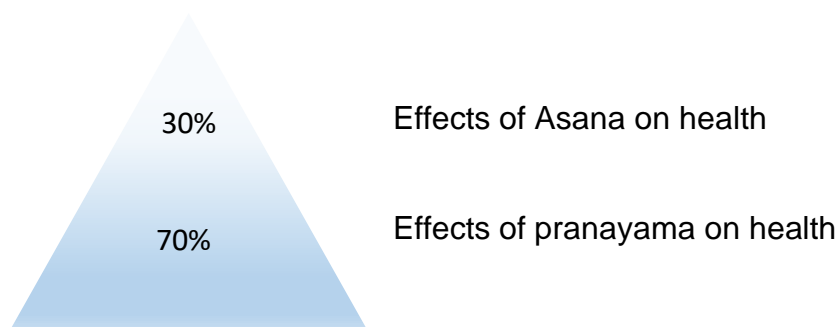


Pranayama as a therapy

Pranayama is probably about 70% more important than asana as a yoga therapy tool for creating opportunities for healing to occur.



Every yoga therapy client would benefit having a pranayama technique and either a deep relaxation or silent sitting technique to help restore health.

The body is only able to heal itself when it stops.

When we sleep or practise deep relaxation the body has a chance to organise the 60 trillion cells within our bodies into action to heal. Just as a plant needs the night to grow, we need rest to restore healthy homeostasis. The well known phrase 'time heals' is incorrect time marches on – stopping and resting heals.

Regular practice of pranayama prior to deep relaxation is important as it moves stuck energy from deep within the cells of the body, after which deep relaxation can work profoundly on a person.

Pranayama will also stimulate the Vagus nerve when performed correctly,

Before working with any of the following pranayama techniques it is important to assess the suitability of the pranayama for the client. Clients who lack energy will need to have pranayama techniques that support and build prana in the body in a way that does not tire the physical body at all.

Basic pranayama techniques used in yoga therapy.

- Bhramari breath
- Kapplabhati
- Bhastrika
- Nadi Shodanam
- Anuloma/Pratiloma/Viloma
- Sitali
- Sheetkari
- Kumbhaka

****Bhramari Breath (Humming Bee Breath) With Yoni Mudra**

This is an excellent pranayama for calming the nervous system down and therefore would be useful for calming down a vata imbalance.

Really helps calm anxiety, and can certainly work on reducing high blood pressure. (not making a claim for curing HBP) This breath is good for memory and concentration and will build confidence

It can soothe an unborn baby and with regular practice, restore the health of the nervous system in most people.

Kaplabhati

Stimulates the abdominal region can be used for endocrine and digestive imbalances such as metabolic syndrome and diabetes.

- Improves absorption and assimilation of nutrients.
- Alleviates constipation
- Cleanses pancreas and liver
- Detoxes and regulates the body.
- Helps to raise metabolism and can reduce weight (reduce excess Kapha)
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Bhastrika (Bellows Breath)

Before teaching this pranayama it is essential that the client knows how to perform the deep yogic breath well and easily before embarking on teaching this breath.

To use this breath therapeutically it is important to know that just by increasing effort on the in-breath the effects of Bhastrika are created.

Like kaplabhati this breath is a stimulating pranayama that clears obstructions in the respiratory system, strengthens the nervous system, increases physical vitality, and enhances clarity of mind.

Pratiloma/Anuloma/Viloma

Breathing ratios are a really good way of restoring health.

Pratiloma is used to break negative mental patterns.

Anuloma helps to replace with something new and positive.

Viloma can help breathing problems such as asthma, bronchitis, etc.,

Nadi Shodanam

This is the only pranayama mentioned in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika.

Fantastic breath for balancing the left/right brain. Using ANB with an emphasis on the feel of the breath can activate the hemispheres of the brain far more.

Sitali – the cooling breath works on cooling the blood. This breath is excellent when you are overheating.

Sheetkari – cools the Nadis, can be used when pitta is aggravated or out of balance.

Kumbhaka – breath retention

This pranayama needs to be used with caution. To work therapeutically with breath retention it is useful to allow the client to just begin to pause at the end of the breath.

Antar kumbhaka In-breath retention is used to help balance **vata/kapha** conditions, as it tends to increase the heart rate slightly and begins to stimulate the system.
It is about expansion and increase of prana.

Bahir Kumbaka Out - breath retention is helpful in balancing **vata/pitta** conditions.
This is a relaxing pranayama for the first few seconds, but after a while it also becomes quite stimulating. A therapist would not use this too much until they had developed the client's strength and ability to practise pranayama safely.

It can create tension and panic and therefore any strain holding the breath in any way is to be avoided.

Bahir kumbhaka provides the opportunity for the client to relax and let go.

** Most people need Bhramari pranayama to calm the nervous system and reduce anxiety and fear, it is therefore one of the best pranayama techniques that can be used to help yoga therapy clients.