



Architecture of the Soul: How the Chakras Handle Energy

This article is excerpted from a forth-coming book from Hay House (April 2018) called *Charge: The Vital Key to Understanding and Harnessing Your Life Force*.

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*We're all on a journey.
Wouldn't it be nice to have a map?*

At the sacred center of each one of us spin seven wheels of vital energy called chakras. Aligned vertically along the energetic core of the body, the chakra system is an organizational structure for how the soul handles its life force. I call it the *architecture of the soul*. Each chakra is a chamber in the temple of your body that handles a particular kind of energy, much like the different rooms in your home handle distinct energies. If we are going to work with the energy body, we need to understand its basic architecture.

My working definition of a chakra is this: *A chakra is an organizational center for the reception, assimilation, storage, and expression of life force energy, or charge.*

The chakras manage charge in forms that span the full spectrum of human experience: from your primal instincts, to your emotions, actions, relationships, communication, and vision, on to your highest consciousness. I've written extensively about chakra philosophy and psychology,¹ but here let's look specifically at how the chakras handle this life force, along with exercises for charging and discharging energy, and ultimately balancing the chakras.

The word *chakra* comes from Sanskrit, the ancient language of India, and literally means *wheel* or *disk*. Though this was not a metaphor known to the ancients, these wheels are like the old-fashioned floppy disks we once used in our computers. Each chakra handles a different aspect of programming—such as our relationship program, our language program, or the images stored in memory.

Chakras exist at the meeting point of mind and body, in what is called the subtle body, yet they have a location in the physical body, as seen in the picture Figure 1. *Energy is the interface between consciousness and the physical body*. Even though they're not physical, like an organ or bone, the chakras do influence your experience of the physical body. Butterflies in your stomach, a frog in your throat, or an ache in your back can be attributed to the influence of the chakras in those areas.

As portals between the inner and outer world, the chakras are primary gateways for both charging and discharging energy. But as receivers and senders of energy, the chakras are not wide open portals that take everything in or let everything out. Instead, they are intelligent patterns in the body/mind system that filter and check energy as it enters and leaves the body.

Each chakra manages a different kind of energy and



is associated with a particular element. In fact, the elements are the simplest way to understand the function of each chakra, as these elements exist both within us and around us (Figure 2). Earth, at the bottom, is solid. Water is fluid and gets energy moving. Fire is energizing; breath is expansive; sound is a vibration, light an even higher vibration, and consciousness, a limitless non-material essence.² Modern correlations of the chakras have expanded this to seeing the water element as representing emotional energy, fire as your power, and the sound element as representing communication.

Chakras receive energy from the outer world, then “digest” that energy and incorporate it into the physical, emotional, energetic, intellectual, or spiritual bodies. You might say they “step it down” from the universal to the particular, the way a solar panel takes energy from the sun and turns it into electricity for your home. Chakras then either store that energy for future use (such as a memory or a feeling), or they discharge it through action and expression. To be healthy, each chakra needs to be able to perform all four of these functions — *reception, assimilation, storage, and expression* — at their particular level of being.

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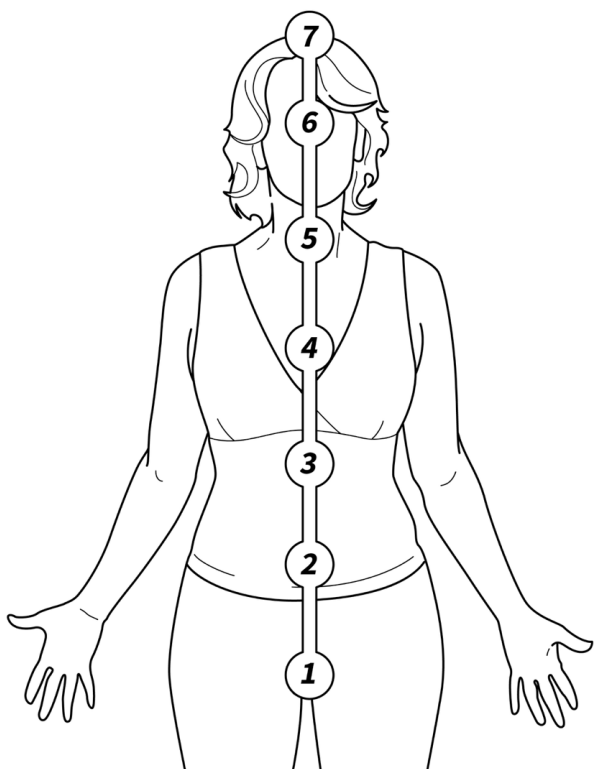


Figure 1 – Chakras as Storage Pouches for Change

Receiving

As a chakra *receives* energy, it may filter what comes in. The throat chakra, which processes communication, receives the words someone is saying, but may selectively listen, hearing only what the person wants to hear. In the second chakra, we receive sensate experience, but sort out what feels good versus what feels bad. In the crown chakra, we might filter information as it comes in.

Assimilating

Chakras are also the *assimilators* of energy into the core. They process our experience, information, beliefs, and emotions, much as our digestive system assimilates our food and turns it into nutrients and calories. If we can't assimilate what we receive, the energy of the chakra slows down, trying to process it, just like a computer chewing on a big file, or a belly trying to digest a Thanksgiving dinner.

Storing

Just as calories can be stored as fat, chakras *store* energy in the form of body structure, emotions, habits, and memory. If we consider that the patterns that persist in our lives (despite our attempts to avoid



them) are our psychological complexes, then our life force energy, or “charge,” can be seen as the “glue” of a complex—holding together the beliefs, emotions, actions, habits, strategies, and memories in a self-perpetuating pattern. A more detailed description of how chakras store energy follows below.

Expressing

And finally, chakras *express* energy. We tell somebody what we’re feeling or we take action after planning our strategy. If we can’t express energy through a chakra, we can’t discharge, and that in turn limits what we can take in.

In this complicated sorting process, our chakra patterns contain our habitual defenses. These defenses were once created in order to keep vital energy in and toxic external energy out. Sometimes, however, these defenses keep out the benevolent energies as well, such as a heart chakra that is so defended it can’t take in the love we want. In the same way, if we think

what’s inside us is not okay, such as thinking we’re stupid or not trusting our emotions, then the chakras inhibit our self-expression and spontaneity.

If you were around air that smells bad, like a smoky bar or rotting garbage, you would inhibit your breath. The body naturally defends from taking that in. Yet, if you were around such smells all the time, you would develop an unconscious habit of breathing shallowly, and that would gradually become hardwired into your body and breathing patterns, affecting your mental clarity, your digestion, and your immune system. It would become part of your unconscious programming.

If on the other hand, you were carrying a strong emotion at a time when it was either unsafe or inappropriate to let that emotion out, you would defend against the *discharge* of that emotion. We all do this in situations where getting angry or having a crying jag isn’t a good idea. But if you grew up in

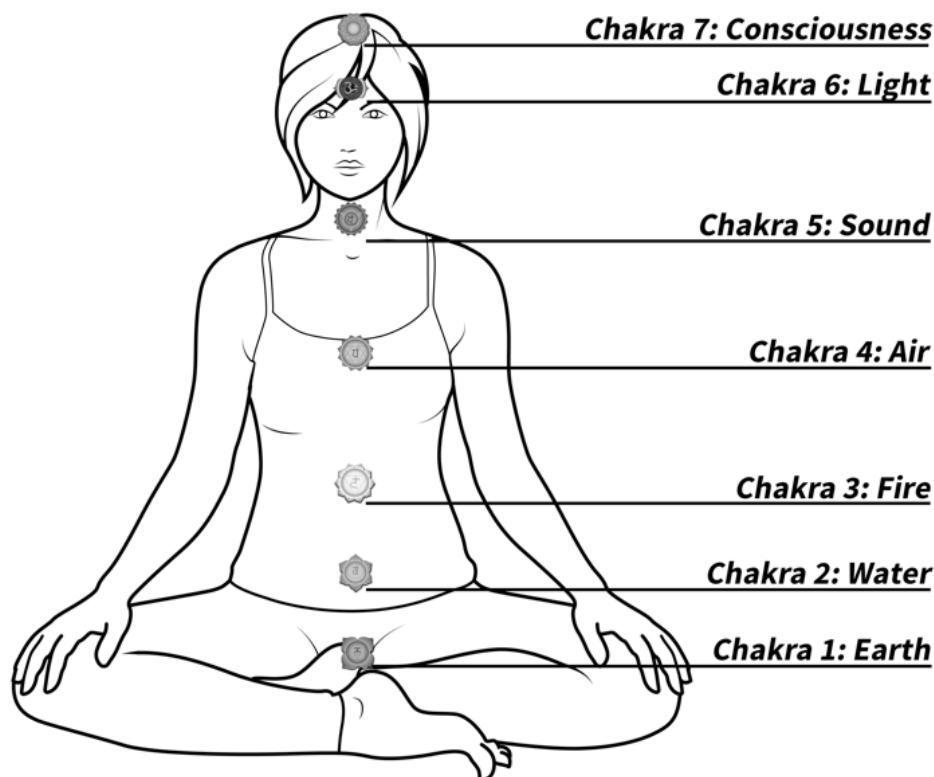


Figure 2 – Chakra Elements



an environment where it *never* felt safe to express emotion, this habit would also get hardwired into the body. It might be through a holding pattern lodged in the second chakra, which handles emotion, or perhaps a pattern that holds back in the throat chakra, the area of self-expression, or perhaps a pattern that makes you afraid to take action, realm of the third chakra.

The aspect of “assimilation” also applies to how the chakras handle the charge that remains within the body-mind system. If you eat food, are you able to digest that food and make good use of it? If someone gives you love or support, are you able to take that in and remember later that you are loved? If you are learning a new subject, are you able to understand and assimilate what you are learning? Have you ever had a conversation with someone who seemed to be listening, but afterward behaved as if he or she hadn’t heard a word you said? Even if we receive and express energy through our chakras, the ability to *keep that charge* and turn it into something valuable depends on our ability to assimilate.

Chakras as Storage Pouches

I see the body as a storage battery for energy, which I call “charge.” Chakras can store our experiences, memories, habits, and beliefs—all which have a certain amount of charge. Memories that have strong charge — such as a traumatic memory — consequently store

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more charge in various parts of the body. This can work positively or negatively. Storing the energy of someone’s love can comfort you in times of despair, or you can store up anger that erupts suddenly when you don’t want it to.

If you think of the vertical core of the body as a great big tube in which energy travels up and down, and you want to store energy in any part of that tube, you would need to create a place to put it. Just as an elevator goes up and down between floors, but doesn’t really store energy (it just lets people on and off at each floor), the core handles the transportation of charge up and down the chakra system, between heaven and earth, mind and body, spirit and matter. But the core is a conduit for charge; it doesn’t store it, except through the chakras. Like a straw, the energy can rise and fall, but unless you create some kind of “storage pouch” along the way, there is no mechanism for keeping energy part way up or down.

So you can think of the chakras as energetic storage pouches along the core of the body, where you find not only gates that defend what passes through, but an energetic “space” to store what is assimilated, so that it can become part of the basic body structure, memory, or behaviors (see Figure 1).

So we can see that the chakras are very busy handling energy, through receiving, sorting, integrating, storing, and expressing charge. And since that energy can take many forms, both positive and negative, or more often mixtures of both, the seven chakras form some pretty complex patterns in the architecture of each person’s essence, what I call the soul. Working with the chakras requires a deep understanding of the role each center plays in handling charge.

Excessive and Deficient Chakras

Chakras can heighten charge or diminish energy, much like the capacitors and resistors of electronic equipment. If the habit is to not feel your emotions or your sexuality, the second chakra will constrict to minimize energy at that level. This will create resistance and slow down everything flowing through the




second chakra, maybe even resulting in lower back pain. If the habit is to live in your head, trying to figure things out intellectually, you will “rev up” your higher chakras when faced with a problem, and pull energy out of your lower chakras. Then perhaps the throat chakra constricts to keep that energy in the storage pouch of the head from moving down into the body.

A chakra’s ability to properly assimilate energy depends on a balanced level of charging and discharging. If a chakra is receiving more energy than it can discharge, then it would become “excessively” charged. If your throat chakra were overcharged for example, you would be excessively focused on talking, or maybe the energy would be blocked up in your neck and shoulders. There is lots of “energy” there, but it’s stagnant. There is too much packed inside for it to flow smoothly.

A deficient chakra, by contrast, starts to close down, making a smaller “storage pouch,” or even crimping the tube that runs from Heaven to Earth, blocking the passage up and down. Even when there’s a possibility of taking energy in, it’s not able to do so—there’s simply not enough room to store it. It’s like offering a truckload of furniture to a person living in a small apartment. They literally can’t receive it.

Of course, it’s not always so cut and dried. Some chakras have characteristics of both excess and deficiency at the same time in different aspects of that chakra. For instance, the second chakra, which is said to handle both emotions and sexuality, could show a pattern of someone who is highly sexual and not very emotional, or the reverse, highly emotional and not very sexual. This is simply the way the person attempts to balance his or her charge within that chakra.

Both excess and deficiency in the chakras are a result of a defensive strategy that modulates the energy coming in and out. Excess results from a compensating strategy—meaning we compensate for something we didn’t get enough of, like love or feeling powerful, but we excessively focus on that level. A deficient chakra results from an *avoidant* strategy. We want to avoid our feelings or avoid taking action.

So you see, there are many aspects to understanding the chakras as managers of energy, with patterns that differ from person to person. It’s not simply a matter of “opening” a chakra, but requires a nuanced understanding of how people have created their defense structure around avoidance or compensation in a particular area. Much like the human face, where the eyes are always above the nose, there are universal aspects to the chakra system, but each person has his or her own unique expression. 



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References

1. For a quick introduction to the chakras, *Chakras: Seven Keys to Awakening and Healing the Energy Body* (London: Hay House, 2016). For more about basic chakra philosophy, see *Wheels of Life: A User’s Guide to the Chakra System* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1987). For more about chakra psychology, see *Eastern Body, Western Mind: Psychology and the Chakra System as a Path to the Self* (Berkeley, CA: Celestial Arts, 2004). For more about chakras and yoga, see *Anodea Judith’s Chakra Yoga* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2016).
2. In the classic texts from which the chakras are described, there are only five elements named: earth, water, fire, air, and ether. No elements are given for the upper two chakras. In my first book, *Wheels of Life*, I popularized a seven-element system.