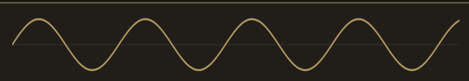
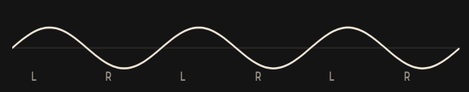
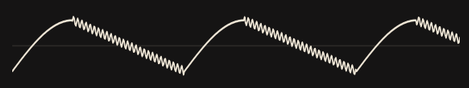
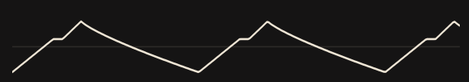
AQUARIAN ALCHEMY · THE AIR ELEMENT

THE BREATH SPECTRUM

One body. Many ways of breathing.

PRACTICE	PATTERN	PACE	INTENSITY	TRADITION	EVIDENCE
Diaphragmatic / Belly Breathing	 Abdomen rises on inhale and softens on exhale	Variable; often slow	Gentle–moderate	Respiratory care; yoga	A review found short-term changes in diaphragm movement and breathing rate; wider clinical benefits remain unclear. [1]
Conscious Connected Breathing: Leonard Orr	 Continuous breathing without deliberate pauses	Variable	Moderate–high	Orr's 1970s Rebirthing Breathwork	A trial of connected breathwork found lower anxiety scores; Orr's specific method and birth-trauma claims were not tested. [7]
Coherent Breathing / Resonance Breathing	 Even, relaxed inhales and exhales	About 5–6/min	Gentle–moderate	Modern HRV biofeedback	Slow-paced breathing temporarily lowered blood pressure and increased heart-rate variability; stress effects were less clear. [2]
Box Breathing	 Inhale, pause, exhale, pause in equal counts	Often 3–5/min	Gentle–moderate	Modern performance and mindfulness	A month-long trial found mood improvements with box breathing; cyclic sighing showed stronger effects. [3]
Alternate Nostril Breathing	 Inhale and exhale through alternating nostrils	Variable; usually slow	Gentle–moderate	Hatha yoga (nadi shodhana)	Six trials reported lower blood pressure, but results differed substantially among studies. [4]
Ujjayi Breathing	 Slow nasal breath with a soft throat sound	Variable; often slow	Gentle–moderate	Hatha yoga	A study of 34 students found lower anxiety scores after one session; lasting effects were not tested. [8]
Bhramari Pranayama	 Nasal inhale followed by a humming exhale	Variable; usually slow	Gentle	Hatha yoga	Small studies reported changes in heart rate and attention; clinical treatment benefits remain unestablished. [9]
Cyclic Sighing	 Two nasal inhales followed by a long exhale	Variable	Gentle	Modern research	A month-long study in healthy adults found improved mood and slower resting breathing after daily practice. [3]
Somatic Breathwork	 Guided body awareness with varied breathing patterns	No set pace	Gentle–high	Modern somatic methods	Studies use varied breathing methods, so their findings cannot be applied to every form of somatic breathwork. [5]
Breath of Fire	 Rapid nasal breathing with active exhales	Fast	High	Modern Kundalini yoga; related to kapalabhati	Forceful yoga breathing appears in adverse-event reports; specific medical benefits of Breath of Fire are not established. [6]

Findings describe specific studies, not guaranteed benefits for everyone. Greater intensity does not necessarily mean greater benefit.

RESEARCH SOURCES

[1] Lewis et al. (2007) - Diaphragmatic breathing.
[2] Shao et al. (2024) - Slow-paced breathing.
[3] Balban et al. (2023) - Box breathing and cyclic sighing.
[4] Nam et al. (2024) - Alternate nostril breathing.
[5] Banushi et al. (2023) - Breathwork research in diagnosed anxiety disorders.
[6] Cramer et al. (2013) - Safety considerations for yoga practices.
[7] Blake (2026) - Online conscious connected breathwork and anxiety.
[8] Niranjan & Pradhan (2022) - Ujjayi breathing and short-term anxiety.
[9] Kuppusamy et al. (2017) - Bhramari research review.