DAN BRULÉ'S

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

GUIDEBOOK

O2 COLLECTIVE

INFO ON FLIP CHARTS

Breath Therapy Basics:

1. The breathing system needs to be healed.

It needs to be restored to its full free natural functioning.

2. Once the breathing system has been healed or restored, it becomes a therapeutic tool.

The Breathwork Mantra:

1. Open and expand (inhale)
2. Relax and let go (exhale)

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BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

DAY 1.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 1.

Open & Expand, Relax & Let Go & Breath Therapy

BREATH THERAPY

1. Breathing Mechanism
2. Breath as a tool (use it to heal)

OPEN AND EXPAND

RELAX AND LET GO

1. The first three days are the Foundation Course
2. The next three days are an Advanced Training
3. The next step after that is a One-Year Practitioner Program
4. The step after that is the Apprenticeship Program (Training Trainers)

The world needs more breathworkers. Breathing is the next major key skillset that high performing individuals need to have.

Breathwork is the new yoga! It is modern meditation.

Breathing is waking up in the mass consciousness; in our collective consciousness. Conscious breathing is the transformational tool of our day.

I believe there is an angel of breath alive on the planet because we are at a huge turning point. Global changes are taking place. There is an acceleration, an intensification.

We are on the verge of an evolutionary leap in consciousness, in human potential. As we approach that shift, things get very intense and the breath is a perfect tool for dealing with that intensity.

If there is one theme that has been universal for the more than 40 years I have taught Breathwork, it is that change is the common denominator. People are intuitively drawn to the breath when they:

- **Desire change.**
- **Are about to go through a change.**
- **Are recovering from a change.**
- **Are in the middle of change.**

Breathing is the ideal tool, a bridge or force for navigating change.

When you change the way you breathe, you change something so primal and fundamental that the effects carry over onto every other level of your being. If you are trying to change something in yourself and you haven't explored your ability to change your breathing patterns, this is the first place to start. If you can't change your breathing patterns and breathing habits, good luck trying to change anything else! But if you can change something as primal and fundamental as your breathing, then changing anything else suddenly becomes easier.

Breathwork defined:

"Breathwork is the art and science of applying breath awareness and conscious breathing as a tool–a force, a bridge–for health, growth and change in body, mind and spirit."

Breathwork is an art and a science. We have quite a bit of poetic or creative license because it's an art. And applying the scientific approach to Breathwork helps to ensure that what we do actually works.

For example, I have trained members of elite special forces, hostage extraction and anti-terrorists teams. If Breathwork didn't work, they would have no interest in it. When the work involves life or death situations, no one is interested in woo-woo, philosophical stuff.

People who work in high stakes, life or death situations, are trained to breathe. The average person is left to their own devices. I consider this to be unfair, because what happens in the boardroom is often just as important as what happens on the battlefield or in the bedroom, in the kitchen, the ring, the playing field or the classroom.

We all deserve the same advantage. The synopsis of my book, JUST BREATHE, is based on the idea that the high states and extraordinary abilities that we normally associate only with the great masters, saints, gurus, mystics and the legendary warriors of modern and ancient times—those same abilities and high states are accessible to anyone. (And not necessarily through years of practice or training that involves very high risks.)

I assure you that it is not necessary to meditate in a cave for 20 years, or crawl through the desert on your knees for 100 miles, to achieve enlightenment. Those ways and methods might have worked in the past, and for some people, but we live in different times. Time itself seems to be accelerating. Evolution is accelerating and so must be the methods that we use and turn to.

I honor and respect the ancient traditions, but it is not my job to preserve them. In fact, very often, my job is to destroy them, rebuild or reshape them to suit the needs of our time. I have been kicked out of many schools and have outgrown almost every teacher I've found. I have been ostracized and I have voluntarily bailed out of a number of communities. I like that and I have no problem with it. It's something that suits me.

One of my favorite teachers was Swami Rama. For those of you who are in the practitioner program, his books are required reading: *The Science of Breath and The Path of Fire and Light*. He was my pranayama teacher for a time. Swami Rama was very dogmatic/traditional and he reminded me of my Catholic school teachers, although he came from India.

It was his job, his mission, to preserve a tradition; to stay pure to a tradition, to embody that tradition and to pass it on in a pure way. That is not my job. I learned a lot from him and a few of the things we will discuss today and tomorrow are among the most valuable things I received from him.

This Foundation Course contains the precious bits and golden nuggets that I received from my teachers as well as from my accidental discoveries and hard-earned personal insights. The course synthesizes ancient and modern methods: the things I've learned and the things I've created.

This program will provide you with a body of knowledge—a certain body of information and certain theories. And it will give you certain practical skills and first-hand direct experiences. I don't know what the percentages are—30%-70% or 50%-50%—but it is a mix of knowledge and skills, theory and practice and information and experience.
The goal is to learn how to use the breath as a tool, a force or a bridge for health, growth and change in body, mind and spirit.

Notice that the practice is focused on breath awareness and conscious breathing. Those are the yin and yang aspects of the practice. There is a time to breathe and a time to be breathed.

There is a time to paddle your canoe and a time to put your oars in the boat and let the river take you. The problem is, a lot of people are paddling when they could simply let the river take them. And they are letting the river take them toward a waterfall when they should be paddling their ass off in another direction! Very often, we are doing the right thing at the wrong time. I have a real-life experience:

I was traveling through Europe in 1980 and fell asleep on the train. I missed my stop and ended up on the way to East Berlin. I had no idea until this rude guy woke me up and interrogated me for an hour. He asked me for my ticket. And I kept pointing out to him that I was in the right seat. He said, Yes, you're in the right seat, but you're on the wrong train!

How many times in life is that true? You know you are in the right seat, but you are on the wrong damn train! Sometimes we need to back up and get a global view. Other times, we need to have our nose right down to the ground, sniffing every little detail.

If you don't have good intuition—if you have not found a natural rhythm to flow back and forth between doing and being, pushing and allowing—you can find yourself hanging out in one phase longer than is helpful. You could be committed to, or stuck in, a phase long after it has served you.

The breath comes and goes and, when we develop an intimate relationship with the breath, we awaken our intuition and we come into harmony with everything that comes and goes. We can take this practice all the way to self-realization or to the awakening as a new Buddha! The Buddha's great awakening was the realization that his sense of self was something that came and went just like everything else.

Thoughts come and go. Feelings and sensations in the body come and go. Emotions come and go. Pain and pleasure come and go. The breath comes and goes. Our sense of self also comes and goes. It is not a static thing that we are supposed to hold together and move through life in.

We have to be able to move, change, shift and adjust, and Breathwork gives us this ability. It gives us certain skills which, when you master them in your relationship to the breath, you can apply to all other areas of your life. It is not just some trickle-down theory: the benefits of Breathwork really do carry directly over into everything.

There are very few basic universal things which, if you focus on, will help you on all levels. And the breath is one of them. Here is a central mantra in Breathwork, a fundamental practice:

1. Open and Expand (Inhale)
2. Relax and Let go (Exhale)

When you inhale, feel yourself expanding. You don't have to imagine expanding: the breath actually expands you. And it expands you from top to bottom, side to side and front to back. When you breathe in, feel the actual sensations of expansion. Feel yourself energetically opening. Nothing to imagine, but something to directly experience. Track those sensations. Do it again and again, so they register in your awareness. When you exhale, relax and let go, feel the details of that release.

Our relationship to the breath cannot be like skipping stones. It is not the superficial, social, polite, automatic or habitual level of relating that we all default to because we are civilized social beings.

"Hey, how you doing?"
"Fine, thanks. How are you?"

Whoa, whoa, whoa! Let's back up a little bit. What do I really mean by that and do I really care? Do I even look, listen or feel when you say, "Fine; how are you?" It's nice and polite and it's better than beating each other with sticks and stones, of course. But if that's the way you approach Breathwork, then you won't get anything from it. You have to dive deep into the experience, with great awareness in mind, body, heart and soul. You have to make it sacred. You have to become totally absorbed in it, at least for the cycle of one breath. When you inhale, absolutely nothing else is happening. When you exhale, you are totally absorbed in the experience.

Breathwork gives us a chance to be total. It is very difficult to be total even for a few moments. Other things start to come in and distract us, and soon we are multitasking.

Open and expand. Relax and let go.

Begin to do that at every opportunity: before you speak, when you're listening, before you get up, when you sit down, when your phone rings, when you end a call, or when someone ask you a question. Breathe! When something affects you, moves you, arises from within you or gets your attention, inject a conscious breath into your experience.

You probably breathe 20 thousand times a day. If you could use just 1% of those breaths—200 breaths—that is not a big investment. So, 200 times a day, take a conscious breath. Although some would say, "Whoa! 200 times a day? That's a lot!" But that's only 1% of the breaths you are given!

If you are not willing to invest 1% of what is given to you, if you are not willing to take advantage of that, then you are not really interested in growing or healing. You cannot use the excuse that you don't have enough time or money or that you're too busy. You can't get away with that. The work is too simple, too easy.

The magic of this practice is that if you do it often enough, if you do it continuously—if you do it in enough different situations and circumstances, in different moments and activities—your system takes it on as a strategy. It takes it on as a habit—and that's when the real magic happens!

Once you re-pattern your mind-body system, when tension comes into you, the breath comes out of nowhere and washes that tension away. Or, if your bliss—your ecstasy—gets dented, the breath comes in and lifts you up!

Things can creep up on us in life. It can be like the story of the slow boiling frog: you don't even notice that you are becoming tense or slipping out of a beautiful state. That's when the magic of the breath comes in. It lifts you up, it calms you down, it opens your heart and it takes you right back to that beautiful state. It takes you home. With practice, your system will have a tendency to automatically move you into a beautiful state.

Your system has already taken on certain breathing habits and patterns. For example, in moments of fear, pain, stress, sadness or confusion, most people unconsciously hold their breath (or they over-breathe). Without realizing it, you have already trained your breath to serve you in some way—to avoid, block, suppress or escape powerful feelings. Yet, we have to feel in order to heal.

The point is that the breath is already working for you in ways that may not serve you! Every time you hold your breath, you block a feeling. You block energy from rising up within you. Your system defends itself from itself and against your own life force energy, as if it is a foreign invader!

If someone tries to come down on you with an external force, what's the reflex? Tense up and hold your breath. This is an attempt to protect yourself from that force. What happens if you touch a fire? You automatically pull away. But what if the force or the fire is in you? Can tensing up or pulling away possibly help?

What happens when powerful emotions arise? What do you do to prevent yourself from laughing or crying? How do you do that? You tense your body, close your throat and you hold your breath. You don't need to think about it or make it happen; you can watch it happen. Your system does it by itself. With Breathwork, we teach our system to do something different. We train our system to open and expand, to relax and let go, to allow the flow of feelings and the flow of life force energy. We develop a breathing response that serves us in a better way.

We are running ancient programs that were designed to protect us from saber-toothed tigers. When was the last time any of us had to defend ourselves against a saber-toothed tiger? And yet, we are carrying habits, patterns, programs and strategies that were designed for that. They have outlived their usefulness and they are now in our way.

So, let me jump to something. Everyone has something in his/her life that fits this scenario. It has served you very well, saved your life maybe. It is responsible for your success. It is unarguably valuable, so you are not willing to let it go. But it has outlived its usefulness.

Like a boat you built to escape a volcanic island. You can't deny its value. Thank God for that boat! From within it, you watch the island get destroyed and know that the boat is your savior. It is the most precious thing you have, the thing you value the most. But then you get to the other shore and you never get out of the boat.

We are coming to another shore in our evolution, in human potential, and we need to let go of some habits and patterns. And so, we start with the breath because the patterns we are talking about are often unconscious and the breath can get under them.

It might be an emotional habit or maybe a habit of thinking. It might be behavioral habit, but in essence, it is energetic. When we are working with the breath, we are working with energy. And once we get better at working with energy, since everything is energy, it simplifies our work on every level.

You need to begin to practice this basic pattern: "open and expand; relax and let go." Do it as often as you can. And in a group this size, you should hear someone practicing that breath in every moment. It's basically a sigh of relief; it's not really a technique or an exercise. It's a natural response that you consciously trigger or deliberately engage.

In a group this size, you should hear someone taking that breath in every given moment. And if you can't hear anyone doing it, it means that it is your turn! And when you do it, you send a message to those around you to also breathe: "Oh, right; yes, thank you for the reminder!"

In the same way that yawning is contagious, absolutely everything related to the breath is contagious. Breath-holding is contagious. Over-breathing is contagious. Fear is contagious. Anger is contagious. Ignorance is contagious. Wisdom is contagious and relaxation is also contagious.

So what high states, abilities, qualities or tendencies do you want to catch from people or that you want to share with others? You need to generate, develop and nurture them in yourself, so that your very presence becomes a source of them. The breath can serve us in this way. It allows us to embody spiritual principles.

One of the models we are practicing here is called "Breath Therapy." Any psychotherapist, counselor, medical doctor or anyone in the helping or healing profession, if they do conscious breathing, they will be far better at what they do than others in their field who are not conscious of the breath. You won't find any exceptions to this.

Psychotherapists who use the breath for their own clearing, centering and balancing − and who integrate breath awareness and conscious breathing into to their psychotherapy practice − get far better results than their peers who are unaware of the power of the breath. Breathwork is now mandatory in psychotherapy training in several countries in Europe; there's a Breathwork module in their training.

There is so much scientific evidence that physical, emotional and psychological issues are associated with dysfunctional breathing patterns. It is very hard to find any problems that are not triggered by dysfunctional breathing or made worse by it.

And so, before you go prescribing medications or launching into various therapeutic processes, first evaluate the breathing and make sure there aren't any habits or patterns that are causing the problem or exacerbating it.

MODULE 1: Open & Expand, Relax & Let Go & Breath Therapy

Breath Therapy is a form of Spiritual Breathing and it has 2 Core Ideas:

1. The breathing mechanism, the breathing system, has been injured, damaged or inhibited. It is not functioning fully and freely as nature intended. It needs to be healed.
2. Once your breathing is full and free and natural again, the breath itself becomes a therapeutic tool.

First, you heal the breathing mechanism and then you use the breath to heal the body-mind system. You can use the breath and the body to heal the mind and you can use the breath and the mind to heal the body. You can use the body, mind and breath to heal emotions. This is the approach in breath therapy.

We are working with the body-mind system because it needs new habits, new patterns, new programs and new structures. Something in us needs to change if we are going to make the transition to the next higher level. If you want to include your body in the eternal life of the spirit, if you want to bring your body with you to heaven, then something needs to happen to your body in order to survive the journey, the transition, the ascension process!

The old way of leaving your body to get to heaven is a very old paradigm. Breathing keeps us in our body even as we connect to the higher planes. My advice is that if you are going to travel off into the astral world, take your body with you! You do that by staying grounded in your body with your breath.

If you leave your body and have an amazingly beautiful experience, you will have to snap back into your body at some point. When you do, you will separate yourself from that experience and you will talk about it as an isolated event. “Oh, I’ll never forget it! It was the most amazing moment of my life. It was on a Tuesday at 4 o’clock. I was in Queensland.”

You talk about it as something temporary. It happened and you are not there anymore. That is because you were not able to open and expand and relax and let go. You were not able to integrate the experience into your sense of being, into your sense of self. You did not allow it to infuse the cells of your body, to transform your psyche, to renew your mind. In other words, you failed to embody the experience.

If you can train yourself to breathe and relax, to open and let go, the experience can percolate down to the core of your being and infuse every cell of your body. That high state becomes a natural aspect of your being. It remains alive in you in every moment and forever!

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 2.

The Student-Teacher Relationship & Freedom & Safety

There is one thing that makes Breathwork different from other healing modalities. If I am a psychiatrist or a medical doctor, and I use Breathwork in my practice, my role as a psychotherapist or doctor already comes with a certain code of ethics and standards. There are certain boundary issues and other things that come with the job. Priests, teachers and therapists have certain lines that they cannot cross. Not so with Breathwork.

In Breathwork, the client can actually become the therapist. The therapist can become the client. The teacher can become the student and the student can become the teacher! It is because something new is happening and, if you are locked in your role, you are going to miss some important opportunities.

Many times, we have been caught up in the role of the teacher, when in fact God or life was sending us a teacher. When we are too busy and lost in our role as teacher, we can miss the teachings that were meant for us.

If you are in the practitioner program, and intend to do Breathwork coaching with other people, it's better to enter into that relationship already acknowledging that this is possible and to acknowledge it with the other person. We are peers. We are connected. We are in this game of life together.

Breathwork sets us free so that we don't have to fear boundary issues and we don't have to buy into or sign on to the formal ethics and standards that doctors, psychologists, pastoral councilors, priests or others must adhere to.

For example, if you are a psychiatrist, you are not allowed to enter into financial deals with your patients. That would be considered unethical. And if you're in a position of power in a therapeutic relationship, you don't have sex with your clients.

Naturally, we are obligated by the contract we have with the public, to behave in a certain way. And so, I suggest that if you're going to be a professional Breathworker, sign on to the Global Breathwork Training Alliance and the International Breathwork Foundation's code of ethics and standards. Sign onto them and adhere to them.

I helped to formulate those ethical standards. They were originally taken from the American Psychological Association, with the intention of applying them to Breathwork. But I believe that Breathwork transcends the existing models, so I tried my best to soften and loosen them, to consider them to be useful guidelines, not rigid rules.

One of my friends Jim Morningstar, (his newest book is required reading for practitioners), is a clinical psychologist I've known for 40 years. He was one of the original Rebirthing Breathworkers, a beautiful man. He spearheaded the movement to bring a certain level of ethics and standards to Breathwork.

I signed onto this code of ethics and standards, but I also did my best to soften them. For example, we called them guidelines instead of rules. I don't buy into the cookie stamp or a one size fits all approach. We can trust ourselves to naturally adhere to our personal ethical standards in relationships.

And so, I leave all that up to you and I trust people to follow the natural laws that govern morality. And, of course, it is very useful, important to communicate in advance about all this so that your clients know: "Okay, this is how the relationship is set up."

I'll tell you upfront that I don't put myself or my clients in a box. I allow the client to be my teacher and I trust myself along with my clients/students to determine those boundaries. We communicate about our roles and we agree to establish our own contract each time.

Having rules in place simplifies life for a lot of people. You don't need to deal with certain things. It's like doing business with a friend or with a family member: things can get complicated. Things come up and you know you're going to lose a friend because of the business. Or you are going to lose the business because of the friend or family relationship.

We know that there can be some sticky issues. You know yourself and you know the kind of people you're going to attract. You are going to establish for yourself your own clear rules or guidelines. You form a contract with your clients and you honor your side of it and you expect your clients to honor their side. Everybody lives happily ever after.

I am not going to push it on you, but I suggest that you sign onto the code of ethics and standards if you get my practitioner certificate. When you've signed onto it, you'll be listed in the directory of practitioners. If you don't want to be listed as a practitioner, you can be listed as an enthusiast, a unique teacher or whatever. If you want to join a club that has certain rules, you need to follow the rules of the club. If you're going to play a certain game, games have certain rules so follow the rules.

I don't have many rules. Here are my two rules for Breathwork, which I honor and adhere to in every case and at all times:

- **FREEDOM**
- **SAFETY**

This is also my philosophy in raising children. Anything else might help, but probably will just complicate things or get in the way. Let the child be free and make sure they are safe. That's it. I don't get why people make parenting so complicated. It's really very simple if you do your inner work.

Let children be free, keep them safe, and they will naturally flourish and become all they are meant to be. I see a lot of unnecessary conversations happening between children and parents; a lot of unnecessary forcing of ideas and beliefs.

I give people a lot more freedom than they give themselves. I can tell you that I will give you more freedom than you dare to give yourself. Have no doubt about it: if someone is stopping you, it ain't me! I guarantee you, it ain't going to be me.

I have a certain sense of safety and trust in this process, in life and in myself. This trust, this safety has been tested in the worst possible situations (so many times that I don't have any doubt about it).

Some people ask, "But what would you do if this or that happens?" I don't know what I would do if this or that happens, but I know one thing: I will do what I need to do in that moment. I don't know what that is now and I don't want to know. I don't need to know anything until I need to know it. I think we waste a lot of energy trying to know things before we need to know them.

If something happens and I really need to know what to do, I know that I will know. It will come to me. It will come to me in that moment and not a moment before. I have already survived the worst things that could possibly happen, so there is a part of me that can easily let go and relax. No matter what happens, I can say, "Compared to that, this is a piece of cake, a walk in the park, a tea party!"

This is not just a trick I use or a mental trip I'm running; it is a totally felt experience, undeniable. I have survived some of the worst things that ever could happen to me, so I have a certain sense of comfort and ease—a peace that is beyond understanding; a peace that is very hard to shake off, a felt sense of safety, an aura of safety.

My friend James Cook, the former army general, calls it a shield. He says that we all have a protective shield, but most people have not learned how to access it. They don't know how to listen to their intuitive voice. They cannot tell the difference between their intuition (their inner knowing), and the rational chatter in their mind. They don't know if they're responding to fear or if they're responding to their higher self. They haven't sorted it all out. Breathing sorts all that out.

With Breathwork you will know, you will feel, when you are listening to your higher self, when you are following your intuition, when you are guided by your spirit. And you will know and feel when you are following some program in your head. Breathing sorts that all out, so that there's no doubt, no confusion and no argument.

With Breathwork, decisions are very easily made; it ends confusion. But the mind doesn't seem to like that. The mind likes to chew on problems like a dog likes to chew on a bone. There is no doubt that the dog gets pleasure from chewing on a bone. It chews and chews, puts it down for a while and then it comes back and chews some more.

What happens if you try to take a bone away from a dog? You might lose your fingers! And the mind is like that: it loves chewing on problems; it loves having problems. And if you try to take that problem away, the mind will attack you! This is tricky territory.

So, these are my rules for our next three days together: freedom and safety!

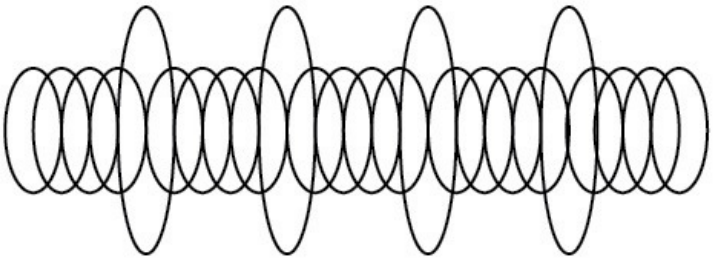
BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

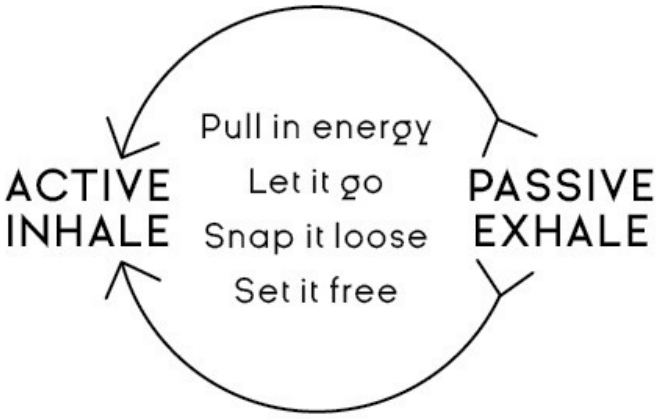
MODULE 3.

Breath Awareness & Conscious Breathing

Continuous Circular

20 CONNECTED BREATHS





MERGING INHALE & EXHALE
CONSCIOUSLY CONNECTED
NO PAUSES OR GAPS

BREATHING

CONSCIOUS
CONNECTED
CONTINUOUS
CIRCULAR

No Pauses
No Gaps

Inhale Active
Exhale Passive

2 BASIC ASPECTS OF BREATH-WORK

1. Breath Awareness (conscious)
2. Conscious Breathing

Yin-Yang
Being-Doing
Conscious-Unconscious
Automatic-Deliberate
"I" do the breathing-Breath breathes "me"

Let's talk about the two basic aspects of Breathwork. I'm still looking for a better term, but right now "aspects" is the best word I can come up with. If anybody else has a better idea, I am open, I'm looking.

Basically, there are 2 things/aspects and you can see them in the definition of Breathwork:

1. Breath Awareness
2. Conscious Breathing

Two different things. They are like the yin and yang aspects of the practice.

With breath awareness, you're not doing anything. The breath is breathing you. It's automatic, it's unconscious. You are just being; you're not doing anything. This is the first step toward breath mastery. It's half of Breathwork: you are simply being the witness. You're not doing the breathing, you're not breathing in any special way. You're stepping back and being the witness.

With breath awareness, you're allowing the breath to come and go by itself–the way it wants and you are simply being present with it. You are just observing it, experiencing it, watching it and sensing it. You are the witness, the detached, objective observer. It is the practice of meditative awareness. You are developing the capacity of meditative awareness, also called "mindfulness".

The second basic aspect of Breathwork is Conscious Breathing. This is where you come in. This is when you breathe in a certain way, you give the breath a certain pattern, a certain quality. You breathe with a certain intention. You take control of the breathing. You do the breathing.

It's like having two wings. Get really good at these two basic aspects and you are well on your way to breath mastery. You will soar! The game is to go back and forth. You do the breathing for a while, you breathe in a certain way and then you get out of the way and let the breath itself or the auto-pilot take over. Then you take over, you take control, and then you let go of control and you get out of the way. It's a dance—the dance of life.

The game is to get comfortable with this relationship to the breath: as the leader in the dance and also as the follower. You want to develop the kind of relationship where you can go from flip to flop. You can take complete control and you can also completely let go, surrender and trust.

You do that every night. You go to sleep and you don't have to think about breathing. You don't have to think about beating your heart; you don't have to manufacture chemicals in your brain. You don't have to know how to digest your food. Something in you knows how to do that. When you practice breath awareness, you are surrendering to your life force. You're staying awake to it and you are discovering what this life force is and your relationship to it. You are connecting to the natural intelligence in your body that knows your own good and that is taking care of you in every moment.

Breathwork is about learning to trust completely in life and to surrender to life. In the end, what choice do we have but to surrender to the life force that moves through us? With Breathwork, we develop a conscious relationship to that deeper or higher life force.

One of my first teachers was Ken Keyes. His 'Handbook to Higher Consciousness' is required reading for practitioners. He also wrote 'A Conscious Person's Guide to Relationships'. He created The Living Love Center (formerly located in Kentucky and later moved to Oregon).

I found his book, The Handbook to Higher Consciousness, on the day that I was discharged from the military. We were camping on the beach in Hawaii, when I met this fat, hippy girl, Bonnie Johnson. (She had a dozen other names and was very good at getting around the system.)

She was living off the grid. A really amazing woman. At one point, she shared a jail cell with one of Charles Manson's girls. She had a little son, a 3-year-old son, Jeremiah Oblio (we called him J.O.). She rode a huge Harley Davidson motorcycle.

The day I got out of the military, the day it was official, we went to the beach. I wanted to disconnect, to live on the beach for a while and disconnect from everything. She was the first person I bumped into and she had a book in her hand. She said, "Oh, this must be for you." She happened to be holding it when we met. It was a yellow-orange book, with a picture of handprint on it, and it got to me.

Ken Keyes had westernized much of eastern spiritual philosophy. He did a beautiful job of it. The book woke me up. There was a cassette tape stuck in the back of the book and listening to him speak was beautiful. I said, "Okay, I have to meet this guy." We talked on the phone at first, and when I finally met him in person, it was a shock.

He was a quadriplegic! He was in a wheelchair and yet he was the happiest, brightest and most joyful guy I had ever met. My first thought was, "Holy crap! How can anybody in his condition be happy? Somebody shoot me if this ever happens to me! Please don't let me be in this state." Literally, I thought, "I'd rather have been dead than be like that." And yet, he was amazingly joyful. It was such a life lesson for me about what happiness is and what it is not dependent on.

I thought of him because we were talking about developing awareness. He called it "conscious awareness" which I think is a really good term because we tend to think that consciousness and awareness are synonymous. Just hearing that phrase, "conscious awareness", made me stop and go "hmmm".

So, anyway, this is what you are developing through the practice of breath awareness. It's breathing meditation. It's meditative awareness, and the more meditative awareness you have, the more conscious awareness you have, the more power and the more results you will get from any breathing technique you practice.

Breath awareness and conscious breathing: these are the two basic aspects of Breathwork and you will go back and forth between them. We are going to explore lots of different conscious breathing techniques. The anti-depression breath that I gave you is an example of a conscious breathing technique. This second aspect, conscious breathing, means you take over from the auto-pilot. You are doing it. You are taking charge.

This is how we practice: we go back and forth between these two aspects. The breath is breathing me and I am being breathed by the breath. I am breathing the breath; I am doing it. I am in charge and then I let go and I allow the breath to breathe me.

The game is to get comfortable going back and forth because we need to get comfortable with that dance. Often we are resisting life and we need to let go into the flow. Other times, we need to take charge, to take control of life. Playing with the breath in this way is a very important practice that leads to many important abilities.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 4.

The Principles of Breath Therapy

5 PRINCIPLES OF BREATH THERAPY

1. Technique
2. Atmosphere
3. Teachers Presence
4. Mind of the Breather
5. "Something else"
(Magical, mystical factor, grace)

First of all, Breath Therapy is based on these two ideas:

• The breathing mechanism in most people is not functioning at an optimum level. It has been dan
and it needs to be healed. It needs to be restored to its full, capacity; it's natural state of function.

• Once the breathing is restored to its full free natural functioning, the breath itself becomes a the

There are Five Principles of Breath Therapy:

1. The Technique.

There are so many breath therapy techniques: thousands, an infinite number. And we can keep making up more of them all the time.

Every technique has a certain effect, a certain power. If you have anything like a normal physiology, and you do something, you are going to get a reaction. If your body is normal, you have certain natural reflexes that are going to fire off. When you breathe in certain ways, you're going to produce certain physiological changes; it's guaranteed. There's no getting around it. Different ways of breathing do different things physiologically, neurologically, psychologically, emotionally and biologically; all of that.

So, we spend a lot of time identifying and practicing the core techniques. I gave you a couple of them already. The question is, "Of all the possible things that you could practice in the beginning, what are the best things to start with?" I already gave them to you: the sigh of relief and the circular rhythm.

2. The Atmosphere.

The second principle is the atmosphere in which you practice the technique. Guess what? The most important atmosphere is freedom and safety!

There's the emotional atmosphere, there is the psychic atmosphere and there's the physical atmosphere. Is it warm? Is it comfortable? Is this a group that I feel good with? There's the energetic atmosphere, the spiritual atmosphere...

The atmosphere is a big factor because you can do the technique surrounded by loving, comfortable and beautiful people who are supporting you and you will get a certain result. Practice the same technique perfectly, but if the people around you are irritating or you are in a dangerous situation—in the middle of a highway with oncoming traffic—you are going to get a very different result. So, the atmosphere is one of the elements of power in Breath Therapy.

3. The Presence of the Teacher.

Who we are speaks louder than what we say. I mean that's what people are getting: they are getting us, not just what we do. We call this "practicing the purity of our personal presence." You can learn a technique from someone who read about it in a book but is not teaching it from personal experience.

He/she might be saying the right words and teaching you the right things, but there's something missing in it because he/she is only passing on ideas and techniques and hasn't embodied or integrated them. You can feel it, right? So, this principle is very powerful: water only rises to its own level.

4. The Mind of the Breather.

The fourth principle is the mind of the breather. What do you think is possible? What are you willing to believe? What is your intention?

Very, very powerful. You can see how, in any given situation, one of these principles could be the key. Any one of them can enhance or destroy the efficiency or the effectiveness of the practice.

You might do the technique right and wonder why nothing happens. Perhaps you haven't tended to the atmosphere, so there's no natural energetic support for the practice. And you wonder why the miracles don't happen.

You can be in the presence of a terrible teacher and so things don't happen. But you can also be in the presence of a remarkable teacher and yet your mind can interfere or interrupt the process. The mind of the breather can cancel the presence of the teacher, can destroy the atmosphere and can neutralize a technique.

Some techniques are powerful enough to transform the mind of the breather. And some techniques are so powerful that the atmosphere doesn't matter and it doesn't matter what you think or believe. Some teachers are so powerful that they don't even need a technique.

Some atmospheres are so powerful that techniques and teachers are not needed. You just sit in a certain place where lay lines cross, sacred places on earth and so on. Just being in that kind of atmosphere causes healing, causes awakening. No technique, no teacher, nothing. So, each of these principles has a certain power of its own.

5. The Fifth Principle: "Something Else".

I don't know what to call it and I don't care what we call it. I just call it "Something Else." There is something else at work. You could call it a magical factor. That's okay with me. There's a certain magical or mystical factor. Maybe the religious idea of "grace" explains it. That's okay too.

All I know is that there is something else working for us, with us, because you can do the technique wrong. You can do it in the worst possible atmosphere, with the worst teacher on the planet and you can do it with all wrong intentions—and still something beautiful and amazing can happen! So, there must be something else at work.

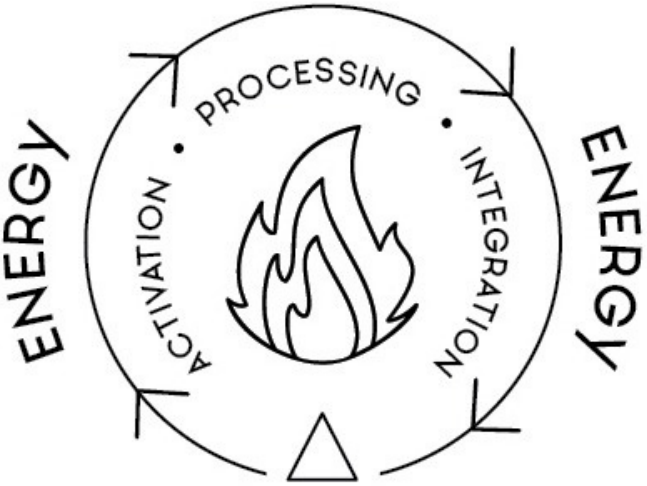
I don't know what it is. I don't care that I don't know. Maybe I don't even want to know. But I use it, I trust it and I depend on it as much as I do the other principles.

So these are the 5 Principles of Breath Therapy.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 5.

Conscious Breathing and Two Core



2 CORE TECHNIQUES

1. SIGH OF RELIEF

Inhale x 2 normal
Tidal volume
One on top of the other

2. CIRCULAR BREATHING

Wheel
Connected breathing
Continuous breathing

Two core techniques in Breathwork:

1. The Sigh of Relief
2. The Circle of Breath

Master these two core techniques: the exaggerated sigh of relief and the connected rhythm or continuous breathing—like a wheel of breath turning. These two breathing patterns are impossible, or very difficult to access, when you're at the end of your rope, when you're under extreme stress or when you're in pain.

When you are anxious and afraid, these two breathing patterns are impossible or difficult to access. If you train them into your system and you practice them, gradually and in increasingly difficult moments, you will master the ability to breathe this way anywhere and anytime, no matter what's happening inside you or around you.

If you master these two techniques and can access them at will, you are free. You will get through whatever it is you need to get through. You will be able to connect to your peace, your love and your clarity. You will be able to stay calm and clear and be creative, regardless of what you're feeling, in spite of what's happening around you or inside you.

That is freedom: the ability to feel wonderful, to feel connected, to be loving, aware, alive and relaxed, regardless of what's happening inside you or around you.

Master these two core techniques and replace your miscellaneous urges and random reactions with one of these two chosen responses and you will be freer. After more than 150,000 people, in 59 countries over 40 years, this is not an experiment for me. It might be an experiment for you, but not for me. For me, the experiment is over. I do not have the luxury of doubt.

Train these two breathing patterns into your mind-body system so that your system engages in them by itself, in the same way it now defaults to contraction, withdrawal, breath-holding, tunnel vision or running around like a chicken with its head cut off. All these miscellaneous, random reactions can be replaced by one of these two core breathing responses.

When we do Breathwork, something happens energetically. Breathing air is only one level of it. Really, we're using the breath to produce a deeper change, on the level of energy. As Breathworkers, it is our job to practice and master these two core energy breathing exercises/techniques and then pass them on.

During this training, at any given moment, someone in this room needs to be consciously breathing. Imagine how difficult it must have been for the Buddha, to wake up in a world where he was the only conscious person; where everyone else was unconscious. That was very, very difficult. But if you are surrounded by conscious people, it's much easier for you to become conscious.

So that's it. The sigh of relief is one of the core techniques and connected or circular breathing is the other core conscious breathing pattern.

And circular breathing is really simple: you've got a lot of freedom here. You can do it fast or you can do it slow. You can do it deep or you can do it shallow. You can do it through your nose or you can do it through your mouth. You have a lot of choice, just make sure the breath is always connected. Breath is circular and uninterrupted; it's continuous. There's no holding, there are no pauses and no gaps between the breaths. It's a continuous, connected breathing pattern, a circular flow, like a wheel turning.

And if ever there is a moment when you cannot access one of these breathing patterns, forget about doing anything else. I have taught this to Navy Seals and Special Forces personnel. If you're in a panic, you don't reach for your gun, you reach for your breath. If you're confused and you don't know what to do, you don't look at the map, you look at your breathing.

And, as you turn your attention to your breath, you are also reaching for your gun, if that's truly what's needed in the moment. As you remember to breathe, you are looking at the map, if that's what is needed in the moment. It's not a conscious choice at that point: you are in the flow.

Mark Divine, someone I write about in my book, was parachuting and someone else lost control and got tangled up in his chute. He had to cut himself loose and use his reserve chute. You have to be trained to do that. And if it's never happened before, it's like when you're on an airplane and the stewardess is giving the same old speech about the oxygen mask and the life vest.

If a time came when you actually had to use the mask or the life vest, you would be going, "Wait a minute; was that the blue thing? Was that the red strap? What am I'm supposed to do?" If you haven't physically walked through the process, you probably won't be able to remember what to do in a moment of crisis. You have to be trained so that in the moment you do it automatically.

Mark talks about how he didn't really think about pulling his reserve chute, he simply pulled it. His training kicked in. With only seconds to the ground, he took a breath and, while he was taking that breath, he pulled his reserve chute. He hit the ground at about 60 miles an hour.

He had only six or seven seconds from when he got tangled until when he hit the ground. Not a lot of time to think and not really a lot of time for the chute to open. It slowed him down enough that he was able to land completely uninjured. And guess what his first thought was? "What about the other guy? How is he?" He didn't choose to think about that other guy, he was trained to think of his men and, because he was in the flow, that's where his attention naturally went.

So, we're training certain breathing patterns, certain breathing responses into our system, so that they happen by themselves in those moments when we don't have time to think. If we train, then at those pivotal points and in those critical moments, we will automatically do what we need to do. We will say what needs to be said. And we won't have to worry about it, we won't have to think about it. It will happen. It just happens.

So here are the two core techniques: The Sigh of Relief and Connected Breathing.

The sigh of relief starts with a long inhale. It's really interesting how medical, scientific people define this. Don't we all consider a sigh of relief to be the exhale? That's what I always thought. You think of a sigh of relief and you think of the exhale. But in fact, they measure or define a sigh of relief in terms of the inhale.

A sigh of relief happens when you breathe a breath that is twice as big as your average breath (tidal volume). A sigh is an inhale that is twice as big as normal. That's a sigh. And because you took this expanded inhale, because you took an inhale that was twice as big as usual, it triggered a bigger than usual exhale, which triggers a natural release. We call it a sigh of relief.

So that's what you focus on: putting one inhale on top of the other. Here's a normal size breath [demonstrates]. It turns around at a certain point. But when I do a sigh of relief, I put another inhale on top of the first one. That triggers a bigger exhale than usual.

Then what I want to do is squeeze all the juice I can out of that exhale. When I let the breath go, I really let it go. I let go of the breath, I let go of muscles and I let go of joints. I let go of whatever thought I had; I let go of whatever I was focusing on. I let go of the past.

And if you want to be a Buddha, you let go of your sense of self and you pass through that fear of destruction, disappearance or whatever the ego is afraid of. You pop back up in the next moment and the ego thinks: "Oh, ok, I guess letting go isn't as scary as I thought." Then the next time you're able to let go even more deeply. And even more deeply. And even more deeply.

When you take that sigh of relief, you are 100 percent absorbed in the process. You're breathing in, you're sensing the feelings and sensations of the air flowing into you. You're sensing the movement and the muscles you're using–the sounds. You are tracking the feelings of expansion, you're tracking those sensations and you are totally absorbed in the experience of breathing. It's a meditation: it's a moment of meditation. You are fully and totally absorbed in the conscious act of breathing in, of inhaling.

And then, when you let go, you not only let go of the breath, you also let go of the muscles, joints, thoughts, points of view, your position, what you think is right and what you think is important. You let go of this thing that you're trying to convince somebody else is so right, so proper and so necessary.

You let go and let go and let go. That is frightening because the ego says, "No, this is right and it should be and I want you to know it. This is how it is and this is the truth." When you are caught up and contracted in that kind of thinking, in that moment, can you expand? Can you relax and let go? It might mean losing the argument, letting the other person be right. Oh, how our egos hate it when that happens!

There's a lot of stuff to work through, but the breath will take you to whatever it is you need to work through. It's magical in that way. You don't need to think about "What should I work on?" Or "What kind of therapy or discipline do I need?" The breath will bring you face to face with whatever it is you need to deal with, work on, to let go of, or to open to. Whatever shift or awakening you need, the breath will take you there.

The second core technique is Circular Breathing. This takes a little more practice because it's not something that you have seen or felt happen by itself as much as you have a sigh of relief. It takes conscious, active focus to maintain a circular or connected breathing pattern, so practice it at every opportunity.

Now we bring these two things together into a really beautiful exercise that Leonard Orr invented called 20 Connected Breaths.

An audience member asks about pausing after the exhale.

It's nature's way of re-setting, re-establishing stability and maintaining metabolic balance. That pause after the exhale is natural. We are going to talk about that and move into that more as we go along.

Connected Breathing (eliminating any pauses) is for transformation. This practice is for entering the flow state. This is for breaking out of habitual patterns and clearing early conditioning. It's for restructuring and re-patterning the body-mind system. It serves to dissolve or burn away the limiting habits, patterns and structures that already exist.

The breath pattern you mentioned, putting a pause after the exhale, is useful after you've gone through a transformational process and you are on a new level. Then that pause grounds you on the new level.

Inhale, exhale, pause. Inhale, exhale, pause. That's what we were talking about; there's a use, an application and a time and place for that. No doubt, it's really important to explore, even necessary. In fact, it's one of the things you will also seek to master in the next three days. It has a different purpose than connected breathing.

20 Connected Breaths are four short breaths and one long on: four short breaths in and out, all connected, circular and continuous, and every fifth breath is a big sigh of relief. We've just taken the two core techniques and built them into a single practice exercise.

Let's spend a couple of minutes doing your version of that exercise.

Four short breaths, one long one. Four short, one long. Four short, one long. Four short, one long. Twenty breaths altogether. Every breath is connected to the next one and connected to the last one. A continuous, uninterrupted, seamless, circular breathing rhythm, where every fifth breath is a big, expanded inhale and a sigh of relief.

Breathe through your mouth or through your nose, however you think or feel to do. That's important information. What do you naturally choose to do? Without any further instructions, go ahead and do 20 Connected Breaths right now and notice how you do it. Fast? Slow? Through your nose? Through your mouth? That's important information. We're going to get into that. But for now, just do it: 20 connected breaths, and feel what changes in you.

I skipped a little piece. Before you do the 20 connected breaths, meditate for a few moments on the energy (feelings) in your body. Get a sense of every cell in your body, just checking in. Then do the 20 connected breaths, and when you are done, meditate again for a few moments to sense what has changed. This is a really important part of the practice.

Now do another 20 connected breaths, in a different form−faster or slower. If you did it through your nose, do another 20 connected breaths through your mouth. If you did the first 20 through your mouth, do the next 20 through your nose. If you did them fast, do them slow. If you did them slow, do them fast. If you did it from your belly, do it from your chest. If you did it from your chest, do it from your belly.

We're starting to get into the parameters of Breathwork, which we'll go into more later. For now, just do another round of 20 connected breaths. Feel, observe and meditate for a moment, because you want to see what's happening within you. Do another 20 connected breaths and notice where the strongest feeling is. What is your mood? What's happening inside of you?

You want to check in before and after each set of 20 conscious connected breaths. And you can do it in increasing levels of intensity… different versions of it. At some point, you're going to do it lying down on your back, on your stomach, on your side, sitting up and standing up. You're going to do it in different positions because each of those positions is going to create different feelings and sensations.

[Demonstrates]

You have just learned one of the fundamental practices that we call 20 Connected Breaths. It brings together the two core techniques and it brings together several other things which we're going to go into next.

I want you to do one more set of 20 connected breaths and I want you to do it in a very different way than how you've done it so far. Be creative. Do another 20 connected breaths, but in a very different way than the way you have already done it. Change it up in a dramatic way. Be enthusiastic. Be passionate. Be creative.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 6.

Sigh of Relief & Yawning

SECRET HANDSHAKE

STATE OF THE ART CUTTING EDGE TECHNIQUE

Sigh of relief + yawn
Circular breath = yawn

SHH...
Don't tell, don't share,
Don't teach
JUST DO IT!

When does a sigh of relief happen?

Give it to yourself right now.

[Demonstrates]

When does that breath happen by itself–without you making it happen, without you doing it or without you thinking about it? When does that particular breathing response occur? Give me an example. When does the sigh of relief naturally occur or take place?

Let's jump to an advanced breathing technique.

Combine a yawn and a sigh of relief. What does it look like? What it does feel like? What is that? It's not quite a yawn and it's not quite a sigh of relief: it's both.

First, you need to be able to trigger a yawn. Wiggle your jaw. Do something with your throat and jaw as you inhale to make a yawn happen. Then, while the yawn is happening, give yourself a sigh of relief. Consciously give yourself a sigh of relief while the yawn is happening.

You can trigger a yawn and you can suppress a yawn. But when a yawn is happening, you are not doing it: it's happening. It takes over your system. It's hard to get out of the way of it. But we've learned to suppress it, from when we're very small, in school. I was literally slapped with a ruler because I was yawning (in the back of the classroom). And so, I became a trouble maker because I loved the feeling and I was squeezing all the juice out of every yawn!

It happened accidentally at first. I wasn't trying to make anyone laugh; I wasn't trying to do anything. This beautiful yawn took over my little young body and I opened to it. I allowed this full yoga stretch to occur and I allowed the sounds of pleasure to come out: "Ahhh!"

"Never do that again," was the message I was given. Maybe other people would have been programmed in subtler ways: "It's not polite." "Am I boring you?" "Are you tired?" "How dare you yawn when the professor is talking!"

An exercise for my practitioners is yawning in an elevator. Have you've ever been in an elevator, a crowded elevator, and somebody goes . . . "ouuuaahhh" *[yawning]*? There must be some unwritten rule. I haven't seen it, but it must be posted somewhere and everybody got the memo because nobody yawns in elevators. You need to be the one to do that and then watch what happens on that elevator. Watch when people come out of the elevator. It's fun! It's required homework for practitioners.

The yawn is an autonomic response. You can trigger it and you can suppress it. But when it's happening, you're not doing it. It takes over your system, right?

And so, the idea is to consciously breathe while you're yawning. Take the 2 core techniques–the sigh of relief and the circular breath–and integrate them into your yawn. My Breathworkers have a secret handshake and it looks like this *[demonstrates breathing thru the yawn].*

Instead of yawning and freezing the breath [demonstrates], we in the Breath Mastery world yawn in a different way. We spin the breath like a wheel when a yawn happens. If a yawn comes in accidentally, jump on it. Take advantage of it. Give yourself a big expansive inhale and a sigh of relief while yawning. And spin the breath like a wheel. While you're spinning the breath like a wheel, yawn. When you give yourself a sigh of relief, trigger the yawn.

You're doing those two things: the sigh of relief and the wheel of breath. You are sighing and doing circular breathing while the yawn is happening. You are cutting new neuro pathways. The ancient part of your brain that triggers a yawn

connects with the modern part of the brain. While your system is running on automatic pilot—causing a yawn—you are consciously breathing at the same time.
In the beginning, it's a little sticky [sample yawn]. That's okay; practice. Smooth it out and something beautiful is going to happen in your brain and body. Your breathing mechanism is going to loosen up; it's going to get freer and, with practice, you will be able to do it very easily and efficiently.

You're not interfering with the yawn and the yawn is not interfering with your breathing. They're coming together. You and nature are now doing something hand in hand. You're consciously doing something exactly when your nature has taken over your system. You are creating a connection to your intuitive abilities.

What you're doing is blending with nature; you're coming into harmony with your nature. You're in charge of it and you are also totally surrendering to it. Both things are happening. That yin-yang symbol with a little white dot in the middle of the black side and the little black dot in the middle of the white side. You have merged these two polarities, doing and being, and they're happening spontaneously. That causes the gradual expansion of consciousness and also the development of deeper capacities, a strengthening of your foundation, a broadening of the footing upon which you can build higher abilities.

[Demonstrates a yawn of relief]

So, the next time you yawn, don't just yawn. Jump on it, spin the breath like a wheel and give yourself sighs of relief while the yawn is happening. The next time you yawn, practice circular breathing. Activate a yawn and bring it together with conscious breathing—with the two core techniques.

The guys in the anti-terrorism and hostage extraction teams are practicing this. And they're not practicing it for a woo-woo kind of fun. They're practicing it because it is having a profound effect on the teams. This simple practice expands your inner resources and it deepens your connection to others.

[Demonstrates bringing together a yawn and a sigh of relief, a yawn and circular breathing.]

You sense the other people on the team better. I look at something and it makes you look there. You feel something and it causes me to pay attention. It's an energetic connection; an intuitive connection. It helps create a group flow state. It's gives you more situational awareness; it's gives you more arousal control. It gives you better emotional and mental state management skills.

Some people need a reason before they do something (and it better be a good reason)! They say, "It better make sense so that I have a reason to practice it." I think it's better to just dive into it, do it and see for yourself what the benefits are. I know what the benefits are going to be. I'm watching them as they occur in myself and in others. Yet, we are just scratching the surface and we don't yet know what all the benefits are.

If you need to know everything about something before you do it, then you don't belong teaching Breathwork! The things that I've learned and understand most, were not learned or understood until I was looking back on them. And if I would've required the understanding before I did it, I never would have done it. Certain understandings only come after the fact, but that's when real genuine understanding comes. Not philosophical, not intellectual, but deep, real, actual.

As soon as you feel the urge to yawn, as soon as the yawning reflex happens, let that cause you to breathe in (expand) and let go (breathe out). If the yawn is still happening, spin the breath like a wheel.

[Demonstrates]

Don't worry about how other people will react. Why should your yawn or sigh of relief bother anyone? Every now and then you have to give yourself a big sigh of relief. If people ask, "Why do you keep doing that?" Reply with another sigh of relief!

Don't allow other people's reactions to twist and contort and cause you to react. Somebody has to wake up. Somebody at some point has to back out of that game of shame and self-consciousness and conformity. Use the yawn and the sigh to make space for something else. So, the perfect answer when somebody asks you why you keep doing it, is to do it again!

Override the urge to defend yourself, to explain yourself, to rationalize what you're doing or to explain what you're doing. And don't try to convince them that they should do it, just double down on the practice.

That sigh of relief, by the way, comes to the average person every five minutes or about 12 times an hour. There have been several medical studies that show that the average person takes an inhale that is twice as big as normal, which is what we call a 'sigh', about every five minutes, or 12 times an hour.

Nature makes you do that. Maybe you've caught it, maybe you've noticed when it happens. A big breath comes to you all by itself. You didn't do it on purpose; you didn't think about it. But you couldn't help but notice it: a breath twice as big as normal. Have you noticed it? Do you notice it every time it happens? I doubt it. It is happening about every five minutes. Where are you when it's happening? "Hell if I know!"

But if you do catch it, if you notice it, then guess what you should do? Double down on nature! Do it again deliberately, right away after it happens by itself. Show nature that you appreciate it and you are willing to cooperate with it.

Medical people understand that the purpose of the reflex is to regularly hyper inflate the alveoli of our lungs. Otherwise, we're going to lose our respiratory capacity. Nature makes you hyper inflate your lungs from time to time, regularly, about every five minutes, to make sure that you don't lose your respiratory capacity.

It's like anything else: if you don't get up and walk or run or exercise, gradually you'll get more and more stiff and less and less able to move. Same thing with breathing: if you don't hyper inflate your lungs from time to time, your respiratory capacity will decline.

Yawning is like an "ah-ha" kind of thing. Whoa! Wait a minute. Let's look into this more; let's play with it, let's explore it. Because no one fully understands the phenomenon, yet the list of reasons why people yawn is already very long. Many parts of the brain are affected by yawning. It amazes neuroscientists.

There is no single activity that lights up more parts of the brain and has more neurological benefits than a simple yawn, so do it! And don't just do it when you need to. Don't just do it when your body makes you do it. From time to time, your body will make you do a sigh of relief, but that's just for survival. This is a survival level reflex. Is anybody here interested in something more than just survival?

If nature is giving you something to do based on survival, maybe you should do more of it. Make it a point to cooperate with nature. Double down on nature and see what happens. Every time a sigh of relief comes by itself, do another one right away on purpose. Every time you yawn unconsciously or automatically, yawn again on purpose right away and watch what gradually happens in you.

If you have any sense of energy in your body, you can immediately feel what happens. You feel very different before a sigh of relief and after a sigh of relief. You feel very different before a yawn and after a yawn. Tune into the subtle changes in your energy that occur with yawning.

Animals yawn before they attack and they yawn after the fight is over. The yawning reflex is stimulated by light. The trigger point for yawning is somewhere buried in the middle of your brain. Light can't even get to it. What's that about?

You yawn when you're tired, but you also yawn when you're full of energy and you're waking up. There are all kinds of uses for the yawn, which we have not yet figured out. It may be decades before we understand fully what the yawn is all about. Don't wait; be your own scientist. Get in on the ground floor of this research!

Not all the research is being shared, I can tell you that. When I trained those teams in Russia, they didn't want me telling people that I had been training with them. Half of them wore masks; I don't know who the hell they were. They were Spetsnaz guys, Russian version of our DEA. I don't even know where those damn people work. They don't want me to know who they are and they don't want other people knowing that they were training with an American.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 7.

Formula of Transformation

FORMULA FOR TRANSFORMATION

1. AWARENESS
- Consciousness factor

WAKE UP!

2. RELAXATION
- Release factor

LET GO!

3. BREATHING
- Energy factor

TAKE CHARGE!

- **Awareness–it's the consciousness factor, and the message is "Wake up!"**
- **Relaxation–it's the release factor, and the message is "Let go!"**
- **Breathing–it's the energy factor, and the message is "Take charge!"**

This formula for transformation came from looking at every time someone had a deep healing, a leap in their growth or a positive change in their life. It was always connected to awareness. They discovered the surgeon that they didn't know about. They got a different view of something that changed everything. They learned something that made a huge difference. Consciousness was that first piece of transformation.

This (holding a pen) had to be an idea in someone's head before it could appear in the physical world. It started in someone's consciousness. Everything starts in consciousness. Many spiritual traditions teach that we started as a thought in God's mind. God had an idea and, poof, here we are!

Everything begins in consciousness; the first element: awareness. You could go to a surgeon and they could fix you and maybe you say that this has nothing to do with your awareness. But you had to become aware of the surgeon and of the surgical procedure. Without it, you would not have gotten fixed, so it did start with consciousness.

Relaxation. There's a spiritual principle for you! How many things have been healed? How many problems have been solved just because of letting go? How many things have come to you and how many times have you gotten free of something, just because you decided to let go?

"Surrender." "Selfless service." "Let go and let God." Relaxation is a spiritual principle and it's also responsible for a lot of transformation and growth. If you can't let go of where you are, you are not going to get anywhere else.

Taking charge. At some point, we have to be an active participant in our own healing, in our own growth and in our own awakening. If somebody does it for us, it's probably not going to last. We are probably going to default back to some habitual state. But if we are the one making the change, if we are the one actively involved, then we own it and it lasts.

So, we bring these three things together and we call it the formula for transformation.

Wake up! That's what happened to the Buddha. When people asked the Buddha, "Wow, what happened to you?" He said: "I was sleeping and I woke up. That's it. I just woke up."

What was the Buddha doing at the moment of his enlightenment? He was observing his breath. He was practicing Breath Awareness.

So, this was the piece that Tony Robbins caught from me and wanted to digest. He likes it when things take the form of a simple formula. He could see how you can take a simple formula and develop it and build on it.
It's one of the reasons I love him. He knows when he gets something. And as soon as he learns something, he pulls somebody into the room and he passes it onto them. He knows that when something helps him, it can help others. He gets his assistant; he gets his wife; he gets somebody else to learn it right away.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 8.

The 3 Cornerstones of Breathwork

3 CORNERSTONES

BREATHING FOR

1. MINDFULNESS
2. RELAXATION
3. ENERGY

3 FUNDAMENTAL CORNERSTONES

1. Breathing for Mindfulness

If you're going to practice only one kind of breathing exercise or breathing technique, start with one that makes you more conscious, more aware, more mindful.

2. Breathing for Relaxation

You want to learn to breathe in a way that improves your ability to relax. When you relax, something opens. Relaxation opens the door for energy. When you relax, something can move, can flow, can release. Maybe there is something you think you need to dig into and understand, to work on or fix and change; but maybe if you simply learn to relax and let go, the issue will resolve itself.

3. Breathing for Energy

The third basic skill is to learn how to breathe energy and not just air. That energy is called prana, chi, ki, spirit, life force, bioenergy, whatever. Breathing literally generates energy–it gives you energy, it connects you to the source of your energy.

In thinking where to start, what to practice first and in what order, the breathing exercises and breathing techniques to start with are these. First, learn to breathe in a way that makes you more conscious, more mindful, more aware. I think this is the best order of business.

As you become more mindful, you become more aware of yourself, of your tension and relaxation and your reactions. All kinds of things. You'll become more sensitive to subtle things that interfere with the breathing. As you become more mindful and more conscious, you begin to open up this doorway to more energy.

Keep this in mind and, if you can practice something that will help you with all three of these things, then you've got yourself a very powerful breathing technique or exercise.

When you practice breathing, there's no limit to how conscious you can become, how aware and how awake you can become. Also remember that relaxation is not just a matter of being relaxed or not relaxed. There are different levels of relaxation.

And there is a spectrum of awareness. There is visible light and we only see a certain little slice of what's out there. We are only sensing a small fraction of what's out there. As we practice Breathwork, our consciousness expands, we start to take in more information, more energy. The world and life itself opens up to us. We begin to consciously experience things that were there all the time that we have been missing.

If something is this big [ ] and my awareness is this big [ ], guess how big this something will appear to me?
And as my awareness grows, the something seems to get bigger!

Consciousness or mindfulness is also related to tension and relaxation. One of the things we've learned is that as you become more relaxed, it often feels like you are becoming more tense. What's happening is the awareness of your tension is growing and this makes it seems as if you have more tension.

So, these are the fundamentals (a formula for transformation):

Breathe in a way that gives you more energy, that wakes up energy and generates more energy.
Breathe in a way that allows you to become more conscious, more aware, more sensitive.
Breathe in a way that deepens and expands your ability to relax.

There is a very subtle energy in the breath and you can't move it with your muscles. You can't move energy with your muscles. Energy is what moves the muscles. It's not your muscles that move the energy. Energy is moved with your consciousness, with your intention, with your breath.

Maybe there is no difference between energy and consciousness. Maybe consciousness is energy. Maybe energy is consciousness. When you play with the breath, you are playing with your awareness and your energy. These are the two most important things we have to work with. They are what make us human and allow us to function and thrive.

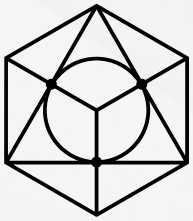
Consciousness sets us apart from, or sets us above, many other life forms. The essence of who we are as human beings is consciousness. When energy and consciousness come together, something is always created. That might be the essence of the creative process: bringing together consciousness and energy. And when we breathe, we're doing exactly that: we are bringing together consciousness and energy.

As we practice, many new things become possible for us. Many amazing things naturally start to happen. Breathing for more awareness, breathing for more relaxation and breathing for more energy: those are the cornerstones of Breathwork. Master them.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

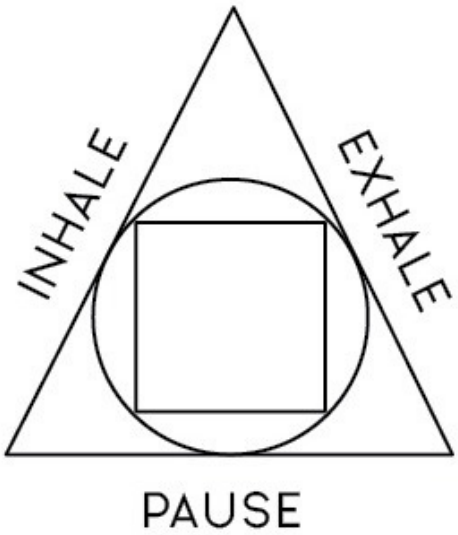
MODULE 9.

The Basic Series & the Triangle Breath



BASIC SERIES

1. Natural breathing pattern
2. Energy to effect ratio
3. Nose & mouth
4. Diaphragmatic breathing
5. Fast/slow - Hight/low
6. 3 spaces + full yogic breath
7. Coherent breath
8. Infusing every cell in the body with energy



The next exercise is what we call the triangle breath:

Inhale, exhale, pause… Inhale, exhale, pause… Inhale, exhale, pause…

This is nature's way of breathing us. It's the way that the body breathes itself when we are sitting at rest. This pattern represents the natural biological, physiological, chemically driven breathing pattern: Inhale, exhale, pause… Inhale, exhale, pause…

This is a perfect breathing pattern to begin with because it is how nature already makes you breathe and so you are coming into harmony with nature's way. Before you start doing different things with the breath, I suggest you first surrender to the breath. See and feel the way it likes to move. Allow the breath to guide you.

I studied pranayama with Swami Rama. He was a genuine yogi who came from India to the Menninger Foundation in the USA around 1970, where he demonstrated his yogic abilities by holding his breath for 17 minutes. How is this possible? 17 minutes of breath-holding! If a human can do that, what else is possible?

There was a neurosurgeon and a cardiac specialist who tested and studied him and he blew them away with his abilities. They became instant devotees and established the Himalayan Institute in Honesdale, Pennsylvania. They parked Swami Rama there and set up his retreat/training center.

They had a bio-feedback lab where I was playing with lowering and raising my blood pressure; controlling my heart rate and my body temperature; cooling myself off and making myself sweat; dilating and constricting blood vessels—controlling so-called involuntary process. It was so cool to learn that we can do this stuff.

The equipment gave you real-time feedback. I could see what happened when I visualized or remembered or imagined different things… I learned what happened when I relaxed in certain ways or when I linked or synched up my heart beats with breathing rhythms. I learned what conscious breathing and deliberate relaxation was doing to my chemistry, to my physiology. These were really useful lessons.

Breathing is a behavior. Lots of times we think a certain breathing practice is causing a certain something, but when you actually test and monitor your practice, you find that it may not be having the effect you thought.

For the practitioners in the room, please google Dr. Peter Litchfield. He's on my board of advisors and he leads the School of Applied Behavioral Science. Dr. Litchfield offers PhD programs in breathing and behavioral science. He has brought together respiratory physiology and the behavioral sciences to create a new model for health and well-being.

How do you learn behaviors? You take them on unconsciously, or you model them deliberately, you consciously establish them. We know that certain behaviors serve us and other behaviors don't. Certain behaviors can make you the best in the world at certain things. Certain behaviors can put you in the category of the "one percenters." They can also make you ill, ruin your life, land you in jail or even kill you. We know that conscious and unconscious behaviors are extremely important.

People fall into various behaviors in moments of stress, when emotions arise, when in pain and while performing in arts, sports, business and so on. Dr. Litchfield teaches athletes to manage their physiology, their chemistry, by changing their respiratory behaviors.

He points out that there is a difference between breathing and respiration. Breathing is the behavior; respiration is the biological, autonomic activity that occurs when breathing. It is reflexive.

If you were to hook yourself up to a monitor and track every breath you take–the rate, the volume, the rhythm, and track a graphic display of the moment to moment physiological/chemical changes you produce, it would surprise you.

If you had been monitoring and charting my breathing pattern for the last 10 minutes, you would see an irregular, even chaotic pattern. It speeds up, it slows down; it intensifies, it stops. You'd go, "Whoa, that's not healthy! Jesus, look at this! It's chaotic, it's a crazy breathing pattern!" Well, yes, because it's serving something else. It's not serving my physiological needs, it's serving my desire to communicate.

What if you are a performer, an athlete, and the way that you're breathing is actually causing stress or anxiety? You have unconscious breathing habits connected to different activities and emotions. They're serving you in some way on one level, but they are actually getting in the way on another level.

So, when you start to look at breathing as a behavior, and you merge that with respiratory physiology and respiratory chemistry, you come up with a new model for healing, for therapy, for counselling.

In the membership area, you will find quite a few articles by Peter Litchfield. I also interviewed him; we've done webinars together and those videos are also in the membership area.

Peter really helped me with this a lot. You know that you know something, you understand something, but then, suddenly, you really know it! You really understand it! You thought you understood it, and you did, but then suddenly you have a big Ah-ha! An even deeper understanding...

Inhale, exhale, pause... Inhale, exhale, pause... Inhale, exhale, pause.

Nature puts this pause after the exhale because we just made a cosmic journey. You inhaled, you exhaled, and now you've come home. The principle I got from Peter, his mantra, his basic teaching is: "Make the pause after the exhale a comfort zone." Make this pause a comfort zone.

You should be able to relax into that pause and not rush right away into the next inhale. Many people cannot tolerate a pause after the exhale for more than a few seconds. This is not healthy. Don't rush into the next inhale before you have completed the last exhale and have rested in that natural pause.

If I exaggerate that... *[Demonstrates]*. Here's a normal inhale and a complete exhale. Now what happens if I don't complete the exhale? Look where I end up *[demonstrates dysfunctional state]*.

If you have the unconscious behavior of not completing your exhale, of rushing into the next inhale, you are constantly producing stress in your body. You are making your body feel like it's in danger. You're telling your body that there is danger. Because what interrupts the breath? What causes it to fall out of a natural physiological rhythm or healthy pattern? Fear. Pain. Danger. Some kind of threat.

If you have the unconscious habit of interrupting the exhale, cutting it short, not completing it, grasping quickly at the next inhale before allowing the diaphragm to relax and reset, consider this:

The diaphragm is the biggest muscle in your body. It's the biggest guy in the room. And if the biggest muscle in the body is tense, imagine how all the little muscles must feel? "Oh, if he's nervous, we must be in trouble!"

One of the practices we do is connected to that second element in the formula for transformation: letting go. We deliberately relax the jaw muscles while exhaling and we allow the diaphragm to totally relax. The jaw muscles are very small compared to the diaphragm, but they are very powerful. You can bite down much harder than you can clench your fist.

Also, the jaw muscles are some of the first muscles we learn to use. Sucking muscles, chewing—what comes into us; and communication, expression—what comes out of us. There are a lot of memories stored in these muscles. These muscles are tangled up with lots of stuff. And everyone sets their jaw in a certain way unconsciously. The jaw, and many other muscles, can tense up when we are not aware of them.

We all carry a certain amount of chronic tension in the jaw. If you are a little baby, your jaw is loose and soft; you're dripping and drooling and someone keeps wiping your face, so you tense up in the process of learning to control that drooling. Now, you don't want to look like a baby and it's embarrassing to drool. To control that, you carry chronic tension in the jaw area.

The jaw is a signal muscle. When the jaw relaxes, other muscles relax. Your neck relaxes, your forehead relaxes, your throat relaxes, your shoulders relax. The jaw muscles are connected to everything and when they relax, you start this cascade of relaxation.

Learn to relax your jaw at the same time as you relax your diaphragm. You are relaxing the biggest muscle in the body and also the little muscles in the jaw. Consciously practice: relax the jaw as you allow that exhale to complete itself. At some point, you can feel the diaphragm reset. If you don't feel the diaphragm reset and you start to breathe in, what that means is you didn't allow the diaphragm to completely relax before you call upon it to contract again.

When you breathe in, it's because your diaphragm contracts. When you breathe out, it's because your diaphragm relaxes. If you can consciously breathe in and breathe out at the same moment that your diaphragm reflexively contracts and relaxes, you will make an intuitive connection to your body and its needs. You will create a felt sense of being in the flow. When you consciously choose to breathe in at exactly the moment that your body wants you to breathe in, you come into harmony with your nature. You will have a practical experience of intuition in real time.

Audience member:

So, you wait until you have a diaphragm contraction?

Dan:

You drop into the pause and relax. You open and soften and you wait. You sense, feel, watch and meditate. And, at some point, the diaphragm completely relaxes and resets before contracting. It releases before it contracts again. The relaxation of the diaphragm completes the cycle and it is ready to contract again.

If you can be conscious of when the diaphragm resets−when it totally relaxes−you will feel when the diaphragm is ready to contract again. And if you consciously inhale in that moment when nature, life, spirit or your body wants to breathe in, you have made a direct, intuitive energetic connection to your body. With meditative practice, you begin to feel it and recognize it easily, more and more.

If I use my chest or abdominal muscles to force an exhale when my diaphragm wants to contract and produce an inhale, I am putting myself out of synch with my nature. And if I do that often enough, if it becomes an unconscious pattern, my diaphragm gets weaker and weaker over time. Developing more sensitivity, more meditative awareness is really important.

Take in a normal breath: inhale, exhale and then pause. And during that pause, make sure that you are not "holding" your breath. You are not locking up your system. It's an "open pause." We will get into that much more later, but for now, focus on continuing to relax after the air stops coming out. Continue to exhale "mentally" after the exhale completes

itself physically. It looks like a pause from the outside, but on the inside, the exhale (and the relaxation) is continuing energetically.

At some point, the diaphragm relaxes completely and then it can have a fresh contraction: it's ready for the next inhale. If you rush the inhale, if you make yourself breathe in before the diaphragm has completely relaxed, you are adding layer after layer of tension to the biggest muscle in your body.

If the biggest muscle in your body is carrying chronic tension, the rest of your body feels that and reacts accordingly. So, develop the ability to relax the biggest muscle in your body, learn to relax it completely before you call upon it to contract again… Aahhh!

Relaxing the throat, relaxing the jaw, settling into a soft open pause after the exhale. Waiting, meditating. Making this pause a comfort zone. Enjoy this pause. There is no sense of urgency, no strong feeling that "I need to breathe! I need to breathe!" Something different begins to occur: a certain peace, a certain calm.

Consciously inhale in that exact moment when your body chooses to breathe in. That's an experience you want to have, a skill you want to cultivate.

Alright, so here is the basic breathing pattern. So let's just practice it.

[Triangle Breath see page 46]

Notice that it's not inhale, pause, exhale: it's inhale, exhale, pause. We're going to talk about the pause at the top of the inhale in a little bit. Right now, just relax into this breathing pattern because it's a natural, normal healthy breathing pattern.

Inhale, exhale, pause… Inhale, exhale, pause…

Is yours an equilateral triangle? (That is the inhale, the exhale and the pause are all the same duration, the same length.) You can start to play with the legs of this triangle, making the inhale twice as long as the exhale; making the exhale twice as long as the inhale; or making the pause equal to the inhale and the exhale combined. Play with it. What do you find comfortable and easy?

3-3-3? 4-4-4? 2-6-4? 6-2-6? 8-8-8?

As you play with this triangle, you are increasing your breath awareness and your breath control. You are getting into a conscious breathing practice. There are lots of possible conscious breathing techniques that can be practiced around or within this basic pattern: Inhale, exhale, pause…

Audience member:

When I'm waiting for an actual diaphragm contraction, it seems to take a long time. Are you actually inviting me to wait for that or wait for an earlier kind of impulse?

Dan:

After the diaphragm relaxes, and because the diaphragm relaxes, you relax. And you can stay in that relaxed pause even longer. You can rest in that pause: there is no tension or muscular or mental activity eating up or demanding energy. If you have a lot of tight muscles, or a very busy mind, it's very hard to relax into that pause. The mind and the muscles are demanding energy and this triggers the urge to breathe more quickly.

But if all your muscles are relaxed, and your mind is quiet, you can pause the breath for a very long time. Ask Stig Severinsen: 22 minutes! Relaxation takes away the demand for energy; it takes the energy demand off of the body so the body can relax deeply. The breath can remain suspended for a much longer period of time.

You're feeling for that resetting of the diaphragm, the completion of the relaxation phase in breathing. And yes, there might be a lot of time between that and when you finally breathe in; when the natural impulse to breathe in comes to you again.

Audience member:

So, it's not exactly a contraction like what a free diver is looking for? Because I work with that quite a lot.

Dan:

Yeah, yeah, you want to relax into that long pause. There is a barrier there, a limit, right? When you feel the body trying to make you breathe, you could tense and force yourself to hold the breath longer.

Or, you could practice relaxing into that urge. When you can relax into that urge, you can accomplish longer and longer breath holds. When you fight off those urges to breathe, you can go beyond old habitual limitations.

Here we are talking about relaxing into those powerful urges, to comfortably tolerate longer and longer pauses. You are learning to relax beyond those urges and, as you do, you increase your breath-hold time.

Audience member:

So, you're saying on this, actually go to that stage?

Dan:

You could, but what you need to do is go to the stage where the diaphragm has relaxed completely and then the diaphragm will actually cooperate with you. You allowed it to rest; you allowed it to reset and it's at your instant command. Just the intention to breathe and the diaphragm will contract and cause the inhale.

It's like a jockey on a horse, you know. I am a horrible horseback rider. My baby sister was five years old and riding horses and I was like this: [bouncing motion]. This is my experience of riding a horse. And when I finally get off the horse, my ass is sore, the horse's back is aching and so I am happy and the horse is happy.

But if you can feel the horse and connect with the horse, it's this beautiful thing. The horse feels you; you just have a little intention and the horse feels it. And you are sensing the horse: the connection is so beautiful.

But this [bouncing motion] is most people's relationship to breathing. They're struggling; it's a fight, it's a battle and it's exhausting. It's wearing down the breathing mechanism and it's making you tired. And it's a horrible ride; it's an uncomfortable ride.

But when you synch up to the breathing, when you really connect to it and you can breathe big breaths and it's very effortless, you're like that jockey–perfectly in tune with the horse, and the things you can do… the things you and the horse can do together is amazing. You've harnessed that power.

Audience member:

Could you put that on the back end of a yawn?

Dan:

Oh yes. The moment my diaphragm completely relaxes [snaps fingers] and then I breathe in, my diaphragm cooperates with me. So yeah, good connection to make.

Inhale, exhale, pause...

Let's do a few minutes of that. Just fall into this simple, natural breathing pattern. Inhale, exhale and pause. See what natural shape and size of the triangle occurs. Based on comfort, ease and simplicity, adjust the legs of the triangle. Not trying to set records, not trying to do anything special.

Inhale, exhale, pause... Inhale, exhale, pause...

Since you are choosing to breathe in a way nature has hard-wired you to breathe, certain lovely benefits will occur automatically.

Notice that, at some point, you may have an urge to take a more expansive inhale, that would be a longer leg of that side of the triangle. Maybe the base of the triangle gets shorter or longer as you play with different length pauses, changing the shape of the triangle, the size of it.

Inhale, exhale, pause.

You are consciously practicing the natural breathing pattern: the resting breathing pattern that nature hardwired into us. You are consciously doing it. You are coming into harmony with your nature. And, if you spend enough time living in harmony with your nature, you will be alert when you go against it. You will be alerted when you get out of balance with it.

Every negative physical, emotional and psychological change is preceded, or comes with, an imbalance in the breathing. The imbalance in the breathing is the very first sign that something else is out of balance in you.

When you develop this very intimate relationship with the breath, you can begin to sense when it doesn't feel right. Something is pushing or pulling on my breathing or interfering with my breathing. It's more difficult than usual to take a big breath. Or I can't quite release the exhale completely. Or it's faster than usual. Or it's getting stuck at a certain point...

The more conscious I am of the breathing, the easier I can stay ahead of many issues and problems. Correct the breathing on an energy level before little things develop into big serious things.

Inhale, exhale, pause...

You have something you can practice [Triangle Breath] and now you can get creative with it. When would be a good time to practice that? When getting upset? When getting overly excited? When uncomfortable? Afraid? Whenever you feel out of balance, come into this pattern: inhale, exhale, pause... Inhale, exhale, pause... And make that pause a comfort zone.

If you rush into the inhale, if you gasp at the inhale, that's an emergency reaction. And even though there is no emergency, if you have the habit of grabbing at the inhale–gasping at the inhale, rushing the inhale–you're sending emergency signals to your system! Why would you want to do that 20,000 times a day?

We have a lizard-brain that's monitoring every breath we take. It's regulating the breath and it's monitoring the breath. If I go through the day breathing like this [quick gasping inhales], what am I saying to that poor lizard-brain? "Be careful! Danger! Watch out!"

If that's an unconscious pattern—I'm exaggerating it—even a subtle tendency in that direction of gasping at the inhale, that's a subtle emergency signal. (Subtle tendencies include grasping it, rushing it and jumping into the inhale.) That ancient part of my brain has no choice, but to interpret that as danger, pain, fear or something to be alarmed at. This alarm is going to cause certain physiological, chemical, emotional and psychological tendencies or patterns.

If I go through the day breathing like this, *[soft, slow breaths; sighs of relief]*, what does that tell my lizard brain? "I must feel very good. I must be very safe. Everything must be ok!"

So, we can trick our brain, we can hack into our nervous system, by choosing the way we breathe. You can consciously send information to the brain, to the nervous system, to that ancient part of your brain. You can manipulate it. You already are manipulating it. Every time you rush the inhale, every time you cut the exhale short, every time you can't make that pause a comfort zone, you are sending information to that lizard-brain. But it's not the kind of information you want to send.

Audience member:

So, I was playing around with the awareness of that total relaxation point in the diaphragm and I got it, I felt it. But then I feel like I can inhale with it completely, I can do a really shallow chest inhale with my diaphragm completely relaxed.

Dan:

Remaining relaxed; yeah, yeah.

Audience member:

So, is that like a good practice? Practice for full relaxation?

Dan:

Yes. Yes. It's a good distinction, right? Because we have a whole set of muscles that can do the breathing, even with a paralyzed diaphragm. With a non-functioning diaphragm, you can still manage to breathe (using intercostal muscles and so on). So yeah, that's really useful.

And it's useful to be conscious of that because, under stress, a person can shift into that kind of dysfunctional breathing, which is very inefficient and exhausting. And it can reinforce anxiety, dis-balance and dysfunction.

If you have an unconscious habit of always using accessory muscles–neck muscles, shoulder muscles, back muscles−if they are constantly tangled up in the breathing, this is not a formula for health or freedom.

My very first session with Tony, working on Skype, I said: "Take a couple of deep breaths." I saw him tense his jaw and I saw the tension in his temples. I went, "Holy crap, Tony! What are you doing?"

"I'm taking in a deep breath."

"Yeah, but who told you to tighten your jaw? Who told you to tighten your temples? Those aren't breathing muscles." He went, "Holy fuck; Jesus!"

And it was like, boom, a light went off and he lowered his blood pressure by 15 points within a week. And all he did was practice relaxing muscles that don't belong in the breathing process.

If you're tensing muscles that don't belong in the breathing, every single time you breathe: 20,000 times a day = 20,000 emergency signals. Of course, you're going to have issues!

Audience member:

Some people clench [their jaw] at night time when they're sleeping.

Dan:

Yeah, some people grind teeth and yeah.

Audience: *[inaudible]*

Dan:

If you practice relaxing your jaw, you're re-training it and it will remain relaxed by itself at some point, because you've trained it to relax. In the same way you've trained it to tense up, you can train it to relax.

The jaw is tense because you have unconsciously trained it to be tense. You tensed it again and again, repeatedly in certain situations, until it became a habit. And now you can create a different habit, one that will add years to your life. It's not a drag on your energy because unconscious tension constantly sucks energy, drains energy.

Audience member:

You mentioned several times, when we're experimenting with our breathing [inaudible], but at the same time we've got all these techniques. Let's say you have a jockey riding a horse [inaudible], what's naturally good or not? When you mention that we experiment with our whole body, the way we're breathing naturally, whether it's fast or slow, etcetera. But at the same time, we have all these techniques in between. So when do you know [inaudible] if it's natural and good for your body or not?

Dan:

I guess you just have to feel it. You have to experiment and see what one way of breathing causes, or how it makes you feel certain things and how another breathing pattern will trigger different things. You have to explore, experiment and awaken your intuition, but also your sensitivity. Get more conscious of subtle feelings and sensations and that awareness will direct and guide you.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 10.

Nose & Mouth Breathing

You have a choice between breathing through your nose and breathing through your mouth. You can breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. You can breathe in through the mouth and out the nose. And you can breathe in and out through the nose or in and out through the mouth.

You can breathe in one nostril and out the other. You can breathe into one nostril and out the mouth. You can breathe in the mouth and out one nostril. You can see how you can start to play with the channels. Experiment. You want to get equally skilled and comfortable at breathing through your nose and breathing through your mouth at any time and in all situations.

For example, we were putting athletes on a treadmill. At first, they were breathing through their nose when they started running. When they would break into mouth breathing, we checked their CO2 level, evaluating whether they should switch back to nose breathing.

What was the CO2 level when they switched to mouth breathing? We would then train them to continue nose-breathing beyond that threshold. Gradually moving that threshold further and further, until pretty soon they were breathing through their nose throughout their entire performance.

John Douillard is a chiropractor and has trained those twin tennis players, Serena and…? Anyway, he points to racehorses as an example. Race horses, the most powerful runners on the planet, never breathe through their mouth. If a racehorse is breathing through its mouth, it's because it's dying.

If a horse can maintain that amazing power of running, simply by breathing through their nose, what's a human's problem? We've never developed the discipline to maintain a certain breathing pattern. As soon as stress and the demands of life get to be too great, we break into mouth breathing and that's how we're able to continue to perform. But that creates a lot of wear and tear on the respiratory system.

Audience member:

Some humans have huge nostrils and some humans have small nostrils [inaudible].

Dan:

I had an old mentor in advertising, a friend, and that was one of the first things he looked at in people. It was a little thing that allowed him to assume or conclude certain things about people–about their tendencies, their personalities, their level of intelligence–all kinds of things. And that was his one little thing.

Very few people knew it, but his whole life he somehow had this talent. And he was using it to make decisions about who to work with. He was able to sense things about people, just by the size and shape of their nostrils.

When I was a devoted Swara yogi, we carried a little mirror that was crescent shaped. You stick it under your nose and look at the clouds that form when you exhale onto it [motions exhaling over it]. Each cloud has a certain size and shape. I would draw it in my journal, I would note the time, what I was feeling, what I was doing, what was happening and who I was with.

Left or right nostril dominance: in Swara yoga this is everything. You decide when to eat, when to do a math problem, when to have sex, when to plant a garden, when to sleep: everything is based on that rhythm. And it's connected to the planets, the moon, the sun and the stars. It's an energetic astrological thing that comes right down to our nostrils.

I left my Swara yoga teacher, similar to Swami Rama, another teacher, because I came up to him. I was having one of these epiphanies. And you know you're in the presence of the teacher and you just assume that your epiphany relates to the teacher so you want to share it. And hopefully he says, "Oh grasshopper, yes, you got it!"

But instead, I came to him and he went [looking at his watch], "Come back in two minutes." Oh fuck, two minutes! He was very pure, very strict. I have an aversion to dogmatic strictness, or seriousness when it comes to breathing. I think seriousness is a disease!

If you check your nostrils right now, which one is more open? Which one is more closed? Which one has more resistance? Which one is more free?

This is a biorhythm. Since the day you were born, it has been swinging like a pendulum. In the average person, the range is like forty-five minutes to an hour and a half: something in that range. (People argue about this constantly.) You can't seem to pin it down, but that's the range.

And in that range is a rhythm that is individually and uniquely yours. You could set your watch by it. It is also the first rhythm to become upset when anything else in your system goes out of balance. If you are intimately connected to the breath, you can sense when this happens.

And it's really weird because, almost every time that I begin to think about this and talk about it, they are equal. [Dan uses his phone to check the size and shape of each nostril cloud]. I find that my left and right nostrils are equal right now.

This is "a very auspicious time", they would say, in Swara yoga ashrams. And there are techniques for extending that period when they're exactly equal. And there are certain meditations that you can do when they are equal.

There are certain activities you would do when your left nostril is more open or when your right nostril is more open. You schedule your day; you schedule everything according to this rhythm. These guys are very anal about it. (It's one of the reasons I left the community.) I like it, but it's just a little too… it's just that my personality doesn't jive with the strictness. For many other people, it is a feeling that "This is exactly for me!"

So, let's jump to an advanced practice of playing with the channel—and this is a good way to think about it—"playing with the channel." Nothing serious. You are playing like a child who is discovering their toes; an infant experimenting.

Devise your own practice, alright? Experiment and explore and meditate. How does it feel when you're breathing through your nose or when you're breathing through your mouth?

Let me jump to another advanced thing, just to touch on it quickly to give you a sense of where you can go with this:

Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Do that a couple of times. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. In through your nose and out through your mouth.

How do you seal your mouth when you breathe in through your nose? Do you seal your lips? If so, when it comes time to breathe out through your mouth, you have to unseal your lips, right? You sealed your lips to inhale through your nose, and now you unseal your lips to exhale through your mouth, and the air bursts free and escapes.

What sound naturally occurs when that happens? Mah? Pah? Bah? Primal sounds. I don't make the sound. The sound happens when the pressure of the breath breaks the seal on my lips.

Now, instead of sealing my lips, I take my tongue and I put it on the roof of my mouth, just behind my front teeth. Now my lips are not sealed, but the mouth is, and I breathe in through my nose. I have blocked the oral cavity by using my tongue on the roof of my mouth behind my teeth.

Now when it unseals, what sound comes? Dah. Tah. Tah. Dah. Tah. Tah. Tah. Very primal expressions of sound based on the breath encountering structures.

Suppose instead of using my tongue behind my teeth on the roof of my mouth, instead I use the back of my tongue and I block the back of my throat to seal the oral cavity as I breathe in through my nose? When I release it, what sound comes? Kah. Gah. Kah. Kah. Gah.

Very subtle little things and most people think: What a silly little thing. Who gives a shit? But that practice awakens us to very subtle structures and energies, and the deeper you go into Breathwork, the more sensitive you become, the more energy you get in tune with. Silly, little things become very important.

Audience member:

Different sounds and different frequencies.

Dan:

Yes, yeah. And look how much more creative possibilities there are when you breathe through your mouth. The nose is a fixed structure. You don't have much choice other than to block one or the other nostril.

You could breathe in through your nose in a powerful way that actually makes the nostrils slam shut. That's why there are cartilage rings in your bronchial tubes. That's why there are metal rings in a vacuum cleaner hose. Because the suction would cause the hose to collapse. If we didn't have these cartilage rings in our bronchial tubes, they would collapse every time we suck in a breath.

And the nose, you notice, doesn't have them; at least the tip of the nose doesn't have them. So if you breathe in too strongly, you slam the nostrils shut and, because you slam them shut, it takes more effort to breathe.

There's very little creative choice about the nose. But when it comes to the mouth, look at all the choices that you have.

[Demonstrates different mouth shapes to breathe through: oooh… ahhh… ohhh… eee… ssshhh. Zzzzz.]

All kinds of choices, and every one of those different shapes, has a different sound and a different subtle energetic effect, a different frequency. An aaah-shaped breath goes to a different part of me, lights up a different organ, activates different emotions and creates different psychological tendencies. An oooh-shaped breath, an eee-shaped breath, an oh-shaped breath. Those sounds shape the stream of breath; shapes that help the breath get into different places, trigger or support different states.

Certain shapes, and therefore sounds of the breath, are connected to different organs and different emotions. It can get really deep and thick. That's why the Swara yogis have developed this amazing science with subtle details, all kinds of subtle details that to the average person wouldn't mean anything.

But if you are one of the best tennis players in the world, one of the best golfers in the world, maybe one of those subtle little tweaks can give you that little extra edge. The top five golfers, the top five martial artists, the top five in any field: their skill level is above everyone else, but so close to each other, that on any given day, even the slightest little advantage determines who takes the day. Breathing can be that little extra advantage that you have over the competition; it can help you seize the day.

Look at all the different ways you can play with the shape of the mouth and you can start to see all the possibilities. Follow your pleasure.

[Demonstrating]

Focus on breathing in and out through an "oooh" shaped opening, starting at the lips. And then take it deeper, an "oooh" shape/sound through the throat. And deeper, through the chest and down to the belly. And even deeper, all the way to here (to the perineum).

That ooo-shaped breath, rhymes with the word root, because that oooh-shaped breath will take you right to your core and your base chakra. Just as an "ahh" shaped breath will take you to your heart. An "eee" shaped breath will send you up into your head. Anyway, this is a whole other level of advanced training. And we are in a fundamentals course.

Let me introduce you to Tarthang Tulku. He teaches what is called "Kum Nye Relaxation." Maybe you can find his book. A beautiful Tibetan teacher. His practice is called Kum Nye and it is about equalizing the flow.

What exactly is that? You divide the stream of breath in half, so that half of the breath goes in and out the nose and half of the breath goes in and out the mouth. Breathing in and out through both the mouth and the nose at the same time.

Since the nose is a fixed passage, it has a certain amount of resistance. The mouth is a bigger hole; there's going to be less resistance. So, I need to do something to the opening of the mouth using my tongue and teeth and lips, so I create an opening that has the same amount of resistance as my nose. Now the air by itself will equally flow through both my mouth and my nose.

It's a beautiful method to practice and it puts people into a state of meditation almost instantly. It causes you to become very sensitive to subtle energies, subtle breathing sensations. When I use my tongue, my teeth and my lips to narrow the opening, I'm creating a little bit of resistance. When I catch it just right, when the resistance in the nose is the same as the resistance in the mouth, the air by itself, the stream of breath divides in half. It is free to go in and out the nose and the mouth equally. The air flow splits in two and streams through both passages equally.

Audience member: [inaudible]

Dan:

Yeah, inhaling, exhaling and the stream of breath is being divided because air will seek the path of least resistance. If I create equal resistance, the air will flow equally between the two.

Audience member: [inaudible]

Dan:

Whatever works to give you the sense that you have created the precise resistance. You'll feel it. After doing it for only a few seconds, you're already moving into a meditative state. It's really a beautiful, natural practice.

Audience member:

Is Kum Nye the guy or the technique?

Dan:

Kum Nye is the technique. His name is Tarthang Tulku. And John Douillard is that Ayurvedic chiropractor that used the racehorse nose breathing analogy and who teaches athletes to breathe through their nose.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

So if a racehorse only uses its nose, are you extrapolating that we should only be breathing through our nostrils?

Dan:

Yes. He trains his athletes to breathe strictly through their nose. And when they start, their performance naturally drops like nobody's business; they just can't maintain their level of performance. The only way they can do it is by breathing through their mouth and so their performance takes a wicked dive when they try to breathe only through their nose.

But after only two or three weeks—in the most extreme case, two or three months—they're back to their original level of performance, but now they're breathing through their nose the entire time. And when they get done with the race, they're breathing normally.

You don't see them breathing like emphysema patients trying to recover from walking up a stairway. When his athletes get through running, they are breathing normally. And they're not creating all this wear and tear on the respiratory system caused by forceful mouth breathing.

Audience member:

Would you suggest that is something that we should be doing?

Dan:

Yes. I mean, if you want to. If you are a performer and you want to up your game.

Audience member:

It may not be, say, the best meditation breath [inaudible].

Dan:

Yes.

Audience member:

One of my breathing teachers told me to tape my mouth shut so I couldn't breathe through my mouth. Do you think that is a good idea?

Dan:

Tape your mouth shut? Yes, good idea! Go for it! F**king right!

Audience member:

Also, there are some breath hackers–a device to create resistance at altitude–and you're basically just increasing the load so that when you turn it off, you're like, "Ahhh!"

Dan:

Yeah, it's like putting weights on your ankles and doing your thing—playing basketball, for example. And then, when you take them off, it's like, wow! You are floating, flying effortlessly! When you create resistance to the breath and then you take that resistance away, it's like, wow! Exactly.

And it's a way to strengthen the breathing system: resistance training. There are many opinions about it, but I would try anything twice! Try it all.

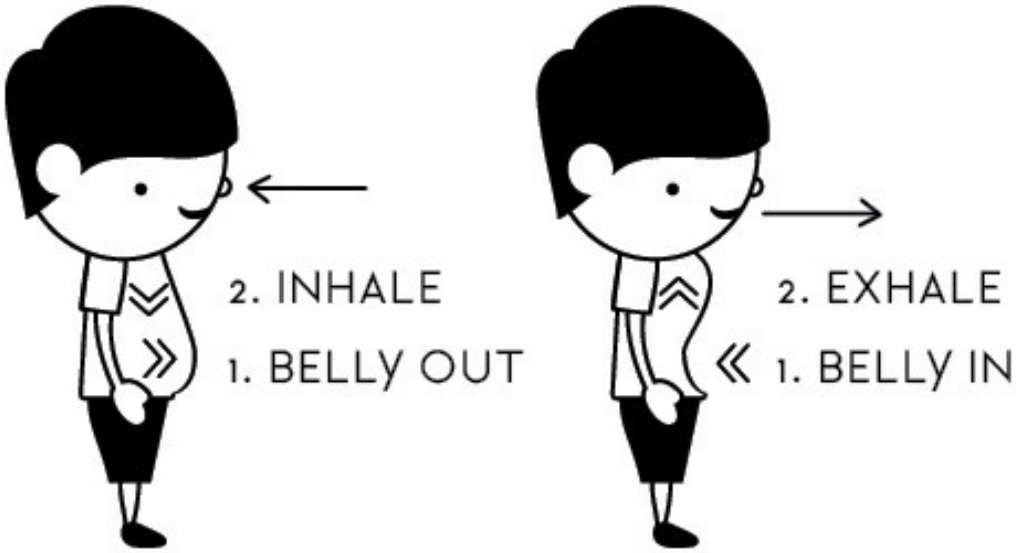
Kum Nye relaxation forces you to become more sensitive and more aware. When you equalize those two channels... In acupuncture, we have "meridians" and in yoga we have "nadis"– energy channels. When you breathe through your nose, you light up a certain energy circuit. When you breathe through your mouth, you light up a different circuit. When you breathe through both the nose and mouth, you light up the entire system. It's really quite beautiful.

Once you lock onto it, play with breathing faster, breathing slower, breathing deeper, breathing more shallow. Vary it as you maintain that equalizing of the flow.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 11.

Diaphragmatic Breathing


2. INHALE
1. BELLY OUT
2. EXHALE
1. BELLY IN

Diaphragmatic breathing. We talk about the excursion rate of the diaphragm. With a complete exhale, the diaphragm takes on a dome shape, like an open parachute or an open umbrella. When the diaphragm contracts it flattens, lowering itself, and that causes a full inhale. Then, on a full exhale, the diaphragm resumes its high dome-shape.

When the diaphragm contracts and flattens (moves downward), the belly pops out. It displaces all of the organs in the abdomen. That's why the belly pops out when you breathe in and why the belly flattens when you breathe out. The greater the "excursion rate" of the diaphragm, the healthier you are and the healthier you will be.

There is an easy way to test the strength of the diaphragm. If someone has a very weak diaphragm, when they shout "hey"– have them shout "hey!" and watch their belly. With some people, when they do this, the belly pops out because the diaphragm collapses under the pressure of the voice.

You'll see that in an older person, in a weak person. When they say "hey" [motions belly popping out]. The diaphragm is so weak that it collapses under the pressure of the voice. When you shout "Hey!", a healthy, trained diaphragm should rise up and the belly should be drawn inward. It shouldn't collapse under the weight of the voice.

So, you can test a person's strength and you can see how weak a person's diaphragm is, because it's giving under the weight of the voice. You want to strengthen that.

In the past it was thought that you couldn't strengthen the diaphragm; you couldn't access it willfully because it wasn't a muscle you could exercise. But back in the 60's, Carl Stough (Dr. Breath) proved that you can exercise and strengthen the diaphragm and he used a counting technique to demonstrate. The idea is to count out loud until you run out of breath on the exhale.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,
[In breath]
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.
And so on…

He realized that if you tell a person to exhale, or if they focus on exhaling, they do artificial stuff. So, he used counting as a trick to teach people to lengthen their exhale. They're not thinking about breathing, about exhaling: they're thinking about counting. But all the time I'm counting, I am exhaling.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

As I am counting out loud, that's an exhale happening. He trained people to increase their count. He was doing other stuff, working with muscles, and he had this model of the breathing mechanism like a ball and socket joint. The socket being the rib cage and the ball being the diaphragm.

You know that side stitch that runners get? When you get that pain in your side, that's the diaphragm rubbing on the ribs because the diaphragm is out of place. If you complete the exhale, the diaphragm gets tucked back up high into the socket (the rib cage) where it belongs and then you don't get that side stitch.

There are lots of ways to play with it. In our advanced training, as a practitioner or as a coach, there are tricks and games you can play. For example, use a brick. Lay on your back, bend your knees up, put a brick or a heavy book over your belly and, when you inhale, lift the book. With the exhale, let the book come back down.

Also, play with arching the lower spine. When you inhale, arch the spine. As you do, the pelvis wants to rotate down and back. When you exhale, flatten the lower spine, press it to the floor, and see that the pelvis wants to rotate up and forward.

Watch Angie. She's a master at this and she can demonstrate the movement of the body when you're doing diaphragmatic breathing perfectly.

Audience member:

Do you think about the diaphragm as something you can train in building resistance, the contractions and things like that?

Dan:

Yeah, Carl Stough discovered that by using his counting technique. You can use the gentle pressure of the voice to tone and strengthen the diaphragm.

Audience member:

But what technique, specifically, builds up resistance to contractions [inaudible]?

Dan:

You train for what you want to do, right? You train for the arena or the field in which you perform. So, a lot of the training that you do as a free diver has very few applications outside of free diving. I mean the training is specific to free diving and there's not much carry over into regular life.

Audience member:

Like for abalone fishing.

Dan:

Yeah, right. There are ways of breathing that work somewhere in life but would not help you in free diving. The question is: What are you training for?

Back to diaphragmatic breathing. Let's start and let's make sure that everybody's got it. Pick a partner. We should have enough people, but just pick any partner. One person is going to lay down, the other person is going to sit next to them to watch and evaluate. And then you're going to switch places.

Bend your legs, put your feet flat on the floor. (This helps in the beginning.) You can stretch your legs out after a couple of minutes when you get it. Don't think about the breathing, focus on the body.

Arch your lower back. You should be able to slide your hand under their lower back–if you create an arch–and then press your lower spine to the floor. Arch your lower back and then press your lower spine to the floor.

When you arch your back, that's an inhale. When you press your spine to the floor, that's an exhale. As you're arching and flattening your spine, notice that your pelvis wants to rock. As you arch your spine, the pelvis tips down and back. As you press your lower spine to the floor, the pelvis tips up and forward.

There is a rocking motion and that motion of the body supports diaphragmatic breathing. That's the way that diaphragmatic breathing wants to move the body. The breathing is supporting the movement and the movement is supporting the breathing.

You can exaggerate it. You can take it further. Extreme arching of the spine and rotating of the pelvis with a deep inhale and then flatten and press the lower spine to the floor, tipping the pelvis up and forward with the exhale.

Exhale and squeeze everything out: pelvis tips up and forward as the spine flattens. Inhale and fill your lungs: pelvis tips down and back, as the spine arches. Exhale: spine flattens, pelvis rotates forward and up. Inhale, spine arches and pelvis rotates down and back.

Start to pump the breath like this. Use the body to pump the breath. Even without breathing, if you start moving your body this way, you will feel the breath being sucked in and being pushed out. You don't even have to breathe; you let the body pump the air in and out of your system.

See if you can feel that happening. You're not thinking about breathing, not doing the breathing: you're just moving the body in that way. And if you're relaxed, if your mouth is open, if your neck and spine are relaxed, if it's all relaxed, then you're going to feel this pumping motion of the body causing the breath to come in and out.

Begin to breathe in harmony with the movement; support the movement with the breath. When you're arching the spine, you're breathing in. When you're breathing in, you're arching the spine. When you're breathing in and arching the spine, you feel your pelvis rotating down and back. Then when you exhale, you feel this flattening of the spine and the pelvis is tipping forward and up. Exhale deliberately as the body moves this way.
Breath supporting the movement. Movement supporting the breath.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 12.

Eight Paths In Breathwork

8 PATHS OF BREATH-WORK

1. Physical health & wellbeing
2. Psycho-Emotional (♥ intelligence)
3. Personal growth & self improvement
4. Sports performance
5. Business performance
6. Creativity
7. Healing healer / Helping helper
8. Spirituality

MODULE 12: Eight Paths In Breathwork

1. Physical Healing, wellness, well-being
2. Psycho-emotional health or Heart Intelligence
3. Personal Growth
4. Sports Performance
5. Business Performance or Business edge
6. Creativity
7. Healing the healer; Helping the helper
8. Spirituality

These are paths, the reasons and areas of application and the benefits of Breathwork. Each of these paths has 8-12 different breathing exercises and, as you grow through the program, you ascend from student to apprentice, to teacher, to expert, to master.

It doesn't take very long to realize you can't go down one path without overlapping onto other paths. That's one of the most important lessons in Breathwork: you cannot separate spirit, mind, body and emotions. Breathing proves that those are not separate things. It's a continuum and so you cannot approach them separately. You have to touch on all of them at some point: they are connected.

These are the eight paths: we are adding two more paths soon (a path for pregnant women and a path for kids). You can find out all about this in the Breath Tech App.

I suggest you download this app because it is a step by step training in Breath Mastery!

Visit: **www.breathtechapp.com**

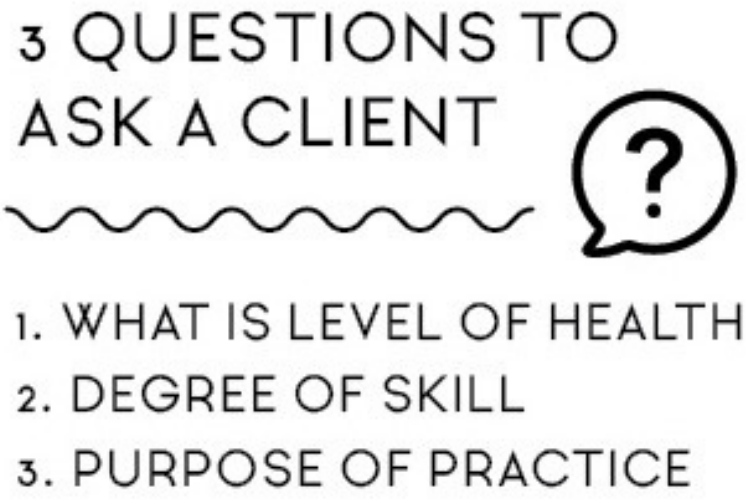
BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

DAY 2.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 13.

Three Questions to Ask a Client


3 QUESTIONS TO
ASK A CLIENT
1. WHAT IS LEVEL OF HEALTH
2. DEGREE OF SKILL
3. PURPOSE OF PRACTICE

MODULE 13: Three Questions to Ask a Client

There are three questions that I ask whenever a client or person comes to breathe. Actually, I don't really ask anymore because the questions are sort of second nature. I'm often getting that information without formally asking the questions. But in the beginning, I would formally focus on these three questions:

1. What is your level of health?

That's going to make a big difference in where we start, what we do and what direction to take. What's your level of health?

2. What is your level of skill?

Do you meditate? Do you do yoga? Martial arts? Have you developed some chi? Do you practice breathing exercises? Have you done Breathwork? What is your degree of skill? Let's see where you are in terms of your level of skill, because that's going to determine where we start and where we go.

3. What is the purpose of your training? What do you want to achieve? What do you want to experience?

Do you want to lower your blood pressure? Heal your asthma? Do you want to see God? Once I have the answers to these questions, we know where to start, we know where to go, and we know what to focus on and what to do first.

So, three simple questions: What's your level of health? What's your degree of skill? What's your purpose in training?

You want to get rid of headaches? Ok, it's not the most exciting thing to me, yet Breathwork is a no-brainer for easing or preventing headaches. I have never had a headache in my life. 67 years, I have no idea of what a headache is. I guess I am just blessed somehow. And I think that headaches are all in your head!

Audience member: *[inaudible]*

Dan:

I don't know what a headache is. I have been hit on the head and my head hurt, but I don't think that's what people are talking about. When I was a medical corpsman in the military, people would come to me every day and I would give them whatever we were supposed to give them for headaches, but I had no idea what was going on with them. I still have no idea what a headache is. I'm just lucky, blessed I guess.

That's why I like it when people have higher goals than just getting rid of a headache. There are so many more uses for Breathwork!

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 14.

Getting Caught up in the Complexity of a Practice

Let me jump to another little bit of Breathwork philosophy. It has to do with my sport, my hobby, my love of disturbing Christians, of irritating religious people, and generally making fun of serious people and dogmatic practices. It's based on this realization that Jesus had emotional issues!

Jesus cursed a fig tree! Come on, a fig tree? What else can it do but be a fig tree? And he walked into church one day and found a bingo parlor or flea market atmosphere. People were selling their stuff, pitching their wares and he began swearing and kicking over everyone's tables. They were like "Hey, I'm trying to do business here!" You know, he threw a tantrum. He had emotional issues.

The Buddha had psychological problems. Lau Tzu had physical illnesses. These things are part of the human experience, they don't go away. And no matter how many emotional issues you resolve, there's always going to be another one. No matter how many psychological problems you fix, there's always going to be another one. No matter how many physical illnesses we cure, there's always going to be another one. And pharmaceutical companies just keep inventing new ones!

There's no end to that approach. And so, if you make fixing those things the focus of your work, your work will never end. If you think you have to somehow clear up all your psychological, emotional and physical illnesses in order to become enlightened, you are mistaken. That's a trap.

You know, in a way, Gurdjieff was a flaming lunatic. Emotionally, psychologically and physically; but it didn't get in his way. And it hasn't gotten in the way of many, many other people. You do not have to fix all that stuff before you reach nirvana or find God. That stuff need not be healed before you can awaken or become self-realized.

To think you do is a trap, because your goal is to awaken, but you end up spending all your time and energy in this process that you think is going to lead to awakening. You never really get to the awakening, because there is always something else to fix or change!
So that's a really useful approach or idea in Breathwork. For example, if I say, We're going to breathe right now, people start to prepare. They change their posture, they get into a special position. Whoa, Whoa, Whoa! Wait, wait, wait. What makes you think you have to do something before you breathe?

Right where you are, right how you are, right in this position, right now, just breathe! No preparation required. You don't have to light a candle and turn the lights down or chase away the kids and put on the right music.

You can get so caught up in all that stuff, when you could be going right for the goodies, right from the start. Some people get into a spiritual practice and they get consumed by it; they forget why they got into it to begin with.

Spiritual practices can become a trap; any technique can become a trap. Because pretty soon the technique, the practice, the rituals and the spiritual rules become more important than the one who is waiting to awaken. We make our practice more important than ourselves, when the practice is meant to serve us.

It's very easy to get caught up and lost in complicated spiritual practices. And I get very leery when people start to lay out these very complicated… 14 dimensions of the astral world…and 47 different complicated exercises. I go, "Whoa, Whoa, Whoa! How about making it simple?"

A really great quote from Leonard Orr: "Most religions make getting to heaven so difficult, even God couldn't make it!"
In Breathwork, the simplicity of the practice is the power of it. And when you complicate it, you're just entertaining your ego, you're satisfying the dog that likes to chew on bones, the one that lives inside of you as your mind.

We are practicing simple things like quieting our mind, like calming and relaxing our body. It doesn't have to be complicated. When your mind becomes quiet and your body becomes relaxed as you breathe, something emerges, something lights up, insights occur.

And sometimes what you touch and what you experience is so vast, so infinite, that you can lay out the most complex map that is unending in its complexity. It's the beauty of that emptiness. It's the beauty of that space. But you don't have to go through a maze to get to that place; just learn to drop into it. You use your breath to open and expand and to relax and let go.

This work is very simple. Don't underestimate the power of simple things! Don't get lost or caught up in complicated practices.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 15.

The Three Convergences in Breathwork; Consciousness & the Mind

3 CONVERGENCES IN BREATH-WORK

1. CONSCIOUSNESS & BREATHING

2. CONSCIOUSNESS & RELAXATION (Tension)

3. Bringing together CONSCIOUS BREATHING & CONSCIOUS RELAXATION

We call this the three convergences. You know that term "convergence"? I love when that original, what was it called, "the harmonic convergence" occurred. Anyway, I love that word "convergence." It means a coming together of forces or dimensions or people and so on. There are three convergences in Breathwork and you're going to recognize them as you practice.

The first convergence is bringing together consciousness and breathing (awareness and breath). Letting consciousness and breath converge. The second convergence is bringing together consciousness and relaxation. (And it can start with bringing attention to your tension.) The third convergence is bringing together conscious breathing and conscious relaxation.

When you are practicing Breathwork, be cognizant of these things. You are bringing together consciousness and breath. They converge in you. You're bringing together consciousness and relaxation. You are consciously breathing and deliberately relaxing at the same time.

The average person's reaction to relaxation is sleep. There's something not quite right about that! If I relax and relax and relax, [snores] it leads to sleep. Why shouldn't relaxation, instead of leading to sleep, lead to more and more awareness, more and more waking up?

It's almost as if the body has to put us to sleep at night so that it can rejuvenate and recover, right? It shuts us off. The body says, "Thank God that guy finally shut up! Now I can recover and relax and rejuvenate!" Our consciousness is so busy that the body cannot relax in the presence of it. That's why cultivating a quiet mind is so important.

When you are in the most relaxed moments of your life, you are literally sleeping. And so you have never had a waking experience of total profound relaxation that happens when you are unconscious, when you are fast asleep. We're missing something very important.

The first time that someone is completely awake, wide-awake, and completely relaxed, it's like a religious experience—a peak religious experience. It is so profound and so powerful, people have to grasp at spiritual vocabulary to try to describe it. And sometimes, there are no words for it.

You'll get a taste of this in your sessions when you are wide-awake and yet completely relaxed. It's stunning in a way and you don't even know how to describe the experience.

We start to feel heavy. Ah, ok, you're so relaxed and so you're actually feeling gravity. Wow; good! You're getting conscious of a force that is on you all the time. We're not conscious of gravity, but it's on us all the time, and when you relax, you can actually feel the weight of gravity.

If you're laying down, you can feel yourself surrender your face to gravity. You surrender the weight of your body to gravity. You allow your joints to release. You are surrendering to the force of gravity as you relax more and more and more. In a way, we're fighting gravity all the time and it's so automatic—so unconscious and constant—that we don't even realize we're doing it until you stop doing it, and then this profound relaxation dawns on you.

Bringing together breathing and relaxation. This is the magical, final convergence. First you get really good at breathing consciously and get really good at relaxing deliberately. Bring those two things together and magic happens.

If you want to guide yourself during the session, just remember these basic convergences. At any time, you can come into them more fully, more consciously, more deliberately. In this way you can be sure you are progressing on that path.

As a sitter, as a helper, guess what you're doing? You're reminding the person to be conscious of how they're breathing, to breathe consciously. You are helping them to relax, in whatever way—maybe by testing their limbs, their neck, etc. After a while of lying still, you may not even realize you're tense until somebody tries to move you.

You can help people to relax. There are ways and things that make it simple. These three things are what you want to remember, or be reminded of, when you're practicing Breathwork: the three convergences.

Audience member:

Before we move on, I'd love to get your thoughts on what consciousness is.

Dan:

The most conscious people I have ever met have been the most spiritual. And the most spiritual people I have ever met have been the most conscious. So, for me, consciousness and spirituality are the same thing. The game of expanding consciousness, refining consciousness, that's the spiritual game.

We already have this aptitude, this ability to be conscious; it's part of our essence. It's really an essential aspect of our nature: consciousness. We are in essence, spiritual beings, so the more conscious we become, the more spiritual we become. I don't think you can separate the two. To be conscious is to be spiritual. To be spiritual is to be conscious. Consciousness is a living energy. And so there is no difference between them.

Audience member:

My perception of consciousness is like a vine. A vine from a seed will grow and then just know to grow towards the sun. When it actually grows up the tree, it knows where to put those little bits that attach to it. And so that's a really nice analogy of what consciousness is. But after yesterday with the breath, especially with the yawning and the sigh and how the body naturally does that, it's like our body is coming back to consciousness. So, if we pay attention to that, that's actually what consciousness is. And I thought it was funny because everyone talks about expanding consciousness and doing all these things, and really, it's like: 'Pay attention to what's happening now; it's like right here.'

Dan:

Yeah, natural inherent intelligence, infinite intelligence. And there is a model… We can go a little further into this consciousness thing.

Two of my favorite teachers are the Buddha and Patanjali. These guys never met, they didn't know each other. They lived in different times and in different places. But they had the same purpose in life: What is the cause of suffering and what is the cure for suffering?

And if you look at the list that Patanjali made and the list that Buddha made of the causes of suffering, they are the same list! And at the top of each of their lists is confusing a real self with a false self. And then you go down the list and they match. It's as if they traded notes. Look at their list of strategies, the things they suggested that we do to cure suffering: it's the same list!

When two teachers from different times and places arrive at the same insights… that's important! And they even used the same metaphor to describe the work we need to do, which is on the level of consciousness. They both identified that as the inner work. The work has to do with consciousness.

They used the same metaphor, the same analogy, to describe what needs to happen to our consciousness. What are the odds of that? They could have picked any analogy and yet they both picked the same analogy: that of a flawless gem, a perfect diamond, a perfect jewel.

That, they said, was how our consciousness needs to be: pure, clear, perfect. I think that's pretty cool! They both used the same analogy, that of an immaculate gem, a flawless jewel, a perfect diamond. They only differed on one or two things (maybe one thing because they are linked).

The Buddha understood consciousness and awareness to be basically the same, to be synonymous. He taught that to be conscious is to be aware and to be aware is to be conscious. And if you look up consciousness in the dictionary, it will say awareness; and if you look up awareness, it will say consciousness. We consider them to be pretty much synonymous.

But Patanjali said, No, No, No! They are very different. They could not be more different! He said consciousness is subject to the same laws and dynamics as everything else in nature. Everything in the phenomenal world of nature is ruled and controlled by certain forces and dynamics, the law of gravity and so on. And he said that consciousness was part of that. Consciousness is subject to the same rules, laws, forces and dynamics as everything else in nature. Awareness, on the other hand, is outside of that, totally outside of that and completely unaffected by those laws, rules, forces and dynamics.

It's a little, subtle thing and maybe it's just in the language where they seem to disagree. If they could have gotten together and had a conversation, they probably would have worked it out and arrived at the same choice of language. But it seems they never had the opportunity.

One of Patanjali's students, I like to think it was me, came up with an even better analogy. It was the analogy of water. Instead of using the analogy of a perfect gem, a flawless jewel, let's use the analogy of water.

Water has two very important properties. It is transparent: you can see through the water to the bottom. And it is reflective: you can see yourself reflected in the water. But that's only if the water is pure, only if the water is calm.

If there are waves on the surface, the image I get of myself is warped. And if there are currents and movements and particles in the water, it's not clear and I can't see through to the bottom.

The inner work, call it the work of spiritual purification, is the work of stilling and purifying the water; our consciousness. Developing a consciousness that is calm and quiet, with no currents or movements, no waves and no particles, a consciousness that is still and clear: pure consciousness.

And when our consciousness becomes like that, we can see for the first time who we really are reflected in consciousness. And through this pure quiet consciousness, we can also see through to what is actually real. But as long as our consciousness has waves and particles and movements and currents, we can't trust it; it's not giving us pure information. So that's the work we need to do on the level of consciousness.

Every feeling, every sensation in the body, is a wave in consciousness. And if I have a feeling or sensation in my body and I react to that feeling or sensation, I have just made another wave. And my reaction to that wave is going to cause another reaction, another movement, particle or wave.

And pretty soon, the water is filled with nothing but waves and particles, and it is impossible to see who I really am, to know who we really are. A consciousness like that cannot reflect back to me the truth of my being. And I cannot see through to the bottom, to reality. There's just too many movements and currents and waves in the water.

A good analogy in our time, a good metaphor, would be a TV screen. What's happening on the screen represents consciousness. But a TV cannot watch itself. It requires an external awareness to observe what's happening on the screen. And that outside awareness, in Patanjali's view, is who we really are. We are essentially that awareness of what's occurring in consciousness.

Think about a circus mirror: the kind of mirror where it makes you look tall and skinny with a little pin-head. Or short and fat with a big giant butt. Imagine someone standing in front of that mirror, crying and suffering because they believe that's how they look; they believe that is who they are.

Any one of us would say, "Don't be stupid, don't be silly; that's not how you look! That's not who you are!" The mirror is warped. Who or how you appear to be is an effect of a warped perception. Straighten that mirror out, clean it, make it clear and you will see who and how you really are!

So, there is the problem in consciousness. We are looking out into the world and we are seeing the sadness, suffering, violence and evil, pain and disease. Is it really there or is that a factor of our perception, the state or level of our consciousness? We're using a circus mirror and we're believing what we see!

You look at yourself and you believe you have limitations and you have this and that impression, identity. Somebody needs to tell you: "Don't be silly; that's not who you are, that's not reality." The problem is your consciousness. Fix that and the world changes. Adjust or expand your consciousness and you seem to change.

But it can be really difficult to make that transition. There are the traditional ways that require a lot of work and a lot of time. But with every breathing session we do, we have an opportunity to do that cleaning and clearing of our consciousness, the calming and quieting of the body-mind system, the stilling of the waters…

You will have moments in a breathing session—you may have already had some of them—where everything is clear, everything gets still; you feel a spaciousness and you feel connected to everything and everyone. For a moment (or longer), you have a direct experience of who you are.

It happens in breathing sessions, and the more we practice, the more those moments happen. Those moments seem to last longer and the gaps between them get fewer and fewer. We keep having these moments of enlightenment until, ultimately, we're living in a continuous state of self-realization.

We are able to see the truth and the perfection of our own being, and the beauty and perfection of everyone and everything in the world and in life. We begin to see through and look past those illusions of separation. We all have moments when we see past the illusion, but how can we live from that awareness? You make it a habit, you create rituals, routines. It's a practice, it's our single-minded intention; that's the inner work.

Think of a movie theatre and how that whole phenomenon works. First, everyone has to be in the dark for the whole game to work, right? You're in the dark and you're watching what's on the screen. And it's seems so real. It shakes you, it surprises you, it makes you cry, it makes you laugh.

What has happened is that you have become absorbed in the movie, so lost in what's happening on the screen that it's affecting your physiology, your chemistry, your thoughts and your emotions. What's happening on that screen seems real. But everything that's happening on the screen is coming from that little window up in the back of the theatre, that little window of light. Call that your mind.

Everything is passing through your mind and that's all you are aware of. If someone opens the theatre door and light comes in, it makes the screen a little fuzzy, difficult to see what's happening on the screen. If someone opens all the doors and windows, takes the roof off the building, you can no longer even see what is happening on the screen.

What happens when light starts coming to you through some place other than your mind? Enlightenment, that's what happens!

Right now, all the light that's coming to you is coming through your mind. And so, when you open the door to your heart, when you open the door to the cells of your body and to your whole being, light starts to come in from other places. It

gets more and more difficult to be caught up in what's happening on that screen.
But we resist, we complain when someone opens the damn door of the movie theatre, because it shines the light on the screen and it makes it hard to see, hard to hold on to our illusions, to our limited, warped perceptions. The mind becomes angry and upset, even violent!

Think of a middleman in business; I know the manufacturer. I know where to buy this [pen] for a dollar and I sell it to you for ten dollars. Am I going to tell you where you can buy it for a dollar and put myself out of business? Hell no! I am going to hide that from you.

Our mind is like a middleman and it doesn't want us to know its source. Because if you know the source, you don't need me; you don't need the middleman any more. Maybe the middleman calls it intellectual property and he protects it. This is my little secret and I don't want you to benefit from it directly. And so I'm not going to tell you where to go and put myself out of business.

Your mind doesn't want you to know its source. It doesn't want to put itself out of business. It likes the position it's in; it likes the position of control and authority. It likes the position of dominance. It wants you to depend on it.

The mind likes being the one in charge of your life and your experience and it's not going to give that position up easily. It's going to fight with you. In the same way, if you try to take a bone away from a dog, it will bite and attack you. Your mind will attack you if you try to put it out of business. Trying to take a thought from the mind is like trying to take a bone from a dog.

Let's say you want to solve a problem. What do you do? You turn to your mind to solve the problem. It seems normal and natural and it makes so much sense; it seems so obvious. You work it out using your mind. You use your intelligence, you talk it out, you put up this and you put up that. You show how, Hey, this is better than that.

We're using our mind to solve a problem and it makes perfect sense; everybody does it because it works. The mind helps us solve problems. But what if the mind is the problem? If you had a choice to use your mind to solve a problem, to turn to your mind to solve a problem−or to turn to the source of your mind to solve a problem−which would you choose?

If you're not in touch with the source of your mind, then there is nowhere else to turn to except your mind. But once you get in touch with the source of your mind, then that source becomes where you turn to solve problems instead of your mind. Breathing connects us to this source; it's a bridge to it. It's a tool that we can use to break out of the mind and connect to a greater source of light, an infinite source of light.

For most people, their mind is like an untrained Rottweiler. I use to watch people walk their dog and wonder who's walking who? The dog smells something and it pulls you this way; sees something and pulls you that way or hears something and all of a sudden it pulls you that way. And I think, who the hell wants a dog like that? You live with a dog like that? Did it ever occur to you to train your damn dog?

I never had a leash on our German Shepherd, not once did we ever have a leash. I would just look at him and he would sit down, if that's what I wanted him to do. If I looked at him and I wanted him to stand up, he stood up. And that's how it should be.

Your mind should be just like that: You turn to your mind when you want to use it and it goes, Ok I'm here. What do we want to do? The ears perk up and it is happy to help. It lives to help you. It wants to serve you. And when you don't need it, it rests in quiet alertness. It's not barking at every damn car that goes by.

You ever visit somebody at their house and you knock on the door and on the other side you hear this loud barking? The dog's screaming and clawing at the door and you have to wait five minutes while they drag the dog into another room and shut the door. Do you live with a dog like that?

Or people have a dog and they say, “Be careful with the children.” Be careful with the children? I’d shoot that fucking dog if I had to worry about him being around a child. You live with a dog that you have to worry about if a child comes around? A stupid paranoid dog that doesn’t know the difference between a harmless child and a dangerous predator? Not in my world!

And yet, people live with a mind like that and they think it’s normal. Your mind thinks something and it drags you this way. Your mind wants something and it drags you that way. Your mind attacks your inner child and you think that’s normal! You’re living with a mind that is like an untrained Rottweiler!

No wonder it’s hard to wake up. No wonder it’s hard to find peace. No wonder it’s hard to relax. No wonder it’s hard to feel safe. You’re living with something that could turn around and bite you, or bite someone you love, at any moment. And you think that’s normal!

Train your mind. Quiet it. Purify your consciousness. Open your heart and let light into your whole being. That’s a perfect application of Breathwork, of Spiritual Breathing.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 16.

Balance in your Breathing Practice

Breathwork is modern day Kriya yoga. Kriya is an action. It's an action taken toward your awakening, an action in the direction of self-realization. That's what Kriya yoga is. We are doing Kriya yoga: we are taking actions that move us toward our awakening, toward enlightenment, toward self-realization. Rebirthing-Breathwork is a modern form, an American style of Kriya yoga: a spontaneous rediscovery of Kriya yoga.

Audience member:

What was the name of the book *[inaudible]*?

Dan:

It is 'The Path of Fire and Light' by Swami Rama. He also wrote 'Living with the Himalayan Masters' because that's exactly what he did. He travelled through India for the first part of his life, living with these Himalayan masters. He also wrote the 'Science of Breath'.

I like Yogi Ramacharaka's book, written much earlier, and is also called 'Science of Breath'. Swami Rama's book is good, but Yogi Ramacharaka, he's the man for me! A turn of the century westerner. He was one of the first people to westernize the whole yogic approach. He was a genuine yogi and he brought Eastern philosophy and practices to America at the turn of the century.

He wrote 'The 14 Lessons' which are actually lectures. He was responsible for my original awakening to eastern spiritual practices. I was 15 years old and the local office of the American Red Cross was moving from their old building to a new one. My high school class went over to help the Red Cross move. We were packing stuff up and helping them move.

The building they were in was an old whaling captain's house: three-stories plus an attic and a basement. A very cool building and up in the attic was a library. I was up there putting books into boxes and two books fell out on me there. One was 'Science of Breath' by Yogi Ramacharaka and the other one was a book by Ernest Shurtleff Holmes called, 'Science of Mind'. I stole both of those books. They never made it to the new building. That's just the way it is. I confess. I suggest you read them.

Let's remember our basic model, our formula for transformation: Awareness, Relaxation, Breathing. A really useful and beautiful model. During your session, be conscious of these forces and notice if they go out of balance. That is, not enough awareness, not enough breathing, or not enough relaxation.

Let's consciously make some mistakes. Let's deliberately see if you can put your system out of balance. We will talk about Vivation this afternoon and we will do a Vivation session. I'll give you the model for Vivation and you can put it to practice.

For now, think about this: if your system were going to go out of balance, which way do you think it would go? Would it be because you are not breathing powerfully enough? Not relaxing enough? Not having enough awareness? Would you go unconscious? Would you be lazy? Would you tense up? Or would you push yourself too much?

Which direction would you go? If you were going to make an error, in which direction would the error be? Not enough awareness? Going unconscious? Getting distracted? Not relaxing completely? Having pockets of tension? Or having contractions? Not breathing powerfully enough? Or breathing too much? Where do you think you would go off course?

What kind of breathing can send you out of balance? What kind of thinking would stop you, block you or get in your way? Where would you tend to hold tension or contract? In what way and on what level?

Do you have a tendency to push too much, to push yourself? To not be gentle with yourself? Do you err on the side of being lazy or do you struggle? Are you easily distracted and go off into la-la-land with wonderful little fantasies or imaginary boogie men? Or maybe you go round and round in your head? Which way would you tend to go out of balance? What would you have to guard against in your session? What would you be cautious or conscious of?

Before your session, you can share it with your sitter or helper. You could tell them: "Ok listen. I have a tendency to go to sleep, so don't let me go to sleep; make sure I stay awake." Or "I have a tendency to tense my jaw, so remind me to relax my jaw." Or "I have a tendency not to breathe fully and freely, so remind me to take big breaths." Or "I have a tendency to push myself too much, to force and strain, so if you see me doing that, remind me to ease off and relax."

"I start and stop, I start and stop, and so, if I tend to do that, please shake me, slap me, remind me to keep going, you know?" "I tend to space out, so if I space out, bring me back." "I tend to push and effort too much, so tell me to ease off if I do that."

Now your sitter has a way to support you. You know what you need to guard against and you're prepared for it. You have support for getting over those humps and getting through those blocks. "Know thyself." Who said that? Aristotle.

A quick hit of esoteric knowledge: Our thoughts are little sparks of energy, and water is a great conductor of energy. There's moisture in the air and our sinuses border on the brain. There is a very thin bony membrane between the sinuses and the brain. When we breathe, this moisture in the air is passing very close to the brain.

Thoughts take the form of little electric sparks of energy that are picked up and carried by those little molecules of moisture. When we exhale, they are sent out into the world where somebody else breathes them in and picks up our energy.

Another bit of esoteric philosophy is about sinuses: The medical world doesn't really know what the hell sinuses are for. Two things: balance−sinuses are somehow involved in balance and resonance. They support our voice. Come on, is that it? Did nature devise these intricate, complex structures just for those two reasons: balance and voice resonance?

There's a lot more to it than we realize. Maybe when they get through finding out what yawning is about, it will lead them to learning what sinuses are about. Infinite cosmic spaces living right inside our freakin' skulls. You don't have to travel off into the cosmos or into the astral world. Those domains, those realms, are literally physically in our head. And the breath is what is passing through them and taking us to them!

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 17.

Chinese Medical Breathing Exercises

CHINESE MEDICAL BREATHING & THE 3 LEVELS OF BREATH

1. REGULATE BODY
2. REGULATE MIND
3. REGULATE BREATH

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1. → AIR ↔ LUNGS
2. → BREATH ↔ BLOOD
3. → BREATH ↔ CELLULAR

Chinese Medical Breathing Exercises: the basic principles of Qigong (Chi Kung).

There are five schools of Chi Kung: Buddhist, Taoist, Confucius, Martial Arts and Medical. The Medical is the school I was drawn to; the one that I learned. They all have the same underlying principles: regulate mind, regulate body, regulate breath or energy.

Maybe we should turn this around. Regulate body first would probably be better.

There is the "Clock Pose" in Chi Kung. The ancient clock was a simple post in the ground. The sun and the shadow on the ground reflected the time of day. The clock pose is basically standing up straight. Not complicated stuff, no weird positions, right?

There's the "Relaxed Pose." There's the "Three Circle Pose" (a circle between my hands, a circle between my arms, and a circle between my legs). I relax into that three-circle standing pose.

There is the "Sitting Pose." The cross-legged position or the normal position of sitting in a chair. There is the "Reclining Pose." Lying flat on your back. There is Lying on your side and there is the half sitting-half lying position. Simple postures in Chi Kung; not complicated stuff.

Medical Chi Kung is like a Chinese menu. Pick something from column A (choose a certain posture). Pick something from column B (choose a method of quieting the mind). And pick something from Column C (choose a breathing exercise).

You have different ways of regulating the mind. You can meditate on a candle. You could repeat a mantra. You could do counting, counting breaths.

So, pick a posture, pick a way to quiet your mind, and pick a breathing exercise. There are many different Chi Kung breathing exercises. There is "Normal Respiration." This is what we call Breath Awareness; it's just allowing the breath to come and go by itself.

There is "Favorable Respiration." This is what we call diaphragmatic breathing, deliberately breathing more fully and slowly. There is "Reverse Respiration." This is where you take favorable respiration and turn it around.

When you breathe in, draw your belly in. When you breathe out, pop your belly out. This is the opposite of the normal pattern where the belly pops out with the inhale and is drawn in with the exhale. You turn that around, sucking the belly towards the spine on the inhale and pushing the belly out on the exhale. This is Reverse Respiration, also called "Paradoxical Breathing".

There are several others. For example, the "Lesser Respiratory Cycle", which Mantak Chia called "the microcosmic orbit." Hu Bin called it "the lesser respiratory cycle." There are two main acupuncture meridians in the body. They are like the super highways, called the Du and the Ren channels. The exercise is to circulate breath energy through these two main channels.

The "Greater Respiratory Cycle" is where the energy breaks out and travels down the legs to the feet and back up the legs to continue up the spine. That's called the "greater respiratory cycle." And there is also an exercise called "Fetal Breathing," which is the practice of very subtle energy breathing.

There are other exercises too. If you're interested in this, I can send you my Chi Kung manual.
Email me your request: **dan@breathmastery.com**

So, pick a breathing exercise, pick a posture, and pick a way to quiet your mind. Put together your own personal practice. You can mix and match elements of this structure.

I love the Chinese approach because they have a beginning, a middle and an end to everything they do. That's really beautiful. Not only do they have a beginning, a middle and an end, they have a before and an after. Bookends around the practice: preparation and integration.

And they are always interested in balance. If we do an active breathing exercise, then before that and after that we do a quiet exercise. If we do a quiet exercise, before and after it, we do an active practice. I love how they are concerned about this balance; really beautiful.

Chi Kung gives us a very clear structure. Some people like structure. They like to know that this is the beginning, this is the middle and this is the end. This is what I do to prepare, this is what I do when I'm done. I love it. It's so satisfying to some people. Chinese medical breathing offers us that.

There's a lot more that we could do and further we can go. For example, there are several types of Chi Kung: one for energizing, one for calming. Very different practices if you want to energize yourself versus calm yourself. And the third purpose would be for training. Three kinds of Chi Kung practices: energizing, relaxing and training.

My three questions originated when I was in China. What is your degree of health? What is your degree of skill? What is your purpose in training? That is going to determine which of the exercises, which of the postures and which breathing exercises you choose.

You can be creative within the structure. You can customize the practice for yourself, like in a Chinese menu: pick one from Column A, one from Column B, and one from Column C. Then enjoy a delicious Breathwork meal!

Chi Kung for me is internal Tai Chi and Tai Chi is an external form Chi Kung. And something funny, when I was with Hu Bin, I wondered what he did for himself every day. I had been with him for a week before it occurred to me to ask.

Every day I would go to his house: he would teach, we would talk and he would give me something to practice for the day. His grandson gave me his bicycle to use. I was riding this bike around the streets of Beijing. (It was like being in a school of fish, with a million other riders.)

The only one standing out from all these people was this crazy American. I wore a bright yellow parker, while everyone was wearing these grey or dark blue, drab colors. I was like this flower, something bright, something weird standing out in the crowd.

I loved riding that bicycle; I liked being in the flow with all these other people. I liked getting out to the edge and skirting around and getting ahead and getting in the middle and weaving in and out of all these people. And I loved how the Chinese had this ability to give each other space, even though they're touching each other or sitting very close together on a bus.

I watched this really beautiful event: a woman sitting with another. Some sad event must have occurred and I wondered if somebody died. Some sad event and I couldn't help but observe them and thinking about what it might be. But every other person on the bus was giving them space.

It could be felt. Everyone was letting those people be in whatever process they were in and not even invading the moment by looking. There was this energetic space that they gave each other. I guess when you live so close, you just learn that. A very beautiful feeling of being able to be in private, even on a crowded bus.

When I arrived in China after the long journey, and I finally met Hu Bin for the first time, it was such a big moment in my life and I just broke down. I started weeping for no reason, with no understanding, nothing, while he and my translator simply sat there, so gentle, so quiet, giving me that space to be in my feelings. It was so beautiful.

I had been there a week before it occurred to me to ask: "Thank you for all this stuff, but what are you doing? What is your personal practice?" He said: "Come with me in the morning. I go to the park every day. I run, I exercise, I practice." Wow! Fantastic! Ok, why didn't I think of that sooner?

But he got started at four o'clock in the morning, while I am a get-up-at-the-crack-of-noon kind of guy! Anyway, I'll show you what a Chi Kung master practices every day. Let's stand up.

He started with body slapping. Starting from the shoulder and working down the arm with cupped fist (loose flopping wrist). If you were to look up an acupuncture chart, or if you know about acupuncture, there are meridians and you could be tapping on certain points.

But anyone can just do it. Starting from the shoulder, working out toward the extremity. You would do this [demonstrating] and then the other arm. The Chinese are so self-sufficient: we don't need a masseuse; we massage ourselves in China!

Of course, depending on your level of health, your skill and your training, it can get really extreme. No limit to how hard you can strike yourself! You can take it to some cool places.

The next thing was this [swings arms across body to shoulder]. I'm swinging from the hips and my arms and the fists land right on these neck/shoulder muscles where we carry tension.

And then he took the body slapping down to the chest. But you're not using your arms. You swing from the hips and your arms are out there swinging, and the closed fists land in that place. So, you're just aiming it at the last minute sort of, but you're not doing it with your arms.

The next place was the kidneys, thumping on the back. And the next was the lower back, the tailbone area. And then he did the legs, just like with the arms [knocks fists down legs]. Sometimes he would put his foot up on a fence or a tree and do it, and sometimes he would bend over and do it, both legs. We are going through the routine a little quicker than he did it.

By now you should be feeling some chi in your body (tingling sensations, vibrations, electrical feelings, energy streaming).

Then he would do this circling or rotating of the pelvis. You woke up all this energy and now you're bringing order to it. He would create little circles with his pelvis, clockwise 200 times, and then counter-clockwise 200 times. And then he ran three miles.

And there you have it. That was it.

Audience member:

Was he changing the size of the circles?

Dan:

Yeah. Really cool experience with that. We went to the park. We were in the park and he was very well known, so when he was in public, people knew him and he tended to attract people. They gave him space but they couldn't help but want to be around him and watch him. He was quite a miraculous guy.

He introduced me to several Chi Kung practitioners who had different abilities and skills. One guy was breaking bricks on his head. And, for a dollar, he would let you break a brick on his head! This guy was trying to pull me into breaking a brick on his head. But there's just something about hitting an old guy on the head with a brick: that's really hard to do. He invited, insisted and handed me a brick.

The first time I did it, I held back at the last minute. I didn't want to [bang] with a brick on his head. And he got pissed off at me. So, the second time, I broke the brick on his head. It was cool; hurt my hand, though, and it was sore for a week, but he was fine.

Hu Bin also introduced me to this old man who had twin granddaughters. Herbert Benson and his co-author wrote a book called 'Encounters with Chi'. They also found these two quite famous little girls in China, twins. You could put them in separate rooms and one would be asked to draw a picture of something and the other girl would draw the same image. They had this amazing connection.

And they had many more abilities than that. Their grandfather would pick them up with a pitchfork and throw them up in the air and they would do a somersault in the air, turn over and land on the pitchfork! Very cool.

Hu Bin had this amazing ability to stay in his energy. My lesson was how I was always pulling myself out of my energy, trying too hard, pushing myself. We would run together for three miles and when it was over, I was heaving and out of breath. He was breathing normally. He was 85 freakin' years old and I was 35 at the time−it was embarrassing!

So that was one thing I learned. He had a sense of his energy and he never got pulled or pushed out of himself. He always remained centered; it was very beautiful, really beautiful.

Audience member:

Can you summarize what he taught you to help you or is that a long story?

Dan:

This circulating [demonstrates]: there's an axis, there's a central axis around which the circulating is happening [rotating pelvis in circular motion]. You can begin to find it and feel it. Then you're in it, you're grounded in it, you're centered in it.

As soon as you start doing things mindlessly, or if you push or force or tense or strain, you can feel that uh-oh, you've lost that axis. That's the best way I've got to think about it. And it doesn't take much to pull us out of that. I was practicing in a crowd, watching when somebody bumped me or disturbed my meditation, things like that.

There is nothing so embarrassing as creating a scandal in communist China in 1985. By the way, I went there on a one-way ticket. I didn't have enough money for a return ticket and figured that if anyone missed me, they would get me a ticket back home. [Dan continues to tell his story of his encounter with the police.]

Catching the moment when something throws me off my center: noticing how easily, how quickly, something or someone could make me leave my center of peace and of calm and of being in the flow. Watching this reaction take over and it is, in essence, a fear reaction. We usually feel it after we get out of it (our center of peace). You know when you're in it. But you don't always catch it when you slip out of it. When you get knocked out of it, it's like, "Uh-oh, I lost my center." So, the recognition of it, I think, and catching it, knowing when you're not in it, is important.

Audience member:

What's interesting about that field idea is I've practiced the microcosmic orbit meditation myself with [heart math] institute. There's a few other guys, there's a guy called [Hasiin] and they talk about this field that we have which is like this donut shape [motions in circular motion around his body].

Dan:

Yes, and you see where these original Tai Chi moves came from. We know it's there, we're sensing it and we don't realize

that we're responding to the way energy wants to move. And you know the traditional thing is some master is sitting in meditation and the energy starts to move him and it's beautiful to see.

Everyone else wants what the master has, so they copy the movements, hoping that—from the outside in—by doing what the master does and thinking the way the master thinks and practicing what he/she practices–that will awaken the mastery within. The approach needs to be from the inside out; it has to come from within.

So what's the best thing, the most we can do with Chi Kung for the moment? I got this from a Russian Chi Kung friend. (He's a China fanatic—loves everything China related; a really beautiful guy.) He said, "All we can do is tell stories, give people things to practice, and leave the rest up to God." That's the best we can do. Moving on from the Chinese approach, let's look at another way to frame the practice of Breathwork.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 18.

Zen & the Art of Breathing

I was saying at lunch that we can start to understand why sinus infections happen, why our sinuses so often become blocked. What's that about? It's about being overwhelmed with energy and information. It's our system protecting itself from too much information coming in. Insulating us from being overwhelmed.

If you started feeling everything that everybody is feeling, could you hold yourself together? Could you manage in the world? Our system protects itself and tries to protect us. Maybe the common cold, (which is probably the most popular, general dysfunction on the planet), a so-called illness, isn't what we think. 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. Before you could take your first breath, you had to get those fluids out and there was an in-between place where the fluids were blocking the passages, the sinuses and so on. Maybe sinus congestion and stuffy nose are a reliving of that original birth pattern: it is an expression of an unconscious memory, a repeating of a pattern.

I was hired by Glaxo Smith Klein last 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?" They offered me exactly what I had envisioned as an ideal invitation: we pay for your ticket, we put you up for two days, we pay you a weekend rate to 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.

They have a nasal decongestant spray and every other pharmaceutical company has one; it's a tough niche. Everybody's got their version of a nasal decongestant and the formula is the same. You can't really improve the formula; you can't really do anything different chemically. Everybody's got the same formula. All you can do is play with packaging and marketing.

A Lithuanian and a British woman had a marketing and media company. They knew me somehow and their idea was for me to address what they called the "higher order benefits of breathing." Everybody else was advertising how if your nose is stuffed up, you spray this thing, now you can breathe freely. End of story, end of marketing, end of advertising.

They said, why don't we start there? What are the benefits of free breathing? Emotional benefits, psychological benefits and so on. They called it the "higher order benefits." 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 the team will have a brainstorming session and come out with a new approach to our marketing."

So that's how it happened and it made me do some research. A couple of things they pushed me on was that they wanted to know exactly what I was going to say. They wanted a script. The first three minutes I would introduce myself, the next five minutes I would talk about this, five minutes for this and the last five minutes for this. But that's not how I work.

I don't know what I'm going to say until I actually say it. But they needed to know exactly what I was going to say. I thought, maybe I should give you your money back because I don't do that scripted thing. Then I thought, oh f**k it, take the money. Create a script. Why not?

I said, tell me what you want me to say, 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 and I started doing research and remembered and realized a couple of things. I had a few nice "ah-ha's."

We evolved in nature, depending on taking in scents/smells. Now we're not so conscious of it anymore, although a newborn baby recognizes the mother through the sense of smell. If the smell is toxic, or if it goes outside a certain comfort zone, then we are conscious of what we're taking in through our nose. Most of the time we're not.

In the same way 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 shut off a very basic and important source of information. 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 or hear. If you suddenly couldn't smell, imagine the stress in the system. We're not conscious of the stress we experience as the symptoms of our flu, our cold or our stuffed-up sinuses.

All the symptoms are actually a sign that the system is in a panic. A source of information has been cut off. So that was one of my insights; there's something there.

Now let's focus on Zen and the art of breathing.

These are Zen principles and you might recognize them. Beginner's mind. Not projecting anything; the art of being present in the moment. The art of transcending the mind and body. No within, no without, no me, no you. No beginning, no end. These are universal Zen principles.

What I find exciting, or really interesting, is that the archer has always been a symbol related to Zen. 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. Draw back too much and you break the bow.

When the Zen master is doing archery, he makes use of very powerful physical forces, very powerful mental forces. And when they come together, when the target is aligned, when everything is in line, what do you do? You let go! If you do anything except let go, the arrow is going to go off course.

Don't slowly breathe out by controlling the exhale, because then it doesn't happen−the whole archery thing doesn't happen. And so, when the mind and body come to a one-pointedness, and everything comes into alignment, at that moment you let go. The Zen master drops into Samadhi, Satori, Kensho, Moksha… Whatever you want to call it.

There is no mind and no body in that moment. The bringing together of mind and body and then. . . boom, just letting go and you transcend, you drop into this Zen state.

This is really useful in breathing. Inhale [motion of drawing back the bow] you are building up the force of intention. And we can play a game with the arrows. The arrow is the intention. I can shoot an arrow, an arrow of peace, an arrow of love or maybe something negative in me that I want to release.

I create an intention that builds up on the inhale, and then with the exhale, I let something go. I let something fly. I allow the forces that have built up during the inhale do the work for me, the work of liberation. We can play that game of shooting arrows of peace into Syria, into Iraq, into the Middle East or wherever you would like to see peace.

Build up an intention on the inhale, you're drawing that bow back, and then release that intention out into the world with the exhale. Play this spiritual game we call Zen and the art of breathing.

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 energetic balance. 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 on this planet toward lasting peace.

In Zen, every breath is like the first breath. Each time you relax, it's as if it's the first time. Very Zen-like−not robotic, not mechanical, but fresh and new and conscious moment to moment. Each time, with each breath, we generate a heartfelt intention and then we set that intention loose out into the world.

Build up the energy/intention again and relax again—as if you've never relaxed before, as if it's the first time. Do it again, each time, as if it's the first time. Very Zen-like approach to breathing.

Audience member:

Do you breathe into your mouth?

Dan:

Nose or mouth: whatever helps you generate the feelings that you want to generate, that you want the breathing to express or reflect. I like to use the mouth to create a sound on the inhale that feels like I'm charging myself. And then I create a sound on the exhale that expresses my intention to let go.

We can breathe through the mouth and express in sound our creative intention. Breathing through the nose, the creativity is directed more internally. When you breathe through the nose, not so much of the intention can be expressed through sound.

This brings us to our spiritual breathing sandwich. (We Americans are really into sandwiches.) I imagine this amazing buffet, a table, spread out with every shape, form, flavor and texture and every type of delicious food you can imagine.

I would start at one end of the table with a slice of bread and I would start putting stuff on it, different flavors, different textures, sauces, meats, cheese... Then top it off with another slice of bread. When you bite into it, it's got all these delicious textures and flavors. That's a breath.

Zen is also about being total. Totality is one of the principles of Zen. This breath involves as many levels of your being as possible. The sandwich is packed with what happens within each inhale and exhale, between those two polarities, those slices of bread. Pack as much as you can into the practice to make that breath as juicy, thick and multi-dimensional as possible.

For example, you can combine breathing and sound, any sound. I love the Rumi people; I love the Sufis. Their favorite sound is "ooooooo." If you go to Turkey and meet devotees from the home of Rumi, they have a community that carries on Rumi's teachings and their favorite sound is "oooooooo."

Combine breathing and sound; be like a child. What is an interesting sound to you? When little kids play, they make noises. Everything has a sound. Sound comes with movements. It's not an accident, it's nature getting in the game. Play with different sounds. Connect breathing and sound.

You can connect breathing and thought, an affirmation, a word or a phrase. Now when I'm breathing in, I've chosen a sound: let's say it's this [ooh on the inhale and ahhh on the exhale]. And then I have a word or a phrase: peace [breathes in], courage [breathes out]. Whatever... It could be an affirmation or it could be a mantra.

The first time I learned this was with Ram Dass, Richard Alpert. He gave me this: "The power of God is within me [breathing in]. The grace of God surrounds me [breathing 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 thought–an affirmation, a mantra, a word or a phrase.

An image. What can I picture? The face of my guru. A beautiful scene that, when I think about it, gives me the most wonderful feeling. I could imagine a certain color light: gold or bright pink or blue, whatever I like.

So now I've got sound, a thought, a color. And you can add to that movement. All based on the breath, all centered around the breathing. 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: hands, arms, head. It adds another dimension, another level of my being to the breath.

Look at all the levels of my being that I am bringing together with 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 that each breath is getting juicier, richer, thicker, fuller.

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

Audience member:

Feeling?

Dan:

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

So, this is our game. This is one of the first spiritual breathing techniques that we invented and I call it a spiritual sandwich. And now if you bring in this archery idea: building up all this force and this intention with the inhale. I am the first recipient of it, filling myself with these energies; then I exhale and I bless the world with it.

A great way to play with your breath! Putting your whole heart, mind and body into it: emotions, sounds, imagery, feelings, thoughts, everything. Pouring everything into each breath, making every breath really rich, thick and juicy, touching as many levels of my being as I can.

Stay with the practice, don't just breathe for 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 for themselves. It gave me this image: you know when people spin plates on sticks, you get one spinning and then another and then another and it's turning it into this complicated, difficult thing.

When I was focusing on the picture, I forgot about the sound. When I was trying to make this sound, I forgot about the movement. Who cares? So what? This is not about juggling or keeping all your plates spinning.

Pick one thing for one breath and pretty soon it becomes automatic. You don't even need to give it thought and then you can bring in something else. Or you can go from one thing to the next. With one breath, I focus on a picture. With the next breath, I repeat an affirmation. The next breath, I focus on the sound. Don't make it into a complicated, difficult thing.

That's spiritual breathing. And maybe you invent something; create your own spiritual breathing exercise/meditation.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 19.

Sufi Breathing

MODULE 19: Sufi Breathing

The Sufis have so many beautiful breathing techniques. Because they do exactly this, they bring together breathing and movement, breathing and sound, breathing and prayer. And they're very imaginative and very creative. There are a lot of really great Sufi breathing techniques.

Google around, swim around, fish around and find them and play with them. It's a beautiful tradition. And if you read about any Sufi techniques, email them to me. If I haven't already heard about them, I definitely want to know.

A simple Sufi technique: imagine that your head is a trashcan full of a lot of useless garbage, redundant thoughts. And what do the Sufi's do? They empty the garbage can [tipping head downwards while exhaling sharply].

For 45 minutes to an hour, just this. Simple, simple, simple. The intention and willingness to engage in that spiritual breathing technique, not just for five or ten breaths or five or ten minutes, but to get into the zone and go at it for an hour, for two hours...

You can connect breathing to any movement [motions shaking head from side to side]. Sufis connect breathing and movement, breathing and intention. One of my favorite breathing patterns is this [In, in, out... In, in, out... In, in, out... In, in, out].

Shooting two in-breaths and then a long releasing exhale. Get good at the pattern. First, establish the pattern, not aiming the breath in any way, not directing it to any certain place: just getting the sense of it, the rhythm of it. Two sharp shooting inhales, then a single exhale.

Once you have relaxed into this pattern, you can begin to create an intention. You can aim the breath into your heart or any organ, into a joint, into any part of your body. You can take this healing practice to a very deep level but, in the beginning, just get the feel of it, the dynamics of it.

And then, when you get that pattern down, turn it around and do the opposite: a long inhale and two sharp exhales: [In, out, out... In, out, out... In, out, out... In, out, out].

Do that for an hour! It's very often done in groups. You can do it on your own, but you need to have enough commitment or devotion (or whatever) to do these practices on your own. When you do it in a group, you have the support of the group.

So let's do 10 minutes of this simple Sufi technique. You can turn it around, whenever you like, so it's either [in, in, out... or in, out, out].

Very sharp breaths. You're chopping the inhales up and then the exhales are full. You're chopping the exhales up and then the inhales are full. Maybe you can chop it up more: three or four shooting breaths. Keep it simple in the beginning.

If it starts to morph into more or different patterns, fine. But stay with the simple pattern for now: injecting two sharp shooting in-breaths, then the exhale. Two sharp, powerful shooting in-breaths and then a relaxed exhale.

Let those breaths send powerful pulses into your body: sharp shooting pulses, almost like a gun firing. A powerful hammering, a spiritual hammering. You're trying to blast through the ego and your layers of tension and embodied beliefs. Two sharp in-breaths and then this releasing exhale.

Two sharp breaths to shake up your system and then the exhale to release what got loosened up. Don't use muscles (you don't have to), you're using the breath: use the force of the breath.

You're hammering on ancient programs. You are chipping away at deep, human limitations that are living in you, that you inherited from someone else. Let the breath be the thing that's shaking your body. Don't do anything with your body. Let the breath be the thing that is shaking your body.

Three minutes. Seems like forever but keep going. See if you can make it efficient. You'll get exhausted if you're using muscles that aren't necessary. It's the breath that's doing the work, not you. You're using the breath to chip away, to drill down, to hammer, to pierce, to shake, to activate.

If you're not relaxing completely with every exhale, you will be building up stress. If you don't inject those powerful breaths, and then follow immediately with a releasing exhale, you'll just create chaos in your system. You will be jamming things up.

Two sharp breaths and a sigh of relief. Two sharp breaths and a sigh of release. Five minutes−don't stop to rest, don't swallow. Double down on the practice if you get distracted. Go for it even more. When you're starting to get tired, distracted or if you need to rest, that's all your unconscious material trying to keep itself from being discovered; trying to stay in place.

Let's turn it around now: a long inhale and two sharp exhales. Very different; the opposite.

Is it easier? Is it more difficult? Is it confusing? Does it send your system into temporary chaos? Do you get all discombobulated? Doing one breath one way, the next breath the other way. Doing one, then the other. Get confusing? It's about simplicity, single-minded focus.

Notice how the body movement can get totally out of synch with the breathing. You start doing all kinds of things with your body when the breathing is the thing you need to focus on. Sometimes people move their body in ways that have nothing to do with the movement of the breath. Totally out of synch with the breath.

Come back to the breath. Feel the shaking that the breath causes. Relax around that shaking and your body will be moved by the breath.

Mix it up. Go back and forth. Stirring up energy, injecting bursts of breath energy into your body and then relaxing and releasing. Then turn it around: pull in a long inhale and shake up the exhale. Chopping up the inhale, smoothly exhaling. Smoothing the inhale, chopping the exhale.

Nine minutes, good enough.

Now forget about the breathing. Let the breath come and go by itself. Focus on the energy in your body. Consciously relaxing. How does your breath want to move? Cooperate with it; take your cue from the breath itself. As you relax and feel the energy, sense how the breath wants to come and go, when it wants to come, how long or slow the breath wants to be, how short or fast.

Surrender to it, cooperate with it, participate in it. Observing and sensing how the breath wants to come and go; participating in it and supporting it.

Observing. What breathing responses come to you naturally? What breathing patterns are you intuitively drawn to? How does your body want to breathe? How does the breath want to come and go?

Everything is open, everything is relaxed. You are wide-awake and you're being guided by the breath itself. Whichever way the breath wants to move, you move with it: you breathe in that way. You cooperate, participate and harmonize with the flow of breath. What movements naturally want to occur as you're breathing? Where does your attention naturally

want to flow? If you feel a subtle movement, allow it, follow it, build on it, cooperate with it, exaggerate it.

Almost any transformational breathing technique is going to activate feelings, sensations and reactions in the body. The game is to stay with the breathing pattern that brought up those feelings, sensations, emotions and reactions. Keep going with that breathing pattern until you breathe through whatever gets activated, whatever comes up.

That's basically it. Breathe into, through and out the other end of whatever comes up in your session. That's a very different way of approaching life. Usually, when we come up against something scary or uncomfortable, we tend to back away or we try to manage or manipulate or control it, instead of just breathing and relaxing into it until we pop through it.

Breathing through whatever comes up. Breathing beyond whatever gets activated. Continuing to breathe regardless of what you think, regardless of what you feel, regardless of what happens in the body. Stay with that breath. Whatever the breath brought up, the breath will process it, will integrate it, will release it. Just stay with the breath and trust the process.

Pretty simple when you get right down to it. That is what a typical breath session is about. You use the breath to activate energy. That energy activates thoughts, emotions, feelings and sensations. Usually you react to those feelings and sensations (avoid, escape, mange, force, think, etc.). The game is to override those old, usual reactions. The game is to breathe through the feelings and sensations instead of reacting to them.

Audience member:

The difficult thing: so say you get a stitch or your knee is sore, is it ok to move a little bit?

Dan:

Yes, you could adjust the breathing to develop the perfect energetic rapport with the feeling, to be able to enter the feeling or let the feeling in, to be able to process the energy. You might find that a very subtle tweaking of your posture allows things to move. But you don't want to get too much into movement. It's ok, but you want the movement to be spontaneous.

There is a difference between when I'm doing something with my body and when my body is just doing something by itself. We are playing with that delicate dance. Some people, as soon as they get into movement, they leave the breath behind. Make sure that the breath is the leading force and that the physical movements are supporting the breath.

You don't want to get caught up in "doing." Don't stop breathing to do energy work or massage or yoga. Don't leave the practice of simply breathing. Don't try to take over the healing process. Instead, allow your inner healer to do the work.

There's a great experience of liberation, of freedom, when something starts to happen. Let's say I get a cramp in my arm and so I massage it, and sure enough, it feels better. But now, every time I get a cramp, I need to do the massaging. But if I didn't massage it and I let the feeling be there, the feeling gets stronger and stronger as I'm breathing and relaxing. It reaches a natural peak and then it goes away by itself.

What a great message to my subconscious: "I don't have to do anything about what happens inside of me. I don't have to be in charge, I don't have to fix it, I don't have to understand it, I don't have to manage it. It will go away by itself." Talk about freedom!

And when you get right down to it, do we really know how to heal ourselves? Do you know how to manufacture chemicals in your brain? Do you know how to digest food? Are you in charge of digesting your food? Do you keep your heart beating? No. There is an intelligence in us that takes care of those things.

During a breathing session, we practice actively surrendering to that intelligence and we learn that we don't have to be the one to manage and fix and change and control. It's a way of getting free.

If you are going to get in the game of healing, transformation, growth and awakening, do it for fun, for growth and learning. Do it because it feels good, not because you have to or need to. Not because it's the right thing, not because you should, not out of fear. Do it for the joy of it, for the pleasure of it!

What did you notice in that ten minutes of practice? What did you encounter? What did you bump into? What did you feel? We only did it for 10 minutes; imagine doing it for 40 minutes or an hour. What came up for you just in the 10 minutes? What did you encounter? What did you notice?

Audience member:

My brain tried to play the same game that it does when I go to the gym [...] saying, "What are you doing? Get out of here; this is pointless!" And tries to make up a million different reasons [inaudible].

Dan:

Wow, great observation! Yeah, that's the intrusion of the mind and the noise in the head−that critical, doubting, controlling, demanding, toxic voice in our head. We all have one!

Here is something out of nowhere...

I'm thinking about Robert Gerzon and his book, 'Finding Serenity in the Age of Anxiety'. (A really great book, he wrote it about 20 years ago.) He's a psychotherapist in Boston; a really brilliant psychotherapist and his book is really good. He talks about three types of anxiety. He sees anxiety as a cord with three threads.

We have natural anxiety. You're on a first date. You just got a promotion at work, or you're at the top of a mountain about to lift off on skis. You should be feeling anxiety; that's healthy energy that we need to perform.

That's very different than toxic anxiety. This comes from that voice in our head, "Why are you doing this? How can you be so stupid? What's wrong with you? You can't do that!" That voice is the source of toxic anxiety, so it needs to be treated differently than natural anxiety.

And the third thread is what he calls sacred anxiety. It's connected to the big questions in life. Who am I? Why am I here? Where did I come from? What happens when I die? What's my purpose? Those questions create a certain kind of sacred or divine anxiety; it's a force for evolution!

So, when you deal with anxiety, you've got to untangle these three threads and deal with each one in its own way. I really love the guy; his book was a best seller and he was on TV. It was the peak of his career when his book came out.

He knocked on my door one day because he was at this point in his life where the feeling was: where do I go from here? It's only downhill from here. It's like... [sigh]. He was at this really interesting point in his life and he knew that the breath was the answer. He heard that I was teaching Rebirthing and he knocked on the door one day.

In working with him, I received so much. I learned from him and he sent a lot of people to me. I sent people to him. It was a wonderful karmic connection. The book is not outdated: he might have been ahead of his time. So, thank you Robert for coming through. I didn't know we would be thinking or talking about him.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 20.

Shamanic Breathing Exercise

MODULE 20: Shamanic Breathing Exercise

Another ancient system: shamanic techniques. So many different kinds of Shamanic breathing. Shamans are into rituals, nature spirits, the elements. The idea is to use the breath to connect to the earth, air, water, fire and to create breathing rituals around these elements.

Shamanic breathing also includes movements, sounds and intentions to connect to these elements.

One of the exercises I learned in Siberia. I was in Novosibirsk in 1990. In the basement of a museum, there was a collection of Shamanic stuff: their clothes, their broken drums. (When a Shaman died, they would break his drum.)

The Siberian Shamanic tradition is interesting because they incorporate metal and iron into their clothing and their ceremonial stuff; very beautiful. I watched a documentary film of one of the last groups of shamans. I remember going into this basement room of the museum. Oh my God! What a feeling–all of these relics left by these shamans. So powerful!

I left with this beautiful Shamanic technique:

These sounds: Hee-yaah, Hee-yaah, Hee-yaah, Hah.

[Demonstration]:

Hee-yaah [on the in-breath]
Hee-yaah [on breath out-breath]
Hee-yaah [on the in-breath]
Hahh [on the out-breath]

Do that for an hour!

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

DAY 3.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 21.

Vivation: The Skill of Happiness

VIVATION

1. CIRCULAR BREATHING
-Fast & full / Slow & full / Fast & shallow
2. COMPLETE RELAXATION
3. AWARENESS IN DETAIL
-Focus on the strongest feeling
- Track the subtle changes in energy
- Feelings & body sensations
4. INTEGRATION INTO ECSTASY
5. DO WHATEVER YOU DO
-Willingness is enough

MODULE 21: Vivation: The Skill of Happiness

Alright, so for our deep-dive session today, we're going to use the style of Rebirthing called Vivation. Developed by Jim Leonard and Phil Laut, it was originally called 'Integrative Rebirthing' because the integration factor was something that they zeroed in on. It was all about integration.

A couple of beautiful concepts from Jim Leonard and Vivation. (It was also called the skill of happiness.) First it was called integrative rebirthing, but then they felt like it was very different from rebirthing, from the usual focus of rebirthing and from what other rebirthers were doing. They decided they needed an altogether different name, so they coined the word Vivation. "Vive" is based on the word life, vitality and so on. And the subtitle was "the skill of happiness."

One of the basic concepts was that there's one way we can achieve happiness: I know what I want, I figure out how to do it, how to get it, I get it and I feel happy. And we all have that skill to some degree. The other way to be happy is to be happy with what is, as it is.

So as Jim started to explore this, he arrived at his key idea that happiness or joy is inherent in existence. The only thing you need to be happy is to exist. And since you exist, if you are not experiencing the happiness that is inherent in existence, you must be doing something to block it.

This was his "ah-ha" moment: being alive should come with a continuous stream of joy and happiness, because it's an essential aspect of existence itself. So, if you are not happy, you must be doing something to block the experience of the inherent happiness that comes with existing. If the only thing we need for happiness is to exist, and since I exist, why ain't I happy?

To answer this, he coined the term "make wrong." A make wrong is exactly what it sounds like: you are making something wrong. Something exists and you are deciding it should not be there, that it should be different. In other words, you're making it wrong.

When you make something wrong, you cannot help but withdraw your awareness from it. You don't want to be associated with it, you don't want to experience it and so you withdraw your awareness (and energy) from it. You shut yourself off from it.

He also identified a beautiful model of the difference between 'content' and 'context'. Every experience has content and context. My experience is what it is, what it is. I can't change "what is" in the moment. In the next moment, maybe I can change it, maybe with work I can change it. But if we're relying on being able to change the content of our experience in order to be happy in the moment, that can be a real challenge.

Context, on the other hand, is how we look at it, what we think about it, what we make it mean: the way we perceive it. That you can change in the moment. And so real happiness can be accessed by changing context and not content.

Everything has some potential for enjoyment. Obviously, some things are easier to enjoy than other things. But every single thing has some potential for enjoyment and it's up to us to identify that potential and maximize it.

We have one kind of person where 100 things are happening: 99 of them are absolutely perfect and wonderful and 1 of them is not. Guess which one he/she focuses on? And you have another kind of person where 100 things happening: 99 of them are horrible, terrible and painful, but 1 sweet thing is happening. He/she has this ability to focus on that one sweet thing.

That Zen story of the guy who's being chased by the tiger and the tiger follows him up into a tree and he goes out on the branch and the tiger follows him onto the branch and he climbs down a vine and now he's hanging over a cliff from the vine and a mouse is chewing on the vine. What does he do? He looks over and he sees a wild strawberry growing off the cliff and he eats the strawberry.

Life is about looking for that strawberry in each moment, noticing whatever potential there is for joy and harvesting it; focusing on it and training yourself to be that kind of person. Because in every situation, in every moment, we can always find something beautiful to focus on—if we want to.

Here is an example of context (I mentioned this very quickly earlier). Something is happening: you are feeling something during your session and you think, "Oh my God, I'm going to die!" That is context. "Oh my God, I'm going to die" is a context we (or our mind) creates. Now imagine the same something happening, but you think, "God is healing me."

You've changed the context, not the content. The same thing is happening, the same feeling is there, but you've changed the context and so your experience is going to be different. You changed the context; you didn't have to change the content.

There are five elements in Vivation.

The first is Circular Breathing. You've already got that. This is connected breathing. Jim was not so concerned with active inhale and passive exhale. He mentions it, but he had people simply focus on making the breath circular; he thought that was enough.

And there are three circular breathing patterns in Vivation, in connected breathing: fast and full, slow and full and fast and shallow. (There is no such thing as slow and shallow in Vivation.) Three possible breathing rhythms and these are the directions. Breathing in the direction of fast and full, in the direction of slow and full, in the direction of fast and shallow.

He does say that when you 're talking about fast or slow, you're talking about the inhale, not the exhale. You're just letting a reflexive exhale happen.

So, these are the three rhythms, and when you go into your Vivation session, you're doing conscious, connected, circular or continuous breathing. You keep adjusting the breath in one of these three directions: fast and full, slow and full, or fast and shallow. But don't stop breathing!

Use fast, full breathing to activate a lot of energy. Somebody asks, "What are you feeling right now?" You say, "Nothing." Ok, breathe fast and full until you'll feel something. That's the point.

You also use fast and full breathing if you have a tendency to go unconscious or to space out. Breathe fast and full to keep yourself awake, to keep yourself in the process, to turn on or turn up the energy.

Use slow and full breathing when you are experiencing something really wonderful and you want to take it into every cell of your body. When you want to maximize your pleasure, breathe slow and full.

Use fast and shallow breathing when things feel too intense, when it is hard to integrate something. When the experience is too big, too intense, take little quick breaths. Use fast and shallow breathing to integrate something intense or use it just for the pleasure of it: for the fun of it, like a happy dog!

The "skill of happiness" is the subtitle of the book on Vivation, and happiness is the purpose and result of Vivation.

How Jim developed this is that he would see, in the early rebirthing days, that everybody was going through all this trauma and drama, working through or re-living miserable childhood events. And he thought, "Can't this just be fun? Can't this be enjoyable from the very first breath, right through the whole session? Can't every minute be enjoyable?"

Why not? The only reason was that nobody made it the focus, no one made enjoyment the intention or goal of the process! So, all it took was the decision: "This is about enjoyment."

Now there are the practice questions: Should I breathe through my nose or should I breathe through my mouth? The answer is whichever one you enjoy more. Which one is more enjoyable? That's the right way. So there's the first element: Circular Breathing and the three possible rhythms.

The second element is Complete Relaxation.

This element or principle should also be familiar to you already. It's the second ingredient in the Formula for Transformation: relaxing, letting go.

The third element is called "Awareness in Detail."

This awareness is focused on the details of the physical sensations in your body. What are you aware of? You are aware of the physical sensations in your body and the details of that. Track the subtle changes in your energy and breathe into the strongest feeling. That's Vivation.

The fourth element is the key. It's what makes Vivation different than Rebirthing and other breathing methods, schools, styles or approaches. It's called "Integration into Ecstasy."

You don't need to engage in this fourth element unless you find that you are not enjoying yourself. If you are not enjoying yourself, you must be blocking the natural enjoyment that comes from existence, from being alive. You must be making something wrong. In this case, you engage in the fourth element.

There are a number of fourth element techniques. There are 101 ways to integrate something. (You could call them affirmations.) Humor is a good fourth element technique. Curiosity and gratitude are also good examples of fourth element processing.

For example, if you are all caught up in tetany, you could think, "At least I'm not driving a car right now." Or "This is easier than a root canal." You know, just bringing in thoughts and feelings like that.

If you are not enjoying yourself, maybe you're not relaxing enough; maybe you need to adjust the breathing a bit. The first element is the thing that gets us into the process. You have to breathe enough to get into that tingling and vibrations and the buzzing and bubbling and that boiling energy sensation, electrical energy. That needs to be happening.

It's like listening to music. If you want to enjoy your favorite piece of music, it has to be loud enough for you to hear it; you got to turn it up enough to hear it. So, you have to turn up the energy in your body enough to feel it. That's why and how we use the breathing.

But even if it's your favorite music, if it's too loud, it's hard to enjoy it. So Vivation allows you to regulate and modulate your breath-energy, so it's strong enough for you to feel it, but not so strong that it becomes difficult to enjoy, to integrate or to relax into. You get to choose the intensity of your process with Vivation. You regulate the energy by adjusting the breathing pattern.

The fifth element of Vivation sets people free. The original idea was willingness is enough. "Do whatever you do, willingness is enough." If you want to enjoy something, if you are willing to enjoy something, you'll figure out a way to enjoy it. But if you're waiting to know how to do something before you're willing to do it, you'll never do it. Willingness comes first. A lot of people are waiting until they know how to enjoy something before they are willing to enjoy it.

Are you enjoying this? Are you willing to enjoy this?

"I can't".

I didn't ask whether you could enjoy it, I asked are you willing? Are you willing to enjoy this?

"I don't know how!"

I didn't ask if you knew how, I asked if you were willing?

Willingness is very powerful. It might be everything and it's probably enough. If you're willing to enjoy something, you're going to enjoy it. I'm on a plane sitting between two fat smelly people for an eight-hour flight. Not an enjoyable situation in general terms, but I can find lots of ways to enjoy it.

What really hit me when I started practicing Vivation was: I may not be able to enjoy certain situations, but I can certainly enjoy myself in those situations. Nobody is stopping me from enjoying myself except me. It doesn't matter what situation you're in. It can be fun to sit on a plane between two fat smelly people. For example, to get back at them, you can fart! All kinds of ways to enjoy yourself! If you're willing, you can make it an amazingly fun and enjoyable thing.

She wrote a book called 'The Possible Human'; she's written 30 books. Her name will come to me at some point in the story. She was visiting a concentration camp in Poland, or some place, and she ended up at… Jean Houston, that's her name, thank you. Jean Houston, an amazing woman. Her mentor was Marguerite Mead, the famous anthropologist, archaeologist.

Jean Houston's father was a Vaudeville actor, a writer, a comedian. And Jean is a great natural story teller. She's written 30 books. She told us about this experience she had going to what is now a holocaust museum; it was a place where they kept children and did who knows what kind of experiments on children–a horrendous nightmare kind of situation.

When she was walking through the dormitory where they stayed, she found someone had drawn a butterfly on the wall. Some child, in the middle of that hell, found a way to create something beautiful.

When she told me that story, I said: "What is my problem"? How dare I ever bitch and moan again? How dare I ever allow myself to be miserable? If a little child in that environment can muster up something beautiful, what is my f**king problem? And shame on me if I can't find out what that is, awaken it in me, and do what that child did.

We have an ability to create and generate joy, regardless of what's happening. We can use everything that's happening to generate joy, appreciation, gratitude, any good feeling. It's just a matter of making it your focus and then doing it. It's pretty easy when you get right down to it. So, this is Vivation.

You can recognize the pieces, the elements pretty easily. Minus the talking, this is a Vivation session. The difference is you're not going to be narrating your session.

[Demonstrates]

Circular breathing.

Complete relaxation.

Ooh, as soon as I focused on relaxation, I took a bigger breath (just an observation).

Awareness in detail.

I relax my throat; I breathe into that feeling. I just pictured my mother, so now it seems I'm in my mind, I'm visualizing something. That's a head thing. So when I picture my mother's face, I tune into where in my body is the feeling of

pleasure that it gives me? My solar plexus, around my navel, my heart area. I can find where those thoughts, images and memories live in my body, and I can breathe into them.

Jim would often do that. If someone was thinking about something, he would ask: "Where in your body does that thought live?" I feel angry. Where in your body do you feel anger and what is the physical feeling of it? What is the physical place where that feeling lives?

Now I'm conscious of my fingertips, I'm conscious of the heat in the palms of my hand. I can feel energy streaming through my arms. I'm very conscious of heat in my heart. As these feelings arise in my awareness, I send the breath to them, I breathe into them and I bring relaxation to them. And when I do, maybe I'll intuitively adjust my breathing to help me develop more rapport with the feelings and sensations that I am conscious of.

My sitting bones have strong feelings in them now. It's my Vivation session and so If I want, I can do something; I can change my position, and sure enough, those feelings go away. But now I have to start my session over and look for some other feeling. When the next feeling comes up, if I make an adjustment in my position, then the feeling goes away.

We can keep doing that: reacting and managing every feeling that comes up but, by doing that, we are wasting (missing) an opportunity to grow. We can, instead, allow those feelings to get stronger and stronger and breathe and relax into them, without trying to change them. I can keep breathing consciously and keep deliberately relaxing, simply observing them until they dissolve and integrate into my experience of my whole self. Until they pass on their own.

So, I breathe until the feelings smooth out and they're not standing out anymore. I have a sense of my whole body; I can feel everything in me from my head to my toes. I just shifted to full and slow breathing. It's automatic now. If I want to enjoy my feelings, as I'm focusing on them, I make my breathing slow and full to maximize the pleasure of them.

I'm starting to notice a little tingling in the back of my neck. I could rub my neck and change what I am feeling or I can let that feeling be. I can find a way to breathe to make that feeling stronger. Ah, I found it and now this tingling is a very familiar pleasurable feeling.

Now my mind kicked in: ah, I know what that feeling is, I know what that means. Oh, I just remembered a time when that was important. Now my mind is taking over the session and I'm not really focusing on the feeling anymore. I'm thinking about the feeling. I'm not doing Vivation. I'm in my head; I'm not relating to my feelings. I'm doing something else, which is OK, but it's not Vivation.

Since it's my session, I can turn the music up really loud or I can turn it down and make it subtle. What's the best way to enjoy this experience the most? If I can't enjoy it, then I need the fourth element.

I always use rap music as a 4th element example. I don't like rap music. I don't even know why they call it music. To me, it's not even music: Where's the melody? And the words and the lyrics? You kill the c*nt... slap the b**ch... f**k the cops! Oh God! I don't like it. I want to turn it off. If it's on the radio, I want to shut it off and turn to another station.

I was driving with Jim one day, and sure enough, a rap song came on the radio. I immediately turned the station. I said, "F**k; I hate rap music!" He said, "Wow, maybe you should vive?" You can integrate that; you can integrate rap music.

So, we turn the rap music on [breathes] and then he coached me. He said, "Think of something you feel really grateful for." That's no problem; I can think of this, I can think of that. Ok, so think of that and imagine that thing. Focus on it. While the rap music is playing, focus on something that gives you gratitude, that gives you pleasure.

He said, "Now just breathe and expand that feeling of gratitude, until the rap music is included in it." Soon I am feeling grateful as I am listening to rap music. I've integrated it. I'm not uncomfortable listening to rap music. I'm actually feeling grateful; I'm actually feeling enjoyment, feeling wonderful, while rap music is playing. So I've integrated it.

The main thing about circular breathing in Vivation is that the breathing never stops. You are breathing continuously. You're relaxing into every moment, with every breath, at every opportunity. And you are intensely aware of the sensory details. As you lock onto a detail and you change the breathing pattern, you can feel the integration. You can modulate the energy.

So here's a question. In Vivation, should you breathe through your nose or through your mouth? The answer is: "Which one is more enjoyable?" That's it.

Make no mistake about it: this first element in Vivation is always present, always obvious, always upfront. If someone walked in here while you were doing Vivation, the very first thing they would notice is that you are breathing differently, you are breathing continuously, your breathing is more conscious and active than usual. It's unmistakable. Jim was a very active breather.

The circular breathing should be obvious. You're activating energy, you're generating energy, you're waking up the energy, which causes the feelings and sensation. When you are aware of those feelings and sensations, breathe into them. Vive with them.

Audience member: *[inaudible]*

Dan:

Yeah, he didn't talk much about the exhale. He wanted relaxation during the inhale and during the exhale. He was trying to peel away what he thought was not absolutely necessary to integration, so he didn't stress the release of the exhale like we do in rebirthing: active inhale, passive exhale; active inhale, passive exhale. Instead, he said just keep the breath circular.

So, I can play, I can keep adjusting the rhythm. Maybe every breath is different from the last one, maybe the breathing rhythm is constantly changing, constantly alive, continuously active. That's a good thing in Vivation.

Sometimes people default to shallow breathing. The breath is moving, but how much energy are you generating? Maybe you're hiding from something or you're afraid of intensity.

Maybe you can only reach a peaceful state when everything is quiet and you're warm and comfortable and you're in the right place with the right person and the moon is in the right phase and you've lit the candle and the right music is playing… and then you can relax. Well, what good is it?

Relaxing into intensity, turning the energy up in your body and celebrating it, and enjoying it, and integrating it… that's Vivation.The other thing about Vivation is that you don't have to lay down. You can lay down. You can also sit up, you can stand on your head, you can walk around.

We did eye gaze Rebirthing, eye gaze Vivation. Looking into someone's eyes and breathe into the feelings that come up. Process those feelings with the breath. Looking into a mirror and watching your face morph into strange creatures and weird forms, and watch the feelings in your body change and process those feelings with the breath.

Ambulatory Vivation. Walking around in life and viving in action. Jim took the rebirthing process out of the fixed practice of laying down and going into your trauma and drama and stuff, and he lightened it up, he changed it with his focus on enjoyment.

Audience member:

How would you choose whether to vive or whether to do a rebirth?

Dan:

Vivation is a style of rebirthing. It's rebirthing with a twist! It's integrated into my work. These principles in Vivation are integrated into my style of Rebirthing, of Breathwork. So there's no question of choosing between the two. Different approaches to the same thing; different variation of the same practice.

Audience member:

So when you work with a client, you don't choose, you just do your thing or do you set an intention for the session… [inaudible]?

Dan:

If I'm working with a client and it's an early session, we're pounding on the basics. We're getting the basic skills under your belt, getting comfortable with the breathing, getting good at relaxing, at maintaining the rhythm, at remaining conscious and aware. Let's focus on that for the first few sessions. Once you have that down, you can set an intention for the session.

You can breathe to resolve some issue, breathe to heal something, breathe to solve a problem or whatever. But the first few sessions are about basic skills, getting good at them so that you can apply those skills later.

If you have an argument with someone, you have an issue, you have a disease, you have a decision you need to make, whatever. Then you can make your breathing session about that; you can use it for that, after you've done a few sessions and have gotten the knack of the process.

We let the spirit of breath decide where your session goes. We don't try to direct it and steer it from the beginning. Just go for the ride a few times until you're comfortable with the process and then you can start to take over and direct it.

With Vivation, what you're doing is, learning to regulate the breath-energy to your taste, for your enjoyment. Some people love ice baths, other people like warm baths. Some people like to dive quickly into the ocean, other people like to get their toes wet and slowly and gradually go in only up to their knees.

In a Vivation session, you get to honor that; you decide, you choose. During the session, everything is enjoyable and it should start to get more and more enjoyable and more and more enjoyable. Then you're enjoying every little thing that happens, every little feeling that comes up; even if it's painful, you find you're enjoying it. Even if it's frightening, you find that you're enjoying it.

Vivation is a way of transforming energy. For example, fear is excitement plus a no. Fear is the energy of excitement plus a no. This equals fear. Fear plus a yes, equals excitement. The same energy, same exact energy. Saying yes to it gives us one experience; saying no to it gives us another experience. But the energy is the same.

And the same thing with sadness. If you say yes to sadness, it transforms into gratitude, into sweetness. I lost my son, 42 years old this summer in June, two weeks before his 43rd birthday. The most difficult thing of my life, I could say. The biggest shock, the most painful thing that's ever happened, without a doubt.

But in the sadness, there's a sweetness, there's this joy; there's this gratitude, there's this appreciation. And it's not painting over a painful feeling with a pretty sugar-coating. There's a real and genuine sweetness and genuine gratitude. When you allow yourself to fully feel sad, the energy transforms into sweetness, into gratitude.

The same is true with anger. Anger becomes determination: this will never happen again [growls]! It's the same energy; you can transform it. So Vivation is really a way to transform energies in the direction of enjoyment, toward a higher frequency.

Celebration, gratitude, appreciation, wonder, curiosity. Deliberately breathing those energies in. Experiencing something in an atmosphere of appreciation, in a state of relaxation and with a welcoming air. If it's sadness, welcome it. Whatever it is, welcome it. There it is; that's the content. What are you going to do, fight with it? Try to pretend it's not there? Distract yourself from it? Try to manage it? Make it go away? No. You breathe!

One thing I learned is that the quicker we are at fully feeling something, the better we are at feeling fully, the more willing we are to totally feel the pain, the quicker we can recover from it. Recovery time is accelerated amazingly by our willingness to feel fully, to allow ourselves to feel whatever we feel.

I watched myself go through the typical chain of feelings and reactions. I get the phone call at 2 o'clock in the morning while in Moscow. Louise, his mother, is telling me what happened.

The first thing I feel is shock, then denial. I want to talk to the doctor, I want to hear it from him. Why is it hopeless? Why did he arrive in a hopeless condition? What's happening here? I need to know. And maybe I'm going to argue with it.

[Dan's story continues.]

The ability to channel emotional energy through the breath, relieves the body of a lot of stress. It speeds up recovery time and it reduces the wear and tear on the psyche and on the body itself.

Whether it's rap music or a horrible event, when you can hold it in your awareness and feel ease and fullness in the breath, feel genuine relaxation in the body and feel sweetness and love and joy in the face of something–then you have integrated it. You've healed something. You've learned and grown from it.

That wave of emotion that just came, was when I was looking at him in the hospital, brain dead, being artificially ventilated, I realized how beautiful his eyes were. I never realized how beautiful his eyes were. You know, in times like that, nothing helps and yet, everything helps.

[Dan's story continues]

To be able to breathe fully and freely, to be able to relax and not avoid the situation, not trying to not think about it, but having it sit on your lap like a brick. This is it: there isn't any pretending it ain't so. There isn't any wishing it wasn't so. There isn't any trying to paint a pretty picture over it to make it more palatable. It's sitting with the fullness of it and allowing your system to integrate the experience [breathes].

I notice now that when I talk about this, the sadness that's locked in other people's bodies, gets activated and I feel myself processing it. Sadness that you don't let yourself feel because it's too painful. Sadness that if you touch it, you're afraid you'll sink into it forever.

Same thing with anger, same thing with rage. To feel the fullness of it is very dangerous, is very scary and so, when we touch it, it's like a fire and we pull away from it. And when we pull away from it, we withdraw energy and awareness from it and we begin to dis-integrate.

In Vivation, it's all about integration. Bringing those parts—those feelings—that you pushed off and separated from and didn't want to feel: Vivation is about bringing them back into your sense of self and becoming more whole and more integrated.

That's the healing power of Vivation. So, let's start. Start with the breath. You don't have to change your position. Nothing to do first. Just start breathing and relaxing. Breathe while you walk, sit, stand, move, or lay down.

Start right here, right now.

Circular breathing.

Complete relaxation.

Awareness in detail.

If you get up, what muscles do you use to get up with? What does gravity feel like? Where is the weight of your body? Feel it when you shift from one foot to the other, and keep breathing.

Awareness in detail, complete relaxation, circular breathing. Fast and full, slow and full, or fast and shallow: your choice. The breath will activate the energy. The energy will activate feelings and sensations.

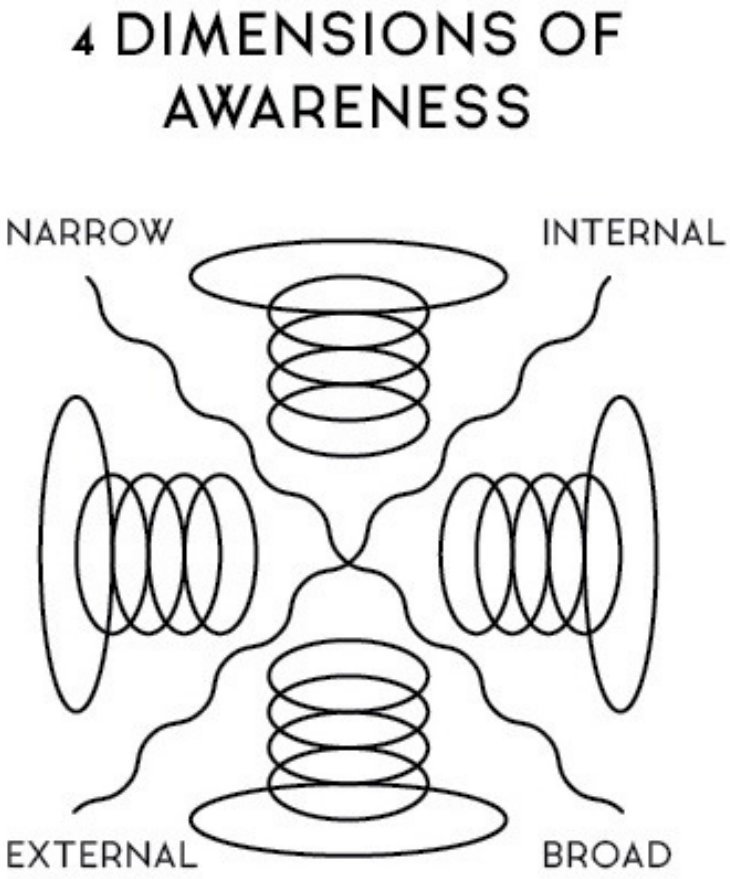
Feel into those feelings and sensations, breathe into them. Relax into them. Enjoy them. And if something starts to happen that you don't find enjoyable, then you need to stop making it wrong. You need to stop resisting it. Embrace it, celebrate it, be grateful for it, be curious about it, invite it in.

Breathe more, relax more. Be more aware of your reactions. And choose to keep the breath moving and to keep relaxing, again and again, each time as if it's the first time.

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 22.

The Four Dimensions of Awareness


4 DIMENSIONS OF AWARENESS
NARROW
INTERNAL
EXTERNAL
BROAD

My definition of a high-quality human is somebody that's... Well, it's a little bit rude to say, but it's somebody who has a really good head on his or her shoulders, has got really big balls, so to speak, and a really big heart.

Those three centers: head, heart, and belly. When all three brains agree, all three centers of consciousness are engaged. When all levels of ourselves come together, a decision or an act has a power and a quality that is missing when we are coming from only one part, one place, or another.

There is an ancient Chinese proverb, a saying: "Where consciousness goes, energy flows." This is particularly true when we bring the breath into it.

If I'm going to send breath up into my brain, into my head, into my thinking centers, into the frontal cortex, the breaths are kind of small; they are flowing into a small hard space, it doesn't really allow for much expansion. The breaths have a certain quality, a certain size, and they create or meet pressure or resistance.

As I'm breathing into this upper space, the head on my shoulders, I'm breathing in and out through my nose, or in my nose and out my mouth; and I'm doing this little thing with the tip of my tongue, touching the roof of my mouth when I inhale and exhale.

When I get out of my head and I focus on the heart center, it's like shifting gears on a bicycle. We are in a different rhythm, a different size and speed of the breath. My energy and my experience naturally shifts and I have an urge to allow the breath to come in and out of the mouth, at a different rate, pace, speed and volume.

And then, when I drop down and breathe into that lower space, the sound changes, the speed and volume change. It's the feeling of 'oooh', an opening that allows the deepest breaths to occur.

So there are small, medium and large breaths.

I can pick a random number, 3, 6, 9, 12... I consciously breath a certain number of breaths into each place/space. Let's start with 3. Take three breaths into each of those three spaces: head, heart and belly.

If I want to make a decision, it's a really good idea to breathe into all three of those spaces. If I am confused or facing a difficult decision or interaction, I take a few moments to breathe into my belly, to breathe into my heart and to breathe into my head. Breathing fully and freely. Relaxing completely; and only then do I think, do I speak and act.

The odds are that energy (information) is coming from those places and I'm tapping those places. We have gut feelings; we have neurons in our intestines. A hundred million of them or something; some ridiculous number of neurons in our intestine. And we have a giant number of them in our heart. We are tapping into those three brains, those three centers of consciousness: body intelligence, heart intelligence, and mind intelligence.

Most companies, most people, are running on mind intelligence only, or they may be responding to body intelligence (gut feelings), but probably not as much as they could if they were more conscious of it.

From time to time, we all get a feeling about something, but that's it. You have a feeling, but do you follow that feeling? Where is that feeling coming from? I suggest that you develop a ritual for yourself, where you tap into mind intelligence, into heart intelligence and into body intelligence before making an important decision.

Do it often enough, in different situations, in different places and at different times, and your system will take it on as a strategy; it will do that by itself. It won't let you act or speak, unless what you're doing or saying is coming from your entire being.

Audience member:

Can I ask a question? Do you also correlate that with your chakra system in the sense that breathing into the lower chakras to work for and against [inaudible] things?

Dan:

Yep, you could. That might be too far out for some executive CEO types; it might go a little outside of their intellectual comfort zone. Those concepts or eastern models may get in the way. But I think that everybody can relate to gut feelings, heart feelings and mental thinking. They don't have to make a big leap into a new philosophy. I would introduce those ideas once we've gotten further along.

If you have that belief system, if you have some knowledge of the chakra system, some feeling of it, then yes, yes, yes. Work with it, play with it. And there are sounds connected to each chakra, colors connected to each chakra, postures...

Audience member:

Is there any significance in using 3, 6, 9, 12?

Dan:

Like Tesla, I like 3's, 6's and 9's for some reason. I am applying those numbers to everything we are building in Mexico; I like those numbers for some reason. Anything that reduces to a 3 a 6 or a 9 is a number I like.

So back to awareness or consciousness. We are back to that.

The Four Dimensions of awareness.

Maybe some of you are familiar with this model: it's called the 'four dimensions of awareness'. We're going to be breathing into each of those four dimensions. You could call it attention, awareness, consciousness, whatever you like.

Let's use the word awareness and notice that awareness can be either internal or external; it can be narrow or broad. At any given moment, your energy, your consciousness, is flowing into one of these dimensions.

Who's in charge of that awareness? Advertising companies? Other people's ideas about what you should focus on and what's important? Fears? Programming? Conditioning? Unconscious habits? What is controlling your awareness?

What or who controls where your awareness (and therefore your energy) goes? Habit? Religious programming? I'm speaking from experience. I am a recovering "cathoholic" and I can still see those habits and patterns and structures that were formed from kindergarten up to high school. I can still see the remnants of those structures in me.

There are beliefs, like the belief in Santa Clause. You all have a belief in Santa Clause, but it doesn't have the charge on it that it did when you were a little kid. So, we can't get rid of beliefs, we can only charge them or discharge them. We can take the charge off of them.

We can take the charge we have on a belief and we can move it to another higher belief. You can't destroy energy. Thanks to Einstein, we all know that energy can't be destroyed; it can only be changed and transformed.

And it's the same thing with any kind of phobia or post-traumatic stress issue. You'll never forget what happened or what you did, but it doesn't have to have a charge on it anymore. We heal and recover when we take the charge off certain things, when we put that energy somewhere else, when we redirect it.

Once you heal or recover from something, you can think about it, you can remember it, but it no longer has that charge. We've done the work of transforming that energy, moving it to another place, in another way or direction. And breath is how we move, redirect or transform that energy.

Certain situations, certain habits and patterns will cause your awareness to move into one of these four dimensions. This model comes by way of Tom Sotis and Scott Sonnon and the mixed martial arts world.

We need to be conscious of these dimensions and be conscious of when, who and how our energy or attention gets hijacked. We need to reclaim it and redirect it. The way we do that is with conscious breathing.

Right now, pick some tiny little point in your body, it could be your baby toe on your left foot, and bring all your awareness to that narrow internal dimension. Like a laser, bring all your attention to that one single internal point and breathe.

Your attention goes there, and because your attention goes there, energy is already flowing there. Bring in the breath and build on that. As you double-down on it, you intensify and accelerate what's happening.

Now you're breathing into your baby toe with all of your attention focused like a laser. Nothing else in you or around you is registering in your awareness; no attention on anything else in you or external to you. You are holding that laser-like, single-pointed, single-minded focus.

Continuous attention on the left baby toe. Breathe into it. You are entering deeply into that internal, narrow dimension.

You could change that point to another single point somewhere in your body. Maybe far away, like your right shoulder. Move your energy, your awareness and your breath up to your right shoulder.

Then maybe shift to another point, maybe your 'hara,' your 'dantien'. Like a laser, bring your attention, and your energy to that point just below your belly button, and breathe into that place. You are exercising a muscle, your consciousness muscle.

Now switch to a broad internal focus. Instead of a laser-like focus, distribute your energy and attention to every part of your body. It's like peripheral vision but on the internal sensory level. Translate what we call peripheral vision into an internal experience of feelings. You are distributing your awareness, your energy and the breath, to every part of your body equally. Wide or broad internal attention or awareness.

Now, open your eyes and pick some little external thing. A light switch, a crack on the floor, a spot on the wall. Some little speck, some single point in your external world. Like a laser, go right to it with your energy, your attention and your breath. Then pick another single, tiny external point, and like a laser, focus all your attention, all your energy, and your breath there.

Do you remember the head, the heart and the belly? Breathe into those three centers of intelligence right now. When you put your attention, your energy, your awareness onto someone or something, you want that energy, that awareness to come from all three centers: the heart, the head and the belly.

Now open up your attention, your awareness, and take in everything around you. Now you have wide, external awareness; broad external awareness.

Your eyes aren't focused on any particular thing; they're soft. Your peripheral vision is really lit up. And you're feeling the air on your skin, you are hearing the sounds around you. Movements in the distance; slight little movements registering in your awareness, everything in the room.

You are being very conscious, very deliberate. You could call it radiating. You're sending consciousness and energy out into the world in all directions; you're allowing your attention and awareness to be everywhere around you: 360 degrees. Broad, external awareness.

Play this game of switching from one dimension to another, going back and forth. Get good at getting a handle on your awareness. Get control of your energy and use the breath to do it.

As you practice this, you will begin to notice when your awareness is disturbed by someone else, by something else; and you can immediately catch it and redirect it back where it belongs, before this downward degrading kind of spiral starts to take over your life and your experience.

Get really good at breathing into these four dimensions of awareness. Internal-broad, external-narrow, external-broad, internal-narrow. Flipping, switching, shifting back and forth. Getting flexible and quick; instantaneous shifting of your energy, your focus, your breath.

Beautiful story of Galileo:

When he was 14 years old, (I think he was in a church in Venice), there was a chandelier hanging from the ceiling and it was swaying in the wind. This 14-year-old kid was mesmerized: narrow-external focus.

Then he did something that very few people would ever think to do. He awakened an internal focus simultaneously and he began to count his heart beats. Who would think to do this in that moment? Combining an external narrow focus with an internal narrow focus? Only someone who is very flexible at shifting dimensions.

The most creative people are naturally good at shifting and combining dimensions; the average person is not. He or she is stuck in one or the other dimension, in certain moments, and it's difficult for them to process multi-dimensional information. It's difficult to unhook from one and shift to another. Creative people seem to have a natural ability to do this, or they have trained themselves to be able to switch, to go from flip to flop and/or to combine dimensions.

Galileo started counting his heartbeats, while he was mesmerized by the swinging chandelier, and he discovered the mathematical law–the law of physics that controls the pendulum. The world has never been the same since that 14-year-old kid combined external-narrow awareness with internal-narrow awareness. The result was a profound personal insight, a great discovery!

That's the power of being conscious of your awareness and your energy (let's call it one and the same thing). Begin to play with your energy and awareness. Direct it. Combine dimensions. Shift from one to another. Bring them in or wake them up. Turn them on and shut them off.

In certain situations, a laser-like focus can save your life. The ability to stay focused on something no matter what's happening inside you or around you is a powerfully liberating ability. Nothing affects you, nothing stops you, nothing distracts you. That's a powerful ability.

But there's a shadow side, because when you become fixated on something, it's not the same. Each of these things has both sides to it: that broad-internal awareness or broad-external awareness is very useful.

On a battlefield, that ability to have a broad-external awareness, to be conscious of your surroundings, the details… the slightest thing moves or happens and you pick it up. The slightest sound registers in your awareness–that's very powerful.

The shadow side is you can be kind of scattered and wishy-washy and you don't have any focus. So there's that negative side, a shadow aspect to it. The same thing is true with broad or narrow-internal awareness.

I have a pain in my left knee, and because I haven't practiced working with my consciousness—with my energy, with my breath—I'm controlled by that pain; I'm trapped by it. My awareness, my attention is dominated by that pain; I'm a victim of it. I am stuck in a single dimension.

The ability to allow that pain to be there and to shift to another narrow-internal focus, my other knee for example, which happens to feel really, really good… I'm not denying, ignoring or suppressing the pain in my left knee. I am simply opening up my awareness to include something else that is equally real, equally true: the pleasure in my right knee.

As soon as I do that, something happens to the pain. Because a big part of the pain was caused by my narrow focus, my fixated energy, my narrow attention. If I shift my awareness from the pain in my knee to include the smell of the flowers around me, I am expanding my consciousness, I am directing my energy. When I was focusing on the pain in my knee, I was oblivious to the beauty around me—the joy and the ecstasy that was right here, all the time, equally real and accessible.

This practice is very useful and very powerful on many levels: business, creativity, sports, having a conversation with a child or a teenager. I mean we can get locked into something, a focus, a position, an attitude, an opinion, a point of view, and we don't realize that we're locked up. We need to expand and relax, to wake up and remember, to shift.

Be creative with your breath and cycle through these four dimensions. Get really good at being conscious of the dimension you are in and how you got there. Was it your choice? Did it come by way of habit? Was it driven by fear? Was it controlled by some unconscious force? Somebody else's energy?

With Breathwork, we can reclaim our power, reclaim our soul, return to our real true self. We can awaken our healing and creative energies. We can expand and refine our awareness, our consciousness.

Let's spend some time right now practicing. I'd like you to breathe and to play with these four dimensions. At random, or in order, combine them and switch between them in your own interesting way.

It's possible to have a broad-internal awareness while you're also very conscious of a single external point. For example, I focus on the flame of the candle. At the same time, I'm aware of every feeling and sensation in my body. I'm combining two dimensions: narrow-external and internal-broad.

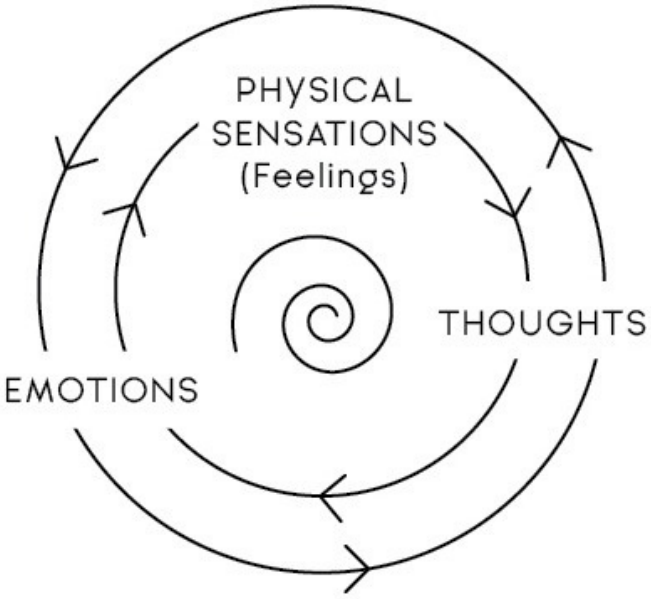
Be creative. Practice!

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

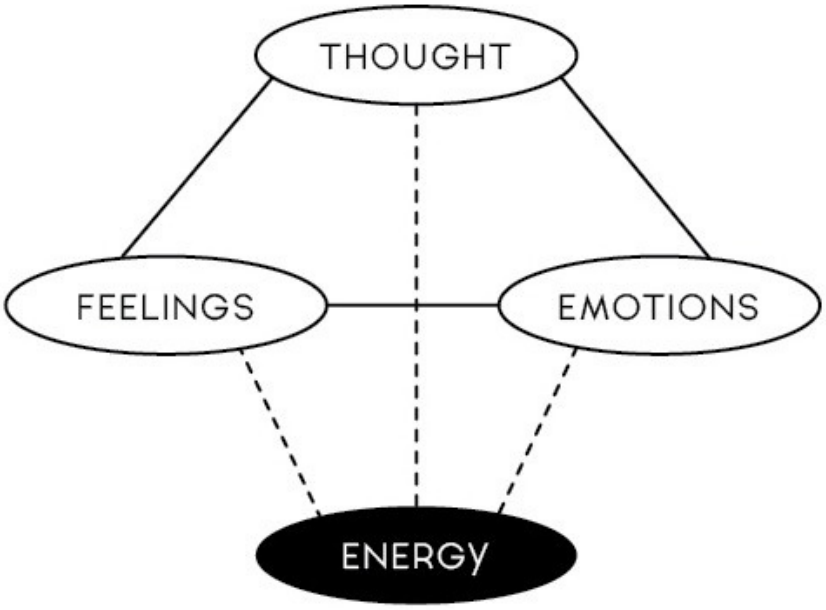
MODULE 23.

Internal Awareness

INTERNAL AWARENESS LOOP



INTERNAL AWARENESS



Rajneess/Osho pointed out that we don't give attention to something unless there's something wrong with it. You would never focus on your kidney unless you had a kidney problem. You wouldn't focus on your breathing, unless you suddenly had difficulty breathing. You wouldn't focus on your elbow unless there was a pain there.

Pain, illness and disease cause us to pay attention. And he said, "If you look at how fixated we are on our mind and how much attention we give to it, what does that tell us about the condition of our mind? It must be the most diseased part of us! If the mind gets so much of our attention all the time, it must really need healing!" A very interesting idea.

Audience member: *[inaudible]*

Dan:

Yes, and as children, people pull us out of our body and put us into our head constantly. Every time you have a conversation with a child and you talk about what's right and what's wrong, and you tell them to think about this and think about that, you're making them get out of their body and go up into their head. In time, that becomes what they do whenever they have a problem.

The mind is what we use to get other people to do things; it's what we use to manipulate ourselves and others: logic, rational (or irrational) arguments, judging, comparing and analyzing. But this mode of mental operation is not natural for children. They are naturally feeling beings. That's why we have to repeat things again and again; why we have to force their attention: "Look at me; listen to what I'm saying."

We are forcing them to get up into their head. We are giving them mental information; we're giving them what's right and what's wrong and how things should be and how they shouldn't be. Without realizing it, we are establishing a pattern in them that the head becomes the default place for their attention and energy.

Kids begin to focus on saying the right thing and making the right choices and they learn how to explain themselves properly and how to rationally (or irrationally) justify what they're doing. Let me tell you why we have to do it this way. Ok, now I understand the why. They focus on mastering head games.

Understanding is a head thing. What is understanding? It's satisfying the mind. When you understand something, all you have done is satisfy your mind. Your mind will bother you and pull you and poke at you until you satisfy it; then it leaves you alone for a while. But is that our job? Is that our mission in life−to satisfy the mind (ours or someone else's)? Is that the kind of relationship with life and ourselves that we want?

Audience member: *[inaudible]*

Dan:

Freedom, safety and honesty. And feel where what you're saying and doing is it coming from. What is under it? What is beyond it? What is around it?

We all have enough examples of when the mind seems to make something so important, we will argue and even fight about it. But then we look back on it later and ask how serious was it really? From that perspective, we often realize that it was not as serious as it seemed in the moment. In hindsight, it was not really important at all. A reality check tells us that the mind had us. We were hijacked by the mind!

If we do that reality check often enough, early enough, we will start to lighten up and we will become more flexible in each moment. Things won't seem so crucial or important. It will not be so vital that others accept what we're saying or agree with our point of view. At some point, you realize that it could have gone either way in that moment and we would all still be ok. We would still be here and now.

Coming from the heart can be much more important than coming from the head. The best way to get others to come from their heart is for us to become conscious of our own heart. When we do it, they will catch it from us. You can't explain how to come from your heart. You can't explain to someone how to listen to their body. You can only do it yourself and trust that they will catch it from you.

Audience: *[inaudible]*

Dan:

You know, we slip in and out of wisdom constantly and I think that's good enough. Being able to move and shift from head to heart, that's a big part of it. We can feel this shift energetically and we can awaken and develop this ability to shift, and no words are necessary. It is catchy.

In the same way, when you're supporting someone's session and you're giving them all of your attention, and then someone cries or screams in another part of the room and you shift your attention and energy away from your breathing partner, that break in our energetic connection can be felt. It registers in our breather's awareness. The energy connection was suddenly broken, severed.

In that moment, when you shifted your attention and your energy away from your partner, you missed a subtle change in their breathing. A third party observing the whole thing could see it; it's real. They felt it and they reacted.

This whole talk about energy and subtle energetic phenomena can sound kind of woo-woo, but it's real. So, let's explore this internal dimension of energy and see how we can develop our own personal healing practice.

What's possible in your inner world? In my experience, there's only three things that occur in our inner world:

1. Thoughts [words, pictures, images]
2. Feelings and sensations
3. Emotions

That's it. Can you give me anything related to an internal experience that doesn't fall under one of these categories?

The fourth possibility or experience of our internal world is energy. Everything is a form of energy. These three things are forms of energy. And when we don't get fixated on the forms, we begin to awaken to a direct experience of this energy that underlies them. Emotions are energy. Feelings and sensations are energy. Thoughts are energy.

Breathwork awakens us to a direct experience of energy. There is this cybernetic loop connecting these three things and you can start to see how they connect. If I have a thought, it triggers an emotion and it triggers a feeling and sensation in my body. If I'm sensitive to my energy, I will catch that. I can observe it; I can experience it.

When I have an emotion, it causes a thought and it causes a feeling or sensation in my body. And when I have a feeling or sensation in my body, it triggers a thought, and it triggers an emotion.

Breathwork creates a new awareness. This awakening to the energetic relationship between thoughts, feelings and sensations and emotions. It represents a new way to deal with these things. It represents a new model for healing and growth.

Let's say I have a physical pain. That physical pain is going to cause me to think thoughts that resonate with the quality or the frequency of that pain. I will literally have painful thoughts. I will have painful emotions because they grow out of this painful feeling and these painful thoughts.

If I have a painful emotion, it's going to cause a sick feeling in my stomach or it's going to cause an uncomfortable physical feeling somewhere in my body. And it's going to cause my mind to generate uncomfortable thoughts because they're arising from the emotional pain or discomfort.

If I have some psychological pain, it's going to cause feelings in my body that resonate at same the frequency as my thoughts, and it will also trigger emotions that reflect and express my psychological state.

If I don't interrupt that cycle, that loop, it's going to spread. If I have a negative thought, it's going to cause more negative thoughts. It's going to cause negative feelings in my body and negative emotions. So, I need to interrupt that thinking mind, otherwise the energy is going to spread to those other levels (body, emotions).

Let's say I start with a physical feeling: I have this pain in my knee and it wants to dominate my attention. I'm distracted by it, and if someone talks to me, I will be bothered by them because I'm in this uncomfortable state of pain.

When I used to work in hospitals, I really got how pain and illness brings out who we really are. We had two kinds of patients: one was so difficult, so obnoxious, so horrible. The worse the pain, the worse he/she behaved.

The other was the opposite: they were like saints. The worse their pain was, the nicer they became. Illnesses, diseases, difficult or stressful situations… they have a tendency to bring up and out who and how we really are.

So what are my choices here? If I start with a pain in my knee and I'm conscious, I notice that tension happens around this area. My body is trying to protect itself from the pain. I might even have tension up in my jaw, tension in my neck and tension in my shoulders. It's like the rest of my body is trying to protect itself from the pain; its reacting to the pain—catching it, you might say.

One physical feeling can cause another physical feeling somewhere in the body. Or the physical feeling can cause an emotion or a thought: "Oh my god, what if I have cancer? My mother had arthritis, maybe I'm getting arthritis!" Look at the mental thoughts that were triggered by that physical feeling.

The lesson is, if I can't do anything about the physical pain, I can still do something about my focus, my awareness. I can choose my thoughts; I don't have to let the physical pain control my thoughts. I can take advantage of the connection, the loop between thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Let's say I stay focused on the physical level. My knee is hurting; that's the reality. But I can still enjoy the sun on my face. I am still free to direct my awareness to other pleasant physical sensations. I can enjoy a cup of tea.

And, when I consciously enjoy that cup of tea, I'm not denying or ignoring or suppressing the pain in my knee. I am just choosing my focus. I can also choose my thoughts. I don't have to sit by and helplessly let the painful physical feelings determine the kinds of thoughts that my mind generates.

I can consciously generate gratitude, appreciation, patience or any emotion. I'm still free. I can take advantage of that freedom. I can exercise that freedom.

Same thing with a thought: if I have a psychological issue and I'm going around and around in my head about it. My wife asked me for a divorce. I can observe the feelings in my body that this brings up and the emotions that it brings up. If I become conscious, I can see how that can spiral into me saying things and doing things and being a way that I would never want to be.

When my first wife announced that she wanted a divorce, we had a good friend, Ridgeway Cook, who lived in Newport, Rhode Island. I drove out to see him and it was on my mind: "Louise wants a divorce; she's at the end of her rope." I told

Ridgeway, I said: "Louise told me this morning she wanted a divorce." His simple instant response was: "Nothing wrong with that."

The way he said it, so simply, so "matter of factly." Just like that, I had a release. Holy crap! It never occurred to me to think about it in this way, to look at it in that way. It wasn't the big catastrophic event my mind was making it into. He opened me to a response that I would never have come up with on my own. He was right. I was thinking that it was very wrong, completely wrong, and it should not happen.

Hearing it, the casual way he said it, the genuineness of it. It shattered this whole thing that was building up in my system. It all fell apart like a house of cards. In a moment, letting his words in, and the energy in the way that he said it, "Nothing wrong with that" [explosion sound].

That kind of thought came from outside my system which, at the time, was lost in feelings and emotions. He showed me we can transcend our own mind-body system. We can transcend those thoughts, feelings and emotions. We can break out of any pattern in a moment, just like that [snapping fingers]!

With one breath, we can shatter that whole thing that is building up in us, we can break free of the whole thing that has us spiraling downward. You can get really good at shifting like this. One breath is like a message from an angel, one breath is like a wave of grace. The grace of God can shine through us in a moment.

So the game we practice is what I call the Two-Against-One game. If one thought has the ability to change and produce feelings and sensations in my body and to trigger emotions, what if I use feelings and sensations and emotions and I pit them against the thought? Two against one.

Now, instead of this one negative thought affecting my emotions, my feelings and sensations, I turn that game around, and I deliberately generate positive emotions. I deliberately focus on enjoying physical sensations. Now the thinking has no choice but to start to change. It is affected by my emotions and my feelings and sensations.

The mind is being affected by the feelings and emotions that I choose. It's two against one. You can switch and change, you can pit any two levels against the other one. Using the power of the breath and awareness to heal yourself.

I worked in the addiction community for some time. I saw that addicts transferred their energy away from alcohol onto cigarettes or onto something else. Smoking was better than drinking and drugging; better than what they were doing. It was an improvement, an up-leveling of the addiction, a transference. Drinking and drugging certainly is not healthy, but smoking isn't healthy either.

Smoking is a good example because it's so unconscious, it's so automatic. People just reach for a cigarette; they light it up. The behavior is so familiar to the system. Whenever it wants security, comfort, it just launches into those smoking actions, those behaviors. Holding the cigarette, seeing the smoke, feeling the inhale and consciously exhaling.

Smoking is a substitute for inner fire, and when you wake up your genuine inner fire, smoking loses a big portion of its appeal.

The other thing is dealing with the actual feelings. I catch myself wanting to light a cigarette. Whoa! That in itself is already huge. You're not automatically, unconsciously doing it. You're actually aware of the urge, and in that moment of awareness, you have a choice. There is space for choice. The opening to change is there; awareness is the first step toward accessing our potential for overcoming, recovering, changing.

Maybe in that moment of awareness, the choice is to light a cigarette. But if I explore the experience and ask: what is the feeling in my body right now? What exactly does the urge to smoke feel like? And where is it? What are the details of it?

Does it have a location? Does it have a shape? Does it have a texture? Does it have a temperature? If it could hold water, how much water could it hold?

I'm beginning to explore the feelings that have been unconsciously driving my behavior. My energy has never gone in a different direction in that moment and so now there is the possibility of change. I'm directing my energy along a different path and I am focusing my consciousness in a different way in that moment. This starts to loosen the grip that the addiction has on me. The bringing in of awareness is a small shift, but it's in the right direction.

We can play this game of allowing and exploring the feeling. Some people say, "I don't know what you mean by "what color is it"? What do you mean "what shape is it?" Let's look a little more closely at this.

Relax a little bit and really tune into the feeling of wanting a cigarette. Stay with that exploration. As the seconds and minutes pass, you're already breaking the pattern. You are focusing on the feeling of wanting a cigarette—postponing reacting to the urge to reach for a cigarette.

If you allow the feelings to get stronger and stronger, you might get to a point when you say, "I don't want to play this game anymore. I just want a f**king cigarette!" Ok, fine, you went three minutes. Let me hug you. That's three minutes of freedom; that's three minutes of personal power; that's three minutes of choice, of control instead of being a victim.

You did something else in a moment when you would usually succumb to your dysfunction. We got a wedge in the door. We have started the process. The next time it will be four minutes and then five minutes. Practice allowing the feelings to get stronger—more and more uncomfortable. Watch the urge build its power to move you. If the feelings get stronger and stronger, at some point, they will reach a peak, and then they will pass, they will go away.

If you allow them to reach a peak and go away, you just completed one very important energy cycle, a recovery loop and now it's complete. You sat with the feeling until it threw everything it had at you and you didn't let it push you or pull you. You just kept breathing and relaxing and feeling and you practiced non-reaction. Now you can reward yourself. Light a cigarette and enjoy it—or not!

If you choose to smoke, do it very consciously. Enjoy the act of slowly pulling it out of the package and enjoy the smell of it. Look at the shape and the color of it and, feel it in your fingers. And when you light a match, play with the flame for a bit before you touch it to the cigarette.

And when you finally smoke it, enjoy it like you're making love to it. Reward your brain for allowing you to play that game for three, four, or five minutes. Five or ten minutes is about enough I think. For most people, even two minutes of conscious awareness is all you really need for the urge drop away.

As you go through that cycle a few times, you're unhooking from the addiction. It's losing its ability to unconsciously control you. You begin to see and feel and know that smoking is a choice. And when you get to that point where it's unarguably a choice, now you're in the position of power. You can actually choose.

Who do I want to be right now? How do I want to be? I know I'm feeling this strong urge, but how do I want to be right now? Who do I want to be right now? And in that moment of choice, you can start moving your energy and awareness in a different direction. The breath gives you the power to do that.

After you do that a few times, your energy and your awareness begins to shift by itself. And soon, that addiction, whatever it was—smoking, drinking, whatever—it's a thing of the past.

Audience member:

And that could apply to pretty much any habit.

Dan:

Absolutely. Any emotional habit, any behavioral habit, any thinking habit, any physical habit. Yeah, it works for absolutely anything, overeating, anything.

I'm suffering with some issue: emotional, psychological or physical. I use the story of my wife. When she would get upset and angry, it seemed that she didn't want to be relieved of the anger.

"Would you like a cup of tea?"
"No! I don't want any tea!"
"But you like tea."
"I don't want any tea."
"Would you like to watch a movie?"
"No, I don't want to watch a movie!"
"But you like movies."
"I don't want to watch a movie!"

There seems to be this psychological attachment to suffering. There is this energetic addiction, a psychological addiction to suffering. All humans seem to have it to some degree or another. Something takes over our system (Eckhart Tolle calls it the 'Pain body'). And when that happens, sometimes an outside force can wake us up.

You're depressed and you're sitting in your house and your friends come by. They pick you up and they make you go out; they push or pull you to do something. You needed that external force to get you out of your slump.
So we need a technique, strategy, a map, to deal with the habits of our mind-body system when they hijack us. We need a way to lift ourselves out of our own slumps!

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 24.

Cycles & The Hero’s Journey

THE HERO'S JOURNEY
Call to adventure
Helper/ Mentor
Challenges & Temptations
Death & Rebirth
Transformation
Return

The penumbra effect. Why was Star Wars one of the most popular movies in history? You can't find a culture on the planet that didn't like the movie Star Wars, the original movie.

If you think about how brilliant that movie was, how they locked the audience in psychologically, how they zeroed in on these universal things that every culture, every person feels. Joseph Campbell called it "the hero's journey."

Think about that movie. I forget parts of it, but in the beginning, Luke Skywalker was invited to learn about the Force. But he had to help his uncle on his farm on some planet and he had plans and he turned down the offer, the invitation.

So that's the first step in the hero's journey: you are offered a gift, a challenge, an opportunity, and you refuse it. And you always have a good reason in life: I have kids, I don't have time, I have to go somewhere, I have things to do… my business. We always have a good excuse. When the gift is offered in the classic hero's journey, it is first refused.

But then, in Star Wars, the planet that his uncle lived on got blown up. Well, there goes the hero's excuse. And then he was offered the gift again, he was challenged a second time, and this time he accepted it. I'm probably going to miss pieces of this… So now you've accepted the gift.

At some point in the hero's journey, we're depressed and we enter this dark night of the soul.

The journey starts with this "Ah-ha!" moment. Here you are and you have this brilliant inspiration. You're bathed in this amazing bright "Aa-ha!" You've got your vision. What are you going to do? I'm going to create this amazing thing and I'm going to cure cancer (or whatever it is).

You're in the light of this beautiful inspiration and you start on your journey—the hero's journey. And here's that penumbra effect: as you start to move, you come around into the zone of darkness, the dark night of the soul.

In the beginning, you had momentum. All this inspiration was driving you. Guides and helpers are coming in along the way. You're developing your skills, your powers and abilities, and you're even accelerating your growth.

Then you get out of the light, you come into the darkness: you're in this penumbra effect and you experience the dark night of the soul. And this is where most people stop and get lost; they lose their inspiration, their teacher isn't around, they're stuck. Most people stop here and their dream dies.

But if you can maintain momentum through here, at some point, you pop back out around into the light again. And the more often you go through that difficult phase, the better you get at navigating it, and the faster you grow.
The fact is you have to plan on it, you have to be prepared to enter this dark night of the soul. It's inevitable. And so you create a strategy for navigating it when the time comes.

One of the things is, when you are in the light of this original inspiration, you sit down and you write a letter to yourself. Write an actual physical letter to yourself.

Write about all the feelings that motivate and excite you, the vision, the passion, with all the beauty, all the emotions, all the feelings. From within this state, write a letter to yourself. And then, when you enter this dark night, you take the letter out and you read it to yourself.

Another thing is to share your vision and mission with someone who will support and encourage you. And have that person's phone number. Someone who, when things get tough, you can depend on them to remind you of your vision, your mission. Call them so that they can reawaken your passion, your inspiration, your enthusiasm. Use them to get through that dark night of the soul.

The lesson is: this dark moment is going to happen. Plan on it, be prepared for it and get comfortable with it. The more often you go through it, the better. Most people experience these things as up and down, up and down, or back and forth, back and forth; It's like you're stuck.

Better to make it a round and round, a round and round. And if you get comfortable with that round and round, get comfortable with circles and cycles, then something can happen: it can become an expanding spiral. Down cycles are as much a part of growth as up cycles and we waste a lot of energy by trying to avoid down cycles.

We used to play at an amusement park where there was a big swing–a cage that two people could stand in. It was a swing and two people could stand in it. And there was a bar to hold onto. At first they helped you, the worker pushed you in this big swing, to help you get it going, and then you're rocking, swinging.

If you really go for it, you can swing until you almost hit vertical and almost make it around the top, but you fall back. And so you drive even harder. You take advantage of the down cycle. Then, finally you make it, you go up and over the top and you come down the other side. You make it a circle. You are pushing and pulling to accelerate the circles; you are enjoying and using the up and down cycles.

Where I grew up, it was a blast! One of our favorite things to do as kids. "Yee-hah!" When you're coming into that down cycle, you're helping it; you are welcoming the down cycle. You are not resisting it; just the opposite. You are driving into it; you are using it.

Then, when you swing around, you don't hit bottom, you sail through it, and you swing and bounce back up. Passing through that point where up cycles and down cycles meet is exhilarating! It's exciting and it's fun.

And so this: circular breathing.

Establishing a steady, energetic pattern and get comfortable with it. It's not an in and out, an up and down; it's a round and round. Something begins to happen in our system. We are growing in the ability to surrender to natural, healthy forces. The so called down cycles and the dark night of the soul, become this quiet winter season where we're resting or going into our cave.

Resting is half the work. And then, sure enough, spring comes. Circles and cycles show up everywhere in nature and in the universe. And so we are breathing in a circular way. We want to get comfortable with it, master it, celebrate it, enjoy it.

When I was stationed at the Naval Station in Annapolis, Maryland, the best boxer, the Navy boxing champion (I was the Navy pool champion), said: "Hey, why don't I teach you to box and you teach me to play pool?" A pretty good trade, that's what I thought at first. At lunch time, every day, I would go to the gym and he would beat the shit out of me. Then, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, we'd play pool for an hour.

After the second day, it was hilarious, because he would hit me in the face and say: "You don't like getting hit!" And I said, "Of course not! Who likes getting hit?" And he said, "I do. I love it!" And he did! He was crazy like that!

He made me realize how much of my energy was going toward not getting hit—so much of it that I didn't have anything left to hit him with. It was just ridiculous. The more I tried not to get hit, the more I got hit. Until once, he hit me very hard, and in that moment, I realized that it didn't really hurt.

It was stunning, it was kind of numbing, but it wasn't pain. And so, it was like, "What the hell am I afraid of anyway?" Something just clicked or snapped or shifted in me in that moment. It was the letting go of fear for sure. And after that, an "ah-ha!" I could volunteer to get hit. I could offer him a target, knowing he would buy into it, and I'd be ready and waiting.

The point is, we can learn to be conscious at any time, in any moment. We can actually choose our response instead of automatically closing our eyes, curling up, covering up, trying to hide or disappear.

So this lesson has applications on all levels. A boxing fight could be an argument or it could be a challenge of any kind. What are you afraid of and what are you avoiding? Can you become comfortable with circles and cycles?

In relationships, sometimes we're so afraid to allow ourselves to experience something or bring up something in ourselves or the other person. Something we're avoiding, resisting; something we're afraid to say or do. At some point, you say: "Oh, f**k it! Let it out! Let it come!"

And then everything finally comes out, it's expressed. And you realize that you survived it! It's safe to feel your feelings. All your feelings are safe! No more wasting energy trying to avoid discomfort! We wake up. We let go. We take charge. Something just clicks. We face and overcome our fears. We have the energy and the willingness to do the hard things first: and that makes everything else easy!

BREATHWORK FUNDAMENTALS

MODULE 25.

Questions & Answers

Breathing and weight loss. The connection to weight loss is pretty direct. Oxygen burns fat. So yeah, just turning on your breathing, turning it up and some things start to happen. You can turn breathing into a weight-loss exercise.

Exhale… Very, very empty. Squeezing, squeezing, squeezing. You're using the fact that you're exhaling, using that opportunity to really work the abdominals. Very, very empty. Squeezing, squeezing, squeezing, squeezing… emptying, emptying … drawing in on the abdomen in and drawing up on the perineum [demonstrating].

Then hold the breath out and stretch your body; reach up with your arms and arch your back. Now bend forward and squeeze even more air out [exhales more]. Hold it out and stretch again. Now you can get more out [exhales]. Hold it and stretch [exhales].

So what you thought was empty, isn't really empty. Now keep going in that direction. You're pulling up on everything as you exhale; pulling everything up. You are tensing everything as you squeeze the air out. You're exercising all those muscles.

Then relax and inhale. Fill yourself up. And then empty yourself again. Squeezing all the air out as you contract all the abdominal muscles. Repeat this a few times. Breath-centered exercise!

Playing with a ball of air. . .

Take a big breath up into your chest and hold it. Then move that ball of breath around in your body. Move it down into the belly and hold it there for a moment; then move that ball back up into the chest and then back down into the belly. Relax and exhale. Breathe in again. Fill your chest, form a ball of breath and then move that ball up and down and around in your body. Move it around while holding your breath; a really good exercise for weight loss.

Audience member:

On a similar note to that, I've experienced first-hand fighters getting to that one week, two weeks out from their fight. They've been losing their weight with a steady flow. Everything's been going well. And once it gets to that clutch point, you know it's getting closer. The stress levels have risen, the training levels have risen, so there's more stress on the system itself because the intensity of the training has gone up. And all of a sudden, the weight plateaus. [So that's] really interesting with the relaxation. When you see the ones that are going, "Oh it's just another weight cut, it's alright." Then it does just continue and they're fine. But the ones that really, I've found it a lot with people doing their first fight, where everything has been going beautiful, they're dropping weight beautifully and then they get to that last point where they're expecting to lose more. They've been cutting down their food intake and have been heating things up and they're not [losing weight] and it's interesting that stress is a key factor in that. Knowing what you know with the breath as well.

Dan:

Yeah, and sometimes weight loss has to do with letting go of heavy thoughts. You need a mental diet of sorts. And extra weight can be a way of protecting yourself. Shedding weight can be like putting your shield down. So sometimes we need to do work on a whole other level, and the weight drops off by itself.

There's a section in my book, JUST BREATHE, on detoxing and a particular pattern called "hypopressive" breathing, which is worth playing with and experimenting with.

Reverse-respiration. Paradoxical breathing: another useful exercise for weight loss, involves pulling in on the belly button and pulling up on the perineum while you inhale. Then do the opposite on the exhale, pushing the belly out and bearing down as you exhale. That exercise creates great intra-abdominal forces, really useful. This exercise increases, improves the burning up of fat.

Maybe two people can come up here and feel it and see what's happening [pulls up two audience members].

I'm going to be exhaling and inhaling, but when I start this exercise of pulling in and up as I exhale, you can feel what's happening inside. Now it's going to continue on the inhale: it continues on the exhale, it continues on the inhale (pulling the belly in and up).

[Audience members feeling Dan's stomach as he breathes.]

So that constant pulling in and up through the inhale phase and the exhale phase, you're going to start sweating. It doesn't take very long to start burning off some fat.

Practicing reverse respiration, hypopressive breathing and exaggerating the movements−this turns breathing into a physical exercise—a real workout! Breath-holding while exercising is very useful for weight loss. You get more bang for your buck.

And of course, there is the Mental diet. Do some meta-physical searching. "How is the extra weight serving me?" Weight loss and anxiety—weight gain and anxiety. Are they linked? "Oh my God; I'm losing weight!"

Audience member comments: *[anxiety... inaudible]*

Dan:

Anti-anxiety breathing is low and slow. The idea is to slow the breathing down and breathe very low into the belly. (The "oojaya" sound helps.) Deliberately slowing the breath down. Getting the breath low into the belly.

Bring in some positive thoughts: "I'm safe, I'm calm, I'm in control, I got this. All my feelings are safe. It's safe to feel all my feelings. My feelings can't hurt me." Low and slow breathing while feeding yourself positive, calming, soothing, uplifting thoughts.

If you can find what the anxiety-producing thoughts are and identify them, then you can choose to form the opposite thoughts and do some de-programming.

Lengthening the inhale and lengthening the exhale to slow the breathing down. Stay out of the chest; don't activate things up in here (upper chest). Focusing on breathing into the belly.

Make the exhales even longer, leaning into the exhale, leaning into the parasympathetic side. Excellent... Relaxing your muscles.

When your muscles are tense, they send a message to the brain that there's danger, something to be afraid of. When you soften all your muscles and relax, your brain says, "Oh, I must be safe. Everything must be ok."

Physical relaxation, slowing down the breath, plus positive affirmations or power statements that calm you, soothe you, support you. This will shift you out of anxiety.

Audience member: *[inaudible]*

Dan:

Yes, when anxious, immediately focus on the breath, immediately get control of the breath. Slow your breathing down. When you control your breath, you give yourself a real felt sense that you're in control. And you actually are in control: you have gotten a handle on the breath, you're controlling your breath.

Anxiety is this feeling that you or something in you is out of control, that something is bigger and more powerful than you. And so as soon as you take charge of your breathing, you establish a felt sense of being in control. So the very first thing to do is to get a handle on the breath.

Use sound. Ssshhh. A ssshhh-ing is nice. Humming is great. So ssshhh-ing, humming or pursed lips. Create whatever breath sounds help you to relax.

Relaxation triggers a chain of reactions that gently take you further, deeper.

You also need to get control of your mind. You need to shift your focus. Have some affirmations ready, some resourceful mantras, power statements, phrases or words...

(Who's seen the movie "Anger Management"? "FooozBaahhh!" So you know, use anything like that, anything that helps.

Audience member: *[inaudible]*

Dan:

Yes, grinding teeth at night. If that's happening, your jaw is also tense during the day. If you're grinding your teeth at night, your jaw is tense during the day. Become conscious of the tension in your jaw during the day and it may just disappear at night automatically.

Keep revisiting it as often as you can, in the middle of activities, in different moments and at certain times, turn your attention to your jaw and tune into it. The jaw has a place where it sets and locks in a certain position, so consciously loosen it, wiggle it, breathe and relax the jaw again and again.

Do that 100 times during the day and the grinding will stop happening at night. It's just a habit of the system that continues in your sleep. You're not conscious of it during the day and so it continues unconsciously at night.

Sleep apnea−same thing. If you have sleep apnea, if you are holding your breath at night, you're also holding your breath during the day—guaranteed.

Moments of putting a key in a door. Trying to remember something; getting up from a chair. There are so many times when you hold your breath, a thousand times during the day. It is an unconscious habit of your system, and at night, you're having dreams and you're playing out those same habits and reactions.

Your body-mind system has habits and patterns, ways that it reacts to energy and ways it reacts to changing thoughts, feelings and emotions. We use breathing to rewire your system to remember to relax.

Remembering to breathe in those moments when your system reacts with tension. The contractions, the tensions, the breath-holding—it's unconscious, it's habitual and, by consciously breathing and deliberately relaxing, you are breaking or interrupting the habits.

Do that often enough during the day and it will disappear at night. If you become more and more sensitive to when you hold your breath when you are awake, your body will naturally be more sensitive to it when you're sleeping.

Every time you notice that you're holding your breath, remind yourself to open and expand and to relax and let go (Inhale, exhale). If you do that again and again, your system will take it on as a strategy. Then, when tension and breath-holding happens, the system itself will responds by re-establishing relaxation and re-establishing the flow of breath.

Program the autopilot by breathing consciously during the day, because the autopilot is what is running when you're sleeping. How your autopilot has been trained during the day is how it's going to work for you at night.

Audience member: *[inaudible]*

Dan:

Tufts University had a chronic pain clinic. This is back in the early 80s and they put together this very far-out team: a dentist, a chiropractor, an acupuncturist, and me.

We got all the tough cases: cases that they couldn't crack at this chronic pain clinic. They said, "What have we got to lose? Let's send them to this weird bunch of people and see what happens." The dentist created this prosthesis thing that he had people sleep with. The chiropractor was doing his thing, the acupuncturist was doing his thing and I was rebirthing people—making people breathe!

The first two clients were excellent examples of most of the people who followed. One was a lovely Jewish woman; the other was a beautiful Catholic woman. Neither of them were about to give up their pain. They just refused to give it up. Once they admitted it, we said, "Ok, at least it's out in the open."

The Catholic woman was stuck in this idea that the more pleasure you have in this life, the more you're going to suffer in hell. And the more pain you have in this life, the greater will be your reward in heaven. She would have to stop being Catholic to have her pain go away and she wasn't about to stop being Catholic.

The other woman, it seemed, got so much love, attention, sympathy and compassion because of her chronic pain. It gave her an excuse to stay in bed, an excuse to avoid or escape things. Her pain was serving her in so many damn ways. She wasn't about to give up her pain. The payoff was just too great.

Back to the breathing.

All you need to do is create a little extra space between your teeth; it doesn't have to be a big huge space. It can be, but the idea is to open beyond whatever the habit is, wherever the muscle-memory sets your jaw; you just have to tease it a little bit.

You just have to open your mouth a little bit more than what feels normal or natural or familiar or comfortable. It doesn't have to be way beyond that place where it sets, but you have to tease the habit and catch it when it tries to re-set itself.

As soon as you don't think about it, the jaw muscles try to come back to the familiar place where they usually set. Catch the muscles when thy contract and recreate that space between your teeth. Catch it and recreate that space. Your teeth are like a gate. Keep the gate open and breathe through that extra opening.

The mind will wander and that's ok, we get a chance to create the habit of bringing our attention back, of getting back on focus. Create that little extra space and breathe through that opening. Soon your jaw will forget the old place. It will let go of the old habit as you establish a new one. With the practice of awareness and relaxation, things get a lot easier.

You could do a whole hour of breathing focused on that one thing, focused on that one place: creating and recreating that little extra space between your teeth. Maybe practice making the space a little bigger and a little bigger. A lot, or a little, as long it is outside or beyond that habitual muscle memory set point, it will have the benefit.

Audience member: *[inaudible]*

Dan:

The breathing you do thru that slightly enlarged or expanded opening is Circular breathing. No pauses, no gaps: continuous, connected breathing, yes.

Audience member:

Just to re-iterate, the circular breathing. Do you want us to [practice] that all the time?

Dan:

Oh yeah, if you can, do it all the time, every day, everywhere, practice as much as possible. It is training. You are forming new habits. You are re-patterning the mind-body system.

Here's my favorite practice formula: 10 + 10 + (10 x 2)

If you want a serious practice, here's what you do: Ten minutes in the morning, plus ten minutes at night, plus ten times during the day for two minutes.

That's 40 minutes a day; that's serious practice.

It could be yawning, it could be sighs of relief, it could be circular breathing, it could be diaphragmatic breathing, box breathing. It could be playing with the tension in your jaw or it could be simple breath watching: the practice of breath awareness.

It's better to spread the 40 minutes of practice out thru the day, every day, rather than 40 minutes all at once in the morning. It's certainly better than those phony religious people who go to church once a week for an hour, and then the rest of the week, they're the devil-incarnate!

Audience member: *[inaudible]*

Dan:

Ten times during the day for two minutes. Interrupt your day 10 times. Sometimes you're at the computer, sometimes you're on the toilet, sometimes you're driving. Who knows? You're bringing the practice, the habit into your life; you're making it a part of your life.

I think this formula works with push-ups, it works with playing the violin, it works with any skill. It works anytime you're trying to establish a new habit or pattern in your system. Bringing together these two bookends, begin your day and end your day with a ten-minute practice and then inject your practice throughout the day, 10 times for two minutes each time.

Circular breathing could be your practice. If you do 10 minutes of circular breathing, if you are new to it, you might go into a process, you might go into a spontaneous session. And if you haven't done many guided sessions, you might have a fun new problem. You may come out of your session half-baked, off balance, or incomplete.

Do you have the luxury of time to give yourself if you need it? Can you blow off a meeting and take care of yourself instead? I don't know; it's up to you. But if a lot is coming up in 10 minutes of breathing, then you need to do some sessions with somebody–one of our practitioners–and get some hour-long breathing sessions under your belt.

This will make it easy for you to do the connected rhythm for 10 minutes. You'll simply feel clear and light, energized and alert. It's very efficient.
You can regulate this practice. It can be really intense or really gentle. You are focusing on the principle of connected breathing, continuous breathing: no pauses or gaps. Invite whatever degree of intensity you want.

This is my favorite practice formula: 10+10+(10x2)

Audience member:

If you had one technique, out of all the things you do, what's the one you definitely have to do?

Dan:

Yawning and sighing together with circular breathing. Trigger the yawn, activate the yawn, and do sighs of relief at the same time. Expanding and relaxing, inhaling and exhaling throughout the yawn. And practice spinning the breath like a wheel while yawning. Practice breathing in and out, in and out, quickly, while yawning. Keep doing it until you get dizzy, until you get buzzy.

Audience member:

You did really short breaths during the yawns when you first started. Like have you built up to that [inaudible]? It's sort of like, it interrupts the yawn sometimes when you bring the breath in. It extends it and, you're like, I just want to yawn but I can't.

Dan:

Right, yeah, so you've got to get to where the breathing doesn't interrupt the yawn and the yawn doesn't interrupt the breathing. Practice until the yawn and sigh marry each other, until they merge, until they're comfortable with each other, until they can both occur in the presence of each other.

Audience member: *[inaudible]*

And then when you do 4 short, 1 big?

Dan:
You could do that. But it's more freestyle when you're doing the yawn. Your intuition will guide you, but you do want to be able to spin the breath quickly like a wheel while yawning. And you want to do the expanding and relaxing, the sighs of relief, while the yawn is engaged. Keep layering them in together; yawning and sighing, and spinning the breath like a wheel while yawning.

If there was one thing I was going to practice, that would be it. And I would practice it 10 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes at night and bother your office workers with it 10 times during the day for two minutes each time!

The practice could be something as simple as breath-watching. For some people, because of how busy their mind is, because of their hectic lifestyle, the simple practice of breath-awareness changes everything, it unlocks everything.

Audience member:

What's your idea of [inaudible]? I understand you want to have flexibility and play with it, but what is the foundation you would want to build on? [Inaudible] So what's the minimum where, if I do this and then allow that to be the first foundation, that we can pop other things on [inaudible]?

Dan:

It depends on where people are starting from.

The 3,6,5 practice: Coherent Breathing. 6 breaths a minute, 3 times per day, for 5 minutes is perfect for some people. They are breathing, they are practicing. They've carved out that time and now they can start playing with different techniques during those times.

This could be a routine for you: a minimum of five minutes three times a day. It could be a formula like this.

And you might do the triangle breathing 10 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes at night and 10 times during the day for two minutes. You could do Box Breathing: 10 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes at night, right? You could do Circular Breathing.

I had one client, his complaint was that he was so busy, too busy to practice: a CEO type of complaint. I said that every time you go for a pee, every time you go for a drink of water, every time you walk from the office to the elevator: that's your breathing time. That's your practice time; not having enough time is no excuse [inaudible].

Pick up the phone [breathe]. Hang up the phone [breathe]. Start linking conscious breathing to different activities. We may need reminders you know, and so having a sticker somewhere that says "breathe" and catching it in the corner of your eye: on your refrigerator, the bathroom mirror, on your desk, on the corner of your computer screen, wherever it can serve as a reminder. A note: "BREATHE!".

My father hung a bell from the rear-view mirror in his car, so that every time he went over a bump or turned a corner, the bell would ring and he would remember to breathe. He would remember his prayer, his mantra, his affirmation, his practice for the day. So we all need a bell of sorts. We need something to keep reminding us and you have to be creative about what that is for you.

If you are a couple, be careful that you don't use breathing to beat each other up and shame and control each other. "You should take a breath right now!" Instead of saying that, you could simply take a breath for yourself.

And as much as I like to breathe, if somebody were to say, "You should take a breath right now." I would say, "F**k you! You take a breath!" (The rebel kid in me is never very far from the surface!)

Basically, we need to breathe whenever any emotional energy gets activated. Emotions affect the breathing; emotions disturb the breathing. We get choked up; maybe our eyes start to well up with tears. In that moment, as a practitioner or a client, stop talking. Breathe. Open and expand. Relax and let go.

Dan to an audience member:

Take a couple of breaths right now. We'll wait for whatever you want to talk about and it will be there. As this buildup of anxiety, emotion or energy starts to come, let's not talk about it. Let's just practice right now. Breathe.

We use the breath as an intervention tool. Injecting conscious breaths. I talked, I guess it was in the first weekend, about Robert Warren who wrote 'The Cure for Positive Thinking' and 'Architectural Redirection'. He has a model: Stop, Look, Shift, Move. He works with golfers, tennis players, CEO's.

In my model, the stop is a breath, the look is a breath, the shift is a breath, and the move is a breath. Injecting breaths into these steps.

Replace miscellaneous urges or reactions with a chosen response, which is the breath. Interrupt patterns with the breath. Reinforcing 'ah-ha!' moments with the breath. Be creative with the breath.

Use the breath to express or reflect an insight. Use the breath to change a pattern or to reinforce an insight. Replace miscellaneous reactions with conscious breaths. Use the breath to anchor yourself in peak states. Breathe consciously until something in your system clicks. You'll know when you get it.

Use the breath to strengthen an intention, to reinforce a realization. Use the breath to shift from one mode or mood to another. Use the breath to shift your attention. Use the breath to bring mindfulness to the present moment. Use the breath at times when you normally wouldn't.

Use the breath to create a space between two things, two events, two activities. So many ways to be creative with the breath. Practice releasing the breath and expanding the breath. Practice holding the breath.

Observe these things: inhales, exhales, pauses. Sometimes you don't have to do anything with the breath. Sometimes just the fact that you are conscious of the breath is enough. Sometimes awareness is enough.

It doesn't have to be talked about. Test this yourself. Notice that when you pay attention to someone's breathing, they become aware of their breathing, whether you talk about or not. Reinforce positive shifts in others' breathing. If someone's breath opens or releases, then reflect that right away, express that, mirror that. Open and release your breath in that moment: reinforcement.

Help people become conscious of when they are holding their breath. If the breath starts to run away with them, point that out to them:

"Hey, you're breathing just shifted. Did you notice that?"
"Hey, you just took a bigger breath than usual. Was that my imagination?"

"Ah, that was a nice sigh!" (breathe)

Take it in. Take this in. Use the breath to take things in.

If something you say or do touches someone, or something someone says or does touches you, take a breath. What a perfect time to take a breath!

You could nod your head in agreement or you could respond verbally, "Yes, right." Those are ways of expressing that you 'got' the person or something they shared. Train yourself to take a breath as a way of acknowledging and integrating those moments.

When somebody says or does something that activates thoughts or feelings or emotions in you, BREATHE!

It's a very simple thing, but it's very big.

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