

Adapted from Jack Painter's description of the "Natural Energetic Cycle"
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BREATH AS A KEY TO RELEASE

FOLLOWING THE WAVE

The Natural Flow of Energy

In *Energetic Integration* Jack W. Painter, PhD developed an approach with specific methods of working with breathing and its blocks, and we can make use of these in supporting the process of *Postural Integration*. In other publications we have described the power of *Energetic Integration* methods in even more detail.

First we need to recognize that all our activities go in cycles or waves. Each movement, thought or feeling has a beginning, middle and end. This is a flow of energy, a process of charging, discharging and finishing any given activity of our bodyminds. This is a beautifully rich process which can be supported in many ways; it is a wave that starts slowly, that develops and surges and finally comes down, then begins over again. You will see on the chart, "The Natural Flow of Energy" that Jack Painter has listed nine steps, all of which are important to the flow in our lives.

The first five steps of the wave lead to, but do not include, the "orgastic breath," which is the high point of our charging process and a point of fusion for our diverse energies. We will briefly discuss the orgastic breath's relation to these preceding steps in the wave. Thereafter we will more thoroughly examine this point of fusion and the subsequent parts of the wave. We will see how the fusion subtly continues as a process of integration.

Here we also present the chart, "Blockages of the Natural Flow of Energy." The first five blockages are important for each phase in the *release stage* of Postural Integration, which we sketched later on, and we will look at how these blockages can be opened through special breathing methods and how this energetic opening supports deep strokes in releasing fascia.

Since some of us have a natural tendency to experience and develop one part (or a few parts) of the wave more easily other parts, we can say that we have a certain kind of personality or natural character style – we are more "grounded" or "receptive" than say, "passionate" or "creative." (On the other hand, there are certain blockages in our breathing -- old, stuck, repetitive patterns, which form our *blocked* character styles). In the following sections, after discussing the steps of the natural wave, we will briefly talk of how the natural character styles can be supported in our work.

These styles, whether natural or blocked, form specifically around our breathing patterns. Here the steps in the natural wave.

The Secure Breath. As you look at the energy chart you will find in the first step that there is a steady, even flow of charge and discharge. This is a state of homeostasis. It is a place where our breathing is connected and coordinated through light charging and discharging. We gently breathe into both our belly and chest and exhale in both our belly and chest, with awareness that we're

breathing with our whole body. We are at home with ourselves. We have a reservoir of energy which we do not impulsively disperse, and we can hold this potential energy until we are ready to use it. We could inhale or exhale forcefully, but don't have the need. We could become masculine or become feminine, but we are not yet either. Here the parasympathetic system is predominant. Our body is warm and balanced in its functions. This is our grounding. (Note that what we call "relaxation," the ninth step is a process of finding this first step of homeostasis but is not identical with it.)

When we support our clients in secure breathing, we may place our hands on different parts of their bodies, helping them feel a safe wholeness. We can support the head and neck and gently rock the whole body. We can help clients discover images in which they feel safe. For example, one client imagined a turning wheel -- the whole body was slowly turning round and round, and gradually this wheel became a vortex in which he, himself, was softly spinning. In other clients who feel cool or even cold in parts of their bodies, we may gently but vigorously rub their arms, legs and torso, bringing a warmer flow into the extremities and center, helping them come into contact with the potential energy of their bodies, but not stimulating them into impulsive expression.

Those persons who easily establish this security in their breathing we designate as "grounded" in natural character style. They are the individuals who, as they surge through other parts of the wave, when faced with stress and imbalances, can find their way back to re-establishing their secure breathing. Or perhaps they are the individuals who take their time, making sure they are prepared, before moving on to another stage of breathing and energy.

The Nurturing Breath. Often as clients begin to feel more secure in their rhythm, they spontaneously take a deeper inhalation. We can then make the transition from security to the charging process. With the deeper inhalation we are filling ourselves with energy, so it is important that the exhalation is less than the inhalation. On the chart you will see that, in step two, the peaks of inhalation (charging) are greater than the descending lengths of exhalation (discharging). On the inhalation, the mouth can be wide-open or the air can be sucked in -- as long as there is no effort. The energy we want is available; it will not be denied us or taken away. Life is abundant and we can have what we want. We may say that this is a "feminine" breath, that we are bringing outside energy into our pelvis and upward to our heart: We're filling up; We're absorbing what we need. (Although when we inhale, the air naturally goes in the mouth and downward into the lungs and diaphragm, after the diaphragm has fully descended, we feel from this point a *filling up* against the lungs as the breath rises toward the chest).

Using our hands, we can encourage this filling up: "Breathe into my hands; let your belly fill; let the chest rise; relax your inhale into the ribs in your back." We can suggest a soft exhalation or ask them to exhale through the nose with the mouth closed. We can also -- during a single, ever-increasing inhalation -- encourage increments of further expansion. Also we can help clients visualize or kinesthetically imagine the process of "breathing" into the feet, legs, pelvis, arms or head. Perhaps the client can imagine breathing a color -- a warm red or cool blue -- which flows to all the parts of the breath's expansion. The feeling of floating -- here you can use an image of being in warm water -- allows an expansion, and you may also with your hands support and lightly lift the back of the client's ribs.

Those persons, who naturally seem to get what they need, we call "receptive" in character style. We see that although they may not have excessive expectations, they still seem to go through the process of wanting and searching for things in their lives, yet somehow mostly get what they set out for. Also they may have the attitude that if they really want something, they can get it. Life is abundant and available for them.

The Exploring Breath. At a certain point the process of charging will begin to reach a momentary limit. After inhaling so much, it seems we can't take in more. Maybe we have been charging too rapidly or maybe we are simply overcharged. We need to also focus on the exhalation. The exhalation can clear the excess charge so that eventually we can again easily charge and allow

the wave of energy to go even higher. On the chart notice that in step three, although the discharge has gradually become greater, the overall peaks of inhalation and charging are higher than in step two.

As we discharge we are expressing what is held in us. We can say that the discharge is masculine and goes from the heart downward through the genitals and outward. When we send our energy out into the world we explore, we discover where we want to put ourselves. Our exhalation can be vigorous or it can be soft. The point is that we are letting go, we are surrendering our energy, not controlling it. We can be the roaring MGM lion, we can be a gurgling baby. For both we discharge naturally without effort.

In helping our clients we again touch parts of the body, but now, instead of asking the breath to come into our hands as in the nurturing breath, we massage during the exhalation -- softly or vigorous, but encourage the held energy to flow out. Our massage (not yet deep forays into the fascia) can be anywhere that an excessive charge is being held -- in the neck, jaw, or chest muscles, in the ropes along the back (sacrospinalis), in the thighs, buttocks, calves. We want the whole body to discharge. It is often effective to alternate a vigorous stimulation with a softer touch. One very helpful support is, with the palms of both hands, to follow the sinking of the chest during exhalation, vibrating the sternum as you apply gentle pressure. You can help the exhalation to be more complete without applying too much pressure.

Finally, let us note that there are individuals who are naturally “expressive” in their character style. They allow their energy to flow into the world without holding back. Their exhale, being surrender, does not turn into an over-exhaling neediness, although they may sometimes be loud and rambuncous.

The Free Breath. At this point both the inhalation and the exhalation have already been supported but in two separate steps -- the nurturing breath in one and exploring breath in another. We can now in our breathing focus on the inhalation and exhalation in one step together. In our lives we are familiar with taking a deep breath and then fully letting it go. This is the freedom of being both masculine and feminine. Yet the free breath is even more: it is the spontaneous, change in the direction of inhaling and exhaling. We are free to make a small expansion, then a strong contraction, and inhale again with a fuller expansion and a smaller contraction. And our pattern may become unpredictable. This is like a flowing belly laugh, where we vibrate with the changing, in and out, of our breath.

You will notice on the chart that step four shows a gradually increasing range of upward charging and downward discharging. One of the best ways to help the client to more freedom is to progressively and alternately amplify the expansion and contraction until they experience the fullest breath possible -- fullest inhalation and fullest exhalation. You can again work on the chest, but this time alternately emphasizing downward pressure for several exhalations, then guiding the chest up during several inhalations. Also sometimes opening the arms wide during the exhalation and letting them drop during exhalation, gives the feeling of free flying or floating. This feeling of full expansion and contraction can be explored further if you put your arms around the client’s rib cage, squeezing with the exhalation and loosening with the inhalation.

The natural “free” character style knows how to feel and show many emotions – giving-in sadness, outgoing rage. And these feelings can spontaneously change – fear becomes anger, becomes joy, becomes fullness and sadness. The free character doesn’t have to dream of freedom, he or she is living it.

The Exciting Breath. Once we are free in our breathing, our fullness of energy naturally leads to the next step, excitement. In excitement the masculine and feminine are not simply coordinating the inhalation (feminine) and exhalation (masculine), as they did in the free breath. They are in a dynamic tension with each other, trying to fuse together, while still maintaining their identity. In moving toward fusion, toward the orgasmic, their identity is strengthened, even while at the same time trying to join the opposite. (Of course, for now, we are treating this as a process inside each of

us, not with the even more complicated connection with the opposite sex in the outside world). Our feminine part builds in charge and intensity, expanding more and more, and our masculine part, contracts with greater force, until miraculously they somehow come together in a new energy.

So that we can better understand the supporting role of the exciting breath, we will now anticipate somewhat our later discussion of the orgasmic. The old masculine and feminine are still present in the new creation but are being purified -- made essential -- in the shape of this new creation. This is a foreground and a background forming a new foreground, even though the old foreground and background, feminine and masculine, remain intact. (See modified traditional gestalt drawing). On the chart you will see that the earlier first four energetic steps are repeated in a modified form as sub steps of excitement -- *initial excitement, feminine excitement, masculine excitement and free excitement* -- bringing the process of charging higher and preparing for full orgasmic discharge with creative re-charge. Yes, "recharge." The orgasmic is not just letting go of the charge in excitement, but also making the new. The new creation is then, in the next step, maintained on what we will call the ecstatic plateau).

We can support the steps in excitement by using hand techniques (we are not yet considering deep connective tissue strokes) similar to those in the first four steps. As our excitement begins (*initial excitement*), we help the client connect the body, but now through more stimulation -- soft touching of the legs and torso. As we increase feminine energy we can gently vibrate the gracilis (the large muscle on the inner upper legs connecting to the pubic bone) with our thumbs and forefingers. As we increase masculine energy we might gently slap the thighs and buttocks. As we reach *free excitement* we help clients celebrate -- with a full vigorous expression of their body energy. We can say this leads to the orgasmic (as the next step), though orgasmic is not necessarily an experience of orgasm as an event solely in the sexual organs. This expression of ourselves is whole, bodymind energy being creative -- and of course in another context a genital orgasm may also be a part of this experience. But more about this later.

And the "passionate" natural character style is above all the commitment to excitement. Maybe the masculine and feminine haven't yet completely come together but their energies can still be lived, over and over again, without frustration, since they both excitedly move toward fusion.

Postural Integration Strokes. As we support the natural flow of energy through each of these first five steps, we find, along the way, that strokes into the fascia can be now even more effective.

The first four steps of natural breathing (secure, nurturing, exploring and free) support and are supported by our deep strokes. Sometimes our strokes can be coordinated with the inhale, sometimes with the exhale. And often we can apply deep pressure without disturbing the natural flow of energy. Sometimes we wish to enter the tissue in order to first bring greater awareness into how the tissue is habitually held and then support a direction of re-organization. Sometimes we need to return to the beginning step, a quiet, secure breathing, before further using deep strokes. Here the intuition of the practitioner is all important.

In the first step of the wave the security of the client allows us to slowly enter the fascia with increased pressure, and even as hot displeasure or pain spreads through the tissue, the client may still feel safe. A client who is naturally grounded in character style may rather easily flow with connective strokes which, by their coordinated directions, further support the way superficial fascia flows as an organized unit.

Also as we look at blocked breathing patterns below, we will find that in the first step, when blocked with insecurity, the tissue disperses too easily -- that is it fragments. So in encouraging more secure breathing, we can also work to make the insecurity more felt in the body, but then, with our hands, help re-organize the superficial fascia by coordinating dispersed sections of the fascia through two-handed strokes.

For example, even well "grounded" clients may need to feel how sometimes in their breathing they bunch tissue toward the chest as a part of protective holding and separately bunch toward the upper arm as another part of insecurity. Then as practitioner you can return to the grounded energy again: while lifting the superficial fascia of the upper fascia of the chest with one hand, you may, in

coordination with your other hand, open and stretch tissue toward and over the biceps.

In the second step of the wave, the nurturing breath, when a client is naturally receptive in style, we will probably have no difficulty in getting their cooperation in lifting tissue during inhalation. They already enjoy inhaling. But in helping them find a part of their oral block (see below), however minor it may be, we can also help them feel the needy collapse of fascia by pressing into the tissue during the exhale. Then, afterwards, as we support a deep nurturing inhale again, we can, with our fingers or knuckles, lift the connective tissue.

In the third step, the exploring breath, when working with the expressive style person, we can press firmly, in a scooping manner into fascia, which is already “receptive.” When coordinated with the exhalation, there is often remarkable further transformation of tissue without much resistance. But when a block can be found, an area will already hold a high charge (see inflation below). The client might even bellow out a roaring exhalation. Here an old explosive pattern has been activated, but it can open the way to return to even gentler, releasing strokes, during softer exhalations.

In the fourth step, the free breath, a free character style client can accept tissue strokes on both the inhale and exhale in almost any part of the body. But when sometimes blocked, the fascia can be restricted both in expansion and contraction. Feeling the resistance of fascia in both directions is important and also opens the way for working alternately to lift the fascia during inhalation and to press more into the fascia during exhalation – gradually leading to a free movement of the superficial envelope.

The passionate character has very responsive tissue with a high charge, and our deep tissue strokes can work with both the inhalation and exhalation similar to our work with the free character style. Yet, in excitement, this charging and discharging can happen within a single stroke and leads toward a higher even excitement. In our pressure we ride not just with the expansion and contraction of tissue as in the free breath, but with an ever-surging energy wave which moves toward fusion of the masculine and feminine..

In our deep work around the pelvis -- for example, in the adductors or in the psoas – we encounter, even in a passionate natural character style, some rigidity, often with high energy, even too high. In opening the superficial fascia, we can further stimulate the blocked over-excitement, but then we need to slowly penetrate the fascia deeper to help bring the outer rigid layers together with the weaker interior. As this happens the client’s passion takes the form of warm vibrations throughout the tissue, inside and out.

Later on we will also see how deep strokes can be used in an integration process which includes the remaining steps in the wave: the *orgastic* breath, the *ecstatic* breath, the *fully discharging* breath and finally, the *relaxing* breath.

Now we are ready to turn to how we work with the blocks in breathing and how we can coordinate this work with deep strokes for opening the fascia.

BREATHING BLOCKS

Opening the Energy in Fascia

We outlined the process of release as having four phases: initial release, elongation, release of the pelvis and release of the head and neck. In each of these phases the practitioner works to open different sections and layers of fascia. This release can be so opening that it radically transforms bodymind, and it can also be a difficult process which calls for patience and all the tools at our disposal. At each step of the way as we release stubborn body armor, we are also working with, not only the natural breathing wave, as we have just seen, but also with blocks in this energetic wave. Let us look at these blocks in the wave and see how going through them helps us in the release of bodymind.

In considering, in turn, each of the first five blocks of the energy wave as they are listed on the chart, the “Blockages of the Natural Flow of Energy,” we will look at 1) the nature of the breathing block, then at 2) how the practitioner can help the client more completely experience the breathing block and its release, and finally 3) at how deep connective tissue strokes can be

coordinated with the release. We have already introduced this third step in our above discussion of Postural Integration strokes with natural character types.

The Fragmented Breath. When we are afraid to be present, we cut off our breathing, focusing its charge or discharge more in certain parts of the body. We may hold our inhalation more up in our chest or more down in our belly. We may discharge only in the belly or collapse in the chest while our belly remains full. We literally cut our body functions into separate, fragmented parts, hoping that we can hold on for a while to something secure. Because our breathing is limited, our circulation is limited, and we may easily feel cold in the extremities, as the sympathetic nervous system dominates bodymind with contractions. We are afraid to be connected with ourselves and the present reality. It's easier for us to go away into fantasy and thought in the hope that we might find security there. And our eyes are part of the escape. As we hold our breath our eyes may dance around the room, stare through the person in front of us or lift upward into thought.

Practitioners can help clients go further into fragmentation with a special eye exercise:

While the practitioner moves one finger, at first slowly, then faster, in varying patterns in front of and along the sides of the client's face, the client is asked to follow with the eyes without turning the head and to inhale and exhale.

Clients may become frustrated, confused and more afraid at this demand to be present and follow the finger.

Paradoxically, with this greater fragmentation there may also be a greater awareness, and attention can be given to where the breath is fragmenting in the body. After the exercise, with this new awareness the client may feel more secure and relaxed.

Also eye to eye contact with the practitioner, the expression of defensive anger, curling up into a protective fetal position or being well-defended against the outside world can, all, bring us deeper into our insecurity, and yet at the same time, into a fuller awareness of how this insecurity controls our bodymind. We can see that the eye area, incorporating a band around the upper head, is the focus of this fragmented block.

During the release phases of Postural Integration, the client's conscious claiming of held breathing patterns opens many possibilities for deeper tissue release. When a client is aware of over-defensive and fragmented breathing, the practitioner, hooking the tissue of the ribcage, can guide with phrases such as "Feel how you separate this part of your body," "As I press, express your fear directly to your father." Of course, if we create too much insecurity too quickly, our strokes cannot be effective -- we need a careful balance between stimulation of feelings and direct release of held tissue. We may find, sometimes, that only after an insecure block has been activated and expressed, can we, during a more secure moment, effectively enter deeply into the connective tissue.

Fascia, we saw earlier, is a mixture of liquid, fatty and fibrous tissue, which through body stress becomes disorganized -- thickened and less mobile on the one hand, or weak and overly flexible, on the other hand. For each of the blockages which come with blocked breathing -- fragmented, oral, etc.-- we discover that this tissue shows tendencies to be disorganized in specific ways.

In the case of fragmented breathing, the fascia can be said to dispersed in clumps." Under the pressure of our hands it moves in different directions holding pockets of protecting tissue. The fragmented person will then tend to hold energy in separate parts of the body -- head, arms, upper chest. The job of moving this fascia is not only to help breakdown the held areas but to coordinate and unify them in a fluid, overall superficial envelop.

The Needy Breath. When we reach for what we can't have, we follow an old pattern of strong exhaling and weak inhaling. Although we need to charge, we are actually discharging. Even as we reach we give away what we are asking for. You will see on the chart that in the needy blockage the energy is mostly in the bottom discharged minus section. We do, even as needy persons, some-

times find a high charge but are unable to hold or develop it, and drop again into a state of undercharge. The force of such excessive exhalation is mostly unconscious, and even when we believe we are taking in more energy, our exhalations may get longer and more predominate. In the extreme, the chest collapses and the needy chin and pelvis jut forward in search of the energy we are denying ourselves. Also we may hold, around the jaw, a strong anger that we didn't get what we wanted: "You took it away from me and I'll never forgive you."

Another aspect of the needy breath may be that our inhalations are incomplete in the sense that we are gulping in limited portions of air. This is similar to what psychotherapists call "introjection." We take in the role of our mother without learning from her, without digesting her. This needy introjection may take the form of sucking without making what we take in a part of us. In both the above case of angry resentment and the swallowing of our introjection, the jaw, mouth and throat are the focus of our breathing blocks (although collapse may extend into the upper chest).

Practitioners can help entry into the full experience of the needy by direct contact. We can press down on our clients' chest as they exhale, gradually increasing the pressure, while playing a denying role: "You can never have it." Also the client can bite into a towel, while we apply pressure to the masseter muscles of the jaw. The anger is focused around the mouth but may also be expressed through the arms and legs.

Returning to the example of introjection: we can activate the gag reflex (wearing an examination glove), encouraging the client to throw out the undigested role. "Momma you make me sick." The object is not to cause vomiting (though that might happen) but to bring the swallowed conflict to the forefront of movement and awareness. If coughing comes with the reflex, it can be further encouraged by softly slapping the chest and upper back. We can also slowly massage the neck (with hands on the front and back). Here feelings of strangulation and suffocation often emerge as a part of the needy pattern. It is important to go through these held-in feelings, to find a released clarity about our bodies.

Connective tissue work is supported by these intensified experiences of the needy breathing block. After fully feeling the collapse of the chest and the hopeless search for more, the chest is, at least momentarily, expansive and Postural Integration strokes can augment this expansion by opening the breathing apparatus on both the front and back of the chest. Also, with oral discharging, the belly at first tightens, but then for a moment relaxes and we can use our fingers to firmly slide under the ribs along the diaphragmatic arch, shifting sections of held fascia.

The extreme discharge that comes with our need may even sometimes be used simultaneously with deep strokes. For example, in the final releasing phase of the Postural Integration, work with the head and neck, we have seen that it is important to loosen the seam of the tongue along the lower inner gums. Here the body contractions that come with needy discharge will not interfere with the release of soft gum tissue (since it is not directly part of these contractions), and in fact, the client can best go with the pain by heavily discharging. Also when we shift the tongue posterior to release the mid-cervical vertebrae, our movement produces a gag reflex, deliberately increasing the contraction of the throat and making more complete the experience of the held-back needy block. (See drawing).

In the "needy breath" the fascia does not disperse into thick, protective pockets as in the fragmented breath, but simply collapses. The inhalation does not restore the tissue to resilience, because along with the collapse there is an over-contraction. There may be a loss of fibers and fluids, so that the tissue cannot respond and replenish itself. The needy character style is the person who can't fill up, who can't get what they need. In our strokes and accompanying work we are helping further collapse the layers, so that they can begin to release deeply held contractions, and we can then help them to lift and fill out.

The Inflated Breath. The exploring breath is a natural letting go, a surrender. But if we keep control, as "good" boys and girls should, we hold the breath up and refuse to fully let go. We may, if challenged enough, explode in a discharge, but then we quickly return to the inflated state of holding. Our discharge, though momentarily strong, was not complete. In early childhood we crawl

away from mommy toward daddy; we explore the outside world with our discharge. But often daddy wants us to stand up too soon; he wants us to live up to his expectations, and in meeting these expectations (or in rebelling against them), we gain control and become a success (or the opposite) of which we can be proud.

This is the masculine style of inflation -- though we find it also in females. The upper half of the body has to live up to (or against) the expectations of daddy (or mommy in the daddy role). So there is a band of control around the chest which includes the trapezius and another along the diaphragmatic arch, holding up the cage. The feminine style of inflation, which we also find in males, happens when we can't quite get away from mommy toward daddy. Though the upper half of the body wants to go out independently into the world, the lower part (especially the thighs) is the more inflated, staying with mommy.

We can stimulate the experience of inflation by challenging its control. By pressing against the chest during inhalation, or by lying with our weight against the inflated chest, we bring up resistance and the holding of the breath. We may also provoke anger, rubbing the chest or the muscles along the spine, or pinching the trapezes. We can also, in the case of feminine inflation, press against bent legs (while the client lies on the back) driving pressure into the hips. But if we are to bring awareness of the control (for both the masculine and feminine forms), we may need to be prepared for plenty of action -- kicking the mat and punching a pillow. We don't bring surrender immediately in this way, but clients can take a first step toward seeing the intensity of their aggression and how they quickly return to control.

In doing deep connective tissue strokes we need to "fly under the radar" (a phrase from Ron Kurtz). Instead of provoking inflation, we can also make contact without challenging the client. We can support the inflated person's strength and power, giving them the space to relax into an exhalation. As we apply pressure we might say "I feel your strength under my hand and I know you have the power to push me out, and I invite you to gently exhale and allow my pressure go deeper." For the masculine inflated person we are asking for surrender in the thoracic breathing, whereas for the feminine inflated, we want an exhalation (and inhalation) that allows the hips to move up and down along the fascial sheaths connecting the torso and hips.

The fascia of inflation is in a sense too full, too full of liquid, too expanded, but at the same time, tenuously holding on to its liquid balloon. In pressing into the layers of fascia the problem is the same as with the character style: how to help with release without a sudden deflation. We need to give the held tissue time to slowly drain its excesses, just as a person needs time to give in and not explode.

The Compressed Breath. When we have received double messages in childhood we don't know whether to expand or contract in our breathing. Our parents tell us how wonderful our bountiful energy is and, in the next instance, tell us to be careful with the furniture. They tell us we can do a wonderful job on the potty but to stay there until it's done. The range of expansion and contraction in our anus, as well as in our breathing, becomes limited.

We have to be careful, prudent and responsible -- above all in our bodies, which might get us into trouble if we don't keep the central energy firmly inside. We want to inhale deeply and fly away. We want to exhale deeply and empty ourselves out. We dream of the open space of the desert, the free fall of bungee jumping, of being on top of the world. But none of this can happen in our responsibly compressed bodies. The band of tension is now a central ring around the body which includes the lower chest, belly, buttocks and anus. There is a meeting point of tension coming from above and below, yet an inner, counter energy keeps on trying to get out.

Using our hands, we can, as practitioners, further activate the strong energy of compression by repeating the double messages of childhood, while at the same time stimulating tightly held buttocks and burdened shoulders. We can use a "confusing breath" in which we press and release the chest unpredictably to bring up frustration and disorientation. The compression becomes even greater, but the old limits in our breathing also become more obvious.

Our deep strokes press into a dense defense system, and as we work we can use the compressed

person's own sense of responsibility in gradually transforming the directions of breathing. "Inhale more as I press into your lower back; now as I continue with the same stroke, exhale, and again alternate your breathing." If we work with the limited range of breathing, we can help the person to gradually increase the range of expansion and contraction.

The fascia holds, simultaneously, both the characteristics of the blocks in the needy breath and in the inflated breath. The tissue is collapsing with contraction, and at the same time it is ballooning with expansion. This produces a dense, conflicted thickness. So as we saw above we need to gradually and alternately work with the tissue to soften denseness, but yet give it fuller contractility.

The Rigid Breath. When our excitement is blocked, there is an opposing back and forth movement between the heart and genitals. We go forward with our heart, and at the same time, go backward with our genitals, or we go forward with the genitals and back with the heart. We try to inhale into our genitals, but we can't bring this inhalation through our genitals and up to our heart, and so our genitals withdraw backward. We exhale forward with our genitals but our heart can't completely give its energy to this exhalation, and it moves back. This back and forth movement brings a rigidity to what would normally be flowing, excited breathing. These conflicting rigid movements can be understood as not getting the sexual support we need, and being cut off. We are the little girl, angry in our pelvis that dad wasn't there for us, and we compress our inhale and exhale with, "I want and hate daddy at the same time."

This feeling of being cut off takes place in an inner triangle -- there we are with our inner mother and father, wanting support but feeling rejected. Whether this inner triangle represents our real parents and what really happened is not important. This is the triangle that we now carry with us. If we are feminine and have been cut-off from feminine support, our breath becomes fragmented and over-excited. If we are masculine and have been cut-off from daddy, our breath is compressed and angry. If we are masculine and have been cut-off from masculine support, we inflate our breath to be stronger than daddy. If we are feminine and have been cut-off from feminine support, our breath is needy, even as we try to be nice to mommy. These triangles, and the patterns which they develop in our ever-repeating sexual patterns, are more fully explored in Jack Painter's work and writings on Pelvic-Heart Integration (*Heart in Sexuality*), a specialized form of Energetic Integration.

Practitioners can activate and make more conscious these old triangles and their blocks by working with the breath and body. We can help the feminine feel even more over-excited through rapid breathing and stimulation of the pelvic area. We can help the compressed feminine express deep-seated anger, while we slap their buttocks. We can, with forceful contact challenge the macho, inflated masculine to try, even more, to feel their muscles contract with control of their sexual feelings. Using work in the mouth and pressure on the chest can help the needy, suppressed angry masculine, who tries to charm the rejecting feminine, claim his power..

This contact and breathwork help, but now with our deep strokes we also find effective ways to bring clients to a very deep sense of frustrated sexuality which they can see as repeated patterns in their lives. In the third phase of Postural Integration (as outlined elsewhere), as we work with the fascia of the buttocks, we are, with our elbows, for example, penetrating to a deep unconscious level of feminine held anger at daddy, which we can further provoke with phrases such as, "I don't have time for you now dear," or "I can't play with you anymore, you're a big girl now." And with these strokes the breath needs to gradually both expand and contract, as anger and loneliness increase.

The fascia which is a part of the rigid breath is stringy, but to understand how to work with this, we need to really look at three layers. Often the superficial fascia (a layer below the skin) is soft and malleable. And the rigid type may display this softness, even as a seductive quality, then deeper, at an intermediate level, we find the fibrous or stringy qualities, which jerk and hold excitement. Finally, deeper still, there is the squishy tissue which lacks tone and responsiveness. In working with the rigid style character we need to allow for reactions at all these levels of fascia and help unify the response from outside to inside.

BREATH AND CHARACTER STYLES

Patterns of Breathing and Fascia

In first part of this chapter we saw that the natural energy flow consists of nine stages of breathing. As we look around us we see that some of these stages come very easily to some people -- they naturally seem in tune with breathing which is more inhaling or exhaling, more excited or even ecstatic. It may often be the case that as individuals block themselves in one stage, they actually give themselves support in another stage. For example, the fragmented energy of an artistic person may even help sustain the excitement of their creativity.

But we also find individuals who simply naturally flow with ease and strength in some stages without using or compensating for blocks in other stages. Some naturally find themselves inhaling a lot, for others it feels right to exhale more. And we can even say that these individuals with their bodies, their habitual behavior, their way of feeling and expressing themselves, form what we above called a natural type or style of character.

If we take each of the nine stages of breathing as belonging to such a character style (see chart), we can then speak of the *grounded* person, the *receptive*, the *expressive*, *free*, *passionate*, *creative*, *joyful*, *mellow* and *satisfied* style. Notice the quiet, even breath of the grounded person; the filling up quality of the receptive; the rambunctiousness of the expressive, the spacious breathing of the free, the searching of the passionate; the soft explosiveness of the creative; the enduring quality of the joyful; the ripeness of the mellow; and the completeness of the satisfied.

But when we look at these qualities, attitudes or styles, we realize how difficult it is to pigeonhole an individual. When we look at a person or they look at themselves, we say yes that fits for now, or maybe some of this and some of that. Character is not a box. This is one reason why we have been using character "style," rather than "type."

Yet seeing a character style helps us. And sometimes as we work with ourselves or others, sometimes when we are paying attention to the natural flow of energy, we find that something a bit like this or that may fit us. And in that moment we open to all kinds of connections along our energy waves. Maybe part of the value of giving ourselves a label is that we can also appreciate it and look for other qualities. We can say "Yes I am passionate and I see that I would like to be even more joyful."

Character Style and Energy Blocks. Again we can say that the same is true when we look at how the energy flow and breath can be interrupted or blocked as a part of character. We look at our bodies and we see patterns. For the fragmented breath there is protective holding around the eyes, for the needy breath around the mouth and throat, for the inflated breath around the chest or hips, for the compressed breath around the shoulders, the belly and anus, and for the rigid breath around the genitals and heart. These are only areas of focus, and these tensions are also bound together with other areas of the body. And of course an individual may have more than one area of focused tension. We can be both inflated and fragmented in our breathing. When we consider our tensions, we find they do form, even if not always clear, patterns from early in our lives.

These patterns constitute our blocked character style. What happened to us in the womb, during breast feeding, early crawling and walking, early identity seeking and first experiences of our inner triangle -- all form deep recurring patterns which continue to dominate our life. So we are a person who is primarily either fragmented, needy, inflated, compressed or rigid. Or our style is a unique combination of these styles.

But again it is important in Energetic Integration and Postural Integration to give flexibility to these styles. Although we are basically a needy person who needs a lot, as we let go of some of our body armor and open our mouth and nose more to receiving deeper inhalations, we also begin to also feel the possibility that life is abundant and giving. We move from a pattern of being blocked toward a natural receptive style. Again it is important to realize that character style is not just a matter of labeling ourselves, but more a discovery which sometimes helps us understand ourselves. Below we will further look at the limits of using "character style."

One main strategy for opening character comes to the forefront when we consider how our

blocks develop. In our physiological and emotional development the blocks establish themselves first around the eyes, then in the other areas. Our head is anatomically larger in the womb and our reactions to trauma are held there. But then as we suck at the breast, the mouth becomes the main area where tension may be blocked. Each further stage of our development and its risks of blockage follow the order we have outlined: head, mouth, chest, anus, genitals.

And in traditional energetic work -- Reich's and his disciples' therapy -- this order has been respected. First concentrate on the eyes, so that there will be enough security to deal with releases further down the sequence. Open the mouth and throat area, so that the pent up emotions of other areas can be directly expressed. Work with the chest to get surrender before going to the area covering the anus and genitals.

If we were to work too deep around the pelvis, so this approach advocates, we risk that blocked feelings cannot exit upward and out through the mouth and eyes. The assumption is that the later blocks are more involuted and intertwined than the earlier blocks. But the early blocks may also require lots of attention. If we are working with fragmented or needy character styles, we may need many sessions before we go on to lower bands of tension.

Character Style and Fascia. In contrast to this energetic model of character which we have explained in terms of breathing blocks, the order of the phases of Postural Integration release (which we developed elsewhere), are similar in some ways to the Ida Rolf tradition of opening layers of connective tissue: first we open the superficial fascia over the whole body, next the intermediate along the sides of the body, then the deep around the pelvis and, finally, the fascia of the neck and head.

This Rolfing strategy seems natural enough when we look at the layers which need to be opened gradually from outside to inside, although we know that this process is not simply like peeling an onion and that we have to work with inner reactions at the same time. But to understand the person in terms of over-thickened fascia we need a perspective of character style, not developed in the Rolfing tradition, and different from the energetic model we have been discussing, but not incompatible with it. A view of character based on outer and inner movements of layers of fascia together with the patterns of our breathing and emotional expression..

Here two traditions come together: we follow 1) the Rolfing opening of layers of fascia and 2) the Reichian sequence of opening breathing blocks from the eyes down to the pelvis. Postural Integration (and also our other forms of Bodymind Integration: Energetic Integration and Pelvic-Heart Integration) uniquely encompasses and goes beyond both traditions. We need to realize that our character involves, not only thick, knotted fascia, but also a blocked sequence of physiological (breathing patterns included) and emotional development. Elsewhere, when we develop the more general character styles of expansion and contraction, we will take both these into account.