

August 2021

heartfulness

advancing in love

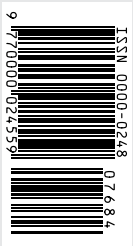
Contentment
DAAJI

Altered Traits
RICHARD DAVIDSON

Heartful
Communication
LIZ KINGSNORTH

Sacred Time
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Communicate
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heartfulness
purity weaves destiny

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Dear readers,

Words have impact! When our conversations ooze love and warmth, we can make someone's day; when we speak harshly or arrogantly, no matter the reason, we create disharmony and hurt others. This month, we celebrate the value of heartfelt communication, hearing from contributors about compassion, communicating with the heart, empathic listening, and how to navigate healthy disagreements.

Richard Davidson discusses altered traits and the return to basic goodness. Dan Siegel explores intraconnectedness and presence. Tobin Hart dives deeper into the relationship between psychology and spirituality. Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee honors the sacredness of time. Liz Kingsnorth shares her experience of a lifetime's work in the field of communication. And Daaji reflects upon the quality of contentment in his series on removing and creating habits. In fact, this month, all roads lead to our ability to refine our habits toward our innate generosity of heart.

Happy reading,

The editors

contributors



DAAJI

Daaji is the current Heartfulness Guide. He offers a practical, experiential approach to the evolution of consciousness that is simple, easy to follow, and available to people of all ages and walks of life. Daaji is also a prolific speaker and writer. Two of his books, *The Heartfulness Way* and *Designing Destiny*, are #1 bestsellers.



LIZ KINGSNORTH

Liz has been a Heartfulness trainer since 1992, and an internationally certified Nonviolent Communication trainer for 16 years. In Scotland, she integrates NVC into her work as an organisational consultant, leadership coach, trainer and counselor. In India, she spent ten years with the Omega School in Chennai, and is now training trainers in Heartful Communication at Kanha Shanti Vanam, near Hyderabad. Liz has a son, a daughter, and four beloved grandchildren, all living in Australia.



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Dr. Siegel is a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine, the co-director of the Mindful Awareness Research Center at UCLA, and the Executive Director of the Mindsight Institute, for the development of mindsight, insight, empathy, and integration in individuals, families, and communities. He is the author of five New York Times bestsellers and is the founding editor for the Norton Professional Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology.

RICHARD DAVIDSON

Richie is a neuroscientist, speaker, meditator and author. He is the William James and Vilas Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and the founder of the Center for Healthy Minds. His work is focused on the neurobiology of emotion and the effects of meditation on the human brain. He has numerous publications in leading scientific journals and is also the author of many best-selling books including his latest, *Altered Traits*, which provides us with a fascinating view of our ability as humans to shape our brains.

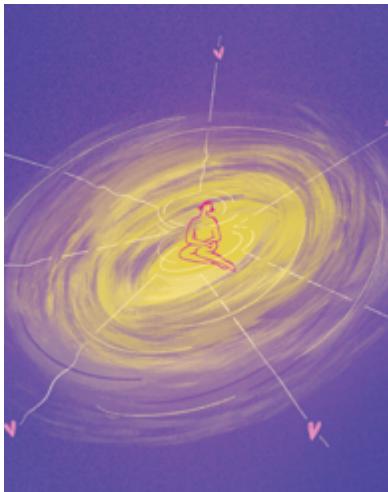


LLEWELLYN VAUGHAN-LEE

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



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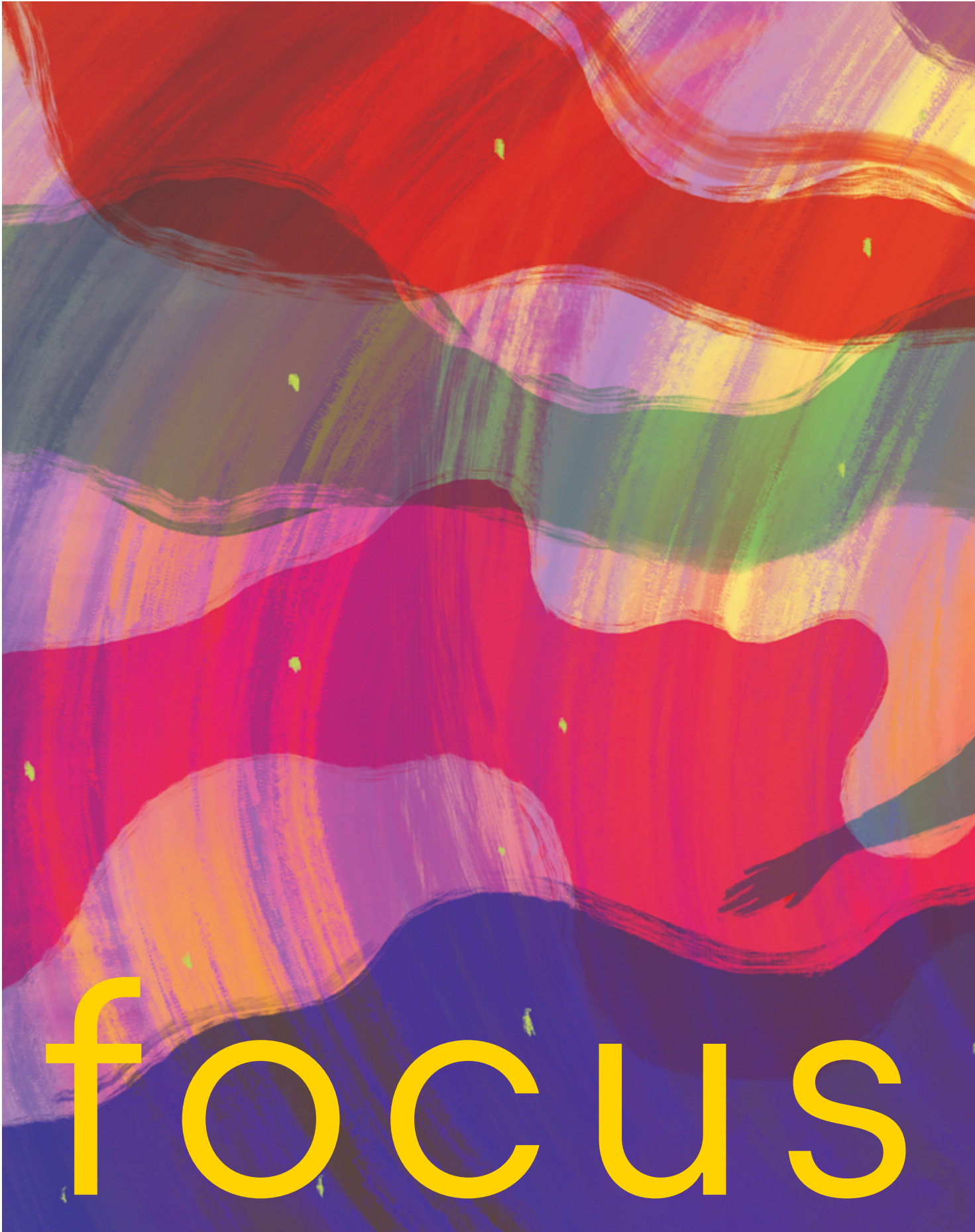
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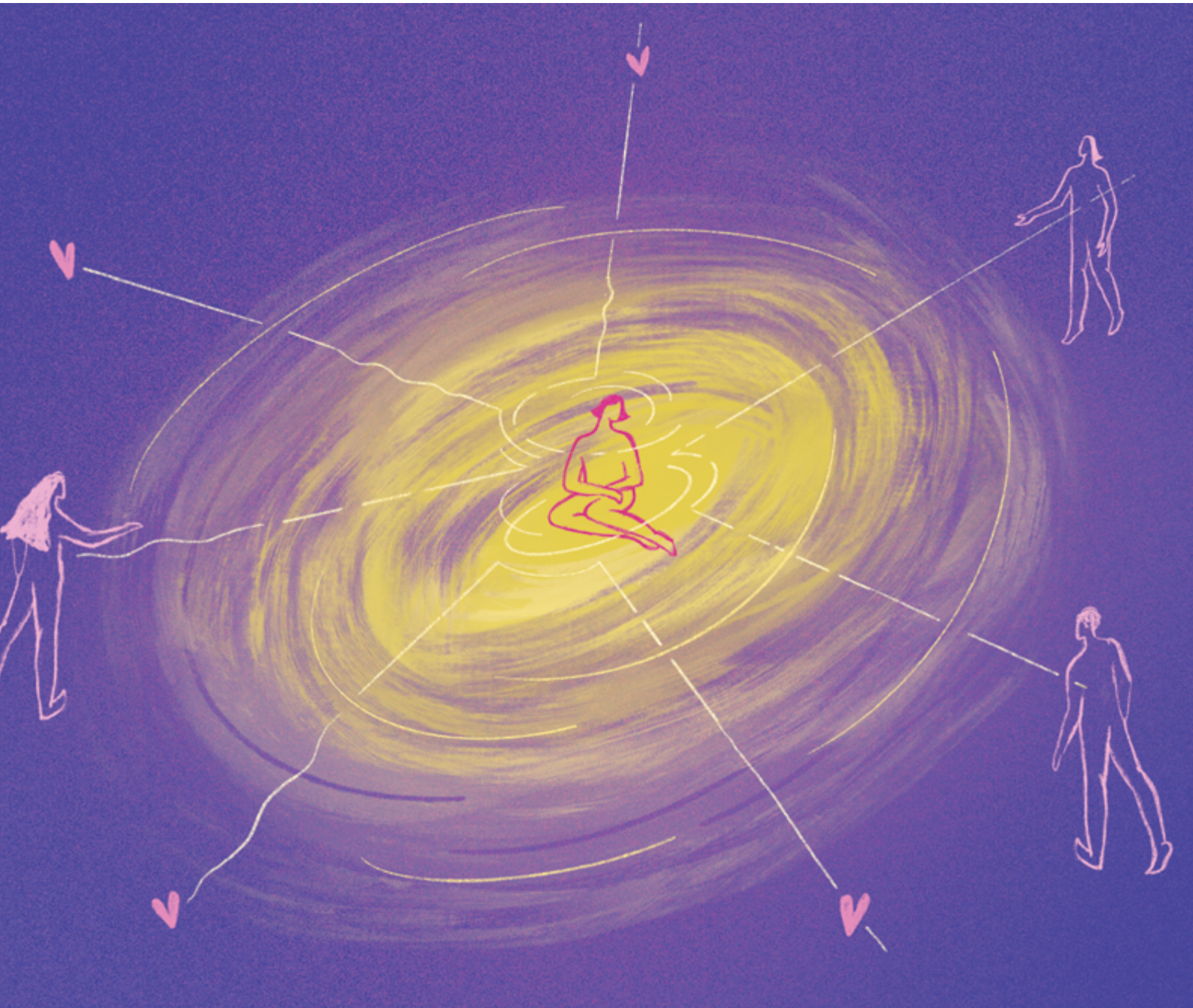


THE ART OF COMMUNICATION

I've learned that
people will forget
what you said, people
will forget what you
did, but people will
never forget how you
made them feel.

MAYA ANGELOU

Illustration by ANANYA PATEL



Communication:

Bridging the Gap

PART 1

In this 3-part series, **LIZ KINGSNORTH** introduces the basic principles of Heartful Communication, and how it can guide our understanding of our personal feelings and the feelings of others, ultimately leading to a more consistent state of harmony. In part 1, she focuses on the importance of the quality of our communication.

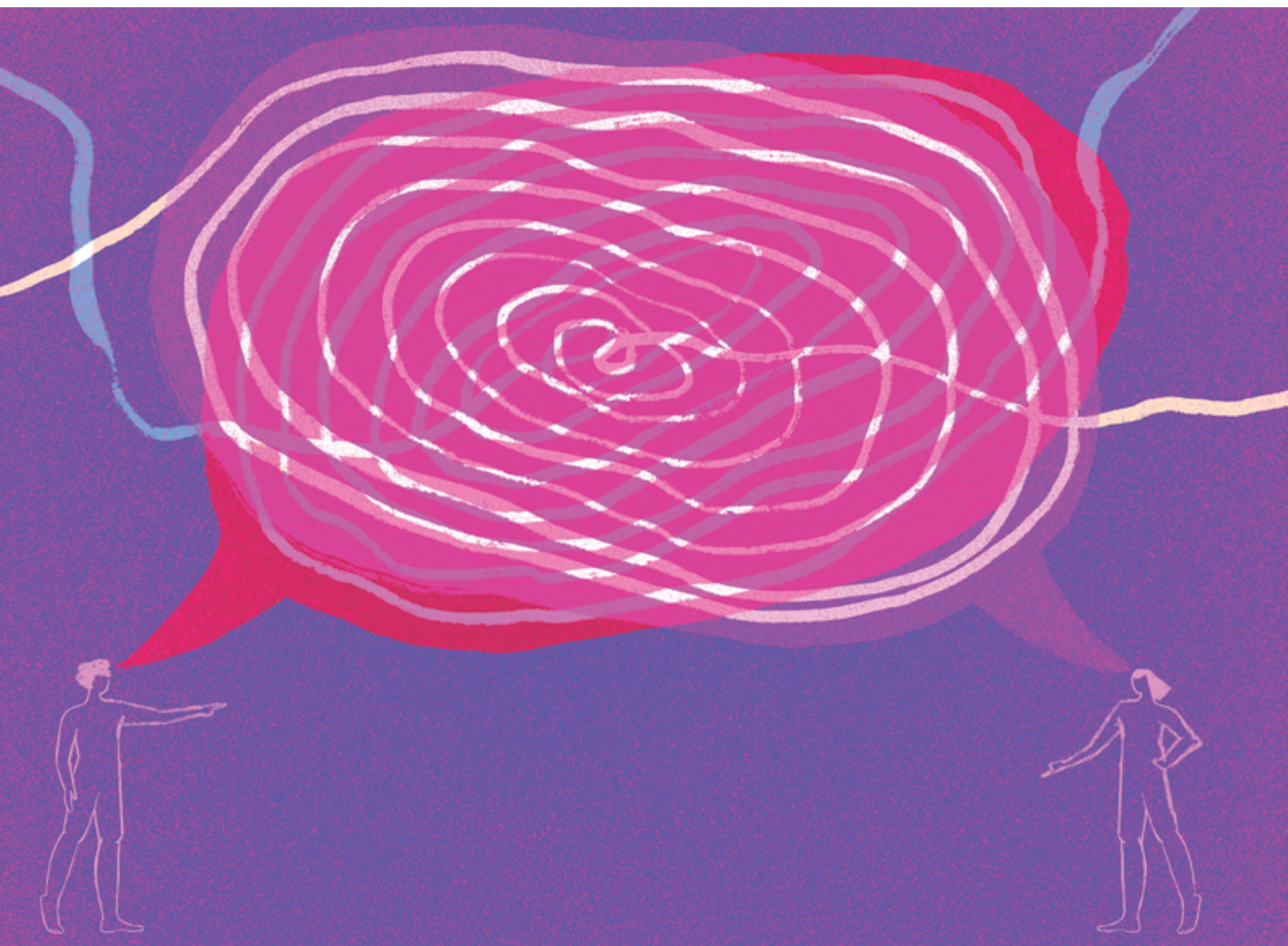
These are extraordinary times. So much of what we call our “normal life” has been thrown up in the air like pieces of a puzzle, and the pieces are landing – if at all they do land – in a different pattern, which may not be recognizable. Amidst this uncertainty and turmoil, we find our relationships under greater pressure. There seems to be conflict and misunderstanding at all levels, within ourselves, between family members, at work, within our countries, and between nations.

Many of us are longing to have more harmonious relationships and to communicate more effectively. At a deeper level, we want to interact in a way that is in alignment with our core selves, with the best versions of ourselves. I hear people saying things like, “I want to feel at peace at the end of the day.” No one wants the heaviness that can result from misunderstandings and disagreement. I’m sure that we all *prefer* to manage interactions with care; we want to listen well, to speak kindly, but we struggle to achieve this consistently. Heartful Communication sets out to meet this need. After

a workshop, one woman wrote simply, “I’ve always known how I want to live my life and now I have the tools to do it.”

This is not just a set of techniques or a toolkit, however; it’s an awareness and a way of being. It weaves together a heart-centered approach to living, with practical ways to manifest this in our daily interactions. Techniques and wisdom from the Heartfulness practices and philosophy are interwoven with a process called Nonviolent Communication, which was developed by Dr. Marshall B. Rosenberg. Both approaches focus on the heart, and honor our humanness, recognizing that we are imperfect beings with shared yearnings and shared vulnerabilities.

So how would it be if we used these very yearnings and vulnerabilities as a valuable, alive way to realize the power of unity and what we have in common, rather than as evidence of our weakness or collective failure as a species? This lived experience of togetherness is something that Heartful Communication offers.



We always communicate from our current level of awareness, so the more we can raise our awareness and refine our inner states, the more likely it is that our communication will be refined. The more our hearts are open and nurtured, the more compassion and authenticity will be infusing our connections with others and with ourselves. So meditation, with its power to raise our awareness and to connect us with our deepest center, holds a key to helping us develop a more balanced, loving way of living and relating.

Yet, even with the best intentions, the noblest ideals and values, we mess up. We say things we regret, we trigger hurt in others, and often we don't know how it happened. We misunderstand and we are misunderstood. We can be our own worst enemy, especially in our closest relationships. Isn't this where the toughest tests often arise?

Let's remind ourselves that we are products of our cultural conditioning. Most of us are educated from birth to compete, to compare, to judge, to

think in terms of who is right and who is wrong, who is better or worse, what is normal behavior and what is abnormal. This has led us into a fractured culture where blaming and shaming are the norm. It manifests in our day-to-day communications, in how we raise our children, in our education systems, our businesses, and our politics. Instead of wanting to CONNECT we want to CORRECT. As Marshall Rosenberg says, we are habitually playing the game of “Who is right?”

Can you take a moment to reflect: When have you wanted to be right recently? When have you insisted on something, or tried to prove a point, perhaps? And if you won that round of the game and proved yourself to be right, how do you suppose the other person felt? And how did you feel deep down? Was it really satisfying to have won a point – perhaps at the cost of the other person feeling embarrassed, small or resentful? Did you win the argument but damage the relationship? Is winning, being right, actually worth it?

This way of thinking and conditioning starts early in our lives. I'd like to share a story, told by a friend about her daughter in primary school. The teacher organized a running race and told the children that whoever won should grab as many chocolates as possible from the bowl. My friend's daughter won the race but took only one chocolate. She was then scolded by the teacher for being disobedient – she had been told to grab lots of sweets and didn't. When the distressed child returned home and was asked by her mother what happened, she cried, “If I had taken lots of chocolates, there wouldn't have been enough for everyone.” Her natural inclination was to share, to think of others, but here she was being “educated” *out* of her natural way of being into winning at the expense of others.

My individual existence
rests in all of humanity.
Whatever I may think of
the human race, I am
inextricably a part of it!
Each of us can and does
make a difference to the
whole, however small, in
how we live each moment.

What is it that we reward? How do we respond to mistakes? I was very inspired when I first heard about African communities that are rooted in the strength of Interdependence rather than Independence – the philosophy of Ubuntu. One Ubuntu practice that especially moves me is this: When someone makes a serious mistake, what we would probably call a crime in our society, that person sits surrounded by their community, and for two days everyone reminds him or her of all the *good, kind* things they have done! The idea is that the person has temporarily forgotten their true nature, so the others remind them of who they *really* are. Having been deeply affirmed and restored through this expression of acceptance, love, and trust, that person is extremely unlikely to repeat the mistake.

This is a philosophy that has redemption at its core. Isn't the possibility of redemption central to a humane society? How radically different this is from our idea that shame and punishment will reform us, starting with young children, all the way through to our criminal justice system. If I shame





someone, whether through speech or action, am I not inevitably shaming myself?

My individual existence rests in all of humanity. Whatever I may think of the human race, I am inextricably a part of it! Each of us can and does make a difference to the whole, however small, in how we live each moment. For example, we cannot know what the extended effects of kindness might be. I remember one day, driving on a highway and stopping at a toll to pay my fee. To my surprise the toll attendant told me that the person in the car in front of me had paid for me! Apparently it was Random Acts of Kindness Day, which I wasn't aware of, and this gesture of drivers paying for those behind them in the queue had been going on for an hour or so. In delight, I paid the toll fee for the car behind me, and I heard later that this chain of paying for another continued unbroken for most of the day. I'm sure that this repeated small gesture, this random act of kindness, will have generated smiles and opened hundreds of hearts that day, perhaps changing someone's dark mood, with the result that they treated people differently. We don't know, but we do know that we enjoy experiences that connect us. How we communicate can contribute to the warmth of connection and unity, or to the chill of separation. It can contribute to our evolution or to our diminishment.

To be continued.


Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL

TURN IT AROUND

AMRUTA PATEL is a student at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. She has been studying Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication and Heartful Communication for the last several months. Here, she describes an experience volunteering at one of the COVID-19 vaccination centers in London, where she was able to apply her newfound communication skills in a challenging situation.


have been volunteering at COVID-19 vaccine centers in London on some of my days off, and what an experience it has been! After a year of stunted conversations over Zoom and carefully extracting myself from situations with too many people, I found myself in a massive hall welcoming hundreds of strangers on their way to getting their jabs. It was overwhelming, exciting and sobering to be a part of this group effort to help combat the virus.





During one of my shifts, I was working in the post-vaccine waiting area, checking on people to see if they were feeling well during their compulsory period of observation before they could leave. Everything seemed to be going well, and most people were largely positive about the experience, while some were still nervous about the vaccine and its effects. The mood was light and the vibrations happy, when suddenly a man marched into the room, anger and frustration rolling off his shoulders in palpable waves. He exclaimed, “I refuse to wait! I’ve waited 45 minutes already for this bloody jab,” as he rushed past the paramedics.

I put my hand up and said, “Sir, please wait for a while so ...” and was promptly knocked to the ground. I still don’t believe he meant to do it. I think I was just in the way, and my arm a bit too close to his frame. He moved with such force and energy that the momentum pushed me over. The only thing I felt in that moment was shock, as I turned and watched him stride out of the room. Not even a moment’s pause to apologize! But then I centered myself and thought, “Everything is all right. You are fine and no one was hurt.”



When I told this story later, my family was upset at the aggression shown towards me. He could have stopped and helped, or at least said thank you to the people who took time out of their days to volunteer. But perhaps we should ask the question, “Why did he do it?”

From what I observed in the few moments I spent in his orbit, he was wearing paint-splattered clothes usually seen on contractors or workmen. In addition, the vaccination process was running a little late and appointments were delayed that day. Perhaps he had a job to get to, or perhaps his

I did not have to see this situation as right or wrong. I could feel compassion toward someone without letting their behavior or situation upset me or my mood.

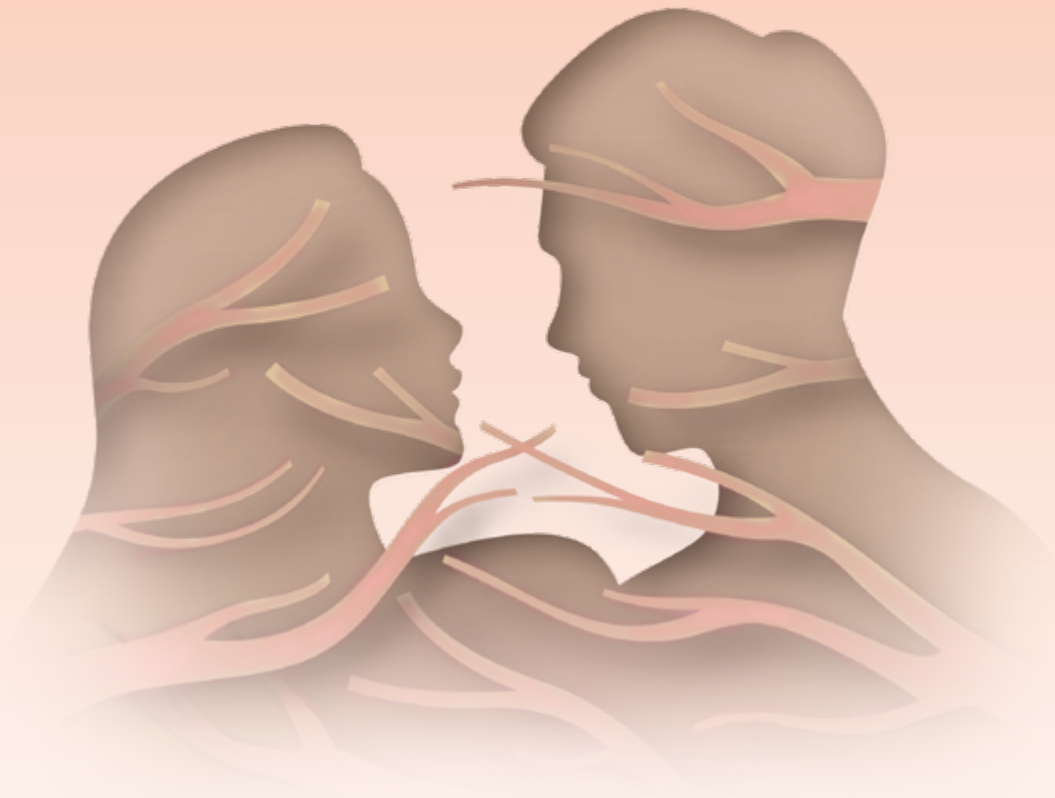
manager was phoning him to ask why he had not arrived for work yet. If he was paid by the hour, perhaps the delay was affecting his ability to make a steady income in an already-tough economic climate.

I have no idea what was going through his head that day, but I have learned to look for the drivers behind someone else’s actions and words. In doing so, I could remove myself from the situation and empathize with his potential predicament. You would think that after eight hours on my feet I would have felt incensed and irritated by the whole event, but I left my shift that day feeling completely happy and fulfilled. I had contributed to something much bigger than him or myself and had thoroughly enjoyed doing so.

I did not have to see this situation as right or wrong. I could feel compassion toward someone without letting their behavior or situation upset me or my mood. I cannot think of a more useful way of interacting with the complex and dynamic world that surrounds us today.

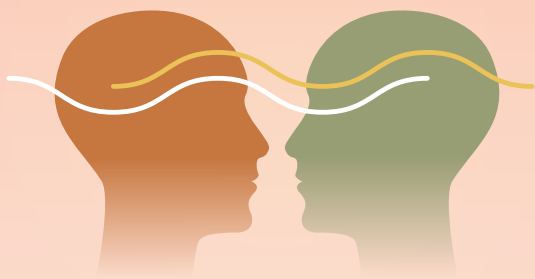
love marriage

CHANCHAL MEENA



One of my closest friends in my hometown had a love marriage, which many considered to be a rebellious act against our small society. She looked happy for a few years after marriage, but I quietly sensed that she was hiding something behind her façade. One day she came over to visit me, and we eventually reached the topic of relationships and marriage. I never force people to share with me, but that day, when my friend started to cry, I gently comforted her and simply asked if she wanted to share.

Eventually, she opened up to our private silence. Her marriage was very rocky, and because it was a love marriage, she could not depend on the support of her family to help her. In many places in India, even today, there are families who blame their children if their love marriages fail. My friend's parents had clearly told her, "If you have problems later, don't come to us. This marriage is your choice." I stayed quiet as my friend poured her heart out. There was no sense of urgency from me; I would have stayed up all night if needed. I



recognized that painful secrets worth several years could take time to be expressed. My friend was broken, and I eventually picked up on her stream of thinking.

That day, it was not my job to tell her right from wrong. It was not my place to criticize her way of thinking, although I sensed it was biased in one direction. And it was not my motive to “fix” her situation. My only job was to listen – to help her feel lighter – after all, maybe unburdening her pain would give her clarity on her situation.

After she finished speaking, my friend realized some of her own mistakes that had brought bitterness in her marriage. I asked her if I could make suggestions, and when she agreed I suggested small behavioral changes, and a more compassionate approach towards failure. She was ready to try these things because she felt she could depend on me to support her, listen to her, and talk things through with her.

Throughout the next few months, I stayed in regular contact with her. She was on the verge of

I believe there is great potential in listening compassionately. When people talk to a listener, they can hear themselves and become more in tune with the voice of their heart. Listening with no judgment gives people space to unburden – to release the clutter – so that it gives room for the heart to speak.

depression, and constant emotional and mental support was necessary. Slowly, the more she was able to open up, the more she was able to discover her own ways of fixing her problems.

I do not take credit for my friend’s recovering marriage. After all, she found her own solutions, carried out her ideas, and kept courage. All I did was listen. I believe there is great potential in listening compassionately. When people talk to a listener, they can hear themselves and become more in tune with the voice of their heart. Listening with no judgment gives people space to unburden – to release the clutter – so that it gives room for the heart to speak.

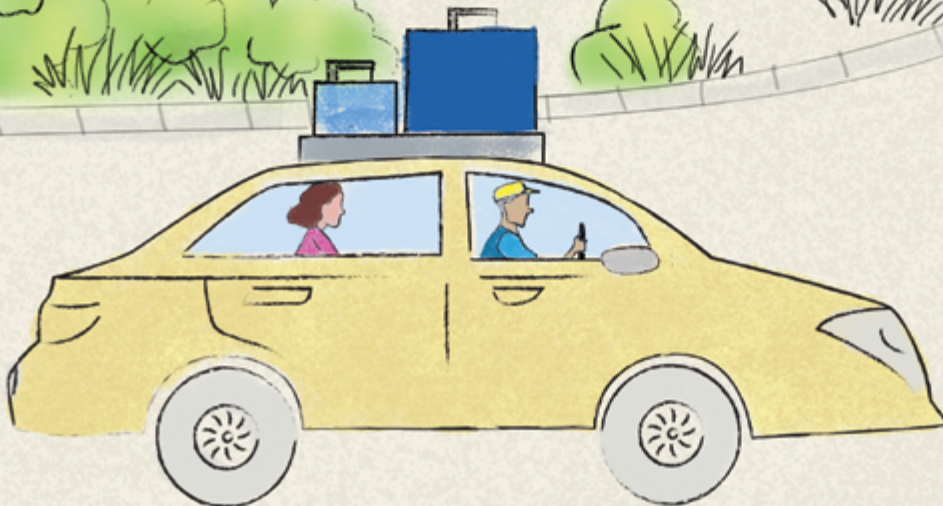
THE CAB RIDE

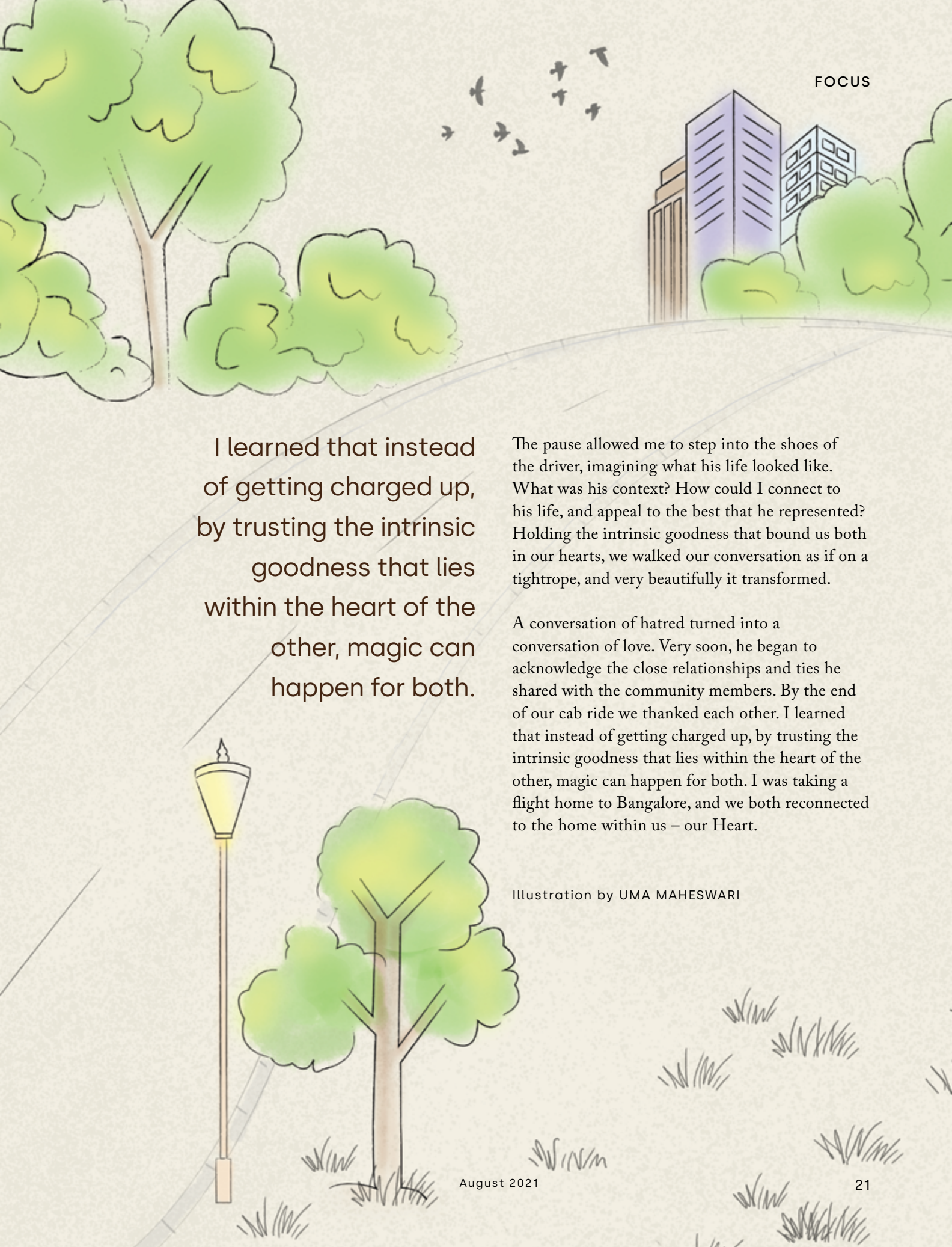
RASHI AGARWAL

sat in the cab on my way to the airport as the driver zoomed over Delhi's wide roads. The sun was rising over the horizon as a new day dawned – quite literally, as election day approached the city of Delhi.

The political environment was charged, and so was the sense of religious divisiveness that came along with it. Quite naturally, everyday communications became political conversations, and so it happened during my cab ride.

After exchanging a few pleasantries, quite unexpectedly our conversation took a heated turn, and the driver began to jab hate towards a certain religious community. Angered, but not wanting to destroy the state of serenity in my heart, I paused and imagined how my spiritual guide would take this conversation forward.





I learned that instead of getting charged up, by trusting the intrinsic goodness that lies within the heart of the other, magic can happen for both.

The pause allowed me to step into the shoes of the driver, imagining what his life looked like. What was his context? How could I connect to his life, and appeal to the best that he represented? Holding the intrinsic goodness that bound us both in our hearts, we walked our conversation as if on a tightrope, and very beautifully it transformed.

A conversation of hatred turned into a conversation of love. Very soon, he began to acknowledge the close relationships and ties he shared with the community members. By the end of our cab ride we thanked each other. I learned that instead of getting charged up, by trusting the intrinsic goodness that lies within the heart of the other, magic can happen for both. I was taking a flight home to Bangalore, and we both reconnected to the home within us – our Heart.

Illustration by UMA MAHESWARI



Our Shared Humanity

RUBY CARMEN

“Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It’s a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity.”

—*Pema Chödrön*

Compassion – just one word – seems so relevant in this moment, in particular in the grieving, loss-filled times we are living in.

It is not always easy to define or capture the true meaning of the word, but we can certainly feel

it, and sometimes its absence. One more literal definition of compassion is “to suffer together,” and although not an exact translation, in Hindi and Urdu we have the word *hamdardi* – our (shared) pain.

Researchers in the field of positive psychology and emotions describe compassion as the feeling that comes when faced with the suffering of another, accompanied by the need to relieve that suffering.

So, how can we relieve the suffering of others, especially when everything seems too much? People often talk of compassion fatigue, but we also know that we can clearly be compassionate and empathic, mirror neurons being considered

Empathic listening can allow the speaker to release and let go of so much, easing their emotional burdens and feel “met,” cherished, human. In doing so, we remember our beautiful and sometimes bruised humanity in all its colors of joy and sorrow. Our oneness.

the cornerstone of human empathy (V.S. Ramachandran et al, 2007). How then? We can listen with our hearts, and listen with our whole being, our whole undivided attention and presence.

And what is this “presence”? When we are there completely for that other person, friend, family member, lover, sister, brother, or even a stranger. No judgment; instead, non-judgment. No covering over the awkward silences with our words; instead, embracing the silence and holding that space for others, honoring that and allowing whatever needs to be said, even unsaid. Offering our pure, unconditional attention, where we hear and feel the feelings behind the words, if possible with love, without any underlying intention.

In that moment of compassion and empathic listening, the listener can even forget themselves completely. It is an experience akin to the dissolution of the ego, of “no self.” Empathic listening can allow the speaker to release and let go of so much, easing their emotional burdens and feel “met,” cherished, human. In doing so, we remember our beautiful and sometimes bruised humanity in all its colors of joy and sorrow. Our oneness.





thought
in action



We discover our
true selves in love.

THOMAS MERTON

The Pandemic of the Separate Self

PART 2

DAN SIEGEL is a clinical professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine and executive director of the Mindsight Institute. In part 2 of his interview with **UDAY KUMAR**, he speaks about intraconnectedness, alloparenting, presence, connection, open awareness, and love.

Q: My teacher, Daaji, says that while survival of the fittest may apply in the overall scheme of survival, human beings evolve only through cooperation.

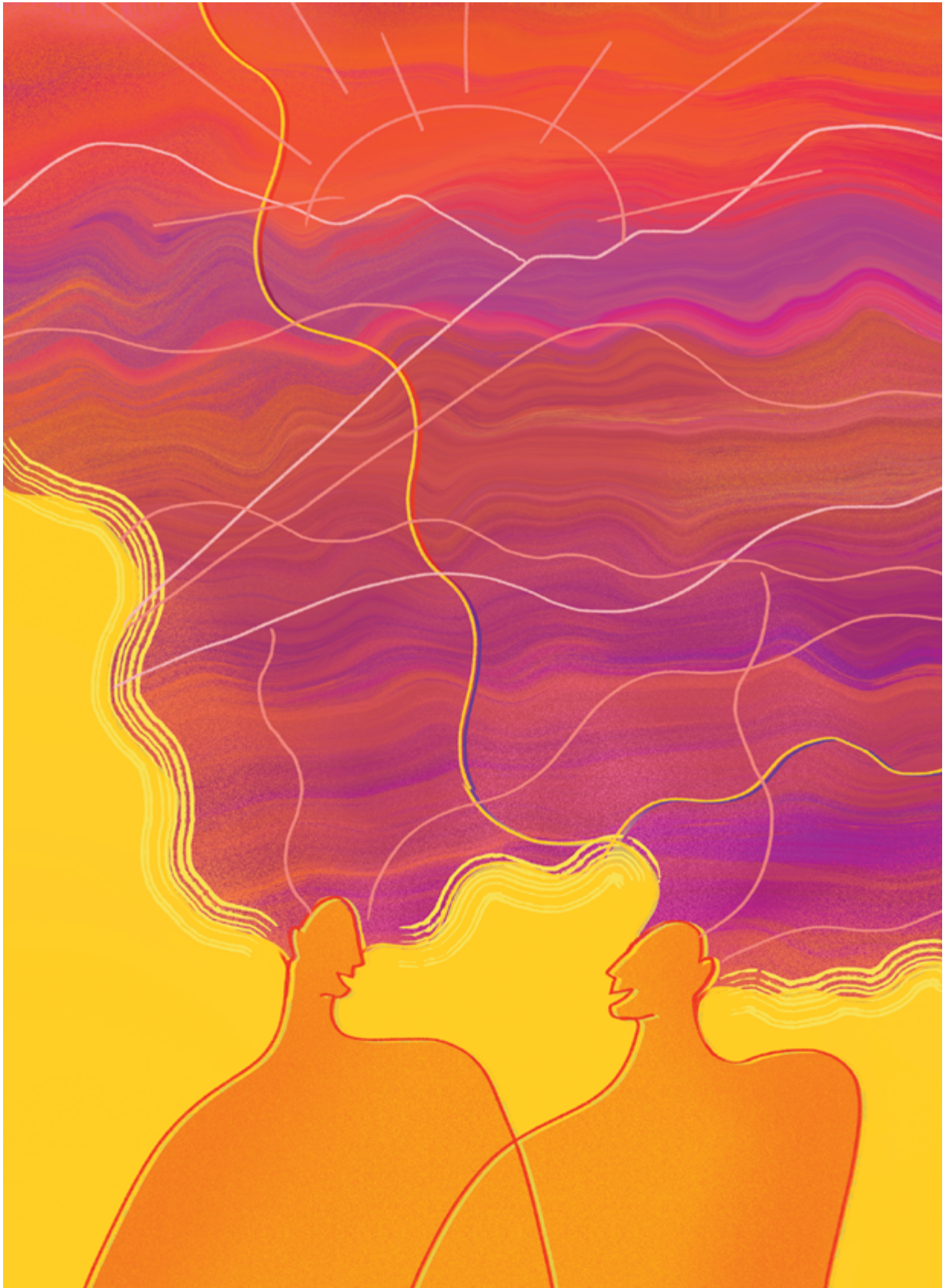
Totally. We've forgotten that.

Q: Then, you were talking about the sense of Self, and I remembered that once he said, "If you're sitting in this room, the walls create the impression of space inside and space outside. And if I take away the walls, then what remains? It's just space."

Exactly. Just this morning I finished writing a book about exactly that topic, called *Intraconnected*. I think it's a moment for humanity to take a deep breath and say, "Okay, we did it this way, we tried to make it work, but it's not going to work like

this. So what's another way to do it?" The book makes suggestions, not on specific things, but rather, "What's a way to be in the world that resonates?"

Q: You're not talking about small fixes here and there. You're addressing the question: How do I conduct my life on this planet itself? This needs to be rethought. I would love to read it, because you mention the five pandemics – one of them is about the environment. Many times, people ask the question: How do we live in tune with nature? Daaji says that living in tune with nature is actually resonating with the principles of nature. And he says if that's the case, if you look at a mango tree or an apple tree, it doesn't need mango juice or apple juice to give you fruits. It takes a little water and sunlight, and gives you the best fruit in return. So, one principle



in nature is to take the minimum and give the maximum. And for human beings, the most important thing is to accept minimum love and give maximum love.

I think it's a moment of bridging these areas of science and spirituality. It's all in the idea of being in service, and how we can learn from the wisdom of ancient teachings and contemplative practices. Weave it together with this cross-disciplinary view of science, and come to some thoughtful ways that collectively we can move forward. We really need to think deeply about the next steps for humanity.

Whether you're a parent raising your children, a teacher in a school, people in the medical world, people running a business, people running a government or non-profit, there are billions and billions of people on our planet. So how do we actually make a shift where people realize that it's survival of the most cooperative? It's survival of the most compassionate. The science that I review in the book shows how our origins as a species

I think it's a moment of bridging these areas of science and spirituality. It's all in the idea of being in service, and how we can learn from the wisdom of ancient teachings and contemplative practices.

were collaborative. We have something called "alloparenting," for example, which means we let our babies be taken care of by more than just the mother.

Q: Sarah Hrdy, right?

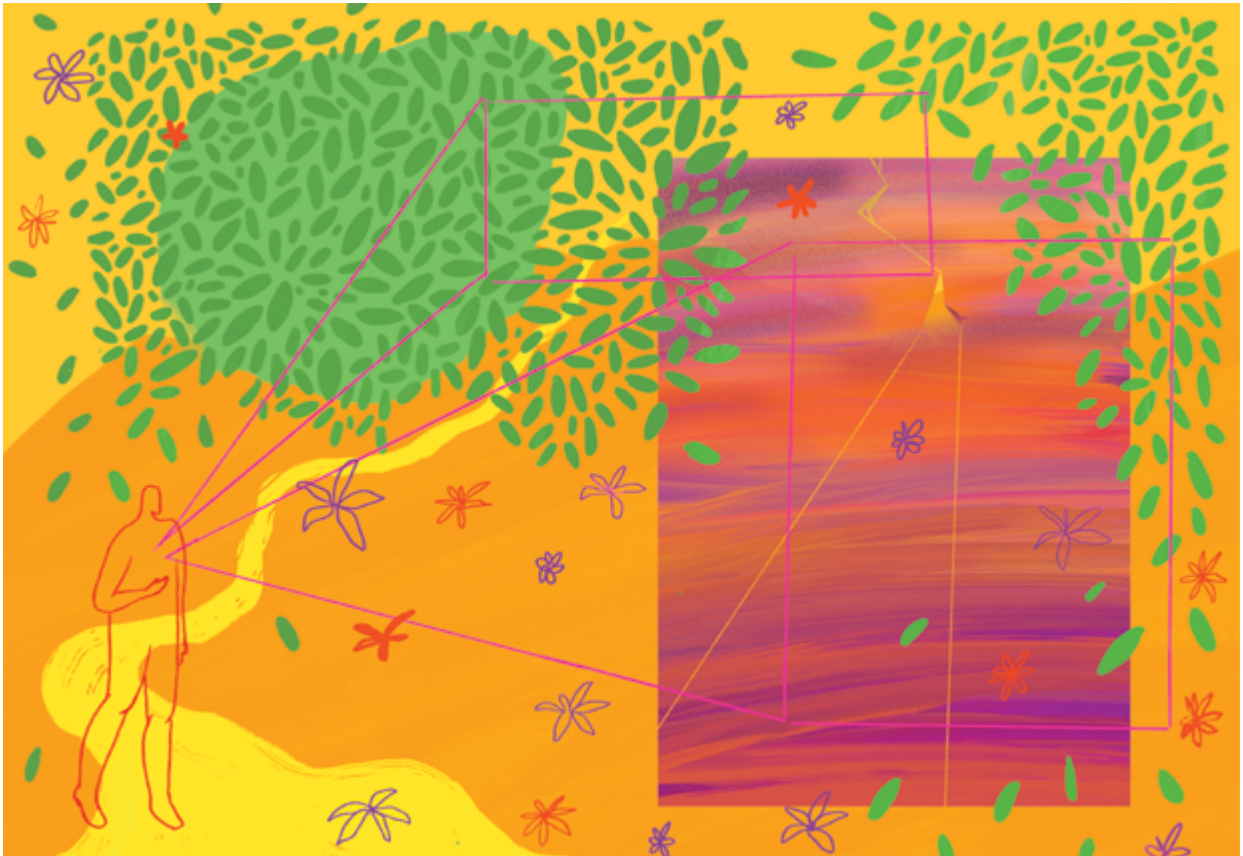
Yes, *Mothers and Others* by Sarah Hrdy.

In my new book, *Intraconnected*, there is the idea of feeling things from the inside out. And as your teacher said about the walls, this is actually learning how to use a lens of identity so that you can focus the lens close in and say, "Okay I have a body," and at the same time focus that lens wide and say, "I can literally see beyond my skin and I am also the tree. I am also the cloud." And that's not just trying to be poetic, it's trying to say, "There's no reason the skull or the skin should be seen as the final boundaries of you."

Q: It's going beyond my physical being to my subtle being, which can be pervasive, and finding the connection with all things.

One thought I latched on to while you were talking about parents, which I have seen, is that it has been a tough year for families, in general, just having to do a lot. One of the things that is compromised in that process is presence. So, any thoughts or suggestions on how to regain the presence parents may have lost in the last year?

It's such a great question. I think that presence has three qualities to it, and each of them contribute to this question you're asking: What do we do as parents? And presence is a great central feature to highlight. Those three are: Connection to your child, Open Awareness so you're able to receive



from your child, and then you have Love. If you like acronyms, that spells COAL.

In the past, I would talk about the word “mindfulness,” where COAL was an acronym for “curious, open, accepting, and loving.” This new COAL overlaps with that, but it’s “connected, open awareness, and love.” Those three things are almost like three threads of a singular tapestry of presence. And they’re what’s described when people do this practice of the “Wheel of Awareness.” It’s been really fascinating to watch parents start to do the wheel as a practice, as they can become more present. They can feel the deep connection. They can enter this state of receptivity called open

awareness. And they can let the natural, vital force of life – love – arise in their being and in their doing.

So COAL (Connection, Open Awareness, and Love) is what presence is made of – the three threads of presence; the tapestry of presence. And the good news is: If I’m doing something, whatever that practice might be, my parenting will be totally different, and my child will develop resilience. One practice is the Wheel of Awareness, where the rim is the many things I’m aware of, and the hub represents the experience of awareness itself. I need to learn to distinguish the hub from the rim, the knowing in the hub from the knowing

When parents bring presence, then children will develop resilience.

in the rim, so that when I'm really there for my child, I'm coming from the hub. I may have all sorts of thoughts or memories or excitements or disappointments or expectations or judgments, and all that rim stuff, but when I drop into the hub, it's "Connection, Open Awareness, and Love"—COAL.

So I am so happy that you brought up the word "presence," because if you had to summarize the science of attachment and parent-child relationships, presence would be the best summary of the whole thing. When parents bring presence, then children will develop resilience.

My wife wrote this really great book called *The Gift of Presence* with "ce," and it was a joke, because presents are gifts, right? It's a mindfulness guide for women, although men can read it, too, and it's a beautiful example of seeing how to become present and show up, for life is available to us whether we're parents or not. We can do it with our neighbors, we can do it with our friends, we can do it with our partners, we can do it at work, and we can do it with government. I was working in a parliament in another country and we did the Wheel of Awareness.

One parliamentarian didn't want to share during the sharing time, but he spoke with me afterward and said, "You know, I didn't share during the sharing time."

I said, "Yeah, I noticed."

And he said, "Do you want to know what my experience was?"

I said, "Sure."

And then he started to cry, and said, "When I got into that hub in the practice, I have never before felt the experience of being connected to everyone and everything, and so much love."

I said, "Wow, thank you for sharing."

He said, "You're welcome."

And I said, "So, you didn't want to share that with your colleagues?"

"Oh no, no, no. They would think I was weak if I talked about love."

Then there was this silence between the two of us.

I asked, "Well, can I ask you a question?"

He goes, "Okay, sure."

"So, when you're making federal law, you're coming up with the plans for national policy, are you leaving love out of your reasoning?"

His eyes got really big, and then he ran over to his colleagues. I don't know exactly what they said, but we can only hope that instead of ... Imagine what he's been taught over the years – that love is a sign of weakness – when, in fact, it's the deepest sign of strength to bring that heartfelt experience of love and collaboration, cooperation, compassion, and connection to the way you design law, or design a company, or the way you are present as a parent.

So this is the moment! The pandemic is inviting us to let love lead us, let it guide us, to teach from that place, to live from that place, to learn from that place of love. I think if we do that, we can have a very different way of being on the planet.



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The pandemic is inviting us to let love lead us, let it guide us, to teach from that place, to live from that place, to learn from that place of love. I think if we do that, we can have a very different way we are on the planet.

Q: I really like this, because what you shared both from a practical standpoint and an overarching philosophy is: When I stop loving, the one who suffers the most is me. I have dammed up the river flowing from within me.

Taking the question of presence a little further, and you also spoke about alloparenting, I want to share something with you. My teacher often speaks about a concept called the Wisdom Bridge. He makes the case that we are suffering from the mass extinction of wisdom in society.

Oh yes.

Q: His point is that the wisdom bridges are breaking down between generations. Grandparents and grandchildren today are not spending enough time together. Very soon, we will be at a place where we lose so much generational wisdom in society that we need to start rethinking family. We need to start thinking alloparenting.

Dan, your work is making a big difference. I didn't even get into interpersonal neurobiology, and to me that is real quantum awareness. You're

looking beyond and bringing in the quantum field of awareness.

The book called *Intraconnected* begins and builds from that place.

Well, it is an absolute honor to be here with you and I look forward to continuing our conversation.

Q: Thank you so much. My best to your family.

Thank you, and us to you, too.

Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL

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If You Disagree, You Are Not Listening

DR. ICHAK ADIZES explores the art of diffusing a disagreement, especially when the other party claims that you have not understood them because you are not listening. He uses the technique of mirroring to ensure better understanding and communication.

It frequently occurs in discussions, when someone does not agree with you, that he or she will say, “No, no, no, no, no. You don’t understand what I said. You’re not listening.”

They appear to be claiming that if you disagree with them, it is because you’re not listening well, or you don’t understand their argument. This is often not true. You are listening and you understand what they’re saying. You just don’t agree.

The other party is intimidating you into agreeing, as if he is the genius and you are the idiot who does not understand their genius. You have to stop that person and say, “I hear you very well. Let me repeat what you said and tell me if I missed anything,” and repeat quietly without allowing interruption of the other party’s argument. That is called mirroring. Now ask the other party to validate that you did hear them well and you did understand their argument well.

After you have mirrored their argument, what often happens in my experience is that they understand their own argument better now that they have heard it from someone else, and they will start adding to or changing their argument. No problem. Repeat the mirroring. It might take several attempts to really understand them.

After they acknowledge that you do understand them well, make your counterargument. Not *before* they acknowledge that you have understood them.

This routine, to deal with a heated emotional argument or discussion, needs strong self-control of one’s emotions. The claim that you do not understand, when you do, can be offensive and stir an emotional response. So be cool. Just listen and write down their argument, systematize it into its ingredients, so that when you mirror you are crystal clear what their argument is, and then respond.

That is what I do, unless I lose my patience listening to someone who non-stop argues that I cannot understand their argument. They are not arguing for me to understand them; they are arguing to win the debate. To win the debate, the rules of the game are different from those of understanding the argument. In this case I disengage.

Just thinking and feeling,
Ichak Kalderon Adizes

<https://www.ichakadizes.com/post/if-you-disagree-you-are-not-listening>

Illustration by UMA MAHESWARI

Be cool. Just listen and write down their argument, systematize it into its ingredients, so that when you mirror you are crystal clear what their argument is, and then respond.

We all come into the
world with a propensity
for goodness.

RICHARD DAVIDSON





innerview



altered traits

DR. RICHARD DAVIDSON is a prolific and well-known neuroscientist, speaker, meditator and author. In March 2021, Richie was interviewed by THANGAM VENKATESAN, professor of medicine at the Medical College of Wisconsin and ANAGHA MATAPURKAR, Ph.D. MBA, about his life's journey and latest initiatives to bring well-being to humanity.

AM: Hi Richie, it's wonderful to meet you. I have been very inspired and fascinated by your journey as a meditator and author, and the astounding body of work that you have as a researcher.

Thank you.

TV: I completely echo Anagha's sentiments, and your book *Altered Traits* is the first book I have read twice! It is really amazing. So, Richie, can you share some key aspects of your journey? Something that I find particularly interesting is your interaction with the Dalai Lama. How did you first meet him? Can you describe that inflection point for you as a person, a meditator and a researcher?

Thank you for asking. I first met His Holiness in 1992 in India and he learned about my interest in meditation, and also that I was a neuroscientist. He was really interested in encouraging

serious neuroscientific research on meditation, which at that time really didn't exist. I met him at his residence in Dharamsala, and it was a pivotal meeting. Up until that point in my career, I had been doing a lot of research on the brain and emotions, and I was focusing mostly on the negative side of things. I studied the brain mechanisms underlying vulnerability to depression, anxiety and stress. His Holiness challenged me. He said, "Why can't you use the same tools of neuroscience to study kindness and compassion?" I did not have a very good answer for him, and it was a turning point.

At that time I had been a meditation practitioner for decades. I went on my first meditation retreat in 1974 with Goenka when I was a graduate student. That was my first visit to India. Most of my professional colleagues at that time did not know of my interest in meditation, as I really kept it under the radar.

So when I met His Holiness in 1992, it was very clear to me that I needed to come out of the closet and be much more public about my own practice. It was a really pivotal time, yes.

TV: In the Gastroenterology Department they think I am a little cuckoo, as I am a meditator. They just kind of accept it.

Keep cuckoo, it's good. It's very healthy.

TV: Yes. So, talking about positive emotions, I know you are the founder of the Center for Healthy Minds. Can you tell us a little bit about its overall mission? What are the services it offers?

The Center for Healthy Minds was founded and inaugurated by the Dalai Lama in 2010, so we have been in existence for a little more than ten years. The mission of our center is to cultivate well-being and relieve suffering through

a scientific understanding of the mind. And our vision is a kinder, wiser and more compassionate world. It is primarily an interdisciplinary research center, with faculty from many different departments. Currently, we have around 75 people working in the center in one capacity or another.

About four years ago, I founded an affiliated non-profit company called Healthy Minds Innovations, with a mission to take the insights from the science and turn them into tools that can be used to cultivate and measure well-being. So, the non-profit is much more externally focused, and it is really to get the insights out into the world in one way or another. The non-profit is located in the same university building as the Center for Healthy Minds, Madison, Wisconsin. We have an agreement with the university, and there are about 20 people working for the non-profit.

TV: I did review your [website](#) and there are some nice tools that people can use.

Yes, and we have an App that is freely available throughout the world, and it is based on our framework for cultivating well-being.



TV: That's great. I know we all talk about well-being, but we seem to live in a cocoon. When we look outside, we live in this highly polarized world. We seem to be caught up in these currents of social, cultural, and racial problems, the pandemic and so on. You have referred to innate human goodness several times. How do we cultivate this innate human goodness in people? How do we all come back together?

It's a great question and I like the way you're phrasing it. So, the scientific evidence really

does show that we all come into the world with a propensity for goodness. Young infants exhibit that propensity, and more than 95% of six-month-old babies show prosocial orientation. So, it is very clear that this is how we come into the world.

The fact today we see so much conflict, difficulties between in-groups and out-groups, and inequalities, is really a product of learning. This happens through forces in our culture, which, unfortunately, promote this kind of conflict, dichotomy, and suffering.



The invitation in all this is that we can use the same mechanisms in our brain and our body, that have been hijacked by the media and the cultural artifacts around us, which promote these unfortunate views. We can train our mind to return to our true nature. Our true nature is basic goodness, and when people resonate with that, when they get back in tune with that, they feel it. It's palpable and it is recognizable.

It is something that is enjoyable, and they can sense that it is a very

authentic way to be. And so, one of the things that we are trying to do is to promote strategies to cultivate these qualities in different sectors of society, in the education sector at many different levels, in the workplace, in the healthcare sector. All of these different sectors are ripe for this kind of training, and I think that one of the things the pandemic has done is - it has exposed this in a stark way, the fact that the trajectory that we were on is not a particularly healthier, sustainable one. And so, we need to come back to our senses, we

Our true nature is basic goodness, and when people resonate with that, when they get back in tune with that, they feel it. It's palpable and it is recognizable.

I think that there is power in the collective. There's power in groups of people engaging in these practices. Doing it with others can be enormously helpful in supporting our practice.

need to come back to our nature and so we're doing everything we possibly can to get this out into different sectors in the world.

TV: That's great. And then, alter traits, right?

Exactly, alter traits. Through that we can change the world.

TV: That's fantastic.

AM: So building on this, I'm wondering if you have any thoughts on the power of the collective efforts of various meditation practices coming together for a common cause. Have you studied or plan to study this in the future?

I think a lot depends on exactly what you are referring to with collective efforts. Certainly, I think that there is power in the collective. There's power in groups of people engaging in these practices. Doing it with others can be enormously helpful in supporting our practice. In the Buddhist view, we have the *sangha*, which is the community, and it is the group that supports us in the practice. And so, to the extent that we can encourage groups to take this on, I think it can be enormously valuable.

We are trying to do that in the systems we work with. For example, we are doing a lot of work in the Madison public school system, as well as in other school systems including those outside the USA. And when more and more people are committed to doing these practices, it then takes on a sense of the collective and the entire organization really begins to embody this change. It can be very, very helpful.

AM: You refer to the deep and wide paths in your book, *Altered Traits*, and it seems like only a small minority, who are already invested in some form of self-improvement or self-transformation, seek such practices. And well-being is a skill as you say. So how do you propose to encourage contemplative practices in a real-world setting, like you just talked about?

That's a really important question. The way we promote it, first of all, is by encouraging people to take small realistic steps to do this. The second thing is in our App – you can engage in practices that are not formal meditation, but that are done during the activities of daily living. You don't have to be sitting still. You can be walking, you can



Photo by TOA HEFTIBA

be commuting, you can be washing the dishes, or you can be doing your laundry. You can be engaged in any of these activities of daily living and also engage in practice in the background. We find this very, very valuable, and we have demonstrated that it doesn't take much to begin to change.

You can start with just five minutes a day, and that can actually produce discernible, measurable change after just one week. That's a little more than 30

minutes of practice a week. It is through this gradual step-by-step approach that I think people can incorporate this into their life.

One of the things I frequently remind people is that when human beings first evolved none of us were brushing our teeth. Yet, today, virtually everyone on the planet brushes their teeth. When you reflect on that, it's not part of our genome. It's something we've all learned to do, because it is good for our physical hygiene. I think

most people would agree that our minds are even more important than our teeth, yet most people don't even take the small amount of time they spend brushing their teeth to nurture their minds. This is really a message that we want to convey to the world.

AM: Commuting and meditating is certainly something I can relate to, because I live in the city and have to take the subway. That's how I cope with the commuting – by meditating.



Photo by BRITTANI BURNS

Our last question is regarding your personal journey and research, which we find remarkable to say the least. What do you envision next?

Well, whenever we are with the Dalai Lama, he reminds us that there are seven billion people, and we need to do everything we can to figure out strategies to scale these practices to nurture the minds and hearts of everyone. This is one of the reasons we developed the App, and we're making it freely available to remove any kind of financial barrier so that anyone, anywhere, can use it. We are developing different versions of this App for different communities; more specialized content for college students, teachers, for example.

Second, along with this, we need to develop better measures of well-being. You can't really change something unless you can measure the change that you are promoting and measure sensitively. And we don't have great measures that we can deploy on a large scale. This is something we are working on intensively.

Then, we're doing a lot of work internationally. We have a large collaborative effort in Mexico, where we are training a group of schoolteachers and principals, and examining the impact of training the staff on the students. We have recently worked with 1100 principals and teachers in elementary schools, who are responsible for teaching around 250,000 students, and

we're seeing the benefits to the students. So, this is a very strategic and cost-efficient way to benefit large numbers of students without having to work with each individual student. This is something we are exploring in different parts of the world.

AM: That's wonderful.

TV: Thank you again for chatting with us. It was really a pleasure. We will send you our research on the effects of Heartfulness, and we hope to meet you in person soon.

That would be great. I'd be happy to. As soon as we can easily travel again, we'd love to have you visit our center.

WORLD SENIOR CITIZEN DAY

A
**Brighter
Minds** Enriching
Young Minds
INITIATIVE

GROWING IS NATURAL
BEING GRACEFUL
MAKES IT
BEAUTIFUL

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it changes

everything

What is this
“we” of ours?
It is our heart.

LALAJI



How we know

PART 3



TOBIN HART is a humanistic transpersonal psychologist, professor in the University of West Georgia's Humanistic, Transpersonal and Critical Psychology program, and co-founder of the ChildSpirit Institute. In the final part of this series, in which he is interviewed by **VICTOR KANNAN**, Director of the Heartfulness Institute USA, Tobin speaks about the intersection of western psychology and spirituality, in particular the importance of presence, imagination, wisdom, love, compassion, purity, and overcoming spiritual bypassing.

Q: When you talk about possibility, would faith be part of wisdom?

Yes, in this sense my favorite definition of faith is a suspension of disbelief. So, rather than believe in something, there is another important quality or capacity we call imagination. One of the powerful allies for wisdom and possibility is imagination. Can we conceive of another way? And can we act “as if” for a bit? Can we hold open possibility for long enough? Imagination is a bridge between the known and the unknown. From psychology, we know our minds are so powerfully conditioned to see things, to perceive in a way, and to believe in a way. If we can imagine another way, suddenly we can free ourselves. That’s also part of what I think wisdom is about – to free ourselves.

Q: So faith is also a bridge between the known and the unknown.

Exactly. Yes.

Q: So imagination is the bridge between the known and the unknown.

Yes.

Q: Wisdom is also a bridge between perhaps the known and the unknown at this point in time, in a way that they seem to share in the quality of each other.

Yes, absolutely. Really, I think with all the things we are talking about, if you go deep enough into any one of them it opens to all the others. Wisdom involves some other things too. It involves cultivating clarity and seeking guidance. Different capacities serve us. For example, how do we find wise guides? From our interiority, from our inspiration, from a dialogue with a good book, with our children, with our loved ones in general, and, ultimately, with any circumstance, we’re looking for signs.

The indigenous cultures often read signs, such as the flight of a bird or something that crosses our path. It’s fascinating to say, “Wow, okay, what does that do for me? Why does it resonate?” Rather than making any ontological claims about somebody sending this bird to me, it’s instead, “What is that about? What does it trigger or open? How can I dialogue with this? What does it make me think of?” So we’re always available for guidance, and it’s always available to us.



Q: And that is not possible if we are not present. In the wisdom category, you talk about discernment, and also about the child's ability to directly perceive things.

Exactly.

Q: In your book, you mention a tool called SAM, the Spirituality Assessment Matrix. So, if I were to say to myself, "Hey, I want to become wiser, I want to be able to perceive things better," then what type of assessment should I give myself?

You're referring to the instrument we made. It's just a series of questions to ask yourself. It's for self-reflection when folks look for help, direction and guidance to develop their psycho-spiritual potential. I think it's very difficult to do the spiritual life without simultaneously doing the psychological, and the psychological without the spiritual. SAM was designed to give a self-assessment about what your strengths are already, and what might be some specific trailheads for growth.

For example, you might discover that you have this incredibly big heart, compassion and empathy, but you may not have a strong capacity for, say, discernment. Another person might have a lot of presence, being really aware and awake, and yet not have what is the fourth direction – they have not found their voice. They haven't yet found their creative expression in the world.


Maybe your capacity for love and compassion overrides any discernment. So anytime you see something or someone in need, you give to them automatically but end up feeling drained, sometimes even like a doormat. You might justify it further by saying, "Well, what I've given hasn't helped, but at least I've given it to them." You may even feel like a martyr in some way, suffering as you give. Yet, I would argue that to give without a very organic joy is problematic. It misses the point really. I think when folks give freely from their hearts, there is this incredible expansion, and the whole world is enriched by it. So, in this particular case, it might be that one needs to practice or develop the capacity for discernment, maybe even

more particularly, self-assertion. Practicing when to say no, and when to say yes, and when to be particular in what and how to give. For example, rather than giving cash to someone who has trouble with drugs, you give meals instead. That's where the heart really joins with wisdom so that we can serve one another.

Q: You're talking about a different dimension of all this working together, right? For example, we can be compassionate, but if we don't have joy, we reach empathy-fatigue. If we are compassionate but don't have wisdom, then we don't know when to stop, or how much to give, or what to give?

I feel it all works together, and that leads me to the idea of evolution of consciousness. At the end of the day, all these elements of love, wisdom etc., are in the consciousness of a person. The joy you speak about is when the evolution of consciousness, expansion of consciousness, and purity of consciousness reach a level where joy is possible.

How do we find wise guides? From our interiority, from our inspiration, from a dialogue with a good book, with our children, with our loved ones in general, and, ultimately, with any circumstance, we're looking for signs.



When I think about purity of consciousness, I think that this is the notion of oneness; ultimately, things are all one. The notion of *maya* alludes to this. At this level of perception or awareness, things are illusory in relation to the ultimate, where there is oneness of all things. That's what I think of when I think of purity of consciousness.

The evolution of consciousness is tricky, because one could argue that consciousness doesn't evolve. It's just what it is, always. It's pure. So, in my mind, the idea of evolution of consciousness is about how each of us, as individuals, and as a community of humanity, can really develop our presence, our love, our wisdom, and our creativity, in order to come closer to that greater mystery.

I think that's what we're about in our own very, very particular ways. Sometimes it can be tricky, because it's easy for folks who are very earnest and very advanced to do spiritual by passing. That is, they take that ultimate perspective of oneness and dismiss the reality of their personhood, the need for differentiation and discernment.

The sentiment might be, "If all is oneness, then I need to love everything. So let me treat everything accordingly." Yet the reality is that there's some things that you don't love. So there's denial, there's repression. What we know is this: What we resist will persist, and it will come back to haunt us. It's what Carl Jung talked about as the shadow. Jung talked about the whole process of individuation. The process of evolution of individual consciousness is about "shadow work."

It's about owning those parts of ourselves that we don't want to see.

William James says that the things we value most are at the mercy of the things we value least. That's particularly true about ourselves, right? So, that's where this trick is. I think we're limited, but let's accept that, and see how we engage with and move through it rather than deny and bypass. This is our work towards expanding consciousness.

Spiritual bypassing is a real problem with earnest and honest spiritual seekers. That's why the psychological and the spiritual have to go together every step of the way. To move spiritually, you have to work through, or in some way disentangle, the psychological structures that have kept you at a certain level. For example, we see great spiritual guides, people who really are remarkable in many respects, who are also abusing people. They haven't done sufficient psychological work. On the other hand, we know lots of people who are brilliant intellectually and great personalities, but in some way don't have the spiritual capacity or vision to really have the fullness of potential.

Q: I want to go a little bit deeper into spiritual bypassing. I think this has been introduced through different terminologies. For example, in *Heartfulness*, the first Guide says that we have not even taken the first step in spirituality until we have improved our character. He makes a big distinction between character formation and spiritual achievement. To me, it is spiritual bypassing



if you are not focusing on improving your character.

Can you talk a little bit more about this, maybe giving one or two examples? That way, people can really understand that the very spiritual practice they are doing can be counterproductive if they do not increase their level of awareness of some of those shadows or blind spots.

Yes, sure. There is a simple everyday one, and that is practicing to be fully loving. Imagine you go to pick up your car from a repair shop. You're having a muffler replaced, and they quoted you \$60 but it turns out to be \$600.

You decide, "Boy, this person must need the money more than I do. From a heartfelt place I'm just going to give it to them." And yet, there's another part of you that says, "I think I've just been swindled. I think I've just been cheated," but you make a decision not to address that. You swallow it. Rather than being assertive (not aggressive) and saying, "Look, you told me this. We had a contract, and you didn't call me to tell me that something changed with the contract."

That's human life. If you're conflict avoidant, which a lot of us are, particularly if we're trying to be in our heart, this will just rile you up. You may wake up at night with it, but rationalize to yourself that, "No, I did the right thing." This is a very simple example, but it's at that level that the tension of

When I think about purity of consciousness, I think that this is the notion of oneness; ultimately, things are all one. The notion of maya alludes to this. At this level of perception or awareness, things are illusory in relation to the ultimate, where there is oneness of all things.



In my mind, the idea of evolution of consciousness is about how each of us, as individuals, and as a community of humanity, can really develop our presence, our love, our wisdom, and our creativity, in order to come closer to that greater mystery.

the spiritual and the psychological is manifested day in and day out.

Another category of spiritual bypassing comes when we might have had some experience, some powerful awakening of sorts. So, we've had some ecstasy, some vision, or some profound sense of love, and we really seek to be with that, to live with that. Yet spiritual experiences can also be a trap. We become so attached to them that everything else falls to the wayside. People then pursue the experience, seeking another high, essentially, and it becomes an addiction. Rather than the profound event being a source of development and growth, it now actually becomes an anchor that holds us back. We may become fixated rather than curious, and this is keeping us from being present in any situation. Also, the ego may assume that this special moment means that we're special and fuel ego-inflation, which works against spiritual growth.

There are other sorts of issues when we have experiences. I think there are three general steps we might go through:

In terms of overarching questions, the first step is, "What happened? What does this mean?" whether it's a near death experience, or a great moment in meditation, or whatever. So, we're trying to figure it out, to ground it in understanding and meaning so that we can get our bearings.

The next stage, as a question, is: "What am I to do?" That might mean, "How do I need to readjust my life and redirect my efforts in light of what I now know?"

The last step takes the integration still further: "How am I to be? What is the life that flows from and through this?" We could say this has more to do with being than doing.

Q: So what's the end goal of all this? What's the ultimate purpose of life and living, walking and exercising? Another way to put it is: How do we derive meaning from all these activities and aspirations?

Well, I think the point of life is to live it. Pretty simple. And I do like that it's a mystery. How do we engage the mystery in a way that feels fulfilling? I think that we basically have some internal felt sense, a barometer or an invisible hand on our shoulder, and it's directing us in some way. I don't know how it works. I think we'll leave that as a mystery. But I do think that we have this opportunity of our life in the Earth school. The job is to do a couple things, that is, to see what it is that is ours to give and what it is ours to learn. In some ways, I would say that's the definition of a calling.

Q: In Heartfulness we say that we are connected with the Source. It's even a logical hypothesis, because we all have come



from some place, so there is a source for everything – not only the source of creation, but also the source of sustenance, and so on. So, if we are part of that which is created and is being sustained, then there is a connection to the Source.

So the hypothesis is about how I establish a connection with the Source and what does it mean? How does it feel, and what does the journey look like? One idea in terms of the purpose of life, or meaning of life, is basically to be cognizant of this connection and the nature of our journey towards the Source. What are the benefits of that journey, the progressive, feel-good aspect, in a very tangible way, in a real way, not in an assumed way? In a way where you're

marching the trail of reality, where whatever you see is real and authentic. Then you become more and more one with it.

I'm going to send you a book called *The Heartfulness Way*, written by Daaji, our Guide, where he tries to explain everything as rationally as possible. But at the same time, there is only so much that the rational mind can grasp. It is in keeping with the wonder, the curiosity and the observation out there that we extend our knowledge from what we can know logically to what we can know with wonder.

I've recently read some of Daaji's writings and really appreciate them. His writings are beautifully coherent and down-to-earth. It is very contemporary, not as in trends, not even as a translation, but as a very sane and spiritual depiction relevant for today. I feel the kinship.

Q: You want to share anything else, Tobin?

I've appreciated your incisive and big questions. It's been nice to talk with somebody who's really knowledgeable and smart about it.

Q: Thank you, Tobin. I hope this conversation further adds to our understanding of psychology and spirituality as a whole study of humanity. Thank you so very much.

Magic to open the heart

VEENA MISHRA shares her experience of learning to listen to the voice of the heart through a meditation practice. She describes meditation as the way she learned to allow the heart to speak out – “that magical tool we are all unknowingly looking for.”

Everything has a tendency to age and decay with time. The outer glamor of this so-called “perfect world” continues to fade slowly but steadily with each passing day. What we often do not realize is that, amid all this pomp and show, our tiny hearts are trying to speak to us. The noise around us is so clamorous, however, that the heart’s voice is drowned even before it can surface.

Our heart is the most beautiful creation. This inner heart of ours is not subject to any kind of disintegration. What it needs is nourishment. If the heart is properly nourished and taken care of, then over time, as the body shrivels, the heart continues to shine, radiate love and, most importantly, guide us through life.

How do we nourish our hearts?
I think that meditation is a



very simple yet effective way of achieving this. Meditation is that magical tool we are all unknowingly looking for. It enables us to lend our ear to the voice within that is trying to speak to us. As we meditate, the outer cacophony begins to die out and that voice becomes prominent.

We often wonder how to discriminate between the voice of the heart and the so-called voice of the mind. When I began meditation, I started to realize that there is only one voice, and it is that of the heart. When caught up

in any kind of situation, this voice is always trying to tell me the right thing to do. Whether I am able to listen to it or not depends on how much I have been able to detune myself from the other unwanted noises, which are a culmination of desires and ego. Meditation helps to refine these and lessen their impact on my thinking, enabling me to know my heart’s wish.

Whether we listen to it or not depends on us.

Illustration by ARATI SHEDDE





be inspired

The only journey
is the one within.

RAINER MARIA RILKE



Contentment

THE ART OF REMOVING AND CREATING HABITS

PART 8

DAAJI continues his series on refining habits, in the light of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga and current scientific and yogic principles and practices. Last month, he explored the first *Niyama* of purity, *shaucha*. This month he shares his insights on that pivotal human quality – contentment, which is known in Yoga as *santosh*.

Our quest for happiness

Contentment, happiness, well-being ... these have been considered hallmarks of a good life for people from all cultures since time immemorial. Yet, in today's uncertain world, they seem to elude us more than ever before. When I remember my grandparents, who were simple village folk from Gujarat in India, they had very little in the way of material possessions, and they lived through tough times at the end of the British rule and India's independence, but they had a higher level of contentment than most wealthy people living luxurious lives today. In my memories I still see their simple life, their smiles, their way of being with family members, and the fundamental principles that defined their lifestyle. These principles brought them a lot of stability, and they are the lifestyle habits that we are discussing in this series.

I hear the same stories from my Western friends, who tell me about their grandparents and parents living through the First World War, the Great Depression, and the Second World War, who also seemed to have a higher level of contentment than many people today. They made do with very little when resources were scarce, they appreciated so many of the very ordinary things in daily life, like wartime rations, a beautiful sunrise, a homemade Christmas present, and letters from loved ones at home or on the battlefield. They made something of their lives despite the hardships they endured. An amazing and inspiring example is the 1997 film, *Life is Beautiful*, about a Jewish-Italian bookstore owner whose family was captured by the Nazis and interned, and who managed to shield his young son from the horrors of concentration camp living with humor and hope.

Contentment arises when we are in contact with the soul. It is vital to understand this point: contentment does not come from the body or the mind. It emanates from the soul, as the layers of conditioning dissolve.



A striking modern-day example happened at a Heartfulness Youth Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2018. Those who attended were all graduates of the CAP Youth Empowerment initiative for disadvantaged youth, and many did not know where their next meal was coming from or when they would find employment. Their stories were difficult by most people's standards, yet they exuded such life and joy that our team was brought to tears. Their openness and heartfelt participation were appreciated by all who attended.

So we can easily see that a person's level of contentment is not necessarily related to their circumstances. Instead, it is directly related to their inner state – their level of acceptance, or alternatively, their level of expectation and desire.

Also, contentment arises when we are in contact with the soul. It is vital to understand this point: contentment does not come from the body or the mind. It emanates from the soul, as the layers of conditioning dissolve.

In this article, we will explore some of the practices that help us to experience that connection. But first, let's explore the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the ancient patriarch of Yoga. These Sutras were written thousands of years ago and are still so relevant today. What does he say about this second *Niyama* of contentment?

Purity ⇒ Contentment ⇒ Happiness

First, Patanjali says that contentment arises out of purity, the first *Niyama*. He defines four qualities that arise out of purity, and the first is contentment. How does this happen? When we remove all the impurities, complexities and heaviness in our system that form coverings around the soul, we purify our field of consciousness, allowing us to focus inward and connect with the soul. It is here that we experience true inner contentment.

Second, Patanjali says that extraordinary happiness results from quiet contentment. So purity leads to contentment, which in turn leads to happiness. This extraordinary happiness is an inner state – it has nothing to do with the pleasures and pains of worldly existence, which are fickle, coming and going like the weather.

If you ask yourself, “What brings me happiness and contentment?”, it may be your relationships with loved ones, your career, or a comfortable lifestyle. But even if you have all of these things, will you truly be happy without inner peace and calm? If you also ask yourself, “How will I feel if my circumstances change?”, you may discover that your happiness is dependent on external events and circumstances. When situations change for the worse, like has happened to many with the Covid pandemic, will you still feel so happy?

A truly happy person is happy under all circumstances – external things and people may bring temporary happiness, which is important in day-to-day life, but they do not ensure lasting happiness, because when they are gone happiness

A truly happy person is happy under all circumstances – external things and people may bring temporary happiness, which is important in day-to-day life, but they do not ensure lasting happiness, because when they are gone happiness also disappears.

Without desires, we don't expect anything. When we don't expect anything, we are not disappointed. Otherwise, disappointment leads to anger; anger leads to loss of equilibrium; loss of equilibrium leads to fear, and eventually we lose our humanity.

also disappears. So, how do we create something more enduring? How do we train ourselves to be happy no matter what is going on in our lives? That is the promise of Yoga – to find the source of lasting contentment by diving to the Center of our being. Osho explains it like this: “Contentment is the discipline of the yogi. Nothing can take us away from the Center.”

I have often shared the German philosopher Schopenhauer's reflections about happiness, starting with his rhetorical question, “How can we determine whether a man is happy or unhappy?” He answers it by saying that true happiness is the complete satisfaction of all desires.

Mathematically it would look something like this:

$$\text{Happiness} = \frac{\text{Number of desires fulfilled}}{\sum (\text{Desire}_n \times \text{Intensity of desire}_n)}$$

In other words, our happiness is inversely related to the number of desires we have multiplied by the intensity of each of them. Considering the number: if we have ten desires and five are fulfilled, then we have fifty per cent happiness; if ten are fulfilled, we have 100 per cent happiness. The more desires we have, the harder it will be to fulfill them all, so the less happy we will be. Considering the intensity: we may have only a few desires but if they are very intense we won't rest until they are fulfilled.

What happens when we have no desires at all? The denominator becomes zero. Anything divided by zero is indeterminate, so happiness is limitless. Without desires, we don't expect anything. When we don't expect anything, we are not disappointed. Otherwise, disappointment leads to anger; anger leads to loss of equilibrium; loss of equilibrium leads to fear, and eventually we lose our humanity.



Practices that bring contentment and happiness

How can we remove our attachment to desires so that we can create this inner acceptance and contentment? In Heartfulness it happens naturally as the result of a set of complementary practices:

Meditation: With practice, we learn to ignore the pull of thoughts during Meditation. They no longer distract us. We develop mastery over the thinking process. As we dive deeper into the heart during Meditation, we are also able to ignore the pull of emotions and feelings in the heart. We learn to pause before reacting to life's ups and downs. We are comfortable in stillness and space. **Transmission** provides the catalyst for this to happen.

Cleaning: We remove the underlying vibrational impressions (*samskaras*) that provide the hooks for our desires in our subconscious minds through the

daily practice of Cleaning. Our desires often have a subconscious root that we cannot remove at the conscious level. Cleaning removes the subconscious root.

Prayer: At bedtime we open the heart, connect with the Center, and acknowledge the barrier caused by our wishes and desires. We accept help to remove those wishes instead of trying to remove them with our limited ego-consciousness.

Ten Universal Principles: I have written about these principles in a series called "A User's Guide to Living." They contain those spiritual secrets that have come from the study of Nature, and are revealed by means of direct perception.

Constant Remembrance: We absorb the inner condition experienced during meditation each morning, and allow it to deepen throughout the

day. This naturally leads to remembering our inner connection with the Center. Part of our attention remains focused inward, and part is focused outward in order to complete our daily activities. When this state becomes a constant flow, it is known as constant remembrance, and this prevents the formation of impressions. The state of purity of our consciousness is maintained.

We then feel contented under all circumstances and at peace with ourselves. We have found the ultimate happiness.

Emotions and desires

Is it really possible to lead a life without any desires? I don't believe so. All of us have desires and aspirations. To be interested in life, to excel at whatever we do, is natural and healthy. It is how we associate our emotions with those desires that makes the difference. How do we solve the riddle of living with desires without letting them pull us off course? There is no easy answer, but a state of inner contentment prevails in us when we do the above Heartfulness practices. We develop a level of emotional maturity, and we become interested in higher goals, so that our desires become aspirational instead of focusing on the pulls and pushes of worldly entanglements. We learn to be totally immersed in whatever we are doing, in the present, without ego, pride or arrogance, and this also results in joy and contentment as we do our very best, with interest, with an attitude of continuous improvement, seeing any failures as stepping stones on the path of evolution.

And when we experience the state of absolute balance during meditation, the *Samadhi* state, and it radiates out into all our other activities as a result

We absorb the inner condition experienced during meditation each morning, and allow it to deepen throughout the day. This naturally leads to remembering our inner connection with the Center.

of constant remembrance, then true happiness naturally emerges on its own, even when we face worldly disappointments. We remain centered. We invite these states of *Samadhi* every day and make them permanent. That is the Heartfulness way.

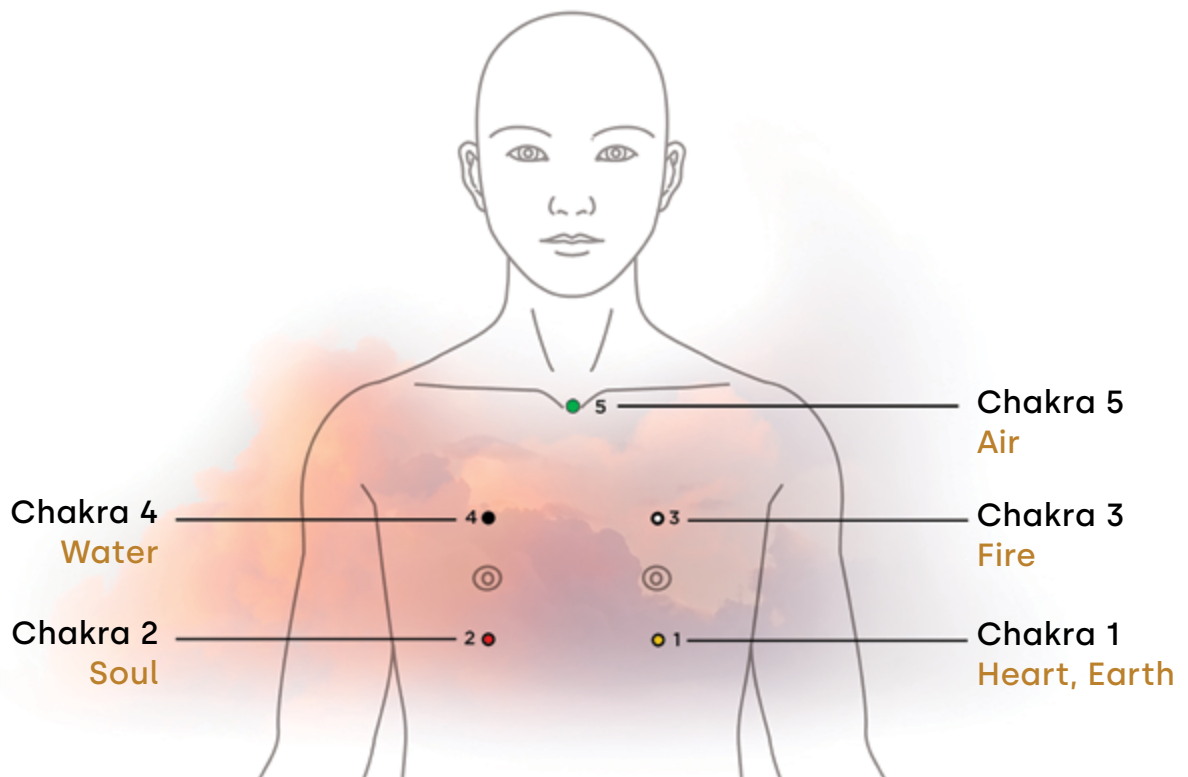
The heart is our reference

The heart is a barometer of how we feel about everything, including ourselves – how we feel about our thoughts, emotions, behavior, and the choices we make. When we are happy and balanced, generally the heart does not say much. When we choose well, the heart is a silent witness to the decisions we make. There is natural contentment. And when we are not happy with ourselves, the heart becomes restless, alerting us that something needs to change. We learn to listen to the heart and let it guide us. We remain contented even when we are uncomfortable with the change it is demanding of us, because we feel

integrated, whole, and at peace with ourselves – we are evolving. There is contentment in the struggle to grow.

The Heart Region is the region of the human chakra system that is associated with the dualities of everyday life. There are five chakras in this region, and every one of them has a specific spectrum of emotions. The first chakra is in the lower left part of the chest where the physical heart is found. The spectrum of emotions at this chakra is the duality of desire versus contentment. At first it may seem that contentment is positive

and desire is negative. At one level that is useful, because desires for worldly things entangle us and create emotional disturbance. But as this chakra is purified through practice, we lose interest in the pulls and pushes of those desires that take us away from our purpose, and realize that the energy of desire can be aspirational; both ends of the spectrum have an evolutionary purpose. Desire in its purest form is the craving for the highest state, and it keeps our focus on that goal. Contentment brings peace and unwavering stability in spiritual practice, as well as poise and patience in worldly life.



The Chakras of the Heart Region

With Cleaning, we remove the emotional attachments associated with our worldly desires that keep us entangled in the matrix. How can we understand the way we hold onto these entanglements? Here is an analogy. Recently, I read an article about primate mothers who continue to carry and groom their babies after they die. Research from the University College London has shown that baboon mothers carry their dead babies for up to ten days, while chimpanzee and Japanese macaque mothers have been observed carrying their dead infants for even longer – sometimes up to a month. They let go of them only when they are decomposing. Even the fathers protect and groom the dead infants.

Similarly, when we hold onto our desires and expectations, they are all played out in the hope for a better future. This hoping things will happen makes us carry our expectations around like primates carry their dead babies. The expectations remain hooked to our minds, and we don't let them

go. In fact, the primates are probably wiser than us, as they eventually do let go.

When we learn to live in the present, we are living in reality, the essence of the Divine. That is why, in the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says, "*Kālo 'smi*," meaning "I am time." He's not talking of the past or the future. When we dwell in the emotions of the past, or the hope for the future, we are living a life of unreality. We are moving away from Godliness, *Paramatma*. And where will we find contentment if we are not centered in our essence?

With Prayer, Meditation and introspection, we go deeper into the feelings and consciousness of the heart, so that our emotions become less reactive, subtler. Eventually, we master the spectrum of desire and contentment associated with the first chakra, and we thus integrate both craving for the goal and contentment – movement and stillness go together.

Desire in its purest form is the craving for the highest state, and it keeps our focus on that goal. Contentment brings peace and unwavering stability in spiritual practice, as well as poise and patience in worldly life.



Contentment brings neutrality

Contentment is how we feel when there is complete and natural acceptance of whatever is happening. The present moment is exactly as it is. This does not mean that we don't want things to change. Contentment is the first step – it gives us the neutral starting point of acceptance from which to move forward, which may include initiating change if required. In that moment, however, we are simply present. Eternity is encapsulated in that instant in time, and we are centered in the Infinite. The past cannot return. Only the impressions and memory remain in our subtle body, programmed

in the subconscious, and when we are able to let go of those impressions and be in the moment, established in presence, awareness, consciousness and desirelessness, we are in a state of total acceptance without expectation.

This level of contentment is the natural state of a yogi. The more contented the yogi, the more peace and happiness they will radiate to others. Contentment is infectious, just as misery is infectious, and it radiates from the inner state, creating an atmosphere. As more and more of us radiate inner contentment, the atmosphere we will create will transform humanity.

Self-awareness leads to awareness of others;
self-compassion leads to compassion for others;
self-acceptance leads to acceptance of others;
inner enlightenment provides the light for others;
and true Self-love is universal love.

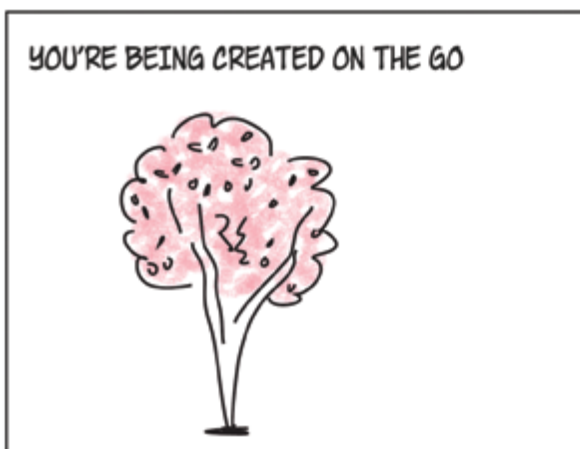
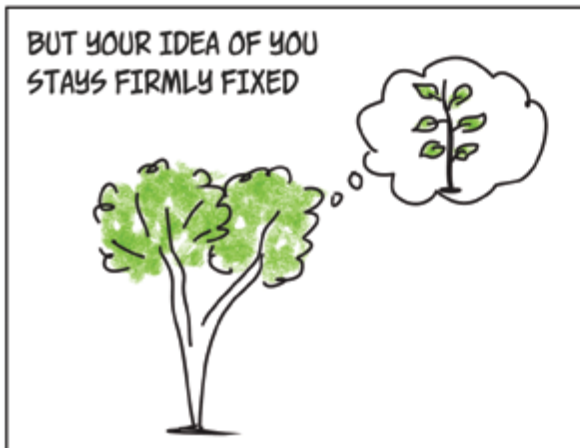
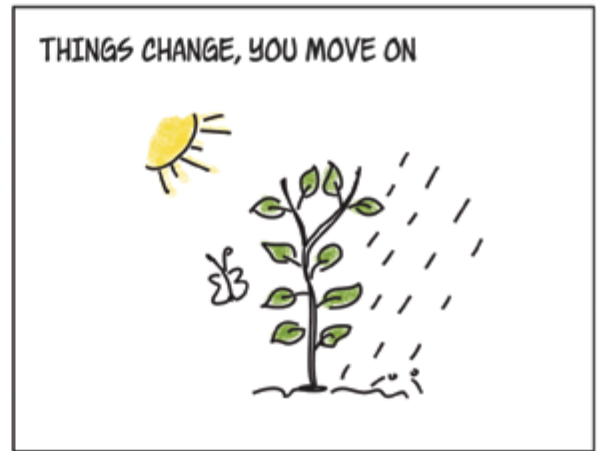
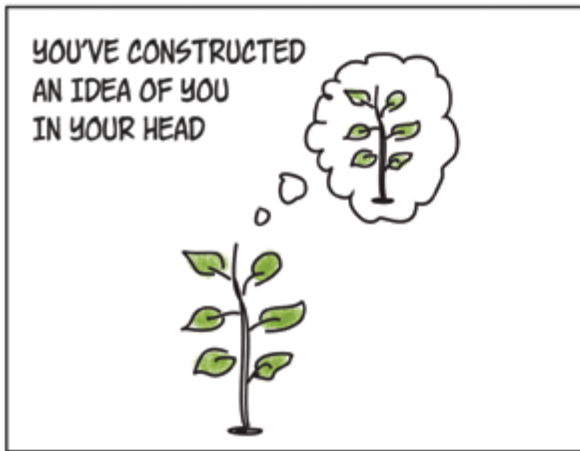


Contentment gets us to first base

The first chakra of the Heart is the starting point of our inner journey, and mastery over this chakra leads to the first stage of contentment. To attain this, we practice. Some people consider meditative practices to be self-centered, but without them, how would we develop ourselves so that we can become effective enough to serve others? Self-awareness leads to awareness of others; self-compassion leads to compassion for others; self-acceptance leads to acceptance of others; inner enlightenment provides the light for others; and true Self-love is universal love.

And all this arises out of purity – when we remove the filters that distort our awareness and perception, we see the reality of things. It is such a simple approach, and it is this simplicity that takes us to the Center of our being. At the Center we find true contentment, as well as oneness with all creation, and the real purpose of human existence.

WORK IN PROGRESS





Somehow, in the process of trying to deny that things are always changing, we lose our sense of the sacredness of life. We tend to forget that we are part of the natural scheme of things.

PEMA CHÖDRÖN

taste of life



SEASONS OF THE SACRED

Sacred Time

LLEWELLYN VAUGHAN-LEE reminds us of the ever-present cycles of Nature, and with them an understanding of time and the sense of sacredness that comes with being in tune with all that is natural. He reminds us that time is essential to life, and thus important to honor in our day-to-day life, instead of the rushing and disconnection associated with our modern-day urban lifestyle.

The sacred is an essential quality to life. It connects us to our own soul and to the Divine that is the source of all that exists. The sacred can be found in any form: in every drop of dew on an early morning spider's web, in the call of wildfowl at dusk. It speaks to us in a myriad of ways. In my own garden it is in the scent of honeysuckle and the hummingbird drinking nectar, or the chipmunk scurrying after the seeds fallen from the bird feeder. It is also present in every prayer, every song of praise and thanksgiving. The remembrance of the sacred is like a central note within life. Without it something fundamental to our existence is missing. Our daily life lacks a basic nourishment, a depth of meaning.

The "sacred" is not something primarily religious or even spiritual. It is not a quality we need to learn or to develop. It belongs to the primary nature of all that is. When the First Peoples felt that everything they saw was sacred, this was not something taught but instinctively known. It was as natural as sunlight, as necessary as breathing. We all have within us a sense of the sacred, a sense of reverence, however we may articulate it. It is a part of our human nature.

We each carry this primal knowing within our consciousness, even if we have forgotten it. A relationship to the sacred is older than any formalized religion, even though it lies at the foundation of many religions. It is a fundamental recognition of the wonder, beauty, and divine nature of the world. It is a felt reverence, an inner sense – we even speak of "a sense of the sacred." If we remember the sacred, we will find ourselves in a world awake in wonder. However we may call this mystery, it permeates all of creation. It may be more easily felt in certain places, in ancient groves, beneath star-filled skies, in temples or cathedrals, in the chords of music. But this is a mystery that belongs to all that exists – there is nothing that is separate from it. As such, it celebrates the unity that is within and around us, the living oneness of which we are a part. Our sense of the sacred is a recognition that we are a part of this deeper all-embracing mystery.

The sacred is not something static or easily defined. It belongs to the wonder of life and its deepest meaning. It is also part of the flow of life, its constant change. And yet it has cycles, patterns of meaning. Both creation and the soul have their



seasons, their times of light and dark, times of birth, blossoming and abundance, times of fruition, decay and apparent barrenness. It can be helpful to recognize these changing seasons of the sacred. Then we can see how the deeper patterns within our own life follow these rhythms – how we are part of this ever-evolving mystery.

The sacred is a quality of the soul, of our inner being and the inner being of the Earth. The experience of the sacred follows the rhythms of the soul and of the Earth, the cycles of becoming, the seasons of life. In today's world we are caught in an image of time as an endless flow of minutes,

days, and years that never return – a river of time that is always passing. We rarely think anymore of time as cyclical, of the days as a movement of light and dark, or the years as a pattern of returning seasons – most of us do not live on the land with its rhythm of sowing and harvesting. We have also almost forgotten how the outer movement of time can reflect the time of the soul. Few still mark the year with the saint's days, or the prayers, rituals, or dances that belong to sacred days. Nor do we hear the monastery bells that, before the arrival of clocks, divided the day for both the monks and the medieval farmers, a day that began with Matins and ended with Vespers.

This deeper cycle of sacred time, which was known to our ancestors, linked the greater and lesser events of their lives – the days, the seasons, and the years:

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, The Bible

The sacred is a quality of the soul, of our inner being and the inner being of the Earth. The experience of the sacred follows the rhythms of the soul and of the Earth, the cycles of becoming, the seasons of life.

This deeper rhythm of time is the rhythm of the sacred. To be in the presence of the sacred is to be present in a time very different from what we experience in our rushed days with the constant demands of the clock. It allows us to listen to a rhythm of meaning, understanding our place within patterns of time that link the growth of a seed to the phases of the moon and the movement of the stars. To live in sacred time is to be present in how this greater pattern connects with our own soul, our inner being, in which every breath is a sacred moment.

But despite our forgetfulness, despite our heated or air-conditioned homes and offices, our disconnection from the soil, the seasons still speak to most of us, from the first warm breath of Spring to the cold wind of Winter. The seasons



Every moment is unique,
offering its own way to
connect to what is deepest
within us, to the wonder and
mystery of being fully alive.

remind us of our deeper roots and the rhythms that are our heritage. As we get older we can also begin to sense the same seasons in the passage of years, from birth and childhood to old age, when our body's energy lessens before time returns us to the earth. In the unfolding of our soul we can recognize similar patterns. In previous times and cultures this inner unfolding was marked by initiations, by sacred rites of passage. Now, for most of us there are few outer initiations. Instead, if we pay attention, we can come to feel the seasons that define our own soul. We can learn to respect and appreciate the way time speaks to us, how its wisdom is within us.

Putting aside our daily concerns and our mind's clutter, we can learn to be present to the presence

of the sacred in each moment. Every moment is unique, offering its own way to connect to what is deepest within us, to the wonder and mystery of being fully alive.

Ten thousand flowers in spring, the moon in autumn, a cool breeze in summer, snow in winter. If your mind isn't clouded by unnecessary things, this is the best season of your life.

Wu-Men

Adapted from *Seasons of the Sacred: Reconnecting to the Wisdom within Nature and the Soul*. Golden Sufi Center, 2021.

TRUTH:

3 Haiku Poems

REBECCA LILLY

Exploring untruth
Isn't enough; in truth, it
Must be discovered



Prior to mind-made
Self and inclusive of it;
The one face of truth



Truth is pathless; our
Awakeness, a happening;
Self, emptied of past



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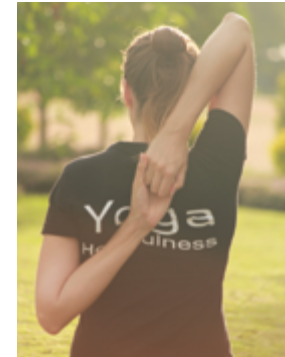
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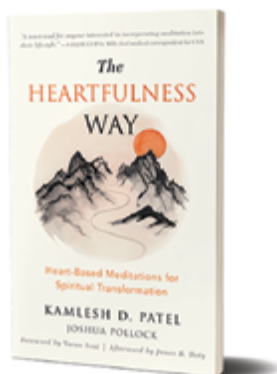
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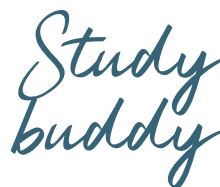


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The Food Forest Project



The Yatra Garden

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