

What Is Holotropic Breathwork and How Is It Used?



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[Usage](#) [Research](#) [Safety](#) [How to](#) [Takeaway](#)

Overview

Holotropic breathwork is a therapeutic breathing practice that is intended to help with emotional healing and personal growth. It's said to produce an altered state of consciousness. The process involves breathing at a fast rate for minutes to hours. This changes the balance between carbon dioxide and oxygen in the body. You are guided through the exercise by someone who is trained in this emotional release modality.

Music is an essential part of the technique and is incorporated into the session. After a session, you'll be asked to creatively express your experience, usually by drawing a mandala. You'll also be encouraged to discuss your experience. Your reflection will not be interpreted. Instead, you may be asked to elaborate upon certain aspects.

The goal of this technique is to help you make improvements to your psychological and spiritual development. Holotropic breathing may also bring about physical benefits. The entire process is meant to activate your natural capacity for healing.

Why is it used?

Holotropic breathing is said to facilitate mental, spiritual, and physical healing benefits. It's [thought to have](#) the potential to bring about improved self-awareness and a more positive outlook on life. You can use it to support your development in a variety of ways.

It's thought that the practice allows you to move beyond your body and ego to get in touch with your true self and spirit. It allows you to better connect with others and the natural world. Holotropic breathing may be used to treat a wide range of conditions, including:

- depression
- stress
- addiction
- post-traumatic stress disorder
- migraine headaches
- chronic pain
- avoidance behaviors
- asthma
- premenstrual tension

Some people have used the technique to get rid of negative thoughts, including the [fear of death](#). They've also used it to help manage trauma. The practice helps some people to find new purpose and direction in their lives.

What does the research say?

A [1996 study](#) combined the holotropic breathing technique with psychotherapy over six months. People who participated in the breathwork and therapy significantly reduced [death anxiety](#) and increased self-esteem compared to those who only had therapy.

A report from [2013](#) documented the results of 11,000 people over 12 years who participated in holotropic breathwork sessions. The results suggest that it can be used to treat a wide range of psychological and existential life issues. Many people reported significant benefits related to emotional catharsis and internal spiritual exploration. No adverse reactions were reported. This makes it a low-risk therapy.

A [2015 study](#) found that holotropic breathing can bring about higher levels of self-awareness. It may help to positively make changes in temperament and development of character. People who were more experienced with the technique reported less tendency to be needy, domineering, and hostile.

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Is it safe?

Holotropic breathwork has the potential to bring about intense feelings. Because of the strong physical and emotional releases that may arise, it's not recommended for some people. Talk to your doctor before practicing this type of breathing if you have, or have a history of:

- [cardiovascular disease](#)
- [angina](#)
- [heart attack](#)
- [high blood pressure](#)
- [glaucoma](#)
- [retinal detachment](#)
- [osteoporosis](#)
- recent injury or surgery
- any condition for which you take regular medications
- history of [panic attacks](#), psychosis, or disturbances
- severe mental illness
- seizure disorders
- family history of [aneurisms](#)

Holotropic breathwork is also not recommended for pregnant women or breastfeeding women

Holotropic breathwork may bring about intense emotions and painful memories that could worsen symptoms. Because of this, some [professionals](#) recommend that it be used in conjunction with ongoing therapy. This gives you the chance to work through and overcome any issues that arise. Most people practice the technique without any adverse side effects.

How do you do holotropic breathing?

It's recommended that you do holotropic breathing under the guidance of a trained facilitator. The experience has the potential to be intense and emotional. The facilitators are there to assist you with anything that should arise. Sometimes holotropic breathwork is offered under the supervision of licensed medical professionals. You can also use holotropic breathing as part of a counseling treatment plan.

Sessions are available as group session, workshop, or retreats. Individual sessions are also available. Talk to the facilitator to determine which type of session is best for you. Your facilitator will guide and support you through the process.

Look for a facilitator who's licensed and has received proper training. You can use [this tool](#) to locate a practitioner near you.

Takeaway

If you'd like to try holotropic breathing, seek out a trained facilitator who can guide you in the process. These facilitators are often psychologists, therapists, or nurses, which means they're also licensed to practice. Having a licensed and certified practitioner would be the best choice. Make sure you're aware of what you may experience during your session. You may wish to set your intentions beforehand.

If you have any concerns, discuss them with your doctor or facilitator before completing your session. You may wish to use this [technique](#) to complement or enhance your own personal mental, spiritual, or physical journey.

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