

Keeping Pace with Pain Meeting – September 2018

Yoga Psychology of the 7 Major Chakras with Fran Hodgson

Psychology is the study of the human mind and behaviour. It attempts to understand and explain why we all have a different personality, disposition and temperament. It is the study of what 'makes us tick'.

In western psychology each of us is separate from the world and each other. The skin is a barrier between you and me and the world. Our sensory organs perceive the world and the brain receives, interprets and instructs the body how to respond. The brain is where 'I' am and where consciousness and emotion are. The brain connects to and instructs the body via the nervous system and hormonal system.

In yoga psychology there is also a subtle energy system that includes chakras (energy centres). The 7 major chakras are the centres of vital energy that together form the system that manages our life-force and each one influences our whole body/mind in its own particular way. It has been found that they correspond to the hormonal glands and nerve plexuses (networks of intersecting nerves) in the body.

Muladhara, the base chakra, corresponds to the coccygeal plexus and to the coccyx, legs, feet and bowels.
Swadhisthana, the sacral chakra, corresponds to the sacral plexus and to the pelvis, hips, bladder & kidneys.
Manipura, the abdominal chakra, corresponds to the solar plexus and to the abdomen, stomach and liver.
Anahata, the heart (central) chakra, corresponds to thymus gland and chest, arms, hands, lungs and heart.
Vishuddhi, the throat chakra, corresponds to the thyroid gland and to the neck, shoulders, ears and mouth.
Ajna, the brow chakra, corresponds to the pituitary gland and to the forehead, brain, nose and eyes.
Sahasrara, the crown chakra, corresponds to the pineal gland and to the crown of head.

The subtle energy system generates our aura and sensory organs and through them we interact directly with the energies of the natural world and of other people/creatures. It's the energy of the chakras that influences our character, temperament and behaviour. Each chakra reacts to pain in a different way, as you will discover overleaf. Pain creates emotion and emotion defies logic. We can make life more harmonious by balancing the chakras by using the senses. Those with an over dominant chakra often don't realise it. To them it's just the natural way to be and they think everyone else is, or should be, the same way. Most of us have a degree of activity in all the chakras but the balance fluctuates and this changes our mood and motivation. Chronic pain/disability alters the dynamics between couples, families and colleagues. It can mean we need more help and can't contribute as much or we might not be as cheerful as we were. Some people will see a chance to dominate us, some will listen and be sympathetic, some won't understand and get impatient, some will help and support us, it all depends on the chakras. You might find that your response to the pain tends to come in cycles as each of the chakras processes the situation in its own way. I find it helps if I recognise these cycles because at the worst times I can just hang on until it passes. My emotions go through a cycle of arrival, an intensifying period, a peak and then a melting away. I have learned that a good day doesn't mean things are getting better and a bad day doesn't mean things are getting worse. I try not to get too worn out and to keep something in reserve, because I don't know what life is going to throw at me next. For me, dwelling on loss means that melancholy sets in, here are some words that help me from a poem called 'Wake up, Beautiful' by Danielle L. Stewart: *Wake up, beautiful. Wake up from this tragedy. Breathe. Return to reality. Be strong, Pull through. And from the track 'Stuck in a Moment' by U2: You gotta stand up straight, carry your own weight. These tears are going nowhere, baby. You've got to get yourself together. Don't say that later will be better. And if your way should falter. Along the stony pass. It's just a moment, this time will pass.*

Through the day

Reluctant to get up? That's the influence of Muladhara. Or overactive mind makes you restless? That's Ajna. Once you get moving Swadhisthana helps you wash and dress. Food and drink encourage you along and fuel Manipura into action, it warms you into acceptance of the day. Ajna comes alive, you mentally wake up. Anahata says 'be kind and helpful' and Vishuddhi says 'relax, chat, watch TV'. Muladhara tired, wants sleep.

One Minute Chakra Balancing Sequence

Sit upright on a firm chair with your feet flat on the floor.

Push both feet into the floor for 5 seconds then stop

Lean forward slightly then lean back slightly then return to centre

Twist from the waist to the right then to the left then return to centre

Take a deep Inhalation and Tap your chest 3 times then Exhale and Swallow hard

Look upwards and Inhale deeply

Exhale as you close your eyes and focus your attention on the crown of your head. Take some deep, calm, smooth breaths, inhaling for a count of 3 and exhaling for a count of 5 then open your eyes again.

Chakra Balancing Song – repeat for as long as you wish to any tune you like

La La Va Va – Ra Ra Ya Ya - Ha Ha La La – Va Va Ra Ra
Ya Ya Ha Ha – La La Va Va - Ra Ra Ya Ya – Ha Ha La La

When you stop spend five minutes listening to the quietness after the sound.

Read through the information given below. If the pain response is familiar or you need more of the positive aspects of any particular chakra or want to reduce any over dominance that has a negative effect on your life then do some of the balancing activities or increase your contact with the things it interacts with. This will balance the energy in that chakra. Remember the aim is always to balance the whole chakra system. If the energy in one chakra flares up and overwhelms you it can cause out of character behaviour that you regret later and wonder what happened. If the energy dies down too much you can't access the positive aspects.

Muladhara: interacts with: Earth/Ground, Red, Protein, Smell/Odour.

Positive aspects: stability, being at ease, calm, reliable, low risk behaviour, sensible.

When dominant: life is seen as a competition for a limited supply of resources resulting in 'have's and 'have not's'. Greed is natural and generosity is foolish. At lower levels can lead to stealing to get what is wanted.

Pain Response: *I can't stand it and I'm going to give up.* Fear/worry, feeling the need to be looked after in a safe place, normally like being alone but pain changes this, need for comfort and re-assurance.

Balancing: Regular meals, Gardening (re-potting, planting), Cooking, Maintaining Home, Security & Safety.

Swadhisthana: interacts with: Water/Sea/Moon, Beverages, Orange, Taste/Flavour.

Positive aspects: cheerful, creative, recovers well, can 'get on with it', sociable, fun loving.

When dominant: life is full of pleasure to be enjoyed and pain to be avoided. All resources are used up in the pursuit of pleasure and there is a danger of addiction, infidelity or ruination. Pleasure is all there is in life.

Pain Response: *It's horrible and I need to make it better.* Hates pain and needs consolation. Will try many therapies and remedies but can be susceptible to 'miracle cures'. Likes to go off on an adventure.

Balancing: Outings, Arts & Crafts, Dancing, Theatre/Cinema, Time with friends and family.

Manipura: interacts with: Fire/Sun, Carbohydrates, Yellow, Sight/Colour.

Positive aspects: motivated, can achieve what they wish, enthusiastic, determined, naturally optimistic.

When dominant: life is a competition for power. Aggressive bully and sycophantic flatterer. Seeks positions of power but doesn't take responsibility. Ruthless dictators/controllers to whom democracy makes no sense.

Pain Response: *It's aggravating me but I won't let it stop me.* Anger and frustration. May deliberately cause conflict and confusion. Critical, impatient, demanding, difficult. Can be nice to visitors or 'important' people.

Balancing: Exercise, Physical Work, Sport, Friendly competition, Don't have too many demanding priorities.

Anahata: interacts with: Air/Plants, Vegetables, Green, Feeling/Touch.

Positive aspects: sensitive, loving, kind, faithful, likes to serve/help others, generous, feels connected.

When dominant: The world is full of victims to be helped. Put themselves at risk to care for others. Swing from high to low emotions, which can be exhausting/confusing. Act according to feelings. Can be needy.

Pain Response: *It's too much to bear, it's not fair and I'm going to cry.* Depression, self neglect, self pity, loss of purpose/motivation. Feel like a burden. Holding a grudge. Doubt own abilities but will soldier on.

Balancing: Tears, Laughter, Gardening (flowers), Nature, Friends/Pets, Find things to love, Nurture yourself.

Vishuddhi: interacts with: Space/Sky, Fruit, Blue, Hearing/Sound.

Positive aspects: Have many interests, outgoing, bounce back well, loves to share experiences.

When dominant: Expect others to listen to what they have to say. Don't see why others are not interested in all the details of their life. Feel misunderstood but don't dwell on it, just find a new project to absorb them.

Pain Response: *I can't contain it and I'm going to explode.* Tell others about it, let off steam and feel better. Lose themselves in books or music or TV. Become frustrated if they have to change or give up things.

Balancing: Telling by talking/writing, Time off, Reading, Music, Friends, Panoramic views, Sleep.

Ajna: interacts with: Cosmos/Consciousness, Indigo, Thinking/Self Awareness.

Positive aspects: Good at solving problems, loves to learn, gather information and use knowledge.

When dominant: Always busy thinking/making plans but not doing. Logical people who consider other points of view as illogical or suspicious. Can't understand emotions. Tendency to dwell on things, too serious.

Pain Response: *I should be able to overcome it, am I going mad?* Will withdraw into own thoughts. Resent distraction. Find out as much about an illness/condition as possible. Understanding it reduces the pain.

Balancing: Housework, Natural Landscapes, Quizzes & Puzzles, Meditation, Philosophy, Contemplation.

Sahasrara: interacts with: Light/God, Violet, Divinity/Faith.

Positive aspects: serene, inspired, find strength from belief, able to avoid cynicism and disillusionment.

When dominant: Trust in God and leave everything to fate. Collect talismans, love myths, magic and ritual. Will not get worked up about anything but can fail to act and take care of business. Drifts along in a dream.

Pain Response: *beyond pain, at peace no matter what happens.* Acceptance of illness, often seeing it as a blessing in disguise. Will look for omens and signs. Unshakeable belief in guidance from 'above'.

Balancing: Make practicality a priority, Shared communal lifestyle, Being in a group of devoted followers.