

## **Podcast Series: Holistic Nature of Us**

### **Episode #33: Meet Lois Grasso, Transformational Breath and EFT**

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Hi I'm Judith Dreyer,

Thank you for joining me for this pod cast series "The Holistic Nature of Us".

My intent is to take us, you and I, into a better understanding of the concepts behind our holistic nature and how that ties directly to the holistic nature of the world around us. How can we connect the dots in practical ways that we are nature and nature is in us?

I will be featuring authors and educators, practitioners and others whose passion for this earth helps us create bridges. We'll see what's trending, what's relevant to our world today, not just for land use, but to connect the dots between nature and ourselves. It's time for practical action and profound inner change so our natural world is valued once again.

And today I'm delighted to introduce you to Lois Grasso. Since 1991, Lois has been on a mission to empower and motivate people to our good health; physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. In the 90s she was publisher of the Self Health Networker, a news magazine featuring national and local experts. She then got certified in transformational breath work while editing and publishing the founders book on the subject and began offering transformational breath sessions and events in 2002. She formed the non-profit Oxygenesis Institute in 2003 and has since facilitated ten international holistic health events including three cruise conferences. She is the author of "Maven and the Magic Buttons". And we're going to talk today about conscious breathing and EFT tapping.

Welcome Lois, so glad you're here today.

LOIS: Great to be here. Thank you!

JUDITH: Lois let's start with you. Let's start with your holistic journey. Tell us something about your work, how you founded the institute and what led you to transformational breath work and EFT tapping.

LOIS: Okay. Well, when I was a junior in high school I was a pretty miserable kid. Well actually up until my junior year I was pretty miserable kid. I was smoking pot daily in the smoking area. Back then they had smoking areas. I was skipping classes all the time, but I was still getting A's and I was just sort of doing, I don't know, having ah, feeling horrible about myself most of the time except when I'd get those A's, right? And so, one day, on the first day of my junior year actually, I'm sitting there in Miss Little's general chemistry class right next to my best friend and something hit me. It was like I just woke up and something inside said, "What the heck am I doing here?", you know? It was just the strangest thing. I just raised my hand and said, "I'm leaving, and I won't be back. I'm dropping this class." My best friend's jaw dropped onto the table. I just got up and walked out the door and walked down to the guidance counselor's office and said, "What do I have to do to go to college. I want to be a psychologist." It was almost like I was watching myself do this, you know? It was really strange. Any way, from then on I took all the honors classes. I had been taking all the gut classes. I took all the honors classes and had the best two years of my life in school and that got me rolling. And at that time, I remember thinking, "Some day I want to teach Love Class in high school to teenagers." Well that hasn't happened, but a lot of other great things have happened. When I was 20 years old I started doing rebirthing breath work which was very powerful and really shifted my awareness of myself and the world, and I did a lot more of that. I also did a good amount of fire walking, which is a very powerful professional or personal development exercise and learned a lot about the nature of the universe that way. And so, as I moved, you know kept moving forward, I had a lot of interesting challenges with relationships and everything, but I really got motivated, committed and passionate about my own personal development. It just started happening that when I knew and understood something I would just share it with others. I started teaching it and eventually became a holistic health coach and speaker and I've been doing that for 16 years now. And I'll tell you what, I've found some amazing techniques that work dramatically well to really shift our subconscious mind and help us see the world as it really is instead of through those, sometimes, you know, piss colored glasses that we can look through. It helps to clear up the view. I've done a lot of different things and lately I'm really excited now, I'm really excited about this book that I wrote for the children because I love children. I really feel that if we teach children some of these skills when they're young, in elementary school, then they won't have to go through everything that I and many of us went through. They'll be able to deal with the issues and there are a lot of

them now. They'll be able to deal with the issues on an ongoing basis as they grow up. And so, I'm excited about that.

JUDITH: Yeah, I can see where you're coming from. We know we have some really bright children out there who are making a difference, but we also have some serious problems from autism or the autistic spectrum to you know the opioid crisis that's hitting our younger population. We do have some serious issues and they're inheriting an earth we haven't taken care of very well. So that kind of negativity, whether we believe it or not, is still part of our consciousness.

LOIS: Right, right and I'm particularly concerned about and motivated by all the shootings, the school shootings that have been happening. I mean there's a reason for this. There's this debate about whether it's about guns or whether it's about mental health and I think it's about both. But how can we help our young children with mental health on an ongoing basis, you know? Because the people, the kids who need the help the most are the ones who are least likely to get that help. Because they're often the ones who have parents who need help too and don't know how to get it or aren't even at a level where they can recognize that they need it or go get it, right?

JUDITH: That's true. Yeah, we have to stop and think about that. And yet, every one of those who are hurting or suffering, are part of us.

LOIS: Yes.

JUDITH: It's important for us to do what we can to create the solutions and be a part of the solutions.

Let's go back to holism. You talked about transformational breath work. You did an awful lot with that including writing the founder's book. Tell us more.

LOIS: Okay. Transformational breathing is a very powerful process whereby we breathe on a connected, it's called conscious connected breathing, which is also the roots of rebirthing breath work as well as Holotropic breathing and there are some other brands. Transformational breathing was founded by Judith Kravitz. The book is called, "Breathe Deep, Laugh Loudly" by the way. And it's a very succinct and highly developed way to reestablish a healthy breathing response to stress. And it does that by encouraging the expression and processing of emotions that

have been stuffed (or repressed is the technical term), or suppressed. Because as children we learn very quickly that it's not okay to get angry at our parents. It's not okay to cry. It's not okay to do a lot of things that include emotions, those unpleasant emotions are often punished or shunned, sent to your room. You know, "Don't cry or I'll give you something to really cry about.", is something that really scares kids and they very quickly learn that they have to stuff these feelings in order to be approved of and the way they stuff them is by constricting or holding their breath because you can't continue to breathe fully with the belly, diaphragmatic breathing, you can't continue to do that and hold back your feelings. When I'm working with people one on one or in groups with the transformational breathing, I am also encouraging them to express whatever emotions come up. They can punch and kick. They can yell. They can cry. They can do whatever and I am just there to support them in it and boy is that a healing experience. It happens for them emotionally and it also opens up the channels to a spiritual connection because breath is the movement of spirit in the body. Now I'm quoting Andrew Weil, the doctor with the big white beard. "Breath is the movement of spirit in the body." And we know that if we're not breathing for more than 5 minutes or so we're dying; we die.

JUDITH: That's true.

LOIS: And at the same time, to the extent to which we are breathing fully and freely are we living freely and fully? This really turns people's lives around and the thing is, I can't really do this process with children in schools, so there are some other processes that I can teach them in schools. But for adults, this is fabulous.

JUDITH: I can imagine that. It is because so many of us grew up in a generation where those kinds of messages were given quite freely and that was part of the culture of the day. What I see with my grandchildren, for example, is a whole different framework and that's a good thing. But, that doesn't include the children who come from disturbed homes, homes that have issues. And that's where I'm sure you see some of the problems with anxiety.

LOIS: Yes, with anxiety, depression, trauma, traumatic experiences. And I feel strongly that all of that that's happening. The parents of today's disturbed children, I feel like they're just a victim too of this same kind of thing where, and it just has come down through the generations, where you

know we aren't allowed to express our feelings. And let's face it, when do you feel the safest with somebody? Isn't it when they are listening to your feelings and not telling you, "Oh you shouldn't cry. Oh, you shouldn't feel that way. Oh, but you're so wonderful, why do you feel that way?" I mean that's not really supportive. We want it to be supportive but if we instead just listen to someone's feelings and go, "yeah, I hear how you feel", I do that. That's when we feel safe. That's when we really bond and when children don't get that from their parents because their parents aren't even able to do it, really, then they start to feel unsafe in their own homes. And boy I'll tell you, I've worked with many people. We've gone back into childhood experiences and cleared them up with breathing and EFT tapping. I've learned a lot about how the child's mind works. And of course, I'm not the only one who knows this. But I learned it first hand for myself and from these clients. And children really need to learn tools for processing their emotions. If they don't get them, they end up getting mentally disturbed, ultimately. Not necessarily but many do, many do.

JUDITH: Right, right. Well if we look at the holistic model, which I like to do, the breath is, for me, connected to air which is in the East. And it's essential to life. If we don't have breath, we don't have life. So how about giving us an example, if you don't mind, from one of your clients that had a breakthrough using this technique.

LOIS: Sure, yes. I had a client, a few months ago actually, who called me up and said, "someone told me that breath work could help me. You're the only person I can find on the internet. I am about to check myself into a \$30,000 rehab for addictions. He had had an addiction and he said I just want to see if there's anything you can do. I said, "sure come on in", so he had tremendous anxiety disorder, that was compounded by an enormous addiction. I won't get into what type of addiction. So, his first session was very powerful, and he really almost went into, started to go into an anxiety attack, or a panic attack. However, I just kept him breathing and ultimately, what I found out years ago is when we go into that hyperventilation or anxiety or panic attacks, it has to do with disordered breathing or restricted breathing. And so, I just kept him breathing. I kept him feeling safe and kept him breathing and he got through that and then he had an amazingly powerful experience. And I'll just quote him this one way. Afterwards he said, "Lois, that was the most terrifying experience and the most", how did he put it? What was the word; I can't remember the word. The most amazing experience, but that's not the exact word. It was just like the most

spectacular experience I've ever had and the most powerful. It changed things for him. He started to feel like, wow I can actually breathe through these feelings that make me go into panic when I don't breathe through them. And now I'm using my own words of course. But he said it was the most terrifying and, oh, the most beautiful. That was it. "The most terrifying and the most beautiful experience I've every had." Because he got through that. Then he started having experiences of loved ones who had passed away who he started to feel their presence of. Talk about a spiritual connection. And a lot of people feel that (spiritual connection) in these sessions once they've gotten past the emotional stuff that wants to come up. What I learn is that you know the emotional things that we stop, we do it with the breathing and then we don't have that clear connection with spirit because our breath, literally our spirit, has broken. We've changed it, restricted it. We don't have that free flow of breath or life force, or what I consider to be spirit/God whatever you want to call it. And so, it shifts you out of being a prisoner to your feelings and always feeling like you're going to burst with some kind of an outburst, which a lot of people do. It frees you from the stress of holding all that in and then gives you the power and the ability to surrender to the spiritual forces that can cleanse you from it all and help you feel that connection with God, Allah, whatever you want to call it. Whatever you want to call that life force that moves through us all. And it also helps you feel more connected and safer with other people, which of course is a part of all that in my holistic view of life. Does that make sense to you?

JUDITH: It does, it does. So, when we breathe we release emotions, so you're really working on the emotional body, the mental body, spiritual body, however that presents itself to you. But, the initiatory catalyst, so to speak, is the breath and the breath is connected to air which is a crucial element here on the planet. Interesting. I find that really fascinating and thank you for that example. I'm assuming that this gentleman is doing okay?

LOIS: Yes, he was back to work a couple of months later. He was unable to work for months and went back to work actually, I think it was about six weeks later and was doing good, making good money. He had a pretty well-paying job when he could work. So yes, he did very well and kept coming in for about six months and shifted a whole lot of things. Realized a whole lot of things about the childhood and how that led to these beliefs about himself, that he couldn't feel these feelings or express these feelings. I also

teach people how to communicate feelings in a healthy way, so they're not out there crying and punching and kicking by the way. Once we get the main pressure down then they can be more present, and they can really communicate with people in a way that honors their feelings and yet doesn't hurt anybody.

JUDITH: Right. And I would think the listeners would be as curious as I am: was he able to overcome his addiction?

LOIS: I haven't spoken to him in awhile but at that point yes, he was making tremendous headway in that regard. And you know addiction is unpredictable and I don't know now. But the last time I texted him, just to check in, a couple of months ago he said he was doing well. So, I'm assuming that's what's going on and he hasn't been back.

JUDITH: What an interesting story. Thank you for sharing that. Let's get into your other love, which is the EFT tapping. I think our listeners need to know what that is and then tell us about your book and what your new work is for yourself.

LOIS: Okay. EFT tapping is what I call the magic buttons for children and the book is "Maven and the Magic Buttons" where she learns about her magic buttons. The first magic button is belly button breathing, right? They learn to breathe with their belly when they're feeling uncomfortable and then they learn how to tap on certain acupuncture points that help to expand the flow of energy through your system, so it can sort of clear out some. It's almost like breathing. It expands the flow of energy so we can clear out some of the energies of stuffed or repressed emotions and tapping is really getting well known. There's a lot of research behind it now and what they found too is that it not only expands the flow of energy and clears out some of the residue or the gook that builds up in our system, but it also calms the fear center of the brain, which is the amygdala. A little gland in the center of your brain, well actually it's towards the hind brain. It calms down that fight or flight response or the lizard brain, the survival mode. All of these are pretty much the same thing in the brain. And when that's calmed down then the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that we use to think as adults and that's the human part of the brain that other animals, many of them don't have. It allows us to use that part of the brain more fully so that we can actually be present, not be on defense mode without knowing it. We can really be present in the world and be on a more adult mode. It allows

children and adults to regulate their own autonomic nervous system in the brain that's all connected, right? And it allows us to really quickly shift ourselves out of defense mode into mindfulness mode, where we can really be who we are, as opposed to be defending who we are.

JUDITH: Exactly. With the brain research, what you're saying ties in; the lower brain tends to hold all the fear and all the negativity. But unless we quiet it, like you said, we can't strengthen the highway, so to speak. There's actually a neural highway from the lower brain to the frontal brain but it's that frontal brain that the monks tap into on a consistent basis. And what they found, they have a sense of we are one.

LOIS: Yes.

JUDITH: It's also high order thinking. It's compassion. It's patience. It's tolerance. It's non-judgmental. Tries to solve problems from that level.

LOIS: Right and what you're saying reminds me of another client that I had. A young woman in her early 30s, very dysregulated in many ways in her life, came in for breathe work but I decided to use EFT tapping first because I felt like she wasn't ready for breath work. And so, we did tap and about the third session we're doing this extraordinary process going right into her history and all, which it just kind of takes you there sometimes. And all of a sudden, she sits up and she goes, "Oh my God. Is this God that I'm feeling?"

JUDITH: Oh my!

LOIS: "Like I'm having this experience." And she asked me and I'm quoting, "Is this God that I'm feeling?" And I was a little taken aback but it didn't surprise me in a lot of ways and I said, "Yeah, if you're feeling this bliss and this feeling of being connected." That's how she described it, like I'm part of everything. Yes, you are and that was very powerful. I was just really thrilled with that. And yes, it helps you to, just like you just said, it helps you to really feel that higher connection. Instead of like the hind brain or the lower brain is more a connection to our animal nature where it's all about instincts and protection, right, and survival. Where as the prefrontal cortex, the higher thinking brain is all about all the amazing things that humans can accomplish. I mean think about everything we accomplish. We do that with the prefrontal cortex, right? And so, it brings us back to that.

JUDITH: Well you know what's interesting about that whole scenario, is the lower brain is apparently a lot older in us than the frontal brain. We do have to do some work to create that highway, as you mentioned. And it sounds like between the breath work and the tapping you've had some great successes...

LOIS: Absolutely.

JUDITH: ...with folks feeling that Oneness that we're striving for, which will help the planet in the long run.

LOIS: Absolutely. And it also works Judith on the physical level. I have had many experiences and successes with people with chronic pain, chronic illness, anxiety disorders, moderate depression, IBS, all kinds of "incurable" diseases. They may not be able to be cured by medicine, but they can be healed once we shift our perception of ourselves and the world and our value. We shift into a high sense of self-worth, then what we actually end up doing is giving ourselves the right food. Giving ourselves the right breathing, right? Giving ourselves credit and recognition for what we've done, right? Take care of ourselves first, liking ourselves. When all of this shifts, it sometimes can shift just based on one belief, you know? That I'm not good enough belief that so many people have can shift into, "Yes, I am good enough, I'm part of God. I'm part of the Universe. I'm part of spirit, life." And that shifts everything. And so that translates into healing on the physical level as well as the emotional and spiritual.

JUDITH: Oh, that's wonderful. Those are great, great examples too. Well let's talk about the children now, with your book "Maven's Magic Buttons" and your use of EFT.

LOIS: It's actually called "Maven and the Magic Buttons".

JUDITH: Oh, sorry.

LOIS: That's okay. And I was inspired to write this book by a little boy. I used to be the Director of Youth Services at Unity of Greater Hartford. A little boy had a tremendous anxiety disorder. His mother one day was trying to get him to come into the classroom so she could go to church, and he was just going, aghhh. You know he wouldn't have any of it. So, I took him out in the hallway. I had a good relationship with him at that point and I took him out in the hallway and I said, "Hey, haven't you tapped on your magic

buttons yet? And he was like, huh? And so, we did. We tapped for about one minute. We tapped on the various points. I had him take a couple of deep breaths and I swear to God Judith, within a minute and a half he was smiling, like he had just suddenly shown up in a new body is what it looked like by his eyes and his facial expression. And then he kind of sauntered into the room and for the first time ever he actually spoke his name when it was his turn to say who he was, what his age was and what he liked about himself. I always had them do that. He was actually able to do that for the first time.

JUDITH: Wow. That's huge for children at that age.

LOIS: And then after that he went, and we would go to the front of the sanctuary where all of the adults would sort of sing us into the room and then three kids would normally take the mike and tell the adults what they had learned. Guess who took the mike? This little boy took the mike and actually spoke to a group of adults. I was floored. His mother came up to me afterwards and said, 'what did you do?'. She used the word floored. I was floored. And so, I went home that day and I sat down to lunch and I was just so blown away and I just heard the name "Maven and the Magic Buttons" and I just wrote out the story. And it must have took about six months to tweak it and edit it and find an illustrator and all but now my goal is to, and my process really – I've created a whole website and everything, I've developed a program called Whole Schools Tap into Happy. And it's geared for elementary school children K-4 or 5. The way it works is I go into the school, read the book and have a little workshop with every class. And then the entire school can learn how to tap and breathe and it's a wonderful thing. The thing about doing it in a big school is it's great because then if everybody is doing it, then it becomes part of the culture.

JUDITH: Right, right.

LOIS: Where if one kid is walking about tapping on themselves the other kids are going to make fun of them because they don't know what's going on.

JUDITH: That's true, right. It's true.

LOIS: It's wonderful when parents buy my book and read it to their kids, hopefully on a repeated basis and tap with them, hopefully. That's what the instruction is in the back. But it's even better if a whole school or a whole

organization, but preferably a school, makes it part of their culture. And if I may tell you one little story about a little girl in one of my classrooms. I just love this story because it's so indicative of how little things can make a big difference and this made a huge difference. She was my volunteer in a little second grade class and she came up and I asked her what the issue and she was said, 'well every time I'm trying to do my homework my little brother just won't leave me alone. He bugs me, and I can't get my homework done and it's really bothering me because I'm not doing as well as I could.', so I said okay, well let's tap on that and so we did. And then afterwards (which takes about 2 minutes) she said, 'huh' and I said "What's the matter? And she said well I think my brother just loves me.

JUDITH: Well how about that?

LOIS: And he wants my attention.

JUDITH: Of course.

LOIS: Now here's some self-esteem coming in, right? He wants my attention, wow! And I said well that's really great. What do you think you could, maybe you could do something differently, a little bit. She said yeah, I think I'll just give him some attention. I'll play with him for a half hour before I do my homework.

JUDITH: Aw, isn't that amazing? And she was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and had that insight, number one ,that he just wanted her attention.

LOIS: Because she's a special person, right? I mean...

JUDITH: In his life she is, yes absolutely.

LOIS: So instead of him just being a little brat and just trying to bug her, which is one way to look at it she totally shifted and now who's going to get more love? He is, and she is, right?

JUDITH: Isn't that amazing! Oh, I love stories like that.

LOIS: Me too.

JUDITH: But... This is great. What I'd like you to do is give us three tips that everyone can take home.

LOIS: Sure, okay. The number one tip is **breathe** consciously. In other words,...well maybe that's even vague. **Breathe intentionally** as often as you can. Whenever you feel uncomfortable and you've got emotions happening, if you can take a couple of deep breaths, or even ten deep breaths and just start to focus on your breathing and do the breathing instead of letting it be done on its own, what can happen then is you will start to be able to clear, you'll be nourishing your emotionally body and your physical body at a time when it needs it most because it's starting to go into the lizard brain and starting to go into defense mode and you're feeling uncomfortable feelings.

And then the second thing is, learn how to tap. **Learn EFT tapping.** It's a wonderful self-help tool and there are videos all over Youtube.com about it. However, a lot of the really deep work that I've talked about like healing chronic illness and chronic pain and all these things, that does require professional help in most cases. Most people can't see the forest through their trees, emotional body, so they might sit there and do a little tapping and then say oh it didn't work. Well don't trust that because what you really need then is somebody to sit there and go, wait a minute. Because when I'm tapping on people or tapping with people I also feel what's going on. I can see in their body language and everything. I can see, and I can say, "No, how about this? Let's look at this." And then they go, "Oh my God, yes!" Because they need support to get through those really difficult things. So, learn how to tap and if doing it yourself doesn't work, find me or somebody else. There are lots of people who do EFT tapping in the country.

And then the last thing is to always **honor your feelings and your children's feelings.** And if you made a mistake, and if you just had a reaction and you said, "Go to your room if you want to cry". If you do that and you catch yourself doing that, when you catch yourself, apologize. Tell that child, "you know what? I want to hear your feelings. I'm sorry I sent you to the room. I just couldn't handle it." Or whatever the truth is for you. Teaching your kids to apologize when they make a mistake and teaching them that's it's okay to have feelings is going to help them become healthy and you'll love having them as children and as adults.

JUDITH: Thank you Lois. Those are great tips that we can put in our everyday work.

How about before we go, tell everyone about your contact information.  
How do they reach you?

LOIS: Well if they're interested in the book or the school program, and I'm actively now looking for a couple of schools to do pilot programs which are free of charge. If they're interested in that they can go to [www.mavensmagicbuttons.com](http://www.mavensmagicbuttons.com) That's the website where they can find out all about EFT and tapping. They can access all kinds of links to studies about it and they can buy the book there as well.

And then the other thing, if they're interested in coaching or classes, I do public speaking as well as group sessions and private sessions on Skype or in person in East Hartford. They can call me directly at 860-796-1480 and that is my cell phone. They can text me there as well. They can also reach me at [lois@loisgrasso.com](mailto:lois@loisgrasso.com) Lois Grasso.com is my website regarding the coaching and the various things, EFT, all that. I think that covers it.

JUDITH: It does, thank you!

LOIS: Thank you!

JUDITH: Thank you. I'm really grateful. I hope my listeners feel as inspired as I do by all of your talk and your very practical advice. But I also appreciate the fact that you've explained Transformational Breath work and the EFT in very practical ways with practical examples and I think that's always helpful.

LOIS: Thank you.

JUDITH: You're welcome.

This is Judith Dreyer. I'm the author of "At the Garden's Gate", book and blog. My book is available through my website which is [www.judithdreyer.com](http://www.judithdreyer.com) as well as several distribution arms such as Amazon, Nook, Good Reads and more. I'd like to remind all of you to please like and share these podcasts. Let's get the word out about our holistic nature. And remember there's a transcript at the end of each podcast when it gets released.

I'd like to say, bye for now! Have a great day.

LOIS: Thank you. And I'm going to go and buy your book right now!

JUDITH: Thanks Lois. Have a good one!