

INNER QUALITIES OF A PROFESSIONAL BREATHWORKER

by

Tilke Platteel-Deur

Some history

After I finished High School, in 1956, I went to the ‘Rotterdamse Dans Academie’. Modern Dance was what I loved most. I took exams in it and I taught it. All movements in this type of dance, which is Martha Graham style, are built on breathing. This technique uses the inhale to stretch the body and the exhale to contract the body and the movement evolves out of the exhale. This technique helped me enormously to get a deeper contact with my body, my feelings and with life itself.

In 1978 I had my first Rebirthing session.

It was a revelation. It felt like coming home in my body and in myself. I understood on a very deep level the contractions and the stretching that I had been doing for all those years at the dancing academy. I knew with a strong inner knowing how my body had been meant to move, and what it was capable of. I had a strong sensation of oneness, of being connected to something that I felt was the source of my being. I felt that I was love. I experienced my inner God. I was elated.

I didn’t have the slightest idea what had happened to me, but I felt certain that something very important had occurred, something that was going to change my life. The thought that popped into my mind was: “This is going to be my second career, no matter what”.

In those days we just knew that ‘it’ worked, but not exactly how it worked. So, when I myself started to give sessions – after some rather superficial training – I was everything, everything except a professional. I was simply acting on Leonard Orr’s positive feedback and on his idea that having had about ten sessions was enough to start working. Today I know that it was not. I was a pioneer in those days, and God saved me hundreds of times from all kinds of disasters.

Having been a professional dancer however, I knew very well about the advantages of having a good technique. Since in those days there were no long term training programs, I started to travel around the world to try to get some technique and knowledge together. As Richard Bach says: “Teach what you need to learn.” I worked, I learned, I got paid, and I slowly learned about what was to become my new work, work which would become a very fulfilling part of my life.

Today, after having trained several hundred therapists over the last 18 years, I most strongly recommend people not to start working the way I did, but to get a really good, thorough training.

The beginning

When I met Hans Mensink, in 1979, we were – at least on the outside – total opposites. Nevertheless we decided to work together, after we found, during a short conversation, that we shared the same vision of creating a three-year training program.

There were two main reasons to do so.

1. Getting breathwork out of the corner of charlatanry.

We were so enthusiastic about the deep effects of this simple technique that we wanted to help others -and ourselves- to learn to use it in a well-founded way, a way that would give credit to it.

2. Our own growth.

All around us we saw trainers giving short workshops, lasting between two and five days. They would bring their participants up to a high level of energy and then they would leave, and were never able to see how, sometimes, people would fall into a pit, simply because the insights they had achieved were not integrated into their normal daily lives in any way.

We noticed a great danger in that, both for the participants in the trainings and for the trainers themselves. In order for trainers to grow and take on their own process, they need to give people the opportunity to get to know them just as well as they know their students, so they will get honest feedback from them. That takes time!!!

So we started a program, which grew organically over the next six years into the three-year training we wanted.

Today I can say; “Yes, I am a pro.” I don’t claim to have mastered absolutely all the qualities mentioned here. I am still working and learning. And that’s mainly because I do a lot of private work, for myself and with my clients

As a therapist, you have to get “It” into your flesh and blood. Because it’s work that you do with people of flesh and blood and it’s the kind of work that is done with blood, sweat and tears. So you need to study, to practice and to widen your knowledge. But most importantly, you need to do your own personal process of inner growth. Ultimately, you will be known by the content of your life and by ‘who you are’ more than by what you say or even do.

Live, what you teach, it makes you reliable.

THE QUALITIES OF A PROFESSIONAL BREATHWORKER

<p>LOVE and LEARNING through LOVE</p>	Trust
	Self discipline
	Authority
	Integrity
	Attention, Veneration
	Service
	Acceptance, Tolerance
	Purposefulness
	Humor

TRUST

Trust comes with learning and experience. Trust comes with the inner work you do and with learning craftsmanship. Both are equally important. So studying and learning, and trusting the inner power make the work easy, safe and pleasurable.

The *Course in Miracles*, Manual for Teachers states it very clearly:

“Trust is the foundation on which the ability of God’s teachers to fulfill their function rests. The teachers of God have trust in the world, because they have learned it is not governed by the laws the world made up. It is governed by a Power that is *in* them but not *of* them. It is this Power that keeps all things safe. It is through this Power that the teachers of God look upon a forgiven world.” (p. 8)

Because we are human most of us have not reached that state of mind yet. Therefore we need practical skills.

There are some skills I consider absolutely necessary.

1. A profound knowledge of breathwork, ‘How to play the breath’. I am still grateful to Leonard Orr for teaching me to play the breath like an instrument.
2. Besides that, you have to have techniques to work through “emotional stuff”. You need a frame of thought, an intellectual understanding of the work you are doing. You need to understand how to work in the direction of stabilizing an adult personality. “An aware ego” as Hal Stone calls it. And you need to have a stable understanding of transference and counter-transference.
3. You need to really understand that this work is about integrating our judgments about ourselves and about life, how integration works and how integration can be brought about.
4. You need to be able to do Inner Child work.

- If you were to grade yourself on your intellectual understanding and on your technique, between 1 and 10, 10 being the most excellent, what would it be?
- Do you need to study and/or practice more?

DISCIPLINE

Discipline means to become your own disciple. That means to stick to your purpose and to clear away the problems you may encounter. It is not a question whether it is because you are a little sluggish or because there is some ‘outside’ obstruction. Listen to your inner voice and listen to the good advice of people who have more experience. You won’t lose face by asking for advice and listening to it.

- Do you have a certain routine to help you to stay grounded and centered?
- Are you open to feedback and do you ask for it?

AUTHORITY

Being your own divine inner authority means to hold to your authenticity. Don’t try to copy someone else. Be yourself. Find your personal style.

As I said before, you can’t ‘float’ on your experience; you’ll always have to develop, to study, and to take sessions. Grow inside and out. The process of inner growth always goes on. If you neglect this, your inner child will feel so insecure that your so-called authority will melt

away. May be it is a pity, or may be it is fortunate that we have chosen a profession that doesn't allow us to rest on our laurels. So take supervision. And practice, practice and practice even more.

Get to know yourself through and through, especially your vulnerability. As you'll often work with the vulnerable child of your clients, you had better be comfortable with your own!

And it's just as basic to get well acquainted with your anger and rage. When your anger is disowned, and not well known to you, you could be a threat to the inner child of others. Your anger, which is mostly a cover up of fear, would come out in a rather cold, polite and withdrawn way.

- Do you take sessions on a regular basis and/or supervision?
- Do you give to yourself what you're giving to your clients?

INTEGRITY HONESTY MODESTY

Learn to distinguish your own signals that warn you when you're going to make a mistake. If we are really honest, we all know when we're doing something that is unethical, dishonest, hurtful, etc. Sometimes we just don't want to hear this clear inner voice, but that's all together a different story.

Be honest to yourself and to others. Communicate if there's something that you feel incapable of. Modesty means knowing your own boundaries, your strengths *and* your weaknesses.

Don't make yourself bigger than you really are, and don't make yourself smaller.

Don't mess around with your clients sexually. You are mainly working with their inner child. Acting on their sensual, or sexual, feelings is like having sex with a three year old!!!!

- Are you honest about your "weaknesses"?
- Do you communicate when you feel that the work stagnates?
- Do you send someone on to somebody else if necessary?

ATTENTION VENERATION

Focus your attention on your client, in a loving, supportive and accepting way. You should come from a point where you know your client has got all the resources s/he needs to move further. You just need to be there to help him to remember. You don't need to "work hard." Lean backward and smile inside, in total appreciation for what you see happening in front of you. Whatever it is, it's always a miracle that we're able to create what we create. Whether it is positive or negative.

- Close your eyes and imagine giving yourself exactly the kind of attention you would give to your clients.
- Smile inside and breathe a little, appreciate yourself for being the creator of your life.

TO BE OF SERVICE

Willingness to be of service is essential to our professional attitude. It means, neither more nor less than to fulfill your function towards someone. It doesn't mean being servile or submissive. It is an attitude of being proud to be able to do the work you do, and doing it well.

- Are you willing to make exceptions and work for free just because someone is in need and you are willing to be of service?

ACCEPTANCE

You need deep trust to be tolerant and accepting. Acceptance and trust are only possible if you're really working on your own process of inner growth. If, inside of us, there still is a thick layer of non-evolved – which means not worked through – material, we will be judgmental about the same kind of stuff in others. Then we can't be in acceptance, so we can't work with that person.

So again it is essential to get to know the shadow sides of your personality. Life will present you with plenty of chances to do exactly that. Because every time you are irritated about someone or you find you are putting someone on a pedestal, you have a “disowned self” right in front of you. If you can start to see that as a gift and an opportunity to learn, rather than something unpleasant you are on your way to being a more complete human being.

- Ask yourself honestly:
- Do I ask for supervision, or do I work on it in a session, each time I feel ‘upset’ by someone?
- Do I really look what it has to do with my beliefs and with me when there is a problem in my life?

SINGLENESS OF PURPOSE

To know your purpose in life will help you tremendously to stay on your path. For me, doing my work is not my life's purpose, but it is the means for me to fulfill my life's purpose. It is the best way I know in the moment to express myself.

Life will always put you to the test in the form of placing obstacles on your path. Don't let yourself be distracted, but simply move forward. For that you need discipline, but you've got that already, right?

- Do a little exercise. State as clearly and precisely as possible, your purpose for this lifetime.

This may take you some time to think about.

HUMOR

Humor is a sure sign that you've stopped being identified with one part of your personality. As long as you are identified with something inside you, there is always an atmosphere of wanting to be right and of seriousness. The moment integration takes place and identification stops, there is room for humor and laughter.

When integration happens, tension is released. We stop feeling the desperate need to be right. It causes more possibility of choice. There is room for different opinions.

Humor, supported by a deep acceptance, allows us to look in appreciation at the creations of others and ourselves.

- Ask yourself honestly:
 - Can I really laugh about myself when I've made a mistake?
 - Can I forgive myself and say "Sorry"?
 - Am I amiable to someone who makes a mistake?
- There is a nice theme to work on!

LOVE, LEARNING THROUGH LOVE and BEING TOUCHED

The capability to be touched and moved by another person is a sure sign that your heart is open. It's OK to shed some tears, even when you are working, when you see how someone has a deep insight or revelation.

If there is no real sense of love for the person you are working with, you can't work.

In the Bible Jesus stated it quite clearly.

“There are these three, hope, trust and love. But the most important of those is love’.

Love is the most important, essential ingredient to succeed with our work. (This probably goes for all types of work) When we notice we are ‘plugged in’ about something or someone, our flow of love is distorted. Our connection with that person is disrupted. We can't see clearly anymore. If the relationship is not working, the therapy won't work either.

We need to be willing and prepared to learn through our feelings of uneasiness as well as by our deep longing for harmony and love. If we are willing to do just that, we will, in a very fundamental way, be able to contribute to the spreading of more consciousness and more love on this planet.

The holiest spot on earth is where an ancient hatred has become a present love.



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About the Author

Tilke Platteel-Deur has been practicing and teaching Breathwork and the dynamics of relationship, since 1979. After intensive training in the Psychology of Selves with Hal and Sidra Stone, she incorporated the Voice Dialogue technique, as they developed it, into her work. Together with Hans Mensink she has created the Institute for Integrative Breath Therapy, (Das Institut für Ganzheitliche Integrative Atemtherapie). They offer a basic three-year training and students have the option, after having worked at least a year as a practitioner, to take a fourth year to learn how to work with groups and be a trainer.

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