

Breath, portal to inspiration and healing

By: Aernoudt Knecht © 2008

We take it for granted, breathing, we do it automatically ... But our breath is a powerful tool to influence the flow of life force in our bodies. Conscious breathing helps us to be more present in our bodies, to be more present in the here and now. In numerous spiritual movements breath has a special place. Every trance dance ritual we begin with a moment of conscious breathing. Breathing is a very accessible instrument to bring movement into your life ...

What inspires us?

Breath is primal, essential. Words such as ghost, soul, spirit, anima (Latin) and Atman (Sanskrit) all refer to the same source: breath. Related words are: air, vapor, wind and storm. In our language we know phrases such as “to inspire someone” or “He blew his last breath”. The English expression ‘to inspire’ means both breathing in, as to bring something to life.

Not everyone breathes in the same way. Everybody has a personal breathing pattern. Very young babies breathe similarly anywhere in the world, but at a certain age, patterns start to deviate. Your personal breathing patterns are the result of environmental influences and personal life experiences. In later life we share our way of breathing partly with the people within our own culture, and that varies from each region in the world. It is good to reflect on this, because the patterns that you develop have a significant impact on the quality of your life!

Most people are hardly aware of their breathing, because breathing is an autonomous process already active from birth. You do not have to think about it. But you can also, of course, consciously and intentionally inhale and exhale. This is a unique quality of breathing, because breathing can be done both consciously and unconsciously. This makes breathing the key to the bridge between the conscious and unconscious aspects of your being. By bringing your breathing into your awareness, you have a powerful tool to apply in processes of personal transformation. It is possible at any time to become aware of your breathing. For instance: you can read this text and at the same time be aware of your breath. As your eyes move over the text, you can feel your breath move in and out. And what a simple tool it is! With very little effort, you can consciously influence the in- and outflow of air and, with some practice, you can learn to be more aware of your breath at any moment.

Pain and protective patterns

If you are in excellent health, your energy flows freely and uninhibited through your system. This flow of energy feeds your body and guides its many processes. But for many people the flow of energy is not free from blockages and obstructions. Throughout our lives we develop patterns of tension. These patterns restrict the free flow of energy. When an organism is confronted with a painful or threatening situation, it withdraws from that situation. If you find yourself in contact with someone you feel threatened by, your muscles contract, however slightly, in order to protect yourself against that threat. If the threat is intense, or if it continues over a long period of time, an ‘energetic scar’ will form. The result is that, in the long run, you can no longer relax at all.

Once you become aware of your breathing, there is a lot to discover. For example, I noticed that I sometimes hold my breath during concentrated thinking. Sometimes I bite my lip – yet another way to hold on to tension. Considering that more creative thoughts come to me during the thinking process, when I get a good in- and outflow of breath! I also noticed that my breath blocks or even stops in emotional moments, thereby blocking the free flow of energy. My body tenses up and I start to breathe artificially. It is an effective strategy to deal with unwanted feelings. Feelings are full of energy, and that energy flows parallel with your breathing, ... always.

Passion and healing

The habit of shallow breathing keeps cramping and blockages in place. Deep and smooth breathing frees up blocked energy and helps to release tension and negative emotions. All contracted and unresolved issues from your past, manifest themselves in the here and now. They can be felt instantly and can be transformed by applying conscious breathing.

This way, you can become increasingly inspired as a human being. When you experience total and full breathing, body and spirit flow together. Every moment of conscious breathing is an inspired co-creation with life itself! The flow of active consciousness that arises when you start working consciously with your breath, will enrich your life. There are many different breathing techniques and almost all of them provide an increase in quantity and flow of energy through the body. At the start of a trance dance ritual we often use the breath of fire (breathing in through the nose twice, exhaling through the mouth). In his book "Breathing" Michael Sky gives an overview of various breathing techniques.

Feel what happens when you become aware of your breathing. When does the air flow freely? When does your breath becomes cut off or interrupted? Breathing is a simple and accessible tool for personal growth and processes of inner transformation. Conscious breathing increases your capacity to have fun and be happy. Your life energy and personal strength increase. By breathing you fill your body with Spirit!

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first posted in Dutch on <http://trancedans.net/> in 2008

Want to read more? Next to my personal experience with breathing, the book Breathing by Michael Sky was a source of information for this article. If you are interested in this subject, it is a recommended read.