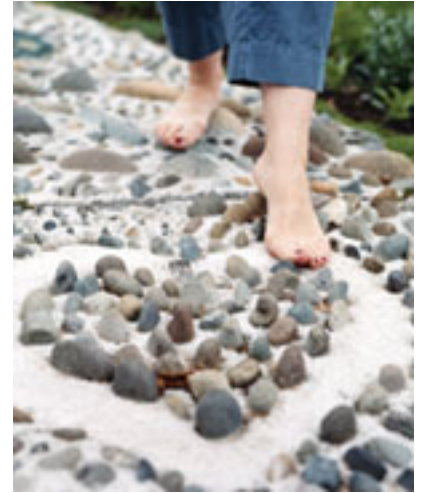


# Calm Heart Meditation

*Try this meditation to nourish the heart from the inside out.*

Many of the paths of yoga lead to the cleansing and nourishing of the energy of the heart. In Bhakti Yoga, the yoga of devotion, the heart is cleansed by chanting with divine sound. In hatha yoga, many asanas focus on opening what is referred to in the Upanishads as “the knot in the heart.” Twists, backbends, and forward bends massage the musculature around the rib cage, which can often restrict the feeling of an expansive heart. Just slouch in your chair to feel the intertwined relationship of a physically collapsed chest and the emotions that soon follow—sadness, grief, depression, and lethargy. Hatha yoga consciously spreads the heart open from the first few koshas or layers of the body (muscles, bones, breath, and awareness).



Meditation practice can also cleanse and nourish the heart from the inside out. The following contemplative meditation can be practiced regularly or whenever you feel overwhelmed, unstable, or emotionally shut down.

To begin, find a comfortable posture for meditation (seated on a cushion or blanket, in a chair, or against a wall). It may be helpful to set a timer for 10, 20, or 30 minutes so you can deepen your meditation without being distracted by the time. You may also want to gently ring a bell at the beginning and end of your meditation.

Place your hands on your knees in Jnana mudra (index and thumb touching), with palms facing up to open your awareness or palms facing down to calm the mind. Scan your body and relax any tension you feel. Let your spine rise from the base of the pelvis. Draw your chin slightly down and let the back of your neck lengthen.

## **Meditation Practice**

Begin by bringing your awareness to the center of your chest. To draw your mind into meditation, start to repeat the sound Om with each exhalation. You can chant Om silently at your heart region or out loud, letting the sound emanate from your chest, as though you have lips on your heart. Let the sound vibrate like a gong, where the sound of Om ripples in all directions. As you work with the sound, feel that each Om widens your heart like a great lake. As you stay with the Om, feel that your heart is being washed of any unnecessary gripping, tension, or feeling. If a particular emotion arises and starts to overpower the meditation, allow it to be buoyed by the sea of sound. Look underneath, around, and inside that emotion and discover an insight that may arise from the spaciousness of your inquiry. Gradually, the sound of Om will dissolve into the calm spaciousness of the heart—the great container.

When you are ready, bring your hands together in Anjali Mudra (Salutation Seal) and complete your meditation with a moment of gratitude, reflection, or prayer to integrate the energy of your meditation into your life. You can bring your awareness to your heart anytime throughout the day to return to the seat of unconditional love.

