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Version of Yourself*

- DAAJI

Creating
Communities
for Health
BARBARA BUSH

No One is Perfect.
Really?
ICHAK ADIZES

A Life in the Day
IRA CHAUDHARI

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Rebuilding the Future

Dear readers,

Taking the metaphor of a glass half full or half empty, people are either struggling or coming to terms with the upheaval caused by COVID, using terms like pause, reset or even delete to refer to 2020 – the year of the pandemic. With the crisis not yet over, we look at “Rebuilding the Future” this month and consider our capacity as humans to always emerge from such predicaments more resilient and compassionate, with greater wisdom and gratitude for the simple things in life. We hope you will find inspiration from our writers to shape your own future outlook.

In his article on continuous improvement, Daaji offers us a simple approach to becoming the best version of ourselves, while Ichak Adizes questions our approach to perfection, instead looking at teamwork as the way to rebuild the future. Bringing kindness, health and equality into the equation, we have the concluding parts of interviews with Barbara Bush and Audrey Lin, as well as the inspiring work of young twin sisters Mariam and Nivaal Rehman in championing education for girls, climate change and other things. Michael Lewin recommends journal writing to help transform yourself, while Karishma Desai explores the benefits of practicing gratitude. We also hear about miracles from Michael Richardson and Aditi Saxena explains the value of martial arts in self-mastery. Rounding out this positive outlook is the embodiment of grace, humility and energy that is the ceramicist, Ira Chaudhari, a dynamic nonagenarian. As this year draws to an uncertain end, our publication continues to foster young, inspired talent looking to their own future growth.

Here's looking at our collective future,
The editors

CREATIVE TEAM

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contributors



KAMLESH PATEL

Also known as Daaji, he 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, and his two books, *The Heartfulness Way* and *Designing Destiny*, are both #1 bestsellers.



IRA CHAUDHURI

Ira is a studio potter and ceramic artist who lives in Delhi and grew up with educationalist parents in Tagore's Visva Bharati, Santiniketan in West Bengal, where she studied art. Her husband was the world-renowned sculptor Sankho Chaudhuri. From 1951, at the newly founded Faculty of Fine Arts in Baroda, she spent her time learning pottery and experimenting with oxides as fired coloring agents, and thus began a prolific career marked by numerous exhibitions and a transformative impact on Indian pottery. Even today, at 93, her zest for life is unmatched.



AUDREY LIN

Audrey calls herself a pilgrim of life. She has had an unconventional journey, starting with her non-violence studies at UC Berkeley, where she embarked on a walking pilgrimage in Silicon Valley. She's also known for her work on the compassion quotient, and is the co-visionary behind the iconic 6-week leadership circles of ServiceSpace. Recently, with a team of volunteers, she's launched karunavirus.org, which is an online platform for amplifying everyday stories of courageous kindness.

BARBARA BUSH



Barbara is a fellow at Schmidt Futures, supporting racial justice. She is co-founder and Board Chair of Global Health Corps, that mobilizes young leaders to build health equity, and served as CEO for its first 9 years. She has also worked at the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, Red Cross Children's Hospital in Cape Town, South Africa, and UNICEF in Botswana. She serves on a number of boards including Partners In Health and Friends of the Global Fight for AIDS, TB, and Malaria. Barbara co-authored the #1 New York Times best seller, *Sisters First*, with her sister, along with a children's book of the same title.

MARYAM AND NIVAAL REHMAN



The 19-year-old twins have worked for such causes as girls' education, climate justice, gender equality and inclusivity. They have their own non-profit, The World With MNR, that uses advocacy, storytelling and development to take action and inspire others. They have covered the Social Good Summit in New York City, the Girl Up Leadership Summit in Washington D.C., and done interviews with Justin Trudeau, Malala Yousafzai, and Madame Christine Lagarde. They have received several awards, including the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award. Recently they released a documentary on the status of girls' education in Pakistan.

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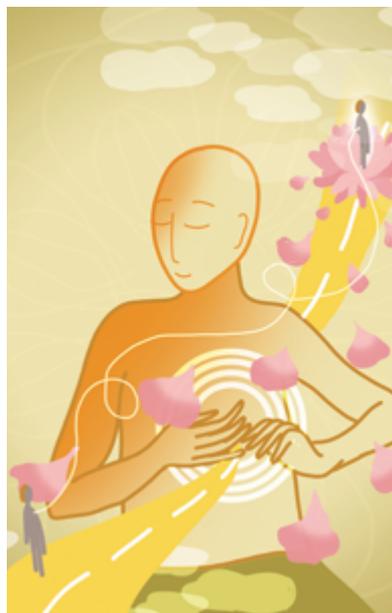


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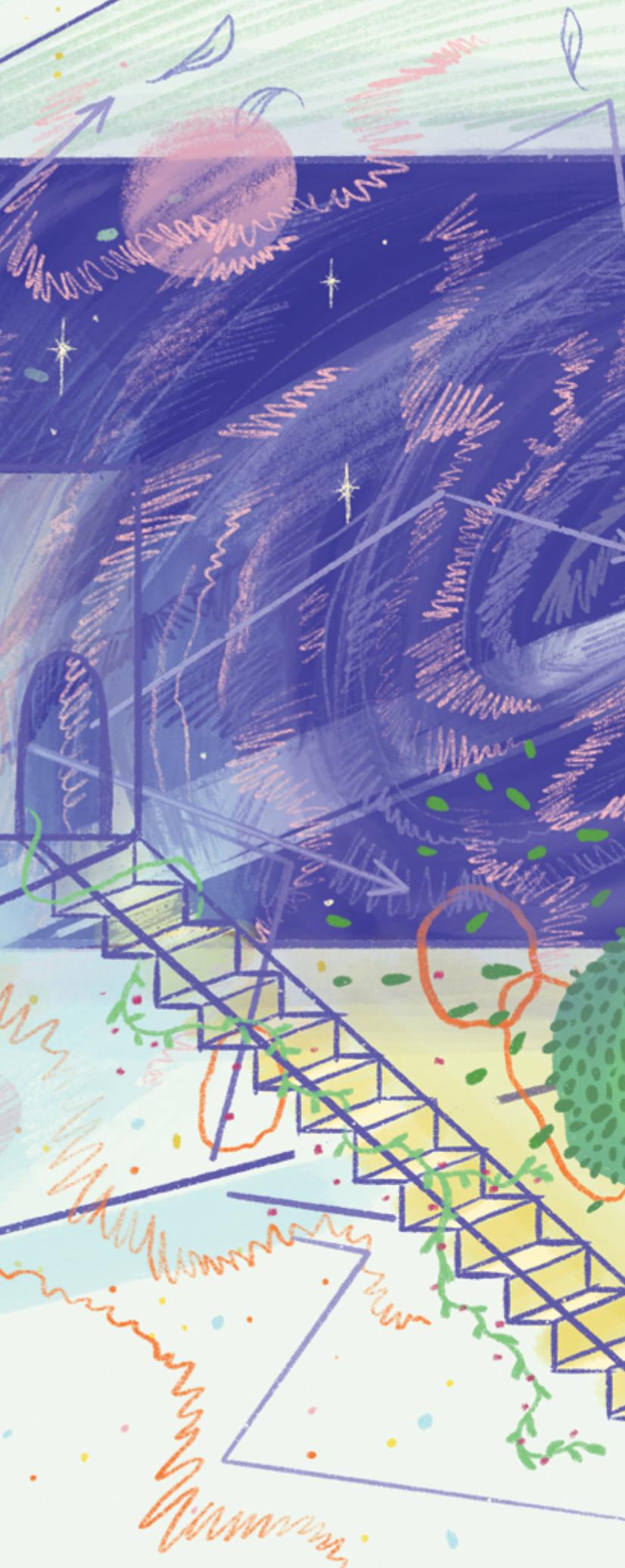
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REBUILDING THE FUTURE

FOCUS

The future belongs to
those who believe in the
beauty of their dreams.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Anampa '70

Kindness Is Key to Resilience

PART 2

In June 2020, **AUDREY LIN** from ServiceSpace spoke with **PURNIMA RAMAKRISHNAN** about the qualities needed to live a life of kindness, and the relationship between kindness and resilience. In part 2, Audrey continues by focusing on the Compassion Quotient, the concept of leading with inner transformation, and how easy it is to integrate simple acts of kindness into everyday life.

AL: You can't draw an easy and clear line of cause and effect with compassion. It's such a distributed, ethereal thing. It's a quality that's there. And we don't really have metrics to measure it, so you might not notice because it's not something we quantify. We don't have a system in place to account for it, so I like the idea of the Compassion Quotient.

We focus so much on IQ, but what about the next generation? Will they be good neighbors? Will they be good citizens? How will they have meaningful lives and meaningful relationships? What's the value of these things?

Will they get you a job? Maybe, maybe not. But, when you're on your deathbed, will they lead you to smile, feeling like you lived in a meaningful way and you did what you could while you were here? It's hard to say what matters more.

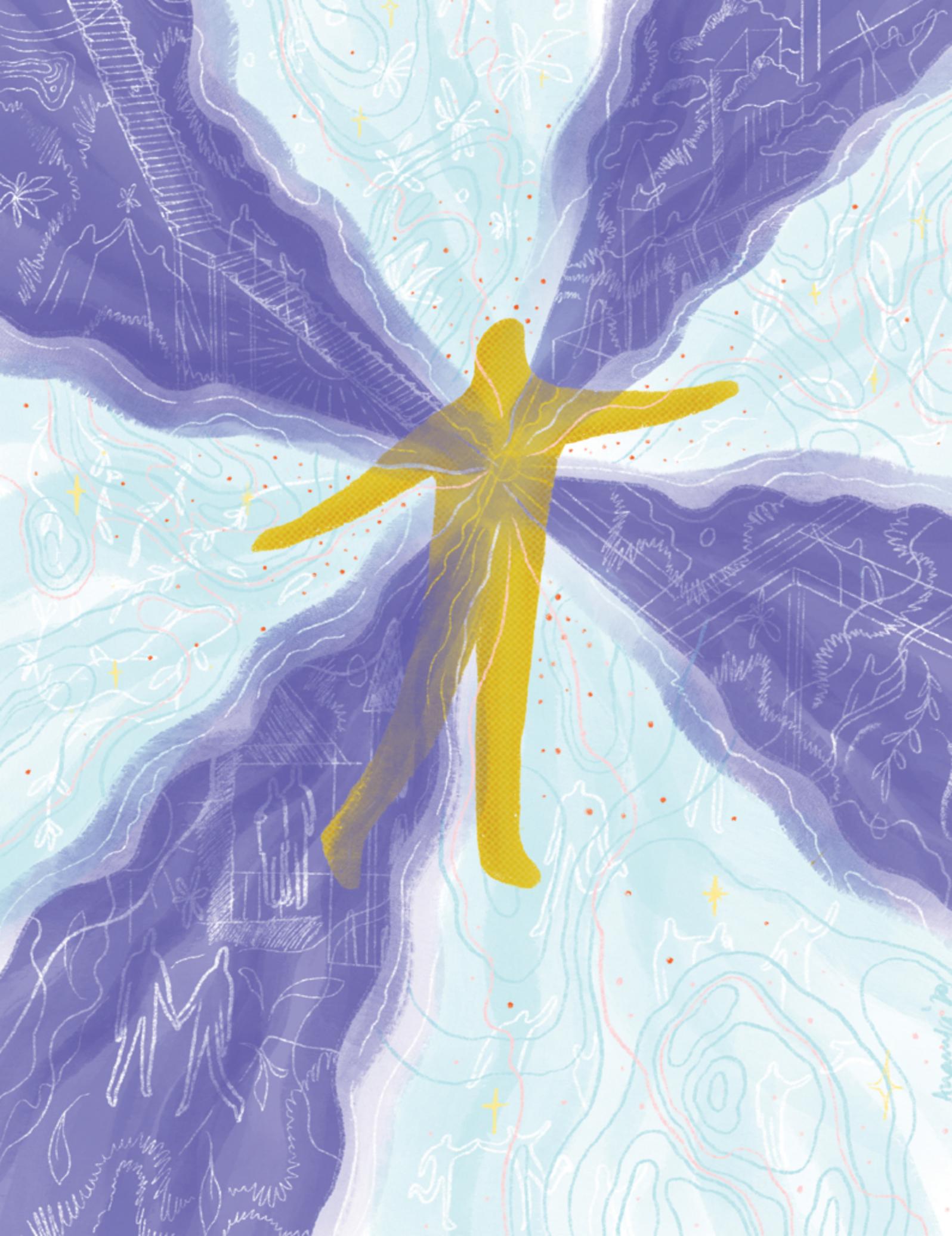
The Compassion Quotient is our capacity to offer ourselves, to respond with kindness again and again.

Q: Thank you Audrey. That reminds me of Mark Twain's quote, "Kindness is the language the deaf can hear and the blind can see." Qualities like kindness, friendship, compassion and

courage are the qualities that define who we are, as humans, and propel us toward what we ought to be in this world.

Adding on to that, I've heard you use the phrase "lead with inner transformation." What does it mean? And can you share a story from your own life?

It's an interesting idea, because oftentimes we lead with impact or profit, or we're motivated by changing some sort of structure in the world. And so inner transformation is like compassion, right? You can't really measure it. You can't copy and paste it, you



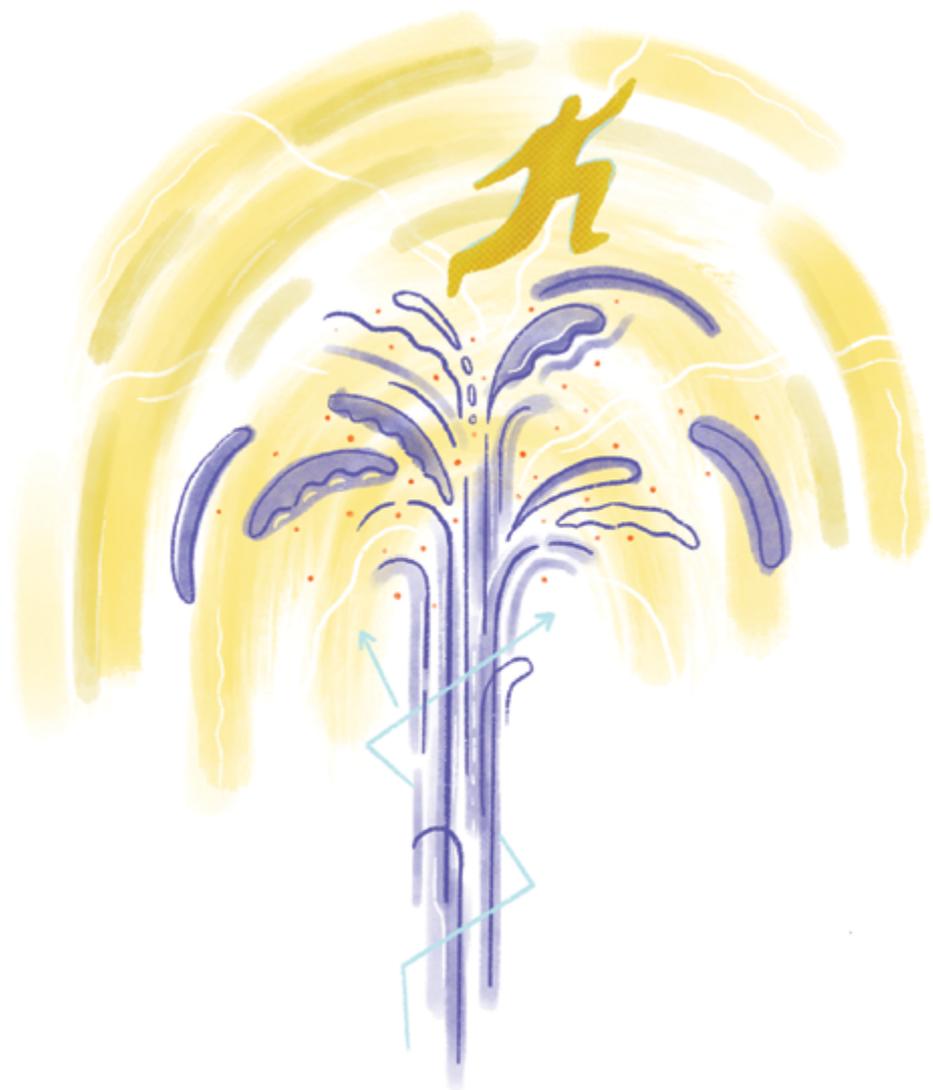
FOCUS

can't replicate it. It's something that happens when the time is right and you're in a space where the conditions have ripened for you to transform in a beautiful way and as a person.

How do you lead with that and why do you lead with that? That seems like such a personal thing. We all have those moments in our lives where we might feel like something shifted in a very deep way and we almost never tie it to anything we do for a living, or anything we do to move and shake the world. Often times we just think of it as this very personal thing that was really meaningful in our lives. But why is that not the center of what we do, and how we engage, and how we operate in the world? Why is that just a thing on the side?

So, in some of the projects we are exploring, that has become the central question. Like how do we lead within our transformation? How do we design in a way that engages these values of compassion, of generosity, of kindness, and what does that look like?

I think it requires a certain degree of operating from a space of emergence. And actually, it's very relevant now during the coronavirus pandemic, because we don't really know. There is so much uncertainty in the world. How do we design for an uncertain future?



In a way, our future has always been uncertain, right? We might have a five-year plan but it gets revised every month. Or we might develop a business plan with target goals, and of course the targets always move; they are uncertain. So, why don't we just say we don't know what will happen, and it is an uncertain future. And we are banking on that uncertainty actually.

And how do we lead from a space where we are anchored in values, and that's all that really matters? Are you leading from a space where all the projects you do are an excuse for these values to take form in some way? So, there have been a lot of ways this has surfaced.

One of our platforms is called KindSpring. It's a website where people can read and share stories

of kindness that they have done or they have received. And everyone who writes there uses an anonymous alias. There is no “Look at what I did!” The cool thing is the way this website came about. One of the volunteers was having a conversation with his cousin about the phenomenon called hazing, which happens in fraternities or sororities at university. To get into one of those social clubs you go through this period of hazing, which is organized bullying. It’s like a rite of passage. You go through ridiculous situations where you need to endure silly things and make a fool of yourself. And at the end of that “rush week,” then you’re either accepted into the club or not.

So, this volunteer was talking with his cousin, who was studying in college, and it was hazing season. People were trying to get into these fraternities and sororities, so they were talking about bullying and pranks, and how usually when you’re doing a prank on someone you’re trying to make their day less convenient.

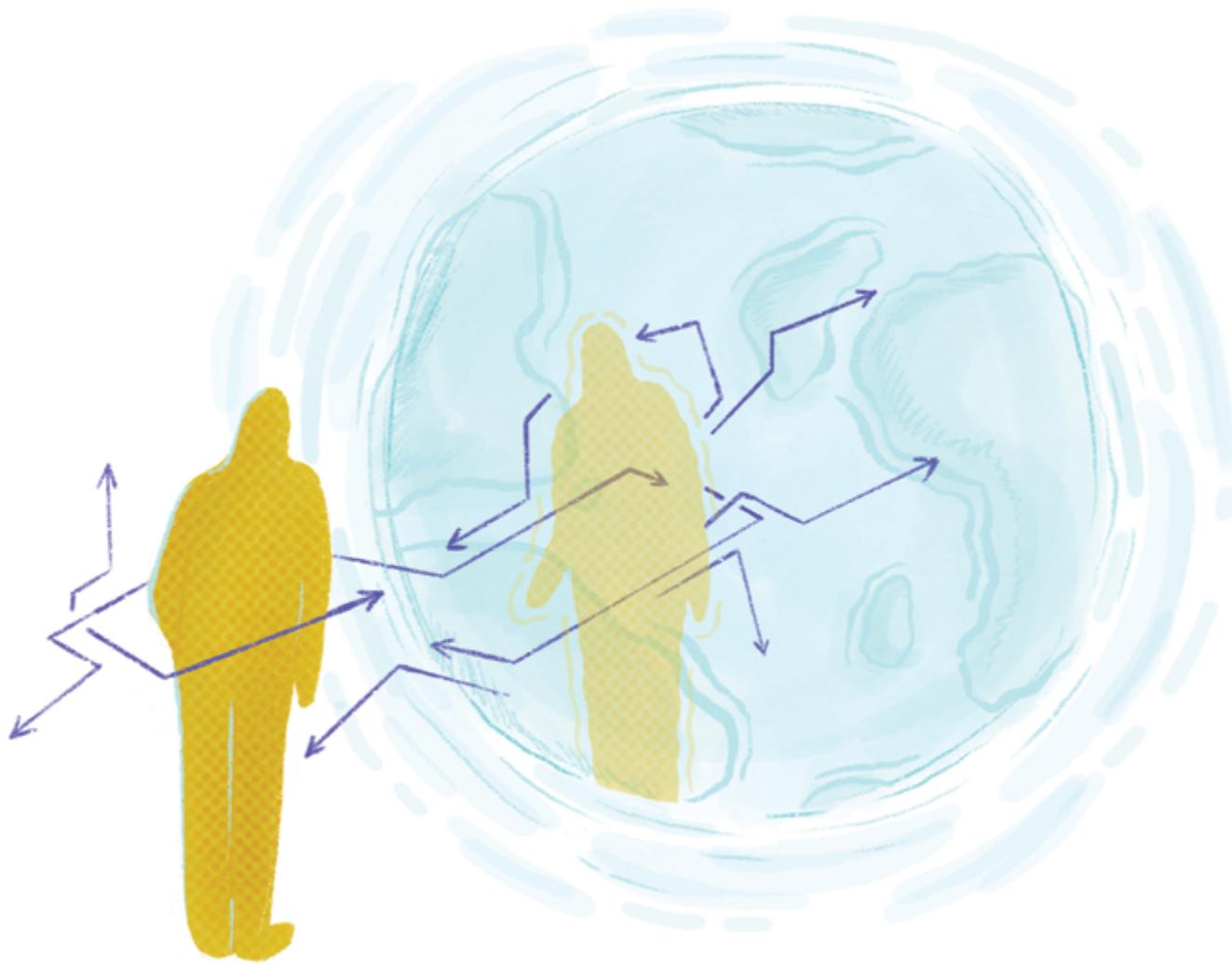
What would it look like if, instead, you did a prank that made someone’s day better? They thought of a little smile card that said, “Smile, you’ve been tagged. An experiment in anonymous and kindness is the name of the game. And now you’re hit.” So, the idea is to do a random act of kindness,

anonymously, and leave the card behind to invite the recipient to pass it on. You could go through a toll booth, pay for the person behind you, and leave a card there to give to that person, just to make their day a little easier. Or you might pick flowers and leave them at your neighbor’s door with a smile card. When they open the door, they see a bouquet of flowers just for them. No reason attached to it. It’s just a nice act by someone anonymously.

So, they thought of this idea as a way to counteract hazing, to counteract bullying. It wasn’t planned, it was just about, “How do we decrease instances of bullying?” because bullying is a big issue in schools. There is that element of, “What can we do to prevent bullying, and what can we do to decrease the incidents of bullying?” What are the statistics on it? That’s also important and very valid, but when we are talking about leading with inner transformation, it stems first from the relationship – from a cousin to his younger cousin, having an honest conversation about the dilemma he is experiencing at university of bullying and hazing. So naturally this idea just came up.

They printed up a bunch of smile cards and started doing random acts of kindness and leaving the smile cards behind. And then they thought, “Each card is going somewhere and it’s inviting some

Inner transformation is like compassion, right? It’s not something you can really measure. It’s something that happens when the time is right and you’re in a space where the conditions have ripened for you to transform in a beautiful way and as a person.



sort of experience for someone. And there is a story behind every card that goes out. So, what if we set up a website to capture some of those stories?" They put the name of the website on the card and said, "If you want to share the story of how you received this card, or what you did with it, you can post it here." They set up this website to capture the harvest, all the stories.

And that became a portal on kindness. Typically, you'd think about the issue and how to plan and execute something to that end. In this case, it started from the relationship. It started from, "How can I help my cousin out? How can I make his day? And what might surface from that?" From there, impact naturally happened. It was focused on the transformation first. I guess that's an example.

Q: Audrey, the mainstream media tends to broadcast sensational news that capitalizes on fear, anxiety, stress, scarcity and competition, rather than collaboration. In this context, how can we create cultural dialogues around kindness? How can we allow this culture of kindness to percolate into the civilization?

We are the stories we believe in, to some extent. So much of what I see, so much of how I interpret the world, is a reflection, a mirror of what my own inner compass is in the world. So much of what's inside me is projected outward.

That's so important. We are the stories we believe in, to some extent. So much of what I see, so much of how I interpret the world, is a reflection, a mirror of what my own inner compass is in the world. So much of what's inside me is projected outward. There are so many times where I have interpreted a situation based on my state of mind, and later on realized that I totally missed something at that time.

We are so very much impacted by the media, by the stories and narratives we are bombarded with. This is the age of information, and especially right now, during the coronavirus, it is a virtual sphere of stories. It's so present. How do we create a culture of kindness around that? It's really a call for all of us to start sharing stories of the goodness we see. And not just sharing them, but seeing them.

We are so primed to operate in the world, looking for our end goal. Whatever we're looking for we start to see around us. And how do we tap into a space where we start seeing the value everywhere? Where we see the value of even an argument we have, or something that's a setback but ends up benefiting something else.

It's a great question: How do we engage a greater culture of kindness in our media? One thing we have been doing in

the last couple of months is the website called Karunavirus. "Karuna" means compassion in Sanskrit. In late March, with all the things happening around the world, it just seemed like there was so much fear, there was so much anxiety, there was so much stress because of unknowns, and everyone was sitting with all that. At the same time there was so much compassion flowing out into the world. There were so many stories of young people buying groceries for elder people. There were so many stories of people checking up on neighbors they hadn't spoken to in years; stories of teachers delivering lunches to their students; stories of police officers forming a heart shape outside a hospital with their police cars to thank the healthcare workers.

It's been an outpouring of such goodness of the humanity that's rising up in the world. And so we thought: How can we share that? How can we bring more awareness that people are choosing love over fear? And what happens when we do that? We start to see a new possibility and engage in different ways. How does it affect our day? How does it affect the way that we think? How does it affect the actions that we are doing? It can be really powerful.

I'm not sure if I'm answering your question, but I think it's been beautiful to see that flow. It is in





our nature to want to be kind. It is in our nature to want to be compassionate. It is in our nature to want to support each other. And when that comes into our consciousness in a strong way, we start to see it everywhere. Even with coronavirus.

We started the website out of feeling the need for it, and a group of over twenty volunteers came together in less than two weeks to start working on it. We get the sweetest intentions. For example, someone wrote, “I am in my 60s and I can still learn. Give me your least-fulfilled volunteer opportunity and I’ll do it.” Wow! That is such a blessing to put out in the world.

In today’s age, where so much of the media is focused on sensational news, headlines and topics, how do we give rise to greater sincerity and humanity? I think that’s the beautiful thing in some of the stories we see. All the celebrities, and the congressman who gave out his phone number to everyone – he made his phone number public and said, “If you feel scared, feel free to call me and I’ll listen to you and talk with you.” And there is Miss England, who was working as a doctor before she became Miss England. She said, “I’m going to hang up my crown and re-enlist as a doctor, because that is the need right now.”

I think we have a culture that’s so focused on the extraordinary, the sensational, the things that are at a distance in the limelight. What about the extraordinariness of simple humanity and the simple moments of connection? It is the simple things that connect us all. I feel that it’s so important to create a culture of kindness in the stories that we tell, and I think it starts with being able to see those stories that are right in front of us, and see the beauty in them, see the gold in them.

Q: So poignant. One thing which has stood out in today's conversation is the power of being the change we wish to see in the world. So, can these small acts make a difference?

I invite whoever is interested to do an act of kindness during the week. It doesn’t have to be a big thing, but just not something that is in your usual routine – an extra act of kindness. And tell us how it goes. We will have a follow-up conversation to share some reflections and experiences.

Q: Thank you, Audrey. Let's see how small acts make a difference in all our lives and in the lives of the people who are the beneficiaries of this kindness.

To watch the full interview visit:
<https://youtu.be/UTYqYntJwFI>

ACTIVISM



MARYAM and NIVAAL REHMAN became activists when they were eight years old, inspiring girls in their village in Pakistan to continue their education.

The now 19-year-old twins have since worked for such causes as girls' education, climate justice, gender equality and inclusivity. They have their own non-profit, The World With MNR, that uses advocacy, storytelling and development to take action and inspire others to do the same.

They have used their social media and YouTube channels to cover several events, including the Social Good Summit in New York City, the Girl Up Leadership Summit in Washington D.C., and interviews with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Nobel Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai, and Madame Christine Lagarde, President of the European Central Bank. They have received several awards, including the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award. Recently they released a documentary on the status of girls' education in Pakistan, and held global screenings to spark further conversation and inspire action.



“Activism is my rent for living on the planet,” is a very powerful quote by Alice Walker that has become one of the mantras we live by. For us, activism is a responsibility. We feel the need to stand up for causes like gender equality, climate justice, and inclusivity, because it is in our hands to make the world a

better place. As global citizens, we have to become informed, understand global issues, and resolve them. We shouldn't settle for a world with inequalities, one in which we don't treat our planet well, and one in which we don't give each other dignity and respect. We humans take so much from our planet that we truly need to pay “our rent” for

living here. In our journey, we have also learned that we can't do it alone. Others need to get involved, too. We have always aimed to inspire others to take action.

Here are our top three tips to get started:



Start with one cause

To be effective as an activist, pick a cause and start taking action, then expand from there. You may be wondering how it's possible to narrow it down to one cause, especially with so many issues in the world, but we recommend that you start with something local in your community. You don't have to travel to the other side of the world to make a difference, because issues of global importance persist in our own backyards, even if we don't recognize them at first. Often, we are best equipped to tackle local challenges, because in doing so, we can use our understanding of our communities, volunteer on the ground, and have a lasting impact.

When we began our journey more than ten years ago, we started by recognizing that girls in a school in our village in Pakistan were quitting school when they reached Grade 5. We resolved to fix the issue by understanding the barriers to education they faced. We learned that girls were quitting because their families thought it would be best if they started to work to support them financially, not recognizing the long-term benefits of education for girls. We worked to inspire the girls in our village to continue their

education, through workshops, and spoke to their parents about the benefits of educating their daughters. Some of the girls went on to high school, and we are continuing to work with the next generation of kids, to ensure they have the opportunity to continue their education, too.



Be informed

Taking action for global issues is only half of activism. First, it is essential to understand those issues, including the background, on-the-ground realities, and ultimately how best to contribute to resolving the challenges. Make

For us, activism is a responsibility. We feel the need to stand up for causes like gender equality, climate justice, and inclusivity, because it is in our hands to make the world a better place. As global citizens, we have to become informed, understand global issues, and resolve them.

sure you don't end up doing more harm than good, which makes this research phase critical before you begin your work. The best way to conduct research is through consulting a variety of sources, including credible books, articles, scholarly journals, films, and videos. Try your best to get a holistic overview of the topic, and ultimately decide what is your stance. As much as you may try to stay neutral when trying to understand global issues, it is also important to note that, as Desmond Tutu says, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor." Therefore, try to understand all sides of the situation, and from there

you can start to understand the best course of action, which will require further research.

Talent + Cause = Change

We have created this activism formula to help you on your journey. Combine your talents with the causes you are passionate about, and make a difference. An example of this is when we combined our talent for filmmaking and storytelling with the cause of girls' education, and created change by launching a documentary in Pakistan. Our film features the girls in our village, and changemakers around the country as well. We held screenings of the film worldwide and are doing virtual events now to increase its impact. You can do the same by applying this formula in your journey.

Over the years, we have had incredible opportunities to support the rights of girls all over the world. While many people see the end results of our journey, there has been a long process of learning, research, and ultimately action. We interviewed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Malala Yousafzai for the Malala Fund's first-ever Facebook Live. We attended the G7 Finance and Development Ministers'

Meetings in 2018 to urge world leaders like the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, to invest in girls' education. We even became filmmakers for Disney and the UN Girl Up Campaign's Dream Big Princess project, which raised a million dollars for programs for girls around the world and shared the inspiring stories of incredible women with millions of families.

We were honored to start working with girls in our village in Pakistan, and eventually to advocate for girls around the world at platforms like the G7 summit, and we're just getting started. We think that our journey shows the potential of activism, and demonstrates that if you stay dedicated to a cause you can make a difference. We urge you to see our story as your motivation to take action for the causes you believe in, and know that your actions will have an impact!



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2013 / 2020



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The Rainforest Project



The Deccan Plateau Project



The Food Forest Project



The Yatra Garden

THOUGHT IN ACTION



→ A →

Beautiful

→ THING →
is never

PERFECT



EGYPTIAN PROVERB

No One Is Perfect. Really?

DR. ICHAK ADIZES explores the nature of being human, of perfection, and the necessity of complementarity in teams. He encourages us to loosen up and acknowledge our strengths and weaknesses so that we can work better with others in a more harmonious atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

None is perfect.

What is new in saying this? Everyone knows it.

Okay, so everyone has strengths and weaknesses. Some of us are creative. We see the big picture, but not the details. Others are detail-oriented to the point they miss seeing the forest but take in each and every tree. Some of us are liberal, while others are conservative. Some are people-oriented, sensitive. Some are not.

So? What is new?

My present insight is that although people say that it is obvious no one is perfect, they do not walk their talk.

There is a whole industry of life coaches and business consultants, men and women who teach, preach, plead, and push you to work on your weaknesses. Be a better person. Improve. I am not referring to pathological deficiencies of character or mental disorders. Just normal imperfections that we all have.

What is wrong?

If you work on your weaknesses, it means you believe that if you succeed in removing them you will be approaching perfection. In other words, you say no one is perfect, but you nevertheless try to become so, probably like your mother pushed you to be.

Working on your weaknesses means you harbor the hope, you have faith that you might succeed and be perfect.



Since none of us are perfect, no matter how hard we try, those fruitless efforts make us feel like a failure. And no one likes this feeling. So, we become defensive. Then, when someone points out our limitations, we become furious or defensive. We are offended, upset, because we have this hidden assumption that we can and should be perfect, although we say the opposite.

If we accept that no one is perfect, including ourselves, criticism would be nothing more than pointing out the facts. So, when someone points you to your weaknesses next time, say, “Thank you for sharing,” and keep going.

Anything else?

If you truly accept that you are not and cannot become perfect, work on your strengths. Capitalize on them. And for your weaknesses, get yourself someone who complements you, someone who is strong where you are weak. Together you achieve the elusive perfection. Alone it cannot be done. Don't we introduce our spouse: “Please meet my BETTER HALF.”

It is in teamwork that we find the perfection no star can provide by himself or herself.

Building a team of people who complement one another is easier when each member of the team knows and accepts their weaknesses and cherishes the corresponding strength that someone else provides.

That requires breaking down managerial elitism created by hierarchy. If you complement yourself with someone who is strong where you are weak, it means that the person “reporting to you” might be better than you are on some aspects. Thus, he or she should not be working FOR you but WITH you – a true colleague.

With mutual trust and respect, based on knowing and not fighting our weaknesses, in appreciating those who complement us, a team is built and success is forthcoming.

Just thinking and feeling.
Ichak Kalderon Adizes

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THE ART OF

JOURNAL WRITING

MICHAEL LEWIN shares his own experience of the value of writing a journal, including embracing imagination, feeling, expansive thinking, creativity, spiritual growth, self-development and much more.

Similar to other art forms, journal writing can only be perfected in actual practice and nowhere else. Through this process of sustained commitment to self-exploration and discovery, a process of discrimination and refinement slowly surfaces to aid our learning and take us forward into new territories of language development and expression – an adventure into the heart of our existence. This has certainly been my personal experience, making me leave behind a rather cold, fixed, rationalist, analytical shell to embrace an imaginative, expansive, psycho-spiritual mode of feeling and expression, which has brought my life so much richness.

At times I have been so engaged with my writing, trekking into a wilderness of a previously unknown psychological life. It has involved learning, clarifying, refining, growing, and has allowed a self-forgetfulness to quietly and without warning descend upon me, dissolving momentarily all traces of the normal functioning of the ego-driven self to reveal an underlying spiritual presence. And in these moments of self-forgetfulness I realize that I'm in meditation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR JOURNAL WRITING

In order to access some of the depths within us for our journal writing to be authentic, real and true, we need to cultivate prolonged periods of stillness and silence. Avoid the busy-ness of normal, everyday routines that contribute to a deadening of creative energies. This is not always easy to manage, but it is essential.

Rise earlier than normal in the mornings and, after meditation, go quietly to your place of writing and write. Do not edit at this stage or engage in any critical, judgmental attitudes towards your work. Record the previous day's events, thoughts, feelings etc. without literary embellishments, unless the latter is what you are seeking and they come easily and naturally and are not too labored. Remember that later corrections are always possible. Avoid being too critical too soon, because time itself is the best editor.

Pay attention to the minutiae of the life that surrounds you. What are they saying to you? How do they impact you? Try to understand them, describe them, search for the underlying values and truths, but never ignore them or you could be missing out on a vital dimension, a crucial lesson. Everything in your life is your life and is therefore worthy of your full attention.

*I am part of all
that I have met.*

—*Alfred Lord Tennyson*

Our mind never stops; it is constantly enmeshed in a continuous process of thought creation. Therefore, should we not try and utilize this vast reservoir of power to expand our understanding of what constitutes significance, meaning and reality in our lived experiences, through the creative medium of exploratory writing? Try to absorb and assimilate, in a mindful



way, everything you see, feel and touch for a future meeting at the keyboard. All our thoughts are possible future prose that could reveal hidden, imaginative, life affirming insight to sustain us.

Although inevitably there is a chronological structure to journal writing, there is always scope to make detours, to follow interesting ideas and thoughts to see where they may lead, in case they can throw up some form of fresh view unrealized before. Journal writing is not a straightforward recording function, but a full and open canvas where many possibilities for looking, exploring and change exist. After sufficient engagement with this process the world may never seem the same again.

*The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass,
it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself.*

—Henry Miller

Sometimes the writing goes well, and it seems to reach out to touch a hidden chord within us that resonates with such clarity. At other times, a possible moment of self-deepening is abandoned in the face of agitation, lack of concentration, impatience, doubt ... But this is the very time to persevere, and in working this through we may come to realize another important facet of journal writing, namely, its therapeutic dimension. Writing can uncover what we are really doing within our lives and thus pave the way for our self-curative potential to develop.

*I am both changed and developed by writing,
and am changing and developing myself
and others in the process.
My emotional, intellectual and spiritual landscape is always on the move.*

—Nicki Jackowska

Journal writing, the chronicling of events, appears to be a universal phenomenon in all world cultures. Whether we filter the story of our lives through the modern Word Processor or use the time-honored oral tradition of telling stories over a night's campfire, it makes no real difference. They are both equally valid. Both fulfil a deep-seated need for human expression and validation.

Working mindfully with words, crafting their potential fine beauty into shape, seeing if they dovetail together to give a coherent imaginative, accurate expression, a life, to your thought processes, is a fine and noble activity indeed.

*...And every phrase
And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,
Taking its place to support the others,
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
An easy commerce of the old and new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together)
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
Every poem an epitaph ...*

—T.S. Eliot



Pursued over time, with commitment, the style, range and depth of journal writing may expand beyond all recognition, sparking off even more fresh thoughts and ideas for us to follow up in a self-reinforcing, creative act. Thus the journal becomes one vast repository of written material to be revisited, and sections can be independently reworked into more structured and coherent forms at later stages if required.

Finally, as the journal develops and opens up, we may find that it also helps highlight, in a fundamental way, our literary, emotional and psycho-spiritual progress as we move through life, recording its experiences and our growing and changing responses to them. And the more we give to this process the greater will be its rewards, until in the fullness of engagement it brings deep understanding and clarity to our life hitherto unrealized.

Excerpt edited and reprinted with permission from the author.

Read the full article at:

<http://www.michaellewin.org/articles/creative-writing/journal-writing-as-a-spiritual-practice/>



Creating Communities for Health – Part 2

In Part 2 of this exclusive interview, **BARBARA BUSH** speaks with **MAMATA VENKAT** about how to nurture mental well-being during the current pandemic, gratitude practices, the styles of leadership needed in today's world, authenticity, what she learned travelling the world as the daughter of a US President, the importance of racial justice, and what is next for her.



Q: I've struggled with mental health issues for much of my life, and the pandemic has been a challenge. It feels like I have this giant mirror right in front of me, and I've had to face so many things that I maybe pushed aside, or didn't want to face or work on. I'm curious if it's been a similar experience for you.

Definitely. The pandemic has forced me to address areas of my life that I maybe would prefer not to. It's been an emotional rollercoaster, and I'm saying this as someone who has been incredibly lucky throughout. I haven't gotten ill. I have very few friends that have. Unfortunately, I have lost a few people, including a wonderful ex-boyfriend, so the notion of grieving has been important to explore. And yet, it can feel hard to grieve in this confusing time, behind your computer quite a bit, or with yourself so much.

So while I'd love to say it's been easy to put into practice all my self-care rituals, it's been a struggle. But I have noticed small things that make a big difference. I've certainly become much more grateful, and a gratitude ritual has been very, very important. I do feel incredibly lucky given everything that's going on in the world.

I've noticed a lot of things from my previous life that I took for granted that are now so meaningful. For instance, when I lived in New York, I walked to work every day. It was about thirty blocks, and it was a wonderful way to start my day outside, moving. If it was good weather and sunshine, if it was snowing, it was still an experience. And then, when I went to grad school, I would walk to class every morning. It's a small thing, but it

really started my day off in a wonderful way, alone with myself, in my thoughts, and moving and interacting with people.

In lockdown, I didn't realize how important it had been, and now, of course, I realize it was a small thing that made a huge difference every day. Now, I make sure I go on walks, that I'm in nature, that I replicate the parts of my previous life that matter a lot to me. That I nurture my ability to be thoughtful about what I'm thinking and what I'm experiencing during the day. It's a small difference, but it's something I took for granted previously.

Q: Definitely. Meditation practice is the core and center of who I am, and I realized how much I take it for granted. So now, as important as it is for you to take walks, it's important for me to wake up every single morning and make sure I meditate, to write in a journal right after that, to make sure I adhere to all the techniques that go along with this practice. So much time is going by, and I don't want to waste another second of it. What's going on in the world right now makes you realize that nothing is guaranteed. The things that we hold on to may not be there tomorrow. I don't want to waste another second of being able to do the external things, like spending time with my family, and also going internally as well.

What are some other things you've been doing?

I love what you just said in terms of not wanting to waste another day or any moment. I think that's so important. I definitely needed to do a reframe, probably six weeks into lockdown, to realize that

there was complete uncertainty around this, and to be comfortable with the uncertainty. It had a big impact. At the beginning, it felt like we were putting everything on pause, and we would un-pause and go back to life the way it was before. Acknowledging that we're not going to do that, and that's okay, has been really important, because I treat it very differently now. I've acknowledged that it's not a big pause, that I need to be actively living in these moments, and actively doing what I can to maintain a life that I am proud of, and a life that is aligned with what is important to me.

I love to meditate as well. I really believe in breathwork. That's something that I let slide at the beginning of quarantine. As I reframe, it's been something that's really important to bring back. I also like a morning practice of journaling. I read *The Artist's Way* when I was in high school, and it made me want to journal every morning. I let all of these things go for the first six weeks, so I brought them back. That's been really important, because the emotions that I'm experiencing – I assume that we're all experiencing – during this time vary quite a bit, given the uncertainty in the world. It's been helpful to get thoughts out of my head and onto the page, and be able to process them and move through them.

Finally, I have dinner with my family every single night, and that's been a fun ritual of community. We know no one is going to miss dinner or schedule a work call during dinner, and it's protected time to be together.

Q: At some point I'm going to have to move out of my parents' house and I'm kind of dreading that, because it has been so nice being together. I don't want to take this time for granted at all. Thank you for sharing all of that.

To segue just a bit: leaders come in different shapes and forms. Especially given everything going on in the world, and thinking about how

you nurture leaders in Global Health Corps, what are some qualities that are really significant for any young adult who wants to be a leader in the social impact space?

There are so many archetypes of leaders. When you're in school and learning about history, you learn about these different archetypes of leaders who are merrily leading with strength. I think it's important to reconsider what we perceive, and who we perceive to be leaders, and why.

I would say the biggest leadership quality that's needed is empathy. I don't even think other qualities rival it, because if you're a leader your goal should be to serve. And in order to serve,

I would say the biggest leadership quality that's needed is empathy. I don't even think other qualities rival it, because if you're a leader your goal should be to serve. And in order to serve, you need to understand people well. You need to connect with people and you need to love people. And while normally love doesn't come up as a leadership quality, I think it should.



you need to understand people well. You need to connect with people and you need to love people. And while normally love doesn't come up as a leadership quality, I think it should. If you think about the opposite of love, it's fear, and it's easy to lead with fear.

Fear looks like "othering" people. Fear looks like creating divisions amongst people. To me, that's not good leadership. The opposite of that is leading with love, which is to lead with empathy, which is to build connections, which is to highlight the humanity in other people, and celebrate people, rather than finding the flaws in them. I think it's important to talk about these qualities. While they are considered soft skills, I'd say they are more important than hard skills.

There's a lot of strength in softness; there's a lot of strength in kindness. I've reflected a lot on my own life. I lost three of my grandparents last year. One of my grandparents was given the title of a leader. His leadership style would seem foreign now, because it was a very gentle form of leadership, and a kind form of leadership. I watched his life and, of course, when you lose people you reflect on their life. He was very satisfied and fulfilled with his life, because he allowed himself to live and be a leader in a way that was authentic to him. Authenticity really matters in leadership. Many of the examples that we see aren't in line with this. You need to be authentic to yourself and hopefully do so with humility and empathy.

Q: It can feel really easy to be disillusioned right now. We were talking about how, from the first

few weeks of the pandemic, it has been easy to feel the weight and stress of the uncertainty. You talked about this already, but what are some things that we can do to stay positive amidst all of the uncertainty?

It's incredibly important to stay positive right now. That's not to say that we should have a Pollyanna attitude and ignore what's going on in the world. I think we can be honest but also optimistic in the belief that we have control over parts of our lives that we can make better. Thinking about how to stay positive with your own experience right now is important. I do think gratitude is incredibly important for that optimism and positivity. It's always an incredible practice, but particularly right now, whether it's gratitude journaling, or thinking about what you're grateful for before you're going to bed, or saying that aloud to yourself or your partner. Making that a practice is really important.

There's a number of different sites that talk about the good news that's going on in the world. It's important to go to those sites and read the positive stories that are happening. There's a great quote from Fred Rogers: "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"

Right now we see a tremendous number of helpers – people taking care of their family members, healthcare professionals, protestors trying to change what racial justice looks like in the United States. Let's consider what we believe notions of helpers are, and look at them, and focus on that. I hope this gives all of us the agency to realize that we can help in whatever way we can. Getting involved is very important – it helps overcome complacency; it helps overcome disillusionment. There are many different ways right now, given all the circumstances that we're living. We may not be able to volunteer in person, or we may be able to: we may deliver groceries to people etc. Figure out a

Thinking about how to stay positive with your own experience right now is important. I do think gratitude is incredibly important for that optimism and positivity. It's always an incredible practice, but particularly right now, whether it's gratitude journaling, or thinking about what you're grateful for before you're going to bed, or saying that aloud to yourself or your partner. Making that a practice is really important.

way to engage that's interesting, because that's the number one thing that helps get past cynicism and negativity – to be part of the solution.

Q: You've been in the public eye your entire life, and I know that's probably come with a lot of really wonderful moments and a lot of challenges, too. How has that impacted your decisions to do the work that you're doing?

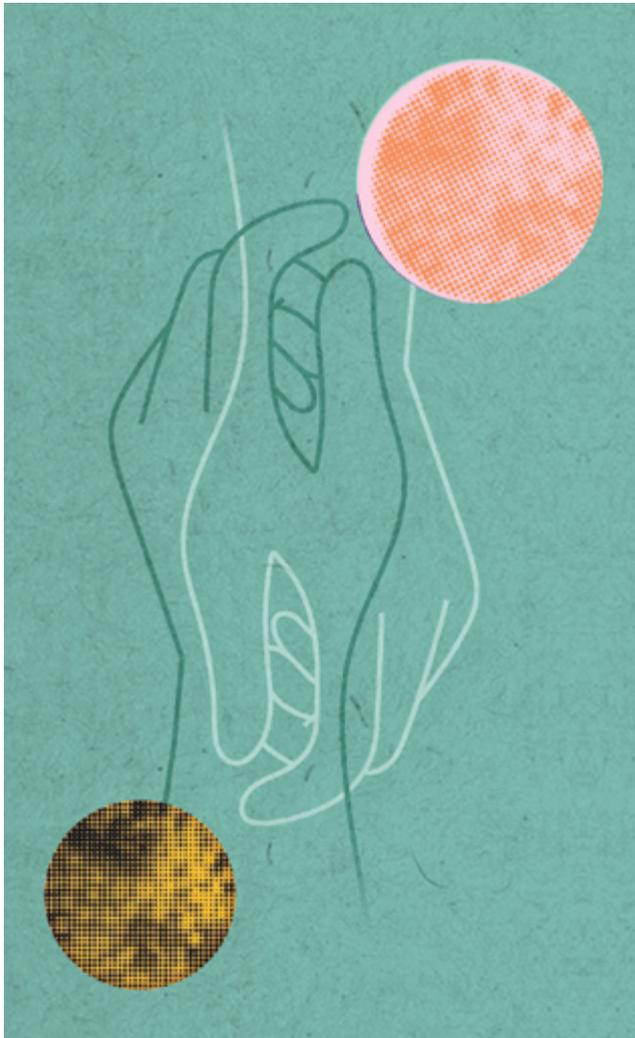
It's really hard to tell how it's impacted my life, because I don't know my life without it. But I do know that I'm really lucky to have had a tremendous amount of exposure to our country and to the world when I was younger. And that was afforded to me because of my parents – my dad being President. I was in my freshman year of college when he became the President, and my parents made it clear that I could travel with them as long as it worked with school and with my jobs. So I had the opportunity to travel the

country and to five different continents with them. That exposure both gave me a global perspective and taught me so much about how people live around the world. It introduced me to a number of incredible people who are service-oriented, who are stepping up in communities to make a difference.

That's incredibly contagious – to meet people who do not accept the status quo, who want to change it and do something about it. That led me into the field of global health, and I was exposed to a number of wonderful leaders in global health who were making a difference. And that inspired me and let me see that we can have an impact on global health issues. That's why I pursued global health as a career.

We can all have exposure to different ways of being and different ways of thinking among the people even in our own communities. It's important to





broaden who we interact with and how we interact with them. That is a huge part of addressing racial justice in the United States. While the United States is not formally segregated, in many ways it is. And it's really important to make sure we understand how people live, and be empathetic so that we're building a country that prizes all people.

Q: You've just finished your master's degree and you're starting a new job. What's next? Where do you see yourself going?

Good question! I'm trying to figure that out myself, especially because it's interesting to have transition points in life. We don't often have many formal transitions. I graduated with a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard Kennedy School at the end of May. I went back to school last year to study racial justice and policy. I was very interested in understanding systemic race in the U.S. for a number of different reasons. One was exposure to the Black Lives Matter movement over the last four to five years. Then, working in global health and working on health equity in the U.S., you really see how health outcomes are divided by race in our country. It's not an accident. The history of the U.S., the different policies like segregation and redlining, and how neighborhoods have been composed and then disinvested, led us here. We were doing great work in global health, but I felt like if I wanted to do more and better work I needed to understand racial justice in the United States.

That's what drew me to go to grad school. I'm still very passionate about global health and I'm very passionate about racial justice, and the intersection between the two. I'm navigating what that looks like moving forward.

Q: It sounds like you're in a very contented place in your life, and motivated to keep pushing forward.

Yes, for sure.

Q: Barbara, thank you for taking the time to chat with us, and for being so open, thoughtful, and authentic in all of your responses. I really appreciate it.

Thank you.

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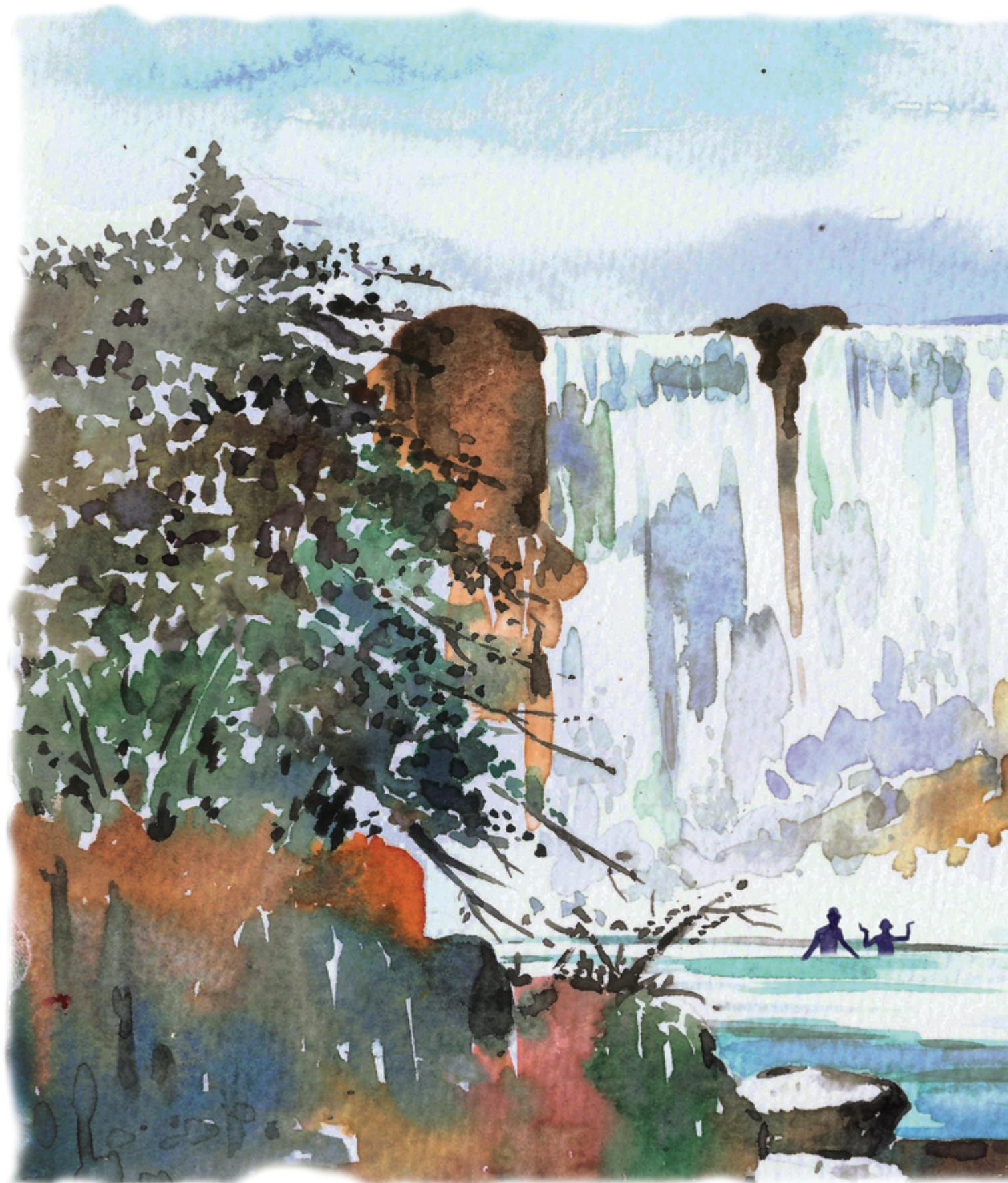
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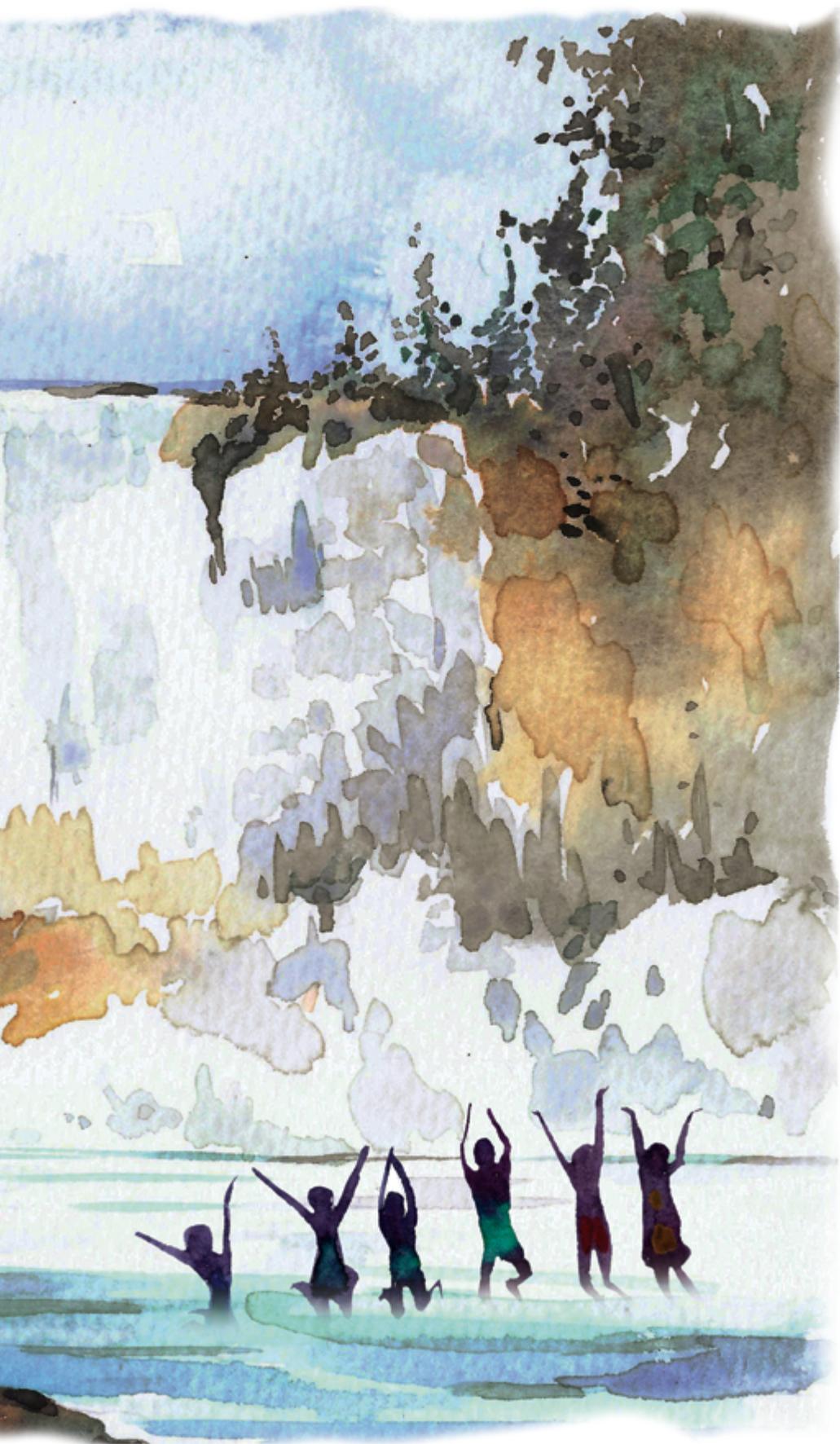
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is nourished by
people's happiness.

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it changes
EVERYTHING

Gratitude

As a young mother in Sydney, Australia, **KARISHMA DESAI** was diagnosed with a serious illness and went through life-saving surgery. Here she shares how this changed her attitude toward life and her appreciation of the simple daily things she previously took for granted.

A few years ago, I had to unexpectedly undergo a serious surgery. My life changed completely during the recovery process. I realised how much I had taken everything for granted.

I valued the first time I was able to get up by myself from my bed. The first time in days being able to walk up to the bathroom without support was like a blessing. I started to be grateful for even the slightest reduction in pain. I started appreciating having my loved ones around me more now. Each day and each moment towards my recovery filled my heart and soul with immense gratitude.

It is a shame that I had to lose it all to feel this gratitude in what I always had. But it surely brought a renewed appreciation for all the mundane things, events and persons in my life now.

There is something magical about cultivating gratitude in our lives. It connected me with the present moment as each moment became a blessing for me. I stopped complaining about little things and in really low times I reminded myself of this gift of life I had. I honestly found the joy back in the littlest of things. The quality of my life is so much more refined just by cultivating this attitude.



I find myself in this joyful, content, positive and peaceful space more than ever.

Gratitude is more than indebtedness. When you feel indebted there is a desperation to return the favour. But in gratitude you know that no matter how much you try, you cannot even out the deal. So, we do not maintain the account. In gratitude you feel positivity, contentment, peace and thankfulness and that transforms everything. With the attitude of gratitude even the smallest things in life give you joy.

And what fascinates me about this development of gratitude is that even though it starts out by being thankful to all that you have in life, it eventually leads one to being grateful to the One who gave you all.

It is therefore not a wonder for me to often read about research which concludes that people with the attitude of gratitude are happier beings in general.

Below are some of the things that helped me cultivate the attitude of gratitude:



Bedtime conversation with yourself, also known as prayer, expressing your heartfelt gratitude to the Source of your life.

Maintain a diary or gratitude journal and fill it up with all the positive things in your life that you are grateful for.



Give a hug to your dear ones or simply tell them how lucky you are to have them in your life.



Offer your service to the ones who need it without any expectation in return.



Meditation and other such calming practices help in connecting us deeply with the present moment and deepen our understanding of gratitude.

So, cultivate gratitude and see how your life unfolds.



MICHAEL RICHARDSON celebrates the miraculous nature of our everyday existence and explores the reasons why we are not attuned to the miracles all around us in every moment. He encourages us to open our eyes to the miracle-nature of all things.

Einstein framed it with his characteristic elegant logic: “There are only two ways to live your life: as though nothing is a miracle, or as though everything is a miracle.” If indeed Einstein actually said this, his use of “as though” was a careful hedge for a scientist – he didn’t come across as being too far out. To flesh out the two options:

1. The universe is unfolding deterministically and mechanically, highly limited in its possibilities and meanings. What we see is pretty much what there is, everywhere. We’ve discovered nearly all there is to discover. There’s no divinity. This is the official belief system of institutional science and business.
2. Despite mechanistic appearances, the fabric of reality is organic, inexplicably saturated with love and many other multi-dimensional qualities, unlimited in possibility and meaning. There is serendipity and synchronicity. Things are mysteriously interconnected, and there’s a sweet, divine presence at the heart of it all – something we often detect in our own hearts.

The “everything option” is exciting because it means the miracle-ness is constant, ubiquitous, always at hand. It’s not about believing that “a miracle” might happen once in a while; it’s the whole shooting match! A miraculous aspect to all things sits in plain sight and yet it’s strangely overlooked – as a matter of faulty perception, or a sort of fatigue, or a lack of hope.

Integral in Einstein’s thought is the idea of living your life as if the wonder and amazement need to be honored, followed through. Either you see that all things are actually miraculous and it affects you deeply – and you change – or you don’t. We should be floored and flabbergasted at amazing things like our eyes, Jupiter, the beauty of a piece of music.

Either you see that all things are actually miraculous and it affects you deeply – and you change – or you don’t. We should be floored and flabbergasted at amazing things like our eyes, Jupiter, the beauty of a piece of music.

Yes, but then we should also be agitated, moved, inspired to act or change.

What are we supposed to do with this endless roll of miracles? We’d like to believe big, but we don’t want to worry our family with constant exuberance and cosmic theories. Then we tend to lose the feeling when we’re wresting food out of the garbage disposal or doing taxes. Besides, many educated people, including many prominent scientists, seem to agree with option 1. Can they really all be wrong? Perhaps the reason we don’t feel it is because we don’t feel we can live it.

The religions have their fingerprints all over this mix-up. Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam all have presented miracles as special, rare moments. Supernatural power – involving human will – is supposed to be accessible only to the anointed and enlightened. From

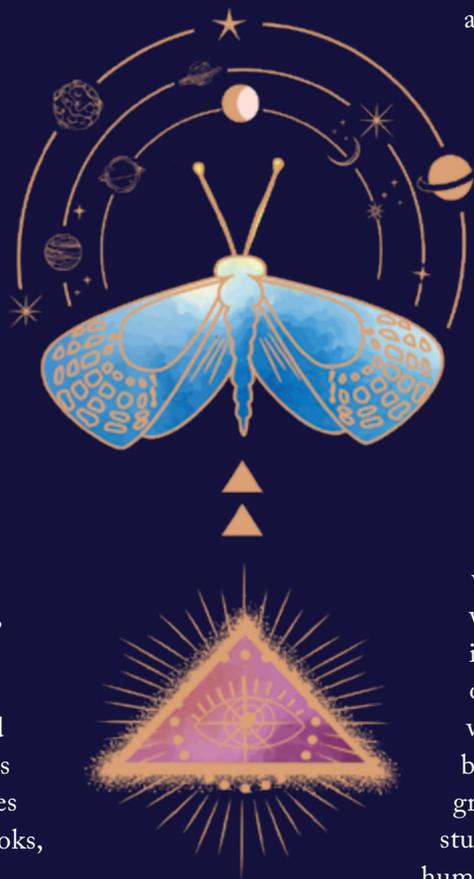
Krishna lifting mountains, to Jesus raising the dead, to the Prophet Mohammed quenching the thirst of armies, tales of healing and death-defying, told over and over, seem almost like advertising. Set into the concrete of scripture, they seem like photographs from which a very important context has been cropped out. Religions often present themselves as exclusive gateways to divine power, but then we are all bereft of God until maybe a miracle comes. It's worth noting, too, that teachers like Jesus and Gautama were incredibly powerful and extraordinarily gifted, but the vibrational character of these teachers could not be written down.

In the religion of modern secularism, the Big Bang and the first cellular life shine as great moments of awesome origin and wonder, but most people today believe that (after some possible divine huffing and puffing) matter and life have merely played out in fascinating, but nevertheless mechanical and predictable ways, according to evolution. Just as in the other religions, something profoundly sacred and awe-inspiring became flattened as it was institutionalized, as theories and equations were put in textbooks, this new, even more inscrutable scripture.

We've been led to believe that things like the gorgeous cycle of romantic love and sex and reproduction and birth – clearly miraculous and inherently sacred – are either sinful or trite, or just mechanisms owing themselves to evolutionary processes. If there is potential for a

consciousness of the sacred, of the precious beauty of each moment, for most people it is drained or discharged. Just keep slogging along through this vast desert. Some miracle will come! Pray!

But look at your hands praying. Miracles. Your lips and your tongue as you speak. Your ears. Miracles. Devote your attention to any three year old playing for a few minutes. The universe is banging away as big as ever, pumping out endless gigatons of babies, birds, butterflies, flowers and sweet nectar, but we blithely opine that the moment is outside of creation, just being played like a recording.



If there's a height from which to experience the unity of things, a place where the self coincidentally dissolves, where a light of love enters us, most of our tools and partners and methods (Ayahuasca, holotropic breathing, heart attacks etc.) act like helicopters, taking us part way up, or even very close to the top. But even as we may be elevated, without an intelligible perception of the why of this fantastic unity, without a way to become anchored there, based in reason, we will tend to gravitate – slide, roll, crash, and stumble – back down, back to the humdrum ground state of the classic self.

The crazy thing about the miracle-nature of all things is how tragically obvious it is; but we are incredulous to the obviousness. It can't be, we say. That would be too easy. We should have to pay for it or read many books. It should be exclusive. Maybe it's not.



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A User's Guide to Living

- Part 11 -

BECOME THE BEST VERSION OF YOURSELF

DAAJI continues his series on everyday living, introducing the tenth universal principle of the User's Guide, which is a prayerful approach to continuous self-improvement. This principle nurtures self-acceptance, and allows us to appreciate that we are a work in progress. It offers a method to observe ourselves with self-compassion instead of guilt and shame. It also develops the gratitude and humility to work on changing ourselves, to acknowledge how our lives are interwoven, how to be kind to ourselves, first, and how to be kind to others as a natural outcome. The result is that we rekindle the childlike innocence and sense of wonder that brings so much joy to everyday living.



Illustrations by JASMEE RATHOD

Within five elements are ten universal principles:

The Practice

- 1 Create a daily morning meditation practice scientifically
- 2 Fill your heart with love before starting meditation and before sleeping
- 3 Fix your goal and do not rest until you attain it

Behavior Being to Doing

- 6 Know everyone as one, treating them equally & harmoniously
- 7 Do not seek revenge for the wrongs done by others, instead always be grateful
- 8 Honor the resources you are given as sacred, with an attitude of purity, including food and money

Essential values

- 4 Live simply to be in tune with Nature
- 5 Be truthful & accept challenges as being for your betterment

Leadership

- 9 Become a role model by inspiring love and sacredness in others. Accept the richness of their diversity, while also accepting that we are all one

Continuous Improvement

- 10 Introspect daily before bedtime, so as to correct your faults and avoid making the same mistake twice



When we go to sleep after this practice of self-improvement, we also assimilate the changes in awareness from our short-term memory into the long-term memory centers of the brain, so that eventually new patterns will form.

Principle Ten

At bedtime, feeling the presence of God, repent for any wrongs committed unknowingly. Beg forgiveness in a supplicant mood and prayerfully resolve not to allow repetition of the same.

To err is human. To strive to improve is also human.

Finally, we come to the tenth principle of Heartfulness, which focuses on continuous improvement. With the help of the preceding nine principles we experience expansion of consciousness, and refine our values, behavior and relationships, and now the tenth principle takes us to the next level, with a very simple daily practice that helps us to become the best version of ourselves.

Have you noticed yet that Principle 1 starts the day, before dawn, with the early morning practice of meditation, and Principle 10 ends the day, just before sleep, with the prayerful practice of continuous improvement? In between, the other eight principles focus on lifestyle during our waking hours.

After reading this article, you will also realize that the practice of Principle 10 is one of the best ways to work with the other principles.

Continuous improvement consists of two aspects:

The first is to recognize and acknowledge our mistakes, then to repent and ask forgiveness, and finally to resolve not to repeat the same mistakes again.

The second is to prevent the same mistakes from happening again; in other words, to let go of past patterns and open ourselves to a nobler, simpler way of living that is in tune with Nature.

It is the combination of these two aspects that enables continuous self-improvement.

Why is Principle 10 practiced before bedtime?

The answer is simple really, given the natural daily cycle: Before going to sleep, we wind down. Our daily activities are over, we are preparing for rejuvenative sleep, and if we are in tune with natural cycles our autonomic nervous system has switched into parasympathetic mode. Our breathing is calmer, our whole energy system is relaxed, and our brainwaves are slowing down so that we automatically access the subconscious realms more readily. We find ourselves in a comparatively free state. Babuji calls it “Nature’s state of contentment.”

It is a good time for introspection and reflection. We are quiet and more likely to accept our shortcomings and work with them constructively. Deeper patterns and memories start to surface. The ego, which is much more reactive during the day when the energy of the sympathetic nervous system is activated, becomes more assenting and less reactive as the parasympathetic system is dominant. So, we make use of the daily cycles to choose the best time to evaluate and correct ourselves, when it is likely to have the greatest effect.

When we go to sleep after this practice of self-improvement, we also assimilate the changes in awareness from our short-term memory into the



long-term memory centers of the brain, so that eventually new patterns will form. These new patterns need to become subconscious and thus automatic for real change to happen. Each night, using Principle 10, we are dissolving unproductive patterns and reconfiguring the cognates, in an open yielding heartfelt state that is the most conducive to adaptation and change. There is a letting go rather than any recrimination. Self-compassion is a natural outcome of this practice.

The more we develop this habit by doing it every night, the more automatic it becomes, and the easier it is to respond the same way during the rest of the 24 hours. Otherwise it is very difficult. Why? We all make mistakes. No one is perfect. The problem lies in our reaction when we do. Often, we don't admit to our mistakes, even to ourselves, for fear of punishment, embarrassment or ridicule, and because we have been taught since childhood to feel guilt and shame for them. Remember that

emotions like fear, anger, stress, anxiety, guilt and shame in the subtle body activate the “fight, flight or freeze response” in our physiology, and when that kicks in no clear thinking is possible. The autonomic nervous system has switched into sympathetic mode, survival mode, and it is primed to attack, defend or freeze.

As a result, instead of gently correcting and improving ourselves, we hide our mistakes and blame others, including parents, partners, co-workers, and the general environment – we deny, cover up, lie, resist, and lash out. These are the reactions of the ego, which surfaces when our sense of survival is threatened, even when the threat is only perceived and not real.

Actually, it all depends upon what the ego identifies with. When the ego identifies mainly with the body, we will attack or defend with the physical body; when it identifies with the mind, we will attack or defend with the mind; in most people it is a combination of the two. When the ego identifies with the soul, we are not so concerned with defending the body or the mind, so we remain centered and focused on our inner state. We are less likely to react, attack or defend, because the soul is immutable and unchangeable, so it is not under threat. We do not flip into that ancient survival mechanism of the “fight, flight or freeze response.”

These days, it is rare to find individuals who willingly take ownership of their mistakes, seek forgiveness, and resolve not to repeat the same mistakes again and again. This is because most people are in chronic low level stress mode, primed for attack or defense. Yet it is impossible to be a true seeker without cultivating this attitude of repentance.

All the practices of Heartfulness are designed to give us self-mastery, and Principle 10 is one

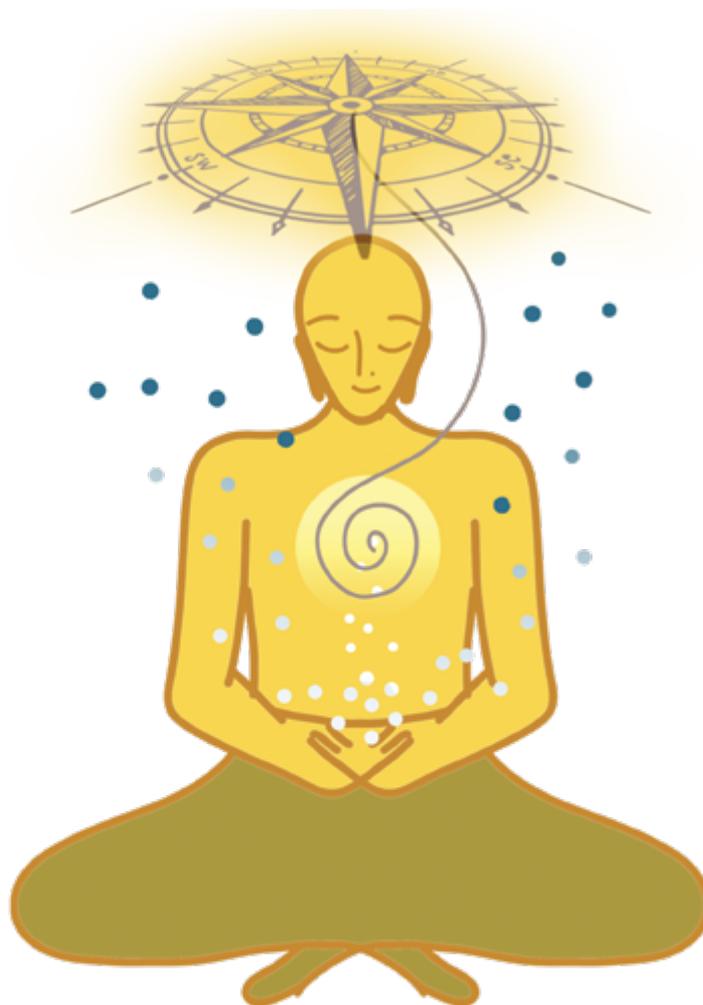
in that suite of practices. When we are able to pause and remain centered, we give ourselves the space to repent for our mistakes. The ego becomes progressively subtler and more refined through this practice of repentance, and the lightness from within suffuses our entire being.

In this article we first examine the practice and its underlying philosophy. Then we look at how we can avoid making the same mistakes over and over again.

Why is Principle 10 a prayerful practice?

We live a lot of our day-to-day lives in the service of the ego, and that is understandable because the ego is our identity; it is necessary for our existence. The ego is our motivator, allowing us to think and act, including reading this article and working on this principle of self-improvement. Unfortunately, the ego also accumulates false identities that we maintain with our beliefs. Our beliefs stem from the subconscious programs we have accumulated in the past, and also from our likes and dislikes in the present; what we desire and what we avoid. Our thoughts and feelings are a reflection of these beliefs. Our words and deeds flow from our thoughts and feelings. Our mistakes are simply those words and deeds done in the service of a misdirected ego.

Our beliefs are deep-rooted programs, the primary algorithm for the programs is based on likes and dislikes, and our dislikes are often associated with fear. Now, the fundamental source of all fear is our feeling of separation from our own Center or Source. When we forget where we have come from and who we really are, the ego clings to external things.



As a result, we identify with our parents, our carers, our teachers, our friends, our social norms, and with their beliefs. We learn that success is measured by wealth, power, popularity, knowledge, fame, passion, or status, to name a few. Our craving for these symbols of identification is what desire is all about. Once the ego identifies with external things, we forget our true self and take on various personas. Eventually, the layers of these personas become our personal reality, our personality. The more complex the layers become, the more we move away from mental wholeness and well-being toward mental multiplicity and disturbance.

Please understand, I am not saying that wealth, power, popularity, knowledge, fame, passion, or status are wrong; it is only when the ego attaches its identity to them that things go wrong. At the root of all wrongdoings is this false sense of identification, the primary misunderstanding of who we really are.

The ego is often referred to as the lower self, although this is really only true when it is not guided by the heart, when we forget who we really are. And these ten universal principles are there to help us remember who we are throughout the

24-hour cycle of every day. They are really the secrets of the cosmic heart that are in tune with Nature. When the ego is not guided by the ethical intelligence of the heart, it is rudderless, and then it can easily drift in the wrong direction. When we are in the service of a misdirected ego, our desires take over, we become selfish, and we forget our true nature. We lose sight of the universal principles, and ignore our duties and commitments. When we neglect our duties, we commit wrongs against ourselves, against others, against humanity, against the environment, and against all other life forms. But since we are usually not aware that the ego is misdirected, we don't always see that we are wrong, so we don't acknowledge our mistakes, let alone atone for them.

The solution is very simple – connect prayerfully through the heart to the Center of our existence, and tune into our highest Self, the inner Master. Here we find the supreme guide, our moral compass. It naturally shines an inner light on our flaws and mistakes, and we can easily repent for them. The ego has no power in this realm.

When we connect with the universal consciousness through a heart that is vacuumized and prayerful, our awareness expands, and we witness ourselves from a higher perspective, without judgment. With self-acceptance and self-compassion we become aware of our flaws and inadequacies. In the tender softness of the inner Presence, our heart melts in humility and we repent for our mistakes, resolving not to repeat them.

What sort of wrongs do we commit?

Do you remember back to [Principle 9](#) and the idea of *vyavahara*? When we fulfil our duties, our dealings, our *vyavahara*, then we automatically resonate with others and with Nature. When we fail in our duties, we often commit wrongs,

even though it may not be intentional. Such mistakes happen because we are not in tune with the principles of Nature – we are flowing against the current. They can be classified as wrongs of omission and commission.

Wrongs of omission: These mistakes are because of our inactions, generally out of fear, selfishness or inertia: Fear of the consequences and repercussions, fear of failure, fear of being exposed, fear of being judged, fear of rejection, fear of not meeting expectations, fear of change, and fear of the unknown. Selfishness is the result of a misdirected ego; and inertia consists of lethargy, the status quo, and resistance to change. Not doing our duty comes under the category of wrongs of omission.

For example, as an employee, what if you come to know that a colleague is embezzling funds from the company? Is it your duty to report him, even if it is risky? Other examples of omission include failure to stand up for what is right, failure to correct your child who is developing negative



habits, and failure to help someone in your family or community when they need you.

Wrongs of commission: These mistakes are from our actions. For example, when we hurt someone physically or emotionally, when we are dishonest or deceitful, coveting what is rightfully someone else's, when we are lustful or acquisitive, and we go against the fundamental principles of Nature, such as the principles of unity, love, truth and simplicity.

Intentional versus unintentional mistakes

While some of our mistakes are intentional, generally we don't set out with the intention to hurt others. Many of our mistakes result from our own complicated behavior patterns. Eckhart Tolle has written about this beautifully in the chapter called 'The Pain Body' in *A New Earth*. We often react to circumstances and people in ways that are determined by our own hardwired subconscious programs, without thinking. Not only that, we may be ignorant of others and insensitive to their feelings. For example, cultural insensitivities and misunderstandings can hurt people terribly. And other people may be sensitive toward something that was said or done because of their personal history, too.

Personality also comes into the picture here, as some people are intimidating just by their presence, tone and body language, without being aware of it. They end up hurting others unintentionally. Wrongs happen at the level of intention, thought, word and action. If our intentions are pure, our thoughts will be pure. In that case, even when we come across as abrasive by virtue of our personality, it is still an unintentional mistake.



Sometimes we make mistakes based on misunderstandings. At other times we don't foresee the consequences of our actions, or we don't know the rules of etiquette of behavior. Some mistakes are genuine. For example, your friend may ask you the time of a work meeting, and you say 9.00 a.m. because that is what you remember. Actually, the meeting is at 8.00 a.m. and both of you miss it. It is a genuine mistake. Some mistakes are impulsive – someone tries to swat a fly away from your face, and you think they are taking a swing at you and hit back in self-defense. It is a reflex reaction, but if you deliberately punch someone that is a different kind of mistake. Some mistakes are one time only. Others become habitual and may even develop into addictions. There are first time offenders and habitual offenders.

What is the impact of wrongs committed?

How do you feel when you have done something wrong? Often we feel terrible – our mistakes hurt us even more than they hurt others. We often feel bad for days out of guilt and remorse. So imagine having a daily bedtime practice that refocuses toward a constructive perspective, hence removing that awful feeling! Also, when we neglect good things, like our spiritual practice or our health – when we don't exercise, or sleep enough, or when we overeat – we hurt ourselves. When we don't study, or when we underperform due to carelessness or lethargy, we hurt ourselves. Also, addictions of any kind hurt us in the long run.

There are also wrongs and mistakes against others. When we undermine a co-worker, we hurt them. When we don't stand up for what is right, or when we don't nurture peace and harmony, we hurt people. When we gossip, spread rumors, preach violence, or corrupt young minds, we also hurt people. When we overconsume, pollute, or lay waste to the Earth and any of its resources, we hurt the environment.

All these stem from not living in tune with Nature according to these universal principles.



The steps to becoming our best version

One of the questions often asked is: What wrongs are we repenting for? Only the ones that we know about? Only today's wrongs? The answer is simple: All wrongs committed, especially unknowingly. In fact, it is not necessary to focus on specific wrongs when we repent. If awareness is needed, it will anyway come to mind.

The process of repentance has five major steps. The first step is to recognize that we are not perfect and take responsibility. This will lead to regret for any of our mistakes. Next is to ask for forgiveness. And the final step is to resolve not to repeat those mistakes. This entire process is done while prayerfully connecting with the Center through the heart.

1. **Recognize:** To recognize that we have done wrong is the first step in acknowledging that we are part of the human race! It is a natural state of humility without any expectation of the need to be fault-free. That in itself is very liberating.

Then, by connecting prayerfully with the divine presence in our hearts, it becomes clear how short of the mark we are. For example, we may help someone in need with the expectation of something in return. We may think that we have done a good deed, whereas we have fallen short of the mark of helping someone without expecting anything in return. This kind of enlightened awareness is possible only in the presence of the Divine, where we feel truly humble. This step allows us to see things as they truly are, without exaggeration. In this step, we are not necessarily thinking of any specific mistake, but we have the general recognition that we are a work in progress, and that there

This state of highest purity is acquired through the relationship of devotion, and this leads us to what is truly behind this practice – the relationship of the seeker with the Master.



is room for improvement. Awareness will surface, however, regarding specific mistakes.

2. **Take responsibility:** The next step is to admit our mistakes and take responsibility. The key here is to look within as the place for transformation, and not pass the blame on to someone or something else. Taking responsibility requires moral courage and self-compassion.
3. **Feel remorse:** When we genuinely feel sorry for any wrongs committed, we have entered this phase. Here we feel a state of simplicity – the quintessence of Nature. In this state, the potency of our errors evaporates. They are reduced to a lifeless lump.
4. **Request forgiveness:** This step involves a deep cry from the heart seeking forgiveness for the wrongs committed. There is so much meekness at this step that our wrongs are washed clean and we are restored to a state of innocence.
5. **Resolve:** In this rejuvenated state of innocence, we make a strong resolve not to allow the same wrongs to be repeated. Here the vacuumized prayerful state of the heart fills with devotion in the form of repeated prayers as a safeguard against repetition.

At the end of this practice of repentance, we feel such a sense of innocence, humility, purity and simplicity. Babuji tells us that “one who attains it has in a way attained all.” Impediments have been removed, and the weight of them is set aside. There is such a tender softness. We feel refreshed and restored. We reach a state of absolute purity like that of the divine current. This state of highest purity is acquired through the relationship of devotion, and this leads us to what is truly behind this practice – the relationship of the seeker with the Master.

The complementary practices of Cleaning and repentance

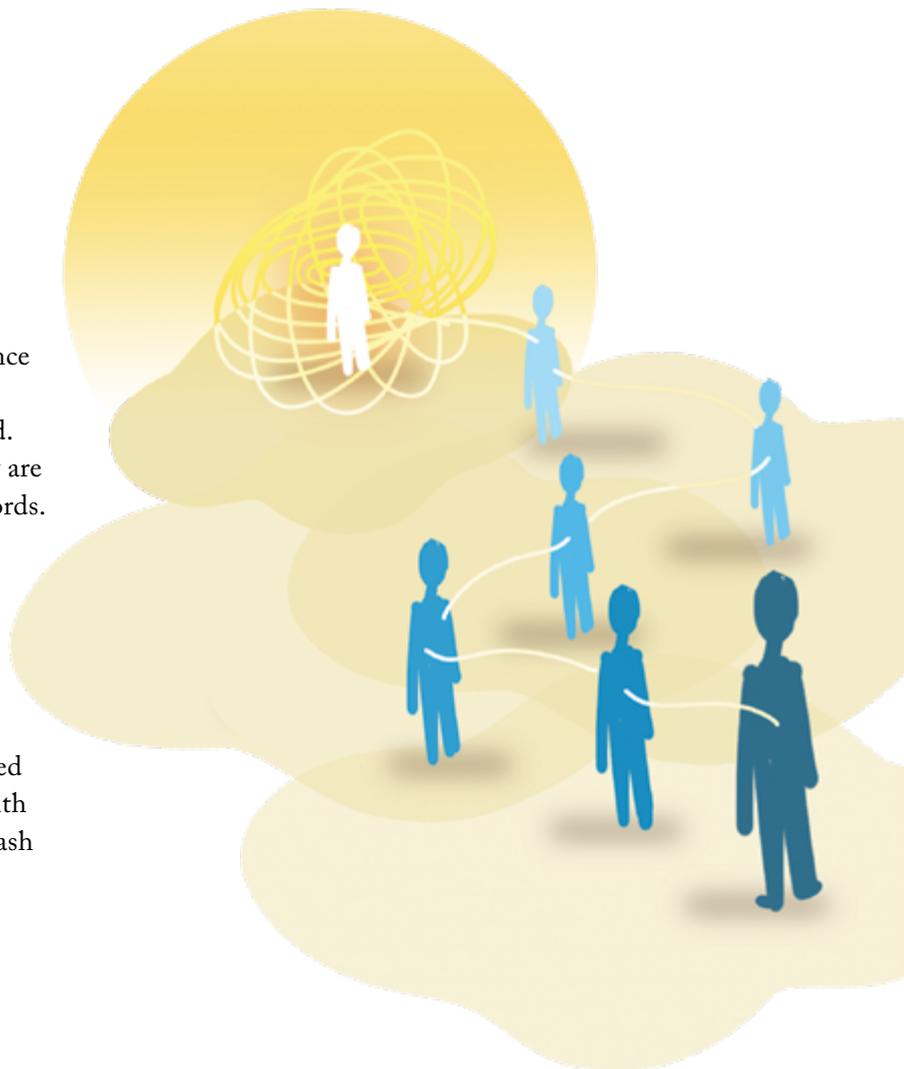
I would say that Heartfulness Cleaning and the practice of repentance go hand in hand. While Cleaning removes the accumulated impressions that are the seeds of our future Karma, repentance arrests the sprouting of the seeds which have already been sown in the fertile soil of our mind. We are never completely free of errors, but they are “reduced to a mere lifeless lump,” in Babuji’s words.

He goes on to say, “By the effect of the strong push applied by the force of the will, they are transformed into repentance. Repentance is nothing but a jerk to the thought-waves that creates, to a certain extent, a state of vacuum within us. The flow from above then gets diverted towards it, in order to keep up its uniformity with Nature. Thus the thing coming in helps us to wash off the previous effect. This may be taken as the true form of repentance.”

Avoiding mistakes

Earlier I mentioned that we often act in the service of a misdirected ego. We are so identified with our persona that we genuinely think it is who we are. We believe the stories we tell ourselves and keep revalidating that external personality. Babuji has said time and again, though, that spirituality is the science of Reality. The purpose of life is to see the unchanging Reality that lies beyond all those outer coverings.

As we travel on the spiritual journey, we have glimpses of that inner Reality. It is in these rare moments of awareness we experience that we are not what we think ourselves to be. As we progress in our practice and our consciousness expands, we become increasingly more aware of that Reality – the inner presence of God. In Heartfulness we also



call it the inner Master. This inner Master is our highest Self, always showing the way from within. And, if we are lucky, the inner Master is reflected in us finding an outer living Master, a guide who has already reached that state of self-mastery and is willing to support us along the way. He becomes the mirror for our progress.

When we equate the Master with our highest Self, then we see the tendencies of our lower self for what they are. We realize that our evolution lies in becoming like the Master.

This principle allows us to reach subtler and subtler levels of behavior, until we reach a level where mistakes are rare. And when we do make them, we become aware and repent, resolving not to repeat the same. Most importantly, it is our connection with and remembrance of the Master that allows this practice to be so effective.

Our ego is directed toward that higher aim. This creates in us a state of negation, which attracts his attention and establishes a link with him. It becomes easy for us to fulfill our duties, and we naturally avoid anything that is not in tune with the universal principles. In Babuji's words, "This can be accomplished when one shortens to the greatest possible limit the distance between oneself and the Master. Hence the best method for that would be to maintain in our thought a constant feeling of his presence."

The essence of Principle 10

In fact, the real essence of this principle is "feeling the presence of God." Only when we recognize the presence of our true Self will we see our ego for what it is – mere identity. That recognition sparks the process of repentance, and with it the removal of unwanted tendencies, the *Yamas*, and the cultivation of noble qualities, the *Niyamas*. In combination, this leads to continuous self-improvement, and the feeling of purity, innocence, humility and lightness.

The philosophy behind this principle can be applied to all aspects of our life to achieve continuous self-improvement. The practice of Kaizen is one such example. Kaizen is a never-ending striving for perfection in everything we do. In order to achieve Kaizen, we adopt what the Japanese call *hansei* or "the practice of self-criticism." This means holding ourselves accountable and finding room for improvement, even when everything is going to plan. Adopting this mindset overcomes the status quo, and pushes us forward. It is what allows us to maintain a differential between what we are now and what we can become, so that growth can continue. There is another practice called *poka-yoke* in lean management, which means "mistake-proofing" or avoiding mistakes, which is similar to living from the perspective of the higher Self.

This principle allows us to reach subtler and subtler levels of behavior, until we reach a level where mistakes are rare. And when we do make them, we become aware and repent, resolving not to repeat the same. Most importantly, it is our connection with and remembrance of the Master that allows this practice to be so effective.

A close-up photograph of a dark, polished wooden bowl resting on a dark, textured wooden surface. The bowl is empty and has a smooth, slightly curved rim. The lighting is soft, highlighting the natural grain and texture of the wood. The background is a dark, vertically-grained wooden surface.

When we have nothing,
we have nothing to lose.

PEMA CHÖDRÖN



*Taste
of
Life*

IRA CHAUDHURI

A life in the day



IRA CHAUDHURI is a studio potter and ceramic artist who now lives in Delhi. She grew up in Tagore's Visva Bharati, Santiniketan in West Bengal, where she studied art. She moved to Vadodara, then known as Baroda, in 1951 with her husband, the world-renowned sculptor Sankho Chaudhuri. At the newly founded Faculty of Fine Arts, she spent her time learning pottery in a tiny annex of the Sculpture Department. Thus began a prolific career marked by numerous exhibitions and a transformative impact on Indian pottery, as well as a stint heading the pottery courses at the very same Sculpture Department where she began. Even today, at 93, her zest for life is unmatched. Here she speaks with **ANANYA PATEL**.

Q: To know Ira Chaudhuri is to know a true force of nature. Her vivacity is barely contained within her eclectically-dressed, interestingly-accessorized self, driven by an inventive mind and an intuition that searches out the beauty in everything around, underlined by her quintessential good humor and sharp wit. I had the good fortune of spending time alongside Iraba ("Granny Ira," as I have always known her) at the Ceramic Center in Vadodara during the holidays,

where even a few minutes in her company meant learning something new. Always aware and compelled by her presence on the other side of the room, I asked her the customary, "How did you get into ceramics?" Considering the course her career has taken, as is often the

case with Iraba, her answer was quite unexpected.

I cannot claim that I was always fascinated by pottery. I was not. I trained to be a painter only to realize that I was not going to be one. When I married Sankho Chaudhuri and went to live in Baroda in 1951, I had no clue about pottery nor was

I particularly interested.





Q: Despite this, she persisted in learning how to center a lump of clay on her own, which the teacher Punabhai deemed "not quite the thing for ladies," and her curiosity led her to explore the possibilities of these new circumstances even beyond the walls of their little facility.

When I got a small quantity of oxides from the very sympathetic chemistry professor, and mixed them with clay and water and invited people to paint, many joined the fun. Punabhai kept warning us that dyes disappear in firing. We assured him that these would not, but he kept smirking behind his considerable moustache. He anyway thought we were all crazy, and to our great joy the decoration in chalky hues stayed!

Q: Iraba describes becoming somewhat addicted to pottery, always returning to it in between raising her children and running her home.

I missed not doing it and I still do.





Q: Her experimental approach and her self-administered lessons in ceramic chemistry have led to all kinds of serendipitous results at the Ceramic Center. When she works, jars of carefully concocted glazes rise around her, among tools of every size and kind. She picks them up instinctively, and takes them to a vessel spinning gently on an electric wheel, using a steady hand to paint bold strokes or carve grooves into leather hard clay.

Iraba is known to get lost in this process all day, and often needs a stern reminder to take an afternoon rest. Even during these siestas, she has visions of her pots swirling over her head, and upon waking she often changes the shape of a pot she was already working on, or starts carving a relief on a platter.



The time of firing is also never a straightforward affair. She has always found ways to use the kiln as an oven, sticking some vegetables in or a chicken to roast, so that when the kiln finally opens she throws a feast in celebration. Iraba's cooking prowess isn't contained to her kiln and her kitchen – wandering outside on a walk, she stops and points to the plants, listing all their uses, conjuring a whole recipe on the spot. She brings a great deal of life and energy to every space she works in, and the Ceramic Center has always been transformed each time she visits, especially when reunited with her close friend and "daughter" Jyotsna Bhatt, another phenomenal ceramicist and educator, who was a pillar of the Center for decades. Sadly, Jyotsnaben passed away a few months ago, and it has been an incredible loss for Iraba, and for all who knew her. She left an indelible mark on the art community. The Center hasn't been the same without her.





Utility is a very good *raison d'être* and its parameters are good for discipline in work. It also reaches out to the non-art-buying public. I feel happier if people want to use a pot rather than put it in a showcase.



Q: Through her practice and teaching, Iraba has advocated for studio pottery to be recognized as an art form, just as respected as sculpture or painting. She has a lot to say about the value a good, handmade pot can bring to your life, which is enhanced when the pot is touched and used. Her functional forms become blank canvases to adorn with intricate graphic work, using signature styles and techniques that she is known for, drawing inspiration from folk and tribal communities. Her most unique, however, is the invention of her own script "Iramese."

At some point, I wanted to use writing as a decorative motif and I found that most people wanted to see what I had written more than the pot! So, I decided to make the writing look like a script, sometimes even like a particular script, but it is not actually any script. And when anyone asks what script it is, I say Iramese with a very straight face.



Q: Just like her pots, Iraba herself is a vessel of creativity and curiosity, and her sense of humor is exuded in each piece she so lovingly crafts. A life in the day of Iraba consists of inventing her own language, cooking meals in her kiln, and drawing on newspaper while waiting for the kiln to open, to then make gift bags for her friends. She is one of the only people I know who could stumble upon a something for which she has such little interest and proceed to drive it forward with passion until she pushes the boundaries of its possibilities. In response to her achievements, she most humbly replies:

Whenever I am asked to make a short personal statement, my stock answer is “I pot, because it bothers me not to. Since I take my work seriously, I do not take myself seriously, and no one else does.”

Q: Considering her world renown, and the respect her students, peers and community hold for her, that very last bit is far from true, and we relish the gamut of beautiful objects, knowledge and enthusiasm that sprout from her passionate potting. Today, she still stands by the words she said years ago:

All stories have an ending. I am still alive and kicking the wheel, which is the happiest ending I can think of.



The Beauty of **MARTIAL ARTS**

ADITI SAXENA holds a black belt in Taekwondo. She explains the beauty of this art form, and how it has given her the discipline, refinement of consciousness and moral fiber to live a life of purpose, with the balance of the spiritual and worldly aspects of existence.



Raised on Bruce Lee films, I became interested in martial arts as a kid. I grew up practicing Taekwondo, becoming a black belt 2 (there are seven levels of black belt, which we call “*dan*”), winning and losing many matches at the national level.

The biggest achievement I have attained with all this is understanding my spiritual side. My Taekwondo Master has played a very big role in shaping this bud into a flower, and I feel I am still blossoming as I continue to practice. I’ve tried to combine this with my spiritual life, and I realize that I was already seeded with a spiritual interest from the very first day I started practicing Taekwondo. It has not only boosted my self-confidence and made me an honest person, but has also helped in character formation by developing kindness, self-control and compassion.

The literal translation of Taekwondo is “The art (*do*) of kicking (*tae*) and punching (*kwon*).” It means “foot hand way.” Now, you must be wondering about the contradiction in terms; after all, the word “martial” in martial arts means “warlike” or “military.” So, how could it co-exist with the peaceful practice of spirituality? I was 7 when I insisted my parents put me in a Kungfu class in the garden opposite my society, and after two years I enrolled in Taekwondo. Since then, there has been no looking back! Even today, with work and family, I take time each day after morning meditation to practice Tai-kek and kicks, which keep me fit and fast with my reflexes.

WHY LEARN A MARTIAL ART?

There are many reasons why people turn to martial arts: Some want to defend themselves, and some join for spirituality. Everybody’s searching for meaning, as without an aim we are lost. When

When we fix a goal,
the path appears, and
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we fix a goal, the path appears, and to find the meaning of life we must walk the path and let life blossom from there.

People often associate martial arts with combat, self-defense, and violence, but the combative craft is not just about flying kicks and flashy punches. The philosophy stresses peace and harmony. The real value of martial arts is helping individuals harness their natural strength.

WHY IS IT CALLED SELF-DEFENSE?

When we see someone being attacked, we don’t just think about our own safety and run away; we try to defend that person. But another aspect of martial arts is the inner dimension. You will notice that many martial arts end with the suffix “*do*”: Judo, Taekwondo, Aikido, Hapkido, Karate-do. *Do* is derived from the Chinese word *Tao*, which is the inner way. When someone studies martial arts, they are doing two things – learning a fighting technique and also learning mastery over the self. In the Korean art form of Taekwondo, *do* implies the philosophical approach to a way of life, a pathway to achieve enlightenment.



THE SPIRITUAL ANGLE

Have you ever wondered why martial arts masters always look calm and collected? The primary reason is that as they move from one level to the next, they don't simply learn new skills to improve their movements and strength. They also begin to understand the energy flow of the body and the surroundings. They become one with the forces of life. They still face challenges, but they know how to overcome them. They know when to give due attention, patiently wait, and watch the situation, and to take action accordingly.

“Empty your mind; be formless, shapeless – like water.
Now you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup,
you put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle,
you put it into a teapot, it becomes the teapot.
Now water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend.”

—Bruce Lee

It is not an aggressive game; it's a spiritual art form. Humans have brought a bad name to these arts through their behavior and wrong usage. Martial arts are connected to inner peace, movement, awareness, observation and calmness. Only when the mind is settled can we foresee what will be the opponent's next move, and that is why we have matches and practice fight.

Over centuries, a variety of systems have been developed, practiced and spread by monks and nuns. Martial arts that are inspired by the philosophies of Hinduism and Buddhism incorporate meditation as part of the training. I grew up starting and ending each class bowing before our coach, then bowing before my seniors. It shows respect for the art, the coach, and fellow beings. It's a sign of growing collectively together.

The key aspects taught in the first month of Taekwondo are stands, posture, how to move correctly, and learning to hold a position for more than 100 counts, including many rounds of exercises. These practices develop patience and inner core strength before getting into the real field. We were called “lions that roar” and taught to defend only when attacked. But before that, we were taught to try every possibility of handling a situation patiently. I was constantly reminded by

my coach to channel energy in the right direction, and once the vision is clear the wisdom to perform will automatically come at the right time. That is exactly what happened in competitions and matches. Remember *Kungfu Panda* and *The Karate Kid*? You know what I mean.

Inner peace is a regular theme and we know very well that inner peace is achieved through training and meditation. Another reference I would give here is the movie, *Doctor Strange*. When you watch it from this angle, you will realize the hidden gems this art form carries.

THE PHYSICAL ASPECTS THAT LEAD TO ENLIGHTENMENT:

The true value in learning a martial art is in exploring and nurturing the inner qualities that develop, such as:

Footwork: It teaches the student about qualities and flow of energy, developing both creative and destructive potential. Hard work patterns and exercises teaches the student about balance, patience, dynamics and how to follow the intuition of the natural spirit.

Observing the opponent (looking into the eyes): This practice increases our ability to read the intention of the opponent, and helps understand body language and the next move. It increases willpower, and develops self-discipline and perseverance in the face of adversity.

The act of blocking, striking, and deflecting: It works on our energy flow, helps refine our senses and makes us alert. We develop 360-degree awareness as we start listening and communicating with everything around us, yet remain unaffected within. Energy manifests within each individual as spirit; spirit manifests in each individual as mind; and that's how we attain stillness within.



When you see Bruce Lee's fights, especially the blindfolded ones, so much stillness is infused in him, even when it's a question of survival! He remains so focused without panic. His presence of mind clearly reflects in his behavior, expressions, actions, and being. It not only gives him a clear sight of who is attacking and from where, but also how to tackle the situation. Imagine if we all learned this art from an early age! Later on, when we start meditative practices, we would be prepared to continue our inner journey, as our consciousness has been refined over the years.

Taekwondo is not only an excellent method of self-defense but also a way of life to attain mastery of "Self." Through experience, I would say it refines the ego so that we live in harmony with the living beings of this universe. Respect, humility and high morals are some of the beautiful concepts I have

TASTE OF LIFE

learned naturally as I gain more insights from this art form. Most importantly, it maintains a strong and healthy master-student relationship.

I remember receiving pearls of wisdom from my Master when he handed me the black belt certificate. It is a covenant that all serious students of Taekwondo are encouraged to live by:

1. Be willing to go where the going may be tough and do the things that are worth doing, even though they are difficult.
2. Be gentle to the weak and tough to the strong.
3. Be content with what you have in money and position, but never in skills.
4. Always finish what you begin, be it large or small.
5. Be a willing teacher to anyone, regardless of religion, race or ideology. Always be a giver.
6. Never yield to repression or threat in the pursuit of a noble cause.
7. Teach attitude and skill with action rather than words.
8. Always be yourself, even though your circumstances may change.
9. Radiate love and positivity through your words and actions. Know that body language and eyes speak more about the inner strength we carry.
10. Be the eternal teacher who teaches with the body when young, with words when old, and by moral precept even after death.

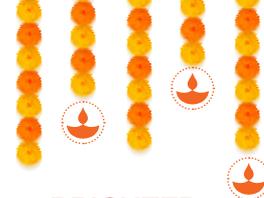
My heart is filled with gratitude towards my Masters, and I feel amongst the most fortunate ones to have lived up till now, in strengthening my mind and realizing the beauty of the spirit.



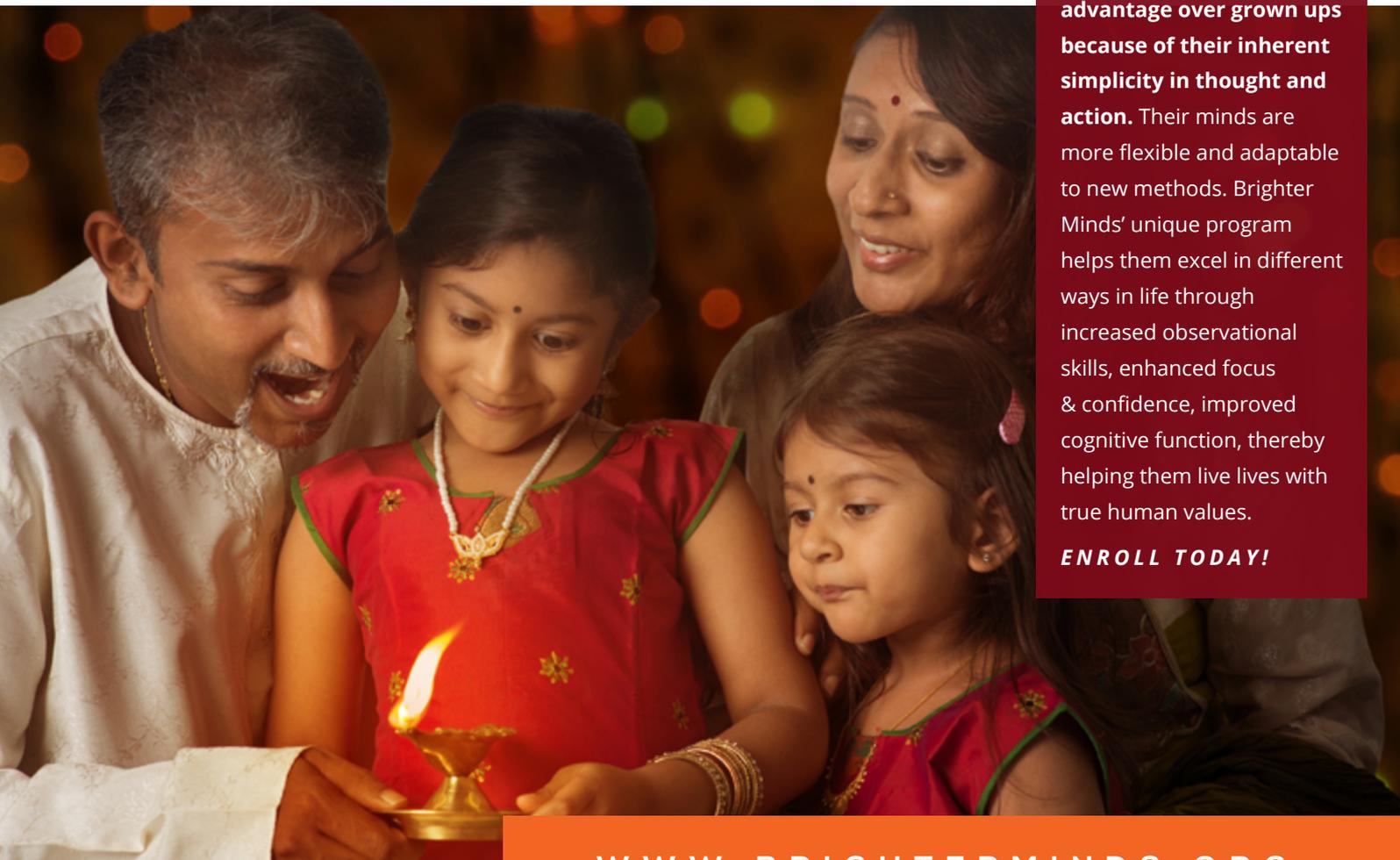


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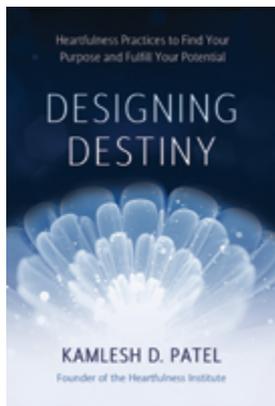
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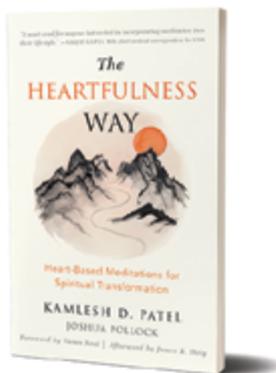
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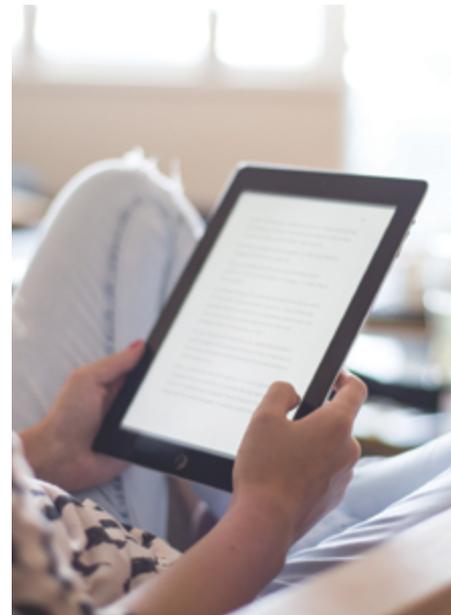
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