Safety Guide & Contraindications

Before participating in breathwork sessions, it's essential to understand how the body can respond to intense physical and emotional stimuli. This guide outlines key safety considerations and contraindications, both for your own safety and that of others. Please read carefully and reach out if anything is unclear.

There are many different types of breathwork, and they don't all do the same thing. In our approach, we distinguish several categories:

1: Strategic Interventions: Using a conscious breathing intervention to adapt to or optimize for a specific circumstance or outcome.

2: Habitual Optimization: Improving the unconscious breathing pattern by consciously training certain aspects of it.

3: Hormetic Training: Consciously facing the body with a biochemical stressor in order to make it more efficient and more resilient.

4: Therapeutic Intensity: Using an intense, usually high-ventilation pattern to enter an altered state of openness, vulnerability, and healing in a safe and guided session.

Deeper physiological and emotional shifts tend to happen in the latter two categories, and mainly in category 4, and this is also where the safety considerations matter most. This is the territory of deep breathing, altered states, and temporary nervous system dysregulation—which, for healthy people, is usually safe and even healing.

But not everyone is always in a place to safely enter this kind of intensity. That's why we have this guide. There is always a way to practice breathwork—just maybe not the intense parts right now.

Important note: Nothing in this document should be interpreted as medical advice. This list may not cover every possible condition or relevant medical issue. If you have any health concerns—especially any mentioned below—you must consult with your doctor before participating in a breathwork session. This guide is here to inform and empower you to take full responsibility for your own health and safety.

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What You Might Experience in Breathwork

Breathwork can bring about a wide range of experiences. For some people it's like riding a wave—at times smooth and peaceful, at other times raw and intense. And for others… not much might happen at all, and that's perfectly fine too.

In a single session, you might experience:

- Strong physical sensations: tingling, pulsing, vibrations, or shifts in body awareness.
- Arising emotions: anything from bliss to grief to anger to unexpected tears. Emotions move.
- Temperature changes: some people feel hot and sweaty, others suddenly cold or shivery.
- Deep relaxation: like floating in space, entering a dreamlike or meditative state.
- Strong activation: intense energy, movement, or catharsis moving through the body.
- Or nothing at all: which doesn't mean "nothing happened." Sometimes the effects show up subtly or later.

As I often say: breathwork is generally safe for healthy people. But even when you're in good health, sessions can still be physically and emotionally intense. It's all part of the ride. Here's a bit more on what that might look like:

Physical effects can include:

- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Tingling in hands, feet, face
- Feeling hot or cold
- Muscle cramping or stiffness (usually in the hands or feet)
- Involuntary movements like shaking, twitching or shivering
- Dehydration (if you're not well hydrated going in)
- Fainting: In rare cases, the intensity of breathwork—especially when combined with emotional release or overbreathing—can cause someone to faint or briefly lose consciousness. For healthy people lying down in a safe, soft space, this is generally not dangerous, but it should be taken seriously and monitored.
- Dissociation: Some people may experience a sense of disconnection from their body or surroundings. This is often temporary but can be unsettling. Having proper integration and support helps ground the experience.

Emotional effects can include:

- Sudden emotional release or crying
- Feelings of deep vulnerability
- Strong emotional resonance with others in the space (e.g. hearing others cry or shout can trigger something in you)
- Memories, images, or symbolic insights surfacing from your subconscious

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All of the above is welcome in our space. Usually people who experience these effects feel like it is the right thing to feel for them in the moment, often it is even experienced as pleasant.

The breath has a way of showing you what you're ready to feel. However, if you have any medical conditions, the intensity of the session may be problematic. Make sure to read the contra indications carefully.

Contraindications for Breathwork

The following conditions may pose a risk during breathwork and must be taken seriously. If any of these apply to you, contact us beforehand to discuss your participation. This is not to exclude you, but to ensure we can keep things safe for everyone.

- **Pregnancy** (any stage): Intense breathwork can overstimulate the nervous system and potentially impact uterine activity.
- **Severe PTSD or trauma history**: Deep breathing can evoke intense emotional release that may retraumatize if not properly supported.
- **Active use of recreational drugs**: Can interact unpredictably with breathwork and impair your ability to self-regulate.
- **Medication affecting brain chemistry** (e.g., antidepressants, anti-anxiety, ADD/OCD meds): May lower the threshold for adverse reactions like panic or dissociation.
- **Detached retina**: Increased intraocular pressure during intense breathing may worsen the condition.
- **Glaucoma**: Same as above; pressure changes can be risky for eye health.
- **Kidney disease:** Breath retention and pressure can influence fluid and blood pressure regulation.
- **High or low blood pressure:** Certain techniques may dangerously elevate blood pressure.
- **Cardiovascular disease** (including angina, past heart attack or stroke): Breathwork can strain the heart and vascular system.
- **Aneurysm** (any kind): Blood pressure spikes can increase risk of rupture.
- **Uncontrolled thyroid conditions**: Fluctuations in metabolism and nervous system activity may worsen symptoms.

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- **Diabetes (type 1 or 2**): Blood sugar regulation may be affected; also risk of fainting or hypoglycemia.

- **Severe asthma**: Intense breathing can trigger an attack; moderate asthma may be okay if you bring an inhaler and we talk it through.

- **Epilepsy or seizure history:** Hyperventilation may increase the risk of seizures.

- **Bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or prior psychiatric diagnosis**: Altered states may destabilize mood or reality perception.

- **Severe psychosomatic disorders**: These can be aggravated by deep somatic exploration.

- **Recent surgery, stitches, or injury**: Physical stress or tension may interfere with healing or cause pain.

- **Hospitalization for psychiatric/emotional crisis in the last 10 years**: Indicates vulnerability that may resurface under stress.

If you're not sure whether something applies, it's your responsibility to check with your physician. We're happy to support you in this.

Safety Guidelines

- Never practice breathwork while driving, swimming, diving, bathing, or in any unsafe location. The risk of fainting, drowning or disorientation is real.
- Don't push yourself or others to do any breathing technique. Breathwork should never feel forced.

Bodywork and Boundaries

Some exercises may involve supportive physical contact (e.g., diaphragm massage, gentle pressure, or positioning):

- We will always announce and check with you before we apply any bodywork.
- Always communicate boundaries clearly. We will not take a "no" personally.
- Let us know about any physical injuries or sensitivities in advance.

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Code of Conduct & Signature

Our team is there to support you in your best possible experience. For this, we have defined some guidelines of proper conduct that our team is asked to uphold. If you are interested in reading these guidelines, you can find them here.

We use this form to make sure everyone is informed and intentional. Signing it means:

- I've read the contraindications and safety information.
- I understand the risks and responsibilities involved.
- I take full responsibility for my participation and will communicate anything relevant.

Emergency contact: _____
Phone Number: _____
Name: _____
Date: _____
Signature: _____

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