

## We forgot to breathe Barbara Pidgeon

Welcome!

Welcome, welcome. Life is so interesting, interesting and amazing that we are all here. I must say, however, I never considered anything in particular all that interesting up to a certain point. I grew up surrounded by beautiful hills in Scotland - I didn't see them. I was academically 'bright', good at sports and pretty much everything else. But in reality, I was more like a dead person until... I found breath. Abused as a child, I wasn't aware that I was in a perpetual state of dissociation, I considered those who protested about how their own childhood traumas had impacted their adult lives as, at best, mistaken.

A single parent of three, divorced at 28, I decided I better be something like an accountant, I needed to earn a decent living, nagging thoughts that my kids should have a better life than mine. The universe was certainly on my side, I could never have imagined in my life that a multinational organisation like Shell would sponsor me through my professional exams and subsequently pay me to wander around the world through a series of exotic expat postings.

Based in Muscat, Oman my invincible self encountered two mountain bike incidents - the slap on the face many of us wait for before coming out of our personal slumbers, each of us to receive some of what life has to teach us in some unique ways. "I need to change my life" I told a friend - "go and see Shiva" she suggested.

I looked incredulously at Shiva... "I hurt my back, I can hardly stand, how the f\*\*\* is breathing going to help!"

"Yes, twice a day, he insisted, for 20 minutes, watch your breath. Stop running, stop cycling, stop this, stop that..."

I can only assume that some sort of divine intervention, or suchlike, made me follow Shiva's nonsensical advice. And now, looking back, I realise, nothing has been the same since - nothing! My researcher brain compelled me to understand what had happened to me. At some point in the journey I found out that there was that thing I mentioned earlier called dissociation. Essentially I came to realise that I had lived the first 40 years or so of my life in a disconnected state, my mind and body two quite separate entities. Basically, I could think and act without feeling, quite literally. I realised how incredibly sophisticated us living beings are, I just don't believe I would have survived, or certainly I would not thrived, should this innate human intelligence not have jumped in to keep me safe.



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Later in the journey, a posting in Chennai, India an urge to write the biography of a yogi lady in North East India came to be. On publication of *Shakti Manifest* another urge compelled me to forego my international career and all that went with that to become, for a while, a bit of a nomad. I was so grateful that my son Steve accompanied me on a walk from Porto to Santiago.



Everything before had always been in a rush, it was so beautiful to take the time to breathe and meditate together as we made our way on this pilgrimage, a journey within as much as a journey through Portugal and Spain. Carrying everything on our backs, I truly realised the burden of having too much stuff. Several adventures ensued, the 97 mile walk along Scotland's West Highland Way a real eye opener, amazed now at the beauty of those same hills that I failed to notice in my early years.

And now, fifteen years on from that first conscious breath, academic studies in Transpersonal Psychology, Mindfulness, certification in HeartMath, interactions with other breathers, professors, neuroscientists and a lot more, I'm fitter, healthier, happier and I even ran Brighton marathon faster than I ran London twenty years earlier. Importantly... I'm generally kinder, happier, an avid promoter of environmental principles and more... I look incredulously at the sky, I watch the cycles of the moon and realise the interconnectedness of all that is, astonished at life's utter beauty and sophistication.

Life was in many ways easier in my oil days, certainly when asked "what do you do" it was so much simpler just to say "oh I work for Shell, business improvement and suchlike" than "oh I teach people to breathe". And now it is so immensely satisfying to get such positive feedback and appreciation from organisations that I work with on events that I call, for example. Leading From Heart. Certainly, I know, I cannot change the past, but I know essentially also, I wouldn't be me without it.

And so... I hope you have enjoyed listening to the discussion with Dr Ese and I, another great privilege in my life today that I get to meet such beautiful people as she is.

My ultimate desire in all that I do is to make some small impact in supporting all of us to find our inner selves, to be at peace with ourselves and so with all of humanity and all beings. I encourage you to try to integrate some conscious breathing into your life - **I know it makes a difference and... it's free!**