

Take a Breath, Break The Silence: The Effects of Yogic Breathing and Testimony About Battering on Feelings of Self-Efficacy in Battered Women

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Abstract

Abuse in an intimate relationship is a common and devastating problem worldwide. This study explores the effects of testifying about one's abuse and learning Yogic breathing (prānāyāma) techniques on self-efficacy. Forty women, self-identified as abused within the last two years by an intimate partner, were randomly assigned to either tell the story of their abuse (testimony), participate in Yogic breathing exercises, participate in a combined testimony/Yogic breathing condition, or participate as waiting controls. Analyses showed that the combination of testimony and Yogic breathing was associated with the greatest improvement in self-efficacy scores. Implications of these findings for interventions and therapy for abused women are discussed.

Introduction

For most women, the greatest risk of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse will come from a man they have known and trusted, often an intimate partner.¹ Worldwide, between 10% and 50% of women who have been in intimate relationships with men have reported that they have been physically assaulted by an intimate partner.² The effects of abuse on women's psyche, body, consciousness, and spirit (including their will to live and resilience) can be vast and devastating. Battered women represent 35% of women seeking emergency care for any reason,³ and 75% of women who are first identified as battered in a medical setting will go on to suffer repeated abuse.⁴ Physically, they may suffer compromised immune systems, miscarriages, broken bones, and bruised organs. Abused women may also suffer from depression, low self-efficacy, post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem. In a meta-analysis conducted by Golding,⁵ approximately half of abused women had clinical depression, compared to women who had not been abused.

By its very nature, intimate violence silences and

isolates its victims. When a woman experiences abuse, the lack of support and loss of self-confidence can result in increased feelings of hopelessness. According to Bandura, "The inability to influence events and social conditions that significantly affect one's life can give rise to feelings of futility and despondency....Because of the common co-occurrence of privations and threats, both apprehension and despair often accompany perceived inefficacy to alter miserable life circumstances."⁶

The purpose of the following study was to look at the effects of two powerful practices, disclosure of abuse to a nonjudgmental and receptive listener, and the use of Yogic breathing exercises (*prānāyāma*), on abused women's *self-efficacy*, the belief that one has the power to influence circumstances and handle challenges in one's life.

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Self-disclosure and Testimony

The belief that one cannot change one's circumstances can stem from a continuation of abuse and others' lack of recognition of that abuse. Dan⁷ suggests that not showing genuine concern for an abused women's experience, or failing to recognize the impact of battering on the abused woman, can cause the battered women to further withdraw and avoid seeking the help she needs. Telling the story of their abuse to a compassionate listener could end the silence, and encourage women to inform those who have the authority to help.⁸ For abused women, the listener could be a friend, therapist, attorney, judge and/or jury, and people who work within the therapeutic and criminal justice communities. According to physician Ana Flavia d'Oliveira,⁹ some women have been waiting their whole lives for someone to ask.

The value of testimony for victims of violence cannot be underestimated. For example, Sudanese refugees living in a Ugandan refugee settlement who gave testimony of their abuse showed dramatic reductions in the prevalence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).¹⁰ This change occurred despite the fact that the refugees continued to live in dangerous conditions, and did not occur among refugees assigned to traditional counseling. The testimony method has also been used for a group of traumatized refugees from genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Participants who received an average of six sessions of "testimony psychotherapy" demonstrated significant decreases in the rate of PTSD diagnosis and depressive symptoms, and significant improvements in global functioning.¹¹ These studies suggest that telling one's story of abuse could be a necessary first step in healing.

Prânâyâma: Yogic Breathing

According to Yogic teachings, *prâna* is a vital energy that connects the mind and body;¹² *prâna* is also defined as "breath." *Yama* (or *ayama*) means to stretch, extend, stop, or lengthen in space or time control.¹³ Hence, *prânâyâma* is the practice of regulating the breath to influence the mind and body. The specific techniques of *prânâyâma* may involve lengthening, directing, retaining, and regulating the movement of the breath.

Breath, as understood through ancient Vedic knowledge, leads us to understanding of the self, changing of the self, and the revelation that we are part of, and breathing with, the breath of the universe.¹³ So *prânâyâma* becomes a means of self-inquiry, self-realization, and self-transformation. According to the philosophy of *prânâyâma* within the context of Hatha Yoga,¹⁴ focus on the breath helps a person

put the past and future aside and concentrate on the present moment. Further, awareness of the breath takes the place of ruminative thinking, allowing the person to substitute negative thoughts with the simple and deliberate act of breathing.¹⁵ For this reason, breathing techniques could have an important place within the clinical/counseling community.

To date, no research has examined the effects of *prânâyâma* on self-efficacy. However, a number of studies offer some preliminary evidence for the benefits of *prânâyâma* on mood and stress for individuals suffering from a wide range of psychological disorders and medical challenges.^{12,16-19}

The Present Study

The aim of this experiment was to examine the effects of two interventions on the self-efficacy of abused women. The researchers hypothesized that individually, both disclosing one's story of abuse and learning Yogic breathing practices would improve the self-efficacy of abused women, and that the combination of both would have a synergistic impact.

Methods

Participants

Participants were recruited through advertisements and word of mouth communication. Announcements of the experiment were carried in the local newspaper, and flyers were placed on the inside of bathroom stall doors in the courthouse, the local state university, and community college, and in various bars and other locations. Forty women who self-identified as either African-American ($n = 20$) or Caucasian ($n = 20$) and also self-identified as verbally, emotionally, physically, and/or sexually abused by a man with whom they have been intimate within the last two years, were invited to participate.

Design

The experiment was conceived as a single factor (with four levels of the independent variable) repeated measures design. Within race, the participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: Testimony of Abuse, Yogic Breathing, Combined Testimony and Yogic Breathing, or Waiting Control.

Conditions

1. Testimony (two 45-minute sessions over two consecutive days)

2. Yogic Breathing (two 45-minute sessions over two consecutive days)
3. Combined Testimony/Yogic Breathing (two 45-minute sessions, beginning with 45 minutes of testimony and immediately followed by 45 minutes of *prānāyāma*).
4. Waiting Controls (no sessions). Waiting control participants were able to receive one of the two treatment conditions after the experiment ended, if they wished to continue their participation.

Testimony. Participants in the testimony condition were matched with a trained listener of the same race. Female research assistants (one counseling masters student and one senior undergraduate psychology major) were trained to actively listen to the participants, asking questions only to encourage the participants to talk about and elaborate on their experiences (e.g., “Could you talk more about that?” and “Could you explain what you mean?”). The research assistants were also trained to exhibit conscious involvement in the participant’s story through eye contact and body language. Women’s testimonies were taken in a small room in a discrete location on the third floor of the campus library. The sessions were recorded for later transcription and content analyses of the narratives.

Yogic Breathing. A research assistant, who was trained by a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT), taught participants a variety of *prānāyāma* techniques, including regulating the length and depth of inhalation and exhalation, directing the movement of the breath, using breath with sound, and using the breath to find a state of focused stillness in body, senses, and mind. Very simple Yoga poses were incorporated into *prānāyāma* for the purpose of enhancing the *prānāyāma* technique. *Prānāyāma* was taught in a Yoga studio located near the university. See Appendix A for a full description of *prānāyāma* techniques and Yoga poses taught.

Procedure

The experiment took four consecutive days to complete. On the first day, participants were administered a measure of self-efficacy, and were asked to fill out a demographic sheet and informed consent. On the second and third days, participants provided either testimony, practiced Yogic breathing, participated in both, or were not given a treatment (control). All participants completed the measure of self-efficacy again on the fourth day, and were debriefed. If at any time during the four days they requested legal or psychological help, a sheet of paper with

resource information was given to them. Each participant received \$100 (1/3 the first day, 1/3 the third day, and 1/3 the last day).

Outcome Measure

The Franzblau Self-Efficacy Scale (FSES)20 consists of five bifurcated factors: relieved/anxious; in control/out of control; secure/insecure; unafraid/afraid; confident/not confident. Participants indicated the level of intensity for each factor on a bifurcated scale ranging from a +3 to a -3. For example, on the in control/out of control factor, +3 indicated “extremely in control,” +2 “moderately in control,” +1 “somewhat in control,” -1 “somewhat out of control,” -2 “moderately out of control,” and -3 “extremely out of control.” Participants selected one point on this continuum. For this study, we analyzed each of the bifurcated factors separately.

Results

Does testimony, Yogic breathing, and/or the combination of the two treatments improve self-efficacy in abused women? Tables 1–5 present the means and standard deviations for each of the five self-efficacy factors (Relieved/Anxious, In/Out of Control, Secure/Insecure, Unafraid/Afraid, and Confident/Not Confident) by the four treatment conditions (Testimony, Breathing, Testimony & Breathing, and Waiting Controls). If the mean post-test score was higher than the mean pre-test score, then on average the participants in that group improved their self-efficacy on that factor. A *t*-test for correlated sample was performed, and Tables 1–5 provide the *t* score and the probability value associated with that *t* score for each item by each treatment condition. Of the nineteen combinations in which there was a difference between the pre-test and the post-test, only six were statistically significant ($p < .10$). For the participants in the Testimony/Breathing condition, changes in four of the five FSES factors were statistically significant. The only factor that did not show significant improvement was Relieved/Anxious, which did not improve significantly in any treatment condition. Improvement in the Unafraid/Afraid factor was statistically significant for three of the four treatment conditions (Testimony, Breathing, and Testimony/Breathing). It should also be noted that for the participants in the Waiting Control condition, there was no statistically significant change in any of the five FSES factors.

Anxious/Relieved							
	Pretest		Posttest			<i>t</i>	
Condition	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Outcomes**	<i>df</i> =9	<i>p</i>
Testimony	0.10	2.183	0.10	1.729	S	0.00	1.000
Breathing	0.50	2.068	1.70	1.160	I	-1.857	0.096
Testimony/Breathing*	-1.11	1.965	0.20	2.098	I	-1.322	0.223
Waiting Control	-0.50	2.014	0.0	2.449	I	-0.643	0.537

* $n = 9$ for the pretest ($df = 8$), $n = 10$ for all the other conditions

** I = Improves on score, S = no improvement, R = score Regresses

† Statistically Significant

Table 1. Changes in "anxious/relieved" self-efficacy factor, before and after intervention.

In Control/Out of Control							
	Pretest		Posttest			<i>t</i>	
Condition	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Outcomes**	<i>df</i> =9	<i>p</i>
Testimony	0.20	2.044	1.20	1.619	I	-1.205	0.259
Breathing	1.60	0.516	1.50	0.707	R	0.429	0.678
Testimony/Breathing*	-0.44	2.242	0.80	1.619	I	-2.135	0.065
Waiting Control	-1.70	1.567	0.40	2.011	I	1.868	0.095

* $n = 9$ for the pretest ($df = 8$), $n = 10$ for all the other conditions

** I = Improves on score, S = no improvement, R = score Regresses

† Statistically Significant

Table 2. Changes in "in control/out of control" self-efficacy factor, before and after intervention.

Secure/Insecure							
	Pretest		Posttest			<i>t</i>	
Condition	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Outcomes**	<i>df</i> =9	<i>p</i>
Testimony	-0.20	1.619	0.30	1.703	I	-0.696	0.504
Breathing	0.50	1.841	0.90	1.449	I	-0.802	0.443
Testimony/Breathing*	-1.89	1.965	0.80	1.989	I	-3.743	0.006†
Waiting Control	0.20	2.201	0.30	2.312	I	-0.126	0.903

* $n = 9$ for the pretest ($df = 8$), $n = 10$ for all the other conditions

** I = Improves on score, S = no improvement, R = score Regresses

† Statistically Significant

Table 3. Changes in "secure/insecure" self-efficacy factor, before and after intervention.

Unafraid/Afraid							
	Pretest		Posttest			<i>t</i>	
Condition	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Outcomes**	<i>df</i> =9	<i>p</i>
Testimony	-0.60	1.430	0.90	1.524	I	-2.875	0.018†
Breathing	0.20	1.874	1.70	0.675	I	-2.875	0.018†
Testimony/Breathing*	-0.11	2.147	1.60	1.776	I	-2.500	0.037†
Waiting Control	0.30	2.111	1.50	1.716	I	-1.765	0.111

* $n = 9$ for the pretest ($df = 8$), $n = 10$ for all the other conditions

** I = Improves on score, S = no improvement, R = score Regresses

† Statistically Significant

Table 4. Changes in “unafraid/afraid” self-efficacy factor, before and after intervention.

Confident/Not Confident							
	Pretest		Posttest			<i>t</i>	
Condition	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Outcomes**	<i>df</i> =9	<i>p</i>
Testimony	0.60	1.955	1.20	1.874	I	-0.786	0.452
Breathing	1.40	1.075	1.60	1.075	I	-0.480	0.642
Testimony/Breathing*	-0.11	1.691	1.90	0.994	I	-3.328	0.010†
Waiting Control	1.50	1.780	0.60	2.413	R	1.868	0.095

* $n = 9$ for the pretest ($df = 8$), $n = 10$ for all the other conditions

** I = Improves on score, S = no improvement, R = score Regresses

† Statistically Significant

Table 5. Changes in “confident/not confident” self-efficacy factor, before and after intervention.

A one-way Analysis of Variance, comparing the change scores for the four treatment conditions, was computed for each of the five factors. Table 6 shows that treatment condition has an affect on self-efficacy for three of the five FSES factors. For the In Control/Out of Control factor, the analysis revealed an F ratio of 3.713 ($df = 3, 35$) $p = 0.020$. For the Secure/Insecure factor, the analysis revealed an F ratio of 3.187 ($df = 3, 35$) $p = 0.036$. For the Confident/Not Confident factor, the analysis revealed an F ratio of 4.132 ($df = 3, 35$) $p = 0.013$. A Tukey HSD post hoc comparison revealed that all of the significant differences were between Testimony/Breathing and Waiting Controls (mean differences were: In/Out of Control = 2.85556, $p = 0.021$; Secure/Insecure = 2.78889, $p = 0.043$; Confident/Not Confident = 2.90, $p = 0.007$).

Discussion

Although some factors of self-efficacy improved for all treatment conditions, the results from this experiment suggest that the greatest effect on self-efficacy is derived from the combined Testimony/Breathing condition. It is clear from the data that there is a powerful synergistic effect of giving testimony and practicing *prānāyāma* on feelings of self-efficacy, particularly feelings of control, security, and confidence.

There are two major limitations of this experiment: 1) the small sample; and 1) lack of follow-up. Extending this experiment with a larger diverse sample would allow us to make claims about the ecological validity of combining breath and voice. Furthermore, just because participants

reported higher levels of self-efficacy after two days of giving testimony and practicing *prānāyāma*, does not mean that their feelings of confidence, control, and security would be maintained over time. A further study would be necessary to explore the extended effects of these two powerful treatment conditions. Using a larger sample, measuring long-term effects, and combining subjective measures with physiological measures, would provide strong evidence for using breathing techniques in a cognitive-behavioral therapy situation.

This research has important implications for intimate violence interventions. Historically, abused women's rights to tell the story of their abuse has been drowned out by the authoritarian voices of government officials, police, family, religious institutions, and even friends. For most of the women in this study, giving their recorded story was their first chance to hear themselves talk about the horrific details of their experiences. The women were finally able to release the emotional burdens that had been buried within, in a nonthreatening and nonjudgmental environment. The environment created in this study gave the women a chance to voice their concerns and their fears, without being reprimanded, interrogated, ignored, and most importantly, further violated by the listener. During the experiment, *prānāyāma* and testimony were instituted in an environment in which the women could feel safe and peaceful, an environment in which the participant could be free of judgment and oppression. They were encouraged to not criticize themselves during the process, and to focus not on their mistakes, but on feeling comfortable and in control, with all attention given to the story and/or the breath.

We hope that these techniques, when taken out of the laboratory, would allow abused women to focus on the present and observe patterns in their lives, and give them the confidence to leave their battering situations. We suggest that cognitive behavioral therapy with abused women incorporate breathing exercises for both client and practitioner. Not only would this help the now-relaxed client better integrate and reflect upon her experiences, but it might help build a stronger and more therapeutic synergistic relationship between mental health workers and their clients.

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Appendix A: Yogic Breathing Techniques

Part One: Learning How to Breathe, Sitting in an Easy Cross-Legged Position

1. Easy Yoga Pose. Cross legs in easy pose, sitting on as many blankets as necessary to bring knees below hips.
2. Bring your awareness to your breath and observe it flowing in and out of your nose as you inhale and exhale.
3. Place one hand on the abdomen and the other on the heart. Exhale by pulling the abdomen inward, back toward spine. To inhale, release the inward abdominal pull and allow belly to swell gently forward into your hand. (Do not press belly forward—keep it strain-free.) Try to keep the hand on the heart from moving.
4. Place palms on the side of the chest, level with the bottom of the breastbone. Fingertips barely touch the chest. Exhale deeply. Inhale deeply and expand the chest, trying to move fingertips away from the midline of the chest. Make the chest round. Notice how the chest expands in all directions: sideways, forward and backward, and upward. As you exhale, gently squeeze the rib cage inward with hands.
5. Place palms on the side ribs, and as you inhale, feel the ribs expand into your hands. As you exhale, feel the side ribs contract toward the center of your body.
6. Inhale and exhale fully. This empties the lungs and creates room for a deep inhalation.
7. To inhale, relax the abdomen and allow the belly to gently swell forward a little. Do not try to do anything. Don't press the belly outward. Simply release the inward pull of the abdomen. Air will come in effortlessly.
8. Aim the breath upward into the chest and expand the chest, rounding it. Slide your shoulder blades down your back. Do not shrug your shoulders upward. Keep them down and relaxed.
9. To exhale, allow the ribs to relax in, release the air slowly, and gently pull your belly in.
10. Make the inhalations and exhalations even and fluid, as if your breath were like water flowing in and out.

Part Two: Feeling the Breath, Lying in Crocodile Pose

1. Lie on your stomach with your arms stretched out before you and the palms touching. Rest your forehead on the ground. Inhale and exhale, bringing your awareness to your breath and the movement of your stomach. As you inhale,

notice that your stomach expands, pushing your spine off the ground. As you exhale, notice that your stomach contracts, releasing your spine and chest toward the ground. Breathe here for 10 full breaths.

Part Three: Expanding the Exhalations, Sitting in Easy Pose

1. Come back to easy pose and continue the easy breathing.
2. Inhale for four beats and exhale for four beats. Concentrate on the breath in your belly, and move the breath up toward your chest. When you exhale, feel the breath sliding down your back, and bring your shoulders down with the exhalation.
3. Inhale for two beats and exhale for three beats.
4. Inhale for two beats and exhale for four beats.
5. Inhale for three beats and exhale for five beats.
6. Inhale for three beats and exhale for six beats.

Part Four: Expanding the Spaces Between the Breaths, Sitting in Easy Pose

1. Inhale for four beats.
2. Hold the breath for two beats.
3. Exhale for two beats.
4. Hold the breath for two beats.
5. Repeat the sequence, but hold the breath for three beats.
6. Repeat the sequence, but hold the breath for four beats.

Part Five: Learning How to Lift and Open the Chest in Supported Bridge Pose

1. Lie down on your back, with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor, directly under your knees.
2. As you inhale, let the breath travel up your chest from your belly. As you exhale, let the breath travel down your back to your tailbone.
3. Lift your arms directly toward the ceiling and stretch one arm at a time, expanding the muscles away from your spine.
4. Lift your hips and place a block directly under your sacrum. Rest your sacrum on the block. You should feel totally comfortable resting on the block.
5. Stretch your arms out to the side, lining your arms up with your shoulders, palms up and fingers slightly curled up.
6. Externally rotate the upper arm bone, and flatten your upper back and shoulder blades to the floor.

7. Close your eyes and breathe evenly, using four beats for the inhalation and four beats for the exhalation. Take 20 full breaths here.
8. Lift your hips and remove the block. Come down on your back, one vertebra at a time.
9. Tuck your pelvis forward, so that your lower back is resting on the ground. Bring your knees up to your chest and wrap your hands around your shins, and then draw your forehead toward your knees.
10. Roll over to one side, and come up to your hands and knees.

Part Six: Learning How to Breathe in Child's Pose

1. Sit back on your heels.
2. Press your buttocks into your heels and extend your spine forward.
3. Extend your arms in front of you, resting them on the floor.
4. Rest your forehead on the floor or on a block, if your head does not reach the floor.
5. Take long inhalations (four beats), and longer exhalations (six beats).
7. Engage Bee Breath (inhale and, with your mouth closed, exhale, humming deep in your throat until there is no breath left). Continue with your inhalations and exhalations this way.

Part Seven: Shavâsana (Corpse Pose)

Those suffering from hypertension, high blood pressure, heart disease, emphysema, a cold or throat congestion, or restlessness should place a pillow under the head. Those suffering from sciatica or lower back pain should place a bolster under the knees.

Directions Given to Participants: Relaxation means recuperation. It is not simply lying on one's back with a vacant mind and gazing, nor does it end in snoring. It is the most refreshing and rewarding pose. The body, breath, mind, and brain move toward the equalization of mind, body, and breath. It is a state of stillness where the body, senses, and mind are controlled by you.

1. First, achieve stillness of the body: remove all restricting garments, belts, glasses, contact lenses, etc.
2. Sit with your knees bent and feet together. Draw an imaginary line down the center of your body from your legs all the way up to the crown of your head. Gradually lower

yourself, vertebra by vertebra, along that imaginary center line, until your back is totally flat on the floor.

5. Lift your hips slightly, and with your hands, move the flesh and skin from the back of the waist down toward your buttocks.
6. Lift your arms straight up to the ceiling and stretch one arm at a time, feeling the muscles and skin move away from the center of your spine to the sides.
7. Adjust your head so that it is at the center, with your neck long and your chin slightly tucked toward your collarbone. Stretch out your neck so that your head is resting comfortably without your neck being pinched.
8. Join your heels and knees, the center of your coccyx, your spinal column, and the base of the skull, so that they all rest on this imaginary straight line down the center of your body.
9. Place the inner point of each shoulder blade to the floor. Roll the skin of the top of the chest from the collar bones toward the shoulder blades, so that your back rests perfectly on the blanket.
10. Take your spine from the center of your spine to your lumbar vertebra and rest them evenly on either side, so that the ribs are spread out uniformly. Rest on the center of your sacrum, so that your buttocks relax evenly.
11. Keep your feet together, and stretch out the edges of your heels. Then let your feet fall outwards. Your big toes should feel weightless. Do not force your little toes to touch the floor.
12. Bend your arms at the elbows, touching the tops of your shoulders with your fingers. Extend the back portion of your upper arms and take the elbows as far as you can towards your feet. Then lower your forearms and extend your hands from your wrists to the knuckles of your fingers, with your palms facing up, and your fingers curling up like the petals of a blossom. Keep your fingers passive and relaxed.
13. The feeling of lying on the floor should be as though your body is sinking into mother earth. [Cover participants with a blanket. If they need a pillow or something under their knees, this is the time to do it.]
14. Remove tension from the back of the body, from the truck to the neck, arms, and legs. Relax the front of the body, from your upper thighs to your throat. Relax from the neck to the crown of your head.
15. Experience lightness in your armpits, your groin, diaphragm, lungs, spinal muscles, and abdomen.
16. Gently move your upper eyelids toward the inner corners of the eyes. Relax the skin above them, and create space between your eyebrows.
17. Keep the root of your tongue passive, as in sleep, and

resting on your lower palate. Keep the corners of your lips relaxed by stretching them sideways.

18. Pay attention to the skin on your temples, cheekbones, and lower jaw. Relax the skin, feeling as if the skin is melting like butter from the center of your face to the sides.

19. Breathe evenly through both nostrils, inhaling normally but exhaling softly, deeply, and longer than the inhalation. Feel as if your breath is oozing from the pores of the skin on your chest.

20. Stay with an awareness of your breath. Let the thoughts you have move in and out of your mind but let them go. Simply observe them. [The following is spoken to the participants: “Like the darting movements of a fish in the water are the movements of the mind and intellect. When the water is unruffled, the image reflected in your mind is unbroken and still. When the wavers of your mind and intellect are stilled, the self arises undisturbed to the surface of the water, free of desires. At this stage of rest, the mind is free from fluctuations, and it dissolves and merges into your self, like a river emptying into the sea.”]

Part Eight: Coming Back To Easy Pose

1. Slowly bring your consciousness back to your breath, and notice that your breath is breathing you. Feel the contentment and peace of your body and mind.
2. Bring your knees up to your chest and slowly roll over to the right side, curling up into fetal position. Breathe slowly and deeply in this position.
3. Slowly, keeping your back rounded, come to easy pose. Make sure you are sitting on blankets if you need to.
4. Inhale for four beats up the front of your body, beginning at your belly and moving toward your collar bones. Then exhale for four beats down the back of your body, drawing your shoulders down with your breath. Breathe this way for about 10 breaths.

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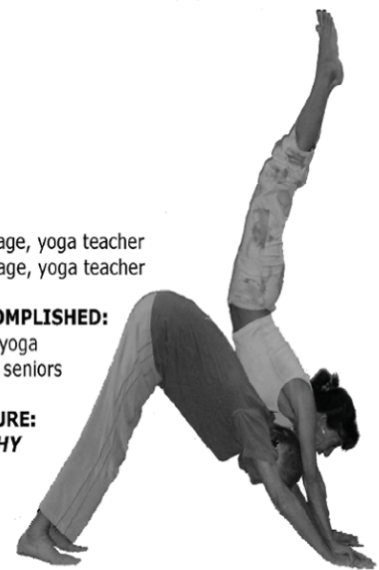
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