

Visualizing With Color

An introduction to working with color in each of the seven chakras.

Why can color have such a powerful effect on us? Color can stimulate our energy or dull our senses. Bright colors tend to be uplifting, while muted colors are usually more relaxing. One color can even seem repulsive to us, while another may be strongly appealing.

Regardless of our preferences, color and light are essential ingredients of health and well-being. Without sunlight, we and all living things on this planet could not survive. And since color is composed of light, and light moves faster than our brain can process words, we are therefore biologically influenced by the energy in color at the speed of light!

Colors influence us differently because they have different wavelengths and frequencies, and these affect different parts of the brain. For example, very bright hues stimulate the brain's limbic system, which is linked to our emotions (Mallon 1999; Andrews 1992). Color therapy, which uses color to cultivate energy in the body, dates back to the ancient civilizations of Egypt, India and China. Even though Western medicine does not formally recognize color therapy, medical professionals in the West are exploring and using light and color therapies to treat issues like seasonal affective disorder, depression and sleep disorders. With complementary therapies on the rise, use of color and light therapies as adjunctive forms of treatment is becoming more common.

The Chakras

Working with the chakras can be a useful approach to cultivating energy through the use of color (Andrews 1992). *Chakra* is a Sanskrit word meaning "wheel" or "disk," and the seven chakras, located

along the central axis of the body, represent its seven major energy centers. Recognized by ancient civilizations for thousands of years, these centers correlate to the major nerve ganglia branching out from the spine. The chakras are also said to correlate to levels of consciousness and bodily functions, among other things. And associated with each chakra is a color, based on the concept that the energy vibrating through each center has a different wavelength or quality of light. Color therapy involves working with color in each of the chakras to help balance energy and maintain health and well-being.

What follows is a brief introduction to the chakras and their colors, along with some simple visualization exercises that you or your clients can do.

Red: The Root Chakra

Red is a symbol of life, strength, courage, passion, love and earth. Warmer than other colors, it is stimulating and can be thought of as a tonic. Bright orange-red is more stimulating than blue-red. Red is said to increase circulation and therefore to raise blood pressure, pulse rate, overall energy and physical temperature.

The color red is associated with the root chakra. This chakra is located at the base of the spine and is related to our connection with the earth. Working with the root chakra and the color red can help ground the body, connecting us to our sense of security, stability and safety.

Exercise for the Root Chakra. Place your hands on your hips, glance downward and draw figure eights from your pelvis area, staying connected to your feet, legs, hips and spine. Imagine yourself growing red roots into the earth from the base of your spine.

Orange: The Sacral Chakra

Orange, a combination of red and yellow, is said to be more balancing than red and good for sustaining warmth. It is thought to enhance creativity, vitality and sensuality; stimulate socializing; and create opportunity. Visualizing orange may help alleviate depression; stimulate joy and happiness; and enhance receptivity to pleasure.

The color orange is associated with the sacral chakra, located 2–3 inches below the navel. This chakra is related to the reproductive system, kidneys and adrenals; also with sensuality, sexuality and pleasure. Working with the sacral chakra and the color orange can help us create a healthy balance between body and mind.

Exercise for the Sacral Chakra. Rock your pelvis forward and backward. If you wish, allow your arms to swing around your torso and gently tap your mid to low back as you rock. Stay connected to your legs and feet. Now visualize an orange disk below your navel.

Yellow: The Solar Plexus Chakra

Yellow is a bright, empowering color that brings light and growth to our life. It is a symbol of universal love. Yellow helps with self-definition and is a good color to visualize when engaging in physical activities.

The color yellow is associated with the solar plexus chakra, located between the navel and the lower end of the sternum. The solar plexus can be imagined as our own personal sun. The healing properties of this chakra are connected with the pancreas, liver, digestive system and gallbladder and with our ability to absorb nutrition. Working with the solar plexus chakra and the color yellow is said to en-

courage positive, empowered thinking and link us to our creativity, well-being, pleasure and abundance.

Exercise for the Solar Plexus Chakra.

Bring your arms around to the front of the body with the backs of the hands touching at shoulder height. Swing your arms around behind your body and clasp your fingers if you can, drawing the solar plexus forward. Imagine that your own internal sun is radiating within your solar plexus. Once again, stay connected to your legs and feet.

Green: The Heart Chakra

Green is a healing color. Soothing to the body, mind and spirit, it is the most relaxing color for our brain to interpret. Green links us to our love for the earth and to new growth. Combining the coolness of blue with the vibrancy of yellow, green is thought to be the most balancing of all colors. Learning to breathe in the color green may enhance meditation and healing.

The color green is associated with the heart chakra, which is also connected to our lungs and to the thymus gland, which is vitally important to our immune system. Working with the heart chakra and the color green can balance our energy and our nervous system; help our minds focus; connect us to compassion, regeneration and empowerment; and lift our mood.

Exercise for the Heart Chakra. Place your left hand under your heart on your chest and your right hand above your heart on your chest. Begin to visualize the color green, and “hold” your heart in your hands as gently as you would hold a newborn baby. Send thoughts and feelings of gratitude, love and appreciation into your heart, and visualize it transmitting these thoughts and feelings throughout your entire body.

Blue: The Throat Chakra

Blue represents truth. Cooling to both body and mind, blue provides a spacious, expansive energy that helps with relaxation. Blue symbolizes thoughtful, meaningful love originating from a deep spiritual relationship to oneself. It is also a good healing color for children and an excellent interior home color that can be used to enhance and quiet the mind.

The color blue is associated with the throat chakra, which acts as a channel connecting the heart and the mind. This chakra is associated with the thyroid and

the parathyroid glands, which aid in regulating metabolism. Working with the throat chakra and the color blue can help us express ourselves peacefully and truthfully, freeing the voice to be an instrument of healing (in words or song).

Exercise for the Throat Chakra. To enhance the energy in your throat, first visualize the color blue and then start sounding “Om,” with the intention of resonating “Om” throughout your entire body. Om is the sound of universal creation. Try a range of tones that feel good in your throat.

Indigo: The Third-Eye Chakra

The royal color indigo signifies spirituality and higher consciousness. You can see this deep color used in churches and temples all over the world. Originating from the deeper hues of blue, indigo has a sedative affect, and too much of it can be depressing.

The color indigo is associated with the third-eye chakra, our seat of intuition and wisdom, located between the eyebrows. Meditation can be an excellent way to develop the third-eye’s ability to “see within.” This chakra is also associated with the pituitary gland, the body’s master gland, and with the pineal gland, which is linked to our cycles of sleeping and waking. Working with the third-eye chakra and the color indigo can help us develop self-esteem, inner peace, discernment, intuition, wisdom, clarity and happiness.

Exercise for the Third-Eye Chakra. Place your index fingertips lightly on the point between your eyebrows. Gently begin to make small circles clockwise on that point with your eyes closed. Now visualize the color indigo. Enjoy the soft sensations in your body that are created from massaging this point between your eyebrows.

Violet: The Crown Chakra

Violet is the color of transformation. A calming color, it can help slow down nervous energy, creating deep relaxation. Violet can also be intentionally used to raise low self-esteem.

The color violet is associated with the crown chakra, located at the top of the head and is related to the pineal gland in the brain. This gland is sensitive to light and produces neurohormones like melatonin that help regulate our sleep cycles. The crown chakra also bridges the right and left hemispheres of

resources

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the brain. Working with the crown chakra and the color violet can stimulate dream activity, clarify our thinking and help us connect to our higher spiritual self.

Exercise for the Crown Chakra. Make yourself comfortable, either sitting or lying down. Take a full breath and empty your lungs completely. Begin breathing consciously in and out through your nostrils. Let your breath be full and relaxing, moving naturally in and out of your body, without much effort. As you breathe in, visualize the color violet and see it circulating throughout your being. Continue to relax, breathe, and visualize violet during your meditation. This practice can bring more clarity and self-respect, establishing a foundation for your spiritual development.

Putting It All Together

My own experience tells me that when I am willing, open, present and purposeful, the healing effects of color are sure to lighten my mood, energize or relax my body, and uplift my spirit. It is my hope that your own relationship to the power of color will do the same for you. Try visualizing the various colors in their chakras as you meditate, or use the specific

exercises I have described. Remember that balance is key to the effective use of color, just as it is in other areas of life.

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Editor's Note: The ideas expressed in this article are not intended as medical advice. Readers and their clients are advised to consult a physician or other allied health practitioner regarding treatment of all health problems.

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