

Cultivate Life!

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Cultivate Life! magazine

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I must work to remember that most of the time the last thing I want to do is
remember myself.

—Guy Finley

Great Changes **by Christophor Coppes**

"What you think matters; in fact, it forms matter." ~*Varja Ghanta Gadan* (1991)

Several NDErs [near death experiencers] are convinced that our world is going through a much-needed major change. For instance, in his book about his negative NDE, Howard Storm writes that this major change is a spiritual revolution that will affect every person in the world.

Another NDEr told me she had seen that the sun suddenly revolved more quickly. This didn't mean that it would literally be revolving more quickly, but she understood that we are going to make a major turn, and see an important transformation. According to her, this is unavoidable. We all have to go through it.

And finally, I should mention an interesting message from an NDEr who I interviewed in March 2008, and who correctly foretold the aggravation in September 2008 of the worst financial and economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s, which is nowadays referred to as The Great Recession. These three NDErs are not alone. Many more express their feeling that things need to change because the way we treat each other and nature is unsustainable. Some are pessimistic about the developments, but this might be because at first we will go through a great deal of pain. Others are definitely optimistic, and express their firm belief that mankind will eventually change, and it will be for the better. Much better times seem to be in store for us.

Apparently, these are crucial times. We seem to have arrived at a crossroad. One NDEr said, "At the moment, humanity is going through the struggles of its adolescence. Who am I now? Who do I want to be? Will we choose for our soul or for our ego?" He added, however, that he thought it would be exciting to see what role negative darkness plays.

Choosing which way to go is difficult, because we don't have an overview of what is happening. What is going on? What are we about to discover? Where do we need to go from here?

The confusing landscape we are in is partly caused by the Great Recession, which has given many of us an acute feeling of pain. The other part of the confusion may be less acute, but nonetheless, poses a serious threat to mankind. It is the way we treat nature.

What can we learn from NDErs about our current situation and how can we smoothly bring about this much-needed change?

Birth pains

At first, we have to recognize that we are more than just a material body that easily learns to enjoy material things. We must realize that, beside this material aspect, we are

a spiritual being too, and that this spiritual part of us is eternal. It is part of something so much greater, which I called the unity universe. One consequence of being part of the unity universe is that we all are interconnected in a spiritual, as well as material, way. Everything we do and think has an effect on the visible and invisible world around us. It ripples beyond our own immediate surroundings, and affects other people throughout the world. Likewise, acts of other people also have an effect on us, even when we don't know them.

It is very understandable that we have forgotten about our spiritual part, because the four-dimensional material world is very obtrusive. Its very clear presence overshadows the more subtle spiritual world. However, this spiritual world is really there. We know about it through NDEs. And through them, we also know about our interconnectedness. What we have seen happening with the Great Recession is the effect of the tidal wave of negative ripples that we created together, and that backfired on us due to this interconnectedness. Therefore, it's about time that we concentrate less on our financial wealth, and pay more attention to our spiritual wealth.

In these times we are discovering that it is beneficial for us not to go against the nature of The Light, but, instead, become aligned with It. Remember that its nature is unconditional, limitless love. Because we are part of this Light, we could know about this unconditional love. It is already somewhere within us. We just have to learn to feel It and to express It. This means that, at least, we need to have a greater respect for all there is, that is, for other people, for animals, and in fact, for all nature. I say at least, because respect is the first stage of unconditional, limitless love. To put it differently, respect is a derivative of this pure form of love. An important aspect of respect is honesty and integrity. The lack of these two has created this economic and environmental mess we have run into.

The NDEr who correctly foretold the Great Recession compared this painful transition we are going through to birth pains. The pain may truly be considerable, but we cannot avoid it. Like a future mother in labor, we should also be thrilled that we are present to experience this great and beneficial change. In fact, we all are courageous, because all of us have voluntarily chosen to play our part on earth at this crucial and difficult time. She allowed me to write about her preview of the economic crisis under the condition that I would also write that we will eventually come through this painful transition, and that we are destined to head for a more wonderful world, materially, as well as spiritually. Apparently, more of us will get aligned with The Light.

The Great Recession or the Great Implosion

Currently, we are still struggling with the aftermath of the worst financial and economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. It is the most severe economic crisis in living memory, and we are still licking our wounds. Sometimes it is referred to as the

Great Recession, but because it was the result of the virtual collapse of the financial system, with the bankruptcy and near-bankruptcy of major financial institutions, it may seem more appropriate to refer to it as the Great Implosion.

When the Great Recession was only in its first phase, I had one of my interviews with an NDEr. The crisis had started in August 2007, and lingered on until Bear Stearns, one of the major investment banks, was running into serious problems. I spoke with her in March 2008, right after Bear Stearns had been saved by JP Morgan/Chase in a deal brokered by the Federal Reserve. Everyone was sighing with relief and stock prices quickly recovered from their previous losses. Due to excess world demand prices of oil, other commodities, as well as food, were heading north. Oil still had to reach its all-time high of almost \$150 per barrel in the summer of that year.

While people out there were scrambling to buy stocks again, she told me that this episode with Bear Stearns was just the beginning. She said, "What is happening in America is just the forerunner of the real crisis. The real crisis is still to come, and it will really be severe. Many people will be affected, including my family. One of my children will be drawn into this... Everything that is detrimental to human beings is wrong, be it economical or environmental. Materially, a new world is being created. Also, people who misuse the earth will be confronted with results of their own wrongdoing."

She had been given this information in her NDE in 1986, but she didn't understand it because it came in this elevated form of communication. The knowledge became intangible after her experience. In addition, she is not knowledgeable about finance, and for that reason alone, she was not able to explain what she had seen. However, the turmoil that started in 2007, which led to the fearful tension preceding the Bear Sterns rescue, made her understand that this was the timeframe that she had seen in 1986. Her feelings during the NDE matched the fearful tension she sensed in the world of March 2008.

I didn't really give much thought to it. I made my notes and went on with my life until September of that year. The two gigantic mortgage banks, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and the biggest insurance company in the world, AIG, ran into mounting problems. Until that moment, the failure of these three mammoth financial firms had not been thought possible. Finally, they had to be saved by the U.S. Treasury. In fact, they were all nationalized: the two agencies entirely and the insurer effectively for about 80 percent. Then, in mid-September, 2008, Lehman Brothers, another investment bank, went belly-up and this triggered the gradual break down of the financial system as we had known it since World War II. It led to the full or partial nationalization of many more banks and insurance companies in Europe and the U.S. The breakdown of the financial system caused the most severe economic crisis the world had experienced since the Great Depression of the 1930s and made central banks around the world resort to what has become known as "unconventional policy measures."

She had been right all along. She and the other NDErs knew that we have to go through this situation. It is unavoidable. We need to learn from it, and we must change ourselves. We all have to turn around. What we have done up to now, and how we lived, is unsustainable.

Another NDEr told me that she too had seen that all of this was going to occur. In October 2007, she sold all her equity before the stock markets everywhere in the world plunged by more than 50 percent at the end of 2008. This is a unique case of "insider trading."

Let's take a look at what happened and then see what NDErs have to say about it.

The housing boom in the U.S. started with the policy of low-interest rates that the Federal Reserve thought necessary to accommodate the effects of a previous crisis: the bursting of the dot-com bubble in 2000. Therefore, the Fed is often blamed for indirectly causing the current crisis, but I will argue that we ourselves are to blame for it. In any case, the low interest rates led to an unprecedented boom in the housing market. More and more houses were sold, and prices were skyrocketing. Mortgages became a booming business; the market proved to be very profitable for banks, mortgage brokers, and many others.

After a while, the number of people who could afford houses at these elevated prices decreased. The business had to think of something to keep everyone going. Ingenious mortgage constructions were invented and sold to people who could otherwise not afford houses at these high prices. This was done, for instance, with teaser rates, where one could start with a ridiculously low interest rate, but after a few years, the interest rate would be adjusted upwards. They went sky-high to more than compensate for the low starting rates. In most cases, the homeowners didn't know about this increase, or didn't understand it. Needless to say, they were not able to pay the increase. However, the involved bank employees and brokers knew in advance that this would be the case, but they were primarily interested in a high, short-term mortgage production.

Sustaining the turnover of mortgages was also achieved by telling people when they were filling out their mortgage applications that they could lie about their income or home situation. These were the so-called liar loans. People were misled in many different ways to borrow way beyond their capacity.

All of this cheating and deceiving has become known as predatory loan practices: making profits at the cost of others. This kind of profit-making is fundamentally an antisocial behavior. Instead of a win-win situation, the mortgage business became an I-win-you-lose market creating so-called sub-prime mortgages. Short-term self-interest of all who were involved in expanding the sub-prime mortgage market caused all of this. These practices did not only occur in the housing business, but in other businesses as well.

There was an abundance of financial constructions, but at the same time a great lack of integrity. On one hand, there were the mortgage-sellers who knew they were selling loans that homeowners were never going to be able to repay. Their intentions were dishonest. Their actions had nothing to do with integrity or respect for others, let alone with love. On the other hand there were the people who took out mortgages on houses they couldn't afford. They often didn't know that they were digging their own financial grave.

This was not all. Securities firms mixed the mortgages and repackaged them. The new securities that came out of this process were sold in the capital markets. To make them appetizing, they were rated by specialized agencies. However, there are only a few of these rating agencies, and they were having increasing problems grasping the ingenious, but complex, loan constructions. Consequently, it became more and more difficult for them to come up with sound ratings.

Money provided an efficient smoothing factor, because the securities firms were paying for these appetizing ratings! This situation can be compared to the poacher paying the salary of the gamekeeper. Apparently, the rating agencies were not free to assign ratings, but they didn't really mind. They fell for the seductive power of money, paid for by the securities firms who needed high ratings to market their products. After all, a fancy name for the securities is a good start, but it doesn't do the trick all by itself.

It was established from e-mails released after a Congressional investigation that employees of rating agencies privately had their doubts about the soundness of their ratings. One said that they had created a monster. Two other quotes are, "let's hope that we are all wealthy and retired by the time this house of cards falters" and "... these errors make us look either incompetent at credit analysis or like we sold our souls to the devil for revenue." And a final quote to show that they would do anything to rate any financial construction, "It could be structured by cows and we would rate it."

They too had dishonest intentions, because they knew, but told no one in order not to jeopardize their own material position: the profit of the agency, their own bonuses, their jobs and wages, and their pension scheme. This is extreme self-interest at work. There was no respect for the well-being of others. There was no integrity. There was no supervision, no checks and balances.

In itself, the business of repackaging, or the securitizing of, for instance, mortgages is not bad at all; it can be very beneficial to society as a whole because it can enhance wealth. But the repackaging of crap and selling it as if it was gilt-edged is cheating; it is devious. This and other sorts of repackaged "crap debt" have become known as toxic debt.

Occasionally, even people who were behind the wheel acknowledged the dishonest practices of financial institutions. For example Henry Kaufman, who served in top management positions with the investment bank Salomon Brothers, indicated that

financial institutions were in distress because they cultivated dishonesty. It is interesting to hear this from his mouth knowing that he had been one of the executive directors at Lehman Brothers, right at the time when the firm went bust. He had been responsible for the Finance and Risk Committee.

Apparently, banks themselves didn't have sufficient mechanisms in place to counter these dishonest lending practices that have euphemistically become known as 'irresponsible lending practices'. Even Greenspan, head of the Federal Reserve during the real estate boom, and firm believer in the capitalist market economy, had to admit this. He was "shocked," as he put it, that the self-interest of organizations did not lead to adequate surveillance of their own activities, or to sufficient self-regulation. Of course it didn't work. What else can you expect when banks are run by individuals who only know to act based on their own self-interest (their bonuses, for instance), and are not interested in their clients any more. Mr. Greenspan (and others) must discover that we are all interconnected in a profound way, and that all our actions and thoughts ripple through universe, and can be materialized somewhere.

And what did all of this cost us? The sub-prime mortgages, the trigger of the Great Recession, caused banks to write-down many hundreds of billions of dollars. In turn, this led to further losses on other financial products, and finally to a gradual crash of the stock markets. The Bank of England estimated that the worldwide total of write-downs on the market value of financial instruments, including the toxic assets, would amount to a whopping \$2.8 trillion at the end of October 2008. In 2010, the International Monetary Fund published its own estimation of around \$2.3 trillion. If you add the losses on all the stock markets in the world in 2008, the figure becomes even more astronomical--a staggering \$26 trillion.

These losses are unprecedented. During peacetime, there has never been any greater destruction of wealth than during this crisis. This amount of value destruction is truly unimaginable. Therefore, relate these amounts to something else. Everyone in the U.S., including companies and the government, would have to work for approximately two full years, devoting all of that money to the debt, to produce \$26 trillion. Now take a look at the smaller amount of \$2.8 trillion of direct losses. Everyone in the United Kingdom has to work one full year to get that amount together. In South America, the annual production of all countries combined just falls short of \$2.8 trillion.

The amount of money the U.S. government spends annually on Medicaid, Medicare, and the State Children's Health Insurance Program is only about one fifth of the \$2.8 trillion. Compared to this loss, the amount needed to halt the AIDS-epidemic in developing nations will almost sound like a giveaway. Stopping AIDS and all the misery that comes with it (such as babies and children that see both parents die and are left alone to care for themselves) only costs approximately \$20 billion, which is less than 1 percent of this \$2.8 trillion. And finally, compared to the financial losses, the total funds available for malaria control in all of Africa seem like peanuts: a mere \$700 million.

The root cause: excessive short-term self-interest

For many decades, we have learned to pursue our own self-interest, and we were taught that this is honorable. Economic theory says so, and after communism collapsed in 1989, capitalism is the only economic guide around. It is based on the idea that the pursuit of individual self-interest unintentionally leads to the biggest product for society as a whole, and everyone would be better off. This happens through a kind of 'invisible hand'.

This idea of an invisible hand was introduced by the godfather of capitalism, economist Adam Smith in his famous book *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776. People who almost religiously believe in the infallibility of self-interest often quote the following passage from his book, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity, but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities, but of their advantage."

Self-interest requires individuals and companies to maximize their own profits. This would eventually lead to the maximization of total consumption in society. This theory has made us think of our own position first, and disregard that of others, although that extreme position was not what Adam Smith advocated. It is less well-known that Smith valued the importance of prudence, humanity, justice, generosity, and public spirit.

Along the way, in our excessive pursuit of self-interest, we learned not to care about others. We wanted to have more for ourselves, and having enough was not sufficient. Greed kicked in. Money was no longer the energy to achieve something productive, something creative, or something that would add to our world in a positive way. We were not aiming for a win-win situation for us and for the others that we dealt with. As one NDEr said, "Money became the goal itself and not anymore a means. Our world is based on money and everything else is made subordinate to it." We go for the money, even if it means a loss-situation for the other. This is greed. By acting this way, we showed no respect for others.

We didn't care about them. We were indifferent to their suffering. Through our greed and indifference, we created an I-don't-care-about-you-society. And this has brought us this current crisis. One NDEr explicitly told me that, "the crisis is based on the combination of greed and indifference. However, you can't be indifferent; you have to care!"

A young man, who had his NDE due to a severe kidney problem when he was eight, said something along the same lines. His NDE was quite complete, with many of the standard features, such as a tunnel, a bright light, a vision of a paradise-like environment, a life-review, and the feeling of unconditional love, peace, and acceptance. His deceased grandfather accompanied him during his experience, and also showed him the future.

"Now I see and experience things that I already saw 21 years ago. I find this surreal, very difficult to comprehend. I saw the earth from above, hovered through time and space of the universe and saw everything. Humanity is caught up in an emotional obsession for money. Wanting more and more while real riches can be found within ourselves. We are now in an economic crisis and everyone is thrown into confusion of how to get back the old economy, but one will see that this is not possible. We are entering a period of time which is meant to make us understand that happiness is to be found in other things."

Although there are good signs of economic recovery, we are not completely out of the woods yet. Moreover, at this moment we know for sure that famous financial institutions have left the stage or had a "near-death experience," and the whole banking sector has changed beyond recognition. Major industrial giants have gone through bankruptcy proceedings, such as GM and Chrysler, and so did entire countries, such as Iceland and Dubai. Along the way, the Great Recession drew heavily on public finances, which are in disarray in many countries. Greece became the first Western country that entered the danger zone because of this, and there are others lining up. Some economists even whisper that the U.S. and the U.K. might, at some time, be in such great financial difficulties that they are left with no other choice than to default on their debt. In any case, one can safely predict that the aftermath of the Great Recession will be felt for quite a while and that a full recovery will definitely take a great deal of time.

In addition, there is still the danger of a relapse, something that happened several times in the 1930s. If we don't fundamentally change, we will have these relapses, and we will see more crises. Actually, the NDEr who mentioned the combination of greed and indifference said something similar. She said, "If we return to business as usual, the whole thing will happen again in some or other form. And the next crisis will occur closer to this one. It will be more like instant karma: you do something, and immediately you'll get slapped in the face."

Other NDErs are sure that there is still more to come. According to one of them, "the worst is yet to come. There is a great inequality in wealth. We are living 'Marie Antoinette times' all over again."

He referred to queen Marie Antoinette who was married to Louis XVI, the last king of France. The French Revolution toppled their thrones, and they were both beheaded. According to the story, Marie Antoinette was told that the people were suffering from famine, and had no bread to eat. She allegedly responded, "Let them eat brioche (a kind of cake)." Although most probably a previous French princess said this, the quote was later used to demonstrate the complete ignorance and extreme self-interest of the excessively rich French royals and nobles, and the church in those days. The NDEr explained that we see something similar today, where the people at the top have lost all sense of reality while being consumed with greed. He hopes that the eventual reversal of this excessive inequality doesn't give rise to a contemporary Napoleon of some sort.

Manhandling of nature

Whereas the focus has been on the economy, and as an economist this topic is close to my heart, one NDEr told me not to focus on the credit crisis alone. "The credit crisis is really just the tip of the iceberg. Our greed is bringing disorder to the whole system of earth."

When asked about nature, another NDEr said, "The feeling I have is terrible. What we do to earth is incredible. It cannot continue like that."

The young man with the kidney condition whose grandfather showed him the future said, "I understood that we are nature, and that it is urgently needed to change our behavior. Otherwise, we will destroy the whole lot: nature, the earth, and therefore also mankind. This coincides very well with the idea of a unity universe: In the end, everything belongs to one great whole, where The Light is the binding factor: I am you, you are me, we are nature, nature is us.

Some other NDErs have said things such as, "There will be more natural disasters," and, "There are some climate processes, which cannot be stopped anymore. We are on the eve of great disasters. It has to do with water, but that seems a bit obvious now."

Obvious or not, problems with water have been a recurring theme in NDEs. For instance, at an IANDS conference, someone told me that in his NDE, he had seen three things that were going to take place. These were the collapse of some important tall buildings that would shock the world, a destructive flood that would affect many people along endless stretches of coastlines, and something that resembled people being pulled back from the ocean shores. The first event he recognized when 9/11 occurred, and the second when the Christmas tsunami of 2004 struck. The third event has yet to take place.

The NDEr who correctly predicted the Great Recession in March 2008 was also sure something was going to happen, and that it has to do with water. However, she was not able to explain exactly what it was. During the NDE, it is perfectly clear what is meant, but once back in the four space-time dimensions, the knowledge can no longer be accessed. As with the credit crisis, she will possibly remember it again when something happens that would fall into place with the feelings she had during her NDE. She said she is not afraid of what might come, but, nevertheless, decided to buy an inflatable boat and store it in her garage.

It is perfectly normal that we use nature and its resources to sustain ourselves, and even to increase our standard of living. We have been doing that throughout history. But until the industrial revolution, mankind had a negligible effect on nature. That changed. Our influence on nature was stepped-up after the start of the industrial revolution. The scale on which we currently influence nature has increased in such a way that we can feel its effect everywhere, and it starts to threaten mankind itself.

One example that needs no further explanation is the great oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which started in April 2010, and lasted for several months. It has caused immeasurable damage. But I could also mention the extinction and near-extinction of many forms of vegetation and animal species. One NDEr was shocked by the little compassion there is with, for instance, the bluefin tuna. Even though this particular tuna is almost extinct, there is still a great demand for its meat, and it was impossible to reach an international agreement to prevent full extinction. The consequence: In a few years, there will not be tuna sushi on our menu.

The Eastern and Western Rubbish Patches in the Pacific Ocean are prime examples of pollution. These immense garbage dumps are formed from the plastic junk we continuously toss into the ocean. Anything made of plastic you can think of is there, such as Lego blocks, footballs, bottles, fishing nets, pacifiers, and all sorts of wrappings. These garbage dumps are unimaginably large. Although the exact size is yet unknown, some scientists estimate these patches to be twice the size of the U.S. They are not solid islands, but more like a soup of plastic that is held in place by swirling underwater currents. Plastic doesn't decay; however, under the influence of sunlight, and the continuous wash of seawater, it degrades into ever-smaller particles. This is how the plastic soup is brewed: We provide the ingredients, while nature does the rest. The soup is consumed by aquatic organisms and animals, and thus enters the food chain (including ours). It not only threatens the health of marine animals and birds, but our own as well.

Apart from the plastic soup, there is much more on our menu. The main course would still be air pollution, which is causing global warming. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris estimates that if we continue with "business as usual", the global temperature will increase in the coming decades by 3 to 4.3 degrees Fahrenheit. It may not seem like much when we look at our thermostat, but outside our homes it definitely is.

In March 2009, in Copenhagen, Denmark, there was a conference at which the world's top climate scientists discussed the latest findings in their fields. The conclusions of this scientific conference are really alarming. The first conclusion was that the observed emissions of carbon dioxide are so high that previously thought of worst-case trajectories will actually be realized. For many key parameters, the climate system is already moving beyond known boundaries. These include mean surface temperature, sea-level rise, ocean and ice sheet dynamics, ocean acidification, and extreme climate events. Moreover, there is a significant risk that many of the trends will accelerate, leading to an increasing risk of abrupt or irreversible climate shifts.

Further conclusions are that our societies are highly vulnerable to even modest levels of climate change. Poor nations are particularly at risk. Temperature rises of above 4 degrees Fahrenheit will already be very difficult to cope with. Scientists consider 4 degrees is unavoidable as things develop now. However, there are some scientists who have calculated temperature rises of up to 11 degrees Fahrenheit. That would really be disastrous!

Global warming will make our oceans a bit warmer, which will cause more hurricanes to ravage cities near our shores. We are already experiencing this. It will also cause more rainy days, and the rain will not be spread evenly over the surface of our planet. Some places will see much heavier rains and, consequently, more damaging floods and mud slides. But in other places, there will be increased heat waves and intense draughts. There will be more deserts. The climate change will differ between countries and regions, and have different effects on us and future generations.

According to some ecologists, the credit crisis will be nothing compared to the environmental problems we will encounter. This coincides with what an NDEr said about the tip of the iceberg. The Copenhagen conference concludes that there is no excuse for inaction. We already have many tools and approaches to effectively deal with the challenge of climate change. We have the economic means, technological know-how, and managerial knowledge, but they must be vigorously and widely implemented to achieve the required transformation of our society and create decarbonized economies. We just have to decisively direct our energy and resources at that goal, and it will come about.

It will have great benefits too! There will be a sustainable energy job growth, reductions in health and economic costs (because, if we do nothing, these will be huge), and the restoration of ecosystems.

Apart from a global rise in temperature, there is another serious and partly related problem: the shortage of water for an increasing world population. In all but a few places worldwide, clean water is becoming increasingly scarce, even in the U.S., with Las Vegas as an excellent example. Las Vegas gets its water from the Colorado River and the Hoover Dam. The level in the Hoover Dam lake (Lake Mead) has decreased in the last years, and could run dry in 2021. In fact, the city uses more water than there is supply. Currently, it is a known problem, and in television programs, we are informed about it. However, NDErs have been expressing their concern for many decades.

For example, one NDEr told me that from her NDE, which took place 30 years ago, she knew that the distribution of water would become a serious problem. According to her, fights and possibly even battles will occur over water. However, only recently, there are scientists who predict that the climate change will lead to wars. But it's not only the lack of clean drinking water that does it. The worldwide rise in temperature also threatens food production, especially in poor countries. People will try to migrate to places where there is food and water, and this migration will lead to conflicts. Actually, the desperate situation in Darfur, Sudan, is regarded as the first climate war. The desertification boosted the struggle between communities in that country. There will be more of these Darfur-kind of internal conflicts, but we cannot rule out that there will also be full-blown, cross-border wars and increased terrorism.

According to many NDErs, the environmental challenge is a very important topic, but expanding more on this falls outside the scope of this book. Nevertheless, the message is that NDErs have been warning us already for a long time about the way we treat our environment, and that severe problems lay ahead if we don't change quickly. ###

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Christophor Coppes holds a PhD in economics and has worked for many years in the banking industry. His interest in near-death experiences dates to 1979, when he read Raymond Moody's *Life After Life*. A few years ago, he wrote a book in which he compares the essence of NDEs with those of five world religions. In 2008, he became president of the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS) in the Netherlands. Christophor is a board member of the Society for Worldwide Dentistry and has participated in dental projects for underprivileged school children in Kenya and Cambodia. He lives in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

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Four Ways to Teach the Truths that Transform the World by Guy Finley

We human beings are born with an indefinable longing to grow beyond ourselves, to penetrate and illuminate the mysterious depths of our own heart. The ideal and pursuit of perfection is literally seeded into our soul; it pervades our very being. Our longing to walk among the stars is not out of reach; the wish to be eternal goes with us everywhere. In more down-to-earth terms, if we wish to live without resentments that linger in our hearts and rid ourselves of fear with all of its debilitating limitations, we must shed the skin of our selfishness. We must learn what it means to consciously suffer ourselves without complaint and have compassion even toward those with whom we disagree. If we do this, we would be on our way to being immortals. Christ's admonition, "Be ye gods" rings true in our innermost ear.

But what we have yet to realize is the actual nature of these celestially prompted longings that push us along to fulfill this promise of our higher nature. The truth is that these forces serve us as both a *disturbance* and an *invitation*: they are one and the same, cosmic opposites that once realized reveal the path back home to our True Self.

Nothing can stop us from receiving the Niagara Falls of celestial impressions whose light not only serves to reveal the *still in the dark* character of our undeveloped nature, but also pours into us, all that is needed to evolve beyond it. Now all we need is to learn -- and practice -- the specialized part we must play in our own transformation.

Say that we've worked hard to be more aware of ourselves in the Now, and that for this effort we catch a glimpse of how quick we are to judge others, to criticize them for their "failings." This pain that strains us -- and those we touch with it -- is itself a creation of a false sense of our own perfection. But our awareness of its punishing presence within us *is the same as our invitation to transcend the negative nature that is responsible for it*. So, if we want to realize the higher level of Self that reveals the need for further transformation, then we have work to do. We must actualize this new level of ourselves by acting from our new understanding in a whole different way.

In each instance where we see that we still have more to understand about ourselves, we must use our lives to become a living example of those qualities of character that we need to learn. In other words, in order to transcend what we have seen as limiting us, we must teach, by example, what we would further understand.

Following are four ways to teach the truths that transform the world we live in, even as we ourselves are transformed by our own actions. It is vital for us to remember that these suggested practices are designed to help us achieve an enhanced spiritual balance in ourselves, even as, through these same actions, we teach others around us about the possibility of living from a whole new order of self-understanding.

1. We teach others when we do not react in alarm to some potentially frightening news or event. The world around us receives the lesson that those events -- in themselves -- do not have the power to make or break the awakened soul. Our lesson -- if we will teach it -- is to see that we need not ride along on our own three-alarm nature that loves getting set off.
2. We teach others when they can see us laugh at our own mistakes. The world around us receives the lesson that there is a big difference between making a mistake and thinking of oneself as being a mistake. Our lesson -- if we will teach it -- is to see that any compulsive wish to be seen as perfect in the eyes of the world is a punishment that can never be a part of our true peace and contentment.
3. We teach others around us when we won't give voice to complaint. The world around us receives the lesson that there are superior ways to handle times of discomfort or disappointment that do not include expressing negative emotions. Our lesson -- if we will teach it -- is to see that we can use passing dark states to awaken to and realize an interior wisdom that knows how to use everything for its own growth.
4. We teach others whenever we refuse to psychologically defend ourselves -- be this against simple sarcasm or even vicious slander. The world around us receives the lesson that what is true needs no defense and that what is false cannot be defended. Our lesson -- if we will teach it -- is the realization that people only feel the need to attack what frightens them and that we need never live in fear of any frightened person.

Our real spiritual development is under invisible laws: To grow, we must learn. To learn, we must teach. To teach we must lead. To lead, we must make mistakes. Making mistakes tills the ground of us, making it receptive to new and higher lessons, and thus the positive spiral completes itself, even as it rises above its original starting point.

Take these suggested exercises and work with them to teach the truths that transform the world around and within you. Make up your own exercises based on the lessons you know that life is asking you to learn. Always strive to remember that anything we work to change in ourselves cannot help but change *everything*. What can be more promising than that? ###

(Excerpted from *Let Go and Live in the Now*, Published by Red Wheel/Weiser, 2004)

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.

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Help Me, I'm Growing Old! by Chuck Gallozzi

Leo writes, "Chuck, I was reading a book last night that said, 'In every old person is a young person wondering what happened.' Soon, I'll be 47 years old, which to me is like being two years older than God. As a quasi-atheist, when I look into the abyss, I become very angry. Yet, having a total and complete lack of insight, I am unsure why this feeling alights. Can you share your ideas on growing old?"

Did you ever see someone get upset over a misunderstanding? It happens all the time. Even if the perceived injustice is entirely imaginary, the anger one feels is real. But once one realizes that things were not as they were imagined to be, the anger subsides. You may FEEL like you don't have much longer to live, and get angry because so much more remains to be done, but what are the facts?

In 27 years, you'll be my age. You'll be 27 years OLDER, but not OLD (unless you allow your imagination to tell you that you are). One of the chief causes of human suffering is REVERSE VISION. That is, we tend to focus outward when we should be focusing inward, and we tend to look inward when we should be looking outward. Or we may be thinking about the past, when we should be thinking about the future, and vice versa. It seems, we're always facing the wrong direction.

Here's what I mean. You see a 23-year-old man and think he's half your age and has a long life ahead of him, so you envy him and are filled with sadness. Why are you miserable? Because you're facing the wrong way. If you turn around and face the other way, you'll see Gwen Beer, who wrote her first novel, a best-seller, at age 96 (as reported in the Toronto Star, December 6, 2004). Wow, and you're only 47? Rejoice and allow yourself to become filled with excitement. Just think of all you have yet to accomplish and savor in life.

A friend just called to explain that he's at his wits' end because his basement apartment got flooded. He's looking inward, at his own problems. No wonder he's frustrated and angry. Yet, just a few days ago, the lives of millions were thrown into complete chaos because they were the victims of raging tidal waves that swept across Southeast Asia and beyond. If my friend had looked outward at the problems facing the tsunami victims, he would be happy that his problems pale in comparison.

Can you see how changing the direction we face also changes our perspective? Being miserable is a state of mind, so move to a different state. It's easy when you realize that you're not growing old; you're just living a long life. Personally, I never felt that I was growing OLD, but always believed I was growing BETTER. Can't you say the same for yourself? When you do, you will discover life is glorious, not odious.

You talk about being a quasi-atheist, but that's like being quasi-pregnant. It's not possible. One is either pregnant or not and an atheist or not. What you mean to say is you're confused and in doubt. Many others share the same feelings. Especially those that were reared in religious environments and later grew disillusioned by the hypocrisy and untenable beliefs that were foisted on them. Such people find the word "God" conjures up bad memories. But don't confuse God with bad memories. Don't get hung up on a word. Change the word to something more meaningful, such as Creator, Intelligence, or anything else you feel comfortable with.

Again, it's a matter of facing and looking in the right direction. Instead of looking back at bad memories, take a walk in the park and look at what surrounds you in the present. A log cabin never was nor ever will be created by chance. But once intelligence (man) enters the picture, it's a simple matter to create one. As you look around the park and see butterflies, beetles, and frogs – all of which are infinitely more complex than a log cabin – isn't it obvious that Intelligence is at work? If you allow yourself to soak in the wonders of nature you will find belief in a Creator self-evident. Just because you don't have all the answers doesn't mean you can't believe in the obvious; mainly, an Intelligence or Creator that brought us into existence.

Not only is our world filled with creatures, but they are all cared for. Nature provides for their needs. Nature cares about its members. It cares about you. It has granted you the resources you need to thrive. As you are confused about life and your role in it, you naturally feel vulnerable. But vulnerability isn't a sign of weakness. It is a sign of strength. It signals that you are facing your fears. What a wonderful position to be in! For at no other time is life so exciting, joyful, and bursting with energy than when we live it with courage. So, take heart. Don't be afraid, for you are not facing a tsunami that will sweep you away, but a rising tide that will lift you to new heights, if you allow it to.

I already mentioned a major cause of suffering is reverse vision. Another is denial. And by that I don't mean a river in Egypt (the Nile), but I'm referring to our tendency to blame others and circumstances for our unhappiness. Although growing OLDER is unavoidable, growing UP isn't. But growing up, that is, accepting responsibility is necessary before we can lead fulfilling lives. When we accept responsibility for how we respond to the events in our lives, we gain control; we become masters of our fate.

There is a fine line between acting irresponsibly and responsibly. It is the difference between saying "I feel miserable," and "I DON'T WANT TO feel miserable." There is a subtle but big difference between the two. For when you say, "I DON'T WANT TO feel miserable," you are implying you have a choice, which is true. Responsibility, then, is all about making the right choices. It's about deciding to have the right thoughts.

For example, when responsible people begin to feel blue, their train of thought may be as follows, "Since I don't want to feel miserable, what am I going to do about it? Complaining, getting upset, or drowning in self-pity doesn't help, so what positive steps can I can take?" This line of reasoning is rational and solution oriented. MERELY

LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS LEADS TO THEIR DISCOVERY. Isn't that what Christ meant when he told us that if we knocked, the door would be opened, and if we asked, we would receive?

Part of making responsible choices is choosing HOPE over DESPAIR and FAITH in yourself and the world over SELF-DOUBT and CYNICISM. Armed with these tools, we will be able to whittle down mountain-sized problems to the size of molehills. We will also have the courage to leap into the unknown. After all, the abyss you wrote about is frightening only if we don't have faith in a Loving Presence that will catch us before we splat into the bottom of the chasm.

How would you feel if your favorite composer, vocal artist, or comedian refused to perform? I know how I would feel. I would feel cheated because the world needs them. We need the pleasure of laughter and the joy of music. And, you know, Leo, the world is counting on you to do your part. Regardless of how you feel, the world is depending on you to spread joy to those you meet. Once you accept this challenge, a funny thing happens, all the joy you give away is multiplied many times over and returned to you. I guess what I am trying to say is the best way to end your suffering is to end the suffering of others. ###

About Chuck Gallozzi

Chuck Gallozzi lived in Japan for 15 years, immersing himself in the wisdom of the Far East. He is the author of the book, [*The 3 Thieves and 4 Pillars of Happiness, 7 Steps to a Life of Boundless Joy*](#). He is also a Certified NLP Practitioner, speaker, and seminar leader. Among his additional accomplishments, he is also the Grand Prix Winner of a Ricoh International Photo Competition, the Canadian National Champion in a Toastmasters International Humorous Speech Contest, and the Founder and Head of the Positive Thinkers Group that has been meeting at St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto since 1999. He was interviewed on CBC's *Steven and Chris Show*, appearing nationally on Canadian TV. Chuck is a catalyst for change, dedicated to bringing out the best in others and his main home on the web is at: www.personal-development.com.

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by Chuck Gallozzi

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A Blooming Riddle

Beca Lewis

My brother sent a riddle to me that involved pairs of words. Since I figured out the last riddle he gave me, I felt as if I had to live up to that reputation and figure out this new one. I wrote it out, put it by my computer, and periodically worked at it trying to find the answer.

Nothing came to me.

Finally, he gave me a simple hint that completely changed the premise for me, and therefore my perception about what I was looking at and for, and two minutes later the answer was apparent.

It was so easy I literally smacked myself on the forehead for not seeing it sooner.

I had made it complicated instead of easy. Complicated instead of easy is always the premise of any perception that blocks our view of what is already present, like the answer to the riddle.

I bought a flat of pansies and planted them at various places around our house and in various soils. Some I planted in containers with super-soil in the sun, and others in containers with super-soil in the shade. Still others I planted directly into the ground without adding any additional amendments to the soil.

I suppose I was saying to the pansies, “Bloom where you are planted!” Of course they tried, after all they are flowers designed to bloom.

However, they bloomed with varying degrees of success. The poor pansies stuck in the ground with no help at all struggled along just barely blooming. Actually, they spent all their energy on their bloom and barely grew at all.

All the pansies in the containers with the super-soil bloomed and grew. However, the ones in the containers with the super-soil and in the partial shade bloomed the best. They didn't need to struggle to bloom; they bloomed in the location that suited them the best.

Of course, I can see the value of finding happiness no matter what the outside circumstances would appear to be. However, why suffer in those circumstances? We aren't pansies—no pun intended. We don't have to wait for someone to come along to water us, feed us, or move us to the perfect location.

We get to choose where to bloom.

The choice of find the perfect location and conditions in which to bloom may appear as a complicated riddle. We could look at all the circumstances we may find ourselves in

and wonder how to make it all fit together to find a way to bloom where it would be easiest for us.

However, like the riddle my brother gave me, beginning with the wrong premise means the riddle cannot be solved.

When I began with the correct premise to the riddle, the answer appeared as if by magic. No work was required, other than desire to solve the riddle. When we begin with the correct premise about our lives and situations, the solution will appear in the same way.

We have to shift our perception to the correct premise which always begins from within, never from without.

Of course, there may be a disagreement about what is the correct premise about life. Nevertheless, I ask you, since “what we perceive to be reality magnifies,” why wouldn’t we choose a premise that will result in ease, grace, peace, and loveliness.

It is not necessary for us to suffer. It is not required, and not desired. It is not what Divine Love, God, Spirit wants for us so why would we want it for ourselves?

We can plant ourselves in a location that suits who we are by beginning with the correct premise that we are already provided with the perfect container, soil, and conditions by the Master Gardener.

We can begin with the premise that we are intended to bloom easily.

When we trust in this fact, and take action in our lives based on this fact, we will find our outside circumstances shifting. We will not be creating something new; we will be revealing what is already present.

This law or perception is at work at all times, why not have it work in our favor.

Whichever perception we choose is always our choice, so why not choose the perception that reveals the perfect blooming conditions for every form of life? It’s what the Master Gardener intended isn’t it? ###

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>

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In Heaven As On Earth by Steve Wickham

Jesus said to Peter;

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

~*Matthew 16:18-19* (NRSV).

The church has a stern responsibility.

Jesus, above, has charged it - at Peter's initial control - with the destiny of eternity. The theory being, that whatever the church would allow here on earth, God will continue in heaven.

It is easy to see where this discussion is heading; we think about the variety of modern compromises the church is now making, or has made; we can see where we're going wrong.

The church involves custodianship for a generation. That's our task as we receive the baton from elders in the church of God before handing it on those seceding from us, our race ran. The length of our task is finite. The mission of the church is, however, eternal.

WHAT KIND OF HEAVEN DO WE WANT?

We normally think in the reverse. As Jesus said in the Lord's Prayer:

Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

~*Matthew 6:10* (NRSV).

We think how God must desire things, and we convert things here in accord with what we discern God would want. In effect, we truly wish to bring heaven here, perhaps never realising that by allowing or not allowing certain things we actually define heaven for all humankind.

Any non-believing person could safely make the assumption that the church resembles heaven and that heaven resembles the church - if they're so interested.

Heaven is an abstract concept. Yet, the church is the means to that end.

HEAVEN THEN VERSUS HEAVEN NOW

Whenever Jesus mentions heaven in the gospels he never normally means a single dimensional heaven; no, heaven is normally quite a dynamic Spiritual location.

Of course, whilst we're here, heaven will always mean something wholly incomprehensible to us.

We cannot grasp what heaven will be like, and we only ever get glimpses of it in this life - that is to live eternally via the knowledge of God (John 17:3).

We're only beginning to understand heaven when we consider it as a place here and to come. That's twin-dimensional. But surely our vast and infinite God has more in mind for something so marvellous. We can be sure this is true.

And still, we have the ability to design heaven as we live it here and now.

This is Jesus' point. Like any good husband, Christ is offering His bride, the Church, full capacity to function (Ephesians 5:21-33). Yet, will she be faithful? Will she bind the right things? Will the right things be loosed?

Only each pastor, priest, church fellowship and denomination can answer that one for themselves, for their generation.

But again, it's a stern responsibility for everyone in leadership. We will need to be ready to give a proper account of ourselves (Hebrews 4:13; 13:17), and why we may've bound or loosed things that previous generations did not.

We can begin to see, here, that the charge for the church is an eternal one. Nothing changes as far as truth and love and wisdom are concerned. We do not live in a special age - other than via technological advance that outstrips all previous ages. Virtue, however, remains unchanged. So, why would we make the compromises that are currently being made?

Are we happy to live in a heaven (to come) resembling the earth as it is heaven (now) today?

We may find that the two are more linked than we realise.

What sort of heaven are we, personally, prepared to settle for? ###

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/>

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~ ***Daring To Be Yourself*** ~
by Peter Shephard

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Do Cell Phones Cause Brain Cancer? **by Andrew Weil, M.D.**

Question: I was alarmed to hear that the World Health Organization has concluded that cell phones can cause brain cancer. So many people depend on their mobile phones. What should we do?

Reply: Not so fast. The World Health Organization hasn't concluded anything yet on this issue, but its International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has just classified radiofrequency electromagnetic fields from cell phones as "possibly carcinogenic to humans." This occurred after a working group of 31 scientists from 14 countries reviewed available research, including some not yet published, and found "limited evidence" of a positive association between cell phone usage and glioma, a type of malignant brain tumor. While the group found the association "credible," it could not rule out that "chance, bias or confounding" could be responsible for the findings. In other words, the group saw a "possible" link between cell phone usage and gliomas but didn't view the association as strong enough to be considered "probable." It has not concluded that cell phone emissions cause cancer in humans.

The chairman of the Working Group, Jonathan Samet, M.D., M.S., of the University of Southern California, stressed the need for more research, especially on the long-term, heavy use of mobile phones, and suggested that in the meantime consumers can take such precautions as texting or using hands-free devices in order to reduce their exposure. Because brain tumors take many years to develop, we may not know for some time whether or not cell phone use really is associated with these malignancies. In the meantime, I think it makes sense to implement the precautions I've recommended in the past:

- Use landlines when available, especially for lengthy conversations.
- In your car, use a cell phone that has a remote antenna outside the vehicle.
- Always use a headset and keep the phone itself away from your body.
- Find out how much radiofrequency energy your cell phone emits. (This measurement is called the Specific Absorption Rate or SAR; find the SAR for your cell phone. The SAR permitted in the United States is 1.6 watts per kilogram.) The Environmental Working Group, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization that advocates for health-protective policies, has a cell phone radiation database that may be easier to use to check on your phone's emissions.

To eliminate the most immediate danger of cell phone use to yourself and others, don't talk or text while driving. ###

Andrew Weil, M.D., is a world-renowned leader and pioneer in the field of integrative medicine, a healing oriented approach to health care which encompasses body, mind, and spirit.

Combining a Harvard education and a lifetime of practicing natural and preventive medicine, Dr. Weil is the founder and director of the [Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine \(AzCIM\)](#) at the University of Arizona Health Sciences Center, in Tucson, where he is also a Clinical Professor of Medicine and Professor of Public Health and the Lovell-Jones Professor of Integrative Rheumatology. Dr. Weil received both his medical degree and his undergraduate AB degree in biology (botany) from Harvard University. Dr. Weil is an internationally-recognized expert for his views on leading a healthy lifestyle, his philosophy of healthy aging, and his critique of the future of medicine and health care. Approximately 10 million copies of Dr. Weil's books have been sold, including *Spontaneous Healing* and *Why Our Health Matters*. Online, he is the editorial director of [drweil.com](#), the leading web resource for healthy living based on the philosophy of integrative medicine. He can be found on Facebook at [facebook.com/DrWeil](#), Twitter at [twitter.com/DrWeil](#), and Dr. Weil's Daily Health Tips blog at [drweilblog.com](#).

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Lifestyle Diets **by Renee Feldman**

It's become increasingly clear that diets don't work. Most of the popular diets that people have tried over the past few years focused on restricting or even eliminating whole food groups. People lost weight on these diets and then, of course, gained the weight back. Now there is a small and hopefully growing trend towards lifestyle diets.

Lifestyle diets focus on how one lives and then propose easy to implement changes to help people to lose and most importantly keep weight off. This is very important because yo yo dieting is dangerous and may cause some serious health threats. A study done at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center by Dr. Ulrich found that the women who yo yo dieted the most had a lower number of natural killer cells. These killer cells are the cells in your immune system that aim at viruses.

The statement above does not mean that people should not try to lose weight. Obesity contributes to many disease states and is being considered as a separate risk factor when health care professionals evaluate heart disease risk. What this does mean is that people need to lose weight by making small changes that fit into their lives. Here are some principles that people can follow to make small changes in order to achieve permanent weight loss:

- Plan Ahead
- Portion Control
- Fill Up With Fiber
- Take 3 Deep Breaths And Drink Water
- Balance Your Choice
- Cheat

Plan Ahead: Eating mindlessly with no plan is like driving to a new destination with no directions. You need to have a plan for eating at home, work and while traveling or eating out. Fill your refrigerator with fresh cut vegetables and fruits so that they're easy to get to. If you have to keep high fat and sugar foods in your home, put them somewhere where it's difficult for you to get to and stay away from that food. Better yet, don't have it in your home in the first place. Buy pre-cooked lean protein, low fat high fiber cereals or low sodium, low fat frozen dinners so that there is always healthy food around.

Portion Control: This is one of the most important areas of any lifestyle diet. Some people refuse to eat "rabbit food" and have lives that socially revolve around food that isn't good for weight loss. These people will do best by significantly reducing their portions. Start by leaving a third of what you normally eat on your plate.

Fill Up With Fiber: Fiber is an essential part of weight loss because it makes you feel full and helps you with elimination. When purchasing cereals, check the label for a fiber number of over 5 grams. This will be under the carbohydrate section. You can also get lots of great fiber from fruits and vegetables.

Take 3 Deep Breaths and Drink Water: When you are about to binge and are eating out of emotion as opposed to hunger try this: stop and take 3 long and slow deep breath, exhaling as slowly as possible. Then drink a big glass of water and wait 10 minutes before you go for that binge. You just may skip it.

Balance Your Choice: This step has a small learning curve, but try to have a bit of a protein and a carbohydrate with every meal. This will help to control your blood sugar levels and insure more adequate nutrition.

Cheat: Everyone needs a break and if you stop eating all the foods that you enjoy, you will resent your eating habits and binge. Therefore, plan one day per week, it could be a special event where you allow yourself some of your favorite foods. Try to still be aware of portions when you do this. ###

Renee Feldman MA <http://www.eatrighttips.com> is an Exercise Physiologist and instructor certified by the American College of Sports Medicine. She is one of the first personal trainers in the United States, a champion competitive bodybuilder and dancer. Her new weight loss program: "Eat to Cheat" was the inspiration for this article.

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Developing Optimism by Linda Sapadin, Ph.D.

There are some days in which you feel anything but optimistic. So much stuff is going on that is problematic - in your personal life, in your family life, in the world. It just gets to you. You feel overwhelmed. Your mind is clouded with worry. Your soul is burdened with heaviness. And you feel there's nothing that you can do to make anything better.

You try hopelessly to quell your worries. Yet they still keep haunting you. You may feel ready to give up. But hold on. Though there may be no easy answers to resolving your issues, here are two things that you can do right now to ease your burdens.

#1. Change "I don't know" thinking to "One thing I do know is...."

The phrase "I don't know...." (i.e. I don't know why I stay in this awful relationship)" is usually tossed off casually as a way to avoid confronting a deeper, more revealing assessment of a situation. "I don't know" avoids the need to address specific, underlying fears and insecurities. Though this may initially seem like a good idea (why get into something so complex), the downside is that it makes you feel powerless. You can't find solutions for what is indecipherable.

If you want to become more optimistic, challenge yourself to be bolder and clearer. For example, you might say "One thing I do know is that I stay in this awful relationship because I'm afraid to be alone." Or, "One thing I do know about this awful relationship is that the constant fighting is draining me." Does this solve your problem? Certainly not. Does it create the possibility, that owning up to what the problem really is, might help you find a solution? Yes, it does.

#2. Make an "I can't" statement into a compound sentence: "I can't ... But one thing I can do is..."

The phrase "I can't..." (i.e. I can't quit my job now") can leave you feeling pretty hopeless. No choice. No power. No strength. You're stuck!

Instead of continuing in this powerless position, shift the focus away from what you can't do to something you can do. For example, you might say, "I can't quit my job now, but I can start exploring other career moves." Or, "I can't quit my job now, but I can go back to school to prepare myself for a more satisfying career."

How do these easy-to-make changes help you become more optimistic? Because knowing what the problem is, even if it's really serious, helps you understand what's going on, then sets you in the right direction to find a solution. Instead of amorphous smoke, you've got a defined dilemma. And once you understand what your dilemma is, you can explore options, you can develop strength, you can establish power. ###

Linda Sapadin, Ph.D. is a psychologist in private practice who specializes in helping people enrich their lives, enhance their relationships and overcome self-defeating patterns of behavior. For more information about her work, contact her at lsapadin@drsapadin.com or visit her website at <http://www.psychwisdom.com/>. Visit her newest website www.sixstylesofprocrastination.com which is devoted to understanding and overcoming debilitating procrastination patterns.

~ **It's About Time!** ~

The Six Styles of Procrastination and How to Overcome Them

by **Linda Sapadin, Jack Maguire**

Overcoming procrastination is one of those things we'll get around to--eventually. *It's About Time!* goes beyond time management books on this eternal problem by tracing procrastinating behavior to personality traits and early family dynamics. Using quizzes and case studies, psychologist Linda Sapadin helps readers find their own personal style and then helps them tailor an individual program for change.

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The Surprising Power of Intelligent Optimism

by Dr Jill Ammon-Wexler

Lately our everyday reality seems to leave little room for optimism. People around the world are suffering from very real natural and personal crises. Our TV's and newspapers are packed with sadness and fear.

In times like these it is very important to hold tight to a powerful life success tool – optimism.

Why optimism? Because optimism activates your amygdala (pronounced ahh-mig-da-la) — a very important part of your brain that increases your ability to create positive answers to life's challenges.

So what is Optimism?

You might fairly ask just what optimism really is. Well first, optimism is not just a Pollyanna everything is wonderful attitude. And it goes beyond the concept of “positive thinking.”

Optimism is actually a refined mental style of how one chooses to respond to life. Webster's Dictionary defines optimism as “an inclination to put the most favorable construction upon actions and events, or to anticipate the best possible outcome.”

But you might fairly ask how you can be optimistic in the face of today's often overwhelming challenges?

So let's face it, life can be very tough at times. But even in the midst of personal turmoil and overwhelming crisis, the same thing holds true: We choose how to interpret what is happening to and around us, and we also choose how we will respond.

Our Greatest Life-Success Power

This ability to choose our mental outlooks and actions is actually the greatest life-success power we humans have.

Virtually everything happening to you right now offers this choice. And it doesn't even matter if that thing is “good” or “bad.” Even if something undesirable happens, you still have the power to choose how you will interpret and respond to that event.

It's admittedly easy to feel overwhelmed at times, and fall into a habit of making non-optimistic choices.

Such an “attitude meltdown” often comes hand-in-hand with chronic or overwhelming stress. But each moment you DO have a choice to either let life wear you down, or to set your mind in a more positive direction.

Mayo Clinic researcher Dr. Toshihiko Maruta reports that optimists have a dramatically higher level of physical and mental functioning than pessimists. “How you perceive what goes on around you and how you interpret it has an impact on your longevity, and also affect the quality of your entire life.”

The Optimism-Financial Success Connection Optimism is also at the very heart of financial health.

Why do I say this? Ask almost any self-made millionaire about their path to prosperity and you’ll get a similar story: Just like learning any other skill, learning to create lasting financial success is learned. And the learning process is based on trial and error.

Consider the term “trial and error.” A “trial” means you’re going to try a lot of different approaches to achieving financial success, and “error” means not all of them are going to work.

I’ve personally been there myself. On my personal path to creating financial independence I’ve tried many different approaches. Some of these trials have been successful, but many have led straight into out-and-out struggles. And have there been errors along the way? Oh yes!

Here’s the big lesson I’ve learned along the way: One of the most important tools in your “financial health tool bag” is the ability to remain optimistic. There are other important tools to be sure ... like passion, drive and focus. But without optimism, you’ll never get beyond where you are today.

But optimism isn’t about denying reality. And it isn’t about being idealistic, or chasing after some totally unrealistic condition or situation.

“Intelligent Optimism”

Many people seem more adept at practicing dissatisfaction than optimism. They worry about money, complain about their business, and compare themselves poorly to others. And in terms of the physical health of their brains — they are actually building and strengthening the neural networks associated with their problems.

But most psychologists agree that the aptitude for optimism is not genetically determined. In other words, anyone can learn to be optimistic. All it requires is a good grasp of reality, along with practice.

In a very interesting cover story, the French magazine *Psychologies* (January 2005) suggested we focus on “intelligent optimism.” According to their insight:

Intelligent optimists don’t deny problems, they adjust to them while still seeking an opportunity for progress.

Intelligent optimists don't allow themselves to get carried away by circumstances they can't change. They instead focus on things within their grasp, and that they can enjoy.

Intelligent optimists also know that for every problem there is (at least the beginning of) a solution, and that the search for that solution can be inspirational in itself.

Intelligent optimists are also not afraid of negative thoughts, which they realize are just internal messages they can choose to either listen to, or reject.

Just Nod “Yes”

How can you develop intelligent optimism? It all starts with a realistic attitude — with facing the reality of your current situation, identifying what you can't change, and going to work on what you CAN change or improve.

But here's an interesting tool that can move you along even faster: Learn how to activate key portions of your brain by nodding your head “yes.” A recent Ohio State University study proved that nodding or shaking your head serves as “self-validation” that confirms to yourself how you feel about your own thoughts.

The researchers found that nodding your head up and down is, in effect, telling yourself that you have confidence in your own thoughts, And it's important to note that this is true whether those thoughts are positive or negative. Shaking your head does the opposite: It gives you less confidence in your own thoughts.

“One of the most surprising things we found,” explained lead researcher Dr Petty, “is that if you're thinking negative thoughts while you're nodding, this actually strengthens your disapproval. What head nodding does in this case is increase your confidence in your negative thoughts. In contrast, when the thoughts were mostly positive, then nodding increases confidence in your positive thoughts.”

Try this: As you go about your day today, be aware of how you are responding to what is happening around you.

Try making a conscious choice to respond, rather than just automatically react in your customary way. And nod your head to remind yourself that you are holding a positive, “intelligent optimist” attitude. ###

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How Conflict Can Make or Break You **by Dr. Alan Zimmerman**

"What I don't like about office Christmas parties is looking for a job the next day."
~Phyllis Diller

Ask people what they hate the most and you'll probably hear the same three things over and over again: death, taxes, and conflict. Very few people want to die. Very few people want to pay taxes. And very few people want more conflict. But the truth is ... you're going to get all three of them, whether you like it or not. So you had better have a plan for dealing with all three of these issues if you want to be truly happy.

Well, death is a religious issue, and taxes are a political issue ... neither one of which is the focus of the "Tuesday Tip." But conflict is an interpersonal issue, an issue that is at the very heart of my program on "Cooperation and Conflict: Working Together Instead of Coming Apart." For more information about this program, [click here](#).

The bad news is... interpersonal conflicts are increasing in frequency and intensity. All you have to do is watch the news or listen to a Congressional debate to verify that. And in 2006, ComPsych, a Chicago-based employee assistance program, using their StressPulse Survey, announced that "people issues" replaced "workload" as the number one cause of job stress.

To make matters worse... most people have had little or no training in how to deal with conflict. They just fall into one of two automatic, instinctual responses: fight or flight. The problem is ... neither one works. Those that opt for the fight response use aggression. They use sarcasm, cynicism, abuse, and ridicule. They live by the motto that says, "War does not determine who is right, only who is left." And some of them may think, "The last thing I want to do is hurt you, but it's still on the list."

Those that opt for the flight response use regression. They shut up, freeze up, refuse to talk about it, or pretend everything is okay. They may even use the silent treatment as a weapon to control, frustrate, or manipulate another person. Other times the silent approach is taken because it seems to be the least painful.

In fact, marriage counselors estimate that at least half of the cases they see involve a silent husband. Men have a tendency to avoid conflict in discussion. That's why Will Rogers noted, "There are two theories to arguing with women. Neither one works."

Sometimes the two approaches of fight and flight play off of one another. The more one fights the other to get him to talk, the more withdrawn the silent one becomes. It's a lose-lose battle.

And to make matters even worse... people without conflict resolution skills are very expensive. They cost their companies and their relationships a great deal of wasted time, money, and energy.

According to Warren Shepel and his "Health & Wellness Database" in 2005, billions of dollars of effective labor are lost every year due to conflicts on the job. Unresolved conflicts turn into stress, and stress turns into absentee-ism. As Julian Knight reports from the BBC News Online, "Bullied workers suffer battle stress," and "Bullied employees take, on average, seven days per year more sick leave than others."

In and of itself, that would be bad enough, but the rate of presentee--ism is estimated to be three times higher than absentee-ism. In other words, lots of workers show up in body but they're not there in spirit. Unresolved conflicts have them so badly distracted that they're not very productive.

The same goes for a manager's productivity. According to Watson and Hoffman in their article, "Managers As Negotiators," 42% of a manager's time is spent addressing conflicts in the workplace. And almost any manager will tell you there are better ways to use his/her time than try to help two people get along. After all, their effectiveness in resolving conflicts isn't very impressive. As the "Dana Measure of Financial Cost Of Organizational Conflict" reported earlier this year, 90% of involuntary departures are due to unresolved conflict.

My conclusion from all of this? People had better learn some conflict resolution skills and learn them fast. I suggest a three-step process.

1. Become aware of conflicts before they fester too long.

Some people do not even notice the conflicts swirling around them. When I've counseled people, I can't tell you how many wives I've had crying, talking about how bad her marriage is, while the husband meekly says, "I thought everything was okay."

Other people ignore the conflicts thinking they'll just go away. It's like the poster I saw one time: "Some cause happiness WHEREver they go, others WHENever they go."

Open your eyes. Pay attention to the conflicts that are popping up at work and at home. In most cases, those conflicts will not disappear on their own. So identify them before they catch you off guard.

2. Become aware of what is happening inside you when you're involved in a conflict.

Actually, there are two things going on inside you ... one biological and one psychological...

Biologically, the blood flow to your brain slows down. At the very time you need to be at your best ... rational and intelligent ... your brain is dumbing you down. So it's no

wonder you sometimes react irrationally or can't think of anything intelligent to say in the midst of a conflict.

Psychologically, your imagination takes over. You experience an "A," an "Activating Event", such as someone not greeting you in the morning or somebody else not listening to your ideas at a staff meeting.

Your "Activating Event" turns on your "B" or "Belief" system. You add meaning, make assumptions, and draw conclusions. You may begin to believe the other person was trying to hurt your feelings or deliberately ignored your ideas. You may begin to believe his behavior was unprofessional, and you may begin to believe the offending party is unworthy of your respect.

All of that leads to a "C," your "Consequence," or your reaction. You may react emotionally rather than rationally. You may respond to the other person with rudeness or a put down. And indeed, based on your "Beliefs", your reaction may seem totally appropriate. You may even get defensive when someone accuses you of over-reacting.

In such cases, I defer to Napoleon Bonaparte, the rather shrewd military leader. He said, "Never ascribe to malice, that which can be explained by incompetence."

More often than not, your problem is not one of over-reacting. Your reaction is exactly right based on your "Beliefs" about the "Activating Event." No, your problem may not be over-reacting. It's probably due to over-interpreting.

What you need is an awareness of what is happening inside you when you're involved in a conflict. And then you need to slow down your responses when your emotions begin to take over. As Phyllis Bottome, the twentieth century writer, put it, "There are two ways of meeting difficulties: You alter the difficulties, or you alter yourself to meet them." Which takes us to the third step...

3. Learn, practice, and use new and better conflict resolution responses.

Here are a few of the conflict skills you need to get started...

***Stay calm.**

When you're in the right, there's no reason to lose your temper; when you're in the wrong, you can't afford to lose it. As the wise and venerable actress Betty white advises, "Keep the other person's well being in mind when you feel an attack of soul-purging truth coming on."

***Clarify everything.**

Under stress or in the midst of conflict, it's so easy to "think" you understand when you really don't. It's like the guy walking down the street who notices another man struggling with a washing machine in the doorway of his house. When he volunteered to help, the homeowner was overjoyed. After several minutes of fruitless struggle the man said to

the homeowner, "We'll never get this washing machine in here." To which the homeowner replied in amazement. "In? I'm trying to get it out!"

***Avoid "you" language.**

Whenever you say something like "You make me feel", you're going to have an angry or defensive person on your hands. And that only makes the conflict more difficult to resolve. Instead, say, "When this happens ... or ... when you do this, I feel ..." You're taking responsibility for your own feelings and not blaming the other person. Unfortunately, losers take a different approach. As one loser put it, "I didn't say it was your fault; I said I was blaming you."

***Acknowledge your responsibility.**

Even if your boss is a complete jerk, you've probably done something ... or failed to do something ... that has added to your strained relationship. Take the doctor's advice. As physician Andrew W. Mason prescribes, "Admit your errors before someone else exaggerates them."

***Use tact.**

If you're brash and abrasive, chances are the other person will be also. Don't give the other person any more feedback than he can handle. You may need to give feedback piece by piece, week by week, working on one issue at a time.

Be gentle and tactful but honest and assertive in the midst of a conflict ... like the six guys playing poker. After losing \$500 in one hand, Smith clutched his chest and toppled over, dead at the table. To decide who was going to tell his wife, his buddies drew straws. Anderson picked the short one. "Break it to her gently," they all urged. "Leave it to me," he said. When Smith's wife answered the door, Anderson said, "Your husband just lost \$500 playing cards." "How much?" the wife yelled with eyes blazing. "Tell him to drop dead."

Conflict is inevitable. Stress and broken relationships are not ... if you learn and use these three steps.

Action:

Where do you tend to over-react or over-interpret? What could you do instead? ###

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

~ **Pivot** ~

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by **Guy Finley**

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Reading the Akashic Records

Tami Simon speaks with Linda Howe

Linda Howe is the founder and creator of the Center for Akashic Studies and author of the first book ever published on how to read the Akashic Records. Linda discusses her experiences accessing what she calls "the records," a dimension of consciousness that holds the vibrational archive of every soul in its journey. By exploring the records, which she refers to as "this point of light that opens within itself." We learn who we are, to what we connect and how we can enter into a conscious relationship with our own soul.

Tami Simon: Linda, you've written a new book, and there's also an audio series on "How to Read the Akashic Records." To begin with, what are the Akashic Records?

Linda Howe: That's a great question. The Akashic Records are a dimension of consciousness. That's really what it is, and what's held within the Akashic Records is a vibrational archive of every soul and its journey.

Tami Simon: That's interesting because a topic like the Akashic Records both brings up for me a ton of intrigue, but also a certain amount of skepticism. So whenever anyone says it's a dimension of consciousness—anything—whatever, UFOs, how do I know it's a real thing.

Linda Howe: It's really natural to be skeptical about anything that we can't see. There are so many unseen dimensions of consciousness. The most simple, and one of my personal favorites, is sleep—a dimension of consciousness where there's so much activity occurring, but we don't see it in the physical. Another dimension of consciousness is memory, and we all have memory and we have our own selection of experiences that we carry within us. Like you have your own memories of your own life. You have your memories. I have my memories, but there's something about the sharing of those memories. Like if you were to start telling me about something that happened when you were young. If it's a real memory, in the telling of it there is—it's like it rings true. There's a sense that it speaks to us. The truth always goes into our hearts. We always absorb the truth, and it registers. And so even though I wasn't there with you in third grade, you can tell me about what happens from this memory that you had, and I will know, just by you speaking it to me that it's true. And in the speaking of registered impressions, as we speak about things in the records, we know they're true, because human beings always recognize the truth. It's within us to know the truth. So I don't even know if I'm answering your questions, Tami.

One is the issue of skepticism, and that skepticism is really valuable when we approach these deep internal regions. We have the skepticism to protect ourselves from being, you know, bamboozled or taken or something. But it's also important to know—you can be

in a roomful of people, and when someone speaks the truth—Ahh!, you know it. And that's how human beings know the record.

Tami Simon: Maybe you could tell me how you first encountered what you're calling the records, the Akashic Records, and how the truthfulness of the records was revealed to you.

Linda Howe: When I was in my twenties, I was on the great search, along with many people, and I was looking for two things. I wanted wisdom and I wanted power, energy, access, really, to the vital life force. And I wanted the two together. I was a pretty smart person, I went to college, did all the things we all do, and I seemed to have a lot of knowledge, and I even had some self-knowledge. But there seemed to be some built-in limitations. Knowledge was great, but it just didn't seem to go far enough for me.

And energy and power—as a person I have a lot of energy—but it doesn't necessarily mean that it was useful to me, like it could help me get up off the couch and move in the direction of achieving my life's dream. So in my journey I was looking, and I went to readers, classes, self-help workshops—a lot of things—and they were all fabulous. At one point a friend of mine said, "You want to have a reading with this woman who works in the Akashic Records, and she will let you know your life's purpose." So this was it. I was on.

So I called the woman for this reading, and what was very interesting—she had a really strong Texas accent—and I really didn't understand her very well. She told me she was reading my Akashic Record, and what happened in that hour of my life is I had an overwhelming sense that she got me. She knew me. She accepted me. And it was amazing, because she was giving me information that seemed really secondary—like I should be on TV or something. But what was primary was this very strong sense that she knew who I was and who I am in my life and within the bigger picture.

It went in so deep and it rocked my world. Whatever this Akashic Records thing is—and I had no idea—whatever it is, that's what I want. I want to be able to do that. So in my own journey I spent some years doing Tarot card readings. That was fabulous and what happened is I saw more knowledge, not much power. From that I went on to work in classic core shamanism, lots of power, lots of wisdom, but it wasn't really the best fit. And I ended up on a panel in a workshop with a woman who was teaching the Akashic Records. She was so esoteric that I had no idea what she was talking about, but there was a quality that she had. And I took her class and again had this very distinct experience of being really known, completely. There was this sense of being very intimate, yet very open and that anything was possible all at the same time.

That was it. I was on my way with this Akashic Record. It's the point where knowledge and power converge--wisdom and energy—now it's empowered. It's at that convergence point where those things are all available. I've seen in my own experience that one of the great things about working in the record—whether my own record or others—it reminds

me of when you fall in love and you feel that you can do anything. That's how I've experienced working in the record.

Tami Simon: Now you're talking about working "in" the records. How do you know when you're "in the records?"

Linda Howe: I'm working with a specific code, this pathway prayer process that will access that particular dimension. Two things happen: the reader gets moved into a very receptive state of consciousness—very open, very allowing, very receptive. We call forth one set of records. At the same time within this specific space it's very protected and reverent space. Some people experience physical sensations, maybe like warmth in the heart or in the head. There's an atmosphere or climate of peace and safety and great compassion and understanding.

Sometimes when I'm in the records and asking about things and doing some journaling I think, "what's the big deal, what is this?" But after I close the records, I come back to an ordinary state of consciousness. It then occurs to me, Oh yes, that really was different than this. It's a perceptual shift, and it can be very subtle.

It's in the family of conscious channeling. We're channeling energy and information. We are not channeling entities, so there are no personalities coming through and using our vehicle. The energy flows through us. The wisdom flows through us.

Another way we know we're in the records is we bring our questions into the records. I might have a question about how to be a better parent—I have a teenage son, so this is the question on my mind six out of seven days. In my ordinary state, I have stacks of parenting books and great ideas, but when I go into the record and ask how can I parent this boy, it's really very different. I often get calmed down and trust that he is loved and a child of the universe and that he has his own path. Know that the same force that is with you, Linda, is with him.

Tami Simon: But that advice seems very general. Do you get advice that's specific to the soul of your son and his . . .

Linda Howe: Yes, yes, yes, and specific to our relationship and our roles. I have a nontraditional family. My partner is a woman and my son is an adopted African American. So when I have gone into the record and asked about raising this child, I get information not only about this lifetime, but about the many lifetimes that we've know each other and what we are doing as a group, and how in this lifetime we are working with finding love and making peace within ourselves with regard to many stereotypes—the experience of being outsiders. And so, yes, there is the more specific information.

Tami Simon: You mentioned the pathway prayer process, that specific entryway into the records. So it sounds like there are lots of different ways that people enter the records,

but that's the way that works for you and the way that you teach? So tell us what the pathway prayer process is.

Linda Howe: There are many ways to access the records and people are naturally attracted to a way that will work for them. It's really pretty simple. The way this prayer works—it's within the sacred prayer tradition. There are people who get into the records through hypnosis, through many years of meditation and fasting and prayer. But there is a sacred prayer tradition, and in that tradition the vibration of the words of the prayer, the structure of the prayer lays a track in consciousness. It's like an energy track or a pathway from an ordinary state of consciousness to a nonordinary state of consciousness.

The saying of the prayer and the repetition of words build a bridge of light. It's almost like weaving this bridge that allows a person to shift into a different part that is both within themselves and beyond themselves, because the record is truly within us. It's in our DNA and it's beyond us. It's both. And the prayer provides for the human vehicle to move into that place. On this track, energy and information move through. Does that make sense?

Tami Simon: Are you able in the course of an interview like this to tell us what the pathway prayer is?

Linda Howe: I certainly could, can I tell you Tami, I have a little problem with this. On one hand I want to say, Yes, here take it! Because I really believe anybody who wants it should have it. But I also know that there's a responsibility that comes with this, which is why the book, the CDs, because in these tools—two different ways of learning, two different ways of transmission—the supporting information that an individual needs are contained within them. Kind of like the rules of the road. I don't know, do I hand you the keys to my car if you haven't read rules of the road. So I don't know.

We've just taken a big leap from no one knowing about the records to now, anybody can access them, but we're in a learning, training state. Twenty-five or fifty years from now people will access the records consciously, deliberately as a matter of just that moment of choice, a moment of volition. We're just not there yet.

Tami Simon: What gives you confidence that that's going to be true in decades?

Linda Howe: (laughs) Got it in my records. It's the time we're in. We're in the most wonderful time. This is a period of a spiritual revolution, the likes of which we haven't seen. We only see this every few hundred years or even more. We are moving into the time when individuals are waking up to knowing who they are as divine beings, but also knowing that they have the right of being human to have access to their own spiritual authority; to have conscious relationships with our soul. This is the real buzz of what's happening, and that's where we're headed.

Tami Simon: Your work is the first work that I've seen that has publicly and widely said anybody can read the Akashic Records. Can really anybody listen to an audio series or read a book and be able to read the Akashic Records? Is this a skill that's that achievable by anybody who wants to learn?

Linda Howe: Absolutely. It's within each of us. Everybody has a soul. Every human being has the potential to know themselves at the soul level consciously. This is not just for a select few, for just a group of spiritual elders. Anyone who wants to can learn to do this. Practice will take you deeper. With these tools people get in the front door, they can get into the building. They can come inside where the light is on. And from there they will be led. I have no doubt. It's built within us. It's part of who we are.

Tami Simon: You mention that there are rules of the road, certain prerequisites to read the records. Do you have to have a certain purity of heart or sincerity? Can anybody just learn how to do the pathway prayer, and you're in?

Linda Howe: On one hand, the records will meet you where you are. There are many people who have been on the path and are really very sophisticated spiritually. The records will meet them where they are. There are also people who are just becoming aware of the spiritual dimension of life. They're just stepping onto their path. The records will meet them wherever they are. There's no studying. What is required is a sincere desire to know your self and to know the truth more. There's a natural protection within the record. The record will not be corrupted. So that even if someone with a little malice or ill will tries to use the records they won't be able to.

One of the ways we know we're in the records is by the kind of results they're producing. We know by the communication, the messages, and the energy. So when there is ill will or the desire to manipulate or control, the records aren't going to participate. They just don't play.

Tami Simon: So in the records all the information about my past lives is held, but also all the information about my future lives as well?

Linda Howe: Yes, yes, yes. When we move into this nonordinary state of consciousness time collapses. There's only now, but in the records there's really only now—you can feel it much more strongly than in the physical plane. The other thing that's important, it's not a parlor game. These other expressions of our past or future lives reveal themselves as they support us now, in the present. So if there's something beneficial from a future or past incarnation that will be brought to me.

Tami Simon: It sounds like you're describing it more in terms of what might be needed in the current situation than just all the possible information I could have about the past and the future.

Linda Howe: Well, that's how it's revealed. If you go to a department store, the place is filled with a million different things and a number of different departments. If you need shoes, you go to the shoe department. The fact that there's a lawnmower in the building really doesn't make much difference. It's nice to know there's a lawnmower for when you need it. [With the records] you may think you need shoes, but really what you need is a coat, and someone will bring you a coat.

Tami Simon: Now it seems paradoxical when you talk about everything in the records being in the now and yet there is information about our past and future lives. How do you understand that when you're in the records themselves? I'm in the now, but yet I'm seeing all this information about my own or someone else's past or future lives?

Linda Howe: The point where we are now, this very moment, every expression of my soul . . . everything that I have had in the past or will have in the future . . . everything from every corner of the universe is directed toward me in this moment. If there is anything interfering with my ability to experience the present fully, that can be cleared, brought to mind by having the records open and looking. So what is interfering with my ability to experience the present moment fully and completely.

Now in the moment is being supported by all other nows.

Tami Simon: If someone really doesn't connect with reincarnation and past lives, how would they make sense of the records? Is there any other way to make sense of it?

Linda Howe: That's a great question. Actually, there is. For people who understand that there is a spirit of God, of the universe, a great mystery—but there is a spirit to it—but this spirit is an all-loving, all-knowing presence, that is an angle on the Akashic Records.

We don't even have to go into past or future lives. What's really important in the record is that experience of the infinite moment. That in this moment being wholly and completely loved and enjoyed and appreciated and at peace—access to that dimension of that eternal peace.

Some people are very interested in other lifetimes and other people aren't, and that's okay. As a tool of consciousness development, what seems to be true is that when we are in the state of compassion, nonjudgment, it's easier to let some of the shadowy parts of ourselves come up and release them. In the space of love everything becomes possible—all healing and transformation. People work in the records because there's a strong sense of dignity there.

Some people will open the records and read poetry or scriptures, it's a very enriching, deep experience.

Tami Simon: It's sounding like there are different aspects to being in the records. The first sounded like being in some huge Library of Congress, where you could get all the information you wanted to know, but now it's sounding more like a feeling zone that you can be in where healing is available, so I'm getting a little confused.

Linda Howe: Well, actually, both are true. There is an atmosphere or climate in the records, and that is a zone of infinite peace. So in that place these other pieces are available as needed. The Akashic Record is the vibrational record of everything, every soul and so everything is in there, but we don't need everything right now.

When we look at what the record is composed of there are two parts. The first is that there is the essence—the soul-level essence of who you are. It's a point of consciousness, the soul-level of who you are as a soul as a being throughout time, and that's fixed, set. And then there's another dimension to the record, which is much more active and that is like the catalog of life experiences that you have as you become aware of who you really are. They're related, but different aspects of the same thing. We have the fixed part and the responsive part that is available as we grow and change throughout our lifetime.

Tami Simon: You said that it's a vibrational record of every soul. Does that include animals, cities, nations, planets, video cameras?

Linda Howe: I would draw the line at video cameras, but you know everything's alive, so sure. Yes, yes, yes. There is a record of the planet, of the solar system. Every star has a record. Animals definitely have records. Absolutely. You know the energy of Chicago is different from the energy of Santa Fe, and opening the records of a place will give some insight into what's really the purpose there. What's the original intent? People can open the records of their house.

There's also a sanctity here. You don't go around opening records without permission, so I'm not going to open your records unless you ask.

Tami Simon: It's one thing to think of the soul of an animal, but another thing to think I'm going to read the records on a house. What do you mean? The soul of a house? How does a house have a soul? What is meant by a soul?

Linda Howe: At the level of a dwelling, the molecules are moving very slowly. There's a quality of aliveness, even though it's not moving vibrationally as fast as a bird or a human. That house is the convergence of all the materials, the ground where it sits, all the people who have helped to build this house. It is a physical manifestation that holds possibilities. You walk into some houses and they feel great and into others and they feel terrible.

Like some people are very connected to different elements and different parts of nature, like some people are really connected to animals and can communicate and receive

insights from them, but somebody else might not get much at all. A lot of this is who are we and to what do we connect. What is most real for us?

I had a student who had an affinity for crows. Through her work in the record she developed a sanctuary for crows. It would not occur to me to open up the Akashic Record of crows. And it turned out to be a beautiful resource for her and her service to the planet, and to that animal group. Not everybody is going to open up the Akashic Record of crow and get anything. We're all here to do different work. One of the great things about working in the record is you follow the light and it will take you where you can be most useful.

Tami Simon: What do you mean by that—follow the light?

Linda Howe: When we work in the record there is a sense of light or aliveness. It's almost like it has a pulse. When you start to follow that and tune in and follow the guidance, it gets stronger. If something is not right for an individual there won't be a lot of energy on it. It's not like tapping into a healthy vein. We want to follow the energy in the direction it's going, and then more comes.

Tami Simon: What do you think is the best metaphor for the Akashic Records? Meaning, you can think of it like the Library of Congress or a huge computer with infinite storage space. Yet we're talking about it more like a room with endless rooms that you can enter. What metaphor works the best for you?

Linda Howe: Hmm, I don't know. On the one hand I want to say, a point of light within a great sphere of light. That might be the best.

Tami Simon: In your book you mention that there are lords of the records—sort of keepers of the records, guards of the records. What are they like?

Linda Howe: Sure, sure, sure. There's this group called the lords of the Akashic Records. Their job is to protect the sanctity of the record itself, so that the record doesn't get corrupted. The lords of the records don't reveal themselves, like they don't have names and they don't visit with us. They're not like spirit guides. We're talking about a body of consciousness, a group of beings whose purpose is to maintain the essential nature of the records and also to determine who gets in, what information comes through, what energy gets transmitted. They're like an operational team, but also keeping the record from intrusion or corruption or being used for ill purposes.

Tami Simon: How can someone corrupt the records?

Linda Howe: Well they can't. People will try. The record itself is indestructible.

Tami Simon: Now Linda, you've written the very first book on how to read the Akashic Records. When did you know in your own life that this would be what was called for?

Linda Howe: When I was in my twenties and I was on the search, along the way I recognized that there were so many wonderful ways of knowing truth, of knowing light, of knowing divine presence and they were all good. What I also noticed was that mainstream religions—you know, I'm from the Midwest—were not giving me or my friends or the people I knew much of what they needed. I would go to different churches or religious groups and always get something good, but I saw, this is great if you're a white, American male with a certain income.

The days of spiritual theory have worn thin. There has to be a way for individuals to have a direct spiritual access to their own authority that stands on its own and doesn't have to stand within a religion. This doesn't conflict with any religions. But for individuals to do this on their own and to find their way.

When I had this reading with this woman, Terri, from Texas it blew me away. It touched me in such a profound way.

Tami Simon: Thank you Linda. ###

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A Simple Strategy for Simplifying **by Leo Babauta**

'It is preoccupation with possession, more than anything else, that prevents men from living freely and nobly.' ~**Bertrand Russell**

What do you do if you can't let go of something you own?

How do you deal with the "just in case" syndrome, or the "it has meaning" syndrome?

There's no easy answer for letting go of the emotional attachments we put into our objects, nor for letting go of the fear of what we might need in the future. But for me, the answer has been to change how I look at ownership.

Ownership, for me, is more fluid and less concrete.

We don't own something for life — that's wasteful, because most of our lives we don't need or use something. We "own" something just for as long as we need it, and then pass it on.

Think of ownership like a public library — we check things out when we need them, and then return them when we're done, so that others can use them. If we ever need something again, we can always check it out again.

In practice, for me, this has meant passing books and clothes and other things on to friends and relatives when I don't need them. It means giving things away to Goodwill and other charities. It means getting things from Goodwill, used book stores, thrift shops, Craigslist, Freecycle, friends and family. And yes, sometimes buying things that I owned years before.

This means sometimes spending a little more, but it also means I'm giving away a lot of value, and others benefit from things I think are great. It means things pass through my life, into the lives of others, and I don't try to hold onto anything. It means no object holds much emotional meaning for me, and so the meaning is instead put into experiences, relationships, conversations, the moment.

Some examples from a reader who is moving and has trouble parting with some possessions:

1. The baby's things. She (the reader) says, "We don't know if we want to have another baby in a few years. It's hard to look at all of our daughter's outgrown clothes and toys and items and think of selling them/giving them away when there is a chance we might have another baby. Seems wasteful. But then again, it seems stupid to ship a whole huge hoard of stuff simply to safeguard 'in case', when the reality is we may go through all that effort and never have another anyway."

Just In Case is the reason we hold onto a lot of things. The vast majority of the time, we don't need them. But we're afraid we might, so we hoard. It wards off insecurities about the future. I beat this by actual facts: I let go and see what happens, and in the six years I've been trying this, I've never regretted it once. Experience trumps fear.

If you need something, you can get it again. If you aren't using something, let someone else use it who might need it. And you'll save yourself a lot of expenses: moving the stuff, storing it, caring for it, mentally remembering everything you have, fixing things that get broken, cleaning things, stressing over how many things you have.

2. My books. She says, "I have an ereader now, and that will be a godsend down south. But I also have a bunch of nice books here, that I'd hate to part with. I have already paired my collection down to: only the novels that I plan to read again multiple times + reference type books + cookbooks. This still makes for a huge pile, and my mum pointed out that most of them will probably mould in the humidity anyway. Do I just leave them all here and replace them in eformat when/if I feel like reading them? Seems like more money down the drain."

Yes, give them to someone who would like them. You've read them, and you won't read them again (at least for awhile). If you need the info, it's probably online. If not, you can borrow the book from a library, or find it used online, or swap with someone online. It's not money down the drain if you enjoyed the books, and if you let someone else enjoy them.

3. Decorative things. She writes, "Picture frames, candle holders, woven baskets, all the little things that sneak up on you over the years... Seems silly to get rid of everything when we don't know what we'll need at the new place, and could end up buying some of it all again."

I've found that only a few pictures is all I need for decorating. We used to have a lot of candle holders and other decorative things, but when we got rid of them, it was liberating. Our house became emptier, but I found that I actually liked the emptiness. It means we have space to fill it with conversation, laughter, play, and silence. Whereas when we fill our house with stuff, we are doing it to stave off the void, to avoid having to fill it with experiences and silence.

There is almost nothing in my life that's irreplaceable, other than people. Sure, I love books, but there are so many others out there in the library and thrift shops and friends' homes that I will never miss the ones I give away. Sure, I would miss photographs if I lost them, but I put them all online now anyway, and more importantly, my life isn't in the photos but is happening now. Sure, I would need a laptop and a few clothes if my house burned down, but those things are easily replaceable.

I'd miss my blog if I lost it, but not because of the lost words ... I'd miss the readers.

And in the end, you learn that the people and the moment are all that matter. Everything else comes and goes.

'As long as our civilization is essentially one of property, of fences, of exclusiveness, it will be mocked by delusions.' ~Ralph Waldo Emerson ###

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](#).

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Accessing Your Inner Guidance by Brian Tracy

We know that the body has a natural bias toward health and energy. It's designed to last for 100 years with proper care and maintenance. When something goes wrong with any part of our body, we experience it in the form of pain or discomfort of some kind.

We know that when our body is not functioning smoothly and painlessly, something is wrong, and we take action to correct it. We go to a doctor; we take pills; we undergo physical therapy, massage or chiropractic. We know that if we ignore pain or discomfort for any period of time, it could lead to something more serious.

Every disease or ailment, whether it be cancer, diabetes, arthritis, high blood pressure or something else, has a series of warning signs. In every case, when we experience an abnormality, we tend to move quickly to do something to get back to normal. Our physical feelings tell us when we're well, and they also tell us when we're unwell, and we tend to obey them if we want to live a long, healthy life.

In the same sense, nature also gives us a way to tell what's right for us and what's wrong for us in life. Just as nature gives us physical pain to guide us to doing or not doing things in the physical realm, nature gives us emotional pain to guide us toward doing or not doing things in the emotional or mental realm. The wonderful thing is that you're constructed so that if you simply listen carefully to yourself-to your mind, your body and your emotions-and follow the guidance you're given, you can dramatically enhance the quality of your life.

Just as the natural physical state is health and vitality, the natural emotional state is peace and happiness. Whenever you experience a deviation from peace and happiness, it's an indication that something is amiss. Something is wrong with what you're thinking, doing or saying. You're an incredibly complex organism, and your feelings of ease and unease, happiness and unhappiness, can be triggered by a myriad of factors. But the bottom line is that your feeling of inner happiness is the best indicator you could ever have to tell you what you should be doing more of and what you should be doing less of.

Unhappiness is to your life as pain is to your body. It's sent as a messenger to tell you that what you're doing is wrong for you. There are many reasons why people don't listen more closely to their feelings and, especially, why many people are reluctant to use their own happiness as the standard by which to judge the events in their lives. I've studied this subject for many years, and I think that there are three major myths about happiness that each of us believes to some degree.

The first myth about happiness is that it is not legitimate or correct for you to put your happiness ahead of everyone else's. Throughout my life, I've met people who have said

that it is more important to make other people happy than it is to make yourself happy. Of course, that is nonsense.

Human beings are happiness-driven organisms. Everything we do in life is oriented toward maintaining and increasing our level of happiness. We are psychologically constructed so that it's impossible for us to be any other way without making ourselves mentally and emotionally ill. The fact is that you can't give away to anyone else what you don't have for yourself. Just as you can't give money to the poor if you don't have any, you can't make someone else happy if you yourself are miserable.

The very best way to assure the happiness of others is to be happy yourself and then to share your happiness with them. Suffering and self-sacrifice merely depress and discourage other people. If you want to make others happy, start by living the kind of life and doing the kind of things that make you happy.

The second myth, which is closely tied to the first myth, is the admonition that we're here to serve others rather than ourselves. Many poems and essays repeat that theme. They say that we've justified our life on this earth if we've made some other person happy on the way through. But as I've said before, making others happy goes hand in hand with making ourselves happy. It's through service to others that we achieve a sense of meaning and purpose in life. Only when we lose ourselves in doing something that we feel benefits someone other than ourselves do we experience transcendence, do we feel ourselves rising above the tedium of day-to-day activity. To paraphrase Robert Louis Stevenson, everybody makes his living by serving someone. And the key is to serve with joy and happiness.

The third myth about happiness is that someone else's definition of happiness is valid for you. Often, we feel a little uneasy if we're not happy doing something that someone else thinks should make us happy. Many people allow their parents to influence their choices of career and find themselves miserable as a result. They want to please their parents, they want to make them happy, but they're unable to experience any joy doing what they're doing.

Happiness in life is like a smorgasbord. If 100 people went to a smorgasbord and each put food on his plate in the quantity and mix that each felt would be most pleasing to him, every plate would be different. Even a husband and wife would go up to the smorgasbord and come back with plates that looked completely different. Happiness is the same way. It's composed of a great variety of ingredients, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Each person requires a particular combination of those ingredients to feel the very best about himself or herself.

And your mix is changing continually. If you went to the same smorgasbord every day for a year, you probably would come back with a different plateful of food each time. Each day-sometimes each hour-only you can tell what it takes to make you happy.

Therefore, the only way to judge whether a job, a relationship, an investment, or any decision, is right for you is to get in touch with your feelings and listen to your heart.

In the play *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand, there's a scene where someone asks Cyrano why he, as an incredible individualist, should refuse to compromise his ideals or principles for anyone. He replies with these classic words: I long ago made the decision that in every area of life, I will choose the path of least resistance in this, that I will please at least myself in all things. That is one of the great lines in literature. To have the courage to please at least yourself in all things. Do what feels right for you, at the very minimum, and if it makes others happy as well, that's terrific. If it doesn't, you'll know that you have done the very best you could under the circumstances.

You're true to yourself only when you follow your inner light, when you listen to what Ralph Waldo Emerson called the still, small voice within. You're being the very best person you can be only when you have the courage and the fortitude to allow your definition of happiness, whatever it may be, to be the guiding light of every part of your life. Whenever you feel stressed, anxious, worried or uneasy about any part of your life, it's nature's way of telling you that something is wrong. It's a message that there's something that you need to address or deal with. There's something that you need to do more or less of. There's something that you need to get into or out of. Very often, you'll suffer from what has been called divine discontent. You'll feel fidgety and uneasy for a reason or reasons that are unclear to you. You'll be dissatisfied with the status quo. Sometimes, you'll be unable to sleep. Sometimes, you'll be angry or irritable. Very often, you'll get upset with things that have nothing to do with the real issue. You'll have a deep inner sense that something isn't as it should be, and you'll often feel like a fish on a hook, wriggling and squirming emotionally to get free.

And that is a good thing. Divine discontent always comes before a positive life change. If you were perfectly satisfied, you would never take any action to improve or change your circumstances. Only when you're dissatisfied for some reason do you have the inner motivation to engage in the outer behaviors that lead you onward and upward.

You've heard of Murphy's Law, which says that whatever can go wrong will go wrong. Well, there's another law, which says that left to themselves, things have a tendency to go from bad to worse. When something is making you unhappy, for any reason, the situation will tend to get worse rather than better. So avoid the temptation to engage in denial, to pretend that nothing is wrong, to wish and hope and pray that, whatever it is, it will go away and you won't have to do anything. The fact is that it probably will get worse before it gets better and that ultimately you will need to face the situation and do something about it.

There's an old saying that you can't solve a problem on the level that you meet it. This means that wrestling with a challenge is usually fruitless and frustrating. For example, if two people who are in a relationship together are constantly fighting and negotiating and looking for some way to resolve their difficulties, they're attempting to solve the

problem on the wrong level. Dealing with the problem on a higher level, those people would ask the question, In terms of being happy, is this the right relationship for us in the first place? As soon as you begin to use happiness as your measure of rightness, you begin to see a situation entirely differently. Many people work very hard and experience considerable frustration trying to do a particular job. However, in terms of their own happiness, the right answer might be to do something else, or to do what they're doing in a different place, or to do it with different people-or all three.

Following are a few questions for you to answer in this arena of happiness. Many people refuse to even consider these questions because they're afraid that if they do, they won't like the answers. But nevertheless, have the courage to clearly define your life in your own terms. Here are the questions; write them down at the top of a sheet of paper, and then write as many answers to each one as you possibly can.

The first question is: What would it take for me to be perfectly happy? Write down every single thing that you can imagine would be in your life if you were perfectly happy at this very moment. Write down things such as health, happiness, prosperity, loving relationships, inner peace, travel, car, clothes, homes, money, and so on. Let your mind run freely. Imagine that you have no limitations at all. Write everything down whether or not you think you have the capacity to acquire it or achieve it in the short term. Your first job is always to be clear about what it would take for you to have your ideal life.

The second question is a little tougher. Write down at the top of a page this question: In what situations in my life, and with whom, am I not perfectly happy? Force yourself to think about every part of your day, from morning to night, and write down every element that makes you unhappy or dissatisfied in any way. Remember, proper diagnosis is half the cure. Identifying the problematic situations is the first step to resolving them.

The third question will give you some important guidelines. Write down at the top of a sheet of paper these words: In looking over my life, where and when have I been the happiest? Where was I, with whom was I, and what was I doing?

By asking and answering those three questions, you begin to delve deeper and deeper into yourself and your feelings. You begin to accept your own happiness as a legitimate standard by which to evaluate everyone and everything in your life. You begin to develop the wisdom, the courage, and the foresight to organize your life in such a way that you become a much happier person.

Once you have the answers to those questions, think about what you can do, starting immediately, to begin creating the kind of life that you dream of. It may take you a week, a month or a year, but that doesn't matter. Every single thing you do that moves you closer to your vision of happiness will be rewarding in itself. You'll become a more positive and optimistic person. You'll feel more confident and more in charge of your life.

And now here's the most important exercise of all. It is from the advice of Dr. Gerald Jampolsky, who asks, Do you want to be right, or do you want to be happy? He recommends that you set peace of mind as your highest goal and that you select and organize around it all your other goals in life. You hold up each part of your life to this standard of peace of mind, and you either get into or get out of anything that adds to it or detracts from it.

The most important part in this process of getting in touch with your feelings is to begin to practice solitude on a regular basis. Solitude is the most powerful activity in which you can engage. Men and women who practice it correctly and on a regular basis never fail to be amazed at the difference it makes in their lives.

Most people have never practiced solitude. Most people have never sat down quietly by themselves for any period of time in their entire lives. Most people are so busy being busy, doing something-even watching television-that it's highly unusual for them to simply sit, deliberately, and do nothing. But as Catherine Ponder points out, Men and women begin to become great when they begin to take time quietly by themselves, when they begin to practice solitude. And here's the method you can use.

To get the full benefit of your periods of solitude, you must sit quietly for at least 30 to 60 minutes at a time. If you haven't done it before, it will take the first 25 minutes or so for you to stop fidgeting and moving around. You'll almost have to hold yourself physically in your seat. You'll have an almost irresistible desire to get up and do something. But you must persist.

Solitude requires that you sit quietly, perfectly still, back and head erect, eyes open, without cigarettes, candy, writing materials, music or any interruptions whatsoever for at least 30 minutes. An hour is better.

Become completely relaxed, and breathe deeply. Just let your mind flow. Don't deliberately try to think about anything. The harder you don't try, the more powerfully it works. After 20 or 25 minutes, you'll begin to feel deeply relaxed. You'll begin to experience a flow of energy coming into your mind and body. You'll have a tremendous sense of well-being. At this point, you'll be ready to get the full benefit of these moments of contemplation.

The incredible thing about solitude is that if it is done correctly, it works just about 100 percent of the time. While you're sitting there, a stream, a river, of ideas will flow through your mind. You'll think about countless subjects in an uncontrolled stream of consciousness. Your job is just to relax and listen to your inner voice. At a certain stage during your period of solitude, the answers to the most pressing difficulties facing you will emerge quietly and clearly, like a boat putting in gently to the side of a lake. The answer that you seek will come to you so clearly and it will feel so perfect that you'll experience a deep sense of gratitude and contentment. You may get several answers in

one period of quiet sitting. But in any case, you'll get the answer to the most important situation facing you every single time.

When you arise from this period of quiet, you must do exactly what has come to you. It may involve dealing with a human situation. It may involve starting something or quitting something. Whatever it is, when you follow the guidance that you received in solitude, it will turn out to be exactly the right thing to do. Everything will be OK. And it will usually work out far better than you could have imagined. Just try it and see.

That brings us to the final point on getting in touch with your feelings: You must learn to trust yourself. You must learn to take time to listen to your emotions and your feelings as to what makes you happy or unhappy, as to what feels right or wrong. You must absolutely trust that what is right for you is the right thing to do. You must never compromise on what your inner voice tells you to do. You must never go against what you feel to be correct. You must develop the habit of listening to yourself and then acting on the guidance you receive.

When you listen to yourself and act on what you hear inside, you are setting out on the road to personal greatness. ###

Brian Tracy is a leading authority on personal and business success. As Chairman and CEO of Brian Tracy International, he is the best-selling author of 17 books and over 300 audio and video learning programs. All Rights Reserved. <http://www.briantracy.com/>

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Focus and the Family **by Annie Burnside, M.Ed.**

As I have heard many spiritual teachers share through the years, *the energy flows where the attention goes*. When this tenet becomes consciously utilized on a daily basis, its universal truth is apparent and life-changing. Focus is a creative tool that leads to physical manifestation. The passion, joy, and enthusiasm behind this focus will determine the ultimate outcome of a heart's desire. Focus creates a consistent and expanded energy flow that allows for greater access to inner wisdom. Energy that is consciously directed toward a specific desired creation announces to the Universe, loudly and clearly, intention. I have found that when this divine connection is open and pulsating with purposeful energy, assistance from both the spiritual realm and earthly connections expands exponentially providing more frequent intuitive flashes and divinely inspired synchronicities.

I encourage all parents to assist their children in understanding the importance and value of focus. Teach your children to make their own daily assessments of exactly where they are placing their powerful energy output. Help them to realize that focus is merely a building of energy toward a specific outcome. Children are never too young to understand, on the most basic of levels, that they are creating their own reality based on where they choose to focus their energy. The building block for this all-important spiritual teaching is the understanding that they are energetic and vibrational spiritual beings, first and foremost. This profound understanding is the doorway to remembering that they are deeply connected to and an integral part of All That Is. Once this groundwork has been laid through family discussions and continual reminders as to their very nature, it will be much easier to expand into teaching the importance of conscious focus, as well as all other spiritual facets, to their overall well-being.

Children should understand that where they choose to place their focus is always a personal choice. No one has the power to determine what we think, say, or do except for us. An individual's thoughts, words, and deeds provide a blueprint as to where his energy is currently focused. These energy patterns determine future reality, no exceptions.

Parents can help children understand the *spiritual mechanics* behind their focus by teaching them the universal law of attraction. The law of attraction states that like attracts like so children will come to understand that the Universe will give them exactly what they are asking for through their thoughts, words, and deeds, which are simply threads of energy. Awareness of the power of these three creative tools and the encouragement to consistently monitor them provides the starting point for conscious living in a family.

A mucky focus of energy will always create a mucky result. In any given situation or relationship, it is imperative to pause every so often to assess focus. Encourage your

children to become very clear on the energy offered to a specific subject and to the world at-large. Through your example, teach them how to recognize patterns of focus that may be moving positive energy away from a desired intention. As natural consequences arise which are not to their liking, help them to make changes in their energy output to keep them on course. You can assist your children in making a list of the different thoughts, words, and deeds that led them to this point in time and physical manifestation. Show them how to categorize these energetic offerings as either expansive or detrimental to intended outcome. As their spiritual guide, demonstrate the importance of wakefulness in regard to choices. On a regular basis, openly share your heart's desires and intentions and the energetic pathways utilized to create them. Consciousness is the understanding of where one places his powerful focus and the willingness to constantly change energetic offerings if necessary.

While at first it may seem daunting to children to take full responsibility for being cognizant of where they focus their energy, the confidence derived from this newly remembered aspect of their spiritual nature leads to the self-realization that they are indeed captains of their own ship. The freedom that this profound inner-knowingness and sense of worthiness brings cannot be underestimated. *As children knowingly exercise their rights as a conscious creator to focus their energy where truly desired, they will find their unique capacity to capture the rapture and experience their own divinity through their life lived.*

Annie Burnside, M.Ed., is a soul nurturer, author, public speaker and teacher specializing in conscious relationships and spiritual development. Her book *Soul to Soul Parenting: A Guide to Raising a Spiritually Conscious Family* (Wyatt-MacKenzie, June 2010) offers everyday mediums and universal, life-affirming themes to those families seeking to expand spiritual awareness. Annie resides in Chicago, IL with her husband and three children. www.annieburnside.com

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A Course in Miracles

Lesson 47

God is the strength in which I trust.

If you are trusting in your own strength, you have every reason to be apprehensive, anxious and fearful. What can you predict or control? What is there in you that can be counted on? What would give you the ability to be aware of all the facets of any problem, and to resolve them in such a way that only good can come of it? What is there in you that gives you the recognition of the right solution, and the guarantee that it will be accomplished?

Of yourself you can do none of these things. To believe that you can is to put your trust where trust is unwarranted, and to justify fear, anxiety, depression, anger and sorrow. Who can put his faith in weakness and feel safe? Yet who can put his faith in strength and feel weak?

God is your safety in every circumstance. His Voice speaks for Him in all situations and in every aspect of all situations, telling you exactly what to do to call upon His strength and His protection. There are no exceptions because God has no exceptions. And the Voice which speaks for Him thinks as He does.

Today we will try to reach past your own weakness to the Source of real strength. Four five-minute practice periods are necessary today, and longer and more frequent ones are urged. Close your eyes and begin, as usual, by repeating the idea for the day. Then spend a minute or two in searching for situations in your life which you have invested with fear, dismissing each one by telling yourself:

God is the strength in which I trust.

Now try to slip past all concerns related to your own sense of inadequacy. It is obvious that any situation that causes you concern is associated with feelings of inadequacy, for otherwise you would believe that you could deal with the situation successfully. It is not by trusting yourself that you will gain confidence. But the strength of God in you is successful in all things.

The recognition of your own frailty is a necessary step in the correction of your errors, but it is hardly a sufficient one in giving you the confidence which you need, and to which you are entitled. You must also gain an awareness that confidence in your real strength is fully justified in every respect and in all circumstances.

In the latter phase of the practice period, try to reach down into your mind to a place of real safety. You will recognize that you have reached it if you feel a sense of deep peace, however briefly. Let go all the trivial things that churn and bubble on the surface of your mind, and reach down and below them to the Kingdom of Heaven . There is a place in

you where there is perfect peace. There is a place in you where nothing is impossible. There is a place in you where the strength of God abides.

During the day, repeat the idea often. Use it as your answer to any disturbance. Remember that peace is your right, because you are giving your trust to the strength of God.

Commentary by Allen Watson

It is reported in the Gospel of John that Jesus said, "The Son can do nothing of himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing...I can do nothing on my own initiative, as I hear, I judge". Basically that is what this lesson is telling us: We cannot do anything by ourselves. When the lesson speaks of "trusting in your own strength" it is talking about attempting to do anything by ourselves, as an independent unit, separate from God and His creation. It is talking about operating as an ego. The lesson is saying that it is simply impossible.

Another example from the Gospels may help. Toward the end of his time on earth, Jesus compared himself to a vine, and his disciples to branches in the vine. He was speaking, I believe, from the perspective of the Christ; or perhaps it would be better to say the Christ was speaking through the man, Jesus. He said: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me....apart from me you can do nothing".

Think about it. Where does the vine leave off and the branch begin? The branch is *part of the vine*. That is its whole existence. It cannot operate independently; it cannot "bear fruit" if it is cut off from the vine.

We are parts or aspects of the Sonship, and the Son is one with the Father. "What [God] creates is not apart from Him, and nowhere does the Father end, the Son begin as something separate from Him". Sounds a lot like a vine and its branches, doesn't it?

When we try to operate independently we can do nothing. As we normally think of ourselves, what is there we can wholly predict and control? How can we "be aware of all the facets of any problem" and "resolve them in such a way that only good can come of it?". Left to ourselves, left to the limited resources of the self as the ego sees it, cut off from everything, we simply cannot do it. We don't have what it takes. "If you are trusting in your own strength, you have every reason to be apprehensive, anxious and fearful".

The lesson is asking us to recognize that we are not limited to what we may think of as our own strength; "God is the strength in which I trust." It is asking us to operate based on our union with God. From where we are at the start of things, it is going to seem as if

we are dealing with some kind of external God, a "Voice" that speaks within our minds or operates in circumstances to guide us:

Since you believe that you are separate, Heaven presents itself to you as separate, too. Not that it is in truth, but that the link [the Holy Spirit] that has been given you to join the truth may reach to you through what you understand.

So it may seem as if we are being asked to "submit" to a superior force, when in fact all we are doing is aligning ourselves with all the rest of our own being, from which we have dissociated ourselves. The Holy Spirit speaks for us, as well as for God, for we are one.

When we realize we cannot live on our own-when we accept our dependence on this Higher Power-God becomes our strength and our safety in every circumstance. His Voice tells us "exactly what to do to call upon His strength and His protection".

When we fear, we must be trusting in our own independent strength, which is nonexistent. Simply feeling inadequate for some task is a form of fear, arising from the belief I am on my own. "Who can put his faith in weakness and feel safe?". When fear arises, let me remind myself that I do not trust in my own strength, but God's. That reality can pull me up from fear to a place of deep, abiding peace.

To recognize our weakness as independent beings is a necessary beginning. If we deceive ourselves into believing we can handle everything on our own, without God, without our brothers and sisters, we will crash and burn eventually. But that recognition is not the point at which to stop; we must go beyond that to realize that we have the strength of God, and that confidence in that strength "is fully justified in every respect and in all circumstances".

Nearly every time I meditate I repeat, silently or aloud, the words that come near the end of this lesson:

There is a place in you where there is perfect peace. There is a place in you where nothing is impossible. There is a place in you where the strength of God abides.

Let us, today, pause frequently to reach down below "all the trivial things that churn and bubble on the surface of [our] mind", to find that place. ###

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