

Spiritual Transformation: A Qualitative-Quantitative Analysis of the Application of the Holotropic Breathwork Method

Transformación espiritual: un análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo de la aplicación del método de la Respiración Holotrópica

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Abstract

This article is devoted to the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the use of Holotropic Breathwork (HB) as an effective method to support the client in the process of his/her spiritual transformation. We distinguish three models of integration of spiritual experiences: religious, medical and phenomenological. Usually, the first two models are based on the external formal evaluation of subjective feelings of a client when his/her state of mind does not promote social adaptation. Due to this evaluative approach, the opportunities for integration of the gained personal spiritual experience are significantly limited within religious doctrine frameworks established externally or become obsolete by means of devaluation or even medical suppression of such emotional stresses regarded by traditional psychiatry as pathologic. We consider HB, implementing the phenomenological model, to be an ecological method of self-actualization and psychotherapy from the point of view of integration of the gained spiritual experience. It focuses on the client's personality, values, and worldview in general, excluding distorting and traumatic influence of external evaluations and speculations from the part of the facilitator. The psychological study evaluating dynamics of life constructs and subject categories as a result of their participation in HB sessions confirms long-term observations of practitioners applying this method. The subjective significance of negative life categories decreases significantly, while the following categories increase: self-confidence, trust in people and the world, life meaningfulness, satisfaction and ability to feel joy and happiness. The results of the present study give some support to the effectiveness of the use of HB in the process of clients' Spiritual Transformation.

Keywords: Holotropic Breathwork, spiritual transformation, dynamics of life constructs, phenomenological approach

Resumen

Este artículo está dedicado al análisis cualitativo y cuantitativo de la utilización de la respiración holotrópica (RH) como un método eficaz para apoyar al cliente en el proceso de su transformación espiritual. Se distinguen tres modelos de integración de las experiencias espirituales: religioso, médico y fenomenológico. Por lo general, los dos primeros modelos se basan en la evaluación formal externa de los sentimientos subjetivos del cliente cuando su estado de ánimo no promueve la adaptación social. Debido a este enfoque evaluativo, las oportunidades para la integración de la experiencia espiritual personal obtenida se limitan de manera significativa, o bien dentro de los marcos establecidos externamente por una doctrina religiosa, o bien quedando obsoletas por medio de la devaluación o incluso la supresión médica de tales tensiones emocionales, que son consideradas patológicas por la psiquiatría tradicional. Consideramos la RH, a través de la implementación del modelo fenomenológico, como un método ecológico de la auto-actualización y psicoterapia que facilita la integración de la experiencia espiritual obtenida. La RH se centra en la personalidad, los valores y la visión del mundo del cliente en general, excluyendo influencias distorsionadoras y/ traumáticas de evaluadores externos, y especulaciones realizadas por parte del facilitador. El estudio psicológico realizado evaluando las dinámicas de los constructos vitales y las categorías subjetivas como resultado de la participación en sesiones de RH confirma las observaciones longitudinales realizadas por los profesionales que aplican este método. La importancia subjetiva de las categorías negativas de la vida disminuye significativamente, mientras que las siguientes categorías aumentan: autoestima, confianza en las personas y el mundo, significado en la vida, satisfacción y capacidad de sentir alegría y felicidad. Los resultados del presente estudio apoyan en cierta medida la eficacia de la utilización de HB en el proceso de la transformación espiritual de los clientes.

Palabras Clave: Respiración Holotrópica, transformación espiritual, dinámica de las construcciones de la vida, enfoque fenomenológico

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Introduction

Since ancient times we've known about the human ability to enter into certain states of consciousness that give access to feelings of a numinous nature that are able to exert a transforming influence on future life (Eliade, 1976). At different stages of human history shamans, priests, and other representatives of various religious schools and cults supported such feelings. In spite of the fact that scientists and philosophers of classical antiquity and the Middle Ages recognized the existence of the spiritual sphere and its involvement in human life; since the moment that psychology was established as a science, the spiritual sphere of a person has been excluded from the focus of studies as an object that cannot be verified with experiments; until the formation of humanistic and transpersonal psychologies. On the basis of these concepts, psychotherapeutic methods to work with people who experienced the spiritual sphere were created, including studies of peak-experiences, psychedelic therapy in terminal cancer patients, dying and death, the perinatal and transpersonal roots of human violence and greed, and the study of extraordinary abilities of the human body and psyche (Grof, 1976; Lilly, 1974; Maslow, 1964; Murphy, 1974). There were psychiatrists with other vision who preferred an individual approach, "psychotherapeutic", but without drug treatment (Assagioli, 1976; 1989; Jung, 1994; Laing, 1965; Perry, 1953, 1999 and others). According to them, the reasons for some mental conditions are connected with the spiritual sphere: this updating process (Perry, 1953, 1999), flight from itself and from society as manifestation of spiritual crisis (Laing, 1965, 1989), spiritual development through critical stages ("awakening") (Assagioli, 1976, 1989). However, the conservative non-acceptance of human spirituality has retained its position in the sphere of psychology and psychiatry up to the present day.

Within the field of transpersonal psychology, human spirituality is treated as an expression of the spirit in individual consciousness and existence. It is expressed in all spheres of life and determines the quality of human existence (Aguzumtsyan and Khachatryan, 2013). Spirituality is based on direct experiences of unusual sides and measurements of reality.

Grof distinguishes two types of the spiritual experience. The first one, "immanent divine", is characterized with uplifted perceptions of everyday reality. The second, "transcendent divine", includes the feeling of transformation of perceptual experience that makes possible the appearance of archetypical creatures and expanded spheres of reality. Systematic research of transpersonal experiences shows that they

are ontologically valid and comprise data on the important, but usually hidden measurements of existence, which can give in to the coordinated confirmation (Grof, 2013). Such experience can be extremely transforming for the personality of an individual, but only the process of integration determines the ecology of this transformation.

We distinguish three models of spiritual experience integration: religious, medical and phenomenological, the last being the integration used by Holotropic Breathwork (HB). HB is a method of self-study and psychotherapy developed by Stanislav Grof and Christina Grof in the mid-1970s.

According to Grof (1985, 1990, 2000, 2013), HB allows the therapeutic potential of altered or "Holotropic" states of consciousness to provide access to the depths of the unconscious, containing diverse experience of numinous (spiritual) feelings. This method uses a combination of such simple means as: deeper breathing, stimulating music, liberating bodywork, artistic self-expression and group discussion.

The *religious model* offers interpretation of the spiritual experience in compliance with one or another religious doctrine, usually without regard to the personality of an individual. This model often leads to devaluation of the individual's own qualities not complying with the values of this religious doctrine. Thus, Legere (1984) underlines that spirituality deals with the experience, while religion conceptualizes this experience that theoretically shall evoke in its follower the same spiritual experience. In comparison with spirituality, organized religion is the institutionalized collective activity, which happens in a certain place and under the leadership of officially appointed attendants. These attendants cannot themselves possess experience of another's personal experiences of spiritual phenomena. Therefore, having become organized, religion often completely loses communication with the spiritual source, and turns into a secular establishment, incapable of satisfying the spiritual needs of people by using them for mercenary purposes (Grof, 2012).

The *medical model* evaluates spiritual experiences as pathological. This variant of spiritual feeling integration leads to negative assessments of the gained experience and of the personality that gained this experience. This interpretation model can be seen in traditional psychiatry and in several psychiatry schools implementing the strategy of biological reductionism.

The *phenomenological model* integrates the gained experience from the interpretation of the person himself, with regard to peculiarities of his personality including values, ideas, religious affiliation, etc. It does not apply to any interventions coming from intellectual

analysis or based on a priori theoretical constructs (Grof, 2004). The spirituality in this model is understood as a special relationship between the individual and the world and is a private and personal matter for each person. The role of the facilitator lies in accompanying and supporting the individual on the way to integration with human resources and with the methods of artistic self-expression and discussion of the experience. Such facilitation is said to help in the integration of the gained experience and in improving the quality of life, expressed in improvement of self-assessment and evaluation of the surroundings, more confidence in personal experience, life meaningfulness, enhancement of communicative qualities and, as a consequence, the amelioration of neurotic and depressive symptoms. We have conducted this psychological study to explore if HB leads to the improvement of life quality by means of gaining spiritual experience and its integration on the basis of the described phenomenological strategy.

The goal of this research is to study the dynamics of self-evaluations of life constructs and existential life categories, and their correlation with dominant feelings in the HB sessions.

Method

Participants

The empirical object of the study was 70 subjects, aged 19 to 46 years, participants of the HB-seminars; among them 47 were women and 23 were men, with higher education; 74% of the participants were Russian, and 26% of other nationalities. The method of control group was not used in this research.

Psychometric Measures

The subject of the study was the dynamics of self-evaluation of the main life constructs and expression of the existential life categories, and their correlation with dominant feelings in the HB sessions. Three psychological tests were used in the present study:

1) *Self-evaluation Scale of Life Constructs Expression*. This scale is the modified variant of the Human Self-Evaluation with regards to his/her life constructs (Eliseev, 2003). The scale assessment method for basic life constructs implies a 10-point scale evaluation by the respondent (1-minimum, 10 – maximum) of the following constructs expressed in life: *Happiness, Health, Life satisfaction in general, Satisfaction with professional activity, Satisfaction with family relations,*

Ability to understand thoughts and feelings of other people, Life meaningfulness, Self-assurance, Need for changes (development), Openness to the world, Trust in the people around, and Ability to enjoy life.

2) *“Spiritual Crisis” Method* (Voskovskaya and Lyashchuk, 2005). The “Spiritual Crisis” method aims at diagnostics of the spiritual crisis experienced by the personality and incorporates the point assessment (from 0 to 6 points) of expression of eight existential life categories in the past, present, and future: *Dissatisfaction, Loneliness, Freedom, Sin, Sufferings, Responsibility, Death anxiety, Meaninglessness.*

3) *“Content Experiences in the HB-sessions Questionnaire”*. The questionnaire was composed on the basis of Grof’s consciousness mapping and the classification of feelings experienced during HB sessions; which aims at expression of dominant feelings experienced during sessions. The questionnaire includes 53 items describing specific feelings that can be conventionally referred to a certain psychological level described by Grof (1976): *sensory barrier, biographical, perinatal or transpersonal*. According to the study procedure, the respondent is asked to choose from 53 offered types of feelings; only the feelings that he/she experienced during HB and to assess the degree of their expressiveness in points from 1 to 5 (1 – minimal, 5 – maximal). These four levels can be briefly described in the following way:

The *sensory level* is the psyche surface layer expressed in abstract and ecstatic feelings as the result of chemical stimulation of sensory organs. This level does not reveal the unconscious; the feelings are diverted and lack any personal symbolic value.

The *biographical level* includes all feelings significant to a person since the moment of their birth that can be experienced during the session as unconscious material expressed in hidden form as symbolic masks, defense distortions, metaphorical hints, in the form of bodily sensations, and other sensory feelings.

The *perinatal level* includes feelings that are associated with biological processes in the maturation period of the fetus in the womb, during the birth of the child, and immediately after it. This level includes of biological birth, physical and emotional pain, disease, senescence, agony, death and the understanding that the beginning of life is similar to its end.

In his studies Grof (1976) revealed the deep parallel between the patterns of perinatal level feelings and the clinical stages of childbirth that he called, “basic perinatal matrices (BPMs)”. The BPMs are hypothetic dynamic managing systems functioning on the perinatal level of the unconscious. The matrices have their own emotional and psychological content,

and they also operate as principles of organizing the material on other levels of the unconscious.

Grof distinguishes four matrices: the BPM-I, “*the Amniotic Universe*”, refers to the fetus experience in the mother’s womb and can be regarded both in the positive and negative aspects. “*The good womb*”: the fetus does not suffer from any inconveniences, development of the fetus is harmonious, the fetus feels protected and presents as whole with the mother, the conditions of the fetus development are close to optimal, which are associated with peace, tranquility, serenity, happiness and bliss. “*The bad womb*” is associated with intrauterine life disturbances, negative influence on the fetus, the mothers’ illness, her intoxication, etc. In this case, instead of the mysterious dissolution of boundaries, manifests psychotic distortion tones with paranoid perception of the world, associated with psychological and physical discomfort.

The BPM-II, “*the cosmic prepossession and the absence of exit*”, is the very beginning of the birth process characterized by pressure on the fetus when the cervix is not yet open. In this case, the child and the mother are a source of pain for each other. There appears biological antagonism and conflict.

BPM-III, “*the struggle of death and revival*”, is the continuation of labor and movement of the fetus along the birth canal. This matrix is extremely dynamic and is full of both positive and negative images, associated with the prospective end of sufferings for the child and the mother that is their common interest. There appears the synergism of the child and the mother. The BPM-III feelings are subdivided into five distinct categories: *titanic, aggressive, sadomasochist, sexual, demonic, and scatological*. The characteristic motive for all of them is an encounter with death and struggle for birth.

The BPM-IV, “*the death and revival*”, follows the third clinical birth stage, directly with childbirth. When this matrix is recurrently experienced, people face quite exact details of their real birth experience. It can be assumed that the basic perinatal matrices experience is the sphere connecting the individual and the collective unconscious.

The *transpersonal state/level* in HB session is the individual’s sensation that his/her consciousness is broadening beyond the usual borders of space and time. In this case, experiencing the other individuality is possible, as well as loss of your own identity or understanding it in its other aspects, time and space.

Procedure

Three different measures were taken in both groups, using three questionnaires. The *Self-Evaluation Scale of Life Constructs Expression* and the “*Spiritual Crisis Method*” were carried out two times;

before and after the respondents’ participation in the HB sessions. The “*Content Experiences in the HB-sessions Questionnaire*” was assessed after the respondent’s participation in both HB-sessions.

Data Analysis

In processing the empiric results of the study we applied Statistica 6.0 with the use of the following methods of mathematical statistics (nonparametric statistics): the χ^2 -Friedman criterion, for detection of rank hierarchy of the expressiveness parameters of self-evaluations for life constructs and existential categories; the *T-Wilcoxon* criteria to check the significance of differences between the above-mentioned parameters to reveal the dominant ones; the *r-Spearman* rank correlation coefficient to detect correlation between the leading life constructs, existential categories, and dominant feelings experienced during the HB-sessions; the *multiple regression analysis* (MRA) for study of correlations between the dominant existential life categories and the feelings experienced during the HB-sessions.

Hypotheses of the Study

- 1) From the result of the respondents’ participation in the HB sessions, positive dynamics of life constructs self-evaluation can probably be revealed.
- 2) Differences in expressiveness of existential life categories before and after the respondents’ participation in the HB-sessions might be detected.
- 3) Specific correlations between the dominant self-evaluations and the spiritual crisis parameters, and the respondents’ basic feelings during the HB-sessions might be revealed.

Results and Discussion

The following results of the study were obtained:

“Life Constructs Scale” Assessment

After the HB sessions, the respondents assessed the following categories higher than before ($p < 0,05$): Happiness (T=170), Life satisfaction in general (T=401), Life meaningfulness (T=408,5), Self-assurance (T=234,5), Openness to the world (T=429,5), Trust in the people around (T=294,5) and Ability to enjoy life (T=448,5). Thus, the obtained data show that, as a result of participation in the HB-

seminar comes awareness and qualitative reassessment of some life events by the subjects, and peculiarities of their manifestation in them, that contributes to the increase of life meaningfulness, trust in themselves and other people (Figure 1).

After the seminar, the participants in the group feel more open to the world, enjoy life, experience happiness and life satisfaction in general. It is necessary to underscore that the most significant life construct before and after the HB-sessions is the need for changes and development, that indirectly suggests the high motivation level of the people who decided to take part in the HB seminar.

Consequently, the first hypothesis is confirmed.

“Spiritual Crisis Method”

The study of expressiveness of existential life categories in different time measurements, before and after the HB-sessions, as well as their dynamics, showed the following (Table 1). Within all time measurements, past, present, and future; the groups of the predominant categories coincided. According to the results of the re-test category *Suffering* has ceased to be one of the most important life categories after the session. The categories of *Dissatisfaction*, *Responsibility*, and *Suffering* are most expressed in the group with regard to the past time. At present, the dominant category is “*Responsibility*”. With regard to

the future, “*Responsibility*” and “*Freedom*” are chosen as the most relevant categories. Consequently, the category of “*Responsibility*” is most typical for the subjects irrespective of time changes. It should be noted that the past is associated with more negative categories (*Dissatisfaction*, *Loneliness* and *Sufferings*) which, in comparison with the other categories, are expressed not so subjectively in the present and future time. The categories of *Freedom* and *Responsibility* associated with the future may suggest the psychological maturity of the participants, readiness to take on responsibility for the things happening and their positive emotional disposition oriented towards the future.

The analysis of the categories expressiveness in all time measurements showed that, before participation in the HB-sessions, the categories of *Freedom* and *Responsibility* dominated. The subjects expected their higher expressiveness in the future. After participation in HB-sessions, *Responsibility* at present has been added to these highly expressed categories. The increase in importance of this category in relation to the present moment of life suggests reassessment by the participants of their own role in the organization of their life activity, which is confirmed with the above mentioned data: increase in *self-assurance*, *openness*, *trust in people*, and general *life meaningfulness*. The obtained quantitative data can hinge on qualitative changes that took place in the personalities, which follow from statements of participants concerning value of the experience. In

Figure 1.

Life constructs self-assessment parameters before and after the HB-sessions (with statistically relevant differences).

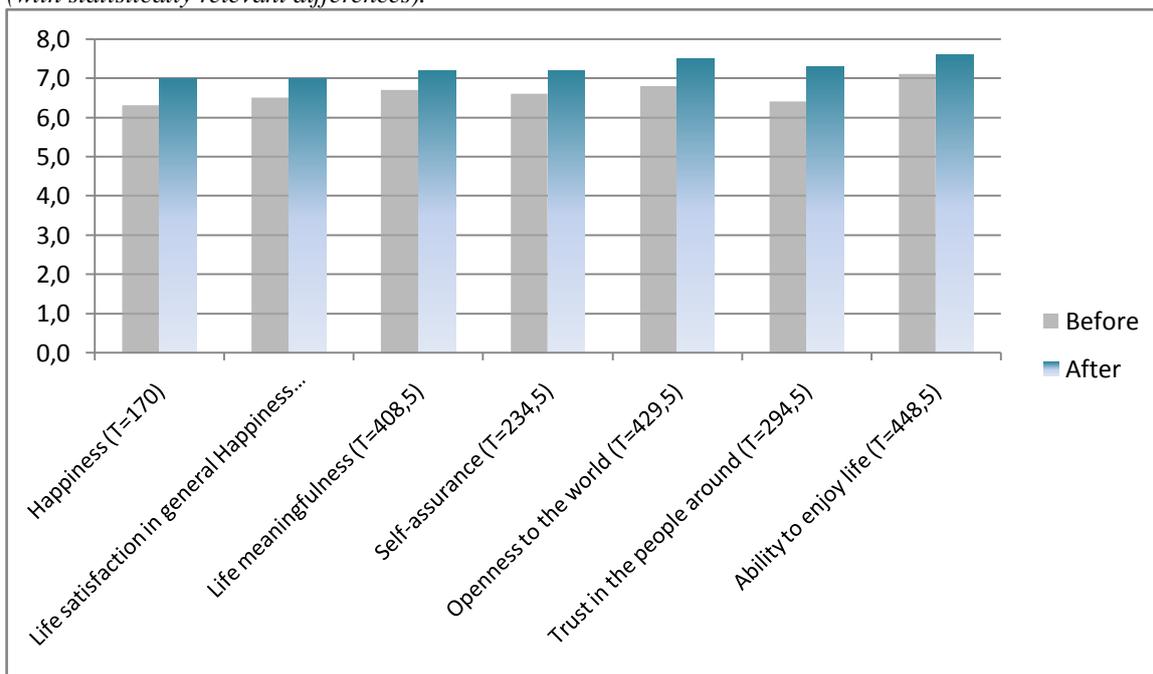


Table 1.
Predominant categories and self-evaluation of life constructs.

	Before participation in the HBsessions		After participation in the HBsessions	
	Past time			
Main categories	Dissatisfaction Sufferings Responsibility	$\chi^2=41$	Dissatisfaction Loneliness - Responsibility	$\chi^2=42$
	Expressiveness decreased	Sin Death anxiety		T=48 T=140
	Present time			
Main categories	Responsibility	$\chi^2=131$	Responsibility	$\chi^2=176$
	Expressiveness decreased	Loneliness Sin Sufferings Death anxiety		T=198 T=65 T=170 T=129
	Future time			
Main categories	Freedom Responsibility	$\chi^2=258$	Responsibility	$\chi^2=273$
	Expressiveness decreased	Loneliness Sin Sufferings		T=111 T=65 T=30
	Life constructs, for which expressiveness of self-evaluation increased	Life meaningfulness Self-assurance Openness to the world Trust in the people around Ability to enjoy life Happiness Life satisfaction in general		T=409 T=234 T=430 T=295 T=449 T=170 T=402

some cases participants cease to feel the victim of their circumstances, to be under negative influence of events of the remote past. Others say that they received a resource for the solution of vital problems, or manifestation creative activity. Others speak about disappearance of unpleasant somatic symptoms, about feelings of release from chronic tension.

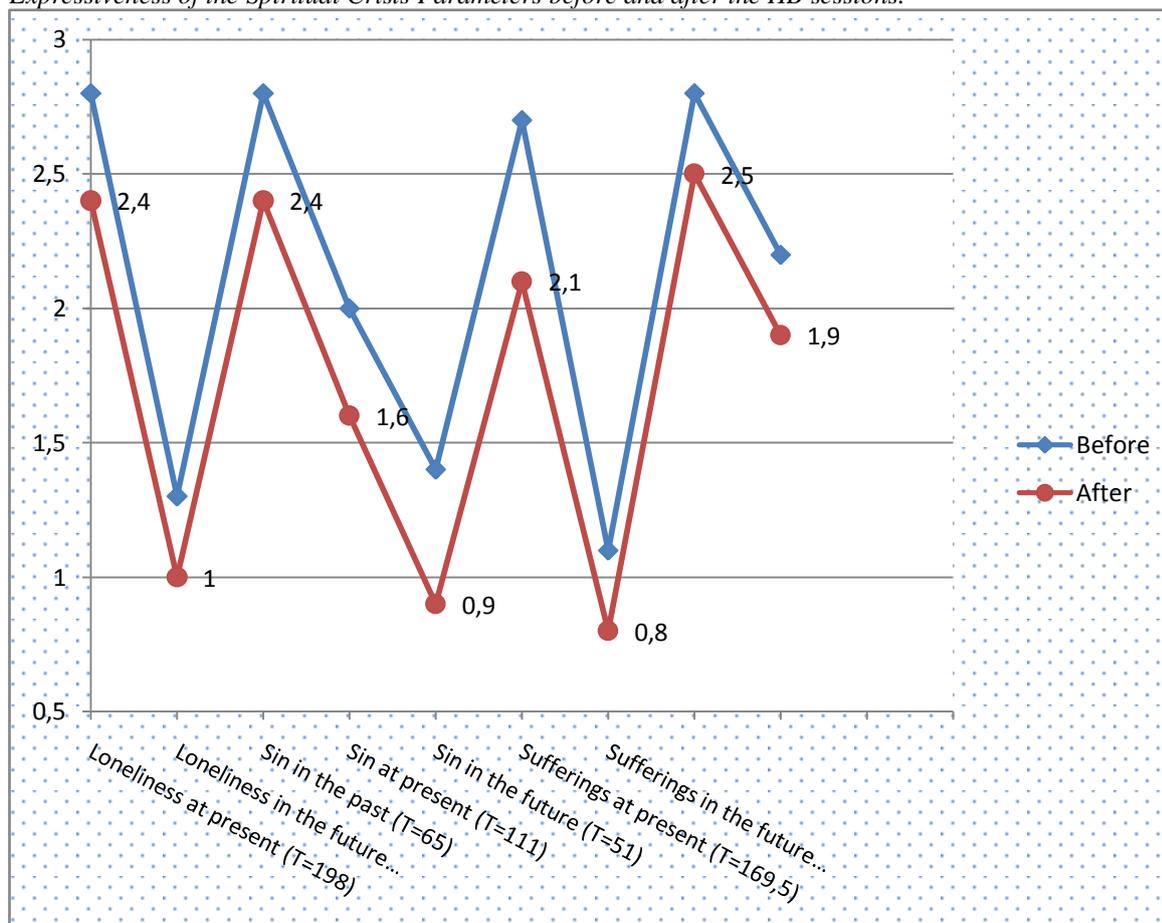
The study of the dynamics of existential life categories made it possible to distinguish statistically significant (at $p < 0,05$) and close to credible in significance (at $p \leq 0,06$) changes towards a decrease of the categories parameters of Sin (T=48; $p=0,006$) and Death anxiety (T=140; $p=0,057$) in the past, Sin (T=65; $p=0,002$), Loneliness (T=198; $p=0,007$), Sufferings (T=169,5; $p=0,0007$) and Death anxiety

(T=129; $p=0,056$) at present, and Sin (T=65; $p=0,046$), Loneliness (T=11; $p=0,060$) and Sufferings in the future (T=29,5; $p=0,008$) (Figure2).

In general, the results illustrate a tendency towards decrease in expressiveness of existential life categories associated with negative feelings. At the same time, after participation in HB-sessions, a rise in expressiveness of positive life constructs was registered, that was manifested in acceptance of a person's own personality, other people and the world, and readiness to take on the responsibility for life, which is regarded as more meaningful and enjoyable.

Thus, the second hypothesis is adequately confirmed.

Figure 2.
 Expressiveness of the Spiritual Crisis Parameters before and after the HB sessions.



“Content Experiences in the HB-sessions” Questionnaire

For the analysis of the questionnaire of the specific nature and expressiveness of feelings in the HB-sessions, we distinguished and used in further statistical calculations the types of feelings which mean point value was larger than 1.5 (with the maximum value=5).

Each type of feelings in compliance with Grof’s mapping can be referred to a certain psychological level: *sensory barrier*, *biographical*, *perinatal*, or *transpersonal*. The most frequent feelings in the group, according to the χ^2 -Friedman criterion, are: sensory barrier feelings; biographical feelings connected with some important memories, emotional problems, indeterminable conflicts, repressed memories and injuries; as well as perinatal feelings conventionally connected with the BPM-I: specific for “the good womb” – experience of cosmic unity: the amniotic universe, experiencing the world, serenity, peace, oceanic ecstasy, and specific for “the bad womb” – experienced on the physical level as shaking,

spasms, convulsion, unpleasant taste, feeling of intoxication.

The conducted correlation analysis (R-Spearman coefficient) enabled us to distinguish many statistically significant (at $p \leq 0,05$) correlations between the self-evaluation values of life constructs, existential life and experience categories in HB sessions.

Dominant among the self-evaluations of life constructs, *need for changes (development)* is positively interconnected with transpersonal level experiences, particularly, feeling oneself to be the observer of some culture (with possible identification of oneself with a representative or a group of people of the observed culture, the humanity as a whole) ($R=0,312$), with the feeling of unity with life and the whole creation (identification of oneself with the phylogenetic evolution of life in all its complexity, with achieving an intuitive understanding of all biological laws being fundamental for it) ($R=0,21$), with the experience of meeting superhuman and spiritual matters ($R=0,35$), with the feeling of primary interstice, complete nothing and silence ($R=0,304$). At the level of the tendency, we can point the correlation of the *need for changes (development)* with merging of

consciousness with all creations, the planet, the Universe ($R=0,23$ $p\leq 0,059$), and the feeling of the most powerful energy flow rising through a body upwards with further activation of all chakras ($R=0,24$ $p\leq 0,051$). Consequently, the higher a subject's need for development and self-modification; the more intensely the mentioned types of the transpersonal level feelings are manifested.

Additionally, high values of *need for changes (development)* in the group are associated with insignificant expressiveness of the following existential life categories: Meaninglessness (at present during the first test) ($R=-0,25$), and Sin (in the past time during the second test) ($R=-0,25$). Thus, the subjects initially saw the sense in their lives, and after the HB-sessions they assessed their past with less pronounced Sin component.

The Dissatisfaction category in the past time measurement (being one of the dominant categories in the past) is positively connected with the experience of the transpersonal level, for example, with the full identification of oneself with some animal, plant, inorganic nature ($R=0,26$), or negatively with the feelings of the perinatal level specific for the BPM-IV –interrupted feelings of bliss, unpleasant feelings of pain in the navel, the bladder, tightness of the chest ($R=-0,29$). The examined category of Dissatisfaction is negatively interrelated with self-evaluation of satisfaction with family relations (before the session, $R=-0,37$, and after the session, $R=-0,28$), having the lowest values of all the studied life constructs self-evaluations. On the basis of these data, we come to the conclusion that the feeling of dissatisfaction of the subject is closely connected with his/her family sphere, the absence of close relations or their dissatisfying quality.

The Loneliness category has many correlative relations with other spiritual crisis parameters, measured before and after the HB-sessions. The reverse interconnection was found between the Loneliness category and Satisfaction with family relations (that was assessed prior to participation in the HB-sessions) ($R = -0,36$), as well as the direct connection with Dissatisfaction with professional activity in both measurements ($R = 0,47$; $R = 0,43$). The higher is the evaluation that the subject gives to the expression of Loneliness, the more significant is the expressiveness in the past of Sufferings ($R = 0,57$), Loneliness ($R = 0,82$) and Meaninglessness ($R = 0,36$); the more he manifests at present Dissatisfaction ($R = 0,27$), Freedom ($R = 0,24$) and Responsibility ($R = 0,26$), and in the future –the category of Sin ($R = 0,28$). However, after participation in the HB-sessions, the subject is expected to manifest less Dissatisfaction in the future ($R = -0,28$).

This category of Loneliness (evaluated after taking part in the HB-sessions) has positive relationships with the experiences, conventionally referred to BPM-III: experience of dangerous adventures, participation in dangerous hunting, battles, new land's settlement ($R = 0,24$); Walpurgis Night experiences, satanic orgies, or Black Mass rituals and temptations ($R = 0,27$). But, there are also positive connections with transpersonal level experiences that include complete identification of oneself with some group, united by a certain feature - race, religion, profession, nationality, fate, or with the whole of humanity ($R = 0,24$); narrowing of consciousness down to an organ, a cell or a tissue ($R = 0,33$). Thus, it can be expected that subjects with high expressiveness of the category of Loneliness may face actualization of this type of experiences in the HB-sessions.

The category of Suffering, that was evaluated as highly significant during the first test, turned out to be negatively associated with Satisfaction in the family ($R = -0,35$) and professional spheres ($R = 0,24$), and positively connected with Dissatisfaction with life in general ($R = 0,47$), Loneliness ($R = 0,56$), Sin ($R = 0,34$) and Meaninglessness ($R = 0,53$) in the past (valued before participation in the HB-sessions). Also, the initial expression of Suffering turned out to be associated with the values obtained before and after participation in the HB-sessions: Loneliness ($R = 0,56$, $R = 0,34$) and Sin ($R = 0,34$, $R = 0,25$) in the past and at present, and Sin in the future ($R = 0,28$); with the low probability of manifesting “the good womb” perinatal experiences of the BPM-I –the cosmic unity, the amniotic universe, feelings of peace, serenity, tranquility, oceanic ecstasy ($R = -0,26$); with the high probability of manifestation in the HB-sessions of biographical level experiences, and feelings of the perinatal level of the BPM-III - Walpurgis Night, satanic orgies and Black Mass rituals ($R = 0,27$), which to some extent explains the importance of the category of Sin for these subjects in future measurement. The obtained results may indirectly suggest that these subjects have unprocessed psychological injuries received during their life and in the perinatal period, that require attention in the first place.

The Responsibility category, which is dominant in all the time measurements in both tests, is correlated with the category of Freedom, as well as in all time measurements before and after the HB-sessions ($0,26 \leq R \leq 0,37$), and also with low value of the category of Death anxiety in the past, obtained before ($R = -0,26$) and after the HB-sessions ($R = 0,28$). The values of expressiveness of the category of Responsibility in the past and at present, obtained in the first test, are associated with low expressiveness of the Meaninglessness category in the past ($R \leq -0,26$) and present ($R \leq -0,24$) time measurements.

In general, subjects evaluating themselves as responsible people do not tend to consider their past from the position of Dissatisfaction, Fear of Death, Feeling of Sin and Meaninglessness, while they see themselves as Free and Lonely (before participation in the HB-sessions), capable of understanding the thoughts and feelings of other people and feeling satisfaction with professional activity. No statistically significant correlations of these categories with experiences in the HB-sessions are revealed.

In the present time measurement, before participation in the HB sessions, Responsibility was associated with Loneliness ($R = 0,26$), Freedom ($R = 0,44$), Ability to enjoy life ($R = 0,24$) and with the lack of inclination to consider life from the point of view of Meaninglessness ($R = -0,24$). With high significance of the category of Responsibility for the subjects at present increases the probability of appearance in their HB-sessions of the transpersonal experience that is narrowing of consciousness down to an organ, a cell or a tissue ($R = -0,26$), and decreases the likelihood of intense perinatal experiences, indirectly associated with the BPM-III - experiences of violence of the forces of nature, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, earthquakes, space accidents, dangerous jungles, underwater full of predators; experiences of the situation following natural calamities, spring landscape with melting snows, idyllic pastures, trees with new leaves, peaceful atmosphere and a rainbow after the storm, a calm sea after the storm, dawn after night ($R = -0,32$).

The Responsibility category, evaluated after the HB sessions in the future measurement, is positively related to the openness of the subjects to the world ($R = 0,3$) and manifestation of the perinatal experiences in the sessions. Based on the results of the two tests, we found a correlation between the Responsibility category in the future with the category of Freedom in the future ($R = 0,36$), as well as with the perinatal level experiences - a convincing experience of one's own birth ($R = 0,28$) and the exchange of thoughts between the subject (being the fetus in the womb), and his/her mother by means of telepathic communication ($R = 0,27$).

The category of Freedom in the future, highly significant for the group, turned out to be associated with the insignificant expressiveness in the categories of Sin ($R = -0,32$) and Freedom ($R = -0,29$) in the past, the high expressiveness of Freedom ($R = 0,37$), Sufferings ($R = 0,26$) and Meaninglessness ($R = 0,25$) at present. However, future Freedom is associated with expectations of Satisfaction with professional activity ($R = 0,24$), high Responsibility ($R = 0,35$), lack of Fear of death ($R = -0,26$), as well as Needs for changes (development) ($R = 0,26$).

For the subjects who obtained high values in the category of Freedom, the biographical level

experiences are actualized more frequently and/or more intensively, such as living through intense emotional events and/or watching again traumatic or most pleasant memories from one's life ($R = 0,25$); the perinatal level: the BPM-I ("the bad womb") - experiencing on the physical level of shaking spasms, convulsion, unpleasant taste, feeling of toxication ($R = 0,33$) and BPM-II - a three-dimensional vortex of an inexorably dragging whirlpool or a sensation as if devoured by a terrible monster, a dragon, a crocodile, etc. ($R = 0,28$); and the perinatal-transpersonal level - experience of exchange of thoughts between the subject (being the fetus in the womb) and his/her mother by means of telepathic communication ($R = 0,31$).

The analysis of the most frequent and intense experiences (arithmetic mean of ≥ 2) in the subjects, who highly assessed the existential categories dominating in the group (arithmetic mean \geq or 4,5) before and after the HB-sessions, showed the following results: the sensory barrier experiences were common for the subjects with the expressed categories of Dissatisfaction, Loneliness, Freedom and Responsibility, in compliance with the results of the first and second tests. These experiences present a mixture of fantasy and reality and the perinatal level: "the good womb" BPM-I - experience of the cosmic unity: the amniotic universe, the world, peace, tranquility; and "the bad womb" BPM-I - experiencing on the physical level of shake, spasms, convulsion, unpleasant taste, feeling of toxication (average point value ≥ 2 , with a maximum score = 5). The analysis of results obtained before the subjects' participation in the HB sessions showed that, for the subjects who highly appreciate the category of Loneliness, experiences that can be indirectly referred to all levels of the psyche (according to Grof's mapping) are actualized more frequently and/or more intensively in further sessions. These levels include: sensory barrier, biographical, perinatal (the BPM-I - "the good womb" and "the bad womb", the BPM-II and the BPM -III) and transpersonal - persuasive feeling of awareness of the totality of the existence, the feeling of being face to face with the supreme unconditional principle, representing the whole objective reality, an intuitive insight into the process of creation as a boundless and mysterious experience.

Transpersonal experiences, in the form of the feeling of primary interstice, complete nothing and silence, are also characteristic for subjects with highly expressed Responsibility. These subjects like the subjects who felt lonely in the past, more frequently and/or more intensively experience natural scenes in which beauty is combined with safety.

In subjects whose past experience is colored with Sufferings, the biographical level experiences are

manifested more frequently and/or more intensively in the form of living through intense emotional events and/or watching again traumatic or most pleasant memories from one's life; and the perinatal level experiences (the BPM-II) are presented in the form of a painful sense of loneliness, helplessness, hopelessness, inadequacy and frustration.

We distinguished between the experiences and feelings that are more frequently and/or more intensively manifested in the subjects, who highly assessed the existential life categories (or their combinations) after participation in the HB.

The following experiences are specific for the subjects with a high level of expressiveness of Loneliness, Freedom and Responsibility: the sensory barrier experiences, that of the biographical level - feelings connected with some important memories, emotional problems, indeterminable conflicts, repressed memories and injuries; living personification of fantasies and dreams, their complex combination; experiences of the perinatal level: the BPM-I specific for "the good womb" - experience of the cosmic entity: the amniotic universe, experiencing the world, serenity, peace, oceanic ecstasy, and specific for "the bad womb" in the BPM-I - experiencing on the physical level of shake, spasms, convulsion, unpleasant taste, feeling of toxication; feeling of the most powerful energy flows intensifying to the explosion-like eruption.

A high frequency and/or intensity of feelings of the most powerful energy flow rising through a body upwards with further activation of all chakras was common for all the subjects with high parameters of Loneliness and Responsibility.

Specific to the subjects with high values of Loneliness were experiences of the biographical level, the BPM-III, associated with a convincing feeling that there is no exit, vulnerability, a sense of imminent death danger, although its origin cannot be determined; painful feelings of loneliness, helplessness, hopelessness, inadequacy and frustration; as well as transpersonal experiences and a persuasive feeling of awareness of the totality of the existence, the feeling of being face to face with the supreme unconditional principle, representing the whole objective reality, an intuitive insight into the process of creation as a boundless and mysterious experience.

Specific to the subjects with high values of Responsibility were biographical experiences in the form of going through intense emotional events, perinatal experiences of the symbiotic entity with the mother's body and feeling oneself as the fetus during the intrauterine life; natural scenes in which beauty is combined with safety and abundance (the BPM-I symbolic experience); feelings of bliss interrupted with unpleasant feelings of pain in the navel shooting up the

genitals, the bladder, tightness of the chest (the BPM-IV symbolic experience); as well as transpersonal experiences of losing the EGO borders and merging with another personality (accompanied with the feeling of holiness of these relations) whilst retaining the recognition of one's own identity.

Thus, the third hypothesis of the study is proved.

Conclusion and future projects

Based on these results, we can conclude the following:

- Holotropic Breathwork is chosen by people who want to develop and who appreciate responsibility and freedom and is committed to them.

- The detected declining importance of the negative aspects of life of the respondents, and the gaining of the positive ones, (by methods of mathematical statistics), confirms the observations of HB practitioners about the positive changes in the quality of life of their clients.

- Given the high severity of the adverse experiences of existential categories of life, there is a high probability of negative experiences in the HB sessions. Strong negative feelings, associating with those categories, were suppressed, unreacted. These feelings can manifest in the session. In this case, the significance of the adverse experiences of existential categories may be reduced by the end of the HB-seminar.

In the psychological literature it is noted that, as a result of spiritual development and transformation of one's personality, a person starts leading a moral life (Aguzumtsyan, Khachatryan, 2012). According to Walsh (2004), due to the moral way of life, in the depths of a person's soul the fruit (the gifts) grows ripe. These gifts include reduction of anxiety, guilt and fear, increase in confidence and courage, improvement of the ability to openness and intimacy, emotions of happiness and joy, a sense of purity, faith and integrity (Walsh, 2004). According to Grof, during HB, we observe changes that are not limited to emotional or psychosomatic states, as well as those leading to a dramatic improvement in the case of organic diseases, and a great number of informal feedback events over the years prove their long duration (Walsh, 2004, p.112). The results of the present psychological research support the fact that the HB is an effective and ecological method of client's support in the process of his/her personal development and integration of the gained spiritual experience.

We see near-term research prospect in studying of the dynamics of self-evaluations of life constructs and existential life categories, and their correlation with the dominant feelings observed during HB sessions with regard to sex of the subjects, connection with presence or lack of previous HB experience.

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