

Breathe



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

CrisMarie Campbell and Susan Clarke

Breathe

CrisMarie: Welcome to The Beauty of Conflict, a podcast about how to deal with conflict at work, at home and everywhere else in your life. Hi, I'm CrisMarie.

Susan: And I'm Susan. We run a company called Thrive, and we specialize in conflict resolution, communication and building strong, thriving teams and relationships. Conflict shows up in our lives in so many ways. Most people, unfortunately, are not very good at handling conflict. Most people have never been taught the right tools for dealing with conflict, and then it leads to unnecessary friction, arguments, passive aggressive emails, tears, hurtful comments, stuck-ness, all kinds of things we don't want. We're on a mission to change all of that.

CrisMarie: We've spent the last 20 years teaching our clients how to handle conflict in a whole new way. We're here to show you that conflict doesn't have to be scary and overwhelming. With the right tools, you can turn a moment of conflict into a moment of reinvention. Conflict can pave the way into a beautiful new system at work, a new way of leading your team, a new way of parenting, a new chapter of your marriage where you feel more connected than ever before. Conflict can lead to beautiful things.

Susan: Well, today's episode is inspired by something that occurred for me, this is Susan speaking, out on a walk. And I came back and shared it with CrisMarie and I think I've now brought her along to be inspired to do this particular podcast, because I was out there in the woods and suddenly I just heard in my own head.

CrisMarie: From somewhere.

Susan: From somewhere that my breath speaks louder than my words. And I just, the moment I heard that I was like kind of inspired. I started to think about it. And I started to feel into it and I had sensation and I had, you know, it was just me out there, so I wasn't really talking to anybody. But the breath I noticed continued to give me all the different ways in which that is so true.

Breathe

When I write if I just start to write nothing much happens, but every once in a while I notice, I actually take a few deep breaths. Usually then what happens is I start to feel more. And all of a sudden my writing is really quite rich, it's very personal, it's very immediate. It's very authentic.

CrisMarie: If when people hear breath is louder than words, I can't – well, I can't help but go to Covid because that's how Covid is transmitted is through the breath. So certainly my breath is louder than my words.

Susan: Wow, okay. I knew that if we started this sort of spontaneously we would somehow get to Covid. And I don't know whether you really want me to say this or not.

CrisMarie: Well, I don't know what it is.

Susan: But really you think about this concept and whether, you know, I don't know the validity of all the things that I know about viruses because I'm not a whatever it is.

CrisMarie: Yeah, epidemiologist I think.

Susan: But I do know that viruses are, you know, have come because they jump from one species to another, they go. They are trying to survive.

CrisMarie: So that is not what we're talking about.

Susan: No.

CrisMarie: Good to know.

Susan: But I did want to give you a reason why even Covid was kind of smart.

CrisMarie: And part of this breath podcast is Susan and I just did a retreat, Passionate East, great retreat, we recommend it. And a lot of it was on connecting to the body and using the breath to align more inside of ourselves and to notice where we stop breathing or the resistance to

Breathe

breathe. And so you out there just even taking a deeper breath right now and noticing how are you wanting to take a deeper breath? What stops you from taking a deeper breath?

Because many of us are on what we call life support breathing, we don't pay attention to our breath; it's kind of up in our chest, whatever, what's so big about the breath? But if you think about then we're often in our minds obsessing and worrying. But as soon as you take a deeper breath, you're bringing into your body; you're connecting your mind down into the lower part of you, if it's deeper into your lower belly. And that's a great form of embodiment, which is very powerful.

Susan: I mean there's all sorts of information about this that would be fun to talk about. And even from the standpoint, this may wake you up if you haven't been paying attention, an orgasm basically requires an in and an out breath, inspiration and expiration. It's the parasympathetic and the sympathetic.

CrisMarie: Firing at the same time.

Susan: Firing at the same time.

CrisMarie: So that's something you might want to try as you're kind of in your own practice around your sexuality, if you breathe in more all the way through that, versus holding your breath which many people do, you might find a more fulfilled experience.

Susan: And this is the idea behind tantric, all sorts of things like that talk about this.

CrisMarie: I did not think we were going to here.

Susan: Well, you did suggest that we bring up, because there are so many – why I brought it up is one, I want to get your attention.

CrisMarie: You've got mine.

Breathe

Susan: And apparently sex gets attention. But I also wanted to bring it up because it's just that's one really vital way. I know think about you – was it last week or the week before, or recently we talked about the Weight of Gold and athletics and how much you know about the nervous system and the significance of breath to being able to settle. And that's very different than the orgasmic cycle, but a different type of an importance to breath.

CrisMarie: Well, and I even know for sure, and also any of you who have been on stage speaking, or actors, or singers, there's a very clear transmission, the more you are in your body the more you're going to feel your emotions and you're going to actually influence other people. When you go to a theater if you're watching actors, the ones that you go, "Oh my gosh, I can feel it," you're riveted by them is because they are in their bodies actually feeling their feelings. And breath is the way, breath amplifies what we feel, or it can.

Susan: Yeah. And you think about people who – well, any of you out there, I'm not going to make this political but we did just finish the democratic convention. And what was inspiring was some of those people who were speaking like Michelle Obama. When she embodies her talk, it's not just words; there is a vibration to it.

CrisMarie: And I bet out there, think about the people that if they're talking from their heads or notice who's actually you're compelled to listen to. And my hunch is the people that you are riveted by are more from that in body place. There's an alignment, not just with their heads but with their bodies, and their hearts, and everything's aligned. And that's a huge transmission, it feels that way.

Susan: And again, there's various types of breath. Let's talk for a moment about some of the ways that we use this with our clients, because that might be helpful. I know recently I was working with a woman who was really – she's in a high stressed job, she'd just kind of balk at me about breathing until I suggested to try what I call a double inhale. So I said, "Just

Breathe

try this and see what happens.” And it’s two rapid breaths, so I’ll do it just so you can hear it. It’s kind of like...

CrisMarie: And you can’t see her but her chest is moving upward while she’s...

Susan: The breath is really in the upper part of the chest and then...

CrisMarie: Which in Chinese medicine is called the passion points.

Susan: Yes. And you do that six or seven times and you go back to just breathing one time fully. And in that moment all of a sudden this client was like, “Oh my God, that was amazing.” And what ended up happening for her, she also realized how much she used to like to swim and in the water. And because the breath was a whole different experience for her then coming and she started to use that. And that became the way she could really get into a more relaxed state. She had to go into that more sympathetic state first.

CrisMarie: Which is a charged state.

Susan: The charged state.

CrisMarie: Energized, yeah.

Susan: Yeah. And then she could drop into a little more of the parasympathetic [crosstalk].

CrisMarie: I was coaching somebody, an esteemed gentleman and he is actually struggling with some depression. And so I was coaching him to do more of a parasympathetic breathing, start where he is but activate the breath. So what that means is it’s yin breathing, in Chinese yin, yang. So this is more yin. And so it’s a deeper breath and it’s filling, you know, so you could try this right now even sitting, typically we suggest you lay down, but since you’re probably not.

Breathe

So put your hands on your lower belly and take a deep breath in and fill up your lower belly and then fill up your chest and then let it all go out. And you can even feel your pelvis kind of rock if you're taking a big enough inhale. And you do that for five, seven minutes, just longer deeper, kind of like a wave and you'll notice, well, I want to hear from you, what do you notice? Try it out because this is something that helps activate more of your just fullness energy. And it can also help if you're stressed, it can help bring down your anxiety.

I was using it when I was coaching this gentleman because he just has stopped breathing altogether and is not feeling very alive. And it starts to wake-up that aliveness, that Kundalini energy, which is down in your lower chakras and starts bringing that up. And I will eventually get to this upper chest, this sympathetic, like you were demonstrating, Susan.

Susan: And it's so powerful. There's so many different ways. I think, you CrisMarie I agree, that that's a really vital aspect of...

CrisMarie: Thanks for saying my name.

Susan: We breathe into that, CrisMarie.

CrisMarie: We want you folks to know who's talking. So we've been coached to say each other's name, so we're trying that, we're learning that skill.

Susan: So I was also thinking early on when breath became most important to me, I was in doing my work up at the Haven Institute where I was also beginning to develop into leading and doing different things. And the breath, the emphasis of the breath really came from more Reichian breathwork where you breathe through an open mouth.

And a lot of times people are very averse to that. I mean now medically they talk about reasons you don't, actually medically they are very afraid of hyperventilation. It's actually not a bad thing to hyperventilate. But that's another whole story that probably...

Breathe

CrisMarie: Yeah, let's not.

Susan: Okay. But the idea being that why breathing through an open mouth is so really kind of important, is that our jaw is one of the tightest muscles that we have.

CrisMarie: She's rubbing her jaw right now.

Susan: I'm rubbing my jaw right now. And so the idea that if you can drop your jaw open, there's a lot less control. So when you breathe through an open mouth, what will happen is you'll start to pay and notice where you have more tightness and tension. You actually have the opportunity to come up against those blockages, and sometimes in Reichian breathwork you work with different bands in the body. And there's ways to actually release and work with that.

CrisMarie: What Susan's talking about with the bands in the body is that we have these places that we hold all the way through like our hips, our diaphragm, our upper chest, our jaw, those are just some of them, our eyes. And they are just physical armor that we used to kind of control ourselves when we were little kids to make sure we were going to be safe. So that's how we've gotten control of our world. The problem is when you stay in that place of control you really lose your own aliveness, and inspiration, and connection to your own passion.

So doing this open mouth breathing you might be like, "Why the heck do I want to try that?" But you are going to feel more, and I know those of you out there are saying, "I don't want to feel more." But you want to feel you more because you're going to feel – it's kind of like a big sine wave, the less you breathe, the less you feel. It's like your sine wave, in science those loops that go up and down, they get really close to that middle line so they're little tiny waves. And what we are saying, you do that enough and it's a flat line which is not a life.

So you want to increase those ups and downs which is breath in and out, and you will feel more. You'll also get more information about what does

Breathe

feel good for you and doesn't, helping you make better decisions in your life.

Susan: Okay, you're raising your hand.

CrisMarie: I did, I did, I raised my hands because I was thinking about, again, why would you even be interested in this breathing?

Susan: Well, that's where I was going to go.

CrisMarie: Good.

Susan: Because I was sitting here thinking, I bet you're asking yourself, why? And here's the thing, most of the time in our lives we kind of go along, our wave is [crosstalk].

CrisMarie: When we're working doing our job.

Susan: And it's okay.

CrisMarie: Getting married.

Susan: But then something happens and usually sadly when most people decide to pursue a particular path with breath, and body, and embodiment, it comes because of a crisis. It comes because they got sick, a divorce, their job is so stressful or impactful that they're having heart palpitations or something. I've had clients that have come in because of that.

CrisMarie: Or they've lost their job and they're like, "Oh my gosh, who am I without my job?"

Susan: So a crisis is, like that is a crack in the status quo of our muscular system that has supported us.

CrisMarie: And our sense of identity of who we are.

Breathe

Susan: And our sense, yeah. And so we then will kind of realize, wait a minute. And then suddenly – that’s what happened to me with my cancer, is like whatever, you can’t give me a path through this, I’m going to try this.

CrisMarie: Try this stuff.

Susan: And we’re just – why you might, if you’re listening to this, we don’t really believe we have to have a crisis to decide that you want to awaken and begin to give yourself the experience of being more conscious and present in your life.

CrisMarie: And from my experience, this is CrisMarie, so often we have our mind, we have our body, we have our emotions, we have our – if you have a sense of spirit, spiritual connection to source, those sorts of things. But we tend to operate from our mind. Our mind thinks it’s the CEO of us. And so we believe our thoughts, we push down our emotions and whatever, the spirituality and drive our bodies. And it’s really out of proportion, we believe that kind of breathing into your body helps balance the body, you’re connecting more to your emotions.

And maybe you even have some more kind of like when you were in the woods, getting inspiration.

Susan: I just want to say a lot of clients that I’ve worked with over the years, they get that this breath. I remember I worked with a gentleman who was dealing with a – he actually had a brain tumor, he was working with that. And he came to me to work with some breath. And in the course of doing his breathing his tumors actually shrank. I wasn’t trying to get him to breathe because I thought it was going to turn around his cancer. It just so happened that it did. He also started to have a lot more other things started to come up in his life.

CrisMarie: What do you mean?

Susan: Some challenges in his relationships. He realized, he said a lot of emotion was coming up, a lot of anger about things that had happened in

Breathe

the past. And I had encouraged him since it was going so well, “Why don’t you just breathe every day.” And the first thing he told me was, “I don’t have the means.” And I said, “What do you mean?” And he said, “I don’t have a mat. You do it here and it’s beautiful.” And I was like, “Okay, take home the mat.” And then one day he showed up and he brought me back the mat.

And I remember he said to me, he goes, “I know this helps but I can’t do it. I think I know what that means for me.” And he had probably, you know, within six months he had passed away. And I don’t know that breathing would have changed that. But I also got when he talked to me that sometimes when you inspire, you know, I was even saying it for myself, all that’s been going on, I’m way more in touch with my despair these days. And sometimes it can feel gripping.

CrisMarie: And I’m sure you listening may want to know why the heck would you want to breathe into your despair?

Susan: When I breathe into my despair I feel it much more deeply, I do feel it much more deeply. But also it’s like it lets the light in just a wee bit. And if I don’t breathe into it what happens is the despair goes underground even further and everything just sort of – I see no way out. And that is actually when I feel more like this is not worth it versus I don’t like sometimes the magnitude of despair I could feel. But when I breathe into it, it does, it’s like all of a sudden it’s actually – it can go darker, yes, or deeper, but also there’s this little light, there’s darkness and light in there.

CrisMarie: So more light comes versus?

Susan: Yeah.

CrisMarie: And another linkage to this is I was a sufferer of chronic pain, back pain, it moved up to my shoulders, feet. And when I read Dr. Sarno’s, *Healing your Back Pain* or *Mind/Body Prescription*, there’s a mind/body syndrome where some part of us is afraid of our feelings. And so it’s kind of like all the subconscious stuff that’s going on, it wants to keep it down and it

Breathe

distracts us with pain. So often people will come to me with chronic pain and one of the things is to breathe and actually feel.

And recognize I actually can feel, I can tolerate my feelings, they're a part of me. They're not something to push down because when we push them down they're still driving us. We're just not consciously aware of it, they're in the subconscious and they're driving. So those are in your nervous system, in your subconscious. And the idea of breath and connecting to you are ways to bring basically you more into alignment with yourself, so you can make choices, change patterns, make decisions that feel really good to you.

Susan: You're reminding me, just a recent experience I had with another client of mine who was – her opportunity in the coaching or desire was to find more of her voice and bring it forward. And we have been – I think we've probably talked about this, our notion of the voo breath, the tapping into the vagus nerve.

CrisMarie: For those of you that haven't heard of this, this is back probably around stress, but it is a way to vibrate your vagus nerve, which is the second largest nerve in your body beside your spinal column that goes down into your lower abdomen, which is your rest. So it activates your parasympathetic, which is your rest and digest, and your calming nervous system.

Susan: So yes, so I...

CrisMarie: Just to give you that little commercial.

Susan: Yes, I like that. But I had introduced her to this idea of a voo breath. And she – first it was a little freaky for her to get the sound to carry, because sometimes what happens when you first start it, at least it did for me as well, and she was reporting this is that to keep the lips vibrating and hold that vibration going through your body while you do the voo. I think you actually did this in one podcast.

Breathe

CrisMarie: And I will demo it because some people may not have heard that podcast. So you take a big inhale, you folks out there can do this with us or me or whoever. So you take a big inhale and on the exhale you're going to make the sound voo. So you're saying the word voo, and what Susan's saying is keep your lips pursed because you can get the vibration in your lips, which helps the vibration, that Susan is doing now. One more time, and it's a long exhale, you can keep doing it. And imagine, just you can imagine it just going all the way down to your perineum and that vibration.

Susan: This client reported to me what she...

CrisMarie: Back to the client's story.

Susan: She actually started to incorporate it; you know how right now a lot of people, a lot of you probably are going into one meeting after the other.

CrisMarie: On video.

Susan: On video. And she said, "What was kind of nice is I could find a way, if I did the voo before a meeting." She really noticed significantly different, she often spoke up more. But people – she thought they heard her more. And I can almost guarantee they probably did because there is more of her in that breath, that embodiment, that fullness. So that's just a different way to access breath is, you know, I think breath wants, it's like the universal energy, it wants us to embrace the breath.

CrisMarie: And even another breath that you can do is you can take a deep breath, kind of imagine it coming up through the back of you, through your spinal column all the way up to the crown, the top of your head and then exhale.

And you can imagine you can even run your fingers down the front of you, imagine it's going down the front of you, back to your pelvis, collecting in your pelvic bowl and then coming back up. And that's kind of like a cycle of breath that really gets you more energy, more aligned. It helps you kind of

Breathe

percolate and digest your experience more. I don't know how it works, that's been my experience, this is CrisMarie.

Susan: Well, we won't get into how it works at the moment. There is a lot to that. And a lot of times, if you're interested in more, I mean this is sort of – we are very passionate about breath. And we really do believe, speaking of passion, if you define passion, the soul.

CrisMarie: The pressure.

Susan: Pressure of the soul.

CrisMarie: To express.

Susan: To express, think about that, the pressure of the soul to express. So it has to meet something, it wants to meet something.

CrisMarie: And you can't see Susan, but she's moving her chest out, so breath actually fills you up from the inside and there is that pressure to express. And it is, it presses against, if you take a big enough breath, and even hold it, it's pressing against your physical armor, which it's kind of like an internal massage versus – and so you're releasing from the inside and softening. And we spend so much time kind of bracing against hardening, trying to get things, I'm going to get it all done, at least I do.

Susan knows I do, and pushing myself and driving myself, and breath is a way to soften from the inside and relax, and active that parasympathetic nervous system.

Susan: This may seem like a little bit of a tangent but you guys all know if you've been listening about my love of horses, not that I ride them, just to be clear. But my love of working with horses, and they are like uber breathers really.

CrisMarie: Yes they are.

Breathe

Susan: They are really good breathers. But another thing I learned about horses is in some respects, from a mystical standpoint, one of the reasons, one of the invitations when you're in – maybe you're in your horse energy or whatever else, is that there is not one right way. They are a bridge, a path to that, there's not one right way, there's many. And I say that because we're talking about a lot of ways to work with your breath. I think too, the breath is inviting many different things, from deep meditative type breaths to...

CrisMarie: Yeah, like yogic breath, in one nostril out the other, or only breathing in through your nose, those are calming breaths.

Susan: Yeah, so your big yang breaths, more expressive, big up in the chest, like a billows breath, like when you're running, or the deep yin, yang breath where it's...

CrisMarie: Yin breath.

Susan: Where it's slow, breath in, breath out, and...

CrisMarie: We even do bioenergetics which is another – who created bioenergetics?

Susan: Alexander.

CrisMarie: Lowen, Alexander Lowen. That's a way of holding, activating some of that armor more aggressively, bigger breaths and having it release.

Susan: And so why I'm bringing that up now is because we're, you know, we're about to close. But there's a wealth of opportunities and I want you to think like this, a little bit like the horse. Bring your horse to it, there's not one right way and if you can find your path, and explore with your breath, pay attention to it, notice it, give it some awareness, give it some attention.

CrisMarie: Another challenge or invitation is when you're in a stressful situation just try taking a deeper breath, and noticing what happens. And

Breathe

you might not, you know, it's a cultivated skill to use your breath in different ways. But you are creating a stronger relationship to you, your inner self, which will only help you be more influential, more aligned, make happier decisions for you in your relationships, in your work, in your health. So we really think breath is – it's a great vitamin pill and helps your immune system even.

Susan: Even if you have a mask on or at least be six feet apart, okay.

CrisMarie: Okay, we hope this is helpful. And we'd love to hear what your thoughts are, so don't feel shy about reaching out to us at thrive@thriveinc.com. Have a great day.

If you want to learn more about what we discussed today, or how to deal with conflict more effectively, Susan and myself, CrisMarie are both available for individual one-on-one coaching. We also offer couples coaching, which now as we live and work 24/7 together, may be more important than ever.

Susan: We continue to do our team facilitation, both live and now virtually. Let's get real, until you've had a tough conversation over Zoom, you may not be building the trust you need on your team. For the next couple of months we are offering free virtual trainings to organizations. Our goal is to support you, your team and your business, both at work and at home during this pandemic.

CrisMarie: Right now you can find short videos on my, CrisMarie's LinkedIn and Facebook with tips, tools and inspiration. To contact us, email thrive@thriveinc.com, that's t.h.r.i.v.e@t.h.r.i.v.e.i.n.c.com.

Susan: Okay, stay safe, stay healthy and remember, together we're better and stronger.

CrisMarie: Take care.