

TAUREGE SEMINAR

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EDITED TRANSCRIPT

CONTENTS

Pain and Pleasure

The Body/Mind System and its Reaction to Intensity

Energy and Emotions

The Face of Joy

Getting a handle on the thinking mind

The Russian Banya: Working to Relax

Tell Your Mind What To Think

The Practice of Awareness

Learn to Let Go

The First Core Breathing Skill

A Secret Technique

Yawning and Emotions

The Sigh of Relief

Conscious Connected Breathing

The Benefits and Problems of Breath Holding

Summing up the Practice

Pain and Pleasure!

Breathing is useful for working on certain problems. But if you have a problem, and then the problem goes away, then you are really only in a sort of neutral place. What I mean is, you have gone from negative to neutral, not from negative to positive.

On my first trip to Lithuania in 1990... I was actually traveling though the whole Soviet Union. And I went to a city called Ufa in Russia. Bashkiria. I had only been a few days in Moscow and then I went to Ufa, so it was the second city I went to in Russia. And the seminar was called "Open Your Heart to Love".

I was giving my talk in large auditorium, and there was a man, I remember his name, it was Genrick Kojemyaka. He stood up in the audience and said: "Look at you. You look like a flower!"

I was wearing a shirt that I bought in Miami and it had rainbow colors on it. He said: "In America everybody is happy, everything is wonderful. But here in Russia, we live under dark forces. You don't know what it's like to live under dark forces."

And he said: "You want us to be happy!"

I said: "Yeah, sure!"

"You want us to have pleasure?"

"Yes, sure!"

Then he said: "But we don't want pleasure. We just want less pain."

There were 300 people in the audience, and I could almost feel all their heads nodding, agreeing with him.

So, if you have this much pain [.....], and someone takes half of it away. Now you only have this much pain [.....], you feel good! But not really! Because you still have this much pain [.....]!

I understood something in that moment. It's like this: people happy if they have less pain. And if they have no pain, then it feels like ecstasy to them. And yet we have only arrived at a zero point, a neutral point (on the pain-pleasure scale). We haven't even begun to move into pleasure yet! Pleasure is not simply the absence of pain. "Pleasure" is not the same as "No Pain."

When someone is living with pain all the time, it's as if his or her brain forgets what pleasure really is. And if they were to suddenly feel tremendous pleasure, it would hurt! Interesting phenomenon.

So, I like helping people to remove their pain. But it bothers me when they stop at that point, when they say: "Oh I have no more pain, Ok, nothing else to do now".

It's like a heroin addict. The brain of a heroin addict confuses pleasure with pain. They take their drug and they feel something that they think is good. And then after some time they start feeling bad. So they take the drug again. And it seems like they feel good.

But everything is upside down and backwards. They are actually harming themselves, injuring themselves, but it feels good. And then when they begin to get free of the drug, they feel bad. So, the brain is confused.

If you live a long time with certain habits, soon you don't even notice those habits. If you have a pain in your body, and it's there every day, all day, all night, pretty soon you stop feeling it. It is still there but you don't feel it any more.

As long as it's the usual pain that you are accustomed to, it doesn't register in your awareness. If it becomes more intense, then you notice it. And so then you take a pill or you do something that makes the pain go down—it doesn't make the pain disappear, it just disappears from your awareness. It still there, but you don't feel it.

So, we have pain and we have pleasure, and in the middle, there's a zero point. It's not pain, it's not pleasure: it's like nothing. That's where we want to start, and then build pleasure. Then something really interesting happens. Because if you have this much pleasure [.....], and you lose half of that pleasure, and now you have this much pleasure [.....]: you feel bad. But you still have all this pleasure [.....]!

A very crazy phenomenon! We can actually have pleasure that feels bad, and we can have pain that feels good! That's a confused brain. But it's a normal brain. It's an average brain.

If everyone has pain, and someone dares to have pleasure. Everyone is going to look at that person and say: "Who do you think you are?" "How dare you!"

And if they are in your family, if they are your friends, they can say: "How you can be happy, when I feel so bad?" And so then we have to feel bad about feeling good! We think: "If you love me, and I am suffering, then you should suffer too, because you love me, right?" "If I am suffering and you are happy, then you must not love me!" "How can you be happy when I am suffering? You don't love me!"

It's like the force of gravity: we pull each other down. And we start with the children. Children are happy for no reason. They live in joy. They are full of energy. They can't sit still. They can't be quiet. They enjoy everything—even things they are not supposed to enjoy! And so we start to teach them: "Sit still!" "Be quiet!" We start to bring them down.

We need to be lifting each other up! So, the idea of breathing is to wake up this original spirit in us. We can call it joy, but when people think of joy, they imagine somebody looking very strange, or some extreme emotion. That is a confused brain. Joy is actually an ordinary state, a natural ordinary state, and there are degrees of it. You can have joy, and you can have intense joy.

The Body/Mind System, and Its Reaction to Intensity

The body mind system—and that is what we live with—has certain programs, certain structures, certain habits, certain patterns. And they are familiar. They are usual. We call them normal. There is a certain zone of familiarity or comfort, and if you go outside that zone, it doesn't matter in which direction you go outside.

You could go in the direction of pain or you could go in the direction of pleasure, but if you go outside that ordinary familiar zone, the body/mind system reacts in the same way. If something begins to feel intense, the body mind/system doesn't care if it's intense pain or intense pleasure: it reacts in the same way.

It's a very interesting phenomenon. The body will react to intense pleasure in the same way as it reacts to intense pain. It will contract, it will tighten, it will become tense, it will block. It's as if it's trying to protect itself from intensity, from the unfamiliar. And the mind will do the same thing.

If you have an experience that is outside of the mind's ability to understand, if it's beyond anything that the mind has encountered until now, if the experience is too intense – it doesn't matter whether it's intense joy or intense fear. The mind is going to react in the same way: it will block, it will try to escape, it will avoid, it will turn away, it will even shut you off.

Almost everyone has heard of this experience: during a serious disaster, people just go unconscious, and they don't even remember what happened. That's the mind trying to protect itself and protect us from something beyond the ordinary. Interesting phenomenon.

So when we start to work with pleasure, intense pleasure, the body/mind system reacts as if you are hurting it. Did you ever laugh so much that it hurt? And did you ever have this experience, where you were crying and crying, and suddenly it turned to laughter? That's when energy is being transformed.

Energy and Emotions

We think there are certain energies that are uncomfortable, that seem to hurt. But those energies could be something wonderful, very healthy, and really good. So we have to work with our system. We have to teach our body-mind system to relax into intensity.

Take the energy of fear, for example. That's a real energy, the energy of fear. And think about the energy of excitement. Children get excited very easily. If you feel excitement and you say "no" to that energy, your experience will be fear.

So, fear is the energy of excitement plus a "no." Now if you feel fear, and you say "yes," then your experience is excitement. And the greater the fear is, the greater the excitement will be when the energy transforms.

You are on the verge of jumping out of a plane, and there is a lot of fear, your heart is pounding, maybe you are spinning, but you jump. The fear gets really intense, it reaches a peak, and it turns in to ecstasy!

Look at the face of a person just before they jump out of a plane for the first time, and then look at them when they're on the ground after that first parachute jump. That's what happens to energy, if the body mind system can be encouraged to go forward.

Take the energy of anger. We think that's a negative energy, but you can transform it into determination, so that nothing can stop you. The same energy, changed, transformed.

Sadness, the energy of sadness, that's actually a very easy energy to transform; and it transforms into gratitude. I lose my mother. I feel very sad. But the more I think about her the more my sadness becomes gratitude.

And we even have expression in English: "sweet sorrow." Those energies are very close. If you say "yes," or you say "no," then the energy turns in one direction or it turns in another. We have been taught to say "no." By the time a child is 5 years old, how many times have they heard the word "no"? A thousand? Five thousand? "No" becomes a habit of our system.

This reminds me of a joke about orgasms. That's an example of intense pleasure. And what happens to the body and mind during an orgasm? You freeze, everything gets tight and the mind just stops. It goes into a vacuum or something. And some people, if you watch them, it seems like they're trying to climb out of their skin during an orgasm.

It looks like they are trying to escape the experience, it looks like they trying to go somewhere, to escape. And if a small child sees an adult having an orgasm, it's scary. It's frightening. That will give a child nightmares! They think something terrible is happening. That's what it looks like!

The Face of Joy

Look at the face of Miss America or Miss Universe in the moment when she realizes that she has won the championship. You have this beautiful woman, smiling, looking beautiful... She's anxious, afraid: "Am I going to win or lose?" And when she realizes that she's won, look at her face!

Take a picture of her face in that moment, and take away the context. Just show that picture to someone, and ask: "What do you think this woman is feeling?" It looks like she is suffering! This is the greatest moment of her life, her dream is coming true, and it looks like she is in pain. Interesting phenomenon.

So, you know, there are several kinds of orgasm. There's the positive orgasm: Yes! Yes! Yes! There's the negative orgasm: No! No! No! There is the spiritual orgasm: Oh God! Oh God! And there's the fake orgasm: Oh Dan! Oh Dan! (Fill in your best friend's name here.)

When we play with the breath, we bring the system back to some natural order, some original purity, some natural, organic joy and peace that we've lost, that's been covered over by so many traumas. The breathing that we do restores that original beauty.

On the way to restoring this natural order, we go through all kinds of crazy, intense stuff. It's a transformation, and the body-mind system reacts to this change, this intensity, and it

tries to protect itself from something very good, something it wants, but something it's also afraid of.

I tell people: "Everyone is on their way to ecstasy, everyone is going to heaven; you can go singing and dancing and celebrating, or you can go kicking and screaming and complaining. But either way, you are going to get there."

And like a heroin addict, we sometimes have to go into a temporary experience of suffering, in order to get free. But if we have certain skills, we can make the journey very quickly. And it can be enjoyable from the first breath all the way to the end of journey.

Getting a Handle on the Mind

In order for it to be enjoyable, in order for the entire process to be enjoyable, we need to get a handle on our mind. Because if I feel something happening in my body and then I react to that feeling, the way that I react to it is going to determine the direction of the energy. The way that I react to that feeling is going to determine my experience.

The body is going to react automatically. We have reflexes, and there's nothing you can do about it. [demonstrates the knee reflex that occurs when tapping it in a certain way]. If you have a normal body, if you are healthy, then you should have these natural reactions.

The mind also has automatic reactions, reflexes, but because of programming, conditioning, they are not always natural or healthy. So we have to get a handle on our mind. We have to choose our thoughts, and not just think whatever the mind decides to think on its own.

So, I have a feeling in my body, and my mind thinks: "Oh! Something terrible is happening!" It's just a thought, but it is going to take that feeling or my experience of that feeling, in certain direction.

I have a feeling in my body and I think: "I am going to die!" It's just a thought, but that thought is more powerful than the feeling—in terms of our experience of it. I have the same feeling in my body, and I think: "Oh! Something really good is happening!" Same feeling, different thought: different direction of this energy, and a different experience.

I have a feeling in my body and I think (my mind thinks): "God is healing me!" Same feeling: "I am going to die." Nothing different about the feeling, but a very different thought: and therefore a very different experience, and a very different direction to our experience.

So, something happens, we have a reaction in our mind and body, and then we have an experience. And we think our experience is connected with the thing that has happened. It is, but it's not. It's connected with our reaction. Do I tighten? Do I tell myself something scary? Whatever has happened doesn't matter now, because my reaction is going to determine my experience.

So, when we start practicing this breathing, your mind-body system will react, and it will react according to its habits or patterns, according to its history, its conditioning, its programming.

I am thinking of Ufa again. I had been in Russia for about two weeks. This was in 1990. Everything just seemed so difficult. And I had never heard the word “impossible” so much in my whole life, as I did in Russia during those two weeks. Everything was impossible!

I am in Moscow and I have a friend in Estonia: I want to visit Estonia. They say: “Impossible.” “But why?” I ask. “Impossible!” I am in restaurant, they give me a glass of water, I ask for ice. They say: “Impossible!” I want to travel to Ufa, and need a ticket: “Impossible!” Is everything impossible in this country?

The Russian Banya: Working to Relax

I was with my friend Jenya, and I asked: “What do you people do for pleasure here? Everybody is suffering and struggling here. Everything is impossible. What do you do for fun? What do you do for pleasure here?”

And he said: “Oh we go to the “banya!” And his eyes lit up! “Wow! I said, “that’s sounds good! OK, let’s go to the banya!” “Well, it’s impossible today, he said,” but tomorrow we can go.” Ok. I’ll wait

So, the next day we get up early. We walk to the bus stop, and we wait, and we wait. The bus finally comes. We take the bus. Then we walk to the train station, and we wait. Finally, the train comes. We take the train. So 1 hour on a bus, and then we are 2 hours on a train, and we get out to this village, and we have to walk 10 kilometers!

It’s 8 o’clock at night. We left in the morning, and we are just arriving to the Banya! But, they have to gather wood, and make a fire. They prepare everything. That’s another hour of waiting. Finally I am in the Banya... sweating... And then they beat and thrash you with birch branches soaked in boiling water!

Ouch! Ahh! Jesus! This is pleasure? I want my mother! So, finally at midnight, thank God, we’re done with the pleasure! But at that hour there are no buses, and no trains; and so we are walking, and walking, and walking. So, I said, “Ok. Now I understand Russian.” You pay 12 hours of suffering for 1 hour of pleasure—sort of pleasure. And that’s your idea of fun. What a crazy world!

But everybody enjoyed it, everybody except me! It happened twenty-five years ago, but they still talking about it: “Wow! Remember that time when we went to the banya with Dan! Wasn’t that great?”

So, I understood Genrick Kojemyaka. He said: “Look we are not interested in pleasure. Just give us less pain, and we will be happy.” But actually, after few times in banya I really started to like sweating and that “viniki” (birch branch) beating thing: I got used to it. And, rolling around in the snow afterwards: it’s really nice. I think I understand the pleasure now.

Tell Your Mind What to Think

So, this journey with the breath can be really exiting. And if we have certain skills, then the journey can be pure pleasure. The first thing we need to do is get control our mind. Don’t

just believe whatever thought comes to you. Don't just expect whatever thought your mind produces out of habit. Tell your mind what to think; choose your thoughts.

No matter what you feel, no matter what's happening, you can choose how you think about it. You can choose what you tell yourself about it. You can decide what it means. And that's a power that everyone has. And it's a transformational power, because we change energy with our consciousness: we can transform energy.

So, positive thoughts are better than negative thoughts: but no thoughts are better than either. Especially when things are changing quickly, as in life, as in moment-to-moment life. No matter what you think about this moment, the moment has already gone, and you have to think again. But now it's too late because it has already gone, so you need to think again.

And then you go round and round in your mind, and you miss the flow of life. There's no time to think in the moment. We can only surrender in the moment. We can have a general frame of mind, but specific thoughts are not useful unless you're stuck and you need to break out of a certain frame of mind. Then certain thoughts can help you to break out of your thinking habits. You choose to think something very different than what you usually or automatically think. and this helps you to shift and change.

So, that's the first skill: getting control of your mind, choosing your thoughts. We call that choosing context. So, I have a certain amount of money in my pocket. It is what it is. This is the content of my experience. I can wish it was more, I can say it should be more: but it is what it is. I can either fight with reality or I can accept reality. This is it. It is what it is.

And what I think about it is really important: "Wow! That's a lot of money!" Or: "Wow! It's almost nothing! I'm almost broke!" This didn't change: it is what it is. We can't change the content of our experience in the moment, but we can change the context.

Maybe in the next moment I can do something about it, maybe tomorrow I can have more money. But right here, right now it is what it is. I can think it should be more; I can say it should be more; I can believe it should be more—but it is what it is.

I can't change what it is in the moment. I can't change the "content" of my experience; but what I can change is the "context." That is: How do I look at it? What do I think about it? What do I tell myself? How do I describe it? What meaning do I put onto it? *That* you can change in the moment. And that's a skill that leads to happiness.

I don't have to wait until my experience changes: I just have to change how I look at my experience. I don't have to change what's happening: I have to change what I am making it mean, I have to change how I am reacting into it. And teaching ourselves new reactions is actually quite easy.

But you will be surprised how people want to hold on to a thought. They want to hold on to their point of view. They want to hold on to their judgment. They make something mean something, and then they hold on to the meaning they have created.

I pass someone on the street that I know, a friend. From across the street, I wave to him and shout: “How’s it going?” And he seems to look right thru me, or he doesn’t even look my way. He ignores me and keeps walking. So I think: “What? This person doesn’t like me? Is he mad at me? He just ignored me? Well, I am going to ignore him! I thought we were friends, but he even didn’t say hi to me! Well, to hell with him!”

And then I see him next day and I say: Hey! How come yesterday I said hi to you, and you just ignored me? And he says: “Oh, sorry, I didn’t see you.” So, when we hold on to our ideas, very often, we are also holding on to pain, resentment, fear, and so on. Again, that’s the first skill: shifting out of the emotional mind and coming into simple awareness.

The Practice of Awareness

It’s useful to think positive thoughts. But when things are happening fast, it can be difficult because you are trying to change your mind and that can take time; that can take effort and it can require a process. Plus the mind will resist, it will fight. It doesn’t want to change. And so we use what the Buddha used: we use pure awareness.

We practice a principle in Zen: no mind, no thought. We are just a witness, we are just observing—not judging, not resisting, not reacting, not holding on, not thinking this or thinking that—just observing, just witnessing. That’s the essence of the Buddha Nature: witnessing, the ability to stand back from our experience and just observe it. When you master that, you are free. That’s what the state of liberation is.

Interesting, that the word “ecstasy,” I think it’s a Greek word, Latin maybe. But it’s two words: “ek stasis” and it means to “stand apart.” Interesting meaning. So, when we can stand apart from our mind, or our mind-body system, when we can stand apart from our reactions and our conditioning, then we are in ecstasy. That’s what happens. Ecstasy happens when you let go.

Learn to Let Go!

That’s the second skill: the ability to let go, the ability to relax. It is a life skill, and it takes practice. Now everyone can relax, but only up to a certain point, and then they can’t relax deeper. They can’t relax beyond a certain point. Or they can relax in some situations, but they can’t relax in other situations. Or they can relax some part of themselves, but they can’t relax another part of themselves.

Relaxation is a powerful skill, and you need to practice it every day, and get good at it. Some people say: “You know, I just can’t relax.” But that’s just a thought! Anyone can relax. And for many years I was confused about what exactly relaxation is. It’s not a state. It’s not a static state. It’s a dynamic process, and it’s a moment-to-moment process.

So, no matter who you are or what you think, you can relax. Anyone can relax for that long [the snap of a finger]. For a moment, anyone can relax. And that’s all you need to learn to do: learn and practice relaxing for a moment. That’s it. It’s that simple. You relax for a moment, and then you relax for another moment, and then you relax for another moment.

And soon it seems like you enter a state of profound relaxation, but it's actually a moment-to-moment dynamic process.

If you cannot relax, if you have chronic tension somewhere in your body, and the energy in you starts to get stronger, those tensions are going to get tighter. If you have pain in your system, and you turn the energy up in your body, the pain will get worse. Pain is actually tension. If you have little bit of tension, we call it tension; but if you have a lot of tension, we call it pain.

So, many people live on an edge of tension and pain. The tension is there all the time: tension in your jaw, it's there all the time; tension in your neck, in your shoulders. It's not a lot of tension, but there is some tension there. And when you breathe, that tension is going to get stronger, unless you are relaxing moment-to-moment. And if you are relaxing moment-to-moment while you breathe, then the relaxation gets deeper and deeper; the relaxation becomes more and more total.

So, anyone can relax, but the question is: how deeply can you relax? How totally can you relax, how completely? How quickly can you relax? In the middle of what situations can you relax? If you are practicing relaxation, you can get free. Relaxation is a skill, and if you are good at it, your process is smooth and easy, and ecstatic.

Controlling your mind is a skill, and if you can control it, your process will be smooth and easy. If you have the ability to simply be the witness, then your process will be very easy. Realize: "It's not happening to me, it's just happening! I am the witness. I am observing what's happening. I am free what's happening." That's a skill that everyone has. But not everyone practices that.

And the third skill is the breathing itself. And that's the part I can teach. I can't teach you to control your mind. You have to do that. I can't make you relax. You have to do that. But I can teach you to breathe a certain way. You can refuse of course. You can say "no." And in that case, I will not force you. I will not fight with you.

But some people, when they are ready, they will say: "Make me breathe! Force me! Even if I say "no," please, force me!" I've worked with heroin addicts. They came to our center, and they say: "I want to quit heroin." I ask: "Are you sure, really sure? Are you are really ready to quit?" "Yes I am, and no matter what I say, don't let me change my mind. Don't let me give up. Don't let me run away!" And I say: "Ok. I can do that."

I don't do that work anymore. It's not as much fun in this. People come and say: "I want to be free! I want peace! I want joy! I want to feel love! I want to be more alive!" "Are you sure?" "Yes!" "Ok. Then we have some tools; we have some meditations; we have some techniques; we have some exercises.

The First Core Breathing Skill

[Demonstrates the "Coming Home Breath," the "Cleansing Breath"]

So, that's the first exercise, that's the first technique. Anybody know what it is? Is there name for it? I call it "Engaging the Exhale"

[Demonstrates again]

Participant: "An exhale"

An exhale, yes. And this is also an exhale:

[Demonstrates "blowing" breath out, forcing, pushing]

That's an exhale. And so it this:

[Demonstrates long slow controlled exhale]

And this is an exhale:

[Demonstrates "Releasing the Exhale"]

That was an exhale. And notice that it triggers a yawn!

As soon as you begin to open and expand the inhale and you begin to let the exhale go, yawning happens. Interesting phenomenon.

In fact, if you even talk about yawning... Let's talk about yawning; let's think about yawning. Just imagine a yawn. What is yawning? And why do people yawn? What's happening when people yawn?

And why is that if one person yawns, someone else always yawns? And why do we hide our yawns? Why do we block them? What's wrong with yawning? Why has everyone been taught to block or suppress the yawn? That's our spirit moving! That's our nature. That's our life force expressing thru us!

It's not polite to yawn! It's polite cover your yawn. What else are we covering that is perfectly natural, very healthy? What else are we blocking, suppressing? What else have we done to ourselves? What other things that are very natural has society told us to stop, to hide, to suppress, to control?

When we begin to play with the breath we begin to set our spirit free. How dare you yawn when I am talking to you? Can you imagine a small child in school? The teacher is very serious and the innocent child yawns... Don't do that! How dare you? Who you think you are? Where do you think you are?

If you allow a full body yawn, you will attract everyone's attention; and we don't want everyone's attention. That can be dangerous. You are in a class and the teacher is looking for someone to ask a question of, and you want to be invisible... What do you do to hide? You hold your breath, that's what!

[Demonstrates a sigh of relief]

That's an expanded inhale and a sigh of relief. And it triggers yawning. A very interesting phenomenon.

A Secret Technique

So, what I learned is... and this is a secret technique! I should charge you a lot of money for this technique, because it took me 25 to 30 years to learn it; and now I just give it away.

Learn to yawn and sigh at the same time.

What is that? if you yawn and sigh at the same time? It's not quite a yawn, it's not quite a sigh of relief. It's both, somehow mixed together. Try that. What does it look like? What does it feel like? How do you do that? There's no right answer, by the way. You make it up.

This is a creative process; you cannot do it wrong. You just make it up. Yawn and sigh at the same time. If you wiggle your jaw and do something with your throat as you inhale, you will trigger a yawn. Anybody can do it. You just do something with your jaw, something with your throat as you breathe in, and a yawn will happen.

When the yawn happens, turn it into a sigh of relief. It's a little tricky but it is kind of fun. Hey, that's pretty good! [observing participants] That's not bad! Some of you are starting to get it. If your eyes begin to water you are half way to a perfect yawn. You have to make your eyes water. If your eyes are not watering yet, you need to keep doing it.

Please do what I am asking! You came to practice. You came here with your yoga mats. If you don't want to practice, go home! I am not asking you to do anything dangerous, am I? I am not making you do something that's bad. Yawning is very natural. A sigh of relief feels very good.

Here is something interesting about the yawn: you can fake a yawn. You can pretend to yawn, but you know if it's real or not. You can fool someone else, but you know what a real yawn feels like. So, we can trigger a yawn, you can activate a yawn, and you can block a yawn: you can suppress or stop yawn.

But when the yawn comes, you're not doing it are you? It's happening. You can make it happen, but when it's happening, you're not doing it: it's happening to you, right? And you know that it is something that is happening: it's not something you are doing. That's an interesting phenomenon.

Yawning and Emotions

What other things are like that? What other things can you fake? What other things can you activate or suppress? And yet, when they happen, they are just happening, and you can't do anything about them?

Your emotions are an example. You can fake happiness. You can fake sadness. You can fake anger. You can trigger anger, you can activate it, and you can block it. But when you are angry, you can't get out of way of it: it's just happening.

And when a powerful emotion comes, you can fight with it, you can block it, but you are blocking a “happening.” That’s why relaxation is so important in this process. Because when a powerful emotion comes, that’s energy: and your body wants to contract, and your mind wants to suppress it.

Sadness comes, the emotion of wanting to cry, and you can watch a person’s system fight with the emotion. We need to heal that. When an emotion comes you need to let it come and you need to let it go.

We start teaching children to suppress and control and block their natural emotions when they are very small. “Stop that! Why you crying? Stop crying! What you laughing at? Be quiet!” So, we learn to block the flow of spirit in us.

When you invite a yawn, it’s the opposite of what happens when you suppress an emotion. Think about that. Physically, opposite things are happening. When you yawn, you open wide, a big breath comes in, energy moves.

And afterwards you feel cleaner, lighter, cooler, maybe warmer, maybe even dizzy. That’s because something changed with your energy. When people let themselves cry, they feel good afterwards. If you block it: you don’t feel as good. Maybe you don’t feel anything. Maybe you don’t know what you feel.

So, breathing helps us to move energy. You need to open wide, and a yawn will do that. A yawn opens you. You don’t open yourself: the yawn opens you. So, what you can do is you can breathe and relax while you yawn. Try to give yourself a big sigh of relief while the yawn is happening. It takes practice, it’s a skill: but you can learn it, and it’s very powerful.

The Sigh of Relief

The sigh of relief is the first breathing technique. Imagine shooting a bow and arrow: the further back you draw the bow, the further the arrow will fly. The bigger your inhale is, the greater will be the release on the exhale. So if I want a big sigh of relief, I need a big inhale in front of it. While you are yawning, give yourself that sigh of relief again and again and again.

There is a difference between letting the exhale go, and pushing, blowing, or forcing it: that’s not letting go. A big part of a sigh of relief is the letting go. Letting go is not blowing; it’s not pushing. If you fill yourself up and then let go, you don’t have to do the exhale: the exhale happens. You just let go and the breath pours out of you.

When the breath pours out of you that way, it can take something with it. It will naturally take something with it. When you blow or you push, you create a contraction and then the breath can’t naturally take with it something. So, this “letting go of the exhale, practicing a sigh of relief—it’s a very important skill!

When does that happen normally? When do you sigh with relief without thinking about it, or without making it happen? Not when you are bored, even though people will think you

are bored if you sigh. Not when you are impatient, even though you fake a sigh to show that you are Impatient.

[demonstrates a fake sigh of relief to express impatience, boredom]

So, that's not a real sigh of relief. That's a fake sigh of relief. It's like a fake orgasm. We are just using it to manipulate someone! You know a real sigh of relief when it happens. And when does it come? It comes when you are tense and then you relax. It naturally comes with relaxation.

When you are in pain, and the pain goes away, for the first time since the pain hit you, you can take a big breath, and you can relax. So when pain goes away, the sigh of relief happens. It happens naturally; it happens automatically. You don't do it. You don't make it happen: it's a natural reaction to the passing of pain.

Pain, then no pain: a sigh of relief. Tension, then no tension: a sigh of relief. That pattern of breath goes together with a certain change in your energy. A sigh of relief expresses and reflects a change in your energy—a transformation of your state.

It also happens when you are afraid and the fear passes. You are afraid, then the fear goes away: a sigh of relief. You don't think about it, you don't make it happen: it's a natural reaction. That's magic!

If every time you are in pain and the pain goes away, a sigh of relief happens.... If every time you are anxious or afraid and when the anxiety or fear passes, a sigh of relief happens.... Hmm... That means they go together.

That means if I give myself a sigh of relief, pain is going to leave me, tension is going to release, fear is going to pass. We have unconscious pain, unconscious tension, unconscious fears. And when you start to deliberately sigh, and when you repeat that sigh of relief again and again, you start to move that unconscious pain, fear, and tension out of your system!

Conscious Connected Breathing

That leads to the next breathing technique, and it is a technique, it is an exercise; it's a specific way of breathing to activate transformation, to trigger deep healing. And that is what we call the connected rhythm, connected breathing, continuous breathing, circular breathing. You get the breath turning like a wheel.

[demonstrates connecting inhale to exhale]

The breaths are connected. The inhale connects to the exhale without the slightest pause, with no gap. Inhale and exhale come together as one. Don't hold the breath for a moment before you let it go. Don't put a pause there. Don't hesitate.

Here is a hesitation, a very slight hesitation.

[demonstrates]

It is two separate things—inhale and exhale. They are separate. Can you hear the difference with this?

[demonstrates connecting the inhale to the exhale]

It turns... The inhale turns, curves around, and becomes an exhale.

And the throat is open in that moment. I often hear people do this: throat opens and closes... opens and closes...

[demonstrates]

For the moment, as we practice, notice that there is a slight pause after exhale and before the next inhale. But there is no pause between the inhale and the exhale. There is a slight natural pause after the exhale. The natural, physiological at-rest breathing pattern is this: inhale, exhale, pause... inhale, exhale, pause... inhale, exhale, pause...

But we don't want to close anything during this pause. We want something to stay open. It's an open pause, not a closed pause. That's the difference between holding your breath or stopping your breath, and experiencing a natural pause in the breathing.

Nothing has to open before I inhale. Something is already open. It was open as the inhale turned into the exhale, and it was open throughout the exhale. It is still open. It hasn't closed so nothing has to open before the inhale can happen. Something stayed open. It's a soft open pause: not blocking, not holding, not closing.

Now an interesting thing happens if an openness remains after the exhale: the inhale can come in right away. And now you are beginning to breathe in a connected rhythm. And that's what we are going to practice next.

We want to practice that connected rhythm: no pause between the in-breath and the out-breath, no pause between out-breath and the in-breath. It's connected breathing. It's like a wheel spinning.

[Demonstrates Connected Breathing]

It's a wheel of breath, turning. And that wheel turns naturally in different ways depending on your emotions, depending on fear, or pain, or tension; depending on what has happened in your mind; depending on what needs to happen with your energy. The connected breathing pattern allows a very natural way for the system to clean and clear itself.

The Benefits and Problems of Breath Holding

And here is an interesting phenomenon: when pain comes into the body, the body reacts. When pain comes into the body, the body reacts in a certain way: it contracts, and the breathing gets blocked. It's an attempt to protect the system from pain. Pain interrupts the smooth flow of breath. Pain disturbs relaxation, it causes you to contract, and it blocks the breath.

That happens when pain comes into your system. And here is the interesting phenomenon: it also happens when pain leaves your system. When unconscious pain comes up to the surface to leave you, your body does something very interesting. It contracts. It blocks and stops the breathing. And by doing so, it prevents the pain from leaving the body!

That protection strategy backfires—works against us! When the body tenses and the breath is held, pain is locked in the body; it is pushed back down into the subconscious where you can't feel it. Pushing pain out of your conscious awareness and down into your subconscious is an immature strategy, an outdated learned behavior.

Magic happens when you can remember to breathe, when you can flow the breath in those moments. And so we need to learn to breathe and relax when pain comes into our awareness, so that it can leave the body. It is the same thing with fear, anxiety, stress, and with everything.

You have fear in your body, that you've had since you were child: the fear of doing something wrong, the fear of being bad, the fear of making a mistake, the fear of being laughed at, the fear of being judged, the fear of being abandoned, the fear of losing love... Lots of fears... They got locked into your system when you were small. They are subconscious in nature, and they live in your body.

And when you start to breathe in the way that I described, your body says: "Ah, thank God! This is a chance for me to finally get rid of this pain, this fear. Somehow this person is breathing in exactly the right way for me to release this pain." But then, it realizes that. "just when it gets to the surface and it is ready to come out, somebody stops it, somebody blocks it."

So this is a skill, and it takes practice. But when a little fear, a little pain leaves your body, you had this much pain [.....], and now you have this much [.....], and you feel good. So you want to keep going. Now you have this much pain [.....], and then you have this much [.....]. So you feel fantastic! And you want to do more.

And when you get to the point where we have no pain, you have no fear, you can truly surrender, you completely let go. You welcome, you invite, and now the pleasure starts to come. And this pleasure is so intense that the body thinks it is pain! It contracts, and breathing stops. Now you need to start the process again!

But now it's not pain you're afraid of: it's pleasure. And now you have to practice relaxing into pleasure. And when that happens, the body starts to shake and tremble, and you feel vibrations and tingling. And sometimes it is so strong it feels like you got plugged into an electric socket!

Summing Up the Practice

And so you have to practice: you have to learn to keep breathing, and you have to learn to relax in the moment. And then something starts to happen. You aren't even doing the breathing anymore. The breath is happening. You are not doing the breathing: the breath is breathing you. It's happening, and you can't stop it!

You stand apart from the whole experience and you are observing yourself: "Look at that! My breathing is coming by itself! Look at that! Weird things are happening in my body!" You are observing it, and you move directly into ecstasy!

And after the session, I ask people to talk about their process. And very often nobody knows what to say. Or they start to use all the spiritual language. "I felt tremendous love!" "My heart opened!" "I felt connected to everything and everyone!" "I felt this peace and relaxation that I've never felt before!" "I saw God!"

They have to look for big words like that to describe their experience. Or they say: "I felt this electricity in my body, and I've never felt such energy in my body!" Or: "I just cried and cried!" Or: "I was laughing, and I don't know why!" Or: "I felt like dancing!" I hear all these amazing reports. And that's why I keep doing this work.

So, I've been to 45 countries in about 38 years; and now I've worked with over a hundred thousand people. And so I have no doubt about the process. I have complete certainty about it. Other people say: "Oh, come on, how can all this be the result of just breathing?" They have doubt. Ok!

But once you've done a few sessions and you start feeling the difference in your body, in the quality of your thoughts, and the emotional freedom, the spiritual awakening and development, then no one needs to convince you. But if you doubt, someone needs to make you do it!

You are practicing three things: you are observing, witnessing (and if you need to think, then think positively); you are relaxing; and you are breathing. Simple: awareness, relaxation, breathing.

You are spinning the breath like a wheel. And from time to time you give yourself a big sigh of relief. And when you give yourself a sigh of relief, you make yourself yawn.

And if you are spinning the breath like wheel and a yawn comes, keep breathing in that pattern, keep the wheel turning. While you are yawning, keep the breath turning. That's a skill; that's an advance skill. And now is a good chance to practice it!

So we will take a five-minute break, and then we will start. We will need one hour to do the practice, and that will give us an hour afterward to talk about the practice.