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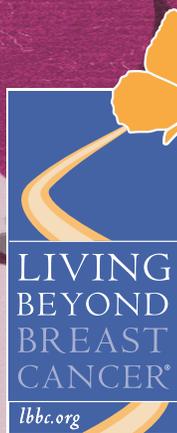
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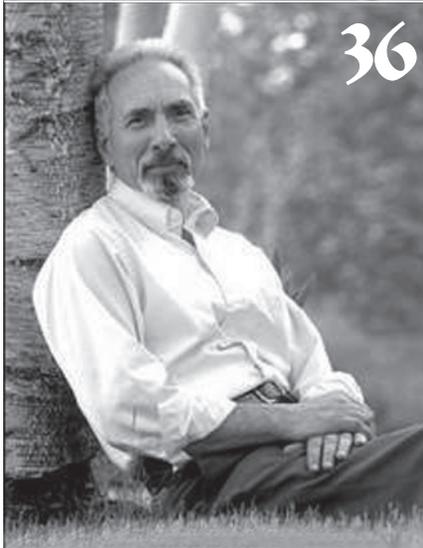
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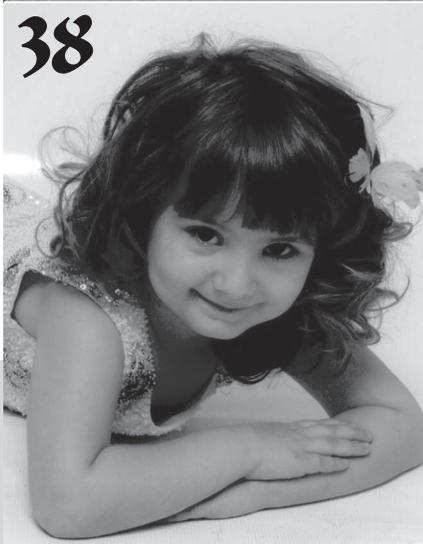
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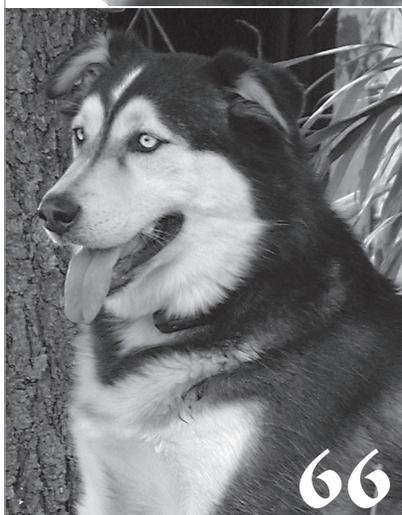
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**Ji** >> aids others in process through the vehicles of *Dream & Spirit Sessions*.



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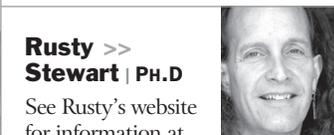
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# Vitality

At the beginning of every spring, gardeners sow their seeds into beds of fertile soil. Children, as well as the inner-child in all of us, leap for joy as tiny seeds start to sprout. Personally, I have many happy childhood memories of running out to the family garden morning after morning full of curious anticipation, checking to see if our sprouts were popping up through the soil.

Witnessing a tiny carrot seed sprout impresses me. The fact that an apple seed grows into a tree that in turn produces thousands of apples in its lifetime continually amazes me. If you think of some of your favorite plants, you can remember that each one starts from just a handful of small seeds.

This marvel of life, the seed, connects directly to the essence of human vitality. In terms of our health as human beings, Yoga teaches us to look within. The Upanishads offer an image of sheaths that apply to health in terms of gross and subtle. The Taittiriya Upanishad, translated by Easwaran as "From Food to Joy" (part II: 1.1-6.1) discusses the cosmos in terms of nature, which brings rise to food. From food, the body arises. Within the body, there is breath. Within the breath, there is the mind of emotions and the mind of reason. Finally, one reaches the spirit that connects to the cosmos. Hence, we as humans move from food to joy.

Healers who use the mind-body paradigm seek to create a balance within the human being. While the inner-most sheath of spirituality harnesses the most influence over our actions, all the sheaths need to find balance for maximum vitality.

One of the trends in the Yoga movement centers on the recognition of the inner nature of Yoga practices. Many of us thrive with the benefits of Yoga poses when we first begin our practice. Our body gains suppleness and we learn to relax/strengthen tense muscles. After time, the Yoga student recognizes the power of the breath. Yoga poses aligned with deep breathing offer added benefits. Following the pattern of these sheaths, the Yoga student later sees how the emotions affect the quality of their vitality. Further, a properly focused mind guides us from food choices to a more balanced life. Finally, the yoga student aligns with spiritual principles and maximum vitality dawns in their life.

Yoga Living aims to share these inner aspects of yogic practices, and remind people that though you need to take one step at a time, there are no limits to your yoga practice: it includes practices for your body, mind and spirit.

Your Editor,

## On Vitality

May/June  
2007



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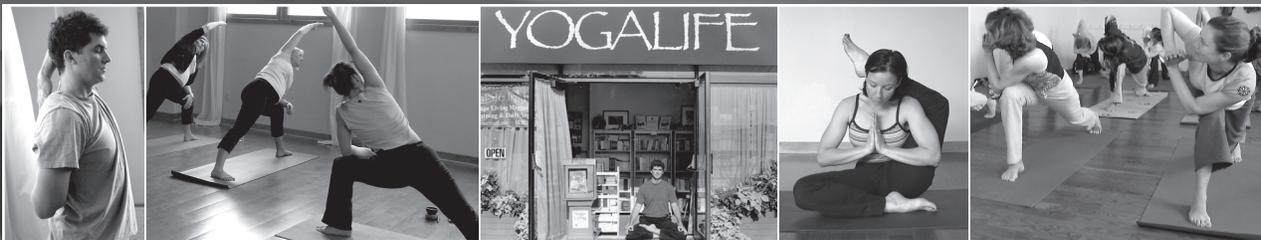
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*Yoga Living, Your Healthy Lifestyle Guide*, promotes the field of Yoga as a healthy lifestyle. The practice of a Traditional Yoga program includes each facet of life. This magazine introduces readers to resources for healthy living. Please share your copy of *Yoga Living* with your friends. Contact us at 610-688-7030 or at [info@yogalivingmagazine.com](mailto:info@yogalivingmagazine.com). Advertisers go to [www.yogalivingmagazine.com](http://www.yogalivingmagazine.com) for a media kit.



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**NEXT TO  
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# Breathing Properly

## Connecting the Body and Mind



**T**HE BREATH IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR LIVES, AND IS DISCUSSED IN MANY IF NOT ALL COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE AND EASTERN PRACTICES. It might seem that the breath is automatic, and to some degree it is, but with physical and mental stressors impinging upon us daily, our breath, therefore our body and mind's functions, can be compromised.

### What Affects Breath

The factors that affect our breath are many. The "fight or flight" condition that increases endorphins in the body to address actual or perceived threats, leads to a quick, shallow breath. This is helpful if we are trying to outrun a lion or scary dog, or when we have to give a speech, but a perpetual state of stress can lead to:

- Muscle twitching
- Nausea
- Irritability
- Lightheadedness
- Confusion
- Anxiety

Western society's obsession with being slender affects our breath as well. The tight jeans that restrict the belly force a shallow breath. External physical constriction plus attempts to keep the abs "toned" by keeping them continually contracted, leads to a state of semi-asphyxiation (an oxygen-starved body and mind).

In addition to affecting the breath, an abdomen in a constant state of contraction means the muscles are actually *weakening*. Muscles must fully relax between contrac-

tions for optimal muscle functioning. Tight abs also increase tension and stiffness in the lower back, making existing back pain worse.

### The Benefits

There are many benefits to full breathing. A relaxed, full breath increases blood flow improving your thought processes, slows the heart and reduces

blood pressure reducing the effects of stress and enhancing your ability to cope, and it massages your organs keeping them functioning at their best, helping achieve and maintain health.

### Benefits of Better Breathing

- **Improves thought processes** by increasing blood flow
- **Reduces the effects of stress** and enhances your ability to cope by slowing the heart and lowering blood pressure
- **Optimizes functions of internal organs** by massaging them with each inhale and exhale
- **Wards off disease** by making people less susceptible to viruses and lowers blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- **Prevents a second heart attack** - Heart attack patients are less likely to have a second heart attack if breathing is improved
- **Reduces number of menopausal hot flashes** - studies show that a significant reduction of menopausal hot flashes results from progressive muscle relaxation and slow, deep breathing

Studies show some compelling reasons to breathe deeply. It helps keep you healthy and virus-free, may prevent a second heart attack, may reduce the number of menopausal hot flashes, and may resolve back problems by reducing nerve impingement, bone degeneration, and arthritic conditions. Alone or with biofeedback or yoga, deep breathing may alleviate migraines, chronic pain conditions, hypertension, epilepsy,

asthma, panic attacks, hyperventilation syndrome, and coronary heart disease (Farhi, page 6).

### The Technique

There are many techniques to apply to the breath, including some that wake you up, some that put you to sleep, ones that engage both sides of the brain, etc. In this article, I will describe the full breath, using your belly and back. The full breathing technique helps you relax, physically and mentally, freeing your body and mind to work at a higher level of efficiency and capability. This technique of breathing is incredibly and deceptively easy to do.

The full breathing technique has few rules, and can be done anywhere. The rules:

1. The IN breath is the same length as the OUT breath.
2. The breath is slow. Work up to a count of 10 for each inhale and each exhale.
3. There is no pause between breathing steps.
4. The breath is relaxed, but needs to reach down into the belly, and eventually into the back as well.
5. The exhale is complete.

### Engaging the Belly

The problem most people have with this technique, other than remembering to do it, is the belly breathing. To most easily facilitate belly breathing, lie on the floor or on your bed and place your hand (or a book) on your belly. Relax and breathe so that your belly rises on the inhale, and falls on the exhale.

Once the belly is engaged fully when breathing, consider including your back as well. You can stand to practice this. Place both hands on your back, just below the ribs. Work to feel this area expand and contract as you breathe.

The full breath technique has many benefits and is so easy that it would enhance everyone's life. Practice as often as you can and as you do, think of the following affirmation. ▲

"As you inhale, bring a sense of gentle confidence into your heart. As you exhale, release your tension, fear, and worries about the future." - Bruce Frantzis

**“Most persons have died before they expire — died to all earthly longings, so that the last breath is only, as it were, the locking of the door of the already deserted mansion.”**

- OLIVER WENDEL HOLMES SR

**I**S THERE AN INNER “DEATH,” AS THIS HAUNTING IMAGE ASSERTS, THAT OCCURS WELL BEFORE THE OUTER ONE?

Is it avoidable? This same 19th century American poet created another memorable image--the legend of the “incredible one-horse shay.” It was a kind of carriage, put together in this case so magically that each single part of it lasted exactly one hundred years. At that point, they all failed simultaneously and the thing fell apart. Both these themes have a lot to do with my own approach to vitality and the process of aging.

But who am I to speak to you about this? Well, today, as I write this, I turned 63. Most people take me for “fifty-ish.” I could easily keep three bodies busy with what excites me--a steady, increasingly enjoyable stream of things to explore, create, resolve, or heal. I am not a Pollyanna, and these are not glib, superficial remarks. In fact, I have spent decades healing damage received in my family of birth. But somehow, in this long, sometimes meandering, often confusing recovery--I seem to have gotten at least some essential things nearly right. So what might those things be? If I am, on the whole, more vital now than in my early thirties (when I was closest to that “inner death”)--how did that come to be?

Let’s start with the miraculous carriage. The body I walk around in is a colossal community of colonies of mutually supportive living beings. My goal is that they should all pretty much exhaust themselves around the same time. No sense having a stomach good for another fifty years if the heart and lungs have given up the ghost. On this basis, I direct load and stress to the stronger of these colonies. Lets wear them out faster, and preserve the weaker longer. What this might mean to you--well, that’s your homework. But for me, for instance, it means left-leg really shelters right-leg, because right-leg has so many old athletic injuries. And if I



## Dancing to the Edge of Death

### VITALITY AS YOU AGE

by Cougar (Michael Reddy, Ph.D.)

were unable to be without vices, then I would be more tolerant towards those that stressed, say, stomach than those hard on lungs--because stomach seems invincible, whereas lungs are bit fragile.

But the carriage metaphor only takes us so far. Unlike axel and wheel, there’s also a sense in which our human sub-systems build strength through use. Sitting, driving, eating, viewing, talking, and typing--the primary activities these days--do nothing for the musculoskeletal system. The older I get, the more meaning “use it or lose it” has for me. I used to work out for sports. Now I work out for life (yoga, weights, and light aerobics). Life is my new sport. And while the pace is slower (“do less more often,” and “push harder only when it feels good”), still--no wallowing. Every system works to its comfortable limits.

Right-leg can’t run anymore? Sad, really, scary too (I am going to die...)--but that’s no excuse not to walk a lot. And guess what... After the grief and several years of walk-a-lot, we found a very springy treadmill, and right-leg *could* run again on it. But if

we hadn’t kept on walking in the interim, both right-leg and left-leg might not have been able.

[As to food, yes, it’s important. But sorry, no space here. Read Marc David, **Nourishing Wisdom**. It’s the ultimate mind-body-spirit approach to diet. Also, **Gut Wisdom**, by Alice Sorokie is great if you have any digestive issues at all.]

Of this body, this community of colonies of living beings, I am the primary companion, healer, and lover--because their entire existence is pledged to my earthwalk. Outsiders (friends and alternative healers, primarily) may help, but it is profoundly my responsibility. Most conventional medicine I avoid “like the plague,” because its purpose is to discover, and, increasingly, *induce* disease for profit (“turn off the

continued on page 22

# Looking for Peace Within

*If there is light in the soul, there will be beauty in the person. If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the house. If there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world. - Chinese Proverb*

**H**OW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU HEARD: “BE STILL”? In our hectic lives, where we run to take the kids to school, drop off the dry cleaning, grab groceries, walk the dog, finish a degree of some sort, and catch our six o’clock yoga class, we sometimes forget that the deepest peace is the one we find in ourselves and the one that we must make time for. Call that peace God or Goddess or nothing at all, it requires that we give it the respect it deserves and the time it needs.

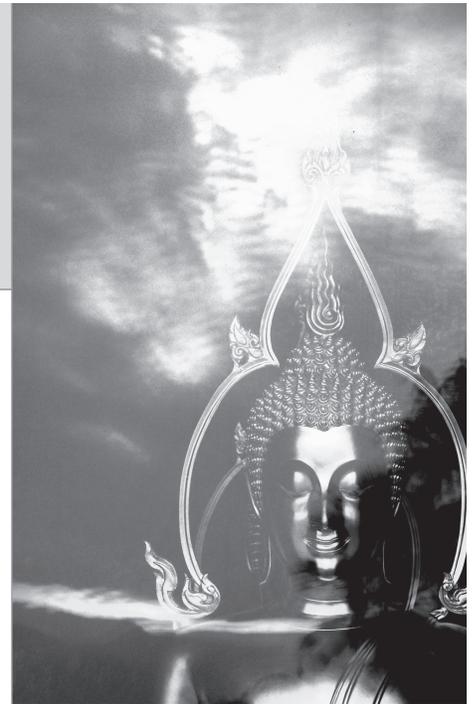
We all have the capacity for inner harmony and stillness. There is a Divine spark in each of us. It can be nourished through daily chanting or ritual quietness. We can develop it in the most sacred of chapels and the darkest of alleys. There is no limit on where we can experience this stillness: in repose and prayer or in gridlock traffic. The location is unimportant, but the connection to the Divine is key.

When was the last time you looked at the sunset and said ‘thank you’? The last time you took a walk in the temperate afternoon and basked in the warmth of the sun? The last time you listened to the rain gently fall against your windows or fell asleep under the stars? These moments, financially free and available for everyone, are opportunities for you to breathe and reconnect with the Great Spirit.

How can we expect to continue our break-neck pace and nurture our families and friends, if we don’t give ourselves the sustaining connection to the Divine? It doesn’t have to be a daily scriptural reading or yoga practice. You don’t have to go to church or temple or fellowship. You need no circle casting ritual, candles, or incense. All you need is you. The only moment you need is the one you create for yourself. It takes seconds to tap into your Divine element.

A monk I know once told me that church wasn’t for us to *do* anything. Instead, it was a time for us to listen and to sit with God. It was a time for us to say “thanks” and to just be. The ritual, the readings, the incense, the stories: they are just ways for us to get away from the everyday and mundane and transcend to something that feels holier and consecrated. But what is holier than a true connection to the Divine? And what could be more peaceful than revering that connection each day, without feeling as though we are forced to go somewhere else for something that lives inside of us?

Sometimes we believe in Spirit, but we don’t feel like Spirit is with us. It is easy to give lip service to the concept of the Divine but to believe, deep down, that we are alone and that we need nothing other than personal philosophy. Some days, the connection to God, from our end, is tenuous at best and we choose to recede farther inside ourselves instead



of reaching out and building a deeper bond. The cord is there - it will always be there; sometimes it is simply thin. It is in these times that, through our moments of yogic relaxation and breathing, we can replace the worn away threads and create a complete connection to the Divine Light.

Whether you recite prayers or chants while doing mala or bead work as you sit through bumper-to-bumper traffic or you take a moment of rest at your desk in a busy office, you have the opportunity to find peace within yourself and to create a connection that goes beyond your hectic schedule. It doesn’t take much - a moment here, a moment there - but the benefits last a lifetime.

Will you take that moment? Will you let go and feel the Divine heartbeat that beats in your chest? I believe you will. Go ahead. And, in that moment, may you find the peace of the ancients that will carry you through this life and beyond. ▲

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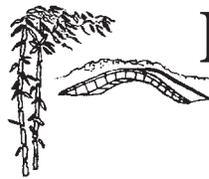
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**I**T'S AMAZING TO WATCH CHILDREN AT PLAY. They are completely resilient to most falls. They have all the energy in the world, plus some to spare. They find entertainment and true joy from simply spinning in a circle. Often when I teach, I will mention to the class how practicing yoga postures can give us our "child bodies" back. Many parents who watch their children tell me that they are in amazement about how far a child's vitality can go. These conversations made me think about how we, as adults, can find not only our child bodies, but our "child vitality."

Pure minds. This, to me, is the number one reason why children can find joy in the smallest of things. Their existence has yet to be hindered by life's expectations and longings. One of the major tenets of Buddhism states that all suffering comes from desire. This is a truth that becomes clearer as my yoga practice goes deeper. I often wonder; Have I conquered my desires? Am I no longer plagued with suffering? Absolutely not. I'll let you know when I've figured it out, but don't hold your breath.

This doesn't mean I'm not always trying to release my attachment to desire. I still worry about whether I'm going to get what I want. The more I practice detachment, the less affected I am by the outcome of my initial wanting. This helps me feel less loss when I am not granted what I wish.

Children are elated to simply exist. They have not become jaded or competitive, wishing for what they don't have. Wouldn't we all love to go back in time to trace when our joy for simple existence was beginning to fade? How could we hold onto it? For years I was caught in an emotional "pushing/pulling" battle with myself. I knew was making poor life choices, but felt powerless to improve my situation. In time I began to find a regular groove in my yoga practice. Yoga helped me to develop a feeling of connection to something greater than myself. I didn't understand what it was at the time, and tried to ignore the feeling. Eventually I became obsessed with this feeling. I trusted it, so I followed it.

# The Child Within



I remember ignoring a lot of emotions initially, and all this did was plague my system. My body reacted with weight gain and lethargy. Self doubt began creeping in on a daily basis. Depression inevitably set in. I began to realize that when emotions are left untended in our minds, a vicious circle begins to take hold. A depressed mind makes poor decisions for the body. The body reacts to these choices, creating stagnation and anxiety. The mind is left vulnerable. While I lived confused in my mind/body disconnection, I was desperate for something to break my cycle of pain. Try as I might, I couldn't imagine what could possibly lift me out of my chronic malaise. I began to learn that negative thinking begets negativity, and positive thinking begets positivity. Getting caught in a cyclone of poor habits can become all consuming. Hard work toward proper habits, however, can take on a life of it's own.

Vitality needs to be nurtured. Realizing this can help anyone who is looking to break free from their prison of personal doubt. When people started to notice changes in me, they would ask, "how is yoga

going?" I would always reply, "It's going. I go to class kicking and screaming, but it's *going*." Over time I stopped having to force myself to practice. The positive energy I put into yoga began to take over and navigate the trip on it's own. I began to experience that planting positive seeds will reap positive rewards.

You have to help yourself. No truer words have ever been written. If we, as adults, intend to regain our child vitality, we must live with vitality. Children are unspoiled. They possess pure minds, bodies, and attitudes. So much of that gets muted or lost as we grow up. Regaining our youthful energy is dependent on only one thing: living the dream. If we learn to move toward a positive and affirming life, even when we feel that day-to-day existence is anything but, we can regain the vitality of our youth, effectively freeing our child within. ▲

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# Vital Energy

by Linda Dobrowolski-Lyng



We are all born with a certain amount of vital energy that we receive from our parents. We can think of this as currency which can be spent or saved, but many of our precious resources are gone before realizing that we need to save something for our continued health, vitality, and spiritual pursuits. For women, energy is lost mainly through menstruation; for men, ejaculation. (In the Taoist view, women actually gain energy with sexual activity!) Other major drains on energy are negative emotions, impure water, food, air and lack of healthy sleep.

Resulting illness often clues us in to knowledge of our energy body and may have the blessing of leading us on a healing path. The good news is that there are ways to preserve and even increase vital energy to reverse ill effects!

Mulabandha, or the Root Lock and Ashwini Mudra are key Yoga practices to build up and retain energy. A primary Mulabandha technique is to contract and release your pubococcygeus (PC) muscles.<sup>1</sup> From a squatting position; exhale then tighten the PCs. Relax the base of your body right before the inhalation. Ashwini Mudra involves isolating, contracting and releasing the muscles around the anal sphincter - this is important as these muscles are associated with organ energy.

In the Taoist view, principal (generative, creative) energy, or Jing, mixed with the air we breathe and the food we eat is transformed into Chi or life force as it interacts with our organs. We can increase Jing, and therefore Chi by using the techniques outlined in the Taoist writings of Mantak and Maneewan Chia. Their books *Healing Love through the Tao: Cultivating Female Sexual Energy* and the companion volume *Cultivating Male Sexual Energy* contain comprehensive detail on conserving and building vital energy. Some practices would be considered part of "left-handed" Tantra in the yogic view, and until recently these details were considered guarded secrets for spiritual aspirants.

Perhaps the most important practice before building up Jing, or sexual energy, is to prepare a pathway in which to circulate the energy. Building up this powerful force without having a way to circulate it can lead to imbalance in both sexes and energy loss, instead of gain in men. The Inner Smile along with the Microcosmic Orbit practice is recommended to circulate and distribute Chi and are recommended for anyone working with energy. Both practices are detailed in the Chia's books listed above and once mastered, there are great exercises to increase Jing, Chi and eventually Shen, or spiritual energy, safely!

I will share a simple practice that is safe for any level of practitioner.<sup>2</sup>

1. Sit towards the edge of a chair, planting your feet on the ground and gently pressing the tip of your tongue against the soft palate.
2. Physically locate the areas we are trying to vitalize; for women, the ovaries are the container of life force energy while in men, it is the testicles. Bring your attention to these areas by applying light pressure or simply use your thoughts to connect with your body.
3. Inhale deeply through the nose, gathering chi/air/energy from without. Exhale also through the nostrils, imagining that the chi spirals into your ovaries/testicles. Engage your entire body in expanding to collect energy and contracting to store it. Repeat for several breaths until you feel a warm or tingling feeling as the outside Chi mixes with your Jing.
4. Visualize moving this combined energy down to the perineum - I imagine it sliding through a silvery, clear straw.
5. Once you have gathered energy at the perineum, lightly pumping your PC muscles to send it to your anal sphincter and then up your spine using Ashwini Mudra, continuing to your crown. (Some may naturally feel the energy moving up the front of the body; follow your inclinations if the back doesn't feel right).
6. Once the energy is at the crown, imagine that it showers over the crown to the front of the body (or down the back if you started in the front).
7. Repeat steps 1-6 up to 9 times, trying to achieve a smooth motion. When ready to end practice, bring the energy down to the area just below the naval. Allow it to settle there in a spiral motion, storing it for future use.

I have found that some faith is required when a practice involves visualization - trust that others have gone before you and that your body will eventually feel the connections you have made with your mind. ▲

<sup>1</sup>The PC muscle is located in the area between the anus and the clitoris in women and the anus and scrotum in men. The complete technique, anatomy, and psychology of Mulabandha are described in detail in the book: *Moola Bandha: The Master Key* by Swami Buddhananda along with Kundalini Yoga exercises using Mulabandha with breath retention.

<sup>2</sup>Contraindications are those suffering from high intracranial pressure, high blood pressure, vertigo, heart ailments or amenorrhoea.

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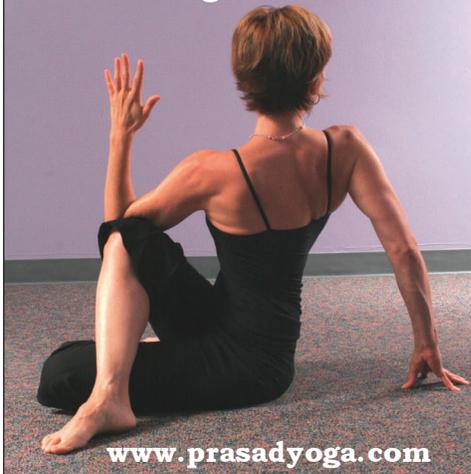
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# The Transmutation of Gross Reality into Vital Essence

## ...a journey of perception

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**T**HERE IS A DENSE FORM TO EVERYTHING THAT CELEBRATES TIME IN THIS REALM. Chemistry 101 verifies 107 elements which manifest in the science of measurement. This number and the capacity to analyze matter in its physical minutia, enables us to feign enlightenment. Those of science will not be fooled by that which is not proven!

Long ago a 16th century, mystic physician, Paracelsus, worked with matter. His teachings, writings and healings were infused with a reverence for essence. In his time matter was composed of four elements, and each element had physical as well as spiritual properties. Earth manifested as solid matter, and also resonated as the weight of rational priorities. Water meant liquid as well as the spirit of response and flow. Air enabled breath; spiritual air nourished concepts, ideas and thought potential. Fire burned substance, and subtle fire inspired.

Today we refer to these essences as symbols. We use them in occult references, in poetry, and in psychological typing. Let's play with these intangibles as see if, in their subtly, there is substance? Since we're playing with time as well as matter, I'll inject the quandary of alchemy into this experiment.

When we think of alchemy, we tend to restrict the term to faulty melding of medieval lead. We think of fools impossibly conjuring base metal into gold. In its retreat from today's science, alchemy has seeped into the toolbox of psychological analysis. Like the essence of the elements, we revere alchemy symbolically, if at all. In actuality alchemy is an ongoing process that mirrors spiritual evolution through physical growth. Plants, for example, are catalyzed in seed form. They sprout, they respond, they become something somewhat different every moment. If we think of the earth's mineral content as base material, sunlight may be

interpreted as being Sofia, divine wisdom, continually inciting growth.

In his book, The Hidden Messages of Water, Dr Emoto illustrates intention's influence on water molecules. The dense matter of the molecule is affected by the subtle experience of the energy relating to the water. Positive intentions of love or generosity crystallize water molecules when frozen. Negative intentions of dread or animosity create globulous and unsightly formations. Visualize, if you will, different observable qualities expressing through the same quantifiable matter! This is really not such a far step from Paracelsus, is it?

Mysticism is often kept in some mental compartment akin to Pandora's box. It's too dangerous for everyday life, and only a spirit of heroic proportions can handle its energy. Perhaps, it's not whether or not we're mystic, but rather whether or not we're aware of our subtle reality. The Secret Life of Plants reveals the conscious response of plants to communication and environment. How can the dense matter of plants enjoy music, attention and beauty? Perhaps, plants have a subtle reality too?

Science has calculated that 85% of the

human brain is water, and 75% of lean body mass is also water. Let's ponder the possibilities of working with that water in physical as well as subtle ways. In the dense body hydration maintains function. Thought patterns, muscular coordination, nervous responses, and organic processes work with necessary levels of water in and around cells. Subtle energy treatments including Reiki and therapeutic touch affect the body without physical manipulation. It's possible that the body's water content responds to the healing intention as directed by patient hands. It's also possible that the subtle essence of each element within the receiver is able to interact with the direction of applied energy.

In the process of alchemy, we find no reward until our base experience is infused with 'Sofia'. Base materials in childhood may include the runny noses, the restless growing pains and the endless questions seeking active vigilance. Concurrently, a dynamism ignites when these base materials are infused with the magic of inspired relationship. Grubby little urchins transmute into heavenly angels offering light, love and infinite possibilities.

In the practical world base materials may include our daily agendas, the food in our pantries, the bills on our desks, and the parameters of our identities. Sofia may be found in the spontaneous glance of an attractive woman, the courtesy of a youth, or the surprise of finding a lost earring. For a moment we are elevated from the predictable mundane and given pause to taste a slightly higher vibration. Symptoms may express as a deeply released breath, a broadened smile, or a much bluer sky.

We seek the sustained elevation of vibration when we reach for a 'superfood', a Rumi selection, an herbal cleanse, or a romantic tryst. We are really seeking some form of Sofia to infuse our dense experience with heightened awareness, wellbeing, and vitality. There is a way to find this vital access to higher experience. It is required, however, that we suspend our perception of solid matter to do so. ▲



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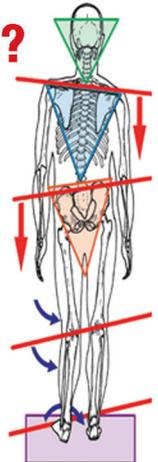
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