

# Working with Breath

Practitioner Guide to using Breathwork with Clients



Copyright: Zoe Gaia, Soul Arts International [www.soul-arts.com](http://www.soul-arts.com)

Feminine Embodiment Practitioner Templates

# Understanding Breathwork

Breathwork is a powerful tool to facilitate change

Breathwork can offer clients:

- Release of Physical & Emotional Tension
- Integration of Life Challenges & Experiences
- Increased Clarity, Alignment & Connection
- Increased Emotional Integration & Emotional Intelligence
- Assisted Regulation of the Nervous System
- Embodied Experience of Relaxation

## What makes Breathwork effective:

- Breath traverses the Sympathetic & Parasympathetic Nervous Systems.
- Breath governs deep relaxation states, general wellbeing & life integration.
- The way in which we breathe greatly effects our physical & emotional wellbeing. Altering our breath can facilitate emotional change.
- Our breath is a major source of energy supply & chi cultivation
- We breathe about 10,000 litres a day, oxygenating some 27 trillion cells
- The average person utilises only about 1 litre of their 6-7 litre lung capacity. Breathwork assists in utilising breath capacity.
- Breathwork addresses futile breathing that often creates internal stress, confusion, tiredness, illness, and poor results in life generally.
- During a Breathwork session the breath is guided back to its natural state: relaxed, rhythmic, flowing, and open.
- Connected Breathing promotes 'whole body' integration of physical, mental, and emotional states of being.
- Breathwork can enable a 'shift in awareness', opening the door-way to altered states of consciousness and expanded awareness and insight.

# How to facilitate Breathwork during Feminine Embodiment Sessions:

The Breathworker's major role is to guide the breath and to create a safe space for the breather to fully process any experience that is arising. This is enabled through voice, touch & presence, and the creation of safe space

Safe space is created through the intensions we set, the presence we offer, the environment we create and the gentle, effective attentiveness we offer throughout the session.

Once we have sat with our client and ascertained their desired intension for the session, we briefly explain the benefits and practice of breathwork.

Creating a comfortable and padded space on the floor, with little to no cushion to offer maximum throat openness capacity for breathing, ensure your client is well supported and comfortable. You may offer a blanket for warmth, however ensure the space is not too hot or stuffy so as to discourage sleepiness.

In conscious, connected breathing we assist our client to link their 'out breath' with their 'in breath', to form a natural circle of energy, a continually flowing motion in the body.

By supporting your client to gently remove the pause in the breath, this may assist them in exploring the many ways in which they 'hold'. This in turn can release cellular holding, emotional holding, physical holding, mental holding and with gentle presence one loosen our hold on what we believe to be possible & true.

In conscious, connected breathing our 'in' breath is an 'active' breath, as though we are walking up a hill: more active & expansive than usual. Encouragement is often required.

Our 'out' breath by contrast is passive - we neither push nor control our 'out' breath - we simply let go & allow a soft release.

Deeper, faster breaths will often facilitate a cathartic response, and can be invited in alignment with the desired focus of one's breathe. Generally speaking if there is stagnation or sleepiness breathing more deeply can be helpful.

Gentle breaths can be just as powerful as heightened breaths - it simply depends on the result & the experience your client desires.

Breathwork can allow experiences that might have previously been too overwhelming or too painful, to be acknowledged and integrated on a cellular level.

Not all Breathwork sessions need to be loud and cathartic, many quiet and peaceful sessions are just as effective for making changes in our lives. Often we make shifts even though it may seem that 'nothing' is happening.

The recall of memories can happen in a session. If this occurs validate your clients emotions and experience and guide them in to their present body sensations, rather than focussing on the story or mental details. Encourage your client to stay 'present' in their bodies, attuned to their sensations and breath, whilst these emotions move through their bodies. Allow the breath to do the healing, rather than the temptation to over analyse. This allowing of emotion to be felt whilst welcoming the healing energy of the breath, creates space for release and the integration and insights that naturally follow.

# Utilising the Healing Power of Breath

*When a past event is gently integrated & reviewed we are able to gain valuable insights into our lives. During significant life experiences where we have felt unsupported or under resourced, we often draw conclusions to help us make sense of the experience. We may decide “I wasn’t wanted” “I’m unlovable”, “I’m not worthy”, “I’m bad” and so on.*

*Most of our formative decisions are made when we are children. As children we tend to take on the responsibility for the things that happen around us as our fault. Many of these outdated conclusions do not serve us later in our lives.*

*During a breathe these conclusions become consciously recognised. Once recognised one now has the choice to reconsider decisions with an adults more complete understanding of a situation.*

*Breathwork is based on the principle: The Healing is in the Feeling. This means that until we actually 'feel' our trapped emotions, we cannot truly heal on a cellular & somatic level.*

Most of us spend a lot of time and energy fighting or avoiding *feeling* our feelings. Carl Jung once observed: 'all addictions are substitutes for genuine feelings'.

True freedom and empowerment come when we learn to sit with our feelings and allow them to pass through us.

*Towards the end of a session there is usually a profound experience of peace and relaxation. The breath is relaxed, gentle and flowing freely. This phase allows one's experiences & insights to be integrated.*

***Each Breathwork session is unique & different.***

# Supporting your Client

POTENTIAL PHASE	CLIENT	FACILITATION
<b>PHASE 1</b> Intension & Introduction	Welcome your client and offer connection and a comfortable place to sit and connect. Establish session Intension. Introduce Principles and Benefits of breathwork.	Attune to your client to see how they are. Hold presence, simplicity and a body centred approach to the session.
<b>PHASE 2</b> Breathwork Practice	Ensure your client is comfortable on the floor with adequate support and an environment preventing sleepiness. Begin Breath Practice.	Hold presence and gently guide the flow when/if client feels stuck with guidance back to the body and breath primarily.
<b>PHASE 3</b> Integration	Ensure adequate integration time through art and sharing.	Provide plenty of time for integration

During a session there may be particular sensations that will draw the attention of the client more, or feel of greater importance to the person. Allow the breath and these sensations to guide the direction & flow of the session. Trust there is an innate intelligence with in this, and redirect the client to stay present to this rather than becoming caught in any 'stories'.

**During the arising of strong sensation or emotion enquire with your client what they can see, feel & sense within the body? Allow time to explore any somatic awareness of colour, shape, size, texture or sound.**

**Actively listen & reflect and provide an environment for exploration.**

If clients become overwhelmed by the sensation in their body or with their emotions, guide them to find an area of their body where they feel grounded and relaxed.

# Key Points

## In Facilitating Sessions:

*The goal with in Breathwork is not to encourage people to become 'irresponsibly' out of control with their emotions.*

*Instead Breathwork gives us a safe and supportive place where we can clear old emotional residue so that it does not come out in the wrong way at the wrong time, to the wrong person. It is an opportunity to reconnect with our feelings and gain skills for managing our emotions more effectively.*

*Any insights or gains made come from 'within' the client and can be clearly recognised by the client as their own internal power. We can gently offer suggestions for enquiry and the flow of breath.*

Apart from the breath, the primary tool of a Breathworker is an attitude of love & acceptance.

Breathwork honours the unique, subjective experience of each individual.

Changes are made largely through the discovery, recognition and validation of what is, rather than through some 'fix it' mentality.

In this way the Breathworker and the client come into a relationship that is mutually honouring, respectful and empowering.

Breathwork can assist one in deepening one's understanding of self, releasing held experiences, open ways to take greater direction in life, and facilitate experiencing more inner love, peace, happiness, freedom, aliveness and well-being.

Breathwork can assist us in integrating & releasing some of these unexpressed emotions, so that we can return to our natural, original state of peace & joy.

Connected breathing gives us an opportunity to develop emotional freedom.

In a safe and supportive environment we can release our feelings gently! With a regulated nervous system.

This often leads to feelings of lightness and great relief, like dropping a heavy load that we have been carrying around for a long time.

People often report experiencing feelings of inner peace, harmony, love, joy for life, and a freedom to be who they truly are.

# Holding a Healing Space

Breathing well activates the self-healing tendencies and so it is the client's felt experience of the process which holds the potential for healing, rather than any logical interpretation of memories or stories.

Any insights or gains made come from within the client and can be clearly recognised by the client as their own internal power.

Breathwork has all the ingredients of healing:

- Safe Containment (of therapeutically held space)
- Deepening of Presence (both clients & practitioner)
- Non-judgemental awareness (both clients & practitioner)
- Choice & Self direction (within breathe)
- Relaxation of Nervous System (facilitated through deep breathing)
- Essential Integration time (through reflection and exploration)

## Using Breathwork in Groups

There are indeed ways to use Breathwork in groups, however it is important as a facilitator that you have the adequate practice, experience and supports in place to do so. It is highly recommended to assist as a helper within group breathes before attempting to hold the space as a facilitator. It is also essential you have your own embodied experience of Breathwork, so you are adept in traversing your own inner landscape, and you have a somatic understanding of your emotional language. This ensures you will have improved skills in reading the energy in an individual or group, and in the emotional flow and regulation of a therapeutic space.

Begin with only very small groups of a few participants at a time with supervision, and always have experienced helpers in the space who can be present for individuals if participants experience large sensations and/or emotions.

**When holding a space remember to breathe yourself and stay grounded and present to where the energy needs to naturally flow and integrate.**



# Therapeutic Steps:

*Supporting clients with Breathwork within Feminine Embodiment Sessions:*

1

## Meet & Greet

Create an environment where your client feels safe, supportive and comfortable; personally & professionally.

2

## Intention

Discuss with your client their intentions for the session; how they currently are, what they may wish to work on and with in your session.

3

## Educate

Gently introduce the Breathwork you will be working with - explaining the context, meaning & benefits of Breathwork.

4

## Connect In

Before beginning the session take a few moments to relax, ground and centre your client into their bodies and intension, before beginning the session.

5

## Presence

During your session ensure you bring your full presence and attentiveness to the therapeutic space. Practice deep listening, reflective communication and mindfulness in regard to facilitation of 'wisdom' or 'insights' from within your client, rather than imposing one's own ideas, advice and beliefs.

6

## Engagement & Follow Up

Suggest ways your client can continue with the integration of their session. eg Journal writing, dream exploration, art therapy, meditation and reflection etc.

# FEMININE EMBODIMENT

## Client Breathwork Record Sheet

**CLIENT NAME:**

**DATE:**

**INTENTION:**

**SESSION:**

**INSIGHTS & OBSERVATIONS:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**NOTES:**

**FOLLOW ON:**

# Feminine Embodiment Arts Session Record Sheet:

*Client Name:*

Date & Session: \_\_\_\_\_  
Intention: \_\_\_\_\_  
Modalities: \_\_\_\_\_  
Follow-on: \_\_\_\_\_

Date & Session: \_\_\_\_\_  
Intention: \_\_\_\_\_  
Modalities: \_\_\_\_\_  
Follow-on: \_\_\_\_\_

Date & Session: \_\_\_\_\_  
Intention: \_\_\_\_\_  
Modalities: \_\_\_\_\_  
Follow-on: \_\_\_\_\_

Date & Session: \_\_\_\_\_  
Intention: \_\_\_\_\_  
Modalities: \_\_\_\_\_  
Follow-on: \_\_\_\_\_

Date & Session: \_\_\_\_\_  
Intention: \_\_\_\_\_  
Modalities: \_\_\_\_\_  
Follow-on: \_\_\_\_\_

# Therapeutic Principles

## Holding Space is an Honour

*Apart from Skilful Presence, the primary tool of a Feminine Embodiment Mentor is an attitude of love and truth.*

Feminine Embodiment Mentoring honours the unique, subjective experience of each individual.

Changes and insights are generated largely through the discovery, recognition and validation of what 'is', rather than through some 'fix it' mentality.

In this way the Feminine Embodiment Mentor and the client come into a relationship that is mutually honouring, respectful and empowering.

Benefits of Breathwork & Feminine Embodiment practices:

- An expanded experience of love and self acceptance.
- Enriched experience of being alive & present
- More peace and less stress
- Improved clarity, insight & Empowerment to create the kind of life desired
- Enhanced physical & emotional well-being
- Connection with one's true, infinite nature of Being
- Increased ability to express and integrate life's experiences

Feminine Embodiment principles assist in deepening one's understanding of self, releasing held experiences, opening to greater vitality & direction, and assisting in facilitating more inner love, peace, happiness, freedom, aliveness, femininity & well-being.

As a culture we are often 'emotionally stifled' from childhood. Generally we are taught growing up to suppress most of our feelings and innate impulse and in-tuition. In Feminine Embodiment Mentoring participants can learn how to feel & express previously held emotions and sensations to enhance personal power, effectiveness & potential.

Typically the emotions of sadness, anger, & fear that are suppressed, once felt and recognised can be freed to move through the body, enabling integration and release. Suppression of feelings, does not equal freedom. On the contrary, it seems that the deeper we suppress feelings, the harder they pursue us.

Feminine Embodiment Mentoring can assist us in releasing some of these unexpressed sensations and emotions, so that we may return to our natural state of peace & joy.

# Embodiment as Healing

## Engaging the Authentic Self

*Embodiment practice gives us an opportunity to develop emotional freedom, safety and emotional intelligence for life.*

In a safe and supportive environment we can gently release & integrate our feelings.

This often leads to feelings of lightness, relief and deep release; leading to feelings of inner peace, harmony, love, joy for life, and a freedom to be who we truly are.

At the time of releasing suppressed emotions we gain an opportunity to become aware of the release of limiting decisions about ourselves, others, and life.

These pivotal decisions are the basis of our *beliefs* and usually reside in our subconscious. Though we may be unaware of them, they inform and affect virtually everything we do.

By becoming aware of the '*context*' where a core wounding may have initiated, where we anchored in a limiting decision about ourselves, then providing a space to release the emotional charge encircling it, we have the power to make new, life enhancing, decisions.

Engaging with ongoing embodiment practices often leads to a deep connection with the very core of our being. This leads to understandings of

ourselves, our purpose in life and our place in the universe at a very deep level.

Somatic practices ground us in our bodies as they are, not as they could or should be or as we wish them to be. It is from this platform of feeling into right 'now' that we build a bridge between our mind, our body, and our heart.

Engaging in somatic work is about becoming an 'integrated' human organism and in this way somatic practices are inherently healing and stress relieving.

We develop a relationship with the swell of our impulses, needs and desires, according to how these are met.

When we ignore our vital impulses, we also lose communication with the wisdom of our bodies, leading to disconnection with our healthy desire and will.

Since our bones, muscles, organs & tissues carry the imprinted memories of experience, when we engage in practices that stimulate these different systems, these stories can move to the surface to be re-experienced, looked at anew and even healed.

# Energetics of a Practitioner

## Holding space for Others

*To 'hold space', one must become aware of habitual responses within ones mind - and instead 'empty out' to listen from your heart space.*

### Qualities of an effective Practitioner:

- Integrity
- Accountability
- Respond-ability
- Presence
- Respect

### Feminine Embodiment Pillars:

- Intention
- Enquiry
- Exploration
- Expression
- Integration

## Creating a “Solid” Container

As a Practitioner your responsibility is to hold a safe, feminine container that is inviting, nurturing and supportive of growth and authenticity.

To successfully offer this you will need:

**Integrity** - This is created when we show up when we say we will show up, say what we mean and mean what we say. This is critical to establish trust within the relationship, for trust and so clients are safe to bring their own integrity. Connections go deeper when there is trust and integrity.

**Accountability** - In sessions, we are doing work to come into alignment with ourselves and be congruent so our appearance to the outside world is congruent with who we are inside. This is about being real, authentic and true.

**Responsibility** - This is the ability to 'respond' instead of simply 'react'. Triggers and woundings can come up in therapeutic settings. In sessions, women learn to respond to these sensations and experiences by communicating without judging, blaming or shaming. This creates trust and healing.

# Creating a “solid” container

**TIME:** Running on time with sessions is a very important agreement. It comes from mutual respect for one another's time. If sessions start late, they may end late. Keeping with the time shows each woman that her time is valuable.

**NOT GIVING FEEDBACK:** When establishing safe space there is no direct feedback or evaluation; only acknowledgement, presence beaming (an attitude reflecting love and support) and quality questions to assist a clients line of enquiry. This helps create a safe space for women to open up and share without worrying about what judgement or 'incorrect' responses.

**Clarity:** Presenting clear intentions at the beginning of sessions is a great way to clear the space and create safety for all involved.

**Commitment vs. Rigidity:** It's important to be committed to an outcome without forcing it. A client will generate their own insights and reflections.

**Receptivity:** You may have an agenda for each meeting, and yet remain open and receptive to what might be needed that is 'off the agenda' but in alignment with the clients overall intentions.

**Respect:** Be mindful of how you “bend” any structures, and model by example not control, maintaining integrity of agreements. For example, if you are running over time, never keep going without stopping at the end time, asking the clients permission for more time and giving the option to leave if they have another obligation. Ask women to be on time, but also make sure you are also honouring their time.

**Holding space** means when someone is going through something, simply means you support their foundation with your presence and love for them to have their own time and space to work out whatever they're going through.

You provide stable, solid ground for them to be completely where they're at; without judgment, criticism or blame. A neutral territory for the other to just be. You have faith in their intelligence to figure it out on their own and resist any temptation to problem solve, rescue or offer external advice. Instead you encourage participants back to their own insights, responses and resources.

In time individuals learn to listen for this inner feedback system, rather than seek validation.

# Cultivating Presence:

The more attuned one is, the more present one can be to our body sensations whilst at the same time read the surrounding energies.

In stillness and openness we can develop the skills to pick up on the energy in the room, and be sensitive to other's energies.

The sacred feminine deeply appreciates being witnessed and sessions are about holding this space of open presence providing healing on many fronts.

A Practitioner masters the art of congruence in body and being, of being mindful of how we are showing up in our own presence and body language. Communication occurs with our body and is 80% of subconscious communication. Being mindful of posture, a facilitator communicates with their body that they are attentive with good posture, an open stance & open heart.

As a facilitator your role is to create space and stillness for the allowance of expression, witnessing and insight.

Do not fidget or play with anything as you hold a space of presence.

Anchor in your breathing, slowing down and focus on taking deep breaths to come into full presence to enable the client/s in the space to do the same.

When someone is in expression, maintain gentle, open, eye contact.

This will show them that what she has to express matters, & that she matters.

## **The main components or holding space are:**

- Letting go of judgment
- Opening one's heart
- Allowing another to have whatever experience they are having; therefore giving her "space" without the impulse to rescue or change her.
- Allowing another to talk about her pain without 'fixing'.
- Giving your complete undivided attention to the situation/other person and being fully present in heart and body.
- Dropping down from your 'mind' space into your 'heart' space
- Emptying yourself and becoming a vessel for something larger than you
- Allowing a situation to unfold; allowing the therapeutic space to weave its magic without feeling overly controlling or responsible.
- Trusting that everyone can heal themselves with time and space
- Less is more. There is a force greater than our own.



# Deep Listening:

Trust your intuition. Trust your gut.

Listen to your higher self's voice as it guides you. Check in with your body.

Allow yourself to be in the moment and respond to what comes up. If you are present in your own body, you can tune into what your own desires and needs are in the moment and see if others are also having that same feeling arising in them. You'll start to hear and sense more deeply, seeing how things are resonating when you trust your feelings and intuition of what is arising in the space.

Breathe & Relax, staying connected to your body & you will hear with a deeper listening, enabling you to be present to both your needs & the needs of others.

## Maintaining your own energy:

How you clear and channel your energy can make or break a session.

Continue to care for your energy and the energetics of the space you provide.

Ensure you are clean, clear and light before your session begins and that your energy attracts, and not repels, your soul clients.

Your energy is most magnetic when you are authentic, clear and well nourished.

Your job, above anything else, is to keep clearing out all of your concerns, limiting beliefs and projections so you come into alignment with the intentions of those you are holding space for.

This is the part where you are doing your own work. It's what calls in the right people and creates the glue for your sessions to be divinely guided.

A true leader has done her work and will continue to do her work. She is constantly looking within herself to find where she is connected, accountable and in integrity, whilst supporting others in this journey.

A good Practitioner does not take on the energy of others, but actively empties out anything she might be holding. Her intension is to maintain her own sovereign energy and refresh her own frequency in order to be a vessel of support for others.

**Whatever changes we make in our own lives, this will filter down to our clients.**