

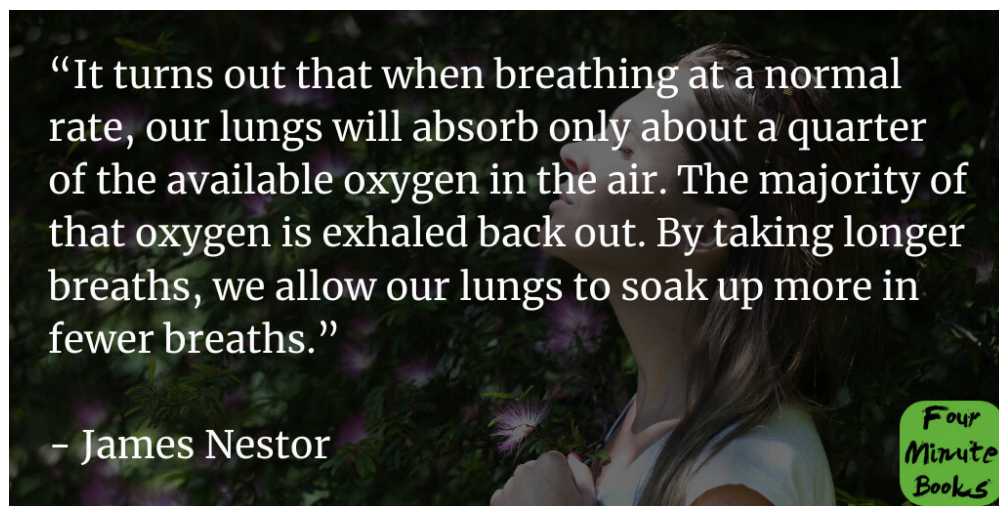
Breath Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Breath* is a fascinating and helpful guide to understanding the science of breathing, including how doing it slowly and through your nose is best for your lungs and body, and the many proven mental and physical benefits of being more mindful of how you inhale and exhale.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



If you're like most people, you probably don't think much about breathing. I mean, why should you? Your body automatically does this for you without you even having to tell it to.

But it turns out, there are many different ways you could actually be breathing ineffectively. In James Nestor's *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art* we explore the ways learning how to breathe correctly can transform your life.

You will learn the unexpected power of breathing that Western medicine seems to have forgotten. By changing the way you breathe in super simple ways, you can do everything from gaining more energy to ridding yourself of ailments like high blood pressure.

Here are 3 of the most insightful lessons about breathing from this book:

1. It's much healthier to breathe out of your nose than your mouth.
2. Breathing slow and shallow can have impressive health benefits.
3. In the West, we have a lot to learn about breathing and health.

Don't hold your breath, you're so close to learning about some really awesome health science!

Lesson 1: Start breathing out of your nose to unlock natural health benefits.

If you've seen the Netflix series *Stranger Things*, you're familiar with the term "mouth-breather". In addition to being cringey to hear, mouth breathing is also bad for your health! It turns out breathing through your nose is the definitive way to go.

After a surgery that temporarily plugged his nasal passages, Nestor experienced a blood pressure increase of 13 points in a matter of weeks. Not only was he more at risk for stroke, but he also had a faster pulse and felt terrible. This is an example of what something as seemingly innocent as breathing out of your mouth can do.

Estimates say about half of us mostly breathe through our mouths and there are many reasons for this such as medical issues or pollution. But did you know breathing through your nose filters, heats, and moistens the air you breathe? **What's more, it releases chemicals that regulate your heartbeat and lower your blood pressure.**

Scientists have learned that excessive mouth breathing actually alters the shape of your face. In a cruel experiment, scientists plugged the noses of lab monkeys. Over two years he documented as their mouths changed and their teeth grew more crooked. Even their head shape changed!

Lesson 2: You can receive unexpected health benefits just from slowing down your breathing.

Unlocking health benefits from breathing can be as easy as just breathing a little slower. You don't even have to breathe very deep breaths. Science says that shallow breaths 5.5 seconds in and 5.5 seconds out are best.

When we get down to the molecular level, we see why this is. When we breathe, we take in oxygen that attaches itself to red blood cells. These oxygen molecules travel throughout the body and are used by our cells and are exchanged for carbon dioxide. The carbon dioxide is then released from the body when we exhale.

But carbon dioxide is more than just a waste product. It helps oxygen separate from blood cells and also plays a role in signaling the blood vessels to dilate, which means they can transport more blood.

This means when we breathe heavily, we release more carbon dioxide, which reduces blood flow. This is why hyperventilating and exercise can cause you to feel light-headed.

Breathing slowly will help maintain your blood carbon dioxide levels which is more efficient.

The author encourages us to breathe slowly and less deeply for these reasons. You don't have to worry that breathing slowly and less from will leave you without enough oxygen. Our lungs are surprisingly efficient and don't need to be filled to capacity each breath.

Lesson 3: Ancient Eastern cultures have been practicing breathing techniques for millennia, but Western culture still mostly ignores the importance of breathing.

Recently there have been people embracing the power of mindful breathing in the West, but Western society as a whole is still very much behind. A lot of the medical community just doesn't take it seriously.

Elsewhere in the world, ancient traditions have made wisdom about breathing common knowledge. Some examples of this are Swami Rama and practitioners of Tummo show. Ancient traditions like these give a more integrated way of thinking about breathing.

In ancient Indian culture, there is something known as prana, and in China, it is known as ch'i. Both of these things are the same idea of energy swirling around everything in the universe. It is most concentrated around things that are alive. They believe that if you want to stay healthy, you need to maintain prana through traditional practices. This is where we get acupuncture and yoga, as they were developed as ways to keep prana flow steady. But the most powerful way of all is to simply breathe it in.

The ancient practice of yoga known as described in the Yoga Sutras of 500 BC describes a yoga practice with very little movement. Surprisingly, it was more about keeping still and building prana through breathing. It's all about building up prana gradually over many years.

With how fundamental this knowledge is in many Eastern cultures, it's surprising that modern science cares so little about something as important as breathing. As we advance in healthcare, we haven't advanced in breathing techniques, which is a shame, because Nestor teaches it can do everything from alter body temperature, heart rate, and blood pressure, to aid in fighting infection.

Breath Review

I'm starting to go down the rabbit hole of this science now because this book was so interesting. Breath is fascinating, informative, helpful, and, well, refreshing! If you're looking for a simple way to improve your health today, this is it!

Who would I recommend the Breath summary to?

The 61-year-old who is overweight and wants to learn some easy ways to get healthier, the 27-year-old that wonders why prayer and meditation are so good at helping people mentally and physically, and anyone who has lungs.