The positive shift many of us work to instill . . . is toward a restoration of wholeness and an understanding of our oneness.  - Jan Engels-Smith
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Dear Readers,

Recently I attended the 34th annual conference of the Society for Scientific Exploration. The society is comprised of scientists who diligently explore scientific anomalies through rigorous research. At the event, one of the founders, Robert G. Jahn, was recognized and gave what was most likely his last talk to the organization. Bob is now in his mid 80’s and has retired from an outstanding career at Princeton University where he was Professor of Aerospace Science and Dean, Emeritus, of the School of Engineering and Applied Science. Bob is a brilliant mind, a kind, generous and giving person, and for me a shining star.

Listening to Bob speak I was struck by several things. First and foremost I was struck by his courage - even with his stellar credentials, unprecedented rigorous research, and numerous peer reviewed papers, he faced serious criticism of his study of anomalous information. Secondly, with a catch in my heart, I realized that we were losing an amazing mentor and that I am of the age where the loss of my mentors would begin to happen more frequently.

Lastly came the recognition that, in the not too distant past, energy medicine was considered slightly more than “voodoo.” Even today energy medicine is considered a fledgling field. Today we continue to educate physicians, nurses and the public in general about the benefits. Key to the success of the field are both people with courage and adventure in their souls, and solid research. Some of us have the ability to be involved in research and to share the results. All of us have the means to understand what good research is and to stay current.

Of utmost importance is that those of us involved in this amazing field of energy medicine remain open to possibilities, criticism and challenges. We need to listen to those of differing opinions, openly discuss our varying perspectives, work toward understanding, admit that we don’t have all the answers, offer what we know from our heart and above all be willing to remain playful.

Energy medicine is an emerging field—the twists and turns as it grows and matures will provide a lifetime of adventure.

Energy Magazine endeavors to offer a broad perspective and in doing so, to support and encourage energy medicine practitioners and students. In each issue we attempt to provide practical solutions for your practice, new food for thought, information on different modalities and much, much more. We hope to nurture your lifetime of adventure.

Margaret
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1 | Lisa Garr wants you to stop going through the motions in life. She wants you to become aware. Her mission is to inspire positive growth in all areas of life and bring conscious conversations into everyone’s living room.

Lisa’s own story is remarkable. Several years ago, she suffered a traumatic brain injury during a freak biking accident that rendered her unable to speak or rely on her short-term memory. She not only used cutting-edge EEG techniques to heal, but also set out to live a different life than the one she was leading in her pre-accident days. Lisa used this experience as a wake-up call and decided to transform in every way possible. In this book, she brings the lessons she has learned from countless interviews with inspirational, spiritual, and new-thought leaders to the pages of this book. She discusses how she’s applied them to her own life, and explains how you can, too.

2 | Can yoga and meditation unleash our inherent supernormal mental powers, such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and precognition? Is it really possible to perceive another person’s thoughts and intentions? And is it possible that some of the superpowers described in ancient legends, science fiction, and comic books are actually real, and patiently waiting for us behind the scenes?

Dean Radin, Director of Research at the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) presents persuasive new experimental evidence for the existence of such phenomena.

3 | Life loves you is one of Louise Hay’s best-loved affirmations. It is the heart thought that represents her life and her work. Together, Louise and Robert Holden look at what life loves you really means—that life doesn’t just happen to you; it happens for you. In a series of intimate and candid conversations, they dig deep into the power of love, the benevolent nature of reality, the friendly universe, and the heart of who we really are.

Life Loves You is filled with inspiring stories and helpful meditations, prayers, and exercises.

4 | With Natural Awareness, this celebrated teacher guides us through Buddhism’s Four Foundations of Mindfulness to bring us to a surprising destination: the effortless state of presence known as “non-meditation.” It’s a journey back to the unabashed presence and delight of the “Child Mind” that lies within all of us.
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True Freedom

Freedom is a release from the ideas and practices of trying to eat right, follow a diet or counting carbohydrates/calories/grams. It is a release from the obsession about what to eat and what not to eat. Freedom is having in place a habit of choosing foods which bring you to health and a greater capacity to run energy. When you do not spend time and energy thinking, planning and worrying about food, then your attention can be spent on what enerizes you and fills you spiritually.

You may be wondering, “How do I get THERE, Sharon?”

Remember when you first learned about energy? You may have had some doubts but then found that some of the information resonated with you. Perhaps you were aware of your sensitivities or that you really did know information “magically” but did not have a systematic way to repeat the experiences.

You had to learn some theory and facts. You had to unlearn some of what you had been taught about how the world works. Then two critical factors happened -- belief and practice.

What do you believe about food? Do you believe if you lose weight your perfect partner will appear and you will live happily ever after? Do you believe if you eat better you will make a better impression and find a great job? Do you believe your real life will begin when you are thin?

A 2012 Glamour magazine survey revealed that most people judge those who are heavier as lazy, mentally slow and self-centered. They judge thin people as complaining and controlling. These stereotypes are expressed outwardly and acceptable in our society. We may have been raised by parents or families who propagated these stereotypes and fed us these messages. We internalized these ideas and they became part of our belief system.

Another Glamour magazine survey of more than 300 women found that 97% had an “I hate my body” moment daily! Most of these women made negative self-statements almost hourly.

Many of us compromise or even alienate our beliefs and practices to please someone else. I have met raw foodists who eat cooked food at family gatherings and vegans who eat sausage topped cheese pizza at work gatherings in order to fit in.

To live in a place of freedom, we need to break down stereotypes. We need to stop believing the falsehoods that someone else shared and to find our own truths. Ironically many of us use food to avoid feelings - even feelings about our bodies and eating habits. This is borne out in the concept of comfort food.

Freedom is learning real information about nutrition, digestion and elimination. It is learning a system that works for you. There are many energy modalities and many of us know more than one. We blend modalities to match our abilities and provide the highest level of service to our clients. We may tend to lean towards a particular modality or to match the modality to the situation. As our abilities and practices evolve we may change how we use energy.

Food is the same way. Begin by learning theory. Some of the more familiar ones may include those developed by medical researchers and doctors such as The China Study by T. Colin Campbell, the MacDougall Program, Dr. Joel
Furhman’s *Eat to Live* program, Dr. Ann Wigmore’s program (Wigmore Institute), Dr. Brian Clement’s program (Hippocrates Health Institute), and Dr. Gabriel Cousens programs (Tree of Life Center). The programs at these institutes are renowned for reversing diabetes, heart disease and other chronic conditions through nutrition and lifestyle. It can be hard to know which path to take. Working with a trained professional to match the protocol with your current health condition and health goals is best. Then start implementing what you learn. Notice the effect. Modify, learn and make small changes to what/how/when you eat, as well, as what you think and believe about food. Wait until this stage to find community and support.

True support works like the concept of entrainment in energy medicine -- systems will attune to the highest vibration. Real support is provided by a community or resources that are in a more stable pattern than you.

Many people think they need support before they make changes. What they find, and often seek, is a group in a similar place. This puts you in the position of reacting to other people’s thoughts and experiences rather than developing your own. They may challenge you because they feel unsure or they may share their struggles – which affirm your struggling. Unfortunately, this keeps you stuck.

True change and freedom comes from internal motivation and deep desire.

It is helpful to work with a trained professional to help you match the theory/modality with which you are working to your current level of knowledge and health. Once you have achieved knowledge and a sustained change in health and habits, then you may begin to learn other theories and see how they dovetail with what you are doing.

Along the way you will need to develop intimacy with yourself. You will need to find the strength to believe in yourself and what you are doing despite the naysayers.

After a while, these practices will simply become part of who you are. Just like your energy medicine abilities. Sure, you will remain conscious about the habit, but it will become more automatic. When you were just learning to do energy work you probably made a very strong effort. After a while it took less effort and became routine.

Once you develop good food habits, you no longer have to spend so much energy worrying about food, calories, what others think or how you feel. It becomes second nature and compromise is not an option because eating foods which no longer serve you is just not part of you.

What I see with my clients, and my wish for you, is that when you find food freedom, you will have more energy and your ability to hold space for energy will increase. You will know a greater sense of peace than you have ever experienced. You will no longer play victim to emotional eating, comfort foods and the oppression of stereotypes and food beliefs in our society.


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Common Sense Healing

Mid-summer finds me knee deep in my son’s baseball. I spend my evenings eating salty popcorn, crossing my fingers when Gabe pitches and fending off mosquitoes. Given the numbers and length of the games, I am afforded plenty of opportunity to reflect on what healing is truly about.

A recent mosquito experiment was quite telling.

My exposure to holistic medicine has encouraged a sort of perfectionism. The more challenging a client’s issues - the more thorough is my advice. Who among us has not assigned clients a retinue of health conscious activities -- to include meditation, exercise, regression therapy, positive thinking, prayer, and supplements? How about their diet? The gluten-sugar-caffeine-alcohol-cholesterol-glycemic-meat free menu that leaves our client, maybe even us, wondering exactly what can be eaten.

So let us return to baseball.

It was the first hot game of the season. It was more than welcome, as we had been enduring months of 30 to 50 degree events. I was starting to equate myself with the Pillsbury Dough Boy, as my warm clothes, which are duck down, are so puffy that I practically have to be rolled onto a bleacher. The shift from cold to hot meant only one thing. The mosquitoes would attack.

There is a unique and shared consciousness among baseball moms. Without a single text, email, or phone call, we decided that this year we would only use non-toxic mosquito repellant. As “Mom One,” I showed up with clove spray. Mom Two had citronella candles. Mom Three passed out mini fans, guaranteed to scare the bugs away, and Mom Four carried a box of dryer sheets, which the Internet insists that mosquitoes abhor. Even the men sat around with Bounce dryer sheets on their heads.

Bottom line, Minnesota mosquitoes do not read instructions and must be more intelligent than most. Clove is on their preferred food list and citronella, a form of aromatherapy. They can ride the current of a fan’s movements to strengthen their projectile velocity. And the dryer sheets? Think “moths to a flame.”

Without missing a beat or making a formal declaration, every mom showed up at the next game with Deet bug spray. Of course, we had been trying to avoid toxic material, but when in the trenches...

As a healer, I have often been guilty of assigning a list of healthy behaviors, nutrients, and attitudes that could easily overwhelm a client. I have done the same to myself. The no-food diet? I have lived on vegetables and air as well, the end result usually an enjoyable “bad food” binge. Me without caffeine? Just ask my kids what I am like.

These days, I eat healthy—pretty much. I avoid the most obvious sins. But I also drink a large glass of ice tea with honey every morning, take my calcium in chocolate flavored candies, and wear real deodorant, not the organic stuff. I have an optimistic attitude, except when I do not, and have been known to be grumpy when I awake and the dogs have turned the upstairs into a litter box.

I also apply a more forgiving attitude as a healer. In other words, I am more realistic. If a client gets migraines, I know they need to eliminate certain foods, but everything “bad?” What if the headaches relate to anger at an ex-spouse? I might help the client chisel away at the bitterness, but I am not going to demand a complete change of heart. Maybe the anger is deserved and simply needs a better outlet.

In general I find it more helpful to support small and sequential changes or one great big transformation at a time. We baseball moms only use Deet in small quantities and even then, as a spray over our clothes, thus minimizing the danger and damage. If a client really does need to eliminate
a certain behavior, such as the eating of sugar, drinking of alcohol, or abuse of a drug, I concentrate on that action and substitute other, healthier activities that will support the change process. In general, however, most healings can involve adjustments over time, such as reducing the three-cup a day coffee habit to one cup a day.

As said by Slick Rick, a musician, “We need realism to deal with reality.” As stated by the Minnesota mosquitoes upon spotting the dryer sheets, “Really?”

Cyndi Dale is the author of *The Subtle Body: An Encyclopedia of Your Energetic Anatomy,* and eight other bestselling books on energy healing. She has worked with over 30,000 clients in the past 20 years. To learn more about Cyndi, her work, books and products please visit: www.CyndiDale.com.

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**Energy Medicine Specialists**

Offering hands on healing and education in the field of energy medicine

Energy Medicine Specialists

EMS is a premier educator in the field of Energy Medicine. We strive to hold the highest ethical and educational standards, offering beginner through advanced coursework. This year we’re adding new courses; Pendulum Assessments and Hara Practicum. Please visit our website for Practitioner Development coursework. [www.energymedicinespecialists.com](http://www.energymedicinespecialists.com)
Professional Development

How we develop professionally as energy practitioners is vitally important to both our clients and ourselves. In turn, professional development has many levels and includes many considerations. Your commitment to your practice and your clients is a long-term endeavor. Building your practice is on-going and whether you are just starting out or have been in practice a long time, there is always something new to learn and room to grow. HTPA is committed to helping you Build, Support and Expand your practice.

Building Your Practice

From the color you paint your office to the treatment table you purchase to marketing and legal issues, these decisions affect you, your clients and the success of your practice. As a trained Energy Medicine practitioner you are proficient and qualified in your field of training. Yet, for many setting up and running a profitable, efficient practice is daunting. These skills are not ones you learned in your chosen modality coursework.

To this end, HTPA has committed to developing a comprehensive e-book on how to start and grow your practice. A list of topics has been outlined and a deadline of May 2016 has been set for the final release. The topics range from your office atmosphere and what treatment table to purchase to finances and marketing. The intention has been set to release individual segments as they are developed to assist you along the way. If you have expertise in an area and are interested in contributing as an author or if there is a topic you would like to see us cover, please let us know.

Support for the Journey

As Energy Medicine practitioners, we choose to accompany our clients along their healing journey. Sometimes our clients’ journeys are full of pain and struggle. We need support ourselves as witnesses to suffering. Providing this steady support is a significant role of HTPA Chapters and practice groups. Gathering as a community of healers for mutual encouragement helps us replenish our strength and reconnect with our center of love. HTPA Chapters and practice groups also offer the opportunity to share “tricks of the trade” that we have discovered and learn from one another.

As HTPA communities build each other up, a natural next step is often to take this support into the broader community. Disaster relief efforts and Stand Downs which support military veterans are examples of how HTPA chapters support their local communities. We support each other so in turn we can fulfill our larger goal of supporting the wider world.

Expand your Skills

Continuing education may be a key element for your re-certification as an energy practitioner. This is true for Healing Touch practitioners. Continuing education also holds great importance for yourself and your clients. As you expand your skills, you are able to offer more to your clients, are more aware of a client’s needs, and in turn your practice succeeds and grows. Taking advantage of courses in advanced practices, new modalities, listening to healthcare webinars or staying current with the latest research in alternative medicine all increase your knowledge, skills and ability to assist your patients or clients.

Reading is another way to grow professionally. Today there is a wealth of books available that offer insight or allow you to stay current on the latest trends in health and healthcare. Older books can be as valuable a resource as the latest ones. Some of the early founders and researchers of energy medicine provide very worthwhile reading. The titles are numerous and one does not have to search far to find them. News articles can be read online or in magazines. HTPA hopes to provide you some of the best online and in print resources in our new e-book.

The sky is the limit on how you can grow professionally. Take the next step, and the next, and the next. HTPA is here to support you on your journey.
CREATE A BETTER LIFE

with Marie Manuchehri
Author of Intuitive Self-Healing

SEPTEMBER 25—27
Become a Reiki Master
Redmond, WA

OCTOBER 10 & 11
Heighten Your Vibration & Frequency
Portland, OR

OCTOBER 23—25
Anatomy For Energy Medicine
Vancouver, BC

DECEMBER 11
The Power of Vibration
Seattle, WA

DECEMBER 12
Perception is Everything
Seattle, WA

“Working with Marie is a life changing experience. If you want to find an effective way to make significant improvements in your life, this is it.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
WWW.ENERGYINTUITIVE.COM
Combining Energy Medicine & Western Medicine
As you may remember if you read last issue’s article, I am one of those rare physicians who combines Western medicine and subtle energy in her everyday practice. I shared with you why I think it is so important to integrate these two seemingly opposing worldviews. Today, I would like to answer some questions about how, specifically, I do that.

In terms of how I incorporate energy medicine into my practice, one of the principle ways is by what I call “active listening.” For me, listening does not just mean using your ears to hear what someone says. It means that you use all of your senses – including your heart and your perception of subtle energy. When patients share their concerns, I am not just hearing what they say with their words. I am also listening very deeply with my intuition, as best I can, to what their whole being has to say.

Energy medicine teaches us that we are not just a body: we are a spirit, a light or a vast energy which is part of the great intelligence. This means that on a higher level, we all know what we need to do to heal. When I use my intuition to listen, I tap into that knowing – the great teacher in the “patient” who knows exactly what is blocking them and what the next best step is to move forward. This means that if I listen well, I can understand not only the problem, but also the next step to healing. So in this sense, I am using energy medicine both as a tool for deeper understanding and as a guide for the next step to health.

In addition, one of my particular gifts with energy is to assist people in discovering on a deeper level the emotional and spiritual issues which contribute to a particular problem. As you know, patterns in the emotional, mental and causal subtle bodies can affect the structure and functioning of the physical body. Caroline Myss describes this in her book *Anatomy of the Spirit*, but even Western medical physicians have found this. For instance, Dr. John Sarno – a traditionally trained MD from New York – described the fact that chronic back pain is often related to repressed emotion, especially anger. One study using Dr. Sarno’s approach to suppressed emotion found a 54% reduction in the average pain intensity scores for 51 chronic back pain patients whose average pain duration before the study was nine years. Similarly, asthma patients who journaled about their most stressful life experience had a 19% improvement in their lung function (FEV1) even 4 months later; in one study, social isolation had been found to be as powerful a predictor of mortality as traditional risk factors such as smoking and cholesterol; and rheumatoid arthritis patients who wrote about their stress had a 28% reduction in their disease activity.

The studies above point out that there is scientific evidence to support what energy medicine has been saying for years – that our emotional and spiritual state affects our health. In my practice, I have found numerous examples of this same fact. For example, some time ago I met one 65 year old woman with breast cancer and noticed that the front of her heart chakra was sunk down into her chest. She had a shattered appearing aura around the front of her heart. My sense was that she had been abused emotionally, causing these changes in her energy field. When I asked her about it, she replied that as a child and young adult, she had lived with an extremely verbally abusive parent. As you may know, the breasts are an extension of the heart and when the energy of the heart cannot expand forward, this prevents healthy expression of energy from the breasts. She had tried to ignore her past rather than addressing it directly, and thus the pattern continued in her field at her age. In this case, she was open to talking and we discussed options. She agreed to start a daily meditation practice and work with a neurofeedback expert to address the subconscious emotions, in addition to following a vegan diet, taking supplements and following her oncologist’s plan as well.

Another example would be a young woman with an aura held very tightly close to her body. The aura appeared to bend inward into her throat where the energy would get caught. When discussing with her, it was revealed that she was an extreme introvert with suppressed self-expression and this issue was paralyzing her ability to move forward in her life. Although some would say that this is “just an emotional issue,”
she had also required surgery on her thyroid which
was the area in which most of the fear was con-
centrated. In addition, in my experience the fifth chakra
of the throat is also related to personal power and
moving forward with confidence – it makes sense
that this was where her “dis-ease” presented itself. In
her case, I recommended diet and supplements for
thyroid and hormonal support, and then referred her
for energy work and neurolinguistic based therapy.
This was based, again, on a discussion with her about
the pros and cons of different options.

Of course, not all people are open to discussion about
energy and if someone is not interested in discussing
patterns, I let it be. If this is the case, we simply focus
on physical treatments – for instance, diet, herbs and
if needed, medications. I like to remember that physi-
cal treatments are just a different form of energy, so
in a sense, even if they cannot discuss issues verbally,
that does not mean we are not addressing distorted
energy in their field.

I have had some people ask me if I am a medical intui-
tive. I have found that this word is commonly used
and has many different meanings. I do use intuition
to guide my approach to health, but I don’t rely on
it exclusively as my only tool. I have seen people live
in fear for years because of something a medical
intuitive told them that has never come true. As a
result, I think it is very important to remember that
no modality – whether it is Western medical testing,
holistic medical testing or intuition – is foolproof. My
definition of medical intuition is when someone uses
their intuition to augment their practice of healing.
This does not mean that intuition is foolproof nor
that it is the sole modality being used. However, it
is an important and useful asset when used in the
context of practical knowledge about health. In my
particular case, I combine intuition with my training
that can help with this issue. From a Western point of
view, physicians generally recommend modified activ-
ity, anti-inflammatory medications and a referral to
physical therapy or orthopedics. From a holistic point
of view, massage and acupuncture can be helpful.
But since chronic back pain frequently has emotional
components contributing to pain, holistic modalities
which can address this – like somatic coaching and
Healing Touch – may also be useful. In this case, I will
have a conversation with the patient to try to discern
with them what they feel fits them the best. As I men-
tioned above, this is where listening again comes into
play – not just on a tangible level, as in what referral
to make, but also what is the overall approach that
fits best with this person’s energy?

I also teach a one year-long course in energy medi-
cine. I do this because for me, learning energy medi-
cine has been one of the single best ways I have found
to augment my own happiness, truthfulness and
peacefulness as a human being. In my experience,
Western medicine is very focused on our physical
health, but is often missing the deeper level of our
human experience. During the Renaissance, church
was separated from state and as a result, our current
medicine does not frequently recognize that spiritual-
ity is an essential part of health. In the course, my goal
is to help people tap into a greater sense of self which can be used to help us heal on all levels. People who take the class are generally interested in this deeper understanding of self-care.

In the 1990s, a study by Jerome Frank outlined the four key elements present in an optimal healing encounter. These are: an emotionally charged relationship with a healing person, a healing setting (an expected place to go for healing), an explanation of the symptoms that resulted in a sense of control and understanding, and a plan that involves active participation by both parties that each believes will restore the person to good health. In addition, one study of positive health change in psychotherapy found that the factor in the therapist’s control that influenced healing the most – by 30% – was their ability to establish a sense of trust and rapport with the client. Those who were most talented at fostering trust and rapport also were much more likely to have patients who responded positively to medications. The question you may ask on reading this then, is “If trust and rapport are two essential factors which strongly influence positive healing outcome for the client, how do I engender someone’s trust? What are the elements that are required?”

We all know that there are concrete actions you can take to engender trust, such as showing up on time, stating your expectations openly, being honest, following through on what you say, having confidence in what you have to offer and giving your best work. In my practice, I try to follow these principles. However, in my experience, what people really desire is to be seen and heard – not just on a material level, but on a greater level, the level of their sacredness and truthfulness. As anyone who studies energy will know, we can only see someone to the extent we have seen ourselves. If we only relate to ourselves as a body walking around, it will be hard to relate to others in any other way. This also means we will be missing out on most of what people have to offer, because we will only be able to see their physical dimension. On the other hand, the more we have a real relationship with the Light, the Wholeness and the Sacredness that we are, the more we will relate truly, with integrity, to others in this way. And in my experience, it is when we see others, genuinely, in this way that we engender the most trust – and from that trust, we know that powerful healing follows.

This is why I go back to the fact that for me, the highest value of energy medicine is to see clearly – or to listen truly – to someone else. This may seem simple, but in fact, all the greatest tools seem simple until they are applied.


In the energy healing world, it is popular to offer your services for free—so people can experience it, so their lives can improve, so they can be healed or transformed. Makes sense, right? I have never met a more generous, kind-hearted group of people than energy practitioners. But does offering your services for free move you forward in your practice or move your chosen modality forward in acceptance and value among a larger population?

When was the last time you went to your doctor, lawyer, or accountant for free or even a discount? Is your work any less valuable?

**Price Signals Quality**

It is important to know that price signals quality—whether you sell a product or offer a service. Think about it, for what are you willing to pay full price? Most everyone has something for which they will pay full price. For example, last fall I was in the grocery store buying canning jars. I was new to canning and happened to notice that Kerr jars were a fraction of the price of the Ball jars. Standing there with a box of Kerr jars under my arm, a woman who seemed to know what she was doing pulled the Ball jars off the shelf and put them in her cart. I mentioned that the Kerr jars were on sale. She responded, “I only use Ball.”

So who would you rather have as your client? The woman who is devoted to you no matter what or the price shopper?

**Free**

When you are first starting your energy practice, it is often advised to offer your services for free to get people acquainted with your chosen modality and how it benefits them directly. Sometimes that works, but more often than not you end up doing a lot of free sessions with very few paying clients in return. Why?

Interestingly enough, it is all about psychology and energy. Think about it - when you have “skin in the game,” when you have put money (which is energy too!) toward something you believe will help you, fix something, etc., you are basically starting the flow of energy toward the benefit you expect to receive. This makes the likelihood of actually receiving the intended benefit far greater than if you had no “investment” in it—either monetary or psychological. Therefore, this “exchange” subtly and importantly begins the “healing” process. Conversely, if a prospective client has no investment in the service you provide for free, they often do not experience the value of it and are not willing to pay for it in the future.

There is also a little process called “managing consumer behavior.” The premise behind this is that you get what you ask for or what you encourage. If you...
offer your service for free, chances are you will generate lots of folks who want your service for free. If they can get what you offer for free, why would they ever pay for it? For yours or anyone else’s? Free makes your work and everyone else’s energy work worthless. Yes, free makes what you offer worthless! My bet is that you did not undergo the countless hours of training, reading, exercises, and practice to be considered worthless or not valued?

Discounts
Let’s face it, we live in a Walmart world. Whether we shop there or not, we are all subjected to Walmart’s “everyday low pricing” and discount scheme. This sales tactic has created some very difficult buying behaviors with which retailers contend. For the consumer, it is about the immediate “screamin’ deal” more than about product value and/or quality and for the retailer it is about the spike in sales. It becomes an addiction on both sides, but for the retailer the sales spike is not sustainable.

In the consumer’s mind, it is all about “the deal” and is a very short-term, immediate gratification, addictive high—just like drugs, food, gambling, sex, and other highly addictive activities.

Following Walmart’s lead, retailers have done a spectacular job of getting consumers dependent on discounts. So much so, that pretty much no one goes shopping for less than 20% off—and that number is increasing rapidly.

How can they do that—offer such deep discounts and stay in business? It is all about price manipulation, which is not the real topic of this article. The real topic is about how discounting (and free) undermines your business—especially if you are a service-based business.

So what about discounts in a service world?

It is important to understand the difference between products and services. Products are generally manufactured in quantities where “economies of scale” can be reached—meaning the more that are made, the cheaper the unit price.

That does not usually translate to services. In most

“Free can be used to reward clients who refer others to you. But do the math first!”

Free with Strings Attached
Although offering your service for free is not an optimal client-building activity, it can be used strategically to reward a faithful client and/or bring fulfillment to you.

Free can be used to reward clients who refer others to you. But do the math first! How many referrals would it take to pay for one session with you? Four? Eight? Twelve? When you have done the math and you know the answer, offer the client who made that number of referrals a free session as a thank you. When you do, be sure to log the cost of that free session as a marketing expense. That way you know the true impact and cost of offering that service for free. Over time, you will come to know whether the referral gift is increasing your client base or if the money could be used toward a more effective marketing effort.

If there is a specific population to whom you want to offer your service for free, then do it. But do it with purpose and on a limited basis and as a volunteer. For example, if you have a heart for veterans, then volunteer your services at the local care facility one day a week, one day a month, one day a quarter, or one day a year—whatever serves your sense of gratitude, appreciation, and/or loyalty. But do not give yourself away all day, every day. Make volunteering your service a benefit to them, as well as yourself.
cases, it is almost impossible for services, especially energy work, to achieve economies of scale as they are generally delivered one-on-one. So the more you discount, the more appointments you have to book. The more appointments you book, the busier you are. The busier you are, the less time you have for the important people in your life. The less time you have for the important people in your life, the more burned out you become. The more burned out you become, the more resentful you get. The more resentful you get, the angrier you are—and then you have alienated yourself and nobody wants to be around you! Clients or loved ones.

Offer Value, Not Discounts
In lieu of discounts, offer value. Can you throw in a little insight/advice along with your session? Can you provide a cup of hot tea or glass of water to comfort a client? Can you invite clients to a group talk that you are giving which they would not otherwise know about—allowing them to be “in the know,” part of an inner circle, or a club member? Can you create a quarterly newsletter with tips or trends and send it to them? Can you create a Facebook page that offers tips they would care about knowing?

There are all sorts of ways to offer value, but be sure that it costs little or nothing for you to deliver it. The key is to make your clients feel important. Be creative! You can have lots of fun with this!

Discounts with Strings Attached
Because most discounts attract price-conscious, “bottom feeder” clients, it is recommended that you do not use discounts as a one-time promotional tool. However, discounts can be used strategically. If you practice a modality that engages in multiple sessions to keep a body healthy and energy flowing, then it is practical to offer a package or series of sessions for a discounted price. (This is a “volume” discount of sorts.) For example, you believe your client would benefit from a massage once a month. You may want to offer him/her a package of 12 massages for the price of 11 massages. It is important that you and your client are clear regarding the package pricing and agree to it.

If you practice a modality that does not believe in or support a series of appointments, then it is important to set a session rate and stick to it.

Always remember -- price signals quality. Free is not often truly valued in the way we hope it would be. Value your work and the work of others by charging appropriate rates that move you, your practice, and your modality, as well as others, forward. Here’s to everyone’s success and recognizing your true value!
It was a restless inner curiosity and fascination with the mysterious hand gestures that propelled me onto a journey that changed my life forever.

I had been observing interesting hand positions in old sculptures of various cultures for years, yet no one seemed to be able to give me clear answers as to what these gestures meant or their specific purpose. Yet, I knew one thing with certainty - they were not just random decorative hand positions. They were a secret language known as Mudras and I had to find the key to unlock the mystery.

Mudras are sacred, ancient and connected to every culture on Earth. They know no limitations of time and are not bound to any specific religion. They belong to the world. To explain them simply - they are hand gestures that we practice by placing our hands, palms, and fingers in very specific positions, holding them for at least three minutes while breathing from the solar plexus (upper abdomen). They help you travel inward to discover the essence of your being. It is an entirely different experience than practicing physically demanding hatha yoga and profoundly different than simply sitting in meditation.

So intense was my longing to understand and share these secret Mudras with others that I began to write a book about them and travel to research and explore every possible source. Sometimes I felt as if I was too late, that all the teachers who carried the sacred knowledge were already gone. I thought that all we had left were numerous sculptures from various cultures, but no map to understand what they conveyed. However, as they say, if you seek you shall find. As life takes us through unexpected and entirely unplanned moments of profound change, the Universe hears our plea.

A set of unusual and yet synchronistic circumstances led me to attend an early evening spiritual event in Los Angeles where I live. It was there that I met my Master Teacher Yogi Bhajan. After his lecture, I took a deep breath, went directly to him and asked him about Mudras. He gazed at me for a moment with his penetrating all-knowing eyes and then guided me through my first Mudra practice. I knew immediately that I had found my source, my guide and my teacher. He told me to come back the next day and so our work began.

His answers and knowledge of Mudras were immense, but his generosity and determination to teach me Mudras in order for me to spread their message and convey them to others were overwhelming. My first book *Healing Mudras* evolved slowly through the following months and years in private study and mentorship with him, often at his ranch in New Mexico. He was beyond gracious, kind and protective.
Mudras offer a journey of inner peace no matter what turbulence surrounds you..."
The best way to describe the experience itself is uplifting, energizing, transformative, deeply healing and empowering. All that is facilitated when we consciously activate the tremendous healing energy within our hands to regenerate and cleanse our entire energy body, the chakra system, the 72,000 energy currents called nadis and thus positively affect our entire physical, emotional, and mental body.

You may wonder how something can be effective in only three minutes? Well, it can, but the best way to understand this concept is to simply take three valuable minutes of your time to explore the practice for yourself.

One of my favorites is Mudra For Help With a Grave Situation. It offers the most soothing, calming, and comforting effects. Now remember, the grave situation can be many different, possibly challenging aspects that we are experiencing – perhaps an illness, a stressful day, a difficult relationship, overwhelming responsibilities or a truly tragic moment. Grave situation in this case can be an overwhelming, overburdening, and energetically heavy load that we are facing. This Mudra offers immediate relief.

Another fascinating fact about Mudras is that the more you practice them, the more profound the effects become. It literally feels like you have plugged your hands into a magical energy socket that fills you with power and peace. By placing your hands into a Mudra position, you create a perfect energy balance within your body that helps you reestablish that delicate state of center and connectedness with your higher self.

However, Mudras offer even more. If you are an Energy Healing Practitioner, Mudras are an ideal technique to add to your toolbox for “hands on work” - in this case quite literally. When used in private client settings, Mudras can become an intricate part of the healing process and are a most powerful technique for releasing old negative patterns and establishing new, healthy habit patterns.

As we know, it is not always the easiest thing to just “snap out of it” as Cher said in the old romantic comedy Moonstruck. We can not do that with habits that we have allowed to grow within our lifestyle - old patterns that were established perhaps as far back as our childhood and still linger in our psyche. The fact that this healing modality can be integrated with any other healing or therapeutic method only expands the possibilities of beneficial use.

Through my years of work with private clients I have used Mudra Therapy by implementing numerous sensory aspects such as aromas, sound, and healing visual imagery to the Mudra practice - thus magnifying and expediting the entire healing process. This is a most powerful and fascinating method. Since my further deeper studies and a Ph.D. in Ancient and Modern approaches to Sensory Healing have allowed me to include the sensory healing aspect into the process while using the Mudra techniques, I have found many transformative results. When applying the Mudra Therapy process, we can use various Mudra sequences in combination with sensory stimuli as described in detail in my book Mudra Therapy - Hand Yoga for Pain Management and Conquering Illness.

A fascinating fact that Mudras originated in Egypt over 5000 years ago helps us understand the interconnectedness and overwhelmingly magnified healing power when these sensory healing elements are combined and used simultaneously. It was in ancient Egypt where High Priests and Priestesses used the Mudras in special sacred ceremonies in combination with aromatic oils, color healing, as well as the transformative powers of sound frequencies.

Reapplying the combination of these mostly unexplored healing modalities with Mudras creates a “Healing Frequency Cocoon” where a client can experience true deep healing on finer energy levels of his/her body. Of course there are very specific techniques for how we go about helping the client open up and discover for themselves where the deepest wounds originated and still live within their energy body. As we know, it is one’s own self-realization that matters and which creates a domino effect of the
healing process, not someone else’s opinion of your state. If and when you manage to realize the mysteries of YOU within yourself – the key is found. In this case - it is literally in your hands.

To use this method in your work with others, you need to go through the proper steps and training. Obviously it is a good idea to learn how to walk before riding a bike or flying a plane, don’t you think? So naturally the first step is developing your own Mudra disciplined practice, to be able to experience the effects that Mudras offer first hand and then teach the Mudras to others. This method is not as easy as one would imagine. After all, Mudras are done with your hands and in a big classroom the student in the last row will not even see your hands. So there are specific techniques and methods to successfully help your clients experience the benefits of Mudras, observe them, and correct them if necessary. The guided breath is another crucial element that is essential to allow Mudras to provide optimal results.

After you have truly mastered these steps, you can go deeper and begin to use the principles of Mudra Therapy while working in private sessions. One of the marvels of today’s technological progress is that we are able to transcend the limitations of distance and can communicate with each other from far away places – even the other side of the globe. It was precisely this aspect that I found encouraging and have therefore embarked on the complex road of creating online personal Mudra training programs for my students.

Now Mudra teachers are spreading this technique around the world and here we are again - another mysterious dynamic has happened. I have had the privilege of teaching a student from a far away city in Mexico who lives next to the ancient Mayan Pyra-
mids. She, too, has been fascinated by Mudras while living in this ancient “Egyptian like” atmosphere. Many of their local ancient sculptures depict Mudras as well. Also, on the other side of the globe, my students in Taiwan have found tremendous fascination with Mudras in connection with their culture and the use of hand Mudras in their traditional dance. It is a very interesting synergy of “world Mudras” coming together in understanding the benefits of these wondrous techniques. Kind of like coming full circle, I feel.

It is my mission to continue exploring, learning and always teaching others how to practice, as well as to teach and understand these techniques properly. Mudras deserve and require the best possible opportunity to be properly reintroduced to the world, so they will be used for the betterment of all - removing man’s suffering and opening the doors of endless possibilities. While these amazing techniques were lost to mankind for some time, they are now back in full force. Enough said. Better just try it for yourself. If this information evokes a tiny glimpse of curiosity, give yourself the gift of a few minutes, sit down and practice these two Mudras.

First give it a try with Mudra for Help With a Grave Situation. Do you feel the healing energy emanating from your hands and soothing your heart? In addition, with Mudra for Patience you will enter another realm and actually sense the transformative effects. It is almost like walking uphill, struggling for a bit and then -- ahhh -- the view! Seeing the world from an entirely different perspective. The calm, patient and wise You emerges. Welcome to the world of Mudras.

“Mudras can be quite the power tool for energy practitioners who are even more aware and receptive . . .”
MUDRA for HELP WITH A GRAVE SITUATION
- Sit with a straight spine.
- Bend your elbows and place both palms on your upper chest, fingers pointing toward each other.
- Hold and feel the healing energy of your hands soothe the heart.
**Breath**: Long, deep and slow.

MUDRA for PATIENCE
- Sit with a straight spine.
- Connect the fingertips of the thumbs and middle fingers, creating a circle. The rest of the fingers are outstretched.
- Lift your arms up at your sides so that your hands are at the level of your ears, palms facing outward.
- Keep your elbows nice and high for three minutes.
**Breath**: Long, deep and slow.

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Shamanic Healing and Soul Retrieval

Jan Engels-Smith

Shamanism is an ancient healing art, dating back at least 40,000 years and has been used by most indigenous cultures in the world. This healing method emphasizes that all experiences affect your soul and that all healing comes through the soul. In shamanic cultures, the care of the soul is extremely important. In fact, it is the most important aspect of healing. The shamanic belief is that a human being is first and foremost a soul having a human experience, not the other way around. If the soul is cared for properly or is healed through the process of soul retrieval, other healings can then manifest in the mental, emotional, and physical bodies of an individual person.

Learning about shamanic healing practices and soul retrieval became imperative for me. I strongly felt that I needed to have a soul retrieval and the information about journeying (the shamanic way of gathering information from the nonphysical realms) stimulated wisdom that already resided in my soul. During my soul retrieval experience I remembered lifetimes of being a healer and my knowledge from previous lifetimes became available to me again. I not only reevaluated my counseling practice, I reevaluated my understanding of the concepts of God, Spirits, possibilities, and other realities - the meaning of life!

We have doctors who specialize in everything imaginable except for the soul in our Western culture. To me, the care of the soul is the missing link in healing and must be considered first. Fortunately, this is beginning to be understood in our Western culture and more people are seeking individuals such as shamans for their healing.

Shamanically speaking, all things are energy. The movement or the transmutation of energy is part of the healing of the soul, which is itself energy. In a healing, the shaman moves out the energy that does not belong to a person and refills him/her with the divine energy that is the essence of that person’s true soul. The theory behind soul retrieval is that there is soul loss when an individual experiences powerful or traumatic situations.

Through individual experiences like some sort of trauma, a person loses part of himself as a survival mechanism to withstand the pain. In shamanic terms, this process is called “soul loss.” In psychology, it is called “disassociation.” Psychology does not ask where the lost part goes and how one gets it back. In the practice of shamanism, when a piece of the soul or energy leaves, it actually goes into another reality and is lost from the person. A void then exists in that person’s soul. Think of the soul as a giant jigsaw puzzle. When you experience a trauma, a piece of the puzzle is lost, leaving an empty space in the puzzle. When this soul loss occurs, a soul retrieval is necessary to restore
Shamanic Healing and Soul Retrieval

wholeness. In a process called journeying, a shaman is trained to enter an altered state of consciousness and travel into different realities to find and retrieve the lost soul parts. The shaman then literally blows these parts back into the client via the heart and the top of the head, restoring wholeness to the client.

The voids created by soul loss can actually fill with energy that is foreign to the soul. This can manifest into all kinds of diseases or physical, mental, or emotional problems. According to shamanic definition, the soul is perfect and divine, and life should reflect this. If a person is not experiencing happiness, or if there are physical, emotional, or mental problems apparent within a person, then evidence exists that there is not only soul loss but also an intruding negative energy. Extracting this negative energy and restoring the soul through the process of a soul retrieval promotes feelings of wholeness and happiness. When a person stopped singing, indigenous people realized that a soul retrieval was needed. With the restoration of the soul’s wholeness, the person would sing again.

In a shamanic culture, care of the soul is part of daily existence. I believe that is why these cultures are notably content, happy, and crime-free. When people feel fearful, threatened, or fragmented, their responses to life are extremely different from those who feel trustful, optimistic, whole, and complete. In our culture, we have very little experience with sustaining trust and optimism. Our cultural system is based on a win-lose hierarchy. Someone is always gaining while another is losing. In shamanic cultures, this win/lose phenomenon is seen as soul stealing, or stealing away someone’s personal power.

Many people purposely steal personal power from others. A person can be the victim of this theft at any stage of life, but it often happens to children, especially if they are raised with authoritarian, controlling, or needy parents. The parents actually steal power away from their children. A resultant exchange of power occurs if a person is abused in any way -- emotionally, physically, sexually, or mentally. The overpowered loses energy to the abuser. Children are easy targets to control and extremely vulnerable to soul stealing. The resultant soul loss leaves a void that is filled by negative energy (usually feelings of unworthiness) and the individual carries this energy for a lifetime, or until the lost soul parts can be retrieved. If there is no care of the soul built into the culture’s system, the result is a society of wounded people. Feelings of unworthiness can lead to all sorts of dysfunctional behaviors and attitudes that predominate in society. These feelings of lack can take generations to heal, but once the patterns are recognized efforts can be made toward healing. I have found in my own research that the core counseling issue for most people is the issue of unworthiness. People need to be genuinely loved and connected to a higher power. Once soul theft occurs, an effort must be made to recover it.

Culture and family more often create hierarchical gender structures, which establish male dominance. The result is socially reinforced losses of personal power for a false sense of social order. Women have been taught to give away their personal power to the male gender to find love or acceptance. Other examples of this belief system abound in our culture, but in true love and acceptance one does not give away one’s soul. The void caused by engaging in this behavior can have extremely adverse effects.

Another form of soul loss happens in relationships built on codependency, in which one person bases his or her worth in another person rather than in self.

“According to shamanic definition, the soul is perfect and divine, and life should reflect this.”
Shamanic Healing and Soul Retrieval

This is a false love that can create soul loss on both sides. True love augments the soul and is most present when the soul is whole.

Soul loss creates a fragmentation of one’s wholeness. Consequently, a person continually tries to fill the voids caused by the fragmentation. Addictive behaviors are attempts at “fulfillment”. These may include overt behaviors associated with drugs, alcohol, sex, faulty relationships, or more subtle behaviors such as co-dependency or verbal communication styles.

Listen carefully to conversations. There is a definite exchange of energy occurring at all times. Questions about what you do for a living, how much money you make, what education you have, and where you live often establish a hierarchy of energy. There will be a winner and a loser in these conversations if the intention of the questions is to establish position. When positive energy flows, people recognize and pursue their interdependence. Interdependent behavior is evident in mutually supportive relationships in which individuals retain their personal power and self-worth. In such relationships, a person is not striving for worthiness from such external criteria as wealth or beauty, but rather from a powerful inner sense of worthiness. This worthiness creates wholeness.

It is important to understand that interdependence is not the same as dependence. In fact, soul loss is often the result of dependence. This is why children are so susceptible to theft of a soul part. However, many adults are also highly dependent on others and subject to resultant soul loss. The journey to restoration of the soul part requires the individual to first move from dependence to independence.

This movement from dependence to independence is accomplished by regaining one's individual power. Many confuse this transition with being selfish. They have been taught for so long to give away their personal power to meet the needs of others that this transition can feel jolting. However, the acquisition of independence allows one to participate in the universe in a positive and personally powerful way.

Once one’s independence is established, the individual is able to move from independence to interdependence, becoming a part of the wholeness of life without the loss of individual energy.

This movement from dependence to independence to interdependence is part of the larger universal shift to identifying with the web of life. The recognition that we are all part of one another enhances every individual’s personal power. We are capable of ending our personal fragmentation and the unnatural fragmentation we have created in the universe. We can have wholeness of person and wholeness of life.

DEPENDENCE ——> INDEPENDENCE ——> INTERDEPENDENCE

In highly interdependent societies, where the interdependence is recognized and appreciated, soul retrieval is a daily and accepted activity. These societies are not the norm in western cultures but can be found in indigenous cultures that still exist such as the Katasee in Peru. The care of the soul is the first priority in health, both for the individual and for the society. In shamanic cultures, a soul retrieval is performed within three days after any major event in a person’s life. Traumatic or other dramatic changes, such as childbirth, marriage, death of a loved one, an accident, a broken relationship, an argument, to name a few, are addressed immediately by performing a soul retrieval. It is assumed that anyone going through such an event would have a high probability of soul loss, and in order to instill proper healing, the soul is attended to first.

Unfortunately, in our culture, years and years of fragmentation and soul loss can accumulate for an individual, which creates the potential for a soul to become critically fragmented. We can see the results of this by looking at the mental, emotional, and spiritual health of our society. We have a society that is depressed and self-medicating with illegal drugs, alcohol, and over-the-counter or prescribed medications. Our youths have difficulty finding purpose and meaning in their lives. Relationships and families fall apart with ever-increasing frequency. The culture is
not grounded in taking care of the soul.

We are plagued in our culture with people hurting—physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. The issues with which doctors and psychologists deal on a daily basis are what a shaman would see as warning signs of soul loss. Warning signs of soul loss can include:

- Anything chronic—fatigue, depression, misfortune, faulty relationships, emotional problems, suicidal tendencies.
- The inability to release some emotional trauma from the past—such as a death, divorce, or other loss.
- Addictions of any kind—alcohol, drugs, food
- Not feeling connected to the body or reality
- Operations or difficulty in recovering from surgery
- Repetitive sicknesses—colds, flu, and so forth
- Major illnesses
- No sense of direction
- Shame or feelings of guilt
- Feelings of unworthiness
- Not feeling one’s personal power

Our culture suffers dramatically from these symptoms. It is rare to come across someone who responds and lives life from wholeness instead of from the woundedness of his or her past. If a person has voids from soul loss, these voids act like magnets trying to fill up with any energy to become whole. If you are exposed to anger, fear, greed, anxiety, unhappiness and hatred repeatedly, those are the qualities your own soul will absorb. Extracting negative energies, bringing back the lost soul energy, and then teaching a person how to stay whole will not only heal the individual and restore personal power, it will begin to restore wholeness in our society as well.

The positive shift many of us work to instill, in Western culture, is toward a restoration of wholeness and an understanding of our oneness. This work addresses the fact that we are energy, as is everything, and that all energies influence one another. We must learn to maintain and care for our own divine energy—our soul. In such a climate of responsibility and openness, shamanism would find a welcome home.

All of us have experienced trauma in some form just from experiencing life. Because of this, I believe that most people would benefit from an initial soul retrieval. I have witnessed amazing results in healing using this technique and have also experienced it firsthand. Soul retrieval changed me, not only as a person but also as a professional therapist.

I never liked the idea of long-term therapy. I could not understand why it took people so long to heal. What I discovered in shamanism is that therapy takes so long because the part of the person that needs to be healed is not present and available for treatment. The lost soul part is in a different reality and is not even present in the therapy session.

When I first started my shamanic training, I asked my clients if they would allow me to do soul retrievals on them as experiments. Within one month, all of the consenting clients were finished with their therapy. The results were amazing. I now understood, at a different level, the concepts, theories, and explanations that I had applied in prior therapy sessions.

During traditional therapy, people often understand what has happened to them on an intellectual or cognitive level, but still change does not occur. They remain too attached to their pain. The shamanic explanation for this is that the lost soul part remains suspended in a different reality, reliving the traumatic event of its loss over and over. The client still does not have access to the soul part, and successful therapy is hindered by its absence. After a soul retrieval, there is understanding not only in the mind but also in the heart and soul of the client. The return of the lost soul part allows healing to occur emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually.

The soul is divine in its essence, and this divine nature is retained in a lost soul part. In receiving a soul retrieval, the initial problem never returns. The soul part left because of the problem. During the soul...
retrieval, the divine essence returns, which restores wholeness to the soul and causes the person to feel complete and empowered. The person is once again connected to his/her divine nature and able to detach from the past. Energy is no longer held captive to the past, and it is no longer necessary to relive the event and experience its pain.

After a soul retrieval, previous therapies increase in value and understanding. The multilevel healing allows the person to process information from the perspective of wholeness, rather than of fragmentation, and to move beyond the traumatic experience. As a result, perspectives about self and life change: When perspectives change, reality changes. It is then that life changes can occur.

Care of the Soul

Care of the soul is very different in our modern industrialized culture from indigenous cultures. Indigenous cultures were clearly focused on an individual’s happiness and the expression of that happiness. Singing might represent such an expression and concerns would be raised if one stopped singing or if a person seemed troubled or distracted. This deviation from the norm would result in a soul retrieval within three days of the noted change in an individual’s behavior. This consistent soul care awareness and focus on happiness would tend to keep the entire village or tribe content and grounded.

In our modern culture our baseline of happiness is much lower due to our lack of consistent soul care, which was created from centuries of the suppression of spiritual values related to the soul. We need a more conscious effort and attention to soul maintenance when the need arises. However, much can be gained from forming good habits of thought. First and foremost our thoughts control our emotions, so diligently creating the intention to direct our thoughts to spiritual matters will promote holistic wellness.

The simple exercise of setting an intention before going to sleep and upon waking can alter one’s life. For example, list twenty blessings or things that you appreciated about your day before you go to sleep. This will change the energy of your psyche and what you take into your dreams. The first thing I say to myself upon waking is, “I love my life!” I hear myself saying it in my head before I am even aware that I am awake. This is trained wellness therapy. If you absolutely do not love your life, set your intentions for the day to be happy, surprised, awed, peaceful, or grateful. On my website, I created a FEEL GOOD CHALLENGE, which anyone can join. I send out a positive affirmation each day with a challenge for you to add positive words to the affirmation. It is my way of reaching thousands a day to help them feel better. You can connect to the challenge on my web page at www.LightSong.net.
VITALITY Cincinnati: Nurturing Seeds of Self-Care for All

Peg Conway

In a converted storefront on a main thoroughfare in Cincinnati, one-hour Healing Touch sessions are available by appointment several evenings a month at a nominal fee. A long rectangular-shaped open room with soft lighting and instrumental music playing contains four treatment tables arranged with pillows and blankets. Meditation cushions and yoga mats stacked along the edges of the room are evidence of other uses for this contemplative space, and hot tea is available at the kitchenette in the left rear corner. Clients are welcomed quietly in the entryway and then ushered to a table.

Just a few miles north, desks are moved aside in a second floor classroom of the parish center housed in a converted apartment building to create three Healing Touch stations. Each consists of two folding chairs facing each other. Despite the hustle and bustle of the Wednesday afternoon food pantry underway downstairs, serenity prevails. Clients are greeted with gentle warmth and quiet assurance that they will not lose their place in line as a result of diverting upstairs for 20-30 minutes of Healing Touch before shopping the pantry shelves. Foreheads nearly touch as the seated pairs confer. Soon the practitioners stand, set down the clipboard, and move their chairs out of the way to begin Healing Touch for the clients who remain seated.

Cosmic Vision

Two contrasting settings in two distinct urban neighborhoods, but both are the work of Vitality Cincinnati, a small non-profit with a cosmic vision for “inviting transformation neighborhood by neighborhood, person to person, and breath by breath through gentle and accessible self-care: Healing Touch, meditation, journaling, yoga and Bones for Life.”

The storefront is Vitality’s home base not only for providing and teaching Healing Touch, but yoga, meditation and journaling as well. Outreach is central to the mission, so small teams of volunteers offer free or low-cost Healing Touch and yoga around the city, in large part through an internship program that has become the organization’s lifeblood. At a practical level, current interns and graduates deliver most of the programming. This year’s class of interns, the fourth, consists of 20 people ranging from college students to grandparents who have committed to 200 hours over seven months to become yoga teachers and student-practitioners of Healing Touch (completing Levels 1 and 2). In a profession of mostly women, the group is one-quarter men. Interns are required to pay only $100 for the entire internship—to learn both yoga and Healing Touch, and in exchange are asked to give back 200 hours of time teaching yoga when they are ready and offering Healing Touch at regular sessions, both at Vitality and in the community.
This arrangement attracts younger people especially. “I had been looking for a way to help myself heal and learn how to help others heal themselves. I didn’t have $3,000 to spend on a yoga teacher training, and Vitality’s vision understands not only that but that everyone deserves to relax and feel well,” said Latisha Sullivan, 26.

**PROFOUND IMPACT**

Once underway, the internship itself becomes a profound spiritual experience for many participants. David Franke, 23, calls his intern experience “nothing short of a small miracle” and cites the diversity of people at Vitality as significant in his growth. “Each day I train at Vitality, I grow in my sense of morality and human empowerment. Without such a loving, humble, open-minded and blended community, I don’t believe I would be able to face each day with optimism and spirit.”

A single mother of two grown sons, Susan Stidd said the program is anything but standard. “Every class is unique and taught in a very professional yet comfortable environment. The most amazing moments for me have been while witnessing the nurturing acceptance, health, wellness and sense of belonging this program brings to the community.”

Recipients of Vitality programs agree. Kathy O’Malley, coordinator of the Bond Hill Food Pantry, said, “It has been such a blessing to have Vitality here. For many of our clients Healing Touch was an unknown, the sort of opportunity open to those ‘with money.’ It has truly been nothing short of miraculous when we now see our clients -- men as well as women -- eagerly looking forward to the next visit from Vitality and trying to schedule their food needs with the gift of healing.”

Volunteer Kathy Banks has become the pantry’s Healing Touch “ambassador.” After receiving it once, on a day when she was feeling unwell, she became an enthusiastic proponent and encourages clients to check it out. “I didn’t know what to expect, but I talked to Brian and got comfortable. What I experienced was very spiritual. I received it and was able to let go. A lot of people don’t know what it is. I tell them it’s getting in touch with your inner self, to relax and let go.”

Such individual witness is as integral to Vitality’s vision as the internship and outreach programs. “That is how we work. One person shares it with another person and another person, and before you know it, there is a holistically-minded person in every home in Greater Cincinnati,” said Brian Shircliff, program director.

**BEGINNINGS**

The seed that became Vitality first germinated among Shircliff and fellow Healing Touch practitioners and friends Sue Saylors and Micah Richey during Level 4 training in 2008. After being asked to journal on “How will you use this training?” and “What is the future for you with Healing Touch?” they were amazed to discover each had separately written of their desire to make Healing Touch affordable and accessible in the community. Thus began a discernment that over the next two years grew to include regular gatherings at Brian’s home with other Healing Touch folks as well as friends and community members who felt drawn to the evolving vision.

Carol Yeazell had just read Soul Medicine when she saw a notice about these meetings. Heeding a strong inner calling, she emailed Brian to say, “I’m not a nurse, I’m not a Healing Touch person, but maybe there’s some way I can be of help to this process.” Carol joined the discernment conversations and
eventually took Level I training. Today she offers Healing Touch at a local nursing home and at Vitality.

**Time for Action**

Tangible action steps to create Vitality began in September 2010, with the initiation of fundraising, filing for tax-exempt status with the IRS, and the search for an official home. Before too long, they found the storefront on Montgomery Road, which met their criteria to be near Xavier University, on a bus line, and with available parking. “But it needed a lot of love”, Brian says now. Serendipitous connections brought needed expertise and materials for the renovation over the next several months.

Meanwhile, they had begun providing Healing Touch on the Xavier campus until the doors opened in January 2011. Clients trickled in over the first few weeks. Then the idea for the internship program emerged, and the first group began in August 2011 with 10 people, of whom five graduated. The second class started with six, and two finished. Up until that point, Brian had been serving as director in addition to his full-time position teaching high school religion. In June 2013 he left teaching to focus on Vitality, having realized that more time was needed to support the interns and provide continuity. That fall they expanded the internship and graduated all 20 of the people who enrolled.

**“Spark Plug”**

Soft-spoken and self-effacing, as program director and co-founder, Brian deflects praise for Vitality’s growth and impact thus far, citing the teamwork of many people. But his pivotal role is clear to others. “Brian is the spark plug behind the whole thing,” says Healing Touch Certified Practitioner and Instructor (HTCP/I) Mary Duennes, who teaches Level I workshops for the interns. She participated in the initial discernment conversations and served on the Vitality board for the first three years.

“His ability to recruit people for the program is just amazing. I love the diversity in so many ways, especially the energy and enthusiasm of young people.

They benefit from the wisdom of the older people, and the presence of men is wonderful,” Mary said.

Brian is the only paid employee, so he carries out much of the day to day operations as well as holding the vision, assisted by volunteers. Besides offering Healing Touch, for example, Carol Yeazell orients the interns and performs hands-on tasks like laundering sheets and cleaning the bathroom. Fundraising occupies a significant amount of time, especially because program fees are minimal or by donation only.

**Growing Again**

Vitality’s unique outreach focus has been recognized with several significant grants to develop the internship program, including a recent award to create one specifically for the Walnut Hills neighborhood, open only to those residents, in partnership with several other agencies working in that urban area. The training takes place in Walnut Hills, and participants will perform their give-back hours there. Brian envisions that this location-based approach will be replicated in other neighborhoods. “Community-organizing from the inside out, you might call it,” he said.
For as long as I can remember, I have blended my passions for scientific research and expanded awareness. As early as first grade, when most girls my age wanted to become nurses or school teachers, I wanted to be a 'scientist/priestess' when I grew up.

My maternal grandmother, who was a gifted sensitive as well as a nurse, nurtured my interest and aptitude for intuition during my early childhood years. She and I would spend extended periods of time playing games, which I now realize were actually training exercises, in remote viewing and other forms of intuition. For instance, she would sit with me in a busy shopping mall and describe the clothing and appearance of people before they came into view. She would then ask me to do the same and to follow my imagination as to where they were going, what might be in their shopping bags, etc.

In high school I studied parapsychology, an exciting new science devoted to altered states of awareness and human consciousness. No parapsychology courses were offered at Arizona State University, which I attended as an undergraduate, so I continued to study parapsychology on my own and turned my accredited academic attention to biology. My Life Science focus was on comparative anatomy, morphology, physiology and ultrastructure.

The more I learned of the intricate balance of life from the point of view of a biologist, the more I was intrigued by my progress in the intuitive or higher sense perception of the living body. My science teachers seemed oblivious to the world of expanded awareness which was opening to me as I deepened my meditation practice and other mindfulness techniques. My dreams, which had always been vivid, became even more profound and instructive. As an example, in the early 1970s, I was taught to see the human aura through a series of spontaneous dreams.

Each dream revealed a bit more detail of the body’s energy field as rapidly changing, swirling colors. Eventually, I was told in a dream that I would see auras while awake, as well. That gradually happened, even though at that time my attention was preoccupied with motherhood. I was also trying to earn a living using my Masters and Doctoral degrees in biology, which I earned from the University of California, Berkeley. Often I could not mention the vivid colors I saw around people, animals, plants, even crystals and magnets. So I developed the ability to tune out and into these impressions on demand.

While most of my attention was focused on raising two young sons, I pieced together an academic career, like a patchwork quilt, from many jobs -- biological and medical illustrator, systematic entomologist, col-
lege lecturer in the biological sciences, and metaphysician. In this last capacity, I taught a wide variety of classes, including dream interpretation, at various local venues. That brings us to one evening in the mid 1980s when I taught a dream class to a group of about 25 people.

After the lecture two gentlemen who had quietly sat towards the rear of the room during my presentation, followed me into the parking garage where we talked for close to an hour. They were also scientists, on the faculty of a local university, and like me, were deeply interested in expanded consciousness.

Within a week my doubts vanished, because my friend called to say that he and his colleague wanted to have additional sessions with me. That was more than 25 years ago. We have improved the accuracy and ease of the work, which we call the Inner Vision process, through practice. We are aware that our procedure is not of itself scientific, but it can be used for science. During our sessions I am in a deep, trance-like state of consciousness. I reach this through a combination of self-hypnosis and deep meditation. Questions are then asked of me by my colleagues and the answers are recorded.

A session may last up to three hours. During this time I am continuously questioned by my colleagues, who later conduct more scientific tests using the information provided. For the first few minutes of a session I am unable to open my eyes or to hold a pen in order to write or to draw the images which mentally appear to me. As soon as the paralysis is gone, I can draw or write with my eyes open and not interrupt the altered state. My ability to do this has strengthened over time. In the early years of our practice, I would often awaken from the trance with double vision and some nausea, which sometimes lasted for more than 30 minutes.

As time has passed and we have continued to practice frequently, any unpleasant post-trance reaction has faded, so that now I see clearly and have no adverse effects after or between sessions. In addition, my role in this work has improved my intuitive and
meditative abilities. I have gained the ability to quiet my inner thoughts. These are sometimes referred to as the ‘inner babbler’, and most people continuously experience them running through their minds. For these and other reasons, the Inner Vision altered state experience has greatly improved my ability to work as a general intuitive - especially a medical intuitive. Also, my artistic experience and training has prepared me to accurately draw what I visualize. This work has made me a more capable artist and illustrator.

The Inner Vision process is applicable to a vast range of scientific/technical topics. Over the years, we have collaborated on inventions, or ‘seed ideas’ of many sorts, some of which have been published.¹

Of great interest to me and to my colleagues is the potential of using the process to view the most fundamental nature of matter and its relationship to energy. We postulate from our research that all matter condenses from undifferentiated energy across a zone which we call the ‘etheric template’ at a rate of billionths of seconds.

We call the smallest unit of matter a ‘graviton.’ These tiny particles have mass, location and acquire a degree of spin as they are formed. (see Figure) The more intense the formative energy of which they are composed, the greater the inertia they acquire. The least penetrating of these form a uniform network of matter, the background ‘zero point’ mass, which fills all of space.

Qi, also known as Chi or subtle energy, is more penetrating than the zero point mass but is still on the low end of graviton penetrance. This category of particle is followed in the penetrance scale by magnetism and gravity. Magnetic polarity and the attraction of gravity are due to the physical process of mass exchange of vast numbers of gravitons. That is why magnetic, gravitational and atomic fields exert force.

Most healers experience physical sensations such as tingling, pressure or heat/cold during their sessions. Medical intuitives and other sensitives can perceive the body’s energy field, the aura, in a variety of ways. It can appear as a colored radiance interpenetrating and extending beyond the form or can be detected as a force on their hands or influencing dowsing tools, such as a pendulum or rods. These forces or sensations are the result of graviton exchange between molecules of the healers’ and the recipients’ bodies.

Clusters of gravitons may spin into orbit around each other to form larger particles. We recognize these as light photons, each composed of two gravitons; electrons, some made up of three and some of four gravitons; and protons, which can be formed from the union of many gravitons. The complete scheme of graviton assembly is outlined and explained in my book, Inner Visions of Matter and Subtle Energy.²

Unformed energy is pure energy and does not have form, position or mass. All matter is a concentrated state of this energy. Subtle energy is actually made up of gravitons and therefore has mass and position. The unformed energy, which concentrates into physical gravitons, is universal and undivided. All matter, including ourselves, is one at this level. Qi is influenced by thought through the universal, unformed energy. Emotion, such as unconditional love,³ can be a strong carrier of Qi by influencing this energy.

Healing occurs at a distance through the exchange of Qi which restores damaged enzyme molecules or cellular membranes, for example. No direct physical contact is required for healing at this level to occur. Focused thought can concentrate or recruit subtle energy and direct it where it is needed. This can be used to upload Qi into an object, as well. Such stored Qi can be downloaded later as needed for energetic replenishment.

This storage and exchange effect is well known in some traditions -- religious relics and amulets, prayer shawls, healing waters and sacred oils are a few examples. Most physical objects quickly lose the extra load of subtle energy which might be impressed upon them through concentrated thought and emotion. Some of the best materials for a mind-matter
interface of this sort are quartz (silica) and sapphire (alumina). Many energy healers recognize that natural fabrics, such as silk, cotton, and wool often hold and transmit Qi better than fabrics with large polymer or plastic content, such as nylon, rayon, polyester, etc.

We had refined and used our version of the Inner Vision process for many years before discovering that others, such as the Theosophists Annie Besant and Charles Leadbetter used a similar process in the early 1900s to describe the structure of the atom even before Ernest Rutherford. They considered their version of the process, which they reached and refined through deep meditation, to be related to the extraordinary abilities called ‘siddhis’ in the ancient East Indian tradition. Stephen M. Phillips, a Cambridge physicist reviewed their work in his book and referred to it as micro-psi.6

Whatever the process is called, it can be used to explore the nature of this dimension and other dimensions. The images which appear in my mind can be held there for indefinite periods of time. They can be rearranged, enlarged and manipulated like an internal viewing screen in my mind. I routinely draw what I see through the Inner Vision process and give a summary of the formation of gravitons from universal or unformed energy. (Fig. 1)

After a mental image is viewed using the Inner Vision process, it must be scientifically analyzed and tested like all information we gather. Our team’s task has not been religious or philosophical. We strive to discover interrelationships and to suggest practical applications which will stand up to the rigors of independent investigation and testing. We welcome further research opportunities and the sharing of results in an open and unbiased manner. Such reliable input can advance our understanding of matter and energy.

2. Randall-May, Cay 2014 (CayMay Press)

This illustration represents the formation of several gravitons from the unformed, universal energy across the boundary, which we refer to as the ‘etheric template.’ The smallest unit of matter, which I call a ‘graviton,’ forms billions of times each second from pure, universal energy. I call the basic, minimal distance between gravitons a ‘1 unit.’ The relative position of each graviton varies within a narrow range, here indicated as ‘n’ 1 to x. Mutually repellant forces between gravitons create the interface between matter and pure energy, represented in this drawing as a line, called the ‘template.’ For greater accuracy, this image should be imaged in 3-D.
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Grounding...
Oh, So Good For You!

Neeta Maharaj

A lack of purpose, anxiety, stress or an intense feeling of being alone? Oh my! Does it sound like you? Breathe with me -- deep, wholesome breaths as I explain grounding to you and how it can help you.

Simply put, it is the act of connecting your body to the earth to receive the earth’s energy.

In the metaphysical world, shamans and healers alike have known the power of “grounding” to Mother Earth for centuries. Mother Earth is a live, conscious being and connecting to her through grounding is similar to a fetus connecting to its mother through the umbilical cord to receive nutrients.

Our body is made of nodes of energy call “chakras,” and these act as a blueprint for the healthy operation of our physical body. We know that thoughts and emotions are energy forms in themselves. If these are continuously negative and disharmonious, we affect the energy nodes. The nodes either contract or expand accumulating the negative energy within themselves. This is the beginning of DIS-EASE, either physical or mental.

By consciously grounding to Mother Earth, we are able to release excessive, unwanted energy, as she transmutes the energy and sends back vibrant energy to nourish our body, therefore stabilizing our emotions and thoughts.

The scientific community has been conducting research on the effects of grounding, starting with Drs. Karol and Pawel Sokal in Poland and then Clint Ober in the United States in the 1990’s. The earth’s natural and subtle energy is made of electrons. Our body, made up mostly of minerals and water, is a great conductor of electricity for the flow of electrons. Therefore, as long as there is a direct contact between the earth and the body, electrons will be easily transferred.

Research done by the “Earthing Institute” postulates -- “Electrons are the ‘object of affection’ so to speak, of positively charged free radicals, the biochemical agents that cause oxidation in the body. Electrons are the source of antioxidant power. We believe this influx of electrons from the ground serves to potentially neutralize or quench free radicals that would otherwise steal electrons from healthy tissue, activity resulting in tissue damage and chronic inflammation as the basis of many common and serious diseases.”

How do you know if you need to ground yourself? You may need to try grounding if you are frequently experiencing one or more of the following: fatigue, constant headaches, pain in your neck and shoulders, heart palpitations, nausea, lack of vitality for life, depression, sleep disorders, anxiety, nervousness and a feeling of being overwhelmed.
Grounding

Some indicators in your life experience that may also be a sign of your needing more grounding are - always having brilliant ideas but never manifesting any of them, constantly feeling a “spiritual high”, feeling a lack of purpose in life or the inability to connect with others. When I meet with clients, 95% of them are experiencing some level of these symptoms and the first thing that I have them do is to “ground”. After grounding, they always feel more calm and connected.

Simple ways to ground yourself:

1. Kick off your shoes and walk barefoot outside on the grass or sand (if you are at the beach) and experience how awesome the grass, soil or sand feels beneath your feet!

If you are worried about parasites from the soil wear leather shoes, as the moisture from your perspiration will be a good conductor for electron flow.

Also, if you are not in an area where there is easy access to soil or grass, like a high rise building or the office, then find a spot where there is concrete and take off your shoes! Concrete that is not sealed or painted will still allow electrons to pass through. When I worked in the corporate environment and I felt like I needed to ground myself, I would always head for the balcony where there were concrete panels as the flooring, and would kick off my shoes and feel the heat generated by the concrete below my feet, followed by a simple grounding meditation that can be found later in this article.

2. Take a sea bath or soak in a salt bath.

3. Carry around pure earth elements such as obsidian, black tourmaline, tiger’s eye, smoky quartz, or pyrite.

4. Chant or sing, feeling the vibration of each sound in your belly and pelvis as you visualize the sound extending deeply into the earth’s core.

5. Eat vegetables that come directly from the ground like carrots, beets, and cassava.

It is ideal to be able to step outside into green, lush areas and enjoy nature for a bit, but for many of us it is a challenge, either because of where we physically live or circumstances during the day. You can therefore also ground yourself through the simple act of intention, which can be done via a short meditation, no matter where you are - from the train station, to being in the middle of a crowd, to your desk at the office.

You can even combine being out in nature with the meditation for grounding, as this will be even more powerful. You will find that in the beginning this meditation may take anywhere from 10-30 minutes but as you get more accustomed with the technique it can be done in literally two minutes.

Short Meditation to ground yourself:

Sit in a chair with your feet flat against the floor. Close your eyes and set your intention for this meditation to be one of connection between you and Mother Earth.

Gently let your attention come to your breathing. Be aware of the gap between each breath. Now bring your awareness to your heartbeat and its rhythm. Continue to breathe, synchronizing your breath with your heartbeat.

Bring your awareness to the lower part of your body, especially the connection of your feet to the floor.

Visualize that your feet are growing nice, strong roots, pushing through the foundations of the building into the soil below. As your roots grow deeper and deeper into the soil, feel the connection with all the roots of the surrounding plants and trees.

As your roots grow deeper and deeper through the soil, you reach the bedrock and other layers until you reach the core, where you connect with the heart of Mother Earth.

Feel the connection with her and notice how it feels.
If you are experiencing problems with feeling the connection between you and Mother Earth, then “let go” of “wanting to experience something” by saying to yourself, “I surrender to the vastness of this great universe” and then allow the feeling or the connection to come to you. If it does not happen the first time, keep trying, with no expectations, because I guarantee, that when you least expect it, you will feel the loving and pure energy of Mother Earth. Even so, look all around you - she shows her love through the abundance of the plant and animal world.

Happy grounding!
The knowledge of neuroscience has doubled in the last twenty years. It will probably double again in the next twenty years. I think that neuropsychology is, broadly, about where biology was a hundred years after the invention of the microscope: around 1725.

In contrast, Buddhism is a twenty-five hundred-year-old tradition. You don’t need an EEG or MRI to sit and observe your own mind, to open your heart and practice with sincerity. I don’t think of neuropsychology as a replacement for traditional methods, but simply as a very useful way to understand why traditional methods work. This is helpful in our culture, since arguably the secular religion of the West is science. If you understand why something works in your own mind that promotes conviction (saddha, trust in the Buddha’s teachings). Understanding a little neuropsychology also helps you to emphasize or individualize those particular aspects of traditional practices that best suit your own brain; natural differences in the brain are a fundamental kind of diversity, and if teachers and meditation centers want to respond to the needs of their existing members and to reach out to new ones, they will have to take into account normal variations in the brain.

Breakthroughs in brain science create opportunities to develop new or refined methods of practice. As Buddhism spread through Tibet, China, and Japan, it learned from the cultures in those lands and developed new methods. Similarly, as Buddhism has come to the West and encountered what is arguably its dominant cultural force—science—it is beginning to draw on science for ways it, too, might be of use on the path of awakening. Not in any way to change the aims of practice—as the Buddha said, I teach one thing: suffering and its end—but to increase the skillful means to that end.

Immaterial experience leaves material, enduring traces behind. In the saying from the work of the psychologist, Donald Hebb: “Neurons that fire together, wire together.” This is a neurologically informed way to appreciate why your experience really matters, and how important it is to have a kind of mental hygiene, to really appreciate what we allow in our minds.

Perhaps your mind is running themes of threat, grievance, and loss. Or alternately, perhaps it is running heartfelpessness, generosity, kindness to self and others, awakening. Whichever movie we’re running, those neurons are firing and wiring together. So learning how to use your mind to shape the wiring of your brain is a profound way to support yourself on the path of awakening.

Rick Hanson (Reprint from Insight Journal)

Mind Changing Brain
Changing Mind
The Dharma and Neuroscience
Mind Changing Brain Changing Mind

THE MIND & BRAIN CO-ARISE CO-DEPENDENTLY
There’s been a lot of research and clarification over the last several decades about how the brain makes the mind, and how the mind makes the brain, in a codependent, circular kind of way.

Let’s begin with some clarifications:
• By “mind” I mean the flow of information through the nervous system, most of which is forever unconscious. We privilege what’s in the field of awareness because that’s what we’re conscious of. But cultivating beneficial factors down in the basement of the brain, outside of conscious awareness, is actually more influential in the long run.
• Further, the brain is embedded in larger systems, including the nervous system as a whole, other bodily systems, and then biology, culture, and evolution. It is shaped by those systems, and also shaped by the mind itself. For simplicity I’ll just refer to the brain, but really we are talking about a vast network of interdependent causes. Much as the Buddha taught.
• There may well be transcendental factors required for the mind to exist, to operate: call those factors God, Buddhanature, the Ground, or by no name at all. Since by definition, we cannot prove the existence or non-existence of such transcendental factors either way, it is consistent with the tenets of science to acknowledge transcendental factors as a possibility. That said, and with a deep bow in their direction, we will stay within the frame of Western science.
• Within that framework, the brain is the necessary and proximally sufficient condition for the mind. (It’s only proximally sufficient because the brain is nested in a great network of causes, without which the brain could not exist.) This view, generally shared within Western science, is that every mental state is correlated with a necessary and proximally sufficient brain state.

This integration of mind and brain has three important implications. First, as your brain changes, your mind changes. Second, as your mind changes, your brain changes. Many of those changes are fleeting, as your brain changes moment to moment to support the movement of information. But many are lasting, as neurons wire together: structure builds in the brain. Mental activity is like a spring shower, leaving little traces of neural structure behind. Over time, the little tracks in the hillside draw in more water down, deepening their course. A kind of circular self-organizing dynamic gradually develops, and then the mind tends to move more and more down that channel, and soon enough you’ve got a gully.

For example, if you are using neural circuits a lot, they actually become more sensitive to stimulation, for better or worse. Over time if a region is increasingly active, it gets more blood flow, more glucose, more oxygen and so forth. Existing synapses get stronger and new synapses form. Cortical layers actually get thicker as neural structures build; for example, the thickening in the part of the brain called the insula—which senses the internal state of your body—that is due to meditation, is on the order of a two-hundredth of an inch, which may not sound like much, but that’s lots and lots of new synapses.

Remarkably, synapses began forming in your brain before you were born, and your brain will keep changing up to the point of your last breath. Since neural activity continues in an increasingly disorganized way for a few minutes after the last breath, synapses may still be forming as the lights in the great mansion of the mind slowly go out.

“Understanding the chaotic and sometimes frankly wacky flux of neural activity can allow you to take it less seriously.”
The third implication is the practical one, and that’s where we’ll focus: you can use your mind to change your brain to benefit your whole being—and every other being whose life you touch.

**Your complex, dynamic, interdependent brain**

Your brain has about a hundred billion neurons in it (see the sidebar for more basic facts about your brain). In principle, the number of possible states of the brain is the number of possible combinations of a hundred billion neurons either firing or not (“on or off”). That number is really big: ten to the millionth power, which is one followed by a million zeros. To put this in perspective, the number of particles in the known universe is about ten to the eightieth power—one followed by eighty zeros versus a million zeros. The brain—your brain, right now—is the most complex object known to science. It’s more complex than an exploding star, or climate change.

The brain functions through a mixture of specialization and lots and lots of teamwork. Parts of the brain do specialized things, like the speech centers in the left temporal and frontal lobes. On the other hand, if you map the communications pathways among the regions and specialized tissues of the brain, you see that it’s highly interconnected. It’s a little bit like tracking roadways from space or information on the Internet: a very dense network. So when people talk about specialization and function in just one place, like “The amygdala is the fear part of the brain,” or “The left hemisphere is bad and the right hemisphere is good,” it’s an inaccurate simplification. Within the networks of the brain, there are lots of circular loops. To simplify, there is the “A” neuron connected to the “B” neuron, connected to the “C” neuron, connected to the “D” neuron, and then back to the “A” neuron. These possibilities of recursion, as a computer programmer would call it, give you the capacity—among other things—to become aware of awareness.

Neurons also share each other. To simplify again, let’s say you activate the “C” neuron in our A-B-C-D-A loop, and the “C” neuron is shared with another loop. So there you are, irritated because the faucet’s dripping in the middle of the night, and suddenly you think about the smell of your grandmother’s cookies. Why? For some reason, there was shared circuitry in the coalitions of synapses that momentarily formed. The discursive stream of consciousness is so complex that as a system it exhibits some chaotic qualities. Understanding the chaotic and sometimes frankly wacky flux of all that neural activity can allow you to take it less seriously.

Neurons often fire in harmony with each other, five to fifty times a second —maybe even eighty or a hundred times in some parts of the brain. They’re synchronizing with each other, and that’s what produces the rhythmic waves of electrical activity—“brainwaves”—that are picked up with EEGs. Types of brainwaves are grouped together based on how fast they are; for example, brainwaves that happen 30—80 times a second are called gamma waves. In one study, when experienced Tibetan practitioners meditated, there was a spreading and strengthening pattern of gamma wave activity in the brain: billions of neurons firing in harmony with each other, 30-80 times a second. Synchronizing microscopic neurons spread across broad regions of your brain is like everybody between Barre and Boston clapping in unison let’s say thirty times a second. Wow! And these effects of synchronization and integration are seen outside of formal meditation: in the same study, those Tibetan monks—who have done 30,000 to 50,000 hours of meditation in their lifetimes—have resting state gamma activity that’s greater than people who don’t have so much practice. This suggests that, as we practice more and more, there’s more integration and coherence in the brain—which corresponds to a growing stability and spaciousness, equanimity in other words, in the mind.

**Brain and body benefits of meditation**

The anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) is a brain region that is ground zero for a lot of very important functions. For one, it’s the part of the brain that manages what’s called “effortful attention,” which is basically paying attention in a deliberate way. That sounds like meditation. The ACC is the part of the brain we use for mindfulness in all four postures, not just seated,
but walking, lying, and standing. It’s also the main source of the focused attention we use for talking, and doing other activities that call for deliberate focus. Your cingulate cortex tends to get thicker to the degree you meditate.

For many people, it’s easy to feel when they feel, or think when they think, but to bring mental clarity into being upset, or to warm up cold cognition with heartfelt emotion, is hard. The capacity to do that is centered in the anterior cingulate cortex. So, for example, doing things like compassion meditation, particularly mingling thoughts and feelings of compassion together, stimulates the ACC and therefore strengthens it; you’re firing those neurons and therefore you’re wiring those neurons.

Another region that gets thicker with meditation is called the insula. If you strengthen a part of the brain through meditation, you get to reap those rewards for other uses. For example, the insula is crucial for one the three main aspects of empathy: visceral resonance with the feelings of another person (the other two aspects are simulating inside yourself the actions [“mirror systems”] and the thoughts/wishes/psychodynamics [“theory of mind”] of others). To the extent that we’re in touch with our own inner being, including our gut feelings—and this degree of in-touchness correlates with the activity of the insula—we become more able to be empathic with others.

True compassion, true loving kindness, requires empathy. I’ve known people who are sort of generically compassionate, and generically kind, but aren’t actually moved by the inner state of the other person. That’s not the real deal. So it’s foundational to strengthen your empathy. I can tell you from twenty-seven years of marriage, empathy’s a good thing! (And there are of course lots of important places for empathy outside of marriage.) Also, if you understand how to be empathic yourself, you understand better how to ask for it from others.

Meditation is probably the most researched mental activity in terms of neural impact. We know, for example, that meditators have less cortical thinning with aging. As I see more gray hairs on my head every year I appreciate the fact that one of the great ways to promote mental faculties well into old age is through contemplative practice. One exploratory study has shown a correlation of about a fifteen per cent reduction in Alzheimer’s symptoms if a person has a religious background (there was only one Buddhist in the sample, and any kind of religious activity counted, but the study is still suggestive). That reduction of fifteen percent is about as much as the best current medication can do for Alzheimer’s.

In another example, Richard Davidson did a very interesting study with people in a high tech company. He had some of them do daily meditation. After just six weeks, the people who meditated had stronger immune systems. They fought off a flu virus more effectively than people who hadn’t meditated.

So meditation benefits us through multiple pathways. Parasympathetic activation (“rest-and-digest”)—relaxation, in other words—is very supportive of immune system functioning, whereas sympathetic activation (“fight-or-flight”) suppresses immune function. Chronic stress exposes us to illness to a marked degree. Sleepy meditating is better than no meditation in terms of parasympathetic activation, or dampening sympathetic arousal (wakeful meditation is usually best of all). We can get attached to and even righteous about one specific method, whereas actually meditation has a lot of important general effects not specific to any particular method.

Another major Richard Davidson finding is that people become increasingly happy as they meditate—positive emotions become more prevalent, broadly defined. There’s a greater asymmetry of activation, left front to right frontal. To illustrate this with stroke patients, people with a stroke in the right frontal region tend to become kind of mellow. Maybe they can’t walk well, but they’re often relatively serene about it. But if they have a stroke in the left frontal region, they’re a lot more likely to be grouchy and grumpy.
Why is that? Because the left frontal region is involved in dampening, inhibiting negative emotional activity, whereas the right frontal region tends to promote negative emotional activity. In the wild, there’s a lot of survival value to negative emotional activity; right hemisphere activation—which tracks the spatial environment from which most threats originate in the wild—primes you for dealing with threats: in other words, primes you for aversion, for what are called avoidance behaviors, namely fight, flight, freeze, appease. Maybe sometimes those behaviors are useful; in our evolutionary history, they certainly promoted survival and passing on genes. But today, in different settings and with different aims (like spiritual practice), it’s great to have relatively strong left frontal activation.

**DEPENDENT ORIGINATION, BRAIN, & EQUANIMITY**
The feeling tone is a good example of where the Dharma maps well to neuropsychology. In the Dharma, there’s this notion of the chain of Dependent Origination. One part of that chain that contains great opportunities to reduce or eliminate suffering is the sequence of contact > feeling tone > craving > clinging > suffering.

Contact is the meeting of three things: an object, the sense organ that apprehends that particular kind of object, and the consciousness that goes with that particular sense organ. Following contact, the brain produces a feeling tone that is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral to help you know what to do: approach the pleasant, avoid the unpleasant, and move on from the neutral. This mechanism is a very effective way to promote survival in the wild and the passing on of genes. Feeling tones are important in evolution and they are a central theme in the Dharma: for example, they are one of the Five Aggregates, and also one of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Say the phone rings. Depending on whether you’re waiting for a call from a dear friend, or doing something really important and don’t want interruptions, you’ll get a different feeling tone: pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. In the brain, the amygdala and hippocampus register pleasant/unpleasant and then broadcast a signal widely.

**AMAZING BRAIN FACTS**
Your brain weighs about three pounds, with the consistency of soft tofu. It is made of about 1.1 trillion cells. About a hundred billion of these cells are neurons; the others are the support structure of the brain, the white matter, the glial cells, predominantly, that help build myelination around the long axonal fibers of the neurons, which accelerate neurotransmission.

Each of those neurons on average has about five thousand connections with other neurons. That creates about five hundred trillion connections, called synapses. These are tiny little junctions between neuron “A” and neuron “B” where they communicate. In most neurons, each time a neuron fires, neurochemicals move across the synapse (a small fraction of your neurons make direct, electrical connections).

Each neuron is always either firing, or not. Each firing is a signal, like “green light/red light;” it tells the downstream neuron to fire or not. So each neuronal firing is like a bit of information in a computer, a zero or a one. Most of the neurons in your brain are firing five to fifty times a second. They are very, very busy.

As a result, this little organ, two percent of body weight, uses twenty to twenty-five percent of the body’s metabolic supplies. Even in the deepest sleep, even in a coma, the brain is busy. It’s like a refrigerator; it’s always on. The brain keeps going so that if you’re suddenly attacked in the wild or you’ve got to deal with something in your cave, kaboom, you’re ready to go.

We can recognize maybe four thoughts per second, if we’re pretty aware. If we get really quiet, we might be able to see eight to ten, at the most. Working memory circuits, which are a key neural substrate of conscious awareness, seem to update about six times a second. So that’s roughly how tight the granularity is of discrete thoughts. That is really slow, as far as the brain’s concerned. So what we think of as thought—this slow, congealed, turgid stuff—is just the tip of the iceberg of mental activity.
In Dependent Origination, what follows feeling tone is craving. We crave the pleasant, and the ending of the unpleasant. Either way, it’s a kind of craving. After craving comes clinging, a sort of a more congealed, substantiated, enacted, “you’re in it” form of craving. And then, what follows clinging? Suffering.

Equanimity can break the chain right between feeling tone and craving, like a big, jumbo scissors. You let the feeling tone be. It gets into the “mud room” of your mind—that outer room where the muddy boots and wet jackets get left—but it doesn’t enter the central “living room” of your mind. Equanimity increasingly allows us to just be present with the pleasant, the unpleasant and the neutral, alike, without getting reactivated around them.

Equanimity is a very deep matter in Buddhism. It is one of the Seven Factors Of Awakening, and one of the hallmark characteristics of the jhānas (states of concentration). Notice, for example, the difference between calm and equanimity. Calm is when you don’t have reactions. You’re chilled out. But with equanimity, you’re not reacting to your reactions; they stay in the mudroom. It’s as if the reactions are surrounded with a lot of spaciousness. You prefer the pleasant to continue and the unpleasant to end—that’s OK. But you don’t even react to not getting that preference. You just surround it with space, and that’s where freedom is. I think that’s how people like the Dalai Lama can be sorrowful about what’s happening in Tibet, and yet simultaneously have enormous equanimity around it.

Calm is based on conditions, and thus not that reliable. But equanimity is based on insight, wisdom, and since we evolved to get really good at reacting to the feeling tone. Our ancestors that were all blissed out, and not driven to find food and mates, and not driven to avoid predators and other hazards...CHOMP, did not pass on their genes. The ancestors who lived were extremely easy to activate into states of “greed” and “hatred,” realizing this helps bring self-compassion to a path of practice that involves, in part, moving upstream against evolutionary currents. And it is important to remember that when we are not activated, our natural resting state is characterized by the Five C’s: Conscious, Calm, Contented, Caring, and Creative. It’s just that we are very vulnerable to signals of opportunity and threat—and especially to signals of threat, since in evolution it is more important to dodge sticks than to get carrots: if you miss out on a carrot today you’ll probably get another chance at them tomorrow, but if you fail to duck the stick today—POW—you won’t have any chance for carrots tomorrow. I think this is the evolutionary reason for the Buddha’s emphasis on dealing with aversion, since aversion to threats is so central to human existence.

In your brain, equanimity entails insights and inten-
tions centered in the prefrontal cortex as well as prefrontal buffering of the feeling tone signals pulsed by the amygdala. It also entails the stable spaciousness of mind characterized by increased gamma wave activity of the brain. These neural developments are the fruits of sustained practice.

**Seeing the origins of mental activity**

One of the possibilities of meditation, or practice broadly, is to get us closer to the bare processing of “this moment, this moment, this moment.” The brain takes the noisy, fertile chaos of billions of neurons networked together in intricate and transient circuits, and then it forms assemblies which may last a few tenths of a second, or a few seconds at most. When you observe your mind you can see the outer signs of this neural activity by watching your thoughts merge into solidity and then crumble and disperse.

Just before a new neural assembly forms, there’s a space of fertile emptiness, where structure hasn’t yet congealed. Once a representation becomes fully established—an image, an emotion, a view, a thought—it is no longer free. You can have freedom around it, but whatever it is, that representation is set until it disperses.

So abiding increasingly in that fertile, generative space, in which neural assemblies take form, is a central process along the path of awakening. I think the people who are really far along in the practice are increasingly abiding in that territory. Thought is occurring, but they’re living more in that space of fertile freedom.

**Self is like a unicorn**

Components and functions of the apparent self—*Me! My Precious! I want! How’m I doin’?*—are widely distributed in the brain. Take just three kinds of self-related activities. One is recognizing yourself, distinct from other people, or noticing an “x” on your forehead someone put there without you realizing it. Only a few animals can do that, including humans, other “great apes” such as monkeys and gorillas, whales and dolphins, and elephants. Another aspect is personal history, your memories. The third aspect is making decisions; I want chocolate, not vanilla, for example. Studies have shown that those self-related activities are spread out throughout your brain. There’s no homunculus looking out from your eyes. Self in the brain is just like the Buddha says in the Dharma: compounded (made of many parts), variable and transient, and interdependently arising. It has no inherent, underlying self-arising on its own; therefore it’s empty of absolute existence.

Much of the time there’s not much selfing present; there is presence and mental activity without much activation of “I” or “mine.” You shift your body in your seat because it’s gotten tight somewhere: probably there’s not a lot of self present. But suddenly someone says something to you, or you notice, hum, their chair is crowding into mine: *Hey, don’t you respect my space?!* Then the self really activates. There is a process of varying self-related activities; self is not a noun but a verb: there is selfing. Selfing developed in evolution to help us survive, and so it shows up particularly under three conditions: pursuing opportunities (often associated with “greed”), avoiding threats (often associated with “hatred”), and interactions with others (since we evolved to be the most social animal of all).

Aspects of self arise as impermanent but existent patterns of mental and therefore neural activity. These patterns exist in the sense that the patterns which correspond to a thought of a butterfly or the knowledge that 2+2=4 exist. Patterns exist, but they’re impermanent and dependently arisen: they’re empty. Mental/neural patterns related to self are just more patterns in the mind and brain, not categorically different from other mental/neural patterns. The problem is that we privilege those particular patterns above all others. They are the ones we most identify with, and the trickiest ones to disidentify with as we proceed along the path of practice. The mental/neural activity of selfing is designed by evolution to continually claim ownership of experiences, claim agency of actions, and claim identification with both internal states and external objects (like political groups or sports teams we like): it’s very powerful! Watch your mind: a strong reaction will arise, let’s say, and for the first second.
or two there is not much self entwined with it, but quickly self jumps on the bandwagon and then claims the reaction as its own. Self does give rise to desire, but much of the time, it is desire that gives rise to self.

But actually, much of the time self is truly superfluous to functioning well in the world, and feeling good inside. Without much if any selfing present, there can be executive functions at work, such as organizing and planning or the will. There can be wholesome desire, chanda, present—which is distinct from tanhā, thirst or craving, which the Buddha said caused suffering. Walk across the room: does there need to be self present? Lift the cup to your lips: is self needed?

The patterns of selfing in the mind and brain are real; they exist in the way that memory or an emotion exists. Their existence is transient and empty, to be sure, and thus not worth clinging to. But even more to the point: does what they point to, what they represent, actually exist? In other words, is there actually a coherent, unified, stable, enduring being somewhere, somehow, in the brain? Actually, no such being exists. Whatever of self there is in the brain, it is compounded and distributed, not coherent and unified; it is variable and transient, not stable and enduring. In other words, the conventional notion of self is a mythical creature. Representations of a horse in the mind/brain are real representations of a real thing. But representations of the self in the brain are like representations of a unicorn: real representations of an unreal thing.

In sum, when you appreciate that the representations of self in the brain are empty, that what they represent does not exist, you start taking your own “self” much less seriously.

**Conclusion**

The reality is that the more we study how the mind and brain intertwine, the more we find how well it maps with Dharma. The Buddha clearly understood this cycle of using the mind to change the brain, which then changes the future mind. If this is done well, it reduces suffering. He showed us ways to examine our experience, see how this works, and use that intuitive, direct understanding to free ourselves from suffering—completely free ourselves, in this very life, potentially. Just about everything we have found in neuropsychology supports the idea that he was right. This should give us a lot more conviction in our practice, along with a continuing source of practical tools to make it a reality.
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We rush through our days with so much to do, so much we should be doing, so much we’re missing out on ... but how often do we stop to appreciate the place where we are right now?

I don’t mean to focus on the journey, because that’s many different places ... but instead to focus on where you are at this particular time. The physical place you’re in, the emotional state you’re in, the phase you are in life.

Pause for a moment, right now, to notice where you are.

What is it like? What is the light like? What about the sounds, the smells, the feelings your body is feeling, the people around you? What is your state of mind? What are you worried about, joyful about? What is stopping you from appreciating this moment?

Find something to be grateful about where you are: if you’re around someone you love, enjoy that. If you’re doing something that makes the world a better place, be happy about that. If you’re in someplace beautiful, be thankful for that.

What if you don’t like where you are? This is something to appreciate as well. Stop and feel your emotions about where you are. See that you are hurting. See that you wish things to be different. How does that feel in your body? Allow it to happen, and realize that it is temporary but a part of life. Not good or bad, just happening.

Then think about all the things you aren’t suffering from: If you aren’t in a war-torn area of the world, give thanks to the stars. If you aren’t suffering from health problems, aren’t sleeping on the streets, aren’t about to die ... that’s a minor miracle. You are alive, and life is a wondrous thing to participate in.

Leo Babauta is a simplicity blogger and author. He created Zen Habits, a Top 25 blog (according to TIME magazine) with 260,000 subscribers, mmlist.com, and the best-selling books focus, The Power of Less, and Zen To Done. Babauta is a former journalist of 18 years, a husband, father of six children, and in 2010 moved from Guam to San Francisco, where he leads a simple life. www.ZenHabits.com
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