

Transforming Heat Into Energy:

A Hot Flash Meditation

It has become a nightly ritual: toss the top quilt off my shoulders, down to my waist. Turn over. Breathe deeply. If the sweat under my breasts becomes too intense, wake enough to throw the second blanket off, or maybe toss both sheet and blanket aside. Luxuriate in the cool, refreshing air of night and breathe again. If I'm still too hot, get up, walk to the bathroom, feeling the chill air on my naked body cool me down like a blasting air conditioner on a sweltering day. Return to bed, amazed, and hoping for a quick return to sleep. Pull covers up halfway, lie on my stomach, and breathe deeply.

Always I try to move the blankets up and down, back and forth, without waking myself. If I don't succeed, and lie wakeful, I use tricks. Breathing deeply is one I use to will myself back into sleep. Another is to hold a special stone that calms my mind, and slowly lulls me into sleep.

But. Sometimes none of this works. I lie in the darkness alternately sweat-covered and chilled, sweat-covered and chilled. My neck hurts. My partner snores. The dog barks. And I lie there wide awake, eyes drooping but mind whirring.

We all have our methods for dealing with hot flash wakefulness. Mine is to give it an hour: if I still haven't fallen asleep, then I consider getting up to read. But, knowing there's a teenager to rise with at 6:30, knowing I'll drag all day if I'm up in the night, I'll try anything to avoid getting up.

Thus was born, one night, my hot flash meditation. For me it's a piece of my efforts to transform an experience filled with loss, mood swings, and uncomfortable feelings into one of empowerment. Women in many other cultures don't experience hot flashes at all (diet appears to make a huge difference, as does attitude); since we seem stuck with them, we might as well put them to good use.

There are no guarantees with this particular magic. Sometimes it works only partially for me. Yet every time I do it I feel I'm at least *doing* something, and it makes me feel less disempowered. At the minimum, this meditation helps me shift my subtle energies: even when I've been particularly sleepless and frustrated, the following day I shrug my shoulders rather than feeling sorry for myself; I enter the new day with hope.

Meditation for transforming heat into energy

As you become aware of your temperature rising, give it your full attention. Breathe into the heat, breathe with it. Watch yourself heating up like a steam engine, like a volcano. Feel the heat rising up your torso, out every pore, exuding energy. Pretend you're Pele [Hawaiian goddess of the volcano], but don't let yourself explode.

Gather the heat as fuel. Gather it into your aura. Expand your aura as you get hotter and hotter. Store the heat as if your body is a receptor, a solar panel.

Store the heat to energize your creativity.

Store the heat to fuel your will.

Store the heat to power you up.

Vision the triangle of femaleness that once pointed down into your body, sending your creative energies into childbirth, nurturing, mothering. See now how the triangle has reversed. It points upward into mind and spirit. Direct your gathered energy towards the point of the triangle, transforming your fire into endurance, patience, compassion, love, whatever qualities you need in your life-as-crone.

Let the heat—pure energy—help you transform. Help you overcome the sadness or barriers of age. Help you become who you are.