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Cultivate Life! magazine

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Heart to Heart Coaching:

Coach Doris Jeanette, replies to: I am always tired and lethargic. I am just frustrated with my life and I just wish I wasn't born.

I am going to answer two questions from two men from Australia. Often men do not admit to being depressed so thank you for admitting the truth of your life experience. You both reveal the pain of being depressed and feeling helplessness.

Questioner 1

Philosophy: I have researched all religions and New Age Groups for the past 40 years and I have ended up not knowing who or what to believe any more, so I don't believe in anything at present.

Hopes and aspirations: Self-Realisation and to Know The Truth.

Question: My question is, is it possible to know the Truth of who we are and are we conscious after death? I have also been suffering from Depression and Anxiety for years, I suffer from low testosterone, I am changing my depression medication and with the process I am going thru emotional upheavals and extreme desire for sex. I am just frustrated with my life and I just wish I wasn't born.

Questioner 2

Philosophy: I honestly believe that I can do anything that I set my mind to. (Just have a problem doing it)

Hopes and aspirations: I just want to be a motivated person

Question: I feel like I'm in a shell sort of. I just sit there and think about things I want to do but I am unable to get moving. My mind is very active and I take Prozac daily. I am diagnosed with depression and anxiety. I just can't seem to make the initial move towards productivity. I need to (I think) make even the smallest move to get started, but I can't seem to lift a finger. I am always tired and lethargic. I hate this about myself. My wife deserves better than that. I have read countless motivational sites and nothing seems to work. Can you help me to even make the smallest moves towards something (anything) productive? Thank you for your reply!

Answer:

Damned if you do. Damned if you don't. This is the curse of the human condition when you are trapped in your past learning history and do not know how to get out of it. You are in a lose-lose situation called learned helplessness.

The famous psychologist, Harry Harlow called it the "pit of despair." Few know that he suffered from severe depression and received shock treatments. After his hospitalization, he conducted research where he created the "pit of despair," in his famous rhesus monkeys.

In this state, no matter what you do, your ego, your brain, your thoughts attack you. Mean. Nasty. Hateful thoughts and damaging mental judgments constantly come at you.

As a result, unhealthy, mental energy is created.

The nasty thoughts are composed of unpleasant energy, which often settle around your head. Of course, these thought forms can take hold anywhere in your body and energy field. They are perceptible; they can be seen and felt by people who are sensitive and intuitive.

These thought forms are real; they have substance, weight and density. Even color, smell and form. Well-trained and skilled Chinese acupuncturists have smelled this energy for centuries. You too, can develop your ability to sense and smell nasty thought energy.

Your thought forms are constantly hurting you and attacking you. So of course, this dense energy weights you down. How could you move when this nasty energy is between you and the real world? As long as this gray energy has the upper hand you are truly stuck in learned helplessness.

Currently, your thought forms do have the upper hand because you are weaker than they are. This is a fact. A physical fact. It is also a fact that this nasty energy breaks the heart and paralyzes all forward movements of life until you unlearn your helplessness.

Traditional psychologists and psychiatrists call this state depression. However depression is not anything strange or bizarre. Mental illness is a myth. Read Thomas Szasz's book, which was first published in 1961, "The Myth of Mental Illness." I like his quote, "*If you talk to God, you are praying; if God talks to you, you have schizophrenia*".

The physical reality that you are experiencing is not a disease or illness. You think you cannot move. Therefore, you do not move. You think you are worthless and helpless. As a result you are stuck in sticky, dark, molasses energy.

As a holistic psychologist, with 35 years of clinical experience, I also know you feel safer when you do not move. Please read the column about OCD, anxiety and depression. It explains that once you move out of the depressed state, you are then face to face with your nasty thoughts forms. This of course, makes you highly anxious.

Since you do not have the skills to deal with anxiety, you go back into a depressed state. This means you must first learn how to reduce your anxiety if you want to overcome depression.

"I am changing my depression medication and in the process I am going thru emotional upheavals and extreme desire for sex. I am just frustrated with my life and I just wish I wasn't born."

To add more obstacles to your ability to move out from under these heavy thought forms, you add medication. Depression medication is notorious for shutting off your sexual energy. I know from successfully teaching others how to get out of the depressed state, that your strong, potent sexual energy is part of the cure.

Your physical, sexual energy is essential. It provides the voltage needed so you can become stronger than your nasty thought forms. Therefore, when you take medication you put yourself in a double lose-lose. You are already depressing your sexual and emotional energy in the first place. Now the drug is helping you depress your juicy energy. Is this the help you need?

Why not enjoy your sexual feelings and encourage this energy? Solo sex is healthy and good for you. What about your lovely wife? You could learn to become a better lover so you can enjoy sex with her. The research on depression consistently finds that physical activities are the only thing that helps. Sex is an excellent choice.

I also know that feeling your real emotions will give you the extra energy you need to become stronger than your nasty thought forms. I cannot help but comment about a Japanese movie I saw, "I'd Rather Be a Shellfish." <http://www.phillycinefest.org/film-details.cfm?id=8605> I love Japanese movies because they are so full of emotion.

This is a very sad movie. From what I understand, it is based on a common theme and popular story in Japan. Watching it can help you cry from your guts, solar plexus and heart. Crying from authentic, emotional hurt is very different from crying due to thought based self-pity.

To learn the difference between your nasty thoughts that depress you and your authentic feelings with create vital energy study and work with the "Opening the Heart" audio. <http://www.drjeanette.com/emotionalhealthaudio.html>

You need to use the current Japanese disaster, as well as sad movies, to help you feel your authentic feelings and emotions. When you feel your authentic emotions, you will notice a shift out of your thought forms into reality. Feelings quickly move you out of depressed energy into a healthier, flowing energy.

With your goal of "Self-Realization and to Know The Truth" in mind, let us continue.

All power is within. This is the truth. It is universal law.

However, when you are depressed, you do not have access to your power. It is not available to you. And I assure you there are no quick, spiritual, angels, therapists, psychologists or gurus who can give you power. They do not have your power. You have your power.

The wise holistic psychologist will teach you how to find, recognize, access and use your power.

Look for teachers who are wise. Do not seek treatments, gurus, herbs or drugs. Seek someone to teach you how to find and access your own power. Going to an acupuncturist is great because he or her can get your energy moving. I use this method as needed. I bless all acupuncturists who help people.

However, if you do not also learn how to move your own energy, treatments are limited. You must learn to manage your own energy if you want to be whole and healthy. Wise teachers show you how to hook up with your power source. They also teach you how to use your power wisely and responsibly.

Think of a volcano. It has plenty of power inside. You have the same huge amount of power inside of you. However, it is worthless until you find it, access it and learn how to use it. Currently, you are conditioned into a place where you do not even see your power. As a matter of fact, you do not believe you have any power.

"Can you help me to even make the smallest moves towards something (anything) productive? "

A skillful teacher will show how to become stronger than your thoughts forms. I have offered you several effective ways to become stronger. You can feel your body feelings and your emotional feelings. You can learn the skills needed to deal with your anxiety so you can stay out of the depressed state once you climb out of the pit of despair.

Here is one more suggestion taken from my educational audio, "Depression: How to Unlearn Learned Helplessness and Break Free." It is the ACE. ACE stands for Active Conscious Effort.

At any point in time you can make an ACE to do something physical. Do anything that feels physically safe for you to do. Wash the dishes, wash your clothes, make love with yourself, your wife, just move.

This is the small movement of energy that will begin to move you out of the pit of despair.

Action Steps:

- **Get to Know Your Depressed State.** Feel it, sense it, understand it, take responsibility for it, own it and vow to move out of it. For a complete understanding of how depression is created and how it can be unlearned, study the educational audio, "Depression: How to Unlearn Learned Helplessness and Break Free." <http://www.drjeanette.com/depressionaudio.html>
- **Learn the skills needed to deal with anxiety and fear.** You will not be successful getting rid of depression until you know how to reduce your anxiety and face your nasty thought forms. You need to have a relaxation response that you can use when you need it to decondition your past learning history of learned helplessness. A good place to start is the educational audio, "Anxiety: How to Relax and Calm Your Nerves." <http://www.drjeanette.com/anxietyaudio.html>
- Readers of Cultivate Life! can get both "Depression: How to Unlearn Learned Helplessness and Break Free," and "Anxiety: How to Relax and Calm Your Nerves" audio for the price of one. When you place your order mention you read Cultivate Life! and I will send you both.
- **Form a healthy relationship with a wise teacher.** Find someone you can trust and learn how to tap into your inner power. Learn to use your natural talents to access your energy, which is stronger than thought forms.
- **Use the ACE.** Be physically active everyday. Get up and move. Engage in physical work, get a physical job, and keep active until you are bone tired. Then let go and relax.

If you live in a country where the currency is especially low, please email me through the contact information at <http://www.drjeanette.com>

Let me know you live in India or African and I will give you a deeper discount.

Doris Jeanette is a licensed psychologist in PA, USA. She is director of the Center for New Psychology where she mentors and trains professionals who are interested in learning how to help people shift out of depression and deal with anxiety by learning how to master their own energy. Sign up for her free newsletter, "The Vibrant Moment" to learn more about holistic psychology and how it can empower you and your clients. <http://www.drjeanette.com/privatehumanenergy.html>

Sharpening Your Conversation Skills by **Brian Tracy**

There are three aims and purposes of conversation. The first is the plain enjoyment and pleasure of self-expression and interaction with other people. One of the most enjoyable things we ever do is to spend time with people we like and whose company we find stimulating. This potential pleasure is the driving force behind all of our social activities. We like to get together with people with whom we have a lot in common and just share ideas, letting the conversation go where it will.

The second aim or purpose of conversation is to get to know the other person better. In sales, and in all kinds of business, you require prolonged exposure to another person in order to get a feel for how he or she thinks, feels and reacts. This can't be accomplished in a short meeting.

The third aim of conversation is to build trust and credibility between the two people. This is perhaps the most important thing we do as we proceed through life and it is only possible with the kind of continuous conversation that reveals us to each other. In our personal relationships, there is no substitute for extended periods of conversation in the development of friendships and more intimate relationships. People who get along very well together have almost invariably spent a lot of time just talking about various subjects as they come up.

One of the very best ways to learn about another person is to spend unbroken time in their company. I've found that a two- or three-hour car trip is one of the most revealing experiences you will ever have with another human being. People who have gotten along well for many years, working or socializing together in brief stints, will often find that an extended car trip brings out elements of their personalities that they did not know existed.

Before you enter into any serious business or personal relationship with anyone, you should spend several hours with them experiencing the ebb and flow of sustained conversation. It's amazing what you will learn.

Many people think that the art of good conversation is to speak in an interesting and arresting fashion, to be noted for your humor, ability to tell stories and your general knowledge of a variety of subjects. Many people feel that, if they want to be better at conversation, they must become more articulate, outgoing and expressive. They must become better talkers.

Nothing could be further from the truth. As you've heard many times before, we come into this world with two ears and one mouth and we should use them in that same proportion. In conversation, this simply means that you should listen twice as much as you talk if you want to get a reputation for being an enjoyable person with whom to converse.

The art of good conversation centers very much on your ability to ask questions and to listen attentively to the answers. You can lace the conversation with your insights, ideas, and opinions, but you perfect the art and skill of conversation by perfecting the art and skill of asking good, well-worded questions that direct the conversation and give other people an opportunity to express themselves.

Ask open-ended questions that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. Open-ended questions encourage the speaker to expand on his thoughts and comments. And one question will lead to another. You can ask open-ended questions almost endlessly, drawing out of the other person everything that he or she has to say on a particular subject.

In order to be an excellent conversationalist, you must resist the urge to dominate the discussion. The very best conversationalists seem to be low-key, easy-going, cheerful, and genuinely interested in the other person. They seem to

be quite content to listen when other people are talking and they make their own contributions to the dialogue rather short and to the point.

In fact, good conversation has an easy ebb and flow, like the tide coming in and going out. Whether it is between two people or among several, the conversation should shift back and forth, with each person getting an opportunity to talk. Conversation in this sense is like a ball that is tossed from person to person, with no one holding on to it for very long.

If you feel that you have been talking for too long, you should stop and ask a question of someone in the group. You will be tossing the conversational ball and giving that individual an opportunity to converse.

Listening is the most important of all skills for successful conversation. Many people are very poor listeners. Since everyone enjoys talking, it takes a real effort to practice the fundamentals of excellent listening and to make them a habit.

Here are the four major rules for active listening in a conversation. They will work for you whether you are conversing with a sales prospect, a business associate, your manager or a friend or member of your family. They are powerful, practical and proven techniques to increase your influence with other people dramatically. The first key to effective listening is for you to listen attentively, without interruptions. When you pay close attention to another person, you convey to that person that you very much value what he or she has to say. This is very flattering to your conversation partners, and they will respond warmly to your attentiveness.

The major reason why most people are poor listeners is that they are busy preparing a reply while the other person is still speaking. In fact, they are not even listening closely to what the other person is saying. They are very much like boxers

waiting for the other person to let their guard down so they can jump in with a quick verbal punch and take over the conversation.

But this is not for you. Effective listening requires that you lean slightly forward, face the other person directly, and hang on every word. Listen as though there were nothing else in the world more fascinating to you than what the other person is saying. The very best listeners seem to have developed the knack of making the person who is speaking feel as if he or she were the only person in the world. Good conversationalists can even do this in the middle of a crowded room.

In addition to listening without interrupting, you should also nod, smile and agree with what the person is saying. Be active rather than passive. Indicate that you are totally engaged in the conversation. Make eye contact as the other person talks. Relax your body and, if you are standing, allow your weight to roll forward onto the balls of your feet. Only you will know that you have done this, but the overall impression you will give is that your whole energy is now forward and focused on what the speaker is saying. The second key to effective listening is to pause before replying. A short pause, of three to five seconds, is a very classy thing to do in a conversation. When you pause, you accomplish three goals simultaneously.

First, you avoid running the risk of interrupting if the other person is just catching his or her breath before continuing. Second, you show the other person that you are giving careful consideration to his or her words by not jumping in with your own comments at the earliest opportunity. The third benefit of pausing is that you will actually hear the other person better. His or her words will soak into a deeper level of your mind and you will understand what he or she is saying with greater clarity. By pausing, you mark yourself as a brilliant conversationalist.

The third key to effective listening is to question for clarification. Never assume that you understand what the person is saying or trying to say. Instead, ask, What do you mean, exactly? This is the most powerful question I've ever learned for controlling a conversation. It is almost impossible not to answer. When you ask, What do you mean? the other person cannot stop himself or herself from answering more extensively. You can then follow up with other open-ended questions and keep the conversation rolling along. The fourth key to effective listening is to paraphrase the speaker's words in your own words. After you've nodded and smiled, you can then say, Let me see if I've got this right. What you're saying is . . .

By paraphrasing the speaker's words, you demonstrate in no uncertain terms that you are genuinely paying attention and making every effort to understand his or her thoughts or feelings. And the wonderful thing is, when you practice effective listening, other people will begin to find you fascinating. They will want to be around you. They will feel relaxed and happy in your presence.

The reason why listening is such a powerful tool in developing the art and skill of conversation is because listening builds trust. The more you listen to another person, the more he or she trusts you and believes in you.

Listening also builds self-esteem. When you listen attentively to another person, his or her self-esteem will naturally increase. Finally, listening builds self-discipline in the listener. Because your mind can process words at 500-600 words per minute, and we can only talk at about 150 words per minute, it takes a real effort to keep your attention focused on another person's words. If you do not practice self-discipline in conversation, your mind will wander in a hundred different directions. The more you work at paying close attention to what the other person is saying, the more self-disciplined you will become. In other words, by learning

to listen well, you actually develop your own character and your own personality.

The final key to becoming a great conversationalist is to practice the friendship factor. The friendship factor is based on the three Cs of caring, courtesy and consideration.

You've heard it said that, People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Caring is the catalyst in all good relationships. The people you like the best and who like you the best are the ones with whom you have the most caring relationships. Whenever you show another person that you genuinely care about him or her, you come across better as a conversationalist and as a friend. The second C in the friendship factor is courtesy. It is a magic quality of politeness that causes people to want to be around you. All good conversationalists make other people feel calm and comfortable in their presence. They never do or say anything that could hurt or offend the other person in any way. They are continually diplomatic and they keep their concerns and irritations to themselves. They always remain warm and friendly on the outside. The third C in the friendship factor is consideration. One of the major sources of positive emotions is the feeling that we are respected and considered highly by other people. Whenever you treat another person as an important and worthwhile human being, you trigger this consideration factor. You show that you not only value the conversation, but you value the speaker as well.

Becoming a good conversationalist is based on learning and practicing the Golden Rule. This simply says that you treat other people the way you would like them to treat you. Just as you would like other people to ask you questions about yourself and to listen attentively to you when you talk, others would like the same courtesy extended to them. Remember, the purpose of conversation is not to dominate, control, or be right. The purpose of conversation is to enjoy yourself and to

make sure that others enjoy themselves when they are with you. ###

About Brian Tracy

Brian Tracy is a leading authority on personal and business success. As Chairman and CEO of Brian Tracy International, he is a best-selling author of books and audio and video learning programs.

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<http://www.briantracy.com/>

How to Stay Calm In Any Situation

by Jon Rhodes

It is often said that how we react when under pressure is the true measure of character. It is all so easy to be calm and efficient when things are going the way we want them to. However it is not always so easy when things are going against us.

We sometimes find ourselves getting 'rattled' by things going wrong, which causes us to make more mistakes, causing even more things to go wrong, causing more mistakes, and so on. We can quickly get into a cycle of mistakes and anger, which feels very unpleasant indeed. This can also have an impact on how successful our lives are.

When we experience these unpleasant feelings, we don't like them. Naturally we try and avoid them in the future. This stops many people from perusing their dreams, and trying new things, and breaking out of their comfort zones. We hear a lot about the fear of failure stopping people from following their dreams. However it is also true that the fear of stress and pressure can also inhibit us.

The most successful entrepreneurs, sportsmen and women, politicians etc. are so successful not because they are particularly any more intelligent than the rest of us, but because they can remain calm in almost any given situation. They can carry on calmly and methodically pursuing their goals no matter what is happening around them. The good news is that this is a skill that anyone can be improved by following few simple rules.

People who remain calm in any situation usually accept that things will never go according to plan. They know and expect that things will go wrong whenever they do anything. This acceptance can help us to 'let go', and simply deal with whatever challenge is put in front of us.

They also see what others may call 'problems' more as challenges. Because it is inevitable that things will go wrong, the challenge is to put them right, and a calm mind is far more capable of achieving this.

You can help your mind to remain calm by focusing on your breathing. I once heard a Chinese saying that basically said that it is impossible to feel stressed when breathing slowly and deeply. I was very skeptical about this until I tried it for myself. Several years ago, when I was about to talk in front of a very large group of people for a hypnotherapy conference, I became quite nervous and panicky. I remembered this saying, so started to put it into practice.

I focused on my breathing, making sure I was breathing slowly, deeply, and evenly. Almost immediately I calmed down, and felt completely fine. I now do this in any situation where I am beginning to feel 'rattled' or stressed, and I swear it works every time. You really must try it - it's amazing how well this incredibly simple technique works. Remember - it is impossible to feel stressed when breathing slowly and deeply.

Also by looking after your health more, you will become a calmer person generally. Eating a better balanced diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables will definitely help. Also some regular exercise will also aid you. Our body's are designed to do some physical work, and most of us don't get enough. If this is the case, we can feel quite frustrated without even knowing it. Regular exercise can help release pent up energy and aggression, helping us to feel far more calm the rest of the time.

When in a stressful situation, it is sometimes advisable to leave the 'challenge' for some time, whilst you clam down. Do something pleasurable to take your mind off it. When you return, you usually find it much easier to spot a solution.

People who regularly participate in meditation or self hypnosis are also much more able to deal with stress. Many of us don't spend hardly any time in the day properly relaxing and 'winding down'. Meditation and self hypnosis can give you that valuable 'time out', and can also help remind you what it feels like to be relaxed. Look at being able to relax as being a skill that can be improved with practice.

From now on, consider yourself as one of those people who can remain calm in stressful situations. Be proud of being this person. People really admire this quality, and it will definitely help you lead a happier and more successful life.
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Jon Rhodes is a clinical hypnotherapist, musician, and author from Lancashire England. He is owner and operator of HypnoBusters < a href = " <http://www.HypnoBusters.com/> ">hypnosis, one of the leading clinical hypnotherapy websites on the internet.

Step Up and Away from Punishing Feelings by Guy Finley

No one really wants to talk about it, but the truth is there is a kind of evil spell hanging over each of us, and our world as well. In fact, part of this global spell is our denial of its existence. It is called suffering. Everyone does it -- believing that their suffering somehow benefits them. That's how the spell works. Why else would anyone punish himself with unhappy feelings unless he had been tricked into somehow perceiving self-hurt as self-help?

Let's examine one of these instances. First of all, to be angry is to suffer. It doesn't help anyone to get angry. Anger hurts whoever is angry. It burns. Anger ruins relationships, causes heartache and regret, and devastates health. And yet, in spite of all of these facts, when we are angry it feels right. Somehow, in some unseen way, anger proves to whoever is experiencing its heated feelings that he or she is right even though, in the eyes of reality, nothing could be further from the truth. The same scenario holds true of worry, anxiety, resentment, doubt, guilt or any dark feeling. How can something so wrong seem so right? Here is the answer. All of these negative emotions feel like they are in your best interest because, at the time of their intrusion into your life, they temporarily fill you with a powerful false sense of self. However, this sense of self born out of fierce but lying feelings can only exist without your conscious consent or awareness of its being there. Why? Because this negative self's interests are not in your best interest. This conjured-up temporary identity is nothing but a self-of-suffering. No one chooses to lose.

This lesson may seem difficult at first, but with your persistent wish to understand it, you will one day wonder how you were ever tricked into feeling bad about anything. The Truth wants you to know that it is never in your best interest to suffer, no matter how inwardly convincing it may feel to you that you will be betraying yourself or someone

else if you don't. The only way that any suffering feeling can prove to you that you need it is to hypnotize you with a flood of itself. Step back from yourself. Learn instead to listen to the quiet stream of higher insight that runs softly through your true nature. It sees through sorrow. Let it show you that suffering proves nothing. If you want to receive some special help for helping yourself escape yourself, always remember to ask yourself this key question: "If I am doing what I want to do, then how come it hurts me to do it?" The Truth guarantees you will stop doing what you don't want to do once you know what you have been doing against yourself.

Here are five powerful ways to snap the spell of suffering. As you read over each one, think about how you can use its insight the next time you are about to be washed by any flood of painful thoughts or feelings. Welcome their higher influence into your life.

Suffering doesn't prove that you are responsible. What it does prove is that you have abandoned true self-responsibility, or you wouldn't treat yourself so badly.

Suffering doesn't prove that you are important. What it does prove is that you would rather feel like a "someone" who is miserable than be a "no one" who is free and quietly happy.

Suffering doesn't prove that you are all alone in life. What it does prove is that you prefer the company of unfriendly thoughts and feelings whose very nature is to isolate you from everything good.

Suffering doesn't prove that someone else is wrong. What it does prove is that you will go to any lengths, including self-destruction, to prove that you are right.

Suffering over your suffering doesn't prove that you want to stop suffering. What it does prove is you are afraid of the end of suffering because you think the end of it means the end of you. It does not.

You do not have to accept any inner-condition that compromises your happiness. It is never right to feel wrong no matter how right you may think you are to be feeling that way. Feeling one way and thinking another is what it means to live in conflict. Self-conflict is really the only suffering there is; therefore, self-unity is the only real solution that can snap the spell of self-suffering.

Here is an exercise to help you take the first step up and away from self-punishing feelings. This exercise is called: Is This What I Really Want?

The next time you catch yourself starting to feel bad about anything, immediately stop everything you are doing for a moment and, as simply and as honestly as you can, ask yourself: Is this what I really want? Try to see the whole self-picture as it is unfolding. You will discover that your thoughts are convinced that you must proceed in their direction of guilt, worry, revenge, or fear but you are the one who is feeling bad. These self-betraying thoughts are like a friend who invites you out to a pleasant evening at the fights and then you find yourself in the ring as the main event! I repeat, you do not have to accept any condition that compromises your happiness.

You can and must inwardly say to any conflicting thoughts or feelings that, "You are not what I want!" The clearer this whole picture becomes to you -- that suffering is stupid and must never be justified -- the stronger your right self-assertion for self-unity will become. A whole life is a happy one. Choose to have a happy life by choosing what you really want. ###

Excerpted from *The Secret of Letting Go*, by Guy Finley, Llewellyn Publication, 2009.

About Guy Finley

Best-selling “Letting Go” author Guy Finley’s encouraging and accessible message is one of the true bright lights in our world today. His ideas cut straight to the heart of our most important personal and social issues – relationships, success, addiction, stress, peace, happiness, freedom – and lead the way to a higher life.

Guy is the acclaimed author of [The Secret of Letting Go](#) and more than 37 other books and audio programs that have sold over a million copies in 16 languages worldwide.

For more information about Guy Finley and his life-changing work, visit www.guyfinley.org.

Thinking about “Thinking about Thinking” by Chuck Gallozzi

We all think about a lot of things, but most of it is driftwood, so to speak. Thoughts drift in and out of our minds with little conscious input or direction from us. Yet, at times, we do take control and consciously direct our thoughts. But do you ever think about thinking? “Thinking about thinking” is called metathinking. So, when we think about metathinking, we are thinking about “thinking about thinking”!

What does someone think about when they’re thinking about thinking? Well typical questions could include, “What are the various styles and types of thinking and how do they affect the outcome? Are some types more effective than others, or more appropriate in different circumstances? What are the barriers to effective thinking?”

Thinking about thinking, or metathinking, is similar to brain gymnastics or *neurobics* (mental exercises). That is, it’s good for us. Besides, as the seventeenth century French philosopher and mathematician, Rene Descartes, taught, “It is not enough to have a good mind; the main thing is to use it well.” And if we want to use it well, don’t we have to think about thinking?

Examples of Types of Thinking

1. Positive Thinking

Positive thinkers look at the bright side of life. It is not wishful or Pollyannaish thinking, but pragmatic. Positive thinkers understand that anything can be seen as good or bad. It all depends on how we *choose* to view it. How does endless complaining, blaming, criticizing, or worrying help? It doesn’t. On the contrary, it merely leads to disease, depression, and failure. But those who choose to focus on the positive are happy, healthy, and successful. Positive thinking makes sense because it works.

Recently an acquaintance and I were discussing steps we could take to improve our lives. He told me that he often gets angry with his 8-year-old son, and he wants to do something about it.

I replied, "What a wonderful opportunity! Admit to your son that you sometimes unfairly criticize him. Tell him when you do so; he must feel hurt and upset. Tell him you are sorry and ask him to forgive you. And after he does, explain that you are not perfect, and some day in the future, you may slip up and unfairly criticize him again. But when you do so, you want him to hold out his hand, palm facing you, as a signal to STOP. And when he does that, you promise to immediately stop and apologize."

My acquaintance's 'problem' is a wonderful opportunity because if he carries out the above steps, he will be teaching his son that we can confess our mistakes and apologize. He will also be teaching him how to forgive others and accept their apologies. And by explaining that his son can signal him to stop, he has empowered his son, who no longer needs to worry about future outbursts. In fact, his son may even look forward to being unjustly criticized, just so he can practice his new power ("STOP daddy!"). All of this will draw father and son closer together, creating greater intimacy. So my acquaintance's 'problem' turned out to be a beautiful gift.

The purpose of this true story is to demonstrate how positive thinkers behave. You see, positive thinkers find a solution to every problem, but negative thinkers find a problem with every solution.

2. Optimal Thinking

Positive thinkers ask, "How can I get MORE from life?" Optimal thinkers ask, "How can I get the MOST from life. Positive thinkers ask, "How can I get BETTER results?" Optimal thinkers ask, "How can I get THE BEST result?" To learn more about Optimal Thinking, read, *Optimal Thinking*:

How to Be Your Best Self by Rosalene Glickman, 2002, and visit this web site: <http://bit.ly/gPQGAs>

3. Analytical or Scientific Thinking

The purpose of analytical thinking is to make good decisions. When dealing with a problem, possible causes of the problem are studied, and then facts are gathered and analyzed with the hope of arriving at a solution. For example, if farmers in a particular region find that their yield has dropped by 30%, a horticulturist will first try to determine the possible cause(s) of the problem. Was the poor harvest due to inferior soil, drought, pollution, or insects? If insects were the cause, research on how to eliminate the threat would be conducted, and this could lead to a decision to spray the crops with a pesticide.

4. Systems Thinking

This type of thinking was developed by MIT professor Jay Forrester. In it, the relationships of the object of investigation are compared to the relationships of all other objects in the system. For instance, in the above example, analysts studied the relationships of crops, insects, and pesticides. But they did not study the relationships of insects to insects, and pesticides to environment. And their limited investigation led them to believe the solution was to spray the crops with pesticide.

However, systems thinking does a much more complete survey. Not only does it study, in this case, the relationship of insects to crops, but insects to everything else as well. For instance, an insect that was believed to be the primary cause of crop destruction also eats other insects as well. And the insects it feeds on do MORE crop damage than it does. So, if the crops are sprayed, more, not less damage, will result because the pesticide kills the insect that feeds on the more destructive ones.

5. Innovative or Creative Thinking

While analytical thinking examines many possibilities, it zeroes in on one solution, but innovative thinking does the

opposite. It starts with one possibility and explodes it into a huge number of possibilities. Brainstorming is a typical example.

Are you in management and would you like to create a work environment in which innovative thinking will flourish? Goran Ekvall, professor emeritus of organisational psychology at the University of Lund, Sweden has come up with this list of the nine characteristics of a workplace that encourages innovative thinking.

a) Challenging. A challenging environment is not boring, but stimulating; there's lots of problems (opportunities) to grapple with and dig one's teeth into.

b) Unrestrained. Workers are not shackled with reams of rules and regulations that monitor their every activity. They are free to work in their own style as long as they get the job done.

c) Relaxed. In a high pressure environment, workers are under stress and do not have time to think things through. Stress and creative thinking are incompatible.

d) Receptive. New ideas and fresh ways of looking at things are welcome by both management and peers.

e) Open. Workers trust one another and feel safe speaking their minds and offering different points of view. They count on each other for professional and personal support.

f) Playful. Workers are not only relaxed, but having fun. They don't hesitate to joke and laugh. They are energized.

g) Harmonious. Workers get along with one another. They cooperate and feel like members of a team. They accept their differences and willingly compromise when necessary.

h) Lively. Workers freely debate the pros and cons of all issues. They argue not for the sake of argument, but for the purpose of resolving issues for the benefit of all.

i) Tolerant. The organization tolerates uncertainty and ambiguity in the workplace. Workers are willing to go out on a limb and share their ideas with management and peers. They are not afraid of taking a risk, which we all must do when trying something new.

6. Critical Thinking

While analytical thinking is associated with science, critical thinking is often linked to philosophy (especially logic) and education. It consists of asking questions, defining problems, examining evidence, analyzing assumptions and biases, considering other possibilities, and staying away from emotional reasoning and oversimplification. It deals with gathering, analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information. A special feature of critical thinking is that it evaluates itself while it is taking place.

7. Magical Thinking

While people of faith may adhere to beliefs without evidence, magical thinkers go so far as to rigidly hold on to a belief even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Since magical thinking can be part and parcel of religion, I will give an example of a young Mormon mother who threw her two small children into February's freezing waters of the Columbia River near Pasco and Kennewick Washington. I'm not trying to attack Mormonism in particular or religion in general, but illustrating how magical thinking can lead to disastrous results.

Returning to the young mother, why did she murder her two children? She believed she was living in sin and if she reared her children, they too may become sinners, so all three would be condemned to the outer darkness (eternal punishment). Because the Mormon faith teaches that children that die before the age of accountability (the age at which

someone has the ability to know right from wrong) will automatically go to the Celestial Kingdom (the highest of three heavenly kingdoms). So, she murdered her children to send them to heaven.

The problem with magical thinking is those who accept it abrogate their mind and allow someone else to do their thinking for them.

Barriers to Successful Thinking

1. Uncreative. When we stop at the first answer or solution that comes to mind, we are limiting our vision. We need to get into the habit of asking, “What else can be done? What other possibilities exist?” Here’s an opportunity for you to test your creativity. Can you solve this puzzle?

Michael has to get three animals across a small river. His raft can only hold one animal and himself at a time. The three animals are: a fox, a chicken, and a worm.

If Michael leaves the fox and chicken alone (on either side of the river), the fox will eat the chicken.

If Michael leaves the chicken and the worm alone, the chicken will eat the worm.

The problem: How can Michael get the three animals across the river, making sure all of them remain safe?

Are you stumped? Stuck in conventional thinking and unable to solve the puzzle? If so, the answer appears at the end of this article.

2. Perfectionism. Stop trying to be perfect; it’s futile, you never will be. So, why try? Give it a shot: voice your opinion, trust yourself and share your ideas.

3. Confirmation Bias. This is the habit of always looking for evidence that supports your beliefs and discarding whatever doesn’t fit. It prevents you from seeing reality. The best way to overcome it is by looking for evidence for contrary beliefs. This will expand your view, bringing it closer to reality.

4. Need to be Right. Which is more important the truth or your feelings? Those who have an obsessive need to always be right can’t handle the truth. If their belief contradicts the truth, they simply deny it. Don’t you agree with Edward de Bono who said that “It is better to have enough ideas for some of them to be wrong, than to be always right by having no ideas at all.”

5. The “Village Venus Effect.” Villagers of an isolated village come to believe that the most beautiful girl in the world is the most beautiful girl in their village. She represents the standard by which all other women are judged. Similarly, thinkers believe the ideas in their mind (village) are the best there are. Such a narrow view prevents one from seeing and benefiting from the bigger picture, or as Roman poet Horace (65~8 BC) wrote, “Men cease to think when they think they know it all.”

6. Generalizing. When we believe everyone from a particular country, religion, race, or political party think alike, we are generalizing. It is a form of sloppy or lazy thinking. After all, it takes time and effort to gather the facts, and generalizing helps us avoid the drudgery of research.

7. Believing without Questioning. Too often we believe what we have read or heard without questioning the validity. Buddha cautioned his followers to question everything he taught them. If you accept things blindly, they are not your thoughts, but the thoughts of another. But when you question and mull over what you learn, it becomes YOUR thoughts, beliefs, and opinions. Better to follow a knowledgeable YOU than a questionable other person.

8. Gullibility. Of course we should have an open mind, but not so open that any fool can walk in and peddle superstition, conspiracy theories, and bizarre beliefs without supporting evidence. Make your mind a treasure chest, not a garbage dump.

9. False Claims of Causality. Did you ever hear that all heroin users started out as marijuana smokers? The implication is that marijuana leads to heroin use. But guess what? After long hours of research, I have discovered all heroin users ate food before they started to take drugs. Therefore, food is a cause of drug addiction! No, that doesn't make sense. So, beware of false claims that link one thing to another. Often, the links are merely coincidences.

Tips and Caveats

1. When you're finding it difficult to solve a personal problem, pretend the problem isn't yours, but your friend's. And imagine yourself giving advice to your friend. Alternatively, imagine that a friend, professor, or famous therapist is giving you advice. What would they tell you?

2. "There are two ways to slide easily through life: to believe everything or to doubt everything. Both ways save us from thinking." (Alfred Korzybski, 1879~1950) Another way to slide through life is to follow tradition without questioning it.

3. Remember, "You cannot plough a field by turning it over in your mind." (Gordon B. Hinckley, 1910~2008). Neither can you accomplish much in life by merely mulling over your thoughts; you've got to put them to use by taking action.

4. Don't confuse thinking with feeling. When you say, "I **think** I'll have another beer," you're not thinking; you're feeling like another beer. If you were thinking, you may say, "I think I'll stop. I had enough already."

If the subject of thinking has sparked your interest, why not turn to the world's leading expert on the subject, Edward De Bono. You'll find many of his books here: <http://bit.ly/hjOljX>

Answer to Puzzle

1. Take the Chicken across.
2. Take the Worm across and take the Chicken back.
3. Take the Fox across.
4. Take the Chicken across. ###

Chuck Gallozzi lived, studied, and worked in Japan for 15 years, immersing himself in the wisdom of the Far East and graduating with B.A. and M.A. degrees in Asian Studies. He is a Canadian writer, Certified NLP Practitioner, Founder and Leader of the Positive Thinkers Group in Toronto, speaker, seminar leader, and coach. Chuck is a catalyst for change, dedicated to bringing out the best in others, and he can be found on the web at:

<http://www.personal-development.com/chuck-gallozzi-articles.htm>

Programmed For Joy **by Beca Lewis**

Most of the time I stand on my feet, or at least my head is pointing up. Once in a while, using a nifty piece of gym equipment, I stand on my shoulders, and my head is pointing down.

Every time I do this I am amazed at how heavy I am, and how little time I can stand the feeling of gravity pulling at me. Yet, when I stand the “normal” way I don’t feel gravity at all. I am used to the influence of gravity pulling me down.

For about a week we couldn’t get on the Internet on one of our computers at our home office. I called the provider and they couldn’t fix it. They said there was something wrong with our wireless card, but when we visited our daughter in California my computer worked fine. Having eliminated that possibility, I tried the company again. “No,” they said. It was still something wrong with your computer.

However, that time I had a different perception. I knew it wasn’t true. It was then that I noticed something that neither the technician nor I had noticed before. The computer was connecting to a router that wasn’t the one in our home office.

It turned out our downstairs neighbor had just gotten his own router, which confused our computer. I switched to the correct router and immediately we connected.

A few weeks later we were watching a prerecorded show on the DVR and our TV started acting crazy. The program would switch off, switch on, or rewind without our doing anything. Del fiddled with the remote until it appeared to work, but as soon as we got settled in, the wild things would begin again.

We tried switching batteries, restarting the TV, yet nothing worked. Finally I called our service.

Are you ahead of me here in this story? Yes, you are correct. Our downstairs neighbor had gotten a DVR, and our remotes were programmed exactly the same. He was controlling our TV.

All it took was a simple reprogramming of our remote to be back in control.

All three of these stories are symbols of the same question; what, and whom, is influencing and affecting our lives and in what manner?

Habitually going about our daily living we don’t realize how much of each moment we are pulled into the rhythm of others. We fall into their pattern of behavior, beliefs and thoughts.

We accept what they say to be true. We “connect” to life their way. It’s only when things don’t work, or get too bad, that we may step outside of that rhythm and say “what’s wrong here,” and then try to stop it.

Others easily disrupt our connection to Truth. Yet it is our connection to completeness, order, omnipresent Love, unlimited supply, and intelligent activity of Mind that “delivers” to each of us the life of wealth that has already been provided.

Being pulled down by the influence of others, or connecting through their router, or letting our lives be directed through their remote is at the least not necessary, and at the most, imperative to stop.

Instead of waiting until things don’t work perhaps we could pause each day and check out our connection.

Check now.

Are you connected to the finite limited worldview or to the Infinite? In case you're not sure, here's an easy test.

Are you thinking and feeling thoughts that are bringing you and others happiness and joy? Great, your connection is to the Infinite. If not, then choose to make that switch now.

Don't put up with a downward influence and inadequate connection anymore. Choose Infinite joy: you are already programmed to receive it, so receive it now. ###

About Beca Lewis

As an author and guide **Beca Lewis** is dedicated to bringing Universal Spiritual Principles and Laws into clear focus, to shift material perception to spiritual perception, which following the law "what you perceive to be reality magnifies™", adjusts lives with practical and measurable results.

Beca developed an easy system to do this called The Shift® and has been sharing how to use this system to expand lives, and bring people back to the Truth of themselves for over 40 years.

Beca and her husband Del Piper are constantly working to develop new ways to support and reach out to others. Much of what they have been developed can be found for free at their membership site [Perception U.com](http://PerceptionU.com). They also founded The Women's Council with the intent of "strengthening the connection to yourself, to others, and to the Divine."

Sign up for **Beca's** free Shift Ezine and Ecourses here: <http://budurl.com/lwyr>

Becoming Invisible by Steve Wickham

Busy people sometimes feel bereft of themselves; sliced and diced between people, roles and the duties of life. Sensations of being squashed or pulled from pillar to post - that's their lot. Their greatest enemy is the void-of-space. They take their responsibilities seriously, perhaps too sincerely. But if they don't, who will? Who will take over these great works that are their lives, foisted of critical accountabilities?

GOD APPRECIATES, ESPECIALLY, THE DILIGENT

Regardless of the desire, capacity or will to become invisible - even for a short time - there's something within the diligent that pushes them on. It's a thing beyond their self-sense. We know it as love. Each weary and embattled step is joined with notice of resilience. How can we give up when we know we've still got a waft in the tank?

God appreciates the person going the extra mile, and then another, before a fourth is endured, for there are many who quit without guilt halfway through the second. But, sooner or later fatigue is catching up with the diligent person, unless their diligence carries them off to the wisdom of self-sustainability in the sight of God's will. Fatigue always has its say in matters of excess work.

REDUCING ACCESSIBILITY

Wisdom dictates we become sharp learners - not perfect by any means, but able to observe and conform to a new truth as it becomes known. One of the gifts of wisdom, when it comes to dealing in this busy world, is having the restraint to reduce our accessibility; that is, to know when to become invisible. Even for minutes. It involves skills of extraction as much as it does awareness - when to go. Each one of us has to have our covert moments. Times beckon when we seek the shelter of the God of our friendly understanding. This Presence of God can only be enjoyed in seclusion and

silence, though a practiced silence in noisy places is possible, for we venture to the centre of the unsullied soul. This is about withdrawing from the coveting of the world, because there are times when it's only the world that insists on our being there, and there are others. Some of these times, the world couldn't care less if we left briefly.

THE SAFETY OF INVISIBILITY

Think about the necessity of escaping for moments or whole days and, occasionally, weeks. It proffers so much for those who depend on us. The safety of invisibility - becoming, for a time, undetectable - is the provision and revival of God. ###

Steve Wickham is a Registered Safety Practitioner (BSc, FSIA, RSP[Australia]) and a qualified, unordained Christian minister (GradDipBib&Min). His blogs are at: <http://epitemnein-epitomic.blogspot.com/> and <http://tribework.blogspot.com/>

Healthy Living Is a Prerequisite for Success by Jeff Beals

Nearly 300 years ago, a British physician, preacher and intellectual by the name of Thomas Fuller said, "Health is not valued till sickness comes."

Such sage historical wisdom still holds true today. Those who hope to achieve the highest heights in the 21st Century economy need to take care of something as simple as personal health. Making a commitment to healthy living is a prerequisite for success. But it's not only physical health that matters.

Those who enjoy long-term success realize that their personal lives must be in order. That means you should care for your mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and financial health as much as the health of your career.

It is very difficult to be successful at work when your personal life is a mess. If your marriage is dysfunctional, it's hard to focus on high-level career achievement. If you lack a set of core beliefs, you may not be able to create philosophy of life that guides you to some great achievement. If you are barely keeping your financial head above water, you don't have the financial ability to take on entrepreneurial endeavors. Whatever the problem, you will be more successful in all facets of life if you take care of things at home.

A good attitude does wonders for your success. Think positive thoughts and constantly reinforce yourself in your own mind. As Norman Vincent Peale taught us in his famous book, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, you can cause successful outcomes by forcing yourself to be optimistic.

After you adopt a positive attitude, there are several other things you can do that will make you a healthier person.

If you have a faith, I recommend you practice it. Believing in and answering to a higher power has an amazing affect on career success. Prayer, meditation or whatever you choose to call it, purges the toxins from your mind and gives you strength and confidence.

After faith comes family. No matter how ambitious you are, your family should be one of your highest priorities. Do whatever it takes to protect your familial relationships. If things ever get really tough, you want to be able to depend on those who share your blood. Stick up for your family members and look out for their interests. In the long run you will be far richer if family comes before career.

Close friends are almost as important as family. A long-time friend who truly understands you is worth his or her weight in gold. Put the important people in your life on a pedestal and make them your priority. If you go out of your way to put people first, you will have more business opportunities than you can handle.

Because family and friends are so important, you should adopt an attitude of acceptance. Let them be who they are and enjoy them in spite of all their flaws and weaknesses. Forgive them any time they wrong you. Bite your tongue, when you feel like saying something hurtful to a friend or family member. These relationships are so important, that it's foolish to put them at risk over some temporary passion.

While relationship-building contributes to career success, so does physical health. You don't have to be an obsessive gym rat, but being in shape and consuming the right nutrition gives you more energy and stamina.

Keep your home life organized. Make sure your house is generally clean and tidy. Have a good system for organizing your bills and other important papers. Develop systems and routines for the simple, daily things. If you run a tight ship at home, you will have time for important things. After all, it's

awfully hard to conquer the world if you're constantly misplacing your car keys.

Hobbies and recreation are also parts of a healthy life. Having enjoyable stimulation outside work recharges your battery and contributes to creative thinking. Just don't go too hog wild with your hobbies. Some people get so deeply involved in hobbies that they hurt their job performance and drain their bank accounts.

Speaking of bank accounts, personal financial discipline is part of a healthy lifestyle. Just as you need to get your body in shape, you need to shape up your financial condition as well. A long time ago, philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Few people have any next, they live from hand to mouth without a plan, and are always at the end of their line."

There has always been a portion of the population that has chosen to live on the edge of the financial abyss, recklessly spending all they have, investing little or nothing. Unfortunately, that portion of the population has been growing rapidly, and it's becoming quite a problem.

Living a financially reckless life will eventually catch up with you and hurt your career. If you have no savings, you have no "go-to-hell-money," the power to walk away from a job or a client when you're not happy. A lot of financial debt can prevent you from taking some lower paying job that might actually make you happier. For every minute you spend worrying and fretting about how you will make ends meet, you are taking away time from your grander goals.

It sounds so elementary, but it's worth a reminder. Live a balanced and healthful life in order to reach the top.

That said, let's end with one disclaimer: don't be obsessive-compulsive in your quest for a healthy lifestyle, because as comedian Redd Foxx said, "Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday, lying in hospitals dying of nothing." ###

Jeff Beals is an award-winning author, who helps professionals do more business and have a greater impact on the world through effective sales, marketing and personal branding techniques. As a professional speaker, he delivers energetic and humorous keynote speeches and workshops to audiences worldwide. You can learn more and follow his "Business Motivation Blog" at <http://www.JeffBeals.com>

Kid Characteristics That Make Us Healthy Later in Life by Veronica

It has long been accepted that children with a happy childhood grow up to be happier adults, but now a new study has revealed that specific characteristics evident in childhood are likely to cause positive or negative emotions and influence biological and behavioral responses to stress. In turn, this may determine whether kids grow up to be healthy adults or not. The study, which looked at 569 individuals, age 7 to mid-30s, to see if certain personality traits influenced later health, found that children who were able to stay focused on a task and react less negatively to situations at age 7 reported better general health and fewer illnesses 30 years later.

Trained observers rated the 7-year-olds on 15 different behaviors and the behaviors were then assigned to 3 different personality attributes: attention, distress-proneness, and behavior inhibition (the tendency toward shyness, acting withdrawn and having difficulty communicating). To determine adult health, the subjects rated their own health and reported whether they had any of the following illnesses: heart disease, diabetes, cancer, asthma, arthritis, stroke, bleeding ulcer, tuberculosis or hepatitis. They found that for all the participants, superior attention spans and having a more positive outlook in childhood most affected their later health.

Interestingly, these effects were greater for women, suggesting that women may be more sensitive to interactions among emotion, behavior and biology and, therefore, be more predisposed to certain health risks, such as heart disease. No differences in these effects were found across race or ethnicity. Of the sample, 76% reported good or excellent health and 18 percent reported illnesses. The researchers found that this longitudinal study provides even more evidence that behavior and emotions generally linked to certain temperaments play a crucial role in long-term health, and fortunately, early childhood characteristics can

be shaped and guided by social, family and peer interactions. Interventions can focus on changing particular ways of responding and behaviors that frequently go along with particular traits in order to prevent the development of some diseases. ###

Veronica is a holistic nutritionist and midwife with a passion for health issues and tips unique to the 2 sexes, FHMweb is where you'll find the most intriguing studies along with posts about any and all things pertaining to female and male health. Particularly interesting is the ever-growing health concern of infertility; here I'll take the time to post tidbits about natural ways to enhance your fertility and overall health.

<http://www.fmhweb.com>

Truth or Consequences? by Karen Wright

Have you stopped listening to and reading the daily news yet? Have you stopped allowing pundits and critics and in-the-know commentators you don't know from filling your head with their truths and their fears? Democrats, Republicans, Tea-Partiers, liberals, moderates, traditionalists, conservatives, fundamentalists, Wall Street analysts, even TV celebrities, for God sake - everyone has an opinion and an agenda.

I used to believe that listening to those well-rehearsed, educated mouths would help me make sense of this world and give me a chance to make informed decisions. But, all the emotional squabbling and contradictory proclamations simply left me feeling even more ignorant and fearful of making any decision regarding my life and future.

It's like witnessing a car wreck. At first you're shocked, then captivated, finally sickened. In an age of unlimited communication avenues and free speech (in most of the world), we're saturated with biased opinions and starving for truth.

Somewhere, probably everywhere, in our up-bringing we were taught that others knew far more than we did. We were intimidated into deferring to the loudest voice. We stopped offering our own views after having them bashed and dismissed with conceited disdain.

Yet, truth lies within each of us - in a voice so faint that it's often unheard among the ear-shattering barrage of non-stop quarreling. It takes no courage or personal honor to hop on someone else's bandwagon. Heck, we all want to belong to something. But, beware the spiritual cost of turning your mind over to anyone else. They have their own reasons for believing as they do - are they your reasons?

When those around you throw their hats into a ring of faith, philosophy or belief, it can be hard to hold out if you remain unmoved. Friendships might end. Rejection is a real possibility. You will either sell your integrity in order to belong, or pay the price of telling yourself the truth about the basis of your relationships. In the long run, which toll can your soul sustain?

Our world doesn't encourage us to think or act independently. It rewards and supports conformity. Safety in numbers, and all that. But, the seed of Truth (with a big T, not the ephemeral little truth of circumstances) was planted within your heart and soul. It has never changed—no matter the circumstances.

- * Truth is Truth always.
- * Violence leads to violence.
- * Anger comes from fear.
- * Worldly power is a sham.
- * No one is worth more than another.
- * The loudest, most degreed voice, knows no more than any of us of what really matters.
- * Thinking and acting like we always have will guarantee a future that looks like our past.

And even my words and opinions should be scrutinized by your own spiritual wisdom. You'll know Truth when you hear it. Even a kitten knows the difference between Truth and pretense. Intellect does not make a person wise. Wisdom is not learned, it is a gift from our Creator. But, a gift that requires dedication in realizing. Like a diamond in the dirt, we need to recognize it, cherish it, and dedicate ourselves to hearing its message.

A message of Truth, given the chance, will out-ring any boastful proclamation of ego-birthered judgments. Like night and day. Listen closely - it's calling to you in a language clear to your soul. ###

Karen Wright is author of [*The Sequoia Seed: Remembering the Truth of Who You Are*](#), a great read for anyone who is seeking understanding or guidance, inspiration or clarity in his or her life. [*Waking Up*](#), the free bi-monthly ezine, was created to help you activate your natural motivation to move beyond mere existence and to really LIVE your dreams.

Discerning Truth **by Joan Angarano**

There is a vast amount of information throughout the Internet claiming to be the TRUTH about Reality, Life - its meaning and purpose. Understanding all of this information is daunting enough, but we also must decipher the truth within it.

The dictionary states that TRUTH: "... Can have a variety of meanings,..from the state of being the case, being in accord with a particular fact or reality... The term has no single definition about which philosophers and scholars agree."

And so, during these changing times, how does one navigate through and to the truth of things? Who do we believe when truth is not black or white, but a perception formulated from a particular frame of reference?

The Mayans, an ancient civilization, and their calendar have had as many interpretations as interpreters; Jesus Christ is seen as everything from the Savior, a great prophet, to never having really existed. These are just a few of the bigger disparities on the road to TRUTH. There is just so much information to navigate through!

Having been a seeker of TRUTH for all of my Life, I would often get frustrated when I would read something that sounded true to me only to read something else that countered the first. When each of them held equal intellectual merit in my curious mind perspective, yet were very different in original platform, in their TRUTH, I would find myself sitting back in contemplation of which one was true.

It was here that I began to understand that the TRUTH is not a black/white dynamic, but an ever-changing concept based on a particular frame of reference. In order for me to

understand the TRUTH of what I was reading, I would have to know the frame of reference in which it was written. College later proved that to be true to me, when in a science class, my professor's first words on the first day were, "All studies and subsequent scientific theories come from an original bias". Funny, it's one of the few things I remember from college, and the only thing I recall from that class.

So how DO we navigate the massive amounts of information, each proclaiming to know and be the TRUTH?

Discernment is the answer. For the TRUTH is not a fixed or finite reality frame but instead is based on experience and a perception of that experience. Each one of us must determine what is truth for ourselves, something society and education does not teach us how to do. And yet, it is the solution to navigating through the mountains of thought and theory claiming to know and be the truth.

Discernment partners sensation with thinking, creating a more complete vehicle for gleaning the truth from the theories and philosophies and studies we are inundated with each day. It begins to connect each one of us to the truth of our beingness, that place inside where we not only know our unique truth of all things, but where we can connect to the Absolute Truth of Divine Mind - God or the Source of all things.

The hope of the World and Her people relies on each one of us moving out from under the cloak of established truth - that which someone else tells us is true - and into the power of discerning what is true for ourselves. It is the only way to change the world for ourselves and everyone else living on this planet today.

The truth keeps changing based on the many facets of Life and our perceptions of them. But, until each one of us arrives at the Absolute Truth - that we are all children from

the same Source - God, each one of us lives in less than we deserve. ###

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The Art of Handling Criticism Gracefully by Leo Babauta

'Conventional people are roused to fury by departure from convention, largely because they regard such departure as a criticism of themselves.'

~Bertrand Russell

If you're going to do anything interesting in the world, criticism is an unavoidable fact.

You'll be criticized, because you'll make mistakes, because some will be jealous, because people have opinions about anything interesting, because people want to help you, because some want to drag down those doing anything different.

The trick to navigating the icebergs of criticism is to figure out which are helpful, and steer clear of those that aren't.

And above all, do it with grace.

Criticism on Zen Habits

Once Zen Habits started to take off — I had 26K subscribers at the end of my first year in 2007 — I received all kinds of criticism. Many of them were from new readers, who were mostly incredibly positive and encouraging, but who sometimes would leave scathing comments on a post.

I learned a tactic that worked extremely well. If a comment was mean, I'd take a minute to calm myself down, and then ask, "Does this person have a point (despite their rude tone)?"

Then I would respond and **thank the commenter for his criticism**. I'd acknowledge their point without being defensive. I'd respond with my reasoning, if I felt I had a point, or if the critic was right I would agree and let them

know I was going to change things. Either way, I was grateful for their criticism.

This had a startling effect: the commenter would often respond very positively. **Thanking the commenter and acknowledging their point is disarming.** People who leave rude comments don't expect you to listen to them, much less be grateful and empathetic. I had many of my critics become friends after doing that — I've never seen a tactic have better results.

I'd also get criticism from other sites. My usual response has been to ask myself (again, after calming down), "Does this person have a point?" If they do, I'll see what I can do to change. If not, I'll move on.

I've learned that criticism is a fact of the game. I can respond with anger, or let it stop me from doing things, or I can let it help me. Or accept that it's there and move on. I choose the last two.

How Not To Handle Criticism

Criticism can bring you down if you let it. People get discouraged when faced with criticism, and just give up. That can be understandable, but why let the words of someone having a bad day (or month) stop you from doing something great? What would have happened if Shakespeare had stopped writing the first time an audience member jeered one of his lines? Or if Gandhi had given up just because the Brits weren't happy with his ways?

Often people will instead respond to criticism with anger. They'll lash out, attack, become defensive and aggressive.

If you haven't read [this now-infamous comment thread](#) for a review of an indie book, I highly recommend it. The review is fine, but the comments left by the author of the book are

simply incredible. She's a train wreck that you can't look away from.

This is how **not** to respond to criticism. It was the worst way to react. If you're angry, you do not tell people to fuck off. You do not attack them, blame them for your mistakes, deny that you made any mistakes, and feed fuel to the fire by compounding your mistakes with more mistakes. It would be so much better just to stay silent.

Do Amazing Things

Don't let criticism stop you from doing anything. If someone tells you that your writing sucks, keep doing it. Make it better. Study people who do it well and rip them off, then make it your own and let your voice infuse what you do. Be great by being honest, by seeking the truth and telling that truth when no one else will.

Create amazing things. Contribute to the world, make the version of the world you want to see.

Go out and do something different. Don't do things just because everyone else does it. Here's a secret:

If you find yourself swimming along with all the other fishes, swim the other way. They don't know where they're going either.

[Do something amazing](#), and share it with the world. Criticism can be necessary, but often it is just dragging down the people trying to do amazing things. Don't let it stop you.

How to Handle It Gracefully

Calm yourself down before responding. Always. Responding to a critic in anger is never, ever, ever a good idea. In case I didn't make that clear: don't ever ever ever respond in anger.

Ask yourself why the criticism was made. Is the person trying to help, to make things better, to help you avoid making mistakes, to suggest positive improvements? Is the person just in a cranky rude mood, having a bad day? Is the person just mean, or jealous? Is there good reason for the criticism?

Regardless of the motivation, ask yourself if there is validity in the criticism. Sometimes there really is, but instead of letting that get you down, let it help you improve. Admit that you're not perfect at what you do (though [you are perfect](#)), and that not everything you do is exactly right, and that you want to improve. I, for one, certainly make mistakes all the time and have a lot I can improve.

Thank the person offering the criticism. Sometimes they're coming from a place of wanting to help you. That takes courage, and is a very generous thing. Be grateful for that. Even when they're not trying to be helpful, they've taken the time to respond to you — and trust me, getting a response is better than absolute silence. Provoking a reaction means you've done something interesting — and for that, you should be thankful. Either way, thanking the critic will help lead to a positive exchange.

Respond rationally and calmly. Instead of being defensive, be honest. Share your reasons, acknowledge the other person's points if there's any validity, and come to a rational conclusion rather than jealously guarding your way of doing things.

Or stay silent. If you can't respond with grace, then just don't respond. Silence is a much better response than anger or defensiveness or quitting.

Carry on. You've responded gracefully, now get back to doing your amazing things. ###

About Leo Babauta:

Leo is a best-selling author and creator of one of the most popular blogs in the world, Zen Habits. He's considered an expert in productivity and motivation, and has applied the principles in his own life: quitting smoking, becoming a runner and marathoner, losing 40 lbs., becoming an early riser, eliminating his debt, quitting his day job and becoming an entrepreneur, starting several successful websites (including zenhabits.net, writetodone.com, mnmlist.com and others). You can [follow Leo on Twitter](#).

How to Confront Without Conflict by Roberta Chinsky Matuson

Most people are reluctant to address problems they are having with an employee, co-worker or even their boss. Yet, pretending everything is fine certainly won't improve the situation. Here is just one example of why this isn't in the best interest of the employee or yourself.

Just today, I spoke with a client who was describing an employee who wasn't quite working out like he had hoped. He shared with me how this employee was refusing to take on projects that were well within the scope of her job description and how unpleasant she was making life for everyone. Yet, instead of confronting this employee, he is going to wait for her to find another position within the company so he can be rid of her.

I suggested a different approach. Why not simply tell this employee that she has gone as far as she is going to go in his workgroup and that it is time for her to move on? This is certainly in her best interest as well as his, and more than likely will take less time than waiting for her to bid adieu. He thought my idea was brilliant!

Whenever we think about conflict, we tend to think of it in a negative connotation. Yet conflict can be good. Here's why. Conflict fuels innovation. It helps take good ideas and make them great. Here is an example of what I mean by this. Have you ever noticed that the best ideas seem to come from other ideas? Think about what would happen if everyone went along with whatever was suggested and stopped there? Do you think such innovative products like smart phones would exist if no one in the room challenged the idea that a phone could be used for more than just making and receiving calls? You can close your eyes and imagine the sparks flying in the room as each participant defended his position.

I got to experience this first hand in the early days of mobile phones when I worked closely with an executive at NYNEX, which is now owned by Verizon. I could see this executive's counterparts didn't quite know what to make of her. She was bold and forward thinking, uncommon in companies like that back in the early nineties. She had a way of confronting the naysayers, and turning them into her advocates. I noticed that when she was in situations that appeared to be contentious, she would win the other people over by telling them what was in it for them. Worked like a charm.

The executive that I spoke with today could have learned a lot from this woman. He knows his problem employee is very interested in being promoted. He also knows this certainly isn't going to happen on his dime. He needs to be honest with her and let her know that she has gone as far as she is going to go within his workgroup. Most likely this conversation will not come as a shock to this employee. In fact, more than likely she will be relieved, as deep down inside she knows this as well.

This is a conversation that may feel uncomfortable to him, but in the end if he plays his cards right, she'll walk out the door thanking him for giving her permission to seek a workplace where she will be an asset. And he will be a much stronger manager as a result of this experience. Now that's what I call a win-win situation. ###

Roberta Chinsky Matuson is the President of Human Resource Solutions (<http://www.yourhrexperst.com>) and author of the highly acclaimed book, *Suddenly in Charge: Managing Up, Managing Down, Succeeding All Around* (Nicholas Brealey, 2011). Her firm helps organizations create exceptional workplaces that deliver extraordinary results. Sign up to receive a complimentary subscription to Roberta's monthly newsletter, HR Matters. <http://www.yourhrexperst.com/hrjoin.cgi>

If You Don't Know Where You're Going... **by Miles Murphy**

I went to see a movie with a friend last weekend... "Uncle Boonmee Who can Recall his Past Lives", a film by the Thai director, Apichatpong Weerasethakul. The film received very favourable reviews and was awarded the prestigious Palme d'Or at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival. My friend and I were both a little dumbfounded... While the film meanders through the past lives of the principal character, Boonmee, who is dying from kidney disease (that he allegedly attributes to bad karma for the killing of insects and Communists), it never really seems to go anywhere. A water buffalo who enjoys a short-lived few minutes of freedom, a princess who cavorts with a catfish, a tamarind farmer who cultivates delicious honey and fathers a son who runs away to live with ghost monkeys and whose dead wife returns to haunt him ("Heaven is over-rated", she tells him)... there doesn't seem to be anything that connects it all together. Admittedly, though the film proved great fodder for our post-viewing existential analysis of its content, I'm not sure we ever arrived at a theme. Life can be like that, sometimes. If you don't know where you're going, it really doesn't matter how you get there.

It is only in retrospect, that we can come to glean the underlying themes that thread their way through our lives, meandering like the myriad rivulets and streams that join into rivers before disgoring themselves into the ocean. When I look back, for example, I see themes that suggest a strong connection to learning and devotion or service. I have spent the principal part of my career working in the not-for-profit sector (for example, providing services for persons with disabilities, or connected with public safety), or in roles that have a strong teaching or learning component (bookselling, literacy and adult basic education, writing). I think it is well for us to understand our strengths. They can help us to chart our course and mark our future destination.

In their book, "Now, Discover your Strengths", Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton, Ph.D. invite readers to "discover their talents, build them into strengths and enjoy consistent, near-perfect performance". The authors ask us to put aside our natural tendency to dwell on our failings and weaknesses and instead to embrace our strengths in a journey of self-discovery and empowerment. Built on Gallup research, the original book (now enhanced with Strengthsfinder 2.0) asks the reader to complete a short online assessment that then returns "signature themes" that the reader can explore in some detail to help them to manage and develop these strengths to greater advantage. The emphasis on positive psychology and the sound, technical basis for the assessment tool are particularly compelling. I found that the themes strongly resonated with my own conscious reflection of who I am.

Of course, in delineating our destination, we must begin with the right premises, for if our premises are false, any conclusion is possible. There is this anecdote, often attributed to the mathematician and philosopher, Bertrand Russell, on the folly of drawing conclusions from questionable premises and the nature of contradiction: Russell was asked to prove from a mathematical contradiction that he was the Pope. He is quoted as follows:

"Let us start with the contradiction $3=2$. Subtract unity from both sides. We get $2=1$.

Now, the Pope and I are two. But, since $2=1$, the Pope and I are one."

As a matter of interest, there is a delightful YouTube video that features a short excerpt of a BBC interview with the elder Russell in which the interviewer prompts Lord Russell for advice he would give to his descendents. Russell first gives an intellectual response: "When you are studying any

matter or considering any philosophy, ask yourself only what are the facts and what is the truth that the facts bear out. Never let yourself be diverted either by what you wish to believe or by what you think would have beneficent social effects if it were believed..." In turn, this is followed by a moral teaching: "Love is wise, hatred is foolish". The video is to be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3jnEqXhDNI>

It is a matter of some difficulty, certainly, to be able to define ourselves in strictly objective terms. For to "know yourself" is to entertain the notion that the knower and the thing to be known are one and the same and subject to some degree of subjectivity and error. But we are not looking for a precise measure and it is enough, I think that our past actions and feedback from others can constitute a pretty fair barometer of our character. The critical thing here, is to be able to participate whole-heartedly in self-inquiry, never ceasing to ask, "who am I"? and never being satisfied with the answer.

The Book of Genesis describes an extraordinary event: Jacob, son of Isaac, grandson of the Patriarch, Abraham, wrestles with God:

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

Genesis, Chapter 32

Many religions and sacred teachings speak about the goal of being united with God, of becoming one with the divine, of discovering our nature as whole and complete beings. Intellectually, it is easy for us to say, "O.K." I'm one with the universe. What's the big deal?" In practice, things are a little different. The vicissitudes of daily life pull us and push us and stretch us and strain us. We are far from the equanimity, the peace, the tranquility and the happiness that we imagine is our birthright. Jacob had all kinds of troubles of his own... he had plotted with his mother to steal his birthright from his brother, Esau (a brother intent on killing him whom he was going home to meet the very day after his encounter with God), marital difficulties... A man plagued by troubles and fear and doubt. He had a lot on the line. We must, like Jacob, enter into the ring, and grapple with God. We must be willing to put ourselves on the line ("to belly up to the bar", as a friend of mine so quaintly put it). We struggle. We suffer.

Where are we going? We are all going into that dark night of the soul. That is our ultimate destination. And so our journey takes on a special meaning. It is critically important that we understand its nature: that it is not the things we acquire or own, the accoutrements of our travels that are important. It is what we become by virtue of our struggle to understand the meaning of our existence.

A Swahili warrior song says, "Life has meaning only in the struggle. Triumph or defeat is in the hands of the Gods... So let us celebrate the struggle!"

The 17th Century philosopher, Baruch Spinoza offers an alternate, but very Buddhist view: "The more you struggle to live, the less you live. Give up the notion that you must be sure of what you are doing. Instead, surrender to what is real within you, for that alone is sure. As stars high above earth, you are above everything distressing. But you must awaken to it. Wake up!" ###

Miles Murphy works in the field of learning and professional development. An independent scholar, he has a wide range of interests including the humanities of East and West. He is a devotee of Buddhism and a t'ai chi ch'uan enthusiast. His poetry and other writings endeavour to poke about in the rich soil and empty sky of the human condition.

See more Miles Murphy articles at <http://www.personal-development.com/miles/>

Slow Down You Move Too Fast by Stephanie Marston

For those of you boomers or for those of you who have seen Dream Girls, you'll remember the back up singers who sang Do-Be-Do-Be-Do-Be-Do. I know this was what the Shirelles, the Crystals and the Supremes sang in the '50s, but it's also one of the greatest challenges in our lives. To "be" or to "do," and how to strike a balance is the all-important question. Our culture abhors idleness. The adage "Idle hands are the Devil's workshop" grew out of the Puritan ethic of keeping busy.

Have you noticed that since we can't slow down the things around us we try to speed ourselves up. We hurry, rush, we hustle. We run ourselves ragged trying to get ahead or stay even or to catch up.

And then we occasionally encounter someone who seems to have time for everything and for everyone. He doesn't hurry. He doesn't seem stressed, rushed or impatient. It's almost as if he's got nothing to do yet he gets so much done.

Consider for a moment, stressed people are always in a hurry. People who hurry are always stressed. People who don't hurry aren't frustrated. People who aren't frustrated don't hurry. Which comes first? Does hurry cause stress or does it result from it?

Is it possible that our attitude and our approach to life actually affect how fast our time passes? Is it possible that we're a little like a hamster on a treadmill who by running faster and faster succeeds only in making our world spin ever faster. And perhaps if we consciously slow ourselves down and become a little more patient, a little more aware we can slow ourselves down and find that we are able to accomplish more with less hurry.

I have to admit that slowing down is a challenge. I was recently on my way to a meditation retreat to learn how to slow down when I was pulled over by a state trooper. I was in such a hurry to learn how to slow down that I got a ticket for speeding. So I'm not saying that slowing down is an easy thing to do. It isn't.

Many of us think that we are cheating when we "do nothing." We think that we have to get sick in order to have an excuse to take time for ourselves. Yet if we adhere to society's dictates to do, do, do, we become automatons and lose touch with our humanity.

We think that fast is equated with happy, but it isn't. In fact the faster we go the more stress we have in our lives. Ask yourself, "What's my hurry?" Hurry is your enemy. We do a lot of rushing around trying to squeeze in more stuff than we should, leading us to do all of it less well and making it all less enjoyable. Why hurry? You probably answer because you have to. But that's simply not true.

Don't fill in all the time with new activities, but rather let the rest of what you do proceed more leisurely. By doing this, you can slow down. This will make you both more effective and more fulfilled. Our information overload has conditioned us to require more speed, more stimulation to feel engaged and not bored. We're on the fast track.

Do you know where your time goes? Most of us budget our money down to the last penny, but very few people budget their time. But let's face it, time is much more important than money. We spend it, we waste it and we "kill it." Time is a finite resource, but we behave as if it were infinite.

Consider for a moment, if I said I would give you \$86,400 every day for the rest of your life, but you had to spend it wisely or you'd lose it what would you do? Of course you'd do everything possible to spend the money wisely. Yet each

of us is given 86,400 seconds every day and the same proposition challenges us, spend it wisely or lose it. You'll never get back the hours you waste at work, etc. that time is gone forever. The way you spend your time separates the successful people from those who continue to struggle. If you are continually amazed at people who live a calmer life than you do, take charge of your time.

If time is flying you have to be the pilot. Guard it as a treasured possession-because it is. Spend it thoughtfully because you can't get it back. But slowing down requires courage and commitment. It means swimming against the societal tide. We must learn when to "do" and when to "be." How to strike a vibrant balance between the two becomes crucial. ###

Stephanie Marston is an acclaimed speaker and author. She speaks from experience. Stephanie is the go to expert for those who seek to create quality driven lives. Stephanie is America's foremost life balance expert. Her new CD program, *30 Days to Sanity* contains powerful, innovative, practical tools to reduce stress, balance work and family and make time for what truly matters. Stephanie is the author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul's Life Lessons for Women: 7 Essential Ingredients for a Balanced Life*, *If Not Now, When? Reclaiming Ourselves at Midlife* and *Life Coaching for Parents: Six Weeks to Sanity*. For more information and a free Sanity Saving Solution visit <http://www.30daystosanity.com>
<http://www.stephaniemarston.com>

10 Reasons to Know Where You Come From! **by Keith Varnum**

Who cares about history? Old, boring stories about dead people! Who needs it!

That's what I felt until I stumbled upon a husband-wife team of professors at the University of Michigan in my college days. These brave explorers would spend half their year living with the most remote tribes on the planet--and the other half of the year teaching the timeless wisdom they learned from these native people!

Indigenous peoples live by, for and from their natural environment. Completely dependent on nature--relatively untouched by modern technology--these folks are very down-to-earth practical in the way they view and manage their human existence. From these "primitive" societies, I discovered many valuable secrets to not only surviving, but thriving here on Planet Earth.

These two free-thinking teachers also taught a series of courses called "World Geography." You've got to be kidding me! Geography relevant? Geography valuable? Geography fascinating? Yes, as flows from the adventurous hearts of these two mentors.

From living with native peoples, my professors learned that all pre-industrial world civilizations were also very tied to the ways and whims of nature: Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, Rome, as well as ancient China and India. And because these civilizations grew naturally, organically, from their deep roots in the land, they also developed practical, workable and ingenious ways to create a rich and bountiful existence on this planet.

From these ancient societies, I learned even more invaluable strategies to making a good life on Planet Earth. Most of this

very useful, pragmatic knowledge from pre-industrial cultures is not taught in our schools. History is taught as events and dates. Geography is places and names. We're not told why people lived where they lived. We didn't explore the values they lived for: what they cared about and what they felt life is really about. The real-life, practical reasons people lived the ways they did is missing. The rich depth of life knowledge behind-the-scenes is left out. The wisdom is omitted. The spirit is absent. Thus, the power is lost.

Until now! With the present availability of wide and deep information through the internet and inexpensive books and videos, the ancient practical secrets of our ancestors can be found. With a little creative digging, you can mine the depths of the wisdom and helpful life strategies of the people who came before us.

Modern Western society at 500 years of age is very young in comparison to many ancient cultures that lasted thousands of years. There have been many civilizations on earth that were much more advanced technologically, socially and spiritually than today's Western society. Knowing the useful ways of previous cultures can help you today to:

1. Make More Money

Becoming aware of the many different ways people used to prosper on earth reveals new options and possibilities to making a good living in a fulfilling way.

2. Build Lasting Creations

A more accurate understanding of how humanity created getting where we are now allows you to create more solid, permanent achievements in your life.

3. Reclaim Spiritual Skills

Re-connecting with your true past automatically re-connects you with your natural spiritual skills because people more

openly expressed their spiritual abilities in many ancient and indigenous cultures.

4. Use Your Ancestral Support System

You can draw upon the support, energy and life skills of your ancestors through technical knowledge and spiritual connection.

5. Tap Advanced Knowledge

You can tap into the vast wealth of life strategy information accumulated by the spiritually and socially advanced societies that have preceded us.

6. Boost Your Effectiveness

Being aware of the whole picture, you can more effectively assist yourself and others in this time of radical planetary transformation. You'll be aware of so many more options and alternatives to the standard modern Western ways.

7. Gain Sharper Perception

As you awaken to each untruth we have been fed by modern Western society, you're in a clearer place to explore and experience how life could be. You'll be better able to create what you want in your life.

8. Increase Your Vitality

True vitality erupts with the excitement that flows from discovering how your unique gifts play an integral role in the evolution of humanity on the planet.

9. Heighten Your Creativity

You can tap directly into the muses who have inspired artists and inventors since time began. You'll be aware of so many more choices in life.

10. Deepen Your Serenity

Experiencing directly that there is a Grand Design--and accepting your unique role in the cosmic scheme--brings a

very deep sense of purpose, peace and fulfillment to your life. ###

For 30 years, **Keith Varnum** has focused his unique spirit on helping people explore, enjoy and embrace the adventure of life. From the wisdom of native tribal cultures and ancient spiritual traditions, Keith shares his distillation of the underlying principles of all healing and transformation.

After curing himself of blindness, he has applied his approach to human dynamics in a practical way as a wilderness vision quest guide, life strategy coach, international seminar leader, author, acupuncturist, filmmaker, gardener, radio talk show host, owner-chef of two gourmet natural foods restaurants and vice president of the country's largest natural food company.

When not exploring consciousness in the canyons of Arizona (see www.SedonaVisionQuest.com), Keith travels around the world assisting people to open to life's wonders and surprises in his Dream Workshops (see www.TheDream.com)

Object of Our Devotion by Barnabas Tiburtius

Yeshua said, "When you see one who was not born of woman, fall on your faces and worship. That one is your Father." —*Saying 15, Gospel of Thomas*.

This is a difficult saying from the point of view of an understanding that was intended by Yeshua and it is necessary for us to take a more esoteric route to fathom a great truth that is revealed in this saying. The meaning of this verse is "that which is unborn, self-existing, supreme is the source of everything and everyone and the only one that is worthy of true worship. This is the essence of bhakti yoga." All manifestations have their immediate source in a birthing process which we refer her as 'born of woman'. The feminine principle symbolizes the source of all creation.

This leads to the question of how one can perceive something that is not born out of pre-existent cause. Yeshua is not talking here about the sense perception of a created entity. This leads to another question, if it is not a created entity what are we then perceiving and with what do we perceive?

Clearly this perception has to be outside the realm of the mind. An approach from the area of consciousness gives us a better grasp of this exercise.

The Bhagavad-Gita explains the mode of attaining the absolute, the Father of all, in the verses 3 and 4 of chapter 12, which illustrates the concept of bhakti yoga. The supreme wisdom of the divine states "But those who fully worship the unmanifested, that which lies beyond the perception of the senses, the all-pervading, inconceivable, unchanging, fixed and immovable—the impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth—by controlling the various

senses and being equally disposed to everyone, such persons, engaged in the welfare of all, at last achieve Me."

The dreamer does not undergo any change when the objects of the dream-world come out of him. Cotton appears as cloth without undergoing a real change. The cloth is nothing but cotton in a different form. The gold chain comes out of gold without any real change in gold itself. Similarly, clay appears as pot. Clay remains clay before the creation of the pot, during the creation of the pot, and after the pot is destroyed. There was no pot ever; it was clay all the time. Clay appeared as pot; water appears as ocean, waves and bubbles; gold became a chain; dreamer became dream objects without undergoing any real change. The fundamental truth is that the very substrate of existence is the Godhead or Cosmic consciousness.

Yeshua's saying also reflects this supreme truth that we need to worship the unmanifested, that which is fundamental to the creation. The distinction between the earthly begotten body and the eternal soul, which is an integral part of the Divine Father, must be clearly understood in lavishing our devotion. In most religions, the necessity for providing a proper grasp of the divine, through iconic representations, has resulted in the distortion of the fundamental nature of the divine and the very distortions are being worshipped as the real object of our devotion. This error has to be corrected and this is the instruction that Yeshua gives his disciples and followers.

Your true being is not that which emanates from the maternal womb of the earthly mother but the spirit which has come from the Father. Here the Father is the symbolic representation of Cosmic consciousness from which our true being finds identity. ###

Barnabas Tiburtius lives in India. A seeker throughout his life, he is involved in multi-discipline learning and his field of enquiry covers Cosmology, Sustainable Technology, Strategic Leadership, Philosophy and Spirituality. He regularly conducts workshops and seminars on spirituality and personal empowerment. Read the [Living Spark](#) for regular commentary and [website](#) for free in-depth papers.

A Course in Miracles, Lesson 41

God goes with me wherever I go.

Today's idea will eventually overcome completely the sense of loneliness and abandonment all the separated ones experience. Depression is an inevitable consequence of separation. So are anxiety, worry, a deep sense of helplessness, misery, suffering and intense fear of loss.

The separated ones have invented many "cures" for what they believe to be "the ills of the world." But the one thing they do not do is to question the reality of the problem. Yet its effects cannot be cured because the problem is not real. The idea for today has the power to end all this foolishness forever. And foolishness it is, despite the serious and tragic forms it may take.

Deep within you is everything that is perfect, ready to radiate through you and out into the world. It will cure all sorrow and pain and fear and loss because it will heal the mind that thought these things were real, and suffered out of its allegiance to them.

You can never be deprived of your perfect holiness because its Source goes with you wherever you go. You can never suffer because the Source of all joy goes with you wherever you go. You can never be alone because the Source of all life goes with you wherever you go. Nothing can destroy your peace of mind because God goes with you wherever you go.

We understand that you do not believe all this. How could you, when the truth is hidden deep within, under a heavy cloud of insane thoughts, dense and obscuring, yet representing all you see? Today we will make our first real attempt to get past this dark and heavy cloud, and to go through it to the light beyond.

There will be only one long practice period today. In the morning, as soon as you get up if possible, sit quietly for some three to five minutes, with your eyes closed. At the beginning of the practice period, repeat today's idea very slowly. Then make no effort to think of anything. Try, instead, to get a sense of turning inward, past all the idle thoughts of the world. Try to enter very deeply into your own mind, keeping it clear of any thoughts that might divert your attention.

From time to time, you may repeat the idea if you find it helpful. But most of all, try to sink down and inward, away from the world and all the foolish thoughts of the world. You are trying to reach past all these things. You are trying to leave appearances and approach reality.

It is quite possible to reach God. In fact it is very easy, because it is the most natural thing in the world. You might even say it is the only natural thing in the world. The way will open, if you believe that it is possible. This exercise can bring very startling results even the first time it is attempted, and sooner or later it is always successful. We will go into more detail about this kind of practice as we go along. But it will never fail completely, and instant success is possible.

Throughout the day use today's idea often, repeating it very slowly, preferably with eyes closed. Think of what you are saying; what the words mean. Concentrate on the holiness that they imply about you; on the unfailing companionship that is yours; on the complete protection that surrounds you.

You can indeed afford to laugh at fear thoughts, remembering that God goes with you wherever you go.

Commentary by Allen Watson

Innumerable problems seem to have arisen from our perception of ourselves as separate from God. A sense of loneliness and abandonment, depression, anxiety, worry, helplessness, misery, suffering, and intense fear of loss all stem from this root problem. Most of our lives are spent, if we look at things objectively, with various ways of trying to circumvent and overcome these problems.

But the one thing [we] do not do is to question the reality of the problem. Yet its effects cannot be cured because the problem is not real.

A spiritual teacher, Adi Da, once wrote a book subtitled *The Imaginary Disease That Religion Seeks to Cure*. That is what separation is: an imaginary disease. How can you cure a disease that does not really exist? The answer is obvious; you cannot. There is no cure because there is no disease. This is why all our attempts to "cure" ourselves do not work. We cannot find the way "back" to God because He has never left us; God goes with us wherever we go. All of our strife and drama is just foolishness, "despite the serious and tragic forms it may take".

Deep within you is everything that is perfect, ready to radiate through you and out into the world. It will cure all sorrow and pain and fear and loss because it will heal the mind that thought these things were real, and suffered out of its allegiance to them.

We carry the "cure" for our disease deep within us. This cure heals, not by overcoming the "illness" but by healing our belief in the reality of the illness. God is always with us. How could we ever, in any way, ever be separate from the Infinite? How could we ever be apart from All That Is? The very idea is insane and impossible.

We understand that you do not believe all this. How could you, when the truth is hidden deep within, under a heavy cloud of insane thoughts, dense and obscuring, yet representing all you see? Today we will make our first real attempt to get past this dark and heavy cloud, and to go through it to the light beyond.

How reassuring to have our Teacher tell us that he understands we do not believe this as yet. Oh, perhaps we hold an intellectual belief in God's omnipresence, but we do not believe it to the core, in a way that banishes all our fear, sorrow, pain and loss. That is the purpose of this lesson: to get past "this dark and heavy cloud" and to reach the light.

This lesson is the Course's first introduction to the practice of what we might call traditional meditation. While the Course does not make such meditation a primary focus, it definitely accords it a place of great importance. Meditation in the Course consists of sitting with eyes closed and making "no effort to think of anything", but attempting to enter deeply into our own mind, to sink down and inward while trying to keep the mind "clear of any thoughts that might divert your attention". The purpose, as has been stated, is to become aware of the light within ourselves. Or, in more traditional terms, to experience a sense of God's presence with us. We are attempting to reach God today.

This meditation exercise, says the lesson, can achieve startling results the very first time you try it. That may not happen for you the first time, but "sooner or later it is always successful". That certainly implies that we are expected to repeat the exercise, and to expect *something* as a result.

Clearly, if this idea of God's presence is meant to banish our loneliness, we can expect to develop a very clear and tangible sense of Someone Who is always with us, in every moment. When we begin to develop this sense we may be

tempted to think it is our imagination. This is no imagination! It is the *absence* of this Presence that is imaginary.

"You can indeed afford to laugh at fear thoughts, remembering that God goes with you wherever you go".