

Rainbow Heart Meditation

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Introduction

This is a beautiful contemplative practice originating in Tibet in the early 19th century. It is a color meditation on the heart in order to wake up and remember what are called the *Four Immeasurables*: loving kindness, impartialness, happiness, and empathy. These four qualities are the meaning of love that we extend to ourselves first and then to others. Therefore this practice is about the color of love and recognizing it's inherent quality located in the physical heart and the formless heart centering the four chambers.

The practice involves the use of an eye pillow in order to completely blackout all light coming into the eyes. A simple eye mask can also be used and there are total blackout eye pillows and eye masks available. Simply find one that is comfortable for you. You can do a simple shorter version of this practice in seated position. An ideal time to practice is in the middle of the night when it's already dark and you would still use an eye mask.

Phase 1 (first 4-8 weeks)

1. **Posture:** Practice is done lying down face up in the hatha yoga posture called Savasana, corpse pose. Take time to really relax and feel the entire backside of your body from the heels of your feet to the back of your head being supported by whatever you are lying upon. Please make sure you are comfortable.
2. **Mudra and Breathing:** Starting with the palm of the left hand over the heart and the palm of the right hand just below the umbilicus. Slowly breath into your right hand feeling the abdomen lift your hand and slowly exhaling for several cycles. The left hand over the heart will move slightly and not as much is the hand in the lower abdomen. A key point is the placement of the breath in the lower abdomen between the umbilicus and pubic bone. Another key point is that this type of slow breathing is called coherent breathing. It is recommended because of the way it raises vagal tone. For most people, this means an approximately six second inhale and a six second exhale. Please avoid being too rigid regarding how many seconds you are inhaling or exhaling. The taller you are the more time can be added upwards to 10-15 seconds of inhalation and exhalation. Wait until you've gone through several cycles of such breathing and feel your body relax even more deeply before moving to the next step.
3. **Attunement to Heartbeat:** Maintain the breathing in the background and begin sensing

your heartbeat. Feel the movement of your respiratory diaphragm and then just move your attention slightly above the diaphragm because your heart is attached and rests upon the diaphragm. If you are not able to sense your heartbeat which is occurring just above your respiratory diaphragm, take your pulse at the radial artery. One of the ways to practice this part is to initially count 70 heartbeats and then stop counting once you clearly sense your heartbeat. Generally, the best time to feel your heartbeat is in the middle of the night when the nervous system is more relaxed, and attention can be given more directly to the geography of the heart and diaphragm.

It's not unusual at all for the mind to become active and to get distracted with different thoughts. When this happens return your attention to your breathing and then your heartbeat. You can add nonverbally reciting a favorite poem or prayer in the cadence of the heartbeat periodically. Research has shown that consciously sensing your heartbeat, called interoceptive awareness, builds empathy.

4. **Color Imagination:** Then with your eyes closed and covered while feeling the heartbeat, imagine the heart is the color white, pause, then the color blue, pause, then the color yellow, pause, then the color red, pause, and finally the color green, pause. This is the practice of visualizing the rainbow of five colors radiating from your heart. Sometimes one color more than another will be easier to imagine and see. Sometimes one color will change into the next color without any conscious intention on your part. At the beginning, seeing these colors is done deliberately and gradually over time the colors become spontaneous merely by thinking the color and placing your attention around your heart. Or feeling your heartbeat and simply inquiring of your heart what color can you show me now? Or simply the colors and the rainbow itself manifest spontaneously from the heartbeat. Each of the colors has an association with the Four Immeasurables mentioned at the beginning.

If you are not able to see colors internally, it's perfectly fine to simply nonverbally say "my heart is white." And so forth until you develop the inner vision of seeing colors. This is a creative process that must be adapted to your spiritual aptitude.

5. **The Eyes:** Now there is a very important skill that gets added in. Begin to imagine that both eyes are the color white, then blue and so on.

Feel your eyes relax even more in their sockets. Now, periodically let your eyes roll up to the middle of your forehead. This is called "seeing the inner light." When you roll your eyes up to the middle of your forehead for several seconds at a time and then maybe for longer periods once the practice becomes familiar, a stretch happens with the optic nerve which generates a color spectrum neurologically exactly like what I am describing here. Tibetan texts say that the third ventricle of the brain is reflecting the same colors that are being visualized in the heart itself as if the heart is naturally composed of these five colors. In this way, over time the practice allows your eyes to look and see from the heart. And remember to keep it simple.

You may notice your eyes ache a little bit when you roll them up to the middle of your forehead because you've been on the computer too much that day. In that case, use the eye rolling to the middle of the forehead as an exercise to relieve the achiness. Once the achiness has diminished notice if you can see the inner light in the middle of your brain.

6. Reorienting: Anytime one's mind begins to move away from that, take a breath and reorient to the breath, the heartbeat, and the colors in the heart. These are the three basic steps which are the ground of the practice.

Phase 2 (after a couple of months of practice of phase 1)

7. Radiance: Wait until one of the colors comes alive and actually starts to spread through the body. This is the radiance phase. This may take a couple of weeks or months of practice before radiance occurs. Be patient. Sometimes only one dominant color is available to you in your practice session when none of the other colors seem to be available. This is natural. This full body radiance phase may not happen right away. It's important to begin getting a basic sense of the five colors permeating your heart. Then there will be a moment where the color radiates and fills your body from the bottom of your feet to the top of your head. In this way your entire vascular tree becomes that color.
8. Compassion: The rainbow colors have a radiance, a shimmering, a glow possibly with beams radiating from the skin to the outside world. In this phase you will actually see through your active imagination and power of visualization the room you're in fill with the radiance and gradually seeing the radiance extend beyond your home or wherever you are

located to fill your community and gradually the whole planet and then gradually the entire universe. This is offering universal compassion for all. And it is simply based upon your heart radiating a rainbow.

Phase 3 (when it happens)

9. Inner Teacher: Finally, a benevolent message or voice may enter your mindstream with friendly information relevant to one's life. Yes, this practice is derived from the mystical tradition especially of Tibetan medicine. The thoughts that occasionally distract us as mentioned above actually turn into instructions or a conversation with a deeper or higher spiritual being in yourself. You become the owner and director of your spiritual experience rather than the guest. As the director of your spiritual experience you are relieved from getting interpretations from how it's side spiritual authorities and so forth. You can remove the middle person, priest or priestess from the equation of your own spiritual maturation.

Conclusion

At the same time, this sentient messaging being given to you can take on a form based on the rainbow colors. This is called the subtle body. And the reason all of this is important is not just for your own spiritual maturation but for deep healing of the physical body, its metabolism and physiology that are in perilous condition in our contemporary society. This rainbow heart meditation practice is a healing practice for yourself and an offering of compassion to all others.