

History of Grof Training – Open letter to the holotropic community

In 1974, my late wife Christina and I developed the holotropic breathwork during our stay at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, CA. In 1988, we started Grof Transpersonal Training (GTT), a school based on the theory of Transpersonal Psychology and on the practice of holotropic breathwork. After traveling worldwide for 25 years conducting holotropic breathwork, and leading training for 10 of those years, we had grown weary of the administrative aspects of the training program and wanted to concentrate more on writing and teaching.

In 1998, we sold GTT to Tav and Cary Sparks. In 2000, we transferred the trademark Holotropic Breathwork to the Sparks for free and without additional payment. After the payments agreed in the sale of GTT we did not receive any financial profit from GTT except compensation for our actual teaching. We agreed that these transactions were carried out for the purpose of “dissemination of the holotropic breathwork all over the world.”

I am very grateful for all the work that Tav and Cary Sparks, and the teachers, organizers and facilitators of GTT have done for the holotropic breathwork over the years. However there are also many experienced teachers of our work outside of GTT who have done skillful and heartfelt training for several decades and trained many facilitators, but did not become members of GTT because they did not want to pay for the trademark and for that reason had to give different names to holotropic breathwork, such as transpersonal breathwork etc. I am also very grateful for them; for me these people also belong to the holotropic community.

In June 2014 Christina Grof passed away. I am deeply grateful for her contributions to the work; together we co-created the method holotropic

breathwork at Esalen where we lived 14 years, offered many workshops and co-led over 30 monthlong Esalen seminars. We also conducted numerous retreats with Jack Kornfield, combining holotropic breathwork with Vipassana Buddhist meditation, and organized many other holotropic breathwork workshops and seminars worldwide. Along with founding and leading the Spiritual Emergency Network (SEN), Christina worked in the field of addiction and organized together with me many International Transpersonal Association (ITA) conferences. Christina wrote two books and co-wrote four additional books that we created together. Christina's legacy can be found at www.christinagrof.com.

In 2015 I started again traveling around the world doing workshops and lectures in Israel, China, Russia, France, South America and Czech Republic. Since April 2016, Brigitte Grof (née Ashauer) and I are happily married. Brigitte is an accomplished psychologist and artist, who started to learn holotropic breathwork with us at Esalen in 1986, before we had any formal training. Later Brigitte participated in several of the early trainings and we worked together for many years. Since 1990 she has been leading holotropic breathwork workshops and teaching my work in Europe (www.brigittegrof.com). Since our wedding, we have worked jointly in China, Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Ecuador), USA, and Europe (France, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, and Czech Republic).

In August 2018 I had a stroke that has affected my speech center. Luckily my mind is completely clear and I am not paralyzed. During the stroke I had the feeling that I died and came back because of my love for Brigitte and my work. We have been living, working and creating together, and sharing our inner and outer journeys. Her love has been for me a source of

inspiration, encouragement, emotional and physical support, and she is my partner for various projects. These recently included the Encyclopedia, *The Way of the Psychonaut*, and the documentary film with the same name, as well as our return to Esalen in the spring of 2018 and 2019. Brigitte is the person who knows me and my work best. Eventually I would like her to continue and lead my legacy.

After my stroke, it was time for me to decide what I should do with my work in the decades to come. I have discussed my hopes and concerns about my work with many friends and colleagues around the world and received much advice, enthusiasm and support. I have also received a great deal of feedback from many people about their own hopes and dreams for teaching and training. As much as I appreciate what GTT trainers, facilitators and participants have contributed in the past, I do not intend to play any role in GTT in the future. I have not been associated with GTT in any way for more than five years, even though it still carries my name. The most important reason for me in ceasing association with GTT is that over 20 years, GTT has not allowed a single independent holotropic breathwork training to be created, not in other countries of the world, nor in Europe or the US, although there are many experienced teachers and facilitators. GTT has been functioning as a monopoly and a family for-profit corporation. GTT and the Sparks own the trademark Holotropic Breathwork, that I gave them for free, but they don't own my work holotropic breathwork. For me it cannot be limited to a family business, but it should belong to the world.

Because of my age, my stroke, and because of the current pandemic that threatens humanity, I attempted to bring order to my professional legacy. Brigitte has been helping me with amazing love and support although she has

nothing to do with the problems that are originally related to the situation. Together Brigitte and I created a broader platform for my work to acknowledge and support independent experienced teachers and facilitators outside of GTT who are outstanding carriers of the work to lead their own trainings.

On May 4, 2020, Brigitte and I launched a new training, called the GROF® Legacy Training. Besides training in holotropic breathwork (Grof® Breathwork) the new training will focus on the whole range of holotropic states of consciousness, including those brought about through psychedelics, spiritual emergency, and the dying process. All of these holotropic states have been extensively described in my work, along with techniques to support people in these processes. In addition to the holotropic breathwork developed by Christina and me, the teachers, facilitators, and trainees will learn the skills, techniques and relevant theory important for supporting psychedelic sessions and for participating in psychedelic journeys themselves through the emerging lawful programs, studies and clinics. Similar skills, techniques, and theory will be taught specifically for those people who will support others in spiritual emergency or in the dying process. In addition, archetypal astrology will be studied and taught for use as an adjunct to holotropic states.

GROF® Legacy Training will authorize qualified teachers in the various countries of the world to lead their own independent trainings. The two volumes of *The Way of the Psychonaut* have been specifically created to provide all the most important information for taking or guiding inner journeys, including psychedelic and holotropic breathwork sessions, as well as supporting Spiritual Emergencies. We believe it is important that students will have the opportunity to learn Transpersonal Psychology from a theoretical as

well as practical perspective. We also strongly encourage learning and researching the connections between holotropic states of consciousness and archetypal astrology, the work of my close friend and colleague Richard Tarnas.

The main quality of the training will naturally depend on the experiences and theoretical and practical knowledge of the teachers guiding the courses. They will contribute their own talents and teachings in their trainings. Grof® Legacy Training will provide abundant resources for both teachers and students from my six decades of consciousness research. These resources include books, videos, Power Points, articles, paintings, films, audio recordings and telecourses; we also have permission to use telecourse modules for training.

The two volumes of *The Way of the Psychonaut* are the basic sources of the training. This two-volume encyclopedia has been specifically created to provide all the most important information for taking or guiding inner journeys (including psychedelic and holotropic breathwork sessions and in working with Spiritual Emergencies). The Psychonaut books will be accompanied by 90 minutes of the film bearing a similar name: *The Way of the Psychonaut: Stan Grof's Journey of Consciousness*, produced by Susan Hess Logeais. We are in the process of translating the Psychonaut books into various languages (Spanish, Portuguese, German, French, Russian, Czech, and Mandarin Chinese). This will enable students to read these books at home and deepen all that they learn in their classes. We have also provided for the Psychonaut movie subtitles in several world languages.

In the GROF® Legacy Training we use the brand name Grof® Breathwork for holotropic breathwork for legal trademark reasons. We encourage all people associated with GTT to continue their training under the brand name Holotropic Breathwork® and we encourage everyone to participate in the workshops of their choice. Our goal in beginning GROF® Legacy Training is solely to support others who we believe are qualified to carry on and expand the legacy of my work.

Brigitte and I believe that owning the trademark Holotropic Breathwork® does not mean owning my work in holotropic breathwork or the work more broadly in holotropic studies. This work belongs to the world and we hope it will be taught for generations to come.

We will not receive any financial profit from our trademark Grof® or from the GROF® Legacy Training unless we are actually teaching in any of the programs. We are enthusiastically looking forward to supporting holotropic studies and working with many old and new friends (www.grof-legacy-training.com).

I have deep love, admiration and respect for everyone who is finding the courage to undertake these deep inner healing and transformative journeys! For me you are all part of one holotropic community.

Stanislav Grof
(www.stanislawgrof.com)

Germany, April 2020