

Healing the Heart: Anahata Chakra



“May all that is unforgiven in you be released
May your fears yield their deepest tranquilities
May all that is un-lived in you blossom into a future
Graced with love”

To come home to yourself. John O'Donoghue.

The heart is the Bridge between heaven and earth, upper and lower, bottom 3 chakras and upper 3. To open the heart is to realise that we are all connected, we are all one, and there is no separation.

The energetic heart

Sanskrit Name: Anahata

Anahata literally means “unstuck” or “unhurt” meaning that underneath all the hurts and wounds of the heart lies a place that is beyond physical and emotional hurt, the place of the soul.

Colour: Green or pink

Element: Air

Location: Centre of the chest.

Purpose: Love & Balance

Basic Right: To love and be loved

Developmental age: 4 to 7 years

Demon: Grief

Issues: Love, balance, self-love, relationships, intimacy, giving and receiving.

Balanced characteristics: When our heart chakra is in balance we're able to love unconditionally. We are full of compassion and we feel connected to nature, people and the world around us. We are able to bring that compassion into our everyday lives in the form of gratitude, understanding and a deep appreciation for life.

Traumas & abuses:

- ॐ Rejection, abandonment, loss,
- ॐ Shaming, constant criticism
- ॐ Abuses to any other chakras, especially lower chakras
- ॐ Unacknowledged grief including parental & ancestral grief
- ॐ Divorce
- ॐ Conditional love
- ॐ Sexual or physical abuse
- ॐ Betrayal

Deficiency: When this chakra is low in energy we feel lonely, unable to connect to others and sometimes unlovable. The ending of past relationships (romantic, friendships, family etc) wounds this chakra we become wary of any new relationships. If healing had been offered and the grief worked through, then the chakra can re-balance and be open to the possibility of loving again.

Excess: Excess in the heart chakra is not an excess of love, but an excessive use of love for our own needs. Excessive love is desperate in its need for constant re-assurance and it can be demanding and possessive.

Physical Malfunctions:

- ॐ Disorders of the heart, lungs, thymus, breasts, arms.
- ॐ Shortness of breath
- ॐ Sunken chest
- ॐ Circulation problems
- ॐ Asthma

The right of the Heart Chakra: to love and be loved.

We may be a culture obsessed with power (solar plexus) but we are driven by the need for love. This is the basic right of every human being – to love and be loved. Sadly this chakra is easily damaged and wounded which affects mind, body and spirit.

When we talk about Love most people automatically think of relationships but Love is so much more, think of love of nature, pets, our fellow human beings, life, hobbies etc. Love is in everything and when looking at bringing more love into our lives we much start first with ourselves.

Some people say they feel very selfish that they're spending time loving themselves but *"is it selfish to be soulful?"* In being soul-ful you are bringing more of who you are (more love, more compassion, more presence) to your life and everyone in it and when you do, this is the greatest gift you can give anyone.

Think of it this way – when you're feeling good about yourself don't you always want to do more for others?

- ॐ How can we have intimacy with others if we are distanced from our own self?
- ॐ How can we maintain balance between ourselves and others if we have no balance within?
- ॐ How can we treat others with respect if we treat our own selves abusively?

Being a friend to yourself is no mere metaphor or purely sentimental idea. It is the basis of all relationships. Thomas Moore

Demon – Grief

Coming to terms with our own grief leads us toward compassion for others. When our heart is heavy with grief it's hard to open and even hard to breathe. Grief sits in the heart like a heavy stone, we become numb and may feel dead inside. However, as we express our grief, as we cry, talk and allow our heart to open then the chakra can heal and we can slowly start to move through our grief. **Note:** Grief applies to all the endings we have had in our lives, for example: Live stages (childhood to adolescent, retirement, menopause for women etc) jobs, relationships, friendships etc.

The heart chakra is the center of the energetic activity in the body.

According to the HeartMath Institute, "The heart generates the largest electromagnetic field in the body. The electrical field as measured in an electrocardiogram (ECG) is about **60 times** greater in amplitude than the brain waves recorded in an electroencephalogram (EEG)."

Healing practices: how to open your heart

To love oneself is the beginning of a life-long romance. Oscar Wilde

There are many ways to heal the heart, there are some key practices:

- ॐ Compassion
- ॐ Gratitude
- ॐ Forgiveness

Compassion

"Whoever wishes to attain Buddhahood need not follow the various practices but must only practice one thing and that is deep compassion" Chenrezig

Self-compassion isn't about liking yourself when you become a better person, self compassion is about liking yourself as you are.

"Today I befriend the person I already am."

It is befriending yourself now and not when you're perfect, or when you're a size 10, or when you no longer smoke or are kinder.....it's becoming a friend to yourself now.

Or simply put by John O'Donoghue compassion is **that there is kindness in my gaze as I look within.**

The more you can cultivate compassion, the more you begin to befriend yourself, the happier you will be. You will encourage yourself to achieve all that you dream of and you won't be so hard on yourself when things don't work out the way you wanted them to. You will learn from your experiences and realise that happiness does not come from the attainment of "stuff" but in a deep connection to yourself.

Compassion helps you to support yourself, accept yourself as you are, encourage yourself to do better next time and it helps you to deal with life. It gives you better coping skills and when you really open your heart to yourself you can give to others in a much more selfless and meaningful way.

Blocks

The biggest blocks to cultivating self-compassion is the fear that we will no longer be motivated to achieve goals or pursue dreams and the feeling that we are not worthy.

For example: Tony is hard on himself. He sets regular exercise and work goals that are difficult to reach and hard to fit into his life. Consequently he doesn't achieve the majority of these goals and he berates himself for his "failure". After a few hours or days of this self-criticism, he decides to move the goals to the next target date and he starts again. However the same thing happens the following week: he achieves some yet not others, beats himself up for the ones he didn't do (a part of him is beginning to feel that he doesn't even really want some of these goals), then moves the goals to the following week. It follows this pattern every week and eventually it begins to eat away at his confidence. He becomes reluctant to set any more goals because past experience has told him that he probably won't achieve them anyway and sure what's the point. Over time Tony stops setting goals in both work and life and he finds it hard to get motivated to do anything.

Mark practices self-compassion. He sets simple, easy to achieve goals that he really wants to achieve both inside and outside of work (rather than what he feels he should be achieving). When a goal doesn't happen he deals with it, doesn't see it as a "bad thing or failure" and simply moves it to the next week and starts again. If he has a few weeks of doing this, he looks at the goal and asks himself *"is this the right goal for me? What is it about this goal that I'm not getting to it?"* his intuition guides him as to how to proceed. He listens, adjusts and moves on. He actively encourages himself to pursue his goals and his dreams and if they don't work out he doesn't see it as failure. He is flexible in his approach and celebrates his achievements.

The good news

We are all born with a certain level of compassion based on genetics and environment; however neuroscience is now showing us that we can train ourselves to be more compassionate. It's a skill. It can be learnt and practiced, and like going to the gym, the more that you practice the better you will become at it and the easier it will be.

How?

There are lots of ways to cultivate compassion. To get started here is a simple strategy for everyday life by Kristen Neff.

- 1) When you become aware of a tough moment, acknowledge it. *"This is really hard" "I'm struggling with this"* This validates your feeling.
- 2) Remind yourself of common humanity. This is part of what it is to be human, everyone experiences this and I am not alone. This is a part of life.
- 3) Bring some words of kindness to yourself. Talk to yourself as you would to a friend if they were struggling in this way. Use soft warm tones.

This simple strategy gives you an opportunity to transform a moment of suffering into a moment of kindness and love.

Other ways include: Loving Kindness meditation (which we're doing today see Insight Timer app), books by Sharon Salzberg and Kristen Neff, and the intention to cultivate compassion.

Gratitude

Gratitude is one of the most powerful emotions to explore and cultivate. Lisa Rankin recently wrote an article on this, she said:

"50% of our propensity for happiness is based on a genetic set point, something we can't influence very much, 10% is based on life circumstances (such as getting the promotion, finding The One, or achieving the creative dream), and 40% is "intentional activity" that we can influence with our behavior. That means we can be up to 40% happier in our lives without changing our circumstances one bit, and one of the key intentional activities is the practice of gratitude.

Research shows that consistently grateful people are happier, more energetic, more hopeful, more helpful, more empathic, more spiritual, more forgiving, and less materialistic. They're also less likely to be depressed, anxious, lonely, envious, neurotic, or sick."

Here are some simple exercises that you can use to cultivate gratitude in your life. Take your pick or you can do all of them if you wish!

- Every evening list 3 things that happened that day that you're grateful for and why.
- Think of 1 meaningful event that happened in your day. Then spend 2 minutes writing down every detail about it. This plugs the experience into your mind and body, anchors it into your soul and focuses your attention on the good things that are happening in your life. The event can be as simple as an hello you got from someone, or an email, smile, conversation etc.

- Send thank you texts/phone calls/ emails/ messages or do this face to face: tell someone what you appreciate about them or thank them for the work that they do. Pick someone new every day and do this every day for 21 days and you'll see how your happiness can positively affect those around you.

Forgiveness

"Anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to suffer." Gautama Buddha

How do you remain centered, calm and balanced as the world goes on around you? How do you find peace in the midst of the drama and in that peace find joy no matter what your external circumstances are?

Nelson Mandela managed to attain this whilst he was in solitary confinement in prison. In one of the most challenging environments to do this, he freed his soul by practising compassion, forgiveness and opening his heart and he found peace.

He forgave his tormentors, he forgave his captors and in so doing he liberated himself.

If you wish to forgive yourself or someone else, then we explore forgiveness through a Forgiveness letter by Jennifer Hadley in the Deepening Practices pdf.

Physical activities for the Heart:

Energise your heart chakra by doing exercises good for your heart such as push ups, swimming (breast stroke) and there is nothing better than giving yourself a good big hug 😊

Foods for the Heart:

Vegetables: spinach, kale, dandelion, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, celery, squash,

Liquids: green teas. Spices: basil, sage, thyme, coriander, parsley.

Gemstones: Malachite, Emerald, Rose Quartz. **Flower Essences:** Holly, Poppy, California Wild Rose

Essential Oils: Rose, Cedarwood, Sandalwood.