

Don't let your energy levels fall in the Fall!



Those balmy summer temperatures and light evenings feel like a distant memory as we turn on the central heating and start the countdown to Christmas. According to a recent survey by MIND, during the latter part of the year a third of us are more anxious and just under half of the country feel like hibernating. However, according to Relaxation Advisor Penny Anne O'Donnell autumn can be a time for re-energizing.

In the old Celtic Calendar autumn was seen as the start of the New Year marking the end of the "season of the sun" and the start of the darker winter months.

Surrounded by the rich autumnal hues take time to boost your energy levels by nourishing your mind and body. An ideal mind and body activity is daily breathing work, and you can start right away.

How to breath deeply

- Sit on both sitting bones.
- Allow your body to 'slouch' and relax stomach and shoulders.
- As you inhale your navel should move forward and return as you exhale.
- To get the top quality fuel you need to access the base of the lungs and allow the diaphragm/chuckle muscle© to work fully, keeping the upper chest and shoulders still.
- Locate your diaphragm by placing both hands in-between the ribs at the front. Say sh! loudly as you breathe out. The movement you feel is the diaphragm area nicknamed chuckle muscle© because when you enjoy a good belly chuckle it really hurts.
- Allow one hand to span the calmness centre© and place the other on the upper chest. As you inhale the top hand is totally still and the lower is mobile, moving forward on an inhalation and returning to the start on exhalation. Now repeat sitting up straight on both sitting bones.

Avoid slouching – it cramps your breathing style.

Energise as you belt out your favourite tune

Singing strengthens your chuckle muscle © boosts your immune system and works your left and right brain. The uplifting effect of singing is immediate, be it in the shower, with a choir or at a sports match. A good singsong provides an excellent aerobic work out, encourages better breathing and posture whilst releasing the feel good hormones "endorphins", which reduce stress and relieve pain.

Chuckle those cares away

Befriending your chuckle muscle© energizes and boosts immunity as we fight the season's colds and bugs.

In Ancient Greece, hospitals were deliberately built close to amphitheatres due to the belief that laughter was the best medicine. Taking only 16 muscles to smile compared with the 26 it takes to frown, a good belly laughing session can burn up to 500 calories and cleanses the lungs in the same beneficial way that a deep breathing activity does. It is also a good way of protecting the heart through the increased blood flow, which is as good as aerobic activity. Research indicates that laughter reduces the stress hormone dopamine associated with fight /flight. Combined with exercise the benefits are greater. So enjoy an autumnal walk and share a laugh with a friend, as you enjoy the breeze and blow out the year's cobwebs. ■

Energy boosting tips.

- We use less than 10% of our brain's capacity. So pop to an evening class.
- Exercise boosts immunity and energy. Try to exercise outside and enjoy the vitamin rich sunlight and beautiful backdrop of nature.
- Dance. Pop on your favourite tracks, sensible shoes, clear a space and boogie! Do not time yourself just enjoy until you feel revitalized.
- Enjoy good quality sleep. Prepare through calmness breathing © and listen to a relaxation CD to help you to mentally de-clutter, ensuring you awake refreshed.
- Stay hydrated. Aim for your daily 6-8 glasses of still, room temperature water. Remember: dehydration symptoms include tiredness and loss of concentration.

A awareness of your chuckle muscle©.
U nleash the diva within.
T hink positive posture – slouching de energises.
U nwind pre-bed.
M onitor breathing style.
N ourish mind and body.

Penny Anne's relaxation CD and DVD "Breathe Your Way to Calmness" is available on her site www.relaxationdirect.com, which also includes information on her seminars which cover relaxation, workplace calmness, presentation skills and voice training, releasing the singing voice and relaxed revision.



Penny Anne is a specialist speech language and voice therapist and relaxation advisor. She consults at BUPA Little Aston Hospital Sutton Coldfield and BUPA Parkway Solihull. She can be contacted on 07770 945040.