



American Expression E2475 Live and breathe

IOTS Publishing Team
International Online Teachers Society
Since 2011

The phrase "live and breathe" is an idiom used to describe someone's deep passion, dedication, or total immersion in a particular activity, interest, or value. When someone says they "live and breathe" something, they are expressing that it is a central part of their identity. It means more than just enjoying or practicing it occasionally; it suggests that the person is emotionally and mentally invested in it to the point that it shapes their daily life and influences their decisions.

This idiom is often applied to professions, hobbies, or beliefs. For example, a musician who spends every waking moment thinking about music, writing songs, attending performances, and practicing might be said to live and breathe music. Similarly, someone who is deeply committed to social justice causes, constantly involved in advocacy, learning, and activism, could be described as living and breathing their values.

The imagery behind this phrase is powerful. Breathing is a natural, continuous act essential for life. To say that someone breathes something is to suggest that they cannot go without it because it sustains them in a vital way. By pairing "live" with "breathe," the expression intensifies the meaning, making it clear that the subject matter is not just a part of life but a defining element of it.

People who live and breathe something often stand out for their enthusiasm and expertise. Their passion tends to be infectious, inspiring others through their energy and depth of knowledge. This can be seen in teachers who go above and beyond in the classroom, athletes who dedicate every moment to training, or entrepreneurs who pour all their resources into building a vision.

However, there can also be a downside to living and breathing one particular thing. When someone becomes too absorbed in a single pursuit, they may lose balance in other areas of life such as relationships, health, or personal development. The idiom, while positive in tone, can also suggest a kind of obsession or tunnel vision if not managed carefully.

In conversation, the phrase is typically used admiringly to recognize someone's strong passion or unwavering commitment. It highlights the deep-rooted nature of their dedication and distinguishes it from more casual interest. People often take pride in being described this way because it affirms their sense of purpose and alignment with what they value most.

In conclusion, to live and breathe something means to be deeply connected to it in a way that defines who you are and how you experience life. It speaks to the power of passion, the importance of purpose, and the human capacity to devote oneself completely to what truly matters.

Questions for Discussion

1. What does it mean for someone to live and breathe a particular passion or value?
2. Can living and breathing one pursuit be both inspiring and potentially overwhelming?
3. How does this idiom help us understand the depth of personal commitment?
4. In what ways can someone find balance while still living and breathing their passion?
5. Why do people take pride in being described as living and breathing something they love?