

Why We Are So Passionate About Transformational Breathwork

By Julie Wolcott and Marcia Bailey

(Editor's Note — Julie Wolcott and Marcia Bailey approached the Crazy Wisdom Community Journal with the request that we do a story on a Transformational Breathwork seminar, to be led by Judith Kravitz, which will take place in the Ann Arbor area in September of this year. We explained that we tend not to run features on out-of-town speakers and teachers, but prefer to focus on local/regional teachers, and on the people locally who are involved in various forms of personal growth work. We suggested to them that they write, instead, about their own experiences with Transformational Breathwork. What follows are their stories.)

Julie Wolcott's Story

It's Friday, March 2. My client has just left, after having his second-ever Transformational Breath session. He is elated!!! During the integration piece at the end of our work together, he got up and spontaneously started stretching, moving, twisting — every which way, accompanied by "I can't believe it; it feels so good to feel my body. I've never felt my body like this — to feel it stretching and moving. It feels like the armor has come loose and I am free." He went on and on, in total amazement — to be in and feel his body. At one point he shared that he had been in talk therapy on and off for years and never had experienced such a deep sense of freedom and aliveness. I simply stayed in the "witness" experiencing his joy and newfound relationship with his body.

This is just one of the many and varied experiences that my clients have reported on a regular basis.

But let me back up a bit.

You might wonder what inspired me to become a Transformational Breathwork facilitator. I was twelve years old when they began (1952) — panic attacks — shaking uncontrollably, feeling clammy, feelings of impending doom, experiencing a fear that death is imminent. I had been given the responsibility of watching my two younger brothers while my parents were out. Shaking and trembling, I dialed my Sunday school teacher and through patience and calm attention, she was able to quiet my fears. Soon after, she got in touch with my parents who immediately returned home.

For long after I was unable to stay at home alone or with my brothers, accompanying my parents wherever they went. Complicating my life further were the depressive

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episodes that began a year later. These were periods of hopelessness, extreme fatigue, unusual and profound fears, and sadness. In those days, folks knew very little about mood disorders or anxiety; there were no labels, no diagnoses, no therapists, and no avenues for healing, at least in our community. I felt very alone and different. My mother took on the role of comforter. She alone was able to reassure me during an episode and calm my anxieties. Needless to say, I had a hard time letting her out of my sight — and had a compulsion to always have a dime with me which I could use to call her if I had an emergency.

My fears defined who I was and what I did — no sleepovers, no school trips, etc. And although my fears, I'm sure, made my behavior appear a bit strange, I didn't feel particularly isolated and through sheer grit excelled in high school. No one knew my secrets.

During my 18th year, my mother found a wonderful therapist to work with me and for the first time, I was able to examine my sense of helplessness and begin to learn some coping skills. Further, this experience sparked an interest in pursuing the study of psychology, which I did in college, later becoming a counselor and eventually a psychotherapist.

In the late 80's I discovered Breathwork. I was transformed. A psychotherapist who had studied Holotropic Breathwork with Stan and Christina Grof in California was offering the work near my home. Mom had been out at the Esalen Institute studying with them for months at a time and encouraged me to try it, I'm sure feeling the experience would be healing for me.

By this time I had studied many forms of therapy — Bioenergetics, Gestalt, Rational-Emotive, Client Centered, and so on. Additionally, I had experienced them all as well. Nothing could compare with the awareness, insight, and transformation I experienced in that first Holotropic Breathwork session. It was life altering. How could I be in an altered state, for example, and be the witness from outside of myself at the same time? It seemed a miracle. How could my body on its own without my conscious direction achieve yoga extensions I could not achieve while awake and conscious? And the memories were awesome. One in particular pre-dated my birth. So began the healing journey that ultimately led to my working through and managing the periods of depression (the panic attacks had disappeared with the birth of my daughter). I gained insights into material from my past, to integrate it and transform old stuck emotional patterns that no longer served me.

After a particularly healing Breathwork session in the summer of 2001 facilitated by my colleague, Marcia Bailey, I was transformed, and came out of that experience committed to studying Transformational Breathwork and becoming a facilitator. I particularly



Julie Wolcott and Marcia Bailey lead Transformational Breath workshops in southeastern Michigan.

appreciated this form of the work because of the additions that Judith Kravitz has made to the Leonard Orr type Rebirthing, including toning and sound therapy, press point body work with affirmations, invocations for positive intention and outcome, and movement.

The story doesn't end here; I continue the inner journey and heal via self sessions as well as facilitated sessions. And now Marcia and I are bringing Judith Kravitz here to share this work with others. See Marcia's article for details.

Marcia Bailey's Story

What brings me to this point in the spring of 2007 to commit much of my creative energy for the next 6+ months to co-organizing a Transformational Breathwork 5-day residential seminar in southeast Michigan? The answer in part is twofold: first, my ongoing passion for the healing power of the connected breath since my first experiences of that breath and related philosophy (The Secret?) during Leonard Orr's first Rebirth Training here at the Ann Arbor Unitarian Church, at that time on Washtenaw Avenue, in July/August 1979; second, my total enthusiasm for Judith Kravitz' version of the connected breath, since I first experienced her Transformational Breathwork in May of 1998, through one of her students who then lived where I then lived, which was in Midland, Michigan.

Some examples of the healing power of the connected breath which I have been privileged to witness as a Breathwork receiver and facilitator since 1979:

- Time after time I witness receivers of this work reporting that in the course of a one hour breathing session they have received greatly increased clarity about one or more major issues in their life.
- At my very first session in 1979 I went right to the veil between this world and the next and laughed and talked with a friend on the spiritual path who had died of a brain tumor at age 50 only two months prior. We saw together the cosmic humor of it all, the illusions of this life in human form.
- At my second session in 1979, one of the most powerful breath sessions I've experienced to date, I went to a place of experiencing my entire body as a very intense vibration...pure energy. I think of that session as my first direct experience of the "I AM", a concept I had been opening to since another transforming workshop in April 1975.
- One of my first clients in 1979 had a living color remembrance of his birth... a near death experience for him and his mother... in a farmhouse with no one else there but his father and his uncle as his mother labored for over 48 hours. Miraculously he was born, his mother lived, his father held him, tears running down his cheeks with great love for the miracle of his son's birth and his wife's aliveness. My client then recalled his uncle tying the cord... awkwardly... nothing his uncle had ever done before... great pain for my client, the baby, as his uncle fumbled around trying to tie the cord. Immediately after the session, my client, a full-bodied, tall man/farmer in his 40's, reached down and touched his belly button... and informed me that his navel was no longer sore... as it had been his entire life.
- And of course there are many more stories — more recent ones of relationships healed, asthma symptoms gone, greater peace of mind, and so on.

My own passion for this Connected Breathing process since 1979 has led me to study in

depth with several Rebirthers, including Leonard Orr, the originator of this work. Also, I've studied with Eve Jones, Ph.D., of Los Angeles, who has a free on-line book about her version of Rebirthing at her website, RebirthLA.com, and Jim Morningstar, Ph.D., who founded Transformations Incorporated in Milwaukee some 30 years ago, to share Rebirthing, Spiritual Psychology and related topics with a growing community of breathers. And since 2001 I have chosen to study in depth with Judith Kravitz. Her Transformational Breathwork is a combination of supplementary healing tools to go with the connected breath, and seems to me brilliantly developed and shared with interested others. Yes! I especially like that these supplementary tools developed by Judith make it easy for me and others to "activate" the breath, session after session, so that the breath "takes over" and breathes the breather. No more falling asleep in mid-session!

And then there are these amazing 5-day residential Seminars Judith Kravitz leads...inspiring facilitators like me and Julie to travel great distances at our own expense, pay our own room and board, all for the pleasure of serving the students enrolled in the training ... and receiving the added benefit of being in that powerful cauldron of healing...at moments during these trainings I sense the 40 or 50 of us in the room are at the "Top of the Universe"... inviting all 6+ billion of us human Earthlings to remember who we really are, to let go of killing each other as a way to deal with conflict, to open to the deep beauty of Life Itself...yes! So it is that I am moving forward to invite and support interested others to experience one of these fabulous Transformational Breathwork residential Seminars, led by Judith Kravitz, right here in Southeast Michigan 6 months from now, September 16-21, 2007. Yes!!!

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— Marcia Bailey

(For more information about Transformational Breathwork workshops taking place in the region in the coming months, see the Breathwork section in the Calendar Section of this issue of the CW Journal, or contact Julie Wolcott or Marcia Bailey at jlwolcott@aol.com or mbailey@tm.net or call (734) 426-4978, or see www.breathe2000.com.)