Unlocking Consciousness Through Breath with Anthony Abbagnano

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Guest: Anthony Abbagnano

Resources: www.alchemyofbreath.com and Anthony's book at https://iam.alchemyofbreath.com/book-podcast

Anthony Abbagano: 0:29

As we slow down our thoughts, we begin to have the opportunity to perceive life in different ways than those which are habitual for us. So we're breaking a habit as we recreate a new normal and new focus. With that new focus, other things come into view that we wouldn't have thought possible. An example would be you could take any problem that you've ever had, that you've never been able to solve, and you could take it into a breath session and likely come out with an alternative that you hadn't thought of before.

David Lowry: 1:03

Hello everyone and welcome to Peaceful Life Radio. That was Anthony Abbagnano, our guest today. He's a breath work expert and the founder of The Alchemy of Breath and the Alchemy School of Healing Arts. It's really gonna be a fascinating program. I'm so excited to introduce this man to you. I'm David lowering With me today is my good friend Don Drew. Don, how are you today?

Don Drew: 1:27

David? I'm fantastic. We have an extraordinary guest with us today and it's an honor to introduce Anthony Abbagnano, founder of The Alchemy of Breath and the Alchemy School of Healing Arts. Anthony's journey into breathwork is profoundly rich, influenced by a lifetime of dedication and philosophical insights of his uncle, the renowned Italian philosopher, Nicola. For over 40 years, Anthony has been a tireless advocate for the power of conscious breathing, integrating it with philosophy, Jungian, psychology, spirituality, conscious loving hypnotherapy, and even matrix energetics, the very science of wonders. He's experienced an vast array of breath practices from Lama to Pranayama, to Sufi prayer and to holotropic breath work. He's the driving force behind hashtag Breathe the World, an

online initiative that has reached over 40 countries impacting thousands worldwide. In fostering a global community of conscious breathers, Anthony serves on the board of the Global Professional Breath Work Alliance dedicated to advancing trauma recovery, addiction treatment. And the integration of psychotropic and plant medicines. His remarkable work is renowned for its profound impact on addiction treatment, personal growth, and humanity's hope for a heart-centered, peaceful coexistence. Anthony, welcome to Peaceful Life Radio.

Anthony Abbagano: 2:42

Thank you so much. It's a pleasure to be with you both. What a wonderful hope that is for a peace and heart-centered humanity.

David Lowry: 2:49

Anthony, we are delighted. You're on our program today, and I know some of the things you may be introducing to our listeners is new territory for some of us. Uh. Lifetime ago I was a yoga teacher and studied some breath work, and I'm very excited to hear where you're going to lead us today. Let's start off with a question, I'm sure everybody asks you. What is breath work as you define it? How does it differ from everyday breathing We do as human being?

Anthony Abbagano: 3:16

Well, if you're breathing consciously, you are working with your breath. The second answer is that if you breathe consciously, in a way, it's the breath that does the work instead of you. So it takes the will to be able to use your breath, the will to make a choice that I'm going to breathe. And then also when I do that, there's an allowing or a surrender to allowing the breath to do the work for you.

Don Drew: 3:42

What initially drew you to the concept of breath work? And did your Uncle Nicola have something to do with that?

Anthony Abbagano: 3:48

I think he's got more to do with me than I ever thought. And the more I teach this work, the closer to him I become, breath happened to me, of course, when I was born, like we're all breathers, right? But. I had an experience in my first decade of life that impacted me so seriously that I understood that this breath was going to change everything. The way I could breathe could change everything. So from eight years old, I think I had probably something akin to a near death experience, and that wasn't because of lack of breath. That was because a kid. Came up to me in boarding school and he asked me to breathe into a paper bag a few times, and he held me from behind and squeezed my chest as I made the last exhale. And he very gently let me down to the ground. And what happened for me in those moments was akin to what I understand to be a near death experience. It just a complete sense of peace, oneness of there not really being any questions. They were questions and answers in the same moment. A sense of wellbeing that was beyond my father's imagination. As a young boy, I really wasn't happy. I was put in boarding school when I was just seven years old and was very unhappy to be separated from my family. But those few seconds of that breath experience made all the suffering that I had seemed like a tiny dot on a very large screen. It was so reassuring that. The stories I was listening to about humans by humans were really just stories, and there was something much, much bigger about life that was beckoning a new kind of awareness. And of course, to integrate that as an 8-year-old or a 7-year-old was like, my goodness, tough. I mean, it was a point of reference, but it kept cropping up. It kept cropping up during my school years, and then I became a young father and a practitioner of breath when I was. 17. When my wife was pregnant, we would practice breath every day to prepare for the actual delivery for the birthing. I didn't realize that I was a breath coach already, but really from then on, every single time I heard about breath work, I would seek out how to get there, how to do it, how to get a session, how to find a practitioner or a facilitator. And to deepen my relationship with the breath.

David Lowry: 6:11

It sounds as though you discovered a deeper reality in those early years when that incident happened in your boarding school. Suddenly you realize, wait a minute, there's more to me than what I thought was me. Would I be correct?

Anthony Abbagano: 6:28

Yes, exactly. And more to all of this, I don't know if you folks felt some kind of existential disappointment in life. You know, you come into this world with all the abundance and boundless energy and curiosity, and we get told not to do things more than we get told to do things, and I think eventually we end up in a bit of a box. I felt that, especially going to boarding school, which was quite regimental and not up to speed with the 20th century, so a very strong hierarchy. Boys were empowered to beat other boys as punishment. It was quite an ancient system. Heartless, and I think that's probably helped juxtapose the experience that I had in that breath state because it was as wonderfully opposite as it could have possibly been. I'll tell you, it was a lifesaver. I mean, I was depressive, I was crying until I fell asleep every night. I didn't understand why I'd been abandoned. I was clearly in trauma. This put it into its correct perspective. I knew there was a hope for humanity that had never been shared with me before, and it was extremely reassuring.

David Lowry: 7:37

So it woke you up, so to speak, an initial awakening, and then going forward, little pieces of the puzzle would fall into place. You mentioned helping your wife learn to breathe during the pregnancy. And you've learned some other techniques as well, and it led you to create this alchemy of breath and your School of Healing Arts. I'd love for you to tell us. How all of that fell together and how you came to do all of this?

Anthony Abbagano: 8:04

Well, it wasn't until my fifties that I realized that breath was my calling. Before that, I had developed a successful business and I'm half Italian, so I moved to Italy in my early thirties, and I developed a highly successful business restoring old Italian buildings from monasteries to castles, and sometimes cottages, but mostly for American and English people. I was gifted with the ability to translate the confusion that exists in the Italian bureaucracy into something intelligible and understandable that could be accomplished by someone who wanted to fulfill their dream of a GOs of Chianti on their. Front porch while they watch the sunset. And I did that for many years and it was wonderful to play with people's dreams, to be able to help people towards what they'd hankered for a lifetime in the workspace. And they were coming to retirement and having the chance to choose again what it was that they wanted. It was very special to help people. And at the same time, there was something lacking for me. I had wealth and success, but it wasn't really nourishing me. I gave it up, went completely to the opposite extreme. I'd studied yoga before, but I'd never really developed or deepened my relationship with it, so I moved to

Asia. I moved to India for the first four years, and then I moved to Bali for about 16 years. The first seven years of that time was spent meditating as I was trying to understand, well, okay, when you reach the top of your game and understand that mastery is not. Really the top of the mountain. What's next? What do you do with that physical material? Wealth really doesn't make a difference. My experience was all the time I worried about survival and making money and creating a capital base. I spent exactly the same amount of worry trying to protect it and make sure it was safe, and it didn't seem like life needed to be lived this way. What if there could be a more easy way to live that was more in harmony with? The natural cycles of life. I meditated for seven years as I let those motors slowly come to a halt and found what the concept of stillness and deep reflection was. And of course, doing breath work every day, beginning to understand something about supernatural powers, not what we accept as power in our normal day, but exploring what might lie beyond what I know. This research was devout. I was very dedicated to it and my practices, and then after seven years, I figured I could come back to life again. I wanted to reinvent my myself in the world, but I wanted to commit myself to something that was really worthwhile. And I've always been blessed and somewhat cursed by being a visionary. I see things before they happen, and I know what it is that will happen. And that's a blessing because it's a wonderful thing to know. It is also a curse because you're the only weird one who's talking about weird concepts and everyone else is looking at you like, oh my God, you're off the planet. But actually, I was in a very benign environment and when I started to speak publicly about what I was seeing and noticing about life. People came to listen and I found a lot of people with whom I resonated. So I started to develop a community in Bali to help people use the breath to discover something about this more that I'd been exploring the other, some philosophers would call it. And as I embraced to learn about the other, you have to have freedom from what you know. So that's not such a comfortable journey for many. That means leaving behind all I thought was in place and structurally safe and entering into an unknown world where it was very much exploration and experimentation and the things that I thought brought security were going to be left behind in favor of making myself available for something else to happen. And then when I started to teach the breath, I discovered that more people wanted to learn about it than I was physically able to teach. More and more people would come in the room and there'd be cues outside the room when I was ever going to. Give a class, and thanks to my dear wife, she said, Anthony, Bali is too small for you. You need to go onto a more international stage. So I gave up Bali and went into the unknown again and moved back to Europe and then took the work online. I think I was the first. Person who took breath work online is definitely why it's mushroomed in general awareness, why it's become so popular. And I also found ways to make it valid and useful online that people could achieve different states of awareness and. Consciousness by using their breath in structured ways that then became my life, my reinvention, and it

was very unexpected. And when I look back on all those diverse human experiences I had, I could see how I'd weaved a needle and thread through all of those weird, funny experiences that I would've never have thought would lead me to this one essence. It was as if someone pulled the thread tight and everything came into alignment and I understood everybody wants it and it's helping people and breath works. It really changes people's lives. So it's kind of become a ministry now, and as the engines would say, my dharma and I'm in total service to.

Don Drew: 13:46

Anthony is somebody who really doesn't have a background in breath work and so forth. I'd like to explore some of the practical applications and personal practices of conscious breathing. What are some of the key physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual benefits you found from incorporating conscious breath work into daily life?

Anthony Abbagano: 14:03

Well, they start at the most basic and fundamental, which is physiological, that we can adjust our physiological condition and accelerate certain processes. By using the breath consciously, we can adjust our nervous system by using the breath. We can manipulate certain conditions like anxiety or depression or listlessness exhaustion, hypertension, PTSD, and deeper states of impact trauma as well. And then in the emotional realms, if we breathe what's called a connected breath, and that means there's no pause between the in and the outbreath we actually slow down the frontal lobes processing. We increase our oxygen in the bloodstream, but we actually slow down the oxygen feed to the frontal lobe, which is our rational mind. As we slow down our thoughts, we begin to have the opportunity to perceive life in different ways than those which are habitual for us. So we're breaking a habit as we recreate a new. Normal and new focus. With that new focus, other things come into view that we wouldn't have thought possible. An example would be you could take any problem that you've ever had, that you've never been able to solve, and you could take it into a breath session and likely come out with an alternative that you hadn't thought of before. An example of that would be, uh, in my first years of practicing, uh, and teaching breath work, a couple came up to me after a breath work session and. The wife said to me that my husband hasn't told me he loved me in 25 years, but in just this 40 minutes of breathing consciously, he's come up to me now and said that he loves me. So an immense amplitude of awareness helps us understand the annuity eye that we this normally because we're so preoccupied with getting somewhere or wanting what we haven't got that

we're in a hurry to get there. So we forget about. Where our feet are standing right now. It's very healthful, mentally and emotionally because it helps people take stock in a completely different way. Sometimes I call it like seeing the other side of the coin from a normal perspective. Then on more of a psychospiritual level, the breath is referred to as supernatural over 50 times in the three major religious documents that. Humanity uses the Koran, the Kabbalah, and the Bible being supernatural and sometimes divine. We get to ask ourselves what's gonna happen as I live my muddled, hurried life, humble jumble as it might be if I stop and take a few breaths. Import spirit, if I inspire, which is literally where the word comes from, importation of spirit, what's gonna happen to my perspective? Then how can my perspective of life change? And so this is incredibly useful for anybody who's on a spiritual path, but it's also useful for people who lack spirit. And I don't mean just in the sense of God power, I mean spirited. Lack inspiration. People who feel dull, pointless or depressed. It's an extremely effective way to import some spirit. Let's get on the horse and ride it rather than watch them walk by. That's super powerful for people coming to end of life. People who want to negotiate this journey from mastery being at the top of your game and now understanding that, oh, I can't quite move like I used to. I need more of those pills or I need to study more about longevity, and we get perhaps a little sound desperate or dissociated because we don't want to think about it. Using the breath in certain ways can really help us negotiate those tender amendments.

David Lowry: 17:54

So many of our listeners in the second half of life face those same questions that you felt at age 50, and I would love to hear some ideas on how we might use breath work to help us. Become more centered, focused and give ourselves that peace of mind that you've been describing.

Anthony Abbagano: 18:13

Anything that you've found difficult in your life, especially in this last half of life that we live things like atonement or forgiveness, that road that we need to pave towards our own passing with a sense of resolve and peace. Acceptance. That journey will be made a lot easier with conscious use of the breath. It starts with one breath and the contemplation of what your first breath would've been like. That unconditional opening to life that is that first breath with a child that's completely unconditional. And it's leaking to bring into the body one of the most mystical, magnificent elements of life force that exist. So reflect on that for a moment and consider what the last breath of life will be. The immensity of all the

collecting, accumulating, accomplishing, living. I've done the good things, the bad things, whatever they are, that when I reach that last breath, it's the complete surrender. So when I say take that one breath, I invite you to consider the enormity of what that means. And after studying breathwork since I was eight years old, I feel like I know. A millimeter of something that's thousands of miles long. If you decide to explore one breath, you're going to open the book to the rest of your life, to a relationship that will become more important to you than any other relationship in your life, because without the breath, you can't have any of those relationships. When we look at large. We understand that there are some very practical things we can do, and I'd like to give folks some practical ways of utilizing the breath that they can take away with them. 1 0 1. Think about that one. Breath 1 0 2 start to cata the way you breathe in different circumstances from when you wake up. Get your wife or your partner, your husband, to tell you the way you breathe when you're asleep. Start to catalog the way that you breathe, when you are upset or excited, or feeling very calm and satisfied before a meal, after a meal, when you're depressed, tense, or anxious, or even when you make love, for example. And this becomes your own manual for how you can choose to breathe if you want to recreate those conditions. If you're feeling over activate, you want to use a nice calming breath. If you're feeling a little tired and listless, maybe pant for half a minute to bring up your energy. It's great for jet lag, for example, breathing in through purse lips and breathing out through an open mouth for 30 seconds. I'm really ready to roll. I'm ready. I'm awake. I'm alert. I'm ready to be present with whatever is in the show. Catalog your breath and select which ones work. One or three is, don't wait till you're nervous to put a breath practice into place. If I tell you. To inhale to the count of four and exhale to the count of eight. Eventually increasing that exhale to 30. Don't wait until you are anxious or feeling of sense of panic to put that into place. Do it now. The best time to practice your breath is when you don't need it. That way you'll find it in your toolbox when you do need it, and you'll be able to pick it up. The final message important for you to know is about trauma. When we were traumatized as. It's human beings. We lost our breath. We embody the trauma. When we lose, our breath becomes frozen In our system, when we feel anxious, we're in the fight, flight, or freeze mode. Those are the three choices, and they're no longer made from the frontal lobe. They're made from the amygdala in the back of the brain. Survival brain. It doesn't process, it doesn't have rationale in order to bring things back to the frontal lobe where we can make choices again. We need something that is a part of our structural awareness. IE that one breath, that when we do feel the tension rising, we immediately say, okay, I'm gonna stop and take a few breaths. That's what I need to do. I'm gonna take a few breaths. And we just sit in that moment, taking a few breaths, and then the choice starts to move back to the frontal brain again. Just that choice to breathe. When we're feeling under pressure, we're already becoming more created. And we're creating

more agency in our existence and our co-creation with life. And this is critical for the more breaths you can take and choosing each one the more agency we create.

Don Drew: 22:59

I was thinking about the current state of the world and how you might see conscious breath work contributing to humanity's hope for a heart-centered, peaceful coexistence. What's your ultimate vision for the future of breath work and its impact on global wellbeing?

Anthony Abbagano: 23:14

I'd love to get those presidents and prime ministers into a circle to breathe with me. That's what I really love. I am fortunate that I work with several founders and CEOs of multi-billion dollar companies, and they're now beginning to implement the breadth in their own structures, and it's making it tremendous different.

David Lowry: 23:31

If you had a takeaway, if you wanted us to remember one thing before you'd leave us today, what would that be?

Anthony Abbagano: 23:39

We have a motto that we call 10 to the power of nine, which explains our vision. If I can get 10 people to uplift their consciousness through the power of the breath, and if I can get them to inform 10 people each themselves, and if we do that nine times, then we've reached 1 billion people. When we've done that, we can create a tipping point. Alchemy now is up to about 50 million, so we're 5% of the way, and that means I've gotta live about another. 20 years or so at this rate. But anybody that's listening that wants to join in this incredible wave of awareness and change and consciousness that's happening, come and help.'cause we get to do this. If we do it together, it gets better.

Don Drew: 24:30

Anthony, you've recently published a new book and I know we've got some listeners that are probably interested in learning more about breathwork in your organization, and then we'd need to hear what's next for you.

Anthony Abbagano: 24:41

Thank you. The book is Outer Chaos in a Calm. It's about how to create inner a calm amongst the chaos, and it's also about how that calm then begins to calm the outside chaos too. How other people become inspired by the changes that we make to ourselves. If you want to know more about the breath, we do weekly sessions online, still free in our 10th year of doing this. It's a way of our outreach and giving back, and there are several hundred people that breathe together every Sunday. You can find out more on alchemy of breath.com for those that are intrepid and want to travel and come to Italy. That's really our center where the community collects and gathers, and we have retreats all year long. Mostly connected to the breath or other forms of consciousness. Things like internal family systems, family, constellations, dance, other healing arts. That's all of the healing arts. We welcome theater, music, and it's a vibrant and exciting place to come in. Tuscany, if you want to reset in a week or more. And then your last part of your question was, what's next for me? Wow, what a great. Question. Well, I have another book on the way. This one is already, fortunately, a bestseller, and I'm looking for a bigger publisher for the next book already. And it's about breath work, but we have an academy. We train students how to bring this work to the world. We have over 2000 students in 70 countries now. What I wanna do is help them get the workout to the world. So most of my time now is spent on podcasts, keynotes. It's more of an ambassador role. I travel the world and open people up to the very idea that this has value, something that's been right under our nose. Our whole lives actually has an extraordinary value. I see myself writing more and being an evangelist.

Don Drew: 26:37

And that brings us to the close of another episode of Peaceful Life Radio. What an incredible journey we've taken today with the remarkable Anthony Abbagnano. We've explored the profound power of our breath as a gateway to deeper self-awareness, healing, and connection. Anthony, thank you for being with us today.

Anthony Abbagano: 26:55

Thank you so much to both of you and all that are listening. It's been a pleasure to be with you.