

Chapter 6: Breathe and Heal

Introduction

Overview

Breathing

Feeling, Releasing and Clearing

Accountability

Wholeness

Introduction

This chapter introduces “Breathe and Heal”, a process formulated by my partner Inge for use in her practice. It implements the healing strategies described in the previous chapter. More details can be found on our website www.breathingschool.com.au

Inge writes this chapter.

Overview

The basis of Breathe and Heal is the breath. When you breathe you feel, when you feel you heal. We can describe the stages of Breathe and Heal as follows (the arrows can read as “leads to”):

**Breathing > Feeling > Releasing > Clearing >
Healing**

It might sound too good to be true, yet David and I both know from our own personal experiences that the Breathe and Heal process has the potential to heal us physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. It allows us to return to our original state of innocence. Jesus said: “To enter into the kingdom of heaven, you have to become like little children. He also said: “Blessed are those who find their home in the breath, to them belongs the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Breathing

Breathing is basic, automatic, essential and changeable. As long as we are alive we all breathe more or less. Unfortunately, in practice, almost everyone in our society is a chronic shallow breather. On average we use only 10-15% of our lung capacity.

Breath means life. Once the breath leaves the body completely what is left is a corpse. We start life with our first in-breath and end it with our last out-breath. When the breath leaves the body, the soul and the spirit leave too. The ancient saying that “The Breath is not in us, but we are in the Breath” says it all. The word inspiration comes from the Latin *spirare*, which means to breathe.

All ancient languages use the same word for Breath as for Soul and Spirit. The breath not only carries oxygen into the body and the carbon dioxide out, it also carries the life force (called *prana* in India and *chi* in China) into the body and carries toxins out. If we breathe very shallowly we are not much more than a corpse. Mary Oliver, a well-known Canadian poet says in one of her poems “Are you breathing just a little and calling it a life?”

When we breathe shallowly we barely take in the breath and therefore little life force. Would we drive our car on only one or two cylinders instead of four? Certainly not, but we do it all the time with breathing.

Alexander Lowen, the founder of Bioenergetics says, “Shallow breathing is both the cause and result of anxiety and tension in the body”. As we are nearly all chronic shallow breathers, this is an important point to remember. He also says that unless you are breathing fully and deeply, you are scared half to death whether you are aware of it or not. Fear is paralyzing and the only enemy within us. From my own experience I know how right he is. I had always thought that I was relatively fearless and courageous in my life. I learned that I had arranged my life in a way such that I was comfortable and did not venture into unknown territory. I was hiding behind a mask that I wasn’t even aware of. Only when I dived into the Breathe and Heal work did I discover how terrified I was. There is another Chinese proverb that goes: “Pearls lie not on the seashore. If thou desirest one, thou must dive for it!”

Shallow breathing brings about enormous tension in the body, especially in the jaw and neck and shoulders. We hang on for dear life! But to what? To power and control. We let ourselves be ruled by fear and so we desperately try to be in control.

The purpose of the breath is not just to keep us alive but also to provide a tool to improve our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual reality. The awareness of the breath helps greatly in our awakening. The breath connects us to our body and to how we are feeling. We all have body memories. Another Chinese proverb says: “If you can’t find it in the body, you can’t find it anywhere else!”

Infants and young children breathe fully without restriction. As we grow older our breathing becomes shallow as we experience tension and stress leading to even shallower breathing. Deep full breathing breaks the armor over the heart and the shield of self-protection across the abdomen and the back. To become whole we need to acknowledge all parts of our being human.

Feeling, Releasing and Clearing

When it comes to feelings we seem to live in the dark ages. Somewhere along the way when we became “civilized”, we became void of feelings. We have abandoned the feelings in favor of thinking and are operating almost solely in the mind. “I think, therefore I am” needs to be revised to “I feel therefore I am a true human being!”

As adults we have learnt to intellectualize our feelings, and thus seldom truly feel deeply. Those that do feel deeply get medicated and are labeled as mentally ill. For example, billions of dollars are spent each year on prescription medication for depression. In the worst-case scenario, these people get locked up in mental institutions and sedated to make them “manageable”. The word depression comes from “pressing down” our feelings that want, and need, to express themselves.

Feelings never go away completely, they yearn for expression, and repressed feelings get tainted and masked. We end up acting out feelings in harmful ways through violence, abuse, anger, blame, resentments, power and control addiction; even suicide is a form of aggression towards oneself.

Recovering our feeling nature is what makes us more human. In our civilized world we have forgotten how to truly feel. Only babies are allowed to express their feelings constantly. Maybe that’s why we all love babies, because they are not withholding their emotions. The build up of emotional energy starts probably around the age of two, depending on the environment the child is growing up in. It can begin as early as conception. The emotional energy, the pain, is that energy that needed to be suppressed during the experience of a childhood trauma. The suppression comes about because the expression of those feelings was unsafe, not allowed, or unwelcome.

The Breathe and Heal process helps us to get back in touch with those feelings that were suppressed during the traumatic event. During the event the feelings became buried in the unconscious and are held in the physical body. The emphasis is on the feelings the child felt, and not on the event that caused the upset. The event is not what caused the trauma. What

causes the trauma was the inability of the child to express the feelings that were generated by the event.

This is best explained by an example. Let us imagine a close relative abuses a child. The child is unable to express its feelings for a number of reasons. These could be shame, guilt, fear of retribution, not feeling safe, or going into shock and disassociating, etc. If the child was able to express all of the emotions it was feeling at the time of the event, then those feelings would not be stored in the body, and the child would heal from the trauma relatively quickly. If the feelings are suppressed, they become unconscious negative emotions that get stored in the body. Remember that every unconscious program we have contains negative emotions and that these are held in the body.

Thus if a child is not just allowed, but is totally supported, in expressing its feelings, then it doesn't have to swallow them down, and they won't pop back up later in life. When we are allowed to feel our feelings and express them safely, we become an alive, loving, passionate, creative and caring human being. Feelings that are suppressed turn into resentments that kill the love and the passion and suck our aliveness into the darkness of the shadow. The word emotion comes from "e" from exit and "motion" for movement.

As adults we think we have every reason to be angry, frustrated, irritated, upset, sad, etc. However, all feelings are old and have nothing, or at most, very little, to do with the current situation. Something happens and our old feelings get triggered. In actuality, old emotional energy attracts the situation so that the unconscious program can be triggered and the emotions can move out of the body where they have been trapped.

Gloria Naylor said: "I don't believe that life is supposed to make you feel good, or to make you feel miserable either. Life is just supposed to make you feel!" In their pure form feelings are neither positive nor negative. Fear in its purity is not that scary. Clean anger is a powerful emotion. It is the involvement of the mind that turns feelings and emotions into something that is complex and undesirable.

The reason why feelings and emotional reactions have a bad reputation, and are shunned in our civilized Western world, is that there is mostly a total lack of accountability for them. Instead of being accountable for our feelings, we have become in control of them to such a degree that they are almost totally denied or projected. Remember that denial stands for: "**don't even know I am lying!**"

Like so many I had been a seeker for a long time. Still, I didn't have a clue that I was sitting on heaps of fear, terror and rage. I had been kidding myself that I was just fine (compared to others). Never ever compare – it is a useless exercise. Actually, important matters in my life did not work. I was in huge denial. As an optimist I focused on the blessings in my life. This served to keep me in denial. How clever! But this terror that I had kept inside me made me small and limited me in a thousand ways.

The majority of New Age spirituality aims for ascension – going towards the light. But like a tree, that only grows upwards into the heavens will eventually topple over, it is the same with our spiritual practices. Those that do not address and heal the shadow (the unconscious) will topple like a tree as soon as a strong wind blows. If a tree grows roots before it shoots up towards the light, it can withstand any storms. Thus we need to descend before we ascend. Another Chinese proverb simply says: “No inner irritation, no pearl.”

A whole human being honors the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual bodies equally. One of my clients said to me recently: “Isn't it interesting that the majority of the people seeking consciousness pay little attention to their emotional reality.” It is a natural human desire to want to feel at peace. Generally, there is often too much emphasis on the body and appearance, with the sole aim of feeling good. Also, people seeking consciousness aim to find peace, which translates into feeling at ease. The emphasis here is misdirected, as dealing with old emotional energy is the only way to truly feel at peace. To find true peace there is no way around it, the only way is through it.

Accountability

As important as it is to get in touch with our feelings is, it is equally important to learn to be 100% accountable for them. What does this exactly mean? How do we become 100% accountable for all our feelings and our experiences?

We have to remember this:

“No one is making me feel anything that does not already live inside me. If the upset lasts for more than 30 seconds, then old stuff is coming up!”

When you get triggered into an upset, you need to immediately focus on the feeling alone, and not on the story, situation, event, etc. Tell your mind to stay out of it. All the mind wants to do is distract you from fully feeling

the emotion. The mind wants to analyze, figure things out, and keep you going around and around the merry-go-round. When we pay total attention to the feeling, and release it completely, we become free. The result is that we gain clarity, we feel unburdened, and we know that we are never the victim of any situation. It is empowering to live like this.

A way to illustrate that emotions are coming from old stuff is to imagine that some event happens which involves a number of people (it might all be one family). They all react to the event. You will observe that everyone has a different emotional reaction. The event can trigger sadness for one, anger for another, and fear for a third etc.

When you embody the statement above, that no one can make you feel anything that is not already inside you, you become accountable for all your feelings and experiences. Einstein said: “All knowledge of reality starts and ends in experience. So when we stay with the feelings, and don’t engage the mind, we gain insight into our mind and more and more realize how our unconscious programming works. We then just keep away from the story.

Wholeness

When we breathe and release all the negative feelings, our unconscious programming becomes clear. We have no more need to criticize, attack, or become defensive, which are all relationship killers. We then are committed to accountability, authenticity, honesty and we trust life completely. We have healed our wounds and experience wellness on all levels. We listen more and more to our intuition, our gut feelings, and our heart. Worry, conflicts, self-pity, victimhood, criticism, guilt, regret, resentments, shame, anger, fear, and accidents all disappear from our lives. We feel joyful, at ease, connected with oneself and others, in the flow, appreciative and grateful for life’s blessings. We live with increased self-love, open heartedness, compassion, empathy, kindness and love. This is the true meaning of Freedom and Wholeness.

Summary of the Principles of Breathe and Heal

1. All babies breathe naturally and deeply.
2. In the process of going through childhood, we are required to control and repress our feelings.
3. We stuff down our feelings by holding our breath and become shallow breathers.
4. The repressed feelings and emotions are stored in the body and become partially or totally unconscious.

5. Shallow breathing is detrimental to our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health.
6. Everybody can learn to breathe naturally and deeply all the time.
7. At a physical level, natural deep breathing can enhance body function and relieve many ailments.
8. Our unconscious negative emotions, stored in the body, need to express themselves as they are not content to lie dormant within us.
9. To do this they either make us ill, or act as magnets to life situations that trigger the emotion. For example, if the unconscious emotion is anger then it will attract situations to you that trigger your anger.
10. The trigger is only a trigger and not the cause of the emotion.
11. The emotional content, locked in our bodies, can only be accessed through our bodies.
12. The emotional content can only be released by letting go of the story and staying with the emotion. This leads to its release, its clearance and healing.
13. Learning this process usually requires, in the beginning, the assistance of an experienced practitioner.
14. The process is gradual and is similar to learning a musical instrument: You need initial training and then the more you practice the better you get at doing it.
15. Breathe and Heal leads to healing and creates the experience of:
 - a. Living with an absence of crises.
 - b. Living with ease and not disease.
 - c. Living with an open heart.
 - d. Living with emotional connectedness.
 - e. Living with freedom, compassion and joy.