

THE MANUAL

A simple guide to create a life of conscious choice

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Intro

This manual is for the person who is serious about living. I mean really living, without fear. These words may have a strong impact at the moment of encounter or may blossom gently over time. I have come to realize that there are three ways in which to make a significant change in life. The first is change through shock - a crisis, a surprise, a powerful force that slaps you in the face. The second change arrives through stillness. Real stillness of the mind until things become truly clear. And, the third type of change occurs through the gentle chipping away, the incessant digging into the depths of who you really are. That's it. If you're going to make a sustainable change, you're going to fall into one of these three categories and you will take what you will from this manual according to the place that you are in life. So take it easy and relax, if the bomb comes, you cannot predict it anyway, and if it doesn't, just be very, very still. Something will come. Or, you can hope that you've chipped away enough to get a little closer to the essence of what it is you are looking for - yourself.

I'd like to point out at this time that this manual will not offer you tricks to get more of what you want in life or magic in how to "attract" desirable things as many other guides do. It talks of something far deeper and more important than the things you *do* and *have* in life. It is about who you are and how to live a full life. There are no prescriptions here for wealth, health and happiness as objects that are outside of you that you may desire to obtain. This manual will not make false promises and let you down if you don't hit the \$10,000,000 jackpot. If that's what you are looking for, you won't find it here. What you will find, though, is your most precious and rare gift - the learning of how to live life in the most honest, integral and whole way that you can. To me, that is priceless and the foundation for a miracle of a life. All that you need is inside your fabulous self: the raw material and the will.

We often fool ourselves into thinking that we need external things to make us happy and full: an intimate relationship, love, money, success, a solid home, friends and more education. When we start feeling a sense of worthlessness or anxiety, we turn to these things and occupy ourselves with getting them. That's why the "The Secret" is so attractive. It offers a quick "cure" for our ailments through magic tricks that "attract" the external objects. But it's not working and why? Because you don't need anything external. All you need is who you are. The only problem is - we don't know who we really are and it is hard to know where to begin looking. This manual offers you a way inside, into yourself. I promise you will find something far more real and beautiful than fool's gold.

I broke down the manual into four parts. The first part deals with finding the raw material inside of you that you'll use in living a life of conscious choice. The second part deals with the theory and structure of your "insides" and how to be a master of them. The third part is an application of the structure and your raw material into creating choices and living consciously. The fourth part offers a summary and what the three parts mean in the larger scheme of life.

This manual is meant to be read once all the way through. Don't worry about retaining information in your first read - just relax and take it in gently. Upon completion of the first read, you may then refer back to chapters one by one in sequence or randomly to "work" on certain parts in your life that you feel need attention. In addition, the manual could be read once through and then gone over chapter by chapter weekly with the accompanying exercise workbook in order to get a "hands on" effect. But honestly, it's whatever works for you. Enjoy.

PART I - YOU AND THE WATER

How to create a life of understanding and conscious choice

Weeks 1-4

chapter 1. Waking up out of the robotic mode – What's underneath the surface?

- Robotic mode vs. conscious mode
- Asking the Big Questions
- Setting an intention

chapter 2. Building awareness – finding your flashlight

- Meaning of awareness
- The two types of awareness
- Accepting responsibility for your life

chapter 3. Recognizing the traps – sometimes a stone is a fish

- Identifying the traps
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CHAPTER 1

Waking up out of the robotic mode - what's underneath the surface?

Robotic mode vs. conscious mode

Asking the big questions

Setting an intention

Robotic mode vs. awake/conscious mode

“Picture yourself in a boat on a river”... actually, somewhere on the surface of the sea. It’s you and your boat. You have all that you need - a fishing rod, water, a good book, a life jacket, some worms and an oxygen tank. And it’s you and the sea. You spend your days throwing out your fishing line, gazing over the water and waiting for the catch of the day. All you know is the state of the surface of the water and the direction of the wind. Sometimes it’s calm and other times it’s choppy and that’s all that interests you. That and the catch.

There are two kinds of states that a person can hold at any given moment - awake or sleeping. The same can be said by way of analogy about the robotic and conscious modes in life. In this analogy, the robotic mode can be equated to the sleeping state and the conscious mode to the waking state. A person who is operating in life through the robotic mode is generally unaware of herself, who she is, why she is here and what life is really about. She passes through life as if asleep, but doesn’t know it. The general mechanics of her being are predictable, conditioned and rigid, never understanding deeply the more subtle meanings and mechanics in life. She doesn’t ask questions. She doesn’t hold clear intentions. She never transcends her ego. Her ego is her entire world and it is doubtful that she would ever evolve beyond narcissism. She doesn’t want to really understand why she acts the way she does and rarely brings awareness into her life. Habit is the major force in her life, and any attempt to kick it is destined for failure. What she is interested in is a good catch.

The conscious person, on the other hand, is a person that operates through life with a deep sense of purpose. He views the world not only through the narrowness of his ego, but also through a larger perspective that is beyond his personal self. He is clear about his intentions and tries to bring more awareness into his life whenever possible. He holds a real understanding of what life means to him and why he is here, or at least he is searching for those answers. He has done, and keeps doing, the work necessary to be an evolved human being. He is awake and knows it. His choices are made consciously, with inquiry and benevolence. The conscious person wonders about *what makes* a good catch and where it comes from.

If you’re still unclear about the robotic mode - think of yourself after you’ve just turned off the TV. Do you ask yourself why you’ve just spent 2 hours watching something that you don’t care about? Think of your kids playing a video game, think of driving a car. These are all robotic modes.

Most people fall in between - not exactly robotic because they are in the process of waking up, of asking questions and not quite conscious because there are still many unknowns to them. I would say that on average most of us spend roughly up to one conscious hour a day (at most), and are robotic during the rest of our waking lives. If you are reading this manual, you’re probably waking up and hoping this may help you wake up some more, or you are

already awake and you are interested in keeping yourself that way. There is also a slight chance that you are still sleeping and that you think this is a bunch of bull, which is just as good. We are all exactly where we are supposed to be - no more, no less.

Asking the Big Questions

Imagine sitting in your boat on a still day. All of a sudden, Thump! Something has slammed into your hull and you have no idea what it is! A whale? A shark? Maybe a giant squid? Your mind is racing. You thought it was simply about you and the catch and the surface. But it just became a lot more complicated. Maybe it's scary, but you just have to know because you can't stop thinking about it. You've asked a question and there is no rewinding.

One way to begin waking up is by asking the Big Questions. The Big Questions are those that at the moment of inquiry give a sense of insecurity and possibly fear - Why am I here? Who am I really? Is this all there is to life? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What lies beyond my personal perspective? What is god? Why do we fear death? What exactly is the soul? When asked with a real curiosity and an intention to find out the truth, we need to gather up courage to be willing to face the answers, even though they may be harmless and even liberating.

These questions, when first encountered are meant to shake things up a little. They stir the person and send him into an unknown spiral. This is a good thing. This is what it means to wake up. Sometimes when we come out of a long night of sleeping, we get confused as we start to wake up to the morning. The same is true for the transition between robotic and conscious modes.

If the Big Questions are too big to tackle, then start with smaller ones: Why do I behave the way I do? Why do I feel the way I do? Who do I think I am? Are my thoughts really my own? What is my philosophy about life? Through which perspectives do I look at the world? Is there more? Just getting into the mode of asking ourselves questions begins the process. We have always been conditioned to speak about ourselves, but not to *ask* about ourselves. It's a fault in the system, not in you, but if you want to be free, you ask yourself these questions because at a certain moment, life becomes dry and meaningless without them and it's back to being robots again.

Setting an Intention

Have you ever stopped dead in your tracks while doing something and think to yourself- why am I doing this anyway? What got me started on this in the first place? Instant paralysis and confusion. The missing link? Your intention. Regardless of the questions you ask of yourself and the world, a necessary element in waking up is setting an intention that holds you along the path you travel. Whether it is the intention of understanding yourself or others, the intention to be free of dependencies and conditionings, the intention to live a full life, the intention to always keep growing, the intention of furthering the evolution of consciousness - you must have an intention to keep moving. Without intention, your energy will be unfocused and eventually you'll get confused about what it is you are doing and where you are going. Your intention is the overall framework in which your actions play out.

So set your intention! Don't be worried about setting an intention that will hold for the rest of your life - that kind of commitment is enough to send anyone running in the opposite direction. Find the intention that fits you at this very moment and one that you connect with deeply enough to sustain you for some time. Intentions change, as they well should, because we change, because our perspectives change.

Your intention is a critical part of your awakening, but knowing why it is what it is, is very important as well. Your intention is in a way a goal that you set for yourself, but it's deeper. It is distinctly connected to the reasons for which you want to pursue a particular path, so check with yourself what is the reason you want to walk in that direction. You know yourself and you can help yourself find the motivation behind your intention.

There is a hierarchy of intentions with reference to the development of the self. So you may find that as you develop, your intention evolves in a particular direction. But where you start does not matter! As long as you are connected with your intention and it keeps you focused, the actual content makes no difference within the context of waking up. Start from where you are, and as you grow, so will your intention.

In figuring out what your intention is regarding this workshop, try asking yourself the questions - what is most important to me within the context of waking up? Why do I want to pursue a life of conscious choice? It would be a good idea to write down your intention and then revisit it every week, month or year to check if it still holds or if something is coming up in its place. Revisiting intentions is also a great way to gauge your development and focus towards a particular goal.

Setting an intention is getting ready to dive into the water with a flashlight and a tank on your back. You decide that it's just not enough to live on the surface of things anymore and you want to know more, but you also know that it ain't gonna be easy! So you gear up, drop your anchor, turn your gaze downward toward the water, and dive.

CHAPTER 2

Building awareness - finding your flashlight

The two types of awareness

Meaning and purpose of awareness

Accepting responsibility for your life

The two types of awareness

There you are, with a tank on your back and your flippers and it's getting darker as you descend. And then you remember - you have a flashlight! And in a moment, your direction is lit and you gasp in awe at the beauty around you. The water is teeming with life. Myriads of fish swimming in your own private reef. And it's not so scary anymore. It's actually quite astonishing.

Now that your intention for creating a conscious life is set and you're asking yourself the Big Questions whenever you can, you're ready to start building awareness in your life. Awareness is one of those tricky terms that get thrown around in different circles and in different contexts. So what does it actually mean? One definition of awareness is to be mindful of something, e.g. I am aware that the light is on, I am aware that today is Tuesday, but I am not aware of the fact that my mother is upset with me, or that something very special is about to happen tomorrow. If you think about the most mindful person you know, they're probably also one of the most aware people you know.

There is another definition of awareness which is less common and more complicated to understand - it's the ever-present state of consciousness. It is what separates a living creature from an inanimate object, a human being from a computer. Awareness in its more commonly used form, mindfulness or knowledge, is the one that gets the most attention in various contexts, but we want to talk of both forms of awareness and their place in a conscious life.

The first type, which I will refer to as being "mindful" awareness, is an active state of the mind. It is the attention you place on an object, whether it be your life, other people or your own mind. This kind of awareness is like a focus you place on something that comes into your vision. It is also the willingness to bring something into your "vision", in the broadest sense of the word. To build awareness in this sense means to broaden your view and bring more attention to those items that fall into it. Your flashlight in the water is like your mindful awareness - it allows you to keep going, all the while giving you clarity and visibility of all the elements that cross your path.

When was the last time you experienced a deep sense of peace, even for a single moment? Have you ever just looked at your surroundings without identifying or judging them? The second type of awareness, which I will refer to as "consciousness" awareness can be described as an inactive state of the mind. "Consciousness" awareness is a little more difficult to exercise if you're not accustomed to it, but is no less significant than the first. It is the stage on which the first type of awareness exists. Experiencing this consciousness awareness requires a centered state of a person, where the mind itself is not active with attention or focus. It is the state in which there is no attention on any single thing but that all things are arising together in the same space and at the same time. It is the absolute *absence* of focused attention.

Consciousness awareness is the ocean itself, on which your boat is floating and in which the fish are swimming. It is immense and boundless. The ocean is your entire realm of consciousness. All the fish you encounter, the anchor, the water, the reef are all the components of you.

The meaning and purpose of awareness

So, what's the importance of these two types of awareness in the conscious life? How does building awareness move one toward a life of conscious choice? Both types of awareness allow the person on this path to expand. Perspectives expand, life expands, intentions expand and understanding expands. Everything expands once you bring more awareness into your life. You begin stepping out of the robotic mode more rapidly.

In order to live a life of conscious choice you need to inquire why you do the things you do, how you want to live your life and what is included in that life in the first place - all that arises through bringing mindful awareness into life. You become aware of all those things that are happening in and around you to which you were oblivious while you were living in the robotic mode. Exploration, inquiry, attention, expansion and searching are all ways you can bring more mindful awareness into your life. As for the other type of awareness - consciousness awareness, it is about being really still and simply being in the moment. When you cultivate that space of simply being, unattached to the thoughts that arise in your head, you learn to be free of the egoic dependencies that cause turmoil and difficulty. "Consciousness" awareness brings peace into your life whereas "mindful" awareness brings understanding.

Accepting responsibility for your life

If the ocean is you and you only, how can you see the eco-system as the makings of another? You see a fish and think - who put him there? Who's responsible for this fish? You! It begins to dawn on you that you are the only caretaker of this reef. All that time you've been waiting for someone to come, you've been waiting for yourself! You are responsible to take care of the water and all the fish and coral because they *are* you.

As you develop mindful awareness and expand yourself through being consciously aware, you begin to see things in your view that you didn't see before. You can begin to take responsibility for your life. What does this entail exactly? Accepting responsibility means to view your life as *your* doing and making, not as anyone else's. It's taking the blame off parents and other people in your life for causing damage or hurt. It's about seeing yourself as the cause and effect of your own life and not looking to an outside source to make you happy or fulfilled. It's all about you and you alone. We have been so conditioned to believe that our parents harm us, that we need to blame others for our misfortune and that life is something that happens to us. Break the chain now! Don't pass this misleading concept on to your children. Assume all the responsibility for your own self and your parents and their parents and then be done. Let it end with you so that from this moment forward, you can be free to make conscious choices, not ones that are made for you while you sit and watch helplessly.

Accepting responsibility also means that you don't let your ego get away with disempowering you again and again. When you accept responsibility you also accept your own power and you can harness that power as best fits your life. Although we don't put blame on others when we choose to accept responsibility for our life, we might be inclined to put blame on ourselves. But don't be tempted to do so! Accepting responsibility means not blaming *anyone*, including you. Just because you assume responsibility for your life, does not mean that you need to walk down a spiraling path of guilt. Responsibility means being response-able. Being willing to do something about your life now and move forward. Being able to respond honestly, appropriately, rationally and generously with the idea of a conscious choice in mind is the true meaning of being responsible.

There are three different concepts at work here that we tend to confuse - blame, guilt and responsibility. Blame, the first instinct we have when something "bad" happens, is something we inflict on someone or something. Our first instinct is to blame other people for our misfortune. This is a conditioned response that the ego feels very comfortable with as it takes all the attention off of it and onto someone else. Whew. Let the other person deal with it!

Once we begin to look closer and find our part in the "wrong doing" so as to unleash ourselves from a robotic, conditioned reaction, we tend to put blame on ourselves for the "wrong doing". This too, is a knee-jerk reaction that we could benefit from disposing of. This, we like to call "guilt" which is not imposed or inflicted but personally accepted. Where you can *put* blame, you can *feel* guilt. And guilt is a very dangerous emotion as it slowly destroys the self and paralyzes the person from ever moving forward.

So how do we take responsibility without falling into the trap of letting guilt take over? We separate the action from the feeling. We decide to do something about "righting" the "wrong doing". We offer ourselves a reframe - "I did the best I could at the time and now that I know more, I can do something to make it better or make the best of the situation. It is my responsibility to take action for the life that I want." It may help in thinking that each moment is its own, with cause and effect being fabrications of our own mind. Then we can feel free of the past "cause" and see this moment as a single event happening now that we can address cleanly.

The clearest way I can think of in separating the three is that blame and guilt are all about the past and responsibility is about the future. When you *take responsibility*, you are making a decision of what's to come, not what has transpired. We have been mistakenly taught that responsibility is owning the past, which pulls so many of us straight into guilt or blame and it is not at all the meaning and purpose of this very important concept. It is truly about being response-able.

You may encounter many emotional consequences to this part of the process. To get yourself started, it might be a good idea to connect with your intention again and ask yourself what is more important: to be right or to be free?

CHAPTER 3

Recognizing the traps - sometimes a stone is a fish

Identifying the traps

Look yourself in the eye

Thoughts, beliefs, conditionings and judgments

Identifying the traps

You're feeling comfortable in your beautiful reef but if you don't study it properly, you're likely to get hurt. Your job is to check the reef for possible dangerous areas and creatures so that you are aware of them and don't make the mistake of touching something you shouldn't. Take the stonefish for example - looks like your standard harmless rock, but it can be deadly if you step on it. In its self it is completely harmless, but when provoked, can be extremely poisonous. So how do you know where these kinds of "traps" are in the water? You carefully study the reef and the movement of the fish - what places they avoid, where they like to hide and who their friends are. Pretty soon you'll see that most fish stay clear of the stone fish- a dead giveaway of this chameleon. And it's not the only one.

Now that we are ready to accept responsibility for our life, our next step is to know what obstacles to look out for in making our way toward a conscious life. Once we become responsible about our situation, choices and life in general, we can begin going deeply into the self and really looking at those things that have kept us from assuming responsibility over our lives. This is the fruit of the desire to accept responsibility.

Recognizing the traps that limit you and your development is a key step in the process toward a conscious life of choice. We secretly depend so much on fear, thoughts and judgments that we never end up seeing reality the way it really is. And we never end up seeing ourselves for who we really are. It's such a shame to go through a whole lifetime and never meet yourself, or another, face to face with honesty and truth. In knowing the areas that trap you in the ego, your process is greatly facilitated and you begin noticing them in others, thereby giving you a clear perspective of where other people are "coming from". You become more compassionate and understanding of the plights of others and where they are trapped too.

By definition, traps are hidden dependencies and conditionings that limit you from realizing your potential. Due to their hiding nature, the difficulty lies in actually finding them, not in understanding them. A trap is no longer a trap if it's not hidden. So, how do we identify the trap if it's hiding from view? Through sign posts! There are many indicators that show us the way to traps that we usually don't notice.

The most common signpost is a negative emotion: stress, anger, anxiety, fear, frustration, etc. In many cases, when we encounter an "undesirable" emotion, we've stumbled upon a trap, and can now bring the thought or behavior that caused that emotion under scrutiny. If working with emotions is not your cup of tea, take a look at a thought or behavior that brings stress and anxiety into your life. Some people connect to their cerebral mind more tightly than their emotions, others learn well from catching themselves "in the act" - do whatever you can to help yourself identify these traps that point to conditionings.

It is important to remember that the thoughts, behaviors and emotions are not the problem itself, neither is the seemingly direct cause of the reaction - they are harmless perfect parts of our reality, but they do serve a great purpose on our road to discovery of Self. The eco-system in your reef is delicate and perfect the way it is. Every fish has its part to play. It is the *reaction* we have to the thoughts that indicates our level of dependency and conditioning. Thoughts and emotions are not done away with once we bring the traps to light - they simply become cleaner and our dependence on them gets loosened. We don't lose any fish; we only become clean sighted enough to see them for what they really are in their color and form.

For example, a trap might surface when I'm feeling frustrated when my husband does not listen to me. At first glance it may seem that the problem lies in my husband not listening to me and instinctively, I may look to change that "reality", but in truth, it is my feeling of frustration that is pointing to a trap and is the real issue here. It is then my job to really look at and evaluate what my thinking is around this topic: My husband should listen to me. This is a conditioning, no matter how universal it may seem. Who says that my husband should listen to me? How do I know that the best thing for our marriage is that he listens to me? When did I ever decide on that? So, my emotion pointed to a conditioned thought that arises from a situation which is not to my liking. This is how you locate a trap, evaluate and dissect it.

Another very interesting trap is what psychologists call "shadows". A shadow is a trap that hides from you all your life and is so sophisticated that it tries its best to cover its tracks. It's one of the most difficult to face, but is completely possible. A shadow is the one (or two or three) parts of yourself that you've removed out of your sight when you were a tiny person, way back when judgments began to surface in your life. It is the part of you that your ego decided to push away because it was too much to bear. How do you find it? Check the one idea you have about others that you just absolutely cannot apply to yourself. "Everyone is always so angry. Why is he always angry at me? I'm never angry." "People are always blaming me. Why do you always blame me? I never blame you!" These are tell-tale signs that a shadow is in the room. This disassociated part of the ego that comes up in almost every conflicting interaction with other people is well worth scrutiny and if you're lucky, you may find a whole family of them to work with.

Look yourself in the eye

Take a close look at your fish and coral in the reef. Explore the dark crevasses where sunlight never shines. It's scary at first. What monsters might be lying there waiting to jump on you if you invade their space? But remember, this is *your* reef. No one will do this for you.

Looking yourself in the eye means creating an intimate relationship with those items about yourself that fall into view. It means to be unafraid to look at dark spots and unwholesome intentions for the sake of your initial intention that you set up in step one. It means to not leave any stones unturned as you move toward a life of conscious choice.

First off, don't be alarmed - you'll find resistance, fear, a kicking ego - many things that will want to point you away from looking deeply at yourself. This is normal! And this is good. Just as negative emotions can be indicators of traps,

they are also signs of the direction in which to move. Notice them and push forward. It is a scary thing to look at your self in a completely transparent way, no one denies that. That is why your intention has to be crystal clear and always in mind.

To be able to face absolutely everything a few things need to happen.

The first is that your intention is super-duper clear. Crystal. Understand your goal and why you want to achieve it. If your intention is not strong enough to get you through this stage, it won't be strong enough to get you through the next nine. If you find that it's not pulling you through, revisit your intention and step one and really sit with those questions until you connect to something strong.

The second is that you adopt the "what's the worst that can happen?" approach. Really, what is the absolute worst thing that can happen if you take a real look at yourself? Who will you meet? Will you lose your current image of yourself? Will you *die*? Whoever died of simply taking a closer look?

The third is that you take a good look at fear and get passed it in anyway possible. One way to meet fear is to use the "acknowledge and validate" technique. When you feel fear coming and you get scared that the fear will prevent you from moving forward, pacify the fear by acknowledging yourself - "of course I'm afraid to look inside! Who wouldn't be in my shoes? There are things there that I don't know and it's dark in there!" And then thanking your ego for performing a great job on protecting you from harm, its prime job. "Thank you ego, for letting me know that you care for my well being and you only want to protect me, but I don't need protection at this moment. I think I can take it from here." This technique works on bringing attention to the fear itself and dissipating the energy around it so that you can make a clear choice about moving forward. Another way to deal with fear is just to plough right through it. Be energized into moving forward despite the presence of fear. You might even need to use will power under certain conditions, but better to be motivated by the intention and sense of purpose you've developed toward being a free and conscious human being.

Being truthful with yourself is the first step in being truly truthful with others. How can you see others with clarity if you cannot see yourself? How can you understand the "unwholesome" parts of another if you are not familiar with those parts of yourself? Being transparent to yourself means that you really have integrity and that you are on your way to living a fearless life. Wouldn't that be nice for a change? Facing fears, checking intentions and scrutinizing actions is rigorous work, but well worth it, as you will see the fruits manifesting in your life.

Thoughts, beliefs, conditions and judgment

Have you noticed the many different types of fish and creatures living in your reef? Which fish do what? What do they eat? How do they play? Each type of organism has its own job to perform in keeping the eco-system in balance. Some are cleaners, some are food for the big guys and some protect others. Their roles are specific and you need every one of them to maintain your reef. But in order to have a good understanding of which fish are best to catch, you

need to really get to know their functions so you don't get hurt or damage the balance of the reef.

In looking yourself in the eye, many things will come to surface - thoughts, beliefs and conditionings among others. These all have a very valuable role in our development as humans and serve many purposes, so it is always important to remember that none of these items are bad, none of them are undesirable and we don't want to get rid of them per se. All we are looking to do is disintegrate our attachment to them, check our dependency on them and find out how much they are holding us back from living to our fullest potential. So don't fool yourself into a new conditioning that these things are bad - just check them.

Thoughts

What are thoughts? Who would you be without your thoughts? Ever try to stop your thinking? Even for a moment it becomes a very difficult task. They are always in our head, and because of that many times we think that our thoughts are objective facts almost, indisputable sometimes, and we think that they are our own, but are they really? When we put our thoughts up in view, inquire into them, observe them and question them, we objectify them. Meaning, we turn them into objects in our view instead of them hiding as a subjective reality. The only *subject* in the equation is your highest self. Everything that that self can witness is called an *object* that falls into view. So, by knowing this and isolating thoughts, we can take a deep look at their validity and what they really are in the scheme of things - elements that can be formed and manipulated.

This technique of inquiry allows us to disbelieve beliefs that have been passed down to us for generations or others that we have learned to create on our own. Like a fish, a thought is an innocent thing. We might, through this process, come to dislike our thoughts, but they are truly meaningless. The only meaning they can have is the meaning we give them and our belief in them. A thought can't be bad - it's always good, if you don't depend on it. The problem never lies in the thought itself. It lies in our involvement in the thought. Does it give us stress? Does it tell us something that is not true? Do we believe it? The point is you'll never get rid of thoughts. They'll just keep coming, but you can have control over your dependency on thoughts as a story that you believe. Check your thoughts. Don't be afraid to really look at them for the sake of inquiry.

We want to offer thoughts their proper place and home in the mind, but when they go unnoticed and cause the stories that we tell ourselves over and over again, they keep us in our heads, instead of in our center and in reality. They are like those huge schools of small fish filling the water like a giant blob, enveloping other objects and the entire reef while causing confusion and disorientation as a means of self preservation.

Conditionings

Most of the thoughts that we can identify today are part of the conditionings that are handed down to us through a long and intricate history of creative story-telling that began as early as the advent of language. The causes of these conditionings are beyond our personal self, but can and should be dealt with by us. They are like little gifts given to us by our parents and society to measure

how far we've come and how willing we are to really be conscious human beings.

Some conditionings are biological, others are linguistic and yet others are psychological. Some conditionings are very difficult to access because they are so universal and imbedded in our race, gender or species that they are hardly recognizable even after inquiry. But there are those that with a little work can start to surface and lead the way to others.

One way to notice them is in assumptions. Assumptions are usually conditionings. It's easy to find an assumption, right? Just have someone listen to you speak about a topic and see where they can pick up on something that you assume to be true, but in fact, they do not. Another way to find a conditioning is to check anything you see as fact. This practice might get you to deeper conditionings that are hiding well below the surface. Conditionings are any belief, thought, action or judgment that we've become accustomed to, so much so, that we let it control us without being aware of it. Conditionings keep us in robotic mode.

Conditionings are the varying currents in the depths of the water that you don't see but can feel. They provide a direction to the many organisms, swaying them this way and that. Just like the thoughts and beliefs, the fish don't know that their direction is being influenced by the current, but it is gently shaping the environment in which they reside.

Judgment

Judgment is the attachment of moral or aesthetic personal value on discernment. Judgment is not discernment itself. "Jack is 6'10" tall is discernment but "jack is too tall" is a judgment. See? It's a value statement. In it you can find what is good, and what is bad. Discernments are factual and don't lend themselves to choosing a side along the fence and they offer us a solid view of reality as it is.

The problem is that we have been conditioned from birth to judge everything and everyone - isn't that the essence of being human? But now, as our awareness as a species grows, we've come to think of it as a naughty word and concept and we just should not be doing it. So confusing, which conditioning is right?

One danger about judgments, just like anything else, is to think that they are facts and reality, rather than a conditioned opinion. Know when you are judging. First start with that. Once you build awareness around the fact that you judge, whether you allow yourself to do so or not, brings attention to the matter. Then you can work out the details. But, know you are judging when you do, so that you don't get into the trap of creating fact out of mere judgment.

Another danger about them is that when we believe them, they further separate us from reality and others. They feed the stories in our minds to the point where we perpetuate our separate sense of self and therefore make it much more difficult to achieve true connection with others and ultimately with ourselves.

CHAPTER 4

Obtaining freedom from dependencies - exercising tough love

Challenge your beliefs and conditionings
Sustaining the open mind

Challenging your beliefs and conditions

Until now, you've communicated with your reef in a passive, observant and gentle manner. You've learned about the relationships among the fish, about the temperature of the water and the currents, and the environment itself. Now it's time to be more active and fulfill your role as the caretaker of the reef. You've noticed the few trouble makers in the crowd and it's time to stand up to them. You know the ones - those that threaten the others and instill chaos in the reef.

By now we've come to realize that there is no problem with the thoughts that create conditionings, beliefs and judgments, but that it is only our level of dependence on them that causes us to be trapped in a skewed reality.

Obtaining freedom from conditions and dependencies is the next step after noticing and bringing attention to them. We've set our intention to be conscious human beings, we're more aware of ourselves and our surroundings, we brought attention to all the pieces we have inside, and now how do we move forward? Once we know that the traps exist, how do we deal with them? One way we can work with these beliefs is challenge them. Already bringing them into our view helps dissipate some of the energy around them. Now, we can challenge their validity, check if they are still true, take them apart and deconstruct them so we have a better grip around what they really are and what they mean.

Challenging the dependency you hold to a thought begins with checking the validity of the thought, right now, today and to see what negative effects it has over your life. Some are easier to notice, while others are so deep psychologically, and may arise from our biological makeup as female or male humans, but even they can be challenged. They are much more complex and imbedded, but you can be free of them as well, possibly with spiritual work. It's all a matter of how much you want to be free.

How do you challenge something that is difficult to find in the first place? Ask a friend! I'm sure they'll be thrilled to show you where your thoughts betray your happiness. Ask yourself! Check with yourself whether these thoughts are meant to bring you forward or do they keep you in the past? Get a coach! Coaching is an excellent way to uncover and dismantle your beliefs and thoughts so that you can lead a life of choice. Find a teacher/Guru who can offer you a different way to see the world. And yet another good technique to work on conditionings is Byron Katie's system, "The Work".

What do you do when a fish is misbehaving? You try to understand the cause of its behavior and act accordingly, right? Sometimes you have to show compassion, other times you need to exercise tough love and yet sometimes, you may have to remove it from the reef, but don't forget, when it gets difficult, you're doing this for the sake of the entire reef, for your own deep well-being.

Sustaining the open mind

In order to learn new things and grow, we must have an open mind. Have you ever been in a class where there's that one person that does not stop arguing with the teacher? Was that ever you? That mind is busy and the information it receives is always with pressure and a struggle. This is the time to take a pause from the struggle and prepare for the next step. Now that we've challenged the conditionings of our mind, we can rest a little and relax in learning how to simply be in the present. An important point to remember is that you don't actually stop the process and let the mind go soft, you always move forward and check for traps and conditionings, but this is part of the rhythm of the process. In addition to the momentum you've built, take time within that momentum to practice sustaining the open mind.

There's a time for action and a time to simply be. In your reef you'll find moments of pure bliss when you swim harmoniously with the fish. You're not studying or disciplining them. You just swim with them with a big fat grin on your face. You meet each one of them with pure acceptance and love and play like a kid in the water.

We want to get to the situation where the mind is open and willing to receive new information. In order to do so, we challenge our thoughts and meet them where they are. In the process of doing so, something beautiful happens. The mind gets less tense, more open and happy. It has its guard down and allows us to start controlling it, not the other way around. This is truly the key in living a conscious life - being the master of our mind, not letting it control us. Mind mastery, when exercised well, is the most real way to live. Things become clear and the mind doesn't play tricks anymore because the ego is not afraid. It's already faced so many scary things - unwholesome intentions, thoughts about death, a realization that it is not the master of the universe. For now the ego and mind can live joyously because they are no longer tormented by their own makings. But, it's very important to remember, that this is not a state that we achieve and get passed. That is the ideal, and things don't happen that way. You must always revisit thoughts and not let the mind take over when you're not paying attention. It is hard work to keep all these things in check, but the alternative is much, much more difficult.

There are a few techniques I can think of in keeping the mind open. One is learning how to listen at deep levels. Usually, when we listen to another person, we are thinking, so we don't end up listening at all. All we're doing is listening to our own thoughts. It is good habit for the mind to listen to another without having thoughts and judgments. Suspend the desire to think while listening to a lecture, a friend or your mother. Just simply be and listen. The mind opens up nicely when you exercise that. Another technique is to meditate. Any form of meditation can help. Choose a form that best suits you and go. Meditation clears away thoughts and helps you practice just being in the moment, in the space. A third technique to keep the mind open is to meet your doubts with doubt. Your doubts are what keep you in a closed frame of mind, in struggle. Doubt everything you already believe and be open to those things that you don't. See where that takes you. A fourth way to open the mind is meet everything with love. It is the seemingly opposite of meeting everything with doubt, but it leads in the same direction. If you meet everything with unconditional love, you suspend judgment, which can trap you.

Unconditional love is the most powerful way to open the mind because you are going against almost every grain in your egoic fiber. You're going against almost everything you were ever taught by your parents and teachers, but is, in essence, your true nature.

PART II - UNDERSTANDING THE ECO-SYSTEM

How to create a life of understanding and conscious choice

Weeks 5-7

chapter 5. Perspectives – Life as a collection of perspectives

- Definition of perspectives
- The difference between perspectives and thoughts

chapter 6. The structure of perspectives

- The bull's eye of perspectives
- The perspective matrix

chapter 7. Shifting perspectives

- Challenging perspectives
- The 3-step process of perspective shifting
- Accessing new perspectives

CHAPTER 5

Perspectives - Life as a collection of perspectives

Definition of perspectives

The difference between perspectives and thoughts

Definition of perspectives

This section of the manual is very different from the first part of the manual. This part is composed entirely of work on perspectives, what they are and how a shift in perspective can change your whole world in one moment. So, don't worry too much about the first part of the manual during this section. Right now, concentrate on understanding this and how you can put it into your life. Later we will merge everything together to form the entire system of what I call creating a life of conscious choice.

I like to think of life as experienced through a collection of perspectives. In order to begin working with perspectives, we must first clarify what a perspective is. A perspective is the way you look at an object, your point of view about it. Your perspective of an object defines your relationship to it, such as: "I see the universe as a benevolent place". My relationship with the universe and all my thoughts of it will fall under that blanket statement, or perspective. My relationship with the universe must be one of goodness if I see the universe as being benevolent. Or, "I see humankind as being selfish in its core." My relationship with humankind and all my thoughts of it will fall under this blanket perspective, which will dictate my dealings with humanity. When we begin to define our perspectives of the world and the objects in it (including our own self) we start making way toward changing our world and life.

A perspective can be described as an engrained "mother" thought. It is a container that holds all of our thoughts, emotions and actions within. It is the framework in which our individual lives play out. Every thought, emotion or action that we have or make is the result of a perspective or group of perspectives that we hold about the world. You are always and at every moment holding a perspective or point of view that is your own. You're probably holding many. These perspectives are so important and basic that they shape your interaction with the world and yourself. For example, think of your point of view about creating a conscious life of choice. What is the overall framework for your desire to creating this new life? Do you look at life as a learning and growing process? Do you see your own life as missing something? Do you see your life through the lens of whether it is proactive or passive?

Understanding perspectives and learning how to work with them is a similar to understanding the eco-system of the reef under your boat and the water surrounding it. Once you gain knowledge about the marine biology in your reef, you can make informed and wise decisions that may have striking effects on your life and the quality of it on the boat.

The point in working with perspectives is the same point as in chapter 4 - to eliminate the attachment you hold towards particular perspectives, which may limit you from living your highest potential. It's that simple. We are not looking to eliminate perspectives in themselves by any means. That is the job of spiritual meditation. We are interested in how to identify our perspectives

and liberate ourselves from their grasp, and within that framework, are searching for all those things that restrict our freedom of choice. An unexamined perspective, like thoughts and beliefs, is one of those elements that can prevent you from making a conscious choice and keep you locked in conditionings without realizing why.

The difference between perspectives and thoughts

Sometimes we can get confused about the difference between thoughts and perspectives, right? It can be hard to identify which of these is a thought and which is more than just a thought.

The way I see it is like this: a thought is a temporal thing. It comes and goes. It can be swayed, contradicted and challenged quite easily. It also may or may not have an effect on other thoughts that surface, it can be random. A perspective, which surfaces *like a thought*, is much more permanent than a thought. It carries more weight than a thought. It can be understood as a thought that has been engrained in our consciousness over a long period of time. In a way, like a “mother thought” and in that context, becomes the lens through which we view the world and the space in which thoughts and judgments arise. We cannot say the reverse is true - that a thought holds within it a perspective.

A perspective, as opposed to a thought, is something which you cannot see when just in the humdrum of daily life. It almost acts as a background to everything that arises, so it stays hidden from view. It's tricky - whereas we can usually identify thoughts quite easily, perspectives seem to hide past the horizon - always out of sight. It's just like wearing contacts. When you put them on, very quickly you forget that they are there and influence the way you see your surroundings. You just look through them. But when you take them off to clean them, you not only are noticing them, checking them for folds and imperfections, but now you see that without them the world looks different.

Another very important difference between thoughts and perspectives is that when you change a thought, the effect is minimal. Think about the latest argument you had with someone where you ended up on their side in the end. It wasn't that hard to persuade you and in the end your whole world was not severely affected. But with perspectives, when they are challenged, which does not happen often, it feels as though the earth shakes. The reason for which is that we treat our perspectives as if they are the bible - a very strong assumption that is a structure for the entire makeup of our thoughts. It almost seems like it is unfathomable that others don't hold exactly the same perspective as we do, if a pretty deep one is touched upon. And when it does get challenged, the shift can change your life and those cyclical feelings and unexamined concepts very simply melt away.

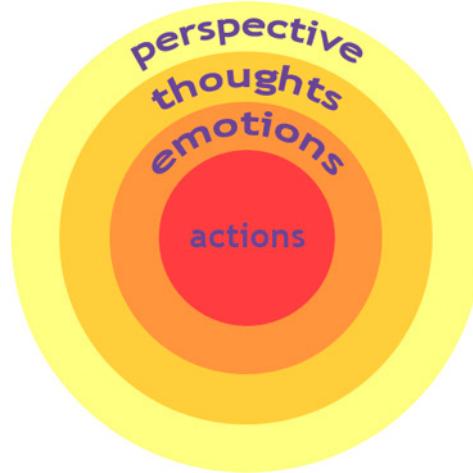
CHAPTER 6

The structure of perspectives

The bull's eye of perspectives

The perspective matrix - the “tree” structure & the “net” structure

The bull's eye of perspectives



Now that we understand the value of perspectives, of checking them and their location in the conditional mind, we can move on to the structure of perspectives and what we can do with them.

Perspectives have two kinds of structure - interior and exterior. The interior structure of a perspective is what it composes, which we touched upon briefly in the previous chapter. The exterior structure is the way in which perspectives relate to one another, which I will refer to as the matrix.

The bull's eye of perspectives is a very clear way to identify the interior structure of perspectives in the egoic world. The reason perspectives hold such a dominant place in our understanding and our evolution is that they contain all the other important components of the being within them.

The bull's eye structure of a perspective clearly shows how perspectives are the generators of thoughts, thoughts create emotions and emotions lead to actions. In this structure, I'd like to clarify one important point. When we say “action”, “thought” or “emotion” we are talking of a *mode* of conduct. In this context, “thought” is a contemplative process or mode. And when we refer to “action”, of course it is not just the behavior, but there are also action thoughts that play out in the action mode.

To show how this structure works, let's take a mundane everyday example backwards from action mode to perspective:

Action: you punish your husband and give him the “silent treatment”

Emotion: you feel frustrated, hurt and unloved

Thought: he should be listening to you when you speak

(Reality: he's not listening)

Perspective: loving husbands listen and communicate well

This structure is very important to know because it provides us with the link between the four modes and offers a framework with which to work on the

pieces. When we can't see the links, we get overwhelmed with the confusion of the seemingly randomness of all these elements, when in fact, it is a very simple structure. Notice that I placed the mode of "reality" between perspective and thought. It's important to understand that the judgment thought doesn't arise purely from the perspective, but also from the reality of what we perceive through our senses. The reason this statement is a judgment is through the use of the word "should" which is another way of saying that what the husband is doing is "bad" or "wrong" because he's not doing what he is "supposed" to do. The reason that this is important is because this is where we see judgment thoughts arise - at the moment of dissonance between our perspective and reality.

You might be asking what the difference is between the thought statement and the perspective. For one, the thought statement is on the surface - you can locate it, and you know that you are thinking it. It is close to the surface and is an object in your "vision". Secondly, the perspective statement is hiding. It lies just beyond the horizon of the experience. It is what dictates the response to the situation without being noticed. I wrote it in here for the sake of clarity, but in real life, you would not notice that it's there at first glance - not until you inquire further.

A major benefit in knowing how all the pieces connect lies in the process of making changes. We hold a serious misconception about how to make changes in our lives - we usually go straight to what we can see - actions, and attempt to change them, but what are the results like?

Have you ever tried to quit smoking? Or ever been on a strict diet? Trying to stop doing something is very hard work, especially if you're trying to break a long-term habit. How much attention and energy do you need to put on your hand and a cigarette in order not to reach for one? More often than not, we think that in order to change we have to use a lot of willpower to change our habits, when in fact, we rarely achieve sustainable results. Why? Why do we have such a hard time changing our habits?

Ever try to not feel the way you do? Have you ever been mad at yourself at feeling a certain emotion and tried to will yourself to change that emotion? How did that work out? Unless you are a very tenacious person who has extremely strong willpower, I doubt you got very far in the long run. Those emotions came out in some way, somewhere, probably when you least expected them.

What about changing your thoughts? How much success have you had in stopping to think about something that plagues you only to find yourself waking up at 4am full of anxiety? That's a good one - change your thoughts, as if that's so easy. The point is, changing your thoughts, along with your emotions and habits is not easy, especially when you are willing yourself to do so. It can also be quite dangerous to the more intricate and subtle parts of the ego that you might repress or hide only to find later as a big mess to clean up.

So, how can we make sustainable changes that will not be fueled by willpower and struggle? Through perspectives! The bull's eye of perspectives shows us that perspectives are the overarching framework in which thoughts, emotions and actions reside. In order to make a sustainable change, we need to understand the framework or structure of our ideas and feelings and tackle it from there.

Take the earlier example of the perspective structure, if you try really, really hard to stop yourself from giving your husband the silent treatment, then you will sense a dissonance between how you act and how you feel. And if you will yourself not to be hurt or frustrated by “your husband’s actions” (the apparent object in the system) then you repress feelings and feel a disconnect between yourself and your life. And if you work on changing the thought that he should listen to you when you speak, you might get a little further than the other two, but chances are it won’t be sustainable. The quickest and most sustainable way to shift is by challenging your perspective that “loving husbands listen to their wives”. What does *loving* have anything to do with *listening*? Where did you learn this misleading concept? What other effects does this perspective have on your life? On your relationship with your husband? Children? Parents? The glorious thing about change through perspective shifting is that we don’t actually change anything. All we do is simply shift our point of view about something in a direction that suits what we’re looking for! That sounds like a relief to me. Change never sounds like it’s going to be easy, but shifting not only sounds simpler, it actually is! This is the gold mine of making changes. If you can really grasp this and apply it in your life, you can free yourself quickly and easily from the limited robotic bubble to an expanded free conscious state.

The perspective matrix

Now that you understand the make up of a perspectival framework and the relationship between perspectives, thoughts, emotions and actions, we can move onto the relationship between different perspectives. Sometimes we identify not only one but two or three or six perspectives relevant to a particular thought that leads to a particular set of emotions. This is the exterior structure of perspectives and their relationship. Within the exterior structure there are two different models - the “tree” approach and the “net”. Sometimes one fits better to a given situation than the other and vice versa, but both are correct and equally important, depending on what you want to achieve.

The “tree” model starts with a particular perspective that is directly connected to a thought or judgment (the “object”), and looks deeper to find the perspective that holds that one. So, when you are looking at a thought like: “people should have equal rights”, you arrive at the perspective “people are entitled to equal rights regardless of their affiliation to me” that generated this thought. That is the first level of perspective regarding your relationship to equal rights. Then you go deeper and look for the perspective that generated the “level one perspective” just mentioned and so on until you arrive at this kind of structure:

Object: “people should have equal rights”

First level perspective - people are entitled to equal rights universally, regardless of their affiliation with me (whether they are family members or complete strangers.)

Second level perspective - truths are universal rather than subjective (if it is true that I should care about my family or nation, then I should care about all people because

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| | otherwise the truth would be relative and subjective only.) |
| Third level perspective - | there is a basic true/false quality to every thought or fact we look at. |
| Fourth level perspective - | the world is composed of a multitude of facts. |
| Fifth level perspective - | there is multiplicity in the world. |
| Sixth level perspective - | there is a world. |

This is an example of a “tree” exterior structure. This structure is one that is like a building, where one floor is built upon another in the way that one perspective is generated by the preceding one. This model is not only a tree, but it is also chronological. The development of each one of these perspectives happens in sequence from babyhood, to childhood to adulthood, starting at the bottom. You can think of this process as uncovering artifacts in an archeological dig. You start at the surface and make your way deeper into the dirt until you discover all the layers that compose your buried perspective tree, leaves to roots.

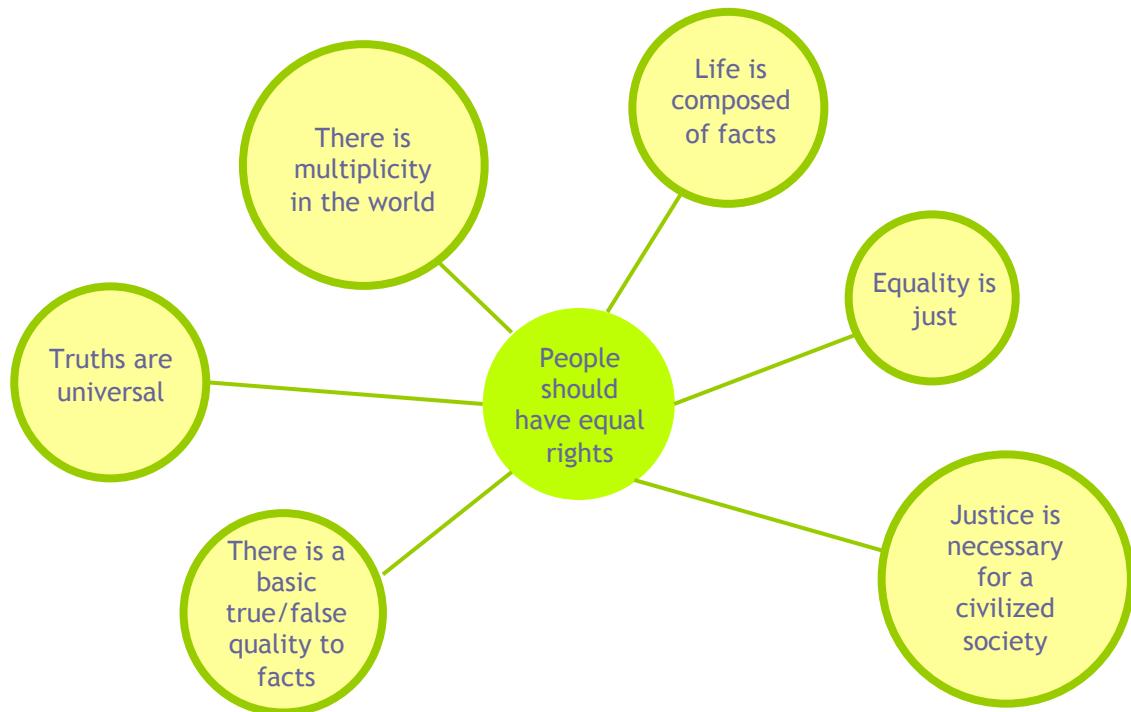
One of the interesting things about perspectives is that some are easier to shift than others, just as some are easier to find than others. You can see here that the deeper the perspective, the harder it is to challenge, because it gets more and more universal. The ones that are closer to the top of the structure are more malleable, and can be challenged easily, even by the self. That doesn’t mean that they can be changed easily, not at all, but they are more identifiable as being personal and therefore their validity can be questioned more easily. The deeper perspectives are much more imbedded in consciousness and are like assumptions that we hold to be absolutely true, until examined. These perspectives are the ones that we assume everyone holds – “you mean, not everyone believes that life is composed of facts?” that is the kind of reaction you’ll find when challenging a deeper perspective in this model. We assume that the whole world or, at least our culture, holds this “fact” to be indisputably TRUE.

When building the perspective tree, you’ll find that sometimes it’s not so simple and may take some time. There are certain things to look out for in preparing the tree. The first is to notice that it makes sense in both directions. What does that mean? The tree must make sense from top to bottom and bottom to top in a logical way. From top down, the tree must make sense in that there is a logical procession of ideas and that there is no skipping of concepts. You must be able to understand how you get from one level to the next and if you don’t, you are either missing a level or are going off in a totally different direction. In the logic of bottom up, the tree must be coherent in that each level adds only one new concept to the structure and that the concept in the previous level is present in the current one, like in the tree above.

The second type of exterior structure is the “net” matrix. Whereas in the tree model we begin with a particular thought or judgment and go deeper, in this model we place each of the perspectives that have a generative effect on the thought separately on a net of bubbles and the object thought in the center.

In this model, the perspectives operate individually from one another, at the same time about one thought.

In this model, instead of going in a sequence, we check each perspective individually for its validity. Of course, this is a simplified version because in reality, there are many other bubbles attached to each one of these bubbles and therefore a net is formed, hence the name for this structure. The advantage of this structure over the tree structure is that you can be free to brainstorm and arrive at many more possible perspectives that operate on that object, but as opposed to the tree structure, it doesn't go deep and force you to see perspectives that really hide from view. So each has its advantages and disadvantages, but you'll get results from both if you are rigorous about the process.



CHAPTER 7

Shifting perspectives

Challenging perspectives

The 3-step process of perspective shifting

Accessing new perspectives

Challenging perspectives

Once we figure out the structure of our perspectives, we can begin challenging them to find where we have attachments, preferably strong attachments. Sometimes it can be enough to simply draw up the tree or net structure and bring those perspectives to light and the natural occupation we have in the days to follow takes care of the challenge itself. So much so that we don't need any other tool to challenge the conditionings. We do have to be very careful, though, not to let go of the opportunity to challenge just because it is uncomfortable or seems like there's no need to challenge anything because it all makes so much "sense".

So, once we have a perspective "tree" or "net" mapped out, we run down the list of perspectives from the top down or around the center and look for something "suspicious". A "suspicious" perspective is a perspective that you think everyone, or at least everyone you associate with, has. Meaning, it's the one that appears the least harmful or strange of them all, the one you feel cannot be disputed or should not be disputed, the one you feel the most resistance to changing. This is because that is the perspective that never gets attention and therefore never gets challenged and therefore is always in the background, hiding from view but in reality, making the view. Make sense? Or, you may find one that stands out the most to you as something that you didn't know about yourself, like a connection you made between two different ideas. These are the perspectives in which to begin the inquiry. You might have five of these and there may be only one, but no matter how many, most likely they are the ticket to the big shift you've been waiting for.

Now that we've discovered one of the perspectives in the structure that may need to be challenged, how do you challenge it? You can apply a number of techniques to loosen the conditioning of that particular perspective, and remember, it is not our goal to "knock out" this perspective, but to check what it really means, update it or replace it with another. One way is to simply ask yourself a few questions regarding this perspective:

1. How does this perspective affect my life?
2. Is it still relevant for how I live my life or who I've become over the years?
3. Does this perspective still serve me or harm me?
4. What would happen to my life if I didn't hold this perspective?
5. Where did I get this perspective? Where did I learn it?

A second technique to challenge a perspective is to work on it with your coach. If you feel that you can't tackle a perspective on your own - maybe it's too deep, maybe it's too much a part of you, seek out a coach that can help you see it clearly. This is what coaches are trained to do, to help you clarify and see things more clearly.

A third way to challenge this perspective is to do “the work” on it, as per Byron Katie’s system of inquiry. This tool can help you identify the effect the perspective has on your life and offers you a few possible new ways to look at it differently in order to loosen its grip over you.

A fourth way to handle this kind of inquiry is simply ask other people- friends, family or co-workers, what their thoughts are on the subject of that particular perspective. Chances are that they’ll give you some good food for thought and possibly offer you other perspectives that may never have occurred to you. You can then evaluate for yourself these thoughts and possible points of view and let the chips fall where they may. It’s very funny how these “perspectival shifts” work, sometimes in a great big “aha!” moment that leads to an immediate shift, and at other times, a gentle “hmm...” moment can lead to a shift 3 days later. It’s beautifully refreshing either way.

If no detachment (or shift) occurs at this point, and that may happen, it doesn’t mean that something is wrong with either you or the system. There may be a number of possible reasons for this. You may not be ready to see things differently and need more tools to do so. Alternatively, you might not have dwelled on the challenge long enough and let yourself off the hook too easily. Another possibility is that you are working on the wrong perspective and you didn’t go deep enough to find the problematic perspective. Check again and be willing to really challenge it.

The 3-step process of perspective shifting

Challenging perspectives may not necessarily allow for a shift to another perspective, but simply lead to a detachment from a perspective. In order to shift to a new perspective, we need to understand the process itself.

The 3-step process of perspective shifting outlines a very simple way to identify the critical components of a perspectival shift and what is absolutely necessary in order for that to happen.

Step 1: Understand the current perspective

What do you see? (The object in question)

How you see it?

Why do you look at it that way? (Values, beliefs and conditions and other perspectives that helped create this view point)

Step 2: Clean/clear the mind of attachment to that particular perspective

Step 3: Tap into/access a different possible perspective

You see, perspective shifting is not some abstract concept - it is a very real, practical way to create your life. What if we hold a very limiting perspective about money or relationships or god? Can you imagine that a new perspective can take you on the road to wealth or real joy? Or maybe it can restore the love you have for your spouse in a dying marriage? Or can create a new relationship with your long lost brother or estranged son?

So far, in creating the perspectival “tree” or “net” structure in the previous chapter, we apply step one of the process. In challenging the perspective in the previous topic, we apply the use of step two of the process. The only one that is left for us to talk about is the third step in the process - accessing a new perspective which we discuss next.

Accessing different perspectives

Now that we have a mind that is clean of attachment to any particular perspective (ah, the ideal!) we can work on finding the perspectives that really *work for us*, not the other way around. Up until now, we've been working with what we have - how to identify the components and how to clear our dependencies on them. This is the part where we start making choices, conscious choices.

What is the importance of being able to access new perspectives? Why should we even bother trying to do so? What ideas can you come up with about the benefit of perspective shifting?

The way I look at it is like this: The mind must always have a perspective through which to look at the world. Just because we detach from the hold a particular perspective has over the mind, doesn't mean that we get rid of perspectives altogether. What it does mean is that we are now clear enough to make a choice about which perspective we *want* to hold that may serve us best or one that naturally aligns with who we are becoming, until that one becomes obsolete sometime in the future.

In detaching from a fundamental perspective such as “the world is composed of facts” we make room for something else that the world “is composed of”, such as maybe spiritual beings, moral dilemmas, emotions, or anything else that

starts to fit with who we've become. The process of "choosing" a perspective can take many forms. One of which is a natural following to the previous perspective. When we make room in our mind by identifying and challenging a perspective, sometimes another one that is similar, but more aware and evolved takes its place naturally. Something starts to formulate in the place of the previous perspective and it's personal, very personal.

Another way we can "choose" a perspective is by asking ourselves questions that bring out certain answers and awareness that we might not have known that we possess. Some of these questions might be:

What's another way to look at "x"?

How can you see "x" if you had all the wisdom in the world?

How can you look at "x" in a way that helps you the most?

What does "x" mean to you today?

And many others that are more particular to the concept involved. An important point to remember is that you cannot shift to a perspective that you are not ready for. It just does not happen and cannot happen. Someone may offer you an alternate perspective and you just don't see how it connects. You may just not be "there" and what that means is that your mind has not created a foundation that can support this brand new perspective. The reason why a shift works is because you have, over a period of months or years, been creating a foundation of thoughts and perspectives around a concept but had not discharged the outdated perspective yet to make room for the one that suits you better. So the shift happens, but only to something that "clicks" and makes sense to you, which I find so beautiful because you can't get ahead of yourself. You are always where you are supposed to be, like it or not.

Perspective frameworks

Yet another way to access a new perspective is to "get in the zone" of another *perspective framework*. What I mean by this access mode is to literally "become" the kind of person that you want to be. These are generally temporary perspectives that last anywhere from hours to a few years, depending on the depth you get into and the interest you hold in keeping them. These are not simply the adoption of one particular perspective, but are more like a family of perspectives that creates a temporary foundation that leads to suspension of who you think you are and pulls you into being something/someone else. These perspectives are more beneficial when you need to do something - a task, solve a problem or make a project. It sounds like magic, I know, but it's not.

Think of the SAT's - we all took them way back when in high school. I remember being disappointed in my score and thinking that something was wrong. I was missing something, and I wasn't the only one. No one ever taught us how to take that kind of exam, or "think" in the way that the people who created it do. No one told me that there was a "trick" and that it was a matter of *looking* at it the right way. There is a way that anyone can excel in these exams - and not by studying their brain off and only absorbing knowledge, but by accessing the perspective of the "problem solver" or the "detective" for key phrases or other content. It was a matter of getting into the *mindset* of a detective or problem solver which meant accessing that particular perspectival framework. You see what I mean? You don't need to be brilliant at math or English to know how to take the SAT's well. And it works with almost anything.

Think about it, if we have to keep acquiring knowledge to know how to do things, life will always be about accumulation, and there will be no being-ness. You can never know all that information you need to know, *never*. We've been taught that acquiring knowledge and experience is the only way that gives us tools, skills and qualities that allow us to *do* certain things. But you can just as easily (or even more so and much, much less time consuming) access a perspectival framework that gets you "in the zone" or in the mindset of whatever you need at that moment.

Being an architect, doctor, mathematician or housewife is not strictly a matter of what you learn in the "field" or in school - it's also a *mindset*. It's a perspective. An architect is an architect by the way he thinks, not by his education. His education helps in developing structures and foundations that form perspectives and thoughts that hold the mindset of an architect, but if at the end of school he still didn't get it, he still has a chance. It's just a matter of *seeing* the world through the eyes of an architect, of *thinking* like an architect. Anyone can do it. *Anyone*. It's a much worst situation if an architect has the right education but thinks like an engineer than an architect with no experience who thinks like an architect. Can you tell which one will be more respected and go farther in the profession?

The same is true for a mathematician. When we access the mindset and mentality of a mathematician, we can tackle problems easily and playfully. We understand and feel what it's like to see the world through the eyes of a mathematician and we see the results in our actions, because remember, perspectives lead to actions; they don't just stay in the mind.

For clarity's sake, I'd like to mention that information is important. It's not only about accessing a perspective and presto! You are a new person. But I do think that the perspective is the basis for being able to perform the task. Once you adopt the right perspective, getting the particular knowledge necessary is a piece of cake and happens naturally. When practiced more regularly, this technique becomes like second nature and saves you much time and energy, not to mention, inspires you to be different and light in life. This can be a great way to loosen conditionings in a very indirect and playful manner.

For instance, say you want to be the best mother in the world to your children. What does that take? How does a great mother look at the world and herself? How does she think? How does she spend her time? What kind of value system does she hold? How do you know that you've just met the world's greatest mom? What does she want? Where is her focus, her attention? These questions are all meant to describe her mindset and perspectival framework so that you can gain access to it. Not in order to imitate her specifically or become *her*, but to understand her so well that you evolve into seeing the world as she does because that is what you want. You become conscious of what it means to hold that mindset and therefore you have the freedom to choose whether you want to adopt the mindset or not. Simple.

Say you want to be a novelist. You've never written a single book or article in all of your life, but you feel a sense of urgency to do it and you don't know where to begin. Some will say begin researching your topic, others will tell you to just start writing. I say, first find out how a novelist thinks, what his perspective on life is and how he lives. Find out what he looks for in a story, what he wants. I am by no means saying you should seek out a particular

novelist and imitate him. No way! I mean that you sit in your room quietly and think of these questions and the mindset that he might hold, that you might hold if you were a novelist. And then, the work becomes much more organic and natural, flowing from the perspective framework rather than forced from knowledge.

It may be helpful to think of it as creating a character you want to be, and then, like an actor, become the part. Only in this case, the play is life itself. There is no “real you” to return to once the curtain goes down. You are not really “acting”, you are creating yourself.

You see, we think, for some crazy reason that we are ourselves and are only *for* ourselves, but we are not. We are part of a collective that is joined in so many ways and on so many levels. We are living in an illusion of separation and it's telling us that we “own” our perspectives. We don't own anything, and because we are really this one entity (call it god, One, universe, collective) we have access to it ALL. All of it, no matter how wacky and crazy it seems - it is all a part of us, so why shouldn't we have access to it? You would never say that god or the universe doesn't have access to it all, so why would you say that about yourself? If you haven't gotten it so far, *you* are the manifestation of god, the universe lives within you and this is all just a big game. A huge game of illusion of separation. So if we truly are One, then we are connected beyond mind and if we recognize this, then we *are* everyone else and we can see through anyone's eyes. This perspective, if you are ready, can open up doors for you that you never imagined.

This is not an easy concept to grasp so if you are feeling resistance and that it's a bunch of bull, that's fine too. I might even feel like that myself, if I hadn't accessed perspective frameworks over the years and had become so many different things that I never would have become. And it's easier than you think.

Lastly, I have this idea, and it's a hard sell, but bear with me. And if you get it, your whole world can turn upside-down, for the better. All we have is perspectives. Our lives are composed of how we see and how we see generates every emotion, reaction, decision, choice and thought we make or hold. So, if we can control the way we see the world, we can be masters of our own world. And if a master is one who is all powerful, and we are masters of our world, then we can do and be absolutely anything within the realm of reason because we have the power to do so. Make sense? So if we can adopt this perspective that our lives are a result of the way we look at life, ourselves and our surroundings, being a master is not far away, and with a little work, you can make supra-conscious choices in your life, just like that.

PART III - A MATTER OF CHOICE

How to create a life of understanding and conscious choice

Weeks 8-10

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|--------------------|--|
| chapter 8. | Effortlessness – fishing to live <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The meaning of effortlessness▪ The effect of attention on effortlessness▪ Where and how to focus attention |
| chapter 9. | The right to a purpose-filled life and finding meaning <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Clarifying your intention▪ personal purpose and general purpose▪ willpower vs. purpose |
| chapter 10. | Response vs. Reaction – the red boat fiasco <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Choosing the level of involvement in a story▪ Detoxifying communication▪ Keeping centered |

CHAPTER 8

Effortlessness - fishing to live

The meaning of effortlessness

The effect of attention on effortlessness

Where and how to focus attention

The meaning of effortlessness

Now that we understand how important the way we look at the world is, we can start testing different points of view to find those that bring us peace and joy rather than struggle and havoc. In this section, we come to see the effects of a few primary perspectives such as struggle and effort, willpower and purpose, and our position in relationships, on our daily lives. The first of which we encounter being effortlessness.

What does effortlessness mean, anyway and who's the smart Alec that filled everyone's head with this unattainable dream? Isn't life hard? Shouldn't it be hard? Maybe, but maybe not! Is hard an objective or subjective matter anyway? Who's to say what's hard? We might look at someone's life from the outside and say "wow, their life is so hard; I wouldn't want to be them." But that person may feel like all they see is ease and love - effortlessness. Why, what makes a life effortless? Not "just the facts ma'am", no sir. It's the perspective that makes it so. Lying around on the beach all day drinking cocktails may or may not be effortless. Raising four kids and working full time may or may not be effortless. Being in your boat, passing the day at your reef can be effortless or not, depending on your focus. I think most of us carry the myth that life needs to be objectively easy for it to be effortless because everyone knows that when life is full and complex and hard you need to make an effort simply to survive! Isn't that logical? Not any more. That is the beauty about choosing how you look at your life. This is one of the biggest fruits of perspective shifting. When you take one purpose-filled life and mix it with 2 parts perspective shifting and one part detached mind, you get one huge life of effortlessness! When this happens, life flows right through you because you are not caught up in expectations, you have the ability to change how you see and think, and you've found a purpose that gives you an ever-present fountain of energy.

Effortlessness may be such a foreign concept to you that we probably could use some clarification around it. The feeling of effortlessness is the utter opposite of the feeling of struggle. Effortlessness is a combination of mental ease and joy, a feeling of being completely present. Effortlessness is a kind of letting go and relaxation. When a person experiences effortlessness, he or she resides in what we call the "witness", the part that is beyond the personal ego, and simply watches the ego function to the best of its ability without involvement. We leave the ego alone to do what it must without conditions on the experience. We simply *are* while in the process of doing. Effortlessness can sometimes look paradoxical - you can be in great physical pain and reside in complete effortlessness and utter joy. One does not contradict the other, because one aspect is about the body and the other is about the mind and spirit.

The effect of attention on effortlessness

Can you locate where you put attention in your life? How much, would you say, affect does attention have on your daily life? Attention has a great bearing on effortlessness. The placement of attention determines if effortlessness or struggle is achieved. In order to create effortlessness, our attention must be placed not on the task at hand and our relationship to it (I'm washing dishes but I really hate doing this), but on the task at hand only. (I'm washing dishes). When you walk away from the clean dishes you will feel one of two things - struggle and concentration or effortlessness about having done them. In the first example, you spend all your time paying attention to the fact that you *don't want to* do them and in the second example you spend your time paying attention to the fact that you *are* doing them. The two options are to either simply "chill" and observe the act that ego performs, or dwell and buy into the story that the ego creates about the act it's performing. When you fill your mind with an internal struggle, you cannot rest enough to experience life directly, but when you simply watch your mind and hands, without struggle or judgment, you are free to experience life as it is. And that is effortlessness. Have you ever walked away from a situation that was very demanding, maybe even life-threatening and thought to yourself, how did I get out of that? How did I do that? Try to recall what you were thinking at the time of action - were you thinking "oh my god I'm going to die and I don't want to" over and over? Or were you thinking "I'm in danger" and all else fell away? Chances are that you were so present in the moment that you were operating on auto pilot and simply watching yourself doing so.

Where and how to focus attention

You're back in your boat and it's nighttime. Now you're not fishing. You're thinking. Despite all your knowledge and understanding of the reef, today didn't bring in a catch and your stomach is grumbling. You're worried about tomorrow because you need to eat. What will happen if you don't make a catch? How many days can that go on before you're in deep trouble? The next morning the first thing on your list is catching a fish. Thank goodness, you got one. For a few moments, you feel at ease, but quickly after, you panic again and think to yourself that maybe it would be a good idea to catch another few so you don't run out. And the stress cycle begins. In your boat, you live to fish because the alternative is too scary. You don't swim in the reef anymore; you don't enjoy your days. It's all about the catch and it's getting scarce.

It's pretty clear to see that attention affects our experience in life directly and is not a small matter at all. We should have been listening more when our teachers told us to "pay attention!" back in grade school. But who knew that it would be such an important part in creating a conscious life?

The trick is to know where and how to focus our attention so that we do achieve effortlessness and presence and therefore have a positive affect not only on our life but on others as well. As we previously mentioned, we have two parts that operate at the same time when we are awake - the ego and the witness that play an important part in effortlessness. We have been unaccustomed to recognizing the witness in us, and we don't really understand what it means to recognize the ego, either. So let's clarify what these two parts are.

The ego is that part in you that *thinks* that it is the master or Self. The ego does not see itself unless really probed to do so. It believes that there is nothing beyond it and it is all that really exists. The ego is an absolutely necessary component of our being - we would not be human without it. The ego likes to pretend and lie to us so that we are always convinced that it is the only one. It tells us stories, it uses our mind against us, it protects us, it separates us from others and it does so many more things. Its job, it thinks, is to be the master of the world, of the universe! But it's lying again. Its only job is to *do, act.*

After days of struggling to get a catch, you're wiped out. As you lie in your boat pondering the days' events, you don't understand how it got so bad. When did you start living to fish? You remember that once there was so much more to life - the reef, the water, the exploration and the never ending sea. Nothing really changed yet everything was different. Consumed with the belief in your needs, you realized that you were blinded to the experience of living. You lived to fish instead of fishing to live.

The witness is the part of us that resides outside of the ego. It's the part that the ego does not want to see, pretends doesn't exist. It is the unconditional experience of life. It is the unaffected seer that has no judgment, no opinion and no motivation. Its job is to *see and be.* That is all.

So the ego's job is to do and the witness's job is to be. And when we focus on only the small part that *does* and attach to it and create a bunch of stories about it and believe that it is the entire world, then we neglect this most beautiful, ever-present part that is the witness. And forget how to simply *be.* This is all very important with regard to the placement of focus and the effect on effortlessness. When we are in the act of doing something, we have two choices - either to be in the ego (which is busy doing) or be in the witness (which is busy being). Which makes more sense? To *be present* in the process of the thing that is *doing* or the thing that knows how to simply *be?* Which sounds more natural?

We can choose to focus our attention in three different ways:

1. From the witness to the ego's behavior
2. From the ego to the ego's behavior
3. From the ego to the world

Different things happen when we focus on each one of these parts. When we focus only on the behavior of the ego (the witness looking at the ego) then we have effortlessness because we let the ego function as it needs, without interference. When we are in the ego focusing on the ego's behavior, we have struggle, because we are judging the actions of the ego. When we focus from the ego outward toward the world we have concentration and focused attention, which means we don't have struggle, but we don't have effortlessness. We need to focus on all three levels in order to be a full human being, but when it comes to feeling effortlessness, the only way to do so is by accessing the more passive approach of observation and focus, rather than high concentration and struggle arising from judgment. This is a great way to exercise presence in the moment. And the benefits include an abundance of fish while you enjoy the fishing as *part of the life you live.*

CHAPTER 9

The right to a purpose-filled life and finding meaning

Clarifying your intention

Personal purpose and general purpose

Willpower vs. purpose

Clarifying your intention

Effortlessness is a real delight in daily life when you access that state, but even more so, and longer lasting, is the accessing your sense of purpose. Purpose is like effortlessness on steroids - like a whole life of effortlessness. Can you imagine?

What is the meaning of having a purpose-filled life and how can you have it? For one thing, the purpose-filled life is like a battery that never dies. It never needs to be recharged externally. It is the perpetual battery that recharges itself as it empties out, from the inside, creating a constant flow of energy. Living a purpose-filled life means to not waste energy, time, effort or anything else - you are always full even when simply in the act of living. You never empty your resources when you have purpose - you just keep going and going and going...

Why should I want to live on purpose, you ask?

When you connect to your purpose, both personal and general, you generate a fountain of youth, in a way. Think of the oldest person you know that doesn't seem like the rest of the elderly - someone who seems to keep up with the world today and keeps looking forward. Notice how that person does not seem old, in fact, feels to you much younger than some of your friends! That special person is living on purpose and they will never get old, even just before they die. Think of what they're purpose might be - maybe he's an orthopedic surgeon and loves what he does, maybe she's the perpetual spiritual student that never stops developing and searching, maybe she's the grandmother/mother/teacher that never sleeps because she's never tired enough. These people are truly exceptional people who love their life, even when it may seem unloving in our eyes. They are connected so well with whom they are and what they do, how they spend their time and the meaning of their life.

Now think of your own parents or other elderly that you are surrounded by and think of how sorry you sometimes feel for them in their old age. How they feel so old to you and if only their health were better or if only they had a little more energy or maybe if they could just be a tiny bit optimistic. It's difficult to look at those people because we are intuitively sorry for their mal-content. They do not live their life on purpose - they use pills and pills and pills, and what they don't get in pills, they get in sleep and what they don't get in sleep they get from the TV, but it's never enough, is it? They are just always falling. This is what it's like in the future when you don't have purpose.

When you are young, you have other things that can "make up" for not having purpose - health, money, screaming kids, work - but all these things do is distract and hide what's underneath - a sense of meaninglessness. And we can start feeling the effects now, can't we? Fatigue after a long day, the fact that we have a *really long day* that ends at 8pm in itself is an indicator. We don't

have patience for our kids and we wish everyone would just be quiet - for 5 minutes! We behave unloving to our spouse and rarely invest in our parents. We just don't have enough time. And now, we're running out of energy. This is how it starts. And it's no good. You must make a choice to either keep living in this depleting way or decide to see how your life will look if you really did have the energy for it.

So how do we find that purpose we're speaking of? There are many different kinds of purpose - the purpose of your being, the purpose of your work/career, the purpose of your spirit, etc... It's a very personal thing, but it's not as esoteric as it may seem. I've created a formula that may help you in finding your personal purpose and that may lead you in developing the other sense of purposes that you may be looking for as well.

Intention + Meaning = Personal Purpose

The first step we can take is revisit step one in the manual - setting an intention. Now, we are going to look at that intention and clarify it. We're checking for its current validity and for how well we connect to the meaning of it. We're looking for *meaning* in this step of clarification. Maybe the intention that you set up in step one is holding you, but you get the sinking feeling that it won't hold for long because you don't see a purpose or meaning in the horizon. Look for what it means to you. Ask yourself these questions: What is the most meaningful thing in my life? What can be the most meaningful thing in my life if I had the courage to really look?

Sometimes parents jump to a very quick answer with "my children" or "my family". That's great, but it is not specific enough. What is it about your family or children that is so meaningful to you? Is it meaningful to you when they make a poop? Maybe, if your kid is a two year old that is developing and getting potty trained, but probably not if he's 10 or 16. What is it about family and in particular about yours that is meaningful to you? Is it the togetherness and synergy that is created when you're all working on the yard or some other project? Is that enough to give your entire life meaning? Maybe, maybe not, but it's up to you to find out.

If the intention you set up in step one was to be the absolute best role model for your kids so that they can create a healthy, conscious life, and the most meaningful thing in your life is your family and the developing relationships in it, I'd say that it's a pretty good match. See? You connect the most meaningful thing in your life to your intention and you get superglue. Say your intention in step one was to further evolve as a human being and be an active part of the evolution of consciousness. And now you're checking and find that the most meaningful thing to you in life is your wife and your relationship with her. These two things seem to have a weak connection between them and we need clarity. How can we connect the meaning and intention to create a superglue that will hold and give you purpose? If the most meaningful thing in your life is your relationship with your wife (which means you will risk all other things, people and ideas of the sake of that relationship) and you still have an urge to evolve, you can integrate them and have a more clear intention. Your purpose might be something like: my primary purpose in life is to further evolve and be an active part of the evolutionary impulse by loving, communication and learning with my partner in life. That intention and meaning can really hold

you for quite some time and also carries within it a very strong sense of purpose, if it clicks.

So, as a recap - clarify your intention so that you can connect with a deeper purpose by asking yourself what the most meaningful thing in your life is. I think you'll find a very strong sense of purpose that is already present in your life, but now, you can know it and use it in ways that best suit you.

Personal purpose and general purpose

In this manual, we're going to cover two of the many different kinds of purposes - personal and general. These two kinds of purposes aren't the only ones - there are more specific ones, but these two are the categories in which all the other ones fall. A personal purpose is your own. It cannot be anyone else's and it cannot be applied to the rest of the world. It's a purpose you connect with personally and even egoic-ly. It is the thing that keeps you happy/content/learning etc. as a single human. As we already noticed, a personal purpose is the very personal connection between personal meaning and intention.

A general purpose is one which is outside of your personal realm and is more global. It could be global with a focus on humanity or global in the sense of all creatures on earth or it can be universal in the sense of a general evolutionary impulse or god. The general purpose is not about the single individual but about the framework of the single individual. And because we all have a different idea of what that framework is, whether it is our family, community, nation, humanity, all living things, universe or god, we speak of different types of general purposes.

We may or may not have an idea of what that general purpose is, but we ask ourselves this question from time to time, don't we? Each religion or spiritual teaching has a very clear framework of the general purpose and sometimes we subscribe to them and sometimes we do not. In Kabbalah, for instance, the general purpose is for the manifest realm to unify so that god can finally realize itself. In Christianity, the purpose is to be love. In spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen's teaching the purpose is to further the evolution of culture and consciousness. In Buddhism, the purpose is to reach nirvana and transcend the ego. Biologists would say that the general purpose of life is to continue to reproduce. The philosophers would say that the general purpose of life is to question our existence. We can go on and on, but you get the idea. The general purpose is purpose on a larger, more impersonal scale. You may subscribe to any one of these or others you may have created on your own over the years.

When you figure out your personal (life) purpose and know which general purpose speaks to you the most, you can combine them to make a super-purpose. If your personal purpose and your general purpose are very closely related, then you've got it made because it is a very solid foundation. But not everyone is that lucky and if you are, I still invite you to take a closer look inside to really check if in fact they are related or if you just haven't looked at your personal purpose seriously yet.

Personal purpose (Intention + Meaning) + General purpose = Super-purpose

Say your general purpose is in keeping with the kabbalistic approach of unification, and your intention is to be the perpetual student of life, while the

most meaningful thing in your life is your family. You might combine them to be something like this:

I am learning how to be the highest human being I can be by loving my family and being fully involved in family life so that I can assist in the unification process of all god's creatures.

That's one idea - there are many others. The key is in creating the super-purpose that you resonate with, but there is one point that is important to remember in all of this work. When you have to communicate to yourself or others your sense of purpose, it is difficult to put into words because it is a complex combination of feelings, thoughts and perspectives where the specific words don't matter very much. The most important thing is that you absolutely connect with what your purpose is, regardless of the words that try to describe it. And it can be as simple as just living life as it is. It doesn't have to be something that you specifically do. If you deeply connect with the idea that you are living your purpose in each breath you take, then that is just as valid and maybe even more so. Can you find a deeper purpose while on your boat in the ocean than simply living life? Passing your days as only you know how to pass them?

Willpower vs. purpose

You may say to me, Rony, I do just fine in life without purpose, in fact, I'm really happy. And I would say that I'm so happy for you, but I would also ask you how much of your life is a struggle and how much is pure joy. And you might say, well, I'd say 20% is a struggle, but I'm happy doing it. That would put up a red flag for me as it should for you. We have gotten really used to feeling that a healthy struggle is a good thing, but it's not. There is nothing healthy about a struggle - only willpower. And what's wrong with willpower anyway? I'll tell you - it depletes all your resources. It's really good when you need to survive and get out of a tough situation like getting eaten by an alligator or being caught in an earthquake, but it's not good for daily life. When I was a kid, I had an insane amount of willpower - I could literally move things that were twice or three times my weight and I was a puny little girl. My mom always told me that all I needed was my brain to do something because that's where my power resides, in my will. But as I got older I realized that I was getting weaker and weaker until I was too sensitive to move anything. I noticed that I operated on willpower and it left me empty. Today, I feel strong and I still move things with the power of my mind, but not my willpower. I used most of it up. It's through my sense of purpose that I move. And so can you.

Next time you feel a struggle come on, I urge you to take a look at it and find why it's there and where it resides. If it's because you really don't want to do something and you feel you must, check why you don't like what you're doing and either don't do it, or offer yourself a reframe that connects to your purpose or create one on the spot. You won't even feel time pass if you do this and before you know it, it's over and maybe you'll even wish that it wasn't. Maybe you hate washing dishes, but someone's gotta do them! And it really feels like a struggle to you. Stop. Ask yourself why you don't like doing them. Maybe it's taking time from something else or maybe you hate the wrinkly fingers afterwards. Whatever it may be, tie it back into your purpose for the

moment or for your life - all kinds of experiences are worth having for the sake of growth. Then, maybe you'll even whistle while you work. Imagine how your family will respond.

CHAPTER 10

Response vs. Reaction - the red boat fiasco

Choosing your level of involvement in a story

Detoxifying communication

Keeping centered

Choosing your level of involvement in a story

Up until now, we have been concentrating on the individual in his own bubble, but as we know, we don't live by ourselves in life. It's very important to hold these concepts and do self work, but we also need to figure out how to incorporate them into the relationships we hold with others and the world. Over and over again we have circumstances and people who test us and our development and it would be a good idea to have a few tools to help us along the way, both in sustaining our development and in being an inspiration to those around us.

One day, as you're sitting in your boat, something funny happens. Another boat enters your field of vision. You quickly take out your binoculars and monitor its movement. Yup. It's getting closer for sure. All you can make out is the red color of the boat and right away, you get nervous. Is he friend or foe? And what is this red boat doing in my ocean anyway? Now, it's close enough for you to get an idea of the size - just about the size of your boat, and who's in it - one man. You notice that he's setting up his fishing rod and throws his line in the water. Now you are really confused. How could another boat be fishing in my water?

The days pass and he's still there, fishing. By now you've given in to the idea that this must be his ocean as well. You're keeping a close eye on him and you notice that he's fishing nasty fish. You realize that he's got a reef under his boat too, but day after day, he keeps pulling in a line with a nasty fish at the end of it. One day, to your shock and amazement, he rows his boat just up to you and dumps the nasty fish into the water, says hello and turns back to his location. Now you're sitting there with a dropped jaw and you just can't believe your eyes. What just happened here? I'm being attacked!

Since that one day, the exact same shocking episode happens every day. And you decide that it's enough, so you catch your own nasty fish and row your boat over to his location. Plop. You dump it by him and row away. You sure showed him! And again, the same episode repeats itself and you both find yourselves rowing back and forth each day dropping nasty fish into the others' water.

After a few days of this funny and frustrating behavior, you think to yourself "This can't go on." It's just making you tired and taking you away from your business. You can't figure out why he keeps dropping the nasty fish in your water - surely it's a hostile gesture, because first of all, everyone knows that the ocean is open. The fish swim between the reefs anyway. What good is it to drop it in my reef when in the morning it's back in his? And secondly, you know and understand the eco-system of the reef and are well aware that the "nasty" fish is not really nasty. It may not taste as good as the other fish, but it is just as important for the balance of the reef. So why would he want to dispose of it if not to simply invade your space?

The most prevalent thing in relationships is communication. By now, we all understand how important communication is and where it can lead - to destruction or evolution. Wouldn't it be nice to find a way where we can control the communication with others so that our relationships evolve rather than destruct?

The first step in doing so is to understand that we all have a choice in communication. More often than not we get sucked into a dramatic situation, even though we don't want to, only because we don't know what else to do. Someone creates some story "why are you always blaming me?!" and you buy into their story and answer back "I never blame you! You always say that!" and the drama begins. And it doesn't end, even after years and years. Think of all those times when your kids were crying and fighting or your spouse was complaining about something you had done or the story on the news that gets you so pissed off - these are all stories - stories that you can choose your level of involvement in. Yes, you have a choice! Just because someone offers you a drama to get into, does not mean that you must get into it, especially not the way they expect. Who would you be if you did not get into everyone's story? What kind of relationships would you have if you didn't let others control your involvement in their story?

We don't even realize that we're doing it, but we are. We are unconsciously defending ourselves when we don't need a defense, we are creating justice when there is no need for justice and we invalidate others on a daily if not hourly basis and where does it lead us? To destructive relationships and sorrow. And if you are ready to stop this cycle of destruction in your life, you are ready to apply all those important things we spoke about earlier about your own development to the relationships in your life, and especially the ones you care most about.

The first step in choosing your role in the drama positioned in front of you is disbelief. Just because your children are screaming and demanding a toy in the store, does it mean you have to get sucked into their story? Do you have to believe them? Of course you believe that they want it, but do you have to believe all those things that they may or may not be saying while in their demand? "You never buy me anything! You're mean to me! I only want this one little thing! I need it!" and so on. If you believe their little stories, then you act defensive - "I don't buy you anything??! Didn't I buy you something yesterday?? I'm mean to you? Aren't you being mean to me right now?? You don't need this toy - you have 4 more of these at home!" isn't that how it goes? And what are you doing, as a grown parent who wants the absolute best for her child? You don't see anything but their story and the story in your head about them. "You are never satisfied! You probably learned that from your father." How would your relationship look if you did not react to them in their story or from your own, but respond to their intention instead? "Boy, you seem to want a lot of toys lately and both of us know how cool toys are but I don't think I'm buying you a toy today." Or "I can really see that this toy is important to you. What do you say we think it over together today and if you are still interested, tomorrow we come back to get it?" Or anything else that takes the focus off of you, your anger, frustration and defense and onto acknowledging and validating the desire of your child for a new toy. But, just because he

wants it, doesn't mean that you have to buy it, if you don't think it's best to do so.

When you feel yourself wanting to raise your voice at someone, that's when you want to stop and breathe, for just a second. Think about the consequences of your reaction later that day or five years from now. Don't just go into it blinded by your defense or attack instead of seeing what it is that is really in front of you - a person in pain, a deep desire, frustration - another human being! How wonderful would it be to be able to really see this other human being clearly and love them without *your* story about them?

Detoxifying communication*

Almost all of our communication with the closest people around us is toxic. Toxicity grows and grows until it destroys the foundation of a partnership which is why marriages end in divorce, parents and children are estranged from each other, friends part ways and business partners break-up.

What is toxic communication exactly? If you look deep inside, can you figure it out? Can you identify the last toxic argument you had with another person and notice what it feels like to be a part of that communication? In the way I see it, it can be described as communication that is one-sided. Toxic communication is communication that is done where each side only sees itself and not the other. The other person might as well be a wall, you wouldn't know the difference. The only intention a person has in toxic communication is being heard. And what happens when two people are both trying to be heard at the same time? Who is actually doing the listening? From my experience, walls never listen, so when you expect the other person to be a wall, you ain't gonna be heard.

When you truly listen to another person and really communicate with them, there is no toxicity. You are not worried about justifying yourself or attacking them because you are not occupied with yourself at that moment. Your focus is not on yourself, but rather on them, their words and intention. You are not looking for how their words are meant to hurt or insult you; you are just listening to them and really hearing what it is they have to say. Maybe they're hurting or suffering. You can't know until you listen and it begins with you. All it takes is one of the two to detoxify communication - you can't demand it of another, but you can do it yourself and in doing so, inspire others.

So you're standing there scratching your head in confusion about the "nasty" fish exchange and it suddenly dawns on you. The red boat guy is not trying to be mean to you - he's trying to get rid of his nasty fish because he doesn't understand the reef's eco-system! It's not about you. It's about him. His frustration is due to the constant nasty fish on his line and he doesn't know how to handle them so he tries to dispose of them in your water, thinking this will keep his water clean. Now you get it! It all makes sense.

Listening means not interrupting! Listening means clarifying what it is that the other person has said so that you both know that you heard the statement.

* adapted from Fred Koffman's "Authentic Communication" video on Integral Institute website.

Listening means trying to understand where the other person is coming from by asking for reasons and examples on which they are basing their statement. This is so that you can hear them better and not misinterpret their words and intention. Listening means keeping enough distance so as not to attach to the emotional charge that accompanies their statement in order to discover the true intent and meaning of their words. Listening means being respectful to another and acknowledging their position.

The poor guy - he doesn't understand the nature of the reef and the water. He's never checked beneath his boat. You were once like that too, until you learned how it all works down there. He's not a threat, he needs help. What can you do to help him? You first start by rowing over to him and with a smile, drop a nice fish in his water.

Just as you learn how to listen, you can also learn how to express yourself effectively. Communication is always two-sided and listening is only one half. You can begin conveying your stand and opinions clearly with making an "I" statement, which means that you take complete ownership of your opinion/thought. Then you can move on to why you think this way, basing it on facts, observations or values - give reasons so that the other person can understand where *you* are coming from. Once you communicate your stand you can offer possible recommendations or suggestions for the future, whether jointly or not.

You will notice how good it feels to validate another person's position and opinion and how fulfilling it is to let them know your position in a way that is not threatening.

Keeping centered

Very often we begin this process with the best of intentions and really do the work, and sometimes, we fall off the wagon. That's ok! Don't worry. The trick is to get back on when you can. And when you can, you can keep an eye on yourself by checking how centered you are at any given moment. Keeping centered is just a way to describe the opposite of getting sucked into stories. We can't be centered all the time, of course, but as you learn how to notice if you are or not helps a great deal in communication.

In order to identify your center, you can do various exercises, including meditation, yoga and "centering". It's just a matter of getting used to that ever-present part of you that does not change - that is eternal and therefore is always an anchor during your transformations. You can simply close your eyes and breathe for a few minutes. When you get in the habit of practicing this, you very quickly will start noticing if you are "off" or "on" center, which will help you in making decisions, choosing your response to someone or just when something does or doesn't feel right.

You can choose a few random times during the day to check how centered you are. I like to close my eyes and image that I am a tree. Then I look at the tree and sense its motion - is it swaying heavily from the winds of drama or is it gently moving with a breeze? Is there anything stuck in its branches or leaves, or is the breeze moving through it with ease? Are there any leaves on the ground below or is the grass clean? The answers to these questions help me understand my own level of centered-ness so that I can have clarity.

PART IV - EVOLUTION

How to create a life of understanding and conscious choice

Weeks 11-12

chapter 11. Creating the life you want

- Putting it all together

chapter 12. The right to a purpose-filled life and finding meaning

- Putting it in the world
- For the sake of the whole

CHAPTER 11

Creating the life you want Putting it all together

Putting it all together

This chapter is an attempt to weave the concepts we covered in the manual into a single comprehensive system that we can refer back to in the future. For the benefit of clarity and giving ourselves some credit for the work we've done, let's take a look at what we covered:

1. We've set an intention and clarified it to align with our purpose.
2. We've built a foundation for expanding our awareness of ourselves and others.
3. We've identified the traps that limit our potential as we challenged our beliefs and conditionings.
4. We've learned how important perspectives are and the strong effect shifting them can bring.
5. We've realized the impact that attention has on our experience of life and the significance of having both an ego and being the ever-present witness.
6. We've established the foundation for effective and compassionate communication while choosing our level of involvement in the everyday dramas that surround us.

What does all this mean and how does it manifest in your life? These might sound like nice words and ideas, but they are even nicer when they become very real and life begins to shift direction. In putting it all together, we begin to realize the benefits of these ideas and processes while creating a beautiful image with the pieces of the puzzle.

In order to understand the full picture, we'll make our way through the process by starting at the end, at the goal.

Our goal in this manual is to learn how to create a life of conscious choice. The two parts of that statement that are most important are "create" and "conscious choice". In "creating", we realize that there is an active role we can take in our lives, that we have the option to be powerful and purposeful. In having a "conscious choice" we recognize that there is a difference between an unconscious state and a conscious one and that we have the capacity to make an informed choice about which we want to inhabit.

Since it's not a simple task to undertake and courage is required in order to withstand the internal pressure to give in and the external resistance you may encounter, your **intention** is your first best friend in the process. It will give you confidence and motivation while directing you on your path; a solid beginning that takes you out of robotic reflexes and into paving your way consciously. In wanting to pave your path, the second friend you meet is your **expanding awareness** that brings understanding and control into your life so that you can keep walking and discovering new and exciting parts of yourself and life. This step fuels curiosity and keeps you captivated as you explore the mysteries of your life. And so, in learning how to be aware, you begin to notice

dark spots that are not clearly defined and that you never knew existed. Once you find them, they become critical keys of self-liberation on your path and you gain more understanding and confidence in who you really are as you face each dark trap. You begin to notice that these elements are **conditionings** that have been imbedded in you for years and you bring them to scrutiny in order to be free to experience life without their binding hold. With each identification you become more proficient in using your **open mind** as a weapon against conventional darkness and plough forward.

All of this scrutiny and desire to exercise freedom of choice paves the road toward the huge benefit of **perspective shifting**. In recognition that who and what you are has been based on the conditioned perspectives in your life, you open a door for yourself to choose who you *want* to be, a large step in creating the life you consciously want. And as we practice the art of identifying and shifting perspectives, we start making sustainable changes in our life from the deepest and most effective location in the mind.

Once we understand that our life is colored greatly by our perspectives, we begin to understand the implications of them on daily life and relationships. We learn how to **communicate effectively** and compassionately with people that we love, thereby enhancing our relationships. And we also learn how to find that **centered** place so that we don't leave our fate in the hands of others while they try to suck us into their stories and drama. The cool, collected and compassionate mind that we've developed can choose its level of involvement, not by the level of threat or fear, but from a deep place of knowing and being. We incorporate the ideas and practice of **effortlessness**, achieved through shifting perspectives, into daily life because we can see the effect struggle has on the quality of life and how much energy it drains from us. In noticing how much energy, time and money we spend on recovering our energy, time and money, we are offered a new way to live - with **purpose**. The purpose of living a life on purpose is to give a meaningful framework to your life and create a fountain of energy from which to live with ease and fulfillment. When you locate the deeper meaning to your own life, you discover a gold mine that continuously foots the bill for a well-lived conscious life.

What does all this mean for you specifically? Only you can know. This process is an outline of one possible method of creating a life of conscious choice, but the content of the choice is up to you. We each have our own experience bank, skill sets, personalities, styles, qualities and inclinations. And thank god for that. This system can be applied to a diverse amount of factors and it will still work. You don't need to be anything like anyone else or have a particular inclination in order to apply it in your own life - all you need is a desire to read the written word and see where that takes you. You can be a doctor, housewife, architect, dog walker, father, newspaper reader, bird watcher, stamp collector, plumber, florist, computer programmer, coach and the list goes on into the millions. All you need to be is yourself and the rest will follow through. Start with what you have and you will be pleasantly surprised to find that what you have become is what you've always been at your core, a loving, perfect human being.

CHAPTER 12

Walk the talk - be a source of inspiration

Putting it in the world
For the sake of the whole

Putting it in the world

Remember the red boat? Over the years, many other boats have come and gone on the water and it all began with that one. That day that you dropped a nice fish in his water turned the world upside down. You took it upon yourself to teach him about the eco-system of the reef and how to fish in the right location. You taught him by example how to carry on with the days, enjoying life and living each day to its fullest. And now? He teaches the newbies on the surface and laughs when they drop a nasty fish in his water. And so do you. And you are good, good friends.

Now that you know who you are under all those blankets of conditionings and you've created the foundation for a life of conscious choice, you can help others do the same. And what do I mean by that? Do you need to become a teacher? A guide? A therapist? A coach? Maybe, maybe not. But more so than anything else, you can inspire. Being a source of inspiration for others is one of the greatest achievements you'll ever have and it can be a part of your life, no matter which path you've chosen. Inspire others to live to be true to themselves, to dream and create. Be a walking example of what the ideal would be like, what it would be like to live in utopia and be a perfect human being, because you already are and by now, you know it. Why not share with others your fountain of youth and energy?

We each have our own path to walk and I can't know what yours is, but you know. As you walk your path, notice the points of encounter with others and feel what it's like to live an honest and authentic life and communicate that to the world. Very quickly, you will find people being attracted to you, being inspired by you and changing their own lives. It is magnetic and it is truly generous. By living a life of conscious choice, you give permission and even require everyone else to do the same. You infect them with your true nature and they have no choice but to be affected.

How can you translate your actions and intentions into inspiring moments for others? How can you be an inspiring doctor, grandparent, housewife, accountant, waitperson, lawyer or manager? How can you give off that presence that others will like to be around? How do you apply it at work, school, home and on vacation? What happens when you meet other family members - siblings, parents and extended family when you are an inspiring human being? Notice how they behave around you and how their behavior shifts. It does not objectively matter what career you have, if you have one, or what specific path you've chosen. All that matters is that you make your choices consciously and intentionally, with the best for yourself and others at heart.

For the sake of the whole

At this point, you may be asking yourself what the reasons and benefits are of inspiring others. On the surface, there are a few obvious reasons that I can think of, such as self-fulfillment, satisfaction, making the world a better place, the domino effect and so on. But when you think about it more deeply, you come to understand a very important point about all the work that you've done and will ever do to reach your highest self - that highest self is the *exact same* highest self that everyone else is. So, when you act on your behalf, you are acting on behalf of all humanity. This means that all of humanity and life IS you. See, really, you have no choice but to act on behalf and for the sake of the whole because that is what happens anyway. Now, you have a choice in how you will affect it. One human being has the capacity to affect billions. Not because of the internet and cell phones, but because he IS those billions of people.

Doing things for the sake of the whole means operating not only with your ego in mind, but also by keeping true to your essence which is the same essence as everyone else. No matter how alone we think we are, we are always a part of something bigger. Remember the ocean? It is not just you and your consciousness, but rather, it is consciousness itself. The One. You and your reef are simply an illusion of separation, but are in essence a paradox - a small part of something that is far bigger and boundless that all life shares, *and* life itself. We are a society, a world and a god.

When we operate strictly from our own robotic, egoic interests, we isolate and separate ourselves from others and deny our true unified nature. Leave a legacy, contribute to society, inspire others to dream and live a conscious life. Now you know for what and whom.

If you would like to read further about the concepts discussed in this manual, these may be good options for you. Although there may not be particular quotes from these books in the manual itself, it has been greatly influenced by these authors and teachers:

Ken Wilber
Integral Spirituality

Byron Katie
Loving What Is
Videos from thework.com

Don Miguel Ruiz
The Mastery of Love

Ze'ev Ben Shimon Halevi
Adam and the Kabbalistic tree
The Work of the Kabbalist
Psychology and Kabbalah

Andrew Cohen's teachings

Bruce Schneider
Relax, you're already perfect

Kurt Wright
Breaking the Rules

Ran Lahav
Essays on philosophical counseling

Various spiritual teachers
Integral Naked Website audios and videos

Fred Koffman
Integral Naked video - Authentic communication series

Malcolm Gladwell
Blink

My husband, Bennie Fritsch