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A PATH TOWARDS WHOLENESS: INTEGRATING MIND, EMOTIONS, BODY, AND SPIRIT THROUGH BREATH

BY

KAREN ARMANDI

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ABSTRACT

Breathing and breath work is an effective, powerful tool by which people can improve their mental, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. The idea that breathing practices and breath awareness lead to wholeness and self-mastery is an ancient one.

Wholeness is experienced when all parts of our being are acting in harmony. The application of breath work and breathing practices can lead to an experience of wholeness. By becoming aware of our breathing patterns we can learn how to manage the negative effects of such psychological states as anxiety and distress.

¹ 05/06/2007 Doctoral Qualifying Paper, GLBP 9621, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. Dr. William Braud. Dr. Kartik Patel.

Therapeutic breath work and breathing practices increase awareness of our breathing patterns and hence our ability to regulate the rhythm of our breath. Our breath directly affects the autonomic nervous system. When we learn to regulate our autonomic nervous system, we increase our chances of experiencing emotional balance and physical wellbeing. In other words, breathe well and be well.

The more we are able to experience an easeful integration of all parts of our being, the more easily we are able to move towards wholeness.

INTRODUCTION

My belief in the power of the breath is the outcome of my earlier experiences with the spiritual practice of pranayama. The word pranayama is comprised of two roots: prana and ayama. Prana means life force. Ayama is defined as expansion in the Sanskrit language. Pranayama means expansion of life force and is generally defined as the practice of breath control. To date, of all the yogic practices, pranayama has led me to my most transformative, growth producing experience. It was through the pranayama practice of Sudarshan Kriya (SK), a rhythmic breathing process, that I have been inspired to investigate the possibility that breathing practices might lead others towards wholeness and healing. The word Sudarshan translated from its original Sanskrit meaning is; su=good and darshan=vision. The word kriya means purifying action. Therefore Sudarshan Kriya means good purifying action.

After my first week of daily SK breathing practice with the guidance of an experienced teacher, I became very clear about a challenging life situation. By realizing my true feelings, I was able to make the necessary changes. I resolved a yearlong inner conflict after one week of intense practice.

Dr. Sharon Sageman (2003), assistant professor of psychiatry at Columbia University, gave a talk at the international symposium on the science of breath in which she stated that according to SK literature: "...rather than allowing the emotions to alter the breath (and cause physiological changes which may prove unhealthy) one can skillfully use the breath to transform one's emotional state" (p. 29). SK certainly did this for me and I would like to present evidence that breath work can empower others towards positive changes too.

THE POWER OF BREATH AND BREATHING

The first act we perform when we come into this world is to breathe. We inhale life into our body. When we leave this world, we release ourselves from this life with our last breath. Breathing is the most vital process of the body. It influences the activities of each and every cell. The breath is intimately linked to all aspects of human experience. It is

important to consider the possibility that the way we breathe can empower our lives. Living an empowered life through conscious breathing is an ancient idea that describes a life with a spiritual center focused on healing and illumination. In this sense, I understand breath as a life force. Thousands of years ago, Eastern yogis and Chinese sages developed powerful systems of breath control and breath observation that they used for healing and attaining enlightenment. These ancient teachings are potent because they tap into the spiritual life force.

All living organisms breathe. In order to live we breathe but breathing is more than the act of keeping ourselves alive. Breath unites mind, body, and spirit. To understand the power of the breath in this way, we need to consider the act of breathing as understood through physiotherapeutic evidence. We inhale and we exhale. Are we conscious or unconscious of this act that may be either voluntary or involuntary? How does this act affect us? *In Psychotherapy East and West: A unifying paradigm*, Swami Ajaya (1997) describes such evidence through the work of Proskauer. He says, "A respected physiotherapist, Magda Proskauer, has declared that the breath forms a bridge between the conscious and unconscious" (p. 197). In her own work, Proskauer stated that the act of breathing creates a bridge between the body and the psyche and shared her following observations from her many years in private practice:

It becomes evident that body and psyche act as a unit, so awareness can come by approaching one or the other. This is so because body and psyche are two aspects of the same reality, two poles of life, two manifestations of the whole of the personality that are in steady interaction. To bridge the gap between these two extremes, we may start from the point of view that our physical behavior corresponds to a psychic pattern, according to the law of synchronicity, not of causality. (Proskauer, 1969, p. 257)

This leads me ask: What is most useful to understand about the act of breathing in relation to well-being? While I will attempt to answer this question with this paper, I do not intend to reconcile the many different approaches and opinions about this subject.

Over the past seventy years, the nature of the breath and the potential use of breathing practices, have raised a great deal of controversy in the various schools of somatic psychology as well as in various lineages of spiritual training. One has to survey many different disciplines in order to fully characterize even "normal" human breathing. One sample of the many disciplines, which describe breathing, include respiratory physiology, psychoanalytic models, and esoteric teachings of breathing practices. Clearly the task of coming to a clear explanation of breathing can be daunting.

Buddhist breathing practices are cited as a means to the realization or full awareness of mind and body united as one. Buddhist meditation master, Thich Nhat Hanh, recommends the integration of breath awareness with everyday life situations. He explains

his views by sharing his interpretation of *The sutra on the full awareness of breathing* quoted by Douglas-Klotz (1997) in his journal article as follows:

Breathing and body are one. Breathing and mind are one. Mind and body are one. At the time of observation, mind is not an entity, which exists independently, outside of your breathing and your body. The boundary between the subject of observation and the object of observation no longer exists. We observe the body in the body. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1988, p. 75)

It is remarkable that through an act as simple as breathing, that is, the practice of focusing our attention on the breath, we are able to connect with the essence of life. To me this means that breathing allows us to be fully aware in the present moment, leading us to the realization that our mind, body, and spirit are one. It has been said in many different ways for a very long time. As stated by Matsumoto (1977):

From ancient times it is the regulation of respiration that has been made most of in Zen practice as the first step towards the Zen meditation. Of course, the breath-regulation is not achieved in itself independently, but it can be achieved by uniting what may be called the mind-regulation, the breath-regulation, and the body-regulation. (p. 190)

Breathing practices are also a means of gaining self-mastery. As stated in the ancient Hindu spiritual text, *The Bhagavad Gita*, "The glory of India's ancient sages is that they discovered the liberating truth: to control the breath is to control the mind" (Paramahansa Yogananda, 1995, p. 639). When I consider the wisdom of *The Bhagavad Gita* in relation to my personal experience with breathing I understand that the way I breathe affects my entire being. By becoming aware of the subtleties of breath, one is able to regulate the breath. I believe that the way we breathe is the key to inner awareness. Learning to consciously and deliberately regulate the breath is an effective practice because it allows the harmonizing of all the parts of our being particularly those aspects related to emotional health.

"More recently, pranayama has been categorized into balancing practices, vitalizing practices and tranquilizing practices. According to Swami Muktibodhananda (1998), one of the most important aspect of pranayama is kumbhaka. Kumbhaka means the ways in which pranayama can be practiced utilizing the retention of the breath. The breath can either be held internally or externally. It is through the practice of kumbhaka that different affects can be created within the body. More specifically, the way the pranic body is affected as a result of the practicing kumbhaka is better understood by gaining an understanding of the prana vayu. Yavu means air. "Prana vayu moves throughout the whole body like waves of energy. It can be likened to an electro magnetic field where the energy is in constant motion" (Swami Muktibodhananda, 1998, p. 153).

The five main functions of vayu are known as apana, prana, samana, udana and vyana. Prana is the inhalation, apana is the exhalation, samana the time between inhalation and exhalation, and the udana, the extension of samana. As described further by Swami Muktibodhanada (1998):

All the processes which affect absorption or inward movement of the subtle cosmic force are due to prana, Those which affect elimination or outward movement are due to apana. Assimilation, preservation and continuation are the work of samana. Ascension and refining are the work of udana, and pervasiveness is the property of vyana. (p.155)

By becoming aware of the manifestation and processes of the five functions of vayu, I believe it is more possible to further understand how breathing practices can be used as a harmonizing practice.

BREATH AND THE EMOTIONS

To begin my inquiry of breath and emotions, I want to show that breathing, as a harmonizing practice, is an ancient notion now supported by scientific studies and evidence. This is important to note because modern science has shown that the way we breathe has a profound impact upon our emotional and mental health as evidenced in a study on the effects of breath therapy in mitigating chronic low-back pain. "The gentler the physical therapy (e.g., focusing on breathing), the more similar to breath therapy the emotional statements were: "calmness", "less anxiety", "sense of emotional strength", "encouraged", "uplifting", "more emotional awareness" (Mehling, Hamel, Acree, Byl, Hecht, 2005, p. 50). Clearly when emotions are stabilized through breath work, physical and emotional pain are more likely to subside. When there is less pain there is, of course, more of a sense of wellness.

Ancient spiritual traditions considered breathing to be the harmonizing force of mind and body, as we can understand from the journal article *Psycho-physiological studies on respiratory patterns*, (Nakamizo, 1977) quotes the writing of F. E. Dunbar (1935) in *Emotions and Bodily Changes*, who says "The use of the Homeric word diaphragm as the seat of emotions indicates that the intimate connection between emotions and respiration was familiar to ancients" (p. 137). This connection is apparent to anyone who has observed children when in an upset emotional state.

Conversely, the effects of breathing on emotions and behavior have only been scientifically studied over the last seventy years. What follows is a review of one such study on the effects of the breath on conditioned emotions:

(Anderson and Parmenter, 1941; Caldwell, 1946, 1986; Gantt, 1944; Goldman, 1939; Masserman, 1943; Minami et al., 1943) make it clear that emotional arousal gives rise to condition able changes in ventilation. The issue to be considered here

centers on the effects of voluntary changes in ventilation on emotional arousal. It appears that the connection between emotions and breathing is a reciprocative relationship in which changes in one lead to corresponding changes in the other. For example, if you are angered, but wish to keep your feelings in tow, voluntary restriction of ventilation will help (i.e., keep your mouth shut and breathe slowly through the nose or pursed lips). (Ley, 1994, p. 82-83)

It would appear from the results of the study mentioned above that we can, in fact, "manage" our emotional state through the way we breathe at any given moment. By this I mean that the ability to affect voluntary changes in breathing occur when we bring our attention to the present moment. Others agree, particularly Thich Nhat Hahn (1988) who says "Through awareness of breath we can be awake and present to the moment" (p. 22). Clearly breath awareness allows us to exist in the present moment where we are more able to experience the non-duality of emotions and breath and therefore exercise self-mastery over our emotional state.

Scientists have identified a strong connection between the quality of breathing and our sense of well-being, what I described above as self-mastery over our emotional state. For example, Proskauer (1969) was able to scientifically prove that through breath awareness one is able to correct irregular breathing patterns. Consequently, a calmer physical, emotional, and mental state replaces the uneasiness, which accompanies irregular breathing.

BREATH AND THE BODY

It is through a disciplined breathing practice that we can relax our mind and experience an interesting paradox in which effort leads to effortlessness. This is a somatic experience in which correct breathing affects positive changes in the body. For example, I have had many opportunities to observe my yoga students as they experience this paradox during their asana (yogic pose) practice. I have learned that those students whose breathing I can either hear or see appear to be making a deeper connection with their body. This comes as no surprise to me. As I observe and experience the resistance of their bodies to certain poses during their yoga practice, I remind them to breathe. As they reconnect with their breath, they move past the resistance. I describe it this way: A deliberate effort to breathe correctly leads to an effortless experience and fluid execution of the asanas. This is the breath-body connection that is so important to well being. With this in mind, I can turn my attention to the negative affects upon the body as a result of breathing improperly.

Breathing improperly which may include such behaviors as restricting the natural flow of the breath, not exhaling completely, or hyperventilating, may limit our ability to ward off disease, particularly mental disorders. In his pivotal work *Function of the Organism* (1948), William Reich, wrote that holding the breath not only created disharmony in the individual, but also in society at large, which manifested as a failure to respond to

natural, vegetative impulses" (Douglas-Klotz, 1997, p. 65). My interpretation of Reich's statement is that the autonomic nervous system, known in Germany as the vegetative system, is not in harmony if one chronically obstructs the natural flow of the breath or does not consciously connect with the breath, which then may lead to the experience of disease or a state of mind, body, or spirit lacking ease.

It is important to understand that improper breathing limits our ability to avoid unnecessary stress on our whole being and may ultimately lead to premature aging, even illness. We often take our ability to breathe with ease for granted until it is gone. This can become a vicious cycle in which improper breathing leads to stress, which in turn leads to less breath awareness then less efficient oxygenation of the body hence less energy. We may become so weakened that we lose the ability to correct our breathing patterns that then lead to a diseased condition. In relating mental health problems with improper breathing patterns, Reich "came to the conclusion that deficient expansion on inspiration or deficient relaxation on expiration, or both, was a central mechanism of neurotic repression" (Boadella, 1994, p. 233).

It is important to explore why people do not always exercise their ability to regulate the rhythm of their breath in order to increase their well-being. How does a person break the cycle of poor breathing patterns, which leads to stress, anxiety and then poor health? The answer is simple: Become aware of the breath. Of course this may seem easy to do but it is not. For instance take a moment now; bring your attention to the tip of your nose. Stay there for a few breaths, breathing through your nose. Now begin to draw your attention to the sensation of the air as it moves through your nostrils while inhaling. At the top of inhaling, retain your breath for the count of two then slowly exhale all of the air from your lungs. Now as you inhale, count in one, two, three, four again with complete attention on your breath. Retain your breath for the count of two then very slowly and again with attention on the sensation of the air moving from your nostrils, exhale all the air out of your lungs. Were you able to maintain your focus on the act of breathing? If one has not practiced breathing this way it can be very difficult.

Although I suggest that it might be worthwhile to breath more intentionally for the sake of our well-being, that is, with more awareness of the breath itself and the process of breathing correctly with wellbeing in mind, F.W. Alexander (1932) advocated a less structured approach of focusing on the process of breath awareness itself and believed that one's desire for well-being would distract one's attention from this very process. In either case, the result is the same: Breath awareness and breathing practices can lead one to be healthier. It is a simple intervention that breaks the endless cycle of poor breathing-poor health. In other words, breathe well and be well. This is precisely what Magda Proskauer, William Reich, F.W. Alexander, Paramahansa Yogananda and Thich Nhat Hanh are saying.

With a clear understanding that proper breathing practices can improve health, I now want to explain how this happens. Breathe well and be well: this is clear enough. But what really happens when one breathes well? To paraphrase Zimberoff and Hartmann (1999), there are two primary physical effects of conscious connected breathing. The effects of this kind of breathing are super-oxygenation of the body and the enhanced ability to discharge toxins from the body, both very important benefits that maintain optimum health.

There are three levels of breathing. There is the voluntary level that involves speaking, breath-holding, whistling, etc., the non-voluntary level that involves emotional expression, defensive reactions (stress), pain, and psychiatric disturbances, then the involuntary level that includes the act of automatic breathing. Since all three levels involve the autonomic nervous system, I will discuss this system in more depth. This system is comprised of two parts. One part is the sympathetic nervous system, which is concerned with the non-volitional preparation of one's body for emergency situations. We commonly understand this as the flight or fight response. The other part is the parasympathetic nervous system, which inhibits or opposes the physiological effects of the sympathetic nervous system. Ideally these systems balance each other.

A certain amount of stress is good for us but stress becomes a problem when we cannot de-stress. Today many of us are operating in an over activity of the sympathetic nervous system and an under activity of the parasympathetic nervous system. We are constantly challenged to find ways to de-stress ourselves. Why do we feel better during and after physical exercise? It is due to the fact that the act of physically exerting ourselves forces us to empty our lungs. Complete exhalation is crucial to good overall health.

An unbalanced autonomic nervous system, one that is predominantly oriented toward flight or fight, is unhealthy. The physical and emotional response to stress tends to draw our attention away from internal processes such as breath awareness. Many people are experiencing stress related illnesses in their daily lives because the sympathetic nervous system response, the fight or flight response is over stimulated. Over stimulation and excessive stress lead to illnesses such as anxiety disorder, high blood pressure, migraines, and chronic digestive problems. As evidenced from a quote by Vanitallie (2002):

Dysregulation of the system, caused by the cumulative burden of repetitive or chronic environmental stress challenges (allostatic load) contributes to the development of a variety of illnesses including hypertension, atherosclerosis, and the insulin-resistance dyslipidemia syndrome, as well as certain disorders of immune function. The brain's limbic system, particularly the hippocampus and amygdala, is also intimately involved in the stress response. Chronically elevated corticosteroid levels induced by persisting stress may adversely affect hippocampal structure and function, producing deficits of both memory and cognition. The ability of stress to cause illness in humans is most clearly exemplified by post-traumatic

stress disorder (PTSD), which consists of a predictable constellation of distressing behavioral symptoms and physiological features. (p. 40-45)

According to Weil (1999) the root of many diseases today is a chronic imbalance in the autonomic nervous system. I believe the answer to this imbalance is to engage in yogic breathing practices. These breathing practices can be used to increase the activity of the parasympathetic nervous system thereby countering the over activity of the sympathetic nervous system. This is a simple and effective means to affect our overall health in a very positive way.

The healing power of breath is engaged when the autonomic nervous system is balancing the overactive sympathetic nervous system. To gain a better understanding of this, let's consider how breathing affects the sympathetic nervous system. Correct breathing stimulates the right vagus nerve. This is important because the vagus nerve calms the sympathetic nervous system thereby balancing the body's autonomic functions. Research has shown that practicing the yogic breathing technique called Ujjayi or Ocean-Sounding Victorious Breath activates the body's parasympathetic response system. Here is a brief description of Ujjayi as described by Weintraub (2004):

This breath can be practiced in a seated position or lying down. To begin, inhale through your nostrils with a slight constriction of your throat, making a snoring sound. Maintain the slight snoring sound on the exhalation, and imagine that you are actually breathing from the back of your throat. Breathe slowly, expanding the belly, the rib cage, and the upper chest. As you exhale, pull the abdomen in and up to empty your lungs completely. (p. 139)

Weintraub writes: "The vagus nerve is likely stimulated, which lowers heart rate as the blood pressure is slightly and temporarily increased. As the vagal tone is enhanced through continued practice, the effects of stress on the heart are reduced" (p. 156). In other words, stimulating the vagus nerve through the practice of Ujjayi activated the parasympathetic nervous system thereby reducing the flight or fight response generated by the sympathetic nervous system. Other experts in the field of yoga agree with Weintraub, among them Swami Ajaya (1997), who says: "Respiration affects the right vagus nerve, which in turn controls the autonomic nervous system" (p. 197). Moreover, medical evidence suggests that yogic breathing practices calm the sympathetic nervous system, indicating that from yogic breathing:

...the yogi's entire sympathetic nervous system may become less active, as shown by the low blood pressure and metabolic rate seen in many practicing yogis. Medical investigators of yogic physiology have repeatedly observed that these practices produce a decrease in sympathetic tone. (Patel, 1975) as quoted by Chandra (1994) in *Respiratory Patterns in Yoga* (p. 225)

BREATH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

Many people breathe incorrectly, using only a small part of their lung capacity. Their breathing is generally shallow, depriving the body of oxygen. They may experience a deficiency of prana or life energy essential to good health. Our general lack of awareness on the quality of our breathing results in various breathing and psychological disorders. We may experience changes in our respiratory physiology due to stress and trauma. The rate and quality of respiration reveals so much about the state of our mind, emotions, and body. Below is a quote from a study on the effects of panic disorder and generalized anxiety disorder on respiratory function:

Results: Both groups reported equally more anxiety and cardiac symptoms than control subjects, but certain other somatic symptoms, including breathlessness, were elevated only in panic disorder patients. Respiration is particularly unstable in panic disorder, underlining the importance of respiratory physiology in understanding this disorder. (Wilhem, Trabert, & Roth, 2001, pp. 596-605)

Health problems arise as a result of poor breathing and also, poor breathing can be a telltale sign that one has a disorder. When the brain does not get enough oxygen, mental sluggishness, mental tension or depression can result. Moreover, people often breathe irregularly. Irregular breathing disrupts the rhythms of the brain and leads to physical, emotional and mental blocks. These, in turn, lead to inner conflict, imbalanced personality, disordered lifestyle and disease. When we find ourselves in anxiety-provoking conditions, what I consider to be an emotional state of fear, our reaction may be to literally hold our breath. More accurately, we breathe in but then do not exhale completely. When we do not empty our lungs completely of air we cannot inhale enough fresh oxygen to reenergize ourselves properly. Fear is an anxiety-based emotion and as such, fear is an anticipatory emotion. This combination of psychological states is important to understand because studies show that yogic breathing positively impacts complicated psychological disorders. For example, states of combined depression and anxiety respond to breath work. The following is a review of a study that demonstrated this:

McCaul et al. (1979) demonstrated that voluntary slowing of the respiratory rate of subjects under stressful conditions reduced physiological arousal, as measured by skin resistance and finger pulse volume, and reduced self-report of anxiety. Subsequent studies from the same laboratory provided evidence to support claims by yoga masters that a specific form of slowed respiration-that is, rapid inhalation followed by slow exhalation at a reduced respiratory rate-is an effective technique for reducing physiological arousal when one is anticipating and confronting a threat. (Cappo & Holmes, 1984, p.265-273)

With the results of this study in mind, applying yogic breathing to mitigate the effects of other combined states is in order. One might consider a case when anxiety is associated

with post-traumatic stress such as from childhood sexual trauma. In this case, it is very important to the recovery process that the client has a way to become grounded. By grounded I mean that the person's awareness is present, in the moment and is therefore free to re-experience the traumatic emotions free of the anticipatory fear associated with such trauma. This occurs because breath control practices can help the client integrate the heart and the mind through the ability to regulate their breathing pattern.

On the other hand, breathing practices can create unintended disorders, even when practiced with the best intentions. Consider the following example of a breathing disorder that can occur as a result of the untrained use of breathing practices. A spiritual aspirant is over zealous in his or her effort to practice breath control and unwittingly makes a rapid and drastic change in the amount of oxygen in their system. This results in a dramatic increase in the amount of energy flowing through their energy centers. They are not prepared to handle this surge of energy and experience something similar to overloading a circuit which causes a fuse to blow. According to Douglas-Klotz (2004):

Every breath raises or lowers the electrical state of the body which can be demonstrated and proven scientifically. If this power is increased without augmenting the capacity many times more - which is done by meditation - the same thing will happen and does happen to the human body as occurs to the electrical system - a fuse blows out and you have trouble. (p. 76)

Others agree that unguided breath work can be dangerous. As quoted by Boadella (1994), "Reich warned that changing the patterns of a person's breathing was tantamount to emotional surgery and should only be attempted by those experienced in his methods" (p. 241). Since working with the breath can unhinge powerful energies with the body it is crucial to learn and practice breath work under the guidance of an experienced spiritual teacher or breath therapist.

TOWARDS WHOLENESS

It is important to gain an understanding of the quality of breathing and why it is so central to understanding the nature of healing. As stated by Weil (1999), "The essence of breath is that oscillation between two poles is what connects us with everything and it is again here I find the spiritual lesson of breath work to be most important". Dr. Weil's work supports my thinking about spirituality and healing in that I believe no true healing can occur until the spiritual aspects of our being are integrated into a whole. I believe when we turn our attention towards our breath, we tune into the spiritual side of our existence. Breathing then becomes an effective tool that allows us to work with our essential selves, what I consider to be our spirit. This is where our true power exists. In this context, I understand breathing as the power of our spiritual selves concentrated in a simple yet profound act of wholeness. The Eastern breathing science as a whole, confirms my beliefs. According to Jaideva Singh's (1979) interpretation of the Vijnana Bhairava sutra says that

the goal of the breathing practices is "realization of the universe as the expression of spiritual energy".

What is wholeness? The term wholeness can be defined as the state of being whole, nothing is left out and everything is integrated. I resonate very strongly with Frances Vaughn's (1986) definition of wholeness in the following quote:

The intrinsic wholeness of a person cannot be considered apart from the totality of which it is only a tiny part. Yet within each one the totality is enfolded. Within this whole, each human being may experience him or herself as an independent separate self in search of wholeness. In healthy psychological development a person grows toward intrinsic wholeness and a recognition of the relationship of the individual to the larger whole within each one exists. (p. 4)

So what is the connection between the breath and the state of being whole? Many ancient systems of spiritual practice reveal that the breath is the link between the body, mind, and spirit. All parts of our being are cooperating together harmoniously to create health. Moreover, I believe moving towards wholeness is moving towards self-mastery. Mastery of the self has classically been called enlightenment. I believe enlightenment is the process of returning to our true nature. According to Dr. Deepak Chopra (1987), "Gaining mastery of the self, with all its benefits to health, means little more than stepping out of the way and allowing the infinite intelligence of the mind and body to cooperate more fully" (p. 98). One might say, breathe well and experience wholeness.

Let me share my understanding of the process by which I experience wholeness.

When I consciously draw my awareness to my breath, all else drops away. As stated by Dharma Master Timothy Lerch (2007), "As we breathe in, we manifest our willingness to accept all as it is. As we breathe out, we manifest the nature of relinquishment, of letting go. We experience the act of receiving and giving freely" (p. 8). The deeper I allow myself to release into the experience of breath awareness the more I experience a shift in consciousness. I believe that conscious breathing leads to expansive states of consciousness that stimulate transcendence. I can transcend anxious states of mind and harmonize the affects of the mind over the body just by slowing down the rhythm of the breath. When I am aware of my breathing patterns, I act from a clear mind and a pure heart. This is the enlightened state of wholeness. Sharon Gannon (2002), a well respected yoga instructor, states:

By consciously controlling the breath, you have moved this function from the primitive medulla oblongata to the frontal lobes. You have made an unconscious activity conscious. This is pranayama: replacing unconscious breathing, and consequently energetic movement, with conscious breathing and the conscious movement of energy toward enlightenment. (p. 106)

What Gannon describes entails considerable effort by many yoga practitioners, as doing so involves the unfamiliar and seemingly unnatural practice of controlling the breath with the mind, the voluntary muscles and the nerves of the autonomic nervous system. Nonetheless, it becomes apparent very quickly that great benefits can be derived from doing so. From my own experience, I therefore believe that it is well worth the effort to master the conscious act of rhythmic, deep and slow respiration that stimulates contented states of mind and subsequent healing.

Research has shown that we can accelerate our healing through conscious breathing. We can then move towards wholeness. To illustrate the power of breathing upon human health consider the following statement taken from a study using transformational breathwork in immunoenhancement: "This is consistent with results of a controlled study of repeated use of Holotropic Breathwork over several weeks, in which Holmes *et al*, found significant increases in self-esteem and decreases in death anxiety" (Collinge & Yarnold, 2001, p. 153).

Holotropic breathwork is a psychotherapeutic approach developed by Dr. Stanislaw Grof and Christina Grof. To understand this work, I need to define holotropic. It derives from the Greek words *holos* and *trepein*. *Holos* means whole, and *trepein* means moving in the direction of something. Combine them and we understand that holotropic means moving towards wholeness. Holotropic breathwork is therefore moving towards wholeness through the breath. This is important because it shows that we can improve our well-being through the breath, thereby experiencing wholeness. Holotropic breathwork enables one to reactivate repressed memories, which can bring new understanding to our suffering. It is an effective therapy because it allows practitioners to access and enhance their most essential, original self from which wholeness emerges.

As I continue to explore and observe the effects of breathing practices on others, and myself the more I can envision moving towards wholeness. I envision the natural outcome of moving towards wholeness resulting in one developing an authentic concern for the wholeness and health of all beings, being at ease with one's self and situation, having self-acceptance, exercising self-honesty, being present with each moment and meeting resistance with equanimity. Breathing practices, breath awareness, or breath work can lead one to wholeness, health, healing, and self-mastery.

However, it is important to be aware and have an understanding of the problems that impede integration towards wholeness. These imbalances are first felt in our spirit then manifest into thoughts and/or emotions then in our body as physical illness or in our behaviors as mental illness. These kinds of imbalances may present as behavior or attitudes such as: self-absorption, selfishness, anxiety, and lost sense of true self. Some of the causes for the imbalances include fragmentation, distraction, oppression (internal and external), and chronic distress possibly as a result of trauma. One way to gain an internal

sense of the feeling of wholeness or conversely imbalance is to gain an understanding how we assimilate life-giving energy within our being.

BREATH AS ENERGY

We can learn to work with our breath in a way that activates our vital energy. By vital energy, I mean the life force. The ancient Chinese called this life force energy qi (chi). The ancient Hindus called it prana. In a quote by Green (1972) a more recent description of life force is given:

Galvani, a professor of anatomy and one of the first discoverers of electricity, described an energy underlying biological functioning a "life force" which was different from ordinary electricity, but which still ran "like a circuit from one part of the animal to the other. (p. 153)

With this in mind, I think it is fair to say that breath work is energy work. When we vitalize our life force through breathing practices, we are manipulating the flow of energy within our bodies.

In my opinion breath is a form of energy just as is sunlight. We use different forms of energy to survive and air is an essential form of energy to our survival. Although we can go days without water and weeks without food, if deprived of oxygen we would perish within minutes. Although most of us do not think of ourselves as transformers of energy, we are.

Conscious connected breathing is important because the energy we create by breathing this way is crucial to becoming whole. We have in our bodies, the capabilities to manipulate energy. If we can realize these capabilities, we can activate the energy centers within our bodies. Our energy centers are called chakras in the Sanskrit language. According to the ancient spiritual system of yoga:

The chakras are considered to be real physical centers that tap into a subtle form of energy that vitalizes the human body. These lotus like "wheels," each with a specific location in the human body, are said to be vortexes for accumulating life force - prana - from a universal source. (Swami Rama, Ballentine, & Swami Ajaya, 2004, p. 174)

Besides tapping into our capability to create energy, we still have to ask; Why is it important to have an understanding of how energy operates within our bodies?

As breathing practices activate and revitalize our energy centers we increase our capacity to expand our consciousness. The more conscious we become, the more we can choose to engage in external influences that raise our energy from lower to higher frequencies. Ultimately we can learn to transform positive, higher frequency energy into optimum health. When this concept is placed in a transpersonal frame of reference, it could

be said that our ability to expand our consciousness becomes greater as we self-actualize. When we have some understanding of the makeup of our energy system it is easier to understand how breathing practices revitalize us.

CONCLUSION

It is exciting to realize our ancient wisdom on the use of the breath is coming full circle. Presently the more holistic, naturopathic medical practitioners consider breath work one of the most time efficient, cost effective ways to promote health. Breath work is also gaining popularity in the field of transpersonal psychotherapy.

From a psychotherapeutic viewpoint, the beauty of using breath work therapy is that therapists can't breathe for their clients. The clients are very obviously responsible for their own breath and therefore for their own feelings and health. Each person must do the practice in order to gain the benefits. There is no way around it.

Increasingly, mainstream healthcare authors write that breath work holds the promise of becoming an important area of study within the new discipline of respiratory psychophysiology. Others working in the various wellness and medical fields are also beginning to recognize that breathing may well be the bridge between psychology and physiology. I believe the act of breathing holds the key to managing, and possibly healing, such psychological disorders as generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. This is important, as it may be signaling recognition that focusing research efforts toward gaining deeper understanding of the impact of breath work is extremely valuable. Hopefully research funds will then become readily available to researchers and we will verify that breath work helps to mitigate many of the mental health illnesses that face us today.

However, respiratory psychophysiology is a relatively new field. What then is missing in the current research? I discovered through my scholarship that future research might include deeper exploration of the role of the autonomic nervous system as it relates to mental health and physical well-being. Additional research may include rigorous analysis of the effects of breathing practices, breath awareness, and therapeutic breath work on the autonomic nervous system in relation to the disorders mentioned above.

In breath work lays the possible solution to our overwhelming need to better manage our ever-increasing levels of anxiety. We are becoming a society ridden by the effects of unmanaged stress. I believe we cannot continue to look for the answers from the field of pharmacology. For example, the pharmacological solutions do not seem to work especially well for our children. Why not turn to our ancient wisdom and return to the power of our breath?

About the Author

Karen Armand has been practicing yoga since 1978 and teaching since 2001. Since entering a Ph.D. program in 2006 breath work has become the focus of Karen's research studies. She is currently a registered yoga therapist and mental health counselor.

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BREATHWORK ETHICS

BY

CAROL A. LAMPMAN

1. Responsibility Versus Blaming

What does it mean to take responsibility?

My favorite description of the word, responsibility, is “the ability to respond”. This means that when something happens we are willing to be fully accountable, answer for our conduct, and take action based on the circumstances. It is not the burden that we might think it to be but one of taking our power and choosing the most appropriate response. A responsible person is aware of their motives as well as the potential outcomes of their behavior. When we are fully responsible, we increase our ability to connect with our authentic power.

Blaming is when we turn the meaning of the word responsibility around and project it onto others. Instead of looking inside for the source of our difficulties, we hold others accountable for the errors that we perceive. We blame each other, institutions and even inanimate objects. People blame society, or the government, or television or computers. Teachers blame parents, parents blame teachers, spouses blame spouses, and the list goes on. Kids learn to blame by watching the adults around them practice this irresponsible and immature behavior.

Try this exercise ...Take a couple of long, slow breaths, allowing yourself to relax completely.

Remember the last time you blamed someone or something for an incident that happened in your life. Allow this situation to come to you spontaneously. It might be a complex experience or something simple. Make it as real as possible, remembering who was there and what was happening. How do you feel... physically and emotionally?

Now, remember a time when you took full responsibility for a situation that took place. Repeat the same process of remembering and tuning into your feelings. How you feel in this situation?

Compare the two experiences and see what you can learn about yourself, your reactions and your feelings. In one situation you might have felt angry, contracted and powerless. In the other you may feel more powerful and expansive, even if the situation

was difficult. Here is where you can connect to choices and your ability to choose a powerful and responsive life.

Though your responsibilities and obligations are very real and pressing, they do not have to burden you. For when you are willing to accept responsibility for something, you put yourself in control of it. Ralph Marston

2. Migraine Headaches

A migraine is a throbbing or pulsating headache that is often one sided (unilateral) and associated with nausea; vomiting; sensitivity to light, sound, and smells; sleep disruption; and depression. Attacks are often recurrent and tend to become less severe as the migraine sufferer ages.

Some of you might remember it was my personal problem with migraines that started me on this journey. The search for permanent relief could only come from addressing the cause and not just the symptoms of my recurring pain. It was this quest that ultimately led me to an intensely personal and life changing exploration of the body mind. Through the connection to the breath, I became aware of deeply held emotions and a mountain of energy trapped in my physical body.

Doctors think migraines may be caused by a chemical or electrical problem in certain parts of the brain. According to theory, the nervous system responds to a trigger such as stress by creating spasms in the arteries at the base of the brain. The spasms constrict several arteries supplying blood to the brain, including arteries from the scalp and neck. As these arteries constrict, the flow of blood to the brain is reduced. At the same time, platelets clump together and release a chemical called serotonin. Serotonin acts as a powerful constrictor of arteries, further reducing blood and oxygen supply to the brain. In reaction to the reduced oxygen supply, certain arteries within the brain dilate to meet the brain's energy needs. This dilation spreads, finally affecting neck and scalp arteries. It is believed this dilation causes the pain related to the migraine.

Symptoms of A Migraine

While there are many forms of migraine headaches, classic and common are the two major varieties. The basic difference between the two types of migraine is the appearance of an "aura." The aura is the occurrence of neurological symptoms 10-30 minutes before the classic migraine attack. You may see flashing lights, zigzag lines or temporarily lose vision. Other symptoms of classic migraine include difficulty with speech, confusion, weakness of an arm or leg and tingling of face or hands.

The pain of a classic migraine headache is described as an intense throbbing or pounding felt in the forehead/temple, ear/jaw or around the eyes. Classic migraines start on one side of the head but can eventually spread to the other side. An attack may last one to two painful days.

The common migraine - a term that reflects the disorder's more frequent occurrence in the general population - is not preceded by an aura. Some people do experience a variety of vague symptoms before common migraines - mental fuzziness, mood changes, fatigue, and fluid retention. During the headache phase of a common migraine, there may be abdominal pain and diarrhea, increased urination, nausea and vomiting. Both classic and common migraines can strike as often as several times a week or rarely as once every few years.

There are many things you can do to reduce the pain of migraine. The most common methods of preventing and controlling migraines include drug therapy, cold packs, Biofeedback, stress reduction and regular exercise. For some it is important to identify and eliminate the triggers which may include certain foods, alcohol, caffeine, nitrates, hormonal changes, as well as stress, exhaustion or lack of sleep.

Migraines afflict about 24 million people in the United States. They may occur at any age, but usually begin between the ages of 10 and 40 and diminish after age 50. Approximately 75% of migraine sufferers are women. If you are working with someone with migraines, I would ask the following questions:

What was happening around the time the headaches began?

Is there a physical, emotional, or psychological link to intimate relationships?

What is her breathing pattern? Look especially for frozen or reverse breathing.

Look at her body. Is there holding rigidity, especially in the shoulders, neck and / or face? Is there any history of illness, chronic stress, abuse, or female problems? Is there the ability to connect with emotionally? Especially the ability to express anger. Has there been any previous therapy that includes emotional work? Is there full access to childhood memories? Is there any depression now or in the past? (It may be low level as migraine sufferers may be highly efficient and productive people.)

There is no doubt in my mind the causes of my migraines could be traced to the incredible stress held in my body. This kind of stress, the kind most migraine people suffer, is chronic and the body can be highly armored. My entire body was so frozen I could or would only breathe barely enough to keep me alive. The origins of this trauma traces back to the womb, toxemia and the resulting trauma of a premature birth. My mother and

I were lucky to have survived. This imprint was reinforced in my childhood through frequent illness, hospitalizations and other complications. I use my own experience to set the background as I understand all too well the accumulated stress carried by those with severe migraines. I have so much compassion for anyone with a life plagued with this malady. I spent far too many years feeling sick as the headaches came and went, then came again.

The migraine profile will show a highly sensitive person. By the time the client reaches you, they may have traveled a frustrating road as this condition is not often correctly diagnosed and medical interventions have been less than effective. Remember, it may take some time for the client to trust you before surrendering fully to the breath, unravel the source of the condition and release the underlying stress.

Sometimes the headaches will get worse before they get better and this can be discouraging. This can be referred to as a "healing crisis" and a sign progress is being made. The person needs to be committed to staying with the process long enough for the therapy to work, break the pattern and become completely free from this painful health issue. I have no doubt Breath Therapy will be of help in eliminating this condition.

3. Breath Therapy and Cancer Patients

Over the last couple of years I have worked with adult cancer patients in Israel. Omri Citron, an enthusiastic supporter of our work, and well respected psychologist and leader of two Cancer Support groups, has organized several workshops for cancer patients and their families. I have been invited to speak to several of his group meetings and he sends his clients and group members to workshops, individual sessions and the trainings. We even did a day for the Cancer Support group leaders allowing them to learn a few techniques to integrate into their group meetings and have a personal experience of the breath at the same time.

My view of working with cancer patients is that there is everything to gain and nothing to lose. I do not subscribe to the idea that it is hazardous for cancer patients to do Breathwork. One of the suspected causes of cancer is chronic stress and Breathwork is a great stress management tool. A diagnosis of cancer in itself is an emotional experience and treatments can be physically and spiritually challenging. We are magnificent beings with body, mind and spirit interwoven and blended into each other. In order to attain healing, the whole being needs to be considered.

Our breath supplies us with oxygen to fuel our body and is essential for optimal healing. It is important to keep the life force energy moving and stay attuned to our needs, moment to moment. Our breath can help us do that and more; it can connect us to our spirit. There are those who say they have learned so much from their disease... about

themselves, their relationships with others and, most importantly, their deepest beliefs about who they are.

In my first career, I was a specially trained medical tech working in a clinic where one of our doctors was the director of pediatric oncology at UC San Francisco. In this clinic, we saw many of his young patients for treatments, routine follow ups and provided counseling for the families. I watched the most courageous young people live with a disease that challenged their very survival. They were so in touch with themselves; they often knew the state of their well being before the tests came back ... before the doctor gave his report. I watched with amazement as some of them gently prepared their parents to be without them.

They taught me a lot... about courage, honesty, and about being in the present moment. Parents would try to minimize the situation out of the desire to protect their child...but these children knew exactly what was going on. It was this awareness that brought UC San Francisco's head of Psychiatry, Gerald Jamplowsky, to create an organization, The Center for Attitudinal Healing. Some of the children from this pilot program came from our clinic. The focus of this program was not on their prognosis or the possibility of death, but on life. Living, loving and being in the present moment is all any of us have anyway. This was the focus of this marvelous program working with the power of the mind. Several years after I left California, I saw a television program featuring the work of this organization. I watched with great joy as I saw the happy and healthy faces of several children from our clinic speak about their philosophy of life.

The tools utilized in Breath Therapy can help the patient deal with the thoughts and beliefs they hold about the disease and the possibility of recovery. There are a full range of emotions that cannot be ignored ...the fear and panic of dealing with a potentially life threatening illness. The feelings of anger and sadness will only intensify or result in depression unless given an appropriate outlet. From the physical standpoint, chemotherapy and radiation is another attack on the body when it is already compromised.

As to the way to work with a cancer patient, I would first consider their current physical condition. Someone with a brain tumor should not do fast and full breathing. It might trigger a seizure. Someone who has had recent surgery should go slow and easy and would benefit from the practice of circular breathing to clear out anesthesia from the system. If any part of the breathing apparatus (lungs, throat, mouth, nose, etc) has been compromised by surgery or radiation, then accommodate for this to ensure the comfort of the client. Be sure to encourage the breather to let their body move in any way it wants as this can allow an opportunity for the body to unwind. Most important is to create a space of love and acceptance so that the breather will feel safe enough to express their feelings and concerns ...with you they can let down and be real. Whatever the patient's prognosis, there is a need to make peace with life. In some cases there is a need to prepare for death.

Remember that whatever you need to work on will walk in the door and you may find yourself affected by what is coming up for the client. The ability to connect with spirit during Breathwork can open the doors to a deeper level of understanding and is a gift to both facilitator and client. There can be powerful insights and healing around the separation from God... and the realization that we are spiritual beings having a physical experience. Great comfort for the patient and their family can come from the realization that there are no endings, simply transitions. The love that is shared at these times can heal a lifetime.

4. A Shift in Attitude

Obstacles are a fact of life. It is how we handle them that ultimately shape our experiences in life. While we may not recognize it at the time, every challenge we face is an opportunity to bring more love, more awareness and higher consciousness into our lives. The obstacles we encounter provide us with an opportunity to look within ourselves with the understanding that the outside is only a reflection of what is inside.

The challenge is to be able to recognize any given situation as a lesson. We can choose to view life's disharmony as an invitation to eliminate an old belief or behavior pattern. We often learn about a positive quality by experiencing its opposite. An impulse toward anger may teach us about love or acceptance. A sense of constraint may teach us about freedom. A situation that appears beyond our control may prompt us to discover our own role in its creation. The lessons presented to us may encourage us to develop important qualities such as humility, patience, compassion or forgiveness.

I realize there may be times when it might be difficult to find the higher perspective. It is more easily recognized as the insight gained in hindsight. Regardless of the situation, we also have the tools to cope and move through the lesson. It is purely a matter of choice. When we remember to feel grateful for something, no matter how small, we begin to move into our power again. This shift in attitude can change your perspective and bring you closer to a sense of peace and sometimes even an awareness of the bigger picture.

Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish. A little knowledge that acts is worth infinitely more than much knowledge that is idle. John Quincy Adams.

5. Magic of Breathing

So, what is magic? Is it an illusion or is it real? The Webster's dictionary describes magic as "The art of producing affects by superhuman means; Any mysterious power, ex: the magic of love. Producing extraordinary results, as if by magic". Miracles are made from the same stuff as magic. They defy explanation by the rational logical mind.

When we talk about magic, we are not talking about turning rocks into gold or parting the dead sea... It could be an amazing happening but, it is often very subtle and quiet. Breathwork sessions, those of your clients as well as yourself. Here, we have all seen magic happening at one point or another. Something wonderful, unseen and miraculous happens in just the right moment and in just the right way. Healing happens and life is dramatically changed. This is magic.

What is the magic you want for yourself? What do you feel is beyond your ability to create in your life? What seems beyond your control? How do you start creating magic right now... today? There are several components that are important to embrace...

Have an “awareness” that everything is energy.

Take a closer look at your limiting thoughts and the beliefs that these thoughts represent. They are energy! You can choose to leave them behind and we have the tools of Breath Therapy to support that process. You cannot change something if you are not aware of it... so awareness is an important key. How willing are you to be fully aware of the energy you are putting out?

Examine what is seemingly impossible and decide it is not. We only need to look back a few years to see that was considered impossible is changing all the time. An example - once the four minute mile was broken by one person, then others began breaking it left and right. We can even build quite convincing case to support the impossibility of a situation. What do you want that you consider impossible? Ask yourself if it is really true.

Go beyond logic to connect with your soul.

If you run your life by logic, you are living from your mind and not from your highest self. Our mind is limited and is well defended. It only knows what has been programmed into it. You will not find what you are looking for there. If you could, you would have found it by now. By using your breath, you can go beyond the limits of the mind to connect with the love that is “who you really are.” This is the place where miracles happen and magic is created.

Want more magic in your life? Breathe! Let go of fear and connect to Love. You cannot hold both emotions simultaneously. I understand that it is not always easy to contemplate this idea when there is so much turmoil in our world today. But fear breeds more fear and the cycle continues. There are places only love can heal. Be willing to believe in what might seem to be the impossible. Breathe and connect with Peace and love. Breathe and send that love out into the world... to your clients, families and communities. Let's all create magic together.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carol A. Lampman is a Holistic Therapist, Certified Breathwork Instructor, Advanced Clinical Hypnotherapist, Certified Release Therapist with training in Hypno-Behavioral Therapy, Reichian Process Work, Integrative, Cathartic, Rebirthing Breathwork, Hendricks Body Centered Transformation.

Carol is an acknowledged speaker and educator, and has presented programs, trainings and workshops for the public in the US, France, Italy, Spain, Venezuela and Israel. She is moving into a more prominent role in the professional community as a facilitator of personal transformation techniques. Her dynamic personality combined with her humor and deep respect for the work of the participants has allowed her to establish a strong foundation of support among the professional community.

Carol's life experience with childhood trauma and her early medical background working with catastrophically ill children sparked her interest in the mind body connection, the emotional process, and its overall relationship to health and wholeness.

BOOK REVIEWS

Rothschild, Babette (2006), *Help For The Helper: The Psychophysiology Of Compassion Fatigue And Vicarious Trauma; Self-Care Strategies For Managing Burnout And Stress.* (New York: WW Norton & Co.) followed by **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.***

Taylor, Kylea (2007), *Considering Holotropic Breathwork: Essays and Articles on the Therapeutic and Sociological Functions and Effects of the Grof Breathwork.* Hanford Mead, Santa Cruz, California.

Harrison, Steven (2008), *The Shimmering World: Living Meditation.* (Sentient Publications, Colorado, USA)

Ridgeway, Roy (2006), *The Unborn Child: Beginning a Whole Life and Overcoming Problems of Early Origin.* (London: Karnak)

Taylor, Kylea (2007), *Considering Holotropic Breathwork: Essays and Articles on the Therapeutic and Sociological Functions and Effects of the Grof Breathwork.* (Hanford Mead, Santa Cruz, California)

This is a collection of nine articles, put together, as Taylor says, to “present some of my thinking about the functions and effects of Holotropic Breathwork and reflect my own interests in addiction and trauma recovery, spiritual emergency, kundalini and SoulCollage.”

The first article, ‘A Description of Holotropic Breathwork,’ is a comprehensive.

The second, ‘The Practice of Sitting in Holotropic Breathwork: What One Learns about Oneself and Relationship while Being with a Breather,’ was published in this journal in 2001. The version published here is the revised version. Everyone who works therapeutically with others can learn from this article. Themes such as “witnessing,” “non-doing as a ‘helper’ in Breathwork and in ordinary life,” balancing a tendency in life to overemote,” are universal.

The third article, ‘Yoga Sleep and Meditation States during Holotropic Breathwork,’ relates states reached in Holotropic Breathwork to known meditative states, with the Sanskrit terms used and explained.

The fourth article, 'Holotropic Breathwork adjunct to Substance Abuse Treatment in a Therapeutic Community,' is a case study of the use of HB in a therapeutic community.

The fifth article, 'SoulCollage: An Art Process to Use with Breathwork,' was first published in this journal in 2002. Art integrates experiences and also takes us further along our journey through images. (More information about Soul Collage can be found at this website <http://www.hanfordmead.com/books/index.php>)

The sixth article, 'Spiritual Emergency and Trauma-Based Dissociative Disorders: Similarities in Description and Treatment' is about treating multiple personality disorder as a spiritual emergency.

The seventh article, 'Sponsoring "Unexperienced" Experience' is published for the first time in this volume. "'sponsorship' includes assisting the inner healer of someone in a non-ordinary state of consciousness and helping them express and amplify the energies and experiences which have not been welcomed and loved sufficiently in any previous context and therefore are actually 'unexperienced experience.'" (p. 109) Taylor draws on the work of Stephen Gilligan's Self-Relations theory and Ivor Browne's work. These would also correspond to the Disowned Selves of Voice Dialogue theory. (<http://delos-inc.com/>) Taylor explains how both the breather and the sitter sponsor these experiences.

The eighth article, 'The Ritual of Holotropic Breathwork: The Healing Potential of *Protection, Permission, and Connection* for Trauma Recovery' gives a superb overview of what ritual can accomplish and details its use in HB.

The ninth article, 'Jung's Fourth (Inferior) Function as a Gateway for Non-Ordinary States in Spiritual Emergence and Spiritual Emergency' is the second previously unpublished article in this excellent collection. It explains the difference between Spiritual Emergence and Spiritual Emergency. Taylor argues that Jung's fourth function was an undefended doorway through which spiritual emergence could enter. "The material of the divine coming through the gate of our first, second, or third functions is not recognized as divine, but when it appears at the door of the fourth, we see it as both 'other' (not of self) and as 'divine,' 'mystic,' and numinous." (p. 150)

This is a remarkable collection of articles, as we would expect from Kylea Taylor. She is, after all, the author of *The Breathwork Experience* and *The Ethics of Caring*, both seminal and essential reading for all breathworkers, no matter which school they follow. She is the editor of *Exploring Holotropic Breathwork*. (All published by Hanford Mead) She edited *The Inner Door* for many years. Kylea Taylor is a formative practitioner of Holotropic Breathwork.

Joy Manné

Harrison, Steven (2008), *The Shimmering World: Living Meditation*. (Sentient Publications, Colorado, USA)

This is a beautifully put together book which combines text by American writer and educationalist Steven Harrison with the art of Richard Stodart a native of Trinidad and resident of Canada. The combination is delightful and whoever designed this little book, probably the editor Connie Shaw, deserves equal credit for the final product. Harrison's text comes in short paragraphs, sometimes only two lines to a page. It's focused and to the point and leads the reader through the distilled essence of the spiritual wisdom that's at the heart of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam...most religions and no religion. My favourite line from the book is "The spiritual teacher may provide us with the keys to the universe, but the universe is not locked." So true to this 'no guru' philosophy Harrison offers a series of simply written truths that readers can use in a variety of ways to unlock the universe for themselves. This is not a book on how to meditate but it can be used for meditation...or for journaling, thinking, discussion, group work, painting...however the reader chooses to use it.

It begins with questioning the purpose of life but the question "is the movement of life itself." From there Harrison takes the reader through the inadequacy of knowledge and how 'knowing' can get in the way of true perception. There are pages about the importance of entering into the experience of chaos, pain and meaninglessness. He emphasises the transience of 'me' and that "Buddha was not just suggesting that we are nothing, he was pointing out that because we are nothing, we are everything... When we breathe, the universe breathes."

It's also about aloneness as the place to find ourselves "immersed" in love. "We stand alone, where we are. This is the portal to the whole of life." The book is about letting go of striving, knowing, seeking, the separateness of 'me'. It's about standing still, not trying to change ourselves, just standing open and being present, now, in this moment with trust. "In being, there is only unity. It is the self that the self forgot in early childhood. It is the love that we all seek in relationship to another. It is the mystic expression that religion seeks to convey." But Harrison mysticism has a social awareness also. "Jesus put the icing on the cake by directing us to love our neighbours as ourselves, which is about all we have left to do when we are nothing." Because "In between some fairly impressive miracles, [Jesus] perceived that the other is oneself. That's the miracle."

The art work that adorns this book is simply beautiful. At times one can see shades of Picasso, of Klimt, of Georgia O'Keeffe. At times it is New Age and at times ancient. It's colourful, sensual, a feast for the eye and adds immeasurably to the beauty of the book.

The reader could take many weeks to explore the ramifications of what is contained in any one page of this book. However, Harrison distilled a lot into each apparently simple sentence and because of the condensed nature of the language, a total beginner in the

spiritual quest might have some difficulty working with the book. The process of letting go can appear complex and need many forms of explanation and experience before the person on the journey finally falls into the astonishing simplicity of it. This book does not offer the detailed explanations, just the essence. Yet it is the sort of book that can rest on someone's shelf until the time is right and they discover the text. In the mean time they can enjoy the art that it contains. It would make a lovely gift to self or someone else.

Catherine Dowling

Ridgeway, Roy (2006), *The Unborn Child: Beginning a Whole Life and Overcoming Problems of Early Origin.* (London: Karnak)

Roy Ridgeway's 1987 book has been republished with forewords by Barbara Findlesen and Michael A. Crawford and preludes by Roy Ridgeway (1987) and Simon H. House (2006 edition). The Parts are numbered A – D.

Part A, Conception and Life in the Womb, takes up subject like development, learning and acquiring characteristics. Part B, Dreams, Feelings and Releasing Distress, covers the work of Nandor Fodor, David Kay on the importance of touch, and William Emerson on dream-images of the womb and self-healing responses. Fairy stories like Tom Thumb and Alice in Wonderland are related to birth experiences. There is a section on work of Otto Rank, Donald Winnicott (called the first primal therapist, p. 69), Francis Mott, Abraham Maslow and Fritz Perls on recalling past distress and releasing it. Frank Lake and Stanislaw Grof work on recalling birth memories with LSD and Lake's subsequent choice of Breathwork are covered, as is Primal integration and Elizabeth Fehr's natal therapy (p. 93)

Part C optimistically proposes ways of 'Generating healthy, non-violent people' concerns protection of children, including environments and nutrition.

Part D, 'Psychological healing and protection,' contains a section on the ways a mother affects her child. I hope that today everyone knows that it is unrealistic and factually false to blame the mother for all of her children's problems. Anyone who has studied Family therapy can have no doubt that each person comes into a body with their own karma or destiny, and takes from their parents what fulfils it, frequently leaving untold riches and potential untouched. (See my book, *Family Constellations*, North Atlantic Books, 2009 and all books by Bert Hellinger and other family therapists). Leonard Orr's Rebirthing is mentioned on pp. 192-195. In the epilogue various philosophies are discussed.

This book is eminently readable. Parts A – C remind of us the work of great therapists of all denominations who were not afraid to experiment. In the end, the hope of creating non-violent children omits the effect of family systems inherited over generations and so cannot be taken seriously, however inspiring it is.

Joy Manné

Babette Rothschild (2006), *Help For The Helper: The Psychophysiology Of Compassion Fatigue And Vicarious Trauma; Self-Care Strategies For Managing Burnout And Stress* (New York: WW Norton & Co.) followed by 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*.

I wrote a review-article about Babette Rothschild's *The Body Remembers*, 'Potential Breathwork Specialisations: Trauma Treatment, A Review Article' (London: W W Norton, 2000) in *The Healing Breath*, Volume 5, No. 2, 2003, pp. 31-39. I also reviewed her *The Body Remembers Casebook: Unifying Methods and Models in the Treatment of Trauma and PTSD*, New York: W W Norton & Co., 2003) in *The Healing Breath*, Volume 7, No. 1, 2007, Pp. 63-65). The bliss of internet publication is its generosity with space. My review-article and my review are reprinted below for ease of reference.

I am enthusiastic about Rothschild's work. In previous reviews, I have sorrowed that she does not know the use of Breathwork – and acknowledged that we cannot know everything. In this latest book I rejoice that Breathwork is everywhere, except in the Index. I am going to imagine that my reviews have had a little influence. At the end of my review article I expressed the hope that Breathworkers who wanted to specialise in trauma treatment would go to study with Rothschild. I hope many have done so, and that even more will do so after this review-article.

I will follow the pattern of my review article of 2000. First I will review the book, and then I will show how Breathwork could be of even more use in her work.

The Book Review

This outstanding book is for psychotherapists and others in the healing professions. The Preface, *Using Common Sense*, praises common sense, as Rothschild did her 2003 book. The Introduction presents the problem of self-care for psychotherapists and its importance: "The better we take care of ourselves and maintain a professional separation from our clients, the more we will be in a position to be truly empathetic, compassionate, and useful to them." (p. 1.)

Chapter One, *Psychotherapists at Risk*, discusses of the pros and cons of empathy. The therapist can experience conscious empathy – over which they can exert control and choice, but they are also subject to unconscious empathy: empathy processes that are outside awareness, and therefore control. Unconscious empathy leads to unmanageable counter-transference, projective identification, compassion fatigue, vicarious traumatisation and

burnout. All following chapters are divided into sections on Theory and Skill Building. All sections, theory as well as practical, are interwoven with exercises and case histories.

Chapter Two, *Managing the Ties that Bind*, has a theory section with subsections that explore “the neurophysiology of empathy, the distinct features of somatic empathy, and the inevitable human tendency for mirroring and mimicry.” It is followed by a skill building section with subsections that teach “the increase of mindfulness and control over facial and postural awareness, and engagement in both conscious postural mirroring and unmirroring.” (p. 34) Exercises demonstrate how body postures can influence behaviour. For example: “Try turning down the sides of your mouth, lowering the outer edges. At the same time, notice what happens in your gut.” This way we learn for ourselves how mimicking or “Adopting an empathetic facial expression” can affect the therapist.

The Theory section in Chapter Three, *Keeping Calm*, covers the neurophysiology of arousal. The Skill Building section equips “practitioners with tools to guide their own nervous systems to optimal states, especially mindfulness achieved through arousal awareness and strategies for reducing stress and hyperarousal.

Chapter Four, *Thinking Clearly*, explains in its theory section, why we do not think clearly when we are agitated or highly stressed. The Skill Building section contains subsections to help the therapist to “know thyself,” strengthen the observer, and control self-talk, as well as organising workspace.

In her *Concluding Reflections*, in Chapter Five, Rothschild discusses the concept of projective identification and a case study demonstrating the application of the theories and skills explained in the book. There are two appendixes: Assessment and Pilot Research, References and an Index.

Breathwork Contribution

That is a brief outline of Rothschild’s excellent book. In this section I will explore how her ideas are relevant to Breathwork, and what Breathwork can offer her.

On Common Sense: Breathwork common sense tells us that we cannot help a client with a problem unless we have resolved that problem within ourselves. Breathwork common sense tells us we can only take a client as far as we have gone ourselves, including relationship and communication skills, recognising and mastering activations, and knowing and understanding bodily responses. In Breathwork, mastering bodily responses – tuning our body into what is wholesome in terms of responses – plays an essential role. In Breathwork, self-care is obligatory.

In her Introduction, Rothschild talks about “bringing a client home,” i.e. bringing the clients problems and turbulent energy home within our own body into our private life. In Chapter One she talks about the therapist’s empathy. Breathwork offers more than empathy. Breathwork sessions are characterised by the energy of love: the *non-sexual* love

that provides the container that the breathworker offers the client. The mutual influence between therapist and client is respected in Breathwork. Recognising the body as a means of information is basic to Breathwork trainings. Breathworkers are taught to listen to their body and to check whether the information concerns their own process, or that of their client so that their body is a feedback mechanism both for their own state and for that of the client. This chapter provides Breathworkers with interesting and accessible explanations of the mechanisms at work here. The Countertransference exercises on p. 21 would be useful in supervision. For those interested in the theory of projective identification, there is an extensive discussion here and in Chapter Five.

In Chapter Two, in a case history about a client called Allison, Rothschild says,

...I noticed that (Allison's) chest was barely moving. I was taken aback. We were breathing alike! Was I copying her respiration style? I wondered if my light-headedness and general feeling of disconnectedness were just the result of new-therapist nervousness or the direct result of m imitation of Allison's breathing? If (as it appeared) our respiration had actually become synchronized, I thought, it was totally unconscious on both of our parts. (p. 46)

All breathworkers know that just as other body language is matched, we match our client's breathing. Knowledge and awareness of this is a basic Breathwork skill. Our body is informing us all the time about our client's state of consciousness. Not only that, but we can take the lead and influence our client into better, more wholesome ways of breathing through leading – through breathing “aloud” so to speak, and counting on the client's body to do the rest – “unconsciously” as Rothschild says. Our breathing reflects our state of consciousness and activation. The breathworker can lead a client into better states of consciousness that are freer of activation (i.e. trauma, projection and other unconscious behaviour patterns). When we lead a client into freer ways of breathing, we also lead them into freer (no naming and blaming, self-responsible, more resources) ways of living.

Breathwork values the importance grounding. If a client is not present, where can any work go? How can there be integration? Therefore, before we start to work with a client, and especially if a client is not completely present, we are likely to do grounding exercises (many can be found in my books *Soul Therapy* (1997) and *Conscious Breathing: How Shamanic Breathwork Can Transform Your Life* (2004), both North Atlantic Books). In this case history, Rothschild is doing supervision with Hank, a therapist himself:

When I work with this client, about 15 minutes into most sessions, I find myself feeling light-headed. I've noticed that my breathing is very shallow and so is his. I've tried changing my breathing pattern. That works for a few minutes and then I'm light-headed again. (p. 89)

This happens no matter what the client is talking about. Breathworkers in this situation would go for a Breathwork session to discover what their own breath is telling them about themselves. Once they have resolved this problem *in themselves*, they will be able to lead the client to freer breathing. Otherwise client and therapist are simply reinforcing a shared problem. Our breath is our life. In many languages the word for “breath” is the same as the word for “soul.” Our breath is a language in itself. (‘Breath is a Language,’ in *The Healing Breath: A Journal of Breathwork Practice, Psychology and Spirituality*, www.healingbreathjournal.org, pp. 3-34.) Therapists who do not understand their breath cannot not understand themselves fully. Breath is the basic body language.

On p. 93 Rothschild has many suggestions on how to unmirror – to get out of the unconscious empathy of taking the client’s behavior into the therapist. “Change breathing” is in this list. But to change our breathing we have to have integrated the problem that breathing shows is activating us. Grounding exercises are not given in this list. A further useful addition is to run very cold water over the wrists. This washes out the accumulated energy. Many breathworkers do this regularly after a session. On p. 146 this is given among the exercises for “keeping your edges” or looking after one’s physical boundaries so as not to absorb the client’s problems.

Chapter Three concerns mindfulness achieved through arousal awareness and concentrates on the body. Several times in this book, a supervisee notices that a change in body postures eases breathing (Chapter Four, p. 169, etc). According to the Theravada Buddhist Pali Canon, the Buddha achieved Enlightenment through awareness of his breathing. (See Joy Manné, ‘Only One Breath: Buddhist Breathwork and the Nature of Consciousness,’ in *The Healing Breath: A Journal of Breathwork Practice, Psychology and Spirituality*, www.healingbreathjournal.org, pp. 22-46; Joy Manné, ‘Mindfulness Of Breathing And Contemporary Breathwork Techniques.’ in Watson, Gay, Stephen Batchelor and Guy Claxton, (eds.) *The Psychology of Awakening: Buddhism, Science and our Day-to-Day Lives*. London: Rider. Republished in *The Healing Breath: A Journal of Breathwork Practice, Psychology and Spirituality*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2002. www.healingbreathjournal.org). Buddhist Psychology emphasises our existence as a series of processes rather than a fixed, permanent self. (Joy Manné, *La Psychologie Bouddhiste au Quotidien*, Jouvence, 2007).

Chapter Four contains a section on Skill Building. It advises, “The better you know yourself, the greater the chance you will be able to maintain clear thinking when you are provoked by a client or a client’s material.” (p. 171) She continues, “Most psychotherapy educational programs now require *a certain amount* of personal therapy as part of the curriculum.” (my italics) I am shocked here. A good Breathwork training demands four years of intensive self-work. Less than that is insufficient for working with clients in any therapeutic discipline.

Finally, Rothschild does not mention shamanism in her discussion of the problem of taking the client into the therapist. But the shaman takes the client into herself to heal, and returns a healed product. (See my book *Conscious Breathing*.) A therapist is a modern shaman, whether s/he wills it or not.

I've pointed out where knowledge of Breathwork would have strengthened Rothschild's book. The richness of the exercises in her book will be useful to all therapists, including Breathworkers. She writes with a beautiful clarity and simplicity from her heart. A worthy teacher for any breathworker – and think what you could bring to her!

I go back to common sense. Why is it so important? Because it is healthy. If we are to help people to heal, we have to offer a healthy role model. Clients will only become as healthy as their healers.

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.) Reprinted from *The Healing Breath*, Volume 5, No. 2, 2003, Pp. 31-39.

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 Achi-keobi, 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.¹⁰

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 interventions² 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

² See e.g. Dowling, 2001; Manné, 1994, 1995, 1997, ; Rajski, 2001. The Healing Breath, Vol 5 No 2 32.

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 – some³ 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.⁴ I hope

³ The Healing Breath, Vol 5 No 2 33.

⁴ See Manné (1997, p.160) for an experience I had when therapy sessions that the treatment room is misinterpreted as the site of the trauma. The Healing Breath, Vol 5 No 2, p. 34.

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 retraumatization 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.

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.¹² 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 *Conscious Breathing: How Shamanic Breathwork Can Transform Your Life*

(Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2004) 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.⁵ 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 traumatised. 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, and then using the breathwork technique of ‘unloading’ will be useful.

Grounding and awareness are especially difficult for a severely traumatised 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 traumatised person to deal with one problem at a time.

⁵ See the introduction to the second edition (1983) of Orr & Ray, who wrote the first Rebirthing Breathwork book. *The Healing Breath*, Vol 5 No 2 35.

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 traumatised 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)¹⁵ Talking, and being listened to with empathy, is an essential part of this relationship. It is also a very efficient form of “unloading.”¹⁶

¹³ See Manné *Soul Therapy, Breathwork*.

¹⁴ See Manné, *Breathwork*.

¹⁵ On the Breathworker-client relationship, see Wilfried Ehrmann

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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 overempha-

sized. ... 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.¹⁷

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)

¹⁶ See Manné, *Breathwork*, for a full explanation of 'Unloading.'

¹⁷ For exercises for grounding through the breath, see Manné, *Soul Therapy*.

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The breath is one of these keys.¹⁸

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.¹⁹ 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?

¹⁸ See Begg, Dowling, Hendricks, Manné, Morningstar and Taylor for case histories.

¹⁹ 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.
- The Inner Door* - <http://www.breathwork.com/member2.html>
- Holotropic Breathwork: www.holotropic.com; gtt@holotropic.com. Tel. (415) 499-4601; fax (415) 499-5740.
- Grof Transpersonal Training – www.holotropic.com. Association for Holotropic Breathwork International – www.breathwork.com.
- International Breathwork Foundation – www.ibfnetwork.org
- International Breathwork Training Alliance – 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. 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; 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) and its Newsletter Editor between 1997-2001. She is a major influence in establishing professionalism and professional standards on every level in Breathwork.

Babette Rothschild (2003) *The Body Remembers Casebook : Unifying Methods and Models in the Treatment of Trauma and PTSD.* (New York: W W Norton & Co.)

The purpose of this book is “to inspire psychotherapists working with traumatized individuals to learn as much as possible about theory, tools, and treatment so that they can be well-equipped in working with the unpredictability of trauma and the diverse needs of clients.” (p. xiii) This is a book that offers methods as tools of the trade, and supports common sense: “laying aside or changing a technique or protocol that makes a client worse, putting off the approach to potentially distressing material until the client feels safe...”(p. xv)

Part One, Theory and Practice, reviews Rothschild’s earlier book, *The Body Remembers* (see review-article “Potential Breathwork Specialisations: Trauma Treatment, a Review Article” by this reviewer in *The Healing Breath*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2003), including her ten foundations for safe trauma therapy. It also resumes the methods illustrated in this book: Somatic Trauma Therapy (Rothschild’s method); Body Psychotherapy; psychodynamic psychotherapy; Transactional Analysis (TA); Gestalt Therapy; Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) – “a combination of several methods all based on the principle that how we think influences how we feel and behave;” Eye Movement Desensitizing and Reprocessing (EMDR); Levine’s SIBAM model; Bodydynamic Running Technique; Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP); Attachment Theory; and Psychopharmacology. Rothschild reminds us that her selection does not mean that methods left out have no worth (p. xvii); that not all of the methods she describes have been tested; that her case histories are anecdotal evidence (xix); and that if patients are consulted, they will know which method works best for them (p. 23).

Part Two contains the chapters with case history illustrations of the use of the various techniques individually or in combination. Many of the techniques are based on grounding techniques and keeping the client in the present. (Chapters 4 and 5)

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) clients may lack the ability to think rationally or to self-nurture, and Chapter 6 illustrates how a combination of techniques can be used to remedy this. Chapter 7 is about emphasising resources. Chapter Eight, “No techniques required,” shows Rothschild making her self a very safe person for a very frightened person through sensitively following her patient’s needs. Chapters 9 - 17 treat working with traumas related to episodes of victimisation; controlling intrusive inner images of the trauma; the feeling of alienation from his family of the child abused by a stranger; a traumatic job dismissal which resulted in the loss of livelihood; feelings of danger; traumatic parenting; the effect of being burgled; the feeling of isolation; and rape.

Rothschild is very courageous in describing some of her mistakes in Chapter 18 on Learning from Mistakes and Failure, and again there is her appreciation of the role of common sense. The next chapter is about applying common sense to the use of theories.

In her Summing Up, Rothschild again reminds us that there is no theory or method that is right for everyone.

There is a section called “Reader Selfcare” early in the book (pp. xix-xxi) on vicarious traumatisation where Rothschild reminds us that reading about traumatic experiences can be traumatising in itself and gives us advice on self-containment and protection.

There is a section of Further Information and Reading on Therapy Models. There are References and an Index. There is no Breathwork in the Index.

In my review article referred to above, I argued that many aspects of Breathwork are ideal for trauma treatment. Rothschild says, “The goal of trauma therapy is to integrate the aspects of the trauma – the sensation, image, behaviour, affect, and meaning – bringing them into consciousness and creating a cohesive narrative.” (p. 165) Breathwork sessions do that whether traumas are minor or major, as long as the breathworker does not push the process insensitively, and knows enough psychotherapy to contain the process.

Rothschild cannot train in every method. I long for the day when Breathwork’s own Rothschild comes forward, with research and case histories, to show what Breathwork can do in trauma treatment. Until that happens, let breathworkers read this careful book carefully, so that they can deepen their work with traumatised clients.

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