

Holotropic breathwork and trauma

Dr. Andrea Bühring



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Definition of the term

“holotropic” “to be focused on the whole”,
“to move towards the whole”

from the Greek:

holos-whole

trepein: to move towards something

Our ordinary everyday consciousness
is only a fraction of our true self

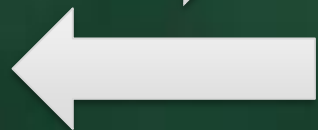
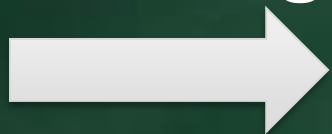
Whereas in holotropic states we can transcend
the narrow boundaries of the ego

To find our true identity

Extraordinary states of consciousness

- States of the novices of the shamans during their initiatory crises
- Ancient tribal cultures, mystics, major world religions used holotropic states

original direction in the psychotherapy spectrum



traditional methods

Extraordinary states of consciousness

Accelerated breathing as a natural means of expanding consciousness,
cleansing and increasing the flow of spiritual energy

Consciousness can be influenced by special breathing techniques

Stanislav Grof

- Founder of Holotropic Breathwork
- Psychiatrist
- Decades of consciousness research



Stanislav Grof

Stanislav Grof initially carried out psychotherapy with psychedelic substances at the Psychiatric Research Institute in Prague, then at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center in Baltimore.

Since 1975, he and his second wife Christina have practiced Holotropic Breathwork at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California.

Radical aversion from traditional thinking in psychiatry

Is consciousness an epiphenomenon of material processes?

Metaphysical assumption which is not supported by facts

contradictory to the findings of consciousness research

Our consciousness is part of a broad, universal
field of cosmic consciousness that permeates
all existence





Therapeutic attitude

- Trust in inner wisdom
- Trust in the immanent healing power
- Self-organization
- We assume a hidden intelligence
- a source of healing



Description of a breathing session

- Accelerated breathing
- Evocative music
- Processual bodywork
- Mandala or intuitive painting
- Group work for integration

What happens physiologically?

- Oxygen 
- Carbon dioxid 
- pH 
- Vasoconstriction in the brain
- Reduction of cerebrocortical functions in favor of the limbic system -> unconscious processes 

What happens physiologically?

- EEG: predominately delta and theta waves
- Excitability of the nerve cells 
- Activation of the body's own hallucinogens (DMT) 

Possible experiences

- Feelings of deep well-being, peace, visions of light
 - experiences of stillness, bliss, cosmic unity or ecstatic rapture
 - episodes of indescribable terror
 - feelings of guilt and aggression
-
- An intensity can be experienced that goes beyond anything previously experienced

Trauma

- The nutrient medium: trust in the process, trust in inner wisdom thus building trust in oneself
- Cooperation with the inner healing powers of the experiencer brings about the experience of self-efficacy
- Experience “I am not alone”
“I am safe” – “my boundaries are respected” – “it is reliable”
- The victim comes into an active role, stuck impulses are released
- Cosmic experience of connectedness
- Usual rating patterns are loosened
- Activation of the self-healing powers
- Trauma fragments can be synthesized and handed over to the past in a completed form

Hare Rama



Remembrance



Contemplation

Backup

Comparing the physiology of the brain with television technology Knowledge of all the circuits, relays and cables does not shed light on the question of how programs are generated.

The connection between the functioning of the television set and the quality of the program does not mean that the secret of the program is to be found in the set itself

(Grof,2015, p27)

Scientific theories?

The existence and nature of transpersonal experiences undermine many of the premises of materialistic science. They imply seemingly absurd realities and phenomena such as the relativity of all physical boundaries, communication through unknown channels, memory without a material substrate, nonlinearity of time...

(Grof 2015)

Scientific theories?

Connectivity hypothesis (Ervin Lazlo, systems theorist, interdisciplinary scientist and philosopher):

Concept of a psi or Akashic field, a subquantum field as the source of all creation. This subquantum field contains a holographic record of all events that happen in the phenomenal world. (Grof, 2015)

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(Grof 2015)

Scientific theories?

Process philosophy of the English mathematician, logician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead.

In his metaphysical system, the central focus is placed on experience or the mind.

Process philosophy assumes that the basic element of the universe does not consist of a permanent substance, but is a moment of experience...

The universe is made up of countless discontinuous bursts of experiential activity at all levels of reality, from subatomic particles to the human soul. (Grot, 2015)

Trust in inner wisdom

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