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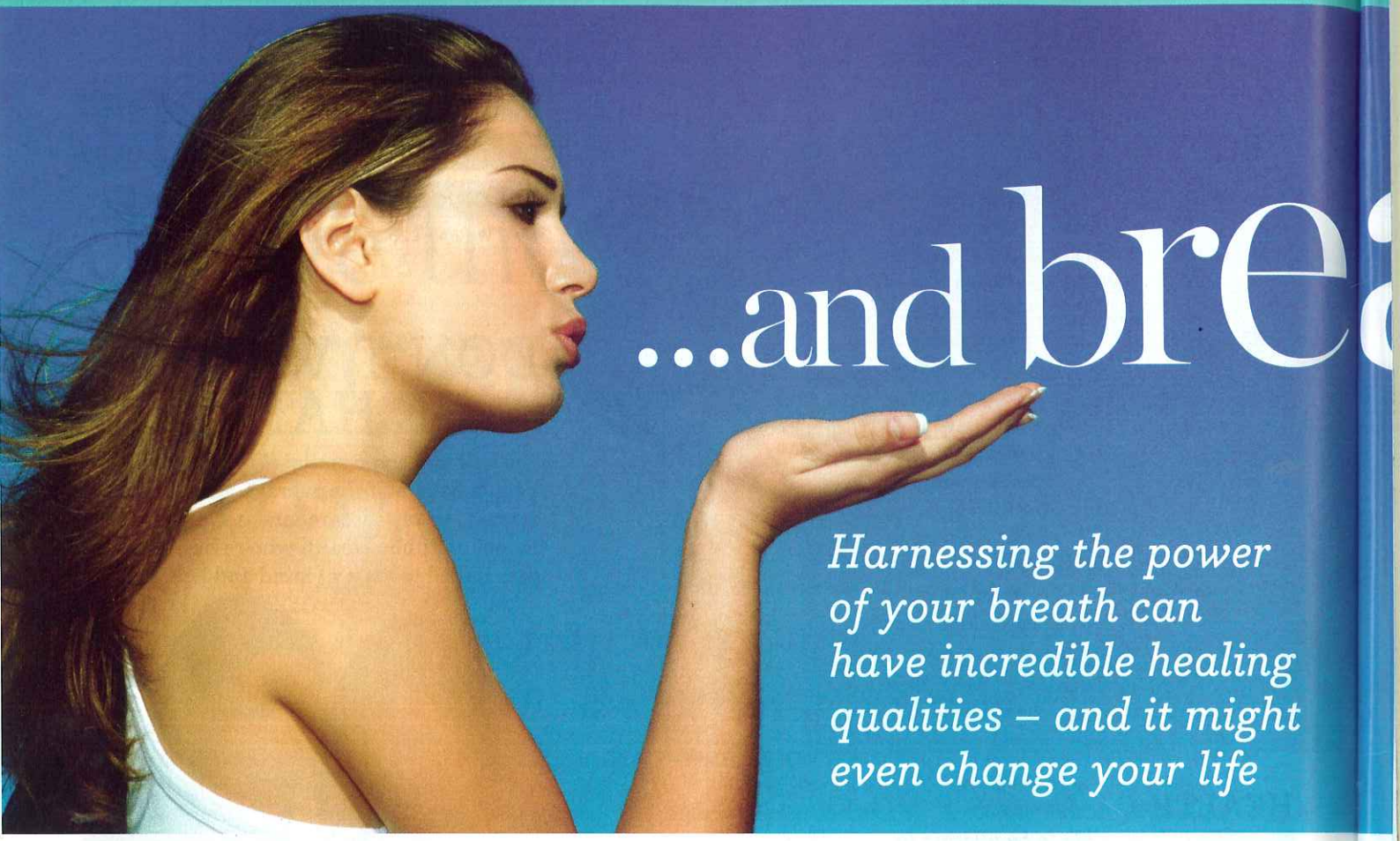

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Harnessing the power of your breath can have incredible healing qualities – and it might even change your life

From the moment we take our first breath we take it for granted. In out, in out, day in, day out for the rest of our lives. With all that practice you'd think we'd be rather good at it but the surprising fact is that, if we had to take an exam in breathing, most of us would fail miserably. On average we use a mere 25 per cent of our respiratory system, which means that we are starving our bodies of the oxygen that nourishes every cell and is the fuel for our physical and emotional health.

'Imagine owning the most high-definition TV in existence, keeping it on standby and then living with it for years without ever turning it on? Sadly, most of us live in "standby mode" most of the time,' says breath coach Alan Dolan, who is on a mission to get us all breathing properly.

Alan knows all about stress, having been an executive in the aerospace industry before he came across the practice called Transformational Breathing. It certainly transformed his life – he packed in his job and went to the US to train as a teacher with the woman who devised it, Judith Kravitz. Now he wants to introduce us all to what he describes as 'the most powerful healing mechanism that is literally right under our noses'.

> "The way we breathe determines how we live our lives"

And here are some of the benefits of good breathing...

- **More energy – a whopping 80 per cent of our energy comes from our breath.**
- **Less stress – deep breathing relaxes us and keeps our brains from going into overdrive.**
- **Better sleep – not only does it help you to get to sleep, the quality of your slumber is better and, if you wake in the middle of the night, a few deep breaths should get you off to sleep again.**
- **Detoxification – some 70 per cent of toxins are released through our breath.**
- **Peace and happiness – negative experiences and feelings can become bottled up inside, causing depression, anger and anxiety. Breathing helps unblock this horrible baggage and leaves you free to live your life more lightly.**

They sound like big claims but Alan is adamant. 'It continues to amaze me and my clients that something as simple as this can have such profound effects. Breath is quite literally life! The way we breathe determines how we live our lives. I saw one young woman who had been raped as a child and still felt toxic. After three breathing sessions she wrote to say that she finally felt able to move on with her life.'

FEATURE: MAIRE FAHEY PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES, JUMP

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SO HOW DO YOU DO IT?

Alan's technique is very simple and, unlike other breathing practices used in yoga and meditation, it doesn't demand that you try to clear your mind (not easy!) or prolong your exhalation for as long as possible. It is easy, practical and not at all New Agey – although the effects can be truly mindblowing.

1 Sit comfortably propped up on pillows supporting your head, with your legs stretched out in front of you and your hands resting lightly on your tummy.

2 Close your eyes, open your mouth into an 'O' shape, then take a deep breath in so your abdomen swells with air. Release your breath in a single puff (imagine you are breathing on a mirror to mist it).

3 Without pausing, breathe in again and out again and continue in an unbroken, circular rhythm. Practise daily for ten minutes – or longer if you want. The time of day isn't important – as long as you're not rushing and can relax in peace and quiet.

- **To find out more about Alan's UK workshops and courses at his retreat in Lanzarote, visit www.breathguru.com.**
- **For more on Transformational Breathing, see Breathe Deep Laugh Loudly by Judith Kravitz (Ini Freepress, £37.50, available from pharmacies nationwide).**

In my case

Prima Editor Maire Fahey describes her experience of Alan's breathing technique

'When I went to my initial session with Alan I was unprepared for what turned out to be one of most intense experiences I've ever had. All I did was breathe as instructed (see above) while Alan encouraged me, repeating positive statements such as "you are allowed to feel what you feel". After 45 minutes, I was shaking and sobbing without knowing why. Afterwards I described it as an exorcism of sorts – it felt as if bad stuff was being released. I was also much more alert and clearer-headed. Once I'd got over the shock, naturally I wanted to do it again – chuck out some more demons! In fact the subsequent sessions were totally different, ranging from gentle and relaxing to utterly blissful. Now I practise every morning and It's the most useful and beneficial ten minutes of my day. I start off feeling calm, positive and ready to be a nice person!'

Primapromotion

Nutritional SUPPORT

During the winter weather your immune system may need a helping hand. As well as eating a healthy balanced diet, you may also want to consider taking a vitamin supplement such as Vitabiotics Immunace Extra Protection. It contains a comprehensive range of 28 important micronutrients and the formula provides nutritional support to help maintain all-round health and vitality.

Expert care

Immunace Extra Protection's one-a-day, research-based formula includes lycopene, resveratrol, l-carnitine and astaxanthin. The formula also includes vitamins C and D, together with zinc and selenium, which contribute to the normal function of the immune system. Immunace Extra Protection also doubles up as a comprehensive multivitamin, eliminating the need for you to take separate supplements.

Immunace Extra Protection is available for £10.15 for 30 tablets from Boots, and online at www.immunace.com