

August 2016

Neuroplasticity. Is your mind flexible?

heartfulness

purity weaves destiny

THE SCIENCE OF SPIRITUALITY
Evolution of Consciousness

AMAZING FLOWERS
Their Healing Properties

10 REASONS
to Meditate at Your Workplace

SELF ● RELATIONSHIPS ● WORK ● INSPIRATION ● NATURE



Heartfulness
Through meditation, inspiration

Experience it
for yourself

united we sit

Heartfulness Meditation

Find a place where you can meditate without distraction, preferably at the same seat and time every day. The best time is in the early morning, when your inner state resonates with the stillness of the dawn.

Sit comfortably, gently close your eyes and relax.

Bring your thought to the idea that the Source of Light is already present in your heart. The light is attracting you from within.

Do this in a gentle and natural way. There is no need to concentrate or to see the light. Feel yourself being absorbed into your heart.

If you find that your awareness drifts to other thoughts, gently come back to the Source of Light in your heart.

Meditate like this for thirty minutes to one hour

To experience this meditation with Yogic Transmission,

please contact one of our trainers at
info@heartfulness.org

or via the website at
www.heartfulness.org.

a global movement in stillness

the math of meditation:
we are equal and we are one



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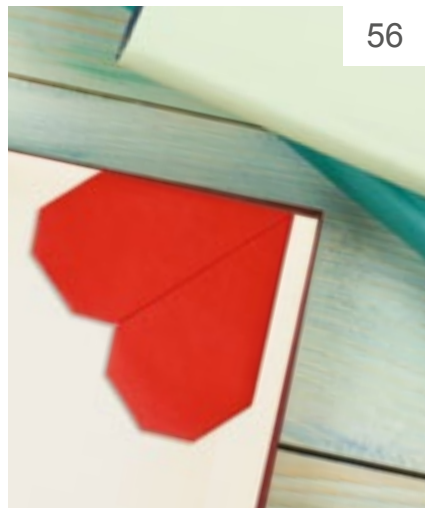
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Let's Feel the Essence

Not so long ago, the use of electricity seemed nothing short of a miracle. Today, how many power outlets and light switches do you have in your home? Flip a switch and the light comes on; we take it for granted as part of life. Most of us also don't go for more than a day without recharging our phones, as that too has become part of life. Have you ever gone for a week without electricity? Why not do an experiment and see how it would be. Even for a day. You will discover how dependent we have become on electricity.

The human race is waking up to another source of energy to connect with daily, much more subtle and refined. In fact, it cannot really be called energy as it is beyond the field of vibrations. What is it? It emanates from the Source and it exists at the center of everything in this universe. We invite you to experience this *Pranahuti* or Yogic Transmission that comes from the Source and feel its transformative effects.

Unlike our phone batteries that deplete over the day, each time we meditate with Transmission, the charge builds upon the previous one, refining our system and balancing our inner world. Small shifts coalesce into a positive perspective as we silently radiate this renewable resource, amplifying itself exponentially.

We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we have enjoyed working on it. A renowned speaker explores the heart's wonders, a student shares how she achieves her sporting goals, and a parent learns the beauty of his son's autism. There are so many inspiring stories when we listen to each other. We would love to hear your stories also, so please send your letters and articles to contributions@heartfulnessmagazine.com.

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Elizabeth Denley



Emma Ivaturi



Meghana Anand

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editors,
My family and I really love this way of conveying our feelings towards each other.
Sweet :) Siddhi



The Jar of Gratitude

Dear Editors,

When I was casually browsing the pages of earlier issues of Heartfulness Magazine, I wondered why is this magazine so popular? Is it the glossy images, bright pictures, or poetic beauty of articles?

What is this art of the spiritual heart that is more beautiful than the greatest paintings like the Mona Lisa, The Last Supper, or Raja Ravi Verma's paintings of the pantheon of the Hindu gods and kings? More musical than the symphonies of Beethoven and Chopin, and the compositions of Thyaga-raja and Meera? More tasty than the culinary delights of the royal palaces of India and China, and the monarchs of Europe?

I read somewhere that even great scientists like Einstein used only a small part of their brainpower, and yet they accomplished so much. The full power of the beautiful creation of Nature called the human brain is yet to be discovered and used.

The same scientific world is, however, sensing that a more remarkable organ called the human heart exists in many, many dimensions – physical, spiritual, emotional and mental – and an understanding of the intelligence of the heart, used intensely by some ancient cultures, is now opening up in our times. Egypt and India knew there was something special about the human heart, even after the rest of the body was dead. Modern heart transplant cases find, much to their surprise, that the character of the donor's heart is inherited by the receiver.

The beautiful 'software' called the human mind, more intricate than the best computer program written by man, is a by-product of the creation of the Universe itself, as discovered by mystics and Yogis. When this consciousness is loaded into the miraculous natural computer called the human brain, great minds like Einstein, Stephen Hawkins, Ramanujan, and others are manifested. What great wonders will be possible when the same superb software of consciousness is deeply loaded into a higher order of natural computer, called the human heart?

The doors of this human heart are big and easily visible on the outside, small and invisible on the inside. Unless we go deep within and open the invisible doors, we cannot access the unprecedented openness of the Heart described by the great mystics. It is then that we will discover that the infinite worlds within the heart are more splendid than the universe outside.

May those days dawn and make us ascend to the great depths of consciousness of the infinite ocean. Maybe we are not at the peak, but only at the beginning of the development of our civilization!

And then I realized that perhaps Heartfulness Magazine is doing its part to kindle that dormant consciousness to awaken in us. With words, with pictures, with the spirit and vibration it emanates, and with the feelings it evokes in us.

Yours,
S.S. Ramakrishnan

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Ms Bernstein has been named 'a next-generation thought leader' by Oprah Winfrey. She appears regularly as an expert on The Dr Oz Show and is the New York Times bestselling author of *Miracles Now*, and *May Cause Miracles*. Her two additional bestsellers include *Add More ING to Your Life* and *Spirit Junkie*. Gabrielle is also the founder of HerFuture.com, a social networking site for women to inspire empower and connect.



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Clara is a scholarship holder at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, doing her bachelors degree in engineering. Race walking is her passion and she continues her career as an elite athlete with success at the national and international level. Her dream is to win a medal at the Olympic level.



She was brought up in a spiritual environment and has seen the benefit of developing a strong connection to her Center through prayer from a young age. She started Heartfulness Meditation at the age of 15 and has found that it enhances all the facets of her life allowing her to perform at her best.

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Guy Sharar

Guy is a Heartfulness trainer, writer, autism consultant and blogger. Early in 2016, he wrote about his family's journey with autism in the book, *Transforming Autism*. Since writing it, he has established the Transforming Autism Project to increase awareness of the true nature and potential of each autistic individual.



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is your mind **FLEXIBLE?**

Many of us today are interested in keeping our bodies flexible and fit, but how many of us are interested in developing neuroplasticity? **ELIZABETH DENLEY** shares some tips on mental flexibility.

What does it mean to have a flexible mind? What is neuroplasticity? Observe your own mind for a few minutes. What do you find? Is your mind flexible and open, or is it filled with thoughts and caught up in the patterns and habits of everyday living?

Flexibility is everywhere in nature. It is the same quality, whether it is found in a plant, a building, a human body or a human mind. Flexibility is the ability to adapt, to be willing to change, to be open, to bend and to respond with sensitivity. It is the opposite of rigidity. A rigid mind

is full of fixed habits and strong views on what is right and wrong, good and bad, intelligent and stupid, just and unjust etc. A flexible mind is open to new ways of viewing the world; it is not prejudiced.

Spiritual traditions value mental flexibility for our wellbeing and evolution. It is not hard to understand why, as it is through the mind that we observe the inner life of the heart. The spiritual journey of the heart is full of wonder, taking us into a vast inner universe. There is no room for rigidity when venturing into the unknown!

NEUROPLASTICITY AND EMPTINESS

In Zen Buddhism it is called *shoshin*, original mind or beginners mind. Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki says: “If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything; it is open to everything. In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s there are few.” He also says: “People who know the state of emptiness will always be able to dissolve their problems by constancy.”

What is constancy? Perhaps it is the ability to cheerfully accept things as they are, with a mind that is soft and open. It is also that unchanging, immutable base of fluidity. Suzuki also says, “It is the readiness of the mind that is wisdom. ... wisdom is not something to learn. Wisdom is something which will come out of your mindfulness. So the point is to be ready for observing things, and to be ready for thinking. This is called emptiness of your mind.”

Mexican Shamans understand the same principle. They try to shut down the internal talk, the restless internal chatter of the mind. Carlos Castaneda writes: “We talk to ourselves incessantly about our world. In fact we maintain our world with our internal talk. And whenever we finish talking to ourselves about ourselves and our world, the world is always as it should be. We renew it, we rekindle it with life, we uphold it with our internal talk. Not only that, but we also choose our paths as we

The spiritual journey of the heart is full of wonder, taking us into a vast inner universe. There is no room for rigidity when venturing into the unknown!

talk to ourselves. Thus we repeat the same choices over and over until the day we die, because we keep on repeating the same internal talk over and over until the day we die. A warrior is aware of this and strives to stop his internal talk.”

WHAT PREVENTS NEUROPLASTICITY?

We clean our houses, our cars, our clothes and our bodies, so they don't become dirtier and dirtier. Imagine a house that has been lived in by a family for thirty years and never been cleaned! Yet how many of us clean our minds? Do we remove the build-up of mental patterns that we accumulate through our senses, our emotions and our reactions and attitudes to the world?

Imagine all the past experiences and emotions that have accumulated throughout our lives. As they accumulate and form patterns, we become more and more fixed and inflexible. It is difficult to change unless we remove them.

When we are born we are innocent, open and flexible. As babies we are like a painter's fresh clean canvas, full of potential. Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari says, "Observing little children growing up around me, I have nothing but wonder, and a sense of tremendous gratitude, for the amazing rapidity with which they shed memories of persons, places and things." He also says, "For me, spirituality is nothing more than becoming like a child, because the ego is what is associated with becoming adult."

He describes this openness and flexibility of mind as being "like the wonder in the eyes of a child – anything it sees is wonderful. Is wonder in the things that we see, or in the way in which we look at things?"

Wonder is the way yogis have always observed the world and developed their philosophy of life, based on practical experience.

As we grow up, we learn values from our society and family. We learn what is right and wrong. As childhood turns into adulthood, we become more and more set in our ways, creatures of habit. When we are confronted with new situations we resist change. When we meet someone who is different from us, we react with prejudice. We think that we are right and they are wrong, or we are better than them. We are not flexible and open, unless we do something to reverse the accumulation of habits.

“If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything; it is open to everything. In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few.”

How Can We Improve

MENTAL FLEXIBILITY?

Meditate



It starts with regulating the mind. From many thoughts the mind learns to gently and naturally focus on one thought.

Then dive deeper into the heart in meditation, so that your experience evolves from thinking to feeling.

Beyond feeling is the experience of direct perception, and beyond that the state of being. Eventually meditation will take you even deeper into the realm of un-becoming, as you traverse the heart towards your own centre.

For mental lightness and flexibility, learn to unwind your mind and heart at the end of the day. The mind needs to be cleaned and refreshed just like the body, and if done regularly it brings stillness and calm, so that the mind is able to regain its natural flexibility.



Unwind

Connect with your own Source



Connecting with your own Source is also known as prayer. It removes self-importance and leads to humility. It creates an inner condition of emptiness in the heart that can then be filled with love. It is a great secret that prayer takes us into the infinite world of the heart, which is filled with so much joy and beauty. The heart is a natural facilitator. For mental lightness and flexibility, learn to unwind your mind and heart at the end of the day. The mind needs to be cleaned and refreshed just like the body, and if done regularly it brings stillness and calm, so that the mind is able to regain its natural flexibility.

Nature teaches us to be simple, flexible and accepting. Take time to observe the world around you and discover that Nature is full of flexibility: the water and the trees don't have to try to be flexible, they just are. That same state of naturalness and simplicity is uncovered within us through a spiritual practice.



Be one with nature

Letting go of habits is not always easy, and character refinement is highly valued in all spiritual traditions, for example, the teachings of the Buddha and Patanjali's yama and niyama. Carlos Castaneda writes, "Self-importance is man's greatest enemy." In some traditions, the practice of bowing is used to develop humility. Shunryu Suzuki says, "Bowing helps to eliminate our self-centred ideas. ... The result is not the point; it is the effort to improve ourselves that is valuable. There is no end to this practice." ●

Refine yourself



Heartfulness Webinar Speaker Series *on Relationships*

REGISTER
NOW

Heartfulness Webinar Speaker Series presents the next webinar on "Relationships" led by **DR. ELIZABETH DENLEY**

Join us on Saturday August 20th
8:00 PM IST/ 4:30 PM CEST/ 10:30 AM EST
by registering at the link below:
<https://goo.gl/P64z1a>

Relationships are all about communication on every level - through words, body language, thoughts and feelings, the interplay of vibrational fields, and most importantly from heart to heart in silence. Our maturity as human beings is reflected in how we go about this: Are we givers or takers? Are we conscious or unconscious of the way we relate with others? What effect do we have on others?

This webinar will explore how spiritual practice and self-development can help us to mature in the way we relate to others, enriching the lives of all those with whom we come into contact.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Practical tips for how we approach relationships, how we relate to others and how we mend them when things go wrong. The focus will be on levels of communication - from the most superficial in what we say to each other, our body language etc. to the deepest level of heart to heart communion.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND:

Anyone who wishes to improve the way they relate with others. It will be especially helpful for young people embarking on a career and marriage, to set the right approach. Also, for anyone managing people in the workplace. Our workplaces are moving from an outdated hierarchical structure to a team-based cooperative approach, and that means people skills! It is no longer acceptable to be a manager in today's world and treat employees badly. See you there!

Consciousness and Awareness

– an invitation
to explore the
inner world

An invitation by DR J KRISHNAMURTHY
to an inner journey of self-discovery.



Consciousness as an idea has always intrigued me. Probably I should not refer to it as an idea any more. The theoretical idea that was with me a few years ago has now translated into a certain tangible experience, thanks to meditation practice. The experience of how my consciousness changes and responds to the outside, and impacts the environment and people around me, greatly fascinates me.

What is consciousness?

There are so many definitions in the books and on the Internet. In the beginning I was excited by what I read or heard, but eventually it ended up either

confusing or tiring me. When I failed to establish any practical application of these ideas in my daily routine, it left me frustrated as well. So I turned to experience instead, and here is what I have learnt so far. To begin with, let us start with a few common ideas.

Is consciousnesses the state of being aware of something? That is, is consciousness synonymous with awareness? Or does consciousness result in certain awareness? Are they actually different?

I ask you to explore this and arrive at your own inference.

For me, it seems like consciousness is something internal, a state of being that I am in. Let us say it is a certain condition that I am enjoying inside that actually influences my awareness, which is an external-looking thing.

I would like to illustrate this with an example. When, for the first time, I faced the vast and mighty Grand Canyon, it was an out-of-the-world feeling for me inside. My heart was instantly filled with some unexplainable joy; its condition changed. It was a condition of joy. My mind that had been preoccupied with so many little things till then instantly felt liberated and opened up immensely. All of a sudden, what I was seeing and appreciating changed alongside. The change in the condition of my heart instantly changed my state of mind, and, in turn, my awareness.

So, it seems that consciousness is actually a state of being, a state that is deeper than the states of mind which actually influence my awareness or what I appreciate at any given time. These in turn influences my actions and reactions on the outside too.

Here is a practical exercise:

Next time you notice some reactions around you, observe the state of mind and consciousness behind these reactions. Note them down. Observe your own speech and action, and your underlying state of mind and consciousness as well. Note them down too.

This will become an excellent body of research and will greatly enrich your life through enhanced understanding of yourself and others. You will start observing yourself and others at a deeper level, and this observation in itself will put you in a state of pause. And if the pause becomes your second nature, you will have already mastered certain states of mind and consciousness

State of Being
- Condition of
the Heart

State
&
Mind

Awareness
&
Perceptions

Actions
&
Reactions

As you travel on this inner journey, you will realise that there are deeper levels of consciousness waiting to be uncovered. Every level enriches you and propels you towards joy and self-realization. Consistent meditative practices help you settle on a particular level of consciousness and operate from there.

Can you imagine being permanently centered in your heart, in a meditative state, filled with inner joy? Can you also then externalize the same in your thoughts, speech and action? Well, I truly believe that is the goal of every single religious and spiritual teaching. And it is quite possible with a simple effective meditation practice. I invite you to experience it for yourself ●

Recovering..

DR YVES BENHAMOU presents us with the science of neuroplasticity but asks whether this is all there is to meditation.

Some words deeply, infinitely and definitely echo in us. They give rise to questions. The word 'recovery' is one of them.

recovery |ri'kəvərə|

complete disappearance of the symptoms of a disease and return to the previous state – regaining normal health.

What is most concerning is the return to the previous state of health. If such is the case, recovery is impossible, since that previous state cannot possibly exist in our present, just as the past cannot be called back.

Let's take a practical example. I have been diagnosed with cancer, I consult a specialist, and I scrupulously comply with the treatment prescribed. I suffer, I hope, I lose hope, and eventually I recover. Or at least the medical system says I have. But what does my own physical system say? Is it back to what it was before such a big trial? Not at all! The disease has left its marks: pains, neuritis, physical fatigue, digestive troubles and other stigmas. If the return to the previous state is recovery, I will never really recover, not even from 'flu. Somehow, my body is going to remember.



Here dwells one of the immense gifts we receive from meditation: the ability to consciously treat a painful event as a boon, as a springboard, by removing fear.

And what of my soul, my mind, my consciousness? How can I recover from that dis-ease? Such an outbreak may be repeated or may even be permanent, as I know from experience. And if a particular episode has taught me anything, what was the lesson?

So the body can never really fully recover, but the dis-ease gives us an opportunity to recover something else that is revealed. Our mind was sick without our knowing it. We become aware of that dis-ease only when recovering from it. It is rebirth, a birth to something greater, vaster and softer, provided we make the most of our body's dis-ease and don't succumb to it. If our body is lucky enough to recover, in the general sense of the term, then we can be reborn; born a second time.

Here dwells one of the immense gifts we receive from meditation: the ability to consciously treat a painful event as a boon, as a springboard, by removing fear ●

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

21st of September 2016

Peace

(noun) freedom from disturbance;
quiet and tranquility

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Travel

in all the
four quarters
of the earth,
yet you will find
NOTHING
ANYWHERE.

Whatever there is,
is only here.

- Ramakrishna Paramahansa



CLARA SMITH shares with students who are in their final year at school how to achieve their goals.

Our mind shapes OUR DESTINY

Have you ever marvelled at the factors of human success and failure? Why is it that some who are born into poverty resign themselves to the situations of their birth, while others use this experience to redefine their future? Why do some students elect to evade their schoolwork, yet others prioritise their academic progress? Does it simply come down to luck, acquired talent or human connections?

So starting today, gradually manoeuvre your thoughts into a direction that will lead you to success. Direct your thoughts towards the realization of the ideal you have placed in front of yourself.


Imagine being born into poverty and having no electricity, insufficient money and scarce portions of food and water. Imagine being told that your dream of having an education and acquiring knowledge is a fantasy. Imagine being cajoled into a destiny you do not desire, but you don't let these notions confine you. Instead, your humble beginnings empower you and encourage you to change your fate. With this mindset you develop perseverance and the will to succeed.

This is exactly what Maha Sinnathamby did. Without letting the circumstances of his birth entrap him, Sinnathamby attained an education at The University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. This man of humble beginnings then used his newfound knowledge to convert a tract of futile bushland into the thriving metropolis that we now know as Springfield. He wisely devoted his success to one simple motto: "If the mind is intensely eager, everything can be accomplished – mountains can be crumbled into atoms."

So what allowed Sinnathamby to achieve greatness? It was his perseverance and passion for long-term goals. This aspect of his mindset I will call 'grit'.

Psychologist Angela Lee Duckworth deduced that grit is as essential as talent to achieve high accomplishments. Her findings show that innate intelligence doesn't always translate into achievement. In fact, the most accomplished people were, on average, only five points higher in IQ than the least accomplished.

¹Duckworth, A. L., 2007. Personality Processes and Individual Differences. Retrieved from Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals: <https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/Grit%20JPSP.pdf>



By laying down a foundation of grit and fine-tuning this instrument of the mind, success will inevitably come your way.

The IQ test is a method used to differentiate intellectual ability. Considering this scale goes from 1 to 200, five points is inconsequential². This suggests that there is another determining factor that contributes to success. Duckworth concluded that this factor is ‘grit’, an element associated with passion and perseverance, which are states of emotions set by the mind. Clearly, our mindset is a crucial aspect linked with success.

Our collective doctrine, however, is that our circumstances define our chance to achieve our goals. Many see their destiny as something which is dependent upon the variables of their formative years.

So let’s take a moment to review how you are feeling today. Are you happy with your accomplishments? Are you on track to achieving your long-term goals? Are you in the right mindset to approach them? If you said ‘no’ to any one of these questions, do not worry, nothing is lost.

Scientists have come to the conclusion that most people have up to 50,000 thoughts each day and up to 80% of them are either passive or negative.³

²Raven, 2015. IQ test for free. Retrieved from IQ test: <https://www.iqtestforfree.net/iq-scale.html>

³*Control your mind.* (n.d.). Retrieved from Control your future: <http://1106design.com/wp-content/uploads/Pages-from-Lifes-Cheat-Sheet.pdf>

⁴Shurr, T. (n.d.). *Conditioning your mind for success.* Retrieved from Shurr Success Inc.: <http://1106design.com/wp-content/uploads/Pages-from-Lifes-Cheat-Sheet.pdf>

Motivational speaker and psychologist, Tim Shurr, proposes two stratagems, incorporating mindful thinking and visualization⁴. Instead of focusing on what you don’t have, focus on what you can have and how to get it. The greatest secret ever told is that the quality of our life is determined by our thinking. Once your mind develops a lust, it will conjure a method of acquisition. Once your positivity is up to par, the next objective is imagery. Visualization is the art of mentally picturing yourself successful, as if you have already achieved your goal. The association of the pleasure felt with achieving this goal will serve as your figurative mentor to lead you down that path.

So starting today, gradually manoeuvre your thoughts into a direction that will lead you to success. Direct your thoughts towards the realization of the ideal you have placed in front of yourself. By laying down a foundation of grit and fine-tuning this instrument of the mind, success will inevitably come your way. As Sinnathamby sagely said, “The mind has to be made malleable like clay. Just as clay sticks wherever you throw it, the mind must be made to dwell upon whatever object you concentrate it.” ●

10 REASONS TO MEDITATE IN YOUR WORKPLACE

Many corporate offices have introduced Heartfulness meditation programs for their employees. What are the benefits?

allows you to be in touch with your intuitive, creative intelligence

helps to make wise decisions and choices

T

MEDITATION...

D

balances emotions, so that reactions are not so strong

A

puts the heart center stage, so that the workplace becomes a happy, joyful place to be.

is a great de-stressor, removing worry and fear

E

relaxes the body

3

T

expands consciousness to see issues with a 360-degree vision

E

M

refreshes, giving you a second wind when you are tired

2

I

makes for better relationships with colleagues and teamwork

5

prepares the mind to accept and work with change

9



Transforming autism

GUY SHARAR turns an apparent tragedy into an opportunity for love, light and transformation.

The advent of our son's autism forced and guided my wife and me to learn to become better parents than we could ever have hoped to be otherwise.

Between the ages of one and two, Daniel went from being a playful and energetic baby, to being almost totally cut off from his surroundings, including his family. He would spend his days lying on the floor rolling a toy car backwards and forwards and resenting any attempt at communications, especially if it included his name. He stopped looking us in the eye, lost all of the words he had acquired, lost even basic self-care capabilities including the ability to swallow solid food, and became susceptible to prolonged and intense meltdowns for very small reasons, during which he was totally inconsolable. This left him utterly exhausted.

It was heart breaking for us. The memory of our happy baby was so recent, and now we were seeing him suffering like we couldn't have imagined. It felt as if the condition was robbing him of his life, both now and for the future.

We started frantically researching what we could do to help him. The Internet was full of therapies offering miracle 'cures' in exchange for colossal sums of money. They promised so much, but their marketing felt so commercial and when we explored the therapies in depth, neither of us really resonated with them. Luckily, we both relied on our inner feeling of what was right, and the vast majority of the time we came to the same conclusions.

When Daniel was born, we had bought only one book about parenting, which we hadn't read. Now, in desperation, we looked in the index to find 'autism'. There was a single reference, which led us to a short paragraph about a small clinic in the north of Israel that had great success treating autism in babies and toddlers. In contrast to all the others, its web presence was small and understated. It didn't make any promises or even say much about its method,

**AS I HAVE LOVED YOU
LOVE ONE ANOTHER.**

· JESUS THE CHRIST

but we both had a positive feeling about it. We sought out other families who had been there and listened to their experiences. We applied to go there and we were accepted. We went shortly after Daniel's second birthday, and it transformed our family's life.

What did they do there? It was so simple, and yet nobody back home had suggested anything like it. They simply played with him – one on one, in a quiet room – for six to seven hours a day for three weeks. That's all. Of course, they used their immense understanding of his condition to be able to build a solid relationship with him. They brought out his hidden interest in the world, showing him that it could be safe to interact with those around him, and more fulfilling than retreating into himself. They taught us how to do the same. Faced with this warmth, trust, understanding and attention, we saw more and more of his inherent character re-emerge, and by the end of our time there we were gratefully getting used to seeing his beautiful smile again.

This continued as we pressed on with the same therapy at home in the years following our return. He became ever more confident, resilient, imaginative, warm and affectionate. Now, aged six, he is such a loving and joyful boy, thriving in a mainstream school. He is still learning to navigate the social world, but is doing far better than we could ever have hoped in the difficult times.

Living through all of this, we learnt something too about the nature of autism. It is often thought of as a disability, in which a person is withdrawn and finds it difficult to communicate with his or her surroundings, has unusual sensitivities to sensory stimuli but seems unaware of emotional phenomena. But we rarely ask why. What it is that creates these symptoms, which are assumed to be a lifelong condition?

Seeing Daniel's life renewed has given us a new understanding about this. Far from being unaware of emotions going on around him, he is profoundly affected by them. It is difficult for him to even look at a picture in a storybook where someone is sad or

Far from being unaware of emotions going on around him, he is profoundly affected by them...This could easily be dismissed as poor self-regulation, but for us it shows he cares very deeply about other living things and feels profoundly connected to them."

frightened. If he sees another child crying at school, he carries this painful memory with him and it weighs him down. If he sees someone knocking weeds out of the way, it is a matter of great distress for him, as he feels for the plants. This could easily be dismissed as poor self-regulation, but for us it shows he cares very deeply about other living things and feels profoundly connected to them.

We believe it is the pain of unrelenting exposure to the unnecessary cruelty that humans inflict on each other and on other living species that makes it impossible for autistic people to remain open and engaged in this



world. That is why they need to protect themselves by retreating inwards and reliant on 'autistic' behaviors.

The only difference for Daniel is that, with support, he has built an admirable ability to cope with some of this pain, which is still evoked in him.

We don't see autism as a set of symptoms, but as the condition that underlies them and makes them necessary. It is a condition of innocence, idealism, goodwill, care, a readiness to put other's needs above their own – we could call it love. This is what exists beneath the apparently impenetrable exterior of the autistic person.

There is so much they can contribute to our world, to make it the sort of peaceful and mutually supportive place that we all wish for, but they can only do so if we nurture them and create an environment around them that enables them to feel safe, understood and loved.

I want to share as much as we have learnt about how to create such an environment to transform an autistic child's life. Earlier this year, I unexpectedly found myself writing a book about our journey and this book has now been published. I have since launched the Transforming Autism Project, which aims to further spread awareness of the true nature of the autistic condition and empower other parents to make transformational changes in their own family ●

Guy's book, *Transforming Autism*, is available in paperback and Kindle formats from amazon.com, as well as from many other national Amazon sites around the world. The blog for the Transforming Autism Project can be found at <http://transformingautism.co.uk>.



Lightness & Balance in Relationships

ROSALIND PEARMAIN shares her experience of tuning in to others.

Think of the heart as an infinitely expanding space. Can anyone limit their capacity to love or care about others or nature or animals? This is the most special surprise about the heart. Mystics have always told us that it is an infinite space that can contain the universe. Now we can all make the same discovery quite easily.

Start by simply bringing consciousness to the area of the heart in our chest. Suppose that the Source of Light of our existence, of our real essence, is there. Open up a space to find a soft, deep, safe place inside so that you feel a bit more space and ease. Then it is possible to feel the same with others.

Feel attuned to your heart and you will quite naturally feel more harmony with others too.

Try an experiment:

First look at people with your mind's eye. Then imagine you are seeing them with your heart. Feel the difference. You will discover a simple common humanity between you.

The word 'tolerance' has a root meaning about simply about making space for others to co-exist. The heart is always there to create such a space.

How can we start to feel this kind of inner space and warmth?

What about the other bit of me that judges, that closes down, that shuts others out and keeps me separate from others, especially if they are different?

Much of the time we react because we feel vulnerable or nervous.

We feel exposed and insecure.

We want others to make us feel good.

But inside we feel lacking or inadequate.

All of these thoughts and feelings can be traced to experiences we have had in our lives. They are engraved on our system, programs in our make up, and they often lead us to negative repetitive life choices in which we feel stuck. They create barriers and layers like cobwebs around our soul. Over time, we lose that sense of simple and soft, deep connection with our Source inside our heart.

Yogic Transmission nourishes and relaxes us from within, like a permanent inner stream of light. It also simply dissolves the barriers very subtly and gently.

At the end of each day we remove all the weight and pressure of the day, leave us feeling like vapour, filled with a source of light. Over time, slowly and surely, we feel free of limiting patterns. We find a new kind of lightness and balance that keeps us afloat in the midst of chaos and stress.

We emanate the same feeling to others. They feel our calmness and ease and relax.

Does this all sound too good to be true? For once it is not.

Of course, we have ups and downs. Change is never linear. But over the years we stick with it because it reliably brings us deep joy, continuing discoveries, and real beauty that you cannot imagine. Simply try it for yourself ●

Feel attuned to
your heart and
you will quite
naturally feel
more harmony
with others too.

UNCONSCIOUSLY WAKING UP

GABBY BERNSTEIN shares with us something of her personal journey of transformation.

Q: How did you come to your meditation path?

GB: Meditation was a radical turning point in my life. I was blessed to be brought up in a home where meditation was the norm. I used to see my mother walk into her room, shut the door, and within a few minutes I would start to smell the incense coming out from underneath the door. And I would hear the *mantra* and just think, “What is going on in there?” And then in twenty minutes, she’d come out of the room completely transformed. She’d be calmer, she’d be more compassionate. She’d be more connected. And I used to think to myself, “I want that. I want to know what that is.”

Then by the time I was about sixteen years old I started to have a little bit of an existential crisis. I was struggling with why I was here and with feelings of depression and anxiety. I didn’t know how to handle it. So I turned to my mother and said, “I don’t know what to do, but I know you’ve got that thing and you go into your room, and maybe that could help me.” And she said, “Listen, that is the only solution.” So my mom sat me down on her meditation pillow and she taught me how to tune in, and she taught me her practice. At the time I was so desperate for a solution, for guidance, for relief.

A few weeks into my meditation practice, I remember going up to a country house with a friend of mine, and when we arrived at the house I could feel this anxiety start to come on. I knew all my friends were arriving and I started to feel the anxiety and depression. I didn’t want to run home and hide, so I found this little corner of a room and I started just tuning in, turning inward, setting the intention to let go of the stories, letting go of thoughts.



PHOTO BY CHLOE CRESPI

Meditation was a radical turning point in my life.

Within moments of that redirect, I started to feel like this energy of love was wrapping around me. I started to feel like I was wrapped in a blanket of light. The depression lifted, the experience of this energy rush through me came in, and within moments I was new. I was feeling an energy that I had never known before and I loved it. I wanted it more and more and I would turn to my meditation pillow day after day to develop that relationship with my inner awareness. This was the greatest gift that had ever been given.

In my post-adolescence, I chose to take matters into my own hands. I went off to college and I started to forget about my meditation practice. I thought I could handle it, that I could do this on my own. I went out into my life, and for five years I abandoned my practice.

By the time I was twenty-five years old I was spiraling out. I had no more direction, and I had no more practice of tuning in. Without that I was walking around without an anchor. I became consumed with the stories of the world, consumed with fear. That doubt and that limitation led me down many dark paths. It led me down the path of addiction, workaholism and co-dependency. By the time I was twenty-five years old I was hitting the bottom. I had to surrender once again.

But thankfully, that seed of meditation had been planted. Thankfully, I knew there was only one place to turn; to turn inward. So I went right back to that practice, and I reconnected to that truth. And since that day, I've had a daily meditation practice for the last eleven years. I've been a committed, devoted, student and teacher of meditation.

I started to feel like this energy of love was wrapping around me... and within moments I was new. I was feeling an energy that I had never known before and I loved it.



DR. PARTHA NANDI, KAMLESH D. PATEL & GABRIELLE BERNSTEIN IN CONVERSATION AT THE HEARTFULNESS CONFERENCE, JUNE 2016

Q: What was your experience of the Heartfulness meditation practice?

GB: I had the opportunity to experience Heartfulness meditation a week before the Heartfulness convention. I'm very thrilled to tell you that, while I was invited to come as a speaker, I think that actually God had a bigger invitation for me. I think the invitation was to learn a new practice. These lovely people came into my home and they sat with me and they held the space for me to sit for thirty minutes in a gorgeous, heart-centered meditation practice. In that practice I felt so much light and love and so much serenity.

So as I would normally do my own meditation practice with a *mantra*, for the last week I found myself turning to my heart. I realized I wasn't just meant to speak at the convention, I was meant to be guided to this practice.

Q: Do you have the experience of people who have attended your live events who have shared how they have transformed from what you offer?

GB: Countless. I hear stories every day of people who feel the transmission of energy in the room when they come to an event or even through books. But when people come to me and say, “You’ve changed my life.” I say to them, “I did not change your life. I just told you a story, and you recognized yourself in that story.” Or, “I gave you a lesson and you used it.” So I give them the credit for their transformations. I may have been a guide along the way or an inspiration along the way, but I didn’t do it.

Q: As an active participant in this movement, how do you see consciousness shifting across the country and the world?

GB: Well, while there is so much terror and fear and destruction, there is also a big awakening. It is natural to have people wake up when they feel powerless and feel the need to have a voice in those powerless situations.

I also think that there is an unconscious call that is waking us up to allow the practices and guidance that we need to come into our consciousness, so that we can actually take action and become participants in a meditation path. I think it is happening all around because there is a deep need. It is also because people are unconsciously waking up – unconsciously becoming conscious.

It is the most life-changing thing to find your way onto a path of personal growth or a spiritual path. Nothing can be the same.

Q: What are some of the ways in your life you like to stay playful?

GB: That’s a great question. I have a lot of fun with social media. I find it to be a really creative way to express myself and to carry a message at the same time.



Q: Is there anything else you want to add?

GB: I just want people to be aware that I personally endorse Heartfulness. I think this is such a beautiful mission that you are on. I am so proud to be part of it with the conference. I mean it. When I met you guys, I thought, “Oh, this is great. Let’s get behind this!” It’s fantastic ●

INTERVIEWED BY EMMA HAWLEY



The Evolution of Consciousness

— PART 5 —

‘Consciousness’ is a popular word these days in the field of mind-body medicine, and also at the cutting edge of research in science and spirituality and the quantum field. The idea of a spectrum of consciousness is not new. Yogis and mystics have written about it since time immemorial, and more recently also western psychoanalysts and psychologists like Carl Jung and Ken Wilbur¹.

What do we learn from this literature? It tells us there is a vast spectrum of consciousness in a human being, spanning the subconscious mind through consciousness and all the way to the superconscious realm, most of which we don’t understand.

As we discussed in Part 2, the great Swami Vivekananda once said, “Consciousness is a mere film between two oceans, the subconscious and the superconscious.” He understood the infinite, limitless nature of this spectrum, because his own state had expanded across that spectrum. He could observe and describe exactly what he found.

This was also the case with Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, who researched and described the states of consciousness and superconsciousness of the various chakras in the Heart Region, the Mind Region and the Central Region of a human being. In the light of these findings, science still lags a long way behind Yoga in describing the spectrum of consciousness.²

¹Wilbur, Ken. 1974. *Psychologia Perennis, The Spectrum of Consciousness*, Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, Vol. 7, No. 2.

Last month, in Part 4, [KAMLESH D. PATEL](#) explored in some detail the impressions caused by our emotions, where they form knots in the spiritual anatomy of a human being, and what we can do to remove these impressions. In this issue, he shares with us some more thoughts on the spectrum of consciousness.

Modern psychologists are also generally studying the mind that is compromised, with very little research done on a healthy mind. Even less has been done researching higher consciousness, as found in personalities like Buddha, Jesus and Swami Vivekananda. And how will we study such higher individuals who we can count on the fingers of one hand when the scientific approach requires a large amount of data to verify observations in order to conclude? From a scientific perspective, we are also limited in another way: when we observe and record results, we can only analyse the outcome from our own level of consciousness.

Persons with a higher, more evolved consciousness see from their perspective. Both are right, from their level of observation and understanding. Because a person can observe the world from the peak of the mountain, the people in the valley should not decry and criticize his wider vision. Similarly, astronomers who view the heavens through a mile-wide, gazing at the beauty of the stars and galaxies, have a greater advantage over our normal eyesight. So scientists and their logic are also correct, but this correctness is from a limited level of understanding and vision.

If you meditate with Yogic Transmission or *Pranahuti*, you will experience more and more

If you meditate with Yogic Transmission or *Pranahuti*, you will experience more and more deeply and broadly this spectrum of consciousness, and go beyond experience into the realm of direct perception and knowledge.

² Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur. 1989. Complete Works of Ram Chandra, Volume 1.

³ Swami Vivekananda. 1947. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 8, 'Saying and Utterances'.

deeply and broadly this spectrum of consciousness, and go beyond experience into the realm of direct perception and knowledge. Gradually more and more of this vast field of consciousness will open up to you.

Swami Vivekananda once said: "What does consciousness matter? Why, it is nothing compared with the unfathomable depths of the subconscious and the heights of the superconscious! In this I could never be misled, for had I not seen Ramakrishna Paramahansa gather in ten minutes, from a man's subconscious mind, the whole of his past, and determine from that his future and his powers?"³

These days, scientists measure brainwave frequencies and electro-magnetic frequencies of the heart in order to try to describe and understand various states of consciousness, e.g. normal waking consciousness, various stages of sleep, a relaxed mind, and a meditating mind, just to name a few. They have already realized that the electromagnetic field of the heart is much stronger than that of the brain.⁴ This is in-line with the findings of those yogis of calibre, who have considered the heart as the centre of our being.⁵

Yogis have also told us that the heart and mind are not two separate entities, but instead there is a heart-mind field, known as the subtle body or *sookshma sharir*.⁶ This vibrational field spreads outwards from the centre of our existence, the heart, into every aspect of our spiritual and worldly life.

The field of the heart and mind can extend across the full spectrum of consciousness, from the depths of subconsciousness all the way to the heights of superconsciousness. In the middle sits our conscious mind, affected at every moment by what is happening along the full spectrum, from both the subconscious and superconscious states. There is always a dynamic interplay.

For example, even when we are fully aware and alert to the present moment, our fears, likes and dislikes from past experiences affect the way we feel. We may fear a specific situation that stops us from embracing an opportunity, or our desires pull us towards other activities. So at no time is the conscious mind unaffected by our subconscious past. Similarly, inspiration from our superconscious can come at any moment. We may have some unexpected insight or inspiration that drives a decision that we would not normally consider. All three levels are always operating at any moment in time.

This interplay is known in Yoga as the interplay of the subtle bodies – *chit*, *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahankar*. We have explored these four subtle bodies in Part 2. *Chit* is consciousness, *manas* is our contemplative mind, *buddhi* is intellect and *ahankar* is ego. As they become refined and purified, through the process of

⁴ McCraty, Rollin. 2015. *Science of the Heart*, Vol. 2.

⁵ Patanjali, *Yoga Sutras*

⁶ Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh, 1973. *Truth Eternal*, 'Karma'.

yogic cleaning, our awareness expands to encompass more and more of the spectrum of consciousness.

When you meditate intensely with Yogic Transmission, your heart opens and you develop the ability to experience the spectrum of consciousness as an integrated field. This is what 'Yoga' actually means – integrating, unifying the field. You become aware of all dimensions at the same time. Your consciousness expands.

The mind is capable of being fully awake and in the world, and yet deeply absorbed in the Absolute at the same time. This is the state known as *sahaj samadhi*, where everything can be known through superconscious perception – the direct perception of Nature. Traditional *samadhi* is often defined as a stone-like consciousness where you don't feel anything, but that is not as subtle as *sahaj samadhi*, where we develop a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree consciousness all around.

In *sahaj samadhi* we see everything to the extent possible – front, back, past, present, future – everything can be in our view. The extent to which one can expand in consciousness is nothing but the reflection of evolution. So while we are working, we are focused on work, on the surroundings, on the TV if it is on in the room, on something happening outside the office, and also on the Source. We are focused on the transmission that is happening inside, and the condition that is prevailing within, on something that is about to come into our system, on the thoughts that are arising, and on the next step we should be taking; and yet we remain peaceful seeing all these things at the same moment.

Automatically, this consciousness becomes three-hundred-and-sixty-degree consciousness. We are not focusing on any particular thing. The moment we focus on a particular thing, it is no longer meditation, but concentration instead.

So in this state we see how our consciousness can expand and we are able to utilize our minds in such a dynamic way.

There is also another way of looking at the spectrum of consciousness, and that is from personal, or individual, to collective. This is the spectrum of mind to heart. Our mind gives us our individual identity through the *ego*, *ahankar*, whereas the heart is collective. In the words of Ram Chandra Fatehgarh, "What is this 'we' of ours? It is our heart."² It is through the heart that we are all connected. This is the hope of our future and Yoga is the key to unlocking this whole spectrum of consciousness ●

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² Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh, 1973. *Truth Eternal*, 'Brahman'.

About Kamlesh Patel

Embracing the many roles of a modern-day spiritual Guide, you will find Kamlesh Patel equally at home meditating with a group of followers in the sublime stillness of a Himalayan ashram, teaching thousands of people to meditate at an international conference in Lyon France or Los Angeles California, addressing recruits in a police academy in Delhi and sharing tips on life skills with students at a high school campus in Mumbai.

Known to many as Daaji, he has that rare and beautiful blend of eastern heart and western mind that allows him to dive deep into the centre of his existence in the heart, and simultaneously have a scientific approach to original research in the field of meditation, spirituality and human evolution.

As President of the Heartfulness Institute and the fourth spiritual Guide in the Sahaj Marg system of Raja Yoga, Daaji oversees Heartfulness centers and ashrams in over 110 countries, and guides the 6,000 certified trainers who are permitted to impart Yogic Transmission under his care.



WHAT YOU THINK
you become.

~ The Buddha

From Thinking to *Feeling*:

The Secret Nature of the Forest

- RASHI AGRAWAL

This whole journey of meditation is like Magic.
The word in itself transports us to a land of the impossible, of fairy tales.
This is a land where clouds become cotton candy
and the petals of a rose are a gateway to heaven.

This is the land of change.

The Heart is a very similar kind of land, except that it is not a fairy tale.

It is a reality.

*It is here, where thoughts are the simple words
that knock on the door of the heart,
and take us to someplace higher than ourselves.
We soon find ourselves engulfed in a space,
sweeter than candy, lighter than the cloud.*

Welcome to the land of feelings.

It seemed nonsensical to me at first, but to tell you the truth it is one of the most profound dreams that I have had, simply because it taught me how to perceive what I was feeling.

And upon sharing this dream with my mother, she asked, "Why don't you paint it?" There. I set off on recreating those same feelings and images. These images aren't a delight to the eye, but hopefully they may take you on a journey very similar to the one I had.

This dream conjured up a journal for me. It was full of articles that did not seem of much interest until I came across a particular article with images that were literally devoid on any imagery. They were empty! They had no trace of life in them. All they had were a soft yellow glow and a few shades of colour here and there. The author had very interestingly titled his article 'The True State of the Forest'. This intrigued me.





And there lies that secret door

In these images, there was nothing even remotely like a forest. There was no mud, forget trees or animals. It was just empty space, like a vacuum.

What was the author really experiencing, and why in the world would she choose to call this empty lifeless picture a forest, and that too, in its true state? The surreality of this compelled me to read the article. As I was reading it, my imagination took a u-turn, and there I was, right in the midst of the forest as described in the image.



Allow yourself to be taken in

According to the author, the reason why the forest looked like this (this was a secret) was because the forest, as it really is, is not the plants, trees and animals there. They are the physical manifestations of something more profound. The forest in reality is a field of energy. And only he who has entered a state of communion with it will truly be able to experience the forest in its true state, in the entirety of its energy.

And there I stood in the midst of that forest, in the middle of an epiphany, thinking in wonder and amazement how little I knew of what I thought I knew.



So you may be one with it

I was alone there, but I was not lonely. The forest's energy was gently saying to me that there was only love. It seemed to caress me and surround me. I was humbled because the forest had let me in, and allowed me to feel her. She was all around me. I could not see her, but her harmony had taken me in, mothered me, and I knew that this was my refuge. This was the place where I truly belonged.

I wasn't thinking all this, because I was potentially seeing nothing. The forest had allowed me to feel what it was to truly feel.



To feel Our heart's embrace

This was the end of my dream.

Hellen Keller once said that the most beautiful things are felt in the Heart. What could be more honest a statement than this?

The forest was the heart's embrace. It wasn't my heart, or your heart. It was the Heart of the World. It was our Heart, something in which everything and everybody have comfortably manifested themselves. We are only to realize that we are all tiny, humble, yet significant parts of it, and all of us are connected by virtue of the very same embrace ●



PURPOSE
OF *Life*

Commit to never-ending self-improvement
Excel in everything I do
Love myself first and extend my love to others
Enjoy my achievements as well as the process
Believe everything is going to be fine in the end
Be responsible for all my decisions
Avoid negative energy but still be compassionate
Trust people's actions, not their words
Imagine I am a child of the Universe and I belong
to a big supportive family
Never give up my dreams
Be grateful for this life journey

Jessica D. Pang



**NATURE ALWAYS WEARS THE
COLORS OF THE SPIRIT.**

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Amazing Flowers

For thousands of years flowers have been used as medicines to cure human diseases. In the 1920s, a London doctor decided to explore the healing properties of flowers systematically and scientifically, and his discoveries have become well-known today as the Bach Flower Remedies.

Dr Edward Bach studied medicine at the University College Hospital, London and received a Diploma in Public Health from Cambridge. He was a house surgeon and a casualty medical officer at University College Hospital. He also worked at the National Temperance Hospital and practiced for over twenty years in London as a Harley Street consultant and bacteriologist. He researched in the fields of immunology and homeopathy, and joined the laboratories of the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital in 1919, where he developed seven bacterial nosodes. And during all this time, he developed a strong scientific research capability.

He believed that illness often result from disharmony between body and mind, so in 1928 he left London to find a new system of healing involving plant remedies. He worked in Wales and the English countryside, and by 1932 he had discovered twelve remedies, using them on the many patients who came to him for treatment. In 1933 he discovered the second group of remedies, the seven helpers. In 1934 he moved to Oxfordshire, and it was in the lanes and fields here that he found the remaining nineteen remedies he needed to complete the series.

His approach was practical and experimental. He would himself suffer the emotional state that he needed to cure, and then try various plants and flowers until he found the plant that could help him.

As time went on he abandoned the scientific method he had always used, choosing to rely on his intuition to guide him. One by one he found remedies for particular mental states or emotions. His life followed a seasonal pattern: during spring and summer he collected flowers and prepared remedies, and during the winter he gave help and advice to all who came to him for free.

He found that when he treated the mental patterns and feelings of his patients with flower remedies, their distress would vanish and the natural healing potential in their bodies would be unblocked and start to work once more.

Bach Flower Remedies are now used all over the world. Here are four examples, with Dr Bach's descriptions of the symptoms that are treated by each remedy.¹

Clematis

“Those who are dreamy, drowsy, not fully awake, no great interest in life. Quiet people, not really happy in their present circumstances, living more in the future than in the present; living in hopes of happier times when their ideals may come true. In illness some make little or no effort to get well, and in certain cases may even look forward to death, in the hope of better times; or maybe, meeting again some beloved one whom they have lost.”

¹ Bach, E, 2011. *The Twelve Healers and Other Remedies, the definitive 1941 edition*. The Bach Center, UK



Elm

“Those who are doing good work, are following the calling of their life and who hope to do something of importance, and this often for the benefit of humanity. At times there may be periods of depression when they feel that the task they have undertaken is too difficult, and not within the power of a human being.”

Pine

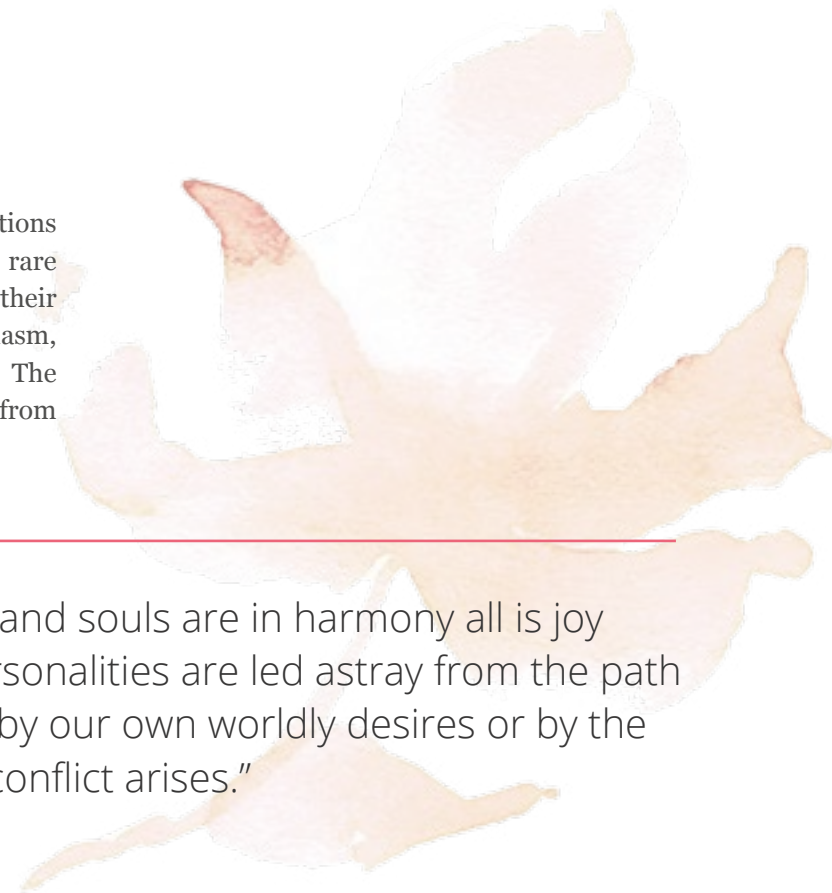
“For those who blame themselves. Even when successful they think they could have done better, and are never satisfied with the decisions they make. Would this remedy help me to stop blaming myself for everything?”

Walnut

“For those who have definite ideals and ambitions in life and are fulfilling them, but on rare occasions are tempted to be led away from their own ideas, aims and work by the enthusiasm, convictions or strong opinions of others. The remedy gives constancy and protection from outside influences.”

“So long as our personalities and souls are in harmony all is joy and peace. It is when our personalities are led astray from the path laid down by the soul, either by our own worldly desires or by the persuasion of others, that a conflict arises.”

- Edward Bach ●



LESSONS FROM THE GARDEN

RED ONIONS

Transformed by Beauty



ALANDA GREENE discovers beauty in unexpected places and learns an important lesson in the process.

I was at the compost edge with two freshly picked red onions, washing dirt from their skins. At the time, my mind was wrangling with unpleasant thoughts, feeling wronged in a particular situation, reviewing how I was wronged. Not sure to whom I was stating my case. Not the red onions.

As I peeled back the outer layer of one, the sun caught its redness, lit it up like a ruby, and I gasped at the startling beauty of it. Thoughts stilled, and the red glow absorbed my being in gratitude and awe.

Suddenly I felt silly for what now seemed a petty absorption. Here I was surrounded in beauty, yet not receptive to it, letting myself be mired in thoughts not about now, not helpful, and an obstacle to being present.

A moment of grace took me out of that state and showed another possibility, showed yet again that the choice I make with my thoughts makes all the difference in my world. I had been grumbly and dark and, suddenly, transformed by beauty.

I would like to say that this insight transformed my mental behavior and ever after I desisted from irritable thoughts, instead seeking to find beauty and be moved by it. But this is not the case. Red onions have, however, continued to be a teacher in this area.

In the winter, retrieving an onion from where they are stored over the long chilly months, I was again arrested by the vivid deep red color of a dried skin, its patterns revealed like geometric stained glass designs. This experience recalled the former one at the compost. This time I wasn't mired in grumpiness, I just wasn't really there at all. Where had my mind been when suddenly this luminous deep purple red pulled it into the now? Now was full, rich, alive. That other place? I don't even know.

Pulling a red onion from the soil, peeling the hard, dirt-encrusted outer skin away, I see a white layer pasted against the dark red. The dark color behind the pale layer reveals a network of pattern, similar to brick work, to skin cells seen under a microscope, to the strata of layers in the inner bark of a tree. Again, I am arrested with beauty and the marvel of the patterns in Nature.

This sends me on a walk through the garden with the deliberate intent to look for beauty. I discover it everywhere. A radiant squash blossom, so intensely yellow it seems to have a light inside the petals, delights both me and also the bee happily wiggling inside, buzzing in pleasure. Light through the cabbage leaves reveals patterns of veins that look like the branching patterns of trees in winter. Fernlike carrot leaves flutter slightly in a barely detectable breeze, a feathery dance. Everywhere is beauty.



I recall part of a poem of the Navajo tribe and understand it in a new way.

With beauty may I walk

With beauty before me may I walk

With beauty behind me may I walk

With beauty above me may I walk

With beauty all around me may I walk

In old age, wandering on a trail of beauty, lively, may I walk

In old age, wandering on a trail of beauty, living again, may I walk

It is finished in beauty.

It is finished in beauty.

Simone Weil noted, "In everything which gives us the pure authentic feeling of beauty there really is the presence of God. There is as it were an incarnation of God in the world and it is indicated by beauty."

What is the mystery of beauty? How can it be explained? It is more than a perspective, lying in the eye of the beholder. Simone Weil noted, "In everything which gives us the pure authentic feeling of beauty there really is the presence of God. There is as it were an incarnation of God in the world and it is indicated by beauty. The beautiful is the experimental proof that the incarnation is possible."

This beauty – the way it brings a mental gasp, stops thoughts, and brings me to joy in the moment – makes me think that this is much of the artistic impulse. There is a desire to capture and share the awe experienced, to also create what will bring the moment of stopped thought, absorption, recognition of patterns and layers and meaning.

Beauty does have the power to transform. Red onions are not the same anymore – they are portals to wonder, remembrance, awe and gratitude. In the garden, it feels easy to find beauty but I am learning also that it is everywhere.

Can I turn my mind, tune my attention, to find it? ●

Heart MARKS THE SPOT.

This is a very simple origami activity that will allow you to create a great heart bookmark for your favorite book in less than 5 minutes.

What you need:

Craft paper, any color, with patterns if you want.

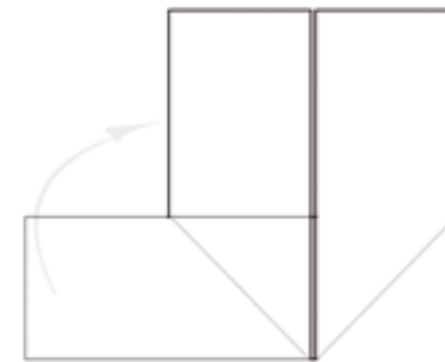
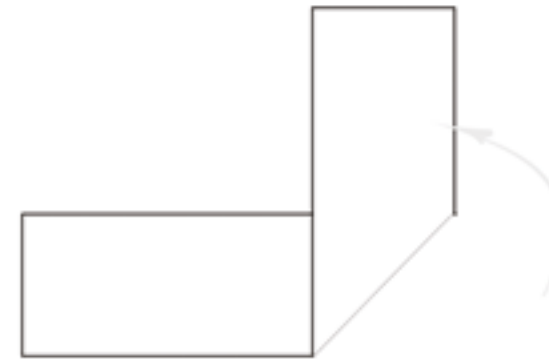
What to do:

- 1 Take a sheet of paper 6cm x 12cm. If you change the size, the smaller side is always half the longer one.

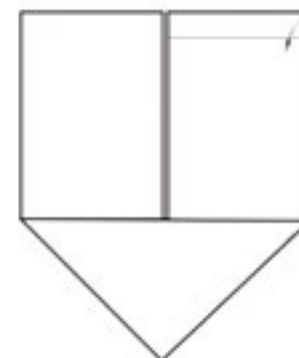
Fold your paper lengthways down the middle.



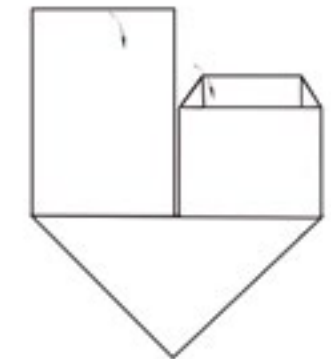
- 2 Fold the right side of your paper into the middle of the band as shown in drawing 2. Then do the same for the left side.



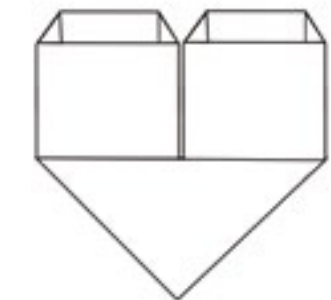
- 3 Flip your folded construction around. At this point, you can place a small piece of tape inside the pointy part to prevent the two arms from moving apart. This will hold them together and make your bookmark stronger.



- 4 Fold a small part of the top of the right arm onto itself, then bend the corners inward. Do the same for the left arm.



- 5 Flip your construction around and there you are! A beautiful heart that will hold the page of the book you prefer.



You can add to this shape, decorating the paper with illustrations, stickers, stamps or paints; in fact that you have at home.

You can even make a smaller heart in another color that you can attach to the first heart.

Great results guaranteed! ●

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JOMO

THE BRAVE

- PART II -

“Please Zaïr, can you tell us the end of the story of Jomo the Brave?”

“Come on children, let’s go into that container. Well! It’s warmer, in here, isn’t it? Oh I see, some of you weren’t here last time. So let me give you a brief summary.

Jomo was convinced he was a leper, and so he left for a better place to live. His journey led him to Guinea, then along the Senegal River, and finally to Mauritania and Nouakchott city, at the border of the Mauritanian desert. A trip by boat along the Moroccan coast took him to the refugee camp at Tarifa in Spain.

JOMO REACHES THE END OF THE ROAD AND THEN AN AWAKENING

“It’s still worse here than in my village,” Jomo thought. “I left to find tranquility and peace and I have only met troubles and pointless adventures. Isn’t there a place where I can rest and live happily? Won’t it ever stop? What did I do to deserve all these troubles? Oh God! I can’t understand anything concerning my life. I did try to accept my lot, but it’s really too hard. There’s only darkness around me. Dad! Mum! Where are you?”

Then he remembered how fervently his father used to pray: “Please God, please, will you help me?” He had seen his father close his eyes and meditate. I’ll do that, he thought. What else could he do, anyway? Suddenly, he heard a voice whispering to him: “Listen to the music of your heart!”



He felt a presence near him and opened his eyes.

An old lady was standing there. So far, Jomo had never seen a woman dressed that way, with a long full brightly patterned skirt and large moon-shaped earrings. Her eyes were lined with mascara.

“What is your heart’s desire my child?”

Jomo automatically uttered these words, “My heart wants to be back in my village and be happy with the people there. I wish peace would prevail and we had no feeling of any difference between black and white people, between a Peul and a Bambara, and between a Bobo and a Dogon.”

“See, light is back within you. If you want to preserve that light, keep it very precious in your mind and make it the goal of your journey. Don’t worry about whatever shapes your adventures take. Keep your goal in your heart and live in the present. Give, whenever you can help. To begin, go to the camp infirmary.”

On the following day, he went to the infirmary and asked a young doctor about his disease. The doctor examined him and said, “It’s not leprosy, but only psoriasis, which is neither dramatic nor contagious. But your foot is malformed.”

“I was born with it and so I got used to it.”

“Yes, but it must be terribly painful.”

“I’ve always felt that pain while I walked, so I just forget about it. For me, walking means being in pain, as others would say, but I found it normal.”

“Listen. If you want, I can arrange for an operation so that the deformity is corrected.”

“Would it be better for me?”

“Sure, and very easy to do.”

JOMO WENT TO HOSPITAL

There he found himself lying in a bed, together with many other kids in the surrounding beds and infant incubators in the center of the room.

The nurses and the health assistants were so kind, looking after him and accepting him as he was unconditionally. He had never felt so well and so happy. Such benevolence brought about a long awaited peace and he felt completely relaxed.

Some people from humanitarian associations came to visit him. With their help he learnt to read. Then he read whatever books he'd come across or that people would lend him. In the evenings, he helped the attending nurse to roll bandages. Hopping on his good leg, he would also pay visits to the younger children who were not feeling so good.

SIX MONTHS LATER, HE WAS BACK TO THE CAMP

He was still more or less abused, but he was able to take things differently. He had learnt how to respond, how to hold an argument, how to defend himself and how to smile most of the time. And also, he could go on improving his reading, now that books were a-plenty. That allowed him to escape, far away, beyond time and space! Moreover, a passing student taught him how to play the flute.

Some time later, the young doctor was back. He explained that a claim had been made for his return to his home country for health reasons and been accepted. Jomo was very happy. He accepted the offer, but he felt just a bit scared.

AFTER A LONG JOURNEY, JOMO WAS BACK NEAR HIS VILLAGE

He did not want to go there straight away. He sat by the river. Two years had elapsed. The small kid he was had grown up, but he still did not know how to approach the villagers. After being in the hospital, he had realized that the people around you don't always change so easily. They imagine all sorts of superstitions and they hang on to them confidently.

So, he asked the river, "What can I do with these people who insist on believing I am a leper? I do know now that it's all a question of superstition and prejudice, but what should I do?"

"So, you have never been a leper?" a voice said behind him.

THE MAN WITH BRIGHT KIND EYES

Jomo turned around and saw an old puny man with bright kind eyes, who was very simply dressed.

"He must be a marabout," thought Jomo.

Standing there, with his bag on his shoulder, he leaned on his walking stick. Then he sat down in front of Jomo and crossed his legs. His heart shone with kindness and he smiled at the world.

"Do you want to be completely sure?" he asked.

"At the camp where I was kept, I met a doctor who examined me and said it was only a light psoriasis, which was very comforting."

"Show me," said bright eyes. "Take off your shirt. Yes. You still have some scabs and white stains but no red sores, so everything is all right."

The old man, who had come of nowhere, prepared a healing ointment with some clay he got from the river, and he mixed it with leaves and chamomile flowers.

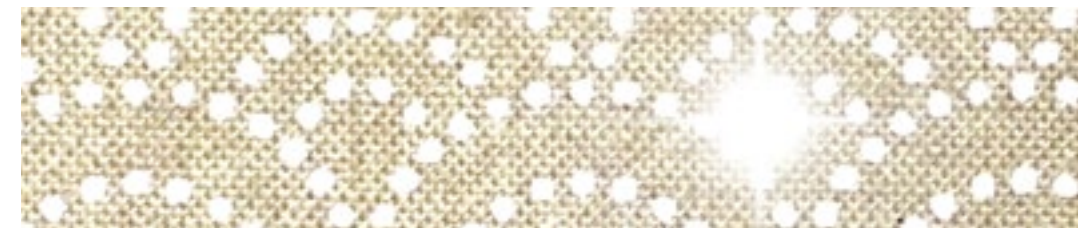
"Put it on your skin twice a day and in two weeks time it will have all disappeared. You look perfectly healthy. What made you think you were a leper?"

Jomo told him about the rumors that had ruined all possibility of him staying in the village, so that he had fled from there.

"Poor people," the old man said. "They saw leprosy outside, on you, whereas it was really a part of their inner selves."

"Sir, you are a saint. Why don't you come and cure them as you have just done with me?"

"I have neither the energy nor the time for it. I have to go back to the source," said bright eyes, pointing upstream along the river. "It is my goal and it looks far enough."



BRIGHT EYES PAUSED

He closed his eyes, and Jomo had the sudden impression that the old man had gone far away I his mind, and was no longer there. It was quite impressive.

“Is he an extra-terrestrial, or what? Or maybe he is going to die just now,” Jomo said to himself.

A few minutes later, the old man opened his eyes again. All the stars and planets in the universe were reflected in his eyes. Jomo really felt that the old man was looking deep within him, and that he could see everything inside him and beyond.

Then bright eyes said: “You can speak to them yourself. You have gone through all those trials, which made you better understand the human soul and the complicated behavior of people. Words and speeches will be useless, but you can speak to them without uttering a single word.”

THE FLUTE

Bright eyes searched his bag and found a flute.

“Music will help you touch their hearts. Can you play it? A German flautist gave it to me. Ignorant people think it is magic, because every time he would play, rats, children and animals were enchanted. In fact, it is only the sweet melodies of love that touch the hearts of the creatures in this world. There is no magic. There is no power. There is only love.

“Every time you hear someone slander, snigger or behave wickedly with a passer-by, play your flute. Play as if it were a shrilling bird, or a grinding magpie. Reflect the vibrations they produce. Then go on with your own musical reflection and let your flute vibrate the sweet notes that come from your heart.

“Go, my son, love life and life will love you. Love God who is in you, and you will love God in the others. Love all and they will all love you.”

The old man went away along the river without looking back. Jomo went to the small hut he used to have in the village.

THE SURPRISE OF THE VILLAGERS

The villagers were so surprised to see him back and to hear him tell the story of his journey, and of all the miseries he had seen while he was roaming the dusty paths in deepest Africa.



They felt embarrassed when he stated confidently that he was not a leper. And they were still more surprised when they saw him pull out a flute from his pocket and play every time they would speak. They were dumbfounded when they heard him play.

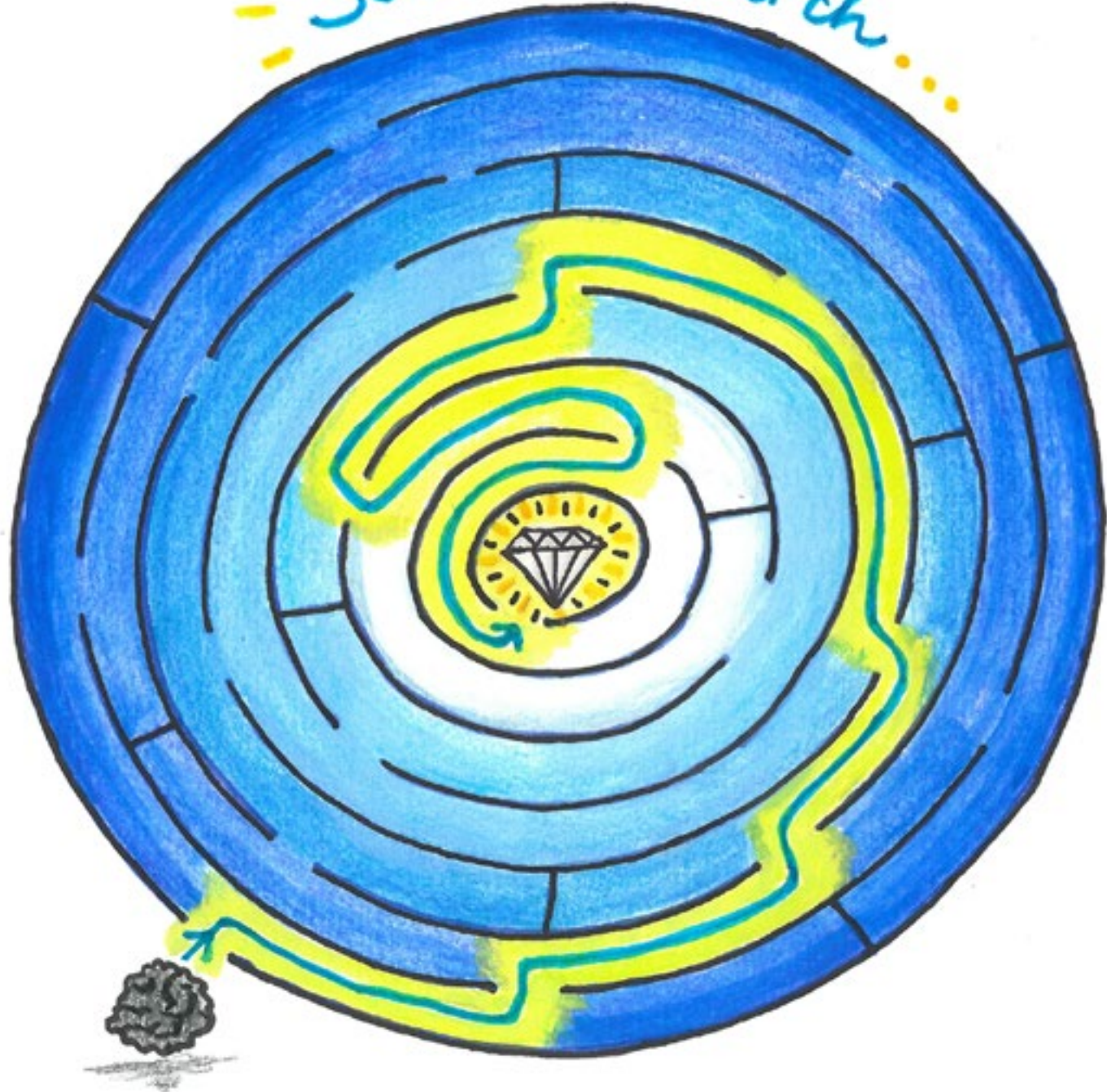
The musical echo of their slandering sounded so mischievous that they felt ashamed. It was as if their own thoughts were being sung in a bird language that was even clearer and more explicit than human words. Then followed the notes from Jomo’s heart. They were so sweet and smooth that they finally touched and softened their hearts.

Little by little, men and women stopped tearing themselves apart with their sharp nasty words. They discovered simple pleasures and they all felt the better for it. And so felt Jomo.

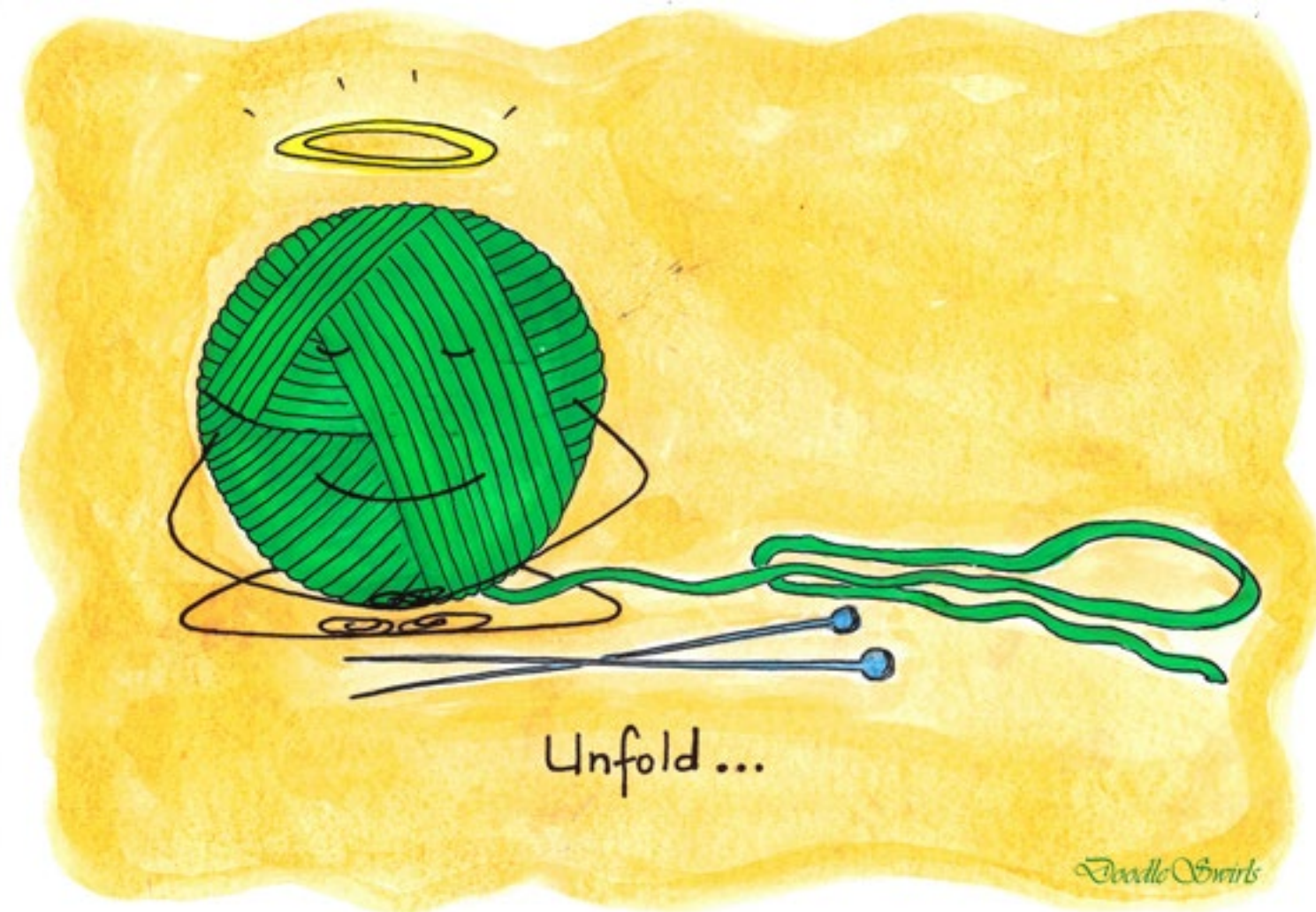
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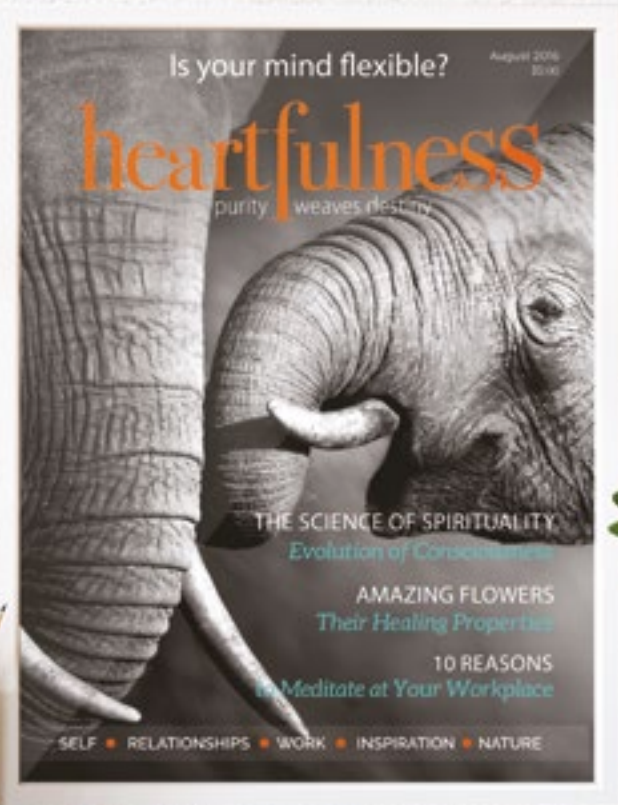
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