

Tibetan Buddhist Yoga
The Practice of the Five Wisdom Energies
by Irini Rockwell

We can be charming, easy-going, clear-minded, efficient, generous and appreciative. Other times we can be stubborn, jealous, picky and fussy, possessive or angry. At times we shine; other times we feel stuck. The way we are—our emotions, the way we speak, dress and relate to others—are manifestations of our fundamental energetic makeup.

Tibetan or tantric Buddhism categorizes we humans as having five basic qualities. Each energy or style expresses itself in personality traits that manifest as dysfunctional and neurotic, or constructive and wise.

In my book, *The Five Wisdom Energies, a Buddhist Way of Understanding Personalities, Emotions and Relationships*, I describe the colors, wisdom and confusion inherent to each of the five energies:

- > The buddha family radiates white energy. Buddha is all-pervasive, spacious, peaceful; this is its wisdom quality. It can also be solid, immobile, dense, ignoring and denying; that is its confused quality.
- > The vajra family radiates blue. Like a crystal-clear mirror, vajra reflects what it sees without bias. But it also has a self-righteousness that can harden into cold or hot anger.
- > The ratna family has an earthy, golden yellow energy that encompasses everything. Its wisdom quality is richness, equanimity and satisfaction. But it can also turn into greedy territoriality and puffed-up pride.
- > The padma family glows with the vitality of red energy. Padma's passion can manifest as compassionate wisdom, finely tuned into what is happening. However, it can also cling obsessively to whatever gives pleasure.
- > The karma family emits a green energy. Its all-accomplishing action for the benefit of others is swift and energetic, like the wind. But it can also become power-hungry, manipulative, competitive and envious.

These energies can offer perspective on all aspects of our life—and particularly our relationships: Why is it that one person brings out intellectual curiosity and another physical desire? Why do I feel at ease with one person, and anxious with another? Why do I feel powerful in one situation, but inhibited and frustrated in another?

Beginning in 1972, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, a Buddhist teacher, developed the maitri practice associated with the five energies. Through taking specific postures in specifically shaped and colored rooms (or by using colored glasses) one evokes the qualities of the energies. The postures are based on the Buddhist teachings on inner yoga. With practice, we can “flush out” neurotic energy that blocks our channels and chakras.

This practice is based on the understanding that our wisdom, our sanity, is embedded in the very energy we experience as neurotic. By heightening the energy associated with each posture we can challenge habitual patterns, often locked in our body for years. But when our neurosis is thus exposed we can feel even more neurotic. By embracing the intensified energy and surrounding it with an attitude of unconditional friendliness, we can experience relaxation and clarity. Our stuck energy can transmute into brilliant sanity, into an unconditional acceptance of ourselves. Each posture is designed to intensify and transmute a specific neurotic pattern by releasing blockages:

> The buddha posture suggests drawing inward into a secure place. It works with laziness and a tendency to ignore. By becoming aware of larger space, we begin to relax.

> The vajra posture frustrates our desire to scan our surroundings and thwarts our preoccupation with details, our desire to know what is going on. We may become angry. And then, we may discover a confidence in what we already know.

> In the ratna posture, we want to embrace the whole world, but we can't move. We feel there is much more to be appreciated, but the richness is beyond our reach. The posture reinforces a sense of poverty and insubstantiality until there's no point pretending anymore—at which point we begin to feel the richness inside of us.

> The padma posture frustrates our longing to possess. We can't be easygoing in this posture. We are stuck in mediocrity, in boredom. Then we discover that all that we desire is within us.

> The karma postures immobility frustrates our neurotic desire to always have something happening; in this restricted state, all we can do is look at the impulse. Eventually we give up, and experience space.

I am continually amazed at how often people do a posture briefly, with no idea of what to expect, and then give a textbook description of the energy. On the other hand, people have a wide range of experiences—there is no particular experience we are meant to have.

This practice is most often done as an intensive discipline, in a group setting. The group provides (as I say in my book) “a nonjudgmental, supportive container with an attitude of fundamental acceptance of whatever arises. It is a safe, nurturing place where we support one another in being genuine. In such a community, we can explore without censure, so our neuroses are neither repressed nor indulged but are openly recognized. It allows the best and the worst to come out.”

Irini will teach at Shambhala Mountain Center in Red Feather Lakes, Colorado, from Sept 10-15th: shambhalamountain.com.

Irini Rockwell, MA, Director of the Five Wisdoms Institute, is a consultant, coach and facilitator of workshops and training programs. She draws from a background in dance, creative process, psychotherapy, Buddhism & leadership training. She also taught the first Buddhist class that our editor ever understood. For more: fivewisdomsinstitute.com.