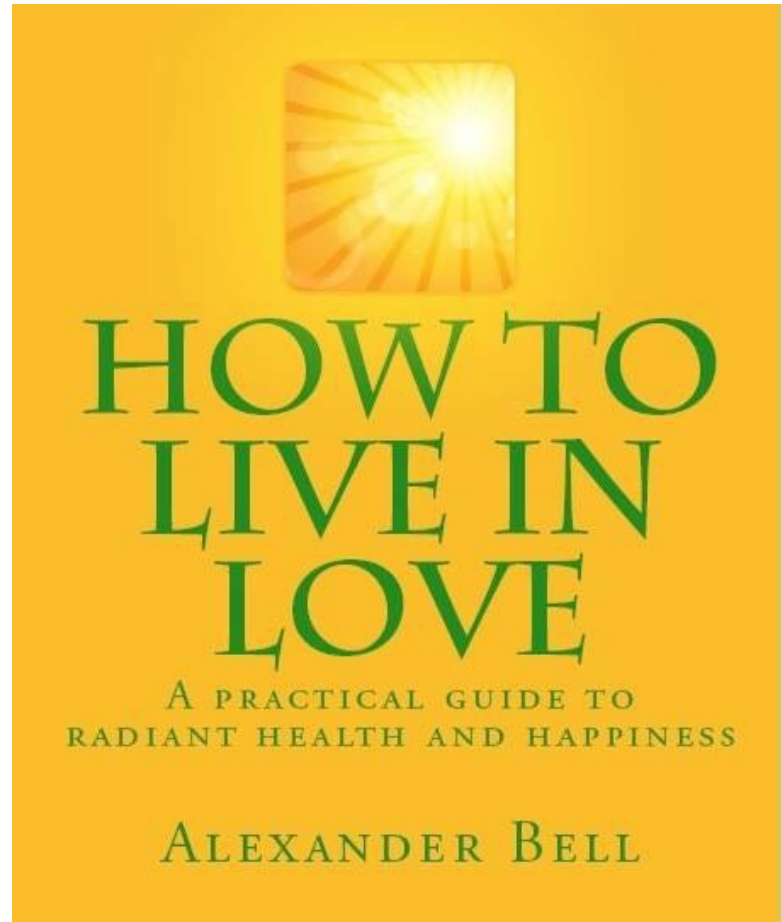


"HOW TO LIVE IN LOVE" by Alexander Bell

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INTRODUCTION

It is said that the most important journey to be made in life is the journey from our head back to our heart. And it is true.

Most people are in touch with their heart to some degree and they come and go from there, depending on their surroundings, their mood, who they are with and even what they have eaten. But is it really possible - and practical - to be aware of

our heart all of the time? And if so, how can we re-establish ourselves - our conscious awareness - back in the beautiful realm of peace and light that exists within every one of us?

This book will answer these questions in the most practical way possible, so that you may experience the answers for yourself. It will guide you towards bringing your body and mind back into perfect alignment so that consciousness can flow in perfect harmony through every cell, allowing you to experience the deep beauty of who you truly are and what life truly is.

The flow of physical, emotional and mental energy within us is always looking for balance, so our primary task is to lead a balanced life so that we are not engaged in a constant struggle to bring ourselves back into alignment, which is where most of our energy is used on a daily basis.

This book will show you very clearly the ways in which we create difficulty for ourselves on the many levels of our being, and shine a bright light on the way forward ñ ìThe Middle Wayî as The Buddha called it.

As we bring more awareness, more light and more love into our lives through greater care and consciousness of our thoughts, words and actions, the world simply reflects this back to us. This is evolution; a beautiful and never-ending journey toward greater realms of light, beauty, joy, peace and consciousness. And this journey is never made alone?..

1 - WELCOME

Welcome to a wonderful journey of self-discovery; a delightful journey of self-remembrance in which everything you have always known deep within your heart will be returned to the forefront of your awareness, and remain there. It is a journey to be made consciously, carefully and with full awareness of every beautiful step.

This book will show you the way back to where you truly belong - the beautiful, loving and expansive realm of your heart; the only place where ultimate Truth and Reality can be found. And as you gravitate back towards your heart's realm, you distance yourself from the duality, conflict, confusion, frustration, separation and isolation which are created entirely by thought. A brighter, simpler and infinitely more nourishing realm of happiness, peace and freedom awaits you. A place so very familiar, yet seemingly so elusive when we need it most.

You see, we all live our lives in varying states of consciousness; for example, often our consciousness is immersed in thought, when we are thinking. This does not mean we are always aware that we are thinking, because often we are not. Sometimes our consciousness is so totally immersed in thought that we lose ourselves in it completely and we forget what is real. Our perspective shrinks so that thought becomes our total reality.

This happens quite often. But after reading this book, it will happen much less. Why? Because in this book I will be helping you to expand your awareness beyond the realm of perpetual thought, so that you can see with greater clarity the beautiful depth of who you really are. You are not your thoughts, and you are not the person that your thoughts tell you you are. You are so very, very much more.

This book is like a guide that will show you - or perhaps simply remind you - of how much more there is to life than your thoughts present you with. It will remind you of what truly nourishes you, it will remind you of your deep capacity for happiness and joy and it will remind you of the truly beautiful potential that exists within each perfect moment that we are alive.

Throughout the book, as you read, I recommend taking little breaks now and then to absorb the depth of the information that is being shared with you. There is a lot contained within these pages and within these words. If you pause every now and then and let the words sink in a little, you will notice your consciousness responding to what you have just read. If you give it a little space to do this, you will gain the maximum benefit from what has been written here, and from the consciousness that has been poured into these words. Consciousness will respond to consciousness, and realisations will come.

What exactly is 'consciousness'? Put simply, consciousness is that part of you which is always aware. You could also call it awareness, and it is always aware of something. It may be thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, intuitive feelings, subtle energies in the ether, or the peace, warmth and love that are always found deep within the heart. Even when we sleep our awareness is still aware. It may be aware of our dreams or of other dimensions of being that we cannot comprehend with the waking mind, thus we cannot recall them. Awareness is eternally awake. It is the eternal flame that is never extinguished, even when we leave our body and depart from this material realm; there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Yet, even while we occupy a body within this material realm, our consciousness does not need to be trapped here. It can move beyond and transcend what appears to be all that is real - the material world - and access the dimensions of timelessness

and limitlessness - eternity and infinity - that are experienced beyond the thinking mind. It is in meditation that we free our consciousness from its total fixation with materiality, and every human soul needs to experience freedom on this level. Otherwise, we will never know who we truly are, how vast and magnificent we are, how interconnected we are with the very fabric of reality.

The radiant, intelligent, conscious beauty of the Universe flows through us. Truly, we are not separate from it, and we cannot be separate from it because it is our essence. Separation is an illusion - the dream that many seemingly separate individuals are currently experiencing at this moment in time, but it is not real. What is truly real - the highest Truth - is what our heart has always known deep within, and been longing for us to remember consciously. It is more than we could possibly ever dream of, infinitely more. This is why the 'spiritual path' - which is simply the path our consciousness takes from materiality to spiritual liberation - is such a beautiful path to walk. It is a path through increasingly radiant and beautiful dimensions of peace, joy and happiness. For me, John Lennon described this most beautifully when he sang, "Limitless undying Love which shines around me like a million suns, it calls me on and on across the Universe.."

We are all on a journey that has no ending, because consciousness is infinite. It exists above and beyond the limited realm of form (including thought) where we invest nearly all of our attention. And although infinite and eternal, consciousness has a deep intelligence that has a very specific direction it must move in. We are all moving in that direction in every moment of our lives, although we often feel like we are going around in circles. We are all learning and evolving, forever moving towards complete union with Love, where we will merge and become One with it. This is when the separate 'me' (the ego) disappears, and there remains only Love. You could call it our destination, but it is not the end, only the beginning...

This is what is calling us on and on, across the Universe. It is like a mother calling to her child across a crowded and noisy room. "Come this way" she calls. "Have no fear. I am here. I will wait for you." We are all finding our way home to our eternally loving parent, whose only desire is to envelop us in Love. We just need to listen to the beautiful voice that is calling to us all of the time. It is calling from within our own heart, and we simply need to remember to listen to it.

Because of our tendency to get lost in thoughts, emotions and material distractions, we are often unconscious of our heart's simple, beautiful and pure communication, yet it never, ever stops communicating to us. This is truly the best news in the world, because it means that all we ever have to do is stop, become silent and listen.

This book will remind you how to do this, and most importantly, it will show you how to assist your consciousness to fully return back to the heart's beautiful realm; the garden of eternal Peace, where you truly belong.

So with this as our goal, let us start with where many people often find themselves...

2 - THOUGHTS

Do you think a lot?... Are you thinking now?... Can you imagine a life free of the endless thoughts, opinions, judgements, beliefs and conceptual understandings that occupy our mind on a daily basis?

Do you believe that thinking is compulsive, meaning that we have no choice whether we think or not? For many people, negative thought feels like a compulsion, and if they were given a button to press that would instantly end all negative thinking forever, they would press it immediately. Wouldn't you?

Many people get stuck within negative cycles of thought and feel like they have no other choice, that they cannot be positive. They cannot even find reasons to be positive - they only see reasons to be negative. Many people, when a negative thought enters their mind, simply have no idea what to do about it. Yet they usually 'do' one of two things.

Firstly, they may engage with that thought and begin thinking more about it, adding to it and building it up with further negative thoughts, related to the original one. By doing this, they create a negative scenario in their mind that seems very real, and creates strong negative feelings in their body, which is simply responding to the thoughts as if they were a real situation. This is the worst of the two possibilities, because we have created an unpleasant and tangible experience for ourselves on many levels of our being. Once this has occurred, what can we do?

The first step is to realise that we created this experience ourselves, through our own thinking. We can then disengage our mind from the negative thoughts that created it. How do we do this? We bring our attention out of our mind. Where does it go? Into our body. We must become aware of how we feel, even if it is not pleasant. With our awareness now on how we are feeling emotionally, we are in the right place to restore a sense of harmony and peace to ourselves. We can do this simply by breathing gently, and calming and relaxing our body.

In response to negative thinking, our muscles always contract and tighten, so by

relaxing our body this tension is released, allowing us to feel more at peace. As we continue to relax, emotional activity subsides and we are able to return to a state of inner calm once more. At this point, we must remain vigilant of our mind attempting to do the same thing again - to spoil our peace. The mind is always ready to do this if given the chance, so it is good to remain aware of what our mind is doing and where it is trying to lead us, while keeping our awareness grounded in our body, in our physical sense of being. This is the only place where we can experience the feelings of harmony and peace that we all enjoy and benefit from so much.

Another highly effective way of restoring harmony to our body and mind is to go outside and walk (or meditate) in nature for a while. The energy of nature is deeply harmonious, and when we are surrounded by it we are influenced immediately. The longer we spend in nature, the deeper its harmony permeates our being. Mother Nature can help us solve most of our problems very quickly, if given the chance.

Now, the second course of action that people often take when a negative thought arises in their mind is that, out of fear of the thought, they anxiously try and push it away or turn their mind away from it. They do this by somehow distracting their mind and occupying it with something else that will engage its attention. By doing this, they hope they can avoid the unpleasant feelings that they know the negative thought will create in their body. I call this the 'distraction technique', and it doesn't really work.

Distraction is the favourite tool of our society - have you noticed? There is always a magazine or paper to read, or a screen we can watch nearly everywhere we go. Or we may listen to the radio, play with our mobile phones or chatter and text on them. But what do we do when we are alone without any of these distractions? For example, if we are sitting and waiting for a bus or train? We usually start thinking. We can't seem to help it.

We might think about what happened earlier in the day and whether we said or did the right thing. Or we might think about something in the future and consider how we should approach the situation, and so on. We can think of a million things, but ultimately most thinking is just a finer realm of distraction. Why is it a distraction? Isn't thinking important?

Well, if our thinking truly brings more good feelings and good situations into our life then yes, absolutely, it is very useful. Thought is an amazing tool for creativity. But does our mind always operate in this helpful way?

A very important question we should ask ourselves is this: "Do I actually need to

think to enjoy my life?"

Because often thoughts only serve to distract us. What they ultimately distract us from - which is to our great detriment - is the very deep beauty of life on earth, and the feelings of joy and happiness that spring from a healthy body and open heart. To experience the beauty and joy of the natural world, for example, we don't need to think about it - we just need to be in it. In fact, the quieter your mind when you are in nature, the more you will feel its magic, its vibrant and joyful energy. It has to be experienced.

The same is true with dancing or singing out loud for example. You do not need to think about it. If you do, you will feel restricted and not really enjoy the freedom of expressing yourself. Often our thoughts interfere with our enjoyment of self expression. We worry what people might think, whether they will judge us or make fun of us. If we are alone, we might even judge ourselves and tell ourselves we look silly, or sing badly. Such judgements (and also the fear of being judged) come from the mind, and the only solution if you want to enjoy your life and enjoy self-expression is to ignore them all.

Most importantly, we need to learn how to apply this attitude to the whole of our life. Life is to be experienced, rather than filtered through our mind and lived half-heartedly. As we begin to experience things more - which means feeling the experience, rather than thinking about it - we will start to feel as though we are really living at last. Yes, we will experience emotions like sadness and anger at times, but at least we are now feeling life, rather than being stuck in endless thought processes that lead us nowhere. Living in thought is like being forever lost in the clouds. We need to come back down to earth and feel more. Once emotions are felt they pass, and we always feel better.

3 - EMOTIONS, GUILT & FORGIVENESS

Emotions have a very liberating effect on us when we allow them to come, be fully experienced and then go, as they always do - usually quicker than we expect. But we only experience the sense of liberation and freedom if we don't feel guilty or 'bad' about expressing our emotions, even if we inadvertently vent or release our emotion onto a friend or loved one. Sometimes this does happen, but feeling bad about a situation doesn't actually improve the situation. Feeling guilty about your words or actions will not improve anything. It will only make you feel terrible. It is literally a waste of time because it creates more unhappiness in you and your environment, and nobody wants this.

So why do we feel guilty? Subconsciously, we believe that if we have done something that is deemed as 'bad' - like shouting at a friend for example - if we feel guilty about it afterwards, it somehow atones for our 'bad' behaviour. We continue to feel 'bad' and it is like a self-imposed punishment. With guilt we are literally only punishing ourselves for something which we thought was 'bad'. What an insane way for adults to behave, to perpetuate unhappiness in themselves this way.

So what should we do instead, to break the cycle of negative thinking and feeling that guilt creates? The answer is easy - forgive yourself. But what does it mean to forgive yourself, and how do you do it?

Well, what is the opposite of punishing yourself? Forgiving yourself - not just by saying "I forgive you", but in a very practical way. How? You have to stop punishing yourself.

You see, forgiveness isn't something you "do" - forgiveness occurs when you decide to stop punishing yourself or another person. For example, when we are angry with someone, we may treat them badly, ignore them or perhaps think lots of angry thoughts about them. These are all forms of punishment that we believe they deserve for upsetting us. And perhaps if they come and apologise to us, we will stop treating them that way.

Yet until they do - which sometimes they don't - we are punishing them, hoping they feel bad about what they did to us. Hoping they feel bad. Allow those words to sink in... We actually want another person to feel bad, that they experience some kind of suffering. Punishment is not a positive or constructive solution to anything. It is actually one of the biggest problems with the structure of our society.

Many, many people in this world believe with all their heart that people who do 'bad' things should be punished, that they deserve to suffer. Isn't that inhuman, to want another person to suffer? How can we harbour such a cruel, cold, heartless attitude towards another human? We believe they deserve it. Perhaps they did something cruel, cold and heartless, so they deserve only bad things, bad treatment, a bad life. People call this "an eye for an eye." However, this is not an intelligent way of operating, because nothing is actually improved, only more suffering is created. Nothing positive can come from such treatment - there are just more people suffering, in prisons mostly, whether they 'deserve' to or not. Often when they are freed from prison, they harbour more bitterness and resentment than when they entered, because of what they experienced in there.

I believe this is changing, with some prisons now offering meditation and yoga for the prisoners. This is very good, because it allows the prisoner the opportunity to access a part of themselves where they are free of aggression or hostility - something they may not have been able to do before. If this process is encouraged, then there is a possibility of deep transformation for the prisoner, so that he or she may leave the prison with a desire to do good in society, to be creative, to help others in the world. However there are many, many prisons worldwide that do not offer such opportunities for healing. On the contrary, they are full of mistreatment and cruelty.

We deem mistreatment of others as acceptable in these conditions, and we accept it as part of life, part of a punishment-based society. I believe the tolerated ill treatment of other human beings is part of the darker side of human society, which we try and keep out of our mind - although not very well, as people seem to devour more and more stories of crime and punishment in the newspapers and on the news.

Could there be another way - perhaps an alternative to a punishment-based society? Yes of course there is, but it requires a change of heart individually and collectively. It also requires looking at things from a different angle. If people are willing to do this, things will certainly change and we will have a very different and very beautiful new way of living together in harmony on Earth. It all begins with understanding...

5 - WHY PEOPLE DO 'BAD' THINGS

Why do people do 'bad' things? Is it because they are bad people? For example, take a 12 year old child who is very angry and destructive - always smashing things, being cruel to animals and so on. Is that child bad? Or does that child need help?

Do you have children? Have you ever recognised the behaviour of your child as a cry for attention? You see, when children feel unloved or are treated badly, they either withdraw within themselves and shut themselves off, or they become aggressive and destructive.

If a child feels truly loved and cared for by both parents, it is highly unlikely you will see angry or destructive behaviour. You will see a child who is happy, confident, feels a sense of self-worth and most importantly, knows what love and care are all about. Children know when they are truly loved, and they flourish and grow like beautiful sunflowers in the light of their parents love. Loving parents are essential for a healthy and happy child - absolutely essential - and it is also what a child wants

more than anything - to feel their parent's loving warmth, attention and approval.

This is how positive, creative members of society are created - by loving parents. So it must be quite obvious to see how destructive members of society (i.e. people who are anti-social, aggressive, hostile, violent and so on) are also produced by their upbringing. It is not an accident, a strange twist in the life path of a normal healthy individual. It works both ways. People work as much on cause and effect as anything in the universe: If you do something to them (be it kind or unkind) there will be a certain reaction.

For example, if you praise a child, say "well done" and pat them lovingly on the back, they will experience a good feeling. You can see it in their faces. There is a positive glow inside. This is almost guaranteed.

However, if you shout aggressively at a child, what will you see in their faces? Well, in fact you will see their whole body contract, almost curl up in self-protection. Their face will obviously fall and you will see either fear, sadness or anger in their eyes. Sometimes all of these emotions come in succession to a child who is treated badly.

Firstly, they will be afraid of the aggressive energy that is being directed at them (because children are small and adults are big, and it is pretty terrifying to be shouted at by a person twice your size!). Soon after, they will feel sad, as the residue of the affair makes them feel like they are not loved by their parent. Young children can't understand that their parent can be angry with them and still love them. That requires advanced understanding of what adults are like, which young children don't have.

Young children take on board the most recent expression from their parent (be it loving or unloving) and this is the remaining impression in their mind and body, until the next time you communicate with them. They just remember the last way you treated them, and they feel inside that this is how you feel about them. It is so basic, because children are simple creatures, until their adult mind becomes developed by society and schooling.

Finally, after experiencing sadness at not feeling loved by their parent, it is possible that anger will come - although it's more likely in slightly older children than younger ones. They might think, "He/she had no right to shout at me like that! I did nothing wrong. I didn't deserve that" and a sense of injustice arises within the child, as well as anger at the unfairness of how they were treated.

What happens when this occurs over and over again and the child is rarely shown

love by their parent but regularly shown hostility, or perhaps just ignored? Negative emotions become strongly embedded in the personality and psyche of the child; happiness and joy quickly ebb away from that child's life.

More than anything, a child simply wants to feel that they are loved, but when they feel they are not, they simply do not understand why. Subconsciously a belief is formed; "I am unlovable" or "I do not deserve love" and this takes root deep within the child and simply becomes something that is believed as an established fact of reality for them. It is something that never gets questioned because it exists subconsciously. At some point in their adult life - if they are lucky - they may become aware of this deeply held belief and begin to address it - and the pain - it has caused in their heart over the years.

So, what happens in the body and psyche of a child when they subconsciously accept as true the belief that they do not deserve love? They shut down their feelings. They decide, usually subconsciously, that they do not want to feel anymore. To them "feeling" has long ceased to be a pleasant thing (as it would be to a child who is often praised and rewarded, and naturally experiences good feelings as a result). Feelings become a negative thing for the child.

Again it is simple child-like logic. The child is so used to regularly feeling bad about him or herself that they simply want a way out. They don't want to feel bad anymore.

So a shutting down of the feelings occurs, and the child seems harder to reach. Communications become only on the level of words, and the child may become rude, disobedient, and destructive. That is if they don't withdraw into a shell, hardly speaking at all, walking around with their head down and avoiding eye contact.

For the child, these behaviours are a way of denying the parent and punishing the parent for not being as loving as the child so desperately wants them to be. You see, they still want love deep down, even when they close up and become distant or aggressive. Inside, no matter what the age, the core of that child is crying out for love so that happiness can return. Happiness is longed for, but the child has no idea how to be happy because they have shut down their feelings, making happiness nearly impossible, until they allow themselves to feel again.

This this can be very, very hard for the child because a bubble of fear has developed within them, which subconsciously steers them away from opening up to feeling again. Their deep memories are that feeling is painful. So even when something good happens to the child and a good feeling comes along, they fully expect that it will be rapidly followed by a very bad feeling - great disappointment and sadness

perhaps. Their inner logic tells them that good feelings never last long and are always followed by bad feelings - which are held as strong, unpleasant emotional memories within the child. So they do not even allow good feelings to come into their life anymore, because they are sure to lead to pain. Because of this, the child will strive to avoid happy situations, fun with others, places where there is joviality and so on. They believe that happiness is sure to bring sadness, and oh how deep is the sadness that exists within a child of any age who has forgotten what it feels like to be loved.

So instead of that child doing what might bring them enjoyment, they do what allows them to express their anger. Inside the child, the anger is all directed at the unloving parent (subconsciously) but externally the anger is directed at the entire outside world. The attitude grows that there is nothing good about the world and that it only promises disappointment and pain. The child begins to resent the world and everything in it - including other people. Bitterness grows within the child and they periodically start to experience feelings such as hatred and rage, which naturally flow out through their behaviour and communications. People begin to regard the child as a menace, a threat, someone not to be trusted, and the child recognises this.

6 - POWER

At some point, a feeling of power comes to the child as they notice that some people are actually afraid of being around them.

This is a very significant realisation for the child. They realise that they have some power. They no longer need to feel powerless, a victim of life any more. They have the power of their anger and it makes things happen. It affects people. They finally feel like they can influence the world around them.

This is a very liberating moment for a child who has for so long been carrying a heavy weight inside them, unable to shift it, feeling helpless and powerless. Suddenly there is some motivation for being in the world. They have discovered the feeling of power and it actually feels rather good. Finally, a good feeling that they are in control of - how wonderful! - and they begin experimenting with their power. How can they make other people feel? How easily can they get what they want? They begin to learn that aggression makes them feel bigger than other people. The child who shrunk so many years ago in the face of their aggressive parent now rises up and begins to feel strong again. But strong only in the power of their aggression. Underneath it, fear remains.

So aggression becomes the new way for that child to relate to the world. It seems to work. They now feel they can get what they want, that people take notice of them and are even afraid of them. They finally feel like they are important. What a feeling!... after feeling worthless for so many years. This is finally the answer, the solution to all their problems, the golden ticket: Power, beautiful power. The most addictive drug on the planet.

Can you see where this is leading?

What I have just written about is what happens in the lives of many children. The result is that they grow into adults who continue to operate on the desire for power over others. 'Powerful' adults have usually mastered the many ways of getting exactly what they want, through manipulation, bullying, fear tactics and so on, and there is often nothing they will stop at, with no care or compassion for others. Why? Because power is the most addictive drug on the planet - like feeling that you are the king of the world. However, in power over others Love is completely absent. Completely.

Power is heartless, cold, ruthless, selfish, greedy, indulgent and very, very destructive. Its relentless greed corrupts every aspect of human goodness right down to the core, so that what is left is a human who simply craves more power. It is the very most compulsive addiction. This desire for power might be associated with money, but it is the deep craving and endless desire for more, more, more that is the motivating factor. This is greed. It is relentless, and never, ever satisfied.

It is never satisfied because such things are not capable of satisfying the deep need that exists within every human being. No matter how much power you believe you have over others, no matter how much money you have in your bank, how many expensive possessions, luxury homes, even island retreats in the tropics, there will always, always be a deep feeling that something very important is missing. Something infinitely more beautiful and precious than all of these things. It is Love

7 - LOVE AND HEALING

The beauty and warmth of Love, and the precious Peace that it brings into our heart has no worldly substitute. Nothing is a replacement, not even all the power in the world. If a power-hungry person were given a switch to flick, and they suddenly experienced what Love really felt like deep in their heart, they would not flick that switch back to 'power', guaranteed. Why? Because power is vastly inferior to Love in

every way - a mere shadow in comparison to Love's beautiful light. But if a person has long forgotten what Love feels like, then power will certainly appeal to them.

Is there any hope for a person whose heart has grown completely cold with greed and power, resulting in a complete disregard of the welfare of others? Of course there is. They need to be shown again what Love feels like. It is possible and it is the only way. The Only Way. Within the heart of any living individual there always exists the possibility for Love to re-establish itself. As long as they are breathing and their heart is beating, it is possible.

Didn't Jesus tell us to love our enemies? Why would he say that? Because if they are treated with Love, their hearts are guaranteed to re-open, as sure as the petals of a flower will open to the warming rays of the sun. It is a natural process that is out of human control. It will just happen. The heart of a human being will always, always respond to being shown Love. Yes it may take time - months or perhaps years - but it will happen. This is the process that we should aim to initiate in those who display hostile, aggressive or inhumane tendencies; even cruelty to others.

Of course, they should be kept securely away from other people if they are a threat, but wherever they are kept, the individual should be viewed as deeply unwell, deeply wounded and in need of persistent therapy, healing and care. Yes, care!

Does it seem wrong to care for someone who has hurt others? It is what they need more than anything else. It is the primary, most vital medicine. Why should people be thrown into cold rooms to perish in misery, when there is the possibility for that person to be treated, healed, revived and brought back to their humanity? I believe this is always possible, no matter how 'depraved' an individual may have become. They should be given that which they were deprived of in their early life, and that person will regain their sanity, they will come back in touch with the core of their being and become aware of the vast ocean of negative emotions that exists deep within them - anger, sadness, perhaps deep rage at what they had to experience in their formative years, as they were being moulded into adult humans.

What has to occur on a deep level within that individual, to ensure that they are fully healed, is that they must fully forgive the parent or adults who wounded them in their early life. By adulthood, it is very likely that this person will be carrying around a deep hatred and resentment toward the parent(s) or adults who hurt them. But this must be dissolved completely because, as long as a person carries around anger within them, it will be directed (sometimes subtly) at the people around them. Do you want to live in a society where many people are going around carrying anger within, sometimes letting it out in your direction, yet mostly just hiding it under a mask,

pretending that they are 'fine'?

I believe this is not the kind of society that healthy human beings want to live in. I believe we want to live in a society full of kind and warm-hearted individuals who are always ready to help each other, to give what they can give, always compassionate and caring. Just imagine if every human being on earth behaved this way. Wouldn't that be paradise?

Well, it is possible. It is the most gargantuan undertaking that the world has ever faced, but we have time. This planet is not a short-term project. There is a vast populace of people who need to remember how to open their hearts, how to be caring and tolerant. Perhaps they were not even shown how to behave this way in their formative years, and how can a human being do something which they were never shown how to do? They must be shown.

Human beings do exactly what they were shown to do in their formative years. How to behave, how to treat others, how to communicate socially, what kind of food to eat, what attitude to have towards life and so on. It is all learned from the authoritative adults that a child had around them in their formative years. Did the child have many kind adults and family members around them as they grew up? If they did, they will have developed into a kind and balanced adult who knows the importance of treating people the right way and also values the importance of friendship and support. Everyone recognises that stable, loving families create stable, loving children.

8 - KINDNESS

Because it is kindness, care and heartfelt humanity that 'make the world go round' - not money. Just imagine if everyone in society shifted their prime focus from earning money to treating other people well. If treating people with kindness and care was prioritised over making more money, I believe we would all live in a much happier society. As it is, we live in a society where many people are living in stress and anxiety, trying to earn enough money to pay for all the things that they want to have in their life, and everything keeps getting more expensive! So there always seems to be a pressure to keep earning enough money.

Trapped in the cycle of always needing more money, money becomes all people can think about. They worry about it frequently and it dominates their consciousness. Their life is full of stress, and they cannot help but release this stress in communications with others. They may lose their temper, or be very impatient and

intolerant. They have become overwhelmed by the pressure created by their worries and have completely forgotten what is really important in their life, what is of the deepest value. People. People are of the greatest importance in this world.

Imagine if you had no friendship in your life, no loving family members, no-one who showed you any kindness or care. It is these things which truly enrich our life and help us to feel that we can cope with the challenging situations that life sometimes brings us - like serious illness for example. The love, kindness, compassion and care shown to us by other human beings is the most precious thing in the universe. There is no substitute. It is invaluable, priceless and we all really need it.

It can take some people many, many years just to realise this - to realise how important the people in their life are. For some it only happens on their lonely death bed, when they realise they have spent their whole life pursuing wealth, success or notoriety. Yet they forgot to treat the people in their life with kindness and respect. They forgot to fill their life with good friendships. They forgot to nurture the warmth of their own heart.

So we should look at ourselves and ask if people are our priority. Not just the people we know, but the many people we encounter during the day. How do we treat them? How do we speak to them? Do we smile at them? Do we show any interest in them? Do we just ignore them?

Imagine for a moment working in a shop, and every customer that came in completely ignored your presence there, or they spoke rudely and impatiently with you, leaving the shop without a "thank you" or a smile. Even though you got paid for being there, the day would not feel so rewarding and you may be left with a feeling of tiredness and dissatisfaction at how you were treated during the day.

Now imagine if every customer that came in smiled warmly and perhaps said a few kind words to you, maybe asked you how you were. Just simple friendly talk. How would you feel by the end of the day? There would probably be a nice warm glow inside of you. You would feel satisfied with the day, feel good about yourself and feel energetically uplifted.

This is the simple power we have to bring a happiness into the lives of every person we meet. Every person. Be one of the people that smiles warmly and says hello - to the shop assistant, to your neighbour, to the man collecting rubbish in the street, to your work colleagues. It doesn't matter what role a person has in society, high or low, they are a human being and every human being is touched by kindness. It is what gives people hope and it can restore a person's faith in humanity. Remember

how it feels to be treated this way and even if you are in a bad mood, be sure not to spread it around the people you encounter during the day. Nobody needs that. You don't need that.

9 - CHOICES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

What the entire world needs now is further addition to the strong current of increasing consciousness on the planet. People are become more conscious of the effect of the things they do, the effect of the things they say and the effect of the things they think - on themselves and other people. This is why meditation and yoga have become mainstream practices now. This is why healthy eating has become such an important focus in many peoples' lives. Highly nourishing, healthy foods (and superfoods) are now available in most supermarkets, enabling people to make more conscious and healthy choices about what they eat and how they want to feel.

There is great cause for a positive and completely optimistic view of humankind and how it is evolving. But we all need to realise that we have a significant responsibility - we have a choice of consciousness. We have a choice about what we choose to be conscious of, where we choose to put our attention, in every moment. And we also have a choice as to what we believe to be true. These choices are vital, because they instantly influence our entire being, dictating how we feel and either allowing us to enjoy a state of harmony and peace, or not.

It is imperative that we collectively keep an open mind and be positive about the future and about any changes that offer brighter possibilities for us, for our children and for countless generations that will follow us. As I said before, this planet is a long-term project and life will continue here for a very long time. It is in our hands whether life will continue to improve for us personally - as it has been doing collectively for a very long time - or whether we allow ourselves to be influenced by moods of pessimism, negativity, gloom and fear. Such moods will only spoil our life. They will not bring change to anything. You will just become a deeply unhappy person. But, of course, you do not need to be! It all depends on your choice of consciousness. Is your mental attitude a positive and life-affirming one? Does it bring you a sense of happiness, excitement and enthusiasm about being alive? Does it inspire you to be creative, to be giving?

The ability to make correct choices for the benefit of our mind, body, heart and soul is the greatest wisdom we can put into practice in our life. The wisdom to choose where we put our attention - whether it be in thought, or in feeling - being the primary and most important choice we can make. To choose thought is to choose a more

superficial level of consciousness. Even 'deep thought' is completely superficial compared to the depth of feeling, warmth, aliveness, joy, peace and Love that we can experience through our entire body, heart and soul.

There are truly wonderful things happening on this planet, and there are deep changes occurring on levels that are not so obvious to many people. To become aware of the wonderful changes that are indeed happening on Earth, we have to look for them, we have to be willing to open our eyes to them. We are not shown them on the news. They are not presented to us in the vast array of newspapers and magazines that are on sale everywhere, and we do not hear about them on the radio.

If you switch on a 24-hour news station on the television (which I do not recommend you do) and if you watch it for an hour or more (which I strongly recommend you do not do!) you will see a non-stop stream of negative information. Some are bad things, some are trivial things, but it all has a very negative perspective, and it will make you feel that way. By the time you switch off that programme, you will most likely not be feeling very optimistic about life on Earth; a negative energy will be in your body and mind. Although we may not always feel so, we are all such highly sensitive creatures that we are influenced by every little thing, even though we may not be aware of its effect upon us.

The things that are most shocking influence us in more powerful ways, and we can feel deeply disturbed simply from absorbing the information that is being presented to us. Yet for some reason we still want to know more. We continue to read and we continue to watch, and all the time we are being influenced by the negative, pessimistic energy it carries.

Why on Earth would we allow ourselves to be influenced in this way? Because drama and sensationalism have become appealing to us. We often consume these stories hungrily with great interest. We want to know more and more about what happened, who did what, who said what, and so on.

And the worse the news, the more tragic or unpleasant the event, the more attention it is given in the media. More people buy more newspapers so that they can read all about the latest tragedy in detail. It dominates our TV screens and everyone talks about it.

Do we enjoy all of this? Do we enjoy how it makes us feel when we read about such bad news? How does it make you feel when you read about people fighting, people suffering and people dying? I cannot imagine for a single moment that it makes

anyone feel good.

Most people say that they just want to know what is happening in the world; that they want to stay informed of global events. But do you believe that all that is happening in the world are the events that you read in the papers and hear on the news? Of course not! That is all the bad news that is gathered together for you to see. And sometimes, nothing has actually even happened! We are just told of the "possible threat of this or that happening", but the way it is presented to us makes it sound like it is actually about to happen! There is a big difference between speculation, rumour and facts. A world of difference.

10 - FEAR AND WORRY

Facts are what can be proven to be so, to have actually happened. If this cannot be done, there is no substance and no truth, it is merely speculation and ideas. So be discerning between these two things - speculation and fact - because by doing so you can avoid a great deal of unnecessary worry and anxiety. Where is the sense in being worried and afraid because of speculation? For example, speculation of impending war, or some other bad event that may or may not happen. The greater likelihood is always that it will not happen.

It is like someone telling you there might be a vicious dog around the corner. Well, there either is or there isn't, so rather than worry, use your intelligence. Take a peek around the corner and see for yourself. If there is a vicious dog, you can avoid it. If there isn't, then there is no problem and you can carry on enjoying your walk. In a similar way, many people spoil their enjoyment of simple things by worrying about what 'might' happen. For example, "I would really enjoy a sunset walk in the park this evening, but oh dear, I might get mugged." Or perhaps this person does take a walk in the park, but spends it in anxiety, looking out for danger.

Some people spoil their enjoyment of weeks, months or even years of their life in fear of some future event that doesn't happen. For example, the impending end of the world. This is a belief system that keeps large numbers of people in a constant state of anxiety, unable to relax and enjoy their life because they are simply expecting catastrophe. This sounds like an extreme example but it is not really, because whether it is 'the end of the world' we fear, or someone stealing our car, or something else, the fear is coming from our mind, from our thoughts that this bad thing could, or is likely to happen. It then affects the whole of our body in very negative ways. And it hasn't even happened!

People may say "I am right to be worried about this or that, because it is quite likely to happen and maybe I need to prepare myself for it." This is a very good argument for keeping yourself in a state of anxiety and joylessness, waiting and waiting for a bad event to occur.

What would happen if you stopped worrying? How would you feel if you had no fear of the future? Can you imagine?

Worrying is a fear based way of thinking in which the mind can only consider the negative possibilities. It may be considered normal to worry, but it is literally a mental dysfunction, by which I mean that it is not part of the functioning of a perfectly healthy human mind. It also creates weakness and illness in the body. It simply does not serve us or benefit us in any way. We could live without it, and live rather well.

Some people do not worry. Some people do not think about bad things happening. Some people simply enjoy their life - not just sometimes - but all the time, without the impedance of negative thoughts. They are very happy people, and usually quite healthy also. You can easily be one of those people, and I will now explain how...

11 - HOW TO BE HAPPY AND HEALTHY

This is the more practical section of the book, because positive thoughts and beliefs alone cannot bring you deep lasting happiness, or excellent health. We need positive actions. Positive actions bring direct changes to our lives and to the world around us. Without positive actions, we get stuck on the level of ideas and intentions, and we never experience the change in our lives that we so desperately want. It remains unmanifested.

A perfect example of this is if we are not in the best of health. Perhaps we have been feeling tired a lot, with little energy or enthusiasm, and we don't know what to do about it. We might even just accept that feeling this way is part of living in the modern world. This is a very common situation.

Firstly, we must decide if we want this way of being to continue for us. Are we willing to just 'put up' with feeling this way for the foreseeable future and hope that it might just change by itself? Or do we want to catalyse a change? Are we keen to feel differently and regain our vitality, energy and enthusiasm? This is the most important decision, because if you firmly decide that things are going to change in your life, you have set a clear intention and your energy will follow that intention. If your intentions are unclear or vague it is very difficult to put energy into them and act

upon them.

Now, the next step is understanding what needs to change. What has been causing you to feel a certain way, and how can you take action to change it? Nearly every time, you will find it is your habits. The things you habitually think, the things you habitually do, the way you habitually talk, the things you habitually put into your body as 'foods'. Our habits are most likely not benefiting us. They are not making us feel the way we want to feel. So we must examine them, look closely at all our habits and really see if they are having a beneficial or detrimental effect on the way we feel. This is quite an easy thing to do. You simply have to observe things, and then experiment with doing things differently, like a scientist would observe and experiment to see what works and what does not work.

A good example of this is food. Perhaps there is something we are eating which is aggravating our digestive system, but we don't know what it is. So we experiment. We try eating certain foods on their own, and we observe their effect on us. Then we can try omitting any suspect foods from our diet and seeing if we feel better. This is a small example, but we can apply this experimental principle to any area of our life. We must be very practical about such matters if we want to bring positive changes to our life.

Sometimes we do things because it is a "nice idea", but on a practical level it doesn't work for us. Another person may tell us of something they find very beneficial in their life and we assume it must be the same for us. However, we have to put 'nice ideas' out of the window and observe our own body to learn what really benefits it and nourishes it. We are each unique and we can discover our unique needs by observing our body's responses to the things we think, the things we say, the things we do and the things we eat. We can then experiment with making changes.

12 - MEDITATION AND GRATITUDE

For example, if we become aware that our habitual way of thinking is very negative and that it is regularly creating unpleasant feelings in our body, we can begin a meditation class, or start meditating at home. Meditation is the very best course of (non-)action, because you are addressing the root of the problem. You are not trying to change the thoughts in the mind (which can take years of psychotherapy) and you are not trying to make them go away. What you are doing by choosing to meditate is you are accessing a deeper part of yourself that is untouched by thought. You are learning to move your attention away from the realm of distraction, confusion, agitation, restriction and limitation (the thinking mind) towards a different

part of your being. You could call it your 'centre' or you could call it your 'heart'. It is the place where Peace is always present, and it has so much more depth than the superficial mind, where so many people spend so much of their time.

Meditation shows you that you don't have to be in that superficial place, and that it is effortless to relocate. No struggle or fight is needed. Just a heartfelt desire to experience a state of Peace and stillness.

How do you meditate? Relaxation plays an important role, so choose a period where there are no time pressures, so that you can have at least 30 minutes of undisturbed quiet time if you need it. You do not have to meditate for this long, but having more time removes any sense of pressure. Choose a peaceful place with no distractions. I recommend being outside in nature if it is warm enough and there is no man-made noise (like noisy machines etc). The quietest room in your house is also fine though. Switch off all phones, electronic devices etc. Sit upright in a chair (or on the floor) and allow your body to feel comfortable, relaxed and restful. It is better to sit upright rather than allow your body to slump because it helps you to remain alert and awake.

Now, you will become aware of two things. Firstly, the physical feeling of your body - how your muscles feel, how your back feels, how your joints feel and so on. Bring relaxation into your body with ten slow, gentle and deep breaths. Let everything slow down. Let your body become more restful, more relaxed and at ease.

You will notice that as your body relaxes, its inner tempo slows down as you become more calm and still. Your mental activity will slow down also. Instead of thoughts flying around in your mind, they may drift in more slowly and then drift away again, without influencing you as much. This is the great benefit of slowing down. Everything occurs in a more calm and manageable way.

Now, the important part here is that we are not interested in a single thought that comes along. Imagine you are taking a holiday from thought, like you might decide to take a break from your mobile phone. So even though texts are coming in for you to look at, you ignore them all because you have decided to take a holiday from them and experience some peace and quiet. You are not even tempted to take a peek.

Your mind may present you with many thoughts for your attention, telling you that they are important, but you must be firm with the mind and tell it that you are not interested in thinking now. The whole purpose of this period is for you to distance yourself from the realm of thinking, so that you can enjoy experiencing a more

peaceful part of your being, a part which has so much more depth and richness. In this place within, you can experience the total nourishment of the Peace and tranquility that arises.

The more distance you create between yourself and the thoughts that enter your mind, the more you will gravitate back to a deep sense of quietness and stillness within. What enables you to create this distance is bringing your attention into your body and feeling the physical sensations present there - the heaviness of your arms, the warmth in your hands, the beating of your heart and so on.

You see, our attention needs to be somewhere. It cannot be nowhere! So if you are bringing your attention away from the thinking mind, where does it go? It benefits us tremendously to bring it into our body. By doing this we are becoming grounded, earthed, connected to a sense of inner strength and stability, and it feels good. With practice, it will encourage within you sense of 'unshakeability', so that no matter what thoughts may attempt to disturb your peace, and no matter how strong the winds of change may blow, you remain in Peace. This is the strength of your heart, which is nurtured through ideal nutrition, an active lifestyle, meditation, generosity and selflessness. Everyone will benefit greatly when they develop this part of themselves in these ways.

So, as you sit calmly in stillness, remain aware of the slow and steady pace of your breathing as it flows in and out of your body, and feel the strength of your heart beating in your chest.

Let your breath move into your belly as well as your lungs, and become aware of the sensations in your stomach. Our stomach is the seat of emotion in our body, so calming our stomach and bringing a sense of stillness to it will help us experience greater Peace. Peace blossoms through stillness. A still, centred mind. A calm, relaxed stomach. A slow and steady heartbeat. A regular, full and steady pattern of breathing. These are the physiological goals which allow us to move into Peace. We are simply calming and soothing the entire body and allowing oxygen - which brings consciousness - to flow freely through it, as we breathe consciously.

Conscious breathing is nothing more than being aware that our breathing remains steady and uninterrupted. Usually, in the thinking state, our breathing stops for short periods. Then we may sigh deeply, or yawn to get more oxygen back into our body. Breathing does not flow smoothly and regularly when we are in thought, and it is usually quite shallow - using only our lungs rather than our diaphragm. Being conscious to ensure our breathing flows smoothly and uninterrupted, whilst also being deep and slow, is a very effective way to remain grounded in our body and

allow Peace to grow and spread within. In a state of calm, patient stillness, where nothing is forced and nothing is hurried, we allow our body the time and space it needs to present us with its greatest gift.

Many people find it helpful to use a mantra - a sound that creates a harmonious vibration within the body and attunes us more to the heart's peace, such as the sound "OM". Sometimes a mantra can also be useful to help us focus our mind and prevent us from wandering back into thinking.

My personal favourite mantra is simple the words "thank you". Why? Because they activate the heart, and bring us a tangible feeling of gratitude and appreciation. We can say "thank you" simply for each breath, as we breathe it in deeply with gratitude. We can say "thank you" for the beautiful sounds of the birds as they sing joyfully in the trees. Or we could say "thank you" for the feeling of simply being alive. Or we could say "thank you" for the warmth and the love that we feel in our heart. It is up to you what you express gratitude for, and there is so much to be grateful for. It is the wonderful feeling of gratitude itself that really matters, and the words "thank you" bring it to us.

You see, our mind will find a million reasons to be dissatisfied. It can find fault with absolutely everything; what we possess, where we live, who we feel we are, the words we speak, the actions we take. It can all be totally wrong from the mind's perspective. This perspective simply creates a deep feeling of dissatisfaction within us and makes us complete unhappy. So we need to choose a different perspective. What is the opposite of this perspective?... That everything is perfect.

Imagine if we accepted that every part of our life - as it is in this moment - is exactly as it is supposed to be. Then we say "thank you" for everything; for our home, for our friends, for our family, for our health, for the food we enjoy, for the material things that make our life easier or more comfortable. We so easily forget how much we have, and how fortunate we are. There are so many people who do not have what we have. There are many, many people who do not have a warm place to sleep at night, or enough food to satisfy their hunger. There are many, many people who have no support and no loving human contact. There are many, many people who wake up fearing for their safety each day.

We are so very fortunate in so very many ways, that we should remember to appreciate everything that we have, and be deeply thankful. Gratitude enriches our being on a very deep level, and simply makes us very happy. Meditation and prayer help to bring us into this space of gratitude. They help us to realise and appreciate that the peace we experience within our heart fulfils us and nourishes us on the

deepest level possible. It is Life's greatest gift to us - a healing balm for the soul which brings us into a state of wholeness and shows us the perfection and beauty of who we really are.

The depth and dimension that meditation brings us need not be just a temporary experience - something we only experience a few times a week in a class or at home. It can deeply infuse (and enthuse) your entire life if you bring the basic premise of meditation into everything that you do.

For example, if you work in an office and are prone to stress in your workplace, what can you do? Firstly you can meditate on the way to work, whether you drive, take the tube or bus, cycle or walk. You can be fully alert with your eyes open and practice the meditative attitude of keeping your attention from wandering into the realm where stress is created - the mind, in thoughts. In partnership with this, you can be conscious of your body's tendency to get caught up in hurrying, rushing and not doing things with care. It is possible not to allow a stressful, hurried energy to take you over. You just have to slow down a little and be conscious of what you are doing to yourself. Are you being patient, gentle and kind with yourself, or are you pushing and hurrying yourself along?

13 - TIME

You see, many people believe it is better to arrive on time full of stress, rather than just a few minutes late, but in a calm state. We all choose our priorities and our experiences. Many people prioritise 'time' over their own well-being. If we decide to prioritise our well-being over time, our life will certainly not fall apart (as the mind often expects it might). When we stop being a slave to the minutes, always trying to fit things in, get to the next appointment in time, anxiously keep our life on schedule, what do you think happens? You actually gain more time.

How can you gain more time? Well, perhaps it is more accurate to say that you feel like you gain more time. You simply feel like you have more time. So many people feel that there is not enough time, and it is because they are in a state of stress. However, if you are in a state of calm, the opposite becomes your reality. You feel like you have all the time you need. And in a state of calm, you do not feel like wasting your time because you realise how precious it is, what a gift it is. It is full of such deep potential for us.

For example, you have got yourself ready to go out somewhere and you realise you have 10 minutes spare before you need to leave. What can you do?

You could switch on the television (a waste of 10 minutes). You can sit down and think (another waste of 10 minutes). You can read the newspaper (10 minutes wasted). You can even look at other people on Facebook and see how they are wasting their own minutes!

So how could you access the deep potential held within this short period of time?

You could go outside and appreciate the beauty of the flowers in your garden. You could sit in the sunshine and listen to the beautiful songs of the birds. You could meditate quietly and create a deep sense of calm within yourself. You could send a caring email or text to someone that you know is feeling lonely, or even call them. You could be creative and write a poem, or enjoy your creativity in some other simple way.

Do you see the difference between the possible ways of using our time? These choices significantly affect the way we feel - very significantly. Our choices do matter - and most importantly they matter to us, because we are the ones who have to carry around the feelings that our choices create within us. You are free to choose to waste your time, but always consider first how you could enrich yourself, give yourself (or another) a good feeling, or even create something special, instead of just 'killing time' with distractions. It is so much more rewarding when we choose to use time wisely, and it simply brings us more happiness.

14 - CONSCIOUS COMMUNICATION

What does it mean to communicate consciously?

Well, first let's consider the very purpose of communicating. What does the word 'communicate' mean? It is obvious, is it not? It literally means to come to a point of unity, to be 'like one' (com une), in a state of complete mutual understanding. In this state we feel that we are completely understood. We feel as though there are no obstacles between ourselves and others. It is a wonderful feeling.

Therefore our communications should always bring us together in this way, because this is their very purpose. But do they always do this? Often they do the exact opposite - they create conflict, hostility and a sense of separation between us and others. Why is this? It is due to what we are choosing to communicate and where - in ourselves - we are choosing to communicate from. This is where we need to bring in more consciousness.

Opinions:

We all know how important it is to communicate with honesty, but does this simply mean telling people what you really think? Many people believe it does, yet thoughts and thinking actually occur on a very superficial level of our being. When we share our thoughts with others we are often just expressing our opinion, and because opinions come from the realm of the mind they can often be insensitive, unkind and harsh.

Opinions are plentiful in this world. We agree with some of them and disagree with many of them. This is due to the fact that opinions come from the realm of thought - a realm of duality and conflict, contradiction and inconsistency. Because of this, opinions can never, ever bring universal harmony.

Opinions are simply thoughts which we identify with and say "I believe this." We invest part of ourselves into them, which is why we can become very defensive if someone criticises our opinion. We feel as though they are criticising us and what we believe is important in life. Our instinctive reaction is to raise our defences and strengthen our position. A sense of hostility arises within us, as we feel that part of who we are (our beliefs) are threatened. And we all know where this leads to... Conflict.

Have you ever been involved in a discussion, and everyone has a different opinion? It can easily become more of an argument than a discussion. Opinions often lead to disagreements, conflict, arguments and hostility of varying degrees. We really want to avoid such disharmonious experiences because they can affect us - sometimes quite strongly - in very negative ways. Usually after being involved in conflict, we carry a residue of disharmony around with us, mentally and emotionally - sometimes without realising it and sometimes for a long time.

So how can we guarantee that we avoid conflict and hostility in our communications, and consequently, in our Life? We must communicate from a deeper level than the mind. We must communicate something more to others than just our thoughts and opinions. We must strive to communicate to others from our heart, from a place of compassion.

When you communicate from a place of compassion, you are fully aware and sensitive to the human being in front you and what they need. They themselves may have difficulty communicating compassionately, perhaps they are angry, for example, or lost in their own problems. Yet if you engage with that person from a place of compassion, that human being will feel that you care about them. This is a deeply valuable thing in this world, and you can give it to everyone.

It may be challenging to be compassionate with everyone you meet, but with practice it gets easier and easier. It is one of the very most rewarding practices we can do, because it is guaranteed to touch people and make them feel that they are a human being worthy of compassion. It also opens our own heart and shows us the deep importance of heartfelt communication, tolerance and patience with others.

Compassion comes easily once you understand why people are the way they are. You do not need to know their life story. If there is hostility in someone, it is because they were most likely treated with hostility. Perhaps they suffered a lot earlier in their life, or are suffering now, perhaps in pain. People are only ever closed to you because they have been hurt and are afraid to be open. So view a hostile person from the perspective that they are in need of help to become not-so-hostile, because hostility can only ever ruin your life, destroy friendships, create isolation and so on. Have compassion that a person may be experiencing something like this. Of course, they may wish to be left well alone, and we should always honour another humans wishes, but we can always let a person know that we are there to listen, should they wish to communicate.

When this is known, sometimes a person can become aware of their deep need to talk to another human being, and decide to open up. But this can never be forced. Everyone must do things in their own time. Just remain available as a compassionate human being, always ready to listen without pressure or judgement.

Heartfelt Communication.

This does not mean pouring out our emotions all the time, or being "lovey-dovey" with everyone we meet. Communicating from our heart means communicating honestly, attentively, sensitively and compassionately. Even when our emotions are strong - like anger - we can be careful not to project them onto another and apportion blame for things that we feel have upset us. This is easy to say, but when anger or frustration bubble over it requires us to be aware enough to take responsibility for what we are feeling, rather than blame another.

When we blame another, we give away our power to choose what we experience, and we position ourselves at the mercy of others. We then require others to treat us correctly to prevent ourself from experiencing anything that we might call a 'negative' emotion. This makes us feeling timid, emotionally delicate and afraid of the treatment of others. Such a power game (which is what it truly is, even if we are giving our power away) only prevents us from experiencing freedom.

By taking full responsibility for what we feel, we reclaim the power to prevent

negative feelings occurring in our life. And we can. It is how we respond to things that leads to how we feel. But we always have a choice how to respond to things, even if it feels like we are compelled to react in certain ways.

By developing our inner strength - that is, the strength of our heart - we become more grounded and stable in our sense of peace. This means that we are able to remain centred, to keep our attention in a peaceful place within us and remain unmoved when people are being unkind, hostile, judgemental and so on. This is true strength - the strength of our heart - which paradoxically has a deep gentleness to it. We can learn to communicate from this place of gentle strength.

When we communicate from our heart about what really matters to us (and why waste our time communicating about what does not matter?) there is a depth and passion present in our communication that reaches out to the depth and passion of the other person, or people. Whatever level we communicate from will be aroused within the listener, and they will be encouraged to communicate on the same level.

Heartfelt communications can be strong because there is deep passion in every heart, but they will never be unkind. It is only the mind which is unkind. When we are focussed on honouring and expressing what we are feeling internally, and putting it into words for others to understand, there is no desire to create disharmony. We are simply striving for harmony, inwardly and outwardly.

When we focus on other people, on their beliefs and their actions, it is far easier for us to become judgemental and unkind. Why? Because we are not in touch with the deeper part of ourselves. Our focus is actually outside of ourselves, looking at others. This is one of the mind's favourite games - to talk about others (usually behind their backs) and pass judgment upon them. This creates within our mind a sense of righteousness that satisfies the mind's need for hierarchy.

The mind and the ego like to take a position of either superiority or inferiority. By doing this they can continue to feed the sense of separation between us and others - a sense of being different, better than or less than. This is not 'communication' in its truest sense. This is actually division. Do we really want to experience this any more? Because this is not the truth, it is simply the reality we choose by 'communicating' from our mind.

All human beings have a strong, innate desire for happiness, freedom and fulfilment, yet many have forgotten how to experience these things. When we separate ourselves from others and create distance between ourselves and them, we are virtually guaranteeing unhappiness for ourselves.

Because it is in joining with others, making friends, maintaining friendships and deepening them that we realise what is important in life, what makes us happy, what nourishes our heart. We are social creatures who need human warmth and positive interaction with others. Life is a shared experience, and we need to share it. But this can only happen if we open up to doing so.

Positive Communication.

We must remember the importance of sharing the goodness of life together - happiness, health, fun, enjoyment. Often people get together in negativity, and share their complaints about all the things that are wrong with the world, talk negatively about other people or talk about the negative agendas of other groups of people. This is what creates unhappiness and spreads it around. This is what feeds our feelings of separateness, loneliness and fear.

Imagine if we never spoke negatively. Imagine if we never allowed ourselves to speak badly of another person. Imagine if we refused to get drawn into the 'complaining mentality', and instead kept our mind focussed on creating the positive experiences that we want. Because, put simply, positivity always creates happiness. Negativity always creates unhappiness.

This is why it is imperative that we become conscious of our communications. They can spread positive energy and influence many people in a powerful and beautiful way. If you communicate positivity to a person, you will influence them to do the same in their communications, and they in turn will influence the people that they communicate with. It is exponential. In fact, it is impossible to fully understand the powerful effect of the words we speak on the world around us. And not only the words, but the energy with which we communicate them. Kind words are not enough by themselves. They need to come from a kind feeling within us, from our care for others, from our compassion, from our heart.

Equally, sometimes we have a feeling to help another, a feeling to express kindness, but we hold back and say or do nothing. Kindness is such a powerful and benevolent force that we should always let it flow outwards, through our words and actions, because it will never have a detrimental effect. Of course, it may be rejected but if it is not then something special has occurred. An act of kindness should never be underestimated, or undervalued. It like a rare a precious jewel. Such jewels should be handed out freely, because then we will all feel the richness they bring us and inspire us to share with others,

Respect.

It is paramount in our communications that we communicate with respect and sensitivity toward the people or persons we are communicating with.

Another aspect of conscious communication is maintaining an awareness of who you are communicating with, and being responsive to how your communication is being received.

Often people speak without realising or caring about the effect of what they are saying on the other. Or they may talk and talk without leaving space for a response from the listener, perhaps assuming that what they are saying is more important than anything that anyone else might want to say. It is very important to communicate with sensitivity for others. If we do this, a more compassionate and interactive communication can occur. Communicating in this way brings a depth, an openness and also a sense of humility that benefits us, and others greatly.

If we are not communicating with sensitivity and awareness, it often means that we are just venting something - expressing an energy that has created disharmony with us, like anger or irritation. Expressing oneself in this way is not communication, it is just expression, and can be done without the need for another human being to be on the receiving end. In fact, it is probably best that nobody is, because unless that person is very conscious, they will simply take on board the disharmony that you are expressing. Nobody needs to be given more disharmony to deal with, and if we are careful with our expressions we can ensure this does not occur.

Venting anger is not the best way of responding to anger. If you feel like you must express a frustrated energy, (i.e. a build up of anger) then go outside and run, or do something very physical, like digging. This is the best way to express a strong energy like anger. Let it motivate you - creatively not destructively. There is absolutely no need to kick anything, break anything or shout out in rage, although you have that freedom if you really want to. But remember, for every action and for every expression, there are consequences. Some call this 'karma'.

15 - COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

How do we experience a sense of equality and understanding with others? What is the common ground that we all share? It is our humanity, our compassion, the fact that we feel and that we care. Yes, we all experience different emotions at different times, but these are actually what unite us. Everyone has experienced sadness. Everyone has experienced anger. Everyone has experienced loneliness. Everyone wants to be happy and share their happiness with others. Everybody wants to enjoy life and experience what life it is truly about, beyond the superficial level.

These are the shared desires and shared experiences that form a strong common bond between us all, and when we focus on these instead of perceived differences, a sense of togetherness, understanding and compassion for others arises within us. This is the place where we are all the same. We all have a heart. We all care about something. If we focus on the fact that we do care, we can easily see the goodness within ourselves, and it is easy to see it others too.

Yes, we all make 'mistakes'. We all express ourselves in inappropriate or hurtful ways sometimes. Again, this we all share, because it is human nature. We are all still learning to be tolerant, compassionate and sensitive individuals. So we need to be patient with ourselves, and not punish ourselves if we make mistakes. Always ask yourself this question: What is your underlying intention? Is it truly to hurt others and create more suffering in the world? I very much doubt it. Often, it is just to be happy, to try and experience some peace, or relief from the thoughts and emotions that disturb our peace.

It is said that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions" but this is highly inaccurate. Good intentions are the rock-solid foundation upon which we build our life. Good actions flow from good intentions, and good intentions come from our heart. If you do not have good intentions, you can be sure you are in the grip of your ego, which selfishly just wants to get what it wants, usually for the purposes of keeping us in unconsciousness.

Why does the ego want this? Because it wants to continue to exist, run (and ruin) our life. Yet it can only exist in the state of separation, which is illusory. The ego wants us to remain unconscious of what is real, so that we continue to invest our awareness in what is unreal - the ego's realm. Only through us doing this can the ego continue to exist. Yet we have the freedom not to do this.

If we are constantly giving the ego what it wants, it will grow and begin to dominate our life, fuelling selfishness and creating further isolation and unhappiness for us, as it has always done. And whilst we are responding to the endless desires of our ego, we are deaf to the vital communication of our heart, which is calling us in another direction.

Our heart is calling us to come back the harmony that exists within us, and to share this harmony through all our communications and amongst the people we spend our time with. Our heart knows that we are not truly separate. Every little thing we say, do, and think influences those around us, often on an invisible level. Yes, we do appear to be separate when you look on the surface at the external shell we call a

'body'. But the body is simply the home for our consciousness, and consciousness is not limited to being contained within a body. It spreads out, so that we are aware of things beyond our body. Like collective harmony, for example.

We can be in a room with a group of people and feel whether there is a sense of harmony present or not. We are sensing the very real, non-physical interaction between the energy fields of all the people who are present. Each energy field contributes to the collective field that is created when people gather together. This is why it is important that we cultivate a sense of harmony within ourselves, because then that is what we will be contributing wherever we go, influencing all those who we encounter.

Collective consciousness is like a large pool of water that we are all immersed in. Each person, depending on their internal state of harmony (or disharmony) is either making the water warmer for everyone else or colder. When we are in a positive state, we make the water warmer. When we are in a negative state, or if our awareness is absorbed in thinking, we make the water colder for everyone.

This is a very accurate analogy, because collective consciousness is a pool of awareness that we all share. This is how we are all connected. Yes our bodies are separate, but our minds are not. And what about our hearts? What about Love? At some point in our lives we have all experienced the beauty of losing oneself in Love, even if it is just a distant memory. In Love, the ego disappears, and our awareness becomes immersed in the deepest harmony and warmth imaginable. This is accompanied by a deep desire to give, to be selfless. When in Love with another, there are no barriers or boundaries. We seem to merge into one beautiful heart, where the feeling of Love is our reality, our sole focus and total priority. It is beyond the physical level, beyond the sexual level, beyond the sensual level. It is a deeply spiritual experience.

This can be experienced in a group also. For example, in a room of people who are meditating together and bringing their attention out of their mind, back into the harmony and peace of their heart. A collective energy field of Love is felt, beyond the personal sense. There is a wonderful sense of expansiveness, of limitlessness, of being an important part of something much bigger than ourselves. Something so beautiful and radiant that it is beyond words.

Imagine if everyone on the planet felt their part in this greater whole. Indeed, this is exactly what is happening globally, as people remember the value of kindness, compassion, collective harmony and personal peace. Human consciousness is shifting from 'separation consciousness', in which we are all focussed on the

apparent division between us, toward 'unity consciousness', where we are aware of being a part of the greater whole.

Love is the guiding force behind this shift in awareness, because Love IS that greater whole. We are all becoming aware of this, in our own ways and at our own speed. And because Love is simply the essential truth of Life - the highest truth - then becoming aware of it is unavoidable. This is the greatest news imaginable. We are being called home - or it would be more accurate to say our awareness is being called home - to Love, where it belongs.

This journey requires no effort. It just requires that we stay alert and aware that we do not take ourselves back into the illusory perspective of separation - a purely mental realm of isolation and loneliness. The good news is that this realm is not real - just an unreality that we have collectively been experiencing for a seemingly long, long time. But it doesn't matter how long humanity has lived in illusion, because time is also part of that illusion. What matters is our tangible experience of being more than our thoughts, more than our emotions, more than our body. Something greater.

Our awareness expands beyond all of these things when it enters our heart, which is the gateway to our spiritual nature as a being of Love. This is the reality of who we are, and as we experience the heart's truth there is no desire to be anywhere else. Because, in truth, everywhere else is just a insubstantial and empty mental landscape, like the clouds that we see in the sky. Such a landscape cannot fulfil us and it cannot harm us, because it exists only in our mind, constructed only of thoughts. It is illusory. It is the dream from which we are all slowly awakening. We are awakening to the beautiful truth of who we really are - our true identity - and to the realisation of what is ultimately real in this magnificent and mysterious world. Put simply, it is Love.

16 - HABITUAL BEHAVIOURS

I will talk now on a very practical level about habitual behaviours, because they have a very great influence on our state of harmony and happiness. Habitual behaviours are the things we may do regularly, like watching the news before going to sleep at night (not good!) or reading the newspaper while eating our breakfast (not good!) or frequently talking with our mobile phone right next to our ear (terrible!) and so on. Our habits are the things that we do all the time, yet we often don't realise the effect they are having on how we feel, our mood and on our health also.

For example, many people have habitual things they do upon waking in the morning

- a morning routine. Some people wake up, look in the mirror, put the radio on, have a shower, get dressed, then have breakfast and so on, and every day it is the same. It is a routine. It is very common to have a morning routine, especially when you have a daily job.

It is also very important to have a routine even if you do not have a job, and this can be a problem for some people, because there is no time structure to their day. They have no need to be anywhere or do anything at any time of the day, and in this instance it is very easy for the body and mind to become lazy and unmotivated.

It is vital to be motivated, even if you have nothing that you have to do. Motivation is the driving force of life. You can feel motivated about anything, for example: writing a book, growing your own vegetables, being healthy, helping other people, creating something, sharing something beautiful, cleaning your house, making dinner for your friends... The list could go on for ever, because we can find motivation for anything.

The secret is: choosing to find motivation - choosing to engage in the things that enthuse you. Some people, if they have allowed themselves to become lazy and unenthused about life, find it hard to feel motivated about anything. The truth is, they don't really want to feel motivated, because it seems to them like a great effort which they don't feel like making. They may see people walking happily and energetically through the park and think to themselves "why bother?" The truth is, this person has an energy problem. They have become stuck in a habitual way of moving through life without feeling any enthusiasm, motivation or energy for action.

You see, our regular habits can lead us into this state if we are not careful; a state of despondent selfishness, where we don't really care about anything - including ourselves and other people. All we want are the things that we know bring us comfort - a sofa, a TV, our comfort foods, alcohol perhaps, and so on. This is a dangerous state for a human being to allow themselves to get into, because of the lack of self-care. Lack of self-care can only cause harm to a person, depending on the degree to which they are choosing to neglect their deeper needs. We all need loving care, and in very practical ways, especially from ourselves.

Now, we all know that we are capable of choosing positive habits - ones that encourage good health, enthusiasm, motivation, and a desire to help others - so let's take this specific example of a hypothetical man or woman to illustrate exactly how we do this...

Upon waking early, the first thing this man/woman does is to sit up, take a few deep breaths and say "Thank you" for the new day, irrespective of the weather outside.

They do not let their mind wander toward negative thoughts or worries about what lies ahead in the day. They remain present and they meditate for five minutes, just breathing oxygen into their body, allowing themselves to feel fresh and ready for the day ahead.

They get up and stretch their body, releasing any tensions from sleep, and they take a shower - a very good thing to do soon after waking.

After their shower, they get dressed (without any sense of hurry) and go to the kitchen. The first thing they do there is to drink two large glasses of mineral water or warm water with lemon juice, to flush any night-time toxins through the body, and to adequately hydrate themselves (as we lose a lot of water during the night). Next, they make a vegetable juice (green being best) with all their favourite vegetables, and maybe a little fruit or avocado blended in. Then they drink it with great satisfaction and enjoyment of the vitality and nourishment that the drink is giving them. It is felt almost instantly.

Already, by this time, this person is going to be feeling fantastic because they have been making healthy choices since the moment they woke up. This is why intelligent people make healthy choices; it simply makes them feel very good - in their body, in their mind, in their heart. Why on earth would we make choices that make us feel the opposite?

Let us continue with our example...

After a healthy and easily digestible gluten-free breakfast, this person has time for a short walk (because they woke up early). So they take a little walk around the park, appreciating the beauty of the trees and enjoying the birdsong. It doesn't matter to them that it's a grey day, because this person feels happy inside. They smile and say good morning to the people they pass, even those that look unhappy. They feel generous and giving.

This person must catch the underground to work, but they carry a warm sense of happiness and well-being with them throughout the journey. The people travelling with this person can sense this positive energy radiating from them and it lifts their mood, without them even realising it.

After arriving at work, this person greets their work colleagues with a genuine warm smile. They make it their priority to stay calm and positive during the day, no matter what challenges may arise. In fact, they look forward to the challenges, so they can meet them in the appropriate way and enjoy the pleasure of finding the solutions that

benefit everyone.

This may all sound quite extreme to you, but why? Do you believe it is not possible? Many people live like this. They begin their day in the right way, and they carry a positive, calm attitude through the day, treating people with warmth and responding to challenges with greater perspective and wisdom. Why can't you do this also? You can, very easily. And it simply begins with changing small habits.

Look at your own morning routine. Does your day start with negative thoughts? Or reluctance to get out of bed? If it does, that is the first habit to address. The way you feel upon waking is not just by chance. It depends on how early you went to bed, how late you had your evening meal and how light or heavy the meal was (lighter being better) and so on.

Did you watch television immediately before bedtime? Did you fall asleep with worries going through your mind?

Sleep is a very precious time, where your body attempts to rest and recuperate every muscle and every organ, including your entire digestive system. This is why it's good not to put much into your body a few hours before bedtime, other than water or herbal tea. Your body goes through an inner-cleansing process during the night, to flush out any toxins - including mental ones - that are in your system, so that you can feel fresh and renewed in the morning.

It is very important to avoid absorbing negative information (such as the news) some time before you go to bed. It is good to fall asleep with a positive thought in your mind or, better still, a positive feeling in your body. Meditating as you lie in bed at the end of the day is a wonderful way to prepare for a good night's rest.

17 - DREAMS

During sleep, your thinking, rational mind is switched off, so you get a break from thought. Your subconscious mind comes more into play and it can actually give you important messages while you dream. This is why we should pay more attention to our dreams. Your subconscious can actually tell you important, practical things about what you need to do in your life - how to solve a challenging issue perhaps, or how to achieve more personal harmony. It can tell you what your body might be lacking nutritionally and it can show you how you might be making life harder for yourself. All dreams carry such information, and if we write them down upon waking we can study them and learn to understand their communication.

At first glance it often looks like nonsense, but if we look at the relationship between the things in the dream, this can reveal something about the relationship between certain parts of ourself, like our emotions, our mind, our body. We can often be shown our potential in a dream - for example a radiantly happy and healthy person appears - and then the dream will show us what is standing in the way of us achieving our potential. Anger perhaps, or an unhealthy and damaging habit. Perhaps our fears and worries are stopping us from being free and enjoying life. The dream will show us.

Rather than fixate on the tiny details, if we step back and look at the dream as a whole message to us about some part of ourselves, we can often feel intuitively what that message may be. Some part of us instinctively knows what the dream is trying to tell us. Water usually represents emotions, teeth often represent aggression, a house usually symbolises your whole being, with the attic being your mind, the lower floor being your body, the garden usually being your heart. Any beautiful garden or forest usually represents the heart. A car will often represent your physical vehicle that you travel around in; your body.

For example, we may dream that we are in a car and we have no control whatsoever. We are afraid. We cannot grasp the steering wheel or reach the brakes and we are coming to a bend in the road and we are terrified... Then we wake up. What is the dream telling us about ourselves?

Well, the car is our physical vehicle, moving through life. We like to think that we are always the one in control, but the dream is saying clearly that we are not in control. In the dream, how do we feel about not being in control? We are scared. "I must be in control, otherwise the car will crash" we believe. But you are not in control, and the car has not crashed. Yet you are still afraid. This is an important communication. The dream is showing you that you are afraid of not being in control. It is bringing this to your awareness, showing you clearly that you do not trust that you will be safe in this car unless your hands are on the steering wheel. What is the last part of the dream? You are coming to a bend in the road and you are terrified. Surely the car is going to crash?

This symbolises coming to a point on your life path where it is time to change direction. You are scared because you don't feel in control, but the dream is asking you to do something: to trust. You cannot crash and you will not crash. That is just your deepest fear. Have faith, and trust that you will be guided around the corner. What lies around the corner? Perhaps a lovely open straight road, through the most beautiful, luscious countryside you have ever seen. It is possible. What is important

is that if you trust, the onward journey can be free of fear and you can enjoy not needing to be in control of everything.

All dreams contain relevant and liberating messages that come from the depth of our being. Their purpose is to help us to become conscious of our fears and other aspects of our personality that may either be holding us back or causing us to endure suffering. Our dreams want to tell us that we do not have to. We would greatly benefit from listening to them all.

And so, because of the importance of our dreams, it is very wise to avoid the news, television, or any other mental input - like a dramatic or scary book - a couple of hours before sleeping. Then your mind is clearer and more still as you drift off to sleep, thus being more receptive to receive the communications from your subconscious.

18 - FOOD AND DIGESTION

What we eat in the evening and the time at which we eat it will also greatly affect the kind of night we will experience. The very latest we should finish our meal is three hours before we plan to lie down. Why? Because the digestive system should not be active during the night time. It needs to rest, as it has been working hard all day. If your digestive system is working during the night, you will not be resting deeply, and it is likely digestion will still not be complete in the morning.

Digestion works very much in harmony with the sun. When the sun is at its highest - in the middle of the day - our digestive functioning is at its strongest. This is why lunchtime is the best time to eat your largest meal of the day and to eat the harder-to-digest foods, like cereal grains and their products (pasta, bread, pastry etc), starches (e.g. potatoes), proteins (cheese, nuts beans etc) and fats. In the evenings and at night, your digestive functioning is very slow and is preparing for night-time shutdown. We should eat just light salads, fruits, a non-sweet smoothie perhaps, or some steamed vegetables. Something light and easy to digest.

How strange though that many people should choose the evening to eat their largest meal of the day, and often a heavy meal too. We have no idea how we are burdening our digestive system by doing this. Where do we think stomach and digestive disorders come from? They come from how we treat our stomach. They result from what we habitually eat, when we habitually eat, and how we habitually eat. Do we usually eat in a state of calm, or do we often eat in a state of stress? This is very important, because if we eat in a state of stress (in a hurry for example) every

cell of our body absorbs that stressful energy. We are highly receptive at meal times, so we should eat with care and consciousness. Calming the body and the mind before eating a meal is a very worthwhile thing to do, because your food carries that energy in a very practical way into the very centre of your body, and feeds it to every cell of every organ and every muscle. This is the energetic aspect of eating - almost like the invisible food that we eat.

Our food habits - meaning what we tend to eat regularly, and how we tend to eat it - are incredibly influential upon us. More than we realise. They affect our mood, they affect the feeling in our body and they even affect our mind. For example, if we eat a lot of sweet foods our moods are likely to be less stable. We will find it difficult to focus for long periods, because our mind is being stimulated by the sugars in our food. We will also find that we experience food cravings as the sugar leaves our blood stream and we suddenly feel the need for more of it. This is when impatience and intolerance are likely to arise, and we can also find that we are more easily irritated. It is the effect of sugar (in most forms) on the human body. It feels good when it goes into our system, but not when it starts to leave it.

Another example is if we eat a lot of heavy foods, meaning foods that take several hours to be digested. This includes foods such as: bread (any kind, gluten-free or not), pastry, pasta (gluten-free or not), most grains, seeds and nuts (including butters, such as tahini or peanut butter), cheese and meat. I won't say any of these are 'bad' foods, because people eat a lot of them, but they are certainly not 'easy-to-digest' foods.

Eating a lot of these foods can result in tiredness, slowness, a feeling of heaviness in the body and an irritable stomach. Our sleep may not be so good and we will often feel very tired in the morning. The reason being that heavier, harder-to-digest foods simply do not flow through our system easily, and they also require a lot of our energy simply to be digested.

Conversely, when we eat an abundance of the easier-to-digest foods our stomach feels stronger and lighter. In fact, our whole body feels lighter and more fluid, and we notice we have a ready abundance of energy. We notice that we don't need so much sleep as before, and we awaken in the morning feeling fresh and alert. It is possible that we may feel that we need to eat larger quantities, but this is part of the pleasure of eating lighter food - we can enjoy eating more of it.

So what are the easier-to-digest foods? All fruits (and there are many, including avocados), and all vegetables, including salad leaves. Soaked seeds and nuts are easier to digest, as soaking them increases their water content and makes their

protein more digestible. Fermented foods such as sauerkraut are good as they are pre-digested, and of course vegetable juices and smoothies are excellent. Any food with a natural water content is going to be easier to digest than a food which is dry, or needs to absorb water through cooking.

The water content of the food is the key here. The higher the natural water content, the more easily it will be digested (watermelon being a perfect example). Soaking dry foods (like nuts or dried fruit) is a good way to increase their water content and make them easier to digest. Soaking nuts and seeds literally 'activates' them - it wakes them up from their dormant state so they have the ability to sprout. Their oil content decreases and their water content increases, as they swell up and become almost juicy. The same is true with dried fruits, which often become much more delicious - and not so intensely sugary - after being soaked in water for a few hours.

When we choose to eat more of the easier-to-digest foods (as well as more raw foods) and less of the harder-to-digest (and heavily cooked) foods, we feel the effect. It is very noticeable. Our general mood seems to be a lighter one - we literally 'lighten up'. Not only that, but we have more energy available to us more of the time, because our body isn't requiring it for lengthy digestion. We feel more positive, cheerful and less likely to get pulled into dark moods or heavy thoughts like we may have done before. Heavy, cooked foods can have this effect on us. Changing your diet in this way is a very powerful and easy way to change the way you feel on a long term basis, and it is easily sustainable.

19 - HEALING FOODS

What makes a food a 'healing food'? Let's take a couple of perfect examples so we can understand clearly...

Wheatgrass juice, which is literally the juice pressed out from the grass of young wheat shoots (using a 'slow' juicer), is widely known as 'Mother Nature's greatest healer' because of its amazing effect on the body. Firstly, it oxygenates the blood like no other food, meaning that it floods the bloodstream with oxygen which the blood can then deliver to the cells of the body. Oxygen is the primary fuel for the body's cells, so when our body is abundant with oxygen we feel energised and motivated. When there is not sufficient oxygen in our bloodstream we usually feel tired and sleepy.

Oxygenating our body - either nutritionally, through deep breathing or through exercise - literally strengthens and expands the entire life-force of our body. It

fortifies our immune system. It energises our body. It brightens our mind and makes us feel more alert and 'in-the-moment'. Oxygen is essential. It enables the body's cells to repair and regenerate, and it prevents illness. This is why a predominantly outdoor life - coupled with excellent nutrition - is very important for our health. While outdoors, we are simply breathing in more oxygen, thus nourishing every cell of our body in the most basic way.

Did you know that in 1922, Doctor Otto Warburg won the Nobel Prize for his findings on the connection between sugar and cancer? Essentially his findings boiled down to this: Normal, healthy cells feed on oxygen - it is their prime food and it is what satisfies their energy needs. Cancer cells however, can only exist in an an oxygen-deficient environment, and they have their energy needs met by the fermentation of sugar. This simply means that cancerous cells obtain their energy from sugar, rather than from oxygen. This means that someone who consumes little or no sugar (in its many forms) is far less likely to get cancer, especially if they have an oxygenating diet and a predominantly outdoor lifestyle. It also means that the healthy cells in our body cannot become cancerous if they have a good supply of oxygen. Isn't that good to know?

(You can learn much more about the subject of oxygen, cancer and healing by reading this wonderful and informative article by Dr Majid Ali:
<http://AlexanderBell.org/Oxygen.pdf>)

So, back to wheatgrass juice. The most wonderful thing about it is that it oxygenates the body like nothing else. It is also very rich in chlorophyll. Chlorophyll does wonderful things for our blood and our body. It balances our blood chemistry, creating a tangible sense of calm and stability in the body. It also eliminates the desire for unhealthy food cravings because of its balancing and nourishing effect. It also nourishes and strengthens the blood with iron. This is especially the case with dark leafy greens (like kale, for example) and super-foods like Spirulina.

Spirulina is a miraculous food. It is the most nutrient-dense of all the algae on the planet, and is the most concentrated form of any known organic food. It is nutritionally complete, meaning that it contains everything the body needs to live on. For this reason, coupled with its very low cost of production, Spirulina is now being used to address the problem of malnutrition in poor countries. It is even consumed by NASA astronauts in space.

Nutritionally, it consists of around 65% digestible protein, so it is a high-protein food and very satisfying. Its chlorophyll content is incredibly high also, and because of this it nourishes the blood in a way that few other foods can. It is also very rich in

vitamin-B12, which is hard to find in non-animal food sources. It has a high iodine content which helps to address thyroid imbalance, and it possesses exceptionally high natural concentrations of beta-carotene and mixed carotenoids, which help to build the immune system nutritionally. It also has many, many other nutritional benefits, as well as helping the body in detoxification. On top of all this, it is delicious and full-flavoured. It can be blended into smoothies, mixed into vegetable juices, sprinkled onto salads and onto vegetable or grain dishes. It is very versatile and, most importantly, it is deeply nourishing for our body. I believe it is the most important 'super-food' we can include in our diet.

And just like wheatgrass juice, Spirulina alkalises our blood. Do you know what this means? It is fascinating and is very influential on our state of health.

Our blood, like every liquid, has a pH level, which means the degree to which it is either acid or alkaline. This is on a scale of 0 - 14, with a pH of 0 being completely acid, and a pH of 14 being completely alkaline. A pH of 7 is completely neutral, as it is in the middle. Our blood pH is naturally alkaline, with a pH that varies between 7.35 and 7.45. This may sound like it is barely alkaline at all, but on the pH scale small variations can have a large effect, so our body does everything it can to keep the blood pH within this range, as this is vital for us to remain in good health.

Now, the degree to which our foods influence the pH of our blood is the important thing here. Our foods can either have an alkalising effect on our system or an acidifying effect. Nearly all fruits and vegetables have an alkalising effect on our body, because they are rich in the alkaline minerals such as calcium, potassium, magnesium, iron and sodium. The very most alkalising foods we can eat are the green vegetables: salad leaves, spinach, kale, broccoli, cabbage, cucumber. I also include avocados in this, as they are such a nourishing and balancing food.

The more dark green the food, the more of an alkalising effect it will have on us, with healing green foods such as wheatgrass juice and Spirulina being the very most alkalising. Molasses is also a very mineral-rich food which has an alkalising effect on the body and blood, due to its high iron content. If you need to choose a 'sweetener' for your drinks or your breakfast or smoothies etc., I recommend choosing pure black-strap molasses, which is easy to find in all health food shops, and is not expensive.

Something very special happens when we habitually nourish our blood with alkalising and healing foods such as wheatgrass juice, Spirulina, and dark green vegetable juices. The blood's capacity to carry oxygen increases. This means that the blood is able to carry more oxygen around our body. This is absolutely vital for

increasing our health and healing our body, because the more oxygen that is in circulation, the better.

We can actually feel the alkalising and oxygenating effect of green foods when we consume them, especially if they are eaten raw or juiced. We feel calmer, more stable and balanced, and nourished in a very wholesome way. We feel that our body is well-energised, yet very grounded. The tiredness that usually comes at some point after eating cooked carbohydrates (such as grains, pasta, bread, white potatoes etc.) is completely absent when we consume nutrient-rich meals, such as delicious chunky salads, with fresh, crispy green leaves or grated vegetables, perhaps some chopped fruit and avocado plus some additional kind of protein (e.g. goats cheese) to satisfy us. Vegetable juices and creamy super-food smoothies also bring us very balanced and sustained energy levels, as they are grounding yet energising and easy to digest.

The energy we gain from such foods gives us a very pleasant and desirable feeling, and we can really feel that we have nourished our body and our blood in the best nutritional way possible, which we have. No other foods benefit us in the way that green foods do. This is why I believe that green salads, green juices and green super-food smoothies should have an important role in our daily diet, especially if we are on a healing regime.

So, what about other foods? Are they alkalising or acidifying?

As a general rule, most grains, proteins (beans, eggs, nuts, cheese, meat etc), and processed foods have an acidifying effect on your body, with animal protein (meat) being one of the most extreme acidifying foods. This does not mean that you should not eat these foods. For example, we need a certain amount of protein in our diet to build our cells and to help us feel strong and grounded.

At this point I should mention that our protein needs can be easily met without consuming meat. There is such a vast array of delicious plant-based proteins (including Spirulina, which is 65% protein) that we can easily avoid such a toxic and inhumane food as animal flesh, and still be in excellent health.

Seeds and nuts, when soaked and blended with water, can create a deliciously rich protein milk, especially if we include hemp seeds. Hemp seeds are one of the most nourishing protein sources in the plant kingdom, and they are also full of many other fantastic health benefits. I highly recommend including them in your diet. There are also an abundance of beans, pulses and legumes - such as chickpeas - that can contribute to our protein needs. Vegetarian cheese is another good option, as is kefir

(a delicious homemade, fermented probiotic yoghurt-type drink, low in lactose). Free range eggs are also a good option. However, bear in mind that the amount of protein we consume should not be anywhere near the amount of fruits and vegetables we consume. These should form the basis of our diet.

It is possible to have a very healthy and nourishing diet in which grains and grain products (pasta, cereal, bread etc.) are completely absent. When I stopped eating grains and grain products a few years ago, all of my stomach and intestinal discomfort vanished. I also experienced much less tiredness, and increased energy levels. I simply replaced grain meals with substantial salads, usually containing avocado and a protein such as cheese, beans, or seeds. I also started drinking more vegetable juices and avocado smoothies, sometimes with a meal. As a result, I didn't miss the substance that I was getting from eating grains, because I found my meals more satisfying. The protein that we include in our meals has a lot to do with this. As a result of this change, the general sense of increased energy in my life was very noticeable, and I never wanted to begin eating grains or grain products again.

When we consume a lot of acidifying foods (including highly acidifying substances like coffee, sugar and alcohol) what happens to our body? Well, firstly you won't feel so great! This is always the most obvious sign that our foods are not nourishing us correctly. Good foods make you feel good on a deep level. If any food makes you feel irritable, tired, over-stimulated, moody or depressed, I recommend that you stop eating it. Nourishing foods should help you to feel balanced, grounded, energised, positive and satisfied.

Consuming too many acidifying foods will lead us to feeling out of balance physically, mentally and emotionally. Not only this, but our blood will not be benefitting nutritionally as it does when we eat an abundance of alkalising, mineral-rich foods, especially greens. There is also a very real danger that, over time, in an attempt to neutralise the overwhelming influx of acidifying or toxic substances, our body will draw out calcium from our bones and teeth so that it can be used as a buffer against the risk of acidosis.

Acidosis is when the pH of the blood drops below its safe range, towards being more acidic. This is not a good situation for the body, and the body wants to prevent this happening at all costs. Therefore, if it is needed, the body will withdraw calcium from the bones to help it rectify the pH imbalance in the blood and prevent a dangerous situation occurring. This is certainly not good for our bones or teeth, and we should do everything we can to ensure that our body never needs to do this. Avoiding over-consumption of acidifying foods, and gravitating towards consuming predominantly alkalising foods is the very best way to ensure it.

So what is the ideal ratio of alkalising and acidifying foods to consume? It is generally recommended to consume 60% alkalising foods (fruits and vegetables) and 40% acidifying foods. This can differ depending on your protein needs, as someone who has a very physical and strenuous job would benefit from eating more protein (which is an acidifying food).

From personal experience, I know that it is perfectly healthy to consume 70% alkalising foods, especially if you are including a lot of the more nourishing fruits such as avocados in your diet. I do not believe it is good for the body to over-consume sweet fruit. We need a good amount of grounding and stabilising green foods and vegetables so that our body's mineral requirements are met. Too much fruit will leave us feeling ungrounded and result in unstable blood sugar levels, as the energy from the fruit sugar moves very quickly through the system. This can leave us feeling depleted as a result of over-stimulation from fruit sugar, and often simply craving more fruit to lift energy levels. What we need are good sources of long-term, grounding energy, for which I believe that foods such as greens, vegetable salads, digestible proteins, perhaps some steamed vegetables if needed, vegetable juices, avocados, smoothies, and deeply nourishing super-foods such as Spirulina and wheatgrass hold the answer.

(If you would like to read a little more about the acid/alkaline balance online, I recommend this article, which also has lists of acidifying and alkalising foods: <http://drbenkim.com/ph-body-blood-foods-acid-alkaline.htm>)

There is a well-known and very successful nutritional healing centre in the USA called the Hippocrates Health Institute, and they focus on healing all sorts of illness - including cancer - nutritionally. The use of wheatgrass juice and greens is central to their healing regime, as is the principle of the acid-alkaline balance. I have also met doctors who have successfully assisted the healing of terminally ill patients through these same methods. One of them suggested to me that, for the purposes of self-healing, a person who is not well should consume 80% alkalising and mostly raw foods, so as to flood their system with a revitalising, oxygenating and healing energy.

When the body is healing, it needs to receive more vitality from the food it consumes, which is why raw foods are very important. Cooking vegetables depletes their life-force and they lose their vitality, especially as food enzymes are heat-sensitive and are always damaged in the cooking process. If you need a healing diet, a raw food diet consisting of an abundance of easily digestible vegetables and green foods, is the answer.

This same doctor then told me that for a person who has a terminal or life-threatening illness, a 100% alkaline diet is essential, consuming no sweet fruit, but rather an abundance of raw green vegetables and salads, and regular vegetable juices throughout the day. This should be supported with plenty of rest, fresh air and pure water to assist the body in healing.

Water is such a deeply vital component to our health, yet we often overlook it. We drink tea, fruit juice or milk perhaps, but none of these are an adequate substitute for pure water. Tea and coffee actually de-hydrate the body! The more pure water we drink (and by pure I mean spring or mineral water) the more we will experience a fluidity and lightness to our body and energy field. Toxins will be washed through our body regularly, and we will feel clearer in our mind, cleaner in our body, and brighter and more energised.

Often, when our energy levels drop or we feel tired, we think we need to eat more food to give us more energy, but this is not the case. Usually we need to drink more water, or breathe more oxygen. Water and oxygen can revitalise our mind and body in ways that food simply cannot. We should always look at these two energy-giving aspects first before consuming more food, especially between meal times.

If we have not eaten enough food we will usually feel weak, with little strength. But if we are feeling tired, it is unlikely to be because we need to eat. Often tiredness comes from eating the wrong foods (e.g. sugar or carbohydrates), not being active enough and not being hydrated. So the remedy is to get some oxygen into our body, to hydrate ourselves and 'freshen ourselves up'. This is what water does. It makes us feel fresh and alert.

Try this experiment. Just for one day, between your meals, do not eat any other food. Instead, regularly reach for a bottle or cup of mineral water, and see if you can drink 2 litres or more during the day. You will be surprised at how significantly it affects the way you feel, and it may even encourage you to do it on a daily basis. Water is a truly miraculous substance that does amazing things for our body and mind. Let us remember this by drinking more of it and feeling its deep benefit.

20 - ADDICTIONS

The problem many people encounter in changing their diet is dealing with the strong pull toward eating foods that they habitually use as 'comfort foods'. Or perhaps there are foods which they cannot resist, or foods which they simply find addictive. Sugar,

chocolate or coffee, for example. Even bread is addictive for some people - they simply have to have it.

Over-eating is also an extremely common behaviour in many people, that affects them in a very similar way that some addictive foods do. How?

Well, often we are eating because we want to feel full - to not experience any emptiness inside - rather than to nourish our body. On a deeper level, this is directly related to our desire to feel fulfilled. But we should all know by now that food cannot 'fulfil' us, because fulfilment is something you feel in your heart, not in your stomach.

Fulfilment is experienced when our heart is full of Love, but if we don't know how to experience this, we choose to 'fill ourselves up' with food instead. This is why there is a strong pull in the western diet towards eating more filling foods like bread, pasta, porridge, starchy grains, potatoes and so on. Such foods fill us up easily and they keep us feeling full for a long time. As a result, we don't need to experience any 'inner emptiness' for quite a while, and we really don't like that feeling.

Food is very strongly connected with Love. Humans also have a very strong emotional connection to food, which is natural but not always healthy. You see, we cannot bring more Love into our life by eating more food. Yes, we can feel more nourished by incorporating healthier foods (like green vegetable juices, for example) into our diet, but the feeling of Love we want in our heart will not come from that juice or from a Spirulina smoothie! Such nutritious foods greatly increase the health of our blood and our heart, so that our receptivity and capacity for Love is increased. This is why healthy eating is such an essential part of creating happiness and fulfilment in our lives. This is what we can use food to our great benefit. Healthy eating is a very direct, effective and sustainable way to uplift your consciousness. But simply eating more food will have the opposite effect. Even eating too much of something considered to be a 'healthy' food can be used as a way of filling up the stomach and eliminating the sense of emptiness that is coming from elsewhere.

Overeating is a very common thing, and is just as addictive as consuming addictive food substances like sugar, chocolate, coffee, alcohol etc. Substances such as these create a temporary physiological 'high' in the body, and they can also lift the mood of the mind too, creating more positive thoughts for a short period. But as we know, the effect is only ever temporary. That is why we feel compelled to continue consuming these substances, so that we can keep experiencing the 'good feeling' that they bring. This is addiction.

Foods that nourish the body, that stabilise the blood sugar and make us feel grounded and calm, yet energised, do not take us 'up and down' like addictive foods

do. Foods such as substantial salads, organic vegetables, vegetable juices, protein-rich smoothies, super-foods, organic fruits, soaked seeds and nuts etc. build within us a strong platform for greater health, sustained vitality and balanced energy. They also help us to experience the joy and happiness that is a natural consequence of being in good health. Such foods will help us to experience the sustained 'natural-high' that comes through healthy, active, balanced living. There is truly no substitute for this wonderful feeling of vitality and well-being.

So what can we do if we feel that we have an addictive tendency towards certain food substances?

The answer is two-fold. The first part is very practical, the second part is about increasing awareness. This can also be applied to addictions to drugs.

Firstly, on a very practical level what we need to do is simple. Obviously, there is a strong desire within the body (and mind) for a particular substance, this we know. However, many people make a mistake here by focussing their attention upon this desire and attempt to get rid of it, battle with it or push it away. This approach is usually unsuccessful because we find ourselves engaged in a struggle.

So the secret is to remove the struggle completely, in a very practical way. How? We focus upon - and feed - a totally different, more natural desire that exists in the body. As we feed this other healthier desire any unhealthy desires will naturally become less compelling. Why? Because, firstly, they are not being fed by our attention, and secondly we are increasing our desire for substances and feelings that nourishes us in the right ways. It is simple.

As we keep our focus on feeding this healthier desire, any unhealthy desires completely lose their influence upon us and are fully replaced by the stronger pull of this healthier, more natural desire. It is completely effortless and guaranteed to be successful. In fact, it is the only natural way to be free of unhealthy desires and addictions.

So what is this 'healthier desire' I am talking about? It is simply the desire to experience the completely sustainable 'natural high' that comes from good health. The desire to feel good in your body, to feel more bright, more alive, more positive and energised. It is the desire to be fully alive, to be fully conscious, and we feed this innate desire in the most effective way possible - nutritionally.

This classic little story perfectly illustrates what I am saying:

One evening, a native American brave was telling his grandson about the battle that goes on inside of people. He said:

"My son, there is a battle between two wolves inside us all. One wolf is evil. It is greed, anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority and superiority, lies, false pride and ego.

The other wolf is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."

The grandson thought about this for a minute and then asked his grandfather: "Which wolf wins?"

The old Cherokee simply replied: "The one you feed."

We are always feeding a part of ourselves. Nutritionally, people feed the 'bad wolf' with foods like sugar, junk food: crisps, chocolate bars, biscuits, cakes, burgers, pizza, meat, deep fried foods, canned drinks, alcohol, coffee, cigarettes... any food or substance that is not wholesome and nourishing us in the right way. Even absorbing negative information (like reading or watching the news, or listening to aggressive or depressive music) feeds this negative part of us.

However, we feed the 'good wolf' with natural, simple and wholesome plant-based foods, like fresh organic fruits and vegetables, green foods, salads, juices, smoothies, raw or lightly cooked meals, non-animal proteins, seeds and nuts, pure water, fresh air, closeness with nature, harmonious, happy or peaceful music and so on.

The difference in how you feel, depending on what part of yourself you are feeding, is very clear and noticeable. Either you feel more energised, or more tired, more positive or more negative, more balanced or more more moody, more patient or more intolerant and short tempered, calm or restless, peaceful or agitated, and so on. These are the simple and observable consequences of how you choose to feed your self.

In terms of unhealthy addictions which may have a strong pull on you, you need to move toward the opposite end of the health spectrum. Addictions should be counteracted with deeply nourishing foods such as daily wheatgrass juices, vegetable juices and smoothies containing superfoods like spirulina. Green foods - juiced or eaten raw - are the best way to counteract imbalance and cravings for unhealthy substances. Eating green foods nourishes and balances the blood, which

in turn nourishes and balances the entire body, producing feelings of calm, peace and groundedness. It is that feeling which encourages us to avoid the "ups-and-downs" of addictive substances.

We learn to enjoy the pleasurable (and essential) feeling of being grounded, balanced and satisfied. Avoiding overly sweet food is a big part of this, as is choosing mostly plant-based proteins which satisfy our body's need for substance. There is a food called kefir, a wonderful homemade, probiotic cultured milk drink - made using cows or goats milk - which is well known for its nourishing and balancing effect on the body, as well as its ability to counteract sugar cravings, which many people struggle with. Choosing nourishing and satisfying proteins like kefir, spirulina (which is around 65% protein) and nuts and seeds is a simple way to establish the feeling of satisfaction and balance that diminishes the desire for addictive, "up and down" substances like coffee, chocolate, sugar, alcohol etc.

As we choose and consume our foods, it is important that we bring in more awareness of why we are doing so, and be aware of what certain foods are doing to us on different levels. Observe yourself - your mood and how your body feels - before, during and after ingesting the food. Is there a strong craving for it beforehand? This is a clear sign that it is not so much of a food, but more of a drug to you. As you eat it, there will likely be great pleasure and satisfaction, which of course is a good thing to have with food, but be aware whether there is a pull to eat more and more of it. You get this with sweet foods and salty foods (like cheese, dried fruit, roasted nuts, chocolate etc.) People call this 'moorishness', as the body is not being properly satiated and just wants more, usually because of the strong flavour in the mouth. This moorishness is not present in neutral foods like cucumber, green leaves, avocado etc.

When it comes to food compulsions, it is important to remember that feeling guilty about what we eat is very detrimental for us. It increases feelings of negativity, which in turn encourage us towards eating more of the foods that comfort us. Guilt is a major factor in eating disorders such as obesity and bulimia. So when you are aware that you are reaching for a food which is not-so-nourishing, remember that you have choices.

The first and most liberating choice is to choose a different and more nourishing alternative, for example choosing a delicious piece of fruit over a chocolate bar, a handful of nuts instead of eating bread, or a fruity/spicy herb tea instead of coffee or alcohol. If you need to, give yourself permission to still choose the 'not-so-nourishing' food afterwards, if you feel like you still want it. But the likelihood is that you will not because you have already made a healthy choice, and healthy choices

always lead to the desire to make more healthy choices. They simply encourage a feeling of health and wellness within us.

Conversely, unhealthy food choices usually encourage us to make further unhealthy choices. Why? Because 'unhealthy' foods usually have a very moorish quality and taste. They may stimulate the taste buds in very tantalising ways (like cake and chocolate for example) or satisfy and fill up our stomach (like pizza and pasta for example), yet they offer our body no significant nourishment and no tangible feeling of wellness, apart from a temporarily satisfied stomach. On the contrary, the foods mentioned above can often leave us feeling tired, irritable, slow, sleepy, congested and so on.

Many unhealthy foods give us an instant, but short-term positive change in mood (like sugar and chocolate) and we nearly always want to eat more of them when the feeling wears off. They have a mild drug-like effect upon us and therefore can be addictive. In fact, sugar is a highly addictive substance, in its various forms. I believe that sugar should be consumed as it is presented to us in nature - mostly in watery fruits, so that the water content of the fruit helps the sugar flow through our system properly.

Many unhealthy foods are simply moorish due to the strong flavours they possess (e.g. salty, sugary, spicy, vinegary). Be aware and notice these aspects within the foods you choose, and see if you are eating the foods for the above reasons. The primary and most common-sense reason to eat a food is because it makes you feel well, and contributes to a mood of positivity and enthusiasm within you. Obviously, the taste and texture of the food is also important because we must enjoy every aspect of eating.

We may not drink a green juice in the morning because it has a moorish taste, but this is a good thing. But if you want to make your green juices delicious, it is easy. Add a piece of fruit, or blend it with an avocado to make a juice smoothy. Carrot and wheatgrass juice, blended with a whole avocado, is absolutely delicious and deeply satisfying. If you can't get or grow wheatgrass, just use kale, chard or something else green, even wheatgrass (or barleygrass) powder.

So let's go back to that initial choice we have to make - for example, whether or not to eat that first square of chocolate; whether or not to have that first glass of alcohol etc. It is the most significant of all the choices because you are setting off a chain reaction of feelings, desires and chemical reactions in your body that create a momentum. Cravings begin with that very first taste, even if it is a small one.

It is the same with the first choices you make in your day; the first thing you do upon waking, the first food or drink you put in your body. Like if you start the day with a sugary cereal for example. You set the tone for your day, in subtle ways and in more obvious ways. The obvious consequence of eating an overly-sweet breakfast is that you are almost certain to be craving more sweet food an hour or two later as the sugar leaves your system, even if your breakfast consisted of dried fruits like figs or dates, sweeteners like honey or maple syrup, or starchy-sugary fruits like bananas. You are also much more likely to be short-tempered and reactive with others - another inevitable consequence of eating excessively sweet foods.

I believe the very best way to start your day is with a balancing green vegetable juice (especially with wheatgrass) or a balancing avocado smoothy with spirulina or other green superfoods. By doing this, you are nourishing your blood, calming your nervous system, and most importantly, not setting up a chain of bio-chemical cravings as happens when we consume sugary foods. If you do want a sweet breakfast, have it after your green drink and have it with kefir, or drink kefir afterwards. Kefir softens the impact of sugars on the nervous system, and helps us avoid the cravings and reactivity that sugars often create. Kefir is a protein drink due to the milk that we use to make it, therefore it has a grounding and calming effect upon us. It is also rich in tryptophan, which simply makes us feel happy. The word 'kefir' actually means 'good feeling'.

Starting the day with a green drink means setting yourself up in the best way to experience a day of greater balance, equilibrium, tolerance, patience and calm. Green juices and smoothies also energise us in a very balanced way, especially when they contain wheatgrass juice. So when you have a choice of food, especially when it is the first choice of your day, always see if you can satisfy your tastes and energy needs with a healthier option. Do the same when you notice a desire for what you recognise as an addictive substance arises. Choose something that nourishes you first (especially a green juice or smoothy) and see if you still desire the addictive substance afterwards.

If you find that after doing this you still desire the comfort food or the addictive substance, do not chastise yourself. You are human, a complex bio-chemical creature that is influenced by everything, and compelled to respond to these influences. Usually food cravings are simply a matter of body chemistry, so there is no need to make yourself feel bad about it. Give yourself permission. Tell yourself that you are allowed to have this food or substance you are craving, if you really want to. And when you ingest it, do it with awareness so that you can find out, "Is this really what I want? Is this really nourishing me in the way I want to be nourished?"

Be aware of how you feel different having eaten this food. This will give you a good idea as to the real reason you eat it. Does it make you feel happy? Does it stimulate and energise you (like coffee or chocolate, for example)? Does it make you feel full inside? Remind yourself that you can always feel the way that you wish to feel in a more sustainable and healthy way. For example, if you want to feel more energised on a long term basis, simply eat lighter food and drink vegetable juices daily. Make it a new habit. An increase in your energy will then become a more sustained experience, part of how you live, rather than stimulated 'high'. And we only choose such highs because we feel low.

The body is always seeking balance. For example, if you over-stimulate yourself with sugar, coffee or chocolate, soon enough the body will strongly crave something at the other extreme - something grounding or heavy to counteract the high level of stimulation. For many people it is bread - an instant way to bring down your energy and make you feel more stabilised and grounded after over-stimulation. Proteins - especially cheese - will also be craved for because they also ground and soothe us. The milk in the cheese is a very soothing antidote to the 'jangly' feeling that sugar or caffeine creates in our body. This is why kefir can be a very useful food, because it is very soothing on the nervous system, which is what sugar, caffeine and chocolate overstimulate. It is also far more digestible than milk or cheese as the kefir culture feeds on and transforms the lactose, which the human body can struggle to digest. It is also very delicious and satisfying.

Personally, I used to eat a lot of dark chocolate, mostly for the taste, but also as an energetic pick-me-up after eating a heavy, cooked meal. Now I do not eat any at all, but instead I include more vegetable juices into my predominantly raw diet. For the sense of satisfaction that chocolate used to give me, I find kefir infinitely more nourishing, and unlike chocolate, very stabilising.

Remember that the body simply seeks to experience balance. I once knew a person who made raw chocolate professionally. Not surprisingly, he also consumed large quantities of raw chocolate, and not a lot else, believing cacao to be one of the healthiest foods on the planet. It is certainly one of the most uplifting ones! Interestingly, the last time i saw him, he was regularly buying huge quantities of raw goats cheese and feasting on this when he had had enough of eating raw chocolate. His body was simply seeking balance, and telling him to eat a certain food to create it. The body is deeply intelligent. The more of an extreme you take it to, the more it will desire and seek the opposite extreme. You could call this the 'chocolate and cheese' rule!

The antidote, of course, is to choose the middle way. Nutritionally, this means eating more greens: leafy salads, broccoli, cucumber, avocados (which are very nourishing and stabilising), green juices with wheatgrass, smoothies with spirulina and so on. Quite simply, green means balance, and finding balance brings freedom from craving.

Addictive cravings will soon disappear from our lives as we feed the more natural desire of good health and well-being. We do this primarily with our dietary choices, and also by increasing the time we spend in nature. The energy of nature is deeply harmonising and nourishing for our entire being, and it can be totally relied upon to uplift us. If you are not feeling low, you will not feel compelled to create a high for yourself or to create comfort through the use of an external substance. This is the most natural and simple way a person can free themselves from addictive tendencies.

Many people do not consider the compulsive or addictive aspect of the foods they eat, or they do not take food addictions very seriously. They believe that it is 'only food' and that it can't do any harm. However, addictive cycles do harm us. They prevent us from being free. They keep us in dependancy and they keep us in upward/downward cycles of mood and emotion. We cannot experience peace in a sustained way while we are under the influence of addictive cycles, no matter what the addictive tendency may be. Creating balance in ourselves is the way to be free of addiction, and the way to greater peace.

20 - THE PERFECTION OF BEING

As we create more balance in the way that we feel, we open the door for ourselves to enter into a place of more sustained peace. We find that we can more just enjoy resting and being as we are, without the need for something external to influence and improve the way we feel. Peace needs nothing adding or altering. It just requires stillness, silence and receptivity in your mind and in your body. No stimulants, no suppressants, no mood enhancers. Peace is always there, waiting for you to become still, silent and receptive.

Receptivity, although an attribute found in both men and women, is a 'feminine' quality. It is the part of us which just wants to 'be', without having to 'do' anything or make anything happen. 'Doing' is a more masculine quality, which is also present in everyone. When we forget how to be still and receptive, we get stuck in the 'doing' part of our personality. We keep searching for what there is to 'do'.

This is where boredom comes from. Boredom is when the mind simply cannot think of anything that it feels like doing. Why can't it? Because it is time for 'being', for the mind to move into a receptive state, for the body to rest a little.

You need it. It is very important. You need time where you are simply at rest mentally, physically and emotionally, so that the body can recharge itself a little. And given the pace at which many people live their lives nowadays, fuelled by substances like coffee and sugar - we are all in need of much more 'being' time that we realise. If we fail to give ourselves these short periods of rest throughout the day, we will usually feel exhausted by the end of it.

If this pattern of behaviour - denying our body it's rest periods - continues day after day, we end up exhausting and harming our nervous system. We will eventually bring ourselves to the point where the body will have a 'nervous breakdown'. If this happens, the body finally gets what it so desperately needed for such a long time - a deep rest. After a nervous breakdown, there is no choice but to rest and recuperate.

But this is not the best way of doing things, as damage has been done to the nervous system and thus it must be healed. Healing can only occur properly when we are at rest, because the body requires all of our energy for its healing purposes. When there is damage of any kind done to the body, healing becomes the body's number one priority. This is just how it functions. Healing always comes first. So if your body is ever in need of healing, even if it is just from a common cold, or a sprained ankle, or stomach pains or something else you might consider as 'minor', just take things easy. Rest more than usual, if you can. If there are things that must be done, then do them very slowly and carefully. After all, when we do things in this way everyone benefits.

Sometimes, our desire to 'do' something about a particular situation and attempt to solve it will only lead us to frustration, even when our intentions are very good ones. A perfect example is the desire to solve a problem that a friend is experiencing. We might ask ourselves, "What can I do about this situation? I've tried doing this, I've tried doing that. I've tried saying this and saying that. There must be something I can do!?" But sometimes we simply need to step back and leave the situation alone. Perhaps give a person some space rather than trying to make them feel better, otherwise you might make them feel worse.

Sometimes you cannot solve a problem through 'doing' something. Sometimes there is nothing you can say or 'do', other than leave the situation alone. This can take great willpower, because our usual tendency is to want to find the root of the problem and make it better. Many men have this attitude, and it can be hard for

them to step back and leave something alone, because they are natural 'fixers'. Women know how to fix things also, but in a different way. Sometimes you just have to leave something alone and give it space to shift, change and heal by itself. This requires a degree of trust and patience which comes with practice. It also comes when you see problems resolve themselves naturally, as often happens when you give them a chance to do so.

This can be the case with wanting change in our own life also. Of course, there is much we can do, many habits we can change and so on. But what about honouring the part of ourself that does not need to be changed? The part of ourself which is already perfect and beautiful.

Becoming aware of this part should be our priority, because in truth, that's all it requires of us - that we are aware of it. When we are not aware of it, we can find ourselves on an endless treadmill of self-improvement, never quite satisfied with who we are because we don't feel perfect yet, or our thoughts aren't completely pure yet. We need to become aware of the part of ourself which is already perfect. It has always been perfect and always will be. Not only is it perfect, it is beautiful beyond words. It is your heart.

Many people will say, "My heart is not beautiful or perfect, it is tainted, it is bitter", but that is not your heart. What you are judging as tainted or bitter are the desires and thoughts that pass through your mind, which we might often say are impure, because they are so often selfish or uncaring ones. Pure thoughts come from the heart, which is always pure and can never be otherwise, no matter what you have done in your life.

When we bring our attention to our heart, our thoughts begin to move into alignment with the heart rather than the ego. It is then that we think of helping others. We think of being creative and expressive. We think of the goodness of life, and we realise how blessed we are. When your mind is aligned with your heart, you feel a deep and natural sense of harmony and fulfilment within you. A sense of peace and completeness is present, no matter what you are doing. Stress will not be created by your mind, emotions will not be stirred up; there will only be equilibrium and balance experienced throughout your being.

This is where our life opens up and blossoms - we realise that everything is a gift. Every little thing. We are continuously being presented with opportunities to give, to help, to be selfless, to act from our heart. We are also continuously being presented with opportunities to follow our dream, to live the way that our heart longs for, and to experience the joys and pleasures of a life fully lived. These opportunities are

always presented, but often we are either too distracted or too afraid to take them. But life is full of them, always.

Sometimes, people wonder why they are stuck - living in a place that does not inspire them, in a job that does not interest them, around people who don't seem to share their passions or dreams.

The truth is, of course, that you are never stuck. We are often just too afraid to break away from what is familiar, even if it doesn't inspire us. It does take courage to move away from a job or situation or group of people that we have gotten used to being around. Why? Familiar situations are safely predictable and they become effortless, meaning that we don't have to try anymore. We can just go through the motions on autopilot, with minimal effort. It sounds kind of easy doesn't it? But all the time we are doing this, our heart is suffering. Because the heart has a passion to create its dream, to do beautiful things in the world. It needs to give, it needs to share its love and warmth. It wants to be a contributing force toward something inspiring, something bigger than itself.

If our heart's desires for our life are ignored, we begin to give up on life, to give up on our dreams and aspirations. The heart starts to wither. But it can be revived at any moment. All it takes is one decision to be courageous and move into a new and different situation. That might just be beginning a meditation class in the evenings instead of going to socialise at the pub. Or going on a detox retreat in the sun, instead of a drinking and partying holiday in the sun! It could be looking at properties in a place where you'd really love to live, and saying, "let's just do this!" It could be looking at the expense of your lifestyle and deciding to live more simply, without so many costly possessions that require financial upkeep. This may then free you from a stressful job, or give you the possibility to attempt working from home on something closer to your heart. A low cost, simple lifestyle can bring us a lot more freedom than we expect, because our possessions and financial responsibilities burden us down in ways that we are not always aware of.

A simple, healthy life with just a few necessary possessions is highly conducive to a greater sense of freedom and happiness. Because we must remember that it is not the material things in life that satisfy our heart and make us happy. It is the virtuous qualities of life, such as kindness and generosity. More than anything else, our heart loves to give, and when we are enjoying giving, we feel deeply joyful and fulfilled - almost as if we are fulfilling our purpose in life, simply by giving.

Being in nature also reminds us that we do not need possessions to be happy. When the birds are singing beautifully and the sun is warming our skin, it is one of

the greatest and simplest pleasures of life. To simply lie down on the grass can be like being in paradise. We could be penniless, and still enjoy this wonderful experience.

Life is full of beauty and life is full of beautiful pleasures that touch our heart and make us smile. It is very true; the best things in life are free. We just have to choose to experience them. So many people shut themselves indoors and spend time watching television or browsing the Internet, when they could be outdoors instead.

My personal attitude is that as long as it is not raining heavily, I will put on all my warmest things (if I need to) and enjoy being in nature. That might be going for a walk in a park, in a nature reserve or in a forest. It might simply be working in the garden, or fixing things outdoors. I believe that a predominantly outdoor life is essential for our well being and happiness. If we have a predominantly indoor life, our health levels will never be what they could be. You cannot achieve radiant health through living a predominantly indoor life.

21 - DEATH AND LONGEVITY

Many people want to live a long and healthy life. Yet they fear the possibility of getting ill in their later years, as it so often signals the degeneration and approaching death of the physical body. Often, it is not so much passing over from this world that people are afraid of, but more the manner in which it happens. Who would want their body to slowly stop functioning properly? Who would want to experience increasing illness and malady until finally the body loses its ability to continue living? It is not an appealing scenario, because our innate biological drive is to live, to be in good health and to recover from illness so we can continue to live on. At some point, this cannot happen any more. But there is good news...

It doesn't have to be this way. Old age does not have to be a progressive succession of physical and mental deterioration, where faculties are lost and illness predominates. Can you believe this? Some people come to the end of their life without these problems. They simply pass away in their sleep. Their time has come. We all have our allotted time on this earth and it is up to us if we spend it in good health or poor health, in happiness or in misery.

But what if someone you know has already given up on life? What if that person has allowed themselves to sink into a depressive state and has stopped caring whether they live or die? Perhaps they are even welcoming the end of their life, hoping that it comes sooner. What can you do to help them?

Well, firstly we have to remember that another person's life is not something we can control. If a person has chosen to give up on life and we cannot encourage them to change their attitude and open up to life once again, we must accept that person's choice. It can be frustrating and painful seeing someone who has given up on life, especially when we sense that there is still the potential for them to experience joy and happiness, if only they would climb out of their deeply negative mindset. If they are not willing to, is there anything we can do?

What is happening for a person in such a situation is that they have stopped caring - primarily for themselves. They have given up on treating themselves lovingly. Perhaps they have completely forgotten what love and care feel like, therefore life has completely lost any meaning. Does this mean that you should stop treating them lovingly and showing them your heartfelt care? This is what that person needs. If they cannot give it to themselves, they need to be shown it by a compassionate and caring other.

And the desire to change that person - or their wishes - must be completely absent. We must accept them and their choices with a loving and compassionate heart, because otherwise we will resent them for not wanting what we want for them. If we are consistent in showing our love and care to that person, it will touch them. Perhaps it will help them to choose to open up to life once more, perhaps it will not. But no matter what, love will be in our heart for them, and this is of the greatest importance.

When loving, heartfelt care is present within us, we are free of the suffering and frustration that comes from having an unfulfilled agenda, even if that agenda is to improve the life of another. Sometimes we simply cannot do this, but we can always be at peace in ourselves, knowing that we are giving everything that we have to give, from our heart, at all times, no matter what another person maybe choosing for themselves.

However, such a situation is very unlikely to occur in an individual who leads an active and healthy life because they know the deep value of life. A life lived in excellent health, regularly eating all of the healthiest foods possible and little or none of the unhealthy ones, a life full of healthy daily activity, free of stress and destructive emotions, a life full of appreciation and gratitude for the simple gifts which we are surrounded with, a life lived predominantly outdoors, ideally in a warmer climate where we do not suffer harsh and unforgiving winters, a life filled with creative enjoyment and love for what we do, a life of happiness, shared and enjoyed with others... This is the kind of life we can all work towards.

It may sound extreme or idealistic, but we are free to make choices such as these and take the steps that lead us toward living life in this way. A life lived this way will certainly not have an unpleasant ending, only a happy one. The approach of death does not have to fill a human being with fear. Again, that is a choice. If the approach of death is accepted with peace in the heart, then there is no struggle. Indeed, why should we be afraid of passing over, when so many people have told us of the beautiful 'light at the end of the tunnel' witnessed in near-death experiences?

Passing over can be a deeply beautiful and spiritual experience when it is accepted and welcomed, rather than feared and resisted. As we get into our final years, it is important that we prepare ourselves to approach death in the right way. Then when the inevitable moment draws close, our heart can remain open and at peace. Our mind can remain still and clear, as we transition from one world to another. It can be very beautiful.

As i mentioned, i believe it is the events and circumstances which precede our death that many people fear. Ending our lives in a hospital room attached to machines and tubes and on painkillers is not an appealing scenario for anyone.

I believe that the degree of good health and well-being (including that of our mind and our heart) that we nurture during the whole of our life will determine what kind of ending our life will have.

Are we surprised that a life lived in mediocre or poor health, with only transient periods of happiness and fulfilment should end in illness and fear? I find it very sad that lives do end this way. But your life does not have to, because you have a choice about how you live your life now. And although you may not always notice it, new choices begin to influence and affect you immediately - physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually.

This is why I encourage you to embrace excellent health starting today. I encourage you to immediately begin addressing any unhealthy habits that do not serve you, and to assess whether you are truly happy and inspired doing what you are doing, and living where you are living. It is your life and it is in your hands. The choices you make today and tomorrow dictate what you will experience and what you will feel. They will directly determine the depth of harmony that you experience on the many levels of your being, and either lead your consciousness onwards into brighter realms of Peace and happiness, or simply keep you engaged in the search for equilibrium and balance, perpetuating experiences of frustration and suffering. This is how important your choices are.

EPILOGUE - Thank You

So to finish, I ask you to remember the very most important choice you can make, which is always made right now, in this present moment. It is the choice where to put your attention. You can choose to get lost in thoughts again if you wish, because you have that freedom. But you also have the freedom to choose instead to take a deep breath, relax your body and become conscious, in this moment, of the peace, warmth and gentleness that are found within your heart. It only takes a moment to go there, and you only need to remember.

Thank you.

To download all of my free healing ambient music, listen to my free radio stations, read 100s of my articles and watch my YouTube videos, click here: www.AlexanderBell.org

Please feel free to
contact me at
alex@godsrealm.com

