

Functional Awareness® Anatomy in Action
Moving out of Habit and into Awareness

Guided exploration in breathing and primary muscular functions related to breathing
(Designed by Nancy Romita)

This exploration in experiential anatomy can be performed in a chair or semi-supine on a mat (lying down with knees bent). It is useful to have a notebook nearby to record your observations at various intervals

Part 1: What do you know?

Before the observations take a moment to draw your lungs on the skeleton chart provided

Or just visualize where your lungs are in your torso.

Write down a little bit about what you know about the lungs, the diaphragm and breathing. It may be that you have some prior understanding about breathing or it may be that you know that smoking is bad for the lungs.

Part 2: Nonjudgmental Awareness of breathing patterns

1. Begin lying down in semi-supine with a book under the head. Notice your breathing. Visualize where you see your breath going as it comes into the body and its journey through to exhale.
2. Notice how long you inhale, and how long is your exhale. Use a counting system to give yourself a relative measure of time for both
3. Notice if you prefer to breathe, inhale through the nose and exhale out the mouth, inhale through the mouth and exhale out the nose, inhale and exhale through the nose, or inhale and exhale through the mouth.
4. Where is the tip of your tongue resting? Where is the belly of the tongue resting?

Stop and sit up and record what you have noticed thus far.

Part 3: Explorations in diaphragmatic, intercostal, and auxiliary breathing patterns: Discovering habitual patterns for breathing.

First, become acquainted with the approach in this activity. For the following exploration, You will inhale through the nose and then exhale out the mouth making an 's' or 'sh' sound. A whispered 'ah' is another possible breathing approach for the following three activities. While remaining with the means whereby, bring your awareness to breathing in one of these manners suggested for several cycles of breath.

Next, place your hands at your lower abdomen and pelvis and observe the movement in the lower part of torso during this kind of breathing. Do not force anything...just sense if there is movement that occurs.

Now, place your hands on your ribs and sense the breath traveling to the alveoli in the mid torso. Senses the movements of the intercostal muscles, moving into three-dimensional expansion on inhale, and releasing from expansion on exhale.

Place your thumbs under your armpits and feel the costal bones of upper rib cage, and visualize breath traveling to the lungs that are deep to the upper ribs.

Finally, place your hands on your collarbone and upper chest and breathe into the upper lungs or auxiliary respiratory system. Notice the movement, if any, in the cervical spine as you inhale and exhale.

Sit up slowly and record your discoveries on paper

Part 4: Visual imagery and its affect on breathing and movement

Notice your breathing, while thinking of the spine as a stainless steel rod from between your ears to your tailbone. Sense how this feels.

Now change the image to the spine as a soft Weeping Willow branch and the breath is like the wind. Or think of the spine as seaweed. Finally, move to child pose and let yourself breathe into the posterior portion of your lungs. Record your findings