

November 2005 Breath and Breathing Report

In the current series of newsletters, we are focusing on the basics of breathwork. If I consider the most recent session I've done, than I am reminded of this: there is a certain balance required in breathwork, if we are to break through to the deepest levels or the highest potentials. In a very traditional sense, it is a balance between yin and yang. It is a balance between energy and relaxation: between "doing the breathing" and "letting the breath happen." The real magic in breathwork happens when we combine energy and relaxation. The real growth and healing comes when we are in a state that can be called "dynamic relaxation" or "energized calm." In order to find that perfect balance, awareness is required. That's why Awareness is the first step, and always the key.

It is common for people who are learning or practicing, to miss this balance. We either try too hard, or we don't put enough energy into the process. And during a session, we may go back and forth between these extremes. There are times in a breathing session (as in life) when we need to paddle like crazy if we expect to get anywhere. And there are times when we can put our oars in the boat, lean back, and just let the river take us. Sometimes we need to take action, and sometimes we need to surrender to the flow. But knowing when to take charge and when to let go... well that is the challenge isn't it? Actually this knowing comes with the breath! It is called intuition, or more precisely: inspiration. The more breathwork we do, the more intuitive and inspired we become.

Breathwork involves: Breath Awareness and Conscious Breathing. Breath Awareness means that the breath is happening by itself. You are just a passive witness, a detached observer. You are the watcher, not the doer. (This is easier said than done. Most people find that it is practically impossible to observe the breath without influencing it in some way.) Conscious Breathing is where you come in. This is when you take over the process. You do the breathing. You breathe in a certain way with a certain intention, or you deliberately bring a certain quality or pattern to the breath.

Actually, there is a beautiful dance that can take place between you and the breath. And it is a glorious and ecstatic experience to find yourself lost in that dance... not sure whether you are leading or following, not sure if you are breathing the breath, or the breath is breathing you! At our trainings, we explore this beautiful dance. We find that the breath wants to expand us, and we can relax and let it do so. And we also find that when we expand ourselves, the breath responds by flowing in and filling the space that we create. This practice of creating "space" in ourselves is a very important way to approach the inhale. But that is the subject of another day.

Where do we start with breathwork? When people come to me to breathe, I always ask (myself or them) three questions: What is their level of health? What is their degree of skill? What is their purpose in training? And I am looking for three things: how conscious and aware they are, how relaxed and at ease they are, and how much breath control and breathing capacity they have.

Does the person have physical, emotional, psychological, or medical problems? Are they depressed or anxious, lethargic or hyperactive? Do they practice meditation, yoga, martial arts? Do they do energy work? Do they want to de-stress, or do they want more energy? Do they want

to see God, or are they trying to make their first million bucks? Are they working to maintain a certain state or role, or are they exploring new possibilities? Are they seeking peace, or pleasure, or power, or balance? Do they have relationship or dependency issues? Are they interested in psychic abilities, healing childhood traumas, traveling the astral world or exploring past lives? Do they want to open their heart, expand their mind, or do they simply want to get rid of a headache without drugs?

Obviously, a frail elderly person who has difficulty walking or standing requires different breathwork exercises and techniques than an athlete in peak physical condition. An emotionally unbalanced or psychologically disturbed person needs a different approach than someone who is powerful, purposeful, clear and determined. People with heart or kidney disease need to approach breathwork differently than people who are training for a triathlon. People who are depressed or lethargic are served by different breathing techniques than people who are anxious or hyperactive.

You would think that one would need to be a medical expert, or a trained therapist, a priest or a counselor in order to know what to do in every case. But the fact is that there are certain fundamental principles that anyone can master. And when these basics are addressed and applied, they open the way and they determine the best direction for breathwork in every case. I teach these basics as a “Formula for Transformation.”

Awareness: The Consciousness Factor (Wake Up!)

Relaxation: The Release Factor (Let Go!)

Breathing: The Energy Factor (Take Charge!)

Awareness and relaxation are the primary elements here. They guarantee the safety and certainty of the process. The initial breathwork sessions are focused on developing these fundamentals. We use the breath and breathing to explore and develop awareness and relaxation skills. The initial breathing exercises and techniques are for the purpose of increasing, expanding and refining awareness; increasing and improving relaxation—at rest and in action. And developing more breath control and breathing capacity, more knowledge and skill, more power and potential.

Breathwork is an organic, self-directed and self-generating process. Breathworkers are like spiritual midwives, coaches, supporters, friends, guides. They are conscious witnesses, attentive observers. They make intuitive and logical connections between breathing habits and patterns and physiological, psychological and emotional states and tendencies. By “playing with the breath” we can discover, explore and develop ourselves. We can uncover physical, emotional, psychological, behavioral, and spiritual issues and challenges. Habits and tendencies, limitations, inhibitions, patterns, dysfunctions, as well as strengths and talents reveal themselves. And so the course and direction of the process are easily seen. The scope and focus of the training becomes self-evident.

I call what I do “Spiritual Breathing.” So perhaps some words about spirituality are in order. I believe that to be conscious and aware is to be spiritual. Without exception, the most spiritual

people I have ever met have also been the most conscious and aware. And the most conscious and aware people I've ever met, have also been the most spiritual.

In one sense, consciousness is the latest evolutionary development. It is in fact our best tool for survival. In the past, we needed to be strong and fast in order to survive. But that gave way to intelligence: the smart and clever ones learned to beat out the swift and powerful. But now we have come to the point where intelligence is not enough. If we are to survive through to the next stage in evolution: we must develop our consciousness. And the fact is, that for every moment that we practice being aware of the breath, we are becoming more aware in general. For every moment we practice conscious breathing, we are becoming more conscious period. The breath is the most useful tool for expanding our awareness, the most effective way of developing our consciousness.

After a few minutes of breath awareness or conscious breathing, an obvious qualitative shift occurs in us. After meditating on the subtle aspects and details of our breath and breathing for only a few minutes, our awareness is heightened. And when we shift our attention and place our awareness on something else—either within us or around us—we naturally see more, feel more, experience more. The breathing has helped us to become more conscious, more aware. If we are in a survival situation, our odds for survival increase. If we are in a comfort or pleasure situation, our potential for comfort and pleasure is naturally greater. That's why bliss is so common in breathwork.

On one level, the breathing exercises and techniques are a trick! When we are breathing consciously, we are not doing what we would normally be doing by unconscious habit. Breath Awareness frees up energy. Conscious breathing pulls life force away from useless, or dysfunctional emotional states, mental activities, or behavioral patterns. Breathwork creates a space where something new is possible, where something different can occur. Even miracles! The best breathworkers are very spiritual. In fact, it is impossible to do real breathwork and not awaken to some aspect of the spiritual within ourselves and others. Well enough preaching for one day! Here's the current breathing schedule: Call me at 508-345-7574 to connect.

December 3-6: Florida (West Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale)

December 6-13: Massachusetts (Boston/Providence)

January 5-25: India: "In Search of the Immortals"

February: Cancun Mexico and Tulsa Oklahoma

March 11-18: France (Paris)

March 23-30: Lithuania (Vilnius)

March 31-April 9: Ukraine (Kiev, Khakov)

April 10-13, Belarus (Minsk)

April 13-16: Russia (Moscow)

April 18-25: Kazakhstan

April 26-30: Bashkiria (Ufa, Salavat, Neftekamsk)

May 4-14: Argentina (Buenos Aires)

June 8-15: Italy (The Hill That Breathes)