

The Power of Our Breath

PULSE OF SPIRIT
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We are all breathing the breath of the universe. It is not only an individual breath. The entire planet is breathing, and we are breathing with it. Our breath is part of the breath of the universe. Are we participating in that consciously?

I am here, breathing the breath of the universe, as we all are.

In the Pulse of Spirit last week, Keahi Ewa shared the true meaning of the word *Aloha*.

Forehead to forehead, I share Ha—breath—an intimate spiritual connection with you.

There are other greetings that carry more intimacy than the familiar “Hello.” There is a Zulu word, *Sawubona*—we see you. Not only am I meeting you, but my ancestors, who I am representing, meet you too. There is a

connection made between my ancestors and the ancestors of the one I am greeting.

Sawubona. We see you.

I acknowledge your lineage. We are connected to our lineage through our physicality. We are also connected to the world through the breath that we breathe. Our ancestors breathed here before we did, and we are breathing that same air, the breath of this universe.

From Sanskrit, there is the greeting *Namaste*. It expresses honor for the presence of the Divine in another person.

The spirit I am greets the spirit you are.

All of these greetings have been repeated over and over again, down through the ages, acknowledging our connection. The breath of life is penetrating all things, always. We have

the opportunity to consciously bring it to each other and our world.

People use physical breath in these greetings:

Aloha.

Namaste.

Sawubona.

We use our breath to just say hello to someone. In America today, “Hello” is degenerating to “Hey.” However we greet another person, we can use our breath to exchange the breath of life.

I walk every morning, and the people who are jogging just nod because they are using their breath to keep running! We use our breath in sport, and we build up our breathing capacity, increasing vitality.

The same thing is true when we sing—learning how to control your breath matters. It requires practice and discipline so that you can sing with control and precision. Singing requires disciplined use of breath.

There is the discipline of breathing with the Lamaze method while in labor, when delivering a baby. There is training on how to use your breath when administering CPR. We use breath whenever someone is in trauma. And if someone is emotionally upset, what is one of the first things we say? *Take a breath... Just take a breath.*

We have all been breathing since the moment we were born, most of the time unconsciously. There are ways in which we become conscious of our breathing through spiritually-based practice. Yoga connects us with prana, the breath of life. Tai Chi integrates breath and movement.

I name these things to remind us that we already know the power of our breath. So why not be even more aware and deliberate, more conscious of the opportunities we have? We can allow our words, which are on the breath, to bring more life and be more powerful.

Prayer can magnify the power of the breath. As we close our eyes, we can breathe that power into our prayer. Officiating at a wedding, I often ask the congregation to voice their support for the couple.

Will you support these two through thick and through thin?

We will!

Their spoken words bless the couple.

People recite prayers that are repetitive and memorized. These can become powerful when made conscious instead of habitual. I grew up saying a blessing before every meal, the same prayer every day. The blessing of a meal became far more real to me as an adult when the words spoken were in the moment and original.

An easy way to bring life through your breath is by offering a toast. I have found that I *love* to do that. When people ask why it comes so easily to me, I simply tell them, “All I do is speak the truth.”

You are a loving friend.

You are a generous person.

You are a beauty to behold.

I am so glad you are in my life.

I'm so glad you were born.

All those words increase life and blessing to the person. So, bless somebody today with a toast, and use your breath to speak words of truth. And if you are alone, toast yourself:

You are amazing, Jane! I offer a toast to you!

Often in a toast, we also offer good wishes.

May you have a great year!

May you find joy with your new spouse!

May you have good health.

May this project be successful.

Good wishes are a little different from a toast because you are propelling someone into good fortune, blessing their future. You are

putting breath into their sails for their destiny.

Many cultures knew the relevance of shared breath. It was a conscious sacred exchange used by many people to connect with each other and their lineage. Lack of understanding between cultures has often oversimplified these exchanges. *Aloha* becomes a flowery hello. And even *Namaste* can become a casual greeting. Sophistication and casualness can become the enemies of the sacred.

Western culture often ignores what is right in front of us. As a result, we have created a culture of separation and isolation. We ignore the people in our world, not wanting to “get too close.” We avoid exposure and vulnerability, as well as the possibility of truly knowing another person. Of course, this has been imposed even more as a result of the pandemic. But it has been present all along.

Shaking hands can be as intimate as it gets for someone unless you are around someone who declares “I’m a hugger”—who then assumes it is okay to hug *you*! I don’t believe that is the solution. We have the opportunity to rethink how we want to be with each other. We don’t have to use the rituals of ancient cultures to share spiritual intimacy. We can find new ways to honor and respect another human being and assist us in entering a deep exchange of the breath of life.

Don’t you long to be in a culture that has no artificial sophistication? A culture of true

unity? That is life-giving, inviting, and inspiring? That soothes, comforts, and blesses?

Thich Nhat Hanh says this:

Breath is the bridge that connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts.

No matter what kind of thoughts and feelings you have right now, your breath can come in and fill you and unite you with all people and all things. Anytime we have a disturbing thought or an uncomfortable feeling, we can take a breath and be filled with blessed consciousness, knowing that that thought and

feeling do not take us away from the breath of life. They are *asking* for it.

The power of our breath is right before our eyes, and yet sometimes we do not see. Without breath, there is no life. Without our ancestors, we are not.

The power of our breath, the importance of our lineage, the vitalness of our connection to the universe, is right before our eyes. Let us live, honoring this knowing.

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Sunday service

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