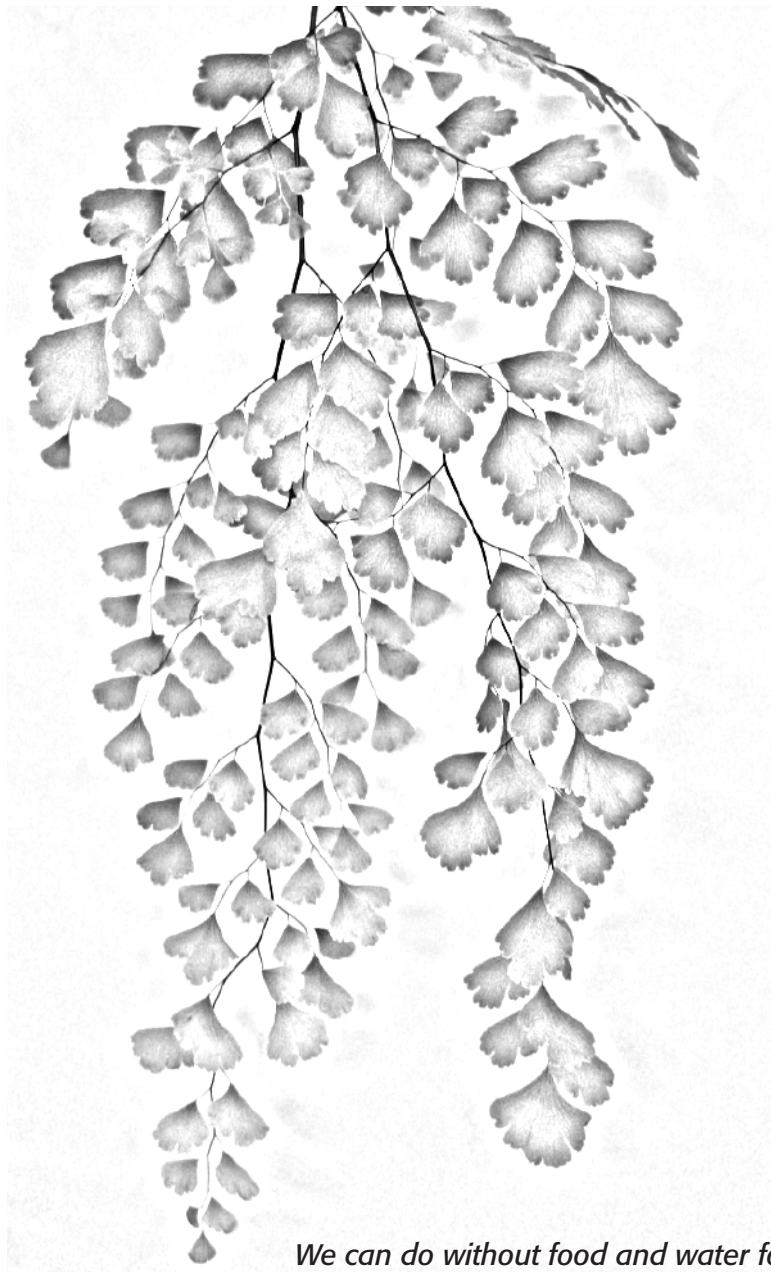


## BREATHE YOUR STRESS AWAY



*We can do without food and water for many days,*

*but we will not survive even a few minutes without breath.*

Now that we understand the dynamics of stress and their impact on us, we can turn our attention to remedies. The good news is that immediate stress relief is readily available. Breath, something we usually take for granted and therefore ignore, gives us direct access to our nervous system. When we join our awareness to our breath, we trigger our relaxation response and quickly calm ourselves down. There is a saying that is worth remembering: “Where our consciousness travels, breath follows, and healing begins.” This chapter offers a simple explanation of how our breath works and introduces breathing exercises that can offer instant relief. Try them and find out for yourself how your breath, which is always accessible to you, can be your best stress reliever.

### BREATH

The breath is the marker of our life span. Our life begins with our first inhalation at the time of our birth, and ends with our last exhalation at the time of our death. We can do without food and water for many days, but we will not survive even a few minutes without breath. When we consider this, the importance of our breath takes on awesome proportions. Yet breathing is something most of us take for granted. We notice our breath infrequently. The relationship between our sense of vitality and our capacity to breathe fully has largely become lost in our society, as has the knowledge that we can manage our moods by modulating our breath.