

# Breathing New Life

CAN 20 MINUTES A DAY OF GUIDED BREATHWORK TRANSFORM YOUR WELL-BEING?

BY GWEN GRAY

At what should have been the pinnacle of her career, with a high-paying, high-level job at a glitzy ad agency and a nonstop social life, Francesca Sipma found herself looking for something... more. To escape the rut she found herself in, she wound up in Bali, taking a breathwork workshop she'd signed up for on a whim, skeptical that simple breathing exercises could have any effect. But Sipma was so moved by the seven-day retreat that she dove headfirst into a year of research, reading voraciously and traveling around the world to learn about various spiritual, philosophical, scientific and psychological wellness approaches.

Back home, she synthesized everything she learned and continued her breathwork. She bought an electroencephalogram (EEG) headband and was astounded to find that after just four minutes of circular breathing, her brain registered beta waves, a state associated with greater focus, and after a few more minutes, her brain could be in theta, a state of subconscious insight. Plus, she was already experiencing the results of her breathwork in her own relationships, an improved self-image and professional clarity onto a new life's purpose: to share the gifts of guided breathing with the world.

Now, a few years after developing and fine-tuning a technique that melds breathwork, hypnosis and visualization into a short 20-minute practice called "HypnoBreathwork," Sipma has launched online courses, trained over a hundred teachers in the method and has led in-person workshops of all sizes—from small groups to entire companies with hundreds of employees.

Her Instagram account (@francescasipma) shows her in chic, sunny poolside settings and on French mountaintops leading sessions with participants lying face up on yoga mats, blindfolds covering their eyes. But despite the polished publicity, Sipma isn't interested in gatekeeping her method. She's making it available to everyone in her new book, *Unblock Your Purpose: Breathwork, Intuition, and Flow State*, and in her app, Mastry. She's passionate about the practice's advantages for everyone but thinks there is an especially good fit for entrepreneurs, executives and highly driven individuals.



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## ABOUT HYPNOBREATHWORK

So, what exactly is the "hypno" part of HypnoBreathwork? Sipma says it's simply the combination of vocal cues and music that guide participants to a state of mind that's open and relaxed enough to access your subconscious. Breathing helps you achieve that state more rapidly.

From there, visualization cues help you "see" past experiences or envision the future and then gain insights from the intuitive messages that come into your mind simultaneously. Sipma believes these takeaways are often the deep knowledge of our subconscious and encourages people to listen carefully and take note of any revelations. Unlike many traditional meditation or breathwork facilitators, she is a proponent of documenting your experience, determining what action you might take from your observations and setting "intuitive next steps" you might take after your breathwork session.

## MOVING THROUGH DISCOMFORT

Tapping into your subconscious can bring up some unexpected realizations. Sipma recalls her shock at discovering she had long glossed over her family's troubled undercurrents. "I had a great childhood!" she recalls thinking. But in her book, she details some difficult dynamics with her father and mother that came to light through breathwork—dynamics that she realized she'd been recreating in her own adult relationships.

Driven individuals are well positioned to take advantage of this. "High achievers or successful people or entrepreneurs—they're willing to do the deep work," Sipma says. "And that's not always a pretty process... but on the other side of that discomfort is massive growth and tremendous success."

## FINDING THE FLOW STATE

Connecting with your breath has another major benefit, Sipma noticed, and that's accessing a state in which your ideas and productivity simply flow easily, allowing people to rapidly access the wealth of information our brains store, make connections, see solutions and come up



with entirely novel ideas and concepts. For her, the creativity that comes along with experiencing a flow state is one of the biggest perks of HypnoBreathwork.

"When I worked in advertising... I would sit in creative meetings with some of the most brilliant creatives in the world," and she remembers thinking, "God, I wish I

could come up with a concept.' I just didn't think I was a creative person. And then, once I cleared all the emotions that had been stacked [against me], and I healed a lot of the past parts of myself, I became a creative machine. I have a million creative ideas every single morning. And that was something that was brand-new for me."

## REVEALING YOUR INTUITION AND PURPOSE

In what she sees as a melding of Eastern and Western cultures, Sipma believes the breakthroughs that come during HypnoBreathwork can lead to powerful change if you take immediate note of them and pledge to follow up with action.

"That's the secret sauce," says Sipma with excitement. "The point of the HypnoBreathwork is to get to the intuitive action [where] you're utilizing your intuition, which is this deep inner knowing, this inner guidance and wisdom. And when you can combine those two things... the spirituality with the strategy—then you are on a completely different path. It's a different playing field. Now, we're talking about true peak performance."

Sipma has noticed that those who try HypnoBreathwork find their revelations going well beyond the solving of day-to-day work or relationship challenges. They begin to zero in on how their abilities can benefit others, beyond their salary or job role, to fulfill what she calls their "purpose." It's perhaps the greatest gift of a HypnoBreathwork practice, she argues, and one that is worthy of the 20 or so minutes a day she recommends for breathwork.

"The most common thing I hear is, 'I don't have time,'" she says. "But the truth is, you become smarter, you become sharper, you become clearer and you become more creative. Everything else in your day takes less time. Your decisions take less time, your emails, your proposals, your decks, your papers—everything takes less time when you breathe for 20 minutes and you're clearer all day." ♦

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