

River of Breath
Interview with Margot Biestman by Ann Nix

Ann: *I'm wondering what it was that prompted you to get started on this creative project?*

Margot: I was stimulated in talking with you about the challenges of living in today's culture, and I said that I'm interested in how the experience of breath can connect us with our culture.

Ann: *I'm wondering what our culture would be like if it were aligned in a healthy way?*

Margot: It would be more in balance between being, doing, and resting—or listening, taking action, and waiting. This can connect to the breath cycle of inhale, exhale and pause. Being in balance with all parts of the breath cycle let's me be who I am with a sense of ease in this world of fast pace, where I'm expected to achieve at any cost.

Ann: *It's really challenging in this culture because it is oriented to a hierarchical system, in a paradigm different from wholeness, balance, and oneness.*

Margot: *And that's where breathexperience comes in. When I connect with my own breath rhythm that I let come and go on its own, I'm not victimized by our culture's demands, Our culture as a whole seems to be oriented to only one part of the breath cycle—the exhale as a driving force to go fast to achieve. The inhale and pause have no space. When I allow and sense all parts of my breath cycle coming into balance as the movement flows through my body, I can experience my wholeness and oneness. From here I can contribute to the whole in the outer world.*

Ann: Then how did this lead to writing this book? Why did you write it?

Margot: *Dru, who became my wonderful editor and friend, helped me to realize that I had unwittingly been writing about the culture in the same way as the culture which I complained about! I was shocked to discover that I had adapted myself to write in the same way as the mainstream probably to fit in and perhaps gain approval. I had to admit that I had left out my inhale and pause, which offer me receptivity, space, and time to rest. I had unconsciously accentuated my exhale to drive home my message.*

Dru asked me why not just begin to write whatever came from my breath. I was excited, happy, thrilled that would be easy for me. So I began to write each day. My breath called me to write from the essence of who I am. The more I wrote, I began to sense an urgency deep within myself to share what I have experienced of the vast intelligence of breath. I wanted to connect with others by connecting intimately with myself. I loved being in the process of writing and drawing just in the moment of sensing breath movement.

I sensed that writing my truths from my personal experience might stimulate and inspire others to find their own truths through sensing movement of breath in their bodies as they read, look at the drawings and collages, and explore breath practice sequences. I hoped to support not only my own growth, but also extend myself to support new growth arising in our world. In gratitude, this book is my response-ability—my way of giving back what I have received.

Ann: I was inspired by the style of writing you chose. Can you say something about that?

Margot: What are you referring to?

Ann: I realize it was a daily practice for you but it has a poetry-like form to it. I wonder how that developed.

Margot: Well, since I was writing just in the moment of sensing breath moving in my body, I let the words flow from me onto the page. I enjoyed it so much that I realized how breath needed space and asked myself how I could create that in print. Ah, poetic form, I thought—with lots of space between the lines and the text. I could also show space through my drawings in breath movement. I was excited.

Ann: I'm curious. I know you've been doing breathexperience for many years. When you think back to the time you started this practice and think about yourself now, what are the most important changes in your life?

Margot: When I started breath experience twenty years ago, I was suffering from severe back pain which limited me in my life. I had to quit teaching and had to lie down much of the time, and wondered what I was going to do with the rest of my life.

Now I'm happy to say that I have no pain at all. I move with more flexibility and ease, much like I was when I was a child. I have lots of energy for creative activities. In fact breath guided me to the source of my creativity and to the source of my life-force.

My relationships are very special to me. When I connect with my breath, we can be with one another with authenticity much of the time—that is, with my husband of fifty-six years, my family, and dear friends. I find when I am intimate with myself, others are often touched to be intimate with themselves. I'm blessed with a rich life.

Ann: What do you most want to communicate to someone who is reading this book?

Margot: That they have the power within themselves to heal and grow through discovering their own truths, so they come to sense their well-being, passion, vitality, enthusiasm, and excitement about life.

Ann: I notice you use the phrase “movement of breath.” I sense that means something to you that is different from what most people think or experience.

Margot: By movement of breath, I mean, to sense the actual movement of inhale, exhale, pause in the body, and allow it to flow without my controlling or directing it.

People may not be aware of their patterns of holding their breath. Then, if they direct their breath by counting the number of inhales and exhales, they place another layer on top of the old pattern. When they become aware of something different through the flow of their natural breath in their body, then the patterns diminish or sometimes even fall away. Then they unfold with vitality and ease, and life becomes different for them and those around us.