

GPBA Professional Training Standards for Breathworkers

The following training standards for professional breathworkers was ratified in 2003 by the collaborative effort of some 22 breathwork schools and training programs around the world.

A breathwork training is a course of study designed to train people to be professional breathworkers. Trainees may choose not to practice after graduation but the course is designed to give them the skills and knowledge to work with clients as a profession, should they choose to do so. This is markedly different to a breathwork seminar where participants work on their personal development through the medium of breathwork.

Such seminars are often called 'trainings.' What follows refers to the training of professional breathworkers and not to personal growth seminars.

The following recommendations are based on a synthesis of contributions of established breathwork training schools worldwide.

1. Length of Training

Requirement:

A minimum of 400 hours of training time over a minimum of 2 years training period. The division of these hours may include classroom training, assisting at Breathwork Training, Supervised practice with clients, observation of Breathwork sessions, individual Breathwork sessions received from trainers, written assignments and readings and may vary with programs.

2. Entry Requirements

Requirement:

Training staff must assess each applicant's ability to utilize breathwork training effectively and responsibly.

Criteria for this assessment will depend on training objectives and may include the following at the discretion of the training staff.

Recommended:

It is recommended that training objectives and entry requirements be communicated clearly in writing to training candidates and that they be notified of what entry criteria they do not meet with and what they would need to do to be eligible.

- A minimum of 10 breathwork sessions,
- Experience in group work,
- Demonstration of maturity, mental and emotional stability, self responsibility and the ability to function in a group,
- Ability to learn emotionally,
- Ability to learn intellectually, i.e. have the capacity for independent study literacy skills, etc.,
- Demonstration of financial stability and social awareness,
- Awareness of the commitment involved in the training and having made a clear decision to participate,
- Prior knowledge of the tenets and principles of breathwork and the profession for which one is about to train,
- For those operating a modular system with multiple entry points, the requirements for entry to various stages of the training will be based on attaining the knowledge, skills and qualities of the earlier phase of the training.

The following are suggested methods of assessing applicants:

- Foundation workshops/weekends,
- Interviews – individual and group,
- Application forms,

- References.

3. Contracts/Agreements

Requirement:

All trainees to be provided with a statement outlining clearly the commitment involved in the training. These include requirements in terms of attendance at classes, between class work, assessment, support provided by the trainers, costs and duration.

Recommended:

Contracts are to be signed with a copy for the trainee and for the school and also include a waiver form, a statement of the school's code of ethics and practice and a copy of the appeals procedure. Trainees commitment is to the full length of the training course and should they decide to leave the course before completion this needs to be discussed with the trainers.

4. Structure of Training

Trainings vary widely in how they are structured in terms of blocks of training and sometimes this depends on the physical location of the training center – urban or rural. Some trainings are modular with multiple entry points, others are closed to new entrants from the beginning. It is therefore, not possible or appropriate to specify how trainings should be conducted in terms of blocks of training.

For some it is one weekend per month, for others there are longer blocks of residential training and for others there are elements of distance learning.

Trainings are divided into theoretical components and experiential work. A training course should contain the following:

Requirement:

A training course should have personal development, client work under supervision, theoretical work, and peer support. Some may require community service.

Recommended:

- One quarter to one third of the time devoted to theoretical input
- Two thirds to three quarters of the time devoted to experiential work
- Emphasis is placed on the personal growth of the trainee and not just on the acquisition of skills/knowledge. However, the acquisition of skills and knowledge is an important part of the training.

Suggested experiential components-

- Exchange of breathwork sessions with fellow trainees under supervision,
- Taking a minimum of 3 clients through a minimum of 10 sessions each under supervision when trainees are considered ready to work with clients by the trainers,
- Having personal breathwork sessions with an appropriate breathworker at least every two months during the life of the training,
- Having an experience of different modes of breathwork, Providing ongoing feedback/evaluation for students from self, peers and staff,
- Providing experience of group breathwork, Ongoing and regular evaluation of the course with staff and students, with a final evaluation at the end of each year.

5. Supervision

Supervision is seen as an essential learning tool.

Supervision is in relation to working with clients and may or may not involve the supervisor's presence at the time of the session, but always respects the welfare, confidentiality and requires the consent of the client.

Trainee's peers can be their "clients" in the early part of the training, and paying clients can be acquired from outside the training when the trainee is ready to begin work with the general public.

Requirement:

Trainees work under supervision from the time they begin working with clients (members of the public and members of the training group) and supervised work forms an integral part of the training. Supervision can take place either in a group setting or individually. In both cases it can be with one or more trainers. Supervision should also include written and/or oral reports of breathwork sessions with clients.

6. Client Work

Requirement:

Trainees take their peers through breathwork sessions for a portion of the training. This can be done in pairs, threesomes, etc. but it is done under supervision and forms an integral part of the training.

Trainees take a minimum of 3 clients through 10 sessions each during the life of the training. All client work, whether peer or with a member of the public is supervised.

Work with members of the public does not begin until the trainee is considered ready to work in this manner (usually in the second half of the training).

7. Assessment/Testing

Requirement:

Trainings have clearly documented outcomes for the training in terms of knowledge, skills, personal development, etc. These outcomes are to be assessed in appropriate, non-competitive, supportive, empowering ways on a regular basis. Students are to be given their assessment as a learning tool on which to build and focus.

Methods of assessment should be clearly specified and can include-

Recommended:

- Self evaluation,
- Peer feedback through group process,
- Tutor feedback, written work including essays, reports, case studies, journals, etc.,
- Examinations, Practicum, e.g.. giving sessions, presentations, etc.,
- Supervision.

8. Printed Materials

Requirement:

All students are to receive a list of recommended reading including books, articles, resources, etc. Where possible or appropriate trainers are to provide study manuals, copies of handouts, etc. Materials that are required and which of these are included in the training fee are to be specified clearly.

9. Trainers

Requirement:

Breathwork trainers have themselves completed a formal training program in groupwork and training. This can include an element of apprenticeship. They are to have been working as a breathwork practitioner for a minimum of 2.5 years prior to becoming a breathwork trainer.

They demonstrate integrity in their personal and professional life.

They have good communication skills, organizational abilities and the ability to work as a part of a team.

They have an understanding of the ways adults learn and of the fundamental concepts of adult education and methodology, i.e. empowerment, groupwork, equality, self and professional evaluation, etc. There should be a minimum of two trainers.

Recommended:

Trainers who have graduated from schools other than the one in which they are working are to be included in the training team.

10. Ethos of the Training

Recommended:

Training is based on the ethos of adult education (an approach to training and education that is based on group work, a recognition that adults learn best by experience and therefore theoretical concepts are drawn from experience as much as possible rather than from lecture, a commitment to equality and empowerment, the trainer is more a facilitator of learning than a traditional style teacher/lecturer/guru, etc.)

It is seen as 'drawing out' learning from people's experience rather than 'putting in' knowledge that is missing.

It is committed to equality and empowerment and respect for all who are involved.

Methodology is largely experiential and groupwork based, although there are times when lecture, etc. is more appropriate to the material being delivered.

It is flexible and learner centered.

It has ongoing and final evaluations/reviews built into it on a regular basis.

11. Modules

MINIMUM AND ESSENTIAL criteria for the training of competent, professional breathworkers.

A breathwork training should contain the following units of learning. A unit of learning is a collection of topics that roughly fit together. This does not mean they have to be delivered together. Some topics can fit under several headings. These are offered as minimum requirements and do not preclude to adding to and expanding them if they so wish. They are not listed in any particular order and the order does not indicate any value judgment or priority.

Required:

Material from all nine Units are to be covered in the training. Suggested topics for this material are given.

UNIT 1: Personal Attributes and Qualities

Suggested topics:

- Personal
- Self-care
- The nature of caring and loving

- Clarity of intention
- Intuition
- Awareness or
- Presence
- Self-esteem
- Motivation
- Responsibility and self-responsibility
- Social and cultural sensitivity
- Professionalism
- Independence
- Closeness/Intimacy
- Independence
- Inter-dependence – the ability to be active within a community/group of people

UNIT 2: History and Nature of Breathwork

- Theories of breathwork – prana, chemical changes, armouring, altered states
- Benefits and limitations
- Client suitability – contraindications for breathwork
- Research
- Literature

UNIT 3: Breathing Mechanics

- Anatomy and physiology
- Medical knowledge – conditions pertinent to safety, eg. heart conditions, kidney conditions, etc.
- Medication and its effects on the process and effectiveness of breathwork
- Analysis of breathing

Unit 4: The Business of Breathwork

- Record keeping
- Referral protocol
- Accounting
- Establishing a practice
- Public presentations
- Legal issues
- Venue

UNIT 5: Breathwork and Breathwork Sessions

This unit will be adapted to suit the particular type of breathwork being taught.

- Five elements
- Variety of breathwork techniques e.g. rebirthing, vivation, holotropic, etc.
- Types of breathwork dry, water, mirror, eye gaze, group, etc.
- Breathing cycles
- Integration
- Stages of a breathwork session
- Interviews and record keeping
- Reading energy, role of energy, energy as a vehicle for thoughts and emotions, moving energy with the breath
- Variety of experience e.g. pain, yawning, ecstasy, tetany, suspended breath, etc.
- Recognizing emotions in the breath
- Intuition its strengths and limitations
- Staying with the client throughout – physically, intellectually, emotionally and energetically
- Touch
- Movement

- Verbal interventions

UNIT 6: Theoretical Approaches

There should be more than one theoretical approach presented to trainees. These can include the following:

- Psychology
- Creative power of beliefs (this is arbitrarily put in this section but it really permeates a whole training, in fields such as self-responsibility, self-esteem, business, energy work, etc.)
- Main schools of psychological thinking i.e. psychodynamic, behavioral, person centered, transpersonal, Buddhist, etc. From these schools more detail on selected theories can be presented if suitable or desirable.
- Theories of human development and stages of development e.g.. Freud, Erickson, Rosenberg, etc.
- Personality theories
- Body Psychotherapies

Unit 7: Counseling/Communication

Suggested Topics

- Active listening
- Congruence and incongruence, empathy, genuineness
- Body language and what happens to the body during expression, eye contact
- Respecting, understanding and working effectively with diverse cultural, socio-economic and religious populations
- Identifying own listening patterns
- Facilitating disclosure
- Summarizing, questioning, mirroring, etc.
- Difference between counseling, advising and helping
- Other facilitation counseling techniques/approaches, e.g., inner child, TA, NLP, Gestalt, Voice Dialogue
- Referral: Knowing when and how to refer clients, what is out of one's scope of practice or advisability to work with clients.

UNIT 8: Presenting Issues – approaches to physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual client issues.

Training should include basic understanding of the challenging issues which may be presented by clients and the life contexts in which such issues arise. Trainees are encouraged to explore these issues in their own lives and become aware of how they may influence their work as breathworkers.

Suggested Topics:

- Architecture of emotional and psychosomatic disorders
- Depression
- Fear
- Phobias
- Addiction
- Grief
- Anger
- Dissociation
- Abuse – all forms
- Relationships
- Sex and sexuality
- Spirituality and spiritual crises
- Self-esteem
- Family dynamics
- Sibling relationships

UNIT 9: Client-Practitioner Relationship

Suggested Topics

- The role of the practitioner/breathworker
- Ethics
- Boundaries
- Transference and counter-transference
- Projection
- Mirroring
- Closeness/Intimacy
- Independence
- Enmeshment
- Motivation
- Being present
- Awareness

12. Continuing Professional Education Requirements

National registration bodies may require annual post graduate education. It is not the job of the training schools to determine the nature and amount of ongoing professional personal development requirement. The schools may provide the training to meet these requirements but they are not responsible for ensuring that their graduates participate in ongoing professional development. That is the job of the national registration body. But in countries where there is no national body, the training establishment could make suggestions or offer guidelines for graduates.

Recommendation:

Registration for individual practitioners of the GPBA requires having completed training in accordance with the above guidelines and 16 hours (two days) of continuing education per annum in breathwork or additional skills that contribute to work as a breathwork practitioner.