

Respiration Consciente n°5 – Printemps 2007

Articles

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[Version originale en anglais](#)

REBIRTHING, CONSCIOUS BREATHING

- So, what we are interested in hearing from you Bo, is about the different techniques in breath work that you have explored and developed; how you experienced this personally; what you suggest for your clients in psychotherapy, and or for other breath experiences.

- The very first breathing technique that I explored in depth was “Rebirthing Breathwork”. I had done some Reichian body psychotherapy before and deep breathing was a part of that, but it was still only very marginal. After discovering Rebirthing I really got interested in breath itself and its effects on the human existence. For several years I was using only Rebirthing for the purpose of clearing out stored tensions in body, release suppressed emotions and widen my mental perceptions. It took me quite some years to realize that there was one area that Rebirthing was not helpful. I am thinking about the ability to contain yourself and your emotions. Since Rebirthing by nature is about to let go of control and trust that the enhanced life energy will guide you safely, many rebirthers, including me, thought that this is all there is to do. What we overlooked was that all situations and places are not suitable to let go. In the same time we did not want to go back and suppress ourselves again. So the missing link in this is to learn containment. To be able to be with whatever is up even if the circumstances are unfavourable for release work. So containment means that you are still aware of what is going on and can be with it without overwhelm. This is done best with Conscious Breathing, using the diaphragm instead of the intercostals muscles, in a controlled way. It is my experience that daily life between rebirthing sessions becomes much easier and more grounded. In the same time this usually makes the rebirthing sessions more effective since people feel safer to let go if they have the capacity to contain their experiences and expansions afterwards.

So apart from these two main techniques I have played with guided breathing meditation around the five elements, Sufi rhythms and forms of breathing, vitality breathing and alternate nostril breathing. They all have specific benefits which can then be used at appropriate times. I can not say that I have developed any

breathing technique but I have developed an intuitive feeling of what kind of breathing is favourable at what time and place. So I really recommend that you learn the two main ones; Rebirthing in the chest for the psychodynamic release of emotions, enhanced insights and a freer flow of energy; and Conscious Breathing for a more daily use for stress reduction, grounding and containment. All other techniques are extras which you can explore in terms of your interest knowing that breathwork in general is really a vast area to study.

*- What types of breathing techniques have you explored?
In which circumstances? for what purpose and why ?*

- See above.

- What is your personal experience, using these various breathing techniques ?

- The only thing I can say is that it has changed my life completely. It gives me so much freedom to have a toolbox for handling and dealing with life and how to exist as a human being in these turbulent times.

- Is the fact of studying (using) different breathing techniques aid you in understanding them better ?

- With every breathing technique you have to practise it to understand it. There is no way around that. But of course it is also very helpful to know the theory behind it.

- How do you use these in your current practise ?

Do you propose different breath techniques according to the individual patient and his or her on going treatment ?

How do you choose the breathing techniques you use with a group ?

- In my work with individual clients I currently mostly use only Rebirthing Breathwork and Conscious Breathing. When they come to me I guide them in a rebirthing session. After a few times I give them like half an hour for instructions in Conscious Breathing. Then I tell them to practise it in daily life. This supports integration between sessions. Next time they come we talk about their experiences and see if some more instructions are needed.

Different clients have different needs. Some may be really good at containment, already when they come the first time, and without any instructions of diaphragm breathing. For them I just go on with Rebirthing until they show some signs of

overwhelm. Other clients have no containment skills at all. If their social situation is a totally isolated one, I might wait with Rebirthing and directly show them Conscious Breathing in my practice and then give them homework. When they come back I check how much they have learned the skills of stress reduction and their capacity in handling overwhelm. When I see that they have become safer with be with themselves I start to give them Rebirthing.

On some special circumstances, I teach my private clients vitality breathing (for the purpose of strengthening the immune system) or alternate nostril breathing (for the purpose of breaking up thought patterns which are really stuck).

When it comes to group work I use also other breathing techniques, like Sufi breathing rhythms, Buddhist breathing meditation or a guided breathing meditation on the five elements. How and when to use what is depending on what is happening in the group and/or what theme we are exploring. I have trained myself to intuitively feel the needs of the group. Since I have explored the different breathing methods and thereby “know” the effects, I can ordinate the right form of breathing for the present situation. However, this has very much to do with being in the moment, since the needs are changing.

- *How do the different breathing techniques interact together in a breathing experience and particularly during a rebirthing ?*

- I do not like to mix different methods during the same time. When I do Rebirthing I do Rebirthing. But as I already said above, doing Conscious Breathing between sessions make your rebirths safer and thus deeper. So everything that effects your being effects what will happen in your sessions. This is why affirmations (if they are used creatively) between sessions also helps the breathing process. Breathing techniques are just techniques, your being is a living and flowing organism.

- *The theme of our next issue "Respiration Consciente" is "death and rebirth" ; could you give us your ideas about the links between your breathing experiences et the theme of "death and rebirth" ?*

- In my experience, by continuously doing breathing sessions, everybody, sooner or later, encounter the theme death and rebirth on a personal level. How prepared you are will determine if it is pleasurable or not to encounter these existential themes. You can be prepared already from your childhood by wise parents or other caretakers, but your rebirther could also be the one that prepare you. Preparation is

partly philosophical, partly emotional and partly physical. It is good to have studied the many ideas that exist around death, so there is not only one way of seeing it. It means that your mind is open. Emotional preparation is the ability to let go of what has been emotionally stuck in you. At least that you have started the process so you know how it feels. Physically it is about the ability to relax and let the life-energy do the job. To trust that life itself will take me further. With these preparations an inner encounter with death and rebirth will be easier and quicker even when it is intense and dramatic. The reason why everybody who continues to do breathing sessions will face these existential issues is that breathing is the first action in life (outside the womb) done by yourself and stop breathing is the last thing you do. Breathing is forever linked to birth, death and rebirth.