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Integral Energy Psychology

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PART ONE: THE RADIANT ENERGIES BALANCE (REB)sm PROTOCOL: PHILOSOPHY/RESEARCH/THEORY BACKGROUND©

Section:

17. DEEP DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING THROUGH THE NOSE

17.1. BRAIN BREATHING (quoted in its entirety without pictures)

By Dina Ingber Science Digest June 1981, pp. 72, 74-75, 110-111. *Dina Ingber, a science writer and flutist, learned new ways of breathing on a visit to the Himalayan Institute for Yogic research.* Changing the way we breathe can change the way our brain works--and give us conscious control over our blood pressure, immune system and mental health.

"We gasp in pain, sigh in relief, hold our breath in anticipation. We feel breathless with excitement or inspired by an idea. In each case, the way we feel--not just physically but emotionally as well--is directly linked to the way we breathe. We have long been aware of this link, as our language shows, and yet we have almost totally ignored it. For some reason, breathing has always been taken for granted by Western science. Keep breathing and you live; stop breathing and you die. It's as simple as that. Or is it?"

"Research has shown that breathing is really a very complex activity that can have a direct effect on many bodily functions. The pattern of our breathing--whether we breathe rapidly or slowly, deeply or shallowly, even whether we breathe through the left or right nostril---could well determine our

susceptibility to illness, the strength of our hearts and the depths of our depressions."

"Breathing, say some researchers, might be the missing link between the voluntary and involuntary functions of the brain. Although it is regulated by the nervous system in the same way as heartbeat, blood flow and other autonomic functions, breathing may be the only one of these functions that can be consciously altered. And by learning to control our breathing, we may be able to control other functions--brain waves, hormonal secretions, metabolism--of importance"

"Breathing is the way in which we transport oxygen from the air to our body's cells, where it is used to burn carbohydrates, proteins and fats, thus releasing the energy that keeps us going. It is also the way in which we rid our bodies of a by-product of the combustion process, carbon dioxide."

17.1.1. A QUICK TOUR OF THE NOSE

"No discussion of breathing should begin without a quick tour of the nose. It is the narrowest entrance to the respiratory system and presents the most resistance to air flow. In fact, it requires more than twice as much work to pull air through the nose than through the mouth. And since we breathe an average of 16 times a minute, that's quite a bit of work. But the extra effort is worth it because the nose performs 30 distinct and important functions. Among others: it filters the air to remove dirt; it moisturizes, warms and directs the airflow; it registers smell and creates mucus."

"The intake area of the nose, called the vestibule, consists of two wings. or alae, made of flexible cartilage. The wings are divided by the septum. Inside the nose are turbinates, bulges that create an intricate series of channels through which air can circulate, picking up moisture and heat; cold or dry air would irritate the lungs. This temperature and moisture control, in fact, accounts for differences in nasal shapes among the various races. Long noses are an adaptation to cold and dry climates because they provide more room for heating and moisturizing to take place. Short noses serve well enough in the tropics where such functions are unnecessary because of the weather."

"Lining the nose is mucous membrane on which millions of tiny hairs called cilia grow. The hairs and the sticky membrane trap dust before it reaches the lungs."

"Under the mucous membrane is a spongy substance called erectile tissue, which can fill with blood. The same kind of tissue is found in the sexual organs, and when they fill with blood during arousal, the tissue in the nose will sometimes do the same in a kind of sympathetic reaction. The result is a phenomenon known as "honeymoon nose," characterized by chronically clogged nasal passages. This link between the nose and the sex organs has been noted by many scientists, including Sigmund Freud."

"Research has shown that menstrual cramps are often related to an inflammation of certain areas of the nasal lining; if these areas are anesthetized. the cramps disappear."

"Air enters the front of the nose, the vestibule, which is encased in a pair of alae, flexible cartilage wings. Inside the nose, bulging bones called turbinates divide the nasal cavity into several chambers The hard palate forms their floor. Air whirls around the chamber until warm and wet enough to flow to the lungs."

"We alternate between the left and the right nostrils during normal breathing. A number of studies have confirmed this 'nasal cycle," in which we shift sides about every two and a half to four hours. The older the breather, the longer the duration of the cycle, apparently; in some people there may be

eight hours between shifts."

"As one nostril becomes more open, its mucous glands increase their secretion. The opposite nostril becomes more clogged as its erectile tissue swells with blood and releases mucus into the nostril. As the cycle continues, the open nostril becomes filled with mucus, and its partner begins to open up as its swollen tissue deflates."

"We can easily test this shift in nasal openness by breathing through the nose onto a small mirror and seeing the difference in size of the two misted areas. Or if you blow through one nostril while holding the other closed, you will hear a difference in pitch. The obstructed side has the higher pitch."

"Dr. J. N. Riga, an ear, nose and throat specialist from Bucharest, Rumania, found that out of the nearly 400 patients who were suffering from nasal obstructions due to deviations of the nasal septum, those who breathed more through the left nostril also suffered much more from stress-related diseases (89 percent of left-nostril breathers versus 29 percent of right-nostril breathers). When the nasal deformity was corrected by surgery, the stress-related problems abated."

"An American heart specialist has prescribed deep breathing through alternate nostrils to patients with angina pectoris (a symptom of heart disease characterized by sharp pains in the chest) and has found marked improvement." (see section 17.7.5.)

"Yogis have long asserted that proper breathing is the key to mental and physical well-being and for thousands of years have emphasized the alternate-nostril method. Ancient yogic texts claim that breathing through different sides of the nose affects our behavior."

"Contrary to Riga, they believe that the right nostril should be used during active, aggressive enterprises and the left side for quieter, more passive endeavors. This bears a striking resemblance to current theories about the functions of the right and left brain. A ... study made by Raymond Klein and Roseanne Armitage, of the department of psychology at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia found that performance of tasks involving right- and left-brain activity comes in cycles. Within a period of 90 to 100 minutes, subjects did well on right-brain-related projects and then shifted to doing well on left-brain-related projects. (see section 17.7.4.) This fits in with current hypotheses that our whole system functions in alternating active and passive cycles. In other words, the way we breathe through our nose could be directly linked to the way our brain functions. Are the yogis right? If we change our breathing pattern, can we also change our entire physiological and psychological balance?"

"Scientists at the Himalayan Institute, a yogic research center in Pennsylvania, ...investigate[ed 1981] this theory. They have marshaled several studies that show that a number of factors affect the nasal cycle. The first is posture. When you lie on your side, your lower nostril congests while the upper one opens. A second factor is pressure. Put your armpit on one side, and the nostril on the other side will open. The third and perhaps the most important factor is emotion. Many people tend to hold their breath when they concentrate, their breathing is shallow and rapid when they're upset, and they breathe deeply and evenly when at rest."

"But in order to understand shallow or improper breathing and its implications, it is important to understand how the entire respiratory process works."

"Air is inhaled (preferably warmed through the nose) into a series of airways that break off into

smaller and smaller branches. The first airway is called the trachea, or windpipe. This smooth, tube-like structure, about three-quarters of an inch in diameter in the adult, begins just below the Adam's apple and is enclosed by 16 to 20 U-shaped rings of cartilage for its protection. The trachea splits into two smaller tubes called bronchi. These bronchi in turn break into tinier and tinier branches within the lungs, terminating in the smallest, called bronchioles, which end in a series of tiny air sacs called alveoli. The alveoli are so small they cannot he seen by the naked eye: there are about 300 million of them in the lungs, and if laid out flat they would cover an area greater than the average one-bedroom apartment. They are of utmost importance because it is in the alveoli that the oxygen-carbon dioxide exchange takes place."

"From these bubble like structures, whose walls are only one cell thick, the oxygen passes into surrounding blood vessels, and carbon dioxide is passed into the lungs to be expelled. Once a molecule of oxygen gets into the bloodstream, it hitches a ride on a hemoglobin molecule within a red blood cell and is transported through the body. The oxygen-rich blood leaving the lungs is pumped through the arteries by the left side of the heart. As the oxygenated blood approaches the cells along its route, it moves through increasingly smaller vessels until it is finally squeezed through tiny capillaries, from which oxygen passes from the blood into the surrounding cells by osmosis. Waste carbon dioxide is passed from these cells as well, turning the blood from bright red to almost blue. This bluish blood is then transported back through the veins to the right side of the heart and winds up back in the lungs, where again carbon dioxide leaves, oxygen enters and the cycle continues."

17.1.2. SMOKE DAMAGE

"Of course, many things can go wrong. Damage to the alveoli is one of the most common problems. Smoking cigarettes causes the lining of the alveoli to break down; the many small bubbles become one large pocket. This reduces the surface area that comes into contact with the capillaries, thus reducing the amount of oxygen that can be taken in during a single breath. Called emphysema, this condition is characterized by shortness of breath in extreme cases. The victim can never seem to get enough oxygen into his system."

"Some gases in the environment cause problems. Carbon monoxide, which appears in high concentrations in both cigarette smoke and automobile exhaust fumes, has a much stronger affinity for hemoglobin than oxygen does. It can therefore latch onto hemoglobin molecule and crowd the oxygen out. We call this internal action involving the transfer of gases within the body *respiration*. But the mechanical action that triggers respiration, the actual driving force behind this essential process, is breathing."

"The point of breathing is to pull air into the lungs, where gas transfer takes place, and then to expel it back out into the atmosphere. But we don't consciously pull air in. We expand the chest cavity, creating a suction and pulling air through the upper airways and into the lungs."

"At rest, the chest cavity can be expanded in several ways. The rib cage can be pulled outward (thoracic, or chest, breathing.) The shoulders can be pushed upward (clavicular or shoulder breathing). The muscular floor of the chest cavity can be pulled downward (diaphragmatic, or belly, breathing). Everyone uses different combinations of these breathing techniques, but research has shown that only one of them is truly efficient: diaphragmatic breathing. Any of the others uses significantly more energy to take in oxygen and expel carbon dioxide."

"The diaphragm is perhaps the most-talked-about unit in the breathing process these days [1981].

This dome shaped sheet of muscle separates the chest cavity from the abdominal cavity. It runs horizontally across the torso, connected to the lower ribs. During inhalation, the dome of the diaphragm moves down, creating a partial vacuum, thus expanding the lungs. At the same time, the abdominal musculature relaxes and protrudes outward."

"This method of' breathing is healthiest for several reasons, according to Dr. Alan Hymes, a surgeon on the staff of the Himalayan Institute. Because of gravity, the distribution of blood within the lungs favors the lower areas. With diaphragmatic breathing, more air is drawn to these areas, thus efficiently mixing blood and oxygen. Diaphragmatic breathing is also the easiest and involves the least expenditure of energy."

"In chest breathing, the air is drawn to the upper area of the lungs, while much of the blood remains in the lower portions and is not mixed with the air as well as it is in diaphragmatic breathing. Breathers who are primarily thoracic take more frequent breaths than diaphragmatic breathers."

"Despite the fact that diaphragmatic breathing is obviously the most efficient method most of us fail to use it. Healthy infants and young children know how to breathe properly, but cultural attitudes move our healthy patterns toward chest breathing, since protrusion of the abdomen is not considered beautiful."

17.1.3. HOLDING OUR BREATH

"Like nasal breathing, diaphragmatic breathing is thought to have a link to the emotions. Dr. Alexander Lowen a student of the psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich, says that 'the depth of respiration affects the intensity of feelings.' By holding the breath, feelings can be reduced or deadened, he says. That's why we tend to hold our breath in times of stress. Through the use of proper exercises to relax the muscles and allow for proper breathing, Lowen thinks pent-up emotions can be released and dealt with. He therefore uses breathing exercises as part of psychotherapy. But even without therapy, the body sometimes automatically releases tension by releasing breath in the form of a sigh, a nervous laugh or a groan."

"We are all familiar with the instructions given to a hysterical child: 'Calm down. Just take a few deep breaths and calm down.'"

"The use of breathing exercises to help one calm down is becoming widely accepted. Dr. Phillip Nuernberger who serves as a stress-management consultant for corporations, has run several tests on the use of breathing techniques for relaxation. He taught one group proper breathing techniques and used another group for comparison. The trained group consistently scored better on standard psychological tests and lower on the so-called neuroticism scale."

"But how is it that breathing style is linked to the emotions, and why does one trigger the other?"

"In two independent studies [ca 1981] from the Langley Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute of the University of California; J V. Hardt and B. Timmons show a link between breathing and brain waves. They found more alpha waves, which are known to appear when people are relaxed during deep breathing, and they found fewer when people were engaged in fast, shallow breathing. The alpha waves correlated better with abdominal breathing than they did with thoracic breathing."

"Dr. Poul Stoksted, a Danish researcher believes that the nasal cycle is controlled by a nerve center called the stellate ganglion at the base of the neck. He tested his theory by blocking and unblocking

nerve transmission through the ganglion and watching the nasal cycle stop and start its opening and closing of the nostrils. Stoksted believes that these nerves are ultimately triggered by the hypothalamus, the part of the brain that regulates autonomic functions such as body temperature blood pressure, heartbeat and the awareness of pleasure and pain. If breathing and pleasure derive from the same source, perhaps one can trigger the other."

"The autonomic (self-controlling) nervous system is divided into two branches: parasympathetic and sympathetic. The former is involved in controlling resting activities--the slowing of the heart rate and metabolism--while the latter serves to speed them up. Whenever we are under physical or emotional stress the body gears up in anticipation, triggering the sympathetic branch and causing our heart to beat faster and our breathing to quicken. This has become known as the fight-or-flight response. Many researchers claim that this physiological response, which is linked to the emotions, can be controlled if a person can learn to relax. Dr. Herbert Benson, of Harvard Medical School, discusses just such an idea in the Relaxation Response. He states that proper breathing is an essential part of relaxation, in that it can be used to control responses once thought to be beyond conscious control."

"When you inhale, sympathetic tone increases, according to research from the Himalayan Institute. By consciously controlling breathing--both left- and right-nostril breathing and the rate of inhaling and exhaling--you can slow down or speed up activity in your limbic system that causes changes in moods and bodily functions."

"Says Dr. Rudolph Ballentine of the Himalayan Institute, 'From our research and what we can deduce from other people's research, breathing is directly related in a very strategic way to the functioning of the internal organs, the emotions and the mind. If that is true, and if you take into consideration that breathing can be voluntarily controlled, then just think of the potential of using breathing as a way of correcting certain psychological and physiological problems. We might even be able to study a person's breathing patterns and predict his *susceptibility* to disease, then correct the pathology before it ever surfaces.'"

17.2. OXYGEN THERAPIES

Healthways Newsletter, 1992, April, 155 Avenida Del Mar, San Clemente., CA 92672

"Interest in the west toward oxygen therapies is growing rapidly as people discover that the human body functions well in an oxygen rich environment. Many studies have shown that many kinds of cancer and infectious agents thrive on an oxygen deficient environment, and when additional oxygen is introduced, these pathogens are often destroyed."

"This marvelous therapeutic value of oxygen is quite understandable when we consider that oxygen is at the heart of our metabolism. It is the only element that we need to collect every minute of the day. If we go just a few minutes without oxygen, we die..."

"...[W]e were given lungs for a purpose, to collect oxygen. If we allow our lungs to become weak and learn poor breathing habits, we will son find that we are only collecting 90% or 95% of the oxygen we need. This puts our blood in an oxygen deficient state, and weakens all functions of the body including energy level, metabolism, immune competence, and clear thinking. (The brain consumes almost 1/3 of the total energy of the body.)"

"If we inhale deeply and exhale fully, we are filling our lungs with oxygen, and then fully expelling carbon dioxide and other waste products. We are doing much more. We are exercising the lungs.

We are squeezing out excess fluids from the lung tissue and promoting blood circulation to rebuild and strengthen the oxygen exchange surfaces. Thus the result of breathing activities is not just more oxygen while doing the deep breathing, but also healthier lungs for more efficient oxygen collection all the time."

"The benefits of a regular program of deep breathing activities go on and on:

- A regular program of deep breathing conditions us to breathe more deeply all the time, ensuring increased oxygenation of the blood around the clock.
- Deep breathing activities reduce stress, another dangerous side effect of a busy life. Reduced stress also contributes to clearer thinking, stronger immune response and better overall health.
- Deep breathing activities strengthen concentration, giving us more power over our lives and more ability to create our dreams."

"And there are even more benefits according to the Chinese who have been practicing and teaching advanced breathing activities for thousands of years:

- Deep abdominal breathing strengthens Qi [pronounced Chee, their term for vital energy or the life force], which appears to go beyond just oxygenating blood.
- Deep abdominal breathing while focusing attention of the abdomen causes Qi to circulate throughout the body, purifying and strengthening the kidneys, brain, and bone marrow.
- Focusing attention of this movement of Qi increases our sensitivity and will power, and allows us to gain the ability to control the flow of this Qi."

"...Oxygenating the blood has tremendous health benefits and is best accomplished by practicing deep breathing skills. Paying for products or procedures that put oxygen into you is a bit like paying someone to implant spaghetti directly into your small intestines."

"Starting today, spend ten minutes per day in a quiet place practicing slow deep breathing. Remember to exhale completely and keep your concentration focused on your abdomen. You will immediately have more energy, clear thinking, stronger immune system, and greater endurance. And every day you continue to practice, you will become a more powerful being, happier and more aware of your purpose."

17.3. THE ART OF BREATHING

by Justine Toms New Dimensions, Winter, 1996, pp. 14-16 (quoted in its entirety)

"The breath is always with us. We can think of it as a portable altar--a place to provide nourishment for the soul and calm for the restless mind. The subject of breathing has come up repeatedly with a diversity of guests in recent New Dimensions Radio interviews. When such themes arise so spontaneously, persistently knocking at the gate of our consciousness, it feels like time to stop and pay attention."

"This is not as easy as one might suppose. As I begin to give my own breathing more attention, I notice the surprising fact that I hold my breath a lot, and often my breathing is shallow. Many of our guests have pointed out that the breath is a powerful helpmate to relieve stress and support a more healthy body. But beyond its health benefits, I'm discovering that the breath, when used correctly, can positively affect our spiritual well-being as well."

"Dan Millman, author of The Laws of Spirit, describes the relationship of the breath to being in balance in our lives. He tells us, 'To be in balance, it's essential to have the breath in balance. When

we're angry, the exhalation tends to be stronger than the inhalation. When we're sad, the inhalation tends to be stronger than the exhalation. The breath is out of balance. When we're feeling fear, we don't breathe much at all.'"

"'Bringing the breath back into balance is a practical discipline. It helps bring our life back into balance, to express whatever we're feeling more effectively. It's certainly one of those principles of life that we need to pay attention to.'"

"'When someone asks me, 'Dan, how do you breathe?' I recommend, 'In and out.' That's facetious, of course! But breathing is the link between the mind and emotions in the body. It's one of the fundamental practices of life.'"

"Iyanla Vanzant, a former defense attorney, Yoruba priestess, and the author of The Value in the Valley: A Black Woman's Guide Through Life's Dilemmas, agrees with Millman that we must learn to breathe consciously: 'Most of us don't realize that the key to stillness is breath. When you're sleeping, your breath is regulated. There's a steady flow in, there's a steady flow out, and the connection to the higher realms, to the spiritual realms, is very, very strong.'"

"'When you're awake, you're talking, you're chewing, you're laughing. And the minute you go into fear, you stop breathing. But when you sleep, the spirit has an opportunity. So the first connection to getting still is to learn how to breathe, and to breathe consciously--to become conscious of how you inhale, how you exhale; the rhythm of your body, the pulsating of your heart--because that is life.'"

"'Life is not whether you drive a Beemer, or whether you pay the rent on time. That's not life. Life is just a state of being--not doing but being. That state of being is enhanced and intensified through breath. So in order to get still, we've got to learn how to breathe ...'"

"'We're not taught how to be gentle without ourselves. We're usually so harsh and cruel and abrupt with ourselves. We want it all, now. We don't realize that life is a process, and it takes time. The same way it takes nine months to incubate a baby in the womb, it takes forty days to incubate a new idea in your brain, forty days of consistent practice to incubate a new idea in your brain.'"

"I asked Vanzant why forty days; what makes that number so magical? She said, 'Forty days is the foundation of life. It rained forty days, and it rained forty nights. The number four represents all of the natural elements--north, east, south and west; air, water, fire and earth. And the zero--the symbol of infinity, the alpha and the omega--is a symbol of God. In order to build a new foundation, you need God--that's your forty.'"

"Vanzant emphasizes the need to be consistent in developing a breathing practice. She explains, 'It will create a new pattern. Even in your body, the skin you have today is not the same skin that you had forty-five days ago, because you're constantly standing and constantly growing. And everything needs a foundation.'"

"'If you can just do something simple for forty days, then that change is solid. Every day for forty days, get up in the morning and take five deep breaths before you brush your teeth, go to the bathroom or utter a word. If you miss a day, go back and do it again. By the time you do it consistently for forty days, on that forty-first day, if you don't get up and take those five deep breaths, you're going to feel it. You're going to know immediately, 'I didn't breathe today.'"

"It seems so simple, yet the implications are enormous. Just imagine the ripple effect if each one of

us did as Vanzant suggests: 'First thing in the morning: Eyes open, sit up, feet to the side of the bed, five deep breaths--every day for forty days. I guarantee you, your entire day--your being, psyche, everything--is going to change.'"

"Gay Hendricks, author of Conscious Breathing, has been studying the breath for years, and shares this insight about breath and health that arose in a recent study: 'Somebody sat a graduate student in a medical doctor's office, and simply asked that student to watch breathing patterns in the waiting room. They found that something like eighty-eight percent of the people in the waiting room had disturbed breathing patterns. Regardless of their physical problem, they had disturbed breathing. That was one of the most fascinating things I've ever read. Probably none of those people were going to go in there and have anything done about their breathing.'"

"Hendricks goes on to say, 'Many of the most creative medical doctors I know--Andrew Weil is a prominent example--[see Part 3, section 1.13.1] say, 'Look at breathing along with everything else.' Many medical doctors say disturbed breathing goes along with illness--but which comes first? We're not sure. It could be that the disturbed breathing actually creates the situation in which there' s a disturbance in other organs in the body.'"

"'On a purely physiological level, if you learn how to breathe deeper and more powerfully--with exercise, for example--you actually grow more capillary space in your body. There are about 60,000 miles of capillaries in your body. But if you're a regular exerciser, you have a lot more than that. You may have another ten or twenty thousand miles of capillary space in your body, so you've literally got more space for feeling in your body. Good breathing enhances your ability to grow a larger version of yourself, on a purely physiological level alone. 'When you're breathing correctly, you don't have to worry too much about getting breath up into your chest. It'll take care of itself. You want to aim the breath down and in, so that it really rounds that area between your navel and the top of your pubic bone. That's the key area you want to keep softening, in order to get a full breath down in there.'"

"'Everybody, all day long, can mix themselves what I call an 'oxygen cocktail,' right there on the spot, and take that nice, deep belly breath. I do it all the time in meetings.'"

"'Participating in something with your breath and with your consciousness, feeling it, breathing through it, will lead you to action more quickly. I've found that if I breathe through my fear, suddenly the action I need to take is revealed to me very quickly. If I resist it, it may take me longer to get to the actual message of it. Breathing through things, I've found, actually catapults you into action more quickly.'"

"'Elizabeth Barrett Browning said, 'Whoever breathes most air lives most life.' The more we really celebrate ourselves and open up to deeper and healthier breathing, the more life we'll feel.'"

"Breathing deeply from the diaphragm is natural for healthy, new babies. When and why so many of us lose this natural capacity is the subject of a lifetime. Whatever the reasons, many of us have poor breathing habits. Nancy Zi, voice teacher and author of the book The Art of Breathing and a videotape of the same title, tells us that mental imagery is very important in teaching breathing because the action of breathing is very abstract and intangible. As a shallow breather myself, I find her image of an eyedropper very useful."

"She says, 'Think of your torso as an upside-down eyedropper--the kind with a glass tube and rubber bulb. Imagine your stomach as the bulb; when you exhale, you squeeze that rubber bulb, and

air goes out. Now, instead of stuffing in air through that glass tube and pushing the bulb out, all you have to do is let go of that pressure. The bulb will expand, and air will be drawn in.'"

"'If you think of breathing that way, instead of shoving air in, you will find that you are not breathing audibly. You'll find a lot of people breathing like 'hahh, hahh'--you hear it. With this imagery of drawing in instead of stuffing in the air, you breathe better. Also, you are breathing abdominal.'"

"Zi goes on to say, 'We don't really put air into our stomach; the air goes into the lungs. But on top of our stomach muscles is the diaphragm and our diaphragm muscle is where the lungs sit. So if we expand our abdomen, the diaphragm drops, pumping air to the bottom of the lungs. If your diaphragm muscle is always squeezed, the lung is squeezed upward, and you are not using the bottom part of the lung. Abdominal breathing doesn't really mean air going into the abdomen. It just gives that sensation.'"

"In this age of medical doctors relying on high-tech medicine and pills for every ailment, it's refreshing to hear from Andrew Weil, a Harvard-trained doctor who has traveled around the world checking out alternative modes of treatment from a diversity of cultures. When asked what most impressed him, he came up with a surprising answer." [see Part 3, section 1.13.1]

"Weil laughingly said, 'There's an odd thing about all this, which conforms to what we read in myths and enlightenment tales of how it's supposed to be. I spent about ten or twelve years seeking out healers in remote areas. Some of it was very arduous traveling, getting to some very remote places, tolerating lots of discomfort and also being very disappointed with what I found at the end of the road.'"

"'Then it turned out that the most interesting healer that I learned from was in my backyard--in Tucson, Arizona, where I had been living--and I didn't know about him! It was only after all of this traveling that I found him.'"

"'He is an osteopath, a D.O., who is now [1996] about eighty-four. He is, I think, the most effective clinician that I've seen, and has an incredible success rate. From him I learned, among other things, the importance of breathing as an essential function of human health and illness. He practices from a tradition that was developed in the 1930s, based on craniosacral manipulation, which is work on the cranium (the skull) and the sacrum (the tailbone).'"

"'In this theory, breathing is seen to be the key to health. Proper breathing nourishes the brain and central nervous system. If breathing is impaired, the natural movements of the brain and the membranes covering it, and the fluid covering it, are not adequate. This can result in disease in any system of the body.'"

"'Now, I think here is a real point of difference kind of medicine and regular medicine. In medical school, I learned nothing about breathing. I learned about diseases of the respiratory system, but I learned nothing about the function of breathing. In regular medicine today, there is a total absorption with symptoms in the diagnosis and treatment of disease--once it's already there--with very little attention paid to the normal functioning of the human body, and seeing the importance of functions like breathing.'"

"'I could talk for hours about breathing and breath, and its importance to both physical health and mental health, and how simple it is to teach people about breathing as a preventive technique, as a

way of controlling moods like anxiety, for example, as a way of improving cardiovascular function--a key element.'"

"'One of the most important things that I learned by watching this man was that I also saw him perform relatively instant cures of conditions that had resisted long-term treatment by regular medicine. To me it was very refreshing to see that you could treat illness without a lot of equipment, without a lot of technological hardware, without drugs, without charging people a lot of money, doing very simple stuff and getting excellent results. That was very refreshing to me.'"

"'This man's philosophy is very simple: He talks a lot about the healing power of nature, and that you make this little adjustment and 'let old Mother Nature do her work.' That attitude is also something I don't see much in allopathic medicine--a reverence for and recognition of the healing power of the human organism.'"

"It seems to me that, when used correctly, the breath can positively affect our state of being better than any miracle drug. In fact, I'm going to mix myself an 'oxygen cocktail' right now. Please, won't you join me? With five deep breaths I toast your good health, well-being and deep connection to a life lived in fine balance of mind, body and soul."

17.3.1. BREATHING YOUR WAY TO HEALTH

with Nancy Zi Audio Tape 1 hr. (quoted in full)

"To breathe is to be alive, and as we breathe more deeply and fully, so can we experience life in a deeper and more complete way, according to Zi, a classically trained professional singer and voice teacher who has developed a philosophy and practical approach to breathing she calls Chi Yi, taken from the Chinese words *chi* for breath and *yi* for art. Based on the ancient Chinese practice of chi kung, a technique of breath manipulation used as the basis for many forms of martial arts, it helps people create a greater sense of power and balance and sharpens mental and physical coordination. Zi is the author of The Art of Breathing (Bantam 1986)."

17.3.2. THE POWER OF BREATHING

with Gay Hendricks Audio Tape 1 hr. (quoted in full)

"Breathing deeply and consciously is a part of almost every meditative healing practice in human history, and in this dialogue you will hear why. Hendricks also describes simple methods for improving health conditions, resolving fear, tension and old hurts, and expanding your capacity for joy, well-being and creative action. He tells how breathing can help us 'grow new positive energy channels in ourselves, so that we can actually learn to experience higher levels of organic bliss.' This program includes a brief excerpt of physician Andrew Weil speaking on a previous 'New Dimensions' program. Hendncks is a pioneering psychologist in body-centered therapies, the author of Conscious Breathing: Breathwork for Health, Stress, Release, and Personal Mastery (Bantam 1995) and co-author, with his wife Kathlyn, of several hooks including At the Speed of Life (Bantam 1993). Hosted by Shoshana Alexander."

"Topics explored in this dialogue include:

- ∞ what conscious breathing is--and how to do it
- ∞ reviving yourself with an oxygen cocktail'
- ∞ how fear is behind most anger, and how breath can release both
- ∞ the connection between breathing disturbances and illness
- ∞ pain control and relief through breathing

- participating more fully in your life and your sensations
- how relationship dynamics are revealed in breath patterns
- expanding your capacity for joy and well-being"

17.4. THE MYSTERY OF THE BREATH

by Michael Grant White Association of Humanistic Psychology Perspective, January/February 1996, pp. 10-11, 31 (quoted in full)

Michael Grant White is creator of Balanced Breathing™, a Somatic Education System, is certified in Radiance Breathwork and Rebirthing, and is a member of the steering committee of the AHP Somatics and Wellness Community.

"A few months ago my mother told me that she witnessed my father terrifying me with a vacuum cleaner when I was about two years old. When she asked what he was doing, he said he was going to 'make a man out of me.' At seven I took the 'wrong' street home from Sunday School arriving home on time. An hour later my paternal grandmother returned after going up the 'right' street to meet me. She went to the cupboard, returned with a double razor strap, and beat me with it for a very long time yelling something about paying attention to instructions."

"Four years later my fifth grade teacher had the class sing every morning for forty five minutes. Life was wonderful, I was receiving mostly A grades, and was even asked by my teacher to sing for the entire school!"

"Over the next few years as a result of accumulating demerits by not making my bed, taking out the trash, feeding the dog, or doing the dishes, I received from my father several beatings that went beyond the point where I could scream. I also experienced several random traumatic experiences involving my ability to breathe."

"At thirty-three, after enduring a numbing sense of loss from a devastating divorce and loss of the presence of my beautiful three-year-old son, I realized that my life felt very empty--at an all-time low. I remembered that singing used to make me feel great, but I could no longer hold or match a tone vocally and I instinctively sensed this might connect to my grief and confusion. I sought a singing teacher and found one who, as chance or destiny would have it, was receiving a form of transformational breath training. She recommended I do the same."

"Now, at fifty-four, I feel much younger and my life is much different. Relationships guide my priorities. I feel worthwhile and am treating myself accordingly. Though some hearing loss challenges my patience at times, I am most often at peace, even when those near me are not."

"Without becoming a yogi or a spiritual master there is a great deal that can be done very simply through balanced breathing, conscious exercise, and nutrition. Here we explore the mystery of the breath."

"Balanced Breathing. *Breathing* is the physical, mechanical act that brings air into the body. *Breath* is the air or life force that is taken in. We are born with the instinct to breathe, though most of us use only a fraction of our breathing strength. This natural ability may have been compromised in the womb, during birth, infancy, or later. It is further compromised by air and water pollution, devitalized and toxic foods, stress, chronic muscular tensions, toxic belief systems, and chronic fear, shame, and guilt."

"How we breathe affects our health, the way we look and feel, our resistance to disease, and our life span. Few people really know how to breathe optimally and fewer yet can sustain a full-bodied breath for more than a few moments before experiencing dizziness, confusion, and spaciness. Sore, tight muscles, hyper- or sub-inhalation/ventilation, trauma restimulation, and toxin recirculation also result."

"A normal, relaxed, fully functional, balanced breath is like a wave. The breath wave must be able to freely transition up and down between the abdominal, mid-, and high-chest breath. To better understand this breath wave, imagine lying down at the beach, on your back, with your feet pointed toward the water. Watch the rise of the ocean out about fifty yards. This is like your breath at your belly. Watch the calm, surfless water rise and come forward where it meets the uppermost part of the shore (the back of the top of your head), then recede back towards the depths of the ocean (your belly). Think of the water as your life force. Imagine your chin as a rubber raft that is gently raised as the water approaches the uppermost part of the shore (the top of the back of your head). That's the inhalation. For the exhalation imagine the water receding and dropping somewhat evenly overall and slightly faster in the chest area. If you've watched waves rush in and recede, you will know what I mean. If you've never been near the ocean, for twenty minutes watch the breathing pattern of a two-month-old baby in deep sleep, imagining it in slow motion. Feel your back softly flatten into the surface on which you are lying as your pelvis rocks gently forward--like a gentle sexual thrust or extension. Feel your pelvis rock backward and out of the way as your back arches slightly to express the rising belly. To allow the tip of the wave to raise the jaw and move the occiput, try the breath wave in a sitting position or with the head at a lower level than the surface on which you lie."

"The breath wave may go out of balance. For instance, instead of rising and coming forward to raise the belly, chest, and chin, it may stay level or sink downward as if someone were pressing down, not allowing it to rise or fall. It may halt, then push upward again, having lost momentum and its smooth transition. We experience this as feeling 'breathless' or 'stuck.'"
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"A major obstruction to a balanced breath wave is a locked-up diaphragm. I call the diaphragm the 'speed bump of life.' This speed bump functions like a breakwater which restricts the natural ebb and flow of the breath. It may appear as a hitch or shuddering movement as the breathwave travels erratically upward or downward within a breath cycle. The degree to which the breath cannot transition is the degree to which we get stuck emotionally and mentally, feeling anxiety or fear."

"We resist unwanted information and related feelings by holding or reducing our breath. So, if someone is saying something and it seems logical but you notice your breath becoming slower, more shallow, faster, or deeper, you probably have an issue, positive or negative, with the information. It will pay off to become more conscious of your breath, body sensations, and the situation."

"To deny our body responses and somatic awareness is to suppress millions of years of somatic evolution and survival mechanisms. For example, the next time you feel your breath catching or find yourself suppressing it, you might think of it as a message. Notice if you are afraid, anxious, at a loss for words, or in some way disempowered. Then take one or more long, slow, deep breaths. Start in your belly and maintain a foundation there while letting the breath move up to the top of the chest. Then exhale by letting go."

"Some indicators of unbalanced breathing are: tightness in the chest; chronic illness; fear or depression; frequent colds; poor attention: sighing or yawning; poor posture; can't catch breath. An irregular breathing pattern is a tip-off. Repeating a poor breathing pattern over time will restrict or

lock up the diaphragm and the musculature of the pelvis, stomach, back, chest, throat, jaw, and eyes."

"If breathing more fully causes you to feel uncomfortably dizzy, spacy, or confused, it's probably because your breathing is habitually imbalanced or too shallow. At first you may feel energy in the form of buzzing, streaming currents or breezelike sensations. I used to feel dizzy and occasionally still do, but as I am able to tolerate more breath, the dizziness subsides and I become energized and relaxed just by breathing in a balanced way for a few minutes. Many clients have reported increased relaxation, intense sexual feelings, bliss, and even mystical experiences from the breathwork!"

"Breathing Based Stress Management. We encounter emotional, physical, mental, and environmental stresses daily. Burnout, fatigue, guilt, lack of control and helplessness, epidemic-scale autoimmune disease, food allergies, chemical hypersensitivities, mental weakness, and confusion plague our society. Responding rather than reacting is a primary goal of body-centered stress management. How you breathe impacts *all* of these."

"Strategies for handling distress often tempt us to rely on cognitive or thinking processes. We try to substitute information for experience and intuition. If heeded, one's body will prompt one to respect its vulnerability, listen to and trust its messages, exercise and feed it wisely, allow it to rest and heal. This is the basis of intuition!"

"'Shallow breathers poison themselves,' says Paul Bragg. 'Take lots of long, slow, deep breaths and you will live longer.' By not breathing sufficiently, toxins remain in our bodies, running through the entire elimination system and back into circulation again. Good breathing practice can release over 70% of your toxins! Dr. Sheldon Hendler states in his book, The Oxygen Breakthrough, that 'Breathing is the *first* place, not the last, one should look when fatigue, disease, or other evidence of disordered energy presents itself.'"

"Correct respiration reduces negative stress, helps to balance the brain hemispheres and blood PH, strengthens the immune system, improves brain blood circulation, memory function, metabolic activity, muscle and vascular tone, lymphatic drainage, arterial blood flow, and psychological functioning. Nerve and hormone responses such as secretions of adrenaline, neuropeptides, endorphins, epinephrine, norepinephrine, insulin, glucose, and others come under more dependable control. This has enormous relevance in self-regulation and stress management. It is also the basis for deep emotional release, self discovery and expression, internal power, and spiritual experience."

"My son was ten years old and was afraid to go on the Santa Cruz roller coaster with me. He finally relented when I reminded him of all the great foods he'd learned to enjoy because he had been willing to take a little risk. I told him I would remind him to breathe. With the first run his face and knuckles turned bone white and he finished visibly shaken. On the second ride I kept up the reminders to breathe. On the third ride we rode in the front car joyfully whooping and hollering as we both held our hands triumphantly in the air during the entire ride."

"Breathing into fear and resistance; breathing and consciously surrendering, letting go, and trusting; breathing during times of threatening stress--these are moments of extreme power and transformation. *Control your breathing and you control your life!"*

"How you breathe and what you eat influence your life more than almost anything else. You may have previously realized the importance of the food you eat, but remember: anything you do 7,000 to 30,000 times a day has to affect you in many, many ways!"

"Conscious breathing has deeply affected the core of my personal evolution, my thoughts, feelings, and actions. I've even learned to like myself! I have also forgiven my father. He is gone now, to his next expression. I know that he loved me. What he did to me was done to him, and there's no one left to blame. His ring is my most valued possession and I wear it proudly."

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