

Power Breath Meditation Workshop Course Testimonials

December 8th – December 12th 2017

“I thought I had a grip on things 11 years after my retirement. I quickly realized that my reactions and short temperedness, along with not being able to sleep remained a problem. It affected both my professional and personal life. Since taking the course I have been able to identify a lot that was suppressed and am able to deal with it. I have much more stamina, sleep well and have boundless more tolerance for both myself and those around me. I am a true advocate of the program and challenge all Vets to take the course!”

“The workshop has given me the tools to take home with me and continue on the journey of finding the 'me' I remember. If you are a vet and you're not feeling like yourself, please come to this workshop. It will be the best investment you've ever made in yourself”

“It helped me to feel the pulse of my life, the energy, the joy, the peace we all deserve.”

“It has brought me a new awareness and understanding of how the mind, body reacts in a positive way to heal.”

“I practice yoga, so I knew that breathing is very important, but I had never learned how to breathe in a way that calms the mind and body. PTS can be treated with mind-body activities, so this breathing instruction definitely helps veterans with PTS.”

“First step in letting go of a secret kept for 30 years. Felt more comfortable sharing near the end which allowed me to examine my life. Looking forward to being free and letting go of the past.”

“Beautifully taught and life-changing. Offers life-long tools enabling you to face any crisis, hardships or challenge. Lucky me for having the privilege of participating.”

“I am calmer, less anxious, more centered and able to interact less reactively with intimates. I am feeling more spiritually connected to others and to a higher Power. Remarkable that attention to the breath can be the royal road to a greater sense of well-being and interpersonal harmony.”

“I am a Vietnam Combat Vet. I highly recommend the Power Breath Workshop to all vets. The course is effective for dealing with combat civilian life stressors. You learn through breathing practices to slow down, get in touch with yourself and gain a measure of inner peace.”

Reverend Tom Davis' Remarks on PWHT Course Founder of the [Interfaith Veterans Workgroup](#)

Last week two other IVW members, Sid Jacobs and Ted Garrison and I completed a five-day Power Breath Workshop for veterans and family members of veterans. This as a free offering, due in part to the funding generosity of a not-for-profit, Help the Veterans, started by two local high school students, Meera and Raghav Garg. Thanks so much, friends! There were ten other participants in the workshop, some from the Vietnam era, and some from Gulf wars. Some had already done considerable work dealing with past trauma, and some were still struggling.

The breathing exercises we learned were surprisingly simple. How they change a person's emotional state is by no means obvious though. Basically, here's what takes place: one learns to breathe deeply and rhythmically in certain repetitive patterns. There is no religion involved, although similar techniques are used by mystics in various religious traditions. When the participants were asked to share what they experienced after even the early practice sessions, there were several who reported a positive emotional influence. They felt more centered, less troubled, calmer. The teacher said that Power Breathing helps to lower blood pressure, increases metabolism, contributes in some cases to improved memory. I can understand how increasing oxygen to the body would promote such physical changes. But what about the emotional ones?

The teacher said that the breath connects the body and the mind. I've been pondering that. How does it connect the two? Partly from reading Bessel Van der Kolk's excellent book about healing trauma, called *The Body Keeps the Score*, here's what makes some sense to me: A portion of the brain (at the bottom and back) takes care of basic bodily functions which carry on automatically and unconsciously, such as the beating of the heart, breathing, and activities of the endocrine system. Another portion of the brain, at the front and top, takes care of reflection and deliberate actions. Severe trauma affects both portions of the brain. To survive continuing combat, the portion of a warrior's brain governing unconscious functions develops habits for self-defense. These unconscious habits remain intact after a combatant returns home, keeping one aggressively vigilant. This angry disposition of mind feels frightfully wrong in a civilian context, but the former warrior doesn't know how, by a deliberate decision, to relax the aggression. The reactive, self-protective habits against attack are firmly embedded in the unconscious part of the brain. How can they be reached and dissolved?

By the breath. Ordinarily breathing is an unconscious, automatic activity. But it can become very intentional, very conscious, if one concentrates on it. The reflective part of the brain is made anxious and sometimes frenetic by trauma. That executive part of the brain wants to DO SOMETHING to make the pain stop. But, the more it strives to think what's required it worries more and more. That's where concentrating on breathing instead can come in handy. A Power Breather gives the executive brain something else to do besides thinking, besides worrying, namely CONCENTRATE ON YOUR BREATHING! And just that, nothing else. If something else intrudes into one's thoughts, one can calmly slip back into paying attention just to one's breathing. To the extent that one is able to pay attention only to one's breathing, the anxious part of one's brain becomes otherwise employed and thus distracted, and becomes a willing partner with the bottom and back of the brain, which usually does its duty with no recognition whatsoever. When the Executive gets in sync with the Automatic Pilot

something remarkable happens: one's mood levels out, one gets a little mellow. I don't understand how just concentrating on breathing affects the emotions so quickly. But it most certainly does. Some veterans report that learning to breathe in such a disciplined way healed their symptoms of post traumatic stress entirely. It seems almost like magic because it's so simple.

Gratefully,
Rev. Tom Davis