



Yoga For You

Ray Madigan and Shelley Choy

***Ujjayi Pranayama* (Stage 1) »**

"*Prana*" is energy, found in everything that moves. *Prana* flows within us and is part of the space outside us. *Pranayama* is the regulation of the breath and *prana*. The practice of *pranayama* brings serenity and calmness to the mind. It soothes the nerves, brings health and vitality to the body, and prepares the mind for meditation and an experience of our own true nature.

"*Ujjayi*" means conqueror. In the first stage of this exercise, we learn to observe normal breathing while lying down with our chest open.

1. Fold blankets and lie down with your back supported and chest open. Use another blanket to support the back of your head, tilting your head down slightly. Balance your body evenly without leaning to one side. Close your eyes and soften them.
2. Let your legs and arms relax and bring your body into a state of complete stillness. This requires a lot of determined effort as a restless mind makes us fidget and seek diversions. Remain firm in your effort to be still. This is *Savasana* (Corpse Pose), which we featured two weeks ago.



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Stage I of *Ujjayi Pranayama* entails observing the breath.

3. Now, begin to observe the movement of breathing. Keep your shoulders and arms relaxed and still, and remain observant and alert to the breath. Let your mind become absorbed in each breath. If your mind wanders, train yourself to return to awareness of the flow of breath. Each breath is unique, flowing into and out of existence, never to reoccur. Observe the inhalation with humility and the exhalation with gratitude.

4. Learn to watch the breath without distraction for 5-10 minutes at a time. After each session, lie flat on the floor and relax for a few minutes (*Savasana*).

Ray Madigan and **Shelley Choy** are certified Iyengar Yoga teachers and co-direct the Manoa Yoga Center at Manoa Marketplace. Visit www.manoayoga.com or call 382-3910. Manoa Yoga Center, the authors and the Star-Bulletin take no responsibility for any injury arising from the practice of these yoga postures. Readers should seek a doctor's approval before commencing this yoga practice.