

6 Powerful Brain Exercises To Expand Your Consciousness

1. Nadi Shodhana (Alternate Nostril Breathing)

Brainwave States Experienced: Gamma & Theta (long practice), Alpha (short practice)

The brain is split into two hemispheres, connected by the corpus callosum, which is a broad band of nerve fibers that sends neural signals between the two and facilitates communication within the brain. Practices that synchronize the functioning of the two hemispheres have the effect of harmonizing the brain and shifting brainwave state away from beta and into the positive end of the spectrum.

There are a number of ways to do this, including the meditation above, however each practice has its own unique effects and lends itself towards giving rise to specific brainwave states, each with



their own nuances and benefits.

Alternate Nostril Breathing (Sanskrit: *Nadi Shodhana*) is an ancient breathing practice that has the effect of altering brainwave patterns by working to synchronize brain hemisphere communication specifically.

Although this practice works on a number of different levels to bring balance and harmony to the body and mind (energetically, emotionally, mentally), it primarily influences brain function due to

the fact that the left hemisphere of the brain controls the right side of the body and the right hemisphere of the brain controls the left side of the body.

Through the practice of this technique, you are forcing the mind and body to constantly alter attention and muscle control between each side/hemisphere, and hence it stimulates communication and synchronization between the two through the rhythmic movements and breathing patterns. This shifts brainwaves into an alpha state during shorter practice (1-5 breath cycles) and even into gamma and theta (5 or more breath cycles).

1. Find a comfortable seated position, making sure your spine is straight without straining.
2. Relax your left palm comfortably into your lap and bring your right hand just in front of your face.
3. With your right hand, bring your pointer finger and middle finger to rest between your eyebrows, lightly using them as a stabilizing anchor. The fingers you'll be actively using are the ring finger and thumb.
4. Close your eyes and take a deep breath in and out through your nose with both nostrils left open.
5. Close your right nostril with your right thumb. Inhale through the left nostril slowly and deeply.
6. Close the left nostril with your ring finger so both nostrils are held closed; retain your breath at the top of the inhale for a brief moment.

7. Open your right nostril and release the breath slowly through the right



side of your nose; pause briefly at the bottom of the exhale.

8. Then, inhale through the right side slowly and deeply.

9. Hold both nostrils closed for a brief moment.

10. Open your left nostril and release breath slowly through the left side. Pause briefly at the bottom.

11. Repeat as many cycles as you like, although 5-10 is a good starting point, allowing your awareness to track and follow your inhales and exhales.

Note that steps 5-9 represent one complete cycle of alternate nostril breathing. If you're moving through the sequence slowly, one cycle should take you about 20-40 seconds, although it could be shorter or longer. Repeat daily for cumulative effects and this practice can be used as often as you'd like, although once in the morning and once at night is a good starting point.

2. Rhythmic Deep Breathing Meditation

Brainwave States Experienced: Gamma, Delta, Alpha, Theta

Meditation is one of the easiest and fastest ways to alter your brainwave state, and the longer and more frequently you meditate, the longer the brainwave state shifts last. Regular meditators tend to experience a semi-permanent to permanent brainwave spectrum shift toward gamma, alpha and theta as they literally recondition their neural pathways and stimulate new growth that reinforces these patterns [Liou, Litz, Udo,^{7,8,9}].



Furthermore, this is what I call an organic method of altering brainwave state, meaning that the practice is initiated by the individual from within without relying on supplements or various technologies. This, of course, is ideal—to empower and activate one’s own innate capacity for evolutionary change.

Perhaps the best way I have found to do this is through what I call ‘Rhythmic Deep Breathing Meditation,’ although other forms of meditation are certainly effective for achieving these ends as well. It’s a simple practice:

1. Get into a comfortable seated position where your spine is as straight as possible while still being relaxed and free of tension. This can be accomplished by using pillows, props, chairs, floor, etc. if necessary. Find whatever works for you. Your hands can be

comfortably placed in your lap or whatever other position you prefer and can be held comfortably for some time.

2. Once you've gotten yourself into a comfortable seated position, close your eyes and take a handful of deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth to relax further. Then begin the Ujjayi breath, an ancient Yogic and Daoist form of breathing, the instructions for which are as follows:

a. Start off by taking an inhalation that is slightly deeper than normal. With your mouth closed, exhale through your nose while constricting and lightly tightening your throat muscles. When you are doing it correctly, you should sound like Darth Vader from *Star Wars*. Some also liken the sound of this type of breathing to the sound of the ocean or what you hear when you put your ear up to a shell.



b. Another way to get the hang of this practice is to try exhaling the sound "haaaah" with your mouth held open. Now make a similar sound with your mouth closed, feeling the outflow of air through your nasal passages. Once you have mastered this on the outflow, use the same method for the inflow breath, gently constricting your throat as you inhale.

For maximum effect on your brainwaves, you'll want to continue to use the Ujjayi breath throughout the entire meditation. The Ujjayi breath allows you to slow down and lengthen your breath significantly versus normal breathing methods, which facilitates deep relaxation in the body and brain.

3. Keep your awareness focused on your breath throughout the meditation. With each breath, inhale a little bit more air and slightly more deeply, without straining.

With every out breath, exhale a little bit more slowly and deeply, again, without straining. This should be almost effortless and the process will begin to unfold naturally as you relax and your body senses the rhythm..

4. Keep this breathing pattern going indefinitely. You may hit an edge where your breath can no longer be extended. That's perfect and just stay breathing at this length. You may find that one single breath may end up lasting a minute or more.

As you continue to breath deeply you will find an exquisite and extraordinarily pleasurable peace wash over your mind and body as you move into various brainwave states.



You will also find your mood elevated and many experience waves of pleasure and bliss. All these phenomenon and anything else you experience can be traced

back to your brain waves moving into deep gamma, alpha, delta and theta wave states.

You can literally feel your brain moving into a state of deep coherence, harmony and relaxation. It is quite uncommon to become very inspired and have intuitive insights flash into your awareness. As such, you may want to keep a pen and paper by you to jot down notes.

Enjoy the aftereffects for hours, and often times, even days if you are able to stay in the meditation for close to 10 minutes or more. Repeat daily for maximum impact and lasting effects on brain function and brainwave patterns. Studies have found measurable alterations in brain size and epigenetic markers of stress reduction in as little as a few weeks.^[9,10]

3. Bilateral Eye Movements

Brainwave States Experienced: Alpha, Gamma

Perhaps one of the easiest and quickest ways to generate hemispheric coherence in the brain and shift the dominant brainwave patterns is through the use of bilateral eye movements, which are a component of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy.

EMDR has been gaining popularity in recent years for its use in treating PTSD and emotional trauma, among other things. Studies have shown that specific exercises from the process have a measurable impact on hemispheric synchronization and tend to shift brainwave state toward the gamma end of the spectrum, although alpha wave patterns have been observed as well ^[11].

The practice is simple: spend up to a minute or so shifting your eyes back and forth from left to right in rapid succession, without straining. If you are sensitive, you should be able to feel your mental coherence increasing as you practice.



Advanced practice: try using the movements to work through difficult emotions as they come up. When you begin to feel a negative emotion surface, breath deep and begin the eye movements. Notice how things shift for you as you go through the process.

4. Resonant Vowel Sound Chanting & Organic Instrumentation

Brainwave States Experienced: Theta, Gamma, Alpha

As mentioned previously, sound is a powerful catalyst for shifting brainwave states, but that also applies to sounds you generate. For millennia before the advent of binaural beats, various spiritual traditions discovered that specific sounds could influence consciousness in dramatic ways. Although the mechanisms by which this occurs are not fully understood, specific forms of chanting and instrumentation have been shown to reliably shift brainwaves towards the positive end of the spectrum.

One of the easiest to begin practicing on your own is resonant vowel sound chanting, which is essentially saying and holding a letter for an extended period of time, adjusting the shape of your mouth, tongue and throat as well as the pitch of the toning to facilitate the feeling of resonance in the body and mind.

Try starting with the letter 'O'. Simply take a deep breath in and on the exhale begin saying and holding the letter 'O' as long as you can without straining. It can help to close your eyes to tune into the subtleties of feeling in the body. Try experimenting with different vowels and letters. By shifting these four elements you can literally feel the sound in different parts of the body.

As such, shifting these elements so that you feel the sound in the head tends to have the most profound impact on brainwave state, although feeling sounds resonating in other parts of the body can still affect brainwave state in addition to having other noticeable, beneficial effects in the body.



Some good ones to start with are: O, A, E, I, U, M as these lend themselves best to holding for extended periods of time. The widely known 'Om' or 'Aum' combines multiple vowels and consonants in a single tone.

You can practice as long as you'd like although benefits tend to plateau around the ten-minute mark in my experience, and noticeable shifts can be felt much sooner than that. Even just one or two repetitions can help shift you into more coherence.

The beauty of toning and chanting is that everything you need is within you. However, certain musical instruments are also known to operate by similar principles. In some way shape or form, all sound shifts brainwave patterns to some degree, but there is an entire class of instruments that are truly designed for this specific purpose.

Singing bowls (Tibetan or crystal), gongs, handbells, chimes, didgeridoos, flutes, even certain types of drums and other more exotic instruments have been used by ancient cultures worldwide to induce expanded consciousness and brain coherence for thousands of years.

5. Binaural/Monastral Beats

Brainwave States Experienced: Delta, Gamma, Alpha, Theta, depending on the music

Sound is one of the most powerful influencers of mood and brainwave states known to man. Research pioneered in large part by Robert Monroe in the 1950's and 60's showed that by sending two different sounds with slightly different frequencies, one into each ear, at the same time, caused a standing wave in the brain of a certain frequency that the brain would eventually match if exposed to long enough.

These technologies are widely known as binaural beats, with other variations surfacing in recent decades including monastral beats

and isochronic tones, which are somewhat similar variations of this



original technology.

Binaural tones are not necessarily melodic in nature, so they are often combined with more sensually pleasing music to cover them up, however, this does not reduce their effectiveness.

It is primarily the rhythmic desynchronization of two sounds played through different ears that produces the effects—so long as headphones or properly placed stereo speakers are used, the brain will respond appropriately.

Binaural and monaural beats can be designed to synchronize brainwaves into any specific frequency the creator of the sounds desires, and therefore the experience can be much more precise and controlled than one can achieve with more organic methods, which are not quite as well understood.

With binaural and monaural beats you can essentially pick your flavor of brainwave state, which can be very useful in achieving specific ends, for example, if one wants to deeply relax, then they could listen to a delta-wave-inducing track, or if one wants enhanced creativity and intuition, they could listen to a gamma-wave-inducing track.

6. Green Tea (L-Theanine)

Brainwave States Experienced: Alpha



Green tea has long been revered in China, Japan and other ancient cultures for its legendary health benefits, but few know that it positively affects brainwave state as well.

That's because green tea is rich in L-Theanine, a naturally occurring amino acid that has been shown in numerous studies to shift brainwaves into the alpha spectrum quite readily.

Interestingly, L-Theanine also helps the body process caffeine more effectively and gently, helping to mitigate the crash many experience a few hours after ingesting it, which generally makes green tea a more balancing and less disruptive stimulant herb than coffee or other caffeinated plants.

While L-Theanine is also available in a supplement form, which may be appropriate for certain therapeutic uses and for those who avoid caffeine, whole food sources are otherwise ideal. As is common with plants, there are likely other synergistic, as of yet unidentified compounds that complement and enhance the effects of L-Theanine in green tea.

