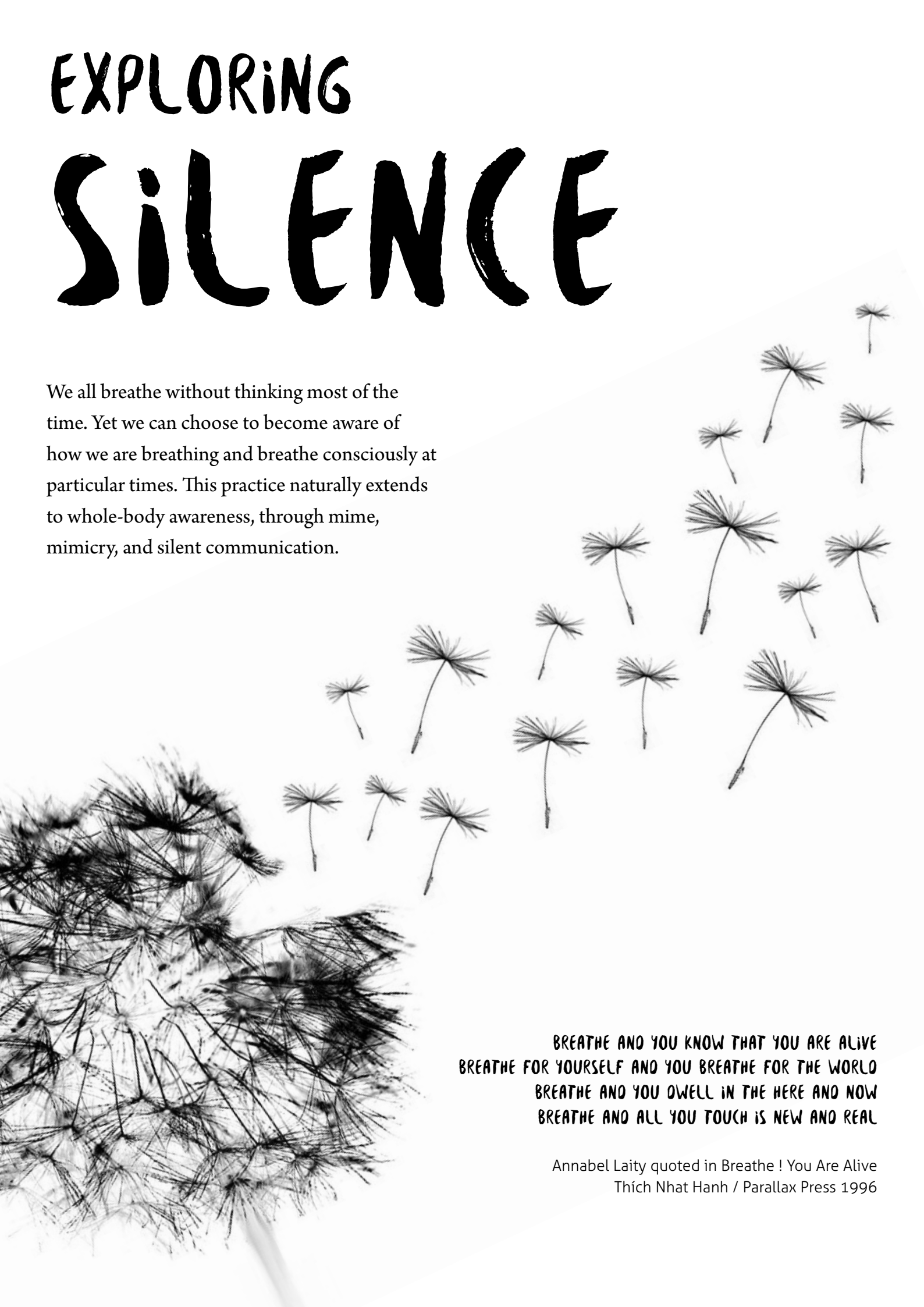


EXPLORING SILENCE

We all breathe without thinking most of the time. Yet we can choose to become aware of how we are breathing and breathe consciously at particular times. This practice naturally extends to whole-body awareness, through mime, mimicry, and silent communication.



**BREATHE AND YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE ALIVE
BREATHE FOR YOURSELF AND YOU BREATHE FOR THE WORLD
BREATHE AND YOU DWELL IN THE HERE AND NOW
BREATHE AND ALL YOU TOUCH IS NEW AND REAL**

Annabel Laity quoted in *Breathe ! You Are Alive*
Thích Nhat Hanh / Parallax Press 1996



BECOMING AWARE

Fully aware breathing helps us return to our body in order to look deeply at it and care for it. This enables us to use our breathing as a tool, for example when needing to reduce tension and relax in a specific situation. Breathing as a way of letting go of distracting thoughts and worries and focusing on the present moment and people.

Before starting, think about your posture, sitting upright yet relaxed with feet placed flat on the floor. This can be simple breathing exercises with or without an element of guided meditation - words or images to help us imagine and meditate for example:

BREATHING IN - I AM A MOUNTAIN BREATHING OUT - I AM STRONG

Becoming aware of what our bodies are expressing of our own emotional response to a companion often shows first in the breathing, and it can help us see how we are using our energy and help us to make choices to use it in different ways.

...TRY THIS

We can heighten our awareness of breathing by trying out some simple exercises:

- Breathe now as if in a panic, imagining that you are being chased
- Breathe now as if in a completely relaxed state in some very comfortable place.

Notice the difference in both how you feel and how you are appearing to others. What can they read from your body language? So what can you observe of others?

**WHEN WE TOUCH A NEW LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS A NEW WORLD IS CREATED
CONSCIOUSNESS IS NOTHING BUT AWARENESS - THE COMPOSITE OF ALL THE THINGS WE PAY ATTENTION TO.**

...MIMING

is acting or expressing ourselves without words. Even when we fall silent we are still communicating with our bodies, with the way we hold ourselves and the way we breathe. Once aware of this 'body language' we can choose to alter our breathing and posture to respond more sensitively to others.

Freeze in the position you are in now. Look at what your body language is saying about your emotions at this time. What feelings are in your body right now?

Now try working with someone. Choose any emotion and exaggerate this in a mime to your companion and see if they can guess at the emotion you have chosen to express. Discuss what clues there are to this emotion that you might observe in others.

...SILENCE

Is some of the richest communication perhaps made in silence?

On occasion, is the greatest gift we can give to another - our completely attentive silence?

Into this space can they move and find themselves with our support?

And for ourselves, can times of silence be the most precious of all?

**IN MOMENTS OF SILENCE, REALISE THAT YOU ARE
RE-CONTACTING YOUR SOURCE OF PURE AWARENESS**

**THE CLOSER YOU CAN GET TO THE INVISIBLE SOURCE,
THE GREATER YOUR HEALING POWER**

Deepak Chopra *Journey Into Healing* / Rider 1994



'Gustav Klimt im blauen Malerkittel/Gustav Klimt in a light blue smock' Egon Schiele 1913. Pencil and gouache on paper (Private collection/Wikipedia)

The Vietnamese zen master Thich Nhat Hanh offers these words to use when breathing in and out:

Breathing in I know I am breathing in
Breathing out I know I am breathing out
IN - OUT

Breathing in my breath goes deep
Breathing out my breath goes slowly
DEEP - SLOWLY

Breathing in I feel calm
Breathing out I feel at ease
CALM - EASE

Breathing in I smile
Breathing out I release
SMILE - RELEASE

Breathing in dwelling in the present moment
Breathing out I know it is a wonderful moment

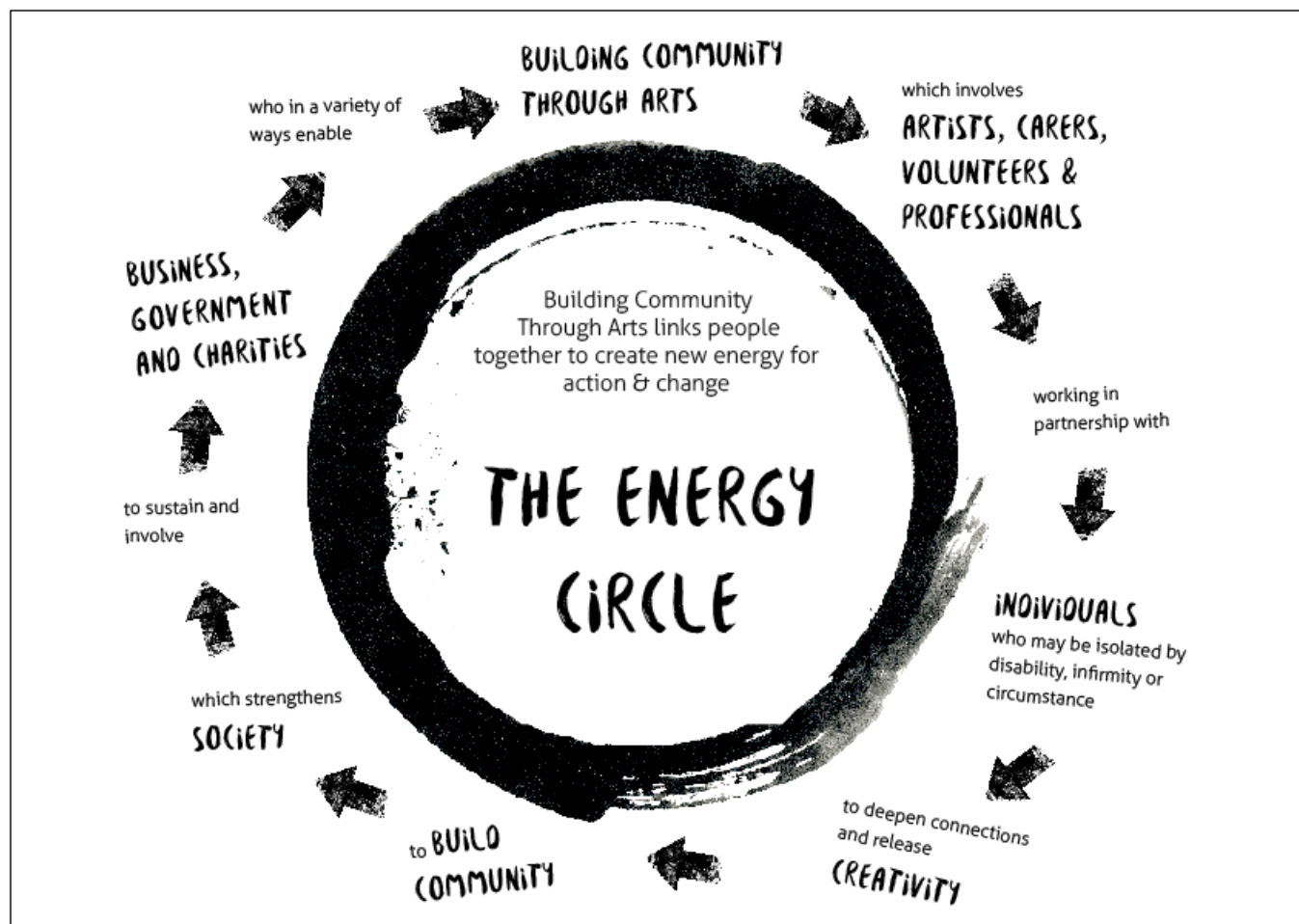
PRESENT
MOMENT
WONDERFUL
MOMENT



'A Varied Landscape on One Side, and a Flat Country or Water on the Other'
John Constable c.1823. Graphite, ink and watercolour on paper. (Tate collection)

ABOUT BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH ARTS

Building Community Through Arts (BCA) was developed as part of Kew Studio's outreach work in a series of projects from 1993 – 2002. Toolkits and programmes have been recently updated and are presented as a set of free tools for use by anyone wanting to develop a community using arts workshops and encounters. Visit kewstudio.org/explore-creativity/.



REFERENCES & CREDITS

Quotes are taken from *Present Moment, Wonderful Moment* by Thich Nhat Hanh published by Rider 1990