

Psychotherapy Guidebook



# REBIRTHING

Lark

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# Rebirthing

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## DEFINITION

The initial goal in the process of Rebirthing is to heal the damage done to the breathing mechanism at birth, when the child is cut off from its supply of oxygen through the premature cutting of the umbilical cord and forced to learn to breathe with lungs that are filled with fluid, under circumstances that seem to say, "Breathe or die." The initial panic or terror in which the child learns to breathe is then reinforced on a subconscious level every time it takes a breath, until the person learns either to release it or it simply remains stored in the body and the subconscious as one of these nameless fears.

In the process of Rebirthing, a person learns to release whatever tension is blocking the breathing mechanism from its full, efficient working, and then, as the healing takes place, to be able to use the breath as a completely supportive and creative part of daily life. It is an ongoing process, and the effects can range from dramatic life changes to very subtle feelings of contentment; it is usually a direct and very powerful experience of personal power. Rebirthing is one of those experiences where it is almost as difficult (and sometimes more) to talk about afterward as before.

## HISTORY

The founder/discoverer of Rebirthing, Leonard Orr, spent a lot of time with other psychological techniques during the years prior to his experimenting with the use of the hot tub in inducing altered states. One technique was staying in the bathtub for long periods of time, and he noticed significant revelations occurring when he did. Finally, around 1974, he began to experiment with friends, suspending them in a redwood hot tub with a snorkel and a pair of nose plugs, and he found that many of them experienced significant realizations about patterns that were basic and generally destructive in their lives. A lot of his friends also began to reexperience their own births during the process, and Orr began to realize that many of the effects were due to his presence. He concluded that he had released enough of his own birth trauma that people felt safe to experience and release theirs with him in the hot tub.

Some of his friends began to work with him, Rebirthing other people, working with transforming the blocks and patterns as they became conscious, and Rebirthing spread slowly and steadily. Then another breakthrough occurred about a year later, when Orr tried working with the breathing pattern that happened in a rebirth, without the environment of the hot tub. It became obvious that it wasn't only the warm water that was responsible for the effects, but also the presence of the rebirther and the method of

breathing.

## TECHNIQUE

The emphasis, then, in a rebirth is on the breathing, and having the person come to a place where the breathing is relaxed and even, rhythmic and balanced, with no pauses between exhales and inhales, and no holding patterns that limit the movement of the ribs and diaphragm.

The importance of having the rebirther present in the initial stages has to do with the nonverbal communication to the rebirthee that the experience is safe and beneficial, and also with the verbal suggestions that the rebirther will make to guide the rebirthee in letting the breath be relaxed and connected. The reexperiencing of the fear and panic surrounding that initial breath, no matter how brief, can be overpowering without the presence of another person who's secure in the knowledge of the safety of the process.

Once a person heals the damage done to the breathing mechanism, taking on the average of three to ten two-hour sessions, the change is permanent, and the breath can then be used as a tool to release specific patterns in the body and mind. At that point people begin Rebirthing themselves if they wish, so any dependency on the rebirther as therapist is short-circuited. The initial part of a person's rebirthing process is usually done out of the water, because it was discovered that Rebirthing in the hot

tub first was usually overwhelming and often impeded the process of release and integration.

## APPLICATIONS

Since Rebirthing releases deep body tension and thought patterns, it can be useful to anyone who's interested in becoming more aware of who he is. Many people experience spontaneous remission of diseases during the process. Breathing difficulties are the most obvious maladies that can be affected, and there are a number of ex-asthmatics who are rebirthers; just about every disease, from chronic lower back pain to cancer, has been released by people. A breathing cycle can be used either to short-circuit colds, sore throats, and other allergic-type reactions or speed up the healing process. Since the natural tendency of the body and mind is toward health, Rebirthing seems to simply speed up that tendency. Experience of psychic capabilities also increase and expand; indeed, Rebirthing simply seems to expand people's awareness of their capabilities.