

## **MODULE 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO BREATHWORK**

### **LESSON 1: WHAT IS BREATHWORK?**

*"Breathwork is the use of Breath Awareness and Conscious Breathing for healing and growth, personal awakening and transformation in spirit, mind and body" - Dan Brulé, Just Breathe.*

Living and working with conscious breathing is about embracing the gift of life. It is also your birth right. To open to the spirit of the breath means to commit to living your fullest potential, taking responsibility for your health and your choices. Making conscious breathing part of your life means that you have gained a lifelong tool that will support health and anchor you to your most authentic self.

In this time of chaos and uncertainty, we are being called on to shift the space from which we are operating and create a new mind-body architecture that supports deeper awareness and consciousness. The ability to achieve this requires a special set of skills that could be placed under the umbrella of "mindfulness". Emotional intelligence, the ability to listen, communicate effectively, focus, and to make healthy choices requires that we live more consciously. The ability to manage our energy requires the ability to live and work with more awareness. Thus, the role of breathwork has become even more relevant and urgent.

The breath is a language. Every psychological, emotional and physiological state has a corresponding breathing pattern or quality. When our state changes, our breathing patterns change too. And vice-versa: by changing our breathing pattern, we can change our state. When we get control of our breathing we get control of ourselves.

Just about everyone has sub-optimal breathing habits and patterns. In fact, it has been shown that poor breathing habits are an underlying cause of many health problems.

Our breathing system is the only system in the body that is both voluntary and automatic, both conscious and unconscious. That is not an accident; it is an opportunity to take part in our own evolution and to determine our own nature. We can look at breathing as an untapped resource. Most people have no idea of the power and potential that it holds. Conscious breathing (or proper breathing if you will) helps us to become more in tune with ourselves. The breath can be used as a tool to transform, change, strengthen, support and enhance various aspects of ourselves.

Sub-optimal breathing results in premature aging and inefficient metabolism. Our cells are not fed properly, we don't sleep well, we have unnatural cravings, we suffer a poor quality of life and we increase the likelihood of many diseases and illnesses.

Breathing optimally gets us to shift out of inflammatory states; activating and supporting the body's innate wisdom by generating authentic energy vs adrenalised energy. Optimal breathing supports the body's natural ability to heal, repair and recover.

Many people have learned to apply remedial breathing for asthma, anxiety, pain management, chronic fatigue, high blood pressure-low blood pressure, weight loss, headaches, insomnia, depression, allergies, and auto-immune diseases. "Proper" breathing optimises peak performance, supports clarity of thinking and feeling.

One of the first things we need to do to be optimal breathers, is to practice 'breath awareness'. In other words, we need to cultivate the habit of tuning into our breathing at different times, during different activities, when desiring to accomplish certain things, or to be in certain states.

How do we breathe when we are feeling very calm, peaceful and content? How do we breathe when we are upset, angry, afraid or in pain? It is important to bring awareness to our breathing at those times, because the way we breathe (either consciously or unconsciously) will either exacerbate or relieve the short and long-term effects of those states.

From simple breath awareness on one end of the spectrum of breathwork to dynamic and powerful conscious connected breathing on the other, we will build up and master an expansive repertoire of breathing skills. In getting comfortable with many styles and techniques, we create flexibility in the breathing mechanism and increase our "Breath Intelligence" so that every one of our actions, whether it be performing, resting, playing sports or meditating, is supported by the most appropriate pattern of breathing. Breath Intelligence therefore maintains balance and alignment of body, mind and spirit.

**Exercise:**

What is your relationship with your breath?

For the next 3 days, notice what your breath is doing when you are:

- opening the tap in the shower and waiting for the water to warm up
- opening a tight jar
- stretching up to reach for something on a high shelf
- typing an email
- sitting in traffic
- sitting in a meeting
- as you sit down at the table to eat
- standing in a queue
- when you are triggered e.g. irritated, angry, hurt.
- when you get into bed at night

What happens to your breath as soon as you've brought your attention to it?

**Recommended reading:**

Just Breathe by Dan Brule

**References:**

Just Breathe by Dan Brule