

Ho Hub Breathing, Natural Movement, and Recess Duty

While at work as a building substitute in a small elementary school just south of Gettysburg, I have attended many recess periods throughout the year. In the winter months, temperatures consistently around or below freezing with considerable wind are not uncommon. At the elementary, we value play as an essential component to learner development. Jackets, hats, and gloves required!

While the students are on the playground the teachers are responsible for monitoring their conduct. Often, students approach us with personal disputes or requests of various sorts. In these wintery months, we frequently hear the complaint, “I’m cold!” The oft heard response is, “Well, go run around to warm up!” Meanwhile most teachers stand huddled together and commiserate about how bitter the cold feels. I found myself joining in on this and suffering the consequences of my immobility. While standing beside several colleagues one especially frigid and windy day I decided that I should practice my Chayon Ryu. “What Chayon Ryu can you practice standing still?” I asked myself, still feeling trapped in groupthink along with my freezing colleagues. “Breathing,” I thought, “you can always practice breathing.” Deep prolonged breathing immediately took away the shivering feeling that builds in your core when you stand still in the cold. The next few days, I would spend the whole 20-minute recess period practicing deep breathing and some other breathing rhythms. Despite how impactful this breathing was in staving off the cold, it could not really keep me *warm*.

Finally, I decided to take the advice that I had heard given to the students. I needed to move around. So, I turned to the other teachers, excused myself, and I began to walk laps around the playground. What began as walking soon came to include other natural movements like marching, skipping, shuffling, and jogging. When I looked behind or beside me, I would find anywhere from two to ten children following along. Many would come and go for short periods; some would follow along most of their recess! Natural movements with good rhythm and proper breathing kept me

warm even when the temperatures were below freezing. What once was a dreaded responsibility, 20-minutes of miserable cold, has become an opportunity to lead by example for the students while practicing breathing with natural movement. After all that movement, I always reenter the building with an improved outlook and readiness for the lessons ahead. Practicing the principles of Chayon Ryu while enjoying the fresh air is now something incorporated into my schedule at least twice daily. Through this practice my day as an educator has vastly improved.

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