

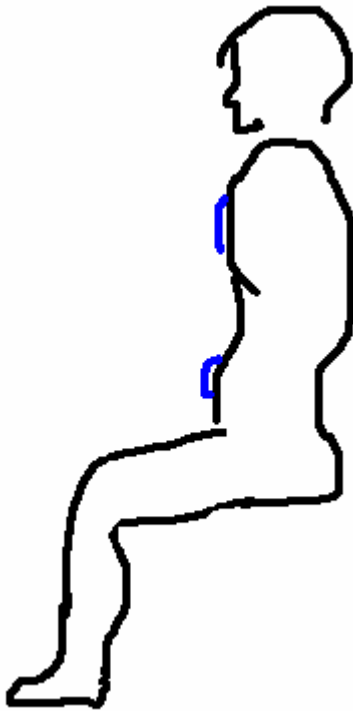
Quick Renewal Through Nurturing Touch

Here is a way you can significantly reduce a friend's overall tension in about four minutes, and leave them feeling refreshed and calmer.

We begin with breathing. Improving breathing is important, because the more naturally full and easy our breathing is, the more calm and relaxed we are. Breathing is also important in this technique because it provides extra energy that makes the rest of the techniques work better. Without realising it, most of us tend to restrict our breath. So here you will learn a quick way to help a friend learn to breathe better.

Assessing Breathing

Have your partner put one hand on their upper chest and one hand on their abdomen, and notice which moves more when they breathe normally. Usually one part will move more than the other. Ask your friend to identify which it is.



This self observation on the part of your friend is very important. You, as the instructor, are not going to improve their breathing. They are going to improve it themselves, with your help. By observing what they are doing, they become more aware of themselves, and have a better sense of what needs to change.

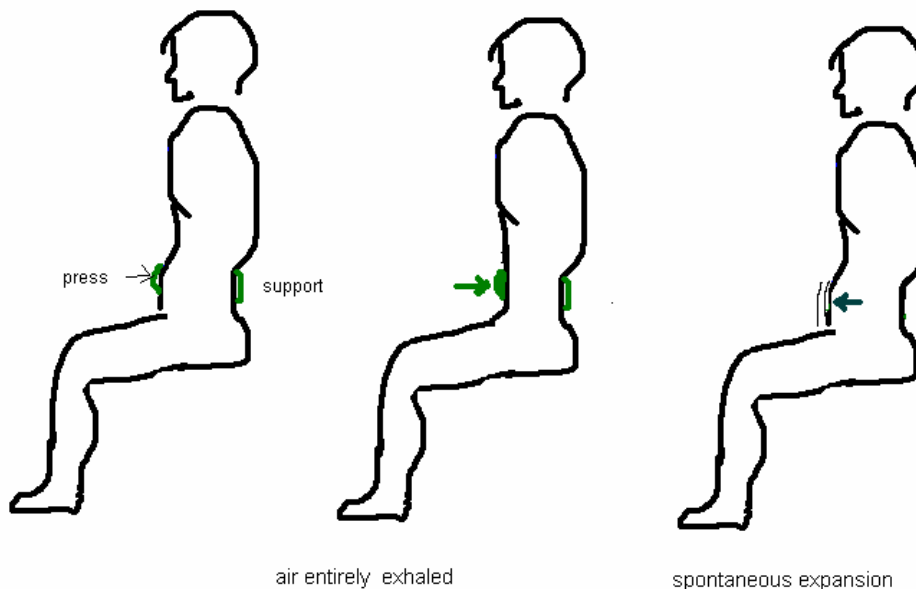
Let's suppose that the hand on the abdomen moves more than the hand on the chest, so that obviously there is more movement of breathing in the abdomen. If so,

then you might think that the thing to do is to try to improve the breathing in the chest first. But we are not going to do that, and there is a good reason. If we begin by improving the aspect of breathing that already works well, then our partner will know what to expect when we get to the part that does not work so well. So in this instance, let's begin by improving abdominal breathing.

We are going to improve it in a paradoxical way: we will increase the inhalation by making the exhalation work better. The reason is that exhaling fully activates a reflex to breathe in. The kind of breathing we do when this reflex is active is full and easy. It is not done by will power. Rather, the breathing is done by instinctual centres deep within the brain. It is more like the kind of breathing people discover when they meditate, when they feel that "it breaths me." However, this kind of breathing can be done when we are active as well. So we are going to accentuate the exhalation.

Accentuating Exhalation

To increase your partner's exhalation, sit at their side facing them and place one hand on top of the hand on their abdomen. Place your other hand on their back at the same level. This gives support. Sense the rhythm of their breathing, and then, as they exhale, press gently but firmly to induce them to exhale more air than they normally would. When all the air is expelled, immediately take your hand away so they can allow an unimpeded inhalation. Ideally they will spontaneously take a full deep breath - more than they usually do. To help monitor the outflow of their breath you can ask them to purse their lips and let out a thin stream of air as you press.



We improve breathing in the upper chest in the same way. Place your hand on top of your partner's hand, with your other hand on their upper back for support. As they exhale, press gently but firmly to squeeze a little more air out than usual. Then quickly release your pressure so they can allow the next breath to come in.

Sometimes people have difficulty in trusting the spontaneous intake of air. Without realising it they subtly clench and stop the intake of air. Encourage them to just allow the breath to come in.

So - by accentuating the exhalation we have improved the inhalation of both abdomen and ribs. We call this whole body breathing. We complete this section by giving a way to establish natural whole body breathing for yourself whenever you want.

We can trigger the inhalation reflex for ourselves simply by ejecting a quick puff of air near the end of our exhalation. This has the same effect as though somebody pressed our abdomen or ribs. As before, we simply allow the air to come in. Once the natural whole body breathing cycle is established, we do not need to keep puffing with each breath. That would be silly. We just allow the easy breathing to continue until we notice that we have stopped it. This could be some time later. Then another puff will cue us back into it.

Triggering Whole Body Breathing

Near the end of your exhalation, give a quick puff of air, and immediately allow the next inhalation to start spontaneously.

Now we are going to use the extra energy generated by whole body breathing to help your friend release excess muscular tension in the arm. The key to quickly releasing muscular tension in the arms is to move muscles around the bone. This is very different than massage. It is easy to do, and it is effective.

Pulsing Muscle Around Bone

Cup your fingers around the upper part of your friend's arm as you did in Neutral Touch, with the thumb pointing in the same direction as the fingers (for some reason this makes it work better). With a movement as though you had a roller between your hands begin to roll the muscles around the arm. We call this "pulsing." Start slowly, and play with the tempo until you find one that feels good to your friend.

Starting at the top of the arm, work your way down the upper arm and the forearm. The pulsing, like wind on water, sends energy and movement to layers beneath the surface. Once the person begins to relax the tempo may become quite rapid, so that the whole arm and hand shake with the movement.

Ask your partner to do whole body breathing while you pulse the muscles, and make sure you exhale a puff of air and start your own whole body breathing as well. When both of you breath fully the pulsing works more effectively. If your friend has not yet learned whole body breathing, you can simply invite them to "breathe comfortably, but a little more fully than usual."

When you have completed the first arm, you might pause and ask your partner to compare the sensation between the arm you just worked on and the other one. This attention will make them more aware of their body, and will also enable them to appreciate just how effective your work is!

Your work on the arms will start the shoulders relaxing. We can carry this further with direct work on the shoulders. We are going to release the shoulders using a method from the Feldenkrais method of body education called "taking over the work." The principle is unusual and effective. If a person's neck and shoulder muscles are tight, it is because their nervous system has sent orders to them to tighten. This tightening tends to raise the shoulders. Now, if we raise the shoulders for them, the nervous system may in effect say, "That's nice - somebody's doing my work so now I can stop trying." With that, the nervous system stops sending orders to the muscles (no point in doing the job twice), and (voila!) the muscles relax.

Here's how we apply this idea.

Releasing the Shoulders

Put one hand on your partner's shoulder near the neck for stability. With the other, grasp their upper arm and raise their shoulder towards their ear. Hold the shoulder up, but ask them to let it drop. Now it can't drop, of course, because you are holding it, but they can stop holding it up. So the muscles relax. Gently lift and lower the shoulder a couple of times, until the movement is smooth and easy. This is your sign that the shoulder is relaxed.

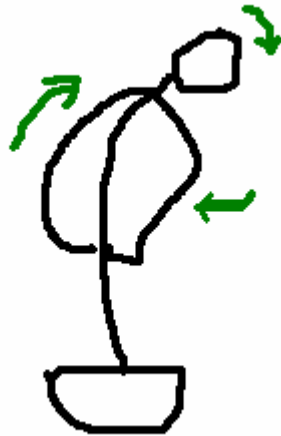
Provided you do not use force, you can also help release the shoulder by moving the shoulder a little forward and back, or even in gentle circles. We often tend to hold our body in set positions; simply being reminded of other possibilities can be relaxing.

When you have released both shoulders individually, you might lift both shoulders together.

The body works as a whole. If we remind the person that their ribs and spine can move, this will also help release neck and shoulder tension. A movement that is often neglected is sideways bending.

Mobilising the Ribs

Place your fingertips lightly under the armpits, and gently give your partner the idea of the ribs and spine curving to the left while the head goes to the right - all part of one symmetrical curve. If the person is comfortable and balanced, the right hip may lift as part of this same pattern of movement. If you use force there is the danger of hurting your partner, so only do the movement within a range that is easy for them.



Now we will do some massage to finish off. Massage is especially good for the neck muscles, the muscles along the top of the shoulders, and the long muscles of the back.

Massage

Ask your partner to rest her head on her arms on the desk. Begin by squeezing the muscles along the top of the shoulders. Then gently squeeze the neck muscles, and work along the base of the skull. Finally press up and down the long muscles of the back on either side of the spine.

Your technique does not have to be professional. Most people find gentle touch soothing, so you don't even have to do too much. Your touch makes them feel more aware of their body (and makes them feel nurtured), so it is not you that release their muscles, they do it. But they wouldn't have done it without you!

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Summary of Steps

The Quick Renewable can be done with your friend sitting in a chair.

1. Invite them to breathe comfortably but a little more fully than usual.

OR

If they know how to activate whole body breathing, invite them to expel a puff of air and allow their natural whole body breathing to proceed. Make sure your own breathing is full and easy as well.

2. Pulse the muscles around the bones of the arm. Start up near the shoulder and work down to the wrist.
3. Lift the shoulders, inviting your partner to 'let their shoulders drop' while you continue to hold it up. Lift and lower the shoulders several times, until the movement is sliding and easy. Sometimes it helps to move the shoulders a little forward and back as well.
4. Touching the ribs under the armpit with your finger tips, gently curve the spine in a bow to the left and right. Only do this where the movement is easy.
5. Invite them to rest their head on their arms on the desk, and do simple massage. Work the upper shoulder muscles, the neck, the base of the skull, and the long muscles that run up and down the back parallel to the spine.