

# *Bipolar Awakenings*

## *Healing Retreat Handbook*

2020

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## Part 1

### An Introduction to our Retreat Program

#### Background

Since April of 2007, Sean Blackwell and his wife, transpersonal psychologist Ligia Splendore, have been developing a program to help people labeled with bipolar disorder heal. This project has involved:

- Continual research of the leading psychiatrists and psychologists in the field, such as Dr. Stanislav Grof, Dr. David Lukoff, Dr. John Weir Perry and Dr. Loren Mosher ([for a bibliography of our research please click here](#)).
- Thousands of conversations with people struggling with their bipolar disorder from all over the world.
- Voluntarily working with people in a variety of non-ordinary experiences, including mania and “acute psychosis”, learning from our mistakes along the way.
- Professional education [with Grof Transpersonal Training](#) as holotropic breathwork facilitators.

This experience has taken us to a place where we feel it is safe to work with people who have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder in an emotionally supportive, protective retreat setting. We have been conducting these private retreats in Brazil and abroad since November of 2013. This document provides a brief description of the Bipolar Awakenings healing retreat program.

#### Underlying Assumptions

To put it in the simplest terms possible, from the perspective of transpersonal psychologists such as Stanislav Grof, the root cause of bipolar disorder is not to be found in the biological brain, but in an overflow of unconscious content which invades our conscious mind as a type of repressed bio-energetic material – something which is currently undetectable by science. We believe that this material is of a spiritual nature and is something found in everyone. The material itself is largely composed of emotional content from life-trauma, but may also include traumatic events from perinatal experiences, as well as energies from other more controversial dimensions of our existence, such as past lives.

In other words a psychological crisis, even a “psychosis”, is a completely natural phenomenon which can happen to anyone. There is nothing inherently pathological about it. And, as a natural occurrence, we believe that all people with mental disorders at least have the *potential* to heal.

#### Retreat Goal

The long-term objective of the retreat is to help our client heal to the point where they are able to remain medication-free without relapsing into mania, debilitating depression or psychosis. We do this by helping people safely access the bio-energetic material, releasing it through powerful healing techniques. Our hypothesis is that if enough of the bio-energetic material is released, the disorder will eventually resolve itself.

This release process is rather unpredictable and, to some extent, out of our control. As with a woman giving birth, the doctor cannot create the birth of a baby, only make the birth process as safe as possible. In some ways, we see this as our role – to help facilitate the rebirth of our client, into someone who is not only free of any mental disorder, but who is also more open, peaceful, compassionate and alive.

## **A Private Location – In Your Country, or here in Brazil!**

The work we do together is highly sensitive and must be done in an environment which is safe, stable and emotionally supportive at all times. Our client must be able to focus on their own personal healing, without the normal stresses of work and family interfering. As a result, a very private location, preferably a home in the countryside, is required. At this location, our client should be able to make a lot of noise without alarming the neighbors. This location should also provide private bedrooms for the client and the practitioner, as privacy and private time are required by both parties as part of the healing work.

During our time together, contact with friends and family that are not supportive of our efforts should be limited, as their opinions may cause undue stress and their presence will be a distraction. In addition, although there will be plenty of time for visiting, both children and pets should be cared for by other family members at a separate location.

If you are interested in working with us here in Brazil, we have a marvelous small hotel in the countryside which fulfills all of our requirements. Please see this video f

## **The Need for Live Support**

During the healing retreat, one person close to the client should always be available to provide emotional support. This “supporter” will stay with us at the house where we will work with the healing techniques as described below. Although additional help is always welcome, we will have time to cook and eat together, and clean up after ourselves.

The role of the supporter is:

- (1) To witness the healing process so that someone in the regular life of the client can have a better understanding of what is involved.
- (2) To provide emotional support to the client as they work through what may be very difficult emotional material.
- (3) To ensure that no inappropriate activities are taking place.
- (4) To be a great “listener” both during and after the retreat, in order to help the client integrate their experiences.
- (5) To simply keep the client company while the retreat facilitator gets extra rest or practices private meditation, in order to prepare for the daily activities.

## **Healing Techniques**

Listed below are the healing techniques which will be made available to our client as we work together. As mentioned above, all of the techniques we use access the unconscious, however, they vary in range of intensity. The timing and duration of these techniques is something which will be agreed upon by everyone involved as the work progresses.

### **1. Our Primary Healing Technique: Bipolar Breathwork**

Over the centuries, many breathing techniques have been developed in different parts of the world which have the intention of inducing spiritual states of consciousness and/or releasing painful emotional trauma. We have found the practice of Holotropic Breathwork, created by Dr. Stanislav Grof, to be especially therapeutic. Holotropic Breathwork is a form of “over-breathing” that allows anyone to access and release the bio-energetic material mentioned above. It has been used to heal depression, birth trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, and

has cured people from alcoholism and other addictions.

Because most people have limited access to their unconscious, a typical holotropic breathwork session is quite strong, lasting up to three hours. Powerful music is also played loudly, to help encourage people to push themselves into contact with the unconscious dimension. However, in our opinion, the bio-energetic content of a person with bipolar disorder is more sensitive and usually easier to access.

As a result, we agree with Grof Transpersonal Training that the standard format for holotropic breathwork which typically involves a three-hour group session, is not a suitable healing setting for most people with bipolar disorder. In fact, most holotropic breathwork facilitators will not accept someone with bipolar disorder into their breathwork workshops, as they realize the potential risks involved.

However with a slightly modified approach which is in complete accordance with all of the fundamental principles of holotropic breathwork, we can use this technique in a way which is both gentle and deeply healing. Basically, our **Bipolar Breathwork** sessions occur in periods of 30 to 180 minutes, depending on how our client is feeling. As opposed to the group setting, in our private sessions, the client will have the undivided attention of both the supporter as well as a certified holotropic breathwork facilitator in Sean Blackwell. Music can also be more personalized, depending on the emotional state of the client. Used in this way, Bipolar Breathwork is a powerful technique which can be used almost every day of the retreat.

**Materials:** (1) Some space on the floor for the client to lie down. (2) A few yoga mats or thin mattresses to lie on. (3) Pillows and blankets for comfort and protection. (4) Strong speakers which can be connected to a laptop to play MP3 audio tracks.

**[It should be noted that Bipolar Breathwork is currently endorsed by Grof Transpersonal Training. Sean received his certification as a holotropic breathwork facilitator in September, 2016.]**

2. **Vipassanna meditation** is a technique which we will all use, including the supporters. This form of meditation (1) helps to create a sacred bond between us as we work together; (2) helps the client get in touch with their bodily sensations, which prepares them for bipolar breathwork; (3) is a practice which can be used daily once the retreat is over in order to help with integration. It is expected that we will meditate together almost every day, for 30 – 60 minutes.

**Materials required:** A quiet room and some pillows to help people get comfortable while they meditate.

### 3. **Mandala Drawing**

The drawing of mandalas for artistic self-expression helps to integrate the experiences which arise from our unconscious. As a result, mandala drawings are usually done after every breathwork session, as well as at other important moments of the healing program. No special artistic talent is necessary.

**Materials:** Large art-size pages. Crayons or pastels.

### 4. **Bodywork / Body Contact**

As the bio-energetic material releases, parts of the body may feel a variety of strong sensations such as cramping, pain, heat, cold, itching, tingling, etc. Sensations such as these should be respected as part of the healing process. As a result, the client is encouraged to stretch or contract in whatever way feels right for them, especially during breathwork.

Occasionally, the client may want to feel the pressure of physical contact or simply touching of a specific part of the body. This contact can help to facilitate the release of trapped energy. In addition, especially during more intense moments, people may request to be warmly embraced, in order to express and/or receive feelings of love.

Dr. Grof points out that, while physical contact with the therapist (or supporter) could be considered illegal in parts of The United States and other countries, due to the risk of sexual abuse, that sharing physical contact, when requested by the patient, can be an important part of the healing process. In order to ensure that nothing inappropriate occurs, a supporter should be present at all times during any therapeutic exercise. Sexual contact between supporters and the person taking the retreat represents a serious breach of trust, even if it is initiated by the patient.

#### 5. **Counseling**

As the deeper therapeutic techniques begin to release the unconscious bio-energetic material, the client may wish to share their newfound issues and insights through conversation. At this point, our retreat work may look more like an informal “talk therapy” session. One important difference, however, is that on our retreat there is no time restriction to the conversation – we talk until the subject reaches its natural completion.

While it sounds unconventional, on occasion we have found it very beneficial to create new, client-specific approaches which bring a combination of all of the above into one fluid healing experience – breathwork, meditation, bodywork and counseling, all happening in a seamless flow!

#### **Integration**

Integration is a critical part of the healing process, as the inner-transformation taking place eventually needs to manifest itself in the client’s daily life and relationships. This type of change should not be rushed, however, and will manifest when the time is right, perhaps weeks or months after the retreat is complete. As a result, it is important for our clients to continue with the integration aspect of their healing through regular meetings with an empathetic therapist who is supportive of our healing program. Follow-up integration sessions with Sean or Ligia can also be arranged live (for residents of São Paulo) or via Skype for a reasonable fee.

#### **Timeline**

After working with people in the retreat format for five years, we realized that ten days appears to be enough time to get the most out of what this program has to offer. Regardless of its length, the last 20% of our time together should be reserved as an integration period, where our client simply has time to relax and share their unfolding experiences with us, in a protective setting. No deeper work in non-ordinary states would happen during this critical integration time.

#### **Medications**

The healing retreat can be done with clients who are currently either medicated or unmedicated. Our experience to date suggests that people can achieve powerful results even while they are medicated. Transpersonal psychiatrist, Dr. James Eyerman, conducted over 11,000 sessions of holotropic breathwork with patients at Washington University Psychiatric Hospital in St. Louis, over a period of 12 years, without any adverse reactions due to medication. One added benefit is that by working with clients while they are medicated, we reduce any tension coming from family members and healthcare professionals who may be unsupportive towards a program which eliminates medications immediately.

If at some point after the retreat the client feels that they could benefit from a reduction in medication, it should be discussed with their family and psychiatrist.

### **Pricing**

[Click here to see the Pricing Guide for 2019.](#)

### **Next Steps**

If you are interested in learning more about our healing retreat, please contact me, Sean Blackwell, at [bipolarawakenings@gmail.com](mailto:bipolarawakenings@gmail.com). Once we are in touch, we will schedule an initial one-hour Skype session for USD \$100.

If you are still interested in the Healing Retreat after the Skype session, we will send you a follow-up questionnaire to help us determine if our program is right for you. After you have completed and submitted the questionnaire, a second Skype session will be scheduled, free of charge. In this second session we will provide you with questionnaire feedback and discuss in depth the possibility of you enrolling in our retreat program.

Thank you for your interest!

Sean Blackwell

[BipolarAwakenings.com](http://BipolarAwakenings.com)

## Part 2

### Complete our Online Questionnaire

We believe that each person arrives at a psychological crisis due to their own personal life path and background. Genetic inheritance plays a minor role, if any. Based on years of conversations with people diagnosed with bipolar disorder, we have identified a series of criteria which we believe would characterize someone who has a high probability of benefiting from our program. While we remain open to considering any candidate, it is important to look at the background and disposition of each client, to ensure that our retreat program is a sound investment which will help you work towards your goal of healing.

As a result, we ask that each client [click here to complete the following questionnaire](#), which will be discussed during a free live consultation via Skype, after your initial paid consultation.

## Part 3

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Will my disorder be completely healed after I finish one retreat?**

Our experience to date has shown us that a ten-day healing retreat can be tremendously beneficial for people with bipolar disorder and other related disorders. In some cases, emotional issues, which may have plagued someone for years, can be released in a matter of minutes. Many of our clients report that their first retreat led to noticeable, lasting improvement.

However, with that said, most people have accumulated the trauma and emotional repression associated with their disorder over many decades, so it may be unrealistic to expect a total healing to take place in just one retreat. Because healing takes time, additional retreats will most likely be necessary for a complete resolution of the disorder.

#### **May I stop my medications after the retreat?**

In almost every retreat, the amount of repressed bio-energetic material which has been released has been quite dramatic. In some cases, long held traumas or physical pain has disappeared within a few days of using our techniques. As a result, the retreat process can leave people with the sensation of being completely transformed, perhaps entirely healed. At the very least, most clients leave the retreat exhausted, as the deep inner work we do often demands extra sleep.

Initially, such powerful transformations led our clients to experiment with reducing medication quite quickly. Some went entirely off their medications within a few months. While a few have had success with this approach, some of our other clients went on to have manic episodes. The reason appears to be two-fold. First, there was obviously more bio-energetic material to work through. Second, due to the retreat work, the client's own bio-energetic, or kundalini system, may have been more "open", allowing for a greater flow of repressed material to surface even weeks after the retreat itself. In this way, *it appears that the subsequent manic episodes may have played a role in the healing process.* With that said, manic episodes are certainly not the ideal way anyone wants to heal, due to the damage they cause to our lives.

As a result, starting in 2017, we adopted a new policy regarding medications, which, ironically, brings us even more in-line with our integral approach of respecting the role of psychiatry in your process:

**Regardless of the perceived progress made during the retreat, we ask that the client remain on 100% of the prescribed medication dosage for a minimum of two weeks after the retreat has been completed. After this period, any reduction in medication should be done only if you feel "over-medicated", and only under psychiatric supervision.**

While this policy may seem very simple, it is, in fact, based on a newfound insight:

As our retreat work progresses, at some point you will have less bio-energetic material to process than you did previously. As a result, the medication dosage you require to remain grounded will eventually become smaller. When that happens, you should begin to have the symptoms of being overmedicated – feeling continually drowsy, dull, lacking energy and perhaps depressed. As I mentioned above, feeling tired immediately after the retreat should be expected. However, if those symptoms persist for more than two weeks, then there is a legitimate reason for you to talk to your psychiatrist about a reduction in your medications.

### **What are the risks?**

Anytime we take an unknown path, certain risks are involved. Especially when we are talking about new approaches towards healing the mind, those risks need to be very carefully considered. When we started our healing retreat in 2013, we were very cautious regarding the risk of one of our clients entering into a state of mania or “psychosis” which might have required hospitalization. However, our initial experience, as well as the work of [Dr. James Eyerman](#), has led us to believe that our approach is very safe for most people. Perhaps most reassuring is the fact that, among the 11,000 sessions of Holotropic Breathwork conducted by Dr. Eyerman with psychiatric patients, not a single episode of psychosis was reported. **Now having conducted over 50 retreats, we have not had a single client enter a period of psychosis during the retreat.**

Nevertheless, in the case of an acute psychosis or manic episode occurring, hospitalization may be required under the following circumstances:

1. If the client becomes violent towards him/herself or others,
2. If the client enters into a continual state of denial (or paranoia) regarding what is happening to him or her, refusing support,
3. If the client leaves the house property and refuses to return,
4. If the facilitator and support team are unable to continue in their role, and the client remains in an unstable non-ordinary state.

### **What about treating people with other disorders?**

As we believe that all mental disorders that lack clear biological origins have bio-energetic roots, we also believe that our retreat program can help people with a wide variety of mental disorders. With that said, we have had very limited experience in working with people who have other disorders, so there may be a learning curve for us in the best way to work with someone, depending on the specific characteristics of the disorder itself.

### **What is Sean Blackwell’s role on the retreat?**

Before the retreat begins, it’s important to be clear about my role as the retreat facilitator - what I can or cannot help you with. As you have seen in the video [“A New Approach to Bipolar Disorder”](#), this retreat takes what is useful from four different ways of looking at your condition: Psychiatry, Psychology, The Peer Support Movement and Shamanism, bringing them together into one integrated program. Looking at these four approaches provides a clearer understanding of my role as retreat facilitator:

#### **1. From Psychiatry – a respect for your doctor**

This retreat process brings a respect for psychiatry and the role psychiatric medications have played in helping you function in daily life. As a result, I will not offer any advice regarding changes to your medication. It is recommended that you come to the retreat on your normal medication dosages. This is especially important for those of you who are flying to Brazil to complete this work, as international travel can be a strong trigger for non-ordinary state experiences. In addition, stopping your meds entirely prior to your retreat is not recommended, as medication withdrawal side-effects may have an adverse impact on your healing program. Our experience to date indicates that, provided you are not over-medicated, our healing techniques remain effective.

#### **2. From Psychology – the role of ‘talk’ therapist**

As the producer of the bipolarORwakingUP video series, I have a deep theoretical understanding of transpersonal psychology, as well as many years of experience in talking with

people around the world who are diagnosed with bipolar and other related disorders. As a result, I am able to provide you with unique insight related to whatever may arise during your healing program that you may want to discuss. The ‘talk therapy’ aspect of the retreat is a fundamental part of the healing process.

3. **From the Peer Support Movement – the role of peer**

It’s important to remember that I was hospitalized for an ‘acute psychosis’, myself, in 1996. As a result, I always consider myself as a *peer first* – someone who has been in your situation. This is not a cold, doctor–patient relationship where something is done to you in order to fix your problem. As a peer, my role is emotionally supportive in nature. In order to get the most out of your retreat, a close relationship between everyone involved is essential.

4. **From Shamanism – the role of shaman (with a small ‘s’)**

Some people have come to me thinking that I am some kind of guru with magical powers that will make all of their problems disappear – big mistake! If your retreat is to be successful, it will most likely take you into some painful situations which you will need to face. **You should arrive at the retreat with the expectation that your entire healing process will occur within you – this is what you are paying for.**

With that said, ***we have noticed in every retreat to date a large amount of bio-energetic material appears to be transferred from the client to me, Sean Blackwell.*** In a sense, ***the Inner Healer is more like a Healing Field***, which can transfer certain traumatic energies from the client to certain support people who are very empathetic. This process appears to be very helpful to the clients, as they are not taxed with the burden of having to work through the more difficult parts of their own process, making the healing path faster and easier.

However, as myself and perhaps other support staff may be absorbing difficult energies, we will need to “Clear-Out” these energies ourselves. As a result, each day of breathwork will include “Clear-Out” sessions for me and perhaps other supporters, as we attempt to process as much of the clients energies as efficiently as possible.

Needless to say, this highly shamanic process is quite radical, and represents a significant evolutionary step in the development of the breathwork process. Further explanation of this “Clear-Out” process can be done during pre-retreat consultations.

**Part-therapist, part-peer and part-shaman – these are the roles I will fulfill as your retreat facilitator.**

**What is Ligia Splendore’s role?**

At this point in the development of our program, Ligia’s primary focus is as a transpersonal psychologist in São Paulo, with a weekly agenda of clients, many of whom have bipolar disorder. As a result, her availability for participation in our retreats is somewhat limited. With that said, her years of experience as a ‘talk therapist’ can be especially helpful, especially when the client is trying to integrate their retreat process.

In order to take advantage of Ligia’s strengths as a transpersonal psychologist, we currently offer each client a free one-hour consultation with Ligia, via Skype, prior to each retreat. Then, once the retreat is over, three free consultations are offered during the first six weeks of integration.

If the client wishes to continue having Skype consultations with Ligia after these consultations, a fee of \$100 per session will be charged. If we feel that a particular client will especially benefit from Ligia’s live presence at the retreat, this can be arranged for a reasonable fee.

## What exactly am I paying for?

Some clients have expressed confusion related to what they are paying for during this retreat, so it is important to clarify:

1. **You are not paying for a specific number of hours with bipolar breathwork, vipassana meditation, counseling, or any other healing technique.**

A few clients with a more materialist perspective have come to our retreat with a “time is money” attitude to their healing, wanting to jam in as many hours of healing techniques into a day as possible. Unfortunately for them, trying to “get your money’s worth” out of the retreat is not the ideal approach for people looking to heal safely. The healing path is not as direct as some people would like.

The optimal approach towards your healing path is to respect the “flow” of our time together, recognizing intuitively, when it’s the right time to work, rest or play. On the one hand, we have conducted retreats where our clients have done as much as twenty hours of bipolar breathwork over a ten-day period – a very intensive program. However, we have had others who have found it best to progress at a much more casual pace.

Sometimes the healing path becomes entirely out of our control. For example, one client’s healing program ended with three consecutive days of vomiting. Adding additional techniques to his ‘volcanic’ activity was not only unnecessary, it was completely impossible, as he was physically exhausted from the physical turmoil his body was going through.

Rest also plays an important role, not only for the client, but for the facilitator and supporter(s), due to the physiological impact of bio-energetic release. The cause seems to be related to the amount of energy exchange that happens between the client and the supporter(s).

As an example, it is not uncommon for me to require extra sleep after a particularly intense breathwork session. In other words, the more energy that has been released, the more tired the people involved may be afterwards. So please keep in mind that even sleeping during the day should not be seen as a sign of failure or laziness, but of progress. If you are so exhausted that your body requires extra hours of sleep, then chances are a deep transformation has taken place.

2. **You are not paying for specific, predetermined results.**

Each person coming to this retreat is unique. Some have milder disorders, while some disorders are stronger, deeper in nature. Some clients are capable of confronting painful issues quickly. Others need more time to build trust with the process, moving at their own pace. As a result, the amount of healing which takes place is highly unpredictable and impossible to measure.

Integration can also have an unpredictable flow. Confronting painful feelings can be liberating, but also disturbing. Some people may leave the retreat with an undeniable sparkle in their eyes, while others leave feeling more vulnerable and moody. The clearing out of energy blockages can result in the resurfacing of buried memories weeks after the retreat has taken place!

**As the retreat facilitator, I cannot guarantee results with which you will be satisfied. All I can do is guide and support your healing process in the best way I can, and trust the Inner Healer to do its job.**

3. **You are paying to take part in a potentially powerful healing process, facilitated by me, Sean Blackwell.**

That means that you are paying for my time as the retreat facilitator. In this role, I will work with you to provide you with the most powerful healing process you are capable of handling. Your program will, most likely, have an average of six or seven therapeutic hours per day, either in counseling, bipolar breathwork, meditation or some other exercise. The rest of your time will be for meals, sleep and leisure. As the retreat approaches its end, integration becomes the priority, so less time will be spent in therapy and even more time will be focused on counseling, rest and leisure activities.

**Can more than one person take the retreat at a time?**

While working with one client has been the norm, I am beginning to experiment working with more than one client at a time. If there is a situation where I feel that there are two clients (or even one client with bipolar disorder and another friend or family member who would like to work on their healing), I am open to consider the possibility. Fees would naturally need to be adjusted, depending on the retreat arrangement.

**Can one of my parents act as a supporter or supervisor?**

It is usually not recommended. Often, there are issues which arise between the client and parent(s) during the sessions which can lead to conflicts which are counterproductive. It is better for you to have a supportive friend, even a brother or sister, who has a bit more of an emotional distance from you. Only if you have a very positive relationship with your parent and you have no other option should we consider a parent in the role of supporter.

In addition, parents may wish to participate in a supervisory role. This is not allowed. Having a friend or other family member participate as a supporter is sufficient for your protection. Bringing in anyone who is skeptical of this work or of my intentions is toxic to the retreat environment and to your healing process. We all need to be on the same page, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

**What is the schedule?**

The agenda of each day will largely be determined by you, the client, listening to your intuitive choice regarding how you wish to proceed with your healing process. However, with that said, a typical day on our retreat may look something like this:

9:00am – 10:00am	Breakfast
10:00am – 12:00pm	Bipolar Breathwork #1
12:00pm – 12:30 pm	Mandala Drawing
12:30pm – 1:30 pm	Lunch (in Brazil, lunch is the main meal of the day)
1:30pm – 2:30pm	Break
2:30pm – 4:30pm	“Clear-Out” Breathwork session for Sean or other supporter.
4:30p – 5:00pm	Break
5:00 – 6:30pm	Bipolar Breathwork #2
6:30pm – 7:30pm	Dinner (light sandwiches)
7:30pm – 9:00pm	Sharing of Breathwork experience and mandala drawings
9:00pm – 10:00pm	Vipassana Meditation
10:00pm	Bed: Lots of sleep is important as it helps the integration process and gives your support team the rest they need.

As we come to see how your retreat is unfolding, most evenings we will come to an agreement regarding the best way forward on the following day.

## **Will my experiences with Bipolar Breathwork be similar to Moni K's?**

My client, Monika Kettler, has done an excellent job of promoting her story of healing, through her article at [Mad in America](#) as well as a [video series](#) which provides great detail into her non-ordinary experiences, while doing Bipolar Breathwork under my facilitation. Inspired by Moni's healing process, other clients have come to their retreat expecting similar non-ordinary experiences.

However, our experience to date suggests that many clients will have non-ordinary experiences which are quite different from Moni's. Some clients begin their retreat process with experiences which are very vibrational in nature. They spend a lot of time shaking, twitching, or vibrating. When they return from their process, they often report feeling deeply rested, but often cannot recall any vision, feeling or memory related to their vibrational behavior. In fact, it's quite common for them to feel that their breathwork session lasted only a few minutes, rather than the actual two or three hours.

Another common experience is for clients to become very still, in what is called a "shamanic sleep". The experience mirrors sleep, but appears to take place in a dimension which is very peaceful and relaxing, even though loud drumming is blasting in the room! It can seem quite mysterious to the supporters to see someone appear to fall asleep after just a few minutes of hard breathing. Nevertheless, it is a frequent occurrence.

Sometimes people have felt disappointed by having experiences which they feel are not as powerful as what they would have imagined through Moni's videos. However, what we have come to realize is that the Inner Healer provides people with the healing experience that they are prepared to handle. If a powerfully visual experience is not coming to you, chances are that the repressed memories related to those energies are so traumatic, that you would find them very upsetting. So if your Bipolar Breathwork session seems relaxing and mild, consider it a blessing!

## **Is there anything I should study to help me prepare for the retreat?**

Along with a review of all [bipolarORwakingUP](#) playlist videos, which are also available [on my website](#), it would be very helpful if the following materials were read in advance:

[Holotropic Breathwork: A New Approach to Self-Exploration and Therapy, by Stanislov Grof](#)

[Am I Bipolar or Waking Up?, by Sean Blackwell](#)

[A Clinical Report of Holotropic Breathwork in 11,000 Psychiatric Inpatients in a Community Hospital Setting, by Dr. James Eyerman](#)

For those of you interested in deepening your understanding of this subject, please download my [Bibliography](#), which includes all books and research which have been a part of the Bipolar Awakenings project.

## **More Questions?**

If you are interested in learning more about our healing retreat, please contact me, Sean Blackwell, at [bipolarawakenings@gmail.com](mailto:bipolarawakenings@gmail.com). Once we are in touch, we can schedule a Skype call where we can cover additional details.

I hope you can join us!

Sean Blackwell

[BipolarAwakenings.com](http://BipolarAwakenings.com)