

September 2021

# heartfulness

advancing in love

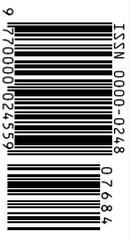
## INSPIRED *Parenting*

Learn to Shine  
DAAJI

Nurture Your  
Children's Inner  
Strengths  
ANNIE MURPHY  
PAUL

How to Raise  
Emotionally  
Resilient Children  
NAOMI ALDORT

Building Community  
Through Education  
KIRAN BIR SETHI



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# Inspired Parenting



Dear readers,

The landscape of parenting continues to shift and evolve as the world experiences its own shifts and evolutions. Technology is now a consistent fixture in most households, often consuming children’s attention more than any adult. The internet and social media allow children to access any kind of information with the click of a button, and their exposure to the black, the white, and all of the nuanced colors of our very complex world happens at lightning speed, pushing kids to learn and mature much faster.

How can we foster kind, empathetic, and grounded young people in a world that often does not reciprocate those emotions? We hear from parenting expert Naomi Aldort, and educator Kiran Bir Sethi. Lynne Azarchi addresses bullying and prejudice in schools, and Upama Rajasekhar showcases the cognitive development and confidence that develop in children as a result of Brighter Minds. Ichak Adizes asks, “When should we stop parenting?”

Daaji continues his series on the art of removing and creating habits, Liz Kingsnorth continues with Heartful Communication, and Ravi Venkatesan with the Heartful Innovator series.

Happy reading!  
The editors

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## DAAJI

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



## NAOMI ALDORT

Naomi is the author of *Raising Our Children, Raising Ourselves*, and one of the leading parenting guides in the world today. She has been featured in the media internationally, and guides parents but about how to have peace without control so that children do their best, not because they fear us or seek our approval but because they want to. Her SALVE communication formula has been praised as providing the best of the work of Byron Katie and Nonviolent Communication combined and more.



## DR. ICHAK ADIZES

Dr. Ichak 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.



## ANNIE MURPHY PAUL

Annie is an acclaimed science writer whose work has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, *Scientific American*, *Slate*, *Time* magazine, and *The Best American Science Writing*. She is the author of *Origins* and *The Cult of Personality*, and her TED Talk has been viewed by more than 2.6 million people. A graduate of Yale University and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, she is currently a Learning Sciences Exchange Fellow at New America.



## KIRAN BIR SETHI

Kiran is an Indian designer, educationist, education reformer, and social entrepreneur. She founded the award-winning Riverside School in Ahmedabad, along with aProCh to make our cities more child friendly, and Design for Change which is in more than 60 countries. Her most recent venture is the Riverside Learning Center which offers training program to empower schools worldwide using the codified processes from Riverside. Kiran, Riverside and Design for Change have won accolades and awards, including The Earth Prize, the Rockefeller Innovation Award, The Lego Remagine Award, The Lexus Prize, and the Light of Freedom Award.

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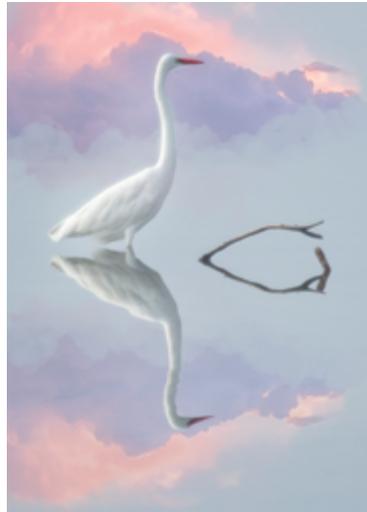
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# for snows

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

KAHLIL GIBRAN







# *Building* **Community** *Through* **Education**

**KIRAN BIR SETHI** is changing the experience of childhood in Indian cities through her education curriculum and initiatives to build healthy relationships between students and their communities. Here she is interviewed by **KASHISH KALWANI**.





Q: I'd like to begin by asking, "What book are you currently reading?" and "What book would you recommend children read?"

Well, the book I have at my bedside is *The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living* by Eknath Easwaran. It's something I keep dipping into. Just open any page and you'll find some wisdom for that day.

What would I recommend to children? Again, it depends on which age group. Forget what I recommend – I definitely recommend that they read! I think the worlds that open, the way they can visualize and imagine, and the way they will develop empathy are outstanding.

I was always with books. My sister was also an avid reader

and we had a fantastic library at home. The worlds that opened up sitting at home in a little corner were literally astounding. I could travel the world! And the way I was able to develop the ability to visualize is unparalleled. Of course, now we have cinema and videos, and while it is great, it is a very passive way to look at the world. With a book, we put the effort into imagining; it's not just handed to us. It's not like a pretty picture, or an art gallery. While reading, we put in the paints, the colors, and the spaces. It really activates our neurons. That's the science behind it.

It's wonderful if children read, or are read to, when they are very young, as part of a family's traditions.

Q: Piggybacking off your mention of the *Bhagavad Gita*, who has been your biggest teacher and how did they impact your life?

When we are ready to learn, we learn from anybody. We learn from a butterfly, from Gandhiji, from a child, and from Nature. Everything can influence us. When we open up every morning and say, "I'm ready to learn," we never know where those lessons will come from.

Having said that, there are certain places we keep going back to in order to get a dose of inspiration. For me, it started with my own family, who introduced me to the world, and how to engage with the



world with empathy, kindness, integrity, and excellence.

Then, my biggest personal learning happened at the National Institute of Design (NID) as a designer. I would attribute my alma mater with figuring out, “Okay, so this is what learning really feels like.”

My husband, Geet Sethi, who is a nine-times World Billiards Champion, has taught me a lot

about obsession and excellence, and how to stay grounded and understand failure and victory in such a deeply personal way.

Then, my children. My son introduced me to what it is to be a mother and what my purpose was. He made my passion find a purpose. My daughter is an incredible source of insight for me because she is a type 1 diabetic, and the way she lives her life is a constant source of

learning for me. No matter what you are given, you can make it a gift and then anything is possible.

In terms of outer inspiration, Gandhi has been a massive influence in terms of stamina. Through it all he still had a sense of humor and compassion, and there was absolutely no animosity toward anyone. That’s a fabulous lesson to learn.

And then there is Nature. Whenever I have a bit of downtime, I sit outside. I am very lucky to have birds, trees and butterflies around in my ecosystem. It’s a beautiful source of renewal to see how the Earth always gives back, no matter what.

**Q:** That’s so true! We are in very uncertain times with Covid, and education spaces have shut down completely. Children are feeling uncertain without the safe space of school and friendships – the experience of a school life. What do you believe are the next steps for education? Is there some learning to be had from all of this?

Absolutely! I think Covid has unmasked the entire dysfunctional system of the world. We were always struggling. I don’t think anybody felt the education system was

fantastic. There was always the sense that something was off. We kept delaying the urgency to look at it because, “Oh, maybe it happened in Africa, then in Asia, then in India.” We justified it by saying, “That’s your problem, not my problem.”

Suddenly it became everyone’s problem at the same time, with the same urgency, with the same inequity! Nobody could shy away from the fact that we were all in it together. Suddenly, everybody started waking up, as if this was a surprise. But it wasn’t. It was always dysfunctional.

Therefore, there were those people who said, “Boss, this isn’t working,” who showed other possibilities. There were pockets, which I won’t call “alternative,” but the other options. There were other ways to look at education. They had been seen as, “That’s a good experiment, but you know we can’t do it at scale.”

Covid has shown us that if we don’t start with the heart, we’re not going anywhere. We have to move forward with heart. It’s the only place that is universal, perpetual, and will stand the test of time. If we don’t, and we only study the heart as co-curriculum, just for fun, we will lose the plot again. I think that’s why everybody has got worked up.



Understanding ourselves and each other takes time, space, dedication and intentionality. If we have learnt anything from this, it's that the heart, ethics, elevation, reflection, kindness and compassion will become the core curriculum. Everything else will flow from that.

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Understanding ourselves and each other takes time, space, dedication and intentionality. If we have learnt anything from this, it's that the heart, ethics, elevation, reflection, kindness and compassion will become the core curriculum. Everything else will flow from that.

**Q: I really love the fact that you use the heart as the guiding factor in going forward.**

To fuel us!

**Q: Yes. Even when we look at the World Health Organization's reports about suicide and mental health issues, we see an increase for students below the age of fifteen. Girls as young as thirteen are dying by suicide. How do we address the root cause of this?**

Well, there are no simple answers. There is a spiderweb of issues. Equity is not just about access, it's also about intention.

For example, when Covid hit, there were a lot of calls for vaccines and everybody kept saying, "No, no, it'll take at least three years for a vaccine to come up," because that is what we were used to. Look what happened! In less than eight months, when we got our acts together and worked together,

what happened? The point is, when economics was factored in, suddenly the world decided, "We have to do something!"

The pandemic of education has been there forever. Nobody has ever thought that collectively we have to work, because it was always somebody else's problem. When we do come together, we will do dramatic, exceptional, outstanding things. We have never thought that education requires it. There has never been a collective will – for girls,

for unreserved communities, for access, for training, for leadership – it's all of that. A systemic change is needed, but if governments keep cutting education budgets, it gives an understanding of their priorities.

Education is by far the greatest national emergency and the greatest national opportunity. If we tackle it, then a nation's entire citizenship goes up. You suddenly have informed, educated people giving back to the nation. Right now we don't.



So, there is no easy answer to, “Why are they dying by suicide? What can we do?” This is a much bigger spiderweb of issues.

**Q: Let's go back to the very beginning, your childhood. Tell us about your personal journey.**

My journey is quite a collection of happenstances along the way. There was no real plan. I think that's been my general flow. I don't have five-year plans. I was very lucky to have an incredible upbringing. I didn't know that gender mattered. I think that's the greatest thing my parents gave me. I'm the youngest of three. I have a brother and an older sister, both exceptionally talented people, and none of us were brought up to think that we were a girl or a boy, and any of us needed something more. It was important not to have those rules in my head. If you're not brought up to believe the rules, anything is possible. That's the beauty.

When I went to NID, my view opened up so much more. My passion was ignited about the user-centered idea, with the user in mind. I had no plans to start a school. When I was in school, I thought I'd become a doctor.

When I became a mum, my passion found its purpose in figuring out, “This can't be true! Children can't be so incidental

to the whole program!” There is a system that rewards them for being quiet and compliant. That offered me the opportunity to say, “There must be a better way.”

When I took my son out of school, it was not like, “I'm changing the education system.” It was just my child, my son's life. I think that finally resulted in the Riverside School being what it is.

**Q: Could you share with us your initiatives, “Design for Change” and “aProCh”?**

aProCh started when a couple of my students from Grade 7 visited me and asked about my childhood. I told them about playing Gilli Danda and Dabba Ice-spice on the streets where I grew up, and they said, “We cannot go out in the streets, it's too unsafe.” That prompted us



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to go to the city and say, “How can a city become friendly for children?” and aProCh started.

Design for Change happened in 2009 when we asked, “At Riverside, how do we take it further?” My friend was planning a really interesting idea called “Joy of Giving.” We were talking about a festival of giving in India, so I said, “What about children?” It was a series of opportunities and I was able to respond with design. I thought it would happen only in India, and then TED happened and it went global. A series of pathways opened up: “Okay,

what is required? Let me see if I can respond.”

*Q: I love the enthusiasm you are sharing with this. You've mentioned your parents and children. I have read about your children and the fantastic work they're doing. Taking inspiration from both, what do you feel is important for nurturing and raising children?*

Well, it's not rocket science.

I think it is to be a mother and not a smotherer. We don't smother children, we mother them, and our role is very clear. Our role is to be on that journey with them as an ally, not as somebody who is forcing them to walk on a particular path.

I love what Kahlil Gibran says in his poem 'On Children' in





I love what Kahlil Gibran says in his poem 'On Children' in *The Prophet*: They really aren't ours. They are here to go to the world, and I have learned that it's an interesting, passionate detachment.



*The Prophet*: They really aren't ours. They are here to go to the world, and I have learned that it's an interesting, passionate detachment. We can be passionate about the journey with our children, but can we still stay detached? It is a tough task for a parent, but that's what I have learned.

My son and my daughter have taught me these lessons. While

they're there and we can reach out, we will find those directions ourselves. And we would love if they come with us on that. I'd rather be that parent who goes on those journeys than one who says, "No. Don't do that."

It's really about learning who we are, not about who they are. I think parenting gave me the understanding that, "I thought I was this kind of person, but I'm

so neurotic and sometimes I'm so painful!" It awakens stuff in us that we didn't know existed and that awakening is why they're children. It is not that we can teach them anything. I think we learn a lot.

**Q:** When you talked about attachment, it reminds me of the example of a flower blooming. If you truly love the flower, you'll let it be rather



than getting attached and needing to pluck it.

Again, none of it is rocket science. You can read a lot about it, but while you might intellectually know it all, putting it into practice is the hard part. I had to grow into becoming detached. It's easier said than done. One thing I have definitely learned, which has served me well, is to listen and tell stories. Also, always have joy in the house. I think these are far greater ingredients to serve the heart than anything else.

Joyfully greet your children. Let their faces light up when they see you, because they're picking up cues even unbeknownst to you.

What you teach is less important than what they're observing. They're learning what you're not teaching them. They're learning from your body language. They're learning from the way you interact with each other. They're learning from the way you talk to your friends. What you say is less important than what you do.

Children might not always listen to us, but they will always mimic us. Are we worth mimicking? What do we want them to mimic? They pick up ideas of ethics very early. They pick up all of it. They will pick up the way we talk to a waiter in a restaurant, or the way we talk about saving the Earth. So, all the messages we convey through

our actions, our behavior, will determine what we stand for.

I tell parents, "The way you greet each other and give each other respect will determine the way your children will respect their own partners when they grow up. Take that very seriously." I remember so many stories my father used to tell us at the dinner table. Nowadays there are no dinner table conversations. Everybody is on their phone, or an iPad is front of a child.

**Q:** That is unfortunate. I wonder how we can channel technology to help bring us closer, which it indeed has in these times. Even so, I personally have very mixed opinions of social media.

I am of the generation that didn't grow up with all of this. I am a reluctant convert!

**Q: The answer might be obvious, but I would still love to know what you feel is better, a degree or experience?**

I don't think it's either/or. I think if you really make the most of your education, then get a degree and supplement it with experience, as that is a great marriage of the two. Had I not gone to NID and pursued the rigor of the program, I would have been a lesser-skilled practitioner. Of course, the degree alone doesn't make it work. I had to then go into the world and build a portfolio of work, and that experience was also invaluable. Wherever both are possible, that's the best.

Currently, there is a disregard for degrees. Degrees matter when they are quality education. But if we understand the rigor and value of disciplinary thinking, and supplement it with experience, it's a great marriage.

There is value in putting your head down and writing pieces and getting feedback, even if you're prodigiously talented. I would not discount the rigor of a disciplinary mind.

**Q: Finally, is there any last message that you'd like to share with us?**

I have learned that we don't have tomorrow, we only have today. Find a moment to be kind, to reach out, to love a little bit more and more shamelessly. Be abundant to Nature today, not tomorrow.

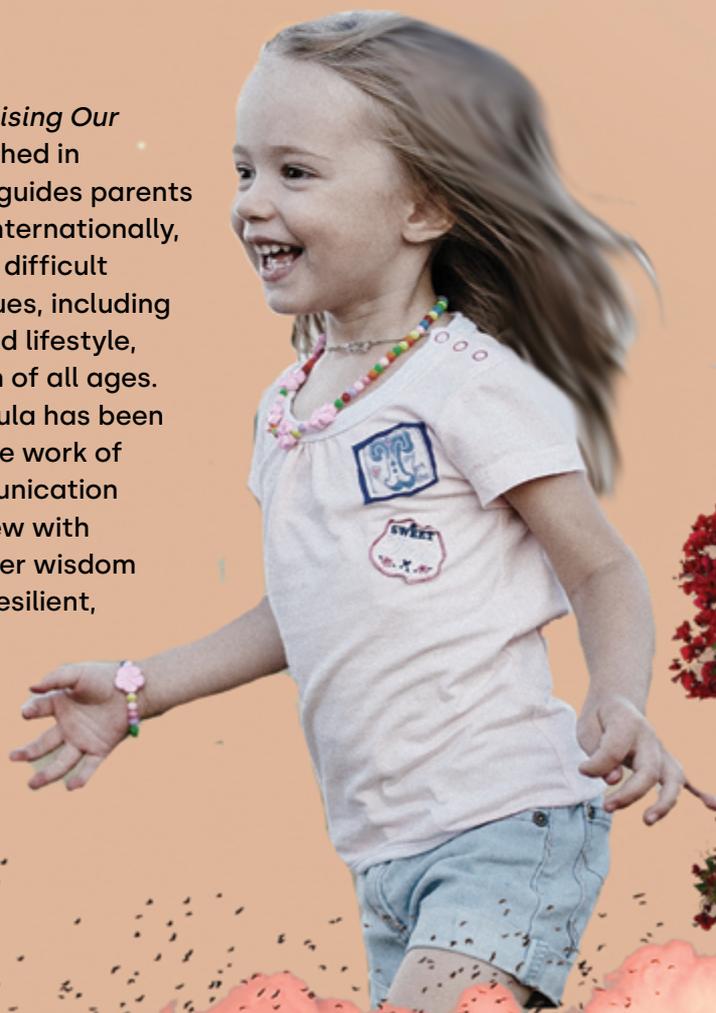
I have learned that we don't have tomorrow, we only have today. Find a moment to be kind, to reach out, to love a little bit more and more shamelessly. Be abundant to Nature today, not tomorrow.



# HOW TO RAISE EMOTIONALLY RESILIENT CHILDREN

## PART 1

**NAOMI ALDORT** is the author of *Raising Our Children, Raising Ourselves*, published in nineteen different languages. She guides parents via phone, Skype and workshops internationally, bringing peace and clarity to both difficult situations and everyday family issues, including marriage, pregnancy, birth, diet and lifestyle, and child development for children of all ages. Her S.A.L.V.E. communication formula has been praised as providing the best of the work of Byron Katie and Nonviolent Communication combined. In this exclusive interview with **LAKSHMI ARAVIND**, Naomi shares her wisdom on how we can raise emotionally resilient, well-adjusted, authentic children.





Q: All kids encounter stress in their lives to varying degrees, and despite our best efforts as parents we can't always protect them. Kids get sick, they have to move schools and environments, deal with bullies, cyber bullies, exams and tests. They may face family breakups and grief due to loss. On top of all this, we also live in a fast-paced world, where we want quick solutions to problems. But this is the time to pause and think of how we can do the best for our children.

Naomi, welcome and how are you today?

I'm doing well, thank you, and I'm delighted to be here with you.

Q: Awesome, so let's get started. The first question is: What are the basic tenets of your philosophy for raising children, and why emotionally resilient?

Where I depart from the mainstream way of parenting is that I am not into shaping children and making them. I hold children as creation (if you're religious that means God, otherwise Nature) and they are perfect creations just as they are. So my whole approach is about

allowing children to be rooted in themselves rather than in what we want for them. Parents want children to learn this, to be there, to sleep in their own room; all this "wanting" for our children. We cannot chew food for another person, we cannot breathe for another person, and likewise we cannot want for another person. A baby is a time bomb. It's a grown-up in a small body with its potential not yet unfolded. We need to know the limitations, but we need to respect them like we respect God. This is not our making.





So that’s the main difference in my philosophy. It’s not permissiveness, it’s not license. We still need to guide and be leaders, but we need to be leaders who enable children to unfold who they already are.

I always use the analogy of watering a flower so it will bloom – not so that it blooms your way, your color, or to your timing. It’s already in the design. They’re going to walk at a certain time, they’re going to talk at a certain time, they’re going to sleep by themselves at a certain time, they’re going to read at a certain time – anytime between age four and thirteen or fourteen. It makes no difference later on. Whether children learn to walk at one or two, we all learned to walk at different times and talk at different times. Einstein didn’t talk until he was four. What difference does it make once we’re unfolding ourselves into adults? And in terms of resilience, again, with the utmost reverence and spiritual recognition of who a baby, a child, a human being is, they are born resilient.

Our job is not to ruin that. And unfortunately, we ruin it a lot. We get in the way, and then, when it’s ruined and things aren’t going well, we ask, “Gee, what do we do? Our child is doing this.” And then we are convinced that we have to shape them because we unshaped them to a point where it’s not working. My teaching is about nurturing who is already there,

not shaping them; watering the flowers, not painting the color of the petals or telling them when to come out.

Let me say a little bit about how we do harm. What do we do? Well, we’re taking the inner power of the child and we’re destroying it in many ways. We give messages to children that their inner voices are somehow wrong. They have to do what we say, not what they say to themselves. It starts in

babyhood – that’s why I always say that everything I teach is from babyhood to adulthood, because it’s the same principle.

So many parents ask me, “How do I get my child to move out of the family bed?” – if they even sleep with the child. And I say, “Well, if you have to trick them and make them go to their own bed, then they’re not ready.” You’re teaching them not to listen to their own voice.



Then they tell me, “Well, to be independent, don’t they need to sleep by themselves and soothe themselves?”

I say, “No. You’re not sleeping right yourself. You’re not soothing yourself. You go for therapy if you’re really upset, or to your friends. Why should a baby, who is scared to death for survival, or a young child, sleep by themselves? And when you give them the message, ‘You should sleep by yourself,’ even though they feel inside, ‘I want to sleep next to mommy and daddy,’ then you’re telling them, ‘Don’t listen to yourself.’ And that kills self-confidence, that kills the self, because we constantly tell them how they feel inside is wrong.”

And another way we kill resilience is by distracting babies and young children from suffering. It is almost contradictory. On one hand, we tell them that they shouldn’t suffer. On the other hand, we cause the suffering when we put them to sleep somewhere else and tell them, “Hey, put up with it!” That stresses them because it is a primal need. Then, when they have suffering that is not a primal need – they don’t get their candy, their friend isn’t playing with them anymore, later on their girlfriend/boyfriend leaves them – then we try to distract them. We start with babies; when a baby cries, we say, “Look here, look there!” or “Here, play with this!” and we tell them, “Hey, you know



In terms of resilience, again, with the utmost reverence and spiritual recognition of who a baby, a child, a human being is, they are born resilient.

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you can handle suffering, you can handle pain.”

I teach the opposite. Meet your baby's needs, be kind with your teenager, and with all ages, but sometimes life offers challenges. Sometimes there is suffering. Grandma does die. Uncle cancels his visit. Toys break. Friends won't always play with them. So, I always tell parents that instead of fixing everything – which tells children that they can't handle it, and that weakens them – let them know that it's all right. Validate their feeling.

Let's say a child comes out of a room full of children and says, "They won't play with me. They told me to leave," most parents say, "Oh no! Let's go in and I'll fix it for you." The parent talks to the other children: "What happened? Please be inclusive," and what is the child learning? "I'm weak and dependent, and I need the adult to come and rescue me so that I get what I want."

Now the response I advocate, when the child comes out of the room saying, "They won't play with me. They told me to leave," is, "Oh, you want to talk about how that's feeling?" Maybe they're crying. After they express their feelings (and sometimes they don't express much because they look for "What am I supposed to feel?" from the parent), I would just say, "Okay, what would you like to do instead?"

Would you like to help me in the kitchen? I'm making lunch," or "Would you like to sit here? I have some nice books and puzzles here."

If it's not my own child, but a guest, I would say, "Would you like me to call your mom to pick you up?" I'm letting the child know that they can handle the fact that the others are not playing with them. I don't ask, "What did you do that they're not playing with you?" That's blame and shame. Definitely not a good idea.

I don't make it seem like it's a big problem, but if it is a problem for them, I listen. "Tell me, I see you wanted to play so badly, so do you want to tell me how you feel about it?" I listen to them. Then, the next step is, "I understand how you feel. What would you like to do instead?"

We often teach them to want things, and we teach them to always get what they want. Then they can't handle not getting what they want. We say, "No, don't call him stupid! It will hurt his feelings." We're teaching them to be weak and to be hurt. When I see a child calling another child "stupid," I say, "Me too!" and I give an example of how I'm stupid. Then they learn to accept.

It's like the Zen story, "Without Blinking an Eye." I'll tell the short version. It's about the General of an army in Japan that is going from village to village killing everyone. Most people run away and escape. He comes to one village, and he's told by his soldiers that the Zen master at the top of the hill in the monastery hasn't escaped. The general is enraged: "How come? Doesn't he know who I am?"

I always tell parents that instead of fixing everything – which tells children that they can't handle it, and that weakens them – let them know that it's all right. Validate their feeling.



So he goes up to the monastery, looks at the little old man and says, “How dare you! Don’t you know who I am? I could run you through with my sword without blinking an eye!”

And the little Zen master says, “And do you know who I am? Someone who can have your sword go through me without blinking an eye.”

Can we raise children to hear bad words – the sword, the criticism – with gratitude? When somebody criticizes them and calls them names, can they say, “Tell me more”? There is nothing we don’t have. We may be generous, but we’ve been greedy. We may smell good, but we’ve been stinky. We may be peaceful, but we’ve been angry at some time. It’s like, “Tell me more. I’m learning. Everyone is a teacher for me.”

We are teaching to “wants” and teaching children to defend themselves and to think that they’re always good. We are teaching instant gratification. We are teaching by distraction – “Here, here, have some ice cream, it will help you forget about what happened with the other kid.” We are teaching children to run away from suffering. Also, we are praising, creating a need for children to seek approval all the time, rather than being themselves.

We teach them to run away from the self, which creates insecurity



and low self-esteem. And we run them toward success – everybody has to know so much. And we put them on the competitive mill to be successful, to have money, to have a profession, to be the best. And then they are afraid and develop anxiety, anxiety to please others, anxiety not to be oneself, to avoid what they really want and feel inside, and to do all this stuff that is expected of them. That’s very anxiety-provoking, because it’s easy to be oneself, but it’s very hard to read other people and please them.

Q: I think we all need to hear that. I’m one of those parents who used to step in and fix it for

them right away. And we don’t realize how hurtful it can be for our children in the long run. We’re really not teaching them to be resilient. As you say, we have already destroyed their resilience, and somehow we have to undo all that.

We live in a world where there’s immediate gratification, and all the time we want to give the best to our children. We don’t want them to get hurt at all. In a world where there’s constant comfort and stimulation, what can we do about that?

To teach emotional resilience, we have to not unteach it, because

## FOCUS

they already have it. Look at babies, who behave like they're the most deserving creatures on Earth. A little discomfort and they cry. They want to nurse and they tell you. You put them to sleep somewhere else, they scream. It's very clear that they're resilient, they can handle it, they can express feelings, and they can handle life and our mistakes, too.

But to teach emotional resilience, we need to avoid teaching them to be triggered. Like what I said before, instead of teaching them that name calling is a bad thing, ask them to find how it's true for them. Teach them not to be defensive. We teach them by modeling. If our spouse tells us, "Hey, you're lazy," or "You did this or that," what is our automated reaction? "No, I'm not! No, that's not what happened." What I teach to create resilience is, "Yes, I am."

I actually teach healing games where members of the family get together and, through games, through play therapy, learn to accept when somebody criticizes them or calls them a name. We need to stop blaming others, making all this justice thing, which is part of why people are so emotionally weak. Take sibling rivalry, for example: "Mommy says I am wrong." Don't ever take sides. Just listen to each one and help them find the solution simply by listening to them. You don't ever have to fix things. They solve it

To teach emotional resilience, we need to avoid teaching them to be triggered. Like what I said before, instead of teaching them that name calling is a bad thing, ask them to find how it's true for them. Teach them not to be defensive. We teach them by modeling.



themselves. When you come into their room and they're fighting, listen to each one of them until they're done. Let each one tell their side, and when the other interrupts and says, "No, that's not what happened," I say, "Wait till she's done, and then you'll tell what happened to you." I don't ever take sides.

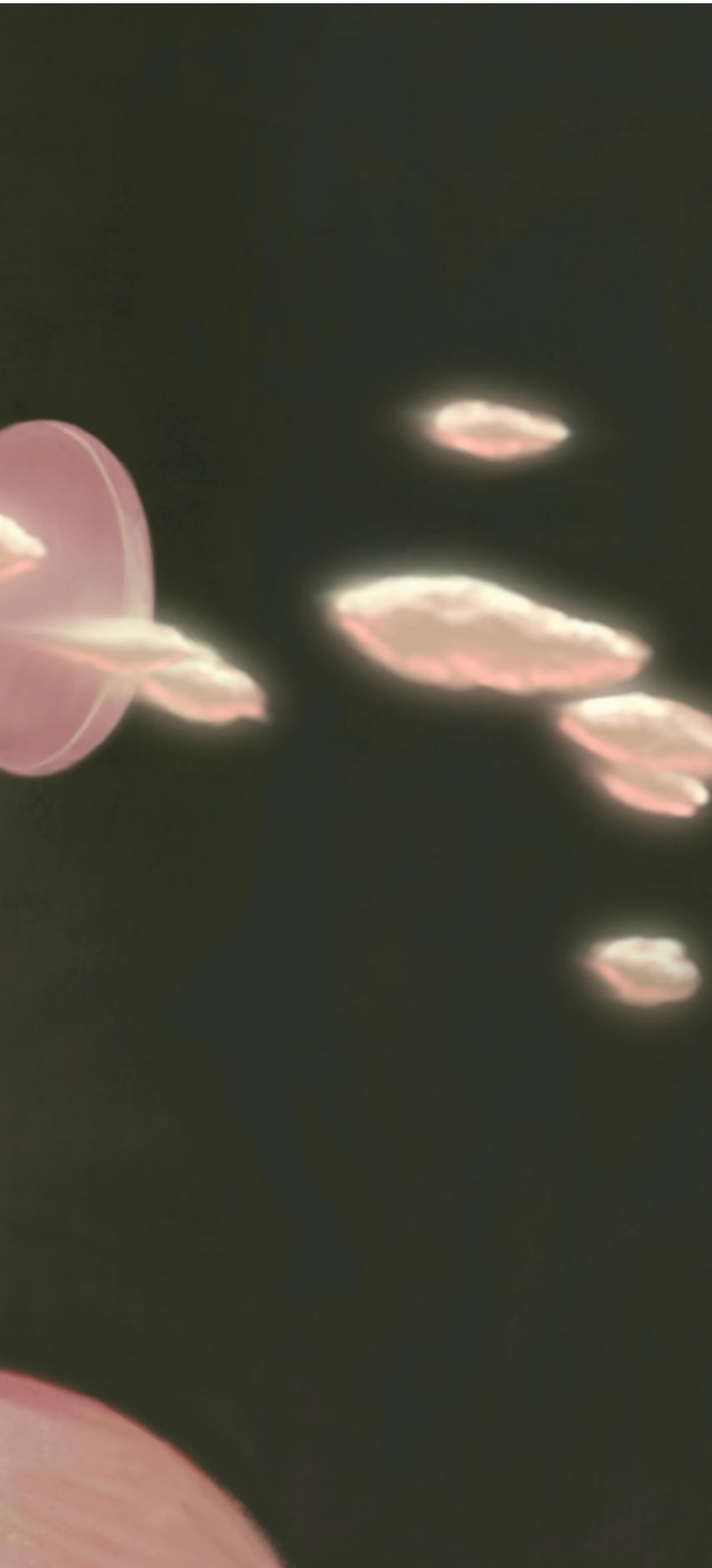
Another way to help children to be strong is to let them find their own solutions and express themselves. The first chapter in my book talks about self-expression. But the main thing is that we're killing strength through the constant need for approval, by expecting children to live based on external rewards, praise and grades. In order to enable inner peace, children need to be rooted in themselves, responsible for creating their own inner joy, no matter what another person is saying about them. That's true power.

*To be continued.*



thought in action





If you fall in love with  
the imagination, you  
understand that it is  
a free spirit. It will go  
anywhere, and it can  
do anything.

ALICE WALKER

# The Heartful Innovator

– Part 8

## 3 WAYS TO OVERCOME MENTAL OBSTACLES

In his previous articles, **RAVI VENKATESAN** outlined four key aspects of the “inner state” that we want to fine-tune to become Heartful Innovators. He explored the role of the Intellect, Ego, Mind, and Awareness, and their transformation in enabling innovation. He also covered ways to overcome barriers to innovation, like stress, fear, uncertainty, and doubt, collectively known as FUD. In this article, he explores the role of a couple of key enablers of innovation – imagination and courage.



In his series on Yogic Psychology, Daaji describes imagination as follows: “Imagination is a very important mental faculty with which we form and create new ideas, images and concepts that cannot always be verified by *pramana*. It is necessary for creativity, innovation and discovery, but it can also lead us into a spiral of delusion.”

The Sanskrit word “*pramana*” means proof. So, in essence, imagination gives us access to envision something that doesn’t yet exist and cannot be proven or verified.

I have always found it very interesting that many innovations seem to appear first in science fiction before making their appearance in real life. For example, an iPad-like device was shown in Star Trek decades before such devices became a reality. Ironically, we make it up first, and then we make it a reality.

Like many of our capacities, imagination can be a double-edged sword. As a kid I used to have the bad habit of compulsively making up things and lying. I remember telling a grand-aunt an elaborate tale about a machine that would automatically make all kinds of food and serve it. All of it was made up. This caused my parents a lot of worry and they tried correcting me through various means. Eventually, someone advised them that I may just have a hyper-imaginative mind and they should encourage me to write stories to channel this. That idea helped a lot. Later I started composing music, and this was another channel.

The point is, especially for innovation, this mental faculty of imagination can be very useful, however, it can also go wrong. As with most things, to use it effectively we need to regulate the mind so that capacities can be channeled in the right direction.

Heartfulness Meditation is a wonderful tool to accomplish this.

Describing the importance of imagination, Einstein said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution.”

Courage is another aspect to explore. Courage builds the bridge from idea to execution. If we have a sufficiently-evolved imagination, then ideas will come. To take the next step from idea to execution requires courage. Again, just like imagination, courage has a dark side, which is recklessness. When courage is not refined and regulated, it can lead a person to take excessive risks, to gamble, or worse, to do things that have negative consequences for society at large. Think about every dictator and conqueror in history. They were no doubt courageous, but their courage unchecked led to horrific actions.

Describing the importance of imagination, Einstein said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution.”

It would not be an exaggeration to say that almost every significant innovation has required a lot of courage on the part of the innovator. Think about Ford deciding to build the Model T in 1909, making cars commonplace. Think about Elon Musk wanting to send humans to Mars, creating a company that could lead the market for space transportation, something only large government-sponsored organizations had done before.

The most important role courage plays in innovation is not overcoming the fear of failure, which of course it does, but overcoming the fear of criticism, which in many cases is a greater fear.



To make this real, try the following:



Practice envisioning what could be, whether this is a new process or product or even a new practice.

Ask yourself: What is blocking me from making this a reality? Is it support, financial constraints, or any kind of fear?

Ask yourself: How can I muster the courage to explore this idea? Can you create and build the muscle of taking calculated and thoughtful risks to fulfil your dreams?

If you can develop this muscle, you have taken another important step toward becoming a Heartful Innovator!



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W H E N T O S T O P  
**Parenting**

**DR. ICHAK ADIZES** explores some aspects of parenting, in particular when to let go of the role, and how to develop mutual trust and respect between parents and children. He also extrapolates his ideas to succession planning in organizations, so as to enable growth and continuous improvement.

**W**e'll start with a joke. A guy goes to work and he's all scratched and bloody and blue and beaten up. So his co-workers ask him, "What happened?"  
 "I buried my mother-in-law yesterday."  
 "What happened?"  
 "She did not cooperate."  
 This is an extreme situation when you try to parent somebody you should not parent anymore.

What I'm learning in old age is that at a certain point in time, children resent being parented. Don't want to be told what to do, don't want to learn the experience of the elders. That was not true in the past. My grandfather was the boss. His word was law, including for my father, who was in his 40s. My father was also the dominant figure in my family, and I never dared to disobey him. He continued giving me advice and instructions on what to do until he died. I didn't like it, but I listened. Yes, it was in the last century. I am 83 now.

Today, it's a different world. Children become "adults" early. They know the computer technology better than us. I could not operate the latest TV

screens without them. I am constantly asking for help with the latest changes to my computer applications. I am the ignorant student. They are the knowledgeable teachers now. They're influenced by TV, by social media, by external factors, school, their friends; so the impact of the family and its control over their behavior is diminished significantly. Thus, they rebel earlier. If you try to control them, they simply run away. You can see that, especially in America, where children graduate from high school and go to college as far away from home as possible. And then find jobs far away from home too. They want to be independent, and if you try to continue parenting them, they resent it and they don't call back any more.

We need to learn to cut the cord and let them go their way. Unless we are asked for advice, don't offer it, let it be. The extreme cases are when you try to parent your son-in-law or daughter-in-law. That's even worse than parenting your own children. They resent you to the point of the joke.

An interesting analogy is for succession planning in a company. Starting a company is like having a child. You love the company. You spend more



time building the company than you spend with your own children. And the day comes when the company is big enough to have good management beyond the founder, and they too want to exercise authority and lead. Can the founder let go, and let them make mistakes, or does he or she continue to “parent,” continue to make all the decisions to be sure no mistakes are made? And what happens? Like with children, the good ones leave and the weak ones stay, accepting the stage of disempowerment they are in, so the company will

grow only as far as the founder is still active to the fullest. And when he or she dies, the company will eventually die too, because there was no successor who could lead.

Just thinking and feeling,  
Ichak Kalderon Adizes

<https://www.ichakadizes.com/post/when-to-stop-parenting>

# innerview





When we begin to know ourselves in an open and self-supportive way, we take the first step to encourage our children to know themselves.

DANIEL SIEGEL



# How to Nurture Your Children's Inner Strengths – Part 1

**ANNIE MURPHY PAUL** is a journalist and author who writes about the biological and social sciences. Her books include *Origins: How the Nine Months Before Birth Shape the Rest of our Lives*, *The Cult of Personality Testing*, and *The Extended Mind: The Power of Thinking Outside the Brain*. In this interview by **UDAY KUMAR**, she speaks about her latest book, and the implications the extended mind has for children's development and how we learn.

Q: I want to congratulate you on *The Extended Mind*, because this topic is not for the faint-hearted. The more I read, the more I feel the pains and the tribulations you have gone through to stitch the whole story together and make sure it holds. How did you come across this? What gave you the signal that this is it?

It was a long and winding road, as books sometimes are. I started out with the idea of writing about the science of learning. I focused on that in my magazine journalism for a while. It actually pretty closely followed the contours of my own life, because I had done the research and recording for *Origins* when I was pregnant with my second son. Then, when my sons were older and went to school, I became very interested in their learning, the instructions their teachers were giving them, how that all worked. I knew I wanted to write something about the science of learning, but I

couldn't seem to find a big idea that would pull it all together. The more I explored the science of learning, the more it felt like a collection of techniques and methods that were very useful, but there wasn't a big idea for me as a writer, which I need to get excited and pull me through all that hard work.

So I started widening the range of things I was reading, including venturing into philosophy and cognitive science, and that's how I came across the 1998 article by Clark and Chelmer on the idea of the "extended mind." I don't remember it being a lightbulb moment, but it eventually came to be the idea that pulled together all the threads. I felt they were in some way related, but I really could not put my finger on how. Things like embodied cognition and situated cognition, the way the physical place affects the way we think, and then socially-distributed cognition, the idea that

we think with other people. All those things seem to be modelling how thinking happens, as opposed to the conventional idea that it all happens in the head.

But until I encountered the idea of the extended mind, I didn't have a name for what exactly I was talking about. And then from there, I wouldn't say it all fell into place, but it gave the book the spine that I needed to string all those different pieces together.

Q: How long was the project overall?

It's hard to say, because the science of learning stuff kind of morphed into what I was writing about the extended mind; the science of learning material flowed into the extended mind. I would say I was working on the book itself probably for five years, but I was writing articles, doing research, and reporting on the science of learning for five years before

that. That really informed what I eventually wrote in *The Extended Mind*.

Q: It shows! I am halfway through your book right now, and I am taking my time because I am also looking up the research studies that you are referring to, and in many ways it has made me a student of the subject. In *Heartfulness* there is the idea of moving from thinking to feeling – the journey of consciousness moves from thinking to feeling to being to a state of non-being. So I got onto your concept of the extended mind immediately. This is brilliant coming from the angle of science. In your book, there is a sentence, “The future lies in thinking outside the brain.” Do you want to talk a little about that – what you see from that standpoint when you talk about the future?

Yes. I think I wrote that the future lies in thinking outside the brain in the context of how very complex our culture has become. As humans, we have created this incredibly complex culture and society, which in many ways is beyond the capacity of our biological brains to handle. We are interacting with this 21st century world, with all these enormous challenges and complexities, but we are still using our Stone Age brains, which evolved for very different kinds of purposes. Our

brains didn’t evolve to deal with abstract concepts so much as they evolved to move the body, manipulate physical objects, relate to other people, and navigate through space.

So these are the things the brain does easily, effortlessly and well. The more we can leverage those natural human strengths in the service of the things we ask the brain to do, at school, at work, and in our daily lives, the better those activities will go. But we have this bias – I really think it’s a prejudice – against thinking outside the brain. We almost fetishize the brain as a sacred organ, when it really has these built-in limits that are just a product of its status as a biologically-evolved organ, and they are shared by all of us. We are obsessed with individual differences and intelligence, when the main thing we should really be focusing on are the limits that are common to all of our brains, and thinking about how to transcend those limits, because we really do have to meet the challenges of the moment.

I am thinking about climate change and political polarization. These huge challenges we have are so complex, and we need to meet these moments as individuals and as a society, and the biological brain is not really up to that job. So thinking outside the brain, drawing in these extra neural

Thinking outside the brain, drawing in these extra neural resources, and using them skillfully is our best shot. It’s humanity’s best shot to tackle the serious problems that face us.









resources, and using them skillfully is our best shot. It's humanity's best shot to tackle the serious problems that face us.

Q: I intuitively get it. I think it is something we have lost over time. It comes to us naturally if we are receptive enough, and that's where you talk about the whole idea of interoception, and how the body is actually communicating with the brain.

In your work, as you were looking at and reading some of these things, was there any research or idea around the interplay of the heart and the mind? I am not talking about the pump, the organ, but the field of operation that we keep harmonizing with and with which we achieve a state of flow.

Yes. That's how I tried to structure the book. Extending with the body, then space, and our relationships with other people, I see it like a set of concentric circles that are rippling ever outward.

Q: As a reader, how do I apply some of these basics as a busy professional in consulting, who has billed all the hours and still has work left to do? Do you have any tips you want to share with a working person on how to extend the mind?

Let's start with that one thought you just mentioned – interoception, the capacity for sensing the internal signals of our bodies. I think we have this notion in our society that to do difficult mental work means to push the body aside, to push it out of the picture, just be a brain working at a desk, at a screen. It is a mistake to think that that is how the best kind of thinking happens. It's actually cutting out a huge source of human intelligence.

What I would recommend for that consultant, to help with his busy schedule, is rather than powering through and gritting your teeth and ignoring the body, take a moment to settle back into your body, and remember you have a body. Tune into what your body is telling you. That can be a source of really valuable information that you will be missing out on if you are not in touch with it.

In the book, I describe using a meditation exercise, the body scan, to pay close, non-judgmental and open-minded attention to all those sensations that are arising in the body all the time, but which we often in our busy-ness ignore or push away. Pay attention to those signals and, over time, you can learn what they are telling you, and how they can guide your behavior.

It doesn't have to take long. It's just a matter of remembering to do that – checking in with your body rather than acting as if you are just a head, from the neck up.

Q: I like that, and the body awareness exercise you share in the book. In *Heartfulness*, we have some of these exercises like guided relaxation that we teach to children. I had my kids do this through the pandemic before they started school, because they were not used to so much screen time. Also, observing which nostril is dominant at any point in time and seeing how it switches.

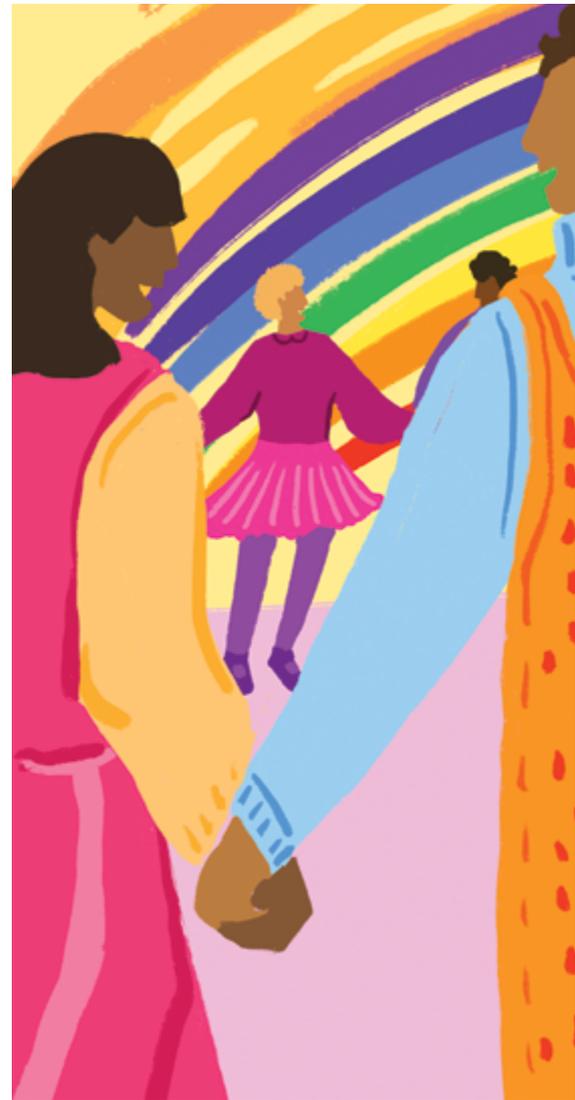
I also read the part in your book where you talk about expertise – how being an expert is not just about mastering those 10,000 hours. Experts are actually extending, trying more, tracking more. While we are breaking down the holy altars of the brain, can we also break down the concept of expertise?

I definitely see that connection. A word that I really like, which was coined by one of the originators of the theory of the extended mind, Andy Clark, is “brain-bound.” We have this brain-bound approach to work and school, and also to expertise. We think about expertise as an individual putting in those 10,000 hours to become an expert, and there's very little reference to how, for example, nobody becomes

an input by themselves. It's quintessentially a social process, and that's something I write in the book: People like physics graduates or doctors-in-training become experts by interacting with others and being socialized into their fields. It's true of all of us.

I mentioned those two because I cite some studies in regard to them specifically. We think of experts as doing it all in their heads, we think of experts as knowing exactly what to do and doing it, and it is very clean and efficient. But actually, experts are the ones who are out there mucking around in the real world, getting feedback in the real world, trying out new things, and figuring out how things work. That is another type of thinking outside the brain: where you're not doing it all in here the head, you're doing it out in the world.

When you think about an expert designer or architect, they're often making models of the project they're working on or the problem they're trying to solve, and interacting with that model, moving their body around the model. They're not doing it all in their head. Artists and designers often say that their best ideas emerge in the process of sketching, and drawing, and iterating their ideas on paper. It's not as if they have the idea inside their head and they just dictate it. It happens in the process of doing the work itself. I think we have some





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The more we can incorporate these other aspects of the body, of movement, and of social interaction, the more we can pull those into academics, and leverage them to make learning more effective.

mistaken ideas, some brain-bound ideas about what expertise is and how it works, and if we want to become experts it would be a good idea to revise those.

Q: I completely agree. There is also this element of intellectual humility that experts have. They're willing to accept what they don't know and listen. I think it is also a sign of the extended mind, where the mind has factored in the humility of "What I know is less than what I don't know." I think that's where experts keep growing, while others maybe taper off over time.

Now, extending the idea of expertise, that instead of people thinking better they extend their minds better, how do we teach our children these skills? Not in terms of a policy, but from what you see, from your research, are there any thoughts on how to teach kids, how to design their work spaces?

I think there are so many implications for what we could be doing right now with our kids, with our students. You mentioned earlier that you tell your kids about tuning into their bodies before school starts. Scientists have found all these individual differences in how people are attuned to their internal signals, and the reason those individual differences arise is because of differences in the kinds

of messaging children receive from their caregivers. "Is it okay to listen to my body? Is it okay to take those messages seriously, or am I supposed to ignore those messages and pretend they don't exist?"

So encouraging our kids to tune into their bodies is certainly one thing I have taken away from the research, in terms of what I do with my own kids.

I've also stressed to them the importance of movement and gesture. Again, we have this idea that thinking and academic work happens when students are sitting quietly at their desks, when really the human brain and body evolved to move, and there are so many ways movement can enhance thinking. Likewise, being outside, often we can combine those two things: movement and being outdoors. Those two things can work together to really replenish depleted stores of attention and executive function. It's a lot to ask kids to sit inside hour after hour, focusing on these things that they are not necessarily naturally interested in.

The more we can incorporate these other aspects of the body, of movement, and of social interaction, the more we can pull those into academics, and leverage them to make learning more effective. I talk about thinking with other people, and thinking with peers, about teaching others,

debating, and storytelling. These are all ways we can leverage children's natural sociability, social instincts and interest in the social world in the service of what we want them to learn.

*To be continued.*

Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL







it changes  
everything

Don't mix up that which  
is habitual with that  
which is natural.

**MARSHALL B.  
ROSENBERG**

# What Are Our Feelings Telling Us?

## Heartful Communication

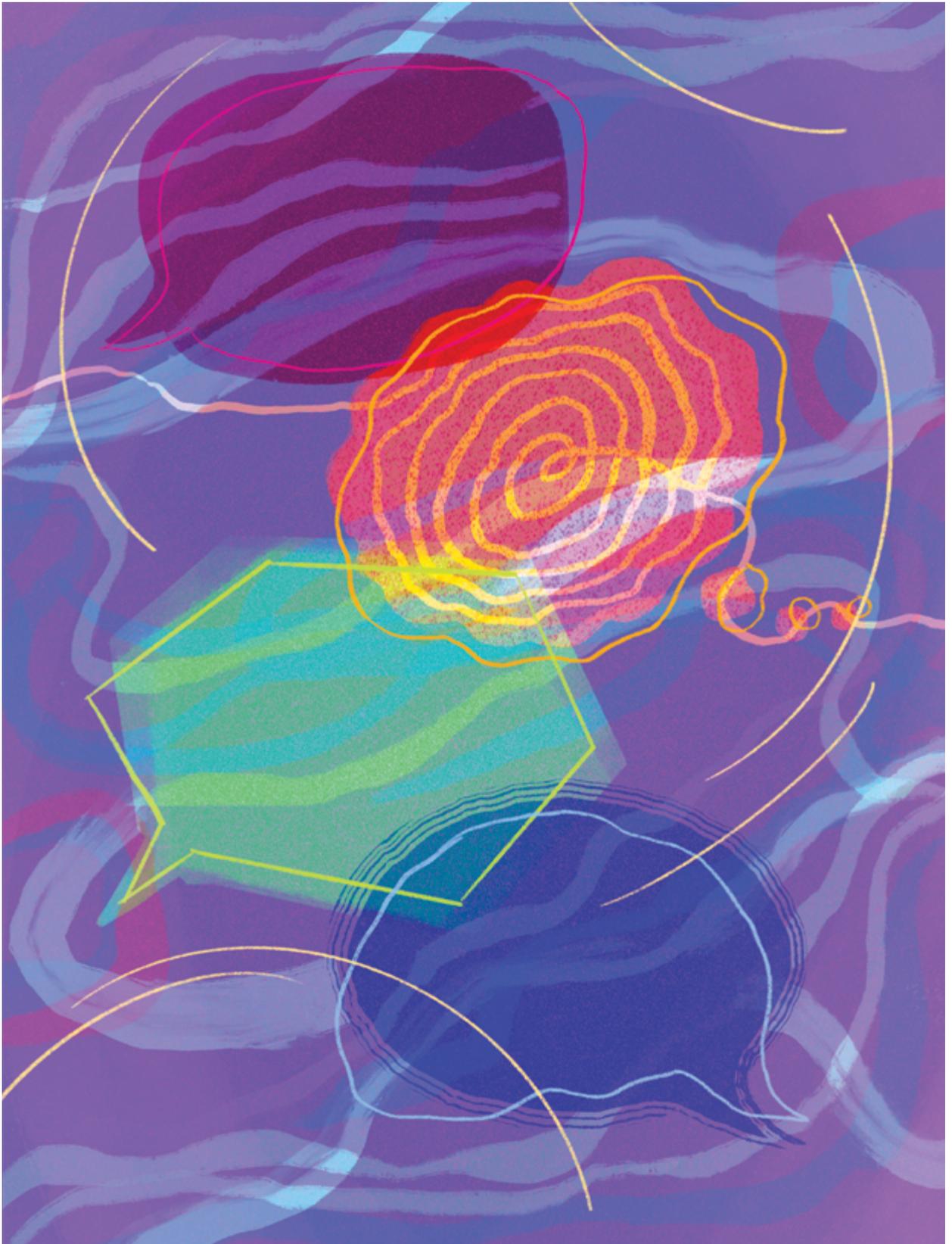
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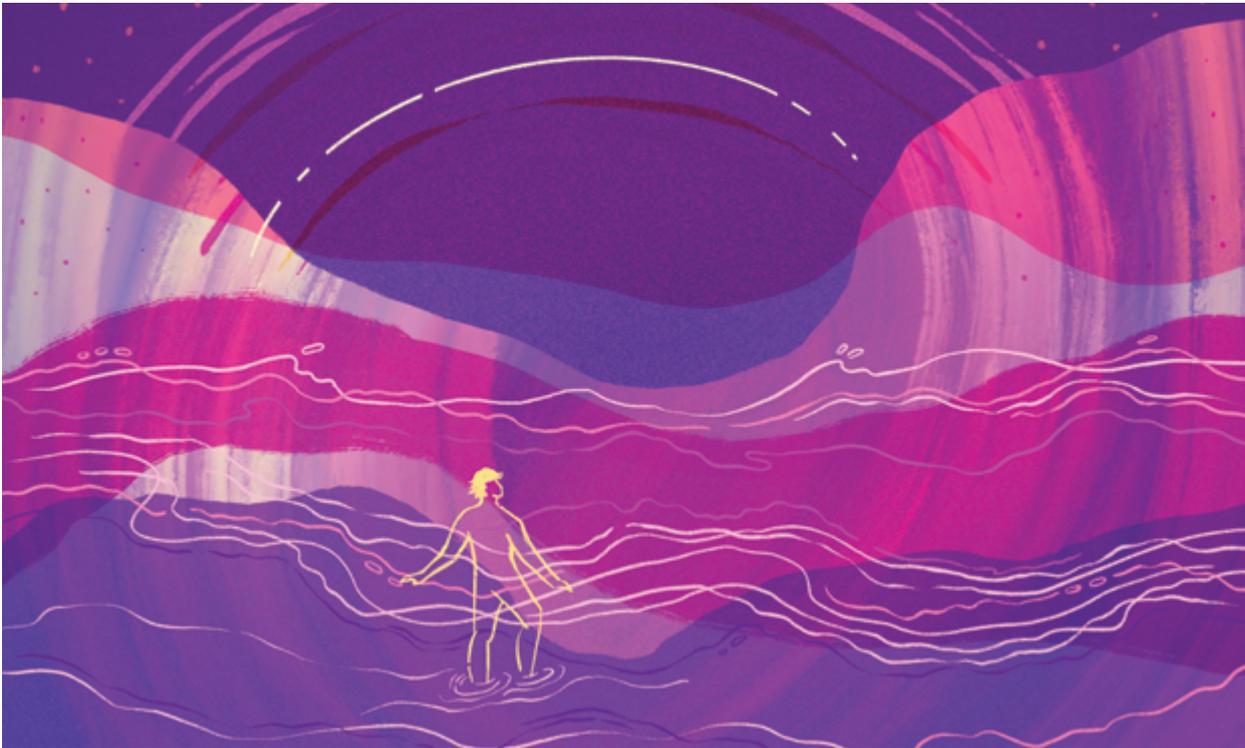
In this 3-part series, **LIZ KINGSNORTH** introduces the importance of effective communication, some principles of Heartful Communication, and how we can better understand our personal feelings and longings, and the feelings and longings of others. In Part 2, Liz explores why we think and behave the way we do, giving examples of how our communication will improve as a result of this understanding.

Marshall Rosenberg suggests that underlying all our actions, words, and choices, are the human “needs,” aspirations, and longings that we want fulfilled. They are the motivators for our behavior. “Needs” may include safety, justice, belonging, to be heard, to have a sense of self-worth, to have purpose or meaning, to be accepted, to learn, to contribute, to have fun, to have peace. We do what we do and say what we say in order to try to meet a particular need. These needs are life-serving; in their essence, they positively contribute to life. Some needs are easy to understand, for example, going for a promotion to ensure security for the family, spending time on social media to meet a need for connection, complaining about loud music because of a need for peace to relax. Other behaviors are not so easy to understand, for example, not telling the truth. What needs might underlie this choice? I imagine each of us has said things at times that

were not true, perhaps because we wanted to protect someone from hurt, or protect ourselves from criticism. Our motivation is to protect. If a child denies breaking a window when we know they broke it, our first reaction might be to scold them for not telling the truth. We might brand the child as a liar and thereafter doubt their word. If we feel into the child’s need underlying their denial, is it not self-protection? That is a need we all share. Perhaps they were punished in the past when they owned up to a mistake, so they have learned it’s not safe to tell the truth in such circumstances.

So, how might we support a child to be honest, other than by punishing them when they lie? Whenever they acknowledge they have made a mistake – “Yes I broke this,” “Yes it was me who ate Mum’s chocolate,” – can we welcome their honesty, affirm how we all mess up at times, and then together think through how the mistake





could be sorted out? In other words, replace the use of fear with trust, with respect, with love.

So here's a key shift in our awareness – from criticizing a person's behavior to trying to understand the underlying need behind their words and actions. What are the needs and values that are driving them? This awareness opens our hearts and enables us to realize our connectedness. It's a choice. Awareness brings choice. This choice can be liberating for us and for those with whom we are relating.

Let's take an everyday example of a family argument between a parent and their teenage child. The parent is frustrated by the teenager constantly being on their mobile phone with friends, even during mealtimes and late into the night, so they forcibly remove the phone. The teenager disappears into their room in a rage and refuses to come out. There's a major stand-off. What each of them say and do to express their needs, in other words the strategies that they use, infuriate the other.

Strategies are what we want; needs are why we want it. The parent has needs for the teenager to be healthy, and to participate in the togetherness of family life. The teen has needs for connection and friendship with their peers – to belong. As a young adult, they also value autonomy and the independence to make their own choices.

The conflict lies at the level of the words and actions, the strategies, not at the level of the underlying needs. These are needs we all understand and experience; they are shared by all human beings – not necessarily at the same time, and not necessarily with the same intensity, but we can relate to them once we become aware of them. The parent understands their child's needs for connection and autonomy, and the teen understands their parent's wish for health and togetherness. In fact, the need for connection is common to both.

The solution to this conflict, and any conflict, lies in recognizing and respecting the underlying

The solution to this conflict, and any conflict, lies in recognizing and respecting the underlying needs, then looking for different strategies, new creative ways forward, where everyone's needs are taken into account.

needs, then looking for different strategies, new creative ways forward, where *everyone's* needs are taken into account. It is not A's way or B's way, but a third way. This is why families all over the world endeavor to come up with agreements about phones that everyone feels okay with.

To help us understand this concept of underlying needs as motivators for everything we say and do, let's take a few examples:

1. Why have you chosen to read this article? What needs are you hoping to meet?
2. If you tell your partner how much you enjoy their cooking, what needs are you fulfilling?

When we express appreciation to another, isn't this fulfilling our need, our wish, to contribute to someone else's happiness? While we may also have an agenda of making sure we get dinner tomorrow too, I'm convinced that wanting to contribute to the well-being of others is one of the deepest human needs.

3. What might be the needs underlying bullying behavior?

Do you sense that the person may have poor self-esteem and want to be seen as powerful, to feel that they are someone? Bullies have usually been bullied themselves and have felt the helplessness that turns to anger. So may they have a need for recognition or respect? There could be a wide range of needs, and often they are not conscious. Remember we don't have to like or agree with certain behaviors in order to try to understand them more deeply.

Marshall Rosenberg offers us this thought: "Every criticism, judgment and expression of anger is the tragic expression of an unmet need." It's tragic because those forms of expression hurt others and hurt our own hearts. Learning to *hear* the unmet needs behind criticism or anger – whether coming from someone else or from inside us – will support a new understanding.

Deep attentive listening is a cornerstone of Heartful Communication. Often we want to be listened to more than we want to listen! In his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey offers us a habit that can transform our interactions: "Seek to understand *before* you are understood." If we have an intention to really listen and understand another person first, this creates a warm connection and opens the field between us for dialogue. Any communication starts with our intention. In Heartful Communication, our intention is to connect: with the Source, with our own heart, and with the heart of another person – what matters to them in this moment? So we listen.

*To be continued.*

Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL



# Can Learning Empathy Prevent Bullying?

**LYNNE AZARCHI** is the Executive Director of the Kidsbridge Tolerance Center in New Jersey. It is the only youth-oriented tolerance center in the US. The center focuses on providing an immersive learning experience for children from kindergarten to eighth grade around the strategies of bullying prevention, diversity appreciation and respect. In this interview with **EMMA IVATURI**, Lynne talks about Kidsbridge, key principles that every classroom carries, and the importance of empathy in a learning environment.

Q: What are the origins of Kidsbridge?

Kidsbridge was started twenty years ago by a young man whose mother was a teacher. He started the organization in her honor, realizing that more than ever before there was a need to teach children and educators diversity appreciation and bullying prevention. We started with the concept of a multicultural museum to teach children about respect and kindness, and ten years ago the museum opened. It is now called the Kidsbridge Tolerance Center. Since then, we have built upon the original concept with activities that address kindness, respect, sensitivity to people with disabilities, victim empowerment for bullying, and being an UPstander.

As the years have passed, we have adapted in order to keep up with the fact that society and kids are changing so quickly. As a result of our research and assessments, our activities have improved a lot. For example, we had a Kid Heroes room, but then learned from our research that not every kid feels that they can be a hero, so that activity evolved into being about personal strengths and working with others as a team. Other activities have evolved from teachers' comments or parents saying something.

By listening to people, and supporting our activities with research, the Kidsbridge activities are now research-informed and evidence-based. We can show statistically significant improvements

By listening to people, and supporting our activities with research, the Kidsbridge activities are now research-informed and evidence-based.

in empathy, empowerment, and moral reasoning as a result of our programs. We do assessments and make sure each activity is effective.

Q: What is an UPStander, and how do you encourage every child to be one?

We start with personal strengths. Kids self-identify with the things they're good at, so we help them discover how those individual strengths can be used in some way to be an UPStander. Not everyone can be a leader, but they can help others as a follower or a supporter. We have an activity where we provide strategies and tactics on how to approach a bullying or name-calling situation.

We're hoping that when kids come to the Center feeling, "I can't do this, this is too scary, I'm not prepared," they will practice skills and tactics. Then they will start to think about the challenges in

advance, so that when an UPStander opportunity arises, they are ready. Then they can work together with their peers and adults.

With teachers, we arm them with the latest research and activities, so that they can create caring classrooms. Anybody can be an UPStander.

**Q: What are some of the principles you use when working with children?**

Many schools have assembly programs and classroom programs to address bullying, but the research indicates that these programs don't work. I call it "finger wagging." So, what happens in an assembly, if you say, "Okay, bullies, stop bullying!

Targets, go tell an adult. UPstanders, intervene"? I think that kids already know the right things to do, but they're not practiced in them, and they're afraid to do them because of peer pressure. So this is why our pedagogy is very effective.

The pedagogy of Kidsbridge is small face-to-face group discussions and activities – no electronics, interpersonal – because that's how kids learn. So they learn from our activities, our scripts, our wonderful facilitators, and they also learn from each other.

We work with The College of New Jersey's Psychology Department. The college students administrate pre- and post-surveys, and the data are analyzed in the psych lab, so that we know whether our activities are working or not. We hone our activities as a result, and they are now evidence-based. We see a statistically significant improvement in attitudes like empathy, empowerment, moral reasoning, stereotype awareness and religious diversity.

Last semester, we did a Heartfulness and Mindfulness activity with the kids, and we are very proud to include this activity. Why? Because research says that children are increasingly under stress and that's very upsetting.

Having statistically analyzed the effects of the program, we can proudly report that the Heartfulness and Mindfulness activity significantly reduced stress. The results show that the survey participants demonstrated significant improvements in three aspects: Observe, Accept without Judgment, and Act with Awareness. The results imply that this new program is beneficial for both middle and elementary school students.







We see a statistically significant improvement in attitudes like empathy, empowerment, moral reasoning, stereotype awareness and religious diversity.



**Q: What are some of the benefits teachers have reported in their classrooms?**

Children report that they feel more comfortable standing up, that they know what to do next time, and that it's not as hard as they thought it would be.

Here are some quotes from teachers:

“The students were engaged, on task, and the group was organized. The facilitators maintained control and continued to enforce objectives. The assignments opened up their eyes to diversity and bullying prevention.”

“The activities were great for this age group. They learned how to speak to others, and who may be different. They also came up with ideas on how to help others. I love Kidsbridge! Please come back.”

“The students really enjoyed the heart and mind role-play. The breathing technique was wonderful. Nice calming activities.”

“The objective was achieved. The facilitators tapped into their background knowledge and experience with mindfulness and meditation. The students responded well and were fully engaged.”

I found the teachers loved these mindful activities.

**Q: What are some essential tools for children to develop so they can face the challenges in this day and age?**

Let's consider the types of problems we see today. Increasingly, Muslim children are bullied and harassed. Of course, they get support from home, but we're hoping to teach them and their teachers

how to respond when they're teased and bullied, using some of the strategies.

We have taken strategies from The Youth Voice Project by Charisse Nixon and Stan Davis, who researched what works for kids: Make a joke, walk the victim away, make a distraction, go to an adult. So we really focus on strategies that are useful for Muslim children, gay children or children of color, as bullying and cyber bullying are especially increasing for these children.

It's also important to energize the teachers, so they feel confident with a teacher's guide and follow-up activities to take back to their classrooms so as to create a caring community.

And with the increase in bullying and cyberbullying, (and the pressure of increased testing), Heartfulness and Mindfulness are even more important than ever today. The kids are more often online, anonymous, and some of them feel fearless in being mean online. Kidsbridge recognizes how important Heartfulness is in providing our children with tools to calm down, breathe and focus on what is important, so they don't feel overwhelmed or hurt themselves.

Illustrations by ARATI SHEDDE



be inspired

No life can be successful  
without self-discipline.

**THE MOTHER**



# Shining Simplicity

## THE ART OF REMOVING AND CREATING HABITS

### PART 9

**DAAJI** continues his series on refining habits, in the light of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga and current scientific and yogic principles and practices. Last month, he explored the second *Niyama* of contentment, *santosh*. This month he shares his insights on the next *Niyama*, known as *tapas*, which is often translated as austerity, but which has a much more interesting and exhilarating meaning.

Simplicity is the final achievement.  
—*Frédéric Chopin*

Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.  
—*Leonardo da Vinci*

## Kriya Yoga – externalization

Let's do a brief review of where we have traveled so far in refining our habits in the light of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga. First, we explored the five *Yamas* – the giving up of unhelpful habits, including violence and aggression, falsity, hypocrisy and multiple personas, dishonesty, the pull of the senses toward unregulated desires, possessiveness, and greed. Next, we have explored the first two *Niyamas* – the filling of helpful qualities in the heart – purity and contentment. We have also seen how each successive habit has followed naturally from the previous one. They build upon each other in a cyclical way, like a positive feedback loop, creating a web of character changes that forms a firm foundation for our evolution.

Patanjali considers the remaining three *Niyamas* to be even more closely interrelated. They are *tapas* (austerity), *svadhyaya* (self-study), and *Ishwar pranidhan* (awareness of and surrender to God), and he defines them together as Kriya Yoga – Yoga in action. Having worked to change our thought patterns, the results must now express in our outer behavior, in action. Up until now, it has all been about inner change, mental and emotional well-being, but now Patanjali turns to action. At the beginning of Part 2 of his Yoga Sutras, the section on “practice,” Patanjali says:

2.1: *Tapah svādhyāyesvarapranidhānāni  
kriyā yogah*

Austerity, self-study, and God-awareness together constitute Kriya Yoga (Yoga in action).

2.2: *Samādhi-bhāvanārthah,  
Kleśa-tanūkaranārthaśca*

It promotes meditation flowering into *Samadhi* and minimizes tensions.

We are now externalizing our thinking and feeling into action. Kriya Yoga is the action that arises out of Yoga, and it is made up of these three *Niyamas*. Just as Yoga is defined as *citta-vritti-nirodha*, the state in which “the ideational choice-making movement of the mind slows down and comes to a stop,” Kriya Yoga arises out of that inner still state, free of any turbulence.

But Kriya Yoga is actually more about the inner awareness and choices that define our action in every moment. This awareness purifies our activities of any negative effects of ego, removing selfishness. It propels us away from a habitual way of living, driven by the past, to a life lived in the present.

The second sutra above explains the results of Kriya Yoga: Through meditation (*bhavana*) we experience *Samadhi*, and at the same time the complexities of our tensions (*klesas*) are removed.

The advances in Heartfulness during the last 150 years have made this whole process much easier,



Kriya Yoga is the action that arises out of  
Yoga, and it arises out of that still inner state,  
free of any turbulence.



because of yogic Transmission, also known as *pranabuti*, and because of the Cleaning process that removes the complexities from our system. With *pranabuti*, we experience the inner stillness of *Samadhi* during meditation, and this transforms us from the inside out. The three *Niyamas* of Kriya Yoga then arise naturally as external expressions of that inner state. In fact, all the *Yamas* and *Niyamas* are expressions of the inner state of stillness. All the habits and qualities are contained in seed form in *pranabuti*.

At the time when Patanjali wrote the Yoga Sutras, however, the method was more laborious: Yogis practiced Kriya Yoga in order to promote *Samadhi*. Now, is one approach better than the other? The reality is that both must go on in parallel. *Pranabuti* makes it faster and simpler, because we start by experiencing the inner state of *Samadhi* in Heartfulness Meditation.

Cleaning also makes it faster and simpler, because the complexities that block our awareness of the inner stillness are removed in an almost effortless way. But then, the onus is on us to make sure we absorb that inner state and let it radiate from every atom of our being, so that our actions are in sync. Otherwise, we lose the inner condition. Nature dictates that outer and inner must match, otherwise there is tension, and we slip back to the lower state due to entropy.

There is one very simple way to prevent this slipping or falling, and it is the most vital aspect of Yoga, love. Our feeling level of connection binds us and holds us to the Center, or more commonly to the Master who is connected with the Center. This is known as *bhakti*, the inner gravity that connects our orbit to him. While he is cradling us in this weak force of love, which can expand over

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vast distances like gravity, we have the possibility of working upon our character so that the *Yamas* and *Niyamas* become an integral part of our personality. This is one of the many reasons why a spiritual Master is so vital in the process of inner change. Without his support, our pre-programmed, subconscious, unwanted habits will keep pulling us back to lower levels time and time again. With his support, there is vitality, as inner gravity holds us to the Center.

## Tapas

The first quality of Kriya Yoga is *tapas*, which is generally translated as “austerity,” so it is not the most popular of *Niyamas*! People much prefer “contentment.” The word austerity evokes images

of tightening the belt when times are tough, downsizing and counting pennies, no indulgence, no fun, and even torture. But this is a very extreme and distorted view of *tapas*.

Actually, rather than being anything to do with enforced hardship, *tapas* is a direct result of the previous *Niyama*, contentment. It is the process of simplifying and purifying our being into a shining state, radiating love and light. Instead of “austerity,” we can use the words “plainness” and “simplicity,” where “plain” means unembellished and original. The outcome of all yogic practice is this ultimate simplicity, and my teacher, Babuji, describes the approach in the following principle, “Simplify your life so as to be identical with Nature.”

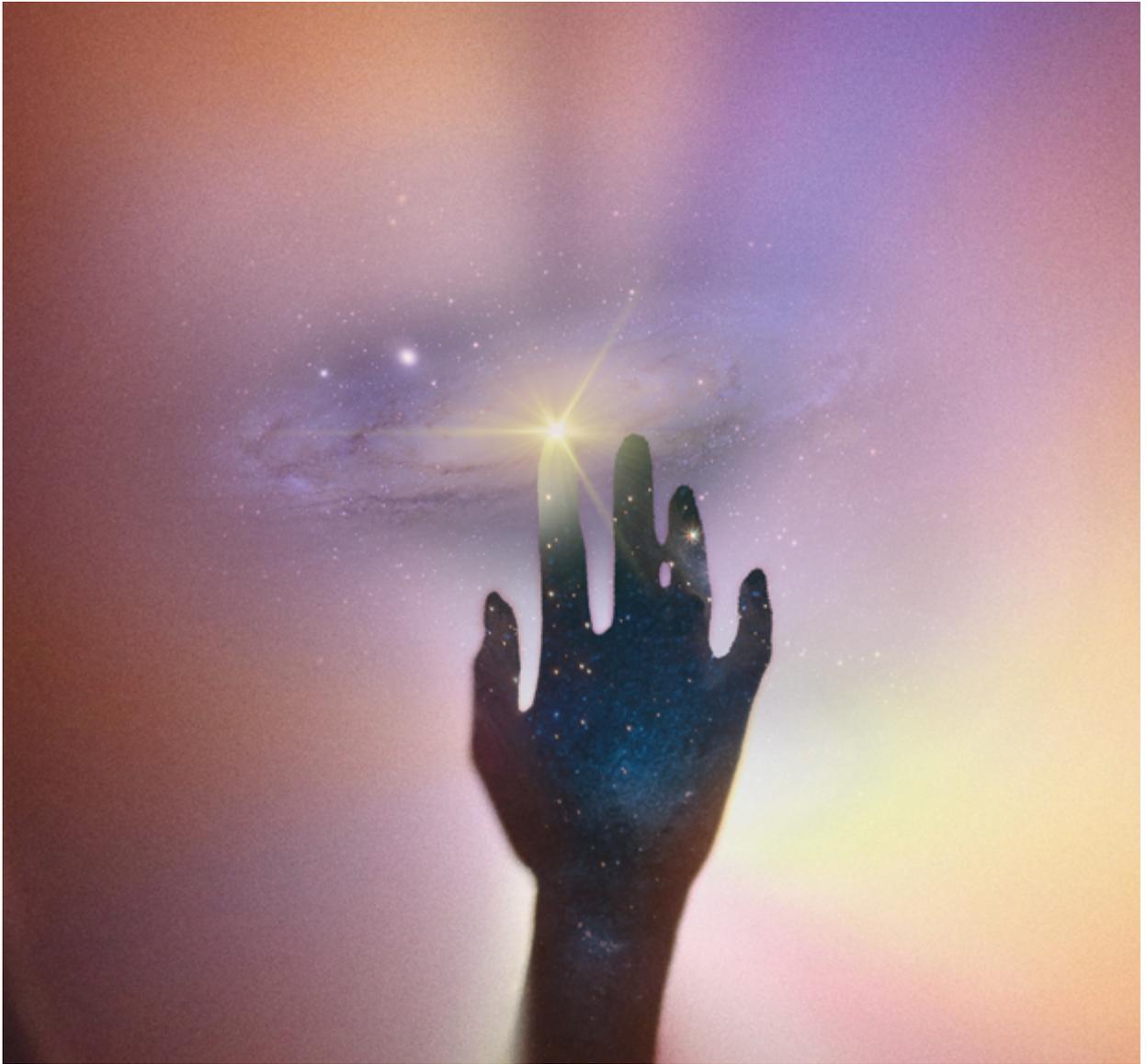
Simplification and plainness are one aspect of *tapas*. The Sanskrit word *tapas* comes from the root, *tap*, meaning “to shine,” also meaning “heat” and “intensity.” *Tapas* is to be intensely, super-sensitively aware of everything, internally and externally, with the self-mastery to respond from a state of centeredness. Normally, when people perceive things in the outside world, their consciousness is enlivened and pulled outward. This creates vibrations in the subtle body, which hook onto similar vibrational patterns or cognates of memories from past experiences. As a result, they perceive the present situation in the light of those past experiences. It is like retrieving data from storage and using it to predict the present moment, which is done all the time in data modeling.

Yogis do something very different. While resting in a state of inner stillness, drawing the senses inward through the yogic process of *Pratyahara*, they are not pulled outward by the movement of thought energies through the *vruttis*. Instead, they hold their energies within and remain in

stillness, creating an intensity, a potential, and that intensity is also another aspect of *tapas*. It purifies consciousness in much the same way that fire purifies the dross from gold ore. It is associated with the fire element, and it is also associated with *Pratyahara*. And it is this centeredness that allows us to continuously maintain a beginner’s mind.

So, *tapas* is not about austerity in the sense of self-harm or suffering imposed from outside forces, as many people have wrongly assumed throughout the centuries. It is about self-purification and simplification. The attitudinal shift, from something imposed and negative to something that evolves from within and is positive, comes with expanding consciousness through meditation. *Tapas* is the process of continuously refining ourselves to become the best we can be. As Chopin said, “Simplicity is the final achievement,” and da Vinci said, “Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.” It is something sublime, something worth aspiring for as the greatest expression of human potential.

*Tapas* is our trajectory toward a simple life, an uncomplicated life, an austere life, with great awareness, great sensitivity, and great flexibility, constantly refined by purification and simplification. It is wrapped in love, starting with self-love, self-compassion, and self-awareness, and culminating in becoming love itself. In Heartfulness, it is not something to be practiced; it is the natural result of our meditative inner practices. We can say that these practices are our *tapas*, and the more intensity we bring to them, the more transformative they become. We shine, and the fragrance of Divinity radiates from every atom of our being, just as the wind is the conduit for the fragrance of sandalwood trees in the forest. I have spoken about this in the series March to Freedom,



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describing the state we arrive at when we reach chakra 10 of our inner journey. This is where the inner intensity of *tapas* really starts to manifest, once we have arrived at the realm of God, expressed so beautifully in the mystical love poetry of Radha, Rumi, Kabir, Rabi'a Basri and Meerabai. I wish that all of you will have the opportunity to experience this sublime state.

### How do we attain this state?

Along the way, what helps us to keep going until we reach this state? Awareness and attitude; essentially the awareness of the difference between needs and desires.

What happens when we are forever complaining about the challenges we face in daily life – with family members, worldly worries, colleagues at work, and friends? Will we see the Divinity and the potential for growth in the problems life throws at us? Unlikely. And when we are busy judging others for their faults and mistakes, will we see the Divinity in them? Also unlikely. The attitudinal shift we are looking for is not to be pulled down into the entanglements of the worst of our shared humanity, but instead to rise up to the highest awareness of beauty, love and light. We are looking for an inner state of acceptance, without expectation, with a carefree, cheerful contentment.

In ancient times, *tapas* was often thought to be hard, the result of arduous penance, both physical and mental, renouncing daily life and living in a forest, on top of a mountain, or in a remote ashram away from human society. When we look back throughout history, however, we can easily

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see that the most evolved mystics and yogis were often not those who ran away from everyday life. Many were immersed in the day-to-day dramas of family, work, and normal society. They refined themselves through these everyday lives. This holds true for both ancient and modern-day mystics alike. What is required is attitudinal shift. Today, we acknowledge this fact – that a more effective



approach to purifying and potentializing the human system is to live within the structure of society, solving the challenges of family life, work, and social issues, with equanimity and poise.

This is our training ground, and every day we are given ample opportunity to refine ourselves, rise higher, and let go of negative thoughts and emotions. Does it mean we are not discerning, unable to distinguish between what is right for us and what is wrong? Not at all! But it means we approach each situation and each person with the generosity of an awakened heart – contentment, calmness, compassion, courage, and clarity.

### The effect of *tapas*

The effect of *tapas* has also been described by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras when he says:

2:43 *Kayehdriyasiddhiraśuddhiksayāttapasah*

Austerity brings about mastery over the body and the senses through the elimination of impurities.

This adds another dimension to our experience. Mastery over the body and the senses is another outcome of *tapas*. Remember the “intensity” that

Imagine now that your intensity is so heightened that you have 360-degree awareness of everything that is happening both inside and outside you: The flows of energy throughout your system, the blockages in that flow, the tensions that accumulate with stress, the effect of circadian rhythms on your physiology, behavior, thoughts and feelings, the vibrations in the atmosphere around you, what is happening in others, etc.

we explored earlier in the article? Imagine now that your intensity is so heightened that you have 360-degree awareness of everything that is happening both inside and outside you: The flows of energy throughout your system, the blockages in that flow, the tensions that accumulate with stress, the effect of circadian rhythms on your physiology, behavior, thoughts and feelings, the vibrations in the atmosphere around you, what is happening in others, etc. In reality, we know so little about the physiology and psychology of the human system, the three bodies – physical, subtle and causal – and the interplay among them, and the interplay with the outside world. Science may be discovering new information every day, but there is still so much to be uncovered by the great scientists.

With the awareness that comes as a result of our *tapas*, with the removal of all the mental modifications that Patanjali describes, we are then able to perceive these directly. Also, as we journey through the chakras, from the Heart Region to the Mind Region to the Central Region, our human potential expands in ways we cannot possibly envision. This real purpose is the promise of Heartfulness, and of the shining simplicity of *tapas* we achieve through the practices, which results in the purity that Patanjali describes. It is an awe-inspiring journey and I wish that you will all experience it for yourselves.

## HOW TO ENJOY SITTING AT HOME

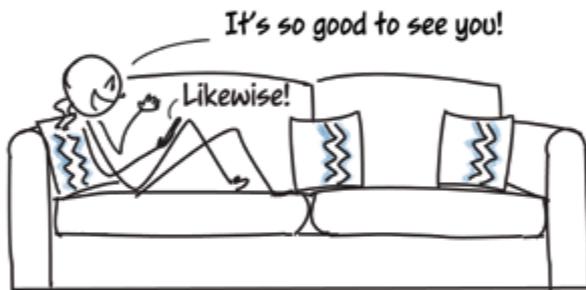
BREW NEW IDEAS



DO WHAT YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO DO "SOMEDAY"



DISCOVER THAT YOU CAN STILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE



It's so good to see you!

APPRECIATE THAT YOU'RE NOT ALONE



ENJOY THE RARE GENEROSITY OF TIME



taste of life





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

EDWARD DE BONO



Illustration by JANNE HARTIKAINEN



CHANGE IS THE

# ultimate creativity

**UPAMA RAJASEKHAR** is a Brighter Minds facilitator. Here, **PURNIMA RAMAKRISHNAN** meets with her and some of the children she facilitates in the program, to learn firsthand about their experiences.

had heard a lot about the Brighter Minds program, when I had a chance encounter with one of the facilitators, Mrs. Upama Rajasekhar, and this meeting was perhaps one of the turning points in broadening my own perception about the world in so many ways.

“So, why did you decide to become a facilitator?”  
 “I wanted to train my son. He is an archer and wanted to master blindfold archery, so I wanted to help him realize his dream. The rest, as they say, is history.”

This was just the start of the conversation. She invited me to interact with her students. When I joined them, I felt like I had entered a sci-fi movie set, the likes of Asimov’s second foundation series.

“My son changed and developed so much in just two days of the program, that we felt this is something all children in the world should experience,” said Upama.

“So what exactly happened?” I asked.

“Have you heard of the term sensory perception? Our brains can sense certain things from the atmosphere, depending on their capacity of perception. When their functions and capacities are heightened, we can perhaps call it super-sensory perception,” responded Upama.

“So, do these kids acquire a sense of perception than is more heightened than normal people?”

“Well, that is not exactly true,” answered Upama.

“To an extent, however, we are awed by their abilities to learn quickly and the way their

memories improve. Their intuition develops, and this leads to better confidence in everyday life. They have a pleasant personality, and we just feel so empowered around them. Let me introduce you to some of the children, and you can interact with them to see what I mean.”

Some of the kids were familiar, because they were from near where I lived, and they sat down to chat with me.

One boy said, “Aunty, you should see me performing while blindfolded.”

This young boy was blindfolded and then guessed the colors of colored balls correctly. I was awed. I had heard of such things, but never witnessed it with my own eyes.

“What else can you do?” I asked him, wanting to see more.

“Aunty, close your eyes and think of something,” he replied.

I closed my eyes and wondered what to think of. For some strange reason, my attention went to the dry deserts, and I could see a pyramid being built in the distance. I went nearer, and noticed that there were so many workers, who were probably slaves. I saw a pharaoh nearby, but then thought that a child couldn’t figure out something so complicated, so I decided to focus on a single pyramid. I opened my eyes to see the boy in a deep concentration.

“Aunty, I can visualize some laborers,” he said.

“What were they doing?”

“They were building something,” he answered.  
“What were they building?”  
“A pyramid, I think.”

I stopped him, and gently asked him to open his eyes. I think I couldn't take more than this, so I told him to go back to his friends.

“Upama, how did he do this?” I asked.  
“So, did you think of a pyramid?” she responded with a question.  
“I visualized exactly what he mentioned – some people building a pyramid in the desert,” was my answer.  
“It happens. I am not surprised. Some children have that uncanny ability to tap into their abilities at the most appropriate times. But it does not happen all the time.”  
“What do you mean?” I asked.  
“There has to be an environment of calm and composedness. They have to be completely relaxed on all planes. So that is why we relax them at the beginning of the session using the Heartfulness Relaxation technique. And then we proceed to the other activities of the Brighter Minds program.”

“So in their minds, in their calm composure, are they really able to know exactly what someone else is thinking?” was my next question.  
“Neuroplasticity!” responded Upama, with great emphasis. “It just means that the brain cells reshape or remold themselves depending on various external and internal stimuli in the exercises. We have exercises for the right and left hemispheres of the brain, for the eyeballs, and many other things. We also have certain music which stimulates the brain and helps it to enter the alpha and theta states. We always encourage children to be natural. We are not rigid in the exercises. Who knows what these kids could lead us to! So, a certain amount of flexibility is required



as a facilitator. We facilitate the children in their journeys to realize their true potential.”

My next question was, “Don't you think the children could start getting proud of their achievements, their confidence spilling over into over-confidence?”

“When they go through their journey, when their minds are opening up in such a magnificent way, there is no place for ego. There is no place for pride. The children feel humbled and awed, feeling confidence in the higher support, as they evolve. Their hearts are refined, and their humility is also refined. The more they know, the more they realize that there is a lot more to traverse.

“Let me tell you about how I feel – there is no place for pride or ego in this work. I am happy seeing these children. I have trained 500 children so far, and I have seen them flower so beautifully, without ego being inflated. Every day I thank God that he chose me to do this in my life, where I can be of use for humanity’s upliftment.”

I also had an opportunity to interact with Upama’s son: “So, did you learn blindfold archery?” “Yes,” he responded, “and I am happy for that.” So I asked, “What has changed in you from within?”

“Ideas come. I am curious. I have changed. Feeling change itself is creative. I was a limited version earlier. I now feel that every day I am becoming a more complete version. Do you know what I mean?”

I did not entirely comprehend, but I accepted what he said.

“Upama, I am curious, can adults also improve their sensory perception?”

“Yes, we are planning to release adult classes soon, for the general public. We are in the process of concluding some research. You know, there is nothing great in what we are doing here. We are not creating history. We are not making magic. We are just helping people realize their true potential. We are telling them, ‘There is this organ called the brain, so please use it to the fullest capacity.’ That is all. Why don’t you try what the other kids are doing?”

“But I am an adult,” I said.

“That is exactly what I was trying to convey,” she said. “Don’t create these barriers in your mind, as they do not exist. We are still researching the program for adults, but that does not mean something wonderful cannot happen with you. Come on.”

There is nothing great in what we are doing here. We are not creating history. We are not making magic. We are just helping people realize their true potential.



Our logic and science are so limited. There is so much mystery in this world. Knowing how to unlock our own hidden potential at this time in humanity's evolution seems all the more exciting.

My personal experience with what happened is a story for another day. Let me tell you, though, I came out with my heart filled with beautiful magic, an eternity of waiting having unlocked in my mind. It is difficult to put into words what I felt after that. I don't know about identifying colored balls while blindfolded, or guessing thoughts accurately. I have not tried to guess things many times, but I can vouch that this is something everyone can try. I now understood what Upama's son was trying to tell me earlier – that indeed change is creative. It is the ultimate creativity.

Sometimes, things we have always wanted all our lives, without consciously realizing it, come in packages that we least expect. After witnessing the miracles in the mind, how can the heart go back to its past state?

As I was leaving, Upama said, "Children may forget the music we play for them, and the blindfold exercises we do. They may forget other things, too, but one thing I know is that they will never forget how they feel, and that is a treasure.

"Our logic and science are so limited. There is so much mystery in this world. Knowing how to unlock our own hidden potential at this time in humanity's evolution seems all the more exciting. What is even more wonderful is to witness the manifesting of this beautiful side of humanity as a facilitator. As a collective, what magical and astonishing things will the generation of the future be capable of? My mind just feels like bursting at the seams."

Illustrations by ARATI SHEDDE



TEACHER'S DAY

teaching  
IS THE  
one profession  
THAT  
creates  
ALL OTHER  
PROFESSIONS



THIS TEACHER'S DAY  
UNLEARN TO RELEARN

**RESTART**

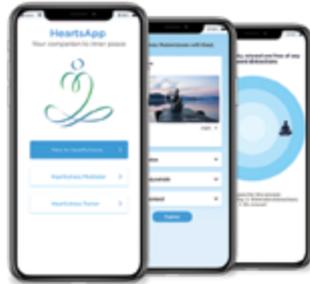
REWIRE FOR YOUR SECOND INNINGS

A  
**Brighter  
Minds** Enriching  
Young Minds

INITIATIVE

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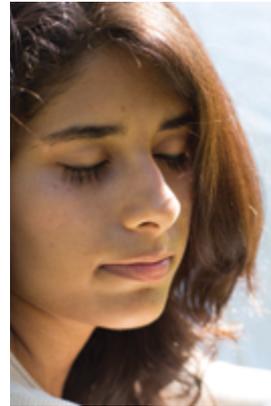
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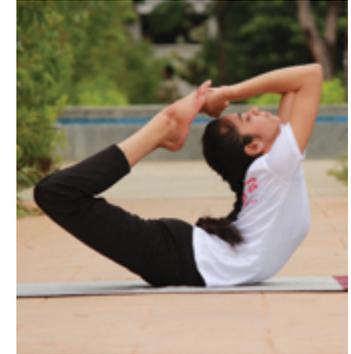
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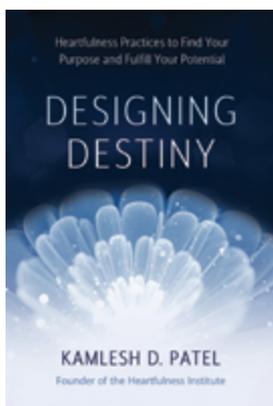
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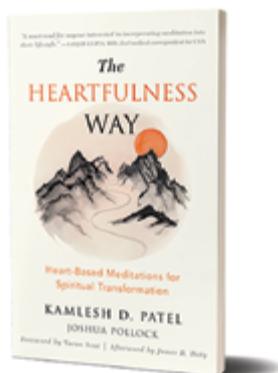
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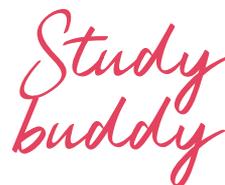


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