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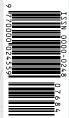
Why Should Scientists Meditate?

Loneliness:
A Silent Epidemic
RANJANI IYER &
JAY THIMMAPURAM

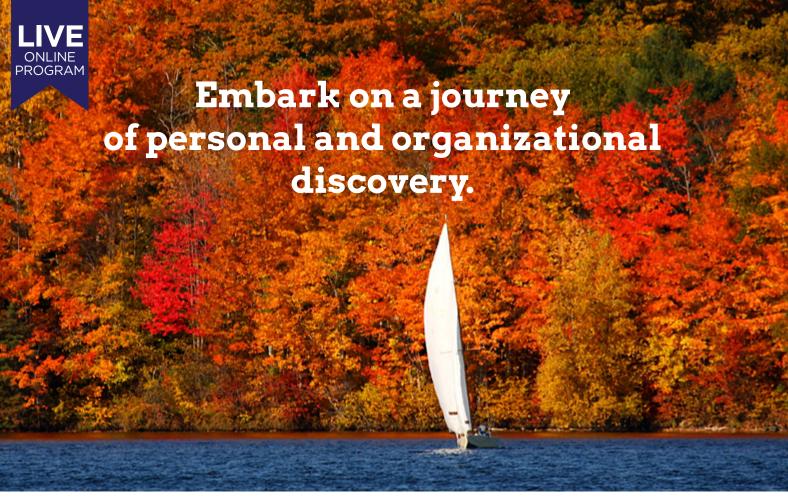
In Pursuit of
Happiness
KATE ELIZABETH
HALLAM

Creating a Green City KAREN EYÞÓRSDÓTTIR









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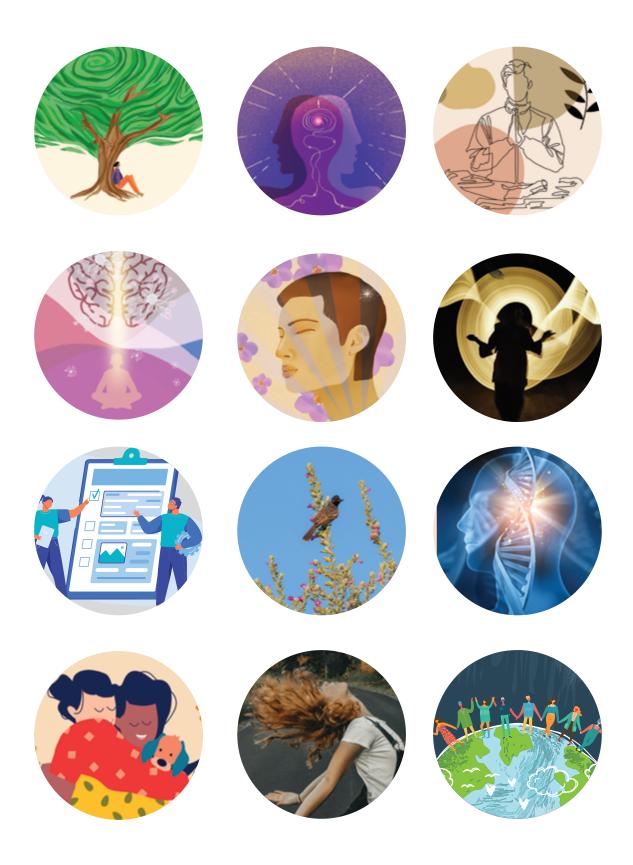


Dear readers,

December 16 to 18, 2022, sees the first international conference on an Integrative Approach to Health and Well-being hosted at Kanha Shanti Vanam. To showcase this trailblazing event, our December edition is full of original research in the various fields of wellness.

We learn about distraction, decision-making, and how to care for ourselves. We explore consciousness, correct thinking and right understanding, and the way we all research in everyday life. We celebrate young researchers and empathetic leaders, and learn the secrets of resisting temptation. We examine the silent epidemic of loneliness and the pursuit of happiness. We evaluate our chances of realizing SDG 3 by 2030, discover how the gut microbiome affects our immune system, and observe the relaxation that comes with Nature's sounds. Finally, we learn how the city of Reykjavik's Green Plan is at the forefront of creating the 3 pillars of sustainability – economic, social, and environmental – leading to an environmentally-friendly city.

Happy reading!
The editorial team



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DAAJI

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Eddie is a yoga instructor from NYC, an author, a researcher, and has created two apps, The Breathing App and Yoga 365. He is the co-founder of the Urban Yogis, and is on the board of the Black Yoga Teachers Alliance. His latest book is One Simple Thing, a New Look at the Science of Yoga and How It Can Change Your Life.



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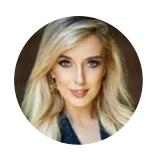
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Laya is a sophomore at Stanford University, where she studies computer science. She loves to go on hikes, meditate, read books, and play the piano. She is experienced in the full-life cycle development of multiple apps and is passionate about developing solutions in the overlap between mental health and artificial intelligence.



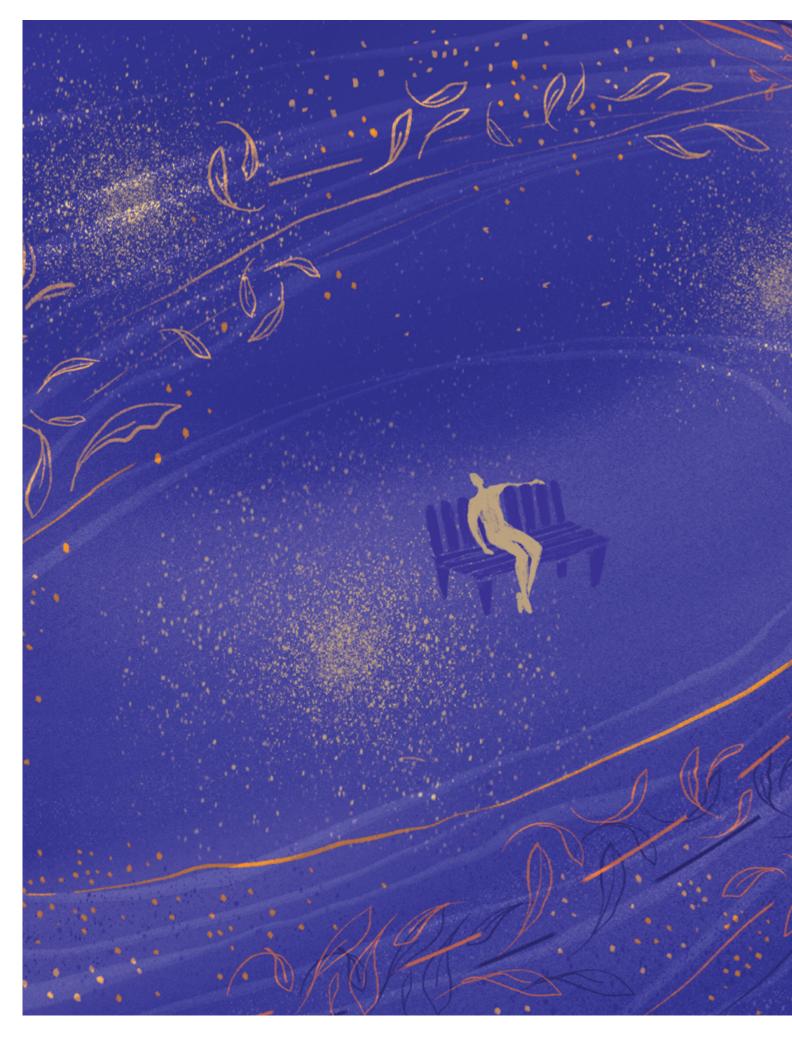
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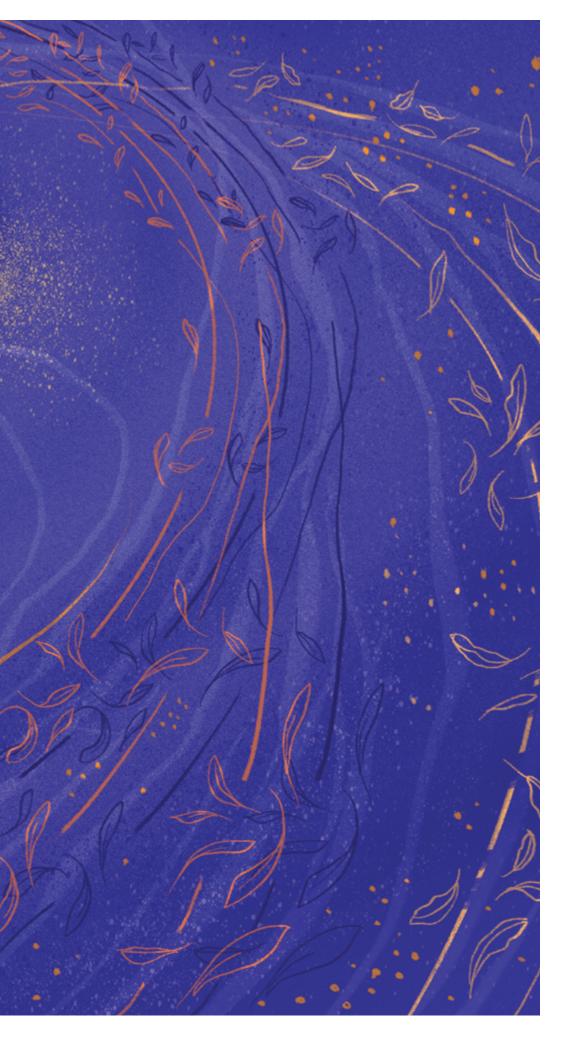
Kate is a British model, actress, and musician, who has been Miss Great Britain Photogenic, Miss England Intercontinental, and the Face of Aintree 2004. Kate is also a humanitarian and works for various charity projects. Her TEDx talk about her life journey has turned into a viral Internet sensation.



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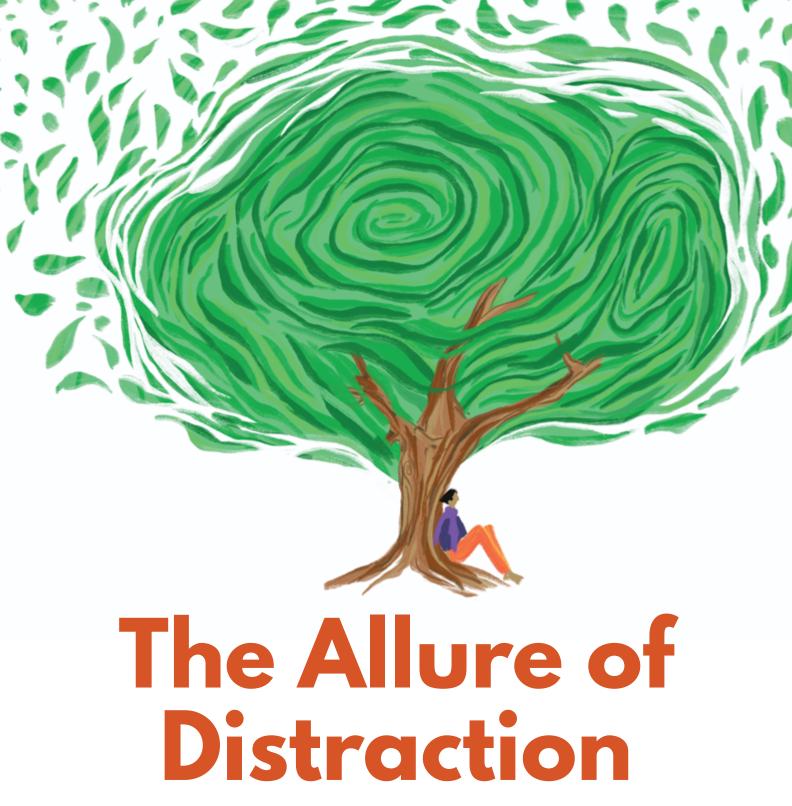


sell-care

Be the Witness.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Illustration by ANANYA PATEL



HESTER O CONNOR shares an account of her personal research into the experience of a 3-day meditation retreat. How easy it was to look for distraction afterward!



have been practicing
Heartfulness Meditation
for almost 30 years, and this
September I participated remotely
in a 3-day spiritual retreat
presented by Heartfulness. In line
with many spiritual traditions,
we are encouraged to study our
meditative experiences and keep a
diary of what we feel and discover
– in other words, to do our own
research.

Live-stream meditations were conducted by Daaji, and here is a narrative account of what I experienced during and after the retreat.

On Day 2, I was aware of an inner feeling of purity, and a longing to be like my guide. I would describe it as a feeling of wanting to be the absolute best version of myself. There was an inner stillness like a pond with no ripples. I had a feeling of moving closer to my teacher, as if the gap between us was less than it had been in previous days. I was conscious of not wanting anything to spoil this

inner atmosphere. I had been ill for a few days with the flu, so I was relieved that I did not have to leave the house and be around others. I did not want to be pulled out from inside into conversation. I was happy to be quiet, savoring and absorbing what I received in the meditations with Daaji.

In addition to those group meditations, I meditated twice a day at home. I found myself clearing a corner of clutter in my kitchen, something I had been meaning to do for months. The daily preoccupations that I am so easily caught up in were not present. I went to bed in this state of ease.

I woke early for the final meditation of the 3-day event. The rest of the day was filled with inner spaciousness and ease. I did not feel pulled out of this state in the office during the day.

The allure of distraction

When I got home from work that evening, I noticed a shift. I longed to party, to let my hair down as if I was coming out of a period of isolation. I mulled over what I would do to distract myself. I had a moment when I could have chosen to stay with the inner experience and not be distracted, but I wanted distraction. I sat and watched an hour of the UK Channel Four News, and was very distracted by the dire events. I felt

like praying for the plight of the suffering in the world. After that, I said to myself, "Enough."

Why would I choose to return to the familiarity and comfort of distraction, of thinking and action? What was going on in these moments of choice between the spaciousness and beauty within, an inner gift arising from meditation, and seeking the familiar daily round of thinking and doing?

It is helpful for me to question the ideas that underpin how I

When you couple clean eating with quality sleep, adequate movement, rest and recovery, emotional wellness, and your spirit, you help the natural in-built intelligence of your body to work for you and aid prevention and recovery.

live my life every day. We all have beliefs that influence how we behave, yet we rarely stop to think about these underlying beliefs, or the assumptions that inform our thinking and actions. What I received from my Catholic upbringing was the trust that all would be well in life. My mother was a fan of the Christian mystics. The Julian of Norwich quote, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well," comes to mind when things feel difficult. My father had a simple faith. Where I differ from my parents is that I believe in reincarnation of the soul. I believe that I have the capacity for goodness and destruction. Goodness is expressed as action to

alleviate suffering, which includes well-intentioned action for all of creation. Destruction is any kind of harm to anything animate or inanimate – judgmental thoughts, cheating, and wasting resources like time, energy, and so on.

The spiritual purpose

The purpose of my existence is a spiritual one. The journey of my life is for my soul to return to the essence of its origin, which is spiritual energy in its original state. It is my assumption that the spiritual purpose of my life is fulfilled through a silent inner connection with my living teacher. It is through this inner connection, experienced within

my heart, that I can evolve to the goal of the highest spiritual level in my lifetime. The effect of yogic Transmission from the teacher is for me evident in how I observe changes within myself and in others.

I considered myself to be flaky when I began Heartfulness
Meditation in 1994. I now have a grounded-ness within, like an oak tree rooted to the eternal.
The deepest longing of my heart is simultaneously satisfied and expands with the simple act of connecting to the core of my human essence. Many unnecessary preoccupations have fallen off over years of practice. Changes happen in a natural manner. The road





ahead is still long and many more layers of ego require pruning.

So, it is very challenging for me to see how utterly bound I am to thinking and action, because it is how I live my life. It is hardly a surprise then that having an experience of a very subtle and beautiful state devoid of choicemaking felt like the satisfaction of my longing. It was so subtle and unfamiliar, and therefore it was hard to rest there. I needed time to adjust to the new inner atmosphere, which was lighter and subtler. I was scared to remain in the unknown, to remain not

choosing by being without the churning of thoughts. I opted for choosing the familiar merry-goround of doing and thinking.

Satisfying your heart's desire

Does this story shed any light on your experience of your spiritual journey? I invite you to question the beliefs and deeply held ideas that inform how you live your life every day.

Does it ring any bells that you might long for something deep

inside, yet the distractions of life keep getting in the way?

Life is full of endless distraction. It is hardly surprising then that my research into my own experience sheds light on my fear of letting go, despite an intense spiritual longing. Zero has few reference points for me. Distraction on the other hand is the stuff of the material world.

Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL

Was Forrest Gump Stupid?

STAN LAJUGIE explores decision-making, and how to keep getting better at it. The results may surprise you, as the biology shows that not much of it depends on thinking!

orrest Gump is the story of a fairly simple man; so simple that people often thought he was stupid and made fun of him. He loved running and chocolate, and if we look at his entire life, he only took good decisions! He always followed his heart. As Idriss Aberkane says in Free Your Brain, can we say that a person who only takes good decisions in their life is stupid? No, right? At the same time, we can see many intelligent people taking wrong decisions! So, we come to understand that decision-making is not about thinking. It is about feeling.

Decision-making is a critical aspect of our lives. At work, we are paid to make decisions, and the decisions we make design our destiny. Our mind is a critical instrument for making decisions, but very few people pay attention to the process. To understand the

biology of decision-making, here is an overview of the 4 steps:

Security check – quick and dirty

First the information is checked by the mammalian brain, especially the amygdala, the part of the midbrain that is in charge of identifying threats and opportunities. Simply put: am I going to be eaten, or am I going to eat?

When there is perceived danger, the amygdala triggers the fight-or-flight response, which Daniel Goleman, the author of *Emotional Intelligence*, calls an amygdala hijacking. The limbic brain overrides all other parts of the brain to mobilize maximum resources for attack or defense. The blood moves to the limbs and the mid and back parts of

the brain, not to the prefrontal cortex, the CEO brain, which is dedicated to analysis and rational thinking. As a result, reactions and outbursts replace rational thought. Thus, decisions taken during or soon after an amygdala hijacking are likely to be based upon strong emotions not rational thinking. Someone who is operating mostly from this state of mind can be described as a reactive-compulsive decision-maker.

When the situation is safe, we move to the second stage of decision making.

Analysis and rational thinking – intelligent and slow

The information passes to the prefrontal cortex, where we evaluate all the pros and cons of the situation. This is where



we harness all our rational and analytical capacities. Deep thinking demands a focused mind. The more distracted we are, the shallower our reflections. The shorter our reflections, the more trivial they are likely to be. A reader's mind typically wanders anywhere from 20% to 40% of the time while reading a text. Not surprisingly, the more our mind wanders, the worse the comprehension (Daniel Goleman, *Focus*).

Besides, the rational thinking process is very slow! In the "Iowa Gambling Task" (Bechara et al., *Science* 1997), participants were told to gamble with four decks of cards. Secretly, two were biased so that they would tend to win, and the other two so that they would tend to lose. Throughout the game, their Skin Conductance Response was measured, and every 20 cards the experimenters asked participants what they knew about the game, and how they felt about it.

Here is what they observed:

After 80 cards, participants had observed that two of the decks were better than average and two were worse than average.

After 50 cards, participants expressed a hunch, a feeling that they liked two of the decks more than the other two.



After 10 to 30 cards, participants sweated more when reaching for the bad decks than when reaching for the good decks. They began to pick more from the good decks, even though they didn't give any indication that they were consciously aware of the nature of the game or their shifting behavior when asked.

Conclusion: we are capable of having physiological responses and feelings that change our behavior even before we are consciously aware of them. Conscious thinking and understanding is slow. In the professional world, too much emphasis on decisionmaking can lead to analysisparalysis. This is inefficient and delays decisions! It requires a third step.

Inner knowing – authentic and unspoken

Decision-making does not stop at the prefrontal cortex. It requires a third step to confirm the information, or the decision, with our inner knowing. Different parts of the limbic brain may be involved, including the brainstem, the basal ganglia, the hypothalamus, the anterior cingulate, and/or the insulate.

Daniel Goleman highlights that the best business decisions are not based on the numbers and facts available, but on something beyond. It requires that we tune into the brain circuitry that manages our entire life's wisdom and emotions. The tricky part is that this circuitry does not connect to the parts of the brain that think in words. They give instructions through feelings. So, in order to make a good decision, we need to tap into our feelings. This is often what people call their gut feeling.

What if our mind is too busy, with too many thoughts, or just wanders here and there? What if we are not trained to pay attention to feelings? How will we listen to our inner voice of wisdom and take good decisions?

Wisdom and intuition – wise and wizard

Research by Dr. Igor Grossman shows that self-distancing practices such as meditation on an abstract object, like the source of light in the heart, is conducive to wise reasoning. Heart-based meditation leads to heart-brain coherence, which is conducive to higher cognitive activities. When we practice a self-distancing meditation, we recognize the limits of our knowledge, and the

possibility of change. As a result, we consider others' perspectives, and search for ways to integrate these perspectives. Decisions are wiser and more sustainable.

Other studies from Rollin McCraty, Ph.D., and Dean Radin, Ph.D., show that the heart plays an important role in intuition. The heart responds 1.5 seconds before the brain does, and indeed

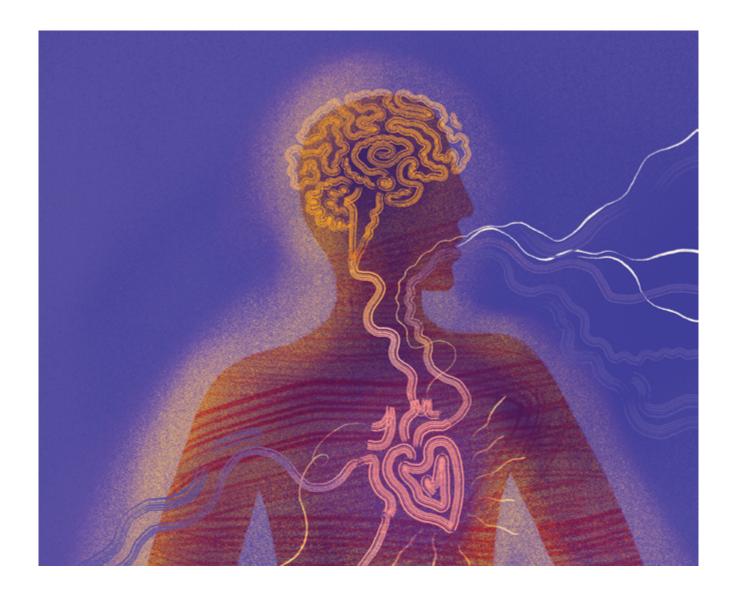
before any other part of the body. Even more surprisingly, the heart responds on average 4.6 seconds before the stimulus itself! This is called precognition, as it appears as a sixth sense, responding before the five senses perceive, and before thinking happens.

To sum up, we have seen the main 4 stages of decision-making. In a nutshell, decision is mostly about

feeling. Heart-based meditation not only sensitizes us to feeling, but also supports wisdom and intuition, improving decisionmaking skills.

We are often told that in the world of competition there is no place for feelings and the heart. Well, biology says otherwise!

Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL





we form a relationship with the inner self in yoga. Eddie is the cofounder of the Urban Yogis, and is on the board of the Black Yoga Teachers Alliance. His latest book is *One Simple Thing, a New Look at the Science of Yoga and How It Can Change Your Life.*He has also created two apps: The Breathing App and Yoga 365.

oga is perhaps one of the earliest self-care practices presented in a systematic way. But self-care in yoga is a little different from the way we currently think of self-care, because it is care for our inner consciousness. It is the quest to discover the deepest understanding of who we are, what our purpose is, and what we are doing here during our short time on Earth.

When we care for our innermost nature, which is one of the things that meditation teaches, other aspects of our life can fall into place. We sleep better, eat better, relate better, and act better. It is a top-down approach to healing.

Take sleep, for example: we don't try to sleep better, but we try to form a relationship with the person within who is sleeping. Better sleep is a result of that relationship. Meditation brings us into contact with the person within us – the consciousness within us – that is present while eating, sleeping, acting, and relating, so that all these activities become imbued with consciousness, and are no longer compulsive.

Ancient yoga texts discuss three basic attitudes that drive how we form a relationship with our inner self. Each is described as a *bhayana*. Bhayana is often

translated as mood or emotion, but it is more specifically a mood or emotion that accompanies an action. For example, one day you might learn a yoga pose that brings you great joy, or a sense of freedom or lightness. When that happens, you consciously attach that feeling to the action. Each time you do that posture, you can recall the feeling associated with it, until the two become interconnected, and each time you do that pose, it brings joy. The same is true with ritual, prayer, work, creativity, and meditation. The mood we bring to any

practice is highly important, and when the mood and action become indelibly connected, we will always enter into that expanded state as we perform the actions. Then all actions become devotional.

All too often, we get bored, are tired, have stuff to do, or are rushing to get things done. Sometimes we are simply goal-oriented and miss the sweetness of the practice. So, to recall the bhavana as we do a practice is one of the first tunings of consciousness that takes place as we transform.



Here are 3 key bhavanas inspired by one of my professors, Dr. Karuna Nagarajan:



 Adopt the opposite attitude to a negative thought or emotion

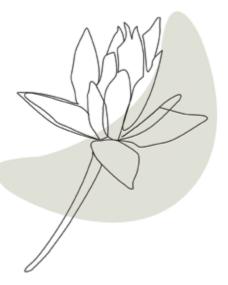
This is known as *pratipaksha bhavana*. If you feel anger, try to replace it with tenderness. If you feel jealousy, try to replace it with sympathetic joy. Easier said than done, but nobody said yoga was easy! Pratipaksha bhavana is featured in the Yoga Sutras.

2. Observe your emotions, don't get lost in them

This is known as *saakshi bhavana*. Things are going to come up, and

we all know by now not to push them away. Observe them, and they gradually lose their energy and power, and we also learn something from them.

Remember, you are the observing awareness, not your thoughts. You wouldn't know you were having a thought, or an emotion, unless something was there to observe it. So, consciously practicing witness-awareness throughout the day is a great practice, and good for our overall mental and emotional well-being.



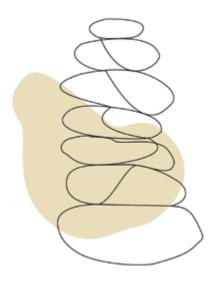
3. Understand that nothing is permanent

This is known as *anitya bhavana*. The only certainty is change. So, practice with an equilibrium of mind, and also practice having equilibrium of mind. This is described in many places in the

Yoga Sutras and is what happens when success in asanas occur. We become balanced and able to withstand the ups and downs of life, the *dvandvas*, or pairs of opposites.

The ability to withstand change is to know and expect that change will come, so we don't need to be surprised by it. We just need to be strong enough to deal with it.

Each of these can act as an anchor. See what happens when you recall any of these at some point during the day, as well as during your practice. When we consciously implement these ideas in our spiritual practice, they can be there for us in our life practices as well. When we care for the inner Self, it is the highest type of self-care, one that reverberates through all aspects of our life.



Illustrations by ARATI SHEDDE



THE ROAD TO DISCOVERY IS PAVED BY **RESEARCH**











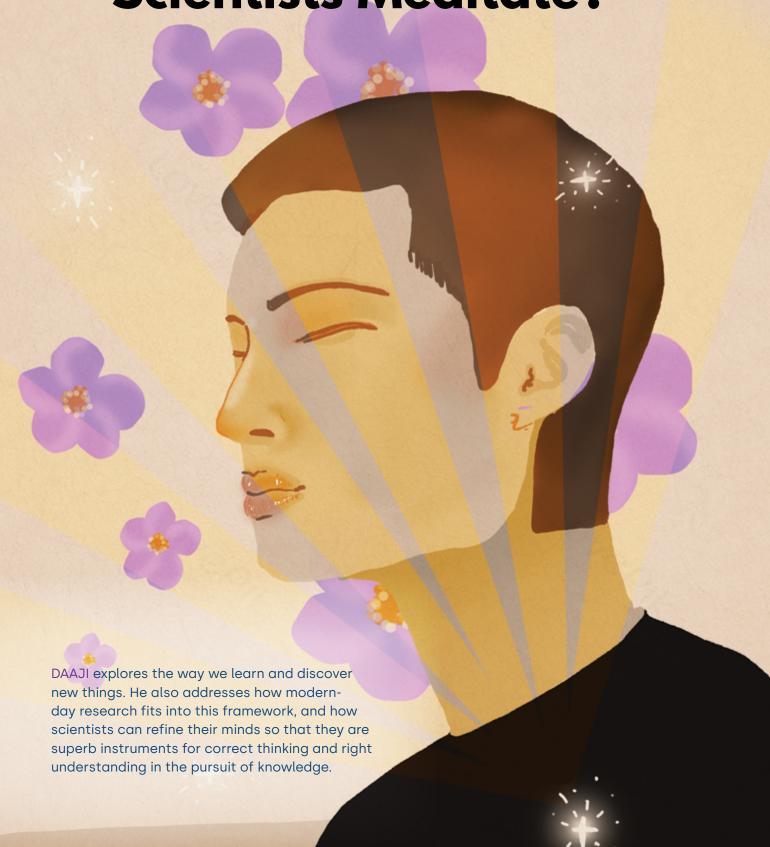
RESEARCHED, TESTED AND APPROVED.



Universal consciousness guides a person's thinking and takes them away from individual consciousness to merge in pure consciousness.

LAILAH GIFTY AKITA





here is an ever-growing body of scientific research about contemplative practices, neuroscience, and epigenetics that includes many studies on the effects of meditation on well-being, happiness, and consciousness. This research is bringing awareness to people around the world about the benefits of meditation, encouraging everyone to make it a habit in their lives. The idea that transcending states of consciousness can improve human performance is now in the mainstream, especially when it comes to integrated healthcare solutions.

We are seeing a growing integration of spirituality and science, where science is enriching spirituality, and spirituality is part of the base of science, so that we can improve ourselves at all levels of existence. Scientific research relies on the scientists' abilities

to observe, record, and analyze data, and then infer outcomes from those results, and this is one very valuable aspect of the process. Yet when we study the great scientific discoveries throughout history, we learn that scientists also use other complementary methods of inquiry, based on inspiration and direct perception. To develop this heightened level of awareness, spiritual practices help in many ways.

Think of the organic chemist, Kekulé, who dreamed of a uroboros, a snake eating its own tail, which inspired him to propose the structure of the benzene ring. Einstein played the violin and daydreamed when he needed inspiration, the Archimedes Principle was discovered when Archimedes was relaxing in the bathtub, and Ramanujan's mathematical genius was inspired in the temple of the Goddess Namagiri. He received

knowledge by divine insight, but his colleagues at the Royal Society of Mathematics insisted he provide supporting mathematical proof, which he did, confirming what the divine insight had already shown him.

When a scientist, an artist, or a mystic becomes so immersed in their subject that they effectively "live" it, insight comes in many ways, including via direct perception. When we become one with something, we understand it through the heart. We don't need to think it. A special osmosis happens, in the same way as we automatically feel warm when sitting next to a fire.

Actually, a lot of everyday learning happens this way; for example, children learn so much from parents and teachers naturally, lovingly, without a formal pedagogical process. In fact, most learning happens in the subconscious

The idea that transcending states of consciousness can improve human performance is now in the mainstream, especially when it comes to integrated healthcare solutions.

INSPIRATION

and superconscious realms of the mind, not in the conscious realm, which makes up such a narrow band of the full spectrum of consciousness.

So, how can we cultivate this capacity to learn by osmosis and through direct perception? It happens when we relax and open the heart to our infinite potential through a daily spiritual practice. Direct perception emerges from a deeper awareness that is associated with the heart. In fact, we can say that scientific research is the rigorous validation of hypotheses that are often first known through other means like inspiration.

Knowledge is continuously evolving

There will never be an end to knowledge. Many scientific theories of the past are no longer valid, and new discoveries are changing our understanding of the universe every day.

Our learning is a continuous evolution.

Knowledge demands inquiry. In science, the inquiry is observable and measurable. In meditation and spirituality, the inquiry is also often observable and repeatable, although not always measurable, but it goes far beyond rational awareness. Science is limited to objective

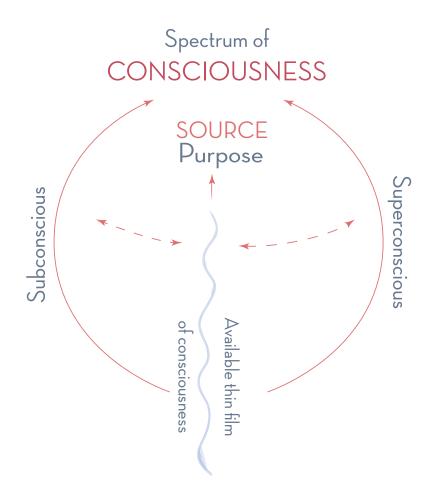
knowledge, while spirituality takes us further into the great unknown. As our consciousness expands through meditation, more and more of that unknown becomes accessible through experience.

Along this continuum, there is no clear-cut separation between objective and subjective. For example, we know from physics that the consciousness of the observer has an impact on the outcome of any experiment. And where does that impact come from? We know from spirituality

that it comes from personal bias, from our belief systems, from the complexities that color our consciousness.

The mind as an instrument of perception

Our perception becomes accurate when our consciousness is pure. Impurities and complexities prevent us from perceiving clearly, so the purer our consciousness, the less bias we will have. That is the reason why the yogis of ancient India set about purifying their own



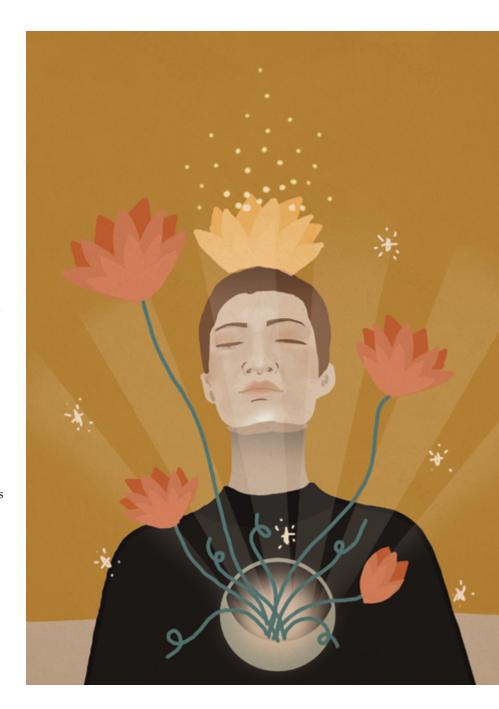
consciousness before they tried to understand the world around them. They knew that the level of awareness from which they perceived the world determined the accuracy of their results. The same is true for us; the level of insight and the accuracy of observation depend upon the clarity of our perception. A pure mind is a beautiful instrument. It captures the essence of inquiry in all dimensions, both scientific and spiritual.

When the mind is pure, and it is directed toward any topic, our awareness effortlessly focuses there. An unbiased non-judgmental approach arises from a still balanced mind. This applies to any type of knowledge, whether it is about space, gravity, atoms, viruses and bacteria, the arts, architecture, or music. It has its own beauty, and always begins with an inner question and some level of wonder.

Science as the dominant worldview

A few centuries ago, religion was the authority, and scientists had to convince religious leaders of their discoveries. For example, in the sixteenth century, the Catholic Church did not accept the findings of Copernicus and Galileo regarding the Earth moving around the Sun.

The level of insight and the accuracy of observation depend upon the clarity of perception.



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Today, science is the authority, and we demand scientific proof of spiritual truths. For example, we want to measure the effects of prayer and meditation, and define the mind of God through scientific principles. While scientific research can show the physiological and psychological benefits of meditation, it cannot measure the more profound benefits.

There is a famous statement of the physicist Stephen Hawking: "If we do discover a theory of everything ... it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason – for then we would truly know the mind of God." But how can we know God when God is beyond qualities, beyond matter, and beyond energy?

How can we know God when God is beyond qualities, beyond matter, and beyond energy? Think of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle where the uncertainty of the position of an electron and the speed of its movement remains indeterminate. The moment we try to see the position of the electron, the very beam that sees the position changes the speed. If the beam were to be lighter than the electron, then perhaps position and speed could be determined simultaneously.

The question arises, why would we want to measure them at the same time? What purpose would it serve? Maybe Heisenberg had some purpose behind establishing the same. In order to understand subtle, we have to become subtler. Heavier cannot understand subtle. God being the subtlest, how could we ever understand unless we were to surpass that ultimate subtlety?

Science deals with the measurable, the definable; spirituality takes us into the invisible, the undefinable. So when we only apply conventional scientific methods to contemplative practices, we



limit the results. Research results help us measure things like stress levels, happiness indices, compassion indices, gratitude indices, sleep benefits, and brainwave frequencies, etc. They show us that emotional intelligence, compassion, gratitude, and empathy increase our levels of serotonin, dopamine, endorphins, and oxytocin, and activate the ventral vagus nerve, bringing well-being. These are all important markers of benefits, but think about this: every mother goat or donkey has higher levels of oxytocin in her bloodstream when feeding her babies!

So while I am a big fan of research in the contemplative disciplines, it does not show us the full range of what spiritual practices do for us. It is just the beginning! For how can we describe what happens when we meditate at the deepest level of our consciousness and beyond, when we touch the realm of God, the realm of our true potential?

Quantum physicists have shown us that science is subjective. Observation depends on the senses, and inference depends on the mind. So the most authentic scientists are those who have mastered the senses and the mind, and who can perceive the world through the medium of pure consciousness.

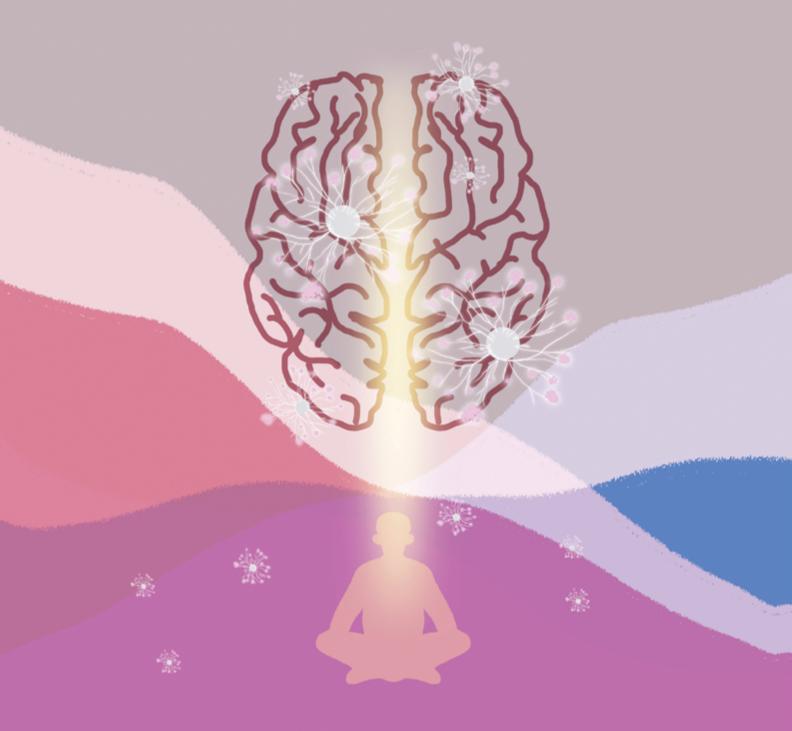
And it is meditation that results in both depth and purity of consciousness. What can we learn from this? Scientists will become better scientists when they also meditate regularly, and their research findings will become more accurate.

Over the years, I have learned to let spirituality and science remain in their own dimensions. They both have a part to play and the beauty happens when they complement each other, bringing correct thinking and right understanding. Nowhere is this more relevant than in the field of research.

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We are all RESEARCHERS



ROSALIND PEARMAIN challenges our current worldview on research methodology, and the relative importance of left-brain and right-brain processes in human understanding and consciousness studies. She references the ground-breaking work of Iain McGilchrist, whose thesis has debunked the old paradigms of the human brain.

e may not all be creating sophisticated experimental designs and calculating how significant results might be, yet each of us encounters new situations each day with our family, colleagues, organizations, and communities. We bring our understanding and our hypotheses, and we modify them as they may be challenged or altered by the response of others.

We keep learning. Life gives us many opportunities to research, and to challenge outworn assumptions, not least the kind of unknowns we have faced through the pandemic.

For most of my life, I have been curious about the realms of experiencing, feeling, the nonverbal, and the implicit realms of knowledge. How do we understand the different qualities felt in the presence of women? What elements contribute to change in experiential learning and groups? How does attending sensitively to the relational process support therapeutic change? What is so transformative for young people about some summer school programs? How does meditation contribute to change and growth?

When we hear music, dance, spend time in nature, and meditate,

we find ourselves in a flow of feeling alive that is immediate and meaningful. Yet somehow, all this subjective experience is often missing from the way we value knowledge.

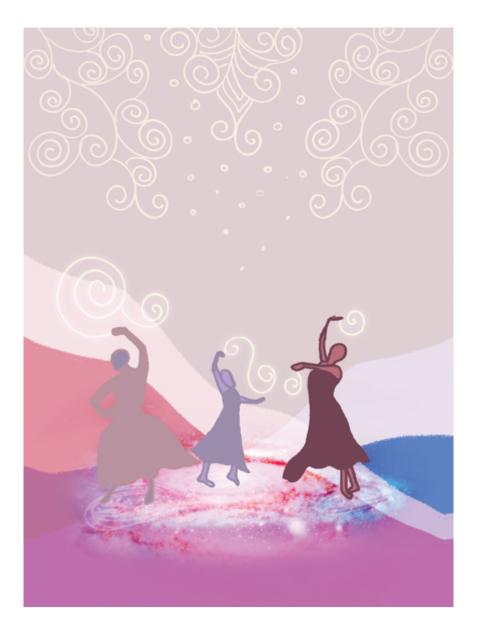
On one level, they are felt and known realities, which we can describe and name. They are also vital in the field of psychotherapeutic learning and training. On another level, they are perceived as occupying a zone of impressionistic and unreliable qualitative feeling. Our culture prefers to make "things" out of experiences, and apply measures and models very fast.

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So, I would like to introduce you to the extraordinary work of Iain McGilchrist, a psychiatrist and neuroscientist, and previously Professor of Literature at Oxford University. He has spent the last 10 years writing a 3-volume work illuminating this dilemma. It is based on an earlier book, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*.

His research is based on various sources and disciplines, including the observation of patients with injuries to either hemisphere of the brain. It is also founded on very wide scholarship. His book is an inquiry into the asymmetry of the brain, and the differences between left and right hemispheres that occur not only in humans but other species, such as birds. He dismisses the simplistic, outdated, and popular notions of this asymmetry from the 1960s. He observes how birds need to keep part of their attention on finding small seeds in a small area, while at the same time keeping their awareness vigilant and broad to spot possible threats, mates, or other environmental occurrences.

This kind of distinction is also true for us. There is a purpose in having two hemispheres. Both are needed: When we hear music, dance, spend time in nature, and meditate, we find ourselves in a flow of feeling alive that is immediate and meaningful.



"Both attend to the world and bring the world into being for us in two largely opposing ways; the left hemisphere paying narrowly targeted attention to a detail that we need to manipulate; the right hemisphere paying broad, open, sustained, vigilant, uncommitted attention to the rest of the world while we focus on our desired detail. This means that each hemisphere brings into being a world that has different qualities. In the case of the left hemisphere, a world of things that are familiar, certain, fixed, isolated, explicit, abstracted from context, disembodied, general in nature, quantifiable, known by their parts, and inanimate. In the case of the right hemisphere, a world of Gestalten, forms, and processes that are never reducible to the already known or certain, never accounted for by dissolution into parts, but always understood as wholes that both incorporate and are incorporated into other wholes, unique, always changing and flowing, interconnected, implicit, understood only in context, embodied, and animate. The left hemisphere is a world of

atomistic elements; the right hemisphere one of relationships. Most importantly the world of the right hemisphere is the world that presences to us, that of the left hemisphere a re-presentation: the left hemisphere a map, the right hemisphere the world of experience that is mapped."

McGilchrist has undertaken this project from both historical and current observations, and from a concern that our culture appears to be increasingly imbalanced towards the left hemispheric sphere of bringing reality into being. The left hemisphere is a closed system not functioning in present time. It is valuable in helping us grasp tools, make maps, and find words. It represents elements as fragments and parts, and tends towards a decontextualized and abstract kind

of machine model of experience, which facilitates our manipulation of the world and our stress on technical approaches.

It tends toward an absolute right or wrong mode of knowing something.

"The left hemisphere is principally concerned with manipulation of the world. The left hemisphere deals preferentially with detail, the local, what is central and in the foreground and easily grasped." 3

However, it is the right hemisphere that presents us with the relational, embodied, preconceptual, changing, empathic and present-time holistic grasp of reality, which is more fluid.

"The right hemisphere is concerned with the whole picture, including the



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periphery or background and all that is not immediately graspable. It is essential for understanding the other's point of view, essential for empathy. The right hemisphere is concerned with understanding the world as a whole, and how to relate to it." 4

He also says:

"I believe that nowadays we live no longer in the presence of the world, but rather a re-presentation of it. This re-presentation has all the qualities of a virtual image; an infinitely thin, immobile fragment." 5

Consider here how often people express things as mathematical concepts, with computer analogies, or as algorithms.

Most spiritual traditions and approaches to meditation have techniques to help us suspend or ignore some of the left hemispheric processes of categorizing and applying maps to experience. In different ways, they focus attention on the embodied and present moment elements of experience as it unfolds and flows, such as breathing or a following a specific focus in awareness.

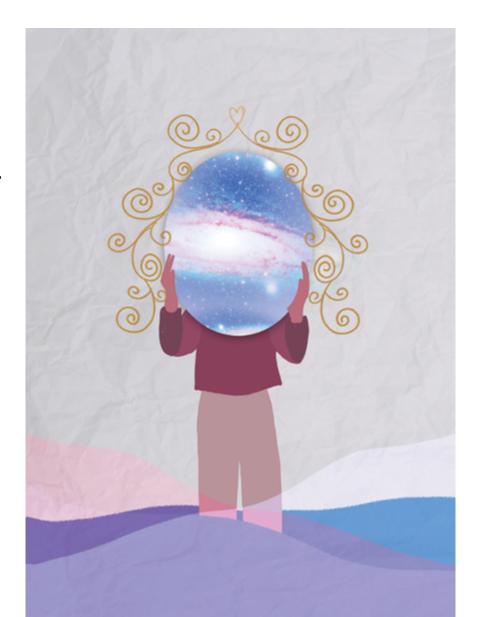
McGilchrist suggests that the right hemispheric mode of

knowing is more reliable than the left. He quotes Einstein who said that "the intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant." He raises the question, "What if our society has forgotten this gift?"

Most essentially, McGilchrist proposes:

"It is true we can see the world only partially, but we still each see the world directly. It is not a re-presentation, but a real presence: there isn't a wall between us and the world. ...

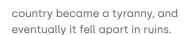
"The nature of the attention we bring to bear is of critical importance here. A maximally open, patient, and attentive response to whatever-it-is is better at disclosing or discerning reality than a response that is peremptory, insensitive, or – above all – shrouded in dogma." ⁶



"It [consciousness] is not fixable in space, or quantitative, but qualitative and experienced in the flow of time. And if things turn out to be interconnected, not atomistic – and they are – each consciousness has its impact on the universe that cannot be quantified. Within my experience of the world, very much can be changed by my response to whatever-it-is; in a sense everything can be changed."

What do I take from all this? A simple, humble, patient, open attention will help us be more encompassing in our understanding, and in our relating to each other and the world. Everything is more fluid and more interrelated than we can know, though we may feel it. And these perceptions are real and precious in our relation with each other and the world we hope to sustain and help flourish.

1 The story that led to this title is this: Once a wise spiritual Master was a ruler of a country that flourished. As it flourished it grew and he needed to trust emissaries to act on his behalf in far flung regions. Eventually, one of these decided to advance himself instead of representing the Master. He saw his master's tolerance as weakness not wisdom and became contemptuous of him. In this way the Master was overcome by his emissary. People were tricked, the



2 McGilchrist, I., 2021. Consciousness as Relational, *Science of Consciousness. Essentia Foundation.*

3 McGilchrist, I., 2021. The Matter with Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions, and the Unmaking of the World, Vol. 1. Perspectiva Press London

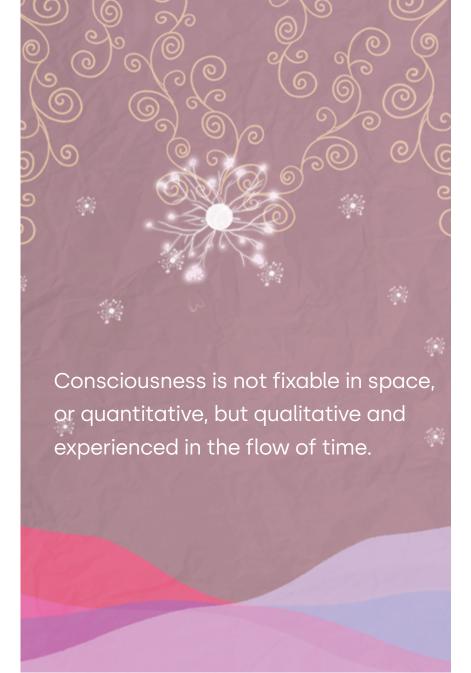
4 Ibid.

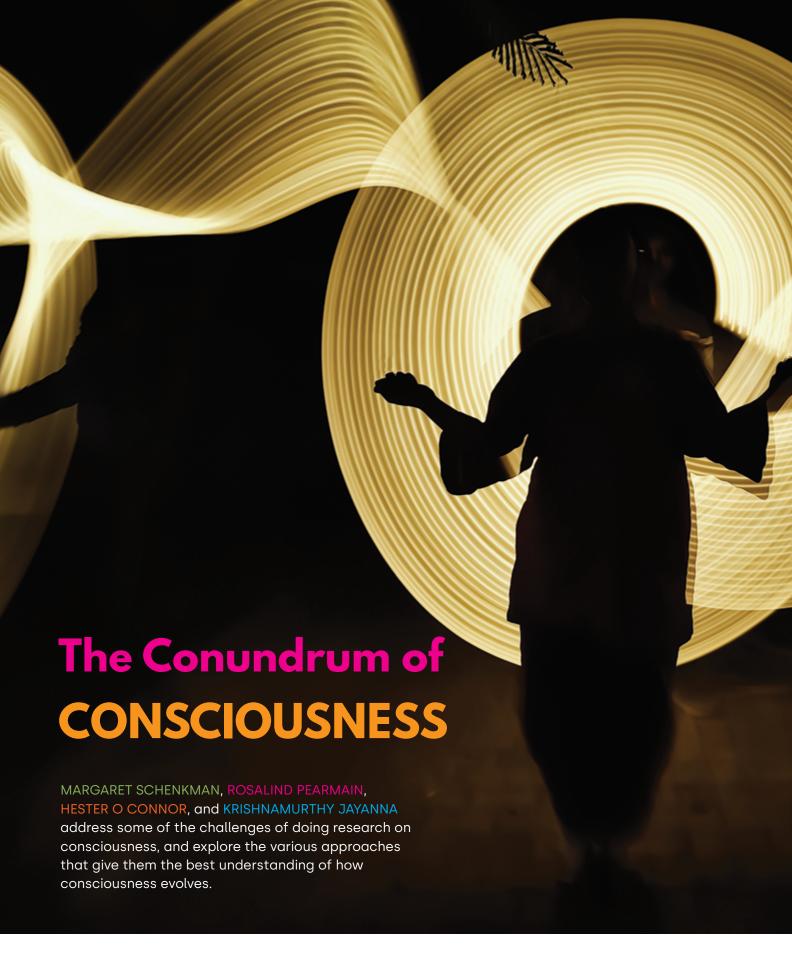
5 Ibid.

6 McGilchrist, I., 2021. Consciousness as Relational, *Science of Consciousness*. Essentia Foundation.

7 McGilchrist, I., 2021. The Matter with Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions, and the Unmaking of the World, Vol. 1. Perspectiva Press London.

Illustrations by JASMEE MUDGAL







roughout the ages, spiritual practices have helped to expand human consciousness. This expansion changes our relationships with our selves, with others, and with our environment. A few years ago, Daaji encouraged scientists in the Heartfulness community to study consciousness, so we took up this challenge. Here, a few of us wish to summarize some of what we have learned.

In order to describe and measure consciousness, we needed to define what we meant by the term. Consciousness is defined and measured in very different ways, depending on whether it is in medicine, philosophy, or quantum physics. Daaji has described consciousness as "the degree of awareness and unawareness," which changes to a large extent according to the refinement of three other mental functions - mind, intellect, and ego. Consciousness evolves to the extent that mind, intellect, and ego evolve. Mind evolves from thinking to feeling, intellect from intelligence to intuition to wisdom, and ego from arrogance to love and humility.

We quickly realized that there were no available measures to capture consciousness from this perspective. Therefore, our first

step was to interview people who practice Heartfulness meditation. Eleven Heartfulness practitioners were asked an open-ended question about how Heartfulness affected their everyday life. Their responses were surprising and brought new insights into how people experience a meditation practice.

The practitioners gave new insights into the experience of meditation as it permeates everyday life, and four themes emerged:

Tangible, deeply felt effects that give a sense of being true or real

Embarking on Heartfulness Meditation can lead to changes that are tangible, and recognized as authentic or real. For some, they include the experience of a new sense of inner spaciousness associated with the heart focus, and inner experiences that are described as sublime, profound, pure, and inspiring.

2. Groundedness and a deeper context of existence, altering relationships

Sometimes, inner changes led to a feeling of groundedness. Over time, some participants experienced a real and authentic

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inner source that supports a more solid sense of self and grounding within. This inner grounding allowed for more openness, trust, and honesty with others, and more empathy.

3. Focus on the heart as the center in the midst of flux and change

Over time, a focus developed on sustaining a connection with the heart center. As life brings inevitable tests and changes, this heart focus is like an anchor in a stormy sea. It offers a continuous presence, a peacefulness, a field of sensibility, and a deeper orientation, in the midst of flux. Reconnecting with the heart could be challenging when distracted by daily stresses and pressures.

4. Immersion in love with less sense of "I"

Increasingly, understanding emerged through the heart field, along with a feeling of no separation from others. It was possible to be in two states of consciousness at the same time: being completely immersed in the practicalities of work and life, and at the same time completely removed from daily preoccupations in the sense of expanded understanding, compassion, and oneness.

We then faced a dilemma: It is not practical to use interviews with large groups of people (50, 100, or thousands), yet studying large groups is necessary to adequately observe changes in consciousness with meditation. We needed to translate what we had learned into something that could be measured.

The themes that emerged from the interviews, along with specific comments of the participants, guided the development of a "Measure of Expanded Consciousness." We tested this measure with over 400 participants, including Heartfulness meditators, meditators in other systems, and non-meditators. The resulting measure, which is in its final stages of development, is based upon the answers to 35 questions contained in the following five categories:

- 1. Relationship with others
- 2. Judgment of self
- 3. Connection to inner self (heart)
- 4. Greater dimension beyond self
- 5. Acceptance and surrender

The conundrum of measuring changes in consciousness is not trivial. The two approaches – interviews and quantitative measures – give very different, yet related information, each with strengths and weaknesses,

neither of which can fully capture consciousness among meditators.

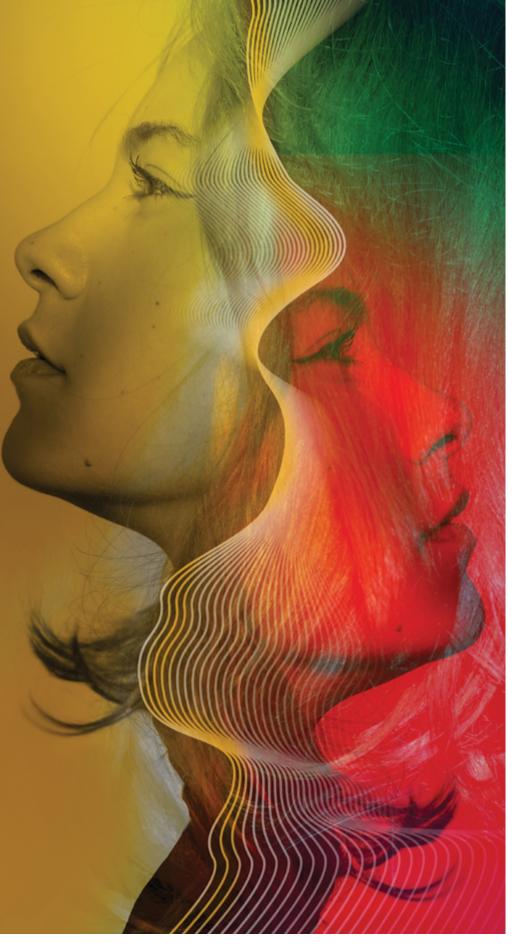
Qualitative descriptions from meditators tap into personal feelings and awareness not previously described. There is a move from a focus on thinking to a focus on feeling, and changes in ephemeral constructs such as intuition, inspiration, humility, and love. Furthermore, this approach offers flexibility and variability of responses, as each person's lived experience is described in their own words.

In contrast, quantitative data from the "Measure of Expanding Consciousness" can easily be used to study groups of people or populations, but the information is limited by the very nature of trying to fit abstract feelings into concrete words. The data obtained from one measure only provide information based on the content and specific wording within that measure; the information is necessarily limited.

Our solution to this conundrum is to combine the two approaches – to obtain quantitative data from a large group, while simultaneously obtaining qualitative data from a sample of the participants.

These qualitative data will allow us to add depth and texture to that which is learned from





the "Measure of Expanding Consciousness." Using this combination, we will explore questions such as:

How does consciousness change with meditation?

How do those changes relate to other important concepts such as loneliness, resilience, and depression?

Although we may never fully answer the fundamental question of how consciousness evolves, we may perhaps begin to approach an understanding with increasing precision through combining these two approaches.

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workplace

The way I regard those who hurt me today will affect how I experience the world in the future.

In any encounter, we have a choice: we can strengthen our resentment or our understanding and empathy.

We can widen the gap between ourselves and others or lessen it.

PEMA CHÖDRÖN





Empoury Sith

BALAJI IYER shares 4 practices of empathetic leadership, and why they make a difference. This is based on his professional experience over three decades of improving employee experience and engagement. He facilitates workshops on leadership and meditation for Fortune 500 companies.

ne of the most significant issues faced by organizations is employee engagement. According to a 2022 McKinsey research report, 55% of employee engagement is driven by nonfinancial recognition, and the majority cite "not having caring leaders" as a key reason for leaving their team. Research at catalyst.org shows a 48% increase in innovation, a 44% increase in engagement, and increased retention when employees feel their leaders are empathic.

So, here are 4 key ideas for building a high-performing team:



Idea #1

Self-awareness is the basis of empathy

Heartfulness Relaxation and Meditation create space between our thoughts, enabling us to be reflective. In a recent leadership workshop I facilitated, participants appreciated the fullbody awareness and tuning in to the heart. It provided a break from the constant stress that fills up every working day. Taking time during the day to pause and reflect, by meditating, improves our responses to events. Leaders become better listeners, resulting in an opportunity to provide a compassionate response to employees' situations.

Idea #2

Deep work creates longterm happiness, starting with individuals and affecting the entire team

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's concept of "flow" recommends a balance between skills and challenges to be able to remain in the flow state. It is important to allow space for quiet time, one to four hours every day, for ourselves and our teams to dive deep. When employees can focus on their work without interruption for multiple hours in a day, it provides them an opportunity to master their skills. It results in an increase in their productivity along with their happiness.

Idea #3

Debate, discuss, and decide

A strong culture of open constructive debate builds solid teams and products. The diversity of the team and their thought processes provide the best possible chance at success, especially if we allow them to share their ideas and debate the merits of each. In contrast, a command and control style produces an "Emperor has no clothes" situation.

In any organization, we need every team member's hearts and minds to be successful. We can then focus on the data behind every viewpoint and decide the best way forward in alignment with the organization's mission. Positional power need only be used as a last resort, to break a deadlock.

Idea #4

Inclusiveness is key to engagement

Leaders will benefit by spending time understanding their employees and their aspirations. They will then be able to work toward their best interests, whether within the current organization or outside. Such an attitude will earn the trust of the employees. Leaders have a duty to focus on employee growth, and include them in the organization's vision and goals. In a corporate setting, managers can also align the individual goals of employees with the organizational vision.

When employees feel valued by their leaders, and they see their efforts are resulting in meaningful accomplishments for the organization, they feel included and engaged.



DR. ICHAK ADIZES shares some insights on how best to resist temptations. This has huge implications for our success or failure in changing habits.

rofessor Deborah MacInnis, a Professor and Vice Dean for Research and Strategy at the University of Southern California Marshall School of Business, Los Angeles, has done some fascinating research that may have significant applications for management.

She and a colleague tested responses to temptation under different circumstances. She placed 3 groups of people in a room containing a delicious-looking chocolate cake and the implements to divide and eat it. The first group was put into the room and told to think about the shame and guilt

they would feel if they ate it. The second group was told to think about how proud they would be of *not* eating it. The third group, the control group, was put in the room and given no instructions.

Here were the results: The control group ate the most.

In life, we are often confronted with the temptation to do something pleasurable that we know is unhealthy or unwise. How can we overcome those temptations? By comparing the pleasure of doing it with the pleasure and pride in not doing it.

The group that was told to think about pride ate the least.

MacInnis concluded that shame and guilt do not work as well as a sense of pride to help resist temptation. I believe I know why. Shame and guilt *consume* energy, subtracting energy from our will to resist temptation. Pride, on the other hand, *gives* energy, allocating more energy to the willpower to resist.

Interesting, huh? This has definite implications for resisting

common faults such as overeating, procrastinating, and being lazy. In life, we are often confronted with the temptation to do something pleasurable that we know is unhealthy or unwise. How can we overcome those temptations? By comparing the pleasure of doing it with the pleasure and pride in *not* doing it.

I hope this helps.

Just thinking and feeling, Dr. Ichak Kalderon Adizes

https://www.ichakadizes.com/



DIVE INTO RESEARCH YOUNG!

LAYA IYER is in her second year of Computer Science at Stanford Stanford University, California. She talks about what motivated her journey as a young researcher, and encourages other young people to take up research.

y research journey began as a freshman in high school. I spent my first year noticing the enormous amounts of social, academic, and athletic pressure that was put on students in my districts, including self-induced pressures. Since I understood the implications that societal and academic pressure

can have on the mental health of students, I wanted to see if there was a way to help mitigate these effects. So, in order to help the people around me, I created an app and I evaluated the efficacy of my app so as to contribute to the broader wellness-research community.





I have been around research from a very young age – inspired by a mother who pursued her Ph.D. when she had three girls under 3. This molded my mind into an inquisitive one. Developing a sense of curiosity helped me to be excited about solving problems and opened up a world of possibilities and ways of thinking.

But I didn't just stop at questioning, taking actionable steps to soothe my curiosity. It helped make me feel like I had a bigger purpose – giving back to people around the world. Helping people by proposing ways to solve



passionate about and develop your ideas in that area!

After setting up my research question and getting the study approved through an institutional review board, I began to collect data. For me, the most exciting part of the research experience is seeing all the data come in, then analyzing and drawing patterns among the numbers. In the analysis phase, the data come together like pieces of a puzzle. Eventually, you have data that either support your initial thought process or reveal something new.

Being a young person in research, you also provide fresh and new perspectives to professionals who have been working in their field for a long time. This introduction of a unique perspective often helps solve complex, unsolved problems; or at least tests out new ideas for problems that have existed for an extremely long time. Contributing to a larger foundation of research work is a gratifying experience, as your research informs the next generation of researchers in your area.

Every step of the way in the research process – whether you just want to be involved in the ideation phase or you really enjoy analyzing the data – you benefit from dipping your fingers in. If you have the opportunity to work in research, leap at it and flourish!

problems, and evaluating solutions fulfills me and keeps me going through difficult experiences.

When I was a sophomore in high school, my school days were academically intense, taking three advanced science classes at once. After school, on the swim team, I would practice for three hours, feeling both mentally and physically exhausted. But, when I came home, I was rejuvenated by working on something that satisfied me, that I was genuinely curious about. One of the best things about research is that you can work on anything you are



The journey's a lonely one. So much more than we know.

KUNG FU PANDA







Loneliness: A Silent Epidemic

DR. RANJANI IYER and DR. JAY THIMMAPURAM encourage contemplative practices to combat loneliness. They also share other easy ways we can adopt to ensure we don't give in to loneliness.

here is an innate need in all of us to be connected. But when there is a gap between the innate longing to be connected and the actualization, loneliness can result. While many of us associate loneliness with being alone, it is not the only cause of feeling lonely. While being alone may predispose us to feeling lonely, many studies show that the

perception of loneliness is much higher in the younger generations.

Young people are the most digitally connected. Digital connection outweighs personal connection. In a recent survey conducted by CIGNA, Generation Z was found to be one of the loneliest generations. What does this tell us? That it is not just

about the number of people we are connected to on social media; it is about the meaningfulness and depth of these connections. Data point to the fact that even if we relate to one person and that connection is deep and meaningful, it can be an antidote to loneliness. Even a connection with pets can be helpful.

Interestingly, even children and young adults are subjected to this perception of loneliness. Many high schoolers, while surrounded by people, still feel lonely. Studies suggest that chronic loneliness in generation Z has links to health issues such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse, self-harm, and even heart conditions.

In 2020, a team of high schoolers created a 4-week program to engage with their peers and build a community focused on selfcare. With quarantine and social isolation leading to increased perceptions of loneliness in this age group, a study was conducted to focus on the impact of the self-care program on levels of loneliness in the students. The participants received an E-portfolio that included daily activities for self-care and guided Heartfulness practices. They also participated in four webinars, focusing on stress-management, positivity, improving sleep quality by aligning with circadian rhythms, and setting goals using self-observation.

This short program of self-care tools led to decreasing loneliness scores in the participants, and opened a new valley of possibilities to help our young children combat loneliness. A follow-up study, extended to three schools globally, has shown that this self-care

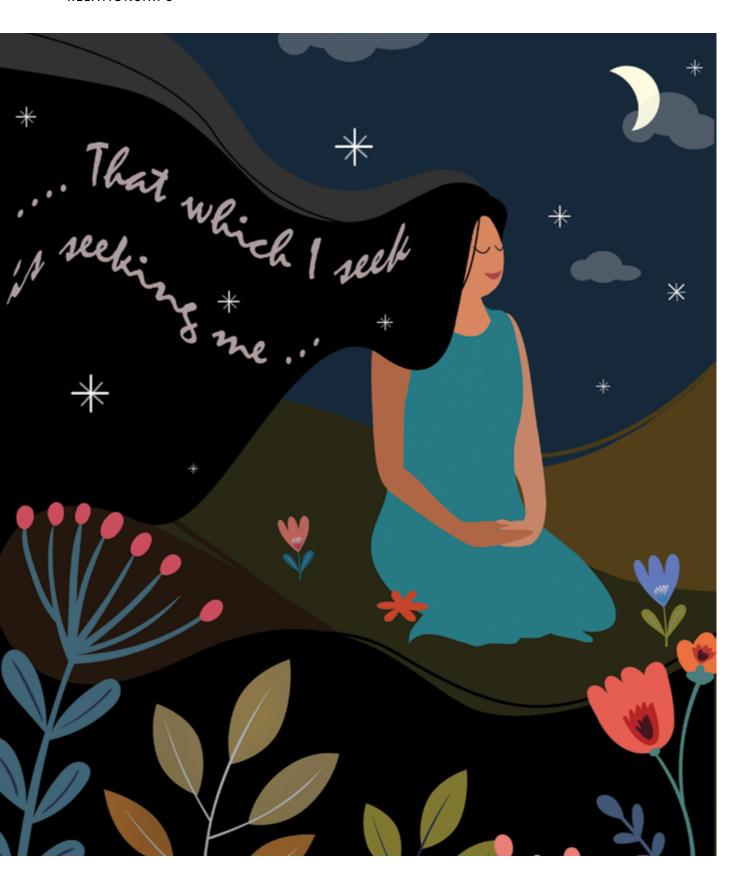
program could help decrease loneliness and anxiety and improve life satisfaction in teens and adults, thus improving the health and well-being of the whole school community.

While many people experience loneliness, healthcare professionals are some of the most prone to loneliness. In a study conducted at WellSpan York hospital, half the healthcare professionals, including the physicians and advanced practice providers, felt lonely. While there are many strategies, including improving social connections and engaging in activities that provide meaningful, pleasant enjoyment, other strategies may also help. One of these is Heartfulness Meditation, as loneliness is not only about our connection with others, but also about the relationship we have with ourselves. If that inner connection is harmonious, it can facilitate a feeling of connection even in the absence of significant

outer changes. In the meditation process, when we gently close our eyes and connect to an inner sublime state within our hearts, a gradual change occurs in the inner landscape, and our relationship with ourselves becomes harmonious. The resulting inner connection can facilitate a connection with the outer world.

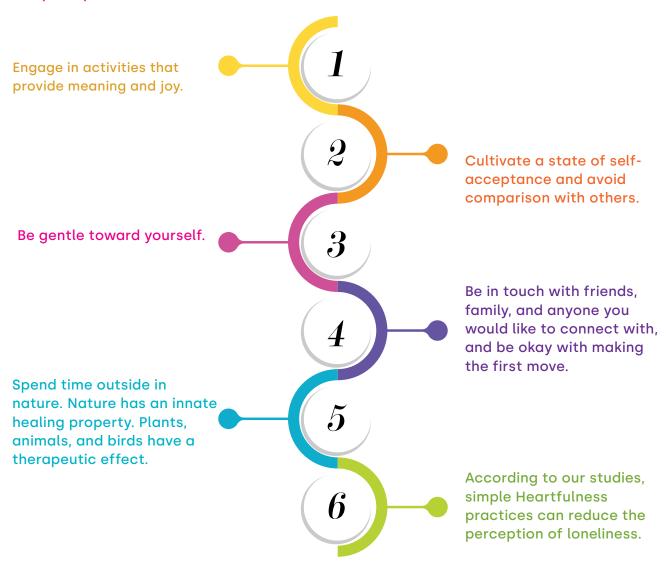
In this study, sleep data were also measured. Previous studies have shown that the practice of Heartfulness Meditation improves sleep patterns. A well-rested mind is better able to socialize, whereas a poorly-rested mind may not be so willing to interact with others. If we facilitate rest for the mind, we can reduce the perception of loneliness. In this study, for the weekly offering of Heartfulness, an introduction was given to the participants. The UCLA Loneliness Scale and Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index were used to measure loneliness and sleep.

In the meditation process, when we gently close our eyes and connect to an inner sublime state within our hearts, a gradual change occurs in the inner landscape, and our relationship with ourselves becomes harmonious.



Four weeks of Heartfulness Meditation practice resulted in a reduction in the perception of loneliness and an improvement in the perception of sleep. While this is encouraging, loneliness may also need to be addressed in all possible ways.

Simple tips to address loneliness



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Illustrations by ARATI SHEDDE

In Pursuit of Happiness

KATE ELIZABETH HALLAM is a British model, actress, and musician, who has been Miss Great Britain Photogenic, Miss England Intercontinental, and the Face of Aintree 2004. Kate is also a humanitarian and works for various charity projects. Her TEDx talk about her life journey has turned into a viral Internet sensation. Here Kate shares with us what inspires her passion to help people.

I was born and raised in a beautiful town called Buxton, Derbyshire, with farmland and beautiful green fields. My brothers and I had a very humble upbringing, and our childhood was fun. We would create our own magic, make tree dens, and run through the fields. When I was 14, my brother Chris was diagnosed with chronic myeloid leukemia. He needed a bone marrow transplant, and I was a match for him. So we underwent the transplant, and Professor Huen helped us through the process. He is an amazing man who helped cure Chris of cancer.

It was a crazy time, because I was only 14 and scared for my brother, who was 27. But with things like that, especially with your loved ones, you just get on with it and do what you can. Luckily, he was

cured. Since then, he's gone on to have a happy family life and a beautiful daughter.

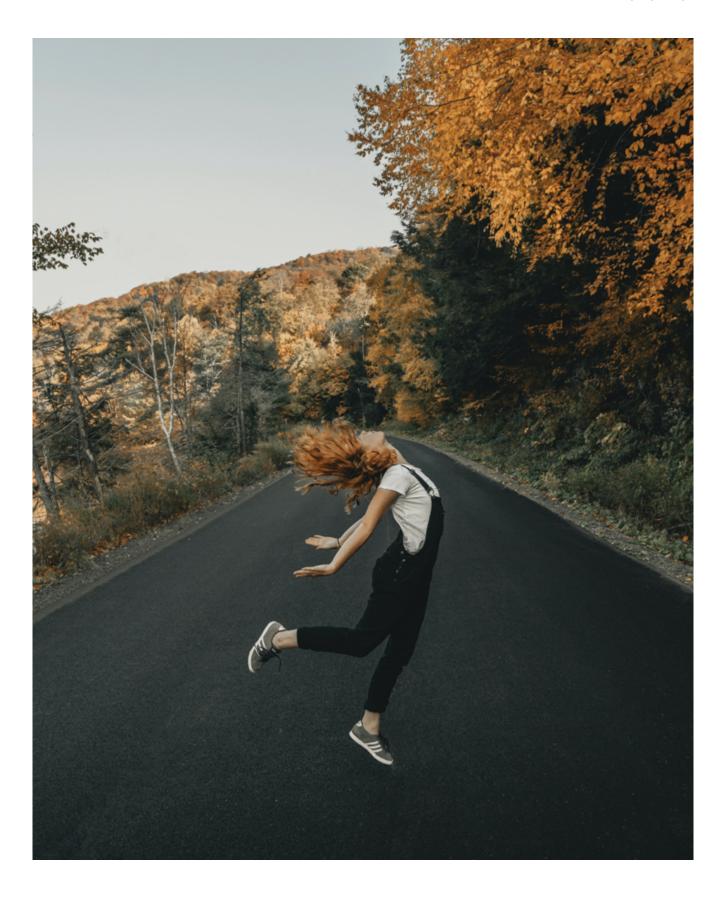
My brother's recovery inspired me to raise money for cancer charities, and I became an ambassador for the Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Trust. We raise awareness for Leukemia sufferers who needed donors. At the time when I donated, a bone marrow transplant was a complicated operation. They had to drill into the sternum and hips to take the bone marrow. Nowadays, donating good bone marrow is just a blood test away. I get people to join the bone marrow donor registries to give Leukemia sufferers a better chance of survival. That work gives me a lot of joy because it is a personal subject.

Travel to India

I have always been a traveler and love exploring new places. I was in Dubai when I was asked to shoot a Kannada movie in Bangalore, and jumped at the chance because I had never been to India, and I had heard beautiful things. I instantly fell in love with India and it carries a very big space in my heart to this day. I met my husband there – a lot of you will know him, Lucky Ali. I had the most wonderful experiences traveling in India and I can't wait to go back.

Dealing with Stress

While pursuing our dreams, we all have days where we feel too stressed or overstimulated by external things and situations. Eventually, we realize we're



RELATIONSHIPS

wanting to rush to get to that point of happiness and success, so we try to do everything. By the end of the day, we're puzzled and tired. The key is to learn to slow down, and that comes with age.

We can still achieve while going at a slower pace, realizing the blessings of each day: taking moments to breathe; remembering to be present in each moment. I have been focusing on that for the last five to six years and it works wonderfully. There are still stressful days, we all have them, but we learn to manage those days and not be reactive. If something's meant for you, you are going to get there anyway.

Success and Joy

Success is an interesting journey. A lot of things in life can make us feel less, e.g. getting turned down for a job, and we take them to heart, but the key to success is to keep going. There's a famous saying that "Sometimes you give up when you are just about to break through," throwing away whatever you have been working on, however long it's taken you. It's good to keep going, to keep positive, to be joyful, to breathe, and not always be stressed by getting overstimulated.

People tend to look at other people's lives and think, "Oh my God! It's not fair. Why isn't my life like that?" Instead, just enjoy your



life. It is magnificent, and it's you who is going to make it better.

It's important for me to know that I am giving back to people. It could be raising awareness for Leukemia sufferers, or simply putting a smile on someone's face. You never know what other people are going through, and a simple smile can give so much to somebody. I try to work every day in a state of giving rather than taking. It's much better to give, and to give joy and happiness to other people.

I think fitness is the key to joy. Your body is your temple. Take a little time out each day for your body – whether you are meditating or going to the gym.

Your body is your temple. Take a little time out each day for your body — whether you are meditating or going to the gym. It's that workout that brings you joy and good vibes.

It's that workout that brings you joy and good vibes. My three boys keep me very busy, but I still go to the gym. I take time out and there is no excuse for not doing that. Everybody's got time to do something for themselves: whether it's mental meditation or physical exercise. Exercising can help release endorphins, which keep us positive and lets us strive for success.

Managing Relationships

I have been married twice and my second marriage is to David. He is a well-known music producer, we have 2 boys together, and I have Dani from my ex-husband Lucky Ali. Life is good. Everybody is happy. Everybody is peaceful and we all get on well.

I think that is the key – when you have children, it's important to make relationships work. After what I went through with my brother, when you overcome adversity at a young age, you realize that life is short and transient. It puts things into perspective. I realized that you have to treasure everything.

Not everything is going to work out for you in life, but it doesn't mean you have to destroy it, or argue about it. You can walk away from things that are not meant for you, or that may have run their course. You can end a relationship and continue with a friendship. That's what I have with Lucky, and it's been especially important for Dani, our 10-year-old son. If you work on the relationship, in the long run it works better for everybody.

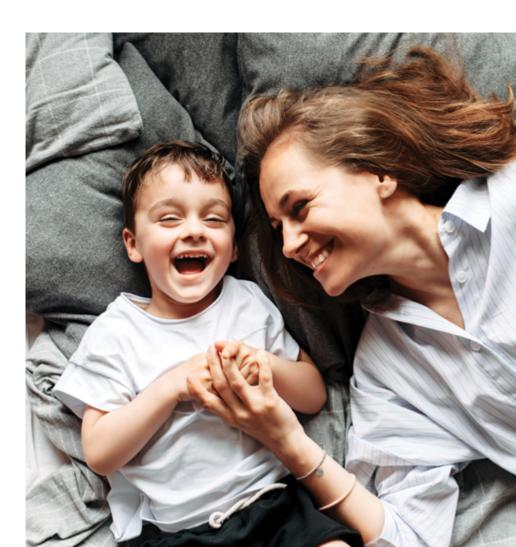
Just keep things positive and breathe. Take a breath before you react to things. I hope everybody out there manages that.

Managing Kids, Hobbies, and Personal Care

I get up early – that is the key. It is challenging with three boys. I love getting into nature and I take time to go into the woods. Trees calm me down from the energy of the day. Taking little hikes helps me

survive the day, and the busy-ness with the boys, as I don't have any help. We make it work as a family, we are a team, and it's good to remember that. I take time out for my boys, and for my hobbies, while I nurture my career.

I also take time out for myself. Meditating and going to the gym set me up for the whole day: fitness and a positive mind. When it gets tough, just remember that our parents did it for us, and we are doing it for our children; it's the way it happens. Look at the joy we get from our children. We do a lot of running around for them, but they are going to grow up into love itself.



It is health that is real wealth, not pieces of gold and silver.

MAHATMA GANDHI





How can we realize SDG 3 by 2030?

Dr. KRISHNAMURTHY JAYANNA is focused on the big picture: how do we ensure health and well-being for all? Here he writes about Sustainable Development Goal 3, the importance of Integrative Health, and the actions we will need to make to realize that goal.

he third UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is about health and well-being. It aims at "ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages." Before this, the UN's Millennium Development Goals focused on disease, and those conditions that contributed to the most illness-related deaths around the world. While that continues to be a priority, the current SDG also showcases the UN's commitment to improving people's well-being and quality of life. This is a huge, progressive leap in terms of how we envision the betterment of humanity and the world as a global community.

Is this realizable by 2030?

While it is good to be ambitious and aspirational when setting goals, unless our approach is backed by effective intervention and implementation that are contextually and culturally relevant, realizing the vision will be a challenge.

It is also important to be creative and innovative as we design ways to solve complex challenges, by bringing together the problems and the stakeholders. "Integrative approaches" appear to be promising, based on the evidence, and it is important that we review them critically for adoption within the public health ecosystem.

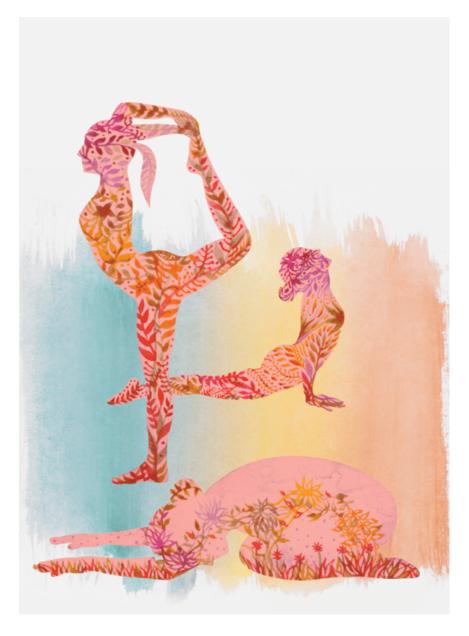
The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH), the lead agency of the U.S. Government for scientific research in this space, describes Integrative Health as "an approach that brings together conventional and complementary healing processes in a coordinated way. It lays emphasis on multimodal interventions for treating the whole person, rather than, for example, one organ system."

The integrative approach focuses on the "person," with various

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Yoga and meditation have been studied to understand their effects on physical and mental well-being, and are explored as complementary approaches to mainstream treatments.

disciplines collaborating to achieve a common goal. The focus is also on the "whole person," including feelings and emotions, not just the physical symptoms and physiological factors.

Research points to the gaps in well-being and quality of life due to the rise of chronic diseases. Treatment can be lifelong, with a greater demand for lifestyle management and treatment compliance, which can be stressful, hampering the quality of life. 40% of the U.S. population is engaged in complementary and alternative approaches (CAM) such as Tai chi, natural products, yoga, and meditation. The CAM approaches are perceived by clients as friendly and holistic, while providing more autonomy. Integrative approaches like Ayurveda recognize the unique nature of the human body-mind constitution, and offer personalized recommendations for treatment and lifestyle change. Yoga and meditation have been studied to understand their effects on physical and mental well-being, and are explored as complementary approaches to mainstream treatments.

In this context, the adoption of "Integrative approaches to Health and Well-being" within national health policies is a welcome change. In India, the AYUSH

Countries across the world have to focus on strengthening the implementation of integrative approaches through methodologies such as Implementation Science and Implementation Research.

systems of Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy are integrated within the primary health care systems. More recently, "Ayushman Bharat," a flagship program of the Government of India, is giving renewed impetus to well-being by setting up 150,000 Health and Wellness Centers across the country. The Western nations have also demonstrated openness to researching the effects of integrative approaches in specific conditions.

While these developments are certainly encouraging, they are not enough from a public health perspective. Countries across the world have to focus on strengthening the implementation of integrative approaches through methodologies such as Implementation Science and Implementation Research. These methods focus not on a single intervention, but a package of

interventions, and an intervention model as well as implementation processes that influence community health and well-being.

Research agendas and investments need to align in this direction. The small pilot studies, predominantly conducted in hospital settings, can expand into large-sample, community-based studies.

Disease-centric studies can expand their focus to address the entire continuum of health – from disease prevention to treatment to rehabilitation.

Integrative health policies have been framed. The next step is to strengthen the science and research for a population-wide impact. Collaboration between implementation stakeholders and institutions is going to be critical, as we continue our march toward this vital SDG.

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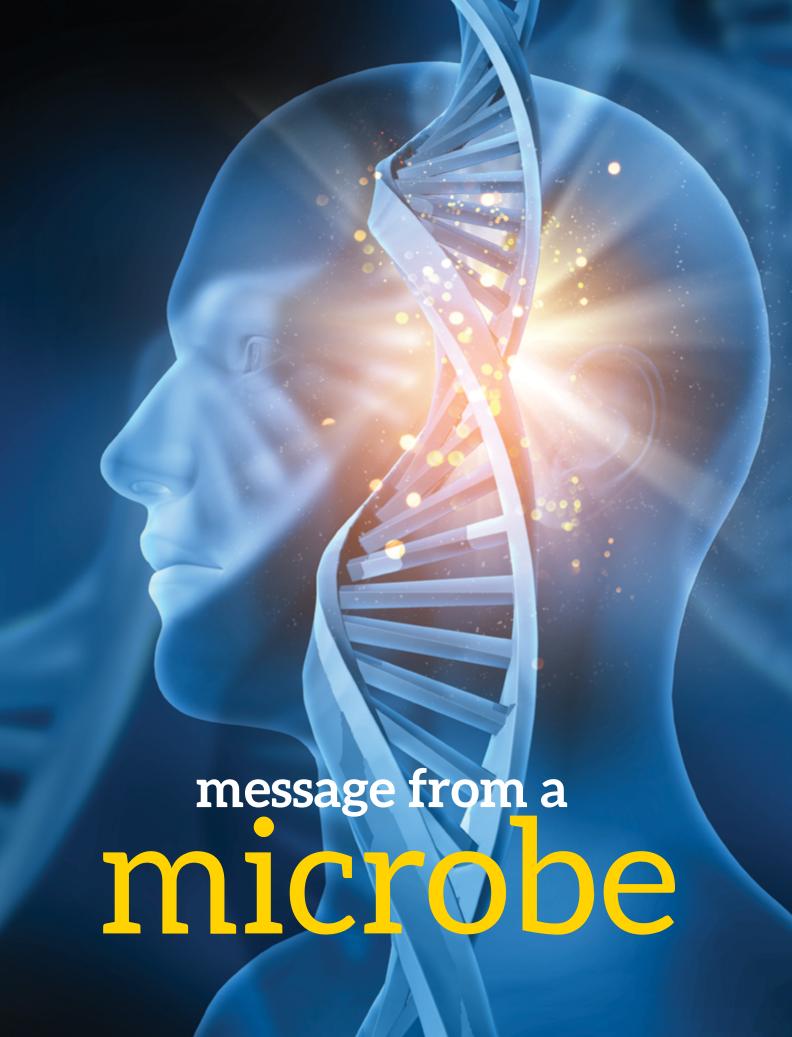
Complementary, Alternative, or Integrative Health: What's in a Name? [Internet]. https://www.nccih.nih.gov. [cited 2021 Jul 19]. Available from: https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/complementary-alternative-orintegrative-health-whats-in-a-name.

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KUNAL DESAI is an infectious diseases clinician from Ohio, whose research highlights the relationship between gut microbes and health. He explores how an imbalanced gut microbiome can affect our immune system, leaving us vulnerable to disease – physical and mental. Inner harmony is key, he suggests, and meditation can help us achieve It.

arious events and life experiences teach us and help us evolve, if we accept them with an open heart and a contemplative mind. All of us have experienced how a subtle singlecelled microbe can influence the entire humanity - Covid-19. The pandemic not only impacted our physical health; it tested our mental strength and well-being. We clearly noticed a significant rise in mental health problems during and after the pandemic. As an infectious diseases specialist and a seeker embarking on a spiritual journey, I witnessed this pandemic unfolding from a different vantage point. It led me to an obvious question: what can we learn from this experience? What message does this subtle microbe have for us?

Let us first explore some science! We may not like microbes, but we are home to millions of them, primarily in the gut, known as the gut microbiome. Many chronic lifestyle diseases, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes,

and obesity, are considered risk factors for severe infections such as Covid-19, and studies have shown a clear link between these health problems and a disturbance in homeostasis among gut microbes, defined as dysbiosis1. It can be understood simply as a "subtle disturbance in a harmonious relationship among widely diverse colonies of microbes." Have you ever had a nervous stomach when you were stressed or anxious? We have all experienced how our mental state impacts our gut at one time or another. In fact, psychological stress is considered to be one of the most common causes of gut dysbiosis. Research has now described a link between the gut microbiome and mental health problems in the context of the Gut-Microbiome-Brain axis.2 The millions of microbes present within us seem to react subtly to our thoughts and emotions, positively or negatively, resulting in significant physiological and immunological changes. These changes influence mental and physical health.

The millions of microbes present within us seem to react subtly to our thoughts and emotions, positively or negatively, resulting in significant physiological and immunological changes. These changes influence mental and physical health.

When we carefully observe the spectrum of Covid-19 infections, we see that the degree of immune response to the virus determines the severity of the illness to a large extent. Studies have shown that gut dysbiosis contributes to a dysregulated immune response to Covid-19². An optimal immune response is vital in fighting such infections with or without vaccines. Based on scientific evidence, we can deduce that pre-illness health status and stress, and the anxiety associated with the disease play a considerable role in the outcome of many illnesses.

So, how does this science help us? What is the message from the Covid-19 microbe? Unexpected events, illnesses, and difficulties, small or big, are inevitable. In his book, *As a Man Thinketh*, James Allen explains, "Anxiety quickly demoralizes the whole body, and lays it open to the entrance of disease." We can certainly strive to improve our response to such challenges.

Entrepreneur and author Jack Canfield gives us a simple equation: Event + Response = Outcome.

Psychological and emotional well-being are not only vital in maintaining good health, but also impact the outcome of an unexpected physical alignment. It is only wise to learn techniques to

maintain emotional balance as a caregiver or patient. An inner state of balance and harmony is a hallmark of our psychological and emotional well-being.

The simple practice of Heartfulness Meditation has helped me maintain this inner state of balance during both challenging and good times. It allows me to access inner resources to cultivate poise, leading to calm amidst crisis and chaos. Don't we all seek such a state of mind?

We conducted a study during the Covid-19 pandemic where we assessed the effects of an 8-week Heartfulness Meditation practice on psychological well-being, as measured by the level of stress, sleep quality, and subjective experiences.3 Interestingly, when we asked how worried the participants were about acquiring Covid themselves or in their families during the study period, no change was noted during the 8 weeks. We did observe, however, a significant stress reduction and improved sleep quality. Participants were also able to cultivate inner peace and resilience. Only a few weeks of Heartfulness practice helped to change the "R=Response" to the event or crisis.

Some of us from a purely scientific background may question

contemplative practices like meditation. The word "yoga" is often misunderstood to mean physical exercises, whereas yoga truly means the union with the higher self. Heartfulness incorporates all eight limbs of Ashtanga Yoga, but unlike many yoga traditions, it starts with the contemplative practices first - the sixth, seventh, and eighth limbs, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi.4 Science helps us understand that the practice of meditation is not merely for spiritual pursuit. It impacts all aspects of human wellbeing, including psychological and physical. This pursuit of inner balance and harmony is possible through simple practices that are practical in everyone's daily routine, regardless of vocation. A virus, considered an enemy, and the millions of microbes living within us, seem to convey a subtle but profound message that humans

An inner state of balance and harmony is a hallmark of our psychological and emotional well-being.



must strive to seek inner balance and harmony. Future research may shed more light and bring an eclipse of science and spirituality. In the meantime, we have enough reasons to embrace yogic practices like Heartfulness, that bring us inner harmony and health.

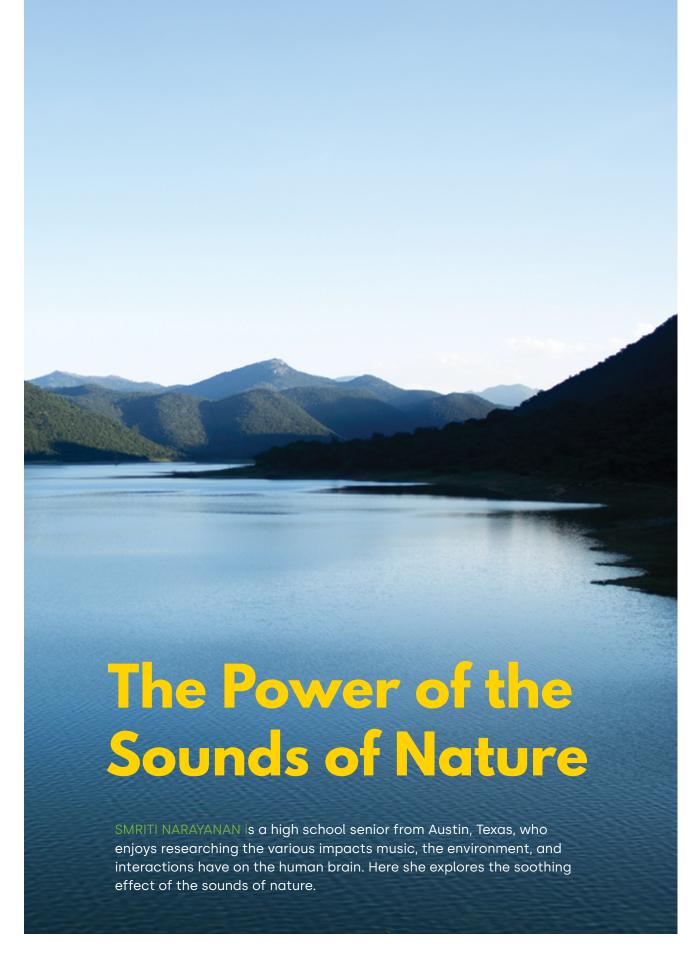
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hink of the soft pitter-patter of raindrops and the gentle tumbles of a stream nearby. Think of the shrill chirps in a birdsong and the whoosh of the leaves blowing in the wind. What do you associate these sounds with? How do they make you feel? These sounds of nature invoke a sense of comfort and ease. This is something common to all people, but why is it so? Actually, there's a science behind why these sounds make us feel relaxed.

A study conducted by Buxton, Pearson, Allou, Fristrup, and Wittemeyer (2021), published by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences furthered the theory that natural sounds relayed a positive correlation to quantitative and measurable health benefits. The study identified 36 publications in which "decreased pain, lower stress, improved mood, and enhanced cognitive performance" correlated with listening to natural sounds.

From this, they identified an environment in which there was decreased human disturbance – parks. Environments with reduced noise pollution allowed people to perceive animal, water, and wind sounds. As the researchers looked

more deeply into various sounds, they found that water sounds had the largest mean health benefits and positive outcomes. When they compared natural sounds to human noise, they found a similar outcome. Their results demonstrated the calmness and joy brought to those who experienced and perceived the sounds of nature.

Having more calmness and joy in one's life can lead to reduced stress, anxiety, and brain fog.

In environments with increased human noise pollution, such as cities, towns, and suburbs, we don't perceive sounds in our environment because our attention is focused on other singular sounds or sights, like a voice or a person. Human-made sound is referred to as noise whereas environmental sound is simply natural sound. When we do get the chance to listen to the sounds of nature, it's almost as if we've taken a pause from the world around us.

One reason why humans find the sounds of nature soothing is because of their connection to music.

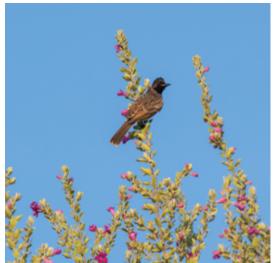
The basic elements of music are derived from sound and rhythm, which are found in nature. Take, for instance, a bird song. The sounds of the bird create a song, just as notes connect to make a song on an instrument. Rhythm is seen in nature through drops of rain hitting the ground. If you listen to the peck of the woodpecker, you will find a rhythm. Many renowned musicians like Vivaldi, Beethoven, Handel, and Debussy were inspired by nature. If you've ever listened to Vivaldi's Four Seasons, you can distinguish the different moods of music used to portray the change in nature. Essentially, we've discovered that music and nature are one. The music we find soothing today wouldn't exist without nature-derived sounds and rhythms.

In addition, the way humans interpret the soundscape can have an effect on emotions.

Studies have shown that nature can affect the psychological development of an individual. Though it is important to note that not all sounds affect humans in the same way. Due to various experiences and memories, different sounds can

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Natural sounds have an overall positive effect on human health. The long term benefits of stress relief and reducing anxiety are numerous including sleep improvements, reduced muscle tension, and an overall better quality of life.



evoke different emotions. Various sounds can evoke certain recalls in the human mind, correlating to positive (and sometimes negative) feelings. The way in which our mind reacts to these auditory stimuli is what we show through emotion.

Kanha Shanti Vanam, an ashram in Hyderabad hosting the world headquarters for the Heartfulness Institute, is an ecological paradise where you can resonate with inner and outer nature. The Green Kanha Initiative aims to utilize this space to nurture biodiversity and this is accomplished through the conservation of hundreds of endangered and indigenous species of plants and animals. In addition to being a meditative space,

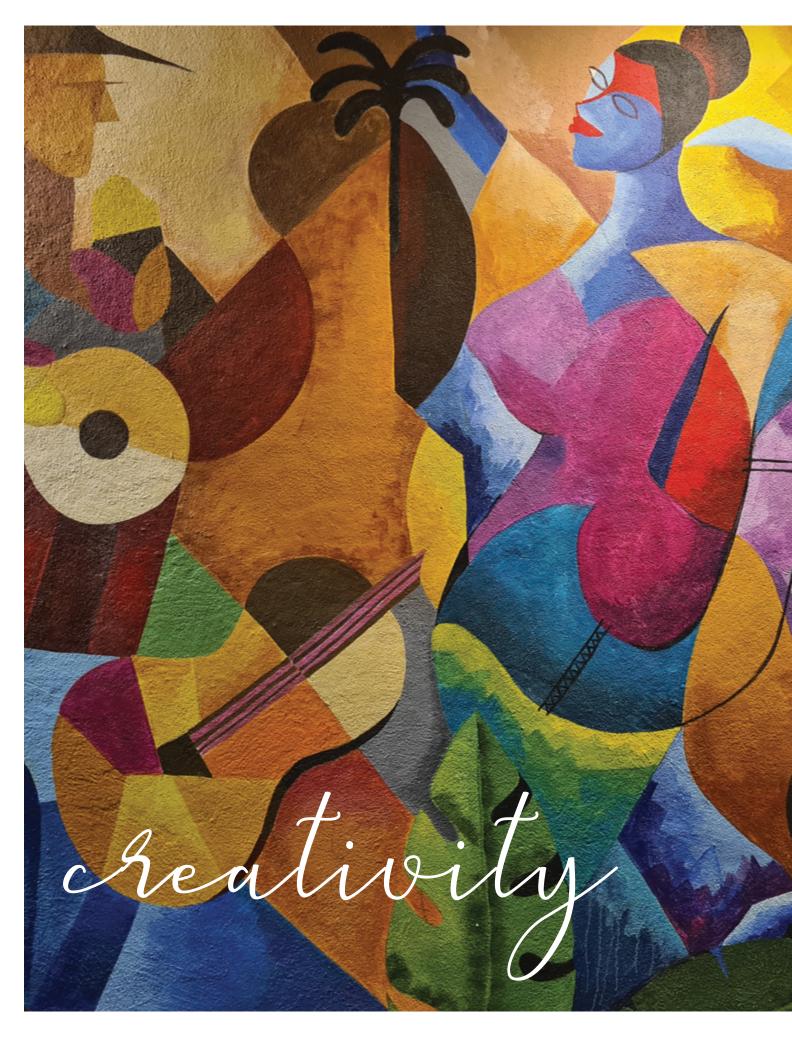
Kanha Shanti Vanam has become a conservation site and home to these flora and fauna. Here people can experience the sounds of nature all around them whilst practicing meditation. If you're looking to implement natural sounds into your meditation and mindfulness routine, you may consider visiting this ashram.

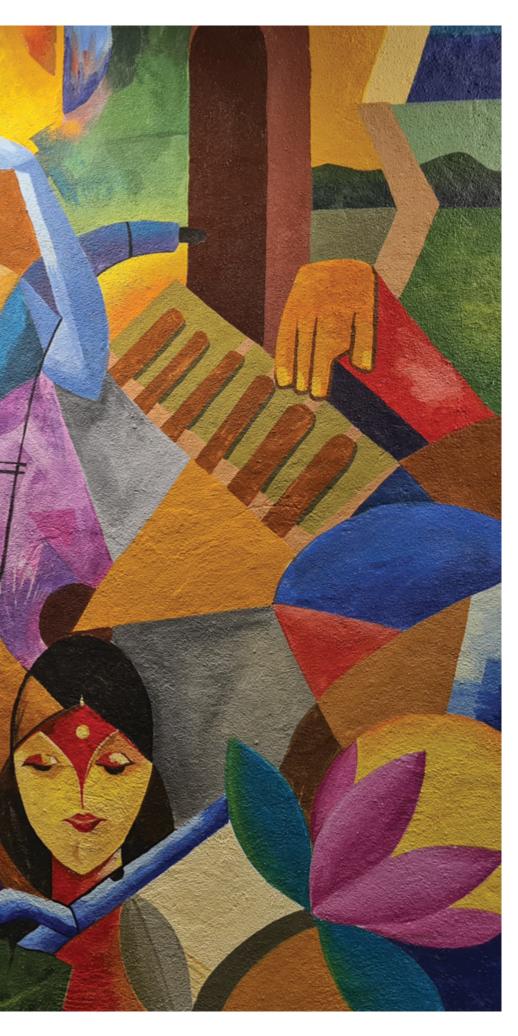
For the most part, we're able to say that natural sounds have an overall positive effect on human health. The long term benefits for stress relief and reducing anxiety are numerous, including sleep improvements, reduced muscle tension, and an overall better quality of life.

Some strategies for accessing natural sounds on a daily or weekly basis are to take some time to step outside, be away from the bustling sounds of an urban environment. and connect with nature. Whether it's in your own backyard, the local park, or a national park, the sounds of nature surround us. If you don't have the luxury of stepping into nature, there are thousands of relaxing audios and natural sounds found on streaming platforms. By simply implementing any one of these strategies, you could take small steps towards daily stress and anxiety relief.

1 https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2013097118#%3A~%3Atext%3DT he%20results%20affirm%20that%20 natural%2Csound%20and%20low%20 anthropogenic%20sound

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Without creativity, there would be no progress, and we would be forever repeating the same patterns.

EDWARD DE BONO

CREATING A GREEN CITY

KAREN EYÞÓRSDÓTTIR works for the city of Reykjavik in the field of climate change and European cooperation, adopting international standards in the city's progress towards a more sustainable future. Here she is interviewed by MADELEINE OLIVE about the sustainable Reykjavik of the future and the importance of togetherness.



A Sustainable Future

Q: What is your vision for Reykjavik as a sustainable city of the future?

After Covid, Reykjavik created something called the Green Plan. It's an outreach program based on the city's vision for a sustainable environment, outlining funding and green spaces for the next 10 years.

There's a lot of emphasis on green transport, infrastructure, neighborhoods, and innovation in green jobs. The Green Plan aims to create a better city to live in, and incorporates the three pillars of sustainability – economic, social, and environmental – to ultimately create an environment-friendly city. And this Green Plan is very much in line with the 100 climateneutral and smart cities program. That's our vision.

Q: Did growing up with nature all around you educate you about the environment?

In Iceland we grow up in close proximity to nature, and many of us live by the sea. If you drive out of the city for half an hour, you experience untouched nature, which is such a privilege. And as you grow older, you appreciate it more and more. I wouldn't say that Icelanders are more respectful of nature than other people. We spend a lot of time in the city and go to the countryside once in a while, but not many people really go out on a hike in nature or go up to the highlands.

Iceland is rich in natural resources, like hydropower and wind power. We use hydropower to generate electricity, and we use geothermal energy – where hot water is pumped from the ground – to heat the houses. But there is an everincreasing need for electricity. A recent report said that to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040, we need to dam our rivers to generate hydroelectric power. Another report stated that we need to build five more dams to harness this amount of energy.

But that would mean flooding entire valleys and their ecosystems, flora, and wildlife, which I think is a big shame because Iceland has one of the most untouched highlands. There aren't many places like it, at least in Europe. We really do need to protect these

The Green Plan
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and environmental
– to ultimately
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environmentfriendly city.

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areas. There are all too many people willing to sacrifice them in order to create more dams to sell more cheap energy to the industry.

I guess living in close proximity to nature does makes you feel more connected to it, but I think we can protect it better. You will protect something that you love.

Young Leaders

Q: Would you like to share something on how to empower and encourage young people to become leaders?

My primary advice to young people is to nurture yourself, because you have to put the oxygen mask on first before you can assist others. And after you have nurtured yourself and found your own strengths, find the field of study or area of work you want to engage in. Then, I encourage you to get involved in any way possible.

Often, we feel that our voices are not heard, or that we are not invited to have a seat at the table. But in my experience, there are a lot more opportunities than we think. For instance, you can be a mentor at your university, helping students find their feet and guiding them. You can be a volunteer with the UN. You can

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volunteer, like you are doing with the Heartfulness Magazine.

I was a deputy delegate to the UN on sustainable development, but then came Covid. So, I didn't get to do nearly as much as I wanted to. Now Covid is lifting. There are multiple ways to volunteer, and if you don't have time, you can be a leader within your environment. But it really all starts with nurturing yourself first, finding self-acceptance, self-love. Find your strengths and work on them, and then you can start assisting others. It always has to come from love. Any kind of activity or decision is so much more powerful if it comes from love rather than fear.

Don't engage with climate change solely out of fear; do it out of love for the future generations. Young people are so powerful. Look out for grants. Very often there are grants from municipalities, innovation companies or institutions, student associations, etc. Go with your idea and believe in it.

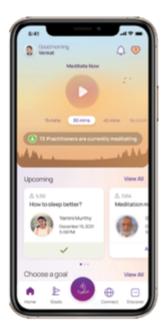
Then, try to inspire others and be open to the world. Travel, get to know other people, be open to other cultures and other ways of seeing things, new perspectives. My main message is to embrace openness and inspiration. Q: I am realizing more and more the power of togetherness. Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts.

Thank you!



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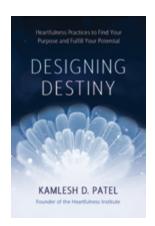
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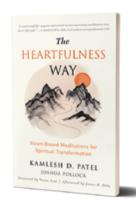
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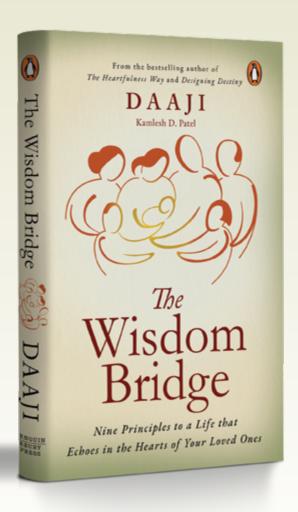
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- JACK MILLER, Professor, University of Toronto, and author of The Holistic Curriculum and Whole Child Education
- "As the old African Proverb states, "It takes a village to raise a child," you can now consider Daaji part of your family's village."
- LASHAUN MARTIN, National Vice President, Operations, Mocha Moms, Inc. Gospel Recording Artist
- "A timely book that families will benefit from, including my own."
- PULLELA GOPICHAND, Chief National Coach Indian Badminton Team, recipient of the Padma Bhushan
- "Whether it's music or life, what matters is growing self-awareness. I impart this lesson through the flute, and Daaji does this through his teachings."
- Pt. HARIPRASAD CHAURASIA, internationally acclaimed flautist, teacher, and winner of multiple awards and recognitions globally
- "I find the wisdom in this book enlightening."
- CLANCY MARTIN, Professor of Philosophy, contributing editor, Harper's Magazine



