

The Kwan Yin Journey



Week 5 Summary – The Thought Plane

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 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. "I'm working on my demons--I don't have time to work on my bliss right now." Joseph Campbell summarized his work as "follow your bliss," because battling our demons just puts obstacle after obstacle after obstacle in front of us.

We are not our thoughts

They are important, to be sure, but they are not us. We are not our thoughts.

We normally remain convinced that we are our thoughts, but this just isn't so. We don't even need thoughts. Our existence does not depend upon thinking. 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. We are not our thoughts.

Our thoughts, instead, are how we create. 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.

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. It's why "self-fulfilling prophecy" and "self-sabotage" work as they do—it's deliberate creation of negative circumstances.

Because we commonly believe we are our thoughts, we think incessantly. Descartes even enshrined this in our philosophy—*I think; therefore I am*. But it's backwards. Thinking may well be *evidence* for our existence, but that thinking is *not* our existence itself.

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.

Why and Purpose

When we start with *why* we are doing something, the *what* and the *how* fall into place naturally. When we worry about *what* to do or *how* to do it without a clear picture of *why*, we get tangled in a sea of negative thoughts.

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.

Creation comes literally from the heart. The heart moves first, informing the brain, not the other way around.

Have a Definite Major Purpose, Napoleon Hill stressed, as the heart of his philosophy. Then a reasonable plan for achieving that purpose.

Tell a different story, the story the way you want it to be—and why. 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. Failure is only possible at the moment you choose to quit. It's a choice. 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. 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 stems from either not knowing or not taking time to think this one through. 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?

It's when we are of service that we are in harmony. In return for that service, you are compensated.

What would have you saying, "Hey, I'd have done it for free"? W

hat is your contribution to be? One you'll be happy to make, in true service?

4) Love yourself.

What would you do for any other friend? Would you do that for yourself too?

What would the Divine do for you? Would you do less for yourself?

Love others. But understand--they are a reflection of you. See how beautiful they truly are.

And love life. It's what you're doing here.

5) Finally, detach from other's thoughts.

Like it or not, we continually look for others' approval. That also means that we accept a LOT of thoughts that mean nothing more than a lot of people think them.

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

Another way we make things tough is Addictions

Here are a few thoughts about addiction.

1) Service work.

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

2) Stop trying to do everything by yourself.

Learn to ask for help. It's foolish to insist on handling everything alone. 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.

It takes 21 days to change a habit, and in the case of psychological dependency, perhaps much longer. But it gets easier with time.

But don't try to just stop--change. If nothing changes...nothing changes.

4) Avoid people, places and things.

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

5) The Rule of Three

*You 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.

6) Have a daily spiritual program.

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, do it daily.

Ask for help, whatever your spiritual beliefs. At the end of the day, say "Thank you."

7) One more thing...

Addiction comes from fear. Nothing logical about it--it's a denial parading as a solution.

To counter fear, choose love. 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.

Third way we make things tough: Time takes Time

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) help you stay the course.

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.

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.

People succeed when they have a passion for what they do, and when they pursue their passion, they don't quit. 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. 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.

Dream big, 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.

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

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 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.

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.

This is the role of choice. How fast we grow is up to us. 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.

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. At some point, that's the whole point, that we get past this, that we can reach our quest and bring something back, something beyond our imagination, something that's beyond ourselves, something that's a benefit not just us but to the entire community.

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 our quest, 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, out of compassion.

These "negative" parts are part of being, are part of the blessings, part of the gifts.

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 wonder of 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! “I just can’t meditate. My thoughts just keep racing. I can’t shut them off!” I have good news—you were meditating! You were noticing your thoughts. In fact, you couldn’t *stop* noticing your thoughts. And that’s what mediation is— noticing your thoughts. You realized that *you* were not your thoughts—and that’s awareness.

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!” This only stirs up the mental pond. Just watch your thoughts. You are meditating. And in time, the pond will still.

3) **Watch your breath.** 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.

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.** 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.

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 will do wonders for your day.

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.

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.

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.

8) **The Master Mind** Napoleon Hill talked about having a Master Mind group, both the physical/real-people kind, and the spiritual kind. 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 Gandhi, 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. 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—but that's not the focus here. You want to be mindful, not unconscious.

Second, you don't have to sit in lotus position. [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.

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 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. 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.

Be here. Now. Eternally Now.

Namaste.