

“You Just Never Know”

Synchronicity and the Cosmic Set-Up

Thomas Merton Brightman

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Brightman recounts the story of a woman client who had an experience of “cosmic set-up” or synchronicity between the external events of a Breathwork process and the inner material that was opening up for her.

Thomas Merton Brightman, B.A., was certified as a Holotropic and Integrative Breathwork practitioner in 1989. He is also certified in MARI Card™ assessment, Levels I and II. Brightman is a Life Strategist, Mentor and Elder who operates two relationship-centered companies. He founded the Change of Heart Center in 1989 to serve individuals. Brightman Associates International was founded in 1984 to serve businesses. “Telephone Thomas” – a telephone mentoring service is available worldwide by appointment. 1.410.666.0238. www.thomasmertonbrightman.com. www.brightmanassociates.com. mystic1943@comcast.net.

“You just never know” are words from a teaching story that Ram Dass tells. I use these words endlessly in relation to Holotropic Breathwork. I just never know what will happen, when, where, why, or how.

One of my Breathers was consciously seeking to recall sexual abuse episodes in her life, so that she could process them and take away the power of secret and shame. My continuous counsel to her was not to be so specifically focused, but to just do the process and let the Holotropic Breathwork surface whatever was ready to be released. In one session, her Sitter went to the bathroom. No sooner had the Sitter left, than the Breather sat up, eyes closed, and also asked to go to the bathroom. As an experienced Breather, she knew to keep her eyes closed and to be led slowly and safely to a bathroom. This trust walk can be a powerful process in itself.

After using the bathroom, she called out her Sitter’s name, thinking I was her Sitter. The way that I hold a person’s hands and lead them usually prevents their knowing who is actually there with them. Meanwhile her Sitter had returned to the room and came looking for her Breather. The Sitter was waiting at the top of the stairs leading down into the Breathing area. In silence, I motioned for her to follow us down the steps. I always walk in front of a person going down the steps to prevent a Breather from falling forward. Midway in the process of descending the steps, the Sitter touched the Breather. In a flash of confusion about who was leading and who was following her, she grasped for my hands and felt the masculine hair on the backs of my hands. She froze in place for a moment. Then, she quickly began a catharsis, turning to her Sitter to be held. We allowed her to stay in place on the steps, in process, until she was ready to continue back to her Breathing space.

The rest of her process that day was dynamic and dramatic. I could only speculate about what had happened, while staying open to meeting her needs and giving great respect to her vulnerability. She did not disclose the episode on the descending steps in her initial sharing. Before moving to the next person, I gently asked, "Do you want to say anything about what happened for you on the steps?" The tears flowed and a deeper sharing began. She shared that, when she felt the hairs on the back of my hand, that I had become her father leading her to the cellar for sex. The Sitter had become her mother. The trigger could not have been contrived. It had to happen just the way it did to have such power of regression and expression.

Before every Breathing session, I comment that "everything" is part of *the process*. I suggest that each person use everything for the furtherance of process. I speak of the process beginning the moment one registers for the session, and continuing for days after the experience. Giving people their space, following their process, not guessing at where they are, or intervening because of some personal speculation, allows a healing event such as this to occur. Just doing the basics: protecting boundaries, maintaining silence, touching in a neutral way — all coalesce to provide a powerful healing potential.

You just never know . . . when, where, why, how, what, or who will initiate healing constellations. I have learned to stay open to outcome; to be generally slow to intervene; to hold the container and keep Breathers safe (for the most part) without human touch; to be alert to spontaneous signals; and much, much more by practicing Breathwork with my focus on following, not leading. You just never know!