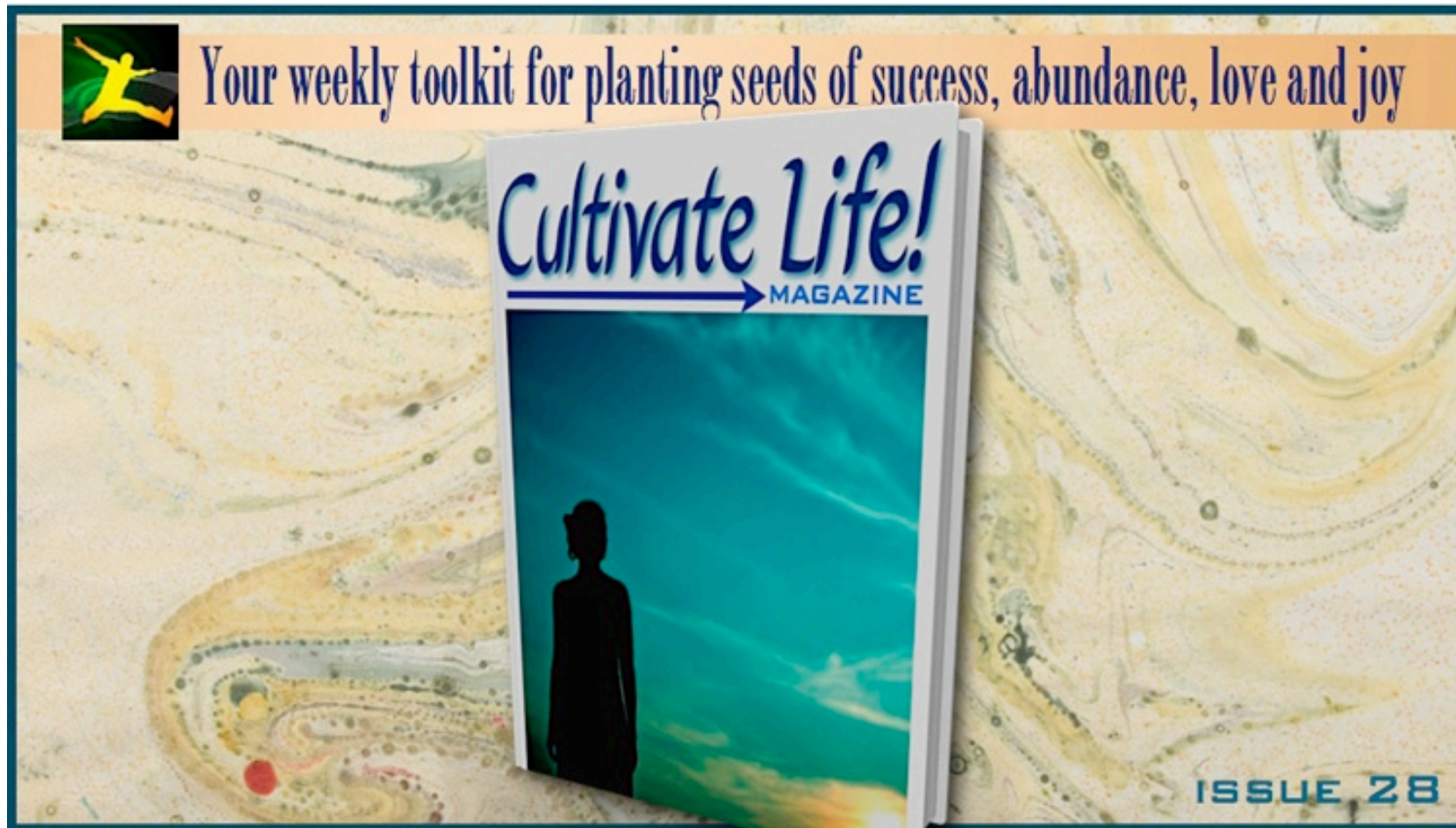


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Cultivate Life! magazine

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Editors: **Greg Willson of No Limits for Me** and **Peter Shepherd of Trans4mind**

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Seven Simple Exercises to Invite the Extraordinary Life

By Guy Finley

I can think of no greater encouragement than the self-evident Truth that there dwells in each of us the opportunity to explore and know the Extraordinary Life. This is the immutable and inexhaustible source that is the secret center of each of us: a timeless resource open and available to anyone who would seek the Life that sits behind life as we know it. Will we spend our lives in mere dreams of winning a limitless life, or will we do the inner-work of awakening from this dream? Choosing the Extraordinary Life begins with our conscious work to realize it, which the following special practices help to ensure.

1. Let Nagging Questions Go Unanswered: In stressful moments, listen to what life is trying to tell you about you instead of searching anxiously for familiar answers to make life feel "right" again. All fearful, doubt-filled moments are secret reflections of what we have yet to understand about life and ourselves, not life's rejection of us or our wish for happiness. Choose to go consciously quiet whenever there is a riot in you. Refuse to take part in the search to repair what you fear may be coming undone. Let go and watch what happens when you consciously sacrifice the fear-filled self. This new action allows the Extraordinary Life to enter into you where its presence alone proves that all is well.

2. Don't Make the Rescue Call: In times of anxiety and fear, we almost always call upon someone or something to help us get through our stress. This dependency on others for strength not only weakens our soul, but also steals from it the possibility of being educated by the Extraordinary Life, which means we miss two major lessons. First is the crucial lesson that all our fears are based upon false evidence that appears real. With this revelation comes our second realization that the same frightened self that seeks rescue secretly confirms its imagined condition as being real each time it cries out for help. Refusing to rescue ourselves from inner states that scare us invites the Extraordinary Life that shows us that no such scared self exists that needs saving.

3. Take the Hard Way: Rut and routine are two sides of the same sad street. Repetitive patterns are the well-worn pavement that our spiritually

asleep self loves to tread while it talks us to death with its empty promises of extraordinary times "just ahead." We can learn to do much better let ourselves be betrayed in this way, but it takes inner work! Instead of caving into the demands of those slipshod parts of ourselves always looking for the easy way out, we must choose in favor of what our false nature wants us to see as being the "hard" way. But it's not. In fact, once we learn that the only real way out of what we would rather avoid is to *go through it*, we discover another self-liberating truth: the only thing that's hard on us is when we allow our unenlightened nature to convince us that getting around something is the same as rising above it.

4. Do the Thing You Fear Doing: There is a correct time and place for thinking through practical plans in the ordinary scheme of life's events. But nothing that is founded in thought can serve to reveal the unthinkable plans that the Extraordinary holds in store for anyone willing to leap into the moment without a parachute. Never mind those old fears of falling. Just jump! *Being willing to risk failing is a prerequisite for fearless living.* If you will take the leap into what you are afraid of doing, the Extraordinary Life will prove to you that its unshakable ground is everywhere beneath you at all times. Nothing compares with this discovery because, once realized, there's nowhere to go but up! A note of caution: taking a spiritual leap is far different from taking a reckless physical risk. Never risk the well being of your physical body for the sake of a passing thrill: for what is possible to attain with a body, cannot be without one. The temporary rush of adrenalin has nothing in common with one's awakening to the reality of a timeless, fearless life.

5. Take Time Out from Your Self Every Day: Unseen by the self that walks upon it, thought is a treadmill powered by the movement of our yesterdays as they produce our tomorrows. This is the real meaning of "doing time." The domain of the Extraordinary Life is Timeless. To share its life, we must enter into its world. Here is a good way to begin this Work: Every day, as often as can be remembered, chose to break out of that gilded, but self-confining cage called "thinking about yourself." We live under the power of these unconscious ponderings, for when they turn dark and stormy, it is we who are left out in the cold. Even if we can only collect ourselves to meditate, pray or contemplate a Higher Idea for

a few minutes at a time, we must do it anyway. These small windows - opened by our work to remember the Extraordinary Life – grant us passage into its timeless domain.

6. Open Yourself to Life: Dare to see and experience yourself as you are without giving names to all the varied emotional sensations that present themselves before your watchful inner eyes. Allow the meaning of whatever states you see coming up in you to reveal their actual nature to you. Resist the temptation to interrupt their upwelling by explaining to yourself what you are experiencing. Have no intention toward these thoughts and feelings other than to be open to them and, in doing so, to permit them their uninterrupted passage through you. Why open up to life in this way? For one thing, this gives negative states the back door they need to depart. For another, the Extraordinary Life is very possessive. It will not enter any zone marked "occupied."

7. Make No Campsites: The Extraordinary Life visits individuals, not groups or organizations. It strengthens the soul willing to be alone for its sake. Keep your distance from people who insist that you believe as they do, who hope to convince you that the reality they have satisfied themselves with should satisfy you as well. These deceivers want only to keep you in their unreal camp. Never mind who is walking with you and who isn't. Be wary of any campsite - inner or outer - with its bright "welcome weary traveler" sign. Most of these campers desire your company so that they can forget they are going nowhere. Walk on! Your persistence is an open invitation to the Extraordinary Life to show you the Way back home.

Excerpted from *Let Go and Live in the Now* (Red Wheel/Weiser)

Are You On Auto-Haunt? By Marlene Buffa

My favorite holiday of the year - Halloween - a time when people honestly pretend to be something other than who they are! By donning our masks and putting on makeup and costumes, we cloak ourselves in a persona vastly different from how we present ourselves every day. The new facade creates an illusion of a new identity as we stay in character. We celebrate the goblins and ghosts which lurk around us this harvest and introspectively examine the spirits within us which haunt us as we roam the earth.

Own worst enemy

Haunted by self limitation, doubt, and insecurity, the well known cliché that 'man is his own worst enemy' resolutely demonstrates itself in our spiritual awakenings. We repeatedly hold ourselves back from living a fulfilling life when we buy into the negative self talk and doubt our capabilities. Giving credence and power to the myth of our unworthiness of whatever it is we truly want in life, we render ourselves helpless to the mind-speak we create, thereby manufacturing the enemy in our own minds as well as falling prey to it. When you consider that you created our own antagonist to your higher self, you then take a look at what fuels the negativity and the perpetuation of those fears.

Haunted by the past

Regrets, mistakes, and "should haves" work together to form the ghost of the past which hovers over our conscious thoughts. With fears of repeating mistakes or behaving in a manner which results in more future regret (?), we rattle the chains of self-imposed restrictions and remain frozen in fear by the inability to move forward to our highest desire and potential. Paralyzed, we spend more time reminiscing and revisiting the past than living in the present moment.

Instead, remember you cannot undo anything nor can you ever "should have" right now. Those are the dead end roads of your life's path. Allowing your past to dictate the vibrancy of the present, surrenders your power to fully engage in the now - the only true lesson you ever own.

Right now is IT; it's all you've got. Quit spending your precious "now" shivering in fear of the ghosts of your past that you allow to haunt your potential awakening.

External haunting turned inward

Along with our self-talk, we integrate and assimilate the words of others into a ghost of our self-perception. Parents, friends, bosses and those we allow to impose their opinions upon us formulate in our psyche as a ghost of "what they think must really be who I am." Believing others more accurately capture a depiction of you than yourself, you allow a haunting of their perspective a higher position of authority than your own self-awareness. Worse yet, you feel their expectations of you both expressed and silent, must be met in order to live up to their definition of who you are.

Learn to separate and detach what others tell you about yourself. They are human, too, and their opinion of you is only that. As a child of the Creator, your role remains to progress on your own path, not constrained by any implied obligation to anyone else. Each of us arrived on the planet with our own lessons to learn. As we share our humanity with one another, we exchange observations. By identifying the differences between how others see you and what you know about yourself to be true, you exorcise the ghost of external opinion.

Cultural ghosts

Social ghosts haunt us into the restrictions of tradition, cultures, or rituals. We sometimes feel bound to limit ourselves to the success level of our family, peer group or perceived social strata. Tremendous pressure exists on us as youths to achieve certain expectations as defined by our family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. In some cultures, dumbing-down and non-achieving is rigorously encouraged so as not to upset the group-think of martyrdom. When others give no plausible reason for attempting to keep you in the depths of failure, know that "misery loves company" and the "I can't" mentality really means "I'm afraid."

Break free from the accident of your earthly birth and ascend into a higher awareness that your life lesson may be to set aside the familiarity

of your surroundings and aspire to higher levels of consciousness. Only YOU decide what's best for you! Ignore the ghostly moans of agony of fear of success and create your own vision of your highest and best.

Be your own Exorcist

Using a crystal ball of self examination, you identify the ghosts of your essence which haunt your mind and soul. These ghosts exist only as habits and thought patterns that you allowed to implant into your mind and eventually control your life. The visions of fear you see are hollow myths you created and project into your future and hinder you from living in the present moment.

Leave the past where it belongs! When you hear the echo of self-doubt and the repeated chants of external control by fears, close the gate of the graveyard of negativity. Slam the door on thoughts which no longer serve you and invite the light of illumined ideas and possibility-thinking to occupy your precious "right now." ###

Taking a quiet sideways glance at life, Marlene offers insight through her words from experiences. A student of new-thought teachings, Marlene finds practical spirituality around every corner and seeks wisdom through observation of life's inter-relationships. Sometimes playful, sometimes poignant, always thought-provoking, her writing inspires readers in meaningful ways.

<http://www.wordsofmind.com>

Two Big Lies that May be Cutting Off Your Success

By Dr. Alan Zimmerman

"I am determined to be cheerful and happy in whatever situation I may find myself. For I have learned that the greater part of our misery or unhappiness is determined not by our circumstance but by our disposition."

—*Martha Washington*, 1732-1802, First American First Lady

There's no doubt about it. We're living in the most exciting time in all of human history ... for one simple reason. In times past, success was perceived by many as something that was either inherited ... or a lifestyle that was enjoyed ... by a very select minority. Successful people were generally viewed as being "lucky." But human development expert Bob Proctor says, "The beautiful truth is that successful people are not now, nor ever have been, lucky. This is an orderly universe of which you and I are a part, and that order, which is an expression of 'Divine Law,' leaves no room for luck."

The reason this is the most exciting time in all of human history to be alive is the fact that today, success has become a subject that can be studied, understood, and enjoyed by anyone ... IF you don't buy into the 2 BIG LIES. Unfortunately, these two lies have been accepted by a large segment of the world's population. And these lies that may be getting in the way of your success.

BIG LIE # 1: Getting an education is getting a degree.

Now before you get all upset, make sure you understand me. I'm not putting down formal education. I'm all for it. After all, I'm a teacher/professor by trade.

The lie comes from the so-called "magical powers" attributed to "getting a degree." So many people were raised to think, "All I have to do is go to school, get a degree, and a good job will naturally follow." Well, you and I both know there are thousands of people ... maybe millions of people ... walking the streets with a degree in hand but no job to show for it. And that's always been the case, in good times as well as bad economic times.

Somehow or other, people who bought into this lie let one of two things happen to them. They may have let their "education" become obsolete, or they may have focused their "education" on "KNOWING" instead of "DOING."

With regard to that first item, I remind you: Getting a degree is NOT the end of your education; it's only the beginning. So be careful. Don't ever let your education become outdated. Take a lesson from the highly successful people throughout history by touring their homes or offices. And notice what grabs your attention. Their libraries!

Now think about it. What do you think came first? Their fancy homes or their elaborate libraries? I would suggest the latter. You won't find many people who went out, bought an expensive house, and THEN became wealthy, and THEN acquired a library. No, it was their library ... or their quest for learning and continual education ... that led to everything else.

And I hope that the same can be said for you ... that you're always in the learning mode. With 200,000 new books on the market every year, with another 2 million articles being published every year, it only stands to reason that at least 1/2 of 1% of that information is critical to your future success. That's 200 books and 2000 articles.

So let me ask you, how are you doing? Or what are you doing to keep up ... at least a little bit? I don't know what your answer is, but I do know this. According to author Brian Tracy, the top 10% of the people in any profession are always the ones who attend the conferences, take the seminars, read the books, and listen to the educational and motivational CDs. They know that's what helped them get to the top and stay on top.

Other people who bought into "the degree equals an education lie" put too much emphasis on "knowing something" rather than "being able to do something." They never learned that "education" comes from the Latin word "educō," meaning to educate, to develop or draw out from within. In other words, a true education involves the development of your God-given powers so you're able to "do" more.

Such is the case of 25-year old Jessica Cox. Born without arms, she just received her Sport Pilot certificate and became the first pilot licensed to fly using only her feet. Parrish Traweek, her flying instructor at San Manuel's Ray Blair Airport, said, "She's a good pilot. She's rock solid." And Traweek knows what he's talking about. Over the years, Traweek has trained many pilots, many of whom didn't come close to Cox's abilities.

So don't buy the first lie ... that getting an education is the same thing as getting a degree. Take a lesson instead from the successful people who have come before you. They know school is never out, and their education is never finished.

BIG LIE # 2: Your company can give you security.

It is ... or at least it was ... an easy lie to believe. After all, corporations around the world preached the gospel of "You give us loyalty and we'll give you security." And as Proctor points out, "Like sheep, millions of individuals blindly followed, not thinking, never analyzing the offer being presented. Had a person carefully studied the promise, they would have realized that no company in the world could give a person security, regardless of service or loyalty. Security, real security, comes from within. If you haven't got it there, you haven't got it."

Tragically, there are millions of people who believed the lie ... that they could find security in their jobs ... and have now lost their jobs. They're demoralized. Their severance pay is gone or their unemployment benefits have expired. They feel like they've lost everything.

Even more tragically, when you interview these good, competent, hardworking people who are the victims of layoffs, downsizing, right-sizing or re-engineering, you'll find out they were loyal. And as a result, they thought they were secure in their companies. But now, many of them are bitter, angry, and resentful. They're blaming their company for a host of injustices.

And in some cases, in some corporations with unethical and dishonest leadership, there's plenty of justifiable blame to go around. But in lots of

other cases, the company did the only thing they could, in an attempt to stay alive. In either case, blame is seldom if ever a helpful response. It keeps you stuck in the past, stuck to your problems, without the energy to do anything about it.

By contrast, highly successful people know how to get beyond the lie. They know they can't change what happened TO them, but they know they have control over what happens IN them when setbacks occur. They know their response will make all the difference in the world.

Back in the 1700's, German statesman Karl Wilhelm Von Humboldt affirmed that. He said, "I am more and more convinced that our happiness or our unhappiness depends far more on the way we meet the events of life than on the nature of those events themselves."

Defeat the lie by changing your focus. Stop focusing on what your company should do for you and start focusing on what you can do for yourself. After all, as motivational speaker Zig Ziglar points out, "The biggest person standing in your way is you. Others can stop you temporarily. You are the only one who can do it permanently."

W. Mitchell, the survivor of several horrendous accidents that burned, disfigured, and disabled most of his body, constantly proclaims the power of focus. He says, "What I focus on in life is what I get. And if I concentrate on how bad I am or how wrong I am or how inadequate I am, if I concentrate on what I can't do and how there's not enough time in which to do it, isn't that what I get every time? And when I think about how powerful I am, and when I think about what I have left to contribute, and when I think about the difference I can make on this planet, then that's what I get. You see, I recognize that it's not what happens to you; it's what you do about it."

Perhaps you've been bamboozled by the 2 BIG LIES. So have lots of other people. The good news is ... you can throw away the lies and grasp the truth that will set you free.

Action:

Which of the 2 BIG LIES has had the most damaging effect on your life or your career? What is one thing you can do about that ... right now?
###

As a best-selling author and Hall of Fame professional speaker, Dr. Alan Zimmerman has taught more than one million people in 48 states and 22 countries how to keep a positive attitude on and off the job. In his book, *PIVOT: How One Turn In Attitude Can Lead To Success*, Dr. Zimmerman outlines the exact steps you must take to get the results you want in any situation. Go to Alan's site for a Free Sneak Preview <http://www.drzimmerman.com/tools/productinfo/pivot.htm>

The Right to Fall Down **By Becky Joyce Reed**

Perhaps the greatest quest of this lifetime exists to be true to ourselves. Joining another in marriage should not precipitate giving away oneself and yet, compromise and respect for the values of the entity of the union must mesh with those of both individuals.

This state of having something in common with shared efforts and interests should entail a mutual "glue" and loyalty. The couple's association is to bolster both individuals as well as the life force of the marriage. Betrayal in one form or another is always a shock for one of the party's to discover. It might even be a surprise to the one committing offense that the bond was not so strong that such a change in choice might occur.

Dr. Roberta Temes and Geoffrey Gorer discuss three stages of grief for people left behind. Their model finds a base with the loss in the death of another, but it seems most applicable to the displaced spouse, as well. They posit that grief is not a disease and there is no magic pill for a cure, but it does have an end. "Numbness, disorganization and reorganization are these stages and they bring about emotional, physical and behavioral changes in all of us."

The works of Temes and Gorer list numbness as the first stage - a place for the automatic pilot which also includes genuine sorrow, moments of anger, and even guilt.

In disorganization, the next phase, a constant and acute loneliness accompanies the loss along with physical symptoms such as tightness in the throat, shortness of breath, and anxiety with panic. This second phase may be wrenching and we are advised to feel all the emotions and not keep them bottled. Eventually, the promise is that (1) we will complete the emotional process and (2) we will begin to focus our energy toward a future.

In the final stage of reorganization, the sadness and weeping subside and the one left behind begins to trust again in himself to provide a security on his own.

Although the authors intended to assist in the experience of the death of a loved one, this message and sense of hope proves valuable to the spouse who found him/herself to be so easily discarded. The advice for obtaining a support system should be underscored.

Looking at life from the perspective of the disposable spouse, the self-esteem and trust in ability to fill certain roles finds a difficult path. Intimacies and openness of thoughts, joys, and upsets may have been turned inward trying to comprehend what actually transpired in the decision of the other partner to end the union. As one who was so quickly left behind, I found myself suffering anxiety over thoughts of "what if" and "were there unspoken boundaries and topics upon which I was not to communicate."

Betrayal is as personal as we are as individuals. Mine included a primary loyalty to parents, an ex-wife with her extended family, and the depletion of my funds brought into the marriage. Marriage counseling seemed a one-time interest for the departing spouse. My sadness and deep hurts came from the rites of passage over infatuations with other women, a lack of interest in me as a woman, and the absence of meaningful communication. Having felt that I had "paid my dues" and was allowed to voice opposing ideas, I erred for the facade my spouse needed to perpetuate as well as his need to play the single entity.

In my own capturing of knowledge and practical wisdom, I can see that I was so enthralled by the vision of what life would be as the future moved into focus that I failed to fully evaluate the discrepancies of acceptability in the joint venture.

Ideas of honor and commitment must be shared. Expecting maturity in responsibilities may not be accessible if the partner finds that his role no longer serves the purpose for which it was created. Life often brings cycles and should one be unprepared for the bumps along the path, that proverbial "grass is greener" elsewhere mentality may be ever so enticing.

Is hope just beyond the next night-fall? Yes, but there is work on self and handling grief to be accomplished first. We will find that we don't look toward that departed spouse for aid or compassion...or answers and when that day arrives, it will be comforting that we can be fine just as a

lone person. There will come a time when thoughts will not automatically drift toward the deceased union and the "what if's" of one's choices in behavior and response.

We have a right to fumble, err, and fall down. We also have the right to see that our best efforts could not manifest the joint vision without both giving to that manifestation. Helen Rowland summarizes the subject well in "A Guide" to Men": "When two people decide to get a divorce, it isn't a sign that they "don't understand" one another, but a sign that they have, at last, begun to."

Becky Reed is a professional copywriter and editor as well as an entrepreneur who has founded and managed a variety of companies offering support services to busy professionals and parents <http://reedpersonalassistant.bravehost.com>, Becky is author of *Romance Stew: The Way to a Woman's Heart*

Can We Teach Our Brains to Think Differently? Jahiel Yasha Kamhi

Do you find this title a little bit weird? You do?

I need to confess something: The title sounds unusual, but technically it is correct. We *do* teach our brains to think differently and properly throughout the whole of our lives. We learn how to control impulses and how to motivate ourselves, which basically means we teach the brain how to react.

Emotional lessons can be taught, and they shape our emotional intelligence.

Let me explain everything step by step.

When we learn something from our parents, teachers or peers, we remember it, which is good.

What if we learn something that is not good for us, like a negative way of thinking or an inappropriate reaction to life events? Sooner or later we come to understand that this is not a good way to live, and we decide to change it.

What the therapy or new teaching does is apply a new process for our brain to follow. We teach our brain how to change, control or inhibit our previous learning.

Basically, we use our brain to teach our brain how to think differently!

It took millions of years in human evolution to develop the so-called thinking brain or neocortex.

At the beginning of human evolution, we had just the brainstem, our primitive brain. This “brain” regulated only the basic life functions, like metabolism and breathing.

From the brainstem emerged the emotional brain and, many millions of years later in evolution, the thinking brain.

We have two brains: rational and emotional. We have two minds (rational and emotional), two memory systems (one for rational facts and one for emotional facts), and two kinds of intelligence (rational and emotional).

At best, there is a balance between the emotional and rational minds. If the balance tips, we are more or less in trouble!

Now we know why we sometimes react emotionally rather than rationally: What came first during the evolution of the brain reacts first! First we had emotions, and then we had thinking. The thinking brain grew from the emotional one.

Therefore we need to teach our thinking brain (the neocortex) how to inhibit our amygdala (the part of the limbic system that plays a role in emotional behaviour).

Let’s make it simple: Usually, it’s better to think first, and to feel later. Whenever we need to make a decision, we need to use our thinking brain first, not our emotional brain. This is the ideal way of reacting.

French essayist and moralist Jean de La Bruyère tells us, “Life is a comedy for those who think and a tragedy for those who feel.”

As the title of this article, I ask the question: Can we teach our brains to think differently?

The answer: Yes, we can, because the human brain has plasticity, meaning it is dynamic and continues to be shaped and to develop. Keeping the intellect active helps us to build a brain capable of handling different tasks.

Studies show that people continue to operate at a high level of function throughout their lives only if they literally train their brains.

Older adults can improve their brain function with the correct training. Certain mental exercises can partially offset the expected decline in older adults' thinking skills. Teaching our brains to operate differently is actually a mental activity that keeps those brains in good shape. The human brain is like any other muscle: we "use it or lose it".

Keeping our brains healthy requires more than just mental stimulation. Scientists now know more about the brain and the many things we can do to keep it healthy and sharp.

The brain's cells (neurons) can be shaped, and increase in number when we expose ourselves to new environments.

If we want to keep our brains in good condition, we need to pay attention also to our stress levels. The human brain is very sensitive to chronic stress. Such stress has a negative effect on memory and potentially induces damage to the brain.

Our lifestyles determine our brain health.

There are many simple things we can do on a regular basis to positively affect our brains. Think about it!

Jahiel Yasha Kamhi holds a degree in Medical Biochemistry and a Bachelor's degree in Chemistry. Jahiel writes regularly for www.personal-development.com and other magazines. He also delivers presentations that inspire others to find more meaning and balance in their lives. He is passionate about writing, and conveying positive ideas that help people live life with more passion and purpose.

Jahiel's mission is to promote a good mental and physical health.

Email at: jasakamhi@hotmail.com

The Cat and The Trash

By Beca Lewis

"Love is always present and cannot remain forever unseen." We were maintaining that point of view in spite of the fact that the evidence before us told us otherwise.

The first problem we had is that we appeared to have lost a client's beloved cat. We had been told that the cats could easily sneak out of the house so we were doubly careful to make sure that when we visited them they were still in the house when we left. Yet one cat was missing the next day when we came back, and a door that we thought we had closed was now open.

We looked everywhere. However, what we didn't do was first change our "point of view" or "state of mind" perception. Instead, we started with the thought and perception that we must have somehow made a mistake and the consequences were unthinkable. Fear and guilt were our state of mind even though we could see that the open door (which we later found out the cat had done) did not lead to the outside.

So we searched that day, the next and the next. We even called the cat's owner and asked where she could hide and after searching all those places, we still couldn't find the missing cat. After the first day we did attempt to start from the correct point of view that "Love is always present and cannot remain forever unseen" but the state of mind of fear and guilt, that we could have made a mistake kept the cat hidden from view.

Finally, during one visit Del sat down on the couch and flooded his thinking with the thought that "Love is always present and cannot remain forever unseen" and I called for help from a friend to get my own perception on track. As I was on the phone and Del was on the couch the cat peeked around the corner to let us know it was there. It was fear and guilt that blocked our view of what was already present.

At the same time, we were packing to move across country. Although we still knew that "Love is always present and cannot remain forever

unseen”, we were having trouble letting go of how we “thought” life should be for us and moving on to something else. Lots of “stuff” had to go, lots of physical stuff, and lots of thinking stuff.

We did start with the correct point of view perception that “Love is always present and cannot remain forever unseen” but the state of mind perception of sadness and wishing remained with us in varying degrees each day.

It wasn’t until the very last moment that the value of letting go was evident in a tangible way. Our trailer was packed, the car was ready to go, and still there were two big bags of “stuff” that had to go the trash, which meant each of us had to carry one to the dumpster.

They were so big that I could barely see over the top and so heavy we kept bumping into each other as we walked. On reaching the dumpster, we simultaneously heaved them in and turned to walk back to the car. The difference was amazing. We were light, free, and able to easily walk together.

The symbol of carrying trash and letting it go can’t be missed. How much “stuff” do we carry around that keeps us from being with other people? It wasn’t easy to go through everything we owned and let most of it go. Every time we thought we were done with getting rid of things, there was more to do. However, each time we did we were more aware that in reality nothing was gone, just our perception that we had to hold on to it in order for it to be available. ###

Speaking with Confidence by Chuck Gallozzi

If you are a student, you may be asked to speak before your class, and those of us who are not, may be asked to speak at a wedding, funeral, sports event, party, or office, sales, or political meeting. Public speaking, like dancing, builds our social skills, and like martial arts, builds confidence. Also, it is the foundation for leadership skills. There’s no question about it, it empowers us, enabling us to inform, educate, motivate, inspire, and persuade others.

For this reason it makes sense to take a course or join a public speaking club, such as Toastmasters International. Yet, the thought of speaking to an audience strikes fear into the hearts of many. To encourage you to enter the exciting world of public speaking, I will share some ideas on overcoming fear, how to deliver a powerful speech, and end with a few more tips.

Overcoming the Fear of Public Speaking

Some fears always remain with us. It is not a matter of overcoming them as much as it is overcoming the inability to act because of them. Courageous men and women act despite their fears. The tasks at hand are too important to ignore merely because they are afraid.

1. Perhaps the best place to start is by recognizing there is nothing to fear about fear. It is just an emotion. Just a feeling of discomfort. And we all can learn to live with a little discomfort. Paradoxically, once we start to reap the rewards of a willingness to accept discomfort, we become comfortable living with it. In a word, each time we step out of our comfort zone we feel uncomfortable, but the rewards of doing so are so great that we willingly continue to repeat the cycle. In a word, face your fears and benefit. This acronym will help you remember fear is your friend: F.E.A.R = Face Everything And Reap benefits.

2. If you are as relaxed as a Zen monk, you are unlikely to be emotionally charged, fully energized, and brimming with passion. Professional speakers stepping on stage to address a large audience welcome their initial discomfort, for it discharges an adrenalin rush that pumps them up and allows them to deliver a powerful presentation.

3. The fear of speaking in public is not about the fear of speaking, but about the *imagined, possible consequences* of speaking. That is, it is about the fear of humiliation. A speaker that is racked with fear is plagued with thoughts such as, “What if I stumble as I walk to the podium? What if I lose my place and forget what I want to say? What if I mispronounce a word or make a grammatical mistake? What if I speak too softly, too loudly, too quickly, or unclearly? What if I cannot maintain eye contact with the audience? What if I look stupid, incompetent, or nervous?” This “What if...” type of negative thinking is nothing more than fodder for anxiety.

The best way to overcome it is to change your focus from yourself to your audience. Rather than worry about how good YOU will look, concern yourself with how much THEY will enjoy your presentation. Ask yourself questions such as, “What can I do to make my material interesting for the audience? What would they like to hear from me? How can I best answer their questions? How can I help them feel at ease and enjoy the presentation?” Questions such as these release your creativity, inspire you to help your audience, and reduce stress.

4. Even the most skilled speakers abhor speaking when they are not prepared, so imagine how you would feel at such a time. The moral is prepare! Gather your resources, organize your material, and do your research. When you are prepared and know what you’re going to say, you’ll be able to relax and focus on your delivery.

5. After completing your preparation, it is time to practice. Do so in front of a mirror. By practicing several times you’ll be able to remove the kinks, refine your delivery, and polish your speech. When you are ready, you will feel much more at ease.

6. Speak on a subject you are highly knowledgeable about. Then you will be able to face your audience and answer their questions with confidence. When you are asked to speak on a subject you haven’t already mastered, do the necessary research to increase your comprehension, competence, and confidence. “Grasp the subject, and the words will follow.” said Cato The Elder [1]. In contemporary

language, Micheal Mescon [2] offers this advice, “The best way to conquer stage fright is to know what you’re talking about.”

7. We have a potent inner resource called imagination. If we channel this force, we become empowered, but if we allow our imagination to run amok, it can defeat us. Those who refuse to speak in public because they are afraid of being humiliated by an audience end up being humiliated by their fear. The secret is to harness the power of our imagination by practicing visualization. That is, rather than doing nothing and allowing your fears to run rampant, become proactive and control your thoughts. Deliberately imagine yourself succeeding. Don’t ask yourself anxiety producing questions such as, “What if I screw up?” Rather ask empowering questions such as, “What if my presentation is brilliant? What humor can I interject to place my audience at ease? What can I do to help the audience feel it was well worth attending my presentation? What can I do to help them understand and benefit from my subject? How can I present my material in a lively and interesting way?” Mentally rehearsing your speech is just as important as actual practice (Point #5), so for a week before the event, spend 15 minutes a day doing so.

How to Deliver a Powerful Speech

1. To shine in public speaking, use the G.R.I.P. formula. Here’s what the acronym stands for:

- a) GRAB the attention of the audience with a dramatic opening.
- b) RELATE the subject to the audience to make it meaningful.
- c) Give INTERESTING ILLUSTRATIONS to make your points.
- d) End with a POINT. Have a clearly understood PURPOSE for your speech, for speaking without a purpose is like shooting without taking aim.

Here’s an example of a poor opening for a speech:
“I want to speak about the dangers of global warming.”

Here’s an example of four 'paragraphs' from a good beginning for a speech:

“The fate of the Arctic is on Thin Ice.

“Since 1979, the size of the summer polar ice cap has shrunk more than 20 percent. Average temperatures in the Arctic region are rising twice as fast as they are elsewhere in the world.

“Arctic ice is getting thinner, melting and rupturing. For example, the largest single block of ice in the Arctic, the Ward Hunt Ice Shelf, had been around for 3,000 years before it started cracking in 2000. Within two years it had split all the way through and is now breaking into pieces. [3]

“How much longer do we have to wait until global warming is taken seriously?”

2. Be brief. Keep your audience wanting more. Remove verbal clutter, and stay on topic. Franklin D. Roosevelt [4] offered good advice on public speaking when he said, “Be sincere, be brief; be seated.” Or as Benjamin Franklin [5] wrote, “He that speaks much, is much mistaken.”

3. The spaces between words and sentences (pauses) are as important as the words. Pauses are necessary for the audience to have time to digest the material. They can also be used to stress a point and build suspense. So, when building your speech, plan your pauses as well as your points.

4. There’s no point in speaking if the audience fails to understand the message. To help them absorb what you have to say, speak slowly, clearly, and in short sentences.

5. Speak about a subject you believe in. When you do, the audience will sense your sincerity and are more apt to be persuaded by your arguments. Francois De La Rochefoucauld [6] agreed, for he wrote, “Passions are the only orators to always convince us.”

6. In a similar vein, don’t be timid about expressing your emotions. Allow yourself to be enthusiastic and get passionate, for enthusiasm is contagious and passion ignites the room, making your speech memorable. Remember, it is far better to make three memorable points than ten forgettable ones. I’ll call on another Frenchman to give his view on the matter, “The people only understand what they can feel; the only

orators that can affect them are those who move them.” (Alphonse De Lamartine [7])

7. Offer your audience the gifts of hope and inspiration, or as Gerald C. Meyers [8] said, “Find out what’s keeping them up nights and offer hope. Your theme must be an answer to their fears.”

8. Don’t build yourself up; remain modest. Audiences don’t like arrogant speakers. “Do you wish people to think well of you? Don’t speak well of yourself.” (Blaise Pascal [9])

9. Double-check your facts. After all, “It is terrible to speak well and be wrong.” Sophocles [10]

Additional Tips

1. Audiences love it when speakers share personal information, so much so that Ralph Archbold [11] said, “A speech should not just be a sharing of information, but a sharing of yourself.”

2. When preparing your speech, don’t forget to ask yourself what are you omitting, forgetting, or neglecting to say? The opposite rule also applies. That is, after you finish writing your speech, ask yourself what is unnecessary or irrelevant and remove it.

3. Dale Carnegie [12] also offers sound advice about the structure of a good speech, “Tell the audience what you’re going to say, say it; then tell them what you’ve said.

4. Use anecdotes, stories, and quotations to illustrate the points you wish to make.

5. “If you have an important point to make, don’t try to be subtle or clever. Use the pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time; a tremendous whack.” (Winston Churchill [13])

6. Keep your material at the level of the audience. “We should speak as the populace but think as the learned.” Sir Edward Coke [14]

7. If possible insert humor in your speech, for “Once you get people laughing, they're listening and you can tell them almost anything.” (Herb Gardner [15])

Now, here is Lily Walters [16] to sum up in just a few words what it is to be a great speaker, “The secret of successful speakers? Passion and compassion with a purpose.”

Resources

To find a Toastmasters International Club near you, visit: <http://reports.toastmasters.org/findaclub/>

If you need help in releasing a debilitating fear of public speaking, visit: <http://www.changethatsrightnow.com/fear-of-public-speaking/>
<http://www.undoityourself.com/>

[1] Cato The Elder (BC 234~149, Roman statesman, orator)

[2] Micheal Mescon (<http://www.aeisspeakers.com/speakerbio.php?SpeakerID=689>)

[3] Polar Ice Cap facts taken from Wikipedia

[4] Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882~1945, 32nd American President)

[5] Benjamin Franklin (1706~1790)

[6] Francois De La Rochefoucauld (1613~1680, French classical writer)

[7] Alphonse De Lamartine (1790~1869, French poet, statesman, historian)

[8] Gerald C. Meyers (former chairman and CEO of American Motors Corporation)

[9] Blaise Pascal (1623~1662, French scientist, religious philosopher)

[10] Sophocles (495~406 BC, Greek tragic poet)

[11] Ralph Archbold (a Philadelphia-area speaker known for his impersonation of Benjamin Franklin)

[12] Dale Carnegie (1888~1955, American trainer)

[13] Winston Churchill (1874~1965)

[14] Sir Edward Coke (1552~1634, British jurist)

[15] Herbert George "Herb" Gardner (1934~2003, American cartoonist, playwright, and screenwriter)

[16] Lily Walters (<http://www.lillywalters.com/>)

A New Day By Stefanie Miller

I woke up quite early this morning. I took my dogs out for a walk and felt a gentle breeze in the air. The same breeze I felt last night while I walked them by moonlight. The wind whispers to me of new beginnings. Oh yes! I am so ready for new things to come! The past year has been filled with so much loss. Loss of life. Loss of hope and trust. Loss of friendship. Loss of inspiration, motivation, and at many times loss of my sanity! Within all the loss there have been many blessings as well. I have grown stronger and more self-sufficient. I've found where my true nourishment lies. I've learned to take better care of myself and let go of what no longer serves me.

It's been a never-ending process of letting go. Letting go of belongings that I don't need, use, or want. Letting go of thoughts, beliefs, and ideas that no longer resonate within me, which are bringing me down, and holding me back from moving forward. Letting go of patterns created in relationships that I care never to repeat again! Letting go of long suffering emotions that I have held on to, which in fact, I don't even remember the source from which they generated!

This morning I opened up all my sliding glass doors and swept the patios. I let in the fresh air and swept out all the cobwebs. My cats and dogs took in the surroundings and the sweet breeze with joy. I looked around outside through their eyes and I saw all the wonder. Good morning new day! Good day new life! Each one is a chance to begin anew. Through it all we arise each day and discover the blessings waiting for us.

Yes, this time has been quite difficult for many of us. We are being challenged and pushed to the limit. We are being pushed to simplify our lives and find new ways of doing things. The old ways no longer serve us. There is simply no way of continuing to do things the way we have done them in the past without suffering.

We are powerful creators. We create far more than we give ourselves credit for. Sometimes I feel like it's a cosmic joke. I am able to create

this inside of my body, yet I can't get a doggone loan modification completed already! The message I keep receiving is that all is in divine timing. We do not see the big picture. We don't know what is going on behind the scenes to align what is necessary for our lives. We need to stay positive, centered, and balanced in order to be in the divine flow.

For today I am able to pay my bills, although with very little left over. Yes, I have had to cut back quite a bit. I do far less than I would like to do, but I also really enjoy what I do do. I am a simple person and find enjoyment doing the little things. It really doesn't take a lot to entertain me nowadays. All in all I am happy and content. The only time I get bent out of shape is when I look at my checking account and start worrying about how I'm going to pay the next set of bills. The bills in front of me always somehow get miraculously paid. The money is always there when I need it. Sometimes it shows up at the last second. Which always peeves me why we have to wait until the last second to get our miracle! This is also about changing my perceptions about money, worth, and abundance.

So many of us are going through challenges. The guidance I receive is as we stay in the present moment and really focus on our blessings the more they will multiply. We need to release our attachment to how we think things are supposed to be. If we can distance ourselves from the problem we give space for the solution to unfurl. Avoid focusing on the issues and spiraling into a negative pattern. While we cannot ignore them, we do what needs to be done in the moment to assist the situation, but then occupying ourselves with things that uplift us the rest of the time.

Prayer

Dear God,
Thank you for many blessings. I am infinitely grateful for all that I have in my life. Today I give my worries to you. I know things are manifesting as they are intended. My focus is on creating the life I dream of. Guide me in the right direction please. I create with a light heart and a happy spirit. I release my attachment to making things happen in a certain way. I am open to the infinite possibilities!

And so it is.
Amen.

Stefanie Miller is a teacher, energy healer, spiritual counselor and an intuitive, channeled writer. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Education and has taught elementary school for over 16 years. Stefanie has been assisting individuals on their spiritual path since 1998. Facilitating private healing sessions, workshops and through her channeled writing, Stefanie guides individuals toward achieving self mastery by connecting with their Higher Self and Source through a heart centered focus. Visit her site, <http://www.amagicalworld.com>

Taking Life On Its Merits

By Steve Wickham

Getting ahead or getting behind; common problems them both. It is better simply to take life as it comes, learning to plan, but little enough to retain the delicate balance.

Our motives, those further down than we're often aware, are frequently our ruination.

More important to us at these times is 'divining' our place and how to maintain or improve our position. But life is more than positioning.

Denying Our Essence

When we go strongly past the issues closest to our true selves - and we do this will increasing ease - we begin to lose access to ourselves.

Strangers to ourselves we can become - at the extremes.

This is about identity. When we compromise that, we begin to entertain time to search on that wasteland road that most feel trapped on as they realise 'suddenly' they've arrived there - something that's been cooking for months, if not years.

There's hardly a more important thing to us than our identities. From the identity the person is.

Denying our essence is a dangerous business and it's precipitated by the chronic practice of competing with a world that wins anyway. Seen this way, it's a futile exercise from the very beginning.

A Better Way

It's a repetitive message, but one that is constantly needed. We venture off the path of due merit all too freely. We do this due to the allure of life. There are so many things that attract our attention and drag our motivations otherwise.

The very best idea in living life, however, is not getting ahead or behind -

it's simply about keeping up. It's not scheming and developing intricate plans that will need to change anyway, as if romanticising life gets us anywhere productive, for it doesn't.

Sure, we do it for entertainment, but that's all, and in that we need to know the tenuous boundaries we operate within - these of which are most difficult to see, and are therefore often best avoided.

Rather than positioning ourselves for success, we'd do better to simply focus on the process of living. We'd find that a better and safer way through the journey that is life, and we'd have more joy and peace to boot.

It's a simple message, but one with power to live... if we'll only just simply live it.

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Pam Garcy

Part 3. "I'm afraid of rejection."

Do you fear of rejection? You might prevent yourself from growing due to this fear. You might believe that if you start to take steps in your own direction, you will be rejected, disparaged, mocked, and ostracized by others.

Below are some initial questions and ideas that I'd encourage you to consider:

1. Do you really know that you will be rejected? Is it really true that this person will reject you, rather than support you? Have you taken steps to explore whether your assumption is true? It is often surprising how others can become your supporters and cheerleaders! Just as an exercise, pick someone to declare your long-term dream to and see how they respond. For example, I was surprised by how supportive my husband was when I cautiously told him about my dream to write a book.

2. If you are facing actual rejection, ask yourself, "What is the price-tag attached to pursuing my own direction?" Sometimes, when you really stop and look at it, you realize that rejection is a small price to pay for fulfilling your dream. For example, couples who have decide to pursue mixed-religion or mixed-race marriages occasionally find that they are rejected by others in their social circle. Such a couple might decide that the cost of facing such rejection is worth the benefit of pursuing their relationship.

3. Also, keep in mind that the rejection you face may only be temporary. Have you ever noticed how others can "come around" over time? What might happen in the best case? They may even grow to accept and even embrace your decision!

4. Ever consider compromising efficiency for ease? Sometimes, moving slowly toward your goal is the answer. Small, slow steps may be easier for everyone, including you. Tolerating a bit of initial discouragement may be easier than tolerating a complete withdrawal of support. For

example, in some cases it might be saner for a college student to learn to play guitar on the weekends rather than abruptly dropping out of college to join a rock band!

5. What is the worst thing that could happen? If it happens, what would you do? How would you go on? Coping is a decision.

6. Are there other sources of support? Is it possible that there are others out there who are able to help you, support you, and encourage you? Would it be helpful to you to start to search for such support?

Do You Rub Your Thoughts the Wrong Way?

Joyce Shafer

There is a phrase, “That person rubs me the wrong way,” that basically means the person (though it also could be a situation) doesn’t make you feel good. You, at times, do this with your thoughts (most of us do); so what works to shift this?

Esther Hicks of Abraham fame has a video on YouTube, “*Now Is Where All Your Power Is, Part 2*,” where she likens feeding negative thoughts—any thoughts that take you out of feeling good—with rubbing your hand on sandpaper. You wouldn’t rub your hand on sandpaper for an extended period of time because it would hurt, remove skin, require healing, maybe lead to infection, and so on.

But, you will rub your thoughts in this way . . . because it’s a habit that seems logical. And, likely, nearly everyone you know does this from time to time. You may have worked yourself, or watched someone do this, into a frothy state of anger or upset—about something that isn’t even happening at that moment, or is long or long-enough over.

A good example of this is replaying in your mind and verbally repeating events you’ve labeled “negative” that happened in the past. How many times will you need to replay and repeat “negative” past events before you’ll feel better about them or change them to “positives” in the present moment? You may even do this when you anticipate negative events that “might” happen.

What does this habit allow you to do?

It doesn’t empower you. It doesn’t allow you to feel appreciation. It doesn’t allow you to feel aligned with what’s good in your life. It doesn’t open you to inspired ideas and creative solutions. It doesn’t allow more good in this specific category to come to you; and if more good does pierce that energy, you may not appreciate it fully.

It does present you with an opportunity (maybe even Opportunity No. 5,798) to ask different questions about it such as: What can I learn about myself from this? If I don’t like what I learn, how can I shift that? In

what way does this make me feel disempowered? How can and will I empower myself about this? What does this opportunity allow me to do, and will I do it?

The tendency to use your thoughts like sandpaper comes from knowing that whatever causes you to feel out of alignment, negative, angered, hurt, fearful . . . wasn’t or hasn’t been resolved or addressed—within you—in a way that allows you to feel the way you want to feel. Maybe it is something you can address in the present, and maybe what you need to address is what you’re doing to yourself (and perhaps others) in the present.

You may feel it’s logical to place responsibility for how you feel, or shifting that, onto someone directly involved. How’s that worked for you so far? Maybe it worked in some way (like from manipulation), but do you feel self-empowered? If you give any person responsibility for how you choose to feel, then that person has the power, not you. And, even if you practice this denial of your power, you know it’s not true—because of the resistance you experience.

Here is a way to shift any thought about anything you use repeatedly like sandpaper on your psyche, whether from the past or now:

1. Notice that you’re doing it. Notice what you’re allowing yourself to feel and be by doing it. Notice it without judgment, because self-criticism is another form of sandpaper—a very coarse form.
2. Ask, “What part of this reflects something in me?” You may not like this fact, but anything you harbor resentment about is something you do in a similar way, even though it may appear as different—so “different,” you may not even recognize you’re repeating a pattern you detest in another. This level of self-assessment may not (initially) feel good, but it is extraordinarily powerful on many levels.
3. Ask, “What can I do about this that I will do?” One thing you can do is find something to appreciate about this. You can appreciate that you notice it, that you ask the right questions from a sincere desire to shift and self-empower. You can appreciate how this process leads to deeper understanding and compassion of and for yourself and others. You can appreciate the feeling of relief

you get when you empower yourself to stop rubbing your thoughts the wrong way and rub them the right way.

You may also experience challenges about allowing what you say you want into your life. Any thought about what you desire that rubs the wrong way, will slow or prevent what you want coming to you. It's like saying No or Not Yet.

When this habit surfaces, you can diffuse it with this question: Does allowing this thought pattern support me to move forward, self-empower, and feel the way I want to feel now? If it needs addressing, address it. Otherwise, find and use a thought pattern that lifts your mind and emotions from the sandpaper. The most immediate relief is to stop doing it when you notice you're doing it.

You are what you practice.

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You Are More! Empowerment Coach Joyce Shafer, author of ***I Don't Want to be Your Guru, but I Have Something to Say*** (jls1422@yahoo.com). Get free empowerment gifts, access the link to her interview about relationships, see which of her books and e-books may meet your needs, and read her current free weekly newsletter at <http://stateofappreciation.webs.com>

Self-Development and the Way to Power

L. W. Rogers (1922)

A Success Classic! Rogers explains why we suffer and how with the right knowledge we can disentangle ourselves from suffering and sorrow. Happiness is the product of wisdom, and he shows us how to attain that perfect wisdom, find our purpose in life, and live according to it.

Self-Development and the Way to Power

"We may be either the suffering slaves of nature or the happy masters of her laws."

It is the natural right of every human being to be happy--to escape all the miseries of life. Happiness is the normal condition, as natural as the landscapes and the seasons. It is unnatural to suffer and it is only because of our ignorance that we do suffer. Happiness is the product of wisdom. To attain perfect wisdom, to comprehend fully the purpose of life, to realize completely the relationship of human beings to each other, is to put an end to all suffering, to escape every ill and evil that afflicts us. Perfect wisdom is unshadowed joy.

Why do we suffer in life? Because in the scheme of nature we are being forced forward in evolution and we lack the spiritual illumination that alone can light the way and enable us to move safely among the obstacles that lie before us. Usually we do not even see or suspect the presence of trouble until it suddenly leaps upon us like a concealed tiger. One day our family circle is complete and happy. A week later death has come and gone and joy is replaced with agony. Today we have a friend. Tomorrow he will be an enemy and we do not know why. A little while ago we had wealth and all material luxuries. There was a sudden change and now we have only poverty and misery and yet we seek in vain for a reason why this should be. There was a time when we had health and strength; but they have both departed and no trace of a reason appears. Aside from these greater tragedies of life innumerable things of lesser consequence continually bring to us little miseries and minor heartaches. We most earnestly desire to avoid them but we never see them until they strike us, until in the darkness of our ignorance we

blunder upon them. The thing we lack is the spiritual illumination that will enable us to look far and wide, finding the hidden causes of human suffering and revealing the method by which they may be avoided; and if we can but reach illumination the evolutionary journey can be made both comfortably and swiftly. It is as though we must pass through a long, dark room filled with furniture promiscuously scattered about. In the darkness our progress would be slow and painful and our bruises many. But if we could press a button that would turn on the electric light we could then make the same journey quickly and with perfect safety and comfort.

The old method of education was to store the mind with as many facts, or supposed facts, as could be accumulated and to give a certain exterior polish to the personality. The theory was that when a man was born he was a completed human being and that all that could be done for him was to load him up with information that would be used with more or less skill, according to the native ability he happened to be born with. The theosophical idea is that the physical man, and all that constitutes his life in the physical world, is but a very partial expression of the self; that in the ego of each there is practically unlimited power and wisdom; that these may be brought through into expression in the physical world as the physical body and its invisible counterparts, which together constitute the complex vehicle of the ego's manifestation, are evolved and adapted to the purpose; and that in exact proportion that conscious effort is given to such self-development will spiritual illumination be achieved and wisdom attained. Thus the light that leads to happiness is kindled from within and the evolutionary journey that all are making may be robbed of its suffering.

Why does death bring misery? Chiefly because it separates us from those we love. But when we have evolved the faculty of clairvoyance, in our work of self-development, the separation vanishes and our "dead" friends are as much with us as the living. The only other reason why death brings grief or fear is because we do not understand it and comprehend the part it plays in human evolution. But the moment our ignorance gives way to comprehension such fear vanishes and a serene happiness takes its place.

Why do we have enemies from whose words or acts we suffer? Because in our limited physical consciousness we do not perceive the unity of all life and realize that our wrong thinking and doing must react upon us through other people--a situation from which there is no possible escape except through ceasing to think evil and then patiently awaiting the time when the causes we have already generated are fully exhausted. When spiritual illumination comes, and we no longer stumble in the night of ignorance, the last enemy will disappear and we shall make no more forever.

Why do people suffer from poverty and disease? Only because of our blundering ignorance that makes their existence possible for us, and because we do not comprehend their meaning and their lessons, nor know the attitude to assume toward them. Had we but the wisdom to understand why they come to people, why they are necessary factors in their evolution, they would trouble us no longer. When nature's lesson is fully learned these mute teachers will vanish.

And so it is with all forms of suffering we experience. They are at once reactions from our ignorant blunderings and instructors that point out the better way. When we have comprehended the lessons they teach they are no longer necessary and disappear.

Thus our evolution is going forward and has gone forward in the past. We know that the human race has passed through a long evolution during which it has acquired five senses by which knowledge is gained. Nobody who has given thought to the subject will make the mistake of supposing that this evolution is completed and that the five senses are all we shall ever possess.

In this long evolutionary journey the next thing we shall do is to develop the sixth sense. Some people have already done so and all are approaching it. This dawning sense is called clairvoyance. Fair investigation will show that the clairvoyant possesses certain powers not common to the majority of people. This is merely the beginning of the development of the sixth sense, and probably with the majority of clairvoyants it goes no further than etheric and lower astral sight. In other words, they are able to raise the consciousness only to a grade of matter a little beyond the grasp of ordinary vision, while the properly

developed, trained clairvoyant raises his consciousness two full planes beyond.

The higher the consciousness is raised the further the horizon of knowledge extends and the clairvoyant is able to hand down information that appears quite miraculous; but it is perfectly natural. If a certain person were born blind and had never understood any more about eyesight than most people understand about clairvoyance; if this person could know how many doorways were in a large building only by groping along with his hands and thus acquiring the knowledge by touch, and another person who could see should glance along the block and instantly tell the blind man the correct number, that would be to the blind man a miracle. Now, when a clairvoyant sees things at a distance where the physical eye cannot reach he really does nothing more remarkable. When we see a thing we receive the vibrations caused by light. That gives the information. When the clairvoyant "sees" at a distance through what we mistakenly call solid substances he receives vibrations of matter so fine that it interpenetrates solids as the ether does.

Every human being must make, and is making, this long evolutionary journey from spiritual infancy to godlike power and perfection, but there are two ways in which it may be done. We may, as the vast majority do, accept the process of unconscious evolution and submit to nature's whip and spur that continuously urge the thoughtless and indifferent forward until they finally reach the goal. Or, we may choose conscious evolution and work intelligently with nature, thus making progress that is comparatively of enormous rapidity and at the same time avoid much of what Hamlet called the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

The degree to which mind can control circumstances and dominate matter is far greater than is generally believed. Our impressions about matter are very illusory. No form of matter is permanent. Change goes on everywhere at every instant, by physical laws in the physical body and by astral and mental laws in our invisible bodies. We are not the same being, physically, mentally or spiritually, any two days in succession. The very soul itself is subject to this law of change. It may expand and shine out through the physical organism resplendent, or it may only faintly glimmer through a constantly coarsening body.

What is the law of soul growth? Through adherence to what principle may we reach spiritual illumination? There are certain well established facts about the laws of growth that we should not overlook when seeking the way forward. Nothing whatever can grow without use, without activity. Inaction causes atrophy. Physiologists tell us that if the arm be tied to the body so that it cannot be used it will in time become so enfeebled, that it is of no further service. It will wither away. That is nature's law of economy. She never gives life where it is useless, where it can not, or will not, be utilized. On the other hand, exercise increases power. To increase the size and strength of muscles we must use them. This is just as true of mental and moral faculties as it is of the physical body. The only way to make the brain keen and powerful is to exercise it by original thinking. One way to gain soul powers is to give free play to the loftiest aspirations of which we are capable, and to do it systematically instead of at random. We grow to be like the things we think about. Now, the reverse of all this must be equally true. To give no thought to higher things, to become completely absorbed in material affairs, is to stifle the soul, to invite spiritual atrophy.

Turning our attention to nature we shall find in the parasite convincing proof of all this. The parasite, whether plant or animal, is living evidence that to refuse or neglect to use an organ or faculty results in being deprived of it. The dodder, says Drummond, has roots like other plants, but when it fixes sucker discs on the branches of neighboring plants and begins to get its food through them, its roots perish. When it fails to use them it loses them. He also points to the hermit-crab as an illustration of this great fact in nature, that disuse means loss, and that to shirk responsibility is the road to degeneration. The hermit-crab was once equipped with a hard shell and with as good means of locomotion as other crabs. But instead of courageously following the hardy life of other crustaceans it formed the bad habit of taking up its residence in the cast-off shells of mollusks. This made life easy and indolent. But it paid the price of all shirking. In time it lost four legs, while the shell over the vital portion of its body degenerated to a thin membrane which leaves it practically helpless when it is out of its captured home. And this is the certain result of all shirking of responsibility. There may be an apparent temporary gain, but it always means greater loss, either immediate or

remote. So nature punishes inaction with atrophy. Whatever is not used finally ceases to be. In plain language, apathy, inaction, idleness, uselessness, is the road to degeneration. On the other hand, aspiration and activity mean growth, development, power.

So we grow, physically, mentally and morally, by activity, by exercise of the organs or the faculties we desire to possess. It is only by the constant exercise of these things that we can grow at all. When this great law of nature is understood we see at once how it is that life is full of trouble; why it is that the whole visible world seems to be designed to keep us constantly at work physically and mentally, to challenge our resourcefulness in improving our physical, social and political conditions, to continually try our patience and to forever test our courage. It is the way of development. It is the price of progress.

The universe is a training school for evolving intelligence--a vast gymnasium for the development of moral fibre. We become mentally clever by playing at the game of life. We match our courage against its adversities and acquire fearlessness. We try our optimism against its disappointments and learn cheerfulness. We pit our patience against its failures and gain persistence. We are torn from the pinnacle of ambition by opponents and learn toleration of others. We fall from the heights of vanity and pride, and learn to be modest and humble. We encounter pain and sorrow and learn sympathy with suffering. It is only by such experiences that we can grow to rounded measure. It is only in an environment thus adapted to our spiritual development that we can evolve the latent powers within us.

Such is the universe in which we find ourselves and from it there is no escape. No man can avoid life--not even the foolish one who, when the difficulties before him appear for the moment overwhelming, tries to escape them by suicide. A man cannot die. He can only choose how he will live. He may either helplessly drift through the world suffering from all the ills and evils that make so many unhappy or he may choose the method of conscious evolution that alone makes life truly successful. We may be either the suffering slaves of nature or the happy masters of her laws.

Now, all powers possessed by any human being, no matter how exalted

his position in evolution, or how sublime his spiritual power, are latent in all human beings and can, in time, be developed and brought into action. Of course there is no magic rule by which the ignorant can instantly become wise or by which a brutal man can be at once transformed into a saint. It may require scores of incarnations to accomplish a work so great, but when a man reaches the point in his evolution where he begins to comprehend the purpose of life, and to evolve the will to put forth his energies in co-operation with nature, his rise to wisdom and power may be swift indeed. But this transformation from the darkness of ignorance to spiritual illumination, from helplessness "in the fell clutch of circumstance" to power over nature, must be brought about by his own efforts, for it is a process of evolution--of forcing the latent to become the active. Therefore one must resolve to take oneself in hand for definite and systematic self-development. Nobody else can do the work for us. Certain moral qualities must be gained before there can be spiritual illumination and genuine wisdom and such qualities, or virtues, have to be evolved by the laws under which all growth occurs. It is just as impossible to acquire a moral quality by reading about its desirability as to evolve muscular strength by watching the performance of a group of athletes. To gain muscular strength one must take part in the physical activities that produce it. He must live the athletic life. To win spiritual strength and supremacy he must live the spiritual life. There is no other way. He must first learn what mental and moral qualities are essential, and how to gain them, and then set earnestly about the work of acquiring them.

The first thing necessary is to get a clear understanding of the fact that the physical body is not the self but only a vehicle or instrument through which the self is being manifested in the visible world. The body is as much your instrument as the hand is, or as your pen is. It is a thing which you, the self, use and a clear conception of this fact--a feeling that this is the fact--is the first step toward that absolute control of the physical body that lays the foundation for success in conscious evolution. When we feel that in managing the physical body we are controlling something that is not ourselves we are fairly started on the right road.

Now, there are three things that a person must possess to be successful

in self-development. If he has not these three qualifications he will make but little progress; but, fortunately, any lacking quality can be evolved and if one does not possess these three necessities his first work is to create them. These three things are an ardent desire, an iron will and an alert intelligence. Why are these three qualifications essential to success and what purpose do they serve?

Desire is nature's motor power--the propulsive force that pushes everything forward in its evolution. It is desire that stimulates to action. Desire drives the animal into the activities that evolve its physical body and sharpen its intelligence. If it had no desire it would lie inert and perish. But the desire for food, for drink, for association with its kind, impel it to action, and the result is the evolution of strength, skill and intelligence in proportion to the intensity of its desires. To gratify these desires it will accept battle no matter how great may be the odds against it and will unhesitatingly risk life itself in the combat. Desire not only induces the activity that develops physical strength and beauty, but also has its finer effects. Hunger compels the animal not only to seek food, but to pit its cunning against that of its prey. Driven forward by desire it develops, among other qualities, strength, courage, patience, endurance, intelligence.

Desire plays the same role with man at his higher stage of evolution. It stimulates him to action; and always as his activity satisfies his original desire a new one replaces the old and lures him on to renewed exertion. The average young man beginning his business career, desires only a comfortable cottage. But when that is attained he wants a mansion. He soon tires of the mansion and wants a palace. Then he wants several--at the seaside, in the city, and on the mountains. At first he is satisfied with a horse; then he demands an automobile, and finally a steam yacht. He sets out as a youth to earn a livelihood and welcomes a small salary. But the desire for money pushes him into business for himself and he works tirelessly for a competence. He feels that a small fortune should satisfy anybody but when he gets it he wants to be a millionaire. If he succeeds in that he then desires to become a multi-millionaire.

Whether the desire is for wealth, or for fame, or for power, the same result follows--when the desire is satisfied a greater one takes its place

and spurs the ambitious one to still further exertion. He grasps the prize he believes to contain complete satisfaction only to discover that while he was pursuing it desire had grown beyond it, and so the goal he would attain is always far ahead of him. Thus are we tricked and apparently mocked by nature until we finally awake to the fact that all the objects of desire--the fine raiment, the jewels, the palaces, the wealth, the power, are but vain and empty things; and that the real reward for all our efforts to secure them is not these objects at all _but the new powers we have evolved in getting them;_ powers that we did not before possess and which we should not have evolved but for nature's great propulsive force--desire. The man who accumulates a fortune by many years of persistent effort in organizing and developing a business enterprise, by careful planning and deep thinking, may naturally enough look upon the fortune he will possess for a few years before it passes on to others, as his reward. But the truth is that it is a very transient and perishable and worthless thing compared to the new powers that were unconsciously evolved in getting it--powers that will be retained by the man and be brought into use in future incarnations.

Desire, then, plays a most important role in human evolution. It awakens, stimulates, propels. What wind is to the ship, what steam is to the locomotive, desire is to the human being.

It has been written in a great book, "Kill out desire," and elsewhere it is written, "Resist not evil." We may find, in similar exalted pronouncements, truths that are very useful to disciples but which might be confusing and misleading to the man of the world if he attempted to literally apply them. Perhaps for the average mortal "kill out desire" might be interpreted "transmute desire." Without desire man would be in a deathlike and dangerous condition--a condition in which further progress would be impossible. But by transmuting the lower desires into the higher he moves steadily forward and upward without losing the motive power that urges him forever onward.

To transmute desire, to continually replace the lower with the higher, really is killing desire out but it is doing it by the slow and safe evolutionary process. As to crushing it suddenly, that is simply impossible; but substitution may work wonders. Suppose, for example,

that a young man is a gambler and his parents are much distressed about it. The common and foolish course is to lecture him on the sin of gambling and to tearfully urge him to associate only with very proper young men. But the young gambler is not in the least interested in that sort of a life, which appears to him to be a kind of living death, and such entreaty does not move him. His parents would do better by looking more closely into the case. Why is he a gambler? He desires money. He seeks excitement. He wants to live in an atmosphere of intense life and activity. Very well. These desires are quite right in themselves. It is useless to try to crush them. It is nonsense to argue that he does not want these things. Clearly enough he does want them and that is precisely why he gambles. Then do not attempt the impossibility of killing the desire but change the objects of his desires. Say to him: "You desire money and a life full of turbulence and excitement. Well, you can get all that in a better and a legitimate way and have the respect of your friends besides. You can go into politics. That is a field within the pale of the law and in it you can have scope for all the energy and activity and intensity of life you long for, with all the element of chance which you find so attractive." And when the young man has had his fling there and tires of it then something else can be attempted. But to try to crush desire and curb the outrushing life is both foolish and impossible. We can only direct it.

There are, of course, certain gross desires that must be gotten rid of by the most direct and least objectionable method, and when one really desires to be free from a given vice or moral weakness and sets earnestly and intelligently about it his release is not so difficult as the complete tyranny of most vices would lead one to suppose. There is a process by which any of us may be free if we will take the trouble to patiently put it into practice. This method will apply to any desire from which we wish to be released. For example, let us take the person who has a settled desire for alcoholic stimulants but really wishes to be rid of it forever. Many people who are thus afflicted to the point where they occasionally become intoxicated feel, when they recover their normal condition, that no price would be too great to pay for freedom from this humiliating habit. As a rule such a man tries to close his eyes to his shame and forget it, promising himself that he will be stronger when the temptation again assails him. But it is just this putting it aside, this

casting it out of his mind, that perpetuates his weakness. He instinctively shrinks from dwelling upon the thought of whither he is drifting. So he puts the unpleasant subject aside altogether and when the inner desire asserts itself again he finds himself precisely as helpless as before.

Now, his certain method of escape from this tyranny of desire is to turn his mind resolutely to an examination of the whole question. Let him look the facts in the face, however humiliating they may be. He should call his imagination to his assistance. It should be used to picture to himself his future if he does not succeed in breaking up the unfortunate slavery of the desire nature. He should think of the fact that as he grows older the situation grows worse. He should picture himself as the helpless, repulsive sot, with feeble body and weakening mind, and reflect upon the humiliation he must endure, the poverty he must face, and the physical and mental pain he must bear in the future if he now fails to break the desire ties that bind him. This creates in him a feeling of repulsion toward the cause of it all; and if he continues to think daily upon this hideous picture of what he is slowly drifting toward--if he daily regards it all with a feeling of slight repulsion--then even within a month or two he will find that his desire for drink is slowly fading out.

This is as true of all other desires that enslave us. The desire for alcoholic stimulants merely illustrates the principle involved. Any desire from which one wishes to be free may be escaped by the same method. But one who would free himself from the desire-nature should not make the mistake of creating a feeling of intense hostility toward the thing he seeks to escape; for hatred is also a tie. He should merely reach a position of complete indifference. He should think of it not with settled hostility, but with slight repulsion; and if he does that daily, mentally dwelling upon the pain and humiliation it causes, he will find the ties loosening, the desire weakening.

Desire is a force that may be beneficial or detrimental, according to its use. As we may eradicate a desire so may we create a desire. How, then, may one who seeks the highest self-development use desire, this propulsive force of nature, to help himself forward? He should desire spiritual progress most earnestly, for without such desire he cannot succeed. Therefore if the aspirant does not have the ardent desire for

spiritual illumination he must create it. To accomplish this let him again call imagination to his assistance. Let him picture himself as having his power for usefulness many times multiplied by occult development. He should think of himself as possessing the inner sight that enables him to understand the difficulties of others and to comprehend their sorrows. He should daily think of the fact that this would so broaden and quicken his sympathies that he would be enormously more useful in the world than he can now possibly be and that he could become a source of happiness to thousands. Let him reflect that as he gets farther along in occult development and in unselfishness and spirituality he may have the inestimable privilege of coming into contact with some of the exalted intelligences that watch over and assist the struggling aspirants on their upward way. He should daily recall the fact that he is now moving forward toward a freer, richer, more joyous life than he has yet known and that every effort brings him nearer to its realization. Thus dwelling on the subject in its various aspects he creates the ardent desire that serves to propel him forward.

If he feels that these things make an ideal a little too high for him at present he may reach that point by degrees. He may at first dwell in thought upon the personal satisfaction that would come from the possession of astral sight. Let him reflect upon what it would mean to be conscious of the invisible world; to have all its wonders laid open before him; to be able to consciously meet the so-called dead, including his own friends and relatives; to be able to have the positive personal proof that we survive the death of the physical body; to be able to become one of the "invisible helpers" of the world; to have available the priceless advantages of the astral region and to bring the consciousness of all this into the physical life. That is certainly something worth all the time and effort required to attain it. Thus thinking constantly of the widened life and added powers it would confer, the desire to move forward in self-development will be greatly stimulated. But the student should always keep it in mind that the real purpose of acquiring new powers is to increase his capacity for service to the race, and that he who falls short of that ideal walks upon dangerous ground.

The second requisite is a firm will. It should not be forgotten that an unusual and difficult thing is being attempted in which a person of weak will cannot possibly hope to succeed. Even in the ordinary life of the

world considerable will power is essential to success. To succeed in business, to become expert in a profession, or to completely master an art, requires strong will, determination, perseverance. The difficulties in occult development are still greater and, while it is true that any degree of effort is well worth while, the weaklings will not go far. Only those with the indomitable will that knows neither surrender nor compromise may hope for a large measure of success. Once the will is thoroughly aroused and brought into action every hindrance in the way will be swept aside.

"The human will, that force unseen,
The offspring of a deathless soul,
Can hew a way to any goal
Tho' walls of granite intervene.

* * * * *

"Be not impatient of delay,
But wait as one who understands.
When spirit rises and commands
The gods are ready to obey."

Mighty, indeed, is this force when aroused. But a person may be easily deceived about his will. He is likely to think that his will is much stronger than it really is. He may say to himself, "Oh, yes, I would go through anything for the sake of the higher life and spiritual illumination." But that is no guarantee that after a few months of monotonous work he may not abandon it unless he adopts the wise plan of strengthening his will as he moves forward. Let him begin this by testing his present strength of will, but let him not be discouraged by the result. He should remember that whatever he lacks in will power he can evolve by proper effort.

To find out whether he really has much strength of will a person may begin to observe to what extent he permits his daily plans to be modified, or entirely changed, by the things that run counter to his will. Does he hold steadfastly to his purpose or does he weakly surrender to small obstacles? Has he the will power to even begin the day as he has planned it? The evening before he decides that he will rise at six o'clock the next morning. He knows there are certain excellent reasons why he should do so and he retires with the matter fully decided. It is positively settled that at exactly six o'clock the day's program shall begin. But

when the clock strikes that hour the next morning he feels strongly disinclined to obey the summons. It involves some bodily discomfort to rise at that moment and he concludes that, after all, perhaps he was a bit hasty the evening before in fixing upon that hour! Whereupon he reconsiders the matter and makes it seven; and when that time arrives he generously extends it to eight o'clock. The hour, of course, is unimportant. But whatever may have been the hour that was previously determined upon the keeping of that determination is of the greatest importance and the failure to put the resolution into effect is evidence of the possession of a weak will.

Now all this proves that such persons have very little real will power, for they permit the desire for trifling bodily comfort to set their plans aside. Such persons are still slaves to the physical body and weakly permit it to upset carefully outlined programs. They are not yet ready for good work in occult development, where real success can come only to those who have steadfast strength of purpose.

People who fail to assert the will and bring the body into complete subjection probably little realize what a price they pay for a trifling physical pleasure; for until we voluntarily take the right course we have not escaped the evolutionary necessity of compulsion and may reasonably expect sooner or later to be thrown into an environment that will apply the stimulus we still need to arouse the will. It may be unpleasant while it is occurring, but what better fortune could befall an indolent man than to find himself in circumstances where his poverty or other necessity compels him to subordinate bodily comfort to the reign of the will? Nature provides the lessons we require. We may wisely cooperate with her and thus escape the sting. But so long as we need the lesson we may be quite sure that it awaits us.

All the business activities of the world are developing the will. Through them will and desire work together in evolving latent powers. Desire arouses will power. A man desires wealth and the desire plunges him into business activities and stimulates the will by which he overcomes all the difficulties that lie in his way. Ardent desire for an education arouses the will of the student and the awakened will triumphs over poverty and all other barriers between him and the coveted diploma. If a man stands at a lower point in evolution where he has not the ambition for

intellectual culture nor for fame nor for wealth, but only the desire for shelter and food, still that primitive desire forces him into action; and while his will power will be evolved only in proportion to the strength of the desire that prompts him, it must nevertheless grow. Instead of rising at a certain hour because the will decrees it he may rise only because he knows his livelihood depends upon it. But he is learning the same lesson--the overcoming of the inertia of the physical body--albeit it is compulsory instead of voluntary. But all this is unconscious evolution. It is the long, slow, painful process. It is the only way possible for those who are not wise enough to co-operate with nature in her evolutionary work and thus rise above the necessity of compulsion.

How, then, may we develop the will when it is so weak that we are still the slaves of nature instead of the masters of destiny? Will power, like any other faculty, may be cultivated and made strong. To do this one may plan in advance what he will do under certain circumstances and then carry out the program without evasion or hesitation when the time arrives. His forethought will enable him to do this if he does not undertake things too difficult at first. Let him resolve to do at a certain hour some small thing which, in the ordinary course of his duties, he sees is necessary but unpleasant; and then firmly resolve in advance that exactly at the appointed time he will do it. Thus fortified before the trial comes he will probably go successfully through with it. After once deciding upon the time there should be no postponement and not an instant's delay when the moment arrives.

One of the things we have to learn is to overcome the inertia of the physical body and many people are not really awake on the physical plane because they have not done so. To a certain extent they are "dead" within the physical body for it is a condition much nearer death than that supposed death of one who no longer has the physical body. The inert mass of physical matter in which such people are functioning leaves them only half alive until they have aroused themselves from its domination. They remind one of the lines:

"Life is a mystery, death is a doubt,
And some folks are dead
While they're walking about!"

This inertia of the physical body that so often renders people nearly useless is very largely a matter of habit and can be overcome to a surprising degree by simply using a little will-power. Everybody is familiar with the fact that it is sometimes much easier to think and act than at other times. But perhaps it is not so well known that the dull periods can invariably be overcome by an effort of the will and the physical body be made to do its proper work. An actor or lecturer after months of continuous work may find the brain and body growing tired and dull. He may feel when going before his audience that he has not an idea nor the wit to express it were someone else to furnish it. Yet by an effort of the will he can quickly overcome the condition and change from stupidity to mental alertness and intensity of thought. The self is never tired. It is only the physical body that grows weary. It is true that it has its limitations and must not be overtaxed and driven beyond endurance as a tired horse is sometimes cruelly urged forward with whip and spur. Judgment must always be used in determining one's capacity for work. But that which is to be done should never be done draggingly, with the inertia of the physical body marring the work. We should be fully awake instead of "dead" while we "are walking about." If a person resolves to be the master of the body he may soon acquire the power to arouse it to activity and alertness during all his waking hours, very much as one may acquire the habit of keen observation and be conscious of what is occurring in his vicinity instead of being carelessly unconscious of the major portion of what is going on immediately about him.

This matter of giving attention to the things that may properly engage the mind, and of using the will to arouse and control it, is of very great importance. Is it not what we call "paying attention" that makes the connection between the ego and the objective world? Giving attention is a process of consciousness. The person who fails in attention misses the purpose of life and throws away valuable time and opportunity. To give attention is to be alive and awake and in a condition to make the most of limited physical life. Yet many people cannot give sustained attention to an ordinary conversation nor direct the mind with sufficient precision to state a simple fact without wandering aimlessly about in the effort, bringing in various incidental matters until the original subject, instead of being made clear, is obscured in a maze of unimportant details or lost sight of altogether.

Such habits of mind should be put resolutely aside by one who would hasten self-development. The attention should be fixed deliberately upon the subject in hand, whatever it may be, and nothing should be permitted to break the connection between that and the mind. Whether it is a conversation or a book, or a manual task, or a problem being silently worked out intellectually, it should have undivided attention until the mind is ready for something else.

Perhaps few of us give to any subject the close attention which alone can prove its own effectiveness and demonstrate the fact that there goes with such steadily sustained attention a subtle power of extended, or accentuated, consciousness. When ten minutes is given to a certain subject and other thoughts are constantly intruding, so that when the ten minutes have passed only five minutes have actually been devoted to the subject, the result is by no means a half of what would have been accomplished had the whole of the ten minutes been given to uninterrupted attention. The time thus spent in wavering attention is practically without effect. The connection between mind and subject has not been complete. Mind and subject were, so to say, out of focus. Attention must be sustained to the point where it becomes concentration. The mind must be used as a sun-glass can be used. Hold the glass between sun and paper, out of focus, for an hour and nothing will happen. A yellow circle of light falls on the paper and that is all. But bring it into perfect focus, concentrating the rays to the finest possible point, and the paper turns brown and finally bursts into the fire that will consume it. They are the same rays that were previously ineffective. Concentration produced results.

The mind must be brought under such complete control of the will that it can be manipulated like a search-light, turned in this direction or that, or flung full upon some obscure subject and held steadily there till it illuminates every detail of it, as the search-light sends a dazzling ray through space and shows every rock and tree on a hillside far away through the darkness of the night.

The third necessity is keen intelligence. The force of desire, directed by the will, must be supplemented by an alert mind. There is a popular notion that good motives are sufficient in themselves and that when one

has the desire to attain spiritual illumination, plus the will to achieve, nothing more is needed but purity of purpose. But this is a misconception. It is true that the mystic makes devotion the vital thing in his spiritual growth; and it is also true that the three paths of action, knowledge and devotion blend and become one at a higher stage. But while there are methods of development in which intellect is not at first made a chief factor it can by no means be ignored in the long-run; nor are we now considering those methods. A good intellect, therefore, is a necessary part of the equipment.

Good motives play a most important part, indeed, in occult progress. They safeguard the aspirant on his upward way. Without pure motives, without a large measure of unselfishness, the greatest dangers would encompass him. But good motives cannot take the place of good sense and relieve him of the necessity of thinking. He must develop judgment and discrimination. There are things he must know, and he must use his knowledge, or difficulties will follow no matter how noble may be his intentions. Suppose, for illustration, that two men set out upon a dark night to cross a wild and rugged piece of ground--one with bad motives and the other with good. One is going out to rob a house and if need be, to kill anybody who might try to interfere with his plans. His motives are very bad but he has perfect knowledge of the dangerous ground he is to cross and he will therefore travel over it in safety. The other man has the best of motives. He is going to spend the night with a sick and helpless neighbor. But he has no knowledge of the rough and treacherous ground he must cross in the darkness and his good motives will not insure him against stumbling over the stones or falling into a ditch and breaking his arm. Good motives are not enough. We must know! Progress in occultism is impossible without knowledge.

But how is a keen, alert intelligence to be acquired if we do not possess it? Like any other latent faculty or power it may be evolved. As the physical strength may be steadily increased by constant exercise of the muscles, so mind may increase in power by systematic work. It should be exercised in original thinking. A stated period, if only a quarter of an hour daily, can be set aside for the purpose. A book on a serious subject will furnish material but the too common method of reading, of following the author lazily and accepting whatever he sets forth as a matter of course, is of little value. One must read with discrimination, receiving the

ideas offered as a juryman would receive testimony from a witness, considering it from every possible viewpoint, examining it in the light of known facts, turning it over in the mind, weighing it thoughtfully, and accepting or rejecting according to its reasonableness or its lack of reason. In such mental work for intellectual growth each paragraph can be considered by itself and only a small portion of the time should be given to the reading while the remainder is devoted to pondering over what has been read. Of course a specific study is an advantage and perhaps nothing is better than to study occultism, thinking deeply upon the problems of human evolution.

Another method that goes admirably with such work is the close observation and study of all the life in manifestation about us. We should try to comprehend people, to observe and understand them. Every word, act and facial expression has its meaning to be caught and interpreted. All this will not only sharpen the wits but also strengthen human sympathy for it enables us the better to know the difficulties and sorrows of others. If such practices are followed faithfully day by day the growth will be steady.

Still another useful practice is to exercise the imagination, the art of creating mental pictures with no physical object present. The face of an absent friend can be called up in the mind and reproduced in every detail--the color of the eyes and hair, the various moods and expressions. Or one's childhood home can be recalled and the imagination made to reconstruct it. The house being complete the landscape can be reproduced, with the hills, trees and roads. Repeated practice at "seeing mentally" is of the greatest value in occult development.

While the aspirant is thus working to improve the three essential qualifications of desire, will and intelligence--to intensify his desire to possess powers for the helping of others, to strengthen the will to get such powers, and to steadily improve the intellect--he should also be giving most earnest attention to meditation, for it is through this practice that the most remarkable results may be produced in the transformation of his bodies, visible and invisible, through which the ego manifests itself in the physical world. In the degree that these are organized and made sensitive and responsive they cease to be limitations of consciousness.

Such sensitiveness and responsiveness may be brought about by meditation, together with proper attention to the purification of the physical and astral bodies; for purity and sensitiveness go together.

Meditation is a subject so very important to the aspirant that specific instructions should guide him. The average person, used to the turbulent life of occidental civilization, will find it a sufficiently difficult matter to control the mind, and to finally acquire the power to direct it as he desires, even with all the conditions in his favor. The serene hours of morning are the most favorable of the twenty-four for meditation. Regularity has a magic of its own and the hour should be the same each morning. To be alone in surroundings as quiet as possible is another essential. The most desirable time for meditation is soon after awakening in the morning. Before turning the mind to any of the business affairs of the day let the aspirant sit calmly down and mediate upon any wholesome thought, like patience, courage or compassion, keeping the mind steadily upon the subject for five minutes.

Two very important things are being accomplished by such meditation. First, we are getting control of the mind and learning to direct it where and how we choose; and, second, we are attracting and building into the bodies we possess certain grades of imponderable matter that will make thinking and acting along these lines easier and easier for us until they are established habits and we actually become in daily life patient, courageous and compassionate. Whatever qualities or virtues we desire to possess may be gained through the art of meditation and the effort to live up to the ideal dwelt upon daily by the mind.

While it is absolutely true that any human being can make of himself that which he desires to be--can literally raise himself to any ideal he is capable of conceiving--it must not be supposed that it can be done in a short time and by intermittent effort. We sometimes hear it said that all we need do is to realize that all power is within us, when, presto! we are the thing we would be! It is quite true that we must realize their existence before we can call the latent powers into expression; but the work of arousing the latent into the active is a process of growth, of actual evolutionary change. The physical body as it is now is not sensitive enough to respond to subtle vibrations. Its brain is not capable

of receiving and registering the delicate vibrations sent outward by the ego, and the task of changing it so that it can do so is not a trifling or easy one. But every effort produces its effect and to the persistent and patient devotee of self-development the final result is certain. But it is not a matter of miraculous accomplishment. It is a process of inner growth. There are, it is quite true, cases in which people who have entered upon this method of self-development have, in a short time, attained spiritual illumination, becoming fully conscious of the invisible world and its inhabitants while awake in the physical body; extending the horizon of consciousness to include both worlds, and coming into possession of the higher clairvoyance that enables one to trace past causes and modify impending effects. But such people are those who have given so much attention to self-development in past lives that they have now but little more to do in order to come into full possession of occult powers. Sometimes it requires little more than the turning of their attention to the matter. Becoming a member of the Theosophical Society or seriously taking up theosophical studies is sometimes the final step that leads to the opening of the inner sight.

But how can one know to what point he may have advanced in the past and where he now stands? How may we know whether there is but a little work ahead or a great deal? We cannot know; nor is it important to know. The person who should take up the task merely because he thinks there is little to do would certainly fail. The very fact that he would not venture upon the undertaking if he thought the task a difficult one is evidence that he has not the qualifications necessary for the success of the occult student. Unless he is filled with a longing to possess greater power to be used in the service of humanity, and fired with an enthusiasm that would hesitate at no difficulties, he has not yet reached the point in his evolution where he awaits only the final steps that will make him a disciple. But even the absence of the keen desire for spiritual progress, which is the best evidence of the probability of success, should not deter anybody from entering upon the systematic study of theosophy and devoting to it all the time and energy he can; nor should the thought that many years might pass without producing any very remarkable results lead him to conclude that the undertaking would not be a profitable one. The time will come with each human being when he will step out of the great throng that drifts with the tide and enter upon

the course of conscious evolution, assisting nature instead of ignoring her beneficent plan; and since it is but a question of time the sooner a beginning is made the better, for the sooner will suffering cease.

There should be a word of warning about the folly of trying to reach spiritual illumination by artificial methods. Astral sight is sometimes quickly developed by crystal gazing and also by a certain regulation of the breathing. For two reasons such methods should be avoided. One is that any powers thus gained can not be permanent, and the other is that they may be more or less dangerous. Many people have made physical wrecks of themselves or have become insane by some of these methods.

There are those who advertise to quickly teach clairvoyance, for a consideration, as though spiritual powers could really be conferred instead of evolved! It is true that efforts toward the evolution of such powers may be enormously aided by teachers, but such instruction can not be bought, and the offer to furnish it for money is the best evidence of its worthlessness. Those who teach this ancient wisdom select their own pupils from the morally fit, and tuition can be paid only in devotion to truth and service to humanity. That is the only road that leads to instruction worth having, and until the aspirant is firmly upon that sound moral ground he is much better off without powers, the selfish use of which would lead to certain disaster.

But how shall the pupil find the teacher? He need not find him, at first, so far as the limited consciousness is concerned. Long before he knows anything of it in his waking hours he may be receiving instruction while he is out of the physical body during the hours of sleep. The teacher finds the pupil long before the pupil suspects that the teacher exists; and since it is the pupil who has the limited consciousness it is quite natural that it should be so. Thus it is inevitable that all who enter upon the way that leads to spiritual illumination must long remain ignorant of the fact that any teachers are interested in them or that anybody is giving the slightest attention to them. Naturally enough one cannot know until the moment arrives when his brain has become sufficiently sensitive to retain a memory of at least a fragment of his superphysical experiences.

But what leads to the selection of the pupil? His earnestness, his unselfishness, his devotion, his spiritual aspirations. There is an old occult maxim to the effect that when the pupil is ready the Master is waiting. They have need of many more than are ready to be taught. Those who lead and enlighten watch eagerly for all who will qualify themselves to enter upon the upward way. Every human being gets exactly what he fits himself to receive. He cannot possibly be overlooked. By his spiritual aspiration each lights the lamp in the window of his soul and to the watchers from the heights that light against the background of the overwhelming materiality of our times must be as the sun in a cloudless sky. Other things come later but these simpler things, to realize the necessity for conscious evolution, to comprehend the method of soul development, to take full control of the mind and the physical body, to resolutely curb the grosser desires and to give free rein to the higher aspirations are the first infant steps in the self-development that leads to illumination. Then we begin to discover that this very desire for greater spiritual power is generating a force that carries us forward and upward. We soon begin to observe actual progress. The brain becomes clearer, the intellect keener. Our sphere of influence grows wider, our friendships become warmer. Aspiration lifts us into a new and radiant life, and the wondrous powers of the soul begin to become a conscious possession. And to this soul growth there is no limit. The aspirant will go on and on in this life and others with an ever-extending horizon of consciousness until he has the mental grasp of a Plato, the vivid imagination of a Dante, the intuitive perception of a Shakespeare. It is not by the outward acquirement of facts that such men become wise and great. It is by developing the soul from within until it illuminates the brain with that flood of light called genius.

And when, through the strife and storm, we finally reach the tranquility of the inner peace we shall comprehend the great fact that life really is joy when lived in the possession of spiritual power and in perfect harmony with the laws of the universe. With even these first steps in occult achievement the aspirant enters upon a higher and more satisfactory life than he has ever known. Literally he becomes a new man. Gradually the old desires and impulses fade away and new and nobler aspirations take their place. He has learned obedience to law only to find that obedience was the road to conquest. He has risen above the gross and

sensuous by the power of conscious evolution; and, looking back upon what he has been with neither regret nor apology, he comprehends that significant thought of Tennyson: On stepping stones of their dead selves men rise to higher things. ###

Heart to Heart Coaching by Dr. Doris Jeanette

Question/Title: *How can I decide whether my wife should undergo conventional surgery and medication, or try alternative methods of healing?*

About the Questioner:

Philosophy: I am a Hindu. I believe that things will happen as they are. Mind has a very peculiar habit of assigning a tag to them, depending upon its experience and its mental maps. Our mental maps grow as our age grows and the amount acceptance decreases.

Hopes and aspirations: How to overcome these mental maps and take things as they are happening - is a big thing to me. Any help from any corner in this regard is welcome. What desires and things forced me to take this life - what did I come into existence for? How to nullify the existing mental maps and stop to create new?

Question: My wife is suffering from rheumatoid arthritis since 2007. Right from beginning her knees are more affected than any other joints. Initially we visited an ortho-surgeon and came to know it is rheumatoid. We used medicines for 6 six months. She got skin allergy. By this time we came to know about her disease and from relatives suggestions we went to other alternative treatment systems - ayurvedic and nature cure. There she got some relief in other joints. But no improvement of knee pains. Instead of improvement the pains are increased. Presently she is unable to stand and walk, even with the help of a walker.

Again we went to ortho-surgeons. They are telling the knees are damaged and has to undergo total knee replacement surgery for both knees. Since her muscle and nerves are week, they asked to go for physiotherapy exercises and medicines to get strengthen. So that in 1 or 2 months surgery can be done. Some of the doctors (particularly rheumatologists) say - though you have to plan for surgery, let us try for medicines another 6-7 months.

She is of the view that take medicines and get rid of - as if it is fever.

She is not willing to do yoga, meditation and food habits. I am not able to accept the situation nor able to convince her to go for surgery. What to be done in her case? I didn't want to go for surgery without her willingness, because she has to undergo post-surgery exercises. Because of pains, if she does not do post-surgery exercises the whole purpose of surgery will go waste. We have to live blaming each other.

Her major concerns are - 1) If it cured by medicines why to go for surgery? 2) Even if she undergoes surgery, its life is 10 yrs only - so what next?

My concerns are - 1) Once joints are damaged surgery is the way out. 2) How long and what next - no answer. If she didn't go for surgery and pulls her life - hips and shoulders may be effected. We have two daughters. Please advise what to be done?

Coach Doris Jeanette replies: My heart goes out to you and your difficult family situation. I can feel your compassion, love and concern for your wife. I cannot advise you on what to do. However, I will offer support and guidance to help you move away from the conflict and allow your wife to make her own decisions.

You do not need to make any decision for your wife because she could then make you responsible for the outcome and blame you if it does not go as planned. How to heal her body is her decision to make and not yours. Whatever she decides to do, you need to accept it.

Your comments about mental maps are most interesting. This type of energy is what I call mental judgments. The lower mind has a terrible tendency to judge everything as good or bad, right or wrong. The brain puts everything into categories of "should" and "should not's." The result of this type of thinking is that the emotional self is scared of doing the wrong thing so he or she is inhibited. This fear and inhibition then creates anxiety in the nervous system, which sends messages of high alert throughout the entire body. Consequently the body and the energy flow in the body are squeezed tight.

Squeezing everything tight creates massive amounts of built-up tension in the whole mind-body. This makes for more and more anxiety. This high anxiety often reaches the level of panic. The end result is a rigid body that does not allow the healthy flow of energy to move through it. This body rigidity is what creates arthritis. Rigid thinking leads to a rigid body. When you look at it this way, the process of creating arthritis makes a great deal of sense.

Let me explain the reason healthy flowing energy is so important for good health. Healthy energy flows naturally and organically through the body when it is relaxed and open. When the body is tight and closed, healthy energy cannot flow through your body. Consequently your energy becomes stagnant. Stagnate energy creates disease.

You find the same principle in nature. When the water becomes still in a pond and does not move the water quickly becomes a cesspool of disease and death. This is exactly what happens to the human body, which is primarily composed of water. When healthy energy is not flowing through the body, you get sick. This is the reason acupuncture has had such great success for centuries in healing people of disease. Acupuncture helps you get your energy moving again.

As a holistic psychologist I always recommend solving problems at the source because it is faster and easier. The source of body inhibition is mental judgments. This is the reason I repeatedly recommend reducing your mental judgments and overcoming your anxiety. Your mental judgments can become so heavy, dark and dense that they create thought forms in the energy field. These thought forms are literally stagnant energy that is not moving. These unhealthy thought forms then begin to create disease in the physical body.

After a lifetime of mental judgments, your anxiety can paralyze you so that you do not know what to do in any situation. Anxiety interferes with healthy functioning in every area. Whether I am working with an athlete who wants to perform better on the football field or a woman who wants to be a better mother, the solution is the same. I teach people how to reduce their anxiety and stop being so judgmental.

Anxiety always puts you in a lose-lose situation so that no matter what you do, you make yourself wrong or bad. You are also likely to project your judgment outward and blame someone else. This is the reason you do not want to make your wife's decision. No matter what she does, she will probably not be happy with it. So make sure your wife is 100% responsible for all her decisions.

For your wife to be successful in moving out of her lose-lose situation, she must reduce her anxiety by letting go of her mental judgments. Surgery is a fix and it can be a very welcomed solution in many cases. However, surgery, medication and herbs will not solve the reason her knees became so rigid in the first place. If your wife is interested in learning more about holistic treatments she can ask me this question because I have researched it and she can do her own research.

Unfortunately, if your wife does not want to solve her physical problems in a holistic manner there is nothing you can do. In which case you need to remove yourself from her unhealthy mental maps and begin to reduce your own unhealthy mental maps. Anxiety is highly contagious, so my major concern is for your children, especially the 8 year old. Hopefully your 21 year old is already exposed to people who are relaxed and open so she can unlearn some of the mental judgments that are paralyzing your wife.

As you reduce your mental judgments, you will be able to protect yourself and your 8 year old from the negative effects of anxiety. Then you will be able to give your daughters a healthier, more relaxed, self-confident role model to follow.

You and your children need to be actively engaged in expressive activities that include the emotions and the body. For example, spend time as a family walking, dancing, jumping and singing in nature. Let your children express themselves and allow the rooms in the house to fill up with their vital, healthy energy. Do not let the energy of anxiety fill up the home with static, dark and gloom.

For you to be successful you need to focus on your higher purpose and your children. Give everything you have to learning the skills needed to

follow your heart. Then you can show your children the healthy way to breathe, move and enjoy the moment.

Action Steps to Solve Problem

1. Get your energy moving in healthy ways. Start with any physical activity that feels good to you and keep moving. Do not let your mental judgments tell you what to do. Your emotional self needs to lead the way and your body needs to follow.

2. Learn more about how physical diseases are formed. My favorite book is by one of my energy teachers, Jack Schwarz: *It's Not What You Eat But What Eats You*, published by Celestial Arts.

3. Learn to reduce your anxiety by reducing your mental judgments. I suggest the convenient, online course, [Overcome Anxiety Naturally](#) which teaches you how to use your body to stop mental maps from ruining your life.

Doris Jeanette has spent the last 34 years getting rid of her own mental judgments. As a licensed psychologist she has successfully freed hundreds of people from the clutches of their Inner Critic by teaching them learning research, body awareness and emotional expression. Sign up for her free newsletter, [The Vibrant Moment](#) to learn more about reducing your mental judgments.

Quotes of the Week

"Home is not where you live, but where they understand you."

—*Christian Morganstern*

"There is no chance, no destiny, no fate that can circumvent or hinder or control the firm resolve of a determined soul."

—*Ella Wheeler Wilcox*

"Life is not discovery of fate; it is continuous creation of future, through choices of thoughts, feelings and actions in the present."

—*Sanjay Sahay*

"You were born an original. Don't die a copy."

—*John Mason*

Here Comes Inspiration with Phil Evans

Fear: Often Our Greatest Challenge!

If I were to ask you all what you thought was your greatest show of courage (ever), I wonder if you would recall your own 'learning to walk' experience? Probably not - I would imagine. However, it was probably one of the biggest challenges that most of us have ever had to face!

One of the most important things about learning to walk is this: regardless of social status; position in family; state of functionality of our family; attitudes of parents; and many other significant factors which impacted on most of our other life learnings; every single person around us encouraged us as if it were a 'given' that we would get up and walk! No doubts back then, and definitely none of those "you can't do it" words to be heard anywhere!

No way! All that most of us experienced were encouraging faces; welcoming hands and arms outstretched and begging us to jump into them; and the general theme of the entire experience was, "come on, you can do it".

OK, if we can accept that forgotten experience as one of our greatest challenges ever, and that life and the people in it don't necessarily hand us all that encouragement these days, then we're ready to stand and face our fears head-on, and look them straight in the eye!

You see, fear can't look anybody in the eye, 'cos that's where we display our courage the most; in our eyes! Others see it too! We feel it deep inside us, but we show it to the world via our eyes, and our body language. Our body language shows the world, and our fears, that we are taking a stand against whatever may threaten us, and our posture and 'look' carry with them a strong message. That message is that we are facing the things, or people, in our lives with the courage to speak our truth, and stand in our own power!

Remember that the opposite is also true: If we are feeling powerless over fears, or people, then it shows in our eyes and in our posture.

Stand tall. Face the world with courage and determination to prevail over the challenges which may be confronting you, 'cos we all get them from time to time.

As a person who lived in the shadow of fear for so long, and without explanation of why, I can attest to the strength which lies within having, and showing, courage to the world; and more importantly, to ourselves!

When we can face our fears, most of the time we will discover that it was not really such a big threat after all. We all need to embrace courage itself as our closest ally, as it empowers us to overcome those obstacles known as fears, and therefore capable of living our dreams.

During some of my darkest and fearful times I found the most amazing book: *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway!* - by Susan Jeffers. I will conclude this message today with an excerpt from that book, as it is without doubt the most important book I have ever read, as it gave me tools to not only cope with fear, but to change because I started seeing them differently.

My personal recipe for facing fear: Determination; courage; persistence; patience! ###

Zen Story

Flower Shower

Subhuti was Buddha's disciple. He was able to understand the potency of emptiness, the viewpoint that nothing exists except in its relationship of subjectivity and objectivity.

One day Subhuti, in a mood of sublime emptiness, was sitting under a tree. Flowers began to fall about him.

"We are praising you for your discourse on emptiness," the gods whispered to him.

"But I have not spoken of emptiness," said Subhuti.

"You have not spoken of emptiness, we have not heard emptiness," responded the gods. "This is true emptiness." And blossoms showered upon Subhuto as rain.

100 Words

Cheryl Richardson

Who Is Cheryl Richardson?

Cheryl Richardson is the author of *The New York Times* bestselling books *Take Time for Your Life*, *Life Makeovers*, *Stand Up for Your Life*, and *The Unmistakable Touch of Grace*. Richardson was the first president of the International Coach Federation and holds one of their first Master Certified Coach credentials. Her work has been covered widely in the media, including *The Today Show*, *Good Morning America*, *The New York Times*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *O* magazine. Richardson was the team leader for the Lifestyle Makeover series on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, and she accompanied Winfrey on the Live Your Best Life tour. She writes a column for *Body + Soul* magazine, conducts an Internet talk radio show on Hay House Radio, and hosts an international community online.

www.hayhouseradio.com, www.cherylrichardson.com

“Experience has taught me that the greatest gift I can give to humanity is my ongoing commitment to raise my level of consciousness. The more conscious I become, the greater my desire to protect the environment, to be an advocate for those without a voice—animals, children, or the less fortunate—and the more powerful my need to maintain a level of optimism and belief in our collective good, which will ultimately save us from destruction. To make choices that elevate consciousness on the planet—now that’s visionary.”

Books that have inspired Cheryl:

Unlimited Power, by Anthony Robbins

Power vs. Force, David Hawkins

The Sermon on the Mount, Emmet Fox

The Bhagavad Gita, translated by Paramahansa Yogananda

From The Shelf

Zero Regrets: Be Greater Than Yesterday

By Apolo Anton Ohno

“Zero regrets. It’s a philosophy not just about sport but about life. School, business, academics, love—anything and everything. It’s complicated and yet not. You have to figure out who it is you want to be. Not what you want to be—*who*. There has to be a vision, a dream, a plan. Then you chase that with everything you’ve got.”

Over three consecutive Olympic games, Apolo Ohno has come to symbolize the very best of the competitive spirit—remaining equally gracious in victory and defeat, always striving to improve his performance, and appreciating the value of the hard work of training as much as any reward it might bring. In *Zero Regrets*, Apolo shares the inspiring personal story behind his remarkable success, as well as the hard-won truths and strategies he has discovered in good times and bad.

Raised by his single father, an immigrant from Japan who often worked twelve-hour days, the young Apolo found it difficult to balance his enormous natural gifts as an athlete with an admittedly wild, rebellious streak. After making a name for himself as a promising young speed skater, his career was almost over before it began when his lack of preparation caused him to finish last at the U.S. Olympic trials in 1998. A life-changing week of solitary soul-searching at the age of fifteen led him to recommit himself to his training, and at the 1999 world junior championships he won first place overall—one of the most remarkable turnarounds in sports history. From that moment on, the world of speed skating had a new champion and Apolo was on his way to legendary status.

Much more than an account of races won and lost, *Zero Regrets* is a compelling portrait of a father-and-son relationship that deepened over time and was based on respect, love, and unshakable faith in each other. For the first time, Apolo reveals what he knows about his long-

absent mother; he makes us feel what it is like to face the best competitors on the planet with the eyes of millions of fans upon you; and he shares his secrets for achieving total focus and mental toughness, secrets that can be applied in situations well beyond sports. We learn the details of the unbelievably intense workout and diet that he endured while training for the 2010 Winter Olympics, a regime that literally reshaped his body and led to some of his most thrilling victories.

In this deeply personal and entertaining book, Apolo shows how we can all come closer to living with zero regrets. While Apolo's own journey may be unique, the insights he has gleaned along the way have the power to help us all feel like champions every day.

Eastern Wisdom

“The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement.”
—*Japanese Proverb*

Meditation

It doesn't matter who we are (or think we are), what we do for a living, how much wealth we have amassed, what incredible achievements we have accomplished, and on and on; we continuously have room to work on growth and development. Never give up your Journey of Self Improvement; there are always opportunities for progress. Those who believe they have nothing to work on happen to be the individuals that require the most in depth work.

Real Life Application

Honestly assess your inner world and define a part of you that you would like to improve. This inner quest must be sincere and complete. The first step is to shine light on those areas of darkness that we may be hiding from and acknowledge their presence. From there we can finally accept these aspects of our beings and begin working on transformation. This internal work is the core of the spiritual life.

Conquering Your Procrastination Habit, by Dr. Linda Sapidin

Tip # 8

GROUND YOUR THINKING BY USING THE "5 W'S & 1 H" APPROACH.

One of the most effective ways to stop dragging your heels and turn your dreams into goals is to ground your thinking with the "5 W's & 1 H" method. Ask relevant questions that begin with: *Who, What, When, Where, Why and How*. Here's a model to help you get started, based on your desire to advance your career aspirations:

- Who** might assist me in my goal?
- What** type of position do I desire?
- When** will I be able to search for such a position?
- Where** would I want to work?
- Why** do I want to change careers?
- How** can educational courses help my career aspirations?

This exercise is designed not only to help you turn a vague dream into a solid stepbystep action plan but also to prompt you to examine a task from a number of different mind-sets. By doing so, you start doing instead of just wishing and hoping.

Ponder a Moment

Do not stand on a high pedestal and take 5 cents in your hand and say, here, my poor man, but be grateful that the poor man is there, so by making a gift to him you are able to help yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed, but it is the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy in the world, and thus become pure and perfect.

—*Swami Vivekananda*

A Course In Miracles, Lesson 19 plus Commentary by Allen Watson

Lesson 19

I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts.

The idea for today is obviously the reason why your seeing does not affect you alone. You will notice that at times the ideas related to thinking precede those related to perceiving, while at other times the order is reversed. The reason is that the order does not matter. Thinking and its results are really simultaneous, for cause and effect are never separate.

Today we are again emphasizing the fact that minds are joined. This is rarely a wholly welcome idea at first, since it seems to carry with it an enormous sense of responsibility, and may even be regarded as an "invasion of privacy." Yet it is a fact that there are no private thoughts. Despite your initial resistance to this idea, you will yet understand that it must be true if salvation is possible at all. And salvation must be possible because it is the Will of God.

The minute or so of mind searching which today's exercises require is to be undertaken with eyes closed. The idea for today is to be repeated first, and then the mind should be carefully searched for the thoughts it contains at that time. As you consider each one, name it in terms of the central person or theme it contains, and holding it in your mind as you do so, say:

I am not alone in experiencing the effects of this thought about _____.

The requirement of as much indiscriminateness as possible in selecting subjects for the practice periods should be quite familiar to you by now, and will no longer be repeated each day, although it will occasionally be included as a reminder. Do not forget, however, that random selection of subjects for all practice periods remains essential throughout. Lack of order in this connection will ultimately make the recognition of lack of order in miracles meaningful to you.

Apart from the "as needed" application of today's idea, at least three practice periods are required, shortening the length of time involved, if necessary. Do not attempt more than four.

Commentary by Allen Watson

Last week it was about seeing; this week about thinking. "Thinking and its results are really simultaneous, for cause and effect are never separate". Thinking is cause; seeing is effect, and they are simultaneous. A baseball flying through your window causes the glass to be broken. Which happens first? The baseball passing through the plane of the glass, or the glass breaking? Obviously both happen at once.

So it is with thinking and seeing. When we think, we perceive. The simultaneity is part of what makes it so difficult for us to recognize thought as the cause. It is fairly easy for the ego to play the trick of reversing cause and effect, so that we believe that what we see is the cause of what we think. But that isn't the way it works at all.

The idea that minds are joined is exciting, but also, especially at first, quite threatening. There are thoughts I have that I do not want to have shared, but "there are no private thoughts". My "private" thoughts affect everyone and everything just as every thought does that engages my mind. The idea can be disconcerting. The lesson tells us that despite resistance, eventually we will all recognize that the idea-of joined minds in which no thought is private-is inevitable "if salvation is possible at all". It does not explain why it is inevitable, but just says that we'll all see it that way before long.

Let's think about it for a minute. If other minds are truly separate from mine, then different wills are also truly possible. That places me in competition with the world, alone against the universe. How can I then be free from fear, if outside forces can at any moment turn against me in vicious attack?

If, however, minds are joined, and if what I think affects all of this unified

mind, then salvation is possible. Then one choice for peace can affect the entire joined mind towards peace. Salvation is possible; I am not an effect of the world, but the world is my effect. I am empowered to choose. I can choose peace for all of Mind. This is how, in the Course's view of things, I can become a savior of the world.

Let me then determine this day to choose for peace, for healing, and for forgiveness. As I begin to realize that I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts, I will begin to care about what I think, and as I begin to care, I will begin to heal myself and the world along with me.