

The Principles of Breath Therapy

CD #1: TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to The Principles of Breath Therapy. Breath Therapy is a unique healing art. It originated in connection to the rebirthing movement, and particularly through my work in the former Soviet Union.

It was there that I put together the pieces of Breath Therapy. And with the help of thousands of Russian people--my friends and associates there--doctors and healers and psychics and teachers of all kinds, people with the Academy of Science in Russia, and at various hospitals and clinics.

Together we put together the Principles of Breath Therapy. Or I could say that they emerged from the practice of my Breathwork, my Spiritual Breathing, there in Russia and the former Republics.

There are five Principles to Breath Therapy and before we begin to talk specifically about those, let's first discuss: "What is breath therapy?" There are two aspects or two facets to breath therapy.

The first is that: the breath or the breathing mechanism itself is not functioning at peak potential--that in most people--the average person, their breathing functions at a fraction of it's potential.

You know, we have this analogy of the mind, and how we use only a small portion of it. The analogy that we use is that of an iceberg, and how the tip of the iceberg sticks out over the surface of the ocean. But the largest part of the iceberg is submerged and invisible. As you do different methods and processes, you discover that indeed, the mind is incredibly powerful and we only tap a small portion of it's potential.

The same analogy is also true of the breath. Only you can discover this in a very, very short time, within 5, 10 or 15 minute of Conscious Breathwork, you will realize that there is a tremendous amount of potential waiting to be tapped.

So, we all breathe. In fact, you must be doing something right if you are here listening to [or reading] this program. The issue is that we learned to breathe on the day that we were born and for most people, that moment--those first few moments of life--were quite confusing.

The atmosphere was tense. We had just made a tremendous transition from the womb to the world. A temperature difference of probably 30 degrees: from above 100 degrees in the womb to about 70 degrees in the comfortable delivery room... That is, comfortable for the obstetrician or the doctor or the delivery personnel!

We made this journey from the womb through the birth canal out into the world into this unknown place, unfamiliar place... Strange sensations, our senses being attacked by sounds and textures and frequencies and sensations that were all new. This was a very frightful or, at the very least, a confusing time.

It was in that atmosphere that we learned to breathe. We learned to breathe enough to survive, enough to satisfy the doctor, enough to get us through the moment. It may be at that time that the first real assault on the breathing mechanism was made, and so perhaps... maybe... on the first day of life, already, our breathing mechanism was severely hampered.

And many, many assaults after that began to inhibit the breathing mechanism. So that by the time we get to be ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty, forty years old, the breathing mechanism is functioning at just a fraction of it's potential. It is functioning at a fraction of what nature intended it to be.

So, the first aspect of breath therapy is that the breathing mechanism itself has been hindered, inhibited, damaged in some way, or is functioning not at a normal or optimum level.

So, the breathing mechanism itself needs to be healed, needs to be repaired. The power of the breath needs to be retrieved. That is the first level of Breath Therapy.

The second aspect of Breath Therapy is that once the breathing mechanism is healed, once the breathing is functioning at full, free capacity, once it is truly natural and close to optimal, then the breath itself becomes a powerful therapeutic tool.

And you can use the breath to heal. You can use the body and the breath to heal the mind. You can use the mind and the breath to heal the body.

Those are the two aspects of Breath Therapy. One is that the breathing mechanism itself needs to be healed, and the second is that once the breathing mechanism has been healed, the breath itself becomes a new powerful tool, a therapeutic tool, to use in our health, for growth, for change.

A definition of Breath Therapy might be: “to discover, explore and develop the power and potential of breath and breathing, and then to apply that power, that potential, in our journey toward optimum health, towards peak performance and towards ultimate potential.”

How do we get to the point where we begin applying Breath Therapy in our lives? For me it was a great awakening. For me to discover that there was something in the breath... In the East it's called chi or ki or prana. Many ancient cultures have different words for it. They refer to the energy within the breath. I think in the ancient West, it was called “ruahk: the breath within the breath.”

Once this is discovered there is no going back. Once you discover there is more to breathing than just air, then just the mechanics, than just breathing in oxygen and breathing out carbon dioxide... Once you discover that there is a deeper, more subtle level: and that is this level of “energy...”

Then something huge happens in our own personal growth and the direction on our path... There is a change in our direction. For some people, breath is the first step. It is a tremendous awakening. For other people, it is the final piece.

It is as if, “here it was right under our nose all the time, literally under our nose!” And, we overlook it. We underestimate it. It is too simple, too obvious. But these are the things that are the most powerful, most profound. It is the simple, obvious, basic things that we take for granted. Breathing fits that to a tee.

So we begin to practice Breath Therapy... and there are a few things that are important to consider as we get to the point of applying the breath as a tool... as we reach the point of discovering or developing or exploring the power and the potential of this breathing... this basic, this very basic function...

First of all, let's talk about some of the Guiding Principles, maybe some of the underlying or overriding ideas that are in place as I practice Breathwork, and as I teach it.

First of all there is this idea that breathing is to be practiced in a “heart-centered atmosphere.” You know, it seems to me that people live in one of three places: in their head, in their heart, or in their belly.

At different times in life, and in different moments in life, one of these parts leads the way. It makes more sense to follow the lead of one of these places.

You know sometimes we get something, and we just get it in our gut. It's like an instinct. You know it is real, you know that it is

true, and you just follow it. And sure enough, thank God you follow that gut instinct.

At other times you have to override what your instincts seem to tell you and what your gut seems to tell you. You have to allow your thought process, your rational mind to be in charge, to be the leader.

There are other times when the heart is the one that leads the way. It is interesting that the heart is actually in a good place. It is the balance between the head and the belly.

So, breathing, Breath Therapy, should be practiced in a heart-centered atmosphere. You know the heart is the home of the spirit. The heart normally takes into account what the brain, the intellect, the rational mind and also our gut, our lizard brain, our instincts, tell us.

The heart is a good transformer of the energies that come from these two other places. You can trust your heart despite what you might have been taught... despite what some of the lessons in life... despite the impressions some of these lessons might have left you with...

The heart is your best bet in choosing your direction and in guiding your behavior. So, a heart-centered atmosphere: that is the first key to Breath Therapy.

A few conscious breaths... just feeling... just listening to what's inside... and you will settle into this place in your heart center.

You know, it's kind of like "soft vision." You can focus on something intently with a sort of laser beam of attention. You can stare at something--focus on it. Or you can look upon it with soft eyes.

So you are also including everything in your peripheral field of vision, and it is more of just... being open.

You can take in more information that way very often. Rather than with a focused, very intense, laser-like focus, which is sort of like having blinders on. You can miss a lot around the edges.

As you just begin to practice breathing and relaxing you will find yourself settling into that heart space. It is quite natural. And the more time that you spend in that heart space, the more familiar it becomes, the quicker and the sooner you can fall into it. And the more you come from it in general.

Let's talk about the Principles of Breath Therapy. There are five principles.

- The Technique
- The Atmosphere
- The Teacher
- The Mind of the Breather
- And Something Else

So, the first Principle of Breath Therapy is the technique. There are many, many techniques. Breath therapy is based upon many breathing approaches, transformational breathing approaches. It's based on the principles of Prana Yoga and Chi Kung, and rebirthing and Vivation, and many other breathing techniques and exercises and methods.

A lot has gone into the formulation of Breath Therapy. Breath Therapy is the result of the "bee approach." The bee that travels from flower to flower, the pollen collects on the legs of the bee and back to the nest it goes, with bits and pieces from some many beautiful flowers...

Rajneesh the famous mystic (Osho), inspired a big portion of Breath Therapy as I teach and practice it. Babaji, the immortal yogi master, inspired a tremendous part of it. Many teachers: Leonard Orr, Sondra Ray, Stan Grof, many modern teachers, American teachers, Western teachers and European.

Breath therapy is actually still alive. It is still in development, it is actually in its embryonic state. It's just in the beginning. As the next years go by, more will be added to it. But the basic structure, the underlying principles of Breath Therapy, seemed to have solidified themselves. They are ready for presentation.

The first is the technique. We make use of a number of specific breathing techniques in Breath Therapy. And most of those techniques, in fact all of those techniques, depend upon three things.

- The level of health of the breather
- The degree of skill of breathing skill, that one has
- The purpose in training

Depending on these three things, one technique may make more sense than another. There are certain core methods core techniques that I teach everyone within the first one or two or three sessions. And I will talk about those later.

But the first element or the first Principle of Breath Therapy is the application of a certain Breathing Technique. You see, every technique has a specific and predictable result.

It is like that reflex in your knee... you know you see... you tap the knee in a certain place and you see that knee-jerk reaction. There is a place in the body where you can find these points...

And you tap that point, touch that point, and it creates a certain response. In a healthy person that point is guaranteed, it is predictable, and you can bet on it.

The same is true of certain breathing techniques. If you practice a certain breathing technique you are going to produce certain results, certain predictable results, certain guaranteed results, in every case and every time.

In the beginning of Breath Therapy, what we do is we observe, and we do a bit of probing, a bit of experimenting, to check the state of a person's health, the degree of their skill, the amount of breath control that they have, the amount of breath awareness that they have, the range and the scope of their breathing mechanism.

I accomplish this in my own practice in a very simple, simple way. I begin by sitting with the person and noticing and observing, first of all, myself. I take account of my own presence. I notice my own breath. I feel my own breathing. I get a sense of my own presence and I relax into my own center.

Then I begin to allow information from the other person to enter my awareness. I focus on the breathing and I notice...

Where does the breathing go?

What moves?

What does the breath touch?

Is there a rhythm to the breathing?

Is it chaotic, ragged?

Is it deep?

Is it shallow?

Does the belly move?

Does the chest move?

Are their shoulders involved?

Are their neck muscles tense?

What is the expression on their face?

Do they breathe through their nose or through their mouth?

What does the breathing pattern tell me?

If I had that breathing pattern, what emotions would be just under the surface?

What would I be feeling if that was the way that I was breathing?

I ask myself many questions as I sit with the person... just receiving information. And gradually I will move towards a rational, logical decision about a technique or an intuitive or spontaneous urge to give the person an exercise or a test of some kind, some practice, some method.

So, these techniques have power. Whether it be the basic technique of simply observing the breath, whether it be the technique of engaging the exhale (using the exhale to release tension, to relax, triggering that relaxation response via the exhale.) Or whether it would be some particular “charging” of a part of the body or a “directing of flow of breath” into one part or another.

Any of these techniques will have a certain specific and predictable result. And during the process or the practice of Breath Therapy, we can move from one technique to another, from one exercise to another. And the process itself begins to become organic, quite natural.

It is like digesting food. You know, once you chow down, you really don’t have much to do. Digestion happens on its own. And some of these techniques work exactly like that.

Once you begin to apply a technique, then the work is done by the technique itself. There is really little else to happen. A shift will occur, a movement will occur, an adjustment will occur and the next step will be obvious. So, the technique is that is the first Principle of Breath Therapy.

The second Principle of Breath Therapy is the Atmosphere: the atmosphere in which the technique is practiced. That atmosphere is physical, it involves things like temperature, the comfort of the room, a soft floor, a comfortable chair, a ventilated room, a peaceful place.

And it also involves a psychic atmosphere. Is there tension in the room? It includes the group atmosphere. The people that are there create a certain atmosphere. You notice there are some places that are just charged with energy.

You can find sacred places on the earth where miracles have happened, where powerful events have occurred; and the energy

of those events seems to hang in the air. You move into that atmosphere, and the atmosphere itself does something to you.

Certain people have a healing presence. And when you move into their bubble, when you are in their aura--in their influence, something happens to you. In a church, sacred places... There are atmospheres that are far more conducive to practicing Breath Therapy than others.

Obviously, you practice a certain technique... you practice it in the middle of a highway with cars coming... you are going to get a different effect than if you practice that technique in the peace and the comfort of your own home, or within the loving atmosphere of a like-minded group of individuals, or you practice it out in nature where the smell of flowers makes the experience more beautiful... or the cleanness of the air or the sound of a waterfall... Just the presence of life and nature around you, enhances the atmosphere.

This can’t be overlooked or underestimated. It is a very powerful part of Breath Therapy. I was able to do things in India in the presence of my teacher Babaji, I was able to do thing in China in the presence of my teacher Hu Bin... that I haven’t been able to do since, because I know... there was something about the presence, they, being a part of that atmosphere.... We’ll get to something more specific about that in a moment...

If you are going to practice Breath Therapy, the first thing you want to do is have the technique in mind that you are going to practice. You have chosen it based on your level of skill and your degree of health and your purpose of in training.

And then you carve out a place where the phone is not going to ring, where you won’t be disturbed. A place where you meditate is often a good place. Sometimes bed is a good place, and sometimes the place where you sleep is not a good place. It depends on the exercise you are practicing.

Consciously choosing the atmosphere or consciously creating the atmosphere in which to practice Breath Therapy often has just as much effect or more effect than the technique itself.

The third Principle of Breath Therapy is the Teacher. As I mentioned a minute ago, some teachers because of their skill, because of their confidence, because of... who they are... They emanate a certain presence. And things are possible in their presence that might be impossible otherwise, or far more difficult otherwise.

Take something basic or simple as skydiving. Now you are going to learn skydiving. You are on the side of somebody who has done it thousand times, and loves it. And you two jump together. Your experience is going to be very different. All else being equal, your experience is going to be different than if the person on the side of you has jumped only once before, and is afraid to jump.

So, the presence of the teacher makes a big difference. Water only rises to its own level. And the power of the teacher... whether actually physically present, or invited psychically or spiritually or mentally... The presence of the teacher adds a certain force to Breath Therapy that is unmistakable.

Simply having another person there, a breathing guide, someone who has breathed their way through certain cycles, has relaxed and breathed in and out of certain spaces... Their presence creates an opportunity for you to breathe through those same things.

It makes your process easier when there is someone with you who has made the journey before.

And so the breathing technique is very important. And the atmosphere in which you practice is very important. And the presence of the teacher is also very important.

And there is something to be said about the process of initiation. Since ancient times, when one human being absorbed a skill or mastered something... and they can pass that on to a student or someone else...

There is something... even the substance of another person, is literally passed on to the other in some way. And so, I think part of Breath Therapy has to do with the passing on of a skill, of an awareness, of a substance, of an energy... from one person to the next.

Creating a space where two people, one person the guide, the breathing guide, the teacher if you will; and the other, the breather, the student, the client if you will, creating that atmosphere with the purpose of practicing a technique...

Something amazing can happen when you start to combine these ingredients, these principles.

The fourth principle in Breath Therapy is the Mind of the Breather. You know, I forget who said it: it has been said so many times: "the mind is a great servant but a terrible master." The mind is an incredibly powerful thing. It may be the source of everything. That may be a divine mind.

Certainly, in your experience, everything that happens to you, everything that you experience, is quite dependent upon your mind: upon your attitudes, your beliefs, your thoughts, your intentions, your will, your ideas, your fantasies, your imagination, your interpretation, your perception. The mind is at work constantly.

And it is the mind that probably brought you to Breath Therapy, in one way or another. And it needs to be honored, because the results you get from practicing Breath Therapy will depend upon... to a great degree... will depend upon your beliefs, your attitudes, your thoughts, what you think is possible, why you are doing something, the reason for practicing, your purpose in selecting a breathing technique. The mind is at work here.

Just as in life, what is happening in your mind has a great effect on the outcome. Certainly this is true in Breath Therapy. There is a particular aspect of the mind that is, I think, required for Breath Therapy. I talk about this in our Formula for Transformation: that is “Meditative Awareness.”

This is a certain way of relating to the mind let’s say. Developing this ability to be the observer, the detached observer, the watcher... just noticing, just paying attention... not analyzing, not trying to understand, not thinking, not rationalizing... just being a witness, just awakening in yourself: consciousness.

The level of your consciousness, or the state of your consciousness, will certainly make a big difference in the outcome of the techniques that you practice when you do Breath Therapy.

So, we have four Principles of Breath Therapy so far: the Technique, the Atmosphere, the Teacher, the Mind of the Breather, and there is a fifth principle. I don’t really have a name for this. I call it “something else.”

The fifth Principle of Breath Therapy is Something Else. It could be called Grace. I am quite comfortable with this idea of grace: something beneficial that is just showered upon us for no apparent reason: not dependent upon deserving, or not in response to any request, or not the result of any effort. It’s grace, a mystical or magical factor...

But there is this fifth element. I know that is there, because you can practice the technique wrong and still something wonderful can happen! You can practice the technique in a terrible atmosphere--the worst of situations--under terrible conditions, and still something wonderful can happen! You can learn the technique from a terrible teacher and still something wonderful can happen! You can practice the technique for all the wrong

reasons--with the worst of intentions, and still something wonderful can happen!

Well, if you could practice a technique wrong, in a terrible atmosphere, with a lousy teacher and for all the wrong reasons, and still have something wonderful happen, that means to me that there is something at work here. And that is the fifth element, the fifth principle: that is grace, a magical and mystical factor.

And I take it for granted. And I think over time... this principle will make itself known over time more clearly... until then I am quite satisfied to call it “something else.”

So there we have the 5 Principles of Breath Therapy. Now what I would like to do is talk a bit about how to put these things together into a practice of Breath Therapy. I will go back to my first conference in Moscow.

During the collapse of communism, leading up to the collapse of the Soviet Union, something began to move in the consciousness of the people there. Maybe it was 75 years of suppressed spiritual expression. Maybe it was just the moment when all of the doors and the windows of that country flew open.

People began to come and go, ideas began to come and go. The wall fell, and people began to get together. A certain synthesis occurred. But something quite extraordinary happened, and it is happening in the former Soviet Union. That was a trigger for me for discovering one of these elements: and that is the atmosphere.

At the Conferences on Free Breathing... and there were ten of them from 1990 to 1999, that took place in Moscow... right outside of Moscow... every June for ten years. It was called the International Free Breathing Conference.

Teachers and healers came from all over the world and gathered in Moscow to share their approaches to transformation, to exchange ideas in the human potential movement, to teach and learn various

methods of psychotherapy and bodywork and of course, Breathwork.

One of the rituals at the Conference For Free Breathing was a daily gathering, sort of an attunement, when everyone got together at one point during the day, before they all went their separate ways and into all the various workshops and courses and classes and processes and methods...

We all got together every day for a simple attunement, and a certain atmosphere was created during those attunements that carried people throughout the day. I know it carried me throughout the day.

If you will notice that in many, many spiritual practices, many spiritual methods, many healing methods, a few moments are taken to sort of center, maybe to call upon guides, maybe to just to remember, to remind ourselves that this is a sacred and holy method, moment: to call upon the saints or to call upon Jesus or Moses or to remember the Buddha...

There are many, many ways of making the moment sacred. When you think about it, every single breath is sacred. So, creating a certain atmosphere of holiness, of sacredness...

Not a sort of strict, righteous, religious, religiosity kind of thing, but a genuine, spiritual feeling, an awareness that we all are one, that something remarkable is happening right here, right now... just by the virtue of being alive!

This can be accomplished very subtly. You can do it standing in line at the grocery store. You can do it sitting on a bus somewhere, or on the subway. You can do it in a moment of a hug. And that is just remembering... just falling into the moment... just letting whatever is, be as it is. Allowing "it" to be as it is, knowing that it is perfect... knowing that it is exactly perfect.

Carrying this sense, this notion, from moment to moment is very, very powerful. And it is an important part of Breath Therapy, because everything that happens when you practice Breath Therapy is suppose to happen!

Everything that happens is grist for the mill of our own awakening. If it is not comfortable or pleasurable, then it is at least useful and interesting. It certainly is perfect no matter how it seems. If it is happening, it is perfect.

So, allow this to become a real basic part of your approach to Breathwork. You know things can be perfect and still you can want them to change, to become more perfect, if there is such a thing... to expand, to include more and more.

You know, this idea of perfection has some people hung up. I think perfection is a process more than a goal. It is not a stagnant thing. It is more of a state. The main point here is to create an atmosphere where you can allow whatever is happening to happen, knowing that it is perfect.

Developing skill at the techniques is also and obviously very important. I mean knowing where to tap to get that knee-jerk reflex is important. Having a sense of the quality of breath, the sound, the feel, the movement of breath, during the process is very important.

I put together all of these principles in this way. Let us begin with a basic, core exercise, one that you can learn on another tape called The Formula For Transformation. But, it is a cleansing breath.

You know a **Cleansing Breath** is sort of like an intervention. A cleansing breath is a way of re-centering yourself. It is a way of releasing yourself from the past, and falling into the present moment.

A Cleansing Breath is an inhale that expands. It begins in the belly, rises up and includes the middle of the chest, then the upper chest, and then it turns into an exhale.

And so this expansion occurs, and then this release occurs. The exhale is like a sigh of relief. It is an effortless, cleansing breath.

You begin by “thinking the breath in,” sensing the expansion. There is no effort, there’s no muscular activity involved. You just expand, and pull the breath in gently, and fill yourself up to the point where the urge or the pressure has built up to where the exhale can occur by itself. And then you allow the exhale to happen.

It can take a very short time, like this...

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Or it can be a longer one, like this

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It is an expansion that takes place on the inhale, and a release on the exhale.

As you practice it, you can refine it. You can make the inhale sort of an “ooooh” shape, as if you are feeding yourself, as if you are sucking through a straw. Then, the exhale is an “ahhh” shape, like the great sigh of relief. During that “ahhhh,” you can even let some sound come out [aaaahhhh...] It is a soothing let go on the exhale. It is very, very simple; very, very easy and very basic.

Let us say that we have selected that technique. A simple cleansing breath, where you allow yourself to expand, where you allow the entire breathing cavity to fill, and then you just allow the exhale to happen, you allow gravity, the elastic tendency in your muscles, atmospheric pressure, to do the exhaling for you, so that it is completely effortless.

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Let us say that that’s the technique that we are going to practice. So, we have selected the technique. Now, we want to do it in

such a place and such a way, or in such a location where we won’t be interrupted, we won’t be disturbed. And that place could be where you are listening to this tape.

You center yourself, focusing on your breathing. We’ll start with awareness. So, before I go in and start to control the breath, I just watch the breath for a few breaths, get a sense of myself in my own body.

Maybe I would want to put myself in a posture that is more conducive to breathing. If you are hunched up or curled up, you won’t be able to expand as much as if your spine is straight or if you are laying down flat, or standing.

So, you find a position that allows freedom to expand, allowing your chest and your abdomen to expand. Maybe you want to loosen clothing, creating a little more freedom in the atmosphere to breathe. Unbutton anything tight: belts, buckles, tight shirts around the neck, bra straps...just create a loose and open atmosphere. And you begin to practice that technique.

An “ooooohh” shape on the inhale...feeding yourself the breath...an “ahhhh” on the exhale...

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And, you might want to combine the fourth element, the fourth principle, and that is the mind.

A wonderful meditation that I first heard from Ram Dass, Richard Alpert... he had a little mantra while he breathed that he did when we were together one time. During the inhale he would say to himself, “The power of God is within me.” And during the exhale he would say to himself: “The grace of God surrounds me.”

So, you can incorporate a thought with the breath. As you inhale: “The power of God is within me.” As you exhale: “The grace of God surrounds me.”

You may want to repeat that with each inhale: “The power of God is within me.” And with each exhale: “The grace of God surrounds me.”

So, now, we have taken two principles and we have combined them. The shape and the sound of the breath: that is the “ooohh” shape on the inhale and the “aahh” shape on the exhale, and a thought, a mantra, a mental focus, and combining that with the breath.

You’ve cleared a space in your room where the ventilation is good, the temperature is nice, you won’t be disturbed. You have created a kind of sacred atmosphere both internally and externally. And now you are practicing. You are doing Breath Therapy. It is a very simple place to start.

Next... we will play with certain breathing exercises. They are the Basic Breath Energy Skills. They were taught at my Breath Energy Trainings through the 80’s and early 90’s... They represent the basic skills that were taught at the Breath Energy Training.

They will help you to develop more Breath Awareness, they will help you to create more Relaxation, to release any tensions or inhibitions in your breathing mechanism. And they will help you to gain more Breath Control.

I suggest that you practice one or more or all of these exercises. The one that is most difficult probably would make sense to play with. The one that is easiest also makes sense to play with. I leave that to you, to your degree of health, to your level of skill and the purpose for practicing Breath Therapy.

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***For more information on Breath and Breathing Exercises and techniques, on Conscious Breathing, Breathwork and Spiritual Breathing and Breath Mastery: visit [www.breathmastery.com](http://www.breathmastery.com)***