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## **7 Aspects of Functional Breathing**

1. **Posture:** upright, yet relaxed posture can stimulate free and easy functional breathing. Slumped or slouched posture can prevent diaphragmatic movement.

When seated: keep your back upright yet supporting natural curves, sit evenly on both sitz bones (do not tuck and sit on tailbone, arch lower back, or jut lower ribs forward), keep pelvis and groin soft, place knees to below hips (this prevents pelvic tilting), keep legs uncrossed and feet flat on the floor (crossing legs tilts pelvis), allow shoulders to drop down and fall away from the ears, and allow the mouth, jaw, tongue and space between eyebrows to soften

2. **Breathe through the nose:** this warms the air and slows down the rate of your inhale and exhale. Cold air can stimulate constriction of the respiratory tract

3. **Diaphragmatic, or "low" breathing:** strengthens parasympathetic tone (or rest & digest portion of the autonomic nervous system). Helps lead to calm, peace, and lowered blood pressure. Allows for optimal delivery of oxygen to your organs and tissues

4. **Shallow breathing:** This is about AMOUNT of air, not where you are breathing. No need to take in a large volume of air when you are at rest since metabolic demand is lower

5. **Slow rate:** Between 4.5 and 7.5 bpm yields the best results for heart rate variability

6. **Inhale:Exhale ratio:** Inhale is equal to or less than length of exhale

7. **Silent:** creating sound with our breath involves creating muscle tension (for example, ujjayi breathing during yoga)