

AUM and Foundational Mantra Principles

AUM as a Sonic Formula

AUM (commonly written as Om) is a foundational sound within yogic and contemplative traditions.

Rather than approaching it symbolically alone, it can be understood acoustically and somatically as a structured vocal progression:

- “A” — open mouth, expanded resonance
- “U” — shaping and narrowing of the vocal tract
- “M” — closed lips, internal vibration
- Silence — cessation of audible sound

This sequence demonstrates how sound emerges, transforms and dissolves.

From a physiological perspective, AUM moves vibration from chest resonance through oral shaping into cranial vibration, before resolving into silence.

This makes it a useful teaching tool for understanding vocal mechanics and breath continuity.

Somatic and Regulatory Effects

Chanting AUM:

- Lengthens exhalation
- Encourages diaphragmatic engagement
- Produces sustained vibration
- Stimulates vagal pathways through humming

The silent phase following vocalisation is equally important, allowing integration and autonomic settling.

In therapeutic contexts, AUM may be used to:

- Transition from activity into stillness
- Establish shared rhythm
- Encourage internal listening

The emphasis remains experiential rather than devotional.

Defining Mantra

The word “mantra” derives from Sanskrit:

- *Man* — mind
- *Tra* — instrument or tool

A mantra may therefore be understood as “an instrument of the mind.”

In practice, mantra involves:

- Repetition
- Rhythmic stability
- Breath coordination
- Focused attention

Repetition reduces cognitive load and interrupts repetitive mental narratives. It stabilises attention through predictable rhythm.

In therapeutic voice work, mantra shifts vocalisation from expressive output to intentional repetition.

Repetition and Neurophysiology

Sustained repetition:

- Entrained breath rhythm
- Encourages parasympathetic activation
- Reduces internal verbal rumination
- Increases attentional coherence

The effectiveness of mantra does not rely on belief, but on rhythmic repetition and breath synchronisation.

Understanding these mechanisms allows practitioners to use mantra with clarity and integrity.