

Practising Heart Coherence

1. Set aside your concerns for a few minutes
2. Take two deep slow breaths and keep your attention focused on each breath until you have finished exhaling. Pause and wait for the next in-breath to begin of its own accord. Let your mind float with your breath.
3. A few seconds after your breath stabilises, focus your attention on your chest or heart region. Imagine you are breathing through your heart. Really feel each in-breath and each out-breath passing through that part of your body.
4. Imagine each in-breath nourishes your body and each out-breath rids it of waste that it no longer needs. Imagine your body bathed in purifying and soothing air. Imagine you are helping your body make the most of the respite and attention you are giving to it.
5. You might visualise your heart floating and frolicking like a child in a bath of lukewarm water – without constraint or obligation. Feel your heart thrive as you continue to supply gentle enveloping air.
6. Become aware of the sensations of warmth or expansiveness in your chest. It maybe helpful to encourage feelings of love and gratitude by thinking of people you love, or even of pets, of a peaceful scene in nature, a pleasing physical feat.

7. You may notice a gentle smile on your face and/or a glow or feeling of lightness or expansion inside your chest. These are signs that coherence has been established.

Coherence between the heart and the emotional brain stabilises the autonomic nervous system. From this state of balance we have access to the wisdom of the emotional brain (its intuition) and the faculties for reflection and abstract reasoning of the cognitive brain. We can ask ourselves questions about what really matters to us/ what we really want and get a real answer.

Suggestions on getting started

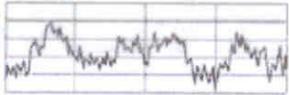
- Identify a regular time when you can spend 10 –15 uninterrupted minutes practising the exercise above. Just before going to bed might be a good time.
- Practice entering into coherence when things are going wrong and your physiology is going into chaos. This is when entering into coherence will make the most immediate difference.

Heart Coherence

The 40,000 neurons of the heart's semi-autonomous network ("the little brain in the heart") are tightly interconnected with the emotional brain. Together, they form a "heart-brain system" in which the heart itself plays an important role. By taming the heart directly, we can begin to tame our emotions.

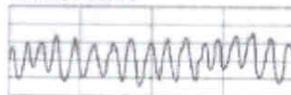
The focus of this method is to train our cardiac rhythm to enter a state of "coherence" (enhanced healthy heart rate variability) rather than "chaos" (reduced healthy variability) which is its usual pattern. Chaos and reduced heart rate variability are associated with stress, anxiety and depressive states. It is also a leading predictor of high blood pressure, heart disease, and even mortality from all causes.

Chaos



In states of stress, anxiety, or depression, the heart rate varies irregularly, it becomes "chaotic."

Coherence



In states of well-being, gratitude or compassion, the heart rate varies regularly, it becomes "coherent."