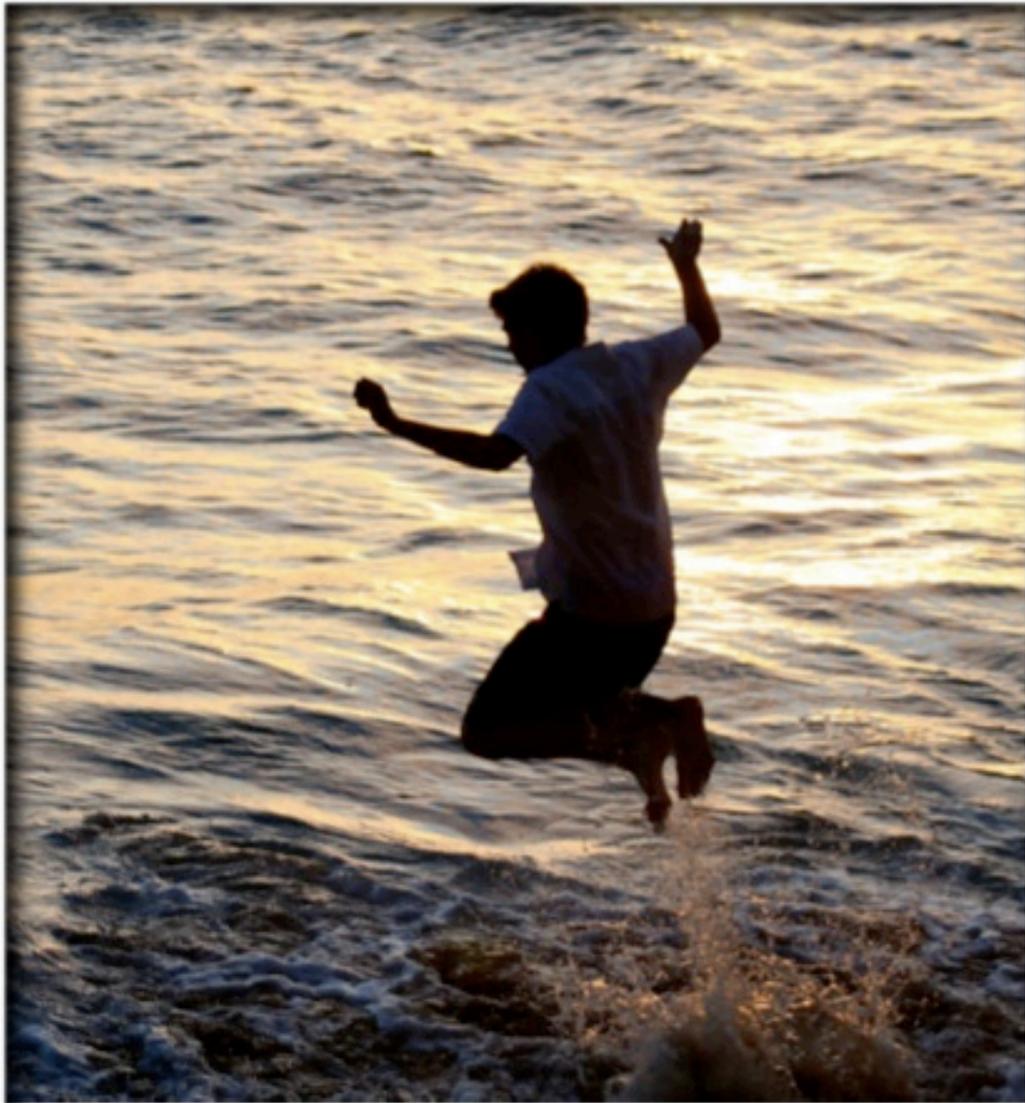


# Cultivate Life!

MAGAZINE

ISSUE 61



# ***Cultivate Life! magazine***

*Cultivate Life! magazine* is published by [www.trans4mind.com](http://www.trans4mind.com)

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Realizing the spiritual freedom I long for appears by itself once I stop agreeing to see myself as powerless in the face of punishing thoughts and feelings!

—*Guy Finley*

## **True or False? The Light of Insight** **by Peter Shepherd**

### **Two Ways of Knowing**

A creative person is one who can process in new ways the information directly at hand - the ordinary sensory data available to us all. A writer needs words, a musician needs notes, an artist needs visual perceptions, and all need some knowledge of the techniques of their crafts. But in addition, in the creative process, a second mode of mental processing takes place: in an altered state of consciousness, an individual intuitively sees possibilities for transforming ordinary data into an original creation.

Concepts of the duality, or two-sidedness, of human nature and thought have been postulated by philosophers and scientists from many different times and cultures. The key idea is that there are two parallel 'ways of knowing': thinking and feeling, intellect and intuition, objective analysis and subjective insight. Political writers say that people generally analyze the good and bad points of an issue and then vote on their gut feelings. The history of science is replete with anecdotes about researchers who try repeatedly to figure out a problem and then have a dream in which the answer presents itself as a metaphor intuitively comprehended by the scientist. In another context, a person may intuit about another, 'The words sound OK, but something tells me not to trust him': both sides of the brain are at work, processing the same information in different ways.

The brain functions in broadly two quite different modes. The first 'left brain' mode is linear, logical, verbal thinking, which we normally identify as our 'mind' - the 'semantic program' of the left hemispherical cortex. The second 'right brain' mode is holistic, intuitive, non-verbal functioning (one cannot call it 'thinking' but it is a way of knowing) of the right hemisphere. Of this we are usually not consciously aware, except as the results of its functioning, which are passed over to the left hemisphere for analytic verbal interpretation.

This duality of functioning passes over to the manipulation of objects by the hands. The right hand of a person (controlled by the left brain) determines fine detailed movement, such as writing, adjusting mechanisms, using tools or doing anything that requires a sequence of actions. Meanwhile the left hand (controlled by the right brain) establishes an anchor point or reference.

You might say that the left brain is chalk and the right brain the blackboard. The left side is linear, it cannot deal with more than one thing at a time, and it forgets strings of words or numbers rather rapidly. The right side holds the gestalt, the overview. It can compare many things simultaneously and its memory of pictures, feelings and emotions is permanent. It is like 'figure and ground', subject and background, focused imaging and overall perception.

Luria, the great Russian neurologist describes this in his book 'Man with a Shattered World'. He writes of a soldier who received a bullet wound severely damaging the right cortex, yet the man survived, but with very strange experiences. While eating soup, when he

concentrated on the soup the spoon disappeared, when he concentrated on the spoon the soup disappeared, and when he concentrated on the flavour the whole room disappeared!

Without this capability music would not be possible. The left hemisphere can concentrate on only one note at a time, while the right hemisphere is able to look at the overall context, of what has been played and anticipation of what is to follow, such that improvisation and emotional interpretation are possible. Whereas a left-brain dominant musician could merely tune the instrument and play simple tunes robotically.

Mostly our consciousness resides in the left, organizing hemisphere but this does not mean that the right side is inactive - it continues like the shining of stars in the daytime, there but unperceived. If the left hemisphere has become excessively dominant the right hemisphere has reduced opportunity to share in consciousness, being blocked in various ways, and can only express itself in deeply Subconscious functions (often only apparent in dreams). Full consciousness would arise from a collaborative integration of the two sets of processes.

How such blockage comes about is demonstrated in the following example. Imagine the effect on a child when its mother presents one message verbally but quite another with her facial expression and body language. 'I am only spanking you because I love you, dear' says the words, but 'I hate you and will destroy you' say the face and body blows. Each hemisphere is exposed to the same sensory input, but because of their respective specializations they each emphasize one of the messages. The left will only attend to the verbal cues, because it cannot extract information from the facial gestalt and kinesthetic sensations efficiently. The right will attend to the non-verbal cues because it has become specialized to do this and cannot understand the words.

In this situation the two hemispheres might decide on opposite courses of action: the left to approach, the right to flee. Since the left is the organizing hemisphere it can take control of the output channels most of the time but if it cannot 'turn off' the right completely, it may settle for disconnecting the conflicting information from the other side. The mental process in the right hemisphere, cut off in this way from the left hemispheric consciousness that is directing overt behavior, may nevertheless continue a life of its own. The memory of the situation, the emotional content and the frustrated plan of action may all persist, affecting subsequent perception and forming the basis for expectations and evaluations of future input. These may have their effect when the right hemisphere is not blocked and cause irrational misinterpretations.

When a person is in a right-brain mode of extreme emotion such as love, rage or grief, the pain and emotion and effort is experienced but he is unable to access the postulates, conclusions and other verbally and conceptually stored material in the left, as this is below the boundaries of consciousness - a person overcome is often speechless.

As a result of the more common left-brain dominance, emotions become a symbolic memory ('I was angry') rather than the feeling sensation of what was actually experienced. The person may have a verbal description of events but is unable to experience the emotion and pain thereof. The painful emotions persuade the left hemisphere to hold-off the right

side's contribution habitually. Eventually, with reduced nervous traffic between the hemispheres, the nerve fibres of the connecting channel (the corpus callosum) become atrophied with disuse (though this may be stimulated to re-grow with Transformational Psychology techniques) and the potential quality of brain functioning is then severely retarded.

A frequent cause of such blockage is when the right hemisphere contains data that the left finds distinctly uncomfortable - such as the truth! For example, the fact of a bad action may be repressed in this manner, as may any experience that the mind finds embarrassing, unacceptable or unconfontable. Similarly, deeply held beliefs that have a strong emotional investment become charged areas in the right hemisphere. The person who is left-dominant tends to be governed by words and belief systems often to the exclusion of external reality; a person with an integrated mind uses words as his servants and is in touch with the truth of where he stands.

The average person lives too much in a state of sensory illusion, of indoctrination, to be clear about anything except at rare, lucid intervals. Trance states are much more prevalent than is generally realized; there is rarely an 'objective' state of consciousness. Most of us are in a semi-waking, semi-sleeping trance induced by our cultural and genetic heritage and our personal belief system. To become fully awakened we must be wholly aware of all the influences that bear upon our daily state of consciousness.

For many centuries the Sufis have said that man must learn to use his mind in a different way if he is to progress. That missing link is the recovered integration of holistic right brain functions. Our right hemisphere, with its capacity for appreciating a complex whole, for facial recognition, map reading, maze solving, provides the alternative mode of understanding.

How did we get this way? Left-brain dominance probably came about because of a basic need to survive in a physical world. It may have developed when man changed from simple food-gathering to having to kill for survival - including having to kill others who threatened his survival or territory. Man had to organize in larger groups in order to live. He had to give up part of himself, to deny his own needs and feelings in deference to those of his society. And in order to kill animals and other humans he required some sort of shut-off mechanism in allow such acts.

The point about the split is that one side of our brain can be feeling something while the other side is thinking something very different. The split person can yell at you and not know why he is doing it, though he will manage to rationalize his acts and put the blame on others. With that division of the brain one could think one thing and do another. Feelings could be transmuted into symbolic form, disconnected from their feeling roots - the elaborateness of the ritualistic and symbolic life being commensurate with the loss of self. Man could then murder others for religious reasons or kill others when the state (an abstraction - not himself) was threatened.

As man came to defer to higher authority, his symbolic and repressive hemisphere became more active. He developed all sorts of ideas and rationales that were out of keeping with his feelings. The cultural trance had begun.

Through thousands of years our ancestors added to left-brain dominance because that was the way to get things done. The two specializations work effectively, the left brain supporting the right hand's use of tools, including writing. Our entire system - books, schools, universities, industry, political structures, churches - is fundamentally left-brained in learning, application and operation. We have generally regarded right-brain functions with suspicion, frustration and awe.

In fact we use our right brain throughout our daily lives in many subtle ways. While the left-brain serves our consciousness, the right-brain serves our awareness. Though the left-brain seems to predominate and to coordinate general behavior from both halves, it is the minor side that sees things in a broader perspective. It sees the context and views the parts of an event as its gestalt. It is the right-brain that takes the facts worked out by the left-brain and can make proper conclusions (connections) from them. It makes facts 'meaningful'.

The importance of understanding our dual consciousness is that it is possible to have thoughts that have nothing to do with what one is feeling, and to try to reach and change someone for the better through his thoughts and intellectual apparatus alone, without reference to the necessity for connection, is a vain exercise. The left-brain can be quite aware that smoking causes cancer but the person will still pull out a cigarette. The person is aware but not conscious.

LEFT	RIGHT
<p>Verbal description, explicit            Linear - one thought following another            Sequential, orderly, counting            Rational, conclusions based on reason            Abstract - representing a whole by a part            Conceptual, word-symbols            Logical thought, analysis            Symbolised, evaluative feelings (head)            Convergent, focused (attends to detail)            Solves problems towards goals            organizes actions, masculine            Has only present time, active, involved            Ends oriented, telic            Imagines details, fictionalises stories            Short-term symbolical memory            Hostile weakness, friendly strength            Hypocritical, lying            Ego-consciousness</p>	<p>Non-verbal awareness, implicit            Spatial, relational, holistic, synthesising            Simultaneous, spontaneous            Non-rational, willing to suspend judgment            Analogical - seeing similarities            Perceptual, concrete, image-symbols            Intuitive ideas, connections            Affective feelings and emotion (heart)            Divergent, contextual (ignores detail)            Perceives problems            Supportive, receptive, feminine            Deals with time, reflective, objective            Means-whereby oriented, paratelic            Constructs contexts, assumptions            Long-term perceptual memory            Friendly weakness, hostile strength            Authentic, genuine            Sub-consciousness</p>
<p>Defenses: falsifying, fabricating, mis-owning, invalidating, or fixating</p>	<p>Blocks: suppressing, withholding, denying, or accepted imprinting</p>

Man is conscious, as are animals, of external stimuli, but to be conscious that he is conscious, to be self-aware, is the introspective faculty that separates him from the animals. But he can only be meaningfully objective about that self when his feelings and contextual understandings are connected and integrated.

Logic is fine for mentally running over the mistakes of the past and for anticipating the future so that we do not commit the same blunders twice. But we cannot actually live in either of these two time realms, and the effort to do so may damage both our minds and bodies. Our task, then, is to learn to free ourselves from the cultural trance, the daydream of illusions, and with an awakened mind, live life today, in fully objective consciousness.

In our daily life we live in two worlds simultaneously, the left and right modes. The left mode is associated with logic, linear thinking, rationality, schedules, time, sequencing, measurements, the obvious, names, dates, deductive reasoning - the things we learn at school. The right mode is about intuition, holistic understanding, expressive movement, art, poetry, emotions, the hidden, the inferred, and imagery - in short, it is the 'ah-ha' state. In therapy, the unconscious is best accessed through the route of images and feelings; answers are then revealed from the unconscious that the rational mind would not otherwise be able to reach.

The right brain, by its very nature, cannot lie; the left brain is an expert at lying - at fabricating answers, telling stories, rationalising, blaming and erecting all of the Ego defenses.

As we converse in normal language, we tell each other anything we want to: details, about admissible feelings, social pleasantries, half-truths, lies or anything we need to say to function in the day to day world. But we may not say what we really think - we may omit information and lie, in order to protect others or ourselves from potentially hurtful truths.

We are, meanwhile, always telling ourselves the repressed truth, both about our conscious reality and also relating to the deeper dimensions of our innermost Self, giving facts about events and information about our motives, but this may not be revealed through the conscious mind. It is our direct feelings, utilizing images and metaphors, and does not disguise itself with pleasantries. The hidden messages occur especially at times when the right-brain is stimulated: when a person is expressing his or her Self emotionally or creatively.

So there is no more need to lie or pretend. To do so is to support power struggle, tyranny, low self-esteem and isolation. Truth conversely brings us closer, though it might take more risk, openness and vulnerability. As human beings we want to be welcomed, for our needs to be honoured, to be able to be strong and still be loved, to be recognized for who we really are. By being honest with our fellow beings and our selves, we can often strike a chord that resonates in every human heart.

### **Integration of the Two Sides**

True higher creative thought arises from an integration of the two sides of the brain. Einstein said, "I will do a flight of fantasy and work on some thinking, which is not thinking as you would understand it, but a combinatorial play of some types of imageries and sensory feelings. Only when this activity comes to some resolution, would I fumble in the other side of my head for words and for algebraic statements, which would permit me to communicate these insights to others".

The parallel processing of the right hemisphere attends to the nonverbal, holistic, spatial and emotional aspects of the environment. The right brain identifies relevant experience and provides the context and awareness within which understanding is possible. There is no sense of time, and much of this process operates below the level of consciousness.

In contrast, the interpretative processing of the left hemisphere provides a verbal description and attends to the detailed information in the environment, and this material is usually available to our conscious minds. The left brain is sequential and, above all, time-based - it includes an accurate internal clock. When the left-brain takes control, this results in rigid adherence to the one-sided reality in which we have been educated and culturally conditioned. In short, we have been fed with pre-packaged cultural patterns - fixed solutions - which emphasize the penetrating, masculine values of activity, manipulation and direct influence over the environment.

In most cases right-hemisphere participation in conscious thinking is actually suppressed. As a result of traumatic experience and cultural conditioning many of the important functions of the right hemisphere are suppressed, e.g. the softer, more feminine ability to be aware of one's feelings, to let things happen and be involved in the moment in an un-selfconscious way. If only the verbal-analytic left side is operating, a person is effectively cut off from many of the ways in which he could experience the world around him - life can become dry, meaningless and boring.

Whether you are left or right handed, man or woman, left-hemispheric cultural patterns of thinking rule the day. As a result we lose touch with our intuitive, spiritual nature. We push aside our unspoken feelings as irrelevant to the struggle for survival. We rationalize the beliefs we have adopted in order to be accepted members of our partnership, family, peer generation, etc. We push aside right-hemisphere intuition because it contains the real truth of who we are, what we have done and what we intend to do. Above all, we repress what we feel about ourselves, because the truth hurts. The keystone of left-brain consciousness is *time*, the primary lie of the physical universe. The right brain is timeless, so it cannot lie!

The brain is a sophisticated transduction device through which the Higher Self is able to relate its mental subtle energies to the coarser energies of the nervous system of its bodily identity. In this way, mental processes manifest as changes of arousal in particular parts of the brain, which leads to bodily action or behavior. The left hemisphere of the brain cortex usually controls selective attention, language, rational analysis, temporal and other sequential functions; meanwhile, the right hemisphere is responsible for felt, intuitional, relational, pictorial, spatial and other awareness processes - it creates a non-verbal, holistic synthesis of information without regard to particular details.

In short, the left brain deals with significance and attempts to reason, and the right-brain deals with the perception, kinesthetic sensation and pictured memory of reality and emotion. Thus the left-brain interprets, which can lead to falsity and rationalization, whereas the right-brain duplicates reality as it is.

The left-brain mode of thought is one of sifting sequentially through files of associated data and then the right brain obtains an overview. The emotional force contained within the right-brain way of representation may prevent inspection of deeply held beliefs, hidden aspects of the personality, or repressed traumatic experience; in which case the right brain will have

reduced arousal. In addition the left-brain may fictionalise to cover up missing data (including that which is unfrontable in the right-brain) or make rationalizations, based on false information or influences which have been installed through genetic or cultural imprinting.

In contrast, if thinking analytically about painful experiences or wrong-doings cannot be confronted, this may result in a retreat to the right-brain mode of experience, where there are strong feelings but no logic to direct them. This is how we feel when overcome by fear, sadness or remorse, and when we are cathartically re-experiencing a past moment of pain or loss.

### **Healing the split**

As a result of the two essentially disparate ways of handling reality, right-brain awareness becomes split off from consciousness. True release and resolution occur only when this split is healed; this depends upon re-integrating the hemispheres, so feelings can be adequately described and organized. Whereas pseudo-release is the consequence of rationalization, leading at most to a detachment, because the individual's attention has been taken off the problem.

Truth may be concealed by distorted thinking fuelled by charged contents of both the left and right hemispheres. Alterations and additions to the truth are derived from the left-brain. Likewise, avoidance of truth and obscured information, derives from painful material in the right brain. Whilst the right brain 'feels wrong', the left brain 'is wrong'. However, from the perspective of a deeper level of consciousness, we 'know better'. We already know the nature of the conflict, and the defense system surrounding it, because we have set this up, almost as a mental game. A game requires unknowingness, and this void is filled with fiction. The unconscious mind contains the truth as to the nature of the conflict through its connection with the Higher Self.

Spiritual writers make much of "being in the present moment" - what they really mean is the state of right-brain involvement, which is timeless and right-brain in nature, so intuitive faculties are fully available and therefore access to the Higher Self and universal spiritual connection. For this reason, the Law of Attraction, a spiritual principle, does not come into play until we move beyond a thinking and planning stage and adopt the mode of full involvement, of responsible action aligned with our vision. Since we are responsible, at cause, and connected with Spirit - responsible for All That Is - the whole world of synchronicities and the "magic" of manifestation is enabled. This is just not possible in the "thinking about" customary mode of left-brain consciousness.

A further important aspect of right-brain consciousness with respect to the spiritual life, is connected with the fact that the right brain cannot lie. Our essential inner nature is loving, indeed as sparks of God-consciousness we are each of us unconditionally loving in nature, and that basic truth is obscured only by the machinations of mental distortions and conditioned belief systems. "The Kingdom of God is within," as Jesus said. Therefore, when our actions are guided by our own inner loving nature, and informed intuitively through the wisdom of the Higher Self, again we are connected to Spirit and the full power of the Law

of Attraction is in our hands. When informed solely by the Ego mind (however intelligent and well-intentioned) and especially when guided by fears and considerations of time, then we are detached from Spirit and the Law of Attraction is weakened, as most people discover to their disappointment.

### **Playing the Game of Life**

There are two fundamental approaches that we adopt in life - we may be **thinking about** things or we may be **taking action**. We can do these in a masterful way, serene and calm; or we may find difficulties, get stressed and worry ourselves - in this case we have a life challenge. Well done personal development involves changing from living for tomorrow to living today. By learning to change our way of being, while facing challenges in life, we move from stress and worry to serenity and calmness.

To illustrate this, imagine a tennis match between two players: both of whom are well involved in the action and playing well. They are in right-brain mode, involved in the moment - time does not exist for them. (This is the paratelic state described in [\*Transforming the Mind\*](#).) But then it reaches a crucial point; one of the players becomes nervous, worries about whether their serve will be good enough and as a result, becomes self-conscious and serves badly. He has reversed through anxiety to the detached, thinking, left-brain 'telic' state. The other player stays cool and involved in the game, and thrashes the weak serve with a pass down the line. One player then is even more tense and 'out of the flow' of the game; the other is excited but calm and really into their flow.

This tennis match is just like the game of life. We all need to make plans, learn from the past, think about things, and then take action, by getting involved in making the plans a reality. But when we have challenging situations, often we have difficulties... We may not have the required knowledge and skills. We also may have previous negative experiences that we fear may happen again, or we may have acquired self-defeating beliefs as a result of our past experiences and conditioning.

These factors may prevent full involvement in, and commitment to, the actions you need to take, and impede the good performance that you need in order to succeed. By learning and applying the skills, insights and understandings that Life Mastery Training provides you are empowered to overcome these life challenges. Then although you are in the same situation, facing the same life challenge, you can now succeed!

### **Having Unshakable Inner Peace**

The ego is a mental projection of Self into the world, necessary to function. It is selfish and egotistical when weak, which is the case when it's dominated by conditioning, fears and pressures, and disconnected from heart and spirit (as is so often the case). Therefore the way forward is to connect and integrate the ego, so it dissolves into a transparent window to the world, rather than acting like an alternative mechanical self on the rampage.

When we focus on clarifying what is being observed, felt, and needed rather than on diagnosing and judging, we discover the depth of our own compassion. That kind of judging and rationalizing easily becomes a filter obscuring what IS, and who we ARE, because it's

effected by beliefs and conditioning and distance. Not that one should not reason, but be always objective and direct as possible, reasoning only with an open mind, ALL beliefs and assumptions open to revision, and seeing from all viewpoints so there is little separation.

Liking and agreement are the customary measures of accord, but they lead to separation; they are not a spiritual way of relating. Communication, understanding and empathy are the factors involved in a higher level of relationship; they enable true compassion and the dissolving of the solidity of existence.

We have all we need within to stay calm and unstressed, to feel good about ourselves and perform to our full potential. What we need is a training program that identifies our greatest challenges and which then supports us in facing this challenge with skill and calmness. This is what personal development, and the resources offered at Trans4mind, are all about.

The following diagram illustrates the the two aspects of mastering life challenges: our thoughts and our actions. The top half illustrates the negative ways we may approach thinking and doing. These are the negative states that separate mind and heart from working together and create inner conflict and stress. The bottom half illustrates the positive states that form as a result of the training that Life Mastery provides, resulting in mind and heart working together, and the resulting experience of unshakable inner peace while facing and addressing life challenges...

## Mastering the Challenges of Life

<b>THINKING ABOUT</b> (Left brain)	<b>TAKING ACTION</b> (Right brain)
<b>STRESSED BY LIFE CHALLENGES</b> <b>Conflict (worrying)</b> (Negative ego) <b>Fears, regrets</b> <b>Guilt, blame, judgment</b> <b>Greed, envy</b> <b>Distorted thinking</b> <b>Conditioned beliefs</b> <b>Negative interpretations</b>	<b>STRESSED BY LIFE CHALLENGES</b> <b>Conflict (stressed)</b> (Reactive) <b>Dispersed</b> <b>Unfocused</b> <b>Uninvolved</b> <b>Intuition blocked</b> <b>Poor performance</b> <b>Negative emotions</b>
In conflict states, mind and heart are disconnected, feelings repressed	
<b>MASTERY OVER LIFE CHALLENGES</b> <b>Peace (serene)</b> (Positive ego) <b>Aware and mindful</b> <b>Learn positively from past</b> <b>Plan how to achieve vision</b> <b>Objective and rational thinking</b> <b>Self-directed and proactive</b>	<b>MASTERY OVER LIFE CHALLENGES</b> <b>Peace (calm)</b> (Inner guidance) <b>Involved and living in the moment</b> <b>No time "in the flow"</b> <b>Clear intuition</b> <b>Good performance</b> <b>Positive emotions</b>
In peaceful states, mind and heart have open communication	

### Truth is multi-dimensional

*"The mind is like a parachute; it works much better when it's open!"* ... Trans4mind's motto. We try to be neutral in the information we put across, for "truth" is unique to the individual perspective. For example, from the scientist's material view, the world looks very different than from the more subjective emotional, intellectual or intuitive points of view. To you and me sitting here, we are first and foremost individual personalities; but from an enlightened, spiritual viewpoint, there is no separation, and we are truly at One with All That Is, we are God. Two widely disparate views - but both are true!

For some God is the Sun, or Mother Nature, or All That Is. For others God is universal consciousness or the quality of Love as a creative and binding force. For others God is Creator and all life on Earth is created by Him. For some, human beings are also spiritual entities who can survive the body's death, and for others Spirit is entirely in God's hands.

Atheists and humanists perceive the physical world to have a completely independent existence that naturally evolves, and in which there is no place for God and spirit. Consciousness may be highly developed and humane but not a supernatural phenomenon. Some believe that our destiny is the will of God; others that our life is directed according to decisions and agreements in-between lives. And others believe destiny is purely a matter of self-determined choices in the present.

Perhaps all these people are right, on one level or another? There are many theologies, dogmas and philosophies... paganism, spiritualism, christianity, buddhism, zen, sufism... just to begin the list. Some demand personal subjective experience of God and spirituality before belief is possible, others demand scientific proof, whilst others will believe according to their faith. And others will not believe at all. One thing is for sure, belief in God and personal spirituality - or not - plays an important part in many peoples' lives, providing sense and reason, and a foundation for their values and worldview.

In argument, the ego presents a view from one level and says it is right; in truth, all the views may be "right" in their own way. Beautiful and ugly, good and bad, are opinions but not essential truth; essential truth is simply the unconditional acceptance of what IS, as it is, without judgment.

And yet we need discernment in everyday life; we want a picture we find attractive on the wall, not an ugly one. Judgmental views are only a problem when they are ego based, to make self right and others wrong - in short, when they present a barrier to unconditional love.

So... we always have to be aware of the context, when we make proclamations about how things are. And "truth" is always something the individual needs to discover inside themselves - what is true for them at their current level of awareness. And be open to revise that view, when new opportunities for learning and expansion of awareness occur. With compassion and empathy, we will understand that truth for others may naturally differ from our own.

Trans4mind remains neutral in these arguments, but we trust the tools and coaching we recommend below will help you become aware of alternative points of view, and help you to synthesize your own unique perspective. ###

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Peter is also the author of [\*Daring to Be Yourself\*](#), which gives the reader the tools to turn their life around.

## ~ *Daring To Be Yourself* ~

by Peter Shephard

You can create a new life. A life revised in small but crucial ways—or perhaps you will totally change the way things have been up to now. You choose, of course. But first you need to know just who you really are and to shed the conditioning imposed on you by decades of conforming to other people's expectations and other people's interpretations. This book—a blueprint to the life you really desire—has been developed by Peter Shephard, author of *Transforming the Mind*. A step by step approach is followed throughout to help you uncover and remove the barriers to self-knowledge and freedom of expression and action.

To purchase as Kindle format go to <http://bit.ly/fmOtZe>

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## ~ Are You Ready To Start A New Life? ~

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**Start a New Life!** is based on principles which have helped thousands of people, endorsed by experts over the centuries. It is developed by Peter Shephard, author of *Transforming the Mind* and *Daring to be Yourself* - the former is free to read online and the latter is a special bonus that is only available in digital format with **Start a New Life!** !

For full information go to [www.trans4mind.com/new\\_life\\_course/](http://www.trans4mind.com/new_life_course/)

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## **Plant the Seeds of a New Self** **by Guy Finley**

Trying to resolve the pain within us by holding others accountable for it is like looking out at a field we have planted on our own property and wishing, every day, something other than what grows there would take hold and flower. If we wish to have true harmonious relationships with others, then *it is we who must change*. We must assume responsibility for what our relationships reveal to us about us, and then do the interior work it takes to plant the seeds of a new Self.

Everywhere we look, people are concerned with essentially one thing: getting what they want, when they want it, and as fast as possible. The fires that fuel their appetite for this envisioned success create so much smoke that they lose sight of the fact that all they reap for their insistent sowing are the cold ashes of regret raked out of broken relationships.

If we are ever to realize the integrity and consistent kindness of our True Self, if we long to know something of heaven while we live on earth, then we must sow the seeds that bring that higher life into fruition. One cannot expect to reap what one does not sow; and merely hoping for a higher life is not sowing true spiritual seeds, any more than climbing an imagined mountain is the same as reaching its top.

To sow spiritual seeds means that we do spiritual work. Spiritual work is always interior work first, even if, as a matter of course, this work becomes manifest through exterior action. What is this interior work by which we sow the seeds of the celestial within us?

One way to sow the seeds of a higher relationship with life is to not burden others or ourselves with past regrets, disappointments, or fearful future visions, even as we learn to ask truth for more insight into those unseen aspects of our present nature that are reaping their regrets even as they sow more of the same dark seeds.

It is not our duty to suffer over what will be or won't be -- to live with painful regret or guilt over what was or wasn't. Our soul task is to be responsible for what is -- and to allow this relationship with life to produce what it will. There may or may not be suffering in this order of responsibility but, if there is, it will be transformational as opposed to self-tormenting --which is the negative effect of every act born of assuming some false responsibility.

It is not enough to just sow seeds in this physical life, i.e., to struggle for or make millions, invent the greatest gizmo ever, or become the "who's who" of some social registry; for regardless of how sublime these intentions first seem, and even if their seeds should grow and flourish, they can only grow into forms that pass and fall in time. If our wish is for a life that is whole and loving, one that is filled with new light, then we must sow the eternal seeds of a higher life within ourselves; that is our work.

Set your self to the task of being an inwardly awake person and watch how you begin to reap the awareness that makes all things possible. ###

Adapted 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](http://www.guyfinley.org).

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**~ The Essential Laws of Fearless Living ~**  
*Find the Power to Never Feel Powerless Again*  
by Guy Finley

YOU have an unlimited storehouse of untapped energy lying dormant in your own heart and mind. It is the secret source of all that is wise, loving, timeless, and truly you.

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For more information go to <http://bit.ly/gYTTNU>

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**~ Secrets of Spiritual Success ~**  
*The Lost Elements of Enlightenment*  
by Guy Finley

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Go to <http://bit.ly/hg5WXI>

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## Clearing Cognitive Cobwebs: *The Overconfidence Bias* by Chuck Gallozzi

In this ongoing series dealing with faulty thinking, I may raise more questions than I answer. But that's okay because the purpose of the series is to get you thinking about the subject, not to answer every question (it would take a book to do that). Today, I would like to introduce the most common and dangerous thinking error: *The Overconfidence Bias*.

On August 29, 2011, the renowned National Taiwan University Hospital announced HIV-infected organs were mistakenly transplanted into five patients. How can this happen? The organs were not double-checked as required by standard procedures, all because of staffers' overconfidence. Meanwhile, five patients must now take anti-AIDS drugs, and live in fear of an early death.

The severity of the consequences of the above mistake pale into insignificance when compared to the death toll, human suffering, and wasted government resources that resulted from the Vietnam War. America's overconfidence in its ability to defeat a small Asian nation led to untold suffering in both countries.

What has the U.S. government learned about the dangers of overconfidence? Apparently not much. Here is Donald Rumsfeld commenting on the Iraq War, "The war... will last... six days, six weeks... I doubt six months."

But this article is not about the U.S. It is about *US* and how overconfidence can lead *US* astray, create havoc, and ruin our lives. It does its dirty work in many ways. Consider the large number of divorces, broken homes, children torn apart from their parents. A spouse, who was once madly in love, may become complacent as time passes. Overconfident, they stop working on the relationship, and neglect or abuse their spouse until their marriage eventually explodes in their face.

In the workplace, because of their overconfidence, employees overestimate their ability to do a project and underestimate the time required to complete it. The result? Procrastination, sloppy work, stress and fatigue. And if these bad habits aren't corrected, the employee may lose his or her job.

In everyday life we find people destroying their lives with drugs, alcohol, and gambling. Overconfidence in their ability to control themselves destroys them. For example, staggering out of a bar, and before driving away, a man tells his friends, "Oh, I'm okay. I can handle booze; I'll get home safely." But he never arrives home. Instead, his name is added to the list of highway fatalities.

People die in swimming, boating, and mountain climbing accidents because they overestimate their abilities and take irrational risks. Even the Bible cautions against overconfidence: "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall." (Corinthians 10:12)

Overconfidence is a killer. Here's another example. The last words of General John Sedgwick as he looked out over the parapet at enemy lines during the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House in 1864 were, "They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance..."

I recently walked on [the edge of an outdoor path that was 116 stories high](#). It is called *Edge Walk* and is one of the attractions of Toronto's CN Tower. It was perfectly safe as I was strapped in a harness. However, a friend asked, "Isn't it possible for the straps to come apart, causing you to fall to your death?"

I answered, "Well, in the sense that anything is possible, I suppose an accident could happen. But our decisions should be based on what's *probable*, not on what's remotely *possible*." My confidence was rational because engineers worked very hard to create the exciting, but safe experience called *Edge Walk*.

Don't confuse high confidence with overconfidence. High confidence is helpful; overconfidence is harmful. I had high confidence in the *Edge Walk* because I completely trusted the equipment and our guide. If I were overconfident, I might have said, "I don't need the harness; I can do the Edge Walk without it." Although we don't want to be overconfident, we shouldn't stop living courageously. After all, we need confidence, for without it, nothing will be accomplished. In a word, confidence moves us forward, but overconfidence leads to getting stuck in a rut, moving backward, or crashing!

If even experts can suffer from overconfidence, we have all the more reason to be careful. Here are examples of comments made by experts. What do you think; do they sound overconfident?

*Lord Kelvin, mathematician and physicist, former president of the British Royal Society:*  
"X-rays will prove to be a hoax." (1883)

"Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible." (1895)

"Radio has no future." (1897)

And when speaking to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, he said,  
"There is nothing new to be discovered in physics now; all that remains is more and more precise measurement." (1900)

*Michigan Savings Bank president advising Henry Ford's lawyer not to invest in the Ford Motor Co.:*

"The horse is here to stay but the automobile is only a novelty, a fad." (1903)

*Scientific American, January 2, 1909*

"That the automobile has practically reached the limit of its development is suggested by the fact that during the past year no improvements of a radical nature have been introduced."

*Lee DeForest, American radio innovator and inventor of the vacuum tube*

“To place a man in a multi-stage rocket and project him into the controlling gravitational field of the moon where the passengers can make scientific observations, perhaps land alive, and then return to earth – all that constitutes a wild dream worthy of Jules Verne. I am bold enough to say that such a man-made voyage will never occur regardless of all future advances.” (1926)

*Admiral William Leahy, U.S. Atomic Bomb Project, advising President Truman on atomic weaponry*

“That is the biggest fool thing we have ever done [research on]... The bomb will never go off, and I speak as an expert in explosives.” (1944)

*Yale University management professor commenting on a college assignment by Fred Smith who suggested a dependable overnight delivery service. (Smith later established Federal Express Corp.)*

“The concept is interesting and well-formed, but in order to earn better than a ‘C’, the idea must be feasible.” (1966)

*Business Week, August 2, 1968*

“With over fifteen types of foreign cars already on sale here, the Japanese auto industry isn’t likely to carve out a big share of the market for itself.”

If experts can be so terribly wrong, so can we. But if we remain aware of the problem and question our beliefs, we can improve our chances for success.

### **Caveats**

- 1.** As we grow older and more experienced, we overrate the accuracy of our judgments. Just because we're older, it doesn't mean we're more knowledgeable or wiser. Or as Oscar Wilde (1854~1900) said,  
“Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes.”
- 2.** The more we know, the more we realize how little we know, and the less we know, the more we *think* we know.
- 3.** We question the statements of others, but not our own. Get in the habit of challenging your own beliefs. Are they based on facts or just hunches or hearsay?
- 4.** Ironically, we are more likely to get overconfident in areas outside of our expertise. So, think twice before commenting on matters you are unfamiliar with.
- 5.** In your discussions with others, *if you find that you're always right, you're wrong!* In other words, you're overconfident. So, beware because it will prevent you from learning new things. Remember, we don't know what we don't know. Generally, we are unaware of our ignorance until we ask ourselves questions out of curiosity and find that can't answer them. The way to become more aware of what you do not know is to stop and think every time you disagree with someone. Because if you disagree with what was said, it may be

because the person you disagree with knows more about the issue than you do. So, disagreements may be signals of learning opportunities.

6. Overconfident people can easily get stuck in a rut because whenever they fail at something, rather than ask themselves what they are doing wrong, they just keep repeating what they think is right.

7. Don't try to predict the present or future by the past. Example: "We have always overcome problems in the past, so don't worry about global warming; when the time comes, I'm sure we will have the technology or knowhow to solve the problem." This type of thinking doesn't solve problems; it merely postpones them to a time when it may be too late to correct the problem.

8. Part of the problem is that we all think we are above average. What is the truth? Well, we are better in some areas, but not in areas outside our expertise. Here is an example of how we can be led astray. People who want to lose weight may see an ad in which their favorite celebrities claim to have lost 30+ pounds. The ad may also have a disclaimer "Results not typical." But overconfident people believe that they are not typical, so the disclaimer does not apply to them. So, overconfident people make excellent targets for sales people. Here's another example. An office worker joins a gym and signs up for the year to save money. But instead of going to gym two or three times a week, he ends up hardly going at all. Rather than saving money, he winds up losing money. That's because the overconfident office worker overestimated his self-discipline and willingness to work out. He also confused what he *should* do with what he *will* do.

9. To avoid the above problems, know your limitations. You can learn them by monitoring your decisions and their consequences.

10. The more information we are exposed to the more we *think* we know. In today's information society we are inundated with facts that come from everywhere: newspapers, magazines, mobile devices, computers, cable TV. As they swirl around us we come to believe we know a great deal more than we really do. There is a big difference between being *aware* of information and *knowing* it. It is like the difference between *hearing* and *listening*.

### **Helpful Books to Clear the Cobwebs from Your Mind**

[\*The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making\*](#) by Scott Plous

[\*Judgment and Decision Making: Psychological Perspectives\*](#) by David Hardman ###

### **About Chuck Gallozzi**

Chuck Gallozzi lived in Japan for 15 years, immersing himself in the wisdom of the Far East. He is the author of the book, [\*The 3 Thieves and 4 Pillars of Happiness, 7 Steps to a Life of Boundless Joy\*](#). He is also a Certified NLP Practitioner, speaker, and seminar leader. Among his additional accomplishments, he is also the Grand Prix Winner of a Ricoh

International Photo Competition, the Canadian National Champion in a Toastmasters International Humorous Speech Contest, and the Founder and Head of the Positive Thinkers Group that has been meeting at St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto since 1999. He was interviewed on CBC's *Steven and Chris Show*, appearing nationally on Canadian TV. Chuck is a catalyst for change, dedicated to bringing out the best in others and his main home on the web is at: [www.personal-development.com](http://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.

This practical guidebook teaches you how you have been misled, the mistakes you are making, and how to once again experience the adventure and joy of life. This clearly written roadmap will lead you to your birthright of happiness.

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## **Live Free** **by Beca Lewis**

It was a beautiful morning. A red sun was peaking through the trees, which tinted the mist in the air with a lovely shade of light yellow. The running was easy, and I was looking forward to making it to the end of the “far” run that I sometimes do.

But the dogs were there. I could see them up ahead looking through the fence. The memory of how loud and aggressively they bark when I pass by, and the fact that they sometimes escape the fence flashed through my mind, and without further consideration I turned around, and headed home.

The joyful long run in the beautiful morning had shifted to, “I’m going home”.

It was a full five minutes before I realized that I was still running with my back to oncoming cars, not a safe way to run. Even when I realized what I had done, I still didn’t turn around and go back to complete the run. I contemplated extending it another direction, but couldn’t bring myself to do so. I just went home.

All dog lovers please keep reading because this is not about the dogs. This is about how evil, with its weapon of fear, attempts to steal our freedom. The more important part of this story is what I did as a result of what scared me. I am not alone in this response. We all do it. It happens to everyone. We react, stop thinking, put ourselves in danger, and stop doing something we want to do.

After a week of not going by the house, I decided to go past the dog’s house on my bike instead of running. I was trying to overcome my fear, and I hoped the problem was solved even though I had done nothing about it.

It wasn’t. This time the dogs came running out and blocked my way, one of them nipping at my heels.

That experience stopped any pleasure I had in either running or biking. After a time I thought how silly it was to allow this fear to stop me so I tried running and biking down a different road. However, it wasn’t as pleasant of a route, and I realized that the entire time I was afraid, looking for dogs.

Isn’t this what we have done with our lives? Fear stops us from doing what we love to do. In order to make it less painful, we forget what we love to do. This is true individually, and as a country, and as a world.

In the world today there are many terrifying events taking place, much scarier than barking dogs. The truth about evil’s ways is coming to the forefront of our awareness.

However, for the most part we react the same way I did. We turn around and go home, and silently let go of our freedom.

This is the exact reaction that evil wishes us to take.

It is impossible to succeed at fighting evil with the same point of view in which it makes its claims. If we agree with evil that we are humans, then we will always react in the human way of fight or flight.

For most of us seeing the supposed power of evil in the world we choose flight. It doesn't look like flight though. We have a life to live, kids to get to school, work to go to, a house to clean, the yard to mow, an income to make, and some recreation to take our mind off things.

*The people never give up their liberties, but under some delusion.-Edmund Burke*

It is important that we remember that evil is never kind or generous. Evil is always greedy, and does not care for anything but its own gains. Evil can appear to be people, places and things, but evil is always just one thing.

It is the belief and illusion that has taken root in our own thought that there is something as powerful as Good.

Evil uses distraction and fear to keep us in our own personal prison. It stops us from trying to escape by using subtle and aggressive means to tell us constantly that there is nothing we can do. It suggests to us that even if we did something it wouldn't make a difference. It scares us with the fear of the consequences for taking action against it.

*"All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.-Edmund Burke*

Nevertheless, there is no reason to be afraid. No matter how loudly evil may make its claim, we have Truth on our side. When surrounded by the powerful army of his enemies, Elisha prayed that his servant's eyes be opened and become aware of the fact that 'they that be with us are more than they that be with them.'" With this shifted perception, Elisha's servant saw what Elisha already knew. Truth is always present, and always the victor over evil's claims to be real and powerful. (Bible: II Kings: 6 15-17)

There is only one way forever be rid of evil. In the same way that Elisha conquered evil, it involves neither fight nor flight. It is to return to the Truth of One omnipresent God, Mind, or Divine Love.

Armed with Truth, the actions we take will be exactly what are needed to dissolve evil's ability to continue. Humanly deciding on an action or non-action before this step is taken is worse than futile. It is part of the problem.

If we begin and stay with the Spiritual Truth then there is no place for evil to be abiding. Our freedom lies not in our human abilities to be free. Our freedom from evil is found within our own thinking, and in our choice of perception. We have free will to choose either human and limited or all One and infinite.

We cannot ask others to make this choice for us, although we can bind together for support, encouragement, direction, and strength. The warfare is between accepting and coddling evil, and knowing and living the Truth of One. The action of choosing infinite Good over evil will dissolve all error. It has to—both cannot be in the same place at the same time.

*The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who, in a time of great moral crisis, maintain their neutrality.-John F. Kennedy*

Using this approach with the dogs, I began with Truth and then took the action of calling the animal control to ask them to ask the owners to seal up the hole in the fence. Last time I went by that house, the dogs did not come out and bark at me.

However, it will take vigilance in my thinking to notice if fear begins to curtail my freedom, and to not allow myself to go to human fight or flight, or to believing that it is resolved if it hasn't been. Sometimes evil gives us a "bone" so to speak, so that we will leave it alone while it continues its secret and subtle work of undermining our lives.

Now is the time to be a warrior for Truth. Don't wait, do it now. You are not alone. The results will be a dissolving of the illusion of evil, and the restoring to our awareness the Reality of perfect Harmony.

*To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men. –Abraham Lincoln*  
###

### **About Beca Lewis**

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

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

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

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

## **The Unique Strength of Gentleness** by Steve Wickham

Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.

~*Ephesians 4:29* (NRSV).

One of the reasons I love taking public transport from time to time is the study one can make of human behaviour in public places. One such occasion an earlier bus hadn't arrived and as a result we patrons boarded what became a very crowded vehicle. It was a trying experience for many; being late, many unseated, and a thirty minute trip of heavy and sudden braking to look forward to.

One man was standing near the tagging-off point, and at one stop had to shuffle about four times just to allow others to get off - some of which were visibly frustrated. As the bus then went on its way he quickly recovered from the fluster of the moment and merely said, with a wry smile, "Bit like a dance, isn't it?"

This guy had every right to be equally frustrated - even to mutter under his breath as one of the alighting patrons had done. But instead, he epitomised the Apostle Paul's abovementioned imperative.

He demonstrated the unique strength in gentleness.

### **IS THERE ARE A MORE ADMIRABLE TRAIT THAN GENTLENESS?**

Human nature is an excellent study, particularly the genders.

When we put gentleness under the microscope there are typical male responses and typical female responses. Let's consider our gentlemen on the bus who turned a potentially angering situation into humour - the strength of gentleness.

Your typical male will respond to such a person in a number of ways; but hardly ever in aggression. Such assured gentleness quells motives of battle as it lightens the mood.

Many males struggle with anger, as do females, but men have extra challenges in harnessing the combination of psychology, cultural norms, testosterone levels and physical strength. Gentleness doesn't come natural.

The female response is most interesting. Without letting on, it was the female populace on the bus that day that appreciated this overture of gentleness most, I suspect. Firstly, this guy defused, at humour, quite a tense situation. Secondly, male gentleness is commonly endearing to women. Women appreciate gentleness in men, and often they may not know fully why - they just do.

God, as always, turns the tables so far as strength is concerned. Real strength is known by the grace we demonstrate in resisting anger, converting it to humour or humility or a helping hand. Gentleness makes it possible to respond in grace.

Gentleness is power to act as an agent of God in a world that sees sparingly little of the Divine. It is the power to restore joy to otherwise sad faces. Most importantly, it is the power to see God operating through us to our world. ###

**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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~ **New ebook from Steve Wickham** ~  
**Grow in God**

GROW IN GOD and grow in Wisdom and God's Love. That's the promise of Proverbs.

Steve Wickham takes us on a meditative journey through the verses of Proverbs, demystifying the ancient Scriptures and translating them into modern, more identifiable resource for contemporary Christians.

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~ **The Journey Home** ~  
*(Course in Miracles)*  
by Allen Watson

*A Course in Miracles* teaches that the whole spiritual journey is a journey home, home to God whom we have never really left. Allen Watson describes this spiritual journey, as seen in the Course, identifying the stages we pass through as we move from fear to love, escaping from darkness and emerging into the light. Watson presents a map that we can look at as we set out, giving us an idea of the spiritual destination the Course is taking us to, and what we must go through to get there. This map helps us be aware of and prepared for the pitfalls and detours that occur along the way. "The Journey Home" also offers Course guidelines and instructions for dealing with some of the difficult passages on this journey.

To secure your copy go to <http://bit.ly/fYi7Z3>

## **Is It Time to Simplify?** by Joyce Shafer

Could a lesson from Super Nanny apply to you and your personal and professional life? If you feel stressed and overwhelmed... yeah.

The parents Super Nanny Jo Frost went to help were well-meaning—they wanted to give their children the best head start in life. Unfortunately, this meant not only school and homework hours for each child, but LOTS of additional activities to help them be well rounded individuals, as well.

Super Nanny pointed out two things:

1. Making their children engage so many activities meant the parents' involvement with their children was minimized. Activities instead of TV were the babysitters. There was a real lack of quality time as a family.
2. The children were stressed out from being overburdened, which affected their behavior in a negative way.

Super Nanny did something that really drove point 2 home: she made a pile of objects that represented all the extra activities each child was enrolled in. There were books, drums, ballet shoes, sports shoes and equipment, and so on. The parents were instructed to put all the items that matched a child's activities into each child's arms. The children were instructed to make every effort to hold everything they were given. The visual effect of the children struggling to hold so much stuff that looked more like clutter than creativity was poignant. Finally, the little girl said, "I can't keep holding all these!"

Super Nanny's solution was to have the parents choose one activity they felt very strongly their children should engage and each child was told to pick one activity they really wanted to keep or to pick a new one. And, the parents were instructed on how to better engage as a family.

Your arms might be bigger than the little girl's, but how would the load look that you may be trying to carry? Is it comfortable, stacked past your chin, straining your arms, falling from your grip? The parents had encumbered their children with extra activities without including choice in the mix. In your life, at least some of what you expect yourself to do is imposed by you and no one else; but you also want to consider who's put what onto your shoulders and why.

How might this Nanny lesson apply to you?

- You're probably as well-meaning as the parents and really want to give yourself what you "believe" you need (in your opinion or that of others), possibly, whether your soul self really wants it or not.

- You may have made yourself so busy that there's little time for you and other parts of your life to get what's needed for your personal and soul-self benefit.
- You may have so many things to do or believe need to get done, your relationships suffer—the most important one being the relationship you have with yourself. Too much to do is one way many use to avoid looking at what's out of balance in their life.
- You may be so stressed or tired that you're cranky or worse.
- You may struggle to keep everything “in your arms” and fear dropping something or everything, and are possibly concerned with how you might appear to others if you let go of some things that aren't working for you rather than how letting some go might enhance your life and well being.

Marcus Aurelius said, "**Most of what we say and do is not essential. If you can eliminate it, you'll have more time, and more tranquility.** Ask yourself at every moment, ‘Is this necessary?’” Super Nanny isn't super because she does a lot, but because she focuses on what's important so she can be effective and effect improvements that change lives in a positive way.

The gift download on my website, “focus: A simplicity manifesto in the Age of Distraction,” is one I'm pleased to provide because it ties in perfectly with Super Nanny's point about the need to simplify—not solely from the too-much-to-do syndrome, but also the issue of multiple distractions that pull us off focus, not just on work but also on the other areas in our lives. The author of “focus”, Leo Babauta, wrote about overwhelm and addiction created by our new technological age, and how so many of us don't even realize the impact on our lives because of it. Even if we don't see it, we do sense it.

This week, maybe pay attention to when you feel stretched or stretched too thin. What's causing this feeling? Is it a fact that you're overburdened? If so, what solution are you willing to engage? Is it that you burden yourself with too much thinking rather than productive action? Over-thinking is a great avoidance tactic: It allows us to believe we're being productive when we aren't.

Eliminate and manage any distractions and extra tasks you can, and that make sense to shed, to simplify your life and reduce overwhelm, if that's your choice.

Practice makes progress. ###

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

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## **Simplify, and Savor Life** by Leo Babauta

‘The miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk on the green earth, dwelling deeply in the present moment and feeling truly alive.’ ~*Thich Nhat Hanh*

These days we have an abundance of luxuries, but I’ve found that excess actually decreases my enjoyment of life.

Sure, we can get massive amounts of rich foods, feasting to our heart’s content, stuffing ourselves in alarming displays of gluttony ... but is that really enjoyable on a regular basis?

And yes, television can be fun, and so can ridiculously large parts of the Internet, but if it’s always on, if we’re always connected, doesn’t that lower the fun factor?

Excesses lead to all kinds of problems, but the biggest problem is that life is less enjoyable.

I’ve been finding that simplifying things means I can savor life more fully.

Savoring life starts with a mindset. It’s a mindset that believes that excess, that rushing, that busy-ness, that distractedness, isn’t ideal. It’s a mindset that tries instead to:

- simplify
- do & consume less
- slow down
- be mindful & present
- savor things fully

It’s the little things that make life enjoyable: a walk with a loved one, a delicious book, a chilled plum, a newly blooming tree.

And by simplifying, we can savor life to the fullest.

Some ideas I’ve been considering lately:

**1. Coffee:** Instead of ordering a latte, mocha, cappuccino with whipped cream and cinnamon and shavings ... simplify. Just get pure, good coffee (or espresso), brewed fresh with care and precision, with quality beans, freshly roasted. Make it yourself if you can. Drink it slowly, with little or nothing added, and enjoy it thoroughly.

**2. Tea:** I recently had tea with [Jesse Jacobs](#), the owner of [Samovar Tea Lounge](#), and he poured two different teas from tiny tea pots: [Nishi Sencha 1st Flush](#) and [Bai Hao Oolong tea](#). It was fresh, hand-made tea from real leaves, not a tea bag, and it was simply

delicious. Drink it slowly, with your eyes closed, fully appreciating the aroma ... wonderful.

**3. Workouts:** I've been a fan of simpler workouts recently. While others might spend an hour to 90 minutes in the gym, going through a series of 10 different exercises, I just do 1-3 functional exercises, but with intensity. So I might do some sprint intervals, or a few rounds of pushups, pullups, and bodyweight squats. Or 400 meters of walking lunges. Let me tell you, that's a simple but incredible workout. Another I like: five rounds 85-lb. squat thrusters (10 reps) alternated with pushups (10 reps). Today's workout was three rounds of 15 burpees and 800-meter runs. No rest unless you need it. These are great workouts, but very simple, and very tough. I love them.

**4. Sweets:** I used to be a sugar addict. Now I still enjoy an occasional dessert, but in tiny portions, eaten very slowly. What I enjoy even more, though, is cold fruit. A chilled peach, some blueberries, a few strawberries, a plum: eat it one bite at a time, close your eyes with each bite, and enjoy to the fullest. So good.

**5. Meals:** While the trend these days is super-sized meals of greasy, fried things (more than two people need to eat actually), I have been enjoying smaller meals of simplicity. Just a few ingredients, fresh, whole, unprocessed, without chemicals or sauces. My meals usually include: a breakfast of steel-cut oats (cooked) with cinnamon, almonds, and berries; a lunch of yogurt, nuts, and fruit; a dinner of beans or tofu with quinoa and steamed veggies (or sauteed with garlic and olive oil). These simple meals are better because not only are they healthy, each ingredient can be tasted, its flavor fully enjoyed.

**6. Reading:** While the Internet is chock full of things to read, I've been enjoying the simplicity of a paper book, borrowed from the library or a friend (borrowing/sharing reduces natural resources consumed). When I read online, I read a single article at a time, using either the [Readability](#) or [Clippable](#) bookmarklet to remove distractions, and in full-screen mode in the Chrome browser (hit Cmd-Shift-F on the Mac version or F11 in Windows). It's pure reading, no distractions, and lovely. ###

#### **About Leo Babauta:**

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

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## **Prerequisites for success** **by Jahiel Yasha Kamhi**

You've reached this stage in life looking for more success. You're not satisfied with yourself and you want change.

Maybe your dream didn't come true.

You didn't choose the events in your life. You had no choice but to accept whatever happened to you. But now it is time to start building a new life.

### **What do you need to succeed?**

Starting a new life? First, you need to open your heart and trust yourself. Be true to yourself. Be honest with yourself.

Prerequisites for success include many "self's": self-confidence, self-respect, self-esteem, self-love, self-consciousness, self-control, self-determination and self-help. Today, let's look at self-confidence.

### **Self-confidence**

Without self-confidence, each step in a new life approach is potentially a huge problem. I know, low self-confidence is not your choice, but you need to deal with it anyway. If low self-confidence is your problem, you need to do something about it before even starting to look at change. Why? Because the process of changing your life will be more successful with the right level of self-confidence.

As an adult, with each passing year, experiences tend to drag you down. In times of uncertainty, keep yourself confident, as much as you can. If you come to the point of creating the life you deserve, you will need that self-confidence.

### **Being stuck**

According to experts, being stuck in an undesired situation is a consequence of lack of self-confidence. Low self-confidence means an inability to respond adequately to any problem. There is no doubt; self-confidence is crucial for overall success.

Accept that you are now a person in transition, and you may feel "everything is against me". Do not accept this perception as true. It's just a perception, not the real fact.

I need to say this very clearly: Not dealing with low self-confidence could be the beginning of an addiction to alcohol, drugs or compulsive behaviour.

If you are aware of your low self-confidence, and you cannot improve it by self-help, ask for professional help. Low self-confidence will not go away by itself. You need to fight it, with the help of professionals. The purpose of professional help is to transform your perception of yourself.

### **You need support**

Do not be afraid or ashamed of your condition. You do not have low self-confidence because you're a "bad person". No, there are times when we feel confused, isolated or overwhelmed by circumstances. If you experience these feelings, try to stay close to people who can help you. Do not isolate yourself. We are social creatures; we need support from our fellows.

Unfortunately, with low self-confidence usually go twisted negative thoughts, loneliness, jealousy and depression. Do not accept low self-confidence as your destiny. At every stage in life stick with learning that you have a choice. You can be the person you want to be when you choose an action. Train yourself to make changes and understand that success is waiting for you.

Staying positive, you create positive energy. As a result, you get a much healthier and more successful life.

One more thing: No matter how low your self-confidence is, never give up your dignity. You deserve respect under any given condition.

In this article, maybe I told you something you didn't want to hear. I'm sorry, but, as you must be too, I was just being honest with you. ###

**Jahiel Yasha Kamhi** holds a degree in Medical Biochemistry and a Bachelor's degree in Chemistry. Jahiel writes regularly for [www.personal-development.com](http://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.

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## **Learn to Listen** **by Stephanie Marston**

Have you ever thought about how much of your life is focused on other people? I think you'd be shocked if you did. We stifle our own voice under the needs of our spouse/partner or boyfriend/girlfriend, children, family and work. And as a consequence many of us have lost track of ourselves. In effect, we've surgically implanted earplugs into our ears and stopped listening to our needs, feelings and longings. That's why it's so essential that we learn to listen to ourselves.

I know, you're probably thinking, what in the world is she talking about, I listen to myself all the time. I know when I'm hungry, when I'm tired, I know when I need a decaffe latte. But I'm talking about another kind of listening, something far more challenging. I'm suggesting that you quiet the chatter in your mind so that you can begin to hear the voice of your soul-your Inner Wise Self, your intuition.

Your Wise Self, you maybe wondering? This is the part of you that knows--your inner wisdom. Yes, you do have one. Everyone does. Some people call it their higher power, the divine, intuition, their soul, regardless of how you identify it this Wise Self will connect you with a calm, knowing place within you. This inner voice, when listened to will guide you to make decisions that are in your own best interest.

It's like sending listening device into depths of ocean to discover buried treasure. We have to go below the fracas of the world to find out what resides in the deepest recesses of our beings.

Before the days of baby monitors, parents used to keep one ear tuned to their sleeping child in the next room. We have to listen to ourselves with the same attentiveness. Yet many people are afraid of what they might hear when they truly listen. Even if feelings of sadness or despair percolate out of the stillness, it is ultimately good news.

I know you might be saying to yourself, "What is she nuts? Why would I want to make room in my life for those unpleasant feelings?" But our feelings are messengers. They're there for a reason. We need to know how we feel. We need to hear how tired we are, how disappointed or disillusioned, how stressed or bored we are. It's only when we listen that we can recognize what's out of balance in our lives. What we discover, may lead us to make different choices. But even when it doesn't, we will likely achieve greater clarity and purpose.

Let me tell you a story about what can happen when we listen to our intuition. When business magnate Conrad Hilton, founder of the Hilton Hotels wanted to buy the Stevens Corporation at auction, he submitted a sealed bid for \$165,000. When he awakened the next morning with the number \$180,000 in his head he quickly changed his

bid to \$180,000. This successfully secured the company and earned a \$2 million profit. The next highest bid was \$179,000.

Whether you're a real estate investor who hears a voice in the middle of the night, a woman who is making a crucial decision about her career or a parent struggling with issues about their children, trust your intuition. It's a wisdom you can count on.

Yet, in order to discover this voice we have to delve beneath the racket of the world that plays in our minds like a constant stream of top ten heavy metal hits. Don't get me wrong. This is no easy feat. Quieting your mind is a lot like taming a roomful of toddlers. It's not impossible, but it certainly requires commitment and effort. But it's an effort well worth making. After all, how are you going to know what you want in your life if you don't take the time to listen to yourself?

From your Wise Self you will learn whom to trust, which paths to take, when to make others a priority and when to focus on yourself. Your Wise Self is the seat of your inner knowing.

Learning to listen requires that we slow down long enough to hear the wisdom of our souls. But this is a challenge in a culture that encourages us to go ever faster.

I was recently on my way to a meditation retreat when I was pulled over by a state trooper. I was in such a hurry to learn how to slow down that I got a ticket for speeding. So I'm not saying that slowing down is easy. It isn't. But it is essential. If nothing else, we must at least make the effort.

But let's be realistic, our culture doesn't support people in spending time alone. In fact, it's often considered taboo. In our materialistic, success driven society spending time alone is often considered wasted time. It's goes against everything we've been taught about being a successful person, but a certain amount of time alone is not only necessary, but, essential.

Think about it for a minute, people who spend time alone are often accused of being self-absorbed, self-centered and egotistical. Not qualities any of us want to be associated with. As if that weren't enough, the other road block is that people, especially those with whom we are the closet, often take it as a rejection or think that something's wrong with us, or that we're withdrawn. And the unfortunate truth is that many people accept this as reality.

Consequently when we feel the need for solitude we often feel uncomfortable. Our guilt demon rears its ugly head and convinces us that we can't possibly justify doing nothing. When we choose solitude we are swimming against the cultural tide.

But the truth is that when we spend time alone we're nurturing our developing self. Time alone provides us with time to reflect on our day, our past, our future, our dreams. But don't get me wrong. I'm not suggesting that you become a navel gazer, far from it. The

truth is that as we spend time alone we recharge our batteries. So when we do re-enter our everyday lives, we do so with a new focus and sense of purpose.

We have to create time in our lives in which to listen. Don't panic. I'm not suggesting that you abandon your family and friends and join a convent. But, what I am saying is that it's essential that you make time for yourself everyday. Yes, everyday. Let's put things in perspective. You feed yourself three times a day and sometimes more. Time alone is food for your soul. Set aside at least 10 minutes everyday. For some people sitting is the path to quieting their mind, but for others it may be soaking in a hot bath, walking in the woods, doing yoga or martial arts, gardening-the important thing is to discover your way to connect with your Wise Self.

When you take time to listen not only will you reap the rewards of your inner wisdom, but you'll discover a sense of peace that comes from getting in touch with the essence of your being. As a result your life will be enriched immeasurably. ###

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

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## **How to Make the Right Decision... the Spiritual Way** **by Tim Ong**

We make decisions every day. Most times, these decisions do not lead to a significant change in outcome. For example, we decide whether to have sandwich or pizza for dinner, or we decide whether to watch a movie or go to the park this weekend.

However, some decisions can lead to big changes in our lives and the lives of our loved ones. Changing career is one such example of a significant decision. Relocating to a new house, neighborhood or country is another. Deciding whether to continue with certain therapies or not when we are unwell is also potentially life altering.

When it comes to making big decisions that will likely change our lives significantly, we are often faced with doubts about whether we are making the right decisions or not. How do we decide? What are our criteria? What is our motivation?

For me, I have come to realize that when I make decisions, I should look at my motivations. If the decision made is motivated by fear, most often it will turn out to be the wrong decision. However, if it is motivated by unconditional love or faith in the universe, then it will invariably turn out right. By unconditional love, I refer to the absence of ego. I now use this as my yardstick when making important decisions in my life. So far, it has worked very well for me.

For example, when my father was diagnosed with cancer of the rectum, my family looked to me to decide where to send him for his surgery. As a doctor, I am automatically expected to know who was the best surgeon and which was the best hospital for treatment. My first thought was to refer him to the most reputable hospital in the city, which was also the most expensive hospital as well. On the other hand, I knew a very competent and compassionate doctor who has just the right competency for the job, although he is not "famous" and was working in a small hospital.

When I examined my motivation for that initial thought, I soon realized that it was based on fear and ego - fear that if I do not send him to the best hospital, I might be blamed if the surgery was not successful. In addition, there was the ego that seems to say "What would others think if you sent your father to a small hospital?"

In the end, I decided to follow my heart and referred my father to this competent doctor in a small hospital, and it turned out to be a blessing. Not only did he operated successfully on my father, he was so patient and friendly to all of us that the whole family felt confident and comfortable with him. Eventually, my father was discharged uneventful. It was a huge relief for me.

When we live a spiritual life, and especially when we have faith in our spirituality, decisions that are based on unconditional love and faith in our spirituality, that goes beyond our selfish ego and needs, are often the right decisions.

When we have the courage to make those decisions, we will often find them to be most beneficial for our spiritual growth. In addition, they reinforce and validate our trust in the benevolence of the universe. ###

**Dr. Tim Ong** is a medical doctor and hospice volunteer. He is also the author of "[From Fear to Love: A Spiritual Journey](#)" — a book that explores our hidden fears and how we can overcome them. Dr. Ong shares his personal experience as well as relates stories and lessons from his patients. You can get a copy of his ebook here: [From Fear to Love](#)

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## **The Feeling of Emptiness**

**by Sushil Baboo**

Why do you feel so hopeless that your life seems empty? I have heard these expressions so often that I am amazed at its frequency in today's generation. I am bored and don't like what I am doing. It's the same again, my job, my relationship all seems so lifeless. I wish to die. What is this life? Statements of helplessness, devoid of natural passion and a self threatening situation, dangerous is it not?

An adage, Life is for living, so powerful and commonly passed down generations as a holy truth that now seems so far removed from reality that no one really has the inclination nor the time to reason its real meaning. Do we want to live for life's sake or do we want our life to live at its best. In reality how many of us do really take life as a game and play by its rules. In India we have a brand of cigarette called Four Square Kings whose advertisement caption reads 'Live Life King Size'. Everyone agrees to this notion but do we really know the meaning of living a life to its maximum.

Everyone eagerly agrees and then their economic quotients takes stock of their lives and they are back to the same old feelings. I agree, life in today's world is not easy, but who says that it was ever easy. From time immemorial, from the dawn of mankind, life has thrown up so many challenges that it has never been easier for anyone, be they rich or poor. Living a life to the fullest has nothing to do with your economic status. Economic status can get you various alternatives that can make your life at best easier, but cannot on its own merit provide you with any sense of fulfillment unless we ourselves learn to understand life.

Theories upon theories have been purported by many on what life is all about, but has anyone really applied these to their own values and judgment and realized what we are and what we should do, to be able to feel the fullness of life, a satisfaction in our selves.

Living is beyond what one theorizes that a life begun has to live. That is but physical growth leading to death. Living has much more to do than the passage called life. Living requires us to be involved in activities that bring to our mind many facets of the same aspect. We must make our living a continuous learning. I don't use the word process, as process is very linear and life in its natural state is quite chaotic. It is this chaos that lends a charm, an uncertainty that leaves a lot to be learnt. Learning? Because acquiring knowledge keeps our mind captivated and stimulated to know beyond what we seem to know. When we are able to pursue a few alternatives beyond our regular scope of occupation, we tend to relate to living more comfortably.

Nature has given the most precious needs on which our life depends for free, than why do we really rant and rave at possessions on which our life does not depend upon. In our pursuit of material gains we seem to have forgotten to smile, to laugh and to appreciate the others point of view. In an unnatural environment which we have created and surrounded

ourselves, we rarely have time to appreciate anything apart from me, myself and mine. It is this strange smallness that creates emptiness, devoid of any happiness or appreciation for self or for others.

Yes, it is true; we have to “Keep up with the Jones’”, but how many Jones, will we push ourselves against and try to keep up with? That is an economic generalization and will not make our lives any meaningful or satisfactory. Knowledge is a must but the curiosity to know is even more important. We all go to school, to colleges and universities, but the learning process does not end there, it is expected to continue till the end. All knowledge is not for the pursuit of economic means but for being able to appreciate the world we live in and the limitless potentialities that this world has in store.

The following tips are some of the few that you may consider to make your life more interesting and thereby remove the emptiness that you feel.

1. Acquire a child like curiosity about life
2. Pursue a hobby and try and learn as much as possible about it
3. Spend your free time in community development without any expectations.
4. Take interest in other people and their happiness, howsoever small
5. Smile and see how infectious it really is and how many people will open their hearts to you
6. be charitable in your speech and actions
7. Engage yourself in bettering your knowledge in fine arts or other related fields
8. Play a game for the sake of the game and not for winning
9. When wrong, apologize honestly
10. Look at the sky and see its limitless expanse and potential
11. See the dawn and the dusk and appreciate how naturally the world around us wakens and goes to sleep
12. Appreciate nature
13. Go to sleep with a wondering of what you could do if you do wake up again
14. Believe in the Almighty
15. Say a prayer with your heart in it
16. And finally and most importantly, you live life once, live it to its brim.

It is by no means difficult nor by any standards easy to change your thought process that has been long set, however, you can attain, all the above points plus more, that you too can develop, thereby enriching your living to match up with the life so graciously won by you. If you are wondering when did you win this life, think of the process of birth and the odds in the fertilization chain. I really don't think you will ever have this odds piled against you in life, so why don't you really appreciate your life as something so special that you will want all of what the world can offer without any economic desires, just for a change. A spiritual and natural appreciation is all the more consummating than any economic standards can ever bring forth. Make your life more engaging and you will have lived this life without the emptiness. A life lived King Size. ###

[\*Visit Sushil's blog\*](#)

## **How to Thrive in Changing Times** **by Philip Humbert**

This week I did a training for an electric utility on the skills and resources for thriving in a world of constant change. What struck me is that I never thought about a utility having to cope with too much change! It's not like we're going to stop using electricity or their customers are all going to a competitor! They dam a river that's been around for a million years, they make electricity, send it through the power grid and bill their customers. How stable is that?!

Yet even the electric utility industry is swamped by change. People come and go. Regulations, standards and new software overwhelm them. And of course, there is competition from new energy sources, so even in the stable world of electric energy, the stress is enormous.

### **How about in your world?**

Constant change both thrills and threatens us. We love the new opportunities, but sometimes we end up running as fast as we can just to stay even. New competitors, new tools and new skills challenge us every week. I'm typing this on my brand new laptop and I love it, but I've spent three days configuring the thing and it still doesn't feel right! Change is the constant in our world.

Here's the thing: We want to grow and have new things! We want new tools, new adventures and new resources. Most of the time, we welcome change with open arms. But, sometimes it's just too much. Sometimes we get caught up in the excitement of new things just because they are new, whether they actually benefit us or not.

Sometimes the old is good enough. Sometimes the familiar is more comfortable and actually more effective. I have a friend who uses an old-fashioned slide-rule partly for the nostalgia, but also because it's faster than doing calculations on his computer. Sometimes, the old is good.

### **Here are three suggestions for thriving on change:**

1. Maintain lots of "personal bandwidth." That means taking superb care of yourself! People who are happy, healthy and rested simply do better than people who are tired, hungry, stressed or worried. Practice extreme self-care. Maintain your personal bandwidth.

2. Focus on the Big Picture. Stay current and be aware. But always evaluate change in the context of your values, your goals and your preferences. Use change to create the life you truly want, rather than to merely "keep up." Understand what's happening, and leverage it to your advantage.

3. Invest in Tools. Knowledge and skills matter! The more you know about your industry and what's happening (and who's leading), the more options you have. Remember, "leaders are readers." And I love the quote from Buckminster Fuller that, "You cannot learn less." Watch the news, read the business journals, network with the smartest people you can find. Stay current and stay ahead of the pack in 2011.

Our world is infatuated with anything new or improved and that's not going to change. What you can control is your response to change. Master it! Learn to respond rather than merely reacting. Use change and growth to your advantage rather than merely trying to hang on and endure! In 2011, make change (and growth!) your friend. Use them to your advantage. ###

**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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## **What the Wizard has for you** **by Marlene Buffa**

L. Frank Baum wrote many books. The most popular and endearing of which we all know as "The Wizard of Oz." While the myths and legends regarding the origins of the book and its many interpretations continue in almost every culture spanning the globe, some poignant lessons provide strong spiritual insight. Ultimately, the Wizard of Oz taught Dorothy and her crew that everything she ever needed in life existed within her. The piercing and sometime menacing look into the crystal ball of our own psyche, offers us opportunities to examine aspects of our life which are within our reach and accessed by the willingness to make new choices.

Dorothy set out on a journey fraught with danger, fear and the unknown. Much like Dorothy, we encounter our own travails of adversity as we travel on a whirlwind through life. While we may never encounter flying monkeys or a forest of unhappy trees, life continues to hurl obstacles at us to both divert our attention away from our true spiritual path, or to force us to stop and observe the strength within we must muster to carry forth into the unknown.

### **Someone to rescue you**

Throughout her adventure, Dorothy's only goal remained consistent - to find her way home. In the good witch Glinda, she found a useful ally, only to later add to her cadre of seekers other characters along the way. Each with his own misfit malady, the solution for each dilemma purported to belong to the Wizard of Oz. Increasing their belief in his powers as the journey intensified, we see the quartet toggle between victimhood and empowerment.

Dorothy's figurative quest to return home to Kansas equates to her finding a home within herself. Sometimes resigned to her fate in Oz, forever pursued by a negative force personified as the Wicked Witch of the West, Dorothy struggles with injustice and a longing for vindication. Her primary battle is her inability to decipher her circumstances and find a way out, thus the dramatic search for a hero.

### **Resourcefulness appears when necessary**

Just as "necessity is the mother of invention," the stalwart Kansan wiggles out of situations which appear by chance or luck. She seems surprised when lauded for her conquests over one adversity after another. However, rarely do we see her confident in her ability to overcome; she battles her environment as well as the storms within.

As Dorothy, we are all at choice point no matter the circumstances which befall us. We can choose to defer to an exterior solution and give away our power, or rely on our own merits for answers. If we pay attention, we notice we are indeed most resourceful when the odds are against us. What would it look like if you knew you could handle anything that came your way? Your confidence to move forward in spite of debilitating effects of

life's poppies or divergent roads may not forestall the inevitable siege of thundering clouds, but will fortify you in your climb to your goals and the destruction of negativity in your life.

### **Only the expert knows**

Like Dorothy and her misguided band of friends, we too often abdicate our wisdom and inner compass to others. As each the Scarecrow, Lion and Tin Man and our heroine grew dependent on the belief that someone wiser and all powerful knew better than they, we see the figurehead of a mere mortal, bereft by his own frailties and insecurities.

In life, we sign over responsibility for our mental and physical health to the so-called "experts" and absorb their interpretations as our own truth. Whether physician, healer, mechanic or contractor, we gladly pay for advice from someone with accumulated knowledge culminating in a working practice. Instead of blindly accepting the answers put forth, few of us seek second opinions from differing experts. Dorothy jumped through all the hoops demands of the Wizard including capturing the elusive broomstick and forcing the ultimate demise of the Wicked Witch, yet the Wizard proved unable to honor his commitment of returning Dorothy to Kansas.

### **Conquering your internal witch**

Oddly enough, the ease of the demise of Dorothy's personified demon, the Wicked Witch, surprised not only the quartet of yellow-brick-road-wanderers, but the surrounding characters as well. Water, the bountiful substance on the planet, and ironically, in the human body, thrown onto the skin of the green monster, caused a melt-down - both literal and figurative. While the captive minions rejoiced with resounding "Ding, Dong the Witch is Dead," Dorothy almost lost sight of her intention when amazed by the ease of destruction of the negative force.

The demons we carry within us throughout our lives continue their forceful domination over us because few of us even notice their impact. If by chance, our awareness increases and we recognize the negativity within ourselves, most often we believe the obstacle of our own green monster is more powerful than we, who created it in the first place. Just as water is the most plentiful physical substance, self-love rises up to destroy our doubts and dissolve our inner turbulence. Present within us all along, when we finally use our confidence and self-respect as method to eliminate our internal nemeses, like Dorothy, we discover how easily they are destroyed.

### **It's already there, inside of you!**

When their final audience with the "Great and Powerful Wizard of Oz" culminated in the deception of the man behind the curtain, the foursome realized they'd been deluded by him - and for what purpose? The belief they held in him allowed them to follow his directions and commands, all the while placing them in peril. Quite simply, they gave away their power to a perceived wiser and greater man than they. What they discovered proved not only did they not need to obey his commands, but his perpetration of expertise buoyed the

illusion of worldliness for both the Wizard and the unlikely friends. Everybody felt gratification in the delusion, yet nobody really won!

Each received acknowledgment or validation from the Wizard in response to their respective quests. The Scarecrow magically gained brains only because someone outside of himself told him he was smart. The Lion gained courage due to the Wizard conferring a medal of bravery upon him. The Tin Man received a mechanical implement to emulate a real beating heart. Dorothy, recognizing that nothing external could assist her in her journey home (to herself), sees her final hopes float away in a hot air balloon.

### **There's no place like home**

It's not until the return of Glinda, a representation of Dorothy's higher consciousness, that she acknowledges her own power. Dorothy visualizes home, and sets her intention to reach her heart's desire and uses the power she never lost to transport her back to herself.

The delightful "Wizard of Oz" touches people of every age. We never tire of watching the misadventures of Dorothy and friends and I dare say, we learn something new every time we see it. We learn that pompous and bullying people are really masking self-doubt and fear. As the trio receive external confirmation as to their merits, we learn that only we validate ourselves - others have little or nothing to do with how we feel about ourselves. We also see the courageous Dorothy muster her belief in reaching that beautiful place of self-realization and self-actualization and return home to her spirit.

May your journeys be one of adventure and discovery and may you always remember you have everything you'll ever need, right there inside of you. ###

### **Marlene Buffa**

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

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## **In With The Good Out With The Bad From HRP**

To acquire more beneficial habits, you first must do away with foul habits. Foul habits may cause an individual to go down the same route as previously. It calls for self-control when it comes to formulating great habits. There are mass ways to go about doing this. When you are able to formulate great habits in your life, you are able to accomplish success. Great habits then transform into great things in life. We have to break our foul habits as well, though.

Formulate a fresh routine. First of all, there may be a lot of different foul ones, or simply a particular habit that you're attempting to improve on. It may be bad eating habits, smoking, whatever. You have to institute a fresh routine, if you're going to break the bad, and acquire better habits. This will likewise let you gain more self-control. Alter your common routine, which focuses on these foul habits. You need to keep things simple, when it comes to formulating a better habit. So begin by altering your routine. Same routine may result in the same foul habits.

Alter your thinking methods. You're going to have to take control, and truly wish to break these bad habits, to formulate better ones. So attempt to found a positive mentality, and don't get so blue when matters tend to not go your way. Simply resume the process again, till you are able to formulate a comfortable routine. Simplifying something helps quite a bit.

Attempt to be more organized and try building schedules. Being organized may truly help you found better habits. As a matter of fact, it becomes really easy when you do this. This allows you to develop an easy rhythm, and flow. Organize a plan, and fresh habit, so it will become easier to adjust to. This will truly help you not only formulate better habits, but really sticking with them.

Give yourself rules. I believe this is really crucial thing to have. This helps formulate self-control, and that's what is required to allow you to formulate better habits. Make rules with yourself, and occasionally it's okay to compromise with yourself, too. Give yourself a little reinforcement, when you've done well.

Attempt new things. I believe this may truly help you break bad, common routines that you have. Bad routines are what bring on bad habits. I believe it's healthy to alter a routine up, and expand your brain too. Staying in the same place and doing the same things makes it really hard to break foul habits. Change things up, attempt fresh things.  
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**For more see: *Habit Reconstruction Project*. The latest addition the the World of Inspiration elibrary, available free to all [lifetime members](#).**

## **A Course in Miracles**

### **Lesson 52**

Today's review covers these ideas:

**(6) I am upset because I see what is not there.**

Reality is never frightening. It is impossible that it could upset me. Reality brings only perfect peace. When I am upset, it is always because I have replaced reality with illusions I made up. The illusions are upsetting because I have given them reality, and thus regard reality as an illusion. Nothing in God's creation is affected in any way by this confusion of mine. I am always upset by nothing.

**(7) I see only the past.**

As I look about, I condemn the world I look upon. I call this seeing. I hold the past against everyone and everything, making them my enemies. When I have forgiven myself and remembered Who I am, I will bless everyone and everything I see. There will be no past, and therefore no enemies. And I will look with love on all that I failed to see before.

**(8) My mind is preoccupied with past thoughts.**

I see only my own thoughts, and my mind is preoccupied with the past. What, then, can I see as it is? Let me remember that I look on the past to prevent the present from dawning on my mind. Let me understand that I am trying to use time against God. Let me learn to give the past away, realizing that in so doing I am giving up nothing.

**(9) I see nothing as it is now.**

If I see nothing as it is now, it can truly be said that I see nothing. I can see only what is now. The choice is not whether to see the past or the present; the choice is merely whether to see or not. What I have chosen to see has cost me vision. Now I would choose again, that I may see.

**(10) My thoughts do not mean anything.**

I have no private thoughts. Yet it is only private thoughts of which I am aware. What can these thoughts mean? They do not exist, and so they mean nothing. Yet my mind is part of creation and part of its Creator. Would I not rather join the thinking of the universe than to obscure all that is really mine with my pitiful and meaningless "private" thoughts?

### **Commentary by Allen Watson**

Remember that the general practice for these reviews is to read all five thoughts and comments twice daily, morning and evening, and to spend at least one two-minute period with each of the five ideas during the day.

The thoughts are thick in these reviews, so I offer only a few observations on things that stand out for me.

"Reality is never frightening". Reality is, of course, what God created. When I feel frightened, I find it useful to remind myself that I must be seeing something that isn't really there.

I am the one who makes up frightening illusions. How reassuring to be told, "Nothing in God's creation is affected in any way by this confusion of mine". That is the basis for letting go of guilt. I may be confused, mistaken, deceived, and deceiving, but none of it affects what is real. What's real is real no matter what I do. The sun doesn't go out when I cover my eyes. So all that I have done has had zero real effects! I have nothing about which to feel guilty.

"If I see nothing as it is now, it can truly be said that I see nothing". A thing is as it is now. It isn't as it was yesterday; it isn't as it will be tomorrow. Things exist *now*. That is the only way I can see them. That is how they are. If I am seeing the past, I'm not seeing anything. The past isn't here.

"I have no private thoughts". What if everyone in the world could see right into your mind? What if the way you thought about your boss affected the war in Bosnia? Guess what? They can. It does. And yet, "they mean nothing". If you think thoughts you believe to be private, they are meaningless. They have effects within the illusion, but they affect nothing real. Only thoughts that are shared have real effects, and the only thoughts that can be truly shared are the thoughts you think with God. ###

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