

Firing up your love life easy as breathing in an out

By Ruth Ostrow

I RECENTLY got word that two respected "breath-workers" from America were in Australia, teaching a breathing technique called the Warriors Firebreath.

Having studied many breathing techniques as part of my yoga, chi gung and Tantra training, I was intrigued to find out more about the techniques that these female teachers Mukee Okan and Jamie Charles (Amara) were bestowing on students, as part of their own tradition known as the Twisted Hairs tradition, originating from ancient Mayan and Toltec schools of learning.

Let me begin by saying that I have had some of the most euphoric experiences of my life using the breath. In many Eastern and esoteric teachings, the breath is used as a way of circulating oxygen to stimulate organs, nerves and help energy flow.

In yoga and chi gung, this is a way of detoxing and reaching total health. In my Tantric lineage, breathing in a particular way leads to an experience termed "full-body orgasm." Full-body orgasm is not the classic sexual orgasm we are trained to understand. As Amara explains: "Let go of what you think orgasm is, and let yourself melt into pure bliss."

For many people I've studied with, full-body orgasm is a state of pleasure that transcends sex. When energy starts pulsing through the body, it stimulates the release of certain chemicals and hormones, hence a sense of euphoria floods the brain.

Meanwhile the surge of oxygen -- as a result of deep breathing -- invigorates blood-flow, which in turn seems to switch on certain nerve endings. The whole body goes into a state of rapture. This rapture is believed by Taoists and Tantrics to be a pathway to the Divine.

In India, the life-force energy generated through certain breathing, yogic and exercise techniques is called kundalini, in China it is called chi (as in tai chi, chi gung), in Japan it is ki (as in Rei-ki).

Taoist master and internationally-acclaimed author Mantak Chia writes in detail about the techniques of bliss in his series on male and female sexuality *Healing Love through the Tao*, as does world-renowned Tantric teacher Margo Anand in her book *The Art of Sexual Ecstasy*.

So here I am, waiting to experience a new tradition of breath-work, as passed down through the generations in the Mayan shamanic culture.

Amara and Mukee admit their breathing techniques are similar to those of other lineages, although the applications are quite different some are used for cleansing, some for gaining strength, some for exercising internal organs.

The Firebreath was used in their lineage to help young warriors sharpen their senses before they went out hunting. Similarly it has the capacity to invigorate the body in preparation for love-making.

The group of students who have assembled for this introductory evening unravel their mats and lie on their backs, on the floor.

The first step is slow, deep breathing -- in through the nose, out through the nose, then it is out through the mouth as energy starts moving. This is coupled with visualisations of taking light up the body and down, and of clenching the "PC" muscles -- those used in childbirth classes, or to stop urination.

In the East it is believed that we store energy in the lower regions of our bodies, the lower chakras, and that the action of pumping can help fan the flames of kundalini or of chi flow.

The dual action of pumping and breathing, stimulates internal heat.

We are then shown ways to increase the tempo of our breathing, taking the energy up and circulating it to the heart then higher to the top of the head and down.

If done too fast this can lead to tingling and hyperventilation, but done with care and caution the body goes into a deeply relaxed state of heightened sensitivity.

When we are finished Amara asks for feedback from the group. Most people have had a wonderful experience that they share.

Ironically, I have not. Having done this many times before I have realised one important thing. If we have blockages -- repressed emotions, issues, intense feelings -- it is impossible to hold these in when we do vigorous breathing. The bad energy comes out before the good. I have often heard people crying, hysterically laughing, or releasing in some way.

This time for me is about releasing stress rather than getting in touch with pleasure. My experience is deeply cathartic -- a lot of laughter, also a lot of tears.

But having done so I feel amazing afterwards, cleaned out, lighter.

This too is preparation for love-making and tenderness, for we all know how impossible it is to be in touch with the body when we are stressed, angry, sad or tired.

The evening was a reminder to me that if we learn to appreciate the breath and the power it wields, we can turn pain into bliss, and have a healthier life all around.

But most significantly we can have a far healthier happier love-life -- and isn't that worth breathing for?

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