



Dr. K's Guide to Mental Health

Practice | Shanmukhi Mudra & Brahmari Pranayama | Notes

These next techniques are powerful pratyaharas that also segue into understanding the nature of the true self. If we think about the difference between a focused and unfocused mind, the focused mind stays in one place while the unfocused mind wanders. Oftentimes, the wandering is triggered by senses, or impressions from the senses. It is hard to eat a salad when you smell french fries!

In this exercise, we'll teach a core pratyahara practice – Brahmari Pranayama and Shanmukhi Mudra. Mudra a hand sign used to enhance meditative practice. Mudras are believed to work on the flow of our Prana or Qi, to activate certain energy circuits in our body. In much the same way that current flows through a closed circuit, yogis believed that adopting certain hand postures would facilitate the flow of spiritual energy.

When we combine these practices, we obliterate the outside world and ensconce ourselves in awareness. These techniques are a powerful way to become centered in oneself and can lead to an understanding of our true nature.

Step 1: Shanmukhi Mudra, Closing of the 9 Gates

- Place your fingers in the following positions:
 - Thumb inside or closing the flap of the ear
 - 5th or little finger at the corner of the mouth
 - 4th or ring finger in the groove outside the nostril
 - 3rd or middle finger on the inside corner of the eye
 - 2nd or index finger on the outside corner of the eye
- When done with both hands we will have a symmetrical posture
- In some traditions, Shanmukhi mudra is done in a more relaxed manner, with your four fingers situated:
 - 5th finger beneath our lips
 - 4th finger above our lips
 - 3rd finger resting gently on the middle of the bridge of the nose
 - 2nd finger above the eyebrow

Step 2: Brahmari Pranayama, Bee's Breath

- Inhale deeply and buzz like a bee or hum
- With your thumbs in your ears the sound will dominate your attention or buzz around in your skull, knocking out most if not all thoughts
- Take a break and breathe calmly and regularly if you start to feel light-headed, or your arms feel tired. After normalization of your breathing and your arms feel rested again, you can resume.

Practice 3-5 breaths to begin with, and you can gradually work your way up to 5-10 minutes of practice.