



Preparatory Information for First-Time EMPOWER Breathwork Participants

This is the preparatory information for participating in one of my virtual EMPOWER Breathwork sessions. I cover the theory behind breathwork, the principles that make it work, the types of experiences that you could have and how to prepare yourself for the session.

In breathwork, you are able to access an expanded state or awareness, get your monkey mind out of the way and connect with your inner intelligence. This is the same amazing intelligence that allows our bodies to take care of all of our internal body processes every second of every day to keep us alive. We just do not normally have conscious connection to it or it is just a very weak internal voice that is rarely loud enough to make itself heard. By doing breathwork on a regular basis, along with profound physical and emotional releases during the sessions, you will strengthen the neural pathway to this internal intelligence and be able to access it more consistently on a moment to moment basis in your life by just taking a few deep breaths.

Participants report experiences such as getting insights to issues in their lives, improving their relationships with their friends and family, feeling less isolated and more connected to the world, and, with consistent practice, being more present which makes it possible to make the best choices for themselves and their families on a moment to moment basis.

Principles of EMPOWER Breathwork

There are principles that make EMPOWER Breathwork work. These are as follows: First, what I call “Projection”. In everyday life, we tend to project the cause of our internal states and emotions on something that has happened in the outside world. When you think about this more deeply, it is obvious that that is never the case. For example, if somebody cuts in front of somebody in traffic, one person may not be bothered at all and another person might be furious. So, it is not what actually happens in the outside world, it is what it triggers from our past and the story we create around what happened that creates the emotion. In breathwork, it is critical to do what we call “taking it deep”. For instance, if a piece of music comes on that you dislike, or there is an unexpected interruption at your house and you get angry, instead of projecting the cause of the anger on what happened in the outside world, just allowing it to fully express itself without any judgment or suppression and see what happens. Any emotion is always a signal from the body that something wants to get released and is always a doorway to drop deeper into the process.

Second, everyone has an “inner drive towards integration and wholeness”. In the same way your body can heal a cut, your psyche can let go of or reframe your past and release you to be self-empowered and blast forward in your life. Energetic blocks can be released, emotional issues can be resolved, personal power and creativity can be restored and enhanced. You just have to breathe deeply to music to let the mind get out of the way and let this inner



healing power bring up what is ready to be released and not try and block it. It is a modality of trust and surrender, but not to anybody else—to yourself!

Third, the only way to get beyond something is to go through it. We have suppressed so much emotional energy into our body and our psyche in our lives and this is our chance to let it out. If something comes up, let it be as big as it wants to be, do not try and suppress it. Also, let go of judging whether an experience is “good” or “bad”. That is the mind coming in again. Difficult experiences many times are the ones that lead to the most personal growth. There is no such thing as a bad experience. Feeling what we might define as negative emotions are no better or worse than feeling what we define as positive emotions. Emotions are just signals to us from our inner intelligence that something needs to be recognized. Everybody has this amazing “inner intelligence” that, among other things, manipulates our 37 trillion body cells simultaneously at every moment without taking a break. When we get a cut, does our mind figure out how to heal it? No. Our body “knows” what to do.

In Empower Breathwork, participants are advised to not go into the process with any agendas and to release any expectations of what the journey will look like so that their inner intelligence can guide the journey to give them the experience that they need in that moment. The basic purpose of the breathwork journey is to build and strengthen this neural pathway that relaxes our thinking mind completely and directs the spotlight of our attention inward, toward that stream of remote associations emanating from the right hemisphere of our brain. In contrast, when we are diligently focused, our attention tends to be directed outward, toward the details of the problems we’re trying to solve. While this pattern of attention is necessary when solving problems analytically, it actually prevents us from detecting the connections that lead to insights and intuition.

When you start doing breathwork on a regular basis, you will have more access to this inner intelligence that can produce the answers to the questions that our thinking minds cannot resolve through analysis. So, just going through this breathwork experience on a regular basis produces the intended result of strengthening our access to this inner intelligence and the particular experience that you have is of secondary importance. However, breathwork experiences can be extremely profound and just so you will know more of what you might expect during your breathwork journey, I will describe the general types of experiences that participants have reported.

Types of Experiences

Many types of experiences are possible and none are better or worse than the others. Each time you do breathwork, it will be a completely different experience depending on what is up for processing at the time of the session so it is important not to compare to prior experiences. Most of the experiences that participants report fall into the following categories.



1. The first type of experience is a **sensory experience**. All sorts of different things can happen to your body. You might feel hot, then cold, then hot again. Your body might feel completely numb. Also, there is a physiological principle that in order to get the best release, it is best to first create maximum tension in the body part in question. For example, if you want to relax your whole body as much as possible, the best way is to first tense up all of your muscles to the maximum degree and then let go of all of the tension. In breathwork, sometimes the body will try to do this on its own. So, you might feel that your whole body is completely stiff and tense and cannot move at all. You also might get what is called tetany where your hands or toes get very stiff and sometimes can be painful. Your hands might look like claws with your fingers completely stiffened. This is actually a very healing experience where your body is taking energy that has been stuck in your hands or body is creating maximum tension which will then turn into an amazing release. The basic direction if you get tetany is to just let it be as tense as it wants to be in order to get the best release possible. If the tetany gets painful, it is always best to try and finish the release, but if it gets to be too much, you can always slow down the breathing and the tetany will subside in a short period of time.
2. The second type of experience is a **biographical experience** – some people report having a visual experience of something that happened to them in their past which, at the time, they felt overwhelmed and did not allow themselves to fully experience the emotions involved. If that happens, the direction is to let yourself fully experience whatever emotion comes up and allowing it to fully express and release. If your body wants to cry, let it cry. If your body wants to release anger, let your body make whatever sound wants to come out (screaming, growling, moaning, etc). If you are in a space where it is impossible to make loud sounds without bothering your family or neighbors, participants report that what they have done is put a pillow in front of their face and scream or growl into the pillow. You will find that in some cases, things that have been stuck in your body or psyche and have been running your lives unconsciously for years, will be released and make an amazing difference in your life. Also, sometimes your biographical memory can also be perceived as images from past lives.
3. The third type of experience is a **perinatal experience** – Psychiatrists used to think that when we are born, we are a blank slate. The reason for that is when we are a fetus, our brains are not myelinated enough to form word or explicit memories. However, we now know that from the time we are conceived, we do form body or implicit memories. I use the model of Dr. Stan Grof, a worldwide expert in what happens during expanded states of awareness, who breaks the birth process into 4 phases, each of which has its own characteristics and energies.

The first phase is from the time that you are conceived to the time just before the birth contractions start. Unless your mother is doing drugs or is in a state of major emotional trauma, it is a time of oceanic bliss where all of your needs are taken care of and you are just floating in warm salty water. The second phase is when the contractions start. Just imagine that you have been in the womb for 9 months floating around in a blissful state and one day you are being compressed with tremendous pressure with your nutrition being cut off. Since the umbilical cord is being



compressed also and since the birth canal has not opened yet, there is no place to go. If this has not been released, this is the energy that you access in times of your life when you are in a difficult situation and feel like things are terrible and they will never change. The third phase is when the birth canal opens and you start pushing your way through. This phase is characterized by aggression, overcoming obstacles and sexuality. It is an important part of the birth process because it gives you an imprint of what it is like to overcome an obstacle and reach a goal. In this case the goal is being born.

The fourth phase is when you are actually born and is a sort of death rebirth experience. You are dying to one way of existing as a water being and being reborn into a totally new type of existence as an air being. This implicit memory can support you during times in your life when you have to let go of a part of who you are to take on something new such as looking at the world in a different way or changing careers to something completely new. Or taking up a new role as you become a mother or a father to your child. The fourth type of experience is what is called a transpersonal experience which is a type of experience that is “beyond the personal”, an experience that you would generally never have in normal everyday life with your thinking mind in control. For example, people report feeling like they are floating in the stars; or, feeling more connected to everything; or, seeing what is happening in different parts of the world for instance with a friend or relative and then calling later and finding out that that is exactly what was happening at that moment. People also report getting insights into issues that have been plaguing them and holding them back in their lives.

The last type of experience is a Yogic Sleep State where even though it may look from the outside that you are asleep, you are not actually asleep. Instead, you go into a deep profound relaxation. This is an amazing feeling where you generally will go into what some would call an enlightenment type of experience where you completely lose track of time and space and, later, will just feel very relaxed and present.

The Role of Music in Breathwork

Music can deepen your experience and is a big part of the experience. I have researched breathwork music and what works best with thousands of participants over a period of 10 years and I only use the most effective music tracks in these sessions.

The Two Fears

Again, though, although the specific experience that you have in a given session can create a profound healing experience, there is also the benefit of the strengthening of the neural pathways to your inner guidance/intelligence that happen through a regular breathwork practice. People generally have two fears in these sessions. In regards to having too much happen, your amazing inner intelligence will generally only bring up what is ready to be processed. That being said, even though it is generally suggested to allow things to be as big as possible and let them process through and release, if you ever feel unsafe, you should bring it to the attention of the online facilitator immediately via online chat and you can lower the intensity of the experience and drop out of the process in a relatively short period of time by slowing down the breath to a normal rhythm. In breathwork, safety always comes first. In regards



to nothing happening, you will generally know that you are on your journey of inner awakening when you little “chit chat” thoughts that your monkey mind is always having die down and you become more calm and present. If, after 5 or 10 minutes, you feel that you are still completely aware of being in your room, your mind chatter is still strong and you feel that “nothing is happening”, what I recommend is to drop into whatever emotion you are experiencing around that. It will generally be frustration. But, whatever it is, let it be as big as it wants to be and almost all the time if you, for example, let yourself be the most frustrated you have ever been and make that feeling as big as possible, SOMETHING will happen. Another technique that helps is making whatever sound your body wants to make...Sound is an amazing way for your body to release and to drop into the process.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is important in these sessions so that all participants feel safe to share their experiences and be fully self-expressed during their breathing session. In order to be allowed to participate, everybody must agree to not discuss any other participant’s experience or anything that another person shares in a way in which that participant can in any way be identified and also to not audio or video tape any portion of the sessions. This agreement is also written into the release form that you will read and agree to during your registration process.

Breathing Technique

The breathing technique will be discussed at the beginning of each breathing session but the basic concept is as follows: Breathe “deeper and faster” mixed with some breath holds. But at the beginning, to help you drop gently into the process, we recommend the following.

1. Start with breathing through the nose only. It will help you to use your diaphragm better and it will be more gentle on your body.
2. Gradually we will build you to breathe bigger, then faster.
3. When breathing, we want you to do circular breathing. This is where there is no pause at top or bottom - you are creating a beautiful circle of breath. If you want to practice this, try putting a hand on your belly, breathe deeply and see if your hand gets pushed out. If you practice taking full deep breaths in this way for even a minute or two, you will feel your consciousness start to change. After a certain period of time (usually around 10 minutes or so), breathers generally find that their body takes over and finds its own rhythm. Your body might want to breathe very deeply but slower than normal, or, your throat might get dry and you might get an inclination to breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth - that is all fine. However it looks, as long as you are getting more O2 than usual and you are on your journey, you are doing fine. If your breathing slows too much, you will fall out of the process and your ego mind will come back in with “chit chat thoughts” like “Am I doing this breathing technique right?” “How much longer is the music going to last?” etc etc. That is your signal to refocus on the breath and move more air.
4. When we breath hold and squeeze, we do so lightly.



Preparation for the Session

1. Do not have a big meal just before breathing...it is more difficult to drop into the Expanded State of Awareness if your stomach is overloaded and all of your internal energy is focused on digestion.
2. You will be able to do the session either sitting in a chair or laying down.
3. In terms of sound quality, over the ear headphones are ideal, earbuds also work or, if you have a computer with external speakers with great sound and the neighbors don't mind loud music, that is fine also. If you use a cell phone, earbuds or earphones will be a necessity to get good sound quality.
4. The better the internet connection, the better the sound quality will be. WiFi is good, hard wired connection is better if that is a possibility. Cell phones without wifi connection may not have good enough a connection to work unless you are in a very strong reception area. If you are planning on using a cell phone please make sure to install the Zoom app (available in the app store) before the session.
5. Make sure you will not be disturbed during the session– turn off your phone, put a “do not disturb” sign on your door if there are other people in your house or apartment, etc.
6. A blindfold is better or you can just close your eyes if you prefer but using a blindfold is strongly recommended as that will generally support you in dropping more deeply into the process.
7. I recommend having tissues, a bottle of water and a blanket close by and a cup in case you have to spit, etc.
8. If you are laying down, please make sure to have enough space around you so that if you move around that you do not bang into anything, especially around your head area.
9. After the session, there is time for participants to share their experiences if they choose to and I stay on the call long enough to answer whatever questions people have about their experiences.

Integration

The integration process after your breathwork experience is also very important. There are some basic suggestions sent out to you in your information pack. Of, if after a session, you are having a difficult time with integration or have any questions, you can e-mail us at: leo@innate-strength.com

Contraindications

The last thing is that there are certain medical conditions for which it is not considered safe to participate in this type of breathwork. Please do not register for one of these sessions if you have any of the following conditions or situations: Pregnancy, epilepsy, uncontrolled high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease including prior heart attack; prior diagnosis by a Medical Professional of manic disorder, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia; strokes, TIAs, seizures or other brain/neurological conditions; history of aneurysms in your immediate family, hospitalization for any psychiatric condition or emotional crisis. Note: if you have asthma, it is fine to participate but we ask that you have an inhaler within reach just in case. If you have any questions regarding this, please contact me at leo@innate-strength.com. I look forward to interacting with you at an Online EMPOWER Breathwork Course soon.

Best Wishes,

Leo Daniel Ryan