

## PRAISE FOR *THE TAO OF INFLUENCE*

“Some twenty years ago, a quote came across my desk that has been with me ever since: ‘Who you are speaks so loudly that no one will ever hear a word you’re saying.’ Karen McGregor’s *The Tao of Influence* expands on that concept, bringing to our awareness just how our State of Consciousness informs our thoughts, words, and ultimately our deeds. A book that is both spiritual and oriented towards happiness and success is what I am always looking for. In that search, *The Tao of Influence* is an exquisite find! Read these pages, feel the Tao, get into the Holy Flow and Have the Best Day Ever!”

—David “Avocado” Wolfe, nutritionist, author, adventurer, health activist,  
organic/biodynamic farmer, [www.davidwolfe.com](http://www.davidwolfe.com)

“Everyone is on a journey to unravel their true purpose and create the impact and influence they know is possible. I regularly ask God/the Universe, ‘Please help me understand your will.’ This has often led to being thrown into tough circumstances! While it may not be what we think we want, it helps us learn new perspectives. *The Tao of Influence* does a great job of helping you realize that in the midst of all this, coming from a place of love and compassion in trying times is the key to lasting influence and true leadership.”

—Brian Smith, UGG Founder

“This inspiring book is a leadership gem! It merges the ancient wisdom of the Tao with both deep inner growth practices and highly effective outer action steps necessary to create impact and influence in the world. Karen McGregor’s unique and insightful process into the heart of true influence will accelerate and escalate your leadership achievement and path.”

—Dr. John Demartini, international bestselling author of  
*The Values Factor*

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# Foreword

The first time I read Lao Tzu's masterpiece, the *Tao Te Ching*, I had recently finished my studies at a respectable Jesuit university in Chicago. Within weeks of graduation, I'd met the woman I would one day marry, and she exposed me to mystical traditions of other religions and philosophies, including the fresh and exciting world of New Age spirituality, which was just beginning to emerge. One of the first things that drew me to Linda was her spiritual curiosity; it was something I could relate to, but only through the perspective of my Catholic upbringing.

Within days of meeting her, I devoured my first non-Catholic spiritual book—Paramahansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*—and my world was forever changed. I began to haunt the shelves of the tiny New Age bookshop around the corner from my apartment. It was filled with crystals, channeled books and tapes, and a wide assortment of other out-of-the-box material that made my mind spin. Everything there was fresh and exciting, and it made me feel like I was part of something important, something that might one day change the world. It was 1984, and my life had found a new orbit.

The next book I read was the *Tao Te Ching*.

How is it possible that such wisdom existed without me knowing about it? It's true: I was a bit sheltered—okay, maybe more than “a bit”—but the book was so far beyond anything I had been exposed to before, that I could almost feel the earth shaking beneath my feet. A gentle presence drifted around me like incense as I read each page.

And that's what brings me to Karen's profound offering. Presence! That was the key, and that's what Karen captures in this wonderful new book.

When I agreed to write this foreword, I thought I would have a lot to say. After all, the *Tao Te Ching* has been a staple in my spiritual diet since I first discovered it all those years ago. But now, as I sit writing these words, I find myself nearly mute, as if the words are less important than the presence they inspire. Isn't that what Lao Tzu hoped to communicate? How many books have passed through the centuries with such grace because the author never sought to institute a religion or even a spiritual community? Lao Tzu simply responded to the heartfelt request of someone who had

benefited from his wisdom and convinced him to write it down. And we are the grateful beneficiaries of that request.

Is *The Tao of Influence* about how to embody the Tao to influence people—or is it about something deeper? The answer to both questions is: “Yes.” The only true influence we have is our presence. Words alone can never come close to the deep communication produced by a simple smile or an energetic embrace, especially if we’re not trying to change the other person. And that’s the key. Trying to change someone to meet our idea of who they should be is a misuse of what Lao Tzu would call the “true Tao.” *The Tao of Influence* is about influence, but not from the level of control or ego. We are called to inspire people to become “influencers” in a world that’s very much in need of positive examples. When we use our presence in this way, people—and even the world—can be transformed.

I can certainly attest to this in my own life. I’ve seen that presence is the great influencer; concepts are not. For over twenty years, I’ve traveled around the world to share peace concerts in troubled countries like Bosnia, Iraq, and Northern Ireland. As a Peace Troubadour, I demonstrate the power of presence through song, and now and then, through a few well-placed words. As St. Francis of Assisi said: “Our only job is to teach the gospel wherever we go, and, when necessary, use words.” Each time I traveled to a country at war to perform the Peace Concert, I would invite people to join their prayerful intentions together at the same time, and extend it to the country I was performing in. Millions of people often responded, not due to any power of my personality, but due to the presence behind my personality—the presence of I AM, which we all share.

Now, something new has come along that is just as powerful as the *Tao Te Ching*. Karen brings into focus something that is so important for the times we find ourselves in. If anything is going to save our world, what she describes here will! It’s one thing to watch the world spin out of control—it’s quite another to offer the balm that the world needs to heal and transform. This book captures what I’m trying to describe here, and we are all blessed for it.

James Twyman, Peace Troubadour  
Ajiic, Mexico  
October 23, 2019

# Introduction

It was the day of my father's funeral. I woke up in the basement of my parents' home, and slowly walked up the stairs, reflecting on what it meant to no longer have my dad in my life—to never hear his hearty laughter and never see his brilliant smile again. I was only thirty-four, and my dad had been a big influence on my life.

I opened the front door to get some fresh air and noticed a letter tucked under the doormat that was addressed to the Brust family. Hoping to spare my grieving mom from having to read what I suspected was yet another sympathy card, I opened the envelope and found inside it a piece of paper that had been folded several times. The gesture seemed to suggest that the contents were important; that the note shouldn't be ignored or tossed in a pile with similar sentiments.

I carefully unfolded the paper, revealing a handwritten letter from someone I didn't know. I learned from her letter that she was a neighbor who lived directly across the street, and she was almost due to give birth to her second child. The letter began as most sympathy cards do. "I'm terribly sorry for your loss." But then she shared something that stuck with me all these years later.

"I never knew Gunther. We never spoke a word to each other, but I would gaze out my window every day and watch him build a birdhouse or a new piece of furniture in the back yard, putting up a new fence, and fixing things that needed repair. I watched him do these things with a smile on his face, and I thought to myself, 'Wow, I hope that my husband will be the kind of man Gunther is.' He gave me hope and inspired me to have a beautiful home and family too. He changed my life, and he didn't even know it. Now, I want you to know it."

Tears welled up in my eyes, and I couldn't speak as I took the letter to my mom. I had always thought of my dad as a simple man who loved nature, stories, and a good laugh several times a day. But I realized that day, and again later at his celebration of life, that my dad *influenced* people in many ways—some obvious and some not. And so, I was inspired to understand the nature of influence. What causes people to be influential, and why? What traits do people have in common that influence the world for the better?

I knew one thing for sure: I wasn't searching for typical answers found on the internet or in one of the hundreds of books written on the topic. I wasn't interested

in antiquated definitions of influence that pit “getting” vs. “giving” or manipulating vs. inspiring. I knew that those who ignite profound change in our world have often acted as sacred messengers of a higher order of influence. Their influence, in fact, is not necessarily neatly packaged; it grows in depth and richness as it is embraced and experienced.

So, my journey had begun; I wanted to explore the mystery of *influence* from all sides and angles. I attended talks with inspirational speakers and received training to become a speaker myself, eventually being guided to train messengers around the world to have more influence. I interviewed accomplished business owners about their influence and success, and then dove into entrepreneurship myself in the field of public speaking and sales training. I studied with spiritual mentors to understand influence from a different angle. Each experience and each conversation led me to observe influence from yet another perspective.

My explorations expanded before me. Any time I started to think that I finally had a handle on what influence was, I would inevitably be guided to new conversations with people who shared with me what influenced them to make lasting changes, and how they influenced others. I witnessed my own impact on my public speaking clients in ways that I could not predict. While I observed, researched, and interviewed, I read everything I could about the finer subtleties of influence, and learned much more. Yet, there was one powerful text that I continued to come back to—a wisdom text that invited me to experience over and over again the nature of true influence: the *Tao Te Ching*.

## **Influence and the Tao Te Ching**

The *Tao Te Ching* is a collection of eighty-one verses written over four thousand years ago by Lao Tzu, a Chinese prophet. He wrote it in response to a desert gatekeeper, Yin Hsi, who begged him to record the profound teachings he had been sharing. Many scholars consider the *Tao Te Ching* one of the wisest books ever written. When applied to influence, the principles of the *Tao Te Ching* shift the fabric of our thinking and behaviors to help create a vibrant world of growth and potential.

Today, more than ever, we find ourselves in a crisis in which many of us are yearning for positive influencers. We are hoping for real, authentic, heart-driven people who can create lasting change on the planet. In less than two decades, we have watched the rise of technology contribute to excess noise, distractions, and a



myriad of choices that keep most people unfocused and uncertain as to what to believe. At the same time, we've observed the fall of corrupt companies, institutions, and leaders. While we have lost faith and belief in them, we have not yet replaced them with positive alternatives. We feel a tangible void, and like nature, the vacuum eventually gets filled—one way or another. The question is: with what?

This void puts us at a vulnerable point in history—we can choose to step into it and become a positive influence, or we can allow more and more apathy and darkness to fill it. There is currently a trend of celebrity influencers; while some of them are indeed creating positive change, those are not typically the ones that the masses are paying attention to over the long term. Huge numbers of people are following those who are loud, large, and spiritually bankrupt. They are voting them into public office. The consequences of doing so are now coming to light, but the masses feel they have nowhere else to turn.

Yet, if enough of us turn inwards to our own capacity to create change—real, lasting, evolutionary change on the planet—we can fill the void, and create a new world rooted in love. The *Tao Te Ching's* principles and philosophies support influential thinking and actions that are based in love. This book aims to help you ground the wisdom of the Tao into your everyday reality through practical, daily steps.

As we begin our journey, it's useful to look at the current situation of old-world influencers: the clear majority of whom came from educational, political, and religious environments consisting of traditional schools, churches, and government-led organizations. The majority of these influencers went on to work in those same establishments, where they generated a great deal of good, and upheld strong values. Yet, now we find these institutions crumbling at our feet, the Millennials and Generation Z having no wish to follow in their footsteps. The reason? The type of influence they stood for is not lasting. Young people are saying "no" to patterns of behavior that, although they have become the accepted norm over a long period of time, rarely foster real and powerful change within ourselves and in our world.

## Three Stages of Influence

Because most of us have witnessed both the positive and negative results of people's influence over others, let's first examine the development of influence, and how it shows up in our lives. In my research, I've learned that most people go through three stages of influence, and you may notice this progression in yourself. The first stage is self-centered, aligned with the old paradigm of influence, and all about attempting

to get something we want. For example, we may have good intentions, such as providing for our young children, qualifying for a first mortgage, or getting that dream job, but the focus is entirely on “me,” and what I need and want for my life. Sometimes, manipulation, greed, control, or another fear-based behavior shows up. Consequently, results are minimal, and often don’t last beyond the individual’s goal.

The second stage of influence happens when the influencer understands that the goal is a “win-win.” They want everyone involved in the decision or action to benefit. Influencers at this stage care deeply enough to ensure that everyone feels that their own desire and goal has been met.

The third stage of influence is when the influencer is working toward a powerful outcome for all—for the planet, the community, and the evolution of humanity. This is the Tao at work—selfless contribution, where the leader’s invisible strength ignites great change. The *Tao Te Ching* reminds us that the sage “does not claim greatness over anything. He’s not even aware of his own greatness.” Influencers in this third stage are not concerned about getting something for themselves or about being seen or noticed. They no longer require that their personal needs get met; they’re focused on working toward change on the planet. As Satyen Raja, one of my spiritual mentors, shared with me, “The heart of influence is devotion to people’s evolution. That’s the source of it being the purest, and most powerful.”

### **The Three Stages of Influence**

- Self-centeredness
- Win-win Mentality
- Selflessness

The most powerful influencers don’t try to be influencers for egoic reasons. They are not struck by the praise or recognition of having an impact. Raw food advocate and superfoods expert David Wolfe, says, “I don’t like to be after influence for influence’s sake. Influence has to do with our ability to alter the direction that our world is heading. To me, that’s a spiritual directive.” David says he wants to see the world different than it is now, and as an activist, promotes far less use of chemicals, a vast decrease in artificial synthetic materials going into the environment or being disposed of in the environment, and huge changes in methods of farming and interacting with the earth. David’s message and action over the last two decades has transformed many people’s choices, and he continues to influence people worldwide to wake up to their personal and collective choices for themselves, and for the earth. He demonstrates the heart of influence: acting for the good of all, and for our planet.

# The Four Pillars

While training people over the past decade to share their messages on stage and reach for their full potential, I came to identify four pillars of influence that determine whether lasting, sustainable change occurs. These pillars are: Power, Presence, Purpose, and Potential. Understanding these four pillars from a spiritual and personal perspective and integrating them into our lives allows the principles of the Tao to naturally become part of everyday life. Real and lasting positive change begins to happen. Movements ignite. People awaken. Miracles become the norm. That's why I wrote this book.

Life itself is all about navigating personal power, so the first pillar, Power, delves into your relationship with it. In every choice, in every thought, in every action you make, you either accentuate or diminish your power. And each time you do so, you impact not just yourself, but everyone and everything around you. In this book, we will look at all the places where power has been distorted and bring it back to light. By doing so, you'll see the Butterfly Effect at work: the smallest of choices can set in motion a myriad of consequences. Walking in the Way of the Tao, you'll learn to choose, so that your personal power has the greatest impact. You'll learn to understand and activate the power of your words, your thoughts, and your commitment to that which you wish to change.

The second pillar is Presence, and we will explore your relationship to it. Presence is the ability to exist in the moment with no thought of past or future. All great spiritual teachers have noted that the key to fulfillment and joy is to learn to be in the now. It is also critical to developing influence, since people who are present and in the fullness of life as it exists here and now are the same people who are fully trusted, counted on for their wisdom, and able to move mountains with their words. Gandhi, Jesus, and Mother Theresa were all examples of people who shifted the course of history and taught great things with their presence and power. As Gandhi said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." And by being that change, we influence others to do the same.

Presence, like power, has always existed within us. In fact, presence is who we are when we strip away all that we are not. When our doubts and fears and illusions of fear-based beliefs are dissolved for good, then presence can be with us always. Presence enables us to experience leadership without experiencing the push and pull of agendas and motivations, and so is foundational to the wisdom teachings of the Tao. In Verse 4 of the *Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzu says, "Tao is empty, yet it fills every

vessel with endless supply. Tao is hidden, yet it shines in every corner of the universe.”

The third pillar of influence is Purpose, of which there are two types. The first type is our soul’s purpose, that is, what we have come here to do and the potential we’ve come to this world to fully express. When we focus on fulfilling the mission of our purpose, we will either naturally influence others to take up our mission or we will inspire them to pursue and fulfill their own mission. In many cases, our journey will provide clarity to people who feel lost and without purpose themselves. The second type of purpose consists of the reason that we came to this earth—the bigger Divine Purpose we all share—which is to love. Period. No other purpose, but to love.

The final pillar of influence is Potential. What is possible for us, for others, and for our evolution as a species? How open are we to create a new reality? Albert Einstein once said, “I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious.” Developing an openness to potential is a core component of being a change-maker. Please note that I did not say, “disrupter.” In the Way of the Tao, leaders do not push, pull or destroy; they work in flow and harmony to create something new. When we are in creation energy—the energy of possibility—positive, lasting influence is more likely to occur.

#### **The Four Pillars**

- Power
- Presence
- Purpose
- Potential

Our relationships to potential, like power, presence, and purpose, are relationships that invite us to observe our thoughts, actions, and choices. Making space for potential, treating it as sacred, and asking for assistance from both your earthly team and your Divine Team is critical.

One of the least talked-about characteristics of powerful influencers is their reliance on Divine support—the unseen, the intangible, the mystical. When influencers speak of potential and possibility, they are visionaries asking us to see things that are not yet recognized by the human eye. They pull things into existence that were never there before, because they have faith in, and are working collaboratively with, Divine Power.

# About This Book

As a part of my research for this book, I had the great pleasure of interviewing numerous global influencers, all of whom had something in common: their journeys were launched on a foundation of personal development. They each journeyed within first and came to know themselves through the process of self-examination. Bestselling author of *Mass Influence*, Teresa de Grosbois, said it this way: “The biggest turning point for me was the moment I made the decision to do my own personal development work. During that time, my business had failed, my marriage ended, and my health was in a tailspin. So, I had an idea to renovate my home, and as I was in the bathroom working on the tiles, the only thought I had was how utterly unhappy I was. I could not point to a time in the past ten years that made me feel happy. I decided that *I* needed to be renovated, not the bathroom. It was from that point forward that life slowly started to transform for me. Change had to start with me, and changing myself. You have to do the inner work to do the outer work.”

This book guides you to do the inner work, in keeping with the principles of the Tao. Through these pages, you will have the opportunity to dedicate yourself to become a change-maker and influence others for the collective good. It may be challenging at times, but it is worth it. As Robert Frost put it, “It has made all the difference.”

This book is designed to help you evolve your personal capacity for influence and empowerment and guide you to explore your potential both in the earthly realm and the Divine realm. Your ability to walk in both worlds is what I call the *Holy Flow*, which leads to enduring and infinite influence.

Within each chapter, you will discover how the ancient truths of the Tao can become your current reality. At the end of each chapter, you’ll have an opportunity to reflect on, and take steps to integrate many of the profound teachings of the Tao into your life. Like all sacred teachings, each one is eternal and can sustain you consistently. When you apply them to the Four Pillars, using the practical, everyday processes in this book, you will discover a new state of influence: the Way of the Tao. In that state, people will feel your heart, soul, and your commitment, and be moved to act in ways that serve the greater good.

I will also describe how you can bring your mystical relationship with the Divine into much-needed action. We will explore mastery, and the ability to create at a high level. You might be motivated to begin or join a movement, for example, or to become an activist. As the *Tao Te Ching* often states, it is vital that our influence not

be self-indulgent and expressed only within our own private desires. It's important to support the many people and the environment in ways that alleviate widespread suffering and destruction of all that is good.

The words "Tao Te Ching" mean "living and applying the Great Way." What is the Great Way? Scholars have debated that for centuries. But, since I will be referring to the Way of the Tao frequently throughout this book, the closest explanation I can offer is to say that it is the essence of love. The Tao speaks to what often gets in the way of love; the awareness of interruption in our natural state of love is at the heart of the Tao. And with awareness, comes transformation. I quote liberally from the *Tao Te Ching* (Translator, Jonathan Star) so that you can experience the Way of the Tao, influencing real and lasting change.

Pillar I

# Power

# One

# Understanding Power

*The Sage helps all things come to know the truth they have forgotten.*

—Tao Te Ching, Verse 64

Power is a mystery to most of us. People often think of it as either a positive or a negative force: something that can either destroy the planet or change the world for the greater good. One dictionary definition of power is: “The ability to influence a course of events or the behavior of others”—for better or for worse.

Throughout the many years of working with powerful people, I’ve come to recognize that the most significant outcome of power is the ability to influence. Yet influence can be fleeting and damaging if power is fueled by personal fear and egoic needs. We need not look far to see how that has played out. Greed, corruption, manipulation, and deceit are rampant among those who are driven by a need for power. They are constantly strategizing their next move to get something from someone or something. While many might consider these actions powerful, they are not an expression of true power because their influence is temporary. As the *Tao Te Ching* says in Verse 55, “Whatever is not Tao comes to an early end.”

True power doesn’t come from the mind or the ego. We cannot *think* our way to being powerful. True power originates in the love we are born with—the only energy form that creates true lasting influence. I call it *love-power* because of its infinite capacity to influence. Love-power cannot be contained by the ego or the mind. In fact, the mind has no capacity to contain even the smallest grain of infinite love. The job of the mind is to be our personal computer and collector of facts; it was never meant to be the source of our true power.

Yet Western civilization sees the mind as the source of power, confusing power with intellect. But the intellect is often intertwined with the ego, so love-based power often morphs into fear-based power, which I call *distorted power*. This is where destructive actions come from.



While popular self-help books refer to the term “losing your power,” I don’t believe we can ever lose it. However, we can distort the power we are born with and close off our access to our love-power. In other words, most of us begin life with our love-power quite active—we are happy, curious, in an unending state of awe, quick to forgive, and wide open to other people and to new opportunities. But, after a few years, we inevitably experience the fear or suspicion that we are not enough as we are. This suspicion leads to thoughts and emotions that become a set pattern of behaviors, which in turn become our state of being, taking us out of our inherent pure love-power and into fear-based, distorted power.

These patterns are so commonplace that many misinterpret negative power as “normal.” Other than condemned, premeditated acts of violence, we often perceive control, domination and force as acceptable everyday behavior—behavior that has become normalized as “who we are,” or worse yet, “who they are.” For example, if we are quick to react to a text that we consider undesirable, we don’t think of it as a misuse of our power, but as a justified tendency to be “hot-headed.” When our natural power of love becomes distorted, we turn to trying to exert power—but as we do, we end up diminishing our own power just a little more. Each time we lower the energy of love, we close ourselves off to the only true source of true positive, influential power.

The field of quantum physics has now made speculations about energy a reality. In terms of measuring energy, our power vibrates fast or slow, depending on whether we have distorted our power or remain in our love-power. This is why we often feel that we are “losing our power.” We feel less energy physically. We feel emotions that make us tired and weak, because we do the opposite of what we have come to the planet to express. This distortion of power is still a form of power, but it is a power that, over time, will lead to poor relationships, lack of health, and even lack of abundance in life.

In his ground-breaking book, *Power vs. Force*, David Hawkins calibrates the energy of each of the levels of human consciousness, on a scale ranging from one to a thousand, where one is mere existence, and one thousand is enlightenment. The calibration is based on a clinical science that emerged in the 1970s called *kinesiology*, which uses the body’s muscles to indicate truth or falsehood (the body is strong with truth and weak with falsehood). Shame, guilt, apathy, grief, and fear all calibrate at one hundred or less because they are part of the falsehood or illusion that humans exist in. Love, joy, and peace calibrate between five and six hundred, as they represent the eternal Truth of who we are as Divine Beings in a human body. We begin to see the level of enlightened beings like Jesus and Buddha in the range of

seven hundred. All levels of consciousness below two hundred are destructive, and all levels above two hundred are constructive. This gives us great insight into our relationship with power, because as we begin the journey to stay in our love-power, we are more and more attuned to the way in which our actions and thoughts impact our energy and the energy of those around us.

When we are in pure love-power, those around us are influenced merely by being in our presence. On the other hand, distorted power can bring many people down with us, or we can feel down when someone begins to turn from love-power to fear-based power. Have you ever experienced a meeting with several fearful people and felt exhausted later? Have you ever spent an afternoon with a complaining friend and ended up going straight to bed or decided against doing that productive task you intended to do when you got home? If so, you've experienced the energetic consequences of distorted power.

When distorted power meets love-power, it is outmatched. Hawkins says that one person living in the highest vibrations of consciousness is enough to counteract seventy million individuals living in the lowest vibrations. That is, the power of one person living in pure, unconditional love (calibrating at approximately five hundred) can counteract 750,000 individuals living below level two hundred, the borderline of destructive consciousness. The greatest form of influence—the most impactful, positive effect—comes from living in heightened states of consciousness, where your being tangibly impacts the consciousness of the world.

Distorted power can be so ingrained in our everyday way of being that we don't recognize it in our words and actions. Acting as a victim or martyr is an expression of distorted power; engaging in passive-aggressive behavior is a use of distorted power; insisting that your way is the only way is distorted power at work. Distorted power can also take the form of careless behavior, risking everything to feel special and noticed, and demanding the universe and its inhabitants take notice. Not following through on your word, showing up late for events, sharing unkind words about another being—all of these are expressions of distorted power. All of it can bring you down in an instant.

## **The Laws of Nature**

But how do we shift from culturally condoned patterns of expressing distorted power to expressing our true love-power? To overcome our habit of being stuck in an energetically low level of power and free ourselves to activate the radiant love-

power within, we can look to Mother Nature for simple teachings that can be helpful to this kind of personal evolution.

True power is ruled by the laws of nature, so understanding them lays the groundwork for us to experience a pure relationship with power. The laws of nature are impersonal; they exist whether any person or life form wants them to or not. They are also universal—they apply to one and all—the natural world as well as humanity.

When we are aware of the laws of nature but still violate them, we distort our power, reduce our vital energy, and lose track of happiness. After all, disagreeing with the laws of nature—irrefutable as they are—cannot produce fulfillment, joy, peace, or sustainable relationships. Yet, most of us fall into the trap of expressing distorted power every day. Except maybe the Dalai Lama. (There’s always an exception!)

The three laws of nature that have the greatest impact on our relationship with power and our growth as an influencer are the Law of Change, the Law of Letting Go, and the Law of the Impersonal.

#### **The three laws of nature**

- Law of Change
- Law of Letting Go
- Law of the Impersonal

## **THE LAW OF CHANGE**

*Accept difficulty as opportunity.*

—Tao Te Ching, Verse 63

Nothing in life stays the same. Nature flows with cycles of change. Plants and animals live in a constant state of growth, decay, and rebirth. Humans are the only species that resist change—especially whatever they interpret as difficult change. We believe this or that “should not” happen. With the onset of the 2020 pandemic, we can see that those who accept and adjust to their circumstances are more influential, peaceful, and fulfilled.

Our love-power is freed up when we accept and work with the Law of Change. Influential people with a high degree of love-power know that lasting influence is

not maintained without attention to this law. Jesus, Buddha, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, and Gandhi each served at the highest level for the good of all by adhering to the Law of Change. These people had comforts of home and family and, in some cases, considerable wealth, but listened to a deeper calling to set out on a path that would change the future of humanity in profound ways.

Undoubtedly, change was not easy for these leaders; there were times when they, too, resisted change. Yet their perseverance altered the course of humanity. The irony is that when we resist a fundamental law such as the Law of Change, the short-term resistance might feel like a relief, but we suffer in the long run. We can feel sadness, anger, or a host of other emotions. We often turn outward, blaming, complaining, and repeating the same story or circumstances to others. When we point fingers of blame at the outer world, it's generally because we're not accepting the Law of Change in our inner world.

Recognizing the Law of Change in our physical reality is also helpful. When I tell people I recently turned fifty, I find it humorous to see how people react. "You don't look fifty!" is one of the typical consolation prizes offered up. Others are speechless, exuding a quiet sympathy. Still others offer products to help me look younger and reduce the increasing number of wrinkles appearing on my face. While I have come to love and accept my body at this time in my life, most people don't share this sentiment. For most reaching their second half of life, fear of aging suddenly takes hold. But what has your body been doing for the last few decades, if not changing? The body must, within the laws of nature, go through cycles of change, constantly and dependably.

When people resist the Law of Change on the physical plane, they join the ever-growing number of people who chase after external sources of satisfaction to avoid having to change. They have compulsive urges to buy things, reinvent their looks, renovate their homes, and more. They become obsessed with making money to manipulate their external environment so they can maintain an illusion of a safe world they can control—what they can change according to *their* time frame and preferences. In other words, they are creating the *illusion* of change as they try to avoid and resist the change that is being asked of them internally.

Here's the rub: when people don't change, they are more easily controlled and manipulated. The powers that be are well aware of this, too, make no mistake. For example, it only takes a stroll through the average North American shopping mall or an online shopping hub to realize how deeply entrenched we are in the culture and habits of buying. But if you can unplug from the thousands of daily offerings

supporting an addictive fix—temptations that temporarily help you feel okay about yourself so that you don't have to undertake real change—you'll experience a massive leap in consciousness.

When physical changes like new clothes, new hair, a facelift, a house renovation, a new car, or a new phone quickly prove to be a fleeting satisfaction, people may enter a dark period where they feel empty, lost, directionless, or without purpose. Many feel the pain of the bandage of buying. They spend their lives living out the dreams of others because they haven't developed a practice of listening to and acting upon the whispers of change within.

When we accept the Law of Change and recognize that all things come and go, we activate the courage within to make necessary changes that empower true power and influence. The Tao is essentially about allowing the flow of life to flourish, without resistance, and to bring us the wisdom and inner guidance that accompany it.

## THE LAW OF LETTING GO

*The treasure of life is missed by those who hold on and gained by those who let go.*

—Tao Te Ching, Verse 75

In nature, everything has a beginning and an end, a cycle of birth and death, decay, and renewal. For these cycles to continue unimpeded, nature needs to release the old to make way for the new. This principle, of course, is closely tied to the Law of Change. Yet the Law of Letting Go deserves as much attention because of how it shapes the universe and everything in it.

Let's take a look.

In nature, plants that hold on to dead or dying flowers have less energy than those that quickly let go of flowers that have completed their life cycle. In the garden, dead-heading plants helps them last longer and produce even more flowers. If flowers that have finished blooming are not released, the plant no longer thrives. The energy of the plant is revitalized when the old has been released. This shows us that energy itself does not grow old; energy just gets blocked and stuffed down by any form of resistance to letting go.

Similarly, your life force, your love-power, is impacted each time you hang on to old grievances or even recent ones. It's also affected when you hold on to people you

were once in relationship with or those who have passed over. Your love-power turns into distorted power the moment you hang on to anyone or anything, even as our collective illusion convinces us that what was good should never go away. Or, that if you let go, then you have lost. Or, if you let go, then you must be unworthy, less than, or unlovable. Or, there must be something wrong with you. So, you hold on to what is ultimately siphoning off your energy, in spite of the truth.

Most people will do anything to avoid seeing the beliefs that control them. But by resisting the Law of Letting Go, they avoid looking at the illusions and beliefs they've built their life upon, the biggest of which is, "There must be something wrong with me if I have to let go of something that was once so good. I must have made a mistake that proves I'm unworthy." Most of us hang on to our baggage only to begin a search for answers as to why we are unhappy. We may blame others; in fact, chances are good that we will point fingers to something or someone that is stopping us from moving on.

Relationships are one of the most difficult things to let go of. I'm not referring to the act of divorce or separation, although that may be an end result. I'm referring to letting go of the unhealthy energetic ties that we have built up with a person that we are or were in an intimate relationship with.

One of the most profound relationships of my life, and one I will always cherish, was with a man I met after my marriage fell apart. For the eight years we were together, he gave me emotional support when I was punishing myself over a failed marriage. He comforted me when I was sad or angry about yet another issue concerning my former husband—the man I spent almost two decades of my life with. But my optimistic view of the new relationship was flawed from the beginning—I resisted the truisms of the Law of Letting Go.

I had been carrying a lot of blame, anger, and guilt—mostly toward myself—for many years after my divorce. I refused to love myself, and I resisted letting go of my numerous negative beliefs about myself as a wife and mother. So, guess what I attracted? A rescuer! The classic archetypal pairing of the wounded bird (me) who meets the rescuer (him). For a while, I felt soothed by the resurrected belief that I was loveable, and he felt temporarily worthwhile because he could help someone in need. The dynamic played out for years. I felt trapped by my circumstances, stuck in victim mode, and only accepted help that didn't really move me forward. Then things really went sour. I became increasingly unhappy, pointing the finger outward, and he felt resentment that he was not being acknowledged for his assistance, which

then turned into passive-aggressive behavior. We both wondered, “Why can’t they be more like me?” No surprise how it ended.

By resisting the Law of Letting Go, both of us were not stepping into new opportunities to grow and live our full potential. Our energies were invested in hanging on to our unhealthy needs and our ego desires to protect ourselves from not being enough. Most people stay in this kind of resistance and hang on to old habits, behaviors, circumstances, and relationships for years, if not decades. But true influence can’t happen when we resist letting go, in any areas of our lives. Others sense that we’re not living our authentic truth, not genuinely present.

What do you need to release? What are you hanging on to that no longer serves you? What power struggle are you engaged in that drives you to stay exactly where you are as you store all your mental and emotional baggage of the past? How does the way in which you see the world distort your natural and pure love? The Buddha said that we see through the eyes of fear, and this perspective becomes so real that we forget we are living an illusion. The minute we are trapped by the illusion of fear and the needs of the ego, we buy into the illusion, and it becomes seemingly impossible to let go, surrender, and be in the flow of life that is the Tao.

## THE LAW OF THE IMPERSONAL

*The Sage is like Heaven and Earth. To him, none are especially dear.*

—*Tao Te Ching, Verse 5*

Several years ago, I had the privilege of taking human behavioral specialist Dr. John Demartini and a friend sightseeing in beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia, my homeland. It was a nippy spring morning, and as the hours went by, I noticed that no matter what we discussed or what we encountered that day, John was absolutely grounded in peace, stillness, and overall happiness. Even when we spoke of tragic personal events, he didn’t alter his state. I had never met anyone like him before, and I realized that he was living the Way of the Tao and embodying the Law of the Impersonal. He didn’t see any individual event as better or worse than any other. And as a result, he didn’t suffer. He put it this way, “Suffering is expecting the world to be only one way and then being surprised when it’s not.”

Nature is a great role model for us when it comes to the Law of the Impersonal. Nature does not hold anyone or anything “especially dear.” It does not give to only a few, nor does it protect just a few from tragic natural occurrences. Nature does what

it does, whether it's a fire, a flood, a tornado, or a new life. Nature simply creates and destroys. Humans are the only creatures on the planet that take every act, word, and thought personally. Most of us feel we cannot exist in an impersonal world. Even when it comes to concepts of the Divine, most of us take it personally, and that is why we suffer. Believing that if we are good, then bad things won't happen, we are surprised to realize that no matter if our behavior is good or bad, "good" and "bad" things will happen. No one is immune. It's not personal.

In my own life, a dear friend passed of cancer, leaving behind young children, three of my clients passed away in the past few months, and the son of a friend just died in an auto accident. It's tempting to ask, "Why?" In our Western world, we worship our intellect as having all the answers to life. Our civilization has come up with the answers to most everything, so why not this, too? We want to know why. But it's not personal.

Two animals died in my backyard this summer. I was shaken to see the remains of a rabbit attacked and killed by a hawk. A week later, a bird hit my front window in the early morning, and I watched it die within seconds of falling to the ground. I felt helpless. There was nothing I could do to stop it. Tears welled up in my eyes as my prayer to return this bird to life "failed." So often, we want to control what we perceive as "not good," even when it has to do with death, and even when we know that death is part of life. It is a natural law; all that is living will die. And yet we resist. We suffer. But it's not personal.

Our refusal to accept the impersonal nature of life can increase our suffering and contribute to the distortion of our power. Instead of allowing ourselves to feel the emotion of sadness, we become bitter, for example. We dwell on the same unanswerable questions over and over: Why did this have to happen in my family? Why are we cursed while others are so blessed? Some give up on God. Some decide not to grow or evolve. Some people sever their relationships with others and stop pursuing new ones. When we take the impersonal personally, our positive influence comes to a halt. Taking it all personally, some people end up feeling sorry for themselves, considering themselves to be the perpetual victim, and telling their sad story to anyone who will listen. Others become full of rage and hurt others with their words and actions. All of this suffering occurs only because they demand that a personal universe give them reasons for why things happen as they do.

Part of the disconnect is simply because the mind is a reasoning tool that cannot comprehend how the same Source that loves and supports us doesn't consider us



special at the same time. It doesn't make any effort to treat us as special. For most, it is incomprehensible.

When I'm guiding budding entrepreneurs to share their message and sell their products and programs, I remind them that one of the best mindsets in business is to learn to expect and accept challenges as they arise. This is not about being pessimistic; it is creating a foundation for the acceptance of natural laws. It's not a matter of *if* those challenges will happen, it's *when*. That perspective empowers people to withstand challenges, not out of fear, but out of love.

What it comes down to is this: expectations will immediately or eventually bring suffering. The need to always have things turn out the way we expect will ultimately create unhappiness; the unmet expectations then turn love-power into distorted power. Harboring expectations fuels the ego's ploys to make us feel safe, to let us see only the threats in life, to look for refuge in what we have, to get what we want—rather than look for challenges and risk losing what we have to evolve or grow.

When people take the world personally and don't like the cards they're dealt, they blame others, God or the Universe, for things not going their way. Some people become aggressive as they try to control the outcomes, insisting that they are special and deserve special treatment. This 'specialness' builds into a sense of entitlement—a common form of distorted power. Feeling entitled, they perceive that the universe, their community, and the people in their lives owe them something. It's all a result of the inability to see the impersonal nature of life.

The solution? Stop using your mind to figure things out. Fully accept the Law of the Impersonal, this intrinsic law of nature, and accept the entirety of what life brings. As Lao Tzu wrote, "Sometimes you're behind, other times ahead, sometimes strong, other times weak, sometimes with, other times alone; to the Sage, the movement of life is perfection."

## Reflections

Draw your attention to how your ego fights your acceptance of your current situation and the present moment. (And it will—every day.) Combine this attention with the daily practice of gratitude. Learn to see every moment as a moment of grace. Gradually the acceptance of an impersonal world will become more commonplace than the ego's fight for specialness and personal meaning.

Choose a new favorite journal to begin recording insights from your journey with *The Tao of Influence*. Like this one, each chapter will close with an opportunity for you to reflect on and integrate your learnings.

Ask yourself: Which of the three laws of nature do you flow well with? Which one do you feel most at peace with? How does the acceptance of this law enrich your life? How has your acceptance of this law affected those around you? What steps can you take to help others activate this law of nature in their own lives?

Ask yourself: Which of the three laws of nature do you resist? How has your resistance to the law contributed to your personal suffering? How has your resistance to it affected the lives of those around you? What steps can you take to more fully accept this law of nature and let it flow in your life?

## Two

# Identifying Your Power Patterns

*Only when your sickness becomes sick will your sickness disappear.*

—Tao Te Ching, Verse 71

Understanding your power and noticing where your power gets distorted is essential to identifying patterns of power. In my years as a trainer in human potential and consciousness, I've come to notice eight basic power patterns that develop over time and become distorted versions of power. They are so common that we don't notice that they prevent us from impacting and influencing the world for the better; in fact, they are considered normal enough to most people that they continue to play out unconsciously for years and even whole lifetimes. Why do these power patterns persist, in spite of the fact that they are frustrating, irritating, lacking in connection, and unproductive? They endure because they are considered to be a natural part of the human makeup. But don't believe it for a second. There is nothing natural or normal about distorting what you are—the energy and essence of love.

As Lao Tzu says in the *Tao Te Ching*, to tap into that energy of love, you have to recognize the sickness and get so fed up with living in a prison of dis-ease that you are willing to do whatever it takes to live free. By becoming more aware of the sickness, and releasing blocks to your true power, you become less willing to accept the “sickness” as normal, and you're empowered to make new choices. The greatest positive influencers in the world impacted millions simply because they would not accept what others considered as normal. They offered an alternative that challenged people's outdated ways of being and thinking. That's the way of a true influencer.

## The Eight Power Patterns

Having done the groundwork of understanding what power is in the last chapter, the next step is to understand why you have developed your power patterns in the first place. By recognizing your personal power patterns and default ways of interacting with the world, you'll begin to loosen their grip over you and free yourself to access deeper, more authentic power.

Consider this. Before birth, you are a fetus floating around in a comfortable, warm bath, happily doing your thing. Then, one day, you are suddenly forced out of your safe environment and, like a fish out of water, you gasp for life. Your little lungs, much to your surprise, start taking in air. You open your eyes and see hundreds and then thousands of different impressions.

We are born into a world of distraction. The sensory, chaotic circus that we are born into completely overwhelms the brain, which goes into a state of confusion. So, you cry in distress. Then the brain tries to balance things out by focusing on a few things, especially the smiling face of a parent or caretaker. Now, finally, you can relax, and your brain begins to shape its understanding of the world.

You begin to focus on the familiar faces, and as you do, you notice that certain things you do cause those faces, and the voices coming from those faces, to respond to you in ways that make you feel good. And certain things they don't do make you feel bad. All you want to do is feel good, so you make choices that ensure that will happen. This is when power patterns begin: as you learn to manipulate the environment to feel good. Still, everyone loves you for it, and for the most part, they are patient and understanding. They recognize that baby is merely acting from a place of wanting its needs met.

As you grow, you still want the faces and voices in your life to feel good. And when they don't feel good, you make it mean that something is wrong with you. After all, you know how to make yourself feel good, so why can't you make others feel good too? Sometimes you hear or see evidence that you are not okay. You might hear an adult say that you could be doing something differently or should be this way and not that way. And you believe the opinions and preferences of these adults because they are like God to you.

Once we develop the suspicion that there is something wrong with us and that we are not okay, most of us will spend the rest of our lives trying to cover it up. We try to put a bandage on our wounds by manipulating our environment and the people around us so that we can feel good about ourselves. We try different tactics—some work and some don't—but we go with the ones that work because we are smart. As we discover the ones that work best, we gravitate toward certain power patterns.

*image*

*not*

*available*