

Practical Matters for Breathwork Sessions

1. **Safety**, both physical and psychological, of participants, is the most important consideration, and it is something **we create together as an entire group**.

A. Facilitators

- i. The Facilitators work to provide **physical safety**,
 - a. seeing that mats and padding are readily available,
 - b. seeing that the room is protected from intrusion.
- ii. The Facilitators use their **experience** to assure that the workshop is psychologically safe for participants.

B. Participants

- i. **Help to provide observe emotional safety by treating everybody's stories as confidential.** Participants are free to tell their own stories to whomever they wish but keep everybody else's stories within the confines of the workshop.
- ii. **Stay until the formal closing of the workshop**, making an informal promise to do so. If you leave before the closing, we cannot stay with you.
 - a. Sometimes people discover such great truths that they feel the urge to leave and spread a message by whatever media they can. Sitting with that urge will yield greater understanding of the discovered truth.
 - b. Sometimes a participant may experience anxiety and a need to escape. Sitting with that fear can yield a breakthrough that will transform the fear into deep self-understanding and an enduring sense of safety in the world at large.

2. Practical mechanics of breathing:

Move a large volume of air, connecting in-breath and out-breath without any pause in between. This takes a bit of work, but after all this activity is called "Breathwork," as Stan has emphasized. It is work especially because it contrasts with normal breathing, which doesn't require any attention at all. The most interesting thing is that this simple activity, if pursued vigorously, generally seems to have the effect of deepening attention to one's internal psychic process.

The word 'psyche' is an ancient Greek word whose first translation is "breath," as one might say it in the phrase 'life and breath.' (And the word also came to be used as the name of a goddess who was so beautiful that Aphrodite (Venus), the goddess of love, was so jealous that she sent her son Eros (Cupid) to make psyche fall in love with someone very, very ugly. Something went wrong, however, and handsome Eros himself fell in love with Psyche, but he hid from her, only letting her visit him in the dark. Unable to suppress her curiosity, one night she secretly carried a candle, but she spilled some of the hot wax on Eros, woke him up and suffered consequences. In the end, however, everything happened for the best, and the two married in a ceremony attended by the gods.)

The more vigorously you breathe, deeply and fully, the more chance you have of marrying your breath with your psyche and exploring all its beauty and terror – until you float off on Psyche's butterfly wings to the realm where you become profoundly aware of your own personal history and the history of the cosmos and begin to find the Peace of resolution with everything that has ever happened.)

3. Intense breathing promotes an increasing focus on interior processes.

Closing your eyes or covering them with eyeshades can help turn your focus inwards.

4. The nature of a session:

- A. **There is no need to try to make something happen. Simply give yourself over to breathing and keep breathing until you are surprised.** This will give you some very intense feelings to work with. On the other hand, you may find some part of your body wanting to move. Go with it. The facilitators will make sure you do not bump into anything or anybody.

You can also try to wiggle or shake a bit on your own to see if that stirs something. **Think of this all as an experiment.** There is nothing you need to do or accomplish. In a genuine experiment, one never knows what will happen, like when Aladdin tried rubbing the jar.

- B. **Sometimes you may start feeling stuck bodily or psychically or bodily.** Perhaps your hands or legs may seem to seize up. This is called **Tetany**. Breathe into it. The way out is through. We can help you if the situation becomes too difficult. Ask your sitter to get a facilitator.
- C. **Bodywork can be done early on in case it is difficult for you to breathe readily, or for some other reason, but usually we will wait bodywork until toward the end of a session.** The basic idea of bodywork is that our bodies reflect any trauma in our psychic history that happened in our birth process or as a result of accidents later on. The basic procedure is to ask whether any sensation in your body attracts your attention. We will offer resistance for you to push against where you have that sensation. If there is some energy there, it may develop, even very dramatically, and we will try to follow it. But we never do anything without your agreement. STOP as literal.

Sometimes bodywork helps to release tension associated with trauma. The key, however, is to increase the tension until it breaks open, rather than massage it to make it go away. Besides bodywork for commission, namely for something that happened to you, we also provide bodywork for something that did not happen, that was an omission, such as not being held when you needed it.

- D. Consciousness has a sort of **double bookkeeping quality**. One can feel oneself in a dangerous place about to be attacked, but at the same time know that one is protected and on a mat in a room that is completely safe. Never therefore pass up a chance for dismemberment and death. The poet Pindar described the Eleusinian Mysteries as “dying before dying,” that released fear of death.
- E. **The sounds of other people’s processes may start to feel intrusive.** The trick is to take them inside, and somehow make them part of one’s own process.
- F. Proximity to the sound system speakers: consider if you want to be close to one of the speakers, in which case be prepared for loud sound, and immerse yourself in it. (Ear plugs are available.)

The sitter's role. The best comparison of the sitter is to the temple attendant (*therapon, θεραπευων*) of ancient Greece. The American word 'therapist' is a direct translation. The role of the temple attendant was to wait upon a person who came to sleep on the steps of the temple and have healing dreams.

- a. **The most important task of a sitter is to focus attention on their breather.** This can be very difficult, because without focus a sitter can easily become bored. Normally no one spends time paying full attention to another person for an hour or more. It requires great self-awareness and is a kind of meditation. The reward is great. It can be even as profound and intense as one's own breathing session.
- b. **The sitter must also protect the space of the breather,** so that if the breather starts to move, they do not collide with someone else, or that someone else does not interfere with the breather. Pillows can be used to prevent breathers from inadvertently bumping into each other. But not to think territorially is key: See the immediate environment as a whole. Use gentle means to keep breathers from bumping into each other. Don't build a fortress around your breather.
- c. No matter how much you might want to reach out to console the person you are sitting for because they seem to be suffering, **it may be best to let them work things out on their own.** If you feel a need to reach out and touch your breather, please consult with a facilitator. **It's best to keep touching to a minimum,** and then only if a facilitator guides you.
- d. **Help your breather to the bathroom as necessary,** avoiding mats and other obstacles. Breathers may be disoriented or slightly dizzy. Wait for your breather to come back out and guide your breather back to the mat.
- e. **Make any necessary agreements with your breather beforehand:** how to request water, tissue, etc., whether a breathing reminder is desired, and any other communication preferences.
- f. Use **no electronics during the session.** Pay attention to your breather.
- g. **When your breather thinks they are finished, make sure to have a facilitator check with them to be sure they are ready to leave the room.** A breather may have something remaining that needs attention, and not be aware of it.
- h. When your breather is ready to leave the room, **help them to the drawing area** and see that they have paper and drawing materials, and offer tea/water, and a snack. Stand by, if necessary. **Keep talking to a minimum** in the drawing area, as people are still very much in their process immediately after breathwork.

Closing considerations

- Stress the ongoing nature of the process and suggest ways for working with feelings, etc., that continue to emerge in the days and weeks ahead.
- Go easy, revisit mandalas, keep in touch with one another....
- OK use of contact info.
- Facilitator availability.
- Follow-up workshop group call.
- SEEN monthly call
- Drops & Buds at breathwork.com
- Seek Feedback/Comments
- Warn Lost and Found....
- Remind participants about confidentiality of other's experiences.
- You are your own expert. The magic is in you, we just create the space for you to remember that.

Closing song/dance/other