

The Power of Mantras

Using Mantras and Mudras to Access Elusive Inner States

By Andrea Isaacs

Mantras and mudras are powerful ways to change how we think, feel and behave. They are both Sanskrit words. "Mantra" refers to a word or short phrase which has the intention to elicit a particular inner state. "Mudra" refers to a body position or gesture, similar to a prayer or meditation position, with the intention to elicit a particular inner state. Together, the mantra and mudra (or the M&M as I fondly call them) can re-pattern the brain, the neural pathways throughout the body, and create phenomenal and profound change.

In terms of the Enneagram, M&Ms can train us to access the best of all the Enneagram types. The purpose of the Enneagram is not to make one a better One, Two, Three, or so on. I would say one of the purposes is to teach us to have the emotional flexibility to respond in whatever way is appropriate, necessary or would best serve the situation, depending on the demands of life. It might mean responding like a Two, a Four, a Six, an Eight, and so on.

[Click here to see sample mantras and mudras.](#)

Neuron Pathways

Neuron pathways are the channels through which information travels between the brain and body. A neuron pathway begins with a message, thought or impulse from the brain. This message travels along nerves, muscles, neurons, neuron peptides, molecules, receptors, pherons, membranes, and connective tissue. They communicate a message to appropriate muscle groups which then engage the body in the desired action.

Messages also flow in the opposite direction along the same neuron pathways. A physical sensation, like touching a hot stove for instance, sparks a series of messages. The muscles innervate the nerves, and the nerves send a message to the brain-"Pain." The brain returns a message along the same neuron pathway-"Remove your hand."

The body is intelligent and this series of messages is communicated quickly, fluidly and unconsciously.

This example is part of the automatic nervous system. Distinct from that, but equally important are neuron pathways that are trained and used to perform special actions like chores of daily living, doing sports and expressing emotions.

An infant learning to drink from a cup demonstrates the laborious development of a neuron pathway. At first unable to grasp the cup, eventually the infant will lift it to his lips, only to miss and dribble the milk all over his face and onto his bib. With repetition,

this neuron pathway is trained, and the infant eventually will drink without spilling. By the time we're adults, we've engaged this pattern so many times it has become unconscious, and we can even read the newspaper, hold a conversation and drink a cup of coffee without spilling.

We have equally well-developed neuron pathways for all our thoughts, feelings and activities-for getting dressed in the morning, cooking, driving, for the way we listen, express emotion, our degree of self-confidence, the way we organize our desks and our lives. The thinking and feeling patterns that we engage in most often have the most well-developed neuron pathways. If we always tell ourselves we're a failure, it creates a neuron pathway that would affect our posture, how we function and would perpetuate a lack of self-confidence. Believing you are unstoppable in manifesting your dreams creates a neuron pathway that is energizing and mobilizing, affecting your posture and how you function.

In the same way the infant learned to drink, you can learn to ride a bike, ski, manage your anger and express affection. You can train emotional as well as physical neuron pathways by "moving in the way of" a thinking or feeling pattern that is new for you. When you engage that neuron pathway, its correlated inner state will arise.

A simple physical exercise can demonstrate how movement can influence inner states (see "EnneaMotion: The Somatic Enneagram" article).

For example, a type One who is overly-critical, always judging and pointing out what's wrong with others and himself, may not have paved a neuron pathway for a calm acceptance. A PQ exercise for this inner state includes: walking through space with less rigidity, less directness, with a lighter use of energy, with gestures that are open, calm and accepting. Eventually, the inner state of calm acceptance will arise. This repetition trains the neuron pathway for calm acceptance.

Through repetition, this pathway becomes stronger and stronger, making it easier and more immediate to access the state of calm acceptance.

Or consider someone who'd like to be authentically generous with their time as they care for a loved one who is ill. This person could do the PQ exercise for Enneagram type Two, the exercise for loving generosity, which includes gestures with an open, embracing quality, moving gently in a curving path through space. Repetition of these movements will start to generate a sense of loving generosity. We also have neuron pathways that have been too developed with over-use. A person with a well-developed "neuron pathway" for the expression of anger won't notice he's angry and raises his voice at the least provocation. This pathway is so well-developed that he doesn't know when it has been engaged. This response is on-call, always ready, often used and is effortless. This person could find a remedy in training the opposite quality of tolerance and listening. As the angry person learns how to engage tolerance and listening, the angry neuron pathway can change and eventually becomes more yielding.

The angry person will eventually need to learn the impact his behavior has on other people, and will need to learn how to cool his delivery rather than responding in the heat of rage. A peaceful person may need to do the PQ exercises for taking charge, speaking up and being more pro-active or else he may blow-up at an inopportune moment.

We tend to react in the way that is most practiced. There is a time and place for the expression of all emotions. To do this, we need to have presence of mind (mindfulness) and emotional fluency-the ability to respond in whichever way best serves each moment.

Information Travels in Two Directions

Information travels along the neuron pathways in two directions. Touching a hot stove and then removing your hand illustrates that information travels from the inside out, and from the outside in.

Outside in: Information travels from your fingertips, up your arm along muscles, nerves, neurons, peptides and membranes, sending the message to your brain that says, "Hot."

Inside out: A message travels from your brain to your fingertips, along the very same neuron pathway, that says, "Remove your hand," and in fact you do.

Other examples of the "Inside Out" direction: When you're "down in the dumps," your energy is heavy, and downward directed. When you're feeling "uplifted," your energy is light and upward directed. Even our language illustrates the body's reactions to these moods.

Other examples of the "Outside In" direction: This would include centuries old traditions such as yoga, meditation, tai chi, and chi kung. If you put your body in a certain position, your thinking and feeling patterns react. Your mind will quiet and your heart will calm down.

We all tend to rely more on the "Inside out" direction, behaving in the same patterns that we always behave in when we feel a certain way. Taking advantage of this two-direction pathway, we can move from the "outside in", by moving "in the way of" a desired feeling that we have difficulty accessing. This trains the neuron pathway for the expression of that feeling.

The foundation of EPI work is that we custom design a sound and gesture that can be used to energize that particular neuron pathway which will elicit that inner state.

The next time that inner state is needed, it can be called upon by using the custom designed sound and gesture. That will activate the neuron pathway for that state, which will then give rise to that particular feeling.

This means if you need to be "direct and decisive," for example, when you're not used to being that way, you can engage the trigger you've designed for "direct and decisive," that

neuron pathway will be activated, and then the inner state of being direct and decisive will arise.

With exercise and practice, the sound and gesture are minimized (and become silent and still) so that the mental intention alone can energize the neuron pathway, bringing on that inner state.