

My Silly Little Self Help Book

12/22/23 8:02:00 AM

~~THE BEST SELF HELP BOOK EVER THAT WILL MAKE ALL YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE, PROVIDE YOU WITH 24 HOUR CENTERED VIBRANT ENERGY, BRING YOU ALL THE FRIENDS, MONEY, AND FAME YOU COULD EVER WISH FOR, AND MAKE YOU MILLIONS OF DOLLARS – ALL AS YOU ARE COMMUNING WITH THE DIVINE.~~

LITTLE EVERYDAY PROBLEMS AND YOUR MAGIC JOURNEY

...or

FROM DAILY LITTLE THINGS TO THE SOURCE OF EVERYTHING

...or

LITTLE THINGS YOU CAN DO EVERY DAY TO MAKE YOUR LIFE A LITTLE (OR A LOT!) BETTER!!!

...or

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT, FROM SMALL DISTURBANCES TO HUMONGOUS EFFECTS IN HAPPINESS AND PERSONAL GROWTH

Pre Forward ☺

Today, December 21st, I sent this out to our DDI Learning Community with the following note:

dear friends,

i had the inspiration and dreaming to make this little “self help” book in 2012 🥰! which i did, mostly all of it right away :-) however thanks to uncrossed edges 😂 and “rationalizing perfectionism” 😂 it has remained lonely in my computer here, waiting to get out 😊

So 11 years later, thanks to an inner work about edge to share things “imperfect or unfinished”, i am excited to share this with you. It’s a little self-help book, called “My Silly Little Self Help Book” (more info on title is on the first page :-))

it’s a series of different inner works around topics that came up for me during that time. I thought some of the practices might be a little outdated :-), but truly they are not getting any less dated as time goes on 😊

so sorry for the long story, here it is, hope someone might enjoy it :-)

love to us all,

ellen

p.s. as you can see it is missing some stuff, like for example table of contents - maybe one day, but if i wait, it will likely be another 10 years 😂!!

Forward

Like many of us, I grew up hearing words of wisdom passed down from my great grandparents to my grandparents to my parents to me about how to live a happy healthy good life. (not to mention the many other comments from the universal peanut gallery, like “early to bed and early to rise makes a man happy wealthy and wise.”)

Maybe the exact contents of the daily life tips that were passed down to me don’t quite hold up for every day life in the 21st century - but the basic idea that there are little things we can do and little attitudes that we can incorporate each day to make our lives a little better has stayed with me. This self help book is a compilation of various simple exercises and attitudes that I am discovering make my life a little better on a daily basis. I hope they might do that for you, too. They are not daily programs or prescriptions, but rather practices that can be used to discover an inner wisdom that is meant specifically for the discoverer, on the day of its discovery. The exercises are the direct result of my training as a Process Work Therapist, and trinkets from my own inner work practice. All of them stem directly from Process Work theory and practice, developed by Arny and Amy Mindell.

The exercises don’t promise enlightenment or ongoing experiences of ecstasy or fame or fortune or perfect health or any of that – just the hope that in the midst of whatever you are doing in your life, these might help to make the quality of it just a little bit better.

About the Exercises

The process oriented principle that constructs all the exercises is essentially the same, and it goes like this.

a) notice a disturbance or b) notice something intriguing or curious.

Find out more about the disturbance or intrigue by focusing on it rather than trying to get rid of it.

Both disturbances and intrigues are information sources.

Discover the information in the disturbance or intrigue and find out how it is meaningful and useful for you in your life today.

The rest of the workbook provides specific formats for implementing this basic pattern in various different areas of your life. The examples given in the exercise are purposefully general, as they are simply meant to suggest patterns that can be applied in many different life situations. You will custom tailor them as you do them based on your own experience and the framework of your life. So the examples should really be seen as just that, examples. You will know how or if they apply for you in your individual life.

In each chapter you will find a longer case example to demonstrate how the exercise works.

Your Experience Will Tell You!

This is a phrase that I use again and again in this workbook. It is the basis of Process Work, as I understand it. The steps in the exercises are meant to help you discover aspects of your experience that you are not yet aware of, enjoying them and letting them guide you. And this principle is the basis of each step and of each exercise. This is why many times I write, “your experience will tell you what is right for you”. Because that is what it is all about. For me personally, this is an ongoing challenge. It is hard to take time with my inner experience. So much in the outer world calls me away, as well as my own patterns, habits, and perceived expectations from others. That’s all fine, it’s just ultimately not always as deeply satisfying as it could be. Sometimes I avoid depth, and stay with something on the surface that feels superficially good - and for some moments that is just right for me. But then in other moments I am seeking something else, and I am learning that following this longing by unfolding my experience can at times lead me to a place that is beyond the concept of better or worse, and this is truly gratifying.

Finally and Most Importantly

Everything I know about formulating exercises I have learned from my partner Max, who can make something deeply enriching and uplifting out of the most horrible seeming problem, or the most tiny little mosquito-of-a-disturbance, without repressing it. Many of the exercises in this workbook have been developed by Max for seminars that we have given, or out of inner work that we have done together, and all of them have been inspired by his way of living life with reverence and awe for all the experiences that he meets along the way. For me, this is the path of ultimate happiness.

As you can see, none of these ideas are my own. I am more like an editor of this workbook than an author. I am simply putting together ideas and practices that I have learned from others that have been helpful to me, with the hope that they will reach you, too. It’s really a chain letter that has


reached me by a lucky twist of fate. I am passing on jewels that have been passed onto me so generously, and I hope that in this writing I can do justice to the concepts and principals from which this book is born. My vision is to give practical and hands on experiential tools that are easily accessible and can be used in your everyday life.


User Guide


Personally, I am not a big fan of user guides – In fact, I try to avoid them whenever possible, and figure whatever it is out on my own. However, they are actually really useful sometimes. So I hope to make this one as short and user-friendly as possible, for you to refer to. It should make going through this book more fun and rewarding for you, because the steps in the exercises will make more sense. Without further ado, here it comes.

Hand gesture:

Many of the exercises have a step that says, make a hand gesture that describes or represents that experience for you - or make a hand gesture that represents that energy. This helps to get to know the experience better through a physical experience of it, not just a mental idea that you have about it. To do this, just make any gesture with your hand. For example, if the energy is something powerful or aggressive, you

might make a fist that thrusts forward.  This thrusting can have a very different quality depending on your experience. Maybe it is fast and quick. Maybe it moves forward in a long, slow fashion, more like lava.

Another example would be something sharp, clear and direct, expressed with a downward cutting motion of your hand.  Or a happy exuberant gesture could be both hands shooting up with fingers

spread.  There are of course an infinite number of gestures and hand movements that you can use, you will find the one that is just right to capture your experience – when you make the movement, you should have a sense of “o.k., that’s it”.

Anchor

Sometimes it can be useful and fun to have something to anchor the experience that you get to in an exercise. This helps to remember it and keep the feelings and insights with you as you go through your day. You can use clothing, jewelry, tattoos, notes to yourself in the house, etc, to remind you of the meaning and essence of your experience.

Integration

In some of the exercises, you will find steps at the end that are meant to help integrate your experience into your everyday life. Sometimes, however, the important thing is to simply enjoy an attitude, mood, or perspective shift that comes out of the exercise: working on integration might not be right for you, or might even take away from the essence of your experience. You will know when thinking about integration is the right direction for you, because you will naturally begin to think about how to bring your experience into your everyday life. If you do want to think about integration, it's simple. Just imagine how you might be different in your relationships, your work-life, your inner relationship with yourself, if you would integrate this new experience, insight, or attitude shift.

Essence

In many of the exercises, one of the final steps includes finding the **essence** of your experience. The essence is a timeless quality that transcends the local expression of a certain experience. It is something that is difficult to describe in a word, as it is formless and eternal somehow, like love, devotion, gratitude. These are words that point to experiences that are larger than life and impossible to name. The names point to an essential experience that is only known through experience. Essences manifest in many forms. For example, the essence *freedom* might be the core of an experience of running fast, but *freedom* might also be the essence that you see if you look at a painting full of bold colors. Freedom could also be the essence of an experience of lightness, or as Janice Joplin says, "freedom is just another word for nothin left to do". For a list of some possible essences (there are many more that are not listed there) see the appendix.

Chapter 1 "The Most Important Person in the World to You is You and You Hardly Even Know You"

A great teaching that came to many children of my generation on the TV interludes called "Snippets" - but hard to implement! Life is a drag when we constantly look to the outside, only, for support. Even if it comes, it is not sustainable, and puts pressure on ourselves and the other who is giving it. This is not to discredit the joy of supporting others and being supported by others; I think this is one of the wonderful ways that we as human beings can express our love and sweetness - but it seems to taste better when it is the icing for the cake, but not the cake itself.

Believing in Your Own Experience – the act of focusing on your own experience, making time and space to notice what you notice, is itself a big shift for many of us because of culture and upbringing.

This exercise is the first in the book because the ability to focus on yourself is essential for all the other exercises that will follow. The purpose is to befriend yourself with your own experience by discovering a personal ally who loves and values it.

INNER SUPPORT: Finding Your Inner Friend

A moment of love: Think of a time in your life that you felt loved by someone else; a lover, a friend, a pet, a parent, a divine spirit, a nature spirit, an element in nature. This may have been for just a brief moment. Remember that moment. What was it like? What was it about that experience that made you feel loved? Be as specific as you can be.

Become the lover: Imagine for a moment that you were that person or being who loved you. Become that person or spirit. Try to make a few movements like that person/being: walk like them, stand like them, or sit like them. What is the pace and rhythm of the walk? What is the posture like? As you do this, imagine the state of mind and quality of energy that goes with this posture or gait. Now try to embody it yourself.

Perspective of the Lover: Now as this person, notice your perspective or attitude about life. How does this person feel about life, the world, people?

See yourself through the eyes of the lover: Continue with this new perspective and take a look at your everyday self - what do you see or experience when you look at yourself through the eyes of the lover? Take your time and really get to know yourself through their eyes.

Give yourself a tip: from the viewpoint of the lover, what would you recommend to yourself - do you have any words of advice or wisdom?

Live the life of the loved: make a plan to take this advice today, and enjoy it! Try to do one concrete thing in homage to your "lover".

Believing in your own Experience

This for me is the most difficult growing area of all, and the most important for this book; believing in and valuing your own experience, even if it is contrary to what you have been taught, or to what others think. So to really do this, start out by checking with yourself, if the idea of believing in your own experience is right for you.

I think it takes courage to notice what you experience, because chances are that some of what you notice will contradict an outer belief system, or a person whose opinion you value, or the social values within your particular culture. Here is an exercise to work with this dilemma.

Think of something that you have done, or would like to do, that someone or some belief system that is important to you would disapprove of. This might also be a new way attitude or way of behaving in relationships - it need not be an actual act. Describe to yourself what it is about this action or behavior that you imagine is wrong in the eyes of the disapproving person or belief system.

Criticize yourself from that person or belief system's viewpoint. What was wrong with what you did, (or are considering doing)? As you begin to formulate the criticism, notice the energy in the criticism as well. Is it scolding, angry, demeaning, punishing? Make a **hand gesture** that describes the energy of that criticism. For example, maybe from the viewpoint of this figure or belief system, you have been selfish, inflated, weak, etc. You will know when you have pin-pointed exactly what has disturbed this outer figure.

Do it more!!! Instead of trying to change this behavior, exaggerate it now. If the criticism is that you were selfish, imagine how you would be now if you were *really* selfish (this could mean that you put yourself and your own experience at the center of everything) What would happen? How would you be if you would really be free to express this aspect completely? Keep going until you have a genuinely uplifting experience that gives you a sense of relief and liberation. Is there a gesture or an image that expresses this experience for you and can be an anchor?

When you really allow yourself to “indulge” in this forbidden experience, does your behavior change somehow? Notice if you would add or change anything in the situation that you described in step one if you would really embrace this experience.

Using the same energy of the critic, formulate a program for yourself to “indulge” in this experience. For example, if the critic was scolding, tell yourself in a scolding manner, **you must be more selfish** (put yourself at the center!)

Example from my own inner work:

The situation that I worked on was one in which I expressed myself strongly in a group. Although it felt right in the moment and even soon after, I later began to imagine that I had been “bad” according to the conflict paradigm that I am trying to practice.

When I imagined the figure who was criticizing me, it was a scolding figure. I was surprised by the criticism when I discovered what had been “bad” about my behavior from the point of view of this figure. The scolding figure said “you became **intoxicated** with your own experience and lost awareness of the other side”. Intoxicated by my own experience!!!! this is exactly right, I was, I often am, and I feel guilty about it and try to hide it, even from myself. I think this is bad for reasons of personal history and culture.

The next step was to do this more. If I would really be intoxicated by my experience, I would celebrate the joy of who I am. I love being me! it is deeply fun and ecstatic just to be me! I enjoy my spirit and the experiences that I have, when I allow myself to have them and enjoy them, and am grateful for them. The gesture that expresses that experience of happiness about being me is an exuberant movement of the hands going up and out! If I would really allow this to be, I would spend time noticing what I experience (this is putting myself in the center of everything) and I would be happy about it!

If I would feel have been more free to do this, I would actually have shared that in that meeting. I would have said, I love the experiences that I have right now, I feel in contact with something deep that is moving me, and it’s a joy to experience that and to have a chance to share this with all of you. I love shining here. And from here I see you shining too. In this case, that would have added a piece to the experience that was missing for me. Surprisingly enough, I would have naturally related to the other side, BECAUSE I was so excited about my experience, and in my imagination, this would have brought a mood shift and more fluidity into the whole situation. The truth is, I wasn’t intoxicated ENOUGH with my own experience!!!



Exuberant gesture like firecracker

The final message from my scolding critic that I will try to follow today is: BE INTOXICATED WITH YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE!!

Getting up in the morning

Some of us wake up in the morning full of energy and ready to go. Not me! I have always been “morning challenged”, and over the years have learned a few things that can help to start the day off a little better.

In this chapter are practices to address the different morning states that can be challenging in the attempt to “face the day”.

Better than Coffee – exercise for when you “Can’t wake up” – not quite present yet, even if you are up. Coffee and tea doesn’t seem to do much either.

1) Notice that you are sleepy or groggy – This might sound obvious but it is easy to ignore these experiences, or to just try to overcome them.

2) How do you know you are sleepy/groggy?

Head is cloudy, you have few thoughts

Mind is empty

Body feels heavy

Body feels floppy

Don’t want to get up/don’t want to move

3) Make space for that experience. Instead of trying to overcome the experience that you found in step #2, make space and time for the experience, allow it to be. Don’t fight it if you can help it, try to enjoy it.

cloudy head: make it more cloudy, don’t try to focus

mind is empty: allow it to be empty

body feels heavy: let it become even heavier, follow the heaviness and let it lead you. (maybe you go down to the floor, put your head down, etc.)

body feels floppy: pick up an arm or a leg with the other hand and then drop it, feel the flop and enjoy it

don’t want to get up: Imagine if you wouldn’t get up, what would be good about that. What is it that is so good about being in bed that you don’t want to go away from?

4) What is good about that experience? Find out what is good about the experience you unfolded in the previous step? How do you need it somehow? *For example, a cloudy head might allow you to be unfocused, more easy-going and mellow. (you will know what it is for you) - or staying in bed might be inviting you to enjoy a more cozy, introverted attitude/experience during the day.*

5) How can you bring this into your day today? Maybe simply having awareness about it is enough. Or maybe you would change something outwardly. The point is, try celebrating this aspect you found by living it somehow in your life today!

floppy – attitude of hanging loose, loosening up about things

cozy introverted – enjoy being and inner states, not forcing yourself to relate on the outside more than you have to

heaviness – slow and steady, rock like, unshakable, connected to the earth

cloudy mind – dreamy, less focused

empty mind – enjoy freedom of too many thoughts, just be here now!

Song in your Head – it's playing there when you wake up or it comes to you later in the day, how come?

I often wake up to a song in my head and I don't know quite where it came from, or one gets stuck in me later on and it keeps playing and playing. Here are a few steps to enjoy that song in your day and find out if it has a message for you:

Notice that there is a song in your head! (sounds strange but actually it's easy to listen to it playing in your head without noticing it is there)

What song is it? Listen to it as it plays in your head.

Hum or sing along if that is enjoyable for you. If you have the song available, play it for yourself.

Listen to the song and notice what is good about hearing it right now, what do you like about it?

Notice the atmosphere of the song. Is it exuberant, melancholy, romantic, energetic, etc?

Move a little bit or a lot to the rhythm, enjoy it. Let the atmosphere of the song affect you. It might be something happy, easy going, optimistic, somber, melancholy, mysterious or longing. Just let it in and around you.

As you enjoy the mood of the song, think about how it is important for you today. If it was the background for your day, how would this affect you?

The message for you of the song might be in the mood. In case there is another message for you in the song, in addition to the mood, hear that too. For example, the mood of the song might contrast with the storyline of the song, like the song is upbeat but the lyrics tell a depressing story. In this case the song might be helping to bring a better mood to a difficult situation that you might be in the midst of.

Snippet

Quick Dance Break on a Busy Day

Have you ever noticed when you are busy working at the desk, a song is playing in your head?

Maybe there is some background music in your workplace that is particularly catching your

attention. Try taking 5 minutes to dance to that song in your head, if you are in a place that you

can do that easily, playing the song or just hearing it in your head. If you are an avid dancer and you are at work where you aren't really able to do that, take a quick bathroom break and dance in the stall. It is as weird as it sounds, but can be rejuvenating! Then think, what is the spirit, energy, attitude in that song that appeals to you right now, and how do you need that today?

Another possibility is that you notice yourself fidgeting, like your leg is going back and forth, or your thumbs are twiddling. In that case, turn to the page on fidgeting, which shows how to make this little fidget into a little fun dance.

Shapeshifting into something that catches your eye!

Nutrition, Exercise, Quirks, and Body Wisdom

This section draws on body wisdom. It does not propose any kind of preferred diet or exercise plan, but assumes that the body is wise and so are our strange preferences, somehow. We just need to find out what they are and how they are wise. The exercises are meant to access the intelligence in our patterns and body experiences, not to change them.

This is not a medical book, and is not meant to replace information about nutrition and body chemistry. It is meant to discover the way of nourishing yourself that is best for you, including timing and amounts and rhythms and colors and all kinds of strange preferences that you might have.

Personally I feel that in the area of diet and exercise, many of us have been told so many things about what we are supposed to do that the concept of finding our own body wisdom separate from that seems nearly impossible. Also there is so much shame involved with eating patterns and health issues. This first exercise is to assist in finding the wisdom of your nutritional or dietary quirks, not to change them. (understanding well that some patterns also need to be changed for reasons of health, this is not a replacement for medical intelligence)

The Wisdom in Your Quirks

What is the pattern that you have around eating that is the most embarrassing to you, or at least that you consider strange, unconventional, or even compulsive? Allow yourself to admit this to yourself, tell yourself about it. What is the most embarrassing aspect of this pattern for you, what do you judge yourself for?

What do you like about this quirk or pattern that you have? What is good about it for you? You probably know a lot about what is not good about it, so this step will require a shift in focus. What is enjoyable about this habit or its effect on you? *Possible Examples: eating little makes you feel light and free. Eating lots makes you feel complete and whole. Eating only ice-cream helps you to feel sensual and cool, etc. (these examples are too literal and trite, your experience will tell you what is real for you)*

Enjoy the effects of this pattern. If the effect is lightness, make a few *movements with your arms or walk around and experience lightness. If it is feeling complete and whole, experience completeness and wholeness. If it is sensuality, make a few sensual movements. Find the experience in your body and relish it.*

How do you need more of the effects of this experience in your life? *Maybe your everyday mindset is too heavy and serious, therefore you crave lightness. Maybe you feel you always need something else and find it difficult to embrace and celebrate your own richness. Maybe you have a very work oriented attitude and don't enjoy enough the sensuality of being.*

Make a plan to make a little more space in your life for this experience. How could you live it just a little bit more, in your relationships, in your work life, in your alone time, your free time, or all of it? make a plan that feels uplifting and healthy to your spirit.

Next time you catch yourself feeling embarrassed about a pattern that you have, try to remember the essence that you are striving for and experiment with bringing it to life in the moment!

Body Energy: a little tired right now, and fighting against it? Try this exercise to see if you can find some gems in that energy

Follow your body: allow yourself to follow your body energy. If you would really let go, what would you do? Maybe you would lie down, sit in a certain way, put your head down, you will know because you will feel a sense of relief when you get to it. Take time to find just the right position, and then enjoy!

Enjoy the position: now you need do nothing, just hang out in the position that you got to and enjoy. Allow yourself to dream. What happens when you are in this position? Do you have certain daydreams, thoughts, or feelings? Just notice any experiences that you have and enjoy them.

Imagine a person/lifestyle: from that position, allow your fantasies to flow. What kind of person do you imagine would being in a posture like this be a “normal” thing? What kind of lifestyle would a person have this type of position in their everyday “movement repertoire”?

Let that lifestyle overtake you: you need not do anything, you are already there. Just allow yourself to identify with this experience and lifestyle. How might you go about the rest of your day if you were to embrace this new lifestyle? Maybe you would go through your activities with a different rhythm and/or attitude. Experiment and “try the new persona on for size”!

Anchor: it might help to wear something on your body that helps you to remember and enjoy this new way. Maybe a certain color to wear, jewelry, or putting your hair in a special way. You will know if you found the “right” anchor b/c it will feel good to your “new identity”.

Snippet

Break Time!! - Need a little break? – next time you feel you need a break, and have a moment or a few moments for that, try this: Notice what it is that you need a break from. Maybe it is an actual task that you are doing. Maybe it is a mindset, like being very focused on completing tasks, doing productive things, etc. Maybe it is a break from taking things seriously, etc. You will know b/c it will be the thing that you feel you really don’t want to do. Now take a break from that consciously. If it is a break from focusing, allow yourself to dream and drift. If it is a break from

doing things for a “purpose”, take time to do something for the sheer joy of it! This might make your break time even more rejuvenating!

Getting the best of your Addictions!

There is a specific reason for this title. For many of us, one of the most difficult things about addictions is the shame that is involved in the idea of having one. There is a prevalent attitude in many cultures that addictions are a sign of moral weakness. This makes it hard for most of us to even think of ourselves as having addictions, or addictive tendencies, so we repress them and hide them even from ourselves. Aside from the inner turmoil and sense of unease that this situation causes, it robs us of the chance to get something really good out of our addictions. The substance that we are addicted to, whether it is coffee, alcohol, chocolate, a certain kind of food or drug, is usually not as good as the experience in the background that we are seeking. To get the best out of your addictions, try by-passing the moral aspect for this exercise and imagine there is something really great waiting for you in the addiction - the addiction is just a road sign pointing you towards it.

*****important point! If you are just in the process of quitting something, and the addiction is close to you, it might be better to wait and do this further down the road. It's possible that as you focus on the state in the addictive substance, your desire for it will be re-constellated – so use caution and your own awareness to gauge if this is a good exercise for you right now. Thank you!**

Think of a substance that you have a complex relationship with. For example, you really like the substance (coffee, alcohol, sugar, cigarettes, etc), but you have a feeling or you know it isn't good for you.

What do you like most about the substance? Is it the taste, the altered state that comes from it, the ritual of doing it. There may be many things that you like about it, use the one that is strongest for you now in the moment.

Use sound and/movement to describe the thing you like most about the substance. This is something that is hard to describe in words – using sound and movement can capture an aspect that is otherwise difficult to name because it describes a multidimensional experience. Notice if a song or an image comes to mind as you make the sound and movement.

What is the essence of the sound and movement that you made in the above step? Make the sound and movement a few times until you know. (see glossary of essences if you are stuck in coming up with one)

How is this energy/essence, important for you in your life? how do you need it, or how do you need more of it?

How can you live and enjoy this essence more in your everyday life? (think of relationship life, work life, everyday activities, your own inner life, health, etc.)

Something to ponder: meditate on what makes it difficult for you to live this essence more. Maybe there is a belief system about life or an everyday attitude that can at times stand in the way of embracing this essence more.

Can't Get Enough of Something Great

Maybe it is time in nature, maybe it is a sport, a computer game, a certain activity. But sometimes there are some things that you just can't get enough of. This can be a blessing or a curse, depending on which way you look at it. A blessing because it is great to have something that you really love to do, a curse because part of you can't get enough of it but another part of you feels its time to move on and make space in your life for other things. So what to do?

Name the activity that you just can't get enough of. Example: for me these days it is running. I just love it and am looking forward to the next time I get to do it again.

Now focus on that activity, imagine doing it and find out what it is about it that you love the most.

Really take your time, and be specific as possible. Example: if I imagine myself running, there are many things about it that I love, but the moment of springing off one foot with all of my might and then feeling that I am flying, that is what I love the most about it right now.

Make a hand movement or a gesture that expresses that experience that you love so much.

example: I made a gesture of both hands coming from inside and waving quickly outward in a flowing fast motion.

What is the essence of that gesture? The essence of the movement above is freedom, total abandon.

How can you live this essence more in your life, and enjoy it as much as possible, even when you are not doing the actual activity that you love to much? giving myself wholeheartedly to everything that I do in my life, with joy and abandon. This means for me not worrying so much about how well I do or if it is "right", the way I am doing it, but just enjoying the experience of doing it.

What everyday attitude do you have that makes it hard for you to embrace this essence? I tend to act as if the point is doing a good job and getting it right- I get bogged down by trying to do "well" and in that process lose the joy of it. And there is a moral attitude about doing well, "though shalt try your best to get it right!" It is not the trying to do well that extinguishes the joy factor, but the heavy moral attitude about that.

Guilt

The “g” word it’s worse than any swear word in my inner vocabulary. I don’t like feeling guilty, even though I spend a lot of time doing it. So many forms of guilt and so many things to be guilty for – here’s an exercise with the hope of getting something useful out of it too, instead of just self battery, which can get old.

You feel guilty about something. Try to be specific as possible about what it is that you feel guilty about. For example, if you feel guilty because you have eaten too much, what is it about eating too much that makes you feel so guilty? Have you sinned against your body, against God, have you broken a program you meant to keep, does this go against a principle that you shouldn’t over indulge, or that you should not take more than you need? Find out what exactly it is about what you did that you are feeling guilty for.

Find the principle, belief system, or worldview that would define this action as wrong or guilt worthy. This might come to you right away because it is a religion or paradigm that you consciously belong to. It may also be more difficult to find if it is a principle that you picked up and live by but not consciously. For example, if you feel bad for eating too much, and the thing you feel guilty about is that you shouldn’t take more than you need, this could be the world view of an ascetic, a spiritual seeker, who is grateful for what is given and only takes as much as is needed in prayer to the divine. Think about what is so important about this for you, this is an important aspect of who you are and a value system that you live by.

Now go back to the thing you did that you feel guilty for. Use your imagination and find out what kind of person you would have to be to do this same thing without any remorse whatsoever. This could be an actual person that you know, a fairytale figure, someone you can imagine, or a person from another culture or time period. (for example, a person from the epicurean time period)

What principles does this person live by? What is the essence of their philosophy or way of life? what does this person live for?

Both of the principles that you discovered in this exercise are important aspects of who you are, Reflect on how you could live each one more consciously in your life, in honor of the principles in you that they represent.

Something to ponder: is there a way that these two principles are somehow interrelated/interdependent? How do they enhance one another? Is there a way that they belong together?

Meeting Your Maker: Working with Persistent Guilt! here is another exercise for working with a certain kind of guilt, when you feel you have not done well with something and you can't let yourself off the hook for it, you feel you have "wronged" the Great Spirit, the Divine, God, or whoever it is that you most revere. This is how Max saved me one day from my own hell ☺

Situation that Haunts You: Describe to yourself the situation that you are plagued by. Try to distill the aspects that you feel worst about. (it's very likely that there are many aspects you feel bad about which take turns occupying your mind. Name the few that are most present for you at the moment).

Discovering "The Authority": Put that issue aside for just a moment and imagine a figure who is the ultimate authority in life, the "one who knows" and who has the power to decide what is right and wrong. Does this figure have a human form? What does he/she look like? How does he/she talk, stand, move? Take time and imagine!!

Meeting "Your Maker": o.k., now is the moment: imagine this is it, it is all over and it is time to "meet Your Maker". Imagine the entire scenario as "your maker" asks you about the situation you described in step #1. "what do you have to say for yourself, you have done "x,y,z"

Explain Yourself! This is the moment, explain what happened, what really happened, be really honest about how you "slipped" in that situation and why you did what you did.

Redemption: allow Your Maker to respond, and continue the dialogue until your maker gives you redemption. Maybe he/she asks something of you, maybe you need to continue until you really feel you understand your behavior and can stand behind yourself in that. Maybe your maker is satisfied with your response and that's where it ends. Your Maker will tell you!

Get out of Hell Free: make a card for yourself, signed by "Your Maker" that releases you from hell, and make sure to keep it with you in the next 48 hours in case you forget!!!

Failure!!!

Why do I put exclamation marks after the word failure? I haven't encountered all the many people that strive consciously towards failure. But like all the other disturbances we are working on, failure can be full of rich experiences. Try this exercise and you might find something uplifting in your worst possible failure fantasy:

Success in Failure

A recent Failure: Think of the last time you failed at something. This could be in the realm of something as small as baking bagels (as in my case!) or something as large as giving a “flop” of a speech in front of a large audience (also in my case ☹)

The worst aspect: Describe the situation to yourself again. If you can stand it, go over the scenario and try to find the aspect of the failure that you feel worst about. (you wasted time, you looked stupid, you offended someone else - whatever it is, you will know when you have discovered it)

Receive the Gift: Now make a shift. Imagine a fairy god mother/father gave you this failure as a gift. The fairy figure looked at you and thought, she/he needs to _____ (fill in the blank) in order to realize that _____ in order to have a better time in life. *(For example, if the worst thing about your failure was that you wasted time, then the gift in this could be to realize that maybe you take success too seriously, you think that life is about achieving, but you need to relax and enjoy the roses on the way, not try to always “use” your time so efficiently)*

Show your gratitude: Make a plan to show your gratitude towards your fairy spirit who gave you this gift by incorporating the message somehow into your everyday life this week.

Snippet

On top of it! (if you are “not on top of it”, what are you on top of? maybe it is not the big IT, but it must be something.) for example, maybe you are not on top of the thing you are supposed to be doing, but you are “on top” of relaxing. And if you would really open up to and embrace relaxing, then you might find yourself in a very great place that might even allow you another way of getting on top of the “IT” that you weren't on top of!

Looks and Size

I don't think I need to say anything about the pressure to look a certain way, and the impact it can have on us. So I won't go into discussing that aspect, but go straight towards the antidote.

Making Friends with your Looks (as they are today)

Think of one aspect of your physical appearance that you don't like. It can be your size, your shape, facial features, hair, etc.

In your perception, what type of image does this physical feature portray that you don't like?
(Example: small size makes you look young, people won't take you seriously, etc.)

Take this aspect to the extreme. *If the problem is a small size, imagine becoming even smaller, teeny tiny!*

When you have reached the extreme, allow yourself to be reminded of a fairytale figure, mythic figure who has this same characteristic. *For example, a very small fairytale figure is tinker bell from peter pan.*

Make one single hand movement that captures the essence of that figure. What does that hand movement, and that character represent? *In the case of tinker bell, you might say magic.*

Think that this original physical "attribute" is meant to help you to portray the message of the figure that you discovered in steps 4 and 5. How would you live differently if you believed yourself to be a messenger of the aspect that you found in step #5?

Snippet: Magic moments on your errand runs! – simple basic and most everyone already knows this, so here is a simple reminder. There are certain moments in life that are especially magical, like when someone in the grocery store line starts talking out of nowhere and shows you/gives you just the energy, advice, or attitude that you need – or you hear a simple random comment from someone on the street as you walk by that is just what you needed to hear. I won't destroy the magic by saying any more. This is just to highlight the preciousness of those moments, hold onto that gift as long as possible by taking the message seriously/joyfully, and really living it.

Missing a Place

Have you ever found yourself missing a special place, one that is close to your heart, and feeling a little melancholy about it. This might be an experience far from your awareness, because you repress it – it seems childish or silly, and what you are going to do about it, anyway, move there? Your vacation time is already used up, and going for a couple of weeks probably wouldn't do it anyway. Here is a way of going there, without a plane ticket, without a car, and staying as long as needed.

Think of a place that is special to you and that you find yourself sometimes thinking of and missing. This could also be a place that you have never actually been in physical form, but you anyway long to go there. What place is it?

Allow yourself to miss it, to miss it as much as you actually really miss it, like a lover or a good friend, if this is how it feels to you. Feel the atmosphere of the place. Let yourself daydream about it. Take as much time as you need to really experience your love and/or longing for the place.

As you daydream, notice if there is anything in particular in your fantasy that really stands out. It could be something tiny, like the sound of the water lapping onto a boat in the ocean, or the feeling that you have when you walk down a particular street. Your daydream will take you there, your only task is to catch it by noticing it.

Now allow yourself to focus on that aspect that really captures your attention the most. Stay with it until you know just what it is about that particular aspect that draws you so much. (for me, with the sound of the water lapping on the boat, it was an atmosphere of playful longing, an enticing water spirit that says, come play with me, enter my world of joy and happiness, magic and mystery)

What is the atmosphere like in that experience? enjoy it and get to know it as much as possible by making space for it. What is unique about that particular atmosphere in that particular place/experience?

Join that atmosphere and become it. Let it take you over, let it get into your blood. What do you experience now. How do you experience your body now, how do you experience life? How is this different from your usual way of being?

Enjoy this shift in mood and attitude, and the experience of “being” in this place without the traffic or jetlag to get there!

Snippit: You create your own reality??!! Yes, but not in the way your inner critic means it when he/she blames you for something difficult that happens in your life. The next time you catch yourself thinking something like this and using it against yourself, try taking this thought in a different direction. If this “negative” event were a gift from a loving spirit, trying to help you along your path of growth and development, what would the message be?

Moods

Need I say more? They can really take you over. If it's a good mood, it's great while it lasts, if it's a bad mood, it can be a real drag. Either way, it's easy to feel a victim of moods. The intention of this exercise is not so much to get out of a particular mood, but to make friends with it so you can enjoy it more and maybe understand its essence better.

Discovering the atmosphere: Allow yourself to notice your mood, whether it is a good one or a bad one. Take time to experience and focus on its quality. What is time and space like in that experience? (slow, fast, tight, expansive, heavy, light, etc) Does it have a color? Does a song come to mind that expresses that mood for you? Get into it and allow the mood to take you over, become someone else for a moment.

Who belongs to this world? let your imagination go. For whom would this atmosphere and world be considered normal reality, not a mood?

For this person or being, what is the point of life? (to enjoy everything, to be with others, to meet a challenge, to become enlightened, to hang out with nature, to find God, there are endless possibilities!)

New Birth! You might think that this person is being born in you through your mood today. Give this emerging spirit a name, and celebrate the birthday by appreciating this new world and perspective.

Snippet

A Moment of Silence

In grade school this was a punishment. We got too rambunctious and the teacher forced a minute of silence onto us. Life does get too rambunctious at times, and sometimes it takes a strict inner teacher to force a break into it, for just a moment. What a relief! If you notice yourself either craving a minute of silence, or feeling that it is all too much, or suddenly turning inward and becoming introverted, take a moment of silence, and allow yourself to indulge in quietness. This can make all the difference, in a subtle wonderful way.

Befriending the Weather

Most of us like to talk about it, or whether we like to talk about it or not, it is a main topic of conversation among us humans. How is the weather today, how will it be tomorrow, how is it where you are living, how do you like the weather today - too grey, too hot, too cold, etc. – and there doesn't seem to be much any of us can do about it, as hard as we may try, it's basically out of our human hands. So here is an exercise to hopefully improve the weather, at least a little, when it is disturbing you.

Name what it is about the weather that you don't like today? Too grey, too rainy, etc.

Meditate on that aspect of the weather, feel into it. Try making a few gestures or hand movements that show that aspect of the weather. For example, I am working on a drizzly weather in the summertime. I make a motion with both hands going downward, and slowly moving the fingers up and down in an accordion-like way.

Get to the essence of the movement: make the movement a few times until you have a sense of the energy in the movement. As I make that movement a few times, I feel a quieting, a calmness or mellowing aspect.

Open up to the energy: Enjoy that energy if you can. It might be difficult at first, but make an effort to find something good for you about it in the moment. (for me it is something soothing which makes me feel centered and calm.)

How do you need this?: Even if this is not your favorite energy, how is it right for you today? (I have been hyper and full of excitement about running, swimming, summertime, working on this book, etc. That is great, but it's also nice to enjoy the calmness of "no fire", simplicity and the joy of being for beings sake, nothing to be done, nowhere to go, nothing to improve. Happiness and contentment regardless of excitement or non-excitement of activity and content of what is happening.

Why is it at first difficult for you to open up to this energy? Example: I don't want to miss summer, and all the exuberance of life - and I tend to associate that most with big inspiration and strong experiences. It's sort of an addiction to all this hype!!! (just make a mental note of this, you needn't do anything about it)

With this new awareness about the energy of the weather, how can you enjoy it more today?

What might you do or what might change in your attitude so you could be "one with the weather"?

Wanna do nothing!

You finally have a moment where you don't have to be at work or talk to this person or clean the kitchen or whatever (there is of course always else that could be done, but when there is a moment of space in between) – and you find that all you want to do is nothing,, but you don't want to do nothing because you finally have a moment, you want to do something fun, creative, active, whatever.

How do you know you “wanna do nothing?” what are the “somethings” that you don't want to do?

If you have come up with a list of things, find out if there is a category that they all fit into, like, doing something productive, relating to other people, getting things done, being active, bettering yourself, completing tasks, etc.

Drop those things all together, for the time being. Drop that entire category or those categories of “something”. What is left? (for me it was playing! How did I get to that, I noticed myself chewing gum, playing with it in my mouth, it was playful and totally un-goal-oriented and fun) – this could be anything at all, and you will know!

Make space for this thing in your life, whether it is an attitude or an activity or whatever, give your self a chance to do this “nothing”.

While you are “not doing” this “nothing” allow yourself to ponder the everyday mindset that does not consider this a “worthy” activity. This is not something to change (unless you want to!) just noticed. (like for example, life is about getting things done, life is about being available for others, life is about developing yourself, etc)

If it is enjoyable for you, think about how you can incorporate a little more of this attitude/activity, into your life.

Snippet: When you are in the middle of doing something and you suddenly become tired and lacking zest to continue, try asking yourself, “what am I tired of”, rather than just thinking you are generally tired. You might be surprised that it is an attitude that you have towards whatever you are doing, rather than the act itself, that is making you tired. (for example maybe a feeling that

whatever you do isn't good enough, or you have to work hard to get ahead, is tiring you out) Try liberating yourself by dropping the attitude that makes you tired!

Not Yourself Today: Who are you then?

On days when you just don't feel quite right, but you can't really say why. Maybe you feel a little tired, or as they used to say when I was growing up, you got up on the wrong side of bed: Either way, call it what you want, you can't find yourself, you are out of sorts, you are just not yourself today!!!

o.k. then, Who are you if you are not yourself, that is the question!

Think of who you usually are that you are not today. How do you usually define yourself? Think of a few words or phrases to describe your everyday self.

How do you know you are not yourself today? What is different in your experience? (ex you feel bland, lacking energy, or you feel hyper, etc.)

Focus on what you do experience now, the strongest experience you have that is different from your usual experience.

Follow that. Make space for your experience until you discover who you are now. ex. maybe you are a meditator, in a quiet spot, a certain kind of animal, or a cartoon figure. Your experience will lead you there and you will know.

Enjoy your new identity today, until it passes into the next.

You Can Get Away from Yourself

Sometimes it's the opposite, you wish you COULD get away from yourself! – and watching a movie, listening to music, going for a walk, or any number of other things that sometimes work either doesn't work or isn't an option at the moment.

If you could get away from yourself, where would you go, or what would it be like? Allow yourself the freedom to fantasize the perfect “place” to be.

What is it like there? How is it different from what you are used to?

Dream yourself away into this place. Imagine what it is like. How do you feel when you are there?

What do you see around you? How do you experience yourself in this place? Enjoy being there!

What is the sense of time and space in this place? What is the pace? Is it fast, slow, etc.? how about space? What is the quality of space, how do you experience time and space here?

Is there a hand movement that goes with the feeling of being in this place? Make the movement a few times, until you experience the essence.

From this place, think about how long you would like to be here? Would you like to “move” here? Is this a vacation spot for a few hours, days, weeks? Check with yourself.

Formulate now for yourself, what would it mean to be here, for however long you decided? How would you live differently? What would change in your everyday life? how would your everyday attitude be different?

To Dwell is to Hell!!! (so get me outa here!!!) my very good friend Becky Allen used to always say in high school, to dwell is to hell, so I must give credit where credit is due, I think that is a great way to say it!

Many of us know that dwelling on a disturbing issue isn't the most uplifting experience. Magazine articles and books on happiness remind us not to dwell on things that bother us. While this sounds like a good tip, the practice of it can be complicated. I am sorry to say that I have never been able to just simply drop something that I am dwelling on, b/c the dwelling seems to be out of my control. Try as I might, it keeps creeping in. Soooooo, this exercise is meant as a helping hand out of the hell of dwelling, good luck to us all!

Describe the issue that you are "dwelling on", the issue that you can't seem to get out of your mind.

Take it to the extreme!! Now, rather than trying to forget about it (I am assuming you have already tried that) do the opposite. Make a mountain out of a molehill, or a mountain range out of a mountain. If you feel bad about something you said to another person, imagine the worst, most devastating of consequences. Imagine ruining the person or relationship completely - really let yourself run with the fantasy! If this were true, what horrible things would it mean about you as a person? Keep going until you can't go any further. You will know b/c your thoughts about it will run out.

For whom would this be normal behavior? Who do you know, either personally, in public life, or in fantasy, for whom the behavior you described above would be an everyday event? A pirate, a hitman, a humanitarian, a nurse, etc., the sky is the limit. Stay with this until you know.

Shapeshift and Become that Person! and discover how you need this now in your life!!! **Go for it!**

Boredom finally some free time/space, and boredom sets in. You know the feeling? Couldn't wait for a moment to have time for creative things, reading, running, writing, whatever, but there you find yourself, bored with all options. What to do?

Becoming your Boring Self

Allow yourself to be truly bored: open up to the boredom. How do you know you are bored? What is it like to be bored? How do you experience your boredom? (I feel I should be excited about doing something, thinking, etc, but just feel blank and disinterested)

Follow your body: follow your body into a position/posture that feels right for you and is effortless. You will know when it is right because there will be a sense of completion. (example, you find yourself in a ball on the floor, or lying flat on your back, etc)

Animal totem Image: is there an animal image that comes to you in this posture? What kind of animal might take a posture like this, or what kind of animal comes to your mind when you are in this posture? (if you found yourself in a ball on the floor, you might discover a turtle – or maybe you are flat on your back and have an image of a bird, etc. Your experience will tell you!)

Become that animal: what kind of energy does this animal embody? Allow this energy to affect you. Move like this animal, find the pace, attitude - become this animal spirit. (turtle – slow and steady wins the race. Going nowhere, hanging slowing one movement at a time, enjoying non-doing)

Viewpoint of this animal spirit: look back at your everyday self from this viewpoint. What is boring you today about your attitude, behavior, or personality? This awareness alone should free you!! stop fighting boredom and drop the thing that is boring you, become your boring self! (trying to do something, get somewhere, be someone – the turtle just hangs and is, enjoys being. Bored of trying to get somewhere!)

Living the Concept

There are so many beautiful concepts that have been discovered and written about. They can be very inspiring. But then sometimes is missing the bridge with your own experience. How to live the concept so it becomes a live entity, not simply a good idea? Here is an exercise to help embody the concepts that inspire you.

Think of a concept or principle for living life that inspires you. For example, “follow your bliss”, “be open to all experiences that come to you”, etc. Think about that concept, and what you like so much about it.

Do you know any person who really lives this principle? This could be a person from the present or the past, someone you know or someone you don’t know. It can even be a fairytale or mythic figure.

Think about that person. How do you feel they are “living the concept”? this could be an attitude that they have towards life, it could be a way of treating others, a way of relating to themselves. Try to formulate this in a few words.

Focus on that quality in that person. How do you imagine they do it? Is it by staying close to an inner experience? Is it a certain kind of strength or conviction? Maybe you sense a mood or an atmosphere around that person that guides them. Trust your own perception of this person and their ability.

Scan your body: Now as you focus on this person and especially this special quality, scan your body. Is there anywhere in your own body that you find something of this quality in yourself?

What is it like in that spot in your body? Focus on it and feel the energy there. Maybe it helps to move that area, or make a movement that shows the energy. Follow that movement, make it a few times until you discover the essence.

Living out of the essence: If you would live out of this essence, how would your everyday life be different? Think of relationships, everyday activities, and everyday attitude. Maybe the attitude would

change but the outer form would remain the same. Maybe you would change your job, change your relationships. From the place or this essence, you will know.

How can you remember this in your everyday life? create an anchor. Maybe you could wear something that reminds you of it, create a desktop icon, or make a daily practice. Maybe there is a new name that you would pick up for yourself. The essence will tell you the right anchor.

Steward of the concept: Now, if it feels right to you after this inner work, think of yourself as a steward of this concept. You are its caretaker, and your lifepath brings it to form.

Procrastination is the Way! (pro-fascination!)

So you have something you need or want to or must do....but you just can't quite get to it. Most everyone has had a moment or two of procrastination in their life ☺ Maybe the worst part of procrastination is you feel you shouldn't be doing whatever it is you are doing as part of your procrastination process, so you can't really enjoy whatever it is you are doing, and can't get to all the good stuff in it. This exercise is meant to fully enjoy and relish all the good things in procrastination.

Think of a moment of procrastination: Maybe it is happening now, you just can't quite get yourself to do something. Or maybe there is a longterm project that you are continually procrastinating about.

Open up to procrastination: If you would allow yourself the freedom procrastinate (maybe even consider it is part of your creative process) – what would you do? Maybe you would go out for a walk, go shopping, putter around, take care of business, read a novel, etc. Take time to explore and find the perfect procrastination pastime for yourself.

Procrastinate Boldly: Now go ahead and imagine doing whatever that is you found in step 2. If it is possible, go ahead and do it, or if that isn't possible for you in the moment, imagine doing it now.

What is good about this?: As you get into your activity, either doing it or imagining it, you have only one task. Notice what is right about this for you right now? What is good about it, how do you need this activity?

Savor the attitude: When you have discovered what is right about it, find the attitude that goes with it. Is it something easy going and relaxed, is it excited, joyous, mellow?...find the attitude, and enjoy it. How is it different from your everyday attitude? Maybe you have a different mood or perspective about yourself and everyday life in general. Imagine living out of this new attitude. How would you live differently?

Look at project/task: now look back at the task that you were procrastinating. How has your perspective about that task changed? How does the task look different to you now? How might you approach the task with the new attitude?

Changing Identity: can you think of anyone who lives life this way? What type of identity would you need to have that this would be an ordinary lifestyle for you? (maybe a surfer, and artist, etc) Think about adopting this new identity for awhile, try it on for size and see how you like it!

When you are Ready: you will know when it is right for you to go to your project. This new attitude and way of life will show you the way. Try focusing on the new lifestyle, and notice when you find yourself wanting to go to it.

Example of exercise: My procrastination "device" was listening to a song that I love on my ipod and dancing. As I listened and danced, I thoroughly enjoyed the feeling of moving my body in different ways, the sheer joy of that, playing with the rhythm and being moved by the song. It was ecstatic. What was so right about this for me was that it brought me in touch with something divine, joyous, and it completely changed my mood about life, daily tasks, and myself today. I enjoyed the pure joy of being moved by the divine, and thought, o.k., this is my real task, to stay close to this experience no matter what I am doing. From this viewpoint, I looked back at myself in my everyday life, trying to get stuff done, working on the flyer that needed to go out YESTERDAY ☺, and realized I could take this feeling right to that flyer, enjoy the struggle of it and the joy of actually being "chosen" to complete this task at this time, on this planet.

Being Human: it's not as easy as it sounds in this day and age ☺!

With all the pressures to be _____ (fill in the blank!) – spiritual, smart, courageous, loving, you name it, someone has heard it and is trying to achieve it! – it might be fun and inspiring at times to aspire to these different “criteria”, but it can also make it even more difficult to open up to your everyday experience, which might not go along at all with what you would like it to. And this can be sort of disorienting, b/c you are having experiences that you don't want to have, so you just feel bad and try to pretend they are not there, which would be o.k. if it would work, but for me, although my inner critic has a great time with it, it doesn't seem to have all that positive of an influence on my mood ☺

Take a moment; what is it in your personality that you are trying to avoid/overcome? You will know you have found it when you have a sense of, ugghh, not that, or something similarly unpleasant, maybe even embarrassing. (like, I am ambitious, I am superficial, I am a hard worker) – within the context of your personality, it will most likely be something somewhat “forbidden” . when you have discovered this, you have finished the most difficult part of the exercise!

Go ahead, allow yourself this human attribute for a moment. If you feel stupid, open up to being stupid. If you are superficial, allow that to be. As undeveloped, silly, wrong, bad, or whatever else it is, go ahead and try it on for size. Play it out a little, as if you were acting it out in a role. Do you know any person or fairytale figure who is like this?

How could this be good for you? Can you think of an area in your life that this kind of attribute/behavior, good be somehow good for you? (For example, if you allow yourself to be “stupid”, then you can be curious, or you can follow happiness rather than try to get it “right”).

Try it out, try it on. If you like it, try it a little more.

Do you have a friend who could appreciate this? Share!

Extra credit!

Who is against it? What everyday attitude, belief system, family tradition, etc, does this attitude go against? What is the belief system that makes this “wrong”?

It's not me!

I really mean that. Projection theory and basic self doubt, combined with a general belief system that says you should be like everyone else, makes it very hard to open up to and even appreciate and enjoy areas in which you feel you are strange or different.

Think of a situation or area in life that you feel you really don't belong, you don't fit in. For example, everyone seems to have a good time and you are not feeling it. Or everyone laughs and you don't. Now shift your focus, rather than think what is wrong with you that you don't like it, focus on what you don't like about that situation, those people, that activity.

Who is the one in you who doesn't like it? Frame this "positively", not as if there was something wrong with that, but that there is intelligence, you are ahead of the game. (is it a monk, a hippie, a business person, a nature lover?)

Allow yourself to feel this one in you. How does she/he walk, think, relate to others. What is her/his lifestyle.

Enjoy meeting this aspect of you,

Missed Opportunity

This experience can be truly haunting. The sense that Life presented you with an "opportunity"/"gift"/"open door" - and you missed it because **"fill in the blank"**: you were too selfish, you were too dumb, you were too ungrateful, you were too unaware, etc. Whatever the reason, an experience of "doom" can set it, and a sense that somehow you went against life, you had a chance and you missed it and this is some kind of "sin" against the larger order. In case you are disturbed by an experience like this, this exercise might help.

- 1) Take a moment to settle with yourself. If you can, get comfortable where you are sitting or standing. Make a space for yourself to begin your innerwork.
- 2) Go back to the moment that you consider a "missed opportunity". If there is a sense of doom present, try to notice what it is that brings out the doomful feeling. For example, is there an inner critic that is accusing you of something? if so, what is it that you are being accused of. What, in the mind of the critic, did you do "wrong"? Notice if this is an inner criticism that you are already familiar with, and if so, how? - rather than further an inner debate on this point, try to put it aside for now.
- 3) Now try something counter intuitive, and find the one who "missed" the opportunity. Imagine you would "miss" that opportunity on purpose. Go back to that situation in your mind, and change the storyline by purposefully "missing" what was offered. Who would do that? What kind of attitude would you have to have to do this? (Let your imagination go, this need not make "rational" sense.) It could be a fairytale figure, a spiritual icon, an animal, a historical person, or someone you know personally. You will know you found it when you have a sense of upliftedness and surprise.
- 4) Now shapeshift and become that figure. Move like the figure, make sounds like the figure, and most of all, allow yourself to enjoy and get to know their spirit/essence. How do you feel about life in general? how do you feel about relationships? What kind of lifestyle do you have? Notice a mood shift and perspective shift, and enjoy.
- 5) From this perspective, look back at the situation that seemed like a "missed opportunity". How does it appear now, from this view? What new aspect of your inner life did you discover through this process? If it feels right for you, frame this as a "gained friend" :-) - and put a image of this one somewhere nearby to remind you of them.



Today is a Special Occasion

1) Here I am: what do you notice right now, as you sit, as you stand, as you read, what do you notice most right now, if you take a moment for that.

2) find a gesture and an essence

3) celebrate this, it is special today

Getting to the Depth of Things

Sometimes you don't want to just feel better. Something in you longs for something more than a temporary uplifting experience out of a temporary disturbance. You sense that life must be more than a series of challenges and disturbances that can be worked with to enhance your mood. This goes beyond "little things to do every day to make your life a little better", but must be said in this context. Maybe feeling a little better is not the ultimate point – it could even have a negative effect by taking you further from the depth of your suffering, which might be the key to your most satisfying awakening. Most of us have had moments of great suffering out of which we understood our lives and our paths in a new deep way. It is helpful to have ways of working with everyday problems and difficulties that come up, remembering, though, that this is all within a larger path and context, a great mystery that is unfolding uniquely for each of us. I hesitate to make an exercise for this point, because to simplify it would be to miss the gift. This is a strange, winding, mysterious path that is discovered maybe not by an act of your own will, but by the winds of fate and a moment of opportunity knocking at your door, and you answering.

For this, each of us will find our own answers, and each of us has probably asked the question many times. Some of us have already found the answer, but the question must be asked again and again, because each time the big question is heard and the answer discovered, liberation happens and the cycle begins again. Within this cycle, there are little things we can do everyday, to help us enjoy the ride as the next big question and answer emerges, and starts it off all over again. The song by the Grateful Dead says it all for me so well, "The Wheel".

The wheel is turning and you can't slow down,
You can't let go and you can't hold on,
You can't go back and you can't stand still,
If the thunder don't get you then the lightning will.

Won't you try just a little bit harder,
Couldn't you try just a little bit more?
Won't you try just a little bit harder,
Couldn't you try just a little bit more?

Round, round robin run round, got to get back to where you belong,
Little bit harder, just a little bit more,
A little bit further than you gone before.

The wheel is turning and you can't slow down,
You can't let go and you can't hold on,
You can't go back and you can't stand still,
If the thunder don't get you then the lightning will.

Small wheel turn by the fire and rod,
Big wheel turn by the grace of God,
Every time that wheel turn 'round,
Bound to cover just a little more ground.

The small wheel turns and we can do things to oil it along the way so the ride is smoother and more enjoyable. This is the purpose of most of the exercises in this book. The big wheel is turning by the grace of god, and every time we connect with that big wheel turning, we find "God", we know god, we love our big wheel and our small wheel, and this allows us to go on, get up everyday, and oil the little wheel as we go. And in this process, maybe you get "a little bit further than you gone before." The source of the inspiration for discovery is different for each of us, and for each moment for each of us. I give thanks now to the grace of the spirit that allows each of us to know the wheels that are turning and the grace of God that is turning them - be it a rainbow, a church sermon, a good friend, the perfect song. These are all divine tools, in the moments that they awaken us, and in my belief system and experience, out of my hands as the writer of this book; they are acts of grace and up to fate. So there is no exercise, just taking a moment to notice the things or beings that awaken us at our depth - for gratitude, and to let it all sink in while we remember until we forget, so we can remember again as the wheels keep turning.

The little things in life are all meant as celebration of everything, the larger thing, God, all the stuff of life provides the form through which to love and celebrate God!!!!

Glossary of Everyday Attitudes

This list is just a starting point, there are millions of everyday attitudes and we all have our own individual versions of them. Most important is to discover the ones that are present with you. Some of these below may not apply to you at all, of course. These are meant as examples/brain stimulators for you!

Don't be self-centered, focus on others

Be responsible! Take care of things that must be done

Be productive! Do things that will improve your future life

Develop! Do things that will make you a better person

Be Nice! Do things for others

Be Healthy! Eat right, sleep right, exercise right

Don't worry! Live for the moment

Be Good! think of the whole (or whatever good means within the context of your life)

Be Useful!

Be open: what happens is "meant to be"

Forgive: don't be angry about "small things"

Work hard, play later:

Embrace life!

Glossary of Essences

This is a small list of a probably infinite number of essences that could be named. These are meant as a guide and to stimulate your thinking around formulating others.

Awe

Calm

Celebration

Communion

Completion

Devotion

exhuberance

Freedom

Gratitude

Joy

Love
Oneness
Peace
Perseverance
Power
Sensuality
Stillness
Wholeness

More exercises:

Loneliness

Things you don't like doing

Your Uniform for the Day: what are you wearing, I mean, what are you really wearing?!! (finding the clothes that help you stay close with your "process")

Friendliness towards your experience

Snippet on fidgeting

Arrange exercises by short, medium, long, and issues that come up each day verses persistent issues like looks, etc.

Arrange by morning, mid day, afternoon, evening issues that might come up in daily life section

Everyday experiences for these categories:

moods
personal growth
everyday life
body experiences
discouragement
addictions

Writing in beginning about “tips for happiness” that you can find. They say, “don’t dwell on things” or “look at the bright side” or “take good care of your health”, etc, which all sound great, but in practice aren’t so easy, if you are dwelling on something it isn’t so easy to drop it, of course we all wish we could!!!

Stockholm syndrome:

All of us, in one or another, in our family situation or situation we grew up in, find a way to “survive” it. But we can find meaning in that, as part of a lifemyth. For example the whole concept of the different roles that the children take. This is not done consciously, but then later as the role becomes a “problem” or habit for the person, we can find the “good” part, the essence of this role that also allowed the person to survive. Then they can embrace that and even enjoy it in their lives.

You could say the same for body symptoms and other difficulties that we encounter each day. The body symptom is the one with more power, so we can find the meaning in it and shapeshift, adapt our everyday behavior according to this power.

And finally the concept of the Petty Tyrant from Castaneda. The only difference that I see is that the shaman works consciously with the petty tyrant, and for the “victim” in Stockholm syndrome, it happens to them.

Topic #1

"The Most Important Person in the World to You is You and You Hardly Even Know You"

A great teaching that came to many children of my generation on the TV interludes called "Snippets" - but hard to implement! Life is a drag when we constantly look to the outside, only, for support. Even if it comes, it is not sustainable, and puts pressure on ourselves and the other who is giving it. This is not to discredit the joy of supporting others and being supported by others; I think this is one of the wonderful ways that we as human beings can express our love and sweetness - but it seems to taste better when it is the icing for the cake, but not the cake itself.

Believing in Your Own Experience – the act of focusing on your own experience, making time and space to notice what you notice, is itself a big shift for many of us because of culture and upbringing. This exercise is the first in the book because the ability to focus on yourself is essential for all the other exercises that will follow. The purpose is to befriend yourself with your own experience by discovering a personal ally who loves and values it.

Exercise #1: INNER SUPPORT - Finding Your Inner Friend

1) A moment of love: Think of a time in your life that you felt loved by someone else; a lover, a friend, a pet, a parent, a divine spirit, a nature spirit, an element in nature. This may have been for just a brief moment. Remember that moment. What was it like? What was it about that experience that made you feel loved? Be as specific as you can be.

2) Become the lover: Imagine for a moment that you were that person or being who loved you. Become that person or spirit. Try to make a few movements like that person/being: walk like them, stand like them, or sit like them. What is the pace and rhythm of the walk? What is the posture like? As you do this, imagine the state of mind and quality of energy that goes with this posture or gait. Now try to embody it yourself.

3) Perspective of the Lover: Now as this person, notice your perspective or attitude about life. How does this person feel about life, the world, people?

4) See yourself through the eyes of the lover: Continue with this new perspective and take a look at your everyday self - what do you see or experience when you look at yourself through the eyes of the lover? Take your time and really get to know yourself through their eyes.

5) Give yourself a tip: from the viewpoint of the lover, what would you recommend to yourself - do you have any words of advice or wisdom?

6) Live the life of the loved: make a plan to take this advice today, and enjoy it! Try to do one concrete thing in homage to your "lover".

Self Support as you Grow on your Path

This for me is maybe one of the most difficult areas of all, and the most crucial; believing in and valuing your own experience, even if it is contrary to what you have been taught, or to what others think. So to begin with on the spot, check with yourself now if the idea of valuing your own experience is right for you.

I think it takes courage to notice what you experience, because chances are that some of what you notice will contradict an outer belief system, or a person whose opinion you value, or the social values within your particular culture. Here is an exercise to work with this dilemma.

Exercise # 2 Believing in your Experience

1) Think of something that you have done, or would like to do, that someone or some belief system that is important to you would disapprove of. This might also be a new way attitude or way of behaving in relationships - it need not be an actual act. Describe to yourself what it is about this action or behavior that you imagine is wrong in the eyes of the disapproving person or belief system.

2) Criticize yourself from that person or belief system's viewpoint. What was wrong with what you did, (or are considering doing)? As you begin to formulate the criticism, notice the energy in the criticism as well. Is it scolding, angry, demeaning, punishing? Make a **hand gesture** that describes the energy of that criticism. For example, maybe from the viewpoint of this figure or belief system, you have been selfish, inflated, weak, etc. You will know when you have pin-pointed exactly what has disturbed this outer figure.

3) Do it more!!! Instead of trying to change this behavior, exaggerate it now. If the criticism is that you were selfish, imagine how you would be now if you were *really* selfish (this could mean that you put yourself and your own experience at the center of everything) What would happen? How would you be if you would really be free to express this aspect completely? Keep going until you have a genuinely uplifting experience that

gives you a sense of relief and liberation. Is there a gesture or an image that expresses this experience for you and can be an anchor?

4) When you really allow yourself to “indulge” in this forbidden experience, does your behavior change somehow? Notice if you would add or change anything in the situation that you described in step one if you would really embrace this experience.

5) Using the same energy of the critic, formulate a program for yourself to “indulge” in this experience. For example, if the critic was scolding, tell yourself in a scolding manner, **you must be more selfish** (put yourself at the center!)

Example from my own inner work:

The situation that I worked on was one in which I expressed myself strongly in a group. Although it felt right in the moment and even soon after, I later began to imagine that I had been “bad” according to the conflict paradigm that I am trying to practice.

When I imagined the figure who was criticizing me, it was a scolding figure. I was surprised by the criticism when I discovered what had been “bad” about my behavior from the point of view of this figure. The scolding figure said “you became **intoxicated** with your own experience and lost awareness of the other side”. Intoxicated by my own experience!!!! this is exactly right, I was, I often am, and I feel guilty about it and try to hide it, even from myself. I think this is bad for reasons of personal history and culture.

The next step was to do this more. If I would really be intoxicated by my experience, I would celebrate the joy of who I am. I love being me! it is deeply fun and ecstatic just to be me! I enjoy my spirit and the experiences that I have, when I allow myself to have them and enjoy them, and am grateful for them. The gesture that expresses that experience of happiness about being me is an exuberant movement of the hands going up and out! If I would really allow this to be, I would spend time noticing what I experience (this is putting myself in the center of everything) and I would be happy about it!

If I would feel have been more free to do this, I would actually have shared that in that meeting. I would have said, I love the experiences that I have right now, I feel in contact with something deep that is moving me, and it's a joy to experience that and to have a chance to share this with all of you. I love shining here. And from here I see you shining too. In this case, that would have added a piece to the experience that was missing for me. Surprisingly enough, I would have naturally related to the other side, BECAUSE I was so excited about my experience, and in my imagination, this would have brought a mood shift and more fluidity into the whole situation. The truth is, I wasn't intoxicated ENOUGH with my own experience!!!



Exuberant gesture like firecracker

The final message from my scolding critic that I will try to follow today is: BE INTOXICATED WITH YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE!!

Topic #2 Nutrition, Exercise, Quirks, and Body Wisdom

This section draws on body wisdom. It does not propose any kind of preferred diet or exercise plan, but assumes that the body is wise and so are our strange preferences, somehow. We just need to find out what they are and how they are wise. The exercises are meant to access the intelligence in our patterns and body experiences, not to change them.

This is not a medical book, and is not meant to replace information about nutrition and body chemistry. It is meant to discover the way of nourishing yourself that is best for you, including timing and amounts and rhythms and colors and all kinds of strange preferences that you might have.

Personally I feel that in the area of diet and exercise, many of us have been told so many things about what we are supposed to do that the concept of finding our own body wisdom separate from that seems nearly impossible. Also there is so much shame involved with eating patterns and health issues. This first exercise is to assist in finding the wisdom of your nutritional or dietary quirks, not to change them. (understanding well that some patterns also need to be changed for reasons of health, this is not a replacement for medical intelligence)

Exercise #3: The Wisdom in Your Eating Quirks

1) What is the pattern that you have around eating that is the most embarrassing to you, or at least that you consider strange, unconventional, or even compulsive? Allow yourself to admit this to yourself, tell yourself about it. What is the most embarrassing aspect of this pattern for you, what do you judge yourself for?

2) What do you like about this quirk or pattern that you have? What is good about it for you? You probably know a lot about what is not good about it, so this step will require a shift in focus. What is enjoyable about this habit or its effect on you? *Possible Examples: eating little makes you feel light and free. Eating lots makes you feel complete and whole. Eating only ice-cream helps you to feel sensual and cool, etc. (these examples are too literal and trite, your experience will tell you what is real for you)*

3) Enjoy the effects of this pattern. If the effect is lightness, make a few movements with your arms or walk around and experience lightness. If it is feeling complete and whole, experience completeness and wholeness. If it is sensuality, make a few sensual movements. Find the experience in your body and relish it.

4) How do you need more of the effects of this experience in your life? Maybe your everyday mindset is too heavy and serious, therefore you crave lightness. Maybe you feel you always need something else and find it difficult to embrace and celebrate your own richness. Maybe you have a very work oriented attitude and don't enjoy enough the sensuality of being.

5) Make a plan to make a little more space in your life for this experience. How could you live it just a little bit more, in your relationships, in your work life, in your alone time, your free time, or all of it? make a plan that feels uplifting and healthy to your spirit.

6) Next time you catch yourself feeling embarrassed about a pattern that you have, try to remember the essence that you are striving for and experiment with bringing it to life in the moment!

Getting the best of your Addictions!

There is a specific reason for this title. For many of us, one of the most difficult things about addictions is the shame that is involved in the idea of having one. There is a prevalent attitude in western culture that addictions are a sign of moral weakness. This makes it hard for most of us to even think of ourselves as having addictions, or addictive tendencies, so we repress them and hide them even from ourselves. Aside from the inner turmoil and sense of unease that this situation causes, it robs us of the chance to get something really good out of our addictions. The substance that we are addicted to, whether it is coffee, alcohol, chocolate, a certain kind of food or drug, is usually not as good as the experience in the background that we are seeking. To get the best out of your addictions, try by-passing the moral aspect for this exercise and imagine there is something

really great waiting for you in the addiction - the addiction is just a road sign pointing you towards it.

Exercise # 4: Finding the Gem in the Addiction

1) Think of a substance that you have a complex relationship with. For example, you really like the substance (coffee, alcohol, sugar, cigarettes, etc), but you have a feeling or you know it isn't good for you.

2) What do you like most about the substance? Is it the taste, the altered state that comes from it, the ritual of doing it. There may be many things that you like about it, use the one that is strongest for you now in the moment.

3) Use sound and/movement to describe the thing you like most about the substance. This is something that is hard to describe in words – using sound and movement can capture an aspect that is otherwise difficult to name because it describes a multidimensional experience. Notice if a song or an image comes to mind as you make the sound and movement.

4) What is the essence of the sound and movement that you made in the above step? Make the sound and movement a few times until you know. (see glossary of essences if you are stuck in coming up with one)

5) How is this energy/essence, important for you in your life? how do you need it, or how do you need more of it?

6) How can you live and enjoy this essence more in your everyday life? (think of relationship life, work life, everyday activities, your own inner life, health, etc.)

7) Something to ponder: meditate on what makes it difficult for you to live this essence more. Maybe there is a belief system about life or an everyday attitude that can at times stand in the way of embracing this essence more.

Getting up in the Morning

Some of us wake up in the morning full of energy and ready to go. Not me! I have always been “morning challenged”, and over the years have learned a few things that can help to start the day off a little better.

In this exercise are practices to address the different morning states that can be challenging in the attempt to “face the day”.

Exercise # 5: Better than Coffee – exercise for when you “Can’t wake up” – not quite present yet, even if you are up. Coffee and tea doesn’t seem to do much either.

!) Notice that you are sleepy or groggy – This might sound obvious but it is easy to ignore these experiences, or to just try to overcome them.

2) How do you know you are sleepy/groggy?

Possible examples:

- ❖ Head is cloudy, you have few thoughts
- ❖ Mind is empty
- ❖ Body feels heavy
- ❖ Body feels floppy
- ❖ Don’t want to get up/don’t want to move

3) Make space for that experience. Instead of trying to overcome the experience that you found in step #2, make space and time for the experience, allow it to be. Don’t fight it if you can help it, try to enjoy it.

Suggested directions:

- ❖ cloudy head: make it more cloudy, don’t try to focus
- ❖ mind is empty: allow it to be empty
- ❖ body feels heavy: let it become even heavier, follow the heaviness and let it lead you. (maybe you go down to the floor, put your head down, etc.)
- ❖ body feels floppy: pick up an arm or a leg with the other hand and then drop it, feel the flop and enjoy it
- ❖ don’t want to get up: Imagine if you wouldn’t get up, what would be good about that. What is it that is so good about being in bed that you don’t want to go away from?

4) What is good about that experience? Find out what is good about the experience you unfolded in the previous step? How do you need it somehow? *For example, a cloudy head might allow you to be unfocused, easy-going and mellow - or staying in bed might be inviting you to enjoy a more cozy, introverted attitude/experience during the day. ***other possible examples*

5) How can you bring this into your day today? Maybe simply having awareness about it is enough. Or maybe you would change something outwardly. The point is, try celebrating this aspect you found by living it somehow in your life today!

*****Examples:**

floppy – attitude of hanging loose, loosening up about things

cozy introverted – enjoy being and inner states, not forcing yourself to relate on the outside more than you have to

heaviness – slow and steady, rock like, unshakable, connected to the earth

cloudy mind – dreamy, less focused

empty mind – enjoy freedom of too many thoughts, just be here now!

Body Energy: So difficult at times to open up to it, not simply think those all too familiar inner lyrics "what is wrong with me?!!) Especially difficult in my mind, at least in the Western culture, is to open up to tiredness, as most consider this to be "wrong" or "abnormal".

If you are a little tired right now, and fighting against it, try this exercise to see if you can find some gems in that energy.

Exercise #6: The Wisdom in Your Body Energy, or "Lack" of it:

1) Follow your body: allow yourself to follow your body energy. If you would really let go, what would you do? Maybe you would lie down, sit in a certain way, put your head down, you will know because you will feel a sense of relief when you get to it. Take time to find just the right position, and then enjoy!

2) Enjoy the position: now you need do nothing, just hang out in the position that you got to and enjoy. Allow yourself to dream. What happens when you are in this position? Do you have certain daydreams, thoughts, or feelings? Just notice any experiences that you have and enjoy them.

3) Imagine a person/lifestyle: from that position, allow your fantasies to flow. What kind of person do you imagine would being in a posture like this be a “normal” thing? What kind of lifestyle would a person have this type of position in their everyday “movement repertoire”?

4) Let that lifestyle overtake you: you need not do anything, you are already there. Just allow yourself to identify with this experience and lifestyle. How might you go about the rest of your day if you were to embrace this new lifestyle? Maybe you would go through your activities with a different rhythm and/or attitude. Experiment and “try the new persona on for size”!

5) Anchor: it might help to wear something on your body that helps you to remember and enjoy this new way. Maybe a certain color to wear, jewelry, or putting your hair in a special way. You will know if you found the “right” anchor b/c it will feel good to your “new identity”.

Looks and Size

I don't think I need to say anything about the pressure to look a certain way, and the impact it can have on us. So I won't go into discussing that aspect, but go straight towards the antidote.

Exercise #6: Making Friends with your Looks (as they are today)

1) Think of one aspect of your physical appearance that you don't like. It can be your size, your shape, facial features, hair, etc.

2) In your perception, what type of image does this physical feature portray that you don't like? (*Example: small size makes you look young, people won't take you seriously, etc.*)

3) Take this aspect to the extreme. *If the problem is a small size, imagine becoming even smaller, teeny tiny!*

4) When you have reached the extreme, allow yourself to be reminded of a fairytale figure, mythic figure who has this same characteristic. *For example, a very small fairytale figure is Tinker Bell from Peter Pan.*

5) Make one single hand movement that captures the essence of that figure. What does that hand movement, and that character represent? *In the case of Tinker Bell, you might say magic.*

6) Think that this original physical “attribute” is meant to help you to portray the message of the figure that you discovered in steps 4 and 5. How would you live differently if you believed yourself to be a messenger of the aspect that you found in step #5?

Snippet

Break Time!! - Need a little break? – next time you feel you need a break, and have a moment or a few moments for that, try this: Notice what it is that you need a break from. Maybe it is an actual task that you are doing. Maybe it is a mindset, like being very focused on completing tasks, doing productive things, etc. Maybe it is a break from taking things seriously, etc. You will know b/c it will be the thing that you feel you really don't want to do. Now take a break from that consciously. If it is a break from focusing, allow yourself to dream and drift. If it is a break from doing things for a “purpose”, take time to do something for the sheer joy of it! This might make your break time even more rejuvenating!

Can't Get Enough of Something Great

Maybe it is time in nature, maybe it is a sport, a computer game, a certain activity. But sometimes there are some things that you just can't get enough of. This can be a blessing or a curse, depending on which way you look at it. A blessing because it is great to have something that you really love to do, a curse because part of you can't get enough of it but another part of you feels its time to move on and make space in your life for other things. So what to do?

Name the activity that you just can't get enough of. Example: for me these days it is running. I just love it and am looking forward to the next time I get to do it again.

Now focus on that activity, imagine doing it and find out what it is about it that you love the most. Really take your time, and be specific as possible. Example: if I imagine myself running, there are many things about it that I love, but the moment of springing off one foot with all of my might and then feeling that I am flying, that is what I love the most about it right now.

Make a hand movement or a gesture that expresses that experience that you love so much. example: I made a gesture of both hands coming from inside and waving quickly outward in a flowing fast motion.

What is the essence of that gesture? The essence of the movement above is freedom, total abandon.

How can you live this essence more in your life, and enjoy it as much as possible, even when you are not doing the actual activity that you love to much? giving myself wholeheartedly to everything that I do in my life, with joy and abandon. This means for me not worrying so much about how well I do or if it is "right", the way I am doing it, but just enjoying the experience of doing it.

What everyday attitude do you have that makes it hard for you to embrace this essence? I tend to act as if the point is doing a good job and getting it right- I get bogged down by trying to do "well" and in that process lose the joy of it. And there is a moral attitude about doing well, "though

shalt try your best to get it right!" It is not the trying to do well that extinguishes the joy factor, but the heavy moral attitude about that.

Topic # 4: Song in your Head – it's playing there when you wake up or it comes to you later in the day, how come?

I often wake up to a song in my head and I don't know quite where it came from, or one gets stuck in me later on and it keeps playing and playing. Here are a few steps to enjoy that song in your day and find out if it has a message for you.

Exercise # 4 : The Song in Your Head as your Guide Today

1) Notice that there is a song in your head! (sounds strange but actually it's easy to listen to it playing in your head without noticing it is there)

2) What song is it? Listen to it as it plays in your head.

3) Hum or sing along if that is enjoyable for you. If you have the song available, play it for yourself. Listen to the song and notice what is good about hearing it right now, what do you like about it? Notice the atmosphere of the song. Is it exuberant, melancholy, romantic, energetic, etc?

4) Move a little bit or a lot to the rhythm, enjoy it. Let the atmosphere of the song affect you. It might be something happy, easy going, optimistic, somber, melancholy, mysterious or longing. Just let it in and around you.

5) As you enjoy the mood of the song, think about how it is important for you today. If it was the background for your day, how would this affect you?

6) The message for you of the song might be in the mood. In case there is another message for you in the song, in addition to the mood, hear that too. For example, the mood of the song might contrast with the storyline of the song, like the song is upbeat but the lyrics tell a depressing story. In this case the song might be

helping to bring a better mood to a difficult situation that you might be in the midst of.

Snippet

Quick Dance Break on a Busy Day!

Have you ever noticed when you are busy working at the desk, a song is playing in your head? Maybe there is some background music in your workplace that is particularly catching your attention. Try taking 5 minutes to dance to that song in your head, if you are in a place that you can do that easily, playing the song or just hearing it in your head. If you are an avid dancer and you are at work where you aren't really able to do that, take a quick bathroom break and dance in the stall. It is as weird as it sounds, but can be rejuvenating! Then think, what is the spirit, energy, attitude in that song that appeals to you right now, and how do you need that today?

Guilt

The "g" word it's worse than any swear word in my inner vocabulary. I don't like feeling guilty, even though I spend a lot of time doing it. So many forms of guilt and so many things to be guilty for – here's an exercise with the hope of getting something useful out of it too, instead of just self battery, which can get old.

You feel guilty about something. Try to be specific as possible about what it is that you feel guilty about. For example, if you feel guilty because you have eaten too much, what is it about eating too much that makes you feel so guilty? Have you sinned against your body, against God, have you broken a program you meant to keep, does this go against a principle that you shouldn't over indulge, or that you should not take more than you need? Find out what exactly it is about what you did that you are feeling guilty for.

Find the principle, belief system, or worldview that would define this action as wrong or guilt worthy. This might come to you right away because it is a religion or paradigm that you consciously belong to.

It may also be more difficult to find if it is a principle that you picked up and live by but not consciously. For example, if you feel bad for eating too much, and the thing you feel guilty about is that you shouldn't take more than you need, this could be the world view of an ascetic, a spiritual seeker, who is grateful for what is given and only takes as much as is needed in prayer to the divine. Think about what is so important about this for you, this is an important aspect of who you are and a value system that you live by.

Now go back to the thing you did that you feel guilty for. Use your imagination and find out what kind of person you would have to be to do this same thing without any remorse whatsoever. This could be an actual person that you know, a fairytale figure, someone you can imagine, or a person from another culture or time period. (for example, a person from the epicurean time period)

What principles does this person live by? What is the essence of their philosophy or way of life? what does this person live for?

Both of the principles that you discovered in this exercise are important aspects of who you are, Reflect on how you could live each one more consciously in your life, in honor of the principles in you that they represent.

Something to ponder: is there a way that these two principles are somehow interrelated/interdependent? How do they enhance one another? Is there a way that they belong together?

Meeting Your Maker: Working with Persistent Guilt! here is another exercise for working with a certain kind of guilt, when you feel you have not done well with something and you can't let yourself off the hook for it, you feel you have "wronged" the Great Spirit, the Divine, God, or whoever it is that you most revere. This is how Max saved me one day from my own hell ☺

Situation that Haunts You: Describe to yourself the situation that you are plagued by. Try to distill the aspects that you feel worst about. (it's very likely that there are many aspects you feel bad about which take turns occupying your mind. Name the few that are most present for you at the moment).

Discovering "The Authority": Put that issue aside for just a moment and imagine a figure who is the ultimate authority in life, the "one who knows" and who has the power to decide what is right and wrong. Does this figure have a human form? What does he/she look like? How does he/she talk, stand, move? Take time and imagine!!

Meeting "Your Maker": o.k., now is the moment: imagine this is it, it is all over and it is time to "meet Your Maker". Imagine the entire scenario as "your maker" asks you about the situation you described in step #1. "what do you have to say for yourself, you have done "x,y,z"

Explain Yourself! This is the moment, explain what happened, what really happened, be really honest about how you "slipped" in that situation and why you did what you did.

Redemption: allow Your Maker to respond, and continue the dialogue until your maker gives you redemption. Maybe he/she asks something of you, maybe you need to continue until you really feel you understand your behavior and can stand behind yourself in that. Maybe your maker is satisfied with your response and that's where it ends. Your Maker will tell you!

Get out of Hell Free: make a card for yourself, signed by "Your Maker" that releases you from hell, and make sure to keep it with you in the next 48 hours in case you forget!!!

Failure!!!

Why do I put exclamation marks after the word failure? I haven't encountered all the many people that strive consciously towards failure. But like all the other disturbances we are working on, failure can be full of rich experiences. Try this exercise and you might find something uplifting in your worst possible failure fantasy:

Success in Failure

A recent Failure: Think of the last time you failed at something. This could be in the realm of something as small as baking bagels (as in my case!) or something as large as giving a "flop" of a speech in front of a large audience (also in my case ☹)

The worst aspect: Describe the situation to yourself again. If you can stand it, go over the scenario and try to find the aspect of the failure that you feel worst about. (you wasted time, you looked stupid, you offended someone else - whatever it is, you will know when you have discovered it)

Receive the Gift: Now make a shift. Imagine a fairy god mother/father gave you this failure as a gift. The fairy figure looked at you and thought, she/he needs to _____ (fill in the blank) in order to realize that _____ in order to have a better time in life. *(For example, if the worst thing about your failure was that you wasted time, then the gift in this could be to realize that maybe you take success too seriously, you think that life is about achieving, but you need to relax and enjoy the roses on the way, not try to always "use" your time so efficiently)*

Show your gratitude: Make a plan to show your gratitude towards your fairy spirit who gave you this gift by incorporating the message somehow into your everyday life this week.

Snippet

On top of it! (if you are “not on top of it”, what are you on top of? maybe it is not the big IT, but it must be something.) for example, maybe you are not on top of the thing you are supposed to be doing, but you are “on top” of relaxing. And if you would really open up to and embrace relaxing, then you might find yourself in a very great place that might even allow you another way of getting on top of the “IT” that you weren’t on top of!

▪

Missing a Place

Have you ever found yourself missing a special place, one that is close to your heart, and feeling a little melancholy about it. This might be an experience far from your awareness, because you repress it – it seems childish or silly, and what you are going to do about it, anyway, move there? Your vacation time is already used up, and going for a couple of weeks probably wouldn't do it anyway. Here is a way of going there, without a plane ticket, without a car, and staying as long as needed.

Think of a place that is special to you and that you find yourself sometimes thinking of and missing. This could also be a place that you have never actually been in physical form, but you anyway long to go there. What place is it?

Allow yourself to miss it, to miss it as much as you actually really miss it, like a lover or a good friend, if this is how it feels to you. Feel the atmosphere of the place. Let yourself daydream about it. Take as much time as you need to really experience your love and/or longing for the place.

As you daydream, notice if there is anything in particular in your fantasy that really stands out. It could be something tiny, like the sound of the water lapping onto a boat in the ocean, or the feeling that you have when you walk down a particular street. Your daydream will take you there, your only task is to catch it by noticing it.

Now allow yourself to focus on that aspect that really captures your attention the most. Stay with it until you know just what it is about that particular aspect that draws you so much. (for me, with the sound of the water lapping on the boat, it was an atmosphere of playful longing, an enticing water spirit that says, come play with me, enter my world of joy and happiness, magic and mystery)

What is the atmosphere like in that experience? enjoy it and get to know it as much as possible by making space for it. What is unique about that particular atmosphere in that particular place/experience?

Join that atmosphere and become it. Let it take you over, let it get into your blood. What do you experience now. How do you experience your body now, how do you experience life? How is this different from your usual way of being?

Enjoy this shift in mood and attitude, and the experience of “being” in this place without the traffic or jetlag to get there!

Snippet: Magic moments on your errand runs! – simple basic and most everyone already knows this, so here is a simple reminder. There are certain moments in life that are especially magical, like when someone in the grocery store line starts talking out of nowhere and shows you/gives you just the energy, advice, or attitude that you need – or you hear a simple random comment from someone on the street as you walk by that is just what you needed to hear. I won’t destroy the magic by saying any more. This is just to highlight the preciousness of those moments, hold onto that gift as long as possible by taking the message seriously/joyfully, and really living it

Moods

Need I say more? They can really take you over. If it's a good mood, it's great while it lasts, if it's a bad mood, it can be a real drag. Either way, it's easy to feel a victim of moods. The intention of this exercise is not so much to get out of a particular mood, but to make friends with it so you can enjoy it more and maybe understand its essence better.

Discovering the atmosphere: Allow yourself to notice your mood, whether it is a good one or a bad one. Take time to experience and focus on its quality. What is time and space like in that experience? (slow, fast, tight, expansive, heavy, light, etc) Does it have a color? Does a song come to mind that expresses that mood for you? Get into it and allow the mood to take you over, become someone else for a moment.

Who belongs to this world? let your imagination go. For whom would this atmosphere and world be considered normal reality, not a mood?

For this person or being, what is the point of life? (to enjoy everything, to be with others, to meet a challenge, to become enlightened, to hang out with nature, to find God, there are endless possibilities!)

New Birth! You might think that this person is being born in you through your mood today. Give this emerging spirit a name, and celebrate the birthday by appreciating this new world and perspective.

Snippet

A Moment of Silence

In grade school this was a punishment. We got too rambunctious and the teacher forced a minute of silence onto us. Life does get too rambunctious at times, and sometimes it takes a strict inner teacher to force a break into it, for just a moment. What a relief! If you notice yourself either craving a minute of silence, or feeling that it is all too much, or suddenly turning inward and becoming introverted,

**take a moment of silence, and allow yourself to indulge in quietness.
This can make all the difference, in a subtle wonderful way.**

Befriending the Weather

Most of us like to talk about it, or whether we like to talk about it or not, it is a main topic of conversation among us humans. How is the weather today, how will it be tomorrow, how is it where you are living, how do you like the weather today - too grey, too hot, too cold, etc. – and there doesn't seem to be much any of us can do about it, as hard as we may try, it's basically out of our human hands. So here is an exercise to hopefully improve the weather, at least a little, when it is disturbing you.

Name what it is about the weather that you don't like today? Too grey, too rainy, etc.

Meditate on that aspect of the weather, feel into it. Try making a few gestures or hand movements that show that aspect of the weather.

For example, I am working on a drizzly weather in the summertime. I make a motion with both hands going downward, and slowly moving the fingers up and down in an accordion-like way.

Get to the essence of the movement: make the movement a few times until you have a sense of the energy in the movement. As I make that movement a few times, I feel a quieting, a calmness or mellowing aspect.

Open up to the energy: Enjoy that energy if you can. It might be difficult at first, but make an effort to find something good for you about it in the moment. (for me it is something soothing which makes me feel centered and calm.)

How do you need this?: Even if this is not your favorite energy, how is it right for you today? (I have been hyper and full of excitement about running, swimming, summertime, working on this book, etc. That is great, but it's also nice to enjoy the calmness of "no fire", simplicity and the joy of being for beings sake, nothing to be done, nowhere to go, nothing to improve. Happiness and contentment regardless of excitement or non-excitement of activity and content of what is happening.

Why is it at first difficult for you to open up to this energy?

Example: I don't want to miss summer, and all the exuberance of life - and I tend to associate that most with big inspiration and strong experiences. It's sort of an addiction to all this hype!!! (just make a mental note of this, you needn't do anything about it)

With this new awareness about the energy of the weather, how can you enjoy it more today? What might you do or what might change in your attitude so you could be “one with the weather”?

Wanna do nothing!

You finally have a moment where you don't have to be at work or talk to this person or clean the kitchen or whatever (there is of course always else that could be done, but when there is a moment of space in between) – and you find that all you want to do is nothing,, but you don't want to do nothing because you finally have a moment, you want to do something fun, creative, active, whatever.

How do you know you “wanna do nothing?” what are the “somethings” that you don't want to do?

If you have come up with a list of things, find out if there is a category that they all fit into, like, doing something productive, relating to other people, getting things done, being active, bettering yourself, completing tasks, etc.

Drop those things all together, for the time being. Drop that entire category or those categories of “something”. What is left? (for me it was playing! How did I get to that, I noticed myself chewing gum, playing with it in my mouth, it was playful and totally un-goal-oriented and fun) – this could be anything at all, and you will know!

Make space for this thing in your life, whether it is an attitude or an activity or whatever, give your self a chance to do this “nothing”.

While you are “not doing” this “nothing” allow yourself to ponder the everyday mindset that does not consider this a “worthy” activity. This is not something to change (unless you want to!) just noticed. (like for example, life is about getting things done, life is about being available for others, life is about developing yourself, etc)

If it is enjoyable for you, think about how you can incorporate a little more of this attitude/activity, into your life.

Snippet: When you are in the middle of doing something and you suddenly become tired and lacking zest to continue, try asking yourself, "what am I tired of", rather than just thinking you are generally tired. You might be surprised that it is an attitude that you have towards whatever you are doing, rather than the act itself, that is making you tired. (for example maybe a feeling that whatever you do isn't good enough, or you have to work hard to get ahead, is tiring you out) Try liberating yourself by dropping the attitude that makes you tired!

Not Yourself Today: Who are you then?

On days when you just don't feel quite right, but you can't really say why. Maybe you feel a little tired, or as they used to say when I was growing up, you got up on the wrong side of bed: Either way, call it what you want, you can't find yourself, you are out of sorts, you are just not yourself today!!! o.k. then, Who are you if you are not yourself, that is the question!

Think of who you usually are that you are not today. How do you usually define yourself? Think of a few words or phrases to describe your everyday self.

How do you know you are not yourself today? What is different in your experience? (ex you feel bland, lacking energy, or you feel hyper, etc.)

Focus on what you do experience now, the strongest experience you have that is different from your usual experience.

Follow that. Make space for your experience until you discover who you are now. ex. maybe you are a meditator, in a quiet spot, a certain kind of animal, or a cartoon figure. Your experience will lead you there and you will know.

Enjoy your new identity today, until it passes into the next.

You Can Get Away from Yourself

Sometimes it's the opposite, you wish you COULD get away from yourself! – and watching a movie, listening to music, going for a walk, or any number of other things that sometimes work either doesn't work or isn't an option at the moment.

If you could get away from yourself, where would you go, or what would it be like? Allow yourself the freedom to fantasize the perfect "place" to be.

What is it like there? How is it different from what you are used to? Dream yourself away into this place. Imagine what it is like. How do you feel when you are there? What do you see around you? How do you experience yourself in this place? Enjoy being there!

What is the sense of time and space in this place? What is the pace? Is it fast, slow, etc.? how about space? What is the quality of space, how do you experience time and space here?

Is there a hand movement that goes with the feeling of being in this place? Make the movement a few times, until you experience the *essence*.

From this place, think about how long you would like to be here?

Would you like to "move" here? Is this a vacation spot for a few hours, days, weeks? Check with yourself.

Formulate now for yourself, what would it mean to be here, for however long you decided? How would you live differently? What would change in your everyday life? how would your everyday attitude be different?

To Dwell is to Hell!! (so get me outa here!!!) my very good friend Becky Allen used to always say in high school, to dwell is to hell, so I must give credit where credit is due, I think that is a great way to say it!

Many of us know that dwelling on a disturbing issue isn't the most uplifting experience. Magazine articles and books on happiness remind us not to dwell on things that bother us. While this sounds like a good tip, the practice of it can be complicated. I am sorry to say that I have never been able to just simply drop something that I am dwelling on, b/c the dwelling seems to be out of my control. Try as I might, it keeps creeping in. Soooooo, this exercise is meant as a helping hand out of the hell of dwelling, good luck to us all!

Describe the issue that you are "dwelling on", the issue that you can't seem to get out of your mind.

Take it to the extreme!! Now, rather than trying to forget about it (I am assuming you have already tried that) do the opposite. Make a mountain out of a molehill, or a mountain range out of a mountain. If you feel bad about something you said to another person, imagine the worst, most devastating of consequences. Imagine ruining the person or relationship completely - really let yourself run with the fantasy! If this were true, what horrible things would it mean about you as a person? Keep going until you can't go any further. You will know b/c your thoughts about it will run out.

For whom would this be normal behavior? Who do you know, either personally, in public life, or in fantasy, for whom the behavior you described above would be an everyday event? A pirate, a hitman, a humanitarian, a nurse, etc., the sky is the limit. Stay with this until you know.

Shapeshift and Become that Person:

How do you need this in your life:

Boredom finally some free time/space, and boredom sets in. You know the feeling? Couldn't wait for a moment to have time for creative things, reading, running, writing, whatever, but there you find yourself, bored with all options. What to do?

Becoming your Boring Self

Allow yourself to be truly bored: open up to the boredom. How do you know you are bored? What is it like to be bored? How do you experience your boredom? (I feel I should be excited about doing something, thinking, etc, but just feel blank and disinterested)

Follow your body: follow your body into a position/posture that feels right for you and is effortless. You will know when it is right because there will be a sense of completion. (example, you find yourself in a ball on the floor, or lying flat on your back, etc)

Animal totem Image: is there an animal image that comes to you in this posture? What kind of animal might take a posture like this, or what kind of animal comes to your mind when you are in this posture? (if you found yourself in a ball on the floor, you might discover a turtle – or maybe you are flat on your back and have an image of a bird, etc. Your experience will tell you!)

Become that animal: what kind of energy does this animal embody? Allow this energy to affect you. Move like this animal, find the pace, attitude - become this animal spirit. (turtle – slow and steady wins the race. Going nowhere, hanging slowing one movement at a time, enjoying non-doing)

Viewpoint of this animal spirit: look back at your everyday self from this viewpoint. What is boring you today about your attitude, behavior, or personality? This awareness alone should free you!! stop fighting boredom and drop the thing that is boring you, become your boring self! (trying to do something, get somewhere, be someone – the turtle just hangs and is, enjoys being. Bored of trying to get somewhere!)

Snippit: You create your own reality??!! Yes, but not in the way your inner critic means it when he/she blames you for something difficult that happens in your life. The next time you catch yourself thinking something like this and using it against yourself, try taking this thought in a different direction. If this “negative” event were a gift from a loving spirit, trying to help you along your path of growth and development, what would the message be?

Living the Concept

There are so many beautiful concepts that have been discovered and written about. They can be very inspiring. But then sometimes is missing the bridge with your own experience. How to live the concept so it becomes a live entity, not simply a good idea? Here is an exercise to help embody the concepts that inspire you.

Think of a concept or principle for living life that inspires you. For example, “follow your bliss”, “be open to all experiences that come to you”, etc. Think about that concept, and what you like so much about it.

Do you know any person who really lives this principle? This could be a person from the present or the past, someone you know or someone you don't know. It can even be a fairytale or mythic figure.

Think about that person. How do you feel they are "living the concept"? this could be an attitude that they have towards life, it could be a way of treating others, a way of relating to themselves. Try to formulate this in a few words.

Focus on that quality in that person. How do you imagine they do it? Is it by staying close to an inner experience? Is it a certain kind of strength or conviction? Maybe you sense a mood or an atmosphere around that person that guides them. Trust your own perception of this person and their ability.

Scan your body: Now as you focus on this person and especially this special quality, scan your body. Is there anywhere in your own body that you find something of this quality in yourself?

What is it like in that spot in your body? Focus on it and feel the energy there. Maybe it helps to move that area, or make a movement that shows the energy. Follow that movement, make it a few times until you discover the essence.

Living out of the essence: If you would live out of this essence, how would your everyday life be different? Think of relationships, everyday activities, and everyday attitude. Maybe the attitude would change but the outer form would remain the same. Maybe you would change your job, change your relationships. From the place of this essence, you will know.

How can you remember this in your everyday life? create an anchor. Maybe you could wear something that reminds you of it, create a desktop icon, or make a daily practice. Maybe there is a new name that you would pick up for yourself. The essence will tell you the right anchor.

Steward of the concept: Now, if it feels right to you after this inner work, think of yourself as a steward of this concept. You are its caretaker, and your lifepath brings it to form.

Procrastination is the Way! (pro-fascination!)

So you have something you need or want to or must do....but you just can't quite get to it. Most everyone has had a moment or two of procrastination in their life ☺ Maybe the worst part of procrastination is you feel you shouldn't be doing whatever it is you are doing as part of your procrastination process, so you can't really enjoy whatever it is you are doing, and can't get to all the good stuff in it. This exercise is meant to fully enjoy and relish all the good things in procrastination.

Think of a moment of procrastination: Maybe it is happening now, you just can't quite get yourself to do something. Or maybe there is a longterm project that you are continually procrastinating about.

Open up to procrastination: If you would allow yourself the freedom procrastinate (maybe even consider it is part of your creative process) – what would you do? Maybe you would go out for a walk, go shopping, putter around, take care of business, read a novel, etc. Take time to explore and find the perfect procrastination pastime for yourself.

Procrastinate Boldly: Now go ahead and imagine doing whatever that is you found in step 2. If it is possible, go ahead and do it, or if that isn't possible for you in the moment, imagine doing it now.

What is good about this?: As you get into your activity, either doing it or imagining it, you have only one task. Notice what is right about this for you right now? What is good about it, how do you need this activity?

Savor the attitude: When you have discovered what is right about it, find the attitude that goes with it. Is it something easy going and relaxed, is it excited, joyous, mellow?...find the attitude, and enjoy it. How is it different from your everyday attitude? Maybe you have a different mood or

perspective about yourself and everyday life in general. Imagine living out of this new attitude. How would you live differently?

Look at project/task: now look back at the task that you were procrastinating. How has your perspective about that task changed? How does the task look different to you now? How might you approach the task with the new attitude?

Changing Identity: can you think of anyone who lives life this way? What type of identity would you need to have that this would be an ordinary lifestyle for you? (maybe a surfer, and artist, etc) Think about adopting this new identity for awhile, try it on for size and see how you like it!

When you are Ready: you will know when it is right for you to go to your project. This new attitude and way of life will show you the way. Try focusing on the new lifestyle, and notice when you find yourself wanting to go to it.

Example of exercise: My procrastination “device” was listening to a song that I love on my ipod and dancing. As I listened and danced, I thoroughly enjoyed the feeling of moving my body in different ways, the sheer joy of that, playing with the rhythm and being moved by the song. It was ecstatic. What was so right about this for me was that it brought me in touch with something divine, joyous, and it completely changed my mood about life, daily tasks, and myself today. I enjoyed the pure joy of being moved by the divine, and thought, o.k., this is my real task, to stay close to this experience no matter what I am doing. From this viewpoint, I looked back at myself in my everyday life, trying to get stuff done, working on the flyer that needed to go out YESTERDAY ☺, and realized I could take this feeling right to that flyer, enjoy the struggle of it and the joy of actually being “chosen” to complete this task at this time, on this planet.

Being Human: it's not as easy as it sounds in this day and age ☺!

With all the pressures to be _____ (fill in the blank!) – spiritual, smart, courageous, loving, you name it, someone has heard it and is trying to achieve it! – it might be fun and inspiring at times to aspire to these different “criteria”, but it can also make it even more difficult to open up to your everyday experience, which might not go along at all with what you would like it to. And this can be sort of disorienting, b/c you are having experiences that you don't want to have, so you just feel bad and try to pretend they are not there, which would be o.k. if it would work, but for me, although my inner critic has a great time with it, it doesn't seem to have all that positive of an influence on my mood ☺

Take a moment; what is it in your personality that you are trying to avoid/overcome? You will know you have found it when you have a sense of, ugghh, not that, or something similarly unpleasant, maybe even embarrassing. (like, I am ambitious, I am superficial, I am a hard worker) – within the context of your personality, it will most likely be something somewhat “forbidden” . when you have discovered this, you have finished the most difficult part of the exercise!

Go ahead, allow yourself this human attribute for a moment. If you feel stupid, open up to being stupid. If you are superficial, allow that to be. As undeveloped, silly, wrong, bad, or whatever else it is, go ahead and try it on for size. Play it out a little, as if you were acting it out in a role. Do you know any person or fairytale figure who is like this?

How could this be good for you? Can you think of an area in your life that this kind of attribute/behavior, good be somehow good for you? (For example, if you allow yourself to be “stupid”, then you can be curious, or you can follow happiness rather than try to get it “right”.)

Try it out, try it on. If you like it, try it a little more.

Do you have a friend who could appreciate this? Share!

Extra credit!

Who is against it? What everyday attitude, belief system, family tradition, etc, does this attitude go against? What is the belief system that makes this “wrong”?

It's not me!

I really mean that. Projection theory and basic self doubt, combined with a general belief system that says you should be like everyone else, makes it very hard to open up to and even appreciate and enjoy areas in which you feel you are strange or different.

Think of a situation or area in life that you feel you really don't belong, you don't fit in. For example, everyone seems to have a good time and you are not feeling it. Or everyone laughs and you don't. Now shift your focus, rather than think what is wrong with you that you don't like it, focus on what you don't like about that situation, those people, that activity.

Who is the one in you who doesn't like it? Frame this "positively", not as if there was something wrong with that, but that there is intelligence, you are ahead of the game. (is it a monk, a hippie, a business person, a nature lover?)

Allow yourself to feel this one in you. How does she/he walk, think, relate to others. What is her/his lifestyle.

Enjoy meeting this aspect of you,

Missed Opportunity

This experience can be truly haunting. The sense that Life presented you with an "opportunity"/"gift"/"open door" - and you missed it because "**fill in the blank**": you were too selfish, you were too dumb, you were too ungrateful, you were too unaware, etc. Whatever the reason, an experience of "doom" can set it, and a sense that somehow you went against life, you had a chance and you missed it and this is some kind of "sin" against the larger order. In case you are disturbed by an experience like this, this exercise might help.

1) Take a moment to settle with yourself. If you can, get comfortable where you are sitting or standing. Make a space for yourself to begin your innerwork.

2) Go back to the moment that you consider a "missed opportunity". If there is a sense of doom present, try to notice what it is that brings out the doomful feeling. For example, is there an inner critic that is accusing you of something? if so, what is it that you are being accused of. What, in the mind of the critic, did you do "wrong"? Notice if this is an inner criticism that you are already familiar with, and if so, how? - rather than further an inner debate on this point, try to put it aside for now.

3) Now try something counter intuitive, and find the one who "missed" the opportunity. Imagine you would "miss" that opportunity on purpose. Go back to that situation in your mind, and change the storyline by purposefully "missing" what was offered. Who would do that? What kind of attitude would you have to have to do this? (Let your imagination go, this need not make "rational" sense.) It could be a fairytale figure, a spiritual icon, an animal, a historical person, or someone you know personally. You will know you found it when you have a sense of upliftedness and surprise.

4) Now shapeshift and become that figure. Move like the figure, make sounds like the figure, and most of all, allow yourself to enjoy and get to know their spirit/essence. How do you feel about life in general? how do you

feel about relationships? What kind of lifestyle do you have? Notice a mood shift and perspective shift, and enjoy.

5) From this perspective, look back at the situation that seemed like a "missed opportunity". How does it appear now, from this view? What new aspect of your inner life did you discover through this process? If it feels right for you, frame this as a "gained friend" :-) - and put a image of this one somewhere nearby to remind you of them.



Today is a Special Occassion

1) Here I am: what do you notice right now, as you sit, as you stand, as you read, what do you notice most right now, if you take a moment for that.

2) find a gesture and an essence

3) celebrate this, it is special today