



Expert Alan Dolan guides a pupil at his retreat



Breathing exercises alternate with laps in the lovely pool – it's a hard life



Feel your stress float away



Looking out on Lanzarote's dramatic volcanic landscape

'A younger, stress-free mind? It's just a breath away'

Ann-Louise Holland, 46, road-tests Transformational Breathing in Lanzarote

'As a yoga fan, I know about breathing – how the simple in and out can help calm me down. But even I'm a little sceptical when I hear about the potential impact of using Transformational Breathing. However, I'm keen to find something to reduce my stress levels.

In my 20s and 30s, I just let stress wash over me and never tackled it. But now in my 40s, running my own business, I feel the effects more. The cumulative effects of stress over the years means I can sometimes feel really tired out and tense. So could an in-depth focus on my breath really give me back that youthful 'shrug-it-all-off' feeling?

In a bid to find out, I book a place on a Lanzarote retreat run by breathing expert Alan Dolan, which takes place at a beautiful hillside villa, just minutes from the sea. He starts by explaining that hesitant or shallow 'anxiety' breathing keeps stress trapped in the body. His aim is to teach you how to take smooth, full

breaths instead. Each guest has a daily session with Dolan that lasts up to two hours (his home is just across the pool from the guest villa) and I admit it feels strange at first. As well as putting me in optimum breathing positions and making sure I breathe in and out through my mouth (harder than it sounds), he actually talks to my body, helping to release the stress points. This may sound peculiar but the combination of slightly out-there 'affirmations' and straightforward breathing techniques works and I leave the two-hour session feeling unbelievably relaxed.

The rest of the days are spent getting to know the five other guests who are all professional women, like me. There were organised dinners, but no pressure to join in. As the days go by, and as we combine sessions with hillside walks and trips to the nearby beach, we all feel lighter and less stressed.

And I'm still feeling the benefits. Now I know I'm just a proper in-and-out breath away from a moment of peace. ♦
A three-night Transformational Breathing Retreat costs from £530 (£455 if you're sharing a room), including all meals and breathing sessions (breathguru.com). Flights from £150 (ryanair.com).

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