



# AYURVEDA ELEMENTS

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## The Inner Smile

By Caroline Robertson

**Are you smiling or frowning to yourself? Smiling is the secret to health and serenity according to several spiritual traditions. The Inner Smile practice propounds that when we smile like a Buddha, the world beams back. Naturopath, Caroline Robertson visited The Tao Garden to experience some smile therapy.**

### The Smile Solution

Mother Theresa believed “peace begins with a smile.” A sincere smile shines from our soul, making the world a warmer place. As Joseph Addison expressed, “What sunshine is to flowers, smiles are to humanity.” A genuine smile puts us at ease whilst a frown creates unease, promoting disease and depression according to modern and traditional medicine. Smiling to others and ourselves is a gift of love. The universal language of a smile speaks straight to the heart, bypassing the intellect and ego. To nurture loving relationships Ayurveda advises one greet others with a pleasant face, Buddhism encourages friendliness to all (maitri) and Taoism teaches that giving ourselves a grin is the best medicine.

A deep inner smile spreads like a relaxing elixir making us receptive to transform negative energy into positive. Conversely, a scowl suppresses our immune system by increasing stress, contracting channels and blocking energy. Research by French physiologist Dr Israel Waynbaum indicates that facial muscles used to express emotion trigger specific brain neurotransmitters. Smiling signals happy healing hormones such as ecstatic endorphins and immune boosting killer T-cells whereas frowning triggers the secretion of stress hormones. Smile therapy actually lowers the stress hormones cortisol, adrenalin and noradrenaline and produces hormones which stabilise blood pressure, relax muscles, improve respiration, reduce

pain, accelerate healing and stabilise mood<sup>1</sup>. If you're feeling down the stress hormones secreted with a scowl may increase blood pressure, weaken the immune system, increase susceptibility to infections, and exacerbate depression and anxiety.

But what if we don't feel like smiling? Can we fake it till we make it? Though a heart-felt smile has a deeper effect, even a surface smile tricks the brain into releasing happy hormones according to facial biofeedback research<sup>2</sup>. And the more we smile, the more we want to smile concluded a study where people allowed to smile found cartoons funnier than those suppressed from smiling by holding pencils in their lips<sup>3</sup>. This is because each time we smile we reinforce happy neural pathways that fire more spontaneously with each subsequent use. Self-love smiling circuits then release healing nectar and self-hate messages release poisons that breed disease according to Taoism.

### **A Smile Trial**

How often do you smile? Try a smile trial for a minute. Relax your face and let a subtle 'Mona Lisa' smile spread from your eyes to your lips. Now frown and sense the emotional and energetic shift. Feel the difference? Considering it takes only 26 muscles to smile and 62 muscles to frown, why wear the strain of a scowl? As motivational speaker Les Giblin felt "If you're not using your smile, you're like a man with a million dollars in the bank and no check book."

Smiles seem to have a cultural element. Japanese rate so low on the smile-o-meter they're being encouraged to smile to increase profits. "Japanese are truly hopeless at smiling. That's caused the loss of many business opportunities," says Makoto Tonami, president of Mac Corp., owner of beauty salons offering thirty-minute smile sessions using exercises and a machine to uplift the mouth muscles and spirits. Britain has sorry smile statistics also as recent research revealed that if you smile at 100 people, 70 people will smile back in Bristol, 68 in Glasgow, 18 in London and only 4 in Edinburgh<sup>4</sup>. Writing this in Thailand I noticed how people go out of their way to smile to others while in many other places I've found people often avert their gaze as if avoiding a smile ambush.

It's easy to share a smile with others, since it's the second most contagious facial expression next to yawning. Smiling faces are always beautiful and the most endearing accessory. Whereas if people wear an ugly expression meticulous attention to grooming and clothes are overshadowed. But smiles do more than increase your face value; British researchers found that receiving a smile could give more pleasure than sex or eating chocolate. And receiving a smile generated much higher levels of stimulation to the brain and the heart than being given money or having a cigarette.

Don't underestimate the power of a smile. Use yours and you'll find it helps to disperse sadness and dissolve stress. So when dressing in the

morning remember author Jim Begg's advise, "Before you put on a frown, make absolutely sure there are no smiles available."

### **The Cellular Smile**

A genuine smile glows from our deepest layer of self-love, radiating like sunlight through clouds and embracing everything as an extension of oneself. Starting as an inner hug it spreads to soften the whole body, melting malevolent energy to emerge from benevolent eyes and lips. The smile says, "I accept and love you unconditionally." Our being warms to this kindness, dissolving walls of psychic and physical isolation that prevent wholeness and health. Just as others respond to our loving smile, our cells soak up smiling rays, creating new cells from the inner love affair.

Taoist Master Mantak Chia has taught the inner smile for the past 40 years. He explained its significance to me on my recent visit to his Thailand retreat, "In ancient China, the Taoists taught that a constant inner smile to oneself, insured health, happiness and longevity. Why? Smiling to yourself is like basking in love: you become your own best friend. Living with an inner smile is to live in harmony with yourself." The smiling energy emanating from Mantak Chia was reminiscent of enlightened souls such as the Dalai Lama. He has an aura of contentment and kindness that put me at ease immediately. Mantak Chia also explained that as sickness starts from negative emotions settling in the organs, the inner smile breaks this cycle. "By transforming destructive emotions into positive energy the inner smile removes the cause and symptoms of disharmony," he said.

The subtle inner smile is different from a superficial smile set on a fake face with hidden motives and meaning. The inner smile is as innocent and natural as a blissful baby's smile. It doesn't impose, demand or expect anything in return. Nor is it a spiritually superior or condescending smile but accepts everything as it is. A genuine smile as opposed to a posed mask makes a significant impact on people's lives according to Dacher Keltner, a psychology professor at the University of California. After studying college yearbook photos since the 1960's, Keltner found people with Duchenne smiles, those which involved the eyes, were happier since graduation than the phoney mouth smilers. Keltner concluded, "Happy smiley people cheer others up around them, which in turn makes them more stable and less prone to depression or divorce than those who faked it in their yearbooks."

Though laughing has significant benefits, as evidenced by the word-wide laughter clubs, excessive or loud laughing can cause excess surplus chi and increase blood pressure according to Chinese medicine. A mild smile is a more sustainable and inward expression. The soft smile dissolves hardened patterns without struggle or force, gently coaxing a shift in stuck energy. Attacking problems with aversion and aggression only increases resistance and abusing our frailties makes us weaker. Alternatively, sending ourselves loving smiling energy empowers us towards strength and restoration.

## Smile Time

The inner smile arises from a loving intention, surfaces on the face then suffuses our internal and external reality. Though a smile may feel fake initially our psychophysiology responds with happiness anyway. As respected Monk Thich Nhat Hanh explains,

"Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy." Eventually our being is saturated in smiling benevolence and it becomes a constant, effortless expression of our inner bliss.

If smiling feels so good why don't we do it more? Negative thoughts become entrenched in our energy and imprint themselves on our façade. Helen, a recent participant in an Inner Smile Workshop observed- "Its easier to remain closed and blame externals for our problems. The inner smile requires us to look inside ourselves, accept ourselves and extend that loving energy to everything."

Ironically we smile least when we need it most. Depression, pain and stress often rob us of the healing humour that can transform our state. Though smiling may be the last thing we feel like doing, it will do us the world of good. When we smile at our pain, worry, troubles and perceived inadequacies we dissolve compounding tension. As Allen Klein, author of *The Healing Power of Humour* expressed, "The hardest thing you can do is smile when you are ill, in pain, or depressed. But this no-cost remedy is a necessary first half-step if you are to start on the road to recovery." Smiling puts everything into a brighter perspective as we observe the psychodrama of life objectively. As Charlie Chaplin understood, "Life is a tragedy in close-up and a comedy in long-shot."

A challenge many experience in practicing the inner smile is the tendency towards negativity. We can catch an inner frown from others negative outlook or our own. When you get tense simply remind yourself to smile again and any inner wrinkles will soon smooth over, uplifting others energy. Strengthen your inner smile by practicing it in difficult situations such as during exercise, traffic jams, long queues and when annoyed.

As it doesn't take any extra time or effort like other meditation practices, nobody can say, "I don't have time to smile". Smile as often as you remember to, knowing it will override negative reactivity and reawaken your core unity of self-acceptance.

## A Smile File

Before practicing the inner smile install smiling energy into your cellular memory by creating a smile file. Scan your past for moments of joy and laughter. Then recall your capacity for happiness by reliving that emotion. One can also visualise a peaceful natural scene to imbibe serenity and dissolve stress. Seeing a smiling baby or your own smiling face is another useful image. Looking at funny old photos, jokes, cartoons and movies can help to recapture one's innate sense of humour. Start the day with a smile by

writing smile on your ceiling and invite more smiles into your life by playing with kids, giving to others and finding the humour in all situations. If you can't conjure up a smile frown for as long and hard as possible until you get tired and flip to the other extreme of a smile.

### **Emotional Detox Smile**

Our organs store emotional garbage so to clear up inner clutter Mantak Chia recommends first smiling to major organs to detoxify negative emotions. This "refines and recycles harmful energy into healing energy," says Mantak Chia. Our organs work hard to maintain our homoeostasis so we can thank them with an inner smile. The specific order for the inner smile follows the organs cycle of creation. The inner smile can be practiced at any time and for any duration. Familiarise yourself with the location of all the major organs before the practice to establish a strong mental connection with them. You may feel more in touch with your organs if you place your hands over them as you send your smile as well as visualising them. Feel the grateful response from your organs as they release blockages and receive loving energy. Open your eyes if you choose to make the healing sounds then close them to resume. To clear your negative emotions follow these simple Inner Smile Steps-

1. Begin by closing your eyes and relaxing your whole body. Breathe slowly and smoothly, letting go on the exhalation.
2. Smooth facial muscles and focus attention on the third eye.
3. Feel inner joy. Visualising a peaceful scene, a smiling baby or your smiling face may evoke this feeling.
4. Gather this bliss behind your eyes and watch it internally as it travels down your body.
5. Let the smiling energy flow like a sweet stream down your nose to wash over your lips.
6. Raise the corners of your mouth slightly in a sublime inner smile. Simultaneously feel this soften your eyes.
7. Place the tongue behind the teeth to connect the energy circuit for the entire practice.
8. Relax your jaw.
9. Swallow your saliva and feel your throat open and relax as you smile to your voice box. Thank them for giving you the power of balance and speech.
10. Visualise your thymus like a blossoming flower and smile to it with thanks for strong immunity and healing energy.
11. Let the smile radiate to the happiness centre of your heart. Feel your heart soften and fill with red love nectar. Release cruelty, harshness, hastiness, impatience and hurt from the heart on the exhalation. You can also say Haaw to release negativity. Send a smiling love letter to

- your open heart. Thank it for giving you compassion, kindness, joy and good circulation.
12. Gather the loving energy from the heart and spread it to your lovely lungs. Sense every cell relax as it releases grief and depression, exhaling the sound Sssss. You can also visualise them as glowing white wings carrying you to your higher mission. Swelling with smiling sap let your spongy lungs soak up joy, love and courage. Thank them for oxygenating your body.
  13. Smile to your liver as it emanates a forest green hue, releasing grey murky light on the exhalation. Release anger and resentment with the sound Shhh. On the smiling inhalation absorb kindness, forgiveness and acceptance. Thank the liver for its role in assimilation, metabolism and purification.
  14. Send pure smiling streams to your stomach, pancreas and spleen. Visualise these organs basking in a golden yellow light as they relax to release worry and anxiety while exhaling the sound Huuuu. Feel faith, fairness and present-minded consciousness saturate this region. Thank the organs for maintaining healthy digestion, immunity and blood sugar levels.
  15. Keeping your body relaxed, send the loving smile to the kidneys. Visualise them like deep blue ears, releasing fear and stress from them whilst exhaling the sound Choo. Smile to them as they fill with soothing security, wisdom and calm. Thank them and the adrenals for filtering blood, balancing water and increasing stress resistance. Strong kidneys also give us the willpower to act on our convictions.
  16. Smile to your orgasmic sexual area. Fill it with a tender loving energy, appreciating the pleasure and power it gives you. Thank it for producing hormones that nourish the mind and body.
  17. To finish smile up your spine, washing the whole body with golden nectar flowing from each vertebra through the nervous system, bone marrow, bones, muscles, skin and hair.
  18. The smiling waterfall rises to your crown showering your whole body in smiling ecstasy.
  19. Allow the energy to flow back down behind your eyes and pool into your navel.
  20. To complete the practice spiral energy around your navel. Men place their palms left over right and spiral clockwise 36 times whilst women place their palms right over left and spiral counter clockwise 36 times. Next reverse the direction and spiral back 24 times. By storing the smiling energy in the navel you will avoid accumulating excess heat in the head or heart.

Mantak Chia also teaches special postures to cleanse each organ.

## Smile Infusion

Once we are filled with an inner smile it naturally overflows to others. The smile resonates with outside vibrations and reverberates back to us as a collective smiling wave. This creates an endless exchange of loving energy, invigorating and uplifting us on all levels. To keep this smiling circuit flowing remember to smile as often as possible. Smile to your past, present and future so you may continue on the spiritual path. Send an inner smile to those you love, hate, empathise with and are indifferent towards. Extend it to your house, family, work, community, teachers, well-wishers, country, continent, earth and universe. Send a special smile to the natural world of plants, animals, water bodies, mountains, the sky and planets.

The inner smile is considered a complete, non-sectarian spiritual practice that will benefit everyone. When consistently practiced it can nurture the enlightened awareness that we are all part of the same smiling energy. For world peace may we all share Paramahansa Yogananda's prayer to, "Let my soul smile through my heart and my heart smile through my eyes, that I may scatter rich smiles in sad hearts." Wishing you a lifetime of smiles.

<b>Chart of organs</b>	<b>transform emotions</b>	<b>colours</b>	<b>animals</b>	<b>element</b>	<b>Sounds</b>
<b>Heart</b>	Hate, cruelty to love, compassion	Red	Eagle	Fire	Haaw
<b>Lungs</b>	Grief, depression to joy, courage	White	Tiger	Metal	Ssss
<b>Liver</b>	Anger, resentment to forgiveness, patience	Green	Deer	Wood	Shhh
<b>Stomach/ Spleen/ Pancreas</b>	Worry, anxiety to faith fairness	Yellow	Monkey	Earth	Huuu
<b>Kidney, Fear</b>	Stress to security, calm	deep Blue	Bear	Water	Chooo

Caroline Robertson is a Naturopath, Homoeopath and Ayurvedic consultant practicing at Ayurveda Elements, Sydney. After suffering from over-seriousness for many years her main ambition is to smile more. Special thanks to Tao Garden, Thailand for their generous hospitality on her recent retreat there. To contact Caroline about Tao Gardens or Ayurveda courses or consultations phone (02)9904 7754, [www.ayurvedaelements.com](http://www.ayurvedaelements.com)

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