

The background of the image is a scenic landscape. The top half shows a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The middle section features a brilliant sunset with a glowing sun low on the horizon, casting a warm orange and yellow light across the sky and the clouds. Below the horizon, a thin line of tall, thin trees stretches across the width of the image. The bottom half of the image is dominated by a lush, green field of grass, which appears to be a wheat or grain field, extending to the foreground.

The Art of Not Giving a DAMN

With Dan Brulé

www.BreathMastery.com

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This seminar and workshop took place near Johannesburg, South Africa at the Woodlands Spa and Healing Center, in May of 2013.

Dan mixes stories and life lessons with practical exercises and techniques. He challenges some popular notions about human nature and the healing process; and he offers some simple yet powerful methods to get free of many common woes. His edgy, irreverent, and unorthodox approach will inspire you to create new and unique solutions to your physical, emotional and psychological issues and problems.

Here are some of the topics and themes he addresses in this program:

- The link between breathing patterns, emotional tendencies and psychological states
- Fear, pain, and their associated breathing patterns and reflexes
- Mozart, yogi masters, and what makes genius
- The skill of changing states
- Four stages of learning any skill
- Identifying the ecstatic breath
- Breathing with Indira Gandhi in 1980
- How children suppress their intuitive abilities
- The depth and totality of feelings in children versus adults
- Re-awakening the emotional resilience we had as children
- Family patterns and the tall poppy syndrome
- Breath-holding sends an emergency signal to your lizard brain
- Anxiety and toxic self-talk
- Byron Katie and waking up to our Buddha nature
- The power of witnessing, and freedom from the “self”
- The average mind is like an untrained Rottweiler?
- Training and tricking your lizard brain
- Breath control and self control
- Do you want to be right or do you want to be in peace?
- Non judgment, non-attachment, and non-resistance
- Clearing fear and pain based breath-holding patterns
- Using the breath to create an inner sense of spaciousness
- Yawning as a breathwork technique and a spiritual breathing exercise
- Using the breath to let go of pain
- To be inspired is not just an expression: it is an experience
- Letting go of the blocks to creative expression
- Breath is like the canary in a coal mine
- Being conscious of our negative or limiting conditioning
- Using everything that happens to wake up

The Art of Not Giving a Damn

Actually, the art of 'not giving a damn' about one thing really means caring a great deal about something else... It means caring about something very, very much and making everything else unimportant.

The thing that I care about very, very much is a certain internal state...and guiding people to discover it, create it, or fall into it. Call it a resourceful state, a creative state, a peaceful state. The Buddha called it detachment, a detached state, where we disentangle ourselves from all our "stuff." **I call it freedom.**

Everyone has had this experience, right? Where you just don't feel that good... like an icky mood, maybe not connected to anything in particular, or maybe connected to something. **Because you are in this bad mood, everything bothers you;** the slightest noise, a look from somebody. Everything bothers you; even things that you usually enjoy bother you.

Then there are other times when nothing bothers you: things that usually bother you, for some reason, just don't. You just go "huh, hey, usually I would be bothered right now, but I feel so good, nothing bothers me." **Even people that try to bother you cannot do it!** "I feel so good today, even *you* can't bother me!" So when we are in certain states, everything is exaggerated or magnified; little things exacerbate the state, or little things support or strengthen the state.

So the art, the process, the practice, is to be able to be in that resourceful state all the time—because we've all been in that state from time to time. You feel so good, sometimes for no reason at all, you just feel really good and things that usually disturb you don't, and things that you usually enjoy, you enjoy much more. **Breathwork can lead us to this ability.**

We tend to fall into that state accidentally or just, I don't know, it just randomly comes. So if we can do certain things to train our system to tend toward that state, or get really good at quickly returning to that state, then a lot of things just don't matter. You just don't care. That's an interesting expression- to care about something- to not care about it. Language can be a trap.

Yesterday we talked about energy and managing energy. So the question is what are you doing with your energy? Where does your energy go? What are you putting your energy into?

We are all conscious of certain things. Everybody is very conscious of some things and totally unconscious of other things. That is the power of a spiritual community. You get a group of like-minded people who are supporting each other, uplifting themselves and each other. They get together regularly. That creates a certain field of energy.

I think in physics they call it "entrainment." The highest frequency tends to draw up all the other frequencies.

And I think one problem is that our energy is going to places and it is randomly moving in certain directions, controlled either by habit or by programming, or by conditioning.

We have various unconscious habits: habits of thinking, habits of feeling, and behavioral habits. Those habits keep driving us into and out of certain states. If we can identify some of those things, and see to it that those things aren't driving us into un-resourceful states, then we can get free.

If we can identify certain habits of thinking, habits of feeling, and behavioral habits that cause us to tend towards certain states, and train new habits into our systems, then we can either stay in a resourceful state constantly or we can return to it quickly and easily, automatically.

The focus of this practice is the breath because every psychological state, every emotional state, every physiological state has a specific corresponding breathing pattern. Every state has an associated breathing pattern.

It is very obvious for major emotions. For example when you are in pain [models breath holding]. You can see what happens to the breath: it gets blocked, held, it can't flow. When the pain goes away: ahhh... ! The breath can move again. It is the same with fear. If you have a sudden fear, you can see the breath reflect and express that state. And when the fear passes: the breath again reflects and expresses the change in state [models the sigh of relief].

If we can begin to identify the breathing habits, patterns and reflexes that are associated with certain states, then we have a real key to either moving into a state or moving out of a state.

It is very obvious that when you are in fear or in pain you breathe differently that when you are peaceful or calm. When you are enjoying music, you breathe differently than when you are struggling with a math problem. You breathe differently when you are angry and upset than when you are happy and comfortable.

But most people don't notice their breathing in those moments or situations. At those times, all their attention is going toward who is making them angry or what they are upset about; and they do not notice their breathing.

So there is the first key: to develop the habit of noticing your breath—waking up and noticing what is happening to your breathing.

When you are in a high and resourceful state, your breathing has a certain quality. If you could recognize that quality, identify that quality, and train that breathing pattern into your system until it becomes an unconscious habit, then you are going to force your system to remain in that state, or automatically return to it

When we go from a state of pain to no pain, the breath reflects and expresses that shift in our state. It is really obvious. You go from this to this. [Dan models breath holding and a sigh of relief]. Every time you go from pain to no pain, the breath expresses that, reflects that. There is a reflex in the breathing that occurs.

Every time you go from fear and anxiety to peacefulness and calmness, the breath expresses that change in state. If you identify that change in the breathing pattern, and you make that pattern a habit, then you will be constantly provoking your system to move toward that state.

Have you ever seen anyone who was in tremendous pain or intense pain, breathe like this? [Dan models the “coming home breath”] I don't think so. If you could breathe like that, could you possibly be in pain? Could you possibly be experiencing tremendous fear? It is like oil and water: they just don't go together.

If you are in pain or if you are in fear, and you can muster up that “coming home breath,” then something is going to have to happen to the pain or the fear. They can't exist in the same way.

Usually that breath—that sigh of relief—comes automatically as the pain or the fear goes away. It just naturally happens. You don't make it happen; you don't think about it; you don't do it. You are in pain [models “stuck breathing”] then the pain goes away [models sigh of relief]. Something like that happens. It is a reflex. It's automatic. It is linked to that change in the state.

If you are in a smooth and easy breathing flow and everything is wonderful and you suddenly have a shock or a trauma, something happens to the breath. You don't do it on purpose. The state forces something to happen to the breathing. The magic is that you can turn it around: **You can breathe in a certain way, and force your system to move into a certain resourceful state.** That's it. It's that simple. But, it is a skill that has to be trained into the system.

There are 4 stages of learning any skill. Maybe some of you know this. In learning any skill there are four stages of learning.

There is the first stage: unconscious incompetence. Take a piano for an example: I don't know that a piano exists. I am unconscious of “piano-hood.” I am unconscious of it and I am incompetent—I can't play the piano. I have unconscious incompetence. That is where everybody starts. This is the first stage.

Now we will go to the next level: conscious incompetence. That's where my job begins. I want you to know that there is such a thing as “piano-ness,” that pianos exist. You might not know it now, and of course you can't play it. I want to tell you that there sure is such a thing as a piano. I am here to tell you that there is a certain skill and there is a tool, an instrument—and it is called your breathing. Maybe you are not aware of it, but I am here to make you more aware of it.

Of course you may not be able to do certain things with your breathing yet. Just having a piano doesn't mean you can make music: you are incompetent. Now everyone knows that there is a skill—an ability we all have to put ourselves into a resourceful state. In the bible they talk about this as a "peace that passes understanding." Athletes might call it "being in the zone."

This is a powerful, creative, resourceful state; and we have the ability to put ourselves in this state and to return to this state at will. You may not be able to do it yet, you may be incompetent at this skill in this moment, but by the end of the day you will be on your way to mastering it.

So now everyone is at the second stage, assuming that we all started from the first stage: unconscious incompetence. So now you know there is such a thing as a piano, but you can't play it. And so we are at the second stage. Conscious incompetence.

You have the ability to breathe in certain ways, to establish certain breathing reflexes, to establish certain breathing patterns in your system. These breathing patterns can put you, keep you, and return you to a state where you just don't give a damn about a lot of stuff that everybody else is struggling with, worrying about, fretting over, getting sick about and dying from.

So we have unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, and the third stage of learning any skill: conscious competence.

This workshop today is about moving to the third phase: conscious competence. This is where you can play a little something on the piano, but you have to think of where to put your fingers. You can make your way through a simple song like 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' or "chopsticks" or some other little basic thing: but you can't really make music.

That happens at the fourth stage of learning: unconscious competence. This is the level of mastery. Now it is like the music just comes through you. If you have to think about where to put your fingers, you can play a little song, but you can't really make music.

It is not until you reach this fourth stage of learning—unconscious competence—that you can really make music on the piano. At this stage you can have a conversation, talk on the phone while you play, because it is coming through you. It's automatic, like driving a car: it's an unconscious skill, right?

There is only one way to get to that fourth stage: the level of mastery. And that is through deep practice. There is no substitute for it. Think about Mozart. Everybody talks about Mozart as being a genius. We think about geniuses as being born. "We say Mozart was a born a genius." Really? Mozart's father was what? He was a piano teacher! When Mozart was three years old, where was he? His father had him sitting at a piano, making music.

By the time Mozart was 10 years old he had 5,000 hours of practice at the piano! By the time he was 14 he had 10,000 hours at the piano. That's what makes a genius! Deep Practice. Maybe there are born geniuses, but they are very rare.

For the most part what we call geniuses are just people who had a tremendous passion about something and they did it constantly. Every day, all the time, as much as possible, from when they got up in the morning, until at night when they fell asleep at the piano. That's how genius emerges.

So there were the ancient yogis, the ancient mystics and masters; they meditated 10, 12, 15 hours a day, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year... and they became enlightened, or whatever. And people said: "wow, they are so special!"

Yeah they're special: they actually practiced something with passion—continuously, constantly, until they arrived at a certain state. Anyone else can arrive at that state. There is really nothing that special about those people, except that they understood the value of dedication, or they intuitively gravitated toward this thing called deep practice, and they engaged in it.

Breathing is hardwired and linked into every level of our being. **Every emotional state has a corresponding breathing pattern. Every psychological state has a corresponding breathing pattern. Every physiological state, every chemical state has a corresponding or associated breathing pattern.** If you identify that breathing pattern, you have a powerful way to transform your life.

One of the best things we can do for ourselves is get into an ecstatic state. **When was the last time you were in ecstasy?** When tears poured from your eyes, as every cell in your body was vibrating with joy. Everything was clear. Your heart was open, and you were in an extraordinary, blissful vibrant state of love and aliveness.

In fact, ecstasy is one of the natural benefits of Breath Mastery!

All you have to do is notice how you are breathing the next time you are in ecstasy, because how you are breathing at that time is associated with that state. That particular quality of breath, that breathing pattern doesn't occur in other states.

If you can identify that breathing pattern and make that breathing pattern a habit of your system, then guess what? You'd be stuck in ecstasy! You wouldn't be able to get out of it. You'd be a prisoner of bliss!

As a matter of fact, those ecstatic breathing patterns, those ecstatic breathing qualities have been identified. We know what they are. And you can train them into your system. You can engage in those breathing patterns, and you can make them a habit of your system. Then, whether you like it or not you are going to have to feel good!

When you feel really good you breathe in a certain way; you breathe in a way that is different than when you don't feel good. Usually when you feel really good, you are focusing upon "who" it is that is making you feel good, or on "what" is that is making you feel good; or you are focusing on your good feelings. The breath is in the background and you are unconscious of it.

So there is the key: develop this habit of turning your attention to your breath, in different moments in your life when you are feeling really good; and actually experience your breath in those moments. "What is my breath actually doing right now? How is my breath expressing itself right now?" Start to identify the qualities and see the patterns.

I was with Indira Gandhi in 1980. I went to India. My first trip to India, my third day in India, just a goofy out of nowhere American, and I am chatting with Indira Gandhi! How the heck does that happen? As they say in LA: It's like weird!

I was with a very weird guy, Leonard Orr... he developed rebirthing... which is one of the techniques we are going to play with today... So I was in India. We got up on the second morning and he said: "Hey, let's go meet Indira Gandhi." She was the prime minister at the time. I thought: "Right, yeah, so we just knock on the door of the white house? How does that work: go meet the prime minister?"

But he's my teacher, so I thought: "What the heck, let's go!" We look around, we ask around. We end up at this big government building. We go inside, and say: "We'd like to meet Indira Gandhi." So the guy says "ok, come back tomorrow at 8 o'clock." Hmm... That's interesting.

The next morning we go back at 8 o'clock. There is a line from the door of the building that stretches around the corner and around the building. There's like a 1,000 people standing in line. So we just kept walking till we got to the end of the line.

I'm thinking, maybe she comes out every morning and waves to people, you know. I don't know. We stood in line for about a half hour, then this Indian guy with a clip board comes walking along the line calling our names: "Leonard Orr? Dan Brool?" I said: "No, that's Dan Brulé." And he says: "Please come with me."

I had Dennis my 7 year-old-son, and there was Zuni from Switzerland, and another woman Vera from Michigan, Leonard and me. We followed this man with a clipboard into the building. There were no metal detectors in those days; they didn't even take our names. They just let us into the building. We walked through this room, there was a little guy at a desk; we walked into another room.

He took us into a conference room, with a big conference table. He said: "Sit here please." Five minutes later, in walks Indira Gandhi! Just like that! We sat with her for 45 minutes. We talked about the schools in India. We compared them to schools in America. We talked about

life, and about yoga. She sat little Dennis on her lap for a time and squeezed his cheeks. I was blown away by the experience.

When she first walked into the room, I was impressed. What a graceful, elegant woman, with this beautiful Indian skin. She was wearing a white sari and she didn't have a single wrinkle on her! How is that possible? Nothing. Her sari was like perfect. She is sitting down, moving and holding things and not a single wrinkle.

I guess her secretary thought this would be a nice break, a nice change in her day to have a couple of crazy Americans out of nowhere, you know; and she had a stack of papers and she was signing them. She was going through them, signing them as we talked.

I was so enthralled in a way with her presence that I was meditating on her breath. **I watched every single breath that woman took while we sat there for 45 minutes.** It was the very first time that I saw how alive the breath is in someone.

Every time she had a slight change in her emotional state, up or down, or a change in focus when she switched from focusing on my little boy to focusing on the next document she was signing, the change in her breathing was obvious. The more I watched it, the more intensely obvious it was. It was as if every little subtle change was somehow being magnified in my consciousness.

I got into her being. I was literally inside of her mind. She was so open and relaxed. It was kind of strange, like wow! It was really strange. I've heard about people who have psychic powers. I didn't know that I had these tremendous psychic powers. I didn't want to intrude on her by pointing out what it was that I was observing in her moment-to-moment changing states. But it was very, very clear to me.

Some of the things she signed were purely bureaucratic necessities. She had no emotional investment in them—just something that needed her signature—that was it. Other things she was signing, it was very obvious that she had worked really hard to reach this deal, or to get this bill passed, or whatever.

I don't know what this stuff was, but I could see the breath move higher in her chest, or lower in her belly, or speed up, or slow down. The quality of it would change: the curve between the inhale and the exhale would change, the pauses - everything was changing. There were other things she was signing- she really didn't want to- she wasn't fully into it.

It felt to me like a compromise, like she was giving away something she really didn't want to give in order to get something she really wanted to get. I thought she was sort of sacrificing, even compromising her soul in a way. I think in politics that happens. They know what is really right, what is really good, but they have to agree to something that in their heart they know isn't right; but if they agree, they will get something they really want: it's a tradeoff.

So I am experiencing all this stuff in myself as I am focusing on her breath. I have never, ever been able to look at anyone the same way since that day in August of 1980.

From that day on everyone's breath has been more alive to me. It's embarrassing, because it's like you're naked! I feel kind of uncomfortable as if I just walked in on you and you are naked, you know, it's an uncomfortable moment... its "oops, I'm sorry."

But what can I do? I am living with that all the time. So I learned something about what we all do as children. We turn down and turn off certain abilities because it embarrassing and it disturbs the people around us... starting with overwhelming joy—that gets turned down.

Now we love that in children, but soon it irritates us. When a kid is filled with joy, they can't sit still, they can't be quiet. They can't focus on what you want them to focus on. They are at the mercy of joy. They don't give a damn about anything else!

They are bubbly, they are bouncy and they don't walk from here to there—they run from here to there! They pop up and they sit down; and they make noise. They cry and they laugh, and they put this down and they pick that up... Oh Jesus, it's like "please sit down! Shut up! Be quiet will you?" Like whoa! So we start to turn our energy down. (We talked about this yesterday)

The only way you can manage your energy is to turn it down to a manageable level. If you have amazing and infinite and powerful energy flowing through you, you can't control it, you can't manage it. You can't sit still, you can't be quiet; you can't suppress your joy. It takes practice to do that you know. But with a few years of guilt and shame and embarrassment, you learn to suppress certain natural abilities in yourself so as not to disturb others.

Children don't have a choice about being joyful. Did you ever notice that? **Even when they are kicked out of joy, they bounce right back into it without trying.** It's not like they consciously do a process: "I'm going to get over this now and feel good again." **They're just like a rubber band; something in them snaps them back into joy.**

Look at that compared to the average experience of an adult, right? When a child is feeling joyful, they might be playing with something stupid, but it is so amazing, so delightful and someone takes it away from them; and it is like the end of the world! It's like you're killing them! They become so miserable, and it's like an endless sadness; it's bottomless misery.

The depth of emotions that children feel frightens the adults around them who don't have the courage to feel that deeply, that totally. They go from extraordinary joy to horrible misery, and you will smile at them: "Come on, it ain't that bad; it's just a stupid toy!" We don't even understand it at some point because we are so far from that. Then, they can pop right back into joy again. Boom! Just like that!

Adults on the other hand kind of have a one way situation when it comes to that. So I am in a really good mood and everything is going great. Then somebody says something or does

something, or something happens, and uhh, I'm like ohhh, in an instant, I'm devastated. But I don't pop back into joy anymore. It takes me hours, or days or weeks to recover.

And some people never recover completely. They never recover their full joy. Months later, they are still obsessing over that thing that happened. They have lost that ability to snap back into joy. However, the other way it works really fast. I'm feeling really good and one thing happens; one word, one look, and just like that I go from feeling really wonderful to feeling really terrible. Just like that.

However to go from feeling really terrible to really wonderful... that's a process. It takes time. We have to talk it out, we have to get over it- yadayada, yada. It is a long drawn out process. It is like a one way freaking thing. We can go from feeling really good to feeling really bad- boom, just like that. But to go from feeling really bad to feeling really good—we can't seem to do it quickly; we don't have that rebound ability. Children can pop either way really quickly.

We (adults) seem to only be able to do that in one direction. One word and uhh, my whole day is ruined. One look, or the person didn't look at me, and now I am disturbed the whole day. It's like what the hell is going on there? We've lost something natural, it's been trained out of us, and we need to train it back into ourselves. We want to be able to be like children again. Children really don't give a damn.

My 3-year-old son Dennis... we lived in Hawaii when I got out of the military, and I was recovering. I took a year to just sit on the Big Island of Hawaii; we went away from people and we lived on this big cliff. We lived on the north shore of the Big Island of Hawaii. We were sitting and camping.

And one day I saw my 3-year-old son running toward the edge of the cliff...And first I saw Louise, my wife's eyes blink and get wide... and I thought, "what is she looking at?" Then I saw Dennis running toward the edge of the cliff... and I thought "what the heck? Is he going to jump off the cliff?" I ran and I caught him just in time. I don't know what he was going to do.

He was just like a bolt, he was charging for the edge, so I just picked him up and his legs kept moving and I turned him around and he kept running in the other direction. And I thought, "Jesus, what if I hadn't picked him up and turned him around?"

I realized that I had been going through life like that. Somehow in spite of myself, God or something has stepped in from time to time and just picked me up and turned me around. I was oblivious to where I was going and what I was doing and somehow someone picked me up.

I realized, wow, he had so much trust in me! It became a weird game and it got really scary. Maybe he sensed my fear or something- he's a little kid. And so a few minutes later, he is bolting for the frigging cliff again. So I picked him up and turned him around.

And it became a really cool game. "I don't have to worry about jumping off a cliff: my father is going to come in and turn me around." So I realized, "God, I've been going through life like that!" I'd like to find who or what it is that keeps picking me up and turning me around; because I seem to have that kind of faith also. My son Dennis was a really good teacher about this sort of stuff.

The joke in our family was you couldn't punish this kid. You just couldn't punish him. My first son... you know you get better as a parent with each one...I have two sons. My first son was unfortunately my guinea pig. I was working out being a father with him and I made all my mistakes with him. My second son, we were already going good. So when Dennis was born, my second son was born, we realized he was very different than his older brother.

At some point we realized that we just couldn't punish this kid. It was difficult; you know, you are supposed to be able to punish a kid. How else do you teach them right and wrong, get them to do what you want, get them to stop doing what you don't want? Punishment is the way, right? I couldn't hit him and he knew that I couldn't hit him. I don't know how he knew.

I slapped his brother once. Danny, my older son was like 3 or 4 years old, 5 years old... young. I don't know, I just lost it and I slapped him, and it shocked him. I can remember the look on his face when I slapped him. It was like Oh My God I had just totally betrayed his trust. It was a horrible moment in my life when I looked at his face; and he was shocked that I would hurt him.

My hand swelled up and got black and blue, and I couldn't use it for a week. I didn't hit him that hard, and it didn't really give him that much pain; but there was something energetic, or emotional or psychological in that. Literally, my hand got black and blue and I couldn't use it for a week. **It was like a lightning bolt from God. "Thou shall not hit your children!"**

So ok, well, I can't punish them that way. I can't manipulate them that way, so how else can I do it? The learning process began. Now when Dennis came along, my second son, we had very few ways to punish him. Sitting him in a corner was one way. "Okay Dennis, go sit in the corner."

He didn't care! He'd sit in the Friggin corner all day long... happy as a lark... So that didn't work. He'd be singing, so we'd say, "Stop singing!" He'd be playing. "Stop doing that, you're being punished!"

So the joke was you could take my son Dennis, put him in a shoe box, and lock him in a closet; and when you take him out a week later, he's coloring on the cover of the box and he's humming and singing. You just couldn't punish him. I realized that we were trying to break his spirit in some way. And his spirit wasn't buying it.

How do we get to that point where we don't realize what we are doing to our children? With good intentions, whatever! Passing on stuff that our parents gave to us. In Australia they have

this thing called the tall poppy syndrome- poppies grow, they are all equal. If one poppy sticks out above the rest, they cut it down.

There seems to be pressure in most societies, most families, most cultures, that if somebody sticks out too much in any one direction you have to get them back into the middle. I think that's happened to all of us. What happens in that process, is that we lose that ability to "snap back into joy" when something pulls us out of it.

So now we are at the point where we need workshops and seminars and therapists and long difficult processes and complicated methods to regain something that we should naturally have working for us. Well, **the ability to regain our natural causeless joyful state is connected to our breathing patterns.**

After 30 or 40 years of observing, experimenting, practicing and studying breathing: this is one of my Buddha type insights. Every time you have had and any kind of pain, a shock, a trauma, whether it was psychological, emotional or physical: your breathing was affected.

When you were punished, or shamed or 'guilted' into something, your natural breathing was disturbed. When you got your finger pinched in a door, when you fell and bumped your head, when you were being punished for something, whatever - Every one of those moments caused a disturbance in your breathing.

Those kinds of things interrupt the smooth, natural, spontaneous flow of your breath; and it continues to this day. **When you put a key in the door, you hold your breath for a moment. When you try to remember something, you hold your breath for a moment.**

Just turning in your car and backing up, you hold your breath for a moment. Trying to hear a sound in the distance, you hold your breath for a moment. How did that happen? Why should that happen? If a hundred times, or a thousand times during the day, your breath is being interrupted. Those are emergency signals being sent to your brain.

There is an ancient part of our brain, this lizard, crocodile brain that we have, which is very simple - it has to be- it's like a frog. **A frog's brain is very simple: "Do I eat it? Or will it eat me?"** End of story: life is no more complicated than that- simple! Maybe there is one other choice: "Should I mate with it?" But that's about it. That is the extent of this ancient part of our brain. That's the part of our brain that monitors every breath we take.

Every single breath that we take - that ancient part of our brain is monitoring it. Every breath registers in that part of our brain, every time. If you hold your breath, which is what happens in shock or pain... breath holding... the interference and the interruption in the flow of breath is a hardwired emergency signal to this ancient part of our brain.

So, if you unconsciously or unknowingly or chronically or habitually hold your breath- just for a moment - a hundred times a day, a thousand times a day: that's a thousand emergency signals

to this ancient part of our brain. So we are almost constantly activating this flight/fight or danger/survival kind of thing. In that state you don't feel joy, you are disconnected from that resourceful state.

If you are walking along the edge of a cliff and suddenly the ground breaks loose under your feet, you have a rush of fear, adrenaline. It is instant. It's extraordinary how the body works. In that one instant, huge things, wide systemic things happen instantly. Then, you get your feet under you, or you get your grip, and then whoop, the fear passes.

Well what would happen if it didn't pass? Which is what toxic anxiety is about. So you lose your footing, your grip, and then this adrenaline comes. Your senses are heightened, your awareness is focused, you unconsciously see a place to grab on; some strength comes, and in that second you survive.

But what happens if you have a toxic voice that says: "Uh oh, you could lose your footing at any time again! Oh my God, I almost died! Oh what shall I do?" It paralyzes you, and you freeze there. Now what? Now you are stuck in that place till you get out of that mental/emotional state.

I have a friend, Robert Gerzon, who wrote a great book **Finding Serenity in the Age of Anxiety**, a really brilliant psychotherapist in Boston. I met him many years ago. His book was on the New York Times Best Seller List. He was on television.

He was at the peak of his career and he knocked at my door one day. Being at the peak of his career, he got to this state: "now what?" "Where do I go from here?" It was a very interesting form of anxiety. He should have been celebrating; instead it triggered, I don't know, something opposite. (I think he would call it 'sacred anxiety'.)

When he first came, I was honored. My ego was like wow! This guy is famous for Christ's sake; his specialty is anxiety, but when he is feeling anxiety, he comes to me? Wow, that's really cool. Once I got past that, he was somebody who helped me.

In watching him, in observing him, in doing sessions with him, making connections about how this free flowing pattern of breath gets interrupted by our thoughts. **I have just one thought, and the flow of my breath is interrupted.** And depending on the quality of that thought, the change in the breath will react and express in a certain way.

So if you can restore a certain breathing quality, if you can reawaken a certain breathing pattern, one that happens to be quite normal and natural in children.... If you can reawaken that in yourself, then you've taken a big step toward being able to stay in a resourceful state, to return to a resourceful state, and not tolerate being out of it.

Byron Katie, does anyone know Bryon Katie? She does a thing called the Work. I saw the book in there, "*Who Would I be Without My Story?*" You guys don't know Byron Katie? **She's a**

modern day Buddha. She's a middle class American woman who woke up, exactly like the Buddha. She is a living Buddha. If you have an idea of what a Buddha is, you might not recognize her to be a Buddha, but she is.

That's another interesting phenomenon that is happening in the world. There was a time in the world when there was just one Buddha walking the Earth, there was one Jesus, there was one Mohammed, one Lao Tzu, one Krishna. Very rare, rare beings. **Today there are tens of thousands and probably millions of enlightened beings—Buddhas walking the earth!**

That's a sign of acceleration. We are into some really exciting times. We are not in a time anymore where there is just one enlightened being, a beacon of light on the planet. There are countless numbers of enlightened beings on this planet right now. That's exciting!

You could live next door to a Buddha and not know it. You could pass one on the street and not know it. You could sit near one on a bus and not realize it. And, if you are not careful, you could be a Buddha and not know it!

So waking up to our Buddha nature is our answer about not giving a damn. If you are in touch with that inside of you, everything else is so irrelevant. If you are the witness of what is happening to you, this is a good step in the art of not giving a damn. (Witnessing is the essence of the Buddha nature.)

If something is not happening to you, do you really care about it in the same way you would care about it if it was happening to you? I mean, we read about terrible things happening on the other side of the planet. We have this little, uhh, ehh feeling. It is painful to know that certain things are happening to other people; and your heart goes out to them. But since it is not happening to you, it's not stopping you from doing your shopping today, or doing your Pilates tomorrow.

If it is not happening to you, it doesn't have the same effect as when it is happening to you; and that is what the Buddha discovered: "Nothing is happening to me: it's just happening." Wow!

So if you have that way of living and viewing the world - it's not happening to me: it's just happening - Whoa, ah, there's some space there- ah, ok, it's not happening to me, it's just happening. [breathing easy] That's the power of developing the witness in us. That's the power of developing the ability to be the watcher, and not the one tangled up in the experience. There is a freedom in that.

So, it's easier to just not give a damn if it ain't happening to me. Put the "me" in there and it changes everything. This sense of self is one of the ingredients of suffering. The main cause of suffering, the Buddha would say, is our sense of self. Somehow dissolving that, or getting some distance from that is the path to peace. It's good practice.

When you become the observer of your breath, when you can wake up in the moment, in the middle of an experience, if you can back up and observe your breathing, you are taking the position of the witness. You are moving into that place where the Buddha constantly abides, right?

So we have moments when we sort of detach: ok I'm able to pull myself out of the situation, to detach emotionally so I can think clearly. Take a little break from the person I am having a fight with, to get back into a better state, and then go back. We use this. We know it's useful and valuable to extract ourselves from the situation of the moment in order to gain some clarity, to recover from an upset, or so on.

When you live in this place where the witness is always alive in you, some part of you always has the ability to back up and look at what you are doing, what you're thinking, how you are behaving, your reactions, your emotions.

In developing the habit of being the witness, you are getting more and more free. At some point it is like what Byron Katie says: she discovered the difference between what hurts and what doesn't. That is how she explains it. She says: "Hey I just know what hurts and what doesn't. It's as simple as that."

If you are tangled up and attached, you suffer. When you can back up and be a Buddha, when you can observe yourself, your feelings, your thoughts, your behaviors, your actions, your reactions, then you are in a space of freedom. So all the meditation practices, the spiritual paths are designed to take you to this place. There are certain exercises, techniques to make going there a habit. So that's what we want to do.

We are going to work with 3 levels of our being today: thoughts, feelings and sensations, and emotions.

Thoughts: How do you talk to yourself? What meaning do you give to the events and experiences in your life? We need to be aware of this because your mind is automatically doing this all the time. It's doing this by habit. Maybe that habit is based on early traumas. So you want to explore that aspect of yourself.

How do you automatically react, mentally, to things. What is it in your mind? He was here yesterday, what was his name? Manesh. Such a beautiful sharing session - he said: "I am kind of a rational guy and when we started the breathing session..." he was sharing what was happening in his mind. This ability to observe what is happening in your mind is very powerful.

Witnessing gives you that space. Now you are not caught up in your mind, you actually backed up and can observe how your mind is functioning, and in that way you get free. So he was talking, I don't remember exactly what he said. It was such a pure sharing of someone simply observing how his mind works. Most people don't do that. They don't step back and

observe how their mind works. Their mind is working the way it wants and they are caught up in it.

When you get up in the morning, you don't decide to think: you are already thinking. It's happening without your permission. I have a good friend Guruji Mohan, a teacher we met a few years ago in India, who says: "thoughts are like foreign invaders." They come into your house without permission and they rule you. They start telling you what to do. They control you.

Would you put up with that? If a stranger you had never met, came into your house, into your home, and started pushing you around and telling you what to do; you wouldn't put up with that! However, that is what thoughts are. A thought just comes into your mind and it rules you, until another thought comes in and pushes that one out, and then that new thought rules you. Most people are going through life like that and they think it's normal.

I look at that mind like a wild untrained Rottweiler. I used to watch people walk their dogs. I used to train - I had German Shepherds, big dogs, and we had little baby children. You know we had little babies, and you know big dogs- big dogs can knock over little babies and hurt the little baby. So we trained our dog to be very, very gentle and very, very careful around babies.

I visited people in their houses and you knock on the door and behind the door is this rawh, rawh, rawh! And you have to wait 5 minutes while they drag the dog and lock it in another room before they can even open the friggen door. Could you live with a dog like that? I couldn't live with a dog like that.

Or you pull up in the driveway and the dog climbs on the side of the door, scraping the paint on your new Corvette. Jesus Christmas! Train your friggen dog! I don't know how people do it. You know I trained dogs; I wouldn't tolerate that. I think it is dangerous- a big dog out of control? Oh my god!

And you have to worry about the dog biting a child. I would never own a dog that I worry might bite a child. A friend comes to visit and the dog bites them. Why do people live with a dog like that? But that's the kind of mind some people live with. They live with a mind that attacks and barks, and they think it's normal. They need to train their mind.

Or walking the dog... You see people walking their dog. And you wonder who is walking who? The dog smells something and it drags the person this way; the dog hears something and it drags the person that way.

I never even had a leash on my dog. I would just look at my dog and he would sit, or I would turn to him and he would come. That's the kind of mind we need to have.

But you are living with a mind that thinks something and it pulls you this way, it imagines something and it drags you that way; it hears something and it pushes you that way. **People are being pushed and pulled around by a mind like an untrained Rottweiler.**

Who the hell wants a mind like that? I don't. And I don't know why other people can live with it. So you have to train your mind. You have to tell it what to think. You have to train your mind to think in certain ways. You have to train your mind to react in certain ways, so that when opportunity knocks, it won't react as if an enemy is attacking you.

But, that's the kind of mind most people live with, a fear-based mind. It's functioning on a survival level. That same mind affects our breathing, and the way we breathe influences that mind. In a way our mind/body system is like a dumb animal. It's very simple—that ancient part of our brain.

So if I go through the day breathing like this [modeling a sharp gasping inhale] I'm exaggerating for demonstration purposes, but every one of those breaths is sending an emergency signal to my brain, it's sending a message to my psyche. Now that breath could be much more subtle, not so obvious and dramatic, but it has the same effect.

That lizard brain is hypersensitive. Subtle things, little subtle pauses, slight breath holding, slight gasping, or just a little holding back of the breath: that's all registering. If all those breathing patterns and reflexes are happening outside of your awareness, you don't realize you are conditioning your mind, your nervous system, or your subconscious to be in a certain state.

Just putting a key in the door for a moment, you're not really experiencing fear or pain, but you are holding your breath, and the brain doesn't care why, it doesn't know the difference. All it knows is: "Oh, the breath was just interrupted, must be danger!" So without realizing it, your habitual unconscious breathing patterns are setting you up to be in certain states—and preventing you from snapping back into certain ecstatic states. So we have to train our breathing.

If you go through the day breathing like this [models an ecstatic breath]: it sends a message to the lizard brain: "everything must be wonderful, I must be safe, I must be experiencing great pleasure because look at how I'm breathing!"

You can trick your nervous system. You are already tricking it and don't realize it, so you might as well take over the tricking process and do it consciously. Send those kinds of signals to your nervous system repeatedly throughout the day. Even if you don't feel good [models the coming home breath], give yourself that kind of a breath.

Breathing is the language of the soul. I can tell my muscle: "Relax! Relax! It's not going to listen. When I deliver a certain quality of breath to my system, I conjure up a certain breath that has a certain quality [models another coming home breath], my system has no choice but to

translate that breath in certain ways and assume certain things, and therefore manufacture certain chemicals that go with that state... A whole chain reaction occurs.

So conscious breathing is the first step. You develop conscious competence at breathing in a certain way, or having a repertoire of certain breaths, resourceful breaths, that you deliver to your system regularly—forcing or tricking your system into believing that you are in a very wonderful state. Practice that breath until it becomes a habit. When it becomes a habit of your system... it's magic!

It works when you do it consciously. When I am having an argument with somebody and I can feel how my breath is sticky, not smooth, I've got tension in my neck, stuff is happening. Okay, instead of focusing on the argument I am having, I back up for a moment and I restore my physiological state [models deep and slow inhale/exhale]. I take a few breaths.

It helps the situation. Now there are not two people arguing any more. Now, one person has decided to be conscious; one person has decided, "okay, let's step back from this for a moment, and just breathe."

After all, how many times have we been in an argument, and it was so friggin important that we get our point across or we convince the other of their wrong position. We are so passionate about it an determined... we are like:#!grhf! [sound effects to convey arguing and yelling] lost in trying to prove the other wrong. You look back on it a year later, honestly look at it, and in the big picture, you realize: "how important was that, really?"

In the moment, it seemed like Oh my God, the most important thing! When lost in reactions, we don't have the ability to back up. In retrospect it is easy to ask: "What was I thinking?" **If you train certain breathing reflexes into your system, then in those moments you don't even have to stop mid-argument and deliberately do it. The breath comes in an It happens automatically!**

But to train it into your system, you have to do it again and again—deliberately and consciously—in order to establish unconscious competence (the 4th stage of learning/the level of mastery).

First you have to consciously practice: deliberately interrupt your pattern. Deliberately take a breath when you notice you are not feeling good, when you are upset. Consciously take a few breaths [models full inhales and relaxed exhales).

That works: you will change your state, you interrupt the pattern that's happening. You could actually resolve the argument if you just take a few moments to... like, okay- center yourself, get clear, create some inner peace... and then continue the conversation.

Wow, it's miraculous! What a difference that makes if somebody has that ability: you can quickly dissolve anger, confusion, fear, or conflict. However it really doesn't work as good

(when we do it consciously) as when it is unconscious, when it is unconscious, when it happens by itself. So that's a really cool thing about my breathing...

After I had been practicing for a long time... If I was in an uncomfortable situation—I was trained in the military—to control my breath. (That was one of the places I trained) I learned that if I could control my breathing, I could control my fear, I could get a handle on myself, I could get some clarity.

You know in certain situations everything gets fuzzy, everything gets blurry. You can go into a sort of paralysis, or you start doing crazy things that aren't really helping. You need to get a grip on yourself, get control of yourself. And the way to get control of yourself, I was taught, was to get control of your breathing.

Get control of your breathing and you can get control of your emotions, you can get control of your focus, you can get control of your body, your physiology, If you get control of your breathing. I approached breathing in the military from that basic way: okay control your breathing. It works. Just focus on your breath. If you start to control your breathing you start to affect the state you are in.

Control got to be my way... too much... and well... I began to question it. I don't know if I want to "control" my breathing. If I am a neurotic, it is my neurosis that is doing the controlling. It's like Einstein says, "**you can't solve a problem with the same mind that caused it.**" So I don't value control so much anymore. I think it was a good way in to discover some things, but I learned that there is a better way: and that is letting go.

When a child lets go of resistance or attachment then he or she just snaps back. The child just snaps back into that joyful state.

So we are going to work with thoughts, feelings/sensations, and emotions. Those are the 3 things we are going to play with today. Those are the three levels we are going to work on. Those are the three levels that we suffer on or derive pleasure or joy from.

Certain thoughts cause pain. Other thoughts cause pleasure. So begin to work on the level of thoughts; tell your mind what to think. **Do what the Buddha did: judge every thought.** Does this thought lead to peace: yes or no? And don't buy into the mind's idea that it doesn't matter whether it leads to peace.

The mind is only concerned with whether it's right or wrong! It's either good or it's bad! I either like it or I don't like it. I should think it; I shouldn't think it. Those are not the ways to judge your thoughts. Don't judge a thought on the basis of whether it is right or wrong, because the mind will argue for the thoughts that it holds. It will try to give you evidence that it is right, even though it doesn't bring peace.

There's the question- Does this thought bring me peace- yes or no? That's it! Not whether it's true, not whether it's right, not whether I 'should' think it, not what everyone says to think it. Does it bring me peace, yes or no? Start to get in touch with that.

I hold a certain thought. Does that thought make it easier for me to breathe? Does that thought make it easier for me to relax? Does that thought bring me peace? Yes? Then hold that thought. No? Then drop it like a hot potato! Even if it's right, even if it's true, even if you should think it- even if only good people think it, and only bad people don't think it- whatever. Peace yes, peace no?

Drop the thought or hold the thought - very simple. So that's a really great exercise. At any time in your life, you can hold a thought up to that judgment process. Does this thought bring me peace? Does this thought give me a wonderful feeling in my body? Does it make it easier for me to breathe? Does it bring me peace? That's a great start: the level of thoughts. We are also going to work with emotions, and we're going to work with feelings and sensations.

When you look at your inner world have you ever had an experience of any kind that does not fall into one of these three categories: a thought, a physical feeling or sensation, or an emotion? I don't think so. I think everything falls onto one of those three levels. So that's where our work is.

Byron Katie says that life is really simple: everything happens when you are standing, sitting or laying. Every experience you have ever had in your life you are standing, sitting, or laying down. She says that those are the only three things we have to master in life: standing up, laying down and sitting. Life is a lot simpler that we tend to believe.

Feelings and sensations are another level that we focus on. For many people, we are numb. We are unconscious of the feelings or sensations that arise in the body. We don't notice them until they become very obvious: then we notice them. We are not tracking subtle changes in the physical sensations in our body. That's a meditative process. The third level that we need to focus on is emotions.

We have a certain relationship to our emotions that comes from our conditioning and our programming. We actually judge our emotions. Some emotions are good, some emotions are bad. What are you talking about? Emotions don't qualify in that way. Are there emotions that we "should" feel and emotions that we "shouldn't" feel? "Good people feel these kind of emotions and bad people feel those kind of emotions."

We've polluted ourselves. We've done something to damage our relationship to our emotions. **All emotions are good; all emotions are healthy. There are no good ones and bad ones.** There are some we like and some we don't like. Some are comfortable and some are uncomfortable. That's the process of the mind: judging certain emotions.

If you can be free with your emotions, and realize that “all my feelings are safe, all my feelings are good;” now you have a very different relationship to your emotions. Now you are not going to be attaching to certain emotions and resisting others.

We are going to be working on these three levels: thoughts, feelings and sensations, and emotions: and we are going to be playing with the breath while observing everything on those levels.

If you master “the Art of Not Giving a Damn,” it means that you are no longer disturbed or bothered by things that disturb and bother other people. Things that used to disturb and bother you, you are now free from.

There is a spiritual approach to this, which you may find very familiar. One piece is called “non judgment.” That's a spiritual principle, right? If you practice non-judging, that is a spiritual way of being. It's like unconditional love. If I'm expressing unconditional love, I'm not into judging if you deserve it or you don't deserve it, if you're good or bad. I'm not caught up in that if I'm non-judgmental.

People feel that. **When you are with a person who's non judgmental, you have a certain freedom, there's a certain comfort.** If you are concerned that everything you say or do is being judged, you are not going to let yourself say or do certain things, then you are going to control everything about you. There is no freedom in that.

If you are in the presence of someone who is non-judging, you sense that. You are freer with your thoughts, your body, and your emotions. That's important. And we need to do it for ourselves. We need to create non-judging within ourselves, so that when a thought or emotion arises, it is not bumping into that judge. If it can't get past that judge, you just retire the judge; you just put the judge aside.

It's like the little kid trying to play and someone is telling them the “right way” they should play. Oh my god, there goes playfulness! You've just destroyed it.

Non-judgment is a spiritual principle. The better you are at non-judging, at being non judgmental, the less you suffer and the more you remain in a state of equanimity. The Buddha talked about it as a state of peace, as a state of freedom.

Another thing is non-attachment. That is another spiritual principle. If you attach to something, if you hold on to something, you are going to suffer.

The other principle is non-resistance. If you are resisting something, that takes energy. It zaps your energy. And it sets you up for suffering. So, non-judging, non-attaching and non-resisting: non-resistance, non-attachment, non-judgment.

Anytime you can wake up and let go of one of those things, you will feel a little spaciousness in you. You're going to feel a little freedom; you're going to feel a little clarity. You are not holding on to your position or your thought. You're not resisting something that is happening.

If you are resisting something that is happening, that's ridiculous: it's happening! Why would you resist what's happening? It is! Accept what is. Maybe in the next moment you can change it, but right now, here it is. We waste a lot of energy, and we cause a lot of suffering in ourselves when we resist what is. If we are attaching to something, we can't move forward, we can't break free.

And all of those things—judgment, attachment, resistance—they are all reflected in the breath. And what's more: there are certain breathing patterns that can help us to clear away those things.

Let's start to play with the breath.

The first thing, well maybe not the first thing, but one of the first things you want to do is create some space inside of you. Create a feeling of spaciousness inside of you. We have the weight of the world on us, we have the weight of our own thoughts, we have physical tensions, and all of this is inhibiting the breath. We want to begin to create a sense of spaciousness in us.

We want to get out of the way so the breath can really expand in us. If the breath meets up with resistance, it means that there is pain or fear there. So if we can clear away what's blocking the breath from expanding freely, we are going to start to move into a space of peace.

Creating this feeling of spaciousness is actually a process and the goal.

Take in a long, slow, luxurious inhale; feel yourself expanding from side to side, front to back, and top to bottom. Take a long slow inhale; track and observe the feelings and sensations as you do. Let the breath be a little fuller, a little more expansive than normal. You are inviting a little bigger, a little more expansive breath. You, you're allowing the breath to stretch you and expand you.

In fact the breath will do that. If you pull in a big breath, you can feel the breath physically expanding you. You don't have to imagine it. You can feel the physical sensations of stretching, expanding. You want to sense those feelings, enjoy them.

There are actually pleasure receptors in these intercostal muscles... in the free movement of the diaphragm... There are nerves connected to all that, and as you stretch and expand your breath you are firing off certain nerves, and certain signals that tell the brain that you're ok.

Think about this: an antelope in the wild sense or hears or smells a tiger. It was busy munching, chomping, eating, and just flowing with life. Suddenly there is a noise or a slight scent, or something moves in the bushes. And what do they do? They stop eating and breathing, and they go on alert.

Then once they realize that there is no danger, they return to munching and breathing. For a moment, the animal holds its breath. Nobody has to teach the antelope or a springbok... you guys have springbok here right? No one has to teach them to do that. If they sense danger, or the possibility of threat they hold their breath. They don't want to give away their presence.

If you breathe, you are affirming your presence, your existence, and expressing your being. You are showing you are alive. When you hold your breath, you are hiding.

A little three-year-old girl will do the same thing. I love this analogy. The father comes home from work and the little girl has this game she plays, and the father likes it too. She hides behind the couch. Mother says: "Your daddy's coming home." Oooh, The little girl shivers with delight, excitement; and she hides behind the couch.

The daddy likes the game too. "Oh, where's my little girl? I've lost my little girl. I can't find her! Where is she?" The little girl, she's behind the couch, and what is she doing? She's holding her breath. Who taught her to do that? It's hard wired in us! If you don't want to be seen, if you want to hide, then you hold your breath.

In the wild, if you don't want to be seen, if you need to hide... it has to be because of possible danger. Why else would you do it!

So we wash away this unconscious breath-holding reflex. Wash it out of your system. Don't let it be constantly expressing itself. Wash that reflex out of your system and you will get so much freer: physiologically, emotionally, psychologically, energetically. Now you have eliminated something that was causing a whole chain reaction of survival, danger, and threat... fear stuff.

And, if you have the weight of fear or guilt on you, it's hard. It's really hard to take a full breath when you have the weight of fear, pain, or guilt stuff on you. And it's a Catch 22 situation: if I'm in pain or fear, my body's locked up and I can't create that soft expansion; but that's exactly what I need to do if I want to release the pain or fear.

Practice the expansive inhale and the relaxed exhale when you are not in pain or afraid. Get really good at the coming home breath, so that when you are in pain or when you are in fear, you can actually manage it—you can accomplish it.

Some people can learn to swim if they fall out of a boat, even if they've never been in the water in their lives. They fall out of the boat and somehow they manage to learn how to swim. But that's very rare, that's very, very rare.

If you practice in a swimming pool, in knee-deep water, then waist-deep water, and you gradually go deeper and get comfortable: then if you fall out of a boat, you already know how to swim, and it's not a big deal.

So, you practice these breathing exercises when you are in a comfortable place, in a comfortable state, and not dealing with anything particularly intense or stressful. Then when you move into anything intensely stressful, you already have a little bit of skill, you've actually got some abilities.

Trying to learn things when under stress is extremely tough, so we try to take advantage of the space in between difficulties to master the skill, to gain unconscious competence.

The ability to create this expansion... a spacious breath... feel that now...because there is an art to it. Most people are over-using muscles to breathe. So when they take in a big, deep breath, they exert a lot of muscular effort. That's counterproductive.

When you use a muscle, it contracts. If you are using muscles to breathe, you are producing contractions at the very same time that you are trying to experience spaciousness. **There's an art to being able to breathe, deeply, fully and freely without a lot of effort.** That's a basic skill you want to master.

Anybody can breathe deeply with effort. But that effort is costing you energy, and it is exhausting. So you are not going to be able to keep breathing deeply for very long, because you will soon be exhausted. It's costing you more to breathe deeply than what you are gaining from the breath.

The ability to breathe in fully and to effortlessly create expansion and an inner sense of spaciousness...it's an art... It's as if you are getting out of the way of the breath.

[one of the participants yawn] Oh, Ah! Yawning...Yes, this is a really good sign! That's the body beginning to help in the process. That's a parasympathetic response in the body, a reflex.

Yawning

You can make yourself yawn; but really what you do is you trigger the yawning reflex. You do something... wiggle your jaw while you inhale... open your throat in some way, and you trigger a real yawn. Well, that's a breathwork exercise. There is something you can take home. That is something you can do a thousand times a day: trigger a yawn!

It seems silly, it seems so obvious and basic: make yourself yawn every couple of minutes... at least a few times an hour... A hundred times a day, make yourself yawn. Trigger the yawn, because something very resourceful happens in us when we yawn. Chemicals changes, and all kinds of things happen.

It should be a study in science; and finally there is some serious research happening in the field of yawning. We don't really get how important it is, and all that is happening when we yawn. We know it's beneficial. We know animals yawn before they attack, and they yawn after a threat is gone.

We don't yawn just because we're tired, we don't yawn just because we're bored. Sometimes we do, but sometimes we yawn because we are full of energy. Sometimes we yawn because we are enthralled with something or empathizing with someone.

Society and culture link yawning to certain things, and we have absorbed those beliefs. So we control our yawns because it's not polite or it's not appropriate. When we do, we are choking off our spirit! We're taught to do that as a small child: suppress, inhibit, block or control the yawn.

Maybe it wasn't done with the use of physical threat as it was in my case. Maybe for some people, or in your life, you were just yawning because it was a natural healthy reflex in the moment; and somebody took offense at that, and asked: "Am I boring you?" Uh, well, I wasn't even thinking about you as a matter of fact- not connected to you at all!

There seems to be some logical and factual reasons for suppressing yawns:

Yawning is not polite. Who said it's not polite to yawn? How did it ever get to be not polite to yawn? Is it not polite to be human? Is it not polite to be natural? Is it not polite to feel good? What the hell happened? My God!

Yawning is inappropriate. Why is it inappropriate? When is it inappropriate? Is it inappropriate to be alive? Is it inappropriate to be natural? If nature is prompting you to do it, what the hell is so inappropriate about that?

So in my training, I have this really good student, and she is trying to tell me about all the problems it is causing. I so I say practice yawning more! Do it on purpose, again and again, until it bothers somebody. Then you deal with it—learn to deal with other people's reaction. That is useful.

And the sigh of relief... Those two things are natural reflexes. They are not techniques. Everybody already knows how to do a sigh of relief. And even that has gotten linked to weird things, like being bored, or being tired, or being whatever. How do they do that? How do they get there? It's a very natural, necessary important thing: to be able to yawn to the point where your eyes water. You've got to be able to do that.

You should do it again and again and again. Keep yawning. We have suppressed a lot of yawns. We have stifled a lot of sighs of relief. So they are incomplete and they have piled up inside of us. That's why when one person yawns, somebody else always yawns. It's like an unconscious permission. "Oh, you mean it's ok? Good, because I need to do it too!"

We are restoring an original natural innocence. Yawning, deliberately yawning, consciously and deliberately yawning helps us to restore a natural innocence, and to establish a natural flow.

This healthy reflex has been choked out of us—civilized out of us. We need to bring it back. It's about life: our life depends on yawning! If we didn't yawn, who knows what would happen! It's necessary; it's vital. Yet, we have a hundred reasons and a thousand times and places when it is so called "inappropriate."

Yawning is probably more necessary than ever in those very moments when we think it is impolite or inappropriate. You know, the professor is talking. "How dare you yawn when the professor is talking!" Or, someone is telling you their problems: "My dog died, and my kids are on drugs..." and you yawn! And then say, "Oh no, no, keep talking, I'm listening."

So we are stopping ourselves for no good reason. Heal that! Heal it. Get over it. Get through it. Do it a thousand times a day! Give yourself a big sigh of relief during the day- a hundred times—a minimum of a hundred times. That's nothing! You take 20,000 breaths a day. What is 200 out of 20,000? One percent?

All we are talking about is taking advantage of 1% of the breaths that you are given. Give 1% of your breaths a certain life enhancing quality. Use them to restore a certain ability... that you naturally had... and we all still have.

You're going to have a problem. If you give yourself a sigh of relief a hundred times a day, one of those times, someone is going to be there and they are going say: "Why do you keep doing that?" I say that if nobody is saying that to you, then you are not practicing enough! You need to be practicing enough that you activate their reactions.

Their reaction points to the same programming and suppression that you are trying to overcome in yourself. Their reaction to you is the same reaction that you were having to yourself, before you decided to get free. You have gotten beyond your own resistance to freedom, and now you are encountering other people's resistance. It keeps us all stuck.

Somebody needs to interrupt the pattern. Invite them to do it too. Don't let them drag you down. Lift them up!

If you do this: [models a big sigh of relief], and somebody says, "Why do you keep doing that?" Don't answer them. Do this: [another big sigh of relief] right back at them. Don't let their reaction trigger a contraction in you. Let it cause an expansion and a relaxation.

Let that become your reaction to everything—especially what is happening inside of you. You are having a thought and you see you are having a thought, what do you do? Breathe. Give space to it. If you notice yourself fighting back an emotion, or judging it: give yourself a sigh of relief.

If you suddenly have a feeling or a sensation in your body, the normal reaction might be mental: "Oh have I got arthritis? Oh my god, do I have cancer? Should I call the doctor?" Wow,

one little change in your body and it triggers this chain reaction of mental stuff. Instead, **when you have a feeling in your body, let it trigger a breath; let it trigger expansion and relaxation.**

That's the other part of the breath. First you are practicing inhaling, stretching and expanding... creating spaciousness in yourself. The second part, which all comes together, is the exhale. Now if you exhale this way [blocking and holding the exhale back]: that's not even an exhale!

Pain will cause that. Whether you like it or not, **pain will not allow the exhale to flow or release.** You will have to wait till the pain goes away before the breath can release. If you practice releasing the breath in the presence of the pain, you will start to wash the pain away. It's really powerful. We can all do that. **We have the ability to remove or release pain if we master the ability of letting the exhale go.**

You cannot be in pain if you breathe like this: [a full easy flowing inhale/exhale]. You can't. The pain is going to interfere with the breath. What's more: the breath can interfere with the pain! It's up to you, which way that game goes. It might take some time and practice to turn the game around: but hey, it's well worth it.

Letting go of the exhale, that's a life skill. I can exhale this way: [modeling a full inhale, a pause and slow extended exhale]. Actually a long slow exhale is used in an exercise like Progressive Relaxation. It is a good exercise for asthma. The pursed lip, long slow exhale- very useful.

However the basic skill, the primal skill we need to really master, is releasing the breath quickly and completely. Set the breath free. When we set the breath free, in a way we are setting our spirit free. We are setting our emotions free.

Everyone has had this experience: where you have what you think is a brilliant idea, right? [model a breath of amazement and satisfaction] It causes a breath to come in. **We feel it; we are literally inspired.** The language is not an accident! The spirit comes into you. You are inspired. You receive an inspiration. The breath comes to you. **The language is not an accident.**

However if that brilliant inspiration rises up and meets a judge, a critic... a fear, a doubt... Instead of expressing it... like ooh, you give me such an idea and I experience a breath of surprise and wonder... I decide maybe it's not quite so brilliant... maybe I only think it's a good idea. Maybe it ain't. It meets a judge and the flow of communication, of energy, of intuition, inspiration stops.

When the expression of creativity is stopped, guess what else is stopped? THE BREATH!

And if the breath is allowed to flow and not be stopped, then guess what happens? Your creative energy and expression will also flow and not be stopped! It's scary at first because, hey that idea you thought was so brilliant, it might actually be a stupid idea! But so what! Who gives a damn!

You might have to have a hundred stupid ideas before you have the most brilliant idea ever conceived. If you can't let yourself have those 100 stupid ideas, you are never going to get to the brilliant idea. So you have to get comfortable with stupid ideas! Ok, so that was a stupid idea. Uh huh, okay, it's gone, let it go. On to the next one...End of story.

However if you stop the expression of it, you'll never find out if it was a stupid idea or not, because you never let it express. You can't get to the idea underneath it, or the one under that, or the one behind that! **Get comfortable with freely expressing yourself and not caring or giving a damn what other people think—or even what your own mind thinks!** That is the real work. A mind is a mind, is a mind.

I tell people: “to hell with what others think. F**k it! We use our fear of what other people will think to stop ourselves. But that's hard to do because we really want approval. We think we need it! **But we also have to say the same thing to our own mind!** Don't give a damn what your own mind thinks! Your mind is no different than anybody else's mind: it was programmed in the same way.

I have a brilliant idea and, it's not someone else who comes in and stops me: my own mind comes up and stops me. So now I care about what my own mind thinks, and that's the same thing as caring about what somebody else's mind thinks. It's the same thing. We have to get by what our own mind thinks, then it is easy to deal with other people's minds.

We do that by allowing the breath to come in and then go right back out... Without holding it, without waiting to let it out, without carefully letting it out, without slowly letting it out, or gradually letting it out. When we control the exhale, we're stifling it, we're not allowing it to flow.

Practice snapping the exhale loose, practice dumping the exhale out, practice setting the exhale free. Get good at that. Get good at that first.

Notice that it doesn't matter how big or how long the inhale is. If I let the exhale go, I let it go, end of story. One second, two seconds maximum: [models a long extended inhale and a quick complete uncontrolled exhale] you either let it go or you don't: End of story!

Don't blow, don't push, don't force. That's not letting go. Letting go is letting go. Setting it free, is setting it free. There is a reflex there. If I create a stretch and an extra expansion, and then just let go, the breath comes out by itself. I don't have to do it, I don't have to push or blow. I don't have to do anything.

Create a slight stretch and extra expansion on the inhale, and then just let go, and let the breath flow out by itself. That's a skill you need to master. That's a skill you need to practice 100 times a day, a 1000 times a day... until it becomes an unconscious habit... Until you have unconscious competence.

Master that skill and train it into your body-mind system; then when stress arises in your system, the breath will release it for you! You don't even think about it anymore, you don't even make it happen. A sigh of relief comes automatically when your state changes; and when this breath comes, your state changes automatically.

An interesting thing happens when my bliss gets dented... some force comes to my breath out of nowhere and lifts me up!

Now I have consciously practiced that a lot. I mean we're talking years, every day. So now, I'm at the point where I don't even have to practice, it's just working for me. In fact, I don't even notice my bliss is getting dented. My breath notices it before I do, and it clears away the problem for me, so I don't even enter those uncomfortable states anymore.

The only way I can be uncomfortable is to make myself uncomfortable! It's really weird. In a way, I feel like I am from another friggin planet. I have to pretend that I am upset. I have to pretend that I am concerned. But really I don't give a damn! I trust in the perfection of life. Really. If people see that I'm not stressing over something, they think that I don't care. But I do care, it's weird, it's very weird.

I don't know what happened. Either all my problems went away, which is really cool; or I still have all my problems, but I just don't care. Either way, I'm free! My breath keeps me in the most resourceful state, which allows me to be of the most service. **The breath can become your best friend and closest companion.**

I use the analogy of the canary in a coalmine. Does anyone know about that? In the old days, in the coalmines, they had a problem with poison gases down there, and lots of coal miners were dying. They would break into a pocket of gas and they would die. The gas could have a smell, or it couldn't have a smell. They couldn't tell for sure, and so they'd keep working and they'd die of gas poisoning.

So they started bringing a canary—a little delicate sensitive bird—down into the mine with them. They'd keep an eye on the bird, and if he went pfft, fell over and died, they'd get the hell out of there! The bird was so sensitive and they were not; and so they'd use the bird as their savior. The bird dies and they'd say oh Jesus, there must be gas, let's get out of here.

The breath is the canary in the coalmine. Your breath is very sensitive. It's the very first thing to respond to any change in your energy. Any change in your state and the breath is right there, expressing and reflecting the change. It's very subtle.

If you have not developed the habit of observing your breath and tracking subtle changes in your breathing while someone is talking to you, when you begin to feel a certain way, when you begin to do certain things... If you have not developed the practice of tuning into your breath in

those moments, then lots of poisonous things can be happening in you, and you are not even aware of them. But your breath is!

So the practice is to consciously tune into your breath; watch it, sense it; and deliberately turn to it again and again, until becomes a habit, until it is automatic.

Right now we have unconscious automatic habits in our system, which are running us. We automatically get upset; we automatically feel insulted; we automatically become offended. Somebody else does something and we automatically become angry. That's not natural: that's conditioning.

That happens because we have repeated a certain reaction over and over again until we have become unconsciously competent. Almost everyone is unconsciously competent at getting upset and being disturbed. With so much practice, you don't even do it on purpose anymore: you have mastered that ability. One person says something to you, and uhhh, you automatically feel a certain way. Somebody does something to you and you react in a certain way. You've mastered some unwanted things. And you need to master some other stuff, the opposite stuff.

Now, when someone does something that formerly caused me to get angry, that very same thing causes me to wake up. It causes me to take a breath. It causes me to observe the reactions in my system. It causes me to back up and create some space around me and them, and the whole situation. It triggers a whole different reaction in me now. The very same things that used to cause me upset now are actually contributing to my enlightenment, to my liberation.

It's not just a philosophical thing: "Oh this is a gift. This person is beating me, or insulting me: this is a gift I can grow from." It sounds fake and phony. But if you actually start to recognize it, and feel that is true... I gradually got to that. I thought wow this is a gift. This is a chance for me to learn. This is a chance for me to grow. This is a chance for me to practice. This is a chance for me to be how I really want to be and not just react. If you do that consciously and often enough, it becomes automatic.

Train your breathing! Master a conscious, dramatic, exaggerated sigh of relief. It will help you get free. You will be able to get free of any state with just one or two breaths. Where other people would have to talk about it for hours, or work it out thru some complicated method, or taking a vacation for a week to recover from some trauma. Instead, **with a couple of minutes of breathing, you can recover from emotional, psychological, physical traumas.** It's amazing! It's really cool.

So that's what we want to do. Today we want to practice that. We are going to take a little break, and when we come back, we are going to start step by step, with this little practice, okay? Let's see if we can't build some conscious competence; then it's up to you to turn that into a deep practice. Continuous, consistent...

Use everything as an excuse to practice! You're looking at something wonderful, something beautiful: in that moment, remember to breathe. Somebody is insulting you: in that moment, open and expand. Usually we want to block, fight, or defend: that doesn't work. People have tried that, we've been doing that forever. It doesn't work.

We've got to try something new. I want you to get out of the box, to be nontraditional. I want you to be unconventional. Let's do some stuff we've never done before. Let's try a totally different alternative approach to how you usually deal with things. Be as out of the box as possible.

Replace all of your ordinary and miscellaneous urges with one single conscious, resourceful ability: the ability to expand and relax. You do that, and you drill, just like in the military. You drill and you train and you practice until it becomes automatic.

There are lots of little details and aspects of the breath that we are going to practice, so we are going to break it down into each little piece, and we can practice each little piece, so you can really get it before you go today. Then it will be up to you to really practice it, use it and then tell us about the benefits.

So let's take a break; then we will have a good chunk of time where we will break down the technique—the exercise—into little pieces. We can practice those pieces, then we'll have lunch. And after lunch we will come back and put it all together into an intensive practice session.

