



Conscious Life presents

# ANXIETY SUPER CONFERENCE

## Harness anxiety energy and the power of breath

**Guest: Michael Stone**

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### **[00:00:10] Alex Howard**

Welcome everyone, to this interview where I'm really excited to be talking with Michael Stone.

Firstly, Michael, welcome and thank you so much for joining me.

### **Michael Stone**

Thank you for having me on the conference.

### **Alex Howard**

Michael has been on a few of our events previously, but we haven't had a chance to connect directly, so I'm really excited to get into this together.

We're going to be talking about breathwork as a modality for working with anxiety, and there's going to be a practical exercise both at the beginning and the end of this session. So we're really aiming to bring what we're talking about to life. And I think that's particularly important when we're talking about a practice such as breathwork.

Just to give people a bit of Michael's background, Michael Stone attended his first breathwork session in 2005 and was blown away by the power of the breath. It was such a life changing experience for him that he decided to focus his life around breathwork in support of world healing.

In 2018, he birthed Neurodynamic Breathwork Online in order to achieve his vision of allowing anybody in the world that wants to experience the benefits of expanded states of awareness to be able to do safely from the comfort of their own home.

In the last 3 years, he has facilitated over 800 online sessions of Neurodynamic Breathwork with participants from over 120 countries.

So Michael, before we jump into some of the conversation together, I know you were keen to start with a practical exercise just to help people land a little bit more in the conversation that we're having. So I'm going to hand over to you for that to start.

**[00:01:58] Michael Stone**

Thank you, Alex. Just a little bit of introduction before we get into the exercise, and that is that breathwork is a much broader subject than just having to deal with anxiety as we're going to talk to you today.

And in ancient and prehistoric societies, breath has been used as one of the principal tools for healing practice, for self-realization, and it's even reflected in all of the ancient languages.

So, for instance, in Chinese, Qi means the air that we breathe, but also it means the energy of life. In Hebrew, Ruach means both breath and creative spirit. In Latin, Spiritus is both breath and spirit. In ancient Greek, Numa is both air or breath and spirit.

So it's been an important understanding that historical societies have had that breath has an incredibly powerful effect on our consciousness and on our emotional states. And we can actually change our emotional states by changing our breath because it's like our body associates different emotional states with different types of breathing.

So once we start to consciously understand and take control of our breath, we have much more of a power, I would say, just to really work with our emotional states and work with our internal world.

So I'm just going to start with just a really quick 2 minute breathing exercise. And this is something that I use myself if I'm feeling really tense and I just want to relax more into my body.

And there's two parts of it. The first one is, I'll just demonstrate it in a minute, just kind of shaking your body. And all animals, when they have trauma, one of the first things that they naturally do is they want to shake to release the trauma. For instance, if a deer crosses the road and it gets hit by a car and it's kind of stunned, before it scoots off the first thing it'll do is shake. And human beings, it also works the same way. So that can be very powerful just with doing that.

And then just do a little breathing exercise. So basically what we're going to do is just do a little demo. So the first thing is putting your feet flat on the floor and just shoulder length apart, shoulder width. And then just let your body shake for 20 seconds and just let it do whatever it wants to do. And if sounds want to come out, let them come out. And just basically just be a vessel for whatever your body wants to do. Don't try to figure out how you should do it.

So you're just going to be moving and shaking. And then after that we're going to do 7 breaths. And the breath will be basically, you're going to keep your feet shoulder length apart. You're going to put your palms forward and you're going to look up like you're just looking at the sky.

And then you'll breathe into the nose for 4 seconds, but doing a diaphragmatic breath where as you breathe in, your belly moves out, not just into your chest and then out through the mouth for 8 seconds.

And when you're breathing out, let whatever sound wants to come out, come out of your body. Whatever your body wants to express to the universe, let it come out. And we'll just be doing that 7 times. It'll take about 2 minutes total.

So let's get started. All right. Just taking a deep breath and standing up, putting your feet shoulder width apart and just closing your eyes and then just letting your body move and shake and release any way it wants to. Just for 20 seconds. And I'll tell you at the end.

**[00:05:42]**

If your body wants to make a sound, let it come. Just let it shake and see how good that feels.

Just a few more seconds. Okay, and then just stop the shaking, take a deep breath and relax.

And now we'll be taking 7 breaths, putting your palms forward, putting your head up, looking at the sky. So in through the nose, 4 seconds. Out through the mouth, 8 seconds. Making whatever sound wants to come out.

So number one, in through the nose, 1 2 3 4 and out through the mouth, 8 seconds, 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8. And just keep going.

Staying with it. Breathing deeply into the belly.

Then just relaxing into your body for a moment, standing for a few more seconds, and then just slowly opening your eyes very gently with a very soft gaze, just bringing your attention back to the session.

And just noticing, has your consciousness changed a bit? Do you feel a bit more relaxed, a little bit lighter? And that's just with less than 2 minutes of just a very short breathing technique.

### **Alex Howard**

I feel much more present. I had a crazy day so I just let that land.

Michael, I know that for you, anxiety was a big issue in some of your development. I'd love to hear a little bit about your experience and how that brought you to some of the work that you're doing now.

### **Michael Stone**

When I was younger, anxiety was a huge issue for me to the point where I even developed some OCD behaviors, obsessive compulsive. And looking back at it now, it was because I felt that the world was an unsafe place. It was like a scary place to me when I was growing up for a variety of reasons that I didn't understand at that moment. I actually got a better understanding of it later when I was doing breathwork sessions. I just knew that when I was out in the world, it didn't feel safe.

And I felt like I was out of control. That was the thing. If I could just have more control in my life, I'd be okay. I wouldn't be so anxious. And it was to the point where I was doing things like I would walk to school every day, and you know how on the sidewalk, every couple of feet, there's, like a little line that goes across. I had to step on every line going to school. So instead of a 10 minute walk to school, it was more like a 35 minute walk to school, because if I missed the line, I had to go back and touch it and then go forward.

And it was just one of the ways that I feel like, okay, at least I have control over this. I can touch the lines. So it was really just this kind of cry for more control in my life.

And in school, I didn't really feel very safe with the other kids for a variety of reasons, part of which was when I first went to school, I didn't speak any English. German was my first language. And so when I started to talk to the kids, they all looked at me like I was a martian. They started laughing at me because they had no idea what I was talking about.

**[00:10:58]**

And also, I have a Jewish heritage, so I went through some stuff around that when I was growing up at school, and I just thought kids were mean in school. So I had this general anxiety that was with me to some degree all the time. It affected my sleep. It affected my life.

And that time, I didn't really have a good understanding of anxiety. And I just thought it was something that was bad that I had to get rid of. At the time I didn't understand that actually, anxiety does have a purpose, and there is a positive aspect of anxiety. But what I did know is I didn't want to feel like that.

And so I started to try to figure out, okay, how can I feel more in control of my life? How can I really resolve this issue so I don't feel this anxiety all the time?

And I have a pretty intense mind. So it was on my mind day and night. Like, what can I do? And the first thing I came up with, okay, I don't feel that comfortable with kids, but I do feel very comfortable with adults. Adults felt like they were more respectful, I could talk to them better and they would understand better what I was going through.

So I said, okay, how can I recreate my world? So I spend less time with kids, more time with adults. And so I said, okay, if I want to spend more time with adults, I need to do the things that adults do, not like going on the playground and playing, I need to do other things. So I said, okay, what interests me?

So I started looking at games because I always loved games. And so I picked a couple of games that I was really excited about. I said, I'm going to learn how to play these games so I can be around adults.

So the first one was chess. And so I started learning chess when I was 9 years old. And once I take something on, I want to be really good at it. And I figured the better I am, the more attention I'm going to get from the adults. So I just studied day and night. I was like a crazy person with chess, to the point that when I was 13 years old, I actually participated in the US Open for chess, it was in Los Angeles.

### **Alex Howard**

Wow.

### **Michael Stone**

And the other game that I was interested in was a card game called Bridge. Some people haven't heard of it, some people have. But for a card game, it's quite complicated. There's memory that's important, you have to... But kids don't play bridge. It's all adults, basically.

So again, I was playing in tournaments. I would go play partners with my mom or my dad and go to a place where it was all adults. And not only did chess and Bridge allow me to develop skill sets, which I use to these days, like my memory is incredible just from Bridge, because you have to memorize all 52 cards as they come down. And you also have to start to be able to read people, their emotions and their facial expressions to figure out what they're doing and what cards they have.

So I started to develop more of my emotional IQ. And with chess, you start to develop better spatial visualization skills and also other things too. So all these things, I started to develop and develop

these skill sets that again today have really helped me move forward, develop my businesses, and to a great degree, made me the person that I am today.

### **[00:14:29] Alex Howard**

It's interesting because one of the things, as you talk about anxiety, often people talk about the negative of anxiety, but what I'm also hearing you say is that the fast thinking mind and the ability to think to the future... And part of the tricky thing of anxiety is often we run scenarios with, what if this happens? What if that happens? But of course, when you're playing strategic games like chess and bridge, that's actually really helpful.

### **Michael Stone**

There's actually research on that now that shows that any type of emotions, as long as they're activating emotions, whether they're negative or positive, actually support creativity. They just do it in different ways.

They're not talking about suppressive emotions like depression and things like that, but activating emotions like anxiety, fear, or also on the positive side, joy and happiness actually expands your creativity.

And the ones that have negative impact or whatever is, like anxiety, do it through developing perseverance and persistence where you don't give up until you find an answer. And that's really what I was doing. It's like I'm going to do what I need to do. I'm going to get the answer to this. I don't want to feel this.

So it has to be uncomfortable in order to get you to move and to actually do things. So that's what they call useful anxiety.

Now, on the other side of it, there's also non useful anxiety. And that's the kind where it's just more of a general anxiety where you're not really sure exactly what's causing it. So there's no action you can take to fix it. So that is not helpful.

And it puts you into, many times, a state that's, to a certain degree, dysfunctional. Because there's really nothing you can do. You're just feeling the anxiety all the time. Or when you start to catastrophize and take these little things and make them into these huge things and just constantly thinking about them.

So to me, just learning that, and much more recently when the research was out, I started to understand more about what happened in my childhood and how there were two kinds of anxieties I was feeling.

The useful kind which pushed me to resolve it and allowed me to develop very important skill sets. But I also had this kind of general sense of dread, so to speak, that something bad was going to happen without really knowing exactly what it was, and of the world being unsafe. That resulted in those OCD behaviors, like the stepping on the... And also I was chewing my nails, I was twisting my hair. I was doing all this kind of stuff just to try to have some feeling of control.

So that distinction is very important because anxiety has an evolutionary purpose. That's why it was developed. And so once you can differentiate those and actually take the useful anxiety and use it for what it was designed for, which is basically to resolve things, to create actions that resolve the

underlying thing that you're anxious about, you can create more creativity and actually expand your skill sets.

**[00:17:44]**

And the kind of anxiety that's not useful, that's the kind you can work with with the breath and with breathwork as a major tool to resolve that type of anxiety.

**Alex Howard**

So let's come into that piece a little bit more. I'm curious as to how, in your own journey, as we're using that as a reference point here, how has breathwork helped and supported you in your anxiety journey?

**Michael Stone**

Breathwork has a variety of purposes and a variety of results. And the type of breathwork that I've done and that I developed for myself, my own modality, which is Neurodynamic Breathwork has to do with doing faster, deeper breathing to music over a period of time.

And it creates certain physiological changes in your body that support having better access to emotions that have been suppressed and to material that's in your unconscious mind that can actually influence you. Because 95% of your information that comes in goes straight to your unconscious mind. And it's running the show, but you have no idea that it's running the show, but it's still kind of driving the bus, so to speak.

And in breathwork you start to get in touch with your unconscious, start to get in touch with seeing what are these patterns, these conditionings that are actually running your life? Along with getting better access to these suppressed emotions.

And when I first heard about breathwork back in the day, if I'd have heard of it when I was a kid, I wouldn't have done it because there was no science behind it back then. And I'm a bit of a science geek so if something doesn't have science behind it, it's very difficult for me to really give it a chance and to dive into it.

But more recently, there actually is quite a bit of science behind, at least on a physiological breathwork basis, how breathwork works and why it works. So when you're doing the faster, deeper breathing, it makes your blood more alkaline because it's basically reducing the amount of CO<sub>2</sub>. Your body's recreating the CO<sub>2</sub>, so it's changing the PH of your blood. And there's a part of your brain called the default mode network that has less activity when you're doing this faster, deeper breathing.

And that's kind of the orchestra of your brain, so to speak. And part of it is your prefrontal cortex, which is the part where your thinking mind is happening. So it quiets the thinking mind, and it puts you into a space that many times people only get when they've done meditation for years and years and years, where the thoughts quiet down and you can connect in a very deep basis to your inner world and to the, what I call, inner guiding intelligence. This drive towards healing, health, and wholeness that we all have.

**Alex Howard**

And of course, also part of what you're doing is you're coming home to your body.

**[00:20:46] Michael Stone**

Yes.

**Alex Howard**

And it's interesting, I was reflecting as you were talking about some of the behaviors you developed yourself as a child. I think you mentioned biting your fingernails and pulling your hair. In a sense, it strikes me as other ways of trying to get to the body and connect to the body, but of course, breathwork is a whole different way of doing that.

**Michael Stone**

Exactly. I could even call breathwork an active embodiment meditation, because that's really what it is. It's putting you fully into your body and allowing the healing to take place when you're in that embodied state.

So once I understood there was science behind it, I was thinking, okay, I'll give it a try. And the first time that I tried breathwork was actually from an experience where I ended up down in Peru for a completely unrelated thing. And I was down there with the woman that I just want to hang out with for a week. And we ended up doing an Ayahuasca journey.

I'd never heard of Ayahuasca at the time, I had no idea what it was. It was just we were going out together into this piece of land that this woman had purchased to protect it in the Amazon. She said, do you want a little shaman to go out with you for a week? I said sure, bring him along, why not? He didn't speak any English, but we had a translator.

So the first night he goes, would you guys like to participate in this religious ceremony that we do down here? Now, I'm from a chemical engineering background, I just don't say yes to those kinds of things. I always want to know what the story is, what's involved. He goes, it's very simple. I go out into the rainforest and I grab this leaf and this vine, I boil it up, and you drink it, and then you have this experience.

**Alex Howard**

He didn't explain what happens in the experience?

**Michael Stone**

No, he didn't. He just said it's a religious experience that we do here.

So I'm ready to go, forget about this, but the woman that I was with goes, yeah, we've got to do this, this is amazing. I'd taken a week out of my life and spent all the time and money to get to know her down in Peru to see if maybe we're a good match, maybe we can move forward together. And now it's like I'm going to look like a wimp if I don't do this.

I was in this mental struggle. My science mind is going, don't you do this, Michael. But the other piece of my mind is going, I just want to see if something could happen with this woman. Oh my God, would this really be so bad? And really this was the first time in my life that I really just spontaneously said, let's just go for it. And I said, okay, whatever. If I die, at least it's in the rainforest, it's in a beautiful space. Whatever, let's give it a try.

**[00:23:35]**

And I had this amazing experience. It was like the first time that I really felt connected and safe in the universe. It just blew my mind.

And so when I got back, I'm going, okay, if I can have this experience with a substance, the receptors are there in my brain, there's got to be other ways to have the experience that don't involve flying down to Peru drinking a substance because that's not going to happen.

**Alex Howard**

And what happens after you drink it as well.

**Michael Stone**

Exactly. That's how I found breathwork basically. And I originally was in holotropic breathwork which was developed by a psychiatrist named Dr Stan Grof. And he developed that modality through his work with LSD psychotherapy. And when it was banned, then he spent a bunch of time researching what historical societies had done in modern consciousness theory to develop a breathwork modality where people could access the same type of, what he called, expanded states of awareness as when people were taking Ayahuasca or LSD.

**Alex Howard**

I'm curious because I know then you developed your own methodology of what the journey from these different experiences and practices, how that then evolved into the work that you now do.

**Michael Stone**

Yes, I did holotropic breathwork for like 10 years and I actually became a facilitator because I was seeing these amazing results people were getting, so I wanted to present it to people in Los Angeles where I live.

And the breakthrough that I first had with that was I found out why I felt like the world was an unsafe place. It was a huge breakthrough because it was just unconscious conditioning from childhood. Both of my parents are Nazi Germany, escapees Jewish, and when I grew up I heard their stories. They would tell me what the story was and how they escaped.

My mom's family was in Germany for hundreds of years and her father, my grandfather, had gotten the Iron Cross in World War I, the highest award they can give. One of my ancestors had paid Napoleon to go around the village instead of burning it down so he'd save the entire village. And then from one day to the next they had to run for their lives.

And so they didn't tell me what meaning to create out of that, but in my child mind the meaning I created is, the world is an unsafe place. If you can't even trust your society, you can't trust people who you've been around for hundreds of years, who can you trust?

So that was my first big breakthrough in breathwork, where once I brought that to consciousness, that was creating a tremendous amount of not useful anxiety. And I could really start to work with it and work through it now that I knew what the source was.



**[00:26:22]**

So once I started having these breakthroughs I go, okay, I've got to present this to the world. And I did holotropic breathwork for like 10 years, but my biggest frustration was it's an amazing modality, but it has to be done in person and it is an all day event basically. There's these two breathing sessions, it's like 12 hours.

And I just thought there was just a very small number of people that I could really involve in it. Even one workshop for 30 or 40 people took days and days and days of preparation, a huge venue, flying people in. And I just thought, okay, this is something that really has a chance to change world consciousness. I saw people getting more connected to nature, more connected to themselves, developing more self trust, and just making huge changes in their lives.

So I really just realized at that point that the only way to make this happen and being able to reach enough people is to do it online. And it immediately brought up anxiety, of course.

And the anxiety was going into these thinking patterns, who do you think you are to be able to create an online business? You're like retirement age, you're like 65. What are you thinking? That's for young kids, online businesses. You're going to fail, you're going to look like an idiot. Or you hate social media. You don't like doing this Facebook stuff. You're going to have to do that. Why should you do things you're not comfortable with? All this kind of anxiety provoking thoughts started coming up.

But at that point, I already had worked through this kind of stuff, I said, okay, these are just thoughts. They don't mean anything. They're just auto thoughts, and I don't have to believe them. And so rather than having it be non useful where I just got into this paralysis state, I said, okay, this is interesting information that's being brought up, how can I work through these things so I can make sure it's successful?

So again, I was using the same thing as when I was a kid. What skills can I develop to make sure that I can be successful online? And where I can enjoy doing Facebook and doing online marketing rather than being resistant to it and that kind of thing.

### **Alex Howard**

So in a sense, this is where the helpful version of anxiety came in, that you were able to strategize and see the options and see the opportunities in different places.

### **Michael Stone**

Exactly. One of the important things that really allowed me to process through, because I was in touch with the benefit that I could bring to the world through getting this modality out there. And that overrode any type of anxiety or any of these thoughts that I had because I started to look at, okay, what are the pluses? What are the minuses? Not just this auto thing of looking, what are the possible ways that could go wrong? And I started to see this could really make a difference in what's happening in the world.

So I did some testing on my own, I launched a platform and a few years later now we've got 65,000 people on the platform from over 120 different countries and it's just had this amazing impact on people's lives.

**[00:29:15] Alex Howard**

It's amazing. Can you walk us through a little bit of what happens during a Neurodynamic Breathwork session? What's the format? What's the frame? What happens?

**Michael Stone**

Absolutely. So a Neurodynamic Breathwork workshop, it's 2 hours, and it's in an online structure so it's like through Zoom, just like this. And so people basically just have to have an Internet connection in order to do it. You can do it on the phone. You can do it on a computer.

And the whole structure is set up in order to allow people to feel safe and be comfortable enough to really open up and release. Breathwork doesn't work well unless people are in this zone of safety. And also it's incredibly powerful to work in groups because people feel the connection support of the group.

And it's interesting because it falls right in with PVT, polyvagal theory, which in essence, the best healing state is when you're feeling safe and when there's also a social component to it. And so that's what the structure that I created as best as possible, given that it was online, in order to have people have really profound, deep experiences that were very similar to what they could have when they were in person.

And so it starts with a 40, 45 minutes introductory talk where I explain everything that could happen, the types of experiences that people can have, so that when things happened they wouldn't go into this place of, oh my God, is this normal? Is something horrible happening? I like to really prepare them properly.

It's like the elephant in the room theory. If you warn someone that an elephant is going to run through the room, when it runs through the room, okay, that's cool. But if you don't, they flip out. And there's stuff that happens in breathwork that, if you're not prepared for it, can be quite disconcerting or even scary.

For instance, there's something called tetany where people get this tension in their hands, where their hands feel like this, they're totally tense, they can't move. It maximizes the tension and then it releases. And it really feels good on the other side of it, but if you're not prepared for it and you can't move your hands and they're stiff like this, oh my God, am I going to be like this for the rest of my life?

We go through a whole 40 minutes talk every single session, even if there's one new person, so that they can feel completely comfortable and safe. Again, we talk about not only all the experiences they can have, but how best to drop into the process, which is working with emotions that come up, working with sounds, working with body movements.

And people used to think that, back in the day when I was a kid, that the best thing you could do with, especially negative emotions, was suppress them back into your body primarily with medication. It was Valium back then. One year there were 1.3 billion pills of Valium that were prescribed in the United States. It was intense.

**Alex Howard**

Wow.

### **[00:32:32] Michael Stone**

What they didn't understand is that if you bury an emotion, it doesn't die, you just give it eternal life basically, it's still there. And the only way to ultimately work with emotions and really release them is to deal with them.

But we're not used to thinking like that, especially when we're children, many times it's very difficult for us to deal with strong emotions. We don't have the resources, so we start to get used to suppressing.

And so it's just this remarkable thing when people start to see that they can actually feel these emotions and not only is it healing, just to release them when you feel great afterwards, but there's learnings that you can have from these emotions, they're teachers.

### **Alex Howard**

Sorry to interrupt you, but I also think that often part of the issue is that we can recognize that suppressing and not feeling emotions is unhelpful, but how do we actually access those emotions? That's where it feels to me that breathwork has a very important role to play because it allows us to go from an intellectual understanding about that to an actual felt experience.

### **Michael Stone**

100% Alex. And part of it is the actual physiology, because when the default mode network has less activity in your brain, one of the things it does, it has a suppressive effect on other parts of your brain, like the limbic system which have suppressed memories, suppressed emotions. And when it gets more deactivated, those things flow to the surface more easily and you can access them more easily.

So it creates this pathway for you to access this stuff that's kind of stuck inside of you, that normally even if you wanted to, it'd be very difficult to access because you've got this whole mechanism of suppression you've been doing for 20 or 30 years.

So the physiology and also the psychology, we explain how healing is just to let yourself feel your emotions and to process through instead of suppressing them and how much damage it can do to your body when you're constantly suppressing, suppressing, suppressing and how it's not good for your health.

So once they have that understanding, intellectually, they have the physiological piece which allows the emotions to come up, they're really willing to finally feel them and see what happens. And they start to see that on the other side of feeling these deep emotions, they're still okay. So they start to regain trust in themselves. That's an incredibly important aspect.

Many people, especially if they've had trauma in their past life, one of the unfortunate side effects is they lose self-trust because there was something that happened that they couldn't deal with in life. So they have this thinking pattern, I can't deal with life. And it's very difficult to heal when you don't trust yourself, because ultimately you have to. Even in breathwork, you have to trust yourself and surrender to the process and trust this inner guidance in your psyche that's bringing up these experiences that you're going to be able to handle them.

And one of the benefits of breathwork is that people start to regain that trust. It's just a beautiful thing to see when people, after a few of these sessions and they start to experience these things are

coming up, and I'm dealing with them and I'm learning from them. I never thought I could handle this. And they start to get more confidence in themselves. They start to bring that confidence out in the world.

**[00:35:59]**

When I do surveys of people that have done the breathwork, all those things are things that people say that those are things that they've gained. And not just 10% or 20% of the people that do the breathwork, it's like 40%, 50%, 60%, 70% say that they get relief from anxiety, more clarity on their purpose in life, more trust in themselves, ability to manage stress better, better connection to source.

So this isn't just on a theoretical basis, people really do get these results in breathwork, and all those things are accessible and possible in the breathwork sessions.

**Alex Howard**

In a sense, what you're describing is also a transforming of one's relationship with their emotions and with their heart. And I think often what also happens is when we don't feel our emotions, it's like the monster that gets bigger and bigger and bigger the further you get away from it.

And somehow, as you touched on, when we have the experience of really going into and feeling and processing our emotions, we actually feel better, not worse on the other side. And I think in time that in of itself becomes self-motivating because it changes our relationship to those feelings that are arising.

**Michael Stone**

Yes, exactly. And people actually get to the place where they see their emotions as their friends and teachers instead of as the enemy, so to speak, even the negative emotions. And that makes a huge difference when they go back into their lives.

You can actually take, it's like we say, breathwork reflects life, reflects breathwork. So as people do more breathwork, and the platform that I developed allows people... We do five live sessions every week. It's the only online breathwork in the world that does that. Where people can actually develop into a practice like yoga. Where they can do it on a regular basis. I've had people who have been doing it for 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, where they come once a week and breathe.

And it's basically almost like a nervous system reboot, where every week, there's always going to be stuff that builds up inside of you just from things that happen. And in the same way that on your computer, if you never reboot it, it's going to start to have problems. So every week you're always told to reboot your computer even more than that so it'll be more effective faster.

And it's the same thing with our nervous system. It needs reboots every once in a while. And breathwork is just an amazing nervous system reboot that you can use in just a couple of hours. You just come out, you feel more embodied, you feel less dense and more empowered to really take on life.

**Alex Howard**

That's awesome. I know you've got a little sample exercise to bring this to life a little bit more. So I wanted to invite you to lead us in that practice.

**[00:38:55] Michael Stone**

Okay. Sure. Thanks, Alex.

So what we're going to do is we're going to do... And this is just a very short 6 minute breathing session. And for those of you who want to dive into this more, you can just come onto my platform, which is [breathworkonline.com](https://breathworkonline.com). Everybody gets a session for free if you really want to do the entire 1 hour session that I've developed, the Neurodynamic Breathwork.

So this is going to be a 6 minute breathing session. So what you want to do is, first of all, you want to get comfortable right now, and this is going to be a closed eye experience. And you want to either use a headset or something. The sound quality is important. And you want to make it, not so it's like a rock concert loud, but that it fills your senses.

At the beginning I'm going to start with just doing a couple of minutes or a minute little relaxation exercise, and then I'll get you going with the breath.

And basically the breathing technique is you're going to be breathing in and out through the mouth and doing diaphragmatic breath. So when you breathe in, if you put your hands on your belly, your belly gets pushed out, your diaphragm expands, and you're going to be doing continuous breathing. We're always breathing in or breathing out.

So full, deep breaths in and out through the mouth and taking full, deep breaths. But keeping your body relaxed. Sometimes when we breathe deeply, we put tension in our arms or whatever. Just keep your whole body open, loose and relax. Make it a full, deep and enjoyable breath. And just putting all of your intention on the breath. Just staying with that for just 4 or 5 minutes with that technique.

And when it gets to the end and the music gets a little softer, your breath may want to just calm down and go to a more gentle rhythm, that's totally fine. As it gets very soft towards the end just follow what your body wants to do with the breath in the last couple of minutes.

And it knows what it needs to do. In the same way that we turn this experience over to this deeper level of your psyche that has this drive towards healing, health and wholeness in the same way that your body does. If you have a cut, your body knows exactly what to do. Your psyche has the same thing, it's just that we get in the way.

So this is like shutting down your ego mind so you're getting out of the way so you can really access this inner healing capability. So you just want to let whatever wants to happen, happen. Don't set any intention. It's a very short session, so you may not have any emotions at all. It may just be a relaxation experience. So just really open up just to whatever wants to happen right now and just let go. Just stay focused on the breath and being an open, surrendered space.

And again towards the end, if your breath wants to slow down and breathe normally, even in and out through the nose, it's all good.

So let me get everything set up here. We'll get started now. You can just do this sitting in your chair. It's totally fine. You don't need to lay down or whatever. You can just sit and either close your eyes or put an eye mask on. Just take a deep breath.

And I'm just going to play just a few seconds of the sound just so you can adjust your sound level, so it doesn't come in too soft or too loud. So just take this time to just adjust your sound level.

**[00:42:56]**

Okay?

Now closing your eyes and bringing your attention inside. Just noticing the breath, not trying to influence it in any way. Breathing in a normal fashion.

And now just scanning your body and seeing are there any areas of your body that feel tense? Just scanning through each body part one by one and releasing any tension that you can. Just visualizing the tension release into the universe. Many times we have tension in our jaw muscles. You want to relax your forehead. Just doing a self check. Visualizing any tension you can find and releasing.

Now, taking another deep breath. Now starting to deepen the breath. Starting to take full, deep breaths in and out through the mouth, but keeping the body relaxed.

When you breathe in, feeling your belly move out as you breathe deeply into your belly, deeply into the lungs. Breathing fully and deeply, deeply and fully in and out through the mouth. Putting all your intention, all your attention on the breath. Breathing fully and deeply, deeply and fully, fully and deeply.

And now breathing in a way where there are no gaps. We're always breathing in or breathing out. Just creating a wonderful circle of breath. Breathing fully and deeply, deeply and fully, fully and deeply.

Already you may be feeling a little bit different in your body, just noticing that but staying focused on the breath. Putting all your attention on the breath. Breathing fully and deeply, deeply and fully, fully and deeply.

Now just picking up the pace a little bit but staying focused on the fullness and the depth of the breath. It's much more important than the speed, but just a little bit faster than normal. Breathing deeper and faster, faster and deeper, deeper and faster.

And for some people it supports them in making a little sound on the outbreath. Just seeing if that feels right and if so, just going for it. Faster and deeper, deeper and faster, faster and deeper.

In a moment, the music will begin. Have a wonderful journey.

Now if you haven't done so already, just slowing down the breath to a normal rhythm. Breathing very gently. Being with yourself. Just noticing if anything shifted. Do you feel a little calmer? No judgment, just noticing.

Then when you're ready, you can just gently open your eyes with a very soft gaze. Maybe stretch your body a little bit. Stretching your arms and your legs. Feeling what it's like to be in this amazing body that we've all been gifted.

That was just a really short, teeny little taster, 5 minutes, more gentle music. In the actual hour long breathwork sessions, there's really a very wide variety of experiences people have. Some people get visuals like in psychedelic sections. They feel like they're in past lives or rebirthing or connected to the universe or dissolved in the stars or they go back to their childhood and re-experience things in more self-empowering ways.

**[00:54:48]**

This incredibly wide variety of experience, and it's different each time. Every experience is completely different. So you do breathwork today, one thing will happen, you do it tomorrow, whatever's up for processing in that moment, whatever your psyche feels is ready to process, that's what's going to come up.

So it's just really amazing in that way that you can never predict. And that's why we want to let go of all expectations and just surrender to the process. The more you learn surrender and breathwork, the more you can bring it back into your life. And the more deeply you can surrender into your life, the more deeply you can experience it and appreciate it.

### **Alex Howard**

I was just going to say, in a sense, the very act of surrendering and trusting the process of the flow is exactly the antidote to much of the anxiety people experience.

### **Michael Stone**

Exactly. This is a great practice gym, breathwork. We call it surrender gym, where you can on a regular basis start to imprint that surrendering and strengthen that neural pathway, that way of being and bring it back into your life.

### **Alex Howard**

That's beautiful. Michael, for people that want to find out more about you and your work, you mentioned the website earlier, mention that again and also a bit of how people can go further with this.

### **Michael Stone**

My website is [breathworkonline.com](https://breathworkonline.com) and anybody who feels like you are curious at this point and want to check out what a real longer session looks like, everybody has a free first session. There's just a button that says "Try Free Session".

And then if you do resonate with it, we're now at this moment also offering where you can participate for a whole month for free if you want to do that. We have 20 live sessions. If you're really curious about what it's like to develop a breathwork practice and what kind of benefits it has, you'll get an email on that after your first session.

In addition, we have a subscription program which is incredibly inexpensive, where you can do, every month up to all 20 sessions. And it also includes a community structure where again, it's designed to support people in feeling safe and being in a community social structure where people can share their breathwork experiences where we give free integration courses like, for instance, EFT, which I'm sure you're familiar with, Emotional Freedom Techniques, where there's been a lot of research about how that's incredibly helpful with anxiety and other things like embodied movement.

So we have a whole structure that's really supportive of not only having a deep breathwork experience but also integrating it and bringing that back into your life where you can actually use it, be in a more embodied place in your life and work more effectively with anxiety and any emotion that comes up.

**[00:57:55] Alex Howard**

Fantastic. Michael, I feel very different to how I did when I started, which I'm grateful for. Thank you so much for sharing yourself and the practice today.

**Michael Stone**

Thank you for having me. It's been a pleasure.