

**MEDITATION AND PERCEIVED THREATS:
TAMING THE FIGHT, FLIGHT, OR FREEZE RESPONSE**

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*Past District Governor, district peace committee chair,
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In these newsletters we invite contributions and ideas, suggestions, and possibilities for our efforts to educate others about addressing the pressing issues of the day with intelligence, compassion, and a commitment to the greater good of humanity and the earth, i.e., nonviolent conflict resolution, improved communication and cooperation, successful negotiation, and mediation. We also want to encourage the critical and creative thinking that can help individuals and communities move through obstacles and difficulties in more sustainable ways, i.e., with the interconnected health of all peoples, their economies, and their environments.

*Sustainable Peacebuilding Fellowship
Rotary Club of Fort Collins, Colorado*

**MEDITATION and MINDFULNESS
TAMING THE FIGHT, FLIGHT, OR FREEZE RESPONSE**

In person

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**Wed. Sept. 6 from 1:15-2:15 MT
Lincoln Center, 417 W. Magnolia Street, Fort Collins, CO 80521**

Dr. Margit Hentschel is the Sustainable Funding Director at Drala Mountain Center and co-Director of Colorado State University's Center for Mindfulness. Margit teaches mindfulness practices in campus classrooms and community workshops, and serves as an OSHER Instructor. She has taught mindfulness practices for over 25 years and is a certified Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapist. She has several publications as a book contributor on global community sustainability and climate change adaptation strategies, and is a founding mother of the City of Fort Collins Action Plan for Sustainability. She has a PhD from CSU's School of Education with a focus on Peace and Reconciliation Leadership.

All are invited. Please share this newsletter with a friend or colleague.

SUSTAINING A SANER WORLD - MINDING YOUR MENTAL GAP

Margit Hentschel, Ph.D.

Mindfulness meditation practice provides many opportunities for participants to experience a high level of personal and professional self-awareness. They are easy to bring into our lives “on-the-spot” and offer a chance to relax in the moment and serve as a tool to recalibrate stressful situations. Through simple breathing meditation, by example, one might avoid a negative reaction and respond from a more centered approach during a challenging experience.

With practice, mindfulness tools can help reduce reactive, habitual mind and behaviors, and help cultivate a more balanced response especially when faced with stressful circumstances. Deepening our understanding of our reactivity versus thoughtful response contributes to identifying these mental gaps and helps us build new pathways for how we choose to be in the world. Studies have shown that there are various brain centers that strengthen positive aspects of our behaviors from dedicated meditation practices.

Through their empathy and compassion research, Singer and Klimecki (2014) offer evidence that mindfulness practices can also be effective self-care strategies and help increase compassion satisfaction. Activating compassion triggers pro-social centers of the brain whereas empathy is located in the pain center.

When we understand - and feel - that distinction through meditation practice, compassion practice can expand our emotional support to others while avoiding the exhaustion that often comes with being *in pain* with another. When we sit still with focus, we begin to recognize the gaps in our thinking and feeling mind/body. After longer periods of time in sitting meditation, a finetuning of sorts begins to reveal choices between these different states of mind and enhanced mental pathways are more accessible.

While meditation experiences can be variable, neuroscience research shows how sitting quietly settles distractions and helps ripen our higher emotional intelligence. For many of us, locating our basic human goodness is at the heart of who we are and offers greater meaning to our lives. Our inherent goodness arises more readily from meditation practice and, in turn, contributes more easily to a gentler, more compassionate world. Minding our mental gaps through meditation is a powerful antidote for our seemingly crazy world.

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The Colorado State University Center for Mindfulness

Vision: The Colorado State University Center for Mindfulness emphasizes a non-sectarian approach to mindfulness practices drawn from a variety of diverse traditions and academic disciplines.

Vision: The Center for Mindfulness is a center where we are working intentionally and collectively to create conditions that inspire personal and community transformation leading to mindful communities and fostering socially conscious, compassionate, and mindful leaders.

Mission: The Center for Mindfulness mission is to promote overall well-being in students, faculty, staff, and community members through the cultivation of mindfulness skills and practices, education, innovative research, and assessment. This mission aligns with CSU's teaching, research and service focus through positive contributions in:

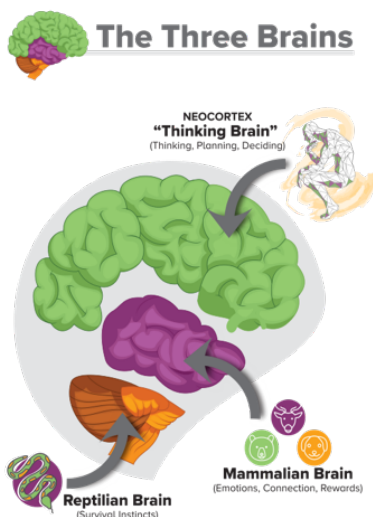
- **Teaching:** Existing and emerging, new courses and programs in mindfulness are designed to promote engaged teaching and experiential learning;
- **Research:** Research on student skills development including focus and concentration, developing emotional capacity, and improved classroom and campus climate;
- **Service:** Community partnerships through workshops, presentations, and events centered in the fields of suicide prevention, trauma healing, stress reduction and public civility.
- **Definition:** Mindfulness is...Non-judgmental intentional awareness of our present moment experience.

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UNDERSTANDING THE FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FREEZE RESPONSE WITH A FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION

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Fight, Flight, or Freeze (FFF): what is it, why should you care, and how can you control it? In an emotional state, you may illogically choose a physical reaction, run away, or have a mental block. These three states affect your entire being, and they define who you are, your personality, ability to deal with all levels of stress, and how well you perform in any task you choose to do. Your ability to communicate, particularly with someone of opposing views, is determined by how well you learn to manage FFF. The response occurs in times of stress, fear (real or perceived), frustration, or great anxiety.



Your brain functions as three regions, separate from one another. The lower reptilian brain is where FFF occurs. Stress develops chemicals in the brain that sends blood and other resources to your

muscles, preparing you to FFF. To achieve this, resources are drawn from other bodily functions. Since the brain, 5% of body mass, uses 25% of available calories, full function of the brain becomes restricted during periods of stress.

The middle brain, mammalian brain, is your emotional center. Its purpose is to protect you. It protected you from the saber tooth tiger in millenniums past but now can overreact in some situations. The middle brain responds quickly. In the book *Behave*, Robert Sapolsky, professor of neurology at Stanford University in 2017 writes, your middle brain will make a positive or negative decision about someone entering the room in 40 milliseconds, long before the outer brain responds.

You spend at least 98% of our life in the middle brain. You drive a car on automatic, play sports, or a musical instrument, cook, all on automatic. After the “learning process” our activities become habitual and are moved to the middle brain. Your conversations with friends have a consistent tone. Friends notice when you are happy or sad as your tone moved from the typical habitual you.

The thinking brain, or cortical region, deals with consciousness and reason. You are in the cortical region when you are learning new information, skills, and creating. It takes conscious effort to be in the cortical region. It takes effort to think and, yes, it is fatiguing. We all are limited to how much time we can remain focused which is why major tech firms have “play stations” to rest the thinking, creative, brain. The cortical region is also much slower than the middle brain taking, at best, 700 milliseconds to respond to a stimulus, again, according to Sapolsky in *Behave*.

You have chosen friends that you are comfortable with. You might talk politics, religion, Barbie, food, or any subject you choose and remain comfortable. You know the friend holds views similar to you, is safe to share personal information with, and is generally supportive of you. 100% of the conversation between your friend and you remains in the subconscious brain, on automatic.

When you are suddenly confronted with an individual who challenges what you said, a colleague with divergent views to yours, a child who challenges your command, it is your middle brain that kicks in instantly and, sending protective messages to the lower brain, all too frequently, causes you to choose fight, flight, or to freeze. It is the middle brain that tells you that you are right, they are wrong; your idea is well thought through, why can't they see; what's wrong with this child. Eventually, your thinking brain kicks in to calm, and analyze the moment. It is this period, between the 40 ms and 700 ms that your life's choices of happiness or stress are determined. If we consciously connect to the thinking brain within that time, it sends counteracting chemistry to move us into a reasoning state and prevents FFF from taking control.

***“Between stimulus and response there is a space.
In that space is our power to choose our response.
In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”***

Victor Frankl

So many communication classes give you the statements to use in the challenging moments mentioned above. Without the tools to control the space between 40 and 700ms, before the thinking brain kicks in, you are unable to remember any of them. Your middle brain, partnering with your lower brain, sends you into verbal, emotional, and, sometimes, physical protection.

Even if you could remember the perfect words, they remain only 7% of our entire communication system. According to Albert Mehrabian, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles, in his book *Silent Messages*, our emotional communication is 55% facial, 38% tonality, and 7% verbal. Far more important than your verbal retort is your facial expressions

in that moment. Neuroscience tells us 100% of our emotion is illustrated by our physiology at all times. So, you must ask yourself: “What message is my physiology sending?” Another critical awareness is congruence. Are all three messages, facial, verbal, words, giving the same message. In times past you probably had an experience with someone feeling uncomfortable with someone’s integrity. This stems from inconsistent messaging between the three methods of communication.

There are several techniques that help you shrink that “space” between impulse and response. First, keep your self-esteem intact. This gives you the ability to separate a challenge to your words as just that. Too often you connect your thoughts, your words, or your actions, to who you are. At all times you are much more than a thought, word, or action. Your emotions generally vary considerably depending on whether someone wants to give you money or wants to take your money. Your reaction will be different based on your recent prior experience. One technique is to separate your ideas or words from who you are. Your words are being attacked, not you.

Another way to move quickly to the thinking, or reasoning brain, is to merely think the word “stop”. Whenever you find yourself thinking negative thoughts, sensing negative attacks, or feeling challenges, all you need to do is think the word “stop”. This simple action moves you into reasoning brain and away from the protective middle brain. It won’t solve the problem but opens your toolbox of options to address the issue logically.

Maybe the most important communication tool is your intent, desire to learn, to grow. I like Carl Rogers’s, Humanist Psychologist, three steps for therapy as perfect tools for all personal communications he defined.

- First is to have empathy for the individual with which you wish to engage. This can be a challenge when the views are extreme to yours. Find something in common.
- Second is congruence. As mentioned above you are always communicating in three languages – are they congruent?
- Third, Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR). Bring your full attention to the moment or person. Difficult to do, but “empty your cup” from preconceived thoughts, views, attitudes and allow yourself to totally be present, in the moment, to the individual. Listen, ask questions, find commonality, become curious, learn, grow.

My personal biggest challenge is dealing with the individual that has “all the answers”. I must frequently question myself about whether I am that very individual – with all the answers. The more frequently you challenge your own thinking, the easier it becomes to be open to hear opposing views. It’s actually quite simple.

1. Separate the statements from the individual,
2. Use “stop” to move into reasoning brain, and
3. Have an intention of dialogue, of learning and sharing, of respecting an individual’s right to a different opinion than your own.

To control your fight, flight, freeze response is never easy, yet critical. How many times have you said to yourself (or others): “I wish I hadn’t said that/done that.” It takes specific skills and practice to maintain the ability to refrain from a negative reaction to giving a positive response. Considering the fact that every word we speak either builds or tears down a relationship brings the importance of that skill. For me, in communication, I try to focus on part 3 & 4 of the 4-Way Test: will it build goodwill and better friendship while being beneficial to all concerned.

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THE NEURO-EDUCATIONAL PATH TO PEACE
What the Spirit and Brain can Accomplish for Everyone

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Adapted from

William Timpson (2002) Teaching and Learning Peace (Madison, WI: Atwood)

NOTE: For emailed pdf copies of this text or these writings, contact the authors.

In times of war and military reprisal, how does one teach about peace? How do we help young people manage their own anger and aggressiveness when violence is so prevalent in their lives, at school and on the streets, in the news, on television, in the movies and in the lyrics of some of their music? When memories of attacks are raw and calls for retaliation become shrill, how do an educator and a neurologist—or anyone in a leadership role who is committed to the ideals of a sustainable peace—open a meaningful dialogue about alternatives to violence?

For at its core, democracy demands conversation, and compromise. Dictators rule without question, their weaknesses sheltered by brute force, nepotism, terror, and the like. In a search for peace, however, we have many heroes to call on for inspiration and guidance. Some like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Thich Nhat Hanh, Elise Boulding and Nelson Mandela are well known. Others are less public but come from communities like the Quaker Society of Friends, the Mennonites and the Bahai's, and share a core religious belief in peace and nonviolence. Some like Dorothy Day dedicated their church work to social justice, hunger, and the poor. And then there is the world of neuroscience and what we can learn about sustainable peacebuilding from them.

In his 2009 book, *Buddha Brain* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger) neuropsychologist and meditation teacher Rick Hanson writes: “In this book we’ll take the contemplative tradition we know best—Buddhism—and apply it to the brain to reveal neural pathways to happiness, love, and wisdom. No one knows the full nature of the brain of Buddha or of any other person. But what is increasingly known is how to stimulate and strengthen the neural foundations of joyful, caring, and deeply insightful states of mind (2).”

In the work offered here, Timpson and Spencer go further and employ the assistance of others from a variety of walks of life to expand, deepen and translate these ideas in the spirit of supporting sustainable peacebuilding, those interconnections of society, the environment and our economic lives that can help us move past armed conflicts toward peaceful resolutions of differences. We want to expand what educators and health professionals can do to help citizens transform threats and violence within schools, colleges and universities as well as in the greater community, within churches and governments, non-profit organizations and among business leaders.

Timpson’s experiences emerge as a career educator at all levels in the U.S. and overseas, applying the lessons learned in practice and through the research literature in educational psychology to improve and deepen communication as well as to support cooperation, critical and creative thinking as we face climate threats, population movements, tensions, and political instabilities.

For his part, Spencer will draw on his years of seeing patients as a neurologist, his work as a researcher and university teacher as well as his many years with humanitarian efforts overseas. He

writes: “*Timpson has studied and written and taught how education can modify our behaviors regarding peace and conflict. I have followed him since we were both teachers at the Cleveland Job Corps about 1970. He went off to educational psychology and I to medicine and neurology. His work has teased me.*

“*As a neurologist I naturally wonder how does all this work in the brain. These chapters add my musings on potential neurobiological substrates underpinning some of his concepts and experiences. There is plenty of neuroscience research on concepts like empathy and altruism. Other subjects like virtues and morals may be a bit murkier.*

“*I agree with Timpson that our brains and behavior are malleable and appropriate training and education can foster a more prosocial peaceful person and society. Neuroscience techniques and concepts are always evolving, and it is proper to try to apply them to Timpson’s mission of teaching peace. In the end I view these chapters with a heuristic spirit that asks; ‘How does this all work?’ Let us seek to understand how the brain works in fostering peace.’*”

At the April 2023 American Academy of Neurology in Boston, Timpson and Spencer were also aided by two lifelong friends, Spencer Hatton and Tom Guendelsberger, who are helping to interface between this research and how best to translate these ideas on sustainable peacebuilding for the general public.

As Hanson concludes the Introduction to *Buddha Brain*, “Last, if I know one thing for sure, it’s that you can do small things inside your mind that will lead to big changes in your brain and your experience of living. I’ve seen that happen again and again with people I have known as a psychologist or as a meditation teacher, and I’ve seen it in my own thoughts and feelings as well. You really can nudge your whole being in a better direction every day. When you change your brain, you change your life (3).”

In our work on the *Neuro-Educational Path to Peace*, we want to take these important and very personal changes out into the world, to challenge the militaristic mindset that leans so heavily toward weapons, force, defense, and security when problems arise. We want to challenge the particularly American addiction to guns and the pandemic of violence that has surfaced recently in the U.S. We also want to challenge the individualistic, competitive assumption of capitalism and meritocracy that has everyone pulling up their own bootstraps and neglecting the power of collective responsibility and action. We are committed to contributing to the health and well-being of the entire population and its abilities to resolve issues fairly and democratically without biasing the process toward those who are wealthy and can afford the luxury of medical insurance.

We can do this, as individuals with our own minds and collectively with what we bring out to the world.

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GROUP MINDFULNESS, GROUP HATE, GROUP RAGE

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Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. – Martin Luther King Jr. (1963)

No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite. - - Nelson Mandela (1994)

In 2022, the SPLC documented 1,235 hate and antigovernment extremist groups across the United States. Extremist ideas that motivate these groups seem to be more prominent today in the political mainstream. These groups exist in every state, urban and rural areas, but have the highest numbers per population density in the northwest, the southwest, mid-Atlantic, and northeast states.¹ Colorado has 31 such groups focused on anti-government (17), neo nazi (5), anti-immigrant (1), anti-LGBTQ (4), white nationalist (2), general hate (1), and Christian identity (1) beliefs. Many find it hard to believe such groups are active in all Colorado communities up and down the front range and in rural regions.

The SPLC identified 42 Ku Klux Klan groups in 20 states in 2017. Many of these were reformed in recent years. Membership ranges from 20 to 100, but most have about 25. 14 of the 20 states are located in the old South.

One must ask, what motivates individuals to join such movements? What do they get out of participating in such organizations? Psychologists have found commonalities among members of such groups. They often have deep personality issues, and are themselves insecure having been bullied, sexually abused, and mistreated as children. Perhaps having weak personal identities, they search for a group identity or cause that will give them security. Often joiners do not already have an ideology and seek a group that mirrors it, rather they join a group, adopt its ideology, and obtain an identity.²

It is not particularly surprising that people's self-identity becomes associated with their "group". Tribalism also exists in American politics today. A recent Wall Street Journal article discusses how group identity drives choices and decisions.³ A major point made in the article is:

Decades of social science research show that our need for collective belonging is forceful enough to reshape how we view facts and affect our voting decisions. When our group is threatened, we rise to its defense.

This is what I call responding with the "gut", thinking is not involved, and our decisions become mostly emotional, defensive, and governed by our tendency to differ to cognitive dissonance.

Sixty years ago, I sat in on an Anthropology class at the University of California, Berkeley where the professor discussed how primitive tribes viewed being "human." He noted that in primitive tribes the word for human was essentially their own tribe. People outside their own group were "not human"; therefor, treating them viciously, enslaving them, and even killing them was not immoral. Today, when people "label" others by derogatory terms such as "red necks", "snowflakes", "libs", "libtards", "whities", "woke", "cuck", "coon", etc., they are taking away their opponents' humanity; thus, decisions which would be considered immoral and wrong applied to their own tribe become acceptable when applied to "outsiders."

¹ SPLC hate map 2000 through 2020, <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map>

² US News, *What Makes People Join Hate Groups*, August 2017, <https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2017-08-23/what-makes-people-join-hate-groups-studies-say-childhood-torment-social-isolation> and START (Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism), *Trauma as a Precursor to Violent Extremism*, Research Brief, April 2015, 2 pages.

³ Aaron Zitner (2023), *Why Tribalism Took Over Our Politics*, *Wall Street Journal*, August 26.

https://www.wsj.com/politics/why-tribalism-took-over-our-politics-5936f48e?mod=politics_more_article_pos1

The FBI and many law enforcement agencies have relied on a study performed in 1993 by Jack McDevitt and Jack Levin, social scientists, who examined multiple hate-crime case files in depth, interviewed victims, offenders, and investigators.^{4,5} They concluded there are four main kinds of hate crimes perpetrated by both individuals and organized hate groups. The categories they identified are:

- **Thrill Seeking** - Hateful behavior driven by search for excitement and drama, often by bored and drunk young men. There are not necessarily any reasons for violence or destruction, just the thrill of it. Victims are often chosen at random or opportunistic.
 - Examples are teens breaking into an LGBT center, street gang assaults a passing Hindu man while yelling epithets,
 - Usually, individual animosity is fairly low and offenders can be rehabilitated.\
- **Defensive** - Attackers see themselves as defending their turf or neighborhood. They tend to target specific victims to keep threats at bay. Actions are triggered when some family of different race, religion, or culture move into area.
 - Attackers feel little remorse because they are protecting with communal assent.
 - *“We don’t want no queers here.” “Japs are taking jobs away from Americans.”*
- **Retaliatory** - Avengers attack members of racial, ethnic or religious groups they believe have themselves harmed others like them.
 - After 9-11 many Muslim Americans and Arabs were attacked in retaliation even if they were not involved or sympathetic to 9-11 terrorists.
 - *“Go home terrorists!”*
- **Mission offenders** – Deadliest type of hate crimes, committed by self-styled crusaders for racial or religious causes. They often publish lengthy manifestos, which justify their behavior.
 - These hate crimes often look like terrorism. Such mission offenders often become quite famous like: Oklahoma City Bomber Timothy McVeigh, Charleston church shooter Dylan Roof, or Colorado Springs LGBT Club Q attacker Anderson Lee Aldrich.

The difficulty with all these hate crimes (and I consider war a hate crime), whether group or individually inspired, is that it is difficult to predict or prevent such bias-mounted attacks. They are often triggered by unrelated events. What is worse is that many offenders believe that they are the “heroes”, and society supports their violent behavior. Hence, the attackers feel they have nothing to be ashamed of.

What can we do?

It is important for communities and politicians to condemn hate crimes. Leave no doubt that the acts are not acceptable, for law enforcement agencies to take situations seriously and not themselves seem to support or approve of violence, and for the communities to gather round to support the victims.

⁴ Daniel Burke (2017), *The four reasons people commit hate crimes*, CNN news, June: <https://www.cnn.com/2017/06/02/us/who-commits-hate-crimes/index.html>

⁵ McDevitt, Levin, and Bennett (2002), *Hate Crimes Offenders: An Expanded Typology*, *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 58, Issue 2, 15 pp.

Misunderstanding arising from ignorance breeds fear, and fear remains the greatest enemy of peace. – Lester B. Pearson, Nobel Prize Lecture (1957)

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MANAGING YOUR HAPPINESS AND EMOTIONS

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Thich Nhat Hanh once wrote, “*If in our daily life we can smile, if we can be peaceful and happy, not only we, but everyone will profit from it. This is the most basic kind of peace work.*” If we want to engage in this “most basic kind of peace work”, we need to learn how to effectively develop our happiness and effectively manage our emotions...neither simple nor easy tasks. So below are some suggestions about doing both.

Control/managing of your personal mental state will result in experiencing pain/stress/discomfort/upset OR pleasure/contentment/peace/joy. *How your happiness is developed depends on how, or to what your unconscious mind has been conditioned.* If you want to know how humans express “happiness”, Look at what very young children do when they are loved and raised in a healthy and supportive manner.

E. E. Cummings once wrote, “*Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight, or any experience that reveals the human spirit.*”

THE SEQUECE FOR REPROGRAMMING YOUR MIND

MEMORIES-----CREATE-----WORDS

WORDS-----CREATE-----THOUGHTS

THOUGHTS-----CREATE-----FEELINGS/EMOTIONS

THOUGHTS & FEELINGS-----CREATE-----ATTITUDES

ATTITUDES -----CREATE-----BELIEFS

BELIEFS-----CREATE-----PRECEPTIONS

PERCEPTIONS-----CREATE-----CHOICES

CHOICES-----CREATE-----BEHAVIORS

BEHAVIORS-----CREATE---YOUR LEVEL OF HAPPINESS & PEACE

Everything I have ever learned was taught to me by others. Therefore, below is a list of experiences/activities you may want to use to create greater happiness in your life. Each suggestion is followed by quotations from others who have reinforced their happiness.

FIFTEEN POSSIBLE DAILY ACTIVITIES THAT WILL RECONDITION YOUR UNCONSCIOUS MIND

1. Staying focused on the present moment: C. P. Snow wrote: *“The pursuit of happiness is a most ridiculous phrase: If you pursue happiness, you’ll never find it.”* All we ever experience directly is in the immediate present moment.

2. Meditation: ...becoming aware of your internal state/life. Andy Puddicombe, Co-founder of Headspace wrote: *“Brilliant things happen in calm minds. To know one’s mind is life-changing.”*

3. Humor: ...laughing: Milan Kundera wrote: *“The sound of laughter is like the vaulted dome of a temple of happiness.”* Gilda Radner wrote: *“Cancer is probably the unfunniest thing in the world, but I’m a comedian, and even cancer couldn’t stop me from seeing the humor in what I went through.”* Mark Twain wrote: *“Against the assault of laughter ---nothing can stand.”* Carolyn Birmingham wrote: *“A smile starts on the lips, a grin spreads to the eyes, a chuckle comes from the belly, but a good laugh bursts forth from the soul, overflows, and bubbles all around.”*

4. Moving your body: dancing, walking, hiking, skipping. Anonymous wrote: *“The body achieves what the mind believes.”* If you don’t make time for exercise, you’ll probably have to make time for illness. Consider the placebo effect.

5. Sleeping: resting

Again, that famous Greek philosopher, Anonymous, wrote: *“Happiness consists of getting enough sleep. A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor’s book. Some people can’t sleep because they have insomnia. I can’t sleep because I have the internet.”* C.S. Lewis wrote: *“The best bridge between despair and hope is a good night’s sleep.”*

6. Sexual activity: I wrote: *“I consider sexual activity as a sacred life force and the conceiving power of the universe. When we lovingly allow it to flow freely, it elicits deep feelings of wellness, desire and passion, and when it is an act born of love, it produces immense healing for our bodies and souls.”*

7. Music: ...playing or listening, singing, humming. Lailah Gifty Akita wrote in the book, *Think Great: Be Great:* *“Happy is the soul that begins and ends the your day with music.”* Debasish Mridha wrote: *“Music has infinite power to reach the gap between the heart and the soul to create infinite and ineffable joy. Music can heal the wounds which medicine cannot touch.”* Wiss Auguste wrote in the book, *The Illusions of Hope:* *“Once again, she was free. Once again, she found peace. It was music that freed her soul from the dungeon of her mind.”*

8. Eating: ...only nutritious food and only until satisfied. Hippocrates wrote: *“If we could give every individual the right amount of nourishment and exercise, not too little and not too much, we would have the safest way to health.”* Steve Maraboli wrote: *“You are what you eat, so don’t be fast, cheap, easy, or fake. By choosing healthy over skinny you are choosing self-love over self-judgment.”*

9. Creating: Carl Jung wrote: *“Imagination is more important than knowledge. Imagination is everything. It is the preview of life’s coming attractions.”* Steve Jobs wrote: *“Creating requires the courage to let go of certainties.”* The Co-Founder of Headspace, Andy Puddicombe, wrote: *“Creativity is as boundless, spacious and unlimited as the sky. We were born with it. It cannot be lost and it cannot be destroyed. It can only be forgotten.”*

10. Thinking positive thoughts: Marcus Aurelius wrote: *“The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts.”* Roy T. Bennett wrote: *[“Don’t waste your time in thinking angry thoughts, regrets, worries, and grudges. Life is too short to be unhappy. The more you feed your mind with positive thoughts, the more you can attract great things into your life. Happiness depends on your mindset and attitude.”*

11. Playing: Using your imagination, play “pretend games.” Games, puzzles, asking yourself “What if I was a _____?” Carl Jung wrote: *“The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct.”* Diane Ackerman wrote: *“Play is our brain’s favorite way of learning.”* From the American Academy of Pediatrics: *“Play is not just about having fun but about taking risks, experimenting, and testing boundaries. “Play is fundamentally important for learning 21st century skills, such as problem solving, collaboration, and creativity.”*

12. Working to achieve desired outcomes: James Barrie wrote: *“It is not in doing what you like, but in liking what you do that is the secret of happiness.”* Jack Nicklaus wrote: *“I’m a firm believer in the theory that people only do their best at things they truly enjoy. It is difficult to excel at something you don’t enjoy.”*

13. Get outside: Anne Frank wrote: *“I firmly believe that nature brings solace in all troubles.”* Albert Einstein wrote: *“Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.”* Sir John Lubbock wrote: *“Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer’s day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time. Fresh air is as good for the mind as for the body. Nature always seems trying to talk to us as if she had some great secret to tell. And so she has.”* David Attenborough wrote: *“An understanding of the natural world and what’s in it is a source of not only a great curiosity but great fulfillment.”*

14. Gratitude: It is the most stress-less emotion you can experience. Kristin Armstrong wrote: *“When we focus on our gratitude, the tide of disappointment goes out and the tide of love rushes in.”* Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: *“In ordinary life, we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.”* Melody Beattie wrote: *“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow.”*

15. Continue learning: Only to strengthen and enjoy your gentle curiosity. Lailah Gifty Akita in the book, *Pearls of Wisdom: Great Mind*, wrote: *“Self-education is lifelong curiosity.”* Abraham Lincoln wrote: *“All I have learned, I learned from books.”* Groucho Marx wrote: *“Outside of a dog, a book is man’s best friend. Inside of dog it’s too dark to read.”* Henry Ford wrote: *“Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young.”* Albert Einstein wrote: *“Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death.”*

SUMMARY: Roy T. Bennett wrote in *The Light in the Heart*: *“If you wish to experience ‘happiness’ in life ... “Accept yourself, love yourself, and keep moving forward. If you want to fly, you have to give up what weighs you down.”* Matthew 18:3 *“Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

SO....

If you want to experience genuine happiness...Treat yourself and others as you would treat a loved child!!

WHAT ABOUT MANAGING YOUR EMOTIONS?

*All of your emotions are natural and human to experience. How you manage and use them is characteristic of your own personal habits. Back in 1995, Daniel Goleman wrote a book entitled *Emotional Intelligence*, which is an excellent source of identifying and understanding one's emotional skills and how they affect our relationships, our physical and mental health and how effective we are in the world.*

During our childhoods, we are usually singularly focused on events outside our skins. We have little knowledge or capacity to manage our emotional reactions to those events. Nevertheless, when we are adults, we need to learn about our “emotional intelligence” and develop our capacity to monitor our own and others’ emotions to discriminate among them and use them to guide our thinking and actions. Learning about our emotional life expands our awareness of our optimism, conscientiousness, motivation, empathy, thinking habits and social competence. Ignoring our emotional life robs us of the skills we need to create a lifestyle of our own choosing.

We usually categorize our emotions in two ways: positive ones and negative ones. You are however, entitled to feel *whatever* you are feeling, whether [your] emotions are ‘justified.’” How you *use* your emotional energy in your behavior makes all the difference in the world. In her book, *Minding the Body, Mending the Mind*, psychologist, Joan Borysenko Ph.D. writes, “*Emotions are the very stuff of life. ...certain attitudes increase the ability to use them constructively in the quest to be compassionate, balanced, and skillful human beings.*” In other words, managing your emotional life will determine how you function in all aspects of being alive.

Powerful positive emotions include: love; joy; confidence; peace of mind; self-esteem; enthusiasm; and delight in being alive. Powerful negative emotions include: fear; anger, hate, depression, guilt, disappointment; and resentment. How you use *both* will define your habits, attitudes, thoughts, choices, and behaviors in all aspects of your life.

Dr. Borysenko writes (*ibid*), “*Tuning into the body can teach you a lot about what you are feeling. Positive emotions create bodily sensations of openness and expansiveness. They invite the world in. The body feels relaxed, even though some emotions such as joy are very energizing. In contrast, negative emotions create a tight, contracted feeling. Everything pulls inward. The world is pushed away. Positive feelings invite intimacy and engagement. Negative feelings invite isolation and alienation.*

“One of the most important levels of emotional awareness concerns your thoughts themselves [and the stories you tell yourself]. Are the things you tell yourself—which create and sustain your emotions—really true? If something difficult happens and your explanatory style (the way you explain it) is personal, pervasive, and permanent (‘It’s my own fault, I mess up everything I do, and it’s the story of my life’), ... then you are thinking like a helpless pessimist. Refuting the thoughts that sustain this mindset is an important component of learned optimism. ... When you begin to realize that the distressing stories you tell yourself aren’t really true, then you can let them go more easily or tell yourself more empowering [realistic] stories!”

Practice a few (or all) of the above suggestions in your daily life, and you will engage in “*the most basic kind of peace work*” ...Thich Nhat Hanh

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