

# Some Anecdotes of Healing and Holotropic Breathwork

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Participants have reported these anecdotes of physical healing to Holotropic Breathwork practitioners in the United States, Germany, and France. They attribute this improvement in health to their Holotropic Breathwork experiences.

Cases of healing a sprained ankle and premenstrual syndrome (PMS) symptoms were submitted by Michael Mithoefer, M.D., a psychiatrist, Board-Certified in psychiatry, emergency, and internal medicine and certified Holotropic Breathwork practitioner practicing in South Carolina, U.S.A. Reference to improvement of scoliosis pain was submitted by Thomas Merton Brightman, B.A., a Holotropic Breathwork practitioner in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A. A case of lowering high blood pressure was submitted by Thomas A. Tepfer, Holotropic Breathwork practitioner in Germany. Two cases, one a phobia of birds and another, a skin rash, were submitted by Max Rossler, Ph.D., a Holotropic Breathwork practitioner and therapist, living in France and Florida, U.S.A..

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## Sprained ankle

A 39-year-old female psychiatrist, who considers herself to be very skeptical and reports, with regret, that she is not suggestible, so she was not hypnotizable during her psychiatric training, had an interesting healing effect during Breathwork. She fell and sprained her left ankle on Thursday before her first Breathwork experience. Her ankle was very painful, swollen, and discolored on Thursday evening, so she went to the emergency room, because she thought it might be broken. After \$480 of evaluation and treatment, she was given crutches and told she wouldn't be able to walk for 10-14 days, and wouldn't be able to walk normally without pain for three to four weeks, and that her foot and ankle would be black and blue for six weeks. She canceled her patients for Friday and Monday and almost decided not to come to Breathwork. When she came to the orientation group on Friday night she was in a lot of pain and could walk only with a severe limp. She Breathed on Saturday morning and had quite an intense experience involving singing beautifully. She said in the Sharing that singing is something she knows she cannot do. She ended the session with a profound sense of being nurtured, while her Sitter held her.

To her amazement when she got up, she was able to walk without any pain and most of the swelling in her ankle was gone. When she came to the follow-up group on Wednesday evening, she was walking and doing all her usual activities without any difficulty and had gone to work on Monday after

all. I saw her the following Monday, and she reported that toward the end of the week some of the feelings of profound comfort and happiness that she was left with after the Breathwork had begun to fade, and at the same time some pain had come back in her ankle. This was never enough to interfere with walking or other activities. I examined her ankle and found slight swelling laterally and some residual discoloration in the ankle and foot from bleeding into the tissue at the time of the injury. She was able to push with that foot against my resistance very hard for a sustained period without any pain or weakness.

### **Pre-Menstrual (PMS) symptoms**

A 43-year-old woman who has had severe PMS symptoms for many years has experienced a dramatic improvement with Breathwork. On Thursday, two days before her first Breathwork she began having her usual PMS symptoms. They began right on schedule and as always, they were mild for the first few days, but she was expecting that by Sunday they would progress as usual to severe body aches and irritability, followed by depression. She expected that by Monday she would be immobilized by aching, especially in her legs, which would continue until her period started on Wednesday. This had been her pattern every month without fail for years. She Breathed on Saturday and her experience was very dark and difficult, dealing with childhood sexual abuse. She released a lot of energy and at the end felt clearer in her body and more optimistic than ever before in her life. She reported in an individual follow-up appointment with me on the following Thursday that her body continued to feel more open and relaxed, and she had had no PMS symptoms at all since the Breathwork. Her period had started right on schedule on Wednesday. I spoke to her again a month later and she has now been free from PMS symptoms two months in a row. After I reported this on Breathnet<sup>1</sup> another Facilitator sent me the following description of her somewhat similar experience:

I was in the training, finishing a session. Stan [Grof] came around and asked the usual question about residual tensions in my body. I said I felt fine, except for menstrual cramps manifesting as pain in my back, but that I had had them before the session started. He said it might be a good idea to work on the back anyway as chronic pain also was sometimes relieved with focused energy release work. I pushed and struggled quite a while and, when we were done, the pain was gone. Furthermore, I did not have menstrual cramps for the next six months, which was very unusual. After that the cramps gradually came back, but were not as severe.

I find these experiences especially convincing because none of these Breathers had expectations that Breathwork would affect their physical symptoms. The first two were new to Breathwork and the third had symptoms that were long-standing, and she did not think of them as being something the Breathwork would help with.

### **Scoliosis pain**

The small number of those with scoliosis, who have done Holotropic Breathwork with me, did it for a variety of reasons other than the scoliosis. Yet, each reports more short-term body flexibility (as do most Holotropic Breathwork participants.) Holotropic Breathwork rather consistently appears to improve circulation, release tension, and ease physical pain, present or emotionally trapped physical pain-of-the-past which can be relived in Holotropic Breathwork episodes.

### **Lowered blood pressure**

I had a client with 180, sometimes 200 blood pressure. I let her participate, Breathing just very mildly, and worked on other levels — talking, elaborating on her life-situation. (I didn't switch her mild-breathing group experience into a talking-session while she was Breathing, of course.) This led to a three-week ayurvedic, health-massage holiday, in which she participated elsewhere. All this lowered her blood-pressure to around 150, and she became emotionally much more transparent, too. Then she worked on several other aspects of her current life situations and was pleased with becoming able to calm her life down — in family and work. She still sometimes joins group work, where Breathing happens. I still ask her to Breathe only mildly.

### **Phobia of birds**

The most intriguing case of recovery that I know, following a Holotropic Breathwork session, was a case of phobia. A patient was suffering from a phobia of birds. Any feathered animal, whether a chicken, pigeon, crow or sparrow, would put her into a state of panic. During a Holotropic Breathwork session, she relived a past life experience in which she was lying down on a battlefield, mortally wounded. She could see vultures above in the trees waiting for her to die. Suddenly they surrounded her body and started to tear out her eyes. The pain and the terror were indescribable. During the session she was strong enough to go through it, yelling in distress, until she faced [reliving] death. I was very impressed. The next day we were having a snack in the open air. A kind of black bird came to pick up a crumb in the grass. Everybody was watching her, expecting that she would run away upon seeing the bird nearby. Instead, she finished her meal and looking up at us said, "I am okay now, since yesterday. Actually, I even went this morning to the nearby farm and watched the poultry. I felt fine. It's wonderful."

There is another interesting aspect to this story. This patient invited me for dinner with other friends. I knew she had remarried. When I arrived at her apartment, I rang the doorbell. After a while the door opened, and her husband was standing there. He was blind. As I was told later, he lost his sight due to illness, when he was already an adult. She had married him when he was already blind. In her past life trauma she had lost her sight before her death and found this very difficult to endure.

### **Skin rashes**

During a session, a handsome man in his fifties started to cry. He cried again also during his sharing. He had found out, to his great sorrow, that he had been sexually abused as a child by his mother's boyfriend, when he was twelve years old. Fortunately the "stepfather" approached him in a movie theater, and he had escaped. After that he said nothing about the incident, but was for years always on his guard. Since then he hated homosexuals and consequently was bothered by them during his life. Because he loved this man [the abuser] as a father, he had mixed feelings about sex — attraction and disgust at the same time. All of a sudden one day, he had a sexual impulse toward the twelve-year-old son of a girl friend. He stopped before his inclinations became obvious, but felt very guilty and confused about his impulse. He told us that, by forgiving the friend of his mother, he could forgive himself. Strangely these abuses were like a "re-creation" — in the second occasion, he became aware of what was going on. Later on, I met with him, and he told me that he had no anger left. He was at peace with himself and coincidentally was no longer suffering from skin rashes on his face.

### **Editor's note**

<sup>1</sup> "Breathnet" is the fond term for the listserv, Holo-Cert, for Holotropic Breathwork practitioners.