

Western Ho'oponopono

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It seems to be becoming popularly thought that a specific mantra is *ho'oponopono* and this mantra can fix everything in your life. *Ho'oponopono* is much more than this. The mantra can be used as a part of a *ho'oponopono* process but on its own can cause more problems than good, if use inappropriately.

The idea that a simple mantra can clean all your bad memories and give you a perfect life is, quite simply, misguided. It's not impossible but for most people, it would take a very, very long and possibly painful time. A mantra is a focusing tool and the effects of using it will vary depending on the words used and the beliefs of the individual using it.

The idea you can "get to zero" is also a misunderstood metaphor. Should you manage it, as it is described, you will no longer exist. The process of *ho'oponopono* is more one of replacing unhelpful and ineffective beliefs and behaviours with helpful and effective ones in the context of the life you want. It happens much faster if we actively involve the conscious mind.

Another thing I have heard is that doing *ho'oponopono* can change the way other people will behave. There are all sorts of issues that come up when the idea is to control the behaviour of others. Where traditional *ho'oponopono* is applied in interpersonal relationships it is a conscious process of negotiation involving all parties.

As a focusing tool, a mantra can take a person into a state where belief changes can happen spontaneously in response to circumstance and surrounding influences. It effectively occupies the conscious mind while the subconscious makes changes. Sometimes the changes are the desired ones and sometimes not. If we are going to use such a mantra then it pays to decide what we want to focus on first and be sure the mantra will not encourage focus on what we don't want.

The commonly taught mantra, a modern western concept of *Ho'oponopono*, is "I'm sorry, please forgive me, thank you, I love you." Let's break that down.

When you say "I'm sorry", who is it being said to and why? A person with low self-esteem may react quite badly because the

statement implies a judgement that something about them is wrong and guilt is the result. It is your own subconscious, Ku, that is listening and the response to criticism is to withdraw, to disconnect, and this is not helpful when we are trying to bring something back into balance. If we already have a good self-esteem and don't respond to it as a judgement, then it can work as part of a focusing tool.

“Please forgive me”. Again who is this being said to and what for? Who or what outside of us has the power to forgive, to release the tension around an idea or event or some vague idea that we are responsible for something an ancestor may or may not have done? Sometimes karma and past lives get blamed. If we have a good understanding of what forgiveness is in terms of changing our present moment responses to memories and we are speaking to our own subconscious to release tension, then it can be helpful. If not, it can be self-destructive and I have encountered a number of people experiencing this effect quite dramatically.

“Thank you.” I will use this part of the mantra when I think of something I like and am genuinely grateful for. Some people say it and experience grief because they feel they have nothing to be thankful for and are not worthy of such, the very beliefs they are trying to “clean up” but may be reinforcing by using this as a part of a mantra.

“I love you.” Again I will use this while acknowledging things I like about myself, others or life in general. I will use it in reference to things I don't like but wish to send a healing intent to but, again, some people may react badly to it because they feel unloved and resentful of life and the world, thereby reinforcing the very beliefs they are trying to resolve.

The responses people get to this mantra will vary widely, with many getting beneficial effects because they already have good self-esteem and confidence. It can bring their focus back into the present moment which can lift them through to new heights. But others, the majority it seems, may fall backwards with it.

It is useful to really check in with your subconscious how you personally are responding to each phrase, even each word. because someone with a very poor self-image could have a tension response to the word “I”. Checking in with Ku in this way is likely to highlight some of the beliefs we may want to change.

Ho'oponopono in Hawaiian means simply "to straighten things out." This can apply to an untidy desk as much as to our internal belief systems, attitudes, behaviours and relationships.

If life is not the way we want it to be then we need to look at the results of our beliefs, experience, choose a new direction and work consciously to adopt the beliefs that support that. It helps to be clear on what we want to sort out and how we want it to be. We don't have to be exact and work out every detail, since this might be somewhat counterproductive, but a good general direction at least helps a lot.

We may need to start with small things, build confidence and self-esteem, and gradually work out how to behave in new ways that give us more and more appealing experiences. A primary focus for me has been to cultivate more empowered, love based, ways of thinking to replace the powerless fear based parts of my belief systems.

Our conscious mind, *Lonu*, is not designed to work all of this out logically, and *Ku*, our subconscious mind, uses a different kind of logic anyway, so we can observe behaviour and work to make it more effective. We can look at symbols around us and in our imagination to influence the underlying belief patterns.

Start from where you are, begin to build a foundation of confidence and self-esteem and work steadily to build a better life. Even if life is pretty good already, we can, if we want to, improve on it. We *can* make the world a better place. In terms of living a happy life, this is *Ho'oponopono* in a modern world. Find ideas, practices and technique that work for you to do that.