

Breathe Deeply

Specialized breathing exercises can help transform your health.

By Patrick Dougherty

Breathing is living. With abundant oxygen, our bodies prosper in health. Without oxygen, we die in three minutes. Despite this stark eternal truth, breathing is oft neglected—and as a result, health declines. Oxygen deficiency is believed to be one of the greatest contributors to disease in both body and mind—and our modern world isn't helping matters. Pollution and toxins make it more difficult for our cells to get the oxygen they need...while stress, anxiety and repressed emotions further deprive us of oxygen by creating restricted, shallow breathing patterns.

Transformational Breathing™, a practice of conscious, connected, super-oxygenating breathing exercises, works to unravel the tangle of complex emotions that constrict our breathing. Freed of these psychological bonds, respiration opens up, cellular oxygenation is restored and profound physical, emotional and spiritual benefits follow.

Hearing that this healing modality must be experienced to be understood, I scheduled a session with Lorna Tobin, a Transformational Breathing Facilitator. Inspired by her own personal triumph over health issues and emotional traumas, Lorna has worked for over 13 years to bring the powerful healing of Transformational Breathing to as many people as possible. "How we breathe is a metaphor for how we live our life," Lorna explained. "If someone's breathing deeply and fully, that's how they are living. If someone's breathing shallow . . ."

An admittedly shallow breather, I felt a twinge of guilt as Lorna explained that shallow breathing, in addition to starving tissues of oxygen on a physical level, is also a sign of emotional repression. "People use shallow breathing to disconnect from processing emotions," she said. "When you don't allow yourself to feel emotions, you hold on to them...you think about negative emotions over and over...when these emotional energies are held in the physical body, they become dense, and they manifest as disease."

Transformational Breathing, by super-saturating the body with oxygen at a cellular level, is believed to shift and permanently purge these negative emotional energies. "During a session, you may feel like you want to cry, laugh, throw up or cough," Lorna said. "It's all good, just the body's way of releasing that energy." As the bad stuff moves out, the good moves in—with each deep breath, neuropeptides and endorphins enter freshly oxygenated tissues, leading to euphoric sensations, spiritual epiphanies and deep, peaceful relaxation.

Transformational Breathing is used therapeutically for chronic fatigue, detoxification, asthma, allergies, panic attacks, addictions and depression, to name a few disorders. And, since oxygen deficiency is linked to serious illness, Transformational Breathing's super-oxygenating activity also holds promise as a preventive measure against disease. Of course, complementary healthful practices help boost Transformational Breathing's impact. "The body thrives with a high-alkaline diet, including lots of greens and live foods," explained Lorna. "This type of diet helps with oxygenation."

The Session

The Transformational Breathing session began with a brisk warm-up. Lorna put on upbeat music, and instructed me to raise my arms on inhale and lower them on exhale at a reasonably quick pace. As Lorna bopped around the room like a bundle of elemental energy, my hands and wrists began to tingle intensely—a sign of oxygen-rich blood coursing through previously starved tissues. The energetic song came to an end and Lorna asked me to quickly lie down on the pillow-and-blankets recliner she had carefully constructed during our consultation. I settled into place, Lorna by my side, and the transformation began.

The core transformational work involves breathing through a wide-open mouth, which brings in a greater volume of oxygen. The up-tempo breaths are conscious and connected, with no pauses between inhale and exhale. "You want to create an energy current; have a continuous flow," explained Lorna. "Your inhale represents the good you allow yourself in life; the exhale represents what you do with negativity." During the session this analogy clicked, as Lorna coached me to enthusiastically inhale the good, and then exorcise negative energies by forcefully exhaling.

"There you go sweetie, let it go," Lorna encouraged in soft, soothing tones. "You're breathing; you're good." She repeated the mantra throughout. The repetitious breathing was surprisingly challenging, but its benefits were immediately palpable. Gradually my conscious mind receded as I sank into deep relaxation. For several minutes I simply breathed; occasionally feeling Lorna's touch on my jaw reminding me to open my mouth wide. Her reminder showed how quickly I fell back into the bad breathing habit of clenching my jaws shut—as well as illustrating the critical role of the facilitator in this process. Lorna's presence and unobtrusive direction broke down the unconscious restrictive breathing habits I would not have recognized alone.

The next breathing exercise involved "vocalization," in which the vigorous exhalation was accompanied with sound. With this exercise, the session intensified—physically, my body was straining, but mentally, the struggle was even greater. During each vocalization, I felt I was facing an inner demon—though I was noticeably "lighter" after completing each exhalation. The negative energies were moving out. I quietly realized that I was in the midst of a childhood regression, having last vocalized in this manner when I was an infant in my crib.

Slowly we eased out of the intense vocalization to an easier, softer breathing. "People love this part," Lorna had explained earlier. "It's where we receive guidance, mystical experiences, past life experiences, messages from people from the other side..." Senses heightened, I heard Lorna rubbing her palms together and I detected the scent of lavender essential oil. As she gently touched my temples, all thoughts vacated my mind. Only my breath and the soft music's haiku-like lyrics resounded: "*It is so magnificent/To sit by the sea and breathe/As the waves crash in.*" A blissful epiphany washed over me: All I was doing was breathing—yet I was doing everything, and life was suddenly magnificent.

The session ended peacefully, and I lay on the plush cushions, basking in complete relaxation and warm silence. When I finally arose, I had two thoughts: I must breathe like this again, and I must tell everyone I know. To learn more about Transformational Breathing, visit www.breathe2000.com.

This article first appeared in the national magazine "Energy Times" (March 2007). Author Patrick Dougherty is the publication's executive editor. Their website is www.energytimes.com