

October 2020

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Love in action

- DAAJI

Kindness Is Key to
Resilience
AUDREY LIN

Creating
Communities
For Health
BARBARA BUSH

On Fear And
Anger
ICHAK ADIZES

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Love in Action

Dear readers,

Who inspires love and goodness in you? Who inspires you to become a better person? This month, we challenge all of you to look around and feel the love in the air, the everyday unsung kindnesses that human beings do for one another. And we challenge all of you to in turn become inspirations for others.

To celebrate the love that is actually all around us, we hear from Daaji on the yogic principle of love in action, and Audrey Lin on kindness as a way of life. Barbara Bush shares her vision of global health and equality, and Trevor Weltman explains how to use meditation as a tool to improve lifestyle. Elizabeth Denley continues with part 2 of a love letter to the future humanity, and Jay Thimmapuram helps us cope with loneliness. Ichak Adizes explores ways to work with anger and fear, and Ravi Venkatesan continues with the Heartful Strategist. We also hear from Leslie Lyons and Sriram Raghavendran, who have independently written to their daughters about the things that matter in life, and we are treated to Han van den Heuvel's beautiful photographs of birds and the artwork of our creative team.

Enjoy an inspiring read!
The editors



CREATIVE TEAM

Editorial Team — Elizabeth Denley, Emma Ivaturi, Kashish Kalwani, Vanessa Patel, Christine Prisland, Mamata Venkat

Design, Art & Photography — Han Van Den Heuvel, Emma Ivaturi, Uma Maheswari, Rahul Singh Parmar, Gayatri Pachpande, Ananya Patel, Jasmee Rathod

Writers — Ichak Adizes, Han Van Den Heuvel, Leslie Lyons, Kamlesh Patel, Sriram Raghavendran, Jay Thimmapuram, Ravi Venkatesan, Trevor Weltman

Interviewees — Barbara Bush, Elizabeth Denley, Audrey Lin

ISSN 2455-7684

CONTRIBUTIONS

contributions@heartfulnessmagazine.com

ADVERTISING

advertising@heartfulnessmagazine.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

subscriptions@heartfulnessmagazine.com

www.heartfulnessmagazine.com/subscriptions

EDITOR — Neeraj Kumar

PRINTED BY — Sunil Kumar

Kala Jyothi Process Pvt. Limited, 1-1-60/5, RT C Cross Roads, Musheerabad, Hyderabad-500 020, Telangana

PUBLISHER — Sunil Kumar representing Spiritual Hierarchy Publication Trust on behalf of Sahaj Marg Spirituality Foundation, Chennai.

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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.



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 laddership 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.



ICHAK ADIZES

Dr. Adizes is widely acknowledged as one of the world's leading management experts. He has received 21 honorary doctorates and is the author of 27 books that have been translated into 36 languages. Dr. Adizes is recognized by Leadership Excellence Journal as one of the top thirty thought leaders of America.

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.

RAVI VENKATESAN



Ravi lives in Atlanta, Georgia, and is currently Head of Innovation at Bakkt. He is also a regular public speaker and public speaking coach. He has been a Heartfulness meditator for over 20 years and is passionate about applying meditation lessons to improve workplace relationships and productivity.

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Love in action

Shall we make a new rule
of life from tonight:
always to try to be a little
kinder than is necessary?

CESAR CHAVEZ

Kindness Is Key To Resilience

PART 1

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.

Q: Hello Audrey. A warm welcome to you. Thank you for joining us today.

Hello. Thank you for having me. It's such an honour to be here.

Q: Audrey, my first question to you is about small acts of kindness. You know, a kind stranger can pay for your coffee and you can pay it forward. All these things can bring a smile to your face for a short period, but how exactly can these things save the world or how can they transform humanity?

That's a great question. I'm just touched to be here and happy to have this conversation with you. A lot of people think kindness

is a sweet thing. It's really cute, it's heart-warming, but maybe it's not that serious. When push comes to shove and you must get things done, you don't necessarily always go with the kinder act. So, this question of, "Can kindness really make an impact or change the world in some way?" is a good question. It's up for grabs.

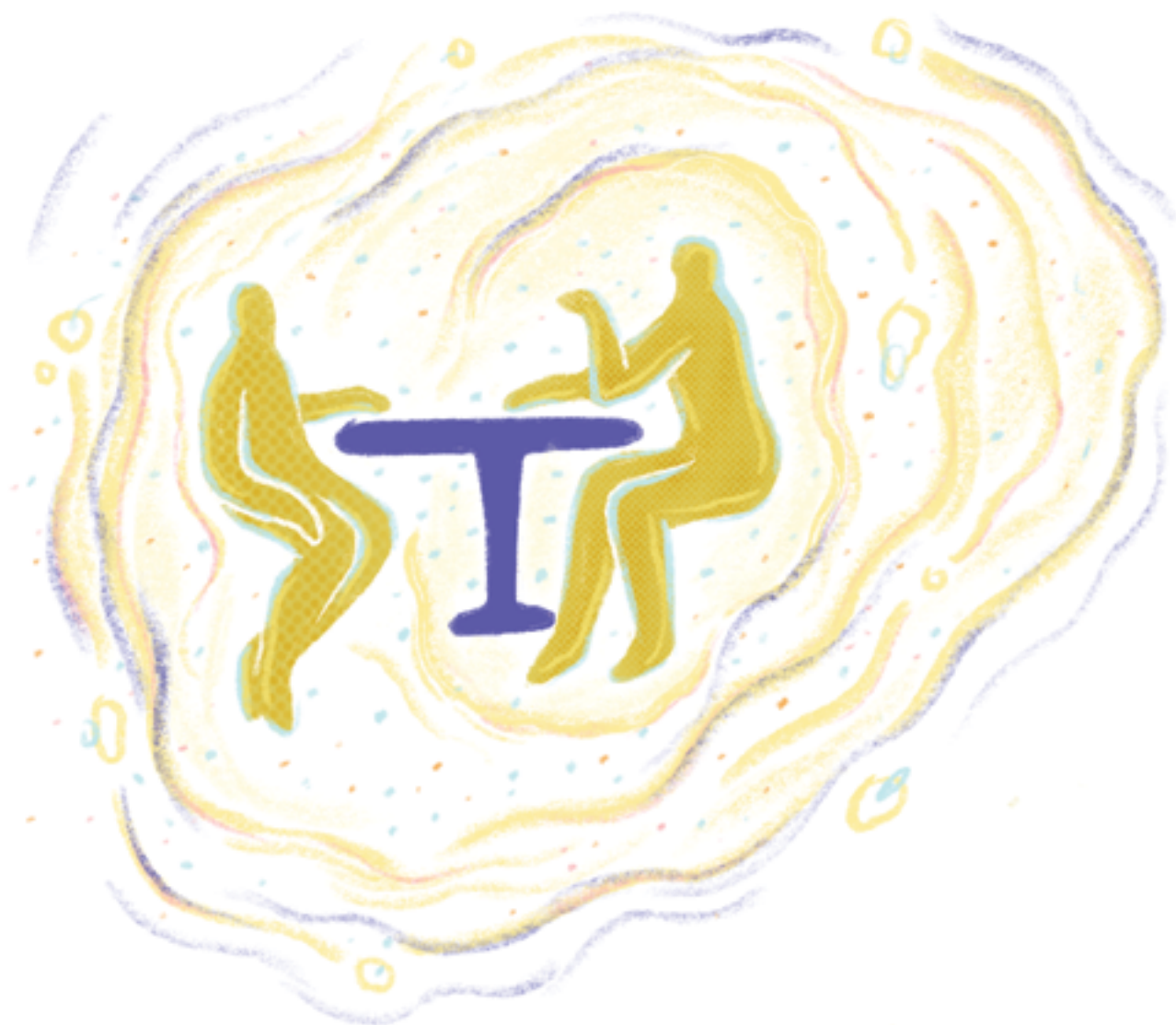
A story that comes to mind is one I heard a few years back. Hugo Diaz is a social worker in New York City, and one day he is taking a train home and he gets off a stop before his usual stop; he is going to a diner to have dinner, and then he'll go home.

When he is walking towards the exit of the subway, a young teenager points a knife at him and says, "Give me your wallet."

Hugo stops, takes out his wallet and hands it over. The teenager starts to run away, and Hugo calls out "Hey, it's a cold night. You want my jacket too?"

The teenager stops, thinking, "In robbery 101 they didn't tell you what to do when the person you're robbing wants to offer you something else!" He turns around and says, "Yeah, I'll take your jacket."

So, Hugo takes off his jacket and gives it to him, saying, "You know, I'm actually going to get some dinner. Would you like to join me? I'm going to go to this diner." The teenager is just dumbfounded. And he decides, "This guy seems kind of nice. Maybe I'll just follow him and see where he goes."



So, they go to the diner. Now, Hugo goes to this diner often, so when he gets there, the waiting staff, the owners, the cooks all know him, and they're like, "Hi Hugo, how are you doing?" He sits down, and the teenager asks, "How does everyone know you? Who are you?" So Hugo says, "I come here a lot."

They order dinner and have a nice meal. At the end of the meal, they get the bill and Hugo says, "I'd love to treat you to this dinner, but you have my wallet." The teenager takes out the wallet from his pocket, and slides it across the table to him. Then Hugo says, "You know, I'd love for you to give me something

else too. I'd love for you to give me your knife." And the teenager takes out his knife and slides it across the table to him also.

What really struck me about this story is that it wasn't just how he reacted in that moment. It is all the moments beforehand

All of us are really looking for a gentler world, and we're all practicing that in our own way. And what if it ripples out and, at some point, there is a critical mass of gentleness. What would that look like?"

that build up to who you are in every moment. He works as a social worker, so he probably has experience with a lot of youth who are in difficult environments. And judging by how the diner people welcomed him, he's probably a nice guy. And so, I think the question really comes down to this: We think about how to change the world, how to make a difference, how to end poverty, how to resolve education, how to create more equity in the world. Those are big questions, but I think there is something that comes up in that moment, when a teenager slides a knife across the table, saying, I don't want to be the person who has to rob people. I want to be the person who can treat people to a meal.

You can't plan for a thing like that. I think you cultivate habits that become your natural response. So, when someone comes to you with violence, with force, with power, with a knife, your neural pathways are wired in such a way that you think, "Oh, that kid looks cold, let me give him my jacket too." The power of that is hard to define, but if we all do these small acts and practices, and transform ourselves along the way, what does that look like at scale? One of our volunteers once said, "What if we had a critical mass of gentleness? All of us are really looking for a gentler world, and we're all practicing that in our own way. And what if it ripples out and, at

some point, there is a critical mass of gentleness. What would that look like?"

Q: Kindness is a powerful weapon, isn't it? It makes us feel that everything is connected to everything else. Every act of kindness is probably connected to every other soul. That story touched my heart. Which leads to the next question: How does a culture of compassion work in practical terms? For example, when an organization needs to look at the economic cost of kindness and compassion, it appears to be a little bit complicated. How can we sustain this principle? How can our economies and cultures, which are already based on capitalism and consumerism, use this as a guiding force? How can a profit-based ecosystem thrive with this kind of culture?

In our market economy, we are conditioned to focus on developing a product. In a company, it's on developing a product. In a non-profit or NGO, it's on delivering an impact. And everything is packaged in a way that it can be shared and exchanged in the world. We have spent a lot of time innovating for efficiency and we have lost the resiliency of relationships along the way.

Many people feel this way in their workplaces, where they're just a cog in the machine, working that

way. You never know, the person next to you might have a family member who's struggling with cancer, or someone disappears one day and you find out they had a death in the family and they're on leave for two weeks. There's something efficient about just focusing on designing a product, but there's something lost in not taking the time to really get to know who you're working with. Or not having the structure or the space to engage in that interconnection.

A big part of it is that a shift is needed. Instead of only asking, "What can I do?" "What output can I create in the world?" and "What product can I make?" also ask, "Who can I be?" "How do I become that person who knows that my colleague in the cubicle in the corner is really having a rough time?" and "Who do I have to be to receive someone's trust, to share those kinds of stories?" and "How might the interactions I have with people change the way our organization runs?" It's an open question.

I think one of the examples that comes to mind is Karma Kitchen, which is one of our experiments in generosity. It's a chain of "pay it forward" restaurants in different cities around the world. You go into a restaurant, you get a menu, and you realize there are no prices on the menu. You learn that your meal is being gifted to you by the



people who came before. You can enjoy your meal, you can have seconds, you can have thirds. You realize that the people serving you are volunteers who have other day jobs, and other things that they do in life, but they chose to spend the day volunteering, to wait on you. At the end of the meal, you get a bill that reads \$0. You're invited to pay whatever you wish toward the next person's meal. It's an experiment in the chain of giving. And it's an invitation to tap into someone who came before you or someone who's coming after you whom you have not met before.

There was one time we were volunteering, and we had a volunteer orientation in the beginning and a closing meal together at the end to share

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When we think of kindness and compassion, it's an invitation to look at how we can create a context where these values get amplified.

reflections. And there was one volunteer who spent the day with us, who shared a reflection. She worked at a restaurant, so she was used to doing this for her day job, but what she found was a complete 180-degree shift. When she was working as a waitress, if she made any mistake it would immediately come back to her. Everyone would be upset with her. There would be tension in the team because everyone was working to earn money, to earn their livelihood. When she volunteered at Karma Kitchen, she said, "It's the exact same work, but if I felt like I made a mistake, I wouldn't even realize it. Ten minutes or half an hour later I'd realize I forgot an order. And someone else would have already covered it." She said it was amazing that it's the exact same amount of work, but the context is completely different.

So, when we think of kindness and compassion, it's an invitation to look at how we can create a context where these values get amplified. How might that influence the way we operate, the way we think, what we think is even possible, and the way we are? The way we show up.

Q: Thank you for sharing your colleague's experience. I feel like there is no such thing as a random act of kindness, because every act we do has a ripple effect, which is not logical

and not measurable. And it doesn't feel like it's ever wasted. It's always going to make a difference, of course for the receiver, but also for the giver, because always in giving we receive something. Which leads me on to the next question about laddership. How is "laddership" different from leadership?

Whenever I write the word "laddership" in a document, it's auto-corrected. And I really enjoy the auto-correction because it makes me realize that this is a new paradigm. It's a different way of thinking. The first time I heard "laddership" was at a team leaders' retreat. There was a mentor visiting from out of town, and he's kind of a community mentor, so everyone was saying, "You should join our team leadership retreat, please come. We'd love to have your presence there." He looked at everyone and he's very good at making puns. He said, "Leader? I don't want to be a leader. I want to be a ladder." And he made a gesture like it's not so much about being the person in front, as that person who can help people to climb up. How can I be that stepping stone to lift others up and help them rise? As soon as he said that, everyone said, "We want to be ladders, too." That retreat became a team ladders retreat, a laddership retreat.

A lot of laddership focuses on building relationships and trusting in the distributed strength of the collective, whereas a leader may think more about how to scale the transactions, and how to engage in the vision.

I think there are some differences. In traditional leadership, leaders are people in charge. They are executing pathways and directing new visions. It's that white knight in shining armour leading the pack. That way of leading is in a way built on some form of power. You are directing people; people are deferring to you, sometimes out of force, out of hierarchy. And laddership is the antithesis. It's

the person at the back of the room who's tuning into viewpoints of the collective and finding value in so many different people. And drawing that out and helping amplify their patterns of positive deviance. Ladders are a form of serving leadership. You might look at someone as a ladder and they might not even consider themselves a ladder. It's more about their way of being. So, the ladder looks at leadership as being the change, whereas the leader might look at the world and say, "How can we change the world? What can we do?" A ladder might look at how to see a spectrum of value everywhere; the multiple forms of wealth to be engaged. A leader might say, "How can I command the financial capital and disperse these resources to a certain end goal?" A ladder might engage at the edges of a space, whereas the leader might be the person directing at the center.

A lot of laddership focuses on building relationships and trusting in the distributed strength of the collective, whereas a leader may think more about how to scale the transactions, and how to engage in the vision.

I don't mean to say that one is better than the other. There are times when you need leadership, otherwise you get a vacuum in a group and a little bit of chaos. There are times when ladders need

to step up, and say, "This is the direction we're trying to go in," and assume that role. But a quote from Lao Tzu comes to mind, the Chinese philosopher who said that a leader is best when people barely know they exist. When the work is done, they will say, "We did this ourselves." I think that's the beauty of it. To be in a space where you don't even know who the leader is. And yet you feel like you're going in some direction. There is something happening. I think that's the real beautiful thing about it.

Q: Thank you Audrey. So, the next question is: How can we make kindness a habit? How can we try to inculcate it into our DNA? Is it in some way related to the compassion quotient you were telling me about? How can we become a continuous conduit of kindness?

Those are beautiful questions. Cultivating a habit of kindness starts with trying. It also helps to have a community around, to keep us accountable. I remember riding a bus some years ago. It was a little bit crowded, and I was sitting reading a book. The bus driver started speaking very loudly at one stop, saying, "Oh, it's great to see you today! There's a seat right behind me. You can sit right here." My back was facing the driver so I couldn't see who he was talking to, but I remember



Ameyi20



There is are whole
communities
where people do
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and they go out of
their comfort zone
and help others.

thinking, “Wow, I’ve never heard such a cheerful bus driver.” The bus drivers I had encountered were not so cheerful, and theirs is a stressful job. So, I turned around and saw a blind woman walking up the steps to sit down in the seat that the bus driver had mentioned. And I thought it was really nice that he spoke loudly and directed her to the seat right behind him.

As we’re going along, and I was still reading my book, the bus driver knew everybody at every stop. He would say, “You’re at a different stop today,” or “I

haven’t seen you in a while.” He was making small talk with the regulars and he was also talking with the woman right behind him: “What stop are you getting off at? I’ll let you know when it comes.” At this point I put my book away. I was just watching them and watching the driver. As we reached the stop where the woman was getting off, he says, “We’re at your stop, ma’am.” When she got off, he spoke to the person getting off behind her, saying, “Can you make sure she gets on the subway okay?” He was trying to watch out for her.

The woman said, “I don’t need so much help. Leave me alone,” but he took it all and said, “Okay, have a wonderful day. It was a pleasure having you on the bus today.” I’m not making this up. At that point, there was a crowd in the back trying to get off the bus, but the door wasn’t open because he was so focused upfront. And so, he said, “Oh, I’m sorry,” and opened the door so everybody could alight from the back.

I was just watching this, and thought, “Wow, this is really nice.” I felt like I should tell him, first of all, that I had witnessed the manifestation of gold in front of me and I realized what it took for me to even see that. To even notice it as something remarkable. And second, that seeing the way he acted, his cheerfulness, made my day. As soon as I had that thought, all these excuses started playing in my head, why I shouldn’t compliment him. Why it’s not worth it. It’s such a small thing. But I knew that was just my fear and uncertainty around doing something that is out of the usual.

So when it was my stop, I went up to him and said, “Seeing the way you interacted with that blind woman really made my day. I also appreciate your friendliness today.”

He just looked at me and said, “Wow, thank you so much. I have

a brother who’s deaf, so whenever there is someone who is seeing or hearing impaired on my bus, I try to help them out. Thank you so much, I’ll remember that it made a difference for you.”

It was five seconds of interaction, and when I got off the bus I was on cloud nine. It was just this beautiful exchange that gave me hope in humanity. The thing that actually made me say, “Okay, you have to go and tell him how grateful you are to witness that,” is the portal in some of our projects where people share acts of kindness.

I know there are whole communities where people do random acts of kindness and it makes their day, and they go out of their comfort zone and help others. It’s not a weird thing. Although it feels weird because everyone’s in their own world on the bus, they’re all focused on their day. I really feel that one element is being able to see the kindness in front of us, and interpret it as kindness. And what does it take to have eyes to see that? Another element is to make a pact with a friend, like, “Alright, we’re in this together. Let’s do a 21-day kindness challenge.” Or, “Let’s share all the kind things we saw today.” A common pact people do is “5-good-things,” where they say five good things they’re grateful

for that day. Just set the intention for it. To reflect in the community makes a big difference.

You also asked about the compassion quotient. It is just the idea that we have an actual quotient. We have an intellectual quotient, IQ, and we have all these metrics to measure intellectual aptitude. And in recent years, we have developed EQ, emotional quotient, which is a measurement of how much we can engage with others, levels of sensitivity, and emotions. And then we have the compassion quotient, which is our capacity to offer ourselves, to respond with kindness again and again.

To be continued.

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

CHOOSING GROWTH

TREVOR WELTMAN's honest appraisal of life in lockdown, with his wife and two young daughters in busy Bangkok, is a refreshing look at how to navigate and transcend the expectations and tensions that surface when we are thrown together for months on end in close quarters without all our normal support structures. Best of all, the outcome is positive and inspirational!



“Anything we ever said, I’ll deal with that later. I will feel that later. I will think about that later,’ will come up in meditation, because by meditating you are saying to life, ‘OK, later is NOW. Bring it on.’”

—Dr. Lorin Roche

Oftentimes we use metaphors from our daily life to elucidate concepts in meditation or spirituality that are ineffable or abstract – from the term “enlightened” itself to “summitting the mountain,” “walking the path” to “accruing inner wealth.” Even the great saint Kabir is able to distil the enormously important but difficult concept of cosmic merge into the ever-accessible “drop of water joining the ocean.”

In this way, metaphors are the lighthouses of understanding and the security blankets of language: when faced with what we don’t know or cannot fully comprehend, they balm our intellect and guide our consciousness safely back through the abstraction to more familiar harbors.

But what happens when what we’re experiencing is truly novel? What if it is without comparison? How to make sense of something that virtually no one alive today or in the recent past has credibly experienced?

What happens when we are without metaphor?

I believe this has been one of the most difficult parts of COVID for me, and I would venture for many others as well. As the second wave of the virus intensifies around the world, and as its health,

economic, and social impacts all deepen, we are truly in uncharted territory.

Certainly there are lessons we can learn from the 1918 Spanish Flu, the 2008 Great Financial Crisis, and the Ebola and SARS crises respectively, to help us better manage the current pandemic. However, I find these past examples don’t do much to help us understand how to feel about what’s happening, and that’s problematic. For none of these previous crises has unilaterally disrupted the lives of most of the seven billion people on planet Earth at the same scale as COVID, nor led to what will in time be looked back upon as the impetus behind the great rethinking and reorganizing of our international politics and national economies.

This time period will also be remembered as the great reorganizer of our homes, our families, our priorities, and – as I’ve come to see – our expectations for ourselves and our loved ones.

So, without any external event to help me make better sense of COVID in a holistic way, my theory at the outset of lockdown was simple: begin actively seeking parallels between my spiritual life and what I have experienced in meditation, to help me better understand my experience of the pandemic.

Before I get much further, though, I must admit that this “lofty” idea was born of much less glamorous and enlightened circumstances. In fact, it was an essential coping mechanism. The rigors of isolating in place with two children under four in a country that neither my wife nor I call home was taking a tremendous toll on our marriage.

I’m not suggesting that the emergent term “COVID-divorce” was a foregone conclusion; far from it. Rather, we were not in sync as the newness and stresses of lockdown, and the greater uncertainties surrounding COVID, had created and exacerbated new tensions between us.

Or had it?

It was then I began to realize that lockdown – like Dr. Roche’s quote about how meditation tells life to “Bring it on” – wasn’t actually the cause of the issues we were experiencing. Instead, it was a focusing event, like meditation, that was forcing us to confront the myriad issues we already had, all at the same time.

On the surface, these issues seemed interpersonal. She was angry that I was on back-to-back Zoom calls all day long, while I was incredulous at her saying she didn’t have time for herself when she was managing to watch a few hours of Korean dramas and choosing to bake complicated recipes every day.

Couldn’t I see she was under water managing the kids?

Couldn’t she see I was doing all I could to ensure our continued livelihood and that of all the staff who depend on me?

Yet, as the comparison of meditation and lockdown crystallized further in my mind, the truth I came to realize was that these issues were actually just personal to each of us. Deeply so.

In other words, deep inside me and deep inside her resided two very different sets of ideals and expectations of what it meant to live well, as well as a raft of expectations for the other person to change and fit these ideals.



Thing is, these expectations and ideals, such as support, time management, balance, and even home tidiness, were all based on normal operating circumstances pre-COVID: kids at day care 5+ hours a day, me at the office, access to yoga, the gym, days out, days off, and a weekend that actually felt like a weekend etc.

But even then, we still managed to fight and disagree about these differing expectations every single day! In fact, in retrospect, these unspoken and unasked expectations for daily things were the largest source of pain in our marriage.

Many of these expectations couldn’t have been more incongruent with our situation during lockdown. And yet, we were both muddling through a kind of passive despair over what was happening to us, instead of embracing one of

Meditation is in no way separate from anything you do during the day, all your relationships, and your whole purpose on Earth.

the most profound lessons taught by meditation, namely, that our experience of lockdown, as does every experience, was in fact happening through us.

Dr. Roche builds on this idea in the same essay when he writes:

“Meditation is in no way separate from anything you do during the day, all your relationships, and your whole purpose on Earth. In every meditation, you will have to sort through all the stuff in your mind and heart, and if anything is out of balance, you will feel it intensely. If you have wronged someone, or left an important conversation unfinished, you will find your attention going to it again and again. If you want to go any deeper in meditation, you will have to bring some resolution to your outer situations, otherwise your meditation will start to feel stalemated. So you’ll find yourself adjusting your behavior in daily life to be more ethical, to minimize the amount of your meditation time that is taken up by processing the residue of the day. In other words, in meditation every day you will have a small degree of the insight people have on their deathbed, where they wish they had lived their lives.”

In the same way meditation isn’t separate from the rest of our life, lockdown isn’t a separation

from our pre-COVID life either. It is an intensified continuation of it. Akin to “marriage” or “parenting” or simply “life” on “hard mode,” we found ourselves without our ritual distractions of the gym, or yoga, or work, or whatever to hide behind when tensions flared.

Thus it drew our expectations out into the open. As we began openly asking each other for the kind of support we needed, lest we kept suffering in silence or exploding in anger, we were able to work through the “residue” of our marriage that existed pre-COVID and ultimately go deeper into our relationship as a result.

But, like meditation, it isn’t easy. Speaking so plainly with your spouse about what you need or don’t need as support is difficult. You may get that support, or a multi-day argument, or you may need to give up an expectation to preserve equanimity,





or realize you are being unrealistic, which also hurts in and of itself. But, by doing so there is at least a more honest foundation to grow into and through (there are also fewer desires floating about, which is healthy in its own right, and could be the subject for another article).

So, no, we didn't choose to go into lockdown and cut ourselves off from our families and social and professional networks for months on end, but – like how we choose to meditate to work on ourselves – we have improved our relationship during lockdown by choosing to hit pause, accept the situation, reorient our expectations, and take responsibility for how we feel.

As hard as it is to write about a shared global experience, I am attempting to do so, because I find many strong, resilient people I know are now at their wits end. Lockdown was manageable for them when it seemed it would be just a few months. But faced with the prospect of another six months, or more, of severely limited movement, and mounting worries about income and jobs, they are starting to cave in to the loneliness, the feeling of being cooped up, and the feeling that life is fully beyond their control.

Make no mistake about it, I believe this is all going to get worse before it gets better. So, to gird our sanity as this intensifies, we need to help each other find those metaphors from our life before COVID, wherein we succeeded, excelled, grew, and proactively took charge of our lives.

For those with experience in meditation, lean into it as I have. Make it your metaphor. It is the perfect training for dealing with the challenges of uncertainty and isolation posed by lockdown, because it teaches us to address how we feel without brooding, so we can take responsibility for our feelings without succumbing to them. In these troubled times, this is a precious experience to have, and, as my wife and I found out, a critical skill to navigating the uncertainties.

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Practice the pause.
When in doubt, pause.
When angry, pause.
When tired, pause.
When stressed, pause.
And when you pause, pray.

ANON

THE HEARTFUL STRATEGIST

PART 8

In the series so far, **RAVI VENKATESAN** has introduced the Heartful Strategist framework, and explored how our consciousness results in the strategies we adopt and the choices we make, which in turn have consequences that impact our ecosystem. He has also explored the concept of thought patterns, and how past impressions create these patterns. He has also reviewed a number of Heartfulness methods that lead to positive shifts in our thought patterns, and the development of the *Turiya* level of consciousness, which he considers to be the ideal for a Heartful Strategist.

In this article, he evolves a specific set of steps to access deeper levels of consciousness, in order to adopt the best strategies. In everyday terms, we can consider this as ensuring that we “see the forest and the trees.”



When we encounter most situations or problems, the best first step is to **pause**. This doesn't mean that we don't respond with urgency when needed. In our modern lives, we are not running away from lions and tigers in the jungle, but the primitive instincts are still present in us. In many cases the first step to access deeper levels of our consciousness is simply to pause.

The second step is to make a fundamental **shift from a reactive to creative mode**. By pausing and shifting to a creative mode, we naturally prevent an emotional reaction, and instead allow space for inspiration to emerge from deeper within.

As we practice the methods outlined in the previous articles, we achieve two things simultaneously. We eliminate past impressions that have created set thought patterns. We also become more aware of our reactive tendencies. This awareness helps us to pause and shift to a creative mode. One way to understand consciousness is also as the "degree of awareness" (Daaji, 2019). With practice, our awareness becomes sharper, and we are able to operate from higher levels of consciousness.

The third step is to evaluate the situation or problem as objectively as possible, by adopting a **witness attitude**. This is a powerful concept. It allows you to be impartial. See part 5 of this series for an exercise to develop this attitude.

The fourth step is to intentionally **broaden the term and scope** of impact of any strategies you might adopt and choices you might make.

And the fifth and final step is to allow multiple choices to emerge from the heart space versus going with the first or the most obvious option that comes from your **head space**. When you shift your focus from mental analysis to feeling, you will balance your head and heart, and tap into higher levels of consciousness in a natural manner. Challenge yourself not to accept the most convenient choice, but rather get to the optimal one for the broadest possible set of people. In other words, think in terms of your ecosystem.

Let's take an example of this approach in action. Eva, who is a consulting manager, is considering laying off three team members due to adverse financial circumstances. Initially, she considers the financial targets she needs to hit and calculates how many people to lay off to reach her target. She then pauses and starts thinking about these individuals and their lives. She considers the impact on their families. She thinks about the circle of their friends and relatives. The impact on their landlord of them not paying rent. The impact of their landlord not paying the mortgage.

Challenge yourself not to accept the most convenient choice, but rather get to the optimal one for the broadest possible set of people.

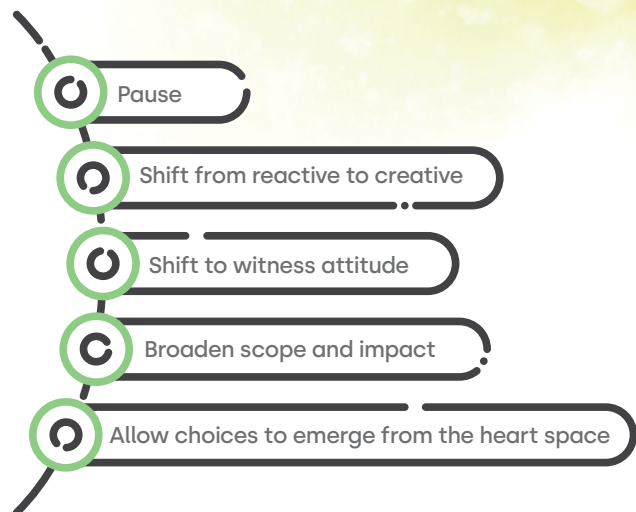
Eventually, Eva's own retirement account that has money invested in this mortgage company may suffer a reduction due to many similar decisions to the one Eva is about to make. The chain goes on. Eva knows that there are far reaching consequences of her decision beyond the individuals she is impacting. So she starts considering other alternatives.

She looks at the option of pay cuts for a larger number of people to get closer to the target. She advocates assertively for this option with her boss and convinces him. She also brings all the impacted people to a meeting, and explains how their temporary pay cut is saving the jobs of some of them. Eva's boss feels inspired and decides to apply this solution to other teams in the company, resulting in many jobs being saved.

Though the story is modified, it is inspired by what recently happened at a mid-sized consulting company in Atlanta that went through tough times during the COVID-19 crisis. The employees appreciated the decision so much that they resolved to stay with the company even if they are paid lower than market rates. Their motivation to help the company get back to positive financial circumstances has risen manifold based on how they saw the partners behave and make choices.

The leaders took a longer term and broader view of the impacts of their strategy to deal with this crisis.

In summary, use this checklist to ensure that you develop strategies by accessing higher levels of consciousness. The choices made will have the best consequences and outcomes for your entire ecosystem.



Adopt this checklist for the next strategy you develop and see what shifts in the choices you make. The outcomes will be those of a Heartful Strategist!

ON FEAR AND ANGER

In this month's column, [DR. ICHAK ADIZES](#) explores the two emotions of fear and anger, and how they color our experiences in life. He shares his own mantra for working with these emotions so that life becomes more purposeful and joyful.

How did it happen that the prophet Daniel walked into the lion's cage and the lion didn't do anything to him? Did God do something to the lion so that the lion did not attack, or was it Daniel who did something so that the lion did not attack?

My insight: Daniel believed in God with all his soul, and trusted that God would protect him. There was no signed agreement between God and Daniel that God would do that. Daniel simply trusted God. Because he trusted God, he felt no fear, and when you feel no fear you do not project that you might attack proactively to defend yourself. If you do not project aggression, there is no need for the other party, in this case the lion, to attack you proactively in its defense.

I learned this taking a walking safari in Africa many years ago. We walked through the reserve without guns, without any protection. I admit I was scared; we might be attacked. There were lions, there were many wild animals left and right. The guide calmed us down, telling us that every animal has a perimeter within which that





animal feels secure, and as long as you do not cross that boundary, they leave you alone. If you don't threaten them, they will not threaten you.

I took it with a grain of salt, because if an animal like a lion is hungry, its radius is probably much bigger. The fact, however, is that we walked that safari for days and nothing dangerous happened. When you feel confident, have no fear, it vibrates, and those that could feel threatened by you, have confidence that you're safe and they do not need to attack you proactively.

This has applications for personal life and married life. Something happens and one of the partners in

the marriage feels that maybe they are not loved. Maybe it happened because the spouse raised their voice or did not show attention, or whatever. Now the one that feels that way, has a fear: I am not loved. I'm not appreciated. I'm being ignored. The fear activates an attack. It will show in their negative attitude, in their tone of voice, and now what happens? The other person feels attacked and develops his or her own fears of not being loved. Because of the fears, they attack in return. And what happens now? Escalation. Bigger attacks yield bigger fears, that provoke even bigger attacks, that provoke bigger and bigger attacks and fears and the result could be appearance in court for a divorce or a separation.

My mantra:

Speak without offending,
Listen without defending,
Love without depending, and
Live without pretending.

Speak without offending:

If you're offending, it is because you are scared. You're scared of losing an argument. Or, you might be scared of not being heard, not being appreciated, you fear that your feelings or ideas are not given the weight they deserve. It could be generated by past experiences which have nothing to do with the present situation, but "past music" in your head does interfere with the present music you hear now.

Listen without defending:

Why are you defending? Fear again. Fear that you might lose an argument, and if you lose an argument it proves that you're not as smart as you would like to project yourself to be; or, again, you perceive you are not being listened to, or being dismissed. Fears. Fears. Fears.

Eliminate fears.

Eliminate expectations.

Trust God, or,
if you are an atheist,
trust yourself.



Love without depending:

Once you depend on other people giving you love, you're living in fear that they might leave, and that's painful. Now what happens? You fight in order not to lose the love that you so much depend on, and as you fight you might be suffocating the other person. You might be limiting the other person to love you of their own volition. Your expectations, your demands, turn them into suppliers of love, whether they want it or not. They might resent it and there we go into fears and anger that destroy relationships.

Live without pretending:

Why are you pretending? Fear. Fear that you're not good enough, and you have to wear make-up to look more beautiful than you really are naturally.

Eliminate fears. Eliminate expectations. Trust God, or, if you are an atheist, trust yourself. Be calm, and you can walk into a hostile meeting and survive like the prophet Daniel did.

Just thinking and feeling,
Dr. Ichak Adizes

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when humanity is called
to shift to a new level
of consciousness ...
that time is now.

WANGARI MAATHAI

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Creating Communities for Health – Part 1

BARBARA BUSH speaks with **MAMATA VENKAT** about Global Health Corps, working in teams with other passionate young talented people who want to make a difference in the health of their communities, and finding ways to create connection with friends, family and colleagues during lockdown and self-isolation.



Q: 2020 has not gone the way people have anticipated. How are you doing amongst all of the uncertainty with the pandemic?

BB: 2020 definitely looks different than I thought it would. I'm doing as well as can be. I feel really fortunate that I've been able to quarantine with my family for the majority of the past few months. I've been with my parents and my husband, and while that is incredibly unexpected, I wouldn't have this type of time with my parents again. I most certainly never anticipated moving back in with them in my thirties. So I feel really lucky to be with them every single day for a number of months.

We've been very, very safe. My parents have taken quarantine very seriously, which I'm really grateful for. That's one less thing to worry about for them, since they are in an older category.

I feel lucky that I got to start a new job during this time. I've had many transitions, from grad school to starting a new job during quarantine, and I think it's motivating to know that life still goes on. This is obviously in the context of deep frustration and concern and worry for so many people that I know or don't know. It's definitely very motivating to think about what work looks like moving forward in a manner that focuses on equity for people, regardless of where they live and regardless of their race in the United States, especially concerning health.

Q: Absolutely. Everything that has been happening in the United States has exposed a lot of gaps on many levels: systemic, communal,

and on an individual level. Global Health Corps, the non-profit fellowship program that you co-founded, was created as a way for passionate young adults to help fill those systemic gaps in the healthcare system. Can you tell us a little more about the conception of Global Health Corps?

I met my co-founders in 2008, and we started Global Health Corps together. We did not think we were going to start an organization. We were in our early twenties and passionate about global health. All of us were imagining what our careers could look like in global health. We ended up coming together around this idea of bringing leadership and talent to global health to continue to solve problems.

We were so lucky to be growing up in the early 2000s. At that time – and today also – we have so much at our disposal. We have the drugs we need to keep people healthy, we have vaccines, we have technology to connect us and share information, we have education etc. We have most of the tools to make sure millions of people around the world don't die from preventable and treatable illnesses. This is incredible, but it doesn't matter if we have these tools if they don't get to people or people can't use them.

So we built Global Health Corps to be the human capital talent pipeline of global health, to make sure that we can maximize these tools to keep people safe and healthy. And the way we do that every day is to recruit young leaders from around the world to join us for an initial year-long fellowship, where they work on cross-cultural

teams within partner organizations, solving issues to better serve the communities in which they're based. They are working and learning in the gray area of health; throughout the year they go through a curriculum focused on advocacy, entrepreneurship, and systems change, so that they have the frameworks they need to continue to grow in their careers as leaders in global health.

While it is a fellowship program, I'd say our impact is what happens in the years after our fellows join us for the first year. We have an incredibly active alumni community. Fellows know each other deeply, which I think helps with resilience in this work, and 82% of them continue to work in global health and social determinants of health following their fellowship.

We're seeing these young leaders enter the field early in their careers and stay in the field, which is great, because it means that there is more creative, young, passionate talent working in global health to serve others.

Q: Are there stories that stand out to you?

There are so many stories of our fellows and alums! I could name a thousand. Each of them brings a very unique way of working in global health. Many

I think we've seen this tremendously in Global Health Corps – how important connections are, and how important it is to have a peer group that shares your values.

of them are not doctors and nurses. They have different skill sets, which bring different ways of thinking to the table.

One of our fellows, Temie Giwa, joined our third class of fellows. She was working in Uganda for Millinium Villages Project, and she's a maternal health advocate. She always was. Temie gave birth to her first child after her fellowship, and even though there were complications she was lucky to have a safe birth. After this, she became even more passionate about maternal health, in particular addressing maternal-infant mortality due to maternal hemorrhaging during the birthing process. Blood transfusions can help dramatically, so Temie started LifeBank to address blood shortages in Nigeria.

In the United States, we take for granted that we have the American Red Cross and other blood banks. Because of the AIDS crisis in Nigeria, blood for transfusions was scarce. So Temie started a company focused on helping to save women's lives in the birthing process, by holding blood drives and delivering life-saving medicines and blood to hospitals. She is scaling it across Nigeria, and in the future, the continent. She has fleets of moto-drivers and bikers that deliver blood wherever needed in order to serve women where they are. She's keeping women alive and healthy in such a unique experience of giving birth, and she's managed to do it at scale.

It's interesting, because that's not what you would think of initially if you were going to think of a maternal health intervention. She came up with a different way of addressing a chronic problem in her country, and across the world.

Q: I appreciate what you said earlier, that these fellows are deeply, deeply connected to one another. In social impact, it can be really easy to get caught up in the grind of the work and forget to make authentic connections. I



worked at Global Health Corps for three years, and I definitely felt the grind of the work, but what made that experience so special for me, and what I'm so grateful for, is the community that I felt amongst the staff and the fellows. It really feels like the pandemic has forced us to remember how critical community is. How important do you think camaraderie is in making impact?

I think it's probably the most important aspect of making impact. And I think, to your question, we forget that we don't need to do this work alone. We shouldn't do this work alone. And there are a number of reasons why. There is a lot of behavioral science theory and problem-solving theory around how important it is to work in groups, because you bring different ways of thinking to the same problem. Therefore, it's more of the notion that "one plus one equals three." You can get to

different solutions based on different viewpoints working alongside you.

Number two: The resilience required in global health, and other fields of social change, is critical. Challenges can be very debilitating, and it's critical to know you have a community of others walking alongside you, and who have your back as you do this work. I think we've seen this tremendously in Global Health Corps – how important connections are, and how important it is to have a peer group that shares your values. When people come to Global Health Corps, they are interested and passionate about global health equity, and all of a sudden they are in this community of twenty to one hundred people who believe completely in global health equity. They have a peer group that pushes them to continue to be better in this work.

They also have a peer group that understands the intricacies of this work. They have people they can turn to for debriefing about what they're seeing. That's incredibly important. Especially now, when we're physically isolated, it's important to remember that we don't need to be socially isolated, and that we can be active in maintaining connections with people emotionally, even if we can't physically be with them.

Finally, we've seen all of these incredible examples of our fellows working together. They do that because they know each other and they trust each other. Trust is incredibly important in building relationships. The fact that Global Health Corps' fellows and alums may have not known each other before entering our program, and yet they build trusting relationships – it's very powerful.

For instance, in the early days of COVID our alumni community in Malawi got together and worked with the Ministry of Health in Malawi to build a Public Service Announcement on COVID and how to take care of yourself and protect yourself from COVID. It's a great PSA, and it's



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been shown a tremendous number of times. They were able to do that because they trusted each other, and they also knew how deeply each one of their community members cared about addressing health equity. We see the importance of that now in COVID; we don't know what it will be, but we will obviously have another epidemic at some point. To make sure we have these trusting relationships of folks who can work together to have an impact and to make change is so important.

Q: To your point: Right now, with the pandemic, it can feel very difficult to stay connected with one another. That can make it hard to feel like we can make a tangible impact, whether it's in healthcare or education, or even just the feeling of being together. What are the things that you're doing now to stay connected to your people?

I've created a ritual with colleagues, school classmates, and friends, to speak with a few each day. I try to make sure that I stay in touch with both my friends and family that I care about deeply. I also stay in touch with those I know who are working every single day on the frontlines, whether it be about racial justice in the United States, or global health with COVID, so that I can be a system of support for them. I draw inspiration from my colleagues who are waking up every single day working on these issues.

I'm lucky on the family front because I'm staying with my family, and we get to see each other every day. I'm usually not a phone-talker, but I've started talking on the phone with friends and with colleagues. This weekend I went on a socially distanced hike with two friends of mine that I met through Global Health Corps, who are working on COVID in the United States. We got to be in nature, I got to listen to everything that they've been doing, which is a lot. We got to laugh. It's important to remember to do that in this time.

I'm a big believer in socially-distanced walking, and socially-distanced phone calls where I go on a walk and talk to people, because it's been wonderful to be moving and to be in nature.

Lastly, I have this crew of my parents' friends who are single. I've known them all my life and have grown up with them. I call them every week or every other week to check on them, just because I know they are living alone. That's been really beautiful and special. It's fun to hear how they are doing, and to make sure they know I'm thinking of them. It's provided a lot of sweet moments and laughs.

Q: That's the bittersweet part. I'm connecting with people that I probably wouldn't have spoken to had life been moving as quickly as before the pandemic. While this period of time has been frustrating, it's been nice to be able to slow down and connect with everybody, and to rebuild those connections again.

There's an incredible book by Dr. Vivek Murthy called *Together*. I read it during the early days of the pandemic. It could not have come out at a more appropriate time. There's a number of simple rituals in the book, where he schedules time with two guy friends from whom he draws a lot of inspiration and support. They schedule time every month, and it's a standing meeting that they have. They know they are going to be vulnerable, and they are going to share what is going on in their life, whether it is good or bad. They use it as a support group and a way to encourage ideas from each other.

I think there is something really great and helpful about the regularity of scheduling check-ins with your friends and colleagues, where you're just going to talk, where it's not work-related at all. You can make that a ritual in your life, something you can always count on. Your friends know that this will regularly happen, and they can also count on it.

I think it's important to realize that we can be deliberate in making sure that we maintain our relationships well.

I think it's important to realize that we can be deliberate in making sure that we maintain our relationships well. It doesn't require a lot.

Q: I think that book is especially relevant now because we don't know when the pandemic is going to end. Reminding ourselves of the ways to stay connected with other people, and with ourselves, is critical right now. Loneliness is a problem. Dr. Murthy really called it, saying that loneliness is its own pandemic. There are a lot of people – the elderly and young adults, especially – who are suffering from mental health issues because of this. We know how to support our friends and family, but what do you think we can do better on a global scale to make sure that everyone feels as supported as possible right now?

I hope that we're more deliberate about this, especially given the physical isolation that's required for COVID. This will become more critical, and I hope that we realize how critical it is.

First of all, I hope everyone reading this reads Dr. Murthy's book. Mental health is under-appreciated and often overlooked. It is something that we feel ashamed to talk about, which shouldn't be the case. There is a lot of work for all of us to do to normalize speaking about mental health – to

remove the shame. We can't expect people in leadership and organizations to do this if we aren't doing it ourselves and in our communities. Normalizing discussions around mental health is really important and it's something that everyone can do.

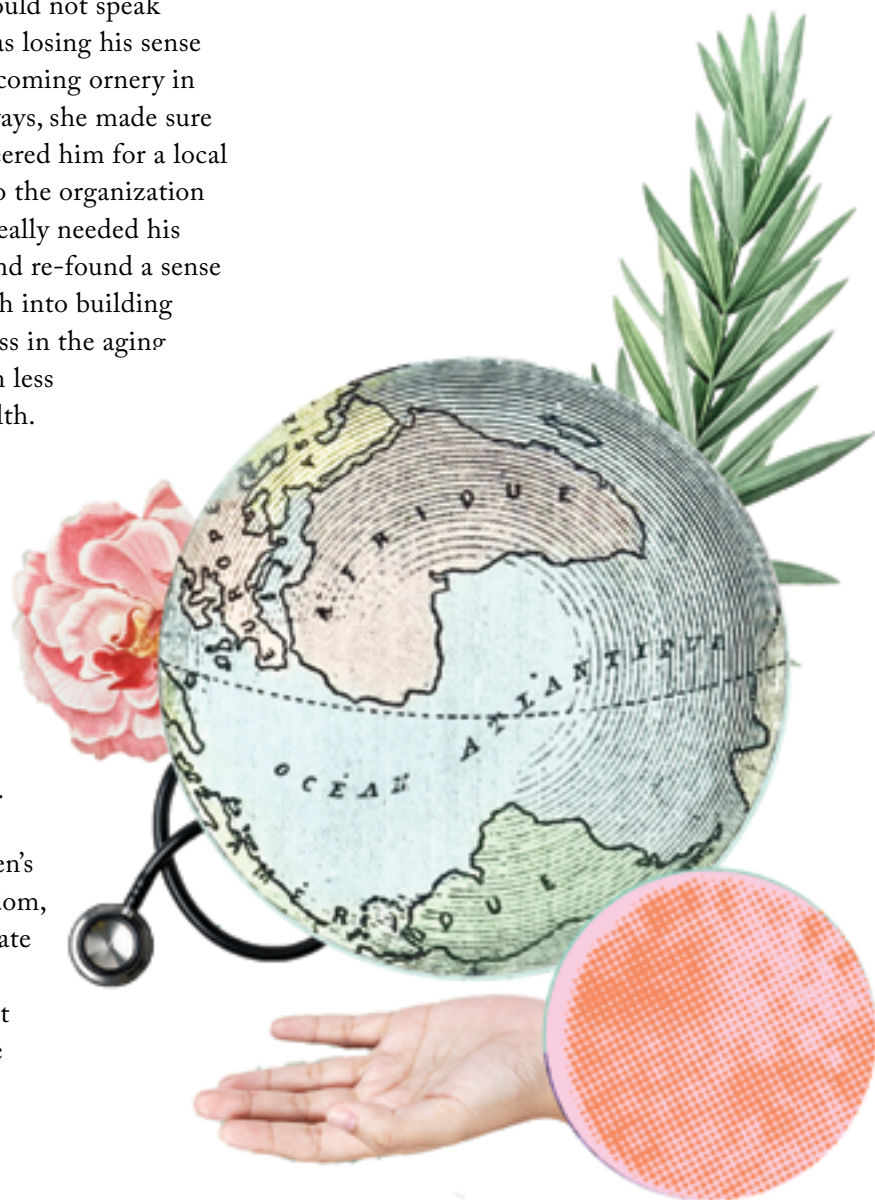
In reading *Together*, I was struck by the examples of individuals who started community-building organizations for people who are more likely to be lonely. There's this incredible organization called Men's Sheds. The founder's mother had just died, making her father a widower. He was grieving, becoming depressed, but he would not speak about it. She could sense he was losing his sense of purpose, and that he was becoming ornery in life. In a number of different ways, she made sure that he was useful. She volunteered him for a local board without him knowing, so the organization called him and said that they really needed his help, he started volunteering and re-found a sense of purpose. Thus began her path into building community to address loneliness in the aging male population – a population less likely to talk about mental health. The Men's Sheds community centers are meeting places for men to do carpentry, metal working, woodworking etc., based on the notion that men won't necessarily talk to each other about mental health face-to-face, but they will when they are working side by side, next to each other.

Now, there are hundreds of Men's Sheds across the United Kingdom, Australia, the US, and they create comfort in talking about inner lives and mental health without shame. Men's Sheds are a place

where strong, trusted connections are built, and community can be built.

I love this because we can each create community for those we care for. For instance, I mentioned that I had started calling my parents' older friends who are alone during the pandemic. How can we make sure that we are in touch with folks, and make sure we're building community for them and ourselves? Because we will all experience different levels of loneliness in our lifetime, too.

To be continued.



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A woman's profile is shown in a soft, warm light, looking upwards. Overlaid on her face is a semi-transparent, ghostly image of another person's face, also looking upwards, creating a sense of connection or reflection.

Alone but Not Lonely

DR JAY THIMMAPURAM explores the science of loneliness and how it impacts our health and well-being. He also shares some simple things we can do in order to feel better about being alone without having to feel lonely.

Loneliness is a painful sense of isolation, a lack of belongingness and an absence of social contact. It refers to a discrepancy between social needs and their availability in the environment. Though humans are fundamentally wired to be social, we are slowly but surely drifting into the zone of loneliness. This perception of loneliness has been increasing with successive generations. Generation Z, our younger generation, are reportedly lonelier than any of the previous generations. It is also a fact that we are more digitally connected with people than any other time in the past, which seems to be a paradox.

The consequences of loneliness are many. It poses a significant health problem for a sizeable sector of the population, leading to increased risks of depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, behavior and health care utilization. There is also an increased risk of cardiovascular problems, and even Alzheimer's disease. The odds of mortality go up significantly. Some studies suggest that the health consequences are almost equal to smoking 15 cigarettes per day. The data are striking. According to recent studies, more than 40 percent of the population feel lonely and left out. And the actual statistics may be higher, as loneliness is perceived as a stigma and often goes unmentioned. The 19th Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Vivek Murthy, has pointed out that loneliness is an epidemic and has mentioned how he felt very lonely as a child and reported an associated sense of shame.

This takes us to a much deeper aspect. Loneliness is often influenced by our relationship to our own self. When we feel lonely, we often erect a barrier around ourselves. This not only prevents others from coming to us, but also prevents us from stepping out of the barrier. As it is a self-created barrier, breaking it is rather difficult. The only way is to dissolve it! This barrier lies at the foundation of our own ideas of ourselves. We may be bogged

Loneliness is often influenced by our relationship to our own self. When we feel lonely, we often erect a barrier around ourselves. This not only prevents others from coming to us, but also prevents us from stepping out of the barrier.

down by feelings of inferiority or carried away by feelings of superiority. Both are ideas that we create for ourselves. It stems from a fundamental state of not being comfortable with ourselves in our current state. When we are not comfortable with ourselves, it is difficult to be comfortable with others, and for others to be comfortable with us. How do we get over this? A simple awareness of how we feel may help us recognize the issue. Attention to our well-being starts from there.

Inner well-being is a state of contentment, joy and having a positive outlook on life. Simple needs, when fulfilled, can yield excellent results. Sleep plays a significant role in our well-being and even our perception of loneliness. A study conducted recently shows that lack of sleep actually causes loneliness. When sleep is disturbed, we are usually not in the best state of mind. Such a mind does not like to socialize. A good night's rest is the foundation on which our day's activities are

based. Without this strong base, our day is not optimal. In addition, sleep may also contribute to our personality. Going to bed in a state of calm, and resting our attention on the inner intrinsic goodness of the heart, can help us mold our personality.

When physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellness are taken care of, they act as antidotes to loneliness. They create a good foundation for positive interactions and yield fruitful results. Another simple solution is to train the mind to give it a good direction, and meditation is one way to do this. As we keep meditating, we begin to experience a change in the inner landscape and a feeling of self-acceptance develops. We become more comfortable and accepting of ourselves, and that lays the foundation for social interaction in a positive way.



As we keep meditating, we begin to experience a change in the inner landscape and a feeling of self-acceptance develops. We become more comfortable and accepting of ourselves, and that lays the foundation for social interaction in a positive way.

Day-to-day challenges, stresses and strains often play a role in loneliness. When we encounter blows in life, our state of mind is not congenial to socialize. An evening practice of Heartfulness Cleaning is a remedy. It helps us to remove the emotional sediments that have accumulated within our system. A mind that is cleared of the emotional burden is in an ideal state for social interactions.

With a peaceful inner disposition, even when we are alone we are not lonely, for there is always an inner state of calmness, contentment and joy. In such a state, when we do interact with others, we will affect them in a positive way and uplift those who feel down or lonely.

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A Love Letter to the Future

Part 2

"What we do now echoes in eternity," said Marcus Aurelius. The transition of the past few months has been stressful but also a time to remove obsolete habits, to rebuild our priorities, and to explore new paradigms. With this in mind, PURNIMA RAMAKRISHNAN interviewed DR. ELIZABETH DENLEY on our ability to adapt to changes during COVID times. Elizabeth holds a PhD in ecology as well as having spent over 30 years practicing Yoga and studying the yogic sciences. She sees the bridging of science and spirituality as the way of the future.

Q: Elizabeth, the word "crisis" has a Greek root which means "the turning point of a disease, perhaps when recovery is imminent." So, as the wise elders say, every crisis is an opportunity. How can we use this time to elevate ourselves as a species?

Let's ask ourselves, "What is it that humanity needs right now?" It's a very big question. How will people view this time a hundred years from now? Will they look back and say we did the best we could? I listened to a podcast the other day, of Krista Tippett interviewing Jacqueline Novogratz, and she said something very profound: We need to write a love letter to the next generation. What is the legacy we'll be leaving them? What is our love letter to them? There is a profound awareness that comes with the idea that what was "normal" before COVID was very abnormal. It was not in tune with nature. We were heading on a kamikaze suicidal path to mass destruction. Many people know it today. It was already well-known in the '70s. It was already known in the '50s when Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring*.

Yet, with all our knowledge, we seem to be heading closer and closer to the abyss. The same is

true of our relationships, as you mentioned before. We've known about the problems of modern culture, digital technology, and the need for digital detox for quite a long time. We have also known the problems of pollution for so long. It's not a lack of knowledge that is stopping us from changing.

It's creating the consciousness to do something about the knowledge we have. It's not enough to know. So, the question then is: How do we raise our consciousness to a level where we can make the necessary changes? We all know what's right and wrong morally, and yet do we do what's right? No. Otherwise, we wouldn't be in this crisis.

The biggest hurdle we face is that our tendencies, our patterns, come mostly from our subconscious. They are all laid down in our formative years, and it is difficult to change these patterns. I'll give you an example. If you've grown up learning that it is safer to lie so you are not beaten or ostracized, you will learn from a very early age that it's safer to tell lies. It becomes an ingrained pattern. So, you hide things from your parents, you hide things from your teachers. It could be that you haven't done

your homework, or you've done something wrong, or whatever. When these patterns become engraved in your subconscious, how to learn to tell the truth as an adult? Even to yourself.

How do we become honest with ourselves about who we are? How do we have the self-acceptance, the self-compassion to do this when we have never been taught self-acceptance and self-compassion as a young child? How do we learn to listen to our hearts, listen to our feelings if we have never been asked the question as a young child, "How do you feel?"

It is not that we don't want to change; all of us want to change. The difficulty is in how to do it, given that the subconscious patterns are so deep? Well, of course it takes work, but the tools are there.

This is what Yoga is all about – getting rid of those layers of complexities that cause individual suffering. It all starts with cleaning the roots of all the tendencies in the subconscious mind. And in Yoga those roots are called samskaras or impressions. Until they're gone, there is no possibility of change. It's like cutting down a tree but leaving the roots, and the shoots come up again.

You can go through all the psychoanalysis and self-help you want, but unless you remove the root samskara, it will sprout again. The practice of removing samskaras is essential to bring about change.

In parallel, behavior also has to change; that's why I mentioned a moral revolution earlier. COVID has given us the opportunity to pause and think about what that moral revolution could be. Can we envision a world that is different from before? Can we recalibrate ourselves personally? Can we simplify our lives so that we move forward without going down the same destructive path? It's possible. I have a lot of hope.

This morning I was out for a walk, and I saw some pathways made of slate tiles, and between the slate, in the hot sun of an Indian summer, there were little plants coming up between the gray slate. Hardly any soil and yet they grow there. They had little flowers. If small plants can grow in such an arid, difficult environment, there is hope for us too. We can turn this around.

I'm very hopeful for the future. I'm not denying the suffering and the problems we face. They are massive, and for that reason it's our duty to help each other, to stop hoarding toilet paper and hoarding this and hoarding that. The way forward is to share, to take each other along and go



forward together. And hopefully, that will be the outcome of this crisis, this opportunity to change direction.

Q: It felt so joyful, Elizabeth, when you spoke about those small plants sprouting in between the slate sheets. So, what do you think is the way forward for the future? Can you share something that is easy to understand, and easy to execute?

You're asking: How to create compassionate consciousness

in our culture? I can only share what I know, and other people may have other ways. The way I know is through heart-based meditation. We need the heart. The mind is wonderful, but without the heart guiding it we're lost. And I think that's where we have gone wrong. We have developed incredible technology and incredible advancements in science, but without the heart we end up with nuclear missiles and plastic everything. Amazing technology, no heart, no care.

How to develop the heart?
Through simple heart-based practices. Put your attention there. First, you have to get rid of the complexities, the emotional complications that are there. You need pure consciousness. And you also need to learn to witness your heart and listen to it. That's meditation. It's a simple thing.

Develop your instrument of perception, your instrument of guidance, your instrument of conscience – your heart. Balance yourself, as the heart is the midpoint of the human chakra system. It's where the physical body, the subtle body and the soul join. The heart is the seat of the soul. So, when you put your attention on your heart, what are you developing? All the heart-based qualities – love, courage, compassion, empathy, kindness, willpower, and resilience – the strength to overcome challenges, to make changes.

It's not enough just to be compassionate and loving, you also need the capacity to bring about change.

I mentioned prayer earlier because it allows us to go into the heart, completely open the heart and create a connection with the higher Self. While we're in that state of love, the infinite vastness of the heart, we can use our willpower to make a suggestion for change. For example, the thought

This morning I was out for a walk, and I saw some pathways made of slate tiles, and between the slate, in the hot sun of an Indian summer, there were little plants coming up between the gray slate. Hardly any soil and yet they grow there. They had little flowers. If small plants can grow in such an arid, difficult environment, there is hope for us too. We can turn this around.





that all humanity is becoming peace-loving, or all humanity is becoming giving. The effect will magnify, it will echo out into the universe, it will ripple out way beyond us.

When we do this, our thought ripples out in all directions. If everybody does it, the problem is solved. How can we have conflict when we're in the heart? The heart is the "we" where we connect. The heart is the vastness of our oneness.

In the heart, you and I are not separate. On the ego level we're different individuals. On the heart level we're the same. When we're all connected, which we are

anyway, everything that happens in the universe affects all of us.

Quantum physics tells us the same thing – an electron in one part of the universe affects one on the other side of the universe, because they are connected.

How to live that connection every day? By doing simple practices, and by letting go of all the fears that hold us from exploring this. I find the younger generation more open to the exploration because they want a better world. Why are school children demonstrating against climate change? Because they want a different world. It's their future and we have messed it up

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You need pure consciousness. And you also need to learn to witness your heart and listen to it. That's meditation.



It's a simple thing.

for them. Hopefully, we will start to listen to their voices, we will write our love letter to the next generation, and say we're sorry, we want to help build a future.

I don't think it's about huge political plans. It's about what we can do as individuals. We change things by changing ourselves. When that happens the world will surely change.

be inspired





Every thought and action then
becomes an inner conversation,
a meeting between God and World.

HERMANN HESSE

A User's Guide to Living

- Part 10 -

Love in Action



DAAJI continues his series on everyday living, introducing the ninth universal principle of the User's Guide, which explores how to become the best version of ourselves. He shares the importance of lifestyle as a complement to a meditative practice, and how our attitude to lifestyle reflects in our relationships with others.

As a starting point, this ninth principle helps us to celebrate and value diversity among us all. In removing our prejudices and accepting the richness of humanity and other life forms, we evoke love and piety in others, and create unity within that diversity. As we go deeper into this principle, we realize the important roles of love and duty in our daily life if we are to become the best version of ourselves.

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

Essential values

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

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

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

Principle Nine

Mold your behavior and way of living to such a high order as to rouse a feeling of love and piety in others.

So far, we have covered eight principles, which we have categorized under Practice, Values, and Behavior. In Principle 9, we now look at raising the bar even higher in our dealings with others, so that they are inspired by us and feel our association to be ennobling. Principle 9 is a call to action to become our best possible version, to be in tune with our highest Self. This requires the coming together of all aspects of our practice and lifestyle. It requires the awareness, refinement, and moderation required for transformation. It is the culmination of all the previous principles, so that we become role models for others. Principle 9 is thus also about Leadership. A true leader leads by example, as a source of inspiration to others. And there is no shortcut to becoming such a leader; it is a weaving of all the previous principles into a way of life that evokes love wherever we go.

Inner transformation can change outer behavior

The real proof of our inner transformation is in our outer behavior and lifestyle, which are reflected in our dealings with everyone and everything. This is known in Yoga as *vyavahara*. Our dealings with others occur primarily in our conversations and actions, while the inner aspects of our being that frame these conversations and actions are our thoughts and feelings. Molding our living to the highest order means transforming all of these.



Science now acknowledges that consciousness is the basic canvas of the manifested universe. Everything emanates from consciousness.

And how can we achieve this? Contemporary science now acknowledges that consciousness is the basic canvas of the manifested universe. Everything emanates from consciousness. So, to make any lasting change in the world, to mold our living, we have to expand and transform our consciousness, and meditation is the most effective way to do this. It is for this reason that meditation has become immensely popular with people who are interested in transformation.

But meditation is one part of the story. The other important part is: How do we bring that expanded consciousness into our way of living? How do we allow it to transform our behavior to such a high order that we rouse a feeling of love and piety in others? Do we need to consider the play of cognitive and emotional biases in dealing with others? How can we create the feeling of goodness in others while we go on with an “I don’t care” attitude? Is it within us to remove biases from within?

Our way of living is all about how we interact with each other, how we converse, how we respond in a particular environment, how we dress, the kind of perfume we wear or don’t wear, our body language,

the way we judge or value others – so many things. The way we conduct ourselves says everything about our way of living. For example, how do we live in such a way that we are not creating envy or jealousy in others? That means simplification to the bare minimum.

Remember Principle 4, “Simplify your life so as to become identical with your divine Nature”? I am purposely adding the word “divine” here to make the meaning of the word “Nature” clearer. It has nothing to do with sleeping under trees. It has everything to do with simplifying life so as to imbibe our divine Nature. When we go to that level of simplicity, the bare minimum, then it is possible to rouse the feeling of love and piety in others. It is a very high goal, actually. So, there is a need to think on how to get rid of complexities in order to arrive at simplicity.

And here we are not just talking of rousing love and piety in ourselves, which is a prerequisite and already a valid achievement. We are taking it to the next level of rousing love and piety in others. It has to be something more than being pious and in absolute love with God. That is not enough. Things move from higher to lower. If our purity has to flow into someone else, if we are to create a state of piety in others, we will have to reach a higher level so that it can move from higher to lower. Arriving at incremental purity too demands the removal of impurities – how shall we do that?

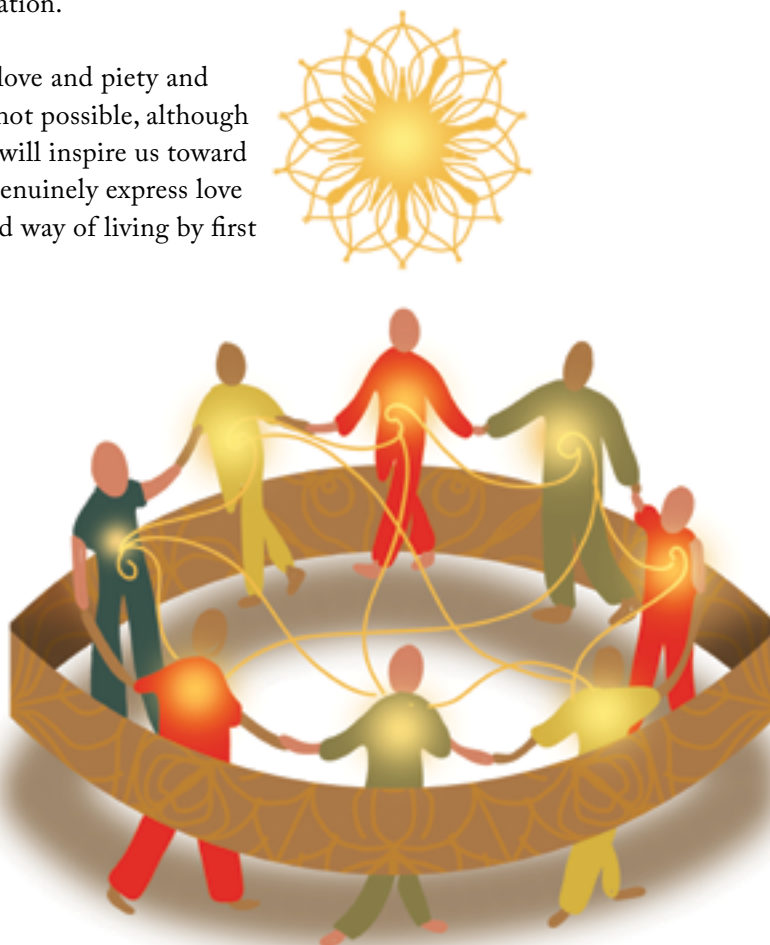
Creating loving relationships with others

The word “piety” is derived from *pietas*, the Latin word meaning dutifulness, affection, love, loyalty, and gratitude. It is worth exploring the idea of dutifulness here. When we are able to fulfil our duties, our dealings, our *vyavahara*, then we automatically create a kind of resonance with

others. When we fail in our duties, others will have no respect for us, let alone love and piety. What happens in a family, for example, when parents are too busy to spend the proper time nurturing, protecting and supporting their children? Eventually, those children will lose respect for their parents, because their parental duty has not been carried out. Here we are talking of the highest level of *vyavahara* that resonates from our hearts. That resonance is created in such a way that others are not hurt by our way of living: They are not hurt because of the way we speak, or because we ignore them, or the fact that we don't smile, or because we flaunt what we have. It has to be very simple, the bare minimum. And it must come with a sense of reverence and respect for others. This requires a lot of deliberation and consideration.

Can we artificially cultivate love and piety and make a show of it? No, it is not possible, although it does help to try! Surely it will inspire us toward a nobler goal. We can only genuinely express love and piety in our behavior and way of living by first

acquiring the condition and creating that inner environment within us. It cannot be copied just by being with a saint or a Master, or by reading about it. It needs to flower from within as a result of meditative practices. And how will we receive such a condition in meditation? How will it transform our inner environment? Will our thirst be quenched simply by looking at two lovely bottles of sparkling mineral water? No. It will only happen when we become perfect receptacles. And that will happen when our hearts become the perfect vacuum. That is why the Cleaning process is so vital in Heartfulness, as it removes the complexities and impurities in our field of consciousness, resulting in the vacuum.



Eventually, after regular practice over time, we mold our living to such a high order that we are no longer dependent on the Cleaning practice, because our lifestyle no longer results in cognitive and emotional biases, either in ourselves or in others. Only then will our associates and loved ones find some peace; only then will they find some sort of uncompromising relationship with us. Only then will there be no demands. It will be a loving relationship based only on purity and simplicity.

Authenticity and conscience

That is why, again and again, Babuji speaks of *vyavahara* – duty. What is your duty in this very moment? Not only in your relationships, but also with the environment in which you move; be it a place that belongs to a friend, your relatives, or you; be it an industry, an office, or a farm. How does your presence contribute?

You cannot fabricate the conditions within yourself, you cannot pretend to be pious, and you cannot pretend to be pure. It will happen when you create an authentic relationship with your Maker and with your conscience. Are you happy with your conscience, whatever you do? Analyze yourself. If you throw garbage on the street or in the river, how does it make you feel? Do you have a certain level of conscience? A lot of us do have a conscience, but is it awakened with the ability to act? Sensitivity develops only then. And we will only become sensitive to subtler and higher things when we are sensitive to these worldly things by actual implementation. Each time our little inner voice prompts us to do something worthwhile, we need to listen to it. Otherwise we will lose the art!

Going beyond the senses and becoming sensitive requires at least some commitment to listening

Going beyond the senses and becoming sensitive requires at least some commitment to listening to our conscience about the day-to-day mundane things. When we have to be reminded of our duties again and again, our consciousness cannot expand.

to our conscience about the day-to-day mundane things. When we have to be reminded of our duties again and again, our consciousness cannot expand. Constant reminders are necessary when we fail to listen. It is already too late when our conscience bites. Because our duty has not been done, hence the reminder comes.

Piety arises within the heart. It comes from beyond when we empty ourselves, when we remain prayerful, when we remain receptive. Piety can become a permanent fixture in us, but it cannot be practiced. Purity cannot be practiced. Divinity cannot be practiced. We can become pious, we can become pure, and we can become divine, but we cannot practice these things. They are the results of practice.

So what can we practice? The daily Heartfulness practices of Meditation, Cleaning, and Prayer. The expansion of consciousness that occurs through these practices is then woven back into daily life,

transforming our entire being. Thought, feeling, speech, and behavior are interconnected; and any change in one leads to change in the others, resulting in transformation in all aspects of our life, creating a holistic transformation.

When we master this Principle, the application of *vyavahara* in our daily life becomes so very natural. Helping any beings in need, whether human or otherwise, is automatic and without ceremony. It is not that we even think in terms of charity, or good deeds, or random acts of kindness, or practicing compassion, or protecting the environment: it is our fundamental human duty to support and care for others, and do whatever is needed for them. It is the natural state – why even consider it to be duty? Hence, there is no need for accolades or appreciation. The ego is not involved. It is like a mother waking during the night to attend to her newborn. Does she see it as a duty or a sacrifice? Not at all – it is simply what she does. It is natural.

One with Nature

The result of this transformation is that we become one with Nature. When all the impurities are gone, we achieve that original state. It is then that our dealings are in tune with Nature. So, what are the aspects of Nature that Principle 9 asks us to emulate?

The first is uniformity. For example, be like the sun that shines everywhere without discrimination, and the air that is available for everyone to breathe. The trees give shade to both sinner and saint, and a rose gives fragrance to both rich and poor. Nature does not discriminate. We are all from the same Source of existence, or, putting it a bit differently, we are manifestations of one energy or singularity.

The second is diversity. Nature embraces and celebrates diversity. Can you imagine a beautiful woodland with only one type of plant? It is the



When we change our behavior, it helps to change our thinking. When we change our thinking, it changes our belief patterns. This process is iterative and convergent, and the change is cumulative. As we continue on, we gradually align with Nature.

variety of colors, textures, heights, leaf shapes, and flowers that give the woods their beauty. Nature manifests herself in diversity, and each expression receives its share, according to its capacity and worth.

When we combine these two aspects, we arrive at the idea of unity in diversity, which is the ultimate way we are able to value each other, accept our various strengths and weaknesses, live a happy family life, in community, and accept that we evolve by ennobling others.

The third aspect is evolution and growth. Nature is continuously evolving. From the primordial soup, the spark of life was ignited when the first single-celled organisms appeared. It took millions of years to evolve into the diversity of species we see today. Evolution and growth are primary impulses in Nature. Here on Earth, human beings are said

to be the pinnacle of evolution right now. While plants and other animals evolve automatically according to Nature's plan, we have been gifted with the possibility to evolve consciously. We have been endowed with a level of consciousness to be self-aware, and we can expand and transform that consciousness. The process through which we do this is meditation.

Meditation allows us to progressively become more and more like Nature, but the transformation only becomes permanent when we apply it in our day-to-day dealings. When we change our behavior, it helps to change our thinking. When we change our thinking, it changes our belief patterns. This process is iterative and convergent, and the change is cumulative. As we continue on, we gradually align with Nature.

The science of molding our living

What is meant by "Mold your behavior and way of living"? Take the example of a metallic object that is defective or not up to the mark. In the process of molding it, we first have to melt it down. This melting down is a metaphor for removing existing habits, breaking down mental and emotional patterns, and changing our belief systems. Once we break down those things of our own making, we can be remade in Nature's mold.

From a scientific perspective, this means deprogramming our fixed subconscious neural patterns, so that neuroplasticity and adaptability develop in line with Nature's principles. This happens through the removal of repetitive tendencies, behaviors and habits. Let's say we have the habit of rudeness in our speech. The first step is to recognize it and want to change. As our speech becomes more and more polite, it will be noticed by others and they will change their

behavior toward us. This will further motivate us to be polite, until eventually it becomes part of nature. This also changes our thinking. In turn, neural patterns related to rude speech are erased. But all this is made permanent when we remove the root cause of the patterns at the level of the subtle body through the practice of Cleaning.

Such changes in lifestyle involve all the earlier eight principles: the daily practice of Meditation to train the mind, the practice of Prayer to vacuumize the heart, having a focus on the high goal, imbibing the universal values of simplicity, truthfulness and kinship, accepting miseries and eschewing resentment and revenge, and being happy to eat what we receive with due regard to honest and pious earnings. These principles are tools that shape our transformation.



Attracting the divine gaze

But the best is yet to come! When we mold our living in this way, we not only rouse feelings of love and piety in our fellow beings, we also begin to catch the divine attention. We become “the cynosure of His eyes,” in Babuji’s words. And this is an essential step if we want to continue on the journey. As Babuji explains, “Divine help does come, no doubt, but only when the Supreme is convinced of the devotee’s earnestness of purpose.” The Supreme Being also needs to have trust in us. Are we earnest, sincere, really searching, and authentic? Otherwise, why would He fool around with us? Babuji’s own Master, Lalaji, explains it further in the book, *Truth Eternal*: “When we have lost all sense of our own significance, and are devoid of ego-consciousness in any form, direct or indirect, then whatever we do will be just what we ought to be doing. This condition, if bestowed by God, is the best of all conditions.” Then Nature takes its place.

Inspiring ourselves and inspiring others

From experience, we know that we cannot inspire others unless we are inspired ourselves. Many people are inspired by wealth, fame, and prestige. Though there is nothing wrong with any of these, true seekers are not inspired by them, but simply accept them with gratitude when they come. It is not what we are looking for. We are also not waiting for some profound prize or enlightenment in the distant future when we complete the journey. We are inspired by something immediate, in the present, and you may be surprised by the answer. It is the condition bestowed in meditation, the gift of *Samadhi*, oneness with God, that is the inspiration. There is a little taste of the Divine each time we meditate. This is what inspires us to practice and also what inspires us to live a simple

and truthful life, treating everyone as kin. This is what inspires us to become the best version of ourselves in whatever we do, each and every day, so that it eventually becomes permanent.

The love and respect we receive from others are only indications of our progress, the confirmation that our behavior is aligning more and more with Nature, but it is not the reason we want to change. Other people may be attracted to us because of the feeling of love and piety that arises in their hearts, but if we expect it, it will only be an expression of ego.

Conscious leadership

The qualities that are valued in today's leaders are vastly different from those that were valued thirty years ago. There has been a shift from dominance, power and control, to empathy, emotional intelligence and compassion. This shift correlates with the shift in our collective consciousness, and it is also validated in research done in the fields of neuroscience and quantum physics. This research indicates that we are connected to everything in the universe through consciousness. Nature is innately intelligent, and that intelligence manifests in conscious form in human beings, so we have an additional responsibility to take care of Nature. We have the means to change external conditions by consciously changing our inner Nature.

When we reflect deeply on Principle 9, we realize that conscious leadership comes from within, from refining ourselves, from moderating our impulses and transforming our behavior. It is only then that we inspire others and evoke a feeling of love in their hearts. All of us have the potential to lead in whatever stage or position we are in. To be a leader means to live a life that inspires others, whether



of Principle 9? It is in every moment. It covers our entire existence. It applies to every little facet of our existence. And small steps bring about big changes. As a start, here is something you can try: Pay attention to your speech – to what you say and how you say it. Bring your heart into coherence with your whole being before you speak, by bringing your attention to your heart. If needed, you can breathe in and out five times from your heart. Smile to your heart when you speak. Choose your words correctly. Keep your tone even, calm, soothing and compassionate. Speak truthfully without hurting others. Help them to feel comfortable. When your speech is calm, your emotions will be calm, your body will be calm, and your thoughts will be calm. You will remain calmly connected with the Real. When you practice this consistently with awareness, it will transform your life.



I am not here on
Earth for strife,
Love is the
mission of my life.

YUNUS EMRE

Taste of Life

The Birds of Northern Sydney, Australia

HAN VAN DEN HEUVEL is an avid naturalist and photographer, and here he shares his love of the local native birds in this photo essay.

Ever since my retirement in 2016, I have been able to spend more time in nature doing what I enjoy – taking photos of birds and bees. I am very lucky to live in a house that borders on Allenby Park Reserve in the northern beaches district of Sydney. The variety of birds visiting our backyard is enormous. I sit on the back veranda with my camera and wait for the birds to come by. Believe me, it is not as easy as it looks to get a good picture!

Eastern Yellow Robin



Eastern Spinebil

Laughing Kookaburra



Australian
Magpie



Rainbow Lorikeet



Sulphur-crested cockatoo



Baby Butcher Bird



Yellow Robin

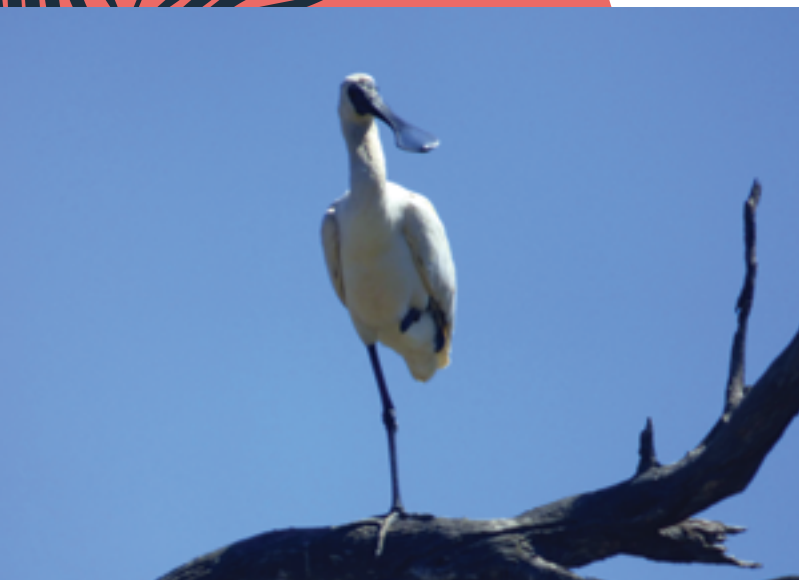


Wattlebird





Royal Spoonbill



Planting natives like grevilleas in our backyard attracts birds like the Rainbow Lorikeet and the Red Wattlebird. Even at night I get visits from the nocturnal Tawny Frogmouth.

Allenby Park is home to a flock of about 30 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos. They fly gracefully through the park and make a lot of noise. Walking through the reserve, I come across the Eastern Yellow Robin, the Eastern Spinebill, and the Variegated Fairy-wren. I have also taken photos in the Pilliga Nature Reserve about 300 kilometers north of Sydney, and at Dee Why beach not far from our home.

Seagull



Variegated Fairy-wren



Laughing
Kookaburra closeup



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Poem for My Daughters

LESLIE LYONS

As I watch my daughters
navigate an imperfect world,
a world that is cruel and
at times crushing,
I see them searching for the light
as a way of being.

They are advocates for their own souls.

What better way to be is there in all the universe?
They are oriented toward success and service
as creators,
as spirits of possibility and
as stewards of compassion.
I am paying so much attention to them. What I can
witness and appreciate is more powerful than what I
can teach them now.
But I still want to share what I have learned and
collected here. Yes, it is a sharing, not a teaching as I
feel that I am still so early on this journey. I am still
learning.

A spiritual life is critical to balance and grow in this
life. This is both intuitive and scientifically true, I
have learned. We are energy, we are vibration. There
is a hum in the universe that we can meet, that we
can match and align ourselves with and be whole.

How absolutely blissful is that?

The most ancient language we have on Earth –
Sanskrit – even has a phrase for this. It is
SAT CHIT ANANDA, the place of blissful truth.
Truth bliss.

Let us be there together.

Love,
Mama

Letter to My Daughter

SRIRAM RAGHAVENDRAN



My dear daughter,

With instant communication, the art of letter writing is lost on today's generation. Of course, there has not been much need for us to write letters to each other, save the year and a half when I was in London. We chose the easier path of just speaking on the phone, but in doing this, something is lost. The thoughtfulness that goes into a letter, the opportunity to reread the contents, savor and cherish the written word for the time to come, is something that instant communication can never offer. There for the moment and gone forever.

When my father was leaving for Tanzania for a period of a year, he made a mere mention that we would write letters to each other. And we did, perhaps once in a couple of weeks. It taught me how to write letters. To articulate one's thought in a cogent manner is not easy, and it is something that can never be achieved when we speak in the spur of the moment. I do hope that we will maintain this tradition when you go over to your college in the coming weeks.

Here, in the serene environment of a retreat center, I have been reflecting on many things. In such places of retreat, when one goes on a long walk, things become much clearer. I am going to try and pen my thoughts to you, and hope that it will be of value to you.

In the last couple of days, I have been worrying as to how we have fared in our role as parents. Of course, there can be no certainty, and no one answer can satisfy – one can only feel their way to this answer. Have we allowed a misplaced sense of affection to cloud our emotions? It is said that love and discipline should go together. But I wonder

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how to get the balance right? It is very much like those two taps, one for hot water and one for cold. Is it possible that we have turned down discipline and let in too much love? Of course, the other way could only have been worse. Let me try and communicate my reflections in this letter.

Einstein said, "Genius is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration." There is no substitute for hard work. In today's competitive world, it is fairly normal for parents to run rough-shod over their children, with success as the only measure of parenting. Of course, we have been blessed with better sense than that. The question is, what should substitute this external drive to success? On deeper reflection, I can only conclude that the lack of an external force or pressure to perform should be substituted by an inner urge to excel. External expectations should be replaced by our own expectations. Of course, when it comes to our own expectations, we call them goals. We need to set lofty goals for ourselves, and in striving to achieve that is a life well lived.



How to inculcate self-discipline? We can push ourselves to the goal, but it becomes a tiresome exercise. Taking a genuine interest in reaching the goal does wonders, for it inspires us on our journey.

I recall the scene where the Cheshire cat tells Alice in Wonderland, “It does not matter which way you go, you will get somewhere, as long as you walk long enough.” Without goals, we are lost. The best talent is wasted. The goal should be well thought out, particularly long term goals. It does not make sense to change direction every other day, for such a course guarantees hyperactivity with no outcome. But, do goals alone lead to success? Clearly not. One other ingredient is critical to the recipe, and that is discipline.

The best form of discipline is one that stems from within. When I do something because I want to do it, it cannot go wrong. But external discipline, of which we see much in the world today, is only imposition, if not slavery. The moment the pressure is off, the person goes off course. How to inculcate self-discipline? We can push ourselves to the goal, but it becomes a tiresome exercise. Taking a

genuine interest in reaching the goal does wonders, for it inspires us on our journey.

As parents, we have taken our foot off the pedal when it comes to pushing you towards your goal, but have we failed to imbibe in you the inner discipline to work towards that goal? It is for you to ponder over this question, and not for me to guess. Discipline is hard to imbibe in today's world, in which instant gratification is everywhere. How to remain focused on the long term goal, and choose that over the pleasures of the moment? How to prioritize the future over the moment? I do not know the answer, but I can only say that a person who lives for gratification in the moment does not get very far. Discipline is the difference between the mediocre and great. Of course, discipline does not mean that we do not have fun. It has to be a healthy mix of making our journey joyful, but never forgetting the goal itself.

These are my reflections, but it does not mean that I have mastered this art. I am disciplined in some things, but in many others I suffer from a lack of discipline. I recall a conversation with my uncle when I was in college, all of 19 years old. I had woken up that morning at 9:00 a.m. and was reading the newspaper with the toothbrush in my hand. He gave me a lecture on discipline, mentioning that no one ever became anything without it. He said, "Getting up early in the morning and having a routine that is driven by self-discipline is a basic ingredient to getting anywhere in life." I scoffed at him, playfully argued with him, thinking that I knew better. After the passage of 26 years, I am still suffering the consequences. I have not given up, and am still working on this. In fact, I have told myself that if there is just one trait that I develop in the remaining part of my years, then, that will be to sleep on time and to get up on time. Buddha said that the chain of desire can be broken anywhere – I feel that self-discipline can be easily fixed by just one act – going to bed early, and many other things will automatically fall in place. I can only hope that you are wiser than me and will learn the rigor of self-discipline at a much earlier age than I do.

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The innate abilities that we are born both with are a blessing. In some sense, we cannot claim them to be our own. It is a blessing that you have been born with so much talent, depth of understanding and a spirit of inquiry. Of course, you have also developed yourself in terms of attention to detail and diligence in doing a job. Going back to the point about inspiration and perspiration, I can only say that the perspiration is something that we can rightfully say is ours. And that comes with discipline.

I find that when I speak on the spur of the moment, it does not come out properly, and even if it does, there is no receptivity on the other side. For both parties to have a cool and wise head in the heat of the moment is too much to ask for. I hope that I have been able to articulate what I wanted to say in this letter.

Soon enough, you will be in a college, though we do not know which one yet. Irrespective of the outcome, this subject is of value, and hence my wish to write to you.

We are going to miss you terribly, but I guess that it is part of growing up. And I should grow up as well.

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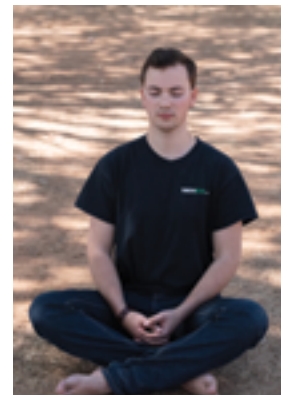
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