

improve your own creativity. Pinches things from everywhere - very good.

13. Morris I. Stein. *Stimulating creativity* (2 vols) Academic Press 1974.

Very thorough and painstaking, mentions every piece of research which has ever been done (more or less) and carefully evaluates the evidence. If you want to compare rival methods, this is where to do it.

14. Carl R. Rogers. *Towards a theory of creativity*, in P.E. Vernon (ed) *Creativity*, Penguin 1970.

A superb essay, trying creativity in to our concerns here. The whole book is full of interesting things.

15. Julian Beck. *The life of the theatre: The relation of the artist to the struggle of the people*, City Lights 1972.

A very personal book with many inspiring things in it. The Living Theatre's play *Paradise Now* influenced me profoundly when I participated in it as a member of the audience, in 1969.

---

Nina Winter

## The Still Point

Take a slow deep breath. Let the chest and belly fill up with air and then breathe out, slowly, fully. Now just wait for the next breath to enter the body. Don't do anything. Just wait and see how that breath, ever-so-subtly and *of its own* makes its way into your system. If you do this a few times with real attention you may experience what feels like a moment of suspension (*after* the exhalation and *before* the next in-coming breath); a moment in which it seems that NOTHING IS HAPPENING. This moment of suspension or pause before the inspiration is actually a moment of deep stillness and peace. It is the second or split-second when we are most with ourselves, most contained (that is if we surrender to it and really permit ourselves to experience it). It has been called by the Chinese 'the creative stillness' and in a poem, *Burnt Norton*, T.S. Eliot refers to it as '... the still point of the turning world.'

When you try this exercise, you might also feel something else just after you exhale fully and before the next in-coming breath: You may feel - instead of comfort and tranquillity - something more like restlessness . . . a kind of impatience for the next breath or perhaps even a vague fear that it won't happen! We call this fear *anxiety* and the feeling behind it is that the next event - be it our breath or some other event that '*should*' take place - *won't happen of its own*. We will have to help it (we think) by gasping or grasping or sucking in; by *doing something*.

Our breathing is a direct reflection of our emotional state at any given moment.\* If we are tense and anxious it is a sure thing that we will be holding our breath, inhaling a lot and not breathing out fully; in other words, we are making a vain attempt to HOLD ONTO SOMETHING, and the easiest and most available thing to hold onto always is our own breath. The more anxious we are the harder it is to 'let go', to let the next moment happen, to let the next breath happen. The more anxious or bound we are, the more desperately we try to make it – whatever it is - (our breathing, our moments, our life) occur in a prescribed, 'correct' way. We have trained ourselves to be do-ers rather than receivers. Even at the instinctual level, we have forgotten how to experience the natural rhythm of our breath-stream, our unique and individual pulse which is at the basis of all our actions and movements. To be in tune with this pulse is to be in harmony with one's self and one's surroundings and it is one of the deepest of human pleasures. To be deprived of it causes imbalance and sickness.

To 'let go' in a very literal way means to let go of past moments, to let go of fears and prejudices and to be in a state of readiness for the next moment. (Stanley Keleman writes beautifully about this in *Living Your Dying*). Most of us have experienced this letting-go attitude in one form or another - through alcohol, drugs, sex, or intense creative activity. It is always delicious and novel, that moment when one can relinquish resistances and allow one's self to be fully in the present instant. And we know that it is just at the moment when we are most willing to let go that we gain the most, that we are operating at our fullest, that we are most *ourselves*.

In breathing, to discover and experience 'the still point' is to let go in the fullest sense. It is to be able to experience each new breath, each new moment as something fresh and original; it is to pulse; in Reichian terms, to vibrate; to feel the life juices and energies flowing, uninterrupted, to be *alive*. This is the aim of all therapy, be it bio-energy, gestalt or traditional psycho-analysis.

I can write, if I wish, with authenticity and expertise on the opposite life-attitude: for years I lived in New York City 'pursuing a career' and in the process learning more and more about how to 'hold-on' in a goal-oriented, competitive culture. I came to California finally out of sheer desperation, in search of a more sane existence which would hopefully include some form of inner peace. One of the first persons I met there was Magda Proskauer in San Francisco. Magda is a leading breath therapist, a Jungian and a pioneer in her field. When I first walked into Magda's class I had immediately an impulse to leave: There were a dozen or so students stretched out immobile on the floor and -- nothing was happening! Or so it seemed. In the course of the next hour, Magda took us through a slow journey inward that was to change the course of my life. It was a dramatic occasion for me but not the kind accompanied by colored lights and thunder. Magda's work is subtle but powerful. Over a period of time it can produce profound changes. This first class with Magda was the beginning of a new kind of study, a new mode of investigation whose point of departure was not the brain but the body. I learned through Magda's work that I *was* my body. I learned gradually to let go of the idea of the supremacy of the intellect and more and more to trust my inner responses. It is a most simple and natural, and yet - because we are so conditioned to being unnatural - it is at first an unfamiliar task, this tuning in to our inner rhythms; to tune in effortlessly, the way a child does before she/he is

contaminated. To do so is to discover an indescribable sense of well-being and joy. To get in touch with your own breath is to make contact with the deepest forces that move you; it is to find and experience 'the still point of the turning world'. It is also to surrender, like the mountain climber, to the point of no return: to reach out and forward. To *wait* for the next breath is to be receptive. To be receptive is to be trusting. To be trusting with one's self is to be creative. And that is to be whole.

\* Reich, Lowen and Feldenkreis write extensively about the relationship between anxiety and breathing.

## References

*Body and Mature Behavior*, M. Feldenkreis.  
*Pleasure*, Alexander Lowen.  
*Character Analysis*, Wilhelm Reich.  
*Living Your Doing*, Stanley Keleman.

**Nina Winter is a writer and body therapist from California who works with body awareness through movement. She has conducted workshops for Esalen and a number of other projects in human potential on the West Coast.**

---

## Have Here

10 years after Paris  
the existential shadow life I lived out in Elisabeth's flat  
Boulevard Pereire.  
La Martine's reality and 3 Experiments in European Literature,  
Cornell 1963.  
Pre-war lace curtains crumbled to the touch, literally.  
Once luxury.  
Elizabeth ate in her room. I took my plate to mine.  
She spoke beautiful French. Jean-Pierre was her lover.  
A job interview - at Unesco  
The director kissed my bewildered smile  
I talked about ethnolinguistics. He asked me to free associate  
with 'love.'  
Love? - glove, gulp, what have I said now?  
Life was too confusing -  
Not according to my Dad's rules.  
I put my foot in. Les Mains Sales.