

Courting Love

Developed by Reverend Jane Beach

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Courting Love

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Marianne Williamson

Dear Friends,

It takes courage to follow God's lead. Once you awaken to the Presence within you, you have a choice. You can go on with your life and act as if nothing has changed, or you can pay attention to the greatest Love of all, forever guiding you toward your magnificence. If you choose God, your life will change ... a lot.

Always, The Beloved has sought your attention. If you choose to focus on It you quit playing small. You understand that because you are a child of God life continuously presents you with its gifts. Suddenly sunrise is not just a spectacular time of the day – it is a direct experience of the Divine, created just for you, “This is a reflection of the beauty I see in you.” Your next great thought is not just a good idea – it is evidence of your connection with your Sacred Essence, ceaselessly directing you toward your happiest, fullest potential, “You are Wisdom; you have the answers within you.” Before accepting and nurturing your relationship with Spirit you may have taken such things for granted. Awakening to your light brings your attention back to the truth that you are powerful beyond measure, and you have a choice. Will you choose to be liberated from fear and say yes to being brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?

This class is about saying yes, making a conscious decision to let go of the belief that we are not worthy, to stop shrinking from our greatness. It is about honoring our fear and walking through it to shine our light. It is about consciously courting the Love that has forever courted us. It is about owning our life.

With love and gratitude,

Jane

Courting Love

Course Overview

➔ Week 1	Turning toward Love
➔ Week 2	Moving through Fear
➔ Week 3	Loving the Now
➔ Week 4	Surrendering to Love
➔ Week 5	Forgiving What Is
➔ Week 6	Choosing to Love
➔ Week 7	Owning Our Life
➔ Week 8	Living Our Dream

Textbook:

A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles
by Marianne Williamson

Prerequisite:

Foundations or Beyond Limits

Student Agreements for Courting Love

Attendance and Active Participation

There is no need to court the God of your understanding; Spirit already knows your every thought, and It adores you, exactly as you are. In this class we are seeking a shift in our own consciousness, one in which we deepen our experience of the Divine. In courting the Love that created us, we turn toward The Beloved and away from our fears, our ego, and anything else that would get in the way of the most extraordinary relationship imaginable. Therefore, attendance and active participation are the foundation of the journey, crucial for the experience that lies ahead.

Assignments

The journey is fluid, with no ending of one class and beginning of another. It is set up so for logistical purposes only. It is recommended that you start on the next week's lessons as soon as you complete the previous class, as the reading and exercises are meant to take you deeper into your journey. Thus, doing a little each day and giving yourself time for reflection will make your experiences richer. You will get as much out of this class as you put into it, so bring yourself wholly into the experience.

The Importance of Sharing

You will find that sharing your insights and experiences and learning from others is an important part of the class. The purpose of sharing is multifaceted. It provides an opportunity to:

- Acknowledge your breakthroughs and wins in life and receive recognition for them.
- Recognize the negatives (opportunities) in your life and start moving away from those experiences.
- Develop the ability to listen and really hear other people, and to benefit from their sharing.

Every part of this class is designed to assist you. A good question to ask yourself is, “What am I to know through this sharing?”

Guidelines for Sharing

Confidentiality – Very important in the process of your and others' spiritual development in this course is having a safe space for evolvment. Your part in this is your commitment to observing and practicing confidentiality. For confidentiality to be maintained it is important for each person to do the following:

- Speak about your own feelings and experiences and not about what someone else has shared as their feelings or experiences.
- Actively listen while another person is sharing and then refrain from commenting or giving advice.
- Keep your sharing short (two to three minutes). If you tell only the important facts, it will give everyone who wants to share the time to do so.
- Respect the rights of others and share one time only in each sharing opportunity. If you later remember something wonderful you intended to share, wait until everyone else has had a turn to share.

How to Support Sharing and Maximize Listening

- As sharing begins, center yourself in love and compassion.
- Become aware of the precious gift being given when someone has the courage to share him/herself.
- Make the space for listening when other people are speaking without categorizing what you are hearing as positive or negative, or good or bad.
- Be sensitive to the Divinity underneath the roles and games we all set up.
- Be sensitive to the amount of class time you spend in sharing. If sharing is easy for you hold back in order to allow time for others. If sharing is more difficult for you, learn to speak up and share yourself.

*The return to love is not the end to life's
adventure, but the beginning. It's the return to
who you really are.*

- Marianne Williamson

Week 1

Turning Toward Love

This week

This week is about consciously turning toward the Divine Presence that has turned toward us for all time. It is about giving up the idea that we are not worthy and instead knowing that we are cherished beyond our wildest imagination. It is about giving up our story and accepting our greatness, living the life we came here to live.

*The Kingdom of God is within and around
me. I know that the power of the living Spirit
exists at the center of my being.*

- Ernest Holmes

*No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and
no one may. We ourselves must walk the path.*

- Buddha

*Insist on yourself; never imitate...Every
great person is unique.*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

*Where love is, what can be wanting?
Where love is not, what can possibly be
profitable?*

- St. Augustine

I Allow Myself to Dip Deeply into My Divine Nature

From the *Science of Mind* textbook

By Ernest Holmes

This meditation is built from the idea that each one of us has within himself a deeper nature, and, of course, this deeper nature, being an eternal unity with God, or with the Living Spirit, is more than man: it is where the being of man, or the nature of man, merges into the Being of God. So, as we dip deeply into our Divine Natures, let us realize that entering the Secret Presence of this Tabernacle of God, we will, like the Pilgrims of old, have to shed that which does not belong to the Kingdom of Good. We have to deliberately drop that which would hurt. We cannot enter this Gate of Good with a sword in our hands.

So we let go of everything and turn to that Divine Depth within our own nature, wherein the Spirit of God – the Spirit of Love and the Spirit of Peace – dwells with calm serenity. We withdraw into that place within us which has never been hurt, nor has ever been sick, has always and forever lived in divine and eternal peace ... within the Kingdom of God, which is Good. And this Inner Kingdom within is all-peace, all-power and all-perfection.

We drop all hate, all fear, all animosity, all resentment. We cast out of our consciousness every doubt and every sense of uncertainty. We know that we are entering into that atmosphere of Wholeness, of happiness and completion where there is no fear, no doubt, no uncertainty, no lack, no want. Here is wholeness, perfection, peace, power, beauty, love, supply and life. We know that the abundance of this life is showered upon us; that we are guided and guarded into right action, into right decision; daily, hourly, minutely, the Principle of Intelligence directs us, the Presence of Love warms us, the Peace of God covers us. And we are led into the pathway of this peace, into the knowledge of this perfection.

We are conscious of the Indwelling God, and we are conscious that the Indwelling God is filling (instantly renewing) our bodies, absolutely eliminating from us whatever there is that does not belong; co-ordinating every function, every organ, every action and reaction (the circulation, the assimilation, the elimination), making it perfect.

The Life Principle of every part of our being is perfect and harmonious and now functions perfectly in us. The whole order of discord is changed into the natural order of harmony and wholeness, and we *let* that Divine Power be *exactly what It is* in us. We are no longer afraid, for love casts out fear. Our faith destroys all fear. We awake from the dream of fear to the vision of Reality, where there is no shadow of which to be afraid. We awake from the dream of lack and want and unhappiness to the knowledge of harmony, of abundance and of peace.

I Allow Myself to Dip Deeply into My Divine Nature

Becoming a Seer: A New Point of View

From *The Fifth Agreement*

By Don Miquel Ruiz and Don Jose Ruiz

*The truth doesn't need you to believe it;
the truth simply is, and it survives whether you believe it or not.*

Lies need you to believe them.

*If you don't believe lies, they don't survive your skepticism,
and they simply disappear.*

Two thousand years ago, a great master said, “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Well, now you know that the truth is what you are. The next step is to *see* the truth, to see what you are. Only then are you free. Free of what? Free of all the distortions in your knowledge, free of all the emotional drama that is the consequence of believing in lies. Then it's not about being right or wrong, or good or bad. It's not about being a winner or loser. It's not about being young or old, beautiful or ugly. All that is over.

You'll know that you are totally free when you no longer have to be the you that you pretend to be. This freedom is profound. It's the freedom to be the real you, and it's the greatest gift that you can give yourself.

Imagine living without fear, without judgment, without blame, without guilt, without shame. Imagine living your life without trying to please other people's point of view. Imagine how different your life would be if you lived with gratitude, love, loyalty, and justice, beginning with yourself. Just imagine the union between you and your body if you were completely loyal to your body, if you were completely grateful for your body, if you treated your body with justice. Imagine being yourself, and not trying to convince anybody of anything. Imagine that just by being yourself, you are happy, and that wherever you go, heaven is going with you, because you *are*

heaven. Imagine living with this kind of freedom. Yes, the truth will set you free, but first you need to *see* the truth.

I want you to see if the story of you is the truth or is not the truth. Just witness what *is*, without any judgment, because whatever you're creating is perfect. See your environment, the frame of your dream, all around you. See your beliefs, the way they're reflected in the story of your life. See where your attention is bringing your whole dream. I don't mean for you to *think* about it. I mean for you to *see*, and seeing is not thinking. Is it the truth?

Well, if it's not the truth, now you know that you don't have to believe it. Instead of believing, learn to *see*. What you believe, you distort right away according to your knowledge. But when you let go of knowledge and go beyond symbols, at a certain point in your life, you start to become a seer. A seer is a dreamer who has mastered the dream, who has learned to *see*. Artist, dreamer, messenger, seer – there are so many ways to name you. I prefer to call you an artist because your whole creation is a masterpiece of art.

This is your chance to see your creation, to see what *is*, to see the truth. But first you have to let go of everything that is not truth, everything that is nothing but superstition or lie. If you're willing to invite the truth, you will find that your story, whatever you say it is, is completely false. You know that the story of you is not the truth. You just need the courage to let go of what you are not, to let go of the past, to detach from your story, because the story is not *you*. The moment you no longer believe all the lies that you have been telling yourself, you find out that it doesn't matter how painful it is; the truth is a million times better than believing in lies.

Choice for Reality

From *Love is Letting Go of Fear*

By Gerald Jampolsky, M.D.

We can choose our own reality. Because our will is free, we can choose to see and experience the truth. We can experience the truth of our reality as Love. To do this, we must, each instant, refuse to be limited by the fearful past and future and by the questionable “realities” we have adopted from our culture. We can choose to experience this instant as the only time there is, and live in a reality of *now*.

Our minds have only the limitations we place on them. For example, when we see value in making a fearful past “real,” we limit our minds to using it as our reality. As a result, our minds can only look fearfully at all that is to come, and cannot pause for an instant to enjoy the present in peace. When we use words such as *can’t* and *impossible*, we have imposed the limits of a fearful past on ourselves.

Mind as Split

It may be useful to think of the mind as the film, the camera and everything else involved in movie production. What we experience is really our state of mind projected outward upon a screen called “the world.” This world and those in it actually become the mirror of our thoughts and fantasies. What our mind projects becomes our perception, which limits our vision as long as we hold to it.

Our mind functions as if it were split; part of it acts as if it were directed by our ego, and part by Love. Most of the time, our mind pays attention to this pseudo-director that we call our ego, which is simply another name for fear.

The ego directs only movies of war and conflict, although through disguises it makes them appear as if they were the realization of our romantic fantasies. It actually directs only movies that project the illusion that we are all separate from each other. Our true director, Love, does not project illusions; it only extends the truth. Love directs movies that unite and join.

Our mind is actually the director, producer, script-writer, film editor, cast, projectionist, audience and critic. Our mind, being limitless, has the capacity of changing the movie and everything about it at any time. Our mind has the power of making all decisions.

The ego part of our mind acts like a curtain of fear and guilt which blocks our Love. We can learn to direct our mind to open the curtain and reveal the light of Love that has always been there and remains our true reality.

Going Home

From *Finding Your Way Home*

By Melody Beattie

People are talking a lot lately about the idea of going home. In different ways, shapes, and forms they're expressing the desire to return home. The idea is in the air. Look around. You can see and feel it, too.

They – we – want to go home.

They're not talking about returning to the home of their childhood days. Some don't even know exactly what the desire is they're expressing. It's an idea emanating from the soul, from the deeper part of us, an idea that's found its time.

We want to go home.

It's an itching, a longing, a yearning, a desire bordering on urgency – almost a cosmic movement.

We want to find our purpose, our right place, the right people to live and work with, the right work to do. We want to do more than discover why we're here; we want to be doing and living what we came here to do with the people we came here to do it with. We want to come into alignment with our highest good and destiny.

We want to discover and live our soul's purpose.

We want to bring out and use all the parts of us we've kept denied and tucked away. We don't want to hear anything more about what we can't do. We want to know what we can do, and then we want to do it well. We want to stop exploiting, and start exploring our gifts and talents, bringing them to the world.

And we want to enjoy doing it. We want to have fun. We'd like to make a little money, too. Maybe a lot. It's not that money is the most important thing. We don't want to be bought or sold. Selling our souls is what we want to stop doing. But we want enough. And maybe a little extra at the end of the month. We don't want to worry about money anymore.

We'd like to feel good, do our art, be of service, be with people we love, people of like mind, maybe experience some joy, bliss, and euphoria, too. We want to be part of a team of high-minded soul mates on a similar mission at work; we want a few friends who are truly friends – belong to a tribe of kindred souls; and we want more than a relationship – we want a passionate love relationship with our twin flame soul mate.

Or we want to be happy and comfortable being alone.

We're tired of feeling afraid and confused. We'd like to take some risks, but we'd like to feel safe, too. Protected. We want to live in a way that feels natural and right to us.

We want to be who we are, to be all that our souls came here to be.

We're tired of straitjackets, limitations, and selling our souls for money or security. We want to bust loose – set our souls free, be in the right place at the right time, fulfill our mission, dance with destiny, and watch the universe unfold at our feet.

We want enough drama and excitement to keep life interesting, but we want an abiding sense of peace underlying it all.

We want to return to our spiritual roots. We want to learn to fly.

We want heaven – right here on earth.

That's what I've been hearing. That's what I've been saying, too.

We want to go home.



The Circle is Complete

From the *Science of Mind* textbook

By Ernest Holmes

The Circle is Complete

The Circle of Love is complete.

It comprehends all, includes all, and binds all together with cords of

Everlasting Unity.

I cannot depart from Its Presence nor wander from Its care.

My Love is complete within me.

The Love of God binds me to Itself, and will not let me go.

I shall make a home for you, O my wonderful Love,
and we shall journey through life hand in hand.

I shall sit in your Presence and learn the wondrous things You will tell me

For You are God.

Love sits within me.



Home Study for Week 2

READING

- *A Return to Love* Forward pp. xi-xii; Preface p. xiii-xix; Introduction p. xxi-xxiv, Ch. 1 p. 5-13; Ch. 2 p. 17-26
- **Workbook** Week 1 pp. 1-16 and Week 2 pp. 18-33

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- **Selective Attention**
 - Continue to practice selective attention. You can practice with sounds, too. Depending on where you are, listen for bird calls, insect sounds, traffic noise, or people talking.
 - If you are in a public place, scan for happy or sad faces, or for people with black or yellow or red hair, for children or teenagers or the elderly, for people who look tired or for loving couples.
 - If you are touching a plate or a napkin, for a minute put your whole attention onto just feeling that plate or napkin.
 - On your path of loving, employ this ability to choose where to put your focus, selectively to love.

WRITING (Not to be handed in)

- “Love and Fear” exercises by Iyanla Vanzant, workbook pp. 21-23

Week 2

Moving Through Fear

This week

This week we look at the many facets of fear. When we see it for what it is, fear does not need to hold us back; indeed, it can be the impetus for moving forward! Fear is often the reason we seek the peace of our own Inner Wisdom. As such it becomes an avenue to our deepening relationship with the Divine and to consciously living a life of love. As we move through fear we become more of who we truly are.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

- Marianne Williamson

He has not learned the first lesson of life who does not every day surmount a fear.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

All doubt and fear must go and in their place must come faith and confidence, for we shall be led by the Spirit into all good.

- Ernest Holmes

... perfect love casteth out fear ...

I John 4:18

You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face ... You must do the thing you think you cannot do.

-Eleanor Roosevelt

Moving Through Fear

By Jane Beach

The definition of fear is “A feeling of agitation and anxiety caused by the presence or imminence of danger.” In the presence of danger fear can keep us safe – that fight or flight instinct. The part to pay attention to is imminence, which means that the danger is “liable to happen soon.” How often do we sit in fear of something that never, ever happens? Fear often stops us from taking that next step toward being the joyous, fulfilled person that we can be. We let it prevent us from asking our boss for a raise, taking a new class, beginning our own business, or introducing ourselves to a potential new friend. Fear often keeps us tucked tight into a very small box ... our comfort zone.

It is not coincidental that we often feel disgruntled in our comfort zone ... bored, disconnected from life and envious of others. That’s good! Our Divine Essence is whispering that there is more to life than what we are experiencing. Unlimited possibilities are stirring within us, urging us forward.

The question is, what do we do with the fear that often goes along with those important next steps? Sometimes we try to push it away, pretending it doesn’t exist. Knowing the creative power of our thinking we may worry, “If I’m feeling afraid, am I going to create more fear in my life?” For those who are stuck in their fear and do not do anything to move through it, this can certainly be true. If we believe that life is scary and the world is an unsafe place we may choose not to participate, and we get to be right – life will be scary and unsafe.

Of course, what we believe is our choice ...

If we are steeped in our own personal relationship with the Divine, fear becomes a reminder that we are at the edge of our comfort zone, and that we are held in great love in the journey, leading to transformation on the other side. The universe is offering us the kingdom if we are willing to accept it. In this respect, fear becomes another way for us to get to know ourselves. And best of all, it causes us to go straight to the God of our understanding. We let The Beloved hold us in our fear, and we feel the presence of our own inner strength. We feel Love within us and all around us. Once again we remember that we don’t have to figure out how to do it – we will be guided as we move forward. Our focus on the present moment, Spirit takes care of the journey *and* the outcome.

Is there an area where you are experiencing fear right now? You may want to take it into meditation to see what it can teach you. Try journaling about it; you might find that there is excitement mixed in with worry! Know that the Greatest Love of All is right there with you, loving you unconditionally. Relax into that Love. Let your fear become a teacher. Be teachable ... be loved ... know that you are worth it.

Love and Fear

From *One Day My Soul Just Opened Up*

By Iyanla Vanzant

Today there are a vast number of spiritual teachers, spiritual books, and spiritual life practices promoting one consistent theory: “There are only two emotions: love and fear.” Love is divine. Love is the activity of God, and the only energy in which God exists. Fear, on the other hand, is a tool of the ego, which is the foundation of the belief that we are separate from God, separate from each other, and generally inferior or inadequate. Think about it. When you are asked or expected to do something you do not believe you are worthy or equipped to do, is fear not the first emotion you experience? Fear of being abandoned. Fear of being ridiculed. Fear of having someone take their love away from you. Fear of being exposed as inadequate or unworthy. At the core of our innermost being, we do not want to feel this way, so we deny that we do. We lie to the Master. “I’m not afraid, I’m busy.” “I’m not afraid, I just don’t want to marry you!” “I’m not afraid, I’m broke!” We fail to realize that the only way to pull the chair from beneath fear is to love it. In order to love fear, we must call the Power and Presence of God into our lives or the situation, allowing its presence to dismantle the fear.

The next time your stomach flips with fear, don’t deny it by acting like you are just fine. Gently whisper, “I know you, fear, and I know exactly what you want. Unfortunately, today I am not in the mood to deal with you!” When your mouth gets dry, your knees get weak, or your ears get hot, don’t call it menopause or something you ate for lunch. Embrace the fear that is now pounding its fork and knife on your table by saying, “Hi, fear! What took you so long to get here?” Sorry, but I cannot feed you today!”

The minute you realize you are in the grip of fear, don’t struggle to get away. Relax! Tell the truth, “I’m in the grip of fear!” Remembering that truth will set you free. Freedom means choosing to invoke this truth: “Wherever I am, that’s where God is!” Take a few deep breaths. Affirm “Let there be light!” Fear hates the light of truth. The moment you affirm the truth, fear will scatter like the lower life forms that dig around in the garbage. If, however, you insist on telling yourself that you are not afraid when you know you are, fear, the lowest form of life, will sink its teeth in you and never let go.

I now consciously and willingly call forth the light of the Holy Spirit into every molecule, every atom, every cell, every tissue, every organ, every muscle and every system in my body, asking It to release every energy, every belief, every pattern, every thought, and every belief that is not in alignment with the love of God. And for this I am so grateful! And so it is!

Let Me Remember

Wherever I am, God is.

Fear wears many faces.

If it is not love, it is fear.

Love will overshadow fear.

The light of truth will overshadow fear.

When I embrace fear, it becomes my ally.

False **E**xpectations **A**ppearing **R**eal are not the truth.

Faith will starve fear.

Today, I recognize that I was experiencing fear when ...

When I am fearful my body responds by ...

When I realize I am in the grip of fear I am now willing to ...

Play Life as a Game

From *The Art and Practice of Loving*

By Frank Andrews, Ph.D.

Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do. Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do.

Mark Twain

Work is activity directed toward some end or goal, and we think of its value or meaning as lying in reaching that end. A game may also take the form of getting from where you are to a goal. But you *play* a game, which means the goal is not the real purpose. Play is now-oriented, toward the joy or the love of the moment. A game becomes work when you play it only for winning. Life, viewed as a whole, must be a game, since the end of life is death and you will die without taking away any of the points or goals.

Do not confuse the score of a game as measured by making goals with its real purpose. You can win money, fame, spouse, children and thus reach your goals. But when you set out on a path of loving, you determine to play for joy, for love, not just to work for money or fame.

When you play a game, even if you do not like the rules, you have agreed to them, so you do not fight them. The rules are, of course, arbitrary, existing only by agreement among those playing. Choosing to play life as a loving game, you choose whatever events come up as part of that game, even if you do not like some of them.

Cultivate the Role of Player

The Fifth (and only) Rule: You have taken yourself too seriously.

Arthur Bloch

This practice is to live life consciously as a game, using your own sense of what that means to guide you in responding to circumstances. You dance down the street for no reason other than that you said you would and you are alive on a beautiful planet full of wonderful creatures. You hold the crises of your life in the same way you would hold the setbacks or losses in any other game.

Playing life as a game does not mean trivializing life. There is nothing trivial about the game of your life – it affects the circumstances in which everyone lives. To love a game, you must play it hard, with your whole heart – yet when you lose, you shrug and go back to play the next day.

Can you live totally engaged in what you are doing, without clinging to the outcome, the score? Can you experience life as both serious and absurd at the same time? Can you be in pain at one level, and at another level be happy because you are playing a wonderful game?

You win the game of life if you play the whole way with caring and enthusiasm. Your goals are just the excuse to play. The plays and players that pop up in the game are the raw material for your loving. Respect your fellow players. Even though they drop a few balls, they, like you, are in the big league.

View Life as Drama

All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players.

William Shakespeare

When you are acting in or watching a play, you know that the whole show is happening so that you and the rest of the people can love it. When you are onstage, you pour yourself into your roles, using them as vehicles for putting loving energy and care into the world. When you take your seat in the audience, you can witness the play in safety, loving every gesture and learning from every moment.

Be Both Role-Player and Spectator

Any role becomes a trap if you take it seriously.

Ram Dass

This practice is to live life consciously as a theatrical drama. Cultivate a vantage point inside yourself where you are a spectator who can witness whatever is going on, even at difficult times. Since you are safe sitting in that seat in the audience, you are free when you want to get up on stage and throw yourself into your roles wholeheartedly. Choose your roles with care as ways to express your aliveness. Though you play them with your whole heart, never identify your *self* with what happens to the roles you play.

It is easy to get so caught up in the drama that you think *you* are one of your roles. You are not – you are the one who plays the roles, and also the one who watches the whole drama. You may *choose to step* into a play in which to act, you can intend to

marry the hero and live happily ever after. But you do not *have* to in order to live happily, because it is still a wonderful play and your part is so exciting.

Trust Life and the World

Fear tells you, “I want to make you safe.” Love says, “You are safe.”

Emmanuel (Pat Rodegast)

It is not easy to be a human. You are born helpless, cared for by inexperienced and fallible people who hold your life in their hands. You are born without an instruction manual, so you are taught the purpose of your life, your limitations, your worth, by these and other fallible people who know precious little about life. Your body is most likely of only average attractiveness and capabilities, and it disconcerts you by its illnesses, injuries, cravings, aging and inevitable movement toward death. You and everyone else continually disappoint each other, you make mistakes. You live as one of many in an overcrowded world that gives lots of criticism and little acknowledgment, so it is hard to feel that you make a positive difference to others.

Given all this, it is understandable if you have learned to focus on the negative events in your life in an effort to avoid them and thereby formed the habit of fearing. When you fear, you project unpleasant events into an uncertain future and direct a powerful *no* toward them. You are so concerned over possible trouble in the future that you overlook whatever is lovable in your life now.

Fear comes when you refuse to trust. You do not have to trust only in reaction to circumstances that seem trustworthy. Your future may not seem worthy of being trusted. It may seem fraught with danger, but you can trust it intentionally anyway. There is something both wonderful and poignant about deliberately trusting that the universe knows what it is doing in creating you and your fellow beings, even though your plight includes inevitable aging, loss, and death. Trust is a stance you take toward life and the world, one in which you know the truth about what the future could contain, but a stance that says you will cope with painful events when they occur and in the meantime will love as deeply as you can.

Explore Your Fears

Human life is a schoolroom. Take the curriculum.

Emmanuel (Pat Rodegast)

*You are a child of the universe,
No less than the trees and the stars;
You have a right to be here.
And whether or not it is clear to you,
No doubt the universe
Is unfolding as it should.*

Desiderata (Max Ehrmann)

Think through your life and list the events or conditions that you actually experience fear about. List only items that you actively fear, not the ones that you know intellectually might prove negative. For each of these events and conditions, write out what it is you distrust about yourself or the world that leads to this fear. It may be that you do not trust your strength to bear pain, or society's willingness to care for you in time of need, or the wisdom of a world that made you and your fellow creatures mortal.

If you hold human life to be a schoolroom, then a major part of the curriculum is whatever set of difficulties your circumstances present. What would it take for you to trust what you do not trust now? What actions could you take that would make it easier to trust? Take those actions. For example, develop a support network of friends and relatives, or draw up a living will if that would make you feel you could approach old age with more trust.

Regardless of whether you are willing to trust the world at this time, turn your attention to something other than your fears. The world has countless places to put your energy, countless objects you can love. Get your attention off of yourself and onto something outside you. You need not live in fear.

The Body's Intelligence

From A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose

By Eckhart Tolle

The physical organism, your body, has its own intelligence, as does the organism of every other life-form. And that intelligence reacts to what your mind is saying, reacts to your thoughts. So emotion is the body's reaction to your mind. The body's intelligence is, of course, an inseparable part of universal intelligence, one of its countless manifestations. It gives temporary cohesion to the atoms and molecules that make up your physical organism. It is the organizing principle behind the workings of all the organs of the body, the conversion of oxygen and food into energy, the heartbeat and circulation of the blood, and the immune system that protects the body from invaders, the translation of sensory input into nerve impulses that are sent to the brain, decoded there, and reassembled into a coherent inner picture of outer reality. All these, as well as thousands of other simultaneously occurring functions, are coordinated perfectly by that intelligence. You don't run your body. The intelligence does. It is also in charge of the organism's response to its environment.

This is true for any life-form. It is the same intelligence that brought the plant into physical form and then manifests as the flower that comes out of the plant, the flower that opens its petals in the morning to receive the rays of the sun and closes them at nighttime. It is the same intelligence that manifests as Gaia, the complex living being that is planet earth.

This intelligence gives rise to instinctive reactions of the organism to any threat or challenge. It produces responses in animals that appear to be akin to human emotions: anger, fear, pleasure. These instinctive responses could be considered primordial forms of emotion. In certain situations, human beings experience instinctive responses in the same way that animals do. In the face of danger, when the survival of the organism is threatened, the heart beats faster, the muscles contract, breathing becomes rapid in preparation for fight or flight. Primordial fear. When being cornered, a sudden flare-up of intense energy gives strength to the body that it didn't have before. Primordial anger. These instinctive responses appear akin to emotions, but are not emotions in the true sense of the word. The fundamental difference between an instinctive response and an emotion is this: An instinctive response is the body's direct response to some external situation. An emotion, on the other hand, is the body's response to a thought.

Indirectly, an emotion can also be a response to an actual situation or event, but it will be a response to the event seen through the filter of a mental interpretation, the filter of thought, that is to say, through the mental concepts of good and bad, like and dislike, me and mine. For example, it is likely you won't feel any emotion when you are told that someone's car has been stolen, but when it is *your* car, you will probably feel upset. It is amazing how much emotion a little concept like "my" can generate.

Although the body is very intelligent, it cannot tell the difference between an actual situation and a thought. It reacts to every thought as if it were a reality. It doesn't know it is just a thought. To the body, a worrisome, fearful thought means "I am in danger," and it responds accordingly, even though you may be lying in a warm and comfortable bed at night. The heart beats faster, muscles contract, breathing becomes rapid. There is a buildup of energy, but since the danger is only a mental fiction, the energy has no outlet. Part of it is fed back to the mind and generates even more anxious thought. The rest of the energy turns toxic and interferes with the harmonious functioning of the body.

Almost every human body is under a great deal of strain and stress, not because it is threatened by some external factor but from within the mind.

The Fiction of Failure

From *What About the Big Stuff?*

By Richard Carlson, Ph. D.

I believe that at some level, most of us are intuitively aware that there is no such thing as failure. At the very least, we acknowledge that what we have learned to label as “failure” is actually an absolutely necessary part of the process of life.

Nevertheless, when a result or effort doesn’t turn out the way we’d like it to, we tend to dismiss this wisdom as being too “theoretical” or even superficial. Over and over again, I’ve heard people say, “I can see that *those* other disappointments were necessary, but *this* one is different. I’ll never live this one down.”

The fear of failure comes out in many subtle ways. I often wonder how many ventures never get off the ground because of this fear. How many classes aren’t taken? How often do we avoid introducing ourselves to a potential new friend, reaching out to someone, trying something new, asking for help, going beyond our comfort level, or simply thinking outside the box? Being frightened of failure can be the difference between getting started and not getting started, but it can also be the difference between winning and losing. It’s an important topic that affects both the quality of our lives as well as our effectiveness and level of success.

It’s a real gift to be able to know that failure is nothing more than a fiction cleverly disguised as disappointment. Once you realize that’s all it is, an entirely different world begins to emerge. You’ll become less frightened and more inclined to try new things more often. You’ll be willing to take appropriate risks with less fear, become more adventuresome, and have a more interesting life. Most importantly, you’ll respond to adversity with more confidence and wisdom.

The reason I refer to failure as fiction is because, once the alleged failure has taken place, it can remain alive only in your thoughts and imagination. This isn’t to deny the event happened, nor does it minimize its importance. This doesn’t suggest in any way that it wasn’t extremely disappointing or that it didn’t have lasting impact. It’s simply pointing out this truth: Events that occurred in the past are over and done with, and the only way you can be a “failure” is if you think you are a failure.

Here’s a vivid example: Suppose a surgeon performed five thousand successful operations during her career. However, the day before she retired, she made a minor mistake during her very last surgery. Had her colleague not stepped in, her patient could have been injured. Luckily, everything worked out fine.

The surgeon, however, didn't think so. To her, she has suddenly become a "failure." She was thinking, "Not only could I have hurt my patient, but I can only imagine the lawsuit that could have resulted." Over and over again, she played out all the worst-case scenarios.

After her retirement, she became more and more depressed. She couldn't stop thinking about what had happened. Though she wasn't always thinking about it, from time to time the event would cross her mind. When it did, she would take her thoughts to heart and become despondent. Her husband, friends, and colleagues all tried their best to reassure her that she had been a successful surgeon and that her competency was unquestioned. Yet, ten years later she was still depressed.

I'm hoping you're already thinking, "Obviously she wasn't a failure. That part was all in her mind."

Even though it's more obvious when someone else is involved, it's much more difficult to see it when it involves us. Our thoughts are very convincing. When we think of ourselves, or of one of our efforts as being a failure, there's a tendency to think that those thoughts are real.

But if you step back for a moment, you'll probably agree that it's nonsense. The degree of "failure" is totally dependent upon the thoughts and perceptions of the thinker. After all, one surgeon to whom the same thing happened might think to herself, "Wow, only one major mistake in twenty years – pretty impressive." Yet a surgeon like the first one would think the absolute worst. If it's not up to the individual's thoughts, then what determines the degree of "failure"?

The hardest part of describing this is that I don't want it to seem as if I'm excusing the mistake. I'm not. The mistake occurred. The surgeon did the very best she could, and if she were to perform any additional surgeries, she would surely learn from that mistake. The question is, "How does one move on?"

I met a law student who failed the bar exam. He told me that the last three years had been a total waste of time and that he was a "miserable failure." My question is, "Who decided this?" There are thousands of other future lawyers who fail the exam but respond by saying, "Oh well, I'll take it over and do better next time." I'd guess that 100 percent of them are disappointed, but only a handful of them would become depressed.



Majestic Calm

From the *Science of Mind* textbook

By Ernest Holmes

Majestic Calm

The Inner Mind is still.

The Soul reflects the Most High.

The Spirit of man is God.

In the great calm of the All Good,

I rest in peace and security.

My life is now reflecting the Perfect Whole.

I am Peace; I am calm

I am security and complete satisfaction.

I am One with God.

I am filled with peace.

Home Study for Week 3

READING

- A Return to Love* Ch. 3 pp. 29-47

- Workbook** Week 3 pp. 34-49

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Chapter 3 in *A Return to Love* is entitled “You.” It is filled with profound reminders of who you truly are. Which parts of the reading are you most drawn to? Why?
 - Meditate on each throughout the week.
 - Journal about them and be ready to share your insights in Week 3.

WRITING (Not to be handed in)

- Complete the exercises in the “Loving the Now” article by Frank Andrews, workbook pp. 35-38

Today, bright with hope and filled with promise, is mine.

- Ernest Holmes

Week 3

Loving the Now

Anything other than love is an illusion. In order to escape the illusion and find inner peace, remember that only love in a situation is real.

- Marianne Williamson

This week

Whatever the present moment contains, accept it as if you had chosen it.

- Eckhart Tolle

This week we are paying attention to life, saying yes to the present moment, just as it is. Letting go of resistance, we are embracing the power and presence of a God that adores us, allowing It to guide us to our happiest good; the present moment is our gift. In great gratitude we look at ourselves and our lives with appreciation. We are most definitely God's beloved!

One's destination is never a place but rather a new way of looking at things.

- Henry Miller

While we may not be able to control all that happens to us, we can control what happens inside us.

- Ben Franklin

Loving the Now

From *The Art and Practice of Loving*

By Frank Andrews, Ph. D.

Waiting for Something Worthy of Loving

Love means setting aside walls, fences, and unlocking doors, and saying YES ... One can be in paradise by simply saying “yes” to this moment.

Emmanuel (Pat Rodegast)

Some people would use the word *loving* for only those times when we feel overwhelmed by how lovable someone or something is. For example, Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote:

Unless you can die when the dream is past –

Oh, never call it loving.

If you have ever felt this kind of love, treasure your memory – the awe, delight, and sensitivity. But do not cling to these past loves or they will shut off your loving now and in the future. Hold their memories as a taste of what your life might be like more of the time, with the events and people of today, not just with the few that overwhelmed you in the past.

These overwhelming loves can set a standard that keeps out *lesser* opportunities. You can get stuck in what loving *should* be like. Your friends and the popular media may agree with your expectations of how unusual something should be before you can love it. Do not limit the loveable to those few objects you deem *worthy* of loving, and thus define to be scarce. If you have lost your ability to love for these reasons, treasure the *little* experiences like attention, awareness, concern, interest and liking as forms of love. The lovable is not scarce; it is everywhere. Your job is to see it that way.

The power of the word loving is enhanced, not reduced, by counting the *little* experiences as forms of love. You are living a *yes* whenever you open up and engage positively with the world. Of course, you certainly don't have to acknowledge the small experiences with a word as loaded as *love*. You can hold back, unwilling to delight fully, and wait for "the big one," for the person or event that will reach out and grab you. You can wait a long time for the big one – maybe even a lifetime. In the meanwhile, you will be ignoring the many little ones that are there all the time. Waiting to love something extraordinary keeps the extraordinary from sneaking into the ordinary. By loving the ordinary you make it extraordinary.

What little experiences have you said "yes" to lately?

How Has Waiting to Love Affected Your Life?

In this practice you think back over your life, while writing in your journal, asking how your life has been affected by waiting for something worthy of loving. What opportunities to experience the various heartwarmings of love have offered themselves to you while you held back because they did not seem right or because you were saving your loving until something better came along? With what boredom have you greeted the new day because you figured it was going to be just like yesterday? What flower has gone unsmelled, what person unloved, what friend or relative unappreciated?

This practice is designed to let you see the power that your beliefs and attitudes have on your life. Your discoveries might make it easier for you to try out other beliefs and attitudes in order to love more.

When Have You Loved in the Last Twenty-Four Hours?

The eye of love makes every person in the world friendly and attractive.

Sai Baba

In this practice you reflect back over this day and recall specific times you have loved – that is, responded to something in your life with a heartfelt yes. Focus on the moment, on the here and now. You may have been engrossed in a task, or paused to compliment a co-worker, or appreciated the bird singing outside your window. Look for the *little, ordinary* examples of loving and you will find them.

As your life grows richer in loving, this practice will become more and more an acknowledgment of your expertise. You will be able to shorten the time from twenty-four hours, eventually to an hour or less, and you will have many incidents to recall because you are naturally responding more lovingly.

List as many occasions as you can remember within the last twenty-four hours when you have loved. Take a minute to relive each one in your imagination. Enjoy your visualization, and pat yourself on the back for having turned that bit of your life into loving. Consult the list of heartwarmings for suggestions on what to look for.

Then, do the same practice for the events in the last hour. This will require that you give up the belief that loving demands some rare, overwhelming experience.

Do the same practice, right now, for the events of the past ten seconds. This requires that you alternate between attending to the world with the strong intention of appreciating something, actually appreciating it, and writing down what you find.

List as many occasions as you can remember within the last twenty-four hours when you have loved.

The last hour ...

The last 10 seconds ...

Consciousness: The Way Out of Pain

From *The Power of Now*

By Eckhart Tolle

Create No More Pain in the Present

Nobody's life is entirely free of pain and sorrow. Isn't it a question of learning to live with them rather than trying to avoid them?

The greater part of human pain is unnecessary. It is self-created as long as the unobserved mind runs your life.

The pain that you create now is always some form of nonacceptance, some form of unconscious resistance to what *is*. On the level of thought, the resistance is some form of judgment. On the emotional level, it is some form of negativity. The intensity of the pain depends on the degree of resistance to the present moment, and this in turn depends on how strongly you are identified with your mind. The mind always seeks to deny the Now and to escape from it. In other words, the more you are identified with your mind, the more you suffer. Or you may put it like this: the more you are able to honor and accept the Now, the more you are free of pain, of suffering – and free of the egoic mind.

Why does the mind habitually deny or resist the Now? Because it cannot function and remain in control without time, which is past and future, so it perceives the timeless Now as threatening. Time and mind are in fact inseparable.

Imagine the Earth devoid of human life, inhabited only by plants and animals. Would it still have a past and a future? Could we still speak of time in any meaningful way? The question, “What time is it?” or “What’s the date today?” – if anybody were there to ask it – would be quite meaningless. The oak tree or the eagle would be bemused by such a question. “What time?” they would ask. “Well, of course, it’s now. The time is now. What else is there?”

Yes, we need the mind as well as time to function in this world, but there comes a point where they take over our lives, and this is where dysfunction, pain, and sorrow set in.

The mind, to ensure that it remains in control, seeks continuously to cover up the present moment with past and future, and so, as the vitality and infinite creative potential of Being, which is inseparable from the Now, becomes covered up by time, your true nature becomes obscured by the mind. An increasingly heavy burden of time has been accumulating in the human mind. All individuals are suffering under this burden, but they also keep adding to it every moment whenever they ignore or deny that precious moment or reduce it to a means of getting to some future moment, which only exists in the mind, never in actuality. The accumulation of time in the collective and individual human mind also holds a vast amount of residual pain from the past.

If you no longer want to create pain for yourself and others, if you no longer want to add to the residue of past pain that still lives on in you, then don't create any more time, or at least no more than is necessary to deal with the practical aspects of your life. How to stop creating time? Realize deeply that the present moment is all you ever have. Make the Now the primary focus of your life. Whereas before you dwelt in time and paid brief visits to the Now, have your dwelling place in the Now and pay brief visits to past and future when required to deal with the practical aspects of your life situation. Always say "yes" to the present moment. What could be more futile, more insane, than to create inner resistance to something that already *is*? What could be more insane than to oppose life itself, which is now and always now? Surrender to what is. Say "yes" to life – and see how life suddenly starts working *for* you rather than against you.

The present moment is sometimes unacceptable, unpleasant, or awful.

It is as it is. Observe how the mind labels it and how this labeling process, this continuous sitting in judgment, creates pain and unhappiness. By watching the mechanics of the mind, you step out of its resistance patterns, and you can then *allow the present moment to be*. This will give you a taste of the state of inner freedom from external conditions, the state of true inner peace. Then see what happens, and take action if necessary or possible.

Accept – then act. Whatever the present moment contains, accept it as if you had chosen it. Always work with it, not against it. Make it your friend and ally, not your enemy. This will miraculously transform your whole life.

On Becoming Receptive to the Divine

From *Can We Talk to God?*

By Ernest Holmes

No two [individuals] are alike, each has a unique place in the universe of Mind, each lives in It; without It no one could live, for each individual life is rooted in the well-spring of Eternal Existence. We each contact It through our own mentality in an individual way, drawing from It an expression which satisfies us. For instance, we are surrounded by the idea of beauty; whoever dwells upon beauty tends to become beautiful, there will be a grace and charm expressing itself through that person which no one can fail to recognize and appreciate.

If we make ourselves receptive to the idea of love, we become loveable; to the degree that we embody love, we are love. This is why people who love are loved; it does not pay to hate, hate is a human idea; love is a divine verity. If we make ourselves receptive to the ideas of peace, poise and calm, calling upon these divine realities, we find them flowing through us and we become peaceful, poised and calm. We have mental equilibrium and balance.

Try this some day when you feel distraught, discouraged, agitated and irritated. Sit down with yourself – for there is a self within you that is real; no one can ever enter here but yourself, for it is you. Therefore, sit with yourself, that you may meet yourself, that the inner self may talk to the outer self; speak to it, calling it peace, if it is peace you need. Say, “Perfect me within me” – just as though you were talking to a person – or “My peace within me, which is perfect, come forth and express through me,” and musing on this, meditating upon it, being receptive to it – not forcing, not coercing but allowing – you will find that the physical body will relax. Your agitation will disappear, confidence and peace will follow, and balance will be gained.

... Let the unhappy call upon joy; it is indwelling. That joy which sings in the dark and dances in the sunlight; the joy of an eternal sense of completion which must be inherent in the Divine Mind. Let us open our consciousness to its influx, that it may enrapture the soul... This joy already is within.

Let the sad and depressed call upon this wellspring of joy within that it may overflow; we cannot be depressed when we contact its surge. Mind rests in action.

The Spirit is never weary. God does not have to sleep. Let the one who is depleted in vitality call upon the vital force within; it is life energy. “Perfect life, complete life within me” (not somewhere else), “let that within me which is life, force, power, vitality, come forth.” Sense it; listen to it. Receive it. Expect it. Take it.

Brother Lawrence

From A Closer Walk with God

By Jim Rosemergy

In the 17th century, there lived a Carmelite monk named Brother Lawrence who worked in the monastery kitchen. At first he detested his job, but then he decided to do his work in the hope that every act he performed would be done from an awareness of his God. He knew if he was conscious of the Presence in which he lived and moved and had his being, his every act would be sacred. The sacredness would not be because of the act itself or because of him, but because of the divine origin from which the work was performed. Brother Lawrence committed himself to wedding the contemplation of Spirit to his daily tasks. He described the result of his endeavor in these words: "... feeling joy so continual and so great that I can scarce contain them!"

There are precious times when we experience the presence of God. A great peace enfolds us. We are whole, safe, secure, and loved. Something so precious is not meant for a few fleeting moments. We are destined to know this preciousness every moment of every day.

Our souls will not be content with a few moments of peace and joy. We are made to be cups overflowing with living water. We are trees of life bearing fruit in every season. When we consider such things, we draw near to the purpose and heart of life. Through the practice of the Presence, we will not only seek the center of life, we will live from its midst.

Is This an Act of Self-Love or Is This an Act of Self-Sabotage?

From *The Right Questions*

By Debbie Ford

The question “Is this an act of self-love or is it an act of self-sabotage?” is one you must consistently ask yourself if you are committed to having all that you want and you deserve. When you love yourself you feel worthy and deserving of claiming the gifts of this world. Self-love gives you self-respect and the ability to respect others. It gives you the confidence to speak up and ask for what you want. Self-love is the main ingredient in a successful, fulfilled life.

I believe that loving who we are is one of the most difficult yet vitally important tasks that each of us is given in this lifetime. Loving ourselves means loving *all* of who we are – the brilliant and the beautiful, the flawed and foolish, the selfless and self-absorbed, the courageous and fearful. It means loving, honoring, and accepting the totality of our humanity. It means cherishing ourselves and appreciating our individuality and our greatness. When we love ourselves, we accept ourselves as a brilliant piece of architecture that is whole unto itself rather than a project under construction that constantly needs to be fixed, changed, and rebuilt.

Loving ourselves means loving what we believe, loving where we came from, loving our quirks and our handicaps. Each of us comes into this world with particular strengths and weaknesses, and since these aspects of ourselves are more than likely not going to go away, our job is to embrace them all by finding compassion and understanding for the imperfections in our human selves.

Self-love makes us acutely aware of our own needs and supports us in doing whatever it takes to meet these needs on a regular basis. When we love ourselves fully and freely, something magical happens. We teach others, without using words, how to love themselves. We become models of self-love, for our children, our family members, our friends, and our communities. We teach them not only that self-love is a good choice to make but that it is really the only choice. When we give ourselves the gift of self-love, all those around us are touched in our presence and feel deeper levels of love for themselves. Most important, when we love ourselves, we freely allow ourselves to experience the joys and gifts of this world.

What does it mean to choose self-love? It means making choices that you feel good about on a day-to-day basis and being able to look yourself in the eye and know that you did what was best for yourself. It means being proud of your choices and your actions. Loving yourself means making choices that allow you to care for the important person that you are.

...When we engage in self-sabotaging behaviors, we are choosing from our lowest selves rather than our highest. We allow unhealthy underlying commitments to direct us away from our desired destinations. Consequently, we go through our days in a state of distress and unease. When we are self-sabotaging, we deny ourselves our own love, we are scared to death of what other people think of us. We become masters of disguise, always trying to conceal the things we hate about ourselves. We give off the message to those around us that not only don't we matter, but they don't matter, either. When we are self-sabotaging, we deny ourselves the right to have what we want and we unconsciously give other people the false perception that it's okay to deprive themselves of their dreams, too.

Remember, each choice we make moves us either toward our goals or away from them. We can rest assured that if we are not moving in the direction of what we say we want, we are sabotaging ourselves somewhere.

... What if attaining happiness and fulfillment was as simple as going to bed at night after making a list of all the things you did that day that fed your self-esteem and waking up the next morning asking yourself, "How am I going to love and honor myself today?" What if the message of all the ancient gurus, the spiritual teachings, the self-help books, and all the transformational techniques we've created came down to teaching us how to give ourselves the love we try to get from others? What if all there is to do is to love ourselves completely and make new choices today, choices that are an expression of self-love? Before making a choice, ask yourself, "Would someone who loves themselves make this choice? Is this action an expression of someone who honors and cherishes themselves?" Both of these questions will bring you back to the simple question "Is this an act of self-love or is it an act of self-sabotage?"

Honoring Our Experience

By Jane Beach

Rumi reminds us to be gentle with ourselves in the process of awakening:

*If God said,
“Rumi, pay homage to everything
that has helped you
enter my arms,”
there would not be one experience of my life,
not one thought, not one feeling,
not any act, I
would not
bow to.*

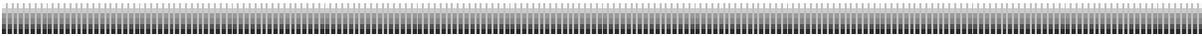
Everything that has been part of our past is important, for it has led us to who we are today. This includes old behaviors, which are outward expressions of inner thinking spawned from beliefs and experiences that happened when we were asleep to our spiritual magnificence. We didn't know how divinely loved we were. We didn't understand the power of our own thinking. Now that a shift in consciousness has cleared our vision, we are no longer victims because we choose not to be victims. We can decide to take to heart the message of "change your thinking, change your life," and make a conscious decision to focus on and be grateful for the positive in life.

Trusting the Greatest Love of All

Our inner wisdom is our personal cheerleader. It whispers, "Pay attention to life. You are capable of finding peace in this very moment, for peace is all around you, and it is alive and well within you; it is who you are. Let yourself be guided so you can feel your vision, understand your potential and accept your gift of happiness." We are so much more than we can see! Like Rumi, we can pay homage to every life experience because each has brought us to God's arms. Gently we let others off the hook as we remember that we can choose to see life with acceptance instead of

resistance. We begin to see ourselves the way Spirit sees us, with unconditional love. Our world changes because *we* change. A spiritual awakening allows us to trust that even though we can't physically see what is around the corner, we can spiritually see it. We can rest assured that whatever it looks like it will be for us, not against us, because it is brought to us by the Greatest Love of All.

It takes as long as it takes to have a spiritual awakening. It took me 50 years, and I'm grateful for every single second of that time, no matter what it looked like. By surrendering into the love of a God that adores us we can choose to look for the blessings in every situation. In Eckhart Tolle's *A New Earth* we are reminded that, "Life will give you whatever experience is most helpful for the evolution of your consciousness. How do you know this is the experience you need? Because this is the experience you are having at this moment." The present moment is when we get to consciously choose our perspective. It is our open invitation to live a life of trust, knowing that the universe is always for us. When we relax into it, the wrinkles of our life tend to smooth out and each step is blessed. In every moment we have the option to choose love. We have the option to choose ourselves.



The Things That Are

From the *Science of Mind* textbook

By Ernest Holmes

The Things That Are

The things that are, were and evermore shall be.

Time, chance and change begone from my thought!

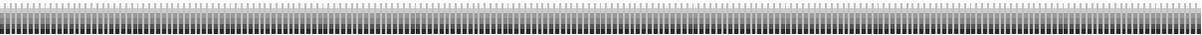
The Changeless is here to stay, and the Timeless cannot
cease from being.

The things that are shall remain,
though heaven and earth should pass away.

I rest secure and safe within the Life of Endless Perfection and Completion.

My whole Being responds to the Realization of the Complete Whole.

I am that which Is.



Home Study for Week 4

READING

- A Return to Love* Ch. 4 pp. 51-62
- Workbook** Week 4 pp. 50-68

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Meditate on the Serenity Prayer

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.*

WRITING (Not to be handed in)

- Complete the exercises in the “Surrender” workbook pp. 59-61.

Week 4

Surrendering to Love

This week

This week we deepen our faith to the extent that we consciously choose to surrender into God's peace, power, and love. We realize that we are accepted unconditionally. Even on days when we have said and done things we regret, The Beloved thinks we are nothing short of magnificent! Nothing we do could ever turn Its love away from us. This week we practice relaxing, resting in God's grace.

... The Principle of Intelligence directs us, the Presence of Love warms us, the Peace of God covers us.

- Ernest Holmes

Surrender allows us to face the thing we fear before it becomes a reality.

- Iyanla Vanzant

Faith is a magnetic power that draws to us our heart's desire from invisible spiritual substance. It is a deep inner knowing that that which is sought is already ours.

- Charles Fillmore

Once we get to the point where we realize that God is love, we understand that following God simply means following the dictates of love.

- Marianne Williamson

According to your faith be it unto you.

- Matthew 9:29

This Thing Called You: Faith

From *This Thing Called You*

By Ernest Holmes

“Who loses his life shall find it.” Since the whole teaching of Jesus was that God is Life, he could not have meant that you should actually lose your life, but that you should let go of the lesser in order to experience the greater. This is not a bad bargain. If you lose a sense of unhappiness you will become happy. If you lose a sense of confusion you will be at peace. If you could become consciously and subjectively aware, even for one moment, of your true spiritual perfection, there would come such a conversion of your mind as instantly to heal your physical body.

This is not the easiest thing to do. When you are in pain it is difficult to affirm peace. When you are in want it is hard to affirm abundance. But this is the true meaning of losing your life. What you lose is a false sense of being.

You are trading the unreal for the real, the false for the true. If you wish to be happy, take all the unhappiness out of your mind and bury it. If you want God, stop thinking about the devil. If you wish to live in the kingdom of heaven, forget hell.

You are to find the roots of your life in pure Spirit, to see the basic unity of all – the fundamental mathematical and logical necessity of such a unity. Lose your sense of being separated from your good and you will find that you are united with it.

This is the secret you have with the God who is ever with you. He already knows what you are trying to find out.

The next time any obstacle appears on your path, try to realize it is not an entity, person or self-created condition. It is not true to the larger life within you. Satisfy your mind that it is not a thing in itself. Cease fighting it and begin to realize its opposite. Know there are no obstructions in Spirit and that you already are Spirit. Begin to identify yourself with the Truth which knows no obstruction. Begin to claim your divine inheritance.

Say:

I know there is no negation in God.

I know that God is always right where I am.

I know that at the center of my being there is a positive affirmation of life.

My word erases anything within me that denies the presence of this Life.

There is One Life, that Life is God, that Life is my life now.

There is nothing in me that can deny the presence of this Life.

Everything within me affirms Its presence.

I have an inward sense and feeling of this Divine Presence at all times.

When everyone believed the world to be flat they did not flatten the round world. When one man made up his mind that the world was really round, he did not resist the flat world because he knew there was no such world. He set out to sail around the world he knew to be round. Through his act of faith he discovered the truth about the round world. The fear and superstition of others did not deter him. The accumulated experience of the race could not bind him. The belief that the unknown oceans were filled with monsters did not frighten him. He knew the world was round and that he could sail around it.

You have discovered the spiritual universe. Many others have discovered this same world, but each must make the discovery for himself. You are going to have a lot of joy sailing around this world of yours. Don't fight the opinions of others, or waste your time arguing over these things. Follow the inward gleam of your consciousness and you will arrive.

Whatever you identify yourself with you will become like. Whatever you resist until you make a reality, you will also become like. Therefore, "... resist not evil and it will flee from you."

Don't fight your fears, see through them. There is nothing in God's world to be afraid of.

Say:

I know there is a spiritual center within me which is perfect.

I am now telling my own consciousness automatically to ward off any thoughts of doubt or uncertainty.

I sense that every state of doubt, every consciousness of negation is leaving me.

Every doubt is being converted into certainty.

Fear is being converted into faith.

I have an abiding sense of happiness and peace.

I have an inward confidence in my own oneness with Good.

I rest in sublime trust.

Living the Serenity Prayer

By Jane Beach

Have you ever looked back on a time of great challenge and realized it was really a blessing? What's that about?! Our human minds are set up to believe that when things are going well we should be happy, and when they are not we have reason to be upset. Then along comes the spiritual awareness that we have choice, blowing that old thinking right out of the water. Instead it is replaced with a discovery that deep within each of us is a place of calm ... a center of inner peace. It is available to us always, and when we tap into it our life heads down a new road – a path of joy and fresh beginnings.

We tend to discover our spiritual nature when life's challenges hit and we don't know what to do. There is something enlightening about making mistakes, hitting the proverbial brick wall and running out of answers. It's often when we grow the most. We have an endless well of loving direction just waiting for our attention. Those challenges may become blessings because finally we allow ourselves to listen.

The Serenity Prayer is a reminder to accept the serenity that dwells within us. Gently whispering our name, our inner wisdom seeks ways to help us notice that we are more than our human reasoning, experiences and emotions. The love that is our true nature sends us messages of hope and possibility in every circumstance. The Serenity Prayer is our cue to pay attention.

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.*

God ...

The first word is God – it's the beginning, the end and everything in between. If you don't like the word God, toss it out and choose a new one. Call it Spirit, Life, Love, Higher Power, Harry or Harriet; it makes no difference. No matter what you call it, there it is. I call it the Beloved or the God that adores me because that's the way I

know it ... powerful yet gentle energy made of unconditional love. Everywhere present, it is the breeze caressing my skin and tousling my hair. It is the chair, couch, pillow or hillside upon which you sit right now, reading these words. The air we breathe is the air of wisdom. I am part of it, and so are you. Because we are each magnificently unique we will all sense it differently, glorying in experiences that are personal to each of us.

What a gift to know that a center of peace and limitless potential exists within us! It is the spot of knowing that has never been hurt, has never felt shame, has never been afraid, and always moves us toward our greatest happiness. It is our soul ... inner wisdom ... intuition ... gut instinct. When we don't know what to do, it's the part of us that does know. Gently, it opens our eyes to old beliefs or patterns of behavior that have kept us from remembering who we are. When we allow our own inner magnificence to guide us, we open the spiritual door that lets in the first word, God. The road to serenity follows.

... grant me the serenity ...

Serenity is ours by right of birth. We were born from it; it is our true essence, and yet sometimes we fail to remember. It's easy to get caught up in day-to-day life, forgetting there's more to us than the outside face we show the world. Spirituality is a great reminder! Spirituality is about belonging – belonging to ourselves and belonging to the whole of everything around us. It's the experience of living life fully, owning a life which is real and authentic, celebrating mistakes and successes as natural parts of the growth process. Instead of focusing on what is wrong, we center our thoughts on the indwelling God, our source of serenity. We say the Serenity Prayer to remind us that we can choose where to put our focus. If we want to have inner peace, we practice having it in every single circumstance of our lives, from cleaning the clutter out of the car to practicing patience while sitting in traffic.

Serenity becomes our reality when we embody the sure knowing that life is on our side, and whatever is in front of us is happening for us instead of happening to us. Every situation becomes an opportunity to be who we want to be. When we stay focused on God, inner peace comes because we fill our minds and hearts with ways to look for the good, even when it's a stretch. We surround ourselves with people who will give us the chance to practice. The choice is ours to make – we can either be a victim or not. In any given circumstance, ask yourself, “Do I want to be right, or do I want to be happy? Will I choose to judge the other person wrong, or will I look past the behavior to see their Truth? Will I set boundaries with love, remembering that I too, have made mistakes? Will I choose to see through eyes of acceptance, allowing inner peace to become my focus? Will I remember that we are all God's cherished ones, including everyone in this situation?” Is creating harmony in your life easy? No, not at first, but it gets easier. Is it worth it? Yes, because whether you believe it or not, you are worth it.

... to accept the things I cannot change ...

The things we can't change are everything that doesn't belong to us, which is a lot! One thing we can count on is that life is full of changes ... always. If we are miserable or frightened beyond measure, it will ease. If we are blissfully happy, that will shift, too. It's our perception of the situation that is creative; our actions come from that. The event itself is rarely as important as who we are in it.

Try as we might, we have probably learned that controlling others doesn't work very well. Most of us have had times when life felt out of control, so we tried to direct and manage those around us in order to make ourselves feel safe. We have been hurt and often we have hurt others. How many of us have cried out to God to save us, only to think we are not being heard? We add God to the list of those who have wronged us. Those were the days when we lived life unconsciously, not knowing that we have choice. The catch is, once we know, we can't un-know the Truth of our spiritual nature. Acceptance awakens the owning of our life and the beauty of what is possible.

Seeking the Kingdom is not something that happens outside of us; it is a state of consciousness. When God created, it did so with no expectation, instead giving us unconditional freedom. In doing so, God experiences itself as us, through us, no matter what our life looks like. Spirit's love holds us in the despair of our darkest secrets and in the joy of our greatest triumphs. It will not step in to save us if we are taking the wrong path because there is no wrong path! There is nothing we can ever do that will turn God's love away from us. When we keep our attention on Spirit we begin to embrace ourselves, warts and all. The walls of victimization start to tumble down as we take responsibility for our perspective and subsequent actions, allowing others the dignity of being responsible for theirs. Keeping our focus on the Divine instead of our problems, everything falls into place in ways we could never have dreamed! Such is the promise of a spiritual life ... one that is without limits.

Courage to change the things I can ...

Opening up to our spiritual nature, we become conscious of the power of our own thinking. If we see the world as a hard place, we get to be right – life is hard. Because thought is creative, if we have chosen to be a person of peace, many situations will pop up in life to give us an opportunity to practice. How will we know if we are peace if we don't test it out? The Serenity Prayer offers us the courage to change the things we can, and it's up to us to take it. Every circumstance is an opportunity to ask, "How can I grow from this situation? What quality of God do I need to be in order to have peace of mind - kindness, compassion, patience? What could the benefits be if I moved through this situation in a new way?" Always, we can start a new day. Having made a mistake we can say, "Ah, I goofed. Do I need to make

amends?” If the answer is yes, then do so, and then let it go. Start a new day from that point forward.

We choose all the time! When I first became aware of our Religious Science tools, I decided to practice gratitude as I stood in a very long line in the post office. First I made the choice to stay in line instead of walk away in a huff. Then I began a game. In my head I made an alphabetical list of everything I was grateful for, beginning with the letter “A”: **A**pples, juicy and sweet, filling my tummy when the old me would be thinking of cake instead; **B**ooks, a place to escape when I want to hibernate from the world awhile; **C**hoice, my powerful new tool that reminds me I don’t have to be a victim; **D**irt, glorious dirt under my fingernails as I plant flowers which will flourish in my care... and so on. Then I had a dilemma! I was only on “W” by the time I neared the front of the line, and how fast can one go through X, Y and Z? I thought I would need to let people go in front of me in order to finish! I was almost giggling out loud as I realized what was happening. In reality, my life was in turmoil at this point, and I rejoiced in this gratitude game – it was a beginning ... a starting point ... a conscious choice, and it worked!

Since then I’ve practiced consciously choosing. When I have a situation I’m really upset about, I’ve learned to remind myself, “You don’t have to like the situation, but it is imperative that you like yourself in it.” Watching my words and actions, I walk away from it saying, “Good for me! I didn’t say what I was thinking, nor did I let my body language give me away. I actually paid attention to my own inner wisdom!” And my life has changed. It requires patience, perseverance and growing self-esteem. If we remember to make conscious decisions six times and forget three times, good! Old habits have been with us a long time, and it takes practice to adopt new ones.

Walking a spiritual path tends to bring up past beliefs and hurtful memories. In fact, they may show up again and again. When they first surface we may cry, “I thought I was getting better! What is this about?” Don’t be dismayed, this is not regression. Those old hurts reappear because we are getting stronger. Each time they show up, along with the resentment, anger or self-judgment that accompanies them, it is Spirit’s invitation to look at them from a place that is more centered than the time before. Though we may be a mess for weeks or months the first time we process that painful memory, we find the courage to stay the course. Our inner wisdom gently reminds us that we are like the onion with its multiple layers to be peeled back to find the sweetness inside. Although not easy, it is an honor to look at old wounds with a fresh perspective that is guided by Love. Finding the courage to change the things we can, we begin to see the process with gratitude. By the sixth or seventh (or seventeenth!) time that past experience shows up we may say, “Ah, there you are, old friend, I know who you are. Thank you for reminding me of who I used to be. I let you go now with love,” and finally it’s done.

... and the wisdom to know the difference.

Have you ever had a moment when you were filled up with how good it feels to be alive, for no particular reason? Trusting life will do that to you! The most important thing we can do to find the wisdom to know the difference is to stay focused on the first word of the Serenity Prayer, which is God. Fostering a personal, intimate relationship with a God of our understanding, one which we have learned to trust, helps us take responsibility for our life. We begin to appreciate our human experience, no matter what it looks like. Letting go of the need to control, we release our grip on people and situations around us, understanding that they have their own walk with Spirit. Embraced by the power of the indwelling God, we begin to see anew. A question may surface, “If God loves me unconditionally, isn’t it time I begin to love myself the same way?” Slowly we learn to accept our own beauty, just as we are. After a while, we look around to find that the universe has reflected our new thinking, filling us with reasons to be grateful. Life is happier and gentler now, and there is so much living to do!

Somewhere along the path of our spiritual awakening, we have surrendered to the wisdom and love that is our true reality. We know we will be guided through our day by a power that knows only good, and we let go of the need to control what comes our way. We wake up in the morning requesting, “Use me today. Whatever shows up I will walk through with grace. I will know the difference between what is mine and what isn’t, and I will act accordingly. Today I choose to look at myself gently, with loving acceptance. I choose to see others the same way. Starting this minute I will own my life and live it fully.” We have come full circle. In the enlightened awareness that allows us to take control of our life, we can now surrender to a God that adores us. Tasting the sweetness of “the wisdom to know the difference,” we are living the Serenity Prayer.

Surrender

What does “surrender” mean to you spiritually?

What does the Serenity Prayer have to do with surrender?

What is difficult about surrendering?

What are the benefits?

Tell about a time you surrendered ... let go ... gave it to the God of your understanding. What were the circumstances? What process did you use to “turn it over” to Spirit? What was the experience like for you? How did it feel? What was the outcome?

An Uncommon Dialogue

From *Friendship with God*

By Neale Donald Walsch

I just need a tool now. A tool with which I can create a real friendship with You at last.

I'm giving you those tools, right here.

Yes. You are. Even before I've asked, You've answered.

As always.

As always. So tell me, how can I learn to trust?

By not having to.

I can learn to trust by not having to trust?

That's right.

Help me here.

If I don't want or need anything from you, do I have to trust you for anything?

I suppose not.

You are correct.

So the highest level of trust is not *having* to trust?

You are correct again.

But how can I get to a place of not wanting or needing anything from You?

By realizing that it's already yours. That whatever you need is already yours. That even before you ask, I will have answered. Therefore, asking is not necessary.

Because I don't have to ask for what I already have.

Exactly.

But if I already have it, why would I even *think* I needed it?

Because you don't *know* you already have it. It is a matter of perception.

Do You mean that if I perceive that I need something, I do?

You will *think* that you do.

But if I think that God will meet all my needs, then I will *not* “think that I do.”

That is correct. That is why faith is so powerful. If you have faith that all your needs will always be met, then, technically, you have no needs at all. And this is the *truth*, of course, and it will be your experience, and so your faith will be “justified.” Yet all you will have done is change your perception.

What I expect is what I get?

Something like that, yes. Yet the true Master lives outside the space of expectation. He expects nothing and desires nothing more than what “shows up.”

Why?

Because he already knows that he has everything. And so he happily accepts whatever part of Everything it is that shows up at any particular moment.

He knows that it is all perfect, that life is perfection, playing itself out.

Under these circumstances, trust is not required.

Or, to put it another way, “trust” becomes “knowing.”

Yes. There are three levels of awareness around everything. These are: hope, belief, and knowing.

When you have a “hope” about something, you are wishing that it is true, or that it will happen. You are not certain, in any sense of the word.

When you have a “belief” about something, you are thinking that it is true, or that it will happen. You are not certain, but you *think* you are certain, and you continue to think so unless something to the contrary appears in your reality.

When you have a “knowing” about something, you are clear that it is true, or that it will happen. You are certain, in every sense of the word, and *you continue to be certain* even if something to the contrary appears in your reality.

You judge not by appearances, because you *know* what is so.

So I can learn to trust You by knowing that I don’t *have* to trust You!

That is correct. You have come to a knowingness that the perfect thing is going to occur.

Not that a particular thing is going to occur, but that the perfect thing is going to occur. Not that what *you* prefer is going to occur, but that which is *perfect* is going to occur. And, as you move toward mastery, these two become one. Something occurs, and you prefer no occurrence other than what is occurring. It is your very preferring of whatever is occurring that renders that occurrence perfect. This is called “letting go and letting God.”

A Master always prefers what occurs. You, too, will have reached mastery when you are always preferring what is occurring.

Honor Yourself with Surrender

From *One Day My Soul Just Opened Up*

By Iyanla Vanzant

It is very dangerous to believe that once you get on the spiritual path, you will be able to see everything that everyone does in a spiritual light. It is foolish to believe that you will always be able to bless your enemy, and think good thoughts about people regardless of what they do. You will not always have the presence of mind to rub your head with crystals, repeat your affirmations, or pray for the good of someone who has angered you. What you can do, however, when rage, fear, or any other negative emotions engulfs your mind and being, is surrender. Admit what you feel. Feel it and then give it up. You must surrender before you engage the influence of the negative. The issue is not that you experience the emotion. The issue is what you do in response to the emotion. When you are on a spiritual journey, surrender is what you must do.

I learned to surrender in the process of buying a home. I realized I had avoided the process because I was afraid of exposing myself to strangers. I was afraid of being judged because I had an *unattractive* credit report. I had convinced myself that no one would give me a mortgage because of my history of financial responsibility. When I finally realized that I was afraid to face the questions, the judgments, the rejection I expected to be the result, I had to surrender. I had to admit that I was afraid. I had to allow the fear to work through my brain. I had to feel the rejection, and from that position I had to trust that whatever happened would be good. I had to surrender the shame, the fear, the guilt of exposing my past unconscious deeds to some strange person who had the authority to judge me worthy or unworthy of owning a home. Surrender is the active reminder that there is a divine law in operation, and that we are always accountable to the law. Surrender is an admission that we cannot make anything happen. However, if we are in alignment with the law, we will always get what we deserve. If we are not in alignment, it simply means we must do the work to make ourselves so.

Surrender allows us to face the thing we fear before it becomes a reality. The fear of being wrong. The fear of losing control. The fear of being found out. Most of the time, the thing we fear has absolutely no power, yet we brace ourselves for the worst possibility. In that defensive posture we keep our minds fixed on what could or might happen. The fear of facing that imaginary negative outcome is what keeps us paralyzed. Surrender places us in the offensive position. It gives us the opportunity to plan, and to move according to the plan. When we surrender, we mentally go to the

end, through the thing that we fear, which in effect releases fear thoughts from the mind. It helps you realize that no matter what happens, you will be able to handle it. Surrender helps you to become willing to live through the experience, without giving your entire life over to it. It also makes room in your heart and mind for the Divine to give you a new idea. A new thought. When you surrender, give up the fear thoughts, and give up the control of a situation, you open the way for a miracle to take place.

... I submitted an application to a mortgage company, and when I was rejected, I made a plan by which I paid off all outstanding debts. There are still certain experiences about which I become angry and frightened, but now I know how to surrender. There is a little prayer I recite when I know I need to surrender. I will share it with you in the hopes that it will bring you as much release as it has brought to me.

Dear God:

At this very moment I find myself in the midst of _____. I know that this is not for my highest good. I know that this is not a reflection of your Divine Will. I ask you to remind me how to transform this experience into something that is a reflection of You and my true self. I ask for You to fill my heart and mind with Your divine influence, so that I will be in alignment with Your perfect plan for me... there is nothing outside of You that has any power over me. I forgive myself for allowing this situation the right to exist, and I surrender it to You. Thy will, not my will, be done. And So It Is!

Let Me Remember

God is in control,

I cannot make anything happen.

Thy will, not my will, is done in the perfect way at all times.

The Divine Presence in me cannot deny Itself any good thing.

SURRENDER will eliminate fear.

SURRENDER will eliminate anger.

I must be willing to do the work to overcome the fear.



Be Still and Know

From the *Science of Mind* textbook

By Ernest Holmes

Be Still and Know

“Be still and know that I am God.”

I am still in Thy Presence.

I am quiet and peaceful, for I put my trust in Thee.

A great stillness steals over me and a great calm quiets my whole being,

as I realize Thy Presence.

The heart knows of Thee, O Most High within.

It is still in Thy Presence, and it puts its whole confidence in Thee alone.

In Thy Presence I am still.



Home Study for Week 5

READING

- A Return to Love* Ch. 5 pp. 65-83
- Workbook** Week 5 pp. 70-85

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- At least once a day be in the stillness as you feel God’s love within you and around you, loving you exactly as you are.
- Before you go to bed at night write at least 5 things you are grateful for, and then end with, “I am proud of myself because _____.”

WRITING (Not to be handed in)

- Complete the exercises in the “The Gift of Forgiveness” on workbook pp. 71-76.

Week 5

Forgiving What Is

This week

This week we open our minds and hearts to forgiveness ... the willingness to be at peace. We give up demands about how the past should have been, and in doing so we let go of anger and resentment. We choose instead to learn from the past and then get on with living our glorious life today, filled with gratitude for every small miracle ... especially the miracle of us!

When we are in the midst of loss, or betrayal, or crisis of any kind, there is power in the words, 'Be still and know I am.' Truth can never be destroyed.

- Marianne Williamson

When you forgive, you in no way change the past - but you sure do change the future.

- Bernard Meltzer

Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.

- Mark Twain

It has been said that the continuation of the species is due to man being forgiving.

- The Mahabharata

The holiest of all spots on earth is where an ancient hatred has become a present love.

- The Course in Miracles

The Gift of Forgiveness

From *The 21-Day Consciousness Cleanse*

By Debbie Ford

You have to pray to be released from the toxic poison of your mind so that you may be free to transcend the limitations of your past. You must give up all your old ways of thinking, being, acting, and behaving in order to form new patterns of life based on who you know you can be rather than who you've been in your past. And you cannot do this until you release your ties to those who have harmed you, left you, deceived you, or hurt you in any other way.

As you open up to higher realms of love, peace, and joy, you see that the ticket into these levels of reality is *forgiveness* – your next agent of change. Without forgiving all those you have harbored bad feelings toward, you continue to be imprisoned by your past. If you do not cut the cords of resentment, you will be held captive by the very people you are trying to get away from. Without activating into this most powerful agent of change, you will continually have hooks binding you to the incidents that caused the resentment in the first place. Because the outer world is a reflection of your inner world, these hooks throw out energy and will ensure that you re-create, in other situations, the same bad feelings you are holding on to inside yourself. Who wants to do that? It's bad enough that you have been hurt so deeply that you still remember the event for days, weeks, years, or decades, but then the kicker is that your grudges become your jailers, locking you into thought patterns, habits, and feelings that deny you your soul's expression.

Unknowingly, your resentments define who you are and who you can be in the future, because you can be only as great as the size of your heart. And if your ability to love from deep in your heart is clouded by the experiences of the past, you are in a lose-lose situation. You first lose your freedom when something penetrates your emotional body and affects you so painfully. And you lose again when you decide to hold on to the bad feelings instead of turning them into powerful fuel for the future.

Resentment and grudges are the culprits that cause you to remain in the cycles of self-abuse, negativity, and victimhood. They lodge inside you, causing you to lose touch with your inherent worth, your joy, and – more important – your God-loving heart. To live in the present moment and open yourself to every new great experience to come, you must forgive the past and leave it where it belongs – in the past. Today you have to fight for your freedom just as so many before you have done. The fight now is not so much with your outer restrictions, although there are many, but with

the inner confines that keep you trapped in the ugly, barren prison of your mind and your heart. As you say good-bye to the grief, resentments, and disappointments that shape your thoughts, that create your feelings, that cause you to react instead of act, to fight instead of surrender, to shut down instead of open up, to push away rather than allow in, and to judge instead of love – as you say good-bye to all this, you will discover that every person, situation, and painful incident comes bearing gifts. The gifts are often hidden from you until you take the courageous step into forgiveness. Although I don't believe that it is a process you can engage in at will, you can begin invoking this heart-healing agent of change by asking God to be your guide and your supporter. You can ask the powers that be to show you the gifts that you may mine from the darkness of your hurt heart. You can ask God to give you access to a larger perspective so you can see why you chose to go through what you went through in this lifetime.

Cleansing Rituals

- Identify the grudges, resentments, and disappointments you have been carrying around with you.
- Calculate how long you have been holding on to those grudges and resentments – how many minutes, hours, days, months, years or decades.
- Identify the cost of holding on to them. Does it cost you energy, vitality, self-esteem, intimacy?
- Tracing your grudges back to specific incidents and experiences, identify how you took personally the hurt these incidents caused you.
- If these experiences were designed to deliver you some wisdom or some gift, what would that be?
- Allow yourself to see what would become available to you if you allowed God to take your grudges from you. What could open up in your life that isn't open to you right now?
- Write a letter expressing your feelings and asking God to release you from the prison of your resentments, grudges, and disappointments.

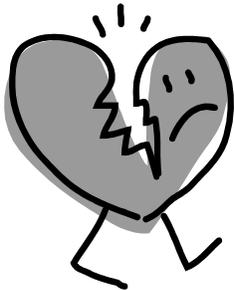
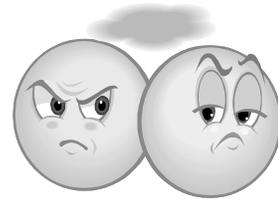
Use the next few workbook pages to participate in each of the cleansing rituals for forgiveness.

Identify the grudges, resentments, and disappointments you have been carrying around with you.



Calculate how long you have been holding on to those grudges and resentments – how many minutes, hours, days, months, years or decades.

Identify the cost of holding on to them. Does it cost you energy, vitality, self-esteem, intimacy?



Tracing your grudges back to specific incidents and experiences, identify how you took personally the hurt these incidents caused you.



If these experiences were designed to deliver you some wisdom or some gift, what would that be?

Allow yourself to see what would become available to you if you allowed God to take your grudges from you. What could open up in your life that isn't open to you right now?



Write a letter expressing your feelings and asking God to release you from the prison of your resentments, grudges, and disappointments.

Do you want to be angry or do you want to be happy?

From *Smile for No Good Reason*

By Lee L. Jampolsky, Ph. D.

Ironically, I just spent a good deal of time writing this section when my computer unexpectedly shut down, losing all of my work. After staring in disbelief at my darkened screen my first reaction was anger and blame. My anger was initially directed toward my antiquated computer for not working, and thus ruining my morning. My second reaction was to blame myself – for not saving the information, and for not coughing up the money for an updated computer long ago.

Does this sound like I was happy? Obviously not. But despite what part of my mind wanted me to believe, the real reason I was not happy had nothing to do with the unexpected event.

My unhappiness was due to the thoughts I was having, *not* the event that occurred. This was good news, because then I could do something about being unhappy.

When something goes “wrong” in life, your first reaction might be similar to mine: anger and blame. I, as you, can attest that neither of these will lead to being happy. They may lead to feeling right, dominating, or self-righteous, but don’t confuse these feelings with happiness.

To be happy, it is important to learn to let go of blame and anger as quickly as possible. This is not to say that you should expect to never experience anger, or that if you do you have failed on your spiritual path. Rather, the intention is not to be taken by your anger and thus abandon your inherent happiness.

When my dog has a splintering, sharp bone in her mouth and I try to take it away, she chomps down harder. She does not recognize how dangerous it is for her. Humans and anger are much the same as dogs and bones. I have been amazed by how many people don’t want to let go of anger, even when it is depriving them of living a full life. This is because the fearful part of our minds, our ego, tells us that our anger will keep us safe. The ego states that without anger, we will be taken advantage of, become unmotivated, and appear weak. If you look closely at the belief

you will discover it is quite insane. *Holding onto anger actually keeps you unhappy, feeling alone, and unsafe.*

You may protest, “Well, I have every reason to be angry!” From one standpoint, who doesn’t have reasons to be angry? It is certainly not difficult to look around this world and find plenty to be very angry about. Many arguments are even about who has the greatest reason to be angry. What a waste of time! Would it not make more sense to spend your time arguing for your happiness?

Though you may not realize it, you are always choosing between two ways of perceiving: Looking to the world for reasons to be upset, or looking to your heart, to God, for reasons to be happy. I guarantee you will find what you are looking for.

To quote the Dalai Lama: *“The only factor that can give you refuge or protection from the destructive effects of anger and hatred is your practice of tolerance and patience.”* Try to remember:

Patience and tolerance bring you happiness.

Anger and hatred bring you suffering.

If you find yourself stuck in anger, I suggest taking these three steps.

First, say to yourself, “I don’t want this. There is another way.” You may want to recognize the suffering your anger has caused you by closing your eyes and picturing yourself during times when you have been very angry. You may also want to recognize the suffering of those who have directly and indirectly received your anger. Don’t do this to make yourself feel guilty. Do it to help make your decision to do something different.

Second, ask yourself, “Who am I angry with, and what are the ways they must have suffered in their lives?” Asking this sincerely will allow your heart to open to compassion and your mind to develop patience. You might also ask yourself, “What is the anger and lack of forgiveness costing me?”

Third, ask yourself, “What is human nature and what is God?” This step is larger, and can also be of benefit during times when you are not angry. I believe that when we do this, we begin to see that humans are inherently loving beings, having been created by a loving and forgiving God. Often, we become lost and forget who we are. Being lost we become fearful, and often find ourselves in endless cycles of attack and defense. The response that will bring us home is not anger and upset, but love and understanding.

It is interesting how if you are open and willing to release your anger, what first appeared to be wrong in your life can be transformed to a gift. Before my computer

went off and I lost my information, I was trying to think of a story to illustrate the choice between anger and being happy. Now I have one.

Look to your heart and find reasons to be happy

instead of looking to the past

and to the world for reasons to be upset.

Are Your Potatoes Heavy?

Author Unknown

A teacher once told each of her students to bring a clear plastic bag and a sack of potatoes to school. For every person they refuse to forgive in their life's experience, they chose a potato, wrote on it the name and date, and put it in the plastic bag. Some of their bags were quite heavy.

They were then told to carry this bag with them everywhere for one week, putting it beside their bed at night, on the car seat when driving, next to their desk at work.

The hassle of lugging this around with them made it clear what a weight they were carrying spiritually, and how they had to pay attention to it all the time to not forget and keep leaving it in embarrassing places. Naturally, the condition of the potatoes deteriorated to a nasty smelly slime. This was a great metaphor for the price we pay for keeping our pain and heavy negativity! Too often we think of forgiveness as a gift to the other person, and it clearly is for ourselves!

Life is a Miracle

From *Attitudes of Gratitude*

By M.J. Ryan

*The Zen master Ling Chi said that the miracle is not
to walk on burning charcoal or in the thin air or on the water;
The miracle is just to walk on earth. You breathe in.
You become aware of the fact that you are alive.
You are still alive and you are walking on this beautiful planet...
The greatest of all miracles is to be alive.*

- Thich Nhat Hanh

Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk who now lives in exile in France.

[*A long-term exile, he was given permission to make his first return trip to Vietnam in 2005 and has returned regularly since.*] While living in Vietnam, he endured all kinds of hardships, including the killings by either the French, American, or Vietnamese military of family members and friends. An orphanage that he started was bombed. And yet he is a walking example of joy and gratitude. When asked how he survived such difficulties with such peace and love in his heart, he replied that every morning he used to ask himself what he could count on that day; sometimes it was only the blue sky and the brown earth, and the fact that he was still breathing in and out. But in counting his blessings, so to speak, he reconnected to the miracle that he was, at least for the present moment, still alive in this beautiful world. “Suffering is not enough. Life is both dreadful and wonderful,” he reminds us. “How can I smile when I am filled with so much sorrow? It is natural – you need to smile to your sorrow because you are more than your sorrow.”

Buddhist and Sufi teachers spend a lot of time talking about “waking up,” by which they mean, I think, living life to its fullest because we are aware of living it moment to moment. Aware of breathing in, aware of breathing out, aware of chewing and swallowing our food, aware of placing one foot in front of the other when walking.

Aware of seeing your infant son, of the effect of your words on a coworker, of the fact that your one foot is resting on top of the other.

Spiritual leaders teach that waking up is a process, that it doesn't just happen once and for all, but must occur again and again when we realize we have forgotten the miracle of being alive, and in recognizing our forgetfulness, we wake to the miracle once again. In the moments we are awake to the wonder of simply being alive, gratitude flows, no matter our circumstances.

When times have been tough for me, I have done a similar practice to Thich Nhat Hanh's. Before getting up in the morning, I have asked myself what I could count on that day, both externally – that I had a place to live and food on the table, and internally – the deep love and trust, for example, that I feel for my friends.

It's a wonderful antidote to worry and opens you to gratitude, provided that you really stick to what you can count on today. Sometimes I would find myself, for instance, when I thought about the fact that I had a house, saying, "Yes, but I don't know if I can afford it tomorrow and what if the earthquake strikes, and ..." Then I would choose to stop and say, "This is just for today. What can you count on today?" As we learn how to appreciate the miracle of being alive, we will find the peace and the strength to face life's challenges as they come.

I Am Free of Problems

From *Creative Ideas*

By Ernest Holmes

There is a power operating through, a presence inspiring, an intelligence guiding, and a law of good sustaining you. Upon this presence, this power, and this law, you may place complete reliance.

Because you live in this divine presence, and because it is in you, you may know that the creative law of good, which is infinite and which has all power, can do for you or bring to you anything and everything necessary to your complete happiness and the solving of your every difficulty. Its whole and only desire for you is one of freedom and joy.

I know that freedom from problems, whatever they may be, and a new joy are mine today. This freedom and joy spontaneously express themselves in my experience. There is nothing in me that can obstruct their passage. I permit them to flow through me in all their wonder and might.

I am conscious of an infinite wisdom directing me. Whatever I ought to know, I shall know; whatever I ought to do, I shall do. My every thought and decision is molded by infinite Mind and expressed through law into my experience. My problems and difficulties are dissolved and melt away as I now declare that the action of intelligence makes all things right in my life.



The Everlasting Arms

From the *Science of Mind* textbook

By Ernest Holmes

The Everlasting Arms

His Arms enfold me, His Strength upholds me,

His Presence fills me with Life and Joy.

I shall nevermore be sad nor depressed,

for I know that I do not walk Life's path alone.

There is One Who goes with me and tells me all the things that

I should know.

There is a Presence with me guiding me

into the Perfect Way.

I rejoice in knowing that I am not alone.



Home Study for Week 6

READING

- A Return to Love* Ch. 6 p. 91-176
- Workbook** Week 6 pp. 86-102

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Each day contemplate Ernest Holmes' meditation "The Power Within Blesses All" on workbook p. 101.
- Reflect on how the Power of Love and Life blesses your life and how you, in turn, bless everyone with whom you come in contact.

WRITING (Not to be handed in)

- Complete the exercises on "Compassion" on workbook pp. 92-96.

“Dear God, I surrender this relationship to you,” means “Dear God, let me see this person through your eyes.”

- Marianne Williamson

Week 6

Choosing to Love

Love is the ability and willingness to allow those that you care for to be what they choose for themselves, without any insistence that they satisfy you.

- Dr. Wayne Dyer

This week

This week we look at our relationships as a Divine reflection of how we see ourselves. As we begin to see ourselves the way God sees us, we recognize and honor our own needs and values, and say yes to them. Our self-esteem jumps up to say, “Hurray, it’s time! Thank you!” As we cultivate compassion for others, we do the same for ourselves. This week we choose love in every sense of the word.

If you judge people, you have no time to love them.

- Mother Teresa

You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.

- The Buddha

To be wronged is nothing unless you continue to remember it.

- Confucius



This is Friendship

By Mary Carolyn Davies

I love you, not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you.

I love you, not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are
making of me.

I love you for the part of me that you bring out.

I love you for putting your hand into my heaped-up heart, and passing over all the
frivolous and weak things that you cannot help seeing there, and drawing out into
the light all the beautiful, radiant things that no one else has looked quite far enough
to find.

I love you for ignoring the possibilities of the fool in me and for laying firm hold of
the possibilities of good in me.

I love you for closing your eyes to the discords in me, and adding to the music in me
by worshipful listening.

I love you because you are helping me to make of the lumber of my life, not a tavern,
but a temple, and of the words of my days, not a reproach but a song.

I love you because you have done more than any creed could have done to make me
happy. You have done it without a touch, without a word, without a sign. You have
done it by being yourself.

And after all, perhaps this is what being a friend means.



Hide and Seek

From *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*

By Robert Fulghum

In the early dry dark of an October Saturday evening, the neighborhood children are playing hide-and-seek. How long since I played hide-and-seek? Fifty years; maybe more. I remember how. I could become part of the game in a moment, if invited. Adults don't play hide-and-seek. Not for fun, anyway. Too bad.

Did you have a kid in your neighborhood who always hid so good, nobody could find him? We did. After a while we would give up on him and go off, leaving him to rot wherever he was. Sooner or later he would show up, all mad because we didn't keep looking for him. And we would get mad back because he wasn't playing the game the way it was supposed to be played. There's *hiding* and there's *finding*, we'd say. And he'd say it was hide-and-seek, not hide-and-GIVE-UP, and we'd all yell about who made the rules and who cared about who, anyway, and how we wouldn't play with him anymore if he didn't get it straight and who needed him anyhow, and things like that. Hide-and-seek-and-yell. No matter what, though, the next time he would hide too good again. He's probably still hidden somewhere, for all I know.

As I write this, the neighborhood game goes on, and there is a kid under a pile of leaves in the yard just under my window. He has been there a long time now, and everybody else is found and they are about to give up on him over at the base. I considered going out to the base and telling them where he is hiding... Finally, I just yelled, "GET FOUND, KID!" out the window. And scared him so bad he probably wet his pants and started crying and ran home to tell his mother. It's real hard to know how to be helpful sometimes.

A man I know found out last year he had terminal cancer. He was a doctor. And knew about dying, and he didn't want to make his family and friends suffer through that with him. So he kept his secret. And died. Everybody said how brave he was to bear his suffering in silence and not tell anybody, and so on and so forth. But privately his family and friends said how angry they were that he didn't need them, didn't trust their strength. And it hurt that he didn't say good-bye.

He hid too well.

Getting found would have kept him in the game. Hide-and-seek, grown-up style. Wanting to hide. Needing to be sought. Confused about being found. “I don’t want anyone to know.” “What will people think?” “I don’t want to bother anyone.”

Better than hide-and-seek, I like the game called Sardines. In Sardines the person who is It goes and hides, and everybody goes looking for him. When you find him, you get in with him and hide there with him. Pretty soon everybody is hiding together, all stacked in a small space like puppies in a pile. And pretty soon somebody giggles and somebody laughs and everybody gets found.

Medieval theologians even described God in hide-and-seek terms, calling him *Dues Absconditus*. But me, I think old God is a Sardine player. And will be found the same way everybody gets found in Sardines – by the sound of laughter of those heaped together at the end.

“Olly-olly-oxen-free.” The kids out in the street are hollering the cry that says, “Come on in, wherever you are. It’s a new game.” And so say I. To all those who have hid too good:

Get found, kid! Olly-olly-oxen-free.

How to Attract Friends

From *Creative Mind and Success*

By Ernest Holmes

The man who has learned to love all people, no matter who they may be, will find plenty of people who will return that love to him. This is not mere sentiment, and it is more than a religious attitude of mind; it is a deep scientific fact, and one to which we should pay attention. The reason is this: As all in Mind, and as we attract to us what we first become, until we learn to love we are not sending out love vibrations, and not until we send out love vibrations can we receive love in return.

One of the first things to do is to learn to love everybody. If you have not done this, begin to do so at once. There is always more good than bad in people, and seeing the good tends to bring it forth. Love is the greatest healing and drawing power on earth. It is the very reason for our being, and that explains why it is that people should have something or somebody to love.

The life that has not loved has not lived; it is still dead. Love is the sole impulse for creation; and the man who does not have it as the greatest incentive in his life has never developed the real creative instinct. No one can swing out into the Universal without love, for the whole universe is based on it.

When we find that we are without friends, the thing to do is at once send our thought out to the whole world – send it full of love and affection. Know that this thought will meet the desires of some other person who is wanting the same thing, and in some way the two will be drawn together. Get over thinking that people are queer. That kind of thought will only produce misunderstanding and cause us to lose the friends that we now have. Think of the whole world as your best friend; but you must also be the friend of the whole world. In this way and with this simple practice you will draw to you so many friends that the time will be too short to enjoy them all. Refuse to see the negative side of anyone. Refuse to let yourself misunderstand or be misunderstood. Do not be morbid. Know that everyone wants you to have the best; affirm this wherever you go and then you will find things just as you wish them to be.

The atmosphere created by a real lover of the race is so powerful that although his other shortcomings may be many, still the world will love him in return. “To him who loveth much, much will be forgiven.” People are dying for real human interest, for someone to tell them that they are all right. Which person do we like the better: the one who is always full of trouble and faultfinding, or the one who looks at the

world as his friend and loves it? The question does not need to be asked; we know that we want the company of the person who loves and loving, forgets all else.

The only reason we think other people are “queer” is because they do not happen to think as we do. We must get over this little, petty attitude and see things in the large.

The person who sees what he wants to see, regardless of what appears, will some day experience in the outer what he has so faithfully seen within.

From selfish motives alone, if from no loftier reason, we cannot afford to find fault or to hate or even to hold in mind anything against any living soul. The God who is love cannot hear the prayer of the man who is not love. Love and co-operation will yet be found to be the greatest business principle on earth. “God is Love.”

We will make our unity with all people, with all life. We will affirm that God in us is unified with God in all. This One is now drawing into our life all love and fellowship. I am one with all people, with all things, with all life. As I listen in the silence the voice of all humanity speaks to me and answers the love that I hold out to it.

This great love that I now feel for the world is the love of God, and it is felt by all and returned from all. Nothing comes in between because there is nothing but love to come in between. I understand all people and that understanding is reflected back to me from all people. I help, therefore I am helped. I uplift, therefore I am uplifted. Nothing can mar this perfect picture of myself and my relations with the world; it is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I am now surrounded by all love, all friendship, all companionship, all health, all happiness, all success, I am one with life. I wait in the silence while the Great Spirit bears this message to the whole world.

Compassion

From *The Art and Practice of Loving*

By Frank Andrews, Ph. D.

Compassion is a way to interpret someone. With compassion you see the person's behavior against the broader plight in which he or she lives. Compassion departs from the world of good or bad people or good or bad deeds, the so-called realistic world that is taught by the media and reinforced in our everyday conversations. To be compassionate, you warm the way you interpret the incidents in your relationship and give up being locked into the cold, hard story as *the only true* story. This is so even if that story is obviously true, and everyone you know agrees with you that it is true.

An event never demands a particular meaning. Because meaning is the experience of relationship, you are free to create an event's meaning with any story that relates it to something else. If your husband once broke your confidence, this incident does not demand that you brand him as untrustworthy and thus a bad person. It does not mean that your relationship or your life is ruined because of the breach of trust. You could view him, for example, as a man who, like so many other men before him, let the little boy inside get the better of his judgment in order to gain attention, approval, or pleasure. You could give up condemning him for his boyish qualities, some of which you might actually find delightful.

However negative your circumstances, there are compassionate viewpoints and stories, perhaps less dramatic, to tell about the same incidents. You do not have to give up your current interpretation. Just be willing to put others up alongside it, to take away some of its force and show there is a choice.

View the Other Person with Compassion

If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Reflect on how your subject came to be the way he is or was. Think about his birth, his genes, his parents and family, and what it was like for him as a child. See him as a typical fallible, confused, struggling human – like you. Consider the society in which he was born and raised, his culture, his environment, the whole history that brought him into your life and made it natural for him to behave as he did.

See him in reflection to *his* life, rather than yours. See him as he saw himself. Describe some of the negatively charged events from his viewpoint. See his hopes and fears, securities and insecurities, blessings and handicaps, sensitivities and insensitivities, goals, joys, and sadnesses. Do the same for his parents and the other people important to him. See how the mistakes made by one generation of fallible people were passed on to the next generation, and so on until he came along.

Be sure to appreciate those qualities in him that you like. See that his behavior, however obnoxious, was fully human. We are all flawed, all succeeding and failing, striving and slacking off, always adding to the great statistical average that is humanity.

Compassion does not mean giving up your knowledge that your subject hurt you. All you give up is the dramatic dwelling on how wrong his actions were. Compassion means you interpret his behavior in light of a broad understanding of his humanness, of how humans tend to hurt and disappoint others. You can understand how natural it was for this particular person to behave hurtfully. Unfortunately, you happened to be in his way when he did it.

Rewrite the Other Person's Story

Truth is that which works.

- Buddha

This is a practice in compassion. You deliberately rewrite the story of one or more of the major incidents involving your subject. You change the circumstances from what *actually* happened to what might *ideally* have happened. Based on your compassion for her, you imagine her behaving in the best way possible, in a way that would have really worked, that would have caused what your compassion tells you she would have wanted if only she had been open and loving instead of closed and fearful.

If your subject is your parent, retell the incidents the way you wish you had been parented. Beneath the abuses, judgments, fears, and lies is the love that your parent wanted to share in the first place. Let her express that love now, in your imagination. Play with it, visualize it in its many details. Taste it, smell it, feel it, see it.

Whenever the actual incident comes to mind, put your rewritten incident up alongside it. Have compassion for your subject's inability to create the ideal alternative. Dwell on the alternative instead of the *actual* event. Credit the person with good intentions, with wanting the loving alternative, but with having failed to find the way.

Rewrite the other person's story as an exercise in compassion.

Rewrite Your Own Story

Experience everybody (or everything) in your life as either a teacher or a lover.

- Ken Keyes, Jr.

All events hold lessons if you actively look for them. Any time you encounter something you think you simply cannot love, that is a message to look for the lesson – one is in there someplace.

This is a practice in compassion for yourself. Through it you can learn the lessons available in your relationships. Again, you imagine yourself in the same incident, only this time you respond, behave, think, and feel in the ways you now feel would have been best. If you were to go through the same experience again, only this time mature, self-confident, independent, and enlightened, how would you act? Put no limitations upon yourself; give yourself whatever abilities are called for. Go beyond merely wishing the experience away; do not say, for example, “The lesson I learned is never to trust men, so I wouldn’t have been there with him in the first place.” Instead, put yourself there, have him do what he did, but change the way *you* responded.

Now, you will have at least three stories with which to interpret this incident – one in which you have rewritten your story, one in which you rewrote the other person’s story, and the original one that led to your being upset.

Challenge the logic in your usual story that keeps you in self-pity (“how unfairly I have suffered”), anger (“you should not have done that”), or depression (“I’m rotten and it is hopeless”). For example, you might be telling yourself, “It’s unfair that I had parents as cruel as these.” If so, respond with, “Of course it’s unfair, but the world is unfair. Some kids will have winners for parents, some will have losers, and most kids will have ordinary parents.” Having gone through your events with this person, having had lessons (perhaps hard ones) and having learned from them, what can you do now to have more compassion and love more deeply?

Rewrite your own story on the next page of your workbook, as an exercise in compassion.

Filling the Hole in the Soul

From *Don't Be Nice, Be Real*

By Kelly Bryson, MFT

I used to think that the need for approval was a misunderstood need for appreciation. In other words, the need for approval is the need for feedback that we are contributing to someone's well-being. But now I think we just need honest feedback about how we are affecting the life around us, for better or worse. This information can help us to make an informed choice about what we want to do about it and how to live our lives. This helps in the process of graduating from seeking others' approval, to meeting needs. We can then choose to meet others' needs when it fits for us, and our own needs when it does not.

One way we get approval is by shutting down or hiding our own needs. I remember being proud when the aunt who raised me would tell other people, "He's such a good boy" (this was before I hit my teen years). "He's such a good boy" meant that I was able to suppress almost all my needs, and never ask for anything. Of course, this had a cost. I developed tremendous resentment, which I acted out by stealing money from my aunt, and eventually running away from home, permanently.

A fun question I like to ask people is, "Do you want to be real or resentful? Are you willing to be honest about your needs or do you prefer to ignore your needs and take the resulting frustration out on yourself and others in destructive ways?" Your body and being will choose one or the other, consciously or unconsciously.

What's Your Default Setting?

Many people think by default. Instead of trying to get clear for themselves what their values are, they default to whatever their ministers, husbands, wives, or parents think. One problem with this kind of thinking is that it never leads to much satisfaction. Sure it fulfills other peoples' agendas, but never the individual soul's agenda for a fully lived life. It leaves us with that "hole in the soul" feeling that many of us spend a lifetime trying to fill, with addictions and achievements.

Another kind of *default* thinking is this: when anything goes wrong, or any time you are not happy, you start thinking about who's at fault. For example, if you are bored with your life, your *default* setting kicks in and you think: "God, my wife is boring, maybe I need a new one." Or the computer starts to go on the blink and you ask,

“Honey, have you been messing with the computer?” Someone always has to be at blame when your inner computer has been programmed with a *default* setting.

Milk Every Compliment

If what we truly need is feedback, not approval, then what do you do when others compliment us? Compliments are one of the great joys in life and an important way of learning about how we are affecting others. Too often jackal thoughts – like, “I do not deserve this compliment,” or “They must be trying to get something from me,” or “Oh my God! How do I respond to this?” – block us from receiving the energy and knowledge that would increase our sense of self-worth. It also prevents the giver of the compliment from having the joy of having their gift received. We can instead train ourselves to honor, celebrate and enjoy compliments.

When someone says to me, “Great workshop!” I almost always ask “Wonderful! What did you like about it?” ... When we had finished, I felt a deep sense of relief, and confidence that I truly had contributed to life. I was very glad that I had not just said “Thanks for the compliment.” I am grateful I took the time to take it in, and empathize with the gratitude I was being offered. When I have talked to people later about how they felt about how I “took in” their compliment, I frequently hear things like, “I felt honored that you would take the time to receive my gift.” Or, “I felt really heard, and that my compliment was genuinely appreciated.” When someone gives you a gift package and you take the time to open it and pull out the shirt and put it on, it is a great gift back to the giver.

Fall in Love Again and Again

From *Attitudes of Gratitude*

By M.J. Ryan

Choose thy love. Love thy choice.

- German Proverb

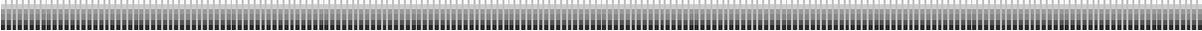
Why is it that we can be so kind, tolerant, and loving to people we barely know and so demanding, cold, and downright mean to those who are the closest to us? Somehow, by virtue of daily exposure, all the wonderful traits in your beloved that attracted you in the first place become invisible, and every flaw and imperfection looms large. We get so focused on all that we want from our partner but don't have that we can't see the beautiful person who is available to us in this present moment.

I once knew a therapist who claimed that she had discovered a whole new way to improve relationships. Rather than having couples or parents and kids talk out their problems, she claimed that she had better results from having people send a loving, grateful thought to the other person every time they felt themselves getting annoyed or angry. I tried it at home. When I found myself about to say to my husband, "Why can't you say something interesting?" I would instead focus on something I was grateful for: "I love the way he treats people so gently." What was amazing was how everything changed. He got more interesting and more loving. Now, whether it was because I changed my attitude and we were not fighting or being caught in hurt feelings, or that my blessing him actually enhanced those qualities in him, I can't say. Nor, frankly, does it matter. The point is that appreciating the good makes the good blossom.

Noticing what you love is a mental habit that anyone can learn. Hypnotherapist Milton Erickson used to teach this practice. He said he could get anyone to fall in and out of love with anyone else. All you do is this. Look at a person and find five things you can't stand, for example, their laugh, the way they smell, the way they put down someone, the fact that they make a mess when eating, the scum on their teeth. Then find five things you love: the shape of their hands, their big blue eyes, their generosity with material objects, their sense of humor, the way they speak to their kids. For one week, every time you meet someone, do this practice. Soon you'll

discover that you *can* affect the way you feel toward someone by choosing to focus on what you like.

Then bring this ability home. Become an expert at switching from negative to positive when you find yourself on a mental rant about your mate, and see what happens in your life.



The Power Within Blesses All

From the *Science of Mind* textbook

By Ernest Holmes

The Power Within Blesses All

The Power within me is blessing all mankind, and is
forever healing all with whom I come in contact.

The Power within me is God,
and It must bless and help and heal all who come near It.

Silently the work goes on,
and silently all are being helped by this Inner Power
which is operating through me.

I will give thanks that my Power within is silently blessing and helping
everyone to whom my thought reaches.

The Life within me blesses all mankind.



Home Study for Week 7

READING

- A Return to Love* Ch. 7 p. 179-222
- Workbook** Week 7 pp. 104-124

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Each day contemplate and journal on the question, “What is my dream?”

WRITING (Not to be handed in)

- Complete the exercises on “The Privilege of Owning Yourself” on workbook pp. 105-114.

God gives some more than others because some accept more than others.

- Ernest Holmes

Week 7

Owning Our Life

There's no more potent way to thank God for your gifts, or to increase them, than by sharing them. You will be given as much power in the world as you are willing to use on His behalf.

- Marianne Williamson

This week

This week we are courageous! We take a good look to see if our lives are congruent – do our actions match our words? We look at our willingness to follow God's will for us in every area of our life, particularly the areas of career/creativity and finances. We consider our deepest fear, "... that we are powerful beyond measure." Saying yes to life, we stand tall, ready to accept the privilege of owning ourselves.

God is our source. A consciousness of God is our supply.

- Jim Rosemergy

With unfailing kindness, your life always presents what you need to learn. Whether you stay home or work in an office or whatever, the next teacher is going to pop right up.

- Charlotte Joko Beck

The Privilege of Owning Yourself

By Jane Beach

My first experience of God was one of profound peace. I have come to understand that the reason it was such a life-changing experience is because I focused on it instead of shrugging it off or getting busy doing something else. Instead I paid attention to the experience, and I didn't turn away from it until I finally realized it was God. From that point forward I knew God was real, and I've been turning towards It ever since.

I wonder how many times The Beloved had made Itself known to me before in big ways and I didn't even notice? Little did I know that because of that moment of paying attention a shift in consciousness had happened, and along with it a willingness to say yes. My life was in motion; I was getting ready to be propelled forward in ways I couldn't have ever imagined! My dance with the Divine had begun.

Divine Discontent

You may have heard of the term Divine discontent. Divine discontent is different than being annoyed or frustrated. Annoyance comes from wanting someone else to change so that you will feel better. If they straighten up their act, life will be a lot easier! Divine discontent is different – it's your part, your responsibility. It is about you awakening to your own potential; you alone are the one that has to do the changing. Something is urging you forward to be all you can be. No longer can you settle for life as it was before. You begin to take next steps, following your inner guidance while the universe opens up to create a space for your success. It's not always easy. Just as sure as you let Divine discontent propel you forward, you can bet that others will notice the difference in you. Some will rejoice for you! For others, the change in you is uncomfortable because you are not playing the role you have always played, the one that is predictable ... the one that makes them comfortable.

Divine discontent at work, the new you may find an increasing need to let go of some of your physical stuff. Your very human side might argue, "Do I just get rid of my prized collections, after I had so much fun accumulating them all these years? Why is it that suddenly they feel like clutter in my life?" Your tastes begin to change, too. "How does it happen that today I often turn off the TV to read a spiritual book or take a walk instead of watching all those DVD's I used to enjoy? What about my old friends? Am I supposed to leave them behind? And yet I continually find myself

making excuses instead of being available when they call. What is this? Something within me is certainly transforming, and I don't know what to do about it!"

Owning Yourself

"The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself."

- Friedrich Nietzsche, the 19th century philosopher

Ever since I knew God was real, I have found myself going against the tribe. The stronger my connection with the Beloved became, and the more I allowed myself to be led, the more I went against conventional thinking. I became a spiritual rebel, causing more than a few to raise their eyebrows and ask, "Is she okay?" They spoke to me personally and with each other behind closed doors. These were people who truly cared about me, and they were worried.

- When I began going to church my family sent my daughter to check it out to see if it was a cult.
- My hefty tithing caused my tax person to advise that I put that money "where it can make some money."
- I left my 30-year marriage, moving into my own home for the first time. "Do you really think she can take care of herself? Won't she be lonely living alone?"
- I quit cooking. "How do you eat?"
- During the holidays I no longer decorated my house. "Aren't you even going to get a Christmas tree?"
- I quit taking vacations at my parent's cabin in the Sierra Mountains. "But you have always loved it there!"
- I left my 20-year teaching career. "How in the world can you even consider walking away from your career? You aren't even of retirement age yet! What will you do?"
- I started jogging each morning. "Well, at least that's healthy!"
- I started a vegetarian diet. I didn't even tell my family about that one for two years!
- Often, when I spoke about God, I became so filled with Its presence that tears overflowed as I talked. "Should she seek professional help?"

Still I moved forward, paying attention only to the God that adores me, surrendering into whatever was next for me. In the unrest of shifting relationships, I would pause to ask myself, "How important is the privilege of owning myself? Is it worth challenging the beliefs, values and customs of the tribe ... my family, friends, co-

workers? How about the ‘tribe’ in my head? Am I willing to look at my own opinions, thoughts and judgments?”

Trusting The Beloved was, and is, more important to me than anything else. I choose to follow Its lead. Never in my wildest dreams would I ever have expected that as a former atheist, I would have become a minister, and yet here I am. Now I get to talk about Spirit constantly (they pay me for it!) and my life has never been happier. People feel comfortable in my presence because I’m comfortable with myself, whether I’m laughing or crying.

Trusting the Presence

My life has been profoundly changed ever since that day when I felt God’s presence as peace and made a conscious choice to keep my focus on It. As I continued to seek the Presence, my relationship has been nurtured by a love so great that it holds me when I am despairing and dances with me in my joy. It’s my guidance, my lover, my secret source of contentment. It takes time to foster such a relationship. Well, Spirit has my time! When I am given new direction, I simply say “Yes” and do it, whether it makes logical sense or not. I have now surrounded myself with people who understand my faith and trust. Instead of worrying about me, they join me!

Guess what? I still overflow with tears when I am filled with the Presence. It often happens on Sundays, and I just talk right through it. My congregation is used to it – it gives them license to be real. I am blissfully happy living alone, grateful for my independence. My body is healthy, a by-product of my vegetarian diet, which was a spiritual choice. In un-cluttering my life I have found time to write; it’s fun! Who knows what else is next? Whatever it is, sign me up! It will surely be for my highest good and for the good of everyone else. God doesn’t have favorites, because we are all Spirit’s favorites!

Life changes once you accept your own potential, your own inner beauty, your own walk with the Divine. It is our option to pay attention to the Love that is forever seeking us. In every moment we can either turn away or not. The reason I have the experiences of the Beloved that I have is because, except for the times I forget, I don’t turn away from It. We will all see and experience the Divine in different ways. If you give yourself time to cultivate the relationship, you will get to know your own unique relationship with the God of your understanding. It will be as real to you as breathing.

Saying Yes to Life

When you pay attention, your human life becomes extraordinarily happy. As you live fully in the moment, you are guided from a place of eternal wisdom. You know what to do and how to do it, and you reach potential that you could never have imagined! It's as if Life opens up so you can have all the glory! You will find that the glory consists of honoring the small things in the present moment ... the feel of wind on your face, a sense of compassion for another, the sacredness behind everyday duties like cleaning the cat litter box or dropping off the dry cleaning. Your actions become the manifestation of your connection with the Divine. Even when you need to do something you wouldn't choose to do, you do it willingly and with a sense of peace. As you let go of resistance, you once again open the door to perfect guidance, and your relationship with Spirit gives power and meaning to the thing you are doing. Everything becomes blessed as it brings you right back to your experience of a God that adores you.

Feeling a pull away from what is familiar can be scary, and at the same time the stirring within you compels you to do so. Divine discontent is one of life's great blessings, a natural part of spiritual awakening. Past patterns and behaviors are no longer who you are; you really are changing! Divine discontent urges you to move in a new direction that requires faith and trust, for there is more for you to know, do and be. It is the next step in your spiritual journey, and if you try to bring along everyone and everything from your past, you won't make room for the new. In your faith, you will be given the courage to go against the tribe when you are called to do so. In your courage, you will say yes to life. In saying yes to life, you enjoy the privilege of owning yourself, the most treasured gift of all.

In what areas of your life are you absolutely content? Why?

In what areas are you less content? Why?

Where does Divine Discontent come in?

“The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.”

What does this mean to you? How does it apply to your life?

**What part of your spiritual essence must you embrace in order to move forward?
(Wisdom, Courage, Faith)**

What must you release/let go? (fear, resentment, guilt)

What are your next steps?

Action / Doing Mother Teresa

From *Wisdom of the Ages*

By Wayne Dyer

There should be less talk; a preaching point is not a meeting point.

What do you do then?

Take a broom and clean someone's house.

That says enough.

- Mother Teresa

A nun who was a history and geography teacher and headmistress in Calcutta, Mother Teresa was called to leave the convent to help the poorest of the poor and live among them. In 1950 she and her helpers established the Missionaries of Charity.

The most effective way to teach anyone what we would like them to know is through behavior, not words. Often endless hours are spent in conversation, expressing our frustration about what we find objectionable, and verbally exchanging insults and examples of what is so exasperating. The desired change does not materialize and you still experience the anguish of being mistreated.

It may be true on some level that communication is the key to successful relationships, but often it seems that the more words are exchanged, the less successful the outcome. This can be true with significant others, family members, employers and employees, even your own children.

Mother Teresa, the diminutive spiritual giant who worked daily in the streets of Calcutta, seeing “Jesus Christ in all of his distressing disguises,” as she puts it, offers us some professional wisdom in her briefly spoken advice. “There should be less talk,” there should be more action on your part. Words that are not backed by action

become simply a “preaching point” and nothing more. If you want to make a point, you may need to create a “meeting point” with new and effective behavior. The old aphorism, “I hear, I forget; I see, I remember; I do, I understand,” applies not only to what you want to learn, but also to how you wish to be treated. Obviously you cannot learn how to swim by simply listening to the words of others, or watching other people in the water. You must do it in order to know it. And this same concise logic applies to the folly of endlessly exchanging words as your only means of communication.

... We all seem to suffer from the inclination to discuss our problems endlessly. We put together committees to study problems and go to the committee meeting to talk about all the reasons that something probably cannot be done. People of action are not inclined to join committees and listen to ad hoc reports. I recall reading about Lee Iacocca, the automotive executive known for his impatience with excuses, whose leadership brought two of the largest automobile companies in the world to places of preeminence. When he asked his engineers to build him a prototype convertible car, which hadn't been done for many decades, he kept hearing reasons in the form of words about why this wasn't feasible to produce, and what all of the engineering problems were. Finally, in exasperation, he ordered them to “just take a car and cut the damn top off of it, and let me see it.”

People of action, those who make a difference in life, those whom we most admire, all seem to know the truth of the ancient wisdom, “What you do speaks so loud, I can't hear what you say.” Be a doer. And in the process you will do more to teach others and to bring fulfillment into your life than all the words in the dictionary could ever convey.

Are You Willing to Prosper?

From *Even Mystics Have Bills to Pay*

By Jim Rosemergy

It is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom, but are we willing to receive? With our words, we say we want all that God has for us, but our closed hands betray us.

Often when I speak about prosperity, I begin the lesson by holding up fifty dollars and saying, "Who deserves this fifty dollar bill?" It is amazing, but only a few hands go up. I invite the first person I see with a raised hand to come forward and take the money. Then I say: "Why wasn't everyone's hand up? How do you expect to receive the wonders and riches of the kingdom of heaven if you do not believe you deserve fifty dollars?"

One Closed Hand

The truth is that often we do not feel deserving. We think we are unworthy, and therefore, in subtle ways, we say no to God and to the most basic prosperity. Sometimes we carry a sense of guilt and punish ourselves by refusing to receive. Since Spirit does not force Itself upon us, there is nothing God can do until we say yes. God waits until we raise our hands.

In 2 Kings 4:1-7, there is a wonderful story about the importance of receptivity. A man who used to work for the prophet Elisha has died, and a creditor has come to take the widow's sons in payment for a debt. Elisha arrived and asked the woman what she had. She told him, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house, except a jar of oil." Obviously, she considered the jar of oil meager and insufficient to pay the debt. The man of God saw it differently. This heavenly sight was the beginning of riches for the woman and her sons.

Elisha said to the woman, "Go outside, borrow vessels of all your neighbors, empty vessels and not too few." The woman did as he said and returned with many containers. She then received additional instructions to close the door (shutting out any negative thoughts or people) and to pour the oil from the small flask into the many containers. The oil flowed continuously until there were no more containers. The message is clear. We receive according to our capacity to receive.

The story concludes with Elisha saying, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debts, and you and your sons can live on the rest.” On the surface, the man of God told the woman she could live on the profits from the sale of the oil for the rest of her life, but this is not true. No prophet of God would consider money from the sale of the oil to be true supply. The “rest” that would sustain the family was not money from the sale of oil, but the spiritual awareness that dawned in them. A person receives according to his or her capacity to receive. This insight is more valuable than precious metals, money, or oil.

Our receptivity is paramount. Spirit will not force Itself upon us, but it is the Father’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom. The kingdom is an awareness of the Presence. It is our supply, but we do not know how to receive it. Often we do not even ask for it. We are too preoccupied with earthly matters. We fail to understand the nature of wealth, riches, and poverty. We cry out for supply, but our hands are closed.

I willingly receive that which is the Father’s good pleasure to give me – the kingdom of Heaven.

Divine Supply is available to me.

...The earthly supply of money, credit, precious metals, and land is not available to everyone; however, all can prosper because everyone can awaken to an awareness of the Presence. This is the love of God in expression. It affirms that we are loved and cherished.

Even when I am in deep despair, bankrupt, or lost at sea with no visible means of support, I can become conscious of the Source. This awareness supplies my needs.

What is the first gift you receive when you become aware of God’s presence? The first gift is a sense of well-being and security.

What is the second gift? The second gift is the meeting of our earthly needs.

Financial Responsibility

From *The Language of Letting Go*

By Melodie Beattie

“When I began recovery from chemical dependency, I had to face my money mess stone cold sober, and I really had a mess,” said one woman.

“I wasn’t able to earn much at first, and it was important to me to make amends. I had past due bills from years before. I needed to try to stay current with my new bills. I had a lot more money before I sobered up. But in time, slowly, gradually, my financial situation cleared up. I restored my credit. I had a checking account. I had a little money in the bank.

Then I married an alcoholic and began to learn about my codependency – the hard way. I lost myself, my feelings, my sanity, and all the progress I had made with my financial affairs. My husband and I opened a checking account together, and he overdrafted checks until I lost the right to have a checking account. I let him charge and charge on my credit card, and he drove that into the ground.

“We borrowed and borrowed to keep our sinking ship afloat – and we borrowed a lot from my parents,” she said. “By the time I began my recovery from codependency, I was again facing a real financial mess. I was furious, but it didn’t matter who did what. I had some serious financial matters to face if that part of my life was ever going to become manageable again.

“Slowly – very slowly – I began to work out of my mess. It seemed impossible! I didn’t even want to face it, it felt so overwhelming and hopeless. But I did. And each day I did the best I could to be responsible for myself.

“One decision I made was to separate and protect myself financially from my husband, the best I could, before and after we divorced. The other decision I made was to face and begin reconstructing the financial affairs of my life.

“It was difficult. We owed over fifty thousand dollars, and my ability to produce income had dramatically decreased. I was grieving; my self-esteem was at an all-time low; my energy was low. I did not know how I would ever untangle this nightmare. But it did happen. Slowly, gradually, with the help of a Higher Power, manageability crept in and replaced chaos.

“I began by not spending more than I earned. I paid back some creditors, a little at a time. I let go of what I couldn’t do, and focused on what I could do.

“Now, eight years have passed. I am debt free, which I never imagined possible. I am living comfortably, with money in the bank. My credit has been restored, again. And I intend to keep it that way.

“I am not willing to lose my financial sanity and security again, ever, for love or for alcoholism. With the help of God and the Twelve Steps, I won’t have to.”

One day at a time, we can be restored in recovery – mentally, emotionally, spiritually, physically, and *financially*. It may get worse before it gets better – because we are finally facing reality instead of dodging it. But once we make the decision to take financial responsibility for ourselves, we are on our way.

God, help me remember that what seems hopeless today can often be solved tomorrow, even if I can't see the solution. If I have allowed the problems of others to hurt me financially, help me repair and restore my boundaries around money – and what I am willing to lose. Help me understand that I do not have to allow anyone else's financial irresponsibility, addiction, disease, or problem to hurt me financially. Help me go on with my life in spite of my present financial circumstances, trusting that if I am willing to make amends and be responsible, things will work out.

Transcending Previous Conditions

From *Creative Mind and Success*

By Ernest Holmes

What if at times we attract something that we do not want? What about all the things that we have already attracted into our lives? Must we still suffer until the last farthing be paid? Are we bound by Karma? Yes, in a certain degree we are bound by what we have done; it is impossible to set law in motion and not have it produce. What we sow we must also reap, of that there is no doubt; but here is something to think about; the Bible also says that if a man repents his “sins are blotted out, and remembered no more forever.” Here we have two statements which at first seem not to agree. The first says that we must suffer from what we have done, and the second that under certain conditions we will not have to suffer. What are those conditions? A changed attitude toward the Law. It means that we must stop thinking and acting the wrong way.

When we do this we are taken out of the old order and established in the new. Someone will say: If that is true what about the Law of Cause and Effect? Is that broken? No, it is this way: The Law is not broken, it would still work out if we continued to use it in the wrong way; but when we reverse the cause, that is, think and act in a different way, then we have changed the flow of the Law. It is still the same Law but we have changed its flow, so that, instead of limiting us and punishing us, it frees and blesses. It is still the Law but we have changed our attitude toward it. We might throw a baseball at the window, and if nothing stopped it, it would break the glass. Here is Law in motion. But if someone catches the ball before it reaches the window, the glass will not be broken. Neither the glass nor the Law will be broken. The flow of Law will be changed, that is all. So can we, no matter what has happened in the past, so transcend the old experience, that it will no longer have any effect upon us. So if we have attracted something that is not best to keep, we will remember that we do not have to keep it. It was the best that we knew at the time, and so was good as far as it went, but now we know more and can do better.

The Law works without variation, so does the Law of attraction work the same way. All that we have thought to do is to drop the undesired thing from our thought, forgive ourselves and start anew. We must never even think of it again. Let go of it once and for all. Our various experiences will teach us more and more to try to mold

all of our thoughts and desires, so that they will be in line with the fundamental purpose of the Great Mind, the expression of that which is perfect. To fear to make conscious use of the Law would be to paralyze all efforts of progress.

More and more will we come to see that a great cosmic plan is being worked out, and that all we have to do is to lend ourselves to it, in order that we may attain unto a real degree of life. As we do subject our thought to the greater purposes we are correspondingly blessed, because we are working more in line with the Father, who from the beginning knew the end. We should never lose sight of the fact that we are each given the individual right to use the law, and that we cannot escape from using it.

Let us, then, go forward with the belief that a greater power is working through us; that all law is a law of good; that we have planted the seed of thought in the Mind of the Absolute; and that we can go our way rejoicing in the Divine privilege of working with the Infinite.



I Keep the Promise

From the *Science of Mind* textbook

By Ernest Holmes

I Keep the Promise

I shall keep the promise that I have made to myself.

I shall never again tell myself that I am poor, sick, weak nor unhappy.

I shall not lie to myself any more, but shall daily speak the truth to my inner Soul,

telling it that It is wonderful and marvelous;

that It is one with the Great Cause of all Life, Truth, Power and Action.

I shall whisper these things into my Soul

until it breaks forth into songs of joy

with the realization of Its Limitless possibilities.

I shall assure my Soul.

Home Study for Week 8

READING

- A Return to Love* Ch. 8 pp. 225-268 and Ch. 9 pp. 271-300
- Workbook** Week 8 pp. 126-140

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

- Try the practice of Mindful Eating on workbook p. 127
- Daily, try meditating on the Prayer from *A Return to Love* on workbook p. 139

WRITING (Not to be handed in)

- Complete the exercises on workbook pp. 132-133 “See a Miracle” by Frank Andrews.
- In your journal make a list of the things that make you happy, especially those things that surprise you!

**** Please feel free to bring light desserts next week. We will enjoy them during the break.***

Week 8

Living Our Dream

This week

This week we are filled to the brim with choosing happiness, knowing that it is a conscious decision. Honoring every single aspect of our lives, we choose to see the glass half full in every situation. By turning to the God of our understanding in every situation we choose love ... we choose peace ... we choose happiness ... we choose to live our dreams.

The more time we spend with the Holy Spirit, the greater our capacity is to focus on love.

- Marianne Williamson

Life is a mirror and will reflect back to the thinker what he thinks into it.

- Ernest Holmes

Your future depends on many things, but mostly on you.

- Frank Tyger

I trust that everything happens for a reason, even when we're not wise enough to see it.

- Oprah Winfrey

Peace between countries must rest on the solid foundation of love between individuals.

- Mahatma Gandhi

Mindful Eating

From the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

These instructions came to us from Buddhist teachers, but similar practices are found in traditions across the world.

Practicing mindfulness during a meal gives you an opportunity to experience food and the act of eating as you may have never experienced it before.

Pause before your meal and examine your food with all your senses, noticing the color, shape, feel, smell, and taste of your food. As your meal unfolds in silence, tasting, chewing, swallowing, and digesting slow down and take on new dimensions.

This is also a convenient practice, as eating is an activity you will hopefully do every day! It's a great way to explore how daily activities can be changed by mindfulness.

Sit quietly, with a straight spine. Notice the sensations in your body. Note anticipation of eating. Slowly begin to put food on your plate. Pay close attention to the color, the aroma, the size of the portion. Notice thoughts in your mind.

Set your plate in front of you. Look carefully at the food.

Slowly place the food in your mouth, notice the explosion of flavor and sensation of the food in your mouth, on your tongue. Notice all the flavors: the bitter, sour, sweet, salty, mild, hot.

Chew slowly, noticing the change in the texture, flavor, and sensations. Notice your thoughts. Notice the changes in your body as you swallow the food.

If you are impatient, simply notice that and continue chewing and swallowing slowly and mindfully.

Occasionally pause, put down your fork, and simply notice the sensations in your body and the thoughts in your mind.

At the end of the meal, take a few mindful moments before getting up. Enjoy!

Living in the Present

From *Creating Health*

By Deepak Chopra

Health is the only thing that makes you feel that now is the best time of the year.

- Franklin Adams

Yesterday is but a dream, tomorrow is but a vision. But today well lived makes every yesterday a dream of happiness and every tomorrow a vision of hope. Look well, therefore, to this day.

- Sanskrit proverb

Have you ever heard someone say, “Worry causes aging”? There is tremendous truth to it. Everybody has seen people, “turn gray overnight” when they underwent a financial or emotional crisis. What exactly is this pattern of thoughts we call worry? It seems to have a powerful ability to poison many hours of our existence; we could even say that worry causes aging because it speeds up time. Worry is obviously a certain habit of thought. It is fretting about something that has already happened in the past or about something that we fear will happen in the future. Worry does not deal in the present.

Let us look first at the past. No one has discovered a means of altering the past. Once a thing has occurred, there is no way to change it. It is indelibly and irrevocably recorded; time has carried it off beyond anyone’s efforts to make improvements. Dwelling on past mistakes or injuries is unproductive. It is also harmful, because it releases into your system all kinds of toxic substances that raise blood pressure and strain the heart. The strategy that disarms worry is to recognize past mistakes for what they are, learn from them, and then leave them in their permanent home, the past. Devoting one’s attention to the present requires a healthy realization that the past is gone forever. Worry is the psychological refusal to face this. What makes it a seemingly inevitable part of living is that mistakes, injuries, grudges, and the acts of injustice leave an impression on the mind and seep into the physiology through the psycho-physiological connection.

The second kind of worry is fixated on the future. It is caught up in avoiding pain by futilely trying to control the future. A medical colleague of mine, an internist, furnished me with a compelling example of this style of thought. He had been

treating a woman for the last twenty years, and over that period she visited him twice a year for a complete physical. Whenever she came, she showed a great concern to him about having cancer. Although she displayed no symptoms of the disease at all, she would concoct a series of complaints that forced the internist to run a battery of tests merely to reassure her that she did not have cancer.

This scenario repeated itself year in and year out. Each time, the internist did his best to reassure his patient that she was free of cancer, and each time she left him asking, “Are you sure?” On the last occasion, however, her physician ran his tests and had grim news. He confronted the woman with a confirmed diagnosis of cancer. To which, raising herself up in a kind of triumph, she replied, “I told you so! I have been telling you so for the last twenty years!”

In her worrying, this woman vividly imagined a disease she greatly feared, and what she paid attention to grew. Awareness itself has a way of altering events. Our subconscious mind quite automatically can turn things we vividly imagine into reality. People who worry have convinced themselves that worry is somehow the right *style* of thought for making something bad not happen. In reality, however, attention is attention. If we vividly imagine something we do not want to happen, it is almost certainly bound to happen. Perhaps something “just as bad” happens; it amounts to the same thing. If we must imagine the future at all, it needs to be an imagination of joyful, happy, positive things.

Healthy people, however, live neither in the past nor in the future. They live in the present, in the *now*, which gives the now a flavor of eternity because no shadows fall across it. Worry does not occur in the present. When attention is paid to the present moment, it grows in its own fullness. When a life is spent in ever-successive moments of now, then time is not the psychological enemy of man. The mischief of worry is defeated by appreciation for what life has to give today.

Realizing Oneness ... Upside Down

By Rev. Nancy Worth

From *New Thought: Practical Steps to Your Greater Life*

Edited by Mary Manin Morrissey

... The wheels on one side of my car began to lift off the ground, and the car rolled down an embankment into a cow pasture below.

I thought, “This is it!” and my life began to scroll before my eyes like a motion picture. For a brief moment I realized this really could be it, but then, as the wheels lifted off the ground, I had an incredible inner knowing that, whatever happened, I would be OK. I understood clearly, for perhaps the first time in my life, that I was connected to something much greater than my own little, limited, fearful mind.

I not only felt, but I knew, God was with me, taking care of me, guiding me, protecting me, loving me; whatever happened, I knew it would be OK. What followed was a sense of peace like I’ve never felt before. I was enveloped in a ball of light, and in every cell of my being, I knew all was well.

The next thing I remembered I was hanging upside down. I looked around and realized I was still on this planet. The car had come to rest, and I calmly undid my seat belt, fell to the roof of the car, which was now beneath me, turned off the engine, and climbed out of the back of the car with Bill’s assistance.

A coworker from Silent Unity drove by, realized it was me, stopped, and I knew that as soon as they heard what had happened, Silent Unity would begin prayer. When the officers and paramedics arrived on the scene, they were amazed that I was walking around, calm and in one piece. One officer said, “You are a miracle!” to which I answered, “Yes, I am!”

Since that experience, I’ve come to realize that the time we spend on this planet is an opportunity to begin to understand our relationship with God and, in the process of that relationship, to be transformed. After rolling my car over and walking away without so much as a scratch, a bump, or a bruise, how could I not believe that I was connected to something infinite and very powerful, a presence that is incredibly loving?

Our relationship with our Creator is one of the most important, the most intimate, the most loving relationships we will ever have. We have been given this gift of life, and we are the ones who choose how to use it. Recognizing this gift starts with each one of us inviting the presence of God into every area of our life – not just on Sunday at a church service or in prayer and meditation – but into every relationship, every circumstance, and every experience.

... Maybe we don't have to roll cars over to realize our oneness. Or maybe we do. Whatever your dramatic encounter with Spirit is, open your heart, listen and then follow where it directs you to go or what it tells you to do or be.

The day I rolled my car over, I knew I was connected to something infinite. I realized oneness ... upside down. Sometimes our lives have to be turned upside down to know that God is protecting us and guiding us, all the time.

See a Miracle

From *The Art and Practice of Loving*

By Frank Andrews, Ph.D.

Anyone who doesn't believe in miracles is not a realist.

- David Ben-Gurion

As to me I know of nothing else but miracles.

- Walt Whitman

In this practice you deliberately experience whatever is around you and your own awareness of it as a miracle. A miracle is something extraordinary, something whose existence in your life you do not understand. A miracle is something whose presence you marvel at, something you cannot explain away, whose cause is not obvious or trivial.

If you are willing to approach the world and its so-called explanations with awe, the explanations simply compound one mystery with another. Explanations explain away a mystery only if you give them that power. The question is, Who is the boss? You do not need to cling to what you have been taught by a culture that is still learning how to live richly while dominated by scientific models.

Assume the attitude of awe or wonder, and approach something with that attitude. It could be your toothbrush, the water you use to brush your teeth, or your daily newspaper. Reflect on what caused it to be in your life. View with amazement the many events that brought it to you. The universe and all consciousness in it are caused out of mystery, and all chains of cause and effect lead back to mystery. Cultivate a state of mind in which you use the chain of causes, “This was caused by that, which was caused by something else ...” in order to increase your wonder and delight.

Practice seeing the miraculous in as simple an object as a pebble, and in as complex a creature as a person. Lie on your back and look at the heavens on a clear night, and as you do, know that countless billions of people have done the same before you. Screen your life for miracles and revel in the experience of finding them.

Practice seeing miracles in everything! Where do you see them? What makes them a miracle?

Different Paths to Peace

From *The Ten Percent Solution*

By Marc Allen

There's nothing new to any of this. It's part of the perennial philosophy – something every generation discovers anew, but it's at least as old as humankind. Throughout history, countless individuals taking countless different paths have come to understand the great truths of our lives. Their lives were transformed by this awareness; they moved to much higher levels of consciousness and fulfilled their greatest potential as human beings on Earth.

Christ taught how to attain this level of consciousness, clearly, simply, when he gave us the Lord's Prayer, and when he said,

The Kingdom of Heaven is within.

Christ showed us how to reach that Kingdom as well:

Ask, and you shall receive.

Seek and you shall find.

The key to it is in the new law he gave us, the law that surpasses all others:

Love one another, as I have loved you.

Love your neighbor as yourself.

... There are of course countless other great leaders and teachers who have shown us different paths up the pyramid of consciousness, paths to peace, serenity, fulfillment.

Einstein taught it: He discovered through science what mystics have known forever. He said,

There are two ways to view the world.

One is that nothing is a miracle, the other is that everything is a miracle.

I prefer the latter.

Think about that! Everything is a miracle – that means we're all miracle workers.

... St. Francis gave us a great example of evolution in his simple prayer – and his words are still so important today!

Lord make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand;

to be loved as to love;

for it is in giving that we receive;

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Mother Teresa taught us a simple way to live and to help the world immensely, through her love, working with the poorest of the poor.

... Mohammed was a messenger of peace: The word Islam, in fact, means peace.

... Buddha showed us we can attain a state of serenity, even enlightenment, beyond all fear, beyond all suffering, once we understand the cause of our suffering. His great teaching, his great contribution to humanity, is showing us that the cause of our problems is not out there, in the world – the world isn't doing it to us, other people are not making us angry, other things are not frustrating us. We're making ourselves angry and frustrated, because of what is going on within us, in our minds and bodies.

The cause of our suffering is within – in our resistance to what is, in our attachment to what we have or want, in our thirst for permanence, in our demands that things be different. The cause – and the solution – is entirely within us. You could put it this way: *The kingdom of heaven is within.*

For Something and Against Nothing

From “Sermon by the Sea”

By Ernest Holmes

Find me one person who is for something and against nothing, who is redeemed enough not to condemn others out of the burden of his soul, and I will find another savior, another Jesus, and an exalted human being.

Find me one person who no longer has any fear of the universe, or of God, or of man, or of anything else, and you will have brought to me someone in whose presence we may sit, and fear shall vanish as clouds before the sunlight.

Find me someone who has given all that he has to love, without morbidity, and I will have found the lover of my soul . . . Why? Because he will have revealed to me the nature of God and proved to me the possibility of all human souls.

Find me one person who can get his own littleness out of the way and he shall reveal to me the immeasurable magnitude of the Universe in which I live.

Find me one person who knows how to talk to God, really, and I shall walk with him through the woods and everything that seems inanimate will respond – the leaves of the trees will clap their hands, the grass will grow soft under him.

Find me one person who communes with cause and effect, and in the evening, the evening star will sing to him and the darkness will turn to light. Through him, as the woman who touched the hem of the garment of Christ was healed, shall I be healed of all loneliness forever.

Find me someone who is no longer sad, whose memory has been redeemed from morbidity, and I shall hear laughter.

Find me someone whose song is really celestial, because it is the outburst of the cosmic urge to sing, and I shall hear the music of the spheres.

Find me one person who has so completely divorced from himself all arrogance, and you will have discovered for me an open pathway to the kingdom of God here and now.

Find me somebody who has detached his emotional and psychological ego from the real self, without having to deny the place it plays in the scheme of things and without slaying any part of himself because the transcendence is there also, and I will have discovered the Ineffable in this individual and a direct pathway for the communion of my own soul.

I am talking about you and myself. When I say "find a person" I don't mean to go over to Rome, or London, or back to your own church. The search is not external . . . [These] people all exist in us. They are different attributes, qualities of our own soul. They are different visions; not that we have multiple or dual personalities, but that every one of us on that inner side of life is, has been, and shall remain in eternal communion with the Ineffable where he may know that he is no longer with God, but one of God. If it were not for that which echoes eternally down the corridors of our own minds, some voice that ever sings in our own souls, some urge that continuously presses us forward, there would be no advance in our science or religion or in the humanities or anything else.

Prayer

From *A Return to Love*

By Marianne Williamson

But there is within us One who knows the truth, who has been given by God the job of outwitting our ego, outsmarting our self-hatred. The Christ does not attack the ego; He transcends it. And 'He is within us every moment, in every circumstance. He is to our left and to our right, before us and behind us,' above us and beneath us. 'He responds fully to our slightest invitation.'

With our prayers we invite Him in, He who is already there. With prayer, we speak to God. With miracles, He responds. The endless chain of communication between loved and lover, between God and man, is the most beautiful song, the sweetest poem. It is the highest art and the most passionate love.

Dear God,

I give this day to you, the fruit of my labor and the desires of my heart.

In your hands I place all questions, on your shoulders I place all burdens.

I pray for my brothers and for myself. May we return to love. May our minds be healed. May we all be blessed.

May we find our way home, from pain to peace, from fear to love, from hell to Heaven.

Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory. Forever and ever. Amen.

Waiting on Thee

From the *Science of Mind* textbook

By Ernest Holmes

Waiting on Thee

In waiting on Thee there is fullness of Life.

I wait on Thee, my Inner Lord;

I listen for Thy voice.

I hear Thy word;

I do Thy will;

again I wait on Thee.

And listening, I hear Thee say:

“Be perfect, be complete, live, love and be glad.”

Sit thou in the stillness and let thy Lord speak.