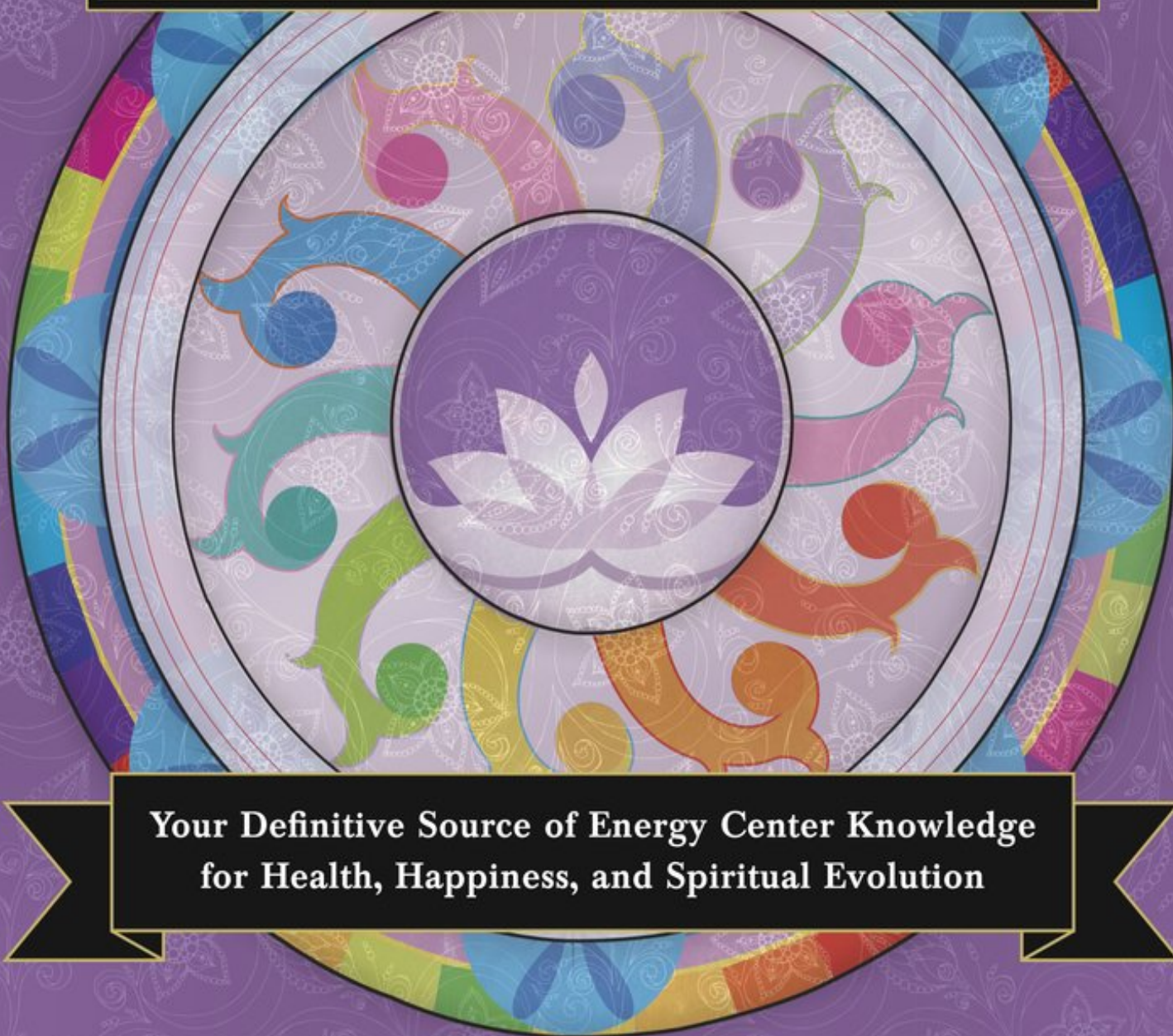


LLEWELLYN'S

COMPLETE BOOK OF
CHAKRAS



Your Definitive Source of Energy Center Knowledge
for Health, Happiness, and Spiritual Evolution

CYNDI DALE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cyndi Dale (Minneapolis, MN) is an internationally renowned author, speaker, healer, and business consultant. She is president of Life Systems Services, through which she has conducted over 50,000 client sessions and presented training classes throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

Visit her online at CyndiDale.com.



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CHAKRAS



**Your Definitive Source of Energy Center Knowledge
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CINDI DALE

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INTRODUCTION

IF THE STARS should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore...

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

I often think of the chakras as stars that descended to earth and embedded in our human form. In some ways, the story of chakras is similar to that of the stars. As Emerson implies, their presence can be overlooked, ignored, or assumed simply because they are content to exist, seen or unseen, as surely as day follows night. But to explore the chakras is to investigate one of the truly great tales of the universe. I have spent years uncovering its many twists and turns, an array of stories enfolded within the larger tale. I wrote this book to present a compendium of these stories pulled together into a single source, a definitive storybook about chakras.

Chakras are energy centers in our bodies that, when perceived by those of us who are blessed to be able to see them, look like wheels of light spinning in and around the body—stars in miniature. Chakras are also “subtle” structures, meaning that, in many ways, they operate under the radar of most people’s perception, on a psychic or spiritual level. But they are also intricately intertwined with our physical and emotional capacities. As key parts of a greater subtle energetic anatomy that you will learn about in this book, they have no less important a job to do than to manage all levels of our existence.

Chakras have been studied by hundreds of cultures over thousands of years. These dynamic energy centers are linked with myriad aspects of our being, from the body’s electrical system—measurable to an extent with diagnostic and other medical devices—to subtler categories of vibration such as colors, sounds, and elements. I call this gigantic basket of chakra ideas—and especially the practices associated with them—“chakra medicine.” This term

honors the traditional meaning of medicine: the sum total of all knowledge, skills, theories, and practices we can engage in to increase our well-being. Because chakras manage all aspects of life, they can be seen as the key to health, happiness, and prosperity.

Chakras have been a subject of study by so many diverse peoples and for so long that writing a book about chakras could take forever—a never-ending account that starts in the early mists of time and slips over the horizon ahead. I have dedicated myself to putting two covers on this eternal story, to serve as markers; hence, I have aimed to make this book a comprehensive compilation of the knowledge of chakras and chakra medicine as it exists today, drawing from sources worldwide, beginning with the ancients and adding information of my own that I have gained through extensive study and my energy healing practice.

But never fear: we will unfold this massive tale in bite-sized pieces. The information I will share begins at a basic level and grows in complexity. It is, therefore, an invitation to learn the fundamentals of “all things chakras” and then go deeper, ever deeper. Eventually, through your own explorations, I hope that you will add your own chakra discoveries to our shared wisdom base.

As you travel through this book, you’ll discover that I continually return to the theme I already introduced: that the chakras in our bodies can be compared to the stars in our galaxy. I enjoy this beautiful metaphor, but as you dive into the discussions of the nature of energy in later chapters, you will see that this connection is more than symbolic. Like our feelings about the stars, chakras operate at all levels, and most practitioners would agree that they are ultimately spiritual, pointing the way to our souls’ dreams.

I’ll start by covering the most fundamental aspects of the chakras and how they perform; this will be the subject of chapters 1 through 15. I open part 1 with a question: what is a chakra? This entire book has been written to fully answer that question, but I will first answer it in basic terms. I’ll include a thumbnail sketch of the history of chakra-related ideas, spanning civilizations and eras, as well as a review of ancient Hindu ideas about energy, as the

venerable Hindu system is one of the best known today. This information will help you set your discovery of chakras in a chronological context and reveal the mindset upon which all modern data has been built. Later in the book we'll explore these Hindu roots in much greater depth.

Next I'll outline scientific thought about the nature of energy. After all, as I mentioned, chakras are essentially energy centers, so it is helpful to get a refresher on what we have learned about the physics of energy. Again, this will be a brief backgrounder that I will expand upon later in the book.

As you'll soon discover, chakras are powerful tools for spiritual transformation. While they do play physical and psychological roles in our lives, ultimately chakras encourage spiritual growth. To begin orienting you to this aspect, I'll briefly describe an energetic force that awakens the chakras and paves the way toward enlightenment. This force is called kundalini energy.

A thorough understanding of chakras requires many more and much deeper layers of understanding, including an exploration of the nature of the energy in our bodies; the psychological, intuitive, and physiological effects of the chakras; the imagery and symbolism people have associated with them; and both traditional and contemporary views of chakras' aspects that include everything from spiritual icons to archetypes. We will begin this in-depth journey in Part 2.

Part 2 examines the most familiar chakra model: the Hindu system. We will travel through the seven in-body chakras in order, from the base of the spine to the top of the head. Our first goal is to look at how they function in the most fundamental of ways: physically and psychologically. We also will begin to add the layers of knowledge needed for a fuller picture: Sanskrit names, purpose, color, associated gland, and the part of the body that each chakra manages. I'll outline practical considerations, including related diseases and psychological functions, and move into more esoteric topics such as the gods and goddesses that reign within each bodily star. Symbols, archetypes, intuitive abilities, and explorations of secondary chakras, as well as other features, help round out our chakra profiles.

We then turn the corner to engage in [Part 3](#), Fundamentals of Chakra Medicine. Here you will learn chakra medicine procedures and techniques. The first chapter in this part introduces the concept of chakra medicine: practices you can follow to work with chakras for greater health and well-being. You will learn various ways chakras can assist you, and I'll provide a plethora of processes you can use to do everything from locating your chakras to clearing and balancing them. Practices are loosely organized into Western and Eastern approaches.

Then it will be time to walk through the next doorway and into [Section 2](#), Chakras in Depth: Historical, Scientific, and Cross-Cultural Understandings. Up to this point, you will have spent your time with the book learning and enjoying all the basics of chakra methodology as if peering through a telescope into the great night sky. [Section 2](#) is the equivalent of getting into a spaceship and actually flying to those stars, carrying precise equipment such as spiritual treatises, finely tuned microscopes, and geographic maps. You will embark upon a thorough review of the history of chakra concepts, examining Vedic, tantric, and yogic chakra legends stretching as far back as 12,000 BCE. This history, which we'll cover in [Part 4](#), will prepare you for [part 5](#): The Science of Subtle Energy.

[Part 5](#) kicks off with a primer on physical and subtle energy that reviews relevant classical and quantum physics and all things scientific about the nature of energy. With a better understanding of the energetic scenery in which chakras grow, you will be ready to picture chakras within their larger familial structure: your entire energetic anatomy. To truly work with chakras, you must also place them within the physical body, which you will examine to better understand the chakras' unique structure. Finally, you will devote your time to the scientific explanation of kundalini, the force that activates the chakras.

Then it's around the world you go, plunging into a deeply meaningful odyssey in [Parts 6](#) through [8](#). Chakras are not exclusively Hindu in origin; they have appeared in jungles, deserts, mountains, and seashores around the world and across time. In addition, they are the subject of modern academic,

spiritual, and philosophical disciplines. Dozens of chakra systems are outlined and explained within the context of their spiritual and cultural surroundings. On this around-the-world tour, you will visit Asia, discover the ancient chakra systems of Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas, and investigate modern Western chakra systems.

Unique and contemporary chakra concepts and systems are the subject of Part 9, Chakras Et Cetera: Natural and Unusual Chakras, coverage of the relationship between chakras and the earth, animals, and skies, as well as an analysis of contemporary and emerging chakra systems. Does the earth itself have chakras? What about animals? This fascinating review is followed by a one-two-three of recent and unusual chakras that are just making their way into our common chakra medicine bag.

As will become clear throughout your pilgrimage, chakras are nothing new—and they are always new; we never complete our chakra adventure. These points of light touch every aspect of our lives as embodied reflections of the starry sky we gaze upon when we count our blessings.

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SECTION 1

CHAKRA FUNDAMENTALS AND BASIC PRACTICES

THERE IS ROOM in the heart for all the affections, as
there is room in heaven for all the stars.

VICTOR HUGO

Over the ages, chakras have been described in hundreds of ways. As you'll discover, they have been depicted as chariot wheels, bodily plexuses, psychological gateways, energetic centers, spiritual powers, and more. At one level every assertion is true, and the seeker of truth about chakras will examine every bit of data available (which is why this book is so large). As an analogy, those who seek to understand the heavens look at everything in the sky. We can't understand the complexity of the cosmos, however, unless we comprehend the basics. The same is true of chakras, which is why section 1 features fundamental chakra philosophies and practices.

Part 1 starts with a bird's-eye view of chakras, briefly touching on the definition, history, science, and functions of the chakras and their other energetic cohorts. Kundalini is also investigated, as this energetic sidekick makes sure that chakras and other energetic structures operate fully on every level, including physically, psychologically, and spiritually.

Part 2 is highly detailed, extensively showcasing the Hindu chakra system. Often called the classic chakra system, this seven-chakra system is the most well known and, because of this, arguably the most fully developed. You can

put your newfound knowledge to immediate use in [Part 3](#), which showcases chakra-based exercises and techniques. These chakra medicine practices are universal and will also help you benefit from the cross-cultural chakra systems covered in [Parts 6–8](#), found in [Section 2](#).

Just as there is room in the heavens for all the stars, so is there room in the seeker’s mind for all the available knowledge that exists on chakras; but first, the groundwork.

[\[contents\]](#)

PART 1

What Are Chakras?

A Pocket Guide to Your Body's Points of Light

DID YOU SAY the stars were worlds...?

THOMAS HARDY

There are worlds within worlds, most of which we cannot perceive with our naked senses. Within our bodies there are cells, and within those cells are an array of component parts. Within each of these are molecules and a humming universe of atoms and subatomic particles. Yet of all the invisible worlds we can investigate and ponder, I find the energy bodies that lie within and around us the most exciting of all, for they are vibrant, like the stars in the sky, and they are part of us. They make us shine. They are vital to our health, happiness, and spiritual evolution.

Many scientists and doctors understand the human body only as a conglomeration of tissues, organs, and cells. All of these are localized, meaning they exist where we expect to find them in a single identifiable place, and can be measured using current technology. There are aspects of us, however, that are not localized and that are composed of, lie within, or emanate fields of energy that are harder to measure or can't be measured at all. This is subtle energy.

The most magical of these cosmic forces is the chakra. With its story first told in ancient civilizations and its substantiation in modern science, the chakra is the most powerful energetic force within and around the body,

useful for performing healing, attracting what we need, obtaining guidance, and expanding and elevating our consciousness.

Chakras: One of the Body's Three Subtle Energy Systems

A chakra is a metaphysical, or “more than physical,” subtle energy center. Subtle energy runs at vibrations outside and beyond those of the physical world. This means we cannot see, touch, hear, or otherwise perceive subtle energy through our physical senses. Nonetheless, subtle energy is all around us. It is the energy that pulses within solid ground and gives direction to our breath. It percolates our coffee, propels our thoughts, flaps the butterfly's wings, and gives oomph to our emotions. All solid matter incorporates subtle energy, and some scientists believe solid matter is even formed by subtle energy.

Compared to physical energy, subtle energy is more like air than clay. Like air, it is present everywhere. Like air, it is vital to our well-being. It is actually the fundamental force that makes life and living possible. And also like air, it follows a set of rules and principles and can be organized systematically.

The chakras are one of three main systems that organize subtle energy for human use. These amazing energy bodies actually convert physical energy into subtle energy and vice versa, enabling us to reach into the realms of the subtle universe for support in living our best life. They accomplish this through interaction with the other two main subtle systems: the meridians/nadis and auric fields.

The term *meridian* is typically used in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) to describe the channels in our bodies through which subtle energy flows, while *nadi* is an East Indian term for the components of a very similar system. Some people believe these channels are one and the same, while others think they are different. We will explore this disagreement in section 2.

Auric fields are one of many sets of energy fields generated by the subtle body. Moving in a progression up the body, like the chakras, they look like

bands of energy that start close to the body and move farther away; each level links to a chakra. They are similar to the electromagnetic fields generated by the physical body, yet they are a step up in vibration.

All three structures interact, which is a topic for more in-depth discussion further along in the book. The important thing to know for now is that together these three main systems form our subtle energetic anatomy. Because the chakras cooperate with so many parts of us—including the subtle meridians/nadis and auric fields as well as body, mind, and soul—if we are to fully understand their beauty and power, we must explore all of these areas. And we will do so together in this book.

All cultural systems are in agreement that we have more than one chakra: some identify only two chakras, while others catalogue dozens of them. Later in the book we will gain an overview of numerous chakra systems around the world and explore the various ways in which different cultures have perceived these pulsing and vibrant energy centers. But here, in part 1, we will concentrate on laying the groundwork for understanding all the systems and everything else about chakras there is to know. Part 1, then, is a pocket guide to chakras, designed to launch you on the exciting odyssey that awaits you.

Chapter 1 provides a quick snapshot of the chakras and investigates the differences between physical, subtle, and other types of energies. These “big picture” discussions will form the basis of your ultimate understanding of the exquisite intricacies of the chakra system.

Also in chapter 1, I’ll outline the similar ingredients and qualities the seven main chakras share that most cultures agree upon: the fact that each regulates vital physical, psychological, and spiritual concerns. But, as you will learn, they do much, much more than this. They also assist us with fully embracing our physical needs while attaining the wisdom necessary to become enlightened beings, filled with unlimited understanding and love. Chapter 1 will also briefly investigate the history and science of the chakras, including some of the Hindu beliefs that have built our chakra knowledge. I will also describe some of the attributes often affiliated with the chakras, including

matters about the structure and spin of this swirling organ of light. My goal is to prepare you for part 2 and a deep dive into the seven in-body Hindu chakras.

Chapter 2 explores the mysterious world of kundalini, one of the many types of subtle energies that enable us to fully activate and make use of the chakras' powers. This chapter draws heavily from the ancient Hindu understanding of chakras and how they operate, and our discussion will be fairly basic. But there is much more to learn about kundalini energy, and we will return to it in section 2, updating our understanding with the views of esoteric explorers and scientists.

Altogether, my aim in this section of the book is to establish a framework of understanding that the rest of the book will fill in, giving you a high-level introduction to the truly mysterious worlds within worlds that are your chakras.

Now let us begin.

[contents]



Your Spinning Wheels of Light

THE QUESTION IS not what you look at, but
what you see.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Many of us are trained to discount anything we cannot see, touch, or hear. Maybe we think this approach will keep us safely tethered to the world we believe we know. But while we can't see the air, we know it's there; we even know we can't survive without it. We cannot touch the smile in another's heart or hear the worries that plague another's mind, yet we know that all these things—and so much more—exist. Likewise, we know there is more to ourselves than the physical image we see in the mirror.

Thousands of years ago, our ancestors didn't require machines to substantiate someone's claim that they felt sick. They didn't look up sketches of the body in *Gray's Anatomy* to track the flow of fluids. It would not have occurred to them to mock someone who had heard from Spirit in a dream. They trusted their spiritual senses as much as—if not more than—their physical ones, and their understanding of the human body, mind, and soul reflected this advanced consciousness.

Our ancestors knew that there were energy bodies associated with their physical bodies—subtler dimensions of the miraculous gift of life. East Indian culture called these energy bodies chakras, or cakras. This is only one of the chakras' many names, as chakras appear in different forms in cultures around the world. Yet no matter how such descriptions differ, chakras are defined in the same way: as a system of subtle energy transformers—similar to the common electrical devices that control electrical energy—operating within a network of systems that compose our subtle energetic anatomy. In

other words, they constitute a vital part of us that can and does influence both subtle (or psychic) energy and physical energy.

This introductory chapter's goal is to provide you with a basic understanding of the chakras and what types of issues each addresses physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Because there is such a wide variety of cultural systems that acknowledge chakras, I have narrowed the scope of this chapter to present only a quick overview of the seven basic in-body chakras that most systems agree upon, as well as the most basic ways of understanding these chakras.

I first offer a simple yet thorough explanation about chakras, moving into explorations of energy—the chakras' area of expertise. A brief overview of the science of the chakras will enable an intelligent discussion about how chakras help us meet our physical, psychological, and spiritual goals.

As background information, I will also include a brief history of the chakra system, the use of subtle energy across cultures, and an exploration of various East Indian energy concepts. And to give you a framework for the chakras, I'll include an introductory meeting with the chakra system's kin: the meridians and energetic fields. Along the way, you'll learn about several of the essential factors related to the chakras, such as elements, colors, locations, tones, and more, all of which will reappear in individual sections that apply this information to each of the seven in-body chakras.

As you embrace these broad but vital ideas about the chakras, let yourself imagine what might happen if you could really understand these mini universes within and around you. What if you could unlock their miraculous powers? Think of what you'd understand about reality. Think how powerfully you could transform reality. Imagine how much more of yourself you could ultimately become. As you'll discover, the overarching beauty of these rainbow-colored vortexes is the invitation they extend to us to continually develop—to become people who have embraced the truth of Vanna Bonta's statement in her book *Flight: A Quantum Fiction Novel*: “The illusion is we are only physical.”¹

Chakras prove we are much, much more than that.

What Is a Chakra?

At the simplest level, a chakra is an organ of the body that manages energy, just as the heart manages the circulatory system and the lungs manage respiration. There are major and minor chakras—chakras with lots of jobs to do and chakras with smaller tasks to accomplish. Most people work with a seven-chakra system, primarily Hindu in origin, where the chakras emanate from the spine or the head, although there are hundreds of variations, as you will discover in this book. While you won't read about them in this chapter, you should know that several cultures place upward of dozens of chakras in and around the body, formulating a true network of light that encircles us. As people through time have done when looking at the placement of stars in the sky, over thousands of years, those who have perceived these chakra locations and drawn conclusions about them have organized them into constellations similar to those we use in astronomy. We refer to these as chakra systems, and they are embedded in a greater subtle- energy anatomy.

Chakras are a lot like the physical organs in your body. They are made of energy, they are professionally employed (i.e., have important jobs to do), and they work together with other organs like the cogs and wheels of a single machine. Yet a chakra's job goes beyond the concrete tasks you might find on a physical organ's job description. Each chakra focuses a unique physical, psychological, and spiritual energy in the body to direct and serve your well-being. Each chakra manages an area of your physical body and a set of emotional and mental concerns, runs specific intuitive or psychic gifts, and highlights aspects of your special spiritual identity.

A chakra's job description is astonishingly broad, encompassing all levels of your being, and there are several reasons for this. While I have compared chakras to physical organs in the body, to best understand their powerful abilities, erase that image of a physical organ for now. Tuck away the illustration of your liver or spleen and instead picture a swirling vortex made of light, narrowing down to a point like a tornado; that's the best image to hold of a chakra. To those who perceive energies that are invisible to the

naked eye, a chakra looks like a rapidly spinning wheel of swirling light, moving so fast that, were it visible, we would perceive it as a blur. It can swirl clockwise or counterclockwise. If we slowed down its lightning-fast movement, however, we would see it as a whirlpool that has twirling vortexes embodied within it.

Each of the major chakras, however, contains a different number of these vortexes. If we were to slow the movement of a major chakra to utter stillness, the vortexes would resemble the tapered petals of a lotus flower. This is one of the reasons ancient East Indian mystics often compared chakras to lotus flowers, and the varying number of vortexes in each of the major chakras is why they associated a different number of petals with each one.²

Now take fourteen of these mini tornadoes—yes, fourteen—and picture seven of them emanating from the front side of your body and seven parallel tornadoes emitting from your body's back side, as shown in *Illustration 1*. Compare this image of the chakras to a lotus and your picture of the chakra system becomes more accurate.

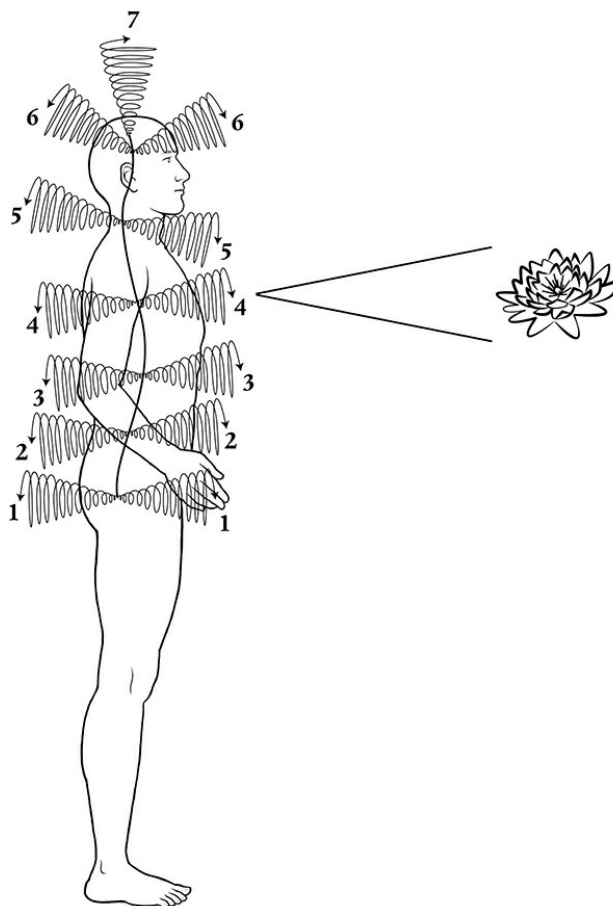


ILLUSTRATION 1—CHAKRAS AS VORTEXES: The main in-body chakras emanate from the back and front sides of the spine to extend beyond the physical body. Each is composed of a cluster of vortexes similar in shape to what you see in a whirlpool. Once the spin of a chakra is stilled, it reveals a lotuslike shape. At the center and deepest point of each chakra is a stemlike channel that connects the main in-body chakras to the spine, and through the spine to each other. ILLUSTRATION BY MARY ANN ZAPALAC

Every in-body chakra has a front and a back side, with each flowery vortex narrowing to a point in the spine or head, specifically in nerve plexuses in the hips (first chakra), abdomen (second chakra), solar plexus (third chakra), heart (fourth chakra), throat (fifth chakra), forehead (sixth chakra), and top of the head (seventh chakra). The names of these chakras in the Hindu pantheon are Sanskrit words: muladhara, svadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddha, ajña, and sahasrara, from first to seventh chakra, respectively. Anchored in the physical body, each performs highly physical functions, such as running that area of the spine or head or managing the organs in the surrounding area.

Each chakra is associated with a long list of factors. These include (take a deep breath) the Sanskrit and other names, a bodily location, chakra purpose, chakra color, chakra age-related activation, a related endocrine gland, associated body parts and physical diseases, element, an action organ, vital breath, related diseases, psychological functions, archetype, personality profile, deficiencies and excesses, a sound, sound carrier or representative, number of lotuses, attribute, cosmic plane, goddess and god, planet, granthi, intuitive gifts, auric field, secondary chakras, and more. And the chakras' physical presence also allows them to draw on a special energy called kundalini to create health at every level and to encourage us toward spiritual transformation.

Chakra Structure

To continue refining the image of the chakras, let's take a closer look at chakra structure. They are not just vertical in orientation—points of light stacked one atop the other at strategic sites along your spine and head. Each occupies its own horizontal band of vibrating energy that extends outward from the body and that can be illuminated as color and sound. There are seven chakras—and seven bands of colors and sounds—that define both the energy band and the chakra. As part of their job description, chakras manage whatever comes their way that matches their own energy band.

There are four additional considerations regarding chakra structure. If you understand these aspects—the chakra substructures—you will have a much clearer image of the chakra and what it can do. It will also help you better understand a chakra's spin and why chakra experts always ask whether the chakra is spinning clockwise or counterclockwise and how energy is flowing within it. Further information about the science behind all of this can be found in chapter 21, “The Science and Structure of Chakras.”

Basically a chakra can be understood in terms of its location: where it lies along the vertical axis of the body, where its energetic field extends to the left and right sides of the body (the chakras themselves have left and right sides as well), and its extension outward to the front and back. The fourth

determinant, in my own experience, is that a chakra has an inner and outer wheel.

The lower a chakra is in relation to the physical body, the lower its vibration and the more material its effects. The higher it is in correspondence to the physical body, the higher its vibration and the more spiritual its effects. It is important to stress that “low” and “high” are not judgments. We are equally human and divine. Metaphysically, the lower chakras ensure our development as healthy human beings and the higher chakras ensure that we are ever-evolving spiritual beings. I think it is fitting that the heart is the center of our subtle energy system. All good things meet in the heart—in the center of love.

The major chakras are complicit in maintaining yin-yang balance in every area of our life. One of the ways they do this is by flowing energy appropriately to the left and right sides of the body. The left side of the body is feminine and is controlled by the right brain hemisphere, while the right side is masculine and is governed by the left brain hemisphere. One result of this differentiation is that the left side of the body receives energy and the right side transmits it. Some esoteric scientists believe that because of this, the energies flowing in through the left side are processed through the metaphysical energy systems, including the chakras and meridians, and are then projected from the right side of the body. Psychologically, this would also mean that the left side acts as a kind of filtering system, “deciding” what external energies we will engage with, while the right side generates more intense electromagnetic waves and shares information about us with the world. In metaphysical terms, energy flows into our left side, traverses the meridian system, and is processed in the chakras. The chakras then project energy into the environment through the right side of the body.³ Seen in this way, chakras help maintain an important flow of physical and subtle energy into and through the body.

This pattern of flow is also found in the way each individual chakra functions. For the most part, the left side of the chakra is yin and managed by the right brain hemisphere, and the right side of the chakra is yang and

controlled by the left brain hemisphere. Many believe that energy enters through the left side of the chakra and pours out through the right in a circular, twisting motion. This motion is amplified by the energy that is already pouring through the center of the chakra at what is, in effect, a crossroads of sorts, with energy moving vertically (from both the bottom up and the top down) and horizontally (from front to back and back to front). The result of the convergence of all of these energetic forces is lightning-fast spin: a whirling wheel containing a number of hubs within it.

The number of hubs a chakra contains has long been symbolized by the numbers of lotus petals seen in Hindu representations of the chakras, and it differs from chakra to chakra. This number is based on the energetic frequency of the chakra and how many streams of energy are flowing into it. There are complicated formulas for adding up these streams, depending on the system we're looking at. For instance, some systems, such as the Kalachakra system described in chapter 24, describe various winds that flow through the body, affecting the spin and therefore the resulting number of lotus petals. Other systems differ slightly. I've included explanations of chakra spin and number of hubs or petals in chapter 21.⁴

In relation to the spine, the front and back sides of the chakras each serve their own vital function. As do many subtle energy professionals, I believe that the back side receives energy and the front side emanates it. I also relate the back side to the subconscious, the unconscious, and the soul; this means that energy entering through the back side is filtered depending on soul (past life) issues, as well as inner child and unconscious beliefs. The front sides of the chakras help us create the reality we move forward into and share information about ourselves with the external world.

The direction of a chakra's spin, clockwise or counterclockwise, is often described by looking at its front or back side. Typically it is determined through the observer's point of view; that is, how someone looking at the front of the body would distinguish a clockwise spin, moving to the right, from a counterclockwise spin, moving to the left. Some practitioners, however, determine the spin through the eyes of the subject. The exercises I

will present in Part 3 circumvent this issue on a practical level by helping you figure out which direction is most natural for you.

Are you getting a sense of the tremendous amount of movement taking place in these powerful energy transducers' multidirectional movement? Well, I believe (as do many other professionals) that chakras have yet another aspect—an inner and an outer sphere, or circle—which rotate in relation to one another.

There are many theories about the existence of an inner and outer sphere for each chakra. I have heard teachers suggest that the inner sphere manages one's inner life and the outer, one's relationship with the world. As I will share in chapter 32, in the discussion of my own twelve-chakra system, I believe our essential spirit programs the inner wheel during conception. It holds the keys to our dharma: our perfect path and most righteous personality. The outer wheel, which is also programmed during conception, assists us with adapting to our family system and the culture around us. It holds our soul's karma and the beliefs, emotions, and values that enable us to fit in to the world we are entering; karma is the sum total of our experiences in this and former lives, often determining our decisions and life events. Many of the beliefs the outer wheel holds are self-destructive, underlying the sense of separation—rather than the truth of interconnectivity—that causes life challenges.

What Does the Spin of a Healthy Chakra Look Like?

A chakra's spin is a complex interaction that enables the conversion of energy—from subtle to physical and vice versa. Most systems propose that a healthy, balanced chakra spins clockwise and that an unhealthy chakra spins counterclockwise, and sometimes this statement is true. Sometimes.

In my own work, I have seen that chakras usually flow clockwise when they are taking in energy and counterclockwise when they are releasing it. This isn't always the case, however; sometimes the opposite is true, depending on the person or the situation. No matter which scenario applies, when chakra rotation is compromised, perhaps because of disease or exposure to emotional

abuse, that chakra will become distorted; its spin disturbed, it will literally warp. This distortion can also affect—or infect—the energy passed along to its neighboring chakras. Therefore, a disturbed chakra can psychically appear weak, misshapen (not circular), or too open.

I caution against using chakra spin to determine the true health of a chakra. A clockwise-spinning chakra can take in unhealthy energy as easily as healthy energy. The counterclockwise spin might also be necessary to release energy, such as toxic microbes, emotions, or the energies of others. And yes, it is just as likely that it might needlessly release positive energy.

One common scenario is that chakras move clockwise most of the time, but at a certain time of day they temporarily shift counterclockwise to let go of negativity. As well, during menstruation several chakras twirl counterclockwise, letting go of the monthly buildup of emotions and tissues until the woman's period is over. During times of great grief, chakras often move in a variety of ways, as if confused by the emotional turmoil. Chakra spins can also cease altogether if a person is stuck in some way or overwhelmed.

The other issue with chakra spin relates to the outer versus inner wheels. In general, all instruments used to assess chakra spin, including intuition, assess only the outer wheel, which is in constant flux because it is karmic rather than dharmic in nature. Whereas karma decides events based on the past, dharma constitutes principles of a higher nature, allowing for forgiveness and love, not only retribution and cause/effect. The inner wheel flows consistently with our higher needs and can only be accessed in a deep meditative state. Upon reaching this state of mind, concentrating on an inner wheel can actually correct any distorted external wheel spin.

In general, I would agree that with a healthy chakra we see a wide, circular, clockwise, and open spin. But that is only a rule of thumb—and even then, only as it relates to most people. Some individuals are simply contrary. These amazing people, who are usually shamanic and mystical by nature, often operate with counterclockwise chakras. Several exercises in [Part 3](#) will help

you assess and balance chakra spin as well as determine your own healthiest chakra spin direction.

As I hope you are beginning to see, chakras truly are energy organs, making use of all types of energy vibrations—including color, sound, spin, and more—to enhance every part of our existence. To truly understand these bodily stars, we need to better understand energy itself and the chakras' interaction with it. This is a big undertaking—and a fascinating subject—but for now we'll take a bite-sized piece and explore just the basics.

The Three Main Functions of the Chakras

Whether or not our chakras have been fully activated by kundalini energy—a process you will learn much more about later in these pages—they perform three gigantic roles. Understanding these three functions, as well as some of the science involved, will help you see how chakras accomplish their goals. A little further on I'll offer some specific examples of how I have seen these functions play out among my clients.

- 1. Physical Processing:** Many chakras have a bodily location, including an attachment to a nerve plexus and/or an endocrine gland, and all of them manage a certain part of the body. They can also be described as colors and sounds, which are related to the vibratory bands they both operate within and emanate, so they relate to our physical senses as well.
- 2. Psychological Processing:** Each chakra interacts with—and creates—psychological constructs that affect our well-being. This processing takes place in the realm of beliefs and feelings.
- 3. Spiritual Processing:** Each chakra contributes to our spiritual well-being and development, adding a layer of consciousness to our maturing sense of self. Every chakra also serves as a channel for a specific psychic ability.

Before I go into each of these further, there are a couple other important things you should know about chakras:

Chakras Remember

Chakras not only process energy related to these three roles, but they record or hold related information as well. For instance, a chakra will receive incoming subtle and physical information about a friend and help your physical body, psychological self, and higher self respond to this information. Then it will remember, as a mini brain might, what conclusions you drew and how your friend reacted. Because chakras start this role as soon as the body is conceived, they can be seen as memory banks for all aspects of your life.

Chakras Are Energy Transformers

Most of the time we go about the activities of our lives generally unaware that an extraordinary alchemy is taking place within us via the chakras. You see, chakras go a step beyond the exchange of energy. They are actually energy transformers or transducers, which means they can change subtle energy into physical energy and vice versa. Think about that! This means that a chakra could hold the key to blinking a tumor out of your body or turning that wish for a sports car you've been harboring into a red Porsche. This transformer function is key to how chakras carry out their three main functions, which we will now look at more closely.

1. Chakras Process Physically

Every chakra has a physical location inside or atop the body, even though we can't corroborate this fact with X-ray machines or most other commonly accepted technologies. It would be easy to think that a chakra's physical duties relate to a particular body part because of its physical link to it. It's more accurate to say that a chakra governs a certain part of the body because their vibrational frequencies match.

Every chakra functions on a different vibratory plane from other chakras, one that is generated from and interacts with a particular level or layer of the body. These layers progress along the upright body's vertical axis as horizontal vibratory bands.

Chakras are ascribed colors and sounds—qualities we are accustomed to perceiving with our physical senses—because these vibratory bands can be most easily explained and understood in these ways. Originally, the ancients used their intuition to figure out the colors of the chakras. Because the seven in-body chakras range from red through the visible spectrum to white, the chakra system is often compared to a rainbow. It has been called a rainbow bridge and is said to awaken kundalini, the rainbow serpent. You can see this rainbow bridge in the [Color Insert](#) and in [Illustration 2](#) in black and white.

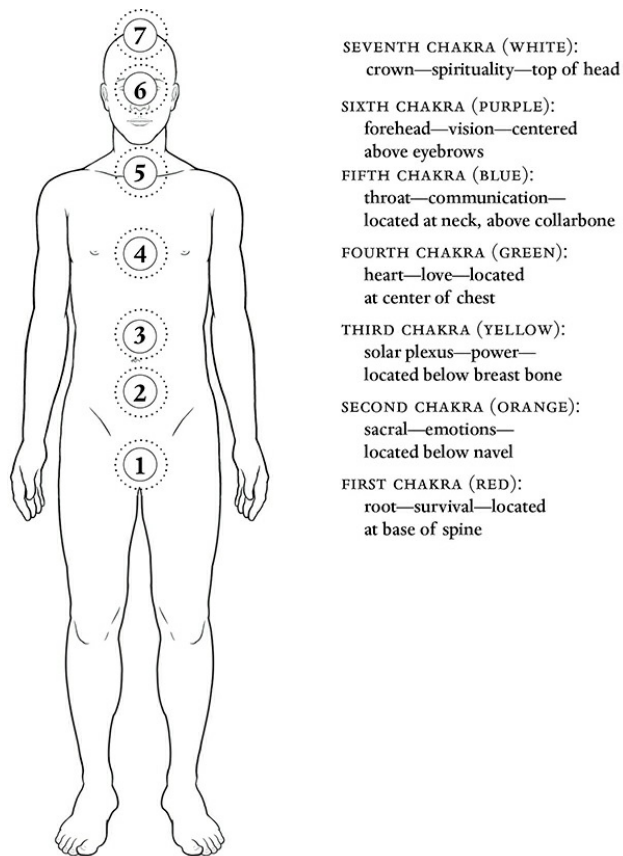


ILLUSTRATION 2—THE LOCATION AND BASIC FUNCTIONS OF THE IN-BODY

CHAKRAS: The in-body chakra system is often seen as a rainbow, with each chakra progressing through the seven colors of the rainbow, from the first chakra in the hips to the seventh chakra in the top of the head. Every one of these core chakras is linked to a major nerve plexus and regulates core physical, psychological, and spiritual functions. Shown here is the color and location of each chakra and its primary function. (See also the [Color](#)

[Insert](#).) ILLUSTRATION BY MARY ANN ZAPALAC

This ultrasensitivity of the chakras makes them very effective at managing our physical concerns. Each chakra is linked with a primal element and monitors the physical issues, tissues, organs, and characteristics within or near its vibratory band. Quite specifically, each chakra is associated with a bodily area, which is linked to a vertebral region or spinal nerve plexus and an endocrine gland. For instance, the Hindu first chakra—located in the hips, through the coccygeal plexus and the adrenal glands—is CEO of the hips, coccygeal vertebrae, anus, bladder, rectum, and adjacent body parts. Have a bladder infection? You might have an energetic issue affecting your first chakra; as a result, your first chakra is playing havoc with your bladder. Conversely, a problem in your bladder will create a subtle energy shift in your first chakra. Chakras are always yin and yang: what happens in physical reality affects them, and what occurs in a chakra alters physical reality.

An example from my practice that comes to mind is of a male client who had crippling hip pain, for no apparent reason, that had started a few months previously. He had been to a dozen medical professionals to figure out the cause, from allopathic to alternative, all to no avail. When he showed up for a chakra healing, I was his last hope.

Hips regulate the first chakra, so I knew we were working with issues related to safety, security, and physicality. After assessing that chakra, my intuitive sense was that my client had been physically injured at some time in his life but couldn't remember the event. I guided him into a calm state and asked him if he could recall any stories about being injured. I directed him to focus on the first chakra area of his body as he thought it over.

He vaguely recalled that when he was about three, he had been in a car accident and that his pelvis had been jammed in his car seat. Being three, he was soon running around without a care in the world. It occurred to him that his son had recently turned three years of age, and that was when the hip pain had started. He remarked that he thought that was odd.

I didn't think it was odd at all. Chakras hold the memory of what has gone before, and recurring trauma, emotional situations, or even our child attaining the age at which an event occurred for us can be triggered to respond in some

way. That's how energy works: like triggers like. I supported my client in sensing the physical pain he had ignored when he was three and used some of the techniques I will cover in **Part 3** to release the pain. After just a few minutes, the pain cleared up and never came back.

2. Chakras Process Psychologically

Chakras might as well call themselves “mini Dr. Freuds” because each chakra manages a particular set of beliefs and the feelings related to those beliefs. Beliefs and feelings underlie our psychological issues and profile.

For instance, the Hindu first chakra runs our beliefs about safety and security. Emotions related to these beliefs include sensing ourselves as loved, worthy, wanted, undesirable, rejected, or abandoned. Our fourth chakra holds our beliefs about love and corresponding feelings such as attraction, compassion, and gratitude.

A dysfunctional belief can inhibit the full function of a chakra, as can repressed or ignored feelings. Likewise, if we place our faith in self-destructive beliefs or express our feelings in harmful ways, the related chakra will become warped or distorted. Chakras injured because of emotional issues can impact our physical health. I'll explore this further in the section called “Chakras Clear Out Negative Beliefs and Emotions” in chapter 11.

There is one more consideration to add to our growing knowledge base about chakras and psychological concerns: the chakra developmental cycle, which I will describe in chapter 3. While we emerge from the womb with our chakras intact, they are awakened in sequence as we age. There are many systems describing this process, and each one slightly differs in terms of ages assigned to a chakra's activation. In the twelve-chakra system, for example, our first chakra is activated after conception through six months of age. Our second chakra becomes operational between six months and two and a half years of age, and so on. During these phases, a chakra “locks in” the conclusions we have made about our environment.

For instance, imagine that your mother hadn't wanted you to be born. The belief of being unwanted and the resulting feelings of rejection might lock

into your first chakra and continue to affect you as time goes on, flavoring your choice of a mate, job, and personal health care (or lack thereof). One of the reasons we perform chakra healing and clearing (terms I will define in Part 3) is to release negative psychological programs and create more life-enhancing ones.

The relationships between our chakras, lives, and psychological issues will be discussed at great length throughout this book, but I'd first like to provide an example of the close connection between our emotions and chakras, and, in this case, of the physical body as well, once again exploring the first chakra.

I once worked with a woman who had started waking up at five o'clock every morning with crippling coccygeal pain—seemingly out of the blue. Doctors had asserted there was nothing wrong, despite the pain being so severe that it left her incapacitated for several hours. The other major issue in her life was her mother's imminent death.

I knew that we were most likely dealing with a first chakra issue from a child development point of view (an approach we'll cover in part 2), which the first chakra activates when we are in the womb. It also holds issues incurred physically or that arise because we don't feel safe, which can happen at any time in our life, but I instinctively believed we were dealing with a very young—or old—event. I asked my client if anything had happened to her mother when she was pregnant with her or even right after birth.

“My mom said that she fell and broke her tailbone during the last week of her pregnancy because my dad yelled at her,” my client told me. “They didn't have much money, and my father blamed her for getting pregnant and furthering the restrictions on the budget. And she told me it was a painful childbirth.”

I suggested that my client's tiny body might have held the imprint of her mother's fall, leading her to unconsciously feel guilty for getting her mom “in trouble,” with its attendant physical pain, and for causing so much stress to her father. The inner thinking goes like this: “Since I'm responsible for my mom's problems, I'll carry her pain.”

Most likely, the body memories had been triggered because her mother was about to leave this plane and enter another one—a death for the daughter, a new life for the mother.

My client gasped. “I was born at five in the morning!” she recalled—exactly the time she awakened in pain every day. We spent some additional time discussing her feelings about her mother and her mother’s upcoming death, as well as that inner sense of guilt and responsibility.

My client decided she didn’t need to carry her mother’s pain in order to help her mother to the other side, and perhaps she had never needed to mirror it at all. After this session of working with her first chakra, the pain disappeared.

3. Chakras Process Spiritually

Ultimately each chakra is a rung on the ladder to enlightenment, which we could define as the ability to live in a state of spiritual truth, guided by insight. Achieving enlightenment is not easy; everything in life builds toward it, including pain, suffering, and hardship. This is why it’s important to remember the advice Anne Lamott shares in *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith*: “The road to enlightenment is long and difficult, and you should try not to forget snacks and magazines.”⁵

While it doesn’t exactly offer snacks and magazines, the chakra system is equipped with its own “Skype service” providing access to vital guidance and needed inspiration. Loaded within each chakra is an innate psychic ability or gift. These gifts include physical, emotional, and mental empathy; healing; the ability to intuitively hear and see information; and more. All of these subtle abilities help us receive spiritual guidance as well as disseminate psychic messages to the world.

Sometimes life events damage our natural psychic abilities, a fact that points to the holistic nature of a chakra. Our spiritual gifts can be positively or negatively affected by physical or psychological events and vice versa. For instance, physical abuse can close down our access to the first chakra’s physical empathy, or the ability to sense what is occurring in another’s body. It will now be hard for us to care about others or sense what they need. We

could also respond by cracking this chakra wide open, becoming too sensitive to others' physical experiences. This hypervigilance can leave us on constant alert, to the point of exhaustion. We might even go so far as to absorb others' physical issues, illnesses, or problems and manifest them through our own bodies. We will further explore the psychic gifts in several sections in this book, including the next chapter. For now, this story illustrates how powerfully spiritual energies can affect the chakras and vice versa.

I once worked with a teenager, whom I'll call John, who had stopped going to school three weeks before graduation from high school. "I get too anxious," he said. "I just can't sit there. I can't keep a thought in my head, and even though I try to think, I can't." I saw him a day before finals, his last chance to take and pass tests that would allow him to graduate. The extent of his anxiety would have been clear to anyone, reflected in physical twitches as he moved and spoke.

"Where do you feel the anxiety?" I asked, already knowing he was going to say his stomach, as my sense was that we were dealing with the third chakra. We pick up psychic data about others through our third chakra. On the positive side, this affinity enables us to sense others' motives and pick up on information that could be useful. On the downside, absorbing too much of other people's mental activity will overload our system and cause anxiety.

When John indicated his stomach, I asked if he often had butterflies, especially if he was around people who were nervous. The young man proceeded to recite situation after situation in which a friend of his, his sister, his mom, and others had been scared about something and he had responded in kind. I suggested that he was too open in this chakra and was picking up others' insecurities or fears. Could it be, I asked John, that right now he was oversensitive to his schoolmates' fear of graduation and the great beyond?

Immediately the young man stopped twitching and soberly said, "Wow, that makes sense." I often find that accurate information instills the kind of instant relief indicated by John's sudden calm state. After some more discussion, the teenager shared that his stomach problems—and anxiety—had started when

his father left his mom. “My mom would cry every night, she was so nervous about how she was going to support me and my sister.”

“Do you think you could have unconsciously decided to take on your mother’s doubts to alleviate *her* tension?” I asked. I also suggested that when he was around others who were experiencing strong uncertainty, he might automatically do the same.

“Bull’s-eye,” John said. From there, we used a number of chakra-clearing techniques to help him close down his third chakra so it was no longer susceptible to other people’s fears. He went to school that week, took his tests, and graduated with his class. As you can see, chakra medicine can affect us in the most unusual of ways.

Deeper into Chakras and Energy

If there is one thing to remember about the chakras, it is their essential job. Chakras are referred to as energy organs, points, or knots because they are energy experts. We perceive them as centrifuges of light because they do indeed light us up. They do this because they manage energy.

Energy is information that moves—plain and simple. And everything in the world is made of energy. Thus there is information in a cup of tea that makes sure you are drinking tea rather than coffee. No matter how still you hold your cup, the saucer, liquid, and cup itself are always vibrating; hence, energy is information in constant movement. Chakras are special in that they interact with several different types of energy.

You’ll learn a lot about energy in this book, and not only because of this central truth that everything is made of energy. Unlike objects like teacups and organs like the heart, chakras work with really fast-moving energy (called subtle or psychic energy), really slow-moving energy (called physical or sensory energy), and everything else in between and beyond. For instance, chakras interact with a type of energy called causal energy, which serves as a blueprint for both subtle and physical energy. You can explore these and other energies further in [Section 2](#).