

Centering and Using the Breath to Clear the Mind

BY DAMARIS JARBOUX

Using your breath to clear the mind is a practice that is really helpful to move out distracting thoughts. A distracting thought is really anything outside of the moment you're in – whether it's past or future. And where do distracting thoughts move out to? The edge of our personal energetic field (which we call the egg), has a particular consciousness (shen/light) that is not personal, so we are not aware there. We call it a filter because once developed it filters out what is not conducive to your greater and higher good and allows in what is. It is not a barrier or brick wall - you don't need to be encased in steel. Any practices you do that acknowledge this layer of shen, at the edge of your personal field, strengthens or reinforces it. It is roughly 3-6 feet out, ruled by your heart, and responds to the state of your solar plexus. It is your true protection and is capable of "burning up" negative thought imprints and invasive energies. When we practice Centering and come to the mind (the Upper Tan Tien) after focus on the Lower Tan Tien we use our breath to help clear our mind by moving distracting thoughts out to the edge of our personal field. This filter is where our field transitions into outer Shen.

Now for some people meditation is just watching the mind. Maybe calming the mind too, but usually just watching it. In Taoism it's different. Watching the mind is really not our end-goal, Centering in the heart is. Our process is not to judge anything in our mind, but to use our breath to help move the thoughts out. It's an entrainment. If you do this every time you Center, you're entraining your ability to let your breath help you clear your mind. It is your right and privilege as a human being to have an empty and clear mind. This is going to promote your freedom. A full or scattered mind is not. With a distracted mind you can not gain access to your deeper Self, through your heart, which is very different than your personal mind. This is our goal. When in deep Center, you have the experience that the mind calms like a "sea of glass". There's a purpose for that.

We're not dismissing the part of our mind that is discerning (questions what it doesn't understand), we are just setting it aside so that we can have the experience of Centering. If the mind is in there always judging the experience, we are not going to really have the experience that we are trying to practice. If we don't have the experience, then what is there to question later? After Centering, based on the experience we have, then we can evaluate, usually from a bigger view.

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When we have experiences out of time and space, ones questioning mind does emerge. Is that discernment? Maybe, but it's often resistance of the lower ego mind. When, in our everyday life, we probably should be applying a lot more discernment. Our personal mind is in the habit of judging when it's not in control. We are just pausing this thought process, not negating it. True discernment comes from the heart, responds to the state of the solar plexus, and holds a big view. When one is in fear, the solar plexus contracts and therefore real discernment is near impossible.

When your mind comes to a calm state like a "sea of glass", that means that for this period of time, you have given yourself the gift of freedom of being, without being bombarded by your mind. This means that your personal mind and your ego that is connected to it, have learned to step back. They have trusted the experience enough to remain calm instead of filling the space with things that can protect you, or keep you safe, or take you out of the moment, or deal with something down the road, or be depressed about something that did or didn't happen, or whatever it is. That part of your mind (personal mind / ego) has learned to suspend control and witness exactly what else is possible. This is a gift to yourself. If you do it enough, you'll feel a deep inner compassion for yourself, which, if you don't normally feel this, it brings you to tears... because it's so true. If you don't have compassion inside, how can you really be compassionate to anyone outside? Compassion is not a thought, it's not an action, it's not a duty or responsibility. It's an energy. And it has to fill you first. And that's what you're experiencing, internal compassion. Only you can give yourself this space, quiet and peace. Then, compassion fills you. And, it can emanate from you in various ways which might look like a thought, action or whatever, for other people. But, it's all false, unless you are filled first. Because that's just how the energy of compassion works. This is EARTH in the 5-phases, which rules our mind. But an even deeper way to understand earth is through the I Ching. K'un (The Receptive) is the earth and The Mother, quintessential yin, with the attribute of Devotion. Inner devotion leads to outer devotion, today this is one of the least understood or embodied human qualities. We must reverse this to save the 'captured' human mind.

Clearing the mind in this way is a practice to come back to and keep working with, over and over, even if it doesn't feel like at any particular moment you are successful. You've sent those thoughts out there and then boom, they bounce back. You're training your mind and it takes practice. For everyone, it takes practice. And, through the practice, you get a glimpse of what the gift is. The practice is your willingness to give yourself that space. Clearing your mind allows you to access the middle space, the heart. And only if you get into the middle space can your heart regain supervision of your mind. Without that, your mind, which has no real power of its own, will remain dualistic. So sinking awareness into the Middle Tan Tien, your heart (the energetic center of your body), is the 3rd phase of Centering.

The idea in Taoism is never transcending this life...it's transforming it...through full engagement, full incarnation. That can only happen by going through the "middle" space of the heart. People talk about all the ways the energy of Jing, supports the physical body and the organs, which is true, but the name "Jing" tells us that it is about "Essence", in full incarnation and "Essence" is the unique frequency of love that you are. Jing holds the 3rd dimensional physical/material body which, if we know anything about quantum physics, we know it's not solid like it seems, but the frequency is held that way. In this dimension the frequency is held as if it were solid. But it's your essence, your spiritual essence, in the incarnational state. For human beings, our spiritual essence is the force of love, and, we have committed, through freedom, to incarnate here and manifest our unique love frequency. Love is our divine nature & our individuality. It is the sacred aspect of being-ness, not doing-ness. It is our inner power and, as such, has no opposite. Spirit is One, our Unity, and it is everywhere, there is no place that it is not, and it always resonates to the force of love. This is why the pure force of love can command the physical world. And why Taoism implores us to be a "centered person between heaven and earth". It means that we are in a middle place, a non-dualistic state, truly connected to both, a bridge between, not a free-floating entity.

We clear the mind, so we can drop into a deeper level and really grow Center. Before we do enough practice, Center is only a dot. We're there and we're out, usually through the front door. Or, we're there and then we're out through the back door, we fell asleep or mind went into who knows what. Then we come back, and we're there again. Every time we're "there", we're expanding the space, the state of consciousness. In brain wave terminology, Center is called alpha, or it's called the qigong state. All these are true, but we grow it. We grow it until we have an actual place we can go that can hold us, where we can rest. I like Rudolf Steiner's image of Center as a hut. A little hut. That's why at the winter solstice we talk about the manger, meaning the inner manger which births the inner light thro the process of the holy nights, balancing the summer solstice, where we are gathering outer light in.

In older times, shamans did not work this way. Our practice is Centering because we're more individualized now than we were in collective societies. In collective societies, people may not have had what we call a manger or a hut or Center, and the idea was to leave the body and travel in the collective and do battle for the tribe or the group. But they had to have a

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spotter, someone who was protecting their body, from invasion. However, the more individualized you are, the stronger the ego, and that is why we practice one of the many versions of centering.

In modern times we have to quiet our ego and our personal mind. It's not a collective mind on the conscious level. We do that by creating the "sea of glass". This experience is in the "middle" state. There, you're connected with both your inner world and your outer world, the world of substance and the world of Spirit. You're between awake and asleep, beyond all polarities. You're in a middle state. That's what the middle state means, you have access to both conscious mind and subconscious mind. Your personal (conscious) mind does not have access to your subconsciousness mind. You can't talk to it. Only the middle place, this part of your being in Center, has access to both. The middle place holds the present. It's not interested in "diving" into the past and future. It's a space between, a "pit stop", from the past and future. That's why it's such a sacred space. A treasured space. A place where your inner essence of love consciousness can connect to you and teach, heal & guide you.

This is a space that children are in mostly through their middle childhood until about 12 years old, naturally. They are in deeper states of consciousness before this age. This is the natural best state for learning anything. In this state, you have access to visual imprints as well as the essence behind words. Dreams & poetry live here. Through Centering, you're giving yourself this brief opportunity where you're not controlled completely by your personal mind or your ego. You're giving yourself an empty restful space. You will return to your thoughts later if they are important. Some of them are not important. What do you think is going to happen to those thoughts if they are not important? Are they going to bounce right back? No. That's the beauty of the edge of your field, the filter. If things are entering your field that are not conducive to your greater and higher good, what does it do? It "burns" them up. It's like a fire circle at the edge of your field. When you send thoughts there, if they're really needed, they will return to you. If they are thoughts that you don't really need, that are just bombarding you and cluttering your mind, then, they won't be coming back because they will be dissolved.

That's why we clear the mind this way. The part of your intelligence at the edge of your field knows. It's not personal, it's an impersonal state of consciousness, of shen. It knows that we do not need 9 of these 10 thoughts that bounced into this field. You're offering it these thoughts and it's going to filter out what is not for your greater and higher good. If you're going to hold Center as a background state for the rest of your day, or whatever period, that means that you don't need those thoughts. As you continue to practice, you start to trust that there is a part of you that is bigger. That has your answers. This part actually knows what your questions are – which you may not. It's a journey for your personal mind (including ego) to trust that the Higher Mind is, "A" there, "B" to be trusted and "C" not going to get you into trouble. Your personal mind, particularly your ego, thinks it's there to protect you and sometime it does. However, the more you're connected with your Higher Mind through

Center the more protected you are.

In this world, there are a lot of things that look fine to our personal mind that the heart knows are not fine - that there is something wrong here. We need to teach this to our children because as young people go out in the world, they need that discernment, because one can easily be fooled. Your "I" / Higher Mind / Higher Ego or Impersonal / Deeper Self (they are all the same) can read that and give you signals and if your personal mind is quiet enough you can receive the signal or alert warning that something or someone is not what it seems. This is your inner teacher, healer and guide. It is worth practicing Centering so that you don't turn over your inner sovereignty to other teachers, healers and guides. That is disempowering. They are only there to help you, not to micro-manage you or your practice.

This is why we practice clearing the mind and creating a "sea of glass" to develop and grow Center. You have to practice Centering for it to become an embodied state of consciousness. You are creating the elemental field of trusting this process for clearing the mind. Your personal mind and your ego will learn not to battle against it to protect you, but instead to allow it, to surrender to it. And, to take a pit stop from continuously talking to you so that there are long periods of time where your mind actually doesn't talk to you. It's empty / It's clear. That's what produces peace and a purer kind of perception. In our world, that is a valuable state. Most people don't have it. There are plenty of things to be concerned about, but we have to have breaks. Quieting the mind and Centering in the heart is a way of creating a real break, a drug-free break. This will effect the rest of your life; it will enhance your sleep & your heart's superior discernment. Deep Centering connects us with the brilliant light of "Inner Certainty", the only place that this can exist, because only our heart is master over illusion.



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