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Rebirthing, A non Cathartic Therapeutic Process

The rebirthing technique created by Leonard Orr, is a process by which an adult can get in touch with his or her birth trauma and transform it into a pleasurable experience.

But it has to be clear that it is a *release* of the birth trauma not a re-experiencing of the birth itself.

Leonard Orr says "The real function of rebirthing is to dissolve the substance of the birth trauma - we learned to breathe in the middle of pain and we made the conclusion foolishly and ignorantly that breathing is painful. Basically, rebirthing is healing the breath. You can pump emotional problems and physical illness out of your body with your breath in just a few minutes. The key to it is to receive pleasure from breathing".

The birth trauma, vividly stored in our subconscious, prevents us from experiencing the degree of calmness, confidence and love we would otherwise feel -this rebirth process offers the opportunity to rid yourself of lifelong body tensions, breathing constrictions and the negative generalizations made at that time.

But, in fact, Leonard Orr says as well:

"There is no birth trauma. It is just a matter of giving up your fear of the pain while you are in the middle of it. The paradox: the desire to prevent pain happening solidifies the fear and makes it happen. There is ultimately nothing physiological about the condition. It is totally mental. Relaxation and pain cannot exist at the same time in the same body. Tingling is your friend - tingling is energy and pain is resistance to it".

Why is it Important to Release The Birth Trauma?

Leonard Orr says "At the moment of our birth, we form impressions about the world which we carry with us all our lives. These impressions govern our experience of life from a subconscious level of our mind. Many of these impressions are negative. ("Life is a struggle" "I can't get what I need", "This is a hostile place" "People hurt me" "Pleasure is always followed by pain" etc. . .)

The reason the impressions are negative is that people didn't know what we needed when we were born and gave us a lot of things we didn't need,

like lights that were too bright for our sensitive eyes, sounds that were too harsh for our ears, and touches of hands and fabric too rough for our delicate skin. Some of us, in spite of the fact that our spines were curled up for several months, were jerked upside down by the heels and slapped, producing excruciating pain.

But the physical pain is nothing compared to the psychic, mental and emotional pain of birth. Nature provides that a child receive oxygen through the umbilical cord while he is learning to breathe, but the custom has been to cut the cord immediately, thereby throwing the child into a panic that he is going to be unable to succeed in staying alive". To cut the umbilical cord when the blood is still beating in it, violently wrenches the child from one breathing system to another, forcing him to breathe through lungs and nasal passages still clogged with amniotic fluid.

Leonard Orr says as well "The second and most significant pain is that we are snatched away from our mothers and stuck in a little box in the nursery. Most people never recover from this mishandling of the separation of the mother and child. For nine months the child knows nothing but the inside of the mother's womb. It is warm and comfortable, until it get too small for him. He needs to be shown, after he is born, that the world outside is a far more interesting place, with lots more possibilities than the womb, and can be just as comfortable and pleasurable as the place he came from. However, since our leaving that place was so traumatic, most of us spend our entire lives trying to get back there and never noticing or experiencing the full extent of the possibilities out here."

Because people don't work out the pain of their birth and what traumatizes their life's energy, they don't have a deep urge to enjoy life. After having completed the rebirthing process, one doesn't need to sleep so often (going to bed seems to reproduce each night the desire to return to the womb).

Fortunately, there are now some changes being made in the birth process. Frederic Leboyer, a French obstetrician, delivers babies in dim light, with few sounds. He places each child on his mother's stomach, holding him gently, and waiting for the child to learn how to breathe on his own. He then takes the child and holds him gently in a tub of warm water with the express purpose of showing him that there are comfortable and pleasurable experiences out here.

Several doctors have adopted this method and say that "Leboyer babies" are more relaxed, cry little or not all, and seem to experience love and more pleasure in their universe. They are more exploratory because they are less afraid than the "normal" child.

This was confirmed by the follow-up of 1000 "Leboyer babies" by a French psychologist, Mrs. Rapoport. Those babies were between one and four years old. The IQ of these children was substantially higher than average,

they started walking slightly earlier than usual, there was no problem with "toilet training".

The interesting thing was also, that the mothers of these children were less worried about them for they had less trouble with them - Mrs. Rapoport says "The fact that there were no problems with sleep or feeding which are so common with babies, cannot but have a deep effect on the parent - child relationship and it appeared far better here than usual".

So it is of the utmost importance to get in touch with our birth trauma and to transform it into a pleasurable experience. It is never too late!

The Technique of the Rebirthing Process

It is simple but very powerful. The rebirthee lies down and relaxes in the presence of a trained rebirther and works with a simple method of breathing. He is encouraged to keep breathing whatever happens (one wants often to stop breathing when some deep feelings arise). In the rebirthing process, the rebirthee notices the pain or any other emotion, without "getting lost in it" or abreacting it, but without suppressing it either, but just breathing on the top of it.

As the rebirthee relaxes, he experiences physical vibrating sensations (tingling) and the dissolving of the tensions and negative emotions stored in the body. This may last one to three hours. After the session, one is welcomed like Leboyer's babies are welcomed.

The Breathing Release

The primary goal in rebirth, is to achieve a major "breath release" reliving totally that moment of taking the first breath, thereby breaking the power of the birth trauma in the mind and body - and freeing the person from the fear of death.

The following is the report of one journalist rebirthee experiencing this phenomenon: "Breath undulates in me. I don't breathe, I am breathed - graceful inertia there - I didn't have to force inhalation, it just comes. I am inspired! I know, in my thorax, the derivation of that word. Then, abruptly, I want shorter and shorter breath lengths: an inch, a half, a quarter, an eighth. I am not breathing at all! There isn't any discomfort or urgency. I must be dead! How interesting, no, not dead I am that child at birth again, wanting to connect himself with humanness through the circumambient air".

As this breathing release consists of a spastic panting followed by choking and no breath at all then followed by beginning to breath again, one feels like dying and being reborn. It results in an involuntary response of deep sighing whenever tensions accumulate.

According to Leonard Orr, this breathing release reconnects the outer and inner breath. The outer breath corresponds to our physical being, the inner breath to our highest self, our infinite being.

It is incorruptible once you get it.

It is a psychophysical transformation. The rebirther can hear that the breathing is free just by listening: the sound of the breath is getting "round" and "full". The rebirthee can then play with his breathing, make variations and therefore experiences the feeling of becoming an "independent healthy being".

It is an experience of being outside the womb and a validation of it.

For some people, it is even a very deep spiritual experience, feeling that they are one with the universe, or seeing amazing colours or hearing beautiful sounds. It is a complete regeneration.

With inhaling, we are taking in the life force energy, we draw something new in our life; with exhaling, we breath out tension, diseases, emotions etc. . . It is a healing process as we will see later.

To get the breathing release takes one to a hundred sessions.

Other Experiences During Rebirthing Sessions

The rebirthee might have other experiences before reaching the breathing release, or even after. For instance the first session could be a sort of extraordinary psychedelic experience, a state of pure bliss, then the following session could be much more difficult, connected for example with traumas from the past.

The rebirthee might get mental pictures of his original birth process, with incredible clarity and detail.

He could encounter breathing difficulties or body blocks, or emotions, or symptoms like headaches, cold, sensation of childhood illnesses. Another experience, that almost everybody encounters during the rebirthing process is the "paralysis" which hits at the same time as the primal panic.

It is therefore created by the fear of breathing, of being alive.

This paralysis is due to a hyperventilation phenomenon.

For Leonard Orr, there is no hyperventilation as such, but just hyperventilated people.

By helping the rebirthee to contact his fear of breathing, one could see

his paralysis disappearing quite suddenly after some minutes (or longer, depending how much the rebirthee is holding onto his fear).

It sounds like a paradox that, by going on breathing, one could undo this paralysis which seemed provoked by too much breathing. But it is so, and I could verify it each time it happened including during my own rebirthing process.

New Perspectives . . .

Just like a "Leboyer baby" who feels unafraid, and surrounded by love, the productivity, vitality and zest for life increase for one who had finished the rebirthing process. He is able to love and feel loved. Life is unfolding to new and pleasurable possibilities according to Leonard Orr; rebirthing could cure psychosomatic diseases, (asthma could be cured in one to four sessions, heart diseases and even cancer.) Illnesses could be chased away with rapid breathing (pumping fast and long outbreath).

Breathing has a cleansing effect on the cells; when one does a rapid breathing, one is relaxing involuntarily which enhances mental and physical health, and our state of wellbeing.

By breathing deeply we increase also the alkalinity of the blood and that is good because the blood of most people is too acid.

Who Could be Rebirthed?

Everybody, according to Leonard Orr. Even "borderline" people because the rebirth could regulate the power of his technique with the breathing. It is good as well for manic-depressive and phobic people.

The Rebirther

He is a "psychic mother". He must be more an intuitive person than a thinking one, using more love and warmth than a technique. He should be like a Leboyer midwife! He should have a floating attention: be there at the right time and withdraw as soon as one uses him too much and becomes dependent.

Difference Between Rebirthing and other Techniques

Leonard Orr says "The right way to breathe is to suck in the air and let go on the exhalation. The other way: pushing out on the exhalation and passively allowing to be drawn into the body, which is how everybody else in the growth movement urges you to breathe - is how you keep trauma suppressed". Everytime one breathes the right way, negative mental material pours out of one's tissues.

Rebirthing is for me, a therapeutic process of the utmost importance, among the many tools used for human development.