

Book Review:

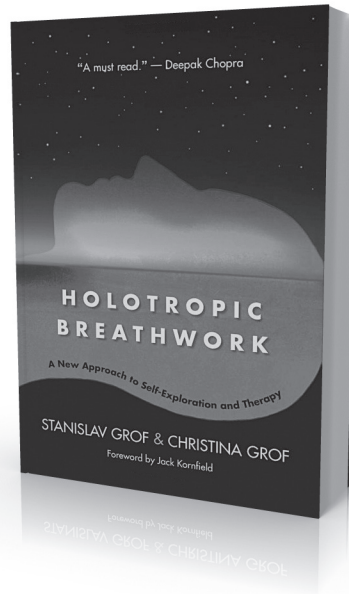
Holotropic Breathwork: A New Approach to Self-Exploration and Therapy

By Karey Pohn, J.D., Ph.D.



Stanislav Grof, M.D., and Christina Grof bring their decades of research on, and lived experience of, holotropic [moving towards wholeness] states of consciousness to light in their latest collaboration, *Holotropic Breathwork: A New Approach to Self-Exploration and Therapy*. Scholars and seekers alike will enjoy this essential text that provides a comprehensive discussion of Holotropic Breathwork, a healing modality the couple pioneered. Although written in a conversational style, its scholarship is evident. The book is richly referenced and provides many resources for deepening understanding. The book and the practice of Holotropic Breathwork reflects and synthesizes Dr. Grof's decades of knowledge, prior wisdom gleaned in his psychedelic research, and his gift to psychology of an expanded cartography of the psyche. Christina's contributions from her hands-on experience and personal research provide a perfect complement to Dr. Grof's heuristic and scholarly discussion. The integrated approach and understanding of science, spirituality, and psyche outlines the experience and practice of Holotropic Breathwork. This book is a rich resource for anyone interested in inner exploration as it gives a guide for orienting oneself on sometimes disorienting journeys.

The book, like the practice of Holotropic Breathwork, begins with set and setting. The authors discuss the historical routes of Holotropic Breathwork in the depth psychological and transpersonal psychological traditions. The genesis of Holotropic Breathwork is drawn from Dr. Grof's former psychedelic research along with its place among experiential therapies. The Grofs explicate the theoretical foundations upon which the practice is grounded, tracing the history and importance of holotropic states and outlining dimensions of



the human psyche. In addition, they describe the essential components for Holotropic Breathwork and give insight into how they came to be part of the practice. The work includes discussion of the healing power of the breath, the therapeutic potential of music, the use of releasing bodywork, and supportive and nourishing physical contact.

Among the many gems in the book is an entire chapter containing a detailed outline of the practice, including examples of the variety of experiences that practitioners encounter in Holotropic Breathwork sessions. Other chapters discuss the beneficial effects of

the practice, the importance of integrating one's experience post-session, facilitator concerns, and how different therapeutic and physical mechanisms operate in Holotropic Breathwork sessions. The book ends with a discussion of the past, present, and future of Holotropic Breathwork, highlighting the benefits of the holotropic perspective and the importance of holotropic states of consciousness in the modern era.

A detailed bibliography provides resources for future study and appendices provide guidance regarding scenarios encountered in Holotropic Breathwork. This book is an important contribution to the fields of psychology and self-exploration and a must-have addition to the library of anyone interested in consciousness. •

Karey Pohn is an adjunct faculty member in the Clinical Psychology Program at Pacifica Graduate Institute. She serves on the board of the Association for Holotropic Breathwork International. Her dissertation, www.cosmicplay.net, uses Grof's work to explore the death/rebirth archetype as it plays out in popular culture.