

WORKING DRAFT

# **An Introduction to Breathwork**

## **A Primer in the Art and Science of Conscious Breathing**

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**Breath and Breathing**

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## **Introduction to Breathwork**

Breathwork is the art and science of applying breath awareness exercises and conscious breathing techniques as a bridge, a force, and a tool for health, growth, and change—in spirit, mind, and body.

Breathwork is a combination of ancient wisdom and modern science. It is an intuitive art, a healing art, a creative art, a revolutionary and evolutionary art. It represents the cutting edge of the human potential movement.

In one form or another, breathwork is used in almost every holistic-health and alternative-care program. It represents the cream of the crop of self improvement and personal growth methods. It can be found at the cutting edge of the human potential movement, and at the heart of the world peace movement.

Breathing is the language of the soul. You can communicate with the breath, and you can turn to it for information. And you can actually learn to breathe from the breath itself! It is literally a source of inspiration, and the key to peace and power, oneness and wholeness.

In every moment, the breath is nourishing us. It is continuously working to keep us alive. It is working to help us to move and to function. It gives us the power to think and to create. And in every moment, it is reflecting and expressing the truth of our being. It reveals our state of our health and the level of our consciousness.

Breathwork awakens pure life-force energy—creative energy, healing energy. You can consciously use this energy in any way you choose. You can use it to generate luminous thoughts, ecstatic emotions, and pure pleasure. You can use it to fuel gentle and loving behaviors, and to motivate creative and productive actions.

Breathwork strengthens our ability to change our focus and to re-direct our creative life energy. Consciousness is a light. And we can use breathing to brighten that light.

Breathwork can be used in health and fitness, sports, the martial arts, and in the creative and performing arts. It can be used in business, bodywork, psychotherapy, or in spiritual counseling.

It can be used to clear your head, calm your nerves, settle your stomach, or open your heart. It can be used to warm you up or cool you off. It can be used to wake you up or calm you down. It can be used to enhance sexual pleasure, or to heal sexual abuse.

You can use it to relax or energize yourself. You can use it to dissolve pain or to reduce stress. It can be used to fuel your passion or to change your behavior. You can use it to access the unconscious mind, or open you to altered states of consciousness. It can be used in meditation or behavior modification.

What we learn and practice in a breathwork session has immediate and permanent benefits that apply to every level and facet of our lives. The principles we apply in a breathwork session have profound benefits when applied in our every day lives.

If you are an artist, you will be more inspired. If you are a healer, you will be more potent. If you are a business woman, you will be more successful. If you are a teacher, you will be more creative. If you are a policeman, you will be more effective.

It is not an exaggeration to say that it can enhance or improve anything about you, and it can empower practically everything you do!

## **The Power and Potential of Breathwork**

Our breathing is affected by temperature, and the clothing we wear. It is affected by sights, smells, and feelings. It is affected by our emotions and our energy, and by other people's emotions and energy. Breathing is affected by what we think, what we eat, how we sit, stand, or carry ourselves.

Breathing patterns are like fingerprints. Every physiological, chemical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual state has a corresponding or associated breathing pattern or quality.

The way you breathe when you are listening to music is different than the way you breathe when you are solving a math problem. The way you breathe when you are peaceful and calm is different than the way you breathe when you are upset or anxious. The way you breathe when you are angry or afraid is different than the way you breathe when you are confident and happy.

But which comes first: the chicken or the egg? What we think, how we feel, and what we do, is directly affected by how we breathe. That was an ancient yogic secret. They noticed that when their physical, emotional, or mental state changed, their breathing pattern changed too. And they discovered that by regulating and controlling their breathing, they could regulate and control those changing states.

With breathwork, you can cope better in difficult situations. With practice, you can accomplish the same things that great yogis and Taoist masters can. You can control the function of your immune system, your endocrine system, your cardiovascular, digestive, and nervous system, by mastering the art of breathwork.

With over 35 years of practice, I can say that there seems to be no limit to what is possible with the spirit of breath as our guide and our ally!

## The “Breath” in Breathwork

Breathing has two levels: the outer breath and the inner breath. The outer breath is air: oxygen and carbon dioxide. The inner breath refers to energy. This subtle element in the air is often called “spirit,” or “the breath within the breath.” And for me, this element is the most exciting, fascinating, and the most important level of breathwork.

You will notice that I often use the same term to refer to different aspects or elements in breathing. When I refer to the breath, I may be talking about the incoming air or oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>). I may be talking about the outgoing air or carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).

Sometimes I may refer to it as “breath-energy” (chi, ki, prana, spirit, life force, etc.). Sometimes, the breath is referred to as light or love, or some other spiritual quality, or even to life itself. But I’m not alone in this. Many ancient cultures use the same word for “life,” “breath,” “spirit,” “air,” or “energy.”

There are many levels of Breathwork: physiological, emotional, psychological, energetic, spiritual, inter-personal, transpersonal, social. Each of these levels have sub-levels. For example, the physical level has three levels of its own: getting breath into and out of the lungs; getting breath into and out of the blood; getting breath into and out of the cells.

On the physical level, the first step, getting air in and out of the lungs involves muscular, anatomical, structural conditions and dynamics. And a lot of work can be done with these elements to increase lung volume and respiratory capacity. Many studies prove that the greater your lung capacity is, the longer you will live, and the healthier you will be.

The average person reaches peak respiratory capacity between the ages of 26 and 28. And from then on, for every decade of life, they lose 12% to 17% of their lung capacity. So, unless you are doing something to maintain or increase your respiratory capacity, by the time you are 60 years old, you will have lost more than half of your vital capacity. This is completely preventable with simple regular breathing exercises, that is, with breathwork.

Breathwork can mean strengthening, toning and coordinating the breathing muscles to improve ventilation. But getting air in and out of the lungs is not enough. No matter how much you huff and puff, it does your body no good unless the oxygen gets from the lungs into your bloodstream.

This second step in respiration depends on the partial pressures of gases, the infusion of blood vessels in and around the lungs, and of course, cardio-vascular health. Our blood needs to be nearly saturated with oxygen if it is to supply life to all the tissues and organs and systems of the body, and the trillions of cells that make it up.

In fact, unless you have some kind of pathological condition or disease, your blood is already 96% to 98% saturated with oxygen. So, for the average person, there's really not much room for improvement there.

The third step on the physiological level is the vital step: that is getting oxygen from the bloodstream into the cells. And as it turns out, carbon dioxide is a key to that critical transfer of oxygen from the blood to the cells. CO<sub>2</sub> is a volatile acid, and so by increasing or decreasing breathing, you can affect the critical pH (acid-base) balance in the body.

There is a lot of hype and misunderstanding about deep breathing: for example that you can “super-oxygenate” your cells through deep rapid breathing.

In fact, hyperventilation can actually reduce the supply of oxygen to your cells, because in the process of “over-breathing,” you blow off too much carbon dioxide. And among other things, this causes constriction of the micro-vessels, which prevents blood flow to the tissues and cells.

Anyone can reduce the supply of blood, and therefore oxygen, to the brain by 40% in just one minute, by hyperventilating. Deep rapid breathing is good up to a point, but beyond that point, you can actually starve your body of oxygen.

Having said that, it’s important to realize that your body is not the only part of you that depends on the breath for health and life. We are multi-dimensional beings, made up of spirit, mind, and body.

The breath is a door. It is the rainbow bridge! The breath connects the mind to the body. It connects the conscious mind to the unconscious and “super conscious” mind. It connects us to the earth and to heaven.

Everyone is sucking off the same bubble of air that surrounds this planet. The breath connects us to nature and to each other in the most intimate way; and it connects us all to our source, to our creator in the most direct way.

The breath is visible and invisible. It is fuel. It is nourishment. It is intelligent. It sustains us. It is alive. It is life itself. It is living in you, it is living around you, and it is living through you. You are not only living your life: your life is living you!

Breath is the most ordinary thing, and it is the most extraordinary thing! Breathing is so simple, so basic, and so ordinary, that we tend to underestimate it, we tend to overlook it. We take it for granted, and we generally give it no thought at all.

And yet, we can make conscious use of it. We can turn to it as a friend, as a guide, as an ally, as a force, a tool. And that is precisely what breathwork is about.

## **The Practice of Breathwork**

Breathing is such a primary function and basic system in the body. And it is the only one that is both involuntary and voluntary. It takes care of itself, and yet we can take it over at any time. That cannot be an evolutionary accident.

Nature is inviting us to explore the possibilities! And playing with the possibilities can be great fun as well as profoundly healing. You can apply breathwork in many interesting and beautiful ways.

Breathwork consists of various awareness, relaxation, and energy exercises, techniques and meditations. Breathwork involves both internal and external stillness and movements.

Breathwork can be practiced lying down (on your back, on your stomach or on either side). It can be practiced while sitting comfortably in a chair. It can be practiced sitting on the floor, in the classic cross-legged yoga pose.

Breathwork can be practiced alone, in pairs, and in three's; it can be practiced in small groups or in large groups. It can be practiced in a clinical context or in a recreational setting. It can be practiced in private or in public, at home, at work, in nature, or in sacred places.

Breathwork can be practiced before, during, or after any other activity or event. It is not religion and it is not therapy. It is an intuitive practice, a creative art, a simple and unique way of approaching life.

Breathwork can take the form of a guided session or a self-directed process. One common form of breathwork involves a series of one-on-one sessions lasting from 30 minutes to 3 hours.

In this case, a coach or facilitator guides a process of inner exploration using the breath as a tool, a force, or a bridge to health, growth, and change in spirit, mind, or body.

There are many schools and styles of breathwork. Some training programs are four weeks long and some are four years long. In many countries, it has been accepted by the medical community and has been adopted as a therapeutic modality, covered by medical insurance.

Today there is a worldwide movement to train, certify and license professional breathworkers. And there is a plan to control and regulate breathworkers in the same way that psychologists, acupuncturists, massage therapists, chiropractors, counselors, naturopaths, and social workers are controlled and regulated by state or other authorities.

In my opinion, this is both good and not so good! It is good that the medical community recognizes the power and potential of conscious breathing to aid in disease prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery. For too long, breathwork was seen as a “flaky new age fringe” phenomenon.

But in order to make breathwork more acceptable, respectable, palatable, or more appealing to mainstream authorities, it is being stripped of its most unique and transformative elements. In order to standardize or professionalize the practice, it must be watered down and gutted of its most profound and liberating aspects.

And so I question the value of confining breathwork to the medical-therapeutic world, or forcing it to conform to the rigid ethics and standards of any old and failing models. And I have challenged some members of the medical community who feel that they have a right or a duty to regulate the practice of breathwork.

I do not want breathwork to end up being just another version of the same old thing. Breathwork is unique. It evolved because the standard therapeutic model was not helping us to reach our ultimate potential.

I don't want to see breathwork held captive by the psychotherapy community. And I will not support them in regulating it or controlling it. In fact, I will not support any individual or any group, no matter how good their intentions are, if they aim to dictate to others what must be done or what cannot happen in the breathwork community, at a breathing seminar, or during a breathing session.

The greatest leaps and the most advances in breathwork took place in the early days when there were no signposts to guide us, no rules to memorize, no policies in place, no instructions to follow, no experts to turn to, and no dogmas to obey.

The community was made up of ordinary people, who were extraordinary in that they dared to trust their intuition, to listen to the voice of their spirit, to rely on their own internal authority, to follow their heart. And we supported and trained everyone who came to us to do the same thing. It was called empowerment.

I believe that the breathwork relationship is a sacred one. There has been a lot of debate about the ethics of the client-therapist relationship in breathwork. But terms like "client" and "therapist" are merely convenient social references. And yet, some breathworkers actually treat the people who come to them as if they were their "patients!"

Many professional therapists and I am sad to say, some so-called breathworkers, are "compassionate for the cash in it." They put on a role or an air. They assume a position of power and authority, and then they relate to their clients on this basis, in this artificial way.

Genuine breathworkers are different. They may happen to be doctors or therapists, or professional counselors, and so on; but in the practice of breathwork, they are nothing more than caring people who have derived great personal benefit from the process, and feel confident enough to share it with others.

The best relationship between a coach (facilitator, teacher, etc) and a breather (student, client, etc.) is simply one of loving friendship. I think that the “contact improvisation” movement in dance is a beautiful model for relating in breathwork.

Good breathworkers trust the sacred process of those they work with. They are not afraid to surrender to the spontaneous movement of spirit. They are conscious and aware, sensitive and intuitive. They are open and available. They are willing to flow with the energy of the moment.

Breathworkers choose the highest thought in every moment, and they encourage others to do the same. They don't turn to a rule book or default to a dogma: they follow the prompting of their heart. In fact, we must even be willing to forget about doing breathwork itself, even as we are in the middle of practicing it!

There is a risk in making breathwork into a “thing” that people “do.” That's what happened in the “primal scream” movement. People experienced real healing when they were allowed to spontaneously scream during therapy. But then it became an artificial technique that people began to “do.” And soon, it lost its natural healing power and genuine therapeutic value.

Natural healing and loving responses can be stifled when we are busy forcing ourselves and others to do what we think is “good” and “right.” To me, ethics in breathwork are simple: be open, be available, be honest, be real, and be present. And in each moment of power and choice, if you really think and feel that you must “do” something, ask: “What would love do?”

## **Two Main Aspects of Breathwork**

### **1. Breath Awareness**

### **2. Conscious Breathing**

Breath awareness is the passive aspect. It means that you do nothing to the breath, or with the breath. You simply observe it. Watch it, listen to it, and feel it. Let it come and go by itself, without controlling or influencing it in any way. The body is breathing itself. You are simply an impartial witness to this natural phenomenon.

Conscious Breathing is the active aspect. This is where you come in. You consciously direct the breathing. You bring a certain intention, a certain quality to the breathing. You give it a certain rate, rhythm, speed, volume, pattern, etc. You are not simply the witness: you are an active participant, you are the controlling factor.

In the practice of Breathwork, we want to use both these aspects. One follows the other, precedes the other, balances the other. In any given moment, you can be practicing one or the other. Do it on purpose to tune into your breath at various times during the day, to see how you are breathing.

Do it on purpose to inject conscious breaths into your daily activities, to interrupt patterns, to empower thoughts and actions, to lift your spirits, or to ground and center yourself.

Breathwork can be integrated into your daily activities. You don't need to create more time to do it. You can do it anytime, but it's a good idea to develop your own daily ritual. I recommend the 10 + 10 + (10 x 2) formula. That is ten minutes in the morning, ten minutes at night, and ten times during the day for two minutes.

## **Three Key Convergences in Breathwork**

Many people have paid a lot of money and spent a lot of time to learn the following secrets. And many people have been applying these secrets without realizing it. In fact, every benefit in breathwork depends on these three things:

### **1. Combining Consciousness and Breathing**

### **2. Combining Consciousness and Relaxation**

### **3. Combining Breathing and Relaxation**

In the practice of breathwork, we focus on bringing together consciousness and breathing. Most of the time we breathe unconsciously; we are simply unaware of our breathing. And for lack of a better word, “magic” happens when we become conscious of our breathing, when we simply breathe consciously.

That’s the first convergence. If you breathe consciously only 1% of the time and you increase that to 5% of the time, you will dramatically increase your awareness and improve your health; and you will double your comfort, pleasure, inner peace, success, and ease in life, relationships, and in anything else that you do.

Whenever you bring consciousness and energy together, you create something. That is the creative process: bringing consciousness and energy together.

The more conscious we become of our breathing, the more conscious we become of other everything else: our thoughts, our words, our deeds, our posture, our reactions, etc. The more aware we become of our breathing, the more aware we become of everything in and around us.

Bringing together consciousness and relaxation is the second convergence.

The fact is, when you are most relaxed, you are literally sleeping! You are actually asleep (or under the influence of a drug) during the most relaxed moments of your life. You are not conscious at those times, and so you have never experienced pure relaxation.

In fact, it is as if nature or life has to get you out of the way in order for your body to relax and rejuvenate itself. Your consciousness, filled as it is with all its useless thoughts and redundant mental activity, actually interferes in the body's ability to relax. And so nature sees to it that you disappear every night. Sleep gives your body a break from you!

And so the first time you are totally awake and completely relaxed, it is like a peak religious experience. It is a peace that passes understanding. It is bliss, ecstasy, an experience of pure joy. And this is exactly one of the prime benefits as well as the focus of breathwork.

The third convergence is bringing together conscious breathing and conscious relaxation. This is an art. Usually when people breathe in a powerful way, they don't relax. And when they relax completely, they don't breathe. The more they breathe, the less they relax. The more they relax, the less they breathe.

This is normal without training or practice. But in breathwork we change around. And we apply the principle of economy: we focus on accomplishing the most amount of work with the least amount of effort.

Breath mastery means bringing together powerful breathing and complete relaxation, with awareness. This is the key to the most healing, empowering and enlightening results and benefits in breathwork.

## **A Formula for Transformation**

For many years, I presented breathwork in a seminar called “The Formula for Transformation.” It grew out of what I called my “Breath Energy Trainings.” It was during a time when “transformation” was the buzz word in human potential circles.

I defined transformation as change, deep change: change so deep and so real that not only you change, but your reality changes too. It is change so deep and so real that your presence actually changes the lives of those around you.

We trained breathworkers to be “transformational change agents.” In fact many breathworkers in the USA still call what they do “transformational Breathing.”

In 1978, I did a survey to determine why people were drawn to breathwork. It was done as a marketing project, linked to my degree in business and education at the University of Massachusetts. But what I learned proved to be of much more value than the few credits I got for completing the course.

The survey showed that practically everyone who was drawn to breathwork was eager to make changes in their life. Everyone was planning a change, or preparing for one. They were either in the middle of a life change, or recovering from one. Breathwork was seen as a tool for creating change or coping with change.

This theme played out in royal form during the collapse of communism and the birth of democracy in the Former Soviet Union. I was literally sucked or blown into that country because of the historic changes.

In Russia in the early 1990’s, tens of thousands of people began to practice breathwork. In a beautiful and accurate play of words, in Russia, rebirthing and breathwork is called “Free Breathing.”

Today not everyone who comes to breathwork is looking for total transformation. Some people are simply interested in getting rid of their headaches, or controlling their asthma, or relieving stress.

Some people are just curious to experience new feelings. And some people are just looking for a natural high, and want to enjoy the wonderful buzz they get from breathwork. And that's okay! For several years, I was happy to call my seminar "Going Deep Getting High."

Whatever your goal, whatever your purpose, whatever your interest, you will do well to follow this simple advice. When you breathe alone, or when you coach someone else, you will do well to consider the following "rules of thumb."

If at any point, you wonder: "What should I be doing?" "Am I doing it right?" Simply focus on one, two, or all three of these ingredients:

- 1. Awareness: the Consciousness Factor. The message is: "Wake up!"**
- 2. Relaxation: the Release Factor. The message is "Let go!"**
- 3. Breathing: the Energy Factor: The message is "Take charge!"**

Actually, any one of these ingredients in and of themselves will bring tremendous benefit if you practice them.

If you meditate often enough or long enough, then sooner or later, you will awaken to the depths of your being. If you relax deeply enough, or at the moment it is required, you will open to the most profound levels of life. If you follow the breath, with an open heart and an open mind, it will eventually lead you to your source, your essence.

In breathwork, we focus on all three of these proven methods at once. Therefore, you can't miss reaching the goal! Breathwork proves that what we thought would take a long time, or require a great deal of effort, can actually happen in a flash!

Awareness is the first step. If you are aware of an obstacle in the road, you simply stop or drive around it. No problem. But if you are not conscious of what's in your way, then it could be a big problem!

Relaxation is not only a powerful life-skill, it is a profound spiritual principle. And it may be the single most important thing in achieving our highest potential. Most people are very surprised to discover that something they have been struggling for so long to fix or change or overcome, was actually something they simply needed to release.

Taking charge of your life-force energy can mean the difference between staying healthy and succumbing to a disease. There are times when you can pull your oars into the boat and let the river of life carry you home. And there are times when if you expect to get anywhere, you better take charge and paddle your way to home!

Breathwork makes us more conscious of our inner and outer world. It gives us the ability to remain cool, calm, and collected in the midst of a crisis. And it gives us the self-determining power to take creative action, and to make positive healthy changes in our lives, and in the lives of others.

## **The Principles of Breath Therapy**

- 1. The Power of the Technique**
- 2. The Importance of the Atmosphere**
- 3. The Presence of the Teacher**
- 4. The Mind of the Breather**
- 5. Something Else**

For many years, I referred to my breathwork practice as “Breath Therapy.” And during that time, I trained “Breath Therapists.” As I defined it, there were two main insights underlying this original healing art.

The first insight was that just about everyone was burdened with a breathing system that was inhibited. The breathing mechanism in the average person was not functioning to its full, free, natural potential. The breathing system needed healing; and so, a therapeutic intervention was required.

The second insight was this: once the breathing mechanism was healed and the breath was flowing full and free, then the breath itself became a therapeutic tool: the simple act of breathing consciously turned out to be naturally therapeutic.

In Breath Therapy, we used the breath and the body to heal the mind; and we used the breath and the mind to heal the body. We also used the breath, the mind, and the body to heal every kind of emotional problem. It was a very exciting time!

But something began to bug me. “Why was it,” I wondered, “that in some cases, nothing much seemed to happen; and in other cases, amazing miracles occurred?”

At the time, the most important thing to me was to see to it that people had major healing and growth experiences. In fact, I was addicted to profound results and deep transformation. My ego was bathing in the power of it!

Thanks to several thousand Russian participants (I called them my guinea pigs), I was able to zero in on exactly what was working and what was happening when the really big miracles occurred. I worked out “The Principles of Breath Therapy:”

**The Power of the Technique.** There is real power in every breathing technique. And there are many techniques in Breath Therapy. If you have anything near normal anatomy and physiology, then when you do a certain breathing technique, it will produce a certain result, guaranteed. And so I spend a lot of time and energy trying to teach my students and clients perfect technique.

**The Importance of Atmosphere.** The physical, emotional, psychic, and energetic atmosphere in which we practice the technique can have just as much to do with the result we get as the technique we use. You can practice a technique in a warm, safe place with a loving group of people and get one result: you can practice the same technique out in the cold in the middle of a busy highway, and get a very different result.

For me, the most important atmosphere is one of freedom and safety: in other words, love. That is the space I am committed to holding during breathwork.

**The Presence of the Teacher.** Water only rises to its own level. There is something real that passes from teacher to student—something tangible on the energetic level. The simple presence of the teacher brings power to the technique and the atmosphere.

If you are about to do your first sky dive, and the person on the side of you has done it only once before and is afraid, your experience will be very different than if he or she has done it a thousand times and loves it!

I learned this principle first hand, as I saw that in the presence of my teachers in China and India, I was able to do things that I could never have done alone.

**The Mind of the Breather.** This fourth principle can be what in sales is known as a “deal breaker.” Thoughts are creative. What you believe is true, what you think is possible, can make all the difference in the world. When someone is truly ready to heal or to grow or to change, the next thing they do will work; the next book they pick up will have the answer; the next person they meet will hold the key.

Our mind consists of conscious and unconscious thoughts, and these thoughts can have more power than any teacher, technique, or atmosphere. And so, during breathwork, I do a lot of overt and covert work on the level of consciousness.

**Something Else.** This final principle is a mystical factor, a magical factor: maybe something like “grace” is at work. I don’t know what it is, so I call it something else. I know that something else is at work because someone can do the technique completely wrong, in the worst of atmospheres, with a terrible teacher, and for all the wrong reasons... but still a miracle can happen! And so this work has taught me to trust the “unknown.” In fact, I love the unknown, and the unknowable!

**Note:** Breath Therapy is extremely therapeutic: but not in the way that most people take it to mean these days. What I do as a breathworker is naturally and deliberately therapeutic: but in the original sense of the word. Therapeutic comes from the Greek “*therapeutin*,” which means “to serve.”

## **Breathing and Relaxation**

Relaxation is a basic life skill. A key to ending much of our suffering lies in our ability and willingness to let go of hard feelings and rigid thinking, as much as muscular tension. In fact, success in breathwork, as well as happiness in life depends on the ability to let go—especially when it is the last thing you would think to do!

In breathwork, we learn the art of letting go. We practice letting go of the exhale, and this triggers relaxation on all the other levels. When you can let go of the breath quickly and completely, you can let go pain, limiting thoughts, negative moods, rigid positions, and even the dreaded ego, quickly and easily.

Much of our tension is unconscious. When you carry tension all the time, you simply stop feeling it. Because it's there all the time, you stop noticing it. And as tension accumulates, it becomes pain. For many people pain is the first sign of tension. Chronic unconscious tension causes or makes worse every kind of illness, injury and disease. It destroys physical and mental health.

Light loving thoughts do not come out of a tight tense body. Dark heavy thoughts come out of a tight tense body. It is very hard to give and receive love when you are filled with tension and pain: and it's also hard to breathe.

It's normal to contract your energy and withdraw your awareness from things that are scary or uncomfortable. But sometimes healing and growth means looking at things that are scary and doing things that are uncomfortable.

And so in breathwork, we learn to relax into intensity. We use the breath to activate strong thoughts, sensations, and emotions. Our urge is to contract and resist in those moments, but we practice expanding and relaxing instead.

It's also important to realize that when you are very relaxed, the body naturally has little need to breathe. The chemical triggers, the breathing receptors do not fire off because there is no muscular activity; there is no metabolic demand for energy.

And so you must override these physiological controls, and consciously choose to breathe. The relaxed body, left to itself, will breathe very little if at all. It simply has no biological-physiological need for powerful breathing.

When you are involved in strenuous physical activity, your body automatically breathes more. You don't have to think about it. You don't have to make it happen: your system takes care of itself. But when you are relaxed and at rest, you must think about breathing; you must make it happen.

Imagine breathing as if you are running up a hill, and yet remain perfectly relaxed. What do you think would happen to all that extra energy? The body doesn't need it, the muscles won't use it. It has to go somewhere. It has to do something.

Simply put, it produces beautiful and powerful new feelings; it triggers a process of emotional, psychological and spiritual healing. It cleans and balances our energy body. But as long as the physical body needs the energy, it gets first dibs on the breath. Physical survival trumps spiritual evolution.

When the body is totally relaxed, and has no need for breath energy, and yet you are consciously supplying it with an abundance of it, then certain things begin to happen. On the physical level, you begin to experience many strange and unusual feelings and sensations, and you activate powerful emotions.

All these feelings, sensations and emotions can trigger important thoughts and beliefs. And so what the body experiences as unnecessary extra energy, is actually a vital key to awakening, healing, and growth on the emotional, psychological and spiritual level.

## **Puddle Out!**

Relaxation is a basic life skill. It is a healing art. Complete relaxation is a cornerstone of Breath Mastery. It is the ultimate shortcut to enlightenment!

Whether you are in the middle of an asthma attack or recovering from surgery, whether you are training as a wrestler or working as a healer, playing in a billiard tournament or performing on stage: relaxation is something you need to practice.

The more you are able to relax, the easier it is for energy to flow through you. By “energy” I mean creative energy, I mean aliveness, vitality: chi, ki, prana, spirit, vital life force, healing light, divine love... Isn't that something you'd like to feel?

Puddle out for 10-20 minutes a day. Devote that time exclusively, entirely to relaxation. (Make sure to also include momentary re-minders to relax and breathe throughout the day.)

“Puddling out” comes from the analogy of ice cream melting in the sun. Imagine your body melting and softening. The idea is to relax so much that the spaces between your cells open up, allowing energy to get into all the cracks and crevices of your being.

Can you relax and let go? I mean can you really relax and let go? Can you release all your muscles and joints? Can you loosen and soften your entire body? Can you be like a rag doll? How quickly can you relax? How deeply? How completely?

In the midst of what situations can you relax? Under what circumstances can you relax? Can you relax in action? Can you relax in motion? Can you relax when you are in pain? Can you relax when you are afraid? Can you relax into divine energy?

Are you aware of the tension that you hold and carry with you all the time? Are you holding yourself together somewhere, somehow to avoid pain or injury?

Do you try to relax, but your body responds by becoming tenser? Is your relaxation fleeting and fragile? Is it easily disturbed?

Anyone can relax when everything is going smoothly, when your bills are paid, when you feel good, when you are safe at home, when there's plenty of money in the bank, when the kids are healthy and happy.

But the ability to relax when the going gets tough: that's the thing! To relax when everyone around you is lost in a panic: that's the thing! To relax during intense moments in life, when it's the last thing we would think to do: that's the thing!

There are many moments in life when we are automatically driven by unconscious dysfunctional reactions and habits. How many times have you looked back on a situation and wished you could have taken a breath and cleared yourself before speaking or acting? How many things have you done that you would have done differently had you taken a moment to stop and reflect?

If you spend a few minutes a day just "puddling out," you will be surprised at how much energy you will conserve and accumulate. You will be surprised at how this practice will help you at those moments in your life when you have an urge to strike out in anger, or to reach for that cigarette!

Breathwork gives us practice at letting go: whether it is letting go of thoughts, old habits, pain or illness. Puddling out regularly has the side effect of improving our ability to remain conscious and clear in those critical moments of life.

Puddling out is a key to health and happiness. Practice it. Master it!

## **Practice Relaxation Now**

Lay on the floor, or your bed, or sit in a reclining chair. Relax and let go. Be like a rag doll. Melt. Puddle out! Loosen and soften all your muscles, release all your joints. Relax your forehead; relax around your eyes; relax your jaw; relax your throat; relax your chest; relax your belly; relax your hips and pelvis. Relax your legs, your arms, your hands.

Let the breath flow gently and freely. Ask someone to check your skill. Let them test you by moving your arms, shoulders, neck, chest and ribs, spine, hips, pelvis, and legs. Are all these parts and places free and loose? Get feedback from someone. Are you really relaxed?

No matter how good you are at relaxing, you can always relax more. We all have unconscious layers and pockets of tension. Notice the hum of your refrigerator or the buzz of an overhead light: because it's there all the time, you simply don't notice it anymore. Chronic tension is a killer! It drains you of energy while blocking the flow of spirit. It robs your organs and tissues of vital life force!

You can free yourself of pain by learning to relax. You can unlock your greatest potential by learning to relax. You can open yourself to more life, to more love, to more joy... That's right: by learning to relax! You can heal yourself and gently shift to the next higher level of being, simply by relaxing into the flow of life.

You say that you can already relax? Then turn on the breathing. Turn up the breath a couple of notches. Activate, generate, invite more energy. More! More! Breathe more quickly, more deeply. Can you remain relaxed as you breathe more?

Are you ready for a breakthrough in your healing or growth practice or process? Combine total relaxation with powerful energy breathing, and see what happens!

## **Breathwork and Emotions**

Breathwork can be used to charge or discharge emotions. It can be used to express or suppress emotions; it can be used to integrate emotional energy. With the breath as your aide, you can contain, release, channel or control emotions. Breathwork can intensify or sublimate emotional energy.

Breathwork can be used to heal emotional scars, or to transform one emotion into another; or with breathwork we can transform emotional energy into an altogether different form of energy. We can use it to empower our thoughts and actions.

In breathwork, people discover a causal loop between thoughts and emotions, often called our “emotional mind.” We have a thought: “people don’t like me.” That thought produces an emotion: sadness, resentment, anger, or depression. Those emotions trigger more thoughts: “I’m a bad person,” “I’m ugly,” “I’m stupid,” “Something must be wrong with me.”

Those thoughts fuel more emotions of the same kind or frequency. Out of this internal emotional atmosphere, more thoughts of the same quality or frequency are generated. And on and on it goes in a vicious cycle.

Many people seem to be easily caught in this emotional mind, in this cycle of negativity. But the same emotional mind can be used to produce very positive and inspiring thoughts, attitudes, and actions.

You have a thought: “I love myself,” “I am a lovable person,” “I am safe, “I am ok.” Those thoughts produce positive emotions, a positive mood. That positive mood triggers more positive thoughts. “I can do it!” “I am capable.” Those thoughts and feelings generate positive and loving actions.

Soon you are helping someone, you are cooking something delicious, you are cleaning out a closet; you are enjoying a sunset, you are making improvements in your life, or the lives of others.

It's human magic! But just like the law of inertia, sometimes in order to shift, move or change our direction, we need to be acted on by an external force.

For example, a good friend calls you or visits you. They find you in a negative emotional mood or frame of mind. And so they make you get up and move. They take you to the park, or they get you to go out shopping.

They get you thinking different thoughts. And soon, you find that your emotional state has changed for the better. A loving friendship is by far the most therapeutic relationship there is. A good friend is the best medicine!

And so perhaps instead of making psychotherapists rich, we need to learn how to be our own best friend. We need to learn to lift ourselves out of "the dumps." All we need to do is to make ourselves move when we are in those moods.

And you can start with your own breath! Move your breath. Breathe consciously! Get yourself to focus on luminous thoughts, on pleasant images and feelings. Just as an untrained body will not breathe on its own when it is relaxed, the untrained mind will not shift out of painful thinking unless you act upon it. Once it begins to churn, it will keep churning in one place until you consciously take control of it.

You have to learn to override your automatic thinking in order to change your psychological or emotional state. But anyone can train their mind to seek happiness. Breathwork can help you to do that.

The ability to breathe and relax allows us to accomplish an extraordinary amount of healing and growth, because these skills allow us to go through periods of temporary discomfort easily and effortlessly.

Breathing activates energy, and that energy brings up all kinds of thoughts and feelings. Breathwork gives us the ability to relax into, through, and out of a lot of pain and suffering: It helps us to become free of it once and for all!

In breathwork, you get to clear yourself of so much “stuff” without any need to delve into the dark corners of your unconscious mind, without any need to remember and relive the past, without any need to analyze yourself or your behaviors, or to spend any money on therapy!

The simple practice of combining breathing and relaxation naturally activates and releases all the “junk” that keeps us from living a life of love and joy and peace! I’ve been teaching breathwork for over thirty years because it is a miracle! I still scratch my head and often wonder how something so simple can be so powerful. But I no longer have the luxury of doubting that it is so. I know that it benefits everyone with a belly button!

On one level, the breathing is a trick. When you focus on your breathing, you take your attention away from other things. When you are breathing consciously, you are not doing what you would have been doing in that moment, and so something new is possible.

By putting energy into the breathing, you are taking it away from the things that are causing your suffering. And so the suffering just dissolves and disappears by itself. Every day, I see people breathe away longstanding psychological problems and emotional issues. These things simply fall away because we no longer supply them with energy; we no longer feed them their vital life force.

Breathwork gives us a reprieve from our useless, redundant, anxious, or fearful thinking. A breathing session is like rebooting your computer. Very often conflicting programs are running and our system is overloaded.

We get so bogged down in our issues and problems that there seems to be no way out. We expend more and more energy in trying to fix or solve our problems, but the result is more pain and suffering, more doubt and confusion. Helplessness and hopelessness soon follow, and the pharmaceutical industry offers chemical relief.

But a breathing session is like re-starting your bio-computer. Often, re-booting solves the problem. Breathwork gives us a clean slate; it provides us with a fresh outlook. It awakens our natural creative and healing energies.

A very interesting phenomenon occurs with regular breathwork practice. When we find ourselves in moments of discomfort, we automatically breathe and relax! That puts us in a very resourceful state. Situations and circumstances that once bothered us, and continue to disturb others, no longer affect us in that way.

When we are afraid or in pain or angry or upset, we are able to access our creative energy. We can breathe and relax, and respond with love and grace, even in the most difficult situations. We no longer react in ways that do not serve us or others.

Changes always occur on the energy level before they are expressed physically. By developing awareness and control of our breath—and through it, our life-force energy—we can stay a step ahead of illness. We can take a more conscious and creative role in our own healing process.

We can work in harmony with the changes taking place on the planet. And we can better handle the everyday conditions and circumstances of our lives. Mastering our relationship to energy makes us captains of our ship, and masters of our fate.

## Three Breathing Rhythms

A simple way of approaching this practice is to play with the three breathing rhythms: fast and full, slow and full, fast and shallow.

Use fast and full breathing when you want to activate a lot of energy, or when you find yourself spacing out or going unconscious.

Use slow and full breathing when you want to integrate something wonderful—when you want to take in a beautiful moment, when you want to maximize your enjoyment of something.

Use fast and shallow breathing when you are experiencing something intense or uncomfortable, or when you simply want to have fun—when you want to play with the energy!

A healthy person should be able to breathe quickly or slowly. Of course what is slow and full or fast and shallow for one person may be quite different for another. But the ability to consciously apply these rhythms in the process of doing inner work is very important.

As you become more aware of your breathing, you may notice that when you are experiencing different physiological, emotional, psychological or spiritual states, the breathing tends to speed up or slow down. And you will discover that by changing your breathing rhythm, you can change your state.

So, get good at these three rhythms!

## **The Three Breathing Spaces**

In addition to the three breathing rhythms, you can also play with, explore and develop, the “three breathing spaces.” Consider that you have a lower breathing space, a middle breathing space, and an upper breathing space.

Practice breathing into the lower breathing space first. This is the area from the navel to the perineum. When you inhale into the lower space, your belly pops out like a balloon. If you put your hands at the sides of your waist and squeeze, you should feel the breath pushing your hands apart as you inhale.

When you exhale from the lower space, the belly button should travel toward the spine; you draw the belly inward as you exhale. An advance practice is to also pull up on the perineum as you exhale.

Breathe into the middle space: This space is from the navel to the nipple line. When you breathe into the middle space, it feels like you are spreading your wings. You create a hollow under your armpits, and you also tend to round your back and breathe into your back as you expand from side to side.

Breathe into the upper space. This is the space from the nipple line to the chin. Breathing into the upper space raises the sternum and the collar bones. You can use your shoulders a bit at first to help, but remember that shoulder muscles are not breathing muscles!

Play with these three spaces. Which feel natural? Which feel easy? Which require focus and which take practice?

## **Pranayama and the Full Yogic Breath**

If you keep playing with these three spaces, you will be able to accomplish the “full yogic breath.”

The full yogic breath is like filling a glass with water. It fills from the bottom up.

When breathing in, fill the lower space first, then the middle space, and then finally the upper space.

It feels like a wave of breath and energy moving up your body. It is a very healthy and powerful way to breathe.

Pranayama (the Hindu Science of Breath) makes use of a basic exercise called “alternate nostril breathing.” It is a very enjoyable and worthwhile practice, and it is very simple.

Start with the exhale. Pinch or close off one nostril, and exhale slowly out the other. Pause for a moment, and then inhale thru that same nostril.

Now switch nostrils. Pinch or close off the other one. Exhale slowly then inhale. Switch. Exhale, inhale, switch. Exhale, inhale, switch. Keep alternating nostrils, breathing in each one at a time.

Advanced practice means incorporating different rhythms and longer pauses between the inhales and exhales, and between the exhales and inhales.

It also helps to visualize the prana surrounding you and permeating you, flowing through you and around you. Imagine that you live in an ocean of prana, because in fact, you do!

Om Namaha Shivaya!

Bhole Baba Ki jai!

## Chinese Medical Breathing Exercises

Chi kung (Qigong) is a wonderful form of breathwork. I love the approach. It has a beginning, a middle, and an end. It offers a key to ultimate human potential, and it favors balance and moderation. It is an art based on centuries of trial and error.

There are more schools and styles of chi kung than you can shake a stick at. And the techniques and methods can be adapted to suit world class athletes who are in peak condition, or frail elderly people who are confined to bed. The practice of “Chinese Medical Breathing Exercises” is literally good for anyone and everyone.

### The Three Principles of Chi Kung

**1. Regulate Mind.** This means to quiet the mind, to focus it. It is the practice of meditative awareness. We develop this through a number of methods, for example: “breath watching,” “counting breaths” or “listening inward.”

You can also quiet the mind by meditating on certain energy centers in the body, for example: the ‘dan tien’. (This is the center of gravity in your body: just below the navel and about one third the way in toward your spine.)

You can also concentrate on a picture of a saint or your guru; you can stare at a flame, or the moon, or any natural scene. You can also repeat a word, a phrase, or a healing mantra. And there are many other forms of meditation.

**2. Regulate Body.** This basically means relaxing into different poses and postures. It can also mean practicing certain movements, such as those taught in “tai chi.”

In fact, the basic postures we use in Chi Kung breathing are quite simple, and require little or no practice.

You can lay flat on your back, or lie on either side. You can sit cross-legged on the floor, or normally in a chair: let your hands rest naturally on your lap.

You can stand with feet together and hands by your side, like a soldier at attention; or you can stand in a more relaxed way, with feet spread apart to shoulder width, and hands clasped behind your back or resting over your belly button.

**3. Regulate Breath.** This means practicing any number of conscious breathing exercises. The first is called “natural respiration,” which is a passive, automatic, uncontrolled breathing pattern (slow, quiet, diaphragmatic breathing). Fall back to this form of breathing after any active, controlled, or dynamic breathing exercise.

The next method is called “favorable respiration.” It is an exaggerated form of “natural respiration,” where you deliberately slow and deepen the breathing. Fill the belly up like a balloon on the inhale; then squeeze all the breath out by pulling in on the belly and pulling up on the perineum as you exhale.

Another exercise is called “reverse respiration” or paradoxical breathing. This dynamic technique calls for you to pull in on the belly button and pull up on the perineum as you inhale; then press down on the perineum and push out on the belly as you exhale. This creates powerful opposing internal forces that act to pack and accumulate energy (chi). It also has a healthy effect on the digestive system.

Chi Kung also makes use of a number of “breath-holding exercises.” For example you can hold the breath in after a full inhale; you can hold the breath out after a full exhale.

You can also allow the breath to pause midway through the inhale, or midway the exhale. But I recommend that people master the rebirthing technique (connected breathing rhythm) before doing any breath holding.

Another way to regulate the breath in Chi Kung is to practice “nasal inhale/oral exhale” (Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth).

One more method is “du and ren channel breathing” (also called the “microcosmic orbit”). This means circulating breath-energy through the body’s main energy channels running down the front and up the back. There are a number of other very subtle energy breathing techniques in Chi Kung.

Designing an evolving Chi Kung practice is like ordering off a Chinese menu. We pick a method of quieting the mind from column A, a posture from column B, and a breathing exercise from column C. We select and combine the principles according to individual pleasure and taste.

Whenever anyone comes to me for Chi Kung breathing practice, I have three starting questions in mind: What is the person’s level of health? What is their degree of skill? What is their purpose in training?

Everyone is unique, and naturally, breathwork is different with a young man in peak physical condition than it is with an elderly woman who is bed-ridden. And if a person practices yoga or the martial arts, or already has a breathing practice, than of course we can start from a different place, and go in a different direction.

### **Three Types of Chi Kung Exercises:**

**Relaxation Exercises.** These involve sensory-awareness exercises and breath-release techniques. And they may also include joint and muscle massage.

**Strengthening Exercises.** These involve powerful breathing techniques and dynamic physical exercises and movements, and energy “packing” skills.

**Inner Training Exercises.** These involve subtle breathing techniques, with a focus on accumulating, conserving, and channeling breath-energy.

## **Review of Some of the Essentials of Chi Kung.**

### **Relaxed, Quiet, and Natural is the Rule**

It may be tempting to turn Chi Kung exercises into a "work out." But remember that it is more mental than muscle; it is more meditation than movement, more subtle than obvious. And so we avoid forcing and straining.

### **Unify Consciousness and Vital Energy**

In martial arts, there is the classic teaching of "one-pointed-ness." That is to bring mind and body together. Tremendous power expresses itself when mind and body act in perfect harmony. This is how bricks are broken, and how big burly guys get thrown around by skinny old men. But an even greater force emerges when we bring together mind, body, and breath. This is how healing and growth occurs.

An ancient Chinese maxim is this: "*Where consciousness goes, chi flows.*" And so in practice, our primary task is to marry consciousness and energy. When you are able to master this skill, you will be able to withstand harsh external elements; you will be able to build up your immune system, to mend a broken bone, to repair an internal organ; you will be able to prevent disease, and speed your recovery from illness or injury.

### **Combine and Balance Movement and Stillness**

In chi Kung, we always alternate between active and passive exercises. We balance one with the other; we follow and precede one with the other. Balance and rhythm are universal principles. And so we make them essential elements in the practice.

Alternate your exercises. Balance active techniques with passive forms. Precede and follow dynamic exercises with passive periods of stillness. After periods of passive stillness, do light movement exercises.

## **Patience and Persistence**

My teacher Hu Bin told me that he once practiced a technique for ten years with no results. Ten years with no results! I was dumbfounded. I told him that it was difficult for me, and wagered for most Americans to conceive of such a thing. We in the West try something once, and if nothing happens, we try something else.

Patience is just not built into our culture. We want immediate results. But believe me, if you practice Chinese Medical Breathing Exercises, tremendous benefits gradually and most certainly sneak up on you. And from time to time, you will even experience quantum leaps in ability and insight.

## **Continuity and Regularity**

There is power in ritual. Doing the same thing at the same time every day has a surprisingly strong effect over time. It's important to put conscious breathing on a par with other daily rituals, like eating, sleeping, bathing, and going to the toilet!

If you don't place Chi Kung high on your list of daily activities, then you simply won't reap the most rewarding benefits that it has to offer.

*Note: Here I present a very brief overview of Chi Kung. For a more in-depth study of this ancient style of breathwork, please refer to my book on the subject. It is available at: [www.breathmastery.com](http://www.breathmastery.com).*

*Final note: Chi Kung, more than other forms of breathwork, requires a good teacher. You'll get much further and go much faster with the help of a genuine master. There is no substitute for hands-on, one-on-one, personal training. If you can't find me, then look for someone in your area. Or better still: go to the source. Visit China!*

## **The Rebirthing Technique**

Rebirthing is a powerful form of Breathwork. It was originally developed by Leonard Orr. And many breathwork schools have spun off from his original work.

Rebirthing was actually a spontaneous re-awakening of an ancient spiritual purification rite of passage.

The Rebirthing Technique is a very specific style of breathwork. It is also called the “Circular Rhythm” or “Connected Breathing.” I call it “Spiritual Breathing.”

This approach to breathwork has been taught to millions of people since it was introduced in the mid 1970’s. Since then it has been widely used for physical healing, psychological development, emotional clearing, anti-aging, energy balancing, spiritual purification and awakening.

It can be defined or described in this way: “conscious, connected, circular, rhythmic, energy breathing.” It is the art of breathing energy as well as air.

Here in a nutshell are the key elements of the practice: the “how to’s” and “what not’s” of the process.

- 1. The inhale is active and the exhale is passive.**
- 2. There are no pauses or gaps between the breaths.**
- 3. The breath goes in and out the same passage.**

An active inhale means that you deliberately pull the breath in. You do it. You control it. A passive exhale means that you simply let the breath out, you set it free. You don’t control it. Gravity, atmospheric pressure, the elasticity of your muscles does the exhaling for you. The body exhales by itself.

Making the inhale active and the exhale passive acts to balance and merge opposite or conflicting forces: it brings together fundamental polarities like yin and yang... above and below... male and female... within and without...

No pauses or gaps: this means that the breathing takes the form or pattern of a smooth, steady uninterrupted flow of breath. The in-breath and out-breath merge, like a wheel turning...

Breathing through the same channel means that you breathe in and out the nose, or in and out the mouth: but not in the nose and out the mouth. The breath is primarily focused in the chest, or the “heart chakra;” but it also includes breathing into the belly (diaphragmatic breathing).

### **Conscious Breathing**

Consciousness is the latest development in evolution: it is our greatest tool for survival. For the most part, breathing is usually automatic and unconscious. Your breathing patterns are affected by many things. And your unconscious breathing habits and patterns may not be natural or optimal.

Conscious breathing allows you to correct unhealthy or dysfunctional ways of breathing. Conscious breathing allows you to take over from the animal machine.

With conscious breathing, we deliberately give the breath a certain quality: we can breathe with a specific intention. We can focus each breath in a creative way, devote it to a certain purpose. We can increase our aliveness and joy, peace and power; we can reduce our pain and tension; we can eliminate anxiety and stress.

### **Connected Breathing**

Connections in life are vital. Our connection to breath reflects our connection to life. We are connected to our source, to nature, to each other, and to existence.

Mind, body, emotions, chemistry, physiology, psychology, are all part of a unified whole. This continuum is consciously expressed and reflected by the connected breathing pattern. Eliminating pauses, gaps, and breaks in the breathing cycle gives us a real sense of wholeness, and a direct experience of oneness.

### **Circular Breathing**

Circles and cycles are fundamental patterns or structures of life and the universe. Existence is rife with them. Nature is based on them. A technique should be in harmony with nature, life and the universe. Connections and completions are expressed by circles and cycles. Breathing in a continuous uninterrupted circle leaves no space for our dysfunctional habits and patterns to express themselves: and so healing and growth occur naturally and spontaneously.

### **Rhythmic Breathing**

Rhythm is another fundamental universal principle. Building rhythm into the technique not only makes it more pleasurable and interesting, it assures us that what we are doing with the breath is in harmony with what is naturally happening in the universe and in life. Since the breathing is such a fundamental thing, when we breathe in a rhythmic way, all our other systems and functions take on a healthy rhythm on their own.

*Note: A rhythm of 6-8 breaths per minute has been identified as the “therapeutic zone” for healing high blood pressure. Solid medical/scientific studies convinced the FDA to approve a medical device called “Respirate.” It is being widely sold in the USA for \$350. The machine makes use of rhythmic musical tones and visual keys to guide the user into a 6-8 breath per minute breathing pattern. (But you can do that with your own watch or clock for free!)*

## **Energy Breathing**

Everything is an expression of energy, a form of energy. We are energy beings. This energy can be called prana, chi, ki, life force, or spirit. It is the animating principle of life. It is the “breath within the breath.”

Changes occur on the energy level before they are expressed physically. By developing awareness and control of this energy, we can stay ahead of illness. And we can take a more creative and formative role in the events and changes, the conditions and circumstances of our lives.

We can awaken, accumulate, channel and direct this energy for creative or healing purposes. Mastering our relationship to this life energy makes us captains of our ship and masters of our fate.

A note about this energy: people often confuse the energy with their body and mind's reaction to the energy. When a boat moves through water it makes waves. When you feel those waves you don't feel the boat. When energy moves through the body, it causes waves of feelings and sensations, thoughts and images and emotions. People often confuse those experiences with the energy itself.

In fact, it is not until the body stops reacting to the energy and the mind stops reacting to it, that we can have a direct or pure experience of this very subtle yet powerful all pervasive energy.

That is why in trainings and sessions, we focus on non-resistance, non-judgment, and non-reaction.

Enlightenment isn't a rare and esoteric thing, reserved only for the rare and great masters and sages. It is a natural phenomenon. Breathwork makes it so.

## **Practicing the Rebirthing Breath**

While breathing in this connected circular rhythm, stay awake, aware. Watch your thoughts. Pay attention to the sensations in your body. Don't judge or analyze or think: judging and analyzing is different than simply observing or being conscious and aware.

Simply feel your feelings. Allow and accept whatever wants to happen in you to happen, without acting on it or reacting to it. Don't judge or censor your feelings. Turn every thought, every reaction, into another conscious inhale, and another releasing exhale.

After several minutes of connected breathing, the energy experience begins. This energy is called prana or chi or ki. Allow this energy to come up, to move, and to take over your body. Get out of the way. Let the energy have its way with you. Surrender to it. Let go into it.

Use every inhale to draw in more energy, and use every exhale to relax into the energy. Keep letting go into the experience. Don't try to control the energy. You can always relax more. Keep relaxing with each exhale. Pay attention to tightness in your muscles. Deliberately release this tension with each breath. Keep expanding with each inhale

Various "symptoms" will come and go throughout the process: like dizziness, tremors, vibrations, numbness, sensations of heat, cold, spontaneous laughter, crying, primal sounds, emotional releases, memories, images, insights, etc.

Simply allow and observe these things along the way of this inner journey. Don't let any of these things interfere with, or interrupt the breathing rhythm, or your

relaxation. Don't let them send you into thoughts and judgments. . Simply breathe and relax into each new feeling, sensation, and emotion.

As you breathe, think: "soft and open, soft and open" "expand and relax, expand and release" "pull in and let go, pull in and let go"

Keep your jaw, neck, shoulders, hands, back, belly, legs relaxed. Keep your throat open and your chest loose.

Don't be afraid of the unknown, or of losing control. You are surrendering to a higher part of yourself. Say "yes" to everything that happens inside of you. Send love to all parts of yourself. Practice Forgiveness and Gratitude.

Just breathe in and out, without stopping, holding, pushing, forcing, avoiding, or resisting... Remember that behind every feeling is another feeling, behind every thought is another thought. Under every emotion, behind every emotion, is love, peace, joy.

Keep moving through everything, all the levels, until you arrive at your "Highest Center." Touch the deepest part of yourself. The breath will lead you there. Then come back to the world, bringing with you the essence of that source, that center.

Be renewed by the experience, moment to moment. Find simple ways to express and reflect this divine light of love. Share the pure loving awareness that is YOU!

## **Tetany during Breathwork**

Tetany (cramping of muscles in hands, feet, face, etc.) is a normal part of learning breathwork. It is not part of the process, but it is also not to be feared or avoided. It is often due to over-breathing: that is, working too hard, pushing, blowing, or forcing the exhale.

It happens when we focus too much on breathing and not enough on relaxation. This causes unnecessary friction and stress in the system. When you relax on the exhale, and let that relaxation carry over into the next inhale, you won't trigger tetany or any other hyperventilation symptoms.

One interesting point is that in the practice of Pranayama, tetany is understood in terms of 'prana' and 'apana.' These are two words for the same breath-energy, but related to whether this energy is in-flowing or out-flowing.

When we take in more energy than we let out, or we are slow to absorb or integrate it as it comes in, the energy simply piles up in us. So, tetany from this perspective is simply a sign of an imbalance or a lack of coordination: something we can naturally expect in the early process of learning anything.

Getting tetany when learning to breathe energy is like swallowing water when learning to swim, poking your chin with a fork when learning to eat, or falling down when learning to walk.

It's nothing to get upset about; nothing to make rules against or judgments about; and certainly not a reason to stop the learning process!

Tetany occurs in about 30% of breathwork students. Actually I often feel a bit jealous when it happens to my clients. I so enjoyed those exciting feelings when they came up in my early practice!

So my advice to people is: “It’s just a feeling. Enjoy it while it lasts!” Your body knows what it needs. It will balance and adjust itself. Trust it and all the feelings and sensations that arise.

One thing is certain to me after working with thousands of people: tetany can occur with even slow or shallow breathing, regardless of whether one breathes in the belly or the chest, or regardless of the inhale to exhale ratio.

Other factors can definitely bring it on: emotional, psychological, energetic factors, or even spiritual presence. Sometimes, the simple process of profound relaxation can trigger it. The intensity and the duration of the tetany seem more related to one’s reactions to it than anything else.

When a person resists the feelings of tetany, or judges the feelings to be ‘bad’ or ‘dangerous,’ or if the person gets busy trying to ‘make the feelings go away’ they always seem to get worse. (And if the person succeeds in suppressing them, they only seem to lay in wait to express again even stronger in the next session.)

I use the analogy of a fire hose when talking about tetany. A fire hose is soft and flexible (like a body that is loose and relaxed). But when you connect the hose to a powerful flow of water, the hose seems to get stiff and hard. In fact, the hose is still soft and flexible. The rigidity is due to the power of the flow within it.

It is important not to confuse “tension” with “charge.” In fact, I tell people that tetany is actually a sign of deep relaxation. It couldn’t occur unless something in them opened up enough to allow this powerful flow.

I encourage people to trust this deeper part of themselves that has knowingly opened up. I suggest that they practice relaxing into the intense feelings, and keep breathing in the direction of comfort and pleasure.

When it seems that we are pushed and pulled by circumstances and situations in life, when we seem to be controlled by external influences, in fact we are really at the mercy of our own internal reactions to these external events.

Learning to relax and breathe through intense internal reactions results in tremendous freedom. So I say welcome the tetany. Don't do anything to intensify it, but definitely try to enjoy it to the max! And if you cannot enjoy the tetany, then at least enjoy yourself while the tetany is happening. You may be surprised that in the process of doing this, something naturally happens to resolve the tetany.

On the metaphysical level, tetany is a sign of trying to control, suppress, or resist our own life-force energy. The best advice is to surrender: don't react, don't judge, don't resist. Practice unconditional acceptance and deliberate enjoyment.

I sometimes encourage shallow breathing and breathing pauses (but not breath-holding) when tetany occurs. I have resorted to using movement and other things to divert the session away from oncoming tetany: especially when the breather needlessly brings on the symptoms through too much effort.

I've also done this in cases when it arose spontaneously but there was simply no time or opportunity to allow the process to complete itself naturally. Once, for example, the fire marshal was threatening to kick us out of the building by force. And sometimes the person needed to go back to work right away, or they needed to drive home to take care of the children. And once, the person was scheduled to appear on television in the next few minutes!

Sometimes tetany is accompanied by the most remarkable "electric sensations." It can feel like you are plugged into 220 volts! And the whole body can contract. It can be very scary. And it is normal for people to try and temper the feelings, to avoid or control them.

But it seems to me that when people try to make the symptoms of tetany go away, when they are allowed or encouraged to fear this normal reaction, it only serves to solidify an unconscious “fear of aliveness.”

People are in a space of trust with me, and we rarely feel the need to avoid or prevent anything that naturally happens or comes up during a session. In fact, I encourage people to welcome every strange and unusual feeling or sensation, especially the powerfully scary ones!

Of course I don't make people do things that they don't want to do. I don't force them to breathe when they don't want to. And I allow people to hold their breath and stop breathing if they want to. In a breathing session, I trust the breather.

But in those breathless moments—in the absence of conscious breathing—I try to get them to consciously focus on relaxation and awareness. I get them to notice their physical, emotional and psychological actions and reactions, and to notice whatever the energy activates or brings up in them.

Some of the best advice I can give is already given in the following poem by the famous mystic Rumi.

## *The Guest House*

*By Rumi*

*This being human is a guest house.  
Each morning, a new arrival.*

*A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
Some momentary awareness comes  
As an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
Who violently sweep your house  
Empty of its furniture;*

*Still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
For some new delight.*

*The dark thought, the pain, the shame, the malice,  
Meet them all at the door laughing,  
And invite them in.*

*Be grateful for whoever comes.  
Because each guest has been sent  
As a guide from beyond.*

## Spiritual Breathing

In the beginning, we are told, was the “word;” but before the word, behind the word is an even greater power: the breath! Have you noticed that words are simply specific sounds, formations, shapes and movements of breath?

In the end days, it is said: all the secrets and mysteries will be revealed. Those end days must be approaching, because today, the breath itself seems to be revealing those secrets.

It seems that the secret of life has been right under our nose all the time! But it should come as no surprise, since every spiritual teacher throughout time has pointed to the breath in some way, and every contemporary healer makes use of the breath at some point.

Almost every ancient language uses the same word for air, wind or breath, as they do for life, vital energy, or spirit, the animating principle of life, the spirit of life.

The breath is often overlooked and underestimated in our search for the source and meaning of life; yet the author of Genesis tells us clearly: *"God took the dust of the earth and formed the body of man, and breathed into the nostrils of man the Breath of Life, and man became a living soul."*

So, it should be no wonder that we can find our way back to God, we can meet the source of life by turning to the breath—or more specifically—awakening to what is referred to in the Book of Genesis as *“neshemet ruach chayim:”* the spirit of life within the breath."

The author of Genesis understood something that the yogis have been teaching since early times: there is a difference between the air we breathe and the life giving principle contained within it.

This inner breath, also called chi, ki, prana or energy, runs through body, mind and soul. In German, the word Atman means both soul and breath.

The movement of spirit is reflected in the movement of breath. As the Sufi Master Hazrat Inayat Kahn writes: *"The healing power of Christ, the magnetism of Mohammed, the miraculous power of Moses, the charm of Krishna, and the inspiration of the Buddha--all these were attained by breath."*

The Course in Miracles teaches us that: *"A universal theology is impossible, but a universal experience is not only possible, it is necessary."* I believe that this universal experience is the breath, is breathing!

In the Nei Ching: The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Chinese Medicine, we read: *"In ancient times there were the so-called spiritual men; they mastered the universe, and controlled yin and yang. They breathed the essence of life, and were independent in preserving the spirit. And their muscles and flesh remained unchanged."*

In his "Book of Secrets" Rajneesh/Osho writes: *"If you can do something with breath, you will attain to the source of life. If you can do something with breath, you can transcend time and space. If you can do something with the breath, you will be in the world and also beyond it."*

He said: *"there are certain points in the breathing which you have never observed, and those points are the doors, the nearest doors to you, from where you can enter into a different world, into a different being, a different consciousness..."*

I believe that Spiritual Breathing is to psychosomatic illness, what penicillin was to infection. Spiritual Breathing is the quickest way to clear your head, settle your stomach, calm your nerves, and open your heart.

Spiritual Breathing is meant to uplift you. It will center you and ground you in your being. Spiritual Breathing opens your heart to love, and fills your body with light and life.

In the Songs of Solomon, we read: *"Breath restores me to my exact self."* Maybe that's why one of the most powerful methods of conscious breathing is called "Rebirthing." It offers a way to regain our original innocence. It is a spiritual technology of purification and awakening.

The breath is the fire of the heart--the heart of love. The Quakers have a wonderful tradition. At their Sunday service, people simply sit in silence and in meditation, waiting, open to inspiration. And when it comes, when the spirit moves them, they speak. They say their piece (peace).

They also held this great idea: *"Now and then, you need to open all the doors and windows of your heart and soul, and you need to let the spirit of God blow through you!"*

Breathwork is a gentle and powerful means of awakening. When you work with the breath, you automatically develop spiritually. On the physical, material level we have solids, liquids, and gases: to play with breath, with air, is to play with the least dense form of matter.

People who master spiritual breathing can accomplish so much on the level of subtle energies. Spiritual Breathing makes it clear that the same life force that built our bodies in the womb is still available to us, to maintain and to rebuild the body.

Yoga is the science of union with God. Yoga holds as a central truth that the breath is the bridge between mind and body, between the visible and the invisible. Breath connects us to each other, and it connects us all to nature, and our source.

We are all breathing the same breath. The breath that is in me now was in you earlier; it will be in the bird flying overhead tomorrow; it was in the dog walking down the street yesterday.

This is not just a pretty philosophy, it is a fact in reality! The same atoms and molecules of air, the same breath that Jesus breathed, that Moses breathed, that the Buddha breathed, are flowing through you at this moment!

Every breath we take can be a prayer, an invitation, and a demonstration of our faith, of our trust. It can be an expression of forgiveness, gratitude, and surrender. Tremendous power is to be gained through combining meditation and breathing.

In the early 70's, I was inspired by Richard Alpert (Ram Dass). He taught us to practice a beautiful spiritual breathing exercise: on the inhale we would think "the power of God is within me," and on the exhale we would think "the grace of God surrounds me."

You can breathe any thought, phrase, affirmation, or mantra. Each of us must find and walk our own unique path. And that is the most empowering aspect of Breathwork: no one can do it for you.

If you really want to go into the deepest realities of life, and to reach the highest states of consciousness, then you will have to awaken to the breath. It is the path, or at least the doorway to your essence, your core, your soul, and your heart of hearts.

Breath Awareness Exercises and Conscious Breathing Techniques are coming to people all over the world. Breathwork leads to the healing of stress, emotional problems, and substance abuse, to the healing of unconscious blocks, primal fears, and everyday anxieties.

I believe that the Angel of Breath is at work on the planet. This Angel of Breath brings fire and light to everyone on the spiritual path. I find this angel quite irresistible and quite unavoidable! Sometimes I feel as if I am being picked up by the scruff of my neck and being thrown into people and places to do this work.

Evolutionary contractions in the form of natural disasters, social upheaval and wars, are doing the work of pushing spiritual seekers out of their comfort zone and into the dynamic working zone of spiritual awakening, purification, and rebirth.

It seems to me that everyone is born a spiritual master. But we forget, we lose touch with our essence, our purpose, our source. The sadness, anger, and love of a child are total: everything seems endless, infinite. That is a reflection of our spirit.

As children, we are forced to choose between following outer authority and listening to our inner divinity. We learned to turn down the light of consciousness in us in order to survive, to please, to conform, to manage this powerful light. Spiritual Breathing is a way to safely turn on and turn up this amazing light!

You can begin to incorporate the eternal life of the spirit into your mind and body. Simply breathe in a conscious way. Breathe with intention. Practice breathing in a powerful way, in a peaceful way, an accepting way, a trusting way, a loving way, a grateful way, a forgiving way, an inviting way. Incorporating these attributes through spiritual breathing makes manifesting them in reality easy and effortless!

More than knowing, believing or doing it, when you are breathing it, you are "living" it. You are "being" it. Opening and relaxing the breath is like opening the doors to your soul. Allow every fiber of your being to be bathed in this life that flows from your source.

Spiritual breathing has been called a cellular experience of divine energy, a biological experience of God.

It takes courage to live a unique life, an inspired life. It requires that you turn to your own inner truth. That inner truth can be reflected and expressed in every breath you take. Breathing is a language: the language of the soul.

Spiritual Breathing can take you to the eye of the storms in your life. It can help you to balance yin and yang, peace and power, rhythm and harmony. You can learn from the breath itself! You can use it to follow your own bliss!

Start by watching your breath. Do what the Buddha was doing at the moment of enlightenment: watch the breath as it comes in and goes out. Feel the sensations of breath, the movement of breath in you. Be a witness, notice and observe what is happening inside of you and around you in each moment.

Add to that the willingness to let go, to relax and surrender. And then begin to conspire with the life that surrounds and permeates everything in existence. Breathe this life consciously.

Feel the expansion and contraction of life! Celebrate the flow of life, and marvel at the mysteries that life reveals to you through the breath. Notice that when you inhale, energy not only flows into you, but out of you as well. And when you exhale, energy not only flows out of you, it also flows into you.

Seek out others who are committed to breath mastery. Share your experience. No one is free until we are all free. But if only one of us gets free, everyone will be liberated in the process!

Breathe peace and love, freedom and safety, energy and aliveness, love and light. And as you do, watch the world within you and around you change forever!

## **Zen and the Art of Breathing**

It is no coincidence that the archer has always been associated with Zen. Archery is used in sport, in war, for hunting, for survival, for self-mastery, and simply for enjoyment.

The force that builds up in the bow as you draw it back is like the force that builds up in your body as you inhale. The force that is released when the arrow flies is like the force that is released when you exhale.

Drawing the bow back and aiming the arrow requires both sharp mental focus and powerful physical dynamics (as does conscious breathing). There is the process: full intensity and complete focus of mind and body...

Everything comes to a peak, to a head, as the bow is flexed and the target comes into alignment. (That is the point between the inhale and the exhale.)

If there is balance and coordination, focus and commitment, strength and grace, the merging of dynamic energy and calm stillness: then there is that magical moment. The moment when all the work is done, and there is nothing left to do... except to "let go!"

In that moment of "let go" of surrender, the Zen master falls into his center, he returns for a moment to the source within.

In a flash, we leap from one extreme to another. We go from full active dynamic physical tension and mental focus, to total relaxation and surrender. For a moment, there is no mind, no thinking, no body, no doing, no effort, no struggle, no ego: no duality.

With the release of the bowstring, the arrow takes flight... the future is set in motion. In that moment with nothing more to do or to know... we simply drop into "samadhi," where there is only pure consciousness and bliss.

If the arrow hits the target, there is the celebration of perfection: natural ecstasy! If it misses the mark, the simple presence of full awareness reveals to the archer what adjustment is needed.... and there is the joy of realization. The next step is clear, and there is the celebration of perfection: natural ecstasy!

Pulling the inhale in is like drawing the bow back. Setting the exhale free is like letting the arrow fly. The game is to fully involve the body and mind in every inhale. Breathe the same intention again and again. Use each in-breath to build up force and focus.

Then on the exhale, just let go. It is an un-doing. On the exhale, you are using the out-breath to simply come into the present moment; and in that moment, to fall into yourself, to drop into your self, your center.

At some point, one of those breaths will take the Zen Breather to that special place of "pure presence and being," if only for a moment... But a moment is enough! Having touched that place beyond right and wrong, beyond time and space, we are fed, we are nourished, we are renewed and inspired! And there is no forgetting. There is no going back!

Within the cycle of one breath, we can reflect or express our soul's entire life's journey. Maybe that is why the ancient yogis say that one hour of Kriya Yoga (Zen Breathing) can result in more evolution than several lifetimes of re-incarnation!

But this path is the path of fire and light: it is not for the faint hearted; it is not for those who resist growth and transformation, who cling to the illusion of separateness, or who insist on identifying with the ego or the reactive mind.

The further back you pull the bow, the further the arrow will fly. The more expansion you create on the inhale, the more release you produce on the exhale.

With the exhale we can be the arrow flying off into the distance, tracking a long arc through the cosmos; or a ray of light bursting forth and leaving its source... landing in another place, another time, on another level of existence... the next higher level of existence.

The arrow can be something that we don't need any more, something we are ready to let go of. The arrow can be an old habit, a negative thought or limiting belief. It can be ignorance, weakness, doubt, or anything that holds us back.

The arrow can also be a positive thing. We can send a healing arrow to someone in need. We can send an arrow of peace to a war torn part of the world. We can send arrows of love.

We feel the tension of the bow at the peak of the inhale, and then we feel the release of the arrow as we let the exhale go. When we let the exhale go, we let go of the body, of all desire, all effort, all thought...

In that moment of letting go, we drop into ourselves, into our center, into silence, peace, into our source, our "Real True Self." Then we rise up again on the inhale, bringing with us the energy of life, the power of our essence, the flavor of our Source.

The journey of one breath... repeated again and again, moment-to-moment, with no clinging, no attachment, no struggle...

This breath, breathed again and again, brings us closer and closer to perfection...  
With each breath, the odds of liberation increase exponentially, and at some point it becomes impossible not to experience a moment of "Samadhi!"

We know what is in our way, or what needs to be done to live in the eternal moment. And there is no forgetting, and there is no going back to sleep!

Breathe in consciously, feeling the actual physical sensations of expansion, from side to side, front to back, top to bottom: you are the bow.

When you reach the point of fullness, enjoy the gentle feeling of stretching. Then in a flash, release the breath. Let the exhale pour out of you quickly, completely: you are the arrow.

When you exhale, there is nothing to do except let go. No need to blow or push or strain, or do anything. In fact anything you "do" will only throw the arrow off its target. The force that is built up on the inhale will do the work for you.

Play with being the bow, and play with making the arrow your intention. It is an extraordinary experience to feel everything change in a flash!

Realize that no matter what has happened up to this moment, no matter what was true in the last moment, anything is possible in the next moment. The next breath can take you out of anything and can lead you to anything!

With practice, you can clear negativity or pain quickly and easily whenever it is activated or triggered in you.

Issues, challenges, problems you thought would require a long and difficult process, simply dissolve! You find yourself in the midst of a beautiful, endless space of peace and love and freedom!

Expand on the inhale and release on the exhale. Do this again and again... each time as if it is the first time. Don't try to achieve anything.

On the inhale you make your intention clear to the universe. On the exhale, you let go and trust that you have done what you need to do. And you let the universe or existence take over the process from there.

Success or failure... makes no difference. Life is as it is, in you, around you, as you! You are now practicing Zen and the Art of Breathing!

Those who become experts at this technique find that they can shift out of any uncomfortable or negative emotional, physical or psychological state at will (In fact all it takes is willingness!).

I invite you to practice this technique. It is the technique of focusing totally on a bright positive intention as you inhale, then letting go totally on the exhale, so that life can do the work for you.

When you master Zen Breathing, you free yourself when pain from the past takes control of your life energy. You can learn to liberate yourself in a moment!

I call the people who have mastered this breath: the "Un-stunned Heroes" of the Spiritual Revolution!

## **Creating your Own Path**

In over thirty years of teaching breathwork, I have had the opportunity to be with many people as they arrive at profound insights about life and themselves, about the world and others, and about the breath and breathing. And I have seen them make many positive changes in their lives based on these insights.

I have also met many people who believe that one particular way of breathing or that a certain technique or method of breathing is the end-all and cure-all of everything. Maybe they read it somewhere, or maybe they were told that it was so. But it is important to realize that there is no “one right way” to breathe.

Often at my seminars, we sit in a circle and I ask everyone to point to the middle of the circle. When we do, something important in life becomes quite obvious: everyone is pointing to the same thing, and yet everyone is pointing in a different direction! We see that everyone has his or her own unique path to the center.

It takes great courage to walk your own path in this world. There is an illusion of security in following the pack, in trusting someone else’s path. “Look how holy and great the one was who invented the path!” “Look how many people believe it is the one right way!” “Who am I to think that I can create my own path?”

But I am here to say that if you are walking someone else’s path, you are walking the wrong path. We can learn from each other. We can support each other. We can walk together for a time: but it is up to each of us to invent or create our own path.

Breathwork empowers people to do just that. It gives us emotional courage and spiritual power. It makes us self-sufficient on the most important levels. And as more people learn to discover, explore and develop the power and potential of breathwork, we all benefit—no matter what path we are on.

I believe that everyone needs to invent their own breathing practice. Here I simply present some fundamentals. I share with you my experience, knowledge and skills, and a host of possibilities. But what counts most is what you are inspired to do!

I suggest that you find something that is organically pleasurable or interesting in the breath: a certain sound, a certain rhythm. Look for a certain point or phase in the breathing cycle, a particularly enjoyable way of breathing. Play with that. Add conscious intention to it and you have entered the creative process.

It is no coincidence what you will find pleasant or interesting. If you let the soft animal of your body love what it loves—if you let your nature be your guide—your intuition will improve and you'll begin to get a better sense of everything.

Through breathwork, you will gain the ability to work with energy. You will find ways to change or heal or improve many aspects of yourself. You will find many ways to enhance and empower whatever you do. I invite you to be your own scientist. I encourage you to explore and experiment.

There are so many interesting possibilities to explore. You can breathe in and out the nose; you can breathe in and out the mouth. You can breathe in the nose and out the mouth; or in the mouth and out the nose. You can breathe through both the mouth and the nose at the same time.

You can make the inhale long and the exhale short: for example inhaling for eight heartbeats and exhaling for four heartbeats. You can make the exhale long and the inhale short: for example exhaling for ten heartbeats and inhaling for four...

You can imagine breathing energy from the earth into your feet, up through your legs and body, and exhaling it out the top of your head like a fountain. You can imagine breathing light in through the top of your head and sending it down through your body, exhaling out your feet into the earth. You can invent. Create!

You can combine affirmations with breathing. For example, on the inhale, think “the power of God is within me;” and on the exhale, think “the grace of God surrounds me.” You can make declarations to yourself as you breathe: “I am peaceful,” “I am strong,” “I am healthy,” “I am safe,” etc.

You can also repeat mantras or recite prayers while breathing. What do you need to remember? How would you like to be? What do you want to create? Focus on that while you breathe.

You can combine visualization or imagery with breathing. Imagine breathing white light, or golden light, or any color that you like. You can imagine a beautiful scene, the face of a loved one or your guru; or you can picture yourself in a high resourceful, successful, joyful state.

You can combine sound and breath. The Chinese as well as other ancient systems combine breath, sound, color, and movement in many creative ways. Certain sounds have healing vibrations that can strengthen and support your system and your organs. Make pleasurable sounds as you breathe. Add movement to it.

Play with your spine, your limbs, or your head, while you breathe. The Sufi’s have many beautiful practices that incorporate breath, sound, and movement. But the principle is simple and you can invent your own method: just move your body in a subtle or dynamic way as you breathe. Do it in synch with each breath.

During physical exercise and in the martial arts, a rule is: “exhale when stressing, striking, or exerting force.” In archery and shooting, you let go or pull the trigger when you are poised in a neutral point, half way through the exhale.

Explore, experiment. Use your imagination. Be creative. Basing your practice on what brings you pleasure is the best approach. It will not be a coincidence what you find interesting or enjoyable.

## **Yawning is Yoga!**

When we begin to practice Conscious Breathing, there is no need to learn any special techniques, or practice any complicated exercises. You can start by reviving and enjoying some very natural reflexes: for example, yawning.

When you yawn, you stretch and breathe. Stretching and breathing... doesn't that sound like yoga? Yawning is one of our healthiest reflexes. That is, when we allow a full, free, total body yawn to take place.

However, family, social, cultural and even religious programming teaches us to suppress this natural and vital urge. Yawning is considered impolite and very inappropriate in many social situations.

Imagine yawning when the preacher is preaching, when the parent is parenting, or the professor is professing... Can you hear their reaction? "Am I boring you?" "How dare you yawn when I'm talking to you!" "What an insult!"

Imagine this: someone is telling you their problems: "My dog died." "My kids are on drugs." "I lost my job." "My uncle was diagnosed with cancer." And suddenly a powerful urge to yawn comes to you.

Would you let yourself yawn in that moment? I doubt it. Even though after the yawn you are in a better state to understand and support yourself and others.

What if yawning is your body's way of clearing stress and toxins (physical as well as psychic and emotional)? What if it is spirit's way of awakening the creative and healing energies in you? Why would you want to stop it?

The yawn delivers fresh positive loving energy; and it purges stuffy, heavy energy. Why would you want to interfere in this?

Most people do not allow themselves a total, full-body, luxurious yawn. They have been conditioned to stifle it, to suppress it, to block it. They cover their mouth. They don't breathe. They don't stretch or move. They don't make noise.

I call these people victims of the “adulteration” process. As we turn children into adults, they lose many of their vital breathing reflexes and natural breathing responses to stress.

Yawning as a simple breathwork technique can mean waking up that beautiful innocent child in you. It can mean giving yourself permission to be who and how you really are.

When you yawn, you draw attention to yourself. That can be dangerous. And unless you were born into a family, or culture, or society of enlightened beings, that “attention” comes with subtle manipulation, expectations, judgments, covert instructions and hidden rules.

Have you noticed that when one person yawns someone else always follows? As more people yawn, more people get caught in it, and they yawn too. That is a sign of unconscious permission. “Oh, you mean, it's okay to yawn here? Thank you, I need it too!”

We have thousands of suppressed yawns, incomplete yawns, waiting to be released, enjoyed, and celebrated!

At every one of my seminars, I encourage people to yawn. There is something you can do with your jaw and the back of your throat to trigger a yawn. Find it. Do it right now. Fake a yawn until a real yawn comes.

Then yawn again and again. Keep yawning. Exaggerate the yawn. Make it dramatic. Make it theatrical. I give prizes to people at my seminars who can exhibit the most Shakespearian yawn!

Look at a cat or a dog when they yawn. What happens with their jaw, with their neck, with their spine? We need to let the soft animal of our body love what it loves, if we expect it to be healthy and strong. Yawn until your eyes water.

Ten minutes a day of constant yawning is good medicine! You have lymph glands in your throat, in your neck, in your arm pits, and other many places in your body. With a full body yawn, all those glands are activated, energized. When you yawn, your body is trying to do something good for you. Cooperate with it!

When a yawn comes by itself, don't suppress it. Enjoy it. Celebrate it! Squeeze all the juice out of it! Make the most pleasurable sounds you can. Stretch and move in a relaxing and energizing way. Make anyone who is watching you feel jealous!

If you want to do the advanced practice, try a big dramatic yawn on a crowded elevator! Try yawning in the middle of an argument! Practice yawning on purpose in public, and watch people's reactions.

You will begin to see how holding our breath is a way of remaining invisible. It is a way of hiding. And you can begin to use your breath as a way of saying: "I am glad I'm alive!" "I have a right to be here!" "I love life!" "Don't you?"

*The following is excerpted from a guided breathing session. Several full guided breathing sessions are available on audio CD. Visit [www.breathmastery](http://www.breathmastery.com) for more information.*

### **Breath Awareness Exercise (A Guided Meditation)**

Become the witness of your breathing.

Become the watcher.

How do you know you are breathing?

What sensations, what feelings in the body, tell you that you're breathing?

Notice those feelings and sensations...

Observe the natural sensations that come with the movement of the breath...

What does it feel like when the breath comes in?

Can you feel sensations in the tip of your nose?

Or can you feel the sensations of the air passing over your lips?

Can you feel movement in your chest, or movement in your belly?

Where does the breath go when it comes into you? What does it touch?

As you breathe in and out, can you feel any sensations in your throat?

Can you feel the sensations caused by the flow of air in and out?

What's happening to the muscles in your neck and shoulders while you breathe?

What's happening to the muscles in your chest?

What's happening in your belly when you breathe?

Can you feel your body expanding from side to side, front to back, top to bottom?

Focus on the details of this expansion.

Start to add a little more breath to the inhale, just to help that expansion a little bit.

Make the inhales a little deeper, a little bigger, a little fuller, a little longer...

Create a little extra expansion inside of you with each breath.

Create that expansion in all directions.

Don't just breathe into the front of your chest.

Half your lungs are in the back. Breathe into your back.

Breathe into the lower spaces, into your belly and your pelvis.

There are lots of very pleasurable details in the breathing.

Notice some of those details.

What are the natural, inherently pleasurable sensations in the breathing?

Find some aspect of the breathing that you can enjoy.

Identify some sensation, some movement that feels good... and enjoy it more.

Let the exhales go consciously, deliberately, as if you are sighing with relief.

As if you've just finished some work, and you can finally relax and let go.

Give each exhale that luxurious quality of release, of relief, of relaxation...

When you relax, something softens, something opens, something releases.

Begin to welcome this breath as if it's life, because it is. Breath is life.

Can you breathe fully and freely? Can you live fully and freely?

Can you accept yourself unconditionally?

Can you allow life to pour into you, as it will?

Can you invite an attitude of unconditional love, of embracing?

The process of breathing is effortless; it does not cost you any energy.

Invite the breath to do its healing work: purifying, cleansing, releasing...

Can you get a sense of energy circulating through your body?

There's a mass of activity occurring in your body.

Trillions of cells... electricity... energy being generated... moving, flowing.

That's a lot of fire! That's a lot of light. Those are a lot of sparks...

When you breathe, it's every single cell that is breathing.

Can you feel it? Your whole body is breathing. Get a sense of that...

Imagine that when you inhale, every cell in your body expands...

And when you exhale, every cell in your body relaxes.

Try to create a sense of that.

Take an inventory of the sensations in your body.

Can you feel any vibrations?

To be alive, to be able to feel, to be able to breathe, is a miracle.

Regardless of the content of our life, life itself is extraordinary!

Get a sense of that. Get a sense of how extraordinary it is to simply exist!

And bring this sense into a conscious moment-to-moment process.

What's the maximum potential in your life?

What's the maximum potential in each moment?

Pick an idea, like "peace," and breathe that idea.

Pick an idea, like "openness," and breathe that idea.

Breathe in a way that brings you the most pleasure.

Breathe in a way that makes you feel alive.

Breathe in a way that makes you feel joy.

Intensify and magnify that enjoyment.

Imagine the breath like light.

When you breathe in, you are breathing in light.

And that light gets circulated to every cell in your body.

And when you exhale, you radiate that light.

You release that light into the world.

It's the light of life, the light of love.

Every breath can be a prayer.

Every breath can be a blessing.

Use every breath in this way.

Enjoy every breath!

## **The Coming Home Breath**

There is a certain breath that comes to us after a long difficult journey. When at last we return home, and can be with family and friends, when we can relax into our favorite chair, our cozy kitchen, our own toilet! Aaaahhhh...!

A breath like this also comes to us upon successful completion of an important and difficult project. After all the work is done, after we have passed the examination, when we finally finish writing a book... again, that certain wonderful breath comes to us....“aaaaahhhh!

This breath is like a luxurious sigh of pleasure, satisfaction, and relief. Because of the particular state we are in, because of that wonderful feeling of coming home, or finishing a job, there is a certain breath that naturally expresses itself. We don't have to think about it. We don't have to make it happen. It just comes to us. And it feels wonderful!

In those special moments, we feel wonderful, and so that breath naturally comes to us. So the question is: “why wait?” What are you waiting for? Are you waiting for one of those rare and precious moments to come so that this wonderful “coming home” breath can happen? Why not invite it? What comes first: the chicken or the egg? Why not just give yourself one of those breaths right now, and see if the wonderful feeling doesn't follow?

There is a part of your nervous system that is very ancient and very simple. It is easily tricked or fooled. If you breathe quick short shallow gasping panic type breaths for a few minutes, you will feel how your chemical, psychological and emotional states are affected. When you breathe long luxurious sighs of relief, you will feel how your state is affected.

When you are upset, afraid, or in pain, your breathing reflects and expresses those anxiety states. And the fact is, unless you have done some serious breathwork training, it would never occur to you to take a long luxurious sigh of relief at those times. And unless you have practiced conscious breathing at those moments and in those situations, such a breath simply will not come by itself in those moments.

But imagine what your life would be like if you could give yourself that breath in those uncomfortable moments. Imagine what your life would be like if that kind of breath came to you automatically during those difficult situations.

What if you could train your system to respond in moments of fear and pain and anxiety, by delivering to you a luxurious sigh of relief? What if you could give yourself a “coming home breath” at those times? What do you think would happen to the fear, to the pain, to the anxiety? It is like magic once you master it!

Try it and see. Practice the “coming home breath” often. And then when you need it, it will be a tremendous resource to you. It will help you remain calm and clear during those difficult moments. It will help you to prevent a small irritation from blowing up into a big unmanageable problem. This breath and breathwork in general, will help you to be more creative and balanced, more conscious and loving. Guaranteed!

**Final Note:** Breathing is like balance. It cannot be taught, but it can be learned. Breathwork is like swimming or riding a bicycle: you can't really learn it from a book. You have to actually get on a bike; you have to actually jump in the water.

And so, I invite you to take a big breath and dive into breathwork. Come to a session, seminar, workshop, or training. I promise it will be the most exciting, empowering, and enlightening ride of your life! And since you can create the results you choose in breathwork, it can also be the softest, most soothing stroll along the most beautiful beach imaginable!

## **What do the world's leading medical experts say about breathing?**

"Breathing is the key that unlocks the whole catalog of advanced biological function and development. Is it any wonder that it is so central to every aspect of health? Breathing is the first place, not the last, one should look when fatigue, disease, or other evidence of disordered energy presents itself. Breathing is truly the body's most basic communication system."(Sheldon Hendler, MD, PhD)

"All chronic pain, suffering, and diseases are caused by a lack of oxygen at the cell level. (Dr. Arthur C. Guyton, M.D., "The Textbook on Medical Physiology.)

"Oxidation is the source of life. Its lack causes impaired health or disease, and death." (Dr. F.M. Eugene Blass, PH.D.

"Simply put, disease is due to a deficiency in the oxidization process of the body, leading to an accumulation of the toxins. These toxins would ordinarily be burned in normal metabolic functioning."(Dr. Albert Wahl)

"Illness is the result of improper removal of toxins from the body. Oxygen (breathing) is the vital factor which assists the body in removing toxins." ( Ed McCabe, author, "Oxygen Therapies, A New Way of Approaching Disease")

"In all serious disease states we find a concomitant low oxygen state...Low oxygen in the body tissues is a sure indicator for disease...Hypoxia, or lack of oxygen in the tissues, is the fundamental cause for all degenerative disease. Oxygen is the source of life to all cells." (Dr. Stephen Levine, renowned biologist, geneticist; Author, "Oxygen Deficiency: A Concomitant to All Degenerative Illness")

"Lack of oxygen clearly plays a major role in causing cells to become cancerous." (Dr. Harry Goldblatt, Journal of Experimental Medicine)

"Insufficient oxygen means insufficient biological energy that can result in anything from mild fatigue to life-threatening disease. The link between insufficient oxygen and disease has now been firmly established." (Dr. W. Spencer Way; Journal of the American Association of Physicians)

"Cancer has only one prime cause. It is the replacement of normal oxygen respiration of the body's cells by an anaerobic (oxygen-deficient) cell respiration". (Dr. Otto Warburg; Two-time Nobel Laureate, Winner of the Nobel Prize for Cancer Research)

"Cells undergoing partial oxygen starvation send out tiny panic signals which are collectively felt in the body as a continuous vague sensation of uneasiness, dread or disaster. This low level generalized warning tends to get tuned out as mere 'background noise' by the individual experiencing it. Or, it is attributed to other sources of uneasiness.... People rarely suspect that the constant vague feelings of helplessness, fatigue....uneasiness are symptoms of cellular oxygen deprivation." (From the Townsend Letter for Doctors)

"Cancer is a condition within the body where the oxidation has become so depleted that the body cells have degenerated beyond physiological control. Similarly, the true cause of allergy is the lowered oxidation process within the body, causing the affected individual to be sensitive to foreign substances entering the body. Only when the oxidation mechanism is restored to its original high state of efficiency can the sensitivity be eliminated." (Dr. Wendell Hendricks)

"A lack of oxygen (hypoxia) is the prime cause of 1.5 million heart attacks each year." (Dr. Richard Lippman, renowned researcher)

"Coronary heart disease is due to a lack of oxygen received by the heart." (Dr. Dean Ornish)

"A Dutch Study compared two groups of heart attack patients. The first group was taught simple diaphragmatic breathing, while the second group was given no training in breathing. The breathing group had no further heart attacks, while 7 of the 12 members of the second group had second heart attacks over the next 2 years." (Gay Hendricks, PhD)

"Jack Shield, MD, conducted a study on the effects of breathing on the lymphatic system. Using cameras inside the body, he found that deep diaphragmatic breathing stimulated the cleansing of the lymph system by creating a vacuum effect which sucked the lymph through the bloodstream. This increased the rate of toxic elimination by as much as 15 times the normal pace." (Gay Hendricks, PhD)

"The relationship between breathing and blood pressure has been known and understood for a long time. It boils down to this: Elevated blood pressure accompanies those bodily states where rapid shallow breathing prevails. By altering breathing to a slow diaphragmatic mode, blood pressure decreases." (Robert Fried, PhD)

"Improper breathing is a common cause of ill health." (Dr. Andrew Weil)

**Breathwork can be integrated into any other self- improvement or self-healing method or practice. If you would like to learn the Breathwork for your personal development, or as a way of loving and serving others, you are welcome to enroll in Dan's One Year Training Program. It can be accelerated to six months or extended to two years. Tuition is \$2500 (Negotiable).**

For more information, visit: [www.breathmastery.com](http://www.breathmastery.com)  
Contact: [danbrule1008@hotmail.com](mailto:danbrule1008@hotmail.com) or call: 508-345-7574

## Dan Brulé

Dan is the founder and director of One Sky International Life Skills and Healing Arts Institute. He is a modern day teacher and healer, a world-renown pioneer in the field of Breathwork; and founder of the Spiritual Breathing Movement. Dan is one of the originators of Breath Therapy, and he was among the first group of Internationally Certified Rebirthers. He is adept in Prana Yoga (the Hindu Science of Breath) and Chi Kung/Qigong (Chinese Medical Breathing Exercises).

Dan majored in Human Development and Learning at UMass Dartmouth, and graduated in 1984, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business and Education. In 1985, he designed a Masters Program in the Healing Arts at Lesley College in Cambridge, called: *"The Breath as a Tool for Health, Growth and Change."*

More than 50,000 people in over 40 countries apply Dan's breathing techniques in their work and in their lives. Among his students are Olympic champions and elite martial artists, leading psychotherapists and medical experts, monks, meditators, hospice workers, yoga teachers, performing artists, personal trainers, and pastoral counselors, university professors, housewives, and business executives.

Dan has studied and traveled extensively with Leonard Orr, the founder of the "Rebirthing" movement. He was initiated into Kriya Yoga and given the name Guchu Ram Singh by the Immortal Yogi Babaji (Babaji was written about in Yogananda's classic: "Autobiography of a Yogi"). He learned Qigong with the legendary Master Hu Bin, at the Academy of Chinese Medicine in Beijing.

He lived in the Osho community in Oregon, and took part in the original Breath Therapy Program at the Rajneesh International Meditation University. He learned prana yoga from Swami Rama, and did biofeedback training at the Himalayan Institute. He studied Breathing Coordination with Carl Stough at the Stough Institute; and he learned Holotropic Breathwork from the founder Stan Grof.

In Russia, Dan has trained over 10,000 people, including more than 500 medical doctors, psychiatrists and psychologists. He took part in a ten-year breathing study with members of the Russian Academy of Science. And he worked with Olympic world champion Greco-roman wrestler Alexander Karilen, as well as members of the Russian judo, triathlon, tennis, and sailing teams.

Dan's home base is in Los Cabos, Baja California Sur, Mexico. With a small group of founders and visionaries, he is developing a sustainable community, an eco-village; a teaching and learning center, and spiritual resort retreat.

For more information, visit: [www.breathmastery.com](http://www.breathmastery.com) or [www.danbrule.com](http://www.danbrule.com).