



**Seated Side Bend:** Inhale to find some length around the natural curves in the spine. Keep the left hip grounded into the chair, reach the left arm skyward and gently arch the torso over the right side. Use the right hand to stabilize the body on the right edge or armrest of the chair. Breathe deeply into the lifted left lung and ribcage opening for 5-10 breaths. Use an inhalation to return to center and repeat the other side.

**Seated Knee to Chest:** With an inhalation lift the left knee up towards meeting the chest without rounding forward. Hold onto the shin or the back of the thigh as needed. Focus the breath into the abdomen for 5-10 rounds and repeat on the other side.



**Seated Figure 4:** Cross the left ankle above the right knee. Lift through the spine into the crown of the head, finding some nice length around the natural curves of the entire spine. Hinge from the hips to fold forward without rounding. Hands can stabilize the body on the desk. For more intensity, the left hand can gently press the left thigh towards the earth to encourage some additional



external rotation of the left hip. Breath deeply while holding the stretch, allowing the exhalations to encourage some relaxation in the left hip and buttock. Hold for 5-10 deep breaths and repeat on the other side.

**Seated Leg Lift:** Allow the hands to hold onto the chair or the desk, turning on the core muscles as you find some nice length around the natural curves of the spine. With an inhalation, lift the right leg and extend the knee. Contract the muscles of the thigh to keep the leg up in the air. Hold for 15-45 seconds. Repeat on 5-10x going from side to side, so that both legs get equal attention and challenge.



**Desk Hang:** From a standing position, turn to face the clear edge of a desk. Stand approximately 2-3 feet away from the desk place the hands firmly on the edge of the desk, about shoulder width or wider apart. Fold forward, hinging from the hips as you lengthen through the arms. With the exhalations, sink the chest towards the floor. Allow the chest muscles to open with focused breath and tilt the pelvis into a gentle backbend. Hold for 5 – 15 breaths.

**Chair Lunge:** Shoes off for this one if you're not wearing flats! From standing, turn the back of the chair to the edge of the desk, making sure that both the desk and chair are secure. Step the left foot up onto the seat of the chair and bend the left knee, bringing it in a line over the left ankle. Hold onto the armrests or top of the chair with both hands. Root through the heel of the right leg, allowing it to lengthen behind the body – the farther the foot is from the body, the more intense the stretch will be. Sink the pelvis forward, gently arching the back. Hold for 5 – 15 breaths and repeat on the other side.



**Seated Sun Salutation:** If the chair is on wheels or swivels, lock them into place or back the chair into a wall or the edge of the desk to keep it stable. Bring the hands to heart center. Inhale, lift the arms through the midline of the body, at the top of the arm lift, arch the back and open the arms out by the ears. On the exhalation, bring the hands together above the head and draw them down the midline of the body as you fold forward and round the back. At the bottom of the forward fold, let the arms fly out off the shoulders, turn on the core muscles and inhale with a strong back and core up to ascend upright, creating another arch in the back at the top of the lift. Repeat the sequence 5-10x, coordinating the breath and movement together in a smooth flow. ▲



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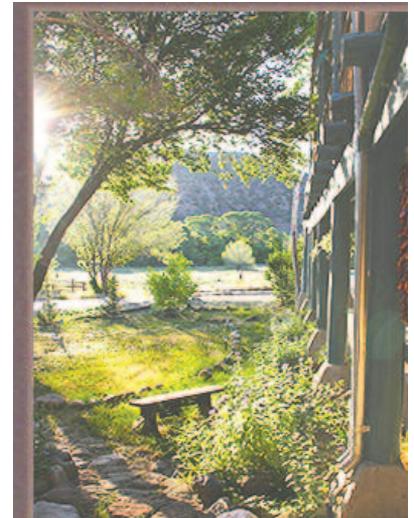


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# The Yoga of Saying **No**

**F**ull disclosure: Because of my inability to say no, I almost didn't have time to write this article. I had piled too much onto my plate and almost didn't have time to do something that I absolutely love to do – write about yoga. Maybe you can relate to this. Here's what happens: I want to do everything! Life is abundant with opportunities, all of which are interesting and inspiring to me. I want to do them all – so I say YES! I say yes to almost everything, adding more and more to my plate from the bountiful buffet of life. But then, eventually, my plate is overflowing and spilling on the floor, and I'm neglecting the things that are most important as they become buried under everything else. Inevitably, I have to say no – but often after it's too late and I've already made a mess and created unnecessary imbalances in my life.

I don't think I'm alone in feeling this way or in having this predicament, as we live in a society that encourages us to be busy all the time. Especially at the end of the year, during the holiday season, it can be particularly challenging, as end-of-year work duties pile up, family obligations and social gatherings abound, and everything and everyone seems to need your immediate attention. This busy time of year is also a great time of year for reflection and introspection: How can the teachings of yoga help us to say no? How can the yoga teachings help us to create more balance in our lives and make good decisions?

Let's first look to the Bhagavad Gita. The Gita deals in great detail with the need and importance of finding our dharma, our true calling, our life's purpose – and not only finding that purpose, but

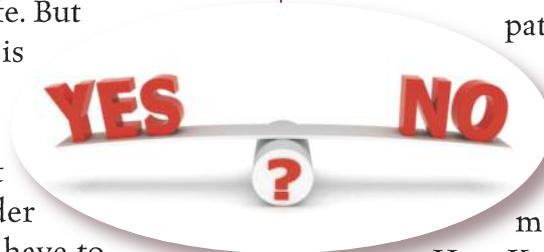
doing it wholeheartedly. Krishna tells Arjuna, "Considering your dharma, you should not vacillate."<sup>1</sup> Krishna is saying, don't doubt it, and don't debate as to whether you should be doing it or not. Once you figure out what your dharma is, you need to stick to it completely and without hesitation.

Finding your dharma is the essence of the path of yoga. Speaking about this path, Krishna goes on to tell Arjuna, "Those who follow this path, resolving deep within themselves to seek Me alone, attain singleness of purpose. For those who lack resolution, the decisions of life are many-branched and endless."<sup>1</sup>

Here Krishna is talking about a problem that many of us can probably relate to – there are too many choices, and when we don't know what to do, we can be left static, immobilized, frozen. On one hand, we should be grateful to be confronted with a dilemma of so many options. But on the other hand, we need to focus our attention and weed out the options that do not support us on our path.

First we must determine what our "singleness of purpose" is. We need to deeply contemplate: What is my life's mission? What is my dharma? Without this sense of purpose, we will see too many choices and become immobilized, unable to take action. Once we find our singleness of purpose, we can harness all of our energy, decisions, and actions to support that purpose.

In Stephen Cope's latest book, he discusses the issue of needing to unify our efforts around our dharma, and in order to do this, at times we need to say no. Cope writes: *It turns out that the process of*



*continued on page 20*

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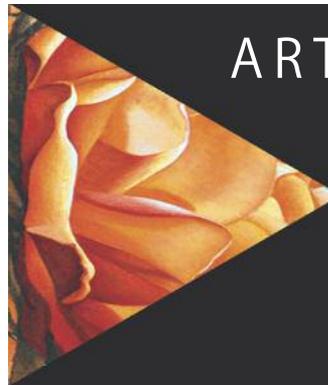
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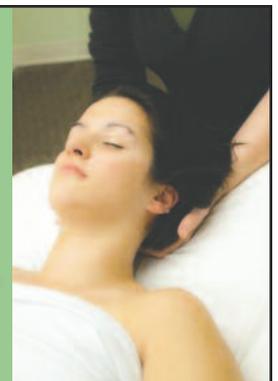
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unification requires saying “no” to actions that do not support dharma – saying “no” to detours, and to side channels of all kinds, even to some pretty terrific side channels. It requires snipping off all manner of “other options.” The root of the word “decide” means, literally, “to cut off.” To decide for something means at times to decide against something else.<sup>2</sup>

When I read this I thought – this is me! I have a hard time saying no to these “terrific side channels” – but then as a result, I end up being taken off purpose. My proverbial plate overflows and spills. My energy is drained, and I don’t have time or energy for the things that truly matter – the things that support my dharma. Thinking about saying no in the context of my dharma gave me a whole new perspective on it. If I want to fulfill my dharma and make the best contributions to the world, I need to learn to say no. I need to flex my “no muscle.”

This gives us several key questions for reflection. Once we have determined our dharma, we can ask ourselves with each decision: Does this decision support my dharma? When I choose X, what am I choosing against? We can use these questions to help us judge whether we should be saying an emphatic “yes” or “no”, whether we should be adding more to our plate, or to focus on what is already at hand.

Another yogic teaching that can help us in our efforts to say no and stay on track with our purpose is the principle of brahmacharya. Brahma means “God” and charya means “to follow”, and in this case, it is often translated as behavior, thus the word brahmacharya means “behavior that leads to God.” If you don’t believe in God, you can also think of it as your highest potential or the highest good – which is directly related to your dharma. We can ask ourselves: What sort of behavior or action will lead me to my highest potential?

Brahmacharya can also be interpreted as moderation of energy. When we say yes to everything, we end

up dispersing our energy everywhere rather than concentrating and focusing it, which can leave us feeling drained. When confronted with decisions, we can ask ourselves: Is this the best use of my energy? Will this decision lead me to my highest good? We can apply this not just in the big decisions we have to make, but in all the ways we expend our energy – in our relationships, in the food we eat (how we replenish our energy), in our work, in how we spend our time, in our conversations etc.

This holiday season, and moving into the New Year, a big part of my yoga practice is going to be saying no. I know that it is going to be a struggle. But keeping these nuggets of yogic wisdom in mind will help me on this path. I will remind myself that in doing this, I am not forsaking opportunities, but rather I am making decisions that support my life’s purpose and result in the best expenditure of my energy.

When we are fulfilling our own purpose, we are contributing in the best way possible to the highest good for all. The great civil rights activist Howard Thurman captured this well when he said: “Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

Your dharma is what makes you come alive. It is the thing that makes you want to jump out of bed in the morning, instills a song in your heart and a light in your soul. And your dharma is the way you can best contribute to the world. As the year draws to a close and you find yourself with an abundance of opportunities and obligations, I invite you to keep these questions in mind, knowing that when you practice the yoga of saying no, you support the highest good for all. ▲

<sup>1</sup>The Bhagavad Gita: Translated for the Modern Reader by Eknath Easwaran (1985)

<sup>2</sup>The Great Work of Your Life: A Guide for the Journey to Your True Calling by Stephen Cope (2012).

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# Exploring Energetic Openings in Yoga Practice



**A**S WE CALM OUR BODIES AND BREATHE DEEPLY INTO THE FEELING OF SPACIOUSNESS DURING YOGA, we may notice that space being filled by a feeling of expansion, movement or freshness. With a deepening practice, we become even more sensitive; expanding our notion of what ‘feeling’ could be. I still remember the day in yoga class when I noticed sensations around the area between my eyes while doing the half-spinal twist. It was as if there was a buzzing, vibrating, almost electrical feeling along with a sensation of pressure. Soon after, I started to feel tingling up my spine and more pressure above my crown.

Initially, my ego was engaged – was someone doing this to me? Having read the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, I wondered – was I experiencing one of the *Siddhis*?<sup>1</sup> I bounced between exultation and fear of what this could mean, eventually settling into a year’s long exploration of, and chase after, what is commonly termed ‘energy.’

We are all aware, at differing levels of attention, of the energy fields that surround all living things. The animating life force of the universe is available to us all, *yet our access to this energy is only as good as our ability to relax our bodies*, including the muscles, organs, (and the fascia which surround them), glands, and areas in and around the spine and joint systems. What is in the way of the flow of this soothing nectar are the holding patterns we have developed which reflect the history of stress and trauma not only from the time of our pre-natal experience to present, but trauma experienced in our family systems as well.<sup>2</sup>

We contort our bodies in the effort to avoid feeling the pain we were, and still are, afraid to experience. Life-force energy is as necessary as air and water to health, life, and ultimately spiritual progression. Every cell longs for that sense we had as babies of being as one with all that surrounds us, but we hold back from entering into this experience because it makes us feel vulnerable. Often it is the increasing discomfort of the holding pattern that helps us finally realize that we are better off unwinding these blocks, experiencing the pain, and letting energy through. Everyone does this in different ways and at different paces.

There has been a lot of chat in the last decade or so about “energy vampires” and protecting yourself. The reality is that once we are able to hold our own energy, then that of others generally won’t trigger us, much as a healthy body quickly dispatches germs. But most of us are not quite there yet. We are triggered when we encounter those who closely match or are in direct opposition to our particular trauma patterns. *We are only able to tolerate others energies at the rate at which we are clear ourselves.* If something is making you feel ‘caved-in,’ angry or agitated beyond what the circumstances seem to deserve, this is something you might want to explore. A subtlety of this is that what you say creates a reaction in someone else and you not only feel their reaction – let’s say, anger – but your own caving-in! You may have a mutual triggering system going on.

While this puts the onus on us to do our own work, this does not mean that we are to take all of the blame for those who engage in harmful or hurtful behavior. Part of being clear is to both work towards healing our triggers *and* place ourselves out of harm’s way if necessary. Often clearing ourselves brings the necessary changes to put us in more congruent situations. Once we are clear, we are able to bring compassion to those still working through that energy. Once we have known and safe boundaries, we are able to grow into more allowing, more feeling, more vulnerability...and, more strength as we feel life-force able to engage with us.

My opening to energy was 13 years ago. I am still working through my blocks; still triggered sometimes on things I thought I had cleared. But, there are layers to trauma; a continued unfolding occurs. Life will continue to show us what we need to work on through internal or external pressures. All we can really do is to show up for it. I can tell you through the glimpses I’ve had of flowing with the energy instead of fighting against it, the reward is more than worth the struggle.<sup>3</sup> ▲

<sup>1</sup>From the Yoga sutras of Patanjali, Book 3 Verse 37. “Tatah Pratibha Sravana Vedanadar-Sasvada Varta Jayante. From this knowledge arises super-physical hearing, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling through spontaneous intuition.”

<sup>2</sup>This is not as far out as it sounds - the science of Epigenetics, or, how environmental influences shape our genes, has shown us that traumas experienced by our ancestors are handed down with our DNA along with our eye color.

<sup>3</sup>For those of you who may be experiencing energetic openings or would like to, I wish I’d had this book years ago! Peirce, Penney. *Frequency: the Power of Personal Vibration*. New York: Atria Books, 2009.

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# Embodying Generosity

*In winter's darkness, we engage in celebrations of light.* Even as nature turns inward, our human impulses often lead us toward outward gestures of generosity within the community, and traditions around this time of year usually include giving to loved ones and charities. As the New Year approaches and we set intentions for the days ahead, the choice of continuous practice of generosity becomes relevant and helpful – a focused yoga practice offers a guide towards embodying generous spirits.

When we feel ourselves blessed with abundance, giving to others becomes easier. Connecting with this sense of freedom and generosity starts on the mat. The practice of asana works on a physical level to create strong, healthy bodies, while creating space for emotional openings and releases.

Giving starts at home – embody generosity to self by gifting yourself with a daily practice of intention, breathing, yoga poses and/or meditation. When you come to the mat each day, take the opportunity to practice an attitude of acceptance towards self. As you observe your body moving through asana, ask, “Where am I today in my practice?” The answer, always, can be, “I am where I am”—no judgment, no self-criticism, no I-should-be. This self-acceptance and contentment are seeds for noticing the goodness in other areas of your life. If you are content in your practice, that feeling changes your perspective and you begin notice all the ways in which life is good, rather than to see lack. Practicing contentment toward the self provides practice for having a generous attitude towards others.

As for specific asanas to practice, in winter months include extra backbends, especially more gentle ones, such as cobra. Spend extra time in standing postures, noticing a lengthening across the collarbones and a feeling of the heart lifting. Visualize warmth and light around the heart, and sending that energy outward through the hands. The heart-opening

quality of these types of practices can have a wonderful mood-boosting effect, which can be helpful during darker days of winter.

At the conclusion of asana practice, even if you are only able to sit quietly for a couple of minutes, use that time to offer a silent intention. Choose words that come directly from your heart. As a beginning, you might try, “May I share a generous heart with all those I encounter today.”

A companion to asana, meditation provides a ready vehicle for cultivating generosity. You can incorporate a focus on generosity into any meditation tradition that you practice. I offer these simple suggestions as a beginning.

One practice involves using a word that has a quality of generosity. Settle your body in a comfortable, alert, seated position. Quietly observe the breath as you exhale. As you exhale, say in your mind one word

indicating something positive that you want to increase in the world—acceptance, love, healing, something that resonates with you.

Another helpful practice incorporates a more visual approach. Once seated, shift your awareness to the center of the chest, the area next to and surrounding the heart. See your heart expand, full of light and goodness and radiate healing energy into the world in the same generous way that sun shines it’s warmth on the earth.

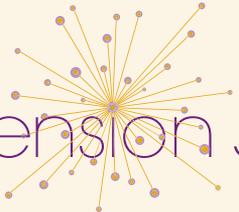
An intention to practice generosity helps us to connect with the goodness of the universe, of the Creator, of the Source of life. Perhaps one of the most helpful practices to undertake is to offer the fruits of all your actions in daily prayer. The yoga tradition includes a call to Isvara Pranidhana—to lay actions at the feet of God. You may have no way to know the future effects of your actions, but this should not discourage you. By undertaking small acts of goodness, and offering the fruits of these actions to God, any person, regardless of religious affiliation, can adopt this attitude into a life practice.

The New Year provides an opportunity to reset habits of attitude and behavior. Through regular practice of asana and meditation, we can all cultivate positive qualities to share with others through living our yoga. May we all find ways to use our gifts and talents, and to share our time and resources in a spirit of generosity. ▲



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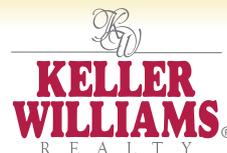
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# Avoiding Sitting Injuries: Six Tips for Better Desk Posture

**I**N MY ROLFING® PRACTICE, CLIENTS ALWAYS ASK ME WHAT SPORT CAUSES THE WORST INJURIES.

As in, am I seeing the snowboarders take more trips to the ER or the football players? It seems everyone wants to know who out there is mangling themselves the worst and with what athletic endeavor. I can say, unequivocally, that the highest injury rate that I see is from sitting! I know, I know, it's a little bit like when I found out that the mosquito is the world's most deadly creature. Something so commonplace and so seemingly innocuous, courtesy of how it aids the spread of malaria, claims far more lives every year than scarier creatures like a bear or a shark. Likewise sitting is the root cause of a variety of physical injuries.

Our poor bodies are still built to be hunter-gatherers, evolution being too slow to adapt to this world where we're sitting on our bottoms in front of a screen for 40-80 hours per week. That a human would spend this much time in this position is unheard of and thoroughly bizarre in the context of human history. It was a long time in the history of humans before we started tinkering with making chairs. When sitting needed to happen people sat on the floor or squatted. Simply put, we are built to be movers, and when we stop moving in more functional, full body ways, we start breaking down.

The injuries that I see most commonly from sitting, particularly while working on a computer, are the things that we also see most commonly in the larger culture because we're all sitting. Are you ready for the laundry list? Low back pain, mid-back pain, neck pain, sciatica, piriformis syndrome, TMJ, frozen shoulder, carpal tunnel, and last but of course not least degenerative and herniated discs. Truly, over-sitting is the root cause of so much of what has become "normative", but still crippling, chronic pain.

To keep your body from deteriorating or picking up any of these lovely pain conditions, get yourself moving both during the workday and outside of work. Outside of work this just means staying connected to and dedicated to whatever forms of movement make you happy. During the workday, it can be impractical for many to switch it up so that they're moving away from their desk more, but for those of you who do have some wiggle room, go for it! On the other hand, for those of you who know your 40 to 80 hours logged in

front of a screen aren't changing any time soon, here are some tips to make sitting a happier experience all around:

1. Sit on your ischial tuberosities (sit bones) instead of your coccyx (tail bone). This gives your spine maximum support by giving you a broad base to sit on, which encourages an upright spine, as opposed to the tiny, singular point of your coccyx, which sends you straight to Slumpville.
2. Use this position of sitting on your whole pelvis, by being on the ischial tuberosities, to find the place of maximum rest for your spine. We're looking for an upright spine that can remain that way without too much effort to remain there. Beware of the temptation to swing the pendulum all the way to the other side of slumping and to jam your spine forward into your chest, creating 1950's secretary posture. This is only more exhausting than slumping, and causes the same amount of harm. So why do it to yourself?
3. Try to set up your work chair and workstation so that your knees are lower than your hips. This keeps your psoas and other hip flexors from over-contracting and allows for some traction that can stave off low back pain, sciatica, and sacroiliac pain.
4. Don't rely on the back of your chair, you'll often find that sitting up on the edge of your chair instead causes your body less distress and doesn't let you give into the temptation of sliding back onto your tailbone, which, as we've covered, makes your spine collapse.
5. 40 to 80 hours a week is a LONG TIME, so this isn't about picking one perfect position and fixing your body there for the duration. Squirming, and even (a little) slumping is fine. Remember, we're not built to ever be still. We're always moving at least in small ways, so invite movement in, especially to your spine.
6. If you have a laptop, try out different working surfaces through the day. Experiment with what happens if you spend half the day standing at a counter, and half the day sitting at your desk. If you have a desktop, but you are suffering from sitting related pain, you may want to play with the idea of having a standing desk. Many people find this increases productivity and alertness during the workday, while simultaneously decreasing or even resolving pain. ▲





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# CO-CREATING A *Rich and Financially Empowered Relationship*

**OFTEN ASK COUPLES THAT I WORK WITH TO TELL ME WHAT THEY BELIEVE WOULD MAKE THEM HAPPY.**

Invariably, some will say, “We’d be happy if we were rich.” Yet, when I probe a bit deeper and ask them to describe to me what “being rich” would look and feel like, almost every couple has a different picture. Clearly, what it means to be rich is subjective and has more to do with our deeper desire to be free and experience a more fully engaged life. Too many falsely believe that only the wealthy can afford to live their lives dedicated to the pursuit of their purpose, dreams, and personal happiness. This is true only if you believe it is.

If you believe that you cannot have or do *something* (*anything*, actually), then it is unfortunately a *fait accompli*, already your destiny. This is why I highly advise you to monitor your thoughts and suspend your disbelief, choosing instead to focus on creating what you want and believing that it is possible.

Although having a lot of money is useful on this human journey, I have found that with enough passion and determination, we are *all* capable of living a rich life, regardless of our financial circumstances. Over the years, I have met many people who have made an art out of living. These people are gifted in what I call *the art of living rich*. Their lives are tapestries of their own invention woven out of their passion for life and a commitment to doing what they love, being of service, expressing their gifts, and/or making a difference in the world. Some of the attitudes and attributes they share in common are a deep faith and belief in something bigger and greater than themselves; a vision that is mission and purpose based; and a deep passion for something that is meaningful to themselves, their families, or their communities. These people live in alignment with their values, and they never let *having* or *not having* money deter them from being or doing what they came here to do. Because these adventurous souls were so willing to move through life without a safety net, not only did they live rich lives, but sometimes they became wealthy as well. However, financial wealth was never their cause; rather, it was the result of their living intentionally and in alignment with their vision, values, and purpose. The wealth they



acquired was a bonus for their efforts but inconsequential to their journey.

## **Cultivating a Rich Life**

Living a rich life is quite different from being rich. Living rich is a state of mind and a way of being, not the state of your bank account. While you can always become rich by attaining more wealth, that is not a guarantee for

manifesting a truly rich life. The art of living rich is not something you can buy; it is something you become. We sometimes hear stories from our parents or grandparents about a single prized possession they had — a silver mirror, beautiful china, a vintage car that they proudly polished on weekends. These were treasures that they cherished and enjoyed for years no matter how little money they had. It is unlikely that as they enjoyed these treasures, the owners were lamenting how little they had. They were absorbed in the joy of the moment. The treasures that make us feel wealthy may not even be material objects. A yearly vacation to the coast, visits across country to be with loved ones or friends, or just hanging out in the company of loved ones can also give us a sense of having and living a rich life.

I’d like to suggest that you give yourself more of whatever it is that allows you that expansive feeling of being wealthy and living a rich life. This usually has little to do with what you have or how much — it’s about how the experience touches you and makes you feel connected to something larger than yourself. That is the secret of feeling and being truly “wealthy.” When some part of your spirit is being reflected back to you by an experience, person, or object that you are enjoying, it is truly magical. Having more and more *things* will not give you that experience, nor will it make you truly wealthy. Landfills everywhere are full of broken toys and abandoned things that we once thought we needed. What we greatly need more of is to feel *engaged* with our passion, our purpose, and people to connect with and nourish our lives and spirit in ways that are *enriching*. When you and your partner discover what this is for you and allow yourselves to live and express more of this in your daily life, then together you will most certainly be wealthier. ▲

Excerpted from the new book *The Heart of Money* ©2012 by Deborah L. Price. Published with permission of New World Library.

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# The Pursuit of the ULTIMATE NEUROTRANSMITTER FIX

## FOR MOST OF US, JEFFERSON'S PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS TRANSLATES TO A QUEST

for a specific state—of peace, belonging, meaningfulness, clarity and joy. We

all have experienced this state—time fades away, senses are full, there is no room for worry. It can be triggered by a beautiful sunset, an accomplishment, family events, sex, yoga, meditation, service, or other conditions. Olympic athletes call this state *Flow*. It is also called the *Zone*, *Mojo* and *eating chocolate*. Unfortunately, for most of us, this state is rare, elusive, doesn't last very long and can be expensive.

Achieving this state is good in that once experienced, we *know* that it exists; bad in that once experienced, we want *more*. It is traditionally called Nirvana or Samadhi, and is a goal of some spiritual traditions. There are also undesirable states, such as stress, panic and depression.

**A state** is a mode of being, like a state of siege or a channel on a TV. With human consciousness a state is characterized by a specific emotional set, perceptual awareness or thinking process. Examples are awake, deep sleep, REM sleep, awake after coffee, hypnosis, etc. To date, science has not been able to define or measure these states, as they are features of mind, which is also unmeasurable. The problem is in part due to the artificial distinction between mind and brain. However, if mind is defined as the function of the brain and nervous system, a state of mind ultimately has to translate to a specific balance of neurotransmitters.

**A fix** is a repair, like fixing a broken vase, usually leaving a small scar as evidence of prior injury. A fix for heroin addicts is an act that gives temporary relief. In general, a fix can be short or long term; but implies damage not fully restored.

**Neurotransmitters** are molecules that convey information to and from neurons, or nerve cells. Thirty years ago, we only knew of two neurotransmitters; today the growing list tops 100, and are produced both in and outside of the brain. For example, the gut is the largest producer of serotonin, an important neurotransmitter for mood and gut function.<sup>1</sup> While neurotransmitters and certain medications are associated with specific emotions or states, this is oversimplified and not scientifically accurate.

**Stuck in a Rut:** Addictions are compulsive behaviors that we repeat uncontrollably, essentially to reach a desired state or get to it. Shopping, gambling, internet surfing, talking, worrying, ruminating, smoking, drinking, sex and eating are activities that for some are an attempt to get us out of one state and into another. They do work, but usually require valuable resources like time, energy

(mental, emotional or physical) and money. Brain science tells us that when we repeat a behavior, thought or feeling repeatedly, they become entrenched and difficult to change (= bad habits). In an attempt to break these patterns, we latch onto the latest philosophy, pill, subscription or other fad, which takes additional resource and creates new dependencies.

**Treatment Successes and Failures:** Many programs have developed to deal with human nature, including Religion, Alcoholics Anonymous (and its spin-offs), Weight Watchers, etc. While successes do occur, after 5 years only 5-10% sustain their achievement. In other realms, a house repair or education, a 90% failure rate would place the provider, not the recipient in question. When people fail, they are blamed for not staying with the program. Doctors sometimes call this non-compliance. We are our own worst critics, blaming our transgressions on not enough willpower. However, each failure is scientific evidence that some other factor needs to be found. We do not choose to hurt ourselves and suffer; our mental states and addictions provide important clues for healing.

**Yoga and Brain Science to the Rescue:** The Pursuit should not be for a result, but for a model and process. Science is about understanding and prediction. Columbus, Galileo, Semmelweis<sup>2</sup>, Einstein, Pasteur, Lister and recently Marshall and Warren<sup>3</sup> are examples of "heretics" who discovered information that changed the world. Brain science continues to identify neurotransmitters and modulators that affect hunger, emotion and motivation<sup>4</sup>. Yoga is a 5000-year-old scientific method that reveals deep and subtle truths about our nervous system, its states, and its cycles. By bringing Brain Science together with Yoga, we have the best chance of breaking out of wasteful ruts, individually and globally. ▲

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** *This general information should not be used to make decisions about medical care without the involvement of a knowledgeable practitioner. Copyright 2012 by Michael Cheikin MD*

### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> See prior Yoga Livings for related articles.
- <sup>2</sup> Semmelweis discovered unseen bacteria as a cause of mothers' death after delivery (child bed fever) before Pasteur and Lister, but was ridiculed and ultimately died in a mad house.
- <sup>3</sup> Marshall and Warren discovered H Pylori as a bacterial cause of stomach ulcers in the 1980's, rejected by the medical establishment but ultimately vindicated with the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 2005.
- <sup>4</sup> Richards: *Mastering Leptin...* (3rd Edition). 2009. 978-193-392-7251.