

# Free Breath, Free Movement, Free Mind

## Introduction to Practice: Appreciating Flow

In a stream of water as it flows, we see how free the water is. Observing the currents of a river can feel quite soothing, when we have the chance to be out in nature. We can find this free, flowing quality in other places as well. The stream of air that flows in and out as we breathe is free like this, too. Right at our nose, there's a soothing flow waiting for us to enjoy it.

Even if we may be feeling tight in our body or stuck in our mind, the flow of our breathing wind is always free. It's like our own nature retreat that is never far away. We can always "sit beside" our breathing wind and enjoy its free, flowing quality.

That's what we'll do in this practice. We'll find how we can appreciate our inner nature retreat by feeling the flow of our breath, our movement, and our mind. We can use 3 flow qualities (also called 3 nowflow qualities) to guide us. As needed in our practice, we can refer to the 3 flow qualities and their corresponding 3 physics flow natures. This supports a simple appreciation of the flow of nature around us and inside us. It's waiting for us to enjoy it. We can start here with the first flow quality: the fine freedom of flow.

## Free Breathing

In the flowing freedom of water, every flow is made up of finer free flows. That's how it flows so smoothly in waves. Air flows that way, too. In the gentle currents of wind, including our own breathing wind, we can feel that free flow quality. We might close our eyes and focus on the sliver of the breathing wind going in and out of our nose. Is it presently flowing in? Is it presently flowing out?

As we breathe in, we can remind ourselves to feel the free flow quality of our breathing wind. As we breathe out, we can scan our fuller experience of breathing for this free flow quality.

### Free Breathing Practice

- Breathing in, feeling the free flow quality of the breathing wind.
- Breathing out, scanning the free flow quality of our breathing body.

Through this practice, the flow of our breath can naturally deepen to our diaphragm. We're feeling how free our breathing wind is. It doesn't take much effort to move something so light and free. This can help us relax the unnecessary trying that actually restricts our full, natural breath. We begin to breathe more freely and comfortably.

## Free Movement

We can continue the same practice while moving. For example, as we breathe in, we raise our arms outward as if embracing the air around us. As we breathe out, we lower our arms down the center. Synchronizing the free breathing practice that we did previously with movement can be a way to help our movement feel freer.

### **Free Breathing Practice + Movement → Free Movement Practice**

- Breathing in, feeling the free flow quality of the breathing wind.
- Breathing out, scanning the free flow quality of our moving body.

As we practice feeling the free flow quality of our breath and our body's movement, we're feeling the freedom that they both share. Every part of our body flow is made up of finer free flows, just like the flow quality of water and air. Appreciating this lets us relax unnecessary tension so that our movement can feel more fluid and flowing.

We can see this fluidity of movement in the practice of tai chi, for example. The Taoist martial art of tai chi encourages practitioners to move like a great river. Just as water is free to flow all together in one whole river, the fine free flow of our body allows our whole movement to be fully integrated. Such free, whole movements are more powerful even while they are more comfortable.

As we begin to feel more of the fine free flow in our body, walking and other everyday movements can feel more comfortable and enjoyable in a way we may not have fully appreciated before. The freedom of flow quality can gradually begin to pervade more of our life experience.

## Free Mind

As our movement feels more free, our mind can also begin to feel more free. Our mind and body are continually sending messages back and forth to each other. *Feeling* messages about sensory experiences flow along nerves from our body to our mind, while *doing* messages about our intentions flow along nerves from our mind to our body.

These feeling-doing message flows are going on all the time, connecting our mind and body. When we are *feeling* the free flow quality of our movement and *doing* the movement more fluidly as a result, we're already more open to this flow of feeling-doing connection between mind and body.

### Free Movement Practice + Feeling-Doing → Free Mind Practice

- Breathing in, feeling the free flow quality of our movement.
- Breathing out, doing our movement in free flow quality way.

As we breathe in, for example, we could feel the free flow quality of each of our ten fingers. While enjoying this free flow quality of our fingers, we naturally begin to move them in a free flow quality way where each finger moves more freely and individually. As we breathe out in the practice, we could remind ourselves to appreciate this free and fluid movement of our individual fingers.

In the practice while we're enjoying the flow of our ten fingers, we're also already enjoying the free flow quality of our feeling-doing mind-body connection. That freedom of feeling-doing can gradually carry over into the other feeling and doing of our lives that may be more challenging for us.

### 3 Flow Qualities from 3 Physics Flow Natures

So far, the practice has focused on the flow quality of free. We're helping ourselves to feel how water, wind, body, and mind all share the same free flow quality. There are two other flow qualities and corresponding flow natures that can serve as supports in practice. They are summarized below.

#### Flow: Free, Mutual, Whole

**Free** — Every flow is made up of finer flows. We can feel this as an inner freedom, which is why the first flow quality is *free*. Underlying this quality is a corresponding flow nature: this inner freedom is never interfered by something at a distance. We can see this in the fine freedom of flowing water. This can

also be described as kai-he (free-connection) in traditional terms and as locality in physics. (The effect itself is local even in quantum mechanics.) In this way, physics helps to reveal how flowing water and our moving body both share this same free flow quality.

**Mutual** — Connection happens mutually and comfortably. We can feel this in the comfortable integration of our movement and even our mind-body connection. This feeling of *mutual* is the second flow quality. The corresponding flow nature can be described in traditional terms as yin-yang and also as the mutuality of action-reaction among parts integrating together. We can see this in how water waves arise, while physics reveals the common nature of action-reaction at work everywhere.

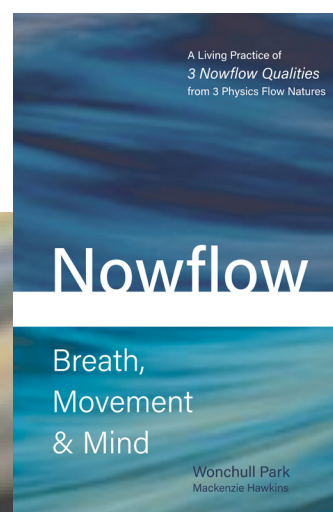
**Whole** — *Whole* is the third flow quality that we can feel. All that is free flowing and interconnecting in this moment is the practical whole of what can make a difference. For example, we can feel a sense of whole presence where even the past-present-future storylines of our experience are appreciated as happening wholly in the now. This flow nature can be described as “everything is now” (where now includes the flow of change) and also as good initial conditions in physics, as explained in the book *Way of Now: Nowflow for Meditation, Peak Performance, and Daily Life*. We can see this in how there’s always one whole presently flowing river — no past river and no future river.

Meditative traditions through the ages have used breathing and movement as methods for helping people feel freer as human beings. The practice shared here follows in these same footsteps: free breathing, free movement, and free mind. As we walk along these well-trodden paths of practice, we can also have with us a modern compass. The 3 flow qualities from 3 physics flow natures provide guidance for a simple, rational appreciation of our inner nature retreat.

If we're enjoying a beautiful outer nature retreat, we know we don't have to try to make the river have more flow. A river doesn't have to achieve flow. Our breathing wind, too, is already free. However uncomfortable or tight an area of our body might feel, it inherently has free flow nature just like a flowing river. However stuck we might feel in our mind, the stream of our awareness and intention is still flowing. The practice is simply about recognizing and appreciating this flow with the guidance of the 3 flow qualities. This keeps us safe from trying too hard and the stress of that. It helps us experience the comfort of our own inner nature retreat.

Flow is already going on. It's an inherent nature of all our experience with its qualities of free, mutual, and whole. As we learn to appreciate flow wherever we can, we invite these qualities to pervade our lives more fully.

Wonchull Park  
Mackenzie Hawkins  
June 2022



To learn more, visit [Nowflow.org](http://Nowflow.org)

the book [Nowflow Breath, Movement & Mind](#)  
guides and classes for [Inner Nature Retreat Practice](#)

[www.nowflow.org](http://www.nowflow.org)

Copyright © 2022 Wonchull Park and Mackenzie Hawkins