

THE POWER OF NOW(ECKHART TOLLE)

ABSTRACT

This book abstract is intended to provide just a glimpse of this wonderful book with the hope that you may like to read the original book at leisure and enjoy its real beauty.

We are like beggar who despite sitting on a treasure, keeps on begging because he is unaware of it. We are also almost begging for happiness, when the source of unlimited happiness is within.

Obstacle: This incessant mental noise prevents you from finding that realm of inner stillness that is inseparable from Being. It also creates a false mind made self that casts a shadow of fear and suffering.

The mind is a superb instrument if used rightly. Used wrongly, however, it becomes very destructive. We usually don't use it at all. It uses you. This is a disease. You believe that you are your mind. That is delusion. The instrument has taken you over.

Can you be free of your mind whenever you want to? Have you found the "off" button? We don't even know that you are its slave. It's almost like to be possessed without even knowing it. The beginning of freedom is the realization that you are not the possessing entity-the thinker. Knowing this enables you to observe the entity. The moment you start watching the thinker, a higher level of consciousness becomes activated. You then begin to realize that there is a vast realm of intelligence beyond thought, that thought is only a tiny aspect of intelligence. You also realize that all the things that truly matter-beauty, love, creativity, joy, inner peace-arise from beyond the mind. You begin to awaken.

Enlightenment : Rising above thought

Your mind is an instrument, a tool. Use it for a task and the lay it down. 80 to 90 % of our thinking is not only repetitive and useless, but because it is dysfunctional and often negative, much of it is also harmful. It causes serious leakage of energy. Compulsive thinking is an addiction because you don't have choice to stop. It also gives you a false sense of pleasure which invariably turns into pain.

No mind is consciousness without thought. Only in that way it is possible to think creatively, because only then the thought has real power. Great scientists have revealed that their breakthroughs came at a time of mental quietude. Majority of scientists are not creative not because they can't think, but because they can't stop thinking.

One of the main tasks of mind is to fight or remove the emotional pain, which is one of the reasons of its incessant activity. In fact, the harder the mind struggles to get rid of pain, the greater the pain. The mind can never find a solution, nor can it afford to allow you to find the solution, because it itself is an intrinsic part of the "problem". You will not be free from pain unless you cease identification with mind/ego. Then mind is toppled from its place of power and Being reveals itself as your true nature.

The pain that you create now is always some form of non-acceptance, unconscious resistance to what is. On the level of thought, the resistance is some form of judgement. On the emotional level, it is some

form of negativity. The intensity of 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 escape from it.

Realize deeply that the present moment is all that you ever have. Make the Now the primary focus of your life. Earlier you dwelt more in past and future and very briefly in the Now. Now make Now your dwelling place and make brief visits to the past and future to deal with the practical aspects of your life situation. Say “yes” to life and see how life suddenly starts working for you rather than against you.

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.

The origin of fear :

The Psychological condition of fear is divorced from any concrete and true immediate danger. It comes in many forms: unease, worry, anxiety, nervousness, tension, dread, phobia, and so on. This is always about something that might happen, not something that is happening right now. You are in the here now, while your mind is in the future. This creates anxiety gap which becomes your companion. You can always cope with the present moment, but you can't cope with the future which has not yet arrived, and is just a mind projection.

Moreover, as long as you are identified with the mind, the ego runs your life. Because of its phantom nature, and despite elaborate defence mechanisms, ego is very vulnerable and insecure, and it sees itself as constantly under threat, although it appears to be extremely confident. Emotion is the body's reaction to your mind. The body continuously receives threat/danger messages from the ego. The emotion generated by this is obviously fear.

Fear seems to have many causes. Fear of loss, failure, hurt, and so on. But ultimately, all fear is ego's fear of death, of annihilation. This affects every aspect of your life. For example, the compulsive need to be right in an argument and make the other person wrong is due to fear of death. So your ego cannot afford to go wrong. To be wrong is to die. Wars have been fought over this and countless relationships have broken down.

Almost everyone you meet lives in a state of fear. Only the intensity varies. It fluctuates between anxiety and dread at one end of the scale and a vague unease and a distant sense of threat at the other. We are aware of it only in its acute forms.

Clock Time and Psychological Time :

You need clock time for everyday actions. Psychological time is harmful because it traps you in the past or future. You learn from the past and use it in the now. You plan for the future goals also in the now.

If you made a mistake in the past and learn from it now, you are using clock time. On the other hand, if you dwell on it mentally, and self criticism, remorse, guilt, come up, then it is psychological time.

If you set up a goal and work on it in a focussed manner, you are using clock time. If you become excessively focussed on the goal, perhaps because you are seeking happiness, fulfilment, you are not honouring the now. Then it is psychological time. Your life's journey is no longer an adventure, just an obsessive need to arrive, to attain, to "make it". You no longer see or smell the flowers by the wayside either, nor are you aware of the beauty and miracle of life that unfolds all around you when you are present in the now.

The past perpetuates itself through lack of presence. Unease, anxiety, tension, stress and worry-all forms of fear- are caused by too much of future, and not enough of presence. Guilt, regret, resentment, grievances, sadness, bitterness and all forms of non-forgiveness are caused by too much of past, and not enough presence.

Hope is what keeps you going, but hope keeps you focussed on the future. This perpetual denial of Now creates unhappiness.

Your life situation exists in time. Your life is Now. Your life situation is mind-stuff. Your life is real. Your life situations may be full of problems-most life situations are-but find out if you have problems at this moment, not tomorrow or in ten minutes, but now. Do you have a problem Now?

When you are full of problems, there is no room for anything new to enter, no room for a solution. So whenever you can, make some room, create some space, so that you find the life underneath your life situation.

If you found yourself in paradise, it wouldn't be long before your mind would say "yes, but..". **Ultimately it is not about solving your problems. It is about realizing that there are no problems. Only situations-to be dealt with now, or to be left alone and accepted as part of "isness" of the present moment until they change or can be dealt with.** Problems are mind made and need time to survive. They cannot survive in the actuality of the Now.

Problem means that you are dwelling on a situation mentally without there being a true intention or possibility of taking action now and that you are unconsciously making it part of yourself.

When you create a problem, you create pain. All it takes is a simple choice, a simple decision: no matter what happens, I will create no more pain for myself, I will create no more problems. Although it is a simple choice, but it is very radical.

If you have ever been in a life-or-death emergency situation, you will know that it wasn't a problem. The mind didn't have time to fool around and make it into a problem. In a true emergency, the mind stops; you become totally present in the Now, and something infinitely more powerful takes over. This is why there are many reports of ordinary people suddenly becoming capable of incredibly courageous deeds. In an emergency, either you survive or you don't. Either way, it's not a problem.

A great deal of what people say, think, or do is actually motivated by fear, which of course is always linked with having your focus on the future. As there are no problems in the Now, there is no fear either.

Should a situation arise that you need to deal with now, your action will be clear and incisive if it arises out of present moment awareness. It is also more likely to be more effective. It will not be a reaction coming from the past conditioning of your mind but an intuitive response to the situation. In other instances, when the time bound body would have reacted, you will find it more effective to do nothing- just stay centred in the Now.

The Joy Of Being :

To alert you that you have allowed yourself to be taken over by psychological time, ask yourself: Is there joy, ease, and lightness in what I am doing? If it isn't, then the time is covering the present moment, and life is perceived as a burden or a struggle.

If there is no joy in what you are doing, it does not necessarily mean that you need to change what you are doing. It may be sufficient to change the how. "How" is always more important than "what". As you honour the present moment, all unhappiness and struggle dissolve, and life begins to flow with joy and ease. When you act out of the present-moment awareness, whatever you do becomes imbued with a sense of quality, care, and love-even the most simple action.

So do not be concerned with the fruit of your action-just give attention to the action itself. The fruit will come of its own accord. Karma Yoga of Bhagvad Gita-oldest and most beautiful spiritual teachings in existence.

Freedom from Unhappiness:

Do you resent what you are doing? It could be in a job, relationship. Do you realize that the energy you thus emanate is so harmful in its effects that you are in fact contaminating yourself as well as those around you? Have a good look inside. Is there even a slightest trace of resentment, unwillingness? If there is, observe it on both mental and emotional levels. What thoughts is your mind creating around the situation? Then look at the emotion. Feel the emotion. Does it feel pleasant or unpleasant? Is it the energy you would choose to have inside you? Do you have a choice?

Maybe you are being taken advantage of, maybe the activity is tedious, maybe someone close is dishonest, irritating, but all this is irrelevant. Whether your thoughts and emotions are justified or not makes no difference. The fact is that you are resisting 'what is' and making the present moment into an enemy. You are creating unhappiness, conflict between the inner and outer. It is polluting everything you are part of.

Surely, change what you can, accept what you can't. Recognize the futility of negativity. It is never the optimum way of dealing with any situation. You get stuck in it and it causes more pain and unhappiness. What is even worse, it spreads more easily than a physical disease. Through the law of resonance, it triggers and feeds latent negativity in others, unless they are immune (i.e. highly conscious). How do you

drop it? By just recognizing that you have a choice, and you don't want to suffer any more. You are not just a bundle of conditioned reflexes. Remember that this recognition is not a judgement, just a fact.

When you accept your resentment, moodiness, anger and so on, you are no longer forced to act them out blindly. But then you also have to go to the next stage, where negative emotions are not created anymore. Otherwise, you will still be moving in a circle. Once you know something is bad for you, you must change.

Wherever You Are, Be There Totally :

See if you can catch yourself complaining, in either speech or thought about situation, other person's actions, words, even weather. To complain is always non-acceptance of what is. It inevitably carries an unconscious negative charge. Then you make yourself into a victim. **Change the situation by taking action or by speaking out if necessary or possible; leave the situation or accept it. All else is madness.**

If you find your 'here and now' intolerable and it makes you unhappy, you have three options: remove yourself from the situation, change it, or accept it totally. If you want to take responsibility for your life, you must choose one of these three options, and you must choose now. Then accept the consequences. No excuses. No negativity. No psychic pollution. Keep your inner space clear.

If you take any action- leaving or changing the situation, drop your negativity first, if at all possible. Action arising out of insight into what is required is more effective than action arising out of negativity.

Any action is often better than no action, especially if you have been stuck in an unhappy situation for a long time. If it is a mistake, at least you learn something, in which case it's no longer a mistake. If you remain stuck, you learn nothing. Is fear preventing you from taking action? Acknowledge the fear, watch it, take your attention into it, be fully present with it. Doing so cuts the link between the fear and your thinking. Don't let the fear rise up into your mind. Use the power of the Now. Fear can't prevail against it.

If there is truly nothing that you can do to change your 'here and now', and you can't remove yourself from the situation, then accept your here and now totally by dropping all inner resistance. This is called surrender. It is not a weakness. There is a great strength in it. The false, unhappy self that loves feeling miserable, resentful, or sorry for itself can no longer survive. Only a surrendered person has spiritual power. Through this you are internally free from the situation. You may find that situation changes without any effort on your part. In any case, you are free.

Or is there something that you "should" be doing but are not doing? Get up and do it now. Alternatively, completely accept your inactivity, laziness, or passivity at this moment, if that is your choice. Go into it fully. Enjoy it. Be as lazy or inactive as you can. Done consciously, you will soon come out of it. Or maybe you won't. Either way, there is no inner conflict, no resistance, no negativity.

Stress is caused by being "here" but wanting to be "there". It's a split that tears you apart inside. To create and live with such an inner split is insane. You can move fast, work fast, or even run if necessary,

without resenting the present. Do it totally. Enjoy the flow of energy, of that moment. Now there is no stress, no split. Or you can drop the whole thing and sit on a park bench. If your mind says “you should be working. You are wasting your time.” Observe the mind. Smile at it.

Does the past take a great deal of your attention? Do you frequently talk and think about it, either positively or negatively? The great things that you have achieved, your adventures or experiences, or your victim story and the dreadful things that were done to you, or by you? Are your thought processes creating guilt, pride, resentment, anger, regret, or self-pity? Then you are not only reinforcing a false sense of self but also helping accelerate your body’s aging process by creating an accumulation of the past in your psyche.

Die to the past every moment. You don’t need it. Only refer to it when it is absolutely relevant to the present.

Overcoming Worry : Are you worried? Do you have many “what if” thoughts? This is because your mind is projecting itself into an imaginary future situation and creating fear. There is no way you can cope with such a situation, because it doesn’t exist. It is a mental phantom. All you have to cope with in real life is this moment. Ask whether there is anything wrong with the present moment, not next year, tomorrow or 5 minutes from now. The answer, the strength, the right action or the resource will be there when you need it, not before, not after.

“One day I will make it”. Is your goal taking so much of your attention that it is taking the joy out of your doing? With this mind pattern, no matter what you achieve, the future will always seem better. A perfect recipe for permanent dissatisfaction and non-fulfilment.

Are you a habitual “waiter”? Are you waiting for the next vacation, better job, children to grow up, or truly meaningful relationship, for success, to make money, to be important, to be enlightened. Waiting is a state of mind. Basically, it means that you want the future; you don’t want the present. This creates inner conflict, and reduces the quality of your life.

There is nothing wrong with striving to improve your life situation. There is nothing wrong with setting goals and striving to achieve things. But don’t think that you will be only happy when you achieve those things.

When you fully accept what you have got, you are grateful for the present moment and the fullness of life now is true prosperity. It can’t come in the future. Then, in time, that prosperity manifests for you in many ways.

Being dissatisfied may motivate you to achieve, you may have many exciting experiences, but they will come and go and always leave you with an empty feeling, propelling you for further physical or psychological gratification.

When you have to actually wait for someone, enjoy yourself- in joy in yourself.

The Inner Purpose of Your Life’s Journey :

It is certainly helpful to know the destination and the path towards it, but the only thing that is real is the step you are taking now.

The outer purpose of journey is the goal/destination/ accomplishments, all in future. But if thinking/planning for it takes up so much of attention, then you completely miss out the purpose of the inner journey, which has to do with only now. Outer journey may have million steps but the inner journey has only one, the present one. It contains all steps and destination. It then becomes an expression of perfection, an act of great beauty and quality. It will take you into your being. That is both the purpose and fulfilment of your inner journey, the journey into yourself.

Does Success/failure of outer purpose then matter?

If you realize your inner purpose, then it will just be a game to be enjoyed. Failure in the outer purpose but success in the inner one is ok, but if you succeed in the outer one, get all the riches, and fail in the inner one, becoming spiritually poor, is disastrous.

The past can't survive in your presence : Whatever you want to know about the past, the challenges of the present moment will bring it out. If you delve into the past, it will be a bottomless pit. You don't need time to be free from the past. Only the present can free you from that.

Attention is essential, but not to the past as past. Give attention to your present behaviour, reactions, moods, thoughts, emotions, fears, and desires. But do not do it critically or analytically, or judgmentally. You can't find yourself in the past, but only in the now. Don't seek to understand your past. It can't survive in your presence.

The State Of Presence :

Experiment : Close eyes and say "I wonder what my next thought is going to be". Then become very alert and wait for the next thought. Like a cat watching a mouse hole. You will see that as long as you are in a state of intense presence, you are free from thought. You are still, yet highly alert. The instant your conscious attention sinks below a certain level, thought rushes in. The mental noise returns, the stillness is lost. You are back in time.

Presence is required to be become aware of the beauty, the majesty, the sacredness of nature. Gaze into the infinity of space on a clear night. You will be awestruck by the absolute stillness and inconceivable vastness of it. You have to put down for a moment your personal baggage of problems, of past and future, as well as your knowledge; otherwise, you will see but not see, hear but not hear. Beyond the beauty of external forms, there is something that can't be named, something ineffable, some deep, inner, holy essence.

Egoic mind has become like a sinking ship. If you don't get off, you will go down with it.

We have occasional respite from our minds. This is during sleep, sex, alcohol, drugs that suppress excessive mind activity. These however, keep you stuck in the dysfunction.

Silence is an even more potent carrier of presence. So when you read or listen, be aware of the silence between and underneath the words. Be aware of the gaps. To listen to the silence is an easy and direct way of becoming present. Listening to silence in you immediately creates stillness inside you. Only the stillness in you can perceive the silence outside. And what is stillness other than presence, consciousness freed from thought forms?

So when such challenges come, as they will always do, make it a habit to go within at once and focus as much as you can on the inner energy field of your body. This need not take long, just a few seconds. But you need to do it the moment that challenge presents itself. Any delay will allow a conditioned mental-emotional reaction to arise and take you over. When you focus within and feel the inner body, you immediately become still and present as you are withdrawing consciousness from your mind. If a response is required in that situation, it will come up from this deeper level. Just as the sun is infinitely brighter than the candle flame, there is infinitely more intelligence in Being than in your mind.

As long as you are in conscious contact with your inner body, you are like a tree that is deeply rooted in the earth, or a building.

Before You Enter The body, Forgive :

Unless you give attention to the body, the emotion will prevent you from gaining access to the inner body, which lies at a deeper level underneath it. Attention does not mean thinking about it. It means to just observe the emotion, to feel it fully, and accept it as it is. Some emotions like anger, fear, grief are easy to identify, others are hard to label like the feeling of unease, heaviness, halfway between emotion and physical sensation. However, labels are not important, What is important is to bring that feeling into awareness as much as possible. Attention is key to transformation-and full attention also implies acceptance. It is like a beam of light that transmutes everything into itself.

An emotion has a very short life span. When you are not in your body, however, an emotion can survive for days or weeks, or join with other emotions and become the pain body, a parasite that can live inside you for years, feed on your energy, lead to physical illness, and make your life miserable.

So place your attention on feeling the emotion, and check whether your mind is holding on to a grievance pattern such as blame, self pity, or resentment that is feeding the emotion. If that is the case, it means that you haven't forgiven. Non-forgiveness is often toward another person or yourself, but it may just as well be toward any situation, condition-past, present, future-that your mind refuses to accept. Yes, there can be non-forgiveness even with regard to the future. This is the mind's refusal to accept uncertainty, to accept that the future is ultimately beyond its control. Forgiveness is to relinquish your grievance and let go of the grief. It means offering no resistance- to allow life to live through you. The alternatives are pain, suffering, restricted flow of energy, and in many cases, disease.

The moment you forgive, you have reclaimed your power from the mind. Non-forgiveness is the nature of mind, just as ego can't survive without strife and conflict. The mind can't forgive, only you can. “ That is why Jesus said, before you enter the temple, forgive. “

Feeling will get you closer to the truth of who you are than thinking. I can't tell you anything that deep within you don't already know.

Strengthening Of The Immune System: The more consciousness you bring into the body, the stronger the immune system becomes. It is as if every cell awakens and rejoices. The body loves your attention. It is also a potent form of self healing. If the master is not present in the house, all kinds of shady characters will take up residence there. In addition, your psychic immune system is greatly enhanced as well. The latter protects you from the negative mental-emotional force field of others, which are highly contagious. It raises the vibrational frequency of your energy field, so that lower frequency vibrations like fear, anger, depression can't affect you.

Breathing Meditation : Conscious breathing is a powerful meditation in its own right.

Enlightened Relationships :

Salvation is not elsewhere in place or time. It is here and now.

True salvation is fulfilment, peace, life in all its fullness. It is to be who you are, to feel within you the good that has no opposite, the joy of Being that depends on nothing outside itself. It is not a passing experience but an abiding experience. It is freedom from fear, from suffering, from a perceived state of lack and insufficiency and therefore from all wanting, needing, grasping, and clinging. It is freedom from compulsive thinking, from negativity, and above all from past and future as a psychological need. You see time as a means from salvation, whereas in truth it is the greatest obstacle to salvation. You get there by realizing that you are there already. You find God the moment you realize that you don't need to seek God.

Love Hate Relationships :

It may appear that if you could only eliminate the negative or destructive cycles, then all would be well- but alas, this is not possible. The polarities are mutually interdependent. Both are parts of the same dysfunction. The negative side is, of course more easily recognizable than the positive one. And it is easy to recognize the source of negativity in your partner than to see it in yourself. It can manifest in many forms: possessiveness, jealousy, control, withdrawal and unspoken resentment, the need to be right, insensitivity and self-absorption, emotional demands and manipulation, the urge to argue, criticize, judge, blame, or attack, anger, unconscious revenge for past pain inflicted by a parent, rage and physical violence.

On the positive side, you are “in love” with your partner. At first it is deeply a satisfying state. You feel intensely alive. Your existence has suddenly become more meaningful because someone needs you, wants you, and makes you feel special, and you do the same for him/her. The feeling can become so intense that the rest of the world fades into insignificance.

However, there is a neediness and a clinging quality to the intensity. You become addicted to the other person. He/she acts like a drug. You are on a high when the drug is available, but even the possibility or a thought that he or she might not be there can lead to jealousy, possessiveness, attempts at manipulation through emotional blackmail, blaming, and accusing-fear of loss. If the other person does leave you, this can give rise to the most intense hostility or the most profound grief and despair. In an instant, loving tenderness can turn into a savage attack or dreadful grief. Where is the love now? Was it love in the first place, or just an addictive grasping and clinging.

Addiction and The Search For Wholeness :

On the physical level, you are obviously not whole, nor will you ever be: You are either a man or woman, one half of the whole. The longing for the wholeness manifests as male-female attraction. It is an almost irresistible urge for the union with the opposite energy polarity. The root of this urge is a spiritual one. The longing for an end to duality. Sexual union is the closest you can get to this state at a physical level. But it is just a fleeting glimpse, an instant of bliss.

On the psychological level, the sense of lack and incompleteness is even greater than that at physical level. You get your sense of self from things that ultimately have nothing to do with who you are: your social role, possessions, external appearance, successes and failures, belief systems, and so on. This false, mind made self, the ego, feels vulnerable, insecure, and is always seeking new things to identify with to give it a feeling that it exists.

Every addiction arises from the unconscious refusal to face and move through your own pain. It starts with pain and ends in pain. However, they do not cause pain and unhappiness. They bring out the pain and unhappiness that is already in you.

This is one reason why people are always trying to escape from the present moment and are seeking some kind of salvation in the future. If they focus on the Now, they face pain, and that is what they fear. If they only knew how easy it is to access in the Now the power of presence that dissolves the past and its pain, the reality that dissolves the illusion. If they only knew how close they are to their own reality, how close to God.

Avoiding relationship is not the answer. Three failed relationships are more likely to force you into awakening than three years on a desert island.

In fact, the moment that judgement stops, you are free from your mind. You have made room for love, for joy, for peace. First you stop judging yourself; then you stop judging your partner. The greatest catalyst for change in relationship is complete acceptance of your partner as he/she is, without the need to judge or change them in any way. That immediately takes you beyond your ego. All mind games and addictive clinging are then over. There are victims or perpetrators anymore, no accuser and accused.

Relationships As Spiritual Practice :

Every crisis represents not only danger but also opportunity. If relationships are activating pain body, why not accept this fact than try and escape from it? Why not cooperate with it rather than avoiding

relationship or continuing to pursue the phantom of an ideal partner as an answer to your problems or a means of feeling fulfilled? The opportunity that is concealed within every crisis does not manifest until all the facts of any given situation are acknowledged and fully accepted. As long as you deny them, as long as you try to escape from them or wish that things were different, the window of opportunity does not open up, and you remain trapped inside that situation, which will remain the same or deteriorate further.

With the acknowledgment and acceptance of facts also comes a degree of freedom from them. For example, when you know there is disharmony and you hold that “knowing”, through your knowing a new factor has come in, and the disharmony can’t remain unchanged. When you know you are not at peace, your knowing creates a still space that surrounds your nonpeace in a loving and tender embrace and then transmutes your nonpeace into peace. As far as inner transformation is concerned, there is nothing you can do about it. You can’t transform yourself, and you certainly can’t transform your partner or anybody else. All you can do is create a space for transformation to happen, for grace and love to enter.

So whenever your relationship is not working, whenever it brings out the “madness” in you and in your partner, be glad. It is an opportunity for salvation. If there is anger, jealousy, defensiveness, urge to argue, need to be right, demand of love and attention, or emotional pain, know that. Then relationship becomes a Sadhna. If you observe unconscious behaviour in your partner, hold it in a loving embrace of your knowing so that you won’t react. The energy form behind hostility and attack finds the presence of love absolutely intolerable. Even if you react, but know your reaction, even then nothing is lost.

If you continue to pursue the goal of salvation through a relationship, you will be disillusioned again and again. But if you accept that it is to make you conscious instead of happy, then relationship offers salvation.

You do not need to wait for the world to become sane, before you can be enlightened. Do not accuse each other of being unconscious. It is falling into the same trap.

When other person behaves unconsciously, relinquish all judgement. It does not mean that you don’t recognize it. It means “being the knowing” rather than “being the reaction”. This creates a space of loving presence that allows all people to be as they are. No grater catalyst for transformation can exist. If you practice this, your partner can’t stay with you and remain unconscious.

If both do it this way it is better. Learn to express thoughts and feelings as soon as they occur without blaming. Listen to other person in an open nondefensive way. Giving space to other and to yourself is vital. True love can’t flourish without it.

If you are free and the partner is still operating from pain body, this will be a great challenge to the other person. The ego of other person finds it threatening because it needs confrontation to survive.

If there isn't an emanation of love & joy, complete presence and openness towards all beings, then it is not enlightenment. Another indicator of how a person behaves in difficult or challenging situations or when things "go wrong".

This awareness does not deny pain and yet is beyond it. It accepts everything and transforms everything.

If you are predominantly present in your relationship, but the partner is not, then he/she has to either join you in that state, or you will separate like oil and water. The light is too painful for someone who wants to be in darkness.

Beyond Happiness and Unhappiness There is Peace

Happiness depends on conditions being perceived as positive; inner peace does not.

Q-Is it not possible to attract only positive conditions into our life? If our attitude and our thinking are always +ve, we would manifest only positive events and situations, wouldn't we?

A-Do you truly know what is +ve/-ve? Do you have the total picture? There have been many people for whom limitation, failure, loss, illness, or pain in whatever form turned out to be their greatest teacher. It gave them depth, humility, and compassion.

Whenever anything -ve happens to you, there is a deep lesson concealed within. Even a brief illness or an accident can show you what is real and unreal, what matters and what doesn't.

Seen from a higher perspective, conditions are always +ve. To be more precise, they are neither +ve/-ve.

Q-This sounds to me like denial and self deception. When something dreadful happens to me or someone else close to me-accident, illness, pain, or death- I can pretend that it isn't bad, but the fact remains that it is bad, so why deny it?

A- You are not pretending anything. You are allowing it to be as it is, that's all.

Remember that we are not talking about happiness here. For example, when a loved one has just died, or your own death is approaching, you can't be happy. It is impossible. But you can be at peace. There may be sadness, tears, but provided that you have relinquished resistance, underneath the sadness you will feel a deep serenity, a stillness, a sacred presence. This is the emanation of Being, this is inner peace, the good that has no opposite.

Q-What if it is a situation that I can do something about? How can I allow it to be and change it at the same time?

A-Do what you have to do. In the meantime, accept what is. Since mind and resistance are synonymous, acceptance immediately frees you from mind dominance and thus reconnects you with the being. As a result, the usual ego motivations for "doing" -fear, greed, control, defending- will cease to operate. An intelligence much greater than the mind is now in charge, and so a different quality of consciousness will flow into your doing.

It seems that most people need to experience a great deal of suffering before they will relinquish resistance and accept-before they will forgive. As soon as they do, one of the greatest miracles happens: the awakening of Being consciousness through what appears as evil, the transmutation of suffering into inner peace. The ultimate effect of all evil and suffering in the world is that it will force humans into realizing who they are beyond name and form. Thus, what we perceive as evil from our limited perspective is actually part of the higher good that has no opposite. This, however, does not become true for you except through forgiveness. Until that happens, evil has not been redeemed and therefore remains evil.

Through forgiveness, which essentially means recognizing the insubstantiality of the past and allowing the present moment to be as it is, the miracle of transformation happens not only within but also without. A silent space of intense presence arises both in you and around you. Whoever or whatever enters that field of consciousness will be affected by it, sometimes visibly and immediately, sometimes at deeper levels with visible changes appearing at a later time. You dissolve discord, heal pain, dispel unconsciousness-without doing anything- simply by being and holding that frequency of intense presence.

The End of Your Life Drama

Q-In that state of acceptance and inner peace, even though you may not call it "bad" , can anything still come into your life that would be called " bad" from a perspective of ordinary consciousness?

A- Whenever two or more egos come together, drama of one kind or another ensues. But even if you are totally alone, you still create your own drama. When you feel sorry for yourself, or guilty or anxious, that's drama. Most people are in love with their particular life drama. Their story is their identity. The ego runs their life.

When you live in complete acceptance of what is, this is the end of all drama in your life. Nobody can even have an argument with you, no matter how hard he or she tries. You can still make your point clearly and firmly, but there will be no reactive force behind it, no defence or attack. There is no conflict outside or inside.

However, physical pain-although rare- is still possible. This is not to be confused with suffering, with mental-emotional pain. You are subject to cyclical nature and to the law of impermanence of all things, but you no longer perceive it as "bad"-it just is.

Through the allowing the "isness" of all things, a deeper dimension underneath the play of opposites reveals itself to you as an abiding presence, an unchanging deep stillness, an uncaused joy beyond good and bad. This is the joy of Being, the peace of God.

On the level of form, there is birth and death, creation and destruction, growth and dissolution, of seemingly separate forms. This is reflected everywhere: in the life cycle of a star or a planet, a physical body, a tree, a flower, in the rise and fall of nations, political systems, civilizations; and in the inevitable cycles of gain and loss in the life of an individual.

As an individual, if you cling and resist at that point, it means you are refusing to go with the flow of life, and you will suffer.

It is not true that the up cycle is good and the down cycle is bad, except in the mind's judgement. Growth is considered +ve, but nothing can grow forever. If growth were to go on and on, it would become monstrous and destructive. Dissolution is needed for new growth to happen. One can't exist without the other.

The down cycle is absolutely essential for spiritual realization. You must have failed deeply on some level or experienced some deep loss or pain to be drawn to the spiritual dimension. Or perhaps your very success became empty and meaningless and so tuned out to be a failure. Failure lies concealed in every success, and success in every failure.

You can still be active and enjoy manifesting and creating new forms and circumstances, but you won't be identified with them. They are not your life-only life situation.

Your physical energy is also subject to cycles. It can't always be at a peak. There will be times of low as well as high energy. There will be periods when you are highly active and creative, but there will also be times when everything seems stagnant, when it seems that you are not getting anywhere, not achieving anything. A cycle can last for anything from a few hours to a few years(few lives). There are large cycles and small cycles within large ones. Many illnesses are caused through fighting against the cycles of low energy, which are vital for regeneration. If you don't accept low energy cycles, the intelligence of the organism may take over as a self protective measure and create an illness in order to force you to stop, so that necessary regeneration can take place.

The Buddha taught that even your happiness is 'dukkha'- a pali word for suffering or 'unsatisfactoriness'. It is inseparable from its opposite. This means that your happiness and unhappiness are in fact one. Only the illusion of time separates them.

The more you seek happiness in this way, the more it will elude you. Nothing out there will ever satisfy you except temporarily and superficially, but you may need to experience many disillusionments before you realize the truth. Things and conditions can give you pleasure, but they will also give you pain. Nothing can give you joy. It is uncaused and arises within as the joy of Being. It is natural state, not something that you need to work hard for or struggle to attain.

The Old Testament prophet wrote " I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind". When you reach that point, you are one step away from despair- and one step away from enlightenment. A buddhist monk said " All that arises passes away. What he meant was, not to resist the present moment, and accept impermanent nature of all things and conditions.

To offer no resistance to life is to be in a state of grace, ease, and lightness. Then the general conditions of your life tend to improve greatly. Things, people, or conditions that you thought you needed for your happiness now come to you with no struggle, and you are free to enjoy them-while they last. All things still pass away, but there is no fear of loss anymore.

Even if everything were to collapse and crumble all around you, you would still have a deep inner core of peace. You may not be happy, but you will be at peace.

All negativity is resistance. It ranges from irritation or impatience to fierce anger.

Somebody says something that is rude or designed to hurt. Instead of reacting, let it pass through without resistance. That is forgiveness. You can still tell that person that the behaviour is unacceptable.

Don't look for peace. Otherwise, you set up inner conflict or resistance. Forgive yourself for not being at peace. The moment you completely accept your non-peace, your non-peace gets transmuted into peace. Anything you accept fully will get you there, will take you to peace. This is the miracle of surrender.

Story of Banzan-Zen Master: He asked a butcher to give the best piece of meat. He replied that every piece of meat he had was best. When we accept that every moment is the best-it is enlightenment.

We are like a lake. The outer situation of life is like the surface of the lake. Sometimes calm, sometimes rough, according to seasons and cycles. Deep down, however, the lake is always undisturbed. We need to remain in touch with the depth.

Remember that we have a great deal in common with other persons. A few years from now- two or several-both of us will be rotting corpses. One of the most powerful spiritual practices is to meditate deeply on the mortality of physical forms, including your own. This is called 'Die before you die'. Nothing that was real ever died, only names, forms, and illusions.

Chapter 10: The Meaning of Surrender:

Acceptance of The Now: Q- How can we improve if we accept the way things are?

A-It is purely an inner phenomenon. It does not mean we can't take action to change the situation. In fact, it is not the overall situation that you need to accept when you surrender, but just the tiny segment called the Now.

For example, if you are stuck in a mud, you don't say, "Okay, I resign myself to be stuck in the mud". Resignation is not surrender. You don't need to accept an undesirable or unpleasant life situation. Nor do you have to deceive yourself and say that there is nothing wrong with being stuck in the mud. Without negativity, you take action and do all that you can to get out of negativity. Such action is called +ve action.

You are walking at night, surrounded by a thick fog. But you have a powerful flashlight that cuts through the fog to create a narrow clear space in front of you. The fog is your life situation, which includes your past and future; the flashlight is your conscious presence; the clear space is the Now.

Not only your psychological form but also your physical form-your body-becomes rigid and hard through resistance. Tension arises in different parts of body, and the body as a whole contracts. The free flow of energy through the body gets restricted, which is not good for a healthy functioning of the body.

If you find your life situation unsatisfactory or even intolerable, it is only by surrendering first that you can break the unconscious resistance pattern that perpetuates that situation.

Surrender is fully compatible with taking action, initiating change or achieving goals. It reconnects with the source-energy of Being. Through this the quality of whatever you are doing is enhanced immeasurably. The results will then look after themselves and reflect that quality. This is “surrendered action”.

Q-If there is no dissatisfaction, where is the motivation to change?

A-In a state of surrender, you see very clearly what needs to be done, and you take action, doing one thing at a time, and focusing on one thing at a time. That’s why Jesus said “Look at the Lillies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin”.

When your overall situation is unsatisfactory or unpleasant, separate out this instant and surrender to what is. That’s the flashlight cutting through the fog. Then look at the specifics of the situation. See if there is anything you can do to change the situation, improve it, or remove yourself from the situation. If you can take action, focus on not 100 things that you may have to do at some future time but on one thing that you can do right now. This does not mean that you should not do any planning. It may well be that planning is the one thing you can do now. But make sure that you don’t start to run “mental movies”. If there is no action you can take, and you can’t remove yourself from the situation either, then use the situation to make you go more deeply into surrender, more deeply into the Now. When you enter this timeless dimension of the present, change often comes about in strange ways without the need for a great deal of doing on your part. Life becomes helpful and cooperative.

Do not confuse surrender with an attitude of “I can’t be bothered anymore”, or “I just don’t care anymore”. Such an attitude is tainted with negativity/resentment, and is not surrender at all.

Q-How to Surrender?

Start by acknowledging that there is resistance. The external conditions that were being resisted also tend to shift or dissolve quickly through surrender. It is a powerful transformer of situations and people. If conditions do not shift immediately, your acceptance of the Now enables you to rise above them. Either way, you are free.

Q-What about people who want to use me, manipulate or control me? Am I to surrender to them?

A-Surrender does not mean that you allow yourself to be used. Not at all. It’s perfectly possible to say “no” firmly and clearly to a person or walk away from the situation and be in a state of complete inner non-resistance at the same time. Let it be a nonreactive “no”, a high quality “no”, a “no” that is free from all negativity and so creates no further suffering.

Q-I am in a situation at work that is unpleasant. I have tried to surrender to it, but I find it impossible. A lot of resistance keeps coming up.

A-If you can't surrender, take action immediately. Speak up or do something to bring about a change in situation-or remove yourself from it. Take responsibility for your life. If you can't take action, for example if you are in a prison, then you have two choices left: resistance or surrender. Bondage or inner freedom from external conditions. Suffering or inner peace. If you suddenly feel very light, clear and deeply at peace, that is unmistakable sign that you have truly surrendered.

Q-What about non-resistance in the face of violence, aggression, and the like?

Non-resistance doesn't necessarily mean doing nothing. All it means is that any "doing" becomes nonreactive. Remember the deep wisdom underlying the practice of eastern martial arts: don't resist the opponent's force. Yield to overcome.

Having said that, "doing nothing" is a very powerful transformer and healer of situations and people. In Taoism, there is a term called "wu wei" i.e. "actionless activity".

If action is required, you will respond from your conscious presence. In that state, your mind is free of concepts, including the concept of nonviolence. So who can predict what you will do?

The ego believes that in your resistance lies your strength, whereas in truth it cuts you off from the Being, the only source of true power. Resistance is weakness and fear masquerading as strength.

Transforming Illness Into Enlightenment:

Q-If someone is seriously ill and completely accepts their condition and surrenders to the illness, would they not have given up their will to get back to health?

A-Surrender is inner acceptance. We are talking about your life-that instant-not the conditions or circumstances of your life, not what I call your life situation. By focussing on this instant and refraining from labelling it mentally, illness is reduced to one or several of these factors: physical pain, weakness, discomfort, or disability. That is what you surrender to-now. You do not surrender to the idea of "illness". Allow the suffering to force you into the present moment. Use it for enlightenment.

Surrender does not transform what is, at least not directly. Surrender transforms you.

If you looked in the mirror and did not like what you saw, you would be mad to attack the image in the mirror. That is precisely what you do when you are in a state of nonacceptance. And of course, if you attack the image, it attacks you back. If you accept the image, no matter what it is, if you become friendly toward it, it has to become friendly to you. This is how you change the world.

Illness is not the problem. You are the problem. When you are ill or disabled, do not feel that you have failed in some way, do not feel guilty. Do not blame life for treating you unfairly, but do not blame yourself either. Anything "bad" that happens in your life-use it for enlightenment. Become an alchemist. Transmute base metal into gold, suffering into consciousness, disaster into enlightenment.

When Disaster Strikes:

For a majority of the population, only critical limit-situation has the potential to crack the hard shell of ego and force into surrender and so into the awakened state. This limit situation occurs through some disaster, drastic upheaval, deep loss or suffering your whole world is shattered and doesn't make any sense anymore. It is an encounter with death, be it physical or psychological. Out of the ashes of the old world, a new world can come into being.

There is no guarantee, of course, that this may happen, but the potential is always there. Some people's resistance to what is intensifies, and so it becomes a descent into hell. In others, it may be a partial surrender, but even that gives them a certain depth and serenity that were not before. Parts of the ego shell break off, and this allows small amount of the radiance and peace that lie beyond the mind to shine through.

Limit situations have produced many miracles, Murderers, just few hours before execution have found peace. Of course, it is not the limit situation that makes room for the miracle, but the act of surrender.

So whenever any kind of disaster strikes, know that you are just a step away from something incredible: a complete alchemical transmutation of the base metal of pain and suffering into gold. That one step is called surrender.

I do not mean to say that you will become happy in such a situation. You will not. But fear and pain will become transmuted into an inner peace and serenity that come from a very deep place, It is "the peace of God". With this radiant peace comes the realization-not at the level of mind but within the depth of your Being- that you are indestructible, immortal. This is not a belief. It is absolute certainty that needs no external evidence or proof from some secondary source.

Transforming Suffering Into Peace:

Being cut off from feelings is not surrender. In certain extreme situations, it may still be impossible for you to accept the Now. But you always get a second chance at surrender.

Your first chance is to surrender each moment to the reality of the moment. Knowing that it can't be undone. Then you do whatever the situation requires. If you abide in this state of acceptance, you create no more negativity, no more suffering, no more unhappiness.

Whenever you are unable to do that, you have a second chance at surrender. If you can't accept what is outside condition, then accept what is inside condition. This means. Do not resist the pain. Surrender to the grief, despair, fear, loneliness, or whatever form the suffering takes. Witness it without labelling it mentally. Embrace it. Then see how the miracle of surrender transmutes deep suffering into deep peace. This is your crucifixion. It becomes your resurrection and ascension.

When your pain is deep, all talk of surrender will probably seem futile and meaningless anyway. When there is no way out, there is still a way through. Face the pain, feel it fully-don't think about it! Express it if necessary, but don't create a script. Give attention to the feeling not the person, event that might have caused it. Be intensely alert. At first, it may seem like a dark and terrifying place, don't act on the urge to run away. Put full attention on the fear, the dread, the loneliness, whatever it is. Stay alert, with

every cell of your being. At this stage surrender has happened already. Full attention is full acceptance, is surrender.

The acceptance of suffering is a journey into death. When you have died this death, you realize that there is no death- and there is nothing to fear. Only ego dies. Do you want an easy death, without pain, agony? Then die to the past every moment.