

# *The Healing Breath*

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**I AM BREATHED**  
**BY**  
**MARGOT BIESTMAN**

I am breathed,  
Moved by the breath  
From the silence,  
From the Greater Power  
That breathes me.  
I am in this breath,  
In my physical body,  
I live here, in my container.  
I am my breath.

I wait in the silence  
For the impulse  
That starts my new breath cycle,  
Inhalation—receiving, growing wide.  
Transition,  
Transformation into  
Exhalation—flowing, connecting, expressing,  
Transition,  
Into form  
Informing me,  
Silence,  
Transition  
Impulse, anew  
I am in each cycle,  
Fresh and different,  
My unique rhythm.

I am tiny,  
Within the whole of all things,  
Sensing movement of breath  
In my physical body,  
In this way  
Breath movement  
Opens to my soul and spirit.

With all this  
My life can never be the same.  
I know not how it will be,  
I only know it changes.  
I can not pull,  
I can not push,  
I can not want,

I can not disturb  
Myself or others.

I am breathed.  
I am my breath.

## **About the Author.**

Margot Biestman is a certified practitioner of Middendorf Breathwork, *The Experience of Breath*, member of the teaching and training staff of the U.S. Middendorf Breath Institute, and founding member of The Breath Center of San Francisco, a non-profit organization for the advancement of Middendorf Breathwork. She also has a private practice in Sausalito and The Sea Ranch, California. She is an author and artist, and has had more than 35 years of experience in education with people from ages 3-93.

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**BREATHWORK SPIRITUALITY**  
**CONTRIBUTED BY**  
**CAROL LAMPMAN**

**CONTEMPLATION – MARCH 2003**

At this time, the one thing that seems to be on all our minds is the possibility of war and what that means to each of us. We are reminded that this is the world of duality... dark and light, good and bad, happy and sad, and, unfortunately, war and peace. Many people state their positions strongly and angrily about the subject of war and peace. Two opposing sides point at each other, each wanting to blame and find fault. This is the reason I do not participate in political discussions. It always ends up with someone angry and makes me wonder how it will ever end if we cannot make peace in our communities, neighborhoods or our families. I remember the following story by an unknown author which I would like to share with you...

"There once was a king who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace. Many artists tried. The king looked at all the pictures. But there were only two he really liked, and he had to choose between them.

One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror for peaceful towering mountains all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace.

The other picture had mountains, too. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky, from which rain fell and in which lightning played. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. This did not look peaceful at all.

But when the king looked closely, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water, sat the mother bird on her nest - in perfect peace.

Which picture do you think won the prize? The king chose the second picture. Do you know why?

"Because," explained the king, "peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart. That is the real meaning of peace."

I would like to invite you to use your breath and release with each exhale all that stands between you and holding peace in your heart no matter what is happening in the outside world. Let go of any fear and consciously breathe in the knowledge that "who you really are" is always perfectly whole and safe. I wonder what could be possible if enough of us could hold our center and stay in LOVE in the midst of chaos. After all, there is the story of the 100 monkeys...If you do not know it, check it online at [www.wowzone.com/monkey.htm](http://www.wowzone.com/monkey.htm)

**About the Author**

Carol is a Holistic Therapist and certified Breathwork Instructor under the International Breathwork Foundation guidelines. She is an Advanced Clinical Hypnotherapist with training in Hypno-Behavioral Therapy, Reichian Process Work, Release Therapy, Integrative, Cathartic and Rebirthing Breathwork and the Hendricks Body Centered Transformation Method. Carol is the founder of Integration Concepts. [Carol's web address is www.BreathTherapy.net.](http://www.BreathTherapy.net)

# **EXPLORING HEALING WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF BREATH: MY STORY**

**BY**

**MARGOT BIESTMAN** ©2002

I shall begin with one of my life's stories. I am in the process of learning something new—about the nature of healing. I have written first to clarify my own experience, then to invite readers to explore how The Experience of Breath may relate to their own healing as well as to others with whom they work. Readers may also choose to explore their own experience on different paths toward healing.

This story begins with a trauma. I fell, while trying to climb onto an upper berth of a train, while it was moving around a curve in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Being very agile at the age of 70, I grabbed onto the mattress above to hoist myself up. I later learned that it was the top mattress, which was loose. It had a slick under-surface, and I slid on it, 7 feet down to the floor of the train, landing on my coccyx. Like an airplane crash, the blow shot through my spine and compressed and fractured my thoracic vertebra, T-12, while on its way, delivering a severe sprain to my entire lumbar spine. EXCRUTIATING PAIN, SHOCKING!

Traumas. We've all had them, in one way or another—whether by accident, war, even a perceived war with a parent, partner, friend. I'm interested in the choices I have in how I respond to any kind of trauma, which can become locked in my body. Within my physical body, I include my mind, soul, and spirit. I do not experience them as separate.

I could choose to succumb to this traumatic circumstance, or become fortified from it. Though I wanted to be fortified, I must admit that part of me collapsed. My spine did not support me to stand or walk. My spirit felt broken. Part of me wanted to give up responsibility. I could not sense my Self. I can now, five months later, more fully understand my ambivalence about living and dying at the time of trauma.

Trauma is broken connections.

I began to ask anew, “When I am in so much pain, conflict, disorganization, how do I enter the world of my body to explore its intelligence, its wisdom? How do I tolerate so much unknown, when I’m scared, separated from my Self?” I tried to cling to what I knew already—familiar ways and patterns of being in the world. I needed a bridge to move from the familiar, to the unknown. Breath was my bridge that could link me between unconscious and conscious, known and unknown.

Quite early on, after my initial shock, I made a critical decision to shift from my thoughts and fears to simply sense my physical body and the natural movement of my breath under my hands, which I'd placed on the center of my torso. I recognize breath as the essence of life, so I brought full presence to its movement, and did nothing more than to sense and allow my breath to guide me, one breath cycle after another. Each cycle was different from the one preceding it—something new each time. I allowed breath movement to fluctuate from moment to moment, as it responds to whatever happens in my life. I could eventually sense my own breath rhythm develop. This led me to begin to trust that my breath that comes and goes on its own without disturbance or control,

would support all the healing forces within. I knew my body held the trauma and it was through my body that I could heal. The key was within the God-given gift of breath I received when I was born. I sensed at a basic sensory level, that my innate resources would empower me to continue to grow, heal, and evolve, to become as fully human as possible. Somewhere, deep down within my core self—my essential being—wanted to be Self-responsible—and live my life.

“We are living, breathing, pulsing, self-regulating, intelligent organisms, not merely complex chemistry sets. There is an innate resiliency of the human organism when it is supported and guided.” Peter Levine

I knew I could reach out to others I trusted immediately. It is through my physical sensation of body with breath moving through it that connects me to my soul and spirit, to my partners, and to the world beyond. My mind follows, but does not lead—that is, when I choose to be “breath aware”.

I’ve had a history of serious back pain, and had explored a variety of approaches toward healing before finding *The Experience of Breath*<sup>2</sup> —a work developed by Professor Ilse Middendorf of Berlin, Germany over the past 65 years. I had taken workshops for several years before entering an intensive 3½ year training program in this work with Juerg Roffler,<sup>3</sup> Director of the U.S. Middendorf Breath Institute. After setting up my practice for a few years and continuing as a post-graduate student in trainings, I became a member of the teaching and training staff. I had learned something about the nature of healing, but I was now being asked to learn so much more than I ever dreamed.

Perhaps my fall was no accident. It was a time to heal more deeply, from prior shocks to my system. I am, after all, not my story. I am my essence, when I am moved by the breath that moves me. It called me to listen to it, to follow it.

But I didn’t always do what my breath was asking for. When I didn’t listen or follow it, I found the way rocky, stormy sometimes. Trying to avoid or get rid of the pain only seemed to increase it. It wasn’t easy when pain and conflict were difficult to bear. There were times when it was easy to give my Self up. Fear and various ego states would take over. Sometimes I could sense breath movement but “I” did not participate in the process. This collapse of Self, combined with my back injury, showed in my posture, and I became discouraged. I learned that even when—and especially when—my pain or conflict was especially challenging, I must be aware enough to not let the act of giving my Self up sneak up on me. Or if it does, then I must grab my Self back and tone myself up by taking the palms of my hands to physically tap the parts of my body that I can reach. This action helps me to sense my physical body and to become alive again with sensation, which stimulates me and my breath.

Often I wanted the process of healing to happen faster than was possible. In acknowledging this, I discovered that I could not move my structure or have it be moved ahead of my breath by anyone. Though wanting to heal fast is understandable as part of my human nature, it actually slowed my healing. When “I” returned to sensing the movement of breath, I sensed myself as whole, and accepted all of my humanness.

At one point, I explored meditating with breath for five minutes and then allowed myself to be moved by my breath into my daily life. I discovered that I needed to be alone and more with myself than out in the world with others, until my “doing” and “being” came more into balance. I realized I had a choice. Too much “doing” brought me to a point of collapse. “To be or not to be?” took on

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<sup>2</sup>Juerg Roffler is a close associate of Ilse Middendorf. The U.S. Breath Institute was founded in San Francisco in 1991, and has recently relocated to Berkeley, California.

new meaning for me. The question became embodied. Basically my decision boiled down to really living my life or partially dying in it.

Healing took more TIME and PATIENCE than I allowed. Yet patience, when I came to it, gave me the experience of not being discouraged. The rocky places did serve a purpose—to give me more humility and compassion for myself and others.

Along the way, I discovered more about what healing is for me. It's about allowing and accepting what is, as it is—not knowing what will happen next. It's about participating, *being* in the process of experiencing the movement of breath and its effect, rather than observing or imagining it, without expectations or pre-conceptions. It is about courage to go deeper to an even greater unknown—and sensing that is the place to be for healing and growth to take place. Breath is what leads me to the next step, which comes from recognizing and experiencing that breath actually moves me. The next step, however small, leads to the next and the next, until more substance of being is created. If my breath is in its natural state I cannot push myself nor be pushed to do something. When I recognize something that is a truth for me and I understand it somatically, then I can heal. I become self-responsible.

Healing is the process of making sound or whole—restoring to integrity—an original or pure state of being. It means to come into a balanced, flexible state between mind, spirit, and matter.

I have had talented and wonderful accompaniment along my path from teachers, colleagues, students, friends, and family. “Humans support and empower each other in the process of transforming trauma”<sup>4</sup> to a life giving force. I sense this when I do not project onto others that they should “fix” me or feel sorry for me, and when colleagues, family members, and friends connect with me authentically, while maintaining a sense of their own Self as separate—not merging with me, not projecting nor transferring their experiences onto me.

For a long time I thought healing was to be pain-free. Although it is true that when my pain diminishes, I enjoy ease and a sense of well-being, but the absence of pain does not mean healing. Focusing or shining a light, on pain or conflict does not help me to heal. I have not imagined, nor used visualizations, though these are pleasant to think about and relaxing for a while, but for me, they engage more with my mind than my whole body.

The process of working with my breath helps to integrate my pain within the whole of me—so that I am not my pain. My pain is not my identity. Pain is actually the result of postponing a decision for my Self to live my life.<sup>5</sup> Breath transforms the experience of pain into healing so that I am able to live my life.

I choose the path of breath, and follow it most of the time. It is simple and profound. I can experience its movement, and I can give over to its intelligence in knowing what my body needs. Our culture has taught me about the connection between my mind and its intelligence, however, this is not enough for me. I come to understand that the connection between my breath and my body holds a far greater intelligence. Breath reflects every move in my life.

Having wondered for some time why my physical body is so slow to make changes, I come to realize that although our culture has provided ways to learn *about*, or *observe* my body through my mind or through sports or dance, it has not taught how I can *be in* my body—how I can live my life in it. Now I learn that with breath as my teacher, *I* can participate in experiencing my physical body

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<sup>3</sup> Levine.

<sup>4</sup>Conversation with Juerg Roffler, April 2002.

and its matter, along with the non-physical aspects (soul, spirit, emotions, thoughts). It is through sensing my physical body with breath that I arrive to greet my soul and spirit. Emotions do not overwhelm me, as they find their home in my body. My thoughts are part of the whole, rather than rule my being. My world opens up to a vast body of knowledge that appears to have no end.

Healing is a constant search for balance. I experience healing as a dynamic process that continues—growing and evolving. I'm not sure that the process ever ends. Layers in my body, mind, and spirit are intricately linked together, each affecting the other. In healthy, balanced states, my physical body is in equilibrium with my emotional, mental and spiritual components. All aspects of my humanness are brought into connection when considering any of my parts.

Different layers within myself are intertwined, woven together. Breath movement is the mediator, the integrating force. The depth to which breath can penetrate to unconscious states of being and bring them into consciousness depends on how willing I am to surrender to this powerful force, within my Self. I sense that I am never finished.

Perhaps death is the ultimate healing. If so, then living means to me to connect with the Divine—through the breath that breathes me. Living life to the fullest is a preparation for another cycle—another unknown.

I was with my mother, sensing her last breath, when she died. Her life cycle had come to completion, just as the breath has a cycle of inhalation, exhalation, and silence before the next breath comes again on its own. The exhale dies within each cycle, into the silence. Each cycle is complete. Perhaps after death, there are more and more cycles in other forms. I still connect with my mother, on another plane—though we are in different worlds—and part of the whole, within the Divine, that holds us all.

Healing, for me, is connecting on many different levels.

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## About the Author

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# AN IMPACT OF THE CONSCIOUS CONNECTED BREATHING TRAINING ON EMOTIONAL STATES<sup>7</sup>

BY

ALICJA HEYDA

## INTRODUCTION.

Breathing is a basic condition of being alive. Without food human being can survive for a few weeks, without water for a few days and only few minutes without breathing. Thanks to breathing we discharge 70% of metabolism products (Jones, 1982).

Although respiratory activity is often a subject of psychological research, it is usually not the first, or even the secondary variable. As far back as fifties, in 1954 edition of *Experimental Psychology* Woodworth & Schlosberg mentioned that respiratory measures “have fallen out of favour” (cited in: Lorig, Schwartz, 1990, p.596). The same applies interventions that use breathing as a therapeutic tool. The author has found only a few researches concerning nature and effectiveness of breathwork methods.

At the Far East for thousands of years different types of breathing have been used as healing methods and tools of achieving spiritual advancement. Among these methods are pranayama techniques of the classic hatha yoga (Iyengar, 1988) or different breathing exercises of Taoism (see for instance: Lewis, 1997). Diverse schools of Buddhism also use breathing to deepen the states of mindfulness and concentration (Hanh, 1992, Wangyal, 1998)

Different methods of breathwork are also used in somatherapies. These schools of psychotherapy apply physical contact, bodywork and breathwork to achieve therapeutic progress. (Boadella, 1991, Meyer 1996). Breathwork is used in the following somatherapies: Vegetotherapy (Reich, 1973), Biosynthesis (Boadella, 1987), Bioenergetics (Lowen, 1977, 1994, 1990), Middendorf Breathwork (Biestman, 2000, Siems 1997), Holotropic Breathwork (Grof, 1985, 2000), Rebirthing – Conscious Connected Breathing (CCB), created by Leonard Orr, and also in many other less known methods.

This writer thinks that the goal of Rebirthing-Breathwork is to free blocked breathing and to gently relax the chronic muscle tensions (the “body armour”). During this process a person has a chance to integrate repressed emotions and memories often coming from the preverbal stage of life. Rebirthing sessions usually bring up to the level of consciousness thoughts, emotions and experiences not necessarily related to the early childhood (see: Heyda, 1999, Morningstar, 1994, Orr, 1988, Ray, 1992, Sisson, 1996, Thomas 1993)

Manné (2002) referred to Rebirthing as an orphaned child of many other psychotherapeutic schools. Although Rebirthing is quite popular, and according to Orr (1994) has been experienced by millions of people, research in Rebirthing is quite rare. Under the term “Rebirthing” people put various definitions and meanings, many of them in sharp contradiction to how Rebirthing is understood by its founders or practised by majority of rebirthers. Some authors describe Conscious Connected Breathing (Rebirthing-Breathwork) as hyperventilation syndrome (Boadella, 1992, Zarębska-Piotrowska, 1991). Others refer to it as a hyperventilation attack, “provoking consciousness disorders similar to effects of substance intoxication (...)”(Aleksandrowicz, 1997 p.15).

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<sup>7</sup> This text was presented (in French version) during Journées Européennes d' Ecole de Psychothérapie Socio et Soma-toanalytique, 19-20 May 2002, Lipsheim, France. This article contains part of data from the author's master thesis “Wpływ treningu świadomego połączonego oddychania na stany emocjonalne” (Impact of CCB training on emotional states), under W. Łosiak, Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland. The author would like to express gratitude to all persons who took part in the research and to all Rebirthers from Polish Rebirthers' Association who helped to obtain data, especially to: E. Berger – Jankowska, I. Daroń – Zygart, D. Gasz , J. Koczwara and H. Kurczyk.

In this text when using the term “Rebirthing” the author refers to the breathing technique developed in the early 1970s by Leonard Orr and his associates. It is believed that the first Rebirthing Seminar was lead by Leonard Orr in 1974 in Theta House commune in California, where earlier he perfected Rebirthing experimenting on himself (see: Orr, Ray, 1983).

The idea of birth trauma and its release was crucial for the development of Rebirthing. Orr, himself a survivor a complicated birth, observed that people who went through traumatic birth experiences often have a strong negative representation of themselves, their relationships and the world (Orr, Ray 1983). This observation was confirmed by other researchers in Rebirthing (Sisson,1996, Thomas 1993). The conceptualisation of birth trauma in Rebirthing shows many similarities to the ideas presented in psychoanalysis (Freud, 1994, Rank, 1969, Winnicott, 1969) and Stanislav Grof’s conceptualisation of Perinatal Matrices (1985, 2000).

In the course of time Orr and other rebirthers noticed that the breathing technique they worked with was quite effective in treating a wide range of problems, not only birth trauma. According to Sudres (1994), around 1979 Orr renamed his breathing method as Conscious Connected Breathing (CCB), to de-emphasise the role of birth and to broaden its appeal. Since then the names “Rebirthing-Breathwork” and “Conscious Connected Breathing” are used interchangeably.

## **CONSCIOUS CONNECTED BREATHING: THE TECHNIQUE AND SOME THERAPEUTIC CONSIDERATIONS.**

The essence of CCB is lack of pauses between single breaths. Another core characteristic is relaxed exhalation, which is not pushed, hold or divided into parts (Morningstar, 1994, Orr, 1988, Sisson, 1996, 1997, Thomas 1993). Such exhalation prevents fast loss of carbon dioxide from the blood, which normally produces hyperventilation, as when people push on exhalation. Inhalation should be natural, free from any special manipulations with diaphragm, not slowed down, divided into parts or very fast (see for instance: Morningstar, 1994). This natural flow of breath, which Orr compares often to the breathing of newborn babies, is what differs CCB from the pranayamas in classic Hatha Yoga (compiled among other by Iyengar, 1988). During the CCB sessions some professional rebirthers (e.g. Meyer, 1991) encourage their clients to draw the air to the upper lungs but it is not a hard rule.

Rebirthing sessions have a non-directive character. The therapist typically does not suggest to the client which problem he/she should solve. The role of the rebirther is rather to accompany than to lead. Often, if the client’s breathing does not require any correction, careful and accepting presence is the only activity on the part of rebirther. Unconditional acceptance during Rebirthing has the same therapeutic role and status as in client-centered therapy of Carl Rogers (comp. Grzesiuk, 1995).

During a typical CCB session a phenomenon known as “breath release” appears (Orr, Ray, 1983). The rebirthee no longer needs to consciously connect inhalation with exhalation. The body starts to do it spontaneously and effortlessly. When it happens it often leads to permanent change in the client’s breathing (Orr, Ray, 1983, Sisson, 1996).

## **REBIRTHING-BREATHWORK: REVIEW OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH.**

Beverly K. Rubin is the first known researcher who analysed the phenomenon of Rebirthing (1983). Her research was divided into two parts. In the first part Rubin attempted to measure cognitive and emotional outcomes of a weekend Rebirthing seminar, which included a group breathing session. In the second part she tried to measure physiological outcomes of two individual Rebirthing sessions.

In the first research 26 subjects were randomised to Treatment and Control Group. Treatment group took part in Rebirth Weekend Seminar. Subjects in Treatment Group showed significant improvement on *Rotter's Internal vs External Locus of Control Test*, *Self-Esteem Scale* and *Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist* as compared to Control Group. Measures were taken one day, two weeks and 6 months after the weekend training. These results were consistent, Rubin concluded, with the claims made by Orr and other proponents of Rebirthing (Leonard & Laut, 1983, Orr, Ray, 1983, Ray, 1992) that this method helps people to feel good about themselves, to feel more in control of their lives and that it reduces the level of anxiety (Rubin 1983).

In Experiment 2, two subjects rested, had a breathing session, and rested again, while eight of their physiological functions were automatically recorded. Rubin observed that volume of air inhaled, oxygen and carbon dioxide expired, pulse volume, pulse propagation time, skin potential response, and electromyograph all changed during the RB sessions. This finding is consistent with the claims that RB triggers important changes on a physiological level.

For instance, the two examined subjects experienced increased pulse volume as indicated by measurements on blood vessels. It was suggestive, Rubin concluded, that bigger amounts of blood reached the most distant parts of the subjects' bodies. She believed that this was a sign of deepened relaxation and better oxygen supply to the cells. In both cases the heartbeat had slightly accelerated or stayed on pre-treatment level what suggested that increased blood flow couldn't be attributed to accelerated heartbeat. If this is so then Rebirthing-Breathwork could probably be used as a detoxification process. This would explain to some extent why people with many different physical disorders improve after CCB sessions as claimed by some practitioners (e.g., Jones, 1982).

Also other physiological measurements showed significant changes during this experiment. In both cases SPR (Skin Potential Response) reached its highest point at the end of session. Rubin believed that increase of sweat secretion could have been a sign of body detoxification on cellular level or an indicator of higher anxiety level during the session. EMG (electromyography) showed increased muscle tension during the CCB sessions and a significant decrease of muscle tension during the rest afterwards, down to the pre-treatment level. Rebirthers claim that during CCB primarily unconscious psychological material becomes conscious (e.g. Orr, Ray, 1983 Sisson, 1996). This transitional state of tension and its later release during the rest after the session, Rubin hypothesised, could have been related to the process of integration of psychological material. If material is integrated, tension disappears (comp. e.g. Sisson, 1996). The results of this research are not unequivocal and the small sample does not allow to draw definite conclusions. To explain precisely the process of CCB, further research is needed.

Sudres et al. (1994) took 12 persons with diagnosed adaptation problems, medium level of depression and average level of general functioning through 10 Rebirthing sessions. Researchers observed that the levels of depression and anxiety of these people significantly decreased. Their body image also improved. Three measurements were taken: before starting the cycle of sessions, right at the end of treatment and 8 weeks afterwards (only 6 subjects examined). Third measurement showed that the positive changes in anxiety and depression levels were maintained in all 6 cases. At the time of the second measurement 10 of 12 subjects were "very or extremely satisfied" with participation in CCB sessions. Four of them claimed that the number of sessions was too small (Sudres, *ibid*, p. 1366).

Reggios (1985/6) applied CCB sessions as an alternative technique to classical psychoanalysis in treatment of clients showing high resistance to analysis. In her opinion these clients were more bound to psychical suffering than wished to be cured. In all cases the use of CCB reduced resistance to treatment and brought therapeutic progress. The results stated by Reggios seem to confirm Reich's observation that there is a connection between holding the breath and therapeutic resistance (Lowen, 1990).

Jones (1986) employed Rebirthing and affirmations (positive thinking) in treatment of seven anorexic and bulimic women. She observed that this treatment improved nutritional habits and body perception of her patients.

Rajski (2002) included CCB sessions into seven monthly therapy programs titled “Rebirthers for Alcoholics” (1986 – 87). Seventy people attended the program. Self-declared sobriety rate one year after the treatment was above 50%.

It is worth noticing that although some research concerning effects of Rebirthing can be found, the mechanism of its healing capabilities is not well understood. Sudres et al. (1994) and Meyer (1991) often apply the word “hyperventilation” instead of “Rebirthing,” believing that hyperventilation (HV) itself is the main healing factor in CCB. Meyer (1991, 1996) says that HV causes the straightening of blood vessels in brain provoking some specific therapeutic effects. Sudres (1994) proposes that transitional straightening of blood vessels in brain may lead to a partial loss of control which cortex has over limbic system. This may bring up emotional states, regressive memories, analgesia, etc. He hypothesises that diverse neural and muscle symptoms, typical for HV, represent release of tension, which was stored in cortex or subcortex since the early childhood. This hypothesis is consistent with traditional psychoanalytical explanations (Freud, 1994, Rank, 1969) stressing the important formative impact of birth trauma, shock of first breath, etc.

Orr (1988) writes that usually hyperventilation symptoms appear only during first few CCB sessions and that they are connected to the pattern of chronic “under-breathing” (p.34, similar observation was made by Lowen, 1990). Jones (1982) also claims that HV is not identical with Rebirthing. Ventilation during CCB session is sometimes perceived as “hyper,” Jones explains, because our “normal” breathing is often blocked and shallow. She proposes a new term - “superventilation” - deepened breathing, which does not carry medical connotations of the term “hyperventilation.”

According to Orr (1988) CCB sessions gradually dissolve HV symptoms - with every session they appear less prominent. Based on this practical experience is Orr’s theory that hyperventilation syndrome represents a spontaneous healing of the breathing blockages (ibid.). This theory is congruent with Grof’s observations (1985) of hyperventilation attacks experienced by psychiatric patients.

Also Rubin’s (1983) experiment suggests that CCB and HV are two different phenomena. Rubin observed that respiratory patterns and percentage of oxygen and carbon dioxide didn’t resemble patterns typical for HV in both examined cases.

## **HYPOTHESIS.**

The author’s own observations from 6 years of therapeutic practice concur with the results obtained by Rubin (1983), Sudres et al. (1994), and other practitioners, that persons who attended Rebirthing sessions achieve significant improvement of psychological well-being. For the purpose of detailed evaluation of CCB impact on emotional states, the following hypothesis was created:

*THE CONSCIOUS CONNECTED BREATHING TRAINING WILL CAUSE CHANGES IN EMOTIONAL STATES:*

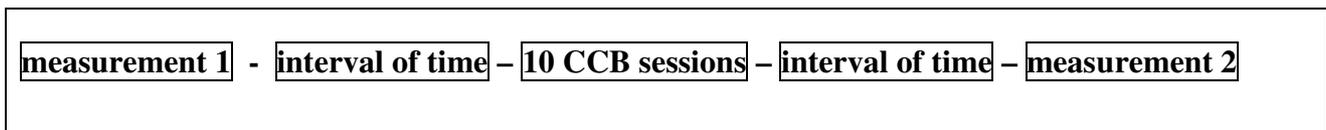
- A) ANGER AND ANXIETY WILL DECREASE
- B) POSITIVE EMOTIONS WILL INCREASE

## **SUBJECTS AND PROCEDURE.**

Persons who agreed to take part in the experiment were voluntary participants of 10 weekly group Rebirthing workshops and pair matched controls. During the workshops subjects attended group CCB sessions. 35 subjects took part in experiment, 23 individuals completed 10 Rebirthing ses-

sions. There were 6 men and 17 women in Experimental Group (average age: 32,1 years, standard deviation: 10,5). Control Group consisted of 23 individuals pair matched for age, gender, education and marital status.

The procedure for each individual took about 4 months. Individuals from the workshop group who volunteered to participate in the study had never attended any CCB session before. Subjects from Experimental Group were examined for the first time one to two weeks before starting the workshop. Second measurement was taken 4 weeks after finishing the cycle of 10 sessions (see Figure 1.)



**Figure 1.** Research procedure.

Breathing instructions and a short relaxation (similar to Schulz' Autogenous Training, see: Grochmal, 1986) preceded every CCB session. If necessary, rebirther intervened during CCB sessions helping the individual to reach an optimal respiratory pattern.

### **Measurement tools.**

The following tests were used in the research: SE-T Scale (W. Łosiak) and ISRA – Inventory of Situations and Responses of Anxiety (J.J. Miguel – Tobal & A.R. Cano – Vindel, 1985a).

SE-T Scale was developed by Łosiak (1994) to investigate emotional states of patients undergoing surgery. It is a checklist consisting of 43 adjectives. These adjectives were obtained through factor analysis of test responses of surgery patients during their first, second and third psychological measurements. These responses were describing various feelings and emotional states. Adjectives grouped in three factors, explaining 21,3% of variance, were: Anxiety-Depression (Cronbach' s alpha for each of three measurements, alpha = .94,.95,.93), Joy-Satisfaction (alpha = .88,.90,.93) and Anger (alpha=.87,.90,.93).

Inventory of Situations and Responses of Anxiety (ISRA) requires individuals to judge frequency of anxiety reactions to certain situations. ISRA consists of 23 situations, 24 reactions and 224 items that discriminate between “normal” and “clinical” responses (Miguel–Tobal i Cano–Vindel., 1985a, 1985b). ISRA consists of 3 subscales. The first one estimates Cognitive Anxiety in diverse situations, the second – Physiological Anxiety and the third one – Motoric Anxiety. Results of all three subscales are summed up, showing General Anxiety Level (alpha for sum = 0.99)

### **Results.**

The program “Statistica” was used for data analysis. The author used the two-factor Anova (repeated measurements of dependant variable – factor of time). The dependant variables were Anger, Joy –Satisfaction, Anxiety – Depression (SE-T Scale), Cognitive Anxiety, Physiological Anxiety, Motoric Anxiety and General Anxiety (ISRA).

The results (Table 1.) showed significant decrease of the level of Anger in the Experimental Group ( $p < 0,01$ ). Also the level of Anxiety-Depression significantly decreased in the Experimental Group, ( $p < 0,05$ ). On the other hand the level of Joy – Satisfaction, in comparison to the Control Group, showed statistically significant increase of positive emotions ( $p < 0,05$ ).

Also the analysis of ISRA results (see: Table 2. and Table 3.) showed that the level of anxiety decreased significantly for the subjects in the Experimental Group as compared to Control Group. For

the variable of “Cognitive Anxiety” decrease was statistically significant at the level of ( $p < 0,01$ ), for Physiological Anxiety at the level of ( $p < 0,05$ ), for Motoric Anxiety at the level of ( $p < 0,05$ ), and for General Anxiety at the high level of ( $p < 0,001$ ).

Effect	ANGER			JOY-SATISFACTION			ANXIETY-DEPRESSION		
	Degrees of freedom	F	p	Degrees of freedom	F	p	Degrees of freedom	F	p
Group	1;41	0,396	0,533	1; 41	0,039	0,843	1; 41	0,003	0,954
Time	1;44	6,904	0,012*	1; 44	3,180	0,081	1; 44	5,993	0,018*
Group x Time	1;44	7,639	0,008**	1; 44	5,858	0,020*	1; 44	6,973	0,011*

Df = degrees of freedom,

- F = ratio of two mean squares<sup>8</sup>
- p = probability value (significance level)
- \* $p < 0,05$ , \*\*  $p < 0,01$

TABLE 1. Anova results for subscales of SE-T: Anger, Joy – Satisfaction, Anxiety - Depression

Effect	Cognitive Anxiety			Physiological Anxiety		
	Degrees of freedom	F	p	Degrees of freedom	F	p
Group	1; 41	0,269	0,607	1; 41	0,170	0,682
Time	1; 44	9,278	0,004**	1; 41	2,746	0,105
Group x Time	1; 44	9,483	0,004**	1; 44	4,660	0,036*

- $p < 0,05$  , \*\*  $p < 0,01$

TABLE 2. Anova results for ISRA subscales: Cognitive Anxiety, Physiological Anxiety

Effect	Motoric Anxiety			General Anxiety		
	Degrees of freedom	F	p	Degrees of freedom	F	p

<sup>8</sup> When the F value is large and the significance level is small (typically smaller than 0.05 or 0.01) the null hypothesis can be rejected. In other words, a small significance level indicates that the results probably are not due to random chance

<b>Group</b>	1; 41	0,001	0,999	1;41	0,149	0,701
<b>Time</b>	1; 44	3,284	0,077	1;44	11,033	0,002**
<b>Group x Time</b>	1; 44	6,305	0,016*	1;44	14,750	0,0004***

\* p<0,05 , \*\* p<0,01, \*\*\* p<0,001

TABLE 3. Anova results for ISRA subscales: Motoric Anxiety and General Anxiety (the sum of three subscales of ISRA)

## Discussion.

The results of this research show that Rebirthing-Breathwork has an impact on emotional states. The subjects who completed the cycle of 10 CCB sessions, reached statistically significant decrease of anger (p<0,01) and anxiety in all dimensions (anxiety-depression – p< 0,05, cognitive anxiety – p<0,01, physiological anxiety – p< 0,05, motoric anxiety, p< 0,05 and general anxiety – p< 0,001). On the other hand the level of positive emotions significantly increased for the same group (Joy – Satisfaction, p< 0,05)

The results of this study and other research in Rebirthing-Breathwork suggest that this method is a valuable tool of personal transformation. Especially in cases in which reduction of anxiety, depressive feelings and anger is urgent, or when a client is resistant to regular counselling, Rebirthing-Breathwork may be an effective method. In conclusion, the author would like to quote the famous Polish psychologist, Maria Susułowska (Chodak, 1999), who said:

*“All methods, which serve human beings by reducing suffering and turn out to be effective, should be used and developed.” (p. 243)*

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# WHEN CONSCIOUSNESS LOOKS AT ITSELF: THE SHAMANIC LIFE PATTERN AND BREATHWORK<sup>9</sup>

by  
**JOY MANNÉ, PHD**

The Encyclopaedia of Religion starts its article on shamanism saying, “in the strict sense (it) is pre-eminently a religious phenomenon of Siberia.” A year or two ago the New Scientist described ‘shamanism’ as a bucket category. If we explore the shamanic life pattern, we open the question whether it is a human universal.

## THE SHAMANIC LIFE PATTERN

Case histories are records of how a person develops. A “life pattern” can be seen as a hypothetical case history, i.e. it describes a predicted course of development. Piaget, Freud, and Maslow are among psychologists who investigated and described such patterns of development.

Here I describe a shaman’s life pattern. Its stages are 1. *Birth*, 2. *Youth and Early Adulthood*, 3. *Initiation*, and 4. *Practice*.

### 1. Birth

Shamans may be selected at or before birth. One way selection happens is through hereditary transmission.

Conception, gestation and birth are increasingly recognised as emotionally and spiritually significant events.

### 2. Youth and Early Adulthood

#### Calling

If a person is not selected at birth or through hereditary transmission, other possibilities for becoming a shaman include spontaneous vocation or calling.

#### Spiritual Crises or Illnesses

There is a well-documented correlation between puberty and the shaman’s calling. The youth and early adulthood of the shaman contain significant illnesses or crises related to the calling.

The youth who is called to be a shaman attracts attention by his strange behaviour: e.g. he seeks solitude, becomes absent minded, loves to roam in the woods or unfrequented places, has visions, and sings in his sleep. ... (He) has fits of fury and easily loses consciousness, hides in the forest, feeds on the bark of trees, throws himself into water and fire, cuts himself with knives. ... (He may go through an) hysterical crisis ... (ER/S)

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<sup>9</sup> First published as ‘When Consciousness Looks at Itself: The Shamanism Pattern’ in *Self & Society: a Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, Volume 30 No 6, February 2003 – March 2003.

Some of these activities are classical means of inducing altered states of consciousness or trance states.

### **3. Initiation**

The extraordinary events in youth are the beginnings of initiation for those who mentally and physically survive the crises of calling. The traditional schema of an initiation ceremony is: suffering, death, and resurrection.

#### **Teachers and Socialisation**

The apprentice shaman is socialised. Initiation includes an apprenticeship to a master shaman from whom are learned the theory and practice, myths, cosmology, rituals and techniques of that particular shamanic culture. The training consists of journeying outside of the body, learning to relate to and control spirits, and healing techniques.

#### **Ascetic Practices and Death-Rebirth Experience**

Practices connected with the initiation are all classical means of inducing altered states of consciousness or trance. Preparation includes ascetic practices; exposure to various extremes, such as of heat or cold, or undertaking a particular diet or fasting; sleep deprivation, physical exertion, meditation, yoga, ritual, prayer, the use of drugs and hallucinogens, and long periods of quiet and solitude or isolation. Elements in initiation may include dreams of torture, especially the dismemberment of the body; the ecstatic experience of an ascent to heaven or descent to the underworld; meetings with spirits; and religious and shamanic revelations. Mastery over fire and heat is significant.

#### **Nature and animals**

The shaman is supposed to meet with an animal during his initiation. That animal becomes his familiar spirit. It teaches him secret knowledge including how to communicate with animals.

#### **Self-Healing**

Self-healing from the crises suffered in youth and early adulthood is a sign that the initiation has succeeded. Curing the initiatory illness depends on consciousness looking at itself and developing through taking responsibility at the highest level for what it sees.

#### **Recognition**

Recognition that the initiation has been successfully accomplished comes when the shaman is acknowledged to have cured his illness.

#### **Death**

A shaman may die in a particular way, usually through a form of voluntary departure.

### **4. Practice: The shaman's work**

After recognition, the shaman's tasks include teaching, journeying and healing, performing magic, relating to spirits, and a role in politics and society.

# THE BUDDHA'S LIFE AND THE SHAMANIC LIFE PATTERN

One striking example of the shamanic life pattern is the Buddha, as his life history is described in the Pali Canon. We do not imagine today that every detail in the story of how the Buddha became liberated or enlightened as presented in any canon is a factual account as the earliest written texts only came into being several centuries after his death. It is therefore significant that the texts ascribe a shamanic life pattern to the Buddha.

As in the Shaman's life pattern, I will divide the Buddha's case history attributed to the Buddha in these texts into the stages of *1 Birth, 2 Youth and Early Adulthood, 3 Initiation, and 4 Practice.*

## 1. Birth

The Buddha's birth legend is that he was "selected" before conception. The Bodhisattva, or the future Buddha's conception, gestation and birth were unusual and magical.

## 2. Youth and early adulthood

### Calling

The Buddha experienced a calling when, having been protected from them all his life, he first saw old age, illness and death, and an ascetic

### Spiritual Crises

Two episodes in the youth of the Bodhisattva may be compared to the spiritual crises that a shaman goes through at the same period in his life. The first is an agreeable ecstatic state; the second is a traumatic initiatory crisis.

In childhood or early youth, at an age which cannot be divined through reading the texts which have different versions, the future Buddha had his first intuition of a high altered state of consciousness:

During the work of my father the Sakka, while sitting in the cool shade of the rose-apple tree, separated from desires, separated from bad things (*dhamma*), I reached the First Dhyāna, which is accompanied by thought and reflection, born from separation, consists of joy and bliss, and remained [there]. (MN, Vol I, p 246f, translation Bronkhorst, 1993:22f.)

This may be compared to a shaman's first, initiatory ecstatic experience. It is noteworthy the texts have this taking place under a tree. Trees are significant in shamanic experiences.

The initiatory crisis came years later and can be seen as the result of his calling. The future Buddha asked himself,

Supposing that, being myself subject to birth, having understood the danger in what is subject to birth, I seek the unborn supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna. Suppose that, being myself subject to ageing, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, having understood the danger in what is subject to ageing, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, I seek the unageing, unailing, deathless, sorrowless, and undefiled supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna. (MN, Vol I, p.163. Tr. MLDB, p.256)

Today we might call this an existential crisis.

## **Initiation**

The Bodhisattva's illness, as the texts describe it, was his inability to accept being subject to old age, illness and death. His attempt at self-healing, or the cure that he sought, was the way out of this suffering. He left home and became an ascetic. We cannot be certain about the age at which this happened.

### **Nature and Animal Imagery, Good and Bad Spirits**

The future Buddha's quest begins with episodes that recall the importance of animals and spirits in shamanic initiations. He leaves home on his horse. Horses are significant in shamanism as funerary animals, psychopomps, and means of achieving ecstasy. His attainment of Liberation is accompanied by nature and animal imagery: it is attained under a tree and in the presence of a serpent. Serpents and dragons are basic images in shamanic initiations and dreams.

### **Teachers and Socialisation**

The Bodhisattva goes to various teachers hoping to learn how to achieve his goal. Besides learning their methods and practices and their concept of Liberation, he also becomes socialised with regard to the tasks of a religious leader.

### **The Death-Rebirth Experience and Ascetic Practices including Heat**

The Bodhisattva realises that he has not found the "cure" to his illness through his teachers and so goes off with five companions and practices austerities that are so extreme that only the gods intervention prevents his death.

Mastery over fire and heat is significant in shamanism. There are abundant images of heat in the Buddha's Teachings.

The Buddha went beyond death, attained *nibbāna*, and was reborn from this to fulfil his shamanic task, i.e., to teach.

### **Self-Healing**

Eventually the Buddha rejects asceticism as not leading to his goal or healing. He remembers the agreeable ecstatic experience or altered state of conscience of his youth, decides that it is the way to his goal, follows that route, and succeeds. He becomes a Buddha. In shamanic terms, he heals himself. Curing his illness depended on the Buddha's consciousness looking at itself and taking responsibility at the deepest level for what it observed.

### **Recognition**

Recognition comes once the Buddha has convinced his five companions in ascetic extremes that he has found what they were searching for, or, in shamanic terms, that he has proved that he has cured his illness and can therefore also cure theirs.

### **Death**

Invited to dine, the Buddha chose to eat food which he perceived was contaminated and forbade anyone else to eat any of it.

## 4. Practice: The Buddha's work as shaman's work

The shaman's tasks include teaching, journeying and healing, performing magic and taking up a role in politics and society.

### Teaching

The Buddha as teacher is described as follows

An arahant, a fully awakened one, abounding in wisdom and goodness, happy, who knows all worlds, unsurpassed as a guide to mortals willing to be led, a teacher for gods and men, a Blessed One, a Buddha. He, by himself, thoroughly knows and sees, as it were, face to face this universe – including the worlds above of the gods, the Brahmās, and the Māras, and the world below with its recluses and Brahmans, its princes and peoples, – and having known it, he makes his knowledge known to others. The truth, lovely in its origin, lovely in its progress, lovely in its consummation, doth he proclaim, both in the spirit and in the letter, the higher life doth he make known, in all its fullness and in all its purity. (DN, Vol. 1 78. Translation DB)

The attributes in this passage are also typically the attributes of a shaman: he knows the worlds, he has cosmic knowledge, and he teaches it.

Besides teaching his method, the Buddha taught a variety of subjects which shamans also teach including ethics; the world with its elements; cosmology; ontology (the beginning of things); conception; how things are born, the nature of life (suffering, *dukkha*, and the escape from suffering); and a rather complete model of man (how consciousness functions, including what is “not the self” – *anattā*). The Buddha has a knowledge of psychology: he encompasses with his own mind the minds of others, and knows whether or not their minds are lustful, hate-filled, delusional, focused or disturbed, broad or narrow, with or without a superior, concentrated, or liberated. Shamans are also psychologists.

The Buddha has magical powers. He sees with his Divine Eye (*dibba cakkha*). He teaches through his higher knowledge, *abhiññā* includes such shamanic elements as psychic powers. levitation, clairaudience, thought-reading, remembering previous incarnations, knowing others' previous incarnations, and certainty of having attained Enlightenment.

### Journeying

The Buddha journeys and performs various other shamanic acts through his magical powers (*iddhi*):

Having been one, he becomes many; having been many, he becomes one; he appears and vanishes; he goes unhindered through a wall, through an enclosure, through a mountain, as though through space; he dives in and out of the earth as though it were water; he walks on water without sinking as though it were earth; seated cross-legged he travels in space like a bird; with his hand he touches and strokes the moon and sun so powerful and mighty; he wields bodily mastery even as far as the Brahma-world. (MN I 69 & variously, translation. MLDB:165)

### Healing

The Buddhist Teaching and terminology is rich in metaphors of illness and healing with a person who is not liberated being compared to someone who is ill, and the enlightenment process compared to a healing process. The Buddha's healing is aimed at psychological and spiritual illness.

### **Relationship with Spirits**

The Buddha is described as teacher of gods and men. After attaining Liberation, when he expresses doubt whether to teach, Brahm€Sahampati, who can be described in shamanic terms as a good spirit, comes to persuade him. The gods celebrate his first sermon. There are regular conflicts with the “bad spirit,” Mara, which the Buddha naturally always wins. The Buddha controls his spirits; he is not possessed by them.

### **Political and social role**

The Buddha has a rich social and political role. He ran the Order of his monks. He was regularly consulted by kings, brahmans, leaders of ascetic groups and others. He was a confident debater.

### **Regular shamanic practice**

After his Enlightenment, the Buddha continued the typically shamanic practice of taking retreats in the forest. He encourages his monks to practice in solitary places.

## **V. A SHAMAN’S EYE VIEW OF THE BUDDHA’S TEACHING ON ANATTA – “NO-SELF”**

The extensive parallels between the shaman and the Buddha’s life pattern justify taking a shaman’s eye view of the Buddha’s Teaching.

A shaman enters into ecstasy or altered states of consciousness at will, and induces them in others for ritual or healing purposes, and like a shaman, the Buddha did exactly that. He taught his followers how to enter altered states of consciousness (e.g., i.a., the *jh€nas/dhyanas*) or trans-consciousness (*Nibb€na*) in order to become healed of Suffering, craving, attachment and other aspects of the human condition that lead to unhappiness, and to become liberated from rebirth. His method can be clearly demonstrated through an examination of his Teaching on *anatt€*– “No-self.”

I will not enter into the details of the controversy among scholars concerning the teaching of *anatt€*– whether the Buddha actually taught that there was a permanent Self or that there was not one: there is already an enormous literature on this subject and I have nothing to contribute to it as it is argued: the “No-self” controversy is usually battled out between scholars on philological grounds. Rather I propose to take a “*shaman’s eye*” view of this Teaching, in particular by considering *how* the concept of “No-Self” was taught. I will argue that the style of this Teaching provides the method through which the Buddha’s followers could auto-induce a particular altered state of consciousness – the “No-self” state, at will.

Before I turn to this, let me make some remarks about the Buddha’s own self-concept which is so often misunderstood.

### **The Buddha’s Own Self-Concept**

At a recent conference on Buddhist Psychology many of the participants expressed their confusion about how the Buddha could function in the world *without a self*. Because they were Buddhists, they were trying to follow the Teaching and to achieve, or to imitate, what they imagined this form of functioning could be. I thought they had missed the point!

The texts portray the character of the Buddha as someone with *a very advanced self-concept*. His self-esteem is perfect; he has gone beyond doubt; he knows, and he is confident of his knowledge; he expresses himself with conviction. His sense of identity is strong. He talks about

himself in the first person with clarity. He gives accounts of his personal experiences and of his spiritual capacities in the first person: e.g. he announces and proclaims that he is a Buddha and says what a Buddha is. He gives first person accounts of the capacities required of him by society, e.g. he insists he is a competent debater. He discusses at ease and in more than full equality with kings and other notables. He defends himself and his Teaching against unjust accusations and false representations.

It is clear that the Buddha's "self," – as this concept is understood in contemporary psychology and psychotherapy: namely: a clear sense of identity, the ability to function competently and realistically in the world, having a standard of ethics, achieving goals, interacting competently with people, making good choices, and so forth – was fully functional and indeed remarkably well-developed.

Neither psychotherapy nor meditation is possible unless the sense of identity or ego is mature and well-grounded. Otherwise there is nothing to change and nothing to go beyond.

What kind of a self, then, did the Buddha *not* have?

## The context of the “No-self” Teaching

The Buddha's Teaching on *anattē* – “No-self” took place in a particular context: the tradition of meditation and asceticism of the ancient Indian religious movements. This tradition can be understood as consisting of “direct and consistent answers to the belief that action leads to misery and rebirth. In this tradition some attempted to abstain from action, literally, while others tried to obtain an insight that their real self, their soul, never partakes of any action anyhow.” (Bronkhorst, 1993:128) This background influenced the way the *anattē* – “No-self” Teaching was conveyed. Gombrich explains,

The Buddha's position...was opposing the Upani<sup>3</sup>adic theory of the soul. In the Upani<sup>3</sup>ads the soul, *ātman*, is opposed to both the body and the mind; for example, it cannot exercise such mental functions as memory or volition. It is an essence, and by definition an essence does not change. Furthermore, the essence of the individual living being was claimed to be literally the same as the essence of the universe. (1996, p. 16)

## How the Buddha Taught *anattē* – “No-self”

Samuels compares “the death of the self involved in the Buddhist attainment” to “the ritual death and rebirth involved in many forms of shamanic training.”

The Buddha teaches against the existence of a permanent “self” through philosophical arguments, which dispose of the positions of his adversaries, and through standard expressions, and routine sequences of questions and answers in which he drills his monks.

Here are two of the frequent formulae through which *anattē* is taught:

1. The Teaching that what is impermanent (*anicca*) and suffering (*dukkha*) is not the self taught in terms of the six senses (*saṅgāṭana*): sight, hearing, smell, taste, physical feeling, and the mind.

The eye is impermanent.

What is impermanent is suffering;

what is suffering is not the self;

what is not the self is to be understood as it is with the highest insight (*paññē*) as,

‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not myself.’

The ear (*sota*) is impermanent ...,

The nose (*ghāṇa*) ...

The tongue (*jīvaṅṅha*) ...

The body (*kāya*) ...

The mind (*manas*) ... (S IV 1 and variously)

2. The Teaching that what is impermanent and suffering is not the self taught as a routine sequence of questions and answers in terms of the five aggregates (*khandhas*): physical form, feeling, formations, perception, and consciousness.

“Is physical form (*rūpa*) permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent.”

“Is what is impermanent suffering or happiness?”

“Suffering.”

“Is what is impermanent, suffering and subject to change fit to be regarded thus:

‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self’?”

“No.”

“Is feeling (*vedanā*) permanent or impermanent...”

“Is apperception (*saññā*) ...”

“Are formations (*saṅkhārā*) ... “

“Is consciousness (*viññāṇa*) permanent or impermanent?”

Etc.

“Therefore any kind of material form whatever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all material form should be seen as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

Any kind of feeling, etc.” (MN, Vol. I, 138f, translation from Walshe)

### **Indoctrination, Induction And The Shamanic Transmission Of Knowledge**

What is particularly noteworthy in the passages containing the Buddha’s Teaching of “no-self” quoted above is that they look suspiciously like *indoctrinations*! Although there are some cases of philosophical arguments against other positions, there are many examples of the formulae quoted above.

Why should there be so much indoctrination in a teaching, where potential converts are invited to come and see, i.e. to test for themselves? (*ehi-passika*)

It is well-known that hypnosis is easily induced when there is sensory deprivation or sensory repetition. Meditation requires sensory deprivation. Moreover there is sensory repetition, for example, in observing the breathing, which is basic to Buddhist meditation practice. My proposition is that these passages are not so much indoctrinations – although they do, in fact, indoctrinate – as

much as *inductions*. They serve as auto-suggestion, or auto-hypnotic messages designed to induce a particular altered state of consciousness, namely, that of “no-self.” When the monks sat down to meditate (perhaps at the foot of a tree), having learned by heart, studied and been in-doctrinated into the ideas expressed in the passages above and in other similar passages, they would tell themselves with regard to all the experiences that arose “This is not the ‘self’” or “This is not mine, I am not this, this is not myself.” They would be using one of the many available *anatt€* – “No-self” experience inductions. Through it, all that would be left to those for whom the inductions worked would be the experience of the altered state of consciousness of “No-self.”

One of the shaman’s tasks is to induce his followers into altered states of consciousness. This is one of the ways in which he transmits his knowledge. Many elements in the Buddha’s method are capable of inducing shamanic states of consciousness. These include solitude, moderate eating (Vinaya [the texts on discipline] shows how few monks could cope with the periods of fasting), sensory deprivation, and Breathwork (*€n€p€nasati Sutta*). Felicitas Goodman, in her extraordinary work on trance and posture, has already shown that when trance is induced, “without an absolute commitment to a mythology, ... there (is) nothing to give cohesion to the experiences....The trance experience itself is vacuous....If no belief system is proffered, it will remain vacuous.” The shamanic trance experience requires a belief system to give it its meaning.

The formulations of the “no-self” Teaching were the Buddha’s way of leading his followers into an experience that was consistent with his Teaching. The followers had to be in-doctrinated first, and clear inductions into the required state had to be given, because, as Gombrich has said, the Buddha’s position and that of the brahmins was very close – close enough for him to call whether or not the Buddha believed in a self a pseudo-problem.

The inductions alone, however, were not enough. Simply practising the inductions did not necessarily lead to the ecstatic, or trance, or altered state of consciousness experience of “no-self” which the Buddha, as shaman, offered to his followers as a cure for their suffering. In-doctrination was essential as the Buddha’s “no-self” inductions could as easily lead the practitioner to the experience of the Self in the Brahmanical or Jungian sense as to the “no-self” experience that the Buddha taught, i.e. they could just as easily lead a disciple to enter the ecstatic state offered by a rival shaman!

## **BREATHWORK AND THE SHAMANIC PATTERN**

The shamanic pattern occurs too in Breathwork. By “Breathwork” I mean working professionally with conscious breathing techniques for purposes of personal and spiritual development and as a method of psychotherapy. Using the breath as the means, consciousness looks at itself, take responsibility at the deepest level, and develops.

### **Birth**

Rebirthing Breathwork got its name because people regressed to their birth trauma and relived it. Stan Grof, who invented Holotropic Breathwork, puts all of life’s experiences into the four stages of birth. Ludwig Janus describes the shaman’s journey as “a graphic reactivation and symbolisation of pre- and perinatal experience.”

### **Youth and Early Adulthood**

#### **Calling**

Clients frequently feel called to breathwork. Choosing and undertaking a therapy of whatever kind is a response to a calling.

## Spiritual Crises

Breathwork, like most other therapies deal with traumas that occurred during youth and early adulthood. Breathwork also deals with pre-conception, conception, placental, birth, and past life traumas. It provides an excellent framework for dealing with spiritual crises.

## Initiation

Breathwork is initiatory. The preparatory elements in this initiation are awareness and grounding. Developing these serves two functions: firstly, it gives the client the means to integrate the larger experiences that follow such as reliving birth, childhood, past life and other traumas, as well as deep altered states of consciousness. Secondly, the development awareness and grounding is a strong commitment to living life in the present, as it really is. It is agreement to being fully alive, here and now in the here-and-now. Initiations are about taking on human life completely, and facing it as it is. The pattern of birth, death and resurrection occurs on all levels.

In advanced breathwork, altered states of consciousness are common. These range from trances of increased awareness and concentration, to the deepest states of meditation. Clients will spontaneously travel out of their body, develop healing capacities, meet their animal and spirit guides, and so forth.

## Practice

Many breathworkers go on to running groups and teaching.

## COMPARING THE SHAMAN LIFE PATTERN AND THE BUDDHA'S LIFE PATTERN

	<b>A Shaman's Life Pattern</b>	<b>The Buddha's Life Pattern</b>	<b>The Breathwork Pattern</b>
<b>Birth</b>	Important	Important	Important
<b>Youth and Early Adulthood</b>	Intense experience, Crisis	Ecstasy Crisis: seeing old age, illness, death and the ascetic	Intense experiences, Crises
<b>Initiation</b>	Apprenticeship Dietary modification Body dismemberment, torture  Solitude Ecstasy, journeying: ascent to heaven, descent, - meeting spirits. Revelation Self-healing Mastery of fire and heat  Animals and nature	Apprenticeship Dietary modification Fasting so severely that he was only skin and bones. Solitude Ecstasy, journeying: ascent to heaven, descent, meeting spirits. Revelation Self-healing Mastery of fire and heat  Animals and nature	Breathwork skills are learned. No extreme practices are imposed.  Ecstasy, etc, happen naturally through breathwork. Revelation, Insight Self-healing Heat can occur in sessions Animal guides may appear during sessions

<b>Professional practice</b>	Teaching, Journeying, Healing, Magic. Ritual paraphernalia that includes: drum, dress, bag, mask	Teaching, Journeying, Healing, magic + criticism of magic. Monk's robes, begging bowl, medicines, etc.	Some clients choose to become professional breathworkers
<b>Death</b>	Suicide or "voluntary departure"	"Voluntary departure"	UNKNOWN

## **WHEN CONSCIOUSNESS LOOKS AT ITSELF: THERAPY, HEALING, CREATIVITY AND THE SHAMANIC PATTERN**

### **Therapy And Altered States Of Consciousness**

Andrew Weil maintains that we are born with a drive to experience altered states of consciousness. Therapy is essentially shamanic and induces altered states of various kinds.

Clients come through being more or less intensely in the crisis stage of their shamanic development. Development and healing occurs when consciousness looks at itself: i.e. when clients agree to be fully self-responsible. Self-responsibility is an essential element in shamanism. Potential shamans become recognised through having healed themselves.

Regression, which can be seen as a form of travelling, is common in most therapies, from Freudian analysis onwards. For Jung "shamanic symbolism is a projection of the individuation process." Body therapies, including dance can be used to enter shamanic states.

### **Shamanism And Mental Illness**

On the controversial relationship between shamanism and mental disease, Walsh says,

What can we make of this curious combination of initial disturbance and subsequent health? Mainstream psychiatry rarely recognizes the possibility of positive outcomes from psychosis; the diagnostic manual does not even mention it. ... Yet a significant number of researchers, some quite eminent, have recognized that psychological disturbances, even including psychoses, may function as growth experiences that result in greater psychological or spiritual well-being. (Walsh, 1990 : 90)

Therapy is rarely an easy process. Many memories that come up are profoundly disturbing. Severe crises are called transpersonal crises, spiritual emergency or spiritual emergence in enlightened circles. Shamanic societies provide a framework for these experiences which is found only rarely in our societies.

### **Creativity and Shamanism**

Creativity is essentially shamanic. In his fascinating book, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, Ellenberger compares the shaman's "initiatory illness" to "creative illnesses," as he designates "the experiences of certain mystics, poets and philosophers." He discusses elements in the development of the great psychiatrists, Freud and Jung and compares them to the general pattern of shamanic development. Noel shows the relationship between shamanism and the imagination, discussing contemporary shamanovelists and shamanthropologists.

It may indeed be that for creativity and invention to take place, it is essential for consciousness to have access to its shamanic dimension.

## THE SHAMANIC PATTERN: A HUMAN UNIVERSAL?

Walsh takes the position that “Some recurring combination of social forces and innate abilities must have repeatedly elicited and maintained shamanic roles, rituals, and states of consciousness.” My view is that they are indispensable. We cannot live well unless we develop access to, and a positive relationship with our naturally occurring shamanic states, from the crises of the Ego, to the Enlightenment of the Soul or No-Self. As Eliade says

Considered from its own point of view, all the strange behaviour of the shaman reveals the highest spirituality; it is, in fact, expressive of an ideology which is coherent and of great nobility. The myths by which this ideology is constituted are among the most beautiful and profound in existence: they are the myths of Paradise and the Fall, of the immortality of primordial man and his conversation with God, or the origin of death and the discovery of the *spirit* in every sense of the word. (Eliade, 1960 : 70)

Consciousness is naturally shamanic. As naturally and as inevitably as consciousness tends to create the experience of Ego or individuality, consciousness tends also to create experiences that go beyond it, namely shamanic experiences.

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## About the Author

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She was a founder member of the International Breathwork Foundation ([www.ibfnetwork.org](http://www.ibfnetwork.org)) and its Newsletter Editor between 1997-2001. She is a major influence in establishing professionalism and professional standards on every level in Breathwork.

# POTENTIAL BREATHWORK SPECIALISATIONS: TRAUMA TREATMENT

## A REVIEW ARTICLE BY JOY MANNÉ

based on

**Babette Rothschild (2000), *The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment.***

(London: W.W. Norton & Co.)

### ON BREATHWORK SPECIALISATIONS

Whether we call what we do ‘therapy’ or ‘personal and spiritual development,’ everyone who works in any form of healing deals with traumatised clients. Many divers (psycho)therapy techniques: the conventional therapies; the body therapies, including massage; and Breathwork bring about regression to traumatic incidents. This book gives good advice on how to avoid retraumatising our clients. No breathworker or other therapist should work with a traumatised client without carefully studying its advice. It is an essential book for all therapists and also for all breathworkers.

Rothschild gives many examples of how to work with trauma based on the therapeutic methods she knows. She does not know Breathwork. It is clear to me that in many of her case histories, Breathwork could have made an equal contribution to the methods she uses.

In our article, ‘An Annotated Booklist for a Breathwork Training,’ Catherine Dowling and I introduced the notion of Breathwork Specialisations (Section 5.4). Some breathworkers already specialise in dealing with particular problems. Ezolaagbo Achikeobi, for example, specialises in black people’s problems while Deike Begg specialises in past life work. We may even allow ourselves to call Bert Hellinger a breathworker who specialises in Family Systems Therapy through the important role that breathwork plays in his Family Constellations, and Franklyn Sills a breathworker who specialises in Craniosacral Biodynamics! And all meditation, yoga and martial arts teachers are (or should be) breathwork specialists. Holotropic Breathwork™ is already a breathwork specialisation, as is Leonard Orr’s Rebirthing Breathwork when it is done in the traditional way.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, although the variety of problems Breathwork deals with is vast, and no one breathworker could become master of all the different areas of psychotherapy that breathwork experiences relate to, there are as yet no formal advanced Breathwork trainings for any specialisations besides Holotropic Breathwork™, and therefore no trainings which deal with specific problems. Hence this review article which is the first in a series.

### The Importance of Theory

I quote what Rothschild says about the importance of theory

One of the ways the therapist can increase the safety of trauma therapy is to be familiar with trauma theory. When the therapist knows what she is doing and why, she is less apt to make mistakes. Theory is more useful than technique, as techniques can fail, but theory rarely lets you down. When one is well versed in the theory of trauma, it is not even necessary to know a lot of techniques, as ideas for interven-

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<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Dowling, 2001; Manné, 1994, 1995, 1997, ; Rajski, 2001.

tions will arise from understanding and applying theory to a particular client, at a particular moment, with a particular trauma. Moreover, when a therapist is well versed in theory, it becomes possible to adapt the therapy to the needs of the client rather than requiring the client to adapt to the demands of a particular technique.

Sometimes teaching the theory itself to the client will be just what is needed.  
(p. 96)

What Rothschild says above about trauma therapy applies, of course, to all specialist branches of therapy, and personal and spiritual development. The Breathwork interventions that I suggest will also be appropriate for trauma therapy will be found in the section ‘The Breathwork Contribution’ below.

## BOOK REVIEW

**Babette Rothschild (2000), *The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment*.** (London: W.W. Norton & Co.)

In her Introduction, Rothschild explains that her book is “a complement to existing books on the theory and treatment of trauma and post traumatic stress disorder [PTSD] and to methods of trauma therapy.” It is a bridge between “the theory developed by scientists, particularly in the area of neurobiology, and the clinical practice of therapists working directly with traumatized individuals and groups” as well as aiming “to connect the traditional verbal psychotherapies and those of body-oriented psychotherapy.” (p. xi) Breathwork is both a verbal and a body-oriented psychotherapy.

The book is divided into two parts, ‘Theory’ and ‘Practice.’

Part I, Theory, begins with a chapter on ‘The Impact Of Trauma On Body And Mind.’ As Rothschild says, “Trauma is a psychophysical experience.” (p. 5) In this chapter she describes, and illustrates with an example, the symptomatology of PTSD, including how the nervous system behaves under threat. Chapter Two gives an account of ‘Development, Memory and the Brain’ to explain memory distortions caused by PTSD. Chapter Three explains somatic memory, particularly addressing the questions “What is meant by somatic memory?” and how understanding of it can be useful in treatment of trauma-related conditions. Her section on ‘Emotions and the Body’ draws attention to how “Emotions, though interpreted and named by the mind, are integrally an experience of the -body,” (p. 56) with many examples of English phrases that illustrate this. One example is “*Anger* – He’s a pain in the neck.” There are interesting subsections on *Anger/Rage*, *Anxiety/Fear/Terror*, *Shame* and *Grief*. (pp. 61-63) There is an important discussion whether the emotional discharge that often accompanies catharsis is useful or not in the treatment of PTSD. (p. 63f). Chapter Four concerns “traumatic dissociation and traumatic flashback (which) are the two most salient features of PTSD.” It is not within my competence to comment critically on Rothschild’s explanation of the neurophysiology of trauma.

The information in the second part of this book is essential for breathworkers.

Part Two begins with a chapter (Chapter 5) ‘First, Do No Harm.’ There is no better advice to therapists. Rothschild says,

Most psychotherapists know all too well just how tricky trauma therapy can be – regardless of the theory or techniques that are being applied. The risk of a client’s becoming overwhelmed, decompensating, having anxiety and panic attacks, flashbacks, or worse, retraumatization, always lingers.” (p. 77) Reports of client’s getting into such overwhelming flashbacks during therapy sessions that the treatment room is misinterpreted as the site of the trauma and the therapist perceived as the perpetrator of the trauma are common. It is also not unusual for clients to become unable to function normally in their daily lives during a course of trauma therapy – some

even requiring hospitalization. Working with trauma seems, universally, to be rather more precarious than other areas of psychotherapy. We talk about the dangers, but we do not usually write about them. (p. 77)

The group of therapists to which Rothschild belongs is not unique in *not* writing about the dangers of retraumatization. Breathworkers also do not generally write about it either (although I am pleased to say that I have, in my book *Soul Therapy*) and yet it happens. Traditional Rebirthing, with its tendency to practice hyperventilation, is likely to induce regressions to severe traumas. The earliest literature claims blithely that it cures all (see Orr & Ray), while there is very little literature yet that discusses problem cases.<sup>11</sup> I hope the International Breathwork Training Alliance will take full account of Rothschild's book and create a module in its programme to teach the dangers of re-traumatization and how to avoid it.

In Chapter Five, Rothschild explains techniques of braking and accelerating and why these are necessary. (See the discussion in the section below: 'The Breathwork Contribution.')

There are useful sections on evaluation and assessment, the role of the therapeutic relationship in trauma therapy, safety in the client's life, developing resources, and creating a safe space. Rothschild stresses the importance of a strong theoretical basis. Chapter Six explains how to use the 'Body as (a) Resource.' She gives techniques on developing body awareness, becoming safe with sensations, using the body as an anchor, a gauge, and a brake to pace arousal. There is a case history that illustrates her method.

Chapter Seven provides additional techniques. She begins with a focus on dual awareness: "being able to maintain awareness of one or more areas of experience simultaneously." (p. 129) There are sections on technique, and then on applying dual awareness to panic and anxiety attacks and flashbacks. There is a discussion on 'Tension vs. Relaxation' with the warning that relaxation can precipitate a trauma reaction. (p. 135) There is a section on 'Physical Boundaries.'

Chapter Eight concerns turning somatic memories to personal history and relegating them to their rightful place in the past, which is the way to heal trauma. This chapter begins with the warning that all therapies do not work for all clients. There is a section on false memories which explains how a memory itself may be true, but the details such as the perpetrator, age or place could be inaccurately remembered. Rothschild gives a case history which demonstrates how easily an invasive experience can be interpreted as a rape. A client had developed feelings of having been raped as a child after his house was burgled. Rothschild said,

"You may or may not have been raped as a child. There is no way to know as you do not remember and there are no records. However, the fact of the recent burglary and subsequent police intrusion is enough to account for your symptoms, your feelings of having been raped. Many people would describe their reaction to such an intrusion as 'feeling as if I have been raped.' ..." (p. 153)

Her good sense and wisdom brought to an end the client's somatic expressions and suicidal tendencies. One can only believe that she was right. There are other examples of simple good sense in this chapter, including taking account that a medication can induce symptoms. Once again there is a case history to illustrate her methods.

This is a wise book by an expert. I should be on the obligatory reading list of all schools of therapy.

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<sup>11</sup> See Manné (19970, p.160) for an experience I had when therapy sessions that the treatment room is misinterpreted as the site of the trauma.

## THE BREATHWORK CONTRIBUTION

Rothschild defines what happens when ‘trauma therapy becomes retraumatizing.’

A client is most at risk for becoming overwhelmed, possibly retraumatized as a result of treatment when the therapy process accelerates faster than he can contain. This often happens when more memories are pressed or elicited into consciousness – images, facts, and/or body sensations – than can be integrated at one time. The major indicator of overly accelerated therapy is that it produces more arousal in the client’s autonomic nervous system (ANS) than he has the physical and psychological resources to handle. It is like an automobile speeding out of control, the driver unable to find and/or apply the brakes.”(p. 78)

I have personal experience of this – hence my concern. It happened to me personally several times during my breathwork training (I was in training from 1985-1987) that experiences came too fast for me to integrate them, and this has happened to many others in that and other trainings. At the time this was not due to negligence on the part of the trainers. Far from it. They were, and are still, careful and respectful people. It happened through the natural ignorance which exists in the early days of a science. Knowledge has to be created.<sup>12</sup> At the time I took my training, breathwork was very new, and almost everything about it had to be discovered. Today, through the influence of the general maturing of the subject, and influential bodies like International Breathwork Foundation, this journal – *The Healing Breath: A Journal of Breathwork Practice, Psychology and Spirituality*, the International Breathwork Training Alliance, and more conscious trainers, fortunately, a general questioning about how to train breathworkers exists.

### Braking and Accelerating through Breathwork

In trauma therapy, the client has to learn how to slow the process down. Rothschild makes the following analogy:

Safe driving involves timely and careful braking combined with acceleration at the rate that the traffic, driver, and vehicle can bear. So does safe trauma therapy. It is inadvisable for a therapist to accelerate trauma processes in clients or for a client to accelerate towards his own trauma, until each first knows how to *hit the brakes* – that is, to slow down and/or stop the trauma process – and can do so reliably, thoroughly and confidently. (p. 79)

She also uses the analogy of a pressure cooker to which she compares the severely traumatised patient: ‘when the pressure is extreme, you risk explosion.’

There are Breathwork techniques for slowing down and stopping. I have written about this in *Soul Therapy* (Chapter 20) where I explain why I decided to slow down the process. In *Breathwork* (forthcoming) I take the subject further and write about how to construct a breathwork process (and why it is necessary to construct it). In this article I have limited myself to illustrating breathwork techniques which achieve the same goal as those used by Rothschild. Here is a case history which gives a method for ‘braking.’

### Case History: ‘I can’t stop crying

Albert came to see me. He had separated from his companion of many years, and although it was his choice, he could not stop crying. It was so uncontrollable that he had been forced to seek medication.

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<sup>12</sup> See the introduction to the second edition (1983) of Orr & Ray, who wrote the first Rebirthing Breathwork book.

We agreed that something, which we did not yet understand, was upsetting him severely – was traumatising him out of his control. We agreed that there was grieving to do. We agreed that we did not want to prevent him from feeling his emotions, but to give him some control over them.

The method I used was to teach him to breathe deeply into his belly and to slow down his breath. I had him place his hands on his belly, one higher than the other so that they did not overlap, to increase the area of sensation, and instructed him to breathe ‘into your hands, so that you can feel your breath caress your palms.’

When the breath is slow and deeply abdominal, grief will not get out of control.

## **Grounding, Awareness and Unloading for the Severely Traumatized Patient**

In her section on evaluation and assessment, Rothschild explains that some patients have experienced a single traumatic event while others have been repeatedly traumatized. In the latter category, those with stable backgrounds, that have imbued them with sufficient resources to be able to separate the individual traumatic events one from the other” can speak about and address one trauma at a time. Others are ‘so overwhelmed with multiple traumas that they are unable to separate one traumatic event from the other.’ These begin ‘talking about one trauma but quickly find links to others.’ (p. 80) For these, I suggest that teaching conscious grounding and awareness first,<sup>13</sup> and then using the breathwork technique of ‘unloading’ will be useful.<sup>14</sup>

Grounding and awareness are especially difficult for a severely traumatized person because they mean being here, in the present, while the instinctive response to trauma is unconsciousness, and repression. Gentle unloading techniques will enable the severely traumatized person to deal with one problem at a time.

### **The Unloading Technique**

Breathwork is a good way to teach grounding and awareness. Once I am convinced that a client is sufficiently grounded and aware for us to start Breathwork, all I do is ask the client. “Put your attention on your breathing and tell me what happens.” The client is to give a phenomenological account, describing bodily feelings and breathing rhythms and when they change. Thoughts and ideas are included in this phenomenology, as they are in Vipassana meditation. The attention to precision and detail inherent in this technique slows the process and enables dealing with each feeling and sensation as it comes up. Starting like this means that the client is doing a lot of talking in early breathwork sessions and I am doing a lot of listening and responding.

### **Unloading and the Therapist-Client Relationship**

Rothschild talks about the importance of the therapeutic relationship for these severely traumatized clients and says quite rightly,

No trauma therapy can or should take place in the absence of a developed, secure relationship between client and therapist. (p. 88)<sup>15</sup>

Talking, and being listened to with empathy, is an essential part of this relationship. It is also a very efficient form of “unloading.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See Manné *Soul Therapy, Breathwork*.

<sup>14</sup> See Manné, *Breathwork*.

<sup>15</sup> On the Breathworker-client relationship, see Wilfried Ehrmann

## Breathwork and Resources

Rothschild proposes that there are five major classes of resources: functional (e.g. a safe place to live), physical (weight training, a martial art), psychological, interpersonal, and spiritual. (p. 88) Breathwork itself provides psychological resources through the insights it brings, and as clients experience control of their sorrow through learning deep abdominal breathing. Frequently people go from individual sessions to group sessions as they feel more competent. Then they are sustained by the warmth, caring and acceptance which is most usually part of a breathwork group. Spiritual experiences may arise in the first breathwork session. As Rothschild says, they provide healing in cases of trauma. The naturally positive and self-responsible approach of breathwork is also in itself a resource.

### Breathwork and the Body as a Resource

In her chapter ‘The Body As A Resource’ Rothschild says,

The potential benefits of being able to use the body as a resource in the treatment of trauma and PTSD, regardless of the treatment model, cannot be overemphasized. ... Employing the client’s own awareness of the state of his body – his perception of the precise, coexisting sensations that arise from external and internal stimuli – is a most practical tool in the treatment of trauma and PTSD. (p. 100)

Results in breathwork are achieved precisely through the client’s learning how to perceive precisely “the ... coexisting sensations that arise from external and internal stimuli.” Rothschild gives an exercise to achieve this body awareness. It begins:

- First, do not move. Notice the position you are sitting in right now.
- What sensations do you become aware of? Scan your whole body: notice your head, neck, chest, back, stomach, buttocks, legs, feet, arms, hands.

It is possible to achieve the same results with breathwork. When clients have little precise body perception, the instruction “Put your attention on your breathing and tell me what happens,” can be used to achieve the same goal. Clients will report on changes in bodily sensations, breathing rhythms, and so forth, and the breathworker can support this process by asking “What happened,” every time she observes a change. Rothschild says, “With clients who are unable to identify and name their emotions ... establishing body awareness is invaluable.” (p. 107) The identification of emotions and the relationship between sensations and emotions is developed through this method of breathwork. Rothschild says further, “Awareness of current body sensations can anchor one in the present ... facilitating separation of past from present.” (p. 107) This method of breathwork is concerned with immediate feelings and sensations. The breath itself is used as an anchor or form of grounding.<sup>17</sup>

The breath can be used to make feeling safer by slowing down the experience of sensations. A client can be asked to relax his jaw, and to breath very lightly and shallowly – but not rapidly! – into the top of his chest. This way of breathing is *not* to be confused with hyperventilation. The light breathing is fully consciously controllable by the client and results in the easing and lightening of emotions. It is a brake and braking reduces hyperarousal and panic attacks. (p. 115)

Rothschild says,

Through its sensory storage and messaging system, the -body holds many keys to a wealth of resources for identifying, accessing, and resolving traumatic experiences. (p. 116)

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<sup>16</sup> See Manné, *Breathwork*, for a full explanation of ‘Unloading.’

<sup>17</sup> For exercises for grounding through the breath, see Manné, *Soul Therapy*.

The breath is one of these keys.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, if breathwork is to be used with severely traumatised clients, the breathworker should be professionally trained in working with trauma. As Rothschild points out, there are situations where teaching body awareness is contraindicated. (p. 106) All bodyworkers should be aware of these limits.

## What about that Breathwork maxim – ‘Trusting the Process’?

Rothschild says,

Optimally, the pace of the therapy should be no slower than necessary, but no quicker than the client can tolerate while maintaining daily functioning. (p. 80)

Breathwork is in principle only suitable for clients with “Sufficient Available Functioning Adult Autonomy” – SAFAA (Mowbray, p. 183), although I believe that as breathwork specialisations start developing, and specialised breathworkers are produced, Breathwork will be found useful and beneficial also for more severe problems and more disturbed people. When the breathwork process goes too fast, many Rebirthers and other breathworkers arm themselves with slogans, such as “trusting the process,” “it was meant to happen” etc, to justify and make sense of breathwork induced experiences that are very difficult to integrate. Therapy and Personal and spiritual development are never easy.<sup>19</sup> As long as the client has SAFAA, psyche will cope. Severely traumatised people may not have SAFAA and hence require specialist treatment. In any case, the process can only be trusted when neither the method nor the practitioner interferes with it. Unless the practitioner is well-trained in therapy, and knows how not to interfere, such slogans are likely to be excuses for sloppy training and practice.

## CONCLUSION

Many of the techniques Rothschild’s book teaches are fundamental in breathwork. If one takes the techniques described in Chapter 5, it is clear that the breath is an excellent tool for breaking and accelerating. Breathwork, too, is focussed on developing resources, especially the body (see Chapter 6). Dual awareness is naturally developed through breath awareness, otherwise breathwork clients would make no progress. Breathwork also naturally works with somatic memories and heals them.

It may be, then, that with the right training, that gentle breathwork could become another very effective means of treating trauma, and that the treatment of trauma could become a specialisation developed within breathwork. The potential exists.

## Finally A Warning

I have argued in this paper that Breathwork can be used for trauma treatment, and I have given some examples in the form of case histories and exercises. *Treatment of severe trauma is the work of specialists*, like Rothschild. If breathworkers wish to specialise, they *must* be responsible and take appropriate specialist. Babette Rothschild works and teaches in many countries. Who better to train with than her?

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<sup>18</sup> See Begg, Dowling, Hendricks, Manné, Morningstar and Taylor for case histories.

<sup>19</sup> See Caplan.

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## RESOURCES

*The Healing Breath: A Journal of Breathwork Practice, Psychology and Spirituality*, edited by Joy Manné, available through [www.i-breathe.com](http://www.i-breathe.com).

The Inner Door - <http://www.breathwork.com/member2.html>

Holotropic Breathwork: [www.holotropic.com](http://www.holotropic.com); [gtt@holotropic.com](mailto:gtt@holotropic.com). Tel. (415) 499-4601; fax (415) 499-5740. Grof Transpersonal Training – [www.holotropic.com](http://www.holotropic.com). Association for Holotropic Breathwork International – [www.breathwork.com](http://www.breathwork.com).

International Breathwork Foundation – [www.ibfnetwork.org](http://www.ibfnetwork.org)

International Breathwork Training Alliance – [www.breathworkalliance.org](http://www.breathworkalliance.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](http://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), a discerning person's guide to personal and spiritual development, which has been translated into Spanish; the shamanovel *The Way of the Breath* freely available at [www.i-breathe.com/wayofbreath](http://www.i-breathe.com/wayofbreath); and *The Breathwork Process: From Rebirthing Breathwork through Conscious Breathing Techniques to Shamanic Breathwork and Breathwork Meditation* (forthcoming, 2003).

She was a founder member of the International Breathwork Foundation ([www.ibfnetwork.org](http://www.ibfnetwork.org)) and its Newsletter Editor between 1997-2001. She is a major influence in establishing professionalism and professional standards on every level in Breathwork.

## BOOK REVIEWS

[Kylea Taylor](#) (2003) (ed), *Exploring Holotropic Breathwork: Selected Articles from a Decade of The Inner Door*. Santa Cruz, CA: Hanford Mead Publishers, Inc.

[Soren Gordhamer](#) (1995), *Meetings with Mentors: A young adult interviews leading Visionaries*. Santa Cruz, California: Hanford Mead Publishers.

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

[Dina Glouberman](#) (2002), *The Joy of Burnout: How the end of the world can be a new beginning*. GB: Hodder Mobius.

**Kylea Taylor (2003) (ed), *Exploring Holotropic Breathwork: Selected Articles from a Decade of The Inner Door*. Santa Cruz, CA: Hanford Mead Publishers, Inc.**

In her preface to this outstanding collection of articles on Holotropic Breathwork, the editor, Kylea Taylor humbly calls *The Inner Door* a “newsletter.” It is much more than that, as this collection of articles amply demonstrates. *The Inner Door* would be much better described as a valuable journal which publishes informative, high quality articles on Holotropic Breathwork™ (HB). It goes much deeper into theory, practice, and issues than does the usual newsletter.

Holotropic Breathwork was invented by Stanislav and Christina Grof. It has by far the most developed theoretical bases than any other form of Breathwork. Its richness shows in the diversity of sections in the Table of Contents: “Introduction to Holotropic Breathwork;” “Holotropic Breathwork and Related Theory;” “Practicing Holotropic Breathwork;” “Holotropic Breathwork and Trauma Recovery;” “...and Addiction Recovery;” “... and Physical Healing;” “... and Living Life;” “... and Astrology;” “... and Kundalini;” “... and Shamanism;” “... and Therapeutic Systems;” “... and other Spiritual Systems;” “Holotropic Breathwork History and News;” “Holotropic Breathwork and Research;” “Global Holotropic Breathwork;” “Holotropic Breathwork Forms.” Within these sections “Eighty-five different authors have contributed a total of 144 articles and poems, five informed consent forms, and three research questionnaires.” (p. 8) Each article has an abstract.

What among all this richness can a reviewer choose to illustrate the quality of this book? In the first article, “Radar to the Infinite: HB and the Integral Vision,” Martin Boroson, the author of *Becoming Me* ([www.becomingme.com](http://www.becomingme.com)) defines HB:

A technique ... in which clients gain access to a non-ordinary state of consciousness through deep, fast breathing. This process is strengthened by evocative music, and is supported by a considerable degree of preparation and personal attention. Clients lie on a mattress and close their eyes, but are free to move their bodies, or cry, scream, sing, chant, shout, move, spit up, meditate, laugh, yawn, *etc.*, as the inner experience demands.

In this state of consciousness, clients can remember, discover and explore any level of the spectrum of consciousness. (p. 30)

In HB there is the client who receives the session, and the Sitter who accompanies it. Sitting is of fundamental importance. There is an inspiring article by Jack Silver that compares sitting to meditation:

My first Breathing experience was not memorable; my first Sitting was unforgettable. ... I looked up and was overwhelmed with emotion. My heart had opened up,

and I was caring not only for my Breather (my beloved), but the room as well. I felt I was sitting for the World. The joy, exaltation, pain and sorrow of the World flowed through me as I witnessed. Later I mused that the real teaching was the Sitting, the Breathing only a means of distracting our attention away from attainment-oriented practices, while the effect of directed attention, compassion-in-action, and opening of the heart occurred and became manifest. (“Here I Sit” p. 313ff)

It is essential in HB that the Sitter offers no interpretations. Cary Sparks (“COEX Systems and Biographical Trauma: Working Multi-Dimensionally in HB”) points out that “most Western psychology is attached to causes of trauma being rooted in early biographical events (thus) it can be difficult, even when we have grown to understand an extended cartography of the psyche, to see outside of a one-dimensional paradigm.” (p. 46f) By not interpreting the client’s experience, “situations where Facilitators have a limited interpretation of emerging material ... and impose it” (p. 48) are avoided. This carefulness is an essential part of the sensitive, well-thought out practice of HB.

Ray Kelly discusses the controversial subject memories of abuse in “Mask Memories:”

Isn’t it interesting that when we have an experience of being raped by a tribe of aborigines in a ceremony of coming of age, we can easily call it a Second Matrix or Third Matrix experience. We can call it a ‘past life,’ and we can otherwise dissociate from it. We experience the terror and the futility, the horror and the grief, but then we can rationalize that it was something other than our current life. However, when a trapped experience or a struggle with rape of physical abuse puts the face of someone that we know on it, we automatically see it as real. For some reason, because we can identify someone, it is no longer a metaphor. Does this mean it is *not* real? I do not know. Sometimes, in my opinion, neither does the person having the experience, even though they may swear it is real. (p. 90)

Kelly’s choice when his clients ‘remember’ abuse by a known person is to have them do five more breathwork sessions before any confrontation. This is a very wise article, and a very wise approach.

HB is more than “just a method.” Ken Sloan intelligently discusses “Breathwork, Community, and the Spiritual Path.” (p. 139ff) Anne Høivik, shows the importance of poetry and art in “Ways of Integration.” (p. 162-165) And as HB is *also* a method, there are advanced trainings for practitioners which deal with particular problems: Ingrid Pacey’s articles “Using HB with Multiples” (p. 184-187) and “Breathwork with Trauma Survivors: Ten Years Later” (p. 188-193) are among the many examples.

What about physical healing? Does Breathwork heal? is a question that is often asked. Many articles attest to the healing value of breathwork.

What about when one partner does Breathwork and the other does not? This is sensitively addressed by Carolyn Green in “Relationships Post-Breathwork. (p.330f) What about how to cope after doing deep work? How to integrate after an HB session is explained in “After the Group” by Ingrid Pacey and Wendy Barrett (p. 571-574) and “Integration and Aftercare” by Lynda Griebenow and Scott Egleston (p. 575f).

Stan Grof has given suggestions for eight research projects for HB that could be applied to any form of breathwork. (“Suggested Research Projects” pp. 517-519)

I could go on, but I won’t. If you are interested in any kind of Breathwork, you will have to read this book. It may be long, but the articles are short, pithy and very interesting, every one of them! I read it through from beginning to end. You may like to dip into it. If you are a breathworker – Holotropic or otherwise - it is indispensable to have this book, as a reference volume to look up issues that concern you and your client, and discover ways of working with them.

A reviewer is supposed to find something to criticize, but I don’t really. Articles are well, but not excessively supplied with references. There is a good Index. Maybe Max Rossler’s article “Pre-monitory Vision in HB” (pp. 115f) should have been in the Shamanism section? Articles written to

compare HB with Rebirthing come down in favour of HB – but what else could happen in an HB volume? I myself do not see this as a choice – why deprive oneself? I see it rather as a “both – and” situation!

Maybe there should have been more illustrations of the mandalas that are a feature of HB sessions besides the one the cover by Daria Kulenkamp? This would, of course, have put up the price of a book that already seems expensive, unless we count the pages and measure the excellence. Grof has already proposed, in “Suggested Research Projects,” that slides of mandalas should be collected. I would like to encourage Kylea Taylor, who has written some of the most important books and articles in *Breathwork*, to produce a book on this subject alone. It is surely worthy.

This is an essential source of information and reference book, not only for HB, but for all forms of breathwork. It sets the standard and should be required reading for all *Breathwork* trainees, no matter which form of breathwork they practice. Its editor is to be congratulated. Her love and respect for her discipline is shown in the physical beauty and grace of this book from the cover picture, through the quality of the articles whose abstracts facilitates its use as a work of reference, to the faultless editing. *Breathwork*, in its great diversity and efficacy, needs and deserves many more books of this quality.

*Exploring Holotropic Breathwork* has its own website:

[http://www.hanfordmead.com/exploring\\_holotropic\\_breathwork.asp](http://www.hanfordmead.com/exploring_holotropic_breathwork.asp)

**Soren Gordhamer (1995), *Meetings with Mentors: A young adult interviews leading Visionaries.* Santa Cruz, California: Hanford Mead Publishers.**

The author was twenty four in 1975 when he wrote this book, which consists of thirteen interviews with American psychologists, philosophers and writers who he deeply respected. . .He had lived for a year at the Esalen Institute, that powerhouse of transpersonal and personal development, where he met or heard of those he has now interviewed. Their distilled wisdom is offered here to other young people. I turned first to those names which I recognise as writers who have influenced me also. Jack Kornfield, Ram Dass, Arnold Mindell.

“On Spiritual Practice,” the first section, tells Jack Kornfield’s early life story, and how this brought him to the study of Meditation in Asia, training with monks and spending a year alone in a room in silence. The Question and answer format makes for lively reading. It brings out the practical information that young people might want to know with regard to what meditation can and cannot do for you.

Brother David Steindl-Rast on Finding your boat and Keeping it afloat, Starhawk on The Goddess and Ritual, and Richard Strozzi Heckler on Aikido and the Warrior Spirit, describe their involvement in Zen, women’s spirituality, and Aikido practice. Their names are new to me, but they are clearly people who have developed rich and intense lives.

The Second section, “On the Earth,” consists of different views on ecology. Sam Keen “staying in one place is what’s required to develop community and an ecologically valid style of life”... raises more questions than answers for the young adult seeking a way to live his life. Malidoma Some, born in West Africa and carried off from his tribe to be educated by harsh French Jesuits, talks about Ritual and Initiation. He eventually escaped the Jesuits and fled back to his tribe seven years later, literate but having missed out on the tribal initiation ceremony which takes six weeks. Now a Californian resident, and having belatedly endured the ritual of his tribe, he has become a writer and traveller, with a message for young people about the importance of staying close to the Earth. Joan Halifax, Buddhist, anthropologist and ecologist who has written about Shamanism and explored indigenous cultures throughout the world, has similar views on the need to keep in touch with nature: “Going into the wilderness is an extraordinary way to enter a world where our

sense of self- the identity box we put ourselves in – starts to expand so we understand that we are one small creation which is also a part of nature”

In the third section, “On Social Action,” Arnold Mindell gives a telephone interview, due to his busy work schedule. It gives a flavour of the man and his varied activities: his writings on dreams and process-oriented psychology. To interview Teru Imai, the author had to catch up with her on a walking pilgrimage, Global Walk for a Liveable World, in Pakistan at that moment. A Japanese-American woman, she walked across the USA., through Eastern Europe, India, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Japan. Her commitment and dedication to the life of the spirit, turning away from material comforts and experiencing the adventure of travelling light and creating a community wherever she walks is both extraordinary and inspiring.

John Robbins son of a well known American icecream company Director, walked away from his inheritance, took up farming, became a writer on food and healthy living, then founded the Earthsave Foundation, concerned with the environment, and animal rights. In this interview, he deeply impressed me with his integrity and clear thinking about the way to live spiritually, socially and practically in the world today. A worthy mentor.

“On Service and Spirit,” the fourth part, introduced me to Ondrea Levine, the wife of the well known writer Stephen Levine, the author of *Who dies?* They both have been involved deeply with work with the dying, counselling and healing. Ondrea, once a young sixties hippy trying out psychedelic drugs and a wild lifestyle, learned early that her vocation was to work with the elderly and the dying. She herself has experienced serious illnesses, and has learned “For every wound there is a healing period. If you are willing to look deeply into your wounds, you can see the grace in them...” Her conclusion from her life’s lessons is that loving is the ultimate wisdom we need.” Another inspiring mentor.

The final interview is with Ram Dass whose spiritual quest led him a long way from being a formal Freudian professor at Harvard. His early background focused on achievement in education, as in many Jewish families, but in the sixties he too found psychedelic drugs and also mystical literature. Confused, he went to India and studied with Maharajji, a Guru who inspired him and thousands of others. Ram Dass passes on the new perspectives he learned there, which led him to work with the dying and to appreciate the wisdom of the universe. The interview shows him as human, fallible and deeply spiritual, and well aware of the need for balance.

In the “Epilogue” the author reflects on how he has been affected by making these interviews and concludes: “Whatever we create must be created together, no one person has the answers.” Each contributor has learned from others to attain their own truth, to find a direction in life, including a spiritual path, as so many of us want to do. You can surely find a Mentor here to speed the process.

Vivienne Silver-Leigh

**Aaron Hoopes (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 it a pleasure.

Having read many books on the art of living, in my opinion this one contains the essence 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 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, simply 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, perhaps 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, and 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, and create energy so that feelings of physical 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

**Dina Glouberman (2002), *The Joy of Burnout: How the end of the world can be a new beginning*. GB: Hodder Mobius.**

In her first chapter, 'The Hidden Message of Burnout,' Glouberman says,

Burnout is one of the words that seem to define this moment in history. No longer an unusual event, it has become part of a normal life cycle, along with midlife crisis, stress, and serious chronic illness, all of which have connections with burnout. And rather than being a one-off event, it can recur again and again in different forms as we grapple with certain fundamental issues. It often begins in a single sphere of our lives, but it can tend to spread everywhere. (p. 2)

There's no arguing with that! Almost all of us who live in affluent societies are overloaded with information, communications of all kinds, the excessive demands of technology by which we are mastered, rather than of which we are masters, and the choice of pleasures now so easily available! We are all susceptible to burnout from these excesses. How are we to deal with it? Dina Glouberman has a good answer.

This book is in three parts: the introduction 'the Hidden Message of Burnout,' 'The Burnout Trail: from Wholeheartedness to Burnout' and 'Radical Healing: from Burnout to Joy.' Throughout Glouberman shares her own experience of burnout, and provides other case histories, in particular that of her friend, the writer Sue Townsend who has been brave enough to share her experiences in great depth too. As one may expect from the author of *Life Choices, Life Changes: Develop Your Personal Vision with Imagework* (Hodder Mobius, 2003) – the only book on imagework you will ever need to read – there is practical, creative imagework in every chapter.

Chapter One takes us through the signs of burnout, gives a case history, and comforts us by informing us that 'we are not alone' if we recognise ourselves in her list of symptoms. (p. 6) Burnout is set in its context, which includes 'the dark night of the soul.' There is an outline of the current research, which is meagre. Glouberman's approach is to take burnout positively:

... if we are open to its message ... it asks to become more who we really are. .. It is part of an evolutionary process ... we are evolving beings ... The more we evolve, the greater the cost to us of not following our intuitive longings. (p. 9f)

This book is carefully constructed for people who may be suffering from burnout and haven't the strength to read it through. The contents of each chapter are carefully explained and a short cut through it is indicated. (p. 13) It would be a shame to take this short cut, however, as the book is truly excellent.

Part Two, 'The Burnout Trail' begins with a chapter that reassures us: 'Don't Take it Too Personally' and provides 'the bigger picture. Here Glouberman discusses the conflict between our vision of a meaningful life, and what is really possible. She is realistic:

Whatever we do, we must have the humility to recognize that we won't get it 'right'. The story of being human emerges in each telling. There isn't a manual someone neglected to give us, a pre-existing story with a happy ending that we need to discover, or a viable future to walk into. (p. 37)

Chapters 3 to 9 take us through the descent into burnout, including the quest for specialness, and the loss of what used to be inspiring and energising. We are given the means to discover what changed that caused our descent, and why we became afraid, ignored warning signals and did not say 'yes' or 'no' at the important time. We are shown how to go beyond burnout. On the way there are wonderful, deeply insightful discussions:

**What is the Soul?**

Most people have a felt sense of the meaning of the word 'soul'. When we try to describe it, we come up with words like: our true self, our values, the eternal part of us, our highest and best purpose, our creative spark, our love, our human spirit, the part of us that knows, our essence, our being. ...

The soul, as it is generally understood, operates according to a different set of meanings than that of our everyday personality. The soul's meanings are more to do with being and loving and what it's all about and why things are the way they are, while our every day personality is concerned with control, success, approval, managing the status quo and achieving personal goals. Our heart speaks of both worlds and can be a link between the two. (p. 58)

Part Three is about Radical Healing, the path from burnout to joy. Chapter 10 teaches us how to wait and listen. Chapter 11 is about giving up the hope that our old dreams will come true, and at the same time keeping faith in ourselves. It contains an insightful exercise on 'forgiving life.' Chapter 12 is about providing our soul with a healing environment, which happens through acceptance. Chapter 13 teaches us how to live truthfully, putting 'our true self first and everything else second.' (p. 206) Chapter 14 encourages us to become part of a community which lives in the same way, and the last chapter is about keeping connected to the joy of 'having let go of old ways of worrying, controlling and driving (our)selves, and having begun to enjoy (our)selves, doing the simple things in life, feeling more whole and integrated ...' (p. 239)

This is a seminal book, and a book for everyone. It is well researched and very accessibly written. Glouberman is gifted with an enviably simple, clear style. Her wisdom and common humanity pervade every page. She is rich in insight and perception, and at the same time humble. Her exercises and questionnaires are outstanding and while one can work through this book on one's own. I hope that she is giving workshops around it. Before one is burned out is the best time to avoid becoming burned out. Whether one is burned out or not, one can learn tremendously from this profound book.

Joy Manné, PhD