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There is a Peace. There is a Shelter. There is a Timeless Place within me that no darkness can shatter or dispel.

—*Guy Finley*

It's All in the Breath

Tami Simon speaks with Leslie Kaminoff

Tami Simon: ...Today my guest is Leslie Kaminoff. Leslie is a yoga educator with more than 30 years experience in the fields of yoga and breath anatomy. He's the founder of the Breathing Project, a New York City nonprofit dedicated to teaching the principles of individualized, breath-centered yoga.

Leslie Kaminoff is the coauthor of *Yoga Anatomy*, and with Sounds True a program called *Freeing the Breath: Health, Realization, and Clarity through Better Breathing*, where he helps listeners become liberated from dysfunctional breathing patterns and opens them to new levels of health and well-being.

In this episode of "Insights at the Edge," Leslie and I spoke about various misconceptions about better breathing, surrender, and what it might feel like to be breathed. We talked about a breath koan, and the power of attending to the exhale and allowing the inhale to take care of itself. Finally, we talked about the relationship between emotions and the breath, and what it feels like to take a beautiful breath. Here's my conversation—"it's all in the breath"—with Leslie Kaminoff.

Leslie, you're an expert on breathing, and what I'm curious about to begin, is somebody comes to you and they say, "I know I could have better health if my breathing was better. I feel it. I can sense it. I can sense that I'm tense sometimes. Sometimes my breathing is shallow. I don't have a lot of time to work on this to make any big changes in my life, but help me." What would you suggest?

Leslie Kaminoff: OK, first of all the word "expert" is kind of a scary word. I'm very interested in breathing and its relationship to well-being, and also the specifics of yoga practice and how it affects the mechanics of what we're trying to do in yoga. So this is the sort of thing that I've been looking into for the last 30 or so years, but I would really hesitate to use the word expert.

And to go to the scenario you suggested, that does happen where people come in specifically saying, "OK, I'm aware that I have a breathing issue." They could be suffering from asthma or some sort of panic disorder or some stress-related thing that makes them aware of their breathing. And they're looking for help specifically with that. But I should also point out that the majority of people who come in have a variety of other complaints that they don't recognize have anything to do with the breathing. And I consider it to be part of my job as an educator to point out the connection.

So to go back to the scenario you suggested, what would I say to someone like that who said, "You've got one hour, my breathing is broken, how can we fix it—" Is that a fair summary of what you're asking?

TS: That's perfect, yes!

LK: [*Laughs*] OK. Well, in pretty short order they would probably end up on my table with my hand in their solar plexus, and we would just take it from there. There's a whole conversation that ensues when I sort of feel around in the space and see how reactive they are to various angles and degrees and pressure in different locations.

What frequently happens is that I'll be having one conversation with them, but my hand will be having a whole other conversation with a whole other part of them. And during the course of the time that you spend doing that, the two conversations come together, and we start talking about the whole level of reactivity that we have on an unconscious level that governs the patterns of breath, and how they came to be, and what function they may have served earlier on in life and are not serving so well now.

Any kind of dysfunctional breathing that someone comes in with, you have to go back to a point in their lives where that actually was functional, where it was doing something valuable for them. You can't just hit the off switch and expect it to go away. You have to figure out how they can feel safe, or protected, or in control of their lives in some way, without the breathing do it for them.

TS: So let's look at what some classic patterns might be from childhood, where somebody developed a breathing pattern that, as you said, it was effective then but it's not effective now. Could you give some examples of what those patterns might be like, why somebody developed it, and then how they would let it go at this point?

LK: The one I'll speak about is the one I most often speak about, which is pretty much universal for everybody. And that is something we learn in our first day in diapers, which is our first day. And you know it's a very eventful day when we're born. We breathe for the first time; our entire circulatory system reverses itself. We start taking in nutrition through our mouths for the first time. And when you take in enough in this new pathway that nutrition is coming through, we get full.

And what we don't know coming into this process is that if we squeeze in and push down, that feeling of fullness, that pain, will go away. What we do know is that it hurts, and we cry. And that process of crying actually does fire up the very rapidly developing respiratory system, which has only recently begun to really oxygenate our bodies. This pumping that goes on with the crying, eventually leads to a squeezing in and pushing down, which gets rid of the pain.

We fire that up very early, that if we have something uncomfortable going on inside of us, in our gut, in particular that if we squeeze in and push down, the pain will go away. And it works perfectly well for pee and poo. It doesn't work so well for some of the other things that arise later on in life that create some discomfort in our gut, yet we still keep trying to do the thing we first learned to do, which is to squeeze in and push down.

And that's the pattern I'm having a conversation with when I put my hand in someone's solar plexus. It may be a little uncomfortable and they react to it, and if they squeeze in and tighten, there's a message that this thing will go away. Except when the discomfort is being caused by this very pattern, then something new needs to arise.

So that's the kind of universal thing people come in with for the most part. We all have that to a certain degree. I relate that pattern to this yogic concept that comes to us from some of these teachings that calls this the Brahma Granthi, the knot of Brahma. This is the knot of tension that occupies our central space in our system that prevents the forces of inhale and exhale from having a healthy relationship, because it clogs up the space where that relationship can occur. Some of the more esoteric teachings relate to this concept, but they are very simple and very ancient. But it goes back to that primary knot of tension we tie in our systems that we use early on in life to relief ourselves of internal discomfort.

TS: OK, so let's talk more about this knot. Would this knot naturally unravel itself, or does it only unravel itself if we consciously engage in yogic training or breath training?

LK: I think there's a variety of ways that people experience this unraveling. One of the great teachings of yoga is that we are multidimensional beings. And anything that affects us on any of our levels can create a shift in any of the other levels. I'm going to say here the famous motto that comes to us from the Upanishads that talks about these five dimensions of being, starting with the physical, and going to the breath and the mind and senses, and the deeper personality.

So I would say one of the great ways to become aware of this tension that we hold is through yoga, but it is certainly not the only way. You can read something in a book that you take in on more of a conceptual level that causes you to reassess your fundamental relationship with the universe that you inhabit, and that can create a profound in your breathing and in your body and in every system that you have. So there's no set way for it to happen.

We just know that in general, human growth requires a spiritual sense—and when I say "spirit," I mean in its original context of having to do with the breath. Most people know that the word for spirit, *spiritus*, really is the same root for respiration, for breath. To have this spiritual unfolding, we need to overcome some of the earlier habits that we developed in life that we use for our survival. We find that at some point in our life, our survival strategies are getting in the way of living fully. And this is the human condition, and this what we all face, and that to me is what spiritual growth is. It doesn't have to be religious or even yogic. It's just what we need to do to live fully. We have to overcome what we originally intended to do in order to survive.

TS: So let's say, Leslie, that I want to take a breath-training approach with you to try to unravel this knot in the gut. I think a lot of people can relate to that: they have

something in their gut that feels somehow like it's a fist or some kind of clenching that is in fact affecting the free flow of breath.

LK: Or it's like their second brain trying to talk to them and they've been systematically trying not to listen their whole lives. You know? You ever have a gut level instinct that you ignored, and later on find out that you wished you hadn't?

TS: Yes!

LK: [*Laughs*] So you know it's not necessarily about getting rid of something there. It's not that there's something there that needs to be eliminated. That's the illusion, really. Because originally there was. There was a big load of poo! And when you get rid of it, you feel better.

So it's not a thing. The knot, the Brahma Granthi, isn't a thing. It's an obstruction that consists of an accumulated set of habits—of habituated patterns that we've learned to do. Now needless to say, in some extreme cases it can turn into a physical manifestation like scar tissue, adhesions, that sort of thing. But for the most part it's more like becoming more sensitive to the message we're getting from there, because the knot really is what we learn to do in order not to hear what's happening. You know, to not listen to it.

So I just want to correct this idea that there maybe is something in there. It certainly feels that way for a lot of people, but it's not a thing.

TS: Yes, that's helpful. But OK, there's this sense of an obstruction in the gut. How do I work with that through breath training?

LK: Let me just say something about breath training in general. There's a term we have in yoga called *pranayama*. And it's commonly translated as "breath control," because it seems obvious that it divides very neatly into two words: *prana*, which means something like "breath" or "life force," and *yama*, which most people are familiar with—it's the first step of *raja* yoga, which means a "restraint" or "control." The yamas are the things that you don't do. You don't harm, you don't steal, you don't covet, things like that.

But from my teaching tradition, that of my teacher Desikachar and his father Krishnacharya— Krishnacharya was among other things a grammarian and a scholar of the very high order, and he used to divide words a little differently than they were commonly divided. What he would remind us is that it's "prana-I-yama"; there's a long "ah" there. "I-yama" is the opposite of "yama." In Sanskrit, when you put "ah" in front of the term, it reverses its meaning. So yama is something like "restraint" or "control," and I-yama is something like "removing constraints" or "extending" or "lengthening" or "opening" or "unobstructing," rather than controlling. So both views are necessary for what we call breath training. I think we tend to overdo the control side because that's the obvious thing.

The obvious thing that we're working with when we learn to do yoga or breathing exercises, or anything else that involves conscious breath training, is we start getting a little more control over our breathing. But that's only half the picture. Our breathing is voluntary to be sure, but the amount of voluntary control we have over our breath is quite limited. It's also an involuntary action, and thank goodness it is. Otherwise you'd fall asleep and you'd suffocate.

So to have a relationship with the aspect of our breathing over which we do not have control is in my view the most important aspect of what I help people do. So the very word "training" tends to put people in that mode of control and exercises and ratios and all these manipulations we can do with the breath. What I frequently find myself point out to people when they realize this is that you know it's really hard work to not work so hard. Once you start unconstraining the breath and realizing all the control you've already been imposing on it, it takes a lot of focus, a lot of attention to what you're doing, to not do that. So I would use the word "training" very cautiously when it relates the breath, so as to not overemphasize the side of it that I think most people get hung up in.

TS: OK, so now I'm very interested in what is a beautiful full breath that really changes the shape—you would say to somebody on the table, "Oh, what a beautiful breath!"

LK: What am I seeing?

TS: Yes, how does their abdominal cavity appear, what's the movement like, and what's the thoracic cavity appear?

LK: Well, the abdominal and thoracic cavities don't even show up as separate cavities in a released breath, because it seems to be happening everywhere at once. It's very three-dimensional. The diaphragm is a very three-dimensional muscle, and its action on changing the shape of both cavities is very three-dimensional. You know it when you see it. And you know it when you feel it, because it feels very different. It feels like you're getting, and it looks like the person is getting, an enormously greater quality of shape change with tremendously less effort. It feels like you're working one-tenth as hard, to get ten times more breath. That's the experience of the person feeling it, and that's what it looks like when you're seeing it.

The assumption here is that the person is lying supine on my table, but this can happen in any position, because gravity and the shape of your body will affect the relationship of the cavities and the pattern of shape change. There's no one right way to breathe, or one pattern you want to be seen.

But it's a quality, really, that is vastly different. It's less labored, less energy being expended, less extraneous muscle contraction around the neck or the shoulders or the chest, the sound is different, it feels like the pathway through which the breath is moving has become unobstructed and less controlled. There's a corresponding shift in

skin color, and the person's facial expression will change. It's almost like, sometimes when people lie down on the table it looks like their body is lying down, but their breath is still standing up. So the best way I can describe it is, it looks like all of them have finally become horizontal. So those are some of the descriptors I would say for that shift.

TS: Now, as people are listening, I want to make sure that they are tracking with you about what this breath might be like, where you don't even feel the distinction between the abdominal cavity and the thoracic cavity. Can you help us understand first of all how you would recommend someone tuning in to what you're describing here?

LK: For some people, certain visualizations are useful. Even just visualizing a 3-D spherical image can free you up from certain breathing patterns. It can free you up from certain thought patterns.

TS: Now, what do you mean by "visualizing"? I'm visualizing my belly as a 3-D sphere?

LK: No, just visualizing a sphere. Just see it, close your eyes, and see it hanging in front of your head in space and make it very real. Let it be any color you want it to be. Let it be a little translucent so you can see all the surfaces at once. In other words, you can see the back of it through the front. So it's like a bubble or balloon.

TS: How big is it?

LK: As big as you want it to be. I don't care.

TS: OK.

LK: As long as it's an image of a 3-D spherical object and you can see it as a sphere, not just a flat circle but a sphere, and then just picture it growing bigger and smaller. That's all you have to do.

Eventually, what you'll notice is that you'll have a tendency to want to make that rhythm of the sphere change shape, and coincide with your own breath. And sometimes people feel that their body is the sphere, or that the sphere enters their body, or their body enters the sphere. We're very open-ended with these things. We try to let the visualization go wherever it wants to go, so long as you have the element of a 3-D sphere being visualized, and that it's changing its shape on the rhythm of the breath.

And the reason this works is that it shifts your hemispheric dominance from your left-brain toward your right-brain hemisphere. Whenever we're doing manipulation of the breath, like the seesaw breath that I mentioned before, or counting with a ratio, or whatever, it's very sequential. It's a time sequence thing. This, then this, then this. Also these methods of controlling the shape change, like inhaling in such a way that you feel an expansion from the top toward the bottom of your system, or making the exhale

contraction from the bottom toward the top, it's kind of a linear sequential thing, which is very useful. And we tend to use our left hemisphere to manage these sorts of things. It also is the language side of the brain, so when we're getting an instruction and hearing it verbally and interpreting it in our body, that's all left-brain activity.

Now, when you visualize something, in 3-D, you can't micromanage it. That's not a sequential thing. You have to grasp it as a whole. That's what your other hemisphere, the right side does. That's why I try to make certain that we don't get too left-brainy with people. That we spend a significant amount of time getting them to shift into the realm, into that hemisphere, where a 3-D hole can be grasped in its completeness—all at once.

That mode of functioning gets related to the breathing as well. The diaphragm is a muscle that creates a 3-D shape change in both cavities, and that's the key to understanding the process by which we can free all the restricting forces that restrict those dimensions. You know, the belly breath that people teach and call "diaphragmatic breathing" is just one dimension of the breath. It's just one dimension of shape-changing in your cavities. It's the thoracic cavity getting bigger from top to bottom, but what about the width from side to side, what about the depth from front to back?

TS: It seems, Leslie, that in your work you're referring to various misconceptions—whether it's the yoga world or the way that people approach diaphragmatic breathing—and I'm wondering, just because our listeners may not know the misconceptions that you're pointing to, if you would summarize what you think are the key misconceptions in the way that people are taught to related to the breath.

LK: Sure. Key misconception number one is that there's a right way to do it, which is why I never use the term "proper" or "correct" breathing. There are certainly techniques that can be taught and learned that have a proper way of being executed. It's important not to confuse the two concepts. There is a proper way to do certain techniques and that's what we coach people to do, but I'll come back to that in a moment.

But it's very misleading to give someone the impression, whether implicitly or explicitly, that this technique that they're learning is THE right way to breathe: this is now the proper way for you to breathe, this is the right way for you to be breathing, and this is how you should be breathing all the time. That's absurd! That's an impossibility, because we do different things with our body all the time, or are in different positions. And here I am, sitting in a chair with my feet up, and I'm talking to you and I'm holding the phone with one hand and I'm actually gesticulating with my other hand. These are all breath movements. These are all body movements. There's no right way to be breathing when I'm doing this.

The question is, is my system free enough to be doing this without any kind of undue restrictions? So getting it right is a mode of thinking and functioning that we're always having to pull people out of, because yoga and the things we teach is not about getting it right, it's about being free. Those are two distinctly different goals, primarily because if

you want to be free—well, I think the first thing to be free of is this idea that you have to get it right.

Now, that does not in any way take away from the fact that yes, there are certain techniques that we teach, and yes, there are ways to do these techniques properly and correctly so that they are safe and effective. And yet, I would say that the benefit you get from a properly executed breathing technique is not from properly executing the breathing technique. It's that in the process of learning that technique, this new way of breathing, you have to unlearn your old way of breathing. That's where the benefit is.

So it's all of the little bits of tension and habit and all of those things in the system that you have to identify and resolve in order to do this crazy new pattern that you're learning. That's what you're after. You're after that, because once you learn this new pattern and this new technique and you're able to do it properly, then it's pretty much served its purpose. That's not the right way to breathe. And what you don't want is that becoming a new habit that you have to get out of at some point.

And so one of these habits—and this would be the second misconception, the first one being that there's a right way to breathe—is that the proper way of breathing is belly breathing, that the diaphragmatic breath is this bulging of the upper belly.

TS: Now, when you're referring to the upper belly, what part of the belly? I want to make sure we all know what you're talking about here.

LK: Let's just say from the base of your rib cage to the top of your navel. I would say the lower belly would be below the navel.

TS: So you're saying that there are some schools that teach that the proper kind of breathing is breathing from the upper half of your belly?

LK: Breathing into the belly. I wouldn't say some, I would say most.

TS: OK.

LK: Because that's the way the action of the diaphragm is understood in most, not just yoga schools, but people who teach breathing—whether it's a voice teaching, or acting, or martial arts or whatever. There's this idea that when the diaphragm contracts, it is shutting downward on your abdominal viscera in your upper abdominal cavity and causing them to bulge forward.

Most people who teach this don't suffer from the misconception that it's filling with air, that that's why your belly is bulging. In fact, they don't even say bulging, they say expanding, which in itself is a misconception, because the abdominal cavity doesn't actually expand in the process of breathing because it doesn't change volume. It's like a water balloon, so it bulges, but that's a detail. A lot of people, though, without being

corrected, do think that the reason their belly is bulging is because there's air going in there. It certainly isn't. It's going into and out of your lungs. This is a pressure that's exerted on your abdominal cavity by the diaphragm, which can cause this particular type of shape change that is called "belly breathing," which is equated with diaphragmatic breathing.

One of the things that we are always demonstrating and teaching people is that the diaphragm is fully capable of moving the rib cage also. Yes, it can create a downward bulging pressure on the upper abdominal cavity, but it can also create a lifting, opening action at the base of the rib cage, which creates chest movement. Now, a lot of people are told that chest movement is not diaphragmatic breathing, that it's some other muscles that are moving the chest. This creates a very damaging misconception, and a dichotomy between belly breathing, which is created with the action of the diaphragm, and chest breathing. People are told that chest breathing is something else, and it's not good. Diaphragmatic breathing is good, which means belly breathing is good. Chest breathing is not diaphragmatic, which is bad, which means chest breathing is bad. This is kind of a damaging sort of syllogism that gets promoted in the breath-training world that we've been doing our best to torpedo over in the West.

TS: OK. And in your view, can you tell me what the healthy or freeing relationship to the diaphragm is?

LK: Recognizing its three-dimensional potential and making the most of it and getting the hell out of its way. You're not going to get me to tell you what proper breathing looks like.

TS: Now, this idea of getting out of its way, in the program *Freeing the Breath*, there is a very interesting line that I want to repeat here. You know, I thought this was like the breath koan in a sense. So here's the line: "Is it possible to observe your breath and not control it?" And I'm wondering how you might explain this, and how somebody might work with that idea. Is it possible to observe your breath and not control it?

LK: First of all, it is, and second of all, it's very difficult. So do you want me to explain it, and then tell how to work with that?

TS: Yes.

LK: OK. By way of explanation, I would say that most of the time, most people are not aware of their breathing, yet they are breathing. And this is why I say thank goodness that it's also autonomic. So usually when we are not aware of our breath, we are not controlling it or consciously manipulating it in any way.

When we are aware of the breathing, it's because something is happening that requires our attention and control over the breathing, like for example there's a bad smell in the room and you don't want to inhale so deeply because something stinks. So you

instinctively, but certainly consciously as well, won't breathe deeply. Or let's say you're an actor who needs to learn how to project to the back of the theater. You need to take control over your breathing mechanism so you can do that, and work out the relationships between those cavities and those vocal cords and your head spaces and all of that, but that takes some conscious training and manipulation and control. What I'm saying is that generally speaking, when we're not aware of the breath, we're not controlling it, and when we are aware of the breath, we are controlling it.

What almost never happens is becoming aware of the breath and attempting not to control it. And that's what happens in this sort of meditative contemplative state that I would call a *svadhyaya*. *Svadhyaya* is a term we get from yoga, particularly from Pantajali, who compiled the *Yoga Sutras*, as this idea that the *sva*, the self, can be gotten next to. *Dhyaya* means "to get next to." So *svadhyaya* means "to get next to oneself." It's about self-study; it's about introspection. It's one of the fundamental legs of the three legs. There's this tripod that supports yoga practice in the *Yoga Sutras*, and this is one of the legs.

The other is about control. It's about the things that we can take some control over. It's called *tapas*. It's about changing habits or changing habitual ways of operating.

The third leg is about the things that we don't control. It's about that which is beyond us, beyond our ability to control, beyond our individual volition. It's called *ishvara pranidhana*. So I consider the breath to be the ultimate teacher of these principles, because it's both voluntary and autonomic. This awareness, this *svadhyaya*, if you will, is what we need to employ to understand this and have the proper attitude toward both, toward that which we can control and that which we cannot. So all of that is packed into that koan of "Can you be aware of your breath and not control it?"

Or another way to phrase it is, "Are you in control of your tendency to want to control your breathing? Or is your control out of control?" It's a mind thought; there's no way around it, but that's what a koan is. Eventually, the whole process shuts down your brain and something else starts happening.

TS: OK, so I'm going to take our conversation to a slightly less technical arena.

LK: It doesn't get more technical than mind fuckery.

TS: That is true, Leslie.

LK: So yes. There's nowhere we can from there.

TS: Exactly. We're going down.

LK: OK.

TS: We're going down. Let's say I find myself in a situation where I clearly feel like I'm breathing in a rapid and shallow way.

LK: And you don't want to be.

TS: And I don't want to be.

LK: And you don't want to be in a yoga class.

TS: No. I want to be more calm and balanced and centered. What would you suggest in that sort of situation?

LK: There's two things. What you can suggest to somebody when they are in the midst of a kind of panic attack is very different than what you would suggest to that person when they're not, and you're trying to help them not have them. So just taking slow, deep breaths is the worst thing that you can try to do.

TS: You're contradicting everything that everyone has ever said about breathing that I know so far. But that's good, Leslie! I like. So why would you not want to take slow, deep breaths if you find yourself anxious?

LK: Because if you could simply take slow deep breaths, you wouldn't be having the panic attack in the first place. The assumption there is, if it is an attack and it is something that is disturbing, that the pattern has gotten beyond your ability to control it. If you had the ability to control, you would simply stop and take slow deep breaths. The more control you try to seize over that situation, probably the tighter you're going to get, and the more the pattern is going to be rooted in place.

What I would say is, at that point, what you need to do is stop trying to take more air into your body. It's totally counterintuitive. Stop trying to breathe deeply. Exhale, blow it out, and hold it out for as long as you can. And then relax on the inhale. That's basically it. Blow it out [*sound of air being blown out*], and hold for a moment if you can, because it will be very difficult because everything in your system is screaming for more oxygen and we equate inhaling with getting more oxygen.

What's probably actually happened at that point is that you have too much oxygen in your bloodstream already. You've hyperventilated. The problem is that the oxygen is not getting out of your bloodstream into your body's tissues, particularly into your brain because you've blown off too much CO₂. You have released too much carbon dioxide from your system, and it's the CO₂ that allows the oxygen to be transported via the hemoglobin into your body's tissues.

So what you want to do is [*sound of strong exhale*] exhale and hold. During that hold, your body is going to start building back up its reserves of carbon dioxide, and you're going to feel less suffocated. It's completely counterintuitive, to get more oxygen

delivered to your body's tissues by exhaling and holding out rather than trying to inhale, inhale, inhale.

Now again, this is something that people are more able to practice when they are not in the midst of having a panic attack. And yet, if I encountered someone who was having one, that would be the advice that I would give them. Just exhale, exhale, exhale. Stop struggling to inhale, and when you take care of the exhale, the inhale takes care of itself. That's sort of one of the aphorisms that we work with breathing.

TS: That's interesting. When you take care of the exhale, the inhale takes of itself.

LK: In other words, make the space in your body, and the universe will fill it. It always does, it always will. Someone who has a chronic breathing disorder does not live in that universe. They live in the universe of "I need to take this next breath because it's not there for me and it's my effort, my inhale that's filling me up." But that's actually not true. The energy that gets the breath into your body is not in your body at all. It's outside of you. It's the atmospheric pressure. It's the weight of the air molecules that we live inside of, which is pretty heavy. It's 14.7 pounds per square inch at sea level. And those molecules want to push their way into your body. All you need to do is make the space.

Remember I said earlier sometimes just hearing a concept can shift your whole perspective including your body and your breath. I've had people who've had lifelong breathing disorders, when I explain that to them that the universe has helped them take every single breath that they've ever taken—whether they recognize it or not—and they can just relax and let the universe do its job of filling your body with air molecules, you'll have a whole lot less of a struggle. And you can just see something shift. And they relax. And they finally, for the first time maybe, are trusting that the breath is going to be there for them.

TS: Let me see if I understand what you are saying. You've said that space itself, that a measurement of space has weight to it.

LK: Well it's not space it's air. In space there's no air. So it's not space, I'm talking about atmospheric pressure. We live in a sea of air molecules. We don't notice it because they're there all the time and they're transparent but they have weight and they're there. We know when there's less of them there. Go up into the Rocky Mountains and breathe air at 12,000 feet. You recognize right away there's less of that sea of air pushing down on you. And it wants to push its way into any available space that it can find. So what we're doing inside our body when we breathe, is we're making that space. That's all we do. We make the space and the universe fills it. It's when we think we're doing the filling that we get in trouble.

And to go back to that tripod of yoga practice, the ishvara pranidhana part is surrendering to the thing that is bigger than you. It relates to this idea of being breathed by the universe. There's a certain surrender to that fact that can happen which is very

transformative once we grasp it. I've seen it happen over and over again with people with even severe lifelong breathing disorders. Sometimes you just have give them a friendlier universe to live in—a universe that wants them to breathe, that wants the air to come into their body because that certainly hasn't been their experience for whatever reason. It doesn't change the facts of physics that every breath they've ever taken was because the universe wanted them to have that air in their body. It's when we start trying to do the job of the universe for it that we get in trouble. You know? That's silly.

TS: Now...

LK: We're not that big! We're not that strong. We're not that powerful.

TS: Yes.

LK: We need to surrender to that. You know, I'm an atheist and you know I can have this conversation very comfortably. This is a spiritual conversation. That's just reality and grasping it and living in it. There's nothing woo-woo about that. It's basic physics.

TS: Is there something you do, Leslie, in your own life, let's say you find yourself like, "Wow, I'm not being breathed by the universe! I'm clenching in this way or holding in this way or tense in this way or whatever." What do you do when you notice that?

LK: I listen to my riding instructor and breathe. I ride. I have horses. I don't consider myself to be really, really good at it because I know people that are really, really good at it and have been doing it their whole lives and they're natural—like my riding instructor. And you know, here I am this breathing guy and I do all of this work and I do these CDs and DVDs and I teach this and I teach that. And here I am having someone reminding me to breathe. It's very humbling.

And the other thing about that is that you're on a 1000-pound animal with the illusion that you are in control of this animal. [*Laughs*] You're trying to use every resource you have to make this large animal, which is a prey animal, you're training them to ignore any instinct that they have, to do the things you want them to do. You're gonna use every resource at your disposal including the illusion that holding your breath is somehow going to help. So that's when I find myself needing to remember to breathe and to be able to use my inner thighs and my pelvic floor and my abdominals in the way I need to use to communicate with the horse. You're not controlling the horse, you communicating with it. It doesn't go one way. You have to feel what the horse is doing. You have to be able to feel like it's on the right lead or not or which way it's leaning or in the case of my horse, is he on the right lead in the front or the wrong lead in the back because he does that too. You know experienced horse people can feel this through their legs but you can't be gripping. So that's my challenge with breathing. It takes a thousand pounds of prey animal under me to get me to not hold my breath but it works. I do my lesson and I get a little better each time and there's always something new to be learned. It's

something that you can never master enough—even the people who've been doing it their whole lives. They're reaching for more. It's a quite extraordinary thing with horses.

In the classic literature, of course, they didn't have cars. I use a lot of car analogies when I'm teaching about the breath but they didn't have that in the old days, they talked about horses and chariots and things like that. The horse thing goes way back with yoga, too, in the ancient teachings.

TS: Now there's one part of our conversation that's kinda niggling at me which is when people move into...

LK: Did you say niggle?

TS: Yeah, niggling. When people move to feeling they're in control of their breathing or they're breathing in a shallow way, underneath it often there's deep emotion or deep fear about really letting go in the way you're describing. And I know from your work one-on-one on the table, I'm sure you've encountered the depth of people's emotional process around really letting their breath go and I'm wondering if you can touch on that some because we've been talking about it lightly and even glibly in a way, and yet there's a lot in that constriction for people.

LK: There's everything in that constriction. It's how we learn to regulate effect. You don't just throw a switch or find the volume control somewhere in your nervous system when you're young that allows you to survive your own internal states. You do it with your breathing. So when you start changing that, you're basically opening emotionally spaces in your system that you learned long ago to modulate. And it's good thing that you learned to modulate. It's not a bad thing. It's just how we survive. Children who don't learn to regulate effect end up becoming extremely damaged. There's lots of studies about all this. So it's all there. The breath is the emotion. You can see the depth of what's going on with someone via the degree of control they've erected around it. Everyone who comes in—whether it's with a back issue or a neck issue or a breathing issue or whatever it is, even if they come in saying they're having a kundalini crisis, I get those people too—this is the emotions.

The emotions are an incredibly powerful part of it. And I'm of the opinion that our self-protective mechanisms are so robust and so deeply rooted in our own need to survive that people don't let go of tension, that they don't allow themselves to experience emotions, that they are not capable of integrating for the most part. That is assuming that the work we're doing is gentle and appropriate to that person. There are very aggressive breathing things that some people get into and this goes more into the whole kundalini crisis thing and these pranayamas and techniques that people sometimes misapply which can create extreme emotional imbalance. But for the most part if you are not dabbling in those realms, the work that I'm suggesting, this awareness and this shifting of patterns with an attitude of self-study, unveils things in their own time and pace in a way that can be integrated. And they need to be integrated. It's about boundaries and space. It's about

dissolving some of the internal boundaries that we've erected around our own emotional spaces—but we can't survive without boundaries.

For every internal boundary that we dissolve, we have to erect one that's external. We have to do it in our relationship with others and with the world. For every "no" that we stop saying inside ourselves to our own emotions, there's a "no" that we have to be willing to say outside to other people because "no"—all of a sudden we are vulnerable and we're sensitive to the effects that other people have on us and our relationships have. And we need to create that protection out in the world, which is what an adult can do but certainly not what a child can do. Children can only erect the internal boundaries and so it's not about dissolving all boundaries, it's about having them live in the right place so that we can function more freely.

TS: That's very, very interesting, Leslie. I have to say that I've never heard anybody say that, that when we dissolve internal boundaries we need to erect external ones. I've never heard anyone say that.

LK: Again, it's simple physics. We need boundaries in order to survive. Adults need adult boundaries. We need to sort of replace the internal ones that they erected as children with more adult ones. Think about the early relationships we have with members we are attracted to. Eventually we realize that certain traits that made them attractive probably were traits that people had that we grew up with. In other words you end up replicating your family dynamics in these other dynamics. The reason for that is quite simple: we already had the defense mechanisms in place that can deal with them. These people are familiar for that reason. Eventually we catch on and we start saying "no" to certain types of people because we don't like how we feel inside when we're around them because it reminds us of whatever we had to do when faced with similar sorts of relationships. I'm not going off the assumption that everyone's upbringing was in a dysfunctional household. It's just that we are very, very sensitive when we're young. I often say it doesn't matter if you were raised by Ozzie and Harriet, or Ozzy Osbourne. You're going to have a hard time growing up because you're sensitive and you learn to create these boundaries and you have to at a certain point identify it, recognize it, and replace them with something more functional. There's this New Age-y thing where it's all about having no boundaries and opening to everything. That's just a recipe for insanity.

TS: Now just a couple of final questions for you. We talked previously about the misconceptions that there are about how to free the breath. How is it that so many people out there have it wrong but you, Leslie Kaminoff, and the people you are training have it right. What's going on with that?

LK: [*Laughs*] I'm smarter than everyone else in the world! No, actually I don't think that everyone has it wrong. There are some people who really do wonderful work who really do understand this and I happen to know a few of them, people whom I consider friends and colleagues. And some of the deeper teachings from the spiritual traditions speak of

this very beautifully, poetically, and symbolically. Not necessarily explicitly in a way that you would understand upon first hearing or reading. There's two parts to your question. Why is there so much misconception? And how did I come to understand it the way I do?

TS: Yes.

LK: I think there's a lot of misconception because particularly when it comes to breathing the deepest principles that govern it are really counterintuitive. The reason for it goes back to what I was saying earlier—that the universe fills us and that's really where the energy is that gets breathed into our body. It's coming from outside of us. We think it's something we're doing. I have a thing on my desk and I want to move it from the left side of the desk to the right side of the desk. It's perfectly obvious how to get that to happen. I see it, I reach over, I grab it, and I move it. And that's how we're accustomed to getting things accomplished. You exert some energy and you do it. If it's a hard thing, then you exert more energy and you get it done. The harder the thing, the more energy you exert to get it done and that's basically what we've learned. Now if I wanted to get that thing on my desk to move from one side of my desk to the other in the same way that my breath works, I would have to go over to the place where I want the thing to be, and somehow create a vacuum that's strong enough to suck the thing into that space. That's how breathing works, but that's not how I rearrange my desk. It's not how I do anything out here in the world. I accomplish things by doing them. When you use that way of accomplishing things in your breathing, if you apply that to your breathing, you get in your own way and you end up fouling yourself up. So this is a very counterintuitive situation when it comes to breathing and yet a lot of people don't grasp that, because it is counterintuitive. Again in the esoteric literature and the spiritual teachings that have come to us, they all point to this idea—this idea of doing through non-doing and getting out of your own way. I've just have been trying to make it explicit based on these simple anatomical principles of breathing.

This goes to the second part of the question. I've been focusing on this stuff for three decades now and it's kind of an obsession that is never far from my thoughts or my mind. So breathing and the principles behind breathing is sort of the filter through which I view just about every issue in my life, whether it's personal or professional, and every person I encounter that I work with professionally certainly. It's sort of like a lens through which I'm viewing all the things I encounter and it helps me to sort out what's really important. Oh, is this something I really have control over or something that I don't. Maybe I need to surrender to it. So this process of contemplation about all of these things, this *swatyiya* if you will, has turned into a kind of *samyama*, which is another term we get from the sutras which is when you bring your powers of concentration and focus onto a singular subject or object for a certain length of time, certain things start revealing themselves to you. This is what they talk about in the third chapter of *The Yoga Sutras*. Stuff just shows up. Stuff starts making sense when you're viewing things through a filter like breathing that helps you to sort things out. That's I think the best explanation I can give on how I come up with this stuff.

TS: Which does lead me to my final question, which is that I was curious what was going on in your life and how you became so obsessed with the breath.

LK: [*Laughs*] Well, I didn't have a breathing disorder, at least nothing that manifested obviously. I was teaching yoga and had been trained to teach yoga by the Sivananda organization originally way back in 1979. And I was beginning to notice that not everyone's body is the same. Even though I was teaching the same class and the same asanas to everybody that came to the class, everyone was responding to these practices differently and I began what it was that was underneath this. That's how I initially got interested in the anatomy and I first started thinking about the breath in a deep way in relation to that after I was told by my friend Larry Payne who one of the founders of the International Organization for Yoga Therapists. This is way back in 1981, I guess when I was in Los Angeles. I was told by Larry that this one teacher that he had encountered in India who had impressed him the most said that it's all in the breathing. That's what he told me about Desikachar as a teacher. He was talking about Desikachar. And I asked him what made his teaching so special, what impressed him. He had visited a lot of the top teachers in India and he said it's all in the breath. That's all he told me. And it resonated with me for whatever reason so I began really watching people breathe more carefully and even watching myself breathe more carefully when I was practicing. That was the beginning of it. So by the time I met Desikachar, I guess six years later in 1987, I had already been focusing on it for quite awhile. So that was the beginning of it.

What I find encouraging about the work that I do and that we do in the yoga world is that—everything that I've observed over the past 32 years now in this field encourages me—because what I've noticed is that the vast majority of the benefit that people get from what we do is from the simplest things that we teach them. To me, that's wonderful. By that I mean, the minute you ask a human being to raise their arms over their head and reach for the sky as they inhale and bend forward and reach down toward the earth as they exhale and then do some other movements that are similarly connected with this process of breathing—in other words as soon as you ask somebody to move their body and their breath and their mind in a coordinated and integrated way—magical stuff starts happening. I think that's what distinguishes yoga from other forms of physical culture, is the breath. I think it's at the core of what makes yoga, yoga. And the simple act of asking a human being to coordinate their bodily movements, with their breath, and their attention, their mind, yields spectacular benefits. And it's so simple and I find that incredibly encouraging. And it also explains why you don't have to be a super duper highly qualified yoga teacher to get pretty great results. All you have to do is ask people to inhale and exhale and move their bodies and amazing stuff starts unfolding.

TS: Wonderful. It's all in the breath. I've been talking with Leslie Kaminoff. He's created a new two-session audio program from Sounds True called *Freeing the Breath: Health, Relaxation, and Clarity Through Better Breathing*. He's not an expert, but he's sure does love the breath! Leslie, thank you so much!

LK: [Laughs.] Thank you. It's been a lot of fun. I appreciate it.

TS: SoundsTrue.com: many voices, one journey. Thanks for listening. ###

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Leslie Kaminoff is the co-author of *Yoga Anatomy* (175,000 copies in print; Human Kinetics, 2007) and a yoga educator with more than 30 years experience in the fields of yoga and breath anatomy. He has led workshops for leading yoga associations, schools, and training programs in the U.S., and has also helped to organize international yoga conferences. He currently teaches yoga and anatomy in New York City and around the world. He lives in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Leslie is the founder of The Breathing Project, a New York City non-profit dedicated to teaching the principles of individualized, breath-centered yoga.

http://www.soundstrue.com/authors/Leslie_Kaminoff/

Sounds True was founded in 1985 by **Tami Simon** with a clear mission: to disseminate spiritual wisdom. Since starting out as a project with one woman and her tape recorder, we have grown into a multimedia publishing company with more than 80 employees, a library of more than 600 titles featuring some of the leading teachers and visionaries of our time, and an ever-expanding family of customers from across the world. In more than two decades of growth, change, and evolution, Sounds True has maintained its focus on its overriding purpose, as summed up in our Vision Statement: **Sounds True exists to inspire, support, and serve personal transformation and spiritual awakening.**

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Give Yourself What You Really Want **by Guy Finley**

Our relationships with one another are often a source of distress. And, speaking in general terms, most of the conflict we experience with others has to do with some form of consideration that we feel they are not giving to us. We often suffer from thoughts like these: “She is not being respectful enough.” “He is not as kind as I want him to be.” “They just don’t care as deeply as I do.” However, if we will be courageous enough to see the truth of the next insight -- admit its finding into our heart and mind -- something new and wonderful can happen within us: we can release ourselves from this dissatisfaction we feel in our relationship with others, along with the conflict it generates between us:

Many times the very thing we want from those we are with -- for example, respect, patience, or a just little tenderness -- is the very thing that we ourselves either lack at the moment or otherwise somehow are withholding from them.

The “catch” here is that we are mostly clueless about our own actual impoverished condition in these moments because -- quietly tucked away in the depths of us are certain clever “self-concealing devices.” The continuing presence of these unconscious parts of us ensures we never realize that *it is we who run in debt* because of how quickly they point out the inadequacies of those they judge. Each time our attention is successfully diverted in this way, here’s what unfolds: not only are we kept from coming awake to ourselves, but in this engineered spiritual sleep we are rendered unable to realize that the very quality we judge as missing in the person before us is actually lacking in ourselves!

Some needed inner light reveals the truth of our actual condition. We almost always place certain character demands upon others, but rarely see that the part of us making these demands is without the very substance it cries out as missing in them. No wonder the cycle of human disharmony rolls on as it does; this spiritual sleep is not just the breeding ground of the contempt we feel for the insensitivity of others, it is *the source* of it!

What’s to be done? How can we transform ourselves and, at the same time, serve as an agent for change in the lives of all those we meet along the Way?

The true Friends of God have always known the law of reciprocal Divine Love: whatever we give our love to, gives us that love back according to the extent of our giving.

With this idea in mind, let’s apply it to our need to open our hearts and stop judging others for what we see as missing in them. Here is the great principle that makes

possible true harmony between all human beings: *giving to others what we ask for from them is how we receive what we wish*. Stated another way: *we must learn to give to others what we hope to get from them*. Here now are a few simple suggestions for how we can get started with enacting our new understanding.

Before we ask for someone's attention, let us first lend that person our own.

Before we look to him or her for an act of consideration, let us offer one from ourselves.

If we wish for kindness, let it begin with our own. Otherwise all we give each other are unconscious demands followed by judgment and disappointment.

We must learn to take the true conscious initiative with each other and then -- based in our understanding of this great spiritual law that governs harmonious relationships -- make the effort to be to others what we wish them to be for us. ###

Excerpted from *The Essential Laws of Fearless Living*, by Guy Finley, Red Wheel/Weiser Books, 2009.

About Guy Finley

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

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

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

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Clearing Cognitive Cobwebs: *The Clustering Illusion* by Chuck Gallozzi

How much of what is going on around us do we understand? Surprisingly little. If not completely blind, our vision is obscured by the cobwebs of our mind, which include false assumptions, beliefs, and expectations. How can we think straight and make intelligent decisions if our mind can easily lead us astray? The answer is awareness. We must be conscious of the problem and alert to the conclusions we make. We need to question them. Are they based on facts or our imagination? Often, rather than seeing what is there, we see what we hope to see, want to see, and expect to see.

Just because we have children it doesn't necessarily follow that we know how to raise them. So, intelligent parents study parenting, and their new skills bring many rewards. Similarly, just because we can *think*, it doesn't mean we know how to think properly. You wouldn't drive a car without first learning how to drive, would you? So, why are we so comfortable *thinking* without first studying how to draw proper conclusions and avoid faulty thinking?

Awareness of some of the thinking pitfalls will help us make better decisions and gain a greater understanding of reality. There are many "mind traps" to beware of but here I will focus on one called, *The Clustering Illusion*. For example, let's say you and a bunch of friends are flipping coins to see how many heads you can get in a row. A few friends tried with unimpressive results. Now it's Tom's turn. He flips and gets four heads in a row. What would you think? Would you be impressed? Surprised? Many people would conclude Tom is 'lucky'.

In this example we had a *group* or *cluster* of four coin tosses that led to an unexpected result. The 'surprising' result is called *The Clustering Illusion*. Tom's ability to get four heads in a row led some to suspect he was lucky, has eery occult or magical powers, or that he cheated. After all, when we flip coins, we should get random results, some heads, some tails, but not a streak of heads or tails. Isn't that correct? Yes, it's true over the *long* term. For instance, if we flip the coins 10,000 times, we should come up with *an average of* heads and tails 50% of the time. But that average also includes streaks or runs of heads and tails. In fact, even in a series of 20 flips, there is a 50% chance of getting four heads in a row!

So, Tom's friends were surprised because they did not have the facts. Without them, the illusion was created that Tom was lucky or had a special gift. His friends mistakenly believed four heads in a row was against the laws of probability. But it wasn't. Now, let's take a look at an example of *The Clustering Illusion* that recently appeared in the news.

The death of Amy Winehouse on July 23, 2011 came as a double shock for the singer-songwriter's fans. First, this promising talent died so young. Second, she died at age 27, the same age that six other famous musicians died. Here is the group or cluster of rock stars who died at the same age:

- Robert Johnson, blues singer and musician (d. 1938)
- Brian Jones, Rolling Stones founder (d. 1969)
- Jimi Hendrix, Pioneering electric guitarist, singer and songwriter (d. 1970)
- Janis Joplin, Lead vocalist and songwriter (d. 1970)
- Jim Morrison, Lead singer, lyricist (d. 1971)
- Kurt Cobain, Founding member of Nirvana (d. 1994)

Amy Winehouse has been added to the list of what some music aficionados call The 27 Club, The Forever 27 Club, Club 27 or The Curse of 27. Fans find it spooky that seven of the biggest names in rock music have all died at age 27. And if we expand the list to include lesser known musical artists who died at the same age, *we can add 41 more names!*

Doesn't it seem mystical that 'so many' of the top musicians have died at the same age? But that's why it's called The Clustering *Illusion*. What are the facts? Simply this: if you get a large enough sample you will find examples of any combination you are looking for. It's just coincidence, nothing mystical. At first glance, the deaths of 48 musicians at age 27 may seem like a large number, but remember, the first member of "The 27 Club", Robert Johnson, died 73 years ago. When compared to the number of musicians who have died since then, 48 is a small number.

To get a better sense of what is likely or unlikely, let's look at three more examples. First, imagine walking into a room full of people; what are the chances that at least two people in the room share the same birthday? Of course it depends on how many are in the room, but does it surprise you to learn that all it takes is a group of 23 people to have a better than 50% chance that two members of the group will have the same birthday?

Second, suppose you dream of a friend's death and later learn that he died on the same day of your dream. How likely is that to happen? If it does happen, is it evidence of ESP, precognition, or some other paranormal ability? Well, British statistician Christopher Scott who considered the population of his country, the death rate, and other factors concluded there would be about one accurate death dream in England every two weeks. From the point of view of an expert on probability, such dreams are insignificant and prove nothing. However, can you see how those who have such dreams would feel otherwise?

Third, a highly unlikely golf story made the British press... Richard and Mark Evans (unrelated) both got a hole in one in successive shots. The likelihood of this occurring? According to William Hartston, International Chess Master and expert on odds, the odds

are 1.85 billion to one. Doesn't that make this feat impossible? Surely synchronicity or some unearthly force must be at work here, right?

Wrong says Hartston, "There are about two million golfers in the country (England) who play an average of two rounds of golf a week each. That's more than 200 million rounds of golf a year, amounting to a total of 3.6 billion holes. That 1.85 billion to one shot doesn't look so unlikely any more, does it?"

As a senior citizen, I have many elderly friends. One of the worries I often hear is that they may be getting Alzheimer's disease. "I often forget things. I'm afraid I may be getting Alzheimer's," they say. "You often forgot things when you were young," I explain, "and if forgetting things while you are young is not a sign of Alzheimer's, why do you think it is a sign now?"

This, too, is an example of The Clustering Illusion. You see, our brain does not like randomness. It always tries to connect, link, and relate random data in order to find meaning. But like it or not, the world is filled with randomness or chaos, and the sooner we come to terms with it, the better. My elderly friends were connecting isolated, random moments of forgetfulness and imagining that they may be on the verge of getting Alzheimer's disease. The result? Unnecessary anxiety and fear.

The consequences of not considering The Clustering Illusion can have much more dire results. It can, for example, lead to innocent people going to prison, or worse. Take the case of Sally Clark, for instance. In 1999 this British woman was sentenced to life imprisonment for the 'murder' of her two baby sons. At first, the death of her first son was considered to be a crib (cot) death or *sudden infant death syndrome* (SIDS). Fortunately, SIDS is a fairly rare occurrence, and two incidents of SIDS in the same family are even rarer. The prosecution's expert witness, who was a paediatrician and not a statistician, was swayed by The Clustering Illusion ("If there's one crib death in a family, it's suspicious; if there are two, it must be murder.") The 'expert' witness incorrectly calculated the odds of two consecutive crib deaths occurring in the same family as 73 million to one. This 'evidence', which was wildly off the mark, was enough to convince the jury of Sally's guilt. Happily, Sally was freed and exonerated after serving three years in prison. However, her suffering took its toll and she died during her sleep at age 42. You can read her heart-breaking story [here](#).

Today, we are subject to The Clustering Illusion more than ever before. Because of the Internet, Facebook, and Twitter, for example, we are exposed to such a large volume of information that we can easily find coincidences to support our favourite theories. The vast amount of web sites devoted to conspiracy theories, UFOs, psychics, synchronicity, and other paranormal phenomena attest to the widespread influence of The Clustering Illusion. By the way, finding meaningful patterns or connections in random or meaningless data is called *apophenia*.

Helpful Books to Clear the Cobwebs from Your Mind

Don't Believe Everything You Think: The 6 Basic Mistakes We Make in Thinking by Thomas E. Kida

Why We Make Mistakes: How We Look Without Seeing, Forget Things in Seconds, and Are All Pretty Sure We Are Way Above Average by Joseph T. Hallinan ###

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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**The 3 Thieves and 4 Pillars of Happiness:
7 Steps to a Life of Boundless Joy
by Chuck Gallozzi**

End confusion about the nature of happiness and discover how to lead a life of boundless joy!

Happiness is the natural state of infants. But, as they are raised in a cynical world, they grow into children, adolescents, and adults who become jaded. They grow to believe happiness is no more than an elusive dream. Yet, this need not remain so, for we can reclaim our natural state of happiness.

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Focused To The Point Of Blindness

by Beca Lewis

I was “exercising” my thinking playing a Google Memory Game. This game consists of a variety of different objects in their own little box within a square, with two of each object. The game begins by automatically mixing up the objects in the square a number of times within a very fast few seconds. Once the mixing stops, the purpose of the game is to see how few clicks it takes to match the two similar objects together.

Here is what I noticed. It’s that perception thing again. First, in order to see anything at all I have to perceive every object all at once. I can’t focus on just one thing hoping that I will then remember the rest. To play the game well it is necessary for me to slow down, see the whole picture, relax, let inspiration guide, and pay attention, but not stare, or focus on any one object.

That is the key to playing well, but it’s not what I tend to do. Instead, I tend to look for one thing to match and completely forget to notice what was in the box on the wrong click. I rush, thinking that somehow if I move quickly it will work better or perhaps I just want to finish the game. I stare or focus on one object and become blind to the rest. The more I continue that behavior the worse it gets. I get tense, can’t remember what I just clicked on, or even what I am looking for.

Sometimes the first game works out ok, but if I play again, it gets worse. Then I can’t remember if I saw the object in the last game, or the current game. Even changing the game so it is a different set of objects is only a slight assistance in stopping the memory bleed from the past to the present.

The game provides a perfect symbol of how we live life. We are always looking for something in particular. We look for what we perceive as the perfect mate, client, or friend. We search for the perfect way to receive income, have the perfect house, or drive the perfect car.

We get focused! It is what we are taught to do. “Focus, move quickly, and ignore anything that doesn’t match what you are looking for. Go out and get what you want, state your desires and what you need, and start matching them up.”

That means that the physics of our being works exactly how it is supposed to work. It filters out everything that isn’t our focus, making us think, that we don’t have anything at all because it doesn’t look like the picture we are trying to match in our head.

We become blind to what is already present because it doesn’t look like what we think we want or need. As we continue that behavior, our blindness increases because as we

continue to look for one thing over and over again—like the perfect job—that becomes the paradigm that blocks from view everything else.

If we are struggling with any form of poverty we think that is the problem and so we focus on matching our money needs with what we think provides income. If we are lonely, we think that is the problem and focus our companionship needs with what we think provides love. If we are not well, we think that is the problem and focus our health needs on what we think provides health.

The problem is not with the poverty, loneliness, or disease. The problem is the focus, which becomes our mind set, our perception, and therefore our lives. As focused humans, we are blind.

This is a much more serious problem than taking too many clicks to match up objects in a memory game.

There is an easy way to remove the blindness of a focused perception and see the whole picture. It is to practice matching spiritual qualities to every person, place, or thing in our lives. Matching qualities expands perception and brings back into view all that we have blocked from our lives by the paradigm we programmed into our thinking.

This practice will also slow us down and give us time to be aware of what is present now. It will begin to dissolve the blindness of the past so that it no longer affects the qualities of our lives today.

There is no rush to get somewhere before we can live, and no game to complete. There is nothing to do but shift our perception to match the Truth of being, and then be willing for what isn't true to dissolve. This will reveal the abundance that has always been, and always will be present, because that is the law of Life. ###

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. They also founded The Women's Council with the intent of “strengthening the connection to yourself, to others, and to the Divine.”

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In Leadership, What's Age Got to Do With It? **by Steve Wickham**

The Apostle Paul to Timothy:

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

—*1 Timothy 4:12* (NRSV).

Most of us will already know that Timothy was a timid, yet very loyal disciple of Christ under the tutelage of Paul.

He was young and called to lead many older, perhaps more experienced believers. Because he was young and lacked confidence, many of these believers looked down on Timothy; they were dubious about his credibility. In effect, by doing this, they didn't trust Paul.

Paul knew, however, that if only Timothy would focus on those five character traits above, he would win over the critical mass and eventually establish his credibility. Let us consider these five traits:

EXEMPLARY SPEECH

Saying the right things at the right time, despite what we feel to the contrary, is the mark of a good leader - to utilise the portents of good self-control.

EXEMPLARY CONDUCT

Like saying the right things at the right time, doing the right things at the right time is also the mark of a confidently restrained leader.

AN EXAMPLE IN LOVE

How can one love if one is not humble enough to consider the needs of others?

The tightrope Timothy walked was in establishing respect whilst at the same time issuing love to those who did not respect him. Love always wins. When we prioritise love over the respect we're not getting, then we prove we're worthy of the respect we wish to claim as our own.

We need to do the very same thing; ignore the fact that respect may not be coming our way. Instead we go on in love; we love with all the power God has put into us. This is quite limitless.

AN EXAMPLE IN FAITH

Faith really is trust. It is difficult when we're not trusted and respected to go out in trust and respect. Faith can do this because it looks to no one but a faithful God.

Paul seeks for Timothy to go beyond his fear and reach forward in faith. The challenge remains for us, also, when we too are 'fighting' for the respect of our credibility.

AN EXAMPLE IN PURITY

Purity is the essence of all the foregoing. It is evidence that our speech and conduct, our love and faith are all in-train.

Purity is the essence of holiness, and that, borrowed from God. Purity is example.

LEADERSHIP IS EXAMPLE

Paul has probably hand-picked these five character traits purposely for Timothy.

Perhaps he's picked Timothy strengths. Ever the encourager, Paul is playing to Timothy's natural virtue; we know Timothy was a humble young man - too humble at times, certainly verging on timidity (see 2 Timothy 1:7).

So, we can confidently know that proper speech and conduct, as well as exemplary love, faith and purity, were well within Timothy's developmental grasp.

Leadership has less to do with age and experience and more to do with example, and example is about the knowledge of awareness and the courage to act.

Barring experience that gives us knowledge, age has nothing to do with these things. Most importantly with leadership the key competencies are morally divined; despite his age Timothy, had these in healthy stock.

No matter our age - whether we're considered too young, too old, too experienced, or not experienced enough - it's these five character traits we must focus upon in establishing our credibility. ###

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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Does the Human Mind Create and Heal Diseases? **by Jahiel Yasha Kamhi**

This question was shocking news for some people.

Recently, I got an invitation from the leader of the group to make a presentation on the topic of the power of the mind. The instructions were: “Make a simple presentation in plain English. Keep everything simple, as much as possible.”

I spent some time preparing material for my presentation with one idea in mind: To show everyone that the human mind is the most creative, powerful, unlimited, unpredictable and very complicated substance.

This is what I had to say to my fellow members, when I was ready to give my lecture:

Welcome to a presentation on the most intriguing subject in the world: The human mind.

The human mind and human genes

As a person who is still learning new facts about positive psychology, I was impressed when I learned about epigenetics.

I must mention the name of Dr. Bruce Lipton, who is a leading scientist in the field of epigenetics.

Epigenetics is the science of the connection between the human mind and human genes.

What did I learn from epigenetics and Dr. Lipton’s explanations?

Epigenetics literally means “above the genes”.

What was realized through epigenetics is interesting and also revolutionary: Something is controlling our genes!

It is environmental influences, including our mind!

Reading Dr. Lipton’s explanations on the mind-gene connection is like reading a good detective book. I couldn’t stop reading it.

What epigenetics actually says provides a clear message for everyone: The source of our problems is not in our genes, but in how our cells interpret directions from our mind and environment.

Before, we learned that our genes control our life.

System of beliefs can change our genetic expression

Now we know: Even our system of beliefs can change our genetic expression, (the chemical process of translating genetic codes in DNA into a protein).

In the same line with beliefs goes our perception about life. How we see and interpret life's events will determine the appearance of our genes. If our approach to life is positive, our genes will create positive environments for us. With an influence of attitude, our genes are changed.

According to Dr. Bruce Lipton and the biology of the mind, what we human beings are able to create, can help us or kill us. There is no more intellectually powerful weapon than the human mind.

This science of the biology of the mind is teaching us that we are not the victims of our genetic code and that there are no limits for the human mind. We have power over our heritage because cells' are controlled by the physical and energetic environment, not by our genes.

Is this proof that self- healing works?

My greatest surprise about epigenetics was when I learned how the people around us can influence our genes. How can we accept the fact that the cultural beliefs of the people around us can control our genes? Is it an unbelievable statement that others have authority over our genes?

Learning from epigenetics, we now know that beliefs are energy fields that shape our genetic manifestation.

Whenever we feel powerless, remember one very important piece of evidence from the biology of the mind: If we believe we are down, helpless and weak, then our thoughts will manifest evidence in life to justify our opinion. Simply, our thoughts will always try to help us, giving us evidence and support that we are right.

That is the nature of our thoughts; they are here to support us, even if we are wrong. Do you know why it is like that? Because our positive and negative beliefs are equally powerful.

The answer to the question from the title of this article is: Yes, the human mind creates and heals diseases. ###

Jahiel Yasha Kamhi holds a degree in Medical Biochemistry and a Bachelor's degree in Chemistry. Jahiel writes regularly for www.personal-development.com and other magazines. He also delivers presentations that inspire others to find more meaning and

balance in their lives. He is passionate about writing, and conveying positive ideas that help people live life with more passion and purpose.

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

Email at: jasakamhi@hotmail.com

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by Peter Shephard

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Desperate for a Cure For Snoring? **by Roseanna Leaton**

The person who is usually most desperately in need of a cure for snoring is not actually the snorer; it is the partner who lies awake each night in states of increasing frustration, using all of their will power to get their partner to roll onto their side and stop snoring. Alas, all that will power doesn't tend to have the desired effect. Elbows get poked into sides and frequently the spare bed is eagerly sought out. Not the best recipe for a tender and loving feeling in the relationship.

It's not a bed of roses for the person who is snoring either. He (or she) often ends up with bruises as well as a sore throat, and although asleep during the night this sleep tends to be of an inferior quality. If that's not enough of an imposition, they often waken in the morning to find that they are alone, having been abandoned during the night and are subsequently subjected to angry and accusing looks across the breakfast table, interspersed with strident directives to get a snoring cure or else!

The search for a snoring cure begins. "How to cure snoring" is keyed into "Google" and page upon page of information is read and digested. Many different cures for snoring are tried, some with eagerness and some with a definite reluctance. If you are lucky you find a snoring cure that works for you. Often the simplest and least invasive snoring cure is completely overlooked. Perhaps this is because hypnosis can often be misunderstood and therefore feared.

In reality however, hypnosis is a normal and natural state of relaxation which you pass through as you go to sleep each night. Hypnosis is easy to learn and easy to use. It is comfortable and relaxing and completely non-invasive; a hypnotic cure for snoring doesn't require a band across your nose or anything alien placed in your mouth or throat...unless you count putting earphones on as invasive, that is! This particular cure for snoring has a couple of extra advantages as it has no side effects at all and is really very inexpensive and so there's really nothing to lose in giving it a try.

A cure for snoring which involves hypnosis can work in two distinctive ways. The person who snores can be given suggestions to the effect that they turn onto their side whenever they hear their own snoring sounds, or that they no longer feel comfortable on their back, and various suggestions in this vein. The snoring solution for the partner comes in the form of suggestions which effectively focus the persons mind to find those sounds comforting and soothing and feel that they can now be lulled to sleep by the very sounds that used to keep them awake.

What could be easier? Hypnosis provides a snoring cure for the person who snores and a solution for the partner all delivered to your home in the form of an mp3 downloads.

What other snoring cure works for the partner as well as for the person who snores?
###

Roseanna Leaton, specialist in hypnosis mp3 downloads to provide snoring solutions for both parties.

Often the easiest and least invasive cure for snoring is overlooked. Hypnosis provides a treatment to cure snoring and also provides a snoring solution for the partner.

With a degree in psychology and qualifications in hypnotherapy and NLP, Roseanna Leaton is one of the leading practitioners of self-improvement. You can get a free hypnosis mp3 from <http://www.RoseannaLeaton.com> and find a [cure for snoring](#) together with [snoring solutions for the partner](#).

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Reducing Stress With Aromatherapy

by Frances Black

The word 'stress' is used incessantly. It has become part of our everyday language. But what does it really mean?

To be suffering from stress means being in a state of high tension which can eventually be the precursor of a more serious physical or mental illness. Stress is more often known as 'nervous tension'. What we mean when we talk about a stressful situation is one which is putting pressure on us that we are not able to cope with it. This state of stress is becoming so common the medical profession has now acknowledged its seriousness by convening many symposia and congresses on the subject. It is now recognized as a serious threat to our health. It is a potential killer and we must pay attention to mastering it before it masters us.

How aromatherapy can help

Aromatherapy acts on the nervous system, which is our most subtle system and the one that is most easily disturbed in the modern world. The nervous system is one which we have no control over such as the beating of the heart. Aromatherapy massage automatically relaxes the recipient by working on pressure points on either side of the spine which function like a series of little power stations to produce energy. In this way a state of relaxation can be achieved.

The essential oils used during the massage of the face and body have a double action. Firstly, they work by scent and secondly they are absorbed through the skin into the bloodstream. They are powerful allies in the fight against stress. Choose essential oils for their calming and rebalancing properties. Such oils are bergamot, chamomile, lavender, marjoram, neroli, orange, petitgrain and vetivert. These are to be used either in a single essential oil preparation with a vegetable oil such as jojoba, soya bean, sesame, St John's wort or wheat germ, or in a combination of two or three essential oils again with a vegetable oil.

Taking an aromatherapy bath three to four times a week using relaxing essential oils can be very beneficial in reducing stress. If time doesn't permit a bath, a footbath can be helpful or sponge yourself down with a wet towel to which 1 drop of essential oil has been added. In addition, a single drop of vetivert (which is known as the essential oil of tranquility) will release a great deal of tension when applied anti-clockwise to the solar plexus. This should be performed morning and night.

It is also good to set aside one evening a week where a light meal is eaten, followed by an aromatic bath and early to bed either reading or listening to music. This will help recharge your batteries. An oil diffuser in the bedroom can help relax you. Try it with

calming oils such as bergamot, chamomile, lavender or neroli. A herbal tea can be useful before bed, try lime blossom, lemon verbena, melissa, skullcap or marjoram.

A good diet can also help you deal with stress. Avoid red meat, white flour and products made with it, sugar, processed foods and to limit the amount of fat eaten. Try to eat wholesome, natural food where ever possible. Meditation can be helpful for some. Even 15 minutes set aside each day to relax and unwind can be beneficial. ###

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How Music Boosts Your Memory And Makes You Smarter **by Pat Wyman**

Have you ever noticed how your favorite music can make you feel better? Well, new research studies suggest that certain types of music can boost your memory, cut your company's training time and make you smarter too.

Scientists at Stanford University, in California, have recently revealed a molecular basis for music known as the "Mozart Effect", but not other music.

Dr. Fran Rauscher and her geneticist colleague H. Li, discovered that rats, like humans, perform better on learning and memory tests after listening to a specific Mozart Sonata in D. They found that various growth factors and a memory compound increased in an area of the brain that affects learning and memory.

In addition, some years before, at the University of California, Irvine, Dr. Rausher found that college students scored higher on the spatial portion of an I.Q. test after listening to the Mozart Sonata for only 10 minutes! The findings were published and the "Mozart Effect" craze officially began.

Although there is still some controversy over whether the "Mozart Effect" really exists, I've done my research and am a big fan personally. I listen to certain Mozart CD's every day when I write my books.

They help me focus and concentrate, and give me the added boost of a better memory. OK, I admit, sometimes I forget where I put the car keys, but listening to these particular pieces called "Mozart Effect for Focus and Concentration" actually do help me focus better.

On a more serious note, there is substantial research showing that classical music lessons can really pay off, because music can "boost brain circuitry and increase certain mental functions".

Ultimately, you may develop the more spatial areas of the brain, and the research shows that people who have had music lessons or play an instrument perform better on many types of cognitive tests.

Major corporations such as Shell, IBM, and Dupont, along with thousands of schools and universities use music, such as certain Baroque or Mozart pieces, to cut learning time, mask irritating sounds, and increase retention of the new materials.

Many industrial corporations provide music to their employees. Dupont, for example, used a music listening program in one department that cut its training time in half and doubled the number of people trained. Another corporation using music found that clerical errors decreased by one third.

I use many type of music in my Instant Learning workshops and trainings because I find that it reduces learning time and increases memory of the material. Music activates the whole brain and makes you feel more energetic.

There is also some compelling newer evidence to show that music, used properly, can calm people with ADD or ADHD and even autism.

A recent news article reported that researchers have discovered direct evidence that music stimulates different regions of the brain responsible for memory, motor control, timing and language. For the first time, researchers also have located specific areas of mental activity linked to emotional responses to music.

At McGill University in Montreal, neuroscientist Anne Blood, who conducted the study said, "You can activate different parts of the brain, depending on what music you listen to.

So music can stimulate parts of the brain that are underactive in neurological diseases or a variety of emotional disorders. Over time, we could retrain the brain in these disorders."

Harvard University Medical School neurobiologist, Mark Jude Tramo, says, "Undeniably, there is a biology of music. There is no question that there is specialization within the human brain for the processing of music. Music is biologically part of human life, just as music is aesthetically part of human life."

Given the exceptional benefits of listening to certain types of music, I highly recommend you add Mozart to your tool chest of rapid learning strategies. You can listen as a family, use it at work, or play it in the background when you want your to kick your memory into high gear. ###

About the Author:

Pat Wyman is the founder of HowToLearn.com, best selling author of Learning vs Testing and the Instant Learning books and coaching series. She uses the [Mozart Effect in her Instant Learning In The Workplace trainings to improve memory and cut learning time.](#)

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Can Music Really "Soothe The Savage Beast?"

by Duane Shinn

It has long been suggested that "music soothes the savage beast." But is this true? And if it is, does this have any implication where humans are concerned? The answer, apparently, is yes. To illustrate this, researchers point to the different physiological changes that take place within the human body in response to different sounds and noises. A loud noise that shatters the silence sets the human heart racing and stimulates a rush of adrenaline that prepares you for flight. In contrast a soft, soothing sound helps us to relax.

Music therapy has, in fact, been around for thousands of years. Nearly four thousand years ago the Hebrew Scriptures recorded that the boy who would later become King David was hired by his predecessor to play the harp to calm King Saul when he would go into a rage. Likewise, the use of music therapy is found in the writings of ancient civilizations such as Egypt, China, India, Greece and Rome.

More recently, scientists have been studying the effects of music therapy and have documented changes in respiratory rates, blood pressure, and pulse in response to musical stimuli. Likewise, researchers in the realm of music therapy have found that the use of music therapy can be effective in areas as diverse as IQ and recovery rates, pain management and weight loss.

Some object that this sounds too good to be true. How can music therapy change something like pain management? Researchers tell us that the reason music therapy works is based on how we hear. Sound is little more than vibrations in the air that are picked up by the inner ear and transferred to the brain which is a key component in your nervous system and controls the functions of the body and the brain responds to the stimuli that it is given.

In light of this, music therapy can and often is used in a wide variety of applications. One common application for music therapy is in working with autistic individuals because research has found that music can help autistic children to express themselves. Likewise, music therapy has been found to help individuals with physical disabilities to develop better motor skills.

With music therapy, individuals with high levels of anxiety can be helped to express suppressed emotions thereby discharging anger, or enabling the individual to express the joy they would not otherwise be able to express. Likewise, research has found that music therapy can help lower the anxiety levels of hospital patients who find themselves facing frightening prospects and in an unfamiliar environment. Furthermore, music therapy has been found to help medical professionals with pain management such that

they have been able to reduce pain medication by as much as one half by helping to stimulate the production of the body's own pain killers, called endorphins.

Music therapy can come in a wide variety of forms. In some cases it's as simple as having the individual listen to particular music. In other cases music therapy requires a more interactive approach, having the individual respond to the music either in dance or using some other form of expression. But in its many forms, music therapy has often been found to be beneficial. ###

Duane Shinn is the author of over 500 music courses for adults. His book-CD-DVD course titled "How To Add Runs & Fills To Your Piano Playing!" www.pianolesson.tv is used by pianists around the world. He is the author of the popular free 101-week online email newsletter "Amazing Secrets Of Exciting Piano Chords & Sizzling Chord Progressions" at www.playpiano.com

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~ 7 Words to Turn Painful States Into Healing Powers ~

by Guy Finley

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I Will Not Should on Myself Today by Joyce Shafer

How ready and able we are to beat up on ourselves! “I will not should on myself today” would benefit many as a new mantra.

A coaching client, who is a solo business person, provided lessons for many by sharing “should” challenges a number of people contend with in their personal, as well as professional lives. Three big “shoulds” showed up for her. You’ve probably experienced at least one of them, in one form or another.

Should 1 convinced her to sit at her computer all day and into the night for three weeks straight, and not productively for the most part, mostly hoping *something* good would happen—no outings; no mental, emotional, physical, or creative time off. All that time, and nothing shifted in a positive direction. Law of Attraction proves that what you focus on you get more of. A better statement is **HOW you focus is what you get more of**. Right now, as you read this, make your own mental list of what was likely attracted into her life or amplified during those weeks. More of the same, for sure. Are you currently doing this in one or more areas of your own life?

Should 2 convinced her to believe the way to improve her circumstances and experiences was to focus 24/7 on her home-based creative business—let me **change the word “focus” to “dwell on”**—**there’s a big difference between the two**. This “should” is filled with stress and strain, yes? Yes. Was her focus on productive ways and actions to achieve desired outcomes during reasonable work hours, or was she worn out mentally—even burned out from the weight of this kind of thinking? Sure, she had some creative, inspired moments in the mix and some productive outcomes; but most of her thoughts ran like this: “Nothing’s working the way I want it to. What am I doing wrong? Why is this happening? Why is this so hard? *When is this ever going to change in my favor?!*”—Whew! Using Law of Attraction principles, you can see what her day-to-day experience was like, from dawn to dark. Are you dwelling on similar questions about one or more areas of your own personal or professional life? ***Dwelling on and acting on create very different results.***

Should 3 convinced her that anytime she attempted to focus on a personal project that felt fulfilling to her or anything other than work, her Inner Critic should nag her. What happened was rather than engage with her self and a project fully, she engaged in an inner battle with the Inner Critic—a battle between what she “should” be doing and what she felt inspired and motivated to do at that time. These battles used up her time and energy; wore her out and wore her down. Creative projects inspire. They bring joy and fulfillment by virtue of meeting a creative challenge. For her, **this inner battle meant *nothing she did was joyful; nothing got completed—except for her feeling completely frustrated.*** When you consider the Law of Attraction factor here, what you

get is a big Ouch! I suggested more fun be included in her life (*very* attractive to LOA!)—and, not just doing fun things—engaging her own *inner* fun about whatever she sets out to accomplish.

We think that such stress and strain can be hidden from others (our own private hell), but it leaks from our energetic pores—it pushes people and desired outcomes away like bad body odor. That’s graphic, but true. It shows in our face, our body language, our attitude. It creates a vicious cycle: we want or need to improve something in our lives; but instead of exploring appropriate actions and taking them so we can give outcomes a chance to show up (including fun and recharge times that stimulate creative productivity), we wallow and fret in our minds—which never, ever creates positive experiences and outcomes. And, **this casts many people into the dark land known as I Don’t Deserve Anything Better.**

We seem to walk on a tightrope when it comes to how we believe we “should” perceive ourselves, which is what generates and amplifies beliefs about what we deserve. It’s kind of like the story of Goldilocks—if we have too high an opinion of ourselves, the “porridge” is too hot. Too low, the “porridge” is too cold. Yet, we can’t seem to allow ourselves to sit in the chair where the “porridge” is just right. Why is this? It’s because we were convinced by others (who also believe this) that the assessment of who we are, how well we’re doing, and what we deserve must be decided by others, not us. **We ignore the fact that allowing the opinions of others to define us and what we deserve has never worked and never will; and, in fact, keeps us understandably confused and stifles our natural inclination to explore what fulfills us,** to discover and live what makes us feel like *just-right porridge*.

Every one of us “shoulds” on ourself from time to time. The next time you catch yourself about to do this, stop and ask, **“Who am I trying to please?”** The best answer, of course, is you! And in that case, you really do know what would please you, so follow your inner wisdom. We’re not talking about running amok here with irresponsible behaviors. We’re talking about you living YOUR life *without resisting* what feels appropriate, productive, and fulfilling for you.

Shoulding on yourself seldom creates results, it creates a mess. If you feel the need to should on you, relevant resistance is trying to get your attention. Really—if there’s something you *must* do, you do it—free of shoulds. A “should” is a Stop sign: take a moment to look at it. If you should be doing whatever, why aren’t you; and what would have to happen at the inner level in order for you to do it? Or, maybe you *shouldn’t* do what you tell yourself you should. During the call with my client, she revealed that her intuition is always correct, but her Inner Critic tries to convince her otherwise with guilt-laden shoulds. I shared a quote with her by Goethe that brought tears to her eyes: **“As soon as you trust yourself, you will know how to live.”** That we weren’t taught to trust ourselves is a good reason so many do “struggle” as a way of life instead of discovery and fulfillment.

Consider if any of your “shoulds” have merit and go from there, but don’t engage in a battle with them. **Shift “I should” to “I will” or “I won’t.” “I should” has no power behind it; “I will” and “I won’t” do.** Include your right to have fun at the inner and outer levels of your life. You’ll have a far better Law-of-Attraction result with this approach.

What does the Infinite Creative Consciousness—the final word in all things—say you deserve? All the GOOD you can use and enjoy! But, you have to agree to invite it into your *state of mind*. Your good will knock; it may put a foot across the threshold, but it won’t enter your life fully without your permission.

Practice makes progress. ###

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Meditation and the Many Faces of Reality **by Robert E. Darby**

Meditation can be a double edged tool. It can reveal the nature of actual reality, but in doing so it also reveals many other states of consciousness that we experience as real but are not usually aware of their true nature, depending on our present level of awareness. So, while meditation can show us true reality, in the process we may realize that we have been living in a conceptual representation of reality for perhaps years or even a whole lifetime.

Many of those who pursue meditation as a means of achieving self realization or self awareness reach a point where they suddenly begin to perceive on an intuitive level, a truth that is fundamental to their well being and sense of self and security, at which point some choose to continue and some choose to discontinue the journey of meditation. In fact, this is a well known obstacle in meditation that has to do with the true nature of reality and our perception or lack of perception of what is real.

Who Or What Is Aware

Suppose we go on an intellectual version of an actual meditation experience. We are sitting in a quiet room surrounded by the familiar objects of our life. We place a candle on a low table before where we intend to sit and meditate. There is little light in the room and we light the candle before us and begin to sit quietly slowly gathering our attention and focusing it on the candle and its flame. Reality slows, the mind begins to calm as we let go of the random thoughts that are constantly being generated by our undisciplined mind.

Candle, flame, wax and fire. Word symbols that represent manifestations of energy in the objective reality, the world of things. We become more and more aware of the difference between our thoughts of these objects and the experience of these objects. We wonder who or what it is that can be aware of the activities of our own mind? We realize that this is what is called mindfulness. As our mindfulness increases our awareness increases as well. Flame and fire become a process of transformation between one form of energy to another form of energy. Something is consumed and something is created.

Sounds from the other rooms of the house come to our senses and we mindfully refrain from identifying them and labeling them but rather simply letting the pure experience of the tone produced in our mind come and go. And then again, perhaps not.

We begin to think about a project we are working on at the office and what we need to do to make it better. And the store later on for groceries, and what to do about the teenage daughter sneaking out at night, and what we would do if we became famous, a star, on Oprah even. And suddenly we are back in the room with the candle and the flame and the process of transformation and ourselves sitting here now once again mindful of the present moment.

But where were we and for how long were we there? And who is asking this? We begin to wonder not only what's real, but when is it real and where is it real? Suddenly we are walking on shaky ground. We begin to experience a feeling of restlessness, we want to get away, our mind becomes involved in a desperate attempt to distract us from our meditation session.

The Truths We Run From

Some forms of meditation such as the Vipassana technique can be perceived as a threat, but why. This particular meditation discipline is about achieving enlightenment through insight. Perceiving awareness as a threat is a sure sign that we are not living in the real world but rather some conceptual reality produced by our own mind's ability to imagine and create mental constructs of what is real. And with a long enough exposure to this, we will of course begin to believe and experience it as real. That is, as long as we don't attempt to develop any true level of awareness through something like meditation which would eventually reveal the deception.

Is it so difficult to understand that we would run from the truth that we may have been living in some kind of fantasy version of reality rather than the actual real world? Especially if we also realize that this has been going on for many years. This is crazy, how can this be?

The Good News and The Bad News

The bad news is the answer to the question of "how can this be?" This can be, because instead of taking possession and control of our natural creative power, which is a tool and capability that is unique to the Human life form, we let that same power loose to affect us in unpredictable ways. For example; if we don't use our power to develop and exercise discipline over our own level and degree of consciousness, then what might we expect to encounter in the area of awareness and consciousness? If we do not learn how to use our tools and capabilities correctly and consciously, then those very same tools and capabilities will use us in unpredictable ways, effectively making us victims of our own power.

Ironically, the good news is that we actually have that same infinite creative power and can use it to change any reality into any reality. The fact that we can create conceptual realities in our mind and then allow ourselves to forget that we created them and how we created them, and begin to mistake them for the real thing, is proof of our creative power. One of the ways back to the knowledge of, and the conscious control and use of our power, is through the methods of meditation. ###

Robert Darby is a self change and personal development specialist who writes for many organizations including [The Agenda Of Life Foundation](#). He focuses on developing personal power since that is usually the cause of all Human problems. Robert takes a practical approach in that he looks at the various tools and techniques out there that are designed to help us achieve our mental, spiritual and emotional goals.

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Just Exactly When Are You Going to Get On With It? **by Gabriella Kortsch, Ph.D.**

You know what I mean with *just exactly when are you going to get on with it*: it means that you've been thinking about:

- * Changing your job (leaving your job as a lawyer and becoming a landscape designer)
- * Learning French well enough to spend a whole summer bicycling through France
- * Leaving your marriage (it died long ago ... are you in it for financial or emotional security? For the kids? If it's dead you are not doing them a favor nor your spouse nor yourself by staying there)
- * Taking up water color classes ... or scuba diving ... or piano
- * Finding a new circle of friends that resonates more with ... well ... you!
- * Writing that book
- * Giving up complaining
- * Taking enough time off from work to really explore Renaissance art in Italy
- * Learning how to sail
- * Going back to university to get your master's degree
- * Figuring out how to reorganize your life so that you can move to Australia and find a job there
- * Fill in the blank with your own whatever it is that you have been putting off

It's Been Nagging at You For a Long, Long Time

And you've been thinking about this forever ... it's not a New Year's Resolution that you thought you would take up this year, but it's something that has been there nagging at you for a long, long time.

And what I'd like to address a bit here, is the *nagging*. So here you are, with a *little voice*, let's call it, a little voice inside of you, that nags at you. What could that be? Do you really think it could be your mother's voice or your father's voice coming to you from your distant childhood, urging you on – nagging you on – to learn how to sail? Or to find that new circle of friends?

Or could it be your own inner guilty conscience? (There might be an element of that, but more on that topic later).

What else could be nagging at you?

It Excites You!

Before we answer that, let's look at another aspect of this. Isn't it also true that whenever you think about doing this thing, accomplishing this thing, being involved with this thing, *there is a degree of excitement in you?* There is something in you that resonates with this thing, connects with this thing, something that seems to quicken, to become more alive, whenever you take your thoughts over to this thing?

And then you feel the nagging, because you have not yet begun *this thing that has formed part of your life so long, but that you have not given the attention it deserves.* Hence the guilty conscience.

But way beyond the nagging is the excitement, the resonance, the feeling of connection, the quickening and the intense feeling of being alive *somehow with regards to this thing.*

It Makes You Feel Alive!

You are giving yourself so much information with this. You see, the feelings that arise ... the positive feelings that arise whenever you engage with the thought about this thing, are a kind of message from you to yourself, let's say from an inner core of yourself that you are not particularly well acquainted with to the outer self that you are much more aware of. And the message has to do with the fact that if you were to engage with this thing, this thing that you have been putting off for such a long time, if you were to engage with it, you would begin to experience some of that feeling of excitement much more often in your life, because it would be intimately connected with the thing that you would now actually be doing or fulfilling. And the feeling of excitement has to do with an inner core of knowledge, call it intuition, call it soul, call it what you will, that *arises whenever you touch on or think about aspects that are meant to form part of your life.* We might even say, aspects that could form part of your particular mission in this life.

Sailing? Mission in life? Giving up complaining? Mission in life? Look at it this way: who is to say that if you were to get involved in sailing, you would not meet up with someone who was to be instrumental in the future development of your life – professionally or personally? Or sail somewhere where you would find another branch of the tree that is your mission or purpose in life? And who is to say that if you were to give up complaining, your attitude to life would be so much more positive, that you would ipso facto be much more aware of possibilities, potentialities and opportunities that might bring you closer to that so-called mission. You just can't know. And that is why it is so important *to listen to that little voice,* especially if it is somehow accompanied by some feeling of excitement.

When You Do Things From Your Soul, You Feel a River Moving in You, a Joy.

Rumi puts it beautifully: *When you do things from your soul, you feel a river moving in you, a joy.*

So what can you do to start it now?

- * No time?
- * Don't know how?
- * Can't figure out how you can finish such a big project?
- * Think your audacity to imagine you could do something like that is ridiculous?

Annihilating the Saboteurs

Recognize that all those inner objections are saboteurs that are keeping you from something your deepest, most inner self is encouraging you to do. It is just as simple to give way to the objections and nay-sayers, as it is to give in to the *little voice* that is actually a sort of email from your soul. You've been receiving it most of your life, and you keep deleting it. *Delete the negative thoughts instead.* Give in to the urging, give in to the need you feel to do this thing. If you can't find the time, break down your entire day (Monday – Friday) and write down everything you habitually do. Figure out what can be shortened or eliminated and *use that time to start your 'thing'*. If you don't know how to start, go online and do some research. Or *just start and see what happens.* If you can imagine how you could ever finish such a big project, *just start.* One step at a time and all those steps will soon accumulate and will have taken you 1000 steps further on. And if you think your audacity to imagine you could do something like this is ridiculous, *quelch the voice.* Remember the saboteur and what that voice is keeping you from doing. Remember Edison, Columbus, Ford, Mandela, and all the rest of them. They went out against overwhelming odds and accomplished incredible feats. *So can you.* And remember to motivate yourself during the process. Remember to keep your energy high. Read inspiring passages, listen to inspiring speakers, and do it daily to keep yourself in a place where the saboteurs can't keep a foothold in your mind.

When you do things from your soul, you feel a river moving in you, a joy. ###

Gabriella Kortsch, Ph.D. (Psychology), author of *Rewiring the Soul*, is a practicing psychotherapist who works with an international clientele in Marbella, Spain using an integral focus on body, mind and soul. She has published a newsletter in English and Spanish since 2004, facilitates monthly workshops and broadcast a weekly radio show both locally in Spain, as well as on the internet for seven years. Prior to her work in private practice she was Director of Sales & Marketing at several luxury beach properties in Spain and Mexico and was married to a diplomat. She has three sons.

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Website: <http://www.AdvancedPersonalTherapy.com>

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Who Gets to Achieve Success? **by Philip E. Humbert, PhD**

We have long known that many so-called predictors of success are totally unreliable. Rich kids end up as failures. Bright kids end up working for other people. Attractive kids grow up to be lonely. The most popular kids and best athletes do no better (and often worse) than the "average" kids. Ambitious kids flame out, and so forth.

So what does predict success? Who gets to achieve external success (wealth, fame, power, prestige, etc) and the internal blessing of happiness? What are the predictors of success in both realms? Who are the winners who have the things we want on the outside, while also having peace and fulfillment on the inside? Who gets that???

There are specific skills and behaviors that highly successful people share and the good news is that they are not genetic! You do not have to be born "lucky!" You can learn or acquire these things. Here are a few of the traits and skills of highly successful people:

1. A paradox. Success is a "do-it-yourself" project and yet no one gets there on their own. Successful people LEARN to be successful by watching and emulating successful people. Winners attend the seminars, take the classes, read the books (including biographies) and work with coaches and mentors. I was reminded of that this week when Vic sent his special about the Jim Rohn recordings. Jim taught me a lot! Hanging around him, watching him, learning from him was one of the best investments I've ever made.

2. Simplicity. This is a very sophisticated concept and has more to do with balance or clarity than with the number of appointments on your calendar. I've met famous business leaders who lead astonishingly quiet, orderly lives. Others are busy, high-energy, on-the-go, making deals every day. The outward "style" is not the issue. It's their inner quiet. Successful people know who they are, keep their feet on the ground, and are rarely stressed.

3. Focused ambition. Successful people are ambitious, but their ambition is aimed at a very precise outcome. They work hard, but they are rarely ambitious for "success." Rather, they are focused on a precisely-defined result. Their ambition is not to "be successful" or to "become" anything! Whether their success is teaching a 5-year old to read or building a global enterprise, their ambition is focused and specific.

4. Insatiable curiosity. Successful people know there is a way to achieve their goals and they will try any legal, ethical technique. They ask for suggestions, borrow ideas, modify techniques, study and ponder until they find the solutions. Remember Sir Isaac Newton and his insight about the nature of the universe when an apple fell from a tree? Successful people are eager, curious observers.

5. Determination without stubbornness. Again we're back to a paradox. Successful people never stop. They are hard working, persistent people who never, ever give up. But, they can change their mind in an instant. They are open to new information, a new way, a new solution and when they find it, they can instantly change direction. No one sees them as unpredictable or chaotic, but when they find a better solution, they grab it.

Success is built on skills that can be learned. The skills come more easily to some than others, but anyone can nurture their curiosity. Anyone can learn from a mentor. We can all persist and "stay the course" in hard times. We can all learn the skills and achieve success in life. So, Who gets to achieve success? Anyone who will study, learn and use the skills of highly successful people. ###

Dr Philip Humbert is a Success Strategist, author and popular speaker. Imagine what's possible! To inquire about having him speak to your group or organization, or to schedule an initial consultation, contact him or visit his site at <http://www.philiphumbert.com/>

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~ The Secret of Being Unstoppable ~

by Guy Finley

If you are one of the rare few who are NOT content with "life as usual," and you long to better yourself, your loved ones, and the world at large, then this message was meant just for you.

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The Beauty of Social Improvisation **by Steven Burns**

Someone asked me the other day what I thought was the most useful thing to practice in order to become more socially skilled and confident around people. There's lot's of things but if I was to pick one it would have to be, learn the art of social improvisation...

About 6 months ago I took a sudden notion to take acting lessons. I'm not exactly sure where it came from as I have never harboured any secret urge to become the next Tom Hanks or Robert De-niro but for some reason it is something I've been strangely attracted too for quite some time... So I found a local drama school and enrolled on a 6 month adult acting course...

Up until the time I enrolled I would have described myself as someone who liked structure. Someone who liked or rather 'needed' at a certain level to know what was going to happen before it happened. While I wasn't a complete stickler for rules, procedures and regulations there was a large part of me that was not comfortable unless I was 'super prepared' before I did something new... If I was giving a presentation I had to have everything written out word for word, rehearsed thoroughly and laid out on cue cards before I felt confident I would do a good job.

If I was coaching a client I had to have the full session (or at least how I envisioned it would go) laid out so I knew where things were going step by step... I wasn't inflexible and rarely stuck to the plan exactly, but I was pretty rigid in my belief that, in order for things to go well, I had to prepare to the nth degree and follow some pre-prepared format or technique.

So when it came to the acting classes my expectation was that I could adopt a similar approach... I could find out the lines I was supposed to say and the way I was supposed to move and rehearse them over and over again until they were hard-wired in.

That would work right? Actually, I couldn't have been more wrong... Little did I know that most of the course was focused on what is known in the acting world as 'devising'. In other words we had to create something out of absolutely nothing. No preparation, no prior planning, just pure improvisation...

I walked in on day one and, after the initial warm up, the tutor gave us all an object (I was given a straw hat) and asked us to come up with a 5 minute performance on anything we liked. Still being from the planning mind set I naively asked her to give us a bit more of a step by step guide as to what she was looking for... She looked at me with a wry smile and said, "That's the whole point of improvisation, you don't get step by step instructions!"

I've got to admit I was initially a bit freaked out by this. No structure, no step by step instructions, the loosest of guidelines. How was I going to come up with anything worth showing?

The interesting thing was, though, after I got over this initial anxiety I found myself in a place that I hadn't been in for a long time. A place that was blissfully free from restraints with unlimited possibilities... The place that you naturally go to when you are improvising, where no mistakes can be made and there is no right or wrong.

Because so often we can try to control or pre-empt social situations way too much rather than learning to become comfortable with not knowing what is going to happen before it happens then responding in the moment and allowing things to progress naturally.

Maybe it's a presentation, a network meeting, a party or a date we can often be governed by rules and procedures as to how we think things should go or what the right or wrong things to say and do might be.

Of course it's great to be prepared and have guidelines but when you really get down to it there is no substitute to being comfortable just going with the flow and responding, in the moment, to what is going on around us... It's the place where all the best and most natural stuff is create..

Because as soon as you add the human element into anything, it's impossible to predict how things are going to go so while it's always advisable to do your homework it's more important to get comfortable not knowing what's going to happen before it happens, going with it and then re-adjusting to suit.

So, you maybe wondering, how does this all relate to social confidence?

It relates a lot... It doesn't really matter what the situation is. Whether you're having small talk, socializing at a party, giving a presentation or talking with a client the more comfortable you are at improvising socially the more confident you will be that everything will work out in the end.

Think about it... it's one thing to be prepared and confident in your own material or in what you are going to say but it's another thing to also be confident in your ability to make use of whatever is going on your environment irrespective of where, when, what or with whom.

It's what I call the 'Ross Noble effect'... Ross Noble is an English comedian who pretty much improvises his full show, He has some common themes that run through them but 75% of his act is made up on the spot or in response to what people say in the audience.

Of course you don't have to be as good as Ross but just think how much more confident and skilled you would be socially if you developed some of this skill for yourself. Well here's a great way to get you started... it's called The TV Free Association Game...

1. Switch on your TV to any channel and listen to the topic being discussed.
2. Now start talking about something topic. It doesn't matter if it makes sense just keep going in free flow.
3. Now start talking about something that is related to the topic. Again, it doesn't matter if it doesn't make sense you are in improvisation mode,
4. Keep doing this for at least 10 minutes. You'll be amazed at how easy it suddenly becomes to talk about pretty much anything.

So if you are a stickler for the rules or tend to have to be 'super prepared' before doing most things one of the most useful things you can do to become more confident and skilled around people is improve your Social Improvisation. ###

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Dream Characters:
Exploring the reasons we bring certain people into our dreams.
by Susan Baragia, M.A.

One of the more confusing and fascinating images that our dreaming brain creates is dream characters. How often have you woken up from a dream and asked yourself "Now, why on earth did I just dream about my old boyfriend from high school?" or "why would I dream about my first grade teacher?" Dream characters can be people we know, people who have died, public people, combinations of people, shadow figures, or even archetypal characters. The important point is that your unconscious chose to bring them into your dream for a reason. Sometimes the reason seems not only puzzling, but totally incomprehensible. I once dreamed of Ringo Starr from the Beatles! Now why on earth did I bring him into my dream? I'll attempt to explain why we bring in various dream characters and how, once examined, our characters reveal the hidden messages intended to help us in our daily lives.

Dreams are our way of maintaining balance in our lives. They help us sort out problems, present solutions, reveal creative ideas, and can symbolically alert us to current social, physical, and spiritual issues. Because our right brain is engaged in dreaming most of the time, our dreams have to present information symbolically and metaphorically. One way our dreaming mind does this is through dream characters. Some dream theorists believe dream characters are always parts of us and don't really represent the actual character. I don't believe it is that simple. I believe the dream character can be parts of ourselves, parts of other people we admire, envy, respect or even disdain. Dream characters can occur in dreams simply because of what their names symbolically represent.

In *Our Dreaming Mind* (Van Castle, 1994) a study is mentioned by C. Brooks Brenneis who examined differences between the characters in male and female dreams. Male students surveyed usually played a pivotal role in their own dreams, while females seem to create an atmosphere of personal closeness full of people they know. In my work with both male and female dreamers, I notice males often have dreams full of action and aggressive acts, while females often dream inside structures, with groups of people that they know or don't know, but seldom report dreams without other characters. Ultimately every dreamer is unique and individual, so we need to be careful about any assumptions or generalizations we make about gender dreams.

Let's examine how characters carry messages to the dreamer. Imagine a dream where the dreamer is carrying on a conversation with a friend from her past. In the conversation the dreamer is angry, and is telling the friend that she hurt and humiliated her. The friend is looking at the dreamer with a smirk. The dreamer says "listen to me!". The dream ends.

When the dreamer reflects on the dream, she remembers the old friend as kind, caring, and a wonderful listener. Why did she bring this friend into her dream? Here are some questions the dreamer could ask herself:

How would I describe my friend? Do I share any of my friend's characteristics?

Does this friend remind me of anyone in my waking life currently?

If this friend were a part of me, and if I was actually talking to myself in the dream, what part of myself am I not listening to?

Is this friend symbolic of someone in my life who I am shutting out; someone I am not listening to?

Dream characters can pop up in dreams simply because of their names or their positions socially. Perhaps Ringo Starr came into my dream to connect the words ring and star. Is there a reminder I need about a ring. Does the word ring represent something I need to think about? Or perhaps the word Starr is the trigger. Remembering that dream characters are seldom about the actual character, but are more about what your associations are with the character is important. Once you begin to analyze this, you will begin to reveal the dream's hidden message. For more information about dreams, dream interpretation, and the science of dreaming, please visit www.DreamsHelp.com.

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by Guy Finley

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Your Mind Has A Mind Of Its Own

by Victor Da Ponte

Isn't it amazing how powerful our minds are - when we tell ourselves we want to do one thing, but end up doing the opposite - all because our mind refused to cooperate with us. Have you ever considered that your mind may have its own agenda? One thing is for sure, it wants to keep you alive and it wants to try and create the happiness that you, the soul, is trying to experience.

So isn't the mind completely committed to fulfilling whatever we desire to experience in life? The answer is yes and no. Yes - because it is trying to create the happiness your soul wants to experience in this lifetime. The mind or subconscious mind really is your servant and is trying to fulfill what it believes you want. The mind without a soul is dead. When the soul inhabits the body-mind, the mind comes to life and the mind tries and carries out the soul's desires and it is acutely aware of the soul's every desire - no matter how much in the back of your mind you are wanting something or how deeply hidden it is in your heart. You may not always remember, but the subconscious always knows and it's there to nudge and remind you of your desires. That's its job and does it very intensely and mathematically.

On the other hand, it may know exactly what you want but nevertheless it will refuse to cooperate with you. It will insist on doing things the way it perceives is best. For example, when you become aware of your true purpose in life, which is to awaken to who you really are, the mind will agree to pursue that purpose so long as you are doing it the "mind's way." It doesn't want to let go and simply allow consciousness to work through you. It does not like the idea of allowing your happiness to come only from the center of your being without any effort or conditions that need to be met. It wants credit because its consciousness perceives it needs it. The mind insists on creating happiness and success - and that's always a formula for disappointment and stress because of the inherent potential for failure.

Its way of achieving happiness is by having, gaining and achieving. It wants to achieve happiness by creating something big through its own efforts. When it gains, it succeeds and only then does its logic allow for happiness to be possible. Essentially, the mind's consciousness is on a rat race for happiness.

Even if you show the mind that it is spinning in circles, it will still refuse to give up the race. Doing so would mean its death and your death - and end the whole experience for both of you. By the way, the also mind thinks it is you.

Until we cause the experience of a perceived death of the mind on a number of minor levels and major levels, the mind will continue on its mission to create and "gain" happiness in your life. The mind will try and gain the respect of others, gain the love and

acceptance of others, gain significance in life, and even gain self realization and personal development.

Even if it is a gain of knowledge or personal growth, it is still on the rat race to create and gain happiness and fulfillment.

The only way out of the mind's agenda, even if you are seeking to be a very deeply spiritual being and want to love, forgive and accept others and yourself on a deep level, is to "jump off" the rat race wheel of conditional happiness and focus intensely on Being. Everything else is transient and conditional. Think of what happens when you suddenly hate or resent someone because they did a great injustice. Your happiness will fly out the window because you now failed to be the deeply spiritual person you want to accomplish being.

The solution - any desire for gain or accomplishment must die. Once you let your perceived accomplishments die, you will be free to be happy without accomplishing it, without deserving it - you will be left and the mind will be silent. The mind will be "dead." Your Being will be left, very much alive.

Acknowledging gain in any way is allowing the mind to continue with its delusion. Here's the disclaimer. It won't be pleasant because the mind does not go away without a fight. It will pull out all of its resources to avoid "dying." It will create depression, sadness, cry out like a victim, anger, anxiety and could even make you feel like vomiting. It has great power, don't underestimate it.

When emotions get intense, simply feel your presence in every cell in your body. This will increase the intensity of your presence and quickly neutralize thoughts and emotions rooted in fear. Commit to Being with all of you heart - and your mind will eventually align with you completely. Are you willing? ###

Victor Da Ponte is a gifted energy healer, spiritual counsler and originator of the iMaster Techniques. He has been in the personal development field for more than 20 years, and is committed to assisting others in their evolution. Learn more about Victor's work by claiming a Free Intro-Video course on the iMaster Techniques.

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A Course in Miracles

Lesson 50

I am sustained by the Love of God.

Here is the answer to every problem that will confront you, today and tomorrow and throughout time. In this world, you believe you are sustained by everything but God. Your faith is placed in the most trivial and insane symbols; pills, money, "protective" clothing, influence, prestige, being liked, knowing the "right" people, and an endless list of forms of nothingness that you endow with magical powers.

All these things are your replacements for the Love of God. All these things are cherished to ensure a body identification. They are songs of praise to the ego. Do not put your faith in the worthless. It will not sustain you.

Only the Love of God will protect you in all circumstances. It will lift you out of every trial, and raise you high above all the perceived dangers of this world into a climate of perfect peace and safety. It will transport you into a state of mind that nothing can threaten, nothing can disturb, and where nothing can intrude upon the eternal calm of the Son of God.

Put not your faith in illusions. They will fail you. Put all your faith in the Love of God within you; eternal, changeless and forever unchanging. This is the answer to whatever confronts you today. Through the Love of God within you, you can resolve all seeming difficulties without effort and in sure confidence. Tell yourself this often today. It is a declaration of release from the belief in idols. It is your acknowledgment of the truth about yourself.

For ten minutes, twice today, morning and evening, let the idea for today sink deep into your consciousness. Repeat it, think about it, let related thoughts come to help you recognize its truth, and allow peace to flow over you like a blanket of protection and surety. Let no idle and foolish thoughts enter to disturb the holy mind of the Son of God. Such is the Kingdom of Heaven . Such is the resting place where your Father has placed you forever.

Commentary by Allen Watson

What sustains me? What do I turn to when I feel empty or depleted? God-my eternal Source? Or something else? I have to admit that often it is to something else that I turn for renewal. What would it be like to have a habit of turning to the Love of God? What would it be like to come to rely fully on something so utterly and absolutely dependable?

The list of items in the first paragraph of the lesson contains something that fits nearly every one of us. Whatever my personal preference for "sustainer," the whole bunch of them is just "an endless list of forms of nothingness that [we] endow with magical powers". When we turn to them, something in us knows that these things are not really solving anything; they are nothing but palliatives, placebos that may dull the symptoms for a while but in the end cure nothing.

I think it was Saint Augustine who said that every one of us is born with a God-shaped blank in our heart. We may try to fill it with all sorts of things, but nothing fits the blank but the Love of God. We "cherish" the other things because we are trying to preserve our imagined, independent identity as an ego in a body. We are cherishing nothingness to preserve a nothing. Wholeness comes only from union with our Source.

The Love of God can "transport you into a state of mind that nothing can threaten, nothing can disturb, and where nothing can intrude upon the eternal calm of the Son of God". [Note: a few early printings of the Second Edition had a typographical error, substituting the word "claim" for "calm."] I want a state of mind like that. I want that kind of inner stability, that serenity of consciousness. What else could bring it to me except knowing that I am connected to an unending supply of bottomless benevolence?

The Psalmist said it well in the First Psalm. The "godly," those who know they are sustained by God's Love, "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper". When you become inwardly aware of God's Love sustaining you, it is like being a tree planted by a river, its roots constantly supplied by the water that is always there, always being renewed. Or from the Twenty-third Psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want....My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life".

Put all your faith in the Love of God within you; eternal, changeless and forever unailing. This is the answer to whatever confronts you today.

Again the practice instructions tell us to "sink deep into your consciousness". (Notice that it is for a ten-minute period, morning and evening; the periods of meditation are getting longer.) We are to "allow peace to flow over [us] like a blanket of protection and surety". Often I find it helps me establish that sense by visualizing something-being bathed in golden light, being embraced by my spiritual guide, or sinking into a warm Jacuzzi. I can let it be a time of rest, ten minutes in which I simply let go, physically and mentally, and allow myself to experience peace. I tell myself: "I am okay. I am safe. I am at home in God. His Love surrounds me and protects me. His Love nourishes me and makes me what I am." ###

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