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BREATH, ENERGY & EGO Daaji on Pranayama

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Heartfulness

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Contributors

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Michael A. Singer is the author of *The Untethered Soul* and *The Surrender Experiment*, which have been published worldwide. He had a deep inner awakening in 1971 after which he focused on yoga and meditation for some time. In 1975, he founded Temple of the Universe, a yoga and meditation center where people of any religion or belief come to experience inner peace. He is also the creator of a leading-edge software package for medical practice management, and is the founding CEO of a public company.



Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee & Hilary Hart

Llewellyn is the founder of The Golden Sufi Center. Author of several books, he has specialized in the area of dreamwork, integrating the ancient Sufi approach with modern psychology. Since 2000 his focus has been on spiritual responsibility in our present era and awakening the global consciousness of oneness. He has written about the feminine, the world soul and spiritual ecology. He has been interviewed by Oprah Winfrey on Super Soul Sunday, and featured on the Global Spirit series on PBS.

Hilary writes about mysticism with a focus on women and feminine consciousness. Originally from New England, Hilary is on the Sufi path and currently lives in Taos, New Mexico. Her books include *Body of Wisdom:* Women's Spiritual Power and How It Serves and The Unknown She: Eight Faces of an Emerging Consciousness.





Pierre Rabhi

Born in Algeria, Pierre Rabhi is a French farmer, writer and philosopher. He promotes a way of life that respects both humankind and nature, and works to promote agro-ecology throughout the world, particularly in Africa. Recognized as an international expert on food safety, he participated in the drafting of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. He has created many associations with the goal of reconnecting people to nature, and personally embodies his philosophical ideals to inspire people to make changes in their lives.





Elizabeth Denley, Rishabh Kothari Meghana Anand, Sylvie Berti Rossi Genia Catala, Emma Ivaturi

WotsUp?

Dear readers,

With time, our means of communication has evolved. From the ancient eras of sign language, smoke signals, drumbeats and hieroglyphs, through the period of evening soirées in the drawing room, handwritten letters, telegrams and landline phones, today we find ourselves in a hi-tech digital age where even writing on paper and talking in person seems quaint. We now ping or text instead of writing letters or emails, and we WhatsApp rather than meeting our near and dear ones in person. How does this paradigm shift in the way we interact affect the way we communicate? And what effect does such constant exposure to electromagnetic radiation have on our health and well-being? More to the point, what are we doing about it?

In this issue, we explore the various ways to use digital technology for our benefit yet with safety and caution. Michael Singer gives us a glimpse of the potential of the human heart in the concluding part of his article, while Pierre Rabhi celebrates change, love and joy in his interview. Daaji continues his series on Ashtanga Yoga with Pranayama, and we feature a new section on Yoga Asanas. Debra and Sarah open us to a whole new world of toys, Vani Kola reveals the secret that gives impetus to her daily life, and Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee and Hilary Hart share the joy of being one with nature while walking.

Nature has her own way of communicating. And it takes more than just putting our mobile phones on silent to perceive it. The rate at which technology is progressing, there may be a day when people communicate through silence, in silence. But for the time being, let's find ways to use our gadgets wisely!

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IN THE FIELD





As a venture capitalist, VANI KOLA is constantly moving in the world of business and finance. Here she describes how she has been able to integrate that world with family life and find contentment and balance.

I am an engineer by training, and an accidental venture capitalist by profession. When a young person asks me about the 'secret of my success', I'm at a loss for words. First, I don't consider myself particularly successful. And second, success for me is not a destination but a journey. The most important accomplishment of my life has been my ability to embrace the setbacks that have come my way and still have the courage to take risks. It's having no regrets, and being content in the present. I attribute this to my daily meditation practice. It has enabled me to be on a journey of self-discovery and purposeful in my actions. My journey as an entrepreneur, venture capitalist, loving mother and a caring daughter are facets that need to coexist harmoniously for me to be whole.

Corporate life





empathy and accept differences with respect.



I began the practice of Heartfulness Meditation two decades ago. Back then, in 1995, I was the CEO of a start-up in California. I had a young child and felt constantly torn between the demands of family and work. I didn't like the fact that the resulting stress manifested itself in lack of patience, a short temper, fear of failure, and guilt that I wasn't doing enough. When I was introduced to meditation, I felt the universe giving me a solution.

As time unfolded I grew to discover my potential, and learnt to take risks and stand by my convictions. Daily meditation freed me from the fear of failure, while clear decisionmaking allowed me to exercise In this fast-paced world it's important to have a healthy body and healthy mind. Also, the shorter attention spans among the digital natives provide a strong case for meditation.

It's important to realize that ego is contagious and triggers conflicts, fear makes us indecisive, while power makes us lose empathy. I've also discovered that when I reduce inner strife, it decreases external strife as well.

Reading people and situations, problem solving, and effective decision-making are soughtafter leadership skills. And daily meditation has helped me develop these key skills.

Today's woman is expected to strive to have it all. Yet there are

many demands on her heart, mind and time. To achieve balance, women must be rooted. Even though we work very hard, we tend to be driven by guilt that we are not giving enough at home or at work.

Recently I read <u>The Heartfulness</u> <u>Way</u>, which summarizes the meditation practice I follow, but experience speaks for itself. I embarked on a journey of selfdiscovery 20 years ago – this keeps me inspired and grounded every day.

DIGITAL



The human spirit must prevail over technology.

Albert Einstein

ON DIGITAL DETOX

Digital technology is an integral part of most of our lives. How does it affect your way of communicating and your relationships?

1



How could we use the benefits of technology without being overwhelmed by the adverse effects?



Do you ever think about how digital technology affects your health and well-being? Do you do anything about it?

In the early '70s, when I went to London to further my studies, telephone calls were so expensive that I only managed to speak to my parents about 3 times during the first 5 years. The other way was to write and receive letters, but the personal contact was absent. I was a teenager and the lack of communication with family was very traumatic. It is so different now. These technologies allow me to be in touch with my sister and loved ones, who live far away, on a regular basis and with ease. Strangely while the digital technologies bring us closer to those loved ones who are far away, they can add distance with the ones living close to us. A few years ago when I realized that I was sending texts or WhatsApp messages rather than meeting people personally, I started to adopt the approach of first trying for face-to-face communication, especially at work; phone calls or voice calls next; email where I need to record or explain in detail; texts to send short messages like reminders and appointments, or as a last resort. I also try to avoid Facebook other than to follow some inspirational teachers. Take time to talk to a person. The body language and human interaction help a lot; we avoid so many misunderstandings that result from emails. Avoid groups in WhatsApp or Facebook unless the purpose of the group is well defined. Refrain from putting confidential information on any of these platforms. Limit the use of technology to set times. Control the technology rather than letting it control me.

Personally I don't think technology has affected my health that much, except for the degradation of my eyesight due to prolonged computer use at work, which might be due to getting older as well. However, I have seen compulsive behavior and addiction in many people. It is even common to see people checking their phone while crossing the road. Many have also said that the chatter in their mind has increased or amplified due to the constant use of these technologies, which in turn affects their sleep and well-being.

RAVI RAVENDRAN

Retired Project Director, Wellington, New Zealand





The ever-widening scope of hi-tech communication has definitely boosted my work opportunities and performance. Yet, while I find my friend-network expanding with regular use of digital technology, I also discern a pattern emerging from such communicative means, which I believe has a rather singular effect on me. Where I feel refreshed, happy, satisfied, inspired even, on meeting friends in the flesh, 'meeting' them via a screen leaves me... well, for the lack of a better term, partly satisfied. Limitation creeps in: texts and emojis fall short of conveying subtle nuances, often leaving the tête-à-tête lacking heart, not to mention that miscommunication poses a bit of a risk as well. Still, virtual relationships flourish because more often than not, the other party prefers the screen. Sometimes, I wonder if my social networking is taking over my so-see-all networking...

Albert Einstein predicted, "I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction, the world will have a generation of idiots." And most unfortunately, our intrinsic typicality of waking up to reality by the time it's too late may just prove Einstein right. However, where there's a will, there is a way. I am no Miss Perfect, I too fell prey to my own abuse of smart technology as it is rather addictive, isn't it? But I have learnt to use it, not abuse it – simply by using my will. So let's make it a point that whenever our idle hand reaches out for that smart device, we employ that iron will and engage ourselves in a constructive, mind-refreshing, physically-activating and energizing enterprise. There are tons out there, take your pick!

I must admit that up until recently I paid little heed to the warnings of the adverse effects of digital technology on my spiritual, mental and physical health. I took to observing and noticed, in general, how quickly tired I became after a few hours of exposure to this technology. So now I make sure I do the following: take regular breaks - a walk around the block in the fresh air, a quick chat in person, not over the phone, a quiet read of a book. I also turn off the Wi-Fi during the night, keep the phone and

laptop away while eating, cooking or meditating, and carry my mobile in a bag not my pocket. If you know more, do share.

PANKHI CHAUHAN

Consultant Editor and Content Writer, Ahmedabad, India



I find the communication is more impersonal; there is less intimate connection. It creates a sense of being connected that lacks depth or high quality. This technology gives me a lot of flexibility with my work so I can work remotely. I appreciate the easy access to information that digital technology makes possible, like GPS to get around new places and comparison shopping using the phone while in stores to ensure the products are good quality and prices are fare.

When I am at home I always set the cell phone to call forwarding to my landline. This keeps the phone at distance, so I am not always checking it for messages. Spend time talking to people face-to-face and when you are doing that, put your cell phone away, ideally on silent or airplane mode. This supports a deep focus of attention on the human interaction and gives it the priority.

This technology made me very sick in a number of ways and it took quite some time to figure out the source of the problem. We use hardwire cable for all Internet and printer connections to limit our exposure to electromagnetic radiation while keeping us connected. If we want to view something on a tablet, it is easy to connect via the phone hotspot when needed.

> PAUL PASTERNAK Canada



We are in a very 'connected' world. The advancement in technology has brought us closer to many of our long lost associates; it has renewed relationships and changed the way we work. Paper and workspaces may become a thing of the past.

But like all things, when moderation is lost we all suffer. Overuse of these technologies is creating fissures in personal relationship, especially with our near and dear ones. One-to-one and face-toface relationships are being compromised. Anything powerful can be misused if we are not balanced. Digital technology is one of the powers in our hands, so we have to use it discreetly and with caution. One way is to use moderate the 'entertainment' part of it.

It can severely affect our sight and muscle movement, cause mental depression, and create lifestyle-related issues if not dealt with properly. I find a lot of youth getting addicted to it, sleeping and getting up late and wasting a lot of productive time. There is also a danger of exposure to the 'wrong' sort of information. One of the major things I can think of is to avoid writing, reading and forwarding spam messages. When we go to sleep, we can disconnect ourselves from these communication devices and avoid checking them immediately before and after getting up from bed and whenever we wake up in the night. Moderation is the key.

PRASANNA KRISHNA

Director at Welfare Harvesters, Bengaluru, India





SMS, email and WhatsApp play an important role in my life. I use them to stay in contact, usually on a one-toone basis, with a wider field of family and friends than I was able to in the past. I also appreciate the time element in SMS and WhatsApp. One has the time to give a considered response – to be aware of the nature of the communication – what part ego is playing in one's response – and to be sensitive to the feelings of the recipient. I tend not to use social media and group chats except for a simple, factual sharing of events or information for the above reasons.

I feel that we need to use our discrimination in this field. The question we can ask ourselves, and need to ask ourselves, from time to time is: "What is the purpose of this communication?" In this way digital technology can actually be a tool in our self-development as it encourages self-reflection and it can give us the time that is needed for this. However, I am aware as I write these words that I have the luxury of not being in the competitive and time-pressured work environments that many people find themselves in. Nor am I a young person seeking reassurance and affirmation.

I try to follow what my body is telling me about what is still a very unknown element in our lives and also to follow guidelines set down by environmental research. This means minimal and purposeful use and particular care around children. We can turn to nature and observe how we feel when are in nature, and contrast this with how we feel when we are enmeshed in digital technology and sensory bombardment. We need to find that balance within ourselves, and work to maintain it. There is a need to do our utmost for children in this field. We have created something which is both attractive and useful to them; but it has a deadly sting in its tail.

ANNA CHRISTINA PEARSE Bristol, UK

•••

LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Google Plus, MeetUp etc. are needed to be aware of what is going on around us as well as to be able to share our views and affect our social network in a positive way. Especially if you are active culturally or socially you can send messages and share your views and events in the shortest possible time to the largest group you can reach out to.

The same comfort and possibility is offered by all sorts of applications to do our shopping, banking, checking the traffic zones before commuting as well as our public transportation timing and so on. Resistance to all these possibilities doesn't seem wise! It will be similar to trying to flour our grains at this time and age with a hand mill rather than using an electric one, or to pull water with hand from the well rather than using a pipe for it. Who does that?

We can enjoy the calm and concentration by having our cell phones on silent mode during our work hours or whenever we need to focus on some activity. We can consider no WiFi periods at our resting times, during the night, or in our personal relaxation time or get-togethers with family and friends during weekends. It's time to look at digital technology as it is in its reality, as a capable yet a mere tool. Neither fight with it nor indulge in it.

NEGIN MOTAMED

Zoning Examiner, Beaverton, Ontario, Canada

It's Time to Oplug

In the era of constant technology, **MEGHANA ANAND** calls for some digital detox, and shares her ideas on how we can remember to experience the oldfashioned human forms of communication in our disconnected-connected world. he other day I was out dining with my mom at a restaurant, when I suddenly noticed the look of amusement on her face as she stared at the table across from ours. A young couple was waiting for their dinner and both of them were engrossed in their mobile phones completely oblivious to the world around them and even to each other. I was more amused with the look of amusement on my mother's face than with the couple, as to me they represented the mass of the population these days.

This episode left an impression in my mind. After reaching home I made a mental list of my own routine, and I wasn't too happy to realize that I did feel a constant urge to reach out for my mobile and social apps at frequent intervals, whether it was necessary or not. While more and more researchers these days are coming up with their findings about the hazards of electromagnetic frequency (EMF), what is a matter of great concern is the effect these gadgets may have on the future generation, our children.

Dr Natwar Sharma, a pediatric intensivist, shares his experience : "Today, we don't realize how much impact gadgets are producing on kids' minds. I find them getting very angry with their parents when they don't give them the iPad or mobile phone, or let them sit at the desktop and things like that. It's very scary. I call it 'gadgetomania', because these kids are going crazy behind gadgets. And it is we who give these gadgets to our children, because we don't have time for them; we're so busy. In the process we don't realize what we are doing to our child's brain, which is still growing." I have seen changes in my son's behavior when he is exposed to a cell phone or a computer for a long time. He becomes aggressive and inattentive afterwards, and it takes a while for him to come back to his usually calm and responsive countenance. I have noticed distortions in my own thinking process and disturbance in my sleep pattern on the days when I cross my usual time limit on electronic gadgets. Why do you think this happens?

Dr Elizabeth Denley <u>writes</u>:"The subtle body, also known as the mind, is our energetic body and here we have an electromagnetic field created by the negative and positive polarity of charge. ... The negative and positive charges in this energy field also correspond with yin and yang, electron and proton, female and male, and the positive and negative poles of an electric charge, etc. This is how matter is constructed – as a result of the positive and negative charges in atoms. ... The flow of energy in our body, in the earth, in any being, creates a field.

"What happens when we add manmade EMFs into our environment? They interact with our natural EMFs. The stronger the wireless technologies we add to our city environments, the more they will interact with our own energy fields. Some people are very sensitive to the effects, getting headaches, rashes, nausea and nervous complaints. The science is still out on whether EMFs cause these symptoms, the evidence inconclusive, but while scientists do their research on the physical body they are unlikely to measure the real effects, which are happening at the level of the subtle body, the energy field. Eventually this can filter down to have a physical effect. Most diseases start in the subtle body as an imbalance or disturbance. ...

"A few years back, a group of five girls from year 9 in a school in North Jutland, Denmark, did an experiment, because they were having difficulty concentrating. ... They took 400 watercress seeds and placed them in 12 trays. 6 trays were put in a room without radiation and 6 in the next room with two Wifi routers. All the seeds were watered regularly and given the same conditions of light. After 12 days the results were clear: the cress seeds next to the router did not grow as well, and some of them mutated or died. The girls were shocked by the findings. ...

"One of the Danish students who did the original experiment with cress seeds said afterwards, 'None of us sleep with the mobile next to the bed anymore. Either the phone is put far away, or it is put in another room. And the computer is always off."

Today, multinational organizations are waking up to the adverse effects that an overexposure to digital technology has on the productivity and health of their employees. Many of them are coming up with retreats and other innovative methods to rehabilitate their employees from this overwhelming addiction.

"It is no secret that our devices can be taxing on our physical and emotional well-being. ... While hotel packages offer a short breather from digital communication, other programs have a more immersive method of reconnecting people with IRL (in real life) activities. Retreats such as <u>Digital Detox</u>, which works with different US campgrounds, takes a Wet Hot American Summer approach to helping people recover from technology. It replaces Instagram, email and Facebook with yoga, meditation, typewriters and arts and crafts." There are even laws being passed by the governments of some countries banning emails to employees when they are outside their official work hours, as a step to curtail the high rate of stress and burnout in today's corporate world.

In some very interesting research conducted recently, neuroscientists studied the behavioral pattern of 35 CEOs and entrepreneurs who were on a trip to the Moroccan desert as part of a digital detox. While on the first day they were put up in a posh hotel with plenty of access to their smartphones, the next four days were spent purely in each other's company without any electronic devices. In the absence of their smartphones, the participants of the program developed better communicating postures, made deeper connections with each other, slept more soundly, exhibited improved memory, and became more open to change and new perspectives. At the end, many of the guests expressed their wish to bring digital detox into their daily lives.

While organizations and corporates become sensitive to this glaring issue of the right use of technology and carry out necessary innovations in that direction, here are a few steps that I have consciously started incorporating in my own routine and which may be of help to you as well:

• Switch on the router only when you need to access the Internet. Keep it switched off at all other times, especially while sleeping at night.

• Keep your smartphones in a different room from where you sleep. We have an in-built biological clock to wake us up. If necessary, get a clockwork alarm instead of depending on the mobile phone.

Digital detox

What happens when we add manmade EMFs into our environment? They interact with our natural EMFs. The stronger the wireless technologies we add to our city environments, the more they will interact with our own energy fields.

• The best way to overcome a habit is to develop a counter-habit. If you are addicted to social apps, one way to get over it is to fix 2 or 3 time slots in a day when you check your messages and avoid them totally at all other times. This method really works for it's just a matter of getting into a rhythm, and then it becomes automatic.

• While working on the computer, turn on the Wifi connection in the device only when you need to access the Internet or send emails. Similarly with the Wifi in cell phones, switch it on only when you need it. This actually helps to disconnect from unsolicited network connections that are constantly active especially if you are living in a community or apartment.

• If you need to work on your computers for long hours at a stretch, break for water at regular intervals and see how refreshed you feel.

• Avoid using mobile phones in the presence of children, except for making and attending to calls. Children constantly ape their parents and surroundings.

• While driving or walking, keep smartphones in external bags or covers instead of in the pockets of your clothing. • If you are on a leisure trip or vacation, don't carry your phones with you. Leave them behind and feel the difference.

• Turn off Bluetooth at all times except when in use.

A year ago, I was quite closed to the idea of WhatsApp, Facebook and other public forums because I felt they were an intrusion into my privacy and a sheer waste of time. But that is one extreme, while addiction to these gadgets and social apps is another. The drawback of technology lies in its misuse. Kate Unsworth, the CEO of Kovert Designs, who initiated the research on the team of entrepreneurs in Morocco, puts it so well: "It will take more than just individuals unplugging periodically. It will take a change in social values and etiquette."

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The man of meditation is the man who wastes no time, scatters no energy, misses no opportunity.

Annie Besant

"III

difference.

the heartful NEGOTIATOR PART 3

Feelings and Emotions in the Heart

In the previous <u>2 articles</u> of the series, RAVI VENKATESAN

set a framework forhow prior disposition, ideas, thoughts, emotions and feelings all play a huge part in negotiation. He also took a deeper look at what constitutes prior disposition as we walk into a negotiation. In this article he'll take a look at real life negotiation scenarios and explore the role that some of these feelings and emotions play. He'll also review some tips and tricks on how to manage feelings and emotions. Feelings and emotions in the heart always come in dualities. Broadly these can be categorized into 5 main sets of opposites.

THOUGHTS & IDEAS Ego perception - Me vs We Intellect- Logic and Reason Mind - Ad hoc ideas and wandering FEELINGS & EMOTIONS Clarity vs Doubt Fear vs Courage Love vs Anger Peace vs Restlessness Greed vs Contentment PRIOR DISPOSITION Worries and Concerns Desires Likes and Dislike Guilt Guilt

Greed versus Contentment

This opposite forms the basis for most feelings and emotions, and so it is most important. Let's take a scenario where Sam and Janet, a young couple, are trying to decide on where to go for their next vacation. They have both been saving up for this vacation for a couple of years and want to go someplace really nice. In many ways Sam and Janet are a great example of 'opposites attract'. Sam is always looking for more. He wants to get the best deal and squeeze out the best advantage. Janet tends to be content with whatever she gets and is careful to not over reach.

Sam: Let's go to Paris this time. It is great in the summer, and such a romantic destination.

Janet: I thought we could go to Laguna Beach. The tickets would be cheaper, and we could save some money for another trip during Christmas.

Sam: We've worked so hard for this. I really want to make this a big one. Why not go all out?

Janet: All right. I do want you to be happy. Let's do Paris then.

Let's pause and ponder over this simple negotiation. Many of us have gone through similar experiences. Sam negotiated effectively making a case for why they should go to Paris. Janet was reluctant but agreed. However, Sam got greedy and this took the whole negotiation off the rails. Many times, when we let greed creep in, it triggers an angry response from the other side, and then we have to make more concessions to get back to the same place. This is exactly why we should carefully avoid greed in a negotiation.

Sam: Let's go all out and fly first class. I can get a personal loan from work.

> Janet: I don't think that is a good idea. We are already going to spend all our savings on this. What if either of us loses our jobs?

23

Sam: Now, why would you think of a thing like that! If you don't want to go then let's just not go.

th go th

Tips to manage greed versus contentment:

- Whenever you articulate your position, ask yourself the question, "Do I really need this, or am I trying to get more just to get more?" Note, many times we will express a position that is more than we need, just so that we can leave some room to negotiate. This is fine as long as we are sensitive to how the other person will perceive our position.
- Feel free to call out greed politely and respectfully. For example, you can say, "That is a stretch. Do you really need that, or would it be nice if you could get that?" Or you could say, "Is that a nice to have or a must have?" These types of questions can help rope in greed in the other person.

Peace versus Restlessness

Let's take a scenario where John and Tim, who are students, want to rent Mary's apartment. Mary really needs to rent her apartment out, but she has been very restless about what it would be like to have students living there.

Mary: I am glad you guys are interested in renting this apartment. Are you sure you can afford the rent?

John: The rent is high, but Tim and I can manage it by working part time. We like the place and are looking forward to spending time in it.

Mary: Great, there are some rules though. You cannot have a lot of people over. Parties are not allowed.

Tim: That would not work for us. What if we promise to keep the place clean and safe, and

assume responsibility for repairs if any damage occurs?

Mary: Why should any damage occur in the first place? I really need to rent the place, but I feel very disturbed at the prospect of it getting trashed.

John: We are never going to trash the place, but we do want to have friends over. We will make sure nothing happens.

Mary: I am not sure this is the best fit.

This negotiation is a great example of restlessness or disturbance that spirals in one person and clouds her judgment. Mary could have potentially offered a discount on the rent in exchange for Tim and John doing maintenance on the apartment. She could have suggested limitations on the hours up to which they could have friends over, and so forth. However, she was so restless and disturbed that it impaired her ability to generate creative options.

Tips to manage peace versus restlessness:

- Relax yourself prior to negotiations. Identify anything that is making you restless and write down your concerns. This will prevent the restlessness from spiraling out of control. A great way to relax can be found at <u>https://www.youtube.com/</u> watch?v=HuiV395xI4I
- If you spot restlessness in the other person, then politely suggest negotiating at a different time.
- Ask the other person to look at it from your perspective. This generally calms them down and gets them to a more peaceful state.

In the next article, we'll look at other feelings and emotions with additional scenarios. We will also understand how these opposite emotions are interrelated and create virtuous or vicious cycles that impact our negotiations. The first step to improvement is awareness. In your next negotiation, try becoming more aware of these two opposites – greed versus contentment and peace versus restlessness – in yourself and the other person.



DR RAJA AMARNATH and CHITRA RAJAN

explore the importance of sleep in our daily lives, and how meditation helps us to create that stillness in the mind and relaxation in the body that allow us to get a good night's sleep.

a deeply Refreshing Sleep

ur physical life is held together by four necessities: eating, drinking, breathing and sleeping. Sleep serves as critical a role in our health and well-being as the other three. Why do we sleep? Scientists have explored this question from different perspectives:

Evolutionary theory suggests that sleep has an adaptive purpose and sleeping patterns have evolved naturally to promote survival by dormancy during vulnerable periods.

Hibernation theory proposes that the primary function of sleep is to conserve the energy of

organisms and the amount of time they sleep fits their ecological needs or serves their ecological niche.

Restorative theory puts forward the long-held belief that sleep restores and revitalizes the physiological processes in the body. Sleep provides an opportunity for the body to repair and rejuvenate itself.

Scientific research reveals that many of the major restorative functions in the body, like muscle growth, tissue repair, protein synthesis, and growth hormone release occur mostly during sleep.

Sleep Patterns

The time we spend sleeping and waking is governed by our internal circadian biological clock. Circadian rhythms, or the 24-hour sleep-wake cycle, occur in almost all species and control vital aspects of our physiology, and disruption of the circadian cycle is strongly connected with metabolic imbalance. Yet the flexibility to work, eat, sleep, socialize and exercise around the clock is ingrained in our modern lifestyle. Urban populations in particular take sleep deprivation in their stride, without realizing the impact. Daily healthy sleep is important, especially when we consider the long hours that we put in at work during the week, causing anxiety, impatience and stress. Sleep needs also vary according to age; for example, children sleep for 12 hours a day while adults need around 8 hours of sleep.

The National Institutes of Health have estimated that the most common sleep disorder in the world, insomnia, affects a sizeable 6% of the world's population across all age groups. Stress, depression, injury, illness, long working hours, excessive consumption of caffeine or alcohol, overstimulation by technology, irregular sleep hours – the causes are multiple and often inexplicable.

Cycles of Sleep

Sleep progresses in a series of cycles of rapid eye movement (REM), and slow wave sleep or non-rapid eye movement (NREM) stages through the night. We first experience NREM sleep, followed by a shorter period of REM sleep, and then the cycle starts over again. Dreams typically happen during REM sleep.

There are 3 stages of slow wave or NREM sleep:



Stage 1: Your eyes are closed, but it's easy to wake you up. This phase may last for 5 to 10 minutes.



Stage 2: You are in light sleep. Your heart rate slows down and your body temperature drops. Your body is getting ready for deep sleep.



Stage 3: This is the deep sleep stage. It's harder to rouse you during this stage, and if someone wakes you up you will feel disoriented for a few minutes.

During the deep stages of NREM sleep, the body repairs and regrows tissues, builds bone and muscle, detoxifies the central nervous system and strengthens the immune system.

Sleep Deprivation

Sleep deprivation may result from both a shorter duration of sleep as well as a reduced depth of sleep. Repeated interruptions result in incomplete NREM and longer REM phases. As a result, the depth of NREM phase to achieve quality sleep is not touched.



Chronic sleep deprivation carries with it a host of health problems, such as stress and anxiety, depression, obesity, diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease, impaired immune system, loss of productivity, early aging and premature death.

Another area that researchers study is the impact on learning and memory. When we are sleep deprived, our focus, attention and vigilance drift, making it more difficult to receive information. Lack of adequate sleep affects mood, motivation, judgment and our perception of events. A good night's sleep brings emotional stability, helping with anxiety and moodiness.



Meditative practices help to integrate brain functions, influencing cognitive behavior and emotional aspects in patients. Removal of tangled thoughts in meditation brings about a stillness, which produces a calming effect.

Better sleep Through Meditation

It is believed that our minds generate 50,000 thoughts per day. Most of these thoughts are repetitive and limiting, consisting of a spiral of anxieties and worries about the past and future. This is the fundamental cause of stress leading to sleep problems. Training our minds to meditate by ignoring thoughts brings us to the awareness of the present and creates a balanced state within, and in doing so removes stress. As a result, healthy sleep can be instantaneous, deep and undisturbed for a balanced mind trained through regular meditation, especially with Transmission. The practice of retaining the meditative state throughout the day, as we go about with our activities, further inhibits the development of stress.

Sleep is induced when the conscious mind is relaxed and when we dive into the unconscious mind. It goes without saying that meditation induces the same response as the Sleep Relaxation Response, where our breathing and heart rate are likely to become balanced as our brainwaves alter and we begin to feel peaceful and blissful.

Melatonin, a hormone produced by the brain, also known as 'the miracle drug from within', regulates the circadian rhythms and is believed to be essential to feelings of happiness and wellbeing. Insomniacs have a problem getting enough of this highly vital chemical, which is responsible for a normalized sleep cycle. And guess what? Meditation augments the synthesis of melatonin.

Diseases that cause sleep disturbances are treated through meditation; the list includes prevention, treatment and rehabilitation in the case of heart disease, bronchial asthma, and anxiety neurosis, COPD, depression, cancer, and certain degenerative diseases and chronic pain conditions.

Meditative practices help to integrate brain functions, influencing cognitive behavior and emotional aspects in patients. Removal of tangled thoughts in meditation brings about a stillness, which produces a calming effect.

After regular practice of Heartfulness meditation, people have reported a better quality of sleep as well as needing less sleep. 99% of people suffering from insomnia make some effort to sleep. Effort makes us alert and tense, while sleep is a no-effort phenomenon.When we have to make an effort, sleep will be disturbed.

Patanjali, author of the Yoga Sutras, said that sleep and *Samadhi* have something in common: sleep comes and *Samadhi* also comes, whereas when we try hard we miss it.

Meditation produces the energy of awareness. Practice the 'art of being' or effortless awareness through meditation during the day. This is a sure guarantee to healthy sound sleep.

Reference:

Amarnath, R., et al. 2017. *Improving Sleep Quality Through Heartfulness Meditation — Technical Aspects and Benefits*. IJHSR,7(5):368–381.

Useful links:

http://www.heartfulnessmagazine.com/sleep-well-tomeditate-well/ nterview

The soul is the instrument of joy. Nay! It is joy itself, and it cannot exist without bliss and happiness.

Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh





AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH PIERRE RABHI

Transcendent OVC Part 2



In part 2 of this interview with **PIERRE RABHI**, he speaks about Colibris and some of the other projects he has taken up to bring awareness and change in society. In particular, he speaks about the pressing need for moderation and reduction in human consumption, and the importance of transcendent love and joy.

In the first part of this interview, you said that your approach and action developed in 3 ways: through philosophical reflections about society, a spiritual quest and a practical approach. Does the creation of Colibris in 2007 fit into this scheme? How did this movement start, and how do you explain its incredible development?

In 2007, along with several friends, including Cyril Dion and Isabelle Desplats, we decided to create a grass roots movement for active reflection and practical ways to build a greener and more humane society. Today, Colibris has grown enormously! It has three main objectives: to inspire, to connect and to support citizens engaged in individual and collective transition processes. These days, Colibris implements so many projects that I would have a hard time presenting them all to you.

To highlight just a few, we have the series, *Domaine du Possible*, published by Actes Sud, some of which is co-published by Colibris; many local action groups; the University of Colibris which offers free online training on eco-construction, permaculture, agro-ecology and education; and finally Fabrique, which is a platform for everyone to do their bit by offering time, talent, material resources and donations in the service of inspiring projects. In short, there are so many things, and I am very happy today about the work accomplished and the number of projects that have been implemented.

This growth has accelerated because now libraries and bookshops are full of books that take note of our human excesses, but now people want to act, to find solutions, and this is what Colibris offers!

In recent years you have also supported other projects that spread the same values as yours, especially in Crete and Morocco. Can you tell us about them?

Indeed, we are doing a lot. An endowment fund was created in 2013 with the aim of raising funds so

Agro-ecology

that we could help. This is a small fund associated with the economic model proposed by Schumaker in his book, *Small Is Beautiful*.

To the extent that our meagre finances allow, we support initiatives that share our values of humanism and respect for living things and biodiversity. In Morocco, the NGO called Terre & Humanisme Maroc has created a training center for agro-ecology not far from Marrakech. In collaboration with Kaligraines and Melitakes, the Endowment Fund has helped to build an eco-hut to house their volunteers in Crete. The Pierre Rabhi Endowment Fund has also supported projects led by NGOs in Africa, one in the Navajo Reservation in the southern United States, and the actions of Navdanya, the women's seed movement.

Your life's journey, your reflections, your meetings and your readings have led you to place human beings and Nature at the heart of your thought and action. Can you share some of your thoughts and ideas?

I told you earlier what I think about our model of a 'slave' society; the kind of barter where people give their life for a salary. They give their life to a system that is not fair, because there is a hierarchy of powerful owners and poor people. In human evolution, the concern for distribution and equity has not been very evident.

Society has been based on a hierarchy of 'having' to the detriment of 'being'. In the acquisition of money there are very rich people, very poor people, and those in between. All this establishes



a hierarchy of destinies that I cannot bear, because the fact that money can determine our social structure is offensive to me. Money should be at the service of something else.

We have just launched a collection of books called *Carnets d'Alerte*, to try to help people understand these issues by providing an integrated approach. For example, in the book on finance, *Les Excès de la Finance ou l'Art de la Prédation Légalisée*, we have highlighted the way society has legalized and standardized predation or 'grabbing': the moment I pay I acquire something legally. This form of legal acquisition may satisfy society, but not morality.

Society has been based on a hierarchy of 'having' to the detriment of 'being'.

Is it right that because an individual has money he can buy the Amazon rainforest, or that the big cartels can 'grab' and confiscate the property owned by the whole of humanity, that they did not even create? If human beings were intelligent we would recognize what Nature or the Divine has given us totally free of charge, as a common good to all people and all creatures. Unfortunately we are not intelligent. Instead, we have proclaimed human beings as the best, and from there we have defined a set of rules in our own interest, in a totally arbitrary way.

In addition, the male world has completely dismissed the feminine dimension. For millennia our societies have been based on the subordination of women. Even the Bible promotes and supports this subjugation of women. I read the Old Testament, and it is difficult to find a woman who 'stands up'. And it's to Eve that we owe all these troubles: what an idea to eat the apple! So we start from this idea, which has then become ingrained, then fossilized, and finally an accepted fact.

In the first place, God is masculine. I do not see why he would not be both masculine and feminine. From there, an entire civilization has been influenced by precepts, principles and arbitrarily established creeds. This asymmetry or imbalance between the feminine and masculine principles creates chaos and destruction. The woman as creative energy, as childbearer and mother of humanity, is naturally inclined to protect life, and we must pay tribute to the guardians of life and listen to the feminine in each of us. Without her, there is no change.

All these arbitrary rules have built a society where fear dominates and where we think we are intelligent because we make weapons, the apotheosis being the atomic bomb. When we see all this, it is not easy to say that humanity is intelligent. In fact, we have confused our abilities with intelligence. We have skills but not intelligence. If our wonderful abilities were governed by intelligence, everything would be in an intelligent order.

Today we are so very far from an intelligent order: slaughter and violence are defended better than life. Violence is encouraged with the advent of more and more new killing machines, and Nature is destroyed. What this means is that the human phenomenon – just a short minute and a half or two minutes in the equivalent of a 24-hour history of the Earth – has been a real catastrophe. The human being is the ecological catastrophe number 1.

We wrote a book with Jean-Marie Pelt, in which he made a retrospective of the way life has evolved on Earth through cooperation and association, a principle that governs nature. He showed that life owes more to alliance than to rivalry. I often tell people that a lion eats an antelope, but does not have a bank of antelopes. He must survive, but he does not survive by accumulation or by speculation, but only by the necessity to which he is subjected, as is the case with all of us. This

Agro-ecology

is the big difference with the indefinite hoarding of a few human beings who confiscate legitimate property from the rest of humanity.

You speak about the urgent need to reduce our needs and the responsibility to leave a better world for future generations. What is your vision of what tomorrow's society could be?

I have indeed said a lot about degrowth, or the reduction of wants, because in France I was pushed to run for the 2002 presidential elections. After much hesitation, asking myself, "What am I going to to do in this gallery?" I eventually proposed myself. The only thing that motivated me was that this candidacy could create a dynamic, a pretext for dialogue between people. Today, citizens need to talk to each other and not just listen to politicians. So I thought it was an opportunity.

Our campaign was more of a manifesto: "What planet will we leave our children, but also which children will we leave to the planet?" It was a call to elevate consciousness: to go beyond all the divisions, all the tendencies that bury us in incurable differences, and try unity. Our campaign was therefore based on anything that could contribute to unity, and contribute to a different world, a paradigm shift. Among our proposals was the famous idea of degrowth. I tried to explain this concept of negative growth, but it was not always well understood.

When we launched our campaign, a number of politicians heard us, joined us and signed up to our program, which was a great encouragement



to us. Our whole process was centered on public debate, and people talked, discussed and exchanged in a multitude of places.

And then time passed, and the idea of degrowth was misunderstood. Maybe we did not know how to explain it. But what is certain is that a fundamental thing was said: we cannot, humanity cannot have unlimited aspirations and unlimited appetites in a system that is limited. The planet cannot reproduce a forest as it is cut, cannot replenish the seas with fish as they are fished, and so on.

Some people have accepted and adhered to the idea, others not. We have no statistics on the impact of the proposal, but we have had a lot of positive feedback. I have never been aggrieved by this idea that we need to reduce our footprint, as for me simplicity and moderation are the true power. It is a conscious choice that everyone can make for the Earth and for equity. Then I wrote a book entitled *Vers la Sobriété Heureuse*. My publisher told me that it would be miraculous if it sold more than 4,000 copies, and today it has sold 350,000.

It has nothing to do with me personally, it's just that today people do understand that wanting a complex society to which one gives one's whole existence, and being happy at the same time, does
Our campaign was more of a manifesto: "What planet will we leave our children, but also which children will we leave to the planet?" It was a call to elevate consciousness: to go beyond all the divisions, all the tendencies that bury us in incurable differences, and try unity.

not work. On the contrary! People living in the developed world have never consumed so many anxiolytics and watched so much entertainment of all kinds. They are escaping from reality. Why? Maybe because this reality scares them. We try to escape by all means. Of course, escape is easier than tackling the issues and dealing with them with the rationality and determination that would be required.

Today the situation is difficult for everyone, at least in France, because nobody is guaranteed of having a job in 5 years. We see a general disintegration of the social system, which is not likely to stop. We can try everything we want, but it will not change because it is the logic itself that ensures that it cannot stop. What is needed now is to praise the power of moderation, and to consider moderation and simplicity as the keys to our survival. To aspire to simplicity is to make a fair, moral and structurally just choice. That's why there's a growing craze for simplicity. Simplicity rather than complexity can lead us to joy.

Can you explain this idea further?

Joy is free. It is something that comes from elsewhere, of a transcendent essence. As we no longer have access to joy in our society, we fill our lives with pleasure. I have nothing against pleasure, but when it becomes industrial and ephemeral it is consumed like the rest. I know people who should be happy and fulfilled because they have everything, but are they joyful? That is another question.

I sometimes find joy in people who have almost nothing, but every hour that passes is an hour of happiness for them. They do not have a moment of despondency! It shows us that reaching something transcendent through the material way is simply not possible. But when we have nothing, we are also not happy. So having just what is necessary brings us inner contentment and predisposes us to joy.

Interview by Sylvie Berti Rossi

Part 1 of Interview: http://www.heartfulnessmagazine.com/agro-ecologylove-socrates-part-1/



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Our highest endeavor must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives. The need for imagination, a sense of truth, and a feeling of responsibility these three forces are the very nerve of education.

Rudolf Steiner

A Different Way to Play

Have you ever been to the world of imagination? Children explore it always. On her radio channel Toxic Free Talk Radio, the internationally recognized consumer advocate **DEBRA LYNN DADD** engages in an interesting conversation with **SARAH BALDWIN**, who has been inspiring parents and children alike to trigger their imagination and creativity through her website www. bellalunatoys.com. She offers families natural, wooden and eco-friendly toys. There are many toxic chemicals around; there're all over the place. They are in consumer products, in the foods we eat, in the water we drink, in our bodies and in our homes. Today we're going to be talking about toys, and not just about finding non-toxic toys; we are going to be talking about a different way to play altogether. The sun is shining here in Clearwater, Florida, and my guest today is Sarah Baldwin. She is the owner of Bella Luna Toys. Hi Sarah!

Hi Debra, thanks for having me.

Thank you for being here. Well, at Bella Luna Toys you sell natural, wooden and eco-



friendly toys inspired by Waldorf education. So, first, what is Waldorf education?

Well, Waldorf is an educational movement that actually started in the 1920s in Germany. It has been in the USA for many years but in the last 10 to 20 years it has exploded in popularity around the world. There are now over a 100 Waldorf schools in the USA, it's growing in China, and it's really exploding around the world.

Waldorf has always encouraged natural childhood, natural play, the importance of play and the importance of imagination for young children. I think the reason it's exploding in popularity is because neuroscientific research on the brain and studies on child development are showing how important imaginative play is in early childhood. We believe the key to creative thinking later in life is imaginative free play in the early years. Imagine the future and future creators, not just consumers. Imagination is so important, and healthy toys are so important. Before we talk more about that, tell me your story. How did you become interested and why is this important to you?

I discovered Waldorf education soon after my first child was born over 20 years ago. Prior to that I had been an actress, but always interested in education and always thought about teaching. After I became a mother, my priorities in life really began to change and I became more and more interested in children and education.

When my son was a baby I learned about Waldorf education and visited a Waldorf school. I stepped into a kindergarten and there was a moment where I saw this beautiful environment, wooden toys and silk curtains, and it seemed so calm and nurturing. The children had been baking bread, and there was the smell of that bread. Outside there was a garden. The children seemed so healthy and imaginative in their play. There were little slippers all lined up in the room. In that moment I felt so excited. I thought, "This is the right environment for children," and at that point, thinking about 41



Children's toys and play



my son, I thought, "I want to come here every day too!"

So before my kids ever got to a Waldorf school, I had enrolled in the teacher training and it really changed my life and my family's life in profound ways. I completed the training and then taught everything from parent/child classes to children as young as two years old, and later nursery and kindergarten classes for four, five and six year olds. About five years ago, after teaching for quite a number of years, I was feeling ready for another change but I wasn't sure what I would do next.

When my children were teenagers, our school enrolment dropped and they needed to let go of one teacher. I volunteered to step back. Almost as soon as I made that decision I found out that Bella Luna Toys was for sale. It is a web-based company selling the kinds of toys we use in Waldorf education. Even though I had no experience at the time in business or retail, it really appealed to me because I knew these toys and I loved them. I was really excited about introducing them to a whole new generation of young parents, and to share my knowledge, my love of these toys, to promote the importance of play and imagination for young children and to support parents. So I took a plunge and bought the online business. We are in the midst of our fifth holiday season. It's grown considerably, and I now have a blog and a video series where I share my passion not only for the toys but also for Waldorf education.

When I was a child I don't think we even had Waldorf schools here, or at least my parents didn't know anything about them or they probably would have sent me to a Waldorf school. I think it is a very wonderful thing, and I am very happy that people like you are doing it. Could you describe the difference between Waldorf play and children playing with regular toys that you would buy in a toy store?

For one thing, Waldorf toys are almost always made out of natural materials like wood, cotton, wool and silk. Not only are these healthy and safe materials for children, but they also nourish a child's senses. Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf education, talked about the importance of young children learning all about the world through the senses, and so we nurture those senses with things that feel good.

... and feel natural to their bodies and connect them with the natural world.

Yes. And another thing that differentiates Waldorf toys from mainstream toys is that they are unformed. For instance, a great toy is a set of natural blocks made out of tree branches that have just been sawed. They're organic forms. They're not fixed and hard, they're not rigid shapes, so it really allows a child's imagination to go all kinds of places. For example, little discs of sawed wood could be plates, or they could be money, or they could be any number of things.

Great toys in my classroom were made of things that we found in nature – a basket of pine cones or a basket of smooth river stones. And the kinds of toys that we introduce now are handmade dolls made from natural fibers, so they have cotton skin, silk stuffed with wool, yarn for hair, mohair etc. These dolls have very simple faces, as that is one of the hallmarks of a Waldorf doll. Sometimes there is no face at all, but most dolls will have two dots for eyes and a little dot for a mouth so that a child can really use her imagination. She can imagine this doll is happy or sad, crying or sleeping, unlike a hard rigid molded plastic doll with a fixed smile that's always wide awake and happy.

So we're looking for unformed toys that are open ended, that can be played with in any number of ways not just one way, and can become any number of things to really enliven a child's imagination. I think that's so beautiful. As you said earlier, it encourages children to use their imagination, which then becomes an excellent tool later in life. To be able to imagine what they want to create in the world, and then create it because they are already accustomed to doing that, is just so great.

Exactly.

I'm looking at your website right now and I really appreciate that you have described them so well, because we need to have the information about what all these products, toys, or whatever, are made from in order to make these decisions.

Yes, yes, absolutely. And also, for example, some non-toxic stains have almond oil in them, so if your child has an allergy to it, it's especially important to know the ingredients. In the case of children with sensitivities or allergies, parents need to be really vigilant about what finishes have been used on the toys. For that reason we also sell quite a large number of unfinished raw wooden toys.

I like the unfinished ones, because they are even a little more abstract.

Yes, yes indeed.

To be continued.

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4 Pillars of Self-Development

CHIARA TOWNLEY describes four human qualities that have helped to remain open and keep her sense of wonder alive.

In the first years of life, we are eager to learn how to walk and speak. Then we go to school and study a variety of subjects – our minds are open to receive, like sponges. When we become adults, we spend more time reinforcing our existing beliefs and creating separation between us and 'the other', instead of learning from our differences. Self-development is not possible if we close ourselves into our cocoon; but if we keep our sense of wonder alive we will discover a lot about ourselves and the world. These four pillars can help us in our growth, regardless of our background and beliefs:

CURIOSITY

COMPASSION

SERVICE

We were born with curiosity, but some of us lose it when we become adults. We don't have to go back to school to learn new things: self-teaching through books and videos is a great way to nurture any interest we have and go deeper. I read a lot and take every conversation with people I love, or strangers, as a way to learn something new. Everyone else has something to teach us, and we have something to teach them. As we become aware of the world around us and get in touch with our feelings, we create a space to hold our emotions and the emotions of others. We feel them, accept them, and learn how to deal with them. We start to look at the suffering of other people with different eyes – the eyes of compassion. We stop judging ourselves and others, and extend the love to all creatures around us. Being very emotional, sometimes I suffer because of the pain other people feel. If you are like me, you may want to use meditation to find detachment. Eastern philosophies teach us that compassion and non-attachment go hand in hand.

AWARENESS

Being able to observe what is going on around us and inside us, and being in touch with our emotions, are essential traits to nurture. Awareness and self-awareness are crucial to create a healthy relationship with the world and ourselves. When we approach life only in a very rational way, it can be hard to connect with our feelings. Disciplines like meditation can help. It's essential to take a moment to breathe and investigate what is going on inside us. The next stage is the will to contribute to making the world a better place. Nobody can save the world alone, but every little action counts. Not all of us can afford to give to charities, or do a job we love, but what matters is the way we do what we do. If we clean the streets with dignity and the desire to help our community, we are doing a service. When I was younger I wanted to be a psychologist, but I abandoned the idea because I knew I wouldn't be able to detach myself from the life of my patients. My service is to write to inspire other people without risking my emotional balance.

Service is the final stage of self-development, because it includes all the lessons previously learned and keeps them alive.

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The Sacred dance of Healing

- PART 2 -

In part 2 of this exclusive interview with DR CRYSTAL JONES, she explores the notion of being here in the present moment. Dr Jones is fluent in many languages of healing, including medicine, alternative healing, yoga and meditation. She acts as a guide for women who are ready to dive within and heal themselves. We're undergoing a collective evolution. You have a number of clients you've seen over time. Do you see any patterns that are common in those things that come up for them or ways they move through challenges?

The pattern I see the most is when we have not understood our own value system and our own truth. I can speak on this in many different cases, but let's take fertility.

I see people who tell me they can't get pregnant. This may happen when they've seen a lot of people in their life having issues or a doctor has told them that they are infertile. There may have been times during their lives when they told their bodies not to procreate. So a lot of things have been 'voiced' to their body. They have created a truth that they now believe. So I can't do anything to help them until that narrative has changed. And it's because of what someone has told them. It's the price of giving power to an outside source. What did somebody tell you? What did that book tell you? What did the doctor tell you? Those are some of the biggest blocks I see.

Another block I see, especially with women, is in people who have no idea who they are, except in relation to others. When they don't know who they are, or what their higher Self is, then when they are asked to move into their higher Self they can't do it, because it's dependent on other people. Then when the relationship changes – whether child or mother or daughter



or wife – they feel like they don't have any identity anymore.

So at a core level, identity is also a major milestone for people. When they tell me who they are at a fundamental level, without titles and roles, it blows their minds that they're actually somebody other than a savior for someone else.

And when people let go of those identities, what are they left with? What do they discover?

They begin discovering that their life is an experience. They get to the point where they can say, "I am", without needing an adjective qualifying it. When they get to that point, there is no need to be strong or weak, good or bad. At the "I am" junction, they are able to be in the present moment, and to adapt to things that

When you sit in that silence you experience yourself, and you really get to feel what comes up for you. come, things that go, because they are not having to be strong or weak, they're not having to make a good decision or a bad decision. "I am" is based on my truths, my beliefs and my values, and if I want that to change I will.

You move past the duality.

Yes, you realize that your shadows and your light and your gray scale are not outside of you. You really understand oneness.

What practices do you recommend to help integrate that oneness?

Well, obviously I recommend meditation. I know that's something that a lot of people are doing today, but really sit in silence before you start your day, before you ask everybody else what you're supposed to be doing today, before you ask your phone what you're supposed to be doing today; just sit in that silence.

When you sit in that silence you experience yourself, and you really get to feel what comes up for you. If you're feeling something that you can't ignore, like anger or jealousy or "I'm not worthy enough," sit with that feeling in meditation and see what comes up for you. "Why do I feel like I'm not worthy? Why was I told I wasn't worthy? Am I worthy?" Just sit and ask yourself those questions, not necessarily needing an answer but experiencing what comes up. The more you experience what comes up, the more you're telling yourself, "I really want to know who I am. I really want to come into wholeness." A lot of the time we write down answers, and when we look at them we think, "That doesn't look good," or "I didn't want that to come up." So instead just sit with the feeling and see what comes up. That's how you go into certain experiences and formulate your own truth.

You spoke before about truth evolving. Can you speak a little bit about how we start off with those impressions that we create as truth, and then have to examine them to see how that truth evolves?

I believe truth is evolutionary, because of a story I read about some blind people around an elephant. One person was touching the tail, another one was touching the trunk etc., and they were all saying what the elephant felt like but they all had different stories. As they walked around the elephant their truth began to evolve, because it was dependent on where they were, based on their experience and what they felt. That's what I mean by evolutionary truth.

There is a point in life where we build a foundation, and this foundation determines our morals, our ethics, and other things, and then life hits us. We want to explore something else, but we've been told that it is wrong. So, evolutionary truth really allows us to explore things that we wouldn't have done most of the time out of fear. We start to explore new things and choose: "I like this" or "I don't like this," "I'm going to integrate this" or "I'm not going to integrate this."

As we get older, our truth evolves from being a sperm and an egg. We're always evolving. Do we want to get to a point of false self-mastery where we have a set of guidelines we're going to live by, and we're never going to allow anything to dictate or change our belief system? I think that's where we begin to feel numb and we start to hide things and think of things that aren't ...

Sometimes situations or people come to open us up to new perspectives, but we look at them as invaders. Well, they're not necessarily invaders. When we have a space of evolutionary truth, we're really opening ourselves up to a lot of things, whereas when we're in the pattern of "It has to be like this!" we don't even know that things can resonate well with us, because we have automatically defined them as wrong.

A lot of what I've been saying is about staying in the present moment. Because evolutionary truth means "I am here right now." What is working? What is not working? What feels right? What

We can ask our higher power: "What does 'yes' feel like? What does 'no' feel like? Am I going with that feeling?" That's evolutionary truth.

Healing



doesn't feel right? It's based on awareness of our intuition. We can ask our higher power: "What does 'yes' feel like? What does 'no' feel like? Am I going with that feeling?" That's evolutionary truth. And sharing that with people also allows us to be less judgmental of other people's truth, because we understand that theirs is an evolutionary process too. Ours isn't more right than theirs.

Yes, blockages to healing often seem to come from judgment and holding on to a perception that we have of ourselves or of another person.

Absolutely. That is also what generally happens during healing phases. Say you are seeing a professional who has a specific generic truth that doesn't necessarily go with your body, but their truth is so solid that they are not able to really integrate with you because they think, "This is what I'm supposed to be," instead of "Okay, let's just be here. Let's be together, and let's do this sacred dance together."

I think that brings us full circle.

Absolutely. It's really about being in the present moment.

Interviewed by EMMA IVATURI

All things share the same breath – the beast, the tree, the man ... the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports.

attributed to Chief Seattle



be inspired.



What if someone told you there was a simple set of practices that could help you manage every aspect of your daily life, and at the same time take you to a level of human potential beyond your wildest imagination? Would you be interested? Most people would at least be curious.

That is in fact an accurate explanation of the practices of Yoga, but most people don't realize it. Yoga includes a holistic set of practices for overall self-development and the well-being of the body, mind and soul. A few thousand years back, the great sage Patanjali compiled the current yogic practices of that time into a simple framework consisting of eight parts or limbs, and that framework is still used today. It is known as Ashtanga Yoga.

But the practices of Yoga have evolved since Patanjali was alive, in response to the needs of the time and especially during the last 150 years. So in this series DAAJI explores each limb of Yoga in the light of the modern day yogic practices of Heartfulness. He shows us how to integrate inner spiritual practices with living in the world and refining our personality, so as to create that true state of Yoga – skill in action and integration of the spiritual and worldly aspects of life.

Pranayama

Prana • Pranayama • PranaPratishtha • Pranahuti

Pranayama is the fourth of Patanjali's eight limbs of yogic practice. Here DAAJI explains the purpose of the practices of *Pranayama* and some key dos and don'ts. He also introduces *Prana* as the base of all these practices, as well as touching upon *Prana pratishtha* in traditional worship and *Pranahuti* in the Heartfulness way of meditation, describing how the regulation and stabilization of our energy field helps us to dive deep in meditation to the center of our being.

or thousands of years people have worshipped and prayed to idols and statues, including images of gods, saints, and symbols like the cross. Often these images have very profound symbolism, and have also been charged with *Prana* or spiritual essence by great saints or prophets from the past. This process of charging an idol is known as *Prana pratishtha*. Now, here is a question: if a saint or yogi can infuse an inanimate statue, cross or stone with spiritual essence, can that same saint not also infuse the heart of a human being with the same essence? A human being who can feel the divine essence and respond directly rather than having to go through the medium of an idol? The answer will become clear later in the article.

Swami Vivekananda once said that, "*Prana* stands in metaphysics for the sum total of the energy that is in the universe. This universe, according to the theory of the philosophers, proceeds in the form of waves; it rises, and again it subsides, melts away, as it were; then again it proceeds out in all this variety; then again it slowly returns. So it goes on like a pulsation. The whole of this universe is composed of matter and force; and according to Sanskrit philosophers, everything that we call matter, solid and liquid, is the outcome of one primal matter, which they call *Akasha* or ether; and the primordial force, of which all the forces that we see in nature are manifestations, they call *Prana*. It is this *Prana* acting upon *Akasha* which creates this universe, and after the end of a period, called a cycle, there is a period of rest. One period of activity is followed by a period of rest; this is the nature of everything."This is also the nature of our breath.

What is the first thing we hope for when a baby is born? That the baby is breathing normally. And at the end of life we also check for breathing, because without it we are dead. Breathing is a sign of life, and in that sense *Pranayama* is all about breath.



But there is much more to it than that. It is *Prana* by which we breathe, by which our blood circulates, our nerves and muscles work, and by which we think. All forms of energy are manifestations of *Prana*.

Pranayama is a combination of two words, *Prana* and *Ayama*. The word *Prana* is derived from the Sanskrit *An*, which means 'to move' or 'to breathe' with the prefix *Pra* which generally is used to intensify the meaning of the root with which it is associated. The word *Ayama* means 'expanding, extending, stretching,' so *Pranayama* means to extend or expand the life force or breath. *Ayama* also sometimes means 'restraint or control', in which case it can also mean controlling or restraining the breath. So both expansion and contraction are there in the process, as in the process of breathing itself.

PATANJALI'S DESCRIPTION

In his Yoga Sutras, Patanjali tells us the following about *Pranayama*:

2.49: Tasmin sati shvasa prashvsayoh gati vichchhedah pranayamah.

Once perfection in the meditation posture has been achieved, then we can practice regulation of the incoming and outgoing flow of the breath and expansion of the vital energy or *Prana*. This is known as *Pranayama*.

2.50: Bahya abhyantara sthambha vrittih desha kala sankhyabhih paridrishtah dirgha sukshmah.

Pranayama has three aspects: outward flow or exhalation, inward flow or inhalation, and the absence of both during the stationary transition between them, which is known as retention or suspension. These three states are regulated by place, time and number, and the breathing becomes slow and subtle.

2.51: Bahya abhyantara vishaya akshepi chaturthah.

There is a fourth type of *Pranayama*, which transcends the inward and outward *Pranayamas*. It appears effortless and occurs during concentration.

2.52: Tatah kshiyate prakasha avaranam.

As a result, the veil covering the inner light diminishes.

2.53: Dharanasu cha yogyata manasah.

The mind now becomes fit for concentration or dharana.

In summary, once you have perfected your meditation posture, you can practice regulating the inflow and outflow of your breath and expansion of your vital energy. There are three aspects to your breathing – exhalation, inhalation, and the stationary transition between them. These three states are regulated by place, time and number, and eventually the breathing will become slow and subtle. As a result of these practices, the veil covering the inner light diminishes, and the mind becomes fit for concentration. The fourth type of *Pranayama* transcends these inward and outward movements, appearing effortlessly and occurring during concentration.

By now we can really start to see the flow that Patanjali envisioned in his Ashtanga Yoga. First came Yama and Niyama, because without refinement of character what good is spirituality! There would be no balance between the inner and outer states. Then when starting a spiritual practice, the first step was to establish the right posture to create the field for an inner approach – that is the third limb, Asana. Perfection in posture was a prerequisite for the later steps. Pranayama then followed directly on from Asana, and it also created the right field of energy for both Pratyahara and Dharana, the fifth and sixth limbs of Ashtanga Yoga.

THE INFLOW AND OUTFLOW OF ENERGY

So the original purpose of *Pranayama* was to regulate the breath to become slow and subtle, in order to allow the attention to turn inwards, calming the mind and dissolving scattered thinking patterns. After all, what are thoughts but energy? This inward turning of the energetic field would then strengthen the link of the *Pranamaya kosha*, the energy sheath of the human being, with the more subtle planes of existence – the mind and soul – rather than always directing energy outwards into the physical plane.

The yogic practices of *Pranayama* work on the energetic field of the human being (known as the subtle body) and the associated *Pranamaya kosha*.

The yogic practices of Pranayama work on the energetic field of the body (known as the subtle body) and the associated Pranamaya kosha. When done well they bring mental balance and well-being, resulting in good health, because our energetic system is then resonating in tune and in harmony with the universal energy. When done well they bring mental balance and well-being, resulting in good health, because our energetic system is then resonating in tune and We can think of *Pranayama* as the expansion of vitality; breathing with the inflow and outflow of the whole. We expand into the infinite breath of the Eternal.

When we do breathing exercises with this in mind, then we will see their effect. If the goal is just to breathe in and out, breathe in and out, in a particular rhythm then we won't enjoy it, but once we do it with the awareness that it is meant for this higher purpose, then it is different.

We can easily observe what happens when we change the way we breathe; our whole energetic field changes. For example, try to observe how your breathing differs when you are angry versus calm, when you are asleep versus awake, and when you are loving versus selfish. And different patterns of breathing are also an indication of a deeper energy pattern - that of inflow and outflow. We can compare it to Newton's second law of thermodynamics about entropy: he says that in unregulated systems entropy or disorder increases. When we get angry with another person, for example, our energetic field is destabilized because our attention is drawn outwards to the periphery of our being. Our system remains unstable. In contrast, when energy flows inwards towards the center of our being, we feel refreshed and rejuvenated, and our breathing becomes rhythmic, subtler and more relaxed. At the center of our being we are one with everything - in fact there is only oneness - so when our energy moves inwards we are moving towards harmony.

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CARE IS NEEDED

So the practices of *Pranayama* are very useful in regulating our energy system, as they provide the inputs to bring stability and reverse the increase in entropy or disorder in our system. But they can be misused, so that instead of refining our energy field they create disturbance. This happens when there is not proper guidance, so it is always better to learn the practices of *Pranayama* from an expert.

There are also many nuances to the science of *Pranayama*, and here are some that Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh advised to his followers:

- While engaging in *Pranayama*, avoid cold and sour foods. Also avoid very hot foods, as they may also cause some harm.
- In the beginning there may be bleeding through the nose, the ears or in the stool, which will disappear with time.

- It is not a good idea to immediately start devoting a lot of time to *Pranayama*. Instead go on gradually increasing the number of breaths.
- Exhale slowly and through the nostrils rather than through the mouth, as exhaling through the mouth may harm the teeth.
- *Pranayama* should not be done on an empty stomach or immediately after food. The stomach should neither be totally empty nor totally full but in between.

These restrictions are for beginners. Adepts can do *Pranayama* as they like, but it is always better to avoid excessive practice, as it creates too much disturbance. Over the years I have seen that whenever there is a lot of physical disturbance during meditation, like unconscious shaking or oscillations, it is because the person has been doing too much *Pranayama*.

THE PRANAMAYA KOSHA

The *Pranamaya kosha* is the sheath in which we experience the flow of energy, which is described according to five energetic processes (*karmendriyas*) and five energy flows (*pranas*). The five energetic processes are elimination, reproduction, movement, grasping with our hands, and speaking. The five flows of energy within the human body are known as the *vayus* or winds. They are:

• The inward flow that governs respiration and the receiving of everything, from air and food to ideas and impressions, When our sympathetic nervous system is activated by stress, we can calm ourselves by activating the parasympathetic system, for example through the Chandra nadi. And when we need to be more active and engaged, we can activate the sympathetic system in a similar way through the Surya nadi. We are able to bring about balance.

- The downward and outward flow of elimination – excretion, urination and menstruation on the physical level, and anything that needs to be removed mentally,
- The balancing and integrating flow at the meeting point between the inward and outward flows, associated with assimilation and digestion,
- The ascending flow that directs energy towards higher levels of consciousness and governs self-expression through communication, and
- The flow through the nadis, the circulatory system, the nervous system, the lymphatic system, the movement of muscles and joints, and thoughts and emotions.

Even though the *Pranamaya kosha* can be regulated by breathing exercises, it is subtle and not glued to the physical system. It permeates all throughout and envelops us like an energy bubble, creating the field of the aura. The chakras of the subtle body are also associated with this *kosha*, so meditation and cleaning of the subtle body are also needed to refine the *Pranamaya kosha*.

Whenever an imbalance or illness happens, the first *kosha* to be compromised is usually the *Pranamaya kosha*. That is why acupuncture and acupressure treatments work on our energy meridians. In fact, our energy field is disturbed before any physical ailment appears. Sometimes we can predict the health of a person just by looking at the aura around their face. We feel the difference if someone is angry, in love, or it is a gentle mother with her baby, for example. This is because our attitude affects our *Pranamaya kosha* to a large extent. When this *kosha* is shining, our overall health is benefited. We radiate the state we have in our energy sheath, including joy and love; love is very palpable.

As I mentioned earlier, when we are stressed, angry or reactive, we need more energy, and it is generally directed in an outward flow. So we activate the *Pranamaya kosha* by activating the sympathetic nervous system. Our heart rate goes up, our breathing becomes more variable, and our body goes into its stress response. This is actually one of the reasons why *Pranayama* came into being – to balance the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems. When our sympathetic nervous system is activated by stress, we can calm ourselves by activating the parasympathetic system, for example through the *Chandra nadi*. And when we need to be more active and engaged, we can activate the

Science of spirituality



sympathetic system in a similar way through the *Surya nadi*. We are able to bring about balance.

This energy *kosha* is quite forbidding to refine, because here consciousness mixes with ego, and that can be like sodium metal exposed to moisture in the air – explosive. All our energetic processes and cognitive senses derive their energy from this sheath, our waking consciousness is regulated by this sheath, and the natural emotions of passion and anger are nourished by this sheath. Fights and conflicts at work and at home with dear ones are due to imbalances here; when it is spoilt we can be terribly egotistical, whereas when it is rightly used it supports Self-Realization.

Always running after pleasure and an excess of materialism can also distort the finer balance of this energy sheath. In contrast, moderation in emotions andother faculties harmonizes the *Pranamaya kosha*, and this in turn helps to harmonize the physical body also. The Heartfulness practices of meditation on point A and cleaning of point B^1 are very helpful in refining this sheath.

The play of opposites is very strong here. Attitudes of likes and dislikes, attraction and repulsion, make this sheath even more formidable. Moderation is not so easy when these things are at play. It is important to remain vigilant in the way we speak, our body language and our inner attitude. It means being humble and respectful towards everyone, including young ones and elders. Constantly nurturing a state of insignificance and curbing the ego are the surest ways to refine this sheath. It finds its true natural luster only when the ego is totally refined to its original purity.

PRANAHUTI

Reaching that state of insignificance is already a high achievement, however, as the true refinement of the ego comes only with the journey of the

¹ Ram Chandra, 2014. Efficacy of Raja Yoga in the Light of Sahaj Marg. Shri Ram Chandra Mission, India.

higher regions of the mind and beyond. Until that work has been done, Pranayama can always potentially inflame the ego. So in Heartfulness, we instead use something so superfine to direct the energetic flow inwards in a highly potentized way, and that is Pranahuti or Transmission. Transmission is an offering of Prana directly from the Source, which is directed by a Guide of calibre into the heart of a seeker - ahuti means offering. While Prana is all around us everywhere, just like air, the Guide acts like a fan, directing the essence of Prana into the heart of the seeker. When we meditate with Transmission, our attention naturally flows inwards and so does our breath, so our system becomes highly stable, leading to lower and lower entropy. Our breathing is regulated naturally as a result of the inward flow of Pranabuti. This also leads naturally to Pratyahara and Dharana, and in fact helps us dive deeper into Dhyana so that we often attain the state of Samadhi during the first meditation sessions. The practices of Yoga have evolved considerably during the last century, thanks to the subtlest flow of *Pranabuti* that is the specialty of Heartfulness.

PRACTICES OF PRANAYAMA

As with *Asana*, the science of *Pranayama* has evolved a lot since the time of Patanjali, when the purpose was simply to gather the life force inwards and expand it to merge with the infinite whole. Nowadays there are practices of *Pranayama* for many purposes, to balance the energetic systems. Simple breathing practices are very beneficial for overall health and well-being, and some of these exercises are available.For more information, please contact us at wellness@heartfulness.org.

I find this advice given by Swami Vivekananda to be very beneficial: first hold yourself straight; then think of your body as sound and perfect, and healthy and strong; then throw a current of love all around, thinking that the whole universe is happy; then pray, if you believe in God; and then breathe.

Also, it helps to include the idea of *Yama* and *Niyama* when you are breathing. With every breath you take in, think that you are drawing goodness and nobility from the existence all around you (*Niyama*), and with every breath you breathe out, think that you are expelling unnecessary complexities from your system (*Yama*).



Known to many as Daaji, Kamlesh Patel is the fourth guide in the Heartfulness tradition of meditation. Embracing the many roles of a modern-day teacher, he has that rare capacity to dive deep into the center of his existence in the heart, and simultaneously have a scientific approach to original research in the field of meditation, spirituality and human evolution. He is a prolific speaker and writer, and you can read his latest book, *The Heartfulness Way*. To learn more about Daaji, go to <u>www.</u> daaji.org.



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Read PART 1

How to know THE NATURE of your Being

PART 2

Author of *The Untethered Soul – The Journey Beyond Yourself*, MICHAEL A. SINGER, shares his thoughts on the nature of the world, the mind and the heart. In part 2, he dives deeper into the nature of the mind and the heart, and how to handle the human heart – how to be at peace with the tremendous range of the heart.

f you want to know why your heart is attracted to some things and repulsed by others, it's pretty simple. For the most part, your heart is programmed by your past experiences - just like your mind. In yogic philosophy this programming is called samskaras. Samskaras are past impressions that have created habitual energy patterns in your heart. When stimulated by an object, the heart will tend to flow in these learned directions. Note that it is not just objects in the outside world that stimulate the heart; thoughts can also stimulate the heart. The heart affects the mind and the mind affects the heart. But you already know this. When your heart gets attracted to something, your mind wants to think about it all the time. Your thoughts didn't used to fixate on that person, place or thing, but now they do. Likewise, when you get really scared by something, suddenly that's all you can think about.

Now I want to discuss your heart in a way that you may not like. Your heart is a very active field of energy with underlying vector flows, and none of it has anything to do with you. It is just one of the things you are aware of. One moment you notice you are attracted to something and five minutes later you're repulsed by it. It happens all the time. You can feel completely attracted to someone until they say or do something you don't like; then suddenly you're turned off by them. This is what we call the personal heart because its energy flows are formed by an individual's personal experiences. At any given moment, almost everybody is following either the personal heart or the personal mind. And in most cases the mind wins. The mind simply applies its logic based on its past experiences and then tells you, "I know how to make you happy."

But the mind cannot make you happy. It will never make you happy. The mind only knows about thinking. In the end, real happiness must come from the heart. The very fact that you are in your mind thinking about how to be happy means you cannot be happy. All the mind can do is try to calculate what will make you happy based on your past experiences. One minute it likes something, and the next minute it doesn't. You've had billions of experiences, and your thoughts about a current experience simply depend upon which of these

The best way to come to peace with the mind is to come to peace with the heart.



past experiences is being stimulated the most. Eventually you come to realize that you're so busy dealing with your mind's likes and dislikes that you can't feel the true happiness that springs spontaneously from your heart.

So are you better off following your heart than your mind? Truth is, neither will take you where you want to go. This is because neither is who you are. You are the one who experiences the heart, and you are the one who experiences the mind. If you can objectively watch something, then it is not who you are - you are the one who is watching. What do you see when you watch your heart? One thing you see is that it can open and close. You experience this as attractions and repulsions, loves and fears. You feel great inner strength when the heart is open to an experience, then if something closes your heart, all that energy drops out or becomes turbulent. That's how you know you're not your heart: you were there when the inspiration started, and you were there when it stopped. You're the one

who's in there watching all these changes take place inside.

Over time you will come to realize that there is only one you in there. You who sees the world, you who witnesses the mind, and you who experiences the heart is the same you. There is only one conscious being in there aware of all these experiences. And none of what you see has anything to do with you. Only you, the awareness of being, has anything to do with you. When you reach this state of awareness, you are awake. But you will not be able to truly explore the nature of your being until you come to peace with the world, the mind, and the heart. This is your spiritual work.

By honoring the nature of the world, you can come to peace with it. Your work with the world becomes to appreciate it, honor it, kiss it hello when it comes and kiss it goodbye when it leaves. Because in truth, that is all it's ever doing – coming and going. God is trying to teach you something: every day a new day comes and every night it goes, never to return again. Now you see it, now you don't – like a magic trick. It has nothing to do with you; you are just experiencing it as it flows by. But the incessant activity of the mind will not allow you to honor the world. Based on its past experiences, the mind has its own idea of what should be going on, and it believes it's right. A truly wise person understands this as part of the mind's nature and does not struggle with it. The wise one simply looks at the personal mind with compassion, realizing that all it is doing is trying to solve the problems of the heart. Therefore, the best way to come to peace with the mind is to come to peace with the heart.

The underlying problem is that the heart is not filled with love and contentment, so the mind keeps trying to rearrange the world to make up for that. But this will never work; you must be able to deal directly with your own heart. Your heart is capable of going from the deepest lows to the highest highs. It can be filled with love, beauty, and song, or it can feel empty, painful and drained. That is part of the nature of the human heart. Like an amazing musical instrument, the heart has great range. But if you can't handle your heart, you're going to be drawn into your mind to try to figure out what to do about it. You're going to use your mind to create an alternate reality of how everything needs to be so that your heart can be okay. Then you're going to go out into the world to try to control and manipulate things to get them that way. If left to its own, that is the interplay you will see between the world, the mind, and the heart.

The alternative to all of this is to learn to handle your heart. Your most important work as a spiritual being is to learn to come to peace with the tremendous range of your heart. You have to wake up every morning and say: my heart is very interesting, and I'm going to handle wherever it goes today. You may feel tremendous love, or you may feel tremendous pain. You may go to the heights of your being and think this is the meaning of your life, or you may visit the pit of your being and think that your life has no meaning. But neither is true. These are just places your heart can go. From the seat of witness consciousness, just marvel at the tremendous range of the human heart. Love, disdain, joy, sorrow, pride, and shame are all simply places the heart can go depending upon whether it is open or closed to what's coming in through the senses or passing through the mind.

Learn to handle your heart. Your most important work as a spiritual being is to learn to come to peace with the tremendous range of your heart. The highest spiritual practice every single moment of every single day is to set the world free, set the mind free, and set the heart free. When those three are free to be true to their nature, then you will be free to be true to your nature – your true Self. This is the journey back to the nature of your being.

The bottom line is that your inability to handle your heart is running your entire life. But it doesn't have to be this way. You can celebrate the nature of the human heart and take great joy in experiencing its entire range. People misunderstand the path of unconditional happiness. It doesn't mean that your heart is always feeling happiness; it means that you are always at peace with whatever your heart is feeling. Do you see the difference? There is a deep joy in your awareness of being for the honor of experiencing what you are experiencing. Tears are pouring from your eyes, but they are not tears of sorrow, and they are not tears of joy. They are tears caused by the sheer depth of experiencing what that heart has to say.

The heart is a great gift that the Universe has given you. It adds tremendous richness to your life. But because you can't handle your heart, you are not free to explore the true nature of your being. If you want that freedom, you must learn to honor the world, observe the transient nature of the personal mind, and be able to handle the human heart. Only then can you sit comfortably in the Self; only then are you free to naturally merge into the true nature of your being. What is the nature of your being? Christ said: "My father and I are one." Genesis says: "God created man in his own image." That is the true nature of Self, and you are capable of experiencing this directly. Just remember every time the heart goes someplace you think you can't handle, you can choose to just breathe and relax back into the seat of Self, instead of getting involved in the heart or the mind. This is the highest yoga. The highest spiritual practice every single moment of every single day is to set the world free, set the mind free, and set the heart free. When those three are free to be true to their nature, then you will be free to be true to your nature – your true Self. This is the journey back to the nature of your being.

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The magic begins in you. Feel your own energy, and realize similar energy exists within the Earth, stones, plants, water, wind, fire, colors, and animals.

-Scott Cunningham

walking

Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee and Hilary Hart

n the busy-ness of our contemporary life, we are drawn into ceaseless activity that often separates us from the deeper dimension of ourselves. With our smartphones and computer screens, we often remain caught on the surface of our lives amidst the noise and chatter that continually distract us, that stops us from being rooted in our true nature. Unaware we are drowned deeper and deeper in a culture of soulless materialism.

At this time I find it more and more important to have outer activities that can connect us to what is more natural and help us live in relationship to the deep root of our being, and in an awareness of the moment which alone can give real meaning to our everyday existence. Over the years I have developed a number of simple practices that bring together action and a quality of heart-centered attention, or deepening awareness, that can nourish our lives in hidden ways. These activities, like walking, cooking with love and attention, can reconnect us with the web of life, our natural interconnection with life in its beauty and wonder. They can help us 'declutter' our outer life and instead become rooted in what is simple and real. One of these practices, which combines action with awareness, is walking.

Walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet. —Thich Nhat Hanh

I have always loved to walk early in the morning, to sense the Earth at the beginning of a day, to feel Her pulse, Her beauty and magic, before thoughts and demands clutter my day. Waking early, I have a hot cup of tea, meditate in silence, and then, as soon as the first light comes, I walk down the hill to the road beside the wetlands where I live. Sometimes the frost is sparkling around me, sometimes the water is clouded with fog, an egret appearing white against the reeds. This is another time of silent meditation, walking, breathing, feeling the Earth. I try to be as empty as possible, just to be present in the half-light, aware of what is around me. Prayer, meditation, presence, awareness - these are just words for a practice that immerses me in a mystery we call nature. Here the sacred speaks to me in its own language, and I try to listen.

Now I live beside the wetlands, and the tidal water is part of this meeting, this communion. Other times, in other landscapes, it has been rivers and streams, the sounds of waterfowls' wings, the dawn rising across meadows. Or in forests, a different bird chorus, animals skittering across the path, a deer and her young. Always it is a listening awareness, a deep receptivity to what is around me, an honoring of a world other than people. It is a remembrance of what is essential, elemental, and its nourishment carries me through the day. It is a return to the sacred, sensed and felt, without words or thoughts – a primal consciousness as if of the first day. This is a practice that has been with me since my teens - when I first started to meditate I also needed to walk. It was not taught or learned, but came as a need, a way to be, an antidote to much of the world around me - a world of people and problems, demands and desires. When one foot follows the other and the day has hardly begun, it seems these demands cannot touch me, as if I am immersed in something simpler, more essential. Placing each foot on the earth is a practice, but a practice that comes from my own roots, not a book or a teacher. Later I came to hear it called "walking in a sacred manner," and it is sacred, a return to what is sacred. But it also is deeper or more primal than any purpose. Nature speaks to me and I listen. Nature calls and something deep within me responds, and I just need to give it space. I am part of a life far greater than any 'me'.

The Earth gives us sustenance: the air we breathe, the food we eat. She is generous in so many ways, even as we forget Her and abuse Her. But there is also this deeper nourishment, this invisible, intangible giving. My early morning walk is a communion – if I am receptive, it is a wine drunk deeply. It comes through Her landscape, moss dripping from the trees, white and pink blossoms welcoming spring, the cry of a sea bird. Those first rays of sunrise are always a blessing. I do not understand this with my mind, but my soul feels it, needs it. Once again we are back at the beginning, in that elemental world we never truly leave. Our present culture may have forgotten it,

Spiritual ecology



disowned it, covered it over, may pretend we no longer need this communion, but my soul and my feet know otherwise. This is the landscape of the soul as much as it is the wetlands stretching towards the ocean. But it is also any landscape we walk. A walk on city streets is made of the same elements: feet touching ground, the rhythm of walking, breathing, the same sky overhead, the wind touching the face.

I would like to say it is easy, but so often I have to remember to reconnect, to empty the clutter of the coming day from my mind, my everyday thoughts. I have to stay in a place of awareness, sense my feet, feel the air, listen. I have to remember that I am not separate but part of everything around me. I have to push aside this great myth of separation, the great untruth. We are the air we breathe, the earth we touch, the same one life, alive in so many ways. We are the Earth awakening in the early morning, just as we are the buds breaking into color in the spring. To be fully alive is to feel how we are part of this embracing mystery. My morning walk is a remembrance, a reconnection, experienced in the body and felt in the soul.

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Walking Practice

Walking reinforces our connection to the Earth, one step at a time. Attuning to the rhythms of one's feet, the swaying of one's arms, the in and out of breath, the ways walking moves us through time and space, helps develop this relationship, reminding us consciously and unconsciously just how much a part of nature we are. Nature is cyclic and rhythmic, and walking – when we are not focused on where we are going – attunes us to this non-linear reality.

Walking practice is perhaps best begun alone, when the intimacy of nature's communication can be sensed without distraction. Just as when we meet a lover in the early part of a relationship, we do not want to share that meeting with others. Choose a time when you can be alone, when listening, hearing, and sensing can take place. Perhaps the start or the end of the day, before life's clamoring takes hold or after it lets go. Lunchtime or an afternoon break from work might be more difficult, but if that is the time available, then make sure the walk is long enough for you to let go of work thoughts or tensions of the day.

Turn off the cell phone, or better yet, leave it at home or the office. There is a way that the vulnerabilities that come with being alive have been squelched by our daily-life safety tools, like cell phones. If you can be without the protection and constant access they provide, try it. Social media will not miss documentation from your walk. **Find a park or a path** through quiet woods if you can. Let the rhythm of your steps soothe your mind and create a space for listening. Feel how your feet connect with the earth, how the air moves through your lungs. Follow your attention as it is drawn inward and outward both – to the inner movements of your body and to the feeling of warmth or cold, the sight of birds, the sound of a distant plane. Let your thoughts and impressions move through and out, as part of the natural rhythm of walking. Just as we come back to the breath in silent meditation, return your attention to your feet and their meeting and letting go of the ground.

Commit to walking every day if you can. Walk without expectation, with an attitude of openness and gratitude. If you feel a longing inside you – a need to connect, a desire to be closer to nature – let it motivate and guide you.

The nineteenth-century existential philosopher Søren Kierkegaard once wrote in a letter to his niece, "Every day, I walk myself into a state of well-being and walk away from every illness. I have walked myself into my best thoughts, and I know of no thought so burdensome that one cannot walk away from it."

This is the first of the practices from Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee & Hilary Hart's <u>Spiritual Ecology: 10 Practices to Reawaken</u> the Sacred in Everyday Life, 2017. It is reprinted with written permission from the authors.

I LOVE TO SEE THEM fill the skies

On the night of the Super Moon, BRENDA NETH celebrates Nature and the intelligence of crows, as she learns from them how to approach her own inner journey. ow much I love to see them fill the skies, their black wings fluttering, their voices communicating with the thousands of others who fly with them. It is New Year's Day 2018, and I am standing on the campus of UW Bothell in Washington State. They have returned, as they always do every night, 16,000 crows landing on the field, in the trees, on the roofs. We stand to watch them bring forth the melon-colored moon, known as the Super Moon because of its large size. No one knows why 16,000 crows gather every night here, lining up on the soccer field before rising into their nightly roost of trees on the edge of the marshland near the college.

My friend Jill, an artist, stands beside me with binoculars as we stare glassy-eyed into the moon, seeing them all flying toward us. We were afraid they weren't coming. They seemed to be flying away from us but that was just an illusion! They were only escorting the large moon into the horizon, flying back to their roosts on the campus of the college. The moon rises as their individual sounds all become one.

It is an unbelievable sight to see them swarming and cawing as they fly toward us. There is no fear in me, because of the nature of these pure creatures. Only love. They come to rest, not to eat corn, destroy or agitate anyone. They are not a curse to the environment, although many call them scavengers. I call them Beloved, because they have survived evolution and have been here long before me. They are a symbol of courage to me, because I see them everywhere on the streets and trees in my hometown of Seattle, Washington. Whenever I am afraid I see them, masters of the skies, landing and strutting about to find their daily food. Cared for and loved by Nature as we all are.

I feed them sunflower seeds and, rather than fight like seagulls, each crow diligently pecks until it receives the prize of its own individual seed. That sound of cracking seeds is a metaphor to me of my spiritual journey. I must focus on my own spiritual hunger, not fight with others so as I can be the first to reach the goal. By paying attention to what I am doing, I find the treasure that I could have lost if I had not persisted beyond the shells of my own individual resistance. Those crows know something that we also know deep within our hearts. There cannot be any competition in spirituality. There can only be meeting a hungry need within the heart. How much I love to watch them throughout my meanderings around town. How much my heart is in flight with them.

Are we like those crows, evolving beyond superstition and perhaps the judgment of others and ourselves? To some, crows are a sign of evil, death, or craftiness, but crows are gaining ground in scientific circles as being perhaps smarter than chimpanzees, our immediate brethren in intelligence. In their book, *The Gift of the Crow*, Dr John Martzluff and Tony Angell share stories and research about the rich abundance of cognitive and emotional intelligence seen in these amazing birds. As part of the Corvid family, ravens, crows, magpies and jays all have the ability to remember, create, assist, play and socialize. They also have partners for life, and their young continue to stay with the parents, helping them with new fledglings. They are not without compassion, helping their disabled, and not without fury, sometimes killing their own. They even hold funerals for their dead. The amazing stories in *The Gift of the Crow* carry the theme of how much like humans they really are.

So it was on that twilight eve of the first day of the year that my 16,000 beloveds came home to roost, reminding me to have faith in the journey. If there is room in one night for 16,000 crows to land, there is room in my heart for all. One seed at a time.

Heartfulness Jogasanas PADMASANA

Come to Dandasana



80



Fold the right leg by holding the right ankle with the right hand and the right foot with the left hand.

Place the right foot firmly at the root of the left upper thigh, sole of the foot turned upwards, and heel lightly presing the left side of the lower abdomen.

Likewise fold the left leg, plce the foot firmly at the root of the right upper thigh, sole turned upwards, and heel lightly pressing the rightside of the lower abdomen. Rest both knees comfortably on the floor.

With both legs interlocked, keep the spine, neck and head erect.

Place both palms on the knees in chin mudra.

Gently close the eyes, maintain the posture with gentle, long and deep breaths - in and out six times.

Release the mudra.



Breathe in, stretch both arms up over the head.

Breathe out, retaining the stretch slowly bend forward from the hips.

Try to touch the forehead on the ground, with arms stretched and palms on the floor completely.

Feel the stretch at the spine.

Keep the eyes closed, breathe deeply.

Hold and stay with gentle long, and deep breaths - in and out six times.





Breathe out, bend forward and simultaneously stretch the hands backwards to the vertical level.

Try to touch the forehead on the ground.

Keep the eyes closed, hold the position and stay with gentle, long and deep breaths - in and out six times.

Breathe in, come up, release the posture and relax in *Sithila Dandasana*.

BENEFITS:

Padmasana induces mental calmness, increases awareness and attentiveness.

The position of les and pressure of the feet against the thighs reduces blood flow to the legs - this supply of blood is redirected towards the lumbar region of the spine, abdomen and pelvic organs, thereby toning up these organs, muscles and nerves in this region.

Sitting in *Padmasana* will strenghten the thighs and calf muscles and help to reduce excess fat in the abdomen, buttocks and thighs.

The practice give a good stretch to the spine, thighs, ankles, knees, joints and calf muscles.

Opens up the hips and makes ligament flexible.

Padmasana is the 'destroyer of all disease'.

http://heartfulness.org/education/yoga-trainers/



art & meditation

an art essay on creativity by Fabio Kohler

n our daily life we naturally meditate to perform our worldly duties. For instance, if an artist is creating a painting his mind will be continuously thinking about the work in progress while choosing the object, the theme, the best material, the technical solutions, and so on. It's seems quite easy and natural to meditate on a worldly activity. On the other hand, when it comes to accessing higher states of consciousness in the spiritual realm, it's seem quite difficult as we don't have an object or external reference point to start with.

So here I will look into the artistic process of creativity, to see how a worldly activity may culminate in a spiritual experience.

Before even starting any creative process, it is important to prepare some ideal circumstances. First of all, time is needed to make room for creativity. A person whose plate is full is often not able to feel or receive inspiration. The second requirement is a clean, pure heart. Third, it is helpful to create a space – an environment dedicated exclusively to artistic creation.





In that first moment, the artist is inspired by something that touches him or her from inside, that develops into a feeling of enchantment. We train the eye to be like a newborn baby observing the entire world with a sense of wonder. Then, we give enough time to observe the subject, slowly and with patience. It's like reading a 300-page novel and telling the entire story later on. If we don't take the proper time to read the novel fully, we will not get the whole picture.

Later on, we start drafting lightly on the paper or canvas. At this step we are repeating what the eyes have seen, and what we have felt, with the hands. When we observe something continuously, the eyes travel around the object. In the same way the hand repeats this eye movement. Initially the whole picture is drafted on the paper, defining the page setting. Later on we get into the details. It's very important not to be lost in details at this initial stage. Like the old Chinese saying: "If you are seeing the leaf, you are not seeing the tree. If you are seeing the tree, you are not seeing the forest."

After a while, when there is enough visual information on the paper or canvas, we can start analyzing proportion, identifying geometrical abstractions in figures and making necessary corrections. Here enters the analytical mind, but even still it has to be balanced and integrated with the natural flow of the figure. Later on we observe



light and dark, adding deep and intermediate grades of shadow, leaving blank spaces in those spots where the light is hitting most. If it is a painting, the next step would then be to add colors, observing the nuances.

At a certain point the external object is not required anymore. Now we explore in depth the graphic or pictorial universe, which turns out to be a new reality. At this stage we express our innermost feelings, enjoying the total liberty of contemplating the inner world. This stage may take hours, days, weeks, months or even years. And even when an artwork is finished, we can easily keep on 'cooking on a low fire', making continuous small perfections and refinements. There is a saying that an artwork is never finished, it's only an abandoned process that others perceive as finished. A famous example is the unfinished painting, the Mona Lisa by Leonardo Da Vinci, which he painted over 3 years and continued refining for another 11 years until he separated himself from the work.

I find that it's preferable to spend more time on one or just a few drawings, going deep into each one, rather than working on many at once and finishing them too fast. There is an importance to the depth we achieve in each work. This depth continues to deepen, and each previous work leads to greater depth in the next one. It's a vertical journey.



At the end, stepping out of the artistic process and contemplating the work, all sorts of feelings arise, like "How was this done?" and "Who did this?" At the same time, all the effort and feeling of doing the work is still very much alive and leads to future work. We have no choice but to keep on excelling, because the previous artwork, yesterday's effort, no longer satisfies the soul. This will continue until our final breath on Earth marks the end of this process. So the ultimate beauty of artistic creation is to refine the tool to such an extent, that we become a channel of creation coming from the deepest inspirations of the heart. Then we are able to completely integrate the artistic process with spirituality.

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MEETING TO MELTING TO MERGER

When two individuals meet.... When two minds meet.... When two hearts meet....

When the oceans of consciousness of two minfle,...

shen then two merge into cach other

There blooms Godliness ...

There is ulter joy and much more ...

Now, the true journey begins.

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Contentment is not about two hears. coming together. It is all about ONE & ONLY ONE EXISTENCE.

After merger, the individual existence is is complete oreness & harmony with rest of the Godly fingdom. The rest of the Godly fingdom.

2

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