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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Integral Breath Therapy

Breathing Your Way to Health

Breathwork has been used as a path of personal and psycho-spiritual development for thousands of years. Certain forms of breathing evoke corresponding mental states which can be used as tools for creating optimum states of being.

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Last spring, I was getting concerned about my breathing capacity and inability to take big breaths without coughing. I decided to see a respiratory therapist and results from testing showed severely reduced lung capacity. I have Scoliosis and the resulting constrictions and restrictions of my twisted ribcage and fascia issues were affecting my lungs and other internal organs. But breathing restrictions can happen in many ways and may be the result of stress, tension in the body, trauma, depression, anxiety, shock, abuse, poor emotional regulation, or overall low vitality.

I've had physiotherapy for years as well as many other helpful practices such as energy work, osteopathy, massage, and chiropractic care, but my breathing was steadily going downhill. But I got the idea of stretching my ribcage from the inside with breathing exercises. I started looking into yoga practitioners

that did breathwork, but then saw an advertisement on Facebook posted by a psychotherapist I know about a class for Integral Breath Therapy (IBT). Bingo! I signed up without doing much research as I felt in my gut that this would help. The energy felt right.

What I had signed up for was 6 days for the level 1 certification course for Integral Breath Therapy. This course was learning how to be a facilitator for Integral Breath Therapy, but also experiencing the benefits of the breathing practice. And what benefits! During those intensive 6 days my body experienced huge changes.

I returned home with my rib and fascia restrictions much looser (after only 6 days!) and I was able to breathe more deeply. When I saw my chiropractor the next day for my weekly adjustment, she said my muscle tone was more relaxed, my flow of energy



and nervous system were more consistent, with a profound change in my overall vibration. The emotional release from the body was amazing and the spiritual connection was awe-inspiring. And most importantly of all, I learned what being fully grounded in the body felt like.

This breathing technique is simple, but life changing. I spent ten months to complete my certification so that I am now a facilitator and offer this healing in my practice with in-person sessions. The course itself is inspiring and full of information, but also so full of healing for personal growth.

Let's begin with a discussion about Breathwork. Breathwork has been used as a path of personal and psycho-spiritual development for thousands of years. Certain forms of breathing evoke corresponding mental states which can be used as tools for creating optimum states of being. It can be used in meditation or to refine consciousness. Pranayama is the yoga term for breathwork. The practice of pranayama is a means to enhance life energy through lengthening or deepening the breath. Wilhelm Reich is a German psychiatrist whose work in the early 1900s influenced the field of psychology with his therapeutic use of Reichian breathing techniques. Leonard Orr created the breathing techniques of Rebirthing which is usually done in warm water (modality evolved from Orr's personal experiences as he breathed in his bathtub). Orr then refined his program to include dry as well as wet sessions.

Carol Lampman is the founder of Integral Breath Therapy, and she has used research from several breathing techniques including Reichian and Rebirthing. Integral Breath Therapy is a composite modality that uses breathwork as a support for various processes, exercises, and inner explorations. In Integral Breath Therapy breathing techniques clear out physical, mental, and emotional blocks or stresses and can be used as part of the body's natural healing process. The breathing pattern triggers a natural

process of cleansing and purifying both the body and the psyche. With increased relaxation and increased oxygen intake the body can naturally heal itself. Reich also outlined what he called "body armor", how we protect ourselves from painful feelings and experiences by contracting and withdrawing into ourselves as a defense. He observed that chronic muscular tension was the equivalent to a suit of armor and with a breakthrough in analysis there was a release in the tension. He witnessed that this armor compromised the ability of the person to breathe fully and naturally. He noticed that mouth breathing activated the holding and resulted in a release of muscular tension and the emotions held.

Breathing is an important physiological function that provides all our cells with needed oxygen and purges waste products from the body. Respiration is a key to life. The proper amount and better delivery of oxygen to our cells improves our health. It helps detoxify the body at a cellular level. Breathing is also connected to the nervous system and breathing can be used as a technique for controlling anxiety and regulating mental states. Breath is the junction point between the mind, body, emotions, and spirit. By increasing our ability to breathe fully, we can make major improvements in our physical, mental, and emotional functions.

Note that in Eastern philosophy breathing is also a way the body can get its supply of life energy (or Prana or Chi or Ki), the energy that permeates every cell. The inner flow of life energy contributes to our well-being. With Integral Breath Therapy the energy cycle can be triggered to complete a circuit of energy and you can begin to breathe "energy" as well as air. The breather increases the flow of life energy in the body resulting in a greater sense of aliveness.

In Integral Breath Therapy a trained facilitator will guide and monitor the client in an in-person session. The facilitator will have the client use an intention and different breathing techniques while lying on



the floor or sitting in an anti-gravity chair and then support the client in the process. An important part of the process is integration and the process of providing a corrective experience, as necessary. The facilitator will use their knowledge and intuition to offer care and assist in the discharge of whatever is ready to be released during the session. As part of the completion, the facilitator will help the client settle into their new way of being and create an affirmation at the end.

The body knows how to heal itself and the use of breathing techniques combined with the presence of a facilitator, holds the space for that to happen. Part of the Breathing Sequence in a session is the basic Circular Breath which is an exercise that is safe for everyone to practice. With continued use it reduces stress, quiets the mind, and promotes emotional wellbeing.

Preparation: Begin by stretching your jaw wide open and make a sound. This opens the throat and prepares the body for a free flow of air. Now, take a deep breath in through your mouth and hold it. Then, take in more air to fill your lungs to the very top and hold it for a few seconds. Now, exhale to the bottom and hold it. Then, squeeze out the excess and hold it there for a few seconds. Repeat 3 times. This expands the capacity of the lungs and brings awareness to the fact that there is more room at the top and at the bottom.

The Circular Breath: The inhale and the exhale are connected without pausing. Imagine yourself breathing in a circle beginning at the pelvis and drawing the air up your back and into your throat... then exhale without a pause allowing the breath to circle down the front of your body to the pelvis begin another inhale without a pause. Think of rounding out the top and the bottom of the breath so that the action of the breathing is smooth and rhythmic. The breathing tempo should be full and slow with more

air coming in than your normal resting state and the exhale should be completely relaxed. If dizziness results, breathe normally for a minute or two before resuming practice. Suggested practice is to use this breathing exercise for 10 minutes once or twice daily.

Find out more at <https://www.integrationconcepts.net/> where you can also find guided meditations and names of IBT practitioners. There are also a variety of breath-oriented meditations on youtube https://www.youtube.com/c/CarolLampman_IBT. Check out the video called The Ideal Breath at <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/674234454>.

Integral Breath Therapy (IBT) has become a practice in my life, and it continues to improve my well-being on all levels, physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. IBT is a useful tool for increased physiological benefits, personal growth and development, stress management, spiritual unfoldment and can be used in addition to any other technique, such as psychotherapy, yoga, energy work, etc. Integral Breath Therapy is great for bringing about permanent, positive life changes. 🌀

References:

- Lampman, Carol. Integral Breath Therapy Level One Foundation Training manual. 2023, 326 pgs.
- Lampman, Carol. "Integration Concepts." 2023, <https://www.integrationconcepts.net/>.



Learn more about author Wanda Davis by visiting: www.wandadavis.ca