

Twelfefold rod exercise: deepening your breathing *Deepening you Breathing for Adults and Children* *Part 1. Working as an adult*

The second primary rod exercise is the twelve-fold exercise. It has a gentle pulse in front of and in back of your chest, stimulating and supporting the rhythmic system, and thereby the health of the etheric body in that region. If you follow the movements accurately, you will find that you are naturally guided to inhale and exhale deeply and harmoniously.

Before I begin to describe this exercise, I want to show you some techniques you will need to know about how to position your hands in this exercise, and how to move the rod from front to back to front.

First, (without the rod in hand), hold your arms at your side, with the palms of your hands facing backwards. Then turn them around and have your hands face forwards. You will need both of these placements in this exercise.

Now have your palms face backwards, and then bend your elbows to the sides until they are shoulder height, and lift your thumbs to your armpits. Your thumb is at a right angle to the rest of your hand. Remember this!

Now lower your arms, and turn your hands around so they face forward.

Now bend your elbows backwards and lift them again to shoulder height, keeping your elbows as far back as possible so the flat palms of your hands are just in front of your armpits.

Next, take the rod in your hands, and hold it down in front of you with your arms straight. Now practice moving the rod around your *right* side to the back (clockwise). Do that by letting go of the rod with your left hand and holding it with your right. *Keeping the rod as flat as you can and parallel to the floor*, move the right end of the rod with your right arm out to the side in a curve until the *left* end of the rod is next to your right leg. Then slide that left end of the rod back behind your thighs.

As you do that movement with your right arm, simultaneously move your left arm in a curve around your left side. In doing do, *turn your palm to face forward*. Now you can take hold of the rod with your left arm with the palm facing forward. Finally, turn your right hand around so it also faces forward.

To move the rod from the back to the front, let go of the rod with your right hand and hold it with your left. Continue the clockwise movement by bringing the rod around the *left* side of your body. Do that by keeping the rod again as flat as possible and parallel to the floor. Move the left end of the rod with your left arm out to the side in a curve until the *right* end of the rod is next to your left leg. Then slide that right end of the rod in front of your legs.

As you do that movement with your left arm, simultaneously move your right arm in a curve around your right side. In doing so, *turn your palm to face backward*. Now you can take hold of the rod with your right arm with the palm facing backward. Finally, turn your left hand around so it also faces backward.

Practice moving the rod in this pattern around your body a few times before going on to the actual twelfefold exercise.

The complete exercise unfolds as follows:

- 1. Begin by standing straight and tall, with your feet together. Hold the rod in the “down” position, in front of your legs, with your palms facing backwards and your thumbs in front of the rod (i.e., you do not use the usual grip with your thumbs by curling your thumb around the rod). Raise your elbows to the height**

of your shoulders, lifting the rod as you do so, and *hold the rod on your thumbs alone*, as they are tucked into the armpits (as described above). Hold in that position.

2. Continue to hold.
3. Continue to hold.
4. Lower the rod back to position 1. This time, use your thumbs to grasp the rod in the normal way.
5. Let go of the rod with the left hand, and move it around your right side to the back, as described above. Grasp the left end of the rod behind you with the left hand, with the palm facing forward.
6. Turn your right hand around, so it too faces forward.
7. Bend your arms behind you, as described above, and let the rod rest in fold of the elbows while the upward-facing palms of your hands are just in front of your armpits. Hold that position.
8. Continue to hold.
9. Continue to hold.
10. Lower the rod to position 6.
11. Let go of the rod with the right hand and move it around your left side to the front, as described above. Grasp the right end of the rod in front of you with the right hand, with the palm facing backward and the thumb in front of the rod.
12. Turn your left hand around so the palm faces backward and the thumb is in front of the rod.

Now begin to practice this 12-fold sequence until you can move through it smoothly and fluidly. The count should be absolutely rhythmical, and all counts should be equal in length.

As you begin to establish this fluidity, you will discover that you are naturally stimulated to inhale as you raise the rod and to exhale as you lower the rod. Now accompany these movements with an inner feeling of lightness when the rod is raised, and heaviness or grounded-ness when the rod is lowered. Keep the movement alive by staying inwardly very engaged in the constant interplay between lightness and heaviness, up and down, front and back.

The twelve-fold exercise with walking

When these movements are well established, you can further develop this exercise by walking forwards and backwards, or in different patterns, with the exercise.

To begin with, practice taking one step with each position of the rod. First do it forwards, and then do it backwards.

Next, practice only walking on the “light” counts. Take three steps forward, to counts 1, 2, 3. Then stand still for counts 4, 5, 6, as you feel rooted in place. Take four steps backward to counts 7, 8, 9. Then stand still for counts 10, 11, 12, as you again feel rooted in place. Allow this movement pattern to underscore your experience of lightness and weight.

Things to watch out for:

Take care that the rod is really low when you move it from the front to the back or the back to the front. It is easy to let that movement become too high, and then it becomes impossible to feel the necessary grounded-ness.

You can now add this to your daily practice. I recommend that you do it every day for at least a month. Many of us do it every day for our whole lives.

2. Addendum for working with Children

The 12 fold exercise is appropriate for grade 4 and above. However, the subtleties of experience that this can develop in the rhythmic system are generally not perceptible to the young child. The 10-year-old child is strongly building a new relationship of breath and blood, but the feeling life will not begin to unfold, struggle and then harmonize until puberty and adolescence set in.

As with the seven fold exercise (see essay), this exercise should be done lightly and with fun. You will find that the children struggle to perceive how to grip the rod in front and behind. You will also find that it is hard for them to really let the rod drop and become “heavy” on beat number ten. You will find that this easily becomes mechanical. Relax, however! If you can develop your own comfortable pace with this, the child will imitate you. Do this with light and easy joy, without sacrificing precision.

For the seven fold exercise, I offered to you the possibility of pretending to be as strict as a drill sergeant. Not so with this one! In this exercise, you are to be gentle and flowing. Your goal is to create harmony, not stress or chaos.

As soon as you are ready, progress to the stage of integrating this with stepping, as indicated above.

Now you can do both the seven fold and the twelve fold in your rod eurythmy routine. I suggest that you do this routine daily (or 3 times a week) for 7 weeks to constitute one “block.” Do three such “blocks” during the year---in fall, winter and spring.

The Journal Box

Thinks to watch as your child learns the 12 fold rod exercise.

How long did it take to learn how to move the hands around?

Could s/he raise the rod without cramping the neck and shoulders----and thereby stay centered in your middle zone?

Did the child show a different feeling when s/he held the rod raised different from when held lowered—was there a difference in the internal sense of levity and gravity?

