

The Kwan Yin Journey



Week 5 – The Thought Plane (module 4 in the recording)

Hi Everybody!

Tim here, of Kwan Yin Healing, and we're on Week 5 of the Kwan Yin Journey.

Before we get started, how are things going? Let's check in with folks. We've covered a lot of ground getting started in the physical and emotional, and we're gonna be looking at the thought plane today and tying together a lot of stuff that we've been talking about. But how are folks doing with finding your patterns, and looking at our tragic flaws, finding allies, catching ourselves doing this, that, or the other thing, or just general thoughts and reflections about where you are at this point .

Participant 1: This is Colleen here. I would like to go first. I just wanted to share that I've gotten more and more stuck in my life, and I've had difficulty really engaging in the course, and then having to replace my computer has limited my ability to interact on Facebook.

The good news is I have been seeking out various forms of healing in the last several months because I felt like this is enough and I really want to move forward. I really want to do some healing. Actually, on Sunday, I sought out a girlfriend who has just started working on some shamanic breath-work healing. I did a healing with her and I feel that I really got rid of a lot of negativity, the demons, whatever, and I'm able to speak more clearly, say my piece.

I feel fantastic. I haven't had a negative thought since this happened Sunday, which is a cause for joy for me. So I sort of feel like I'm just now joining the group fully, and I look forward to being more a part of the group because the content has really intrigued me, but I have been kind of tied up in knots. Amen. That's my piece.

Tim: Well, welcome.

Participant 1: Thank you. Here I am, new kid on the block.

Tim: Okay, any other thoughts? Shares?

Participant 2: This is Heather. I'll jump in. I am finding my voice. I don't remember when I had spoken last, but all along things have been moving, getting the homework done, whether I'm actually sitting down and doing it energetically every week has been definitely working on me, working through me and moving me forward.

This week I'm finding a lot of fire really moving through, like it's not working, it's not working, and at the same time I'm having a bit of a challenge at finding that compassionate space for the fact that this is what works and this is where I attract from, this is what alignment means, and this is what serves me, and I know this, and at the same time, I have to put up the shingle out of office because people want more, want more, want more. I've been really clear that there's no more to give. I'm it, I'm running the show here, taking care of me, myself, my son, my life. Everybody wants to tell me how they think it should be, what I should be doing differently, how come I can't slow down for them and all this kind of stuff.

So that's where I'm challenged at right now, how to stay compassionate with people when they want my time and my energy, and there's only so much of it, and trust me, I've tried everything under the sun from, "Here's my calendar, here is available space. I'd love to give it to you during this time."

That doesn't work. "I don't work on a calendar like you do. Why does everything have to be business-oriented?" I don't know. I'm just clear about my life and what I know supports me, and I don't know what to do. I'm sorry if I can't be compassionate toward the fact that you're in chaos 24-7 and you need to call me when you just can call me, and I don't have my phone on when I'm surfing. I'm sorry. I don't live by that message and you shouldn't either.

There's a lot of that going on in the anxiety and chaos in the world, and the work that I do is to help support people not to live in that chaos, and I am not going to get caught up in it, but to be able to be in relationship and communication with people, I have to find a way to make that all work, so that's where I'm at.

Tim: Yes, a lot of this is going to come up in a couple more weeks, in the course I mean. It's coming up for you, obviously, now.

Participant 2: Okay, that's good. Like I said, energetically it works on me as the assignments are being given, so here it is. Okay.

Tim: Right, and life doesn't always follow by schedule. I've noticed that.

Participant 2: Yes, yes.

Tim: I didn't schedule this today. It clearly does not say 'Crisis' today. I'd have remembered that.

Participant 2: The good news is I'm being expressive about it, this was the reason why, and it's not just shutting the door. It's this is why because if I don't do it this way, this is the way I've tried, I'm trying to communicate in the little bits of seconds that I have available to report in. I'm trying my hardest to communicate with people. So be it.

Tim: Yes, just quickly, it's not today's topic, but one of the things that helped me with that was when I sat down and started doing tracking. It does speak to what we're talking about in terms of awareness, what's in our head versus what has actually happened, and when I started tracking who I was working with, what kind of results they were getting, what kind of work we are doing together, I found out – it's like a cliché out of a time management book, but I found out that a small percentage of my clients were the ones getting all the benefits and giving all the business, and a lot of the people who were sucking up a lot of my time and were not getting all that good results were all the ones who said, "I want this, I want this, I want it now and I don't want to pay for it either," and it wasn't doing either one of us any good.

When I really saw that in black and white, it wasn't a matter of compassion anymore. It was a matter of reality, and this was not a good use of my time or theirs. I could then take my time and put it into the things that were better use for both me and my clients.

Participant 2: So that's helpful when it comes to a working client relationship, but I'm talking about my life. As a single mom, I run by a schedule, so I'm talking about personal relationships with people who help me out and I help them out, like family members, lovers and friends. I have to live on a schedule. It's just a matter of fact. So that's pissing people off because they don't live that way and I shouldn't always be so regimented, and I would like to know how not to be and still get things done.

Yes, so anyway, I appreciate the feedback. I feel pretty clear and confident about work environment that way, but more personal relationships and the

dynamics of how to be available. That's all. Or not, and move beyond those things, or whatever.

Tim: There again, there's quality time and there's not quality time. I'm not going to try to compete with the reality of being a single mother, but nonetheless, there are people clamoring for our time where the answer is no.

Participant 2: The answer is no, yes.

Tim: And there are people who just want things instantly, "Why do you have to be so regimented?" "Well, I am, so get used to it."

Participant 2: Yes, that's who I am. You want to get to know me? This is who I am. So it got pretty heated tonight and I got really angry. I almost wanted to be forceful about it because it was really pissing me off. I felt like a lot of this fire moving through me about this, like, "No, I'm not going to do that, and you can feel bad and that's not my problem, and I'll have compassion for you there, but this is me holding my ground." So anyway, that's that. Somebody else can talk. I don't mean to monopolize the conversation, but hopefully that helps some other people.

Tim: Yes, and there's also the reality of we can't always be efficient with people the way that we can with things, but it comes down to which of the things are important and which are the things that are not important, and we know what those things are, like you have said.

Years ago, I was talking to a therapist about this, "I'm just so busy? How would I even have time for a relationship?" She said, "From what I know about you, if you were with the right person, you would find the time." And we do that. When the things are important, we find the time for family and things, and given the reality that there's so much time to go around, if we don't take time for ourselves, we don't have time for anything else.

Participant 2: That's it.

Tim: Again, I can't compete with the single mom thing, but I have found that in business, if I don't take the space out for myself, that I end up not doing anybody any good.

Participant 2: That's what I basically left off with in the conversation, that I'm not going to be there for you if I'm not here for myself. So that was that. Okay.

Tim: Sorry, that's tough.

Participant 2: No, it's fine. It's great. I love this stuff.

Tim: Okay.

Participant 2: Yes, you have to figure it out, right? I'm not going to stay stuck in this. I have to figure out a way to dance.

Tim: All right, anyone else? Okay, last chance because you know what happens once I start talking.

Participant 1: It's Colleen again. I just wanted to add one other thing from my little spiel there. I realize that all of the work I've done in my adult life, and certainly in the last few months, including this, helped to open me up to doing the work on Sunday. I guess I didn't want to discount the impact of even though I haven't actively been as involved in the recovery journey as I would like to be, I know that it has still had an impact on me, and I plan to be more involved. There you go.

Tim: All right then.

Okay, well let's jump into the thought plane. When we looked at the levels of being, the thought plane is right in the middle, and it's where we spend most of our time and awareness. And rightly so! Buddha pointed out that everything flows from mind. The only trouble is that the ego is also comfortable there as well. The ego will say "Everything flows from me; everything happens to me." We want to look at this carefully, because we want to keep what's good, as well as start to find some space away from what isn't working as well.

One of the things that is interesting about humans is that when we sit down to look at this material, we latch onto the demon part of "here are my demons" and "here are my trials" and "here are my tribulations" and "hear the things that I have to wrestle with." Equally as important is the bliss and the mercy and the joy. We kind of push that aside. You know? "I'm working on my demons--I don't have time to work on my bliss right now." And bliss is very much an important part of that. I want to start by emphasizing that distinction. Joseph Campbell summarized his work as "follow your bliss," because battling demons is not a reason to get up in the morning. It's not a reason to work through things. Battling our demons just puts obstacle after obstacle after obstacle in front of us, and at a certain point, we go "Enough! I'm tired of fighting. Forget it. The demons win. I'm just sitting here on my stump." But when we follow our bliss, that's something that pulls us, and when we're following our bliss, there are no obstacles, just hurdles. And hurdles are meant to be jumped over. It doesn't matter what's in our way; we are going to that bliss. You know? It's just going to happen. We are going to find a way. So I want to start by

pointing that out. And again the reason that we cling to the demons is ego. "Everything is happening to me." Okay? This is total ego. Once we start focusing on "everything happens to me," it's a short jump from there to "everything is the fault of others," things that come outside ourselves, and then once again, we're looking outside instead of inside.

Nor is the purpose to blame ourselves. I like to think of SHAME is an acronym: Should Have Already Mastered Everything. That's not a reasonable expectation. It's a part of the journey, of the process. The point is, however, to look at how our thought manifests in our physical and emotional environment. Thought *is* the creative force. Thought is the Law of Attraction. Thought is the power to transform and transcend. The physical and emotional things can get in our way, but the mind can destroy. I mentioned that sometimes people are careful about the astral plane, that you see people who consider the astral plane dangerous--it's really the mental plane we should be afraid of...that's where the real damage can happen, and that's where the real creation happens. The problem with the thought plane is this: if you believe something is true, it is; if you believe something is not true, it isn't, and either way, you are right. Yes that's circular reasoning, but, if we say "that's a bunch of crap," that's also circular reasoning. So we have to step back and say, "Which is a empowering thought here? Which is a thought that, if I believe it, moves me forward?" Because once we do, that becomes our reality. And the way to check on this is what we've already learned, is that emotions reflect the quality of our thoughts. Good quality thoughts feel good; poor quality thoughts don't feel good, and so we can check-in to the quality of our thinking and hence what we're creating at any given moment. We can then make decisions to think better thoughts that are reflected in better emotions. Look around at our physical world. Every so often, step back and ask "How is this working out for me?" Whatever is in my head, my physical world will tell me if that's accurate, or if the evidence in front of me is saying "Things aren't the way that you would like to think."

So -- a couple of different major areas I want to cover today. The first is--that we are not our thoughts.

We are not our thoughts

After all the talk about positive and purposeful outlook, this next point may well seem strange: we are not our thoughts. They are important, to be sure, but they are not us. We are not our thoughts.

I finally got this one morning by accidental discovery when handling a negative experience. I had agreed to help an acquaintance address some difficulties he was having, but as we started to work together, it was clear he wanted an endless reflection, never actually getting down to work. After a few weeks, I brought this up, explaining this just wasn't working, and invited him to raise the issue again at a time he was ready to address the problems. He immediately launched into a verbal attack that lasted much of the next week (confirming my decision to step away from the association, frankly) filled with distortions and outright falsehoods, as anger can attempt to justify itself. I understood all this, but it wasn't a pleasant experience,

and weighed heavily for a few days.

I woke one morning on the one hand feeling clear and relaxed from a good night's rest, while also recognizing with a sigh the dark cloud of swirling thoughts connected with this issue. But abruptly, for reasons I can't explain, I saw and understood the dichotomy, and with that, had a sudden revelation—I didn't have to enter the cloud.

I elected to lay back and enjoy another five-ten minutes of morning peace, letting the dark cloud of thoughts swirl around by itself a few feet off, having little to do with me at the moment. Later, I rose, picked up my thoughts, and started my day.

Once I saw this, I could start to see it in others. I watched my friend Louise, for example, one time when she was going through a troubling transition, glowing with her usual positive energy while a swirling cloud came and went, sometimes connecting, sometimes passing through.

We normally remain convinced that we are our thoughts, but this just isn't so. We don't even need thoughts. One night, I woke in the middle of the night, in that half-asleep kind of waking, feeling absolutely terrific. At that same instant, I heard a voice in my head say, as if I were in a class, "Now, try this in your home environment." I immediately understood that I was to maintain that euphoric feeling from the "classroom" while now in my own home. So I did, for about five minutes, before drifting off to sleep again, perhaps to rejoin the class. During that time, I had no thoughts whatsoever, just a pure floating feeling of euphoria. It was wonderful.

Our existence does not depend upon thinking. We are not our thoughts. Thoughts are important tools, but they aren't our identity. We need to remember how to live, how to just be, independent of the interruption and distortion of thinking. I used to get into times where my thoughts were just racing as I wondered what to do about some situation at the time. Now, I just stop thinking—in other words, stop doing what isn't working. Don't let the tools run the craftsperson. We are not our thoughts.

Our thoughts, instead, are how we create. This is not some great mystical puzzle. Before there can be a chair, someone has the idea of "chair," prior to making one. Before there were any chairs, someone had the idea of "chair," prior to any chairs existing whatsoever. Before there's a house, someone plans it out, from the mind, eventually in every detail before it is built. Before anyone had any kind of house, someone conceived the idea of building one, prior to any houses existing. We think the thoughts first, and later realize the physical manifestation.

Our thoughts *are* the creative process; our emotions are *feedback* about how we're using those thoughts. Yes, this process can seem more complicated than that, and it often is—but we create these complications ourselves, through our thoughts, and then anguish over them, as our emotions warn us we're not heading in a clear direction.

Negative thoughts are not mere worries—they create negative conditions, in the same way positive creation moves from concept to realizing physical manifestation, and these negative conditions are flagged by the negative emotion. You're probably familiar with the concepts of “self-fulfilling prophecy” and “self-sabotage”; here they are, and this is why they work as they do—it's deliberate creation of negative circumstances.

Now, because we commonly believe we are our thoughts, we think incessantly. The voice in our heads never shuts up. Descartes even enshrined this in our philosophy—*I think; therefore I am*. But it's backwards, as we typically understand it. Thinking may well be *evidence* for our existence (which is what Descartes was getting at), but that thinking is *not* our existence itself. It's a *coup d'état* – but it's still not you. To paraphrase Yeats, the falcon is flying the falconer. Or at least thinks it is, and wants to continue thinking that. And so, it tries to create it. That's at odds with who you are really are, though, so the emotions respond with anxiety, stress, worry, and so forth. It's not something that's happening to you—it's a warning signal you're not heeding. Just like your nerves warning you about that hand in the fire...not a good idea.

The mind ego will fight hard to keep its usurped throne. But it's not really in control, and it's not really you. Instead of thinking your way out of all your troubles—stop thinking. Seriously. That alone will be an improvement, and your emotions will respond peacefully. Then set about purposeful creation—and enjoy the joy you are meant to feel.

Once your own mind is out of your way, you can start to see the possibilities. Again, I don't mean pie-in-the-sky Pollyannaish rose colored glasses—I mean seeing the actual possibilities, and seeing they are indeed possible.

Then it's time to take action. But what does taking action mean?

We all tend to be “doers” in the sense that we feel we must do more to get more. We've forgotten how to wait, how to allow. I do NOT mean sitting around wallowing in wishful thinking; I mean getting out of our own way.

Learn to wait, to allow. Ever watch a cat stalking a mouse? Perhaps there's one behind the stove. “Silly cat,” we'll say. “Been like that for hours!” But what's going on in the cat's mind. Nothing but patience and focused attention. How long will the cat wait? A silly question from the cat's perspective--however long it takes. The amount of time doesn't matter; stalking the mouse matters. Everything is in the present, even as the cat is waiting. Never does the cat think, “Well, what if it DOESN'T come out?” or “What will people think of me sitting here in the kitchen staring at a stove?” THIS is creative and purposeful use of our thoughts and attention.

Learn to let go of emotional attachment, allowing purposeful creation to manifest in its place. *Feel* emotions, but don't let them *control* you, when really, you control the thoughts

that control those emotions. Eckhart Tolle tells of a talk Krishnamurti gave in his later years. “Do you want to know my secret?” the Indian saint asked. Everyone listened. “Here is my secret,” he said. “I don’t mind what happens.” Like the cat, he was focused on what he was doing in the NOW, not thinking about “what if” in the future. One is a positive, creative focus of attention and thought; the other is wasteful worry and speculation.

Why and Purpose

Purpose, though, will guide us through; when we start with *why* we are doing something, the *what* and the *how* fall into place naturally. We do plan, of course, so this is a distinction hard for us to grasp at first. Simon Sinek, unwittingly perhaps, offers a clarifying point in the title of his book: “Start with Why.”

It’s when we worry about *what* to do or *how* to do it without a clear picture of *why*—and here I mean in the creative, purposeful sense of attention to our thoughts—that we get tangled in a sea of negative thoughts.

Here’s an example--as I’m writing this, I’m also putting together a workshop that I’ve been thinking about for a few years. I’ve finally found a way that it all ties together, bringing much of my work in several disparate areas into a unified whole that will truly change the way people think of their work lives and how to achieve what they truly want and can best contribute. I believe in this work strongly. It will help so many people who are otherwise struggling needlessly. That’s the *why* behind doing the workshop. Can you see my point? It feels great. It’s exciting. And as such, I enthusiastically met challenges associated with the project and overcome them.

Now imagine instead other workshops I could certainly do, and expertly, but that I’m just not really into. Perhaps I might decide to do one for the money. But that’s not a purposeful, creative use of thought attention. How will that inspire me to meet the challenges? More likely, the obstacles will discourage the project before it even got started—which is what happens with *most* of the projects people think up, isn’t it?

That’s the difference that *why* makes. *How* and *what* flow from *why*. When you want something, ask yourself why you want that. If the answer has you smiling, excited, happy, full of joyous anticipation, then you’re on to something. But if the answer is drab, routine, predictable, matter of fact, then you’re not creating something you really want, and your own thoughts are working against you. Emotions are signals; use them to gauge the quality of your thoughts and whether you should charge in or change course. How many times do people ask, “Give me a sign!” There they are.

Even if things work out differently than you’d planned, you’ll still find yourself on an interesting, enticing path, only farther along it than you were before, and having fun. To quote Simon Sinek again—there’s a reason we say “arts and sciences,” never “science and

art.” The “art” always comes before the “science.” Similarly, we don’t set out to win “minds and hearts,” but rather, “hearts and minds,” in that order.

Creation comes literally from the heart; in one segment of the documentary “The Living Matrix,” researchers show a series of images, some negative, some positive, and measure heart and brain activity for each. Not surprisingly, the heart and brain waves are different for the positive images than for the negative images. But this next part is fascinating.

The researchers then had subjects watch randomly generated images on a computer screen, not knowing which would come up—in fact, not even the computer knows—and found the heart waves changed before the brain waves and even before the images were generated. And again, the heart and brain waves responded differently depending on the positive or negative image. But what’s really interesting is the order of these “responses.” First the heart wave would change, then the brain wave changed, and only then did the image change. The heart “responds” first, informing the brain, not the other way around, and both “respond” before the random image even appears. My friends, we are much more than we typically realize, and at essence, we are heart-centered.

In a related discovery, Dr. Gary Schwartz measured the heart and brain waves of both practitioners and clients in Reconnective healing sessions. He found that during a session, the practitioner’s heart wave changes, followed by the client’s brain waves. Interesting, no?

It—whatever “it” is, in the sense described in “Zen and the Art of Archery,” comes from the heart. When our thoughts follow our heart, we are in purposeful alignment, and our positive emotions resonate with it. When we find we are not feeling happy, we need to change our thoughts; the emotions are a sign we are not creating purposefully.

Does this all sound a bit too mystical? Are you more of a practical, business-oriented nature? Then you need to spend a little time with Napoleon Hill.

You may remember this man for his most famous book, “Think and Grow Rich.” I ignored this book for years, thinking it yet another of the “How to be a Billionaire by Speculating in _____” variety. I was wrong.

Napoleon Hill was hand picked by Andrew Carnegie to investigate and codify a formula, a philosophy of success. Carnegie would give him letters of introduction to hundreds of the most successful, wealthy people of his day. He would pay Hill nothing beyond this. Hill told Carnegie he could depend on him, and though it took years, Hill did just that, first with his “Laws of Success,” followed by other works refining his research.

What Carnegie and Hill discussed was not a business tactic, but a “vibration” as a basis for a Law of Attraction. This was “the secret” mentioned throughout Hill’s books. The ability to focus the mind on a definite purpose and to see that purpose fulfilled, believing it, no matter

how lofty, was the magical key to success. Over and over, Hill would find the same answers to his questions, interview after interview.

Have a Definite Major Purpose, Hill stressed, as the heart of his philosophy. Then a reasonable plan for achieving that purpose. Adjust as necessary, and don't give up. Ever. Keep the focus on the success, not the lack of it. In fact, originally, Hill told Carnegie he was the wrong man for the job, coming from humble origins. Carnegie made clear as long as Hill kept to that vision of things, he would always manifest lack. Sound familiar?

Hang in there—and want to. No matter how many times they're rejected, the waves still kiss the shore. That's the goodness of the universe we're born into. Truly, all we want is already here. We just have to believe it. And that's from not the mouth of mystics, but from the fabulously successful.

A good friend tells the story of a coworker who was a pathological liar—whose lies would then become true. And yet—his lies had an amazing twist. When he was without a vehicle, he lied about owning a blue Ford truck...and a few months later, he found a blue Ford truck he could afford and bought it. He lied about having his own piece of land with a trailer in the country...and a few months later, talked a farmer into selling him a small piece of land he wasn't using that just happened to have an old trailer a farm hand used to live in. He lied about having a girlfriend, with red hair...and guess what? He married a redhead.

Now, I'm not recommending you become a pathological liar, but as Abraham poses this question and answer: “You want me to have an airy-fairy thought? You want me to say something that isn't true?”

Yes. Tell a different story. Believe it.

Not practical? Tell that to Andrew Carnegie and Napoleon Hill. Stop telling yourself that.

Tell a different story, the story the way you want it to be—and why.

Don't forget the Good!

When working on leaving negative thoughts and behaviors behind, don't overlook something important—the many good things you are too. Just as your situation contains many positive elements as well as the negative ones that were getting your attention, so too YOU embody many positive elements. Don't forget this.

Part of your personal inventory, then, is all the good things you are. This is an important, in fact crucial, part of facing reality, and it's as easy to deny our good qualities as our challenges. Let's take a look.

Whatever your educational level, work experience, background—you have skills. What are

yours? Take a thorough and specific inventory. Even in the areas challenging you, some aspects of this are good. Find them. These are the strengths you'll use in your new unstuck journey.

If you're looking for a job, this is the basis for your search. If you're looking for a new job, these are the keys to more options. Skills are transferrable. Someone with extensive cashier experience, for example, and experience with accurate record keeping might do well as a bank teller. Many important skills are "job-neutral," as they plug into a wide variety of jobs—presentation skills, inventory management, design, event planning, supervisory experience, to name just a few. Look at your complete collection of skills, and you'll quickly realize your "job" you're looking for is actually any of dozens of jobs, opening up your opportunities.

When considering what you want, ask why you want it—this will open areas previously unconsidered that you might find beautifully fulfilling. If you enjoyed your time in the army (not to make light of service, but just to illustrate), what about it was enticing? Do you like to work with jeeps? Do you like the outdoors? Perhaps a job as a forest ranger would fit. Do you like the structure and keeping order? Perhaps police work would suit you. Are you keen about firearms? Perhaps a safety instructor. Or was it about helping your country? Perhaps a career in politics is for you. Or defending those who need assistance? Maybe work with a legal firm. The point here is that even in a pursuit that many seem uniform, like the military, each individual in that experience is very different, and may well be headed to a very wide variety of meaningful career experiences—including perhaps a career in the military.

If you want to be a musician, *why* do you want to be a musician? Is it because you enjoy being on stage? Is it creating beautifully crafted recordings? Is it bringing a message to people? Is it helping people forget their troubles? Is it to bring out deep feelings otherwise inaccessible? Is it working closely as a team with band mates? Is it writing songs? Is it orchestrating the arrangements? Is it appreciation for the instruments? Is it physically moving, or physically inactive? There are a wealth of possible careers in these and other questions, all of them very, very different for a world of very different people with different ideas and feelings about music and the things that can go with that music.

Know what you want; it's hard to get what you want if you don't know what it is. Be honest with yourself. Very, very, often, we convince ourselves we want something just because it's something palatable we think is within our reach and we can live with. What if instead we all admitted what we truly want? What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail? How would that feel? Why would it feel that way? Spend time on this—over time, it's self-revealing. The better you know yourself, the better you can begin to show your possibilities to others.

Don't make excuses, and let go of fear. Erase both those from your consideration. What, honestly, do you want, and why? What would that do for you?

Abundance as an Energy Signature

Mary A. Hall has an interesting way of presenting this reality; she talks about abundance as an energy signature we can feel, as a blessing energy.

She makes her point with this really interesting: "What would ____ (money, for example) provide for me?"

Then, "What would *that* provide for me (i.e., the answers to the first blank)?"

Then "What would *THAT* provide for me?" etc. etc. etc.

...until it ends with "all is possible."

So....for example...

"What would money provide for me?"

Security, peace.

"What would security and peace provide for me?"

Less stress, peace of mind, confidence.

"What would less stress, peace of mind, and confidence provide for me?"

Expansion, growth, letting go of fear.

"What would expansion, growth, and letting go of fear provide for me?"

Unlimited possibilities.

"What would unlimited possibilities provide for me?"

All is possible.

And then...."If all is possible, what would I do?"

Interesting?

I've also done it and ended with "All things are," which strikes me as similar.

Then, "If all things are, what would I do?"

Abundance is the nature of reality.

So why doesn't it work?

Most people think the problem with their dreams is the tough nature of reality; it's not—they simply give up too soon. How do you know it's too soon? You haven't realized your goal. Failure is only possible at the moment you choose to quit. Notice—choose to quit. It's a choice. If it's a choice better suited to what you truly want, fine. If it's fear of not attaining what you want, it's a poor choice. Don't choose to be unhappy. You can't get

unstuck when you're choosing to be stuck.

Like all habits, settling for stuck can be hard to break. You need a strategy, something that will support and sustain you through the times you might decide to quit.

1) Enter your Definite Purpose—from our old friend Napoleon Hill...a passion, a driving force, a commitment. It will keep you focused in a single direction.

Then have a reasonable plan for achieving your Definite Purpose. Follow it. Have specific long and short term goals. And—write them down.

In “What They Don’t Teach You in the Harvard Business School,” author Mark McCormack tells of a ten year study of graduates and goals; in 1979, interviewers asked new graduates from the Harvard’s MBA Program, “Have you set clear, written goals for your future and made plans to accomplish them?” 84% had no specific goals at all, 13% had goals but they were not committed to paper, and just 3% had clear, written goals and plans to accomplish them.

In 1989, the same graduates were interviewed again, and guess what—those with written goals were the top achievers.

- The 13% of the class who had goals were earning, on average, twice as much as the 84 percent who had no goals at all.
- The 3% who had clear, written goals were earning, on average, ten times as much as the other 97 percent put together.

Now, given that we’ve known this for decades—really since Napoleon Hill and Andrew Carnegie—why don’t we follow this simple advice? Especially in the face of such compelling evidence that it works so well?

We don’t write down our goals because don’t know what they are. Sounds strange, doesn’t it! But what’s the hold up?

It’s not the writing down itself that’s magic—it’s the writing down that forces us to be honest. We have to really look and think and decide. We have to really articulate what these goals are and how we intend to reach them. Most of our thoughts are MUCH more vague than that—despite what we tell ourselves to the contrary.

You can’t get what you want if you don’t know what it is or how you’ll go about it.

2) Further, why do you want this?

So much of our confusion—and make no mistake, it’s confusion—stems from either not

knowing or not taking time to think this one through. What is it this will give you? Why do you want that? What will that give you? Why do you want that? Get to the real truth of who you are, what you want, and why. Your life will change.

3) Next, what are you willing to give for this goal?

After deciding Definite Purpose, this was Napoleon Hill's other wonderful insight (again, led by Andrew Carnegie at first)—what are you going to give for what you want? It's when we are of service that we are in harmony with—the Universe if you like, but also simply the Economy. In return for that service, you are compensated.

But here, think of service much more broadly; what is it that would have you saying, "Hey, I'd have done it for free"? What really gives you joy? Think like a stream—if it's damned at either end, there's no flow. You have to give as well as get, or you'll have either a desert or a swamp instead of a flowing stream.

Take this seriously, and think it through; what is your contribution to be? One you'll be happy to make, in true service? One you'd do just for being asked?

4) Love yourself.

What would you do for any other friend? Would you do that for yourself too? Are you? If not, why not?

What would the Divine do for you? Would you do less for yourself? And if so, why would you undercut the Divine? Does that seem appropriate?

Love others. But understand--they are a reflection of you. See how beautiful they truly are. Recognize that this is your beauty shining back to you. Truly.

And love life. It's what you're doing here, and for good reason. Enjoy it, and live it with passion.

5) Finally, detach from other's thoughts.

Like it or not, we continually look for others' approval. We're a social species. That also means that we accept a LOT of thoughts that mean nothing more than a lot of people think them. And that holds us back.

Don't let the naysayers stop you before you start.

Another way we make things tough is Addictions

So here are a few thoughts about addiction.

1) Service work.

“Coffee makers make it.” It’s an AA saying. It’s true. When I became a coffee maker for the Sunday night meeting, I just figured somebody had to do it, and I didn’t mind taking a turn. What I didn’t expect was the impact such a seemingly simple thing would have upon me. I cared. That became “my” meeting. Everything had to be just so...it was like I was the host, getting everything ready to make the meeting go smoothly, right down to spreading out the readings for people, getting the books and pamphlets out and available for easy reading, making sure chairs were ready--all simple things, but I took tremendous pride in all this.

Later I got busy and passed off the regular commitment to newcomers, taking it back as they moved on. Until my friend Mike walked through our doors (a stranger to me then), just back from Florida, looking to find his footing in New York. I could see he needed something, and asked him to be the new coffeemaker. He’s had that job ever since, and loves it--it’s the highlight of his week.

My friend James makes the coffee at my local home group--and has for 18 years. This is not the only form of service work, of course. It’s an easy one to get going, low pressure, and a way to get to know people in the program. But any contribution anyway, any help to offer others, gets us out of ourselves and our minds and our problems and into being of use to our fellow men and women.

One friend tells the story of complaining about his life in early sobriety to his sponsor. “I’ve got just the thing,” replied his sponsor. “I’ll come pick you up.” And when he did--he drove them straight to the Rescue Mission, where they served food to homeless people all day.

Need help? Want to solve your problems? Go help someone else.

2) Stop trying to do everything by yourself.

Learn to ask for help. I don’t care that you don’t need it. Ask anyway. It’s foolish to insist on handling everything alone, and you’re not as good at it as you think. It’s also more fun to do things with other people.

I know. You’re a loner. You’re not good with other people. And you’re the ten millionth person in early recovery I’ve heard say that. Get over it.

Call other people in recovery--at least one a day. If you don’t feel comfortable, if the phone feels heavy, if you’re just not able to do this--get over it. You’re an adult, and every one of these people have been where you are. Call just to say, “Hey, I’m practicing,” or “How’s the weather,” or even “I know this sounds stupid, but this ‘Getting Unstuck’ book says to call other people in recovery--crazy, huh?” It will help. When you’re not feeling 100%, call

somebody and chat about it. When things are really bad one day, you'll naturally pick up the phone--instead of a drink, drug, etc.

Let other people get to know you. You're a wonderful person--but not as special and unique as you think. Stop setting yourself apart, and join with these people. You'll learn to love it.

3) Replace old habits with new ones.

Right now--don't think about orange juice! Oops, too late...that's the problem with trying NOT to do something. Now, instead of orange juice, think of cranberry juice...much easier, yes? Do the same with habits.

If you usually have a cigarette with that first cup of coffee, plan ahead of time what you're going to have with your coffee from now on (make it sustainable). If you usually have a drink after dinner, decide what you're going to have after dinner instead. If you usually get a pint of ice cream when you're having a rough day, figure out what you can have ready instead. And keep at it--it takes 21 days to change a habit, and in the case of psychological dependency, perhaps much longer. But it gets easier with time.

And time takes time.

But don't try to just stop--change.

If nothing changes...nothing changes.

4) Avoid people, places and things.

If that convenience store you stop at every day has a worn path to the scratch off tickets, shop somewhere else. If the supermarket aisles show the trail you've well-traveled to the beer displays, change stores. If the route you take home every day goes right by where you usually buy cigarettes, take a different route to and from work. Change.

If you're trying to stop drinking, smoking, gambling, over-eating, or any other addiction, stop hanging out with the people who do those things. Don't hang out where those things happen-- "You don't go to a whore house to hear the piano music," as the saying goes. You are just flirting with trouble. Don't.

And lose the things you associate with those addictions, whatever they are. Change.

It will get easier the further away you get.

5) The Rule of Three

I went through a lot of pain before I realized this. I call it the Rule of Three:

- *I won't feel this bad in three hours (usually two).
- *Things won't look this bad in three days.
- *This situation will look very different in three weeks.
- *Things will be completely different in three months.
- *You can't even imagine where you'll be in three years.

Doubt it? Think back to how you were feeling three months ago, three weeks ago, three days ago, three hours ago. Emotions change quickly--we only treat them like the present one will last forever. It won't. Ride it out, knowing all will be well shortly. And it will.

6) Have a daily spiritual program.

Make sure it's daily, and inviolate. Let this be your touchstone each day, a way to focus and renew your energies in a positive and productive way. Daily readings are a popular way to do this, along with prayer and meditation, but whatever way works for you, whatever way is most meaningful to you day by day, is what you should organize your life around, day by day.

Ask for help. Whatever your spiritual beliefs, don't try to go through life without aligning yourself with God/Universe/Nature/Tao/Higher Power/Creator/Great Spirit or whatever other term you prefer. Be part of the whole, and let that whole govern your part in it.

At the end of the day, say "Thank you." There is tremendous power--and solace--in gratitude. Use that power, daily.

When you need help, this really works:

God, Grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The Courage to change the things I can,
And the Wisdom to know the difference.

One day at a time, my friend. Just for today. You can do it. Call when you need help.

7) One more thing...

Addiction comes from fear. Nothing logical about it--our addictions, whatever they are, serve purely emotional ends, and not in logical (i.e., not in healthy) ways. It's a denial parading as a solution. But like all lies, it comes from fear. Truth needs no lie.

One man in recovery describes it this way: "Alcoholism is the only disease that must be diagnosed by the patient, and the chief symptom is denial." This is true of all addiction. Imagine that first cigarette--eyes watering, mouth burning, the urgent cough, feeling nauseous...and then deciding to do it again. That's not the rational mind at work. Or

dropping dollar after dollar on the lottery, because, “Hey, you never know!” Yes you do. When the odds of winning are one in millions, and the odds of being struck by lightning are one in a million--hey, have you ever run in terror of lightning because “Hey, you never know”? Or did you ever wonder where all the money for that gorgeous casino come from? This isn’t hope--it’s desperation.

To counter fear, choose love. Why do we balk at love? Why is happiness too great a price to pay? Nothing logical about that either. To counter darkness, turn on the light. Rationalizing the dark will never make it light. Love yourself. Love your fellow humans. Love your current situation, even if it seems there’s not that much to love. Love. Face your fears with love. They will run.

This is why will power so often fails otherwise strong people when aimed at addiction. It’s the wrong weapon and the wrong target. Face your fears, with the help of your Higher Power and with the help of people around you. It won’t be easy--but it will be real, and it will get better. It will. I promise. Your life will improve beyond your wildest dreams. Mine did. So will yours.

Third way we make things tough: Time takes Time

The Key is we must be grateful for where we are. Yes, I know, you want to get elsewhere. But be grateful for what you have right now, and be so happy appreciating it that you don’t mind waiting with the thrill and excitement of what’s yet to come your way. This will also (1) keep you from asking for what you don’t want, and (2) keep you emotionally stable to stay the course. Be patient and consistent.

Burt Goldman offers this illustration:

Imagine going into a special restaurant, one that specializes in delicious soups made completely from scratch, any kind you want. So you decide on the Garden Tomato, and the chef gets right to work, chopping up vegetables, processing the fresh tomatoes, and so forth.

But 20 minutes pass after ordering Garden Tomato soup, and you complain to the waiter, “Where’s my Soup?” The waiter explains the chef is working on it, but you can’t see why this should take so long. “Never mind,” you say. “Just give me the French Onion.”

So the waiter tells the chef, who nods, looks at the simmering tomato soup you no longer want—and pours it out, immediately starting on your French onion.

Another 20 minutes...you’re getting irritated. “Hey,” you call to the waiter. “About that soup?!” Again, the waiter assures you the chef is on it, but you don’t want to hear this. “Forget it,” you command. “Bring me the Vegetable Beef.”

The waiter updates the chef, who again nods, tosses the simmering French onion, and

immediately gets to work on your new order of vegetable beef. But 20 minutes later, just as your third soup is almost done, you get fed up and march out of the restaurant. You buy some Spaghetti-Os on the way home, mumbling about how the world is going to hell and how your life sucks. The chef and the waiter decide to enjoy your soup.

That's how all too many people use the Law of Attraction. Know what you want, and why, and follow this definite purpose with conviction. Look with appreciation for what's going right. Keep at it, happily, knowing the positive outcome is inevitable—as that's the place you stop.

Why do you always find things in the last place you look? Because when you find them, you stop looking. Not until. If you don't find them...keep looking.

Napoleon Hill dramatically shows this with the story of R. U. Darby, whose uncle joined the Colorado gold rush, found gold, staked a claim and quietly went back to Maryland for help and financing. Darby returned with his uncle and equipment, soon earning enough to repay their debts—when the vein of gold they were mining ran out. They dug and dug, but apparently the gold had run out. They sold the mine and all the equipment at a huge loss to a local junk man.

The junk man who bought the mine from Darby, however, had a passion for mining, and was ready to work the mine when Darby had given up. He'd read quite a bit about it, and was delighted to acquire a mine at a price he could afford. The first thing he did, though, was hire a mining engineer—in other words, to get expert help. The engineer took a look and explained that the previous owners didn't appear to understand fault lines. In fact, he predicted there was another vein running—just three feet from where Darby had stopped digging. The new owner started digging, and indeed, found gold just three feet from where Darby had stopped.

Incidentally, Darby learned from the experience; never again would he given up just three feet from gold. He repaid his loans and went into insurance, where he became one of the most successful men in the industry. And Napoleon Hill tells that among the over 500 successful men he interviewed, they repeatedly reported that their biggest successes came just a bit after continuing through their greatest failures. In short—they simply did not give up.

While Darby made his name in insurance, the new mine owner reaped millions in gold. Why? He had a definite major purpose and consulted expert help for a reasonable plan. It's not the circumstances or the times or the economy or the legal restrictions or the taxes or anything else external that made the difference here—it's the difference between two mindsets, two purposes, two outlooks.

Emotions reveal your thoughts, to others and to yourself—Use this! Negative emotions are warning signs that counterproductive thoughts are creating undesirable outcomes. Positive

emotions are similarly reflections of positive thoughts working toward positive outcomes. When you feel bad, change your thinking, or you're creating more of what you don't want. You'd take your hand off a hot stove, yes? Same thing with your thoughts. At the same time, relish and rejoice in good feeling thoughts. All too often, people get nervous about these and feel they must reign them in—hell no! Feed them, stoke them, encourage them in every moment of every day.

People succeed when they have a passion for what they do, and when they pursue their passion, they don't quit. This alone gets them through the inevitable challenges—they keep hope and vision, maintaining positive momentum. Complaining, on the other hand, is not only wasted effort, but also perpetuates the negative situation by continually recreating it, prolonging the agony. Tell a better story. You aren't stating reality—you're creating the very situation you're complaining about. The world is a mirror. Take this seriously and literally. You are looking at you.

There are only two emotions, fear and love, and if you aren't doing what you love, it's out of fear. But fear is an illusion. “Nothing real can be threatened; nothing unreal exists” (A Course in Miracles). Just outside your comfort zone lies exactly what you need to be doing. Do it. Face it. Love it.

When people talk about acceptance, they discuss it almost as a quiet resignation. Just accept it. It is what it is. Doesn't sound very happy, does it! But the world is full of joys and celebrations and beauty and miracles and hope and promise and all sorts of wondrous things at every moment, even in tougher times. Life is good. The world is a wonderful place. You'll just have to learn to accept that! And really, people have trouble accepting good times. When's the other shoe going to drop? Sure, things are calm now, but you just wait...! No. Life is good. The world is a wonderful place. Learn to accept it, and deal with the joy.

“You can be anything you want!” we tell children. But to the adults, “Be realistic.”

Dream big; people are afraid to do this because they fear the competition—but much of that competition gives up, leaving a lot fewer people than you'd think. Getting funding or starting a business are often easier in tough times, because even more people don't even try, increasing your chances, and often offering special opportunities in the form of discounted prices as others give up. Or people are afraid to try what hasn't been done yet. I've fallen into this trap myself. But what do all entrepreneurs do? Just that—what hasn't been done yet. Face fear. Follow passion.

Stop doing what doesn't work. If you're still defending the status quo--how's that working out for you? Right. It's not.

Face fear, and follow passion—but appreciate how much is truly right in each moment. If nothing changes, nothing changes—but what changes is not first the circumstances, but first

attitudes and perceptions. Get unstuck by appreciating what is right now—and enjoying it while pursuing a definite plan and sticking to a dream.

Be patient—and happily so.

From Ideas to Physical Manifestation

Then we need to get out of mental abstraction, and start building things step by step in real space and in real time.

I had an epiphany one evening about manifestation.

I had finally carted my potted citrus trees outside, where they do much better after hanging on for the winter and early spring indoors, waiting for warm nights as well as warm days. I'd been meaning to do this all week...took me until today to get down to it. Late today. Getting dark late today.

Once they were finally, one by one, hauled from sunny corner to door, under the watchful eyes of my cats, from door to porch, making sure the cats stay inside for the night, and from porch across the yard to the shade of a large tree (they need a couple of weeks adjustment before moving again to full sun), they needed water. I hadn't watered them much because (1) water is heavy and (2) I knew I would be moving them. I just hadn't figured it was going to take me all week to get to it, and now, they definitely needed a good soaking to help them revive. And at night is a good time to do that anyway, let the roots absorb it before the morning sun.

What I hadn't planned on was spending the next hour connecting the garden hose. It's in an awkward spot, and I had forgotten that I had disconnected it a few months back when I needed a quick water sample for some well work. OK, no problem, right? Wrong. Getting the hose lined up and the threads to connect to screw the hose back securely in place just didn't want to happen. I did finally get it connected, though, and soaked my thirsty plants well. And between the connection and the watering, I had my epiphany.

I suck at even seemingly easy physical manifestation—that was my epiphany.

Well, OK, I don't suck at everything—I do see things into realization. This isn't a pity party. I mean at the “round the house” stuff, I suck. I have a friend who's a plumber. His work is beautiful. I have other friends in the trades as well. An electrician. Carpenters. They do beautiful work too—professional, clean, effective. Not me. I live in my head. I'm an ideas person. Getting those ideas into physical manifestation—not so much. My plumbing would leak, my carpentry would be crude, my electrical mazes unsafe. I just do not have the skills to make things come out correctly and beautifully the way these men do. They know physical manifestation. I get as far as the ideas, and while I might refine those ideas, I rarely

get to the physical stage. Perhaps that's why plumbers and electricians are so much better paid than musicians, writers, and professors. The same is true of other friends—excavators, road crews, housing inspection—these people know how to make things work in the physical world.

Not to downplay what I do, and do well. Becoming a professional musician meant a lot of very hard work to realize practically what the ears and head can imagine. A lot more goes into writing and teaching than most people realize. And I've certainly made things happen in the business world. But always at the idea end. I was management. I was the consultant. I conceived the training program. I designed the course. Ideas. Ideas for other people to implement. People who make the physical things happen.

What really happens is that I, like other idea people, and like all of those of us with more ideas than finished projects, give up too soon. Manifestation takes time and purpose and dedication—like I applied to music performance. It takes applied skill and knowledge at the physical level. Not just ideas. Look that the number of “someday” projects and dreams we all have. Ideas. We need more application of skill and knowledge at the physical level. We need to understand the beauty and mastery this physical manifestation embodies. And we need to understand the dedication and commitment to seeing it through properly and successfully manifestation requires.

Suddenly, seeing things this way, we can realize why our “stuff” hasn't manifested yet. We aren't done. We give up too soon. Ideas are not enough. We have to build it in real time and real space.

We can start building with a true appreciation for the people who are already extremely good at manifestation in the physical realm. Plumbers. Farmers. Electricians. Road crews. Craftspeople.

Full of mystical ideas, we forget Jesus was a Carpenter, building real things with physical tools in the manifest world. Perhaps that should be telling us something about physical manifestation. Fishes and Loaves come in time.

Apotheosis

The final part that I want to talk about today to tie all this together is the "Apotheosis" part of the Hero's Journey, the idea of what happens when "Meeting the Goddess" meets "Atonement with the Father." We touched on this a little bit last time, but here want to drive in another point. And the way that I understand this is with the metaphor of nature--nature in the wilderness. Last summer I climbed Dix Mountain. I climb a lot in the High Peaks in the Adirondacks, and in various other places, but I had never been to Dix Mountain because it's a very long hike. It would be, I figured, a backpacking trip. Until I ran across a steward at the top of Mount Marcy who pointed out that there's this other trail that when, if you left early, it would be a very long day, but you can make a day of it, just as they had just

done with Mt. Marcy. Get up at 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. and start dawn, hike until dark, and drive home. Okay, that's possible.

The only thing about that is, when I climbed Mount Marcy, Mt. Marcy is the highest mountain in New York State, and it's in the middle of the high peaks wilderness. There's a maze of trails there, and it's extremely popular. So when I climb Mount Marcy by myself in August, I'm not going to be alone. There's just no chance of being alone. In fact, even when I was climbing Algonquin Peak, which is near there, in late October, where I all but broke my knee, I had help. The area is just well-traveled. But Dix Mountain is in the middle of the Dix Mountain wilderness, and I didn't realize until I got there that there is no place to register for the trail because the trail starts on private land. So there's no help from Rangers; they wouldn't even know I'm there. Since it's privately owned land, nobody there is patrolling or knows I'm there. There are no intersecting trails. It is just walking straight deep into the Dix Mountain wilderness. It is as wilderness as wilderness gets. I'm not going to see anybody, nobody knows I'm there, and it's an extremely difficult climb--in fact, some of it was straight up rock. It's the only climb I've ever done where my husky almost refused to go at a couple of points.

I recognized it was a beautiful day, but I also recognized the danger involved in this. I was stepping over huge crevasses, climbing up rock faces. I recognized very clearly, "Tim, no mistakes today, because if you make a mistake, you die here. It is very clear to me not just the peace of nature, but also the absolute wilderness. I'm was thinking as I walked into this that this would be a place to go to die. It was one of those 90° days, and I wore my jacket well into 2:00 in the afternoon because I'm walking along this pass--it's cold and damp down there even though it been a dry summer. I'm surrounded by nature that's rough and tough, and it is not even at that nature was against me in any way--it's not that. Nature just didn't care. Live, die, you know, whatever. I mean, it just doesn't care. There are there are mosquitoes, there are gnats, there are bears, there's you, there's this rock, there's this leaf--who cares? It is just vast indifference. And yet at the same time, oh my God, what a just beautiful, beautiful sight. I have never seen anything like it--the whole trip, not to mention from the summit. There are just mountains and mountains and mountains in wilderness and wilderness and wilderness in every direction. It is just awe-inspiring. Absolutely awe-inspiring.

Now when I think of the goddess meets atonement, this is what am talking about. That there is this beauty and grace and wonder of nature, and there is this strictness of the father, that makes sure that we learn our trials before we go on. The real understanding of this process is that when we look at nature, we don't say "Well sometimes nature is nice and sometimes nature is evil." No. We understand that this is part of the Majesty of Being, of the Majesty of Nature. The understanding of the Road of Trials, finally, and the Apotheosis, is the understanding that the tragedy and the mercy, the good parts, they are all part of the Majesty of Being. They are all part of the wonder of being alive. We come to a part we appreciate all of it--all of it. In the same way that we don't judge nature as good and bad--we appreciate nature in totality--that's what Campbell gets at here finally. The blessings and the

justice equal one another.

Left alone, we would destroy ourselves and our world. We would see "them" as "others." We would do things that are not in our best interests or anyone else's. We need those negative parts, in the same way that if you notice a small child is playing with knives, you take the knives away--you don't negotiate with the child. You don't care that they're crying. It's a non-negotiable point. "You're too young. I'll take those knives." It's not something that's coming out of fear--it's something is coming out of love for someone's safety. Understand that the Road of Trials is like that.

We talked about comedy and tragedy--comedy is about general human faults, all of us are dealing with this something. And we don't well until outside forces help us in the end. Tragedy, we have one hero alone facing that heroes' tragic flaw. This is really the work. We're going to have challenges and opportunities and pathways. We're going to have repeated challenges as long as we cling to those aspects that are our faults. Because we need to transcend those faults. They are holding us back. And those "others" that we face, those poor experiences, are us, highlighting our tragic flaw as long as we cling to it.

This is the role of choice. How fast we grow is up to us. How long do we keep clinging to stuff. How long do we keep bashing our heads against the wall. Now that said, let's give ourselves some credit. Ego has a very useful role. We can't master all this in an afternoon--time takes time. Our ego shuts us off from just being overrun by all this. But as we keep going on this journey, as we keep pursuing this journey, as we keep on our quest, what we ultimately get, what Campbell calls the Ultimate Boon, is a gift from the universe from the divine, stepped down to whatever our current level is. You know the old saying, that all prayers are all answered, and they only have three answers--and it's never "no"; it's either "not yet," or "yes," or "I have something better." And the "not yet" means time takes time; the "I have something better" means I have to get outside myself. Left alone, I can only see the world as it is in my head, and the world is much bigger than that.

So our quest is taken to this Ultimate Boon, this ultimate discovery. In a tragedy, the tragic hero eventually comes to this realization that's worthwhile that he brings back. Now we don't have to have utter ruin, but at some point, that's the whole point, that we get past this, that we can reach our quest and bring something back. What we were looking for, not so much, but something more, something beyond our imagination, something that's beyond ourselves, something that's even better something. Something that's a benefit not just us but to the entire community. The things I'm sharing in the Reconnective journey are a result of many of my own travels. The chance to be of service, a chance to connect. It's the blissful manifestation of presence, of divine presence, surpassing anything that can be said by the justification that Frost was talking about in "The Road Not Taken."

So we continue on this path. It's a purging of faults, so that we are able and ready to take that chariot, that Sun chariot across the sky, in its proper time. And when we do that there are gifts beyond what we can imagine. This repeats and repeats and repeats and repeats,

time after time after time after time. We reach request, we get an ultimate boon, we come back, and then we grow into the next step, repeating the journey, until one day we've realized the void--we've reached Awareness. Ultimately, we started off annihilating self, but ultimately both son and father are annihilated, because they're no longer needed. Ultimately the son becomes the father and is filled with compassion. Instead of being the one facing the test, you become the one administering the test, not because you want to beat other people up, but because out of compassion, like "No, no no, don't play with the knife Sweetie." Not forever; not now. Later, when you're ready to play with knives.

So, what I'm getting at is coming to this understanding that these "negative" parts are part of being, are part of the blessings, part of the gifts, that we're not allowed to play with knives when we're not ready, that we're allowed to play with knives as soon as we are ready. And when we are ready, we can do things with knives beyond what we ever imagined, whatever we were trying to do with them in the first place before we were ready.

So. That's the overall cosmic place that we've been headed with this. Now, the thing is, to move from here to the next planes means not only understanding how the physical, emotional, and thought work together, but also understanding that our thoughts are not reality. Yes, we use our thoughts to create reality, but it's a typical trap, and we spend a lot of time in the trap. So, this is the wonders of meditation. Your daily spiritual practice at this point might include meditation.

A lot of people have trouble with meditation. Here are ten tips to help.

Ten Meditation Tips for People who “just can’t meditate”

1) Even when it’s hard, it’s easy! No, that’s not a Zen koan, though granted, it certainly looks like one. It’s just one of life’s paradoxes, like how standing is more tiring than walking. And this one isn’t even a paradox, but rather an observation about a common misconception. I frequently hear people lament, “I’ve tried it, but I just can’t meditate. My thoughts just keep racing. I can’t shut them off!” If that describes you, either as a newcomer to mediation or as one frustrated from the experience, I have good news—you were meditating! Yes, seriously, for real. You were noticing your thoughts. In fact, you couldn’t *stop* noticing your thoughts. And that’s what mediation is—noticing your thoughts. Or put another way, you realized that *you* were not your thoughts—and that’s awareness. Now, admittedly, your awareness was parked on top of those thoughts—but in your frustration you have already separated your thoughts and your awareness. Now let’s work on getting them farther apart.

2) You can’t slap down the waves. Imagine watching a pond, waiting for it to become still, so you could gaze into its depths. You watch patiently for a little bit, giving it a good try—but then get tired of this approach, reach out and start slapping down the waves to speed up the process. Obviously, that approach is only going to further agitate the pond,

not still it. Similarly, often people sit in silent frustration thinking “No thoughts! No thoughts!” and trying not to think, while those rascally thoughts keep parading through the mind. This only stirs up the mental pond. Just watch your thoughts. If there are a lot of them, fine. Just watch. If you start thinking about the thoughts, just watch the new thoughts running after the older ones. If noise or distractions come in, just notice and watch. You have to wait for the pond to still. And on windy days, it isn’t going to do so. So just watch the waves. You are meditating. And in time, the pond will still.

3) **Watch your breath.** There are many ways to meditate. Don’t worry about that. As often as you think of it during the day, just watch your breath. Be aware of the feeling of air inside your lungs and airways. Feel the expansion and contraction. Notice the shifts in your body. Just be present. Just breathe.

If you feel the need for something more formal, you can count your breaths on each exhale: 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on. But that’s not necessary—you’ll probably find you keep losing count! So just count one, one, one, one, one, one, one, one on each exhale. It’s easier to concentrate on *something* rather than sitting there trying to not think, and watching your breath keeps you in the moment.

During the day, whenever you focus on your breath, whatever you’re doing at the time, you can return to being present, especially after you get used to the practice. You can also consciously slow your breathing, taking long, slow, full breaths. This sends a message to your brain that you are now relaxed—and your brain will start relaxing. Try it!

. 4) **Go for a walk.** Not working for you? Go for a walk. Meditation doesn’t have to be sitting. In fact, Zen meditation practice typically rotates between sitting meditation (*zazen*) and walking meditation (*kinhin*), one step after each full breath. The idea is to be completely mindful of each step. Instead of worrying about or listening to the cacophony of thoughts racing around in your head, be totally where you are, attentive to what you’re doing. Ever wonder why the Tea Ceremony is performed with such attention to small, ritualized details? Or the other Zen arts do the same? When we consistently pay attention to the small details, we cultivate a mind and attitude of daily calm, which then carries over to an instinctual, effortless attention to the large details as well. When you’re washing the dishes, if your mind races, say to yourself, “I’m washing the dishes, I’m washing the dishes, I’m washing the dishes,” over and over, keeping yourself in the activity. If you’re mowing the lawn, say “I’m mowing the lawn, I’m mowing the lawn, I’m mowing the lawn,” keeping yourself aware in that experience. Just notice what you’re doing. After a time, the mind will recognize it’s attempt at distraction is futile, and give up. Don’t be in a hurry to get to that point—just notice. Incidentally, exercise helps too. Oxygen and blood flow more efficiently, endorphins are produced, the lymphatic system eliminates wastes, the heart and lungs work more effectively—all of which produces a greater sense (and reality) of well-being, which in turn relaxes the mind. Choose exercise you enjoy doing—having fun is allowed! Meditation isn’t punishment.

- . 5) **The Morning Reading** Start your morning with some spiritual (not necessarily religious) daily reading meaningful to you. It will focus your day. Never start the day without it. Taking 15 minutes to do your daily reading and to sit quietly for a bit while watching your breath will do wonders for your day. Very quickly, you'll learn that "bad" days come on days you skipped your morning meditation. Start the day like this daily, without fail. There is a wealth daily 365 books. Taoist, Buddhist, Zen, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, and so forth, or Codependent, Alcohol Anonymous, etc., or Nature, Philosophy—pretty much whatever is important to you, there's a 365 book for it. Choose a subject area that's spiritually important to you, that resonates with who you are and how you feel about the world, and use it every morning.

6) The Evening Octopus

Just before bedtime (or some convenient time in the evening), sit quietly, with your eyes closed, and just watch what's going on in your mind. What are the things that happened to which you're still attached? One by one, as you notice these entanglements, visualize carefully picking up the tentacle of each attachment, pulling it away and setting it aside. Then notice the next one and remove that too. Keep at it until you've removed all the conflicts, projections, and revisitations of things already past, and can sit in relative mental peace. Don't worry if you don't get them all at first—keep at it, each and every evening, and they will begin to lessen and then slowly vanish.

Whatever your day was like, this will bring you back to a place of focus before retiring for the night. You will also find that as you go through your day you'll begin to notice as you pick up entanglements, and eventually, learn not to pick them up in the first place, since you'll only have to disentangle yourself later. Even better, you'll no longer have mental arguments with people who aren't even there! Nor worry about things that haven't happened and aren't likely too either.

- . 7) **Daily Practice** Whatever spiritual/philosophical/religious/or-not inclinations you choose to follow, and whatever method of mediation you choose, do it every day, without fail. This is a crucial point. There's no real magic in sitting still and watching your breath, or reading your daily meditation, or whatever else you choose. But day after day after day after day, the impact of that builds in a way that doesn't happen when it's more-or-less every day here-and-there. So choose something that is this significant for you. Don't try to adopt views or beliefs you aren't really sold on—pare those down to what you DO actually believe in your heart-of-hearts, the deeps of your soul and spirit. If that's not much—that's also fine. Quantity is not important here; bottom line truth for you is. When you get to such clear fundamentals for you, then you'll find you *want* to practice them daily—as soon as you start, you'll find you're looking forward to it.
- . 8) **The Master Mind** Napoleon Hill, of *Think and Grow Rich* fame, talked about having a Master Mind group, both the physical/real-people kind, and the spiritual kind. In

fact, he stresses this as a key point. One way is to have “chats” with your subconscious, setting it after the things you are striving to achieve—including balance and peace of mind. You can also create a committee in charge of various aspects of your life—one entity in charge of finances, another in charge of romance, another in charge of health, and so forth. Still another way is to invite people (living or passed) you admire, whether Benjamin Franklin, Nikola Tesla, Mahatma Ghandi, Mother Teresa, Clara Schumann, or your grandmother and grandfather. The common point is the same—your subconscious mind doesn’t know the difference between “reality” and make-believe; thus, imagination becomes reality, and you will find yourself responding as if they were really there, sharing in their insights. As a music student, I used to put the most famous musicians in the corner whenever I thought a piece was ready—and I *always* heard new things to address when under the pressure of their “presence.” Try it!

9) For sitting practice—don’t lie down.

Now, if you’re physically unable to sit, then of course, lie down. But if you’re able to do so, sit up.

First, lying down is conducive to sleeping, and that’s the message you’re sending your brain—sleepy time. Sleep is important, but that’s not the focus here. You want to be mindful, not unconscious (no, dreams don’t count for this).

Second, you don’t have to sit in lotus position. In fact, if that’s not comfortable for you, it’s going to work against you, not for you. [Of course, if you’re able to use the lotus position, by all means do so—it’s a very useful posture, and clearly sends the message “mediation time.”]

DO sit in a straight-back chair, or in any sitting approach that allows support for your back and head to be straight (vertically). This will help your breathing, as well as encourage balance with a minimum of muscular strain. Be comfortable—if you need cushions, use cushions. You DO want to be relaxed. Using the same place each day helps as well, as does using the same time each day.

What you actually do then doesn’t much matter, whether watching a candle flame, counting breaths, visualization of a special place, or just letting thoughts drift away as you watch the calm growing. But you should be able to do it comfortably for a time—and at first, 15 minutes is long!

10) Use a positive daily mindset to keep yourself present in the Now.

Along with your meditation, take a look at your thoughts throughout the day.

I have a friend who says, “Did you have a bad day? Or did you have a bad moment and milk it all day?” That first negative incident doesn’t need to set up the cascade for a day of such

incidents. Just as easily, we could look for *positive* things to appreciate, allowing *those* things to cascade through the day. Sure, sometimes we go through tough times. But it's never true that *everything* is bad. Focus on those better things to set the positive cascade trend in motion.

I used to see gratitude as the last step of a process, but I've come to realize that it's actually the very first step. We're always trying to get *to* something, and yet, that something is always further away. Imagine instead of traveling around space through linear time, imagine you were traveling around time through the same space. You could go to any time you want, just jump there, no waiting. But—every time you go to, there you are, worrying about “one day.” Nowhere can you go to be done or at peace. This is how most of us live our lives.

Instead, love the moment. Be grateful for all that's present. Live in rich experience, savoring every element, being truly “there” in each moment in the Now. This is where life happens, and if we're going elsewhere, we aren't living, now or then. Be here. Now. Eternally Now. *Namaste.*



“Meditation is not what you think.”