



Yoga Teacher Training

Understanding the Chakras

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Introduction

The word **chakra** is Sanskrit for wheel or disk and signifies one of seven basic energy centers in the body. The seven chakras are the energy centers that approximate the nerve plexuses in the physical body. These energy centers correspond to nerve ganglia branching out from the spinal column, as well as states of consciousness, developmental stages of life, archetypal elements, body functions, colors, and sounds. Together they form a formula for wholeness and a template for transformation

A chakra is believed to be a center of activity that receives, assimilates, and expresses life force energy. Chakras are energy centers along the spine located at major branchings of the human nervous system, beginning at the base of the spinal column and moving upward to the top of the skull. Chakras are considered to be a point or nexus of biophysical energy or *prana* of the human body.

The following seven primary chakras are commonly described:

1. Muladhara - Base or Root Chakra (last bone in spinal cord *coccyx* or tailbone)
2. Swadhisthana - Sacral Chakra (ovaries/prostate)
3. Manipura - Solar Plexus Chakra (navel area)
4. Anahata - Heart Chakra (heart/chest area)
5. Vishuddha - Throat Chakra (throat and neck area)
6. Ajna - Brow or Third Eye Chakra (pineal gland or third eye)
7. Sahasrara - Crown Chakra (Top of the head; 'Soft spot' of a newborn)

The seven colors of the Chakra System represent the full spectrum of human possibility. Learning about the chakras gives you access to your programmed responses, so you can make the most of them.

Because chakra meditation has been part of hatha yoga since ancient times, pranayama and yoga postures are particularly effective in rebalancing and stimulating chakras. Yoga practice benefits the chakras because the asanas help in freeing up prana.

The Nadis

Prana (life force) flows through the body in subtle energy channels or pathways known as nadis. Nadis are like roads within the body's energy highway system. Where two or more roads cross, energy junctions (or chakras) form. The seven major crossing points are the seven major chakras, while less busy intersections form minor chakras. When your energy highway is free from traffic jams, prana can travel freely. Practicing certain meditations and yoga asanas is believed to help clear any blockages so that prana can flow freely. When we practice yoga, we are seeking to clear these pathways so our energy can flow more freely. Each pose is designed to help open the energy channels and pranayama helps us to direct and increase our prana (life energy).

Of the 72,000 nadis in your body, only three are of relevance in chakra mediation. These include: 1) the ida channel (which flows to the left of the spine); 2) the pingala channel (which flows to the right of the spine); and 3) the sushumna (which approximates the spine).

To experience the effect of the nadis on your physical body, try this exercise:

- Place each thumb face up about a ½ inch under each nostril
- Exhale a few times with a little more force than is natural
- Notice how your breath feels a little stronger on one side
- Repeat this process throughout the day – you will probably notice that your “stronger” side changes every couple of hours

The change in the “stronger” side reveals a normal change in the predominance of the left (ida) or right (pingala) nadi. It is thought that the only time the breath flows evenly through both nostrils is during meditation, when your breath comes into the central channel – the sushumna. At this time, both sides of the brain are said to be completely balanced, which may help restore balance in all spheres of life. Yoga breathing exercises (pranayama) are helpful in dissolving energy blockages in the nadis and bringing breath into the sushumna. One of the best breathing exercises for this is Alternate Nostril Breathing.

Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nadi Shodhana Pranayama)

- Bring the right hand to your nose
- Place the right thumb gently on the right nostril and the right pinky and ring finger on the left nostril. Place the index finger and middle finger just above the bridge of the nose
- Exhale completely
- Block the right nostril with the right thumb, inhale left (inhale slowly to count of four)
- Switch, releasing the right nostril and blocking left nostril, exhale right (slow, full exhalation)
- Inhale right (full inhale to slow count of four or five)

- Switch, releasing the left nostril, block the right nostril, exhale left, inhale left
- Switch, releasing the right nostril, block the left nostril, exhale right, inhale right
- Continue this pattern of breathing, switching the side that is blocked after each inhalation
- Repeat for 8-10 breaths
- Make sure you are inhaling and exhaling slowly and completely

Protective Knots

There are thought to be three protective “knots” that sit at three separate chakras to shield a person from a premature or excessive release of kundalini energy along the sushumna nadi. Each knot acts as a circuit breaker that only opens when the body is ready to handle the flood of energy. The following are the three knots:

- Brahma Granthi: in the root chakra remains shut until you have overcome your attachment to stability, inertia and identification with the physical body alone.
- Vishnu Granthi: in the heart chakra remains shut until you have overcome your attachment to action, ambition, and passion, and forgive everyone.
- Rudra Granthi: in the brow chakra, remains shut until you have overcome your attachment to your intellectual powers and your own self-image.

The Seven Major Chakras

Starting from the bottom, the first three major chakras deal with external reality: how secure and stable your life is, how you fit into your community, and how you express your individuality.

Root Chakra (Muladhara)

This chakra is related to instinct, survival and security. It is located just below the bottom of the spine. The root chakra is symbolized by a red lotus with four petals and the color red. It governs stability and a sense of security.

Sacral Chakra (Svadhithana)

This chakra is located in the sacrum. It is located in the sacrum, and is symbolized by a lotus with six petals and corresponds to the color orange. The key issues of this chakra are relationships, as well as creativity and enthusiasm. Here we move beyond a focus on survival and begin to focus on our work.

Solar Plexus Chakra (Manipura)

This chakra is related to the digestive system. It's located just above the navel in the solar plexus region. It empowers you with the energy you need to function efficiently, and governs personal power. When in balance, it gives you a solid sense of self.

The three middle chakras deal with internal reality. They determine your self-perception, and how you express yourself and relate to others.

Heart Chakra (Anahata)

This chakra is located in the heart region. It governs the energy of unconditional love and compassion, enabling you to express love, or blocking its expression.

Throat Chakra (Vishuddha)

This chakra deals with communication and allows you to take in information and express yourself with clarity and confidence. It is located in the throat.

Brow Chakra (Ajna)

This chakra is related to your wisdom and intuition. Your mind's eye sees your dreams and directs you to them. It is located between the eyebrows, at the third eye.

Highest Chakra

Crown Chakra (Sahasrara)

This is your highest chakra and deals with ultimate reality and infinite potential. It is located at the crown of the head and is our connection to our spirituality.

In Indian tradition, each chakra is pictured as a lotus flower with a specific number of petals. Below is a chart that explains the number of petals and the element that represents each chakra.

Chakra	Number of Petals	Element	Color
Muladhara (root)	4	Earth	Red
Swadhisthana (sacral)	6	Water	Orange
Manipura (solar plexus)	10	Fire	Yellow
Anahata (heart)	12	Air	Green or pink
Vishuddha (throat)	16	Ether (or space)	Pale blue or turquoise
Ajna (brow)	2	Mind	Indigo or deep blue
Sahasrara (crown)	Infinite (or 1000)	Beyond the elements	Violet (sometimes white)

Muladhara Chakra (Root Chakra)

Muladhara, which means “root place,” is the first of the main seven chakras, and is represented by the color red. Muladhara (or root chakra) is related to instinct, security, survival and also to basic human potentiality. The root chakra is located around the base of the spine at the very bottom of the tailbone, and is your energy foundation. Although no endocrine organ is placed here, it is said to relate to the gonads and the adrenal medulla, responsible for the fight-or-flight response when survival is under threat.

The root chakra is associated with matter in its most dense form, and is a limitless storehouse of potential spiritual energy that lies dormant in this chakra. When the root chakra is in balance energy flows in two directions. The chakra releases energy downward, while at the same time drawing energy upward from the earth.

“Grounding” or “rooting” us is the main function of muladhara. It helps you find your path in life, to stand on your own two feet. At the root chakra, you connect with your physical body. By keeping in touch with your physical body, you equip yourself to function well on a day to day level as you develop your inner world.

If the energy flow of the root chakra is blocked, you may feel as if you don’t belong. You might feel disoriented and indecisive, not connected well with others and tired all the time.

Symbol for the Root Chakra



The symbol for the root chakra is a red lotus flower with four petals (usually surrounding a yellow square). The four petals represent the four directions or four qualities of bliss.

Meditations for the Root Chakra

Earth Meditation

- Sit in your preferred meditation position
- Place the backs of your hands on your knees and place your ring finger and thumb together
- Close your eyes and become aware of the effects of gravity on your body. Begin to experience that heaviness as stability and security.
- Feel as though you are rooting yourself firmly into the earth
- Feel yourself drawing up stability and strength from the ground beneath you
- Mentally repeat an affirmation such as:
- My life is firm and grounded

- I am exactly where I need to be
- I am safe and protected
- I have my feet planted firmly on the ground

If your root chakra is not firmly balanced, thoughts of loss may disturb your inner peace and drain your energy. Fear is the key negative emotion associated with an imbalance in the root chakra. Fear can be a phobia, anxiety, shyness, or just the absence of security or as persistent restlessness or worry. The image of a sturdy tree, such as an oak offers an ideal focus to help you get in touch with your inner strength and conquer fear.

Oak Tree Visualization

- Sit in your preferred meditation position
- Visualize an oak tree and think about its strength, endurance and stability, as well as its ability to draw up nourishment from the earth
- Mentally repeat affirmations such as:
 - I am grounded and secure
 - I embody courage
 - I draw nourishment from the world around me
 - I am at peace at all times

Yoga Asanas and Practices for the Root Chakra

In kundalini yoga, there are various yogic practices held to incite the energy in Muladhara including: asanas (such as Eagle and Warrior 1), pranayama, and the practice of mula bandha. The following yoga postures help your to draw up energy from the earth, and may help balance your root chakra.

Mula Bandha

Mula bandha concentrates on the first two chakras. By contracting the anal sphincter, the apana (downward moving energy) is reversed and forced to flow up. This prevents prana from escaping and creates the force needed to activate kundalini energy.

Mountain Pose

In this posture, feet are firmly planted to the floor and the body is straight, which helps draw energy up from the earth.

Warrior 1

This strong standing asana makes a firm connection with the prana coming into the root chakra. Planting your feet firmly on the floor helps draw energy from the earth, while reaching your arms overhead helps to lift that energy higher.

Eagle

This posture is thought to be helpful in locking in the lower energies.

Svadhithana Chakra (Sacral Chakra)

Swadhithana is located in the sacrum just above Muladhara, and is considered to correspond to the testes or the ovaries that produce the various sex hormones involved in the reproductive cycle. Svadhithana is also considered to be related to the adrenals. Its corresponding point in the front of the body (i.e. its kshetram) is at the pubic bone. It is closely related to Muladhara in that Swadhithana is where the different samskaras (potential karmas), lie dormant, and Muladhara is where these samskaras find expression. Physically, when this chakra is blocked, it is thought to be associated with bladder and urinary problems, and sexual dysfunction.

This chakra is related to our romantic relationships, as well as to our creative powers. The qualities of water epitomize this chakra's nature: flowing, fluid, flexible and adaptive, which is what is needed to have relationships that work well, along with creative abilities. Water also has a purifying quality, which is appropriate, since when this chakra is blocked there may be a feeling of having done something wrong or of shame. A block in this chakra can have someone feeling repressed in both their romantic life and their creative life. When the sacral chakra is open and balanced, a person is sensitive, intuitive and full of ideas and dreams. You are adaptable and accept change and can go with the flow. When this chakra is off balance, and too far open, a person tends to be over emotional and spend too much time daydreaming. When the sacral chakra is blocked, it becomes difficult to have fun in life; nothing seems good enough and depression can ensue. When this chakra is blocked, a person may feel as though they have no choice, no ability to change. Opening this chakra is about letting go of guilt and frustration, and enjoying the flow of life.

Symbol of the Sacral Chakra



The Sacral Chakra is symbolized by an orange lotus with six petals, and corresponds to the color orange. Pleasure is the motivating principle of this chakra. The six petals symbolize its connection with the high sixth state of consciousness into which people are evolving. The pull of this chakra represents the universal urge to connect with others.

Meditations for the Sacral Chakra

Water Meditation

- Sit in your preferred meditation position
- Resting the backs of your hands on your knees or thighs, join the tips of your pinky fingers with your thumbs
- Close your eyes and think of the qualities of water – feel as though you are fluid like liquid
- Mentally repeat an affirmation such as: I trust myself to follow my dreams, I adapt with grace to any situation, or I release ideas that no longer serve me

When the sacral (swadhisthana) chakra is closed or unbalanced, a person may feel overcome by guilt, even without reason. Feelings of guilt can then turn into feelings of shame. To balance this chakra, try the following visualization.

Lotus Visualization

- Sit in your preferred meditation posture with a picture of a lotus flower in front of you.
- Look at the picture intently until you can close your eyes but still “see” the flower
- See the flower as an analogy for your life – just as a flower is not sullied by the mud from which it grows, you are not affected by the negativity that may surround you.
- If any negative thoughts occur during the visualization, see them as bubbles rising to the surface of the water around the lotus and watch them burst.

Practices in kundalini yoga for controlling and balancing the energy in Swadhisthana chakra include: mula bandha, and various pranayamas and asanas, such as:

Yoga Asanas for the Sacral Chakra

Yoga asanas and exercises that focus on the area near the sacrum or below the navel may be helpful in opening or balancing the sacral chakra.

Mula Bandha may be useful for also balancing this chakra.

The following postures are believed to help open the sacral chakra making you more open to change, creative and flexible in your thinking.

King Dancer (standing bow)

You use your sacral chakra to help you balance in this posture.

Bridge

In bridge, the muscles near the sacral chakra are activated. Placing a block under the low back against the sacrum can help bring focus to this chakra.

Prayer Squat

This posture helps stretch and open the low back (near the sacrum) as well as the hips.

Manipura Chakra (Solar Plexus Chakra)

Manipura is related to the metabolic and digestive systems. It is located just above the navel, at the seat of the digestive system. Manipura is believed to correspond to Islets of Langerhans, which are groups of cells in the pancreas, as well as the outer adrenal glands and the adrenal cortex. These glands play a valuable role in digestion, converting food into energy, in the same way that Manipura is said to radiate prana throughout the body. An energy imbalance can show up as digestive complaints, eating disorders, or blood sugar problems.

While the two lowest chakras govern physical and emotional survival, the energy at the manipura chakra is more transformative, having the potential to bring about growth and change. The element of fire is associated with this chakra. When the energy of your solar plexus is balanced and unblocked, a person will feel unique, valued and confident. A strong sense of personal worth allows that person to avoid excesses and respect personal boundaries.

Key issues governed by Manipura are issues of personal power, fear, and anxiety. An imbalance in the manipura chakra can cause a person to feel the need to manipulate others (too much manipura energy) or to be controlled by others (too little manipura energy). Those who feel a need to be controlled by others often end up with a victim mentality and have great fear of rejection. The ego is in control. On a physical level, imbalances in this chakra are thought to show up as digestive problems or ulcers.

Symbol for the Solar Plexus Chakra



The manipura chakra is symbolized by a lotus flower with ten petals. The color that corresponds to Manipura is yellow. The meanings of the ten petals are: spiritual ignorance, thirst, jealousy, treachery, shame, fear, disgust, delusion, foolishness, and sadness. All these are aspects to overcome at this chakra level before proceeding to the next.

Meditation for Solar Plexus Chakra

Whirling Meditation

The manipura chakra is the gravitational center of the body. The whirling meditation allows a person to become more centered through the movement. Spinning to free yourself from the chatter of the mind produces a powerful juxtaposition: from external energetic movement comes a profound inner stillness.

Steps:

- Stand with feet slightly apart, crossing arm in front of chest, with right hand on left shoulder and left hand on right shoulder
- Close your eyes and take a few breaths (return here if you get too dizzy)
- Half open your eyes and gaze at the ground
- Open your arms, using the momentum to begin turning counter clockwise
- Extend both arms straight out as your spin
- Keep your left foot in place on the floor and use your right foot to step around in a circle
- Spin for just one minute to start
- When done, bring your arms to your chest and close your eyes

Yoga Asanas and Practices for the Manipura Chakra

In kundalini yoga, different practices for arousing and balancing the energies of Manipura include various asanas which work on that part of the body, pranayama, Uddiyana bandha (exhaling and pulling back and up of the abdomen and diaphragm). Practicing uddiyana bandha (especially in down dog position) can help balance the Manipura chakra.

Uddiyana Bandha (Navel Lock)

- Start in a standing position with feet a little wider than hip width
- Bend your knees, placing your hands just above your knees on your thighs
- Inhale deeply, then exhale completely (exhaling all your air out)
- As you hold your breath after exhalation, pull your stomach in and up
- Hold your stomach in and up for a few seconds, then drop your stomach and let your muscles completely relax (while still holding your breath)
- Once your muscles are relaxed, inhale fully, and take a few slow deep breaths
- Repeat this process 3-6 times

Any yoga asanas (especially twists) that promote better digestion can be helpful in balancing the manipura chakra.

Examples of asanas include: seated twist, revolved triangle, chair twist.

Anahata Chakra (Heart Chakra)

Anahata (heart chakra) is related to the thymus, located in the chest. The thymus is an element of the immune system as well as being part of the endocrine system. It is the site of maturation of the T cells responsible for fending off disease and bringing the body into equilibrium, and may be adversely affected by stress.

Anahata is associated with the ability to make decisions outside of the realm of karma. In Manipura and below, man is bound by the laws of karma, and the fate he has in store for him. In Anahata, one is making decisions, 'following your heart', based upon one's higher self, and not from the unfulfilled emotions and desires of lower nature. The Anahata seed sound is *yam*. The wish-fulfilling tree, kalpa taru, resides here, symbolizing the ability to manifest whatever you wish to happen in the world. It is also associated with love and compassion, charity to others.

When this chakra is out of balance, jealousy and resentment take the place of love and peace. The physical problems that are thought to be associated with this chakra are high blood pressure and a weakened immune system.

Symbol for Anahata



Anahata is symbolized by a lotus flower with twelve petals, and is related to the colors green or pink. The twelve petals of anahata represent: lustfulness, fraudulence, indecision, repentance, hope, anxiety, longing, impartiality, arrogance, incompetence, discrimination, and defiance. As the mid-point in the chakras at the midpoint of the body, anahata is often viewed as the gateway to higher consciousness.

Meditations for Anahata Chakra

- The heart chakra relates to the element of air, so we work with the breath. This is an exercise designed to expand the heart in all directions.
- Sit in a comfortable meditation posture with spine erect
- Close your eyes and tune into your heart. If you can, feel your heartbeat.
- Begin gently breathing in and out getting a slow steady rhythm.
- Imagine that you are inhaling in the left side (receptive) and expanding your heart out to the left.
- Take a few breaths here, then imagine expanding your heart to the right side (expressive) and feel your heart space widening.
- Then breathe into the bottom of your heart, deepening your compassion, for self and others.
- After a few breaths here, imagine you are breathing into the top of your heart, lifting the heart to blossom into the shoulders.
- Finally inhale, pushing your heart energy forward, out in the world.

Rose Meditation

- Place a rose in front of you and sit in your preferred meditative position
- Gaze at the rose for a few minutes to study the arrangement of petals, noticing how they spiral out from the center
- Close your eyes and bring your awareness to the center of your chest
- Visualize an unopened rosebud lying there
- Watch as the bud slowly opens, noticing how each petal unfolds to create a spiral pattern
- As the flower opens within you, feel your heart center opening too.
- Notice the healing warmth radiating from your heart and allow it to create a feeling of well-being throughout your body
- Mentally repeat (4-6 times) the affirmation: May I be happy, may I be healthy, may I be full of love
- Then think of someone you know and mentally repeat (4-6 times): May (name) be happy, may (name) be healthy, may (name) be full of love
- When you're ready, open your eyes

Yoga Asanas for Anahata Chakra

In kundalini yoga, anahata is awoken and balanced through practices including asanas, pranayamas, and the practice of *ajapa japa* (repetition of a sacred mantra). It is purified through the process of *bhakti* (devotion). Asanas that open the chest and the middle back (thoracic spine) are thought to be helpful in restoring balance and opening this chakra. Examples of beneficial asanas include: cobra or up dog, chest expander, wheel and camel.

Vishuddha Chakra (Throat Chakra)

Vishuddha may be understood as relating to communication and growth through expression. This chakra is paralleled to the thyroid, a gland that is also in the throat and which produces thyroid hormone, responsible for growth and maturation.

Vishuddha is often associated with the thyroid gland in the human endocrine system. This gland is in the neck, and produces hormones essential for growth and maturation

It governs such issues as self-expression and communication, as discussed above. Physically, Vishuddha governs communication, independence, and fluent thought.

When this chakra is blocked, it is thought that we will have trouble communicating, or that our communication will hurt rather than heal. Physically, problems with this chakra are thought to appear through sore throats and infections.

Symbol of Vishuddha Chakra



Symbolized by a blue lotus with sixteen petals. Vishuddha is characterized by the color light or pale blue, or turquoise. The sixteen petals correspond to the sixteen sanskrit vowels.

Vishuddha is associated with the faculty of higher discrimination, between choosing what is right and wrong, and it is associated with self-expression. It is known as the 'poison and nectar' centre, closely related to the Bindu chakra, and the secret of immortality is said to reside there. When Vishuddha is closed, we undergo decay and death. When it is open, negative experience is transformed into wisdom and learning.

Meditations/Exercises for the Throat Chakra

OM Chanting

Chanting OM is recommended to release blockages that might be present in the throat region and to make the voice more resonant. The sound is believed to have a positive effect on the nervous system, to strengthen the respiratory system and to energize every part of the body. Chanting its three syllables (Ahhh-Uuhhh-Mmm) sets up rebalancing vibrations in the body.

Yoga Asanas and Practices for Throat Chakra

In Kundalini yoga, Vishuddha can be opened and balanced through practices that stretch and open the throat and upper chest, as well as the back of the neck and upper back. Practices such as shoulder-stand, fish, and jalandhara bandha (throat lock) may be useful. Also useful is Lion's breath and Ujjai breath, or any other breath that makes use of the throat.

Jalandhara bandha (Chin Lock)

- Exhale, then inhale completely
- Hold your breath after you inhale and bring your chin to the hollow part of your throat
- Press your shoulders down and back as you press your chin as close in as possible
- Stay in this position for a few seconds
- Lift your chin and exhale fully
- Take a few deep breaths
- Repeat 3-6 times

Ujjayi Breath

The prefix “ud” means upward or expanding. It also conveys the sense of power. “Jaya” means success. In ujjayi pranayama the lungs are fully expanded with the chest opened forward. Ujjayi pranayama is easily recognizable by the sound – a soft hissing sound the breath makes once the throat is slightly closed.

Steps:

- Begin in sitting or standing position
- Exhale completely through the nose
- Slightly close the back of the throat (glottis) and inhale deeply through the nose
- Keep the back of the throat slightly closed as you exhale through the nose
- You should hear an echo like sound (like a soft Darth Vader) as you breathe in and out
- Repeat 8-10 times

Lion’s Breath

- Sit on your heels with your hands on your thighs
- Inhale deeply through your nose
- Exhale fully through your mouth
- As you exhale, open your mouth wide, stick out your tongue and say “ahhhh” as you exhale

Ajna Chakra (The Brow Chakra)

Ajna (along with Bindu, is also known as the third eye chakra) is linked to the pineal gland which may inform a model of its envisioning. The pineal gland is a light sensitive gland that produces the hormone melatonin which regulates sleep and waking up.

The Ajna chakra is positioned at the eyebrow region. Ajna is considered the chakra of the mind. When something is seen in the mind's eye, or in a dream, it is being 'seen' by Ajna. Ajna's key issues involve balancing the higher & lower selves and trusting inner guidance. Ajna's inner aspect relates to the access of intuition. Mentally, Ajna deals with visual consciousness. Emotionally, Ajna deals with clarity on an intuitive level. Imbalances may show up as mental illnesses.

Symbol of the Brow Chakra



Ajna is symbolized by an indigo colored lotus with two petals, and corresponds to the color white, indigo or deep blue. The two white petals are said to represent the psychic channels, Ida and Pingala, which meet here with the central Sushumna nadi (channel) before rising to the crown chakra, Sahasrara. These petals also represent the manifest and unmanifest mind, as well as the pineal and pituitary glands. 'Ham' is the letter of the left petal, and 'ksham' is the letter of the right petal, representing Shiva and Shakti, respectively. "Pranava Om", the supreme sound, is the seed mantra of this chakra.

Meditations for the Brow Chakra

The Brow Chakra is light, higher mind, intuition, and imagination. A simple exercise to begin bringing light into a person's inner world is to "capture" light wherever they see it and bring it inside. Here's how you do it:

Next time you are watching a beautiful sunset, open your entire awareness to the experience of drinking in the light. Then close your eyes and visualize what you just saw in your inner third eye. Keep doing it until you can call up the image at will. You can do this any time you see a particularly beautiful color, the glare of light coming off a car windshield, the way light plays on the trees as the breeze blows, the light of a candle during your meditation.

See if you can retain these images that you bring inside, calling them up at will days later. This will help develop your third eye capacity.

Third Eye Gaze

- Sit in your meditation position
- Close your eyes
- With your eyes closed “look” up towards the center of your forehead
- Hold for 10 seconds, then rest your eyes.

Yoga Asanas for Brow Chakra

In Kundalini yoga, the Brow Chakra can be opened and balanced through practices that place gentle pressure on the forehead. Down dog can be useful, especially when attention is focused on the third-eye or on blue light, while holding the down dog position for a few minutes. Other asanas, such as child’s pose (with forehead to the mat), crocodile, and yoga mudra may also help balance the brow chakra.

Sahasrara Chakra (Crown Chakra)

The Crown Chakra is located at the crown of the head. Sahasrara involves such issues as inner wisdom and the death of the body. It is generally considered to be the chakra of pure consciousness and is related to the thalamus. The thalamus is thought to have a key role in the physical basis of consciousness. It is here that we find our desire to evolve and become self realized.

Sahasrara's inner aspect deals with the release of karma, physical action with meditation, mental action with universal consciousness and unity, and emotional action with "beingness. Sahasrara chakra symbolizes detachment from illusion; an essential element in obtaining supramental higher consciousness of the truth that one is all and all is one. When a yogi is able to raise his or her kundalini, energy of consciousness, up to this point, the state of Samādhi, or union with all, is experienced.

When this chakra is blocked, it is thought to appear as extremes in spiritual life: either living in the belief that there is no possibility of any spiritual life for anyone, or living as a religious zealot who is extremely attached to the dogma of their own religion and sees no value in other religions.

Symbol of the Crown Chakra



The Crown Chakra is symbolized by a lotus with one thousand petals. Sahasrara is represented by the color violet. The 1000 petals are arranged in 20 layers each of them with 50 petals. Often referred as *thousand-petaled lotus*, it is said to be the most subtle chakra in the system, relating to pure consciousness, and it is from this chakra that all the other chakras emanate.

Meditation for Crown Chakra

There is no better exercise for the crown chakra than meditation. But there are many forms of meditation and any of them can be helpful in balancing the crown chakra. A person can meditate while walking, focus on the breath, utter a mantra, imagine an image, or simply empty your mind completely and sit in emptiness.

What is most important is to connect through the crown chakra to the limitless source, so that the person becomes an open system, pulling that source into the crown and down through all your chakras. Opening the crown chakra is not just a matter of lifting our energy up, but of moving it down to manifestation as well. In this way the chakras become condensers of the cosmic energy of universal consciousness, condensing it into the seven levels of manifestation.

Increasing Energy Flow Through the Chakras

The following exercise may help enhance the flow of energy throughout the entire chakra system by first relaxing and then focusing in turn on each chakra.

- 1) Become aware of your feet and legs. Be aware that through your feet and legs you are strongly rooted to the earth. Feel that connection and stability to the earth. Visualize a deep, rich red earth color and feel it in your legs, flowing up to your root chakra in your tailbone.
- 2) Focus on your sacrum and your sacral chakra, and imagine water pouring into it and healing and purifying it. Then imagine six orange lotus petals surrounding it. Feel your creative powers becoming stronger and more free.
- 3) Focus on the area just above your navel – your solar plexus chakra. Connect with the immense energies of the sun. Feel it's bright yellow fire burning away any blockages at this chakra, and feel yourself becoming more powerful.
- 4) Focus on your heart. Feel your heart open and expand with every breath in. Visualize the color green and allow yourself to feel completely at peace and completely accepted. Whatever you wish, is yours.
- 5) Focus on your throat, and see it glowing with the protective and healing color of light blue or turquoise. Feel your thoughts becoming more fluid. Imagine yourself communicating your thoughts with confidence and ease.
- 6) Turn your closed eyes inward and upward towards your brow chakra in your third eye. Visualize a spinning blue disk that contains all the answers to your questions. Imagine yourself stopping that disk and following its guidance, trusting in your intuition.
- 7) Focus on the top of your head and visualize your crown chakra there. Imagine thousands of purple lotus petals coming out from the top of your head and pulling the infinite energy from the universe down into your head. Feel your connection to the entire universe.
- 8) Finish the meditation by taking a deep breath for each chakra in sequence, as you return downward to your root chakra, and then to your feet.

Sample Yoga Practice for Balancing Each Chakra

The following yoga sequence is an example of how you can create a practice that will focus on each chakra.

Start with Warm-Ups and Sun Salutations, then practice the following:

Warrior 1 (root chakra)
King Dancer (sacral chakra)
Revolved Triangle (solar plexus chakra)
Down Dog (practicing uddiyana bandha while in down dog) (solar plexus chakra)
Cobra/Up Dog (heart chakra)
Janu Sirsasana/Seated Forward Fold (heart chakra)
Plow (throat chakra)
Fish (throat chakra)
Yoga Mudra – forehead to floor (brow chakra)
Headstand (crown chakra)
Child’s pose (brow chakra)

Think of another sequence that includes asanas that focus on each of the seven chakras:

- 1) Root Chakra: _____
- 2) Sacral Chakra: _____
- 3) Solar Plexus Chakra: _____
- 4) Heart Chakra: _____
- 5) Throat Chakra: _____
- 6) Brow Chakra: _____
- 7) Crown Chakra: _____

How Balanced are Your Chakras?

For fun, you can take a test to see how balanced your chakras are at:
<http://www.eclecticenergies.com/chakras/chakradotest.php>

Summary of Chakras and Signs of Under/Over Activity

1 - Root chakra

The Root chakra is about being physically there and feeling at home in situations. If it is open, you feel grounded, stable and secure. You don't unnecessarily distrust people. You feel present in the here and now and connected to your physical body. You feel you have sufficient territory.

If you tend to be fearful or nervous, your Root chakra is probably under-active. You'd easily feel unwelcome.

If this chakra is over-active, you may be very materialistic and be attached to things. You're probably obsessed with being secure and resist change.

2 - Sacral chakra

The Sacral chakra is about feeling and sexuality. When it is open, your feelings flow freely, and are expressed without you being over-emotional. You are open to intimacy and you can be passionate and lively. You are able to be creative and find your own unique creative expression.

If you tend to be stiff and unemotional or have a "poker face," the Sacral chakra is under-active. You're not very open to people or to finding your own creative voice.

If this chakra is over-active, you tend to be emotional all the time. You'll feel emotionally attached to people and you can be very sexual.

3 – Navel (Solar Plexus) chakra

The Navel chakra is about asserting yourself in a group. When it is open, you feel in control and you have sufficient self-esteem.

When the Navel chakra is under-active, you tend to be passive and indecisive. You may be timid and don't get what you want. You worry about being accepted by others.

If this chakra is over-active, you are domineering and probably even aggressive.

4 - Heart chakra

The Heart chakra is about love, kindness and affection. When it is open, you are compassionate and friendly, and you work at harmonious relationships.

When your Heart chakra is under-active, you are cold and distant.

If this chakra is over-active, you are suffocating people with your love and your love probably has quite selfish reasons.

5 - Throat chakra

The Throat chakra is about self-expression and talking. When it is open, you have no problems expressing yourself, and you might be doing so through creative works.

When this chakra is under-active, you tend not to speak much, and you probably are introverted and shy. Not speaking the truth may block this chakra.

If this chakra is over-active, you tend to speak too much, usually to domineer and keep people at a distance. You're a bad listener if this is the case.

6 - Third Eye chakra

The Third Eye chakra is about insight and visualization. When it is open, you have a good intuition, and listen to your inner guidance.

If it is under-active, you're not very good at thinking for yourself, and you may tend to rely on authorities. You may be rigid in your thinking, relying on beliefs too much. You might even get confused easily.

If this chakra is over-active, you may live in a world of fantasy too much. In excessive cases hallucinations are possible.

7 - Crown chakra

The Crown chakra is about wisdom, spirituality, and being one with the world. When this chakra is open, you are unprejudiced and quite aware of the world and yourself.

If it is under-active, you're not very aware of spirituality. You're probably quite rigid in your thinking.

If this chakra is over-active, you are probably intellectualizing things too much. You may be addicted to spirituality and are probably ignoring your bodily needs.