

A Sense of Infinite Potential

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Our first action on this earth was to open ourselves to the breath of life, and our breath has long since been our ever-present companion. As young children, most of us experienced this breath of life directly in our bodies and feelings as a sense of infinite potential. Living as we did in the vast expanse of the present moment, where time itself seemed infinite, we experienced life as a wondrous, unknown mystery and felt that nearly anything was possible. We felt ourselves as pure receptivity and welcoming, filled with magical impressions of bodily movements, sounds, touch, sensations, smells, feelings, and thoughts.

As we grew up under the guiding hands of our parents and educators, however—people who themselves were conditioned and shaped by the particular familial and societal conditions in which they in turn had grown up—many of us began to lose our sense of wonder. We learned to define ourselves and the world in ways that allowed us to live as much as possible in a known world we began to take for granted, a world bound by laws and rules that defined our place and possibilities. We began to see ourselves more or less as others saw us, as external objects changing with time, and we defined ourselves in relation to what we saw, instead of what we sensed and felt in our inner world.

Breathe into Being

The breath of presence that awakened our bodies and hearts as young children gradually became a pale reflection of itself.

Can you remember now the sense of infinite potential that you felt at special moments during childhood? Take a moment and see if you can remember the wondrous breath of presence, of life, as it moved through you then. It may come in the form of an expansive sensation, a smell, a feeling, a thought—right now. Don't try to do anything with this experience; just allow it to touch the whole of yourself.

Working with Your Breath Begins with Awareness

Whatever we may have experienced as young children, we are faced with ourselves *as we are* today. But what or who are we really? Who are you? Are you in your essence now any different than you were as a young child? Are you the object you see so often in the mirror about two or three feet in front of you, the object that ages with time and has graying hair, wrinkles, sagging skin, or other such changes to prove it? Or are you the

Check in on Your Breathing

unchanging sense of *I am*, the inner witness who experiences these impressions? Or are you perhaps in some mysterious way both and neither? I am sure you have had the experience of standing in front of a mirror and realizing that the image staring back at you from some distance has little to do with the experience you have of yourself from *no distance*, where you are fully and immediately present to yourself.

Take a moment now to stand in front of a mirror or, if there is no mirror nearby, imagine you are standing there. As you examine the one-dimensional features of the body reflected there, allow your attention to move inside toward the internal, multidimensional spaces of your own being, toward the breath of presence that fills your inner world, toward who or what is actually looking. See if you can stay in touch with the outer image in the mirror and your inner being simultaneously. Perhaps you begin to feel the question “Who am I?” in a new way.

Check in on Your Breathing

One way to begin to explore the question “Who am I?” more deeply is to allow your awareness to move inward with your

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breath, to experience yourself as a *breathing being*. The process of breathing is a living metaphor for understanding how to expand your narrow, restrictive sense of yourself and be present to the miraculous energies of life that are both in and around you. As a manifestation of the breath of life, every breath you take both reflects and shapes who you are at that moment.

So check in on your breathing right now. Allow all the sensations of your breath—all the internal and external movements related to how you are breathing now—to enter your awareness. See if you can discern what parts of your body your breathing engages. Just be aware of what your breath feels like and how this awareness influences your sensation of yourself. How do you feel? What, if any, new perceptions have appeared? Without coming to any conclusions, what does this experience and what do these perceptions tell you about who you are?

Check in on your breathing as many times as you can throughout your day. A minute or two at a time is enough. This simple action will begin to activate your inner awareness, your inner presence.