[**Breath Mastery Fundamentals Day 2**](https://www.o2collective.com/products/breath-mastery-fundamentals-2/categories/553614)

Module 18 **Zen and the Art of Breathing**

I was adding to that at lunch, that you start to understand why sinus infections block sinuses. What's that about? It's about us being overwhelmed with information and our system protecting itself from too much information coming in. Insulating us from being overwhelmed. I mean if you started feeling what everybody is feeling, could you hold yourself together, could you manage? So our system is kind of protecting itself and maybe protecting us. So maybe the common cold, which is probably the most popular, general dysfunction on the planet, illness, what is it really about? What is it really? I haven't had anything like a common cold in 40 years. We originally said it was birth trauma; you had fluid in your lungs before you could breathe. And before you could take your first breath, you had to get those fluids out and there was a kind of little in-between place where the fluids, and so the sinuses and so on, maybe it's that reliving of that original birth pattern?

I was hired by Glacsole smith klein .... this year, I went into the belly of the beast of the pharmaceutical industry. I was like, do you guys know I'm an anti-pharmaceutical. Why would you want me to come to talk to your people? What's this about? But at the time, they offered me exactly what I had envisioned as the ideal invitation, we pay for your ticket, we put you up for two days, we pay you $2500 and you talk for 20 minutes. Alright, I'll go there, I'll do that. Even though you are a pharmaceutical company. But I was curious, what was it about? And what it was about was their marketing department had hired an external marketing company to rethink their advertising and their marketing, because they have a nasal decongestant spray, every other pharmaceutical company has one, it's a tough nitch, everybody's got their version of a nasal decongestant. And the formula is the same, you can't really inform the formula, you can't really do anything chemically, everybody's got the same formula. So all you can do is play with packaging and marketing. So a Lithuanian woman and a British woman, a team were in this media marketing, media company, knew me through whatever, and their approach, their idea was what they called the "higher order benefits of breathing". Everybody else was advertising, you know your nose is stuffed up, you spray this thing, now you can breathe freely. End of story, end of marketing, end of advertising. So they said, why don't we start there? What are the benefits of free breathing? Emotional benefits, psychological benefits and so on. They call it the "higher order". And so the woman I knew from Lithuania, said hey I know a guy, he can talk for like six years about breathing, about the higher order benefits of breathing. Let's put him in front of the marketing team, let him talk for 20 minutes and then have a brainstorming session and come out with a new approach to our marketing.

So, that's how it happened. But it made me do some research. A couple of things they pushed me through. They wanted to know exactly what I was going to say. They wanted a script. The first 3 minutes I introduced myself, the next 5 minutes I talk about this, 5 minutes for this and the last 5 minutes for this. You know I don't know what I'm going to say. Oh no, we need to know exactly what you're going to say. I say, hmmm maybe I should give your money back because I don't do [that scripted]. But I thought fuck it, you know take the money, why not. So I said, tell me what you want me to stay, how's that? What do you want me to say, and I'll say it. So she gave me enough, a couple of the ideas. So I started doing research and remembered, realised and had a few ah-hahs, that we evolved in nature depending on taking in scents, smells. Now we're not so conscious of it anymore, although a newborn baby recognises the mother through the sense of smell and we are, you know if the smell is toxic or if it goes outside of a zone, if it stands out, then we are conscious of what we're taking in through our nose, but most of the time, we're not. In the same time that we're not conscious that we're reading each other’s body language, we're not conscious of the information we're getting through our nose. And when your nose gets stuffed up, you just shut off information. And to the ancient lizard brain, it would be the same if you suddenly couldn't see. Imagine the stress in the system if suddenly you couldn't see. So if you suddenly can't smell, imagine the stress in the system. We're not even conscious of that stress, we experience it as the symptoms of our flu or our cold or our stuffed sinuses, but it's the system that is in a panic because a source of information has been cut off.  So that insight, there's something there.

We're into the zen and the art of breathing, these are just zen principles, you might recognise them. Beginner's mind. You know, not projecting anything, being present in the moment. Transcending the mind and body. The no within, no without, no me, no you, no beginning, no end. These are kind of universal zen principles. And what I find exciting or really interesting is the Archer has always been traditionally a symbol related to zen. And so when I started thinking about that, when you think about it, the same forces and dynamics in shooting a bow and arrow, those same forces and dynamics are at work when we're breathing. You draw the bow back, that's an inhale. You exhale, the arrow flies. If you don't draw the bow back enough, the arrow can't go anywhere. You draw back too much and you break the bow. And when the zen master is doing this archery, this powerful physical forces, very powerful mental forces, when they come together, the target is aligned, everything is in line, what do you do? You let go! If you do anything except let go, the arrow is going to go on a different course. And you don't [motions of breathing in and out strongly, then softly]. Because then it doesn't happen, the whole archery thing doesn't happen. And so when this happens, you get the mind and body at one point and everything comes into line, at that moment you let go, the zen master drops into samanti, satori kencho.... whatever you want to call it. No mind, no body in that moment. The bringing together of mind and body and then boom, just being let go. And you drop into this zen state.

So really useful in breathing. Inhale [motion of drawing the bow]. And you have this intention, so we have this game of the arrows right. The arrow is the intention, so I can shoot an arrow. An arrow of peace, an arrow of love. Or maybe something negative in me that I want to release? So I have this intention that builds up on the inhale, and then [exhale] I let something go. I let something fly. I allow the forces that have built up to do that work of my liberation, my releasing. And so we can play that game of shooting arrows into arrows of peace into Syria, into Iraq, into the Middle East. You build up an intention on the inhale, you're drawing that bow back, and you release that intention out into the world with the exhale.

So we play this game where we called it zen and the art of breathing. And you know in the Buddhist tradition, there are monks who every day, face the four corners of the compass and they beam positive vibrations of peace and compassion out into the world. I think they're making a difference. I think if they stopped doing that, we would see a difference in the world. They're helping to create a certain balance. And it's a spiritual practice and the more of us who find a way to engage in it, maybe we can finally tip the scale.

And every breath is like the first breath. And each time you relax as if it's the first time, very zen-like, not robotic, not mechanical, but fresh and new. Each time, generate an intention and let that intention loose into the world. And then build up the energy, and then relax as if you've never relaxed before, as if it's the first time. And do it again as if it's the first time. And do it again as if it's the first time. Very zen-like approach to breathing.

Audience member: Do you breath into your mouth?

Speaker:

Yeah, whatever helps you generate the feelings that you want to generate, that represents. You create a sound that feels like I'm charging myself. And expresses my letting go. So we can breath through the mouth and be creative, you can breath through the nose and all the creativity is internal, not so much expressed in sound.

So this brings us to our spiritual breathing sandwich. You know, we Americans, we're really into sandwiches. So I imagine this amazing buffet, a table, spread out with every shape and form and flavour and texture and type of delicious food you could imagine. I would start at one end of the table with a slice of bread, and I would start putting stuff, different flavours, different textures. And then you end up with another slice of bread. And when you bite into it, it's got all the textures and flavours, and, delicious. So that's a breath.

And zen is about being total. Totality is one of the principles of zen and involving as many levels of your being as possible. So the sandwich is the inhale and the exhale and between those two things, is as much as you can pack to make that breath as juicy and thick and multi-dimensional layered as possible. So for example you can combine breathing and sound. Any sound. I love the Rumi people, I love the Sufis. Their favourite sound is "ooooooo". You know you go to Turkey and you meet the home of Rumi \*\*\* and they have his community and all is carried on and their favourite thins is "oooooooo".

So any sound, combining breathing and sound. And be like a child, what is an interesting sound. Little kids play [truck noises]. It's not an accident, it's their nature, getting in the game. So you play with different sounds and connecting the breathing and sound.

You can connect the breathing and the though. An affirmation. A word or a phrase. So now when I'm breathing in, I've chosen a sound, let's say it's this [breaths in]. And then I have a word or a phrase; peace [breathes in], courage [breathes out]. Whatever, it could be an affirmation it could be a mantra. The first time I learned this it was with Ram Dass, Richard Alpert and the power of God is within me [breathes in], the grace of God surrounds me [breathes out]. Breathing in, thinking the power of God is within me, breathing out, thinking the grace of God surrounds me. I have connected breathing and though and affirmation a mantra. A word a phrase.

An image; what can I picture? The face of my guru. A beautiful scene that when I think about it, I have the most wonderful feeling. A certain colour of light. Imagine gold or bright pink or blue, whatever I find.

So now I've got sound, thought, a colour.

You can add to that movement.

All based on the breath. All centred around the breathing. So now I'm doing this breathing. I have a sound, I have an image, I have a word or a phrase and I have a movement. And the movement could be anything. But look at all the levels of my being that I am now bringing to each breath. I'm building that delicious spiritual sandwich. I'm becoming more total. I am bringing in more and more levels of my being. So each breath is getting juicier, richer, thicker, fuller.

What's missing here? What else could I bring into the breath?

Audience member: Feeling?

Speaker:

Yeah a feeling, let's say an emotion. I could generate a feeling of gratitude or generate a feeling of compassion. Yeah.

So, this is our game. This is one of the first spiritual breathing techniques that we invented and called a spiritual sandwich. And now if you bring in this archery, so now I'm building up all this force and this intention, I am the first recipient of it and I bless the world with it.

So a great way to play with your breath. Putting your whole heart, mind, body, emotions, sounds, imagery, feelings, thoughts, everything. Pouring everything into each breath, making every breath really rich, thick, juicy and touching as many levels of me as I can muster up.

And then follow yogi Cameron's advice, stay with the practice, don't just breath in a few breaths, stay with it, stay with it, keep going. Stay with it, stay with it long enough for something to click.

When I first started teaching this, I couldn’t believe the problems that people created. It gave me this image, you know when people spin plates on the sticks, you get one spinning and then another and then another, and it's like they're turning it into this complicated, difficult thing. Ohh, when I was focusing on the picture I forgot about the sound, and when I was trying to make this sound I forgot about ... who cares, so what? So you pick one thing for one breath, and pretty soon it becomes automatic you don't even need to give it thought and so then you bring something else in. Or you go from one thing to the next, one breath I focus on a picture, the next breath I repeat an affirmation, the next breath I focus on the sound. Don't make it into a complicated, difficult thing.

Spiritual breathing.

And maybe you just invent something, you create something.

[End of video 18].