
Chapter Twelve

Experiencing Alchemy

The Opportunity for Change

Alchemy implies magic and the extra-ordinary. In Chapter 10, we looked at ways of building alchemical fulcrums. In this chapter I focus on how consciousness can be shifted through their use and how we can induce non-ordinary experiences. Alchemy is “any magical power or process of transmuting,” where transmuting means “changing from one form into another.” Alchemical touch can provide extraordinary experiences and even bring one closer to their divine nature.

From a rather simplistic view one could say that, since energy is neither created nor destroyed, we are composed of the vibration present at the beginning of all things. Astrophysicists postulate that creation came from one “Big Bang.” If that moment released all the vibration and energy that is Spirit, then our energy is still connected

with it and we all have a God or Spirit aspect within us. As Jung has said, “Bidden or unbidden, God is present.” As one experiences this reality deeper and deeper one can begin to see Spirit, or God, in everything and everybody.

Spirit is present everywhere. When we come to this understanding we know that every touch contact can engage that Spirit essence. We can touch a person in such a way as to take him or her beneath levels of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty, and help establish re-connection with their deepest essence. Our intention is not to alter a person’s inner understanding of spirituality or their belief systems, but rather to facilitate a fundamental experience of optimism, joy, and happiness that resides at that essence level.

At the Esalen Institute a number of years ago Joseph Campbell described three levels of human activity: the first, and best, activity was to experience the Mystery; the second best was to share about that experience; the third best was our actual day-to-day activity in society, involved with science, commerce, formal religions, and the like. Campbell explained that we could not approach the first level using the vocabulary of the third; words cannot capture the Mystery. The experience of the Mystery could only be approached through myths, imagery, imagination, or direct experience.

Touch is one of the fastest and often least confusing ways to create direct experience and get beyond the thinking and analytical mind of the third level. Through bodywork we have the opportunity to create deep experience and work directly with it. We can open the door to the first level—the personal experience of the Mystery, of the Spirit. Herein lie some of the extraordinary dimensions of touch and seemingly magical dimensions of alchemy.

Working from Principles of Nature

Zero Balancing is based on laws and principles of nature, rather than on medical pathology. It is neither diagnostic nor symptom-based nor limited to a desired outcome. The lack of pathology focus gives us the opportunity to work directly with a person’s health and potential. Fulcrums become far more than simply techniques to accomplish specific ends or relieve particular symptoms, rather they become instruments to promote change in accord with one’s natural growth process.

This opportunity for change is based on a number of assumptions that have developed out of our hands-on experience. These assumptions progress following the principles already discussed. They are:

- we are connected to and are an extension of nature
- we are an energetic system with a particle aspect that represents our physical manifestation and a wave aspect that represents our inner nature
- the particle nature changes with time and circumstance; the wave nature is continually changing in configuration and yet remains connected with the beginning of all things
- clearer, stronger fields of energy will override or alter weaker fields
- healing is more possible in expanded states of consciousness where people are less held to conditioning, trauma, and self image
- actualization is more possible when fields of the body are clearer, and in better balance and relationship.

Expanded States of Consciousness

With these assumptions as background, I would like to share my understanding of the relationship of touch to expanded states of consciousness. We live in many fields of vibration that are at the surface of life, comprised of our personal conditioning, hectic lifestyles, busy minds, fears and anxieties. We have accommodated to these fields over time so that we are no longer aware of their vibrations. Beneath these surface vibrations we have a more subtle vibratory nature, which is usually obscured from our daily experience. Through touch and expanded states of consciousness we can help a person gain access to this subtle nature.

Rosanna Price, an acupuncturist and Zero Balancer, wrote an essay of her early experience with Zero Balancing"

After years of searching, yearning for a spiritual context in which to place my life, I had my first ZB about 11 years ago. It

took me somewhere that I had not visited since extremely early childhood. It took me directly into the presence of the divine. So wonderful was that place, the light, warmth, and unfathomable love and acceptance, that I simply did not want to leave it. I felt that I had been given the key to escaping the drabness and miseries of normal life. That first experience gave me something that has never left me, something which has immeasurably changed my life for the better: the certainty within myself that something higher and better exists, and that nothing can take that knowledge away from me."

Expanded states of consciousness can offer very powerful healing potential. In expanded states, we are less locked into our internal conception of self. We are less identified with our conditioning, problems, or illnesses. In expanded states, beyond linear consciousness, we are more in touch with our holographic nature; we can allow the internal world to shift and expand and more easily re-program the mind.

I remember so clearly the first time I watched Deepak Chopra on television speaking of the Ayurvedic viewpoint of health and disease. In particular he spoke of the nature of reality, the nature of consciousness, and the nature of meditation. I remember my "Aha!" experience when I realized that with ZB we accomplish through touch what Chopra was describing in words. We can help the client work within their inner world at whatever rate they choose. We can catalyze the meditative experience he described. We are able to facilitate a quiet state of mind for the client in a few moments, one that otherwise might take weeks or months of sitting practice to accomplish.

According to Chopra, meditation allows us to escape "time-bound awareness," to experience unity of consciousness, with no sense of separation or sense of other; and to experience that part of ourselves (the soul or spirit) which is beyond change. He explained that through meditation we could experience the seen and the seer as the same thing, and know ourselves as "non-local." Synchronistic events happen more frequently and anxiety is lessened. We can experience love and the space between thoughts.

Unity and Duality

Chopra's common theme was how to replace experiences of duality with experiences of unity, how to move from the world of two to the world of one. As I listened to him I was reminded of my high school physics class when the instructor gave a lecture about the attraction of opposites. Afterwards he demonstrated how the opposite poles of magnets attract each other while like poles repel. Then a few weeks later he told us that like also attracts like, and gave several examples: a drop of water is attracted to a larger drop and they coalesce into a larger whole. Or on the social level like-minded people are drawn toward one another.

For a long time I wondered how it was possible to live in a universe where opposites attract, while at the same time like attracts like. These seemingly contradictory concepts only began to make sense when I accepted the possibility that we actually live in two different realities at the same time. One reality is unity; the other is duality. One world is not inherently better than the other in that each has its purpose, but each is governed by a different set of rules and provides different experiences.

It can be mind-boggling to grasp that we live in two worlds that occupy the same time and same space, each with different operating principles and experience potentials. But it can be even more mind boggling or confusing not to know this—to attempt to cope with all our experiences as though they were based on the same parameters. Throughout the day we inherently move from one reality to the other depending on the circumstances at hand and the location of our focus. To a greater or lesser extent we have some choice as to which world we are in at any given moment.

Many years ago I was advised to be careful when first opening into unity experience because frames of reference suddenly change, and that if I didn't realize this, things could become very confusing. The most basic values suddenly shift. In the world of duality we are used to judging this and that, and suddenly we don't judge anything. We may be used to thinking this is mine and not yours, but suddenly it is ours or no one's. In the world of duality we selectively love this person or selectively love that person. In the world of unity love becomes a singular experience. We love everything. We love trees, birds, women, men. We are in love with life. It is a very different reality.

I remember an experience during one of my first trips to Esalen. I had come up from the sulfur baths, fully relaxed, open, expanded, without a care in the world. I stopped for coffee in the main dining hall and was just sitting there enjoying the view of the ocean. I had no inkling of unity consciousness in those days and didn't realize that I was in that state. A man came and sat across from me. I had never seen him before but when I looked at him I fell in love. I couldn't believe it. I was stunned. I was overwhelmed by love. I quickly and nervously finished my coffee and left. I have no idea who the person was and never saw him again. But those few moments left me deeply confused. I didn't know what had happened. I had never experienced anything like that. Overwhelming feelings suddenly seemed to come out of nowhere.

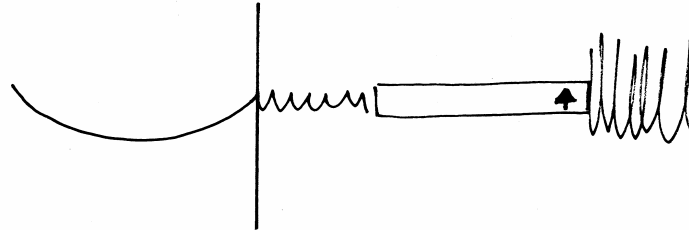
I found a satisfying explanation for that afternoon only years later, when I learned more about energy, the kundalini process, and about living in two worlds simultaneously. I was so much at one with everything that when this man came into view, I felt at one with him and therefore in love with him. He could have been anyone or anything and I would have loved it at that moment. I know now that this is, and should be, a wonderful ecstatic place to be. But when it first happened to me I was caught totally off guard and unaware, and without any frame of reference to understand it, I was frightened and confused.

Touch and Unity Consciousness

We can use touch to help a person move from the experience of duality to one of unity or into a meditative state. There are a number of ways to achieve this.

Pleasure and pain

One way of accomplishing movement from duality to unity is by using the polarity of pleasure and pain. I have devised a special fulcrum, the *Hedonic fulcrum*, which employs the sensations of pleasure and pain to induce an expanded state of consciousness. The definition of a hedonic fulcrum is a fulcrum that "hurts good" to the client. In the blue line drawing *hedonic* would be located at the extreme far right end of the box where the sensations of pleasure and pain reside simultaneously.



Location of a hedonic fulcrum

“Hurting” and “feeling good” are usually contrasting experiences. In this fulcrum, I hold these polar opposite sensations of pain and pleasure constant in the experience of the client for a brief period. Experience has shown that when the person is confronted with two equal and opposite sensations, they go into an expanded state of consciousness to cope with the experience.

As a matter of technique, it is easiest to create a hedonic fulcrum utilizing bone rather than soft tissue. The ribs are ideal, especially a place on the ribs where an excess of energy exists. This point already is tender to the client. A hedonic fulcrum is created by lifting or pressing deeper into the rib, to the depth that it “hurts good” to the client. Within a few seconds of holding these sensations stationary, the person will go into an altered state.

Filling and Overfilling

Another way we can move from duality to unity is by *filling up until full*. Several years ago a group of us went on a seven day silent trek in the desert of Morocco. The pinnacle experience of the trip was near the last day when we each camped by ourselves in the desert dunes. The design was that we were each to find a location in the dunes, out of sight of the others, where we would camp for 24 hours, utterly alone.

The 24 hours began after we finished our evening meal together. We hiked off to the campsites we had prepared that afternoon. We were to regroup the following evening for our last dinner, when we would celebrate breaking our isolation and our silence.

About mid-morning the following day, I was mediating in my small campsite when a huge wave of happiness just rolled over me. It seemed to come out of nowhere; it engulfed me for a moment and

then passed on. I was in bliss, in Nirvana. A few moments later another wave came, engulfed me, and left. After this happened four or five times I asked myself the question, "What would it feel like if my whole body were actually filled with happiness, rather than being washed over by the sensation?"

When the next wave came and began to engulf me, I made a conscious move to absorb the vibration of happiness into my body, as deeply as I possibly could, to the cellular level. It was like filling a glass from the bottom up. I experienced the happiness vibration as it filled me from deep inside and moved all the way up to the more superficial outer me. I absorbed the vibration so deeply into my body that, as it began to fill me up, I became more and more ecstatic. This process took a number of minutes during which I had full awareness on the event. It was wonderful.

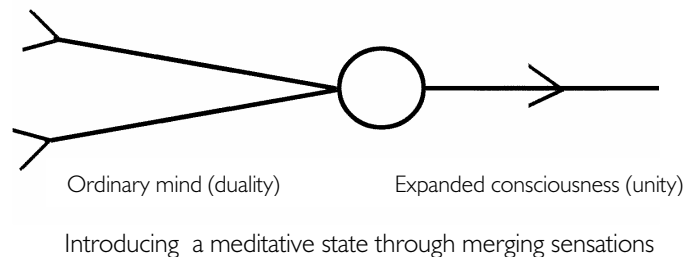
Then a very strange thing happened. I was filled with the vibration, like the overflowing horn of plenty, when I began to have an out-of-body experience and lost track of what then happened. The next thing I was aware of was feeling cold, and when I opened my eyes, I was surprised to find the sun had moved far across the sky. Several hours had gone by, of which I had no recollection. As I gradually became more conscious I felt otherworldly, transcendent, clairvoyant, and more transparent than I had ever been. The past, present, and future were one. There were no separations. I sat with those feelings until it was time to break camp and return to the others.

In retrospect, my left-brain interpretation of the event was that I had filled up with one thing totally—in this case the vibration of happiness. I had experientially moved from duality (me and happiness) to unity (me being happiness). The experience of a singular sensation transported me into a meditative state.

Later I pondered the question of how to create this filling sensation for another person through touch. I believe I achieved a partial success by modifying a basic alchemical leg fulcrum. Specifically, I created a larger than usual bolus of energy within the client's leg, and moved it slowly and firmly down the outside of the leg. When I deposited the energy into the fibula, I pressed deeper, held it longer, and got more behind myself with my body mass. All these modifications meant that the stronger vibration went deeper, filling the person's skeleton to such an extent that flushing, heat, and tingling preceded the shift of consciousness.

Merging experience

A third way to create a unity experience is to intentionally merge two separate proprioceptive experiences into a single experience. This is a dependable way of achieving a unity experience because of the characteristics of the nervous system. Information is transmitted through the nervous system utilizing off/on sets of signals, similar to Morse code used in telegraphy. This binary system is extremely efficient for dealing with linear information but not for processing merging experiences. When the linear mode of perception is pressed beyond its capacity, expanded or altered states of awareness can result. If we can develop two separate sensations in the client's body and merge them into one experience, at some point in the process the person will be unable to track the two sensations. As they become indistinguishable the person will move into an altered state of consciousness.



This can be demonstrated almost anywhere in the body. For example, I can pick up a client's legs as for a simple half moon vector, and intentionally apply different amounts of tension onto each leg. This creates an asymmetry and two distinct impressions. Beginning with this asymmetry, I slowly add more tension into each leg, while I simultaneously and gradually equalize the leg tensions. By the time a full stretch is developed there is symmetry in the client's body. We hold the tensions for 3-7 seconds and then release. Either during the process, or while holding the tensions, the client will most often demonstrate signs of expanded consciousness.

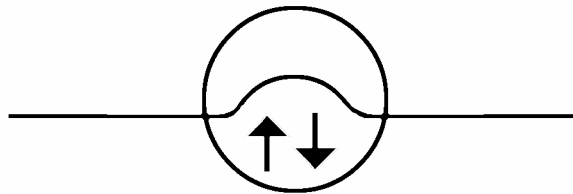
Meditation Strategies

According to Joseph Campbell in his book *Mythic Image*, there are two ways to meditate: from the perspective of the sixth chakra or the perspective of the seventh chakra. Both methods are effective but they are different. Meditation through the sixth chakra allows recall of the event, whereas meditation through the seventh chakra does not.

From the sixth chakra perspective we focus or concentrate on an external object—a candle, holy image, mantra, breath, or even the tip of the nose. When we focus on an external object, there is an inherent sense of “me” and “other.” The separation of “me” and “other” eventually becomes so fine, however, as to be almost non-existent, and a meditative state develops. When the meditation is over we can recall the event because the implicit sense of separation between “me” and “other” persists.

From the seventh chakra perspective, however, we completely merge with the experience and there is no sense of “other.” There is only Unity, only the Divine. The “I” does not exist, and therefore there is no one to recall the experience. We know we have gone somewhere, but will be unable to tell you anything of the experience—there is no recollection. Holy women and men from India often report this phenomenon.

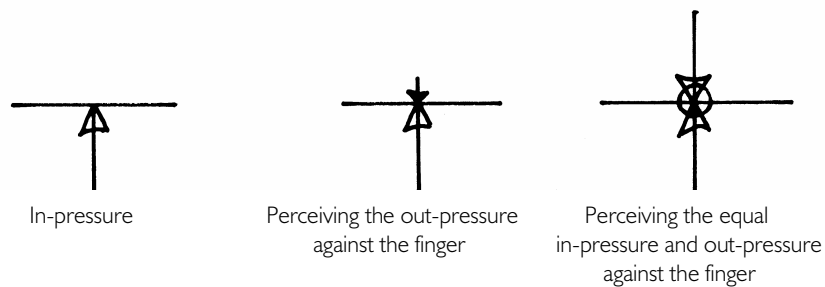
Through touch we can approach both these perspectives. I can press into the client’s thigh with one finger and hold this pressure stationary so the client experiences my touch. Then by releasing as slight an amount of pressure as possible I reverse the direction of the thrust of my finger. I hold this point for several seconds and then come off. Almost inevitably the person will experience expanded consciousness, because they are unable to track the two conflicting sensations of pressing in and lifting out.



Experiencing equal in-pressure and out-pressure
Inducing “singularity” or “nothingness” through touch

The client's response to our touch determines whether there will be recall of the event or not. The technique centers on working with exactly equal and opposite pressures. In some cases the person will experience this as a singular sensation, in which case there is recall of the experience; in other cases the person will have an experience of zero or "nothingness" with limited or no recall of the experience.

In the above example the therapist needs retain a high level of attention so as not to go into an expanded or altered state his or herself. For some people a variation of this fulcrum may be easier to do. Specifically, I can press into the person's thigh and hold. Then, without changing the tensions, I shift my awareness to the sensation of the client's thigh pressing against my finger. When I experience the exact balance of the *out-pressure* of the client's leg against my finger with the *in-pressure* of my finger into the leg, I have reached a critical juncture and maintain that balance. Even though this is my experience, at the exact moment I have the equality of pressures, the client will go into an expanded state. I can tell this by the body signals. It is easier for me to stay out of an altered state because of the focus I have on the relationship between two things—my fingertip and their thigh.



Inducing "Nothingness" through touch

Working at a Spirit Level

Spirit is a more fundamental part of a person than either mind or body. When we say "go to the spirit level," we imply going to the deepest part of a person. Through touch we can go beneath body sensation or awareness, beneath emotional engagement, and beneath

the chatter of the mind. We can engage unity consciousness and engender feelings of transcendent peace and the sense of “being home.” Used in these ways, touch has an alchemical potential to produce experiences inherent in the mystical or spiritual life, and thus bring one closer to their spirit and true nature.

Experiencing our true nature

Ramana Maharshi, as well as many other Indian sages, said that a person’s true nature is happiness and bliss. They claim that beneath all our conditioning and all our personal mythology, buried somewhere beneath the veneer, lies our true nature or original self.

In ZB we can touch a person at this essence level. Experiences of joy, peace, and happiness indicate that we have indeed engaged the essence level, the true nature of the person. “True nature” exists everywhere in the body and is not limited to one tissue or one place. My preference is to locate it in bone, especially in bones that are easy to feel, like the tarsal bones of the foot or the ribs. I want as little overlying soft tissue as possible so I can feel the bone most clearly.

If I want to look for “true nature” in terms of a rib, I make the best bone connection possible. I reach under the supine person and raise up into the rib cage and explore to find a clear section of a rib. I then put my awareness on the bony aspect of my fingertip and move it slightly back and forth over this portion of the rib, to establish a clear tactile connection. My touch itself does not necessarily go deeper, but rather my awareness of sensation becomes more focused. My awareness of the client’s bone becomes clearer and clearer, to a point where I feel that there is nothing other than the essence of bone under my finger. Once I get to that awareness, I feel I am in contact with the essence or true nature of the rib and thereby the true nature of the person. I press deeper to create a fulcrum and hold this for several seconds.

I have treated many people repeatedly in this way and have seen profound shifts of attitudes toward greater happiness and ease. I attribute part of this to the person’s recurrent experience of being touched at a core level of their true nature.

Rosanna Price said in her essay:

{...} at present my conscious work with ZB and spirituality has settled down to working normally with people, seeing if anything

comes up for them without prior discussion, and if it does, to nurture and encourage their work without doing anything particularly different. I suspect I am only aware of the tip of the iceberg: How much of a person's spiritual life is conscious anyway? Who knows what heights people may be reaching during those blank moments which can so often happen during working states?"

Being in the moment

Touch can help us approach the mystical realm by simply offering an experience of being in the present moment —in the now. In truth all we ever have is the moment, but we rarely *experience* that fact. Our minds are too busy, life seems too demanding, and the past and future too present. Touch has the ability to help us realize Ram Dass' admonition to "Be Here Now." When we literally experience the "now," there is nothing other than that, and we thus find ourselves in unity consciousness.

When a person sits up at the end of a ZB session, he or she rarely looks the same as before the session. The eyes are clear and sparkling, the demeanor is calm, centered, and peaceful, yet alert. Sometimes the person seems dazed or momentarily disoriented. Rarely are they unaffected in some way. The outcome of the session seems greater than the sum of its parts, and I attribute part of this to the experience of altered states of consciousness.

Spirituality into Action

Alchemy, as applied to touch, implies some magic and the extraordinary events resulting from touch. However, the ability to induce expanded and altered states of consciousness does not lessen the magic of the happening. Rather the wonder and awe increase as we see people change from the opportunities and experiences of touch.

When I attended Muktananda events, one by one hundreds of people would go up to him to pay respect and to receive the blessing of his touch by a tap on the head or body with a peacock feather. After paying my own respects, I would position myself in the audience where I could watch people coming away from the experience.

It was astounding. Almost everyone through that line had a reaction. Some were dazed, some were confused, some were in tears, and most had the slightly stunned look of people in ecstasy. Rarely did anyone look the same as they did before being touched by Muktananda. The experience had a discernible effect. From my perspective, the energy body of almost everyone had been somehow affected by that one touch of a peacock feather.

Closing

Touch becomes increasingly alchemical when we can navigate the wisdom and teachings of great teachers from past and present, and translate them into direct experience for someone else. Because ZB is based on coherent principles, we are able to incorporate esoteric concepts in our fulcrums. Throughout the book I have referred to the teachings and philosophies of a number of people—Chopra, Campbell, Young, Grof, Maharshi, Ram Dass, the Dalai Lama, and others—that relate to extraordinary matters. I have tried to show how we can work out their perennial truths and teachings through touch. The fact that touch is so versatile is part of its charm, importance, and magic. Touch gives us a way to approach the Great Mystery. It can put spirituality into action.