

The Healing Breath

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**THE BENEFIT OF BREATHING OUT AND IN,
INSTEAD OF IN AND OUT
BY
IAN JACKSON**

Keywords : BreathPlay; breathing; breathwork; marathon running; yoga; ballet; core strength, neuromuscular integration, Feldenkrais, spinal activation, meditation.

DISCOVERING BREATHPLAY

I didn't set out to make a profound paradigm shift. In the late 1960s and early 1970s I was an enthusiastic distance runner, talented enough to earn US national ranking as a marathoner. In 1971, with my personal best of 2:33 only three minutes short of the qualifying time for the 1972 Olympic Marathon trials, I increased my training mileage in hopes of finishing a marathon in under 2:30 and thus qualifying for the trials.

I harbored no illusions about competing with the world's best in the streets of Munich. In my mind, running in an Olympic Trials marathon would have been the thrill of a lifetime, even if I had finished dead last. Driven by this dream, I upped my training miles from 100 per week, to 120, and then 140. I ended up driving myself into breakdown instead of to breakthrough performances

I was deeply disappointed at the time, but the breakdown set me on a quest to undo the overtraining damage, which led me in turn to explore the healing benefits of hatha yoga. Racing marathons imposes a certain urgency about time, since good results depend on maintaining the fastest possible pace over those 26.2 miles. Practicing the hatha yoga asanas, on the other hand, requires slowing way down in order to develop the appropriate quality of attention. As I explored yoga, I sought out the best teachers I could find, including, including J.B. Rishi, of the European Yoga Center, Joel Kramer of the Esalen Institute, and B.K.S. Iyengar, whose methods have made an enormous impact on yoga teaching worldwide.

The influence from Yoga

I became a yoga adept, then a yoga teacher. In 1974 I wrote a book entitled *Exercises For Runners*, which presented the highly structured Iyengar-approach as a prophylactic to the chronic muscular tightness brought on by high mileage marathon training. In 1975, I wrote *Yoga and the Athlete*, which featured Joel Kramer's more exploratory approach to yoga as a way of transforming distance running into a modality for BodyMind integration.

From Yoga to Dance

Ironically, in the same week that *Yoga and the Athlete* came off the presses, I was about to move on from the static stretching of yoga to the dynamic stretching of dance. This development was triggered by an unexpected event in the middle of a solo yoga session, when someone in the upstairs apartment turned on the Brandenburg Concertos as I was in the middle of an intended ten-breath focus, playing the edges of an asana stretch.

I happen to love that music, and it quickly drew me into a spontaneous trance state, enhancing the edge-playing process so wonderfully that I continued with the stretch throughout the entire Concerto. I brought my stretching to a close only when the music went silent.

I realized in that silence that I had been totally absorbed in an entrancing form of synesthesia, in which the beautiful music seemed to resonate in the stretch sensations. I seemed to be listening with my muscles and not my ears. Not only did I lose all track of time, but when I came out that trance, I was deeper by far into the asana than ever before. Stretching with music had transformed the yoga experience.

Inspired by this epiphany to explore dance, I overcame my inhibitions about moving with music. I plunged into dance classes with such passionate enthusiasm that only six months later I enjoyed my first professional performance, as the only male dancer in a modern dance company.

Discovering the active Out-breath

Yoga had introduced me to the practice of using the breath for more than mere air supply. The world of dance, with its focus on the centrally important element of movement, was about to introduce me to an even deeper appreciation.

The first epiphany came in a jazz dance class, which I chose for my initial explorations because jazz dance seemed to manifest a joyful exuberance with distinctly athletic qualities. As the only male in a class of 21 I felt decidedly insecure. I came up with the idea of running to and from the class, seven miles each way, wearing my West Valley Track Club singlet and my Adidas running shoes. I felt that I was thus projecting the image of “an athlete in search of body awareness,” and avoiding the image of “a pansy in tights.”

Besides helping me get over my early insecurities, this strategy brought an unexpected additional benefit. I would run to class feeling good, eagerly anticipating further movement learning, and I would run home feeling better, enjoying a quality of movement enhanced by that learning. Running to class was always easy; but running home from class was always easier, in spite of fatigue. Each class seems to set me up for a beautiful run home.

The dance classes continued to refine my movement awareness for several weeks, leading up to a class which presented me with a profound epiphany which changed everything. In the last section of this particular class, thoroughly warmed up and well tuned in, we started playing with a new combination. It was a playfully sexy series of four-step walks—forward, backward, to the left, and to the right. The pelvis rocked forward and backward with the forward and backward walks. The hips rocked side to side with the

steps to the left and right. The teacher made it look exciting when she danced it. I knew my body was flexible enough, but I wasn't so sure about my mind.

I rocked my pelvis forward so that my tailbone tucked under; then rocked it back so that my buttocks stuck out. I rocked my pelvis forward and back, listening with my body, feeling the beat, rocking to the beat.

The combination had an outrageously sexy edge, and was great fun to play with. I liked the way it felt and I sensed that an unusual connection was trying to push itself into my awareness.

Suddenly it was there; I felt it and heard it at the same time. Each time I rocked my pelvis forward by pulling my abdominal wall back, I created a high volume out-breath. Each time I released the pullback of my abdominal wall, letting my pelvis rock back, my belly would round out and I would enjoy an effortless in-breath equal to the out-breath volume. It felt very intriguing and I immediately began wondering whether I'd be able to learn how to rock my pelvis as I breathed and ran home.

I was thankful for the late evening darkness, but I still turned down a side street so that I'd be free to play without self-consciousness. The learning didn't come easy, but I was able to master the knack.

I reviewed what was happening as I explored the feelings. I realized that actively pulling back the abdominal was the key. That contraction first pulled the pubic bone up and then pulled the sternum and the floating ribs down and in. As it pulled the pubic bone up, the pullback of the abdominal wall displaced the abdominal contents back and up, against the underside of the diaphragm, creating a greater upward excursion into the chest cavity. The contraction started at the pelvic floor and moved upwards in a bottom-to-top squeeze. Once the first part of the abdominal squeeze had pushed the diaphragm up against the underside of the lungs, the final part would further compress the lungs by activating the downward-pulling intercostals and pulling the bottom of the sternum down and back.

The active out-breath was applying a muscular corset to the torso, providing a fuller upward excursion of the diaphragm and a fuller closure of the ribcage for a more complete out-breath. A higher volume out-breath means a higher volume in-breath, since we breathe in as much as we first breathe out. I knew this was going to make a big difference in running.

In integrating the pelvic rock with the running movement, I made it more subtle than the jazz dance movement. Instead of a full tilt (forward *and* back), I was simply tucking my tailbone slightly under on the out-breath and letting it return to neutral on the in-breath. I wasn't sticking my buttocks out on the in-breath, as I had learned to do in the dance class.

I was squeezing my air out by pulling my abdominal wall back towards my spine. I was initiating that pullback by pulling the pubic bone up and completing it by pulling down on the bottom of the breastbone. I was letting the in-breath happen all by itself by simply relaxing the various forms of muscular insqueezing I had used to push my air out. As a result, my in-breath was an effortless, automatic, opening recoil from the active-out-breath closure.

Nature abhors a vacuum. I was allowing my in-breath to be a rebound from the out-breath. On my in-breath, I was just resting, relaxing, and letting myself be filled.

I was actually reversing the breathing pattern of a lifetime. Instead of an active in-breath and a passive out-breath, I was practicing an active out-breath and a passive in-breath.

To help myself feel the rhythm of the breathing, I intuitively put steps and sounds into it. I let the breathing feel as if each step was forcing more air out, or letting more in. I began to hear words in my head, with one syllable to each footstep: “Squee-eeze-ou-out / Re-ee-lax-in. Squee-eeze-ou-out / Re-ee-lax-in....”

The exercise in the section “Training the Olympic cycling team,” below, will give you a chance to practice this.

Discovering the “Odd-count” Breath Cycle

After a couple of miles of that hypnotic rhythm, that interweaving of breathing and movement, I was beginning to feel *breathed* down the street. I noticed that the last step of the out-breath was always on the right foot. The feeling reminded me that my right leg has been most frequently injured. I wondered if my even-count breath cycle was creating some kind of imbalance.

I began breathing in over three steps instead of four, which led to an odd-count seven-step breath cycle, with the last step of each out-breath switching sides. By anticipating the switch, by knowing exactly how the breathing fit with the footsteps, I found that the running felt a lot easier. My awareness of the rhythm was helping me to relax into it and release its energy. Even more than before, I felt *breathed* down the street.

I changed the words slightly so that what I was hearing now brought the switch-side out-breath more clearly into my awareness. Four syllables out, three syllables in: “Bre-eathe-out-left / Re-lax-in. Bre-eathe-out-right / Re-lax-in....”

I played with it all the way home, letting the rhythm float me through the darkness. In the last few miles, I began to notice that I seemed to *surge* slightly with each out-breath. It was as if the out-breath power boost added enough momentum into my run to let me relax on the in-breath. And that was not the only contrast I felt with my breathing. Wherever in my running body I focused my attention, I detected a subtle difference between breathing out and breathing in. Contracting, *squeezing* my torso on each out-breath set up a different footfall for the out-breath steps, a different arc for the out-breath arm-swings, a different feeling in the shoulders, in the lower back, in the chest, and in the neck.

After a lifetime of running, I had discovered an inner eye to help me explore in greater depth what it was all about.

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF BREATHPLAY

BreathPlay practice does more than just coordinating the work of the primary and accessory respiratory muscles, more than just recruiting the abdominal wall to support the work of the diaphragm. It also builds the same extraordinarily dynamic torso strength that classical dance training builds.

The Spinal Stretch

Each out-breath is, in essence, a spinal stretch. It's not necessary to take the active out-breath that far, but doing so makes each out-breath part of a process that builds both core strength and core skill.

The lumbar part of the spinal stretch is obvious, because the pulling back of the abdominal wall tends to lift the anterior portion of the pelvis, so that the lower back flattens as the belly flattens.

The contraction of the ribcage is the middle part of this spinal stretch. We have the pelvis, the ribcage, and the skull, attached at the bottom, the middle, and the top of the spine. The BreathPlay out-breath starts the stretch at the bottom with the initial abdominal contraction, continues the stretch through the middle with the ribcage contraction, and completes the stretch at the top with a subtle tilting movement of the skull.

The cervical stretch is not so obvious, but refined BreathPlay completes the out-breath with a slight tucking of the chin. Think of the occiput moving up slightly at the last count of the out-breath. So the out-breath begins with a subtle pelvic tilt that brings the pubic bone up towards the chin, and ends with a subtle skull tilt that brings the chin down towards the pubic bone. The result is a complete spinal stretch, moving from bottom to the top, from sacrum to skull, over and over, with each out-breath. With each in-breath, the spinal stretch is released and relaxed.

Gravity and the Rebound In-breath

Consider how gravity helps create the rebound in-breath. The active out-breath displaces the abdominal contents, pushing that mass of tissue and fluid back towards the spine and up against the underside of the diaphragm. It's real work, because that mass is upwardly displaced against the downpull of gravity. When the belly is released, of course, gravity pulls it all back down, and the diaphragm follows.

A similar rebound effect occurs with the insqueezing of the ribcage. You literally use muscle to bend bone here, and, like the bent wood of a bow when you release the arrow, the bone springs back when you release the insqueezing muscles. The rebound relaxing of the abdominal wall, the effortless flattening of the diaphragm, and the rebound release of the ribcage are all interconnected parts of the passive BreathPlay in-breath.

Clearly, the shift from active-in-breath chest breathing to active-in-breath belly breathing falls significantly short of the shift from either to the BreathPlay active out-breath. The shift to BreathPlay brings far more changes, and changes of far greater benefit.

BREATHPLAY FOR ATHLETES

Training the US Olympic Cycling Team

Several years later, when I was asked to introduce the BreathPlay paradigm and skill set to the US Olympic cycling team, I used the following simple exercise.

Exercise 1. "Up Against the Wall" BreathPlay

- Stand about 12 inches away from a wall and lean back into it. Your buttocks should be in contact with the wall, and your mid and upper back. See if you can also get the back of your head comfortably in contact with the wall, or at least close to it.
- First settle into resting against the wall, and then explore pulling your belly back for a three-count out-breath and relaxing it for a two-count in-breath. Emphasize the three counts of your out-breath by creating an intense three-count hissing sound: "Sss-sss-sss." Mark the two counts of your passive in-breath with a contrasting relaxed sound: "Aaa-aah." Think of these stepped breathing sounds as timing cues that will fit with your footsteps and your pedal strokes.
- Make that pressurized hissing sound by positioning your tongue up against your teeth so that it partially blocks your out-breath. This partial blockage increases the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide by creating back pressure within your lungs. Let your in-breath happen all by itself. Simply relax your tongue and your jaw muscles so that your mouth feels easily open, and relax your pulled-back belly so that it rounds out.
- Using your own comfortable rate of breathing, learn to pressurize your out-breath and relax your in-breath: "**Sss-sss-sss / Aaa-aah. Sss-sss-sss / Aaa-aah. Sss-sss-sss / Aaa-aah.**" etc. Make these stepped sounds clearly audible, anticipating how they'll help you coordinate your breathing with your walking and riding.
- On the three counts of your out-breath, use the pullback of your belly to pull your pubic bone up, making your tailbone tuck under and your lower back flatten against the wall. Try to flatten your lower back fully against the wall by the third and final count of your out-breath. Note that this flattening stretches your lower back. As your BreathPlay skills develop, you'll be using each out-breath to stretch not only your lower back, but your entire spine.
- On the two counts of your in-breath, as you let your abdominal contents drop down into your relaxing and rounding belly, notice that your lower back comes away from the wall and your pubic bone returns to its normal position.
- By pulling your belly back, you're displacing your abdominal contents up against the underside of your diaphragm. This pushes your diaphragm unusually high up into your chest cavity, creating an unusually high volume out-breath. Throughout the entirety of this high-volume out-breath, your tongue blocking maintains an unusually high pressure within your lungs.
- When you've pushed your air all out, simply relax your belly pullback for an effortless in-breath. Gravity will pull your abdominal contents back down into your rounding belly, pulling your diaphragm down with them.
- **Playing with the Rhythms.**
The 3/2 count is simply an easy way to start learning odd-count upside-down breathing patterns. Once you feel comfortable with the out/in 3/2 count, practice until you have the same level of comfort with a 5/2 count, a 2/1 count, a 4/1 count, a 4/3 count, and a 6/3 count. (I have produced cassettes that help support these rhythms. See below.) Whether you're out on the road or on an indoor trainer, you'll need to be able to change breathing gears to accommodate changing work rates, and this small repertoire of breathing patterns will give you a basic breathing gearbox.

I recommend that you practice this exercise frequently, just as a dancer practices the basics daily in classical training. Every time you do "Up Against the Wall" BreathPlay, you'll increase your familiarity with the feeling of pushing your air out and letting it

in. I call this technique the *Pelvic Pump*, since it uses the muscle work of the pelvic tilt to pump your air out of your body.

Exercise 2. Walking the Pelvic Pump

- Once you feel comfortable with “Up Against the Wall” BreathPlay, you’re ready to play with the Pelvic Pump in walking. Many of us have played with breathing patterns while walking, running, or riding, so you may already be familiar with this process. Think of the “Hup, two, three, four,” cadence of the military march, which tends to set up four-step 2/2 out/in breath cycles.
- Notice that when you take five steps per breath cycle rather than four (using an odd footstep count rather than an even count), each breath cycle automatically ends on the opposite foot. Counting with a variation on the military cadence, your breath cycles would play out like this: “Hup-two-three-four-left. Hup-two-three-four-right. Hup-two-three-four-left.” etc. Or “Sss-sss-right / Aaa-aah. Sss-sss-left / Aaa-aah. Sss-sss-right / Aaa-aah.” etc.
- As you walk with a 3/2 pattern, measuring out each breath cycle with five steps, make your breathing sounds audible, just as you did when you were practicing against the wall. Try out all the breathing patterns you’ve practiced against the wall: 2/1, 4/1, 3/2, 5/2, 4/3, and 6/3.
- It doesn’t really matter which one drives the other. A VoiceWeave pair on the 5/2 Serendipity Brisk Walk CD which I have produced, says, “Step-ping-drives-your-breaths / Re-lax. Breath-ing-drives-your-steps / Air-in.”

I urged all the Olympic cyclists to practice BreathPlay patterns while walking around throughout the day. “Walk before you ride,” I suggested. “Build familiarity with organizing your active out-breaths and passive in-breaths in odd-count patterns that automatically balance the work of right and left sides of the body.”

I believe it’s no accident that the cyclists who achieved the deepest BreathPlay skills did the most walking practice at the beginning. Alexi Grewal, who won a BreathPlay-powered gold medal in the 1984 Olympic Road race, is a perfect example. He was out walking in all kinds of weather, practicing the patterns with a look of intense concentration on his face.

BREATHPLAY FOR BOOSTING CARDIOPULMONARY FUNCTION.

Daniel M. Woyta and Xavier F. Flores undertook research on the “BreathPlay” regimen involving members of the Maumee Valley Wheelmen, a United States Cycling Federation (USCF) cycling club, and other athletes. Preliminary results of their study were reported at the Midwest regional meeting of the American College of Sports Medicine held at Boyne Mountain, Mich., Feb. 5-6. Some of their results were reported in the August, 1986, issue of *Ultrasports Magazine* and the March, 1987 issue of *American Health Magazine*.

They found that for racing cyclists ‘BreathPlay’ acts to increase endurance and delays the onset of anaerobic metabolism, the anaerobic threshold. The anaerobic threshold is that point during prolonged physical exertion at which the body switches its main source of energy from fats burned in the presence of oxygen to the burning of stored carbohydrates without oxygen. Thereafter, production of lactic acid in the body tends to limit endurance.

Their evidence pointed to more efficient breathing among experimental subjects as compared to the control group, as seen in lowered heartrates, perceived exertion, and greater endurance. BreathPlay breathing patterns are characterized by a decrease in breathing frequency and an increase in tidal volume, the amount of air moved per breath, thereby increasing breathing efficiency.

“Despite results indicating benefits for the racing cyclist,” he said, ‘and while the technique can be simply explained, it required a great deal of discipline to master. After six weeks only a third to half of the experimental group were still practicing the new breathing pattern faithfully. It may be that the elite athlete who has the time and discipline necessary to learn this new skill will benefit most. It represents a significant departure from normal breathing during exercise.

BreathPlay and Pulmonary Rehabilitation

While the value of “BreathPlay” to athletes was recognized, Flores pointed out that “the past success of individual respiratory patients using “BreathPlay” and other conscious breathing patterns indicates a possible application of the modalities for use in pulmonary rehabilitation.”

BREATHPLAY AND ESOTERIC BREATHING TECHNIQUES

Let’s start building BreathPlay understanding with a distinction I believe is familiar to all breathworkers – the distinction between chest breathing and belly breathing. From the perspective of the BreathPlay paradigm, belly breathing is definitely preferable, but only because it is *less inefficient* than chest breathing. Both chest breathing and belly breathing are inefficient because both reflect a fundamental but questionable assumption about breathing, one which, incidentally, seems to be embedded in all languages. Both reflect the assumption that the in-breath is the active phase of the breath cycle and the out-breath is the passive phase. Both reflect the assumption underlying the familiar expression “Take a deep breath and let it out with a sigh.”

To take a breath is to draw air actively in. To let a breath out is to release air passively.

When you begin talking about breathing from the perspective of the BreathPlay paradigm, you change your language to reflect fundamental changes in your breathing. When you turn that active-in-breath assumption upside down, you also turn your breathing upside-down. For example, when I was coaching the bike racers at the US Olympic Training Center, I kept encouraging them to “Push your breath out and let it in.”

At this point, I think I should take up the issue of why I question the active-in-breath assumption behind the expression “Take a breath.” After all, this assumption is universally accepted. It seems as if I’m questioning the way billions of breathers over millions of years have managed the need for oxygen. Surely my advocacy of active-out-breath BreathPlay is more to be questioned than the breathing patterns which have served billions of breathers for millions of years.

And yet, when you look deeper, the active out-breath is not as radical a departure as it might at first appear. As a matter of fact, the active out-breath has been taught for

thousands of years, as esoteric knowledge, by various masters of the martial arts, the dance arts, and the meditative arts.

In all the martial arts I've investigated, the active out-breath is used to focus the power of kicks and punches. This active out-breath is often audible, in the ritual yell, or Kiai. In many of the dance arts I've studied, the active out-breath is used to focus movement around the power of the stretching spine. In some of the meditative disciplines I've explored, the focus is on pushing air out and surrendering to its return.

In fitness clubs worldwide, the breathing formula is the same: "Effort on out-breath." When weight lifters push heavy iron, they focus their strength through a strongly active out-breath. BreathPlayers simply continue focusing on the active out-breath for each and every breath cycle. Thus, the BreathPlay paradigm offers a way to turn ancient esoteric knowledge into modern common knowledge."

APPENDIX

ABOUT BREATHPLAY CASSETTES

To support the BreathPlay method of breathing there is Carlton Williamson's BreathMusic. This music is unique because it is organized organically, around the rhythms of breathing, rather than structurally, around the measures of traditional music. When you first hear it, you might appreciate having something pleasant to listen to while you breathe and move. Later, you'll appreciate it in a much deeper way, because you'll discover that it's an important part of the learning process, helping you recognize the rhythmic patterns of BreathPlay. The BreathPlay CDs provide breath-by-breath acousticoaching in a variety of tempos and breathing patterns. You'll hear hissing outbreath sounds and aahing inbreath sounds setting up a basic tempo beat. For instance, with the 5/2 breathing pattern (five steps out, two steps in) you'll hear "sss-sss-sss- ss-sss / aah-aah". You'll also hear, woven into the breathing patterns, the BreathPlay refrains, or voice-weaves, which help build the skills and reinforce the learning.

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Cassettes

Please go to Ian's website to discover these.

About the Author

Ian Jackson teaches endurance sports. His Endurance Sports Philosophy has been the subject of articles in The New York Times Magazine, Self, Outside, and Esquire. He has produced a number of CDs for training breathing rhythms for sports. He can be contacted through www.breathplay.com.

**THE POSTURE OF HEALTH:
GRAVITY, OXYGEN, & YOU
BY
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Keywords: breathing habits, vocal sound, posture, center of gravity, attitude, gestation, balance, suspension, TMJ, breath holding, 100% blood-oxygenation, Runner's High, larynx, tongue, jaw, vocal sound

Abstract. Observations of the striking influence of postural mechanics on function and symptomatology have led to our hypothesis that posture affects and moderates every physiologic function from breathing to hormonal production. *American Journal of Pain Management*. J. Lennon & C. Norman Shealy, Vol. 4, No. 1, January 1994.

PART I

**POSTURE:
A CONSCIOUS, MULTISENSORY EXPERIENCE**

**THE BALANCING ACT
PHYSICAL IMBALANCES ALTER BIOMECHANICS**

Chiropractors have been preaching the importance of efficient posture for decades. When something feels 'out of whack' – our chiropractor fixes it. After a series of adjustments, everything feels like it's where it should be. But the catch is – the minute we sit up and get down off the table, our postural habits begin undoing the very thing we just had fixed.

Change in perceptual awareness can potentially redefine your individual physical profile. If you have psychosomatic (mind/body) balance, everything feels as if it is where it should be. Unfortunately, the average person mistakenly identifies familiar habit as 'where it should be.' When re-programming is advised, we mistakenly seek external help to correct the results of internal dysfunction.

A simple three-part equation can alter habitual body mechanics by conscious awareness of How you do What you do When you do it. The best way to learn about your unique persona is Self-Examination.

I THINK, THEREFORE I AM.

VERSUS

I BECOME WHAT I THINK MYSELF TO BE!

Posture is how we organize our individual body components in defiance of gravity. How well you effectively accomplish this reflects your individual productivity.

Posture is not something the average person thinks about. Once we get the hang of it, we never question if those habits, usually learned in the first year of life, continue to efficiently serve a functioning adult to best advantage in later life. This same balancing act must eventually deal with a fully, mature structure. We eventually become what we think ourselves to be.

How You Do What You Do When You Do It

Unfortunately, few persons are consciously aware of How they do What they do When they do it. For example, when standing and/or sitting, where is your weight centered? Can you accurately explain How you keep your upright balance? As you read these words, are you holding your breath or moving it? These are just a few basic questions examining the importance of How you do What you do When you do it.

Reality is seldom what we think it is. You are individually responsible for running an intricately complex mind/body corporation. The average person goes through life aware of two levels of consciousness: awake and asleep. We are often so mesmerized by the external environment we have little regard for the intricacies of balanced Self-management.

Most of the human body's vital functions run on autopilot with little awareness of our participation of uniquely individual doing. For example, when standing or sitting, where do you centre your weight? Can you accurately explain *How* you keep your upright balance? If not, Why not? You have been doing it since you first experimented with standing erect. Another example: As you read these words, are you holding your breath or moving it? These are just a few important questions to consider when examining *How you do What you do When you do it*.

The Fruits of self-examination

A good place to begin self-examination is with a familiar function: your voice. Do you enjoy the sound of your voice? Do mood changes affect your voice? Are you surprised by what you hear when your voice is recorded? How often have you said, "Is that what I sound like?" There is a simple explanation for this auditory misperception: we listen to our vocal sound inside our living speaker. Everything thing else we hear is external.

The Sound Of Your Voice

Individual vocal spectrum is your audible resonant reality. Vocal resonance is a direct result of *How* you individually identify with form and function.

This writer has enjoyed intimate association with vocal sound for well over half a century. This longstanding association continually re-enforces the fact that individual vocal sound identifies bodymind expression. Your vocal sound, the Resonance of Self, tells more about you than you might, otherwise consciously allow.

As Professor of Vocal Performance, Emeritus (thirty-four years at Emporia State University preceded by years of professional performances in Europe and the States) I first began investigating postural influences on breathing habits and vocal sound approximately thirty years ago.

Hypothesis: postural habits have an all-inclusive interaction with everything we do from breathing to hormonal production. [Lennon, Shealy]

The following facts concerning human developmental anatomy are relatively unknown to the public.

Humans Are Born Obligate Nose Breathers

All mammals are born with the tongue entirely in the oral cavity where it remains, with the exception of humans, throughout adult life. This oral/lingual configuration facilitates breathing while nursing during infancy. Humans are the only mammals to lose this innate response sometime between six months and six years of age. At birth, the human larynx is situated in front of the first, second and third cervical vertebrae of the neck. Because of this, human infants are born obligate nose-breathers, incapable of breathing through the mouth except when crying. As the human structure grows and matures, the tongue and larynx gradually conform to gravity and move down to a place, at rest, in front of the fourth, fifth and sixth cervical vertebrae. One third of the tongue forms the anterior wall of the human throat where it remains throughout life. [Crelin]

The average person thinks of the human larynx as a 'voice-box.' Its vibratory potential, however, is secondary to its primary function as a sphincter mechanism controlling the flow of air in and out of the lungs.

The original purpose of this investigation was to examine postures that allow the body to breathe as innately intended, thereby enhancing vocal resonance. Realization of this intent occurred early on in the investigation. We were not prepared, however, for how extensively postural habits influence all other human function.

Medical science concedes that the average person inadequately ventilates and oxygenates his/her living structure. Why are we humans so ineffective in oxygen exchange - the most vital component of our existence?

For the past twenty plus years this writer has been investigating how posture influences breathing habits and vocal sound. What emerged from this on-going investigation is the hypothesis that postural habits have an all-inclusive interaction with everything we do from breathing to hormonal production. (Lennon, Shealy)

Without Oxygen, Nothing Works

Oxygen is one of the most powerful healing forces known to living creatures. Without oxygen, nothing works! The bottom line is that we often fail to optimize its full potential. Most unfortunate, when you consider that breathing is the only body rhythm over which we have conscious control.

The average person wants to feel better, look better, and sound better. Is it possible that something so wondrously conceived as the human creature is incapable of optimal function? Innate wisdom is active while we grow and develop during gestation, when we are born, and remains actively responsive until the day we first try to stand up. In that

moment, our body's innate efficiency to interact with gravity becomes compromised attempting to find the right muscle tension to maintain an upright posture.

The dictionary has several dictionary definitions for posture but the most inclusive is, attitude, state of mind. It's easy to spot someone with 'attitude.' What tells you? – Their posture. Posture is how you individually organize the major components of your body (head, chest, and pelvis) to resist the downward pull of gravity.

RETURN TO BASICS

Center Of Gravity

If the center of gravity of any functioning structure moves off its axis in any direction, structural integrity is compromised. The human body, however, has three centers of gravity designed into the dynamics of a continually moving and thinking force, each with its own center of gravity. If these three gravity centers are not in synchronized alignment, the efficiency of all vital parts is in continual jeopardy.

As multisensory beings we humans continually move in, off, and around our structural axis to maintain body balance. The average person is not consciously aware of how much superfluous effort is spent maintaining erect balance, until the end of the day when everything crashes down from the exhaustion. That's why we have to readjust the rear view mirror in our car to a lower position in the evening from where it was that same morning. Have you ever questioned why you feel so physically and mentally spent at the end of the day? Such wasted energy is incalculable in an hourly and daily application, let alone for a lifetime.

Not everyone is guilty of this imbalance. Some keep their innate spinal suspension as they experiment with upright balance. The infants who invariably walk sooner than others. The octogenarians whose efficient posture and energetic spring in their step that belies their actual age. Why? – Because the body's inborn ability to optimally interact with gravity is seldom compromised – allowing optimal function with minimal effort.

Discomfort and pain invariably change posture. This not only influences how we feel, how we breathe, and how we look, but also the sound of our voice.

Anthropologists argue that the human creature was never intended to be bipedal. In answer to this statement, let's explore a speculative observation, together with a little-known fact about the human body. Had early humans not chosen to stand erect, it is doubtful that we would have developed our unique human capacity for vocal sound.

In the back of the human throat there is a space that exists in no other living creature. Quite possibly, first standing erect shifted gravity's influence on the continually evolving human body, allowing this variable to develop as a gravity adaptation. The sound potential of this space is unique only to humans. (Crelin) Had we stayed on all fours it is unlikely that this particular space would ever have evolved. This is not a proven fact, but it is a plausible hypothesis.

An Unanswered Wake Up Call

Is it possible that many of the average human body's aches and pains begin and continue, except for genetic predisposition, when we first learn to balance on two feet? By middle age, the superfluous energy spent holding our body erect would boggle the mind.

Maybe a little self-maintenance could prevent problems before they happen. Periodic maintenance of our car is a foregone conclusion if we wish to keep it working efficiently. Why not the same attentive responsibility to our individual body? Learning to consciously focus on How you do What you do When you do it is a beginning in assuming responsibility for your personal self-maintenance.

Modern medicine too often addresses only the effects of a problem with minimal regard for the cause. We already know the effects – discomfort, pain and disease. Now let's examine some of the possible causes.

The three most obvious causes of chaos in the human body are genetic predisposition, the immediate environment and how your conscious mind reacts to such stimulation. Remember the observation about posture and attitude? Our thinking creates, molds, and shapes both our imagined and visible self-image. Our individual experiences define our personal perception of reality. Once again, think about How you do What you do When you do it.

Breath Holding

For example, the average person stops breathing when engaged in the activity of focused-doing. Breath holding is one of the most self-destructive habits we humans have. Ask twenty collective people to thread a needle; chances are that all twenty will stop breathing attempting to do so. We will discuss the ramifications of this universally self-defeating habit in Part II.

We began experimenting with postures that minimize the excessive exaggeration of the secondary spinal curves that do not appear until a child first becomes bipedal. With the help of videofluoroscopy we found that minimizing these secondary curves allows the adult larynx a potential suspension as low as the first thoracic vertebra. This lower suspension not only appreciably alters vocal resonance, it also greatly enhances breathing efficiency.

Our investigations developed a postural/breathing technique we call Gravity-Centered Breathing™. This technique evolved, not from conscious design, but from more than a decade of experiential participation and observing specific postures that minimize habitual gravity antagonism and maximize breathing efficiency. Parts II and III gives more specifics details about this technique.

The postures, together with enhanced breathing efficiency, had other benefits not anticipated. Voice not only changed for the better, but also many other stress related dysfunctions like lower back pain, neck pain, migraine headaches, chronic depression, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, TMJ, dysphonia, and stroke disability. Why? Because the relaxing postures and improved breathing efficiency increases blood-oxygen.

Using a pulse oximeter to monitor pulse and blood oxygen, we observed 100% oxygenation sustained for over thirty minutes when practicing these postures. The experience has been referred to as a runner's high, only more intense. Practicing this procedure countless individuals have found that, after three minutes, the central nervous system's dominant force is invariably the parasympathetic; The end result is unimaginable relaxation. More about this in Part II and III.

LIMITATIONS OF THE MIND BECOME VISIBLE REALITIES IN THE POSTURE OF THE BODY!

Your mind is conditioned only by your self-imposed limitations. If your present limitations remain locked up in your own personal paradigm, where is your innate capacity to grow and reach out beyond the confines of your personal experiences? Self-imposed limitations are the same as your own self-wrapped chains, restricting your personal freedom. Your body innately knows how to attend to its specific needs. But, in order to allow your body to do what it already knows, you have to get your conscious mind's habitual participation out of the way.

You have at your conscious, voluntary command three of the most powerful forces known to man; gravity, oxygen, and you!

PART II HOLDING IT ALL TOGETHER

It is often said there are two things from which there is no escape: death and taxes. To that meager but impressive inventory must also be added the influence of gravity and oxygen on every aspect of human life.

The intent of this article is to help create a conscious awareness of How you do What you do When you do it. Unfortunately, the average person goes through a daily routine oblivious to the How, What, and When of most habitual function. Individual posture is a prime example of this unconsciousness. The purpose of posture is to organize the three components (head, thorax, and pelvis) of his or her erect body with respect to the forces of gravity. Architecturally each one of our three structural components has its own center of gravity. Common sense tells us that if a single structure has three centers of gravity, sympathetic integrity between all three is basic to the functional efficiency of a unified structure. In other words, if your erect balance is not efficiently aligned to minimize gravity's antagonism, you are wasting precious energy keeping your body erect.

In Part I we discussed the hypothesis of how posture, our individual responsiveness to gravity, influences everything we do from breathing to hormonal production. Gravity and oxygen are the common denominators of our individual life force. A discussion of gravity, posture and breathing, however, is not easy because these are things about which the average person gives little or no thought.

In Part I you were asked if you were aware of breathing or holding your breath while reading and listening. Not only does breath holding rigidify posture, it also causes

metabolic and biological chaos throughout the body. If you stop breathing for any other purpose than what is innately required for successful execution, you lose control of the outcome. In this writer's opinion breath holding is one of the most insidiously self-destructive habits we human creatures have.

For example, any learning process is enhanced when accompanied by some kind of structural movement. The most basic movement known to humankind is the movement of breath. You actually inhibit your ability to remember what you hear and read if you stop breathing. All of these seemingly insignificant unconscious activities in which we all indulge are defined as How we do What we do When we do it. Most specifically, How we use our body with respect to gravity.

TMJ: TEMPORALMANDIBULAR JOINT PAIN SYNDROME

Jaw flexing, teeth grinding or clenching – is another unconscious self-destructive habit because it so adversely affects your postural balance. For this reason, it is extremely important that you also monitor your bite when doing these exercises. Consciously program your self to keep your teeth from touching with your jaw and tongue relaxed. For some of you this will not be easy, because of enormous tension in the tongue and jaw muscles. This particular dysfunction is so epidemic that it's been given an intimidating name – Temporalmandibular Joint Pain Syndrome (TMJ). It has been speculated that TMJ is the number-two human complaint after lower back pain. One might even go so far as to say that breath holding and TMJ are the Siamese Twins of superfluous effort. Such wasted energy invariably leads directly to frustration and failure. For this reason it is strongly advised that you remain conscious of your jaw and breathing while you are listening, visualizing, and doing.

Why dwell on these two particular very human problems? Because whenever the average person attempts any new and unfamiliar experience, both of these habits immerse into full reality. For this reason you will be constantly reminded to continue breathing AND monitor your jaw while engaged in execution of the GCB postures.

For all human creatures on this planet gravity and posture are inescapably synonymous because they determine the efficiency of how we breathe and use oxygen. Is it too far fetched to speculate that this efficiency might easily determine the quality of our life from beginning to end?

How to do the Exercises

The Gravity-Centered Breathing™ exercises introduced in the following paragraphs would have much greater impact if it were possible to hear the directions rather than read them. For this reason I suggest you experiment with a somewhat different procedure while reading the details of the two postures. As you read the description of each postural exercise pause momentarily after each explanation, close your eyes and visualize your self executing the details of each exercise. This same procedure has proven extremely effective in the Gravity-Centered Breathing™ Health-Sense Audio Series. One very important condition in using this procedure – remember to breathe while you are visualizing and your memory retention will be greatly enhanced.

Preparation

Before we begin a detailed explanation of the first two Gravity-Centered Breathing™ postures, let's take a reality check of how your own individual postural habits have influenced your own body.

- Seated in a chair with your eyes closed place the palm of one hand directly over your sternum and the back of your other hand in the small of your back.
- Now lift your chest as high as possible and notice what the small of your back does. For the average person the lower back curve will move in becoming more pronounced.
- Repeat the procedure again, only this time allow the curve in the small of your back to move out against your hand as your chest rises.

This is the innate movement your body makes when taking a deep breath.

- With your chest up, your lower back open and your eyes still closed, take a long deep breath through your nostrils only. Notice what happens. Both hands should move out slightly as air enters your lungs.
- When your lungs feel filled to maximum capacity – slowly exhale, again through your nostrils, without allowing either your chest or lower back to move from its expanded position as you do so. In other words, deflate your lungs without your ribcage collapsing. This exhalation is accomplished with no movement other than the relaxation of your lower abdominal muscles as air is released.

This reality check allows you a conscious perception of how your body innately responds to the movement of breath. Please keep this in mind as we move on to the first two GCB™ postures.

The First Two GCB™ Postures.

Our first posture is called the Rag Doll because that's what you look like when seated in this posture, a limp rag doll with no skeleton.

- Sit down, preferably on an armless chair, with your head down between your knees and your arms hanging on either side of your legs.
- Point your feet straight ahead, approximately shoulder-width apart with your eyes closed. You may have to sit further forward on the chair to find the proper leverage.
- Experiment with your position on the chair before you decide what feels best.

Inhaling in this position is a new experience. In this posture the anatomical gravity center deep in your abdomen automatically flexes each time you inhale.

- Breathing only through your nose (we are born obligate nose breathers) inhale as much air as possible.
- As you breathe in, your abdomen and lower back will expand out lifting your upper chest and head slightly. Try not to unconsciously assist your head

movement. Allow your head to hang down like a dead weight. Only the movement of your breathing should change your body's position. Remember to monitor your jaw and breathe only through your nose.

➤ When you reach maximum inhalation, exhale slowly through your nostrils, allowing your head and chest to drop down, totally limp. Properly executed your head and arms will drop down further toward the floor with each exhalation. If your breath is responding efficiently, you will notice that your body relaxes more fully to gravity's downward pull with each exhalation.

➤ Continue breathing in this posture until your body feels completely relaxed.

This posture is particularly useful for anyone not willing or able to lie down on the floor. It was in this posture that I took my first complete breath. It is relatively easy to fall asleep in this posture if you maintain it for an extended period. For this reason, it is important that you find the correct leverage on your chair. Without the proper leverage, if you doze you might fall off the chair. You may also feel light-headed from breathing in this posture. This is normal and should give you no cause for alarm. It is strongly advised, however, when such circumstances occur, that you remember to consciously continue breathing regardless of what experiences you have.

The Basic Prone

➤ Visualize your self lying down with your back flat on the floor, your legs bent at the knees resting on a chair. Flexing the knees changes the tilt of your pelvis. Moving your flexed legs further over your abdomen, closer to your head, brings the small of your back closer to the floor. This position alone will lessen lower back discomfort. Exaggerated neck and lower back curves can cause lower back pain as well as many other undesirable dysfunctions.

➤ When you find the flexed knee position that allows the full length of your back to touch the floor, pull the chair closer to maintain it.

➤ Remember, monitor your jaw and keep breathing.

➤ Stretch your arms straight out on either side palms up. Notice your shoulder movement as you do this. Your shoulders are closer to the floor with the palms up.

➤ Bend your elbows, slowly moving only your forearms along the floor until your hands are on the floor on either side of your head, slightly above your ears. Visualizing this posture from above, it would appear as if someone had just ordered you to "stick 'em up." This movement may cause one or both of your arms to involuntarily suspend above the floor because of excessive tension in your shoulders. If this happens, simply flex your elbows as far as possible before your forearms leave the floor. We will discuss this problem more extensively in Part III.

➤ Open your eyes and check your wrists on both hands. Are both wrists touching the floor?

➤ Close your eyes again and, as you continue breathing, try to consciously release that tension, allowing your wrists to relax down to the floor. If this doesn't happen, put a small weight on top of each wrist for approximately five minutes while lying on the floor and breathing.

After several minutes in this posture your body will feel different because of less opposition to gravity.

- With your eyes still closed, get an impression of your head position. Open your eyes and look up at the ceiling. Are you looking straight up or at a spot further behind your head? Most of us carry our head too far forward on our shoulders.
- Close your eyes again and adjust your head position by lowering your chin closer to your chest. See how many stacked fingers of one hand you can place between the back of your neck and the floor and then return your arms to their former position. Remember to monitor your jaw and continue breathing.
- Breathe out, exhaling as much air as possible. When your lungs feel empty, begin breathing in very slowly through your nostrils until your lungs seem filled to maximum capacity.
- Now, slowly breathe out, again only through your nostrils.
- With each exhalation, silently say, "Let go!"

If you are sufficiently tuned in to how your body is responding you will notice that increased oxygen relaxes your muscles, allowing more air to enter your lungs with each inhalation. It is extremely important that you notice how your body responds when breathing. Your body relaxes during exhalation – now learn what it habitually does when inhaling. If the small of your back leaves the floor when you inhale, slowly bring your knees further over your chest. This will help keep the small of your back on the floor during inhalation. Now let's work on that space between the back of your neck and the floor.

- Lace the fingers of both hands together and place them under the back of your head like a pillow.
- Remember the combination of movement and breath like this: Breathe in, keep still; breathe out, move.

Breathing in gives strength and stability to the skeletal muscles of your body. Breathing out releases muscle tension, relaxing excessive compression in your skeletal framework

- After a long deep inhalation and just at the beginning of exhaling, using your arms for support, lift your head off the floor as far as possible.
- Keep this position during the next inhalation, moving your head further forward only when exhaling.
- Several exhalations may be necessary before your head is as far up in the vertical as possible.
- Always go further than you think you can and remember to monitor your jaw and breathing.
- Get sufficiently relaxed to keep your head up in the vertical for at least three minutes, while breathing through your nostrils.
- After three minutes, return your head to the floor with your arms on either side as before. Lower your chin down on your neck as far as possible and check the space between the back of your neck and the floor. The space will

be smaller because the muscles that hold your body's posture have released their habitual constriction, relaxing the excessive curvature of your spine.

➤ You feel better because of the increased oxygen in your blood.

This feeling of relaxation comes because of an interesting phenomenon that occurs with the central nervous system. The three-minute time frame is extremely important because of a little known innate capacity of the human body. When the two parts of the central nervous system, the sympathetic and the parasympathetic, are in conflict with one another for more than three minutes a process called induction takes over and one automatically becomes dominant over the other. The sympathetic is active when you are awake and alert. The parasympathetic is dominant when you are physically and mentally relaxed. Which one depends on who's in charge of your individual operation; unconscious habit or conscious awareness. If you are a habitual, unconscious breath-holder, your parasympathetic nervous system has little chance of becoming dominant. Using postures that minimize habitual antagonism to gravity together with deep breathing exercises, the parasympathetic system invariably becomes dominant providing unprecedented mind/body relaxation. One more reason to consciously monitor How you do What you do When you do it.

Practice these procedures twice a day for ten to fifteen minutes. Not only will you notice an improved awareness of energy and flexibility but you will also gain the wonderful benefits of all that increased oxygen in your blood.

Part III—introduces a third GCB posture and discusses how one transfers this awareness to an upright posture.

PART III

POSTURE IS A HABIT – GRAVITY IS NOT

Science tells us that the forces of gravity exist to assist the functions of all things on this planet. Indeed, it does just that for everything else except the average erect human structure. Are we missing a vital message here? How is it possible to allow gravity to assist rather than antagonize our structural balance? When all functions integrate according to designed intent the potential of any concept is limitless. We are also told that human potential is beyond present comprehension. What variables prevent realization of that potential? There is much to indicate that the greatest detriment to this realization is the manner in which we are "holding it all together."

It is this writer's conjecture that early childhood individual alterations in the structure's alignment are what brings the various, highly flexible segmental gravity centers out of sync with one another. This miscalculation of alignment keeps the erect balance of the human body in constant jeopardy. Our balance is continually attended to by musculoskeletal imbalances not accounted for in the design's intent. Because of these imbalances the erect body continually moves in and out of balance. Such a dissipation of energy is incalculable when one realizes the extent to which this activity negates every

facet of our existence. We actually wear down our living body by constantly holding it in a state of constant compression from the moment we begin to stand on two feet.

Fortunately, almost any habitual action has the potential of reversibility. That reversibility has been attempted experimentally in our investigation by returning the vertebral column to the extended C configuration of the fetal arch at birth. This alignment synchronizes the segmented gravity centers thereby minimizing structural sway to the extent that gravity is allowed to assist in maintaining balance. In order to realize more fully gravity's impact on fetal configuration we must examine gestation; a period of structural suspension, as the fetus develops while suspended in amniotic fluid.

Gestation

The first discernible structural part in human embryonic development is the vertebral column. All other parts evolve from and are dependent upon the arched configuration of the growing fetal vertebral column that, other than expansive growth, never once varies. During a nine-month gestation, the human structure grows and is formed around a vertebral column flexed in an arched configuration from atlas to coccyx. Existing in suspended amniotic flotation, gravity's effect on the fetus is somewhat the same as on a ball in water, equal to all parts. After birth, the arched C configuration remains constant except for extension. This extended C configuration allows the infant the experience of optimal structural suspension from head to pelvis until bipedalism is first attempted.

Gestation allows a panoramic blueprint of how all parts grow in relationship to one another and to the arched configuration of the vertebral column. Even the slightest alteration in this designed suspension affects the alignment of all other parts. Like a highly sophisticated mobile, if one segment is altered, all are affected. Since the disposition of all growing parts of the musculoskeletal human structure is determined by the alignment of the vertebral column, this fetal arched configuration is the key to exactly how the summary of all parts was meant to suspend in relationship to one another. At this point of maturation, if the fetus is normal, all structural parts continue to extend and develop according to architectural intent.

It is an established fact that both external and internal stimuli influence the growing fetus, but other than genetic predisposition, the extent of the influence remains unknown. It is, however, at the moment of birth that we begin our initial individual alterations upon the design's intent.

Reawakening This Innate Sense of Structural Suspension

We looked for a means of reawakening this innate sense of structural suspension as opposed to the common practiced sense of structural support. There is strong evidence that whatever the unconscious mind does to the body, the conscious mind can also undo. As the ultimate Biocomputer, the human creature is capable of anything done by a machine conceived, designed, and built by man. This sense of structural suspension is maintained after birth until the growing child first attempts to stand erect. The resulting alteration in vertebral alignment brings about a transformation from the innate sense of suspension, which is replaced, by a learned sense of support. Think of the consequences to any structural design that reverses the architectural intent of the blueprint.

How one individually reacts to stress is another determining factor in altering the innate balanced alignment of the human body. To this end it is most helpful to be aware of what part of your individual body is most affected when you get 'uptight.' The neck and shoulders are a common site for many people. Others feel it in their head, but keep in mind that headaches are usually manifested from neck and shoulder tension. Another common place is the stomach and intestines. Once in awhile I even hear complaints of excessive tension in the hip sockets.

After more than half a century working with the sound of the human instrument I am convinced that three of the most unconsciously constricted parts of the human body are the root of the tongue, the masseter muscle of the jaw and the ankles. I have seen literally thousands of tongues that appear to have minds of their own. By that I mean that when I ask a student to perform simple tongue exercises, no matter how much they try, the tongue seems unwilling to respond to conscious will.

Remember Marley's Ghost?

It is an interesting fact that in death when the heart stops beating the first two muscles to let go are the masseter muscle of the jaw and the tongue. Most of us have seen the film of Charles Dickens' Christmas Carol. In the scene when Marley's ghost returns to confront Scrooge, he appears with a cloth wrapped around his head from under the jaw to the top of his skull. The purpose of the wrapped cloth was to keep the mouth closed. It is amazing how releasing tension in the jaw and root of the tongue dissipates tension elsewhere in the body. I, personally, do tongue exercises every day. Time and space in the series prevent detailing exactly how these are executed. If you just remember to explore sticking your tongue out between your lips when doing the Gravity-Centered Breathing™ exercises detailed in this series, it will go a long way in helping you become aware of this problem.

Michael Jordan's Tongue

I remember reading an article somewhere about Michael Jordan's habit of sticking out his tongue in concentration when playing basketball. When he tried to consciously correct this seemingly benign habit his concentration and effectiveness were minimized.

The reason for including the ankles is because the average person does not relax the ankles in response to gravity when lifting a foot off the ground. Humans are the only creatures who come down on the heel of the foot. Can you sight examples of other animals that do this?

Let's take a moment to explore your 'comfort-zone.' For the most part, many people are comfortable only with what is familiar to them, including both good and bad habits. It takes courage to move out of one's 'comfort-zone' and explore the unknown. Because your 'comfort-zone' is habitual it should always be viewed with suspicion until you have explored other options. The GCB™ postural exercises provide a means of awakening your mind and body to the habitual roadblocks that hinder your individual potential.

That the human body has three centers of gravity has been mentioned earlier. Such a posture requires a unified central axis, the gravity centers of each component part in parallel suspension. Visualizing the human body from the side, imagine a plumb line

dropped from the center of the skull down through the ears to the center of the shoulders and upper thorax, to the anatomical gravity center in the lower pelvis, to a place just behind the ball of the foot.

BALANCED STRUCTURAL ALIGNMENT

We found that this alignment is achieved most effectively by minimizing the secondary curves in the spine. This structural repositioning appears to reduce excessive gravitational resistance and requires the least amount of energy to maintain. Unconscious bodymind gravitational inefficiency is what gradually pulls the component parts away from the innate sense of a central axis in the first place. By analogy, when something alters the suspension of a car, it is immediately apparent to the driver and anyone else riding in the vehicle. Unfortunately, the average person is functionally insensible of the aligned suspension of his or her own body. But if correct alignment and suspension are so vital to automotive efficiency, think what it means to human performance.

More than three decades of working one-on-one with university students has convinced me that the average person has little concept of the visual assessment of their individual postural profile and the sound of their voice. How they do What they do When they do it. For example, can you see yourself without a mirror? It is truly astonishing how many people are dissatisfied with the sound of their own voice and shocked when they hear it reproduced. There is not enough time or space to pursue this observation for now, perhaps in another article. In the meantime, ask yourself this question – Can one's life be as productive as possible if one has only a vague awareness of what one looks and sounds like?

Catch Your Own Act

If you are habitually unconscious of the environmental impact of your daily live performance then your individual effectiveness is unconsciously compromised because of inattentiveness to your self. That means that your unconscious mind-set or attitude is in control and not your conscious self. You fail to 'catch your own act.'

Habitual posture is a very personalized and individual human function. No two persons have the exact same 'holding-pattern.' Think of the times when you have identified a friend, one facing away from you, some distance away. What is the dimension that provides identity? Is it clothing? Or is it an indefinable style, the body's structural attitude, while moving or in repose? Each person's individual 'holding-pattern' is as distinctive as fingerprints and vocal resonance.

First and foremost, you are an individualized form with an extremely flexible spatial identity. By that I mean that your postural profile occupies a continuously changing space in your environment. How you individually fill up that space with the visible reality of your self-image is the physical object of your self-perception. To this end we each personally create our own self-sculpted logo that we present in the daily performance arena of our life. In essence, daily living is nothing more than a continuously running live performance involving only two props; gravity and your thinking. Gravity is

omnipresent and unchanging. Your thinking is equally omnipresent and formidably influential, but hopefully, continually evolving to a higher degree of consciousness.

An easy way to identify with posture is to equate it with the house you live in. Who doesn't have an idealized 'dream house'? A physical structure and surrounding environment that epitomizes the personification of who you are and your station in the hierarchy of society. Something one can look at and admire – perhaps even elicit envy in others. This is, however, not always representative of the true quality of one's life.

There is another kind of house in which you spend even more time than the man-made dwelling where you live, eat, sleep and raise a family. That other dwelling is the physical structure of your living body. It's sad that the average person devotes more time and energy to the maintenance of one over the other. If the foundation of your house shifts, you call in a contractor to make corrections before the problem undermines the integrity of the entire structure and your investment. If problems arise with the electrical wiring or the plumbing a responsible owner sees that experts correct the problem as quickly as possible. If one is truly self-sufficient and capable, they fix the problem themselves.

Why then, do we tend to ignore these same warning signs in our living body? Your investment in your self far surpasses any monetary contributions you have made to your otherwise personal property.

Exercise: Bookend

We now move to the third GCB™ posture called the Bookend. It is exactly the same as the Basic Prone with one exception.

- While lying on the floor in the Basic Prone, move back against the nearest wall, moving the chair under your flexed legs as you do so, with your head up in the vertical the same as you did previously using your hands and arms.
- Continue resting your legs on a chair with your knees flexed. Let the wall hold your head up in the vertical the same as your arms did before.
- Stretch your arms straight out along the baseboard with your palms up.
- Notice how far off the floor your shoulders are.
- Each time you breathe out let your shoulders relax down to the floor. Pull the chair closer to bring your knees further over your chest.
- If your shoulders are reluctant to relax and let go, put a ten-pound flexible weight on each shoulder, as I suggested for your wrists in Part II, while you continue breathing. Remember to monitor your jaw and breathing.

I have known Gravity-Centered Breathers to stay in the Bookend for over two hours while breathing and listening to soft music. Why so long? The longer you stay the more beneficial it is and the better you feel. The first time you try it, however, you may well doubt the truth of this statement. The Bookend posture can, in the beginning, be quite uncomfortable. If you have excessive tension in your neck and shoulders it will immediately make its presence known in this posture. If you experience difficulty breathing through your nose in this posture, stick your tongue out between your lips as suggested earlier. You will be surprised how much better you breathe with the tongue out between your lips. Be careful, however, not to extend your jaw forward when doing so.

If you can allow yourself to remain in this posture for three minutes while breathing deeply, no matter how uncomfortable it is, your discomfort will dissipate because of the induction phenomenon referred to in Part II.

As you begin to adjust to this posture, let's explore moving your head from side to side. The order of the movements is not important.

- Begin panting (either through the nose or with the mouth open) while slowly moving your head as far to one side as possible.
- See if you can touch your cheek to the wall.
- Notice that your shoulders do not get involved in this maneuver. You may experience a pulling in your opposite shoulder as you do this.
- When you have gone as far as you think possible, slow down your panting and begin a long, slow, deep breath through your nose with your head turned in this manner. As you exhale, move your head even further against the wall.
- Now, repeat the movement on the opposite side, panting as you do so.

This particular exercise is quite useful in reducing migraines. There are other helpful variations but too detailed to include here.

By now it should be quite evident that postural habits can either contribute positively to or negatively detract from human health and well being. This article could continue for many more parts before we cover even the basics of that contribution. Overall, however, the results of these postural studies suggest that a new era is on the horizon, one that replaces a trite old axiom with a new concept: gain without pain.

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**THINKING POSITIVE OR RATIONAL?
DEALING WITH THE DOGMAS OF REBIRTHING
BY PIOTR RAJSKI, M.A.**

*says gran: a positive person is one who
like Sue, having jumped from the fifteenth floor
of her upscale apartment
says at the moment of impact:
"I've got an appointment tomorrow at three..."*

David Huggett, "Gran, the maledictions."

INTRODUCTION.

I invite my fellow rebirthers to join me in discussion on one of the popular concepts of Rebirthing-Breathwork known as "thought is creative" principle. Orr and Ray (1983) formulated it in the following way:

"Our purpose is to get everyone spiritually enlightened. And enlightenment is certain knowledge of the absolute truth. Absolute truth is that one and only truth that is true throughout all time and space for everyone. And what is the absolute truth? The absolute truth is: The thinker is creative with his thoughts. The only way you could prove that this is not the absolute truth is by thinking it is not, thereby proving the axiom." (P.52., underlines of the authors)

As psychologist and rebirther I was initially quite fond of this philosophy and the overall concept of taking responsibility, through this concept, for one's life. After a few years however I developed some doubts that I want to share. In my comments I deal mostly with certain abuses of the principle, which itself may be correct, especially absolutization of the principle. I hope that our discussion on this subject will contribute to the development of Rebirthing as therapy.

I divided my concerns about the "thought is creative" principle into three broad categories: Philosophical, Psychological and Practical. I will also suggest (4) an alternative to the principle.

1. PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRINCIPLE.

1.1. Distortion of Reality.

The very first consequence of the Principle, if accepted, is a highly subjective perception of the world. The idea that I am creating results with my thoughts “throughout all time and space,” leads to a very tempting conclusion that everything is a product of my mind. It means there is no objective reality. Everything becomes “maya” – the world of illusion. The world is but a game of my thoughts, in which literally everything can be manifested and dissolved by a thought.

Although this is a very tempting proposition (who wouldn't like to enjoy such a power), the experiences of those who became enlightened show that the matter is not that simple. First of all, in most cases, people do not become enlightened as a result of playing with one's thoughts, but rather through going beyond thoughts. It is most often achieved through meditation. This is, for instance, how Osho (2000) described his experience:

"That night for the first time I understood the meaning of the word maya. Not that I had not known the word before (...) I was aware of the meaning - but I have never understood it before. How can you understand without experience? That night another reality opened its door, another dimension became available. Suddenly it was there, the other reality, the separate reality - the really real, or whatsoever you want to call it. Call it God, call it truth, call it dhamma, call it Tao, or whatsoever you will. It was nameless. But it was there - so transparent and yet so solid one could have touched it. (...)" (P.73-4)

However, Osho quickly makes another comment as to not let his readers to remain confused about the matter of reality. He writes:

"Since that day the world is unreal. Another world has been revealed. When I say the world is unreal I don't mean that these trees are unreal. These trees are absolutely real (...) - they exist in God, they exist in absolute reality (...)" (P.76).

In other words, Osho even after his enlightenment warns us against marching blindly into the tree, in the hope that our thoughts will somehow dissolve it. This would likely end up in a painful encounter. I don't know any enlightened persons who would, for instance, encourage you to jump in front of a car. If anything, enlightened people become very humble with the reality, realizing the sacredness of its source.

Yet this is what we at times do when we interpret the principle mechanistically. The real and unreal become confused. We move into the subjective world of our thoughts. We cannot prove anything objectively. We lose the fundamental tool of testing our theories, concepts and ideas - the reality. Rebirthers sometimes claim to have control over "things." They do not realize that there is a difference between the statement - "Thinker is creative with his thoughts," and - "I can produce/control what I want with my thoughts."

1.2. No room for God.

Another misuse of the “thought is creative” principle involves distortion of our relationship with God. If it is me, who creates “throughout all time and space,” it does not leave much room for God. Rebirthers often declare faith in God, but then have no time to surrender, as they are too busy “creating” things. They try to “create” - dream houses, cars, lovers, etc. In most cases these efforts are very superficial and they quickly become disappointed.

I refer to the people assuming this attitude as “small gods.” I don't mean this in a derogatory sense, as I was also a small god myself. I believe as well that God wants us to use our creative powers and exercise the power of our mind. It took me some time however to realize that miracles in this material domain are not a result of superficial cognitive manipulations. Miracles happen in God. Look at the miracles performed by Jesus. He customarily stressed that whatever he was doing it was done by the power of his Father, His will and in Him.¹ In contrast, rebirthers' efforts to create are ego driven. They have difficulty listening. They are willing to accept, but only what fits with their preconceived goals or plans.

1.3. Epistemological Trap.

The “thought is creative” principle as presented by Orr and Ray (1983) is also a form of tautology. It means, that once accepted, it cannot be falsified. This is reflected in the statement – *“The only way you could prove that this is not the absolute truth is by thinking it is not, thereby proving the axiom.”* By accepting this innocent sentence, we put ourselves in an epistemological trap.

As explained by Encyclopedia Britannica a tautology is a statement “so framed that it cannot be denied without inconsistency.” For instance, the statement – “All men are rational” – asserts with regard to anything whatsoever that either it is a man or it is not rational. Male chauvinists would quickly conclude that this statement is true if applied to women. (☺) But this universal “truth” follows not any facts noted about real men. It is based on the actual use of the words “man” and “rational” and is thus purely a matter of a faulty logic. In reality some men are rational and some are not some of the time.

Similarly, the “thought is creative” principle may be quite true, but it is not “the absolute truth” as purported by Orr and Ray, certainly not because of the logic they suggest.

1.4. Ethical Relativism.

Another consequence of the principle is that it may lead to ethical relativism. If it is me, who “creates throughout all time and space,” then also the ethic becomes a product of my thinking. In other words, it is not, for instance, that prostitution is bad by itself, but it is what I think about it that counts. When I think it is bad, then it is bad, when I don't think it is bad, then it is not that bad.

¹ For instance, “So Jesus answered them, ‘I am telling you the truth: the Son can do nothing on his own; he does only what he sees his father doing. (...)’” John 5:19

This approach is quite a risky thing to do, which I know from my own experience. As a young person, in search for this “self-determined” ethics, I experimented with activities traditionally considered “inappropriate” and I reaped a lot of pain. I finally realized that the Ten Commandments were not given to make our lives miserable, but because they are good for us. No amount of “positive” or “creative” thinking may ever change it.

2. PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRINCIPLE.

2.1. Overburdening.

If the principle is the absolute truth – many rebirthers conclude – it means that they are responsible for everything that happens. Accidents don’t “just happen” – someone has to take the responsibility for them. There is no escape. If you are serious about this philosophy it may lead to overburdening.

Generally speaking, taking responsibility for one’s own actions is a positive quality. It is often associated with good mental health. Rebirthers are often quite keen to take responsibility and as long as things are OK even quite enthusiastic about this philosophy. Problems start when things don’t go so well. “Average” people simply vent on such occasions, blame everyone around, while sipping beer or coffee. Rebirthers on the other hand, when they interpret the principle absolutistically, often struggle. It can still be a creative, growth enhancing process, if they are capable of sorting out what is their responsibility and what belongs to other people. However, I knew rebirthers who were going to the extremes. They were taking responsibility “for everything,” to the point of masochistic self-torture. Some ended up in depression.

Such absolutistic interpretation of the principle is not good, I believe. Where there is no escape from responsibility, usually there is no escape from guilt and self-blame. Again part of the problem comes from the ego, searching for power and control at all costs. Rebirthers, to whom it happens, forget that there are other people (e.g. spouses) “creating” around them and contributing to the particular situations and outcomes. They also tend to forget that there are other powerful forces, such as family, society, culture, economic and political systems, environment that set the stage for what happens in their life.

2.2. Isolation.

Absolutistic interpretation of the principle often leads to isolation. If I am responsible for everything, nobody can really help me (what a nice boost to the ego!). The whole work, some rebirthers think, has to be done in the mind through reconstruction of thoughts. Such attitude at times reduces our ability to receive help from the environment. By attempting to play “small gods” we at times cut ourselves off from people who love and support us. I noticed it was quite difficult to help some rebirthers who found themselves in an emotional low. They were just “too big creators” to accept help from another person. They used the principle to build a wall at the price of losing emotional contact with other people.

2.3. Self-Defense.

The principle is sometimes used as a self-defense device. The popular logic goes as follows: "If I am responsible for things that happen to me, you HAVE to be responsible for things that happen to you (even when they result from my actions)." All the complaints against us can be neutralized on this basis. "It is you who complains, which means it is your problem," I heard people saying, "so you better change your thoughts."

Under these circumstances we may have difficulty accepting an objective feedback. I remember a rebirther who lashed out at me for "lack of positive thinking" when I suggested something she could improve in her functioning. This is not what positive thinking is for. It was not meant as a means of protection from the reality. We should not become blind and act like machines.

When valuable information is rejected just because it is not "positive," then it is difficult to achieve progress. Constructive criticism becomes impossible. It is difficult to improve a system (be it a person or a movement such as Rebirthing) if only positive information is allowed.

2.4. The Power of Positive Thinking.

One of the variations of the principle says: "*your positive thoughts produce positive results.*" (Orr, Ray, 1983). This philosophy is quite old and not typical for Rebirthing. This is the beginning of many manipulations we try to perform on reality. It may be used to create income, or favorable social outcome, health, immortality or etc. Rebirthing literature is full of reports of how beautifully this philosophy can work in many instances.

Occasionally, I believe, this approach can misfire. We sometimes hope for a positive outcome when there is no objective basis for our optimism. At times positive thinking is used as a substitute for action. Instead of doing whatever would get us closer to the desired outcome, we write affirmations. Occasionally we trust people who are not worthy of our trust and we voluntarily victimize ourselves. I remember that on one occasion even the Father of Rebirthing reported to me that a substantial amount of money was stolen from him in the airport. Perhaps he was a bit too "positive" about the nature of the humankind.

In other words a rigid interpretation of the principle of "positive thinking" may deprive us of some important survival skills – objectivity, flexibility, alertness. As one of my alcoholics clients expressed it - "*To be positive does not mean to be stupid.*" Rolland (1994) also describes how Ramakrishna rebuked one of his disciples for letting people take advantage of him. Being "positive," loving and supportive does not mean we should not keep our eyes opened.

2.5. Difficulty Expressing "Negative" Emotions.

The recommendation for "positive thinking" may sometimes serve as a censor. We are "supposed" to be positive so to have negative emotions becomes somehow shameful. It reduces our ability to express anger, irritation, hurt, jealousy, sorrow, because all of these emotions seem to be somehow improper. This applies in my observation especially to the situations in which rebirthers are with other rebirthers. Unexpressed envies, small and big

upsets, often create a lot of tension. Dug in behind the safe ramparts of “positive thinking” we forget the virtue of forgiveness.

2.6. Between the Potential and the Ideal.

The “thought is creative” principle opens a totally new spectrum of opportunities. What once seemed impossible, now becomes a possibility thanks to positive thinking. This initially creates enormous expectations. Overweight people try to lose weight just through writing affirmations. Not very attractive women become busy creating lovers. Men reach for positions and go into ventures that are beyond their intellectual and emotional potential. When everything is possible (through positive thinking), nobody is really satisfied. The sky is the limit.

Again this naïve optimism often misfires. People try to manifest certain ideals forgetting that the ideal and their own potential are two different things. Many people overextend themselves and end up disappointed and frustrated. Then they claim that “Rebirthing does not work.”

3. PRACTICAL SHORTCOMINGS OF THE PRINCIPLE.

3.1. Affirmations.

In the Rebirthing literature you can find basically two techniques of the practical application of “thought is creative” principle – affirmations and personal law. As far as affirmations are concerned it is my experience that only a few people can do this technique consistently. Most of the people, including myself, do not have enough perseverance to write affirmations even 10 minutes a day.

There are two basic explanations of this phenomenon. First, it is said, affirmations trigger so called “negative mental mass,” or unpleasant elements in our unconsciousness, and thus provoke resistance. Second, the technique itself, especially if applied mechanically, creates boredom, and thus resistance. For some clients writing affirmations is a form of a “school trauma.” I remember well one of my clients who would fill whole copybooks with affirmations. However they were written as if they were a punishment from a teacher. This impressive effort on her part was not accompanied by any insight, any reflection on how the affirmation could be translated in her real life.

Affirmations are relatively simple to apply and thus can be used by rebirthers who don't have a formal background in psychotherapy. But in order to be an effective tool, affirmations have to be used skillfully. From the therapeutic point of view it is much more interesting to explore what people record as their reaction to the affirmation than the affirmation itself. Both clients and rebirthers often neglect this part. If this is the case, then writing affirmations is often a phony recommendation. People seldom follow it.

In my experience a journal is often a better tool of working with thoughts. Especially moments when one feels down offer an excellent opportunity for growth. When you record your thoughts without censoring, both positive and negative thoughts, such a work triggers less resistance. My thoughts flow easily down to the paper, because I do not try to “create” anything. I observe, accept and record myself the way I am. It is a

form of meditation. I feel much more in contact with myself while doing this than when I try to write affirmations. Once my work is finished and I have recorded how I felt, I can review the content of what I have written for the presence of strong negative thoughts. I can then change them into affirmations if I feel that I need to do it.

3.2. Artifacts of the Personal Law.

Another practical application of the “thought is creative” principle involves looking for so called “personal law.” Orr (1998) defines personal law as “a thought which controls our mind and life more than any other thought.” (P.40). As a “core belief” personal law underlies the structure of our beliefs about the nature of the world, life and ourselves. Such a thought, once identified, can be then changed into a positive one through reversal. In theory it should lead to a new perception of the world.

It sounds simple but in practice it is not that easy. I attended a couple of Personal Law Seminars that had one thing in common. A list of the possible personal laws was given to the participants in advance. Then, through different projective techniques these laws were “discovered” by the participants. Methodologically it is quite dubious and seldom leads to valuable results. I know people who discovered two, three, sometimes more personal laws in such a way, and it did not look that these findings changed much in their lives.

Besides these methodological flaws I have two doubts about the concept of personal law. First, that if such a thing as “personal law” exists, it is likely preverbal, not coded in words, and thus not accessible through pen and paper techniques. Even if it can be discovered, through intuition, illumination, self-observation, etc., it is probably, and this is my second concern, too overpowering to be changed by the “thinker” himself. In my experience personal laws are often related to the issue of bonding. To heal traumas in this area usually requires a lot of support from the significant others or the group.

4. IS THE PRINCIPLE REALLY THE "ABSOLUTE TRUTH"?

It does not take much time to realize that by thinking – “I, Peter, am a millionaire” - I do not become a millionaire. At least not automatically and not immediately. Someone would say – “What a pity” – but it may not be such a bad thing after all. If each of my thoughts manifested right away, I would probably die many years ago killed by my own self-destructive impulses. Can you imagine an instant manifestation of all those expressions, such as “F... you,” “get lost,” “go to hell,” people so often use in their daily life?

Fortunately, the principle is not “absolutely true” this way. There are certain conditions under which this absolute truth works. And if there are conditions, this is not the absolute truth anymore. What are these conditions?

First of all there is the element of time. It looks as though God, while giving us the powerful tool of the mind, gave us a protective layer of delay. It gives us time to decide whether we really want something or not. Second is the element of emotion, of wanting. These are our emotions that add energy to our thoughts, and eventually make them manifest themselves. Third is the element of action. Through our actions we try our ideas in the reality. The results of our actions can make us pursue or drop the idea.

These four elements - thought, time, emotion (wanting) and action - seem to work as a formation. In this context one could say that not every thought, but only a thought, which is accompanied by wanting, which is strong and persistent in time, and which leads to action, will manifest itself.

As far as the thought about becoming a millionaire is concerned, mere thinking it a few times will not manifest it. But if it becomes my desire to the extent that I will keep this thought in my mind over a prolonged period of time, and I add some constructive actions to achieve my goal, then it may manifest one day.

There is one more thing we should keep in mind. We are not alone in this world. Other people around us are also busy manifesting their thoughts. When I try to manifest a very appealing idea of nice love making with my wife, but she is not “in the mood,” my idea will not manifest. I have no more control over my wife's thinking than God – and He gives her a complete freedom to think what she wants.

The same principle applies at a social level. I don't control other people's thinking. I may try to influence them, I may try to seek their cooperation, but I don't have control over them. Quite opposite, the mental mass produced by millions of my fellow thinkers often creates conditions – customs, laws, economics, etc. – that control my thinking and my behavior. This is another reason to reject the “thought is creative” principle as an “absolute truth.”

4.1. Alternatives to Positive Thinking.

There is one basic alternative to the positive thinking. It is *rational thinking*. Rational means based on reason and oriented toward reality. This is not a new concept. In psychology, basic ideas of so called “rational-emotive approach” were first formulated by Albert Ellis and his associates in the early 1960s. Cognitive therapy has grown enormously since that time and represents one of the dominant domains of the contemporary psychology. It has a well-established research base. Handbooks and manuals of cognitive therapy are easily available. (see for instance, McMullin, 2000, Greenberger, Padesky, 1995). What are the principles of cognitive therapy?

It maintains that emotional problems are rooted in our thinking. I don't think any rebirther would have difficulty with this proposition. Ellis believed however that our emotional problems come not so much from “negative” thinking but from “illogical” or “irrational” thinking. This tendency often manifests in “self-talk” or “self-verbalization,” which is often biased toward irrationality by early childhood experiences. The main task of the therapist, according to Ellis (1962), is to demonstrate to the client that his disturbance comes from telling himself a chain of false sentences. The therapist is supposed to dispute the main irrational ideas of the client. She may point to the unjustified generalizations, contradictions, presumptions lacking any evidence, etc. In other words the therapist encourages the client to test his ideas against reality, and eventually to change the ideas.

This is very similar to what we do in Rebirthing. Ellis asked, if he believes in the “thought is creative” principle, probably would confirm, but with one condition. Namely, that the principle is true in the sphere of our *emotional life*. Everyone can easily test this position. It does not take much introspection to see that our thoughts precede emotions. To prove that the same relation exists between thoughts and the physical world is much more complicated. By adopting the principles of cognitive psychology Rebirthing would

have a chance to become a research-based, more main stream therapy. This would be one more reason to move Rebirthing from positive thinking to rational thinking.

It is also worth mentioning that rational thinking does not exclude God. Statement – “There is no God” – scientifically speaking, is in no way better than the statement – “There is God.” These are but two hypotheses that can be used to test reality. In other words, adoption of rational thinking by rebirthers does not preclude them, in principle, from being also spiritual.

To illustrate my point about the difference between positive and rational thinking I will use the ancient myth of Dedalus and Ikarus. As you may remember it was a paramount for them to try to escape from the island of Creta, which was under control of a bloody tyrant. Dedalus, who will represent for me the principle of rational thinking, was very creative. He built wings for himself and his son so they could fly away from the island. However, when they were above the sea something unfortunate happened. Ikarus, delighted by the pleasure of flying, came to the conclusion that he was “like a god.” In this sudden burst of enthusiasm (“positive thinking”?) he decided to fly to the Sun. The wax in his wings melted and he drowned in the sea.

CONCLUSION

One of the fundamental concepts of Rebirthing, known as “thought is creative” principle, was critically analyzed. The author presented some concerns over the applicability of this “absolute truth,” especially if understood in a dogmatic and absolutistic way.

On the philosophical level the principle seems to create confusion about the relationship between God, matter and the human being. Second, it means tautology, inability to verify its conclusions. It may lead to a moral relativism.

On the psychological level it may lead to overburdening with the sense of responsibility, emotional isolation and self-defending behaviors. It may cause difficulty in expressing negative emotions. Positive distortions of the reality, high expectations for positive outcome caused by some applications of the principle may lead to disappointment and frustration. Unskillful and inconsistent use of affirmations and the concept of personal law may multiply this effect.

The author proposes that the principles of rational thinking, as delineated in the cognitive psychology, be adopted as the main alternative to positive thinking. A move in this direction would bring Rebirthing closer to the main stream therapies.

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Piotr has been a Registered Rebirther with the Association of Polish Rebirthers since 1983 (currently an honorary member of this Association). In the years 1986-87 Piotr ran a program for alcoholics based on Rebirthing. He taught Rebirthing as a part of the Clinical Psychology Practicum in the University of Silesia.

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MINDFULNESS OF BREATHING AND CONTEMPORARY BREATHWORK TECHNIQUES

BY

DR. JOY MANNÉ¹

Keywords: Breathwork; Conscious Breathing Techniques; Therapeutic Breathwork; meditation; Rebirthing Breathwork; psychotherapy

Abstract

This paper takes a meditation case history and proposes that the problem could have been treated more efficiently through the use of Conscious Breathing Techniques.² My position is that knowledge of meditation practice and technique enhances therapeutic Breathwork, and knowledge of therapeutic Breathwork techniques makes meditation more effective.

1. A MEDITATION CASE HISTORY

Mark Epstein, in his book, *Thoughts without a Thinker: Psychotherapy from a Buddhist Perspective*, contains a meditation case history that demonstrates some very basic features of Breathwork meditation.³ The first is that the breath is not a neutral object. Joe, a participant during a meditation retreat, “(finds) himself quite fearful of watching his breath...(as) it felt dangerous and made him anxious.” It takes three full days before Joe is able to concentrate on his breath again. We see from this that observing the breath has profound psychological consequences. This is hardly surprising as observing the breath is observing the process of consciousness itself.

The second feature is the close connection between Breathwork meditation and bodywork. The next stage in Joe’s Breathwork meditation was a peak experience “immediately followed by the feeling of an iron band constraining his abdomen, hurting him and restricting his breath.” These feelings were so intense and unpleasant that meditation could not help Joe through them in any way: “No amount of attention, no change in position, no associated thoughts or feelings, no advice from his teachers seemed to affect the intensity of the sensations.”

The third feature is the close connection between Breathwork meditation and both primal therapy and regression therapy. Joe finally stopped fighting his process. He stopped trying to induce the suggested meditative altered states of consciousness and he

¹ This paper was presented at the conference The Psychology of Awakening: Buddhism, Science and Psychotherapy, Dartington Hall, November 1996 and first published in Watson et al. The only changes I have made are: 1. to add the Anapanasati sutta and the subheadings in that section. I have had to leave out the diacritical marks in the transliterated Pali through publishing constraints. 2. To replace ‘Rebirthing’ with Rebirthing Breathwork. This avoids confusion with other completely unrelated techniques that call themselves ‘Rebirthing.’

² Manné, 1994, 1995, 1997.

³ See Epstein, 1995, pp. 168-170 and my review, Manné, 1997.i.

stopped trying to please his meditation teachers. Instead he surrendered to what was happening. Lying in one position and overcome by sadness, he “sobbed and shook for several hours.” Eventually he remembered a traumatic childhood incident during which he had hidden from his raging father in the closet with his mouth filled with rags. This was when he had learned to hold his breath and to “bind all of his fear and rage and despair in the muscles of his abdomen.”

In spite of the evidence which he cites, and despite his own observation (quoted above) that Joe’s unpleasant sensations could not be alleviated through any advice whatever from his meditation teachers, Epstein nevertheless asserts the efficacy of meditation, claiming that Joe’s realisation came through the meditative state rather than through therapy. He does, however, add this proviso, “(Joe’s) years of therapy obviously helped him see the experience through in a way that many other such traumatised people could not.”

There is a gentle way of working with the breath therapeutically that would have brought Joe through his problem probably in one or two hours.

2. } N} P} NASATI AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Joe's experience was evoked in the context of the Buddhist meditation on the breath, } *n-p-nasati*. This practice concerns much more than the awareness of breathing. It shows the Buddhists using the breath in order to attain non-ordinary states of consciousness. If we analyse the sequence in the text, we see that the basic requirement is to have sufficient concentration to be able, for an extended period, *to breathe with awareness*.

The Anapanasati Sutta

The traditional Vipassana exercise of putting our attention on the breath is described like this in the Pali Buddhist sutras. The Buddha says,

There is one *dhamma*, Monks, which when developed and practised frequently is very fruitful and deserves great praise. What is this one *dhamma*? It is mindfulness of breathing. And how, Monks, is mindfulness of breathing developed? How does it become very fruitful and deserving of great praise when practised frequently?

This is how. A monk goes into the forest or to the foot of a tree or to an uninhabited place and sits with his legs crossed, and with his body erect he generates mindfulness and being mindful he breathes in and being mindful he breathes out.

As he breathes in a long breath he recognises that he is breathing in a long breath; as he breathes out a long breath, he recognises that he is breathing out a long breath. As he breathes in a short breath he recognises that he is breathing in a short breath; as he breathes out a short breath, he recognises that he is breathing out a short breath.

He trains himself to breath in experiencing his whole body and to breath out experiencing his whole body. He trains himself to breath in calming bodily activity and to breath out calming bodily activity.

He trains himself to breath in experiencing joy and to breath out experiencing joy; to breath in experiencing happiness and to breath out experiencing happiness.

He trains himself to breath in experiencing mental activity and to breath out experiencing mental activity; to breath in calming mental activity and to breath out calming mental activity; to breath in experiencing mind and to breath out experiencing mind.

He trains himself to breath in pleasing the mind, and to breath out pleasing the mind; to breath in concentrating the mind and to breath out concentrating the mind; to breath in releasing the mind and to breath out releasing the mind.

He trains himself to breath in observing impermanence and to breath out observing impermanence; to breath in observing freedom from passion and to breath out observing freedom from passion; to breath in observing cessation and to breath out observing cessation; to breath in observing renunciation and to breath out observing renunciation.⁴

Discussion

The exercises begin with putting attention on *the duration of one's breath*. I think that everyone who has tried meditation will agree that it is impossible to be aware of the duration of one's breath without also becoming aware of its rhythm, the quantity of air one is inhaling and exhaling, the way the air is flowing into and out of the body and the movement of and feelings in the body as the air flows in and out of it. There is also awareness of whether the breath is easy or blocked and where it may be blocked. We are thus immediately in the realm of today's breath and body therapies and indeed Joe's case history shows that comparable experiences will be evoked. Watching the breath can indeed feel fearful and dangerous and induce anxiety. Many traumatic situations result in the habit of holding or blocking the free flow of one's breathing.⁵

The next part of the exercise too has similarities with today's breath and body therapies. It uses the breath to *experience the whole body*. Experiencing the whole body may bring up various physical tensions such as the feelings of restricted or obstructed breathing or tension in the abdomen that came up in Joe's case. As Epstein says, "Joe's story illustrates the power of meditation to focus us in on the places in our bodies where fear has taken hold." The exercise then goes on to using the breath to *calm bodily activity*. It is difficult to calm bodily activity without becoming aware of where the bodily activity is agitated, and working through *psychotherapeutically* the causes of the agitation. Epstein describes these as "the internalised remnants of chronic defensive reactions, fossilised within the body out of reach of our usual awareness." In the case history, Joe's breath was constrained by the feeling of an iron band around his abdomen and this problem had to be worked through to the point of catharsis. As Epstein says, "when there has been a specific trauma, there is often a specific focal point in the body that needs to be experienced." This is classically the language and the process of body therapy.

The text then passes to using the breath to cultivate the particular emotional states of *joy*, and *happiness*. We read in the texts that the mind of someone who is happy is

⁴ Majjhima-Nikaya III. pp.82f. London : Pali Text Society, 1977. My translation.

⁵ Boadella, 1994, Conway, 1994, Proskauer, 1994.

concentrated.⁶ The purposeful cultivation of joy and happiness is likely to evoke the awareness of their absence, and also the experience of their opposites, sorrow and suffering, as well as emotions such as passion, hatred and delusion⁷ which are considered particularly dangerous and harmful in the Buddhist texts.⁸ Joy and happiness become possible when we have resolved enough of our life's suffering and when we have attained some degree of freedom from our intense emotions, hatreds and wrong ideas.

In this exercise, being able to produce states of joy and happiness at will, supported by the breath, is a prerequisite for confronting the mind. Only then does the meditator have enough concentration to use the breath to focus awareness upon *experiencing mental activity*, i.e. to become conscious of what is happening in her/his mind. Experiencing mental activity is what happens in every psychotherapy, unfortunately without the preparation of being able to enter stages of joy and happiness at will. The meditation continues with using the breath to *calm mental activity*. This includes purifying the mind by getting rid of certain hindrances which can be regarded as negative thought patterns, among them covetousness for the world, ill-will, apathy, agitation, regret and doubt.⁹ Working through these mental states is also part of today's psychotherapies.

The breath is then used to *experience mind*: this is a state of being able to watch the mind without becoming involved with its multiple processes. This peaceful state cannot come about unless practitioners have worked through and integrated many of their life's problems. Otherwise, as is well known in psychotherapy, these keep coming up.

The next stage is to *please the mind*, keeping it contented and peaceful, so that it is possible to *concentrate the mind*, and *release the mind*. Then follows using the breath to *observe impermanence, freedom from passion, cessation and renunciation*.

All of these exercises and the states of consciousness that they induce are supported and energised by the breath. For most parts of this exercise, and certainly for practitioners on all but the highest levels, this is, in today's terms, psychotherapy using the breath as the means to gain access to the unconscious.

3. REBIRTHING BREATHWORK AND MEDITATION

The use of connected breathing techniques in personal and spiritual development was developed by Leonard Orr and Sondra Ray in 1977 as *Rebirthing (Breathwork)*.¹⁰ If you spend a moment observing your breathing you will notice that there is a pause between the inhale and the exhale, and again between the exhale and the inhale. Traditionally Rebirthing Breathwork is taught as strong and rapid connected breathing in the top of the chest, the pause between inhale and exhale being avoided. This is what I will mean when I refer to Rebirthing Breathwork in what follows. Hyperventilation is often connected with Rebirthing Breathwork, not always justifiably.¹¹ Rebirthing Breathwork got its name because its method of breathing frequently caused clients to

⁶ Joy Manné, 1995(i).

⁷ raga, dosa, moha.

⁸ Joy Manné, 1995.ii, Brazier, 1995.

⁹ abhijjha loke, vyapada, thana, middha, uddhacca, kukkuccha, vicikiccha. Manné, 1995(i).

¹⁰ Orr & Ray, 1983.

¹¹ Manné, 1995.

relieve their birth trauma. In fact, Rebirthing Breathwork is a powerful psychotherapy and brings up the same material as psychoanalysis.¹² The breath is the “royal expressway” to the unconscious. Rebirthing Breathwork goes further than psychoanalysis, however: Breathwork induces transpersonal experiences as the Buddhist text on awareness of the breathing shows.

There are certain common problems between practitioners of meditation and clients in Rebirthing Breathwork, usually called rebirthees. In Rebirthing Breathwork, as in meditation, there are people who can just do it. Rebirthing Breathwork and meditation work for these clients. They have good concentration and awareness. They cope with the experiences that come up, remain stable, integrate what happens and make good progress. There are people who can neither meditate nor do Rebirthing Breathwork. In meditation, they have insufficient concentration: their minds wander, they daydream or they fall asleep.¹³ In this way they escape the experiences that meditation may induce. Another outcome for meditators who have insufficient awareness is that they become very rigid in their minds and bodies through fighting out of their consciousness with sheer will-power the experiences they cannot integrate. These meditators hold on to the meditation object with grim determination which they mistake for concentration. In Rebirthing Breathwork there is a second person present, so mind-wandering and daydreaming are more difficult, although clients do sometimes fall asleep.¹⁴ Further, there is a witness there to draw the client’s attention to rigid body holding. Rebirthing Breathwork clients may also suffer from tetany, a temporary painful paralysis of the hands and sometimes of the mouth, too, during sessions. Tetany is said to be caused by hyperventilation.¹⁵ Hyperventilation forces into consciousness painful experiences, or evokes non-ordinary states of consciousness, that the client may not be ready to integrate. This accounts for the hysteria frequently present in groups where hyperventilation is practised. Tetany is the psyche’s way of preventing this abuse from taking place.

Both meditation and Rebirthing Breathwork can bring up extreme experiences. These may be traumatic memories, ecstatic states, and other altered states of consciousness.¹⁶ The incident in the present case history is an example of a traumatic event evoked through meditation. When the foundation of personal development is insufficient for the integration of these experiences, various more or less serious problems may ensue. The strong ecstatic experiences can cause people without a solid foundation to lose contact with reality and to become flippy. There are many examples in the Buddhist texts of people who wanted to out-Buddha the Buddha, imagining they knew more than he did. One Sarabha claimed that he gave up being a follower of the Buddha for the reason that he understood the Buddha’s teaching. The Buddha challenged Sarabha to repeat this claim in his presence. Sarabha could not, and so his claim was exposed as false.¹⁷ Contemporary meditators, too, may come to believe that they are enlightened, boast about it and start playing the “Teacher”.¹⁸ In Rebirthing Breathwork, practitioners may take up various types of rather odd religious beliefs (belief in the

¹² Manné, 1994, 1995.

¹³ Engler, 1984:33.

¹⁴ Taylor, p.81-83.

¹⁵ See Albery, 1985:84-120; Karl Raab, 1992:155-167.

¹⁶ Engler, 1984:26; Manné, 1997.

¹⁷ Anguttara Nikaya, I 187, see Manné, 1996.

¹⁸ Engler, 1984:33, 37.

possibility of physical immortality is frequent¹⁹) or fall into other types of unrealistic beliefs or superstitious thought.²⁰

These are the main kinds of outcome that I noticed both with meditation and Rebirthing Breathwork. These outcomes are not mutually exclusive. Many clients will go beyond tetany after a number of sessions and be able to open up and integrate the material that comes up. Many meditators and rebirthees who have spent some time being unrealistic will become realistic. With confidence and knowledge, people who have sought safety in rigid defences become more flexible.

4. MEDITATION INFLUENCES REBIRTHING BREATHWORK

My experience with Vipassana meditation, the Buddhist breathing exercises,²¹ and my study of Buddhist Texts influenced my practice of Rebirthing Breathwork, and eventually I came to an adaptation which I now call Conscious Breathing Techniques. This is a six part structure for using the breath in therapy and for personal and spiritual development. The structure is:

- Part 1. Awareness Work with the Breath and Analytical Breathwork;
- Part 2. Introduction to Independent Breathwork;
- Part 3. Inducing Conscious Connected Breathing;
- Part 4. Working the Breath;
- Part 5. Advanced Energy Work with the Breath;
- Part 6. Advanced Awareness work with the Breath.²²

This influence was not systematic except for one point: as in the exercises the breath is used as a support for awareness and the cultivation of specific states of consciousness.

5. CONSCIOUS BREATHING TECHNIQUES INFLUENCE MEDITATION

I will briefly describe the various stages of the structure and relate them to the experiences Joe went through in his meditation practice to show hypothetically how Conscious Breathing Techniques could contribute to a more effective practice of meditation.

Many people do not naturally have basic awareness and have to learn it. The Buddha says, “the practice of mindfulness of breathing in and out is not for one who is

¹⁹ Manné, 1995, 1996.i, 1997.

²⁰ See Albery, p.68f and elsewhere: Manné, 1995.

²¹ Manné, 1995.

²² Manné, 1995, 1997 and forthcoming, *The Breathwork Process: Varieties of Breathwork Experience; From Rebirthing Breathwork Through Conscious Breathing Techniques to Shamanic Breathwork and Breathwork Meditation.*

careless in mindfulness or inattentive.”²³ So the first step in working with the breath is to teach *awareness* and *analysis*. The one leads to the other.

In Joe's case history, his fearfulness of watching his breath could have been treated through awareness in the following way: When Joe feels an iron band around his stomach, he can be encouraged to breath into that area and to use his breath to explore the iron band. In other words, to increase his awareness of the situation he describes and to explore it with his awareness. The realisation and consequent release usually come very quickly. In this case, it was some days before the meditator realised that, “all of his fear and rage and despair in the muscles of his abdomen, (and) the iron band around his diaphragm was the feeling that resulted from his sobbing and holding his breath, (stifling his reactions so as not to set off his father), with his diaphragm rising and falling until it cramped.”

Joe's fear could also have been treated analytically through the use of precisely relevant questions or instructions while he was attending to his breathing, e.g. “Tell me about this fear of watching your breath,” or “What is your relationship with your breath?”, or “Do you often have feelings of tension in your abdomen?” or “Tell me about feelings of tension in your abdomen.” Again, one would expect the client to come rather quickly to realise that he had a habit of holding his breath, and to connect that to his father's treatment of him and possibly to other traumatic events. Joe's fidgeting could be similarly treated with awareness and analysis. Here the technique would either be to avoid it or to enhance it. In order to avoid it the instruction would be, “Be aware of your urge to fidget, but do not do it. Just keep connected to your breath and be aware of this urge.” In order to enhance it the instruction would be “Fidget consciously. Make the movements your body wants to make. Really go into this, and all the time remain connected to your breathing.” Here I would expect that after very few minutes Joe's body would have ended up repeating the position in the cupboard. Whatever the instructions, the breathing is at all times the anchor, the source of grounding, the support for mindfulness. In both awareness work with the breath and analytical breathwork, clients remain grounded in their breathing, speaking only on their out-breath, so that their conscious breathing continues to energise their process. Both methods: awareness work and analysis, would be likely to result in catharsis, understanding and integration.

The second step of the structure is the Introduction to Independent Breathwork. This happens when clients are aware of what is happening in their minds and bodies and can concentrate on it. With regard to our hypothetical treatment of Joe's case history: if he had been capable of this level of conscious breathwork, he would spontaneously have had his attention on his bodily feelings and have been able to keep it there. He would have known how to observe these feelings, analyse them and integrate what he discovered as he worked. It is easy for the trained breathworker to support a client in such a situation if the client can work at this level. Good accompaniment would have helped Joe to move through his fear of his breath and to integration of the traumatic event that caused it. Many Conscious breathing techniques that facilitate discharge of tension are available. In this situation one possibility is to invite the client to breathe into the area of tension and to release the tension on the out breath.

²³ Majjhima Nikaya III, 84.

Effective meditation depends on competence in these first two stages of Conscious Breathwork.

Inducing Conscious Connected Breathing is the third part of this structured way of doing Breathwork. This means inviting the client to breath in such a way that pauses between in- and out-, and out- and in-breaths are eliminated. This is done once clients have a good foundation: i.e. they are grounded, their self-awareness is good, their awareness of their body is good, and their self-esteem is good. Then they are ready to integrate stronger experiences. Connected breathing is more likely to lead to trance states although it will not necessarily do so. It will certainly lead to strong experiences and that is why it should only be induced with clients who have already developed a sufficiently solid foundation to be able to integrate these. Connected breathing may be proposed, but it should never be imposed. Connected breathing is not hyperventilation.

From the case history, it seems possible that Joe was in a breathing trance: it seems that his breath was breathing him into an experience and holding him there. He could not get out of the process or shake it off, but had to work it through. Augmented breathing (see 4 below) and connected breathing give energy to such a process. Although what has to be gone through may be unpleasant, the support of the breathworker makes it easier and gives ongoing guidance. In this process, what might have happened to Joe if he had been working at this level is an intensification of the feeling of choking over a short period (usually only minutes) followed by the realisation of its cause and a discharge of the tension held through childhood.

The fourth stage is Working the Breath. Rebirthing Breathwork is also called “conscious connected breathing” as the in-breath and the out-breath are connected and form a continuous cycle. It is unfortunately often associated with rapid breathing in the upper chest area which is an unnecessarily limiting way of using connected breathing. Conscious connected breathing can take any form and rhythm and can be focussed on any body zone. Working the Breath means any rhythm of consciously connected breathing intentionally undertaken and worked purposefully and with discipline like a physical exercise. This *consciously augmented* breathing is not to be confused with hyperventilation²⁴ which I categorically exclude from my practice: there is nothing meditative or conscious in hyperventilation.

When working the breath, the goals for the session are discussed and an appropriate rhythm of breathing and part of the body where the breath should happen is proposed. There is an agreement between client and therapist that if what has been proposed does not happen, whatever is happening will be honoured, as the true practice of awareness in meditation demands (and which, incidentally, does not seem to have been proposed by Joe’s meditation teachers). The breath is an honest guide on the path of development.

This way of breathing induces intense emotional experiences, regressions and higher states of consciousness. When we have learned to contain ourselves and can integrate strong experiences, we are ready to work with the consciously connected breath without fear. We are ready to play with our breath and have adventures with it.

²⁴ Taylor and Manné, 1999.

Breathwork consciously undertaken, in strength and not through an overwhelming upsurge of the unconscious, can lead to shamanic experiences at this stage. Stanislov Grof's Holotropic Breathwork^J belongs in this part of this structure.

Epstein's account of Joe's case history does not say what kind of breathing took place at which stage, and so I cannot comment on it in this part of the structure.

Parts 5 and 6 are not relevant to Joe's case history. In Advanced Energy Work with the Breath advanced practitioners use their breath to purposefully clear out from their energy-field – their aura and chakras – unproductive thoughts, habits and attitudes, unnecessary influences, old relationship problems and tendencies towards relationship problems, and the energy left over from past life problems and experiences. These clients are able to practise all the parts of the *n-p-nasati* exercise. Advanced awareness work with the breath is meditation. A client who has reached this stage no longer needs to be accompanied by a therapist.

6. ACCOMPANIED MEDITATION

Conscious Breathing techniques are a form of meditation for two, which is how David Brazier describes his Zen Therapy.²⁵ The therapist holds the space, helps the client to keep her/his attention on what is happening, and supports the client through difficult experiences.

This form of "supported meditation" is an effective therapeutic method which surely has its uses in the teaching and practice of meditation. It would certainly prevent meditators from getting lost in their process for long periods of time, as happened to Joe.

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²⁵ Brazier, 1995:61.

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For further information about Breathwork of all kinds, contact the *International Breathwork Foundation* at www.ibfnetwork.org.

About the Author

Joy Manné has a degree in Psychology and a PhD in Buddhist Psychology. She has practised Vipassana meditation since 1965, taught by Dhiravamsa. She was trained in Spiritual Therapy by Hans Mensink and Tilke Platteel-Deur in Holland, 1986-1988. She had her own school of personal and spiritual development in Switzerland between 1989-1995. She is the founder and Editor-in-Chief of the peer-review internet journal *The Healing Breath: a Journal of Breathwork Practice, Psychology and Spirituality* available

through www.i-breathe.com. She has written numerous articles, on Buddhist Psychology, Breathwork, and the relationship between them, as well as textual studies on the Theravada Buddhist literature in Pali. She is the author of *Soul Therapy* (North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, CA, 1997), which can accurately be described as a discerning person's guide to personal and spiritual development. It has been translated into Spanish. She has also written the first breathwork shamanovel, *The Way of the Breath*, freely available at www.i-breathe.com/wayofbreath. Her most recent book, *The Breathwork Process: From Rebirthing Breathwork through Conscious Breathing Techniques to Shamanic Breathwork and Breathwork Meditation* is forthcoming in 2003.

She was a founder member of the International Breathwork Foundation (www.ibfnetwork.org) and its Newsletter Editor between 1997-2001.

Joy holds Breathwork in the highest respect. She is a major influence in establishing and maintaining professionalism and professional standards on every level in and all aspects of Breathwork.

BOOK REVIEWS

[Jackson, Ian](#) (1986), *The Breathplay™ Approach to Whole Life Fitness*. New York: Doubleday and Co.

[Hoopes, Aaron](#) (2002), *Perfecting Ourselves: Co-ordinating Body, Mind and Spirit*. Wethersfield CT: Turtle Press.

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[Clarkson, Petruska](#) (2002) *The Transpersonal Relationship in Psychotherap: The hidden curriculum of Spirituality*. London and Philadelphia: Whurr Publishers Ltd

[Brandeis Gayle](#) (2002), *Fruitflesh: Seeds of Inspiration for Women who Write*. HarperSanFrancisco.

Jackson, Ian (1986), *The Breathplay™ Approach to Whole Life Fitness*. New York: Doubleday and Co.

I am reviewing this book although is out-of-print it because it is truly original and excellent and well worth republishing.

Jackson has developed a method of breathing primarily for professional sports men and women which he calls “BreathPlay.” BreathPlay is “a systematic approach to exploring breathing as a basic living skill,” (Introduction, p. 2) and so is relevant for everyone, no matter their profession. If you are afraid that in a book for sports, the method will be painful, put those fears aside. Jackson says, “Let your body and your breathing get stronger in an enjoyable way, at a conversational pace.” This is a friendly and gentle book and it is refreshing to read about “exploring breathing as a basic living skill” outside of a therapeutic context.

Chapter Two explains the basics of breathing, including the role of oxygen, the tasks of the heart and lungs, breathing and health. Jackson’s method is focussed on actively breathing out, rather than actively breathing in. He makes the very interesting observation, “I believe that the active inbreath lightly presses that same panic button that gets pushed hard in extreme situations. The harder you work to suck air in, the closer you come to the fear that you won’t be able to get enough.” (p. 17) I was glad that I had read his book before a recent attack of bronchitis (due to the terrible wet weather). Actively breathing out, made all the difference and kept me relaxed even when my breathing was obstructed and heavy. Actively breathing out is important, too, in the Buteyko method of asthma control.

Chapter Three explains how Jackson came to learn his method. His account of his ballet classes is great fun. Chapter Four explains the advantages of BreathPlay, and gives case histories. Here he explains “why the ongoing process of deepening and clarifying your body awareness is centrally important,” (p. 44) and introduces the novel and impor-

tant concept of an “Awareness Quotient.” He has a section on breathing in relationship to left and right brain balance.

Chapter Five Introduces the BreathPlay exercises. They are by far and away the most original and interesting that I have found in any book on breathing, and I’ve read multitudes. I particularly enjoyed “Upsidedown Breathing – actively pushing the air out of my lungs and then passively letting it in.” Rebirthing breathwork, which is where I started, teaches the reverse, i.e. to “take” one’s in-breath, and relax on one’s out breath. “Upsidedown Breathing” is a lot more relaxing, and its result is that the in-breath becomes larger and easier. It is a good way to help breathwork clients to draw more breath. I had a lot of pleasure practising this and Jackson’s other exercises. It found it specially beneficial and pleasant to do those for aligning the body. As this is a relatively old book, published nearly 20 years ago, there are no diagrams to illustrate the exercises. I would have found these useful.

Chapter Six concerns Applications. “...you learn to breath out actively and in passively; ... to tune your mind to your body; ... and to balance the work of your left and right sides.” (p. 91) This is not an exclusive list. Through these exercises, “... imbalance becomes an irritation, and the body seeks ways of bringing about balance.” (p. 94) Jackson includes the use of the imagination to achieve results. There are exercises to do while shopping or driving, to stay calm, to help an extreme lower back curve or jutting head, to firm buttocks, chin and thighs. Naturally there are exercises adapted to various sports including cycling, running and swimming. There are exercises to counteract stress.

Chapter Seven is about working with athletes and to enhance sports performance. Chapter Eight contains the success stories and attestations of professionals as diverse as secretaries, writers, and athletes. Chapter Nine is about living BreathPlay. “Just as BreathPlay is a balance between outbreath and inbreath, so is the attitude behind its practice a balance between outer and inner. We see what’s inside us, and then we give what we find to the worlds in which we live.” (p. 181)

When it was published, this book was way ahead of its time. Even almost twenty years later, it is full of innovation and creativity with the breath. Its writing is excellent and easily readable; its exercises are inventive and interesting, and altogether, this is a very enjoyable book. I hope it will be republished, and if it is, I hope it will become a best-seller!

BreathPlay CD’s

Jackson has created a number of BreathPlay CD’s which have delightful music and vocal encouragement and support breathing in one of his interesting breathing rhythms. BreathPlay is everything he claims it is, and these CD’s enhance the fun. Jackson’s website is www.breathplay.com.

Joy Manné, PhD

Hoopes, Aaron (2002), *Perfecting Ourselves: Co-ordinating Body, Mind and Spirit*. Wethersfield CT: Turtle Press.

Aaron Hoopes offers a framework for understanding the coordination of body, mind and spirit based on his own practical experience of teaching Martial arts, Shanti Yoga and

meditation. I enjoyed the straightforward and uncomplicated writing style, and the good quality paper and printing layout made reading this book a pleasure.

Having read many books on the art of living, I realise that this one contains the essence of them without frills or personal anecdotes. Someone coming to the subject completely fresh will receive a great deal of sensible advice and can start the journey towards self-understanding with comfortable reassurance that the author knows what he is writing about.

Part One, 'The Body,' introduces readers to their own physical body and the basic requirements for it to function well. There will be those who have no idea of what they should ideally eat and drink, while for others it will be a reminder of why it is a good idea to give up certain habits completely or at least adopt a policy of moderation in them all. "The body in which we exist is our present reality and that is the only place from which we can begin a quest for perfection" the author says, and gives in detail well known ways to keep it healthy. Avoid, of course, drugs, drink, and over-eating, and don't forget your aerobic exercise.

The section introducing Conscious Breathing explains why it is a good idea to increase the lung capacity through increased diaphragm movement. Many people have only a vague idea that they should breathe properly, but do not know how. The author describes what he calls Attention breathing and Abdominal breathing. He includes a few Dynamic breathing exercises with photos to illustrate the postures necessary for their practice. His own strong convictions and belief in the power of developing breathing to bring about harmony and a relaxed approach to life should inspire readers to start breathing deeply and smoothly as they read on.

Next, three concepts are introduced: the Ordinary Mind, the Universal Mind, and Quietism. The Ordinary mind is the world of the Ego and unconsciousness and the one we function from most of the time. We are a mass of moving moods with the Ego controlling these.. For someone in a state of confusion and wanting to learn to become focused, just sitting still for five minutes is a starting point. The next step is learning to accept all thoughts, without judging any of them negatively.. From there you advance to realising your real nature, which connects to the Universal Mind, a way of thinking where you see "the essential unity behind the changing experiences and phenomena of life" and after practice you will have calmed the Ordinary Mind and accessed this place of peace and tranquillity.

"Quietism is the state of pure calmness unfazed by the rapid pace of the world around and within us..." The author advocates developing this beautiful state of mind through the practice of focusing, or just watching and noticing, a natural scene, such as the sky, trees, the sea, mountains or fire. Concentrating on the qualities of the scene, such as fluidity, or solidity, you become identified with the subject itself. Then the focus is narrowed to a part of the body itself, aided by different breath counting methods. The idea is to gain control over the mind through these concentration exercises and attain a deep state of Quietism within yourself. The author's tone is encouraging and it is all made to sound attainable to anyone prepared to practice regularly. You are then ready to develop spiritual consciousness.

The author links the elusive idea of spirit to the balance of opposites, of yin and yang, with yoga exercises one way of achieving this in the body. From his training in the practice of yoga, Shiatsu, Chi Gung and other martial arts, he offers a variety of exercises

to coordinate the body and mind, energise the body so that feelings of well being and spiritual awakening can be felt. Finding your spirit may prove overwhelming, so he provides a chapter on integrating the new developments and enjoying your life much more. Meditation and breathing practices are seen as keys to all the progress you make.

This is a gentle and wise guide to perfecting yourself, or in other words, creating yourself as you would like to be, reaching your potential, and living peacefully. You certainly need to have a certain determination and focus to be able to follow the instructions to get results, and to be motivated to do so. The book will be appreciated by those seeking a practical Buddhist-based approach to developing inner strength.

Vivienne Silver-Leigh

Duffell, Nick (2000) *The Making Of Them – The British Attitude To Children And The Boarding School System*. Dorset, England: Lone Arrow Press.

The author warns that reading this book could press the reader's emotional buttons, and I have to agree with him.. I saw through the eyes of a six year old once more, reliving the numbness and confusion of separation. Strategic survivors, the author calls such children, living two quite separate lives, one at home and one at school.

The main thesis is that sending children away before puberty to boarding school completely ignores accepted psychological theories of child development, and attachment and loss theory. The resulting psychological damage produces adults who have difficulties in making relationships, and who have learned well not to show their emotions.

This is an in-depth look at the effects on children who lose contact with their parents, lack physical warmth and touch, and have to develop new ways of coping. They may make themselves into someone completely different, who fits into the institution. The adapted child hides his feelings of misery and sadness, since these are disapproved of and mocked, and becomes later in life the adapted adult, no longer in touch with the original self underneath the armour.

Chapters on Sexuality, abuse and peer bullying as late as the sixties, make uncomfortable reading. It seems that many schools have allowed their traditions to be maintained, while ignoring the world of child psychology, and writers such as Alice Miller, Liedloff, Winnicott and Kohut.

While most of Duffel's case histories and his personal experience are about boys in boarding school, there are some desperately sad stories from women, who felt the loss of their feminine self, missed their home and family. Splitting off from the pain of losing an early secure life can lead to a severely Schizoid type of personality as the child tries to find a safe place in the new surroundings.

Nick Duffel journeyed from boarding school rebel to personal therapy and into group Psycho therapy, where he met other men who had been equally wounded by their experiences. He and his wife, both Psychotherapists, set up separate Workshops for men and women survivors. Ten years of this work has brought him a greater understanding of their psychology. He has published newspaper articles about his work, and a BBC 2 documentary film, *The Making of them*, was shown in 1994. Many supportive letters followed this, as well as indignant responses from present day boarding school Head-teachers, defending the changes which have now been made in boarding school life.

I resonated with the stories told by people in the Survivor groups, who did not cry, who fitted into regular three month stretches, with their relationships with parents becoming more distant “visitors”, as home gradually became an alien world. We lost touch with it, and the arrival of new babies or moving house went on without us.

The author explains the origins of British boarding schools, underlying philosophy, and colonial past, which make interesting reading. From this has developed the well established tradition of British parents from certain classes colluding with the idea that children have no feelings and should not be listened to when they complain they are unhappy. These parents support each other in the belief that it is advantageous to a child's future to be with other similar offspring in a place with wider facilities than they can offer. They expect their children to be educated to enter the establishment with ease and good manners.

Duffel found little research had been done on boarding school survivors, perhaps because the code of not revealing feelings, for fear of being exposed as “pathetic”, continues in the adults. He was surprised, however to find that there existed in Britain little sympathy for such children, considered to have had the best of opportunities in life, and who should certainly not complain.

Hopefully, Therapists and others reading this serious study will see the need for more compassion for the child sent away. Boarding school children become adults who may not know how to maintain intimate relationships and show love, because they have spent years avoiding any such thing. Obviously the author as a therapist running specialist groups for them knows only of the casualties. He therefore has nothing to say about the adults for whom boarding school was a refuge from difficult family circumstances, and who much preferred their time there.

The recurring theme in the book is that many children became confused, lost trust in people, and learned to forget their parents altogether, losing their sense of identity, some saying they have been through a sausage machine, and transformed into a standardised product. Transactional Analysis is the model which the author uses to clarify the complexities of what is going on in the inner self of those who ask “Who am I now?” after boarding school.

The latter part of the book describes the process of Soul healing- mending the splits within the survivor's personality. There are definite sequences to be followed for this to be successful, as with healing sexual abuse, where a similar long and difficult therapeutic path is followed. There has to be a painful breaking down of the fortress created for survival, and recognition of the ways developed to compensate for the loss of the rejected inner child, and the author is optimistic that then a stronger personality will take its place.

Vivienne Silver-Leigh

Clarkson, Petruska (2002), *The Transpersonal Relationship In Psychotherap: The Hidden Curriculum Of Spirituality*. London and Philadelphia: Whurr Publishers Ltd

For anyone wanting to learn more about the connection between psychotherapy and spirituality, and to understand the full meaning of the word “transpersonal” this book will give detailed answers. Full of interesting references and quotations, the reader is led to

consider philosophical issues, orthodox and unorthodox theories of therapy, and educational and academic ideas. I relished the overall comparative approach; the author always connects her own ideas to those of other transpersonal, existential, or philosophical writers, acknowledging commonalities, and considering transcultural and Eurocentric religious and spiritual differences.

I admire and enjoyed Dr. Clarkson's scholarly approach, her humour and free thinking. This is a treasury, of ideas, knowledge, poetry and humour, written with the "sap of three disciplines – philosophy, psychology and physical science" as Dr. Clarkson puts it. It has a firm structure, but you can easily dip in anywhere and find yourself drawn into an analysis of the seven levels of the transpersonal dimension, the human approach she shows in case studies, or unexpectedly get an accurate analysis of the current state of the Psychotherapy field in the UK.

While embracing the Transpersonal may seem to other "traditional" Psychotherapists to be unconventional, the author puts this into a wider context to make it seem normal, unavoidable, even essential. It is refreshing and reassuring for those of us already working transpersonally that she admits to asking clients at first interviews "What is your belief about life?" Having a spiritual or religious belief system is for many of us part of our culture. She discusses how individual personal relationships with God may affect outcomes in healing and therapy, and the Transpersonal Therapist's need to honour and accept this.

"Physis means the emerging and the arising, the spontaneous unfolding that lingers. ... In this power rest and motion are opened out of original unity". This quotation from Heidegger (1987) opens a discussion of process and connectedness and the way things change all the time. Physis, life force, is necessary for healing to begin. Transpersonal therapists are dealing with the mysterious process of the life force itself, healing and creativity being the components that we do not fully understand yet. There are some useful Guidelines for Transpersonal therapists on how to find the client's vital force — when it may be hiding. The Transpersonal Trainer and Supervisor will benefit greatly from the practical seven level models for advanced practice, given in Chapter 10 and the map of the five dimensions of the relational process, the fruits of the author's own research and practice. It is the first book I have seen which goes into so much detail on this subject, making considerable demands on the reader, but it is rewarding.

Many inspiring poems by the mystical poet, Rumi, appear throughout the text, heading each chapter and deepening the reader's immersion into the transpersonal way of feeling and thinking. Not surprisingly we are led to a consideration of Therapy as healing, including hands-on and distant healing, prayer, and paranormal phenomena, with cross-cultural studies to illustrate these. Clarkson includes the Alchemical stages of inner personal transformation from the Negredo of depression, the "dark night" through Albedo where hope emerges, and on to Citrinitas, the I-you encounter and the Rubedo or rebirth.

The author gives suggestions throughout the book for Transpersonal psychotherapy in practice, from rituals for creating a suitable atmosphere, to how the therapist needs to prepare herself to allow healing to flow, and how to take a holistic view of clients and themselves, acknowledging the breadth of life itself.

Readers will be grateful to the author for allowing herself an outlet for her sense of humour, in Appendix 1, a Psychotherapy of the Dead, which gravely discusses work-

ing with dead patients, with a reference to Dr. I.M.Bananas (1916) who reported that death was the crucial turning point in his treatment of Frau Rigormortis, an arrogant, vindictive patient, whose family had no problems after his death and therefore the case was considered a complete cure! Other more serious gems follow, a look at Jesus Christ as one of the best psychotherapists the world has ever seen, including comments on the enormous transferences onto him, and his own counter transference. A client follows this by describing her personal transformation, detailing the changes she considers she has made.

This latest book will join the extensive list of highly acclaimed books written during the author's long career, which have contributed to her being one of the UK's foremost figures in the Psychotherapy and counselling academic world. Transpersonal psychotherapy in the UK has found a wise, humorous and powerful spokesperson.

Vivienne Silver-Leigh

Brandeis Gayle (2002), *Fruitflesh: Seeds of Inspiration for Women who Write*. HarperSanFrancisco.

Now here's a wonderful book! How shall I describe it? It is a book that teaches creative writing, that is certain, and it is wonderfully abundantly creative and inventive. And it is also a self-help book. By working through the exercises, we will both improve our writing skills, and work our way through all sorts of problems we have with our body. And the route is not through "working on" what is wrong with us, it is on the enjoyment of our senses and ability to be sensuous, and the words we use to describe what we sense. And it is a book for breathworker-writers and professionals in the personal growth world: the breath is a consistent theme throughout.

The chapter names in themselves are evocative: Seeds, Roots, Trunk, Branches, Leaves, Buds, Flowers, Fruit, Seeds. In each there are meditations on particular fruits: mangos, uglies, kiwis, blackberries, pears, lemons, kumquats

I will give one tantalising long quotation, which will surely make you want to buy the book!

Fruitflesh Meditation: Apple

Apples are probably the most widely mythologized fruit. They are rife, and ripe, with associations, some of them quite contradictory. Eve's apple represents temptation, while an apple for the teacher is a wholesome token of appreciation. Apples represent knowledge: they represent death. They represent sexuality in Tantric ritual; they represent the Virgin Mary in Christian iconography.

Slice an apple in half, across its belly. Note the star shape of the seeds inside. Take a bite of the fruit. Taste how all of the apple's contradictions come together to form a perfect whole.

What are some of the contradictions that you hold inside your skin? Don't deny them on the page; they make life interesting, more richly textured. You are full of

star seeds and dazzling shifting sands; you pack a wholesome crunch as well as slippery skins of desire. Your fruitflesh unites all of it in perfect, delicious balance.

You can see here the variety of perspectives that Brandeis offers: from the symbolic, to the physical, to the use of the metaphoric for self-exploration: our bodies as apples. She covers all the fruitflesh of the female body, inside and out, through meditations and exercises that begin with a fruit. What's more, she's packaging no ideals, no unrealistic norms for us all to attain. The essence is to enjoy one's individuality from head to foot!

But writing is also healing. Asthma and arthritis patients have improved through writing exercises. As Brandeis says, "Writing can open the body, just as the body can open the scope of our writing." (p. 95)

Brandeis is tremendous fun. Once when she was struggling with her own development and confronting the Void, a meditation on a strawberry drew her back and grounded her. (p. 89)

Breathing is a consistent theme: "We are fruit with breath inside, ... Breath is life. Breath invigorates us, fills our blood with oxygen, fills our bodies with vitality, fills our language with possibility. Breath, literally, "inspires" us." (p. 38)

Much is spoken about shamanism these days as we reclaim our naturally shamanic abilities. To be human is *in itself* to be magical – it is such an extraordinary thing to be. When you have read this book and done at least some of the exercises, you will have a most intimate relationship with fruit: you will be able to become any fruit you wish. Just think of the potential of being able to turn ourselves into a plum in our relationship!

This is a beautifully produced book, a joy to hold in the hand and to read. It is a thoroughly wonderful present, for oneself and for one's good friends, ... and – why not – for some of the men in our lives too!!! I will be giving copies for Xmas!

Joy Manné