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Kundalini in simple terms, what it is, how it can feel, and when to seek support

From time to time I meet people who are going through experiences that feel powerful, confusing, and sometimes frightening, yet also deeply meaningful. Some describe it as a breakdown. Others call it an awakening. One of the words that often comes up is “kundalini”. I would like to explain, in simple terms, what this points to, how it can affect the human body and mind, and when support becomes essential.

In traditional yogic language, kundalini is described as a latent life force, symbolised as a coiled serpent at the base of the spine. You do not need to take this literally. The serpent is a metaphor for instinct, vitality, and the body’s innate intelligence. In modern terms, kundalini describes a process where the system opens, energy and sensation increase, and deeper layers of the psyche and nervous system begin to reorganise.

When this process unfolds, it often affects the whole person, not just thoughts or beliefs. Physically, people may experience waves of heat or cold, tingling or vibration along the spine, spontaneous shaking or movement, changes in breathing, pressure in the head or chest, altered sleep, appetite changes, and heightened sensitivity to light or sound. Emotionally, there can be sudden releases of grief, fear, joy, or tenderness, often without a clear story attached. Memories can surface, priorities can shift, and questions about meaning and identity may come strongly into focus.

Some people actively engage practices that can stimulate this process, such as intensive meditation, breathwork, fasting, or psychedelic experiences. Others experience a spontaneous awakening, often triggered by major life events like grief, trauma, illness, childbirth, or deep psychological work. Sometimes the system simply opens when the conditions are right.

A helpful distinction is between spiritual emergence and spiritual emergency. Spiritual emergence usually refers to a slower, more manageable unfolding. It can be challenging, but the person remains grounded, functional, and able to integrate what is happening. Spiritual emergency is used when the process becomes overwhelming or destabilising. This may include severe insomnia, panic, disorientation, paranoia, inability to function, or loss of basic self care. In these cases, support is not optional. Safety and stabilisation must come first.

This leads to an important question people often ask. Is this psychosis or spiritual awakening? There is no simple answer. Some spiritual experiences can look like mental illness from the outside, and some mental health crises can contain spiritual themes. What matters most is safety, grounding, and support. If someone cannot sleep, eat, care for themselves, or is at risk of harm, medical and mental health support is essential, alongside any spiritual understanding.

There are organisations that specifically support psycho spiritual crises, including kundalini type experiences. In the UK, the Spiritual Crisis Network offers information and guidance for people going through these states, helping bridge psychology and spirituality.

Many people are surprised to learn that the snake symbol appears widely in medicine. The staff and serpent seen in emergency services, ambulances, and the World Health Organisation emblem come from ancient healing traditions. While this is not a direct reference to kundalini, it reflects a long standing recognition that healing involves life force, renewal, and deep biological intelligence.

If you or someone you love is going through a kundalini type process, the aim is usually not to intensify it, but to stabilise, ground, and integrate. Rest, nourishment, nature, gentle movement, reducing stimulants, and working with someone who understands both the nervous system and psycho spiritual processes can make a profound difference.

Human transformation can be gentle or dramatic. With the right support, it becomes maturation rather than crisis.

If this topic resonates and you would like me to speak about it more, or if you want to understand how to approach these experiences safely and respectfully, contact me with the word ***“Kundalini”***, and I will share further resources.

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