

"Breathe for the Health of It" Book Excerpts

Chapter One - Anna's Story

"We are the biology of our biography" ~ Caroline Mays

I got into breath work as an act of sheer desperation. It saved my life, gave me back my health and then it gave me a job and great passion for sharing what I learned.

I had been dealing with chronic illnesses including Chronic Fatigue Syndrome on and off for seventeen years. For six of those years, I had severe allergies, bouts of asthma, candida and my nose was completely clogged with polyps. I was in constant pain and had chronic sinus inflammation from food allergies. I hadn't slept more than a few hours per night for nearly seven months. Suicide ruled my thoughts during many early morning hours alone on the bathroom floor crying, full of anger and hatred at what my life had become. The emotional and physical pain was excruciating. I continued to get worse even though I was trying every kind of pill, cleansing diet, allergy shot and inhaler to get well. I spent thousands of dollars to get better and no one had answers for me.

I was invited to attend a workshop about breathing. I was somewhat hopeless as all the meditations or breathing techniques I tried in the past were instructing me to breathe through my nose and that alone was impossible and frustrating. I went with hesitation but soon found myself feeling hopeful, for the first time in many years. I had three private sessions with a trained facilitator, which opened my body to breathing better and deeper than ever. I reconnected with a part of myself that had been lying dormant for a long time. I knew then, that I could get through this suffering and take my life back.

After my first session, I slept better than I had in years. By the third session, my body understood how to breathe correctly and how powerful of a tool it was. I practiced what I learned for 20-40 minutes each day.

In three weeks, my tight jaw relaxed and the long held tension in that area was gone. I used the breathing technique every time I felt an asthma attack coming on and instead of reaching for a pill or my inhaler, I would stop whatever I was doing and breathe for a few minutes. I not only retrained my muscles to breathe openly when feeling the tension and tightness of an asthmatic attack, but I would also look at the emotions that were triggering the constriction. In three months my asthma disappeared.

I learned that the body has a language, be it pain or tension or a feeling that just won't leave. Breath work gave me the opportunity to observe how I had been living my life (my biography) and how that was affecting my health (my biology). *Chapter continues.....*

Chapter Two - What is Breath Work?

Breath work is any type of breathing practice that leads you to inner peace, expands your awareness and helps you create connection with your body. Taking time for yourself to simply breathe can work wonders and bring instantaneous changes to your physical and emotional well-being.

Imagine for a moment you feel energetic all day, your body is healthy, your mind is clear and your intuition is strong. You are true to yourself, unafraid to really live, you are empowered and you manage your emotions and stress level. How much could you accomplish? How much more quality time could you have with family and friends if you had the energy? What if it was as easy as changing how you breathe?

Your breathing habits determine how much energy and vitality you have and directly influence your body's ability to heal. Taking a deep breath once in a while may not be enough, as each individual differs in what they believe is a deep full breath. Many people are used to getting small volumes of air and their deep breath may fall short of what they are really capable of taking in. Our bodies learn to breathe poorly. During our lifetime we gasp, hold our breath, sigh, yawn, go into hyperventilation and simply stop breathing. In this relationship with breath, we actually form habitual responses to situations and eventually these habits are the norm.

You will understand how to influence your physical and chemical responses and to manage emotions and feelings. Most importantly, you learn to resolve and clear stress or tension. Medical science has proven that stress plays a major role in illness, heart disease, depression and anxiety.

The levels of experience: emotional, mental, physical, spiritual. All are affected by how you are breathing. The best way to change the body's emotional reactions and programmed chemical responses is to use breath as a tool for staying in a relaxed state.

Three simple components: respiration, regeneration and re-creation. When you add other levels of consciousness, you use belief (intention), action (breathing), and

feeling which can bring instantaneous change. You can easily change old limiting belief patterns when you practice breath work. Going into a deep state of relaxation allows you to access your unconscious and rewrite old belief patterns lovingly.

When you allow the body to associate a new feeling to an old emotion you are actually choosing a new response pattern and giving yourself a new choice for your future experiences. *Chapter continues.....*

Chapter Three - How the Body Breathes

Most people believe the movement in the body while inhaling and exhaling occurs only around the diaphragm and upper chest. Yet the body is capable of movement from the tailbone and lower spinal area, the pelvis and intestinal area and around the diaphragm, the entire rib cage, up above the clavicle bones and as far up as the nasal cavity. The body is a miraculous organism that has musculature in place to support the breath as it flows easily and freely throughout the respiratory system. When noticing your breathing patterns, it is easiest to locate where you feel the breath in your body and where you don't feel it. Take a moment and breathe deeply. Where do you notice the breath originating? Does it stop between your inhale and exhale? When you breathe deeply do your shoulders lift up and crowd your neck area? These are all signs of your body's habits of breathing.

This chapter includes diagrams illustrating how the diaphragm works as well as how the body expands in four directions while breathing fully.

Chapter Four - Biology and Anatomy of Breathing

When we are anxious, stressed and feeling or thinking negatively, our bodies have a tendency to breathe shallowly. This stimulates the fight-or-flight response and signals the autonomic nervous system to release chemicals such as cortisol and adrenaline. The body responds in kind by shutting down the digestion process and certain brain functions. Both of these chemicals are necessary components of bodily functioning but in excess, like anything, can have detrimental effects.

When there is a consistent lack of oxygen, the body breaks down system by system. When one part of our system is making up for what another part can't handle efficiently, it loses energy and the ability to repair and rejuvenate. If you had a co-

worker handling his workload and yours, he would soon tire and not be able to do anything. This same principle can be applied to our organs and bodily functions.

It is common to hear someone say, "I can't think straight," and this may be due to the simple processes of the body when it lacks oxygen and is stressed. Additional complaints include stomachaches, nausea, and general irritability when the body is functioning in low mode.

Deep Diaphragmatic Breathing

Breathing from the diaphragm improves the ventilation and perfusion process in the lungs, which brings the blood-gas exchange into balance. When we breathe slowly and are in a relaxed state, we allow the parasympathetic nervous system dominance, creating homeostasis in the body. *Chapter continues...*

Chapter Eight - Creating Changes In Your Life

The most important rule for creating changes in your life is to be aware. Through breath work you can find information within which will inspire you to become more self-motivated and encouraged to live the life you know you deserve. We all have the capacity to find tools, which help us on our journey of healing mind, body and spirit.

When you practice this breath technique with an intention, you will notice that it brings you to a place of introspection. If you observe your breathing and have a constant gentle flow, your life may mimic this flow of gentleness and ease simply because that is how you live internally. It directly affects how you respond to the external environment. You can manage your emotional energy and reprogram your body's responses to stimuli be it thought or environmental experiences.

When you feel emotions or thoughts coming up, that is a time for examination and creating new perspectives. You always have the choice to take responsibility for your thoughts even when they seem to not be something you would have decided to believe in. Meaning, sometimes we find out that what we think or believe may simply be transferred information from others. You have to determine if those thoughts or beliefs are in accordance with your life. If they do not add to a state of joy and harmony within and without, you may determine it is better to create a new belief right then when you are doing the breath work. Make up a new affirmation and speak it out loud. Let your body feel the energy of a new belief that is more aligned with who you really are.

Your Emotional Intelligence System - Reprogramming the Mind/Body While Practicing Breath Work

Creating an intention focuses the mind, the body follows and the thoughts manifest a feeling or sensation.

Thoughts and feelings are directly linked. Whatever you choose to magnify in thought, you experience in the body as a feeling. This is how the actual reprogramming takes place. When you associate a thought with a new feeling you have created a change. You have actually influenced your body's chemical and neurological patterns. I believe every cell in your body has the ability to learn and be reprogrammed to respond in kind to what is happening within your heart and the thought processes of your mind.

Using breath work as a tool we are able to identify what we can change, direct how the change occurs within and have mental awareness that opens many new or alternate options which may have been clouded over by old patterns and beliefs. You always have choices in what you perceive, how you think and what actions you take. Creating change is a life-long, day-by-day, moment-by-moment practice. You are here to know joy at its fullest for you are a miracle. Remember to be grateful. Each day is a blessing and this is your journey.

"In understanding how to manifest our future, we must first learn to understand and manifest what is happening now." ~ Anna Coy

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