

Joy Tries It: A new year, a new breath

Virgil resident Tabatha DeBruyn takes people on an incredible journey via her breathwork sessions

Joy Sanguedolce



After writing a profile about Tabatha DeBruyn for The Local, reporter Sharon Burns invited a group of women to join in a breathwork session. Of course I said yes.

Typically, for this column, I 'try' things on my own. This experience would be different. It actually felt like going to a slumber party. Blankets, comfy clothes and anticipation in tow, we pulled up to a quiet residential street in Virgil where people are learning to breathe.

We were a group of women from diverse backgrounds, occupations and life stages. What we had in common was the feeling of sometimes being stuck, overwhelmed and stressed. We also shared a willingness to try something new.

According to the Canadian Lung Association, controlled breathing techniques can play a role in managing stress, reducing anxiety, blood pressure and heart rate and can even help you get a better night's sleep.



We gathered in DeBruyn's home studio, an inviting space with dim lighting, yoga mats, warm blankets and refreshments. She is a transformational breath master, she holds three degrees and is a published author. She is also an engaging, enthusiastic and passionate woman.

We were in good hands. Once we lay down, donned headphones, eye covers and blankets it felt like a warm embrace. DeBruyn's website describes her as someone who "understands the beautiful paradox of modern life — the constant dance between ambition and rest, giving and receiving, doing and being," and that her work "meets people in that space, helping them reconnect to their breath, their body, and their mind to optimize their holistic brilliance."

One and a half hours later it was over. It felt like half that amount of time. It was a mysterious new experience (for me at least) that left me energized, hopeful and



emotionally stronger than when I'd first walked in. I asked some of the ladies to share their immediate impressions while the experience was fresh in their minds.

Tabatha DeBruyn (standing) has participants at ease within minutes, preparing them for the work to come. Despite the setup this isn't a sleepy, dreamy meditation — as the name suggests, it's breathwork, emphasis on the work! Joy Sanguedolce

Participant Barb Schmidt, a pilates instructor and therapist, said she has had experience with breathwork before, “but never like that. It was an immersive experience that truly allowed the participant to feel, hear and engage with their own breath on a personal level and feel the impact that breath has on the mind, body and soul.”

Breathwork and personal breath, she said, “has been so overlooked and undervalued and as a rehab pilates instructor, therapist and owner of a studio for mature clientele, anything that can down regulate the nervous system is of value. The fact that breathwork gives people the opportunity to tune into their own bodies and learn to self-regulate is a key to healthy living. I'd love to see Tabatha and her

skills as a trauma-informed breathwork practitioner share her expertise with early learning, elementary, and neurodivergent populations as well as parents and mature populations.”

“Tabatha,” she added, “is very talented, and her sincerity and passion for her work is palatable.”

Heather Davis admitted to being sceptical at first. “I have tried meditating and have a hard time turning my mind off,” she said, “However, “I was able to tune into the breathing, and everything and everyone else faded away. I felt very heavy, and like I was vibrating somehow.”

During the session participants are asked twice to let out a primal scream, and not all felt comfortable with it. “I tried the first scream just to see how it felt but the second one felt much more natural. Overall I left feeling a little drained but calm,” Davis said.

As a high school teacher, this time of year can be stressful, she added. “This session was just what I needed and Tabatha was so warm, welcoming and knowledgeable. I would definitely try it again, maybe with my daughter next time she is in town.”

Steffanie Bjorgan, executive director of Red Roof Retreat, was another of the participants. “Tabatha was warm and welcoming,” she said. “It’s been years since I’ve done a breathwork session, and I’m very happy there is a local facilitator.”

Karen Skeoch described the studio space as peaceful and the experience as “relaxing and refreshing, hosted by a wonderful teacher.”

Kristi Williams describes herself as “a pretty open-minded person” who will try just about anything once. “Outside of prenatal yoga classes where we practiced what breathing may be like during labour, I have never done any intentional breathwork classes. So I was really walking in blind.”

She said she wasn’t sure what to expect in the session, “and to be totally honest, even after several minutes into it I thought it was nonsense. “HOWEVER,” she stresses, “and I am putting that in caps for a reason, because boy, was I very wrong. I started feeling really cold in my hands and feet, but continued to breathe as instructed. I’m no quitter, so I was absolutely committed to seeing this through until the end. I am very glad I did!”

As the class went on, Williams said, “it was like my brain was blank, but alive. It was like I was so deeply inside my mind and making peace with myself, which was such a beautiful and liberating feeling. I did cry, and in a million years if you told me I was going to cry I would have laughed at you. But I truly just could not help it. And that was ok! It felt so good to let it go and get all those feelings and emotions out.”

“The sight deprivation with the sound deprivation and simultaneous sound stimulation was something I haven’t experienced before, and I thought it was amazing,” Williams continued. “I would for sure do it again. I have already been telling pretty much anyone that will listen about my experience, even though it’s kind of hard to explain what happens because each person’s journey is unique.”

“Tabatha,” she added, “was so kind and welcoming. She made me feel safe and comfortable immediately. I don’t think I would have been able to get so into the session if I hadn’t felt that way from the start. So in a nut shell, was I uncomfortable? Yes. But, change isn’t supposed to be easy. Did I enjoy it? Also, yes! Would I do it again? Without a doubt.”

To read more about breathwork and Sharon Burns' experience [click here](#).

As for future plans, DeBruyn said, “My intention is to continue building a safe, loving community where people can come exactly as they are — to breathe, reset, feel supported, heal, and ultimately live lighter and happier lives.”

Happy breathing readers!