

Conscious Breathing: A Path to Freedom

The Estonia Training

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The Story of the Butterfly and the Two Kinds of Suffering

On the way here, on the plane, I took some notes on the vomit bag! I think I told this story already to some people, I forgot where I heard it, but I'll tell it again. It's about this guy who is wandering thru his nature garden, and comes upon a butterfly trying to break out of its cocoon. He thought: "What a great opportunity. I'll get to see a butterfly be born!"

He watched it try to spread its wings to break the cocoon open. He watched for an hour, two hours, three hours. It seemed stuck, so he thought he would help it a little bit by prying open the cocoon a little, to make it easier for the butterfly to get out.

Finally the butterfly came out, and he watched it walk around the garden, but it never flew. And in talking to a biologist later, he discovered, he found out, that this stress that the butterfly puts on itself is meant to send blood out to the wings. And without this struggle... by taking away the stress, he prevented the butterfly from ever flying!

So I have learned that there are two kinds of suffering: one kind of suffering leads to more suffering, and the other kind leads to growth.

One of the things I've learned is that everything that happens to you is required for your process of self-realization. And this was a difficult realization for me, because all my life I have been a healer, working to take away people's suffering. If someone is sad, I try to console them, if they are angry, I try to calm them down, if they are in pain, I try to take the pain away.

So, I suddenly wondered: "Wow, how many butterflies have I prevented from flying?" So the lesson for me is that there are no mistakes in the universe. Think about that for a minute: there are no mistakes in the universe. If it happened, it means that it should have happened. If it is happening, it means that it should be happening.

The practice of breathwork often means being able to sit with people thru their pain. And I am speaking of psycho-spiritual pain as well as physical pain: the kind of pain that a caterpillar goes thru when it is becoming a butterfly. And it means being able to sit with people through their joy.

And this comes only when we have learned to sit with ourselves through our own pain and through our own joy, without reacting, without trying to change anything, or fix anything, or cling to anything.

The Difference Between Mining and Shopping

The breathing process that we are going to do tonight reminds me of the difference between mining and shopping. When you go shopping, everything is arranged on the shelves neatly, and you can go right to what you want. Mining is different: you may have to sift thru a thousand shovels of dirt before you get to one shovel of gold.

It would be nice if everything that was waiting to be discovered within us, was just neatly lined up on shelves and labeled, and we could just collect it up. But it is much more like mining than it is shopping.

In mining, there are tons of dirt for every ounce of gold. So in your process, you might have to go thru a lot of useless or dirty junk before you get to something really useful or precious.

The most important tool is attention, is awareness. Practice this ability to be able to feel the details of your inner experience. And be able to notice when you resist something, because resistance creates the kind of suffering that leads to more suffering.

Making and Holding Space with the Breath

So without changing your position, without moving your bodies at all, begin to sense your breathing.

Now gently and slowly fill yourself with breath. And feel where the breath meets the pressure of resistance.

Notice that point where you need to exert a bit of effort to breathe against that pressure, it in order to continue the expansion.

Try to create the expansion in all directions: top-to-bottom, side-to-side, and front-to-back. Notice when and where it requires some effort to accomplish the expansion.

Gradually, slowly, carefully inhale, and sense the expansion... And notice when this expansion encounters resistance or pressure... And notice the force that it takes to breathe and expand against that pressure.

Then let go and exhale. Rest for a few seconds, then close your eyes and take a long, slow, deep breath, filling yourself up completely.

Imagine that your body is a room in which all your organs live. You want to make this room bigger, so that all the organs aren't packed together or congested. You are creating more space inside of you.

Try to keep that space open, even as you exhale and release the breath .

Create space in yourself with the inhale, and then try to hold that open space while you exhale.

Create expansion on the inhale, and try to retain some of that expansion while you empty yourself of air.

It looks something like this [demonstrating] When I inhale, I fill up both my chest and my belly. Then I hold my chest expanded, and exhale from the belly. Don't let your chest collapse. [demonstrating] Don't lose the space that you created.

Try that for a few minutes: create space throughout the breathing cavity with the inhale. Then hold the space open in the chest while you exhale and empty yourself from the belly.

Feel that space open, and then gradually relax. Relax, and somehow hold that space open. In the beginning, you are going to find yourself using muscles. But you can gradually relax the muscles and still maintain the space.

Put your hands on each side, over your lower ribs. And when you breathe in, feel them expand.

Then as you empty the air out of yourself, try to keep some of the expansion there. Your ribs expand from side to side like wings.

Experiment with those sensations. Wings you can open and spread...then relax and manage to remain open and expanded.

Put your fingers on your collarbone and sternum, and when you inhale, feel your collarbones rising up to meet your chin, and feel your sternum projecting outward. Then when you exhale, relax but hold that space.

After a few extreme breaths, let everything go, and just feel.

Then do it again. Expand everywhere... then hold the expansion in your upper chest while you exhale from the belly.

You are inhaling slowly, so that you can feel the details of expansion; and feel where you have to push against pressure to continue expanding.

If you are breathing thru your nose, imagine your nasal passages expanding and opening like lungs. As you are inhaling, feel your throat open and expand.

And get the idea that every cell is breathing. As you are taking in this long slow inhale, you are imagining every cell breathing in and filling up.

Notice all the places in your body where you can't create this feeling of expansion. Are there any places that are not allowing the breath to expand into them?

Focus on the area high up on your sides, in the area of your armpits; and as you inhale, feel that you are creating a space, a hollow there under your arms.

Many of us have been taught to not take up too much space, or to be quiet and not disturb others. And as children, in an attempt to do this, we contracted energetically. This contraction creates congestion in our system. And now we want to create expansion in our system.

This is like preparing the vessel. You want to invite infinite spirit to come into you, so you have to create more room inside of you!

When you inhale, allow the expansion all the way down to your genitals and anus (to the perineum). Deliberately press the breath low, as if your body is a pear shaped sac of water...

When we were children we would fill rubber balloons with water and throw them at each other. We'd put the balloon on the faucet, and when you turned on the water, you could see the balloon filling from the bottom up. First creating a bulge at the bottom.

Let your body be like a balloon being filled with water when you breathe in. The bottom of the balloon will fill bulge out first, stretching the bottom of the balloon. Then it will begin to fill from the bottom up.

So the body is a room in which the organs need space to breathe. Make the walls of this room soft and flexible, sensitive, giving, allowing...

Allow some sounds to happen with the in-breath and the out-breath. Any sounds that want to happen, let them happen.

Unexpressed impulses do not go away. They remain in your system like pollution. So, are there any unexpressed emotions in you? Any unexpressed communications?

We all suffer from this. When you are a child and you are told to be quiet... How many times is a child told to be quiet? And we think it's normal, to be constantly telling our children to be quiet and still.

And so, in order to be "good," she somehow has to contract herself energetically. "Ah what a good child!" You've learned to choke off your spirit; you've learned how to stop the life from moving in you." Now you are like all the adults around you. You have become "adulterated." No spontaneity, constantly controlling, civilized... but lacking spirit.

Remember to observe your breath when you are listening and when you are talking from now on. In the middle of a conversation, remember the breath. Become conscious of how you are using it. Or when you are listening to someone, bring in the awareness of your breathing. You are still be listening, but you are also aware of your breathing.

Many times, during a conversation, we don't really listen; we are thinking about or preparing what we will say when the other person stops talking. And it looks like we are listening. So you can listen thru an awareness of your breathing.

Or at least from time to time, just remember that you are breathing. If you make this a habit, you will be strengthening your connection to your own life force.

Exploring Subtleties in the Throat when Breathing

Here is an exercise in noticing subtleties in the throat. The difference between “ah” and “hah,” the difference between “aahhh” and “hhaahh.” Feel what’s different in your throat when you make those two sounds. Listen and feel what happens to the breath. This is a very subtle difference, but an important difference in terms of energy.

You can make those same two sounds without using your voice, just your breath. If you whisper the “aahh” sound, it sounds like something is closed, and then it opens.

With the sound “hhhaahhh,” something is already open, and nothing has to open before the breath can come through. What is it that is open? What is it that you do to change between “ah” and “hah?”

What is that? Feel how soft the “hhahh” feels... and how there is something sharp or hard about the “ahh.” If you do it as a whisper, you can really feel the difference.

Many times in listening to people breathe... I hear them do this [demonstrating breath sounds of closing the throat]. Can you hear that something closes and opens, closes and opens? When you take it away, it sounds more like this. [demonstrating soft open throat and breath sounds] There is not a door opening and closing, closing and opening with each breath.

So you want to find that door, and leave it open. Because when you become afraid, that door wants to slam shut [demonstrating constricted throat]. And when powerful emotions come, the same thing happens: the throat contracts and blocks the flow of emotions.

And so if you have already practiced keeping that door open and soft, then when fear comes [demonstrating moving breath, circular rhythm] the breath can move, and the energy of fear can flow out of you.

But if the door closes [demonstrating choking off of the throat, and the panic induced freezing of the breath. Now you are stuck in the fear. The fear has you in its grip. And this might be the same fear that a caterpillar feels when it’s becoming a butterfly.

Continuos Breathing

Now forget about holding the expansion. Breathe in and out continuously, as if you are one of those revolving doors that they have in a typical hotel or department store. Someone can come in and someone can go out at the same time while the door is revolving.

What a great invention. You don't have to open and close the door: the door is round and open. And people can just flow thru in either direction at the same time.

We breathe in this way because in any given moment, something may want to come into you and something may want to come out of you. So you are breathing in a circle, and focusing on keeping the door open and revolving throughout the process.

Throat open... chest open... any other spaces you can find... open them. Look for any places that you hold or keep shut by habit. Your jaw... How many people have constant tension in their jaw...?

Almost everyone... From all those years of controlling and being careful... making sure that nothing comes out that you don't want to come out. Now you are including your jaw in that opening... soften your jaw...

The inhale is a "hhhaahhh," and the exhale is a "hhhaahhh..."

Feel your whole body soft as you breathe. How much tension do you hold in your belly... in your genital area... in your hips... lower back...? People often contract around the belly... trying to maintain a waistline...! Forget about your waistline. Let it expand and relax while you breathe in.

Breathing into the Chest and the Back

Some people, when they breathe deeply, they pop out their chest and throw there shoulders back, causing the shoulders blades to come together in the back. In order to create an opening or expansion in the chest, they create a closing or contracting in the back.

Get a feeling of your shoulder blades... get a sense of them. (Some of you may have laid down too soon. You should be sitting up.) But even lying down, you can feel your shoulder blades... and when you inhale, let your back open and expand. Let your shoulder blades move apart, away from the spine.

In the classic military posture, when you throw your shoulders back, your shoulder blades come together near the spine. This prevents expansion in the back. Your lungs are not just in the front half of you: your lungs also fill the back half.

Create a sense of expansion back there. Your shoulder blades are like wings. They should be spreading when you inhale, like wings.

Lengthening the Spine as you Breathe

Often there is a collapsing that happens on the exhale. This is easier to explore if you are sitting up, but you can also do it lying down.

When you inhale, feel yourself getting longer... expanding your spine from top to bottom. And then when you exhale, deliberately make your spine even longer. Lengthen your neck and spine as you exhale.

So as you inhale, you can feel yourself stretching taller, then when you exhale, you deliberately continue to stretch and lengthen your spine and your neck. So imagine getting taller with each exhale. That is different than collapsing on the exhale.

Experiment. Let yourself collapse on the exhale. If you are lying down, you can't collapse your spine because gravity is not working. But when you are sitting up and you collapse, you can feel the force of gravity compressing your spine... maybe creating some unnatural curve...

In the effort of standing straight, people can take away the natural curve of the spine. So you want to get a sense of that natural curve of the spine. One way is to imagine that you are hanging from a string that comes out the top of your head; as if you are suspended by this string at the top of your head.

Experiment with your breathing. Feel the subtle differences. On the inhale you create real actual expansion. You feel the actual feelings of expansion while you inhale; and then as you exhale, you imagine continuing to expand... getting longer... getting taller...

Expand from side to side and front to back, as well as top to bottom... as if when you inhale, you are expanding like a balloon, like a bubble... building up pressure...

Bring your attention to any places where the expansion is being prevented. There is a certain point when you are completely full, when you can't seem to physically expand anymore... and if you try to expand more, you create muscle tension...

A tight muscle is like a wall, like a board. And so, your effort actually prevents more expansion. So when you reach that point of maximum expansion, imagine the bubble bursting, and all that energy escaping and expanding out...

Soon you are breathing beyond your body. The space around your body is expanding and relaxing along with your lungs and body....

The spiritual part of breathing is learning to breathe energy and not just air. That requires conscious awareness and the ability to feel.

Using your Imagination Creatively

Use your imagination. When most people think of imagination, they think only of pictures. Imagine an elephant, and there it is: a picture in your mind. But you can also imagine feelings.

Imagine a feeling of expansion... Imagine a feeling of peace... Imagine a feeling of love... Imagine a feeling of joy. Your body does not know the difference between a real event and an imagined event. If you imagine something terrible, your body is going to react as if something terrible is really happening.

If you imagine ecstasy, your body is going to respond in a way to receive or accept this ecstasy. Almost everything that we dream of and desire: like peace or enlightenment... these things are not... They are not like a static event that happens once and that's it. These things are really more like a dynamic moment-to-moment process.

Enlightenment and Love

Enlightenment isn't something you achieve some day. It's not like now you are unenlightened, but after you meditate for ten years, then suddenly you're enlightened; and then from that point on, you will be enlightened. It doesn't work that way. Enlightenment is a constant conscious moment-to-moment dynamic process.

That's what love is: it's something that you have to generate. It's not something that falls on you... comes into you from the outside somewhere. It's an energy that you generate. And if you are not feeling it, it's because you are not generating it.

It's a choice. As the Course in Miracles teaches, in every moment, there is the opportunity: "I could choose peace instead of this." What a great thing to remember! In any given moment in life... if you are upset or angry... you have that thought: "I could choose peace instead of this." And that's all there is to it. That's all that's required!

Just let go of what you are holding on to: your anger... your doubt... your confusion... Those are choices. And in any moment, you can choose something else. But then comes the shock: in the next moment, you have to choose it again... and in the next moment you have to choose it again...

That's why in all the spiritual teachings, it is said that if you really want enlightenment, you have to put your entire heart, mind, and body into the process. It has to be a full time commitment, otherwise don't even bother.

Some people actually believe that being religious or spiritual means going to church on Sunday, and the rest of the week it doesn't matter what they do.

You see, it is an internal process. And the space in which the process needs to occur is already being filled by habits. It's like space in your computer. You try to install a new program, and you get a message that there is not enough space. You have to delete some files before you can load a new program.

Look at how many useless programs are operating in your bio-computer. Most of the space is used up by useless thinking... totally useless thinking! Thinking just keeps happening constantly.

And if you honestly look at your thinking, you can see that the biggest portion of it is totally unnecessary and serves no useful lasting purpose. It is just wasting space in your computer.

You can begin to delete files. If you notice yourself reacting out of habit, or feeling anything other than peace... feeling anything other than love... why waste those moments?

What's most important? What do you want to feel more than anything else? Just begin to choose to feel it. Remember what is most important, especially when you are totally caught up in automatic reactions... lost in your mind... or caught up in a stream of thoughts...

Using the Breath to Interrupt Negative Patterns

That is when the breath can be like a wedge. You can use it to interrupt your patterns. You can keep a door open with it. If you can just maintain an opening... some of this useless stuff will just escape by itself. If you leave the barn door open, the cows and horses will wander out. You don't have to kick them out to make room.

Conscious Breathing can be a way to interrupt your negative or limiting patterns. How many times have we gotten upset, and then afterward looked back and said: "Oh, boy, why did I do that?" This is actually a good thing. But it's easy to negate it by beating yourself up.

Waking up More Often, as well as Sooner

So I look back and I think: “Ahhgh!” Someone said something or did something, and this unconsciousness woke up inside of me. I became impatient or irritated or violent or cruel. And then afterwards I realize: “Ok, look what I did.” Well, that’s enough! Awareness is enough. I don’t need to then say: “What’s wrong with me? How could I be so stupid! Am I ever going to wake up? Damn, I’m so stupid!”

In my process, that is exactly how it happened. Anger was my way of life. It was my response to anything that didn’t go my way. But I began to wake up afterwards and look back and go: “Gosh, look at that: I was angry again.” The more often that I woke up and looked back, and didn’t get angry at myself for getting angry, then some healing took place.

But before that, when I noticed that I got angry, I would get angry at myself for getting angry. So I cleared that up by practicing loving kindness toward myself—especially when I didn’t deserve it!

And an amazing thing happened... in the middle of being angry... well, not quite... in the beginning, maybe it was several hours or days, after I became angry, I would look back and regret it.

Then I would wake up sooner and sooner. Sometimes 20 or 30 minutes afterward, I would already be going: “ahhh I lost it...” Then, I’d wake up right after I did it: Driving my car... somebody cuts me off: and instantly: “!@#\$%! You son of b...ch! And in the next moment, I would wake up.. A moment after it happened, there I was, awake to my reaction.

And then with practice, I began to wake up in the middle of the anger. “Wow, look at this, I am being angry!” In the middle of it, some part of me woke up! Attention... Awareness... And then the real miracle happens... The moment the anger arises... as the anger comes... already even before it hits, I am aware of it coming!

Anger and Spirituality

And then an interesting thing came to my awareness: my urge was to stop it. Of course! That is the whole point: to not be angry. If I felt myself getting angry: I would stop the anger, because that was the “spiritual” thing to do. And people noticed: “Wow! Dan is becoming so spiritual.”

Except for the two or three people who knew me very well.... And when no one else was looking... they knew the real Dan... My family: “Oh sure, you are so spiritual with everybody else: but with us, you’re an asshole!”

And so then, the process seemed to be insane, because when the anger arose, I said: “Great! The hell with it! Let it come! Be really angry! Enthusiastically angry! Really go for it! Squeeze all the juice out of it that I could! I began to enjoy my anger—with everyone!

When you mix enjoyment with anger... suddenly there is humor! The anger turns into laughter! But when we try to stop the anger, it turns into cancer, arthritis, heart attacks. Or it turns into subtle manipulation of others...

We never lose the ability to act angry. I learned that with my children. They did something totally stupid, totally terrible... And of course the job of the father is to correct them: “You shouldn’t do that!” So I had to act as if I was angry with them. And at first it worked, because I am a good actor: “Don’t touch that!” “Put that down!” “What did your mother tell you?”

And they would listen to me. But then they started to feel something amiss... And at one point, my younger son... he had an advantage... I made all my mistakes with my first son, so with my second son, I had grown and I had learned, and I had taken a vow of harmlessness... He saw through the act of my anger, and I couldn’t use it anymore!

My Vow of Non-Violence and the Ufa Mugging

Part of my Buddhist practice, was to dare to be harmless. If people know that you have taken a vow of harmlessness... and people knew... they knew that they could do anything to me, and I wouldn’t hurt them.

I couldn’t even feel anger toward them. So they stole from me. They had nothing to worry about. Before my vow, they knew I would kill them, so they didn’t do anything.

I took this vow of harmlessness in 1984. And I graduated in 1994. So I completed my harmlessness training. And I graduated in Ufa. I was at an “avia kassa,” I was buying an Aeroflot ticket, and I needed to change dollars into rubbles. So I went to this “abmyen valuta” place...

There were several guys hanging around there, and I exchanged a thousand dollars in cash. And as I was leaving the building, I was approaching the door, and I could feel a crowd rushing up behind me... And it seemed like these three or four guys decided to leave at the same time I did...

But in the next moment, I started to feel this familiar something in the back of my neck, the hairs standing up. And for a moment, I hesitated to push the door open. I felt as if some part of me knew that something was about to happen, and I didn't want to open the door.

But I had no rational idea or understanding: "What is this hesitation? Why? What?" And I also felt the movement of these guys behind me, and I felt that I should keep moving... not to block the way, or hold up the people behind me...

But then, as soon as I opened the door, as soon as I put my hand on the handle... these guys pushed me thru the door. Suddenly I had both arms pinned... someone had both of my arms in a grip.

And they had this doorway system where you opened one door, walked thru a short hall to the left or right, and then went out another door. And as I opened the first door, there two other guys in my face. They were pulling me as the others behind were pushing me.

I've had a lot of martial arts training. And there are so many reflexes... In a moment like that, they all just come up. But in that moment, I was helpless. It was an ambush. And I also remembered my vow.

And so I became soft. And they pressed me against the wall... I felt a punch here, and a punch there, a knee, an elbow... And I am feeling all of these things happening in slow motion... In very slow motion, and with extreme clarity and in great detail...

I felt this hand come into my pants pocket and take my money. And another hand goes with big fat fingers goes into my jacket pocket, and out comes my ticket and my passport!

For a moment I had the feeling of great respect—these guys were good! They were so quick, and they worked as a team. I never had a chance. You can't help but acknowledge skill and experience.

Then a final dizzying blow to the back of my head, and I am on the floor... And suddenly something in me said: "You're going to let this happen? No passport? Not ticket back home? No money?" People are beating you and you are letting it happen?

And just when this "No" started to come, I felt this final blow to my head... And I got very dizzy, and my legs didn't work. I collapsed and felt them all rush out past me. I was on the floor. I remembered the picture of the hands coming in and taking my money and

my passport... And I thought: "I have to do something! Don't just lay here! Get that stuff back!"

So I was suddenly up and on my feet, and I am stumbling out the door. One guy was running this way, and two guys were running that way; and another guy, a big fat guy was running this way. He had my passport.

The guy with my money was small and fast. So I thought: "If I am going to chase someone, I should chase someone that I can catch. I don't think I can catch that guy: he's running too fast. So in a moment, I decide: "ok, I am going after the fat guy and my passport!"

I turned and started to run down the stairs. It was a cold and icy Russian winter day. And there were quite a few people on the street, hanging around in front of the building, talking. And as I started my chase, someone stuck out a foot, and I tripped and fell down the stairs!

He was part of the team! I hit the ground face first, My forehead cracked the ice on the street. It was like a wake up call! It was as if an alarm went off! All the anger I ever felt came up in that instant! I woke up in a rage!

I thought about killing the guy who tripped me, but I was on a mission to catch the fat fingered guy running down the street. And then all I wanted to do was keep moving. I rolled onto my feet and headed after my passport. I didn't even look back at who tripped me.

For a moment I thought of killing whoever tripped me. He was the one who was going to get all my rage; he was going to pay, and suffer for all his friends!

But as I rolled down the steps, I had momentum, so I just kept going. And I chased that fat guy. There was ice and snow on the street. As he ran to the end of the building, I was catching up to him. And when he tried to go around the corner he fell. He slipped and fell.

And by this time, I was coming up on him very fast, and I suddenly remembered my vow. And I thought, well, what are you going to do when you catch him? Are you really going to kill him? And the answer was: "no" or more like "I don't know."

And just then life answered the question and solved the problem. He fell and I just plowed into him. I fell on top of him with all my weight and with my hard parts making contact. I fell on him with my elbows and my knees. And I had all this momentum.

It wasn't me hitting him. It was physics, it was momentum. It was gravity. I had no anger. I had no rage. I had no intention to hurt him. I just had momentum. And he felt that momentum!

In the next moment after I slammed into him and he made this noise, this grunt thump noise, and I heard the wind get knocked out of him.... And in the next moment I had this question: "What now?" "Am I going to beat him?" "Am I going to strangle him?" I had no answer! What now? If he begins to fight me, I'm going to have to let him beat me up again! What was I thinking? What a stupid idea to chase this guy!

But instead, suddenly I saw his hand with my passport, and it was shaking... He was giving me my passport! "Vot, voy passport!" All I could do was scream "Thank you!" I grabbed my passport and ran. And in my passport I still had \$500.

So I managed to leave Ufa. I got back to the United States without a penny in my pocket, not a penny. People asked me: "How was your trip to Russia?" Ah, it was great! Oh, and by the way, I am not harmless anymore!

I felt like I graduated, because my primal rage completely took over my being, and it didn't control me. It was a great sense of victory.

You can do the same process using a little bit of resistance. It doesn't have to be a big thing. A little bit of resistance... a little contraction... a little closing... You can breathe and relax past that, thru that... And you will be a little freer, a little more liberated.

And during the breathing session, you will have a lot of opportunities. Feelings come up inside of you, and your reaction is to fight: "Go away! Get out! Go back!" If instead you surrender... keep your momentum... and something just happens perfectly by itself.

And there is great freedom! Something that was unacceptable... you somehow learn to accept it, to be conscious and flow with it... and in that acceptance is this spiritual promise... of freedom and bliss.

Everything that you resist is a door to your own freedom! So you feel that hesitancy about opening the door and letting this thing happen... Just choose. No one is really going to beat you up. You are laying here breathing. It is all happening in your mind, inside of you.

But if you do the work there, the situation in your world will somehow magically change. If you don't do the inner work, the outer world is going to be your school. So do your inner work or life will give you a rude awakening!

Reality, Vontrol, and Being Right

And notice this: that reality does not wait for your permission to be what it is. Reality is what it is, whether you like it, whether you don't like it, whether it feels good, whether it doesn't feel good, whether you think it should be different, or whether you think it shouldn't happen. Reality doesn't care! You waste a lot of energy by resisting reality, by arguing with reality.

And you can be 100% right! People shouldn't attack others. People shouldn't steal one's money. People shouldn't be violent. But what is the reality? What is real? What is true? Is it true that people shouldn't be violent, and shouldn't be criminals? Is that really true? Our minds, or some people will say yes that's true: there shouldn't be criminals. There shouldn't be violence...

But ask this question: What's real? Are there criminals? Is there violence? What is the reality? That's why surrendering is such a powerful spiritual principle. You are surrendering to reality, surrendering to whatever is—anger, love... whatever is, is what it is. It doesn't matter whether you agree or not.

The ego has gotten very good at controlling reality. But it is an illusion. We can control some parts of it for some of the time. But ultimately, reality is what it is, and we make ourselves suffer when we resist it.

That's the lesson. So whatever your internal reality is in the moment... what real choice do you have but to surrender to it? If you have pain, and you fight the pain, you make the pain worse. You feed it. If you breathe and relax, if you accept it and flow with it, something else happens.

So we are going to play some music. We will breathe, and we will go on an inner journey.

We begin a certain way, a very specific way:

The inhale is active. You do it. You make it happen. You pull it in. Active inhale. Use a sound, sound that sounds active, as if you are charging yourself with energy. [demonstrating] You can hear that: it's a strong inhale.

The exhale is passive. It happens by itself. You just set it free. Don't let the exhale out slowly. Don't control the exhale. Let the exhale out all at once, quickly and completely.

So, I can hear the door of your throat opening and closing... Don't do that.... Hahh...yes, that's perfect.

Don't hold the breath for a moment before you exhale. You want to let the inhale turn around and become an exhale without a pause.

It's a circular rhythm. It can be a small circle [demonstrating] or it can be a big circle. [demonstrating] But as soon as the exhale is finished, start the next inhale right away. And let the inhale just turn around and become the exhale without the slightest hesitation.

And just let the music take you. If you find that a certain part of the music has rhythm, breathe in rhythm to the music.

Once you begin breathing, keep the breath moving in and out constantly. Don't hold the breath.

There will be many unusual physical sensations in your body... strange feelings... maybe strong emotions... Expand, open and surrender to them. Breathe into them. Relax into them.

Every exhale, you are relaxing and letting go. Every inhale you are choosing life. You are saying yes. Every exhale, you are surrendering to life. Saying yes. Saying yes.

Music...