

The Reconnective Journey
May 7 - June 25, 2013



Transcript – May 21, 2013: Week 3 Call

We're on Week III of The Reconnective Journey!

So you spend a week on the threshold, looking at the physical world, and as is predictable, and judging from the Facebook wall, a fair amount of stuff came up for folks, even as we were just looking at the physical -- a lot of emotional things, a lot of thoughts, and that's kind of the point, how all of this works together. The benefit of that stuff coming is that, before we can do anything else, we need to understand what we're dealing with. Only after we're aware of it can we start to transform it, and only after we have the ability to transform can we start looking at Intention, and start balancing that out with Intuition and Awareness.

So today, that's what we're looking at -- hat this stuff comes up, why it comes up, and why that's good (though it may not seem good at the time), and what do to about that.

Before we get into all that, I'd like to hear about your experiences. Who's feeling brave? We talked about 2-3 physical things we can do, as well as what we see as outside problems-- people, situations, and so forth. Once again, understanding that we can't change any of that until we're aware of it. And even just the physical things, small things. This alone will change things. I've experience this once again this week myself. Telling you all these things puts it in front of my face as well, so I picked a couple things to work on. Three long-standing problems around here got fixed in three days, things that had nothing to do with what I was doing. When we start making physical changes, things happen. It's not always clear why, but, if you remember back to Week I, it's like having a car, that maybe you're really worked on, but it's only 95% functional. Sometimes there's just this little electric short, and once that's fixed, BING! Everything works again.

So -- let me hear from you before we dive into this. What are the physical things you're working on, and what are the outside problems you've identified? So, too, this may hit some emotional flashpoint, so let's all create a lot of love for everybody--which is happening on the Facebook page, and that's wonderful...and invite people to share! The mike is yours. Who'd like to start us off?

--- sharing ---

So -- emotions! The Astral plane. We're going from "on the threshold" to actually "crossing the threshold." First of all, a couple of words about the Astral plane. If you've any kind of reading on this topic, or hear people talk about these things, it's not uncommon to come across some pretty wild stuff about the Astral plane and warnings and cautions and things of this nature. What I want to say about that is to not take any that too seriously. It's not that it's not accurate; it's just that a lot of this those kinds of writings and traditions go back thousands and thousands of years when people were just learning to transcend the physical and to better things.

Now imagine kind of kicking around in the plane where there's nothing but raw emotion with no understanding or control of it, where things manifest very very quickly. Because if you look at that chart we looked at in Week one of the levels of being, you notice that the things that we usually think of this as spirit aren't even halfway through plane one, so when you get to the astral plane to the emotional plane, things move very very quickly, and imagine completely raw emotions with no control and nothing to counterbalance them out. It would indeed be a very scary place.

But the reality is that we do have control, we do have other emotions, and we do have higher thoughts and planes, and so I would let go of those fears; keep them in context. We don't have anything of that nature to worry about by exploring the astral plane the way that we're doing it. It is, however, much much faster, and this is the key in going from "on the threshold" to "crossing the threshold." It is a zone of magnified power. We want things to change; well, this is where things start to change--some in the physical plane already, but especially in this plane. So let's start looking at how we work this together.

The first point I want to make about emotions is that joy is our natural state. We really sometimes have trouble with that; it's a cultural thing I've mentioned a couple times before. You click at some "primitive" societies and they're happier. They don't work as hard; they don't face some of the same things problem that we do. It is a natural state. Steven Wilder wrote in one of his books--I don't remember which one--consider the tiger. Tigers don't get up in the morning and go, "Oh, man . . . what is it, Monday? Sigh. There's nothing for breakfast . . . I'm gonna have to get up, and every time I've got to run down food, it always runs away. . . being a Tiger just sucks, man." No, tigers don't think like that. Most things in nature don't think like that. We're kind of the exception here. We change that natural state. So, before we get into dealing with all these things, that's one key thing to remember, that joy isn't someplace difficult for us to get to and maybe one day we can attain it. It's our natural state, okay? It's we ourselves who change it away from joy.

So one of the ways, a very easy way, it theory easy, to deal with this is simply that--that one out of hell is to stop creating it, and to become aware that we do in fact create it. And once we do create it, we love to cling to it. We have several sayings--you probably have heard some of these--one of my favorites is, "If you're being dragged, let go of the rope." It's the only thing that's keeping you dragging. It's hard to do because our egos get involved, and all the sudden you've got all this drama going. And this is a good way to think of the

emotional plane, the astral plane--good, bad, or indifferent, it's our drama. We're going to talk about drama in fact in a little bit, but just that first basic understanding, that one way out of hell is to stop creating it, and if you're being dragged, let go. I have a friend who says, "If you're going through hell, for God's sakes don't slow down," and we tend to do that, we tend to slow down and wallow in it. Again, I understand it's a difficult thing to do; I'm as guilty as anyone. So . . . a place to think of first.

One of the things that helps me deal with this if I find myself in that state is that I remember this really humorous comic. I think everybody's probably heard the footsteps in the sand story, right? There's two sets of foot prints in the sand, and then there's just one set, and the guy says, "What was happening? How come you left me, God, when I was walking through these hard parts?" And the story goes that God says, "Where there's is a single set of footprints, that's where I carried you." Somebody did a comic of this event, and in the next panel God says, "That long furrow over there? That's where I dragged you for a while." It reminds me to keep a sense of humor about things and I stop taking myself so seriously. So if joys are our natural state and were just getting in our way, why do we do? There actually is a positive purpose to this, and this is really the beginning of understanding Initiation We're going to start talking about that process today, so let me stop really briefly just for questions before I get into this.

"Why don't we just let go when we're being dragged? I thought that was funny, by the way, so thank you for that."

You're welcome.

"I appreciated that."

OK. Let's jump in then.

This is not a new a new issue for humankind. It goes back to the very beginning of Western civilization, the thought in Western civilization, and probably others--I just am more familiar with ours--and going all the way back to Greek theater. Now, Greek theater is dedicated to the god Dionysus. Dionysus is a satyr--he's half mad and half goat. This is important; it's not simply some are random myth, because it reflects our nature as half rational and half passionate. And it's important that we are that nature, you know--I don't think anyone of us would want to be, say, Spock, all logic and no passion, and we also wouldn't want to be entirely passion with no reason whatsoever, that we have this dual nature.

Greek theater is divided into two main types, comedy and tragedy, and these have nothing to do with happy and sad. It's a different way of carrying a message. The word comedy means loosely "home-song," a song about all of us together, the human condition. When you look at a Greek comedy, in fact, any comedy since then, you will see things that address the common problems in human nature. So not things that are typical of that person or that person or that person, but problems that we all share.

A good example in movies is romantic comedies; now it's easy to say, "Well they all have the same plot." In one sense they do because we all face that those same issues. It's not something that is different and unique for one person and then in a complete change for someone else. But in the sense of Initiation, comedy is about the inexhaustible joy of life invincible. The inexhaustible joy of life invincible. Why? They always end happily. But, how do they end happily? We don't solve these problems. They end happily because someone or something, or in the Greek tragedy it's one of the gods, comes in and solves it for us. There's some piece of information that comes up and sets it up. Somebody else opens the door for us. We're not capable giving out of that situation by ourselves; we need outside help--but, that outside help always comes...after a while anyway.

Now, tragedy. Tragedy in Greek is literally "goat-song," a song for the satyr Dionysus. In terms of Initiation, tragedy is about shattering forms and attachment. Shattering forms and attachment. One of the things that happens when we leave the comfort zone and cross the threshold is that those old forms and those attachments are not simply left behind--they're gone. And the reason they're gone is because they never existed in the first place (but we didn't know that).

Now, the tragedy has a really interesting form that centers around not everybody, but around a tragic hero. And a tragic hero is somebody who is, in the Ancient Greek sense, somebody who is noble and good, but not perfect--in many ways a superior human being, somebody who may be beyond us. And the reason they're superior is largely because they go on this journey that most of us never take. Now, the reason the tragic hero is not perfect is that the tragic hero has a tragic flaw--something to which the tragic hero is usually blind. Probably the best example of this ever is Oedipus Rex, where Oedipus is a truly great king, a truly smart king, has done wonderful things for the people of Thebes, but he's arrogant, and when people question him, he reacts defensively and violently. And his arrogance extends from his kingdom to the gods; you don't challenge Oedipus--he knows everything. This is his problem. He's brilliant, but he knows it, and his arrogance that his downfall, but he's blind to this.

Now the hero, the tragic hero, faces a dilemma. The situation here is not fair; there is no way for the hero to win. Both choices are terrible. It's not going to end well. Period. No chance. But, in the process of addressing that dilemma, in making those choices, in going through this tragedy, something is gained. The hero acquires new knowledge that can be shared with us, with humanity generally. And this happens when the hero is humbled. In Oedipus's case, he's blinded--well, he blinds himself, but he has learned. And this is what tragedies are about. All these all these things that the hero goes through--you would think at the end the hero would be very bitter, you know? It was never fair deal. But no--the hero accepts his fate graciously. Why? Well, for one thing, this is a superior human being, by definition, but the reason the hero accepts his fate graciously is that something really valuable comes of this. At a very high cost, perhaps, in the case of a tragedy, but something very valuable.

In particular, in terms of initiation, what happens here is that this hero has to face his or her own demons. So in the case of Oedipus' story, why did it have to happen this way? If you go through the play carefully, it didn't have to happen that way; it's largely Oedipus making decisions. The word "pan-ic" comes from the god Pan--a satyr, half man, half goat. These demons are twofold--yes, the demons are danger. But demons also bestow magical power. There is real power in these demons, and this is the mystery, the real mystery of tragedy in initiation. Aristotle talked about one of the most important parts of a tragedy as catharsis, this release of emotions, but not a catharsis in the way "I had a good cry and now I feel better," but really losing this attachment, releasing, taking something that was inside and letting it go--a very different meaning to that.

So the big mystery of these demons, the big mystery of Initiation, is that these demons come from ourselves. As soon as we crossed the threshold, we enter what Campbell calls the Road of Trials. Now that doesn't sound so appealing, but the road of trials is a journey of discovery, and we cross the threshold, Campbell describes this as the belly of the whale. In other words, the hero goes inside himself or herself, goes inside to be born again. That's the purpose. Self-annihilation: that sounds pretty scary. But the purpose of this self-annihilation is not destructive, but to be born again, to be created. The negative context of this is the ego resisting this. It's a journey of discovery, and at the end of the discovery lies things of real value.

So this is another place to pause for a second for questions.

"I'm panicked just you talking about it." (laughter)

Well I'm glad you said that, because the very next up is meeting the goddess, which is a very good thing. So let me jump into that then.

So when we meet the goddess--the first thing that happens on the road of trials is that even though demons come from ourselves, we are not alone. We have allies. We think of this in terms of myth, and again I encourage people not to dismiss myth as mere stories, but understand that these are stories we tell over and over and over and over again in the same form because they ring so true for us; they reflect us. We don't go on these journeys alone. The first thing the hero does, even if the hero is initially some sort of a loner, is to hook up with some buddies. Get some help! Maybe they're already friends, maybe they aren't, but the hero does not go on this journey alone in initiation. None of us should or need to do that as well. One of the purposes of gratitude is to allow us to accept this grace, instead of saying "No, no I've really got my own way," is to say, "Wow, thank you, okay, yes. I'm willing to accept this help. I am grateful." There's a little bit of humility that comes with this. But that's the first thing, is to recognize that we do have help. And this is the role of gratitude.

This process of fighting these demons then--it's not so much that it should be something that's scary as it is of understanding that the purpose is that we're discovering our opposite our own unsuspected self and assimilating it, so instead being half-people, we actually are absorbing all of ourselves. That journey of self discovery. Just the simple things we done so far, we've found that we've learned a lot about ourselves, and we're starting to become whole selves. What sometimes is a scary part is that everything is fluid and ambiguous and moving, but that's what we want, remember, that we can't change things, we can't grow, until we can change and be fluent. And the only thing that's scared, the only thing that has a reason to be scared, is the ego itself. So, the Meeting with the Goddess then. You know, Nature is good. It's bountiful. To go into this not alone, that's ego, but to go on this with the understanding that we do have help and balance and to make good use of that.

The next then we run into, the problems we run into next after the first thrills of getting underway, is that yes, as you correctly identified already, the adventure develops into a journey of darkness and fear. But--this again is coming from inside us. Campbell calls this "the woman as temptress" section, meaning that we spurn the flesh that we've come from. So who are the ogres that are attacking the hero? They are "reflections of the unsolved enigmas of his own humanity," as Campbell puts it. Reflections of the unsolved enigmas of his own humanity.

So let me give an example of how this works. When I did last week's homework the first time, one of the things I recognized that I didn't know going into this, when I looked at the column of what part did I play in this, even if it's small, and I looked at the part as well of in what way are these people struggling, what are their challenges, I saw ego versus ego, right down the page, all the way down. And that was the source of most of the conflicts on that page, my ego versus somebody else's ego. That was an important piece of knowledge. The other thing that we find out is what are the hero's ideals? "Ideals are symptoms of the grasp we have of life" (Campbell). How well do we understand life? Ideals tell us that. When somebody shares their ideals with you, they are in the sense telling you how well they understand life. The point it this, that our conscious views of what life should be do not equal reality. Right? That's where we started talking. What happens is that we perfume our faults, and we blame the outside, and as long as we do that were going to be stuck in darkness and fear. As long as we do that, we're going to be fighting battles. And we're going to be doing that in an ongoing way with no solution ever. So this awareness, this understanding of where am I pointing to the outside, and starting to ask ourselves how was this reflecting the inside, how is this reflecting what's going on with me, is absolute crucial. Absolutely crucial.

So, some of the things that we did last week--the point of that of looking at these things is to prevent this meltdown when we meet these things abruptly, which is what happens if we don't go consciously into the journey, so that we don't have a big meltdown. Then the next step is moving from the goddess to Atonement with the Father. This is kind of a difficult thing to understand at first, but this is the beginning of real understanding, so I beg patients for a little bit. In Atonement with the Father, justice and wrath are blended with mercy and

grace. We think of mercy and grace as being qualities of the Mother, in the traditional sense, while justice is the traditional role of the Father.

How can I explain this? When we're growing up, there's Father and Mother, and the child sees the Father as an outsider, that the bond with Mother has to loosen up before we let this outsider in. And then we grow up in a home, and there are things that happen in our home, and things that happen outside the home, these are the Outsiders, the people we have to be careful of, strangers. And then our community, a comfortable place, and people outside the community are the Outsiders. Or a country, and so forth.

So, the Father is at first the Outside, and is also a bit of the Disciplinarian, so to speak, but there are important reasons for this. When we're children, all this is fine, but when we grow up, one of the childish things that we hang on to is an inappropriate balance between justice and wrath and mercy and grace, because we tend to want "justice for you, mercy for me," right? You have to understand me, but YOU should get what you deserve, when the truth of it is, thank God we don't get what we truly deserve, or life would be one heck of a mess. It's reflective of our own ego. Just as we're hesitant to accept true justice and wrath for ourselves, we're all hesitant to accept the true mercy and grace that is our natural state, going back to the Goddess.

So one of the first things we want to do, with gratitude, is going back to the daily spiritual practice. A large part of this is not just to identify the process, but now, going one step further, to expect it. That it is OK that we are loved, that we have grace, that it is OK that we have allies, that we not only don't have to, but shouldn't, do this alone. And to accept, and to appreciate, and to make good use of this help, and to let that be.

At first, it seems like the Mother is the protective force against the Father, but in the end, the Mother and the Father reflect each other. The Father has the role of preparing us for the outside world. And things we can get away with at home aren't going to fly in the outside world. When I was a kid, I'd mouth off to my mother all the time. But the time I was old enough to live on my own, my father made it clear to me that it was time for me to make my own way in the world, that they had reached their breaking point. You know, this is the role of the Father.

And the reason here isn't so much a punishment, but a very appropriate lesson. Hence the term "Initiation." Let me give an example. There's a wonderful myth of the Sun God, at one point, and he has had a child. He loves this child, and says at one point, "I'll give you anything you want." His son immediately asks for to take the chariot of the sun across the sky himself. In the Greek myth, the sun is a fiery chariot with flaming horses and all that. Immediately Dad regrets his promise; being a god, he can't go back on it, and as you can imagine, this is a disaster. The son is in no way ready for this. The horses don't listen to him, the sun goes up and down, scorches the Earth, then vanishes into the Heavens--it's a mess, and finally the other gods have to intervene. This is the problem if we're only given mercy and grace, if we're only given what we ask for. It's not that it's denied to us, but

sometimes we simply aren't ready yet. It's not that we won't be, but we need to be ready for this, right? Imagine your very first job, whatever it was. Now imagine your very first job had been as CEO of a corporation. It would have been a disaster--you weren't ready for that. It takes time to prepare for things. This is the role of the Father. The Father is kind of a gatekeeper in this way--not to exclude, but to make sure that we are ready before we move on.

So, there tends to be this father versus son for mastery meme, but it's really this, the preparing. Probably the best myth for this of all is the Norse myth of Thor. Thor was the son of Odin, King of the gods, and Odin is ready to pass on his kingdom to Thor. But Thor, while in many ways very competent, is arrogant, and overconfident, and a hothead, and he ends up being banished without any of his godlike powers. At first this seems like a horrible punishment, but he's returned later. The point of this "punishment" is to purge him of infantile and inappropriate behavior. To divest us of this flawed humanity in us so that we can be representative of the better things inside us. It's not punishment. It's rather an impersonal cosmic force, how we move from that to mastery.

So at first yes, it's scary. It's horrible. It's like the open soul has to go beyond terror to grasp how the tragedy of ruthlessness is validated in the Majesty of Being. We just are not ready for something like that. But it's like this--like the tragic hero, the ordeal was borne, and as we get to the other side of it, we have the blissful manifestation of the Boon of the Presence of what we've learned. And I think if you think back--I can think certainly of many--if you think back, you can think of things you went through, though you weren't aware of it in these terms, some very difficult trials, but on the other side of it, things were better. When it was over, you were different. You were better. You came out with new knowledge. As Campbell says, you are "somebody who has seen something" surpassing anything that's been said by justification.

Remember that justification we saw in Frost's poem, right? That's a typical understanding--we're trying to justify our actions. Instead, having seen and experienced something that makes such a justification kind of silly and pointless, we have something that is much, much higher. This is the purpose of Initiation. And Atonement, which we usually think of as punishment--you need to atone for your sins, right?--is actually at-one-ment. This is how we become at one with the father, at one with this process, how we understand the true love that's present, that this is the reality. The price then (why not just be happy and joyous), is this understanding. We want new things; this is the process that brings us to new understanding.

So. That's a lot. I've a little more that's not quite so heavy that kills more appropriately/traditionally with emotions, but I want to kind of sketch out the process and kind of get a feel for that. Let me stop here and hear questions. How's this landing for you?

"You have a lot of information."

"I think it's nice that you're relating the archetypes of the emotions with things that we can relate with. I mean even though you're talking logical it's still very, very real. We're all dealing with those different archetypes."

Yeah. As you say, it's very, very real, whatever we're going through. I can remember a few years ago--it wasn't anything more serious, logically, but a conversation with someone near the end of a relationship. But at the time, I remember thinking of it as walking through a wall of fire--and I was not happy about walking through a wall of fire, I can tell you that. It was a very, very scary thing. So yeah, I get how real these things are to us--whether they make logical sense or not, that's not really the point. And the reality of logic is that people do things for emotional reasons more than logical reasons. It's great when they work together, but we tend to do things for emotional reasons.

Any other thoughts?

"Yes, I have a question. Is Joseph Campbell one of the better resources for understanding a little bit more about Greek mythology?"

For understanding the Hero's Journey, "The Hero with a Thousand Faces" and certainly his "The Power of Myth," there's a movie on the Hero's Journey, "Finding Joe." There are several clips available; I'll dig those out and post them on the course materials page. As far as Greek mythology, the two go-tos there are Edith Hamilton's "Mythology" and for general mythology, Bullfinch's Mythology -- Thomas Bullfinch. Those are the two standards.

"I think for me I've really started to realize how this idea of arrogance--you mentioned it just in one specific event, but arrogance is another one of those words where we have a lot of extra connotations. I know personally that I'm starting to really see how I, my thought of who I am as a compassionate person, whatever labels I have, that at times that arrogance is really what separates me from really seeing or really connecting with another person or really seeing the opportunity to have resolution. One of the cliché quips--it's not cliché, it's really true--do you want to be right or do you want to be happy thing. And that's been huge for me, and you really sort of nailed it when you talk about this idea of like conflict with my partner, like 'Don't you see my side?' whereas, you know, am I giving just as much effort to seeing this other person's side, and really being able to see that person without all of the extra lens that are really arrogance. Or you called it Ego. And it's funny because when I think of it that way, then it's not scary, it's exciting to move through it. When you were describing this beginning thing--and I know that there are certain things that I'm ready to let go of, there's still that like [scary sound] feeling of panic."

Yeah. It doesn't so much help in the moment, but a good way to look at that dichotomy is in the Course in Miracles: there are only two emotions, love and fear. And so there are only two motivations--we are either acting out of love, or we are acting out of fear. And it's useful to stop and say "Which am I doing now?" And if I'm acting out of fear, what would have me work out of love? And if I don't think I'm afraid, and I'm not acting out of love, I

can stop and ask myself "What am I afraid of?" And what I'm afraid of is that I'm not facing something, so I don't know what I'm afraid of. But yeah. You're right--it's very common. I was listening to a friend just last night talk about some things going on in his life that are threatening his marriage. And he's a rational person, he's just explaining it, he's not laying blame on anyone, but at the same time, as an outsider, I can see what's hard to see as an insider, which is that as he's telling me all the story, and it all makes sense, I'm keeping it to myself but I'm thinking, "This can't be the whole story." And probably, right now, she's telling someone her version of the story that sounds very different, and probably one of her friends is nodding and saying "Yeah, yeah," and thinking "That can't be the whole story."

So this brings us to this week's homework.

Here's what I'd like you to do. Take a look at last week's assignment, when we wrote down the things that were bugging us and so forth, and, just as I described earlier, consider: Do you notice any patterns (as far as your involvement)? Where do the same kind of things come up repeatedly? And then, after you find your patterns, ask yourself: In your tragedy, what are your tragic flaws? These are things to which you're otherwise blind, but if we really look at the reality, we can say, "Wait...I'm seeing some things I'm not usually aware of that's getting in my way." So that's the first part. Notice your patterns, and ask yourself, what are your tragic flaws. Now if you can't see them--this is why last week I suggested you share this with somebody you feel comfortable with. Once you share this and explain it to somebody else, you will notice more, and if you don't, they will. So other people can really help with this.

And that's the next part of the homework--don't fight your demons alone.

Who are your allies? Really give this some careful thought. Not just your inner qualities--you know, "I have these strengths." Strengths are good, but that's not what I'm talking about here. Go ahead and put those down, but those inner qualities, those strengths we have, just help us to deal with things. They don't change anything. We need somebody outside of us, outer allies, to help us change. This is one of the key benefits of a relationship, any kind of relationship, with anyone, is that we have an extra set of eyes. That other person will see things that you cannot see, or don't want to see, or both. So--where do you have patterns, what are your tragic flaws, who your allies? If we fight these demons alone, were going to get the same results. We've been fighting them alone a long time. So who are your allies. We don't understand if we just look from the inside; we need outer things.

If you don't have allies, recruit them--from bringing in your friends with what you're trying to do, to talking it out with friends, the Facebook group. In the case of in a severe problem sometimes people have, calling in appropriate professionals, bringing in appropriate coaches. I've recently hired and I talk to regularly some business coaches because they can see things that I can't see and have ideas that I just don't think of. I need help with these things. So these are things you can recruit. You could refute fellow travelers right in the Facebook

group (that's largely what it is) as allies on this journey. But ideally, fellow travelers should be people who would have been there before, been where you are going. In the case of The Reconnective Journey, that would be me. But it's kind of the difference between, for example--if a college student has a problem, nine times out of ten the college student will ask another college student who doesn't know any better the answer to the question, versus something like, from my personal experience, why does AA work so well? It's because you go talk to other people who understand what it's like to be an alcoholic, and who have the experience of getting sober. So instead of saying "You guys don't understand," there's a bunch of people who will say that we've heard enough of your bullshit--we understand just fine. Those are real allies saying things that nobody else in our lives can get away with. So fellow travelers, as they are indeed--travelers who've been someplace.

Ask for help includes spiritual help, okay? Literal spiritual help if you're comfortable with that at this point, but if you're not, the daily spiritual practice, what is the truth, that part from you. Coming back to that truth is a part of getting help. That's part of your resources, that's part of having allies, even if it's not in any way a traditional spiritual path, because that focusing on the part of truth as you yourself have defined it keeps you from being delusional. It keeps us from believing our own stories, which we tend to do. So look for patterns, find the tragic flaws, who your allies, inner but especially outer allies, and recruit them if you don't have them. Really give some thought to this. Include your daily spiritual practice as part of your help. Then when you do look at all this, you know, atonement does have its original meaning, as well as at-one-ment. If you want to be at one, you do have to atone. The odds are, once you really start looking at this carefully, you'll realize where there are places where you messed up, and you wronged somebody, and you really in a sense owe them some amends.

Here's where we want to get our ego out of the way and accept the humility to go and make that right to the extent that we need to do that. It's not a question of whether the other person deserves it--this is for you. To the extent that we hang onto that is the extent that we will be held away from ever resolving that. Now, this isn't something to do this week--this is something to put on the agenda. Go slow. Don't run off and do that by yourself. Do it with help. Do it during its own spiritual time. And that spiritual time will come by itself. I'm not going to go find some college girlfriend that I inadvertently wronged at this point in life; however, I run into her in Dunkin' Donuts, OK, maybe it's time for a conversation. Those sorts of the things. So just really be open to that. Find those patterns, what are your tragic flaws, who your allies, include your daily spiritual practice. Bring gratitude and the goddess with you, accept mercy and grace. You are deserving of that--well, none of us are, but you are as deserving as anyone. And moving from that arrogance to a practice of humility. Making amends where we owe the, not expecting anything back, just simply for our own good, moving past those inner demons into at-one-ment. That's the meat of the homework--I'll have one small thing that later, but that's the meat of the homework. Does anybody have questions about that? And we'll get into some lighter things.

First, I want to talk about desire.

Facing Emotional Challenges -- Desire and Mirrors

Listen to your Heart—but how?

Our emotions are mirrors of what we're thinking and attracting in each moment.

As such, these emotions are useful indicators, a feedback loop showing just where we're stuck and why.

Once we get that we are not our thoughts, we can understand our emotions as the feedback mechanism reflecting our thoughts, but even once we wrap our heads around that concept (ironically trying to understand a larger world than our heads with must our heads), we still are likely to have trouble separating ourselves from our emotions. E-motions—emissions that move us to action (or at least responses)—seem to be much more than that.

We can understand our physical pain, as in placing a hand on a hot stove, is not us, but something we experience as important feedback. That's a harder distinction, however, when that feedback is continual. People in chronic pain, for example, often struggle to remember that they have pain, and not that the pain has them.

The same is true of emotional feelings—they are feedback. But it's damn hard to take an objective view during difficult emotional time while living through it at the time. Still, to the degree we can recognize that challenging emotions are reflections of poorer quality thoughts, we begin to have the tools to address those tough emotions with better thoughts creating better quality emotions. When we feed our bodies poor quality food, we don't feel as well. When we feed our psyches with poor quality thoughts, likewise, we aren't going to experience good feelings.

We understand from meditation that we can find peace amid our thoughts; we sit quietly, let the mind come to rest, and slowly calm the mental turmoil--yet we have tremendous difficulty doing this emotionally. This is the heart "meditation." Forget about the mind; sit quietly with your heart energy, and let it grow. Don't think about it or "listen" for messages—that's going back to thinking about it. Just let it be still, and just be. It's a powerful refocusing. Your whole body energy will shift noticeably, and you'll find distance from what had seemed sticky emotional trials.

Let the heart come to rest, and feed yourself better thoughts; at first, the negative emotions will continue to taint the results. . .but keep at it—gardens don't grow abruptly. Keep pursuing better feeling thoughts, and gradually you'll find yourself in a better emotional state.

The Rule of Three

Still, we understand that physical pain is feedback, not literally ourselves, but we have trouble understanding that about emotional pain. Here's something I learned over time that might help.

While generally only chronic physical pain begins to become a pain-identity for people, emotional pain goes

us there much faster—we tend to react as if this pain is forever.

Enter the “Rule of Three,” something I learned slowly over much time and thoughtful observation.

No matter how anxious, sad, or upset, I won’t feel this way (or at least not this bad) in three hours (usually two, actually). No matter how worked up over it I am today, and want to rush in to do something, anything, I won’t be this worked up in three days. The situation will look very different in just three weeks. And in three months, everything can change. Look back three months, three weeks, three days, three hours. What were the things you were upset about? Where are these now? Trouble is a gypsy—it comes to pass, not to stay.

I’m not advocating a head in the clouds or head in the sand blindness. There are times to be stuck, when working through an emotional hurt, or taking time off to just be for a while. But be sure these are conscious decisions, not reactions feeding your fears.

I *am* advocating paying attention to what we do to ourselves.

Consider the importance of your existence.

When you came into being, the thought of You, nothing but you, was held in fully attention, love, and awareness. “You are an original work of beauty, light, love, joy and bliss.” And “the truth is that you are to learn how to handle love, joy, creativity, and success.” (Michael Beckwith). “The greatest thing you’ll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return,” goes Nat King Cole’s song “Nature Boy.” Note that loving is the clincher—but learning to allow yourself to be loved in return. Love yourself. Let others love you. Let the world around you love you. And learn to act like the Loved One you are. Let go of fear and excuses—they are not real. Follow your bliss. It’s what you came here to do. Bless us with your path and passion.

This is who you really are. Let painful emotions pass through, not camp out and become identity. You can do it!

Are you the mirror?

“If your reality is other than what you’d choose then you can be sure that you’re living a life of reaction.”
—from the Positive Thoughts blog, positive-thoughts.typepad.com/

If you have trouble accepting for now that the world mirrors your state, consider instead now much you mirror the world; that’s really what complaining, excuses, negative projections and so forth are, you reflect what comes your way—and that’s why you’re stuck. You aren’t moving—just stirring things in circles.

Stephen Covey’s famous *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* starts exactly here with Habit One: Be Proactive. Move from being acted upon—no, move from allowing yourself to be acted upon—to acting on your own behalf. Don’t allow fear (which is reactive) to stop you—change is going to happen...the question is only whether you have a say in it or have to take what comes through refusing to place your order.

Know what you want. Covey's second step is "begin with the end in mind," followed by "first things first" that is, prioritizing to reflect the importance, not the apparent urgency, of your primary activities. Apparent urgency is again you reflecting whatever comes along. Act according to what you want. As E. James Rolfe says, "If you really want to do something, you will find a way. If you don't, you will find an excuse."

Don't assume it's out of reach; people commonly say can't when they mean won't, and couldn't when they mean wouldn't. No one asks "Could you marry me?" Of course they could. The real question is "Would you marry me?" And when they say, "Oh, I can't do that," they mean, "I'm not going to do that. I could, but I won't." Why? Again, fear—and reaction to that fear. Follow your Love instead. As James Joyce says, "Be bold and pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion."

Look at what you can do, not what you can't do. Be proactive, not reactive. Don't be the mirror. Let the world mirror your passion.

One important point—you are not alone in this...and you shouldn't be.

There's an excellent reason three of Covey's steps involve others: think win/win; seek first to understand then to be understood; and synergize. The interaction with others gives more energy and better results than working separately. Let people who can help you come into your life and into your day—and let them help you. Get over the loner thing. Management is the art of getting results from other people. To better manage your life, include other people—and be grateful for them. The process helps them as well. For that reason, be sure to help others. Look for opportunities to do so and take them. Do it only for the service; you will be richer for it.

And as you work on yourself, the changes you see in the mirror will start to be changes in your entire world more and more each day.

Good Feelings Become Manifest

The world mirrors our good feelings too—and most of what we see is indeed what we wanted . . . with a few blemishes we cling to as well.

We are programmed to notice the negative aspects of our surroundings. By noticing it first, we can better avoid danger. By noticing hungry and thirst, we address those important needs up front. But those survival instincts can become distorted, and some learn to see the world in continual criticism. Ironically, the world then mirrors their critical mindset, seeming affirming their negative mindset in mere reflection.

This negative perspective is not reality, other than subjective reality. Much is going quite well in that survival scenario. There's oxygen. Our hearts beat. But we don't notice, as the negative aspects draw attention. Similarly, even when we face problems, much of our world is going well—we just aren't looking at those aspects, as they aren't priority observations. We can consciously shift perceptual habits, however, to begin to notice what's going well moment to moment. When we do this, the world mirrors that positive mindset, confirming our observation that all is well.

If we look around ourselves, fully and honestly, we will realize that, despite the longing and frustration we might often feel, we actually are largely living our dream. We might live more or less where we want, how we want, and work at work we more or less want, and spend our time with the people we want. If it doesn't seem so, remember that we live the *entire* dream, including all its fears and hesitations and cautions. If we wanted to be left alone, and to avoid high stress and huge responsibility, for example, we may need to recognize that, when we're lonely, or when we're feeling unfulfilled on the job, that we are, nonetheless, living what we have chosen.

This, then, is reason to celebrate. We did it! And that positive emotional vibration will help you continue to manifest what you wish. The parts you find less emotionally exciting, now that you recognize how you are attracting them, can now be changed. It's you bringing them about, and your negative emotions are letting you know the pain of those choices, just as a hand in the fire warns you of that painful choice. Appreciate these feelings! And listen to them, just as you listen to the pain in your hand when it's too near the flame. Don't lament and dwell on them—pull yourself back from the flame and make a better feeling choice. This is how we create.

Truly, we have created the world that feels good to us at this time.

The Role of Desire

Desire is the root of pain, as the Buddha noted, but it's also the road to successful fulfillment of those desires.

Desire gets a bad rap in some interpretations of Buddha's teachings, but the real issue is attachment. The idea is that desire leads to suffering, so the way to freedom from suffering—and the wheel of karma and rebirth—is to free oneself from desire. Unfortunately, that would mean a detachment from actually living an enjoyable, meaningful life. So the point is not to have no desires, but rather to stop attaching judgments "good" and "bad" to what happens, because it's these judgments to which we become attached, not the desires per se. Detachment means detachment from outcomes, not desires.

What's the difference? Outcomes are mileposts, while desires are continuous. We all have several things in our lives that we once desired—and yet, most of us are not enjoying blissful lives. Why? Those are now outcomes, while our desires have expanded to other wishes. Accumulating past fulfilled desires doesn't seem to fulfill us, unless we remember to appreciate what we have in each moment with gratitude. This is living in the Now. We will still have desires, because we are always growing and expanding. But we can be so busy enjoying all we have in the moment that we are unconcerned about future outcomes, while still enjoying the anticipation of seeing those desires come to fruition.

Desire is creative, while attachment is not. We conceive the thought of this new thing or experience, and to all the other thoughts we have, we attach positive emotion to this one, and it becomes desire. And this process is continuous, because we will continue to think of new things and experiences that promise significant positive emotion. If we can learn to enjoy this process, rather than lament the absence of what we've only just conceived, we'll live happily in each moment. If we're continually concerned about what has not yet come to pass, we will be continually unhappy and remain blind to the many blessings we already have.

enjoy. Our focus, then, is on creating negative experience, and living continually not in the present moment.

Similarly, karma is not justice, neither reward nor punishment, but fulfillment. Every desire comes to fruition—that's the Law of Karma. Or in other terms, once something is desired, it *must* come to fruition, even if that takes many lives. And—that desire comes as complete packages, all the things that go with it, anticipated and wanted or not. That's why benefits and retribution seem to chase the actions taken to reach those desires. And that's why the Wheel of Karma holds us life after life. As long as we continue to desire, we continue to expand, and our experience incarnate continues. Once we transcend this state of continual desire, we have nothing more to manifest, and nothing more to learn from it.

This is the importance of living in the Now. When we learn to appreciate where we are and to just be, we become fulfilled in the moment. With this comes detachment from outcomes—and then emotional calm. Desire is fine; attachment to outcomes creates suffering. Continually expand and grow, but in emotional balance.

When we have the ability to remain in the Now, emotionally detached from the outcomes of our desires with gratitude for them, we are better on the road to realizing those desires and the positive emotions we have when we think about them.

The Importance of a spiritual path/daily program

To better focus on a purer form of desires, starting and ending each day with spiritual practice will keep head clear, and the spiritual connection and certainty will grow stronger and build over time.

You don't have to be religious necessarily, but decide what you do believe, however secular and/or minimalist, and daily focus around your understanding of spirituality—whatever it is.

Start and end your day with it, for two reasons—first, it will renew you day to day, helping you keep your head clear. Covey's final step, "Sharpen the Saw," stresses the importance of renewal for effectiveness.

But second, anything you practice day to day, everyday, will build, no matter how small the start. To let go of fears and complaining and negative projections and excuses and so on, you'll need strength. There will be days this is tougher; sometimes for good reason, sometimes for no particular reason. A firm and strong connection to your spirituality will see you through.

"When excitement and fear meet ... you're on the precipice of a life transformation."
--positive thoughts blog

Keep the excitement; banish the fear. Use your spirituality.

GETTING UNSTUCK: OVERWHELMED

When we feel overwhelmed, we need to understand that overwhelmed is a feeling, and feelings can be

changed by changing our paradigms.

“I’m just overwhelmed!”

“All I do is work!”

“Something’s gotta give!”

Any of that sound familiar? You’re not alone.

I. The first and most important point is that “overwhelmed” is not a situation. It is not just how things are. No. It’s a feeling. You are feeling overwhelmed. Perhaps for good reason--but it’s still a feeling, not an objective reality. And feelings can be changed--if you want to change them. Why “if”? Because often people like to feel overwhelmed. No, overwhelmed is not a nice feeling, but being overwhelmed often gives people a sense of importance, a work ethic, an identity. And that they like. I know people, and you do too, who would find a way to be frazzled if living in luxury on a Pacific island. Overwhelmed is a feeling, and if you want, feelings can be changed.

II. Next come three areas commonly ignored, three areas to stop and examine.

1) Stop trying to do everything yourself.

Ego, pride, embarrassment, and probably a few other emotions commonly stand in the way of this simple and frankly obvious point. You are not, whatever you try to tell yourself, the only one who can do what you’re trying to do. Stop going it alone. Whether lending a hand, or offering advice, or even just encouragement or camaraderie, an ear to listen...let other people help you. In fact, ask them to help you. If you just don’t want to, face up to the reality that you’re not overwhelmed, but stubborn. Forget the lone wolf argument--people are social creatures, and interaction with each other is how we are wired. Even people like me and you, who like our quiet alone time. Let others help you--they will be delighted.

2) Stop trying to control everything.

Or put another way, instead of asking yourself “What should I do about this?” ask yourself “Why do I have to do anything?” The Universe will continue without your aid. People will still breathe in and out. The sun will still rise and set. You are not the Boss of Everything. Let it go. Life will become so much easier, and so much more smoothly, when you simply allow it to do so. Life existed before your arrival, and will continue when you’re gone.

I love the beginning of Ken Blanchard and Spenser Johnson’s “The One Minute Manager”: Typically, a manager is seen as someone torn in multiple directions, finger on every pulse, but a good manager is standing around the office with little to do--because everything is running smoothly without the manager’s immediate input. We tend to think of “making” things happen, by force. Instead, allow things to happen.

3) Stop taking on too much.

This ain’t rocket science. If you’re feeling overwhelmed because you have too much to do, you’re taking

too many things. Duh. Stop it.

Sure, I get that there's a lot to do, and that a lot of it is important. But it makes no sense to daily plan what can't possibly happen and then beat yourself up for not accomplishing what had no chance of getting done from the start.

If you're doing too many things, do fewer things. Prioritize. If that means less than you want to do, fine. Decide which to do and do it, and feel glad of a good day's work.

Remember--overwhelmed is a feeling; you at least will stop feeling overwhelmed.

III. And finally, there's a difference between time management and getting unstuck from what we're managing.

First, time management. Lots of help available here. Probably at the top of the list is Stephen Covey's approach, laid out in his book *First Things First*. This, however, is far more than allocating the 168 hours each week into the various pieces that make up your time life.

Covey suggests turning first not to the clock, but to the compass, that is, not to juggling minutes, but considering principles. Where do you want to go? What are your objectives? What is important to you in life? Those are your organizing principles. Thus, your "big rocks" get placed first, then medium rocks, then smaller rocks, then pebbles, then sand. But don't let a sandstorm keep you from getting to the big rocks important things--like relationships, or your children, or someone who needs help--take precedence.

OK, that's an important start--but you're still left with only so many hours in the day.

You need a paradigm shift.

Here's an example of what I mean--my first week of graduate school.

I had followed a scholarship to the New England Conservatory of Music, but I was also working, partly delivering the *Wall Street Journal* to Cambridge businesses, and partly selling mutual funds (I was licensed in both New York and Massachusetts). Additionally, as a performance major, I was expected to participate in a number of ensembles. So I knew time would be at a premium.

I was ready, I thought. I collected all my course syllabi, and bought myself a spiral notebook, laying out a week for each page, and entering all the assignments for all my classes in each week. Then, I started working through it to make adjustments necessary for various clusters of assignments. For example, if four papers were due in Week 7, three of those papers will need to be written sooner, in previous weeks. So I figured I'd lay it all out, making my work load smooth and manageable. Good idea, right?

Well, I hit a snag; very quickly, the reality became apparent that there was no way all this work this was going to happen—it couldn't. Literally, there was no way I could do all this work, no matter how I scheduled it. Simply not possible. Time management was NOT going to help. If I was going to continue in grad school,

needed a very different solution.

So I headed over to Barnes & Noble, and bought eight books--six of them on speed reading, two on writing quickly (as, for example, journalists must do, or freelance writers who want to make a good living). That's how I spent my first week of grad school, ignoring my school work, reading these books instead. Either they worked, or I was screwed.

They worked. I got quite the education.

I also employed other strategies. I never read anything without asking my professors where we were going with those reading selections. Then, if we were writing a paper eventually, I read for the paper elements I would need, marking them as I read, recording the page number and topic inside the book covers. I could then write and document at the same time. For a class with a large research project, I teamed with other students in an eight person study group. We met in the rare book section of the Boston Public Library, divided the necessary research areas into eight pieces, and presented our findings to the group (then we wrote individual papers from that source material).

Tim Ferriss, in *The Four Hour Work Week*, takes ideas like this much, much further. He challenges many assumptions about how we construct our work and our time, noting that much of our structured time (if structured for us) is wasted, and often working from home can be far more productive (acknowledging that this isn't necessarily true for everyone). He gives the examples of sales calls to business owners--an hour calling from 8-9 and another from 5-6 accomplished more than calling all day. Why? He didn't have to go through the secretaries on duty 9-5; the decision makers themselves answered the phone.

Take the Pareto Principle seriously: 80% of our results come from 20% of our activities. Invest time in isolating that 20%, and cut or minimize the 80%. Ferriss points out that this need not mean expanding your 20% (though you may well want to do so)--lateral moves can also be satisfying. What if you could make the same income you do now, even doing the same thing, but in half the time? The remainder could be spent doing things you love, rather than reinvesting in work pursuits. This in turn would give you considerably more energy during the time you do spend working--for even greater results.

Ferriss has a number of other interesting ideas, from maximizing Internet resources to setting up your business to essentially run itself to employing "Virtual Assistants" to take up the slack--including offshoring this to low cost countries. Yup--you too can offshore operations to Bangalore, and for less than \$10 an hour for often excellent quality work. Ferriss even hands off personal responsibilities. This book is definitely worth a read--there are multiple options to how you are doing things now.

What lifestyle do you want? Do you want to travel the world? How about continuing to do your current work while living in China, or Italy, or London, or anywhere else that strikes your fancy? From remote controlling your home or office computer, to services that cater to exactly this clientele, Ferriss has a wealth of ideas. Live the life you want to live--now.

And that's key--live the life you want to live, rather than get caught up in merely managing the details of life presents. Alex Baisley, of the Big Dream Program (bigdreamprogram.com), is a genius at challenging

people to construct their lives around five principles (“Juicy Realizations,” he calls them), considering them as an ecosystem, where all five are required:

What if your Big Dreams were essential to what you do, and not some distant possibility?

What kind of lifestyle would you like to live? Do you want to travel? Or live somewhere specific? What is this is not a “someday I could do this” but an important element of what you do right now?

Who do you want in your life? What if you enjoy your work, but the people you’re serving just aren’t the kind of people who jazz you up? Who are your tribe? Who would you love to have with you?

What fires up your energy? Usually, as we get busy, we tend to cut back the very things that renew us--exercise, meditation, days off, vacations, fun with friends and family--exactly when we need that extra energy. What if incorporating this rejuvenation was part of our pursuits?

*Rethink income as a series of projects. I love this one. Love, love, love it. Two reasons--it breaks things down into manageable parts/projects, and it moves the typical assumptions about jobs/employment to considering a “living” as a combination of income streams.

IV. Have you ever noticed that a LOT of successful business people run not one, but a few businesses? get this principle, and the same is true on a smaller scale. Let’s say you love to write, but your pieces are netting you \$1,000 a month. Hmm. Not a living, for sure. But that’s one project. What if another project in music, theater, organic apples--nets another \$12,000 a year? See where this is going? Five such small projects could bring in \$60,000 just doing things you love to do anyway. Or even one such project, on top of your current work, once you rethink your current work to reduce your time commitment there.

Go project by project, and don’t get overwhelmed about getting unstuck from being overwhelmed. The point is simply that you have a wealth of options. Do the ones you want, pass on the ones you don’t want, and come up with a wealth of your own. But recognize that you are not stuck, that you are experiencing a feeling only, and that change--even radical change--is not only possible, but also accessible.

Learn to say no, and learn to say yes.

Saying no to things and people as you choose need not be a conflict. As a first step, simply stop saying yes to these things. When asked to attend an event, for example, instead of feeling pressured to respond yes or no (notice that feeling again?), say, “Thank you; I’ll keep that in mind,” or “I’ll have to think about that when I get closer to it,” or “OK, maybe I’ll see you there.” NONE of these things commit you. In fact, even if you WANT to go, leave the commitment open, so you’re still free to decide in the moment. [And by the way, because you said you would doesn’t force you to go either...though I too keep my word.]

In time, you can nicely say, “Thank you for inviting me. I’m glad you thought of me, but I just don’t want to go.” There it is. You’re entitled. Keep in mind that people-pleasing comes from egos with inferiority complexes. We want people to like us, and fear they won’t if we don’t acquiesce. Or (and), we feel the world would fall apart without our help, so we simply have to go help. Neither of these things are true. Stop acting out of fear, as it simply creates things in our heads that are not real.

Say YES to the things you want to do, the person you want to be, the life you want to live, the people you

want with you, the time to pursue and enjoy all these things, and the time to allow yourself to grow into person you have always been meant to be.

And you can do it very, very quickly, a few months, if you decide to embrace it.

Let that overwhelm you!

Imagine your ideal feeling—and choose it now. How do you want to feel? What have you done that makes you feel that way? What could you do now that would make you feel that way?

One day at a time. Step by step. Closer and closer.

Enjoy the journey. You can feel better right this instant! Alex Baisley compares this to planning a road trip across country. You pack, prepare, plan, and you're excited just getting into the car--and you haven't left your driveway yet! Let your life be like this, and the exciting, fulfilling, joyous feeling starts--today. Right now!

How awesome is that!

LETTING GO OF RESENTMENTS

Resentments are about ego, and as such are negative thought projections that only hurt ourselves and exist in our minds—another paradigm shift.

We can't afford resentments--first, they're costly, and second, we get nothing for them. They're a very big investment.

Yes, yes, yes, I know, but this person really, really deserves it. Guess what? You're not doing a damn thing for that person. Resentments are like swallowing poison and expecting the other person to die. Really bad idea. Resentments are you hurting yourself. That's it. Cold hard truth. Nothing to see here. It's just you, and you alone.

But I'd understand if I knew what this person did, right? You aren't getting it. I've heard some pretty horrendous stories. Changes nothing. A resentment hurts you, and you alone. Stop hurting yourself. Let it go. Not for the other person. For you.

A resentment does nothing to the other person. The person you resent doesn't even know what you're thinking right now. It's just you making you miserable. Stop.

Stop. Really. Stop.

Really—now. Because here's the tricky part--once you decide you want to stop torturing yourself with resentments, you'll find that's difficult to do. It's become a habit, and you're good at it. So here's what you

do.

So first--get over yourself. You aren't that important. People really don't go around planning what they're going to do today to make you miserable. Give it up. I get it---these may not be the nicest people in the world. But they are interested....wait for it....in THEIR lives, not yours. You are an incidental detail. They aren't doing it TO you, and never have. You were just there. They were concerned about themselves, not you. Your reaction is pure ego--how dare they do this to ME? The Great and Powerful Me! They didn't. They were thinking about themselves and their concerns, not you. Just accept that. You aren't that important.

And second--OK, you're over yourself, but there's still what the other person did, right? What to do about that?

Imagine God/Universe/Buddha/White Buffalo Woman/Anyone Else Meaningful to you sitting on your shoulder, watching and totally taking your side on this—hardly seems likely. So let's play a game. If you aren't a believer, play anyway--the game still works. Imagine God looking at the situation from your perspective, and saying, "Damn! You're right! Look at the obnoxious bozos you have to deal with! Man sucks!" Now....if you're having trouble seeing God taking sides like that...then you're getting the point. If God wouldn't be enthusiastically supporting your personal rants, then you aren't being objective, and the problem is.....You.

Third--alright, you've accepted that the other person isn't the problem...but you're still steamed. Just can't shake it. You're still letting this person rent space in your head.

So evict them from your head. Seriously. Stand up, announce, "I'm sorry, but the Hotel Head is now closed to visitors. Pack and go, right now. Bye!" No, I'm not kidding. The sillier the better--after all, how silly is being rent head space to your resentments in the first place! Throw the bums out. Let them live in someone else's head.

Fourth--pray for them. No, not, "God, let them be hit by a bus."

"But wait!" you say. "Look, I went along with all your other silly ideas, but come on, why should I pray that SOB?" Because, my silly friend, the point of the prayer is not for them--it's for you. Even if you don't believe in God or prayer, pray anyway. For real. The point of the prayer is to change You, not the other person. Wish them well--your energy and attitude will shift. You will feel better. You will heal. You will let go of the resentment.

Again, remember--resentments do nothing to the other person; they bind You. And when you are bound by the actions of others, you're truly a prisoner, as you have no control over what others do. You CAN, though, control what you do. Do so and be freed.

Fifth--this is a maintenance step: Learn to let things go. That driver this morning didn't get up early just to rush over and cut you off. Probably doesn't even remember, if indeed noticed in the first place. As your

“How important is this, really?” Then let it go. Life is too short, and resentments are too costly.

Remember--the cost of resentments is high, and with no benefit beyond the delusion of the ego.

Ditch ‘em. Sell at a loss. You’ll feel so much lighter when you’re not carrying those around.

Anger

Anger is useless except as a red flag—when we’re angry, we’re wrong...yet another paradigm shift. Year ago, I had a lot of trouble with anger. I was young, life was unfair, people were idiots, etc. Here are a few things I learned, slowly.

The first 30 seconds of anger can be an important emergency response, to alert us to a serious problem, stop something abruptly, things like that--but usually not, and anything after that is what anger is really about—fear and ego. You aren’t justified, no matter how long you carry on. And perhaps more to the point—it’s counterproductive.

All that yelling and screaming, or worse yet, throwing things in an attempt to force the world to conform our vision—just doesn’t work. Oh, it can seem to work, if you’re in a position of authority, literally or granted in the relationship dynamic. But all you really do is train people to avoid you. That ranting man who gets everyone scurrying? The moment he’s gone, people are complaining to each other instead of working.

Anger does damage. Maybe you only blow up occasionally, say, once a year. Not bad, huh? Sorry—ever is just waiting for the next time. Your credibility and your ability to communicate with these people honestly and openly is gone.

Anger does not show that we are in control—it demonstrates that we have lost control, of ourselves and the situation. And no matter how that might look on the surface, anger does not help you regain control only the illusion of temporary compliance. Not cooperation, not communication, and in fact, you only get what you can get while you stand there and rant. Unless you have time for that continually, this is not an effective practice.

Nor does righteous anger work. When you’re angry—you’re wrong. Sounds simplistic, yes, but it’s stunning how accurate that simple tool proves itself. If you’ve got an excellent, important point, you should be able to make it calmly and rationally. To the degree you can’t is the degree to which it’s not as good a point as you imagine. Nor is there a need to shout back at an irrational, anger speaker. How does that contribute to an understanding or communication or persuasion? You are only talking to yourself—and to your ego—convincing only you that you’re accomplishing anything.

And that’s the problem. You’re stuck—but don’t know it, or aren’t admitting it.

In the absence of a true and immediate danger, then, take anger for the sign it is—a sign we are covering another emotion. As it’s not love...that leaves fear. “Nothing real can be threatened; nothing unreal exists.”

When we find the need for anger, we are feeling threatened, hence the defense. It's why dogs bark when they're tied...all they can do is warn off. So they do. Like the bumper sticker says, "Wag more. Bark less."

After recognizing the sign that something is wrong (even if you're still convinced it's nothing), slow down and pay attention to how you're really feeling, what's really going on. If you find yourself suddenly snapping at someone or something, you aren't fine.

Don't neglect obvious things—if you're tired or hungry, for example, recognize Grandma was right—somebody needs a nap, or have a little snack. If you're feeling alone, call somebody and chat. Don't tell yourself you're above these things—these are basics we all need.

If you're angry and no one is there, or if you're the silent angry type—you have a resentment—also unproductive. Accept or talk. Those are the options.

Some good news—you don't have to be a saint. If you need some time, take it. Go for a walk. Breathe. I share that "I can't talk about this right now, but we'll talk later," and without attitude or tone.

Nor do you need to react to everything immediately. Before you send off that fiery email—take time first. Take a few days even, or weeks. Things change—or at least look different. And (something that took me a while to learn), just when you are fuming and deciding what to do, first ask yourself, "Why do I have to react to anything?" Learn to act proactively, not react in anger. Reacting always means you are not the one in control. Nor will reacting help you regain control.

Learn to let go. It's the only true control—control of one's self.

Honesty, Forgiveness, Ego, Teams, and Healing

"In every person who comes near you look for what is good and strong; honor that; try to imitate it, and your faults will drop like dead leaves when their time comes." – John Rushkin (1819-1900)

To feel better, then, takes one more paradigm shift: forgiveness and self-honesty are the keys to relieving pain.

I was asked recently about my take on honesty and forgiveness; the occasion was a betrayal one person was trying to work through. The group conversation, however, evolved quickly into more universal themes. I was struck by how heavily the wonderful points shared as people spoke stressed healing on many levels, and passing it on!

First, let's be real—when negative things happen, we need time to work through them. There's nothing wrong with that. It's a process, and that's fine—even good. Take time to heal.

At the same time, though, as long as we hold on to our anger and withhold forgiveness, we are clinging to the pain. What may seem as directed at someone else is actually hurting ourselves. Again...OK for a time.

long as we recognize what's going on. If we don't see that, though, we can set up a chronic condition.

Forgiveness of others is also a prerequisite for something crucial for healing—forgiving ourselves. When we cling to pain, it's always for reasons of ego (no natural instinct would make us do that). What part did we play in the exchange? Or are we beating ourselves up for poor choices or perception? Outer anger covers and disguises this inner festering, even from ourselves. This again can set up a chronic condition.

Here's where honesty enters the picture in a major way. To heal, we really have to take the focus off others and put it on ourselves. That's the only way to watch what is truly happening, and then we can start to heal the things in ourselves that need it—not cure other people from their transgressions. Let go. Stop clinging to needless pain. Grow beyond it. Forgive, and learn what you needed to learn from this interaction, even if the lesson was painful. Recognize that this new knowledge and wisdom is a keeper—it applies to all new situations, so you truly have gained from this experience. Make it a positive application.

People make mistakes. Yes, even stupid ones they had no business making. But we've all done things in retrospect that weren't the best moves. Understand people are dealing with their own issues and growth however well or poorly, and that this is their process. Focus on your own growth and process, and bless others in their journey. Love and forgive. You don't have to repeat poor choices, of course—but forgive and love them for who they are. Do this as best you can at first, even if that's not much. The effort counts.

This acceptance of imperfect people, including oneself, is the key to being “right-sized.” We are each not the center of the universe, but one person among many, part of a group. When we can see our part in our interactions, we can start to see our role in daily life. We are part of a group—many groups, actually. Each member has a role to play; each member is responsible for his or her own progress. But if we place ourselves above this, we have lost the reality of our place in the group, and we've taken on a greater role than what we truly serve. We are different, not better. An architect building a home might indeed have the creative inspiration and direction that spawned the project, but the owners' needs shaped that vision, and the tradesmen on the job are the ones who know how to make abstract ideas work in the field. ALL these are necessary for a successful project. All are part of this team—none better than the others. And what a relief! You don't have to run the universe today. Pressure's off.

This vision, though, of knowing yourself and your growth and process, of knowing your place as one of many on the various teams in your life, your important place at that, just as the others are important, is really a lynch pin for healing and for a healthy life. It is truly who you are, in gratitude for all those around you who are well. It's a vision of harmony and well-being, one model each day, if we only see it for what it is. Forgive others. Love them. And forgive and love yourself. They, and you, are just that special. When we let go of our pain, we begin to live in love—daily, constant, universal love.

Love, let go, and at the end of the day, say thank you. Even on the crappiest day, it was not all bad. Be grateful. If you have trouble with this, make a list--yes, I get the irony of listing what you are having trouble with. Start with A--Apples? Alice? Anesthesia? Alaska? Animals? Anagrams? Then B. Then C, D, etc. But end the day grateful and thankful, even if you need to work a bit to get there. Your mind will settle, your nerves will slowly unwind, your muscles will begin to relax (didn't know you were that tense).

you started relaxing), and you will sleep better--and be better prepared for the following day.

In time, day by day, you'll find yourself progressing, growing, and healing. Then do the same for the beginning of your day—wake up grateful and glad to start the day. It will happen.

Let go and heal.

Release Emotional Pain

We are vibration; to let go of any emotional pain or difficulty, simply release it.

As Einstein or Tesla could have told us 100 years ago, we are energy, frequency, and vibration. That's it. The experience of a material world is simply the interaction of these vibrations. It's not some solid wall we're powerless to address.

Somehow, though, as straight-forward as that may make any first impulse to see deep mysticism here, the understanding gets immediately clouded when applied to emotion. The less tangible emotional energy more logically seem easier to grasp as frequency and vibration, but this aspect we prefer to mysticize. These are emotions! Subjective, soft, subtle, secret sensations of silent sorcery. "You made me feel that way!" "The emotions just came over me!" "I fell in love" (like tripping into a hole). "Anger washed over me" (as if just innocently standing on the beach). Powerful stuff, these emotions!

We see emotions as inevitable storms, not as conscious choices.

But just as we tune into the desired frequencies on the radio dial, we tune into the frequencies and vibrations emotionally that we choose. As mentioned before, emotions are reflections of our thought. If we have positive emotions, we're thinking positive thoughts. If we experience negative emotions, we're thinking negative thoughts. If someone is "psychically draining energy," it's only because the "victim" is tuned right into that emotional mindset and energy. Change the dial, and it's fixed.

When we don't see that we're choosing, we mistakenly identify with passing storms, thereby hanging on to them, preventing them from simply passing through quickly.

If someone throws us a ball, we don't cling to the ball and start to identify with it. We toss it back, or even just let it whiz right by. The same is true of emotions. If they aren't emotions we choose to share, we do have to catch them and cling to them. Release them.

This is even worse when the emotions arise from within. Trying to battle emotions is as ridiculous and as pointless as trying to battle that ball. But we do—or try to do it. And it never works. If anything, it amplifies the vibration, and we can work ourselves into a real tizzy. When we understand what's really going on, and how simple and frankly silly it truly is, we can step back, stop exacerbating the frequency, and either swing or let go.

Imagine you're being dragged by a rope behind a speeding car. What can you do about something so ho

painful? You can let go of the rope. Stop focusing on the emotional pain, and let go instead. Just as you pull your hand off a hot stove, stop pressing against whatever is generating the emotional pain. Common sense says but oh we love our drama and our troubles. Recognize, though, that this is a choice, not the conditions of our lives.

Remember the simple monkey trap: the monkey reaches into a jar to get the peanuts, but can't pull back its fist without letting go of the peanuts. Don't be trapped by nothing but your resistance to letting go. It really is just you creating all that pain.

In physical healing, sometimes we visualize the pain as dissipating, releasing that energy. Do the same with emotional pain (and with mental confusion too). See the emotional pain as simply dissipating into the atmosphere around you. Keep at it. Let it go. Stop recreating it. Recognize and think better thoughts, or thoughts that feel better, until you've changed your vibration into a better feeling frequency.

In emotional healing, resist the urge to hold painful emotions tightly, and instead, visualize them dissipating, releasing that energy and any "stuck" conditions we're unconsciously continually recreating.

Release Attachment to Ego:

Only our egos prevent us from seeing and using this important sense, and we need only decide to be happy to manifest our desires.

What if life was happening not "to" us, but for us? What if we never took anything personally, no matter what? What if we were so busy noticing and appreciating life that we had no need to bring anything extra created from our reactions and projections? What if we just saw things for what they are, without interpretation? Can you imagine how much easier life would be, how much more powerfully our actions would resonate when we did act, how much lighter our burdens would be, and how much less pain we'd carry around?

We wonder why we aren't creating the lives we truly desire, but we're so busy creating the lives our egos insist on seeing that it takes all our time and energy and manifestation. We *are* getting what we're sending. We *are* living in the vibrations we create and attune to. We just are so wrapped up in our egos that we live the vibration of stuck ego. And when we're so busy separating ourselves as distinct from all that's around us we can't see that all around us is part of ourselves, part of our energy, part of our vibration—nay, it *is* us, our energy, it *is* our vibration, our frequency. What's around us is us, and if we'd learn to accept, to recognize, and to live this, we'd be far more happier (and powerful) beings, living in peace and harmony.

We need only be grateful for what life brings.

Our emotions are the early warning system. Learn to watch them as giveaways for the quality of our thoughts. If you aren't having good emotions, you aren't having good thoughts. If you're loving your emotions, you're having perfect thoughts. Further, we are not our thoughts. If our thoughts aren't good, we are thinking at odds with who we are—not to mention all that's around us—and we are disharmonious: we feel negative emotions. If we are thinking good, balanced, positive thoughts, our thoughts are in harmony.

with the us that's all around us, and our emotions are happy, passionate, loving, joyful, peaceful.

As such, emotions are a spiritual barometer. Are we separate from the One, from our true selves, or are in communion with the Universe and our Highest Selves? Our emotions tell us, revealing our thoughts, the level of balance in our ego. That's why it's so difficult for our minds to grasp what physics assures us: we are energy, vibration, frequency. This threatens the ego-mind, which wants to be separate. But separate always be unhappy, and separate will always be a lie. We can still choose where to tune in and be whole, we cannot be separate from that whole—and our emotions will always flag it when we try.

Release attachment to ego, and life automatically flows better—and our emotions reflect this happiness.