

Week 3 – Law of Giving and Receiving – Om Vardhanam Namah

I am the nourisher of the Universe and the Universe nourishes me - gifts/acknowledgement of gifts/circulate love

Wellbeing Techniques

This is the third webinar for week 3. Like last week, I'm going to go over practical techniques for empowering your wellbeing focusing on the Heart Chakra that enlivens the Principle we are discussing this week. These techniques are not necessarily specific to the Law (Principle) of Giving and Receiving, but they will help enliven it because of the connections to the Heart Chakra.

I'll also explain how you can stack the techniques to truly strengthen your wellbeing empowerment which will not only save you time, but also make the techniques more doable within in your busy schedule.

The Wellbeing Technique of Mindfulness - Sounds:

Direct Aim: To quiet the mind; to bring the mind to one point of focus; to take the mind from activity to stillness.

Indirect Aim: To respond with reflectiveness, openness, and calmness in all situations; to achieve, maintain, and preserve health and prevent disease in both mind and body.

Procedure:

1. Choose a recording of Tibetan singing bowls, or the sound of the ocean; make sure this is at least ½ hour in length.
2. Sit quietly, out of sunlight, in a comfortable seated position.
3. Play the recording of the sound you have chosen.
4. Close your eyes.
5. Focus your mind on the sound and allow the sound to reverberate throughout your entire body.
6. At any time that your mind wanders, without judgment, gently bring it back to the sound in the recording.
7. Practice this Mindfulness Technique for 1-5 minutes.
8. After practicing this Mindfulness Technique for a week, try and increase the number of minutes in your Mindfulness practice; you may want to add one minute at a time until you can sit for 10 minutes.
9. Mindfulness practice is best done daily to truly notice the benefits.

Notes:

All life forms express themselves through sound. You may notice that you associate certain sounds with either positive or negative experiences, but most certainly sounds will take you back into past experiences or bring you into the present moment. Notice how you feel when you hear sounds that have a negative effect on you and explore the feeling.

Extensions:

Tibetan singing bowls make for fabulous sound meditation instruments. Meditate on the sound until you no longer hear it.

Also, if you can, try and practice sound mindfulness technique while outside – remember that Mindfulness Techniques are not practiced in the sun. You may want to focus on a water feature, birdsong (make sure there are enough birds to allow this to happen), or on a windy day sit amongst pine trees and listen to the sound of the wind.

The practice of Yoga to empower your wellbeing:

The Following Yoga poses will help enliven the Heart Chakra. I've chosen one pose that you can do while seated in a chair at work – Seated Twist Pose – this is an excellent pose to work on the central nervous system, but also opens the chest (enlivening the Heart Chakra) hence my choice for this week. The two other poses, Cobra and Dancer (Standing Bow), may not be able to be done in a work environment, but both are helpful in enlivening the heart chakra and both are gentle backbends. Dancer (Standing Bow) is a one-legged balance pose (the pose I'm demonstrating on the opening PowerPoint Slide), so it's also a great balance pose to practice. Cobra Pose is a pose practiced in most yoga classes, and again is a great pose for you to learn if you don't know it already. There are no videos of me doing the latter 2 poses as of yet, so I'm including a link to what I consider are good videos for you to watch. However, please note that I've included very detailed written explanations of the poses, so please read these first before practicing the poses – even if you have practiced them for years.

Direct Aim: To bring about a sense of wellbeing and quiet to the mind; to tone, strengthen and lengthen the muscles of the body; to establish union within mind, body, soul, Spirit and environment.

Indirect Aim: To achieve, maintain, and preserve health and prevent disease in both mind and body.

Procedure:

Seated Twist Pose – on a chair:

1. Sit on the edge of a chair with your knees bent at 90 degrees, your feet flat on the floor and hip distance apart.
2. Inhale, then on an exhale turn your torso to the right without moving your legs but moving through the mid back.
3. Place your right hand towards the back of the chair in the direction you've turned your body.
4. Place your left hand on the outside of your right knee.
5. Your head will automatically follow the torso and you will find you are looking over your right shoulder or in that direction.
6. Now bring awareness to your sit bones – both sit bones are evenly balanced on the chair.
7. Sit tall on both sit bones making sure the crown of your head is held tall so that your spine is not only twisting but also lengthening and your shoulders are back and down.
8. Notice the stretch across the shoulders and in the outer hip area.
9. Take about 5 inhalations and exhalations in this position.
10. On an exhalation twist back facing forwards and bring your hands to your knees.
11. Repeat this pose on the left side.

Notes:

In Yoga, twist poses are used to cool, relax and detoxify the body. These poses also lengthen the spine, calm the central nervous system, massage the kidneys and liver and in the seated twist pose as per above lengthen the muscles around the chest, ribs and shoulders.

Procedure:

Cobra Pose:

1. Lie prone (face forward) on a mat or a towel on the floor.
2. Stretch your legs backwards making sure that the tops of your feet are on the floor.
3. Place your hands under your shoulders while hugging the elbows back into your body – now spread your hands open and push your fingertips into the floor.
4. Press the tops of the feet, thighs and the pubis firmly into the floor.
5. On an inhalation, begin to lift your upper torso off the floor – you can stay here with your elbows bent (a little like chicken arms) near your body with the elbows facing backwards.
6. You may choose to straighten the arms to lift the chest off the floor while making sure you push through your fingertips.
7. Importantly, you need to make sure that you only move upwards to the height at which you can maintain a connection with the floor through your pubis to your legs.
8. Press the tailbone downwards.
9. Firm but don't harden the buttocks.
10. Your shoulder blades should be pressed downwards against your back.
11. Expand the side ribs forward while lifting through the sternum but be careful not to push the front ribs forward. In this position you are enlivening the heart chakra by opening up through the chest.
12. This is a backbend so attempt to evenly distribute the backbend throughout the entire spine.
13. Hold the pose anywhere from 15 to 30 seconds, breathing easily.
14. On an exhalation, release back to the floor.
15. Repeat several times always remembering to inhale up into the backbend and exhale downwards to the floor.

Note:

Cobra Pose has quite a few benefits for the body. The important ones for what we are trying to activate are the following: Invigorates the heart, increases flexibility, opens the chest and helps relieve stress and fatigue.

Link for Cobra Pose Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEraplwtKrs>

Procedure:

Dancer Pose or Standing Bow:

1. Stand in Mountain Pose.
2. Prepare to shift your weight onto your right foot and balance on your right leg making sure you are lifting up at the knee and engaging the quadriceps.
3. Then lift your left heel toward your left buttock as you bend the left knee.

4. Take your left hand and hold on to left foot or ankle while externally rotating your shoulder.
5. At this point make sure that both your knees are close together to stabilize the body and bring you back to your mid-line.
6. Continue to activate your standing leg's quadriceps and make sure that you are pressing all four corners of the standing leg's foot into the floor.
7. You can stay here as this is the first expression of the pose, but make sure that you are standing as upright as you can in this variation of the pose. (In this position, the backbend is not yet activated.) You can also lift the right arm upwards near the right ear as you stay in this variation of the pose.
8. To practice the full expression of the pose, maintain the standing leg's position, but now kick back with the left leg into your left hand.
9. While kicking back with the leg into the hand, move the torso forward extending the right arm, palm facing downwards, forwards and parallel to the floor.
10. It's very important to keep kicking back into the left hand when the right leg is used as the balancing leg – this activates the backbend and opens the chest which helps enliven the heart chakra and maintains your balance.
11. Stay in the pose for 20 to 30 seconds. Then release the grasp on the foot, place the left foot back onto the floor, and repeat for the same length of time on the other side.
12. Please note, if you decide to practice the first variation of the pose on the right leg, then you must practice it on the left leg – ensuring that you balance the body completely at all times.

Note:

Dancer Pose (Standing Bow Pose) is a wonderful pose to strengthen and stretch your ankles, legs, thighs, chest, abdomen and hips. It of course also improves balance and develops focus and concentration. It's a very invigorating pose.

Link for Beginning Dancer Pose: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpTze_-rqKE

Link for Intermediate Dancer Pose: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVugPs3IKG4>

Please note: the instructor here suggests keeping a flexion in the foot and hand in her instructions. I have not been trained this way. In certain poses in yoga it is very important to keep a dorsi flexion of the foot when the knee is bent, but my physiology instructor and all my yoga instructors have never said that it's necessary for this pose – in fact the full expression of the pose could not happen with the foot flexion. I also follow an orthopedic surgeon who is also a yoga instructor, Dr. Ray Long, and he does not recommend this for Dancer Pose. However, if you have issues with your knees, no harm can be done by keeping the flexion in the foot of the bent knee. That being said, it is important, from my training that you stay with the arm position as I've described in the procedure above, as it is what allows you to balance. I chose these videos as the instructor does give easy instructions and demonstrates the modified version of the pose. In the links I've given you, she does not demonstrate the full expression of the pose.

Now, on to further discussion about the Chakra which enlivens this particular Law (Principle):

The Anahata (Heart) Chakra: we associate the color green with this chakra. Our love, forgiveness and compassion arise from this chakra. According to yoga, the heart chakra is in the middle of the chest, and some say that this

chakra is flanked by the physical heart on the left of the body and the heart of the soul on the right of the body. The seed mantra to enliven the Anahata Chakra is: “YAM.” Please note: if anyone has cancer we generally don’t use the color green. Green is about growth and proliferation and we do not want to encourage proliferation of cancer cells. In this instance the color pink can be used instead of green.

Fun fact: did you know that dogs have 2 heart chakras? If you’re a dog lover and know and understand dogs, this may well make lots of sense to you.

Wellbeing Technique of Breath - Alternate Nostril Breathing:

As we move along learning new breathing techniques, I’m going to continue with increasingly more challenging techniques. It’s important that you feel comfortable while practicing breathing techniques; if you find that you are dizzy or at all light-headed please do not continue with the technique without checking in with me first.

Breath: Alternate Nostril Breathing (Channel Clearing Breath – Sanskrit: Nadi Shodhana)

Direct Aim: To reduce mental turbulence often caused by anxiety and insomnia and helps foster a clear and alert mind. To balance the left and right hemispheres of the brain and body. To connect the mind and body; to calm the central nervous system thereby calming both the mind and body.

Indirect Aim: To achieve, maintain, and preserve health and prevent disease in both mind and body.

Procedure:

1. Using your right hand, position your thumb over your right nostril closing the nostril.
2. Take an effortless breath in through your left nostril, at the end of the inhalation close the left nostril using your ring finger.
3. Lift your thumb away from your right nostril and exhale effortlessly through the right nostril.
4. Keeping the left nostril closed inhale effortlessly through the right nostril, at the end of the inhalation close the right nostril with your thumb and open the left nostril to exhale through the left nostril.
5. Continue to breathe effortlessly alternating between left and right nostrils.
6. After completing 10-20 full breaths finish the breathing technique by exhaling through the left nostril.

Notes:

It is important to start this version of Alternate Nostril breathing through the left nostril and end the technique through the left nostril.

Extensions:

Alternative way of doing Alternate Nostril Breathing: breathe in and out through your right nostril 10 times in a row, then breathe in and out through your left nostril 10 times in a row. Notice the different effect on the body to alternating between left and right nostrils and breathing through each nostril several times in a row. In

Yoga and Ayurveda, it is believed that breath through the right nostril is energizing and breath through the left nostril is calming and soothing.

Alternate Nostril Breathing using breath holds: practice as per the directions above but breathe in for 4 counts, hold your breath for 4 counts and then breathe out through the alternate nostril for 4 counts.

Some more advanced techniques include specific duration ratios for the inhalation and exhalation. A qualified teacher in these instances should teach these techniques.

Stacking Techniques

As I mentioned last week, we will never add anything to the Mindfulness technique, but this week, I'm going to explain to you how you can include a breathing technique with the Mindfulness technique.

Let's consider stacking both Alternate Nostril Breathing with our Sound Mindfulness experience. Firstly, find yourself in a quiet location away from direct sunlight. Then practice at least 5 rounds of Alternate Nostril Breathing before going into your Sound Mindfulness practice. Once you've finished the Mindfulness practice, finish off with another 5 rounds of Alternate Nostril Breathing. Even though we don't practice the two techniques simultaneously, we create a compounded effect on the mind and body by adding Alternate Breath as a beginning and ending to the mindfulness practice. As Alternate Nostril Breathing clears the channels and balances the left and right hemispheres of the brain and body, it is the best breathing technique to incorporate before and after a mindfulness or meditation practice. From now on, I encourage you to always begin and end your mindfulness/meditation practices with Alternate Nostril Breathing.

We also often recommend that you do affirmations or visualizations before going into a meditation. So, if you can, for a couple of seconds after you've completed the Alternate Nostril Breathing rounds, practice one of the visualizations or repeat an affirmation several times before starting the Mindfulness experience.

Now, let's consider some of the other techniques we learnt this week and look at how we can stack these to compound our wellbeing benefits and to save us some time.

We had three yoga poses all of which would benefit from the addition of our Success (Ujjayi) Breathing technique. So, as you practice any of the poses always remember to breathe deeply using the diaphragm and restrict the back of your throat to encourage the activation of the vagus nerve.

While practicing the 3 different poses from this week, try intoning the seed mantra which enlivens the law and opens up the Heart Chakra. As you find yourself twisted around in Seated Chair Pose, inhale deeply and intone YAM. As you hold your choice of Dancer Pose expression, inhale deeply and intone YAM. In Cobra Pose intone YAM when you are in the lifted position.

Practicing daily while trying to include as many of the wellbeing techniques that you can for each practice time. As always, I suggest that you practice one or several techniques three times per day for about 5 minutes per time, as this will bring noticeable benefits to both your mind and body in a relatively short period of time.

Remember, that stacking the techniques as much as you can, compounds the benefits of the different techniques and makes your practice more powerful, however, you can use any of the techniques separately at any point in time whenever the moment is right for you.

And, just as another reminder: we are all unique, so therefore, your practice is unique to you and as such you are the one who will know best what works for you. The techniques, however, will benefit everyone as evidence by the research.