

Who Is Doing What?

IN A TIME WHEN WE ARE ALL ENCOURAGED TO 'FEEL GOOD ABOUT OURSELVES,' AND WHERE FAME IS PERCEIVED WITH SUCH HIGH IMPORTANCE, IT IS A DIFFICULT SELL TO TELL SOMEONE THAT THEY ARE NOT THE DOER OF THEIR ACTIONS – THAT WE ARE THE VEHICLE FOR ACTIONS OF SPIRIT. Even for spiritual seekers who know this to be 'truth' it is often hard to remember.

Also, if someone says, "Hey, I like how your hair looks today," it's a little much to reply, "Oh, thanks, God styled it!" Or, as my daughter points out on the occasions when I am inspired to vocally give thanks for a meal, "Mommy, YOU made the food, not God!" I might reply that I couldn't have done anything without having been created; that if the Sun didn't shine, no vegetables or grass would grow, the animals couldn't eat, then we could not take in their energy. But, I don't want to belabor the point and force a situation where we only mimic thanks we are not fully feeling. As a child I remember this feeling false to me. And, as my daughter pointed out – this body did put effort into the meal. I cut the vegetables, prepared the rice, and chanted the mantras to imbue it with healing energy. So, what should our attitude be, if attributing everything to God publicly at all times can feel overly humble or inappropriately egoistic (holier than thou)?

The *Bhagavad-Gita* (3:30) gives us the proper attitude, "With your mind centered on the Self, dedicating all actions to Me, free of expectation and free of the thought 'mine,' fight without the fever of fear and anxiety." The key here is the mind and heart working in unison – it is with our heart-mind that we sacrifice and dedicate our efforts to the higher Self, which is a part of the One. There is



no need for ostentatious show if our heart-mind is pointed towards Spirit.

As with all actions, the appropriate one to take is the one which is right for that moment, and we know it is right because we have taken time to be still and listen to our hearts. Karunamayi-Ma says that we need to meditate and raise our vibration before we can perform selfless service, because otherwise, how do we know whether an action will have a *sattvic* (pure, truthful) result?

We see evidence everywhere of good intentions gone terribly wrong when an action was performed without care or consideration of potential outcomes. Our over-use of penicillin is a perfect example of when a noble goal (to relieve human suffering) has resulted in a worldwide health crisis, as resistant strains of viruses have developed. Would things have been better if penicillin was never created? Of course not, but certainly prescribing penicillin for every infection and routinely feeding it to animals whose

bodies will be used as meat were probably not the best choices. Instead, allowing the small suffering of the body while healing a nonlife-threatening infection would build stronger immune systems. Creating situations where animals are not caged in unnaturally filthy conditions requiring antibiotics for 'health' would have benefited all creatures. But these responses would have required sacrifice – a sacrifice which is not supported or rewarded by our society.

So, care must be taken with our actions so that our karma-yoga (yoga of action) results in the best possible outcome. After practicing meditation for some time, and clearing our own psyche, we become able to reflect reality as it is and make these distinctions. We may start to build small actions into our lives that expands our ability providing real help when needed. As we slowly integrate knowledge gained in meditation, the sacrifice to Spirit is made at an internal level and eventually, flows externally. We know in our hearts when an action is the right thing to do and we do it immediately.

When you start thinking at a level of the Atman instead of the Body, you see that the most is gained by doing things that are right, *especially* when there are no rewards. As we progress, these situations and opportunities start to present themselves, and life becomes a series of exchanges of helpful energies, lifting us all in spirit.

So, what is the proper response when someone compliments our actions? Perhaps simply saying, "You are very welcome," while acknowledging in your heart-mind the source of all actions; giving thanks for the opportunity to use your hands as the tools of service. ▲



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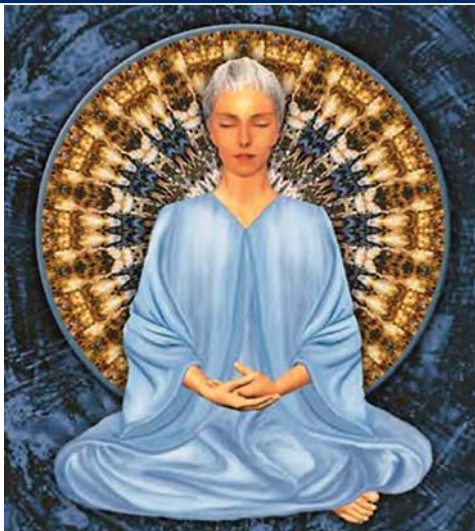
The term, *-serving moment*, refers to a peak experience, or 'in the zone' experience, in which we let go of self-concern to totally immerse ourselves in the concerns of the person or people we are serving. Since a serving moment brings us into a state of calm focus, let's begin with some basic general suggestions to cultivate such a state of being.

1. Practice some form of meditation that brings you to an awareness and acceptance of the present moment of life. This can be a *posture meditation*, in which you simply assume a certain position (sitting or reclining, for example), focus on your breathing, and wait for your mind to clear.

2. Another type of meditation is *meditation in action*. This is when you are doing an activity that requires a degree of concentration, bringing all your attention on the activity, and therefore, away from any distracting thoughts and behavior.

3. A third kind of meditation, and the one suggested in this article, is the experience of the *Serving Moment*. This also involves an activity, but it goes beyond to include the practice, motivation, and feeling of serving others. Since selfless service is considered to be a direct path to one's highest self-actualization, naturally we consider it to be the meditation of choice for this particular practice. As with *meditation in action*, the Serving Moment puts you into an activity that requires a degree of concentration that brings all your attention on the activity. However, with the Serving Moment, it is all being done to serve others.

It is suggested, that along with your serving based meditation, you also practice a posture meditation regularly, to deepen the meditative state, and make it more durable and reliable. Once you can experience a clear mental state in meditative practice, you are ready to take it into the framework of your professional life of service. And then you learn to use the distractions, reactions, and attachments in your work life as a test to free yourself, develop your character, and to move closer to your true higher nature.



Meditation & the Serving Moment

by Anthony Michael Rubbo, MHS

Simply observe attachments as they occur, instead of getting lost or trapped in them. Allow yourself to be who you are, others to be who they are, and the situation to be what it is; then use all of it to transcend your personal concerns and immerse yourself in your purpose of serving others. You then fully integrate your meditative perspective into your work life when you actually begin to look forward to people, places, and things, and becoming aware of how you might react or respond to them.

And then you realize that it's all about transcending the turbulent activity of life, while still living in our very active world. It is written in philosophical texts that the beauty of life is the sense of balance in the foreground against a background of imbalance. Therefore, the art of living is to find your balance, and to exist in this world against a background of constant activity, all while maintaining your calm center.

Although this is a very positive idea, we must acknowledge that there is still negativity in our world. So, let's conclude by looking at the place that negativity has in a life of serving others. Without personal commitment to a serving purpose, a negative incident serves no constructive purpose. You're often left with a negative feeling, and the impulse to react defensively the next time a similar incident occurs. With no specific purpose to serve, the negativity expands outward into other areas of life until a negative life-pattern develops. In other words, without a serving purpose, life gathers around the impressions of negative incidents, and everything you think, feel, say, and do begins to support and strengthen the fear, blame, guilt, resentment, and irresponsibility of such incidents. The central items of life become the negative feelings, and you see life itself as negative, with little or no possibility for true personal satisfaction, empowerment, and enjoyment.

With personal commitment to a serving purpose (supported by a meditative perspective), you learn from negative incidents, and use lessons from them to support your purpose. Past files of experiences are overwritten in the natural course of positive action that accompanies a life of serving others. You begin to confidently welcome new and different experiences, because you know you can utilize the experiences to support your personal commitment to your serving purpose, and live your professional life in the *Serving Moment*. ▲

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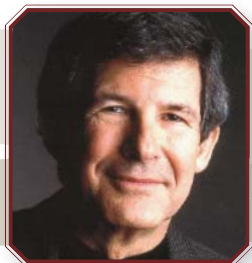
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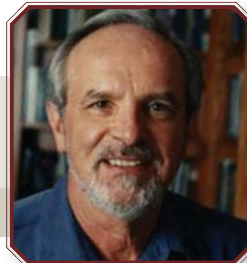
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Suspended Between Heaven & Earth: A Spiritual Vacation to the Temples of Bali

IT IS EASY TO FALL IN LOVE WITH BALI; IT LOOKS AND SMELLS LIKE PARADISE. The Balinese are hopeful, open people. They trust in god, but are aware of evil. A pilgrimage to Bali is good for your mind, body, and soul.

Bali is a Hindu island, perhaps literally, in a sea of Islam. It is the only predominantly Hindu island in the otherwise Islamic, 17,508-island nation of Indonesia. Even though Indonesia officially recognizes five faiths: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism, it is the world's largest Muslim county.

It is easy to think that Hinduism is polytheistic, but Balinese believe in only one god—one with many manifestations. One Balinese put it this way: I am just one person; someday I might be a farmer, another a driver, yet another a cook, but I am still only one person. The one deity is known as *Sanghyang Widi Wasa*. The main manifestation of Sanghyang Widi Wasa is in the Hindu trinity: *Brahma the creator, Wisnu (Vishnu) the preserver, and Siwa (Shiva) the destroyer*. Manifestations of god also appear in geographical areas (such as the ocean and mountains) and attributes (such as fertility and learning). But there is also evil in the world. The deities live on the mountains, the evil beings under the sea. Balinese make offerings to both: paying homage to the good ones, placating the bad. They seek a balance between these two forces. At almost every glance you will see black and white checkered cloth draping statues. This represents the balance between good and evil. Their daily lives and temples also reflect this.

Balinese temples are walled and consist of three courtyards. The outer courtyard is often outside the wall and represents hell. The middle courtyard represents an intermediate area; the inner courtyard represents heaven. As you walk from the outside of a temple into the inner court, you are walking the divine universal path, from perdition to paradise. Inside the courtyards are shrines and pavilions.

It is said that Bali has 20,000 temples. Some are quite famous, such as *Pura Besakih*, *Pura Taman Ayun*, and *Pura Tanah*. Besakih is known as the mother temple of Bali and considered the most sacred. A good way to see different parts of the island is to visit the special temples of *Pura Uluu Danu Bratan* and *Pura Luhur Batukau*, and the famous seaside temple of *Pura Tanah Lot*. Take your time and visit one a day. After visiting Bratan, have lunch overlooking the lake. Visit Batukau in the afternoon and enjoy the coolness of the mountain and forests. Finally, make sure to get to Tanah Lot to see the sunset.

Pura Danu Bratan is perhaps the most picturesque of the three, and is located on the shores of Lake Bratan. Built in the early 1600s,



Danu Bratan is dedicated to the goddess of the lake, Dewi Danau. Two of its multi-roofed shrines, or merus, are actually on small pieces of land in the water, and when the mist hangs over the lake, appear to be suspended between heaven and earth. Outside the temple complex, but still on the grounds, is a Buddhist stupa. The complex also includes gardens and majestic views of the lake and central mountain area.

Head off to *Batukau via Jatuluhih*, which means "truly marvelous," and the views from the winding

road truly are. It is here that you'll see unobstructed views of miles of rice paddy terraces nestled in the mountains. *Pura Luhur Batukau* is on the side of Bali's third major mountain and holy peak, Gunung Batukau. Surrounded by forests, it is misty and lush. It includes shrines to Maha Dewa, the mountain spirit and to the three near-by mountain lakes: Bratan, Buyan and Tamblingan. Down many steps to one side of the complex is a tranquil pond and shrine. Down an equal number of steps on the opposite side is a small river.



An essential end-of-the-day event is watching the sunset at *Pura Tanah Lot*. Popular with sightseers, this is nonetheless quite a spectacle to behold. This temple is built on a small rock in the ocean and connected, at low tide, to the mainland by a strip of sand and stone. Unlike the temples at Bratan and Batukau, which are dedicated to mountains and mountain lakes, Tanah Lot is dedicated to the spirits of the sea. Protected by sea snakes at high tide, this small temple, with trees perched precariously against the ocean surf seems to defy logic. It is perhaps Bali's most photographed temple.

But even this idyllic island has seen its share of violence. The Balinese are very aware of both good and evil. They, and their island, are indeed suspended between these two forces, suspended between heaven and earth. ▲

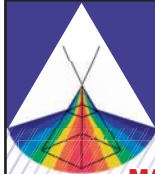


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What is Karma?

IN THE WAKE OF THE 1960s, THE PRIMARILY EASTERN CONCEPT OF KARMA BECAME A PART OF WESTERN POPULAR CULTURE. As with many cross-cultural concepts, there is something lost in translation in the process. As Americans, we have come to know the word *Karma* as a casual expression of “what goes around comes around,” with the implication that whatever you put out into the world will return to you. This belief is fundamentally misplaced, and doesn’t really relate to the original definition of karma.

Like most people, before my higher level studies of philosophy, I held the superstitious belief that if I wronged someone, I should fear that the universe would eventually repay me: if not now, then at heaven’s gate or worse, when I was re-born. Honestly, this idea kept me well behaved, and good karma (in terms of grades and behavior) meant being popular at school, getting into a good college and ultimately, approval from my community.

Yoga defines Karma as “action” and then further defines it as the “consequence of all actions.” *Everything we do affects everything else.* It is a powerful law of nature – that all actions create a ripple throughout the universe. But, as with every simple truth, the reality is not as simplistic as it sounds.

A key quote from a version of the *Bhagavad Gita* by Eknath Easwaran, awoke me from my confusion related to karma:

“The Buddha says that we are not punished for our anger; we are punished by our anger.”

Think about this question: when someone yells with anger at another person, who is hit hardest by the angry comments? The yeller is absolutely disturbed by the anger. The angry person’s blood pressure rises, his words are spiteful and his thoughts are intensely negative.

This person is punished by his anger. The listener to the anger has distance between the negative thoughts. The listener can ignore the words or listen with compassion. The listener is free to respond to the anger in a variety of ways. The angry speaker is a prisoner to the anger.

Secondly, the angry person is sowing seeds for his future. Not in the sense that others will yell at him or treat him with anger, but in the sense that he is setting the stage to become angry again. He is trapped by his karma, regardless of what others do. Anger itself is the prison.

Building on this point, karma relates to a series of events. Yoga’s philosophy considers each event as a lesson. From this perspective, karma might be better summarized as the “school of hard knocks.” The key is to learn from your experiences and then alter your experiences as you go through life.

The *Yoga Sutras* explains four types of karma: **Black, Black & White, White, and No Karma.**

Black Karma is negative or destructive acts that are planned and then carried out. These Black Karmas leave a person in an ill state of mind. For example, if you plan to say something mean to a person and then execute the negative interaction, you suffer for the duration of all the negative effects making it a strong event. If you inadvertently say a similar mean statement without planning to say it, you suffer to a lesser degree.

Black and White Karma includes good acts that carried out with selfish intentions. A wealthy person donates money so long as a plaque with his name is hoisted in front of the building. A person plays a great sports game and then boasts about their abilities in front of a crowd.

White Karma is good deeds that are offered for the sake of bettering humanity but with self-awareness. The good person is driven to do good deeds and knows that they are doing good things for others. Their enthusiasm for performing the good deeds motivates them to seek out more ways to continue to do good deeds. There is a slight degree of attachment to the end result of “doing good” so the wheel of karma keeps spinning as the person is ready to act again.

No Karma indicates a deed done without any identification to the deed. The person cares for their body by eating healthy food but does so effortlessly. There is no feeling of missing the junk food, as the person is simply following the rules of health with no resistance. Fulfilling one’s responsibilities is considered normal and not the subject of ‘good’ deeds. They simply act without attachment to their deeds. This leaves the sense of complete freedom because they are not impelled to have to do anything, not even good deeds. Another way of explaining this is that of being one with the flow of life. Having no karma ends the cycle of continued action and sets the doer free.

The beauty within this concept is that the mind can grow and change. There is a chance to alter karma in positive directions by self-understanding, healing, and spiritual practice. The practice of Yoga aims at purification of one’s karma. Yoga classes offer a student time to realign the mind-body relationship. Meditation offers time to instill deeper spiritual intentions. Living in loving and conscious relationships allows patterns of selfish behavior to be replaced by acts of kindness. The entire science of Yoga conditions the mind to behave with purified forms of karma.

It is said that everything in this world is in a state of change, and this is especially true of the mind. This potential for change allows for the possibility of karma to change for the better or the worse. The key to the process is to become aware of your karma by understanding yourself. Once you understand why you think the way you do, you will be free to choose how to act. Eventually, you will gain a larger understanding of yourself and be able to break free of certain karmic patterns in your life. Start with self-awareness and let positive change grow from a pure state of being – find your yogic culture of consciousness! ▲

Dreamer Dan: KARMA YOGA MAN



DAN UNDERSTOOD THAT KARMA YOGA IS THE PRACTICE OF DISCIPLINE OF ACTION. Karma Yoga focuses on the adherence to duty or dharma while remaining detached from the reward. It is a pure Path because it functions without attachments. It is the practice of doing for the Joy of doing itself. For confirmation of this understanding, Dan connected to his Dear Friend, the DreamTime, who offered Dan the following Visions.

I sat and wrote the Records of my present Service. I had great discipline and focus. Some came to look at my personal calendar and notes. I took them away and kept them private. Dan knew the Power of the act of writing. Writing required focus, a principal aspect of Karma Yoga. The only way that Dan could act just for the Joy of acting was to maintain focus on the act without considering the benefits that accompanied it. Dan also saw that the practice of Karma Yoga brought with it the Wisdom of when to share and when to wrap a silence around his actions. The act of writing grounded Dan's Service onto the Earth so that all could benefit from it.

The DreamTime often depicted Dan as a teacher. Dan came to realize that, in these Visions, Dan was teaching himself and that his students were the parts of himself that required learning. *I taught young Ones. They left in small groups and walked freely without asking permission. I had to bring them back and discipline them to keep them in line. The time came for*

them to be called to their appointed destination. These are young Ones because they do not yet understand that they must adhere to the dictates of the One who has already Mastered the art of what they desire to learn. When the immature parts of Dan "took a walk," Dan's Higher Self brought them back. This is another part of the discipline. When Dan strayed from his focus, the inner Master or the Self, called Dan back to *keep him in line*. Discipline provided the guarantee that Dan would be ready for his chosen Mission when his time came.

I liked the blond student who had sat in the middle row in the front. For some reason, he threw the class books out the window. I told him to go down, gather them, and bring them back. He refused. The student in the middle row represents Dan's spinal column or Chakra system. Dan liked this student because the blond hair represented Dan's Love consciousness. *For some reason* indicates that Dan does not understand why his Love would become resistant and unruly. Dan demands that his Love be respectful and replace the books. His Love refuses because Love Knows what Dan does not yet know. Throwing the books out the window shows that Love Knows when old teachings require an update. The window or multidimensionality symbolizes another important teaching of Karma Yoga; that is, One's actions in this lifetime serve to redeem the unbalanced actions from

other lifetimes. Love Knows that the other lifetimes were parallel lives that were acting in the present, the only tick of time that exists. Love was assuring Dan of this Truth, that Dan was acting for this life as well as all his other Ones. Love *refused* Dan's discipline because it refused to focus on this life alone but rather to include the experiences of the others.

I played baseball. I was very happy with our lineup. I realized how Great each player was. At certain times, some players carried the team. That player was now the catcher. He was hitting many homeruns. The DreamTime teaches Dan another very important part of Karma Yoga. Again, the image of the line appears. This time, the lineup is the order of the Chakra system. Dan saw that all his Chakras had matured into individual levels of proficiency; and moreover, they had learned to harmonize with all the others. The *catcher* shows Dan how important receiving is in the act of doing. Dan realizes that One cannot act in the purity of doing without receiving the Grace to do so. We cannot dispense our Grace until we can first receive it. The act of receiving furnishes us with the Abundance to live our lives in the Joy of Fulfillment.

Dan thanked the DreamTime for its unbounded Wisdom. He left his Dear Friend with the suspicion that perhaps he had been practicing Karma Yoga without knowing it. ▲

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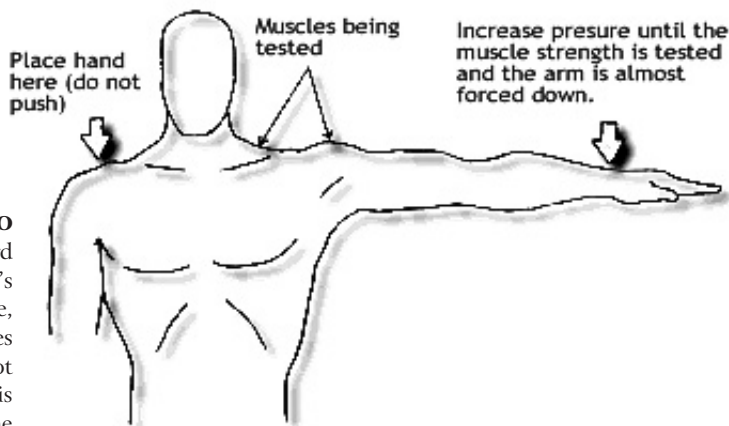
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Responsible Releasing of Karma

MANY TIMES WE USE KARMA AS AN EXCUSE TO STAY IN OUR VICTIMHOOD. Have you ever heard somebody say, "Oh, I can't do anything about that, it's my Karma." My question is, "How do you know that?" For me, Karma is the lessons we are to learn in this lifetime, and many times we don't know what those lessons are. In addition, we may not know if we are ready to learn a specific lesson, or even if the time is right to learn that lesson. Everything is whole-istic and thus all the parts interact with all the other parts and the whole. Sometimes in order to learn another lesson, we must put some of our Karma on hold so-to-speak. This is all happening unconsciously all the time. The goal is to practice more self-responsibility, and bring more of our Karma to our consciousness. It's like bringing darkness to light, or like bringing light to our shadow self. The good news is, we have ways to determine whether we are ready to learn from and/or let go of parts of our Karma and learn the lesson. Let me explain.

I have recently been facilitating Psych-K, studying the work of David Hawkins, and attending James Ray seminars. All of these methodologies and people use muscle testing, or what is more technically called *kinesiology*. Muscle testing is using the wisdom of the body to answer questions. The most common way to muscle test is applying light pressure on an outstretched arm parallel to the floor. If the arm tests strong, the arm will hardly move. If the arm tests weak the arm will move down more than if the arm tests strong. Everybody is different in how they experience muscle testing. In other words, some people experience a large difference in the movement of their arm between strong and weak. Some people require more applied pressure than others. The important thing to remember is to find a qualified practitioner who is experienced in applying successful muscle testing. Kinesiology is being used by many chiropractors, energy workers, body workers, and various practitioners to bypass the ego and access truth in the body.

Muscle testing can also be used in personal growth with belief statements. In Psych-K, muscle testing is taking a goal or belief statement and testing whether we believe it is true or not. This process bypasses the ego and accesses the higher consciousness and the unconscious mind. Our consciousness is ego-based, and cannot be relied upon to give us accurate answers to our questions and goal statements. A typical goal statement may be, "I attract available women into my life easily and effortlessly." In Psych-K if the goal statement tests weak then we ask the higher consciousness for permission to balance the right and left hemispheres of the brain so that the goal statement tests strong. If we get a weak response with the arm asking for permission to balance the goal statement one could say we have accessed Karma that is not ready to be released for the highest good of the individual. In other words, there are more lessons to be learned and that limiting belief statement will aid in learning those lessons. In this case the limiting belief state-



Basics of muscle testing

ment is, "I attract unavailable women into my life easily and effortlessly." However, if we muscle test strong when asking the higher consciousness for permission to balance the belief statement, then we are growing and potentially breaking Karma. Essentially we have learned our lessons with the above limiting belief statement, and are ready to balance it so the goal statement is true for us.

My experience with muscle testing is that it is always accurate if done properly. Muscle testing is easy to learn, and just takes practice to become proficient. I recommend three books that talk about and give examples of muscle testing: *Power vs. Force* and *Transcending Levels of Consciousness*, both by David Hawkins, M.D. The other book is *Psych-K... The Missing Peace In Your Life*, by Robert M. Williams, M.A. The more we muscle test in all areas of our life, the more we can consciously raise our vibration. Higher vibration has a way of bringing our Karma into consciousness, to organically clear it out, and bring more peace and possibility into our lives.

In the work I am doing with James Ray (www.jamesray.com), we are also learning how to screen everything in our lives, so we can practice more conscious choice as to what we allow into our energy field. Once again, we screen using muscle testing. We screen music, food, movies, people, places, and things. This also helps to bring our Karma (triggers and lessons) to our conscious awareness, and practice more responsible decision making for our highest good. James Ray draws much of his information on muscle testing from David Hawkins.

In closing, I would like to challenge all of you to bring your Karma to a higher conscious awareness. I feel it is the responsible thing to do, for those of us that truly want to transcend levels of consciousness and really make a difference from the inside out on this planet and universe. If we are to break or release our Karma, we need to learn our lessons. We can do this by letting go of our egoic needs to do it a certain way. If we surrender to our higher consciousness and our unconscious mind, we can clear out a good chunk of our stuff quickly and effortlessly. We can take goal statements that are not currently working for us, and balance them out rapidly and efficiently. There are no limits, only lessons. Are you ready for your Karmic release? Muscle testing can answer that question and much, much more! ▲

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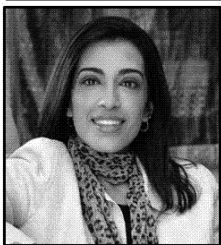


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What? I'm a 'Soccer Mom'?

LIKE MANY WOMEN, I EXPERIENCED A SUDDEN SHIFT IN GEARS – A RADICAL LIFE CHANGE – WHEN I WENT FROM BEING A FULL-TIME WORKING PROFESSIONAL TO A STAY-AT-HOME MOM. With any change comes stress. But this one is a biggie. Any new mom will tell you so, or maybe they'll just tear up when you ask, "How are you?" Trading a familiar identity for another is one layer of stress, add on the hormones, sleepless nights, and constant demands of a newborn, and even the most capable of us can feel fragile.

Things had gotten easier after a physically tough first few months, and my baby was approaching his first birthday. Then I discovered I was pregnant. Making the transition from one to two was more difficult than I had ever imagined. Completely overwhelmed with a newborn and twenty month old, I knew I needed to do something for myself.

Looking back, I realize how fortunate it was to be so clear I didn't want to go back to my commuter job in the city working with children with cancer, coming home each night physically and emotionally exhausted and unavailable. Some women struggle with the decision to stay or go, feeling guilt and uncertainty in both directions. I was doubly blessed that our family situation afforded me the choice.

I wanted to pursue something I loved, something that would give to me and nurture me. I had been enjoying yoga practice since college, and thinking about how it made me feel physically and spiritually, beginning yoga teacher training was an easy choice. Of course it was difficult to get to classes and do my practice with little ones climbing on me, but it was keeping me sane and I could see that it was making me a better mother. As I became more aware and present in my practice, I became more aware and present during my parenting. What an unexpected and welcome by-product! Or was it a by-product?

The greatest shift in my yoga practice came not from doing postures, but from studying Karma Yoga. I realized that my life's purpose, or Dharma, was to be a mother and accepting that role has made it easier not just to bend rather than break during the frequent family storms, but also to accept that which I never imagined happening – *becoming a soccer mom*. **Acceptance** is the first step in Karma Yoga. I'm not about to buy the bumper sticker, but my son has made me a member of a club I never planned on joining.

Learning that being a mother could serve as my spiritual practice has profoundly affected my parenting. I began to see my children as little Zen masters teaching me the greatest lessons in life. It seems they were especially interested in my learning to let go and stop trying to control everything. Patience was a big lesson too. It's now eight years later and I am still learning. But how could I teach my children these same valuable lessons if I did not at least try to model this practice for them?

In Jon Kabat-Zinn's book, *Wherever You Go There You Are*, he writes that he loved going on meditation retreats, but once he became a father he knew he couldn't attend any while his children were young. Instead he shifted his thinking to 'having kids is being on a constant retreat.' "For each child, it would be at least an eighteen-year retreat... The schedule would be relentless, and demand continual acts of self-



lessness and loving kindness." He elaborates on this with his wife, Myla, in their book, *Everyday Blessings – The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting*. During a retreat, one works to quiet the mind and better understand one's place in the world. Only from that more still mind can we choose to be less reactive. Of course, it's much easier to do when we can remove ourselves from the hustle of daily life, but is immensely more rewarding – and difficult – when we can practice mindfulness with those closest to us!

I'm sure some parents do this naturally. Maybe intuitively they see the light of God in their children, and approach them with tenderness at even the most difficult moments. For me, after listening to my little ones yell, whine, cry, and make constant demands I eventually (actually pretty quickly) fall apart. When my daughter was about three, she and her brother had spent the morning doing everything to drive me crazy. My anger had taken over and I couldn't snap out of 'grouchy mommy' mode. Late for an appointment, we got in the car and my little girl quietly asked in a sweet little voice, "Mommy, do you think you could be nice to us now?" Instantly I felt the tension drain from my body and I let out a big sigh. Once again a lesson learned, I thought to myself.

Looking back I wonder how I let two such little, cute people create such havoc with my emotional state. It should be easier to find humor, compassion, and grace while parenting. I know much of my temper stems, not from what my children are doing, but from the other pressures I find around me, regarding my parttime work, our home, and extended family, making it easy to lose sight of the pure beauty of the relationship with my children. This directly relates to the second step in Karma Yoga, **Concentration**. How could I expect to focus on my children, when I was being pulled in a hundred different directions? When I let go of some of the other demands that weren't so necessary and gave the kids my full attention, doing my work as mom came easily with many rewards.

The next step is **Excellence**. Once I put aside the concerns, and took the time to truly be present with my children, doing an excellent job – or at least a better job – came naturally. Trying to raise a baby Einstein, baking the most decorative cupcakes, or winning the Halloween costume contest at school didn't become part of my work, but I found pleasure – in shopping for healthy foods and preparing them, in walks through the woods where my little ones showed me every dragonfly and shining rock, in singing *This Little Light of Mine* over and over again as we drove to Grandma's house.

Non-Attachment to the results is the last phase of Karma Yoga. This is the place where I really have to let go. I have to believe that I have done my best work and trust in my children. As a parent, I would like to think that I could control my children's actions, but we all know that is far from reality. Instead I need to have faith. Framing my role of mother through the lens of Karma Yoga has helped me immensely. Still I need to remind myself daily to take those mini retreats, a moment for meditation, prayer, to simply practice breathing, so that I can approach my family with the mindfulness they deserve. To be in the moment with them and embrace that time for all its spectacular glory even if we are just doing homework – or driving to soccer practice. ▲



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Think about the times when you experience the most peace, the most joy, the most exhilaration. Your life can be filled with infinite moments like that! And indeed, it is your job to engage in the process of creating that for yourself. If you are living your life according to someone else's rules, you are not being true to yourself. If you are living a life filled with so many obligations that you have forgotten what brings you joy, you are not caring for yourself. You are here to BE you and live who you are!

*Your mind will create a million reasons why you cannot or should not make yourself your first priority. **NONE OF THEM ARE TRUE.***

I can already hear your protests, "I can't make a living getting to know myself!" I beg to differ. Think about the gurus in the world. I'm talking about people who are truly living their passion. They walk their talk. They display unlimited creative energy. They are so excited about their work, that they create health and wealth just by being themselves as they do their work. They are steadfast and committed to making a positive difference in the world no matter what it takes. Sounds enticing, doesn't it?

I hear this one all the time. "People will think I am selfish." **Does it really matter what other people think?** Remember, there is a difference between caring for yourself so that you can be a force of good in the world, and thinking of yourself out of greed.

Reconnect to yourself. Explore your motives and choose to get to know who you are from a place of compassion and integrity. Give yourself a chance to be who you really are. You will find that your self-esteem dramatically improves when you give yourself permission to be who you are.

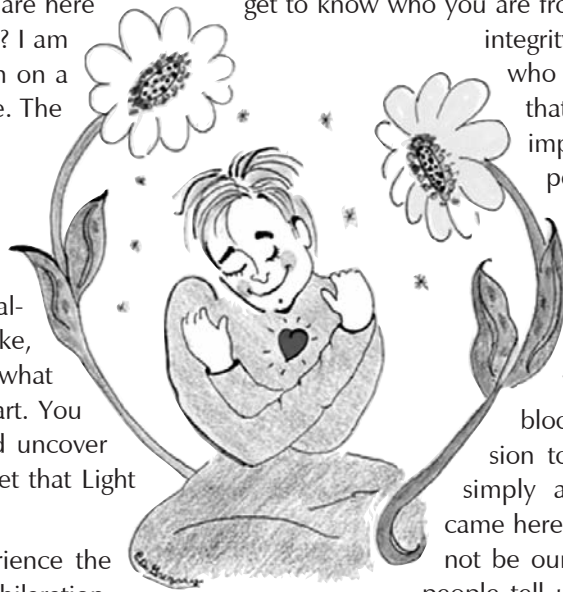
Observe a one year old child. He does not seek approval to smile, laugh, or cry. When he falls after his first step, he gets back up and tries again. Watch a flower open and bloom. It does not ask for permission to be beautiful and radiant. It simply and graciously does what it came here to do. Over time, we learn to not be ourselves because of what other people tell us, and the structure imposed upon us by society. If we can learn not to be authentic, surely we can learn to reverse the process.

GET TO KNOW THE REAL YOU

Tips for the everyday journey

1. Start eating simple meals composed of locally grown, organic produce. Simplicity slices through the mind chatter and reconnects you to your Source.
2. Spend time in nature. You are more similar to trees, flowers, and bees than you think you are. Take time to observe and listen. Nature will speak to your heart.
3. Think back to the times in your life when you have felt overwhelming happiness or love. Remember the positive things that you were doing for yourself then and reintroduce them into your life now.
4. Ask for spiritual support. Ask for guidance to connect to the life that is in you. Ask for guidance to free your soul. Ask for grace when you get stuck in your head and your emotions with thoughts and feelings of unworthiness.
5. Receive. Receive. Receive. When you ask for grace and support and guidance, open your heart to receive it!

Knowing yourself inside and out is a blessing and a precious gift. You deserve such a gift. Open your heart to yourself. Open your heart to your work. ▲



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The CSI of Health Care: Holistic Medicine

There are many reasons that America loves CSI. They are good stories and contain lots of great technical feats and facts. In addition, the characters in the original show also have intriguing personal lives and relationships.

However, there is another aspect of the show that we find appealing: the amount of resource that goes into solving a murder. In fact, "real life" juries now expect the level of detail that these shows glamorize. We like to think that if we were to meet an unnatural doom, the CSI's would swarm in to serve justice, and that our lives are worth the cost.

It's this romance with problem-solving that is the basis of the hit show *House*. Hospital patients and staff are willing to put up with the main character's misanthropy because he doesn't miss a detail (often searching the patient's home for clues), and is the only one who can solve the case.

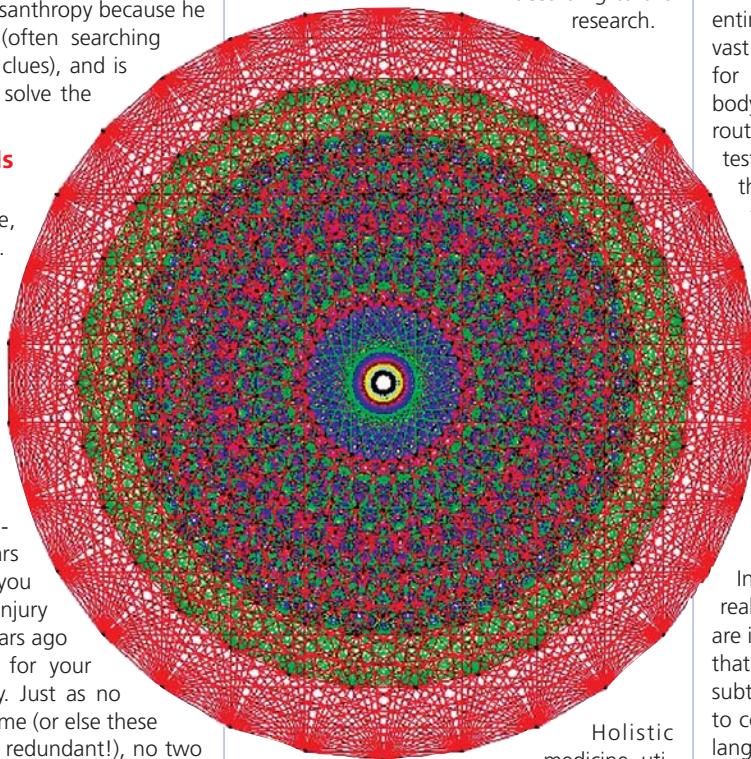
HOW HOLISTIC CSIS WORK

In Holistic Medicine, everything counts. Every detail, whether subjective or objective, normal or abnormal, might make or break a case. Not only genes, but childhood health may give a clue as to why someone is now stuck at age 5, 25, 55, or 85. Stomach problems ten years ago may explain why you have fatigue today. An injury to your knee twenty years ago may be a root cause for your shoulder arthritis today. Just as no two murders are the same (or else these shows would get quite redundant!), no two cases of diabetes or high cholesterol have the same causes. No two people get the same evaluations or treatment.

Our society has been so influenced by science and the scientific method, that we tend to

think very linearly. The basic concept of disease, reinforced by the discovery of bacteria and antibiotics, is "one disease, one cause, one treatment." For example, "pneumonia is caused by bacteria and is treated with antibiotics." "Heartburn is caused by stomach acid and is treated with anti-acids." "Depression is caused by neurotransmitter imbalance and is treated by antidepressants."

This paradigm works well when illness is acute. Yes, I want antibiotics for my pneumonia. However, after sinusitis recurs three times per year for several years, maybe antibiotics aren't the solution. Yes, I want surgery if I'm in a car accident and I'm bleeding from several places. But arthroscopy for knee pain is no better than time and exercise according to the research.



Holistic medicine utilizes a whole new (and very old) way of thinking and approaching illness called a "paradigm shift" by recognizing that most chronic ill-nesses are multi-dimensional. By the time an ill-ness is chronic (i.e.

more than six months), it is virtually impossible to find a single remedy that will solve the problem(s). Health is like a web, where everything is connected to everything else. Not only is every organ connected to each other, we, as organ-isms, are also connected to each other. Just think of how the illness of one family member can cause stress and consequent illness in other family members. The data on the effect of these interpersonal stressors on health are incontrovertible; and yet rarely asked about or dealt with in a typical medical office visit.

Chinese and Ayurvedic (Indian) medicine have used a multi-dimension approach for thousands of years. However, this new paradigm goes against the socialization and TV commercials that have shaped our concepts our entire lives. Research also shows us that the vast majority of primary care office visits are for "non-organic" i.e. emotional or mind-body problems that can't be measured with routine blood tests or MRIs. We ask for these tests, but then we're dissatisfied because they don't validate or explain our subjective state of not feeling well.

THE INTUITIVE & SUBJECTIVE DIMENSION

The "art" of medicine involves intuition, the sensing of a truth that is hidden behind the facts. Isn't that how these detective shows work? The investigators just happen to look in the right place, or know a fact that no one else does (such as how entomological (bug) knowledge has come in useful in several CSI shows).

In our search for "truth," the subjective realm, our beliefs, emotions, and hunches are important. Often, the symptom of "pain" that we try to "kill" (using pain killers) is the subtle wisdom of our inner body/mind trying to communicate to us. The body doesn't use language, so we must "listen" with more than our ears.

As a Holistic Practitioner, the saying, *Physician Heal Thyself*, becomes a mandate. If I am not taking good care of myself by eating the same diet that I recommend, taking the

continued on page 38



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same supplements, practicing yoga, getting occasional acupuncture and/or body work, sleeping well, and placing priority on my spiritual life, then not only can't I be a model, I can't do my best in listening and sensing the blocks to my patients' healing.

TURNING TO HOLISTIC MEDICINE

Even after failing to get satisfaction with numerous doctors and therapies, people often turn to Holistic Medicine for help. Is it that they have unrealistic hope? Or is it that they are following an inner message that tells them that they can get better? They've had hints of healing, such as an unexpected string of good days. They have a sense that if they can achieve improvement for a even a few moments, maybe there is something out there that can extend that relief to a few more moments, or even weeks or months. Conversely, if something consistently makes a symptom worse, this can be an important clue. When the dentist probes and finds an abscess, we are glad, not angry at the dentist for "causing" pain. We know that finding the abscess is necessary for true healing, rather than using blanket, symptom-masking approaches.

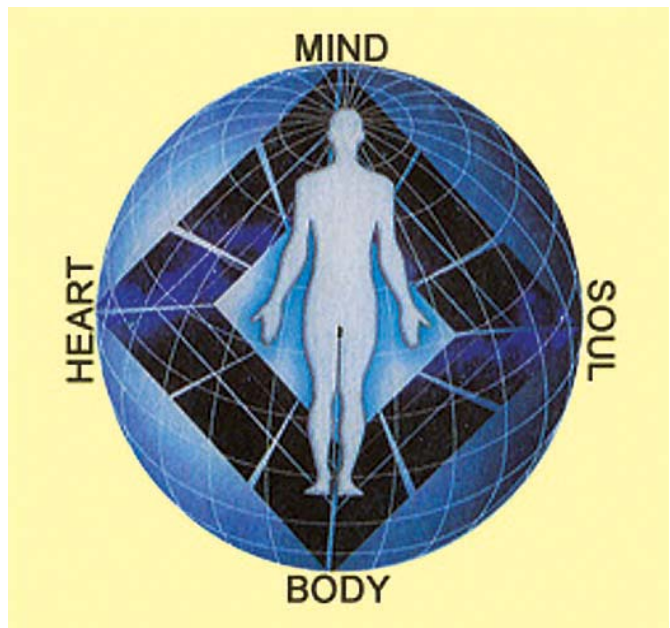
People also have an intuitive sense that if their practitioner truly listens to them, then this will enhance their healing. While the magic of *listening* is a topic for a separate article, suffice it to say that having a practitioner who will listen to you, and encourage you to listen to yourself (hard for most of us) can be the beginning of the healing path. Yoga philosophy tells us that all the truth we need is within. A modern spin on this concept is that your symptoms are messages from your inner wisdom telling you to make a change. For most of us, making changes in the ways we eat, sleep, move, work, and love will profoundly affect our health. This is not just conjecture – science tells us this.

And so, a detailed history from a holistic practitioner, who might ask you about your comfort foods, relationships, or spiritual beliefs may gain the clues needed to solve the crime! In addition, this practitioner might encourage you to spend time with your self, and inspire you to make necessary changes that will facilitate your healing. These methods are time-proven (yoga and acupuncture are thousands of years old), simple and low-cost (compared to drugs and surgery).

RULES OF THE GAME

In working with a Holistic Practitioner, the principles and process are different. Here are some basics:

1. Be prepared to take responsibility for changes in your lifestyle. Figure out what you're willing to do and not to do. Make a commitment to these changes. The alternatives are pills and procedures (i.e. conventional medicine).
2. Keep learning. Knowledge is power.
3. Understand that there are risks for you, and your practitioner, in pursuing alternatives. While overall, holistic medicine is vastly safer than conventional medicine (in fact, conventional medicine is in the top five causes of death in our country), holistic medicine it is under scrutiny due to the fact that it is challenging the powers-that-be. Unlike medications for chronic illness, some herbs, supplements, and other remedies are both diagnostic and therapeutic – your practitioner needs to monitor your response to determine what to do next. So to decrease the risks and increase the chances of success, be sure to do the things that you have agreed; and follow-up regularly so your program can be adjusted as needed.
4. Understand that all people, including yourself, are paid based on time. Don't expect time from a practitioner, or his/her staff for free. Also, if your practitioner accepts insurance for your visit (a rare sit-



uation), respect his/her need to work within the insurance guidelines.

5. Holistic medicine is as much as philosophical, ethical, social and economic movement as it is for health; so share your experience and learning with your family, friends and coworkers. It may be one of the only ways to heal the health care system itself.
6. Understand that the journey to health is a winding path. Don't expect quick responses. However, the Holistic Path can get you long-lasting, life-enhancing results if you get on the path. Even one percent per week amounts to 52% at the end of a year, not including the compounding effect! In addition, since we are all connected, your health, or ill-ness will affect the health of your family and your society; so if you don't do it for yourself, do it for them! ▲

IMPORTANT NOTE: This general information should not be used to make decisions about medical care without the involvement of an experienced practitioner.

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