

# Introduction

Welcome to *Breathe into Being*, a book that can help you awaken to who and what you really are through the miracle of the breath as it manifests now in your body.

Most books on breathing explain how and why you should work with your breath to improve your health, increase your energy, or obtain some spiritual goal—all in the future. Most books on presence explain that there is really nothing to do to be who you really are except perhaps to open your eyes right now and see that you have always been what you have been searching for.

Of course, there are books on breathing that discuss the importance of presence and books on presence that discuss the importance of breathing. There are very few (if any) contemporary books, however, that explore the depths to which breathing itself, natural breathing, is a portal to presence, an ever-present gateway to awakening to and being who you really are.

*Breathe into Being*, a natural extension of my previous books *The Tao of Natural Breathing* and *Free Your Breath, Free your Life*, has grown out of my engagement in various traditions over many years, including Taoism, Advaita, and the Gurdjieff Work—traditions whose fundamental aim is to discover and

## *Breathe into Being*

live the Truth. The book has also grown out of my personal work with breathing and presence over the past many years, as well as out of my work with individuals and groups. As such it will give you a taste of how and what I actually teach in a workshop setting.

As you read this book and undertake the practices that are given, please remember that it has been written to help you in several different ways.

### A LARGER MENTAL PERSPECTIVE

First, *Breathe into Being* will help awaken in you a larger mental perspective, a perspective that will enable you to receive new, direct impressions of the truth of your life. As thinking beings, we will always have thoughts, and we will always be guided in one way or another by ideas—even if the idea we have is to free ourselves from our thoughts and ideas. A larger mental perspective is necessary because the narrow, egoistic way we think about ourselves and the world has a powerful restrictive impact on our emotions, sensations, and perceptions; and that way of thinking often keeps many of the insights and experiences we have from helping us to awaken to our real nature.

Paradoxically, those who write books about being and presence (and there are many such today) often use words to emphasize

## *Introduction*

the importance of going beyond words and thoughts. But they seldom mention the fact that bigger thoughts—thoughts that include instead of exclude—create space for the miracle of being and presence to appear. Though this “little secret,” as I sometimes refer to it, is seldom discussed, “big thoughts” play a major role in what happens when you attend a Satsang or other spiritual event in which you listen to the teacher speak. The presence of the teacher, along with the ideas that she or he expresses in a sincere way—ideas of self-inquiry, awakening, consciousness, love, truth, and being—resonate with a deeper dimension of yourself. They evoke an openness that allows you to go beyond your own conditioned thoughts and reactive emotions and see what you have really always known in your heart.

### CONSCIOUS CONTACT WITH YOUR BODY

Second, the book will help you come to a more direct, conscious contact with your body, not the body you take for granted and think you know so well, but your body as a sacred temple, a sacred substance of silence, through which you can return to the source of all being. The work with sensation that you will discover in this book is an engagement with the power, mystery, and energy of life itself. When you sense the various parts of your body engaged by your breath, you are learning to sense the

## *Breathe into Being*

breath of life itself. And with the overall sensation of your entire body at increasingly subtle energetic levels comes presence—*the hereness and the nowness of being.*

### THE RELEASE OF PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL KNOTS

Third, the transformation that takes place as a result of your larger mental perspective and the living multi-dimensional sensation of your body now and here will help release the unnecessary physical and emotional knots and tensions that constrict your breath and your life. These knots and tensions, maintained in large part by your identification with past traumas and conditioning, as well as with the rigid thinking and the mental stories you tell yourself about yourself to support this thinking, sap your energy and fragment your being, and make it virtually impossible for you to experience the fullness of the breath of life.

### A BENEFICIAL CHANGE IN YOUR BREATHING

And finally, your breathing itself will begin to change in a beneficial way—not because you have tried to change it but rather because you have created conditions in which your breath can flourish. The breath likes to move where there is awareness, where there

## *Introduction*

is space and comfort, and where there is openness and ease of being, which the practices in this book are designed to promote. The breath is a portal to presence, and presence transforms the breath.

### A MOVEMENT BETWEEN BIG IDEAS AND LIVING IMPRESSIONS

As you work with this book you will quickly discover that there is a rhythmical movement between big ideas and questions—those that leave room for truth to manifest without resistance by the egoic mind—and the living impressions of how these ideas and questions can manifest in your own body and life. It is therefore important as you read and work with the book to take your time, ponder the ideas that are given and the questions that are asked, and try each exercise without assuming that you know what the results will or should be.

### LIVING IMPRESSIONS OF YOURSELF AS YOU REALLY ARE

The exercises themselves, along with the insights and information about breathing they often include, are designed to help bring you into conscious contact with yourself, to help bring you living impressions of who you are at every level—physical, emotional,

## *Breathe into Being*

mental, and spiritual. In many cases these impressions will not be the neat and orderly impressions you hope for but will instead reveal *yourself to you as you are at that very moment*. Such a revelation could have to do, for example, with the mechanical quality of your thinking, the disharmony of your breathing, or a judgment you are making about yourself or someone else. And it is at the very moment such an impression appears that you may realize that what makes this impression possible is presence itself, and that this presence, this miracle of consciousness, is who you are at the deepest level. When you realize this truth, there will be no compulsion to react to what you see, though you will no doubt respond in an appropriate way.

### LEARNING TO USE CONSCIOUS EXPERIENCE AND INNER SINCERITY AS A GUIDE

Each chapter of this book contains a specific practice, whether it is a practice of pondering or questioning or experimenting with your breath. In many cases I have not suggested how long you should work with each chapter or practice. Such suggestions, while seemingly helpful, can sometimes be a great disservice to you, the reader, since only you can know what you are experiencing at any moment and when you are ready to move on. What this book asks you to do is to use your own conscious

## *Introduction*

experience and inner sincerity as a guide. When you truly feel that the meaning of the chapter has opened for you, feel free to proceed to the next chapter. As you continue working in this way, you may also find yourself called from inside to return to earlier chapters where new meanings may suddenly reveal themselves.

### PRACTICING IN THE MIDST OF LIFE

In many cases, I suggest that you also try the practices throughout the day along with whatever else you are doing. This is important. It is one thing to get a sense of the practice as you are reading the book; it is quite another to allow the practice to begin to come alive when you need it most—in the thick of the movements and situations and turmoil of your everyday life. For it is in the habitual flux, confusion, and patterns of our so-called ordinary life that we fall asleep most easily and lose sight of who we really are. But it is also our ordinary life that provides the frequent shocks that can help us awaken from our illusions and dreams.

*Breathe into Being*

EACH CHAPTER IS A MENTAL, PHYSICAL, OR EMOTIONAL  
PORTAL TO PRESENCE

As you will see, most of the chapters are short, but don't let this length mislead you. In addition to raising important questions or providing useful information, each chapter is a mental, physical, or emotional portal to being, a doorway into who or what you really are. Even when you are working with a small part of yourself—your eyes, for example—the deep sensation that arises as a result of this work can guide you into the unknown miracle of yourself. The key is simply to be present, to pay attention without any expectation or judgment, to what is happening as you read and practice and live. And it is to realize that *being* this presence, along with whatever appears within its field of illumination, is the very miracle and meaning for which you have been searching.