

A wand wasn't needed for Occlumency. A wand wasn't needed for an animagus to transform, once they'd mastered the initial transformation process. They channelled magic directly from a person's core.

That had to be the connection. *Never Unarmed* talked about being in tune with your magic, about using your fingers instead of your wand, learning to push the magic through your body rather than your focus. Even to Harry, whose magic had been buzzing under his skin since the moment the goblins had released the blocks, that felt exhausting. He'd tried all the exercises the book offered, holding his wand in his off-hand and trying to cast through the fingers of his dominant hand, but it just felt like trying to push concrete through a sieve.

The book was wrong, he was sure of it. *Reaching Your Core* had taught him a lot of things, as had the books on core blocks and family magics. Wandless magic wasn't about turning your fingers into your focus — it was about bypassing your focus entirely and just letting your core *breathe*.

*"...And the Harpies score! Owens had better hurry up, or even the snitch won't save the Bats today! Quaffle is back with Fawley, and to Kinnock..."*

Harry tuned out the quidditch match, shutting his eyes and taking a steadying breath. Between all the various meditation exercises he'd been learning, it was easy to sink deep into the corner of his consciousness that housed his core, the magic humming softly. He wondered absently if it was like that for everyone, or if he was an exception. He was only thirteen, surely he couldn't be *that* powerful?

None of his teachers had ever said anything about focusing inward on your magic, or any sort of humming or buzzing sensations. Perhaps it was just an uncommon practice, and if everyone tried it they would feel the same. Maybe he'd talk to Neville about it sometime, see what the other boy thought.

He delved deeper, surrounding himself in the humming, the warmth of his magic like rays of sunlight against his skin. Even now, months after the blocks had been removed, it felt... unsettled. Like it was housed in a space too small, crammed into his body like he had been crammed into the cupboard under the stairs at the Dursleys'. Harry hoped he'd grow a few inches, maybe put on some muscle; that might make his magic feel better. Dumbledore was pretty tall — was that because he needed to contain more magic?

Drawing his focus back to the task at hand, Harry kept breathing, raising his right hand slowly. He opened his eyes. His fingertips were glowing.

*"Wingardium Leviosa,"* he whispered, gaze turned on the hefty book at his side. The humming grew more urgent. His veins itched.

Then, slowly, the book began to rise off the bed.

A slow grin tugged at Harry's lips — suddenly, a door slammed, and the book fell back on the mattress. The connection was gone, the humming almost silent.