

“Inner View” of a Breather

On December 5, 1998, Elizabeth Comeau had her first Transformational Breathing session at a training clinic where her sister was being trained for certification. Plagued with severe depression, Liz couldn't even imagine what the word “joy” meant. A single mother in her early thirties, she found despair a far more familiar concept.

In this chapter, “Liz” vividly and courageously recalls the constant stream of fearful thoughts and compulsive, self-sabotaging habits that had gripped her for years. Let's ride with her as she travels to the session and begins a journey so profound that her life would be unrecognizable just two months later. From the depths of depression and despair to the heights of love, power, and joy, this is not an embellished description. This is a true story and, thank God, not a rare one.

Doubt, skepticism, and outright fear cloud my mind as my mom and I set out on this nebulous journey... toward what? Breath? Joy? Peace? Simply obscure mythical dreams to me. Apparently others can experience joy, but this is a completely foreign concept to me. Becoming joyful seems about as plausible as the prospect of becoming anorexic. It just ain't gonna happen. Ice cream and chocolate happen to be my best friends. Is this joy thing going to demand the relinquishment of these pleasures?

But okay, I'm going. I promised my sister—that person I barely know anymore. Gone are the days of decadent food-commiserating-binges in which we once indulged. She will have none of that anymore. She's way too joyful for that nonsense. She'd rather breathe. Do I resent this? Yes! Now who can I complain to about life's many tragedies? Where else will I receive the pity I so desperately seek?

My mother could provide it, but she has such a condescending manner about her. I really can't take much of it. When she pities me, I feel like a pathetic idiot.

She sits next to me now, moaning and groaning in the background about all of life's injustices and terrible drivers and the dirty windshield and—

“What, ma? Yes, I know that the insurance company is raking you over the coals. We've discussed it at least a dozen times. I'm sorry I hurt your feelings, but—WHAT? Yes, I saw that car. Don't worry, I'm in control.”

But am I in control? As her verbal miseries fade into dull drone, I ponder the question. It seems the more I strive to control my life, the more chaotic it becomes. Hmm, let's count the tragedies over the last year or so.

I had bought a business, after receiving a small car accident settlement, because I wanted to have more control over my life. Three months later, I bought my first home (can't stand bosses or landlords) and within a month the business went belly up. Hmm, then what? Months of severe depression, my first new car was repossessed, and I got skunked out of my home.

“Oh! Liz!” Mom is bracing herself firmly between the dash-board and the seat back. Some guy in a big black truck just slammed on his brakes to take a turn with no blinker.

“I got it, ma.” Right at home in a crisis, I quickly lay on the horn in a fit of rage. It feels good to yell. “Learn how to drive, you *!?!%*!!”

Mother chimes in, whining, “My God, what is wrong with these people? Don't they care if they cause an accident? That jerk!”

“All right, ma, it's over now.”

After a variety of skunk remedies that didn't work and two months of virtual homelessness, my ten-year-old son and I are finally living back home. Of course, I can't pay my mortgage and am already behind. The sheriff is expected any day now to throw us out due to foreclosure. Nice Christmas.

Isn't life joyful? Sorry, sis. My reality is doom and despair. Yet, I resent the woman next to me for verbalizing it. I don't really need or want confirmation of my belief that this world is a hellish nightmare. On the other hand, the notion that someone will change that belief by "breathing" me seems utterly ludicrous. What am I, nuts? Taking this four-hour trip across New Hampshire to Vermont?

Yet, what else do I have to do? Sit at home, watch bad TV and wait for the sheriff while eating a half gallon of Breyer's Mint Chocolate Chip? (It is all natural, you know.)

As we draw nearer to the clinic, fear begins to grip me. What if this is embarrassing? What if these joyful people see through my façade, see who I really am? An irresponsible degenerate in an uncontrollable depression? What if I can't do it right? Or even worse, what if I can? What if I do become joyful? What will life be without the familiar struggle, pain, fear, worry, self-hatred, anger, rage? What will be left of me? Who will I be? What will I do? It's just like me to worry—even about joy!

Okay, good. Now we're lost. This is a good thing. We're running late (as usual) and we're close, but lost. What a nice distraction from the panic I was feeling about a new, foreign experience. Being lost and late with no windshield washer fluid left on a drizzly day. Now, this is more like it! A nice comfy, familiar panic. I can live with this.

"Yes, ma, that must be it. I'm turning, see? My blinker is on."

Arrival. Six minutes late. I'm almost panting. The fear is loud now, filling my head with voices, scenes of humiliation and embarrassment.

Will I find the right building? How many people are in there?

Will I find my sister? I'll tiptoe in, annoyed faces of consternation greeting me; I'll interrupt a solemn and peaceful ceremony, and they'll ignore me, everyone will ignore me. I'll be the only outsider. They'll all know it. At least I'm not the only one. My mother is here to take the heat too. But I'm

really all alone. No one can feel my pain for me. I have to. I have to feel the pain. All alone.

Wait, there's Lois! Phew! She's outside. It hasn't started yet. Thank GOD! Now I'm safe, temporarily at least.

Walking into the room was less stressful than anticipated. The atmosphere was friendly, warm, somehow. Eye contact suddenly seemed easy and natural. Confidence grew as we sat in a large circle of about forty people. A twinge of nerves surfaced momentarily when I realized we would all have to introduce ourselves. But it subsided quickly as the intros began.

My unruly imagination had conjured the image of a roomful of Dalai Lama types connecting to each other on deeply spiritual levels, while I sat on the fringe, from the outside looking in—with the demeanor of one on the verge of a nervous breakdown. To my relief, everyone seemed rather *normal*—even me! I relaxed as people expressed fears and reservations. I admired their willingness to try anyway. My self-esteem improved as I noticed that this was exactly what I was doing: trying! I decided to admire myself. By the time it was my turn, I was anxious to introduce myself. I was proud to announce my decision to come and my reason for coming. My sister's promise.

I began to finally understand why she had dragged me here. Little did I know that this was just the beginning. As Judith began talking, my preconceived notion of her melted away. My self-demeaning imagination had envisioned an untouchable guru-type in long flowing robes speaking parables in angelic whispers.

Although Judith was none of those things, I had instantly recognized her as the one I had come to see. She had a natural warm glow and I immediately relaxed in familiarity—as if we were old friends. She was curiously humble, with a fun teaching style, and an absolutely joyful (*did I say that?*) smile! I felt more like a friend than a student. Part of me was amazed when I volunteered to go in front of the group and receive a breathing analysis!

As I walked toward her, I felt my face flush with a melange of excitement, embarrassment, fear and pride. In a dreamlike sequence, I realized I was drawing the eyes of everyone present to my 300-pound frame on purpose! Unheard of! A cacophony of voices inside my head struck up a chorus:

African American sistah: "You go, girlfriend!"

My morbidly-obese personal angel: "Ice cream, ice cream, you need Ding-Dongs and ice cream!"

Sleepy girl blinking eyes at the sun: "Is this the beginning of a courageous life?"

Giggly little girl, slightly mischievous: "I'm doing it! I'm really doing it!"

Some wise guy in a leather jacket: "Okay, so who you supposed to be? Sybil?"

I try not to look clumsy as I recline under Judith's kneeling posture. As I hear her voice in the distance, I'm sure that my efforts to appear relaxed are working. Then, suddenly, effort is unnecessary. Judith has placed her firm, warm hand on my upper chest. I immediately draw in a breath as I never have before. The voices go silent. She asks some specific questions about my childhood in a way that makes it easy to answer in front of all these strangers. She points out that my upper chest is not moving. Gently, she reminds me of some deeply buried truths about myself: I really don't have asthma; my heart center was virtually shut down long ago; and I hold on to ancient trauma that affects me still.

Big surprise, right? Yes and no. I've been depressed and anxious for so long that I'd forgotten there were causes. I mean, intellectually I knew, but I stifled that knowledge and chose to believe that I had no choice but to hide the truth about who I was. Shame was a constant in my life. Maybe the only constant besides pain.

The realizations began to reemerge while I was lying on that floor. Tears escaped as she asked me to repeat in my mind, "It's safe to open my

heart... safe to express my love.” The silent gasps (that would have been sobs if I didn’t hold them back) came, and just as I began to choke them down she said, “It’s safe to express my feelings.”

I can’t let myself sob in front of all these strangers! Cut that out, young lady! You know better. Get a Ding Dong. Ice cream, yeah!

Judith was saying something and then I heard voices in the room, which drew me back, and it was loud. They were all toning and Judith wanted me to take a deep breath and join them. At first I was afraid to be heard. *Children should be seen and not heard!!* But who would hear me in all this noise? Maybe it’ll be fun!? I took a deep breath and went for it.

Aaaaaaaahhhhhhhh! Another deep breath... *Aaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh...*

I was amazed at how long I could hold the tone and then my next inhalation filled me up with more energy. I started to feel a little light-headed and tingly while pictures of my life story flew past my mind’s eye at the speed of light, complete with emotion, in full living color. I watched as the group supported my verbal expression. Words were somehow unnecessary. I felt as if it was all just melting away. No need to talk it over and relive the pain. My body was vibrating, and Judith’s comforting touch told me everything was okay.

“Good, good, Liz. It’s safe to express my will,” she was almost yelling so I could hear her. Yet she was loving me. I could feel her loving me. I felt safe. After making several long sounds, I continued to breathe with no effort at all. It was as if someone else was breathing me, yet it was deep and full.

“Now Liz is beginning to activate,” Judith told the group. “How does that feel, Liz?” I could only shake my head and smile. There was so much going on inside me! I was feeling parts of my body that I didn’t know existed. This all occurred in a matter of ten minutes. As I walked back to my seat, the only voices left were encouraging, peaceful, hopeful and giddy. Mmmmmmm, all this growth even before doing a session. But the best was yet to come.

Soon we were told to hook up with a student facilitator. I already liked Alison, the woman sitting next to me, so I chose her. As people made themselves comfortable around the room, I lay back, closed my eyes and gave myself over to whatever was coming. Though I was a bit self-conscious (especially with Mom just a few feet away), I didn't let the fear take over. Alison began by making sure I was comfortable, giving a short explanation of what to expect, and telling me that there was no way to make a mistake during a breathing session. *Whew! What a relief.*

The breath was more difficult at first than I had expected, but the toning was an unforeseen bonus. Toning, or sounding as some call it, seemed to be a remarkable technique to expel grief, anger, pain, anything negative. The room was filled with an incredible range of extraordinary sounds and emotions; it seemed as though all of our souls were intertwined in a celebration of life and love and joy. I seized upon this opportunity to really let loose. I mean, how often does anyone feel safe enough to scream out their pain? Ironically, expelling that pain was *joyful*.

I remember crying for a short time, but I was not in my pain; it was simply streaming out of me. Though it took me a while to get into the rhythm of the breathing pattern, I recognized its value and looked forward to mastering it. At the end of the half-hour session, I became conscious of an intense tingling sensation in my lips and the tips of my fingers. My mind was clear, my blood was pumping as if I had just run a mile and I felt like I was glowing. I was so *alive!* An instinctive and momentous decision was immediately thrust upon me by my higher self: this was my calling. *I must make this my life's work.*

Nothing had ever seemed so clear. Since I started working fourteen years ago at the age of eighteen, I had held over twenty jobs, engulfed in a perpetual search for a satisfying, enriching career, something with depth and meaning. Thankfully, years of frustration and struggle came to a halt that evening, as the answer came swiftly and easily.

That night as I lay down to sleep, I noted with pleasure that my mind was not whirring with anxiety—quite a stark contrast to every other night as far back as I could remember. There were some unnerving musings floating around, like “what if this isn’t real? What if I wake up tomorrow and the effect has worn off?” But these thoughts were not intrusive. I easily allowed them to drift to the perimeter as I enjoyed the new quietude in my mind.

The next morning I was ready for another incredible experience. But, as expected, I had a renewed distrust in the reality of this “therapy.” I felt great, but suspicion was still a diminutive voice, nagging from a deep chasm in my mind. In hindsight, I realize I had been allowing doubt a forum only to appease the sense that I was betraying my own historic belief system of: “Life is hard, it must be hard, and if it *isn’t* hard you must be cheating.”

But how could I cheat myself by being happy?

The ongoing argument in my head was off and running again: *You’ll be cheating yourself out of the ability to communicate with those around you. How’s that? Most of the people you know are miserable, right? You’ll be betraying them. Remember how you felt about your sister’s joy? Others will feel that way about you. True. But should I stay miserable just so I can retain miserable friends? Come to think of it, I don’t really have any friends, just acquaintances. Well, they will be angry, or at least taken aback, right? Here you have no friends and you’re willing to jeopardize the few relationships you do have. Wait a minute! Maybe if I change my life I’ll make some new friends—did you ever think of that? Well, I— and if I become joyful others will want to follow—the way I did with my sister. What about that? Hmm? SILENCE. HA! I’ve stumped you. Now keep quiet while I enjoy my day.*

Healing Respiratory Conditions

I find it very curious that modern medicine has not yet realized the value of working directly with the respiratory system in the treatment of respiratory symptoms. Sadly, when we seek medical help for a respiratory condition, we are usually just given inhalers and drugs indefinitely to treat the symptoms, often with no hope of actually addressing the cause to relieve the problem permanently. Considering the economy-driven society we live in, however, this is not really so surprising. Treatment modalities that cannot be patented by large pharmaceutical companies seldom reach mainstream awareness.

Many people who once suffered from asthma, emphysema, chronic bronchial infections, and even some rare lung and respiratory diseases have benefited greatly from Transformational Breathing. Over and over again, I have witnessed great improvements in their ability to breathe. Many eventually free themselves from a lifelong reliance on expensive, toxic, and sometimes debilitating drugs and oxygen-support systems.

The transformation process for chronic respiratory sufferers is a bit different than it is for the average person. For one thing, people with respiratory problems usually have a lifelong history of issues around breathing. In other words, not only is their breathing mechanism shut down, but they also tend to have many deep-seated negative beliefs and feelings that are *directly related* to the function of breathing itself. When this type of adverse relationship to one's most vital life-support system has been established, dysfunctional breathing patterns are deeply ingrained and do not shift easily.

The asthmatic breathing pattern is very easily recognized. Simply described, it is a continuous tightening of the muscles directly below the sternum (breastbone). This constriction prohibits the full release of the breath, especially in the upper chest.

Exhaling incompletely creates a situation in which the carbon dioxide (toxic waste) is not being expelled, so there is little or no room for the intake of new, cleansing, fresh oxygen. This cycle creates the feeling of not being able to get enough air. It has very little to do, however, with the popular medical belief that the lungs are unable to perform properly. It is simply a matter of not trusting enough to let go as we exhale and, thus, not having space for the next breath.

Naturally this pattern leads to a desperate need for fresh oxygen, particularly in the presence of any kind of physical or emotional stress, that requires extra oxygen for the body to function is present.

Over the years, I have personally assisted hundreds of individuals with respiratory challenges, primarily with the symptoms and diagnoses of asthma. One of my interests has been to note historical happenings that might be connected to their breathing disorders. During their breathing sessions, they often remember a trauma in infancy or childhood that originally caused the condition. Transformational Breathing allows these memories to surface and be integrated. Healing can then happen naturally.

A high percentage of my asthmatic clients suffered childhood trauma and pronounced feelings of mother-abandonment, sometimes dating all the way back to birth or earlier. A client may relive, for example, the panicked feeling caused by premature cutting of the umbilical cord, when oxygen supply was abruptly terminated, causing a life-threatening situation where the infant was forced to breathe or die.

Worse still, if the cord is wrapped around the infant's neck, an attitude of fear fills the room, and baby's breath patterns become firmly associated with this response. The most obvious abandonment scenario is being given up for adoption, an event that does not go unnoticed by the infant. In all of these situations, on some level, the confused infant desperately wonders, "Where's Mommy? Why isn't she protecting and nourishing me? Why has she rejected me?"

Another recurring theme with asthmatic breathers is a fear or history of suffocation, drowning, or other life-threatening events in which a dramatic loss of air supply was experienced.

Such experiences set up what I call the asthmatic breathing pattern, putting into place the belief system that “I can never get enough.” This subconscious belief not only greatly affects the breathing, but carries over into many other areas of life as well. Such people are usually engulfed by feelings that they cannot get enough love, attention, food, money, and energy.

During Transformational Breathing sessions, we have the advantage of re-experiencing those earlier moments of life now with a more mature level of understanding and a higher perspective of compassionate awareness. From this new multidimensional vantage point, painful judgments and assumptions can be reviewed and reframed into a loving perspective. The super-charged emotions associated with those beliefs are eliminated as well. Once this occurs, self-limiting associations are disengaged and transformed into forgiveness and even appreciation for Mother’s as well as our own original perspective. Forgiveness releases the fear that causes the stress that triggers the respiratory attack.

Liz, for example, came to her first session believing she had an incurable condition. Her mother had left home when Liz was seven years old and her dad was busy healing his wounds and trying to fill the void. Liz adopted the belief that there was never enough for her. She learned to hold on to things—even to unpleasant thoughts and experiences—so that she might at least have plenty of *something*. She also held on to her breath, subconsciously believing that the next breath may not be coming. By the time she was thirty-three, Liz’s breathing had become so restricted that she was diagnosed with asthma after being rushed to the emergency room.

Liz’s asthma attack was the result of emotional and physical stress. The stress increased her body’s demand for oxygen, and she panicked, believing she was unable to inhale enough air. The truth was that she was not

able to *exhale* enough air—a necessity before new air can enter. This illustrated perfectly her unwillingness to let go of the negatives (toxins) in her life.

When the lungs are filled with toxins ready to be expelled, there is no room for nourishment (new oxygen) to enter, and the system auto-intoxicates—the toxins are recycled through the system. This leads to more stress—emotionally, physically, and ultimately to the reality of not having enough.

The fear of having asthma attacks now compounded the many scary beliefs that had been driving her behavior since birth. She experienced disease, pain, and many other harmful side effects. Her life was in a shambles. Yet as soon as Liz allowed for the possibility that she could transform her own breathing patterns and received proper guidance to do so, the whole direction of her life changed drastically.

During coached sessions, instead of continuing to struggle as she inhaled, she began to relax fully as she exhaled. This allowed room in the lungs for fresh air. With practice, her cycle of effort was eventually broken.

In Transformational Breathing sessions, Liz was able to clear the longstanding belief about life that there was never enough for her. She became aware of her habit of holding on to unpleasant thoughts and experiences. She realized and began to experience that letting go of what she did not need (but had been clinging to just to have something) made room for what she *really* wanted. She also found it easier to trust in her life as she discovered many new ways to let go of old fears.

Once she had cleaned out her closet, both literally and metaphorically, Liz found that more of what she really wanted could come in, and many struggles subsided. Behaviors and perspectives were effortlessly—sometimes automatically—modified. These new, more attractive and responsible behaviors and thoughts about life served to elicit more favorable responses

from others. She soon found herself in an upward spiral of giving and receiving.

The irony is that this desperate holding on to the remnants of the last breath for fear of not getting another chance to inhale, creates exactly what is most feared. The next breath is thwarted because the first one has not been released! It becomes an insidious self-fulfilling prophecy, and a revealing example of our most common self-sabotage mechanism. We create that which we fear, and what we resist persists.

In Transformational Breathing sessions, we focus directly on training contracted muscles to relax as we exhale, so that the toxic carbon dioxide exits and there is space in the lungs for the next breath to enter. We also focus on reprogramming the mind to change the false negative beliefs about the ability to breathe, by affirming that it is safe to let go and that we each are worthy of plenty.

This process is self-regulated. The time it takes to change this or any other pattern depends in part upon how fervently we cling to our fear of freeing our breath.

In the first breathing session, asthmatic breathers are taught to recognize whether they are relaxing or holding on as they exhale. At the very least, this enables them to have the awareness of what intensifies the symptoms and allows them to begin to practice relaxing as they exhale. Usually by the fifth individual session, there is marked improvement in the ability to consciously release the breath during stressful times. As you can see, the progression with an asthmatic is somewhat slower than with someone who has no respiratory problems; yet compared to the allopathic alternative, Transformational Breathing provides new hope and renewed life.

Relaxing Asthmatic Symptoms

The following is a simple exercise that can be helpful in relaxing symptoms experienced by asthma sufferers. It is different from the Transformational Breathing and is not intended to replace it. It is especially important in cases of respiratory ailments to work with a certified Transformational Breathing facilitator for strong, clear coaching and support in the initial stages. This exercise can also be used on your own to gently begin to soften and relax the asthmatic breath pattern. It will assist in preparing you for the maximum benefit of your facilitated breathing sessions.

Begin by lying on your back, propped up at the shoulders to an angle between forty-five and seventy-five degrees. A wedge-shaped cushion or reclining chair is great for this as it supports you in relaxing and letting go.

Inhale a slow, deep breath through the nose. Place one or two fingers directly on the muscles just below the breastbone and apply enough pressure so the muscles relax. This area might be a bit tender at first due to accumulated tension, but it will feel better as it begins to relax. Exhale as quickly, freely, and gently as possible. A fully relaxed exhale is fast and easy; you may feel relieved, as if you are releasing a big weight. Consciously ask your body to relax, and keep feeling your diaphragm muscles. Feel the upper chest collapse as you release your breath. Don't be discouraged if this doesn't happen immediately. Remember, you are working with years of unproductive patterning. Repeat this for about ten minutes. Do this breath as quickly as you can while remaining soft and gentle in those muscles. Ideally, there are no pauses as you inhale and exhale.

When you can relax completely while breathing in and out with the nose, switch over to breathing in and out of the mouth in the same way.

Mandy's New Life

Several years ago, a client brought in his wife who had been suffering from severe asthma for the past twelve years. It was now at the stage where her difficulty in breathing was affecting and limiting most of her activities. She was only in her early thirties and was unable to work, exercise, or perform normal activities for someone her age. Her breathing was so restricted that she could not live an enjoyable life, and the asthma was the foremost consideration in everything they did.

Mandy was very pale and thin, always wheezing and quite listless. She was the most severe case I had ever worked with up to that point. Just lying down to breathe seemed to require all her energy. Her breathing pattern was very shut down. When I felt her solar plexus area, it was stiff as a board and felt hard all the time. It didn't even relax as she inhaled, a sure sign she was holding on to something major.

I began patiently working on the muscles in that area, by gently applying pressure and massaging them with each breath. I was trying to teach them that it would be safe to relax and let go. At one point, I asked her to stop *trying* to breathe. I asked her instead to just let the breath come in and go out without any major effort. That was an important step toward beginning to breathe more effectively.

By the end of the first session, she could actually relax those controlling muscles during every fourth or fifth breath. Her face and cheeks had some color in them, and she said she felt totally energized. For the first time in quite a while, a greater amount of oxygen was entering her system and she was feeling the benefits.

I later learned that this coaching technique can assist many with asthma. I came to understand that the very act of trying so hard to breathe was causing much of the tension and constriction in the first place.

Surrendering and relaxing, letting the breath flow in and flow out, allows our breathing to happen without the usual tightness and holding on.

We were both encouraged and we set her next appointment for two weeks later. I asked her to practice the relaxed, connected breathing for at least fifteen minutes a day.

In the second session, something very powerful occurred. Mandy's breath opened up enough for her to begin to activate, thus tapping in to the subconscious mind. After a short while, she began to cry hysterically. I asked her what was happening. In a few minutes, she regained her composure and was able to tell me that she had remembered a tragic event that had changed her life. She was surprised at how upset she still felt about it.

Twelve years previously, a young boy had run out in front of her car and, unable to stop, she had run him over. He was killed, and she was guilt-ridden. For a long time afterward, she thought she would never get over it. Unconsciously she felt that she did not deserve to live.

Immediately I connected that experience and her feelings about it with the onset of her asthma. Mandy had been denying herself life by subconsciously refusing to accept the Life Force through her own breathing. Before I could even voice my understanding, I could see she had made the same association. We had accessed the emotional root of her debilitating breathing pattern.

The next few sessions continued to improve her breathing. On the fourth session, her husband came with her. They were both beaming as they shared with me that over the weekend they had gone bike riding together. She was actually able to go up hills and keep up with him, something they had never experienced in their relationship. They also stated that her need for the inhaler was almost nonexistent. When she felt difficulty breathing, she would instead stop and take ten deep, relaxed breaths. The exercises created enough opening in her breathing that the inhaler was not necessary. They were now

planning events they had previously considered impossible, including plans to start a family.

Betty's Miraculous Healing

Several years ago, while working in New York with some young adults in the entertainment business, I witnessed one of the women break down and sob after her breath session. She told me that her mother was dying of a rare respiratory condition. Doctors had warned that there was no cure, and it would eventually kill her. She looked at me with a hopeful glance and asked if Transformational Breathing could help in any way. At that time I had no idea, and I explained to her that I had not heard of her mother's condition and did not know if it would respond to our work. I felt it was at least worth a try, and if they were willing to experiment, so was I.

Betty, in her mid-fifties, arrived in the city to meet with me the next day. In speaking with her, I gathered that she was not resigned to accepting the fatal prognosis, but she also felt lost as far as alternatives.

I explained the three levels of Transformational Breathing and let her know that we would probably be spending most of our time working on Level I, opening up her breathing. She seemed ready to try anything. I think that if I had recommended standing on her head and whistling she would have tried it.

When she started to breathe, I was amazed at how shut down her breathing was. There was no visible expansion of her chest as she inhaled. When I told her to take a deep breath, the air went in, but I saw almost no movement in her respiratory system. This type of breathing pattern is usually associated with feelings of unworthiness and the inability to accept one's good. I instructed her to continue to breathe and say, in her mind, "I accept my good. I am worthy of my good." As soon as I gave her that affirmation, she burst out in sobs. I knew I had struck a major chord.

After she stopped crying, there was visible expansion on her next breath. She was allowing herself to accept her good, her breath, her Life Force. As we continued the session, her breathing kept getting larger. I couldn't believe what I was seeing—that someone could go from a virtually non-existent breath to an open, healthy breathing pattern in less than an hour! I knew that by the end of our time together, her life was going to be very different.

When she sat up at the end of the session, she looked totally transformed. Her eyes were sparkling, her body was vibrating, and her smile told the whole story. We both knew some sort of miracle had happened, and I felt fortunate to be there and witness it.

Betty exclaimed, "I don't remember ever feeling quite so wonderful, so clear and light. It's as though I've never breathed before."

In talking to Betty later, I learned that she had been an unwanted child. Her mother had even considered aborting the pregnancy. She came into this world feeling unwanted and not worthy to be here—not even good enough to breathe. A lifetime of unconsciously believing herself to be unworthy of life and breath had caused a major shutdown of her respiratory system with detrimental consequences to her health. After one month of practicing the breathing exercises I had given her, Betty called to say she was doing fabulously well and did not feel a need for any more sessions. None of her medical practitioners could believe her miraculous recovery.

Not everyone's response is as dramatic as Betty's was. There are many factors that determine how quickly a person moves within this process. In part, it depends upon one's level of commitment to practice, and readiness to heal, as well as the willingness to actively choose life.

Complete Recovery from Asthma

Shelley Salvatore has been a professional fitness instructor for sixteen years and was a dancer before that.

“As a teenager, I was diagnosed with asthma. Being strong-willed, I went through my life never needing medication, until my mid-thirties. My mother had died a few years earlier, and I was a single mother with fifteen- and sixteen-year-old sons who were going wild! I was teaching fifteen to twenty classes a week and diagnosed with exercise-induced asthma. The stress had finally caught up to my body.

“I was put on three types of medication that made me sick to my stomach and very hyper. I carried the inhalers with me, but knew that they were not the answer. Shortly thereafter (God bless!) I attended a Transformational Breathing workshop. After twenty minutes of deep, connected breathing, I knew that this was the answer to my prayers. I took the training, became a facilitator and my oldest son also did, with the scholarship program that Judith offers for teenagers. My younger son also breathes now. My breath is fuller than ever, my spiritual life has deepened and I am truly grateful for this gift—as simple as breathing consciously!”

Teenager Leaves Inhalers Behind

Eligio Salvatore, age nineteen, says: “My experience with Transformational Breathing was like sunshine on a cloudy day. At the age of ten, I was diagnosed with asthma after a serious bronchial infection. Two different types of inhalers were prescribed. One was steroid based and the other was Ventolin. I was told to use them daily (more than once) for the rest of my life.

“By nature, I am a rebel and decided at this young age that I could control my breath without depending on these drugs. I still had sporadic asthma attacks however. In the fall of 1996, I accompanied my brother and

mother on a 'breath retreat,' where I was reintroduced to spirit, mind, body, and, most importantly, my breath. Breathing properly has opened my body and my awareness. Practicing daily took a little adjustment, as most things do. I now strive to be aware of my breath on a constant basis. I've learned to breathe into the NOW. Also, I no longer have an inhaler, I AM the inhaler. I live in Colorado (the mile-high state), hiking comfortably at high altitudes daily. Breath is life, so live breathing! I am grateful."

Transformational Breathing has a great deal to contribute to the field of respiratory health. Current medical treatments tend to be effect-oriented and quite toxic. Drugs merely control symptoms and offer little in the way of permanent change or healing. Transformational Breathing offers a whole new self-responsible approach to the treatment of respiratory conditions.

Addressing breathing patterns, and changing them, gives one the ability to be proactive and to participate in the healing process. It offers the potential for physical as well as emotional healing of underlying causes, by accessing and integrating repressed beliefs and trauma. This leads to true rehabilitation.