

Mudras

Mudras are specific gestures practiced with the body (i.e. hands, arms, eyes, etc) to bring forth a specific expression of energy be it grounding, inspiration, peace, etc. Mudras have played an integral part in all cultures and ancient rituals - from the pagans, to the shamans, to the yogis. The unconscious gesturing of the body into a depressive slump is very indicative of someone's mood and therefore their energetic state. In a way, this is a mudra since it is a gesture, even if it is for the most part unconscious.

Mula Bandha (Root lock) Uddiyana (Navel lock) and Jalandhara (Throat lock) - aka - Mahabandha is a master mudra and is often used in classical yogic breathwork to channel energy up through the nadis - mainly via the spine. Other mudras we will be using as amplifiers in the breathwork practices will be with various hand positions to help channel energy through the nadis of the hands.

Practicing Mudras

In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), mudras are used to heal a variety of health disorders. How is it that by creating specific gestures with the fingers triggers a healing response in the body? The ancients mapped out the energy body and the correlation between the energetic and the physical - the yogis through the nadis and the Chinese through the meridians.

There is a direct relationship between the hands and fingers and the rest of the body. The nerves that run between the hands and the neck travel through the vertebral foramina in the arms, hands and fingers. So on a physical level, the flexibility of the hand is directly affected by the flexibility of the neck and vice versa. Because of this, hand exercises will create more space in the neck. Also, when we spread the ten fingers wide, it activates a reflex that causes the thoracic vertebrae to spread out - which in turn allows more space for the lungs to breathe. You see why yoga teachers can become a bit of a drill sergeant when it comes to spreading the fingers wide on the mat.

Just as there are reflexology points of the feet that correlate with the spine and organs, the hands mirror the same principle of this internal micro-macro relationship. As people age, they lose the dexterity and the flexibility of their fingers, and an onslaught of health issues occur - like heart and lung disorders.

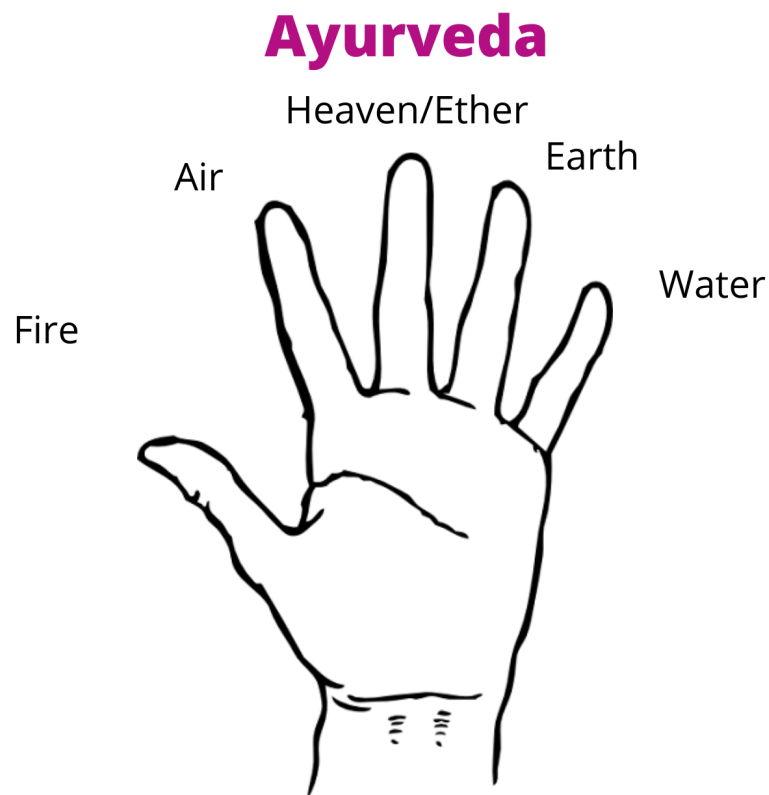
Ilse Middendorf, an expert in respiratory therapy, proved that there is a direct relationship between the fingers and the different areas of the lungs. The index and thumbs influence the upper lobes of the lungs, the middle finger - the middle of the lungs, and the ring and pinky finger - the lower lobes of the lungs. Play with this on your own and connect the thumbs with each of the fingers and notice which region of the lungs the breath travels.

There is also a whole practice of using finger games with children who have learning challenges, as the connection of the nerves of the hands occupy a large area of the brain. Large

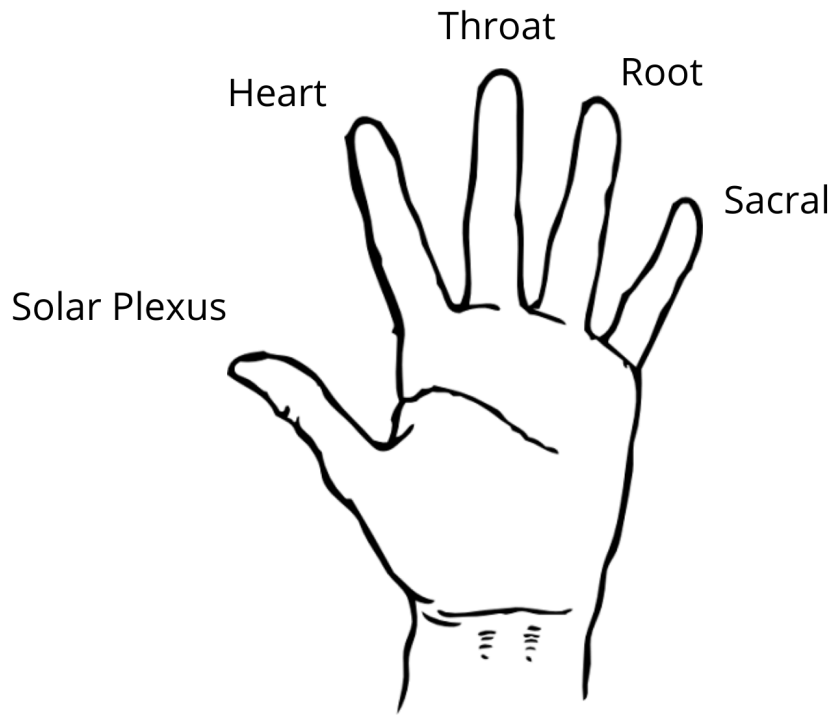
amounts of cerebral activity is activated through touching via the fingertips, more so than that of the arms or legs. So by using the mudras consciously and intentionally, we can tap into the brain in ways that will enhance our awareness while inviting a sense of overall vitality.

Energetic Associations with the Fingers

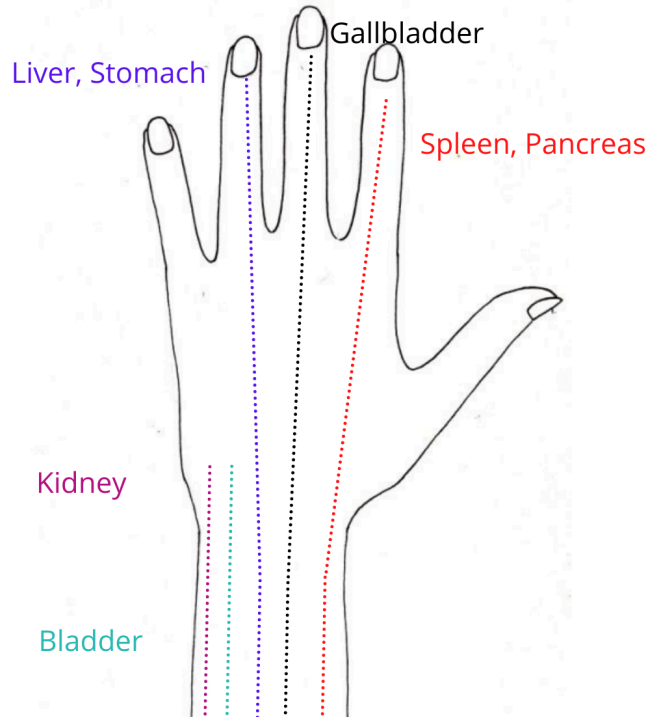
The following charts are energetic associations with the fingers from various schools of thought. You can see cross-culturally, there have been various systems created to understand how to redirect energy with conscious participation with the fingers as activators.



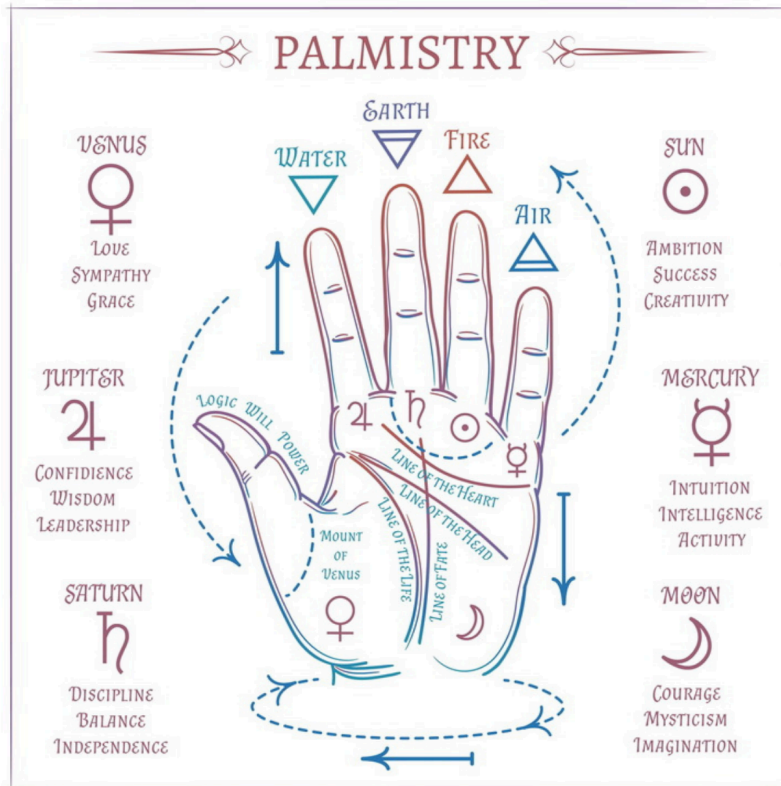
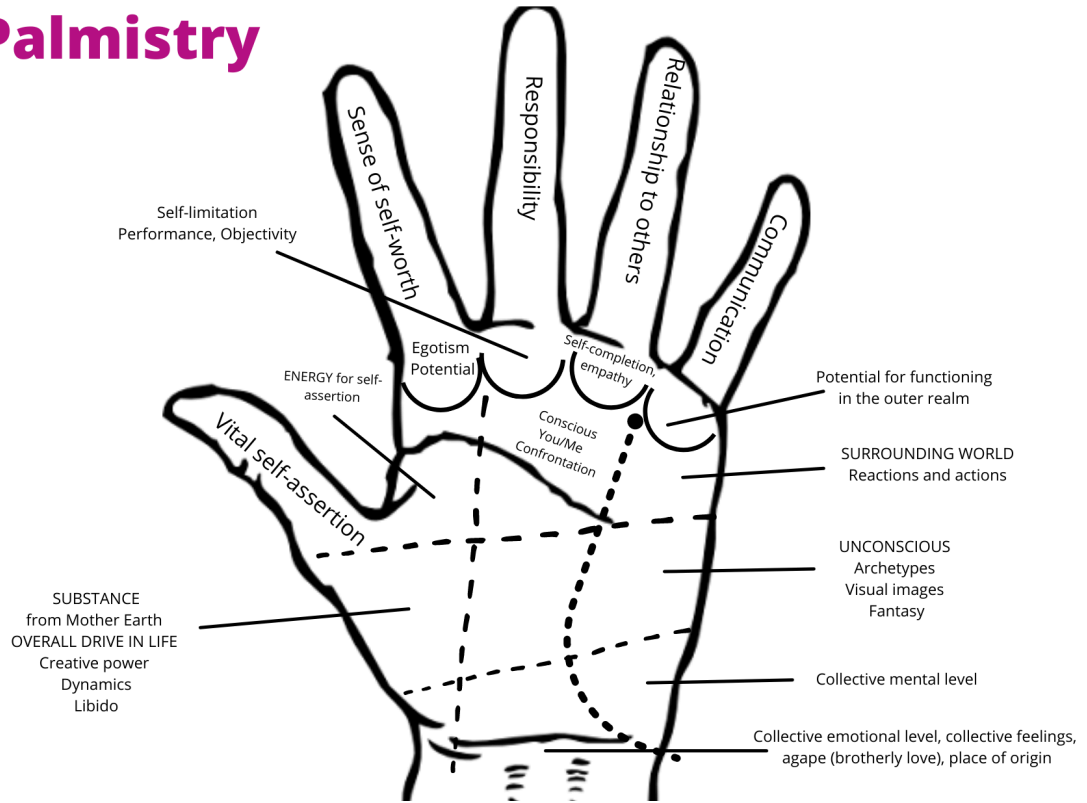
Chakras



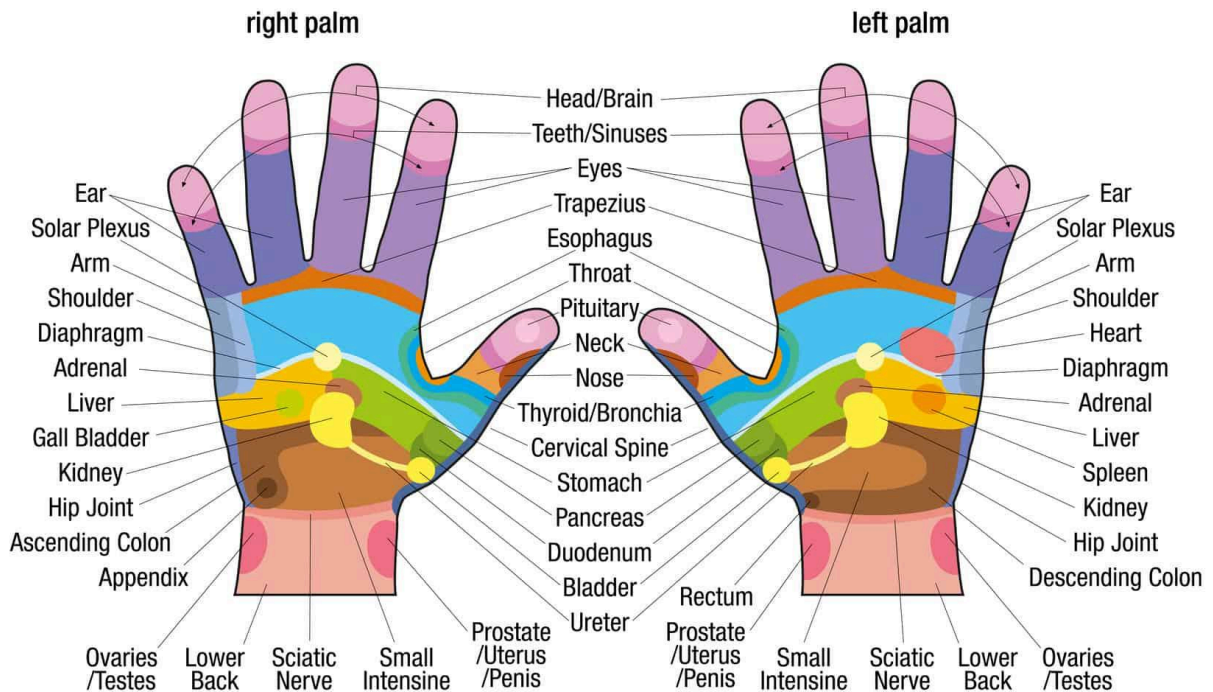
Meridians



Palmistry



Hand Reflexology Chart



The Thumb

The thumb is connected to the element of fire, the lung meridian, the solar plexus and the planet Mars (the god of war). The element of fire helps to fuel the vital life force energy in the other fingers and also helps to absorb the excess energy of the other fingers. In the same way that Mars manifests our thoughts and intentions in the 3D, the lungs enable us to create energy via breath to take action. Sometimes we need a small match fire, and sometimes we need a big bush fire to clear the way for the new - and everything in between. When the body is not hot enough or is too hot, issues will occur. When working with the energy of the thumb, consider what it is that you are wanting to burn away, and what you're looking to cultivate after you have cleared away the clutter. Also, you might consider what you're needing to intensify. In the same way when we metabolize nutrients and dispel waste through our digestive fire, the same principle can be applied to the people and situations that you're looking to mulch up and process in your life.

The Index

The index finger is associated with the element of air, the heart chakra, the large intestine and the deep meridian of the stomach. This element of air represents the thoughts of the mind, which is why the popular meditation mudra, jnana mudra, is connecting the element of the fiery thumb to the airiness of the mind in the index finger. This finger is contemplative and intuitive in

nature, with the ability to receive cosmic inspiration - the precursor to thought. The planet Jupiter is also associated with it. The planet of expansion, prosperity and abundance. Jupiter is the king of the planets, and reminds us that there is a higher order at play, and trying to control that is futile. When you're working the energy of the index finger, connect to who is thinking the thought. Before the thought becomes the thought, from where is it being inspired? The full power of this finger can be used to help us direct us into the future in full alignment. We can either 'point' the way forward from a place of egoic wilful-ness or from a place of divine inspiration.

The Middle

The middle finger is associated with the element of ether, the throat chakra, the circulation meridian, the deep meridian of the gallbladder, and the planet Saturn aka the Lord of Karma. The Hindus called this the heavenly finger as it stands above the clothes like a stairway to Heaven. In the same way that the circulatory system is responsible for the flow of oxygen and nutrients to the cells, Saturn is the never sleeping taskmaster of the planets. Saturn keeps everything in checks and balances through hard work and responsibility. Every choice has a consequence and every experience has a lesson - be it a curse or a blessing. The purpose of karma is for us to make it conscious, so that we can take its lessons and compost it into a new action - and eventually break out of the samsaric loop of suffering. Saturn is the master initiator through life's challenging lessons, and helps us to manifest our visions into the material world - just like the gallbladder stores bile from the liver and releases it slowly into the small intestine to help the body breakdown and absorb fats from food. Saturn gives us lessons and initiates us in the doses that we are ready to handle. When working with the middle finger, consider what you are willing to master right now? When you master it, who will it serve beyond yourself? If you can move beyond the self, success will move from the material to the divine, and you will connect your solar plexus to the collective solar plexus of the universe.

The Ring

The ring finger is associated with the Sun, Apollo the Sun God, the root chakra, the element of earth and the deep meridian of the liver. The triple warmer meridian also begins in the tip of the ring finger. This meridian rules all protective functions in the body and is responsible for maintaining the body's temperature which in turn regulates cell function. Essentially, it helps to maintain equilibrium under stressful situations which is necessary for a healthy immune system. Like the sun, which is a life giving force in our solar system, the ring finger represents stability. Similarly, the pelvic floor of the root chakra provides a foundation of support for our physical being. It is in fact, the base of the core, not just the core muscles, but the core of our very being. It is the beginning and the end. Our past soul ties come from the root chakra and when this physical life expires, the energy of the root will expire. When working with the ring finger, imagine your roots growing deep into the earth, like the roots of an ancient tree. Ground down, to expand up and out into your becoming.

The Little

The little finger is associated with the element of water, the second chakra, and the planet Mercury. In TCM, the heart meridian is in this finger which relates to the realm of emotions that the second chakra governs. Mercury is also the messenger of the Gods and the theme of communication rules this finger. How do you communicate what you feel? This finger is all about interpersonal relationships and how you come into partnership with others. To communicate effectively, there is a certain level of structuring of what you mean to say with intelligence and logic. However, too much structuring can dissolve adaptability and lead to indecisive and anxious ways of communicating instead. So when you're working on your ability to communicate your truth through the little finger, connect to the dwelling place of truth within you, the second chakra - the home of your identity. What rings true right now for you? And do you need to communicate that truth? And if so, who does it benefit?

Mudras to add into Breathwork Practice

The following mudras can be done in stillness with any of the pranayama practices, or in movement with a more dynamic practice. Experiment and experience the variations of how you can use the mudras.

For more of an activating experience to amplify a certain quality, you can sync up breath of fire with ***finger tapping***.

For more of a releasing experience (emotional, energetic letting go), you can sync up the breath of fire with ***finger flicking***.

For a more grounded and incremental experience of growing the energy field, you can keep the connection of the fingers and change the pressure between the fingers, i.e. - *inhale, release the pressure between the fingers; exhale, increase the pressure between the fingers*. You can also try, *inhale, increase the pressure between the fingers; exhale, release the pressure between the fingers*.

There is no right or wrong way to use the mudras. It's about the intention behind the mudras. Consider what qualities you're trying to cultivate in the theme of the class. Are you wanting to release, to ground, to amplify, to envision, to create, to surrender, etc. Some mudras are more conducive for some engaging with certain states of being than others, and you can make a case for any of the mudras. Whatever you choose, you should experience it for yourself and observe the energetic effects on you. Also, if you are choosing lots of activating mudras, make sure there is a grounding period of helping your clients integrate the energies so they don't feel too wired after a session.

There are countless mudras from various traditions with various names. Here are some that I find most important and effective as a foundational start to weave into your classes. Over time, you can experiment with creating and channeling your own mudras.

Adi Mudra



(Primordial, first mudra, tucked thumbs mudra)

Curl thumb into the fist.

Benefits: Soothes nervous system. Calming and grounding in situations of stress. Improves blood circulation, brain function, digestion. Increases personal magnetism and enhances intuitive and mental powers. Acts as a holistic antidepressant.

Ganesha Mudra



(The elephant deity who triumphs over all obstacles)

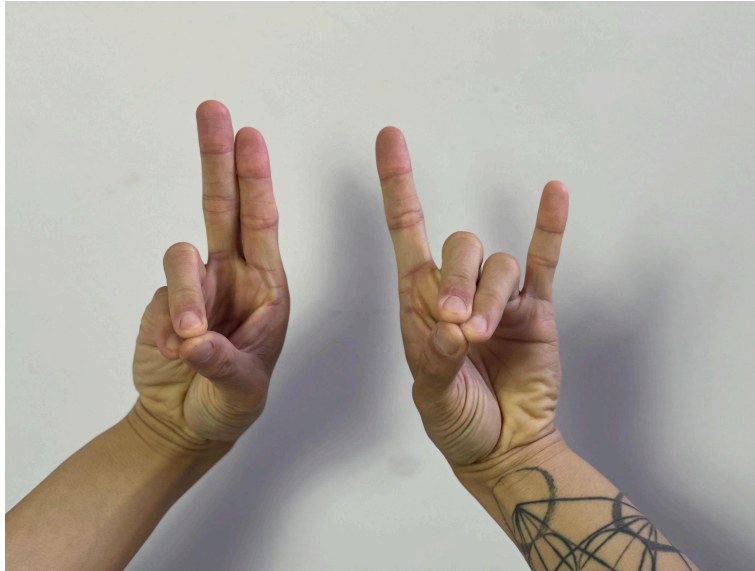
Left hand in front of chest with the palm facing away from the body. Bend the fingers. Clasp the left forefingers with the right forefingers. Right palm is facing the chest. Hands are at the level of the heart.

On the exhale, pull vigorously. Inhale - release the tension of the arms and the pull. Sync this up with the breath. And repeat it for 3 min

Benefits:

Stimulates heart activity, strengthens heart muscles, opens bronchial tubes, releases thoracic tension. Opens the heart chakra. Instills courage, confidence and openness.

Pushan Mudra



(The sun god Pushan, the god of nourishment)

Right Hand: Tips of thumb, ring and little finger are connected. Index and middle are extended like an arrow.

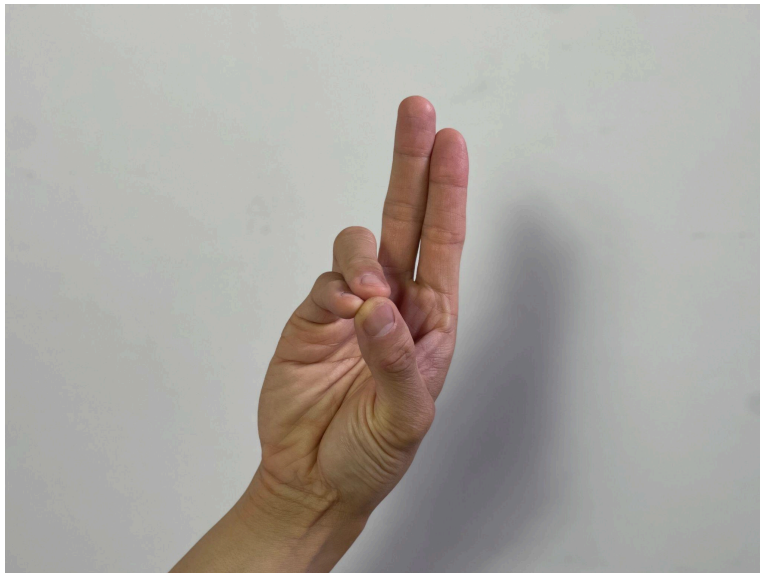
Left Hand: Tips of thumb, middle and ring are connected, index and little finger are extended.

Benefits:

Acceptance - left hand receives, right releases - the giving and receiving of all things. Improves digestion, absorption and

elimination. Improves absorption of oxygen and release of CO₂. Softens solar plexus, regulates the autonomic nervous system. Helps with acute nausea, seasickness, flatulence and fullness after meals. Right hand mudra activates the pelvic floor while the left hand directs that energy upwards.

Pran Mudra



(Life Mudra)

Both hands - Tips of thumbs, ring and little finger connect. Index and middle point like arrows.

Benefits: Activates pelvic floor. Reduces fatigue, nervousness and improves vision. Improves the health of eyes. Creates a field of stability. Calming and anchoring.

Shankh Mudra

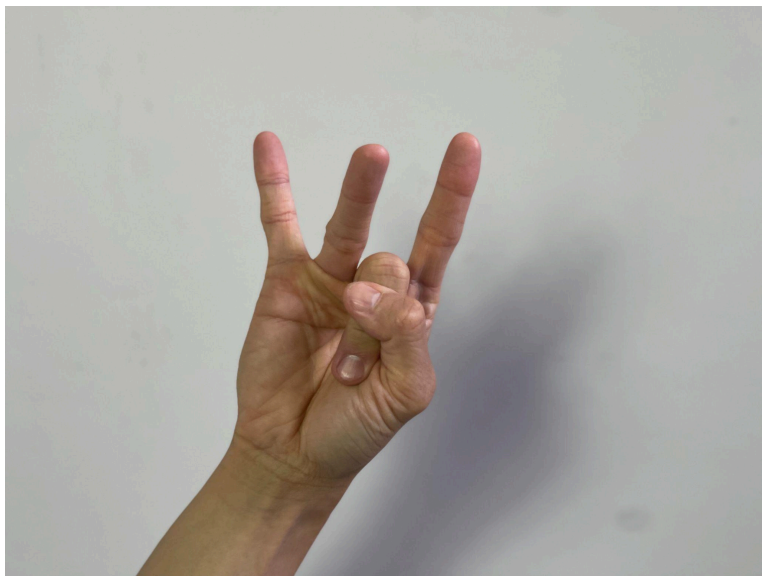
(Shell Mudra)



Encircle left thumb with forefingers of right hand. Then, touch the right thumb to the left middle finger - forming a conch shell. Hold the mudra in front of the sternum. Ideal for changing OM.

Benefits: Opens the throat chakra. Soothes the throat. Improves the voice.

Shunya Mudra



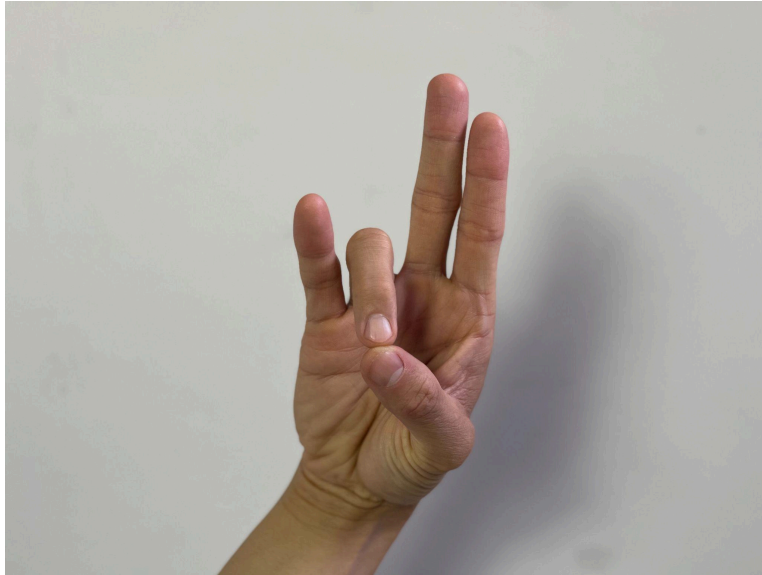
(Heaven mudra)

Bend the middle finger until it touches the base of the thumb. Then wrap the thumb over the middle finger.

Benefits: Heals earaches and ear issues. Helps with hearing others, inner voice and the divine. Helps with contemplation of old stories. Assists in forgiveness of the past. Helps reveal and unravel inner truth.

Prithivi Mudra

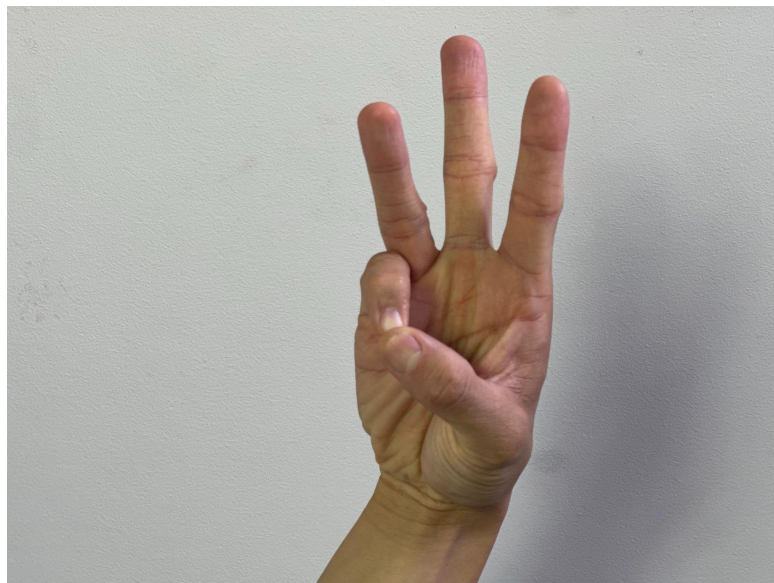
(Earth mudra)



Connect the tip of the thumb with the tip of the ring finger.

Benefits: Eliminates energy leaks in the root chakra. Intensifies sense of smell. Improves nails, skin, hair and bones. Restores equilibrium and trust. Stimulates body temperature, liver and stomach.

Buddhi Mudra



(Fluid mudra)

Connect the tip of the thumb with the tip of the little finger.

Benefits: Restores balance of fluids within the body. Replenishes dry mouth, dry eyes, disorders of the bladder and kidney. Improves the sense of taste and qualities around second chakra.

Kubera Mudra



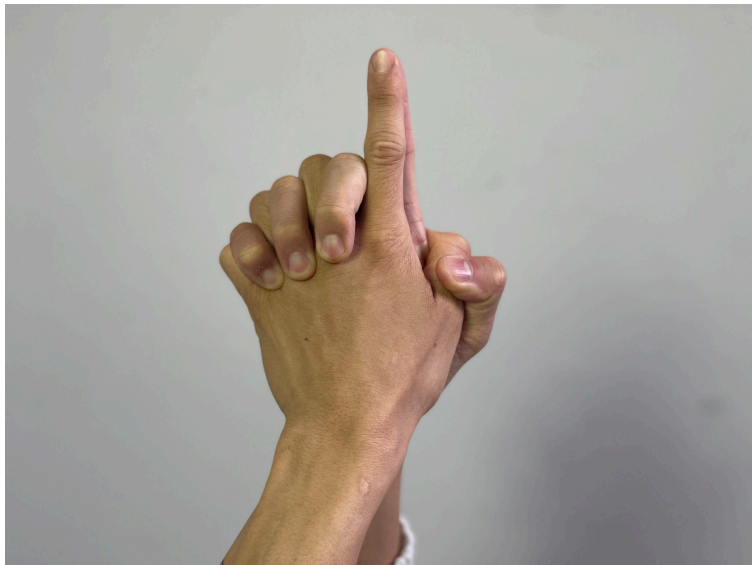
(Wealth mudra)

Connect the tip of the thumb, index and middle finger together. The other two fingers plug into the center of the palm.

Benefits: Kubera is the god of wealth, and this mudra is used for amplifying the powers of manifestation. The connection of Mars (force & will), Jupiter (expansive joy and abundance), and Saturn (the power of discipline and materialization of the physical) come together to create from the

spiritual into the material. Increases inner repose and confidence. Opens and decongests frontal sinuses.

Kali Mudra



Temple mudra - (discharging and releasing)

Connect the pads of the index fingers together while interlacing the rest of the fingers. The thumbs will cross one another.

Benefits: Stimulates elimination through large intestine, skin (perspiration), lungs (improves exhalation) and removes excess negative charge of energies in the mind body system.

Rudra Mudra

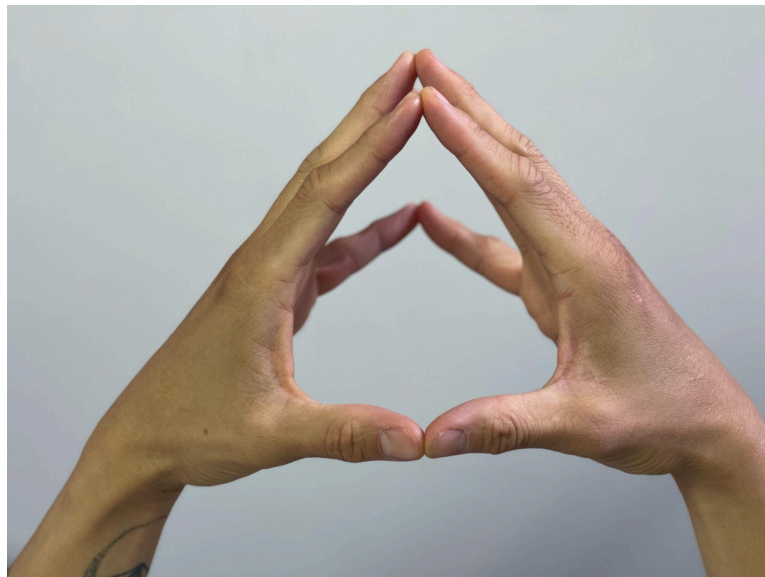
(Solar plexus mudra)



Connect tip of thumb with tip of index and tip of ring fingers. The other two fingers extend away.

Benefits: Strengthens the earth elements and its organs. Alleviates heart issues, dizziness, the descent of organs and uplifts exhaustion. Strengthens the autonomic nervous system. Increases feeling of centeredness and focus.

Hakini Mudra

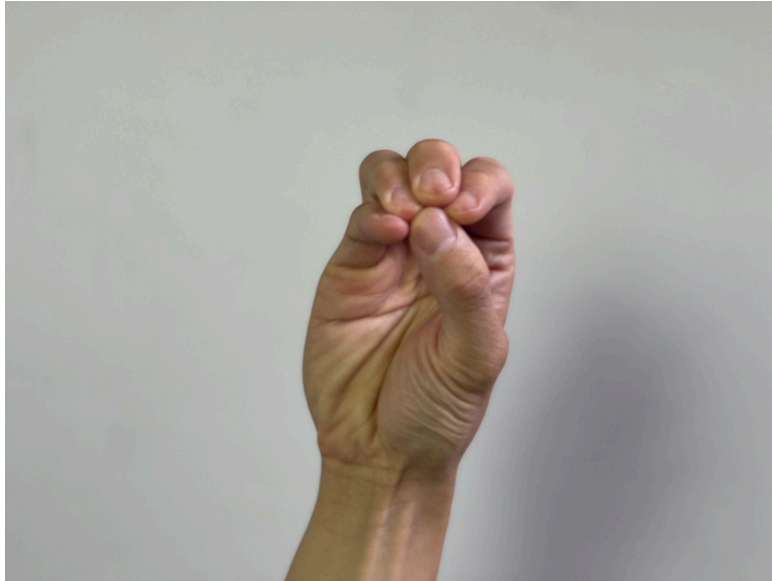


(3rd Eye Mudra - Hakini - God of 6th Chakra)

Connect the tips of all the fingers together.

Benefits: Promotes cooperation between the left and right hemisphere of the brain. Amplifies memory in the right brain. Improves concentration. Improves respiration. Activates energy of the large intestine.

Mukula Mudra



(Beak Hand)

Connect the tip of all the fingers to the tips of thumbs.

Benefits: amplifies the energetic charge of the body part or organ that needs healing. Stroke the sternum for heart chakra and immunity. Spiral the mudra around the solar plexus and the intestines to stroke 2nd and 3rd chakra from right left. Sync up visuals with corresponding colors of the chakras for healing.

Jnana Mudra and Chin Mudra



(Connecting to consciousness and higher knowledge)

Connect the tips of thumbs and index finger. When palms are up towards the heavens, it is jnana mudra, when it is down to the earth, it is chin mudra. Jnana is receiving from the cosmos, while Chin is giving to the earth.

*The three extended fingers represent the 3 gunas: tamas (inertia), rajas (action), sattwa (balance and harmony). The thumb and the index encircled

reflect the unification of atma (the individual soul) with Brahma (the universal soul)

Benefits:

Remedies mental tension and disorders. Improves memory and concentration. Clears the mind. Aids insomnia, depression and high blood pressure. Aids in the beginning and the ending of things. Connects to higher wisdom.

Atmanjali Mudra



(Gesture of Prayer)

Connect both hands together in front of the heart center with a hollow between the palm centers.

Benefits:

Harmonizes the left and right brain. Amplifies gratitude and appreciation. Calms the thoughts and invites clarity. Supports inner harmony, balance, silence and peace. Cultivates reverence to the divine and respect to the source of all that is.

Dhyani Mudra

(Gesture of contemplation)



Palms facing up, place the left hand on top of the right hand like a bowl. Connect the tips of the index fingers.

"Thy will be done." Represents the full receptivity and surrender to the Divine. Symbolizes the emptying of all the worries, doubts and fears that get in the way of fully receiving. Emptiness as the Buddhist concept of nothingness - that nothing is as it seems - just like how cells are made up of 99.99% empty space.

Benefits:

Connects to the quality of surrender and to the subtlety of the energy body (the void within - the 99.99% empty space in the subatomic).