

Happy holiday season,

Take a break right now and take a deep breath. Feel your belly as it expands out. Feel the calming of the mind as you exhale.

Stan Szozda, a cyclist from Poland spent considerable time developing his lungs. According to him, the secret to success was breathing and the way to improve it was through regular training. I am sure Szozda's definition of success was winning a bike race and I know that success is more than that. It can be anything from walking up a hill or around the block to releasing stress when in the middle of a stressful discussion. Your breath is a big part of each of these as well as many more.

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, talks about a Present Moment, Wonderful Moment in his book Peace at Every Step. He states:

“In our busy society, it is a great fortune to breathe consciously from time to time. We can practice conscious breathing not only while sitting in a meditation room, but also while working at the office or at home, while driving our car, or sitting on a bus, wherever we are, at any time throughout the day.

There are so many exercises we can do to help us breathe consciously. Besides the simple “In-Out” exercise, we can recite these four lines silently as we breathe in and out:

Breathing in, I calm my body
Breathing out, I smile
Dwelling in the present moment,
I know this is a wonderful moment!

“Breathing in, I calm my body.” Reciting this line is like drinking a glass of cool lemonade on a hot day – you can feel the coolness permeate your body. When I breathe in and recite this line, I actually feel my breath calming my body and mind.

“Breathing out, I smile.” You know a smile can relax hundreds of muscles in your face. Wearing a smile on your face is a sign that you are a master of yourself.

“Dwelling in the present moment.” While I sit here, I don't think of anything else, I sit here, and I know exactly where I am.

“I know this is a wonderful moment.” It is a joy to sit, stable and at ease, and return to our breathing, our smiling, our true nature. Our appointment with life is in the present moment. If we do not have peace and joy right now, when will we have peace and joy – tomorrow, or after tomorrow? What is preventing us from being happy right now? As we follow our breathing, we can say, simply, “Calming, Smiling, Present moments, Wonderful moment.”

This exercise is not just for beginners. Many of us who have practiced meditation and conscious breathing for forty or fifty years continue to practice in this same way, because this kind of exercise is so important and so easy.”

This time of year is often filled with more than enough to do, places to go, people to see.... I encourage you to stop every now and then and consciously breathe. Take a moment to bring you to the present moment and to bring peace and freedom within yourself.

Have a wonderful holiday season. I will be back in January with the start of 2006 newsletters. Until then stay mindful with all that you do, say and feel.

Carol Lee