

Noire

WOMEN'S WELLNESS

SEPTEMBER IS YOGA
AWARENESS MONTH: START
YOUR PRACTICE TODAY

BREAST CANCER
AWARENESS MONTH

Santia Deck

BREAKING THE MOLD
& STACKING THE DECK

MINDFUL TRAVEL
HAPPY 70TH BIRTHDAY
MS. ELLEN ECTOR!

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BREATH IS LIFE!

By Leslie Salmon Jones

Breath is the essential life force of our existence. Without breath, we would not be alive! Those of us who are blessed with good health can literally take each breath for granted, and breathing can be a mindless activity left to the brilliance and reliability of our bodies. Yet what happens when we lose our breath? When we're frightened, over-stressed, or physically spent, that previously mindless activity becomes a life-saving mission. We panic! We activate our bodies' sympathetic nervous system, the "fight-or-flight response." But if we take a few minutes a day to engage in mindful breathing, we can change our physiological state.

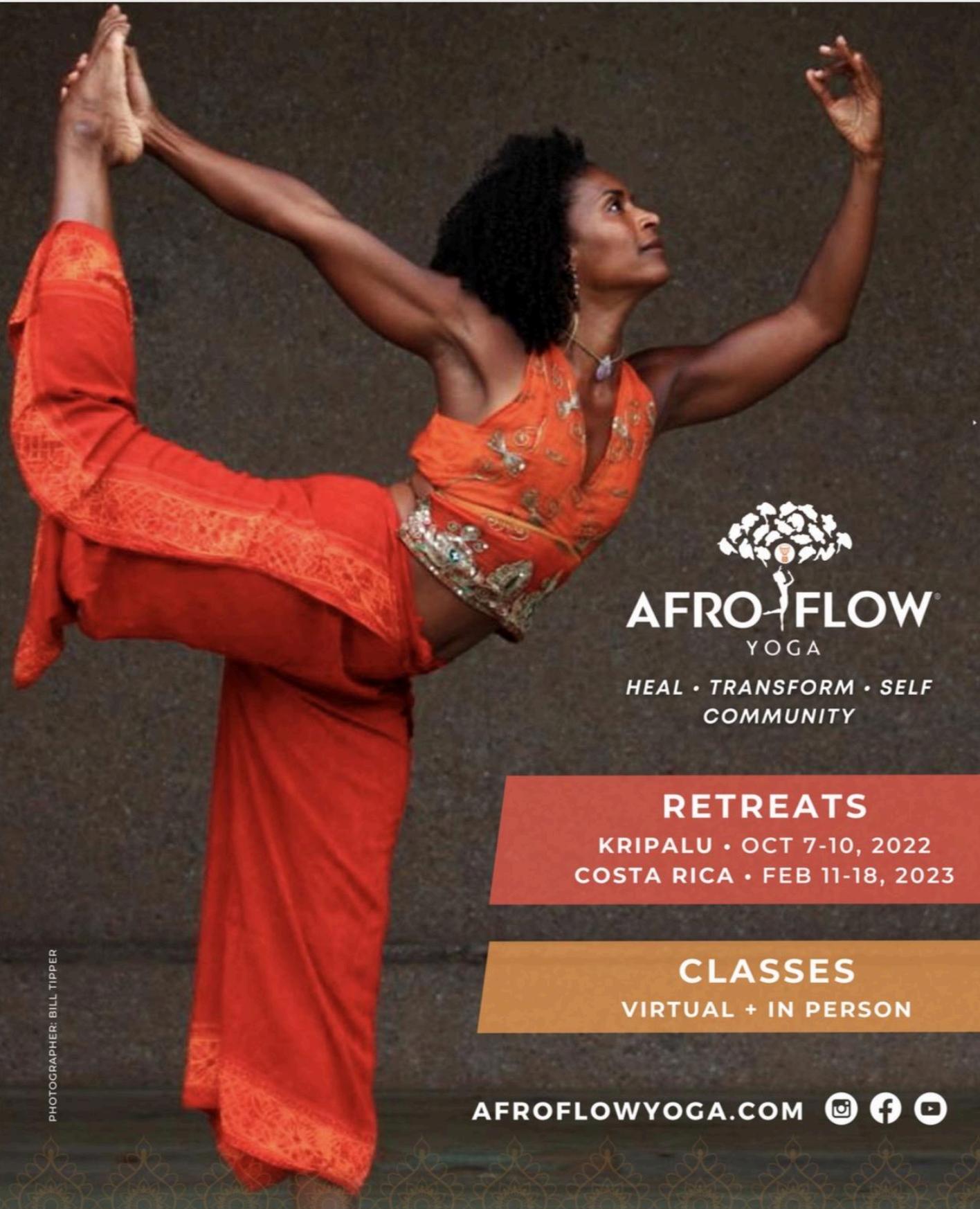
Mindful breathing is a great way to relieve stress and trapped emotions that have been suppressed in our bodies. If you're feeling anxious, fearful, racing thoughts, etc., taking some deep, slow, rhythmic breaths activates the parasympathetic nervous system to calm your body and mind. It's also a great energy booster, as 70% of our energy comes from breathing. If you feel like you don't have enough energy during the day, take

a moment to breathe. Engaging in daily breathing exercises for a few minutes elevates the oxygen levels in your bloodstream, which is the key to increasing the energy available to your mind and body. When you're working out, mindful breathing will help you get through tough physical exercises by bringing focus to the mind, energy to the body, and strength to the muscles.

Exercise:

Deep Belly Breathing: Lie on your back with the soles of your feet on the floor (or sit in a chair with the soles of your feet on floor and your back supported). Feel your spine on the floor and place your hands on your belly. Relax your shoulders and neck. Take a deep breath in through your nose for four counts, filling your belly with air like a balloon. Hold the breath for four counts, and then slowly exhale out of your mouth (as if you are exhaling out of a straw), deflating your stomach until all the air is squeezed out of your lungs. Inhale and repeat the exercise for four repetitions or more. When you feel comfortable, increase the sets to six counts, then eight counts, and so on.

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