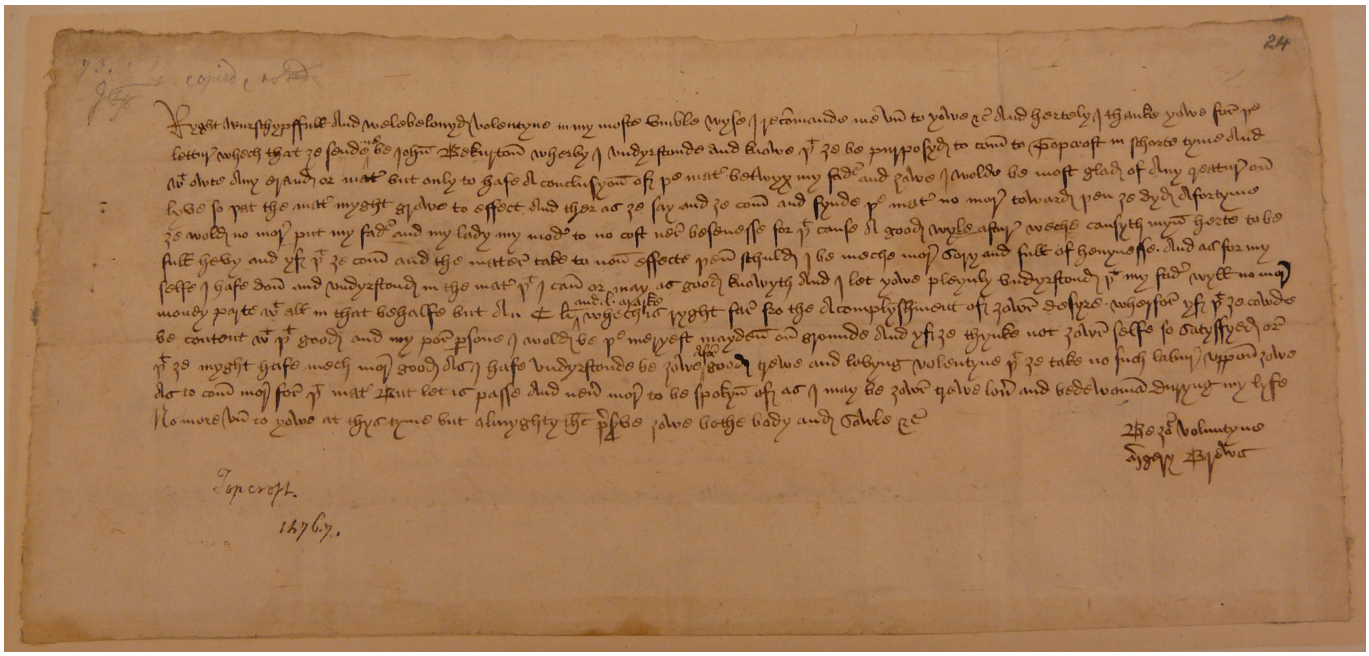
Geoffrey Chaucer in the 14th century, **"Parlement of Foules"** writes

"For this was sent on Seynt Valentyne's day'

Whan every foul cometh there to choose his mate"

These popular verses further helped to create a romantic image of Valentine's Day festival during the Middle Ages. Lovers, therefore, began to celebrate Valentine's Day by expressing love to their sweethearts with an exchange of love notes and simple gifts such as flowers and the gifts of the heart.

The First Valentine's Day Card



The first known Valentine card is said to have been written in 1415 by Charles, Duke of Orleans to his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London following his capture at the Battle of Agincourt. The greeting is part of the manuscript collection of the British Library in London, England.

Historians also say that Saint Valentine of Rome also sent a letter signed “From your Valentine”, to his sweetheart who was the jailer’s daughter a day before he was to be executed. This phrase is still popular amongst lovers and it continues to live through the centuries.

Legends influencing Valentines Day Celebration in Middle Ages

One very popular legend of Valentine's Day states that the festival originated from the Feast of Lupercalia – a fertility festival celebrated in mid-February by ancient Roman during pagan times. The festival paired young boys and girls through a lottery system who would fall in love and marry.

Another legend states that a priest called St Valentine lived in Rome during the reign of Emperor Claudius II. Valentine defied the orders of Claudius order that banned engagements and marriages in Rome and secretly married young boys and girls. Saint Valentine was executed by Claudius on February 14, 498 AD. Over the period of time, St Valentine became the patron saint of lovers and they began to celebrate his martyrdom by expressing love for their beloved and exchanging love notes, so many legends.



The Meaning of Cupid

from: http://www.romanceclass.com

While Cupid is not believed to be a real person, Cupid was the cherub of Love to ancient Romans, and many Italians believed in his powers. Even in the modern world, references to Cupid and his bow and arrows of love are found everywhere on Valentine's Day's cards, candy, pastries and much more.

Cupid was not initially the cherubic, happy little angel that we think of today. In his original incarnation, he was a very mischievous, sometimes dark cherub of love and desire who enjoyed matching 'odd couples' and seeing how they worked out.

Cupid eventually fell under his own spell of odd matches. He fell in love with Psyche, a mortal. In the Greek language, Psyche means "butterfly" and also means "soul". In many ways, what Psyche goes through is symbolic of the path of each woman's soul in life.

Cupid had actually been sent by his mother, Venus, to punish Psyche for her beauty. Instead, he was captivated by her and fell deeply in love. He will arrange to have her brought to his mountain home to live with him, but he hid his identity from her, and only visit her at night. Their time together was so tender and full of gentle talk and loving moments that Psyche fell in love with Cupid.

Psyche's jealous sisters were angered by her wealth and love and convinced Psyche that her lover must be a bad person to so hide. The sisters persuaded her to sneak up on him after he left her one evening, armed with a knife. He awoke and saw her there, and said sadly, "I inflict no other punishment on you than to leave you forever. Love cannot dwell with suspicion."Wow that is so true love never lives were is

suspicion, doubt or nay kind of negative feelings that contradict the concept of love, good lesson.

Psyche realized how foolish she'd been, and decided the only way to be with Cupid again was to go talk to Venus and ask for her blessing. Venus was delighted at having Psyche kneeling down before her, and set forth many tasks for Psyche to perform to prove her worthiness, Humm! that's one way to get things done. Each task was more than Psyche thought she could manage, but in each case, a God stepped in to assist her. Finally, Psyche and Cupid were allowed to be married. They were very happy together, and had a child, named Pleasure., what a heart felt story.

From: http://www.novareinna.com/festive/valworld.html

Australia



It is saidDuring the Australian gold rush period, miners who were suddenly in possession of money from the new-found wealth of the Ballarat Mines were willing to pay a princely sum for elaborate valentines and merchants in the country would ship orders amounting to thousands of pounds at a time. The most extravagant Australian valentines were made of a satin cushion, perfumed and decorated in an ornate manner with flowers and colored shells. Some might even be adorned with a taxidermied hummingbird or bird of paradise. This treasure, contained within a neatly decorated box, was highly valued, being both fashionable and extremely expensive.

Austria



Austria celebrates Valentine’s Day in the way any other developed country enjoys it. The American influence on Austrian culture is profound and it’s believed that Americans introduced the whole concept of Valentine’s Day to Austria. Austria is famous for the dance to waltz and hotels offer three nights from Valentine’s Day in Vienna with a fairytale ball thrown in. The fun will take place in a beautiful Italian renaissance building in Vienna’s Stadtpark named `Wiener Kursalon’, with holidaymakers dancing to famous waltzes of Johann Strauss’ along with popular opera as well as modern pop music. Austria follows the popular customary rituals of

Valentine’s Day such as greeting cards, flower bouquets, and gift baskets.

It has become a tradition in Austria for a young man to present his loved one with a bunch of red flowers on Valentine’s Day. Red flowers are considered as the symbol of love from the ancient times. It still rules the valentine minds in Austria as it does in another part of the world. Lovers exchange flower bouquets on Valentine’s Day in Austria. Red roses and red tulips are the most favorite flowers which make the most valentines’ flower bouquets on Valentine’s Day. As flowers, chocolate candies draw smiles on Austrian sweethearts’ faces. Austrian women give chocolate candies as Valentine’s gifts. People prefer homemade chocolate cookies than the ones which they can purchase from the stores. Austria being a land of music, where Beethoven and Mozart breathed music, has a lot of musical concerts takes place on Valentine’s Day.

Musicians of different bands and of different genre come to Vienna, the capital city of Austria to play the music of love on that day. Restaurants in Austria offer romantic valentine dinner arrangements on the day. These restaurants get decorated to make them look slicker for lovers. They offer delicious and exotic food menu on the day. Austrian food is almost a mixture of Bohemian, Hungarian and Austrian dishes, like goulash, different kinds of veal and beef and sweet dessert. This helps the lovers to enjoy Valentine’s evening with soft romantic music and nice food. When a lot of people are using the traditional gift methods of Valentine’s Day while Austrian youngsters use email, SMS, and E-cards to send their love messages. Austrian nightlife is rocking with umpteen number of beer pubs welcoming lovers on Valentine’s Day. It is an exotic experience to celebrate Valentine’s day in Austria.

Austria has some rather obscure courtship customs that may or may not be associated with Saint Valentine’s Day. Nonetheless, it is customary for a young man to present his beloved with a bunch of flowers on February 14.

Bohemian, Hungarian and Austrian dishes, like goulash, different kinds of veal and beef and sweet dessert. This helps the lovers to enjoy Valentine’s evening with soft romantic music and nice food. When a lot of people are using the traditional gift methods of Valentine’s Day while Austrian youngsters use email, SMS, and E-cards to send their love messages. Austrian nightlife is rocking with umpteen number of beer pubs welcoming lovers on Valentine’s Day. It is an exotic experience to celebrate Valentine’s day in Austria.



United States

In the United States of America, there have been so many varieties of cards given over the course of the years. In the times of the Civil War, cards were flagged with rich colors

accompanied by patriotic political motifs. Early American valentine cards were especially lithographed and hand-colored, beautiful and very distinctive in design, they were produced with intricate lace paper and decorated with such ornaments as beads, sea shells, cones, berries twigs and all manner of seeds. Cards were also available decorated with seaweed or moss, in addition to dried artificial flowers, all of which were attached to a string which was pulled and could then be suspended, thereby creating a three-dimensional picture. For the most part many early American cards were imported from abroad, given the poor quality of American paper at the time which was not particularly suitable for embossing.

In the United States and Canada, Valentine's Day is an extremely popular festival. Here, the day is observed as a holiday. Originally held to honor St Valentine and express love to sweethearts, the theme of the day has come to be so widened that it has now become an occasion to express gratitude and love to not only sweethearts and spouses, but also to teachers, parents or any other close relation or acquaintance. The modern celebrations of the day see people complementing their dear ones with gifts that include popular items as cards, fresh flowers like rose, chocolates and candies jewelry and much more. Dinner and dance parties are specially organized all over the country to celebrate the occasion. Many couples hold private celebrations in homes or restaurants and gift flowers, a box of candy, or some other present to one another. Sending candies on Valentine's Day has been a very popular tradition and it still is.

In the US, children celebrate Valentine's Day with great enthusiasm. To keep with their interest, many schools hold Valentine's Day programs where little students perform songs, dance, skits and plays. Kids handcraft gifts and cards on this occasion and present them to their friends and teachers. In some schools, the children organize a classroom party and put all the valentines into a box they have decorated. In dos

cases, the celebration culminates with a teacher or child distributing the cards. Older students construct candy baskets and gifts, and place on them cards trimmed with hearts, cherubs winged children called cupids. They also organize dances and parties. A collective endeavor is made to make the day a special one.

Canada



Valentines Day festival is celebrated with much enthusiasm in

Canada. Valentine’s Day balls and parties are organized all over the country where people express love for their spouses and sweethearts and enjoy to the hilt. Roses, chocolates, candies and cards are the most popular gifts for the romantic occasion.

As a tradition, children in Canada exchange Valentine’s Day gifts with their friends. In several schools, classroom Valentine’s Day Parties are organized where children put all the valentines in a decorated box. Later, teacher or a child distributes the cards. Kids are encouraged to prepare handmade valentine as a school activity. Many children also gift fancy Valentines Day card to parents and teachers. Songs, skits, plays and concerts are also organized by schools and societies to celebrate Valentine’s Day. Students in senior school hold Valentine’s Day dance parties to cherish the joyful festival, how fun.

Britain



The poets of Britain have probably penned the majority of the best-loved romantic verses that are associated with Saint Valentine. Different regions of the nation celebrate their own customs to honor this day, although the sending of cards and gifts of flowers and chocolates is, for the most part, the standard procedure throughout the entire country. One uniform custom is the singing of special songs by children, who then receive gifts of candy, fruit or money. In some areas,

valentine buns are baked with caraway seeds, plums or raisins.

In Britain, St Valentine’s Day is celebrated with great fanfare and gaiety. Like in many other countries, the common celebrations of the day have people expressing love for their beloved with gifts like flowers, cards, chocolates and so many more special items. The traditions of the celebrations of Valentine’s Day differs in different regions of the country but one uniform custom is the singing of special songs by children. All over Britain, children sing special songs related to the occasion and are rewarded with gifts like candy, fruit or money. Another popular tradition followed in some areas of England is the baking of valentine buns with caraway seeds, plums, or raisins. This is believed to be a way of celebrating agrarian productivity. This connection with fertility and the similar date of celebration are probably the reasons why many writers link the festival of Lupercalia with Valentine’s Day.

Composing verses is another very well-known Valentine’s Day custom of Britain. About a month earlier to Valentine’s Day, leading tabloids and reputed magazines publish sonnets and verses to commemorate this occasion. The tradition owes its origin to the British poets who have penned some of the best love poems and the majority of the romantic verses associated with Saint Valentine.



Denmark



The Danish valentine card is known as a “lover’s card.” Older versions of this greeting came in the form of a transparency which, when held up to the light, depicted the image of a lover handing his beloved a gift and still you can find it. One custom in Denmark is for people to send pressed white flowers called Snowdrops to their friends. Danish men may also send a form of valentine known as a gaekkebrev (or “joking letter”) leave it up yo guys right?. The sender of this gaekkebrev pens a rhyme but does not sign his name. Instead, he signs the message with dots…one dot for each letter in his name. If the lady who receives the card guesses the name of the sender, then she is rewarded with an Easter Egg later in the year, pretty playful I love it.

In Denmark, February 14 is mainly a day for the young. It’s a time for romance and exchanging of love tokens. Here, the festival is celebrated in a very conventional manner. Young people send to their beloveds a valentine card on this occasion. The Danish valentine card is famously known as a “lover’s card”. Earlier, these came in the form of transparent cards which, when kept before light, reflected the picture of a lover handing over a wonderful present to his beloved. Nowadays, many newer varieties of lover’s cards have come up and every year before Valentine’s Day card shops all across the country are seen to be stacked up with colorful and musical lover’s cards containing lovely Valentine messages. Another Danish Valentine’s Day custom is to send pressed white flowers called Snowdrops to friends. The season of love is also a time for fun what with many Danish men sending to their ladylove a form of valentine known as a gaekkebrev (or “joking letter”). This gaekkebrev is a type of romantic letter that contains a rhyme penned by the sender himself. The fun part of this custom is that the letter doesn’t have the name of the sender. Instead, the lover signs the message with dots…one dot for each letter in his name. If the lady whom he sends the gaekkebrev correctly guesses his name, he rewards her with an Easter egg during Eastertide.

France



In France, a custom known as “drawing for” once occurred. Unmarried individuals, both young and not so young, would go into houses facing each other and begin calling out across from one window to another, pairing-off with the chosen partner. If the young man failed to be particularly enthralled with his valentine, he would desert her. As a result, a

bonfire would be lit later where the ladies could burn images of the ungrateful sweetheart and verbally abuse him in a loud tone as the effigy burned. This ritual was eventually abandoned since it left much room for nastiness, ridicule or even outright malice and the French government finally handed-down a decree officially banning the custom. Elegant French greetings cards known as cartes d'amities, which contained tender messages, were given not totally as a Valentine but chiefly as a result of a fashion which was popular in England at the time.

Valentine's Day Festival is celebrated with joy and enthusiasm in France. People take the opportunity of the occasion and express love to people close to them. Just as in several other countries people in France exchange Valentine's Day greetings through cards, fresh flowers, and gifts of love.

History of Valentine's Day in France

History of Valentine's Day Festival has a strong association with France. It is said that during the Middle Ages, there was a popular belief in France and England that birds began to mate halfway through the second month of the year. For this reason, lovers saw the day special and considered it auspicious to exchange love letters and tokens of love on Valentine's Day. During fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, French and English poets and litterateurs too stressed on this idea and created a romantic image of the day in the minds of the people.

Valentine's Day Cards too are said to have originated in France. A young Frenchman, Charles, Duke of Orleans is said to have written the first written Valentine's Day Cards. The Duke who was captured at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 is said to have written a poem or 'Valentine' to his wife while imprisonment in the Tower of London.

Valentine’s Day Custom in France

People in France once followed a peculiar Valentine’s Day custom called **“drawing for”.** Unmarried young and old people would go into houses facing each other and begin calling out across from one window to another and pair off with their chosen partner. If the young man failed to be particularly enthralled with his valentine, he would desert her. A bonfire would be lit later where ladies would burn images of their ungrateful lovers and hurl abuses at them. The ritual was eventually abandoned as it left much room for nastiness and ridicule. French government handed down a decree and officially banned the custom.

There was also a custom in France to exchange elegant cards containing tender messages called **cartes d’amities.** These were not essentially Valentine and resulted chiefly due to a trend popular in England.

Germany



In Germany, it has become customary for the young man of a courting couple to present his beloved with flowers on February 14. Valentine gifts in Germany are usually in the shape of love tokens, complete with endearing messages. However, these are not distributed solely on Valentine’s Day,

but on any occasion. Even early German baptismal certificates or marriage certificates were considered at one time to have been valentines but were more likely simply decorative and pictorial documents which contained lovely verses.

The German celebration of Valentine’s Day is nearly the same as elsewhere in the world. For Germans, the festival is a celebration of love and a time to spend with their sweethearts. In Germany, it is customary for a young man to present his beloved with flowers on February 14. Valentine gifts in Germany are usually in the shape of love tokens, complete with lovely messages. But these are not entirely restricted to Valentine’s Day celebrations and can be gifted on any occasion of a joyous nature.

Italy



In Italy, Valentine’s Day was once celebrated as a Spring Festival, held in the open air, where young people would gather in tree arbors or ornamental gardens to listen to music and the reading of poetry. However, over the course of the years, this custom steadily ceased and has not now been celebrated for centuries. In Turin, it was formerly the custom

for betrothed couples to announce their engagements on February 14. For several days ahead of time, the stores would be decorated and filled with all manner of bon-bons.

Romantic Festival of Valentine’s Day is celebrated with enthusiasm in the beautiful country of Italy. Lovers take the opportunity of the day to express love and affection for their beloved. Loads of Valentine’s Day gifts are exchanged and everyone enjoys the day to the hilt.

History of Valentine’s Day in Italy

Valentine’s Day was initially celebrated as a Spring Festival in Italy. Celebration of the day was held in the open air. Young people would gather in tree arbors or ornamental gardens and enjoy listening to music and reading of poetry. Later they would stroll off with their Valentine into the gardens. The custom steadily ceased over the course of years and has not been celebrated for centuries.

Early Valentine’s Day Tradition in Italy

In the Italian City of Turin, betrothed couple used to announce their engagement on the Valentine’s Day. Several days ahead of February 14, stores were decorated and loaded with a huge variety of bon-bon. Some even sold china baskets and cups filled with delectable Valentine’s Day candies and tied with a ribbon. These were to be presented as gifts to Valentine.

Another interesting Valentine’s Day tradition followed in Italy and Britain made unmarried girls wake up before sunrise. People strongly believed that the first man an unmarried girl sees on Valentine’s Day, or someone who looks like him would marry her within a year. Girls, therefore, used to wake up early on Valentine’s Day and stand by their window to watch a

man pass.

Valentine’s Day Celebration in Italy

People of Italy see Valentine’s Day as a holiday imported from the US, just like Halloween and Mother’s Day. For the love and lovers country of Italy, the major day for the celebration of love is **il giorno della festa degli innamorati.** As lovers’ exclusively celebrate this day family members and friends do not exchange gifts.

In recent times, however, lovers in Italy celebrate Valentine’s Day by expressing their love to sweethearts. Couples usually go out for dinners at pizzeria or ristorante. Just as in several other countries, the festival has been commercialized to a great extent. There is a strong tradition to exchange gifts like a rose, perfume, chocolates and diamonds depending on the age and taste of the person. Another popular Valentine’s Day gift in Italy is Baci Perugina – a small, chocolate-covered hazelnuts containing a small slip of paper with a romantic poetic quote in four languages.

In Italy, Valentine’s Day was once celebrated as a Spring Festival. It used to be held in the open air, where young people would gather in brightly decorated gardens to listen to music and the reading of poetry. This custom, however, steadily ceased with the passage of time, and has been out of practice for a long long time. In modern day Italy, Valentine’s Day is mainly seen as a holiday imported from the US, just like Halloween, Father’s Day or Mother’s Day. The day is celebrated mainly by the young people who take this opportunity to profess love to their sweethearts the American way with gifts like perfume, chocolates, flowers, cards or jewellery. The day is seen here earmarked exclusively for lovers, and hence, family members and friends do not exchange gifts. Couples usually go out for dinners at pizzeria or

ristorante which ends with lovers’ giving gifts to each other. A popular Valentine’s Day gift in Italy is Baci Perugina – a small, chocolate-covered hazelnut containing a small slip of paper with a romantic poetic quote in four languages.

Japan



In Japan, Valentine’s Day is celebrated on two different dates…February 14 and March 14. On the first date, the female gives a gift to the male and on the second date…known as White Day and supposedly introduced by a marshmallow company in the 1960s…the male has to return the gift he received on February 14. Thus, strictly speaking, a Japanese female has the luxury

of actually choosing her own gift. Chocolate is the most popular gift in Japan. However, since most Japanese females believe that store-bought chocolate is not a gift of true love, they tend to make the confection with their own hands.

In Japan, Valentine's Day is observed on February 14 but the celebration of love truly ends on March 14, known as the "White Day". On the first date, women present chocolates or gifts to the men they love to express their feelings for them. Gifting chocolates is a typical way to celebrate Valentine's day in Japan for chocolate is the most popular gift in the country. Hence, it is a must for Japanese Valentine's Day celebrations. Gift shops all over Japan pile their shelves with chocolate a month before Valentine's Day. Most Japanese females believe, however, that store-bought chocolate is not a gift of true love. Hence, they tend to make the confection all by themselves.

But it's also common for women to give chocolates to any man close to them, such as co-workers and male friends, whom they don't actually love. This kind of chocolate gift is called giri-choco which mean chocolates given because of obligations. Men who receive chocolates or gifts on Valentine's day are supposed to return the favour to the women on March 14, exactly a month after Valentine's Day. Also known as "White Day", this is the time when men are to give back a gift to the women who gave them gifts just a month before. The tradition is believed to have been introduced by a marshmallow company in the 1960s.

South Korea





The traditional gift of candy takes place in Korea on February 14, but only from females to males. There is another special day for males to give gifts to females and this is celebrated on March 14. Very similar to the custom in Japan, March 14 in

Korea is known as “White Day.” On “White Day,” many young men confess their love for the first time to their sweethearts. For those young people who have no particular romantic partners, the Koreans have set aside yet another date…April 14, also known as “Black Day.” On that date, such individuals get together and partake of Jajang noodles, which are black in color, hence the name of the day.

The Valentine’s Day celebrations in Korea is quite akin to the Japanese observance of the festival. As in Japan, Korea witnesses gifting of chocolates and candies from females to males. The favour is returned the same way by the men on March 14, which is referred to as “White Day” similar to the custom in Japan. But “White Day” here is Valentine’s day in its own right as many young men confess their love for the first time to their sweethearts on this occasion.

And then there is April 14, also known as “Black Day”, which has been specially set aside for those young people who have no particular romantic partners. The curious name of the day probably comes from the fact that on this date, individuals who are not in any relationship get together and partake of Jajang noodles, which are black in color.

Scotland



In Scotland, Valentine’s Day is celebrated with a festival. At this festival, there is an equal number of unmarried males and females, each of whom writes their name (or a made-up name) on a piece of paper which is then folded and placed into a hat…one hat for the ladies and one for the men. The females then draw a name from the hat containing the men’s names and vice versa. Of course, it is highly likely that the two drawn

names will not match, in which event, it is usually expected that the male partner with the female who selected his name. This rite having been completed, the company split up into couples and gifts are given to the ladies. The females would then pin the name of their partner over their hearts or on their sleeves. A dance often follows and, at the end of the festival, it is not unusual for marriages to take place. According to another Scottish custom, the first young man or woman encountered by chance on the street or elsewhere will become that individual’s valentine. Valentine’s Day gifts in Scotland are frequently given by both parties in the form of a love-token or true-love-knot.

Spain



In Spain, it is customary for courting couples to exchange gifts on Valentine’s Day and for husbands to send their wives bouquets of roses.

Although not a traditional Spanish holiday, St. Valentine’s Day in Spain is celebrated, like in most of the countries, with all kinds of sweet heart-shaped gifts, bouquets of flowers, cards and romantic dinners at fancy restaurants. Shop

windows are decorated with hearts in all shades of red and pink, bars and cafes are getting creative with Valentine-themed offerings, and many events are organized throughout the country. However, what's really interesting about St. Valentine's Day in Spain is that certain regions have their own versions of the holiday, usually celebrated with great fanfare and peculiar traditions.

1. For people from Valencia, the most romantic day of the year is the 9th of October, when they celebrate both the Day of the Valencian Community as well as the Day of Saint Dionysius (Sant Dionís), locally known as the patron saint of lovers. This is a public holiday marked by many festivities and colorful costume parades held in the main plaza of every town and village. A distinctive tradition on the Day of Saint Dionysius is the custom of offering ladies a Mocadora (Mocaorà) as a sign of love and appreciation. This traditional gift consists of a nice package of marzipan figurines handcrafted by local confectioners and then wrapped up in an elegant piece of silk.

2. In Barcelona and the whole Catalonia, couples rejoice their love on April 23, when the nation celebrates St. George's Day or La Diada de Sant Jordi – Catalonia's national day. This public holiday is also known as El Dia de la Rosa (The Day of the Rose) or El Dia del Llibre (The Day of the Book) and the main event is the exchange of gifts, usually roses and books, hence the Catalan saying *"A rose for love and a book forever"*. As expected, during this time of year, a myriad of stalls selling roses and books are set up all over the region, public squares are brought to life by all sorts of performers and most of the book stores and cafes organize readings. Moreover, this is the day when Barcelona's Palau de la Generalitat opens its doors to the public.

3. Convinced that this is a holiday invented to boost consumerism, Spaniards often refer to Valentine's Day as the Día de El Corte Inglés (Day of Corte Inglés), their main

department store.

La Diada de Sant Jordi

But Spain actually has another ‘lovers day’ that I think has a far better case for celebration. St. George’s Day, the same day that is celebrated not nearly enough in England even though it is our patron saint too. But as I said, Spain loves a saint, and they do it properly here.

Many countries have Saint George as their patron saint and most celebrate it on April 23rd (the accepted date of Saint George’s death in 303 AD).

Though Saint George was real and did some pretty gallant stuff, the story of him slaying the dragon and saving the princess is of course legend. But that still makes St. George’s Day far more romantic.La Diada de Sant Jordi

In Catalonia it is called **La Diada de Sant Jordi**, also known as **El Dia de Rosa** (*The Day of the Rose*) or **El Dia del Llibre** (*The Day of the Book*) and is a public holiday. The main event is the exchange of gifts between loved ones. Roses have been associated with this day since medieval times but more recently the giving of books is the custom. This came about in the 20th century as some bright spark of a bookseller realized that Josep Pla (*1897-1981*), Miguel Cervantes(*1547-1616*) and William Shakespeare (*1564-1616*), all great proponents of the written word had all died on the same day, April 23rd. Again, far more valid a celebration in my opinion.

So, please do celebrate Valentine’s Day if you so wish. I wouldn’t want to be the reason for any break-ups. But let’s make sure we celebrate St. Georges Day too. In my eyes a far more valid day for the celebration of love and literature. And

it will make up for the poor job they did of it in England when I was growing up.

Taiwan



Valentine’s Day is celebrated in Taiwan on February 14, but there is also a special Valentine’s Day on July 7 of the lunar calendar, based on an ancient Chinese folktale. Both dates are equally as important. Many men purchase expensive bouquets of roses and other flowers for their sweethearts on these days. According to Taiwan tradition, the color and number of the

roses hold much significance. For example, one red rose means “an only love,” eleven roses means “a favorite,” ninety-nine roses means “forever,” and one hundred eight roses means “marry me.”

Taiwan celebrates the idea of love three times a year by including the Valentine’s Day of February 14th and the Japanese White Day in addition to the traditional seventh day of the seventh month when singletons go to temples to burn incense and pray to meet a lovely significant other. On the February 14th Valentine’s Day, Taipei 101 lights up a heart and malls everywhere are dotted with sales for your sweetie (Really, the US should be so inclusive– we could have tried stimulating the economy with Lunar New Year withdrawals to give each other money in red envelopes). Taiwan has also adopted White Day from Japan.

The traditional 7-7 day is the once-a-year meeting of the weaving maid and the cowherd across a bridge of magpies. It always rains on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month, since the couple are said to be crying at their reunion. This past summer I got to visit a temple to observe the dances and sniff the incense celebrating 7-7 day.

In spite of all these modern celebrations of love, traditional Chinese love stories as far as my limited knowledge allows are rather grim. The love stories all end unhappily. An emperor falls for a mistress-spy from one of his conquered kingdoms, who costs him the empire. A fairy falls for a human and ends up forced to return to heaven alone. The one happy story was based on a real-life artist-poet who infiltrated a household so he could woo one of the daughters and make her his wife (in real life she was his ninth wife.)It is said that the abundance of sad stories is because people there love to cry at a good tragedy.

So people in Taiwan have three days to either feel bitter, depressed, and lonely, or nervous, warm and fuzzy.

Whether you’re in a cosy couple or single and free, I hope you had a lovely Valentine’s Day with lots of love.

South Africa



Valentine’s Day in South Africa is celebrated with great passion and enthusiasm. The day is celebrated on 14th February every year. The craze and verve for the festival is like any other festival in South Africa. The geographical location of the country has made it one of the most romantic destinations. Thousands of tourists get attracted towards the beauty of the place when it comes to celebrate the festival of love. Large number of tourists throng the beaches and other romantic places of South Africa to celebrate Valentine’s day.

Valentine’s Tradition in South Africa

Most commonly observed tradition includes going out on a romantic date with one’s Valentine. Young couples make it traditional to celebrate the day at a very romantic place. Also, young girls celebrate the occasion by following an old-age Roman festival of **‘Lupercalia’**. According to this traditional festival, young girls pin their lovers name on their sleeves. At some places, men also follow this custom.

Valentine Celebrations in South Africa

Valentine’s Day celebrations begin well in advance in South Africa. Shops and market places are beautifully adorned with fragrant flowers, love symbols like cupid, love birds, hearts and in traditional African style decorations. Week long parties and celebrations take place in various clubs and hotels. These activities highlight the tradition and South African culture. People totally indulge themselves in the African culture and art to celebrate the occasion of Valentine. Be it an old man of 60 or a young lass of 16, the joy of celebrating love is same in everybody.

Different events take place in various parts of South Africa. All the discotheques, pubs and restaurants are completely

booked. South Africans as well as tourists attend huge balls where they match their dancing steps and flow in the Valentine mood with different alcoholic beverages. People of South Africa like to visit wildlife parks and sanctuaries with their friends and families. Many other events like river rafting, mountaineering amidst the exotic islands of Cape Town and Johannesburg are main attraction of the day. Luxurious resorts gives the most enthralling view and rated as one of the best place to spend a romantic evening. Apart from this, a very popular small coastal village Hermanus is just the place to be. Grand festivities are marked in the city of Durban, where innumerable tourists flock in large numbers.

India



Valentine’s Day celebration is a recent phenomenon in India but has caught the fancy of people to a great extent. Though some see it as a western import and hesitate to celebrate, there exist a large and growing number of those who love the feeling behind the beautiful and romantic festival. Especially to the Indian youth February 14 signifies love – a day when people express their affection for others. Just as several other countries, people in India too celebrate the Valentine’s

Day by exchanging cards and gifts.

Euphoria of Valentine’s Day festival can be experienced weeks before the festival. Television, radio and print media start creating hype about the festival by covering all facets of it. Gift marketers and card companies launch a rigorous campaign to lure the youngsters. Card and gift shops are interestingly decorated with symbols of Valentine’s Day including roses, cupid and heart shaped balloons. Shopping malls in metropolitan cities organize fun-filled competitions and distribute discount coupons to lure the consumers.

On February 14, the Valentine’s Day restaurants, discos, Cineplex, pubs and pizza parlors see a particularly busy time as couples celebrate the day in togetherness. Many boys and girls even propose to their sweetheart on this romantic day. People also express love to their friends, teachers, siblings and parents. Popular Valentine’s Day gifts exchanged in India include chocolates, fresh flowers, cards, soft toys and candies. These are also clubbed with several other gifts to pamper sweethearts.

China



People in China too have a day devoted to love but it is quite different from Valentine’s Day festival as seen in other parts of the world. Chinese Valentine’s Day fall on the 7th day of the 7th lunar month in the Chinese Calendar. Hence the day is also called as **‘Festival of the Double Sevens’** or **Qi Xi – ‘The Night of Sevens’**. The other popular name for the Chinese

Valentine’s Day is **‘Seven Sister’s Festival’** and **‘Daughter’s Festival’.**

Legend behind Chinese Valentine’s Day

There is a very interesting legend behind the festival of Valentine’s Day in China. The story goes that there once lived an orphaned poor boy called **Niu Lang** with his brother and sister-in-law. The handsome boy owned an old ox that he worked on the field everyday. The ox is said to be an immortal from the Paradise who was punished for mistakes in heaven and send on earth as an ox. The ox liked the cowherd and one day he said to Niu Lang, “You are a nice person. If you want to get married, go to the river and your wish will come true.”

When the Cowherd went to the stream he saw all the seven beautiful daughters of the Emperor who had come down from Heaven to take a bath. Niu Lang was captivated with the beauty of the youngest daughter **Zhi Nu** and secretly took away her fairy clothes. Without her fairy clothes the youngest daughter could not fly back to the heaven along with her sisters. The cowherd asked the fairy that he would return her clothes if she promised to marry him. The girl coyly agreed to marry the cowherd. They lived a happily married for several years and had two children.

One day, the ox felt that his last day was near. He told the cowherd that he should keep his hide for urgent situation after he dies. Meanwhile, Emperor began to miss his seventh daughter. He sent Zhi Nu’s grandmother to bring her back from the earth. The grandmother succeeded in bringing Zhi Nu back to heaven. While the 7th Princess was being taken away to the heaven, the cowboy wore the ox hide and carried his two children in the two bamboo baskets with his wife’s old fairy clothes and chased his wife in the sky. To keep the lovers

separated forever the grandmother created a Milky Way between them. The seventh princess was moved to the star **Vega** in the Lyra (Harp) constellation while the cowherd with his two children stayed in the star **Altair** (Flying one) in the Aquila (Eagle) constellation. The star Vega is therefore popularly known by the name of the **Weaving Maid Star** whereas the star Altair as the **Cowherd Star** in China. The mother took pity and two were allowed to meet only once a year on the 7th day of 7th lunar month. It is believed that on this specific day magpies form a bridge with their wings for Zhi Nu to cross to meet her husband.

Celebrations of Chinese Valentine's Day

The celebrations of Chinese Valentine's Day or Qi Qiao Jie – the seventh eve is quite different from usual Valentine's Day celebration we see in rest of the world. There are specific and colorful rituals for the day besides the usual exchange of flowers, cards and chocolates as tokens of love between lovers.

Following the tradition, lovers visit the **Temple of Matchmaker** on the Chinese Valentine's Day and pray for their love and happiness and their possible marriage. Singles too visit the temple on the day and ask for their luck in love.

The Chinese Valentine Day is also known as the Daughter's Festival. Chinese girls always wished to learn a good handcrafting skill like the weaving maid. On the night of the Chinese Valentine's Day, unmarried girls offer prayers to the Weaving Maid star and seek blessings to become smarter. When the star Vega is high up in the sky, girls perform a test by putting a needle on the water surface. If the needle doesn't sink, it's a sign of girl's maturity and smartness indicating she is eligible to find a husband. Girl who passes the test may ask for any one wish. It is also traditional for young

girls in China to demonstrate their domestic arts, especially melon carving, on this day. Chinese Valentine's Day is therefore also known as **The Festival to Plead for Skills, The Seventh Sister's Birthday and The Night of Skills.**

In some provinces of China, people decorate the ox's horn by flowers on the Chinese Valentine Day in a belief that the ritual will save them from catastrophe. Following the age old tradition women also wash hair to make them look fresh and shining. Children wash their face the next morning using the overnight water for a more natural and beautiful look.

Stargazers celebrate the festival by looking up at star Vega on the east of the Milky Way which represents Zhi Nu, and at the constellation Aquila, on the west side of the Milky Way, where Niu Lang waits for his lover to join him.

Israel



Tu B’Av, the Jewish Day of Love

Tu B’Av, the 15th Day of Av, is both an ancient and modern holiday. Originally a post-biblical day of joy, it served as a matchmaking day for unmarried women in the second Temple period (before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.). Tu B’Av was almost unnoticed in the Jewish calendar for many centuries but it has been rejuvenated in recent decades, especially in the

modern state of Israel. In its modern incarnation it is gradually becoming a Hebrew-Jewish Day of Love, slightly resembling Valentine's Day in English-speaking countries.

There is no way to know exactly how early Tu B'Av began. The first mention of this date is in the Mishnah (compiled and edited in the end of the second century), where Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel is quoted saying, "There were no better (i.e. happier) days for the people of Israel than the Fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur, since on these days the daughters of Israel/Jerusalem go out dressed in white and dance in the vineyards. What were they saying: Young man, consider whom you choose (to be your wife)?"

The Gemara (the later, interpretive layer of the Talmud) attempts to find the origin of this date as a special joyous day, and offers several explanations. One of them is that on this day the Biblical "tribes of Israel were permitted to mingle with each other," namely: to marry women from other tribes (Talmud, Ta'anit 30b). This explanation is somewhat surprising, since nowhere in the Bible is there a prohibition on "intermarriage" among the 12 tribes of Israel. This Talmudic source probably is alluding to a story in the book of Judges (chapter 21): After a civil war between the tribe of Benjamin and other Israelite tribes, the tribes vowed not to intermarry with men of the tribe of Benjamin.

It should be noted that Tu B'Av, like several Jewish holidays (Passover, Sukkot, Tu Bishvat) begins on the night between the 14th and 15th day of the Hebrew month, since this is the night of a full moon in our lunar calendar. Linking the night of a full moon with romance, love, and fertility is not uncommon in ancient cultures.

I Love You in Different Languages

Afrikaans:

Ek is lief vir jou

Ek het jou lief

Albanian:

Te dua

Amharic:

Afekrishalehou

Arabic :

Ana Behibak (to a male)

Ana Behibek (to a female)

Basc :

Nere Maitea

Bavarian :

I mog di narrisch gern

Bengali :

Ami tomake bhalobashi

Berber :

Lakh tirikh

Bicol :

Namumutan ta ka

Bulgarian :

Obicham te

Cambodian :

kh_nhaum soro_lahn nhee_ah

Bon sro lanh oon

Cantonese :

Ngo oi ney

Catalan :

T’estim (mallorcan)

T’estime (valencian)

T’estimo (catalonian)

T’estim molt (I love you a lot)

Chinese :

Wo ie ni (Manderin)

Croatian :

Volim te (most common), or

Ja te volim (less common)

Czech :

miluji te

Danish :

Jeg elsker dig

Dutch :

Ik hou van jou

Estonian :

Mina armastan sind

Esperanto :

Mi amas vin

Persian (Farsi):

Tora dust midaram

Flemish :

Ik zie oe geerne

Finnish :

Mina” rakastan sinua

French :

Je t’aime

Friesian :

Ik bin fereale op dy

Ik ha^ld fan dy (Most commonly used phrase)

Gaelic :

Ta gra agam ort

German :

Ich liebe Dich

I mog Di ganz arg! (Suebian: South German dialekt.)

Greek :

S’ ayapo

Gujarati:

Tane Prem Karoo Choo

Hausa :

Ina sonki

Hebrew :

aNEE oHEIVET oTKHA (female to male)

aNEE oHEIV otAKH (male to female)

Ani ohev at (man to woman)

Ani ohevet atah (woman to man)

Hindi:

Mein Tumse Pyar Karta Hoon (man to woman)

Mein Tumse Pyar Karti Hoon (woman to man)

Hokkien :

Wa ai lu

Hopi :

Nu’ umi unangwa’ta

Hungarian :

Szeretlek te’ged

Icelandic :

?g elska ßig

Indonesian :

Saya cinta padamu

Saya Cinta Kamu

Aku tjinta padamu

Saja kasih saudari

Italian :

Ti amo

Irish :

taim i’ ngra leat

Japanese :

Kimi o ai shiteru

Sukiyo

Kannada:

Naanu ninnanu preethisuthene

Naanu ninnanu mohisuthene

Kazakh :

Men seny jaksy kuremyn

Kiswahili :

Nakupenda

Korean :

Tangsinul sarang ha yo

Kurdish :

Ez te hezdikhem

Latin :

Te amo

Vos amo

Lao :

Khoi huk chau

Latvian :

Es Tev milu

Lingala :

Nalingi yo

Lithuanian:

Ash miliu tave

Luo :

Aheri

Madrid lingo:

Me molas, tronca

Malay/Indonesian:

Saya cintakan awak(awak=kamu=you)

Aku sayang engkau (engkau=kamu=you)

Malay :

Saya cintamu

Saya sayangmu

Malayalam:

Ngan ninne snaehikkunnu

Njyaan ninne’ preetikyunnu

Njyaan ninne’ mohikyunnu

Marathi:

Mi tuzya var prem karato

Me tujhashi prem karto (male to female)

Me tujhashi prem karte (female to male)

Maltese:

Inhobbok

Mandarin :

Wo ai ni

Mohawk :

Konoronhkwa

Navajo :

Ayor anosh’ni

Ndebele :

Niyakutanda

Norwegian :

Jeg elsker deg (Bokmaal)

Eg elskar deg (Nynorsk)

Pakistani :

Mujhe tumse muhabbat hai

Persian :

Tora dost daram

Pilipino :

Mahal Kita

Iniibig Kita

Polish :

Ja Cie Kocham or Kocham Cie (Pronounced Yacha kocham)

Portuguese :

Eu te amo

Punjabi :

Main tainu pyar karna (male to female)

Mai taunu pyar kardi aan (female to male)

Romanian :

Te iu besc

Russian :

Ya lyublyu tebya

Ya vas lyublyu

Scot Gaelic :

Tha gra\dh agam ort

Serbian :

Volim te (most common), or

Ja te volim” (less common)

Shona :

Ndinokuda

Sioux :

Techihhila

Slovak :

Lubim ta

Slovene:

Ljubim te

Spanish :

Te amo

Swahili :

Nakupenda

Swedish :

Jag a”lskar dig

Swiss-German:

Ch’ha di ga”rn

Tagalog :

Mahal kita

Taiwanese :

Gwa ai lee

Tamil:

Naan Unnai Kadhalikiren

Telugu:

Ninnu premistunnanu

Neenu ninnu pra’mistu’nnanu

Nenu ninnu premistunnanu

Thai :

Phom Rak Khun

Ch’an Rak Khun

Tunisian :

Ha eh bak

Turkish :

Seni seviyorum!

Urdu :

Mujhe tumse muhabbat hai

Vietnamese :

Anh ye^u em (man to woman)

Em ye^u anh (woman to man)

Toi yeu em

Vlaams :

Ik hou van jou

Welsh :

‘Rwy’n dy garu di.

Yr wyf i yn dy garu di (chwi)

Yiddish :

Ikh hob dikh lib

Zazi :

Ezhele hezdege (sp?)

Zuni :

Tom ho’ ichema



Organic Spa Basket

A nourishing and complete spa experience awaits the body, mind and soul with this abundant and expertly curated basket of wholesome, all-natural, organic, dye-free bath and body essentials.



Engraved Bettoni Pen

This fine rollerball pen offered by Bettoni Peruzzi, one of the world’s finest writing instrument makers, combines smooth rollerball style with distinctive, ergonomic comfort. Enhanced by your chosen name or message engraved on the pen, it’s a thoughtful gift for congratulating, rewarding, thanking, or just because.



Tranquility Spa Collection

Fragranced lavender bathing salts, olive oil moisturizers, a rustic citrus basil candle and more make this hand selected gift the quintessential collection of an ultimate spa experience. Hand-tied with a satin robin’s egg blue ribbon, it’s the perfect gift to offer someone who deserves a little pampering.



The Royal Champagne Gift Basket

- Your selection of Moet & Chandon Imperial, Dom Perignon Brut, or Louis Roederer Cristal.
- Gourmet Chocolates from Ghirardelli, Godiva and Lindt.
- Camembert Cheese, Sea Salt Roasted Almonds, Savory Popcorn.



Artisan Fruit and Cheese Hamper

Enjoy a picnic of orchard-fresh fruit, well-aged artisan cheeses, fresh nuts and so much more, presented in an elegant hamper. It’s a perfectly delicious gift to celebrate any special occasion.



Traditional Teatime Basket

Overflowing with a wide assortment of organic teas, accompanying sweets, and their very own matching teapot and teacup set, this bestselling basket is perfect for delighting any tea-lover with a unique spin on traditional teatime.