



TRI BREATH

A BODY SCULPTING
PROGRAM

The
Willow

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The Willow

A warm summer breeze with the sound of water flowing over rocks in the distance.

That's what I imagine when I'm in the Willow mode. The Willow is one of those classic movements that is both powerful and sublime. It's like a ballet dancer... graceful. Yet what cannot be seen is the raw strength and coordination required to make it look easy & graceful.

Lifting one arm up out to the side, you pull the energy up until your hand reaches its highest point. At the same time, your other arm comes down with the palm of your hand open to release the energy you've previously pulled up as your arm & hands extend upward. The Willow, like the Eagle is a beautiful movement... powerful yet so graceful.

With your hand going up (*as in the Eagle*), there is a particular way you hold your hand & fingers with the emphasis being on the thumb, index finger & wrist. Thus the extension of your body is felt not only from the shoulder down to the wrists, but from the spine as well. Many mobility issues with regard to the ribs, shoulder, arm, elbow & hand can be addressed doing the Willow.

How you hold your hands

There's a couple of points to be aware of hence regularly reminding yourself when you're in Willow mode about these finer aspects will provide you with plenty of dividends in the long run.

Firstly... As one hand goes up, the other hand comes down! For instance, as one hand passes the midway point (*shoulder height*), then so too does the other at hand pass at shoulder height at the same time. There is no in between! It's a full 180° separation from arm-to-arm.

The hand starting at waist height

The hand starting from the DOWN position (*at waist or hip height*) is held just like in The Eagle & The Monkey... it's the same technique! That is, with the index finger held straight and the tip of your thumb connected to the tip of your index finger. With index finger and thumb connected, you bend your wrist inward. Be sure to maintain your index finger as straight as possible.

So looking down at your hand, all you can see is the palm of your hand, your inner fingers and your thumb & index finger touching.

Notice how when you bend your wrist inwards with your fingers held in position, the ligaments on the underside of your forearm raise up. This is good! This is exactly what you are looking for with the reason being, as you lift your arms above your head (fingers, thumb & wrist held in position), you get an extension of both muscle, ligament & nerve that is very special.

When practicing The Willow (*as in The Eagle*), as your arm is drawn up with your wrist pulled inward & your index finger & thumb connected, as your arm moves up and particularly when your hand is reaching its highest point, direct your index finger & thumb back so they point more behind you rather than pointing out to your side or in front of you.

The hand starting above your head

Quite the opposite to the index finger & thumb being connected & the wrist pulled inward, the hand that moves down from above your head has fingers that are parallel and straight. As for your wrist (*again opposite to the wrist position of the hand that moves upward*), your wrist and fingers are also pulled back so all you can see is the back of your hand & the back of your fingers.

What about the breath?

All of the three TriBreath breathing rhythm's work while you're practicing The Willow. It more depends on how you're doing the movement. That is with the focus being on muscle work or your focus being honed in on *fluidity of movement*.

If fluidity is your goal, then i would recommend starting with the 3 Step and as your prowess and lung capacity improve, work up to the 5 Step and or 7 Step to get that willow flow.

If muscle work is your goal, then be advised you can move a lot of "body-stuff" and release a lot of calcification particularly in and around your shoulder blades, shoulder and neck if you flex & engage your muscles with solid intention. With this scenario, again, i would recommend using the 3 Step simply because of the physical power you can draw upon by getting those two IN breath's in and then concentrating your OUT breath within that one breath.

Some thoughts on energy

A wonderful visualisation to enhance The Willow experience is to imagine your hands as they are lifted up from your waist pulling energy up from the Earth, through your index finger & thumb, up into your arm & hand, with the other three fingers helping with the lifting process.

As your arm comes down, imagine the energy you've already drawn up as your fingers ascend fingers being released out through the palm of your hand as your hand descends with your hand and fingers pulled back.

Once you get the coordination happening, it's all about being soft branches that flow effortlessly just like willow branches fluttering in the breeze on a warm summers night on the banks of a babbling brook or a cascading gentle stream.

The technique

Depending on which hand is in the down position (left or right) dictates which leg will lead.

If it were your left arm in the down position, your left leg would hold the weight of your body and your right leg will lead and *vice versa*. For this example the leading leg will be the right leg, so your left hand starts in the DOWN position & your right hand will start in the UP position.

With your feet placed at less than hip width apart and using the 3 Step ready for walking (*walking on the spot also works really well*).

Step 1. Hold your left hand at around waist or hip height and assume the index finger & thumb connected with the wrist being pulled inward position.

Step 2. Lift your right hand up above your head and assume the fingers being straight & parallel with both your fingers and your wrist being pulled backward.

Step 3. Place your weight on your left foot (as it is your left hand that's at waist/hip height) and lift your right knee as though you were about to take a step and breathe in.

Step 4. As you breathe OUT in one breath, three actions occur simultaneously...

1. Your **right foot** lands on the earth.
2. Your right hand is pulled down to your waist/hip height.
3. Your left hand is lifted up above your head.

Step 5. As you breathe IN for the first of your two IN breaths, again three actions will occur...

1. This time your **left foot** will land on the earth.
2. Your left hand is pulled down to your waist/hip height.
3. Your right hand is lifted up above your head and so on.

But this time your right hand will assume the index finger & thumb connected with the wrist being pulled inward position and your left hand will assume the fingers straight and parallel with your wrist pulled backwards position.

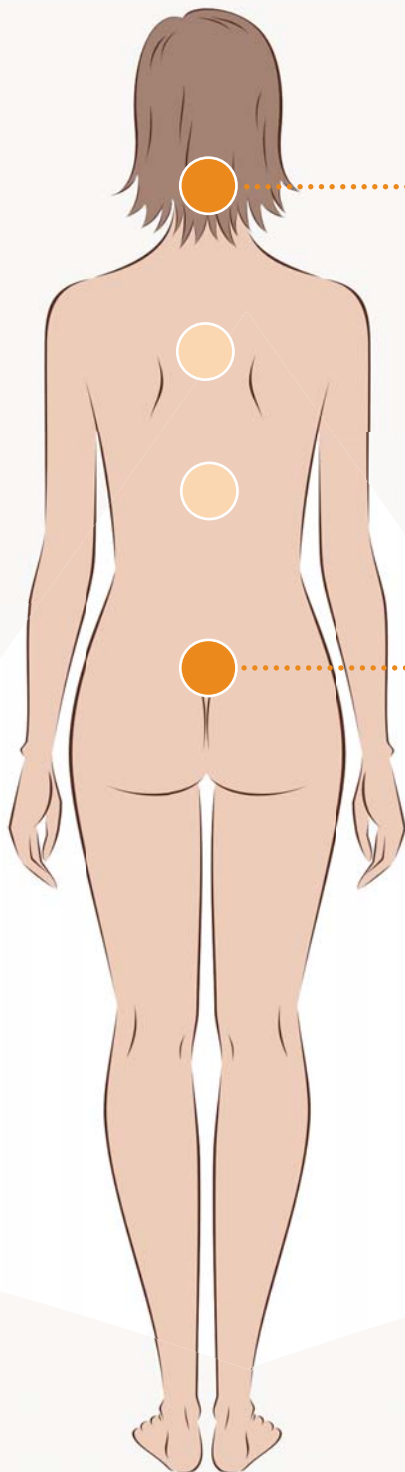
As you draw your second IN breath in, it'll be your right foot that lands on the earth, your right hand being brought down to waist height and your left hand being pulled up above your head.

Whether your hands start at waist height up to above your head, or from the above your head down to your waist is ONE breath be it an IN breath or an OUT breath. To maintain your timing, always remember...

Whatever hand is at waist height, the same leg will be holding the weight of your body!

Breathing Points of the Spine

When practicing The Willow and using 3 Step breathing rhythm with it's associated breathing points, your breathing will be directed in such a way.



● The 2nd IN breath is drawn up to the base of your skull (the mastoid process), activating the chest and upper lung.

● The 1st IN breath is felt around your sacrum... this helps activate your diaphragm so as to draw the air down into your lower lung.

The OUT breath is released by squeezing your tummy in towards your spine on the one step. See in your mind as your abdominal muscles come in that as squeezing in thereby emptying your lungs of air.

Points to remember

- As one hand is UP the other hand is DOWN
- Use either the 3 Step, 5 Step or 7 Step
- Whatever hand is DOWN, the same side leg supports the weight of your body
- Pull the energy up from the Earth through your fingers on the UP stroke
- Release the energy out through the palm of your hand on the DOWN stroke
- Imagine yourself being lifted with every IN breath, getting taller
- Lift your head up from the back of your skull

The little breath tip

To help fill your lungs with air gradually, the little breath bigger breath technique works a treat. Using the 3 Step, with your IN breath's think...

- 1st IN breath little breath
- 2nd IN breath biggest breath

and then when your exhalation (the OUT breath) begins think...

- Empty your lungs in one beat or step...squeeze your belly in.

This way you'll be able to fully maximise both your upper and lower lung as more conscious thought will be placed upon activating your diaphragm.

BE FULL OF CARE

Start softly and proceed with no rush to get anywhere.

Any movement that requires extension of the abdominal region requires respect. Be Gentle As with all the TriBreath movements, we embrace feeling first... then work in the tenths of millimetres to expand outwardly on the physical level.