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ADAPT ADJUST ACCOMMODATE TOOLS, TECHNIQUES, & METHODS to a Balanced Life

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Our lives are full of tensions and stress. Our patterns are irregular. We find ourselves undisciplined, trying to achieve random goals. To a great extent we have developed the attitude of finding fault with everything, forgetting to find the faults in ourselves.

Our lifestyles have led us to innumerable physical, mental and emotional problems. These patterns are the root cause for all our day to day restlessness and inefficiencies. Our problems appear at work, school and in our personal lives. Our lifestyle is leading us to further frustration, anger, discontent and other imperfections, causing us to lose our health and the happiness, which is available to us all the time.

We have tried to find the solutions for our problems with drinking and partying, drugs, sex, and any of a great number of escapes. The solutions we take lead us only to short-term pleasure. In the long run, we are not satisfied with our lives. We start to live like animals. We try to find fault with everything without trying to find the faults within ourselves. We have gone too far in this direction.

There is a solution. There are tools to get ourselves composed, healthy and happy. Many people all over the world use these tools by practicing the teachings of yoga. They have achieved excellent results.

Swami Shivananda, a great yoga master from India's Himalayan region, advises that the first and foremost change we all have to do is: **ADAPT, ADJUST & ACCOMMODATE**. We can accommodate ourselves by making specific time to learn and practice yoga. The regular practice of yoga will help us to adjust to the circumstances around us, which will help us to adapt, by understanding our situations and reduce tensions. Hence, the first step to improve our present situations is for us to start the three A's—**ADAPT, ADJUST** and **ACCOMMODATE**.

Let's start by looking at the meaning and practice of **ADAPT**: Try to practice the teachings of the yogis in our daily life. These practices include the following: Breathing, Exercising, Relaxing, Meditation and Positive Thinking. Yoga has been shown to have very good benefits for our physical, mental and spiritual selves. These practices have improved health and happiness, and help to make us more efficient, disciplined and prosperous.

To Start Adapting

- Get up early in the morning, speaking the truth.
- Do not harm any creature in this universe through either your body, speech or mind.
- Be kind and compassionate.
- Be good and do good.
- Serve, love, and give to the needy both physically and emotionally.

Protect yourself from intoxicating foods and drinks. Do not waste time and energy in idle gossip, back-biting or cheating. Protect yourself from the negative things, such as lust, anger, greed, hatred, jealousy and attachment to materialistic things.

BREATHING: Breathing is very important. Breathing is the foundation of life. Every creature in this universe breathes. If we carefully observe the breathing of animals, we notice that they use their abdominal area. In our infancy, we also use our abdomen for breathing. This abdominal breathing helps the lungs to take in more air and more oxygen for the whole body. Our bodies need energy in the form of oxygen even more than food and water.

When we have more oxygen, every part, every cell gets their required share of oxygen. If we do not get enough oxygen, then the oxygen we have will be used by the parts of the body that require it most. Less vital parts or cells start starving and decaying, causing our bodies to function less efficiently. We gain weight, our coloring gets poor and we lose skin tone. In short, negative energy and disease starts to take hold of our bodies.

In the long run, with limited oxygen, we age more quickly. We lose our strength prematurely and begin to have shortness of breath. It is common for the lungs to lose the capacity to take in enough oxygen. This shallow breathing leads to physical and mental problems. Yoga can prevent this.

Relearning Breathing

Let us get back to the natural way of breathing: using our abdomen for breathing. Place your hand gently on your abdomen (around the navel with palms down), inhale deeply moving the abdomen out so that you feel your stomach rise. Then exhale deeply moving your abdomen in so that you feel your hand move in. Practice this awhile, doing deep abdominal breathing for at least 5 minutes. After this simple exercise, notice that you are inhaling and exhaling more than before. Now, removing your hand from your abdomen, continue abdominal breathing, making a conscious effort to use your abdomen for breathing. Do this throughout the day. By consciously doing this for several days, abdominal breathing will become a reflex action.

Once you expand your breathing and this becomes a pattern, your body will begin to gain strength and become more balanced. Both the body and the mind will receive the benefits from this simple exercise. You will start feeling stronger and healthier. Also, if you have any breathing problems like a stuffy nose, bad breath or congestion, you will get relief from expanded breathing.

Remember to use your nose for breathing, not the mouth. The nose filters air as it moves into your lungs. As you persist in doing deep breathing, any difficulties in breathing through the nostrils will vanish.

The Subtle Nerves and Chants

In our body we have 84 million subtle nerves, which are called Nadis in Sanskrit. They can also be called psychic nerves in English. These nerves cannot be seen, but we can feel them. The ancient sages, who practiced natural habits, were able to feel 72,000 of them. They realized that the vibration of all 72,000 nadis provided the harmonious energy in our bodies. This, in turn, provided all the health and efficiencies, physical and mental, which help us to have a healthy and happy, stress-free, tension-free lives.

The sages found that nadis vibrate through sounds we provide in our body orally or mentally. They showed us how to make all 72,000 nadis vibrate using one Sanskrit letter. That letter is om: . When we repeat this OM we can feel a soothing effect and also experience a relaxed feeling throughout our body and mind.

The Yoga Asanas

We all know that we have two nostrils for breathing, yet we are not using both the nostrils together for breathing all the time. Usually we only use one nostril fully at a time. When we use our left nostril predominantly, the body tends to become cool. When we use our right nostril predominantly, the body tends to become warm. This cooling and warming effect is always compared to the moon and the sun respectively, and to the Sanskrit words **HA** and **THA**. Hence, the balancing of this in our bodies through the practice of exercises (Yoga Asanas) and breathing (Pranayama) is known as **HATHA YOGA**.

The breathing from left nostril to right nostril changes automatically according to the requirements of our body. This is the gift of nature to all beings in this universe. You can observe that we become restless or feel uneasy when our body either feels too warm or too cold.

Modern technology has allowed us to control our environment through the use of air conditioners and heaters. This type of help from artificial or external appliances can lead us to many physical and mental problems. Air controllers restrict the natural air flow in the atmosphere. Added to this, we are victims of air pollution due to our urban lifestyles. This is almost unavoidable. By using the wisdom of our ancient saints and sages, we can try to recharge ourselves through practices, and gain enough strength to face our daily lives more effectively and efficiently.

Alternate Nostril Breathing

Let us start with the most simple and most beneficial exercise for maximum physical, mental and spiritual development in our daily life. This is called Alternate Nostril Breathing Without Retention (Or in Sanskrit: nadi shuddhi pranayama). Our breathing involves three actions: Inhalation, Retention and Exhalation (Puraka, Kumbhaka and Rechaka). This exercise involves only two of them: Inhalation (Puraka) and Exhalation (Rechaka).

To do this exercise, sit in crossed-leg position on the floor (you can sit on a cushion). If it is not possible to sit on the floor, sit on a chair. The important thing is to keep your back, neck and head straight. Do a few rounds of deep abdominal breathing. When the breathing becomes slow and steady, touch your forehead with your right hand and gently press. Command the forehead to relax. Next, close your eyes and gently touch the eyes and eyeballs and command them to relax. Feel the relaxation in your eyes and eyeballs. Next, relax the jaw and jaw joints: when the mouth is closed and jaws do not touch each other the jaw joints will get relaxed. Now try to feel the relaxation in your forehead, eyes and jaw joints. Then feel the relaxation in the shoulders and the whole body.

When you are relaxed, you can check that the breathing has slowed down and become steady. Now, concentrating on the breathing, close your right nostril with the right thumb, exhale through the left nostril and then inhale through the left nostril completely. Fill the lungs with air. Close the left nostril with the index finger and exhale through right nostril complete and full and then inhale through the right nostril complete and full. Close the right nostril and exhale through left nostril complete and full. This is called one round of Alternate Nostril Breathing.

Repeat this exercise for at least five rounds, (ten breaths) remember to concentrate on the breathing. Now, breathe normally and try to observe the change in the breathing pattern; the inhalations and exhalations are becoming longer and longer, slower and steady. The mind is becoming calmer.

Observing this and concentrating on the breathing, repeat the alternate nostril breathing again for 5 more rounds. Again notice the changes in the breathing pattern and feel the nice cleansing feeling in the back of your throat and nasal passages. Again repeat the alternate nostril breathing for 5 more rounds.

Now sitting in the same position, back, neck and head straight, keeping the eyes closed, concentrate on the breathing. Try visualizing the breath going all over the body from toe to the crown of your head, with each inhalation and the air from all over your body going out with each exhalation. Stay in this position for at least 10 minutes. If you want, you can repeat a mantra mentally or repeat OM mentally and feel the vibrations all over the body.

Then slowly get up and begin your daily routines. This practice constitutes Breathing and Meditation. The next practice involves some simple exercises called yoga asanas: also known as yoga postures. Asanas means holding a position for some time, maybe seconds or minutes. These yoga asanas exercises differ from physical exercises,

which as the name physical indicates, are intended to strengthen the muscles. Yoga asanas, as the name indicates, brings union with mind and body.

Yoga exercises are most effective when done with synchronizing the movements with breathing, and visualizing the movement while concentrating on breathing. This helps the whole body to get good circulation of air and blood through all the joints. Yoga exercises are practiced to the satisfaction of ones own self and not for the satisfaction of others.

As we practice daily, we can observe the progress, as well as the flexibility of the body. This will help us to see that the practice of exercises will not become mechanical and helps us maintain our concentration. These benefits improve our ability to cope with our daily stresses.

Adjusting through Yoga Postures

Now let us get ready to do some yoga Postures: yoga Asanas. We are going to practice 12 asanas, known as the basis set of asanas. When we are able to do these asanas to the best of our satisfaction, we can do any variation of the above asanas without any difficulty and all.

Now let us try to understand the meaning of the term adjust: In this day and age, very few of us are satisfied with our lifestyle, such as, where we live, type of job, life partner, children, surroundings, friends, environment, etc. Nature has given us the capacity to adjust ourselves to our circumstances and to make ourselves comfortable.

So, when we look into the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual problems we have in our lives, it is essential for us to adjust ourselves to certain disciplines such as when we eat, work, sleep and exercise. For example, when it comes to eating, it is important that we eat freshly prepared food at regular times. But due to our busy schedules, we are not doing this and instead we eat anything to satisfy our hunger. This habit leads us to many health problems and we spend lots of energy and money to subsidize these deficiencies.

These bad habits of ours have taken away our gifts from nature, such as sleeping. So instead, we take external aids to sleep, then to wake, creating a cycle of imbalance. This causes us to think that these aids are essential and unconsciously we set the stage for our children and family to accept this vicious cycle. This situation has been exploited by commercial institutions for their own economic gain, offering more and more a drugs to simulate well-being. Without realizing it we fall prey.

To break this cycle, let us start adjusting ourselves naturally. Yoga will achieve this for ourselves, as well as our family and friends. As with any exercise or self-improvement, the sooner it becomes routine, the sooner you experience the benefits. Keeping the long term benefits in mind, lets us adjust ourselves, our families, our friends, and start the practice. Remember the saying: Better Late Than Never.

Accommodate

Now we know how to Adapt and Adjust. Let us start understanding Accommodate: We have developed the habit of saying we have no time for this or that, and complain about everything, instead of looking at ourselves. In a way we use this as an excuse to cover up our helplessness. If we start to observe our complaining and our fault-finding with others, we find that when we point a finger at someone, our other fingers are actually pointing at us reminding us that more faults are really within ourselves. Hence, we should get rid of this habit and start thinking about our own faults instead of looking elsewhere.

The practice of this ancient wisdom, known as Yoga, helps us to take responsibility for our lives. If we can make time for parties, movies, theatre, gossiping, backbiting and so on, why not find the time to do yoga, which will give us health and happiness without a financial burden? If we have lots of money without good health what is it truly worth. When we are healthy and happy in our life, then everything else is possible to achieve. Just do it, and experience the benefits.

Now, we know the meanings of Adapt, Adjust and Accommodate. Let's start practicing so we can experience health and happiness within ourselves. Let us be happy. Let us not postpone beginning yoga practice. Let us start right now. DIN: Do It Now.

To get started, you can all get information and assistance from:

Swami Ramachandrananda c/o Swara Yoga Systems, 450 East Gravel Lane Romney, West Virginia 26757. Or you may call us at: 304-822-7576.

Let us live together, let us eat together, let us grow strong together, let us attain our goals together and let no one in this world be unhappy.