

Hello all,

Welcome to ***The Medicine***, Volume 1, Issue 7 of *Alternativz*, an occasional journal of complementary and alternative approaches to health, well-being, performance, and longevity. I offer this article especially to health practitioners who would like to maximize their client's take-away, and of course to any and all Coherent breathers who would like to optimize the outcome of their practice.

In my recent article [Countering The Entropy Of Aging](#), I offered 5 mental methods that when used alone or in combination can help mitigate the effects of entropy – all of them being age-old techniques from one system or another, but in retrospect I left one out, this being frequent immersion in the state between wakefulness and sleep. You can think of this as the *meditative* state, although there are many notions about what meditation is. In Kashmiri Shaivism the state to which I refer is called “sukma-gati”, meaning “subtle awareness”. It is considered the gateway in the Shaivist spiritual pursuit. We enter it by closing the eyes, remaining perfectly still, and breathing coherently. Within 10 minutes or so, one can clearly feel entry into sukma-gati, where we can persist for as long as we wish. It is evident when “it’s” work is done, after which we can rise and go about our day.



The Medicine

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For me personally, this is how I came to understand the profound effects of breathing coherently. It was the experience of finding and entering this *meditative* state that alerted me to the fact that there is a breathing method that facilitates this entry, not just now and then but every time we wish. After many years of seeking such a needle in a haystack, I understood it to be a significant finding. Sometime later I found that it was also the form of breathing that when fully awake facilitates robust coherent heart rate variability, a coherent brainwave pattern, and that generates the [Valsalva Wave](#) – which leads us to today...

When I see a client or instruct a new-comer in the practice of Coherent Breathing, my goal for the first session is for them to experience this *meditative* state, which is almost universally described as an “unusual feeling of internal calm and quiet” (although I add for clarity). A number of acupuncturists, massage therapists, neurotherapists, and yoga teachers are using Coherent Breathing in-session to bring the practitioner toward balance, balance enhancing therapeutic effectiveness. I usually employ the first track on [Respire-1](#), Vocal Instructive Sequence, as it is easy to understand and follow. [The Six Bridges](#) was specifically designed to elicit this *meditative* state when in a horizontal body position.

Stress, strain, insult, and injury tend to accumulate in the body mind. Incessant rumination, muscle tension, and feelings of angst are clear indications. *Meditation*, when practiced regularly sweeps away these obstacles leaving the body mind clean and clear, and preventing maladies that ultimately accrue from such impediments. Other surprising things can also happen.

The “state” of interest is quite literally a middle state, a *median* state in between wakefulness and sleep where the nervous system quiets down and the mind and the energy in the body are freed up, an experience that many of us have never had, at least that we are able to recognize clearly. Within 20 minutes or so, the energy in the body wells up and begins to move around of it’s own accord, relaxing muscles and untying knots, physical and otherwise. The Six Bridges exercise adds the dimension of conscious progressive relaxation of “bridges”, six anatomical zones that are the body’s interface with the external environment. Figuratively, I call the immersion experience “a shot of parasympathetic emphasis”, in that it is the strong conscious elicitation of parasympathetic activity that temporarily takes us there – but the effect is more than temporary.

With frequent entry into the *meditative* state, it wakes up the under utilized and often atrophied parasympathetic apparatus of the body, such that when we are awake and active it continues to function, helping us persist in a state of balance - the middle way. Sleep is also critical to health, well-being, and longevity, but it is the state between wakefulness and sleep where are able to consciously participate in the process. It is where the *medicine* can be found.

Gently closed eyes, Coherent Breathing, and perfect stillness make it happen. By “perfect stillness” I mean we don’t move a finger or blink an eye. The only conscious movement is that of breathing. Body inclination also makes a difference.

In 2010, Herbert Benson and William Proctor authored *The Relaxation Revolution* summarizing their study of how even 8 weeks of what they generically refer to as *a regular mind body practice that facilitates relaxation* has the potential to dramatically change gene expression for the good. In my opinion, evidence for the importance of managing our state of being couldn’t be more compelling.

I offer that *the real medicine is the middle way*. As we proposed in *The New Science Of Breath*, when the autonomic nervous system is brought into a state of balance, the body mind already knows how to care for itself. I see Benson’s work as a testament to this truth.

“Suksma-gati”, the *meditation* that results from closed eyes, Coherent Breathing, and stillness is a means of accessing and ultimately residing in the middle way. Words themselves offer us some insight into the understanding of the ancients, *median*, *medicine*, and *meditation* all sharing the same Latin root “medi” or “middle”.

[Of course China understood the significance of the middle way long long ago and to this day it remains a fundamental principle of Chinese philosophy and medicine.]

Thank you for your interest, Stephen Elliott

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