

## HOLOTROPIC BREATHWORK OFFERED TO UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA/TUCSON RESEARCH TEAM

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**S**ince 1986, I have been intimately involved with the work of Stanislav Grof, MD. Certified in Grof's first US three-year training program (along with my friend, Rick Doblin!), I am a longtime practitioner of Holotropic Breathwork and have served as a senior staff member with Grof Transpersonal Training since 1991.

Having worked in a training context for over a decade, one thing that interests me greatly is the application of Non-Ordinary States of Consciousness (NOSC) work in a wider variety of settings. In fact, I have always dreamed of one day being involved in the clinical application of psychedelic therapy. For that reason, I was delighted to receive a call from Rick Doblin in October 2001 asking me to be involved in offering holotropic breathwork to the University of Arizona/Tucson research team.

As many of you know, the University of Arizona/Tucson won FDA approval in July 2001 for a psilocybin/obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) study led by Francisco Moreno, MD (see this issue for update on the OCD study). With both logistical and financial support from MAPS, Stanislav Grof offered a series of talks and a Grand Rounds lecture at the University of Arizona/Tucson in October 2001. In attendance was the psilocybin/OCD research team. Grof discussed how to conduct psychedelic psychotherapy research and helped the team prepare for their treatment sessions. In addition to issues related to 'set and setting', Grof stressed the importance of researchers being committed to their own NOSC work in preparation for working with others.

Although there are some major differences between holotropic breathwork and psychedelic sessions, holotropic breathwork does offer a valuable alternative or adjunct to substance-induced non-ordinary states of consciousness. Over the years I have heard many people greatly experienced with psychedelics report that their breathwork sessions rivaled any psychedelic session they had experienced in terms of depth, intensity, relevance, etc. Because holotropic breathwork sessions are of shorter duration, typically easier to manage, legal, and accessible to a larger number of people, holotropic breathwork is a viable and powerful tool for mobilizing the

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unconscious and introducing people to the incredible realms of the human psyche.

In January, 2002, a colleague (Scotty Johnson of Tucson) and I offered a holotropic breathwork weekend workshop to the University of Arizona team. The weekend was organized by Chris Wiegand, MD, psychiatric resident and coordinator of the study. Also in attendance was Jean McCreedy, a trained volunteer 'sitter' with the project. Unfortunately, Francisco Moreno was not able to attend. While the Friday night session (introduction/orientation/preparation) was held at the University of Arizona Medical Center, we were blessed with a beautiful retreat setting (thanks to Friends of Tibet/Tucson) for our experiential work on Saturday. That day involved two breathwork sessions (one in which a participant was the 'breather'; the other in which he/she was a 'sitter'), and a group process in the evening.

Since few people on the research team have had much personal experience in deep non-ordinary states of consciousness or in conducting psychedelic sessions for others, the workshop was valuable in terms of introducing people to Grof's theoretical framework, issues related to creating a safe and therapeutically sound 'set and setting', and offering participants an opportunity to step outside their professional roles and responsibilities to spend a day in deep inner exploration/personal healing.

While this one workshop seemed like a drop in a very large bucket in terms of the kind of training/preparation those involved in psychedelic research would ideally be offered, it did feel as though we were on the right track. Inspired by the experience, I came home and excitedly projected a training model for professionals involved in research or the clinical application of psychedelic therapy. Conceptualized as four long weekends spread over a year, the focus of the training would be both *personal* and *professional*. In addition to the ongoing use of holotropic breathwork for personal exploration/healing, participants would be offered a theoretical foundation including the history of psychedelic therapy, review of Grof's cartogra-

phy, critical variables in psychedelic therapy (e.g., set and setting), principles of psychedelic therapy (e.g., preparation, session, integration), ethical considerations, etc. Although still a dream, it was a stimulating exercise to create a bridge between a work I know so well - and a work I would love to see manifest.

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I am grateful to Rick Doblin and MAPS for the rich opportunity. I appreciated very much Francisco Moreno's warm responses to correspondence, Chris Wiegand's cheerful support in making things happen, and the interest and enthusiasm of the group. ■

**Diane Haug, M.A., LPCC** is a psychotherapist living in rural northern New Mexico. She is a senior staff member with Grof Transpersonal Training (GTT) and conducts professional training - including the Grof module on Shamanism - throughout the world including South America, Scandinavia, Russia and Europe. Following a longtime interest in the healing potential of non-ordinary states of consciousness, Diane has had the opportunity to work with indigenous healers in Brazil, Peru and Ecuador. In August, 2002, she will be working with Luis Eduardo Luna, *Ayahuasca, Holotropic Breathwork, Psychopharmacology and Consciousness* in Manaus, Brazil. For more information see [www.wasiwaska.org](http://www.wasiwaska.org).