

## *Breath and Psyche*

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San Francisco, February 1999

Psychology and The Experience of Breath: I hear questions like:

Can they be combined?

Why are they considered two different paths?

Where are the differences between Somatic Psychology, which uses methods other than words, and the Experience of Breath?

Emotions in Psychology are invited and used as a major focal point. How does The Experience of Breath deal with emotions?

I cannot give final answers to all the questions, but what I can certainly do is to give you my personal opinion. How I come to understand the relation between The Experience of Breath and Psychology is based on almost 30 years of experience with the breath, and somatic and traditional Psychology.

The Experience of Breath is an experiential approach to understanding the healing and rebalancing power of breath. Learning and understanding is based on the sensation of breath movement in its undisturbed state. In sensing this breath, we have a dialogue, which means the interaction between the manifestation of the natural breath and the process of becoming aware of its meaning. For this Ilse Middendorf has developed a whole path toward healing, called The Experience of Breath, which can be learned. The result is a healing that comes directly from the breath, showing in a unique movement of breath which we sense. By participating with our full presence, we receive and integrate the meaning of this breath movement. Our ability to not interfere with the process of the unfolding of this "inner intelligence" initiates healing. This is a healing that happens from within. We can call this self healing power that comes not only out of ourselves, but also from a "greater power".

Psychology is a science developed and born in western culture, teaching the meaning and modality of psyche. It is traditionally based on a cognitive and scientific understanding including empirical research. The measure is recognition of process and development with the goal to analyze Self and personality. Healing involves therapeutic stimulation by an outer element such as another person, a therapist ("healer"), concepts that follow principles of causality, or simply medication (drugs). An *outer intelligence* actively contributes to selecting the step that can invite healing.

I see the main differences between Psychology and the Experience of Breath in the source of the therapeutic stimulation and by the choice of the learning/understanding tool, which in traditional Psychology is the cognitive and with Experience of Breath the experiential (sensory awareness of breath movement). By sensing the movement of breath we can gain access to every individual cell that becomes available as a source of intelligence. I like to call this *Somatic Intelligence*.

This is reason enough for me to consider the two as separate disciplines, with similar goals. They can eventually become partners and complements, but not from the same source, like Sun and Moon or Masculine and Feminine.

The question of how do Psychology and Experience of Breath relate to each other now becomes more specific: How do they deal with Psyche?

For the Psychology part you have to refer to an expert in Psychology.

For the Breath part, here are some of my conclusions:

Every single breath cycle includes the whole. Inner and outer are not separated but included within the whole. So also are psyche and soul, which includes our emotional being. I mention psyche and soul together, because in my opinion they are inseparable. Psyche is defined as the nonphysical forces and soul as the immaterial essence/God. If we learn to trust and orient ourselves to the natural principles of breath, we may realize, that by that choice - and this choice is the key to it all - psyche and soul make themselves available in exactly the right amount to enable us to understand the next step toward balance. The consequence is a healing that lets emotions participate in a way that we can consciously experience them and integrate them with self-responsibility.

In her latest book: *The Experience of Breath in its Substance*, Ilse Middendorf writes: "By letting your breath come on its own, go on its own, and waiting until it comes back on its own your wanting, needing and exaggerating disappear and you experience yourself being able to not be swept away by your emotions. As a result of this, the psychologically determined state of being judgmental is transformed into life-giving substance of soul. Whether conscious or unconscious, the supporting, enveloping layer of emotion nurtures us. It is present from the first to the last cycle of breath with its precious Trust. Yet it becomes dangerous in case of too much emotion, or lack of it. In both cases the connecting movement of breath is healing. If we give over to the movement of breath, it balances the pushed or restricted emotion as *the other power* and guides us toward a state of being that feels appropriate."

Going through all of this is typically only possible through a thorough and in-depth preparation and build up through the Experience of Breath. This process can sometimes last even a few years, because we have to uncover what we have or what has been repressed throughout our lives. Once the Breath is understood and the decision is made to follow its development, life changes and we are on the path to healing and balance.