

BREATHWORK PRACTITIONER PROGRAM MATERIALS

NOTES FROM THE CANCUN TRAINING: FEB 2006

**This Program Covers half of the Level 1 Basic Practitioner Training.
We cover this, and more in the 21 Day Practitioner Intensives**

PART 1

Definition of Breathwork:

Breathwork is: The Practice of Breath Awareness and Conscious Breathing Exercises and Techniques, for Health, Growth, and Change, in Spirit, Mind and Body.

Who needs it?

Anyone with a belly button!

Who teaches it?

Everyone who practices it (at least by example)

Who comes to breathwork

The Heart Centered and the Open Minded, those who are “ready”

Who uses it and why

Anyone willing; peak performance, optimum health, ultimate potential

What are the benefits of doing breathwork?

What are the benefits of living? Of breathing itself?

What issues and challenges can be healed or resolved or overcome with breathwork?

Anything that requires energy or aliveness, conscious action, focused awareness, or ease and relaxation.

Breathwork is more about creating new possibilities than it is about solving old problems.

Breathwork aids in the generation and control of extremely powerful creative and healing energies. What goals, dreams, and aspirations do you want it to serve?

The most popular use or application of Breathwork is for dealing with stress and anxiety. Breathwork is most useful for psychosomatic illnesses and conditions. And it is the most powerful agent for any mind-body performance, endeavor, art or science.

Breathwork should not be defined solely within the illness model. Although it is often a miracle intervention and “treatment” for a host of so called “medical” conditions, one need not have a health issue or a “problem” in order to explore it and benefit from it.

Conscious and unconscious breathing habits and patterns can trigger the stress response or the relaxation response. Two people can practice the same exercise and get opposite results, while two people can practice the opposite technique and get the same results.

What kinds, forms, styles of breathwork are there?

Basically there are the ancient traditions, methods, forms and styles, and there are the modern or contemporary approaches. In fact there are thousands of them, and ultimately we each need to invent our own style, our own form, our own method, our own approach.

Why are people drawn to particular breathworkers or styles of breathwork?

Whatever you have used breathwork for to create changes in yourself, whatever you have accomplished for yourself, sets up a vibration, an atmosphere, that attracts others who are ready and wanting to make the same changes, to accomplish the same things.

Breathworkers feel a natural willingness and ability to share what they have learned and benefited from with others. The way you communicate about it, and of course to whom you advertise and promote it depends on your personality and focus.

(That is why the essays about “What breathwork means to me” and “My most significant session” are so important. They begin the process of communicating to yourself and others about the practice, and your experience of it.)

[PROCESS: What is Important?]

This exercise helps us to clarify our values, goals and motivating principles. It helps us to arrive at a place of easy decision making. Doing it trains the mind to think in a certain direction, in a certain way.

Ask yourself: “What is important?”

Write down a long list of answers.

Go deeper by asking yourself:

“What is the most important thing?”

“What is the most important thing in life?”

“What is the most important thing for me at this point in my life?”

If you arrive at what you think is a final answer, ask:

“Why is that important?”

Keep digging with these questions.

BREATHE each time you ask and answer!

[Demonstration: Honoring everyone’s unique path]

In a circle, everyone pointing to the center...
each pointing in a different direction, yet all pointing to the same thing.

The role of the breathworker:

Developing the use of “presence” above and beyond any knowledge or skills. Orienting yourself toward what’s important creates an atmosphere that triggers the same tendency in others.

Therapy VS breathwork:

Personal comfort and ethical boundaries and rules in breathwork. In some cases, I have allowed people to become violent with me during a session! But I don’t expect everyone to do that. recommend that. Each person has to acknowledge or determine their particular limitations or vulnerabilities. Every breathworker is responsible for setting the tone, direction, and scope of their relationships.

THE CORE TECHNIQUE:

Conscious Connected Circular Energy Breathing (The Rebirthing Breath)
Learning to breathe energy as well as air.

[EXERCISE: 100 Connected Breaths]

Doing several cycles: observing changes in thoughts, sensations, feelings, emotions.

PART 2

BREATH AWARENESS:

Exploring the various breathing possibilities.
Observing patterns, habits and characteristics;
Finding new ways of perceiving or experiencing the breath..
Speed/rate: Fast or slow.
Volume: deep, shallow
Location: chest or belly.
Three Breathing Spaces: upper, middle, lower
Channel or entry point: nose or mouth
in nose out mouth;
in mouth out nose;
in nose out nose;
in mouth out mouth;
in and out both nose and mouth;
in nose out mouth and nose;
in mouth, out mouth and nose.

In practice: when we simply observe all the details, note all the subtle and not so subtle aspects, patterns, etc., then we can trust our intuitive mind to synthesize and collate it all, and deliver an answer to any question in the moment.

Practice Alternate Nostril Breathing at least 15 minutes.

Practice Kum Nye Breathing (equalizing the flow between mouth and nose)

(Handouts on Hyperventilation)

Three physiological levels of breathing:

Getting air from the room into the lungs
Getting oxygen from lungs to blood
Getting O₂ from blood into cells

Exploring the connection between psychological, emotional, physiological, spiritual states, and breathing patterns; how they are associated, how one affects the other; how changing one changes the other.

Asthma:

Misreading the symptoms of air hunger
Practicing tolerating the symptoms of air hunger.
Practicing the controlled pause (after exhale, before inhale).
Pursed lip breathing
Triggering the reflex point at the end of the exhale

GUIDED SESSION

Applying the Formula for Transformation.

Noticing any holding in the chest.

Eliminating any pause or hesitation between inhale and exhale.

Waking up the releasing reflex point between inhale and exhale (engaging the full free exhale)

Relaxing the jaw. Opening the throat.

Focusing on any restrictions, contractions.

Conscious and unconscious shaping of the stream of breath (lips, teeth, tongue).

Using breath sounds.

Yawning reflex.

Spontaneous connected rhythm:

Phases of a session: Activation, Process, Integration.

Recognizing and encouraging a “Complete Energy Cycle.”

PART 3

DETERMINING THE TYPE, STYLE, METHOD, APPROACH, TO BREATHWORK:

1. What is the breather's level of health?
2. What is their purpose in training?
3. What is their level of skill?

THE FORMULA FOR TRANSFORMATION:

1. Meditative Awareness, the Consciousness Factor: Wake up!
2. Total Relaxation, the Release Factor: Let go!
3. Conscious Breathing, the Energy Factor: Take charge!

THE PRINCIPLES OF BREATH THERAPY:

1. The Technique
2. The Atmosphere
3. The Teacher
4. The Mind of the Breather
5. Something Else

PART 4

Analogy:

Glass of water with layer of mud at the bottom:
Stirring, shaking, pouring in fresh water brings up the junk.

Breathing as the language of the soul. Breathing expresses and reflects our innermost states.

Breathing in a way that expresses the energies of joy, fear, anger, sadness, confusion, peace, etc.

When Consciousness and energy come together, something is created... manifested.

Choosing thoughts vs believing thoughts. Changing what we think, and the way we think.
Choosing our responses vs blindly accepting the way the conditioned emotional mind reacts.

Touching VS not touching in a session.

Relating to the infant in everyone.
Relating to the ancient wisdom in everyone.
See through the illusions people have and the games they play.
Seeing to the powerful essence in everyone.

Combining thought (affirmations) and breath
Combining sound and breath
Combining movement and breath
Combining imagery (visualization) and breath

Event + perception/interpretation/reaction/meaning = Experience

EXERCISE: 20 Connected Breaths

PART 5

VIVATION:

5 Elements

Context/content

Make wrong

Integration

Happiness inherent in existence

Enjoying everything

Focus on strongest feeling

Observe subtle changes in energy

Skills of happiness: loving what we have, getting what we want

Breathing Patterns:

Fast and full: to activate energy, start session, when going unconscious

Slow and full: when integrating something pleasurable, clearing and completing

Fast and shallow: when integrating something uncomfortable or intense, or for fun

(controlling the inhale... the exhale is always simply released quickly and completely)

Rebirthing:

Birth trauma

Death urge/Physical Immortality

Parental disapproval syndrome

Specific negatives

Past lives

Family conditioning

Cultural and religious programming

Senility Process

The technique (how to's and what not's)

Spiritual Psychology:

Model of the mind (open circle)

Thought is creative:

1. analysis principle

2. goals principle

3. affirmations principle

Personal Law (Personal Lie)

Affirmation Process to transform it

PART 6

Suffering

Cause and ending it
2 kinds of suffering
Love brings up anything unlike itself
Resisting evil/loving your enemy
Butterfly story

Consciousness work:

Uncensored thinking (writing)
Creative listing
Purpose in life process
Creative listing process
Nathaniel Branden: Art of conscious living 22-week course: sentence stem completion

BASIC SKILLS/EXERCISES:

1. Breath Awareness
2. Engaging the Exhale
3. Charging the Heart
4. Connected Rhythm
5. Abdominal Breathing
6. Three Breathing Spaces
7. Four Corner Exercise
8. Rhythms and Rates
9. Equalizing the Flow
10. Reverse Respiration/Paradoxical Beathing
11. Breath Sounds/Toning
12. 2-Phase breathing

EXERCISE: Favorite Pleasures

PART 7

MAP OF THE PROCESS

Diagram: layers and levels, surface and center/encounters along the way

Thoughts, Feelings/Sensations, Emotions: the only thing we need to work with.

Bridge story: cause vs trigger

Missing dimension (from Michael Ryce)

My 9/11 awakening

Love vs anger, fear, desire, need, etc.

(Dr. Sarno: back pain: The Mind-Body Prescription)

Breathing with children:

games: copying breath, feel good breath, calm down breath, wake up breath

Ken Keyes: Living Love Way

12 Pathways

7 Centers of Consciousness

Addictions vs preferences

Life traps

Intense reprogramming

Core beliefs //personal laws

Breathwork Session Issues:

Birth trauma...

leaving the body...

going unconsciousness

The difference between tension and “charge”

Tetany and the fire hose phenomenon

With Breathing you can integrate emotions on the feeling level—that is physically: without the need of psychological/psychotherapeutic work. When a feeling or emotion that you have been avoiding all your life comes up, it is normal to stop breathing, stop relaxing, or stop being aware.

Breathwork involves doing something different about “what is” rather than trying to make “what is” different than it is. With breathwork, you can permanently change (resolve) feelings and emotions related to anything.

The point is not to make physical, emotional or psychological issues, problems and challenges go away: the process involves changing your relationship to them. Then they may naturally resolve, integrate, heal, change or disappear.

With breathwork, you can reduce or eliminate stress. You can increase or activate creativity. You can transform energy... Like an alchemist, you turn lead into gold! You can simply learn to be happy, creative, relaxed and alert in any situation, under any circumstances.

PART 8

Transforming Energies:

Depression to happiness
Pain to pleasure
Fear into love
Anxiety into peace
Sickness into wellness
Pessimism into optimism
Ennui into enthusiasm
Poverty into wealth
Tension into relaxation
Upset into calmness
Anger into gratitude

TEACHING:

Question of whether to talk about all the possible things that will happen in a session VS not saying anything.

When a person knows what to expect, they feel more comfortable. If they are “warned” about certain symptoms, then when they occur, the person is ready.

The opposite is also important: not saying anything about the possible feelings and sensations and energy experience. The person will be looking for them, and might miss something else, something new.

The mind has an uncanny ability to create a false experience upon suggestion.

So about the question: I am still comfortable with both extremes. Sometimes I say nothing about what will happen: leaving open the possibility that something totally new—even for me—can happen. And other times I try and tell the person everything that has happened in everyone else, so that they can be prepared for everything. Intuition rules.

SETTING INTENTIONS FOR A SESSION

In the beginning, best not to have any intention, except to work on the basic skills (awareness, relaxation, conscious breathing) Let the breath do what it wants, let the breath take the person into what it wants. In later sessions, bring in the idea of intention... Working thru certain issues, breathing into specific challenges, etc.

BREATHWORK INTERVENTIONS/BREATH ADJUSTMENTS

A session can be seen as having three parts: Activation, Process, and Integration.

Add a little stretch to the inhale: Pull past the ceiling on the inhale

Create a little space between the teeth: open the jaw a bit more than the habit.
Watch for crunching of the back of the neck: keep the back of the neck long
Watch (listen) for unnecessary friction... relaxing throat, etc.
Watch for unnecessary effort, overworking: using more muscles than necessary

Talking about comfort zone, discomfort zone, working zone (three concentric circles).

Learning to expand one's comfort zone: including more and more into one's sense of comfort.
Not staying in the middle of comfort, but getting out to the edge: so we can grow, evolve.
Getting to the working zone that borders, overlaps between comfort and discomfort zones
Not going too far too fast and therefore triggering unconscious defenses: causing body to shut down, relaxation to disappear, or consciousness to be lost. (Don't confuse what is actually comfortable, with what is simply a familiar habit.)

A COMPLETE ENERGY CYCLE is the Key to a Successful Session: The Art of Rebirthing

When we begin to breathe and relax, we activate the energy experience. The energy builds and builds, and reaches a peak. Then the energy recedes naturally. This is a complete energy cycle.

The mistake people often make is that they interfere with this cycle before it reaches its own natural peak. They try to control or stop or change the energy before it can resolve itself naturally. So, the idea is to welcome, invite, encourage the energy to build and reach a peak without interfering or interrupting this natural cycle.

The other mistake people make is that as soon as the energy peaks, they think the session is over. Sometimes everything happens on the down cycle. After the peak come integration and resolution, realizations and insights. Everything has been reorganized and new structures are formed and new directions are set. Sometimes it seems that the session actually begins after the peak. Sometimes more cycles are triggered.

Breathwork is about Self Determination and Self Esteem, Self Empowerment and Self Realization. We are midwives, coaches, facilitators. We trust the process. We let the breath do the work. We allow life to determine its own course.

Breathwork teaches the art of relaxing into intensity. The body reacts the same to intense pain or pleasure. It contracts, resists, short circuits, is overwhelmed. So Breathwork increases our ability to feel and accept intensity... Love is the most intense energy in the world!

Breathwork is about Spiritual Purification. It is about developing an intimate relationship with the element of air. And it is important to develop a conscious relationship with the other elements: water, fire, earth.

PART 9

Breaking our identification with thoughts, feelings, emotions: with the mind and body.

“I” versus “my mind” my “system” my “body.”

I am upset, I am afraid... versus “my system is in a panic,” “my body is activated, etc.”
I like this, I like that versus “my mind likes this or that,”

Living in your Car/Eating Snow VS wandering out into the unknown

Ocean Meditation... each breath a wave... the swelling of the tides... deep, shallow, warm cold, calm stormy.... Perfectly natural you...

Bamboo flute meditation... hollow body, open at top and bottom... Chakras are the flute holes.
Your body, a hollow flute lays on an altar. God picks you up and plays you!

Cosmic Breathing: using big gentle expansive inhales to create a space inside... room for something big to live in you. Invite the infinite. Make room for the infinite and the eternal in you.

TRAINING:

Reflex Points, Neutral Points.

2-Phase Breathing

Zen Breathing

PART 10

Uses and applications of Breathwork

Sympathetic and Parasympathetic branches of the autonomic nervous system

Diaphragmatic Breathing: Abdominal Breathing

Diaphragm (biggest muscle in the body)

Place a heavy book on the belly and practice lifting the book with the inhale

Squeezing the Sponge (Squeeze and breathe)

Resisting a fist: strengthening the abdominal breath

Internal massaging of the heart with diaphragmatic breathing:

Diaphragm movement/Supporting the heart: The heart sits on the diaphragm; and with the help of gravity, the heart “rides” the diaphragm.

During the inhale, as the diaphragm flattens, the heart gets long and skinny; when the diaphragm rises up during the exhale, forming a dome shape, the heart becomes short and fat.

The greater the excursion rate of the diaphragm, the more heart massaging action takes place

Coughing During a Heart Attack: emergency self-help method

Reverse Respiration/Paradoxical Breathing: for digestive problems.

The intra-abdominal pressure creates a squeezing and stretching...

Organs are toned and stimulated, supported, strengthened, soothed...

Low and Slow Belly Breathing: for anti-stress and for lowering blood pressure

Therapeutic Zone: 6 to 8 breaths per minute.

Healing Sounds (Chi Kung Practice)

PART 11

SPIRITUAL BREATHING:

Bringing in all the layers levels...

Sounds, images, words/phrases, feelings, emotions, movements, smells, colors, etc....

Don't let a single breath go by without intention...

Make each breath full, total, multi-leveled...

Every breath can be a prayer...

Every breath can be a blessing...

Giving words to feelings and emotions...

Breathing in ways that express and reflect those feelings

Conscious Breathing:

Connecting to the Energies of aliveness and creativity;

Giving force and form to "What's Important."

Decision, to decide: from "de care" to cut off all other possibilities

Letting go: releasing: Kite string, trap door analogies...

The commitment to moving your life forward