

**Chapter 6 :****TASTING and SMELLING (FOCUSSING)**

Chapters 6 and 7 belong together.

Chapter 6 is rather technical.

Chapter 7 is rather advanced.

They are a separate part of this book to be experimented with when you've a little extra time. They explore a deepening of the body breath sense, through tasting and scenting. They will not significantly influence your understanding of chapters 8 and 9.

Chapter 6 will probably be boring to read in a purely theoretical way.

If you want fun, you will need : a ripe lemon, an onion, a knife, soy sauce, a small cup of honey or syrup with just enough drops of water to make it a drink, a small unsweetened bitter espresso, and a cup o'tea or whatever is your habitual drink.

Tasting and smelling are a far stranger and deeper world than seeing and listening.

The senses of smell and taste are largely undeveloped by modern man. We must first learn to focus with them and to recognise what these senses can do.

**TASTING**

The sense of taste is probably the most neglected sense.

First we need to discuss food. Since the 1990s Western specialists mostly agree on five categories to define the different tastes (sweet, bitter, sour, salty and umami), but there are differing opinions. There is also disagreement about where we taste, some experts say only the tongue has taste receptors.

So, to wake up in various ways, taste just a few drops of strong ripe lemon juice, swirl it around, gargle, feel how in different places it's different strengths. The sensation on the roof of the mouth may be faint, but the taste is clear on the lips, between lips and gums, all around the sides, under the tongue, naturally the tongue itself, and back all the way to the throat. Then swallow just a little drop, feel it in the throat, and down along inside the spine. Then do you notice how after a minute, a faint sense of this taste spreads into the cheek bones, jaw, the front and sides of your neck - (maybe something like an optical illusion, but that's how it feels).

With the lemon taste still in your mouth, drink just a little espresso and notice the effect, notice the contrasts. Then fill your mouth with espresso taste, before contrasting this with a drop of honey water. The point of doing this is so you recognise that you have a sense of taste all over your mouth and throat and the roof of your mouth.

An awareness of the possibility of tasting with the roof of your mouth is important for the following exercises. Toothpaste often gives a strong experience of minty freshness on the roof of the mouth.

Another idea is to get a little soy sauce on a finger, and without touching the tongue, spread it on just one side of the roof of your mouth, notice the contrast between the two sides.

**TASTING YOURSELF**

Now, drink something neutral, tea, whatever is normal for you, and we will discuss the taste of your own body from the inside, how you taste to yourself. This is part of your basic feeling of being alive and it's so taken for granted we never even think about it.

Everyday in the modern world, we eat a rich variety of enhanced foods, the taste of our own body is bland by comparison, it's as though there's nothing there to taste. To start to get a feeling for this self-taste sense we will explore the contrasts between the different taste areas. By noticing the parameters of this sense we can learn to recognise it.

Use the tip of your tongue, and taste first at the back on the soft palate, then on the top on the roof of the mouth, then at the front behind the teeth, then underneath the tongue, then at both sides, notice the similarities and the contrasts. Then taste at the front between the lips and the teeth, up and down and both sides, and your lips.

This is how all these different tastes are sensed by the very sensitive tip of your tongue, but now, without your tongue, take a minute to sense those tastes directly. Then follow these tastes as far as you can down your throat and into your body,... as far as you can.

This is just a start. There must be hundreds of ways of waking up our sense of self-taste. Any feedback would be welcome.

I would love parents to ask their four to ten year olds year olds : "you know that taste in your mouth, how does it feel in your cheeks, under the tongue, on the roof of your mouth and on your lips? What does it taste like in the different areas, is it sweet or sour or salty - and on 'this picture of the mouth', draw in which colours it tastes like - can you taste it in your throat? And can you taste anything in your neck, or in your body?"

## **SMELLING :**

### **FIRST, YOUR OWN OUT-SMELL**

First it makes sense to briefly discuss the out-smell, so you can explore your own out-smell inbetween the in-smells.

We often notice the smell of other people's out-breath and we might occasionally recognise our own out-smell when we have bad breath. But normally we are never conscious of it. It is a constant in our experience and self-identity and we take it for granted.

It's hard to recognise because we are so used to it. To identify that there is any smell there, notice the contrast between the in-smell and the out-smell.

### **THE IN-SMELL**

The first areas for sensing smell are the nose and then the nostrils.

When i smell something strong, or something bad, i recognise it straight away and sense it very clearly in my nose, often at the tip of the nose. This seems logical, it's a wake up signal, either to contract the nostrils, not to inhale, and filter out the bad smell; or to savour and take this scent in, to ingest it.

The nostrils and smelling are very similar to the eyelids and seeing. Humans hardly ever use their nostrils, and most people have never even thought about using them. They need a little exercise. We need to do a little nostril yoga ...

The nostrils adjust to temperature and smells. Unless you live in a hot land, the in-breath is cooler than the out-breath. The nostrils may sometimes even contract a little to warm the air on the in-breath. Cool dry air is warmed and moistened by it's passage through the nasal canals.

When smelling-in with a general curiosity for scents on the wind, the nostrils expand. If you expand your nostrils and just breathe-in, rather than smelling-in, you will get a sore throat. Thus it seems obvious that dogs who flare their nostrils when sleeping, are smelling-in. When we smell something specific, like perfume or wine, we generally contract the nostrils with short sniffs.

We can do all sorts of funny things with the nostrils to channel smells, to refine and clarify them, to search out the scents. Long forgotten and never used muscles become fully obvious once we start scenting. We sometimes contract the upper nostril while flaring the lower, and sometimes the outside rims narrow and almost seem to hold the smell at the top of the nose ... it's all very interesting, but i have no analysis of it all. Discover it for yourself ...

Experiment with something which smells nice, a cut lemon under the nose, enjoy the smell, ... read on ...

After the nostrils, scents pass through the nasal canals. I doubt if any animal or child could realise that they have nasal canals. What we feel and what any self aware creature would recognise, is how the breath and smell seem to curl round into the back and sides of the mouth, and (depending on how your tongue is hanging), on the roof of the mouth.

To explore your nasal canals, to isolate them, slightly open your mouth, breathe out through your mouth, then smell in through your nose. When you smell in through your nose, your tongue will automatically rise to the roof of the mouth to stop air coming in through your mouth. If your tongue is relaxed it will curl up in the middle.

Then smell-in slowly. Sense the scents quite generally in and behind the nose. Notice the smell sensation spreading out, above the roof of the mouth, into the cheek bones, outwards to both sides in the direction of the ears, and inevitably the back and sides of the mouth. (The nasal canals also extend to the centre of the forehead, but i didn't directly smell anything there till after i learnt about it.)

Now close your mouth and notice how the sensation changes, it feels as though it is the roof of the mouth which actually does the sensing. And, it feels as though the roof of the mouth is much larger and higher than it actually is. This sensation is the felt-reality, and thus i believe effective to practice with.

To fully understand the exercise i suggest you (close your eyes) and do it with freshly cut onion, and afterwards by smelling soy sauce.

Then experiment with freshly cut onion a few feet away on one side and soy sauce on the other, try to smell both by 'smelling in their direction'. At first you will be unsure if it's just your imagination, but realise the scent is actually there, your imagination will help open the door. I feel sure animals know the direction of a smell, and that they can smell in two different directions at the same time.

To build up a general awareness of these senses, the exercises in this section need to be developed creatively over a period of time with an awareness of the different smells in your everyday life.

Smell is an ever changing experience out of doors. Indoors, where there is no wind, in your own room, most of your in-smell will be a mixture of your own body scent, and your own out breath. This may be reassuring, but it is not stimulating.

Indoors, these days, i often use aroma therapy oils. If you want to give yourself a crash course in smelling, buy a set of aroma therapy essential oils: (ebay, from China 1.50 euro per bottle, go to '[Kiuno](#)' or '[Pyrrla](#)').

This is just a start, there must hundreds of ways of waking up our sense of self-smell. Please experiment and give me feedback.