

*The Book of
Is*

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Changing the Channel

Each one of us is conscious of the moments passing when we pay close attention. And when we deeply inspect the future or the past, we see that only the *present* future and *present* past exist. Thoughts shift, desires shift, personal history gets rearranged, memories reorganize to fit a new point of view. Even something that gives us a sense of meaning now may at some point feel petty or empty.

We search for happiness and fulfillment. We long for connection. But consciousness at its core causes a certain disconnect. To be "I" is to be something other than everything else.

Creating a road map for how to find joy and peace of mind moment to moment is the ultimate goal of this book. We come across these feelings by luck, under the right circumstances, hard won successes, or desires met. They last for a time. But then we once again must deal with the tricks the mind will play.

Therefore, part of the task of being happy or fulfilled for as much time as possible is learning how to extend these feelings.

That brings us to the importance of the present moment, and what you can do to -- how shall I put this -- not make things worse than they already are!

Everyone has worries, fears, failures, goals unmet. The key is to think about these things only to the point where it's helpful. What we don't want to do is have dark or negative

thoughts rattle around in our minds endlessly. They will always have plenty of time to block out the sun. There is no need to manufacture more space for them.

The Book of Is borrows from traditions that were created long ago. It is an odd amalgam of Buddhist psychology, positive thinking, moralistic hedonism, as well as the Declaration of Independence.

The mantra *The Book of Is* wants you to learn, is this:

I wish to experience as much creativity and joy as possible right in this moment, without purposefully harming myself or others in the process.

Ironically, the mind hardly ever wants to cooperate, even though it insists this is what it wants.

The mind almost immediately rejects what would seem to be a great way to live because it is fearful and lazy. It whispers it's impossible, or too hard, or questions what creativity really means.

To be sure, achieving the goal of the mantra above takes discipline, determination, and conscious awareness of your thoughts. But at least it's not somber or boring. The goal is not to become thoughtless. It is instead similar to Vipassana (insight) meditation, where you practice constantly overseeing (witnessing) your thoughts.

We must observe our thoughts with great care and suspicion. Only then can we hope to guide them with towards joy as much as possible. You do not need a new

mind, or a changed brain. You just have to take good care of the mind you have.

One of the best ways to do this day-to-day and moment-to-moment is by playing a game I call

Changing the Channel:

Let's say you are driving a car. When you notice a lack of enjoyment in your mind, maybe the traffic is bothering you, at that moment you remember your Book of Is mantra and you attempt to immediately *change the channel* to a different "is," a different present moment. Because there are many hundreds of parallel dimensions of the present moment.

Let's say you stop at a red light, and you see a crushed cola can lying on the grass divider, and you begin to think how stupid people are, and how could someone do such a rude selfish thing. You feel angry, and hopeless. But what if you switched dimensions and allowed your mind to just see the sun sparkling off a shiny silver object? No defining the silver object allowed, no judgment of it, or how it got there, no fear or anger about pollution, or global warming, or irresponsible behavior.

You could also comfort yourself first by writing yourself a quick note or recording a voice memo to recycle more, or write to the city council about cleaning up the county highway, if that will make you feel better. But *ultimately* the choice is yours in that moment to either dwell on this inanimate object and let it upset you (an odd thing to do to oneself when you stop and think about it) and then stay upset long after the light turns green, or, let it go by

changing dimensions, flipping a switch, and having a moment filled with color and light.

This is an example of the key discipline needed for those interested in surviving "what is:"

Turn worrisome, mundane, and often irksome moments into something creative and beautiful.

Other examples of changing the channel:

While you're sitting in meditation, watch the light show of shapes and colors going by like clouds in front of your closed eyes. Don't get attached to what you see, or judge it as better or worse than the next light cloud that passes in front of you. Just watch without thought or judgment as best as you can.

Do not judge yourself if you catch yourself thinking. It's not a failure. It's part of the meditation process. Just let the thought of failure pass like a cloud as well, and go back to the light show.

This game of becoming hyper-aware of observing the present moment without getting caught in the judgement and stories that get created allows you to cut off those thoughts simply by being aware of their existence, and then -
- changing the channel.

The Book of Is calls this process The Mind Game.

The Mind game is NOT EASY TO DO. Being aware enough to change the channel is step one. Being willing to change the channel -- and not be conned into staying with a thought or story you don't like -- is step two.

This is similar to Vipassana meditation. The difference is The Mind Game can and should be played for as many waking hours as possible. Not just while meditating.

The Wisdom of Co-creating with the Is.

The mind has to be guided by a deeper layer of mind, or it will literally destroy our life.

Those who do not choose to play The Mind Game are playing it anyway. *But they become pawns instead of players.*

This is because most of us are not conscious that there is a game being played. For those who are living in the shallows, the game on that level almost always ends badly.

The King or Queen in this chess game, the overseer, is the inner guide.

The inner guide is your deepest self. The one that desires to live a truly good and happy life.

Ask your inner guide -- what is my goal right now in this moment? What do you want me to do or think right now that will make me feel happy without harming myself or others in the process? What can I focus on right in this instant that will make me feel good?

If you allow your initial thoughts to make the decision you will likely be asked to succeed at desiring the wrong things, or be willing to cheat, or lie to get what you think you want. This will immediately darken your thoughts and therefore serve to pull you in the opposite direction of The Mind Game.

The initial thoughts are also quite good at convincing you that you are bored or feeling sad or fearful, or that you

are a failure, or jealous, and then your unconscious mind will gladly oblige and create endless mental and emotional images and internal stories that bring those thoughts to life. Many of those stories you have heard before with slight variations or new reasons to feel victimized or wrong.

Your inner guide usually will not, or cannot stop the initial chatter from taking over without discipline and practice on your part.

We all must practice hearing the deeper guidance.

The deeper guidance relies on baselines like compassion, love and understanding -- given to yourself as well as others.

It doesn't just want to have fun at all costs. It wants to have *deep* fun -- creative fun -- the kind of fun that leads to fulfillment and joy, not just immediate gratification that leads you deeper into despair. Outcomes of the unguided mind are booby prizes.

When we get deeply in touch with the inner voice we find it is not only the guide, but the creator. It is the creator of all you come to define as "your life."

Some call this inner voice the soul. Some call it our will. Some call it integrity, or our moral center. Some call it God or Atman.

Whatever you wish to name it, being in touch with it as often as possible, and allowing it to decide *what* to attempt *moment to moment* is the key to The Mind Game.

The meaning of human existence may never be clear to us. The universe and the mysteries of life itself may never be discovered by science.

Or, maybe science will eventually come to discover the workings of the universe and the meaning of life itself!

Or, maybe we discover that God (some religion's definition of God) is real. Maybe he or she or it appears before us all one day and announces the truth about holiness and existence and right and wrong and how to live a beautiful life. (Or maybe he or she or it has already done this but we weren't listening.)

Maybe we will live for two hundred years. Maybe we will all die tomorrow.

In *all* of these circumstances, there is *still* only one clear thing to do in this moment:

Repeat the mantra of *The Book of Is*:

I wish to experience as much creativity and joy as possible right in this moment, without purposefully harming myself or others in the process.

Then do it.

Whatever you believe, or even if you believe in nothing at all -- you have no excuse not to play The Mind Game.

In fact, ignore it at your own peril.

Solutions

But what if the present moment is an objectively painful or negative experience, like so many moments in life seem to be?

Well, as my dad used to say, "There's a time to watch the ballgame, and a time you just gotta deal."

When you gotta deal, when life presents a moment where action is called for, inspect clearly what that problem is. Look for solutions.

Painful or negative experiences can be broken down into three categories:

1. A repetitive worry that has no permanent solution.
2. A repetitive worry that does not have a solution at this time. But might have one in the future.
3. A worry that needs a solution now and it's possible one exists.

Examples:

1. *A repetitive worry that has no permanent solution.*

~ **We are all going to die.**

There is nothing we can do about this. Even if we find ways to stay alive indefinitely, in a trillion years the universe

is going to become very inhospitable. Eventually we will cease to be.

~ **Relationships go up and down.**

There is no way to stop people you love from changing, disagreeing, individuating, differentiating, and occasionally thinking or acting kind of crazy. Just like you.

~ **Friends and relatives have flaws.**

There is no way they can be perfect, and you can't teach them how to be perfect since you're not able to be perfect yourself. No one in your life will check off all the boxes you have created next to their name, with each box representing yet another way to please you.

~ **Waiting for all the things you're worried about to resolve themselves before allowing yourself to feel happy or at peace that day.**

Remember, a day where there is absolutely nothing to worry about will be followed by many days very unlike that day.

If you are only going to feel happy or peaceful on days when there is absolutely nothing to be concerned about, please do not hesitate to enjoy those handful of days in your life. But also remember, it's important to find a strategy to deal with the tens of thousands of days where worries will abound. It's not wise to assume life will hand you happiness without understanding how to access it under stressful circumstances.

2. *A repetitive worry that does not have a solution at this time. But might have one in the future.*

This would be the time to change the channel. Ask yourself first if there is any new idea you can think of to solve the problem.

If you cannot think of a solution that feels good and right, move on from it for now. Write the worry down if you like, so you can allow yourself to move on, and look at it some other time to see if a solution suddenly exists. If there's still no available solution, continue to *change the channel*. Including focusing your attention on another worry that is currently solvable.

3. *A worry that needs a solution now, and it's possible one exists.*

If you come up with a solution to a worry, by all means act on it. Stay within your integrity. Be firm but fair with others. Then see what happens from your actions.

It may solve the worry. It may not. It may create other worries on top of the initial one, or make that original worry worse.

But over time, successes will increase your ability to solve future problems. The failures will teach you humility and patience.

The most important lesson is to accept the outcome of your actions, *accept what is*, and then either find a new solution that may result in a better outcome, *or let it go*.

Learn to Bifurcate

A day is rarely filled with just one or two worries. Usually we are overwhelmed with worries, deadlines, chores, and other things that make our lives feel disconnected and meaningless.

One methodology I have found helpful is to bifurcate different parts of your life.

For instance, while something very upsetting might be happening at work, when I get home and the children want to play with daddy, I take a deep breath and fall as far as possible into their world, even if it's only for a few minutes. I try to open my heart to them and tell them I love them. I smile at the thought of having children, and being lucky enough to experience fatherhood, and remind myself not to throw away these moments.

As I get up off the floor and stop a small red fire truck from slipping down the stairs I might go to my desk to try to find a solution to the problem at work. But a few minutes later my friend calls and asks me if my wife and I would like to meet them for dinner over the weekend. And how am I? My response: I'm fine. Because enough good things are happening in my life, including having a friend calling me, to honestly say, I AM FINE.

But what if my problem at work is that the boss is telling me he may need to let me go? Then in between actually enjoying playing with my children and talking to my friend, I am also actively looking for another job. Or maybe even starting my own business based on my limited but needed talents.

The point is: You can seek solutions to more than one problem, some of which may feel quite terrible, while also having a good day and enjoying life.

Consciously bifurcating your worries and goals and responsibilities and hobbies by dealing with each one separately and staying in the present moment as much as possible when you do, can lead you to an internal place of peace where "everything is okay."

Worrying is very much like being put in the Star Trek transporter. One can travel straight to Hell in seconds, in a mere a flash of synaptic light. Just press the button and we dis-integrate. We end up wandering around on an unknown planet holding our phasers out in front of us, waiting for the actual moment of danger to reveal itself.

The present moment is the only real and permanent thing in the universe.

So how can you step into the light beam of worrilessness?

One worriless moment at a time.

The Discipline of Happiness

Of course, lasting happiness does not depend on a set of external circumstances going your way. That will not happen often or consistently enough.

We have all heard happiness is a choice. Happiness is a moment to moment mental decision to experience happiness, or not. But how do you do that? What's the trick?

First, let's define happiness, and then set the rules of the game.

There is a vast difference between *feeling* happy and being happy.

Feelings are thoughts that form a physical sensation. Sometimes physical elements can alter our thinking, like hormonal shifts, illness, and brain chemistry. But eventually feelings -- emotions -- are formed with thoughts.

Feeling in love, or feeling angry won't become real or believable to us unless they are turned into thoughts that consciously or unconsciously become what you assume is "you" *feeling* that way.

But if one were to come to a deeper mental understanding that you can *be* happy even if you feel sad or angry, for instance, that creates a very different psychological baseline from which to judge everything else that happens.

Mental Tool One:

Understand clearly that you cannot be truly happy unless you first make an agreement with your mind to find some level of happiness under all circumstances. *The Book of Is* believes the mind will almost never feel truly happy unless this is your goal.

Therefore, never stop the internal search for a way back into the dimension where happiness exists.

Remember *The Book of Is* mantra:

I wish to experience as much creativity and joy as possible right in this moment, without purposefully harming myself or others in the process.

The way to do this is to constantly change the channel to a deeper conclusion about life, and/or to enliven at least one of the senses when you don't like what you're thinking.

Mental Tool Two:

The Book of Is encourages desires, as long as they do not potentially harm ourselves or others.

Rearranging our desires to result in deep fun or joy for ourselves without causing pain or sadness or physical harm to ourselves or anyone else should be a daily goal.

Use any of your senses or conscious thoughts to extract, create, and imagine pleasurable experiences and outcomes as much as possible.

Fun and internal creative playfulness is essential. It's food for a broadly happier state of mind.

The Book of Is believes in this:

-- Your life will be blessed with as much happiness as you can *imagine*.

The Maybe Story vs. Being Punched in the Face

There is an old Taoist story about fate, which is -- You never know if an event that happens to you is ultimately good or bad.

The famous story goes like this:

An old farmer who had worked his crops for many years depended heavily on his horse and his son to tend the fields. One day his horse ran away. Upon hearing the news, his neighbors came to visit. "Such bad luck," they said sympathetically.

"Maybe," the farmer replied.

The next morning the horse returned, bringing with it three other wild horses. "You are the luckiest man we have ever known," the neighbors exclaimed.

"Maybe," replied the old man.

The following day, his son tried to ride one of the untamed horses, was thrown, and broke his leg. The neighbors again came to offer their sympathy on his misfortune. "Who will now help you tend to your fields while we tend to ours? You are very unlucky indeed."

"Maybe," answered the farmer.

The day after the son broke his leg military officials rode into the village looking to draft all of the village's healthy young men into the army. Seeing that the son's leg

was broken, they passed him by. The neighbors congratulated the farmer on how well things had turned out. "Maybe," said the farmer.

On and on life goes. . . .

On the other hand, there is the famous joke from the modern day comedian, Demetri Martin, which goes something like this.

I was at this party and everyone was drunk. I got into a conversation with this new age guy, and I'm telling him about this girl that just dumped me. So he says, "Everything happens for a reason."

So I punched him in the face.

He gets up from the floor and said, "Why the hell did you do that?"

And I said, "I don't know, you tell me."

This is why I told you The Maybe Story and didn't just tell you everything happens for a reason.

The Book of Is doesn't believe there are predestined reasons. Things happen. Random things happen. But it is equally true that we cannot predict whether or not any particular event will lead to something better or worse in the future.

While *The Book of Is* is all for putting past events in the best light possible, it does not believe in, or wish to promote, or need to preach about pre-destined, pre-ordained, events.

Fearlessness

I once heard this story, told by an Indian woman, a great teacher and mentor of mine, who I will discuss in a later chapter:

A taxi driver was zipping in between the two lanes of a busy city street, just barely missing cars by inches as he drove sixty miles an hour to the passenger's destination.

When they finally arrived the frightened but admiring passenger said, "You are the bravest driver I have ever seen. How do you find that kind of fearlessness?"

"It's quite simple," the driver said. "Whenever I get close to crashing into something I close my eyes."

Most fearlessness is of this variety. It's not conscious fearlessness. It's fearlessness regardless of the consequences.

But to find true fearlessness, or true happiness, *The Book of Is* asks us to shift our focus to another road entirely.

The road reshapes and self-defines reality.

To do this we use Mental Tools One and Two from Chapter 4 above, and The Maybe Story.

Because the road where true fearlessness exists does not need to find an answer to our problems. It has no need for solutions. It is a pure acceptance of what is. It is your ability to accept life as it presents itself. And that takes

having your eyes wide open, and your mind guided moment to moment by a fearless attitude.

We may not have a choice what happens to us,
but we do have a choice to define what happens to us.
This internal choice is our *karma*.

For instance, maybe just before bed we become fearless enough to forgive all the things that were done or said to us by others that made us feel badly about ourselves.

Then we forgive all the thoughts and feelings we have told *ourselves* that have made us feel upset or jealous: I wish had more money, more love, better health, a nicer car.

We have to become fearless enough to change the channel at the moment thoughts and feelings like that arise, and maybe instead we intentionally see the stars out our window as distant messengers whispering about the infinite that our minds can never comprehend. Or we notice that the shadow the night light makes on the wall looks like a small house with an inviting doorway. If the shadow looks like a ghost upon first impression, shift your eyes until the image becomes something that makes you smile or feel protected, or peaceful. Control the Rorschach test! The inkblot is yours to shape.

Fearlessness in the present would also include, while walking on the beach at sunset, dropping into the beauty of the present moment and allowing the waves to wash over our thoughts, our memories, our plans, our pain. Rather than dwelling on all the problems you have that aren't there in front of you.

These “oceanic” moments can be very healing. They can allow us to soar above suffering, and all the confusion that our minds love to saddle us with.

The world puts many obstacles in front of us, many are heavy enough to block our way. Many obstacles crash into us without us ever seeing them coming. Of course, we have to deal with the things that we crash into.

But the trick is to become disciplined enough, imaginative enough, optimistic enough, and courageous enough to find this "oceanic" place of peace as often as possible.

Because that is the only place where true fearlessness and true peace exist. *True happiness relies on these things.*

Spiritually, Should We Attempt to Change. . . *Anything?*

One of my favorite life teachers is also a great humanitarian named Amma (see Amma.org).

She tells us, yes, it is okay, and even important, to put in the effort to change the world for the better. But she cautions -- we do not know how things will ultimately turn out. (The Maybe Story.) So while it's good to try, at the same time, accept the way things are, and accept what happens in the future from your well-intentioned efforts.

Do not assume *your* vision of the future is the right vision, or the only vision.

Do not assume your fears about the future are assured to happen.

When it comes to relationships, politics, or *any* actions you contemplate, as long as they are approached with right intention there are thousands of types of efforts that will lead to positive outcomes.

Try. Yes. Open your heart to attempt positive change. But make sure the efforting itself is filled with optimism, joy, and a sense of peace *regardless of the outcome.*

Those attached to outcome usually end up with a very bad outcome.

Don't Worry, Be Happy,
Because We Don't Have Anything to Live For!

Suffering is constant. Physical pain, emotional heartbreak, aging, dying, all these things are bound to occur in everyone's life. But the ego is at the core of suffering. Ego senses and defines our reality, pain, fear, selfhood and mortality.

The ego is like a fog that blurs our vision. The ego is a web of tangled perceptions which keep us from sensing a pervasive feeling of connectedness.

Experiences where people lose a part of their ego, through meditating, or sometimes by taking psilocybin, or even LSD, seem to indicate that the ego is the lie, and that connectedness and timelessness are the true reality.

In the ego state, even when we come to consciously believe in the connectedness around us, we will hardly ever *feel* its existence.

Ego leads to attachment. We become attached to desiring and "winning" happiness so badly that we create the opposite by the very seeking of it.

But when suffering comes and changing the channel seem as far away as the dark side of the moon, then we have to tune in to a different kind of programming.

To combat true suffering we have to bypass our ego to see the truth of that suffering.

When we let go of our ego we realize we have nothing particular to live for. Nothing critically important to do, or be concerned about. No people or responsibilities to take care of. No one we have to pretend to be.

Life is suspended between realities, one seen through the ego and human consciousness when we're alive, and the other *felt* during our rare times of sensing true surrender, interconnectedness, timelessness, vastness.

Thinking about the vastness is daunting, often frightening.

Feeling the vastness, and feeling the wildness of the mystery of all we don't know, is almost like sensing God.

In the end, is connectedness the delusion? Or is the reality created by our ego the delusion?

Regardless of which is "true," the fact is, in the end, there is nothing we have to figure out, nothing to worry about, and nothing we have to live for. Reality is far bigger than that, and far more vast than only ourselves. We are a fraction of consciousness. A fraction of reality. A fraction of time. A fraction of emptiness, which is the ultimate fate of the universe. We are nothing. . . right now.

That can be frightening if the ego considers it.

And liberating, even a joyous relief, if it doesn't.

Everything is in the hands of *what is*.

Nothing will ever change that.

It's not our job to know anything more than this.

When to Surrender, When to Fight

Each morning our life presents us with a chessboard-like situation -- "our life as it currently is" -- with the chess pieces set in various advantageous and disadvantageous positions.

Our responsibility to ourselves each day is to first surrender to the way the board is set.

Surrender to the way things currently are.

But after surrendering to what is, then it's time to put your day's efforts into trying to win the chess game as it lays.

(Surrendering the effort to try to win, is just being a fool.)

Winning fairly, by using your best and clearest intention is critical, or the next day's chessboard will almost surely become more complicated and far less winnable. Morality is always the best long-term winning strategy.

Defining morality can be tricky. But I rely on The Declaration of Independence for that: to freely pursue joy and live life in a way that makes you happy, as long as you don't do anything illegal or violate the rights of others.

* "The right to pursue any legal activity as long as it does not infringe upon the rights of others."

Which brings us back to the mantra of *The Book of Is*:

I wish to experience as much creativity and joy as possible right in this moment, without purposefully harming myself or others in the process.

Here is the difficult but important task of truly accepting what is:

*Surrender to the morning,
then fight to win fairly and joyously until the day is done.*

The Peacock Fan of Thoughts

In one of my favorite SpongeBob episodes of all time Squidward moans to SpongeBob and his friend, (the wonderfully eternally-dumb starfish, Patrick), "*Please stop screaming and prancing around. I can't hear myself think!*"

To which Patrick asks, "Well okay, but can you *smell* yourself think?"

SpongeBob chimes in, "Or can you *taste* yourself think, Squidward?"

Patrick adds, "Can you *see* yourself think?"

Patrick was wise (for probably for the first time ever) because you *can* hear and see yourself think. And it's extremely valuable to do it as much as possible.

The Peacock Fan of Thoughts is a mental construct that goes like this:

After each thought, and each event in life, our mind has a choice to enter one of a thousand doorways of thought.

It usually does so without our consent.

But what if we had the power and the common sense to choose the doorway our thoughts should enter?

Imagine there is a one hundred eighty degree spectrum of thought choices, spread out like a peacock fan, from having very dark fearful thoughts all the way to very light

positive thoughts, with a dozen vertical lines or gradients separating them. Each one of those gradients is a doorway.

After any occurrence our thoughts naturally drift into one of those doorways on the dark to light spectrum.

Through each one of those doorways is an imaginary room with a matching emotional atmosphere of the door you just entered -- sadness, or anger, or fear, or humor, or peace, or forgiveness.

The mind, when left to its own devices, is not fully aware that it has a *choice* of what doorway to enter from moment to moment, and it will too often drift into the darker spectrums, hypnotized and unconscious, as if we are walking around in a dream.

It's very difficult to move into a light spectrum once you are deep inside one of those dark rooms.

On the other hand, if you become conscious of your thoughts, and discipline yourself to walk through lighter spectrums as much as possible, even when unwanted events occur, you can learn to control your fate and your personal history.

This is not a theory. It is the psychological truth about the human mind.

There is a story I once heard about a young boy who saw a young girl playing on the grass with a bunch of silver coins she was given.

The boy became desirous of the coins and offered her two small pieces of chocolate for all the coins, keeping the biggest piece of chocolate hidden in his pocket.

She happily gave him all the coins, and after dinner enjoyed the chocolate to the fullest. It tasted amazing. She was grateful the boy traded with her. She slept peacefully that night and had beautiful dreams.

The boy, on the other hand, ate his big piece of chocolate on the way home without thinking much about it. But that night he tossed and turned in bed, with the shiny silver coins beside him, and thought to himself, "I bet she kept the most valuable coins for herself. I bet she hid them from me. Why didn't I force her to empty her pockets before making the trade?"

The boy and the girl created their own very different realities from their transaction, each one entering a doorway with a gradient from dark to light that matched their true intentions.

When people say, "Go to the light," they are actually making a very good suggestion.

PART II

Stories From the Overworld

Hangnails

The definition of a hangnail is "a piece of skin near the root of a fingernail that appears jagged and torn."

Have you ever had a perfect day? A day where you wake up and your body feels perfectly healthy in every way. All of your family and friends are happy and doing well. You are having enormous fun and have accomplished all of your life goals. All your thoughts and feelings are gleaming with joy and love and peace. And even the headlines in the news are not particularly disturbing. Ever had a day like that?

Me neither!

But I almost did, once.

The first few hours were quite lovely, if not a little disarming. My mind had nothing to worry about. All my friends and family were doing well. My creativity was peaking and all my writing projects were going well. But then, sometime before lunch, I noticed I had a hangnail. Literally, a tiny hangnail on my left index finger. It went in and out of my consciousness until I noticed myself picking at it while laughing and horsing around with my adoring friends (on this perfect day they all seemed to adore me).

Finally, I pulled and yanked at it until the small shard of skin was torn off and I was left with a slightly bleeding cuticle the size of a paper cut. For the rest of the day my mind continued to come back to the slight pain I felt from

the cut. Should I put a band aide on it? Would my friends laugh at me and call me a wimp, and might that ruin their adoration of me? After all, I was supposed to be strong in mind and body. Putting a ban aide on my finger for something smaller than a mild cut would look quite lame. This is what my judgment of myself was at the time. It was a problem I continued to perseverate on from various angles of perception on and off for the rest of the day. My perfect day was constantly being colored by the attention I was giving to my hangnail.

Let's compare this story to one about a Swami I met on a very sad day. Someone close to him had passed away. He absorbed the sadness for a while, and spoke kindly about his dear friend. A few of the stories were quite funny. Others were quite beautiful. But then he moved on with his day, and busied himself with his typical chores of selfless service.

Usually he spent some time answering spiritual questions from devotees. But for the next many days he took no questions. He went into a storage room where medical deliveries came, to be shipped on to a hospital in India that treated the poor for free. He sat down with the other devotees and carefully weighed, labeled, and taped up each box. He addressed each box by hand using his best handwriting.

He then cooked lunch for the work crew and served them, thanking them for volunteering their time for such an important cause.

He worked tirelessly day and night, continuing to focus his thoughts on the people who would be helped by these shipments, and his admiration he had for the rest of the

crew, one by one, each by name, until he felt the darkness lift from him.

Only then did he let the devotees know he was once again available to answer their questions as best as he could.

The mind under normal circumstances will focus on every hangnail. No ant will go unnoticed during life's very complex picnic.

But we do have a choice, if we stay awake and conscious.

For each of us, there will always be excellent reasons to worry, feel misery or anger or sadness or fear, and be too busy to play The Mind Game.

Do not fret over the times you cannot conjure up the will to play. Do not blame yourself or label yourself as a failure. No one can play the game flawlessly or the game would be unnecessary.

Instead, remind yourself of the immense courage and mental muscle it takes to play this game.

It is the most powerful and difficult game in the human world.

It takes a lifetime to play it well.

And it is a game played only by the wise and the fearless.

Strive to be one of them. Continue whenever possible.

The Power of the Heart

A Swami devoted to Amma told this story at a retreat in June of 2011:

Once there was an angry old man. He'd been angry all his life and could not control it. He even asked people he knew for help, but the anger came whenever it wanted to.

He didn't realize that only by accessing the heart and learning its language can we control our emotions.

The heart wants to be inspired. Inspiration and a deep understanding of compassion is the way the heart gains power over the mind.

This is what spiritual practice is all about - finding the path to the heart instead of getting lost in the maze of the mind.

Once the heart gains power over the mind, the mind cannot destroy it, or you.

This brings us back to the angry old man and the lesson he was about to learn.

He was sitting on a park bench reading the newspaper, and though his goal was to peacefully sit and breathe in some fresh air, the world news was of course very disturbing. He was angry about how stupid and heartless people were as he read the various articles.

Just then a man and his son approached him. His son was 25 years old. He ran over to a tree near the old man and called out, "This is a tree right? And the color of the trunk is brown, isn't it?"

The father patiently replied, "Yes, that's correct."

"And," said the son running over to a flower, "this flower is yellow isn't it? And this one over here is red!"

"Yes, that's right, son," the father called back to him.

By now the old man was getting irritated. The father and son were speaking so loudly. And the son seemed more like a 2 year old than a 25 year old.

"And father," the son continued, running over to the other side of the walkway, "this is grass, and it's green, right?"

"Yes," said the father.

The old man had had it. He stood up and grabbed the father by the arm and said, "Your son obviously belongs in a mental institution. He's got the mind of a baby, asking all these stupid questions, and disturbing my peace!"

The father said, "I'm so sorry, sir. My son was blind since birth, but he had an operation yesterday and this is the first day he can see. He's heard of all these colors but now he can truly see and understand them."

The old man felt intense shame and apologized to the father. His heart awakened for the first time in a long time. He went over to the son and took him by the arm and said, "Son, let me show you all the beauty I have seen during the twenty years I have walked through this park. "

The old man's heart had turned his anger into an enlightened state in an instant, just by accessing the compassion that had been dead for so many years.

Amma says accessing this kind of compassion and wisdom of the heart is a key element in meditation practice. Without compassion for yourself and others all attempts to steer your own thoughts to a lighter doorway will likely fail.

Love: Finding "The One"

God, or an Assassin?

When I was eighteen I found a girl I loved enough to want to marry. She felt the same way. I will call her Kelsey for the sake of anonymity. Two summers after we fell in love she fell in love with my best friend. I was left alone with my heart broken.

I tried to replace her. I tried to find an alternate "the one," even though my fear was Kelsey was the one and only one and there would never again be anyone as right for me as her.

None of my following relationships lasted more than a few years. I always found reasons why they weren't "the one."

In my early thirties I met a very wise hypnotherapist. I saw her for over a year and trusted her. We worked on a number of issues. But on this particular day the idea of "the one" came up again, because I was about to break up with another girlfriend who was obviously not "the one." I wondered aloud if there would even be anyone to fully replace Kelsey in my life.

She put me in a light hypnotic state, as she had many times before, then said quietly, "I want you to conjure up, while keeping your eyes closed, an image of 'the one.' Not someone from the past. Someone you might hope to meet in the future. It's your fantasy girl. Do the best you can. Use

your imagination. What kind of person comes to mind, physically, mentally? Describe her face to me, tell me about her personality.”

I didn't respond at first. In fact, it took me a full minute to speak.

“Describe what you are thinking and seeing now,” she said patiently.

When I saw the image of the girl in my mind so many of the physical features were like Kelsey's features, but it wasn't her. “Her face has very soft features, a kind smile. Kind of a boyish grin. Her hair is blonde. Like Kelsey's was. She's very funny, this person, she likes to make me laugh. She understands the pain I've been through. She wants me to trust her. She likes to see my heart open. I'm courageous around her. I feel strong like I used to feel. I feel like I want to try again when I'm around her.” I stopped to focus harder on this person's face. It was all very abstract, the image was fuzzy.

“Okay, very good,” the therapist said in a warm tone. “After I've counted down from ten to zero you can open your eyes slowly. Take a moment to be here. Then we'll talk.”

I felt myself coming out of the dream she put me in as she slowly counted all the way down to zero.

“Tell me what you're thinking now,” she said quietly.

“Thinking about 'the one' made me feel sad, not happy. Because not knowing her in real life feels empty. And because I'm not hopeful I will ever find her. It makes me anxious to think about her. Because she can never really be.”

I waited to hear some words of wisdom to rescue me from my thoughts.

"The one you hope to find, and want so badly to find, but don't think you will ever find. . . I actually know her. I know this person you described, I know who she is."

I was stunned. Then I realized it must be a psychological trick of some sort.

"It's still Kelsey?"

"No, it's definitely not Kelsey. She belongs to you on another level. That's not who I'm referring to."

"My mother?" I said, dejectedly, thinking of the typical pop psychology response.

"No!" she laughed softly, "I don't do that kind of therapy. It's definitely not your mother."

I thought about this puzzle she was setting up. Could she actually know someone I should meet? Could she be playing matchmaker, setting me up with some sort of bizarre blind date? "Is it really someone you know?"

"Yes," she said.

I shook my head. "Please tell me."

She leaned forward in her chair and said, "She's wearing a mask, Gary. See who is behind the mask."

"A mask? I have no idea!"

"If you take off her mask -- the beautiful face you saw in your dream -- you will see who she really is."

She let another moment go by.

"I give up."

"She is your murderer!"

"What?"

"She is your assassin."

"How, why?"

"She exists to murder your present moment, and kidnap you from everyone who wants to become close to

you. Because eventually they won't be 'the one.' No girl anywhere can match the power of your fantasies. So if you can't be with Kelsey, and you can't ever find the fantasy girl, the inevitable outcome is you will always be alone. You will also hurt a lot of very decent lovely people along the path to your eventual loneliness. You'll never find 'the one.' Not the one you saw. So, in essence, she has killed you. She has destroyed your life far more than Kelsey ever could have."

My head began to spin. "I see your point. I really do. I understand. I have to get rid of this fantasy of 'the one.' I have to ban the concept, ban that image before it causes me to die another death."

"No, no! Don't destroy her! Ever."

"But you just said..."

"Look closer, Gary. *Look closer.* You have to go deeper still. The murderer is wearing a mask. There is another mask to be pulled off. Pull it off! The mask of the assassin -- look who is behind that mask!"

I tried to play her game for a moment but I really had no clue.

"It's *God. . . .*" she whispered. "*Your God.* Your image of God. It's the force deep within you that is so very capable of creating love, sensing love, and feeling it very deeply, everywhere, in everything. Not just for a single person. True love is not just about one girl. It never has been. It's not about Kelsey, or someone alive out there in this world. It's *Eros.* It's sensuality, felt with a loving open heart. It's there, you can hear it when the wind is circling through tree branches. It's there in the smell of a flower blooming. It's there to see when clouds form from nothing in the sky. . . 'The one' is not *no one*, and it's not *never*. It's not the past. In

fact, it has no ending. It's a continuous rebirth. It's *everything*.
It's now. Do you get it?"

I did get it. But I had no words to speak. My mind was incapable of integrating this new idea of "Eros" with the way my mind had always thought.

Then she said, "I know you know this dimension exists. That's the reason I was able to trust you with the truth.

The Complex Concept of "Selfless" Service:

Concentric Circles

Amma says we should actively try to devote ourselves to selfless service. But those two words are tricky because the mind loves to serve its ego first and foremost.

This answer came from one of Amma's Q and As:

A woman stood up and asked Amma how she could stop her husband from being jealous about all the selfless service she was doing. The woman said, "I do selfless service all over the world. In fact, I just came back from Africa. I am going to India next month. My husband only works part-time. All I ask him to do while I'm gone is take care of our 6 year-old son. But he is angry with me. He says he doesn't want me to go and serve the poor anymore, and he's threatening our marriage. How can I convince him not to be so angry?"

Amma shook her finger at the woman and said, "What you are doing is not selfless service. It's serving your ego. That is because selfless service is like concentric circles. Like the circles on a dartboard. To selflessly serve you first have to start at the bullseye -- and selflessly serve your mind until you gain some control over its whims and demands. Otherwise you will lose control to your ego.

"If you have any energy left over after dealing with your own mind, then selflessly serve your child and spouse

and family. If you still have more time and energy then give to your friends, then your neighbors, then your community. Having more energy to selflessly serve further is rare, but if you do, then you can serve the rest of the world."

This story changed my life. It focused my goals and intentions to selflessly serve in the proper order, so we don't harm those we love along the way.

Stop Helping Those Who Refuse to Be Helped

Should we ever stop trying to love someone who does not seem capable of being helped?

Amma surprisingly warned the person who asked her this question to stay away from people who did not accept their help.

Amma said they needed to learn to help themselves by learning how to access their own discriminating power and by avoiding impatience and greed.

Her explanation went like this:

"What if there was a traveler who came past your house and asked you which was the best path at the crossroads to take to town.

You reply that one is a short-cut but the road is steep and dangerous. The other path is longer but very safe.

The traveler thanks you and immediately takes the short-cut, and comes back hours later bleeding, limping and needing someone to bring him back to health. So you do.

But as soon as he's better, despite your repeated warnings, he takes the short-cut again.

This person should no longer be helped if he comes back injured yet another time.

In fact, if you continue to help the stranger every time he comes back wounded you might eventually kill him with your kindness by making him think he will always be protected from the danger he is constantly putting himself in.

Metta Meditation

Metta means forgiveness.

Metta meditation is one of the most powerful meditations I have ever experienced. Whether you do it every day or once a week or once a month I think you will feel very good after it's over.

Sit for 5 minutes with your eyes closed. Try not to stay on any one thing for too long. This forgiveness should be both a mental and physical-emotional feeling, a complete letting go, perhaps using a long outbreath to help you let go and fully resolve any lingering resentment or doubt.

Perhaps for 15 -30 seconds each:

Forgive your past.

Forgive your fate.

Forgive yourself for not treating yourself with love and compassion.

Forgive yourself for the times you have not played, or have not successfully played The Mind Game.

Forgive yourself for anyone you did not treat with love and compassion in the distant past.

Forgive yourself for anyone you did not treat with love and compassion in the recent past.

Forgive people for being the way they are.

Forgive the world for being the way it is.

Forgive people or events that have caused harm to you or others.

Forgive those who don't believe in what you believe in
Forgive your enemies.

Forgive evil.

Forgive people you consider to have been evil.

Of course you can add to, or make up your own forgiveness list.

The End of Suffering

Someone once asked this question: How can people stand it when an animal is killed for food or sport? Do they not see the suffering in the animal's eyes, or feel horror eating something that was once alive?

It's an honorable thought. I certainly can relate. I don't even like to harm an insect, or a snail walking across a path. Yet I eat fish and meat for my health.

Having been a vegetarian for ten years when I was in my twenties I clearly noticed feeling healthier after adding meat and fish back into my diet in my thirties, and conversely feeling less healthy omitting them from my diet for longer than a few weeks, even now in my late sixties.

Others may feel better eating less meat or fish. Each must decide what is best for his or her own health, and taking their moral stance into account.

The debate of morals vs. health can be endless. But I've concluded the only true thing to know is this:

We have to deal with our own suffering and what causes it. If someone eats meat and enjoys it then that person is not suffering.

We cannot understand the suffering of animals, but they have been part of the human food chain for millions of years and have also been omnivorous predators themselves for millions of years.

So the ones that are clearly suffering around this issue are the humans that *feel* suffering when this subject arises. That is the only thing we can know for sure.

You can become a spokesman for saving the animals, or the trees, or the bees. But *The Mind Game* suggests you also deal with your own mind in this moment, and not use your assumptions, your judgments, or your imagination to create even more suffering inside yourself.

Find the good in this moment. Find the good while working for change if you wish. Or when eating meat if you wish. But in *The Book of Is*, finding the good, from moment to moment, is our only responsibility.

What about the Nazis, someone might ask?

I myself am Jewish. Do I not feel the suffering of the Jewish people at the hands of the Nazis?

My answer is, of course, and while acknowledging that obviously it happened, and the suffering was enormous, and the crimes were beyond heinous, I try not to *feel* their suffering *right now*, and I try not to extrapolate from that time that *therefore* people in general are murderous and insane. Or, that the entire human race is doomed to be forever bathed in darkness and hatred.

What I *will* do if that nightmare presents itself to me in conversation is, first -- remove myself from the conversation. Because I have no way to change what happened or make the world a better place by talking about it.

Or, I might also think of all the countries, and all the soldiers, who fought against the Nazis and what they stood for. And more specifically, I might think of the amazing civilian heroes who saved so many Jewish families, hiding them on their farms, and in their churches, at great risk to themselves, and I will silently thank them for their heroism. They represented the human race at its best during a time of war and chaos.

And then I will change the channel and think of something beautiful in this moment. I will not want to dwell on the specifics of the war, or the heroism. I do not look at the photographs. I do not watch the movies. I do not judge the reincarnation of any other human being, whether they were a Nazi or not, or pretend to know with one hundred percent surety if reincarnation even exists, or that Hell exists beyond the Hell we create for ourselves while we're alive, or pretend to know if God, or multiverses, or infinity (our perception of it) exist. I do not know.

I just know that in this moment, if it is even remotely possible, I wish to be happy. And I have a choice to go to a place where happiness exists

Here is what I also know:

In order to eradicate superstition and murder and suffering and war here on earth I have to personally diminish the suffering and hatred and superstition that arises as a choice in my own mind. That cannot be done by outside laws, or by others urging me to do it. It is a decision I have to come to by myself, for good and logical reasons.

The Book of Is believes we can only deal with *what is, right in this moment*, and then work hard to find a moment of inner peace there.

*Subdue your curiosity about what lies beyond what is.
Then no metaphorical cats will die from curiosity.
Disagree with no dogma. Bark at no one.*

The "Circular Time" Theory (The End of Was)

There's a built-in timeframe bias -- a trick of the mind -- that we cling to, yet we are rarely aware of.

As an example, if you are writing a book, as I am doing now, you will probably hope it will have some lasting value. The time frame bias for that hope might be ten or twenty years, or a hundred years if you can make that kind of case for yourself.

But once your timeframe extends to *thousands* of years, your reasons for creating the book come into question.

And, if someday we extend our lives for an indefinite amount of time by some sleight-of-hand of science and we colonize other planets for thousands of generations to come, that enormous endeavor to colonize also has a timeframe bias. Because *billions of years* from now any attempt at human life extension, any hope for immortality, will probably run into some very serious problems.

By the end of the universe as we know it, one hundred trillion years from now, hope for immortality will likely be insurmountable. Your book will quite likely have been long forgotten.

Unless. . .

unless, time is circular.

In which case, everything we think and do and say and write would be critically important, and in fact, *permanently experienced* -- forever. In other words, *Is* is permanent!

I am writing this book, and living my life, using circular time as my working theory. It motivates me. It's fun to consider. Therefore, I will accept it as motivation.

And of course, if this were to be true, The Mind Game mantra would be as true as it ever was -- if indeed there is, or ever was a was.

The Creator

I once asked a Swami whom I hold in high esteem, since he is not only scholarly and compassionate person, but one of the most honest people I know, the following question:

Do you think it's inaccurate to see the story of Arjuna and Krishna as a metaphor for the battles in our own mind -- the battles between right and wrong and good and evil?

And one big step beyond that -- is it possible that even Atman, God, is actually a metaphor for the witness voice, the deepest guide, or soul, within us? Not "God" as most people understand that word?

Or, do your studies indicate that the texts should be taken more literally?

What if Atman is just our *soul* when it is as pure and perfected as we can get it in this lifetime? The fact that our soul's voice and its wisdom is far more powerful than our moment to moment thinking is indisputable. Maybe that's all the scriptures are trying to illuminate?

Could reincarnation be a metaphor for each of us continuing to evolve step by step in this lifetime, and not really pointing to, or guaranteeing, that there is a literal reincarnation from human to dog, or human to human after our actual deaths, etc.?

And could it be that "karma" is actually the way we *react* to the thoughts and feelings and events in our life -- for

instance negative thinking, by the laws of karma will lead to more negative thinking, positive thinking would lead to more peaceful thinking, etc. Is it possible that is what is truly meant by karma?

Do you think I am on the right track with these kinds of thoughts and feelings and conclusions?

Or do you think the Scriptures are not about metaphors, they are trying to tell us literally what exists beyond human life?

.... You are the only one I know who I trust with these questions. I look forward to your answers.

Swamis answer simply said this -- "What you are thinking and the direction you are going is correct.

That was the day *The Book of Is* was born.

The End of Endings

Some believe that when the body dies, that is the end.
This could certainly be true.

Others believe when the mind ends, that is the end.
This could certainly be true.

Others believe when consciousness ends, that is the
end. This could certainly be true.

Still others believe consciousness never ends.
This could certainly be true.

Some believe the present moment never ends,
whether we are here to experience it or not.

This

Is

True.

Therefore, please change the channel whenever you wish
to experience your deepest joy while you're here.

May you find the present moment
to be beautiful
for as long as you can make it possible.

~ GM

Why This Book? 482 likes. Dedicated to the first feeling when you set your eyes upon the book that eventually becomes a part of your life...Â Why not celebrate some special authors too ? :) <https://sheroes.in/â€|/doordarshan-anchor-loses-herâ€|/MjU2MA==â€|> Why did PowerObjects create The CRM Book, a free, online, comprehensive resource for Microsoft Dynamics 365.Â When PowerObjects, An HCL Technologies Company began considering this book, many people asked: â€œWhy? A book will take a lot of effort, and rarely does anyone ever make money on a technical book.â€ This was true. A book would take a lot of effort, and our plan was to give it away for free. So why do it? To explain the rationale of why, we need to tell you a what makes PowerObjects tick. I really don't know why this book is so popular. I mean, I suppose it is going to appeal to young girls who want danger and romance, but I found this book really tedious. For a start, the characters were really unconvincing. The author went out of her way to add lots of details about the characters, but I found these details really pointless. I thought that some of the facts she presented about the main characters would become significant in some way later in the novel, but they didn't. They were just worthless bits of information.