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GENIUS AND MEDITATION

GENIUS, BRILLIANCE, OUR HIGHEST INTELLECT, CAPACITY, CREATIVITY AND DISCERNMENT. Inventiveness, prodigy, virtuoso, wisdom. Where do these come from, how do they arise? Can they be cultivated or strengthened through the practice of meditation? Let's explore this possibility through an experience I had a few nights ago.

First, let's consider that a traditional goal of meditation is to let our thoughts subside and enter a state of pure awareness, bliss, transcendence, etc. So in meditation, we move from thoughts about the outer world to a pure state of inner awareness. This can be referred to as an outside-in movement. However there is also extraordinary value in an inside-out movement in meditation that results in the sublime thoughts of the beautiful mind or 'genius'. I personally discovered this phenomenon in one of my middle-of-the-night meditation sessions.

I awoke at 2:00 AM, unable to get back to sleep. I looked in the fridge and considered sedating myself with food, but passed on that option. I felt too restless to sit in meditation, so I found a timer app on my iPad and set it for an easy one minute. The soft tone of the timer bell rang, and then I set it for two minutes. I continued on to a total of six settings compiling 21 minutes in a still sitting posture. I closed the ipad cover and continued sitting. As usual, thoughts came and passed, and I finally reached that calm state of inner silence. For some reason in that particular session, I felt as though I could sit forever in my sublimely stable posture. There we something markedly different in that session. Perhaps my restlessness had been honed into an enhanced vitality.

I intuitively reached for a notebook and pen, and lay the notebook open on the floor in front of me. And then it happened. Unusual thoughts flowed out of my being and onto the page – thoughts that would never arise in my everyday beta rational mind state. I watched as an elegant theory of my life formulated before my eyes. The emerging premise produced a criterion of ultimate personal relevance, and more and more dots of my life connected, forming self-affirming and higher purposeful patterns.

The content began with work-related projects, objectives, ambitions and aspirations and moved seamlessly into my social life, and then my physical life - all originating from, and leading back, to my most essential identity (my soul?). As I reached this pure spotless clarity, I found myself letting go of all personal need, and I reached a state of security that wasn't dependent on any material achievement. With no need whatsoever for myself, the needs of my customers, clients, partners, associates replaced my own personal needs. I became them. I felt their deepest desires. I understood. There was no personal motive in my thinking. I was in a purely analytical (and empathic) discerning mode.

I felt as though the full capacity of my mind became completely accessible. There was a sense of pure science in my thinking, forming a foundation on which to build theories, form plans and achieve objectives. I then delved deeper into the needs of others, and a question emerged. Why had I ever put my own needs ahead of the needs of others? I was now experiencing my highest state. Did I fall from this height at some point in my life? And then I realized how I had appropriated the grasping and insecure state from my background, my conditioning. I instantly saw the sequence and progression of material world insecurity that transpired in my own life. I then experienced a very pure sense of freedom, followed by a hope of cultivating my higher thinking in my everyday life.

And then I realized how the grasping, the clinging, the insecurity, the appropriation of certain traits can ultimately lead to a state of unease and ultimately, disease, in one's life. In the moments that followed, I let go of all of it and discovered a new place within my being. I returned to bed, hoping that I could revisit that place upon awaking. I fell into the deepest and most rejuvenating sleep.

My mind is now clear. And although I still succumb to some of the trappings of life, I know that through meditation, I can touch that place, and reach the pure beauty of the human mind and its extraordinary capacity and potential. And so, my suggestion is to occasionally bring a pen and notepad with you into your meditation. And when you reach that point where all of your reactive thoughts have subsided, allow new pure creative thoughts to arise. Let the thoughts flow from your beautiful mind onto your notepad. Observe the emerging patterns and the meaning they have in your life. And finally, feel gratitude for God's love and light, which when channeled through your mind, can beget the spark of true genius.

Inquire Within

In-Depth Meditation Studies

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Meditation is more than just sitting still. Many people try it and discover that it's not as simple as it seems. In order to meditate, one must first be able to quiet their mind, and second be prepared to deal with what actually comes up during meditation.

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Health and the Magic of Wholeness

SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO US ALL IN THE LAST CENTURY OR SO. We don't notice it, but in terms of staying well and happy, it's hurting us badly. If you throw a frog into really hot water, the frog jumps out. But heat the water slowly, and it doesn't react until it's too late. Creeping change fools the frog. And creeping change has fooled us as well. In terms of health and happiness, there's what you might call a "whole-self wellness wagon." And little by little, we've slipped right off of it.

It started, I suppose, when we went to cars, and with them, to assembly line thinking. Break the job into little pieces, focus one worker on just that little piece, and have him or her do it *ad infinitum*. It's the fastest way to produce the same automobile over and over again. But for the worker in those conditions, the functioning car as a whole system got lost. The felt and understood coherence of how all the parts fit and work together disappeared. "Not my job," as they say. And it became easier to think of ourselves the same way. "I just drive it… ho hum… various different mechanics keep it working."

But imagine that what's moving along that assembly line is your own health and happiness. You slide past a whole bunch of workstations where mechanics measure each little body part. Here for your stomach, there for your joints, another for your skin, then one for your eyes only. These specialists know the good and the bad numbers for each and every organ, and keep careful track of them. Adjust the pressure in your blood vessels, turn down any overheated feelings, pop in a flu vaccine—and away you go. As long as you keep those numbers in line—you're fine. Though perhaps, you're not.

Thing is, those workstations aren't coordinated. What one expert wants for his (your) organ can often conflict with what another wants for his (your) bones. Eat fish for the Omega's says one; no don't, says another—the heavy metals will get you. Take a drug to bring that down, says one mechanic, but then another has to give you pills for the side effects. The truth is, the whole ballgame comes down to a really sizable series of complicated, tricky judgment calls. And the isolated, assembly line approach doesn't begin to address those various trade-offs and compromises.

Well if it's all so complex, how did we ever survive so long? To understand that, we not only have to put the car back together—we also have to understand it in that older, really different way. If you think about it, there was never a time when you were in pieces. No one and nothing ever "assembled" you. You grew as a viable whole from the moment the sperm hit your mother's egg. As open-minded researchers refine what this "wholeness" means, it takes on a deeper meaning than just nerves and chemicals sending signals around your body.

It's a scientific fact, for example, that every kind of molecule anywhere absorbs and radiates its own characteristic pattern of electromagnetic vibrations. Since quantum physicists figured out how to measure these very miniscule energies coming out of human organs and bones and tissue—it's become apparent that every cell in the body is bathed in radiations coming from every other cell. It seems more likely now that every part of the body knows instantaneously what every other part is doing. When you have a wound that heals, the gash in the flesh grows back to the way it was because all the cells around it remember what it felt like to have whole nerves and blood vessels and skin next to them. The wholeness around the wound restores wholeness to it.

We don't have good words for this, so let me call this wholeness an "emotional-body-mind." This emotional-body-mind—that is you—is the only thing in the universe that can simultaneously compute all the tricky trade-offs that keep you well and happy. A doctor would need to model you personally on huge supercomputers to even get started at this job. Really expensive medicine acknowledges this. You can go to something like the Mayo clinic and have a whole team of different specialists try to put your Humpty Dumpty together again. But good luck with the payments.

But there's another approach as well. It's inexpensive, low-tech, and it's worked for tens of thousands of years. It means using your felt intuitions and intelligence to have an ongoing conversation with the indivisible emotional-body-mind you actually are. When you maintain strong passions and social relationships in life, supported by natural foods and some exercise—there is an integrity and coherence to YOU that remains stable, despite all sorts of slightly or sometimes even drastically "bad numbers." Even more important, when you do get sick, it's that resilient wholeness, far more than any drugs that remembers how to put you back together.

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What's that Taste? Umami? Umami!

Recently a friend came to me for dietary advice since she was struggling with cravings for all sorts of foods she felt were "bad". The first thing we had to work on was the idea of "bad food". Now, don't get me wrong, there is plenty of really "bad food" out there. I like to think of these so-called foods not as food at all, but rather as Michael Pollen likes to refer to these items ~ "food-like substances". "Food-like substances" are items that have been processed, packaged and sold as food, but have almost no nutritional value. That's not what I'm talking about here.

My friend's cravings were for foods from her childhood. She's Italian and had grown up with wonderful Italian dishes, full of flavor, satisfying and delicious. She had been following a dietary protocol that, while full of nutrients, stressed light, simple cooking and very limited oil.

As she was telling me of her dreaming of having dishes from her childhood my comment was – well, why not? What's the problem with having these dishes? They are full of vegetables and nutritionally dense. Make those dishes with good quality, organic ingredients and what could be wrong with them?

Then it dawned on me – she needed umami! Italian food is filled with this wonderful quality known as umami and it's one of the reasons we love it!

When we choose to eat a healthful diet that is full of vegetables, we often neglect to make food that is not only nutrient dense but is satisfying on all levels – nutritionally and emotionally. We are either too rushed and busy to take the time to do anything but steam vegetables, or we are convinced for some reason that food full of rich and satisfying flavors are "bad foods". Nothing could be further from the truth.

Healthy food should not only be nutrient dense, but when you finish eating it, the eater should be satisfied on all levels – nutritionally, spiritually and emotionally. Umami is a big part of feeling satisfied at the end of a meal and if we don't have it we'll be finding it somewhere.

So ~ are you curious? What is umami?

There are 6 basic flavors sweet, sour, bitter, salty, pungent and umami. The theory in Asian cooking and healing arts is that we should have these flavors in our meals every day in order to feel satisfied and for our health.

Umami is a Japanese word, the translation of which is a "delicious, savory taste". Kikunea Ikeda, a professor of Tokyo Imperial University in 1908, discovered what it actually is that creates this quality of deliciousness and satisfaction – glutamate. Glutamate is one of the most common amino acids and a main component of many proteins. It was later discovered there are actually three sources of umami - glutamate and two ribonucleotides; one is called inosinate and the other guanylate. Insoinate is found mostly in meat and fish and guanylate is found in certain mushrooms. When we combine foods that have all three umami compounds we have an umami power packed dish. It has been discovered that we have taste receptors all over our tongues specific to this wonderful taste of umami. When these taste receptors are activated we have the feeling of satisfaction with our meal.

The term umami is currently very popular in the healthy cooking and nutrition world. The term is used for individual foods that contain L-glutamate (a healthy source of glutamate) or a combination of ingredients that together create umami –the flavor of delicious, savory taste.

Breast milk is our first encounter with umami. A few other foods that naturally contain high levels of umami are fish, cured meats, many vegetables such as mushrooms, ripe tomatoes, chinese cabbage, spinach, and celery, green tea, fermented and aged foods such as miso, shoyu, worcestershire sauce, balsamic vinegar, cheese and sea vegetables. This list could go on and on.

For years I have added a little shoyu (soy sauce) to my tomato sauce, miso to baked beans and a dash of balsamic vinegar to soups and stews. I would say it rounded out the flavor and made the dishes more satisfying. Little did I know at the time that what I was adding was umami. These dishes tasted so much better with these added ingredients.

Enjoy these making these umami filled dishes!

MUSHROOM BURGERS

Splash of Olive Oil
2 large shallots, minced
2 pounds portabella mushrooms, finely chopped
½ lb cremini mushroom, chopped finely
½ lb shiitake mushrooms, chopped finely

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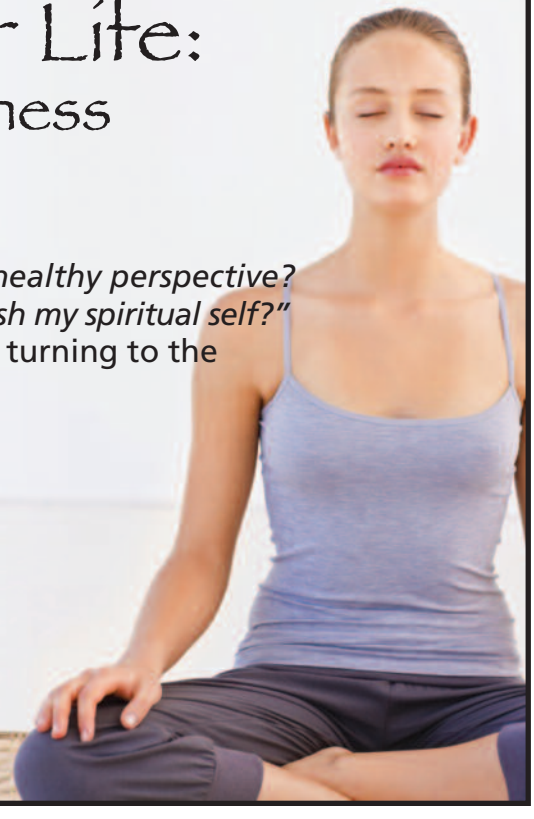

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Plant Healing for Summer: *Mullein & Echinacea*

FOR THE PERSON WHO LOVES TO IDENTIFY PLANTS BY THEIR FLOWERS, summertime presents a bit of a challenge as many plants lose their flowers by then. Summertime can also mean catching that annoying summer cough or cold. But good news! There are two plants are easy to spot and they are well worth paying attention to for their restorative properties that can be used medicinally (and have been for centuries) to relieve many afflictions, including that nasty summer cough or cold.

Mullein or *Verbascum thapsus*, as it is known by its scientific name, can't help but get noticed. It can be found growing by the sides of the road as it likes hard packed soil and it often can be spotted in the median as you're driving down the highway. Of course, it also grows in many state and national parks—usually right by the paths or trails. Mullein is a fairly large plant and can grow anywhere from 3-6 feet in size. Its thick, long raceme puts forth beautiful little yellow flowers while its light green/gray leaves are covered with tiny hairs that make them soft to the touch.

Mullein is in the *Scrophulariaceae* family, which was named after 'scrofula', or tuberculosis of the lymph nodes. Therefore, plants in this family are often used to help relieve ailments of the lungs. Other plants in this family include plantain, eyebright, Culver's root, figwort, devil's claw and Rehmannia root.

Nearly every Native American tribe used mullein, including the roots, the leaves and the flowers, in some fashion[1]. Necklaces were made from the root for teething babies, and poultices of crushed leaves were often used for bruises, rashes and swellings (including hemorrhoids). But it was mainly used, with several other plants, for ailments of the lungs. Historically speaking, mullein was a go-to plant for any respiratory problem. Not only was it well used by the Native Americans, it was also commonly used by physicians who practiced herbal medicine in the 18th and early 19th century[2].

The energetic properties of mullein are cooling, moistening and slightly demulcent, and offer a gentle coating for the mucus membranes. Modern herbalists use it to help with the constrictions from asthmatic coughs, with great success. It can also be used for damp mucus producing coughs because of its anti-tussive and expectorant qualities. When a cough is damp, the doctor or herbalist can combine it with more warming/drying herbs, depending on both the type of cough and patient. The leaf and the flower are the parts most used today and the physiological actions include: expectorant, demulcent, and external emollient[3].

Mullein extracts have been shown to exhibit antiviral activity for both influenza A and B and HPV. Its antibacterial properties have been shown to work against staphylococcus and E. coli. Promising anti-tumor studies in human gastric carcinoma cells have been found as well4. So, if you get a nasty summer cough, pick some mullein flowers and leaves, boil the kettle and pour the water on both and steep for 15 minutes. Add some raw honey and a little elderberry syrup and you've got a wonderfully soothing and powerful cough remedy!

The second healing plant of summer is the well-known 'purple coneflower' or *Echinacea*, from the *Asteraceae* family. There are three species of *Echinacea: angustifolia, purpurea* and *pallida*. The first two are the more commonly used ones. Historically speaking, internal uses for this plant included influenza, measles, chickenpox, tuberculosis and pneumonia. It was used externally for boils, abscesses, snakebites, septicemia and poultices for respiratory issues. U.S. practitioners used the root, while German practitioners used the juice of the above ground aerial parts. Native Americans used it more than any other plant for medicine, and shamans in South America would chew Echinacea so as to numb their mouth in order to be able to place hot coals in it for ceremonial rituals.

Modern herbalists use all parts of the plant, and like their shaman counterparts, look for that tingling sensation to ensure that the active constituents (or properties) in the herb are working! Even though *Echinacea* has been a key herb in many cold, flu and upper respiratory formulas, extensive studies have shown it to have both immune balancing as well as anti-inflammatory affects. The *pallida* species is high in anti-fungal properties.

Because *Echinacea* is rich in polysaccharides, or plant sugars, a tea is the best way to have it. For a summer cold, try pouring boiling water over a teaspoon of *Echinacea*, add a piece of ginger, some elder leaf or elderberry, and let steep for 10-15 minutes. Then add a dollop of raw honey, relax in your favorite pj's and enjoy! ▲

[1] *Native American Ethnobotany* by Moerman

[2] *The Physio-Medical Dispensatory* by Cook

[3] *British Herbal Pharmacopoeia*

[4] *Herbs & Natural Supplements-An Evidence-based Guide* by Braun & Cohen

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4 Ways to Create More Meaningful Time for Your Family

Pay attention to the conversations of parents around you, and notice how often the subject of time comes up:

"I'm fine, just crazy busy. . ."
"I just don't know when I can find the time. . ."
"I can't really talk now, I'm running late. . ."

People used to be tied to things like families, communities, rituals, worship, curiosity, and beauty. Now we are tied to schedules, watches, datebooks, computers, and keeping up with the latest gadgets that start with i. When you're a parent, you've usually got multiple clocks ticking away inside your head, as you're keeping track of everyone's time. You're likely to look to the latest time management tools or gadgets to try to help you gain control of all the spinning plates. Time management can improve what you accomplish but often at the peril of what you *experience*. As a result, the more that busy parents try to manage their time, the more fragmented they often feel.

The concept of creating time is not just about creating more hours in the day, but creating a new *relationship* with time that benefits everyone in the family. Here are a few ways to get started:

Become aware of different kinds of time

All time is not created equal. The Greek language has two words for time – *kronos* and *kairos*. Kronos is sequential, measured time (from this we get the word chronology) and kairos is non-linear, circular time. Simply being *aware* of which time state you are in expands your control of time. For example: you're trying to get your child dressed and out the door for an appointment and the more anxious you're getting, the more your child seems to be resisting. In this moment, you can recognize you are in kronos time and your child is in kairos. What if you were to join your child in kairos…what might that look like? Maybe pretending that his socks are wild tickle puppets is more important than getting there "on time". Exploring the shift between kronos and kairos time is a powerful way to access new ideas and insights.

Change the way you talk about time

You are no doubt aware that your children are listening to and absorbing every word you say. Every time you complain about not having enough time, or every time you rush around, your child is watching and learning what time means. Further, your own psyche is listening, too; time seems to reacts as if we're yelling in a canyon, and whatever we are saying about time comes back to us in our experience. If we are saying, "There's never enough time; I'm constantly chasing time and I can't find it," then our experience echoes back, "Yes! There's never enough time; you're constantly chasing time and you can't find it!" If, however, we are saying, "I have all the time in the world. Time is fluid and changing at my design. More and more, I see that I have all the time I need," then this is reflected back in your experience. When we talk and act as if we had all the time in the world, our perception of time does indeed slow down, and our children learn that time is a precious resource, rather than a cause of never-ending anxiety and dread.

Measure time in new ways

Time is measured in linear fashion, with numbers on a clock and squares on a calendar. But what if we could interpret time as a *qualitative* entity instead of something just measured by quantity? For example, instead of judging a family activity by how long it takes, try measuring it by aspects such as joy, connection, silliness, and meaning. Introduce these new measurements into your family:

"How many laughs until we go to the park?"
"How many memories did we just create?"
"Three hugs 'til dinner!"

Ask each family member for new ideas for measuring time in new ways. Embrace your children's creativity and have fun learning how to "tell time" in new ways!

Play games to learn to "tell time"

As your family talks about new ways to think about, measure, and experience time, try creating a new "Family Time" clock that is calibrated to *true time*, the things that are most important to you, as a family. Cut out a circle from posterboard or find an old clock at a thrift store that you can alter. Ask each family member to replace the numbers with images or words that reflect the things that are most important to them. After your project is complete, place it in plain view in your home, to remind everyone to engage in a new relationship with time.

Each time we make a choice to work *with* time, instead of against it, we are expanding our sense of time. When we are not slaves to time and its perceived boundaries, our family relationships blossom. We also discover a liberating new view of self and a fresh perspective on the meaning of being human, empowered, and fully alive. ▲

Based on the book Creating Time: Using Creativity to Reinvent the Clock and Reclaim Your Life *©2012 by Marney Makridakis.* *Article published with permission of New World Library*

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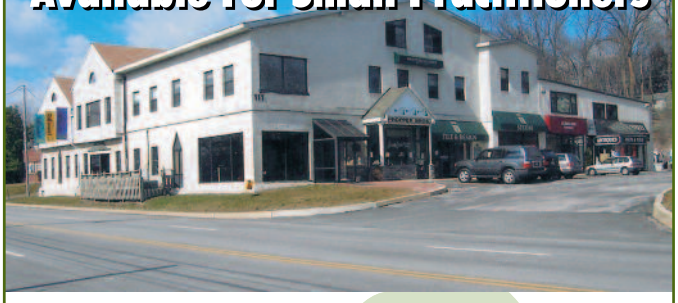

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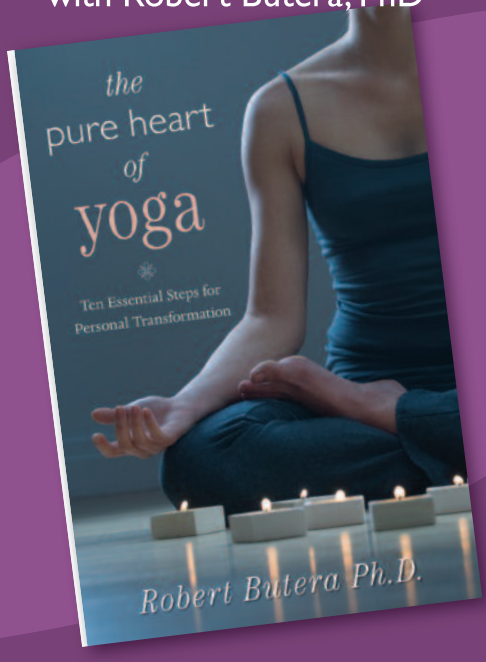

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