

# ***Getting Free***

## ***The Promise and the Practice of Conscious Breathing***

**This Seminar took place on Easter Sunday in Bucharest, Romania, April 2014. In the group were several experienced practitioners, several “first timers” and several others in between. The audio Recording (with Romanian translation) is available upon request.**

### **CONTENTS**

**The Difference Between Being Very Sensitive VS Hyper-Reactive.**

**Working on Your System VS Working on Yourself**

**Creating Some Space Between You and Your Thinking**

**Re-Directing Attention and Awareness**

**Sensing and Connecting to the Energy in the Breath**

**Expanding the Inhale Opens Your System**

**Relaxing the Exhale Opens You to Your Self**

**Identifying Blocks and Contractions**

**Freeing Yourself from the Reactive Emotional Mind**

**Re-Setting Your Default Patterns**

**Reclaiming Your Original Freedom, Flow, and Natural Ease**

**Putting Pain and Fear in Perspective**

**Eliminating Effort and Tension That Wastes Energy**

**Relaxing On the Exhale and Relaxing Into the Inhale**

**An Interesting Discovery About Birds and Flowers**

**Two lessons From the Ilse Middendorf Breath Training**

**Breathwork and Non-Reaction**

**Question and Answers About the Practice**

One of the things we want to practice is using conscious breaths—using one conscious breath from time to time—to put a space between when something happens and when we react to it. So you have to find creative ways to do that.

Catch yourself when you react; then you can predict that the next time someone says something or something happens, you know you usually react and so you can watch for it; and when it happens, you deliberately take a breath... and then you answer or move or act, or whatever.

Recently, in the last six months or so, we have been looking at the difference between being “sensitive” and being “hyper-reactive.” Some people say they are very sensitive but really they are hyper-reactive. And as long as you are hyper-reactive, you cannot be truly sensitive.

If your mind reacts to every little thing, it’s never going to let you go deeply and receive something or really feel something. For example, someone might say that they are sensitive to cigarette smoke; what they are really saying is that their system reacts to cigarette smoke. And the reaction is actually a pushing away, it’s a blocking; it is not being sensitive.

When we are doing breathwork we are working with our system. We don’t need the work. We don’t need to be worked on: we are all already perfect. What we are really working on is our mind-body system, our emotional mind. In a way, the breathing is an escape from the reactive mind. It is a momentary vacation from our reactive system. And that is how we gradually get free.

If someone is pushing you and pulling you, and making you look at things and making you feel things, you wouldn’t say that you are free. If someone is stopping you from doing things or making you do things, you couldn’t say that you are free. But that is exactly the relationship that we have to our system.

Our mind-body system is making us do things and stopping us from doing things; it is making us feel things, and stopping us from feeling things... And so as long as we are being run by our system, we can’t really say that we are free.

Like thinking... When you get up in the morning, you don’t decide to think, it is already happening. You don’t have any choice about it. So how can you be free? Something is already running you.

And that is the value of meditation: you begin to get some space between you and your mind. You observe your thinking, and that pulls you out of your thinking, and now you are free. Your thinking is happening and here you are, observing it.

We have to begin to create some gaps between the thoughts. The mind will try to fill every gap with another thought, with more stuff. And so developing the habit of taking a conscious breath... in the middle of things, it is so necessary.

If we cannot wake up in the middle of our problems, we will never wake up. We have to wake up in the middle of our reactions. So we have to have a way to do that—to interrupt our patterns. So we inject conscious breaths.

When we take a conscious breath, we take all of our attention, all of our awareness and we focus it, we pull our attention out of what was happening and we put it on the moment-to-moment sensations of the breath.

We stop putting energy in one direction and we put it in another direction. That allows us to be free or more free in the next moment. Because if we are run by habits, we cannot really say that we are free. The more often we interrupt our unconscious habits the less like robots we become.

After a breath like that, it is more possible to come from a different place in ourselves, rather than from our reactive mind or our habits or our emotions...

If you begin to go in a certain direction, maybe more and more afraid, or more and more upset, or more and more unconscious—and you interrupt that direction with a conscious breath—then maybe after that conscious breath, you won't be continuing in that direction. There it is: end of story.

If it was a direction that was in harmony with God or our highest purpose, then after that breath we will have even more energy to keep moving in that direction. So the same breath can be support for a movement or it can help us to stop or interrupt a movement.

It is also really useful to use the question: "What is important?" "What is the most important thing?" It is important to remember that, and to remind yourself. Then when you take that breath, the question is happening. The remembering of that question can cause you to change your direction.

Sometimes that breath will lead to another breath, and that breath will lead to another breath, and to another... Sometimes that breath will begin to take us in a direction that is much more in line with what is important and more in line with our heart's desire, than where we were going before that breath.

Everyone has had this experience or something like it, where I am trying to lift something and carry something, and someone comes along and helps me. The difference you feel in that moment, when you were struggling, carrying this heavy thing, and someone else comes and helps you with it and suddenly, phew, it is so much easier.

We are building my house, office, studio and the breathing retreat center in Mexico, and we are loading and unloading construction materials. And when even two people lifting or carrying something and two more come along and help, it feels so much easier.

We are looking for that same feeling in the breathing. I take a conscious breath, and it is like me doing something, lifting something; but all of a sudden some energy comes, and I can feel something else lifting the breath, moving the breath with me. I can recognize that; I can feel it.

I wait for that now. It is like connecting with something. And you can feel when you make that connection, because you can take a breath that is twice as big with half the effort or no effort.

When we are first coaching people in a breathing session, it might take five minutes or ten minutes, thirty minutes, or several sessions before that connection is made. Up until that time it is very obvious that you or the other person is doing all the work of breathing.

Now, someone who has never experienced the other thing, who hasn't felt it, doesn't know what they are missing. Now I can find that... Sometimes I can find it with one breath, or maybe the second breath, I can find that connection. And sometimes I can find it in the very first breath: it comes before I am even done taking the first breath.

It is like triggering a yawn. I can do something and then the yawn happens. I am not doing the yawn. I do something to trigger it, but then the yawn happens. And so I can do something to make that connection, but when the connection is made, something is breathing me.

I am not doing it: some energy comes into the breath, and does the breathing for me. And it is unmistakable. It is very different than when you want to take a bigger breath and you put more effort into it and you take a bigger breath.

Now to someone else who is not as sensitive, it doesn't look any different: it looks the same. The person took a different breath. But once you have made this connection to the energy in your own breath, then you can recognize it when it comes into the other person's breath.

One of the devices or the practices we've been using to get that experience or make that connection is this practice of doing two inhales, one on top of the other. So we get people to practice that.

Without it, the breath will turn around in a certain place [demonstrating]. If you add an inhale on top of that [demonstrating].. that's two inhales and one exhale. Instead of letting the breath turn around at that first place, you add a second inhale on top of it, and then let it turn around [demonstrating].

You do it on purpose. You practice adding one inhale on top of the other. And it should be obvious: you can see it, you can hear it, you can feel it. [demonstrating]

What that does is it prepares your system, it shows your system, it opens your system; so that if that energy wants to come into the breath and add to your labor, then the system already has some space for it.

And if that space is there, then the energy or spirit will want to fill it. It's like a vacuum, and nature abhors a vacuum, it wants to fill a vacuum. So what begins to happen is that if you have more space in you for love, if you have more space in you for peace, for joy or for energy, and with the breath you don't fill that space, then life or energy or spirit, or the breath itself will fill that space for you.

So even after I have filled up all the space, more breath comes from somewhere! And while that extra energy is coming into me, I am actually relaxing. I am not pulling more. I am actually relaxing, and more comes in. That's a very different experience than pulling in more so that more comes in.

That's why we watch and pay attention to tension in the muscles. It's really important that when we are practicing our breathing, to make sure that this doesn't happen. [Here, Dan demonstrates tension in the neck, jaw, and shoulder muscles while inhaling, contrasting it with relaxed neck jaw, shoulders.]

You have to notice that difference everywhere in your system. And you can't feel that thru a layer of hyper-activity. It is relaxation, but even more, it is energetic relaxation, not just physical relaxation. As soon as I relax something, an expansion happens. I don't even breathe in: I relax something energetically, and the breath comes in.

Early on, we were playing with the throat for example, and teaching people the difference between when your throat is open and when it's not. So we use sound for that [demonstrates tight contracted throat versus relax open throat]. So when I relax my throat, the sound disappears.

When people are breathing, even if you cannot hear it, you can feel and sense this. [demonstrates sound of the throat opening and closing] Open close, open close, open close. We need to practice keeping it open all the time.

The difference between that open and closing causes all kinds of interesting feelings. I can do this all day [demonstrates open and closing throat]. And after some time, I notice that nothing has really happened. But if I do it this way [demonstrates continuously open throat] even after just three or four breaths, already I can feel things moving, I can feel energy swirling.

The opening and closing in the throat causes an energetic something that looks like this. [Dan draws a pattern in the air like two cars coming around a corner and meeting head on, or two hands of a clock moving in opposite directions, closing in and meeting at high noon]

Without that closing, it is more like this. [draws a pattern in the air that looks like a fountain] And those open breaths, the opening between the inhale and the exhale creates a different energetic happening.

Now, you can hear it when it is in the throat. But if that energetic closing is anywhere else, it is not so obvious. If the holding is in the chest and the throat is perfectly open, then it's not so noticeable, but it is still there. [demonstrates holding and releasing of the chest]

The "holding on" can run and hide in different places: in the solar plexus, in the belly; and ultimately it can be in the mind. Thinking is linear: one thought connects to the next thought, connects to the next thought.

Every one of those thoughts is like a separate link in a chain. And when you break those links, then the thoughts can go anywhere. And so you can take a leap. I can think of an elephant, then think of a rose, then think of my mother, then think of a Mercedes Benz.

The mind doesn't really like this. It likes to predict. It likes to feel in control. It's like a child learning to walk: it doesn't want to let go here, until it is holding on there. If you just free the mind, there is a part of our ego that becomes really afraid.

Each breath is like dying and being born, dying and being born, dying, being born... And so we train our system to get comfortable with that on a moment-to-moment basis. We are preparing our system to let go in a deeper way.

And so soon, with practice, we can let go of our past, we can let go of our habits, our beliefs, our programming, our ego... And then we become part of the flow—whole—not a little separate piece of something.

We could do meditations where we connect to other people, where we dissolve our borders, where we connect to other dimensions, or to higher beings... but if our system has certain reactions and programs and default settings, like on a computer, then when we are done with that meditation, we are just going to go back to that old reality that everyone else is stuck in.

And that mediation turns out to be nothing but a mind game; and the egoic mind lets us play that game because it feels good, we feel spiritual: but the mind or the system allows it because it knows that we are going to go back to the familiar state.

So we have temporary moments of connection and peace and love, but then we return to our old setting. It is better to turn that all around and then have temporary periods of discomfort and suffering and anger and fear, and then when it's over, we automatically go back to the other setting of love and peace and joy!

We had that as children. It started out that we were automatically and continuously in this state of flow, of open relaxation, of causeless joy, of automatic natural delight.

Look at babies: they are in that state all the time. And it's temporarily interrupted by hunger or fear or discomfort. But then like a rubber band, they just snap back to their joy.

But because of repeated traumas, their system gets re-set, and a vague continuous discomfort takes over, and then that state is from time to time, interrupted by temporary periods of pleasure and fun and comfort and peace. And then that becomes what's normal.

People work 6 days a week, struggling and suffering and working hard, and then one day a week they have it easy, they have fun, they relax, they enjoy. And everyone thinks that's normal. And society supports it and encourages it, rewards it. And then we have to make those temporary periods intensely enjoyable: so people go on extreme vacations. It's crazy.

So we have to somehow return to that original state. And there are signs and symptoms when you are on the way toward that. You feel your burden is lifted. You can recognize it in your breathing. You can return to that place with your breath. And some people, once they return to that paradise, they don't want to go back.

People find a relationship, or they find a job, or something where they can feel like aahhh... this is where I want to be all the time, this is how I want to feel, this is how life should be! We've had those feelings, those moments. And sometimes they last quite long, like a relationship, like a honeymoon.

It could last a long time, but sooner or later, here comes that old problem again. The relationship that started out really wonderful and loving turns into: "Screw you! I hate you! I am outa here!"

It has nothing to do with the relationship, nothing to do with the other person: that's our system reverting back to that default setting. We got a temporary break from it, and it felt like we got free of it.

That's like being in a prison this big [the size of the room], and then suddenly they move the walls further away, and you feel like: "Oh, I am not in prison anymore!" And they push the walls so far away that you don't even see them anymore, and you go: "Yes! Look! See? No walls. I am free! Look! No walls anywhere!"

Until you go over the next hill, and you bump into the wall and realize, oops, I am still in prison. If I just stay here and never go looking, I will never realize that I am still in prison.

And that's what people do: they hide in a job, in a relationship, or in a religious practice; and they never wander too far away, because they are going to realize that they are still in prison.

So, the ability to let go and allow this flow, this movement... then we find out how free we really are. And so what I did is I deliberately moved into uncomfortable situations; I practiced in difficult situations. Instead of escaping discomfort: I'd stay in it, until I could create comfort in the middle of that discomfort.

It is much easier to just escape from discomfort than to sit with it until it dissolves. If you can do that, it never comes back. If you escape from it, it is going to be waiting for you around the next corner. But if you're going to sit in discomfort, you're going to need certain skills and abilities to be able to manage it, to be able to tolerate it.

One of my early teacher Ken Keyes pointed out—I think it was him—he pointed out that there are two kinds of suffering: One kind of suffering leads to more suffering, and the other kind of suffering leads to growth.

And so, the kind of suffering that leads to growth, can you really call that suffering? Some discomfort leads to freedom; other discomfort just leads to more discomfort. And without the ability to be sensitive...

It's interesting, when I think about sensitivity, or talk about it, unconsciously I point to my heart! And the kind of sensitivity that most people have, or what they call sensitive... I am pointing here [to the head].

So, without the ability to be sensitive, without the ability to relax, without the ability to breathe, then discomfort can be very hard to manage; suffering can just lead to more and more suffering.

The ability to be sensitive means that if we are in the middle of suffering and it is ninety nine percent pain and one percent pleasure, our ability to be sensitive allows us to feel that one percent pleasure. If I am reacting to that 99% pain, there is no way I can access that 1% pleasure.

So we can train our minds to begin to look for that. "Every cloud has a silver lining." We know that, right? We have all these clichés; we know we have this ability. But we have to practice accessing this ability.

So I used to do this demonstration; I haven't done it in quite a while. I trained in martial arts, self-defense... and a very good thing to remember is that this top part of the foot right here... No matter how big or strong you are... [Dan invites a man in the



group to step onto his foot] If you put pressure here, it hurts everybody! Someone can have you by the throat, but if you come down on this place with your heel, they will stop whatever they are doing!

If you scrape along the shin area and land on the top of the foot, it's even more effective! For a woman, this is really useful to know for self-defense. You don't have to be big or strong, just coming down with the weight of your body is enough.

[Dan instructs the male participant to put all his weight on the top of his foot] So, stand here... pick up the other foot. Good. Ok, so this hurts! But I can think of my mother, how she loves me... I can think of my son when he was born...

Now this is hurting more and more, no doubt. But there are other things I can focus on that are equally real. I am not ignoring the pain, but I can put it in perspective. And most people cannot reach for a pleasant thought in that moment. Their system is trapped. They have no choice. All their attention goes here, to the pain. And so it takes practice. There's no way to learn it except to do it again and again.

So that is true in any moment. No matter how difficult or painful or horrible... humans... we have this ability, to reach with our consciousness toward something else. But we have to exercise that muscle. The system by itself won't do that.

So we practice. I am in a terrible situation, and so I deliberately think: "What can I learn from this?" "How can I benefit from this?" I have to consciously engage in that process. "What can I celebrate about this?" "What's a reason to feel grateful right now?"

Now people wouldn't normally do that in those painful situations. When they are in pain, when they are suffering, the last thing they would think to do is to feel grateful! But if you *can* feel grateful, something happens to the pain. Something comes in to balance it.

And you can even bring in something so big, that it's bigger than the pain. And then even the pain is difficult to feel because the gratitude or the joy or the appreciation or the curiosity is bigger than the pain.

We do that with fear: our desire for something can be bigger than our fear. And we move forward regardless of the fear. The thought of the reward is greater than the temporary discomfort, so we are able to get thru the discomfort. So, we already know about this ability and this process.

In Breathwork, we are practicing certain abilities, certain skills, and one of them is relaxation; because pain spreads, tension spreads. If I have tension in my fist, it spreads to my arm, to my shoulder; it even spreads to my neck, to my jaw, to my chest and my stomach...

We can change that pattern. I can have a lot of tension here in my fist, and everything else is loose; everything else is relaxed. Now I am very dangerous—in the martial arts—that makes you a very dangerous person!

If you can do that, you are not wasting energy. The only muscles that you need are being used, and the rest of them are resting, open, relaxed, ready. So you have more endurance: you are not wasting energy. You are not blocking the flow of energy through your body.

When we are doing breathwork, we need to be practicing that. We need to be conscious of the tension in our tongue, conscious of any tension around the eyes or in the face, any tension in the jaw, the neck, the shoulders...

We don't want to be using muscles we don't need. Being hyper-reactive means we are using more muscles than we need to. We are trying so hard, that we are putting much more effort into it than is necessary.

This is a good sign. It shows how determined you are, it shows how much you want to do it right. But we have to practice unhooking from unnecessary muscles. Remove unnecessary effort... Stop trying so hard.

But in the beginning, when you stop trying, it stops happening! And it takes practice to be able to stop trying and still continue achieving, or succeeding.

So, we relax on the exhale, and then we stay relaxed while we inhale. That's a skill. It's a skill to be able to relax on the exhale. And most people haven't learned to do that.

And so that's what we learn and that's what we teach in the beginning: relaxing on the exhale, relaxing on the exhale. And then we start practicing relaxing on the inhale.

But for most people, if you relax on the inhale, it doesn't happen. If I just relax [Dan demonstrates going limp and listless] the inhale doesn't happen. It takes practice to be able to have the inhale happen when you are relaxing.

So, in the beginning, we practice an active inhale [demonstrates]. And with that active inhale, I am doing it, I am doing it. But what I am also doing is relaxing on the exhale [demonstrates]. I am letting go completely.

I am doing, doing, doing on the inhale. But I am also equally relaxing on the exhale. And then if we practice long enough, and we relax enough... so we do that continuously... and at some point it all comes together by itself.

And then we can begin to allow the relaxation to occur during the inhale as well as the exhale. And if that relaxation is complete, if we can relax totally, then we are wide open and the life will pour into us. And it takes no effort to inhale.

From time to time that happens during a breathing session. And if you can feel it and catch it and recognize it, then you can begin to become more open to it, more available for it.

So there's a bit of relaxation at the end of the exhale that normally doesn't occur to everyone. If you relax and relax and relax, you are going to get to a point beyond which you cannot relax. Your system won't let you.

It's like you hit bottom, and you can't go any further. You hit the floor and that's it. So, I can relax down to the point where I hit the floor; and it seems like I am relaxing completely, but I have only reached the limit of my system's ability to relax.

And so you can relax and relax until you reach a point beyond which you cannot relax. And we have to keep touching that place again and again, and even lean on that place, hang out at that point, until something gives and you go further.

So, on one end, we have adding the extra inhale on top of the first... opening our system. And on the other end, we have adding more relaxation to the end of the exhale. Now I can begin to feel that and practice that. Something like this.  
[Demonstrates]

It's difficult to demonstrate from the outside, because something is opening deep inside. But when I pop thru the bottom and I can relax beyond that point, that's when I open to this extra energy, and it comes into the breath.

So I don't even breathe in. I breathe out, I relax, and the breath comes into me. Something opens and that allows this energy to come in. Now I can help it. I can help my system open.

I can play with relaxing my jaw and my chest and my belly. I play with my energy. I can even play with my mind. I am playing with my system to kind of be available to that opening, to be prepared for it.

If I start the inhale too soon, [demonstrates cutting the exhale short] if I start it sooner and sooner, I get further and further away from that ability to drop down thru the bottom.

I can go in the other direction, and I can wait; I can pause for a moment, after I think I've finished the exhale. It's an open pause. And it's really important that during that pause, nothing is tight: my throat is open, my muscles are soft.

So there was a great dance teacher Ilsa Middendorf. I think she's still alive. If she is, she's over a hundred. She taught dance: forty fifty years training dancers. And I learned two things from her. She had a thousand things to teach, I'm sure, but I took two things from her.

One is this exercise, this meditation exercise, where you feel you have four sitting bones. And I move from my right front sitting bone to my right back sitting bone; then to my left back sitting bone to my left front sitting bone. You move around to and from each of those sitting bones.

And when you do that, you create this turning of your hips and pelvis. I put all my weight on my left front sitting bone, then all my weight on my right front sitting bone, then all my weight on my right back sitting bone, then my left rear sitting bone. [Demonstrates] Left front, right front, right rear, left rear, left front, right front, and so on.

And then I guess if you want to be a dancer, then you'll hold your head in one place while you move your pelvis around; if you want to be a dancer, then you might hold your chest in one place while you move your hips and pelvis around [demonstrates].

It loosens up your pelvis and lower back. And if you combine breathing with it, you'll feel where the inhale is supposed to happen. So obviously when I am moving toward the front bones I am inhaling; and when I am moving onto the back sitting bones I am exhaling.

Then you can go from the two front sitting bones to the two back bones, two front bones to the two back sitting bones [demonstrates].

The other thing I took from her is her basic mantra, her way to get people to learn how to breathe. And it's very simple. She says: "Inhale, exhale, and wait for the breath to come in again." Inhale. Exhale. Wait for the breath to come in again. [Demonstrates]

That's different than inhale exhale, inhale exhale, inhale exhale. And the feeling while you are waiting for the breath to come in again, the feeling is you are not really breathing in: you are waiting for the breath to come in again.

Then when the breath comes in again, you can help it, you can cooperate with it. And when you are waiting, you are in this open relaxation, aware. If any part of you is tense, then the breath cannot come in. Spirit is so very subtle, so very gentle, the slightest little tension, and spirit says: "ok, never mind, ok, I'll wait until you open."

Everyone has learned to close themselves, to protect themselves, which makes a lot of sense; it's useful. We don't want to be open to pain, open to negativity, open to violence. But in the process of closing ourselves to those things, we are also closing ourselves to spirit. That's the difference between sensitivity and hyper-reactivity.

So, someone hurt me, and then they hurt me again; and then someone else hurt me; and then someone else hurt me; and then they hurt me again; and then they hurt me again. And so soon, I become hyper-reactive. In fact, I am no longer sensitive.

Someone even says something, and already I am reacting as if they are hurting me. And so we have to wash those hyper-reactive reflexes out of our system and regain our original sensitivity... by using the breath... gently opening and expanding ourselves... relaxing and letting go.

So we can do a meditation like a flower opening. You don't tear open a flower. You just wait, and the delicate flower opens by itself. Now you can help it open: give it sunshine, give it good soil, give it water...

And as my friend Jenya and other ornithologists have discovered, birds singing is part of the process of flowers opening. Most people have never heard of it, and don't know that. The tweeting and singing of birds—those frequencies of sounds—stimulate the opening of flowers. Interesting...

So if all the birds in the world stop singing, all the flowers are going to stop blossoming. And if all the flowers in the world stop blossoming, all the birds will stop singing!

Everything is connected; and most people are not sensitive to those connections, because their system reacts to everything. We have to train our system to stop reacting. And we do that with breathing.

We use the breath to trigger reactions, and then we practice relaxing out of those reactions, relaxing thru those reactions. And that's how we are coaching people. When you are in a breathing session, and things start to happen inside of you, don't react!

And if your system reacts, don't react to the reactions! Allow the reactions to be there. Expand and relax until those reactions get washed out of your system. A good breathing session will do that. Every time you do a breathing session, you can reach a point beyond which you cannot relax, and then relax a little more.

You can reach a point where your system automatically reacts, and then teach your system not to react. And then you grow. Until you can breathe thru anything, and you can relax anywhere, no matter what's happening, inside of you, around you.

You can still react. You never lose that ability. But the default pattern changes, the default setting changes. And we get free. We are free to react. We haven't lost that freedom.

If someone throws a rock at your head, you are still going to duck. You won't have to think about it. Your system will react perfectly. We don't lose that ability. We gain something.

So, someone throws a rock at your head, but it is going to go right by your head; you don't even need to move. Your sensitivity is such that you can see that the rock will miss you.

Without that sensitivity, you see it coming toward you, and you think it's going to hit you, and so you duck—but the wrong way—and it hits you! If you had not moved, it wouldn't have hit you! That is over-reaction, hyper-reactivity.

Yes, someone throws a stone at my head, but it really isn't going to hit me. So, I don't have to do anything. Those reactions will get me into more trouble, they won't help me.

It's like water. You throw a stone in water, and the reaction of the water is perfect. The water doesn't over react, and it doesn't under react. It is exactly perfect. That's the kind of mind we need to have. That's the kind of system we need to have: one that doesn't over-react, or doesn't under-react. And if no reaction is required, it doesn't react at all.

Some things require extreme reactions, and yet people are not reacting at all. SO to be able to come back and find this original wisdom or sensitivity, whatever you want to call it, it is so important.

And if you get it on the level of breath, you get it on all the other levels. If I am struggling to breathe and I break that struggle pattern, it helps me in all the other areas of my life: struggling for love, struggling for money, struggling for health...

If I am using too much effort to breathe, and I heal that, it helps me on all the other levels of my life. I am using too much effort there, and using too much effort there, and now I can feel it.

Whatever interferes in my breathing session—that same thing is interfering in other places in my life. So I decide to do a breathing session. I am going to breathe like this for an hour [demonstrates connected breathing rhythm].

Whatever stops me, or distracts me in my breathing session, that same thing is stopping me and distracting me in all the other areas of my life. And when it doesn't stop me in my breathing session, it cannot stop me in any other area of my life.

And what is it that stops me in a breathing session? It's a reaction in our system: a fear reaction, a contraction, a tension, a thought. So we are getting free of our system all the time. And when we get free of it, we can use it. The body-mind system is a magnificent tool. We can use it. But until then, we are more of a victim of it, a slave

of it. We are not free. So the more reactive our system is, the less free we are. So we are training ourselves in non-reaction.

**Question from a woman participant:** *She says she still feels a fear when something happens, and she cannot continue. What should she do? She thinks the answer is to just continue.*

It's like leaning on a wall. Just lean on it... until it gives. You have reached a limit, and so, just hang out there.

**Comment from another woman participant:** *Once you have reached your limit, won't you hurt yourself if you continue?*

No: only if you push yourself thru it. I can hurt myself if I try to break the wall, yes. And in many therapies, they want you to push and force yourself thru. No, you just lean on it. You can't hurt yourself that way. You just wait there, stay there, until it gives. It's very natural. You don't push yourself past it.

**Question from a participant:** *When I feel the need to wet my lips during a breathing session, and I can't continue. What should I do? Just let it be, and keep breathing, or is it ok to stop and wet my lips?*

Yes, just stop and wet your lips, and then go right back to the breathing. Also, it is important to realize that it's a thought: "I can't deal with it." People say: "I can't deal with this." "I can't take it." "I can't." "I can't" However, very often life forces us: there is no escape and you have no choice but to deal with it.

So if we don't learn, life will force us to learn. And we find a way; we find a way to create comfort in the middle of the situation, no matter what it is. Even people who are suffering from chronic pain, they have moments of no pain. The system will always find a way to take a break from it, to get free of it, so it can survive.

I love that image of a mother lion, laying there so relaxed, while her cubs are biting on her ears, and pulling on her tail, and walking or jumping all over her; and she is just laying there, relaxed and not reacting... sensing everything, but not reacting.

We have that ability. Things that we think bother us do not have to bother us. That is the difference between sensitivity and hyper-reactivity.

**Question form a participant:** *She doesn't know how long she should continue to breathe, when the session is supposed to be over, how far to go in a session, exactly what to do with the discomfort.*

We have to find and get to the edge of our comfort zone, and hang out at that edge. We have to use the breathing session to activate, if you want to call it, discomfort. And then practice relaxing in the presence of that discomfort. That's how we grow.

**Question:** *And what happens after we get thru the discomfort?*

Our comfort zone gets bigger.

**Question:** *Is the session over?*

Ahhh! Hmmm... Many people feel like they were struggling with something, struggling, and then finally: ahhhh... And they think the session is over. But very often, that's when the session really begins! But it's ok to end the session there. OK, you accomplished something. Enjoy, celebrate.

But very often, now is a good chance to go even further. It's like if you are a runner, and there is this place, they call it hitting the wall. You feel like you just can't go any further, but if somehow you can do it, you break through, and you suddenly feel that you can run forever.

So, when you break through that wall, you can stop running... but...

**Question:** *She asks, what does it mean when during a session it feels like she is paralyzed; she can't move, and it feels like she is nailed to the ground?*

That is very common feeling. Normal. Almost everybody feels that at some point. And you can make it mean whatever you like. Really. And so at that point, what you choose to make it mean is very important. What you tell yourself about it.

I know that it is a normal thing that happens in everyone's session. Now for some people, that is not enough: especially when it's happening to them. And they feel like: "I couldn't even get up if I had to right now." However, you could. You can. If suddenly there was a fire, you would discover that, "oh, actually I can."

But it's good to stay in that place, and just notice the feeling: "wow! I can't move!" And just keep breathing and keep relaxing. It means something. Your mind will make it mean something. And what it makes it mean will not be an accident or a coincidence.

So, watch what you think. Observe what your mind does with that experience. And you'll learn the habits of your mind. You'll learn the history of your mind. Very useful. And you'll discover that the feeling passes. It came by itself and it passes buy itself.

That's a very important lesson; because you learn that you don't have to do anything about what happens. For some people, as soon as something happens, they begin to do Reiki on themselves, they do affirmations, they begin to massage themselves.



And then it goes away, and they think it went away because of everything they did. And then they are happy that they did the Reiki or the massage, or the energy work. They go: "Wow, this really works. I was feeling this, I did that, and it went away."

But when it goes away by itself... ahhhh.. we learn, hey I don't have to do anything about it. It's like freedom. It's a very important lesson to learn. And you can start with little things, like an itch.

Ok, I had an itch. I scratched it. And it went away. But I could have used that itch. And in a breathing session, that's what I would probably do. I am free to scratch it at any time. So why not practice? Feel the itch. Explore the details of it. Relax into the feeling. Breathe into the itch. Observe it. Don't do anything about it. Watch it. Feel it closely. And watch it dissolve.

That's how the Buddha got free! "Oh, I don't have to scratch every itch I ever have!" "I don't have to follow every desire that my mind creates. Feelings come and feelings go. Thoughts come, and thoughts go. I don't have to hold on to them; I don't have to push them away. I don't have to do a process to fix them. I am free!"

So that is what we want to use our session for today: use your breath to activate the reactions of your system. Activate feelings and sensations. Activate energy. And then practice relaxing in the presence of them.

Observe the reactions of your system. And observe your reactions to the reactions. Observe my thoughts about the feelings. Observe the feelings. Keep breathing and relaxing.

Play with the breath, and discover how you can make the feelings stronger. You can use the breath to intensify the feelings. You can use the breath to change the feelings: turn them up and turn them down. It's useful to play with that ability.

You discover that you can play with all kinds of symptoms. People who get headaches can discover how to make the headache stronger or how to make the headache less. That's very useful.

***Comment from the interpreter:*** *Until they disappear totally. Like me: I used to have headaches two or three times a week.*

Yes, exactly. And then maybe you can even welcome the headaches, because it's a chance to play with it, have fun with it, because you know you can get free. So that will be our intention for the session.

Use the breath to activate reactions in the system. Go right to your limit. "I just can't relax anymore. I can't breathe any faster or deeper." Get to the limit, and then just ease off and hang out at that edge, until something gives, clicks.

Add that second inhale [demonstrates]. Add that extra relaxation [demonstrates].  
And see if you can do not break through to some higher potential!