



Photo by Jess Loiterton

Breathing



INTRODUCTION TO THE DIMENSION OF BREATHING

Photo by Nita

Breath is our inseparable companion, the first and basic physiological need. Our breath changes according to our emotional, psychological and physiological state. It carries emotions: speeds up when we are stressed, anxious or excited, and slows down when we are relaxed. We can't get full control over it, since, just like our heartbeat, it continues even when we are asleep or unconscious, but understanding our breathing can bring many surprising benefits.

Basic as it is, breathing is so important and complex that it has become the subject matter of numerous and various techniques aspiring to more fully grasp the nature of this phenomenon. It should not be surprising that Eastern meditation techniques are based on breathing. From pranayama through to tai-chi and many martial arts, these seemingly remote areas are linked by a profound understanding of how breathing works. And the voice? Well, it doesn't even exist without the breath!

Breathing itself may serve as a tool for self-observation and personal development. Observing one's breathing we may recognize where we are tense and how we react to stress. Therefore, when used consciously, breathing is a powerful tool for relaxation.

Breathing is also the main engine of our vocal expression: the voice is produced by air moving across our vocal cords. The power of the voice and its ease of production largely depend on our breathing.

How is breathing relevant in adult education?



Becoming more familiar with one's breathing - to understand its nature and its organisation - is a great tool to understanding ourselves. This has particular importance when it comes to establishing our presence as adult educators. The breath is the foundation of every action. The way we breathe translates into our movement and posture, way of speaking and the way we deal with stress. Breathing can become a very easy and accessible tool both to detect tensions in our body and voice, and to release them.

Breathing supports the flow and easiness both in the voice and in the body, supporting the coherence of our actions. A free breath means a free voice and body.

Some things that are worth considering when it comes to breathing:

1. The ease of breathing: if we ask ourselves the question about the ease of our breathing, there are several levels to answering it. On the most basic level, it is obviously very easy. It's literally the first skill we acquire after being born and we never have to think about it thereafter. However, as the polar opposite, there is the question of whether I am able to recognize how my breathing reacts to stress, and to what extent am I able to consciously use to eliminate tensions appearing in my body.
2. Alignment with the voice and body: the body is a complex structure of mutually dependent elements, of which the breath is fundamental. Therefore, it is fair to consider whether the quality of breathing supports us in obtaining the qualities of movement and vocal expression desired. Connecting to our breathing brings us a greater awareness of all aspects of the body.

Questions for self-assessment

Questions to answer before watching your video

Open questions

- Do you know how you breathe in everyday life?
- Do you feel that your breathing is different between everyday life and when you are teaching?

Questions you can use to take quantitative measurements

Please answer using the 1 to 5 scale where 1 stands for "*not at all*" and 5 for "*very much*"

- To what extent are you aware of your breathing?
- To what extent is your breathing deep and regular?
- To what extent are you able to consciously use your breathing as a tool to relax and release tensions in your body?
- To what extent do you feel that your breathing disturbs you?
- To what extent do you feel your breathing is aligned with your movements and speaking?
- To what extent can you take pleasure from your breathing?

After watching your video

What do you observe about your breathing?

Would you like to change any aspects of how you breathe?



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