Chakra Practices
A few examples of how to strengthen and restore the *Chakras*

I. Introduction:

Understanding and working with the *Chakras* can be very useful on our path to creating a life well lived.

We build a strong personal foundation, giving us confidence to fully engage in life. With this confidence we are better able to fully experience each moment, unfettered by fear and unresolved emotions. This opens us to be better able to recognize and experience positive emotions. This foundation helps us find the courage to do the self-study necessary to discover our particular strengths.

Our firm foundation, and the confidence it provides can propel us into engaging and meaningful activities. We cultivate the skills necessary to develop and maintain nurturing relationships. We develop empathy and see how we are all connected to each other. This makes it easier to identify opportunities to serve others and, by doing so, live a life of purpose.

How do we develop an understanding of the *Chakras* sufficient to take advantage of what they have to offer? Fortunately, there are some tremendous resources to assist us, including two books by Anodea Judith: *Wheels of Life*[1] and *Eastern Body Western Mind*.[2] In both books Dr. Judith offers valuable information about the energies of each *Chakra* and suggests ways to help us strengthen and, as required, restore the energies of each *Chakra*.

Tonight we will take a brief look at some examples offered by Dr. Judith as a way of acquainting us with the power of the *Chakras* and the resources available in these books to help us work with that power. By all means, if this subject is of interest to you, strongly consider getting these books for yourself.

II. First *Chakra*: *Muladhara*, the "root" *Chakra*.

The function of this *Chakra,* located at the base of the spine, is survival and grounding.[3] Its purpose is to create the foundation we need as a human being in order to thrive in the world.[4]

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[1] Judith, Anodea (2004 ed.). *Wheels of Life.* St.Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications.
[2] Judith, Anodea (2004 ed.). *Eastern Body Western Mind*. Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts.
[3] *Wheels of Life,* at 58.
[4] *Eastern Body Western Mind*, at 52; *see also*, Dorigan, William (2013). *Finding the Midline*. Winter Park, CO: LuHen Publications, LLC., at 209-210.

To strengthen this *Chakra*, Dr. Judith suggests a grounding meditation in which she asks the reader to sit in a chair and then guides the reader into proper alignment. From this position, she then provides cues to help the reader ground into the earth, the element associated with this *Chakra,* establishing a sense of strong foundation.[5]

From my experience, the seemingly simple practice of grounding helps me when I find myself in a stressful situation. By rooting down into the floor I've learned to associate that action with my own personal power. That power comes from the lessons learned from the people that raised me, taught me, coached me, or otherwise interacted with me in ways that helped me grown into an independent person. That power comes from the love and support of many people and each time I root into the ground, or floor, I am reminded of that love and support. The power comes also from my own hard-earned work, academically, physically, intellectually, and spiritually. It comes from the knowledge that I've had the courage to examine my own behavior and take responsibility for it, even as I worked to modify patterns of thought and behavior so as to live more gracefully.

Returning to my reference to a stressful situation, the next time you find yourself about to get into an argument or say something that might be hurtful, press your feet into the ground and take a few breaths, rooting yourself firmly into the solid floor as a way of summoning the memories of all the support and hard work that preceded the moment. Allow yourself the space of just a few seconds to absorb those memories, restoring your sense of confidence to the point that you don't need to say something out of fear, insecurity, or other unhelpful emotion. Let this action of returning to your foundation help you avoid saying something that moves you away from positive emotion, away from the cultivation of a meaningful relationship.

To restore this *Chakra* Dr. Judith offers several recommendations, including simply standing in proper alignment. She says that standing this way is an assertion of our personal power, teaching us to stand up for ourselves.[6] Again, as I mentioned, this simple act helps us remember our own power and capabilities.

III. Second *Chakra*: *Swadhisthana*, the "sweetness" *Chakra*.

The function of this *Chakra,* located at the sacrum, is desire, pleasure, sexuality, and procreation.[7] Its purpose is movement and connection, critical components for finding our purpose in the world, as well as developing and maintaining healthy relationships.[8]

To strengthen this *Chakra*, Dr. Judith suggests a water meditation, water being the element associated with this *Chakra* in part because water represents movement.

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[5] *Wheels of Life,* at 86-87.
[6] *Eastern Body Western Mind,* at 96-97.
[7] *Wheels of Life,* at 106.
[8] *Eastern Body Western Mind*, at 104.

She offers a water meditation involving drinking a glass of water as she cues the reader to certain feelings created with that action.[9]

Another practice that I've used is to visualize a stream – something every yoga student has been asked to do numerous times! I visualize a powerful current in a narrow mountain stream, maybe three to five feet wide. I watch the water forcefully flowing, unimpeded, until it faces a large rock sitting on the shallow riverbed. The water doesn't stop its flow when confronted by the rock and the rock doesn't get up and leave so the water can have its way. Rather, the rock sits, because it is a strong, heavy rock and the water parts its way and flows around it and then keeps moving downstream, even more powerful for having to focus and coalesce with a different, yet important energy.

This is how we develop nurturing relationships. We want to be with people who don't impede our flow, but cause us to make shifts based on the realities of the world – people who honor who we are but also offer us opportunities to think, accommodate, and become more significant in the world.

To restore this *Chakra* Dr. Judith writes that healing this *Chakra* involves finding balance in the movement of our emotions, encouraging our excesses or deficiencies to move toward the center. We identify restricted patterns of emotional movement as well as patterns where such movement is excessive.[10]

IV. Third *Chakra*: *Manipura*, the "lustrous gem."

The function of this *Chakra*, located in the area of the solar plexus, is will, power, and assertiveness.[11] Its purpose is transformation.[12] To bring more positive emotion, engagement, meaning, accomplishment, and nurturing relationships into our lives, we necessarily have to study ourselves to identify what holds us back. Then we need the courage to take the steps necessary to transform our patterns of thought and behavior, making changes in them as needed.

To strengthen this *Chakra*, Dr. Judith suggests a breathing exercise called "Breath of Fire." To do this, a person sits in an upright position and engages in a form of breath work cued by Dr. Judith. This connects the person doing the exercise to the Fire element, representative of the heat and light of transformation.[13]

To restore this *Chakra* Dr. Judith recommends, among other suggestions, that her clients give up being attached to feeling safe. [14]

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[9] *Wheels of Life,* at 135.
[10] *Eastern Body Western Mind,* at 150-151.
[11] *Wheels of Life,* at 150.
[12] *Eastern Body Western Mind*, at 166.
[13] *Wheels of Life,* at 176.
[14] *Eastern Body Western Mind,* at 216.

V. Fourth *Chakra*: *Anahata*, the "*unstruck*" *Chakra*.

The function of this *Chakra*, located at the heart, is love.[15] Its purpose is love and balance. [16]

As I write in my book, *Finding the Midline*, to live a life of well-being we ultimately have to decide if we are going to the view everybody as separate from us – not our problem – or, instead, as individual, unique expressions of Spirit living in the world in many diverse forms. If we choose the latter viewpoint, we stop drawing lines as to which people we care about and which ones we allow to be thrown to the wolves. We stop drawing those lines because making such distinctions ultimately diminishes our capacity for love. We either are love or we are not. [17]

Once we make a choice to be love, our choices automatically move us into a life well lived. When our mind is, by default, operating out of inclusion instead of separation, we aren't hampered by rote responses of fear, anger, envy, and jealousy. We don't view everybody with an attitude of scarcity. Freed of these powerfully inhibiting feelings we are open to experiencing more positive emotion. We recognize the opportunity to engage in meaningful activities. We become somebody whom others wish to befriend. Life becomes full.

To strengthen this *Chakra*, Dr. Judith suggests a deep breathing exercise in which we make our inhalations and exhalations full and watch the breath.[18] This helps connect us to the Air element, associated with this *Chakr*a and representative of knowledge, openness, and spaciousness. [19] These qualities are essential to creating an increased sense of awareness of life's Midlines, those opportunities to bring into our life a rich experience.[20]

To restore this *Chakr*a Dr. Judith suggests a number of exercises, including an interesting visualization practice in which the reader imagines somebody, a "fantasy" person, such as an ideal parent or lover. She then guides the reader through an exercise in which the reader infuses their cells with the feelings associated with this fantasy, using these feelings to help recharge this *Chakra*.[21]

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[15] *Wheels of Life,* at 190.
[16] *Eastern Body Western Mind*, at 222.
[17] Dorigan, William (2013). *Finding the Midline*. Winter Park, CO: LuHen Publications, LLC., at 216-217.
[18] *Wheels of Life*, at 216.
[19] *Wheels of Life*, at 196.
[20] *See, generally, Finding the Midline.*
[21] *Eastern Body Western Mind,* at 281.

VI. Fifth *Chakra*: *Visuddha*, the "purification" *Chakra*.

The function and purpose of this *Chakra*, located in the throat, is communication and creativity.[22] This *Chakra* is associated with the Space element because sound is represents the energetic field of vibrations that make up our universe.[23] We use sound and words to experience and create our world and so this *Chakra*, involved with issues of communication, creativity, listening and finding our own voice in the world,[24] is critical to creating a life well lived.

By finding our own voice we embrace our particular signature skills and then use them in a way that serves others. We become more valued as a friend because of our ability to effectively communicate with others.

To strengthen this *Chakra*, Dr. Judith suggests playing charades because of its ability to build communication skills. She also suggests taking vows of silence, even if just for a short while, so as to open up other senses, allowing us to tune in to what is going on around us.[25]

To restore this *Chakra* Dr. Judith recommends, among other suggestions, a deep listening exercise in which the reader sits in a quiet place and identifies as many sounds as he or she can.[26]

VII. Sixth *Chakra*: *Ajna*, the "command" *Chakra*.

The function of this *Chakra*, located in the center of the head slightly above eye level, is seeing and intuition.[27] Its purpose is pattern recognition.[28] This *Chakra* is associated with light because we learn about the world through sensory perceptions based on how perceive, both visually and psychically.[29] When we are skilled at this we are able to easily see the use for our particular gifts and find engaging activities through which we offer them in a significant way.

To strengthen this *Chakra*, Dr. Judith recommends several mediation exercises, as well as a photo blink exercise to help us improve our visual observation skills.[30] This involves looking at a person, then opening and closing the eyes, then observing what arises in our mind.

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[22] *Wheels of Life*, at 234; *Eastern Body, Western Mind*, at 286.
[23] *Wheels of Life*, at 241-243.
[24] *Eastern Body Western Mind*, at 286.
[25] *Wheels of Life*, at 266.
[26] *Eastern Body Western Mind*, at 325.
[27] *Wheels of Life,* at 279.
[28] *Eastern Body Western Mind*, at 338.
[29] *Wheels of Life*, at 282.
[30] *Wheels of Life*, at 308.

To restore this *Chakra*, Dr. Judith recommends, among other suggestions, dream work, the study of mythology, and visualization exercises.[31]

I find that it helps me to spend some time reading or watching movies about our various mythological heroes. These characters became mythological heroes because of something inspiring about them. They help us learn how to think in metaphor, learning how to see one thing and from that draw a connection to something else.

While yoga lore provides great examples, such as Hanuman, the Monkey God of the *Ramayama*, there are other resources for inspiration. Lately, after watching a movie about Robin Hood, I was moved to think about the value of such a courageous person standing up for the masses in the face of abuse by those in power. Thinking about this character inspires me to be more courageous about these issues as they exist today.

VIII. Seventh *Chakra*: *Sahasrara*, the "thousand fold" *Chakra*.

The function and purpose of this *Chakra*, located at the top of the head, are understanding.[32] The word "understanding" here refers to a divine intelligence by which we see the underlying purpose and connection of everything.[33]
To strengthen this *Chakra* Dr. Judith suggest an exercise in which the reader follows his or her thoughts back to the thought that caused this thought to arise, then back to the preceding thought, all the way to the origin.[34] The element associated with this *Chakra* is Thought.

To restore this *Chakra* Dr. Judith writes that this *Chakra* involves recognizing the reality of our spiritual nature.[35] She recommends a number of exercises, including sitting quietly and relaxing, being open to whatever thoughts arise.[36]

[31] *Eastern Body Western Mind*, at 375-387.
[32] *Wheels of Life*, at 317; *Eastern Body Western Mind*, at 390.
[33] *Wheels of Life*, at 319.
[34] *Wheels of Life*, at 340-341.
[35] *Eastern Body Western Mind*, at 421.
[36] *Eastern Body Western Mind*, at 423.

IX. Conclusion.

Studying the *Chakras* is a great way to recognize where we hold patterns of thought and behavior that get in the way of creating a life well lived. It is also a valuable way of enhancing our ability to connect to our own inner strengths as well as with each other.

At the end of *Eastern Body Western Mind* Dr. Judith includes a section entitled "Putting It All Together" in which she outlines a chart method for the reader to use for assessing which *Chakras* are excessive or deficient. This can be an important tool for the reader to use in order to delve into *Chakra* work. [37]

[37] *Eastern Body Western Mind*, at 443-450.