



## **MODULE 1: PNEUMANITY BREATHWORK**

### **LESSON 1: WHAT IS PNEUMANITY BREATHWORK?**

Pneumanity™ is an approach to conscious breathing that is inspired by an ancient vision of the future, held, and shared by the Breathwork Africa Community.

It is an integrative and embodied approach to Breathwork that is honouring each individual as a unique expression of their history, character and spirit. It draws on the vast scope of practices that is guided by ancient wisdom and grounded in modern science.

Pneumanity™ is adaptable, simple, safe and most importantly, accessible to all people regardless of age, culture, nationality, race, gender orientation, religion and life circumstances, empowering every person back to their own inner resources held within their body and breath.

It is borne from the words 'Pneuma' and 'Humanity', the essence of Ubuntu and the universal life force that weaves through the heart of humanity.

Pneumanity™ Breathwork is based on a 'big picture' perspective. It supports a long term and sustainable relationship with breath as life force and respects the science of breathing being in service to the A\_R\_T Framework and the Great Mystery.

It honours breath as a language of Ubuntu, a beautiful philosophy of Southern African Wisdom Traditions reflecting the interconnected and interrelated web of life.

Pneumanity™ Breathwork is not based on a particular method, style or technique of breathing. It challenges the idea of a 'right' way to breathe and goal oriented approach. It embraces nuance and duality. It sees breathwork as a creative endeavour that engages certain tools and utilises the full spectrum of breathing practices in a way that is safe and grounded.

At the same time, we acknowledge the immense power of breathing to influence psychology and states of consciousness and thus we work with them responsibly by understanding the deep science that includes the biomechanics, biodynamics, biochemistry, bioenergetics, and ecology.

In summary, Pneumanity™ Breathwork is the study and practice of breath as embodied Ubuntu, applied through the A\_R\_T of breathing framework, which categorises the full spectrum of practices on the basis of their physiological and energetic effect with the intention of liberating the breath to reflect our innate state of wholeness and continuous growth. This approach to conscious breathing is held by and rooted in the seven threads of Pneumanity.



The 7 threads of Pneumanity are the guiding principles that support the integrity of our work as 'Pneumanitarians', the practitioners and members of the Breathwork Africa Community. They are universal principles of breath and consciousness, many of which are found within the Indigenous Wisdom Traditions of Africa. These 7 threads are woven through our training both in terms of philosophy and practical application. We commit to breathing and embodying these principles into our own life in order that we may hold them for others.

We encourage you to work through what they mean for you.



## 1. Sankofa

*Breath is the thread between remembering and imagining.*

Sankofa is a word in the Twi language of Ghana that means 'go back and fetch it'. It is symbolised by a mythical bird with its feet firmly planted forward and its head looking back with the egg of possibilities held within her beak. The spirit of Sankofa reminds us that we all come from somewhere and that we are custodians of a legacy. It is a reminder that healing is an invitation to go back to our roots and gather the best of what our past can teach us, using the insights as energy to step into the future.

As custodians of the breath and in honouring the principle of Sankofa, to go back means to turn inwards and to breathe into the inherited and acquired memories of the past held within our cells and nervous system. Through the breath we can release and heal unintegrated trauma, but are also able to access the gifts, talents and resilience that reside within our ancestral lineage.

Our breath is also rooted in a timeless wisdom that reaches even further back into the hundreds of microscopic mitochondria within every cell that holds a unique set of DNA that has been passed down through our maternal line from our common ancestor, Mitochondrial Eve, who through genetic studies was traced back to the Kalahari about two hundred thousand years ago.

We also see Sankofa within the universal principle and natural law of 'feedback loops' i.e., information that is received from one part to inform the functioning of the other to maintain homeostasis or balance. Within the body-mind, Sankofa employs the breath to inform the brain of what the body is experiencing and vice versa.

As breathwork practitioners, we often observe the feedback loops in the body-mind system that reflect fear and keep the system in a fixed pattern which reinforces the stress response. Through conscious breathing, an environment is created that allows access to intergenerational information held in our cellular memory.



Sankofa reminds us to go back and fetch the breath that is rooted in timeless wisdom. From here, we can repattern the trauma of the past and to co-create new feedback loops and neural pathways that express our most natural state reflected within the parameters of Breath Intelligence.

## **2. Safety**

*Safety creates the environment that supports the natural healing process.*

The thread of safety is symbolised by the mighty African Baobab tree, a sacred symbol of many Southern African traditions. The Baobab tree is regarded as the African Tree of Life. It is considered to serve as a source of protection, providing shelter, sustenance, and comfort to all those who sit around it. It is a symbol of life and positivity.

While Sankofa reminds us that we belong to something that is greater than our individual self, the Baobab reminds us that with the experience of belonging comes the feeling of safety. Safety allows the ability to relax, activating the body's self-healing capacity. We also experience safety when we feel heard, seen, understood, and accepted by others. We also feel this profoundly when we share stories and realise our shared humanity.

The Baobab tree reminds us that our primary role and most valued skill as breathwork practitioners is to always provide a safe space for our client. From the physical environment that we create, to how we embody an attitude of openness and compassion, to the language we use, music we play, and our own breathing pattern; all these contribute to the creation of a safe environment. The ability to be deeply present with attention and heartfelt intention creates a powerful container of safety. This allows the breather to be free, express and integrate their experience in a deeply held, respectful and loving environment of no rescue and no judgement. Our own personal practice also helps to cultivate and embody safety within our own being in order that we can hold the space with integrity for others.



### 3. Embodiment

*"The body already is a pure intelligence and THE unspeakable beauty. Every cell in your body is in a profound harmony with the rest of the cosmos... light, air, water, the green realm, female male collaboration, all tangible and intangible conditions."- Mark Whitwell*

Breathwork is the art and science of experiencing the body as an expression of and vehicle for the Breath, Spirit, Life Force, Nöm, Chi, Prana, Umoya, Ruach. Our approach to breathwork is therefore deeply embodied. Through our study of the human form, biomechanics, biodynamics, and biochemistry we learn to appreciate the body's magnificent inner workings, intricacies, and wisdom. With this understanding, we feel more inspired to tend to our inner environment - to listen, respect and respond to its inner cues. We support the body to facilitate the flow of breath.

Through the body and breath, we slowly and gently reintegrate fragmented aspects of ourselves that may have been split off because of trauma and stress responses i.e., numbing, suppression, avoiding, armouring, projecting, overworking, perfectionism, spiritual and intellectual bypass. Through the breath, we also begin to befriend the body to understand and relate to physical symptoms.

We support our clients to experience safety slowly and gently within their own body, through a range of embodied practices and techniques. We encourage clients to experience the full range of energy from intensity to deep relaxation and expanded states while staying present in their body without dissociating or splitting from it or defaulting to old patterns of trauma.

We use the body to understand, dissolve and integrate emotional experiences. We use breath awareness as the foundation of staying embodied and staying present to internal cues. We encourage all kinds of movement styles to shake up and release the breath, make space in the body, and keep energy flowing.



The Khoisan people of the Kalahari used a 'shaking medicine', rhythmically shaking up the body to shake up the breath and life force. Many African traditions use drums and rhythmic beats to mark rites of passage, connect to the ancestors, the spirit of nature, and to activate healing. The Yogis work with physical asanas to create space in the body through the release of fascial lines and creating flow of energy through the energy lines that run through them. Physical Asana is the preparation for Pranayama. Martial arts practitioners move the body poetically and dance with, and master life force with graceful flowing and powerful movement.

Pneumanity practitioners encourage conscious embodied experience of breath through movement styles inspired by ancient practices and creative ways of working with the body.

#### **4. Wholeness**

*This is whole, that is whole. And when whole is taken from whole, all that remains is whole - Translation of Sanskrit Mantra.*

The thread of wholeness is the feeling we have when we gaze up into the stars in the African night sky. We are reminded that we are already whole and complete, and this is our natural state and that there is nothing to fix or control. It takes us away from the idea of a pathology paradigm, where it is easy to become over-identified with our perceived illness, diagnosis, history, habits, addictions, and patterns.

While these are all important to name, acknowledge and accept as part of our experience, conscious breathing brings us back to the experience of wholeness within and that we are part of, providing us with the inspiration and tools to integrate them. We are reminded that even illness or the symptom is part of the natural process of moving towards wholeness and that nature has a perfect order that integrates dark and light, life and death.



In some indigenous African cultures, when someone in the village experienced a transgression, the person concerned was brought into a circle with the elders and the community and rather than being reprimanded, they were reminded of their wholeness through song, music, dance, and other forms of enactment.

Our role as practitioners is to honour and own our wholeness so that we can reflect for the other. We use conscious breathing to invest in, feed and deepen our relationship with our wholeness and to see and respect every person that we work with as already whole and complete. It is from this place that we can relate to pain, anxiety, trauma, and stresses. Through the breath we also experience wholeness as an ever-expanding state that contributes to the whole.

## **5. Ubuntu**

*We think of ourselves far too frequently as individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world – Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu*

Ubuntu is a universal principle held deeply within the wisdom traditions of Southern Africa. The common translation of 'I am because we are', speaks to Ubuntu only in terms of its social construct, however this powerful universal truth expands more deeply and widely, embracing the interconnectedness of all of life. It is the thread of interconnected intelligence between each cell, organs, dimensions of our being, each other, every plant, animal, insect, the elements, the cosmos, our past and present that connects us to the whole, we see this web fractal in the macro to the micro - the spiders web, fascia, neural network, and mushroom mycelia.

Ubuntu reminds us that separateness is simply an illusion, and that disharmony occurs when the threads of connection are broken or when identify as separate. Breath is the thread that reweaves us back to our natural state and the heart of humanity of which we are an inextricable part. It is the bridge between the conscious and unconscious and all the conflicting polarities we experience within and around us.



Breath is embodied Ubuntu. We also see Ubuntu reflected in the Web of Breath, which practically illustrates the breath as 'Ntu' or essence of existence at the centre of every dimension of life.

## **6. Creativity**

*Breath gives us the form for the flow.*

From the embodied experience of wholeness and interconnectedness we can appreciate that we are all unique and individual expressions of what is shaped by our ancestry, unique gifts, tendencies, and traumas. In appreciating each person as a unique expression of life force, we communicate with breath as a form of art - creatively and fluidly, using the form of technique to support the flow.

A\_R\_T supports that each one of us are also emotionally, energetically, and biochemically different each day and therefore reminds us to listen deeply to the body to sense what is ready to be expressed through breath. Thus, we cannot work with a formulaic approach. By being deeply present and embodied within ourselves, we can work intuitively and creatively.

We master technique to ultimately be free from technique and we learn to breathe from the breath itself. This thread reminds us that the A\_R\_T of breathing framework is the guide, the form for the flow of creative expression of breath. The body is a canvas in which the breath gets to play. The Thread of Creativity and the San people of the Kalahari also remind us to approach our practice and sessions with lightness, playfulness, joy, and curiosity.





## **7. The Mystery**

*Breath is the thread between the known and the unknowable.*

Ultimately, the nature of existence is mysterious and magical. Breath is the surrender to the great mystery and the invitation to embrace uncertainty, impermanence, the unknown, the void, the space of pure potential. It holds the seeds of love sown in the dark night of dreams, ready to come alive through our body. Through the exhale, and the pause that follows and the next breath that follows that, we are taught to relax in the void. True freedom resides in the ability to surrender to this space to the unknown, knowing that we are an eternal expression of the whole.

Breath allows us to practice the feeling of what we may be beyond the body. From the mystery, the void, yesterday's dream is tomorrow's Sankofa.

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