

LETTING GO

THE PATHWAY
OF SURRENDER

David R. Hawkins, M.D., Ph.D.

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FOREWORD

This book provides a mechanism by which to unlock our innate capacities for happiness, success, health, well-being, intuition, unconditional love, beauty, inner peace, and creativity. These states and capacities are within all of us. They do not depend on any outer circumstance or personal characteristic; they do not require belief in any religious system. No single group or system owns inner peace, as it belongs to the human spirit by virtue of our origin. This is the universal message of every great teacher, sage, and saint: “The kingdom of heaven is within you.” Dr. Hawkins says frequently, “What you are seeking is not different from your very own Self.”

How can something innate to us—part and parcel of our true being—be so difficult to attain? Why all the unhappiness if we were endowed with happiness? If the “kingdom of heaven” is within us, why do we often “feel like hell”? How can we get free of the sludge of non-peace that makes our journey to inner peace seem so arduous, like molasses running uphill on a freezing cold day? It’s nice to hear that peace, happiness, joy, love, and success are intrinsic to our human spirit. But what about all of the anger, sadness, despair, vanity, jealousy, anxieties, and daily little judgments that muffle the pristine sound of silence within us? Is there really a way to shake off the sludge and be free? Dance with unimpeded joy? Love all living things? Live in our greatness and fulfill our highest potential? Become a channel of grace and beauty in the world?

In this book, Dr. Hawkins offers a pathway to the freedom that we long for but find difficult to attain. It

may sound counter-intuitive to get somewhere by “letting go”; however, he certifies from clinical and personal experience that surrender is the surest route to total fulfillment.

Many of us have been raised to correlate worldly and even spiritual accomplishment with “hard work,” “keeping our nose to the grindstone,” “living by the sweat of our brow,” and other self-stringent axioms inherited from a culture steeped in the Protestant ethic. According to this view, success requires suffering, toil, and effort: “no pain, no gain.” But where has all the effort and pain gotten us? Are we truly, deeply at peace? No. There is still the inner guilt, the vulnerability to someone’s criticism, the wanting to be assured, and the resentments that fester.

If you’re reading this book, you’ve probably already reached the end of your rope with the mechanism of effort. Perhaps you’ve seen that the more you pull on the rope to hitch yourself up to where you want to be, the more frazzled and frayed it becomes. Possibly, you might be wondering, “Isn’t there an easier, better way?” Are you willing to let go of the rope? What would it be like to utilize the mechanism of surrender instead of the mechanism of effort?

I can share what it was like for a highly educated person who had already tried many different methods of self-improvement. Despite professional success, there were physical and emotional problems that never seemed to improve and, eventually, reached a breaking point. The encounter with Dr. David R. Hawkins and his writings catalyzed a healing effect that was unexpected and dramatic.

At first, there was skepticism. Having explored various spiritual, philosophical, and religious avenues

with unfulfilling or only temporary results, I approached my study of Hawkins with the thought, “It will probably turn out like the rest.” However, the conscientious seeker in me said, “I’ll check it out. What have I got to lose?” So, I read *Power vs. Force: The Hidden Determinants of Human Behavior*. When the book was finished, there was the inner realization, “I’m a changed person from the one who picked up this book.” That was in 2003. Now, many years later, the catalytic effect is still operating in all areas of life.

What convinced me of the truth of his work, ultimately, were the transformations in my own physical and nonphysical consciousness. There were empirical facts that I could not deny: the healing of an addiction that had been previously impossible to overcome, despite many sincere attempts; freedom from several allergies (pet dander, poison ivy, mold, hay fever); letting go of long-standing resentments, with a capacity to see the hidden gifts within the various life traumas I had been through; alleviation of several life-long fears and an anxiety disorder that had severely limited my career and personal life; resolution of several inner conflicts related to self-acceptance and life purpose. These major breakthroughs at the physical and non-physical levels were concretely observable not only by myself but by those around me. They would ask, “How do you explain the transformation?” Now, if faced with that question, I will suggest that they read this new book, *Letting Go: The Pathway of Surrender*. It lays out the pragmatics of the inner process of transformation that was experienced upon reading his earlier books.

Letting Go: The Pathway of Surrender provides the roadmap to a freer life for anyone who is willing to

make the trip. Your life will be changed for the better if you apply the principles described in this book. They are not difficult to understand or to implement. They do not cost anything. They do not require special attire or travel to an exotic country. The major requirement for the journey is a willingness to let go of the attachment to your current experience of life.

As Dr. Hawkins explains, the “small” part of ourselves is attached to the familiar, no matter how painful or inefficient it is. It may seem bizarre, but our self with a small “s” actually enjoys an impoverished life and all the negativity that goes with it: feeling unworthy, being invalidated, judging others and ourselves, being inflated, always “winning” and being “right,” grieving the past, fearing the future, nursing our wounds, craving assurance, and seeking love instead of giving it.

Are we willing to imagine a new life for ourselves, characterized by effortless success, freedom from resentment, gratitude for all that’s happened to us, inspiration, love, joy, win-win resolutions, happiness, and creative expression? One of the biggest hurdles to happiness, he tells us, is the belief that it isn’t possible: “There’s got to be a catch”; “It’s too good to be true”; “It can happen for others but not for me.”

The gift of a person and teacher like Dr. Hawkins is that we see and experience a being who IS that happiness; who IS that boundless joy; who IS that unassailable peace. The book was written because he himself experienced the power of the mechanism it describes. To read about and be in the presence of such a liberated being gives us the catalyst, the hope, and the launch for our own inward trek. And so, despite the cynicism of the small self, there is the Self

that beckons us on. We may first hear its call as coming from an advanced consciousness such as Dr. Hawkins, a teacher, a guide, or a sage who has realized the Self. Then, as we have our own experiences of truth, healing, and expansion, we hear the call as coming from an inner place. “The Self of the teacher and that of the student are one and the same,” says Dr. Hawkins.

He radiates the truths of this book. As a serious seeker who saw much of contemporary spiritual writing as shallow, I wanted to verify the authenticity of this work. It was all-important to know: does this author speak from a true inner Realization? The answer is “Yes!” Close observations made during several years of interviews and visits confirmed the advanced state. In this book, he reminds us of the law of consciousness that says: We are all connected at the energetic level, and a higher vibration (such as love) has a powerful effect on a lower vibration (such as fear). I feel the truth of this law whenever I am with him; his energy field transmits healing love and profound peace. As he explains in this book, these higher states are available to all of us at any time.

No matter where we are in life, this book will illuminate a “next step.” The mechanism of surrender that Dr. Hawkins describes is applicable to the entire inner journey: from the letting go of childhood resentments to the final surrender of the ego itself. Thus, the book is equally useful for the professional interested in worldly success, the client in therapy seeking to heal emotional issues, the patient diagnosed with an illness, and the spiritual seeker devoted to Enlightenment. The important step for all of us, he advises, is to acknowledge that we have negative feelings as a consequence

of our human condition, and to be willing to look at them without judgment. The high state of non-dual awareness may be our goal. But how do we handle the persistently dualistic “small self” that wants us to see ourselves as “better than” or “worse than” another?

In his previous ten books, Dr. Hawkins has described the non-dual state of Enlightenment with rare pristine awareness. As he says humorously at the start of many lectures, “We begin with the end.” Indeed, in his lectures and books, he has thoroughly illuminated the highest states of consciousness that are the culmination of human inner evolution.

Now, in this book published in the latter part of his life, he is taking us back to our common starting point: acknowledging the existence of the small self. We must start where we are to get to where we want to go! If we want to go from here to there, we don’t get there faster if we fool ourselves and say we are starting from nearby. By thinking we’re closer than we are to the goal, we actually make the trip longer. As he explains in the book, it takes courage and self-honesty to see negativity and smallness in ourselves. Only when we can acknowledge the negativity that we’ve inherited from the human condition will we have the possibility to surrender and be free of it. We simply need to be willing to acknowledge and accept that part of our human experience. By accepting it, we can transcend it—and Dr. Hawkins shows us the way.

In this highly pragmatic book, he illumines a technique by which we can transcend the small self and break through to the freedom for which we long. This state of inner freedom and unalloyed happiness is our “birthright,” he says. As we read, we draw encouragement and inspiration from the real-life clinical examples

that he shares from his decades of psychiatric practice. In case after case, we see the power of surrender applied to nearly every area of life: relationships, physical health, work environments, recreational activities, spiritual process, family life, sexuality, emotional healing, and addiction recovery.

We learn that the answer to the problems we face is *within* us. By letting go of the inner blocks to it, the truth of our inner Self shines forth and the path to peace is revealed. Other spiritual teachers have emphasized the cultivation of inner peace as the only real solution to personal difficulties, as well as collective conflicts: “Inner disarmament first, then outer disarmament” (The Dalai Lama); “Be the change you want to see in the world” (Gandhi). The implication is clear. Because we are all part of the whole, when we heal something in ourselves, we heal it for the world. Each individual consciousness is connected to the collective consciousness at the energetic level; therefore, personal healing emerges collective healing. Dr. Hawkins may be the first to attempt to understand this principle in light of scientific and clinical applications. The crucial point is: by changing ourselves, we change the world. As we become more loving on the inside, healing occurs on the outside. Much like the rising of the sea level lifts all ships, so the radiance of unconditional love within a human heart lifts all of life.

.....

Dr. David R. Hawkins is a world-renowned author, psychiatrist, clinician, spiritual teacher, and researcher of consciousness. Details of his extraordinary life are given in the “About the Author” section at the back of the book. His unique work effulges from a wellspring

of universal compassion and is dedicated to the alleviation of suffering in all dimensions of life. The gift of Dr. Hawkins' work to human evolvment is beyond what can be said about it.

The state of Enlightenment is totally complete in its bliss, such that one would never leave it except out of a total surrender of love to God and to one's fellow human beings, to share the gift that was given. This book on letting go, and all of his work in the world, is the result of that surrender. As you will read in one of the chapters, there was a very deep surrender that allowed the resumption of his personal consciousness in order to fulfill certain commitments in the world. The state of oneness was not lost or left, but extraordinary love had to be directed toward the challenge of verbalizing the ineffable. You will notice that some of his pronouns do not fit grammatical convention—for example, "our life"—yet they are true to the experience of a spiritual state that knows the impersonal oneness of all life. That Dr. Hawkins would re-enter the world of logic and language in order to share a "Map of Consciousness" with us—so that we might also complete our destiny—speaks volumes of his selfless love for humanity. By showing us the way to liberation, Dr. Hawkins gives us the chance of reaching it.

Thank you, Dr. Hawkins, for the gift of total surrender.

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PREFACE

During many years of clinical psychiatric practice, the primary aim was to seek the most effective ways to relieve human suffering in all of its many forms. To this end, numerous disciplines of medicine, psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, behavioral techniques, bio-feedback, acupuncture, nutrition, and brain chemistry were explored. Beyond these clinical modalities were philosophical systems, metaphysics, a multitude of holistic health techniques, self-improvement courses, spiritual pathways, meditative techniques, and other ways to expand one's awareness.

In all of these explorations, the mechanism of surrender was found to be of great practical benefit. Its importance necessitated the writing of this book to share with others what was clinically observed and personally experienced.

The previous ten books focused on advanced states of awareness and Enlightenment. Over the years, thousands of students at our lectures and Satsangs have asked questions that reveal the everyday obstacles to Enlightenment. It is pragmatic and helpful to share a technique that will facilitate their success in overcoming such obstacles: How to handle the vicissitudes of ordinary life, with its losses, disappointments, stresses, and crises? How to be free of negative emotions and their impact on health, relationships, and work? How to handle all of the unwanted feelings? The present work describes a simple and effective means by which to let go of negative feelings and become free.

The letting go technique is a pragmatic system of eliminating obstacles and attachments. It can also be

called a mechanism of surrender. There is scientific proof of its efficacy, an explanation of which is included in one of the chapters. Research has shown the technique to be more effective than many other approaches currently available in relieving the physiologic responses to stress.

After researching most of the various stress-reduction and consciousness methods, this approach stands out for its sheer simplicity, efficiency, clinical efficacy, absence of questionable concepts, and rapidity of observable results. Its simplicity is deceptive and almost disguises the real benefit of the technique. Simply stated, it sets us free from emotional attachments. It verifies the observation made by every sage, that attachments are the primary cause of suffering.

The mind, with its thoughts, is driven by feelings. Each feeling is the cumulative derivative of many thousands of thoughts. Because most people throughout their lives repress, suppress, and try to escape from their feelings, the suppressed energy accumulates and seeks expression through psychosomatic distress, bodily disorders, emotional illnesses, and disordered behavior in interpersonal relationships. The accumulated feelings block spiritual growth and awareness, as well as success in many areas of life.

The benefits of this technique can, therefore, be described on various levels:

Physical:

The elimination of suppressed emotions has a positive health benefit. It decreases the overflow of energy into the body's autonomic nervous system, and it unblocks the acupuncture energy system (demonstrable by a

simple muscle test). Therefore, as a person constantly surrenders, physical and psychosomatic disorders improve and frequently disappear altogether. There is a general reversal of pathologic processes in the body and a return to optimal functioning.

Behavioral:

Because there is a progressive decrease of anxiety and negative emotions, there is less and less need for escapism via drugs, alcohol, entertainment, and excessive sleep. Consequently, there is an increase in vitality, energy, presence, and well-being, with more efficient and effortless functioning in all areas.

Interpersonal Relationships:

As negative feelings are surrendered, there is a progressive increase of positive feelings that results in quickly observable improvement in all relationships. There is an increase in the capacity to love. Conflicts with others decrease progressively, so that job performance improves. The elimination of negative blocks allows vocational goals to be more easily accomplished, and self-sabotaging behavior based on guilt progressively diminishes. There is less and less dependence on intellectualism and a greater use of intuitive knowingness. With the resumption of personality growth and development, there is often the uncovering of previously unsuspected creative and psychic abilities, which are thwarted in all people by suppressed negative emotions. Of great importance is the progressive diminution of dependency, the bane of all human relationships. Dependency underlies so much pain and suffering; it includes even violence and

suicide as its ultimate expression. As dependency diminishes, there is also a diminution of aggressiveness and hostile behavior. These negative feelings are replaced by feelings of acceptance and lovingness toward others.

Consciousness/ Awareness/ Spirituality:

This is an area that opens up by continuous use of the mechanism of surrender. The letting go of negative emotions means that the person experiences ever-increasing happiness, contentment, peace, and joy. There is an expansion of awareness, progressive realization, and experiencing of the real inner Self. The teachings of the Great Masters unfold from within as one's own personal experience. The progressive letting go of limitations allows the realization at last of one's true identity. Letting go is one of the most efficacious tools by which to reach spiritual goals.

Anyone can accomplish all of these ends, with gentleness and subtlety, as one silently surrenders throughout daily life. The progressive disappearance of negativity and its replacement by positive feelings and experiences is pleasurable both to watch and to experience. It is the purpose of this information to assist the reader in having those rewarding experiences.

David R. Hawkins, M.D., Ph.D.

*Founding President,
Institute for Spiritual Research*

Sedona, Arizona

June 2012

CHAPTER

1

INTRODUCTION

While in contemplation one day, the mind said:

“What in the world is wrong with us?”

“Why doesn’t happiness stay put?”

“Where are the answers?”

“How do we address the human dilemma?”

“Have I gone nuts or has the world gone crazy?”

The solution to any problem seems to bring only brief relief, for it is the very basis of the next problem.

“Is the human mind a hopeless squirrel cage?”

“Is everybody confused?”

“Does God know what He’s doing?”

“Is God dead?”

The mind just kept chattering along:

“Does anybody have the secret?”

Don’t worry—everybody’s desperate. Some seem cool about it. “I can’t see what all the fuss is about,” they say. “Life seems simple to me.” They are so scared they can’t even look at it!

image

not

available

more shots, try cell salts, have your minerals balanced, pray, implore, and beseech. You learn astral projection. Become a vegetarian. Eat only cabbage. Try macrobiotics, go organic, eat no GMO. Meet up with Native American medicine men, do a sweat lodge. Try Chinese herbs, moxibustion, shiatsu, acupuncture, feng shui. You go to India. Find a new guru. Take off your clothes. Swim in the Ganges. Stare at the sun. Shave your head. Eat with your fingers, get really messy, shower in cold water.

Sing tribal chants. Relive past lives. Try hypnotic regression. Scream a primal scream. Punch pillows. Get Feldenkraised. Join a marriage encounter group. Go to Unity. Write affirmations. Make a vision board. Get re-birthing. Cast the I Ching. Do the Tarot cards. Study Zen. Take more courses and workshops. Read lots of books. Do transactional analysis. Get yoga lessons. Get into the occult. Study magic. Work with a kahuna. Take a shamanic journey. Sit under a pyramid. Read Nostradamus. Prepare for the worst.

Go on a retreat. Try fasting. Take amino acids. Get a negative ion generator. Join a mystery school. Learn a secret handshake. Try toning. Try color therapy. Try subliminal tapes. Take brain enzymes, antidepressants, flower remedies. Go to health spas. Cook with exotic ingredients. Look into strange fermented oddities from faraway places. Go to Tibet. Hunt up holy men. Hold hands in a circle and get high. Renounce sex and going to the movies. Wear some yellow robes. Join a cult.

Try the endless varieties of psychotherapy. Take wonder drugs. Subscribe to lots of journals. Try the Pritikin diet. Eat just grapefruit. Get your palm read. Think New Age thought. Improve the ecology. Save

the planet. Get an aura reading. Carry a crystal. Get a Hindu sidereal astrological interpretation. Visit a trans-medium. Go for sex therapy. Try Tantric sex. Get blessed by Baba Somebody. Join an anonymous group. Travel to Lourdes. Soak in the hot springs. Join Arica. Wear therapeutic sandals. Get grounded. Get more prana and breathe out that stale black negativity. Try golden needle acupuncture. Check out snake gallbladders. Try chakra breathing. Get your aura cleaned. Meditate in Cheops, the great pyramid in Egypt.

You and your friends have tried all of the above, you say? Oh, the human! You wonderful creature! Tragic, comic and yet so noble! Such courage to keep on searching! What drives us to keep looking for an answer? Suffering? Oh, yes. Hope? Certainly. But there is something more than that.

Intuitively, we know that somewhere there is an ultimate answer. We stumble down dark byways into cul-de-sacs and blind alleys; we get exploited and taken, disillusioned, fed up, and we keep on trying.

Where is our blind spot? Why can't we find the answer?

We don't understand the problem; that's why we can't find the answer.

Maybe it's ultra simple, and that's why we can't see it.

Maybe the solution is not "out there," and that's why we can't find it.

Maybe we have so many belief systems that we are blinded to the obvious.

Throughout history, a few individuals have reached great clarity and have experienced the ultimate solu-

tion to our human woes. How did they get there? What was their secret? Why can't we understand what they had to teach? Is it really next to impossible or nearly hopeless? What about the average person who is not a spiritual genius?

Multitudes follow spiritual pathways, but scarce are the ones who finally succeed and realize the ultimate truth. Why is that? We follow ritual and dogma and zealously practice spiritual discipline—and we crash once again! Even when it works, the ego quickly comes in and we are caught in pride and smugness, thinking we have the answers. Oh, Lord, save us from the ones who have the answers! Save us from the righteous! Save us from the do-gooders!

Confusion is our salvation. For the confused, there is still hope. Hang on to your confusion. In the end it is your best friend, your best defense against the deathliness of others' answers, against being raped by their ideas. If you are confused, you are still free. If you are confused, this book is for you.

What's in the book? It tells of a simple method to reach great clarity and transcend your problems along the way. It's not by finding the answers, but by undoing the basis of the problem. The state reached by the great sages of history is available; the solutions are within us and easy to find. The mechanism of surrender is simple and the truth is self-evident. It works during daily life. There is no dogma or belief system. You verify everything for yourself, so you cannot be misled. There is no dependence on any teachings. It follows the dicta of "Know thyself"; "The truth shall set you free"; and "The kingdom of God is within you." It works for the cynic, the pragmatist, the religionist, and the atheist. It works for any age or cultural back-

ground. It works for the spiritual person and the non-spiritual person alike.

Because the mechanism is your own, nobody can take it away from you. You are safe from disillusionment. You will find out for yourself what is real and what are just the mind's programs and belief systems. While all of this is going on, you will become healthier, more successful with less effort, happier, and more capable of real love. Your friends will notice a difference; the changes are permanent. You aren't going to go for a "high" and crash later. You will discover there is an automatic teacher within yourself.

Eventually you will discover your inner Self. You always unconsciously knew it was there. When you come upon it, you will understand what the great sages of history were trying to convey. You will understand it because Truth is self-evident and within your own Self.

This book is written with you, the reader, constantly in mind. It is easy, effortless, and enjoyable. There is nothing to learn or memorize. You will become lighter and happier as you read it. The material will automatically start bringing you the experience of freedom as you read through the pages. You are going to feel the weights being removed. Everything you do will become more enjoyable. You are in for some happy surprises about your life! Things are going to get better and better!

It's okay to be skeptical. We've been taken down the primrose path before, so be as skeptical as you like. Indeed, it's advisable to avoid gushing enthusiasm. It is a setup for a letdown later. Therefore, rather than enthusiasm, quiet observation will serve you better.

Is there such a thing as something for nothing in

the universe? Oh, yes, most certainly there is. It's your own freedom which you have forgotten and don't know how to experience. What is being offered to you is not something that has to be acquired. It is not something that is new or outside of yourself. It is already yours and merely has to be reawakened and rediscovered. It will emerge of its own nature.

The purpose of sharing this approach is merely to put you in touch with your own inner feelings and experiences. In addition, there is much helpful information that your mind will want to know. The process of surrender will begin automatically, for it is the nature of the mind to seek relief from pain and suffering and to experience greater happiness.

THE MECHANISM OF LETTING GO

What is it?

Letting go is like the sudden cessation of an inner pressure or the dropping of a weight. It is accompanied by a sudden feeling of relief and lightness, with an increased happiness and freedom. It is an actual mechanism of the mind, and everyone has experienced it on occasion.

A good example is the following. You are in the midst of an intense argument; you are angry and upset, when suddenly the whole thing strikes you as absurd and ridiculous. You start to laugh. The pressure is relieved. You come up from anger, fear, and feeling attacked to feeling suddenly free and happy.

Think how great it would be if you could do that all of the time, in any place, and with any event. You could always feel free and happy and never be cornered by your feelings again. That's what this technique is all about: letting go consciously and frequently at will. You are then in charge of how you feel, and you are no longer at the mercy of the world and your reactions to it. You are no longer the victim. This is employing the

basic teaching of the Buddha, which removes the pressure of involuntary reactivity.

We carry around with us a huge reservoir of accumulated negative feelings, attitudes, and beliefs. The accumulated pressure makes us miserable and is the basis of many of our illnesses and problems. We are resigned to it and explain it away as the “human condition.” We seek to escape from it in myriad ways. The average human life is spent trying to avoid and run from the inner turmoil of fear and the threat of misery. Everyone’s self-esteem is constantly threatened both from within and without.

If we take a close look at human life, we see that it is essentially one long elaborate struggle to escape our inner fears and expectations that have been projected upon the world. Interspersed are periods of celebration when we have momentarily escaped the inner fears, but the fears are still there waiting for us. We have become afraid of our inner feelings because they hold such a massive amount of negativity that we fear we would be overwhelmed by it if we were to take a deeper look. We have a fear of these feelings because we have no conscious mechanism by which to handle the feelings if we let them come up within ourselves. Because we are afraid to face them, they continue to accumulate and, finally, we secretly begin looking forward to death to bring all of the pain to an end. It is not thoughts or facts that are painful but the feelings that accompany them. Thoughts in and of themselves are painless, but not the feelings that underlie them!

It is the accumulated pressure of feelings that causes thoughts. One feeling, for instance, can create literally thousands of thoughts over a period of time. Think, for instance, of one painful memory from early

life, one terrible regret that has been hidden. Look at all the years and years of thoughts associated with that single event. If we could surrender the underlying painful feeling, all of those thoughts would disappear instantly and we would forget the event.

This observation is in accord with scientific research. The Gray-LaViolette scientific theory integrates psychology and neurophysiology. Their research demonstrated that feeling tones organize thoughts and memory (Gray-LaViolette, 1981). Thoughts are filed in the memory bank according to the various shades of feelings associated with those thoughts. Therefore, when we relinquish or let go of a feeling, we are freeing ourselves from all of the associated thoughts.

The great value of knowing how to surrender is that any and all feelings can be let go of at any time and any place in an instant, and it can be done continuously and effortlessly.

What is the surrendered state? It means to be free of negative feelings in a given area so that creativity and spontaneity can manifest without opposition or the interference of inner conflicts. To be free of inner conflict and expectations is to give others in our life the greatest freedom. It allows us to experience the basic nature of the universe, which, it will be discovered, is to manifest the greatest good possible in a situation. This may sound philosophical, but, when done, it is experientially true.

Feelings and Mental Mechanisms

We have three major ways of handling feelings: suppression, expression, and escape. We will discuss each in turn.

1. Suppression and repression. These are the most common ways in which we push feelings down and put them aside. In repression, this happens unconsciously; in suppression, it happens consciously. We don't want to be bothered by feelings and, besides, we don't know what else to do with them. We sort of suffer through them and try to keep functioning as best as we can. The feelings that we select to be suppressed or repressed are in accord with the conscious and unconscious programs that we carry within us from social custom and family training. The pressure of suppressed feelings is later felt as irritability, mood swings, tension in the muscles of the neck and back, headaches, cramps, menstrual disorders, colitis, indigestion, insomnia, hypertension, allergies, and other somatic conditions.

When we *repress* a feeling, it is because there is so much guilt and fear over the feeling that it is not even consciously felt at all. It becomes instantly thrust into the unconscious as soon as it threatens to emerge. The repressed feeling is then handled in a variety of ways to ensure that it stays repressed and out of awareness.

Of these mechanisms used by the mind to keep the feeling repressed, denial and projection are perhaps the best-known methods, as they tend to go together and reinforce each other. Denial results in major emotional and maturational blocks. It is usually accompanied by the mechanism of projection. Because of guilt and fear, we repress the impulse or feeling, and we

deny its presence within us. Instead of feeling it, we project it onto the world and those around us. We experience the feeling as if it belonged to “them.” “They” then become the enemy, and the mind searches for and finds justification to reinforce the projection. Blame is placed on people, places, institutions, food, climatic conditions, astrological events, social conditions, fate, God, luck, the devil, foreigners, ethnic groups, political rivals, and other things outside of ourselves. Projection is the main mechanism in use by the world today. It accounts for all wars, strife, and civil disorder. Hating the enemy is even encouraged in order to become a “good citizen.” We maintain our own self-esteem at the expense of others and, eventually, this results in social breakdown. The mechanism of projection underlies all attack, violence, aggression, and every form of social destruction.

2. Expression. With this mechanism, the feeling is vented, verbalized, or stated in body language, and acted out in endless group demonstrations. The expression of negative feelings allows just enough of the inner pressure to be let out so that the remainder can then be suppressed. This is a very important point to understand, for many people in society today believe that expressing their feelings frees them from the feelings. The facts are to the contrary. The expression of a feeling, first, tends to propagate that feeling and give it greater energy. Second, the expression of the feeling merely allows the remainder to be suppressed out of awareness.

The balance between suppression and expression varies in each individual depending on early training, current cultural norms and mores, and the media.

Expressing oneself is now in vogue as a result of a misunderstanding of the work of Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis. Freud pointed out that suppression was the cause of neurosis; therefore, expression was mistakenly thought to be the cure. This misinterpretation became a license for self-indulgence at the cost of others. What Freud actually said, in classical psychoanalysis, was that the repressed impulse or feeling was to be neutralized, sublimated, socialized, and channeled into constructive drives of love, work and creativity.

If we dump our negative feelings on others, they experience it as an attack and they, in turn, are forced to suppress, express, or escape the feelings; therefore, the expression of negativity results in the deterioration and destruction of relationships. A far better alternative is to take responsibility for our own feelings and neutralize them. Then, only positive feelings remain to be expressed.

3. Escape. Escape is the avoidance of feelings through diversion. This avoidance is the backbone of the entertainment and liquor industries, and also the route of the workaholic. Escapism and avoidance of inner awareness is a socially condoned mechanism. We can avoid our own inner selves and keep our feelings from emerging by an endless variety of pursuits, many of which eventually become addictions as our dependency upon them grows.

People are desperate to stay unconscious. We observe how often people flick on the television set the minute they enter a room and then walk around in a dream-like state, constantly being programmed by the data poured into them. People are terrified of facing themselves. They dread even a moment of aloneness.

Thus the constant frantic activities: the endless socializing, talking, texting, reading, music playing, working, traveling, sightseeing, shopping, overeating, gambling, movie-going, pill-taking, drug-using, and cocktail-partying.

Many of the foregoing mechanisms of escape are faulty, stressful, and ineffective. Each of them requires increasing amounts of energy in and of itself. Enormous amounts of energy are required to keep down the growing pressure of the suppressed and repressed feelings. There is a progressive loss of awareness and an arrest of growth. There is a loss of creativity, energy, and real interest in others. There is a halting of spiritual growth and eventually the development of physical and emotional illness, disease, aging, and premature death. The projection of these repressed feelings results in the social problems, disorders, and the increase of selfishness and callousness characteristic of our present society. Most of all, the effect is the inability to truly love and trust another person, which results in emotional isolation and self-hatred.

In contrast to the above, what happens instead when we let go of a feeling? The energy behind the feeling is instantly surrendered and the net effect is decompression. The accumulated pressure begins to decrease as we constantly let go. Everyone knows that, when we let go, we immediately feel better. The body's physiology changes. There are detectable improvements in skin color, breathing, pulse, blood pressure, muscle tension, gastro-intestinal function, and blood chemistries. In the state of inner freedom, all bodily functions and organs move in the general direction of normalcy and health. There is an immediate increase in muscle power. Vision improves and our

perception of the world and ourselves changes for the better. We feel happier, more loving, and more easy-going.

Feelings and Stress

There is much attention and publicity given to the subject of stress without a real understanding of its essential nature. It is said that we are more stress-prone than ever. What is the essential cause of stress? Certainly it is not the external precipitating factors. They are merely examples of the mechanism we described as projection. It is “they” or “it” that is thought to be the culprit when, in fact, what we are feeling is merely the letting out of the inner pressure of repressed emotions. It is these repressed feelings that make us vulnerable to external stress.

The real source of “stress” is actually *internal*; it is not external, as people would like to believe. The readiness to react with fear, for instance, depends on how much fear is already present within to be triggered by a stimulus. The more fear we have on the inside, the more our perception of the world is changed to a fearful, guarded expectancy. To the fearful person, this world is a terrifying place. To the angry person, this world is a chaos of frustration and vexation. To the guilty person, it is a world of temptation and sin, which they see everywhere. What we are holding inside colors our world. If we let go of guilt, we will see innocence; however, a guilt-ridden person will see only evil. The basic rule is that we focus on what we have repressed.

Stress results from the accumulated pressure of our repressed and suppressed feelings. The pressure seeks

relief, and so external events only trigger what we have been holding down, both consciously and unconsciously. The energy of our blocked-off feelings re-emerges through our autonomic nervous system and causes pathological changes leading to disease processes. A negative feeling instantly causes a loss of 50% of the body's muscle strength and also narrows our vision both physically and mentally. Stress is our emotional reaction to a precipitating factor or stimulus. Stress is determined by our belief systems and their associated emotional pressures. It is not the external stimulus, then, that is the cause of stress, but our degree of reactivity. The more surrendered we are, the less prone we are to stress. The damage caused by stress is merely the result of our own emotions. The effectiveness of letting go and reducing the body's response to stress has been demonstrated in scientific studies (see Chapter 14).

Many stress-reduction programs offered today often miss the essential point. They try to relieve the after-effects of stress rather than remove the cause of the stress itself, or they concentrate on external events. This is like trying to reduce the fever without correcting the infection. For instance, muscle tension is the aftermath of anxiety, fear, anger, and guilt. A course in the techniques of muscle relaxation is going to be of very limited benefit. It would be far more effective, instead, to remove the source of the underlying tension, which is the repressed and suppressed anger, fear, guilt, or other negative feelings.

Life Events and Emotions

The rationalizing mind prefers to keep the true causes of emotion out of awareness and utilizes the mechanism of projection to do this. It blames events or other people for “causing” a feeling and views itself as the helpless innocent victim of external causes. “*They* made me angry.” “*He* got me upset.” “*It* scared me.” “*World events* are the cause of my anxiety.” Actually, it’s the exact opposite. The suppressed and repressed feelings seek an outlet and utilize the events as triggers and excuses to vent themselves. We are like pressure-cookers ready to release steam when the opportunity arises. Our triggers are set and ready to go off. In psychiatry, this mechanism is called displacement. It is because we are angry that events “make” us angry. If, through constant surrendering, we have let go of the pent-up store of anger, it is very difficult and, in fact, even impossible for anyone or any situation to “make” us angry. The same, therefore, goes for all other negative feelings once they have been surrendered.

Because of social conditioning in our society, people even suppress and repress their positive feelings. Suppressed love results in the broken heart of the heart attack. Suppressed love re-emerges as excessive adoration of pets and various forms of idolatry. True love is free of fear and characterized by non-attachment. Fear of loss energizes undue attachment and possessiveness. For example, the man who is insecure about his girlfriend is very jealous.

When the pressure of suppressed and repressed feelings exceeds the individual’s tolerance level, the mind will create an event “out there” upon which to vent and displace itself. Thus, the person with a lot of

repressed grief will unconsciously create sad events in life. The fearful person precipitates frightening experiences; the angry person becomes surrounded by infuriating circumstances; and the prideful person is constantly being insulted. As Jesus Christ said, “Why do you see the splinter which is in your brother’s eye, and do not feel the beam which is in your own eye (Matthew 7:3)?” All the Great Masters point us *within*.

Everything in the universe emits a vibration. The higher the vibration, the more power it has. Emotions, also, because they are energy, emit vibrations. These emotional vibrations impact the body’s energy fields and reveal effects that can be seen, felt, and measured. Motion pictures using Kirlian photography, such as those done by Dr. Thelma Moss, show rapid fluctuations of the color and size of the energy field with changes of emotions (Krippner, 1974). The energy field has traditionally been called an “aura” and can be seen by people who have been born with or learned the ability to see vibrations of that frequency. The aura changes color and size with emotions. Muscle-testing also demonstrates the energy changes that accompany emotions, as our body’s muscles instantly respond to positive and negative stimuli. Thus, our basic emotional states transmit themselves to the universe.

The mind has no dimensions or size and is not limited in space; therefore, the mind transmits its basic state via vibrational energy over an unlimited distance. This means that we routinely and unwittingly affect others by our emotional state and thoughts. Emotional patterns and their associated thought forms, for instance, can be picked up and received consciously by psychics at a great distance. This can be demonstrated experi-

mentally, and the scientific basis for this has been a subject of great interest in advanced quantum physics.

Because emotions emit a vibrational energy field, they affect and determine the people who are in our lives. Life events become influenced by our repressed and suppressed emotions on the psychic level. Thus anger attracts angry thoughts. The basic rule of the psychic universe is that “like attracts like.” Similarly, “love promotes love,” so that the person who has let go of a lot of inner negativity is surrounded by loving thoughts, loving events, loving people, and loving pets. This phenomenon explains many scriptural quotations and common sayings that have puzzled the intellect, such as, “The rich get richer and the poor get poorer,” and “Those who have, get.” As a general rule, therefore, people who are carrying the consciousness of apathy bring poverty circumstances into their lives, and those with a prosperity consciousness bring abundance into their lives.

Because all living things are connected on vibrational energy levels, our basic emotional state is picked up and reacted to by all life forms around us. It is well known that animals can instantly read a person’s basic emotional state. There are experiments demonstrating that even the growth of bacteria is affected by human emotions, and that plants register measurable reactions to our emotional state (Backster, 2003).

The Mechanism of Letting Go

Letting go involves being aware of a feeling, letting it come up, staying with it, and letting it run its course without wanting to make it different or do anything

about it. It means simply to let the feeling be there and to focus on letting out the energy behind it. The first step is to allow yourself to have the feeling without resisting it, venting it, fearing it, condemning it, or moralizing about it. It means to drop judgment and to see that it is *just* a feeling. The technique is to be with the feeling and surrender all efforts to modify it in any way. Let go of wanting to resist the feeling. *It is resistance that keeps the feeling going.* When you give up resisting or trying to modify the feeling, it will shift to the next feeling and be accompanied by a lighter sensation. A feeling that is not resisted will disappear as the energy behind it dissipates.

As you begin the process, you will notice that you have fear and guilt over having feelings; there will be resistance to feelings in general. To let feelings come up, it is easier to let go of the reaction to having the feelings in the first place. A fear of fear itself is a prime example of this. Let go of the fear or guilt that you have about the feeling first, and then get into the feeling itself.

When letting go, ignore all thoughts. Focus on the feeling itself, not on the thoughts. Thoughts are endless and self-reinforcing, and they only breed more thoughts. Thoughts are merely rationalizations of the mind to try and explain the presence of the feeling. The real reason for the feeling is the accumulated pressure behind the feeling that is forcing it to come up in the moment. The thoughts or external events are only an excuse made up by the mind.

As we become more familiar with letting go, it will be noticed that all negative feelings are associated with our basic fear related to survival and that all feelings are merely survival programs that the mind believes

are necessary. The letting go technique undoes the programs progressively. Through that process, the underlying motive behind the feelings becomes more and more apparent.

To be surrendered means to have no strong emotion about a thing: "It's okay if it happens, and it's okay if it doesn't." When we are free, there is a letting go of attachments. We can enjoy a thing, but we don't need it for our happiness. There is progressive diminishing of dependence on anything or anyone outside of ourselves. These principles are in accord with the basic teaching of the Buddha to avoid attachment to worldly phenomena, as well as the basic teaching of Jesus Christ to "be in the world but not of it."

Sometimes we surrender a feeling and we notice that it returns or continues. This is because there is more of it yet to be surrendered. We have stuffed these feelings all of our lives and there can be a lot of energy pushed down that needs to come up and be acknowledged. When surrender occurs, there is an immediate lighter, happier feeling, almost like a "high."

By continuously letting go, it is possible to stay in that state of freedom. Feelings come and go, and eventually you realize that you are not your feelings, but that the real "you" is merely witnessing them. You stop identifying with them. The "you" that is observing and is aware of what is happening always stays the same. As you become more and more aware of the changeless witness within, you begin to identify with that level of consciousness. You become progressively primarily the witness rather than the experiencer of phenomena. You get closer and closer to the real Self and begin to see that you had been duped by feelings

all along. You thought that you were the victim of your feelings. Now you see that they are not the truth about yourself; they are merely created by the ego, that collector of programs which the mind has mistakenly believed are necessary for survival.

The results of letting go are deceptively quick and subtle, but the effects are very powerful. Often we have let go but think that we haven't. It will be our friends who make us aware of the change. One reason for this phenomenon is that, when something is fully surrendered, it disappears from consciousness. Now, because we never think of it, we don't realize that it has gone. This is a common phenomenon among people who are growing in consciousness. We are not aware of all the coal that we have shoveled; we are always looking at the shovelful we are handling right now. We don't realize how much the pile has gone down. Often our friends and family are the first ones to notice.

To keep track of progress, many people keep a chart of their gains. This helps to overcome the resistance that usually takes the form, "This isn't working." It is common for people who have made enormous gains to claim, "It just isn't working." We have to remind ourselves sometimes what we were like before we started this process.

Resistance to Letting Go

Letting go of negative feelings is the undoing of the ego, which will be resistant at every turn. This may result in skepticism about the technique, "forgetting" to surrender, a sudden upsurge of escapism, or venting feelings by expressing and acting out. The solution is simply to keep on letting go of the feelings you have

about the whole process. Let the resistance be there but don't resist the resistance.

You are free. You don't *have* to let go. Nobody is forcing you. Look at the fear behind the resistance. What are you afraid of regarding this process? Are you willing to let go of that? Keep letting go of every fear as it arises, and the resistance will resolve.

Let's not forget that we are letting go of all the programs that have made us a slave and a victim for a long time. These programs have blinded us to the truth of our real identity. The ego is losing ground and will try tricks and bluffs. Once we start letting go, its days are numbered and its power is diminishing. One of its tricks is to go unconscious about the technique itself, for instance, to decide suddenly that the mechanism of surrender isn't working, things are still the same, it is confusing, and too hard to remember and do. This is a sign of real progress! It means that the ego knows we have a knife with which to cut ourselves free and it is losing ground. The ego is not our friend. Like "master control" in *Tron* (1982), it wants to keep us enslaved by its programs.

Letting go is a natural ability. It is not something new or foreign. It is not an esoteric teaching or somebody else's idea or a belief system. We are merely utilizing our own inner nature to get freer and happier. When letting go, it's not helpful to "think" about the technique. It's better, simply, just to do it. Eventually it will be seen that all thoughts are resistance. They are all images that the mind has made to prevent us from experiencing what actually *is*. When we have been letting go for a while and have begun experiencing what is really going on, we will laugh at our thoughts. Thoughts are fakes, absurd make-beliefs that obscure

the truth. Pursuing thoughts can keep us occupied endlessly. We will discover one day that we are right where we started. Thoughts are like gold fish in a bowl; the real Self is like the water. The real Self is the space between the thoughts, or more exactly, the field of silent awareness underneath all thoughts.

We have had the experience of being totally absorbed in what we were doing, when we scarcely noticed the passage of time. The mind was very quiet, and we were simply doing what we were doing without resistance or effort. We felt happy, maybe humming to ourselves. We functioned without stress. We were very relaxed, although busy. We suddenly realized that we never needed all those thoughts after all. Thoughts are like bait to a fish; if we bite at them, we get caught. It's best not to bite at the thoughts. We don't need them.

Inside of us, but out of awareness, is the truth that "I already know everything I need to know." This happens automatically.

Paradoxically, one resistance to surrendering is due to the effectiveness of the technique. What happens is that we keep letting go when life is not going too well and we are beset by unpleasant emotions. As we finally surrender our way out of it and all is well, then we stop letting go. This is a mistake because, as good as we may feel, there is usually more to it. Take advantage of the higher states and the momentum of letting go. Keep on going because it will get better and better all the time. Letting go gains a certain momentum. It is easy to keep it going once it is started. The higher we feel, the easier it is to let go. That's a good time to reach down and let go of some things (suppressed and repressed "garbage") that we wouldn't

want to tackle if we were in the dumps. There is always a feeling to be let up and surrendered. When we are feeling good, the emotions are merely subtler.

Sometimes you will feel stuck with a particular feeling. Simply surrender to the feeling of being stuck. Just let it be there and don't resist it. If it doesn't disappear, see if you can let go of the feeling in bits and pieces.

Another block that may occur is the fear that if we let go of a desire for something, we won't get it. It is often beneficial to look at some commonly held beliefs and let go of them right in the beginning, such as: (1) We only deserve things through hard work, struggle, sacrifice, and effort; (2) Suffering is beneficial and good for us; (3) We don't get anything for nothing; (4) Things that are very simple aren't worth much. Letting go of some of these psychological barriers to the technique itself will allow an enjoyment of its effortless and ease.

THE ANATOMY OF EMOTIONS

There are numerous complicated psychologies of the human emotions. They often involve considerable symbology and references to mythology, and they are based on hypotheses that are hotly debated. As a result, there are various schools of psychotherapy with their different aims and methods. Simplicity is one of the earmarks of truth, and so we will describe a simple, workable, testable map of the emotions that can be verified by subjective experience, as well as by objective testing.

The Goal of Survival

Whichever psychology is studied reveals that the primary human goal, superseding all others, is survival. Every human desire seeks to ensure one's personal survival and the survival of one's identified groups, such as family, loved ones, and country. Humans fear, most of all, the loss of the capacity to experience. To that end, people are interested in the survival of the body because they believe that they *are* the body and, therefore, they need the body to experience their existence. Because people view themselves as separate

and limited, they are stressed by their sense of lack. It is common for humans to look outside of themselves for the satisfaction of their needs. This leads them to experience themselves as vulnerable because they are insufficient unto themselves.

The mind is, therefore, a survival mechanism, and its method of survival is primarily the use of emotions. Thoughts are engendered by the emotions and, eventually, emotions become shorthand for thoughts. Thousands and even millions of thoughts can be replaced by a single emotion. Emotions are more basic and primitive than mental processes. Reason is the tool the mind uses to achieve its emotional ends. When used by the intellect, the basic underlying emotion is usually unconscious or at least out of awareness. When the underlying emotion is forgotten or ignored and not experienced, people are unaware of the reason for their actions and they develop all kinds of plausible reasons. In fact, they frequently do not know why they are doing what they are doing.

There is a simple way to become conscious of the underlying emotional goal behind any activity through use of the question, "What for?" With each answer, "What for?" is asked again and again until the basic feeling is uncovered. An example would be the following. A man wants a new Cadillac. His mind gives all the logical reasons but logic doesn't really explain it. So he asks himself, "What do I want the Cadillac for?" "Well," he says, "it is to achieve status, recognition, respect, and solid citizen success status." Again: "What do I want status for?" "Respect and approval from others," he might say, "and to ensure that respect." Again: "What do I want respect and approval for?" "To have the feeling of security." Again: "What do

I want security for?” “To feel happy.” The continual question, “What for?,” reveals that basically there are feelings of insecurity, unhappiness, and lack of fulfillment. Every activity or desire will reveal that the basic goal is to achieve a certain feeling. There are no other goals than to overcome fear and achieve happiness. Emotions are connected with what we believe will ensure our survival, not with what actually will. Emotions themselves are actually the cause of the basic fear that drives everyone to seek security constantly.

The Scale of Emotions

For simplicity and clarity, we will utilize the scale of emotions that corresponds with the levels of consciousness. A thorough presentation of consciousness levels, their scientific basis, and practical applications is found in *Power vs. Force: The Hidden Determinants of Human Behavior* (Hawkins, [1995], 2012).

Briefly, everything emits energy, either positive or negative. Intuitively, we know the difference between a positive person (friendly, genuine, considerate) and a negative one (greedy, deceitful, hateful). The energy of Mother Teresa was obviously different from the energy of Adolf Hitler; most people’s energy is somewhere in between the two. Music, places, books, animals, intentions, and all of life emit an energy that can be “calibrated” as to its essence and its degree of truth.

“Like goes to like.” The different energies constellate in “attractor patterns” or “levels of consciousness.” The Map of Consciousness (see Appendix A) provides a linear, logarithmic view of this nonlinear energetic terrain. Each level of consciousness (or attractor pattern) is calibrated on a logarithmic scale of energetic

power, ranging from 1–1000. The level of Full Enlightenment (1000), at the top of the Map, represents the highest level attainable in the human realm; it is the energy of Jesus Christ, the Buddha, and Krishna. The level of Shame (20) is at the bottom, close to death, representing bare survival.

The level of Courage (200) is the critical point that marks the shift from negative to positive energy. It is the energy of integrity, being truthful, empowerment, and having the capacity to cope. The levels of consciousness below Courage are destructive, whereas the levels above it are life-supportive. A simple muscle-test reveals the difference: negative stimuli (below 200) instantly weaken the muscle, and positive stimuli (above 200) instantly strengthen the muscle. True “power” strengthens; “force” weakens. Above the level of Courage, people seek us out because we give energy to them (“power”) and we have goodwill towards them. Below the level of Courage, people avoid us because we take energy from them (“force”) and we want to use them for our own material or emotional needs.

Here, we delineate the basic scale, starting from the higher energies down to the lower:

Peace (600): This is experienced as perfection, bliss, effortlessness, and oneness. It is a state of non-duality beyond separateness and beyond the intellect, as in the “peace that passeth all understanding.” It is described as Illumination and Enlightenment. It is rare in the human realm.

Joy (540): Love that is unconditional and unchanging, despite circumstances and actions of others. The world is illuminated by exquisite beauty, which is seen in all

things. The perfection of creation is self-evident. There is closeness to unity and discovery of Self; compassion for all; enormous patience; the feeling of at-oneness with others and a concern for their happiness. A sense of self-completion and self-sufficiency prevails.

Love (500): A way of being that is forgiving, nurturing, and supportive. It does not proceed from the mind; rather, it emanates from the heart. Love focuses on the essence of a situation, not the details. It deals with wholes, not particulars. As perception is replaced with vision, it takes no position and sees the intrinsic value and lovability of all that exists.

Reason (400): This aspect differentiates humans from the animal world. There is the ability to see things in the abstract, to conceptualize, to be objective, and to make rapid and correct decisions. Its enormous utility is problem solving. Science, philosophy, medicine, and logic are expressions of this level.

Acceptance (350): This energy is easy-going, laid back, harmonious, flexible, inclusive, and free of inner resistance. “Life is good. You and I are good. I feel connected.” It meets life on life’s terms. There is no need to blame others or blame life.

Willingness (310): This energy subserves survival by virtue of a positive attitude that welcomes all expressions of life. It is friendly, helpful, wants to assist, and seeks to be of service.

Neutrality (250): This is a way of life that is comfortable, pragmatic, and relatively free of emotionality. “It’s okay either way.” It is free of rigid positions, non-judgmental, and noncompetitive.

Courage (200): This energy says, “I can do it.” It is determined, excited about life, productive, independent, and self-empowered. Effective action is possible.

Pride (175): “My way is the best way,” says this level. Its focus is achievement, desire for recognition, specialness, and perfectionism. It feels “better than . . .” and superior to others.

Anger (150): This energy overcomes the source of fear by force, threats, and attack. It is irritable, explosive, bitter, volatile, and resentful. It likes to “get even,” as in “I’ll show you.”

Desire (125): It is always seeking gain, acquisition, pleasure, and “getting” something outside oneself. It is insatiable, never satisfied, and craving. “I have to have it.” “Give me what I want, and give it to me now!”

Fear (100): This energy sees “danger,” which is “everywhere.” It is avoidant, defensive, preoccupied with security, possessive of others, jealous, restless, anxious, and vigilant.

Grief (75): There is helplessness, despair, loss, regret, and the feeling, “If only I had . . .” Separation. Depression. Sadness. Being a “loser.” Mournful, as in “I can’t go on.”

Apathy (50): This energy is characterized by hopelessness, playing dead, being a “drain” to others, being immobilized, and the feelings: “I can’t” and “Who cares?” Poverty is common.

Guilt (30): In this energy field, one wants to punish and be punished. It leads to self-rejection, masochism, remorse, “feeling bad,” and self-sabotage. “It’s all my fault.” Accident-proneness, suicidal behavior, and

projection of self-hatred onto “evil” others are common. It is the basis of many psychosomatic illnesses.

Shame (20): Characterized by humiliation, as in “hanging your head in shame.” It is traditionally accompanied by banishment. It is destructive to health and leads to cruelty toward self and others.

In general, we can say that the lower end of the scale is associated with lower vibrational frequencies: lower energy, lower power, poorer life circumstances, poorer relationships, less abundance, less love, and poorer physical and emotional health. Because of the low energy, such needy people drain us on all levels. They tend to be avoided and find themselves surrounded by people on the same level (e.g., in jail).

As we let go of negative feelings, there is a progressive movement up the scale to Courage and then beyond, with increasing effectiveness, success, and more effortless abundance. We tend to seek out such people. We say they are “high.” They give off life energy to all living things around them. Animals are attracted to them. They have a green thumb and positively influence the lives of all with whom they come in contact. At the level of Courage, the negative feelings have not all disappeared, but now we have sufficient energy to handle them because we’ve re-owned our power and self-adequacy. The fastest way to move from the bottom to the top is by telling the truth to ourselves and to others.

The energy levels are also traditionally associated with the body energy centers that are sometimes referred to as “chakras.” The chakras are energy centers through which “kundalini energy” is said to flow, once it is awakened at the level of Courage (200). The

energy centers (chakras) can be measured by a variety of clinical techniques and sensitive electronic instruments. On the Map of Consciousness, the chakras calibrate as follows: Crown (600), Third Eye (525), Throat (350), Heart (505), Solar Plexus (275), Sacral or Spleen (275), Base or Root Chakra (200). When we relinquish negative feelings, the energy in our higher chakras increases. For instance, instead of habitually “venting our spleen” (second chakra), we are now described as “all heart” (fifth chakra).

This energy system has a direct impact on the physical body. The energy in each chakra flows out through channels called “meridians” to the whole energy body, which is like a blueprint to the physical body. Each meridian is associated with a particular organ, and each organ is associated with a particular emotion. A negative emotion throws off the energy balance of its associated acupuncture meridian and related organ. For instance, depression, despair, and melancholy are associated with the liver meridian, so these emotions tend to interfere with liver function. Every negative feeling impairs a body organ and, as the years go by, that organ becomes diseased and eventually fails to function.

The lower our emotional state, the more negatively we influence not only our own lives but also all of life around us. The higher the emotional level of evolution, the more positive our life becomes on all levels, and we support all life around us. As negative emotions are acknowledged and surrendered, we get freer and move up the scale, eventually experiencing predominantly positive feelings.

All lower emotions are limitations and blind us to the reality of our true Self. As we surrender our way

up the scale and near the top, a new type of experience begins to happen. At the very top of the scale, there occurs the realization of one's true Self and the varying levels of Illumination. The main importance of this is to note that, as we get higher and freer, what the world calls spiritual awareness, intuition, and growth of consciousness occur. This is the common experience of all who surrender their negative feelings. They become more and more conscious. That which is impossible to see or experience at lower levels of consciousness becomes self-evident and stunningly obvious at higher levels.

Understanding Emotions

According to scientific findings, all thoughts are filed in the mind's memory bank under a filing system based upon the associated feeling and its finer gradations (Gray-LaViolette, 1982). They are filed according to feeling tone, not fact. Consequently, there is a scientific basis for the observation that self-awareness is increased much more rapidly by observing feelings rather than thoughts. The thoughts associated with even one feeling may literally run into the thousands. The understanding of the underlying emotion and its correct handling is, therefore, more rewarding and less time-consuming than dealing with one's thoughts.

In the beginning, if one is unfamiliar with the whole subject of feelings, it is often advisable to begin merely by observing them without any intention of doing anything about them. In this way, some clarification will occur about the relationship between feelings and thoughts. After there is more familiarity, some experimentation can then occur. For instance, certain

areas of thoughts that tend to recur can be set aside and the feeling associated with them identified. The feeling can then be worked with by first accepting that it is there, without resisting it or condemning it. And then one begins to empty out the energy of the feeling directly by letting it be what it is until it runs out. Somewhat later, the former thoughts can now be looked at and their character will be observed to have changed. If the feeling has been totally surrendered and let go, usually all thoughts associated with it will have disappeared entirely and been replaced by a concluding thought which handles the matter quickly.

For example, there was the case of a man who misplaced his passport shortly before going to a foreign country. As the scheduled date of departure drew closer and closer, his inner panic mounted. His mind raced wildly, trying to think where the passport could have been misplaced. He searched high and low. He tried various mental tricks to no avail. He berated himself: "How could I have been so stupid as to lose a passport? Now there isn't time to get another one!" As the fateful day approached, he faced a real dilemma: no passport, no trip. Missing the trip had a lot of negative consequences because it was both business and pleasure, and it would have created a difficult situation. Finally, he remembered to do the letting go technique.

He sat down and asked himself: "What is the basic feeling that I've been ignoring?" To his surprise, the basic feeling that came up was grief. The grief was associated with not wanting to be separated from someone he dearly loved. There was also an associated fear of loss of the relationship, or at least the weakening of it due to his absence. As he let go of the

grief and the associated fear, he suddenly felt at peace about the matter. He also concluded that if the relationship couldn't handle a two-week absence, it wasn't worth all that much anyway; so, there was really nothing at risk. As soon as he felt at peace, he instantly remembered where the passport was. In fact, it was in a place so simple and obvious that only unconscious blocking could explain why he had not remembered it. Needless to say, all of the thousands of thoughts about the missing passport, the failed trip and the potential consequences instantly disappeared. His emotional state became one of gratitude and happiness instead of frustration.

Letting go can be very useful in everyday life situations, but its use in life crises can be crucial in preventing and alleviating large amounts of suffering. In a life crisis there is usually an overwhelm of emotion. The crisis has tapped into one of our major areas of suppressed or repressed feelings. In this situation the problem is not one of identifying the emotion but how to handle the overwhelm.

Handling Emotional Crises

Because this is a very difficult problem for most people, some details are needed. There are several techniques to help move through emotional disaster much more quickly, and with a better end result, than allowing it to run out on its own. Recall the usual mechanisms that the mind consciously uses to handle emotions, which are suppression (or repression), expression, and escape. These are deleterious only when they are used without conscious intent. In an overwhelm, it is often advisable to utilize them, but

doing so *consciously*. The purpose of this maneuver is to reduce the sheer overwhelming quantity of the emotion itself so that it can be disassembled and let go of in bits and pieces (this process is described below). Thus, in this case, it is all right *consciously* to push away as much of the emotion as we are capable of at the moment. The emotion can be reduced in intensity by sharing the feeling with close friends or mentors. By merely expressing the feeling, some of the energy behind it is reduced. It is also alright in this circumstance consciously to utilize escape mechanisms, such as going out in a social situation to get some distance from the upset, playing with the dog, watching television, going to the movies, playing music, making love, or whatever one's habit is under the circumstances. When the feeling has been reduced in its sheer quantity and intensity, it is best to start letting go of small aspects of the situation rather than the overall situation and the accompanying emotion itself.

To illustrate this point, let's take the example of a man who loses his job after many years with a company, and is now in an overwhelm of despair. By utilizing the three mechanisms already described, some of the emotion can be reduced. What he can look at, then, are some of the small trivia about the job. For instance, could he let go of wanting to have lunch where he always had lunch with his business colleagues? Could he let go of wanting to park his car in the parking space he always had in the past? Could he let go of wanting to ride up in the same elevator? Could he let go of the attachment to his desk? Could he let go of the attachment to the secretary and her friendliness toward him? Could he let go of the attachment to his computer? Could he let go of seeing the

same boss every day? Could he let go of his feeling of familiarity with the background noises in the office?

The purpose of surrendering these smaller aspects of losing a job, which may seem trivial, is that it gets the mind into the letting go mode. The letting go mode takes us up to the level of Courage; the negative feelings have been acknowledged and worked through; consequently, they've lost their charge. Suddenly there is the awareness that we have the courage to face the situation, recognize our feelings, and do something about them. As the trivia are surrendered, curiously, the main event becomes less and less oppressive. The reason for the phenomenon is that, when we use the mechanism of surrender on one emotion, we are surrendering on all emotions at the same time. It is as though all emotions have the same underlying energy, so that to surrender in one direction surrenders feelings which appear, on the surface, to be in an opposite direction. This is a matter of clinical experience; it must be tried personally in order to believe it.

After utilizing the above four methods (suppression, expression, escape, surrender of smaller aspects), a fifth now becomes apparent. Every strong emotion is really a composite of a number of subsidiary emotions and the total emotional complex can be disassembled. Thus, for instance, the man who has lost his job initially has an overwhelming feeling of despair; but, as he begins to surrender around the periphery, and as he diminishes his overwhelm through consciously utilizing escape, suppression, and expression, he now realizes that there is also anger. He sees that the anger is associated with pride. There is a lot of anger in the form of resentment. There is self-invalidation, which is

a form of anger expressed against himself. There is also considerable fear. Thus these associated emotions can now be addressed directly. For instance, he can start letting go of the fear that he won't find another job. When that fear is acknowledged and let go, all the alternate possibilities that exist will become suddenly apparent to him. And, as he surrenders pride, he will quickly see that he is not faced with economic disaster, as he had thought. Thus, as the disassembled emotional complex is taken apart into its component parts, each component part now has less energy and can be surrendered individually.

As we come out of the overwhelm, it will be remembered that a certain portion of the emotion was purposely suppressed or escaped. It can now be re-examined, so that it no longer does residual harm, such as ending up in bitterness, unconscious guilt, or lower self-esteem. Fragments of the emotional complex may recur for a period of time, even years; however, because they are now small fragments, each can be handled as it arises. At least the crisis situation will have been passed through safely and consciously.

Handling a crisis from the emotional rather than the intellectual level will shorten its duration dramatically. In the case of someone who loses a job, handling it from the intellectual level will produce thousands of thoughts and hypothetical scenarios. The person suffers through many sleepless nights due to the racing thoughts about the situation as the mind reviews it over and over again. All of this is fruitless. Until the underlying emotion is surrendered, the thoughts will be engendered endlessly. We all know of people who have had an emotional crisis many years ago and, to this day, have not recovered. It has totally

colored their life, and they have paid a big price for their lack of know-how in handling the underlying emotions.

There are numerous benefits to handling a life crisis successfully. For one thing, the amount of suppressed or repressed emotion is now much less. The crisis has forced it up to be relinquished and, therefore, the amount that is left in the reservoir is much less. There is a greater feeling of self-esteem and confidence because there is the awareness that one can survive and handle whatever life will bring. There is an overall reduction of the fear of life, a greater feeling of mastery, greater compassion for the suffering of others, and an increased ability to help them through similar circumstances. Paradoxically, after a life crisis, there often is a period of variable duration of peace and calmness, sometimes approaching the level of mystical experience. The “dark night of the soul” frequently precedes states of heightened awareness.

One of the best-known examples of this paradox is illustrated by persons who have had near-death experiences. There are now many books on the subject that reveal a certain commonality. Once the worst of all possible fears—the dread and shock of death—has been faced, it is superseded by a profound sense of serenity, peace, oneness, and immunity from fear. Many such persons develop extraordinary abilities, become healers, develop psychic awareness, and advanced states of spiritual illumination. They experience major leaps in growth and the sudden appearance of new talents and capacities. Thus, every life crisis carries within it the kernels of a reversal, a renewal, an expansion, a leap in consciousness, and a letting go of the old and a birth of the new.

Healing the Past

When we look at our lives, we will see the residual of past life crises which are still unresolved. Thoughts and feelings about the events tend to occur and color our perception, and we will note that they have disabled us in certain areas of life. At that point, it is wise to ask ourselves if it is worth paying the continuing cost. Now that we have some mechanisms by which to handle these residuals, they can be uncovered. The residual feelings can be investigated and let go of so that a healing can take place. This brings us to another emotional healing technique that becomes powerful once the major event has passed. That is to place the event in a different context, to see it from a different perspective, and to hold it in a different paradigm with a different significance and meaning.

It is said that most people spend their lives regretting the past and fearing the future; therefore, they are unable to experience joy in the present. Many of us have assumed that this is our human fate, our lot, and the best that we can do is “grin and bear it.” Philosophers have sometimes made hay out of this negativistic, pessimistic approach and developed whole systems of nihilism. These philosophers, some of whom have become celebrated over the years, are obviously mere victims of painful emotions that they did not handle and which triggered endless intellectualization and elaboration. Some spent their entire lifetime constructing sophisticated intellectual systems to justify what is glaringly obvious as a simple suppressed emotion.

One of the most effective tools for handling the past is the creation of a different context. What this

means is that we give it a different meaning. We take on a different attitude about the past difficulty or trauma, and we acknowledge the hidden gift in it. The value of this technique was first recognized in psychiatry by Viktor Frankl. He explained the approach—which he called “Logotherapy”—in his famous book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*. His clinical and personal experience demonstrated that emotional events and traumatic occurrences will change considerably and be healed if a new meaning is placed around them. Frankl told of his own experience in the Nazi concentration camps wherein he came to see his physical and psychic suffering as an opportunity to achieve inner triumph. “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way” (Frankl, [1959] 2006). Frankl re-contextualized the horrific circumstances to hold profound meaning for the human spirit.

Every life experience, no matter how “tragic,” contains a hidden lesson. When we discover and acknowledge the hidden gift that is there, a healing takes place. In the example of the man who lost his job, after some time had passed, he looked back and saw that his former job was stunting, that he had been in a rut. Frankly, the job had given him an ulcer. Prior to losing the job, he had seen only the pleasures from it. Once outside of the situation, he began to see the costs that he had been paying—physically, mentally, and emotionally. After losing the job, he was open to discovering new abilities and new talents; in fact, he began a new, more promising career.

So, life events are opportunities to grow, expand, experience, and develop. In some cases, it seems in

retrospect that there was actually this unconscious purpose behind the event, as though our unconscious knew that something important had to be learned and, painful as it was, it was the only way it could be brought into experience. This is part of the psychology of the psychoanalyst Carl Jung, who concluded after a lifetime of study, that there is an inborn drive in the unconscious toward wholeness, completeness, and realization of the Self, and that the unconscious will devise the ways and means of bringing this about, even if they are traumatic to the conscious mind.

Jung also said that in the unconscious there was an aspect of ourselves called the “shadow.” The shadow is all the repressed thoughts, feelings and concepts about ourselves that we do not want to face. One benefit of a crisis is that it often brings us into familiarity with our shadow. It makes us more human and more whole to realize what we share with all of humanity. All the stuff that we thought “they” were guilty of is equally in ourselves. Thus, when it is brought up to conscious awareness, acknowledged, and surrendered, it no longer unconsciously runs us. Once the shadow has been acknowledged, it loses its power. All that is necessary is merely to recognize that we have certain forbidden impulses, thoughts, and feelings. Now, they can be handled with a “So what?”

Passing through a life crisis, then, makes us more human, more compassionate, more accepting and understanding of ourselves and others. We no longer have to indulge in making others wrong or making ourselves wrong. Handling an emotional crisis leads to greater wisdom and results in lifetime benefits. Fear of life is really the fear of emotions. It is not the facts that we fear but our feelings about them. Once we have

mastery over our feelings, our fear of life diminishes. We feel a greater self-confidence, and we are willing to take greater chances because we now feel that we can handle the emotional consequences, whatever they might be. Because fear is the basis of all inhibitions, mastery over fear means the unblocking of whole avenues of life experience that previously had been avoided.

Thus, the man who successfully handles the crisis of losing a job will never again experience that same fear. He will, therefore, be more creative on the next job, willing to take the necessary risks to make it a success. He begins to see how that haunting fear of job loss had severely limited his performance in the past, made him fearful and cautious, and cost him his self-esteem due to his kowtowing and compliance with his superiors.

One benefit from a life crisis is greater self-awareness. The situation is overwhelming, and we are forced to stop all of our diversionary games, take a good look at our life situation, and re-evaluate our beliefs, goals, values, and life direction. It is an opportunity to re-evaluate and let go of guilt. It is also an opportunity for a total shift in attitude. Life crises, as we pass through them, confront us with polar opposites. Shall we hate or forgive that person? Shall we learn from this experience and grow, or resent it and become bitter? Do we choose to overlook the other person's shortcomings and our own, or instead do we resent and mentally attack them? Shall we withdraw from a similar situation in the future with greater fear, or shall we transcend this crisis and master it once and for all? Do we choose hope or discouragement? Can we use the experience as an opportunity to learn how

to share, or shall we withdraw into a shell of fear and bitterness? Every emotional experience is an opportunity to go up or down. Which do we choose? That is the confrontation.

We have the opportunity to choose whether we want to hang on or let go of emotional upsets. We can look at the cost of hanging on to them. Do we want to pay the price? Are we willing to accept the feelings? We can look at the benefits of letting go of them. The choice we make will determine our future. What kind of a future do we want? Will we choose to be healed, or will we become one of the walking wounded?

In making this choice, it is well to look at the payoff we get from hanging on to the residuals of a painful experience. What are the satisfactions we are getting? How little are we willing to settle for? Anger. Hatred. Self-pity. Resentments. They all have their cheap little payoff, that little inner satisfaction. Let's not pretend that it's not there. There is a weird, quirky pleasure when we hang on to pain. It certainly satisfies our unconscious need for the alleviation of guilt through punishment. We get to feel miserable and rotten. The question then arises, "But for how long?"

Take, for example, a man who had not spoken to his brother for twenty-three years. Neither of them could remember what the incident was about; it had been long forgotten. But they were in the habit of not speaking, and so for twenty-three years they paid the price of missing each other's company, affection, togetherness in family matters, and all the shared experiences and love they could have had. When the man learned about the mechanism of surrender, he began to let go of his feelings about his brother. Suddenly, he broke out in tears of grief, realizing all that

had been lost over the years. By forgiving his brother, he triggered a similar response in the brother, and the two were reunited. Then, one of the brothers flashed back on the incident. It had been an argument over a pair of tennis shoes. Over one pair of tennis shoes they had paid a price extending over twenty-three years! Had the man not learned the technique of letting go, he might well have gone to his grave with the same resentment. So the question is, “How long do we want to go on suffering? When are we willing to give it up? When is enough enough?”

The part of us that wants to cling to negative emotions is our smallness. It is the part of us that is mean, petty, selfish, competitive, cheap, conniving, mistrusting, vindictive, judgmental, diminished, weak, guilty, ashamed, and vain. It has little energy; it is depleting, demeaning, and leads to the lowering of self-respect. It is the small part of us that accounts for our own self-hatred, unending guilt, and seeking for punishment, sickness, and disease. Is that the part with which we want to identify? Is that the part we want to energize? Is that the way we want to see ourselves? Because if that’s the way we see ourselves, that’s the way others will see us.

The world can only see us as we see ourselves. Are we willing to pay those consequences? If we see ourselves as cheap and petty, it’s unlikely that we’ll be at the top of the company list for a raise.

The price of holding on to smallness can be demonstrated with muscle testing. The procedure is fairly simple (Hawkins, [1995], 2012). Hold in mind a mean, petty thought and have someone press down on your arm while you resist; notice the effect. Now choose the exact opposite view. Picture yourself as

being generous, forgiving, loving, and experiencing your inner greatness. Instantly, there will be an enormous increase in muscle strength indicating a surge of positive bio-energy. Smallness brings weakness, sickness, disease, and death. Do you really want that? Letting go of negative feelings can be accompanied by another very healthy maneuver which will greatly assist your inner transformation, and that is to stop resisting the positive emotions.

Enhancing Positive Emotions

The corollary to letting go of negative feelings is to stop resisting the positive ones. Everything in the universe has its opposite; therefore, in the mind, every negative feeling has its counterpart between smallness and greatness, whether we are constantly aware of its existence at any given moment or not.

A good and very illuminating exercise is to sit down and look at the feeling that is directly opposite the negative one that we are experiencing and begin to let go resisting it. Let's say, for instance, that a friend's birthday is coming up and we are feeling resentful and stingy; therefore, we just can't seem to get out to shop for a present, and the day is getting closer. The exact opposite feelings are those of forgiveness and generosity. We just start looking for the feeling of forgiveness within ourselves and stop resisting it. As we keep letting go of our resistance to being a forgiving person, it is often surprising that it will come up with a surge. We will begin to recognize that part of our nature has always been willing and wanting to forgive, but we didn't dare chance it. We thought we might appear foolish. We thought we were

punishing the other person by holding the resentment, but we have actually been suppressing love. In the beginning, we may not consciously feel this specifically about our friend, but we will begin to notice that we do have this aspect to our personality. As we keep surrendering our resistance to love, we will notice that within ourselves there is something that wants to express itself through sharing and giving, letting the past go and burying the hatchet. There is a desire to make a friendly gesture; we want to heal the separation, to repair the wound, to make good the wrong, to express gratitude, and to take a chance on being thought a fool.

The purpose of this exercise is to locate within ourselves that which can only be described as greatness. Greatness is the courage to overcome obstacles. It is the willingness to move to a higher level of love. It is the acceptance of others' humanness and having compassion for their suffering by putting ourselves in their shoes. Out of the forgiveness of others come self-forgiveness and the relief of guilt. The real payoff we get is when we let go of our negativity and choose to be loving; we are the ones who benefit. We are the ones who gain from the real payoff. With this increased awareness of who we really are comes the progressive invulnerability to pain. Once we compassionately accept our own humanness and that of others, we are no longer subject to humiliation, for true humility is a part of greatness.

Out of the recognition of who we really are comes the desire to seek that which is uplifting. Out of it arises a new meaning and context for life. When that inner emptiness, due to lack of self-worth, is replaced by true self-love, self-respect and esteem, we no

longer have to seek it in the world, for that source of happiness is within ourselves. It dawns on us that it cannot be supplied by the world anyway. No amount of riches can compensate for an inner feeling of poverty. We all know of the many multimillionaires who try to compensate for their inner sense of hollowness and lack of inner worth. Once we have contacted this inner Self, this inner greatness, this inner completion, contentment, and true sense of happiness, we have transcended the world. The world is now a place to enjoy, and we are no longer run by it. We are no longer at the effect of it.

When we utilize these techniques of relinquishing the negative and surrendering resistance to the positive, sooner or later we come into a sudden, comprehensive awareness of our true dimension. Once this has been experienced, it will never be forgotten. The world will never intimidate us again as it once did. There may be continued compliance with the ways of the world out of sheer habit, but the inner drivenness, the inner vulnerability, and the inner doubt is now gone. Outwardly, the behavior may appear the same but, inwardly, the causes for it are now totally different. The end result of the conscious handling of emotions is invulnerability and imperturbability. Our inner nature is now bullet proof. We are able to go through life with balance and grace.

APATHY AND DEPRESSION

Apathy is the belief, “I can’t.” It is the feeling that we cannot do anything about our situation and no one else can help. It is hopelessness and helplessness. It is associated with such thoughts as: “Who cares?”; “What’s the use?”; “It’s boring”; “Why bother?”; “I can’t win anyway.” This is the role exhibited by Eeyore, the glum character in “Winnie the Pooh” cartoons who says: “Oh well. Won’t do any good anyway.” Discouragement. Defeat. Impossible. Too hard. All alone. Give up. Isolated. Estranged. Withdrawn. Cut off. Desolate. Depressed. Depleted. Unfulfilling. Pessimistic. Careless. Humorless. Meaningless. Absurd. Pointless. Helpless. Failure. Too tired. Despair. Confused. Forgetful. Fatalistic. Too late. Too old. Too young. Mechanical. Doomed. Negative. Forlorn. Useless. Lost. Senseless. Bleak. Blasé.

The biologic purpose of apathy is to summon aid, but part of the feeling is that no help is possible. Much of the world’s population is functioning on the level of apathy. For them, there is no hope that they will be able to meet their basic needs, nor will help be forthcoming from elsewhere.

The average person is often apathetic in a number

of areas in life, but only periodically faces overwhelming apathy about their whole life situation. Apathy indicates a lack of life energy and is close to death. This was observed during the World War II blitz of London. Infants were removed to nurseries and remote safe sections of England where their physical, nutritional, and medical needs were well attended. However, the infants developed apathy and began to fail; they lost their appetites and the death rate was high. It was discovered that apathy resulted from a lack of nurturing and emotional closeness to a mothering figure. It was an emotional state and not a physical one. Without love and affection, they lost the will to live.

In our country, we see depressed economic areas where an entire local population goes into apathy. When people from such areas appear on the television news, it is often with such comments as, “When the welfare check runs out, I guess we just face starvation; there’s no hope for us.”

Feelings of apathy about the letting go technique itself may appear as resistances. These may take the form of attitudes and thoughts such as: “It won’t work anyway”; “What’s the difference?”; “I’m not ready for this yet”; “I can’t feel”; “I’m too busy”; “I’m tired of letting go”; “I’m too overwhelmed”; “I forgot”; “I’m too depressed”; “I’m too sleepy.” The way out of apathy is to remind ourselves of our intention, which is to get higher and freer, to become more effective and happy, and to let go of the resistance to the technique itself.

“I Can’t” vs. “I Won’t”

Another way out of apathy is to look at the payoff we are getting out of the apathetic attitudes. The payoff

may be in the face-saving excuses to cover up what is actually fear. Since in reality, we are very capable beings, most “I can’t’s” are really “I won’t’s.” Behind the “I can’t’s” or the “I won’t’s” is frequently a fear. Then, when we look at the truth of what is behind the feeling, we have already moved up the scale from apathy to fear. Fear is a higher energy state than apathy. Fear at least begins to motivate us into action and, in that action, we can again surrender fear and move up to anger or pride or courage, all of which are higher states than apathy.

Let’s take a typical human problem and trace how the mechanism of surrender works to free us from an inhibition. Public speaking is one of the most common inhibitions. On the level of apathy in this arena, we say: “Oh, I can’t possibly speak in public. It is way too overwhelming. Nobody will want to hear me anyway. I don’t have anything worth saying.” If we remind ourselves of our intention, we will see that the apathy is merely covering up fear. Now, the thought of speaking in public is frightening, not hopeless. This brings about a certain clarity. The facts are not that we “can’t,” but merely that we are “afraid.”

As this fear comes up and is let go, we become aware of the fact that we have a desire to do the very thing that we fear. Now when looking at the desire, which is blocked by fear and perhaps compounded by some grief over lost opportunities in the past, anger arises. At this point, we have already moved from apathy, to grief, to desire, and up to anger. In anger there is much more energy and capacity for action. Anger often takes the form of resentment, such as resentment that we agreed to the public speaking and now feel obligated to do it.

There is also anger about our fear, which has blocked accomplishment in the past, and the anger leads to a decision to do something about it. This decision might take the form of a public speaking course. When we sign up for a public speaking course, we have already moved up to the energy of pride in that we have finally taken the bull by the horns and are doing something about it. On the way to the speaking course, again more fear will arise. As this is constantly acknowledged and surrendered, we become aware that we have courage in our capacity at least to face our fears and take action to overcome them.

The level of courage has a lot of energy. That energy takes the form of letting go of residual fear, anger, and desire, so that in the middle of the speaking class, we suddenly experience acceptance. With acceptance there is the freedom from resistance, which had taken the form previously of fear, apathy, and anger. Now, we begin to experience pleasure. There is the self-confidence of acceptance, "I can do it." On the level of acceptance, there is greater awareness of others, so that in the speaking class, we become aware of the pain, suffering, and embarrassment of others in the class and begin to be concerned about them.

With the emergence of this compassion towards others, there is a loss of self-consciousness. With the emergence of selflessness come moments of peace. On the way home from the class, we experience an inner contentment, a feeling that we have grown, that we have shared with others. In the experience of sharing, we have forgotten ourselves for a few moments and have been more concerned with the happiness of someone else. We take pleasure in the accomplishments of others. In this state, there is a transforming grace, the

discovery of our inner compassion, a feeling of connectedness with others, and a compassion for their suffering. With the full development of this progression, we might then share with others how we had a fear of public speaking, the steps we took to overcome it, the success we experienced, the increase of our self-esteem, and the positive changes in our relationships.

This entire progression is the basis of a great deal of the power of self-help groups: the sharing of inner experiences from the lowest to the highest levels on the scale of emotions. That which in the beginning seemed formidable and overwhelming has now been surmounted and handled, with the resultant increase of aliveness and well-being. This increase in self-esteem then spills over into other areas of life, and the increase in confidence results in greater material abundance and capability in vocational functioning. On this level, love takes the form of sharing and encouraging others, and our activities are constructive instead of destructive. The energy radiated out is then positive and attractive to others, resulting in a constant positive feedback.

Once we have experienced this progression up the scale of emotions in any one particular area, we now begin to realize that it can be done in other areas of limitation in our lives. Behind all of the "I can'ts" are merely "I won'ts." The "I won'ts" mean "I am afraid to" or "I am ashamed to" or "I have too much pride to try, for fear I might fail." Behind that is anger at ourselves and circumstances engendered by pride. Acknowledging and letting go of these feelings brings us up to courage and, with that, finally acceptance and an inner peacefulness, at least as it regards the area which has been surmounted.

Apathy and depression are the prices we pay for having settled for and bought into our smallness. It's what we get for having played the victim and allowed ourselves to be programmed. It's the price we pay for having bought into negativity. It's what results from resisting the part of ourselves that is loving, courageous, and great. It results from allowing ourselves to be invalidated by ourselves or others; it is the consequence of holding ourselves in a negative context. In reality, it is only a definition of ourselves that we have unwittingly allowed to happen. The way out is to become more conscious.

What does it mean, "to become more conscious"? To begin with, becoming more conscious means to start looking for the truth for ourselves, instead of blindly allowing ourselves to be programmed, whether from without or by an inner voice within the mind, which seeks to diminish and invalidate, focusing on all that is weak and helpless. To get out of it, we have to accept the responsibility that we have bought into the negativity and have been willing to believe it. The way out of this, then, is to start questioning *everything*.

There are many models of the mind. One of the most recent has been that of the computer. We can look at the mind's concepts, thoughts, and belief systems as programs. Because they are programs, they can be questioned, cancelled, and reversed; positive programs can replace negative ones if we so choose. The smaller aspect of ourselves is very willing to accept negative programming.

If we look at the source of our thoughts, begin to identify their origins, and stop the vanity of labeling them as "mine" (and therefore sacrosanct), we notice that thoughts can be looked at objectively. We see that

their origins were often the early childhood training from parents, family, and teachers, as well as dribbles and drabbles of information we picked up from playmates, newspapers, movies, television, radio, church, novels, and the automatic input from our senses. All of this went on unwittingly without our having exercised any conscious choice. Not only that, but out of our unconsciousness, ignorance, innocence, and naïveté, plus the nature of the mind itself, we ended up as the composite of all the negative garbage prevalent in the world. Furthermore, we concluded that it applied to us personally. As we become more aware, we begin to realize that we have a choice. We can stop giving authority to all the mind's thoughts, begin to question them, and find out if there is really any truth in them for ourselves.

The feeling state of apathy is associated with the belief, "I can't." The mind doesn't like to hear it, but in reality most "I can't's" are "I won't's." The reason the mind doesn't want to hear this is because "I can't" is a cover-up for other feelings. These feelings can be brought to awareness by posing the hypothetical question to oneself, "Is it true that I *won't* rather than that I *can't*? If I accept that 'I won't,' what situations will be brought up and how do I feel about them?"

As an example, let's say we have a belief system that we can't dance. We say to ourselves: "Perhaps that's a cover-up. Maybe the truth is that I don't want to and I won't." The way we can find out what the feelings are is to envision ourselves as going through the process of learning to dance. As we do that, all of the associated feelings now start to come up: embarrassment, pride, awkwardness, the sheer effort of learning a new skill, and the reluctance about the time

and energy involved. As we replace “I can’t” with “I won’t,” we uncover all of these feelings, which can then be surrendered. We see that learning to dance means we have to be willing to let go of pride. We look at the cost and ask ourselves, “Am I willing to continue to pay this price? Would I be willing to let go of the fear of not succeeding? Would I be willing to let go of resisting the effort required? Would I be willing to let go of the vanity so that I could allow myself to be awkward as a learner? Could I let go of my stinginess and smallness and be willing to pay for the lessons and give the time?” As all of the associated feelings are surrendered, it becomes very clear that the real reason is unwillingness—not incapacity.

It must be remembered that we are free to acknowledge and surrender our feelings, and we are free not to surrender. As we examine our “I can’ts” and find out that they are really “I won’ts,” it doesn’t mean that we have to let go of the negative feelings that result in the “I won’ts.” We are perfectly free to refuse to let go. We are free to hang on to negativity as long as we want. There is no law that says we have to give it up. We are free agents. But it makes a big difference in our self-concept to realize that “I won’t do something” is quite a different feeling than to think that “I’m a victim and I can’t.” For instance, we can choose to hate somebody if we want. We can choose to blame them. We can choose to blame circumstances. But being more conscious and realizing that we are freely choosing this attitude puts us in a higher state of consciousness and, therefore, closer to greater power and mastery than being the helpless victim of a feeling.

Blame

One of the biggest blocks to overcome in getting out of depression and apathy is that of blame. Blame is a whole subject in itself. Looking into it is rewarding. To begin with, there are a lot of payoffs to blame. We get to be innocent; we get to enjoy self-pity; we get to be the martyr and the victim; and we get to be the recipients of sympathy.

Perhaps the biggest payoff of blame is that we get to be the innocent victim and the other party is the bad one. We see this game played out in the media constantly, such as the endless blame games dramatized in a multitude of controversies, mudslinging, character assassinations, and lawsuits. In addition to the emotional payoff, blame has considerable financial benefits; therefore, it is a tempting package to be the innocent victim, as it is often financially rewarded.

There was a famous example of this in New York City many years ago. A public conveyance accident occurred. People poured out of the front door of the vehicle, then gathered in a small crowd, furnishing their names and addresses for future financial benefit. Bystanders quickly caught on to the game and secretly climbed into the back of the vehicle, so that they could then emerge from the front as injured, “innocent victims.” They hadn’t even been in the accident, but they were going to collect a reward!

Blame is the world’s greatest excuse. It enables us to remain limited and small without feeling guilty. But there is a cost—the loss of our freedom. Also, the role of victim brings with it a self-perception of weakness, vulnerability, and helplessness, which are the major components of apathy and depression.

The first step out of blame is to see that we are *choosing* to blame. Other people who have had similar circumstances have forgiven, forgotten, and handled the same situation in a totally different way. We earlier saw the case of Viktor Frankl, who chose to forgive the Nazi prison guards and to see a hidden gift in his experience at the concentration camps. Because others, such as Frankl, have chosen not to blame, that option is also open to us. We have to be honest and realize that we are blaming because we choose to blame. This is true, no matter how justified the circumstances may appear to be. It is not a matter of right or wrong; it is merely a matter of taking responsibility for our own consciousness. It is a totally different situation to see that we *choose* to blame rather than to think that we *have* to blame. In this circumstance, the mind often thinks, "Well, if the other person or event is not to blame, then *I* must be." Blaming others or ourselves is simply not necessary.

The attraction of blame arises in early childhood as a daily occurrence in the classroom, playground, and at home among siblings. Blame is the central issue in the endless court proceedings and lawsuits that characterize our society. In truth, blame is just another one of the negative programs that we have allowed our mind to buy because we never stopped to question it. Why must something always be someone's "fault"? Why must the whole concept of "wrong" be introduced to the situation in the first place? Why must one of us be wrong, bad, or at fault? What seemed like a good idea at the time may not have turned out well. That's all. Unfortunate events may have just happened.

To overcome blame, it is necessary to look at the secret satisfaction and enjoyment we get out of self-pity,

resentment, anger, and self-excuses, and to begin to surrender all of these little payoffs. The purpose of this step is to move up from being a victim of our feelings to choosing to have them. If we merely acknowledge and observe them, begin to disassemble them, and surrender the component parts, then we are consciously exercising choice. In this way, we make a major move out of the morass of helplessness.

It is helpful in overcoming resistance and taking responsibility for our negative programs and feelings to see that they come from the small aspect of ourselves. It is the very nature of the smallest part of ourselves to think negatively, so there's an unconscious tendency to agree readily to its limited viewpoint. But that is not the whole of our beingness; for outside and beyond the smaller self is our greater Self. We may not be conscious of our inner greatness. We may not be experiencing it, but it is there. If we let go of our resistance to it, we can begin to experience it. Depression and apathy, therefore, result from the willingness to hang on to the small self and its belief systems, plus the resistance to our Higher Self, which consists of all of the opposites of the negative feelings.

It is the nature of the universe that everything in it is represented by its equal and opposite. Thus, the electron's equal and opposite is the positron. Every force has an equal and opposite counter-force. Yin is compensated for by Yang. There is fear but there is also courage. There is hatred but its opposite is love. There is timidity but there is also bravery. There is stinginess but also generosity. In the human psyche, every feeling has its opposite. The way out of negativity is, therefore, the willingness to acknowledge and let go of negative feelings and, at the same time, the

willingness to let go of resisting their positive opposite. Depression and apathy are the result of being at the effect of the negative polarity. How does this work in everyday life?

Let's look again at the example of someone's birthday that is approaching quickly. Because of things that have happened in the past, we have resentments and feel unwilling to do anything for the birthday. Somehow, it just seems impossible to get out and shop for a birthday present. We resent having to spend the money. The mind conjures up all kinds of justifications: "I don't have time to shop"; "I can't forget how mean she was"; "She should apologize to me first." In this case, two things are operating: clinging to the negative and the smallness in ourselves, and resisting the positive and the greatness in ourselves. The way out of apathy is to see, first of all, that "I can't" is an "I won't." In looking at the "I won't," we see that it is there because of negative feelings and, as they come up, they can be acknowledged and let go. It is also apparent that we are resisting positive feelings. These feelings of love, generosity, and forgiveness can be looked at one by one.

We can sit down and imagine the quality of generosity and let go resisting it. Is there something generous within ourselves? In this case, we may not be willing to apply it to the birthday person in the beginning. What we can begin to see is the existence of such a quality as generosity within our consciousness. We begin to see that, as we let go resisting the feeling of generosity, there is generosity. We do, in fact, enjoy giving to others under certain circumstances. We begin to remember the positive flood of feeling that comes upon us when we express gratitude and acknowledge the

gifts that others have given us. We see that we have really been suppressing a desire to forgive and, as we let go of the resistance to being forgiving, there emerges the willingness to let go of the grievance. As we do this, we stop identifying with our small self and become consciously aware that there is something in us that is greater. It is always there but hidden from view.

This process is applicable in all negative situations. It enables us to change the context by which we perceive our current situation. It enables us to give it a new and different meaning. It lifts us up from being the helpless victim to the conscious chooser. In the example given, it doesn't mean that we have to rush out and buy a birthday gift. But it does mean that we are now aware that we are in our current position out of choice. We have total freedom, with greater latitude of action and choice. This is a much higher state of consciousness than the helpless victim who is trapped by a past resentment.

One of the laws of consciousness is: *We are only subject to a negative thought or belief if we consciously say that it applies to us.* We are free to choose not to buy into a negative belief system.

How does this work in everyday life? Let's take a common example. The newspapers report unemployment is at a record high. The television news commentator states: "No jobs are available." At this point, we are free to refuse to buy into the negative thought form. We can say instead, "Unemployment does not apply to me." By refusing to accept the negative belief, it now has no hold over our own life.

Examples from personal experience reveal that, during periods of high unemployment such as after World War II, there was no problem getting a job. As a

matter of fact, one could have two or even three jobs at the same time: dishwasher, waiter, bellhop, cab driver, bartender, factory worker, greenhouse worker, and window-washer. This was the consequence of a belief system that said: “Unemployment applies to others but not to me,” and “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.” There was also a willingness to relinquish pride in return for employment.

Another example is that of belief systems having to do with epidemic diseases. A few years ago, fourteen acquaintances were observed closely during an epidemic of flu. Of the fourteen people, eight came down with the flu, but six did not. What is important here is not that eight people came down with the flu, but that six did not! In any epidemic, there are people who do not “catch it.” Even during the depths of the depression, there were still people who became wealthy and even millionaires. The thought of poverty was “catching” in those days, but somehow those people did not buy into it; therefore, it did not apply to them. For negativity to apply to our life, we must first subscribe to it and, secondly, give it the energy of belief. If we have the power to make negativity manifest in our life, obviously our mind also has the power to make its converse come true.

Choosing the Positive

One surprising effect of the willingness to let go of our inner negativity is the discovery that the polar opposite of the negative feelings exists. There is an inner reality that we can term our “inner greatness” or “Higher Self.” It has much more power than the inner negativity. In return for letting go of the payoffs that we were

getting from the negative position, we are now surprised by the positive payoffs that stem from the power of our positive feelings. For example, when we let go of blame, we experience forgiveness.

Our Higher Self, which we might say is the composite of our higher feelings, has almost unlimited capabilities. It can create employment opportunities. It can create situations for the healing of relationships. It has the power to create the opportunity for loving relationships, financial opportunities, and physical healing. As we stop giving authority and energy to all of the negative programs that stem from our own thinking, we stop giving away our power to others and begin to own it back again. This results in a rise of self-esteem, the return of creativity, and the opening of a positive vision of the future that replaces fearfulness.

We can experiment with someone with whom we have a poor relationship due to our holding of resentments. We can sit down and say to ourselves that this will merely be an experiment. The purpose for this, we tell ourselves, is strictly to learn; that is, we want to become familiar with the laws of consciousness and to watch the phenomena that occur. We acknowledge the payoffs we have been getting from our negative feelings. We surrender each component and, at the same time, let go resisting that within us which would be willing to heal the relationship. At this point, it is not necessary to have any personal contact with the other person. We are doing this experiment for our own sake and not for them.

As we look within ourselves, we ask, "What is the anger covering up?" Underneath the anger, we are likely to find fear. Aside from the fear, we also find jealousy. We find competitiveness and all the other lit-