

**Shrink Rap Radio #372**  
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### **“Exploring Holotropic Breathwork”**

**Dr. David Van Nuys Ph.D., aka ‘Dr. Dave’ interviews Dr. Monika Wikman PhD**  
(Transcribed from <http://www.shrinkrapradio.com> by Gloria Oelman)

#### **Introduction:**

My return guest today is Jungian analyst Monika Wikman and we’ll be discussing her work with Dr. Stan Grof’s Holotropic Breathwork. Monika Wikman PhD was my guest on episodes #344 on *Archetypal Phenomena Surrounding Death*, #286 on *Jungian Active Imagination* and #235 on *Using Alchemical Archetypes in Jungian Analysis*. She is a Jungian Analyst and author of *Pregnant Darkness: Alchemy and the Rebirth of Consciousness* (2005) and a chapter entitled *Sophia’s Dreaming Body: Night Sky as Alchemical Mirror* in the book *The Dream and its Amplification* (2013), along with various articles in Jungian psychology journals. Monika obtained her BA from UC San Diego and her doctorate from the California School of Professional Psychology in San Diego, where her research took her deep into the study of dreams of people with terminal cancer. After teaching graduate students at California State University, Los Angeles, she graduated as a diplomate from the Jung-Von Franz Center for Depth Psychology in Zurich. She lectures internationally on mythology and symbolism, dreams and wellness, alchemy and creativity and Monika particularly enjoys collaborating with Diane Haug creating week long retreats with breathwork as a component for diving deeply into the living waters of the psyche. In private practice as a Jungian Analyst and astrologer, she lives and works in Tesuque, New Mexico and Santa Barbara, California with her partner, Tom Elsner, who you might recall me interviewing on fairy tales.

Now here’s the interview:

**Dr. Dave:** Dr. Monika Wikman, welcome back to Shrink Rap Radio.

**Monika Wikman:** Thank you Dr. Dave. It’s great to be back with you.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, great to have you here and today we’re going to be talking about your involvement with Holotropic Breathwork, which was developed by Stan Grof. I think it was in the course of one of our past conversations on the phone when we were trying to line up an interview that you mentioned that you were going to be helping to lead a workshop on the holotropic work and I was a little surprised to hear that. How did you come to be involved with Stan Grof and his Holotropic Breathwork approach?

**Monika Wikman:** Well (unclear) insight into the conversation because I think there’s a interfacing of a number of worlds that have happened for me that caused this part of my work to start blossoming and it really started with my friend Diane Haug who started working as a one of the central people for Stan Grof in training people in the breathwork practice, starting thirty years ago. She met him at a lecture when he

was looking for people who were interested in his developing of this new model and she spoke with him and it's thirty years later and she still holds quite a torch in that community and I'm very happy to have her as my dearest friend.

**Dr. Dave:** Is she a Jungian analyst as well?

**Monika Wikman:** No, she has come up through her own work, she started actually working with children who were dying, which is quite incredible. She's been sprouted out of the Artemis archetype and has many chapters of living deeply in the woods and different places, in addition to having very central roles with the breathwork community for thirty years. She also has her own private practice as a psychotherapist and so she and I have done the therapy thing between me holding the Jungian part and her holding the breathwork portion and so our collaborative work of doing retreats, for example, on our own privately but also for the Grof training modules, she's asked me to collaborate with her at times and it's been a great joy.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. Now before we get too far into this, let me ask you to... you know we may have some listeners who might not have heard of Holotropic Breathwork, so maybe you can just give a quick word about what it is.

**Monika Wikman:** Sure. Yeah and anything you want to add here too David, sounds good. I am not a licensed Holotropic Breathwork practitioner and I know that someone from their own community would describe themselves much more clearly, so I'll just speak to it from my Jungian point of view and some practical pieces. From a Jungian point of view, it's an active imagination practice that is extended in time and also brought into a form with shamanic music designed to help activate the psyche and also the use of breath, the circulation of breath, to help the energy move through the body and the psyche. There's a lot of teaching that goes on at these courses for people who are just starting the first breathwork that they've ever done, they can get a full download from the practitioner about how to stay with the breath through the set of music. Everyone has their own mat, their own eye mask and drops into their own deep, inner work as this process unfolds. And the music goes for, I would say, about an hour and a half to two hours and then once you have taken this dive in and are breathing and you're watching inner worlds, feelings, sensations, kinesthetic processes, experiences of the imaginal, the bringing forward your intention, 'cause it's a shamanic form. Well I'm sure we'll get more into talking about that but you bring in your intention and like with active imagination, you ask the psyche to help you focus on a certain something in your life that may be up. And with the breath and with the music, you then drop into your own inner states and when you're done at the end – you have a sitter who's watching and taking care of you, holding the form very carefully for you, if you need anything they're right there – but when you're done they help you get to, I think this is a wonderful part of the practice, they take you to this large piece of paper that you then draw out your mandala – your giant circle – and put into it the experiences that you had. You draw them in, write them in, any way, color, shape or form, whatever might occur to you to try to express and capture something of what just happened to you and that practice of the mandala of course just is so essential to Jung but the first time I saw it I just smiled with happiness. A beautiful way for integration after the work and then they meet and speak some pieces that have happened to them and have ways in their

community to hold the form so that they have an integrative process at the end that's quite rich.

**Dr. Dave:** Well that's a very helpful description and so I gather the people who attend the workshop are paired up and one person will be the journeyer, if you will and the other person will be sitting with them as kind of the holder?

**Monika Wikman:** Yes. For any of your listeners who have not done this before or anyone who's been interested in breathwork and even those who've done it, it is amazing to really look in and see what they have crafted, what Stan Grof crafted and what the Holotropic Breathwork community hold that form because it really works. And you know the whole thing about set and setting being so important and the professionals from around holding the form, I have to say I just have great admiration for it because deep processes kick off and then they hold them and people then get a chance to drop into very deep experiences and find a way to hold and integrate these. So yes, there's the sitter and there's the journeyer, as you just said. And so they start that way. For example, in the morning session would be one partner is sitting and holding the space in case the person (unclear) and then they switch later in the afternoon, for example, or the next day, then the one who was the journeyer becomes the sitter and that partnering can be quite rich.

**Dr. Dave:** Oh, yes, I can imagine. There's real bonding that would take place with each person having gone so deeply.

**Monika Wikman:** Yes, yeah. And it's interesting to think about Stan's background that led him here and you know I can't say that I'm an expert on Stan's background but I certainly am interested in looking at part of his trail and he's... for people who don't know him they can look up his bio at [www.stanislavgrof.com](http://www.stanislavgrof.com) and he's 82 and still going strong. He offers several public events every year still, he is speaking at and he speaks just as smooth and solid and seamlessly as he ever has and he keeps presenting his theoretical material also at the Grof training modules for the practitioners who are in training and he and his wife, they have an incredibly busy schedule. In 2013, they lectured and presented at conferences and professional meetings in Russia, Germany, Switzerland, Hungary and I mean on it goes, so at 82 he's not slowing down and he's deeply rich, so I think for people who would like to get, you know, close to the elder and feel the direct transmission, it's very worth it, I highly recommend that. He was born in Czechoslovakia and he is such um, one of the beloved heroes of Russia and they just love him and also Eastern Europe. My friend Diane had traveled in Russia with him before and she totally... it's a bit like being with Mick Jagger, everybody comes out to see Stanislav Grof. So anyway, he's one of the unique people who's travelled, cutting new trails, this form that he's founded that helps people drop into deep states of the imagination and the ability to train practitioners to hold that space, the form goes on, past Stan clearly. Quite a life, I've great respect for the people who are learning also the breathwork in their own training.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. He actually developed this breathwork approach as I recall, he started out doing LSD work. He was a psychiatrist, a fully qualified psychiatrist and he started doing therapy, I guess, using LSD and then developed this as an alternative.

Share with us whatever of that history that you know about because I think you hold different pieces of it than I do and I'm always interested in your perspective.

**Monika Wikman:** Well I do think his work with psychedelics definitely obviously cracked him open and opened his sensibility to the transpersonal psyche and then he ends up being one of the founders of the field of transpersonal psychology, as it's called and this links of course deeply with Jung's sense of the psyche and psychoid, they are sister kins in a way, transpersonal psychology and Jungian psychology but he launches into the LSD research and you know, he's a fully formed psychiatrist doing all of this and working in this deep friendship with Albert Hoffman, who of course was the Swiss doctor who came up with LSD to start with. These two were long time, lifelong friends, there's a beautiful photograph of the two of them together right before Albert Hoffman died. Yeah, that background, you really get the feeling of Stan as a great psychic adventurer, who really took the leap in as a young man with all of that and then, from a Jungian point of view, from my point of view, you know thinking about the divine puer energy, and of the divine youth that also will launch into the unknown and all that. Where we really find out if any of our lives with that archetype end up being fruitful, is if we come back with something for the collective from these explorations and from the leaps that this archetypal energy may help us take and Stan clearly at 82 we can really see the fruit of having had a lot of the divine puer archetype and also definitely the wisdom of the elder. What he's brought in as part of his grail cup offering with this form, that is you get into non-ordinary states of consciousness without the psychedelics and you develop a relationship with the energy, transpersonal reality, without having to use psychedelics. That's an amazing move that happened to him when he came through with this breathwork form. So I am very moved by his psychedelic research and his connections there.

**Dr. Dave:** Do you know how he came up with this breathwork as an alternate pathway into that psychedelic experience? Where did he get that idea from, I wonder?

**Monika Wikman:** Well, you know it's interesting. When you look at his book *Beyond the Brain*, I don't know if you remember this book came out in the eighties, I know I was in graduate school when it came out and was really moved by it and basically what we see is that during the LSD research, he was seeing the prenatal and perinatal psychology in the experiences that would happen to people during these LSD experiences. He saw a cartography of the human psyche and it included birth and pre-birth, which Jung psychology doesn't really address and Jung was very up front about that, that you should live life on but so inside the LSD research he saw a lot of Otto Rank's theory about birth trauma showing itself and so in *Beyond the Brain* he speaks to that and from that he went on to discover that without drugs, you can create a supportive environment just like you would during the LSD research, with a supportive environment, you take a deep breath and you add music and you use the breath and the breath body that could help move the energies through and help the process be carried. This point about the breath is the key and that's why it's called, of course, 'breathwork.' I think it came from, from what I gather, in these deep states that people would be in on the LSD experiences, that he used the breath at those times to have the ego let go of its clinging and its coordinates and let it drop into the larger psyche, find the intrinsic intelligence of the psyche through those experiences, that breath was always a very big part of helping the energies circulate and (circumvent?)

the mind and clinging in the body and then the ego to let go. So the breath body as they call it in India, was something that he just stumbled into through the LSD research and then began to realize, my gosh this is able to circulate the energy to help people have deep altered states, without the drugs and they come out of it with the same fruitful visionary experiences. So this yoking, Dr. Dave I think it's so important. Think about yoga, it's learning to yoke together and Grof's work with breath is in addition to what Jung had going with active imagination because it links it to the somatic unconscious that Jung was so interested in. And Grof took the diving board on into the deep end of the ocean when he added that power because the somatic unconscious that is so much on our minds these days in new developments in healing arts, Grof's work really addresses. So think about back to Otto Rank and also Wilhelm Reich and the armoring in the body and so the breathwork literally drops in and helps move and discover and find and breach and crack open and move the way psychological armoring takes hold of them and the way our bodies move through the world, so the psychic body histories are deeply addressed in this breathwork practice, which is what's caught me.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. Now what are the breath instructions in the workshop?

**Monika Wikman:** Well, when Diane and I collaborate together, usually what we've done for the breathwork community, for example, is I end up teaching on *The Red Book* and Diane does the full download around breath and also of a practice beforehand and the holding of the whole entire (unclear), Diane's holding that piece. So I am not the one to give you the exacts but from what I feel about it and understand from it, that the breath... you really find the breath that breathes itself and starting with a very deep, slow breathing through the abdomen and then up through the chest and then back out like a wave and the breath as a wave is where you start. And then as certain kinesthetic processes may occur you help the body move to help move the energy and the breath also informs itself about how it might like to change. You might get into breathing more deeply and then more quickly. The quick breath also activates the psyche and activates the process and then when you are coming into wanting to calm something down then you go back to the slower breath. But there's a whole art form to that that I think a practice nurse would be better able to describe.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. O.K. You know I've not been in a workshop but I have had some experiences that I think maybe were informed by that and indeed it was very powerful but part of what I experienced was what I would call hyperventilation and so there's the skeptical part of my mind saying, 'well, how much of this is hyperventilation?' You know as my fingers turn into claws and my toes curl up and I get light headed.

**Monika Wikman:** Yes. Well I'm with you about that because you definitely if you look at it from that languaging you can absolutely can get into hyperventilation and that tetany response, where the hands lock into like claws and all that and definitely people can get into that tetany experience. Sometimes dropping into that can then trigger a felt sense of the birth trauma that something in the body psyche remembers that that can also of course get going. But to get into that tetany experience and have to deal with panic because often times that leads to feelings of panic, or something else but all those subtleties of what gets activated becomes part of the work. So even if it turns into hyperventilation, it can cause a visionary state of course. It's a strange both/and, isn't it? So that can also trigger something.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, I'm open to that and I kind of had that experience. I did not go into panic but I did go into a kind of ecstasy, I would say.

**Monika Wikman:** Oh, that's interesting, that's interesting. That's funny, you think about it, it's the same archetype, you know Pan, the god of ecstasy, also creates panic and also the ecstatic doorway.

**Dr. Dave:** Interesting.

**Monika Wikman:** Yeah and these ecstatic experiences, the non-ordinary states, and to create a form where we drop in and touch them and it's just a beautiful, beautiful thing. You think about indigenous cultures forever have had their way to that grail cup and indigenous cultures that are still intact, very much the center of their alive culture will be experiences of the shamanic realms and many realms of being and (unclear) and archetypal energies and the intelligence of the natural world and the whole world of the anima mundi, the whole axis of the world, you know, opens up. The shamanic world has known forever. Our Western world is starved for this, it's just starved for this and Jung, of course, fell right into that and our work with active imagination and dreams takes us into relational field with this. Anybody working with the imaginal field has this ability to try to open the Western mind to things that are deeply ancient, that our world's so hungry for. It gets us, like you had that experience of the ecstasy, suddenly it's like 'oh my gosh, the map is so much bigger than the map the ego coordinates tries to hold of our life' and although that's scary, it's radically comforting. It changes our worldview, it changes the way we live and breathe and think, the way we feel about the beings in the natural world and our whole sensibilities, our whole paradigm shifts.

**Dr. Dave:** You know you mentioned that the West is hungry for this but you also said that in Russia and Eastern Europe that people treat Grof and I guess this work as a rock star, why do you think that is there, what's the special appeal to that block of the world do you think?

**Monika Wikman:** Isn't that something? I know I, like you, I also stand kind of with my jaw open about that. I had the joy... my dear friend Diane arranged for Stan and she and I to have dinner in Santa Fe together this summer and then he was on his way to teach in Taos for the Grof transpersonal training module and so we met for dinner and Stan mentioned that one time when he went to Russia, there was a program on television of what he was doing and saying and he was very proud to say at 82 that at that moment in time, in Russia, no program on TV had been more attended to, there were more people per capita watching Stan Grof in Russian television than any other program up to that point in time.

**Dr. Dave:** Wow!

**Monika Wikman:** And so, like you, I was wondering, how is this? Well, they see him as a hero, you know he is an explorer that was born out of the Eastern European psyche and his ability with language and ability to reach Russian people. His mother – beautiful story – about Stan's mother going on in Prague to train as a practitioner and holding her own healing groups and Eastern Europeans have loved her and him.

She of course has now died but also in Russia and my friend Diane did mention that, she did giggle and say it was a bit like being with Mick Jagger, that people come out to celebrate the work that he's done that's opened up the psyche. And also, you know, Jung called it the religious dimensions of the psyche, you know I guess we would call it spiritual but Jung meant the religious as in linking back, linking backwards to the ancient and you think about Russian psychology and they're starved psyches for the mythic dimensions that their culture's born on. This opens them to that. I actually have a funny story about that to tell you. I had the great happiness, with Diane, of teaching in England a few summers ago and in England all of these people came, also from Eastern Europe countries and I was teaching on *The Red Book* and you know, dropping something of Jung and Jung's spiritual emergency, the story of *The Red Book*, what happened to him, the coordinates that Jung found, all of that, as people are dropping into their own breathwork practices. And part of what was quite astounding and this gets back to Grof and Russia, all of these Eastern European people were there, they knew his background, there were many psychiatrists that were from all these Eastern European countries and also from Russia who'd had come and they knew great pieces in their own work of dropping into their cultures as practitioners but the part that really touched me, was that in the psyche itself as we all dropped into our own experiences, people were having different archetypes from different cultures that were present in the room, activated. So, for example, one of the joys for me is that I get to do breathwork, when I do these teachings with Diane and so Diane's holding that form so I get to lay down on my own little mat and drop in and I just love that. And when I did that in England, I was very surprised to find the Baba Yaga archetypal field was just binding right there, it was just so vivid and so alive, I just laughed, absolutely laughed. And I had my own experience with that energy and it went on in active imagination and it became very important to me that...

**Dr. Dave:** I think you might need to tell us about Baba Yaga. I know the name is familiar. Is it a Russian myth about a witch or, tell us about it, both the objective story and then your experience.

**Monika Wikman:** Yes, well O.K. yes, well this is probably a good example also of the breathwork operates because you get into that non-ordinary state and you're going to have encounters and important encounters that are particular to you, particular to me but the thing is though that if you're in a field of a number of different people whose cultural roots are linked to different mythologies and psychologies, those are present in the room. And so I was very happy to drop in and find, yes, Baba Yaga who is a Russian fairy tale of hers and also of Slavic countries as well and she is the wisdom hag who lives out in the forest and is an archetypal energy to be reckoned with, if it's one's fate and to be eaten up by her if you are not getting in synch with her in the right way, those are part of the story. So in one of the tales about Baba Yaga the young feminine is a bit like Cinderella but instead of finding the magic prince she wanders into the forest and finds Baba Yaga. And Baba Yaga is the scary witch who lives in her own forest hut and actually the story is that her body sometimes is seen like a scary witch house and she stands on one bird leg like a chicken and then her mean witchy eyes are able to perceive all things and she's really an archetype, that truly transcendent feminine, that exists in and of its own right and also with great wisdom and like an energy at the core of the psyche that if you encounter, you will change – amazing personification of that energy. So I had never thought about Baba Yaga but if you're then in the room with all these people from

these Slavic countries and from Russia, there it was quite clearly and very vividly. So I had a very deep experience with that, wanted to readdress some things in my life and give me a reckoning which was very powerful and I did smile later talking to other people in the room who had similar archetypes also that could be activated and present that liked that. So it's rich the people that are drawn to this plane, what happens in the psyche, each person works to hold their own encounter and ground that and integrate that and take it home and have their lives changed, that's really the heart of the work. But getting back to Russia, I think that my friend Diane and I in September of 2014, at the end of the month, she and I will go to Russia and teach that module together. I'll teach *The Red Book* portion and she of course will hold and teach the Holotropic Breathwork. It will be in Rostov-on-Don, Stan mentioned at dinner this summer that he'd like to come with us, I'm yet to know if that's actually going to happen but he's certainly got enthusiasm for coming too. Diane has been there before and she says it's just a rich body of seekers and many, many, many people, I mean hundreds of people come to these events, that's how hungry they are for it.

**Dr. Dave:** You know I'm thinking about that hunger and the Communist experiment to kind of shove a materialistic worldview and to kind of ban religion on this people who have a deep history of real shamanic roots in their history, so it almost feels like it's speaking to this what had been suppressed for so long but didn't go away.

**Monika Wikman:** Dr. Dave I so agree. You think about the Sami and various traditions in the northern regions of Russia that are deeply shamanic and yes, this allows them to get back to their roots. And they're wise, they go right to it, so I think that wakes us up too, in the West, with our own materialism and our own society cultural values that try to hypnotize us into the capitalistic worldview and so that births our own hunger to be more connected to nature and find our place with the nature spirit takes us seriously that wants to address us in our dreams and visions and through the breathwork work as well. That it's something that's actively alive at the core of the psyche of each of us that wants to help direct the life and the growth of and the shape of our lives, it's really important for our world as well. I'll have more to say after I go to Russia with Diane next year.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, I bet you will. I'll be interested to hear what that is. It sounds like just a wonderful opportunity for you two and for all the people who are going to be participating in that workshop. A thread I wanted to pick up on was you said something about integrating it back into life and I remember when I used to be very involved in encounter groups and people would get very high, people can have a peak experience as a result of any of a number of these forms if you will and have a peak experience but then when you go back, when you come down off the mountain, that can be very challenging. So talk about what kinds of steps, you know, your own thinking about that and what steps you guys have taken to try to ensure that transition.

**Monika Wikman:** Well I'm appreciating that you're bringing us back to this because I do think the value of it, in fact I joke, when I teach the Grof training module on *The Red Book* we joke about archetypal addicts anonymous – the triple 'a' club because that's the shadow, the intensity junkie that wants the high but doesn't take it back to life and find a way that it lives inside the core of the life. And I have a big heart for this in my own life and also in my work as a Jungian analyst as well because Jung

says that the most important thing is how we *live* with the spirit of the unconscious, how do we live with the imaginal and it wants to integrate very much into dailyness and so I come at it, when I watch integration processes, which they do beautifully in the Grof work and really emphasize that, I come at it through the lens of course of alchemy and Jung's work and I think a *huge* contribution to current psychological development, Jung was on to it, he looked at alchemy. Around this stage is called the rubedo, the reddening and it means that after you go through the dark, the blackening, the nigredo and you drop into seeking the vision, crying out for help, knowing you don't have the way, the ego knows that it's lost and then finally the psyche can circulate and move the energy and move the imagery and then if all goes well there is the albedo, the whitening, or this illumination, or high, you were talking about in this really ecstatic high, the 'outside the body' for example.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes.

**Monika Wikman:** Yeah, exactly the out of the body experience. Then the psyche very much in its intention for wholeness, in its intrinsic intelligence, it drops us right back into the body and into the life in a new way and a new experience. An experience of the body, an experience of matter and also having its place of divinity, we don't see the natural world in the same way when the rubedo experience has happened. We learn to literally walk into our lives and through the world with our lenses of perception cleansed and seeing the world of matter for the great mystery that it is. So we're more at peace with the temporal, our attitudes have adjusted, knowing signs of when one's attitudes are off and one needs the waters of rebirth, one needs to get closer to the divine self. You know you get the coordinates on the map, right? And so this rubedo is about that, it's about how to live with these deep experiences, have them infuse us and I agree with you, it's very big work. That's why we have to talk about it, to cross back across the threshold with the boon into daily life and with the connection still going. This is where I've had a heart for my own work with the Grof community because the work with dreams and active imagination that is not just at the depths of these you know ritual shamanic drop ins, that we have so deeply through the breathwork but stay with the ongoing dialogue and the richness of the relationship. I think that's an addition from Jung's work that is a help for this integration process.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah and I think a big part of the challenge is to come back not just to be more connected and aware of nature and so on but it seems to me like a lot of the challenge has to do with social relationships, with our connections with other people who haven't gone on that journey, haven't had that experience, haven't had that same set of insights. I'm remembering back in the days of est and people come out of those workshops really high and they'd kind of hammer everybody over the head with it.

**Monika Wikman:** (laughing) Yes. Well, I'll tell you from my experience how this is authentic, you know, when it's authentic for us how we know it, is that we're not just high we've had tons of shadow corrections, course corrections and shadow encounters and the whole of the personality's getting giant adjustments and downloads about how it needs to live and love and relate differently. And that course correction is the beauty of it and it changes our attitude and it moves toward a greater wholeness of the personality and that is the richness that is also in the Grof world. When they have you do the mandalas in the place for shadow the place where you've

encountered something that's been very dark or difficult and then also course corrections around your personal self and life. It really tries to get us, as Jung psychology so deeply is addressing, literally into a spirit of wholeness and that would mean definitely that we are on humble ground and not just flying high. We're on deeply humble ground. In fact I think Stan mentioned one of his first experiences of this huge transpersonal presence that came to him, just smeared him, it was a divine feminine presence that just literally took him and pushed him and just smeared him. He was absolutely nothing and *then* began the rest of the experience and 'cause he was talking about the humility of understanding the place of where he sits with these energies and you know that gave him his first teaching. So I guess I'm just saying to you yes, we come out high but we also come out radically humbled and course corrected.

**Dr. Dave:** Okay (laughs).

**Monika Wikman:** There's that line you know 'you must change your life.' I think that goes with this, I love to think we are. I think that's the richness and part of the integration process is to hold back those notes as well and find ways that you move into life differently. So I think though in terms of how I experience it is as a great addition to active imagination, that's what we have to do with the somatic unconscious and the breathwork yoking into consciousness, dropping into the body and the body's kinesthetic intelligence awakening and it also being part of the process. It moves through armor, it moves through places in our lives where feelings just get stuck for example and the somatic unconscious holds so, so much. And I know there are other traditions that are all making inroads in this clearly. I know Marion Woodman's work has done this for eons and I definitely have great respect for the healing arts that are Craniosacral work. I've been a practitioner of that for years. There's many inroads into the psyche-matter mysteries and I think this breath body, adding the breath and the kinesthetic felt sense in the body to active imagination is genius and Jungians can really benefit from them. I know Bernice Hill who's an elder in the Jungian lineage has a beautiful book out now called *Emergence of the Cosmic Psyche* and she did go through the training with Grof years ago and has great respect for this tradition of the Jungian truth that they're facing and I know Houston for example also has Ken Stockton stepping forward to offer part of the grail cup to the Jungians in Houston about breathwork and the breathwork form. So I think this interfacing between the Jungian world and the breathwork world is a natural one with richness on both sides of the equation that I know sure lights me up and again it's my friend Diane who brought all this fun with women, you know, working in the world. We do it differently, it comes through collaboration and love often. For me this has definitely landed in my life through Diane and the great friendship there. She'd have a lot to tell you about Stan more so because she's worked side by side with him for thirty years.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, yeah. I know there was an International Jungian conference just recently in Copenhagen. Did you go to that?

**Monika Wikman:** No, I did not go. That's wonderful that you did.

**Dr. Dave:** No, I didn't.

**Monika Wikman:** Oh, you didn't, oh, O.K.

**Dr. Dave:** I thought maybe you had.

**Monika Wikman:** Yeah, I didn't go to this one, I went to a surf camp instead.

**Dr. Dave:** To surf camp?

**Monika Wikman:** Yes, I decided that I wanted to go to surf camp with my partner Tom and his boys instead of going to Copenhagen and I think for me that was a good choice. I did go though to the one in Montreal a few years ago and I found it to be very rich, I really did. I learned a tremendous amount about people around the world doing various things. I gave some material there on Emily Carr, a Canadian painter, her life and work and they were so moved by the beauty of her artwork and her soul that I gave that talk but everybody is offering something and it's a lovely way to exchange. I did not make the Copenhagen one, no (unclear) a long trip.

**Dr. Dave:** Are you a surfer?

**Monika Wikman:** (laughs) No, I'm just beginning but I decided that that would be in August, more I think what my heart had in mind, so I went that journey instead.

**Dr. Dave:** Oh, yeah. I tried to take it up two or three times but it was too late in life. If I am so fortunate as to be reincarnated, that's high on my list of what I want to do the next time around.

**Monika Wikman:** Oh, that's wonderful! Oh, that's wonderful! Yeah there's something so beautiful between the kinesthetic and psyche and the natural world, imagination. My partner Tom takes his boys surfing all the time and to see them, you know, leaping in and out of the water just, you know, lit up from contact with nature and joy. It's just a great thing to be there.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, yeah. I think it's such a high experience and the closest that I've been able to get to it is in skiing, where you have I think something similar of that sort of blending with nature and giving way to gravity and letting it carry you.

**Monika Wikman:** Oh, I really share that with you. I grew up skiing and ski racing and I just was in love, my central passion early in life was absolutely skiing and dancing with the mountain and the beauty of that dance and the non mental quality it's just (unclear) suddenly isn't it? For you, neat, you've got that going so...

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, yeah. I've never been any more than an intermediate skier at best but got far enough to have that experience and feel that and the whole thing about, you know for somebody who takes up skiing later in life, didn't start as a child, the learning of getting past the fear of letting your skis point downhill which you have to do to turn. There's no way you can turn and that's probably a really good metaphor isn't it? You cannot turn, you can't change your course without taking the risk of going through a period where your skis are pointing downhill.

**Monika Wikman:** Yes, Dr. Dave I love that you're bringing that in. That feeling, that kinesthetic psychic feeling too, about 'I am so not in charge and I'm taking the leap and taking the adventure and here I go.' You go and then finding some way that you'll figure it out together and that you do, you and the mountain, obviously, here you are, still living. I do think though, Stan's work, Jung's work, our own work with the psyche on a daily basis is just like that, it's like pointing the skis downhill and saying, you know, 'I'm part of what, that's so much larger than me and I want to be in the flow of it, I want to be in the play of it, you know, the tao of it, to be alive and enlivened from living in the tao.' Which takes risks and dealing with, you know, uncertainty a lot but nonetheless. One of Grof's books talks about the cosmic game. I really appreciate his sensibility about that, you know, the divine itself is having a time playing with lost and found, it's playing with light and dark, it's playing with all these opposites and we're in the field of that and finding our place in the great play. I definitely find sports and being with horses, skiing, now surfing – anything that takes us into the natural world, it just can be so healthy. It's really part of the (unclear).

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Monika Wikman:** ...that Rumi line that speaks to you 'There's so many ways to kneel and kiss the ground.' And these are all ways to be alive, aren't they and celebrate being a human being on the planet. It's interesting to get into this actually, it reminds me of what we started with in the beginning about the puer archetype because the puer archetype gets a bad rap in the world and among Jungians it certainly does as well and for reasons, because the puer archetype if it possesses us with the negative side, then you know it's the midlife crisis that's never resolved, it's the young puer energy that's just going ad nauseum over and over in repetition toward something that's compulsive or addictive or trying to avoid death, trying to avoid time, trying to avoid life and then of course it has a negative rap. However, Jung says, there's no renewal, no renewal possible without the puer and puella archetypes, the divine youth that takes the fresh outlook, the fresh try, the first step. It's like the sacred fool and I think when we really drop in with our own lives, through nature, through love, through inner work, through breathwork, through dreamwork, we are definitely like those skis pointing downhill saying 'I'll take the view of the sacred fool,' fresh, you know, youthful energy. 'I'll give this a try' and something of magic happens, the staleness of the senex, of our known coordinates, the fixed consciousness has to break up and I think the breathwork's so beautiful because it's a form that's really here for us that helps that breaking up of the fixed and the known. And then it helps the activated imagination just really be able to dialogue us with it and it changes as well. You know the unconscious and conscious, they get into that new fresh energy and some new amalgam gets formed out of that. So it takes that youthful part like you with your skis pointing downhill and Grof doing the LSD research in his youth and then coming up with another model and those of us who leap into, you know, doing the breathwork or some other shamanic form. It's the same piece and trusting intrinsic intelligence of the psyche and relying on that, learning to track it and growing wiser in the contact. I just go back to Baba Yaga, I think she's the wisdom archetype of the divine feminine that's going to teach us more and more wisdom. So I'm grateful for everyone who pointed those skis downhill, you doing that and Grof and other people that have taught me and been my teachers who have through that explorer, you know, the psychic explorer, that's an important element. We really need that piece in order to keep the coordinates quite alive.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, I really appreciate your repositioning the puer archetype a little bit because I recognized some time back that that's probably my archetype, very much so and I realize that the challenge for me was going to be able to grow into the senex of the sort of the wise old man direction and not to get totally hung up on youthfulness.

**Monika Wikman:** Well, that's interesting thinking about your listenership that you have and the work you do, Dr. Dave because you're constantly bringing in what is new and what would open doors to something new and helping break up fixed thought forms. Because you know it really is the fixed thought forms of the senex that's so deadly, the thinking 'we know.' Like what do we really know? Are you kidding? Where do we come from, all of us are born into this world, all of us go, what do we actually know? I mean, I agree that humans actually know a lot, a bit of science, medicine and there's a lot that we know but what do we *really* know about the nature of consciousness and the nature of being? And that's the beauty of it, never to be fully answered and always to be explored. And your whole work is staying on the horizon, drawing in all kinds of people from different traditions and practices that keep the dialogue going, so I can see you with the puer in such a healthy way. Now that's interesting because I think especially when we get into the LSD research and we think about Grof's beginning and my dear friend Ralph Metzner also was at Harvard when the LSD research was going on and you know people have had experience with psychedelics and leaping in through that and then the grounding of that also in these times. The puer and the senex marrying, creating amalgam that comes out with some wholeness in it is really beautiful. For example, there's research that's been done on the use of psilocybin mushrooms with cancer patients, that's taking place at UCLA and it's beautiful, about expanding consciousness and helping individuals going in the dying process make peace with their life and connect with something larger before going. It's the most natural thing in the world, ancient traditions have known it forever how to do, you know, use the sacred forms and sacred ways that really serves the larger whole. So the integration between senex and puer I find so important. I know I'm going on and there's one other thing and then I'm going to stop. Von Franz I know, who I love very deeply, Von Franz's work I of course love very much and there'd be times when I'd hear her voice... toward the end of her life it would sound quite senexy and high on something and I would sort of take that into account but also realizing, you know, she was Swiss and also of a certain time and so for example she was not into group work, she had a certain sense about that and my life has really taken me toward doing group work actually and people holding individual vessels while you're part of a larger canoe that holds the whole of the group. I really loved doing retreat work but one of the things she said that I loved... she looked in at Terence McKenna and Dennis McKenna and their work at one point and of course these were just amazing researchers who spent time deep below the border of the psyche and below the border in South American culture looking in on the psilocybin mushroom culture and experiencing it very deeply and when Von Franz looked in on them, she said something beautiful that ties in with what we're saying about the senex and the puer. And she said when people go that far out, like these two are doing, I just hope that they bring something back, something back to the collective, back across the threshold that would be commensurate with how far they went, that they discover the new thing and bring it back on in. Now that's so respectful of the puer archetype and the puella archetype. It is its role to go far and bring something back and I know that's what you're saying of the archetype

you're close to. Certainly in my life they've been very important as well, the grounding of it and also the reaching the nation with it. And I think Grof's life surely shows that as well. The fruit, at eighty-two, over (unclear) you know, yeah, very beautiful and integrated personality and aware and given so much to the collective with his grail cup.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, something I haven't shared with you previously, is I had psychedelic experience during graduate school back in the sixties and you know it's hard to know just how much of an impact all of that had upon my subsequent life but it's really possible for me to question whether or not I would even be doing this series in the way that I'm doing it, if I had not had the experience.

**Monika Wikman:** I am so glad to know that, yes and also for listeners to drop in with that as well. The expansion of consciousness, the getting into non-ordinary states, the importance of that for all of us, so important. I know there's this thing that says that it's 'state dependent' you know that if you experience something in an altered state with a certain drug that it stays there, well actually I think it's also the reverse. That what we experience in altered states phenomenon it literally changes the way we perceive so that when we come back into ordinary – supposed ordinary – consciousness, we've got these inroads. Like you look at a sunset differently, you slow down for the movement of the sky and the gorgeous beauty of color and, I mean the shock of the beauty of the ensouled world and each other, we're more alive to it if we have experiences that have been outside the box and certainly of a psychedelic. You know set and setting is the key of course with using psychedelics and if set and setting is there and it's the right practitioner, many people have very important openings. I think this is an important conversation that we're stepping on into Dr. Dave for our next time.

**Dr. Dave:** O.K. That sounds like a good transition point. Is there anything else that you'd like to say before we wrap it up here?

**Monika Wikman:** I guess the one thing I haven't mentioned that I will just briefly is that Stan, at the end of his life, one of the things that I heard which goes to my heart is one of the things he finds extremely valuable has to do with astrology and he's had a long, long partnership with Rick Tarnas who wrote that brilliant, brilliant book, the brilliant tome *Cosmos and Psyche* and so I was very interested to see when he taught in Taos this summer and I was tuning in, how much he respected of the pattern of the stars from the moment we're born and the archetypal music, symbolism and energy that sits behind the birth chart. I listened to that with amazement and that I think's another part of what he leaves in his legacy because he would look at the charts of everybody who came to do breathwork modules early on to see what were the aspects like for their recent opening and what was the potentiality. So his collaboration with Rick Tarnas I know runs very deeply in his own writing, his own speaking and that's fun to see too, men who collaborate and do something of deep mutuality where we find something of a third thing, is one like I've experienced with Diane. I think Stan and Rick Tarnas have been doing that and I admire that. So I find people just might want to pick up that book *Cosmos and Psyche*, I know we've mentioned that before.

**Dr. Dave:** O.K. Well Dr. Monika Wikman it's always a rush (laughs) to speak with you (both laugh).

**Monika Wikman:** Well, Dr. Dave it's a total joy with me to know you and to share yet another hour with you and your listeners and I hope this is helpful to some of the people tuning in.

**Dr. Dave:** O.K. Well let's do it again.

**Monika Wikman:** O.K. I agree.

**WRAP UP:**

I always enjoy my conversations with Monika Wikman. Her conversations are like a mountain stream rushing down a mountainside, refreshing, nurturing and touching on so many things, yet unified. I get energized by the thought of maybe attending one of those workshops on holotropic breathing. It would be especially good if I could go to one that she's doing with her friend Diane Haug and it were somewhere near where I live. It's at least a fantasy. For various reasons I'm not sure if I'd really do it at this point or not. Am I still the adventurer I used to be? I'm not sure. I suspect many of you may not be aware that I interviewed Stan Grof a couple of years ago on my Wise Counsel podcast. I think it's a very interesting interview, we had a good rapport and I was very energized by his journey. There's also a transcript on that site. Just go to [www.wisecounselpodcast.com](http://www.wisecounselpodcast.com) scroll down the list of past shows to the bottom where you'll see a link to archived shows, click on that link and you'll find it. It was recorded March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011 and is a perfect companion piece to today's interview.

Thanks to today's guest Jungian analyst Dr. Monika Wikman for sharing her experiences and insights in and around Holotropic Breathwork.