

Breath of Life

Breath of Joy



LEE TIMMERMAN

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*if you can laugh  
you can embrace  
the mysteries  
if you can love  
you can carry  
laughter  
in your heart*

## Introduction

In 1981, the World Health Organization announced that the #1 health problem worldwide was stress. This included stress related illnesses and stress related deaths. It was the major health problem in both developed and undeveloped countries. Since that time, we have begun to live at a faster pace. We have computers, internet, e-mail, cell phones, and fast foods. We have come to expect things instantly — instant food, instant information, instant communication. Research has found that the speed of the internet has changed the way people are able to receive new information. Society has become geared to instant stimulation, both visual and auditory. Each of us is living in a society that, as a whole, is struggling under the weight of stress. We are living at a time when we are being encouraged to go for the gusto, to seek out all the stimulation that we can find.

Stress was the #1 disease over twenty years ago and it is out of control today. Medical research has found that major diseases, including strokes, heart attacks, panic attacks, anxiety attacks, and depression, have all originated from stress. They also report

that numerous minor physical and psychological conditions are stress related, like migraines, allergies, insomnia, aggression, fatigue, moodiness, and low self esteem. Long-term stress will cause biological changes in the physical body, which will eventually manifest disease in one form or another. The insurance industry is constantly raising their rates to handle the increasing medical costs. Prior to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack, the business community was losing over 100 billion dollars a year in employee health related costs, absenteeism, and diminished productivity. In the two years following September 11<sup>th</sup> that figure tripled to over 300 billion dollars a year.

In one form or another, philosophies and religions talk about the three universal relationships everyone has. These are: our relationship with others, our relationship with our self, and our relationship with God. Little time is given to developing a balanced relationship in these three areas, and this alone will bring stress and anxiety. Very few of us take the time to get to know our “self,” and it is our self that is lost or forgotten in daily life. This will also cause us stress and anxiety.

Humanity is constantly seeking happiness in the material objects of the world, and this also causes stress. Everyone seems to have different ideas of what will bring happiness, which indicates that we believe that happiness is the attainment of something. We go through the day pursuing those activities that we think will bring us happiness, trying to avoid those that will cause conflict or pain. There’s an old saying of having “too many irons in the fire.” In this day of information overload, we need to begin to sort through the “irons” and prioritize them. If our life, mind, and body are seemingly out of control, we can take back control by making some changes. We are being overly stimulated by the constant seeking of external input, activity, and approval. Only when we take control of our mind, feelings, and body can we begin the discovery of who we are and what will fulfill our life. This discovery is a major step towards what will bring happiness and joy into our daily life.

*Self-conquest is the  
greatest of all victories.*

*Plato  
c. 428-348 BC*

What used to be called the opinion of the world is now called co-dependency. Co-dependency is a lack of relationship with our self. It is an attempt to get from others the love, approval, and security that we feel we lack. This idea of incompleteness, that



we need something from someone else to complete us, is the main cause of conflict in our lives. The idea of incompleteness is the root cause of all human suffering and of the eight meannesses of the human condition (hatred, fear, shame, grief, condemnation, race prejudice, class prejudice, and narrowness of thinking). This is why people around the world, in both developed and underdeveloped countries, are suffering from stress. Anytime we are dependent on someone else to give us love, appreciation, or security, there will be inner conflict and stress. Getting from others what we feel we lack involves negotiations and compromising of our ideas, our dreams, and our sense of self.

As we begin to work on who we are, we will find life becoming more calm, peaceful, loving, and fulfilling. Happiness will begin to bubble within. As we begin to

*It is for us... to go forward  
with a great desire forever  
beating at the door of our  
hearts as we travel toward  
our distant goal.*

*Helen Keller  
1880-1968*

know more about our self, we will begin to notice more about other people. This diversity becomes the beauty and the spice of life. When we begin to know who we are, we will no longer need others to think, feel, or believe as we do because we are no longer dependent on their support, approval, or validation of us. This will give us

the beginning of freedom because trying to get others to give us what we feel we need is a complicated process with no guarantee that the other will actually fulfill our needs. It is our life and only we can live it in a manner that will fulfill our purpose for being here.

To gain understanding of our self, we simply need to pay attention to what we are interested in doing or exploring, what we are interested in knowing and sharing, how we want to live our life. If we pay attention to our interests, we will discover what we want to do and then we can discover a way of doing it. For example, someone who has always dreamed of being a teacher, but is delivering mail probably won't feel fulfilled. However, if he was mentoring a student or coaching a little league team in the evening, he would find joy coming into his life and that joy would spill out to those around him. The changes we make don't necessarily have to be huge in order to be life changing.

It is our life. When we begin to accept full responsibility for our life, we can begin to take control of it, and then we will begin to experience the unfoldment of our

life. The unfoldment of life is about coming to our self and beginning to live in a manner that is in harmony with our self, filled with energy, enthusiasm, joy, and love.

There are changes we can make in our life and techniques we can use to help us regain control of our life. We need to address each aspect of our life — that of the body, mind, and spirit. The vast majority of people on the planet believe they have a spirit, they may not be sure what that means, but they have a belief or feeling that there is something beyond this physical existence. Some people believe they are a body that has a soul. Others believe that they are a soul that *is* the body and mind. Still others believe that they are a soul that *has* a body and mind. The perception we have influences how we perceive our self and others.

An important step in understanding our self is to have a basic understanding of the mind. We have a left hemisphere and a right hemisphere of the brain. If we are to embrace life, we must work towards balancing the right and left hemispheres of our brain so that we may develop and utilize the whole brain. This will be covered more fully in chapter one.

When we sincerely want to know our self, we will be willing to see ourselves in a new light. This new light will include the body, the mind, and the spirit. We will also begin to see our self as a social being, as part of a human and global society. Happiness will come when we balance a life with interest for our self, knowledge of nature (God), and healthy interactions and relationships with other people. We will be able to attain this balance by a process of minor adjustments to activities we are already doing in our life. These minor adjustments include:

- proper nutrition and water consumption
- proper breathing and exercise
- directing and controlling our mind
- self-analyzing and meditation
- non-attachment and letting go of opposing desires
- positive thinking and the uplifting of the human condition

In the journey to our self, we will expand our understanding to a more complete view of our self, while learning to change unhealthy habits into a healthy and happy life filled with enthusiasm for learning, growing, and living.

Included in this book are quotes from numerous people throughout the ages. The diversity of the backgrounds, cultures, traditions, and time periods of the people quoted reflects that there is a universality of the human experience that transcends time and boundaries; and it is the human experience that inspires and uplifts the human spirit. I have also included some of my poetry at the beginning of each chapter. The quotes and poems in the book can be used as positive affirmations to help change negative thoughts or feelings into positive thoughts and feelings.

*who can walk  
down to the sea  
and not long  
to be a sailor*

## ONE

To know our inner self is a journey that must be undertaken in order to live a healthy and happy life. We can learn to enjoy the process of life. Since our self is within us at all times, developing a relationship with our self is the only sane approach to life.

Most of humanity believes that they are body, mind, and spirit. Therefore, the relationship with the inner self must involve the physical body, the mind and thoughts, and the spirit. We begin where we are and allow for knowledge and understanding of who we are to grow. We start with the premise that we are body, mind, and spirit.

Like an iceberg, which has only a small part visible above the water while the majority of it remains unseen below the water, we also are aware of only a small part of who we are while the major part of who we are is hidden to us. We see only some of our physical life, but there is so much more that is beyond what we are currently aware of.

*The beginning is  
the most important  
part of the work,*

*Plato  
c. 428-348 BC*

The conscious, subconscious, and superconscious<sup>1</sup> are all part of our wholistic<sup>2</sup> self. The relationship with our self has to start with where we are and from where our current vision is. We are aware that we are a body, mind, and spirit, so we will start there.

Unless the mind is understood and brought under control, we will get nowhere. Thoughts are just thoughts. They are not who we truly are. To go deeper into the question of who we are, it is essential that we understand the workings of the mind better. The mind is a tool. We need to learn what this tool is for and how it works in order to use it skillfully. G. I. Gurdjieff<sup>3</sup> told a story about a man driving a horse and cart. He said the driver, the man, is the conscious mind. The horse is the subconscious mind. The cart is the superconscious. Most drivers think they are in control, doing what they want to do and going where they want to go to be happy. They are going to a party, a wedding, shopping. Then something runs across the road and spooks the horse. Now the horse is running off through the ditches. The driver is hanging on for dear life yelling, “Whoa!” Still the horse is running where it wants. Everything in the cart is falling out and the cart is getting damaged. The cart, the superconscious, is where we have our dreams and purpose of being. To fulfill our life, we need to learn how to direct and control the horse, which is the subconscious mind.

#### **Four Functions of the Mind**

The mind has four main functions. One function of the mind is to question everything and to have doubts. Another function is to evaluate, discriminate, and make decisions. Another function is to store information pertaining to our experiences and

*As if you could kill time  
without injuring eternity.*

*Henry David Thoreau  
1817-1862*

knowledge. This information that is stored can be drawn upon to help us make decisions. The fourth function is the ownership, the “I, me, mine.” This is the part that wills us to make choices. “I have

questioned and evaluated and compared this to other experiences. I have now made a

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<sup>1</sup> *Conscious*: awareness of body, senses and breath; *Subconscious* (active in sleep): associated with little or no conscious awareness of body, senses and breath; *Superconscious*: state of freedom from the delusion that “existence” depends on the body, senses, and breath.

<sup>2</sup> Wholistic: dealing with the whole or integrated systems. Our wholistic self includes the body, mind, and spirit.

<sup>3</sup> Russian teacher and writer (1877-1949)

decision. This will benefit me. Now I will use my willpower to do it.” These four functions of the mind are working together in a healthy human being.

A mind in control will use these four functions in a natural way to accomplish its goals. A mind out of control will war against itself. It will make decisions and then question the decisions. It will draw from stored information, but will be unable to move forward with it. It will evaluate and make decisions, but will begin to come up with questions and excuses as to why it shouldn't be done. In conflict with itself, the mind will be in a chronic state of indecision. In this case, the four functions of the mind were all there, but not being properly controlled.

To control the mind, we have to first understand how these four functions work for us, then we have to use discipline. When a situation comes along, the mind should question what it is about. It then evaluates the situation and draws from prior knowledge or experience. It then makes a decision as to what will be done. Finally, it has the ownership and will to carry out the decision. Doubts and uncertainty may continue to come in, but we have already addressed those in the decision making process, so we don't have to keep rehashing them. We follow through to accomplish our goal.

An easy example of how we use the four functions of the mind would be, “What will I have for supper tonight?” *Function #1 Questions/doubts*: “Do I want to cook, or would I rather go out? *Function #2 Evaluate and decide*: “I'd rather stay in tonight, so I will cook.” *Function #3 Access warehouse of mind*: “I had fish last night and I don't want it again tonight. I have everything I need to make spaghetti, salad, and garlic bread.” *Function #4 Will the decision into action*: We begin preparing the meal. The same four functions of the mind that help us make the small decisions in our life should be consciously used to make the larger or harder decisions in our life.

Most people want to be more disciplined and want to exercise more willpower. What stops them is that they don't understand how to control the mind. When we make good decisions but don't follow through on them, it is easy to blame it on other people, places, or situations. People make the reasonable decision to take better care of their health and come up with an exercise plan through using the four functions of

*There is no such thing as a great talent without great willpower.*

*Honoré de Balzac*  
1799–1850

the mind. There will be feelings of happiness and calmness when the decision is made. Then comes the time to exercise and the excuses start...not enough time, something came up, too tired. If we recognize the excuses as the first function of the mind, we will not start undermining our self, but rather will implement the action for our benefit.

Once we understand the four functions of the mind, we understand that we can simply dismiss the questions and excuses that come up after we have made a decision, because we know we have already gone through the proper process to make the decision in the first place. We know that our original decision was already based on questioning, evaluating, drawing on stored knowledge, and that we willfully decided on a plan. Discipline is simply using the willpower function of the mind to follow through in acting on our decisions.

### **Thoughts**

Thinking is a process of the mind. Most people think their thoughts are the “truth.” A thought comes in and because it feels comfortable or familiar, it is declared the truth. For example, “I know I decided to exercise, but this exercising may not be what I want to do. This doubt has come in and it feels like a legitimate doubt, so therefore it is true that exercising is not what I want to do. I better not exercise.” We are not the mind. The mind is a tool that has functions. We are not our thoughts. Thinking is just a process or function of the mind.

A negative thought will bring agitation, anger, irritation, frustration, fear, or depression. A healthy mind is a calm and quiet mind. The anger or fear did not cause the thought, rather it was the effect of the thought. For instance, if we are at the funeral of our best friend, we will feel sad. The sadness arose because of an event, the death of our friend. However, if we sit and think about what it will be like if our best friend was to be killed tomorrow in a car accident, we will get very sad and upset. Our best friend is alive, but here we are in tears because we aren’t living in the moment and we aren’t living in reality. Our sadness arose from a thought. Most of our moods and attitudes are caused by our thoughts rather than actual events. Negative thoughts will lead to negative moods. For decades, psychologists have said that our feelings are legitimate. That may be true, but negative moods do not fill us with happiness and love. Our feelings may be

legitimate, but not all are happy and healthy and may have come from non-legitimate thinking.

When the mind is calm, we naturally feel love, appreciation, gratitude, thankfulness, and joy. The mind is aware and enjoying the beauty and joy of life. If we watch children, we will see that there is often not much more on their minds than the enjoyment of the world around them. This is the natural state of the calm mind until we have to put the mind to work in order to understand or communicate something. Paying attention to thoughts, moods, and attitudes allows us to see whether we have control of the mind or whether it has control of us. Understanding and utilizing the four functions of the mind are the first steps towards gaining control of the mind.

Next, there needs to be an understanding of the two sides of the brain. There is the left hemisphere and the right hemisphere. The left hemisphere is predominately the male principles and the right hemisphere is predominately the female principles. The left (male) side of the brain is where logic and reason are accessed. It is where we analyze information, sort things out, and it is the source of our assertiveness. The right (female) side of the brain is where intuition and expression are dominant. It is the creative, intuitive and receptive side of the brain. The left side of the brain analyzes things and the right side connects or communicates things. To enjoy life, we need to balance the two sides so we are working with the whole brain when we are in the process of questioning, evaluating, sorting through knowledge, and willing the decision into action.

### **Thoughts and Perceptions of Reality**

In learning to take control of our mind, we need to understand that thoughts are

just thoughts. They are not “truth” or “reality.”

*Ah, make the most of what we  
yet may spend, before we too  
into dust descend; dust into  
dust, and dust to lie sans  
wine, sans song, sans singer,  
and sans end!*

*Omar Khayyam  
1048-1122 AD*

At best they are a perception of reality. If a perception of reality changes, then the thoughts will change. Feelings are the accumulation of thoughts. The good feelings like love, joy, gratitude, and peace are our nature. The bad feelings like anger, jealousy, and frustration usually arise from our thoughts. If we want to



change our mood or attitude, all we have to do is change our thoughts, and our feelings will follow. If we withdraw our attention from certain thoughts, the moods and attitudes will dissipate. If we are thinking sad thoughts, there will be the feeling of sadness. If we choose to think about beauty or happy thoughts, the sadness disappears. When we have a thought, a feeling will appear. We need to understand that our thoughts are what cause our feelings, and our feelings are the cause of our moods and attitudes. Even in a world that is not filled with continuous joy, we have the ability to choose our feelings and moods by what thoughts we give our time and attention to.

Everyone has his or her own perception of reality. This is called separate realities. One separate reality is not the same as another. When we want validation from others and then we do not get it, we may become angry, hurt, or frustrated at the other. Now the mind is starting to be out of control simply because it does not understand the reality of our self or others. Our individual reality is but one of billions of realities. This variety of realities allows for the spice of life.

Understanding the mind and its functions allows us to take the mind and direct it towards our goals and our relationship with our self. Learning about the mind may seem like pretty dry material, but we need this knowledge in order to take control of it.

*Everyone does and  
says as much as he  
has understood.*

*Tulsides  
(Indian poet)*

Not only is the mind a tool, it is the most powerful tool we have. We have infinite potential, and our true nature is that of love, harmony, beauty, and joy. Yet many people are unhappy, frustrated, pushed and pulled by the simple need for food, sleep, and the desires for procreation and self-preservation (the four primal instincts). This happens because the mind is not being utilized properly.

To use the mind successfully, we simply utilize its parts and functions. Once there is a basic understanding of the mind, we can begin to use it properly. We then

*It is not the answer  
that enlightens, but the  
question.*

*Eugene Ionesco*

begin to take control of our destiny, of our joy, of our freedom, health, and love. It becomes possible to remove the negative and dysfunctional thoughts. Negative thoughts are not reality and we can let them go when we understand that they are not healthy for us.

Understanding the mind and using it properly will positively affect our enjoyment of everyday life.

When we have gained control of our mind and a problem or situation comes up, we will evaluate it and question what we want to do or why we want to do it. This is where we weigh the pros and cons, where we have the inner debate. We come up with an answer or plan. Then we willfully put the plan into motion. We then need to pay attention to the results of our actions. We aren't questioning our plan, rather we are paying attention to the results. If we are happy, then we are doing something right. If we are unhappy, we may be doing something wrong or unhealthy, which is causing discord or conflict. If we are happy, we continue. If we are unhappy, we need to re-evaluate our decision-making process. This can be a little tricky because sometimes we are doing the right thing, but are not happy. This can happen when we wanted a different result than what we got. For example, we can be a virtuous person, but others may not want to associate with us. If the thought was, "I will be a virtuous person so that others will like me," then the thought was flawed since we cannot control another person.

Healthy thoughts are ones that are beneficial to our self and to others. This is basically the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would wish they would do unto you." What we do for others, life will give back to us. Healthy thoughts will lead to a healthy mind. A healthy mind is a calm mind. A calm mind is better able to perceive the true reality. An agitated mind cannot be clear. It will be in conflict and will be unable to perceive events or facts accurately or truthfully.

### **From Thought to Action**

The goal of taking control of the mind is not to empty it of all thoughts. Even though a quiet mind is healthy and happy, there is more to life than just sitting quietly. The goal is to calm the mind down so we can empty it of the negative and unhealthy thoughts, then to fill it again with new, creative, and uplifting ideas. This allows us to come up with new approaches to life. Remember, one function of our mind is the storage of the sum total of all our thoughts and experiences. We need to begin adding new

thoughts and experiences or we will just continue using the same old thought processes and will come up with the old ideas that weren't getting us anywhere.

Calming the mind opens us to new and creative ideas. However, this is where the ego, the "I" part of the mind, can get stubborn. When a new or creative perception comes in, the ego may say, "No. My perception is familiar and this new way of looking at things is wrong!" This happens all the time. When something new or unfamiliar is introduced into a discussion, people often reject it because it is foreign to their way of thinking. Not being familiar, it is dismissed without further consideration. A calm mind is more apt to view the new or creative idea with curiosity and openness. We need to be open to new material in order to add new information into the storage area of the mind.

The ego is part of the mind. However, we don't need to use that part of the mind when we are listening to others. True listening is when we are open to what others are saying. A calm mind will be open to new ideas from within, and it will also be open to new and creative ideas that may come from others. Healthy relationships are founded on people being open to each other's ideas. Troubled relationships are where people have

*If you judge people,  
you have no time to  
love them.*

*Mother Teresa  
1910-1997*

stubbornly held to their idea that their view of reality is right and the other person's is not. An open mind will understand that there are different ways of viewing things. Several people can watch the same event and give several different versions of what occurred. With this understanding, we will be less likely to judge a view that is different from ours as "wrong" and can remain open to new ideas.

Once we have gained control of our mind, we must then do something with it. We begin to move, to grow, and to discipline ourselves. This will take effort and practice. Once the mind is disarmed through understanding its functions, we can make progress. We no longer have to argue and debate with our self. We no longer have to blame others for our conflict, because we now know that was just the mind warring against itself. We have freed up time and energy to put into motion the plans we have developed.

The mind, with the energy of our thoughts and feelings, is the most powerful tool we have to attain happiness in life. We use this tool to decide to have better nutrition for

the body and mind. We use it to decide to have exercise for the body. We use it to decide to meditate or calm the mind. We come up with a plan for how to achieve these decisions. We make it fit into our life. Now we use the ego, the “I will do this,” to will our self to do it. We don’t allow the other parts of the mind to come and undermine us at this point. This will take making discipline and consistency a priority because without discipline, we will get nowhere.

### **Developing Discipline**

Once a decision has been made, it needs to be willed into action. It will take discipline to do this. Many people have formed the habit of making decisions, then start questioning and doubting and not sticking to their decisions. If a decision is made and carried out, our mind and our life will be cleared of the unfulfilled desires and intentions. Unfulfilled desires and intentions can continue to grow until there comes a state of hopelessness. One by one, we take our desires and intentions and evaluate whether they are still worth doing. Using the functions of the mind, we either drop them or carry them out. We can take one thought, desire, or plan and evaluate it and continue to rewrite it for the rest of our life, or we can just do it and move on to something new.

Discipline helps us to remove the clutter. It is the struggle with our mental clutter that brings a sense of hopelessness, despair, and depression. Life, people, and obstacles are not standing in our way of being happy and successful. It is our lack of control of our mind that stands in our way. Instead of blaming others for not supporting or joining us, we need to be honest and acknowledge that we alone sabotaged our plan.

We decide what is important in our life because it is *our* life. No one can live it for us. Our habits and choices are uniquely ours, to keep or to change. Habits develop when we have a familiar, and often lazy, way of doing things. Sometimes we even begin to believe that the habit is part of who we are. Obviously, habits are not who we are because they can come and go.

*Clear your mind of can't.*  
*Dr. Samuel Johnson*  
*1709–1784*

Taking control of the mind is not only possible, but is preferable and necessary. Once we acknowledge and accept this, it is just a matter of practice and proficiency. Life

will give us opportunities to see when our mind is being used properly and when it is not. If we pay attention to when and why we feel happy or upset, we will understand how we got there. The more we practice controlling the mind, the more confidence and proficiency we will develop. The steps to controlling the mind are: 1. Believing that the mind can be controlled; 2. Understanding the functions of the mind, which allows us to go beyond indecision and gives us the knowledge and freedom for the third step, which is: 3. The implementing of self-control and discipline.

We also need a healthy view of the ego. There is a good part of the ego, the part that says, “I will.” A healthy ego helps us to attain, to be a better person, to be open, loving, and caring towards others and towards our self. The unhealthy part of the ego is

*Time is the most valuable  
thing one can spend.*

*Theophrastus  
d. 278 BC*

what says, “It must be my way. My way is the only true reality.” The healthy part of the ego is what allows for growth and development of human beings and the human spirit. The healthy person will get started and make one change at a time.

When the mind is calm, challenges in life don’t look overwhelming. They look doable. When the mind is calm, we can see whether our feelings are coming from a mood or attitude or from an actual event. By identifying the source of the feelings, we can change them.

When it comes to our relationships, the most important one we will ever have is with our self. We need to appreciate our self. The measure of our relationship with our self is in our happiness and joy regardless of where we are or what we are doing in life. Taking control of the mind is a necessary step in the journey to the self.

- Life is a journey.
- Developing a relationship with our self allows us to enjoy the journey.
- This relationship involves the body, mind, and spirit.
- The mind is a powerful tool.
- To skillfully use the mind, we must understand the four functions of the mind.
- We choose our thoughts and we can change them to uplift and benefit us.
- The thoughts and feelings we choose will define our perception of reality.
- A calm mind allows us to transform our thoughts, feelings and moods.

**Making the effort to have self-honesty and courage (for the recognition of our problem), and the commitment towards a resolution includes the following exercises:**

EXERCISES:

1. Identify the problems or stresses in our life and *write them down*.
2. After acknowledging the problem, choose an affirmation that allows us to affirm a positive solution and *write down the affirmation(s)*.
3. Throughout the day, mentally affirm the affirmation(s).

### **Taking control of our mind**

EXERCISES

1. Practice the recognition of and utilization of the four functions of the mind in our everyday life.
2. Set realistic goals for yourself, and divide the goals into small manageable steps. These small manageable steps will lead us to the attainment of our goal. Let go of the “all or nothing” mindset or habit of goal setting.
3. Plan a schedule for goals with short term, medium term, and long term goals. *Write them down*.
4. Allow time for yourself. Schedule time for relaxation and recreation, even if it means hiring a babysitter or letting a chore wait until later.

## ENERGIZING AND RELAXATION TECHNIQUE

This exercise will both energize and relax the muscles of the body. The combination of more energy and less tension will immediately reduce stress.

Begin by standing upright with the feet 12 inches apart and the arms hanging at your side. Take a deep diaphragmatic breath and exhale fully. As you begin to take another deep diaphragmatic breath, begin the gentle isometric tensing of the body from the feet up to the head. The tensing of the entire body will take place during this one deep diaphragmatic breath. When you reach the neck and face, you will hold the tension for five seconds, and then exhale as you relax each body part from the head to the feet.

Always use gentle tensing of the muscles, working towards moderate tensing. Never tense muscle fully or intensely, as this will cause stress, or even injury, to the body.

### EXERCISE

1. Deep diaphragmatic inhalation then exhale fully
  2. Begin deep diaphragmatic inhalation — *THEN* — as you gently tense:
    1. Feet
    2. Calves
    3. Thighs
    4. Buttocks and hips
    5. Abdomen
    6. Lower back
    7. Chest
    8. Arms
    9. Upper back
    10. Neck and face
  3. Full Exhalation as you relax:
    10. Neck and face
    9. Upper back
    8. Arms
    7. Chest
    6. Lower back
    5. Abdomen
    4. Buttocks and hips
    3. Thighs
    2. Calves
    1. Feet
- Hold five seconds then begin full exhalation/relaxation**
4. After completing the tensing and relaxing, take a full deep inhalation and exhale completely. Step four is the same as step one. Do six to twelve repetitions of this exercise.

The tensing of body parts 1-10 are done on a single inhalation, held for five seconds and then the body parts are relaxed in reverse order of 10-1 on a single exhalation. As you get used to the exercise, you may build up to holding the tension for ten seconds instead of five seconds. This would give an even count to the exercise: Inhalation to the count of 10, retention for a count of 10, and exhalation for a count of 10. Always do at least one regular deep inhalation and exhalation between sets of tensing and relaxing. If you are doing steps 1-4, you will have two regular deep breaths between each set.



*the rhythm  
of butterfly wings  
shakes  
the mountains*

## TWO

*In* the journey towards developing a happy, healthy and loving relationship with our self, we need to come to our breath. We must understand the importance of breath in our life. Without the understanding of the importance of the breath and regulation of the breath, we will not be able to live a happy, healthy, and harmonious life.

The average person will breathe approximately 500 cubic centimeters of oxygen per breath, yet our lung capacity is approximately 3500 cubic centimeters. The average person will breathe 16–22 times a minute. Someone doing deep diaphragmatic breathing would only need 2–3 breaths a minute. Not only does deep breathing provide more oxygen to the system, it also removes more carbon dioxide and toxins from the body. The average person is providing 1/7<sup>th</sup> of oxygen nutrition to the body and removing 1/7<sup>th</sup> of the toxins with each breath.

It is more important to breathe properly than it is to eat properly. Proper breathing will positively affect us physically, mentally, and emotionally. It is easy to see

the need for oxygen nutrition when it is put into the context of: How long can we live without food before we die? How long can we live without water before we die? How long can we live without oxygen before we die? Oxygen is the primary nutritional need of the body and mind, yet most people will give little, if any, time to the breath.

By increasing the fullness of breath, more oxygen will be coming into the body and more toxins will be removed. When we realize the benefits of more oxygen, we will be more inclined to make the effort to improve our breathing habits. Most people would never dream of cutting their food or caloric intake to 1/7<sup>th</sup> of what they normally eat, nor would they consider cutting their water intake to 1/7<sup>th</sup> of what they drink. However, we don't give much thought to providing the body with only 1/7<sup>th</sup> of the oxygen it can utilize. Stress, anxiety, conflict, and discord are a direct result of this lack of oxygen nutrition to the body and mind.

If we view oxygen as nutrition and approach it from a nutritional point of view, we will see the physiological need to change our breathing habits. We will then begin to see the connection between the mind and body.

As we begin to take in more oxygen and get rid of more toxins, we will notice how calm and peaceful our mind is. A mind that is peaceful and calm will see and enjoy the diversity of life.

The very act of proper breathing will bring about a tremendous change in our view of life, or our moods and attitudes.

*“Wake up! You are in a state of deep sleep. You can become free of misery; you can understand your real goal and your essential nature.”*

*The Upanishads  
800-500 BC*

Breath is part of the autonomic nervous system, so we can breathe without even thinking about it. When we bring our attention to the breath, we can change the depth, length, and frequency of our breath. How we breathe is basically just a habit we have formed. Because it is a habit, it is something we can change. By paying attention to what we are doing, we can change shallow and irregular breathing to slow, deep, rhythmic breathing. When we understand that increased oxygen and reduced toxins will help make us happier and healthier, we will be willing to take the time and make the effort to change our habits.

Changing our breathing habits begins with simply taking full, gentle, deep breaths every day. While doing this, pay attention to how the body and mind respond. Be aware of how you felt physically, mentally, and emotionally before you began the diaphragmatic breathing and how you feel afterwards. A mind that is anxious, angry, or irritated will be accompanied by short and rapid breaths. The mind will follow the breath, so if we regulate our breathing we can have better control of the mind. We can use deep full breathing to attain a calmer and more peaceful mind.

In the beginning, we will need to use discipline to regulate our breath. We change our shallow breathing to deep diaphragmatic breathing, which begins to calm the mind. More oxygen is available to the body, which improves our health. More carbon dioxide and more toxins are being eliminated. The body and mind now have maximum fuel.

To discipline ourselves with proper breathing, we simply take a little time each day to practice deep diaphragmatic breathing. We take deep slow breaths. We count from 1 to 12 as we inhale. If we can't make it to 12, we choose a lower number that we can reach. Then we exhale to the same count. It is deep, slow, and even. The brief pauses between breaths should also be even. Ideally, we take a few minutes each hour for this practice. We pay attention to the differences in how we felt before the practice and how we feel afterwards. Also pay attention to the length of the deep breathing. The first deep breath may have been to a count of 1 to 4. After a couple of minutes, it may be 1 to 12. The goal of practicing this 1-12 breathing technique throughout the day is to have a calmer breath and therefore, a calmer mind, but this practice also allows us to change our whole breathing habit.

Another breathing practice is called bellows breathing. It is a deep and full inhalation through the nostrils with four or five quick and short exhalations through the nostrils to expel all the air from the lungs. This process will allow us to take a deep breath *and* help our body and mind to relax and calm down. When we concentrate on expelling all the air, we will be focused on what we are doing. This will relax us and this relaxation will allow us to take an even deeper breath. The inhalation is done slowly and gently. The exhalation is done with four or five quick explosive exhalations. Both the 1-12 breathing technique and the bellows breathing will help us change our breathing habits if we do them consistently and daily.

When we have experimented with changing our breathing patterns and see how effective and important it is in controlling the mind, we will begin to pay more attention to our breathing. It will become natural to check how we are breathing throughout the day. In the beginning, we will have to set aside a few minutes a day to consciously work on diaphragmatic breathing, but eventually it will become routine. Within a few days, if not hours, we will begin to harvest the benefits of increased oxygen and reduced toxins with more peace, joy and calmness of the mind, less agitation, more positive thinking, and less negativity. We will see the connection of the deeper breathing to increased energy and enthusiasm for life.

### **Breath/Mind Connection**

In a healthy person, generally one nostril will be predominantly more open than the other. Throughout the day, this phenomenon will alternate back and forth between the right and left nostril approximately every two hours. What is interesting about this fact is that each nostril correlates with a different (opposite) side of the brain. Which side of the brain is more easily accessed and activated is affected by which nostril is more open. When the right nostril is the more predominant, the left hemisphere (male/reasoning and logic) is more active. When the left nostril is more predominant, the right hemisphere (female/intuition and communication) is more active. Left and right brain studies have shown that the left brain (male) is more aggressive, assertive, and outgoing. It is more orientated to the external world. Concentration, will power, and action are functions of a balanced brain. The right brain (female) is more collective, communicative, passive, internally orientated, intuitive, and is better suited for multi-tasking.

We can tell which side of the brain is more active by being aware of which nostril is the predominant one. The side that is more activated can play a part in our moods and attitudes. If we were going into a business meeting where we would need to present new material, it would be best to have the left brain more active. If we were attending a seminar and needed to gather information, it would be best to have the right brain more active. Also, the right nostril/left brain regulates the heating function of our body, while

the left nostril/right brain helps regulate the cooling unit. By understanding that the nostrils have an affect on the different sides of the brain, we can have some control over, or even temporarily change which side of the brain is more activated.

There are breathing exercises, which allow us to balance our left and right brain. These techniques are called pranayama breathing exercises and will be described in more detail in the section on meditation. *Prana* means “life force” and *yama* means “control.” The pranayama techniques will balance the left and right side of the brain, giving us equal access to both sides. This will help us to be more balanced human beings. There is so much more to breathing than just getting oxygen into the body. It affects our thinking processes, the mind, our moods, attitudes, our emotions, our digestive and elimination processes, our immune system, and our physical and mental health.

There is another technique we can use to help switch which nostril is open. By placing our fist under our left armpit and applying pressure or lying on our left side, our right nostril will be predominately open. By reversing this process, we can open the left nostril.

Moods, attitudes, and emotions are of the mind. We see life with our mind and we hear with our mind. It is the mind that causes us to see, interpret, and translate. The mind is what interprets what others say to us. Our emotions, moods, and attitudes reflect how we interact with the rest of life. Proper breathing, or improper breathing, will affect how we think, interpret, and translate what we see and hear every day. We can experiment and notice how we are affected by our breathing. When we are angry or frustrated, the breath is trembling and uneven. When we are crying or angry, we also have a very narrow view of things. It is at these times that we can use the breath to gain control of the mind.

It may be helpful to make notes or keep a journal while you are practicing or experimenting with regulating the breath. Note how you feel physically, mentally, and emotionally before you begin the breathing techniques, then note how you feel afterwards. During the day, when you experience happiness, sadness, calmness, anger, or any mood or emotion, make note of your breathing pattern. If you consciously took control of your breath by a few minutes of deep breathing and experienced a change of mood, note that. When focus is shifted from the mind to the breath, the mind will

naturally calm down. The more happiness and joy we have in life, the more successful our journey will be. True success is measured by the amount of love, joy, happiness, and enthusiasm we have as we journey through life.

I can't emphasize enough the importance of proper breathing. Proper breathing is the single most important nutrient for health and happiness. The breath is what regulates a healthy body and a healthy mind. Without the breath, there is no such thing as a healthy and happy human being. The most valuable nutrient for the body and mind is oxygen. By having proper breathing habits, both nostrils will be open fairly equally, the entire brain will be accessible, and we can function at peak and full potential. This starts with the regulation of the breath.

### **Body, Mind, Spirit Connection**

Not only does the breath connect the mind to the body, but it also connects the spirit to the body. When the breath quits, the spirit leaves the body. The breath is the link between the body, mind, and spirit. When there is complete harmony between the body, mind, and spirit, we can accomplish anything. To accomplish any goal, to attain any desire, it will be easier and more quickly accomplished if the body, mind, and spirit are in harmony. The slower and deeper the breath, the more we can focus.

*The wise don't expect to  
find life worth living;  
they make it that way.*  
*Anonymous*

The very fountain of youth is in the breath. You feel more energized, healthy, and happy with deep breathing. Proper breathing will make us calmer and more peaceful. Slower breathing will cause the heart to slow down. When the breath and heart are slower, there will be less wear and tear on the physical body. Better health, more happiness and joy all start with the breath.

Without regulating the breath, there will be little control of the mind. If there is no control of the mind, there will be no concentration. Without concentration or focus, there will be little accomplishment in anything we undertake.

An important step we take to developing a relationship with our self is taking control of the breath. Once we change our breathing habits, all else will follow. The

mind will be easier to discipline and direct. It will be easier to utilize willpower. Physically and psychologically, you will feel lighter and happier. Colors will seem more colorful. Negative emotions make the world seem heavy and dull. Our “burdens” are not part of our nature. They are merely things we have taken on with an agitated or overly active mind.

A calm mind will have controlled and directed thoughts that will be able to accomplish things that are beneficial to the individual and the international community. A calm mind will not be overwhelmed, frustrated, or irritated when something new comes along, nor will it be stressed by too much information because a calm mind will automatically dismiss all non-essential information. A calm mind will have clarity and vision because our true nature will be able to separate the essential from the non-essential. On a subtle level, this clarity and vision will simply dismiss negative, anxious, overactive thoughts that may start to form. A calmer mind begins with breath regulation.

When we have a calm mind, we won't have to get away from our family and friends in order to get away from stress. We will be able to embrace the life we want. We will have the time and energy to do the things we enjoy because we have quit wasting our time and energy on all the unimportant and negative things that we used to allow in.

*We do not see the world as it is, we see  
the world as we are.*

*Anaïs Nin  
1903-1977*

### **Breath of Life, Breath of Joy**

In the beginning, we can begin to make changes in our life by starting with 10 minutes a day of deep breathing. Then we begin to increase that to a few minutes every hour. We continue to increase how long we do the deep breathing until eventually, it will be the way we breathe normally. The next time you are feeling stressed, agitated, angry or irritated, try 10 minutes of slow, deep diaphragmatic breathing. There will be a marked difference. Once we have done this and found that it does work, we will find we have the key to health and happiness. Now, it isn't just the breath of life, it has become

the breath of joy and happiness. With this knowledge, we now have the ability to determine how much happiness and joy are in our life. Our view of life and our choice of how to interact with life will change for the better.

Deep breathing and a calm, balanced mind allows us to come to our self and begin to *live* our life rather than spending our life sorting through the demands of an overly stimulated world. This is what an agitated mind is doing—working on sorting out and dealing with the bombardment of external information. If you have deep breathing and a calm mind, this information overload will naturally sort itself out as to what is essential to your life and what is non-essential.

After removing some of our stress, anxieties, or obstacles, we don't then just sit and do nothing. Having a peaceful life doesn't mean we have to go off to the mountains or sit in a garden all day. It means we are at peace with our self and life around us. This lets us accomplish and fulfill the things we enjoy, allows us to fulfill our very purpose. It is being at peace with the activities we do. Having developed a relationship with our self,

*The development of one's  
personality is the real  
purpose of human life.*

*Hazrat Inayat Khan  
1882-1927*

we now want to succeed in our goals. We become able to see what we would like to experience. We may want to become a better parent, or accomplish something in the art or music world. We may have a personal goal, like that of greater peace in our life.

We may have a goal in the scientific field or medicine and research. The goal may be in the humanitarian field, trying to help others remove obstacles in their life, like teaching or social work. By removing the obstacles from our own life, we have more freedom to live the life we choose.

Once we have attained some balance in our life and have removed a few obstacles, we begin to utilize all our efforts. Thus far we have used simple breath control that has brought about these almost miraculous results. Now we develop the mental discipline to take control of our life. Regulating our breath has been a step. Without it, no other steps can be made. Having taken control of the breath, we now start to develop discipline. We bring in a healthier physical diet that brings more energy, more harmony, and less conflict. If we pay attention and have more positive and uplifting thoughts, we



will be calmer, happier, and more peaceful. We begin to see the reasoning behind being virtuous or thinking positive thoughts.

The process of developing this relationship with our self starts with the breath, which affects the mind, moods and attitudes, and how we even perceive life. Remember, we don't see with our eyes, we don't hear with our ears, rather we see and hear with our mind. How open to life we are is reflected by the healthiness of our "wholistic" self, that of our body, mind, and spirit. We change our thinking and begin to nurture our self with deep breathing. Simply by regulating the breath, the rest of the disciplines will become easier to establish. It's almost miraculous what happens to the body, mind, and spirit when we begin to breathe properly.

A relationship with our self includes the body, mind, and spirit. We add physical and mental nutrition. We add meditation, which is beginning to know our self on a much more complete level. The knowledge, techniques and exercises, nutrition, and psychology are all tools to help us on our journey. Getting to know our self is the self-discovery of the joy, happiness, and success of our life.

*Life has two aspects—inner and outer—and both aspects should be touched and perfected.*

*Swami Rama*  
1925-1996

- Oxygen is the most important nutrient for the body and mind.
- Stress, anxiety, and conflict are a direct result of lack of oxygen to the body and mind.
- How we breathe is a habit we can change.
- There are techniques we can use to increase our oxygen intake.
- With proper breathing we can control our mind, moods, and emotions.
- When there is harmony between the body, mind, and spirit, we can accomplish anything.
- The breath is the connection between the body, mind, and spirit.

## **EXERCISES**

Take time to experiment with these breathing techniques and notice the results.

1. Do 10 minutes of deep, slow diaphragmatic breathing counting from 1-12 on the inhalation and 1-12 on the exhalation.
2. Do diaphragmatic breathing throughout the day, a little each hour.
3. Do “bellows breathing” for 10 minutes. Inhale deeply through the nostrils and then exhale fully with four to five short rapid expulsions of air through the nostrils.
4. When feeling stress, anxiety, frustration, or anger, do 10 minutes of deep diaphragmatic breathing, which will calm the mind and emotions.

*within  
the beauty  
of the  
dance  
and the love  
of the  
dancer  
is you*

### THREE

Continuing with developing the relationship with our self...we come to our self by accepting self-responsibility. There is no one to bless and no one to blame for our life but ourselves. This will distinguish the children from the adults. Children want to be taken care of. They are always wanting, needing, or asking for something from someone else, like a brother, sister, parent, lover, or life itself. We can either ask life to fulfill us or give to us, or we can accept responsibility for living our own life. This is a major issue that must be addressed. Are we willing to accept responsibility for our own happiness and joy? When we make the decision to do this, we will immediately recognize that no one can live our life for us. No one can eat for us or gain knowledge that will satisfy us.

In living our own life, we make our own choices, have our own experiences, and discover what our life is about. This will bring us to our relationship with our self. We will choose how we want to relate to others, to life, and to our self. The ability to make

choices about our own life brings freedom. It is our unfoldment. When we accept responsibility for our choices, we come to our self and live our own life.

How we live our own life is really more like ingredients to a recipe. “Steps” implies that once something is done, it is left behind, and most of humanity believes in this linear way of thinking. A recipe, on the other hand, is a combination of ingredients. Each time we make bread, we gather all the necessary ingredients and then we mix them together. To live a fulfilled life, we need all the ingredients from the mind, body, and spirit, and then we mix them together. We are unique and each person will have his own favorite recipe of life. However, there are some universal ingredients that everyone will need to embrace.

In order to live our own life and be the master of our destiny, we have to be in control of our mind. Our mind is our greatest tool in our journey, or the biggest barrier to happiness in our life. Some of humanity has the idea that life is standing in their way.

*Creation is neither good nor bad; it is as it is. It is the human mind which puts all sorts of construction on it.*

*Sri Ramana Maharshi*  
1879-1950

They are quick to blame life, situations, and others for their unfulfilled plans. In reality, it is the uncontrolled mind that is creating the obstacles to our life. We allow our fears, doubts, insecurities, and attachments to stand in the way of our unfoldment.

We take control of the mind by understanding the four functions of the mind. Once we understand the four functions, we then use discipline. The first place we use the discipline is in proper breathing, because with proper breathing we will remove 50% of what causes us stress. This 50% is the non-essential information that we are constantly being bombarded with. We can't blame this 50% of non-essential information on the TV, because we are the ones turning on TV and watching it. We can't blame our spouses or children, because we are the ones that are attached to our expectations of them. We can't blame society, because we are choosing to live in society. We are the ones making the choices. However, through proper breathing and the ability to dismiss much of the non-essential material, we can live in a happier and healthier manner. Some information

*No one knows what he is able to do until he tries.*

*Publilius Syrus*  
1<sup>st</sup> Century BC

coming into the mind during the day does have to be dealt with. Some is not relevant to our happiness or survival and can be disregarded.

After we have dismissed 50% of the non-essential information, we are still left with the other 50%: our stress, conflict, and discord. Meditation, re-education, and willpower are used to deal with this remaining 50%. Meditation helps us become aware of what is running through our wonderful heart/mind. It helps us to see what is present in the conscious, subconscious, and superconscious mind. Without awareness of our thoughts and/or conflicts, we will continue to have stress and disease throughout our life. However, awareness is not the same as removing the conflict or resolving the issue. Once we have the awareness of the conflict, we can either end it or mend it. We can either drop the issue or resolve the issue.

### **Meditation**

Meditation helps us be aware of the wholistic self. Then by developing concentration and calming down the breath, we can calm down the conscious thoughts. Once we calm the conscious mind, we can become aware of the subconscious thoughts. Calming down even further, we can become aware of the superconscious mind.

To be in control of our destiny, we use discipline to control our mind. Quieting the mind does not mean to empty it. To quiet the mind means to focus and concentrate it on what we choose. There are many types of meditation. There are meditations on mantras (words) and yantras (images); with concentration on theologies, on objects, and on holy ones. However, there are really only three subject matters of meditation. The first of these subjects is the “freedom from.” This is freedom from our mental conflicts, freedom from stress, freedom from all that bothers us in our conscious awareness. It is freedom from the diseases or the eight meannesses of the human condition (hatred, fear, grief, shame, condemnation, race prejudice, narrowness of thinking, and pride of pedigree or tribe). These lie within both the conscious and subconscious mind. Meditation on the conscious mind is about what we want to resolve, create, think and do, or what we want to go beyond. In order to have meditation on the inner subconscious mind, we have to quiet the conscious mind.

The second subject matter of meditation involves our enslavements to our personal beliefs or the ideologies that we have chosen. This includes fears and issues that

*The real learning is the unlearning of all that one has learned.*

*Hazrat Inayat Khan*  
1879-1950

may have come from childhood. These issues may have distorted our view. Something may have happened in the past that prejudiced us in a certain way. By quieting the conscious mind, we get to the subconscious mind and can begin to work on this material that is

standing in the way of our enjoyment of life. As an example, we may be aware that we have a sliver in our hand, but that awareness doesn't heal the hand. When we discover an unresolved issue in the subconscious, our awareness of it doesn't heal the wound. We have to address it by letting go of it or resolving (healing) it.

The third subject of meditation is the greatest of all. It is the exploration of our life and the "freedom into" our nature. It is how to live in love, joy, harmony, happiness, and freedom. This will happen when we are *free from* our conflicts and issues. The process of developing a relationship with our self is not going to be instant. However, if we make consistent and steady efforts, it can be an ever-expanding enjoyment of life. Coming to our self will be a continuous evolution and revolution.

*The wise man looks into space, and does not regard the small as too little, nor the great as too big; for he knows that there is no limit to dimensions.*

*Lao-tsu*  
c. 604-531 BC

How do we meditate? The simplest way is to work with our nature.

We have already established that the

most important nutrient is breath, because of the oxygenation and detoxification that occur with the breath. It is also one of the basic rhythms we have in our body. Thus, it is natural to base meditation on the breath. We also use a mantra<sup>4</sup>, which is a word or sound that helps us to concentrate, and we link the mantra to our breath.

It is the conscious mind that will hear the truck going by, or the noise in the kitchen. It is the conscious mind that will think about work or things to do. If these are nonessential to our happiness or survival, we can let them go during the time we have set

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<sup>4</sup> Mantra is a Sanskrit word, which literally means "instrument of thought."

aside for meditation. By calming down and focusing on the breath, we can let go of the nonessential conscious stuff. Once this happens, we will become aware of more subtle thoughts, feelings, and ideas from the subconscious. At this point, we have two choices. We can continue to calm the mind further to have even more subtle experiences, or we can evaluate the issues in the subconscious for a while. We can evaluate the subconscious thoughts for the entire meditation time, or we can just make note of the thoughts so we can work on them later.

“Freedom from” is a term that has to be understood. It is not suppression or repression. “Freedom from” means something no longer affects or impacts our life. We no longer believe something to be true. “Freedom from” means there has been a resolution or ending to the issue or thoughts. We need to become aware of what is in the subconscious because it is part of our mind, and it is the mind that tells us who we are. Every thought coming in does not distract us from peace. It is just something that is telling us something about our self. It may give insight into our ideas, thoughts, philosophies, fears, insecurities, shame, hatred or narrowness of thinking. These things must be addressed either in meditation or outside of meditation. If they seem nonessential at the moment, we can choose to continue meditating on the breath and the *So Hum* mantra so we can become quiet and experience freedom into our nature.

### **Beginning to Meditate**

The first step of meditation is pranayama, or breath control. Without regulation of the breath, there can be no regulation of the mind. If there is no regulation of the mind, there can be no meditation.

The first step of meditation should be the simple inhalation and exhalation of the 1–12 pranayama technique. This is inhaling to the count of 12 and then exhaling to the count of 12, trying to regulate or make the breath even. It is a deep, calm, even breath. This should be done until the breath is quite relaxed and rhythmic.

Then we start meditating with the *So Hum* technique. As we inhale, we listen to the sound of our breath. The sound of the inhalation is “So.” As we exhale, we listen to the sound of our breath. The sound of the exhalation is “Hum.” We are listening to the sound of the breath while mentally saying *So* on the inhalation and *Hum* on the

exhalation. We are focusing on the breath. We pay attention to all the thoughts and distractions that come. We are not letting them keep us from focusing, but neither are we ignoring them. These thoughts or distractions are telling us something about our days, something about us. We can choose to either evaluate them or not during meditation. We are just paying attention.

The deeper we dive into the *So Hum*, the deeper our meditations will be. We will begin to transcend the mind and areas of mental activity. Once we begin to do that, it is time to go to the *Om* technique. Instead of using the *So Hum* mantra, you now use the *Om* mantra.<sup>5</sup> When we attune to the *Om*, we will be attuning to all life, and we will then begin to feel our self expanding out beyond our limited identities. We will experience our self expanding out into the rest of life. This meditation of deep, even 1-12 breathing, the *So Hum* technique and the *Om* technique should be done on a daily basis. One of your meditations each day should be this basic meditation.

Meditation is simple. In each meditation, you should dive into your self and come away feeling energized. You should feel calmer and more relaxed while doing the deep breathing. You may feel energized while you are doing the breathing techniques. You should have more self-awareness while doing the *So Hum* mantra. You should feel more expanded into the rest of life, with the *Om* mantra. With each meditation, you should feel all these things. If you aren't feeling them in each meditation, it means you are not concentrating.

I know most people have active schedules, but preparing yourself for meditation is simple. When it is getting close to meditation time, you begin to put the rest of the stuff away. You use non-attachment and say, "I'll get back to that after my meditation. This does not need to be dealt with for the next half-hour." You don't have to spend a long time in the preparation for meditation. Take a few minutes before you sit down to clear the mind of all the things and activities you have been doing and will be doing afterwards. Take a little time to begin to get perspective on why you are meditating and what you hope to gain. Then sit down to meditate. Do the 1-12 deep breathing. Do the *So Hum* mantra and then do the *Om* mantra. If this meditation is done on a consistent basis, self-realization will come to you because you will have made the effort to discover

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<sup>5</sup> *OM* is the vibratory sound heard throughout creation. It is the sound of creation.



and realize your self. You will be using some of the most powerful meditation techniques available to humanity.

In the beginning, it is better to have two half-hour meditations than to have one hour-long meditation. It is recommended that you have one meditation at the beginning of your day and the second one at the end of your day. If you only have an hour a day, then it is best to take a half-hour in the morning and a half-hour in the evening.

The timing of your meditations is important. You need to be alert for your meditation. Meditating right before bed is not a good time because most people aren't alert at that time. Meditating immediately after getting out of bed is also not a good time because most people aren't alert upon waking. Each person needs to find the proper time. It may take you from ten minutes to an hour after you get out of bed to feel alert. If you get up early and want to meditate before you go to work, increase your 1–12 deep breathing. This will bring alertness. Find the time of day that is best suited for you and try to make it consistent. Don't become too rigid in your schedule or structure, but be consistent in your scheduled meditation time.

Your place of meditation should be inspirational. It should give you the feeling that you will be able to attain something. Don't go off in a dark closet and close the door because it is the only peaceful place in the house. There is nothing inspirational about a cluttered closet. Find a time when you can sit somewhere that is comfortable and open. If this is your bedroom, that is fine. If this is your living room, that is fine. If this is your back porch, that is fine. It should be a space in which you feel comfortable and open to life. Find a place that is well ventilated with clean air. Keep the air as fresh and clean as you can.

As for posture, you must be comfortable. If you are comfortable sitting cross-legged, do so. If not, find a good chair in which your spine can be kept comfortably erect for a half-hour or an hour meditation. Do not get sloppy in your posture. The main pranic (energy) channels flow from the base of the spine to the crown. If the spine is not kept erect, then these energy channels cannot flow freely. It is important to have proper posture.

You need discipline, because your experience with your wholistic self comes in

*Each human personality is  
like a piece of music, having  
an individual tone and  
rhythm of its own.*

*Hazrat Inayat Khan  
1879-1950*

meditation. It doesn't come after the end of a lifetime. It comes in a focused and one-pointed meditation. This is when you will expand into your larger self. Sit down to each meditation with the focus that meditation will bring you more self-awareness, more harmonization. Be disciplined and one-pointed in your meditations. This discipline and one-pointedness will help in all areas of your life. A disciplined, consistent effort in meditation will bring knowledge of our wholistic nature. By taking the knowledge we gain in meditation and incorporating it into our daily life, we will be harmonizing with our wholistic nature.

### **Meditation Techniques**

Meditation is the process of calming the mind, breath, and ego for the purpose of realizing one's wholistic nature. Meditation is a very simple and gentle process and should be practiced with a gentle yet firm discipline. Concentration leads to a quieter and deeper meditation. When we continue to get quieter still, we will reach the superconscious. Here we will notice that the *So Hum* has grown very soft until eventually we will hear the sound of existence, which is the *Om* sound. It is the sound of silence. There is a sound throughout existence that is humming at all times. We use the *So Hum* mantra to emulate the sound we hear. We can do it on the inhalation and exhalation, or just on the exhalation. The *So Hum* is most closely associated with the *Om* mantra, which is the sound of existence. As the mind gets calmer and quieter, it may switch to the *Om*. If the mind doesn't get that quiet, we stay with the *So Hum*. When the mind won't get quiet, it means we should pay attention to what is keeping us from calming down. The 30 minutes we have set aside for meditation is just a slice of our life. Thoughts that are there will be the same thoughts that were there yesterday and will be with us tomorrow, so they need to be addressed. When you work on something in meditation, always do so gently.

With consistent deep breathing, concentration, and meditation, we will be able to get to the part of our nature that is full of joy. When we are doing this daily, it becomes easier to deal with everything in the subconscious. As we remove the fears, phobias, and

insecurities, we will have greater freedom from the issues that keep us from living within our nature. This freedom from all of the issues that cause us conflict, will lead us to freedom into the enjoyment of everyday life. We will be freed into love, play, joy, and into a life that we choose to live. Our relationships will be healthy and enjoyable. This is done day by day. Meditation and breathing may seem to have magical results, but it is our efforts that will bring the results. It is our conscious willful effort that removes the other 50% of stress from both our conscious and subconscious mind.

### **POSTURE**

Sit in a relaxed, upright position with the head and spine straight and erect, but not tense. Sitting on a blanket or pillow against the wall or sitting upright in a chair are both acceptable. Sit upright with the eyes and mouth closed. Take a few deep diaphragmatic inhalations and exhalations. Maintain this posture throughout the meditation. Your posture should be one that is comfortable for a 30-60 minute sitting.

### **1-12 PRANAYAMA TECHNIQUE**

Inhale a full diaphragmatic breath through both nostrils while counting from 1 to 12, and then exhale through the nostrils to the same count. The mental counting should be calm and even. The count need not be to the full count of 12, but does need to be the same count for both the inhalation and the exhalation. For example: Inhale to 12 then exhale to 12, or inhale to 6 and exhale to 6.

### **SO HUM TECHNIQUE**

Breathing through the nostrils, take a very gentle, slow and full diaphragmatic breath while mentally saying “So.” After inhaling the full breath, exhale gently through the nostrils while mentally saying, “Hum.” Repeat.

While mentally repeating this mantra, listen to the sound of your breath. The natural sound of the breath will be *So* (inhalation) and *Hum* (exhalation).

## **OM TECHNIQUE**

Take a full diaphragmatic inhalation through the nostrils. Then, while exhaling through the nostrils, mentally say, “*Ommm*” for the full exhalation. Feel the *Om* vibration during each exhalation. Repeat.

## **HRIM TECHNIQUE**

The *Hrim* mantra is always done audibly. It is pronounced “HUH-ree-mm” and it means “I invoke the indwelling energy.” Five to fifteen minutes of doing this technique will allow the mind to become relaxed and focused, and at the same time bring energy into your life. To do the *Hrim*, you begin by taking a full diaphragmatic inhalation through the nostrils. As you begin to exhale through your mouth, contract your stomach muscles slightly, and audibly (with force) say “Huh.” You then continue with the exhalation with an audible “reeee,” ending with “mmmm.” Then you again inhale through the nostrils. All three parts of this mantra are done on one exhalation...*HUH*...reeee...mmmm.

All mantras should be done calmly, with concentration, and in harmony with the breath. Remember that the mantras are a vibration we use to re-identify with our wholistic self through the calming of the mind and breath. You can pay attention to any thoughts that come in. Then, gently bring your focus back to the mantra. Properly doing the techniques will bring a calming of the mind and breath.

- Proper breathing will remove 50% of our conflicts and issues.
- Meditation and re-education helps us to deal with the remaining 50%.
- Meditation gives us awareness of our conscious, subconscious, and superconscious mind.
- The changes we make allow us “freedom from” our issues and concerns.
- Meditation allows us awareness of, and thereby “freedom into,” our spirit or nature.
- Meditation techniques provide a systematic process of quieting the mind, breath, and ego, allowing us to experience our true nature.

## **EXERCISES**

1. Make a commitment to schedule 30 minutes of privacy a day for yourself.
2. Meditate for this 30 minutes a day. (1–12 breathing, *So Hum* mantra, *Om* mantra.)
3. Practice proper posture of sitting upright throughout the day. Correlate with breathing exercises.
4. Take time each day to evaluate what you experience or are aware of during your meditation.
5. Take some time to list any positive or negative ideas or situations in your life.
6. Choose a positive affirmation that will empower you, and allow you to accept responsibility for your life, and use this affirmation throughout the day.

*love  
is the source  
of life  
beauty  
the energy  
of eternity*

## FOUR

*Most* everyone would agree that once our survival is ensured, we seek love and freedom. This lets us know that love is part of our very nature. This love, joy, and happiness is our very soul and our nature. All we have to do is be aware of our self and pay attention to what drives humanity. Along with the four primal instincts (the need for food, sleep, procreation of the species, and self-preservation), humanity seeks love and freedom before all else. For most of humanity, the desires for fame, wealth, and power will come after the desire for love and freedom. Love and freedom are part of our nature and allow us to feel complete and fulfilled.

*Man looks for wonders; if he  
only saw how very wonderful is  
the heart of man.*

*Hazrat Inayat Khan  
1879-1950*

When we calm the mind and meditate beyond the subconscious and conscious mind, we will get to that self that is quiet and is filled with love, joy, beauty, and happiness. Meditation does help us to balance our life and bring about this awareness. Meditation will give us an awareness that no one else can. When other people point out our weaknesses, insecurities, or fears, we just resent them. To accept that we have issues that need to be resolved, we need to see them for ourselves.

There is a story about a swami<sup>6</sup> who was walking along at night when he saw a woman under a street light. She was on her hands and knees looking for something. He went to her and asked if he could help her find what she was looking for. She said she had dropped her ring and would appreciate his help in finding it. They looked all around where she was, but could not find it. After a thorough search, the swami asked her if she was sure she had dropped it here. She said, "Well, no. I dropped it over there," as she pointed off to another area. Surprised and a bit dumbfounded, the swami asked her why she was looking here if she knew she dropped it over there. She said, "Because there is

*The difference between an ordinary man and a sage is that the sage does not allow his thoughts to dwell on the negative.*

*Swami Rama*  
1925-1996

light here. It is dark over there. I can't see over there, and I'm afraid of the dark." The swami suggested that they get a candle for light and look for it where she dropped it.

When we are developing a relationship with our self, there will be times that we will have to look into the "dark," which is where we have our fears and insecurities. We might be frightened. However, all we need to do is to bring a little light into that darkness. Then we can see the issues and resolve them. It is great for someone to offer us help, but we must still see the solution for ourselves (add our own light). This is accepting responsibility for our life, our joy, and our resolution. We must remove the conscious conflicts from our life. We must remove the subconscious fears and insecurities from our life. This is what will free us from all the pain, suffering, conflict, and stress. It is what will allow us freedom into the joy of living and interacting.

*Maturity of the mind is the capacity to endure uncertainty.*

*John Finley*

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<sup>6</sup> Swami: a member of an ancient order of monks.

It will free us into our nature of love, harmony, beauty, and joy. Once we have that, we can share it with others.

Meditation will help us become aware of what is in our conscious and subconscious mind. However, we must still do the work of ending or mending what brings us conflict. This is why it is not beneficial to suppress or repress what bothers us. When we are meditating and things come up, we can become aware of them, and if we choose, gently put them aside to work on later. To resolve the conflicts, it will first take our awareness of them, and then it will take our determination and mental discipline to find a resolution. Meditation will give us the awareness.

Once we gain the awareness of how to free our self into life, into our true nature, the relationship we are developing with our self will expand into a larger self (that of body, mind, and spirit). We will begin to live our life in the manner that we choose. We will have healthy boundaries with life around us. Our interactions with others will be healthy and enjoyable. This is the way life can be lived. Developing this relationship with our self isn't instant, and it isn't always easy, but neither does it take years of practice. By taking control of the breath, we can take control of the mind. Taking control of the mind means we discipline and focus it. Developing concentration benefits us by removing stress and allowing us to accomplish and attain our goals. It becomes easier to do what we have chosen, because we have removed most of our own resistance.

Meditation gives us something that nothing else can, which is awareness and direct knowledge of our self. Not only will we see the conflicts, issues, fears, and insecurities, we will also see our strengths and virtues. When we can see our strengths and virtues, our weaknesses are put into the perspective that they are not mountains but rather molehills.

*Since the beginning of time  
there have been those who  
have attained oneness with  
their nature.*

*Lao Tzu  
c. 604-531 BC*

Meditation gives us the opportunity to look at both the negative and positive, or beautiful aspects of our life and our self.

Once we have self-awareness, we can then do something with that awareness. We must affirm and nurture it. We must remember that if negative thoughts come in (from the conscious or subconscious), they are just a habit. We let go of them, because



they are not a part of our true nature. “This negative thought is not valid. I will let go of it and affirm something positive. I will move on to something that brings me joy or interests me.” The two-fold approach of non-attaching and going on to something positive will become more natural as we continue working on focus and concentration. The more we see results, the more we will want to practice it. With continued practice, it will become less of a discipline and more of a positive new habit. “I’d rather be feeling love, joy, and happiness than thinking about that negative thought.”

The process of self-awareness is an essential step or ingredient in developing a relationship with our self. The greater our awareness, the more we have to work with. The Golden Rule of “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” has been used by all major religions and cultures throughout human history. Having reverence for all life must start with our self. Everyone wants others to treat them with kindness and compassion. When we come to realize that not only are we worthy of kindness and compassion, but that it is our nature, we will be willing to share kindness and gentleness with ourselves as well as with others. When we do this, we begin to see kindness and compassion everywhere in life.

### **Inner Freedom**

There is a story about Buddha as a young man. Someone brought him a pail of sharp rocks as a gift. Buddha looked at the gift and knew that he had no use in his present or future life for the sharp rocks. He said, “No, thank you” to the gift. This is what we need to do when people bring us their sharp rocks, their negative thinking and their discouragement. We evaluate what they brought to us and if we can’t put it to any constructive use, we say “No, thank you.” We let their feelings, words, and thoughts pass over us. If we have embraced the concept of separate realities, that everyone is allowed to live their unique life, it is easy to see that how others think we should feel or act is simply their perception. Knowing that it has to do with them, we don’t have to keep it as our own. “No thank you. I don’t need that,” and we continue on.

There are probably hundreds of books written about co-dependency. This is a fairly new term, but it is about how we process the opinions of others. If we look at it

with this view, then it is clear that humanity has been struggling with this issue from the beginning of time. As children, we are dependent on our parents and other adults for our food, clothing, shelter, and self-knowledge. For children, it is natural to use the opinion of others to learn and grow. However, at some point, children leave the family to pursue their own life. In developing this relationship with our self, we must all come to this point of leaving childhood. We have to throw off the need for approval from others for our self-esteem. We need to let go of the idea that we need others to reflect who we “should be.” We need to stop looking to others to define what our interests are. Leaving this childhood dependency on others is a step we take towards self-responsibility. We take responsibility for establishing our own sense of self-identity and worth.

Once we become aware of the fact that only we can live our life, we begin to accept that others can support us or not support us. Someone can support our choice of foods, but we are the ones who have to eat the meal to get the nutrition. If they don’t support our choice of foods, it doesn’t matter, because if we are hungry, we will eat.

*Learn to stand alone,  
secure in your own virtues  
and self-worth.*

*Parmahansa Yogananda  
1893-1952*

Whether or not others support us in our life decisions, we must remember that the unfoldment of our life is our personal responsibility and should not be dependent on the approval or disapproval of others. When we accept responsibility for our own

life, it will be life altering. Whether we are at a banquet with hundreds of people, or alone having a simple meal, we will still be able to have the nutrition we need to nurture our self. Once we are able to do this, we have matured past co-dependency.

If therapy is helping us to come to our self, we should keep doing it, but we should view the therapy as something that is helping us to learn how to be responsible for our own life. We must remember that the support, security, and self-esteem that we get in therapy, and from family and friends, are coming from *our* efforts, along with their help. It is the same for support groups or reading the self-help or meditation books. Anything that will help us develop this relationship with our self is beneficial, but we need to understand that it is also our efforts that are helping us grow and learn.

When we develop a relationship with our self, we will begin to experience freedom from the stress and distractions in our life. This begins with something as

simple as changing our breathing habits. In the beginning, it will take conscious effort to change our breathing pattern, but in time it will become our new habit and will take little effort to maintain the new habit.

When my younger brother was around six, I asked him what he did all day. He said, “I get up and I play. Go to school. Then I come home and I have to play. Then I eat supper and have to play again. Then I go to bed.” Playing was part of his “job,” part of his life. He had to play. Adults lose this around the time the male/female relationships begin. Then we take on the responsibility of marriage and family. Somewhere along the way we lose our self, and we lose the joy, or play, in life. Robert Lewis Stevenson said, “There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy.” We must begin to add play back into our life.

Beyond the four primal instincts, love is the one thing we want in our life. Love, that feeling of peace, harmony, reverence, and joy, is our very nature. We can share that feeling with others, but it *comes* from our nature. We can have that feeling of love when we are alone, with others, or simply watching a sunset. Because we can have the feeling of love in all kinds of environments and situations, we know that love isn’t just coming

*Only those who will risk going  
too far can possibly find out  
how far one can go.*

*T. S. Eliot  
1888-1965*

from outside of us. We feel it when we come to our self and are open to life. Love is our connection with our self, others, life, and God. When we are open and sharing, we will still have healthy boundaries of sharing, but we will

also discover inner boundaries as we discover more of our self.

We need to make “play” part of our life for joy and happiness. Removing 50% of our stress through proper breathing isn’t all we need to bring us to a state of happiness. Now we also begin to play and feel the joy. What keeps us from playing in life are our fears, doubts, insecurities, attachments, prejudices, and grief. It is hard to play when we are fearful or feeling insecure or self-conscious. We need to either end or mend some of our inner issues, but even that can be done in a delightful manner. We just need to spend a little time each day on proper nutrition, meditation, affirmations, and play. Most children laugh 300-400 times a day. The average adult laughs about 12 times a day. We need to regain our ability to laugh, play, and enjoy our life. Even if everyone else has

the philosophy that life gets hard and then you die, you don't have to have this belief. Make a little time for fun and play in your life.

- All humanity is seeking love and freedom.
- By quieting the mind in meditation, we will experience our nature as love.
- Meditation expands our awareness by shining a light on both the negative and positive aspects of our life, our self.
- Self-awareness gives us the freedom to choose love, joy, and beauty.
- Make time for play and laughter.

## **EXERCISES**

1. Make a list of all of our weaknesses, and also...
2. Make a list of all of our strengths.
3. Make a conscious, willful effort to change a weakness into a strength, one at a time.
4. List personal goals or interests you would like to attain. This could include things like a hobby, career, community service, or things just for fun.
5. Make a plan to schedule time for the accomplishment of the above goals.
6. Make time for fun and play in your life. Buy a joke book and make a point to share laughter with another person.

*when you sow  
the seeds of love  
know  
there will be a time  
of the harvest*

## FIVE

When we begin to develop a relationship with our self, we begin to nurture our self as body, mind, and spirit. Physically, we begin to give our self the best possible nutrition. With proper breathing, we give the body oxygen and get rid of the carbon dioxide. We give the body the best possible foods, which are generally located on the perimeters of the grocery store. We take the time to prepare more nutritious vegetable dishes. Modern medicine is saying that we need to cut back on eating red meats. Animal fats and animal proteins are not the healthiest nutrition for the human body. We don't have to be a vegetarian to have good nutrition, but we do need to look for the freshest foods. We can cut back on red meats. We pay attention to which foods our body reacts to the best. We do this by paying attention to which combination of proteins, carbohydrates, and fats makes us feel the best.

Someone can sit down to a highly nutritional meal, but if they are upset, angry, or disturbed, they will begin to feel sick when they eat. When we are calm and relaxed, the body can utilize more of the nutrients of the food. A family argument at the dinner table does not make for a peaceful meal. The goal is to provide the best nutrition to the body, the mind, and the spirit. A good meal should make us feel more peaceful, happier, and more relaxed. The meal should be a part of our overall nutrition. We should enjoy the preparation of the food, and we should enjoy eating the meal.

Although food is necessary for the survival of the body, it should also be something that is enjoyed at the physical, mental, and spiritual levels. Eating can be a time of coming together with other people. It can be a time of delightful interaction. It can be a time of sharing positive ideas and laughter. If we are preparing a meal just for ourselves, eating can still be a time for nurturing the self. There can be joy in preparing the meal. It can be a time of appreciation for the self. It can be a time to play music, control the breath, and enjoy the relationship with the self. The right attitude towards food should be beneficial to all levels of our self.

The human body needs food, water, and oxygen. We have many choices of what we eat and drink. We all know that some things are toxic and poisonous to the body, like alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, and purine (found in red meats), to name a few. To change a poor eating habit, we first start by making different choices and gradually move to a healthier diet. If we're not sure about something we are going to eat or drink, all we have to do is ask ourselves if we would give it to a young child. Would we ask a child to skip meals? Would we feel right about giving a child nothing but junk food? We must give as much concern, respect, and reverence to our own body as we would to a child's body. Developing a relationship with our self requires us to give the same kindness, consideration, time, and nurturing to our self that we would give to others we care about.

Once again, having a healthy diet is all about finding a balance in what and how we eat. We can begin with what the medical community tells us, but we also have to pay attention to what our body, mind, and spirit are telling us about the foods we eat. Most people are attached to their way of eating. Changing our habits gradually brings about a change that will be peaceful. This is why the extra time it may take to prepare a good meal is beneficial to us. We get home from work and head to the kitchen. Here we can

let go of work and the day, and our focus will shift. This quiet or reflective time, or time spent talking with the family is, in a sense, healing time. This in itself is good nutrition.

Food, water, and proper breathing bring proper nutrition to the body. The priorities of this nutrition are based on how long we can live without each individual nutrient. We will die quicker without air, so deep, slow diaphragmatic breathing is the first priority. We can only live a day or two without water, so this is our second priority. Food is our third priority. Many weight loss diets stress the need for adequate intake of plain water throughout the day. Sufficient water consumption will decrease the appetite. When the body is asking for something, we usually just feed it, when in fact it could be calling out for more oxygen or hydration. Ironically, when the body has sufficient oxygen and water, it will automatically begin to desire less foods, but more nutritious foods. Instead of cravings for fats, sweets, and sugar, we will start naturally desiring carbohydrates and proteins.

### **Nurturing the Body**

Physical nutrition involves eating foods that nurture the physical body. It has been proven that fruits, vegetables, nuts, and grains are beneficial to the body. Presently, the medical community is encouraging people to cut down or limit red meat and animal fat. There is currently a lot being said about the need to balance the carbohydrates, good fats, and protein. A diet built around fruits, vegetables, nuts, and grains is a diet that will be fairly well balanced in carbohydrates, good fats, and protein. The protein comes from certain vegetables, nuts, and combining foods such as milk and cereal. The final chapter on how much carbohydrates, fats, and protein we need, has not yet been written by the medical and scientific communities.

When it comes to food, everyone has likes and dislikes. However, we need to become more aware of how much nutritional value is in the foods we choose to eat. Are we healthy or tired? Once we become aware of how the food we put into the body affects the body, changes can be made. Everyone is different, so this will take personal discovery and awareness that will be unique to each individual. There are plenty of nutritional foods to choose from. It will take a little time to do some basic research on nutrition, but it will be well worth the time over the course of a lifetime. It may take time

to become aware of how the body reacts to various foods, but it is important to do so. Our body gives us clues if we just pay attention. It is just as important to be aware of how your body feels after you eat, as it is to read the research that someone else has written on what is good to eat. This is taking control of our own physical nutrition.

The body is 70% water. It needs water to survive. Soft drinks, coffee, tea, and wine are all liquids, but they are water mixed with other ingredients, some of which may have a toxic affect on the body. It is fine to drink these things, but they shouldn't be used as substitutes for the water that the body needs for survival. We should be drinking 6–8 glasses of water a day.

Proper breathing doesn't seem important until it is viewed from a nutritional standpoint. It is important to view proper breathing as part of our physical nutrition for the body. Then we need to reassign priority to the physical nutrients. Oxygen is the first priority, because we can only live minutes without it. Water is the second priority, because we can only live a day or two without it. Food is the third priority, because we can live a number of days or weeks without it.

There's a common saying that to eat healthier, shop the perimeters of the store. Generally, all the fresh foods, the fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy products, are around the perimeters of the stores. The inner aisles tend to have the processed foods, most of which have been enhanced and preserved with things we can't even pronounce. Those foods may help us survive, but the chemicals, preservatives, and dyes are not beneficial to the body. The produce department at a store is like nature's pharmacy. There are foods that will help lower blood pressure and cholesterol, that will ease indigestion, that will burn calories, reduce allergy symptoms and on and on. Bookstores and health food stores have many books which explain the healing properties of foods. A proper diet promotes a healthier body. It is difficult to be happy and cheerful when the body is ill or in discomfort. When we are healthy and energized, there is more happiness and enthusiasm for life.

Preparing fresh food doesn't take that much longer than preparing processed foods. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "There is more to life than increasing its speed." Not only is fresh food healthier for us, but it also tastes better. The extra time it takes to prepare fresh food can be used in beneficial ways. We can use that quiet time to sort



through what we want or need to give our attention to. It is a perfect time to nurture our mind and emotions. “What would I like to do to be happy? How can I feel better about myself? How do I use this power within me to live the life I want?” We can put on music while we cook, allowing us the opportunity to appreciate the beauty of music. Music has the ability to calm the mind and open the heart. This time can be used to non-attach from the daily demands and also to nourish the body, mind, and spirit. Life should be a celebration, and it gives us plenty of opportunities if we just recognize and take advantage of them.

*Life is a festival only to  
the wise.*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*  
1803-1882

We may not be able to heal all the stress around the world, but we can do something about making our individual life more peaceful, calm, and joy-filled. We can start right where we are by accepting responsibility for *our* life. We also need to understand how to nurture the mind and the spirit. This will bring more love, freedom, friendship, health, and knowledge into our lives. We are a whole being of body, mind, and spirit, and we need to nurture the whole. With the inclusion of a more “wholistic” view, feelings of sadness, pain, and incompleteness will diminish until they fade away. The relationship we develop with our self is the beginning of our relationship with the whole of life. Our little reality will begin to grow larger and we will begin to connect with the rest of life and truly enjoy living.

### **Nutrition for Our Whole Self**

Providing better nutrition to our whole self takes a willingness to do so and the discipline to begin making changes in our life. If we are not enthused about living our present life, then we are not enjoying our life and it is time to make some changes. The easiest changes we can make are with our breathing, water, and food choices. These changes are not self-centered or selfish because they are beneficial to us. If they are beneficial to us, they are beneficial to those around us.

The first thing we have to do to nurture the mind is to accept our self as legitimate. We do this by not judging our self to be good or bad. Our true nature is happiness. We are here to experience life. We get to determine what we experience in life. We can fill our mind with negative thoughts or activities, in which case we will feel unhappy and agitated. We can nurture our mind with positive thoughts and activities, in which case we will feel happy and see beauty all around us. The thoughts we entertain will influence our state of mind, and our state of mind will influence how we perceive life around us. We will see what we expect to see. As we become less judgmental and more open to life, life will become more enjoyable and open to us. Life hasn't really changed, only our perception of it has changed. If something limited has happened, we need to understand that it is our perception that makes it negative. If we make the effort to see a positive side to the situation, it will be there. We need to understand that if we look for ugliness, we will see it. If we look for beauty, we will see it. We get to choose what we look for. Looking for joy, beauty, and happiness is always good nutrition for the mind.

Positive affirmations are beneficial in changing our perception of what we experience. Remember, emotions will follow the mind and thoughts. If we are using negative affirmations all day long, like "I am unworthy. I'm bad and

*We are shaped and fashioned  
by what we love.*

*Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe  
1749-1832*

sinful. I'm sad and unhappy," then that is how we are going to feel. If we think, "I'm happy. I'm looking for laughter. I can see beauty," then that is how we are going to feel. In nurturing the mind, we need to understand what is proper and healthy nutrition. As one poet said, "What we dream, we become." What we think, we will feel. It isn't difficult to get the proper nutrition. There are many good inspirational books that we can read. We can use positive affirmations. We can look for beauty, joy, and laughter in life.

When bad things happen in the world around us like war, famine, storms, etc., we need to view it with a compassionate mind. We evaluate what happened and ask ourselves if there is anything we can do to help bring a solution to the situation. What can we do to bring about a more reverent and peaceful society? Is there anything we can do to be more supportive of people who are working to bring about a healthier society?

Proper nutrition for the mind will lead to proper nutrition for the spirit. We are all on the planet together. When a ship goes down, everyone goes down with it, regardless of whether they are on the front or back of the ship. We are all on this planet Earth. When we work towards peace and happiness, we will naturally want to try to help others to do the same. There is an interwovenness in life. We are a social species, and our happiness does not arise from isolation. To attain and maintain happiness, we must take others into consideration.

*Happiness is a by-product of an effort to make someone else happy.*

*Grett Brooker Palmer*

What you see is what you get in thought, word, and deed. We tend to judge others by how we judge ourselves. We are skeptical of the experiences of others unless we have also had the experience. We want to see the signs and wonders for ourselves before we will believe something is possible. This is a statement of our view of reality and of our vision of life around us. It is a statement of our separate reality and how we judge ourselves and others. Once we recognize this, we can see how we are judging

*People seem not to see that their opinion of the world is also a confession of character.*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*  
*1803-1882*

others. Are we seeing more people that are happy, cheerful, growing, and learning, or do we see more people struggling and suffering? Do we respect and trust most people, or only a few people? When we see how we feel about others, we will know

how we judge and feel about ourselves.

As soon as we change our view of ourselves, our view of others will change. A lonely person will see loneliness wherever they look. Someone in love will see love wherever they look. A happy person will see happiness wherever they look. A sad person will see sadness. An animal lover will see animals everywhere, and a person who doesn't care about animals will rarely see any. When the mind is nurtured with positive thoughts and ideas, it will begin to see more of the beauty, love, and kindness wherever it turns.

## Raising the Bar for Our Self

We need to raise the level of our aspirations. When we get up in the morning, we must simply say we want to see beauty, we want more laughter, we want to feel a little more joy. Then we make the effort to look for it. We look for a smile and then pass it on. We look for something beautiful that will inspire us to express that beauty. The things we aspire to at the beginning of the day will set the tone of our day. Many people have the misconception that they don't have to do anything but wait for life to bring them what they want during the day. This is a carry over from childhood where we expected our parents, friends, and teachers to give us what we wanted. We need to mature beyond this thinking. Everything is present in life, and we just need to make the effort to look for it. Comedians earn their living by taking common things in life and giving a different perspective to them. Seeing things from a different perspective can make us laugh.

One comedian was talking about the differences between men and women. He said that separately, they were just fine, but mix them together and trouble starts. For instance, at an all male party, if the chip bowl was empty, the guys would start negotiating. They would establish who purchased the chips, who brought the bowl, who filled the bowl, and who brought the bowl into the room. Anyone who hadn't contributed so far was chosen to go to the kitchen to fill the bowl. This is perfectly normal in a male social setting. At a female party, someone would notice the empty chip bowl and announce it. The women would get together, agree they needed more chips, and they would all go to the kitchen to fill the bowl and bring it back. In both cases things worked out just fine. But, if you mix the groups and run out of chips things can get tense. The men will start their negotiations. The women will wonder what in the world these lazy guys are doing and in disgust, they will pick up the bowl and all head for the kitchen. Now the guys are wondering what in the world is wrong with the women and why it took all of them to go to the kitchen to fill one little bowl with chips.

*Most folks are about as happy  
as they make up their mind to  
be.*

*Abraham Lincoln*  
1809-1965

This perspective of the male/female approach to life could make us laugh about a common thing. We can laugh about common things or get disturbed by someone else's

perspective. We choose how we view life and our view will be based on what we are looking for. We will be influenced by our habits and past experiences and actions. However, our view can be changed by wanting to take control of our life and by wanting to develop a relationship with our self.

We must work to develop a healthier, more positive relationship with our self. It does no good to strike out at others, and it does no good to beat ourselves up. We have to make the effort to look for the joy, beauty, and laughter. This is how we will grow as human beings and become part of an uplifted human spirit. We become open minded to the differences and varieties in life. We can appreciate that there are different types of people and interests without judging one kind to be superior to other kinds.

We begin to develop this relationship with our self in a reverent, positive, uplifting manner. We start where we are and begin to look for and affirm the beautiful and positive in our self and in others. We can start our day by doing 10–15 minutes of inspirational reading or meditation. Then we affirm that we will add a little more light and joy. “I’ll smile a little more on my way to work. I will be a nicer person to myself and others today.” We make a willful effort. We will notice in a short time that we seem to have transformed our life. We will see more love, laughter, beauty, sharing, and caring. What we give to life in thought, word, and deed is what we begin to see all around us. It isn’t a different world. We are just seeing it differently. We are seeing a larger picture. It was always there, but our vision had been limited by our thoughts and beliefs.

“Laugh and the world laughs with you; Weep, and you weep alone.”<sup>7</sup> When we are open and see the beauty and laughter in life, we feel connected to the whole world. When we are sad or lonely, we feel separated from everyone. Understanding this, we can choose how to view things. Choosing is a matter of making a decision and using willpower to follow through. Anyone can do that if they want to. Being positive and uplifted is a choice. Being negative is a choice. One helps us to have a better day in body, mind, and spirit. The other makes the day harder. Every better day we have gives us a better life.

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<sup>7</sup> Ella Wheeler Wilcox 1850-1919

Most people believe that they are infinite and eternal. Everyone wants to live an infinite and eternal life of happiness. No one wants to live an infinite and eternal life of misery. That's called hell, and everyone thinks hell is for the really bad people. However, if our days are filled with sadness and misery, isn't that a self-created hell? It is our negative and limited beliefs and ideas that got us into this self-created prison, and it is our limited thoughts and ideas that keep us there. We alone can free our self from a life of sadness and misery. This is done through conscious control of our mind. We don't blame others, and we don't abuse ourselves. We simply start taking control of what we put into our mind, body, and spirit by choosing the positive healthy nutrition.

It is better to spend time developing a relationship with our self than it is to spend time with wrong company. It is better to spend time and attention on positive affirmations than it is to spend time with abusive people. Everyone has a body, mind, and spirit. We must begin to live as "wholistic" beings. Since everyone is interconnected, we can't just look out for ourselves and not concern ourselves with others. When we are selfish, we assume everyone else is selfish too. A thief will steal for his own comfort and happiness, but he has no peace because he assumes someone else is going to steal from him. He is constantly on guard against theft. Poverty is an idea we have when we think we don't have enough to be happy. There are millionaires living in poverty because they don't think they have enough, and there are people who have very little, but consider themselves wealthy because they are happy with what they have.

*Remember that very little is  
needed to make a happy life.*

*Marcus Aurelius*

*121-180*

Nutrition for the body is air, water, and food. Nutrition for the mind is affirmations, beauty, laughter, and delight in life around us. Reader's Digest has been around for many years. There is a part in it called "*Laughter is the Best Medicine.*" Studies have shown that laughter promotes faster healing and better health. Everyone would choose laughter over anger. Everyone would rather hear a good joke over a frustrated tirade. Yet, what are we looking for? Do we look for the humor in situations or for what is wrong with the situations? It isn't difficult to introduce uplifting and positive nutrition into the mind. It is a choice. We look on the light side or dark side of things by our education and our own efforts.

The body will not nurture itself. Nutrition does not come in by osmosis. We need to take in food, water, and air. It requires effort on our part. The food we eat, the thoughts we think, and the things we do will affect the nutrition we take in. If we watch good comedy, we will laugh. If we watch an action show, we will feel energized. A horror show will affect us differently. These are just a few examples of how what we put into our mind affects us. We also need to be aware of what brings us joy and laughter. That may differ from person to person, so we have to pay attention to what will nurture us. When we find what brings us joy, love, and laughter, we need to add more of it.

Positive affirmations will benefit us, but we need to pay special attention to the ones that really inspire and uplift us. Positive affirmations start with simple repetitions in our mind until we begin to feel them, then become them, and finally to live them. Most of the things we learn in life are based on repetition, because we learn through repeating a thought or activity.

- We need to take responsibility for the nutrition we give our body, mind, and spirit.
- Our first priority is proper oxygenation, as we can live only minutes without air.
- Our second priority is plain water, as we can only live a day or two without it.
- Our third priority is food, as we can only live so many days without it.
- The most nutritional foods will have the least additives, chemicals, and dyes.
- Shopping the perimeter of most stores will give us the healthier produce, dairy, grains, and proteins.
- Looking for the beauty, laughter, and love in life will nurture the mind and spirit.
- Using positive affirmations will help us to learn to view life in a new way
- We need to raise the level of our aspirations.

## **EXERCISES**

1. Buy a book on nutrition and a vegetarian cookbook that looks appealing.
2. Prepare fish and poultry as side dishes to supplement our meal; reduce portions of meat, especially red meat.
3. Drink 6–8 glasses of water a day.
4. Continue to do breathing exercises daily.
5. Buy a book of positive quotations or spiritual affirmations, and begin to affirm something positive each day.
6. Look at an embarrassing situation in our life and see the humor in it.



*it is the love  
within life  
that makes the heart  
sing  
and it is the  
beauty of life  
that allows  
the soul to dance*

## SIX

*If* the goal is worth attaining, the journey is worth making. Don't be discouraged if you haven't attained your goal in a week. What you attain as you are working towards your goal is often greater than the goal itself. This is according to Hazrat Inayat Khan in his book *MASTERY*. To continue to strive towards that which is worth having may mean saying goodbye to old habits. You may also have to say goodbye to old ways and opinions as you used to understand them to be. Maybe we have accepted that suffering is part of life. But, if we begin to nurture this relationship with our self, we will begin to live a happy, enjoyable, peaceful, and love-filled life with our self and others around us. We have heard that the cup is either half full or half empty. When we fall in love, we overlook certain aspects of our beloved that may appear as "issues" to others. We need to begin to look at life with the eyes we have when we are falling in love. We need to begin looking for the beautiful and uplifting. The rest isn't denied or repressed; we just

don't let it affect our happiness. We accept that it is there, but we continue striving for a new wholistic view of life that includes body, mind, spirit, and the human community.

The lotus flower has its roots in mud while the stem rises up through the water. The lotus blossom unfolds in the sunshine above the water. Some things in life will have their roots in the mud and we accept that, but we can rise above our own self-interests, conflict, and confusion (mud). When we look for the positive things in life, we can rise above the limitations of humanity. Often, the limitations of humanity have more to do with our own expectations than actual reality. Our expectations of life, our wants and desires, our idea of how life or others *should be*, are the things (the mud) that we need to rise above. We rise above them by looking for the positive, for the beauty, joy, love, and laughter in life (the stem rising through the water). When we do this, not only do we feel uplifted in our own life, but the lives of those around us are uplifted also (blossoming of the flower). Rising above the mud is beneficial to our self, and the international community.

*We are here to add what we can to life, not to get what we can from it.*

*Sir William Osler*  
1849-1919

There is a story about some children who had heard that there was a wonderful fruit tree in a garden. The wealthy landlord who owned the garden had put a high wall around it, and no one was sure if the tree was still there. When famine hit the village, some of the children decided to see if there really was a bountiful tree in the garden. One child made the difficult climb up the wall and saw the fruit tree. He jumped over the top of the wall and began eating the fruit. He called to his friends that there was a tree full of fruit. One by one they climbed the wall and jumped down so they could eat the fruit. The last child to climb the wall decided not to go into the garden, but rather ran to tell other people about the bountiful tree so that they could all come and eat. When we make the decision to share the beauty and bounty of life with others, then life begins to share its beauty and bounty with us.

No one appreciates you when you are in a hurry and cut into the front of a line. If you slow down and let someone in front of you, they will usually smile and say thank you. When we are courteous, generous, and virtuous, we feel good about ourselves. Life giving unto life is part of our nature. This is obvious in regards to our spirit nature, but it

is also part of the nature of the mind. The mind wants to know about others and this is a clue that there is an interwovenness and interconnectedness. This is why the Golden Rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” is expressed in one way or another in every major religion around the world. Nurturing the body, mind, and spirit will lead to more peace and joy.

Nurturing the whole self isn’t just about the food, the breath, and the pure plain water we give the body. When the body feels well, the mind is able to be more positive.

*To wish to progress is the  
largest part of progress.*

*Lucius Annaeus Seneca*  
*c. 4 BC – 65 AD*

As we begin to gather all these little things that improve our way of life, our view of life begins to change. Remember that one part of our mind is the storehouse of all our experiences. When we go to bed thinking about the smile and wave of

thanks we got during the day, or something from the inspirational book we just read, we will have good dreams and a good rest that night. We don’t need to reprogram our entire daily routine, we simply start making minor changes in our views of life around us.

We don’t need to be a saint to be happy. We only need to do something positive, courteous, generous, or uplifting to nurture the spirit. The poets express this in terms of “love makes the world go ‘round.” Love is what we feel. Reverence is our expression to others of the love we feel. Positive nutrition is our responsibility and requires our effort.

*Only a life in the service of  
others is worth living.*

*Albert Einstein*  
*1879-1955*

The world will provide us with every possible situation to draw either good or poor nutrition from it. What we select to take from life is our own personal choice. We can look at the people in third world nations and see the struggles they have been under. This can make us sad, or it can make us want to help them. We can look at the people trying to raise their family and help out their neighbors and friends in any way they can. We can look at the beauty of people who are longing and striving for freedom of the human spirit. People all around the world are sending food, water, medicine, and equipment to help rebuild these suffering third world countries. Seeing the outpouring of human relief measures that are flowing into a devastated country can make us feel uplifted. Contributing to the relief measures in some way will make us feel even more uplifted.

Edmond Burke<sup>8</sup> said the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing. For darkness to prevail in the world, all you need is good men and women who accept that “this is just the way life is” and do nothing. We can begin to bring lightness to dispel the darkness by beginning to nurture our self in body, mind, and spirit. That alone will affect others around us. When we hear a good joke, we smile and laugh. We feel an uplifting of our heart. We share the joke with someone else and they laugh and feel uplifted. When we begin to nurture our self, those around us will benefit.

### **The Rhythm of Butterfly Wings Shakes the Mountains**

We must make a conscious, willful effort to add good nutrition to our life. We change the way we view air, water, and food consumption. We change how we view other people. We change how we view ourselves. Modern psychology talks about the “inner child.” If we would treat ourselves like we were a child, we would be more gentle and take better care of ourselves. What the psychologists are basically saying is that if you had a difficult childhood, reconnect with your inner child and re-educate, re-nurture and develop a healthy relationship with this inner child of light and happiness. Don’t beat yourself up. Find where things can be changed and make an effort to gently and fairly make the changes. Be honorable and honest in making the effort to nurture body, mind, and spirit.

Proper breathing will remove 50% of our conflict and stress. It may take a while to change the rest of the mindsets and habits, but if the goal is worth attaining, the

*Have patience with all things, but first of all with yourself.*

*St. Francis of Sales  
ca: 1600 AD*

journey is worth making. A habit or mindset that is bringing us a lot of pain may take a while to change. It may even require help in the form of therapy or meditation. But, if letting go of the pain is worth it, we must make the effort. We will need patience because we won’t be able to instantly end or mend some things. What is important is that we be gentle with our self and continue to make the beneficial choices of the positive and healthy nutrition we take in.

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<sup>8</sup> 1729-1797

To take a bath, you turn on the water and have to wait for the tub to fill up. That is what it is like when you begin to develop a relationship with your self. You start adding the positive nutrition. We do a little bit each day. We look for humor, kindness, and beauty each day. If someone smiles, we smile back. We don't get into wondering what their motive may have been. We continue on our way in a joyful and happy manner and hope they are doing the same. To truly enjoy life, we don't have to be saints. The more we do these little things, the more we will delight in everyday life, and our joy and compassion will naturally grow.

*Resolve to be thyself;  
and know that he who  
finds himself, loses his  
misery.*

*Mathew Arnold  
1822-1888*

We add reading from positive and inspirational literature. There are a lot of books with inspirational quotes on all kinds of topics if we don't want to read entire books. We can read several quotes a day to uplift us. If we want to laugh, we can buy a joke book or get a desk calendar that has jokes or cartoons. These little things will help to uplift us. When life becomes more beautiful and enjoyable, a nice thing begins to happen...other people want to share the bounty and joy. They too want to laugh and feel good about themselves and life.

Really, the process for enjoying life is quite simple. What you are looking for is what you will see; what you give to life, life will give back to you. If we look for more of the positive, we will see more of it. If we prepare a tasty and nutritional meal, it will satisfy us for hours. If we grab fast food on the run, we will be hungry again soon because the body didn't get all the nutrients it needed. Poor nutrition is incomplete or unbalanced nutrition. When there is incomplete nutrition, whether of the body, mind, or spirit, there will be a craving of some kind because the body, mind, or spirit is not getting what it needs. With proper nutrition, there will be more joy, love, laughter, and peace in our life.

*Great is the human who has  
not lost his childlike heart.*

*Mencius (Meng-Tse)  
4<sup>th</sup> Century BC*

Children naturally want to play, laugh, and look for the beauty in life. They try to avoid the negative. Adults lose this. They believe the negative (limited) is part of being

“mature.” Yes, adults have responsibilities that require dealing with difficult situations,

but it doesn't mean we have to lose our joy and happiness. We can accept those responsibilities as being a part of life. They are like the roots of the lotus, which are in the mud. We need dirt. We plant our seeds in dirt. We need it for our lawn and garden. Food grows out of dirt. Outside, dirt is great, but we don't want it in our bed or food or house. We spend a lot of time moving the dirt that gets in our house back out of our house. Like everything in life, our responsibilities have a time and a place. We need to keep things in proper perspective.

Remembering that we are a body, mind, and spirit, we will take a wholistic approach to nurturing our self. Body, mind, and spirit always work together. Proper nutrition takes our willful effort and will make us happier and healthier.

- If the goal is worth attaining, the journey is worth making.
- Looking for the positive in life will raise us above our
- Limitations.
- Love is what we feel; reverence is our expression of that love to others.
- We can remove 50% of our stress by adding good nutrition (air, water, food) to our life.
- To increase our joy and happiness, we make the willful effort to see the positive in life, to see the beauty around us, to smile and laugh more.
- Body, mind, and spirit always work together.

## **EXERCISES**

1. Make a willful effort each day to do a virtuous act in thought, word, or deed.
2. Make a willful effort to be gentle and patient with our self and others, but especially with our self.
3. Read 10–15 minutes of inspirational and uplifting material each day.
4. Be committed to developing a healthy and happy relationship with our self through practicing the exercises and affirmations each day.

*to the  
flower  
and the  
butterfly  
are given  
the love  
of  
fragrance  
and flight  
to you  
is given  
the beauty  
of  
their presence*

## SEVEN

*F*inding balance in our life helps us attain the enjoyment of everyday living. We need to balance the right and left hemispheres of the brain, to balance the male and female qualities. We need to balance the inner and outer life.

Most people in this country have graduated from high school, yet did not take three essential classes: How to do self analysis so we could develop a relationship with our self; how to handle our finances, or how to budget and spend less than we make; how to have successful male/female relationships, and healthy parenting skills. If we are going to lead a balanced life, we must accept responsibility for learning these skills.

*The good befriends  
themselves.*

*Sophocles  
495–406 BC*

The loss of happiness usually goes along with the loss of relationship with our self. When we lose our self in our family, career, or other people's lives and beliefs, this is when we no longer look

forward to living, and lose our enthusiasm to get up in the morning. We need to regain the balance in our life in order to develop a relationship with our self.

Just as we must nurture our whole self, we must find balance for our “wholistic” self. Our physical body is created in a manner that drives it towards activity. The body wants to be active. To find balance in the body, we must find physical activity that is helpful, beneficial, and consistent. We develop a 30–60 minute exercise plan that is healthy for us and also enjoyable so we will be willing to do it 3–5 times a week. Walking is the best form of gentle and easy exercise. A vigorous walk (3–4 mph) will properly exercise every muscle in the body. Swimming is another excellent form of exercise that combines calorie burning, cardiovascular workout, and weight loss activity. Swimming is also a form of resistance training that uses all the muscles in the body. What we think about while we are exercising will let us know if we are stressing about something or if we are enjoying and developing a relationship with our self.

Exercise can promote good long-term health regardless of how much one weighs. A brisk half-hour walk a day is enough to achieve the benefits. Combined with a healthy diet, it will also help to reduce obesity, heart disease, and other medical conditions. Here are a few examples of how our hobbies and interests can work for us:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Calories Burned</b>
Sitting	80 calories/ hour
Weight lifting-non-vigorous	215 calories/ hour
Volleyball-recreational	215 calories/hour
Golf-played with cart	250 calories/hour
Lawn mowing	325 calories/hour
Walking-at 4 mph	325 calories /hour
Kayaking	360 calories/hour
Dancing-nightclub	395 calories/hour
Water Skiing	430 calories/hour
Hiking	430 calories/hour
Aerobics-high impact	505 calories/hour
Racquetball-recreational	505 calories/hour
Tennis	505 calories/hour
In-line skating	505 calories/hour
Skiing-cross country	575 calories/hour
Hockey-ice or field	575 calories/hour
Martial arts	720 calories/hour
Bicycling-15 mph	720 calories/hour
Running-10 minutes per mile	720 calories/hour
Swimming-crawl stroke	790 calories/hour



We need to add exercise. It doesn't have to be 3–4 hours of fitness training. We just need 30–60 minutes of exercise that will work the whole body. Some form of resistance training or weight training is important and we need to add that 2–3 times a week. Weight training rebuilds bone, builds strength, and improves agility. People who work out regularly regain mobility and an enthusiasm for life. It is beneficial to add some kind of resistance training 2–3 times a week. We don't need to join a gym or buy expensive weight sets, but we will need some equipment and maybe a book showing us some of the basic weight training exercises.

Most people think that when we get old there will be aches, pains, and deterioration of the body. This is an idea. Fortunately, this idea is being redefined. Professional athletes are continuing their sports longer than before. Carl Lewis broke a world sprinting record when he was 33 years old. Before that it was believed that sprinters peaked at about 25 years old. Today, there are some football and basketball players in their late 30's still playing at a professional level. Instead of thinking in terms of "age," we need to start thinking in terms of "condition." Most aches and pains of middle age are aches and pains of an unconditioned body. We need to maintain our physical conditioning without getting lost in an exercise program.

We seek balance in our life and as we develop this relationship, we must remember to allow time for our physical fitness. Ideally, if we are married with children, we can make it a family affair. If we can't, we still need to make time for our self. During a walk, we can talk and interact and make it a social event, or we can go for a walk alone.

There are some activities that allow us to work on several levels. For example, the Sun Salutation (a Hatha Yoga movement), is not only stretching the muscles, but is also stretching the body to help open the energy channels that run through the body.<sup>9</sup> We are doing the things that will help us to feel healthy, happy, and allow us to enjoy the day.

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<sup>9</sup> There are three main energy channels in the subtle body: the ida (cooling channel ending at the left nostril), the pingala (heating channel ending at the right nostril) and the sushumna, the middle and largest of the channels, that rises from the base of the spine to the crown of the head. The life force energy moves through these channels and also through many minor channels throughout the body.

We need to participate in maintaining this body. We find time for activity and time for rest, time for meditation and reflection, quiet time and active time.

Mentally and emotionally, we also look to find a balance. In developing a relationship with our self, we will notice that life is not a solo journey. Human beings are social beings. We love people. We love *love*. We love to interact. Communion with life is a social activity. This doesn't mean we spend every moment interacting with others. The balance and enjoyment of life is in finding time for our self and the things we enjoy doing, and finding time to do these things with people we enjoy doing them with. We need to spend time with people who have similar interests, goals, and ideas. This is what brings about a peer group or a family.

When many adults think about a relationship, they first think about the male/female sexual relationship. First, they fall in love and then they work towards being friends. This is reflected in the joke that says marriage is a perfect male/female institution because it keeps us from having to fight with perfect strangers. In our attraction to each other, we first think of sexual attraction, and later work towards being friends. We should first work towards compatibility and friendship and then decide whether we want to be romantically or sexually involved.

We strive to find a balance in our life in regards to our relationship with other people who have similar interests and goals. When we develop a relationship with our self, we are developing both individually and socially. Some will want to be more social, while others will want to do more things individually. It is about finding our own balance and balancing what works for us.

Right company is "right" if what the people are doing or talking about is uplifting, enjoyable, and happy. This will bring an upliftment or benefit to the individual and the international community.

*Life is either a daring  
adventure or nothing at  
all.*

*Helen Keller*  
1880-1968

In finding the balance, we first have to come to our self and know who we are and what we like. What is beneficial to someone else may not be beneficial to us. For example, when we graduate from high school, if we want more education, we move on to college. We don't go take a GED class at the local community college. We have been there and

done that. That class is no longer beneficial for us. We want higher education. We want to learn and grow.

We must get to know our self and learn what we are interested in and where we want to go. This is incorporated into balancing our peer group. Our peer group may change over the course of our life.

### **Balancing Our Inner Development and Our Outer Development**

If we are constantly learning and growing and doing what is beneficial for our self and the international community, we will be open to life and the relationship with our self. We will be constantly finding a balance between the inner life or getting to know our self, and the outer life of learning what we enjoy doing during our active time. What is beneficial for the individual is the inner life. What is beneficial for the international community is the outer life. This is an important balance that very few ever attain. The saints, sages, and prophets of all traditions have said that we are created in the image of God. They talk about finding the balance between the inner life and the outer life, to do what is beneficial for the individual and the international community. This has been their message throughout the ages.

The inhalation and exhalation is about finding the balance. It is done physically in maintaining our health. Our body is the vehicle we use while on earth. A healthy vehicle brings more joy than an unhealthy vehicle. We maintain the physical body with proper nutrition, hygiene, breathing, and exercise. This gives us a healthier vehicle to use in fulfilling our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual goals in our life. We seek to

*Celebrate life while you have  
it Kabir; use wisely the time  
you are here.*

*Kabir (poet)  
Ca 1440 AD*

find the balance between the inhalation (the inner journey), and the exhalation (the outer journey). We find what interests us and what brings us joy and either start or continue doing it.

We will recognize that who we are and what we enjoy is legitimate. We will be able to share with some people and maybe not with others. We won't be able to share everything with any one person. Many have the idea that the person they fall in love with should be everything to us. They should be a counselor, therapist, friend, and lover. We

want them to be every relationship we could possibly desire or need. What we have done is created an image of what this other person *should* be to us. It is impossible for anyone to fulfill our every desire, so we have created for ourselves probable disappointment with the other person. We are social beings and we should have people in our lives to fulfill our various needs. We need our teachers, healers, friends, spouses, and co-workers. They may all be different people who help us to fulfill different aspects of our self.

We can have friends that enjoy athletics with us. They may not be the same people we discuss psychology with. There may be people that we enjoy playing music with. We fill our life with people that have similar interests to ours. We don't demand that any one person share all of our interests. In this way, we develop healthy human relationships. We do not demand that one person fulfill all our interests, nor do we demand that our spouse or best friend have only us in their life. We need to be careful that we don't begin to sell out our sense of self when we do things out of friendship or love that we don't want to do. We can begin to lose our self when out of love for another, we do things they want us to do, but we don't want to do it or do it out of fear that they will find someone else.

We allow our self to truly develop as a human being by developing relationships and friendships. If we want to do athletics, we find someone who wants to do athletics. If we want to play music, we find someone who enjoys that kind of music. If we want to go see a comedy act, we find someone to do that with. We can share different interests with different friends. This is the way the human being is meant to live with a peer group. This may seem like a radical idea. It may even threaten the basis of friendships and marriage in America today because so many relationships are based on love, fear,

insecurity, and mutual exclusiveness.

*We can easily forgive a child  
who is afraid of the dark; the  
real tragedy of life is when  
adults are afraid of the light.*

*Plato*  
*c. 428-348 BC*

In order to develop as a human being, we must develop this relationship with our whole self. We must find the security and joy within our self that allows our spouses and children to do things we can't relate to or enjoy.

We realize that by developing this relationship with our self, we can have this freedom. I'm not talking about the freedom to do whatever we want without consequences, but

rather the freedom and security to grow in a relationship. We will still have boundaries that define our relationships.

It is only when we begin to lose our self in our relationships and the relationships become an entrapment that we begin to seek some happiness in other things. We can develop healthy relationships with each other and our society and our peer group that are non-threatening. If we feel free, happy, and compatible, we will not go looking for freedom and happiness outside our self or our close relationships. If this sounds radical, it may be that there is an element of fear in viewing our relationships in a new way. It is only when we begin to entrap ourselves, when the relationship begins to become exclusive, that we demand the other quit doing things because it is a threat.

The majority of stress, pain, and suffering are caused by not maintaining a healthy relationship with our self. It is reflected in the male/female relationships. There is fear, anger, jealousy, possessiveness, and insecurity. When we don't have a healthy relationship with our self, we seek our security in an exclusive relationship with another person. We begin to exclude more and more of our self. We may begin to give up our dreams, hopes, interests, activities, and friends. At first we think this is no big deal because we would rather have this relationship, but it doesn't take long for us to begin to feel we have willingly given up too much. Then we may begin to feel threatened at the possible loss of that other person. We need to regain this relationship with our self and re-establish or re-define our relationship with other people. We are social creatures, which means that we should not exclude other people or peer groups from our life. We need to continue having healthy relationships that are beneficial for us, and the international community.

There are many aspects to our personality. Once we begin to develop a relationship with our self, we may find things we will want to do by ourselves. Writing a poem or reading a book is something we do alone. Going to the movies is something we can do alone or do as a social event that includes other people. This is finding the balance between the inhalation and exhalation, between the inner and outer life. Each of us must find what is beneficial to us, and then we need

*Not knowing when the dawn  
will come, I open every door.*

*Emily Dickinson  
1830-1886*

to develop it and grow as a human being. If we do it in a healthy manner, it will be beneficial for all of society.

- Balance in our life helps us attain the enjoyment of everyday living.
- This balance includes:
  - Our right and left sides of the brain
  - Our male/female qualities
  - Our inner and outer life
  - The inhalation and exhalation
  - Physical, social, and individual activities
  - Relationships and personal interests
  - What is beneficial to the individual and the international community
  - Developing an exercise program
  - Developing new interests, which may include peer group activities

## **EXERCISES**

1. Start a simple exercise plan; choose a plan and schedule the time; be committed to 30 minutes 3–5 times a week.
2. Consult a physician before beginning a vigorous or athletic program.
3. Purchase a beginning Hatha Yoga book, VHS tape, or DVD and begin doing the techniques a few times a week.
4. Make a courageous effort to do something you have always wanted to do, but keep in mind consequences.
5. Begin to explore your individual and social interests by doing new activities. Read new and different books. This is a perfect opportunity to try something new that your spouse has been interested in.

## **CUT AND BURN WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAM**

It takes the burning of 3500 calories to lose one pound of fat.

Through a combination of reducing our caloric intake and increasing our daily activity, we can “cut and burn” 500 calories a day. By doing this, we will be able to lose one pound a week with just minor adjustments to our life.

This weight loss program helps us develop discipline and better health by simply cutting our portions a little and burning more calories with 20–60 minutes of exercise each day. Example: by eating  $\frac{1}{2}$  portion of dessert and swimming for 20 minutes, we can reduce the dessert calories by approximately 200 calories, and burn approximately 300 calories by swimming. This would give us a total (reduction + burning) of 500 calories for the daily goal. In seven days we could cut and burn 3500 calories for a one pound weight loss.

*we stand beside the water  
with the tides  
moving between us  
yet the sea  
is more than the distance  
between two shores  
it is what bonds  
you to me*

## EIGHT

The most powerful instinct we have is the survival of the species, or procreation. This is seen in the warrior class who fight to protect the human family. It is seen in mothers, fathers, and friends who will sacrifice their life for a child or loved one. The most powerful instinct we have is preservation of the species. This shows that even at an instinctual level we are social creatures. We want to interact. Now, we just have to learn how to interact in an enjoyable and harmonious manner. The way we do it is not by demanding that the world be created in our image, and not demanding that our spouse, children, or friends be everything we want them to be. The way we do it is to develop a relationship with our self and a peer group so we can live a fulfilled life.

We need to begin to balance the inner life and the outer life. If we develop the relationship with our self, we will have a healthier marriage and friendships. We will have a healthy, happy, and balanced life because we are nurturing our self physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.



When it comes to body, mind, and spirit, how do we nurture the spirit? The spirit is nurtured by our being happy and healthy. When we are happy and healthy, we share it. We share all of life because we are communing with life. Our laughter affects those around us. People listening to laughter will start smiling and laughing. Our vibration of happiness and cheerfulness will affect others. This sharing is life giving unto life. If we are at peace with our self, we are sharing peaceful vibrations. If we pay attention, we will notice that when we are peaceful and walking in the forest, we will see animals. When we are not peaceful and are walking in the forest, we will rarely see animals. They sense our vibration of peace. They may not walk up to us, but they won't be hiding from us.

On a spirit-to-spirit basis, we share on a vibratory level. In thought, word, and deed we share not only on a physical level, but also on a subtle vibratory level. We've all had the experience of standing in someone's space and have felt it was too close, so we have moved away. To say we don't feel vibrations is not accurate. We do feel them to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the subject or person. The most beneficial things to share are love, joy, freedom, happiness, and compassion, and if this is what we are sharing with the rest of life, that is what life will give back to us. We look for what we are feeling or experiencing. For example, when we are happy, it is difficult to relate to those times we felt sad and depressed. When we are sad and depressed, it is difficult to feel happy and cheerful. Our memory tells us we have experienced both of these states, but the memory doesn't always help us get to those states.

*As is a tale, so is life; what matters is not how long it is, but how good it is.*

*Lucius Annaeus Seneca*  
*c. 4 BC – 65 AD*

The revolutionary part of this whole concept is that we can take control of our destiny. We can take control of our happiness, our joy, and our life by recognizing that our happiness is as simple as what choices we make. We make the right choices and use willpower to follow through and act upon those choices that are positive and uplifting

We must recognize age appropriateness. Sexual humor can be appropriate if it is age appropriate. We don't allow children to drink alcohol. Drinking alcohol or driving a car is not evil, but they are not appropriate until children have reached a certain maturity. We need to recognize that what is beneficial for the international community needs to

consider age/maturity appropriateness. Not everything is beneficial for all ages. Sex is not appropriate for children. Bungee jumping may not be beneficial for people in a retirement home. By getting to know our self and a little bit about humanity, we will be able to recognize age/maturity appropriateness. Then we will begin to balance the smaller self (the individual human being) and the larger self (the human being that is part of a collective humanity or life itself).

### **Interwovenness of Life**

All humanitarian and religious traditions talk about doing unto others as we would have them do unto us, about selflessness, about giving to humanity. It is difficult to be happy when those around you are suffering. Sometimes there is nothing you can do about the suffering and sometimes you can help relieve the suffering.

We are all connected. What is happening in Africa, China, and the Middle East is affecting us to a greater or lesser degree. If we understand this, then we will be willing to give, even if only a little each day. We can give with positive affirmations, money, time, energy, or whatever we have to offer. This contributes to the uplifting of humanity. The ways we can give are almost endless. We can join an organization that helps others, give money to a homeless person or a charity, give a kind thought, word, or deed, or give a little bit of our time. However, it does take more than, “Well, if I’m happy, they will benefit.” Just as we give to our loved ones, we have to give a little bit to the whole of humanity. This is how we find balance in the spirit part of our life. We don’t have to be a Mother Teresa or a saint. We just have to find a balance so that each night when we go to bed we can see that we did something beneficial that day.

*It does not matter how small  
the thing we do, it is how  
great the love we put in it.*

*Mother Teresa  
1910-1997*

*When the fight begins within  
himself, a man is worth  
something.*

*Robert Browning  
1812-1889*

In the *Bhagavad Gita*,<sup>10</sup> Krishna asks Arjuna how he fared on the battlefield that day. Who won...the good soldiers or the bad soldiers, our strengths and virtues or our habits

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<sup>10</sup> Bhagavad Gita means “Song of the Spirit.” It is the Hindu Bible or Holy Testament.

and weaknesses? At the end of each day, we should be able to do a quick analysis of our day. “Yes, I had this issue, but I worked on it. I did something beneficial for myself, and I did something beneficial for the international community. I made a contribution today. I feel good.” That is so much better than ending the day by wanting to forget it ever happened. When we just want to escape from the day’s events, we are bound to have a restless night with unpleasant dreams because the mind is not going to let us get away with dismissing something that is on our mind.

We develop a relationship with our self that includes our body, our peer group, our friends, our interests and hobbies, our joys, and the human community or the human spirit. If we do something on each of those levels every day, we will be happier. The happier we are, the less conflict and stress there will be in our life. We are open and growing and sharing our joy. The closer the relationship with our self, the more we will become a social creature that the rest of society will appreciate and enjoy. It is not selfish to work on the relationship with our self. As we do the work, we will become a better human being and a better world citizen.

The people we admire most are those that are the most balanced. We admire the people who take care of themselves, who pursue their interests and goals, who are helping other people. We especially admire the people who are helping others on a large level. We can become one of those people by making the effort to develop a relationship with our whole self. We will be happier and healthier and enjoying life much more.

*He who wishes to secure the good of others has already secured his own.*

*Confucius*  
551-479 BC

We find the balance of the body, mind, and spirit in doing what is good for the individual and the international community. It isn’t about finding a perfect balance, but rather about balancing within ourselves. This balance may change day-to-day, year-to-year, from childhood to our golden years. As long as we are working on living a balanced life, we will find we have enthusiasm for life. If we need help finding the balance, there are therapy or support groups for us to utilize. One person’s way of finding balance may not work for another person. Someone may put up posters or inspirational sayings on their walls or refrigerator to remind them of what their journey is

about, yet another may just see that as clutter. Feng Shui may work for one person, but it may just be impractical to have in a house with children, because children have their own creative ways of decorating a room.

When we come to this relationship with our self, we begin to express it in our interactions with all life. The balancing of our life is an individual thing and we need to work with the reality of where we are. We don't demand that reality fit our view of life. Instead, we adjust our views to fit into reality. A person is happiest when they have a balanced relationship with their self, nature, and others. They will then find that they have many relationships expressing their interests and personality. When we develop healthy relationships with others and maintain a relationship with our self, we can be happy, enjoy life, grow, and become uplifting to the human spirit. All it takes is our effort to live a balanced and happy life.

*Nothing great was ever  
achieved without enthusiasm.*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson  
1803-1882*

### **Non-attachment**

In developing a relationship with our self, we must develop the quality of non-attachment. An example of non-attachment can be seen in driving a car. When we drive, we have a driving consciousness. We are aware, alert, and following the rules of the road. Hopefully, we are driving respectfully and defensively. When we arrive at our destination, we non-attach and let go of the driving consciousness. It has fulfilled its purpose. Once we leave the car, we go on with what we planned on doing at our destination. We don't continue to think about driving the car. Our consciousness has now shifted to work, shopping, or whatever our plans are. Driving consciousness has a time and place in our life, but when we aren't using it, we non-attach from it.

We all know how to non-attach because we do it in so many areas of our life each day without giving it much thought. We have a different consciousness for work, interacting, playing, grooming, eating, and so on. These are situations that have patterns or rules and regulations of some kind. When we leave those activities or events, we leave behind those patterns or rules and move into the next situation. We simply need to understand the naturalness of this process and become aware of how we can willfully use

it. Once we can clearly see how it works, we can expand it into other areas of our life. What we are basically doing is letting go of the past and coming to the present moment.

With deep breathing, we can remove 50% of our stress and conflict. That leaves the other 50% for us to work on. With the remaining 50%, deep breathing allows us the ability to separate the non-essential from the essential. Non-attachment will allow us to let go of the non-essential easily. Now what we have remaining is our history, issues, and conflicts. We continue to use non-attachment to let go of these things where and when we can.

### **Separate Realities**

We can let go of our concern over other people's thoughts and ideas, which have to do with *their* separate reality. Their perception of life will be different than our own. There is a story of five blind children who were taken on a walk one day. They were taken up to an elephant so they could "see" it. One child touched the leg. Another touched the ear. Another touched the trunk. Another touched the belly. Another touched the tail. When they went back to their village, they were eager to tell other children about what an elephant is like. The first child said the elephant was thick and round like a tree trunk. The next said, no, it was thin, flat, and very flexible. The next said no, it was curvy and thick and flexible. The next said no, it was big and round and smooth. The last child said no, it was skinny, round, and moved from side to side. They all had a different view of the elephant depending upon their specific experience of it. We can see instances of this everyday. Eyewitnesses at an accident will give different versions of what they saw happen. Fans at sporting events will see things differently. This lets us know that we all have different views of life.

*A foolish consistency is  
the hobgoblin of little  
minds.*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson  
1803-1882*

Someone else's reality isn't necessarily the truth. It is simply their perspective based on their experiences. Our perspective and experiences are going to be different. Someone else's perception may be based on fact, or just their perception of fact. Once

we can understand this, we can begin to accept the concept that everyone has his own views of reality. Knowing this, we can let go of our past perceptions, thoughts, or opinions of others. This is non-attachment.

When we can't let go of the opinions or need for approval of other people, it is because we think we need something from them. Our attachment is really to what we want or expect from them. We must understand that we don't let go of the other people, but rather we work on letting go of our needs or expectation of them. We don't throw the baby out with the bath water. It becomes easier to non-attach the more we understand the idea of separate realities.

We also begin to use non-attachment when working on the issues in our life and when we sort through the conflict of our personal history. This will take more effort and won't be accomplished in a short period of time. However, we need to take the time and make the effort to sort through these issues, because only then can we begin to let go of them. We can either continue to play the blame game, or we can pick up the ball and move on with our life. We can't blame our teachers if we didn't go to college. We can't blame our college teachers if we didn't succeed in our jobs. We have to accept responsibility for our life and for our relationship with our self.

Non-attachment allows us to look at and evaluate these issues that cause us conflict. Is the issue something that needs to be resolved or is it something that can be let go of? For example, some people have a lot of anger when a loved one dies. They blame the person for dying. They blame God. They blame life. They will not accept the law of birth and death. With death, sadness is normal. Anger sets in when someone cannot accept the loss and is looking for someone to "fix" it, undo it, or change it to how they want it. Death will happen and we all must accept that. When we are able to accept that death will occur in one way or another, we will be able to non-attach from the belief or expectation that life should always be the way we want. When we can let go of the anger and rage over the injustice of death, we can begin to heal from the loss in our life. If we feel our parents were unkind, we can forgive them and move on with our life.

Forgiveness is a concept or process having to do with the person who is doing the forgiving. It has less to do with the other person who has done us wrong. The process of forgiving allows us to let go of our pain, anger, and frustration of the incompleteness we

feel. We come to an acceptance that what has happened is in the past. We begin by understanding and accepting that human beings aren't perfect. Then we have to acknowledge

*Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.*

*Mahatma Gandhi*  
1869-1948

that the other person may have been trying to do their best. Even if it wasn't their best, blaming them or wishing for a different outcome isn't going to change or remove the conflict within us. What has happened *has happened*. Replaying it over and over in the mind hoping for a better outcome isn't going to change what really happened. When we say we are going to accept responsibility for our own life, we will be willing to accept that it happened and move on with making a better life for our self. Whatever we may want or expect from another person, we have the ability within us to provide it for ourselves.

Our emotional, mental, and spiritual growth is our responsibility. As we mature, we become more and more responsible for ourselves. When we graduate from school, we get jobs and become responsible for supporting and providing for ourselves. It is a

*The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.*

*Marcel Proust*  
1871-1922

natural thing to do. We don't expect our parents to support and provide for us the rest of our lives. It is the same for maturing emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. We stop looking for others to provide for our growth. We begin to support, provide for, and nurture our self.

In order to come to the moment and begin nurturing our self, we must let go of some of our past issues and conflicts. We need to resolve the inner conflicts we have with people whom we feel did not help us to reach our goals in life. "Maybe they were doing the best that they could. However, I'm taking over from here. I'm going to accept responsibility for my nurturing, my growth, and my happiness." We need to say, "Thank you for being so generous." Letting go of the past is non-attaching from the past. We do this by coming to our self.

*The main thing is that you hear life's music everywhere. Most people hear only its dissonance.*

*Theodor Fontane*

## Re-education

It does no good to say that we or our parents, teachers, or society didn't do a very good job educating us. Re-education is about replacing the negative thoughts or activities with positive and beneficial thoughts or activities. We choose to add new information to our consciousness. We can add more reading to gain new intellectual, emotional, and spiritual knowledge. This increases the information base part of our mind. We bring in new ideas and beliefs and interests. This is the time for re-assessing, re-evaluating, and re-defining our life.

We add new information by reading new material. We add it by calming the breath and mind to see more clearly. We add it by meeting new people and doing new things. We can go to lectures or classes. We expand our life with new things. This gives us new and different information in our warehouse, which allows us to see and perceive life in a new and different way. If we don't make these changes, it will be difficult to change our perception. If we don't make these changes, it will be difficult to non-attach because all we have is the same old material. To let go of the old perceptions, we need to bring in the new ideas and experiences. This isn't difficult. Remember the example of driving consciousness. When we left the car, we entered a new non-driving situation. It is that simple. It isn't painful. We don't have to leave our job, family, interests, friends, or hobbies. We just have to add new views and insights. Then a transformation will begin to happen.

When we bring in the new, letting go of the old will happen. We will have to exercise discipline or willpower of the mind for this to happen. This requires a few key things. We

*A journey of a thousand miles  
must begin with a single step.*

*Lao-Tzu  
604-531 BC*

don't fight with our self, and we understand the four functions of the mind. Once we have questioned, evaluated, and drawn from our storehouse of information, we will our self into action. We don't negate that. We don't start with an overwhelming project. We start with a manageable plan and make small steps to accomplish it. Instead of saying we will "get in shape," we say we will start working out three times a week. Twenty minutes three times a week is a manageable step. "Getting in shape" may be such a big and



distant goal that we may feel discouraged at a twenty minute workout and give up the goal. It is more likely that we will meet our goals if we break the process down into manageable steps. When we do this, we give ourselves choices. “I can prepare a good meal, or I can eat junk foods. Which is most beneficial for me?” Instead of thinking of what we “should” do, we give ourselves choices. When we have choices, we will usually choose what is the most beneficial for our self and others. If we don’t make the most beneficial choice, we at least give up the old habit of abusing ourselves. We begin to use willpower to will ourselves to make more beneficial choices.

By making these small daily efforts, we will begin to see our issues drop away.

*Freedom is not worth having  
if it does not include the  
freedom to make mistakes.*

*Mahatma Gandhi*  
1869-1948

One by one, we will start letting go of our issues and our past. Now as things come up, we can deal with them. When something from our past comes up, we can see it more clearly and by accepting responsibility for our own life, it becomes easier to let go of. We quit blessing or blaming other people for our life. Some issues may be easy to let go of, and others may be more difficult and may even require some therapy or a support group to help us let go of them. The unwillingness to sort through these past issues will prevent us from being happy. These very things will keep us anchored in our unhappy past. The willingness to address our life frees us into life.

In developing a relationship with our self, we must come to the moment. This means we must deal with our issues when they come up. This is the way to let go of the past. This doesn’t mean we forget about what may have happened in our past. It means we non-attach from the event, thoughts, or feelings we had back then. We recognize that those thoughts and feelings no longer serve a purpose for our life and we let go of them. Going back to the driving analogy, we don’t forget about how to drive when we leave the car, we just let go of our driving consciousness until we need to utilize it again. We do this in so many areas of our life. There is a time and place for competition, sports, humor, and music. We enjoy them, but let go of them when they would be inappropriate. We know how to let go of things because we do it every day. Now we simply need to apply that knowledge of non-attachment to our past conflicts and issues in order to remove stress from our life.

Most of the things that bring us conflict are the things we are attached to. It is a belief or idea that we are blaming someone else for. For example, most people feel insecure when it comes to love. Will they find someone to love? Will the other love them back? The issue of love threatens most people because they have not yet realized that their very nature is love, and that love comes from within and not from another person. Love is something you experience in sharing or in connection with other people, animals, sunsets, or life itself. Love is experienced by the feeling of joy bubbling over, and because it is experienced in association with another person or thing, credit is given to the other person or thing. When we believe that love comes from someone else, we will blame them if we don't feel love. We need to quit blaming others, or life, for times when we aren't feeling love. We take responsibility for our happiness and begin to open ourselves up to embrace and experience the beauty of life.

### **Love and Relationships**

Love is the connection we have with all of life. When we begin to put conditions on how life should be, we begin to limit our ability to experience love. We are saying that we will only feel love if other people meet our conditions. We are the ones who are imposing some very narrow boundaries that will prevent us from experiencing our nature of love.

*Dost thou love life? Then do  
not squander time, for that's the  
stuff life is made of.*

*Benjamin Franklin*  
1706-1790

Love and relationships are two different things. Relationships are about the boundaries we have for our interactions with others. We have relationships with the earth, with our co-workers, with our families, with our lovers, with strangers. We have different kinds of relationships with different people or things. For each relationship, we will have set up different boundaries. Now we need to look at the boundaries we have set up and evaluate whether we have set healthy or unhealthy boundaries. Do we even have the boundaries well defined in our own mind? Do the boundaries/definitions of our relationships allow us to experience love? Do we have a few or a lot of conditions that we require to be met before we can be open and feel love?

The fewer conditions we impose on life, the more open we will be to embracing life just as it is. This is when we will have the greatest experiences of love. Love has to do with our nature and the bubbling over and sharing of that nature. We need to understand that love and relationships are two different things. Our love is the feeling and expression of our life. Our relationships are the boundaries and conditions we set up in order to share our love.

*Man is free at the  
moment he wishes to be*  
Voltaire  
1694-1778

As we begin to recognize and sort through any unhealthy relationships (boundaries), we will be able to let go of more conflict in our life. We are beginning to accept responsibility for our own experiences of love, joy, and cheerfulness. That is what we will be sharing with other people. If we expect others to bring us those experiences, we are dependent upon when they will bring it, and then whether it will meet all our conditions. Love is our natural state. We need to understand and accept this. Love is about our openness to life. When it comes to sharing that love, we then set healthy boundaries for the various types of relationships we will have in our life.

Everyone has what are known as the four primal instincts, the need for food, sleep, procreation, and self-preservation. The major religions in the world have all dealt with the four primal instincts in one form or another in an effort to get humanity to rise above these four primal instincts. These same instincts drive the animal kingdom and influence the human kingdom. People in positions of power or leadership often tend to use these instincts as platform issues to manipulate humanity. If we feel shame or guilt over any of these four primal instincts, we need to re-evaluate and re-define them. These are natural instincts and are not anything to be ashamed or afraid of.

*The unexamined life is  
not worth living*  
Socrates  
469-399 BC

These instincts should not control our life. We need to eat, but we can eat healthy foods. We don't need to look like a model on TV. We just need to eat a healthy diet. When the body is always hungry, it is letting us know that we aren't giving it something it needs. If we find the proper balance of protein, carbohydrates, fats, water, and oxygen for our body, we won't be hungry all the time.

We need to sleep, but we don't have to sleep to escape from life. If we are constantly tired, we aren't getting enough rest. If we are getting eight hours of sleep a night and still feel tired, we need to determine if we simply need more sleep, or if we are just tired of life.

We will have the sex desire, but we don't need to act on it every time we feel the desire. Science states that men are biologically programmed to spread their seed to multiple women. This doesn't mean that men should not or cannot be monogamous. They simply have to take control of the primal instincts. Humanity has the ability to rise above the animal kingdom. The sex desire is for the procreation of the species. It isn't about love, although we often confuse sex and love. We even call sex, "making love." The two have gotten so confused, that many times when people want to feel love, they will turn to sex. Let's keep the definitions clear. Sex is an enjoyable experience that can be shared between consenting adults, but it isn't love. Sex isn't anything to be ashamed of or afraid of. It is a pleasurable and intimate experience that can lead to procreation.

Yes, we should strive for the survival of ourselves and for humanity, but not if the striving is dysfunctional. The self-preservation instinct has to take into account what is beneficial for the individual and the international community.

The four primal instincts must be addressed and evaluated to remove stress and conflict in our lives. We need healthy views of these instincts, a view that the instincts are natural and that we have the ability to control and direct them. Even with the four primal instincts, we need to find a balance that we enjoy.

- A healthy relationship with our self will result in a healthier relationship with others.
- Our spirit interacts with the spirit of others on a vibratory level.
- All humanity is connected on this vibratory level.
- Within that common vibration is the diversity of perceptions, thoughts, ideas, and interests.
- Finding the balance in our inner and outer life brings us into harmony with the vibration of all life.
- Finding the balance means learning to:
  - non-attach from our old ways of thinking
  - *non*-attach from the opinion of others
  - respect the differing perception of others
  - forgive past wrongs

- understand the difference between love and relationships
- develop a healthy understanding and way of dealing with the four primal instincts of food, sleep, procreation (sex), and self-preservation
- Our emotional, mental, and spiritual growth is our responsibility.

## **EXERCISES**

1. Make note of how we affect or are affected by others in a non-verbal (vibratory) manner.
2. Make a charitable contribution to benefit the human spirit. It doesn't have to be large, but we should try to do it consistently (i.e. once a week).
3. Make an effort each day to do something uplifting or charitable in thought, word, or deed for the following: our self, family, friends, peer group, community, human community, or the planet Earth.
4. Practice non-attachment from non-essential thoughts and feelings.
5. Make an effort to forgive ourselves and others for past hurts or mistakes.
6. Add new information in thought, word, and deed to re-educate our self; add new ideas, new beliefs, and new interests.
7. Define the boundaries of our relationships.
8. The four primal instincts must be addressed and effort made to control and direct them towards our benefit.

*beauty  
like the wind  
is not for the eyes  
rather for the heart  
for one must  
stand within the wind  
to be touched*

## NINE

We must come to the moment and live in the moment. We have a past and we may have issues to resolve, but we can't do all these things in a week or even a year. We allow that developing a relationship with our self is going to take some time, so we give ourselves permission to have time for our self. We have time to come to the moment, time to nurture our self. We make time for new interests and new ideas. We have time to

*Light tomorrow with  
today.*

*Elizabeth B. Browning  
1806-1861*

take a class or seminar to learn something new. There are special interest or adult classes being offered all the time. We take the time to find something we are interested in learning about. We stop doing "the same old things," the behaviors or activities that got us into a rut in the first place. We replace those things with new thoughts, ideas, and activities that will allow us to expand and grow as a human being. We begin to interact with life in a

new way and with a new view. We don't need to radically change all our activities. We keep the ones that bring us joy and add new ones.

Most of the things that I have discussed that are beneficial for us, like diet, exercising, proper breathing, controlling the mind, and meditation, take very little time. To include these things in our day will take only minor adjustments. It is a minor adjustment between choosing nutritional foods or junk foods. It is a minor adjustment between directing the mind towards uplifting thoughts or negative thoughts. It is a minor adjustment between taking full deep breaths or shallow breaths. Most of these things involve a minor adjustment between an old poor habit and a new beneficial habit.

We are the sum total of our past thoughts, words, and deeds. If we aren't happy where we are, we change our views and we change our life. This is having a relationship with our self. We understand that we alone can nurture our self in the very manner we need nurturing. No one else can do that for us. No one knows us better than ourselves. To think or wish that others could give us what we need is only a false idea. We need to let go of that old idea and bring in something new.

To develop healthy relationships, it is going to be important to learn how and what to communicate with others. We communicate what we do or do not enjoy. We communicate about what our boundaries are. We communicate our beliefs. We begin to share with life and not be afraid to do so. We all know that some people may reject us because of our beliefs, and that is fine. We don't need those kinds of friendships. What is important is to not limit our self out of fear of being rejected by others. When we fear sharing our beliefs with others, there is no real relationship with them and there is no real communication happening.

We must embrace being open to life. This gives us the freedom to share who and what we are with our family and friends. This begins with developing the relationship with our self. If we are happy with what we are doing, then what others may think or say won't cause us conflict. If we are happy doing our hobby, it doesn't stress us when someone else doesn't support us in that interest. If we are going to allow others to influence us, then we need to choose carefully those people who will influence us in a positive way that will enable us to grow. This starts with non-attachment, letting go of past ideas and embracing the new.

Non-attachment of the past isn't about forgetting the past. If someone has abused us in the past, we don't just "forgive and forget" and hope things will be different now. Non-attachment isn't about other people. We aren't trying to change someone else. It is about our expectations of life. We can keep our expectations and desires, but we change our perspective of who is responsible for the fulfillment of our expectations and desires. We quit holding other people or God or life responsible for fulfilling our expectations and desires. We take responsibility and control of our life. Having desires is natural. We just make a small adjustment in our thinking of who is going to bring about the fulfillment of our desire. This allows us to come to the moment and bring new things into our life. When we do this, we are more willing to non-attach from our issues and our past.

Ninety percent of what is holding us back from being happy is in our mind (our beliefs and ideas). These things are based on our limited reality, yet we continue to cling to them as if they were the whole truth. A limited reality is just one view. Others will have a different view. We may also think others share our view when in fact they don't. This is why we need open communication. We can find out how others are viewing their reality. If we want to do something but are concerned it will upset someone, go ask the other person. "This is very important to me. If I do it, will it bother you?" They will probably say, "No problem, go ahead." Most of the time, other people won't be bothered by our different interests. These differences are the very reason we enjoy other people. This is what is called the variety of life.

*Self-reverence, self-knowledge,  
self-control; these three alone  
lead life to sovereign power.*

*Lord Alfred Tennyson  
1809-1892*

We create our own conflict when we need approval from others for what we do. When we base our self-esteem on the approval of others, we will get into the bad habit of always trying to please others. We will be afraid of what they think of us if we don't please them. We may have learned this as a child, but it is time to let go of this habit. As we mature in our relationship with our self, we need to non-attach from this dependency on the approval of others.



## Transformation

As we begin to unfold, we may see things about our self that we are not proud of. We don't deny them or run from them or beat ourselves up over them. We begin to work on changing them. This is part of beginning to know our self. Once we get to know our self and live in a manner that is enjoyable, cheerful, happy, and beneficial to our self and others, we will have a healthy balance in our relationships. When we become the person we want to be, that fear of others not liking us will fade away. Instead of hiding who we are, we begin to share who we are

Non-attachment leads to transformation. All we need is the courage and discipline to make the minor changes, and I do mean minor changes. We don't have to undertake a major overhaul of our life. We breathe all day long. It takes only a minor adjustment to do it properly. Since we are going to be breathing anyway, we might as

*If you do your practice, it is not possible that you will fail to make progress.*

*Swami Rama*  
1925-1996

well get the most benefit from it through slow deep breaths. In a little while, we will have changed our habit of breathing and not even need to think about it. It only takes a little time to change any habit. If we take the time to eat good nutrition instead of poor nutrition, we will feel better physically. It will be worth the time. Once we are in the habit of eating healthier, we won't even think about it.

In working on our past issues, it will take some time at first to work on forgiveness of self and others. We just drop or let go of the things we can and work on resolving the others. The same issue may come up a hundred times, but we look at it each time. "Yes, I was hurt by that person. I accept that it happened. I want to move on with my life." Each time the issue comes up, if we deal with it, the pain will go away. Eventually, the incident will just be a memory that we have, like the memory of an old toy. When we broke a toy as a child, at first there was the pain of loss, but we eventually got the toy replaced with something new. Life should be about the embracing of the ever new, which requires letting go of the past. To let go of the past, we make a willful decision to do so. The process becomes easier each time we do it.

## **Expectations**

When we are enjoying our life, we will find that very little will cause us conflict and stress. Most pain and conflict comes from broken expectations. This needs to be addressed. Are the expectations reasonable or not? When both reasonable and unreasonable expectations are broken, there will be disappointment. If you set up an appointment or make an agreement with another person, this is a reasonable expectation. If the agreement is broken, that is a reasonable conflict, but we still need to let go of it. We evaluate it, come up with a different plan, and move on.

An unreasonable expectation is when we just think or believe that someone else is going to do something. These expectations are based on assumption rather than clear communication. We still feel disappointment when the unreasonable expectations are broken. Forming unreasonable expectations based on assumptions is a bad habit that we need to break. It brings so much stress and suffering into our life. An unreasonable expectation would be when we expect our spouse, child, parent, or friend to just “know” somehow that we need or want something and give it to us, and then feel hurt if they don’t. No one else has exactly the same view of reality that we do, so it is not reasonable to assume that another person is going to “know” what we want or need in our reality at all times. “How could they say or do that to me? Don’t they know me any better than that? Is that what they think of me?” When we ask those questions, it has more to do with us having unreasonable expectations than it does with the other person. It is based on our interpretation of what they said or did, and may have little to do with what they were actually trying to convey to us. When asked, they may even respond with, “No, wait. You misunderstood me.” Or, “No, wait. I was only kidding.” But we don’t believe them because we have already made our interpretation of what we think they meant. This is what happens when we impose our reality on another person. This leads to unreasonable expectations. We need to work on changing this habit because it brings in useless suffering and unnecessary conflict that have no real foundation. It is conflict that is self-created in our mind, and this conflict is an obstacle to our happiness. This behavior is about judging and condemning others in our mind based upon our view of things.

When we have desires or expectations, we need to clearly communicate them to the other person. We need to take care with our communications because sometimes we can tell someone what we would like to have and think they understand what we are saying, but they don't. This leads to disappointments or disagreements.

### **Clear Communication**

Lack of communication is fairly common in the male/female relationships. Men communicate more clearly with other men, because they are using similar thinking processes. The same is true when women communicate with other women. But, the thinking processes for men and women are different. Men may think they are being clear with women and vice versus, but this is where we have to be careful, because often what we think should be perfectly clear to the opposite sex is not at all clear in their thinking processes. Agreements, timetables, contracts, and commitments may be entirely different things to men and women. The same words can mean two different things to men and women. "Let's make love" to a man means "let's have sex." "Let's make love" to a woman means "let's have sex." It looks the same. However, for most men to go forward and have sex, all they need is an opportunity and some privacy. Most women will need to feel love, commitment, intimacy, birth control, compatibility, romance, a clean and comfortable environment, a number of other things. They both came to the same agreement to have sex, but their expectations of what that involves, prior to consummating the act, has not been communicated clearly and can lead to disappointment and conflict.

Clear communication needs to include definitions of our boundaries and the other person's boundaries. Separate realities can only come together and cooperate through clear communication. When we have a relationship with our self, we will naturally want to interact with others. When we are secure within our self, we will be more open and

*Can a person ever explain the  
taste of sugar, simple and  
plain?*

*Kabir*  
c. 1440 AD

capable of clearly communicating with others. This is a necessary step in our happiness. This is a necessary step in human development. We must learn to communicate with others and learn how to agree upon what is being communicated.

We also need to learn how to keep our commitments and agreements. The better we understand our boundaries and the other person's boundaries, the clearer the communications will become. Communication is about sharing, talking, and defining. This is all part of developing a relationship with our self and developing as a human being. If we communicate clearly, we will remove some major obstacles from our life. We will have more happiness and less conflict. We need to be true to our relationship with our self and then we will be true to others also.

The process of removing stress from our life just takes some minor adjustments. We all want to interact with others. We all make agreements or contracts with others. Part of this relating needs to include defining our boundaries, especially in any kind of male/female communication since the thinking process is different. This applies not only to marriage or dating situations, but also to the workplace, our friends, and life itself. Communicating is a natural part of living.

Non-attachment is a minor adjustment. Embracing the four primal instincts is a minor adjustment. Balancing the left and right hemispheres of the brain is a minor adjustment. Clear communication is a minor adjustment. A lot of people are not wanting to communicate as much any more, because it is just more information coming in at a time when there is already information overload. We don't want more information and more stress. If we can remove some of the struggle, then the joy of interacting with others will once again be there. We will want to talk to people in order to learn and grow. We will want to receive new information from others for the growth of our mind. We will want to expand our database. We will want to interact, whether it is in the grocery line or at work. We will want to embrace life around us. We will begin to want what is beneficial for our self and life around us. Our life will change into an enjoyable relationship with our self and others. Life will be ever new.

*The sound of laughter has always seemed to me the most civilized music in the universe.*

*Peter Ustinov*  
1922-2004

Don't assume that love and relationships are so natural that we don't have to define them or work at developing them. Don't assume that just because we want to be happy that we will be happy. It will take some effort to make the minor adjustments in

order to remove the conflict and stress, but this effort is what allows us to move into embracing the joy and happiness of a healthy life. We need to start the day, not by wondering what is going to happen, but by making a plan. We pick a plan and a positive affirmation. “I will be reverent today. I will be patient today. I will find a kind word to say. I will try to see the best side of everyone.” An affirmation will help to make us a better person. Have a plan and implement it. Make it simple, manageable, and make it your own.

Minor adjustments and letting go of the past will lead to a transformation of our life. It will lead us into things we want to do. If we implement them, we will begin to enjoy our life because the stress will either be gone or we will be actively working to remove it. Obstacles are only obstacles when we don’t see them. When we see them, they are just challenges we can overcome and remove from our life. These minor adjustments free us into our self and the enjoyment of our life. It just takes our effort to develop the relationship with our self, with others, and with life, but this effort will lead to a natural unfoldment into joy.

- We must come to the moment and live in the moment.
- We begin to interact with life in a new way with a new view.
- We need to learn to communicate clearly our likes, dislikes, and boundaries.
- We take responsibility and control of our life.
- Ninety percent of what prevents us from enjoying life is in our mind (our beliefs and ideas).
- Non-attachment and minor adjustments will lead to a transformation of our life.
- We make minor adjustments in:
  - the way we breathe
  - the foods we choose
  - our physical activity
  - our perception of reality
  - our expectations of others and of life
  - our methods of communication
  - our willingness to learn and grow
- All it takes to make the minor changes that lead to transformation is courage, discipline, and the willingness to be happy.

## **EXERCISES**

1. Begin to communicate your boundaries to the people in your life.
2. Begin to communicate and share your interests and desires with family and friends.
3. Make a willful effort to let go of a past issue, to say, “That was then and this is now.”
4. Evaluate your expectations of others. Are the expectations reasonable or unreasonable? Are they based on assumption or clear communication?
5. Practice clear communication when making or agreeing on plans, or when there are expectations of “things to come.”
6. Throughout the day, see and make the minor adjustments in your life, using manageable steps to make the adjustments.
7. Each day, plan what you want to experience that day, then affirm it throughout the day as you make the willful effort to attain your goal.

*when the flame  
becomes  
the fire  
and the fire  
becomes  
the flame  
the dance  
and the  
dancer  
are one*

## TEN

*In* developing the relationship with our self, we realize that it is both an inhalation and an exhalation. It is a process of bringing change to our life physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. The first step we take is to accept responsibility for making the choices that will reduce our stress so we may live a happy and fulfilled life.

Most people think they are taking responsibility for their own happiness, but there are times when we subtly shift that responsibility to someone else and hope that they will fulfill our desires. For instance, we may leave work at the end of the day and feel too tired to go home and prepare the evening meal. We hope someone else will do the meal preparation or take us out to eat. This is how we subtly shift responsibility to another person. Then we justify it with, “After all, I deserve it, and if they love me they will do this for me.” The initial desire or hope that someone else would fulfill our desire is one thing, but when we connect our happiness to that desire or hope, we are setting ourselves

up for the disappointment of an unfulfilled desire. In this case, we should be honest about the situation and communicate openly with the other person. “I’m tired and don’t feel like cooking tonight. How would you feel about going out to eat, or we could pick up something on the way home, or have something delivered.”

There are times we want to do something, and we hope our spouse or friends want to do it also, and we pin our happiness on their co-operation with our wishes. If they don’t want to go along with our plans, we may blame or resent them for our unfulfilled desire and loss of happiness. We need to recognize how we set ourselves up for disappointments that lead to unhappiness in our life.

### **Multiple Conditions**

Sometimes our desires have multiple conditions. For example, we may really want to see a certain movie, but we want to see it with a particular person, *and* we want to see it on a particular day at a particular time. Now we are dependent on the other person wanting to see that movie and being available to see it when we want to see it. Because we have subtly shifted responsibility to this other person, we will not be happy if they say they don’t want to see that movie or that they have other plans for that time. If we want to see the movie, we should make plans to do so and invite the other person to share the experience if they want, but if they don’t want to, that’s fine too. We can do the things we want and invite others to join us, but we don’t want to allow our plans or happiness to be dependent on others agreeing to do them with us.

We need to be careful not to confuse totally different issues when it comes to doing activities with other people. If the other person says they don’t want to see that movie, it doesn’t mean that they don’t want to spend time with us. When we think this, we aren’t allowing the other person to have personal preferences or a personal life, and we are questioning their feelings and motives. We need to recognize when and how we do this subtle shifting of responsibility to others, then we can begin to be responsible for our own fulfillment and happiness. Blaming others or society for our broken expectations is just a

*Sometimes a cigar is  
just a cigar.*

*Sigmund Freud*  
1856-1939



convenient excuse for not accepting responsibility for our own desires and happiness. To go beyond our stresses, difficulties, and obstacles, we accept responsibility for our life.

The spice of life is the ever-newness of life; it is the learning, growing, and developing. If we embrace the concept of the ever-newness of life, we will embrace the responsibility for the learning, growing and development of our happiness, fulfillment, and enjoyment of living. If we blame others for standing in our way, we should

*A wise man will make  
more opportunities than  
he finds.*

*Sir Francis Bacon  
1561–1626*

understand that we are choosing to wait for life to happen and hoping it will give to us what we want. As the saying goes, beggars can't be choosers. When we make others responsible for our happiness, we have to be willing to accept what they choose to give to us. The alternative is to accept responsibility for

our own life and development. We need to mature beyond the idea that life or others “owe” us something, or that they should “want to do” for us.

As we learn, grow, and develop, we need to be careful not to camouflage a weakness as a strength. If we are too tired to cook, we don't need to pretend that we want to take the other person out to eat as a treat or as a goodwill gesture for their sake. This will only undermine our efforts towards self-responsibility and self-fulfillment. We have to be honest with our self and others. We need to be honest with our self on both the inward journey and the outward journey.

We must accept that we are legitimate, our life is legitimate and our desires are legitimate. We should not have to give up our life just to please another person, nor should they have to give up their life to please us. We should be able to fulfill our life and include in it spouses, children, friends, work, hobbies, and interests. We should be able to walk through life with others without being chained to them. How we balance and harmonize our life is directly related to the development of self-responsibility.

*Sing and dance together and be  
joyous, but let each one of you be  
alone, even as the strings of a lute  
are alone, though they quiver with  
the same music.*

*Kahlil Gibran  
1883-1931*

What stands in the way of our happiness is our own beliefs and desires of how life “should be.” Once again, the example of the movie: “Life would be great if my friends and I went to this movie on Friday night.” This desire has several conditions to be met for us to be happy. We want to go to the movie, and the friends we want to see it with have to want to see the movie, and they have to be available on Friday night. The desire to see the movie with our friends is legitimate, but we get into conflict when we begin to put conditions on the desire, especially when those conditions include other people. We’ve all done this at times, and we all know the disappointment that comes from putting conditions on our wants and desires. Once we become aware of what we are doing to sabotage or undermine our happiness, we can begin to re-educate ourselves in how we approach our desires. When the desire for something includes other people, we need to learn to be flexible and be willing to compromise. You may be able to see the movie you want to see with the friends you want to see it with, but it might be a different time.

When we run into disappointments, we need to evaluate what our desire was and if any contradictory conditions were attached to it. This is how we learn. This evaluation will show us how we have sabotaged our desire and how we can correct that in the future. We begin to understand that our disappointments are not caused by life or others, but by the contradictory or opposing conditions that we have attached to our wants and desires. As we continue to evaluate, we will gain knowledge into how to keep our desires clear and free from opposing conditions that would undermine our happiness.

There is an old saying that you can’t walk north and south at the same time. Everyone says of course you can’t, yet that is exactly what we are trying to do in the examples of not wanting to cook and going to the movies. That is how we set ourselves up for disappointment, stress, and unhappiness. This is why it is so important to develop a relationship with your self. When you begin to know your self, you will learn where you can be flexible and where you hold your ground, where you are willing to compromise and where you won’t. Developing a relationship with our

*The mere sense of living is joy  
enough.*

*Emily Dickinson*  
1830-1886

self is about going within and learning about who we are, but it is also about interacting outwardly with the rest of life. When we learn more about our self, we are better able to balance and harmonize our interactions and relationships with others.

Variety is the spice of life, which means we want new, interesting and exciting things in life. The person who is responsible for their own happiness makes it their responsibility to keep their life ever new. They do this by changing their views, learning, growing, and developing as a human being. They learn how to live in harmony with their nature and with life around them. The person who has not accepted responsibility for their own life will demand that life give them new and interesting things. Further, they will demand that people around them accept their wants and desires without question. We need to give up the idea that life needs to provide us with something new. Instead, we need to understand that we need a new view of life. With this understanding, life will always appear ever new.

### **Opposing Desires**

If we are not enjoying life, we cannot blame our parents, teachers, family, friends, or society. We are responsible for our own life and the fulfillment of this life. There will be times in life where we will have opposing desires, where we will have to choose one thing and leave another behind. If we understand what opposing desires are and how to evaluate them, we will be able to make the choice, assume responsibility for the choice, and feel good about the choice. If we don't understand what opposing desires are, we will feel conflict, be upset, and blame others or life for our unhappiness, for not giving us what we want when and how we want it.

Humanity is a perfect example of “variety is the spice of life.” We can travel all over the world and see people of different sizes, cultures, colors, traditions, beliefs, and geological settings. We can study history to learn about people of ancient times and how

*He who knows others is  
wise; he who knows  
himself is enlightened.*

*Lao-Tzu  
604–531 BC*

humanity evolved into the current society. If we have enough time, money, and interest to do this travel and study, that is great. However, to understand humanity better, we can also learn more about the people in our

neighborhood or community. The yogis<sup>11</sup> say that humanity is universal and all we need to do to understand humanity is to understand our self. They say that in knowing our self we will know that which is common to all of humanity and that which is unique to the self. There is a universalness to humanity, but there is also a uniqueness of each spirit. We need to discover this in the relationship we develop with our self.

Sometimes we will have to prioritize some of our desires. Sometimes we will have to choose between two conflicting desires, because it would be better to have one rather than lose them both. Most people sabotage their happiness, and this can be seen in the stress level of society. We are so stressed about not making the right choice, the choice that will please us or other people, that we can't make any choices. We must take a little time to recognize how we sabotage our own happiness and fulfillment. Almost 90% of this takes place in our head. It has nothing to do with what our family or friends want. It has to do with the fact that in our head we have demanded that everything we want comes together in one moment. It isn't going to happen, and when it doesn't, we blame society for our imprisonment, which just leads to more stress.

*Nothing will ever be  
attempted if all possible  
objections must be first  
overcome.*

*Samuel Johnson  
1709-1784*

Whenever we feel frustrated and feel we are not getting what we want, we have to recognize this as the first symptom of opposing desires. Once we recognize that we are having opposing desires, we can evaluate it and prioritize our desires. For example, you want to go to a movie with your spouse, but your spouse wants to stay home tonight. You recognize that you have two opposing desires and now you can choose between going to the movie alone or negotiating a different time with your spouse. You can have both desires fulfilled, but not as you had initially wanted. We need to mature beyond the "I want what I want when I want it" syndrome. Until we understand opposing desires, we will create conflict in our life without even realizing what we have done. The opposing desires may both be perfectly legitimate, but we may have put conditions on them, which cannot be met simultaneously. When this happens, we are adding stress to

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<sup>11</sup> A yogi is one who practices yoga. Yoga (meaning "yoke" or union) is the science of uniting the small spirit with the large Spirit.

our life that is unnecessary. This is why it is so important to understand and recognize opposing desires.

This kind of stress can be removed from our lives if we just reassess and re-evaluate our desires. Anytime we feel frustration or conflict, we reassess and re-evaluate what our desires are at that time. Our feelings of frustration or conflict usually have to do with us, not with society or the people around us. We need to ask ourselves at those times what it is we wanted to do and what conditions we put on that desire. If we want some of the conditions met, are we willing to be flexible and compromise? When we reassess and re-evaluate our desires, we can remove the conflict and frustration from our life without demanding that life or others give us what we want. This is being responsible for our own happiness.

We should always want to learn, grow, and be interested in new and different things. This is normal and healthy. To demand that life always offer us something new, to demand that we always have the money and people to do these new and different things with, is unhealthy, because it places the responsibility for our happiness on life, society, and other people. That means we will constantly be caught in the stress, conflict, and frustration of opposing desires.

When we are re-evaluating, we need to ask, “What is it I want to do? Am I a product of society? Am I being influenced by society? Am I a willing or unwilling participant?” We need to stop and re-evaluate what we consider happiness, success, and fulfillment of our life. If we have a list of things, we need to make sure there are no opposing desires on the list.

### **Fulfilling Our Life**

Being responsible for the fulfillment of our life and happiness will include learning and growing. Part of the learning and growing will be about understanding what it is we really desire. Understanding the nature of our desires will allow us to make minor adjustments in how to pursue those desires. Learning to reassess and re-evaluate our desires at times of frustration and conflict will open up the possibility of fulfilling more of them.

*Life shrinks or  
expands in proportion  
to one's courage.*

*Anaïs*

*Nin*

To be happy, we need to find a balance in our life, a balance between the inward journey and outward journey. I have mentioned a few changes we need to make in our diet and in our understanding the four functions of the mind and how to keep them under control. I have mentioned the benefits of deep diaphragmatic breathing, meditation, non-attachment, and accepting personal responsibility. I've discussed opposing desires, and how to become a better world citizen. All these things take only minor adjustments. They are things we all want to do. We want to be healthier, more energetic, have more enthusiasm for life, and be a better person. Proper nutrition and proper breathing will give us more energy in our life. Removing conflict and stress will increase our enthusiasm for life. Making minor adjustments to our opposing desires will remove much of the conflict and stress. If we work on these minor adjustments for just two or three months, we will see almost miraculous results in our view of life and the happiness we feel. If we make these minor adjustments daily, our life will become a celebration.

When we make the effort to make the minor adjustments, we give up the idea that life will give us something to make us happy, and we give up the idea that others will serve us or fulfill us. We accept the responsibility to find the balance in our life, to make the minor changes, to give up the old habits. We make an effort, at the first sign of conflict or frustration, to reassess and re-evaluate our desires, to identify the opposing desires, and then to either choose one or compromise and co-operate on the conditions we had put on the desire. We need to co-operate with others and it is possible to do so while maintaining control of our life and our happiness. We eat, breathe, think, and evaluate anyway, so all it takes is making minor adjustments in how and what we eat, breathe, question, think, evaluate, and decide. As we begin to live a healthier life, we become more enthusiastic, and that enthusiasm will bring with it more energy, happiness, joy, and fulfillment.

Developing a relationship with our self is about accepting responsibility for our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual life. We make the minor adjustments in how we view our self and how we view and interact with the rest of society. In making these minor adjustments we will be removing clutter from our life and we will be bringing in more balance and harmony. The more aware we remain in making these minor adjustments, the clearer our vision of life will become.

Even though the adjustments we make are minor, they are not instant, which is why it will take consistent effort. However, after a while, our healthier habits will replace the old habits and will not require our constant attention. Most importantly, we will have an excitement to go out and learn, enjoy, and embrace our life. What we will gain from the effort is the love, the beauty, and the joy of our journey. We gain our self, our life, and the celebration of living.

*The reward of a thing well done,  
is to have done it.*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

- Developing a relationship with our self is a process of minor changes
- We are responsible for our desires.
- We need to be honest with ourselves and not camouflage a weakness as a strength.
- We want life to be new, interesting, and exciting, and this can be as simple as having a new view of life.
- Frustration is a signal that we have opposing desires.
- Understanding and recognizing opposing desires, we can resolve them.
- The effort of making minor adjustments will bring our life into balance.
- We have the ability to fill our life with love, joy, and beauty.

## **EXERCISES**

1. Evaluate our disappointments to see if we have “conditions” making them difficult to fulfill.
2. Evaluate our frustrations to see if we have “opposing desires” and make adjustments.

3. Learn to recognize when we have created conditions or opposing desires (forms of self-sabotage), so that we can correct them before we encounter stress or frustration.
  
4. Make the effort to make the necessary minor adjustments in:
  - diet
  - controlling the four functions of the mind
  - deep, diaphragmatic breathing
  - meditation
  - non-attachment
  - personal responsibility
  - opposing desires
  - being a better world citizen

The more aware we remain of these minor adjustments, the clearer our vision of life will become
  
5. Make the commitment and effort to be a happier and healthier person each day.



*with  
the delirious intensity  
of losing control  
i have danced  
on the mountain tops  
insanely high  
and crawled across  
the desert floor  
dangerously low  
desiring  
more mountains  
and deserts*

## ELEVEN

We must learn to embrace our self, and then go out and embrace life itself. In conclusion I would like to share a few poems from different times and experiences in my life, which I feel embrace the universalness of the human spirit.

***i was in love with you then***

*i've stood beside  
golden fields  
watching you move*

*within the wind  
and i was in love  
with you then*

*i've seen you naked  
in the lakes  
glimpses of shimmering  
sunlight and beauty  
and i was in love  
with you then*

*i saw you silhouetted  
against the night sky  
embracing the stars  
as only the young can  
and i was in love  
with you then*

*i watched while you played  
with the ocean  
an ancient ritual of  
awe and intoxication  
and i was in love  
with you then*

*i walked with you  
in the forests and meadows  
in deserts and mountains  
in the sunshine and in the rain  
and i was in love  
with you then*

*i've danced with you  
beneath the moon  
with the snow falling  
and on the mountains  
and i was in love  
with you then*

*i've touched you  
in the spring and summer  
in the fall and winter  
in the daylight and in the night  
and i was in love  
with you then*

*i sat with you  
beside the river  
hearing our tears  
our joy our laughter  
and i was in love  
with you then*

### ***somewhere***

*there is lightning racing across  
the mountains tonight  
thunder off in the distance  
there will be rain  
falling in the forest  
and flash floods  
rushing for the desert floor*

*and i'm sure  
there is an ocean somewhere  
washing in on the shore  
young girls will give  
their hearts away  
to the boy  
who can win her smile  
lovers will walk hand in hand  
and the moon will cast its shadow  
over the land  
adding mystery to the night*

*somewhere an old man will sit  
remembering younger days  
not quite sure about accepting  
the ongoing tides*

*and the drums  
they will still beat in africa  
to a rhythm  
we know so well  
someone will be dancing  
in the sun  
laughing  
surrendering to the fun  
someone else will be*

*dancing in the dark  
bodies glistening  
beneath the moonlight  
moving to the rhythm  
of the summer heat  
moving in the rhythm  
of a primal beat*

*somewhere sailors will go  
down to the sea  
with a longing and a smile  
embracing the ocean  
like a lover they never knew*

*somewhere people will be together  
with music bread and wine  
there will be talk  
of days gone by  
butterflies puppies and apple blossoms  
children running  
laughter and singing  
ringing in the air*

*somewhere someone will die tonight  
and someone else  
will be reborn  
there will be bells ringing  
for the wedding feast  
and the funeral pyre  
for the man on his knees  
asking for  
forgiveness  
and for those  
who are seeking  
grace  
for any who are weeping  
and for all  
who are rejoicing*

*somewhere a soldier will sit  
struggling with his courage  
and a family will sit down  
and give thanks  
for their daily bread*

*somewhere there will be a poet  
with songs  
of love and sorrow  
flowers  
and sweet tasting wine*

*somewhere there will be  
a young woman  
with a baby at her breast  
and a man will stand  
in a field  
praying to the sky above*

*somewhere there will be  
rivers and meadows  
birds flying in the air  
snowstorms and draught  
and the winds may blow  
whispering your name*

*and the bells will go on ringing  
for the unborn child  
and those beyond  
ringing for the rain forests  
and the polar cap  
and the bells will go on ringing  
for those who are willing  
to light the candles  
ringing for those who would  
feed our children*

*and let the bells go on ringing  
for the pilgrimage  
and the prophet  
and for those  
who make us smile  
and let those bells ring out  
for love and life  
for the love of the journey  
itself*

*somewhere there will be  
angels singing  
in the heavens above  
and saints will be  
dancing on the shore*

*and the moon will stand above  
the darkness  
and call out for more*

*somewhere the dawn will choose  
between night  
and morning  
and the soul will call out  
for more*

*and the soul  
will call out  
for more*

### ***sometimes***

*sometimes  
i look around and i miss  
the summer rains  
dandelions and butterflies  
and the warm starry nights  
and fireflies*

*sometimes  
i miss the crisp fall morning  
colors of autumn  
and northern lights  
splashed across the night sky  
the beauty  
of the first snow  
a country-side  
covered in white*

*sometimes  
i miss the laughter  
and the innocence  
and the walks we took  
the springtime  
and the flowers  
and the love we shared  
when it was just  
you and i  
and younger days*

*it seems like  
its been such a long time  
since i first saw you  
standing there  
looking like an angel  
maybe even before the moon  
began to travel  
between the stars*

*was it honey and roses  
the fragrance  
you wore in your hair  
that night  
or was it musk and passion  
i just can't seem to remember  
but i do remember  
the color of your hair  
was like a sunrise  
and a smile  
that lit up the daytime*

*did we learn to dance  
in eden  
or was it in ancient babylon  
and did we dance  
on the water  
or was it just a kiss  
we stole  
somewhere between  
the brothel and the temple*

*it all seems kind of hazy now  
all except you standing there  
looking like an angel  
and the promise of a dance  
down to the water  
a dance to the edge  
of time*

*sometimes  
the lines between yesterday  
and today  
come and go  
like the tides on the shore  
still the mockingbird whispers  
songs into the night*

*like desires  
of days to come*

*sometimes  
when i look around  
i see you dancing  
with the sunlight  
and i hear the laughter of your voice  
in the wind  
and i fall in love  
all over again*

*and sometimes  
i feel  
like i am just racing the devil  
to the finish line*

***the music was everywhere***

*i went for a walk  
the other night  
i wondered where you were  
there were a thousand stars  
overhead  
and the moon rising  
in the sky above  
i wondered about all the years  
and all the nights  
and why i was  
the only one standing here*

*please if you would  
let me take a moment  
to talk about those days*

*days of love and laughter  
of flowers in your hair  
talk of peace and change  
and revolution in the air  
there was making love in the grass  
and demonstrations in the streets*



*oh and there was music everywhere*

*there were rumors  
that the gates of hell were opened  
and those hounds of hell  
would be loosed on me  
i don't know much about the hellhounds  
but i do know  
when there is no love  
it still makes me cry*

*oh it sure was a time  
to be alive*

*there was the quiet sound  
of rain outside my window  
there was the wind  
blowing across the wheat fields  
like waves on a sea of gold  
just as if it had been written  
in some ancient holy book  
waiting to be revealed*

*there was the roar of a freight train  
in my body and my soul  
until the very earth itself  
began to tremble  
oh it sure did thrill  
a young boy's heart*

*there was you and there was i  
there was dancing in the streets  
there was a whole world  
coming together  
some for the very first time  
some were nervous  
and some were shy  
and some said no  
they would rather die  
still they were joining hands  
around the world  
singing hallelujah oh hallelujah*

*oh the music was everywhere*

*a warm summer's night  
with the moon  
and the stars above  
must be to the  
fountain of youth  
like the shore  
is to the sea  
it is the love  
within life  
that makes the heart sing  
and it is the  
beauty of life  
that allows  
the soul to dance*

# **APPENDIX**



# SUN SALUTATION

1.



2.



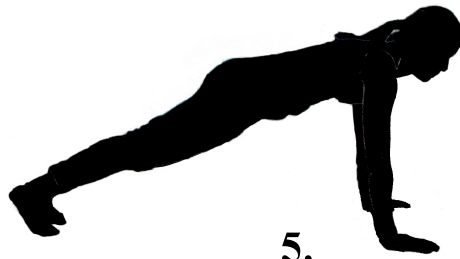
3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.



9.



10.



11.



12.





## NOTE OF APPRECIATION

This book was compiled from a series of talks on stress management. I would like to take this opportunity to say, “Thank you” to friends and family for the love given. I would also like to say, “Thank you” to those who made this book possible through countless hours of transcribing, typing, and editing. A special thanks goes to Emily McCann for her editing assistance. Lastly, and most importantly, thank you all for being a part of my life.

Light, blessings, and joy

Lee

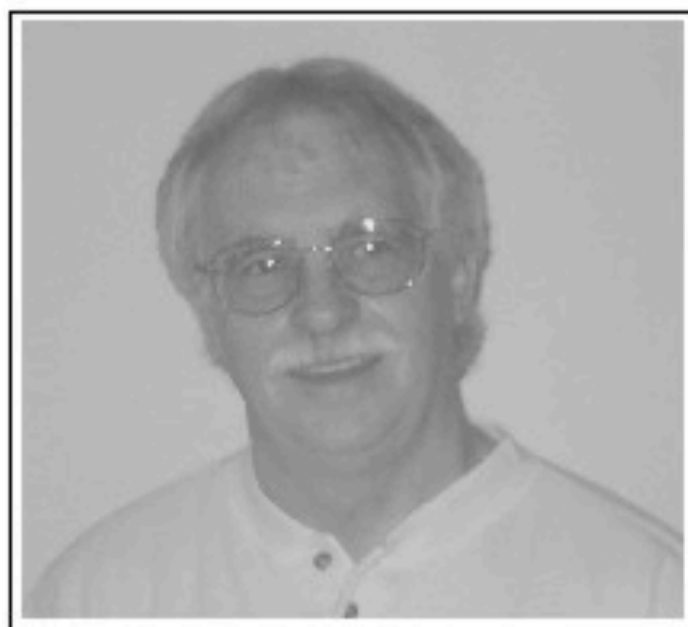
Lee Timmerman has practiced the ancient science of meditation for over 35 years. He has taught meditation classes since 1980, and also teaches stress reduction. He has written books on both subjects. He has also produced a number of CDs with mantras, guided meditations, and chanting. Lee and his family live in Phoenix, Arizona, where he continues to teach, write, and produce CDs for the upliftment of the human experience of body/mind/soul.



*Happiness will come when we balance a life with interest for our Self, knowledge of nature (God), and healthy relationships with other people.*

To know our self is an inner journey that must be undertaken in order to live a healthy and happy life. We can learn to enjoy the process of life. Since our Self is within us at all times, developing a relationship with it is the only sane approach to life.

Most of humanity believes that they are body, mind, and spirit. Therefore, the relationship with the whole Self must involve the physical body, the mind and thoughts, and the spirit. We begin where we are and allow for knowledge and understanding of who we are to grow. We start with the premise that we are body, mind and spirit.



Lee has been teaching meditation to both individuals and classes since 1972 and has written books and produced CDs on wholistic living and the royal path - combining Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga and meditation. He has also put together CDs on meditation and Sanskrit Chanting - chanting the sacred names of the Divine vibration is a celebration of life and fills our hearts with joy, laughter and love. Lee currently lives in Phoenix with his family. He continues to teach meditation and run his businesses.



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