

SUNGAZING BASICS

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There are several techniques of sungazing. The safest and surest to get results is that taught by sun yogi Hira Ratan Manek. HRM's protocol is to gaze at the sun once a day when the UV index is close to zero, that is, either within the first hour after sunrise or in the last hour before sunset. Master Omraam taught that sunrise is better. Morning sunlight has more ultraviolet than sunset, which has more infrared, but there are other beneficial factors in the morning sun's rays that scientists cannot yet measure. Sunrise is also the best time to meditate. If for some reason you cannot sungaze at sunrise, then do it at sunset. Or you can gaze at the sun's reflection in polished obsidian stone or in fresh water before mid-morning. Or you can skygaze around the sun without directly looking at the sun. In any case, still get up before dawn to meditate, pray, and do pranayama.

Begin in the predawn with alternate-nostril pranayama. Hold your right hand up and curl your index and middle fingers toward your palm. Place your thumb next to your right nostril and your ring finger and pinky by your left. Close the left nostril by pressing gently against it with your ring finger and pinky, and inhale through the right nostril. The breath should be slow, steady and full. Your tongue should be pressed against the palate right behind the upper teeth. Now close the right nostril by pressing gently against it with your thumb, and open your left nostril by relaxing your ring finger and pinky and exhale fully with a slow and steady breath. Inhale through the left nostril, close it, and then exhale through the right nostril. That's one complete round. Begin with 5-10 rounds and add more as you feel ready. Remember to keep your breathing slow, easy and full.

Omraam taught a more advanced version of this pranayama. In this version, after breathing in through the right nostril to the count of 4, hold your breath to the count of 16. Close your right nostril with the thumb of your right hand and breathe out through the left nostril to the count of 8. Keeping the thumb on your right nostril, breathe in through your left nostril to the count of 4. Hold your breath to the count of 16. With the middle finger of your right hand closing the left nostril, breathe out through the right nostril to the count of 8. Repeat these steps six times. You can increase the counts gradually till you build up to 8, 32 and 16.

Stand or sit with your spine erect and as straight as possible with bare feet on sand, dirt, mud, pavement or concrete in that descending order of desirability, but not on grass. I asked HRM why not and he said because grass drains your energy, especially cut grass. HRM also advises against standing on damp ground while sungazing. If the ground is too cold, wear wool socks, or sungaze barefoot from inside.

It's important to drink a glass of sun-charged water before and after sungazing because sungazing can be very cleansing and the water helps remove toxins. Also, it's advisable to take one gram of

vitamin C, one vitamin A capsule and a pinch of sea salt. Janet Irwin, who has been sungazing for 7 years reports that this helps the eyes tolerate the brightness of the sun. But definitely drink water, because water is yin and it helps balance the yang energy from the sun. That's one reason why we always sungaze barefoot on bare ground. Another reason is to get grounded. Think of the sun as the positive pole and the earth as the negative pole. The body is the rechargeable battery, and if we want it to be charged, we require water in our cells and good connections with nothing between our feet and the earth and between our eyes and the sun. If you wear glasses, remove them, but it's okay to leave contacts in. Gaze at the sun in a relaxed manner; don't strain. It's important to blink the eyes to keep them moist. If your eyes tear, don't wipe them dry, just blink. If the glare is too strong, you can reduce the glare by closing the eyes so that you're gazing through the eyelashes. Or you can position yourself so that a tree is between you and the sun and the leaves filter out the glare. Other teachers of sungazing such as Gene Savoy and Seekverta, who have sungazed for decades, advise against focusing on the center of the sun. They advocate gazing at the periphery of the sun and gradually moving your gaze clockwise from the 12:00 point to the 11:00 point. Let your gaze rest at each point of the clock for a few seconds at each point before moving on to the next point. The reason for this is to allow sunlight to exercise all the rods and cones of the retina instead of just those in the center of the retina. If you squint your eyes, you can actually see 12 rays radiating from the sun.

Begin with ten seconds. Increase by ten seconds a day. If you find that too difficult at first, then gaze only five seconds and increase by five. Then when you're more comfortable, increase by ten. If cloudy, sungaze but don't increase the time. When cold, do it indoors through a window that doesn't have UV protection on it. Otherwise, do it through an open window or door. If you take a vacation from sungazing, even if it's for years, you don't have to start from scratch at 10 seconds; just pick up where you left off.

Stage 1: Between 10 seconds and 15 minutes, which can take from three months if your sungaze every day to several months, sungaze in silence with arms hanging loosely by your sides. Use a timer to time your sungazing. During Stage 1, you may find that you become less tense, spend less time worrying, are happier, more self-confident and compassionate. During this time it's important to be passive and receptive, and allow the sun to heal your mind. Don't engage in prayer, mantras, visualization, or contemplation; just be. If you have some physical condition that requires healing, you may be tempted to do the visualization and affirmations in the Stage 2 instruction. Don't; physical healing first requires that the mind be healed. This is accomplished by passively receiving the sun's rays in Stage 1. If you have near-sightedness or far-sightedness, you should stop increasing time when you reach five minutes and stay at five minutes for a month or so till you notice some improvement. Then continue increasing time. Palming after sungazing, wearing pinhole glasses and gazing at grass or other green objects will also improve eyesight. People who have recently had eye surgery should wait three months before beginning sungazing. Also, people with macular degeneration or sensitivity to sunlight should first get comfortable just looking in the direction of the sun at sunrise or sunset with their eyes shut for five minutes each day, and continue this for two months. Then, when and if they are comfortable looking with eyes opened, they can start sungazing normally. Sun-charged water is the best antioxidant, so they should drink plenty of that (three to four quarts per day) and use it as eye drops three times a day. Also they should try the Amslergrid, Bates and other non-invasive methods of eye therapy.

Stage 2. Between 15 and 30 minutes, your body will begin to be purified of disease and addictions because all the different color pranas are going to their respective organs to address any deficiencies. To facilitate this process, sungaze with arms outstretched to the sun, palms facing the sun. As you

breathe deeply in, visualize healing rays of light coming from the sun and entering your left palm and traveling to areas of your body that require healing or strengthening. If you have no problems, visualize the light going to your heart. Mentally affirm that the light is healing or strengthening you on a cellular level. Then, as you breathe out, visualize the light returning to the sun through your right hand. Express love and gratitude for your healing. Establish a continuous flow of energy. This Y position was thought by the ancient Greeks to channel the sun's ethereal radiance, which originated in the Great Central Sun. Plutarch wrote that our etheric body absorbs this radiance. Use of this posture was called "fire blooming" because the radiance or essence thus channeled burned away impurities.

Stage 3. Between 30 and 44 minutes, begin with the energy circuit, but instead of visualizing light going to problem areas in your body, visualize it creating a miniature sun in your heart and see the light from your heart radiating out to problem areas in the world. Mentally affirm that the light is bringing healing, sustenance, peace or whatever is needed in those situations. Also as you look directly at the sun, send intent, visualizations, thoughts, and feelings of love, hope, gratitude, and faith to bless all, and send any specific requests to the sun. In this way, blessings travel along rays of light to the sun and the sun amplifies them and broadcasts them to all humanity. But if at any time, your peace of mind is disturbed, go back to sungazing in silence with arms at your sides till your peace is reestablished. If at any time your health or strength is adversely affected, go back to visualizing light and affirming healing and strength in your body. You may begin to feel free from desires, such as food and material things. Fasting or dieting become easy and you don't get hungry because the sun satisfies your energy requirements. Your cells have become purified to the point where they are beginning to act as photovoltaic cells.

In every stage, after sungazing, rub your hands together to get them warm, then press your palms to your eyes and gaze at the afterimage of the sun until it fades away. This should take only a few minutes. If you continue to see a spot that last for hours or days, make sure you are sungazing within the safe hours. If you are, then your eyes are probably too sensitive and you should stop daily sungazing till the spot goes away. Then sungaze with eyes open for half your time, after which sungaze with closed eyes for the remainder of your time. When you feel comfortable, resume normal sungazing with eyes open the entire time.

After or before sungazing, or at some point during the day, walk barefoot for 15-45 minutes. Barefoot walking on sun-warmed sand is another means of absorbing solar energy. It also massages the pressure points on the soles of the feet and helps balance the yang energy from the sun with the yin energy from the earth. The time you spend barefoot walking is also a good time to sunbathe.

Children under the age of puberty stop increasing time at five minutes and remain at five minutes until the onset of puberty. This is because their nervous systems aren't developed enough to receive much energy from the sun. Pregnant women should also stop increasing at five minutes and continue increasing after they have given birth. Very young children and babies, who can't be taught to sungaze, can still get benefits if their mothers sungaze. They can be held in the arms while sungazing or touched after sungazing and the benefits will be transferred.

When you reach 44 minutes of sungazing, reduce sungazing time 1 minute per day to 15 minutes and stay there for a year. After that you are fully charged and all you require to maintain your charge is to expose yourself to the sun for a few minutes a day. However, if you enjoy sungazing, then continue with 15 minutes of sungazing every day.

If you follow the method provided above, you will have excellent results in general health and well being. If shortcuts are taken, such as increasing time too fast or not standing on bare earth, then the benefits are reduced. For most people, sungazing according to the above instructions is safe. Mental attitude is very important. If you are fearful that the sun will harm your eyes, then you should not gaze directly at the sun at first. Instead, gaze at the radiance of the sky before sunrise or after sunset. Eventually, your fear will go away and you will be able to sungaze. Also, if you have a quiet faith that the sun will help you and express gratitude to the sun, results will be quicker. But don't be impatient, don't aspire or push, or results will be delayed. Be as a little child and just enjoy the beauty of the sun without expectations or demands, but only with love and gratitude. When you receive energy and wisdom from the sun, use them only in loving service to life.

Sungazing Tools. Sungazing is low-tech. It doesn't require much training, and you don't require much equipment to do it. All you require are the bare essentials: bare feet on bare ground and looking at the sun with your bare eyes. However, certain devices can help with timing your sungazing session and measuring ultraviolet radiation. If you don't have a digital watch or cell phone that you can set as a timer, you can purchase appropriately-named Sunbeam digital timers at WalMart for only \$5.99. Safe sungazing should always be done when the UV index is below 2. UV measuring devices can be purchased from \$3 to \$60, depending on how accurate a reading you want. The cheapest and least accurate is a UV card. They're available for \$3.00 from the Measurement And Technology Company. To order online, go to www.measurementandtechnology.com/uv.htm. These cards incorporate a UV sensitive strip that changes to a shade of purple when exposed to sunlight. An adjacent color-matching chart provides the approximate UV Index number. If you use a UV card, make sure you don't leave it out in the sun as this will shorten its useful life. The deluxe UV device is the Speedo SD50536BX UV Sensor wristwatch that displays the UV index and comes with a UV alarm that goes off when the sun goes beyond a UV index of 2 for safe sungazing or 5 for safe sunbathing. It costs about \$50. UV monitors can be purchased from \$20 to \$60 from Weather Connection at 1-800-414-8655.