



Integrative Prevention in the Covid-19 Pandemic

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At this point we are mourning the increasing damage that is being done to social life in general as well as the actual victims of Covid-19. The pandemic is affecting the physical and mental health of those infected and at the same time threatening children, the elderly and the seriously ill who are suffering from contact restrictions. An increase in domestic violence, depression and neglect, unemployment and loss of meaning, and violations of human dignity (such as when people are prohibited from visiting the dying) have now become part of this disease system.¹ This pandemic thus calls for prophylactic measures that can strengthen the health, self-esteem and confidence of individuals in their social, cultural, scientific and religious life. We require prophylaxis that does not just prevent infection or activate our immune systems, we also need to prepare for new, more sustainable health.

Freeing Respiration

Covid-19 disease comes from a virus that attacks the respiratory and cardiovascular system. The symptoms are initially those of a cold, with a headache and aching limbs, a dry cough, fever and temporary loss of the sense of smell. Primarily very elderly patients with previous diseases of the cardiovascular system often have a severe course and sometimes

have to be ventilated. Mortality is high in these patients – also due to the Covid-19 infection.²

Prophylaxis initially aims to prevent infection through protective measures such as hand hygiene, respiratory masks and contact restrictions. These protective measures can be supplemented by supporting respiration as a life process. This starts by providing fresh and humidified air in closed rooms and ensuring regular outdoor exercise. We can stimulate our breathing by taking deep breaths, looking into the light, listening to sounds and observing nature.

Through breathing we connect ourselves with our environment. Speaking, singing, laughing and crying are directly connected with breathing. The isolation measures during the pandemic have been restricting social life and culture. Speaking, singing, laughing and crying connect people, create closeness and familiarity and have a liberating effect on souls trapped in solitude.³ Going for walks with a partner or with the family, personal conversations, shared perceptions of nature in spring, playing and cooking together – all these are possible positive experiences that we can have during the crisis.

Speech lives in the breath. Therefore, certain therapeutic speech formation exercises can be recommended to improve respiration, e.g., to relieve nasal breathing.

Especially singing helps to bring rhythm and deepening to our breathing. Singing stimulates healthy

breathing: it promotes internal warming and ventilation of the lungs, it invigorates and deepens the breath. It also has a psychologically liberating effect.

When we alternate between listening and singing or playing actively ourselves, we stimulate our life forces. This strengthens our body's own defenses and enables our immune system to better process foreign influences. This was shown, for example, by a pilot study carried out on healthy test persons, which looked at the effect of live music on their breathing and heart rhythms. A composition for lyre and voice, "Mercury Bath" by Maria Schüppel, composed especially for therapeutic purposes, was used for this study.⁴

Singing together creates a feeling of togetherness and enables a special quality of social communication. In times of widespread social distancing, imaginative ways of singing and making music together can be found (e.g., singing from the balcony...). The shared experience of music awakens the joy of singing.

With morning and evening songs and seasonal songs, we can promote awareness for the rhythms of the course of the day and the year. This creates a feeling of belonging to the rhythms of the world around us. Through connecting with a melody and its rhythmic repetition, we can consciously make something our own – we can absorb it.

Last but not least, we can create a new relationship to time through active musical activity. I am present in musically shaped time, it is fulfilled time, unlike stress.

From the point of view of nursing care, essential oils can be used to stimulate respiration. The following substances may be considered.

- Lavender 10% oil Weleda as a chest rub (Rhythmical Einreibung) or as an oil compress (relaxing, calming)⁵
- Plantago Bronchialbalsam WALA (bronchial balm, oil for external use) as a chest rub (Rhythmical Einreibung) or as an ointment compress (warming, relaxing, expectorant)
- Thyme 5% oil WALA as a chest rub (Rhythmical Einreibung) or as an oil compress (expectorant)

The respiratory process can be additionally supported by the following medications:

- Ferrum sidereum Weleda or Meteoreisen WALA (Meteoric iron, phosphorus, quartz), 10 drops/pilules 1–3 x daily for general prophylaxis and for flu-like infections
- Ferrum-Quarz caps. Weleda (also available as Biodoron 5%, Kephaldoron 5% or Bidor), 1–3 tablets daily for headache tendency and iron deficiency
- Berberis/Quarz pilules WALA or Silicea comp. Weleda, 10 pil. 1–3 x daily for infections of the upper respiratory tract
- Cinnabar/Pyrites Weleda (also available as Pyrit-Zinnober), 1 tablet 1 x daily for recurring sore throat
- Bronchi Plantago comp. or Petasites comp. WALA, 10 pilules 1–3 x daily. for acute and chronic bronchitis

The fact that meditation can strengthen the breathing in many ways is a millennia-old human experience.

Meditation for breathing:

*In my heart
Shines the strength of the sun
In my soul
Works the power of the world.
I will breathe
The strength of the sun
I will feel
The warmth of the world
Sun-strength fills me
World-warmth penetrates me.⁶*

School lessons in front of and with computers, home office and the shifting of physical meetings to video conferencing, as well as film, concert and museum visits via telecommunications – all this is now happening as a (temporary) substitute solution and is being celebrated as progress on the path towards digitalization. It remains to be seen what impact this will have on the quality of learning and social life. But already today it is clear that with increasing time spent in front of a screen, physical movement is re-

stricted, with negative consequences for muscles, bones, the cardiovascular system, respiration and the neurosensory system. Applying age-appropriate health standards to screen time has not yet become a part of general culture. But even in front of our screens, rhythmic breathing is needed between concentration and movement, between being with oneself and being together with others.

Igniting Warmth – Getting Moving

For many people, fears, excessive demands, social constriction and isolation are a considerable challenge and danger. Fear narrows the soul. It hinders respiration. Seized by panic, people are in danger of hyperventilating. Ongoing worries and fears, such as concerns about economic survival, weaken the immune system. Thus, exercises that help to overcome fears are important preventative measures and they strengthen resilience – not just against micro-organisms, but also helping us to overcome paralysis and frozenness. The following eurythmy exercises can be used to distinguish ourselves from our seemingly unpredictable environment:

- *Affirmation/Negation*: These movements have a strengthening effect on the respiratory system by working through the life organization.⁷
- *Sympathy/Antipathy*: This exercise helps the forces of human individuality, which are particularly expressed in a person's warmth organization, to become increasingly active, especially with regard to circulation and digestive processes.⁸

The 'I' connects with the body through warmth. The organism overcomes foreign substances through fever and inflammation. Warmth regulation between the core of the body and the periphery is mainly stimulated by exercise and diet. Warmth spreads from the inside of the body to the periphery via the blood. If the warmth formed in the body core cannot penetrate to the periphery, the limbs cool down and the microbiota of the skin change. The reduced blood flow no longer supplies the body's outer boundaries sufficiently, resulting in increased susceptibility to infections.

The most important measure for stimulating warmth development and warmth regulation is movement. Warmth is generated by movement. Warmth of soul and spirit comes from ideals, enthusiasm, interest and courage. If you combine physical movement and movement out of the spirit and soul, the movement can become expressive. This is the aim in eurythmy, for example. The following eurythmy therapy exercises have a strengthening effect on the warmth organism with its connections to specific organs.

- *Love E* has a warming effect on blood circulation
- *Hope U* has a warming effect on the respiratory system
- *Reverence A–H* helps support the organism in becoming more resistant⁹
- *The sound series 'BGE'* protects against environmental influences.

External applications can also be considered for stimulating the warmth organism.

- Full body rubs (Rhythmical Einreibung) after showering or bathing, with lemon-Swiss pine massage oil Sonett (available as Zitrone-Zirbelkiefer Massageöl)
- Whole-body Rhythmical Einreibung with Rosemary 10% oil WALA
- Ginger salt footbaths¹⁰
- Ginger kidney compress¹¹
- Copper ointment foot rubs (Rhythmical Einreibung) with Red Copper Ointment WALA (also available as Kupfersalbe rot) or Cuprum metallicum praeparatum 0.4% ointment Weleda

A meditation on warmth can be done as follows:

Hold the two palms of your hands against each other without touching, leaving a small gap between them.

Warmth is generated in the space between.

Move your palms slowly, slowly away from each other, but in such a way that the warmth is retained between the palms like a cushion.

Move the palms of your hands so far apart that the warmth is just barely noticeable.

Hold the warmth between your hands for some time.

*Rest your warm hands relaxed on your chest for three minutes, wherever it feels comfortable.
Let yourself be warmed by the idea of the sun.
Feel: I am in the sunshine.
Imagine yourself in a cold landscape.
Feel: I bring warmth to the world.*

Warmth creates deepened relationships with other people. It is known that immunological functions can be hampered by feelings of loneliness. Cultivating interest in other people and in their deeper nature develops human warmth and promotes immunological competence.

Fortifying Ourselves and Others with Food

Physical and socio-cultural life are linked by nutrition. A healthy, i.e., balanced diet adapted to one's lifestyle has important effects on one's own physical health as well as repercussions for the production and availability of food. Food and drink are thus inseparably linked to ecological and economic conditions in agriculture. The Covid-19 disease in particular illustrates how the displacement of natural habitats of plants and animals and the suffering of animals kept and sold without dignity has facilitated the transfer of viruses from the animal kingdom to human beings. Maintaining a healthy human diet, i.e., eating limited quantities of fish and meat, preferably from organic (or biodynamic) animal husbandry, and mindfully enjoying other animal products such as eggs and milk, selecting food that has not been produced in a monoculture and if possible is grown without herbicides or pesticides, is also a way of making an active contribution to the preservation of the planet as a living organism.

As long as prevention is aimed only at one's own well-being and not at the effects of one's behavior on others (e.g., abstaining from alcohol or tobacco, or using the media in a way that can serve as a model for children), it seems to serve primarily to avoid illness and less to maintain health. An ecological philosophy of nutrition also considers the maintenance of one's own intestinal microbiome. It is known that the microbiome plays an important role in immune defense. Fiber-rich, low-sugar nutrition with lots of

vegetables and fruit, supplemented by fermented foods such as sauerkraut, nurtures our intestinal flora.

The following external applications can stimulate digestive activity:

- Liver compress with yarrow tea²
- Abdominal rub (Rhythmical Einreibung) with yarrow 5% oil (e.g., Dr. Heberer)
- Abdominal rub (Rhythmical Einreibung) with Oxalis 10% ointment Weleda³

The following substances can be used medicinally to strengthen the digestive and metabolic systems, even during or after treatment with conventional allopathic drugs (antiepileptic drugs, cytostatics, antibiotics, etc.):

- Taraxacum Stanno cultum, planta tota D2 or (non-alcoholic) Rh D 3 Weleda, or
- Cichorium Stanno cultum, planta tota D2 or (non-alcoholic) Rh D 3 Weleda, 10–15 drops 2–3 x daily

Meditation on nutrition:

*View the prepared meal before eating.
What had to happen for me to be satisfied with this meal?
How was it cooked?
What does the meal consist of?
Where did the ingredients of the meal come from?
How did they get to the store?
Where were they harvested and processed?
How did they grow?
In what earth, with what water, in what light?*

While eating:

*What has become is being broken down again.
It is becoming light.
It is becoming my own substance.*

Letting Go of Ballast

Promoting excretion through skin and mucous membranes (sweating, coughing, defecation and urination) has high prophylactic value. As a rule, excretion is initiated when respiration, exercise and nutrition are well taken care of.

Spiritually, every elimination process is a decision-making process. What is important? What can be discarded? What must I part with? What is burdening me? Setting priorities, letting go and accepting new things are important mental, spiritual and biographical processes that are often triggered by crisis situations. Here, too, it can be an enormous help to try to distinguish the essential from the unessential from time to time. Preparing inwardly for loss and parting enables us to take a fearless and expectant approach to life crises. Especially the onslaught that elderly people are suffering from the Covid-19 threat shows how important it is to share with others our perspectives on sudden and life-threatening illness. Dying, like being born, is primarily part of the life cycle and is not in itself a disease requiring treatment. Professional assistance from midwives, relatives, nurses and doctors may be necessary. In almost all cases, though, dying needs the company of understanding and loving people who have life experience. To cultivate such a circle of people is prevention. – It is also prophylaxis against loneliness.

A helpful meditative exercise in this context is:

*Create moments of inner peace for yourself,
and in these moments learn to distinguish the
essential from the inessential.¹⁴*

For inner cleansing, the Hallelujah eurythmy exercise can be recommended:

- HALELUJIA (H, A, seven increasingly growing Ls, E, three big Ls, U, I, A)

Practicing – Growing – Creating Something New

In this pandemic, many people are having to reorganize their everyday lives. Some experience this as an opportunity, others as an unbearable imposition. In research on the origins of health it is known that the most difficult and life-threatening external circumstances can be better coped with and leave less traumatizing damage if those affected understand what is happening, experience meaning and are able to work out options for action that relieve them in some way.¹⁵

Understanding the pandemic is not easy at this time. The conglomeration of statistics in need of interpretation, dramatic images in the media, the contradictory scientific discourses and the different political voices make it difficult to understand how everything is connected in such a way that one can form an independent mental orientation in the crisis. Perhaps it is precisely personal narratives that we need to understand the pandemic. The *exercise of impartiality*¹⁶ is most likely to provide a clear view into the diversity of opinions and sometimes all too simple half-truths.

The question of meaning has a personal and a social perspective. Society at large is becoming increasingly aware that ecological, social and economic issues cannot be solved by national egoism. The question of the meaning of the crisis thus seems to move in the field of tension between isolation and proximity, struggle and cooperation, egoism and responsibility. To find orientation here could be an important prophylaxis keeping us from falling ill socially through isolation, struggle and egoism or breaking physically due to lack of distance and feeling overwhelmed by outflowing compassion and excessive demands.

What can we do? We can try to resolutely take the perspective of the future, of those still unborn. To ask ourselves together with them: When I look back on myself and us today in the year 2030, and when I look back on myself and us today in the year 2300 – what will then, from that perspective, be the essential thing in our thinking, in the shaping of our relationships, in our actions? Let us call upon the strongest forces within ourselves: The belief in meaning. The hope for lasting change. The love to be able to fend off the attacks on life.¹⁷

- 1 Neue Zürcher Zeitung (as checked on April 24, 2020), <https://www.nzz.ch/schweiz/angst-vor-haeuslicher-gewalt-wenn-der-corona-stress-eskaliert-drohen-die-kinder-zu-hause-unter-die-raeder-zu-kommen-ld.1548198>; Tagesspiegel (as checked on April 24, 2020), <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/corona-und-die-ausgehbeschraenkungen-haeusliche-gewalt-ist-kein-schicksal-sondern-ein-problem-das-alle-angeht/25718698.html>
- 2 Robert Koch Institute (as checked on April 24, 2020), https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Steckbrief.html.
- 3 Cf. also on the subject of respiration and lungs: von Bonin, Dietrich: “Gestaltetes Sprechen zur Lungenstärkung”, in: *Das Goetheanum*, no. 18, May 1, 2020, p. 14f. (<https://dasgoetheanum.com/kultur/2020/5/1/gestaltetes-sprechen-zur-lungenstaerkung>)
- 4 Heckel, Viola: *Veränderungen der Atmung bei live-gespielter Musik*, Master thesis. Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences, 2015
- 5 <https://www.pflege-vademecum.de/lavendeloel.php?locale=en>
- 6 Steiner, Rudolf: *Mantrische Sprüche und Seelenübungen 2*, GA 268. Dornach 1999, S. 85. English translation by Dana L. Fleming and Christopher Bamford, in: Steiner, Rudolf: *Mantric Sayings*. Great Barrington 2015, p. 71
- 7 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ym3Oc42WMKU>
- 8 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBfZoZlVM-w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBfZoZlVM-w;);
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJFtcQwEXVE>
- 9 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4aIJMbitapg>
- 10 <https://www.pflege-vademecum.de/ingwerfussbad.php>
- 11 <https://www.pflege-vademecum.de/inw.php>
- 12 https://www.pflege-vademecum.de/schafgarben_leberwickel.php
- 13 <https://www.pflege-vademecum.de/oxalissalbe.php>
- 14 Steiner, Rudolf: *Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der höheren Welten?* GA 10. 24th ed. Dornach 1993, p. 29. English translation: Steiner, Rudolf: *How to know higher worlds – a modern path of initiation*. Great Barrington 2002, p. 25
- 15 Antonovski, Aaron: *Salutogenese. Zur Entmystifizierung der Gesundheit*. German edition by Alexa Franke. Tübingen 1997
- 16 Steiner, Rudolf: *Anweisungen für eine esoterische Schulung*, special edition based on GA 245. Dornach 2010, p. 19. English translation: Steiner, Rudolf: *Guidance in esoteric training*. From the esoteric school. 3rd ed. London 1998.
- 17 Steiner, Rudolf: *Glaube – Liebe – Hoffnung, drei Stufen des menschheitlichen Lebens*, Lectures of December 2 and 3, 1911, in: Steiner, Rudolf: *Das esoterische Christentum und die geistige Führung der Menschheit*, GA 130. Dornach 1995, p. 160ff; p. 182ff. English translation: Steiner, Rudolf: *Faith, love, and hope*. Rudolf Steiner Archive, https://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA130/English/GB1964/FaLoHo_index.html