

# What differentiates breathing retraining and the Buteyko Institute Method from other breathwork?



In recent years, breathwork has gained popularity, with countless courses, coaches, and influencers promoting its benefits. But not all breath practices or breathing practitioners are equal. Breathing retraining, based on the Buteyko Institute Method, stands apart for its proven efficacy in relieving breathing related disorders and *restoring functional, efficient breathing for sustained health improvement*. It's a comprehensive approach addressing all aspects of the breathing pattern in all situations, rather than just special effects breathing exercises.

The Buteyko Institute breathing retraining programme aims to normalise each aspect of the breathing pattern (rate, rhythm, volume, mechanics, use of the nose), for all situations (awake, asleep, at rest, when eating, talking, and when exercising). The specific goal of breathing retraining is to achieve physiologically normal breathing.

*Adapted from Tess Graham – Relief from snoring and sleep apnoea*

## So much more than just breathing exercises

This calibre of breathing retraining does not just involve breathing exercises. It also includes identifying and addressing habit and lifestyle factors that are influencing the breathing pattern

and guidelines around daily movement/exercise which can be detrimental to progress when the breathing is unstable, but then becomes a major driver for ongoing improvement as the baseline breathing pattern improves and stabilises.

## A clinical, individualised approach

Unlike many generalised breathwork techniques which focus on guided breathing sessions or emotional release, breathing retraining begins with a comprehensive health and breathing assessment and aims to re-establish a functional baseline breathing pattern going forward.

A qualified practitioner will take the time to understand:

- Your breathing symptoms
- Any respiratory, cardiovascular, nervous system or sleep-related issues
- Your breathing habits and behaviours
- Lifestyle factors such as nutrition, exercise and stress
- Your medical history and current medications
- Your breathing/health goals

Our clients complete a comprehensive health questionnaire and an initial breathing assessment, including [capnography](#). This allows for a tailored programme aimed at correcting the dysfunctional breathing pattern that often lies at the root of conditions like asthma, hay fever, nasal congestion, snoring, sleep apnoea, chronic cough, anxiety, fatigue, and more.

## Clear, measurable outcomes

Many breathwork approaches make broad claims, often lacking in specificity or measurable results. With breathing retraining, clients can expect real, measurable, sustained, long-term improvements — not vague short-lived benefits. For example:

- Those with asthma frequently experience a substantial reduction or even elimination of symptoms and need for medication.
- Clients with sleep apnoea achieve better, more restful sleep and reduced need for devices like CPAP.
- Those with anxiety and panic learn to understand and positively influence their nervous system via their breathing.
- People living with chronic respiratory conditions often find they breathe more freely and use less medication.

[Read real-life testimonials and case studies from past clients »](#)

## Why practitioner training matters

The Buteyko method is not a DIY practice. It cannot be learned from a book, video, or drop-in class. A certified practitioner has undergone extensive training (at least 3–12 months), including:

- Anatomy and physiology of breathing
- Comprehensive study of breathing-related disorders
- Medications and medical devices
- Practical and theoretical tuition and study
- Measuring and managing individual responses and adjustments during retraining
- Assessment of practical and theoretical understanding
- Ongoing supervision and mentoring from a senior practitioner

A competent practitioner is not just trained to teach the breathing exercises, but also to tailor the programme to the individual and monitor, adjust, and support clients throughout the process to ensure safety and effectiveness.

## Proceed with care

Altering your breathing, one of the body's most fundamental habits, can have dramatic results, both good and bad. Done properly, with a qualified practitioner, it can transform your health. Done incorrectly, it can lead to confusion, setbacks, or even worsen symptoms. The same breathing exercises that would heal someone with asthma can make someone with anxiety or cardiovascular issues considerably worse.

That's why choosing a trained breathing practitioner matters.

Considerations in selecting a suitable breathing practitioner:

- What is the practitioner's training and what are their qualifications?
- Do they understand medical conditions and medications?
- Do they offer a structured, evidence-based programme?
- Do they offer an individualised clinic-based programme with ongoing assessment of progress and follow-up?
- Do they work full-time with breathing assessment and retraining, or have they done an online certificate and tacked breathing on to their primary modality?
- Are they registered with a professional body that oversees their education/ongoing professional development and code of practice such as The Buteyko Institute of Breathing and Health?

[Read about the Buteyko Institute Method and its practitioners here »](#)

[A full list of certified Buteyko Institute breathing educators in New Zealand »](#)

Breathing retraining is not just another wellness trend. It is a clinically proven structured approach to restoring physiologically normal breathing and with it, a better quality of life.

## For more information

**For any questions about booking an assessment, breathing retraining or our services contact the clinic on [info@buteykobreathing.nz](mailto:info@buteykobreathing.nz) or +64-9-360 6291**

## [Timetables and online bookings](#)

Prepared by: Glenn White BSc MSc MBIBH