

How breath can make you stronger and healthier

by Jeri Lynn Sunok

A simple breath can make all the difference in taking your mind and body to a soaring level. Harvard Medical School (2007) reports that clearing the mind via deep breathing and meditation practice restores energy, improves productivity, and can prevent stress-related illness.

As founder of **Fitness Intuitive**™ I take it one step further with all my clients. Focusing on your breathing creates a burst of strength during those tough iron-weight reps or fit skills. An essential key is to practice meditative breath work outside the exercise environment, as well as in the gym. This helps the body perform at its best and stimulates mind-muscle attentiveness.

While pumping iron or doing a cardio exercise skill, many people tend to hold their breath (especially during the concentric "lifting" contraction). Doing this tops the unsafe list as it can dangerously spike blood pressure. To boost your fit progress, here's something to **consciously think** about while exercising. During normal activity, a muscle generates two types of muscle contractions, concentric when the muscle begins to shorten and eccentric when the muscle actively lengthens. To apply more effective breathing, let me use the barbell curl exercise as an illustration. When you raise the barbell during bicep curls (concentric contraction), *breathe out slowly, EXHALE*. Then as you lower the weight, **INHALE**; breathe in slowly for the entire range of motion (ROM) of lowering the barbell.



Jeris Chi-Fit Breathing



To decompress from the stresses of life outside the gym or to open the body for a refreshing workout, try my Chi-Fit "life-energy" breathing technique. To begin, stand with hands crossed (on top of each other at waistline), palms facing towards the body.

- 1 **INHALE** slowly as you move your hands to the side away from your body, drawing a full moon shape until your hands are above head, palms facing outward.
- 2 Keeping your hands together, lower hands to chest level (still INHALING). Then **EXHALE** slowly while you push your hands out.
- 3 Finish the movement by forming a triangle with your hands, first finger and thumb touching together. The triangle represents the mind-body-soul uniting.

