

STOP STRESSING

PART 1

LIFE CAN BE A BREEZE



DR SUSAN KRIEGLER



HOW TO BE REALLY ALIVE!



LIVE JUICY. STAMP OUT CONFORMITY. STAY IN BED ALL DAY.



DREAM OF JYPSY WAGONS. **FIND SNAILS MAKING LOVE.**

DEVELOP AN ASTOUNDING APPETITE FOR BOOKS.



DRINK SUNSETS. DRAW OUT YOUR FEELINGS.

AMAZE YOURSELF. BE RIDICULOUS.



STOP WORRYING. NOW. IF NOT NOW, THEN WHEN?

MAKE **YES** YOUR FAVORITE WORD. **MARRY YOURSELF.** DRY YOUR

EAT MANGOES



CLOTHES IN THE SUN.

KEEP TOYS IN THE BATHTUB.



NAKED. HANG UPSIDE DOWN. **FOLLOW A CHILD.**

CELEBRATE AN OLD PERSON. **SEND A LOVE LETTER TO YOUR SELF.**

BE ADVANCED. TRY ENDEARING.



OUR SPIN
DIZZY
SELF

INVENT WAYS



TRANSFORM NEGATIVES.

TO LOVE.

DELIGHT SOMEONE.

WEAR PAJAMAS TO A DRIVE-IN MOVIE.



ALLOW YOURSELF TO FEEL RICH WITHOUT MONEY.

BE WHO YOU TRULY ARE AND THE MONEY WILL FOLLOW.



BELIEVE IN EVERYTHING.

YOU ARE ALWAYS ON YOUR WAY TO A MIRACLE.



THE MIRACLE IS
YOU !!!



THE LIGHT IN THE BODY

SONG OF MYSELF

Walt Whitman

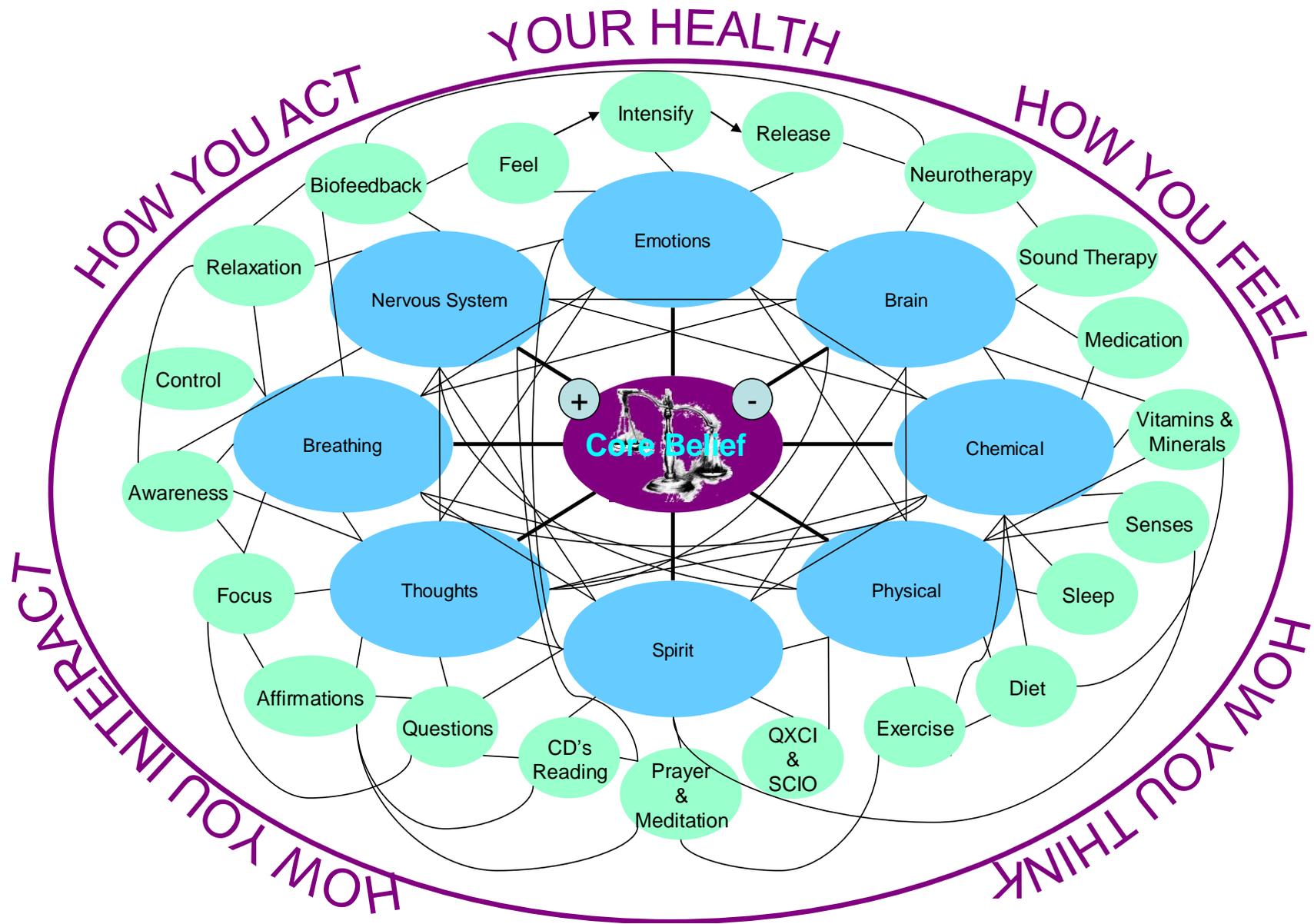
*I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you...*

*Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge
That pass all the argument of the earth,
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers,
And the women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love...*

The bodymind is an integrated **network**. We used to think of the brain and nervous system as a hierarchical structure with a control centre (the brain) at the top, and a downwards spiralling cascade of lower structures, each having a less important function than the one above. This is like a company with a MD at the top, a Board of Directors below him, and further down people in less important positions, right down to the doorman and the cleaners at the bottom of the pecking order. Today there are companies with a more “flat” or democratic structure, where everybody has more or less the same authority. In the same way, we now tend to **think of the bodymind as a network, where every system within the larger system has equal power to control the functioning of the entire network.**

In a network you can theoretically press any button to cause fundamental change in the entire network. **It is like a spider’s web where touching any part will affect the whole web.** All points are equal regarding the potential to control the flow of information throughout the network. Every sub-system is a node, or **point of entry** into the whole system. That is why there are so many different kinds of therapy, each having the potential to make a difference.

Often, people ask, “Isn’t there a pill that will fix it all?” Indeed **there is a pill for everything, but there is no pill that will fix it all.** Many people take three or more kinds of medication for depression, anxiety, high blood pressure, cholesterol, and insomnia. Sometimes they need pills to fix the side-effects of other pills. **If one system is unbalanced, the other systems fall like dominos.** A typical and tragic example is an achievement driven, perfectionistic woman who told me she is on sleeping pills, pills to dilute her blood after a light thrombosis attack, and a hormone replacement pill. She is over-weight, constipated, has chronic neck spasms, lower back pain, drinks too much, and doesn’t enjoy sex. She yells at her children, and her thyroid needs testing. She is 43 years old and goes to the gym five times a week, where she works out to the point of exhaustion, but she refuses to make the changes in her life which will really make the difference for her. Unfortunately, her doctor has prescribed the sedative that enables her to continue to live the life and to continue to think about life the way she does.



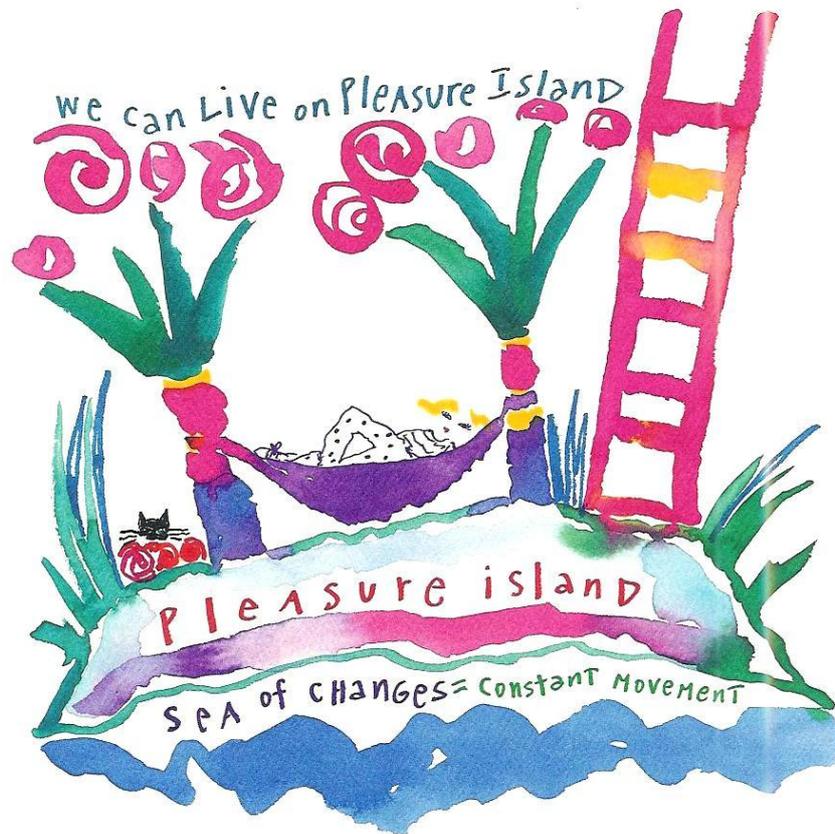
I believe in a **holistic approach**. This means that **we look at all the sub-systems of the bodymind, and simultaneously address as many of them as we are able to**. There is no single quick-fix. To be healthy and happy does **not necessitate more pain and suffering**. It is all about **small changes – baby steps – in the direction of positive change**. You will backslide now and then, and that is OK too. Remember that **just like any other being on the planet, there are basically two ways of living for you – either you are comfortable, happy, and healthy, or you are in trouble, and this can manifest in a myriad of psychological and/or physical symptoms**.



LOVE OR FEAR

Ten years ago when I read Jerry Jampolsky's book **LOVE IS LETTING GO OF FEAR**, I thought it was a gross over-simplification and mere pop psychology to say that there are only two emotions, namely **love** and **fear**. **If you let go of fear, your natural state of being is love**. The longer I work with people, the more I realize that Jerry and others who quote the **COURSE IN MIRACLES** are entirely correct. This is not only a spiritual truth. It also rests on a universal psycho-biological law. The relationship of all living beings to their environment is based on **two basic instinctual modes which exclude each other: relaxation, safety, pleasure, joy,**

attraction, and connection (love), or tension, stress, anger, hate, avoidance, and disconnection (all born from fear).



By the way, the COURSE IN MIRACLES is not a course like a workshop you have to attend; it is a book you can buy in larger book shops or order on the internet. In short, it is “a course in spiritual psychotherapy aimed at replacing a thought system based on fear, and replacing it, instead, with a thought system based on love.” For me the COURSE is my second Bible. Many people misinterpret the beautiful Christian teachings in such a way that it causes them even more fear and guilt than they already have and the COURSE can be a wonderful corrective for this.

The most important goal of psychotherapy is to liberate the total network from its chronic emergency mode – the fight, flight, or freeze response. If the bodymind is stuck in the chronic systemic stress syndrome, the entire network and all its sub-systems are functioning outside of their comfort zone, or above their discomfort threshold. If the network is functioning below its stress threshold – e.g. if it is mostly operating in the parasympathetic mode, you feel at ease, happy, and healthy. If the system is pushed over its threshold of what it can handle with ease, the sub-systems and all the life processes are operating in the sympathetic mode. The idea of a threshold can also be illustrated by the metaphor of a scale. The point where the scale tips out of the comfort zone and is weighted in the direction of the survival or emergency zone, is the threshold.

The ideal state in the bodymind rests on a delicate **balance** between the sympathetic and the parasympathetic functions of the autonomous nervous system. During normal, restful breathing (and good sex!) there is a complex and harmonious ebb and flow between sympathetic and parasympathetic processes, e.g. between effort/tension and relaxation/release. However, in most people this balance is disturbed and the entire network is **over-activated** in favour of the sympathetic functions and processes. The parasympathetic processes are neglected and the multiple results of this imbalance are devastating. The root of this evil is too seldom addressed. A myriad of pharmacological remedies are prescribed to suppress the signs and symptoms of this sympathetic over-activation. Many people take sleeping pills, anti-depressants, sedatives, pills for high blood pressure, and even Beta-blockers to counter-act or camouflage shakiness, heart palpitations, panic-attacks, and other signs of **excessive adrenaline production**.

The problem with pharmacological suppression of sympathetic symptoms is the boomerang effect. It is like taking medication for a runny nose. It can unblock your nose, but a few hours later your nose is even more blocked and you need to take more medication. This is even truer in the case of anxiety symptoms. Indeed, sedatives or tranquilizers are the worst remedy for stress and anxiety, because in the long term these medications aggravate the symptoms. The dosage has to be continually increased. The only real solution is to restore the balance in the nervous system by **calming the sympathetic over-arousal** and increasing the parasympathetic tonus – the **restoration of balance**. The healing through non-pharmacological methods is of course slower, but the advantage is that there are no negative side-effects, it is non-toxic, and it costs nothing.

The sympathetic response is built into all living organisms. Its purpose is to ensure survival in a physical emergency situation. All the reactions that accompany stress, are very useful in a combat situation – every physical and psychological change has a logical and necessary function. However, if these reactions become **chronic** states, they cause dis-ease and they become physical and psychological **symptoms**. In other words, **there is nothing wrong with sympathetic activation if your life is danger, but the state itself becomes unhealthy and even life-threatening if it is continuously maintained in the absence of physical threat in the environment.** In a physical emergency it is useful and even essential for your heart-rate to accelerate and for blood to be pumped to the muscles so that you can punch, kick, or run. It is also useful for the blood to be withdrawn from your skin, to limit blood loss and pain in case of injury. Because digestion and fighting against viruses and infections are not priorities in a combat situation, these functions are logically temporarily put on hold.

Since the beginnings of evolution the bodymind has “reasoned” that loving thoughts, gratitude, normal blood-pressure, digestion, and warding off diseases can all be resumed – later, perhaps tonight when we are once again safe in the cave by the fire under the fur blankets. Then the parasympathetic gear can be engaged for the deep restoration of all the physical, organic, and neurochemical damage of the battle. The problem with us is that this does not necessarily happen. You toss and turn under your cotton sheets and your down duvet and you still worry about your children, your investments, your affair, your bond and whatever else, because **you can’t switch off**.

The body's inherent intelligence is based on the principle of **economy**. All non-essential functions are suppressed in favour of what is crucial in the moment: action! That is why blood is sent to certain parts of the brain – those parts that deal with concrete details and physical action. Brain functions pertaining to abstract thought and the experience of love are put on hold in favour of detail focus and paranoia. These adaptations are extremely useful if you are huddled in a trench in the midst of a battle field!

However, if these states become habitual, you may believe it is just part of your personality to be so tense, pessimistic, critical, perfectionistic and driven. You may think it is natural for you not to be able to sit still and to have such a busy brain, because you may have been this way since you can remember. And most probably your father or your mother (or both of them) were that way too. Perhaps your whole family operates this way. The habit of stress is certainly partly **genetic** in origin, but it is definitely also **learned** within families through example and atmosphere. When discussing a qualitative EEG with a client, I often tell them this is a perfect brain wave pattern – for a soldier in Iraq or for a cornered crocodile. For a housewife, an engineer, or an artist, it is not ideal.

STRESS IS THE MOTHER OF ALL DISEASE

My grandmother used to say, “Ledigheid is die duiwel se oorkussing” (“Laziness is the devil's ear-cushion”). Many of the other things she said, for example about the golden middle road, silent prayer before meals, and resting on Sundays, were absolutely correct. In this regard, however, she was 100% wrong – **most of us can do with a healthy dose of taking it easy**. Indeed it would be more true to say that stress is the mother of all evil. Relaxation, and especially the totally “empty” state of meditation, is an opportunity for the angels to whisper in our ears. Stress is the primary or intensifying cause of most physical and psychological problems. It does not matter whether you call it fear, tension, anxiety, panic attacks, worry, hyper-activity, ambition, or a busy brain; it is sympathetic over-stimulation or stress. **“Stress is the mother of all disease.”** (Caroline Myss: WHY PEOPLE DON'T HEAL) Even if the obvious cause is in your environment, or your genetic constitution, or other physical factors, **all problems and illnesses, including chronic pain, can be alleviated by relaxation and better breathing.**

Relaxation and enough oxygen are the prerequisites for the activation of all the natural processes through which the bodymind maintains, balances, and heals itself. Even in Third World countries usually associated with more dramatic and exotic diseases like HIV-AIDS, the Ebola virus and Malaria, most problems treated by doctors are the stress-related diseases that are also endemic in the Western World, like headache, spastic colon and stomach ulcers. Stress manifests differently in different cultures. But to be human, is to stress.

In another chapter I explain how intense negative emotion may be used to lift specific stress thresholds. **Your general comfort/stress threshold for what is happening in your life is created by the blueprints about yourself and the world.** These blueprints are the core beliefs which were learned during your

childhood years. These core beliefs were engraved into your **nervous system and your cell memory** while you were totally helpless and highly impressionable. Those **childhood blueprints** still determine you what you can comfortably say “yes” to and handle in your life, as opposed to what goes beyond your ability to deal with. This in turn determines whether your inner kingdom is peaceful or not, because those basic concepts which you formed before you could speak, still determine your basic **perspective** on life.

In THE GATEWAY OF PAIN there is a more detailed explanation of why therapy that boils down to expressing, blocking or avoidance of negative emotions brings only short term alleviation of symptoms. Some therapists (like Jo Steenkamp: SPONTANEOUS INTRASYSTEMIC HEALING PROCESS / SHIP) are totally opposed to therapy that aims at relaxation, spiritual enrichment, or positive thinking, because, like medication, these kinds of therapy prevent **the intensification of painful emotion which is needed for spontaneous intrasystemic transformation**. Perhaps you feel a little better, but you are still trapped in a psychological emergency which will have catastrophic effects on the entire bodymind if it becomes chronic. This is a very valid point of view and I want to emphasize that the advice given here should not be seen as a substitute for fully experiencing and being **transformed by the painful emotions** caused by your childhood blueprints.

The best approach is to combine the methods described in the GATEWAY OF PAIN and ASCENDING TO HEAVEN, and the methods described in this chapter. Although fundamental emotional transformation is indeed essential, it will not suffice to change old habits of shallow breathing, negative thinking, poor eating habits, disturbed sleep patterns, muscle tension, brain and chemical imbalances. The following guidelines are not ways to pour pink paint in the form of healthy habits and positive thinking over core negative beliefs that have existed since your childhood. This will not work. **These guidelines should be balanced with “deep” methods aimed at changing the unconscious operating system in the psychobiological computer.**

BREATH IS THE SILVER BULLET

Psyche, the Greek word which is the root of the word psychology, means “soul”. Psyche has twin etymological roots: one the butterfly whose mysterious, beautiful, but elusive permutations metaphorically dramatize our experience of soul; and the other, from the verb “to breathe”, is an analogue of that invisible wind which enters at birth and departs at death. How ironic that modern psychology so often addresses only the behaviours which can be observed and converted to statistical models, or cognitions which can be reprogrammed, or biochemical anomalies which may be medicated, while ignoring the two root meanings of its name: the soul and breath. The very nature and quality of consciousness, including spiritual experience, and the quality of breath are indeed inextricably intertwined.

(James Hollis)

Conscious, relaxed breathing is mentioned first and gets most space in this chapter. This is because **the relaxation response** and deep, diaphragmatic breathing are the

prerequisites for those deep **transformations which can occur through the conscious experiencing of emotional pain**. Also because of all the things you can do for yourself, it is the **quickest and most effective way to get rid of most of your stress and bring your total bodymind into balance** and integration. It is the bridge between the conscious and the unconscious bodymind. It is the **key to control over the autonomic nervous system and the gateway to spiritual awakening**. It is the most effective way to focus and calm the brain and the emotions, to function more productively and creatively, and to re-direct the attention from the physical to the metaphysical dimension.

Breath control is about the gentle manipulation of the basic life processes through the restoration of healthy, natural breath patterns. Of all the self-help techniques this is the most useful one to gently restore electro-chemical imbalances, including problems with attention, memory, digestion, circulation, heart conditions, temper, anxiety, panic attacks, muscle tension, sleep, headache, and depression. It costs nothing, takes no extra time, does not need any apparatus, and it is as close as the tip of your nose!

I agree with dr. Andrew Weil (BREATH: THE MASTER KEY TO SELF HEALING) that **without paying attention to your way of breathing, all the medical treatment, therapy, and self-help books in the world will not really help. Even your spiritual life will remain shallow without breath awareness**. It will not bring you those desired states of deep and consistent inner peace where you are in touch with a greater oneness and the divine. There is a story of a woman who drew water from a well for the Buddha. She asked him, "Master, how do I attain Enlightenment?" The Buddha answered, "My child, breathe awareness and be aware of every movement of your hands as you draw water from the well."

To **become aware** of something which is usually unconscious, is initially uncomfortable and feels unnatural, but awareness is the basis of all the feedback therapies. It is also the foundation of spiritual awakening and emotional growth, especially if it involves becoming aware of "the difference that makes the difference." Of all the bodymind processes, breath is the only one that can be totally conscious **and** totally unconscious. **Conscious breathing bridges the gap between the conscious and the unconscious domains**. The goal of many forms of psychotherapy is to make conscious what has been unconscious, for example through dream analysis. Many of our emotional and health problems are caused by the splitting of these two worlds into watertight compartments.

It is an important physiological fact that breath is the only function that can be totally voluntary **and** also totally involuntary. The voluntary nervous system and the involuntary (autonomous) nervous systems are controlled by two different sets of muscles and nerves. **Through voluntary control of breathing, the voluntary muscles can be used to influence the autonomic nervous system and different patterns can be established in it**. It is the **gear-shift** that can be used to shift the total network of bodymind systems from the emergency gear to the relax gear. Breath is the element that bridges the physical and the non-physical dimensions. It has the potential to control the impact of the mind on the body. An imbalance in the autonomic nervous system where it leans towards the sympathetic side of the scale is the root of a myriad of physical and psychological problems. Because conscious

breathing bridges both the physical and the psychological dimensions, it has the power to change **both**. The bodymind can heal itself if it is given the chance through the healing power of breath work.

Unfortunately this simple and life-enhancing knowledge is not usually included in the conventional medical curriculum. I have seen several medical doctors in my practice and it has been a revelation to them when I explain the implications of breath as the control mechanism of the total nervous system. Someone who suffers from the symptoms of sympathetic over-arousal is diagnosed as being “stressed” and there is the diagnosis of “metabolic syndrome” (high blood pressure and cholesterol, digestive problems and overweight). But the simple and ubiquitous syndrome of **autonomic nervous system imbalance or sympathetic over-stimulation** does not exist as a diagnosis. It is used as a common diagnosis in Japan and in Ayurvedic medicine. Deepak Chopra (RESTFUL SLEEP) calls this state hyper arousal. It is characterized by impatience, irritability, anger at small things like how people drive and service in restaurants, and an inability to switch off the mind and to relax.

Ice-cold clammy hands (and feet) and excessive sweating under the arms are tragically “cured” through an operation where certain nerves are severed, while a simple change in the person’s style of breathing can solve the sweat problem, as well as many other problems. There are a few people whose hands and skin get hot with stress, but by and large cold, sweaty hands are a sure fire indicator of sympathetic over-activity. That is why I always touch my client’s hands in order to ascertain what is going on in their autonomic nervous system. I always tell them that **the therapy is not finished before their hands are warm and powder dry**. A thorough assessment of their stress level includes looking at their breathing tempo, heart tempo, brain wave activity, muscle tension, and electrical conductivity of the skin. This forms the basis for **biofeedback and neurofeedback therapy**, which is the necessary **prerequisite** and/or **complement to psychotherapy**. The easiest sub-system to control through feedback training is the respiratory (breathing) system, which automatically calms all the other systems.

If the base-line stress in the bodymind is reduced, many of the psychological symptoms disappear, including relationship problems that are caused by irritability, low libido, chronic anger, panic-attacks, over-sensitivity, and mood disturbances. In the same way, work and study problems due to concentration and memory deficits disappear. Often **physical problems** like constipation, heartburn, flatulence, spastic colon, reflux, eczema, sinus, back pain, chest pain, heart palpitations, high blood pressure, neck spasm, headaches, migraine, insomnia, and chronic fatigue **also disappear**. Many physical and psychological problems can be seen as the logical signs of chronic sympathetic over-activation. If the imbalance in the nervous system is corrected through a disciplined and long-term programme of relaxing breathing, much of the secondary or structural damage caused by chronic stress may even be reversed.

The treatment of serious diseases like lupus, diabetes, fibromialgia, HIV-AIDS, cancer, etcetera, may also be supported if the bodymind relaxes. This enables the medication and the natural self-healing mechanisms of the body to work together. I want to stick out my neck and say the healing of any disease under the sun can be

enhanced by the subtle but powerful impact of breath control. Breath influences any state in any place in the body where you have nerves. But it demands **perseverance and time**. It is a gentle power like the force of water, which can in time carve a canyon out of solid rock. Sometimes it takes a few weeks, or a few months to really feel the effect. It is still worth while trying – it costs nothing, and what have you got to lose besides your stress?

TWO WAYS OF BREATHING

Fitness instructors, bioenergeticists, sports trainers, dance teachers, and even Western Yoga instructors are not necessarily aware of the crucial importance of the two different ways of breathing. Many of my clients are dancers, or train in the gym, even run in the Comrades, ride the Argus, play squash or tennis, yet they are stuck in the pattern of shallow chest breathing due to ignorance. I tell them they are **action-fit, but not relaxation-fit**. They also suffer from the usual list of stress-related illnesses and symptoms that one would expect in people who don't exercise, who eat like pigs and smoke like chimneys. The tight abs and the six-pack muscles give them a beautiful appearance, but these are ironically the very obstacles to relaxed breathing. A Yoga or Kung Fu Master would give them not an admiring, but a compassionate look, because those who know the science of breath are aware that the "lion profile" (big chest and narrow waist) also have a "lion temperament" (tension and aggression).

Think of the body as an elongated, flexible cylindrical tube or box, separated into two sections by a moving shelf – the **diaphragm**. In effect the upper and lower body is two roundish boxes, the chest (the air box) and the stomach (the food box). The two spaces are two separate pressure systems that together enable the body to breathe by alternating high and low pressure in the two boxes. Also, without tightening the diaphragm, you cannot jump, run, punch, or lift a heavy weight. You may test this if you wish to. Notice what happens if you stand upright and you make a little jump into the air. You pull in your breath, pull your diaphragm **up** in the direction of your chest, and the **pressure** that results, together with the **stiffness** in the centre of your body, enable you to jump. The same happens when you throw a punch, or throw something, or kick up your leg. The chest contains your heart and lungs, while the stomach cavity contains your intestines and diverse organs. To prevent the leakage of pressure, fluids and solids between the two cavities, the oesophagus which penetrates the diaphragm has a **valve** which can close tightly. The habit of shallow chest breathing can create chronic pressure on this valve, thus causing reflux or a hiatus hernia.

If I were to ask you to take a deep breath, I wonder what you would do with your diaphragm? Please put this book down now, and take a few deep breaths as you would normally do it. Notice whether you pulled your diaphragm **up** toward your lungs while you expanded your chest with your **inhalation**? Or did you relax it and allow it to drop **down** softly in the direction of your stomach, while your belly expanded outwards? If you did the latter, you don't need to read any further – you are on the right path! If you are breathing like most people, however, you pulled your diaphragm upwards while you inhaled. You sucked in your stomach, hunched your shoulders upwards, and expanded your chest while pulling air into it. When you

exhaled, you relaxed your stomach. This is what most people consider to be a deep breath. If you think about it logically, however, this is a funny thing to do if you want to get more air into your chest. By pulling up your diaphragm, you effectively **reduce the space in your chest** while you are forcing air into your lungs! In addition, if you are also pulling your stomach in, you were making the whole cylinder smaller.

If you think there is a lot of stretch potential in the chest to accommodate the inflow of air, take a closer look at a mutton or pork rib the next time you cook or braai spare-ribs. See if you can stretch those tiny muscles between the rib bones. Not really much to spare there, is there? No wonder your **neck** gets so stiff and hard, because with breath you are building up **pressure** in your chest, which is displaced upwards towards the **neck, shoulders, and head!** No wonder you feel short of breath and your chest feels constricted much of the time. The body compensates for the decreased volume of oxygen per breath by increasing the breath tempo – up to 20 breaths per minute. But even at that speed, you don't get enough air to make you comfortable. It is of course useful if you need to use that pressure to shout or to punch someone, but unless you are a professional boxer, the only result of the accumulated kinetic pressure is chronic tension in your neck and shoulders. This style of breathing is also the cause of much back aches.

Now repeat that deep chest breath and notice what happens in your neck, shoulders, and back. You may also notice how much tension there is in your throat and face while you breathe in this way. If you look at yourself in a mirror while you breathe in this way, you will also see how the muscles and tendons in your neck tighten up and how the tension shows in your face. Your eyelids may be tight and the eyes may widen. Not a pretty picture! It almost looks like you are preparing to do the “Haka.” Well, this is of course useful if you are preparing for a fist fight. And this is exactly what this kind of breathing is meant for. It is **action-breath**: fight, flight or freeze breath. Let us call it **sympathetic** breathing. **As long as you breathe in this way, your bodymind will remain trapped in the stress response.**

Now try the other way of breathing: the **parasympathetic** way. Think about creating **space** for air in your chest and lungs by **dropping** your diaphragm down into the stomach cavity. When you create negative pressure in the chest, the air can flow into the lungs freely and naturally. To do this, you will need to **relax your stomach** and even **expand** it slightly. What you are actually doing is getting your intestines out of the way so that your diaphragm can float down into the belly cavity. When you exhale, push the breath up and out by gently contracting the stomach muscles and allowing the diaphragm to float upwards in the direction of your lungs. In this way the lungs are naturally and gently emptied from below. Make sure that you breathe out **all the used air**. Any carbon dioxide remaining in the blood stream will be interpreted by the body as a signal to fight for oxygen and the breathing tempo will speed up.

Parasympathetic breath is the absolute prerequisite for relaxation. It is also called **belly-breathing** or **diaphragmatic breathing**. Because the chest has so much more space and the lungs can therefore fill up completely, the breathing speed is automatically **slower**. The ideal tempo if you are relaxed and sitting down or lying down, are **six breaths per minute**. This means that **each breath** cycle lasts about **10 seconds**. **Try to breathe in for about three seconds, breathe out for four**

seconds, and rest with the breath out for three seconds before you breathe in again.

Diaphragmatic or belly breathing as your usual way of breathing will have a dramatic impact on the bodymind. **A harmony is created between the breathing tempo and the heart speed and blood pressure.** A cardio-respiratory arrhythmia is the big word which means that during each exhalation, the heart speed and blood pressure decrease, as they are supposed to during physical non-activity. If the stomach muscles instead of the chest muscles are used for breathing, every breath is a gentle **massage** of the intestines and all the lower body organs. This enhances digestion and libido.

(Talking about sex, here is some interesting information. It is especially important for women to do diaphragmatic breathing for sexual arousal and orgasm, because the female sexual response is principally connected to the parasympathetic mode. Men, on the other hand, can feel very sexual even while they are pumping adrenaline. This is why men are able to rape in a war situation or while committing an armed robbery. If a woman is stressed, she does not usually think about sex. With orgasm, a woman secretes oxytocin – a stimulant and bonding hormone. That is why she wants to chat after sex and feels more deeply in love with her mate after ‘making love.’ With orgasm a man produces tryptophane, and this is a sedative – that is why he “switches off” and falls asleep almost immediately. He is definitely not in the mood for chatting about the relationship after sex! In fact, he may not even phone her the next day!)

Indeed one may say that the **entire lower body sighs with relief** when you breathe better and comes truly **alive!** The chest also opens up because the chronic pressure is relieved. The **spine** undulates with each wave of the breath and the **brain is overjoyed because it is getting enough oxygen for peak performance.** Those screwed up facial muscles relax and you look younger. Your **voice** drops an octave and sounds more melodious because it resonates from the stomach. The release of pressure in the throat and vocal cords also helps your voice to come into its own.

HOLY BREATH AND WHOLE LIFE

The power of breath to change and harmonize body processes and consciousness was discovered centuries ago in India. The word *psyche* (root of psychology and psychiatry) is derived from the antique Sanskrit words *psu* (“breath”) and *ug* (“move” / “live” / “experience”). Psyche thus literally means “breathe that moves, lives and experiences.” The ancient Greeks also knew that **the quality of breath and the quality of consciousness are inter-dependent.** Eastern martial and healing arts like Tai Chi, Kung Fu, Chi Kung and Reiki are built on this knowledge. An important component of Yoga is Prana Yama, which consists of breathing exercises. The word *prana* (from the Sanskrit origin) means “breath,” “life,” “spirit,” and “Universal Life Force Energy.” *Chi* or *ki* also means “Universal Life Force Energy.”

Early Christians also knew that breath, life, consciousness and Spirit or Universal Consciousness is inter-related. The meanings of the Greek word *pneuma* and the Latin word *spiritus*, as well as the Hebrew word *baruch* all include these multi-level

interpretations. Careful reading of ancient Christian texts shows that the Latin words *Spiritus Sancti* which are translated as “Holy Spirit”, often firstly and literally mean “whole, healthy, and hence, holy breath.”

Breath is the **essence of life and consciousness**. Life begins with the first inhalation and ends with the final exhalation. In many spiritual traditions it is taught that the spirit or the soul is not fixed in the body before the commencement of the breath cycle at the baby’s birth from the womb. Consciousness floats more or less freely around the foetus while it is still in the mother’s body. There is a Muslim teaching that at birth, Allah allocates a fixed number of breaths to each person. This is a good reason to breathe slower – you will live longer!

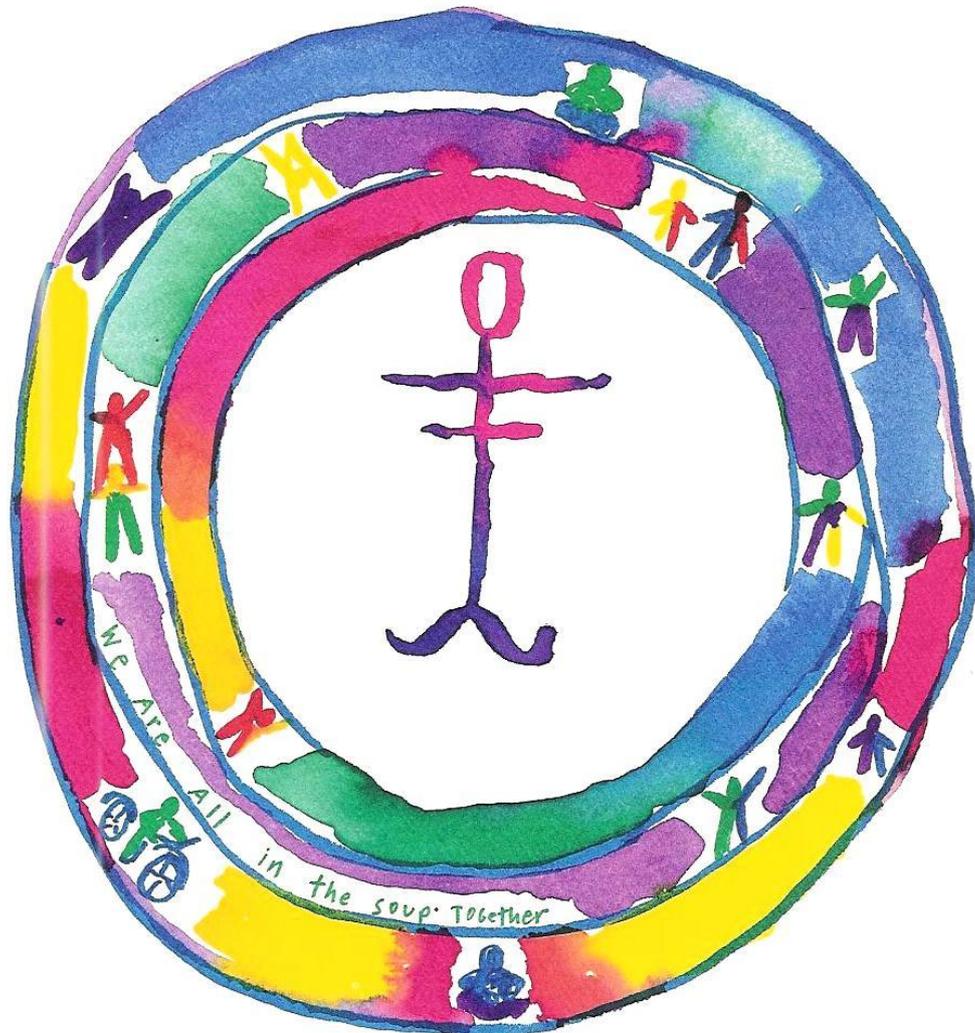
Strong alcoholic beverages like brandy, whiskey and vodka are called “spirits.” The historical origin of brandy was “spirits of wine” – a distillation of wine. The process of distillation means that the fluid percentage of a beverage is reduced. What remains is the essence of the drink. This is how the volume of wine was reduced for the purpose of shipping and exporting the vats more economically. The idea was that water could again be added when the product reached its destination. When the vats were opened, people noticed that it had a stronger impact to drink the undiluted “brandy-”wine, or “burning wine.” The meaning of distillation is to reduce the non-essential physical part of a fluid and thus to concentrate and intensify its non-physical power. The less the physical substance, the stronger the power that remains. This is the same principle upon which homeopathic medicine rests. It is this meaning of *spiritus* which simultaneously refers to breath, life, and spirit. **Spirit, or breath, means concentrated, distilled, essence of our beingness.** It is not visible, it is not physical, but this is where our **power** is. Breath is the movement of life, consciousness and spiritual energy.

Shifting the attention to the breath means to attend to the animated, non-physical, or spiritual self. It means paying attention to the movement of consciousness, spirit and soul in the body. Even if you do nothing else except just observing your breath consciously, you have already started to awaken spiritually. This can be the first step towards Enlightenment. It can be the first sign of the *metanoia* (“repentance” or “turning around”) referred to in the Bible. The turnaround means that your **focus** is shifted from the physical world around you, to the **non-physical** domain of power (the kingdom) within yourself.

This shift in focus to the rhythmical cycle of your inhalation and exhalation connects you with the larger, usually invisible **cosmic** reality. You become aware of your connection with a universe that is also eternally and rhythmically contracting and expanding. This awareness and oneness are what is intended with meditation. It is the same cycle of positive and negative phases that we see in the waves of the ocean, the cycles of day and night, summer and winter, birth and death, the explosion and implosion of stars, and the dance of atoms and sub-atomic particles and waves.

The macrocosm oscillates rhythmically between the two poles of expansion and contraction. Perhaps the big bang was the beginning of a cosmic exhalation that is still expanding and that will one day again shrink away to nothing, from which in turn a new universe will be born. The rhythmical oscillation between two poles is the

essence of breath. It connects us to All That Is and this is the spiritual lesson we can learn through breath awareness. Perhaps it is because of the universality of breath that the multidimensional meanings of breath work are emphasized in so many religions and spiritual traditions.



In English the immediate and logical links between all the words sharing the common root *spiritus* are clear: spirit (psyche or soul), respiration (breath), inspiration (literally breathing in), expire (to die, literally breathing out), spirited (lively). It is the gentle, slow, deep breathing which involves the whole body that opens us to the experience of peace, love and inner wisdom where we may **experience** the presence of the **divine**. **It is only when you relax deeply and enter the silence that you may hear the whisper of the Voice which is everywhere and nowhere.** The original meaning of the word conspiracy (Latin: *conspirare*) is to breathe together, or to think together and to see in the same way. To breathe in harmony, instead of in opposition to your body, the universe, and God, is to unite your will, your thoughts, and your being with All That Is. This is by far the best conspiracy you can join for the sake of your emotional and your physical well-being!

ELECTRO-CHEMICAL CHANGES

Neurophysiology helps us to understand scientifically the chemical and electrical changes in the brain and in the total bodymind when we do “holy” or “whole” breathing. The high frequency Beta brain waves are replaced by much slower Theta waves, which change the brain from a decoder of physical, sensory information, into a receiver of information from the non-physical dimension. Candace Pert (THE MOLECULES OF EMOTION) says breath is “the magic bullet, which is a sure fire, proven strategy for releasing endorphins and quelling the brain.” Although the autonomic nervous system operates unconsciously, it is possible to learn to regulate the electro-chemical network consciously. Yogis can control their experience of physical pain through breath control. They can walk on burning coals and pierce their lips or cheeks without feeling pain. Other people (known as mothers) also demonstrate that pain can be mastered through breath control during childbirth.

These persons have learned to gain access to and consciously control their PAG (peri-aqueductal grey matter in the mid-brain, where pain is regulated). How is it possible that pain can be neutralized or even be experienced as pleasure through conscious intention? To understand this, think about what a network is. Conscious breathing is a particularly effective way to control the total nervous system, including the experience of pain, because the respiratory system is a nodal point (point of access) into the network.

Research demonstrates that slowing down the speed of breathing qualitatively and quantitatively affects the production of peptides in the brain stem. And **the other way around!** What do you do when you are startled or annoyed? You pull your breath in, your breathing becomes rapid and shallow, or you hold your breath until the crisis has passed. This sets in motion the “red alert” chain reaction of peptides circulating through the blood and cerebro-spinal fluid, preparing the bodymind for action (fight, flight, or freeze), or possible injury. The problem is that so many people **don’t stop** breathing **as if** there is some kind of survival crisis and their bodies don’t stop producing those molecules. It is only the **intensity** of the emergency or alarm that varies, but they never switch off.

A total hijacking of the bodymind by the sympathetic response (a panic attack) can result in such dramatic physical changes that it feels like a heart attack. Some people are regularly rushed to the outpatient emergency section in hospitals with symptoms which are so acute that they think they are dying. The irony is that repeated panic attacks can create so much strain on the heart that in time actual heart problems result, for example arrhythmia, atrial fibrillation or heart attack.

By breathing slowly and deeply, you can tell the bodymind that the lights are green – **all is well.** This results in the production of the body’s own opiates (endorphins) in the respiratory centre in the brain and in other places in the network. **Any emotional experience or memory that is held in awareness while you breathe deeply and slowly in the parasympathetic way, can be digested, i.e. it can re-classified under the heading of things that do not hurt me.** On the other hand, if you are already upset, angry, or afraid, your thoughts run wild and everything seems to be wrong or dangerous. While (at least a part of) your attention is resting on your

breath, it is a **safe place**. Once you are in a dark mind space, it is very difficult to stop your dark thoughts and imaginings. **You can learn to focus your attention in a safe place – your breath.** In this way you park your nervous system and consciousness in **neutral**, so that you can decide on the most creative interpretation of the circumstances and the most productive action you can take.

HOW TO BREATHE

Some teachers warn that you should not attempt breath work on your own without the guidance of a guru, because you may not be able to handle the dramatic changes in the bodymind. Indeed there are intense techniques like Prana Yama, advanced Yoga breath work, “Breath of Fire” or Holotropic Breathing, where you may breathe very rapidly, or inhale and exhale in special ways. These techniques may cause intense sensations which may be frightening if you are not used to them. Intense emotions may surface, you may feel dizzy or faint, experience spinning sensations, feel that you are levitating or losing your mind. What I am suggesting here, however, are simple ways of restoring natural, comfortable breathing patterns which have been disrupted through years of stress, in order to calm your nervous system and centre your mind.

If you shift your habitual way of breathing from the sympathetic to the parasympathetic mechanism, you can have all the **feel-good chemical substances** you may buy at the pharmacy (or from the dealer on the street corner) and it is for free! **Simply put, you need to change your habit of rapid, shallow chest-breathing to the habit of deep, diaphragmatic or stomach breathing.** Your bodymind will remain stuck in the emergency mode as long as you continue to breathe in the shallow and quick manner that most people use, or as long as you continue to periodically **hold your breath or hyperventilate**. Meditation, Yoga and martial arts teachers emphasize different ways of breathing. I want to encourage you to **explore different ways of breathing and to become playful as you experiment with the way inhale and exhale the stream of life** (CDs are available in the practice).

Simply begin by watching your breath without in any way trying to control it. Do this any time and any place, while waiting, sitting, lying down, talking, watching TV, reading, or driving. Take a break and focus your attention away from the external stimuli and your thoughts. This is already a step in the direction of spiritual awakening. The qualities of breath that we want to develop are **deeper, slower, gentler, and more regular**. Whatever you are doing, begin to breathe more deeply, slowly, gently, and regularly. Merely paying attention to the breath will begin to change it in these directions. Your body will feel better and your mind will be calmer. If you are upset, angry, or anxious, your breathing becomes quick, shallow, hard, and irregular. Calm and harmonious emotional states are accompanied by deeper, slower, gentler, and more rhythmical breathing. When you are upset, you can't really tell yourself to relax. But you can tell your breath to be deeper, slower, more gentle and more regular. **These physiological changes change your brain wave frequencies and you chemical balance, thus changing your thoughts and your emotions.**

In reality the stream of breath is uninterrupted. There is no beginning and no end. We say arbitrarily that it begins with the inhalation and ends with the exhalation. In the Chinese ideogram meaning breath, it is the symbol for exhalation which is written first. It is useful for the purpose of relaxation to think of the breath cycle as beginning with the exhalation. For relaxation the **exhalation** is more important than the inhalation. Also, you are more in **control** of your exhalation, and the muscles you use for exhaling are stronger than those you use for inhaling. **If you think of breathing more in terms of breathing out than breathing in, it is more relaxing and you have more control.**

If you devote **at least 10**, or preferably **20 to 30 minutes twice a day** to conscious, relaxing breathing, you will soon feel more relaxed, energized, and optimistic. What I am really saying, is that you should meditate twice a day. It is really a question of **meditate or medicate**. Twice a day is good, but the real point is that you should do your breath work **regularly and consistently**. Consistency and regularity will yield the promised results – long-term and deep relaxation of the bodymind. The impact of breath work on the nervous system is like the gentle, constant force of water that can change the entire landscape permanently and dramatically – for better or for worse.

If formal meditation is not your cup of tea, you can combine periods of relaxing breathing with other activities like listening to tranquil music, or a recording of inspirational thoughts, or reading, watching TV, gardening, sewing, gentle exercise, or a bubble bath. Do try to **start each day** with a little breath work. Stay in the bath tub or the shower for ten minutes longer than usual and start the day in a more relaxed way. It is especially important to breathe well **before falling asleep**. This will ensure that you glide into the land of dreams in a relaxed state, instead of falling asleep from sheer exhaustion while your bodymind is still stuck in the fight, flight, or freeze gear. If this happens, your sleep will be shallow and restless, you may have nightmares because of the adrenaline in your body, or you may not remember your dreams. **See the least sign of tension in your neck or shoulders as a signal that you should breathe better.** Check and change your breathing before you run off to your physiotherapist or masseur. If you feel upset, tense, or stressed, take your refuge in relaxing breathing.

While sitting still or lying down, your breathing speed should not be quicker than about six breaths per minute. You should be using your **stomach muscles** instead of your chest muscles. Place one hand on your stomach and the other hand on your chest. Forget about how you look and make sure that the hand resting on your belly **moves more** than the hand resting on your chest. (No-one is going to love you more because you have a flat stomach. And if there are such people in your life, you probably need to get rid of them, because they are more interested in your appearance than in you.) **Allow your spine to undulate** gently and naturally with each breath. If it feels as if you are not getting enough air, try relaxing the soft triangular area between your clavicle, your shoulder and the top edge of your rib cage. This area should expand with the inbreath and subside when you exhale. This is called **clavicular breathing**.

Your **inhalation** should last about **three seconds** (maybe two and a half seconds). Don't hold your breath in at the top of the inbreath. This builds up unnecessary

tension and pressure. The air flows in naturally if the lungs expand in the chest because the diaphragm descends into the stomach cavity. By decreasing the pressure in the chest, a vacuum is created in the chest and the lungs are immediately filled with air, without you having to force anything. You don't need to **suck or pull** air into your lungs. All you need to do is to make space in the chest by allowing your stomach to gently relax and expand outwards. This allows the diaphragm to relax and float down into the stomach cavity. Both the inhale and the exhale are thus a **release** of tension.

All you really need to do is to stop pulling in your stomach! This means that you will have to wear looser clothes. Please avoid those too tight jeans and belts that make a ridge in your stomach. The **exhale** should last about **four seconds**. Make sure that you breathe out the last little bit of used air. If there is still some air left in your lungs, you have not exhaled properly. Each exhalation should be a kind of a detox. Holding back a tiny bit of carbon dioxide when you exhale, is part of a vicious circle causing chronic, subtle hyperventilation, anxiety, and depression. Carbon dioxide in the blood stream sends a distress signal to the fear centre in the brain. **After the outbreath**, there should be a **pause of about three or more seconds** before you breathe in again. **In the gap after the exhalation the total electro-chemical network, including the heart and blood pressure, takes a break. This is where the real relaxation occurs.**

A very reliable sign that you are breathing correctly and that you are indeed relaxing is that your **hands are warm and dry** and that there is **more saliva in your mouth**. The sub-mandibular and sub-lingual saliva glands are opened up as part of the relaxation response (these are the glands in corners of your jaws and under your tongue). Technically this means that your nervous system has switched from the sympathetic to the parasympathetic gear. In my meditation group I often ask whether people have saliva in their mouth, to check whether meditation has in fact happened. **The amount of saliva in your mouth is pretty accurate indication of your stress level.** The relaxation response is also accompanied by moisture in the eyes and lubrication of all the mucous membranes, but it is easier to notice in the mouth. If you are a woman, the implication for sex is clear! Before you fall asleep, make certain that you are **drooling on the pillow**, then you know that you will sleep deeply.

AWARENESS

Once a man has found consciousness in himself, he has found the key to the ultimate. Any education that does not teach you to love your body, does not teach you how to enter into its mysteries, will not be able to teach you how to enter into your own consciousness. The body is the door – the body is the stepping stone.

(OSHO)

Most life-style choices have to do with things that you need to do or stop doing. The most important change is however the one that has more to do with **being** than with **doing**. This is the decision to become more **aware**. After all, you were a human being before you became a human doing! You **can** become more aware, not only of

what is happening in your mind, but also of your basic biological processes. Denial is not only a river in Egypt. Awareness is the antidote. Changing your way of **breathing** demands a whole new dimension of consciousness which is absolutely needed if you want to feel better. Through heightened self-awareness you can become a participant observer of the dialogues taking place on the autonomous level, where health and sickness are determined every second. Awareness is enhanced through the feedback therapies and through intentional **visualizing** (or sensualizing). For example, you may visualize blood or light flowing to those parts of your body where healing is needed, or you can imagine feeling the healing processes happening. PNI or Psycho-Neuro-Immunology is the study and practice of healing techniques based on **conscious intention and imagination**.

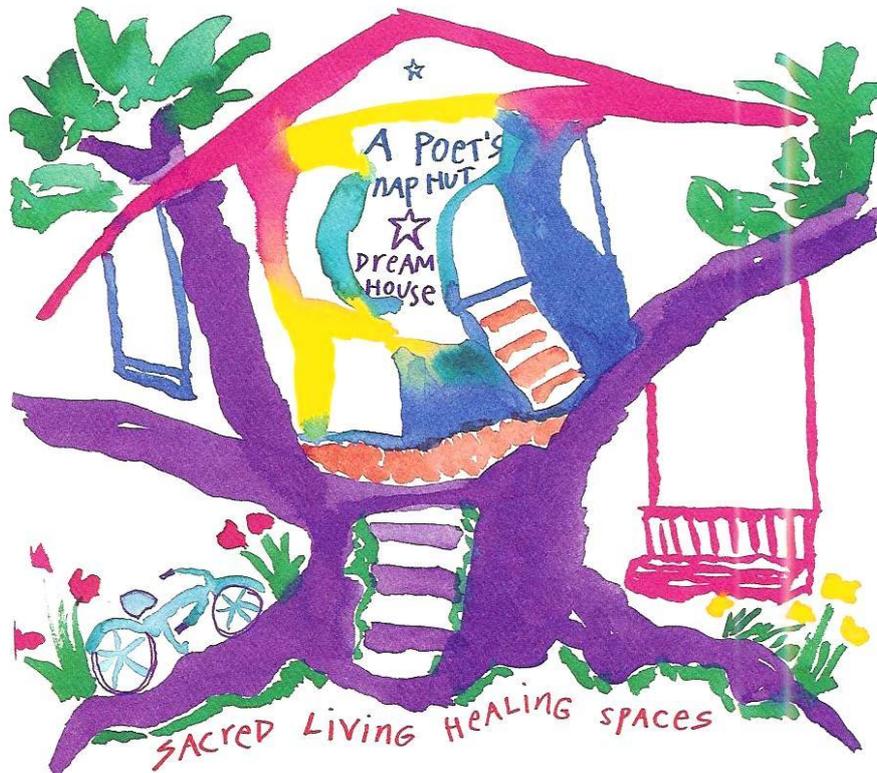
The entry point or node used to gain conscious access to the psychosomatic network is the frontal **cortex**, also known as the forebrain, because it is situated behind the brow. This is the place where all the higher intellectual functions happen, for example long-term planning, wise decision making, and the formulation of intentions to change. It is the frontal cortex that distinguishes us from animals. Chimpanzees possess 99% of the same genetic material we have, but they don't have the highly developed human forebrain. In humans it is not fully developed before the early twenties – that is why teenagers are the way they are! This part of the brain is just as dependent upon the free flow of peptides as any other part of the bodymind. To function effectively, it needs nutrients. The brain's only food is glucose, and of course oxygen, and both are carried to it by the **blood**.

You will discover that diaphragmatic breathing will satisfy the brain's need for **glucose and oxygen**. Blood flow is regulated by the emotional peptides which cause blood vessels to contract or dilate. That is why you can blush with embarrassment or grow pale with anger. Chronic suppression or blocking of negative emotions can impede the flow of blood to the cortex – causing you to feel cloudy or dumb. You are caught in old patterns of thinking and behaving and you lose your ability to respond with freshness and clarity. If you learn to relax and be aware of your habits, your thoughts, and your feelings, you can develop insight and your brain will produce more flexible, resourceful and creative here-and-now solutions to old problems.

Keeping a journal and remembering your dreams and perhaps writing them down as well, are ways of increasing your awareness of what is happening around you and inside of you. **Dreams are direct communications from the bodymind and they can provide precious physiological and emotional information.** Listening to your dreams is a way of eavesdropping on the usually unconscious psychosomatic dialogue (Judith Orloff: INTUITIVE HEALING). What happens when you dream? Different parts of your bodymind are exchanging **information** and the content becomes conscious in the form of a symbolic story, with a story-line and characters. On the physiological level the psychosomatic network is restoring itself and preparing for the next day. Huge quantities of peptides are produced and they bind with receptors to enable all the processes needed to re-balance the network. You experience this in your dreams as emotions.

The emotions that you have not worked through in the course of the day are released from the cells and stream up to the surface of consciousness. If you can

remember your dreams, you can integrate the information into conscious awareness – perhaps you can realize what is **bothering you on the unconscious level** and think about it so that you may make certain decisions or **forgive** those things which you need to let go of. Dreams can also serve as **warnings** regarding bodymind states that might cause illness. Perhaps the body is discussing some danger with the mind and you can eavesdrop on the conversation if you interpret the dream symbols with the help of your therapist.



Beware of those books that tell you if you dream about a wedding someone in your life is going to die. These books tend to interpret dreams as prophetic signs about things that are going to happen in your external world. Dreams more often refer to **inner events** – a marriage would rather refer to some kind of integration between two systems, thoughts, desires, feelings, or values that were previously at odds with each other. Your unconscious is trying to help you to resolve the conflict. If you don't remember your dreams, the simple decision to remember will help. Perhaps keeping pen and paper by your bedside will also help to mobilize the **attention and the intention** in the frontal cortex. When you wake up, stretch and yawn, take the pen and start writing, even if you only remember disjointed fragments. The emotions in the dream are clues telling you what it is really about. Also take note of the associations – for example that yellow car in my dream is like the car my father drove when I was in primary school...

*To pay attention to your dreams is an important step in the direction of greater awareness of and **respect for your inner processes**. Never dismiss a dream as ludicrous or unimportant. Just like feelings and thoughts, dreams obey the laws of information; they exist beyond time and space. Paying attention to this information adds more intelligence to your understanding of your bodymind. You may see it as a cheap form of psychotherapy that is*

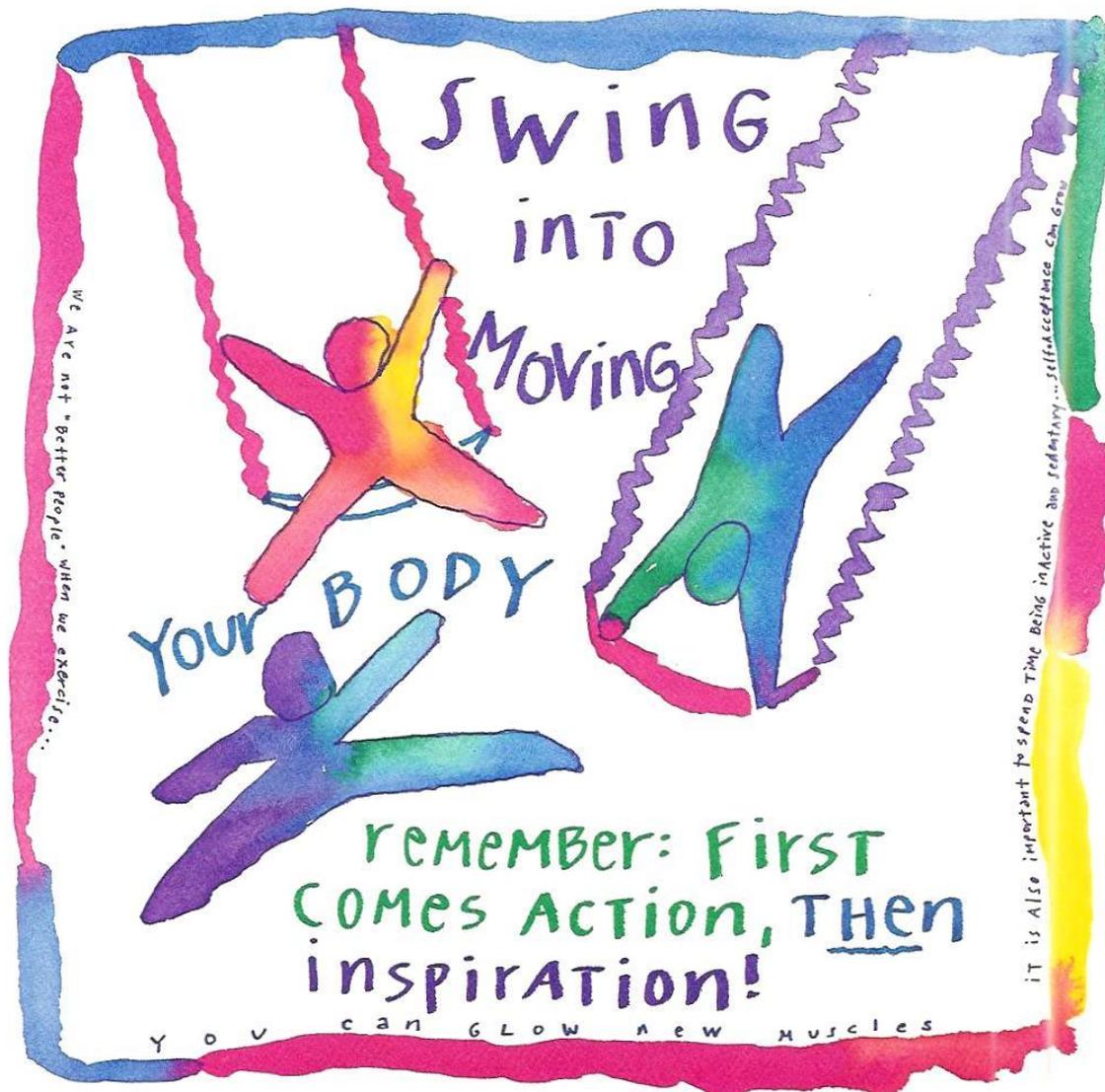
more effective than medication (which often suppresses dream activity). I think of dreams as internal conversations between body, mind and soul. The soul is asleep by day while the ego is in control. While you are sleeping – as in hypnosis – the ego relaxes and the soul is able to whisper divine wisdom into your sleeping ears.

(Bob Nairn: LIVING, DREAMING, DYING)

EXERCISE FOR LIFE

The stillness in stillness is not the real stillness,
Only when there is stillness in movement can
The spiritual rhythm appear which pervades
Heaven and earth.

(Ts'ai-ken T'an)



There is no doubt that exercise is an absolute necessity for physical and emotional health. Most people think it is hard work – one more thing they have to do to be thinner and fitter and try to motivate themselves using the carrot and stick approach. It is like having to go to church. They say, “I know I have to go to the gym more often.” With our new vision of ourselves as an emotion-rich information system, exercise should be something we do for **pleasure and joy**. I often tell my clients who are part of the gym culture that they need more of that kind of exercise like they need another hole in their head. **If you are already buzzing with adrenaline, it can fix your nervous system even more firmly in the sympathetic response, especially if you do chest breathing while you are pumping iron or dong the circuit.** The saying in Ayurveda healing is, “From exercise, one gets lightness, capacity to work, firmness, tolerance of difficulties, diminution of physical impurities, and strengthening of digestion and metabolism” (Deepak Chopra: RESTFUL SLEEP). If your exercise programme is doing this for you, think again!

A special group of people who often look stunning and feel rotten is ballet dancers. In my practice I see little girls with the ice-cold, clammy hands and the permanently sucked in stomach that is the smoking gun which tells me that they are caught in the trap of shallow chest breathing. Their ballet teacher never told them that they should not breathe in that way all the time. This is not to mention those hordes of people (young and old, male and female) who suck in their stomach all the time because they think they will look better if they have a slimmer waist. My own mother told me when I was about seven years old, “A girl always pulls in her stomach.” On top of this I took gymnastics and Spanish dancing lessons and these were the nails in the coffin of my already tense body. I learnt the tight stomach as a habit. It was only as an adult – after two years of psychotherapy, sedatives, and anti-depressants – that I realized that my **stiff body posture and the chronic under-breathing** were the missing links in understanding my **chronic anxiety and depression**.

Just like healthy eating, exercise is all about pleasure and relaxation. Excessive exercise or the incorrect kind of exercise can be harmful. Think of the ex rugby players who are physical wrecks when they hit middle-age. A friend of mine – now just over 60 – was amongst the top ten in his sport in his heyday. Today he can hardly walk or even sit without intense pain. The most common mistakes regarding exercise are the following:

- You may be getting no or too little exercise.
- Perhaps the kinds of exercise you do are wrong for your body type. We don't all need the same amount or the same kind of exercise.
- Too much exercise which means that the harm outweighs the benefits.

The **quantity and kind** of exercise should be carefully considered in the light of your individual needs. **Above all else, the purpose should be to increase your energy, suppleness, energy, and inner peace, rather than using it up.** You ought to feel energized, strong, happy, and alive during and after your exercises. If you feel fatigued or stressed at any time, something is wrong. Perhaps you should **halve the amount of strenuous exercise** you do and see if you don't feel better. You ought to stop before you are fatigued. Stop at the point where you feel you can still do about half as much more. For example, if after you have done five kilometres of cycling, you feel that you can do another five kilometres, stop right there. If you

keep this up, your ability will increase in any case and in time your **50% capacity** will be ten kilometres, but it will happen without having harmed yourself.

Get some **sun on your body**. Research proves that sunlight is an important anti-depressant. This is why people in colder climates are more likely to commit suicide. **Walk** (with earphones and music) or **swim** to get in touch with your bodymind in a wonderfully joyous way. If you push yourself to point of pain, you cannot **hear what your body is trying to tell you** – this can be the information that makes a difference. **The value of exercise is perhaps more about getting your heart to beat a little faster, to stimulate the flow of blood to your brain, and to accelerate the drainage of waste products from the organs than it is about building muscles and burning calories.** If you sweat a little, there is also the benefit of endorphins and other peptides being secreted.

Tai Chi and **Yoga** are highly recommended for health and stress reduction. Consider these calming exercises even if you are already doing other, more cardiovascular kinds of exercise like jogging or cycling. Perhaps you want to halve your strenuous exercise and add more relaxing exercise. These kinds of exercise have been developed over centuries specifically to enhance neuro-muscular and neuro-respiratory integration and to harmonize body and mind. Any kind of conscious breathing together with relaxation and body awareness is Yoga. There are excellent books and DVDs you can use in the privacy of your home to get you started. The best time for exercise is mornings before breakfast and evening before supper.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

The taste buds on your tongue – together with the smell receptors in your nose - form another channel of communication between your bodymind and the information field of the universe. Through the amazingly sensitive sense of taste you receive information about your environment and this information is measured by the information field that is your body to create balance. The sense of taste is another instance of the body's fantastic inherent intelligence. For example, your body is able to distinguish very tiny concentrations of substances. One part of sugar diluted in 200 parts of water, or one part of salt in 400 parts of water can be detected. One part of acid in 130,000 parts and one part bitter in two million parts of water are also registered! This delicate ability to distinguish tastes is not built into the body by coincidence. It enables us to sense precisely what nature is trying to tell us about the interaction of our body's needs with the environment. Homeopathy is the art of capitalizing on these delicate interactions for the purpose of healing.

Your eating habits are another area of your life-style which can be seen in a different light with our current understanding of emotion. **Because eating is intimately connected with survival, it is evolutionarily designed to be a highly emotional aspect of life.** All the processes connected with survival – sex, eating, breathing, etc – are intensely loaded with neuropeptides and are thus emotionally regulated. The simplest emotions of pain and pleasure are there to tell you to approach and get more, or get the hell out of here and stay away and this plays a huge role in the survival and evolution of any organism. Your small intestine is densely lined with neuropeptides and receptors, all of them busy exchanging emotion-rich information.

That is why we say, “I have a gut-feel about it.” There are at least 20 different emotion-bearing peptides that are secreted by the pancreas to regulate the assimilation and storage of nutrients, and all of them also carry information about hunger and satiation.

Too often we ignore the information and eat when we are not really hungry. We use food to bury negative emotion. We do comfort eating or starve ourselves in order not to feel a different kind of need. Learn to **listen to your body’s real needs**. You can’t hear what your body is trying to say if you are cut off from your emotions. Ask yourself more frequently, “Do I feel hungry?” Wait until you are hungry before you eat. The Hindu Ayurveda system’s advice is to slowly sip a glass of hot water to still false hunger and to flush half digested food from the digestive canal. If you are really hungry, this will prepare the body to properly digest the next meal.

There are so many diet fads that it is difficult to know what to believe. Naturally it will be wise to **develop healthy, balanced eating habits**. Patrick Holford (NEW OPTIMUM NUTRITION BIBLE) recommends the following daily eating pattern:

- **One** portion of food containing the essential fatty acids, e.g. fish, nuts, seeds, or olive oil.
- **Two** portions “seed” vegetables like beans or lentils.
- **Three** portions fresh fruit like apples, pears, bananas, berries, melon, or citrus fruit.
- **Four** portions whole grain like rice, oats, corn, whole-wheat bread or pasta.
- **Five** portions dark green, leafy or root vegetables like sweet potato, carrots, broccoli, spinach, green beans, peas, or peppers.
- At least **six** glasses of water, diluted fruit or vegetable juice, or fruit or herbal tea.
- As much as possible whole, organic, and raw food.
- A Multivitamin and mineral supplement, 1000 mg vitamin C and essential Omega 3 and 6.
- Limit fried and char-grilled food and animal fat.
- Limit white sugar and flour, refined and processed food and chemical preservatives, alcohol, coffee, and tea.

The most important advice is to **listen to the wisdom of your body** when deciding what to eat and what not to eat. Perhaps your craving for junk food is a signal that you need more protein. If you feel like something sweet it may signify that your brain needs glucose, so eat a fruit. The advantages of eating according to your feelings – not your impulses – are greater than any specific rules you may follow to build muscles or lose weight. If your impulses dominate your eating behaviour, you need to get in touch with your suppressed emotions.

The **environment**, e.g. where you eat is also important. Quiet your mind before you eat. Eat **slowly and peacefully and savour every taste**. I like to take my evening meal in the garden where I can see the stars and chat with my partner about the events of the day. Eating while you are emotionally upset or in a hurry is harmful to the peptide-regulated digestion process.

The thoughts and the feelings you bring with you to the table are as important as the healthy, balanced food on your plate. Are you are worried or stressed while eating or are you thinking about the grocery bill, counting calories, or calculating your cholesterol levels? Do you eat while on the run or do you shovel food as if you have a plane to catch? Or maybe you get comatose in front of the TV, or eat with a book by your side and don't taste a thing? This is a kind of disintegration, a body-mind split that can cause unnecessary weight gain and all kinds of illnesses connected with incomplete digestion.

Be fully **aware and in the moment** when you eat (and doing anything else!). Enjoy every taste, aroma, colour, and texture, and **be grateful**. Blessing your food need not necessarily be a religious ritual. It can be as simple as saying, "Enjoy!" before the meal, and after eating, "Thank you, that was delicious!" Nevertheless it is not a bad idea to close your eyes, take the hands of those who are with you, and to enjoy a moment of silent prayer at mealtimes. For me, **cooking is a form of meditation and also prayer**. If you cook in the Zen way, you cook as if you are doing it for the very first time. You are attentive and awed by every colour, texture, aroma, and sound as you chop, stir, cut, fry, or steam. What is more beautiful than the glistening red flesh of a ripe tomato, and what is juicier and greener than a fresh pepper? When is the last time you really looked at the shiny yellow eye of an egg floating in its own pool of translucent life stuff?

Peeling fruit, do you **think about the earth and the rain and all the human hands which worked together** to bring these beautifully wrapped packets of nourishment to you table? What can compare with the aroma of bacon frying, except perhaps onions? Can you remain unaware of the lush abundance of the earth when you taste pumpkin with cinnamon, or brown rice with lentils? You **can make every meal a feast** if you realize that you are preparing a meal for God's children who sit at your table. And you are one of them! **Don't focus on the outcome** – what time are we going to eat, how it will taste – **enjoy the process**. Cook with pizzazz and elegance. Cook as you imagine Jesus would cook. Or cook as if you were cooking for Jesus. Indeed it is true, if you choose to see it that way.

RELAX

You carry armour around you. It is just armour – it is not clinging to you, you are clinging to it. So when you become aware of it, you can simply drop it. The armour is dead; if you don't carry it, it will disappear. Not only are you carrying it, you are also nourishing and feeding it continuously.

(OSHO)

Perhaps it is stating the obvious to say that to get rid of your stress, you need to learn to relax. It is a fact that if you simply learn to **walk more slowly**, a whole lot of your unnecessary tension will disappear automatically. **Avoid being late** for appointments and then arriving out of breath and full of excuses. Pay attention to the **way you move** through life. Float more and hop less. **Move gracefully, as if you have all the time in the world, even if you are in a hurry, and especially if there is some kind of crisis**. This is something I learned from my Tai Chi teacher.

He always says, “Slower is smoother, and smoother is faster.” Tai Chi is the Chinese martial art which is built on the fact if you can learn to move gracefully, calmly, slowly, with full awareness and totally relaxed, you are able to act more effectively. Even in a combat situation, you will be more deadly than your opponent who will be stupid due to the adrenaline in his system. Adrenaline has the advantage of more physical power in a fight, but the Chinese discovered centuries ago what we are now able to see black on white through modern EEG techniques: **the more agitated the person is, the more unintelligent the brain becomes.**

Sympathetic over-activation causes tunnel-vision. You literally see your environment through a tiny key-hole – and a negative one at that. When a client’s nervous system calms down, they always say something like, “Oh, that’s a pretty lamp / carpet / painting. Is it new?” I always smile when that happens, because the object was in the room all along. It is the person’s perceptual field that has opened up. **Relaxation causes the focus to expand. The converse is also true – if you expand your perceptual focus, you will be more relaxed.** This is an example of a feedback loop. If you are talking to someone **relax your eyelids and soften your gaze. Include the whole visual field in your gaze** – the air, the colours, and the textures surrounding the person. Don’t just focus on what the person is saying – also hear the background sounds. This is a trick that can also help you if you have a habit of getting upset or losing your temper quickly.

The Indian and Chinese masters discovered the principles of feedback training by way of experience and self-observation. Many Yoga exercises are aimed at increasing inner peace through controlling body processes and co-ordinating body postures and gentle, deep breathing. **Body posture and movement, especially if combined with controlled breathing, have a dramatic impact on the mind and the emotions.** Talk therapy with someone who is constantly fidgeting, who goes through life with hanging shoulders, shallow breathing, and a frown on their face, will not make much of a difference. The person’s body language and posture have to be corrected. **Practice a body posture that says, “I am good, wonderful, calm, and humble.”** In Tai Chi many hours of practice are devoted to the deceptively simple art of standing and walking while remaining centred and balanced, with a flexible, straight spine, the head resting comfortably on the neck, and knees relaxed.

A Tai Chi fighter is also taught to maintain an **angelic facial expression, soft flowing movements and wide focus** while executing energy-efficient and lethally accurate manoeuvres with hands, feet or sword. The inner calm enables the warrior to fight and incapacitate up to eight attackers simultaneously with the grace of a ballerina. Well, at least that is the theory that is so beautifully depicted in movies like “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon” and “Hero.” Whether myth or fact, we can learn a lot from watching the practice and understanding the philosophy of this martial art.

The point is to reach more and grasp less. **Relax the hands, especially the thumbs. The saying is, “Open hands, open mind.” Relax the shoulders, neck, and throat. Glare, frown and stare less and gaze softly with relaxed eyelids.** Eliminating unnecessary tension in the facial muscles helps to calm your brain wave frequencies. **Relax your lips, jaw, tongue, and vocal cords.** If you relax the muscles and nerves that control speech, the language areas in the brain quiet down and the mind is automatically “tranquillized.” If you remember to practice these

simple meditations tips or techniques consistently in your daily life, you will be rewarded by the kind of relaxed productivity and peace of mind that we all desire.

One of the most important things you can do to reduce stress is to **get honest with yourself and others. You need to learn to be true to yourself, to be impeccable with your word and to live with integrity.** There is a deep physiological reason why **honesty eliminates stress.** The purpose of emotion is to unify the entire bodymind to achieve a goal – all the biological systems are integrated and co-ordinated with the mind to create behaviour. Walking is an example: you have a thought and an intention to go somewhere for a specific purpose. It is co-ordinated with the process of walking, and you don't need to think about it. How complex the process is, is illustrated by the fact that after decades of experimentation, scientists are still not able to manufacture a computerized robot that is able to climb down a set of stairs with any degree of elegance or without falling down. If your thoughts and feelings are in conflict with each other, you are clumsy, bump up against things, twist your ankles and easily fall.

If I have the **intention** to write a book, it is a much more complex story. **Every system is mobilized by my intention and does what it needs to do.** Perhaps my appetite for protein is stimulated, my digestive system's ability to assimilate protein is increased, blood is sent to my digestive organs to produce the necessary enzymes for maximum absorption, etc. And this is only what is happening in my stomach!

There is physiological directness and integrity in the process which results from the **clarity of my intention.** If there is a conflict in me regarding what I really want to do, e.g. if I pick up the phone and call somebody I don't want to talk to – **if I do or say something I don't mean – my emotions are and my actions are in conflict and my physiological processes are confused. My total bodymind is not in integrity – in other words stressed.** This is what is detected by a polygraph (lie-detector test) as the tell-tale changes in breathing tempo, heart rate, electrical conductivity and temperature in the skin. If the loss of integrity or wholeness in the bodymind becomes chronic, the psychosomatic network is disrupted and weakened. It can cause illness and accident-proneness. To **always speak the truth** is therefore not only the correct thing to do from an ethical perspective, it is also healthy. It literally takes more energy to lie and cheat than to be honest. Rather use the energy for something useful.

TOUCH

The body is a miracle. It expresses our personal spark from the Spirit within us and surrounding us. It is our vehicle of communication with each other, with our past, our present, and – if we pay attention to it and listen to the body's messages – our future. Our body tells us who we are as no mirror can. And it can lead us into feelings of ecstasy and unity, of union with other people and with a greater Spirit.

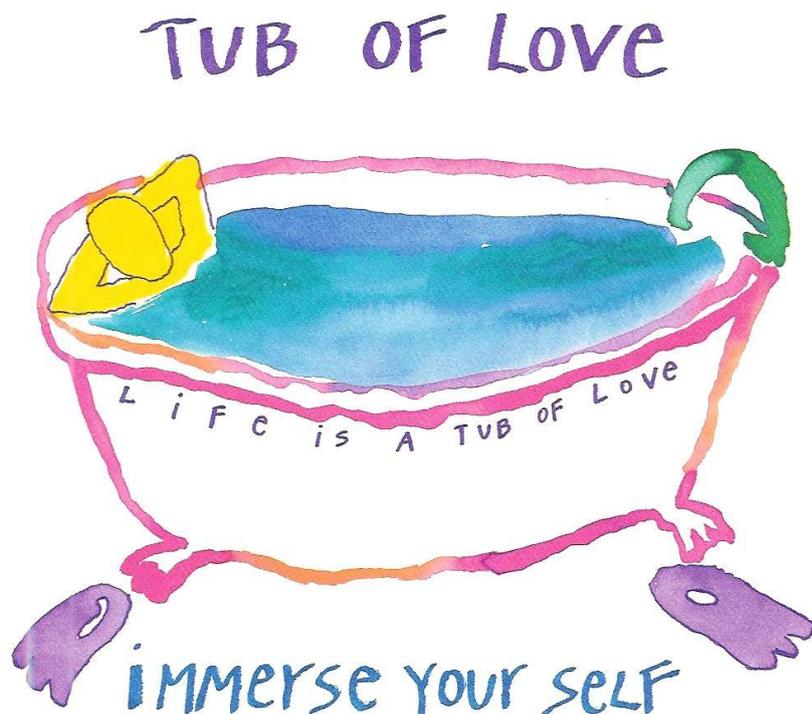
(Irene Lamberti)

Stress is accompanied by high levels of steroids, which will help with the healing of wounds and scar-tissue formation in case of injury. People who are

depressed also have high levels of CRF and ACTH, which stimulate the adrenals to produce the cortico-steroids that accelerate cell growth – this is one of the reasons why depression is associated with tumours and cancer. Because it is found in high concentrations in people who are traumatized, we can say that **CRF and ACTH are the peptides of negative expectation**. They cause the suppression of other peptides, which results in the person being left with a limited repertoire of emotions and behaviour.

We see this same **diminution of feeling and behaviour** in depressed animals, where essential behaviours like self-grooming disappear, while apparently meaningless behaviour may be obsessively repeated. The progressive contraction of feeling, thinking, and behaviour becomes a deep, black hole. Research shows that a monkey hug therapist can neutralize these substances in apes. **“Hugs not drugs” is more than a witty bumper sticker!** Each of us has an inbuilt laboratory and pharmacy where every chemical molecule we need for happiness and health is produced. The **power of touch to stimulate the body’s natural anti-depressants and tranquillizers** is well documented. It is also the most natural thing in the world to hug someone who is sad or distressed. **Give and receive as many high quality hugs as you can.**

There are many forms of **touch and/or massage therapy**, e.g. aromatherapy, reflexology and kinesiology. Even if you merely go for a regular facial and massage, it will do wonders for your emotional and physical health. **You also own two fantastic therapeutic instruments – your hands!** Exchange massage sessions, scalp tickles, foot rubbings, and hand caressing with someone who also likes these treats. If you don’t have such a person in your life, it is even more important that you **feed your own skin hunger**. **Learn to touch and caress with love that amazing organ which envelops you – your skin.**



Your skin is the largest pharmacy you will ever have access to. After the digestive tract, the skin is the richest source of healing substances, e.g. immunoregulators, tumonecrose factor (which fights cancer), anti-depressants like imipramine, and vaso-active intestinal polipeptides (which dilate blood vessels). **The skin is an important source of all the healing molecules.** Every neuropeptide found in the nervous system, is also found in the skin. In fact the skin and the nervous system are intimately related. Both the skin and the nervous system develop from the same structure in the foetus, namely the neuro-ectoderm.

Touch yourself all over and give yourself feather-light taps, pinches, and pats on your forehead, cheeks, and neck. You can treat yourself to an Indian head massage each time you wash and dry your hair. **Think about how you touch your own body** every time you take a bath or a shower. Do you treat you're your body like a piece of dead meat or a machine, or do you take a little more time and **stroke or massage your body with gratitude** for the work it does for you? Do you use luxurious gels or aromatic soaps? Drying yourself attentively and sensuously with a fluffy towel and spoiling yourself afterwards with a wonderful body lotion or sprits, is an **exercise in self-love and will cause a cascade of feel-good endorphins.**

The universe itself is in a state of constant orgasm at the level of pure energy, and full sexual orgasm brings us into greater harmony with the vibrant energy of universal life. In the fullness of orgasm, every cell in our body dances, electrified, and we resonate with all life at the level of vibration. We make love with trees and stars and with existence itself. Such true pleasure can heal old wounds and fill us with a "peace that passeth understanding."

(Margot Anand)

Sex is probably the most delightful anti-depressant on the planet! And it is a wonderful form of exercise. The endorphin levels in your blood-stream can increase by 200% during sex. Why deprive yourself of the intense pleasure of making love and the ecstatic release and renewal of an orgasm just because you are a little annoyed with your partner? **The best advice for sex problems is still simply – do it more often! Don't let a good habit die.** If you suppress your natural sexuality, or neglect or abuse it, you wilt like a flower without water. Life itself streams through you when you are sexually uninhibited, stimulated, and satisfied. It makes you charismatic in the true sense of the word – to be filled with spirit.

Sex connects us with each other, with our deepest self, and with God. You, and all living beings, are here because of sex. Your sex life is an expression of and a metaphor for your attitude towards life itself. Think of the thrill of sexual arousal as an intensification of the Holy Spirit flowing through you and think of orgasm as an explosion of the love of God. If you don't have a lover who can touch and enter the temple of your body with reverence, then do it yourself.

Do it yourself anyway, even if you do have a lover. **Make love to yourself. Masturbation is an ugly word for the expression of self-love and self-worth – the willingness to pleasure yourself.** Make it part of the habit of playing with yourself. Don't be shy. There are delicious toys for self-pleasuring available on the internet which can be delivered to your front door within three days in a nicely wrapped parcel.

You don't have to spiritualize sex to make it valuable, because by its very nature sex is a deep act of the interior life and always brings with it a wealth of emotional and spiritual meaning.

(Thomas Moore)

WAKE UP

ETERNITY
William Blake

*To see the world in a grain of sand
And heaven in a wildflower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.*

The Universal Self can be seen as the larger experience of your True Self as soul. It is the realization that you are part of All That Is. If God is omnipresent, and if you are part of God, then we are also omnipresent on this level. If anyone else is hurt, you are hurt too. If you experience joy, everyone experiences joy. Perhaps you have experienced the **sense of oneness in nature**. Perhaps you have felt **unconditional love looking at a child, a tree, or an animal**. Or perhaps the experience of **connectedness with all That Is** blossoms in you when you **listen to beautiful music**. Perhaps your ego-boundaries are transcended when you are moved by the heroic or tragic stories of other people in a novel or a movie. The omnipresence is described in Michael Talbot's THE HOLOGRAPHIC UNIVERSE: "Just as every portion of a hologram enfolds the whole, every portion of the universe enfolds the whole. This means that if we knew how to access it we could find the Andromeda galaxy in the thumbnail of our left hand."

Nurturing the universal perspective helps you to feel a deep connection with all beings and with life. There is a **Self which is larger than the boundary of your body and your ego** – the non-physical Self that was never born and therefore does not die when the body dies. This is the Self whose knowledge is not limited by what the senses experience in three-dimensional reality. Discovering yourself as soul may sound esoteric, but this is a natural and universal human experience described in all the world's great religions as a kind of waking up or rebirth (Greek: *metanoia* = a turning around or reversal). Different cultures and religions have different stories to explain how it happened that we lost touch with our essential beingness, e.g. the myth of Adam and Eve in the Bible.

We do not lose our true self and our oneness with each other and life. We only lose our awareness of it. All we need to regain it is to remember. This remembrance is described in various ways - to see the Light in the midst of the darkness or to awaken from a dream or a nightmare. In the Indian Vedas it is said that we live in a dream until our divine Self wakes up. The dream state is called *maya* or illusion. Yoga (the ancient word meaning to yoke or join together) refers to the ways in which the bodily self may be made aware of and unified with the divine Self.

In Jewish tradition life on earth is seen a state of sleeping. Adam (the Hebrew word for man) falls into a deep sleep. There is nowhere where it says that he ever woke up! Later the prophet Ezekiel laments over the valley of the bones of the dead, which is a metaphor for humanity as the walking dead. This refers to the tragedy of all those who live without the consciousness of who they really are and who are therefore like dead people. In the New Testament St Paul says, “**Wake up those who sleep! Arise from the dead!**” This refers to those who live unconscious of who they are. Cuang Tzu, the Chinese philosopher from the third century before Christ, humorously says:

He who dreams of drinking wine may weep when morning comes; he who dreams of weeping may in the morning go out to hunt. While he is dreaming he does not know it is a dream, and in his dream, he may even try to interpret the dream. Only after he wakes does he know it was a dream. And some day there will be a great awakening when we know that this is all a great dream. Yet the stupid believe they are awake, busily and brightly assuming they understand things, claiming this man ruler, that one herdsman – how dense! Confucius and you are both dreaming, I am dreaming, too. Words like these will be labelled the “Supreme Swindle.”

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of Transcendental Meditation TM, calls the awakened state heaven on earth. In the awakened state we see the unnecessary suffering of others clearly, and because we no longer suffer, we have compassion with them. In the words of the Buddha:

*Live in joy, in love,
Even among those who hate.*

*Live in joy, in health,
Even among the afflicted.*

*Live in joy, in peace,
Even among the troubled.*

*The winner sows hatred because the loser suffers.
Let go of winning and losing, and find joy.*

BE IN THE MOMENT

So how do you make your life sacred? You say “This is sacred,” and you treat it that way.

(Stuart Wilde)

Ecstasy need not be limited only to sex. “We can learn to cultivate the quality of a great lover in the way we live our daily life. Ecstasy can be cultivated on a daily basis when we enter into a love affair with life.” (Margot Anand: THE ART OF EVERYDAY ECSTASY) We think of churches or monuments as places where we can become still and experience the moment intensely as sacred. But **your**

intention can make any place a holy place and any moment a sacred moment. Think of the meaning of the word “holy.” It shares the same root with the words “whole,” “wholesome,” and “healthy.” **Any experience in which you are involved with total surrender and in harmony with your whole being – senses, emotions, thoughts and soul – is indeed healing.** It is to experience your greater self as one with what is.

An anonymous poet expressed it well:

*It is only the senses that
Bring laughter to the soul;
But then also, nothing can
Cure the senses but the soul.*

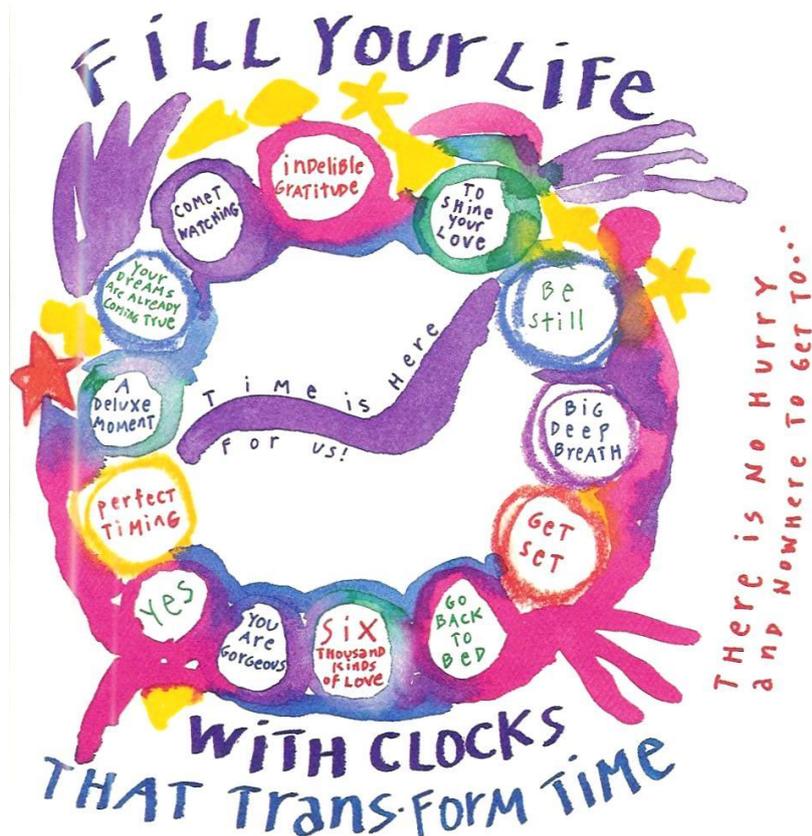
*What better way to
Honour God, than to bring joy
To the body He created.*

*For passion is the
Purest of all cosmetics.*

Even in the city nature is always around us, but we are so busy thinking about what we are going to do when we get “there,” that we don’t notice the light, the trees, the birds, the flowers, the sky, or the clouds. Our relationship with life and nature – and ourselves – becomes distant and abstract. Learn from the beautiful Pueblo Indian song:

SONG OF THE SKY LOOM

*O our Mother the Earth, O our Father the Sky,
Your children are we, and with tired backs
We bring you the gifts that you love.
Then weave for us a garment of brightness;
May the warp be the white light of morning,
May the weft be the red light of evening,
May the fringes be the falling rain,
May the border be the standing rainbow,
Thus weave for us a garment of brightness
That we may walk fittingly where grass is green,
O our Mother the Earth, O our Father the Sky!*



We are so focused on doing and having, achieving, impressing and searching for acceptance, that we lose our **sensory connection with the world**. We miss out on this **rich source of sensual peptide stimulation**. There are peptide factories at every point where information enters the nervous system. **This is why it is inspiring to see something beautiful, calming to listen to tranquil music, refreshing to smell a pleasant aroma, delightful to taste something delicious, and pleasurable to have your skin caressed.** This also works the other way around – your body cells cringe away from ugly sights, harsh sounds, repulsive smells, and hostile touch.

Even when just a few of your body cells are isolated and placed in a dish in another room, those cells will demonstrate the fight or flight response if someone appears to be intending to cut you with a scalpel, even before the blade touches your skin! **Choose positive people as your friends, don't watch soaps, horror stories, or the news, don't read conspiracy theories or other junk if you don't want to actually make yourself feel bad. Remember, "Garbage in; garbage out."**

I laugh when I hear that the fish in the water is thirsty. You don't grasp the fact that what is most alive of all is inside your own house.

(Robert Bly)

Sensualize. Keep your living and working spaces reasonably neat and clean. Surround yourself with sensory feasts and beautiful spaces and don't forget to relish them. Cultivate and cherish opportunities to **nourish your senses**. **Look** as if you are just born, **listen** as if it is your last day on the planet, **feel** as if you want to remember every texture for ever, **smell** as if you are a forest animal, **taste** as if you are going to

jail tomorrow, **move** as if you are going to lose your legs. **Dance** as if no-one is watching. **Create** small islands of flowers, pictures, and ornaments, or tiny altars of stones, fruit, crystals, feathers, and shells. **Burn** scented candles and incense. **Plant** Jasmine at your front door. There are receptors in your nose which are directly connected to your hypothalamus, also known as the brain's brain. It regulates your heart beat, blood pressure, thirst, hunger, and your sleep cycle and it has enormous power over the molecules of memory and emotion.

There are hormones called **pheromones** that influence sensations of pain and pleasure and they are secreted by your body into your environment as a result of the emotions you experience. Animals can smell your feelings. People are also affected by them, although not always consciously. Maybe this is what **sex appeal** really is – **the aroma that surrounds you when you are in love with yourself and life**. When we say there is an unpleasant atmosphere in a place, or that you can sense the love in a home, these are not merely metaphors. **Fill your house with flowers and the ordinary aromas of orange, chocolate, rose, and lavender, or try more exotic smells.**

Collect beautiful music, hang wind chimes outside your bedroom window, get a tinkling fountain in your garden. According to Ayurveda tradition **your body is a physical manifestation of sound** – an expression of the universal sound vibrations that create and animate the universe. Think again of what St John says in the Bible, "In the beginning was the Word." The body's inherent rhythms are indeed universal rhythms. Our biological rhythms are part of the cosmic symphony orchestra in which we are instruments and performers. We are instruments for the music of nature and life. Our heart, liver, and kidneys and every other organ has a unique signature tune and this is what is picked up by an instrument like those used in quantum biofeedback therapies, e.g. **the QXCI&SCIO**. We possess – or we are – a unique melody which forms part of the great universal symphony of life. If you are sick or upset, your song is out of tune and not in harmony with the universal music.

The sense of **hearing is another important node or point of entry into your bodymind which can be used to restore your balance and harmony**. The music I play all day in the waiting room of my practice is not chosen at random. Research shows that even plants flourish if they are exposed to beautiful music. Music and **sound therapy** which impact on the brain wave frequencies can play an important part in your healing. The **Mozart effect on the brain** is demonstrated by research – it enhances creativity and intelligence. **Chants and other kinds of meditation music can accelerate healing of the total bodymind**. CDs are available in the practice and in shops.

I often suggest **sound therapy** as a way of **correcting the disturbed brain wave frequencies** of my clients. These CDs are sophisticated recordings (embedded in a specific carrier frequency), containing two sound frequencies with a precise frequency difference. The difference may vary between four, eight, or twelve Hertz, and it is actually the **difference that makes the difference to the brain's average frequency pattern**. If you regularly listen to these recordings using earphones, your brain picks up this difference and resonates to it. The one frequency is heard by the one ear, and the other by the other ear – hence they are called binaural recordings. Because the brain is made for learning and can be very easily trained, it will adopt

the desired lower frequencies, e.g. Alpha and Theta, and you will feel calmer and more focused.

Remember that the “infomercial” that warns you not to allow children to watch scary movies also pertains to you – it says, **“The effect lingers long after the movie ends.” This is true about everything you see and read. Choose what enters through the windows of your soul – your eyes. Make your home and work space a temple for the senses and the soul.** It won’t be of much use if your house and garden is a designer paradise complete with Koi fish and wild birds but you don’t **appreciate and enjoy** it every day. Perhaps you sit working next to a window with a breathtaking view, but you never give it a second glance. I had a client who is a game ranger but who derived no pleasure or inspiration from the great natural cathedral that surrounds him every day.

Die Chinese philosopher Zangshu said, “The chi of yin and yang breathes forth as wind, ascends as cloud, falls as rain. This living chi circulates within the earth, and animates the ten thousand things.” Breathe in harmony with the earth. Chew a blade of grass or a leaf. **Feel the energy of mountains, rivers, the ocean and all that is in yourself.** You don’t need to apply the principles of Feng Shui, but **remember that that your environment has a deep impact on how you feel. And how you feel has a deep impact on your environment.**

Eckhart Tolle (THE POWER OF NOW) says ordinary consciousness is always somehow a denial of the Now. The Now naturally implies the Here. Are you resisting the Here and the Now? Many people always want to be elsewhere. “Here” is never good enough. If you become aware that you’re here and now make you feel unhappy, you have **three options – remove yourself from the situation, change the situation, or accept it** whole-heartedly. If you want to take responsibility for your life, **you need to choose one of the three and you need to do it now.** Then you need to accept the consequences of your choice, without excuses and negativity: “No psychic pollution. Keep your inner space clear.” The power of **unconditional surrender is spiritual freedom.**

Is there something that you actually “ought” to be doing? **Don’t delay or procrastinate. Do it now. Or accept your inactivity, laziness or passivity completely. Enjoy doing nothing.** Experience it fully and consciously. **Whatever you do, do it with your whole heart, without inner conflict or resistance.**

Much stress is caused because you would always rather be “there” than “here.” To worry about what might happen is to live in the future and splits your being in two. Much stress is also caused by living in the past. **Eliminate “ought to” or “could and should have” form your vocabulary.** This causes your mind to dwell on past successes or failures and you feed it with nostalgia, pride, guilt, sadness, anger or regret. **Die to the past every moment.** You don’t need it. Remember the past only when it is absolutely necessary. Feel the power of the moment of the now and experience the fullness of your Beingness. **Feel your presence.** Zen masters describe Satori as a flash of total insight, a moment of non-thought and total presence. It is a taste of Enlightenment.

Beyond the beauty of external forms, there is more here: something that cannot be named, something ineffable, some deep, inner, holy essence. Whenever and wherever there is beauty, this inner essence shines through somehow. It only reveals itself to you when you are present. Could it be that this nameless essence and your presence are one and the same? Would it be there without your presence? Go deeply into it. Find out for yourself.

(Eckhart Tolle: THE POWER OF NOW)

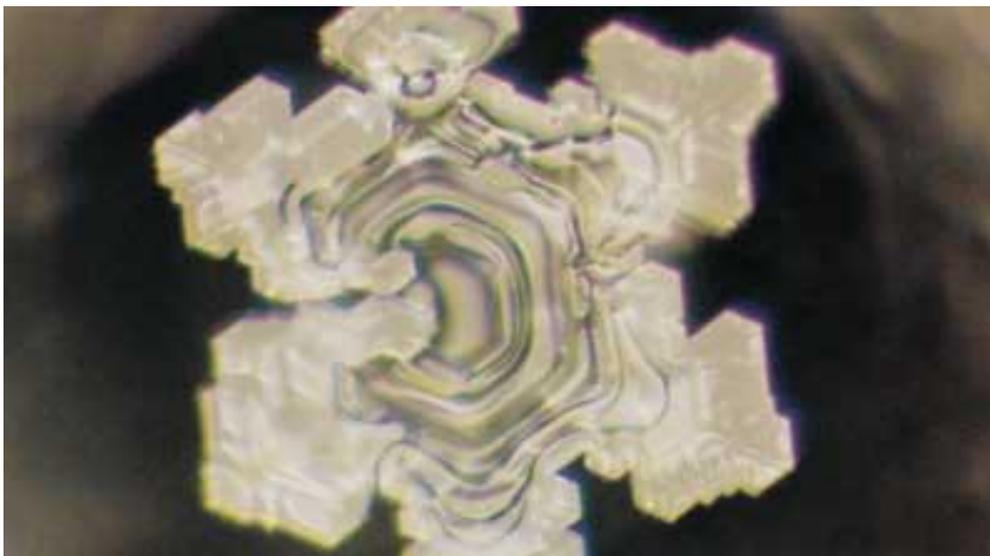
POSITIVE FOCUS

People are very interested in having beautiful eyes. Rather, they should be interested more in having a beautiful way of looking at things. Rather than having beautiful eyes, have a beautiful vision. See beautifully. See the one, undivided, the eternal – that’s what I mean when I say, “See beautifully.”

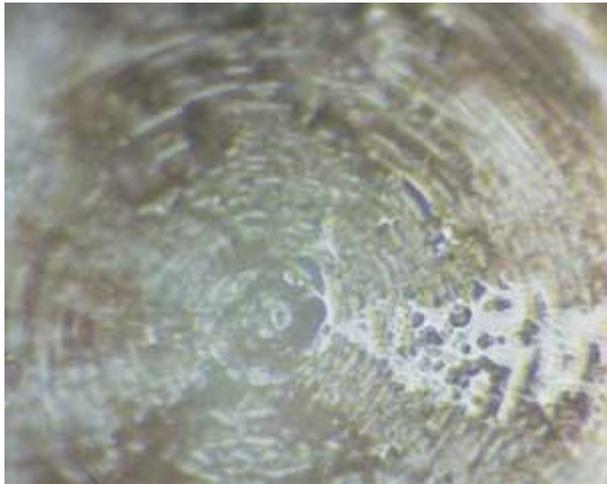
(OSHO)

In Masaru Emoto’s book THE HIDDEN MESSAGES IN WATER he shows beautiful images of frozen water crystals. He captured the “expressions” in water droplets in response to different words, sounds or thoughts. For example, a delicate symmetrical pattern is formed in the water in response to a Mozart symphony, while Heavy Metal music causes a chaotic pattern. What is even more astonishing is that the molecular **patterns in water droplets are dramatically affected by the words, thoughts or feelings directed at them.** If you look at water and concentrate on the thought “You make me sick” a chaotic pattern results. If the thought of “**Love**” or “**Gratitude**” is focused on the water droplet, a complex and beautifully symmetrical crystal pattern similar to a snow-flake is formed. Bear in mind that half of the planet consists of water and that your body is three-quarters water. The implication is that **your attitudes, thoughts, and feelings have the power to affect your environment and also shape the molecules and cells of your body!**

Water droplets



Mozart



Heavy Metal music



Love and Gratitude



"You make me sick"

The Talmud says, "We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are." The COURSE IN MIRACLES puts it even more succinctly: "Projection makes perception." This means that our thoughts and beliefs are projected outwards and colour our perception of the world, events, relationships, and people. **There is no thing or person out there that can really make you feel "bad" or "good."** It is your choice how you want to see what is.

The ego is the prince of fear and will always see what is dangerous and negative in a situation. You can choose to see that there are two kinds of people in the world: 1) those who are able to show love and 2) those whose behaviour is actually an appeal for the love they need.

(Henry Grayson: MINDFUL LOVING).

Yet, whenever we can face pain — our own or another's — our hearts open still more.

Sometimes I climb down long rickety ladders into the caverns, sometimes I'm plunged into them in utter wailing despair. Sometimes I'm led by an experienced guide, or I fall through a hole in a meadow of wildflowers.

There are many entrances and types of access.

We must only be willing to see what is.

Whatever healing work we each do contributes to the healing of all of us.

Remember: we are all swirling in the soup together.

HEART sees pain and blossoms

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Yet I want to add that it is good and well to be a hero, helper and rescuer, but not at the cost of yourself. **Beware of co-dependency** (not inter-dependence), and co-addiction, which means that you need others to need you in order to feel that you are worthy. To surround yourself with people who are always complaining and moaning, will contaminate your mind and your energy. **Feeling sorry for people is not always good for them** either, especially if it means that you join with them in speaking the language of “woundology” and confirm their belief that they are victims. In the film “In Good Company” it is said, “Pick the right one to be in the foxhole with you.” And **choose your friends wisely** – you are just as good as your “wing-man.”

Remember **“the power of positive thinking”**. To think positively is not only a gift to those around you, but also a way of loving yourself. **An affirmation is a positive thought that you can consciously choose to immerse in your consciousness to achieve a desired result. It is also like a prayer that you impress on Infinite Spirit.** Ultimately, it is a good idea to become an affirmation. Then you are in a constant state of prayer. Saying or writing affirmations is a very spiritual and powerful thing to do. However, it is important to **remember that “love brings up anything unlike itself.”** Since doing affirmations is a way of loving yourself, anything in the way of having that new result in your life will present itself to be dealt with. At first this may make your life seem rather strange, but if you keep doing the affirmation the resistance will be dissolved, the affirmation will eventually be integrated into your consciousness and the new thought will manifest. Think positive thoughts about your partner and loved ones. Holding on to negative thoughts about them only fortifies their negatives.

If you invite Love or God into your life, all hell may break loose at first. It is like a kind of detox process. More God, more Love, more Light and more Life will at first unleash a cleansing process. If you **use the affirmation “I trust the process of life, I am safe,”** everything that scares you will appear on the screen for a while. Persist no matter what happens, and in time the thought becomes integrated into your being and in your world. The Bible is a wonderful source of affirmations. My favourite is, **“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures....”** The COURSE IN MIRACLES contains 365 amazingly powerful affirmations, like “I have no cause for anger or for fear; your love envelops me. In every need that I perceive, Your Grace suffices me.” I love the following extended affirmation by Louise Hay (YOU CAN HEAL YOUR LIFE). When I discovered it twelve years ago, nothing contained in it was true of my life. Today I can say that this is (almost) how my life is:

Deep at the centre of my being there is an infinite well of love. I now allow this love to flow to the surface. It fills my heart, my body, my mind, my consciousness, my very being, radiates out from me in all directions, and returns to me multiplied. The more love I use and give, the more I have to give; the supply is endless. The use of love makes me feel good; it is an expression of my inner joy. I love myself, therefore I take loving care of my body. I lovingly feed it nourishing foods and beverages, I lovingly groom it and dress it, and my body lovingly responds to me with vibrant health and energy. I love myself, therefore I provide for myself a comfortable home, one that fills all my needs and is a pleasure to be in. I fill the rooms with the vibrations of love so that all who enter, myself included, will feel this love and

*be nourished by it. I love myself, therefore I work at a job that I truly enjoy doing, one that uses all my creative talents and abilities, working for and with people that I love and that love me, and earning a good income. I love myself, therefore I behave and think in a loving way to all people for I know that that which I give out returns to me multiplied. I only attract loving people in my world for they are a mirror of what I am. I love myself, therefore I forgive and totally release the past and all past experiences and I am free. I love myself, therefore I live totally in the now, experiencing each moment as good and knowing that my future is bright and joyous and secure, for I am a beloved child of the universe and the universe lovingly takes care of me now and forevermore. **And so it is.***

ASK BETTER QUESTIONS

You are continuously asking yourself questions on an unconscious level. **The quality of the answers you get is a direct outcome of the quality of the questions you are asking.** A negative thought or perception is really the result of a negative question. It boils down to negative expectations and negative expectations literally determine what you see and don't see. If you come home from work and the first things you see are the dirty ashtrays, the dog hair on the coach and the children's dirty feet, you have been unconsciously asking yourself on your way home what evidence you were going to find that your wife is useless and lazy. Stressing is the outcome of an unconscious question, "What can go wrong?" Being depressed is a manifestation of the question, "How has life hurt me?"

Some of the most debilitating questions you can ask yourself are, "**Why me?**" "**What is wrong with me?**" "**What do I have to live for?**" "**Why am I so miserable?**" "**Why are other people happier than I am?**" and "**Why do others have more than I do?**" These are the toxic questions that are often the real cause of your depression. Your brain – being a very efficient answering machine – will definitely come up with a few appropriate answers to these questions. And because these are negative questions, the answers are certain to make you feel even worse. Rather ask, "**Why not me?**" People are trapped in depression or anger for decades by saying, "If only I could understand why that happened." Even a question like the title of a well-known positive book is actually loaded with negative meaning, namely **WHY BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE.**

Neale Donald Walsch's **CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD** books underline the thought that our whole life is essentially our conversation with God. Every situation in your life is actually God's question to you, "**Who are you and what do you really want?**" The circumstances pose a question to you, "**Who is the person you want to become?**" Which character muscles and soul qualities do you wish to develop in your response to the situation? Do you wish to become angry and nurture self-pity, or do you choose to develop endurance, self-love, self-worth, independence, discipline, faith, humility, surrender, optimism, or wisdom? Learn to **interpret your problems as challenges and your obstacles as opportunities to learn life lessons. Listen to yourself**, especially if you start a sentence with words like "**I am...**" Ask yourself whether you really want to be the person described by those words. The thoughts you are thinking right now are creating the person you are

becoming. Remember that “I AM” is the vibration of God and that these words activate the creative power of the divine within you. When Moses stood before the burning bush and asked God His name, God answered, “I AM WHO I AM.” But if we read the Hebrew text (“AYAH ASHER AYAH”), we see that the answer may also be interpreted as, **“I AM NOT WHO I WAS; I AM WHO I AM BECOMING.”** This is equally true for you.

Learn to see a crisis as an invitation to become the person you want to be. Think of the life of Christopher Reeve, who played the role of the invincible man in “Superman.” When he became paralyzed and found himself in a wheelchair after his riding accident, he rose to the challenge and demonstrated to the world what inner strength is. If you catch yourself thinking negative thoughts, ask yourself, **“Is that true?”** “Can I definitely know that that is true?” **“How do I feel when I think that thought?”** If you feel bad, then you know that is a bad thought. Bad thoughts do not come from God. Keep asking until you find the answers that make you feel good, or goodness, or God. If you feel good, free, and peaceful, your thoughts are in harmony with the thoughts of God. It is as simple as that.

The COURSE IN MIRACLES has taught me not to pray to God to change the circumstances, but rather to **ask for the vision that reveals the perfection in the situation as it is.** Rather ask what is already good and wonderful in your life, than to ask for good and wonderful things to happen. This nurtures the **habit of gratitude**, which is definitely the most powerful tranquilizer and anti-depressant on the planet. It is impossible to be sad or afraid and grateful at the same time.

If someone makes you angry, ask how you do that same thing to others. If someone irritates you, ask yourself how you manifest that same behaviour or characteristic. Remember the metaphor of the beam and the splinter. Don't concentrate on the splinter in your brother's eye; rather find the beam in your own eye. If you struggle to love your enemies, ask what reasons you have to be grateful that they are in your life. **Ask the open, innocent, childlike question, “What if?” “What if there are no failures, only feedback?” What if God sends you only angels? What if every problem is only an opportunity for a miracle?**

Don't worry, rather wonder. To wonder what is going to happen in an open and neutral way is even more productive than hope. Rather say, “I wonder what is going to happen today,” than to hope that things will happen a certain way. **Hope often has a certain desperate quality which closes you to the possible lessons and surprises life may hold for you as it unfolds.** The following are a number of wonder-questions I have collected over the years. Needless to say, your brain will come up with even better answers if you breathe deeply and relax while you are asking these questions, in other words if you use them as a focus for contemplation, which is a form of meditation.

HAPPY RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS

- *What am I happy about in the relationship?*
- *What am I excited about in the relationship?*
- *What am I proud of in the relationship?*
- *What do I enjoy most in the relationship?*
- *What inspires me in the relationship?*

- *How much do I love? How much am I loved?*
- *How much do I receive? How much do I give?*

EVERY MORNING QUESTIONS

- *What am I happy about in my life now?*
- *What am I excited about in my life now?*
- *What am I proud of in my life now?*
- *What am I grateful for in my life now?*
- *What do I enjoy most in my life now?*
- *What inspires me in my life now?*
- *Who do I love now? Who loves me now?*

QUESTIONS FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

- *What is fantastic about the problem?*
- *What is not yet perfect?*
- *What am I prepared to do to make it the way I want it?*
- *What am I prepared to stop doing to make it the way I want it?*
- *How can I enjoy the process while I do what is necessary to make it the way I want it?*

PLAY, SMILE, AND LAUGH

When you play, you stretch your physical and emotional muscles and your biochemical network is liberated. Playing is a wonderful way to relieve stress and to invigorate body and soul. **People don't stop playing because they get old – people get old because they don't play. When is the last time you did something for the first time?** This also applies to things that you have done a thousand times before – do it each time as if you are doing it for the first time. Never let an opportunity go by where you could laugh, smile, giggle, hop, skip, jump, wiggle, stretch, tickle, stroke, embrace, make out, kiss, wrestle, somersault, whirl, dance, or sing. Let those emotional peptides flow!

I almost smiled years ago when I heard about the guru who said that if you **smile ten times a day for no reason, all your problems will disappear**. Yeah, right! Fresh from university and stuffed with complex theories, I thought that was simplistic nonsense. Today I know that behaviour, body posture, and movement are important ways to get access to the multidirectional feedback loops which connect all the systems of the bodymind. Now I would seriously encourage you to make a habit of smiling. When is the last time you tried to stand on your head, did the rock-and-roll, jived naked, jiggled your bum, or simply ran? If nothing else, these will make you smile!

Why automatically grab an umbrella and rain-coat when it rains? You can still **enjoy child-like activities** like getting wet, walking barefoot on the lawn, swinging in a hammock, going to the circus, playing with your dogs or the kids, having a picnic, running through the sprinkler, eating cookie dough, chewing ice, licking a plate, climbing a tree, blowing bubbles, splashing in the bath, or submerging your face in

the basin. And it really is OK to **laugh at you**. Why always so serious and dignified? **Please don't take yourself so seriously!** Consider the words joll, tumble, canoodle and hanky spanky. Do more of these. Play with candle wax, see how long you can hold your breath, tell jokes, pull faces in the mirror, jump with joy, hop on one leg, growl, yelp, coo, hum, put a skip in your step, stretch like a cat, spin yourself silly, yawn like a hippo, grin, eat cookies in bed, embrace a tree, eat flowers, walk naked with a funny hat, dress like Tickie the Clown (Sark: SUCCULENT WILD WOMAN, DANCING WITH YOUR WONDER-FULL SELF!). Norman Cousins, who cured himself of cancer by locking himself in a hotel room with a stack of Charlie Chaplin videos, calls laughing "internal jogging" (ANATOMY OF AN ILLNESS).

You have probably noticed that the answer to the question, "**What affects my body and mind?**" is: "**Everything!**" Everything you think, feel, believe, eat, smell, hear, touch, say, and do either makes you feel better or worse and has a cumulative effect on your health, your relationships, your work and the quality of your life. Everything inside and outside of you is intimately related with everything inside and outside of you. All that is, is an interwoven web of infinite possibilities. The point I want to make here, is that if you **behave as if you are optimistic, happy, and joyous** - or the other way around – this is what you will be. It is a case of **fake it till you make it**. But please note that I am not saying that you should pretend to be somebody you are not in order to impress other people. What I am saying is that you can pretend to be the person you want to be as a conscious decision for the purpose of making yourself more alive and happier.

This is **definitely not about denial**. People who are falsely happy and positive in order to create a fake image of themselves, can be extremely off-putting. If there is an emotional difference between what you do or say, and what you believe or think, there will be tension in your body. This is called cognitive dissonance, but in reality it is a total dis-ease in the bodymind. The uncomfortable chemical changes of play-acting for the purpose of deceiving or cheating are immediately picked up by a polygraph machine as changes in your heart rate, brain waves, breathing and skin temperature. To go through life with these this kind of dissonance, is indeed detrimental to your well-being.

What we are talking about here is **behaviour therapy for yourself**. If you do a little bit of play-acting for the purpose of helping yourself to grow in the direction of positivity, these behaviour changes will cause positive neuro-chemical changes in the bodymind. Actors know that if they play a tragic or an angry role their thinking and emotions in real life will follow suit. In marriage therapy we capitalize on the principle that **positive behaviour changes will cause positive emotional changes**. Think of how many actors and actresses have fallen in love while playing opposite each other in a romantic movie, e.g. Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie when they played in the film Mr and Mrs Smith. It is very difficult to pretend to be madly in love for a few months and not to fall in love in reality.

If a married couple says they can't behave in a loving way because they don't feel that way, I always say they might as well **behave affectionately until they feel that way**. Of course this can never be a substitute for addressing the underlying and real problems in a relationship, but it is a fact that regular **intimate eye contact, kisses, smiles, hugs and loving words will unblock the flow of love** if it is there.

SLEEP LIKE AN ANGEL

By now you really understand the concept of “**a healthy body houses a healthy mind.**” You understand that is the literal truth because every system of the bodymind is inter-related with all the other systems. A positive change in one dimension will have a ripple-effect on all the other dimensions. Modern man and woman don't sleep enough. Due to electrical light and TV, the average amount of sleep in the West has been reduced by an hour or two each night. Millions of people have sleep problems. This is one of the most important reasons for depression and car accidents. Many people think alcohol will help them to relax, and this is another cause, rather than a solution for sleep problems.

If you suffer from chronic stress the quality of your sleep is definitely not good. If you struggle to fall asleep, it is often a sign that you are anxious – there is too much adrenaline in your brain and body. If you regularly wake up some time after 12:00 pm, it may be a sign that you are depressed. Other symptoms of being chemically unbalanced may be shallow sleep, nightmares, sleeping too much and waking up tired. **If you sleep better, and if you sleep enough, you will function better by day, you will be happier, have more energy, and live longer** (Vafi & Vafi: HOW TO GET A GREAT NIGHT'S SLEEP).

Because so many parents feel guilty that they spend too little time with their children and are under the impression that children need only unconditional love, many children have sleep problems. These parents neglect their children's (and their own) **need for discipline and structure**. It is often the beginning of many other problems like hyper-activity and learning problems when they go to school, and also sleep problems when they grow up. To “sleep like a baby” often means to wake up a few times at night – that is why I changed the heading above to “sleep like an angel.”



If a young mother complains of irritability, depression and feeling out of control, the first question is how many times a night she gets up for her child. Often her

problems – including the tension in her marriage – disappear as soon as she addresses her baby or toddler’s sleep problem. If she bites the bullet and stops giving her child four or more bottles through the night, the baby also gets enough sleep and is happier by day as well. An 18 month old toddler who gets a good night’s sleep for the first time, often changes from a little whiner and tyrant who keeps his parents awake till he finally falls asleep at 11:00 pm, into a calmer, healthier, and better behaved child as if by magic. Because a child needs about 12 or more hours of uninterrupted sleep from the age of about eight months onwards for the normal development of the brain and nervous system, the result of better sleep is usually a remarkable spurt in language, motor, and intellectual development (Richard Ferber: HOW TO SOLVE YOUR CHILD’S SLEEP PROBLEM).

While sleeping the body is relaxed and the metabolism slows down, but there are **absolutely essential psycho-biological processes** that can only occur when you are getting **sufficient, uninterrupted, and deep sleep**. There are specific phases during a good night’s sleep, each of which is absolutely essential for health and emotional well-being.

- Deep sleep, or Delta sleep, during which rest and restoration occur
- Dream, or REM sleep, during which you dream and your eyes move rapidly in your eye sockets
- Light sleep, which occurs after Delta and REM sleep

Avoid over-stimulation of the five senses – this is an important cause of sleep problems (Deepak Chopra: RESTFUL SLEEP). But if you **nurture and pamper your senses, they are the doors to restful sleep**. Hearing, touch, seeing, taste and smell are the doors through which we receive information about the world. **We are the metabolic end-product of our sensory experiences**. We physically digest and metabolize our environment through our senses. You don’t digest only the food you eat. If you want to know what you experienced in the past, all you need to do is examine your body (and today that is possible through sophisticated machines like the QXCI&SCIO, which is used for quantum feedback therapy).

If you want to know what your body will look like in the future, examine what you are experiencing now. Everything you experience through your senses literally becomes the molecules of your body. If you eyes see something, the biochemistry of your brain and your entire body are changed in less than one hundredth of a second. If you see violence, there are immediate brain changes and adrenaline and cortisol are circulated throughout your body, and several hormones are produced, e.g. insulin, glucagon and growth hormone.

Also, the world that you experience is a fundamental end-product of who you are, how you think and what you believe. This is because your senses are not merely passive sensors for receiving external stimuli – they are also five different ways in which you project consciousness onto the world. **The senses are the ways in which the self reaches out to reality. What you see, hear, feel, smell, and taste “out there” is never an accurate picture of what is really there.** Ultimately you and your environment consist of one and the same energy field, the same field of information, the same quantum soup, which is a radically ambiguous and infinitely interwoven unity of energy and information. Through the act of looking, listening,

tasting, smelling, or touching, you “freeze” or “fix” the formless mixture of possibilities into the objects you recognize as the world. You are literally like King Midas who could never experience the softness of a kiss or the texture of a rose, because the moment he touched anything, it changed into gold. It is as if behind your back all that exists is the eternally flowing quantum soup, and the moment you turn around and look, it changes into the material reality you know through there projection of your consciousness. The way in which perception creates reality is beautifully shown in the movie “WHAT THE BLEEP DO WE KNOW?”

The five senses are expressions of the stream of intelligence flowing from the ocean of infinite intelligence – the reservoir of cosmic consciousness. The five senses are projections of ourselves. We then metabolize those projections and transform ourselves into material bodies. Precisely how this happens is truly amazing and has enormous implications for the well-being and healing of the bodymind. It has specific implications for the ways in which **careless use of the senses causes psycho-physical over-stimulation and imbalance which disturb sleep**. It manifests as the restless thoughts that prevent you from slipping gently into the land of dreams and waking up the next morning refreshed and rejuvenated. Over-stimulation of the brain and senses is a Western fashion and almost an epidemic. Take an objective look at the amount of violence, melodrama, and sensation in TV programmes. Most people’s brains show an unhealthy quantity of Beta activity and too little Alpha and Theta waves. They think and stress without end and they don’t know how to relax.

Avoid sleeping tablets – this is not really a solution to your problem. Research shows **that the quality and even the quantity of sleep in people with sleep problems who take medication to help them sleep are actually worse than those who don’t take medication. To tell the truth, people who rather lie awake for a while feel better and are more alert the next day than those who slept with the help of medication.** Sleeping pills are habit forming and they have serious side-effects. Sometimes the best we can say about sleeping medication and sedatives is that they give the person who is taking them a feeling that something is being done about the problem. The false reassurance is however only a mask for the underlying problem: sympathetic over-stimulation. If you are used to pills, you should not suddenly stop taking them without consulting your doctor and you should first make sure that you are following the recommendations in this chapter.

Here are a few things you could do to ensure a wonderfully restful night’s sleep:

- Avoid sounds that are over-stimulating, unpleasant, or disharmonious before you go to sleep – listen to gentle, calming music.
- Eat a light supper early in the evening and engage in relaxing and pleasant activities after that.
- Put your feet in basin of warm water with essential oils, massage them, dry them gently with a soft, fresh towel, and pamper them with a nourishing lotion. Take a refreshing shower, take a lovely warm bubble bath or add relaxing bath salts to the water and then go to bed.
- When you get into bed, massage the two energy points associated with sleep, namely the centre of your forehead and the lower part of your stomach. Do this gently, using round movements and the palms of your hands and use aromatherapy oils.

- Keep your bedroom neat, fresh smelling, softly lit and well ventilated, preferably on the cool side. Use warm, calming and restful colours.
- Don't use your PC, watch TV, or read the newspaper after 8:30 or 9:30 pm. Read something that is relaxing, inspiring, or nourishing to your soul.
- Avoid stimulants like coffee, nicotine, and alcohol before bed-time. Rather drink a glass of warm milk. Add a pinch of nutmeg, cinnamon, fresh ginger or brown sugar before heating.
- Always follow the same evening routine and begin to focus on relaxation and winding down long before you go to bed.
- When you lie down, don't worry about struggling to fall asleep. Just keep on watching your thoughts and feelings in a calm and objective way, as if you are observing somebody else. Breathe deeply, slowly, and regularly and remember deep relaxation is almost as beneficial as sleep and definitely better than taking a pill.
- Get up early (preferably as the sun rises) even if you haven't slept enough. Don't take an afternoon nap – your natural tiredness will help you to fall asleep more quickly the next night.

MEDITATION

A totally new kind of education is needed in the world, where fundamentally everybody is introduced into the silences of the heart – in other words, meditations – and everybody has to be prepared to be compassionate to his or her own body. Because unless you are compassionate to your own body, you cannot be compassionate to any other body.

(OSHO)

This entire chapter boils down to ways of learning to live with more awareness and relaxation. This is essentially what meditation is and what it aims for. Since the Seventies we are beginning to understand what has been known in the East for centuries: the power of meditation to **switch the nervous system from the sympathetic to the parasympathetic gear and to lift our threshold for what we can handle comfortably, permanently.** One of the best definitions of meditation is Jon Mumford's (CHAKRA AND KUNDALINI WORKBOOK): "Meditation is essentially autonomic nervous system gymnastics." Anna Wise (AWAKENING THE MIND) describes meditation as an **optimal brain state where all the electrical waves – Beta, Alpha, Theta, and Delta, click into harmony symmetrically in the two hemispheres.** There is a free flow of information between the conscious, the pre-conscious and the unconscious. The subjective experience is a state of relaxed super-consciousness which the masters describe as bliss, samadhi or nirvana.

*Regular meditation will lead to **greater calm, insight, creativity, and spiritual awareness** in your daily life. Although it is useful at first to learn to meditate formally, e.g. by sitting cross-legged with closed eyes and diaphragmatic breathing, it is not absolutely essential. Formal techniques are only a start to teach you the knack. When you have meditated a few times in the traditional way, you are delighted to realize that you have already been meditating in many situations where you are relaxed and focused and in some way merged with peace. **Any activity that is done with breath awareness,***

the observer mind, open focus, and total presence, can become a meditation, e.g. washing dishes, cooking, walking, gardening, sex, fishing, reading, sewing, taking a shower or a bath, listening to music, gazing at a candle flame or a flower, the night sky, a tree, or a sunset. The essence of meditation is to learn **to be present with reverence, calmly observing**, just witnessing what is happening inside and outside of you. Eventually your whole life becomes a meditation.

(OSHO; THE EVERYDAY MEDITATOR)

“Research shows that meditation can dramatically assist in alleviating pain and high blood pressure, to activate the immune system, and to retard ageing.” (Jon Kabat-Zin: FULL CATASTROPHE LIVING and WHEREVER YOU GO, THERE YOU ARE) Stress and the stress-related emotional and physical states may be seen as information overload. The psychosomatic network becomes so overloaded with undigested sensory information, uninterested trauma and stuck emotion that it is brought to a standstill. The energy can no longer flow freely. All the systems get scrambled. The systems can no longer work together in harmony. If stress impedes the free flow of the molecules of emotion, the autonomic functions like breathing, blood flow, immunity, digestion, and elimination are disturbed. Meditation, especially if it is accompanied by diaphragmatic breathing, creates **the relaxed state where the forgotten and suppressed emotions and thoughts can surface into awareness**. The peptides can be liberated and circulate freely through the body. The bodymind can heal and balance itself.



When you begin to meditate you may at first feel more uncomfortable and even confused, because all kinds of negative sensations and emotions that have been stored in the psychosomatic network float to the surface of awareness when the mind begins to quiet down (Albert Low: ZEN MEDITATION). This is because blocked or unprocessed physical and emotional information can be indefinitely

retained on the cellular level. Through **guided or focused meditations** (available on CD's) or **open unfocused meditation** you can discover your anger beneath your depression, and beneath your anger, the root of it all – the fear and sadness of your ultimate aloneness (Osho: MEDITATION: THE FIRST AND LAST FREEDOM). **Eventually you will make peace with your aloneness and in the stillness of your inner landscape you will discover the sweet peace of your oneness with your own deep essence – the part of you that is one with All That Is.**

There are many forms of meditation, e.g. **meditative prayer**. **The difference between prayer and meditation is that when praying you talk to God, whereas in meditation you become quiet enough so that God can talk to you.** Hatha Yoga is a form of meditation related to Yoga, and some kinds of meditation involve movement, e.g. Chi Kung and Tai Chi. The latter is my personal favourite which I have practiced for more than five years now. I usually start my day with 15 minutes of Tai Chi to welcome the day and to feel life flowing freely through my body. I follow this with about 15 minutes of Vipassana in the bath-tub to witness my thoughts and feelings. I close my morning ritual with meditative prayer to hear what God has to say to and through me. I can write a book about the benefits of these practices.

For my personal pleasure over than past ten years I have offered a free meditation group at my practice, where I teach different forms of meditation. Because it is so therapeutically beneficial I concentrate mostly on **mindfulness** techniques. Vipassana or mindfulness is an insight meditation and may be described as the intention to focus – **to pay attention to what comes up inside and outside of you without resistance or judgment, while you relax and breathe.** There are many excellent books on meditation and at my practice a number of CD's to teach you the basic techniques are available.

By now you realize that you are already unconsciously influencing your psychosomatic network through your thoughts, often to the detriment of your health – for example through over-adjustments in the natural cybernetic mechanisms. Through meditation you can learn to **attend mindfully to the bodymind's internal and external communications.** Messenger molecules are produced in the limbic system in the back of your brain where breathing is regulated, and all the systems in the network are harmonized. Eventually the brain's chemical and electrical architecture are permanently altered. With a qualitative EEG a regular meditator's brain is immediately recognizable through the increased amplitude of the slower brain waves (Alpha and Theta) which signify increased creativity, intuition, and inner peace (Anna Wise: THE HIGH PERFORMANCE MIND).

I often say to people who say they hate pills that in that case they have a choice – **meditate or medicate.** The difference between the two is that whereas medication costs money, meditation costs time. But if you give yourself the precious gift of a regular meditation practice, **you will discover that you have more time!** I have always needed an hour and a half to get going in the morning. Although I now meditate for half an hour I don't need to get up any earlier. This is because a calm mind is the basis for more effective time management and action. What did I do with that extra half hour before I meditated? I stressed about the day to come, tried on different outfits, searched for my keys, and who knows what else? "Talk and dose" therapy boils down to lots of talking and lots of pills. This is seldom sufficient to

make an end to those negative thoughts and feelings. It may be little more than a band-aid on a cancerous growth.

Many people say they struggle to calm their minds and switch off their thoughts. In my opinion **the best form of meditation is not directly aimed at trying to switch off**. To try to do something, is to engage **the will**. It is exactly the energy of the will – to get power over – which is the ego’s way and it’s main weakness. You cannot fight fire by fire. You cannot overwhelm thinking by more thinking (Bob Nairn: LIVING, DREAMING, DYING). You cannot will to surrender. It is more a question of **letting go into the peace that arises naturally if you cultivate an attitude of neutral awareness, surrender, acceptance, and compassion** for yourself and others. This is the way to tranquillity, inner freedom, and bliss (Sogyal Rinpoche: TIBETAN BOOK OF LIVING AND DYING).

And remember, all emotion is healthy. It is emotion that unifies body and mind. Anger, fear, and sadness – the so-called negative emotions – are just as healthy and necessary for our survival as peace, courage, and joy. We need anger to define our boundaries, sadness to release our losses, and fear to protect us from danger. It is the human you – you ego – who will always be with you as long as you inhabit a body. **Through meditation your ego will in time be gently tamed. It will become less turbulent, more clear, and more serviceable to the soul.**

Meditation is really about the experience of ourselves as **fully human and fully divine**. Our dual nature as “son of man” and “Son of God” is exemplified in the figure of the Christ in the Bible. It is also shown in the image of the Christ (the Higher Self) riding into Jerusalem (material reality or the world) on a donkey (the instinctive, animalistic, ignorant bodymind). The idea is not to despise or abuse the body. I cannot imagine Jesus flogging the donkey! With gentle humour, St. Francis of Assisi often referred to his human self as the poor ass to which he was bound. To meditate is to **experience the balance between the two selves**, rather than merely talking about it. Gradually the Higher Self gets control over the donkey and the donkey is made useful as the precious vehicle, worker, and instrument for the purposes of the soul.

It is all about **balance**. Balance, moderation, and temperance are difficult because they are **contrary to human nature which always tends to extremes, to black or white thinking**. When the Buddha arose from the meditation which brought him Enlightenment, he was emaciated, exhausted, and starving after years of denying the human needs. In his vision he saw all beings like shimmering jewels interconnected by the timeless, loving, conscious web of light which is the universal consciousness. He wondered what this might mean for the way we should live our ordinary lives and the answer he received was Enlightenment is the Middle Road. A little girl from the neighbouring village appeared by his side and offered him a bowl of aromatic rice. He ate the rice and placed the empty bowl in the river’s surface as a test. When he saw the bowl floating upstream instead of downstream, he knew that he had understood correctly. **Although it may appear to be the easy way to also eat, drink and enjoy the pleasures of the body, balance or moderation in all things is as difficult for us as it is for a bowl to float upstream.**

Trying to avoid, deny, or suppress the dark emotions is never a good idea. If they are not allowed to flow freely, there is a lack of integrity and communication in and between the sub-systems. If emotion is blocked, the result is chronic irritability, anxiety, depression, and/or periodic outbursts. This is when emotion becomes harmful to yourself and others. All honestly and spontaneously experienced emotion is positive emotion. Health and happiness are not merely a question of repeating pretty mantras. This is why I don't really like TM (Transcendental Meditation) where the repetition of a mantra is central. I have seen people who have been doing TM for 10 or 15 years who are still struggling with panic attacks and depression. **Don't resist "negative" emotions – rather observe them with compassion and forgiveness for yourself and the situation, and then allow them to naturally climax and transform into their own opposites** (Leslie Temple-Thurston: THE MARRIAGE OF SPIRIT; Hale Dwozkin: THE SEDONA METHOD).

If you meditate, sooner or later you will come upon love. If you meditate deeply, sooner or later you will feel a tremendous love arising in you that you have never known before – a new quality to your being, a new door opening. You have become a new flame and now you want to share. If you love deeply, by and by you will become aware that your love is becoming more and more meditative. A subtle quality of silence is entering you. Thoughts are disappearing, gaps appearing...silences! You are touching your own depth. Love makes you meditative if it is on the right lines. Meditation makes you loving if it is on the right lines.

(OSHO: MEDITATION: THE FIRST AND LAST FREEDOM)



SUMMARY

PHYSIOLOGY: Healthy Body

Breathing – deep; relaxed; diaphragmatic; 6 breaths per minute

Diet – healthy; balanced; wise; enjoy it

Exercise – moderate; regular; enjoyable; Yoga; Tai Chi

Behaviour – smile; laugh; fake it till you make it; give something

Relax – walk slowly; play; make love; dance

Nurture – massage; bubble bath; caress yourself

Sleep – 7-8 hours; activate relaxation response before sleep; drool on your pillow

FOCUS: Healthy Mind

Awareness – journal; remember dreams; listen to what you say

Respect – your emotions; breathe deeply and let feelings flow through you

Select – sensory input; see beauty; hear good news; choose positive people; read truth; garbage in – garbage out

Choose – positive thoughts; learn affirmations; ask quality questions

Decide – to be happy; seek joy; be in the moment

Interpret – problems as challenges; failure as feedback; obstacles as exercises; losses as lessons; go with the flow

Listen – to CD's; beautiful music; birdsong

Meditate/Pray – (deep breathing) twice a day (20 minutes); connect with peace; don't change the world – change worlds

EXAMPLE OF A HEALTHY DAY PROGRAMME

5:45 Wake up; remember dreams and notice thoughts on the mind-screen positive / negative?

5:50 Herbal tea / hot water with lemon and honey; vitamins, minerals, supplements

5:55 Tai Chi or other exercise for energy – while listening to CD for relaxation / positive thoughts

6:10 Meditate and breathe (with or without CD) 15 minutes

6:25 Bath / shower; breathe and pray / affirmations / positive morning questions; self-nurturing while grooming

6:35 Coffee; get dressed (I love you and you look wonderful!); breakfast (whole-wheat toast; egg, cheese and fruit)

7:00 Drive to work; breathe and listen to CD in the car

7:30 Begin work and remember your higher agenda for the day (you are here to let your light shine in the darkness)

10:00 Tea-time; (a fruit and whole-wheat biscuit) breathe with affirmations 5 minutes

13:00 Lunch; (soup / salad / fruit and cheese sandwich / boiled egg and seed bread) 10 minutes meditate and breathe

15:30 Coffee-break; (a fruit / nuts / cheese and whole-wheat biscuit) breathe with affirmations 5 minutes

17:30 Drive home; breathe and listen to CD

18:00 Sit and relax in garden / on patio; admire a tree; breathe 10 minutes; play with children or walk dog

19:00 Supper; enjoy cooking; balanced and light; relaxed; be grateful

- Two evenings per week Tai Chi / Yoga / gym / meditation or spiritual group / make love often

- Once / twice per week therapy / massage / reflexology / aromatherapy / Reiki

- Notice breathing during routine activities like phoning / PC / TV / talking / eating / toilet

- Affirmations every time you look in the mirror

- Half hour before sleep hot chocolate / milk and read something inspirational 10 minutes

- Before sleep relax deeply and breathe to let go of the day

22:00 Sleep 7 to 8 hours and give all your cares to your Higher Self while you rest

- Saturday and Sunday another half hour meditation, plus walk / read / gardening / napping / something special in addition to day programme

- Smile and give and receive as many hugs and compliments as you can

- Welcome everything that happens

- Collect and tell jokes and miracles

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

Place a cross X to indicate your score out of 5 where you are now, and a circle O to indicate where you want to be. For example if you are now seldom active, give yourself a cross under 1 or 2. If you want to get more or better exercise, place an O under 4 or 5.

	Low				High
	1	2	3	4	5
Love / Connection					
Breath Awareness					
Diaphragmatic Breathing					
Remember Dreams					
Relax Muscles					
Forgiveness					
Aware of Emotions					
Right Exercise					
Enjoyment and Pleasure					
Sun and Open Air					
Healthy Eating					
Gratitude					
Walk Slower					
Open to Everything					
Body Posture					
Smile					
Dance with Life					
Laugh, Humour					
Soft Eyes, Hands, Tongue					
Honesty					
Touch					
Hugs					
Sex					
Self-nurturing					
Oneness with All That Is					
Spiritually Awake					
Be in the Moment					
Sensory Awareness:					
• See					
• Hear					
• Taste					
• Smell					
• Feel					
Positive People					
Inspirational Reading					
Appreciate Nature					
Accept What Is					
Surrender					
Do it Now					

	Low				High
	1	2	3	4	5
Do it with a Whole Heart					
Eliminate "Should Have"					
Positive Focus					
Affirmations					
Give Love					
Trust					
Quality Questions					
Listen to Yourself					
Friends					
Who Are You?					
Vision of Perfection					
Wonder instead of Worry					
Flexibility / Flow					
Do it for First Time					
Laugh at Yourself					
Positive Thinking					
Fully Alive					
Good Sleep					
Calm, Inner Peace					
Prayer					
Meditate					
Balance					
Challenges					
Inspiration					

