

"When the heart is open, and the mind is bright with curiosity, every moment is an opportunity for growth and unfolding. All objects and events become teachers and we discover a wondrous sense of connectedness which both heals and brings deeper knowledge of how to help others."

Tarchin

MEDITATIVE FIRST AID

A Doorway to Health

TARCHIN



WANGAPEKA BOOKS

1990

CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| THE STOP EXERCISE | 4 |
| A REFRESHING SUMMER SHOWER | 5 |
| COMMONSENSE THAT WORKS | 6 |
| CENTRED AND SPACIOUS | 7 |
| HEADACHES AND NECK TENSION | 9 |
| THE INNER SMILE | 12 |
| THE HEALING BUBBLE | 14 |
| DEEP RELAXATION | 16 |
| PEACE COMES WITH OPENNESS | 18 |
| LOVING KINDNESS | 20 |

ISBN 0-9597962-0-7

Reprinted as a pdf file 2004

© Wangapeka Books 1999

Wangapeka Books 1990

P.O. Box 80-141

Green Bay, Auckland 7

New Zealand

Wangapeka Study & Retreat Centre

R.D.2 Wakefield

Nelson, New Zealand

Ph: (054) 34-221

Dear Reader

This booklet arose as a result of a telephone conversation with a close relative. She had been peripherally involved with healing and awareness practice for many years. During our conversation I asked about her health and she, with a slightly embarrassed voice, "confessed" she was now on medication for high blood pressure. When I inquired if she was doing any meditative work to help her condition, she replied that she had dabbled in many books and teachings and methods without really practising any of them and now that she really needed something, she didn't know where to begin.

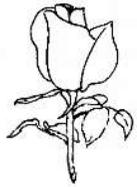
I reflected on this for a number of days and realised that her situation was not unique. Many people understand that physical health and mental attitudes are intimately related. Many people have been exposed to a broad spectrum of New Age and Eastern inspired teachings speaking of personal development and healing. There are bookshops brimming with attractive volumes on the subject and yet, when it comes right down to it, one or two simple exercises that you actually do are worth far more than contemplating the many exercises one could do.

The seed idea for this book was planted.

Here are ten simple exercises that will help balance your energies and bring more vitality into your life. They are not accompanied by any theory or teaching. There are books enough on this. These are really presented for people who just want to get on with something direct. Think of them as meditative first-aid. If you practise them on a regular daily basis they will strengthen your body's natural resistance to illness and speed the healing process. They will also help relieve headache, depression, high blood pressure and insomnia and any general conditions of stress.

Out of a vast range of exercises, I have found these ten work particularly well for people, being both easy to learn and easy to do. Best of all, they are effective and most of them can be done in fifteen minutes or less. I suggest you begin by browsing through the book and trying the ones that appeal to you. Eventually you may want to work more deeply with some of them. In that case take an exercise and practise it once a day for a week. Then take another and practise it once a day for a week. Just continue like this until you've worked through all the ones you like and then go through the cycle again. Each time you repeat an exercise you will go a little deeper. Eventually you will come to appreciate the calm, clear centre of openness and loving-kindness that nurtures all of us.

Best wishes
Tarchin



THE STOP EXERCISE

This is a very simple exercise that doesn't take long to do but you'll find it refreshing and insightful. At this very moment while you are reading these words, **STOP!** Freeze the body posture. Don't make it stiff. Just stop the movement as if you have been caught by a stop-action photograph



Now, starting with your head, sensitively feel your way down through the body, checking it out for places of tension. When you find a tension spot, don't verbally analyse it. Just let it relax a little and then continue checking. Pay particular attention to your face, shoulders and neck, abdomen, legs and feet.

There are many moments in the day when you are simply waiting. Waiting for the lights to change. Waiting for something to come up on the computer screen. Waiting for the phone to be answered. Try this stop exercise in these moments. Also, if you catch yourself feeling uptight, pause and do this stop exercise..



A lot of our tensions are maintained through unconscious habit. If you practise this a number of times a day, you will be surprised how much more relaxed you feel. After a while the process of frequently checking the body for tensions and releasing them becomes a bit of a habit itself. This way they don't really get a chance to build up.



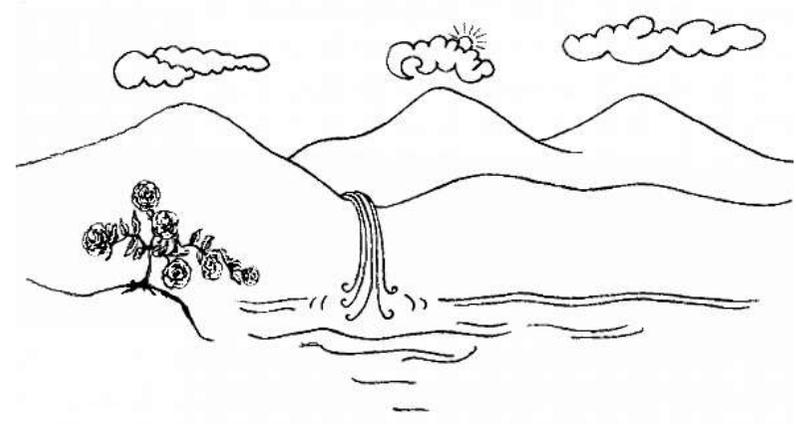
A REFRESHING SUMMER SHOWER

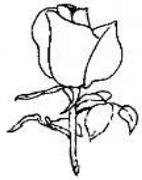
Think of the times you've felt stuck in states of negativity. This exercise will help to quickly and sometimes dramatically change a low energy, negative state. You know; the ones that feel lethargic and for ever. It's not difficult to shift these energies into a healthy positive flow.

1. Sit, stand or lie in a position that allows your back to be straight.
2. Use the tips of the fingers of one hand to lightly tap the upper part of your breastbone. Don't do this too hard. Let it be light and rapid like the staccato beat of rain in a refreshing summer shower.

3. At the same time breathe fully and deeply, in and out, a number of times. While you're doing the tapping and breathing, use your tongue to gently massage the roof of your mouth.
4. Throughout all this, close your eyes. Imagine that you are in a beautiful place in nature; a sunset, a waterfall, wide open blue skies, mountains and crystal clear air. Imagine some place where you have really felt a moment of beauty or joy or inspiration.

Bringing together the tapping, the breathing, the massaging and the imagination in this way will rapidly shift the energies and allow you to get moving again.



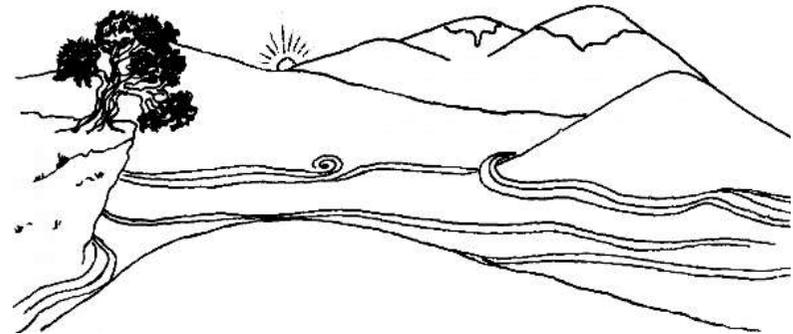


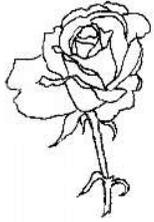
COMMON SENSE THAT WORKS

When you get home from work, take 15 minutes to do something that will really refresh you. If your energies are too speedy and agitated this exercise will slow them down. If they are dull and lethargic it will perk them up.

1. Take a shower and put on different clothes.
2. Lie down on your back on a firm flat surface as is suggested on page 10.
3. Breathe deeply in and out, in a relaxed, unhurried manner for between five and ten minutes.

4. While you are breathing feel the sensations in the body. Allow good feelings to expand and let tensions drop away.
5. Finish by taking a few minutes to breathe naturally and to relax into the overall feeling that is present.





CENTRED & SPACIOUS

When we feel centred, we feel good. Gone is the sense of being crowded or rushed. What remains is a lovely spacious quality that is profoundly healing. Try this exercise while you're sitting. With a bit of familiarity you'll be able to do it while standing or even when walking.

Sit comfortably and take a few full deep breaths. All the way in and all the way out. As you exhale let the body relax into the chair; deeper and deeper.



Front

With your eyes open, become aware of the space in front of you. Note the various objects and get a feeling for the distance they are from you. In your imagination, look right through and beyond them. If you are sitting in a room, you may see the wall and then imagine the street on the other side of the wall and the houses across the road and the trees behind them and the beach and the sea and the sky and so on. Extend your sense of space in front as far as your imagination will allow. The main thing is to develop a tangible feeling of a vast space in front of you.

Behind

Then go through the same process behind. Imagine you have eyes in the back of your head and expand the feeling of space as far as you can in that direction. Add this to the feeling of space in front so that you are held in a sandwich of space.

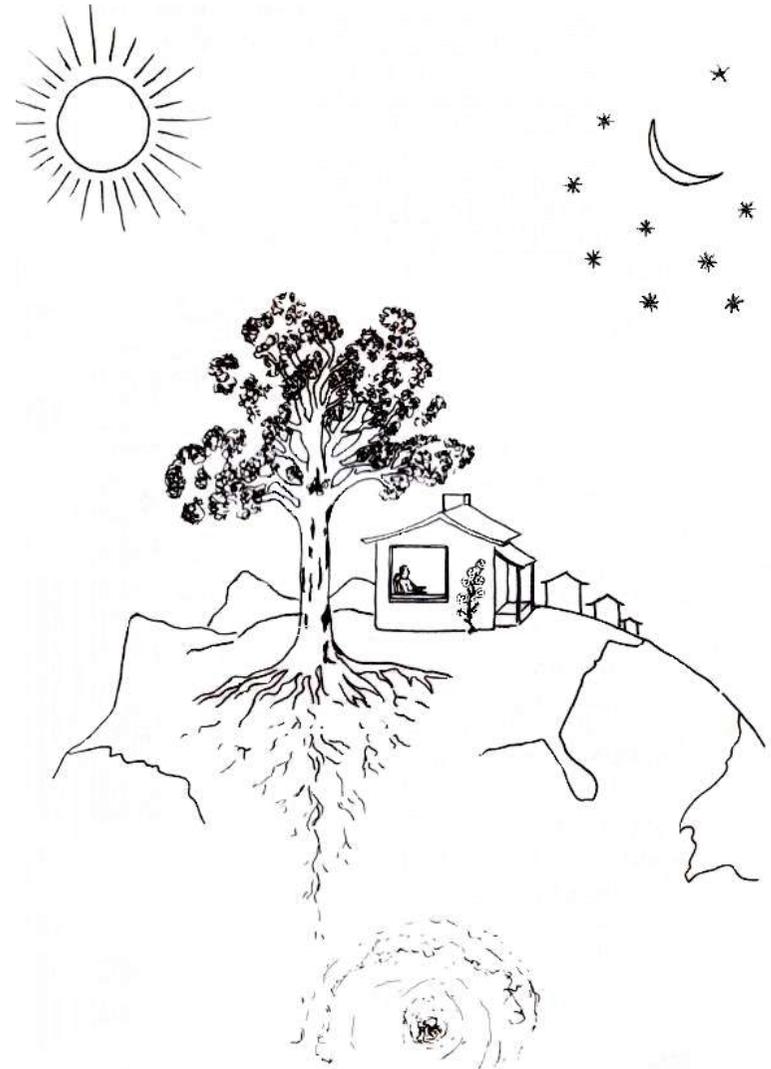
Right and Left

Now do the same process with the right direction and then with the left. Strengthen the sense that you are at the centre of an infinitely large wheel of space.

Up and Down

Finally, become aware of the space above you. Extend it up, through the roof and out to the stars. Then add the awareness of the space below; the floor, the ground, the bedrock and possibly right out the other side of the planet. Once you have established all of these directions, (front, back, right, left, up, and down) then intensify the feeling of being in the centre of a vast sphere of space. Recognise the quality of mind that is present at this moment. It may feel wonderfully calm and at the same time very alert.

Try taking this state into your daily life. With practice, you will be able to contact the feeling of being spaciouly centred in just a matter of seconds

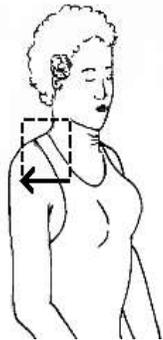




HEADACHES AND NECK TENSION

Many headaches are caused by neck tensions. If you have a headache, before you take an aspirin, why don't you try this.

Loosening Shoulders

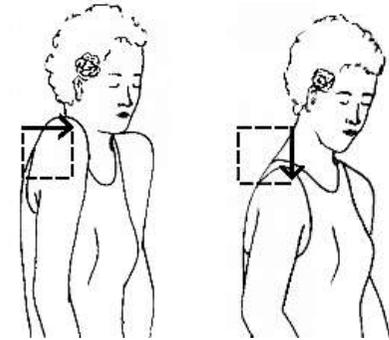
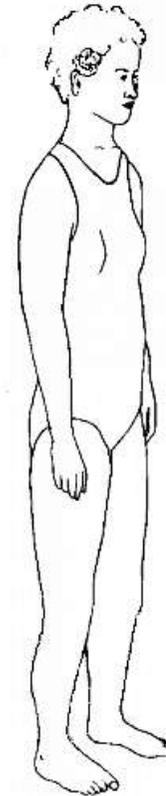


Imagine your shoulders are in a box. Move both shoulders back across the floor of the box as far as they will go.



Then raise them up the back wall of the box until they are as high as they will go.

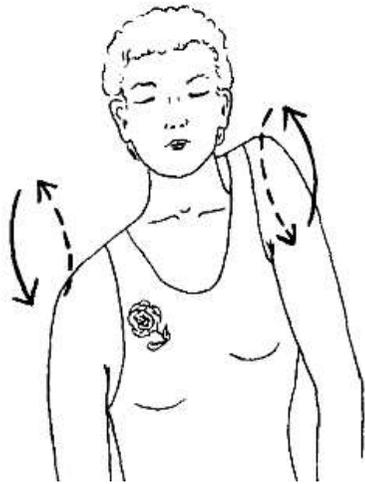
Bring them forward across the top and then down the front of the box. Don't rush the movement. Do it sensitively without straining.



Focus gently at the back of the neck. It may begin to feel warm and soft. Try to be very aware of the movement of the shoulders and neck. Do this three times in one direction and then three times in the reverse direction. After that, repeat the whole process two more times.

When you are finished, let your arms hang by your sides and gently focus on your breathing for about one minute. Then go on to "Rotating Shoulders".

Rotating Shoulders



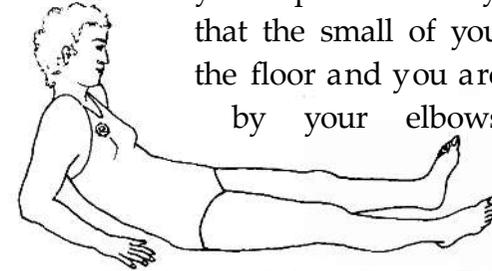
Imagine the square box has become a circle. Move your shoulders around this circle as if you were back peddling on a bicycle. The right shoulder goes forward and up and back. Just as it begins to move down, the left shoulder begins to move forward and up and back. Let the circle be as large as

possible; one shoulder up, the other one down. Relax the abdomen. Focus gently at the spot between the shoulder blades. Continue this movement for between one and three minutes.

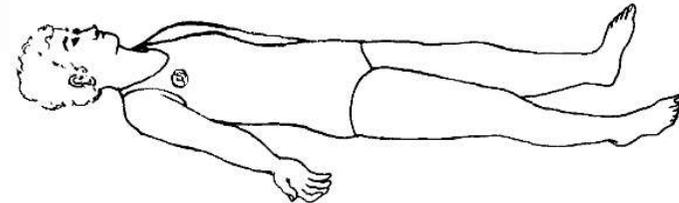
Now concentrate on making the movement as smooth as possible and gradually slow down the rate. Go very sensitively into any feelings that are arising. Go slower and slower until the movement is almost imperceptible and eventually comes to a complete stop. Let the arms hang loosely by the sides and focus gently on the breathing for about a minute.

Lying Down

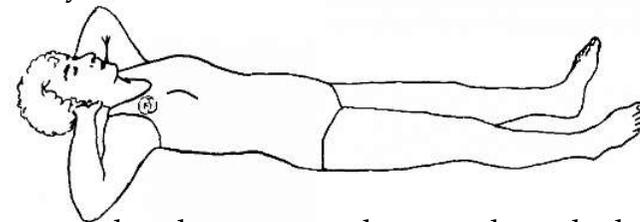
1. Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front.
2. Place your hands beside your hips and lower yourself down so that the small of your back touches the floor and you are being supported by your elbows and forearms.



3. Continue the movement of lying down. Roll your spine onto the floor until your head comes to rest on the floor.

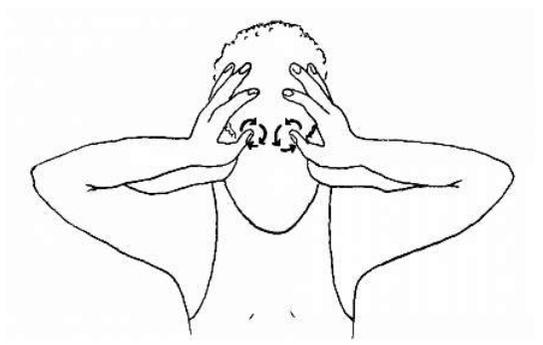


4. Raise your hands and place them on the floor just under your head.



Using your thumbs, massage the area along the base of the skull.

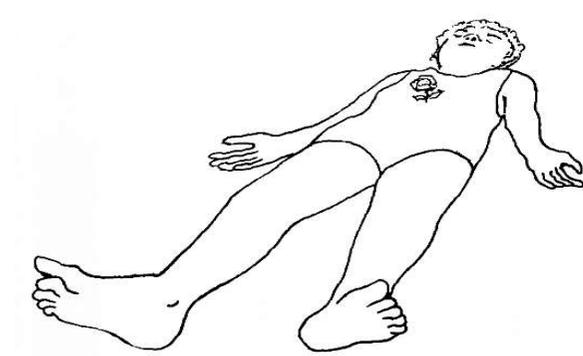
Massaging the Head



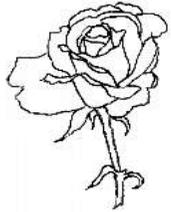
Begin just behind the ears and work towards the spine. Push up with your thumbs and let the weight of your head rest on them. You may find some painful spots. If you do, then pause there and gently rotate the thumbs in a spiral motion. Focus on your breathing and particularly on the out breath. See if you can relax into the pain. This is the quickest way to release the tension. Work the spot for 15 seconds or so and then move on.

When you've finished the base of the skull then use your fingertips to give your head a brisk, vigorous massage. Generally, work up toward the crown of the head. Finish by giving your face and temples some light massage.

Finally, lay your arms down by your sides so that the palms are facing up. Lie there for five minutes gently focusing on the breathing and feeling the body relaxing ever more deeply into the floor.



It is important to give yourself the time to lie down at the end of the exercise. The energies that have been loosened through the physical movements will balance and integrate themselves here. As you relax, study the changes of feelings in the body, the energies and the mind.



THE INNER SMILE

This is an excellent exercise for healing physical problems. It is also very good preventative medicine. As you become more familiar with it you'll find that you can do it in the midst of daily activities. It's easy and pleasurable. The most difficult thing is remembering to do it when you need it.

Eyes

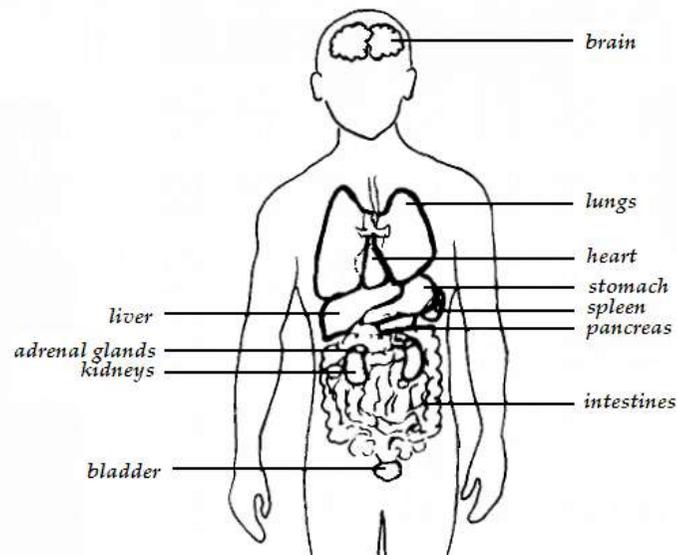
Smile a genuine warm, happy smile. Do it right now as you are reading this. Feel the sensations around your eyes. You don't only smile with your *mouth*. You smile with your *eyes*. Recognise the feeling around your eyes. They may seem light, twinkly, quick-moving, warm, humorous, spacious, crystal-like. People describe the feeling in different ways.

Front Line

Once you have contacted the sense of the smiling, bring that feeling into your *cheeks* and *jaw*. Imagine you are smiling down through your face. Feel the muscles relaxing. Then smile down into your *throat*. Spend a few moments there, smiling and relaxing and then move down to your heart. At each point rest for a few breaths and smile a warm friendly feeling into the area. It may help you to imagine a smile in the area itself beaming back at you. It's not so important to relax an area as to come to a warm loving acceptance of whatever is taking place there. Don't linger too long if a tension doesn't want to let go. Just move on to the next point.

Smile into the *heart* and the *circulating blood*. Imagine thousands of little smiles travelling all through the body. Smile into the lungs. Feel the smile moving with the *breathing*. Then smile into the other major organs; the *liver*, the *pancreas* and *spleen*, the *kidneys* and the *adrenals*, then the *bladder* and lastly the *genital area*. This sequence is called smiling down the front line.

If at any point you lose the feeling of lightness or goodness, then return to your *eyes*. Physically smile a real smile. Recontact the feeling and continue where you left off.



Middle Line

When you have finished the front line then return to the eyes and smile your way down the middle line. Make friends with your digestive system. Begin with the *eyes*. Then smile into your *mouth, tongue, and throat*. You may experience saliva forming. Take a big swallow and imagine the *saliva* as a present of bubbly smile-essence being sent down to the stomach. Smile warmly into the *stomach*; a great big belly smile. Spend a little time here before moving on. Now smile down through the *intestines*, into the *rectum* and finish with the *anus*. This last bit will improve the ability to absorb nutriment and will help heal any problems connected with elimination.

Back Line

Return to the *eyes* and recontact the feeling of the smile. Now smile warmly down the back line. Direct the smile to the *right or left side of the brain*. Smile in there for a while and then go to the other side. Then smile into the *middle of the head* to warm the *pineal, pituitary and hypothalamus gland areas*. Then slowly smile your way *down the spine*, if possible, one vertebra at a time until you come to the *base of the spine*.

All Together

Lastly, return to the *eyes* and smile your way down all three lines simultaneously

At the beginning, don't worry if you can't complete the whole process in one sitting. If you find an area particularly interesting then stay there as long as you like. If it is not so interesting, then move on after a few breaths. Eventually you will find that you can smile through the whole body quite quickly with noticeable effect. The whole point of this work is to develop a warm smiling acceptance of whatever is going on in the body. This acceptance often leads to the dissolution of tensions.

Try it.



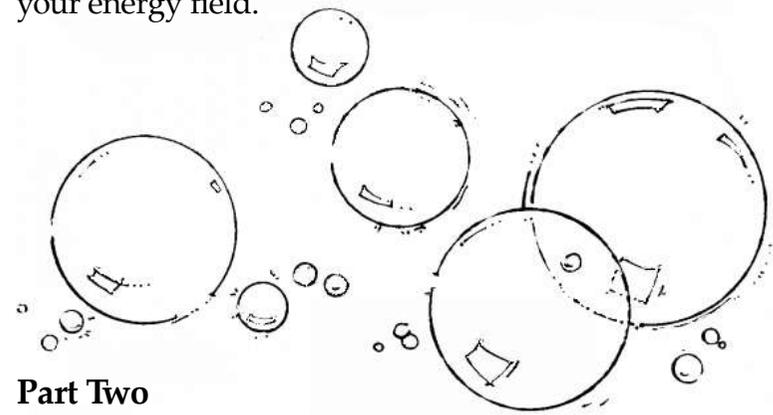
THE HEALING BUBBLE

This exercise is particularly good for people who are feeling depressed. The first time you do it, get some soap bubble blowing equipment and spend a bit of time blowing bubbles. Observe the bubbles very closely and feel the way they float.



Part One

Now imagine that you are inside a large soap bubble. Feel and see the swirling colours around you. The bubble is bright, alive and constantly moving. Work on this until the feeling of the bubble is very strong. If it helps you can play some relaxing music in the background. Imagine that this bubble is an embodiment of your energy field.



Part Two

Once you have a feeling for the bubble then gently focus on your breathing. Imagine that there is a channel of golden light from the crown of your head to the tip of your spine. Each time you breathe, the energy in this channel grows brighter and there seems to be a dancing dialogue between the golden column and the swirling rainbow bubble. With a bit of practice you will find that you can develop this very quickly.

Part Three

Now think of a situation in your life when someone has done something hurtful to you or that you have done something hurtful to another.

Or think of a time you were sick or in an accident.

Think of any situation that caused you to lose energy.

Anger, guilt, resentment, fear, pain etc.

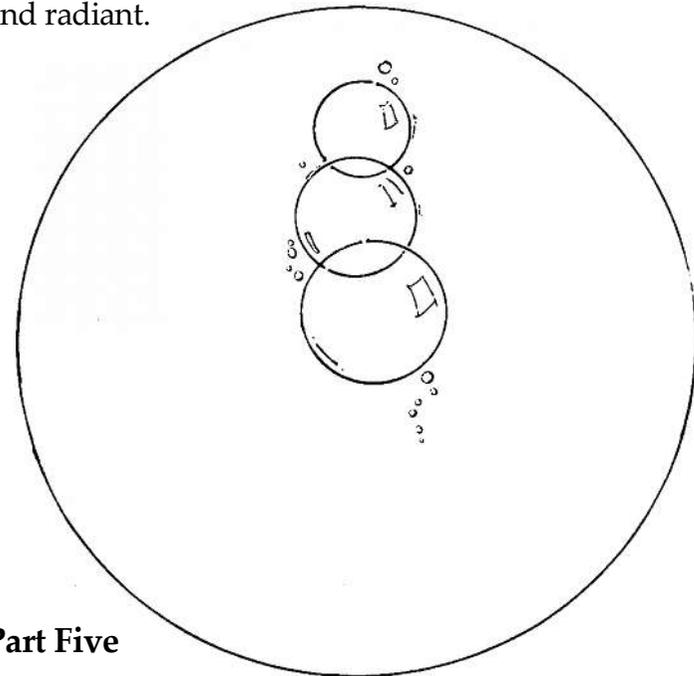
All of these diminish one's energy field. Think of a specific situation, and then mentally call out for that energy to return. Ask it to come back to you.

As you do this, imagine the energy in the form of streams of coloured light coming in from all directions of space. They dissolve into the bubble and strengthen it.

Think of another situation and ask the energy to return. Feel it coming back and merging with the swirling colours of the bubble. Go through as many things as you can think of that have reduced, or diminished your energy in some way and invite the energy to return. This work is not an analysis of negatives. It is a positive restoration. Simply acknowledge the negative energy draining situation, and call back the energy.

Part Four

After you have contacted enough memories, shift the focus back to the breathing. Feel the dynamic play between the column of golden light and the bubble. Each one strengthens the other until both feel brilliant and radiant.



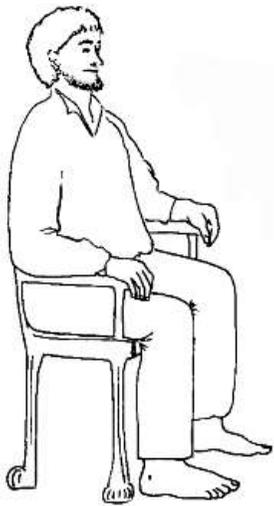
Part Five

At the end let the energy of the bubble merge with the energy of the golden column. Then let this soft radiance diffuse throughout your body. Mentally wish that any positive energy or realisations arising from doing this work be for the benefit of others.



DEEP RELAXATION

This is an old exercise. It used to be called autogenic training which sounds a bit clinical so we'll just call it Deep Relaxation. It takes ten to fifteen minutes to do it really thoroughly.



Sit in a comfortable chair. A straight backed chair is better than a floppy couch. Well designed office chairs can be good. You could practise at work without anyone knowing you were doing so. The best chair would be one of those old captain's chairs with side arms.

Ideally you should sit so that all your joints are relaxed at 90°. The feet rest flat on the floor and are 90° to the calves. The calves are 90° to the thighs so the chair needs to be just the right height. The thighs are 90° to the back. The forearms are 90° to the upper arms (resting on those captain chair arms!). The wrists hang limp over the ends of the chair arms. If your chair doesn't have arms then rest your palms on your thighs. Don't worry if you can't get this exactly. Come as close as you can. Feel solid and comfortable in the chair and then continue.

Direct your attention to your *right hand* and mentally suggest it relax. Stay with it for three or four breaths or until you feel some change. If you don't notice any change don't worry about it, just move on to the *right wrist* and suggest it relax. The wrist and arm may begin to feel a little bit heavy. That's a good sign. Then move to the *forearm, upper arm and shoulder*.

Do the same process beginning with the *left hand* then *left wrist, left forearm, left upper arm, left shoulder*.

Then go to the right foot, *right ankle, right calf, right thigh, right buttock*.

Then *left foot, left ankle, left calf, left thigh, left buttock*.

Take a bit of time with each of these places. Focus your attention into the area and really feel what's there.

It may begin to relax a little. It may become heavy or warm and tingly. If you don't feel you can contact an area very well, that's all right. Stay with it for a few breaths and then move on. Even if an area won't relax immediately you'll often find that as more of the body relaxes, suddenly the area that wouldn't give, just lets go.

Now suggest that your *buttocks* relax.

Then begin to move gradually up the *spine* going to the *small of the back*, the *heart area*, *shoulder blades*, *shoulders*, *neck*, *scalp*.

Now come over the head and down the front.

Moving from *forehead*, *eyes* and *temples*, *cheeks* and *jaw*.
Feel your whole face letting go.

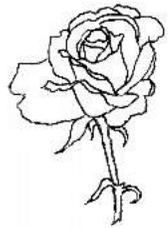
Then move down to the *throat*, the *chest*.

Come to rest at the *abdomen*.

Finish by feeling the whole of your body and letting go into the relaxation even more. (If you want to deepen this even more, gently focus on your breathing while you continue to feel the body and let the tensions relax.)

After you become more familiar with this exercise you will be able to do it quite quickly. What is really important is to recognise the overall feeling of a relaxed body when you have finished and then to carry this feeling with you as long as possible after you get up.





PEACE COMES WITH OPENNESS

Sometimes life seems so hectic that you just want to close down the senses and shut it all out. The problem is, the harder we try to shut out the aggravations, the more agitated and disturbed we become thinking about all those problems out there. True peace doesn't come from making everything around you go the way you want. True peace is a quality of experience that arises from within when you are not battling to control the world around you. It has something to do with acceptance and awakesness and feeling connected with all of life.

This exercise can be done in any posture. Take five or six really full inhalations and exhalations. After that,

spend a couple of minutes focusing on the feeling of the breath passing by the nostrils. Then continue.

Seeing Peacefully

Let your gaze soften a little and become slightly unfocused on whatever is directly in front of you. Then become aware of the area around your *right eye*. You are looking through both eyes but you are more aware of the right eye. As you breathe, mentally say the word "peace". See if you can bring a quality of peace into the right eye. *Seeing peacefully*. Spend about a minute with this. After you have practised this a bit you may begin to feel the whole right side of your face relaxing.

Now go to the *left eye*. Bring peace into that eye area, mentally saying "peace" on the exhalation. *Seeing peacefully*. Spend about a minute with this .

Now bring peace into *both eyes*. *Seeing peacefully*. Do this for about a minute.

Hearing Peacefully

Focus on the *right ear*. Listen intently on that side. With each exhalation, mentally say the word "peace". No matter what kind of sounds are happening, relax into *hearing peacefully*. Feel the right side of your head and jaw softening and letting go. Stay with this for about a minute.

Repeat the same process. with your *left ear*.

Then do it with *both ears*. *Hearing peacefully*. Spend about a minute with each of these steps.

Eyes and ears together. Become very still and see if you can be aware of seeing and hearing simultaneously. Bring peace into this.

Smelling Peacefully

This may seem a little unusual to you but see if you can become aware of smelling at the *right nostril*. *Smelling peacefully*. Smell is a very deep sense. As this one relaxes you will find the breathing relaxing as well.

Then go to the *left nostril*.

Then *both nostrils* together.

Breathing peacefully. Smelling peacefully.

Tasting Peacefully

It's not necessary to eat something at this point, just become aware of your *lips* and *tongue* and the taste in your mouth. *Tasting peacefully*. As you exhale, mentally say the word "peace" and feel the mouth and throat area relaxing. You may find your mouth salivating. Imagine this saliva is a present of peace and swallow it down to the stomach. *Peaceful digesting*.

Touching Peacefully

Focus on the *tactile sensations* of the body; the texture of your clothes, the whisk of a passing breeze. *Touching peacefully*. Spend a few minutes here.

All Together

See if you can open yourself to *seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching peacefully*, all together.

When you have finished the exercise, try to take this quality of peaceful openness into your daily activity. After practising this a few times you will see how peaceful sensing can transform your life.

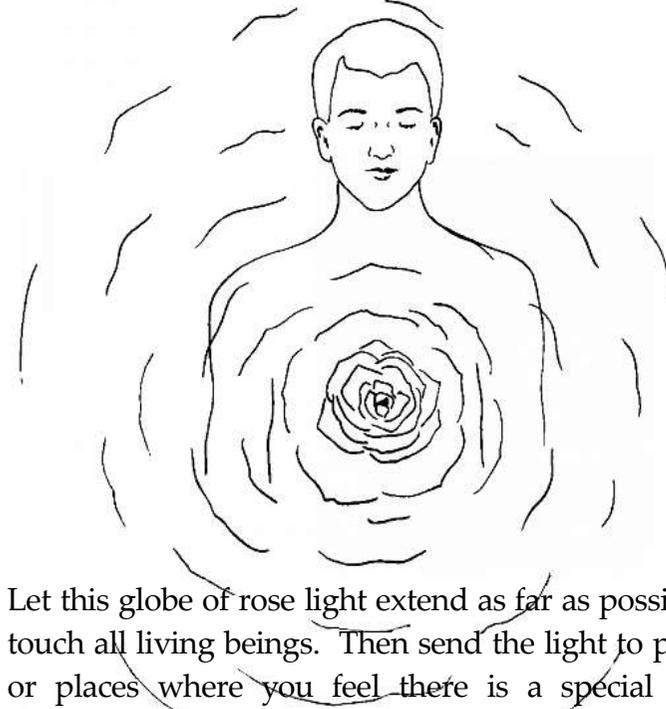


LOVING-KINDNESS

Sit in a comfortable chair or lie down on a firm flat surface. Take a few moments to relax and focus on the breathing.

1. Imagine a beautiful rose coloured flower in your heart that is radiating soft rose coloured light. It may help to have a real flower with you. Look at it. Close your eyes and imagine it in your heart. As you focus into this area you may feel it become warmer. Imagine that this rose light is the essence of loving-kindness. It spreads through your body, warming and softening and dissolving fear.
2. Focus clearly on the feeling of this light as it expands to fill your body. Think that it is healing any parts that are in need. Eventually you are so filled with the

rose light that it begins to overflow outward, filling the space around you. Imagine that you are at the centre of an expanding globe of loving-kindness.



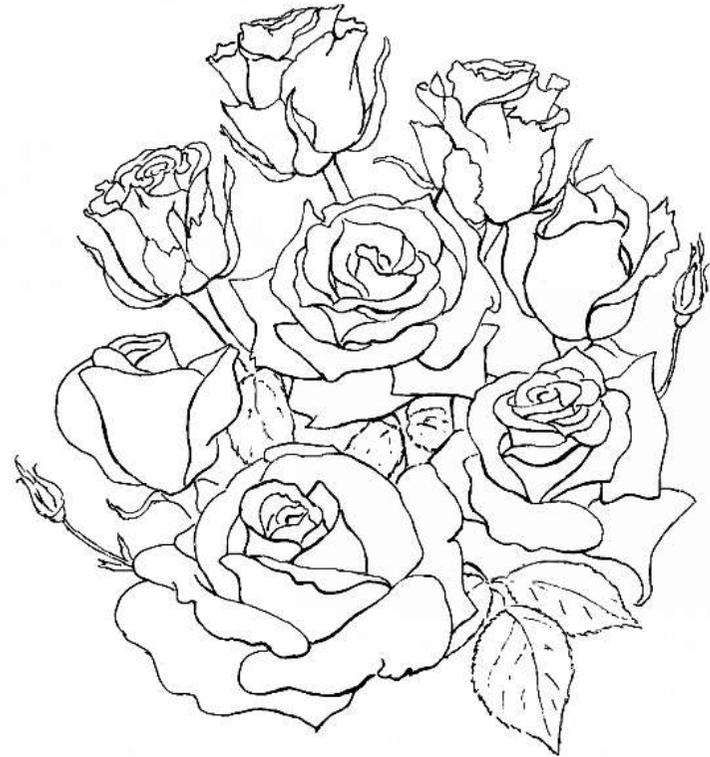
3. Let this globe of rose light extend as far as possible to touch all living beings. Then send the light to people or places where you feel there is a special need, bathing them in this light of loving-kindness.
4. To finish, allow the globe to shrink back into the flower in your heart. The flower gently fades as the essence of loving-kindness is absorbed into every cell of your body. Rest in this state.

Postscript

Well, there you have the exercises. I'm sure at least one or two of them will work well for you. Play with them. Use your imagination to incorporate them into your lifestyle. Relaxing deeply could become something you really enjoy doing. With this, your pleasure in life will deepen. When the heart is open and each moment is experienced fully, life becomes a joyful exploration.

Enjoy your journey

Tarchin



Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed to this collection of exercises. The Inner Smile was from the work of Mantak Chia. Headaches and Neck Tension was inspired by Tarthang Tulku's Kum Nye exercises. Parts of the Healing Bubble came from Janet Goodrich's book, Natural Vision Improvement. Many of the other exercises, I learned from Namgyal Rinpoche.

Mary Jenkins and Eileen Burton did the illustrations. Mark Watson did the cover art. K.Tsultrim Jeltsen, Peter Woollett, Suzanne Stewart, Thelma Rodgers and all the rest of the Wangapeka Books team, for all your efforts, thank you.

2004 PDF Edition

In 2004, when Meditative First Aid became out of print for a second time, it was decided to rework the printed book into a pdf file, and to make it available free of charge from the Wangapeka website www.wangapeka.org. Most of this work was done by Thelma Rodgers, with the support and encouragement of Tarchin Hearn and Mary Jenkins.

If in this process some errors have appeared please contact khemari@wangapeka.org.

Sarva Mangalam

All is Blessing

Tarchin Hearn



Born in England in 1949, raised in Canada and now based in New Zealand, Tarchin Hearn has more than 30 years of experience in Buddhism and was ordained as a monk for 12 years. He has studied with some of the world's great meditation teachers, including Namgyal Rinpoche and Kalu Rinpoche.

Writer, artist, poet, traveller and inspiring teacher, Tarchin has a great interest in blending the insights and understandings of science and ecology with the teachings of Buddhadharma. His teachings have inspired a wide range of people around the planet.

Other writings by Tarchin Hearn

(all published by Wangapeka Books)

Natural Awakening: The Way of the Heart

Breathing: The Natural Way to Meditate

Daily Puja

Cycle of Samatha

Satipatthana: Foundations of Mindfulness

Coming To Your Senses

Walking in Wisdom

Wangapeka Books is a non-profit organisation dedicated to publishing material that furthers the work of awakening.

Except for printing and binding, all the work, including the writing, is done without pay, by volunteers giving their skills, energy and time. If you wish to support publications, donations are appreciated.

To order books, email or call
Wangapeka Study & Retreat Centre
R.D. 2 Wakefield, Nelson
New Zealand
tel: 03-522-4221 fax: 03-522-4980
email: wangapeka@ts.co.nz
website: www.wangapeka.org



WANGAPEKA BOOKS