

## The Heart

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Remember the first three weeks of being in love? It's amazing! It's when you love everyone and everything, the clouds, the trees, the flowers, the passing motorists, dogs, cats and insects, and of course your beloved. As an added bonus, nothing at all seems to bother you and then gradually, it wears off. Why? The reason that you felt love in the first place was that your heart was open for a short time. When your heart is open you do love everyone and everything. Life is beautiful and profound. Then you start closing down your heart, take a deep breath and re-enter the grey zone. In fact, for many of us, life goes back to "normal".

Usually our hearts are only open when we fall in love, have children or when we are on holidays. We fall in love with a holiday destination because when we go there, we drop our worries and open our hearts. Then we come home, close our hearts, and talk and dream about moving to our geographical ideal. If or when we move there, unfortunately it's just not the same.

If you want the experience of love again, it's simpler than chasing people or geographical destinations. Just open your heart. You don't have to pay for holidays or have another person be the trigger. In ancient times, many spiritual schools of learning taught techniques to open the heart centre. Nowadays, while there are still some schools that teach these practices, they have been mostly ignored and forgotten. Our modern love is generally towards an object, usually a partner or child. We don't think of love as a state of our being, rather as an attitude that we have towards someone or something. When our hearts are not really open, we are incapable of allowing love and trust to be within us. No one learns love and trust, they just happen automatically when we open our hearts. It's how we're made.

If we don't love and trust life, then we seek to control it. Make it our way because obviously whoever's in charge doesn't seem to know what they're doing! This controlling and closing of the heart signals is a way of developing illness in the body. In common parlance, we say that we "hold things" against people and situations. In fact what we hold, ever more tightly is our heart. If you shut your heart down against someone, you will have to find the antidote of forgiveness to open it up again. This is not that easy. Just saying "I forgive so and so" won't make any difference. You will have to discover the true energy of forgiveness in yourself. True forgiveness isn't something you do, it's something that you find in your heart. When you find it you will forgive everyone for every thing. Until that happens your forgiving is just practicing.

The ramifications of closing your heart on your physical health are profound, but they are still generally unrecognised. In the 1990's, Dr Dean Ornish's famous study of the treatment of coronary patients showed that even "untreatable" heart disease could begin a process of healing when the patients went through a personal emotional counselling process with their partners and family. The publication of Ornish's study in "The Lancet" and most of the other major medical journals, has ensured that the cutting edge of health professionals acknowledge the link between heart problems and emotional blockage. What isn't recognised by western medicine is how far this closing of the heart affects the body.

In some forms of energy medicine, this heart/body correspondence has been recognised. A simple example is the heart's effect on the six acupuncture meridians that flow through your

shoulder. These meridians are all associated with the heart. [The heart and heart protector channels directly, small intestine and triple heater through their elemental pairs and lung and large intestine through the Ko cycle.] As the meridians act like lawn sprinklers dispersing energy to muscles and tissues, when you close your heart down, this affects the flow of energy in those six meridians. If you damage your shoulder during this period and only have conventional physio, chiropractic or acupuncture treatment, you stand a very good chance of having a long spell from tennis. It makes good sense to play with an open heart.

A simple technique to help open the heart is the Tibetan Forgiveness Meditation. In this meditation, first sit and find a place of stillness within yourself. If that feels impossible, sit and breathe deeply for nine breaths. Then visualise someone whom you unconditionally love standing in front of you. This can be your dog or cat, whoever gives you a feeling of warmth in your heart. Next, bring your friends into your visualisation and stay with the feeling of warmth in your heart. Then, while still feeling the heart's love and warmth, add your family, then your acquaintances and finally those people that you have issues with. If you can stay with the feelings of the heart instead of the judgements of the mind, you will take a big step towards keeping yourself healthy and making your life beautiful and profound.

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