

O&A

with
Anandi

By Rosemary Byfield

Fifteen years of insomnia drove Anandi to despair. Her life and health were in pieces. Until she discovered using the breath as a healing tool and found the key to a good night's sleep.

Epoch Times: Why is deep breathing important to sleep?

Anandi: The breath, heart and mind are linked. You can't control your heart or your hormones with your mind, but you can with your breath. So when you change your breathing patterns, you change your heart rate and you calm your mind. A stressed out insomniac will have a short, shallow breathing pattern. This is the sympathetic nervous system (fight-or-flight response) being dominant. Deepen your breathing and the parasympathetic nervous system (rest and restore) takes charge. So you go to bed in a calm state and can sleep. No amount of herbs will do the same thing as connecting to the breath.

Epoch Times: In your book *Breathe Better, Sleep Better* you write about discovering "the surrendered breath". Why is it important to get the mind out of the way to breathe deeply?

Anandi: When I first paid attention to my breathing, my whole round of breath – my in-and-out-breath – was 16–17 seconds. When I was able to completely surrender – to wait for the breaths to come and get my mind out of the way – it was nearly a minute. So the difference is actually surrendering. I call it being breathed by the breath.

If you try to take a long breath in and out, that is actually a very short breath. What I am talking about is actually lying on your back and being in a completely relaxed state. Your

The Ayurvedic sleep consultant and author of 'Breathe Better, Sleep Better'

mind is relaxed and then you can make space for the breath.

While "trying" there is a certain amount of tension in the body, so your rib cage is tense and you can't expand. When you take a deep breath, the breath I am talking about, your body really expands. You have this three-dimensional movement of the thoracic cavity, not just lifting up. Often when people take a long deep breath in, they bring the shoulders round the ears. Because their body is tight, there is no space in the rib cage. When your body is completely relaxed, you get an incredible expansion.

Epoch Times: How do you get into a relaxed state before you start doing the surrendered breath?

Anandi: You have to go through a process. You can't just lie down and get the surrendered breath technique. There is a process in my book *Breathe Better, Sleep Better* called "legs up the wall" you can do to prepare yourself. You actually have to do some unwinding – so it is about giving space to yourself. Turn off technology, have a bath, put on your pyjamas or your tracksuit, so you're feeling really relaxed. Light some candles, and make a nice space where you feel you're walking into a sanctuary.

Doing "legs up the wall" for 10 minutes completely relaxes your system. It takes practice – it's a process of relaxing, releasing and unwinding. We build a lot of tension in the body over time, and we don't really ever unwind from that unless we practise.

Epoch Times: What is fundamentally important to have a good night's sleep?

Anandi: I believe insomnia is caused by an



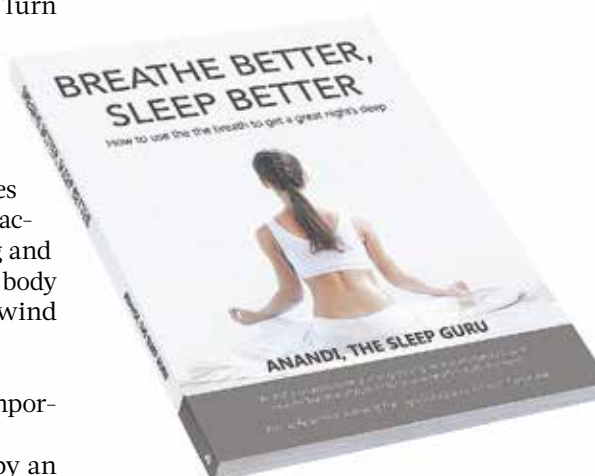
Anandi, 'the sleep guru'

imbalanced lifestyle and cured by a balanced lifestyle. You can self-heal if you pay attention to your lifestyle, what you are eating, how you are breathing, and you make space in your day for that.

Epoch Times: Can you suggest a daily breathing practice?

Anandi: This practice (opposite) will help you release the stresses and strains of the day. You should do this practice at least 15 minutes before you go to bed. Make sure it's the very last thing you do and there are no other activities to do afterwards.

The meditation audio can be downloaded at www.thesleepguru.co.uk/freebies/



- Organise your space, lie on your back, ensure you're really comfortable.
- Put cushions under your knees to relax your back. Put a cushion under your neck and have your palms facing up. Adjust yourself so you are totally comfortable. None of your clothes are pulling anywhere and no area of your body is pinching.
- Now take a long deep breath in, a long deep breath out. Let go of the day.
- Rest your awareness on your belly and imagine you're breathing in and out of the belly. As you do that your breath will naturally lengthen. Don't try to do anything other than keep your awareness in your belly.
- As you breathe in your belly will naturally rise, and as you breathe out your belly will fall backwards down towards the spine. Just for a moment follow the rise and fall of the belly
- As the stomach rises say to yourself, "stomach rising", as your stomach is falling say to yourself, "stomach falling".
- Keep that going in silence for a few moments. Inhale, "stomach rising", exhale, "stomach falling"... Inhale, "stomach rising... exhale, "stomach falling"...
- Gently release the words, keep your awareness in your belly and follow the movement of the belly with the mind for a few moments.
- Release your attention from the breath and invite sleep to come into your space.

The chemistry of beauty

Talking ethics and the science behind cosmetics with professor Alice Roberts

By Kat Piper & Rosemary Byfield

When it comes to cosmetic products it's all chemistry to professor Alice Roberts, anatomist, author and presenter of several BBC series, including *Coast* and *Food Detectives*.

Usually when you hear the word chemical, you think of something synthetic, cooked up in a laboratory, but ingredients extracted from plants and minerals are chemicals too.

"A natural ingredient is a chemical, and a synthetic one is also a chemical; it doesn't mean that just because it's natural that it is necessarily best for you," Alice said.

For one company, its "natural" credentials might be used as its selling point, while for another its "scientifically engineered compounds" are touted as the best for your skin. Both approaches can be misleading and are a source of frustration for Alice.

"If you're thinking about the interaction with the body, where a particular chemical comes from is not necessarily going to give you a good indication about whether it is good for you or not, you actually have to look at that interaction," she said.

"Our bodies are built on chemistry; everything in us is chemistry."

Look at the ingredients label on a typical moisturiser or shampoo and there will likely be a list of unintelligible chemical names, which most of us won't have a clue what they are. But there's a growing interest among consumers, and safety concerns about certain ones have been raised in recent years.

SLS and parabens, for example, while considered safe by the EU, have been cited as possible hormone disruptors and irritants. As a result, you might have spotted SLS-free or paraben-free labels on some of your favourite products.

Because of strict UK and EU regulations that govern what can go into our food and cosmetic products, and extensive safety testing, Alice thinks consumers should not be overly worried.

But, without mentioning any ingredients in particular, she does suggest, "It is a question of keeping an eye on the research and seeing whether those things do turn out to be bad for

us or not. We see changes in the regulations all the time as new research is done, looking in detail at particular compounds.

"If there is concern about a particular compound you can always apply the precautionary principle and avoid them, but you have to be careful you don't get paranoid about it."

Ethics and the environment

When it comes to buying both everyday and luxury cosmetic products for herself, Alice says ethics plays a big role in her choices.

"If you're buying something like that it is really important to know it is ethical and you're buying something that feels luxurious and is lovely for you, but you're doing it with concern for the environment and with concern for all the people who've been involved in it as well," she said.

Our bodies are built on chemistry; everything in us is chemistry

Dr Alice Roberts

So this year, Alice is working with organic beauty brand Green People as their official adviser on science communication to get all of us thinking about the chemistry of everyday products.

"For me public engagement with science is about having a much more open and wider discussion about science and technology and also making sure that you are providing information to people in an accessible way," said Alice, who is also professor of Public Engagement in Science at the University of Birmingham.

"It's really important that there is dialogue between scientists and the general public;

it's about sharing information more effectively and being able to make decisions about where science is going in the future, where technology is going in the future, as a society. We need to make sure that we are much more scientifically literate as a society."

As a long-time user of Green People's products, she is proud to be an ambassador for a company that has rigorous organic, fair trade and environmental policies – and have always put a lot of scientific research into their products.

"The fact [Green People] have this ethical concern about the impact on the environment and people – so they are concerned about making sure they are using fair trade sourced ingredients, making sure they are as ethical as they can be with their ingredients – I think that is great," said Alice.

And, of course, they don't test on animals, a practice Alice finds puzzling. "I am just very confused by the fact that cosmetics have ever been tested on animals; it is such a peculiar thing to do if you don't need to do it – and you don't need to do it."

"For me, the fact that for Green People [no animal testing] has been a central tenet of the way that they work and that they wouldn't now aim to sell products in countries which are asking for products to be tested on animals, I think that is really important for my own personal ethics."

While animal testing for cosmetics is banned in the EU, China, however, currently requires all imported cosmetic products to have undergone such testing.

Giving back

Green People was established 20 years ago, and as part of the celebrations they are running a competition "Change the World in 20 Ways",



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which Alice will be helping to judge.

"This is a really lovely positive campaign," said Alice. "Twenty people will each receive £1,000 to invest in the idea they have come up with."

"It's a relatively small amount of money but it is meaningful. This is about stimulating [people] from that very first moment when somebody is thinking 'I'd love to do the thing that will make a positive impact to my local environment, to my community, or whatever it is' and giving them enough funds to actually take it off the ground for the first time.

"It's really stimulating innovation and stimulating those positive ideas that start to make a difference, and who knows, some of them may turn into much bigger projects."

For more information about the campaign visit www.greenpeople.co.uk/change. Deadline for applications is 31 July 2017.