



# Australian Breathwork Association

## Breathwork Training Standards

[www.australianbreathworkassociation.org](http://www.australianbreathworkassociation.org)

## Change Record

Revision	Date	Change
1.0	2/10/17	Final Document for ratification by ABA Committee and first Issue – Ratified 18/10/17
2.0	11/6/18	Formatted and numbered as part of standardising all ABA documents
3.0	28/6/19	Revised to amend Group Facilitator Training as agreed by ABA trainers, Training Standards Subcommittee and ratified by ABA Committee on 21/6/19

## Related Documents

Version	Document	Description
18/12/16	NA	Australian Breathwork Association Constitution
5/5/17	NA	Australian Breathwork Association Constitution Section 6 Training Standards Only
11/8/17	NA	GPBA website Module 11 - <a href="http://breathworkalliance.com/about-ibta/training-standards">http://breathworkalliance.com/about-ibta/training-standards</a>
Current	ABA-GB-001	ABA Constitution
Current	ABA-GB-009	ABA Code of Supervision
Current	ABA-GB-010	ABA Code of Continuing Professional Education (CPE)

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## **Purpose and Scope**

The purpose of this document is to outline the minimum training standards required for professional membership and training endorsement by the Australian Breathwork Association (ABA).

In the context of this document Breathwork includes any modality where breathwork practitioners, group facilitators and trainers, offer conscious connected breathing as a primary form of transformation, in line with the ABA training standards and curriculum.

## **PRACTITIONER TRAINING STANDARDS**

A Breathwork Practitioner has the demonstrated ability to conduct Breathwork consultations for individual clients. A Breathwork Practitioner may deliver Breathwork groups under the supervision of an ABA Breathwork Trainer.

This ability must be demonstrated by the successful completion of a Breathwork Practitioner Training course of a minimum of 450 hours with assessment of knowledge and skills.

The trainings must include theory, personal experience and professional practice working individually with clients.

1. Theory: Refer to Practitioner theory subject material in this document; and
2. Personal Experience: must include a minimum number of 30 Breathwork sessions as sitter, and 30 Breathwork sessions as breather; and
3. Professional Breathwork Preparation: must include a minimum of 20 client consultations, facilitated by the student under the supervision of an ABA Breathwork Trainer.

### **Practitioner Theory Subject Material**

The requirements and guidelines outlined here for the ABA are in alignment with International Standards and have been adapted from the Global Professional Breathwork Association, Item 11 – Modules (2003)

A Breathwork practitioner training SHALL cover the content included in the following nine units of learning.

Please note that:

- a. trainers are free to choose the depth of coverage of each topic i.e. it can be in depth or very rudimentary.
- b. the unit purpose and intention contains the guiding principles and context for the topics.

The units are not listed in any particular order and the order does not indicate any value judgment or priority.

### **How to interpret the following Practitioner Theory Units:**

Where examples have been offered in the unit content they are intended as examples only and the trainer can include, delete or add their own topics in line with their own Breathwork style.

When interpreting the content of a unit please refer to Unit Purpose and Scope to provide context for that topic.

### **UNIT 1: Practitioner Attributes and Qualities**

**Unit purpose and intention:** To clarify the necessary personal attributes and qualities that allow and enable a practitioner to support the Breathwork process. (Students need to understand that these qualities are required as a Practitioner).

- Capacity for Self-care - personal and professional
- Open heartedness and compassion
- Clarity of intention
- Trusting Intuition
- Presence (holding the space)
- Awareness
- Self-esteem
- Self-compassion
- Personal Motivation
- Responsibility and self-responsibility
- Social and cultural sensitivity
- Independence/ Autonomy
  
- The ability to be active within the training environment and within a community or group of people in the Breathwork community.
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### **UNIT 2: The History and Development of Breathwork**

**Unit purpose and intention:** To situate Australian Breathwork in its historical and professional context.

- History of Breathwork, to the extent honoring and acknowledging the place of the following in the modern Breathwork context – for example, yoga, Babaji, Sonda

Ray, Leonard Orr, Stan Grof, shamanic and indigenous practice –Breathwork Trainer’s Lineage

- National body – ABA (or equivalent body in country of operation)
- International professional bodies – for example GPBA, IBF
- Breathwork Research and Breathwork Literature

### **UNIT 3: Breathing Mechanics - how does the breath work**

**Unit purpose and intention:** To provide basic knowledge of the anatomy of breathing and those elements which enhance or inhibit breathing.

- A rudimentary understanding of the anatomy and physiology of the respiratory system
- Contraindications for certain Breathwork styles
- Client Suitability
  - Conditions pertinent to breathing safety, for example heart conditions, kidney conditions, etc
- Awareness of client medical conditions and potentially mind altering medications  
Analysis of breathing – for example, tetany, hyperventilation
- Elements of the Breathwork experience – for example, prana, chemical changes, armouring, altered states
- Benefits and limitations

### **UNIT 4: The Business of Breathwork**

**Unit purpose and intention:** To ensure understanding business requirements in a Breathwork Practice.

- Establishing a practice
- Professionalism
- 
- Record keeping – for example client records
- Referral protocol – for example, when, where and if to refer
- Financial responsibility and a rudimentary awareness of Account keeping
- Clarity with payment for Breathwork sessions
- Marketing as a Practitioner
- Legal requirements – for example privacy act, child protection act, mandatory reporting (student to be aware that they are to understand legal requirements in their country of operation)
- Insurance (student to be aware that they are to understand Insurance requirements in their country of operation)
- Venue – for example privacy, parking, accessibility

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## **UNIT 5: Breathwork and Breathwork Sessions**

**Unit purpose and intention:** To provide a comprehensive description of the elements involved in Breathwork.

(This unit will be adapted to suit the particular type of Breathwork being taught)

- Conscious Connected Breathing (CCB) technique
- Variety of Breathwork techniques, styles and approaches, for example, rebirthing, vivation, holotropic, five elements
- Types of Breathwork for example dry, water, mirror, eye gaze, group
- Cycles and Stages of a Breathwork session - CCB, activation, resolution and integration
- Content of a Breathwork session including:
  - Pre and Perinatal experiences
  - Family of origin issues
  - Impact of belief structures
  - Existential issues
  - Transpersonal experiences
- Boundaries and permission
- Touch, movement and verbal interventions
- Consultation, interviews and record keeping
- Energy Theory and practice: Reading energy, and the role of energy as a vehicle for thoughts and emotions, moving energy with the breath - theory and practice
- Physical changes during breathing cycle, for example, pain, yawning, ecstasy, tetany, suspended breath, breathing deviations
- Staying with the client throughout – physically, intellectually, emotionally, energetically and intuitively

## **UNIT 6: Breathwork within Theoretical, and Cultural Context**

**Unit purpose and intention:** To situate Breathwork in the broader mental health, personal growth and spiritual cultural contexts.

- Situate Breathwork within the follow:
  - Creative power of thought and beliefs
  - Main schools of psychological thinking - for example psychodynamic, behavioural, person centred, transpersonal, Buddhist, yogic
  - Theories of human development and behaviour - for example Freud, Erickson, Rosenberg, Jung, Grof, Maslow, Piaget, Greer
  - Shamanic and indigenous practice
  - Spiritual and/or Religious practices and philosophies
  - Personality theories



- Body Psychotherapies, for example somatic experiencing

## **UNIT 7: Communication and Counselling**

**Unit purpose and intention:** To ensure all Breathwork practitioners have effective interpersonal and communication skills when working with clients and colleagues.

To ensure that the Breathwork practitioner has the ability to distinguish between general communications, advising, helping and counselling.

- Communication
  - Active listening
  - Body language and what happens to the body during expression, for example eye contact
  - Respecting, understanding and working effectively with diverse cultural, socio-economic and religious populations
  - Identifying communication and learning styles and patterns, for example auditory, visual and kinaesthetic
  - Transference and projection
  - Awareness of the power of language
  - Summarising, paraphrasing, questioning, mirroring
  - Clear communication of what we are doing, why we do it and where we are coming from in a Breathwork session
  - Authenticity and transparency
  - Conflict resolution
- Counselling
  - Creating a safe and trusting environment
  - Establishing confidentiality
  - Congruence and incongruence
  - Facilitating disclosure
  - Difference between counselling, advising and helping
  - Awareness of other facilitation and counselling techniques and approaches - for example Inner Child, Transactional Analysis, Neuro Linguistic Programming, Gestalt, Voice Dialogue
  - Referral Protocol: Knowing when and how to refer clients

## **Unit 8: Presenting Issues**

**Unit purpose and intention:** To ensure the basic understanding of, and the ability to identify, a range of presenting issues. Note: Breathwork practitioners do not diagnose.

- Relationship between the body and the emotions.
- Depression

- Fear and anxiety
- Phobias
- Grief and sadness
- Addiction
- Anger
- Guilt and shame
- Dissociation
- Varieties of Abuse
- Relationship with Self, for example low Self-acceptance, Self-love
- Relationships, for example family, parents, siblings, children, friends, work colleagues, partners
- Sex and sexuality
- Spirituality and spiritual crises

### **UNIT 9: Client-Practitioner Relationship**

Note: This Unit is underpinned by the ABA Code of Ethics and Code of Breathwork Practice.

**Unit purpose and intention:** To ensure students are familiar with the ABA Code of Ethics and Code of Breathwork Practice, and its application. This involves the capacity to apply the ABA's ethical principles in Breathwork practice which include:

- Professional care
- Working within personal capability in practice
- Confidentiality
- The use of client information
- Practice with children and young people
- Boundaries in Breathwork practice
  - Power and influence
  - Personal freedom and self determination
  - Ethical practice, including fair treatment, appropriate professional relationship
  - Clear communication of extent and limits of practitioner availability
- Supervision and on-going professional education
- Complaints
- Professional conduct and working collaboratively with other practitioners
- Honesty and integrity
  - Referrals
  - Practitioner/client agreements
  - Conflicts of interest
  - Data collection
- Clarity about the different roles and approaches as a breathwork practitioner, facilitator and therapist

## **GROUP FACILITATOR TRAINING STANDARDS**

### **Pre- requisite**

An ABA Breathwork Group Facilitator has fulfilled the requirements for Practitioner and has demonstrated the ability to facilitate group Breathwork sessions of two or more breathers.

### **Preamble**

Group Breathwork can be a highly charged and powerful environment – it is easy to feel overwhelmed by others’ processes and by what arises in our own process. Some people may find it difficult to share their experiences within the group environment and can leave quietly without the facilitator being aware of any distress.

The ABA is guided by our responsibility to ensure that group participants leave group Breathwork environments feeling integrated, relaxed and nourished by the experience.

The ABA believes that Group Facilitators are best able to hold the space for the dynamic group process when they have significant experience as Practitioners, working one-to-one, and when they are also having individual Breathwork sessions themselves (as required within our Code of Ethics).

It is recommended that the ABA trainer carefully considers:

1. The pre-requisites of their course and the suitability of candidates;
2. The increased capacity of a group facilitator to know the sacred and ethical responsibilities of client work, within the powerful dynamics of the group environment;
3. The competency of the candidate as demonstrated by their qualifications as an ABA Breathwork practitioner;
4. That Breathwork training is competency based. It may mean that rather than just numbers of groups facilitated, there is scope for the trainer to require the student to do additional groups as required to gain competency in areas not met.

### **Definition clarification**

The following definitions apply throughout this document:

- **Sessions**

A Group Breathwork session is one with two or more breathers, and which lasts for a duration of at least 5 hours, which includes setup and pack down time.

- **Supervision**

The supervisor (ABA trainer or group facilitator) may be present at the group, or provide debriefing afterwards. Trainers and students are reminded to review the ABA policy on supervision (ABA-GB-009-Professional Supervision), noting that it is intended to support the Breathwork professional’s learning, practice development and professionalism. Different ABA Breathwork supervisors may be called on by the student to offer such support.

## **Sections within the group facilitator training standards**

This training standards document is divided into two sections.

**Section 1 outlines the group facilitator training requirements, and is divided into three categories:**

1. Theory
2. Personal Experience
3. Professional Breathwork Preparation

**Section 2 outlines the subject material required as a minimum standard in the theory category. It is made up of four units:**

- UNIT 1: Group Breathwork structure
- UNIT 2: Facilitation of Breathwork groups
- UNIT 3: Group Breathwork Marketing and Promotion
- UNIT 4: Professionalism and Self Care

## **SECTION 1: ABA GROUP FACILITATOR TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**

The ABA acknowledges that Group Facilitation is significantly different from one-to-one sessions, and the theory and energy-holding requirements are different.

It is necessary that an ABA Breathwork Group Facilitator has firstly fulfilled the requirements for a Practitioner, and secondly, has demonstrated the ability to facilitate group Breathwork sessions of two or more breathers.

This ability must be demonstrated by the successful completion of a Breathwork Group Facilitator Training course, of a minimum of 80 hours with assessment of knowledge and skills, conducted by a qualified trainer.

The training must include theoretical study, personal experience and professional preparation for conducting Breathwork groups.

### **1. Theory**

Theoretical units must provide the Group Facilitator trainee with knowledge of group Breathwork practice. This element is to be a minimum of 30 hours.

**Please note** these 30 hours are not all face to face. They also include:

- teaching theory through observation, research and assignments,
- face to face delivery, and
- debriefing and professional supervision sessions.

## 2. Personal Experience

This personal experience is to be a minimum of 25 hours (five Breathwork group sessions of a minimum of 5 hours per session, which includes setup and pack down time). **Personal experience** is that which occurs while supporting and/or co-facilitating Breathwork groups under supervision with the Group Facilitator trainer present. It includes observation and reflection on:

- group dynamics and process,
- personal and group learning and teaching strategies,
- individual functioning within a group, both for self and participants,
- self-evaluation of learning and performance,

## 3. Professional Breathwork Preparation

This **professional Breathwork preparation** is that which occurs while facilitating groups as a sole leader. It is to be a minimum of 25 hours (five Breathwork group sessions, of a minimum of 5 hours per session), and supervised onsite or offsite, by the Group Facilitator trainer or another Breathwork Group Facilitator. The 25 hours includes setup and pack down time.

### SECTION 2: GROUP FACILITATOR THEORY SUBJECT MATERIAL

A Breathwork Group Facilitator training shall cover the content included in the following units.

- 1) It is important to remember that trainers are free to choose the depth of coverage of each topic;
- 2) The ‘**Unit purpose and intention**’ is the guiding principle and context for each unit; and
- 3) The units are not listed in any particular order, and the order does not indicate any value judgment or priority.

#### How to interpret the following Group Facilitator Theory Units

When interpreting the content of a unit please refer to ‘**Unit purpose and intention**’ to provide the context for that unit. Where examples have been offered in the unit content, they are intended only as examples and the trainer can include, delete or add their own topics in line with their own Breathwork style, as long as the ‘**Unit purpose and intention**’ is being addressed.

#### UNIT 1: Group Breathwork Structure

**Unit purpose and intention: To give underpinning knowledge of the structure of Breathwork groups.**

##### Composition of Group

- Group facilitator needs to be able to identify suitable participants, their learning abilities and their intellectual and emotional capacities for group work.
- Contra-indications for group Breathwork, for example mental illness, cultural elements, those with limited language, literacy and numeracy capacity.

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- Client Information
  - Importance of knowing client history
  - How to gather client information prior to groups in an ethical manner (for example only asking questions relevant to group work, asking clients upfront rather than via other contacts or social media)
  - Compliance with Privacy legislation
- Communication to participants
- Providing relevant and specific information prior to the group session
- Preparing participants and articulating expectations for group Breathwork session
- Group rules (for example confidentiality, punctuality, respectful listening etc).

### **Understanding personal limits regarding group sizes and facilitation support requirements**

- Please note that the ratio of facilitators and assistants to participants can depend on the level of experience of the facilitator and of the participants. In general, the ABA recommends the following as guidelines:
  - For groups in which participants exchange breathing and sitting roles (otherwise known as ‘swap breathes’), one facilitator is recommended for every 12 participants (6 pairs);
  - For groups in which all participants are breathing together, one facilitator is recommended for every 6 to 8 participants;
  - Assistance is recommended when ratios exceed those recommended above. (An assistant is defined as someone who is working under the instruction of the trainer).
- Clear communication of roles and expectations is essential for conducting Breathwork groups successfully

### **Types of Group Breathwork Sessions**

- Participants exchange breathing and sitting roles
- Simultaneous breathing by all participants

### **Structure of Group Breathwork Sessions**

- Opening the group
- Introduction of participants
- Group breathing cycle
  - Introduction
  - CCB (conscious connected breathing)

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- Integration
- Sharing
- Closing the group

## **UNIT 2: Facilitation of Breathwork groups**

### **Unit purpose and intention: To give underpinning knowledge of the facilitation of Breathwork Groups.**

It is important to teach Group Breathwork Facilitators that group work has both educational and therapeutic elements.

#### **How to facilitate group Breathwork**

- Through theories of teaching and learning – examples include NLP, conditioning and reinforcement, modelling, neuroscience and learning, social learning theory
  - Gaining rapport with each member of the group
  - Teaching conscious connected breathing to a group
  - Understanding learning styles
- When to provide intervention to an individual within the group
- Simple interventions to support breathers who are stuck
- Touch and permission
- Music and group work
- Breathwork and movement
- Energy and flow
- Energetic coherence
  - Holding Space
  - Rules of sharing and Confidentiality
  - Mindfulness
  - Honouring participant boundaries
  - Awareness of transference and counter-transference in groups
  - Equal treatment of participants
  - Conflict and resolution

#### **Leadership**

- Modelling behaviour as a leadership technique
- Awareness of leadership and power dynamics
- Humility

- Professional Supervision
- Centering and grounding
- Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence
- Self care
- Safety and Care
  - Creating safety in Groups
  - Checking in after the group

### **Group Dynamics**

- Boundaries
- Conscious and unconscious projections
- Loyalties
- Energetic Field Theory
- Ethics in groups
- Energy dynamics
- Holding space for group energy
- Holding space for the wider energy field
- Dealing with challenges in group dynamics
- Dealing with issues that commonly arise in group sessions
- Participant wanting to leave mid-session
- Pre-existing interpersonal issues between participants

### **UNIT 3: Group Breathwork Marketing and Promotion**

**Unit purpose and intention: To provide basic knowledge of describing Breathwork group work; and how to use marketing and promotion to ensure maximum clarity of what it is that people are saying yes to.**

- Education about group process versus individual work
- Promotional elements may include:
  - Marketing and promotional plan
  - Social media marketing
  - Basic principles of copywriting
  - Basic principles of graphic design



## **UNIT 4: Professionalism and Self Care**

**Unit purpose and intention: Apply Australian Breathwork Association Code of Ethics and Code of Breathwork practice to group facilitation; and necessary self-care practices specific to conducting Breathwork groups.**

The ABA recognises that the application and consideration of ethical practice in group work are different to those in one-to-one work. Group participants need to take care of their personal process and the material which arises in a different way than when working one-to-one.

The ethical considerations regarding projection, transference and counter-transference arise differently in group work, and need to be reinforced during the Group Breathwork training.

It is also necessary to reiterate the importance of Professional Supervision as an ethical matter, and finding a supervisor who is experienced in group work.

### **Focus for a Breathwork Group facilitator**

A Breathwork group facilitator has three areas of focus:

1. the general public
2. participants of group Breathwork event
3. professional & personal care

#### **1. For the general public**

- Work within an ethical framework
- Organise and run promotional events
- Clearly explain relevant group work services to clients and community groups

#### **2. For participants**

- Determine the appropriate format for group Breathwork sessions
- Establish group norms, purposes, roles, goals and responsibilities
- Maintain a safe and effective Breathwork group environment
- Provide information to clients on Breathwork group processes
- Correctly identify a range of client needs within a group context
- Communicate effectively with clients about Breathwork values, philosophies, principles and metaphysical foundations in a group
- Provide coaching and motivation

#### **3. Professional and personal care**

Please note that the following points are intended as guidelines, and are not an exhaustive list.

- Professional:

- Embody the underpinning values, philosophies, principles and metaphysical foundations of Breathwork
- Appropriately record details of client enquiries according to accepted guidelines
- Clarity of intention
- Undertake continuing professional education
- Undertake professional supervision – particularly with a supervisor who is familiar with group work
- Personal:
  - Maintain awareness of personal needs to avoid ‘burnout’
  - Necessity to continue to have personal Breathwork sessions
  - Use modalities that support personal wellbeing

## **TRAINER**

An ABA Breathwork Trainer has fulfilled the requirements of Group Facilitator, and has the demonstrated ability to train Breathwork Practitioners and/or Breathwork Group Facilitators.

This ability may be demonstrated through the successful completion of:

1. Theory: Australian government accredited vocational Training and Assessment qualification or Teaching Training qualification, for example Diploma of Education.
2. Personal experience: Sitting for a minimum of 1000 professional standard one-on-one Breathwork consultations as a Breathwork Practitioner.
3. Professional Practice: Breathwork practitioner training &/or Breathwork Group Facilitator training through:
  - a. understudying to an approved ABA Trainer, *or*
  - b. conducting at least one Breathwork Practitioner Training as a Trainer under the supervision of an ABA Trainer.