

TONING

"The three basic sounds are the long basic vowels sounds of A, I and U. These are what the Sufi's call the universal harmonic constants and they are used in all mystic paths that utilise sound. Master these sounds and you will ascend the stairway to heaven." Shaykh Hakim Abu Abdullah Ghulam Moinuddin.

Toning is defined as - 'to make sound with an elongated vowel for an extended period'. Toning vowel sounds is an easily learnt skill. Toning oxygenates the body, deepens breathing, relaxes muscles and stimulates the whole body. Regular toning helps to restore health to the mind, body and spirit.

Toning together with other people will give us a feeling of connection; it can also help us to release stress and repressed emotions. Toning strengthens the vocal muscles. It assists in improving our breathing and posture. The muscles of the digestive system are massaged and stimulated by regular toning. Toning can relax and energise us at the same time.

The human voice has a vast potential for healing. All of us have the ability to create pure tone and vocal harmonics. When we first learn to speak we have a wide vocal range, as we grow older our voice begins to become more restricted and closed.

Research suggests that toning has a neurochemical effect on the body, boosting the immune system and causing the release of endorphins in the brain. Toning can release psychological stress before surgery, lower the blood pressure and respiratory rate of cardiac patients, it can also reduce tension in those undergoing MRI and CAT scans. Toning has also been effective in relieving insomnia and other sleep disorders. (Campbell, 1997, p90-99)

ALFRED WOLFSON

Alfred Wolfson was a German-born singing teacher who was plagued by the sounds of artillery and human agony that he experienced as a soldier in the trenches in World War I.

Wolfson cured himself of 'aural hallucinations' by singing the terrible sounds that haunted him. He went on to develop a therapeutic method that was based on using the voice. He taught his students to make spontaneous noises, including those of animals, birds and even machines.

Wolfson strongly opposed the classical singing tradition that divided the vocal range by gender: soprano and alto for women, tenor, baritone and bass for men. Using Jung's concept of the anima and animus, Wolfson taught that by extending the vocal range through singing exercises, one could contact the opposite polarity within oneself, thereby integrating the psyche and healing a variety of psychological and physical conditions.

One of Wolfson's pupils, Jenny Johnson, developed a vocal range of eight to nine octaves. She was able to sing all the parts in Mozart's "Magic Flute".

Wolfson showed that the personality could be deepened and enriched by using the voice. He said, "The truth is that the natural human voice, freed from all artificial restriction, is able to embrace all these categories and register. Indeed it is able to go much further." (Newham, 1993, p76)

LAUREL ELIZABETH KEYS

Laurel (1973) describes how she first discovered 'toning'. "I noticed a sensation in my chest and throat as though a force was rising, wanting to be released in sound, but it would subside again. It was the feeling that might cause one to burst into song-for no known reason-or to gasp as one might when coming upon a beautiful scene."

"I found my lips parting and my mouth opened very slightly in an easy relaxed manner so that the teeth were just barely parted. Unexpectedly a sound bubbled up, like something tossed up on a fountain spray. A single syllable emerged - 'Ra'. I couldn't have been more astonished."

“Why the sound took that form was as bewildering to me as if some foreign language had sprung from my throat. It came again, paused as though frightened, but when it was not stopped it came out and soared.”

“The feeling was as though these sounds came from the earth itself, and poured up a silver tube, through my throat, effortlessly, freely as artesian water flows from the ground. I did not take a deep breath, as a singer, but the note was sustained as though supplied by a limitless source and it went into heights that I couldn't have reached normally since my voice is rather low.”

Laurel says that our physical body has its own voice, a creative force that is normally enslaved by the mind. “Each time I toned, my body felt exhilarated, alive as it had never felt before, a feeling of wholeness and extreme wellbeing. She describes this as the ‘feeling’ voice which can be combined with the ‘idea’ voice, “in joyous co-operation rather than rebellious slavery.” (Keys, 1973, p10)

Until the twentieth century everyone sang or whistled as they worked. As machines took over their sound began to drown out our songs. We now have machines to sing for us! Toning is a natural method of healing, it releases tensions and stimulates the circulation. The ‘tone’ of a person’s voice is indicative of their state of health. A whiny or weak voice reflects negative health and feelings of self-pity.

Laurel says, “no healing can be effected until the person reverses his tonal pattern.” “The sucking in, whining tone attracts lingering illness, such as cancer, asthma, allergies, tumours, rheumatism and arthritis, etc.” Those who suck in their words need to thrust out their words with vigour to change the polarity of their body's energy fields.

Laurel taught toning to a woman who was suffering with mononucleosis and had been sent home 'to die'. Her voice was so weak that it was difficult for her to speak on the telephone. Laurel asked her to work with her repeating simple words such as "I am going to get out of bed and do things I want to," but in a thrusting, positive way. "Give it more THRUST," I encouraged her.

From that moment it seemed that her force was reversed from negative to positive. The next day she was out of bed doing housework. On the third day she drove to a nearby town to hear a lecture. There was no return of her disease.

The opposite of the weak voice is the voice that is thrust out projecting hostility, resentment, conflict, fighting for everything. This person will be accident prone, prone to heart attacks, stroke, broken bones, falls and violent accidents. "By his tone he attracts to him what he is - violence". "By the manner in which we speak, every hour of our lives we set the pattern for our life.” (Keys, 1973, p24-26)

HOW TO TONE

Laurel says, “Stand erect, feet several inches apart. Stretch both arms high, and let them drop back, shoulders swinging on the spine as a cross bar rests on top of a T, in perfect balance. The eyes must be closed, begin to look inward, and feel. Stand erect relaxed, let the body sway slightly to get the pulsation of life, feeling this magical process of aliveness within and around you, let your body speak. Relax the jaws. Let the sound come up through your from your feet. Let your body groan. Empty out. Start with low groans. Groan out all the hurts.”

“Make the mind obedient, still. Allow the voice to rise siren like, drop back again and rise again, over and over until it reaches high note without effort. The session may last ten minutes or an hour, when the body feels cleansed a sigh is released. Don't strive or impose direction on the voice. When the sigh is released sit and fill the body with peace, or read something inspiring, sing a happy song. Toning should be done on waking to set the tone for the day.” (Keys, 1973, p29-30)

In her book 'Toning: The Creative Power of the Voice' (1973), Laurel recounts many stories of miraculous healing through the power of toning. A lady with multiple sclerosis was carried to her on a stretcher. "I talked to her for about half an hour, trying to explain toning, which wasn't easy. Her mind had long been schooled to strict scientific terms. Then her sister and I toned for her."

"We toned for about 20 minutes. We watched her body react as it might have to a very mild electrical stimulation. She sat up straighter- a glow began to come to her white cheeks. She began to cry.

She cried, great heart-breaking sobs, which were a kind of groaning, really. She said between the sobbing "Oh, how I have mistreated my body! I never thought about it except why wouldn't it do more, overworking it, hating when it wouldn't go on serving me. Forgive me God - forgive me!"

The lady learnt to Tone and went on to make a full recovery much to the surprise of her doctors!

SOUNDS FOR HEALING

The sounds Hi, Hah, Hoh, Hu, Kah and Koo all appear to stimulate the glandular system.

Ah stimulates the upper lungs.

A deep O, as in home stimulates the lower lungs.

Ohm stimulates the heart.

OO as in broom stimulates the sex glands.

Ea in the word 'head' stimulates the thyroid, parathyroid and the throat.

Ee as in the word 'seed' stimulates the pituitary and pineal glands and the head.

Rahm toned for the solar plexus gives a feeling of authority and power.

Eh-He-Ah toned softly is soothing and relaxing. Let it drift off in a sigh.

(Keys, 1973, p109)

EATING DISORDERS

Don Campbell (1997) mentions the work of Irene Kessler Ph.D. Irene has been working with women with eating disorders. Through movement and toning, the women's voices began to open up. After about ten weekly two-hour group meetings, significant changes began to occur for the women. They were able to speak more freely of their emotions, and their interest in creative pursuits revived.

The women's eating habits improved and they expressed renewed interest in cooking healthy food, resisting over-work and exercising. A year later, the members of the group continue to benefit from a tremendous change in self-esteem, emotional balance and physical health.

TONING EXERCISES

Toning elongated vowel sounds like OO, AAH, and EEE, has a profoundly healing effect on the body and mind. The longer the tone is held, the more it becomes possible to hear the overtones within the fundamental tone.

Dr Tomatis's work has shown how important different frequencies of sound are for our body. The high frequency sounds above 3,000 Hz actually charge up our brain, giving us more energy and helping us to think more clearly.

WARM UP THE BODY/ WARM UP THE VOICE

Before toning or singing it is advisable to warm up your body and your voice. Generally it is best to tone while standing upright with the legs apart and knees relaxed. This position allows the chest and diaphragm to be open. If you choose to sit while toning, I suggest you sit in a chair with an upright back to keep your spine straight.

Stand erect

Stretch and shake your body

Take a deep breath and groan from your belly

Repeat a few times

Bounce your body by lifting your heels up together

Groan and bounce at the same time

Finish with a few sighs

Lift up both shoulders

Let them drop quickly with a sigh

Repeat a few times

Stretch up both arms

Let them fall with a sigh

Repeat a few times

Tilt back the head a little

Make a high pitched AAH sound

As you lower your head allow the sound to become a groaning sound in the throat

(This sound relaxes the vocal chords)

Finish by letting the chin drop onto the chest with a sigh

Repeat a few times

MORNING EXERCISE

Find a comfortable place where you can lie or sit undisturbed

EEE

Close your eyes

Breathe in through the nose

Tone a high pitched EEE sound (as in the word tea)

Make the sound as pure as you can by relaxing your jaw and throat

Imagine that the sound is coming out of the top of your head like a fountain

Imagine that the sound is clearing your head

Continue to tone this sound for five minutes

Open your eyes. How do you feel?

OOO

Close your eyes

Now tone a deep resonant OOO sound (as in the word blue)

Make the sound as deep in tone as you can

Imagine the OOO is flowing from the base of your spine down your legs into the earth

Feel all the tension leaving your body as you tone this sound

Feel where the tone is resonating in your body

Feel the resonance moving to your feet

Continue to tone for five minutes

Open your eyes. How do you feel?

AAH

Close your eyes again

Now tone an AAH sound (as in the word jar)

Choose a tone that you can feel will resonate in your heart area

Open your mouth wide to produce a full tone

Imagine the sound AAH is relaxing your heart and chest

Imagine the sound is releasing all your cares and worries

Remember to keep your mouth open wide while sounding

Keep breathing in through your nose

Open your eyes. How do you feel?

Finish by taking a few deep breaths, groans and sighs

You are now ready for your day

PAIN

When we are in physical pain the body will naturally want to make a sound to release the pain. We will instinctively moan, shout out, groan or cry. Our conditioning tells us that to shout or groan in public is not acceptable, so we suppress our body's naturally reaction to pain. As a consequence the pain gets locked in the body.

A friend of mine told me a story about her five-year-old son. She had gone to collect him from school. He was playing in the playground with his friends unaware that his mother was watching. She saw him fall and cut his knee. Normally if he did this at home he would cry and run to her for comfort.

She saw him start to cry but when he saw his friends looking at him he stopped crying. Here we see how early our conditioning takes hold.

When Betty Brenneman slipped on ice and broke her right ankle she was a long way from any people and was in excruciating pain. She experimented with sounds by toning, eventually finding a long 'O' which released her pain. As soon as she stopped singing, the pain returned with a vengeance. (Campbell 1997).

EMOTIONAL PAIN

A woman who attended one of my workshops told me that at her father's funeral she started wailing. She said that she had no control over her reaction to her grief. She said the sound that came out of her sounded very primitive, not a sound she had ever made before.

Her family was embarrassed and angry at her outburst. Some family members refused to speak to her after the funeral. She found herself crying for no reason for many days after the funeral, and then suddenly felt better. The rest of her family carried on without expressing their feelings. They all became ill within a few months of her father's death. She had managed to release the pain through her wailing and crying. Traditionally wailing or keening is a sound made by women at times of mourning.

When there is pain in the body we will want to express discordant sounds, shake or scream. As the pain is released the sound that will we make will generally become more harmonious. When doing this exercise avoid having a preconceived idea in your head about what sound your body wants to make, just make the first sound that wants to come out of your mouth.

Avoid any sound that hurts your voice. Screaming very loud can be very therapeutic but if it damages your vocal chords you may be creating more pain in your body. The same applies to the prolonged bashing of cushions to release anger. This is not a natural way for the body to release pain.

When a child has a tantrum, it will scream, cry and shake it's whole body for a few minutes and then very quickly it will be happy again. When we seek to release pain from our bodies we have to remember how it felt to be a child having a tantrum.

RELEASING PAIN EXERCISE

Find a place where you can make a sound without affecting any other person

Stand upright with knees relaxed and legs apart

Locate an area of pain or discomfort in your body

Close your eyes

Spent a few minutes really feeling that area of the body

What sound does it want to express? (The sound may be discordant)

Express the sound your body wants to make

After each sound take a deep breath and shake your body

Let out a deep groan or sigh

Return to the area of pain or discomfort

What sound does your body want to express now?

Continue until the area feels better

CLEARING BLOCKAGES IN THE VOICE

Stand upright stretch your arms upwards

Let them go with a sigh or groan

Start with a deep OOO sound

Gradually increase the pitch of the OOO sound

Listen for areas in the voice that are blocked, in these areas the OOO will not sound clear

Continue slowly upwards until you reach your highest note

Then shake your body, groan and sigh

Start again with your top OOO sound

Gradually descend to your lowest OOO sound

Then shake your body, groan and sigh

Choose a sound that feels stuck or discordant

Keep working with that sound, shaking and groaning and breathing between each sound

Continue until the sound gets clearer

Repeat this exercise for each 'stuck' OOO sound

Do the same for the EEE and the AAH vowel sounds.

Your voice reflects where energy is blocked in your body. The exercise will release blocked energy in your body leaving you feeling energised. Doing this exercise will tune up your whole body. The body is like an instrument that can easily go out of tune. This exercise can be done in the shower or bath where the acoustics are good. Gradually your voice will start to sound like a clear bell.

MICHELE

Michele came to a sound workshop I was running in Vancouver Canada. She also had a private healing session with me before the workshop. She e-mailed me to tell me what had happened to her after the workshop.

"I want to tell you what has happened to me. We started our workshop on Saturday. I slept only a little on Sat., Sun. and Mon. night. I knew a lot was going on - the pain in my heart chakra was enormous, and I had considerable left side neck, shoulder, rib, hip, thigh, knee pain. On Tuesday I had a deep opening of joints by my yoga instructor while doing yoga postures. The overall pain subsided a bit and Tues night I slept."

"Wed. I felt much better. Thurs morning I woke up and felt like my body had been run over by a truck, and tremendous left side pain. I knew that all of this was simply a release of old stored beliefs, memories, etc. but WOW it hurt. Friday it was much better, only a little residual in my neck. The experience was beginning to feel like a roller coaster ride!!!!. Sat. I woke up barely able to turn my head because of left side neck pain so I went and had a bodywork massage. Again I felt better but still a lot of left side pain. I have neglected to say that I have been doing some yoga to stretch into these areas, and some toning, full range on scale."

"This morning I woke up at 5am and was in even worse left side pain. I began toning mid range, which slid fairly quickly through various stops to my higher (but not highest) limit. My voice came back to mid range and I focused on "ah". My hands were over my heart. Then my voice slid to the deepest note - G - and as I got longer and longer breaths, the G would be fairly solid until 3/4's of the way through. Then it would crack, croak, break-up."

"After doing this several times, starting on G, the notes within the croaking began to rise a bit. At each one I focused on the part of my body that hurt at that moment. I could really feel the work on the toning on that part - in fact there was a repeated popping/movement in my mid back, left side in the area of the kidney. Eventually I was at a note that croaked with an "ee" sound and found my hands had moved to my throat chakra."

"I worked for some time in the shoulder area moving my body position (arms, turning head) to pinpoint the pain. The occasional popping lower down continued. By this time I was in fairly deep meditation. I felt a slight release in the shoulder and I relaxed into it, stopping toning. I seemed to know it was enough. Oh, I also groaned seemingly naturally every so often."

"The process took about a hour and when the end came I knew it was the end. I lay there for a long time in meditation. I am blown away by the power of this experience and have a sense of healing. I wanted to tell you that all of this came from your great workshop. I am curious to know if there is anything else I can do in this process. "

UPDATE

"Hello Simon - an update. After I wrote to you last time, I read the chapter in 'Toning: The Creative Power of the Voice' that sounded exactly like what I was talking about. Thank you for your kind reply. I would very much like to keep in touch!"

"I continue to clear my voice and usually do some toning twice a day. I seem to be waking up in the middle of the night, wide-awake, ready to tone. Even though lying down does not feel like the best position, it does allow me to stretch into any area of pain in order to focus the sound on its centre. The results are phenomenal. My spine cracks spontaneously. These areas of pain I seem to be opening up disappear after toning specifically into their centre."

"I have two stories for you. The first - I tripped on Saturday night, falling down three steps onto quarry tile. I got up, deciding that I could still carry on to a dinner, but knowing that my knee would not like me the next day. During the night both my foot and knee were very painful so I toned. When I got up my foot was still very painful, and I limped when I walked.

My knee was still sore but certainly not as painful as during the night. I toned again. The knee then had no pain. I toned again later in the day and by the time I went to yoga the next day, my foot had no pain and full movement - in spite of some bruising on both the foot and knee!!!"

"The second story happened yesterday. My girlfriend has had breast cancer, the invasive kind. I went over to teach her toning and to tone over her. Her husband is suffering from a bad back and was very grumpy and in pain when I arrived. He also is very sceptical. I toned with the two of them while explaining. He had a huge range of rough notes, probably two octaves. He caught on to several solid notes and was so happy."

"He said that he had never let his voice out because he thought he would make bad sounds. When we finished, he thanked me and said that he REALLY enjoyed toning. His face was soft; he was smiling, so I encouraged him to explore with a sound to reach the centre of the sore spot on his back. He agreed to try it."

"My girlfriend discovered her shallow breath and has decided to use toning to help expand it, along with learning yoga breath. She is committed to using toning to explore a couple of areas where she knows she has unidentified lumps. What was so wonderful about this was my feeling of giving them this wonderful gift that they could grow into. So simple, and so joyful. I have agreed to come and tone with them whenever they wish!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

"One night toning I discovered a place a couple of notes deeper and then created considerable didgeridu sound - even with rhythm and other sounds."

VOWELS FOR THE BODY

This is similar to the morning exercise we did earlier. Here we are using five vowel sounds to tune up different parts of the body. Find a comfortable standing or sitting position, tone each vowel sound several times, attempt to focus the sound in the part of the body mentioned. Start at the lower body and work upward, then come back down to finish with Oo: -

Head	Ee	(as in bee)
Throat	Eh	(as in hair)
Chest	Aah	(as in jar)
Abdomen	Oh	(as in dough)
Pelvis/Lower Body	Oo	(as in glue)

LAUGHING

Laughter is the greatest form of medicine. Medical research is now proving that laughter boosts the immune system and produces natural painkillers in the body. Norman Cousins (1979) the American publisher cured himself of terminal cancer through an intensive programme of watching funny films and reading joke books. He laughed so much that his cancer went into remission. Patch Adams, the doctor made famous in the film prescribes humour for all his patients.

Research on rates of laughter at different ages indicates that the highest point of laughter in our life is at age six when we laugh on average 300 times a day. By the time we reach adulthood we are only laughing 47 times a day!

The key sound in the English language for laughing is the 'H' sound. This sound is in the words 'humour', 'happy', 'hearty' and 'hilarity'.

THE JOY OF LIFE

Lie down on your back
Wave your arms and legs in the air pretending that you are a small baby
Make a happy babbling sound like a baby
Continuing making baby noises for a few minutes
Keep returning to your happy gurgling laugh
Lie for a few quietly for a few minutes before getting up

LAUGHTER EXERCISE

The following exercise is loosely based on an exercise that I learnt from James D'Angelo (2000). Each laughing sound works relaxes and energises a different part of the body. Spend a similar amount of time on each sound. James suggests two minutes laughing, and two minutes rest between each sound. With this exercise use the sound to start the body laughing. This is a little like starting a lawn mower. It takes an effort to get it going, but then will go by itself! It is more fun doing this exercise with a friend or in a group.

While doing this exercise it helps to keep the body moving. Once you really start laughing it is good to stamp your feet. This action will help to keep you from getting too light headed. For men the HEE sound can be done in a falsetto voice. **IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE VOICE IS NOT STRAINED IN THIS EXERCISE.**

LAUGHING YOUR WAY UP THE BODY

HUH

Stand with your feet apart and shoulders relaxed

Place your hands on or near your hips

Begin to bounce your body by lifting your heels

On the out breath utter a series of rapid HUH, HUH sounds (as in the word hug)

Feel your abdominal muscles tightening as you make the sound

Focus the sound in your hip/pelvic area

Rest

HO

Place your hands on or near your belly

Begin to bounce your body by lifting your heels

On the out breath utter a series of rapid HO, HO sounds (as in the word holy)

Feel your abdominal muscles tightening as you make the sound

Focus the sound in your belly area

Rest

HA

Place your hands on or near your chest

Begin to bounce your body by lifting your heels

On the out breath utter a series of rapid HA, HA sounds (as in the word happy)

Focus the sound in your chest/heart area

Feel your heart muscles vibrating with the sound

Rest

HEH

Place your hands on or near your throat

Begin to bounce your body by lifting your heels

On the out breath utter a series of rapid HEH, HEH sounds (as in the word heaven)

Focus the sound in your throat

Rest

HEE

Place your hands on or near the top of the head

Begin to bounce your body by lifting your heels

On the out breath utter a series of rapid HEE, HEE sounds (as in the word heal)

Focus the sound at the top of your head

Rest

FINALE

Using all five sounds you can move from one sound to another at random

Keep the body moving

Lie down and rest