

Spiritual Breathing

The Sedona Gathering

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CONTENTS

A joke about Psychologists, Psychiatrists and Psychotherapy
The Problem with Yoga, Tai Chi, and other Methods and Systems
Finding the Courage to Create Your Own Path
Going Inward Versus Moving Along The Surface
The Formula For Transformation
Merging Opposites
Yawning is Yoga
Fear, Growth, and the Ego
The Rebirthing Breath
Some Traps and Barriers on the Inward Path
Fear versus Excitement
Getting past Thoughts, Emotions, and Feelings and Sensations
It's all about Energy
Confusing the Boat with the Waves the Boat Makes
The Creative process
Patanjali's Message
An Analogy for the Inner Work
The main practice
A Guided Breathing Session
Advanced Breathwork Skills
Final Advice for Your Practice

This past spring, I attended a national psychological conference in the Ukraine. Over 600 psychiatrists, psychotherapists and psychology students were there. I got up in front of this group and began to think out loud: “What the heck am I doing here? What am I doing in the middle of 600 psychologists and psychotherapists?” Looking out at the audience, my mind went blank and I could only think of a joke: “Psychologists build castles in the air. Psychotherapists live in them. And psychiatrists collect the rent every month!” No one laughed.

I’ve been teaching breathwork since 1976, since I got up from my very first rebirthing session. But suddenly on that spring day in the Ukraine, it seemed that I needed to go back to everyone I’d had ever taught breathing to and say: “oops... errr... umm... uhhh... please forget most of what I’ve taught you! I realize now that all this breathing stuff is about something very much different than I thought!”

The real work, the ultimate work, can only be done from the inside out—which is the only way that anything real or pure can ever happen. All of the healing and personal growth systems like yoga, tai chi, movement, dance, martial arts, and so on... they were all invented or discovered by someone. That some “one” was in meditation when the energy began to move within them... and this energy moved the body. These beautiful movements—these pure forms—naturally and spontaneously expressed themselves.

The teacher—the master—was in such a high, deep, natural, open, creative state, such a beautiful state, when these movements expressed themselves. The people around them could feel something from the beyond in these movements, in these expressions. They could sense the purity and they could see the efficacy of the practice... And they naturally wanted to touch it too—to be in that state with the master! And so the idea is: if

I go through those same motions long enough and sincerely enough, I too will get to that place from which mastery comes.

I call this working “from the outside in.” And it seems to have worked in the past in some cases. But I don’t think we have time for that way anymore. Now I think that everyone needs to invent their own form of yoga; everybody needs to invent their own style of chi kung, their own tai chi, their own life dance.

We need to create or discover our own path. But it’s so seductive and so tempting to copy someone else. It is so common for people to simply follow a well-established path. However, I am here to say that if you are walking someone else’s path, you are walking the wrong path! That’s the ruthless truth.

We say: “but look how great the “one” was who invented or discovered the path!” Or we think: “how can so many people be wrong?” The path—the way—may be so beautiful and so popular. A million people may swear that it’s the one true way. But for me now, the more people that swear one way is the right way, the more I know it’s not my path!

We have to find or make our own way in this life. And doing so takes tremendous courage—emotional courage. To actually walk your own path? To march to the beat of your own inner drummer? To do what your heart tells you to do regardless of what other people think and say and do? Damn that’s a hard row to hoe in this world! But it’s the only real way to reach ultimate liberation and self-realization.

So much of my work over the years has been related to the world of psychotherapy, the medical world, the world of healing. I’ve always wanted to fix or solve problems, to heal disease, to help people, to stop people from suffering. I don’t

know how or why, but that driving passion seems to have been hardwired into me. Every job I've ever really enjoyed, everything I've ever done that gave me satisfaction, seems to have been an expression or a reflection of that deep irresistible urge.

In psychotherapy, you come with a problem, and the therapist is there to fix you, to help you and to support you and to counsel you and to help you dig into your issues, into your past, and to find the source of your problems. And so you discover that the doctor dropped you on your head at birth, and that's why you've never been able to trust anyone. And in knowing that, you somehow forgive and forget and finally move on. You start to relate to yourself and others differently. You change your life. And that's good!

But in fact, we've had so many influences—too many to ever count, or even know. And so if we work along this line, the work like will never end! I am not against good psychotherapy: on the contrary. I simply think that there is a better way. I call it spiritual breathing.

And my work evolved to this because I too wanted what the “perfected master” had. I too wanted to be in that “place” from which all life, all art, all form, all substance, all wisdom, all healing, all truth, all purity, and all good things arise. In fact, I am more interested than ever in this place! Call it our “Source,” our “Center,” our “Essence.” It's awesome! It's infinite! It's eternal!

We all have immediate and direct access to it. But as soon as you try to think about it or talk about it, you are into the old problem: you can't find words, or you must use someone else's words to describe it. You can share it, but you can't really give it to anyone else.

In my experience, with breathing, by chance or by grace, I touched it; and I

experienced the love and peace and joy and freedom, the certainty and the awesome safety of it. Then suddenly all the traditional words like Samadhi, kensho, nirvana, moksha, satori, enlightenment, liberation, perfection, the kingdom of heaven—they all made sense! All of those exalted states that we've read about and heard about—that all the great teachers have been pointing to—opened up to me!

I am here to say that absolutely everyone has his or her own key, and the breath is a direct and immediate door. It is a real connection to this place—to this state—of pure freedom, creative power and total aliveness. No one is any closer to this reality than anyone else. Many of the old paths lead toward this state. Those paths usually begin on the surface or the outside, and it takes us inward, deeper, which is always a good direction!

The world is round. I like to think of this analogy as one of God's cosmic jokes. To someone walking on the surface, the world seems flat, endlessly flat. Lots of things seem obvious or true on the surface. But when we attain to a deeper or higher level of awareness, we find that something else is actually real and true.

Imagine two people standing on the earth—on the surface of a big circle. One points east and says, “this is the one right way.” The other points west and says “no, that is the right way!” As if they both belong to the flat earth society, they argue and fight over which way is the only right way. So, they turn their backs on each other, and they each go in opposite directions. Well the world is made so that the further away they go from each other, the closer they get to each other! And sooner or later they end up face to face.

So I say, don't even start that long, damned process! You'll probably die before

you come to the realization that you've wasted your whole life going away from something that you eventually have to come face to face with.

When you're up here (on the surface) and you want to get here (the center), it's so easy to assume we need to go through some process to get to this place. You walk and struggle along on the surface, and sooner or later, it dawns on you that you're not going to get to the center by moving north, south, east, or west. You will never get there by moving along on the surface.

So you change your direction. You leave the surface and you move towards the center—your source. When I go to the center of myself, I pop up in the same place that you pop up when you go to the center of yourself! Meeting on the surface level is nice. It's wonderful! You can do a lot of really fun things when you connect on this level. But when you connect on this level (the center), the possibilities are infinitely better!

So, I see this journey as leaving the surface life and taking an inward path. I wish we were sitting in a circle right now. I think it's such an important demonstration. Can I have a few of you just come here and make a circle? About six of you are enough. Make a circle: just sit in a circle here.

Okay, so here we are in a circle. There is the center of the circle. Everyone please point to the center of the circle. I think this is so cool! Everybody here is pointing to the exact same thing. And yet everybody is literally pointing in a different direction!

This woman (opposite me in the circle) obviously doesn't know where the center is! By the direction she is pointing, she must think that the center is somewhere behind me! But I can see exactly which way the center is. And it sure ain't the way she is pointing! She's got to be blind or stupid! And that guy (off to my left): don't listen to

him! He thinks the center of the circle is that way. He's totally lost and confused! If I follow him, I'll never get to the center of the circle!

So, this is how the world works. And we need to remember and to honor the fact that everyone has his or her own unique path. Your course is yours alone. God, that's so hard to live with in this world! There is such an illusion of safety, such an illusion of certainty in trusting that someone else knows the way for you. We think: "so many people say that the right way is that way. But I feel it is this way. Yet, who am I? And so I better follow them..." You follow someone else, and abandon your unique destiny.

We have to honor our own path, and honor the fact that everyone has his or her own path. On the surface, everyone's path, although different, is towards the same one thing. Let's just agree to it up front: no matter what we call it, we are all talking about the same thing. No matter which direction our path seems to take us, we are all really heading to the same place! Let's agree to that in the beginning and save us all a lot of surface conflict.

So, having said all that... let me point to the way that I have found that leads to our center. Actually, there are three ways—very tested and proven ways—for each of us to find our way to this place.

First, there is awareness: meditative awareness—meditation. If you meditate long enough, your consciousness will open and expand. Sooner or later you will get there. Meditation will do it. It's a proven way.

Another proven way is relaxation: Letting go, "letting God," the path of surrender. This is a traditional and classic method or path. It's a powerful spiritual practice. Relaxation will definitely get you there.

And the third way is breathing. If you follow the breath—the breath is like a thread—if you follow the breath, it will take you right to your center. Your breath is coming from your source, and so if you follow it like a thread, you will sooner or later, get there.

And if you do all of these three of things at the same time, it's guaranteed that you'll get there! You can't miss! In fact, when you combine awareness, relaxation and breathing, things happen very quickly—almost too quickly for your system to accept or allow. You are touching the source of infinite energy, infinite love, infinite power... and your system may not be ready, willing, or able... it may not be trained to receive that much energy.

That's the purpose of yoga and many other systems: to prepare the body—to prepare the vessel—to receive this energy. Hatha yoga and many other practices prepare you for the kundalini awakening, for an explosion of shakti. This practice is about awakening to this life-force energy. In yoga, the work that you do along the way, prepares you for what awaits you at the end of your journey.

So this is the journey that we are on, consciously or unconsciously. And this is a method or the way that we will explore. I call it a Formula for Transformation. There are three ingredients in the formula.

The first is awareness: it's the consciousness factor, and the message is “wake up!” Just wake up. Become more conscious and aware! Anybody who has ever become enlightened has described it in the same way. They just say, “I woke up! I didn't have to go anywhere. There wasn't anything wrong with me. I was simply sleeping and now I am awake.”

The second ingredient is relaxation: it's the release factor, and the message is "let go!" At certain moments, we need only trust in the perfection of life, we need only surrender to life; we need only "to let go and let God."

Think about it: we don't know how to manufacture chemicals in our brain. We cannot consciously digest our food. We don't know how to beat our own heart. We don't know how to generate new cells to rebuild an organ. But something in us knows this. And we need to trust this something: because it also knows our way to liberation.

And the third ingredient is breathing: it's the energy factor, and the message is "take charge!" We need to be an active participant in your own evolution. We need to take action if we are going to move forward. Taking charge can mean opening to your own creative energy. It can mean being your own guide and leader. If somebody else gives you enlightenment, you won't be able to maintain it.

If you are not an active conscious participant in your own healing, in your own growth, in your own awakening, then it won't last. One day, you'll be looking back at the experience and saying: "Wow, I'll never forget that session or that trip or that moment!" It will be something that happened once, but in time, you disconnect from it.

So you have to be a conscious participant in the process. Now, there's a wonderful paradox here, because breathing is something that you do, but it is also something that just happens. Relaxation is something that you do, but it is also a non-doing.

We are talking about bringing together two things: opposites, polarities, yin and yang. And that requires skill. It is a real art! How do you bring active and passive forces together? How do you merge opposites?

Well, since it's already happening in breathing: we play with the breath! When you breathe consciously, you are combining active and passive. You are bringing these two things together. It sets up a pattern in your system, and the same thing begins to happen on other levels.

Hey, she just yawned with her mouth closed! That must mean she is a very good girl! She must have spent years in school, years trying to conform, seeking approval and avoiding disapproval! She has successfully completed the adulteration process: she has managed to control and inhibit and stifle a very healthy natural reflex!

Can you imagine sitting in the back of the classroom, and the professor is talking, and you do this? [Long loud yawning sound] [laughter] You would never dare do that! When you need to yawn, your spirit is calling your energy to move. The soft animal of your body is begging you to let it live. Yet family, society, culture teach you to suppress it. "It's not polite." You don't want to draw attention to yourself. That's why when one person yawns, someone else always yawns. It's like unconscious permission. "You mean it's okay to yawn? Thank God! Because I need it too!"

What if you need to yawn when somebody is telling you his or her problems? I mean what's the worse thing you could do when someone is telling you his or her problems? Yawn in their face! But the yawn is actually an urging of the spirit to move energy, to open and receive, to clear and release and balance. And yet we stifle and suppress this natural reflex called yawning.

But yawning is yoga. Yawning is yoga! When you yawn, you stretch: yoga. When you yawn, you breathe: yoga. When you yawn, you do something with your spine: yoga. It's natural yoga.

So, just begin to yawn, and listen to your body. Cooperate with the yawn. Exaggerate it. Make it dramatic. Make it theatrical. Make it Shakespearian! You will be cooperating with an awesome natural reflex: one that society simply overlooks—not only overlooks, but also frowns upon! In certain moments, this perfectly healthy and natural blessing is actually frowned upon and even condemned! You are taught that it is not polite. It's rude. We buy into a social rule that prevents us from being fully alive in the moment!

And so, if you leave here tonight, and just remember to yawn fully and freely and often, you will have gotten the essence of what I teach! And the breath itself—the sacred breath that you are opening to when you yawn—that breath will teach you absolutely everything else!

Encourage, invite, cooperate and celebrate the yawn! It sounds so simple. And it is. And it should be. You don't need a degree. You don't need to be an expert. You don't need to be a saint to get to God. You don't need a middleman to find yourself. You've already got the middleman: it's your mind and body! It's your ego, it's your personality. And this middleman can be either a wall or a bridge.

So let me describe this. It's what I want for myself and what I want for everyone. It is what I practice and what I teach. This is how I see the process after 30 years and 50,000 people. I've literally done hands-on breathwork with over 50,000 people. They have all been my guinea pigs, my laboratory rats! Every person who has ever come to me to breathe...I have used them! I am still using them! I am using them for my own growth. I am using them for my own healing. And I hope and pray that they are using me for the same reason!

If you don't like it, don't come to me! Because as I see it, there's only one game in town. And if you don't want to be in it, you probably don't want to be around me. And if you end up in a room, breathing on a table or on the floor or on a bed in front of me, then it ain't no accident! You must have chosen to be in this game too.

There's one thing that's important; and I rarely lose sight of it. Though my process has changed completely in the past 25 years, one thing has never changed... I know I am here now. I have tasted the present moment and I know of no other home.

We've all had those moments when the beauty and power and peace and joy and freedom come up and come through. These moments do something to us. Everyone's had those moments. But they seem to come accidentally or arbitrarily: when making love, or when a child is born, or suddenly when watching a sunset. The moments seem to be caused by certain special life situations or circumstances. But that's not how it's really happening. It is simply the result of being conscious, awake, present.

Anyway, this is where I started [drawing a circle]. I'm up here on the surface. But for a moment, I get a glimpse of this (the center of the circle). And I say: "What do I have to do get from here to there?" And I think that's the normal path of a seeker. The teacher says you have to do this or that to get there, so you get involved in this or that process, and sure enough it takes you in that direction.

Does anybody need to stop me or to say anything?

[Inaudible question from the audience]

Yes, it can be scary. Fear naturally comes up when we grow. If you are not experiencing fear, you must not be growing. It can be like entering a cyclone, a vortex. And once you're moving in it, there's no going back! Once you get to a certain point

there is no escaping the process. In physics it's called the "event horizon." From here, we cannot see what is beyond it, and once we pass thru it, there is no turning back! And so the ego is afraid of it, afraid of the unknown, the unknowable.

Because this center—this source is calling us. It's pulling on us. It's drawing us to it. All of the energy of the universe is radiating out from it. And like a moth to a flame, we are naturally drawn toward it.

We are up here on the surface and the direction that we normally go is along the surface. That's the direction. It could be north or south or east or west, but it's still on the surface. It's the law of inertia in physics: an object in motion tends to stay in motion and an object at rest tends to stay at rest. We need some spark or some force to get us to change our direction, to take this inward path and to start doing this inner work. That's the purpose of this technique or method or process. It helps us to change our focus, our direction, and the very course of our lives.

It is the Formula for Transformation that I talked about earlier: awareness, relaxation and breathing. We use a technique: conscious, connected, rhythmic, circular energy breathing. There are no pauses or gaps between the inhales and the exhales. Each breath is connected to the next, like a continuous circular breathing [demonstrates connected breathing]. So at all times, you are either inhaling or exhaling and there are no pauses, no gaps: no time to do anything else but breathe.

Such an utterly simple technique! But in my experience, it is the most profound and powerful breathing technique at work on the planet today. In thirty years of searching and seeking in forty countries, I have yet to find a more powerful or effective technique for growth, healing, and awakening to our essence, to our real true self.

So you apply the technique, and sure enough, you overcome inertia. It allows you to change your direction, to leave the surface. You take the inward path, and you begin to go deeper. Now you need motivation. You need to remember your intention. You need to choose to keep moving in that direction again and again. You may need to give yourself a little push to get started. If you just breathe like this [demonstrates dull lazy apathetic breathing], you're going to get more of what you already have.

If you continue to breathe in the same unconscious way that you do everyday, you're gonna get more of what you get everyday. If you want to experience something you've never experienced before, then you have to breathe in a way you've never breathed before. It's pretty simple: you just breathe in that way. You simply use the technique.

Once the inertia is broken, the process gets really interesting. The first thing that you may encounter is physical tension. Muscular tension: it's like a wall. It blocks your path. It stops you dead in your tracks. If you have not learned how to physically relax, and you have not practiced it in the face of intensity, you simply cannot go deeper into your own being. You're own body will prevent you from going deeper.

Much, if not most of our tension is unconscious. Tension in your jaw, tension in your neck, tension in your shoulders, tension in your belly: all this tension inhibits the breathing mechanism, and it prevents the full free flow of life force energy. Everybody's got their favorite place where they hold and carry tension. Breathing away this chronic tension is a profound key to self-realization.

When you relax, you drop deeper. You go deeper. Letting go, relaxation, takes you deeper. And the next thing you encounter can be called a "sensory barrier." This is a

wide array of possible feelings and sensations. A mass of intense feelings and sensations can arise in your body. Heat, cold, vibrations, tingling, headache, heaviness, lightness, dizziness, dry throat, muscle spasms... Just imagine the list of possible physical sensations that you can encounter in life—and you do encounter them in life—you also naturally encounter them in a session.

We judge some of these natural feelings and sensations: “Oh, that’s a bad feeling.” “Oh, that’s a good feeling.” Now as soon as you judge a feeling to be wrong or bad, well, guess what? You cannot relax into it. You cannot get past the feeling. The judgment stops you dead in your tracks; or it makes your journey difficult and painful.

If we judge it to be a good feeling, we run the risk of getting lost in it, of not going through it or past it. You will again begin to move along the same direction you were going on the surface. And some people do just that. They live their whole lives going round and round, stuck in their feelings or emotions. (And they pay big bucks to a therapist who is all too willing to let them do that forever!)

Of course, if you have taken the step to move inward, and you have gotten past the barriers of fear and tension that stop everyone else from “feeling,” then of course you can see that you are better off than they are, and so you may be even more likely to remain stuck on that level.

During the 60’s and 70’s the whole human potential movement was about getting in touch with our feelings. And for some people, that’s as far as they went. Softening and opening to their feelings was obviously much better than living in your head and walking around with stiff psychic armor, not able to breathe.

But this is where the teachings of the Buddha come in very handy: remembering

the practice of non-attachment. If you simply feel all these feelings fully and freely, if you relax and breathe into them and through them, you will keep going deeper.

If the feelings are new or strange, unusual or uncomfortable, or if you are feeling many things at the same time, it's easy for your mind to interfere or even stop the process. We hear thoughts like: "This is bad, this is uncomfortable, it's too intense, I don't like it. Go away, stop, etc." When that happens, it's important to remember that it's not you who is talking: it's your unconscious conditioned emotional mind, it is an old fearful version of yourself! In that moment, you need let go and breathe—not indulge or buy into those thoughts.

Resistance is an automatic unconscious reaction of the mind. In fact, it often resists perfectly simple, harmless and natural feelings and sensations. This is what stops so many people. "Oh no, I don't like this feeling in my body! Oh no, this is not good for me! No, this is not for me, not now, maybe another day."

To an impartial objective observer, it is so obvious that the breather has encountered a feeling that is scaring them. They are becoming afraid of their own feelings in their own body! It may be a feeling that is there inside of you all the time: the only difference is that now you are consciously feeling it!

So, you are going thru life (along the surface) unconscious and disconnected from the feelings within, and you somehow think that you are safe from them! You think that somehow this solves the problem. Does it make sense to avoid and escape your feelings? Most people say: "Of course not. I would never do that! Other people do that! Not me!"

So awareness is needed. Awareness is not thinking. It's not judging. It's not analyzing. It's just watching, noticing, observing. Then if you add relaxation and

breathing, you go deeper—you go further. And we come to another interesting layer: the level of emotions. So the process is becoming both more subtle and more powerful. Things are very dense and thick up here (close to the surface). But as we go deeper, things get more nebulous, more subtle.

Now people usually say that there are some emotions one can simply not enjoy. I beg to differ. There is not a single human emotion that is not enjoyable. Well, what about fear you say? Hey people pay \$10 bucks to go to a movie to get scared out of their wits. By the millions they go. And by the hundreds, Hollywood produces more of them. There must be something enjoyable about the emotion called fear!

It's all about energy! I teach fire walking, where we see that there's something exciting about fear. Fear to me is excitement plus a "no." So, you feel excited, and up comes a "no." That's fear. Excitement is fear plus a "yes." So you feel fear, but up comes a "yes." Now we have excitement. It's the same energy, fear and excitement. It's the same energy but there is a "no" or a "yes" tangled up in it.

So, you have to start saying yes! And saying 'yes' gets to be so important. At this point every breath better be a big 'yes' to every emotion, because emotions are at the root of the physical sensations. And these physical sensations coming from a "no" form this armor or tension. We have these structures in consciousness, made of thoughts, emotions, and feelings and sensations. So you better be saying yes or you're going to get stuck going round and round in one of these structures, and you won't get to your source, your center.

The mind will interfere. "Oh no! If I feel that, I must be a bad person. If I feel such anger, what does that mean about me? If I feel afraid, then I must not be good,

grown up, trustworthy, blah blah blah.” And so we start to judge our emotions and. You can get lost in emotions, or you can touch them and jump out of them so fast—as if you’ve touched a hot stove. “No way I’m going into that emotion!” Then out of the process you go.

If you just keep breathing and relaxing into and through all the emotions, you get to this really interesting level, which is the level of thoughts, ideas, beliefs. And if you look at traditional psychotherapy, all the emotional problems have a root in certain thoughts, beliefs, ideas; and all your physical problems arise out of the resulting emotions.

All right, and so here is the whole structure [thoughts, emotions, feelings and sensations]. This is the realm of healing in the world. People are focusing on thoughts, feelings and sensations, and emotions. That’s the work of all healing, of all therapy. If you look at any healing method, they’re working on all these things.

Let’s get your head straight. Let’s clear some of those emotions. Let’s get comfortable in your body. Thoughts, feelings and sensations, and emotions: they comprise your entire inner experience. Everything that you experience can be framed within or experienced through, thoughts, feelings and sensations, and emotions.

But you can get so lost in this process, on these levels, in these things. No matter how many thoughts you catch and change, there’s always going to be another one. No matter how many psychological problems you solve, there’s always another one. No matter how many emotional issues you resolve, there’s always another one. No matter how many physical illnesses you cure, there’s always going to be another one.

The work will never end. And that's where I was lost for 25 years. Every time I helped a person solve a psychological problem, resolve an emotional issue, or heal a physical illness, I felt so good and they felt so good, and I felt so successful and they felt so empowered. But finally I realized: "hey, this is never going to end! If we focus on this level, the work will never end!"

So now I'm about disconnecting from this whole realm. Unless you like "playing paddy-cake in your shit," as Werner Erhardt used to say... and some people do love it! They end up in therapy for years and years. They love it; they love just churning it up and talking about it. It's like your mind is a rottweiler. You give it a bone and it gnaws on it and gnaws on it, chews on it and chews on it. It will chew on it all day and then the next day it'll pick it up and chew on it some more. You can't find a happier dog. Give it a bone it can chew on forever and it's the happiest dog in the world!

Give your mind—give your ego—a problem to solve, and oh, it's the happiest dog you'll find! And the more complicated the problem, the happier the mind is; the longer it takes, the better it likes it. And in fact, our ego likes for you to be lost in this realm of thoughts and feelings and emotions forever. And with each specific thing you resolve, it gives you the feeling you are making progress, because you are making progress!

Now you might get lost on any one of these levels for a long time. How long do you want to process all these things? How much time do you want to spend clearing all your emotions? How much therapeutic stuff do you want to do? You started off in the right direction but then you get caught, and now you're spinning, churning, mucking go round and round in your stuff.

So when I asked people “Have you ever had an experience that you cannot describe in terms of thoughts, feelings and sensations, or emotions?” I haven’t encountered anyone who can come up with anything outside this realm. Now some people will say “energy” which I really love, because in fact thoughts are a form of energy. Emotions are energy in movement; they’re a form of energy. Feelings and sensations are forms of energy.

So if you are experiencing these things as energy, you’re awfully close. You’re very near to a pure state of being. You’ve gotten through all these complicated, miscellaneous—infinately different forms of energy. And now you are experiencing the energy as energy. So now you’re on to something! You’re close... you’re getting really close to this place where you can experience everything as energy.

When people tell me that they feel energy—and lots of people say: “wow, I feel all this energy in my body!” To me, it’s like a boat going through water. The boat goes through the water and makes waves. You don’t feel the boat; you feel the waves that the boat makes. So when energy moves through you, you feel the waves that the energy makes—the mental, emotional and physical ‘waves’ that the energy makes. You don’t feel the energy: you feel the waves that the energy makes in your body, mind and emotions.

People confuse the boat with the waves it makes. They mistake the energy for the reactions that the energy causes in their mind-body system. And I think that there’s one of the most powerful lessons. You will never really experience the energy directly, until your body stops reacting to the energy. You don’t directly touch the energy when you focus on the emotional reactions to the energy. You don’t experience the energy until you

stop having mental reactions to the energy. Only then do you start to experience the energy directly—at the level of your being—from your core, your essence. Until then you are only experiencing your mind's interpretation of the energy, you're feeling the emotional experience of the energy, your feeling your body's reaction to the energy, and not the energy.

But, when you get to this state and you are experiencing the energy, by then you are caught in a vortex, and the urge is so powerful to return to a thought and to find some stability on this level of thought. “Okay, this is what's happening, I know this is happening. Okay now I'm ok, I understand...” There's this need to know or understand or to put it into some psychological context in order to be able to safely experience it. But when you do, you take your self out of the experience.

And people can also convert this energy into this most blissful and ecstatic emotions. You may think: “I'm there! God! I see God!” You converted that energy into a mental image, or you converted it into a beautiful physical sensation, even a cosmic orgasm!

This realm is so powerful—thoughts, feelings and emotions. We so easily identify with this realm. We think we 'are' our thoughts, feelings and emotions. And you match up with other people have also identified with their thoughts and feelings and emotions. That's why you make them so important.

Think about the people that you love the most. You care about what they think. You care about how they feel. That's how you express love—as if they are those things. And you can imagine yourself on the other side of it: “What, you don't care how I think? Then you don't care about me!” “You don't care how I feel? Then you don't care about

me!” We are so identified with these things that unless other people relate to them we don’t feel like we are being related to.

So who we really are in truth, is down here at the center, just humming along, totally out of the ego’s idea of reality, not being contacted what so ever! And you know what? It doesn’t care! It doesn’t even care. It is whole and complete, in peace and power, untouched by surface waves.

So this is the first breathing exercise. It is a good time to invite this energy. Now you can call this energy whatever you want. Call it God, call it source, call it love, call it peace, call it freedom. Call it whatever you want. We’re all sitting around pointing to the center of the circle. And we really don’t care what everybody calls it because we know that despite the different names, we’re all talking about the same thing—all pointing to the same thing.

So here’s the creative process: energy and consciousness coming together. Whenever energy and consciousness come together, something is always created—something manifests every time. Consciousness is represented by... well, what are you focusing on? What is your intention? What do you believe? What do you think? What are you picturing?

And the energy is represented in the breath. Whatever you think about while you breathe, you will create in consciousness. Now most people don’t experience that creative power, because everybody is creating, and one little wave of creation in a storm—in an ocean of waves—seems to go totally unnoticed.

And that’s why Patanjali who, who is here today... You know, Pantanjali didn’t

invent yoga, but he took all the yogic wisdom of his day and he put it into a system of awakening to our ultimate potential—a very complete system. The problem was Patanjali's sutras were probably spoken or sung, or repeated verbally for two or three hundred years before they were finally written down.

Patanjali was teaching yoga 700 years before Hatha yoga was invented. So if Patanjali were walking around today, he'd see that hatha yoga is the most popular form of yoga on the planet. Yet it didn't even exist until 700 years after he devised the yoga sutras.

His idea of the perfect asana, Patanjali's idea of the perfect yoga posture was any position where your body was not a distraction to the inner work. So simple: any position where your body isn't a distraction to the inner work. No need to master any strange or difficult pretzel poses! You just put your body in whatever position that's not going to distract you. Then you can do the inner work.

Here's the inner work. He used the analogy of the perfect gem, a flawless jewel as an analogy for consciousness. He said we have to refine our consciousness, to purify our consciousness: to clear it of all desires and attachments, prejudices and projections.

He was very much like the Buddha. Patanjali and the Buddha were spiritual cousins—brothers. They both had the same intention. They saw suffering in the world, they were looking for the cause of suffering, and the cure, the end of suffering. That's what their lives were about. That's what their teachings were about. So in that way Patanjali and the Buddha were identical.

But they differed in one really interesting way, more easily understood in the Sanskrit language because it's more precise. Our words sort of overlap and blur together

and they seem to mean the same thing. Different words seem to refer to the same thing. Patanjali's work was about purifying consciousness, purifying it to such a point that it becomes a perfect gem, a perfect jewel...

And when consciousness is crystal clear and perfectly still, you can see who you really are reflected in it. Your consciousness, once it's purified, reflects back to you who you really are. When your consciousness is pure and perfected, you can use it to see through to reality as it is. As long as your consciousness is corrupted and polluted and moving and full of waves, you can't depend on it... it's not useful to you for the ultimate purpose of self-realization.

One of his students, or a later follower came up with an even better analogy, which in my view is so perfect. That is the analogy of water. Water has two very interesting properties. It is transparent: you can see through the water to the bottom. And it is reflective: you can see yourself reflected in it. So that's such a perfect analogy of consciousness because if there are waves on the surface of the water, when you look at yourself, you see a weird, warped, perverted, twisted thing. And you think you are seeing who you are!

You are using this consciousness to experience yourself. But the waves in consciousness distort the image. Your perceptions are not true or accurate when consciousness has stuff in it, thought particles, or various mental movements and images. When your consciousness is not still or clear, you cannot use it to see through to reality as it is.

So the point of yoga is to refine the consciousness. Stop making waves and stop making karma. Karma is a result of a wave in your consciousness. Every time you have a

feeling or sensation, an emotion, or a thought, that is a wave in your consciousness. A thought is a wave in consciousness. An emotion is a current, a wave in your consciousness. A physical feeling or a sensation is a wave in your consciousness. Every time you experience one of those things you are experiencing waves in your consciousness.

So his teaching is so simple: non-reaction. I have studied every translation of the yoga sutras that I can find, and none of them are the same. Every damn translator, interpreter has their own axe to grind, they have their own understanding: and the thing about language, words, is that you can do things with them. You can twist and bend and do all types of things with words. So I've read many translations of Patanjali's Sutras, and it disturbed me that I couldn't find any two who could agree on everything.

And so finally I said okay, I am going to go through these damn books. And I literally tore out pages where I found where different authors were saying the same thing. And the one thing that came through—the fundamental teaching of Patanjali—that came to me was the practice of non-reaction.

Every reaction creates a wave in consciousness, more karma. A thought, a feeling, a sensation or an emotion: they are waves. When you react to one wave, you create another wave, and so you perpetuate your karma. If you can allow a wave to pass without reacting to it... behind it will be this calm place of peace and clarity.

Breathing Session:

So follow the path that the breath takes when it comes into you. Your eyes are closed. The breath can come through your nose or your mouth. Let's breathe through our

mouth for the time being, because there are so many more possibilities—so many more ways to play with the breath and enjoy it than breathing through your nose.

Your teeth are like a gate. Open the gate. Create a space between your teeth that's a little bigger than normal. Your jaw is going to want to lock into the place of habit. Your teeth are going to want to come to that place where they set all the time. So you're going to want to tease that place. You want to create a little space between your teeth.

You don't have to open your mouth really big, but you have to open enough that's beyond the habit of the muscles, outside the habitual position of the teeth. And you have to guard that space, and breathe consciously through that space. Do that now. Breathe through your mouth. Create a space between your teeth. Open your mouth a little more than what feels comfortable and normal. And just breathe through that extra space and notice the new feelings, the different sensations.

The next place to focus on is the back of the jaw. You don't want to open just the front of your teeth. You want something in the back of your jaw to open. This happens when you yawn. When you yawn, something in the back of your jaw and your throat opens, and you can hear the sound of the breath change. [Demonstrates sound change] When you yawn, something opens in your throat and your jaw.

That is an invitation to the breath. You open the door and the breath will say "thank you. Here I come." It will just flow into you. You just open the door. You don't have to pull the breath in; you don't have to make it come in. Play with opening your jaw, your teeth and your throat. You'll feel it—you'll see that the breath gets bigger. The breath opens up. You've given it a bigger door.

If you can make eyes water by yawning, you've got it. You've got to be able to make your eyes water. Keep playing with the yawning reflex, keep making yourself yawn, keep breathing through that opening that happens when you yawn until your eyes water.

Think about what that means when you make your eyes water! You are controlling your involuntary nervous system. You are producing chemicals. You are generating real feelings and sensations. You have a handle on something so powerful. If you can make your eyes water, you can do lot's of other things in your system.

So you can open something in your throat. We're following the path that the breath takes and we're opening the way. Hey, you know when someone important walks down the street and they've got people in front of them to clear the crowd, right, to make way. The Queen is coming. The President is coming...clear the way!

You want to be that for the breath. You want to open and clear the way for the breath. You want to be the one that opens the way, clears a space and allows the breath to pour into you. That's such a great relationship to have with life. Opening to it, inviting it and making way for it.

The next thing you open is your chest. Now the breath will actually do that for you. If you notice, when the breath comes in, it tries to stretch you open. The breath is trying to expand you. The breath itself is trying to open and make room for itself. So you can cooperate. You become soft. You relax. You allow the expansion to take place. Now you're like a dancer. Now you're like a good dance partner. The dancer moves and the partner immediately responds.

The breath comes in and you open and expand around it. Don't give it any

resistance. Don't constrict it. Let it in and open and expand yourself. Make room for the breath. Make space inside yourself for the breath, and the breath—like a good dance partner, will come in and fill that space. You create the space, the breath comes in and fills it. The breath comes in; you make room for it.

Now you're in a divine dance with the breath of life. And I hope you get lost in that dance! I hope you don't know whether you are breathing the breath or the breath is breathing you. That's one of the most beautiful turning points in breathwork—when who you thought was doing the breathing takes a back seat and something begins to breathe you. That is an awesome moment.

So now I want you to play with the sigh of relief. And let's get advanced here. Do something that's not quite a yawn, not quite a sigh. What exactly is that? Invent that. Invent a breath that is part yawn, part sigh. It's half yawn, half sigh. What is it? Is it a yawn, is it a sigh? You make it up. You invent it.

Now focus on relaxation. Just let the breath come and go by itself and just relax and feel. Feel the energy in your body. Look for feelings like electricity, vibrating and tingling... And melt into those sensations. Relax into the vibrations. Melt into the electricity.

You want to relax so much that your body becomes a puddle on the floor. You want to relax so much that the spaces between your cells open up and the energy can get into all the cracks and crevices.

Use your imagination. Imagine that your body is like ice cream melting in the sun. Some little kid dropped his ice cream cone on a hot Sedona Arizona sidewalk, and that glob of ice cream is turning into a puddle. Your body is just melting into a puddle.

And the softer you become, the easier the breath can flow into you.

When you relax, something opens. When something opens, something can move. So when you relax it's like an invitation, you're opening yourself. When you breathe you're inviting the energy. That combination of breathing and relaxation is utter magic. Most people simply never learn to combine those two things.

When you get perfectly relaxed, so still, so and beautiful, relaxed, profound still space... but the breathing disappears. And when you're breathing with force, with energy, with power... you lose the relaxation. And so most people trade off those two things, one for the other. And this is the magic: bringing them together, having both!

How do you combine powerful energetic breathing with total relaxation? That's the art. That's the skill of spiritual breathing. How do you do that? Only you can figure that out. You play, you experiment. You make mistakes in one direction, then you make mistakes in the other direction. You breathe so hard or so fast that you get tense. Or you relax so much that you stop breathing. And you keep making those mistakes until you find the perfect balance.

So there's really a very useful breathing exercise to develop this skill. You do a combination of short breaths and then a couple of big breaths. I'll exaggerate it. I'll make it loud. You can also do it exaggerated and loud but I'm doing it louder than normal so you can hear me. It doesn't mean you need to make this noise, I just want you to hear it so you can get a sense of it. So it's something like this [Demonstrates]

Notice that I took a couple of big cleansing breaths. Then I went into a circular rhythm again; and then I gave myself a couple of big cleansing breaths. So that's it. So simple.

Now what you call fast and shallow breaths might be this [demonstrates] So that

might be your game. [demonstrates variations and speeds of breath]. So that's basically it. Play with a gentle rhythm, quick little breaths, then some big cleansing breaths. And notice that they are all connected: there are no pauses or gaps between the breaths. It's circular connected breathing, constantly playing with the depth and speed.

Your system is going to resist this practice, and that's why I tell you to practice a little bit for your own pleasure at first, because otherwise your system is going to interfere, disturb, resist. The practice will activate so many thoughts, so many feelings, so many sensations, so many emotions, that you will not be able to continue.

You will be bombarded, overwhelmed by your "stuff." The breathing will activate every thought, every feeling, every emotion, every sensation possible. The breath is going to stimulate and activate things on an energy level, which activates all the levels above it: thoughts, feelings, emotions, and sensations. And you are going to get so distracted by those things, or scared off by them, or caught up in them. And you are going to stop breathing, or tense up.

Until you practice enough, your systems is going to keep interfering and will keep blocking. And so it's a just matter of persistence; and often it's a matter of a good coach—someone who just sits beside you and says "Keep breathing, just keep breathing, relax your jaw, relax your shoulders, relax your neck, keep breathing, take a cleansing breath".

That's all you need, just someone to keep you in the process; and the breath does all the work. It will burn away all of your karma. It will clear away all the gunk in your consciousness. And every session will leave your consciousness a little more purified. You'll have less junk in your system, fewer negative thoughts, less fear and fewer

reactions. And now you're on the way toward what Patanjali called the goal of yoga: self realization.

The practice purifies your consciousness. It clears away of all the seeds of karma, all the thoughts, feelings and emotions that trap you, block you, control you, push and pull you and keep you from experiencing who you really are.

The breath is magic. The breath is life. It has intelligence. It will do the work for you. You just invite it, relax and let the process take care of itself, and watch your reactions. You start to feel something in your body, watch your reaction. It makes you think. It makes you want to do something with the energy. Watch those reactions and inject a cleansing breath, a sigh of relief instead. Continue breathing rhythmically. Keep going deeper. Every breath will take you deeper. [Breathes.]

I suggest that people use an "ooh" shape on the inhale. It gives you the sense that you're feeding yourself, like you are sucking through a straw. And it gives you the sense that the inhale is active, that you are pulling in the breath. The exhale is the "aahhh" shape. It's the sound of letting go.

So "ooh" and "aah" are two very beautiful shapes or sounds that you can give to the stream of breath. Very healing, very useful, and very effective; and no matter what you feel, keep breathing. No matter what happens in the body, keep breathing. No matter what you think, keep breathing. Keep relaxing.

Every time you exhale, you relax as though it's the first time. Every time you exhale, you let go as if it's the first time. AHHHHH! You know my feeling is that everyone who comes to spiritual work on this planet today has already done lifetimes of work! We

are all so close to making that final leap into liberation! You might only need to breathe! This will get you to the final few steps. And when you get close, you don't even have to take the final few steps: your source will draw you into it. That source will rise up and meet you. And you use the breath to invite it.

Pour in love. Pour in life. Fill yourself with energy, and then let go and surrender and release and relax. Trust your body. Tell yourself whatever you need to tell yourself to keep going. "I'm safe no matter how I feel." "I'm safe no matter what I think." "Everything about me is perfect." "I trust my body." "I trust life." "It's safe to feel energy." "I enjoy intensity."

Love is the most intense energy in the universe. So if your goal is love, you better start getting comfortable with intensity! Your body needs to be trained to relax and receive intense energy. And the way that you train it to relax and receive energy is by breathing, by expanding and letting go, by making that (breathing and relaxing) your reaction to everything that happens.

By breathing, we give and receive tremendous amounts of love. Then when you get hit with a burst of love, your body won't contract, and your mind won't resist. Make your reaction to expand and relax. You feel something unusual? Expand and relax. You feel something strange? Expand and relax. You feel something wonderful? Expand and relax. You feel something scary or painful? Expand and relax.

If you are expanding and relaxing in each moment, that is a wide open invitation for spirit, for life, for love to pour into you in its fullness. And you can expect your body to react. You can expect yourself to laugh, to cry, to shake, to quiver, to move, to dance, to shout to freeze. You can expect that stuff. Those are just reactions in the body. Don't

do anything about them. Relax and breathe, don't do anything with the energy.

Don't do anything about the energy except breathe and relax. Because when you do anything about what you feel, you have taken over the process. But we want life, spirit, source to direct the process! You can't shake enough. You can't shout enough. You can't dance enough when love fills you. You need another way. You need a bigger way and so you just trust that life will create that bigger way. You breathe and expand. Trust the energy. Breathe and relax.

Use every breath to invite freedom and safety, peace and power, certainty, calmness, gratitude.... Light!

All for now.