

the
chakra
system

A Complete Course in
Self-Diagnosis and Healing

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With Selene Vega. *The Sevenfold Journey: Reclaiming Mind, Body, and Spirit through the Chakras.* Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1993.

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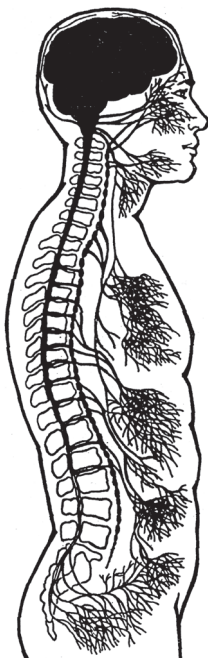
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welcome to the journey

The Chakra System: A Complete Course in Self-Diagnosis and Healing is a map for the journey to consciousness. Set down by the ancients long ago, this map navigates the connections between spirit and matter, mind and body, heaven and earth. It shows you how the inner dimensions of your own spirit align with the sacred architecture of the world around you. Like any map, it does not tell you where to go, but shows you where you can go. If you have begun to work on your own healing, taken an interest in spiritual growth, are interested in metaphysics, or have become engaged in any self-reflection, then you have already begun this journey.

The points of interest on this map are the vital energy centers known as

The Chakras and the Human Body



Seventh chakra
Cerebral cortex
Top of head

Sixth chakra
Carotid plexus
Brow

Fifth chakra
Pharyngeal plexus
Throat

Fourth chakra
Cardiac plexus
Heart

Third chakra
Solar plexus

Second chakra
Sacral plexus
Abdomen, genitals

First chakra
Coccygeal plexus
Base of spine

chakras, from an ancient Sanskrit word meaning “wheel” or “disk.” There are many chakras in and around our bodies. Of these, the seven located along the spine are generally regarded as forming the basis for the chakra system. We will work with these seven fundamental energy vortices in this series.

I define chakras as centers of organization for the reception, assimilation, and expression of life energy. In this way, chakras are like chambers in the temple of the body, where various types of energies—such as physical, emotional, verbal, or visual energies—are organized for use in our lives. These chambers transform energy from one level to another, as when we digest food to use as fuel for activity, or translate sights, sounds, or thoughts into insight and awareness.

You can also think of the chakras as programs on a floppy disk—programs that may or may not be serving your best interests. These are the patterns that lock you up or liberate you. They are lodged in your cells, emotional reactions, habits, thoughts, and belief systems. They are the core inner programs that generate the situations in your daily life. In order to have a healthy and productive life, it is wise to make sure these programs are free of bugs and frequently updated.

On the journey through life, chakras are like inner gears that allow you to experience different levels of power. A good vehicle has a free range of gears that allows it to move slowly or quickly, uphill and downhill. If you are stuck in one gear, or cannot move into a higher or lower gear, your journey is limited. When you're stuck in a tight parking space, you also need a reverse gear, which in this system is a means of looking at past events that may have created the patterns in which you are now stuck.

The chakra map also charts your lifelong psychological experience. You will see how certain patterns become established in the chakras at crucial developmental

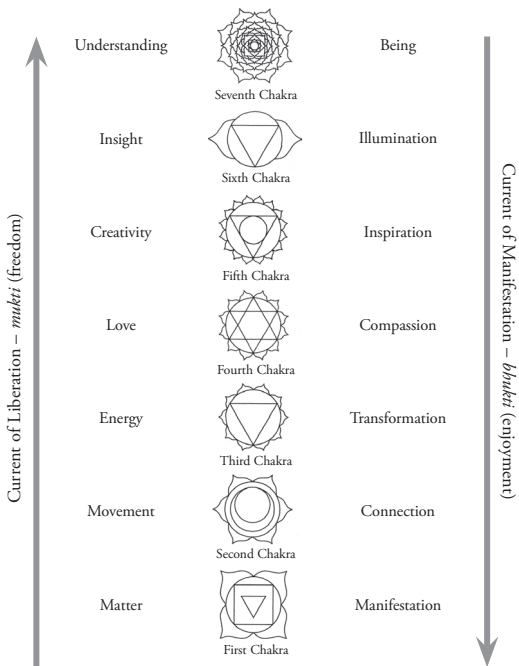
stages of childhood, and how each chakra builds upon the accomplishments of the previous stage. Patterns arising from abuse, neglect, or misfortune may remain lodged in the core matrices of your chakras, causing you difficulty many years later. Fortunately, through appropriate attention, understanding, and redirection, these patterns can be healed and changed. The symbolic language of the chakra system is a powerful tool that can help you better understand and integrate the psychological markers that have shaped your experience.

liberation and manifestation

The major chakras represent seven vibratory modalities of human life, analogous to the seven colors of the light spectrum. Thus, this journey to consciousness can be described as an excursion across the Rainbow Bridge. Mythically, the Rainbow Bridge is a symbol of hope—a means to connect humans and gods, heaven and earth, mortal and immortal. Many cultures have believed that calamity could be avoided by crossing the Rainbow Bridge and keeping this connection in good repair. In reclaiming this bridge—through the chakras within your very self—you can achieve realization of your divine nature, nestled inside your own mortal body.

The chakras are stepping stones across the Rainbow Bridge, forming a continuum between the two poles of matter and spirit. This bridge traverses the vertical span between heaven and earth, so the “traffic” along it moves both up and down. As you journey across the bridge, it is important to be able to travel in both directions. Tantric texts describe the upward-traveling energy current as *mukti*

The Complete Journey along the Chakras



(freedom) and the downward-moving current as *bhukti* (enjoyment). I have come to name these pathways “the current of liberation” and “the current of manifestation,” respectively (see chart on page 3).

The current of liberation begins in your roots and moves upward, toward the heavens. This is the pathway most commonly featured in chakra discourse. Its upward movement draws you from the sleepy realms of unconscious instinct into the possibility of realization as an awakened being. This is the journey toward consciousness undertaken by nearly all living things, which root into the earth and reach for the light of the heavens, learning and becoming more conscious and more complex as life progresses. Only humans, however, pursue this process willfully.

The upward pathway begins with form and solidity, gaining increasing freedom, expansion, and transcendence with each level. The lower levels provide a foundation for the journey upward, much as roots give a tree stability and nourishment so it may grow taller. While each level in the upward direction is said to transcend the one below it, *this evolution does not deny but includes and builds upon the lower levels*. If you cut off the roots of a tree, it can no longer grow upward. In the same way, if you deny your lower levels, they cannot give you the support and fuel for the liberating current to complete its journey.

The journey downward is equally important. Beginning in pure awareness, this journey progressively activates image, communication, relationship, energy, connection, and, finally, manifestation. Each level becomes more dense, more defined. In order to manifest something on the earth plane, we create dense forms by focus and repetition. If you cannot accept the limitation that form requires, you cannot manifest.

If you are to be whole, both the upward and downward currents must be available to you. You must free yourself from fixed and limiting forms in order to

achieve liberation and transcendence (mukti). To support the evolution of the world around you, you must be able to embody your consciousness, expressing and manifesting it in your everyday life (bhukti). The chakras are like windows of the soul through which the light of spirit shines forth as it passes upward and downward, expressing itself through you and into the world.

unblocking the chakras

If the chakras become blocked, one or both energy currents can be impeded, keeping you stuck in repetitive patterns. Addiction is a classic example of a nonproductive, repetitive pattern caused by a blockage of the upward current. Other examples include getting stuck in a relationship pattern, a chronic illness, an obsession, or an annoying bad habit. Any of these symptoms indicates that one or more of the chakras is preventing the upward current from completing its journey.

Turning your attention to these repetitive issues—in other words, bringing them to consciousness—gives you a means of breaking the bonds that hold you. An alcoholic, for example, remains trapped until he or she becomes conscious of the reasons for drinking. As any recovering alcoholic will tell you, however, mere awareness is not enough. Diligent effort must be applied on many levels.

Blockage of the downward current, on the other hand, keeps you from manifesting. You may have read all the appropriate books; you may have many ideas and excited conversations; but somehow, these ideas never come to completion. You will typically have trouble narrowing your focus, trusting yourself, or applying your will to your intention. These are signs that you need to work on your descending current, freeing up whatever chakras impede the flow of energy

downward. This current also needs attention if you experience frequent health problems or difficulty staying in touch with your body.

what causes blocks?

Chakras become blocked by the unresolved difficulties you have encountered on your journey—especially those that occurred in childhood, when you were not yet as conscious as you are now. You may have encountered too much of one thing or too little of another, such as too much responsibility or too little attention. You may have endured something you didn't want, like physical or sexual abuse; or longed for something you wanted but didn't get, like guidance and support. Whatever the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune brought you, you had to find some way to cope with it.

The methods you developed to manage these difficulties shaped your personality. Typically, they will have formed lifelong patterns of defenses, designed to protect the sacred being who lives inside. In examining your defense patterns, you will discover two main characteristics: you may have *increased* your energy on a particular level in order to deal with the issue; or you may have *decreased* it in order to avoid the issue. These patterns become lodged in the chakras as habitual coping mechanisms that persist into adulthood, even in safe or benevolent situations. In this way, a chakra can become *excessive*, in that it habitually compensates on a particular level (you might say it is fixated), or the chakra can become *deficient*, in that it habitually avoids a particular level.

For example, if you often went hungry or lived in fear of being hungry, you may have learned to overeat as a compensation—an excessive first chakra response. Or you may have decided you had no interest in food, becoming anorexic—a deficient








first chakra response. In reaction to a dominating parent, you may have tried to feel powerful by becoming a bully (excessive third chakra); or you may have become passive to avoid confrontation (deficient third chakra). To survive discord or danger in your surroundings, you may have retreated to an active, imaginative fantasy life (excessive sixth chakra); or you may have shut down to avoid unpleasant memories or images (deficient sixth chakra).

In terms of the energy flow along the Rainbow Bridge, an excessive chakra is crowded with stagnant energy, like a traffic jam. A deficient chakra, by contrast, is more like a constriction: a place where the road is too narrow to permit the easy passage of energy. In general, excessive chakras hold on too tightly and need to let go and release energy. Deficient chakras are undernourished, and need to let go and receive energy.

the chakra diagnostic system

By examining the upward and downward currents, and the flow of energy through each chakra, you have the makings of an elegant diagnostic system for understanding and treating your difficulties. If you understand the purpose and function of each chakra, and then look at how the energies associated with that chakra play out in your life—as well as how your body functions in that particular area—you will discover how your childhood coping mechanisms evolved into excessive and deficient chakra patterns. This diagnosis then serves to guide you in particular exercises that focus and move energy through particular chakras. This is the great gift of the chakra system: It represents a profound formula for wholeness that integrates body, mind, and spirit, restoring them to their original unity.

Chakra Correspondences

Chakra	Location	Central Issue	Goals	Rights	Developmental Stage
 Seventh chakra	Top of head, cerebral cortex	Awareness	Wisdom, knowledge, consciousness, spiritual connection	To know	Throughout life
 Sixth chakra	Brow	Intuition, imagination	Psychic perception, accurate interpretation, imagination, seeing	To see	Adolescence
 Fifth chakra	Throat	Communication	Clear communication, creativity, resonance	To speak and be heard	7-12 years
 Fourth chakra	Heart	Love, relationships	Balance, compassion, self-acceptance, good relationships	To love and be loved	4-7 years
 Third chakra	Solar plexus	Power, will	Vitality, spontaneity, strength of will, purpose, self-esteem	To act	18 months to 4 years
 Second chakra	Abdomen, genitals, lower back, hips	Sexuality, emotions	Fluidity, pleasure, healthy sexuality, feeling function	To feel, to want	6 months to 2 years
 First chakra	Base of spine, coccygeal plexus	Survival	Stability, grounding, physical health, prosperity, trust	To be here, to have	Womb to 12 months

Identity	Demon	Excessive Characteristics	Deficient Characteristics	Element
Universal Identity (Self-knowledge)	Attachment	Overly intellectual, spiritual addiction, confusion, dissociated body	Learning difficulties, spiritual skepticism, limited beliefs, materialism, apathy	Thought
Archetypal Identity (Self-reflection)	Illusion	Headaches, nightmares, hallucinations, delusions, difficulty concentrating	Poor memory, poor vision, cannot see patterns, denial	Light
Creative Identity (Self-expression)	Lies	Excessive talking, inability to listen, overextended, stuttering	Fear of speaking, poor rhythm, aphasia	Sound
Social Identity (Self-acceptance)	Grief	Codependency, poor boundaries, possessive, jealous, narcissistic	Shy, lonely, isolated, lack of empathy, bitter, critical	Air
Ego Identity (Self-definition)	Shame	Dominating, blaming, aggressive, scattered, constantly active	Weak will, poor self-esteem, passive, sluggish, fearful	Fire
Emotional Identity (Self-gratification)	Guilt	Overly emotional, poor boundaries, sex addiction, obsessive attachments	Frigidity, impotence, rigidity, emotional numbness, fear of pleasure	Water
Physical Identity (Self-preservation)	Fear	Heaviness, sluggish, monotony, obesity, hoarding, materialism	Frequent fear, lack of discipline, restless, underweight, spacey	Earth

an overview of the sessions

The first two sessions on *The Chakra System* give you background information on the chakra system as a whole. They tell you its history and meaning, give you ways of understanding how to use the system, and describe a brief overview of the seven chakras as a complete system. At the end of session one, you will have an opportunity to locate your own chakras through a guided visualization exercise. You will learn how to attune yourself to your chakras, and begin to familiarize yourself with the elements and colors associated with each one.

Sessions three through nine are devoted to each of the seven chakras, starting at the bottom and moving upward. Here, you will learn the meaning and function of each chakra, its childhood developmental period, difficulties that may have created blocks during that period, and the chakra's excessive and deficient characteristics. We will explore the characteristics of a balanced chakra, and learn general guidelines for bringing your own chakras back into balance. We will also discuss the identity and the demon associated with each chakra. Each of the sessions ends with a meditation similar to those detailed in this study guide. On session ten, we will again look at the system as a whole, from the perspective of understanding each chakra.

Sessions eleven and twelve are devoted to the physical exercises that help to open, stimulate, and balance each chakra. Focus, relaxation, and opening are the first steps to take for both deficient and excessive chakras, so these exercises work equally well for either condition. The final sessions will lead you sequentially through each chakra, from bottom to top. As you learn and practice the exercises, replay sessions eleven and twelve as often as you like until you are familiar with them. The

illustrations in this study guide will help you learn the most beneficial postures for working with your chakras.

Enjoy the journey and take your time with it. It is full of vital material that should be savored and honored. Stubborn blocks take time to move – and the material itself may bring up previously buried issues, stirring emotions and memories. Be compassionate with yourself. Allow the journey to unfold pleasurably into the deepest nature of your being. The reward is a clear, unblocked channel between earth and heaven, in which you can openly experience the full spectrum of human consciousness on each of the seven chakra levels.

chakra meditations

The following meditations are designed to help you get in touch with the healthiest expressions of each of your chakras. If you do them regularly, they will give you a basis for anchoring your consciousness into each chakra, and help you balance excessive and deficient characteristics, bringing your mind, body, and spirit to a centered place of confident, generous energy.

Listen to the symptoms of excessive and deficient manifestations of each chakra on *The Chakra System*. When you recognize yourself in any of these descriptions, look for the meditation associated with that chakra and make the time to do it. You may do these meditations singly; in groups that address your particular growth areas; or sequentially, from the first chakra to the seventh chakra. You may also choose to do one or two each day, moving through the chakras on a rotating basis.

first chakra

The first chakra is associated with the element earth and your physical identity. The characteristics associated with this chakra are primarily established from mid-pregnancy to one year of age. Located at the base of the spine, this energy center forms our foundation and is oriented to self-preservation. This chakra represents our survival instincts—as well as our sense of grounding and connection to our bodies and the physical plane. Ideally, the first chakra brings us health, prosperity, security, and dynamic presence. When afflicted, this chakra exhibits the “demon” of fear.

first chakra meditation

Sit comfortably in a chair with your back straight (but not rigid), both feet planted firmly on the floor. Take a deep breath. Push gently into your feet and notice how your legs become slightly energized. Notice how, with the tightening of the muscles, they take on more definition and form. Relax your legs and push again, alternating rapidly between pushing and relaxing. Notice how pushing down into the floor makes your upper body move upward slightly. This illustrates the basic principle of the first chakra: *pushing down allows us to move upward.*

Now, maintaining slight pressure with your feet pushing into the floor, imagine roots growing down out of the base of your spine. Allow those imaginary roots to tumble down through your chair, into the floor, and down through the floor into the earth—even if you have to go through additional floors below you or pierce through cement foundations.

When you reach the ground, imagine those roots burrowing into the moist, solid earth. Visualize them digging deep down and finding stability as they wind around

rocks, pushing deeper and deeper through the crust into the molten magma that throbs below the earth's surface.

Imagine pulling that throbbing energy up through your roots, enlivening them. Imagine dynamic, red energy pulsing through your roots, into your feet, into your legs; feel it moving into your spine and up through each of your chakras, flowing out of your hands and through the top of your head, like branches from a tree.

Once you have firmly established this visualization, you can practice maintaining this same feeling of dynamic, contact with the earth even while walking. When it becomes second nature to maintain this connection, you are naturally grounded.

second chakra

Water, emotional identity, and an orientation to self-gratification are associated with the second chakra. Its corresponding developmental stage is six months to two years of age. This chakra is located in the abdomen, lower back, and sexual organs, making it a matrix for our emotions and sexuality. It connects us to others through feeling, desire, sensation, and movement. Ideally, it brings us fluidity and grace, depth of feeling, sexual fulfillment, and the ability to accept change. The demon of the second chakra is guilt.

second chakra meditation

Imagine you are sitting by a waterfall. Above the waterfall, a stream runs down from the mountain. The stream continues below the waterfall, eventually running all the way to the sea. Notice how the waterfall is a constant flow of energy—the water is neither held back nor pushed ahead. The rocks remain firm, providing structure for the flowing water, and it washes over them easily and effortlessly.

Now imagine that it is a very hot day. You are naked, standing underneath the waterfall, allowing the water to fall on your head and wash over your body. Feel the exquisite delight of allowing the water to fall, without trying to stop it or hold onto it. Let the water flow over you and continue its journey downstream.

Now imagine that an invisible flow of energy, much like the waterfall, washes through the interior of your body. Feel it entering the crown chakra and flowing down through the core of your body, through every cell, through your bloodstream, down through the base of your spine, and out into the earth. Allow each cell to be nourished by the water element, so that the inside of your body feels very juicy.

As you do so, imagine that a pleasurable sweetness inside you is flowing through every part of your being. Fantasize about a pleasurable touch caressing your skin. Allow the energy that arises to simply flow through your body and consciousness, without having to be expressed outwardly. Imagine pleasure coming in through the senses—sights, sounds, smells, tastes – and that this stimulation floods into your awareness and awakens your consciousness.

At the end of this meditation, get up, put on some music, and dance in a way that moves this sweet energy through your body. Allow your movements to be as fluid as possible—as expressive and passionate and full as you can allow yourself to be. Finish with a deep drink of cool, clear water that literally flows through the inside of you.

third chakra

The third chakra is related to fire and ego identity. Its development is most profoundly affected between the ages of eighteen months and three years. It is oriented toward self-definition. Known as the “power chakra,” this energy center—located in the solar plexus—rules our personal power, will, and autonomy. It also

governs our metabolism. When healthy, the third chakra brings us energy, effectiveness, spontaneity, and nondominating power. Its demon is shame.

third chakra meditation

Sit quietly and tune into your roots, as you did in the first chakra meditation. Imagine those roots drawing up vital energy and power from the earth. Feel the intense heat of the molten lava deep in the earth as a living fire within you. As that energy enters your first chakra, imagine that it turns to fluid movements of energy inside your body, turning your watery element to fiery steam—power that can fuel your engine. Allow this energy to gather in your solar plexus and radiate throughout your body. Imagine your body filling with energy and heat as the ascending current rises, flowing into each of your chakras.

Now imagine the descending current of consciousness coming down through your crown from above. This current starts with a concept: an idea of something you would like to transform or create in your life. Allow this concept to clarify and form an intention. As it descends, allow it to form a vision or goal you want to accomplish. Let it descend into your throat chakra, and imagine expressing this vision among your friends, your coworkers, or the larger world. As concisely as possible, state your intention in words. Make it as positive as possible. Feel your heart connect to the fulfillment of this vision. Imagine your heart expanding with joy as you direct energy to your intention. Watch it play out in all your relationships, positively affecting the people around you.

Now bring this vision into your third chakra to meet the energy rising from below, and let the two currents swirl in a vortex of effective activity. See your intention directing the rising energy and heat within you, informing every cell how to enact this

vision. See yourself actually performing the actions that would bring about your intention. See yourself doing these things easily and effortlessly, joyfully and powerfully, and with confidence and strength—and a minimum of ego attachment. Imagine walking through the results of your manifested vision, enjoying the benefits and sharing them with others. Notice the feeling of power glowing in your third chakra. Imagine living each day with this feeling of power and mastery. Breathe and smile.

fourth chakra

The fourth chakra is associated with the element air. The period in which this chakra most shapes personality is between the ages of three and seven, when we form our social identity, oriented to self-acceptance. With three chakras both above and below it, this “heart chakra” is the central matrix in the seven-chakra system. It is related to love, and is the integrator of opposites in the psyche: mind and body, male and female, persona and shadow, ego and unity. A healthy fourth chakra allows us to love deeply, feel compassion, and have a profound sense of peace and centeredness. An unhealthy fourth chakra manifests the demon of grief.

fourth chakra meditation

Remove yourself from any interruptions or obstacles that might interfere with making deep contact with your inner self. Allow yourself to sit or lie down quietly. Focus on the simplicity of the breath moving in and out, easily and effortlessly. Do not force the breath to be any particular way; just allow yourself to relax deeply, letting go of effort and will.

As you relax, tune in to the sound of your heartbeat and begin to enter a deep state of inner listening. Simply acknowledge that your heart has been beating every

moment since you were in the womb—always beating, never stopping. Tune in to its rhythm and imagine your whole being gently pulsating with it. Continue to let the breath move easily in ... and out ... in ... and out.

Now allow yourself to think of someone or something you love very deeply. Focus on the feeling in your heart as you think of this being. Feel the warmth and radiance that emanate from that love. Allow this feeling to fill your whole body with every breath.

When your body is filled with love, turn the feeling inward, toward yourself. Regard your inner being with the same care and tenderness, delight, or appreciation. Imagine yourself surrounded by a field of divine love that holds this feeling for you unconditionally, regardless of your struggles or faults. Allow this love to fill you with a divine radiance that is both peaceful and centering.

Imagine this love expanding beyond your body, into the field around you.

Allow this field to wrap around you as if it were a warm, soft cloak. Feel yourself contained by it, strengthened and stabilized. See all your relationships as emanating from this field of abundant and radiant love.

fifth chakra

Sound is the element associated with the fifth chakra, which is oriented to self-expression and one's creative identity. Its strongest developmental period occurs between the ages of seven and twelve. Because it is located in the throat, this chakra is related to communication and creativity. Here we experience the world symbolically through vibration—specifically, the vibration of sound that represents language. Lies create the demon of the fifth chakra.

fifth chakra meditation

Find a quiet spot where you can relax deeply and open to the sounds around you. Choose a place where the sound of your own voice is not likely to disturb others.

Find a comfortable position, sitting or lying, where you can allow yourself to surrender to the many vibrations of sound and movement within and around you. Begin by simply listening deeply, extending your consciousness to as many sounds as possible. Identify all the sounds that you can hear: traffic, wind, birds, distant voices.

After identifying as many as possible, allow your attention to move away from individual sounds, and listen instead to all the sounds together, as one indivisible rhythm. Let your whole being tune in to this rhythm and let your body relax, as if the rhythm were an ocean wave and you were relaxing on a raft.

Once you have surrendered to the outer sounds, allow yourself to listen to as many inner sounds as possible: your heartbeat, your breath, the murmur of your thoughts. After turning attention to each one individually, let them all blend together in one overall vibration, and simply listen to the sound of it. Again, let your body resonate with this rhythm. Let it settle into a peaceful drone.

Now turn your attention to the chorus of outer and inner sounds together. Let your body vibrate with the sum total of all the inner and outer sounds you can hear. As the sounds distill into one primordial sound, begin to add your own voice. Let it resonate softly, blending harmoniously with the single sound of your inner and outer world. Let your voice get gradually louder, becoming fuller with each breath. Do not let it get loud enough to drown out the subtler sounds; just let it grow into resonance and harmony with all that is around you.

End the meditation by letting your own sound gradually become quieter. Settle back into deep listening to the inner and outer sounds, as before. Repeat the entire process until you can feel a silence and stillness within you.

sixth chakra

This is the chakra of light, archetypal identity, and self-reflection. Adolescence is the developmental stage associated with this energy center. It is known as the “brow chakra” or “third eye center.” The sixth chakra is related to the act of seeing, both physically and intuitively. As such, it opens our psychic faculties and our understanding of archetypal levels. A healthy sixth chakra gives us clear vision—in effect, letting us see the “big picture.” The demon that keeps us from seeing clearly is illusion.

sixth chakra meditation

This simple rainbow visualization will help you heal and cleanse the chakras, and develop the ability of the inner eye to create and perceive color.

Begin in a meditation position, preferably seated. Ground and center your energy.

When you are sufficiently grounded, imagine a bright sphere of white light, like the sun, floating directly above your head. Imagine that this sphere contains all the colors, and that you are a prism that can draw forth each color at will.

Begin by reaching into the white sphere and pulling down a rich, vibrant, violet color into the top of your head. Feel it streaming into your crown, nourishing your mind and energizing your consciousness as it does so.

Next, reach into this sphere of white light and pull down a ray of deep indigo blue, drawing it into your sixth chakra. Feel the coolness of this color as it bathes

your third eye. Allow it to wash away the residue of any extraneous images, cleansing and soothing your inner screen.

Now reach into your white sphere for a bright turquoise blue, and pull it down into your throat chakra. Allow it to soothe your neck and throat, relaxing your arms and shoulders. Feel the blue rays extending all around your throat, sending waves of communication all around you.

Turn your attention toward your heart. Pull down a vibrant green energy—like the green of growing things—from the white disk above your head. Feel it wash over you with a sense of love and affinity for the world around you. Visualize this experience as a warm, emerald glow in and around your heart.

Return to the sphere and find a golden yellow light to pull through your body, pulling it down to the third chakra. Imagine warm, golden rays streaming out of your solar plexus and through every part of your body, filling and warming it. (The third chakra has to do with energy distribution throughout the body, so these rays are important for spreading the inner fire.)

Return to the area above the crown chakra and pull orange light out of the white sphere. Run it down through your torso, noticing the effect this color has on you. Bring it down to your second chakra, and fill your belly with radiant orange. Let the light remain there, glowing within your second chakra.

Finally, we reach up to the sphere of light and pull down the color red. Pull it in through your crown chakra, down through your whole spinal column, and into the first chakra at the base of the spine, filling it with a deep vermilion red. Hold that color in your first chakra for a few moments, and then let it descend down your legs and into the earth like glowing roots.

Check to see that all your chakras are retaining their colors. Take a glimpse of your whole body and try to see it as a continuous rainbow. Notice which colors are the strongest or brightest. Notice which colors feel more nourishing or energizing. The colors most welcome probably represent energies that you need most at this time, or ones with which you are most comfortable. The least welcome colors represent areas that you typically avoid, areas where there may be difficulty—yet these colors may be necessary as well. Pale or washed-out colors represent weak areas; strong colors, places of strength and solidity. Play with the colors internally until they feel balanced to you.

Imagine that each of your chakras is a window through which different colored light shines out into the world. Feel yourself to be a glowing rainbow, shining with the light of your inner being, and allow yourself to be nourished by this beauty.

seventh chakra

The seventh chakra is related to thought and the creation of our worldview. Though it develops throughout life, it has its greatest opening during adulthood, as we question the meaning of life and all that we have been previously taught. Its orientation is toward self-knowledge and the understanding of our universal identity. Also called the “crown chakra,” this is the center of pure awareness. It is our connection to the greater world beyond—a place of all-knowing, beyond the limits of space and time. When developed, this chakra brings us knowledge, wisdom, understanding, spiritual connection, and bliss. Its demon is attachment.

seventh chakra meditation

The best meditation for the seventh chakra is total silence as an act of listening deeply to spirit, but if you would like a guided meditation, use the one that follows. It will help you disengage sequentially from over-identifying with the lower chakras and turn your attention toward the indwelling consciousness itself.

Sit comfortably in meditation posture. Allow yourself to become quiet, simply watching your breath or dispassionately observing your thoughts. Say hello to the self inside who has decided to meditate at this moment; the self who has lived inside you for your entire life. Who is that self? What is it made of? Instead of answering these questions in words, use them to turn your attention to your own indwelling consciousness.

Begin by feeling your body as a container for the self within. Feel the edges of your skin, the structure of your bones, the flesh between them, and the organs inside. How are you able to observe your body? What faculty is active, what part of you do you use for this observation? Notice the awareness that can observe your body. Notice that although you are in your body, you are more than your body.

Move your attention from the body to your emotions: the ups and downs you experience in the course of your life, the joys and sorrows, the worries and wants. Watch yourself going through these fluctuations, and observe the way you react to them. How do you know when you are happy or sad? Who is it that feels these emotions? With what awareness do you experience your feelings?

Next, turn your attention to the things you do in your life—your activities. Watch yourself going through the motions of getting up in the morning, going to work, moving through your day, making dinner, going to bed. How do you know

how to do these things? Who is doing them? What is able to review these activities right now? What awareness guides you in these activities?

Think now of the person who your friends and loved ones see in you. Observe the patterns of those relationships as if watching a movie. How do others see you? How do you see them? Who is it that interacts with them? When you feel loved and moved by them, what is it that they touch? What awareness is making these observations right now?

Think of the things you have created in your life: the interior of your home, the situations you have shaped, past school projects, artistic products, the simple effect of your conversations with others. See the “I” who did the work of those creations, whether they were good or bad. See that “I” as the generator of many more things to come—but as something separate from the creations themselves. Who is it that has generated those things? What faculty did you use to create them?

Now see yourself floating on a sea of archetypal energies. You are riding on waves that peak and fall, carrying you with them. See the archetypal forces that have run through your life: the cultural energies of male and female, the presence or absence of the shadow, the striving to be something, the avoidance of becoming something. What have you been trying to complete in your life? Who is it that has participated in this dance? What is the awareness that has shaped your path?

Feel the presence that has gone with you on this journey. Feel the lightness that comes when the body, emotions, actions, persona, projects, and archetypal forces drop away, and nothing remains but the awareness within, sometimes called the witness. Notice that even the witness is observed from a deeper consciousness within. Who is that?

Allow yourself to expand—beyond the earth, beyond the solar system, beyond this galaxy—and feel your connection with all of creation. Feel yourself as a point of divine intelligence or pure awareness, connected with God, Goddess, Higher Power, or your own concept of divinity. See how small the other identities look from this perspective. Embrace the self who still remains. This is your ultimate reality, your universal identity. Thou art that!

exercises

The final sessions on *The Chakra System* are designed to teach you how to move energy through your chakras. You will learn a movement sequence that combines visualization, yoga postures, bioenergetic exercises, breathing, sounding, visualization, and meditation. The sequence begins with basic grounding, then progresses upward, detailing a short set of exercises for each chakra.

If you are new to yoga or chakra movements, you may need to go through these sessions repeatedly before you feel comfortable or experience real results. Have patience. The benefits of these poses are cumulative. They develop over time, as you train your body to tone or relax in different places.

It is important that you do not force your body beyond its current flexibility. The exercises are still effective if you cannot accomplish the complete pose. You will derive the greatest benefit from going to your “edge”—the meeting point of what is easy and what is tense—and remaining there as long as possible without feeling strain. Pushing beyond that point accomplishes little, and may even cause injury.

Move slowly enough to feel each muscle responding to the stretch—and do only as many repetitions of any given exercise as feel appropriate for your physical condition. Use your breath to help you relax more deeply.

If you are already familiar with yoga or with chakra movements, you may want to use these sessions as suggestions for further practice. (For more recommended exercises, see *The Sevenfold Journey: Reclaiming Mind, Body, and Spirit through the Chakras*—Additional Resources, page 35.) Feel free to experiment with the exercises, adding them to your existing routine or selecting those you find most beneficial (these will not necessarily be the ones you like best—those that feel unnatural or difficult are often the ones you most need).

For these final sessions, find a quiet place with clear floor space on which to move. If the floor is uncarpeted, use a rug or mat to cushion your contact with the hard surface. Select a time when you will be undisturbed, so that you can go deeply into the movements and practice the entire sequence—at least, until you are familiar with it. In order to make this practice a sacred meditation, you may want to begin by lighting candles or burning incense to salute your own spirit.

After you have run through the basic sequence a few times, use the following brief summaries to remind you of the moves associated with each chakra.

first chakra

claiming your ground

Step into the center of the space and assume the basic standing posture known as *tadasana* (fig. 1). The feet are placed parallel on the floor, hip-width apart. Push into your feet, spreading your toes, lifting your knee caps, pressing your hips downward



figure 1: tadasana



figure 2: saluting
the ground



figure 3: child's pose

under you, and lifting your chest and belly up out of your hips. Relax your shoulders and place your arms to the side, fingers pointing directly downward. Lift your head out of your shoulders. Feel the vertical alignment as if your chakras were beads on a string, aligning as the string is pulled taut.

Now visualize yourself as a column of energy. Breathe into this column and enliven it with your breath. Press your feet firmly into the floor. Bring the upper chakras down toward the earth by bowing low in prostration, saluting the ground (fig. 2). Honor the ground by moving into the child's pose (fig. 3). Rise like a serpent, from buttocks to head, and sit on your heels (fig. 4). Align your spine, imagining roots descending from its base through the floor and into the ground beneath you.

stick pose (“dandasana”)

Sit with legs out straight and back erect (fig. 5). Root yourself into the earth. With your sitting bones spread behind you to make a firm base, flex your toes toward the ceiling. Keep your back as straight as possible and lift the torso up out of the hips.

head-to-knee pose (“janu sirsasana”)

Sit with legs out straight, as in the stick pose. Lift your torso and inhale deeply. Bring your arms up overhead,

locking the thumbs together. On the exhalation, bend at the hips, keeping your back as flat as possible. Come forward as far as you can; find your edge of flexibility. Allow your hands to fall where they will—at your knees, ankles, or feet (fig. 6a shows the full pose; fig. 6b is an alternative for less flexible bodies). Keep your feet flexed, toes pointed toward the ceiling.

Breathe and surrender into the pose. Allow the backs of your legs to release as you walk the sitting bones backward and press them into the ground. End the exercise by unfolding your body and lying gently back on the floor.

bridge pose (“setu bandhasana”)

Lie on the floor. Place your knees parallel and hip-width apart, and bend them until they are twelve to eighteen inches from your buttocks. Take a deep breath. As you exhale, push into your feet and slowly raise your spine off the floor, one vertebra at a time (beginning at the base). Continue until your hips are in line with your knees and shoulders. Bring your hands together under you, and press your arms into the floor to help support your weight (fig. 7). Take a few deep breaths, rooting into the legs. Descend slowly on an exhalation, starting at the neck. Move your arms back out from under you. Drop one vertebra to the floor at a time, finally relaxing the buttocks.



figure 4: sitting on heels



figure 5: stick pose



figure 6a: head-to-knee,
full pose



figure 6b: head-to-knee,
alternative pose



figure 7: bridge pose



figure 8a: goddess pose



figure 8b:
goddess pose with pillows

second chakra

butterfly or goddess pose (“supta baddha konasana”)

Lie on the floor. Allow your bent knees to drop outward to each side, bringing the soles of your feet together (fig. 8a). Relax the inner thigh muscles by focusing on the breath, letting the muscles release a little more with each exhalation. If you find this too difficult, try putting a pillow under each knee (fig. 8b).

pelvic rock

Lie on the floor with your knees bent, feet parallel and hip-width apart, twelve to eighteen inches from the buttocks. Inhale, arch your lower back, and push your belly toward the ceiling, creating a space under your sacrum (fig. 9a). Exhale and press the small of the back down into the floor while pushing into your feet and lifting your pelvis slightly off the ground (fig. 9b). The vertebrae above the waistline should remain on the floor during the exhalation—only the pelvis lifts.

pelvic side rolls

Lie down on the floor. Bring your knees together and hold your arms straight out to either side, forming a T. Keeping both shoulders on the floor as firmly as possible, allow both knees to roll over to the right side (fig. 10). Turn your head to the left. Remember to breathe as you feel the diagonal stretch across the hips. If this does not give you enough stretch, you may straighten your lower leg to stretch a little deeper.

Now lift your bent left knee and move through the Goddess pose (fig. 8a) until the knee touches the floor on the left side. Follow with the right knee, allowing it to cross over to the left side as well. Turn your head to the right. Repeat.

third chakra

stomach crunches

This exercise develops the muscles that support the third chakra area. Lie on the floor, bend your knees, and place your feet firmly on the ground. Lace your fingers together behind your neck. As you exhale, lift your head and tighten your belly muscles into a full contraction (figs. 11a and b). (Do not lift all the way, as in a full sit-up, but only until your muscles contract.) Inhale as you release your head back to the floor. Repeat until you feel heat burning in your solar plexus.



figure 9a:
pelvic rock on inhale



figure 9b:
pelvic rock on exhale



figure 10: pelvic side rolls



figure 11a: stomach crunches



figure 11b:
stomach crunches



figure 12a: full boat pose



figure 12b:
alternative boat pose

boat pose (“navasana”)

This pose requires will and practice, but you will find that it strengthens the entire body. Begin in the stick pose or dandasana (fig. 5). Lean your torso backward at forty-five degrees, placing your hands on the floor for support. Raise your legs straight out in front of you, making a ninety-degree angle to your torso (fig. 12a). If this is too difficult, you may bend your knees (fig. 12b) or place your feet against a wall. Once the legs and torso are in place, raise your arms parallel to the floor, palms toward the knees. Make the body rigid with your will and focus. Relax your legs and bring your hands back to the floor. Repeat as often as you can.

inclined plane (“purvottanasana”)

Begin as in the previous exercise, with legs straight out in front and torso at a forty-five degree angle to them. Your hands should be on the floor, directly beneath your shoulders. On an exhalation, push the pelvis upward until your hips, shoulders, and feet form a straight line, with your feet resting on the heels (fig. 13). Raise the heat of the third chakra by remaining in this position while you breathe and tighten your whole body, making it as rigid as possible. Finally, let your pelvis relax gently back down to the floor.



figure 13: inclined plane



figure 14a: lotus belly roll



figure 14b: lotus belly roll

lotus belly rolls

Sit cross-legged with a straight spine. Imagine you are sitting in a barrel. Keeping your shoulders in one place, roll the midsection of your torso around in a slow circle, as if you were trying to push it against the sides of the barrel (figs. 14a and b). Inhale when your belly is forward and exhale when your back is rounded. Rotate in one direction a few times, then repeat in the other direction.

fourth chakra

standing yoga “mudra”

Begin in *tadasana* (standing erect), your feet parallel and hip-width apart. Root into the ground. Bring your arms behind your back and lace your fingers together, clasping your hands. Rotate the elbows outward so that your shoulders are pulled back, opening your chest. Take a deep breath and, as you exhale, lean forward with a flat back, bending at the hips and lifting your arms behind you (fig. 15). The knees can be slightly bent, the head dropped. The focus is on opening the chest; the joined arms are used as a lever for opening the ribs.



figure 15: standing yoga mudra



figure 16: half-moon pose



figure 17: tie stretch

half-moon pose

Begin in *tadasana* and raise your arms straight above your head. Press your feet into the floor, lifting the kneecaps. Clasping your hands together, lift your torso up out of your hips, bending to the left side (fig. 16). Be careful not to bend front to back—only at the sides, as if your front and back were wedged between two pieces of glass. Allow one hand to pull on the other to increase the stretch and expand the space between the ribs. Return to center and repeat on the other side.

tie stretch

Grasp a tie, scarf, or belt with both hands, holding them about three feet apart. Keeping your elbows straight throughout, raise your hands up over your head and behind your back (fig. 17). If this is too difficult, allow your hands to move farther apart on the tie. If it is too easy, bring your hands closer together—but make sure you keep your elbows straight.

As a variation, allow yourself to hold the tie as above and move your torso from side to side. Experiment with achieving the best stretch for your pectoral muscles in the front of the shoulders.



figure 18a:
alternate nostril breathing



figure 19a:
cross-legged position



figure 19b: neck roll

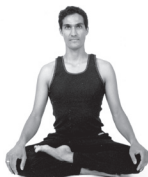


figure 20: seated pose

alternate nostril breathing (nadi shodhana)

Sit in a simple, cross-legged position. With your right hand, form a *mudra* (hand position) with your first and second fingers bent toward the palm, and your thumb and third and fourth fingers extended. Bend your elbow and place your right thumb on the side of your right nostril, closing it as you exhale through the left nostril (fig. 18). Breathe out completely, then inhale again through the left nostril. When your lungs are full, close off the left nostril with your fourth finger and exhale through the right. Inhale on the same side. Switch nostrils at the top of the breath and repeat. Begin with ten breaths on each side, and increase gradually to twenty-five.

fifth chakra

neck rolls

Sit erect in cross-legged position (fig. 19a). Start by lifting your head as if your hair were being pulled upward at the crown. Continue to feel the length in your neck

while allowing your head to gently fall forward. Keep your spine straight and stretch the back of your neck. Let your chin drop to your chest and rotate your head slowly, describing a circle with the crown. Take care to keep the neck long, stretching the sides and the front of the neck. For an extra stretch, you can wrap your hand over your head, touch your ear (fig. 19b), and give a gentle pull.

seated pose

Return to a seated meditation posture (fig. 20) for the remainder of the exercises. If this is uncomfortable for you, you may sit in a chair, but keep your feet placed flat on the floor and your legs uncrossed.

soundings

The chakras are said to contain seed sounds, or *bija mantras*. These are traditionally depicted at the center of each chakra. These mantras come from various ancient texts. They can be used during meditation to vibrate with the element of each chakra.

seed sounds (bija mantras)

First Chakra: lam

Second Chakra: vam

Third Chakra: ram

Fourth Chakra: yam

Fifth Chakra: ham

Sixth Chakra: om

Seventh Chakra: (silent)

vowel sounds

The central vowel—the resonant part of the sound—is the same for most of the seed sounds. For Westerners, I often find that the vowel sounds yield equal, if not better, results. Changing the vowel creates resonance in a different center.

First Chakra: oh

Second Chakra: ooo

Third Chakra: ah

Fourth Chakra: ay

Fifth Chakra: ee

Sixth Chakra: mmm

Seventh Chakra: nng

Both the seed and vowel sounds may be sung aloud or uttered silently as a mantra for meditation. Experiment with each set and see which is more effective for you.

sixth chakra

The ancient Tantric texts show varying arrangements for the colors of the chakras. There is, however, some agreement about a few of the chakras (such as red for the first chakra). When we correlate the seven chakras with the seven frequencies of visible light, however, we can correlate the slowest frequency—red—for the root chakra, which has the slowest vibration. As the vibrations of each chakra become progressively faster as we move up the spine, so do the electromagnetic frequencies of the colors, moving upward from red through the rainbow into violet.

First Chakra: red
Second Chakra: orange
Third Chakra: yellow
Fourth Chakra: green
Fifth Chakra: bright blue
Sixth Chakra: indigo blue
Seventh Chakra: violet or white

seventh chakra

Allow yourself to focus your attention on the indwelling consciousness that is known as the “witness”—the detached, nonjudgmental observer that simply notes all your thoughts and activities. Practice bringing the energy of that consciousness upward and downward, according to your will and awareness. Allow your thoughts to become quiet. Simply experience the bliss of pure awareness.

To bring yourself back to the earth plane, be sure to ground when you are finished by bringing your awareness downward through each chakra, and by touching your hands to your body and to the floor.

taking the chakra journey

I hope you have found these sessions and exercises helpful in diagnosing your own energy system and growing toward healing and increased consciousness. With what you have learned here, you can now use the chakra system as a lens through which to view various events and situations in your life. In this way, the chakra system can truly function as an invaluable map for the rest of your journey. The journey is a long one, so be patient and loving with yourself—and enjoy the ride!

additional resources

books

Avalon, Arthur. *The Serpent Power*. New York: Dover Publications, 1974.

Goswami, Shyam Sundar. *Layayoga: The Definitive Guide to the Chakras and Kundalini*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1999.

Johari, Harish. *Chakras: Energy Centers of Transformation*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1998

Judith, Anodea. *Eastern Body, Western Mind: Psychology and the Chakra System As a Path to the Self*. Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts, 1998.

Combines developmental psychology, Jungian psychology, bioenergetic character structures, and transpersonal development to describe the psychological aspects of the chakra system.

- *Wheels of Life: A Journey through the Chakras*. Audiotape. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1987.
Nearly two hours of guided meditations through the chakras, with music by Rick Hamouris.
 - *Wheels of Life: A User's Guide to the Chakra System*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1987, 1999.
Guided meditations, chakra correspondences, chakras and relationships, chakras and evolution, and details on each chakra.
- Judith, Anodea and Selene Vega. *The Sevenfold Journey: Reclaiming Mind, Body, and Spirit through the Chakras*. Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1993.
Further exercises and tasks related to the chakras, taken from the popular Nine-Month Chakra Intensives.

music

- Aeolia. *The Seven Chakras*. 1988. Available at pi.net/~oreade/home.html.
- Goldman, Jonathan. *Chakra Chants*. Lakewood, CO: Etherean Music, 1998.
Available from Etherean Music, 12640 W. Cedar Drive, #300 Lakewood, CO 80228.
- Velez, Glen. *Rhythms of the Chakras*. CD/audiotape. Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 1998.



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sounds true
many voices, one journey



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