

Part Four - The Heart Chakra Breath of Love

by Christine Krakora Milovani, LCSW
Fourth of a seven-part series

I just returned from another sacred journey through the Southwest. I drove through the Arizona desert to the ocean, and then finally returned by plane home to the Midwest. As the airplane headed down the runway, I listened more carefully to the safety precautions to prepare us for an emergency. One phrase stuck in my mind, "First secure your own face mask before putting one on children traveling with you."

During this trip was the first time that I really understood the reasoning behind this statement. There were times that I thought it was selfish to take care of myself before helping another, especially in a crisis situation. I do realize that in order to care for another person, I must first be able to care for myself. We must also breathe in the sacred life-sustaining air so we can be fully present and alive to help those around us. This parallels an important lesson of the Heart Chakra: Have unconditional love first for yourself, and then love others as you love yourself.

The heart chakra is located in the center of the chest connecting to the lungs and to the element of air. This center radiates the color vibration of emerald green and is the source of healing and life-sustaining energy. At this center, we are connected to the rhythm of our beating heart and to the constant breath of life. Here is where we find the lessons of love, compassion, and forgiveness as the heart deepens our connection and awareness of our relationship first with ourselves and then with those around us.

The heart center is also the balancing point between our physical connection to the earth and our spiritual connection to the divine. It transitions our earthly existence into a space that can open us to the expansive connection to the universe. A beautiful man who taught me some qigong movements in New Jersey had a wonderful way of explaining the bridging that happens in the heart center. While doing movements, he would comment, "Breathe in the energy of the earth below. Breathe in the energy of the sky above. Now combine this energy in the heart where they make love. Remember to make love every day." This gave me a new meaning to the phrase "making love"!

How do we create love in our life everyday? How do we live from a space of unconditional love for ourselves and for those around us? My life journey has been about understanding unconditional love. Giving love to others comes naturally for me, but allowing myself to receive has been a more challenging lesson. For most of my life, I did not understand that to be fully present for others, I had to take care of myself first. As a young social worker, I ended up getting into an unending cycle of giving so much of my time and energy to others, to the point of being totally exhausted physically and emotionally. My focus was always outside myself, thinking that learning how to love others was the big lesson.

One day a friend told me that even though I was a very loving person, myself, she did not think that I really understood love, as I did not seem to love and care for myself. I spent the next six years learning this lesson of love, nurturing myself and asking for what I needed from others. Now I understand that the secret to creating enough love to sustain ourselves in this world, is to give it to ourselves first -- just like the instructions on the airplane. I also trust that the universe is ready to help me receive, if only I ask.

I have recently learned another lesson about unconditional love and acceptance that has allowed me to have healthier boundaries with others around me, and more specifically with my family and partner. If I am too eager to take care of others and try to make their lives easier, I take away their empowerment. I am also assuming that they cannot take care of themselves, and that I know what is better for their life at this time. True empowerment comes from realizing the strength and wisdom within as we journey through all of our life experiences. We can let go with love, and trust that the divine order of the universe will continue to unfold for the highest good of all.

Meditation for the Heart Chakra

Place your hands on your heart center. Notice your breathing pattern and feel your heart beat. Feel the rise and fall of your chest and abdomen with each breath. Allow the breath of love to fill your lungs.

Take in several deep cleansing breaths. As you inhale, breathe in peace and love. As you exhale, let go of any tension or heaviness in your heart center. Continue to breathe this sacred air into your body, transforming it into golden light. Let this golden light move into the center of your heart. Slowly, let it radiate from the heart center all around your physical body, forming a cocoon of golden light. With every breath you strengthen your golden cocoon of safety, protection and love. Imagine a circle of love all around you. Invite all of your closest family, friends, and spirit guides to join this circle of love and light. They are supporting you in your journey toward self-love and they are breathing with you. Breathe in unconditional love for yourself. Breathe out love to the circle around you. Connect to this constant cycle of giving and receiving. Breathe in love. Breathe out love. You are love.

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