

APPENDIX B:

YOGA PRANAYAMA HANDOUT

WRITER'S YOGA BREATHING*

Sit up straight in your chair, feet planted firmly on the ground. No cross legs or slouching. Neck in line with back in line with tailbone. You should be alert but also comfortable.

Proceed slowly and with purpose through the next steps

Close your eyes softly. Bring the lids together, touching but not squeezing them, so you feel the horizon of your sealed eyelids. Let the pupils of your eyes begin to migrate slowly toward the back of your head.

Scan your body for tension and release it.

Tune your ears inward, and begin to listen to the sound of your own breath.

- Follow your exhalations to their natural end, without closing in the walls of your throat. Keep your abdomen relaxed, shoulders melting away from your ears on the inhalations, chest lifting away from your thighs on the exhalations. **(Continue this slow, soft, quiet breathing).**

Pay attention to your breath, the inhalations and exhalations, without trying to change them. Let your breath be perfect, just as it is in this moment. If your thoughts pull you away from your breath, gently guide them back to your breath. **(Stay here for a few moments).**

* This handout is inspired by Holly, my yoga teacher discussed within these pages, and the practices and phrases she used in my classes with her. As we tend to do, I've used my experiences in her classes as a yoga student as inspiration for my own teaching methods and prompts here. Holly's own techniques can often be traced back to the practices outlined in *Yoga: A Gem for Women* (2002).

Now, based on how you are feeling today, choose which breath is right for you:

- If you are tired, work on our three-part inhalation, sharply inhaling to your lower, middle, then upper ribs. Pause after each inhale and once you reach the top ribs, release your breath in a steady exhale.
- If you are stressed and anxious, begin to deepen your exhalations, so they become longer than your inhalations. See your inhalations as “small” and your exhalations as “big.” You can try inhaling for three slow counts and exhaling for five slow counts, if this helps.
- If you are feeling fairly balanced already, simply concentrate on smoothing out your inhalations and exhalations, making them soft and quiet.”

Allow your inhalations to give you energy and your exhalations to expel all the worries and stresses of your day. Find peace in your breath. **(Stay here for a few moments).**

Keeping your eyes closed, let your breathing return to normal, but keep it smooth and calm. Pay attention to your feelings of calm and steadiness. Resolve to carry these into the rest of your day. **(Stay here for a few moments).**

Now, take a minute to set an intention for yourself. Your intention could be grounded in the learning goals you have for our class or for all of your classes today. It may even encompass your social and academic lives. What do you hope to accomplish today or this week in your writing, your living, your learning?

Slowly open your eyes.

Opening your notebook, take a minute to record your feelings after this breathing exercise.