

NEWS AND TOOLS FOR HAPPINESS, LOVE, AND WISDOM

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DEEPER MINDFULNESS: THE NEW WAY TO REDISCOVER CALM IN A CHAOTIC WORLD

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Every morning, a man walked his four dogs in the park. Three of them always darted about, barking happily, tails wagging with delight. The fourth seemed happy enough but would only ever run around in tight little circles (albeit covering quite a distance), staying close to the man as he

walked. Day after day, the park keeper watched the dog's strange behavior. After a while, the keeper plucked up the courage to ask the man why his dog was behaving so oddly .¹

"Ah," the man replied. "She's a rescue dog. She was locked up for most of her life. That was the size of her cage."

How often have you behaved like that dog? Free, but constantly running around in little mental circles. Free to be happy, yet caged by the same dark, repetitive thoughts. Free to be at peace with yourself and the world, while remaining trapped and entangled by anxiety, stress, unhappiness, and exhaustion.

Greetings

The Wise Brain Bulletin offers skillful means from brain science and contemplative practice – to nurture your brain for the benefit of yourself and everyone you touch.

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Michelle Keane edits the Bulletin, and it's designed and laid out by the team at Content Strategy Online.

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¹ Adapted from Into the Silent Land by Martin Laird.

So much of life is needlessly marred by little tragedies such as these. Deep down, we all know that we are capable of living happy and fulfilling lives, and yet something always stops us from doing so. Just as life seems to be within our grasp, it slips through our fingers. Although such periods of distress seem to appear from nowhere, they actually arise from deeply buried psychological forces. Neuroscientists have begun to understand how these processes guide our thoughts, feelings, and emotions; but, more important, they have discovered why they occasionally go wrong and leave our lives as shadows of their true potential. These new discoveries also show why mindfulness is so effective at relieving distress, but crucially, they also open the door to subtly different methods that can be even more effective. Mindfulness has not been superseded; rather, it can be expanded to include an extra dimension that transforms it.



Our new book, <u>Deeper Mindfulness: The New Way to Rediscover Calm in a Chaotic World</u>, harnesses these new developments. It will help you to step aside from your worries and give you the tools necessary to deal with anxiety, stress, unhappiness, exhaustion, and even depression. And when these unpleasant emotions evaporate, you will rediscover a calm space inside from which you can rebuild your life.

We can help you to do this because we— and our colleagues at Oxford University, UK, and other institutions around the world— have spent many years developing treatments for anxiety, stress, depression, and exhaustion. We co-developed mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT),

which has been clinically proven to be one of the most effective treatments for depression so far developed. Out of this work arose <u>Mindfulness: Finding Peace in a Frantic World</u>. That book, and the mindfulness program within it, has been proven in clinical trials at Cambridge University and elsewhere to be a highly effective treatment for anxiety, stress, and depression. So much so that it is prescribed by doctors and psychiatrists around the world to help people cope with a wide range of mental health conditions, as well as generalized unhappiness and dissatisfaction with life.

But the practices revealed in *Mindfulness*, and similar skills taught on courses such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), are only the first steps on a longer and more fruitful road. Although MBCT and MBSR can form the foundations for a happier and more fulfilling life, and have proven transformative for many, a lot of people have asked us whether there is anything more they could do to enhance their practice and resolve their remaining issues.

The answer is yes. There is a way of taking mindfulness to the next level, of going further and unleashing more of your potential, by exploring another frontier of mindfulness known as *vedana* or feeling tone. And, importantly, you don't need to have



extensive meditation experience to benefit from these practices. Research is showing that novice meditators can gain just as much from them as those who have practiced for many years.

Although it is an often-overlooked aspect of meditation, feeling tone is in fact one of the four original foundations of mindfulness. These are: mindfulness of the body and breath; mindfulness of feelings and sensations (or *vedana*); mindfulness of the mind or consciousness; and mindfulness of the ever-changing nature of the world and what helps and hinders your journey through it. Each aspect is cultivated using a different set of practices that, together, bring about profoundly different effects on mind and body. Mindfulness courses generally focus on the first layer of each of these four foundations. This book uses new meditations on feeling tone as a gateway into the deeper layers of the same four aspects of mindfulness. These take you closer to the source of your "spirit"; closer to any difficulties you may be having; nearer still to their resolution.

There is no satisfactory translation of the ancient Sanskrit word vedana. It is a quality of awareness that can only be experienced, not pinned down with precision. It is the feeling, almost a background "color," that tinges our experience of the world—of mindfulness itself. For this reason, vedana is often translated as "feeling tone." Although we will use the terms interchangeably, it will always pay to remember that we are referring to a flavor of awareness, and not a rigid concept that can be hedged in by words and definitions. Feeling tone is something that you feel in mind, body, and "spirit," but its true quality will always remain slightly ineffable. Sometimes annoyingly so. A typical feeling tone meditation consists of stilling the mind with a simple breath or body meditation and then paying attention to your experiences in a manner that is subtly different to what other meditations request. It asks you to focus in a very specific way on the feelings and sensations that arise in the moment when the unconscious mind crystallizes into the conscious one. Such moments, though fleeting, are often the most important ones in your life. This is because vedana is the balance point in your mind that sets the tone for the sequence of thoughts, feelings, and emotions that follow. It is often subtle, but if you pay attention to it, you can feel it in your mind, body, and spirit—right through to your bones. The feeling tone is of profound importance because it guides the trajectory of your subsequent thoughts, feelings, and emotions. If it is "pleasant," you will tend to feel positive, dynamic, and in control of your life (at least for a while). If it is "unpleasant", you will likely feel slightly gloomy, deflated, and powerless. Feeling tone meditations teach you to see, or, more precisely, to feel the way that your life is pushed and pulled around by forces you are barely conscious of. Sometimes these forces act in your best interests, sometimes not— but the important thing is that they are not under your immediate control. Under their influence, your life is not your own.

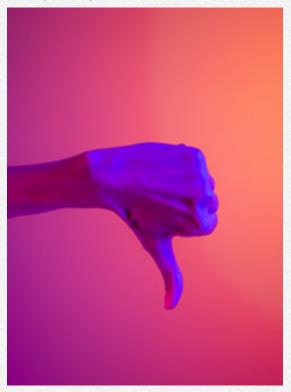


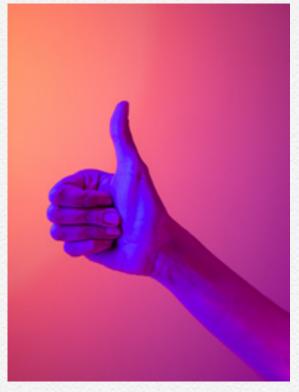
To help these ideas settle into your mind, you might like to try this little practice to get a sense of your feeling tones: if it is convenient, take a few moments to look around you; the room, the window, the interior of your train or bus, or perhaps the street, field or forest before you. As your eyes alight on different things, or different sounds come to your ears, see if you can register the subtle sense of whether each one feels pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. If you are at home, your eye might alight on a card, gift or memento from a much-loved friend. You might feel the instant warm glow of a pleasant feeling tone in response. Or you might see a dirty dish that you've been meaning to tidy away, or something you've borrowed from someone and had intended to return, and then you might notice an unpleasant feeling tone. If you are outside, you may notice the sun streaming through the leaves of a tree, or a piece of dirty plastic trash flapping around. If you can catch the moment, you might sense ripples of pleasant or unpleasant feeling tones. But it is not just the external world that has such an impact. You may also become aware of sensations inside your body, such as aches and pains, or perhaps a sense of relaxed calm. These, too, register on the same dimension of pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. And sooner or later, you may notice thoughts or emotions arising and passing away soon after the feeling tones.

You could also try this ten-minute feeling tone meditation. Stream or download it from *here*. You'll find the text for the meditation at the end of this article.

Yet, feeling tones can be unpredictable. You can never know in advance the flavour of their appearance. They don't exist in objects themselves but instead emerge from their contact with your mind and body in combination with the state of your body and mind at that precise moment. As an example, you might normally find chocolate cake pleasant, but if you have just eaten a heavy meal, the very thought of it might feel unpleasant. Or if you are busy, the ping of an arriving message might feel like an unpleasant distraction, but if you are feeling lonely, the same sound might create a pleasant feeling tone. This ever-changing landscape of contexts and moods makes it difficult to predict what will strike you as pleasant or unpleasant. The only certain way of knowing is to pay attention in the now. And because feeling tones often arise and pass away quickly, they can be difficult to notice, unless you intentionally cultivate awareness of them. As you will come to learn, somehow there is a "readout" in body and mind on the dimension of pleasant to unpleasant. It's like a gut feeling. It's not a matter of thinking hard about it, or hunting for it, it's more like the taste of something; you just know it when you taste it. Like tasting milk that's gone sour, you know it's unpleasant without having to think about it.

This is hidden knowledge – part of the wisdom tradition that has influenced the practice of meditation for millennia – but is only ever rarely made explicit. And its true significance has only recently come to the fore. Neuroscience has now discovered the importance of this 'first impression': it is fundamental to all life. Just as plants arch towards sunlight, and roots stretch towards water, so every living being has the means to discern the pleasant from the unpleasant. All life depends upon it.





Feeling tones are immediate and rely on sensitivities built into every cell of our bodies from the earliest days of our evolution. Even single-celled creatures are sensitive to both nutrients and toxins. It allows them to distinguish between one and the other. This is the essence of vedana. It helps all living beings distinguish between the things that they should move towards (*pleasant*) and those that they should move away from (*unpleasant*) and encourages them to sit tight if everything is fine (*neutral*). Without such a sensitivity, they would be like a boat without a rudder, with nothing to steer them away from danger and towards a friendly port.

In countless ways, vedana marks the difference between life and mere machinery.

But we humans have a unique and special difficulty when it comes to vedana: our mental life is so complex that we can become lost inside of it. Our thoughts, memories and plans, which also carry feeling tones, can compel us to flee from our own minds.

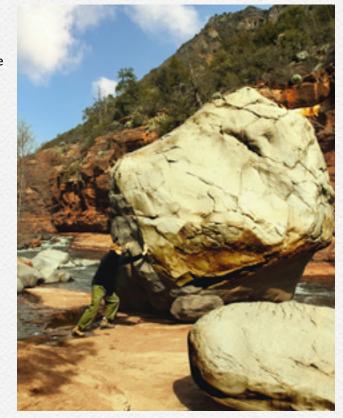
And while we can flee, we can never escape.

In these ways, feeling tones are hugely significant. Cast your mind back to the last time you were sitting in a café or bar and suddenly felt unhappy for no apparent reason. If you could rewind the clock and observe what was happening "frame by frame" as your unhappiness arose, you would have noticed that the emotion was preceded by a momentary pause. It was as if your mind was poised on a knife edge, a moment when it was sensing whether the evolving situation was pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. A moment of *vedana*.

So vedana is often a tipping point in your mind that affects how you experience the world in the moments that follow. Good, bad, indifferent. But it is what happens next that is of paramount importance—we call it the "reactivity pulse." It works like this: If a pleasant feeling tone arises in the mind, then it is entirely natural to want to grasp it, keep hold of it, and be a little fearful that it will fade away or slip through your fingers. If the tone is unpleasant, then it is natural to want to get rid of it, to push it away, fearing that it will stick around forever and never leave. Neutral

sensations often feel boring, so you feel like tuning out and finding something more interesting to do. These feeling tones are primal and can quickly trigger a cascade of reactions in the mind and body. These are felt as emotions and cravings that compel you to try to keep hold of pleasant feeling tones, push away unpleasant ones, and distract yourself from neutral ones. So the reactivity pulse is the mind's knee-jerk reaction to feeling tone. If a feeling tone sets the scene, then the reactivity pulse casts the actors, selects the costumes, and writes the script for what happens next. And it can write a script and direct a scene that can easily ruin your whole day and sometimes far, far longer.

Virtually all of the emotional difficulties that many of us experience begin with the mind's reaction to our feeling tones— our reactivity pulse. But it's not even the pulse itself that is the problem, but our ignorance



of its existence and underlying nature. We are often not aware that it has occurred, oblivious of the feeling tone that triggered it and unaware of its tendency to fade away all by itself, if only we would allow it to do so. All we are aware of is the cascade of thoughts, feelings, and emotions that follow in its wake.

Learning to sense your feeling tones— bringing them into the light— teaches you to recognize your underlying state of mind and helps you make allowances for your sensitivities and entirely natural biases and reactions. It gives you the space to respond rather than react. It helps you to compassionately accept that although you might be anxious, stressed, angry, or depressed in this moment, this is not the totality of your life with only one depressing future ahead of you. You can change course. Alternative futures are available to you.

And tapping into an alternative future is as simple as sensing the underlying flow of feeling tones.

Noticing the reactivity pulses. Realizing that the craving for things to be different is the problem.

Craving an end to unpleasantness. Craving for pleasantness to remain. Craving an end to boredom.

This idea is common to many ancient traditions. And now, neuroscience agrees.

Why cultivate awareness of the feeling tone of your thoughts, memories and emotions?

Your thoughts, feelings, memories and emotions are not the problem, no matter how unpleasantly real and visceral they might feel. As an example, emotions are signals that something important needs our attention:

- We feel sad if we've lost something or someone important.
- We feel fear when a threat appears on the horizon.
- We feel angry when a goal is thwarted.
- We are preoccupied when a long- term project needs our problem-solving skills.

In many ways, the real problem is the reactivity pulse, triggered by fluctuations in the underlying feeling tone. This creates a narrative so compelling that we can get stuck inside our thoughts, feelings, emotions and memories and can't escape.

Learning to sense the feeling tone that precedes this reactivity pulse gives you extra information. It signals to you the very moment when your thoughts, feelings, emotions or memories are likely to seize control, become entangled and spiral out of control. This programme teaches you how to recognise these moments so you can step in and dissolve your old, destructive habits. It will help you rediscover the calm, vigour and joy that lie at the core of your being.

Feeling Tone Meditation

Preparation

 Settle in to sit, on a chair or a stool or a cushion. Allow the shoulders to be dropped and the head balanced, so that your posture embodies a sense of being present, awake for each

- moment. Then choose an anchor as in Weeks One and Two the breath, feet, contact with seat or hands.
- 2. When you feel ready, deliberately expand the focus of your awareness to the whole body.

Feeling tone of body sensations and of sounds

- 3. As you sit here, bring your awareness to whatever sensations in your body are most distinct at any moment, seeing if it's possible to register if they are pleasant, unpleasant or somewhere in between. For many sensations, the feeling tone may be quite subtle, so don't worry if you aren't sure; simply let go and wait for another sensation to arrive.
- 4. When you feel ready, expand the attention to sounds as best you can, registering the tonality of the sound pleasant, unpleasant or neither? There's no need to think too hard about this; simply register what the body and mind already feels when a sound is received.

Feeling tone of distractions

- 5. At a certain point, when you feel ready, let sounds fade into the background and return attention to your anchor.
- 6. Whenever you find that the mind has become distracted, as soon as you notice this, see if it's possible to also notice the feeling tone of the distraction (just as you did with body sensations and sounds). It may be from something happening outside, or from inside your body or from your mind (a memory, or plan, or daydream, or worry) . . . whatever it is, when you become aware of it, take a moment to get a sense of whether it's pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.
- 7. And then, when you have registered the feeling tone, bring the attention back to the body.
 Come back and anchor yourself once again in this moment. And when the next distraction arises, once again register its feeling tone, before coming back to your anchor. Remember not to try too hard if something is hard to register, let it go, and wait for something else to arise.
- 8. And sit in silence as you continue to do this practice on your own, checking in from time to time to see where your mind is, and noting the pleasantness or unpleasantness of wherever it had gone.
- 9. And remember that if anything seems overwhelming at any time, you can always let go of registering tonality and bring the focus of your attention back to your chosen anchor.

Ending

10. For the last few moments of the sitting, come back to focus on your chosen anchor, back to the simplicity of sensations, arising and dissolving from moment to moment.



Mark Williams is Emeritus Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Oxford. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society, the Academy of Medical Sciences and the British Academy. With his colleagues at Oxford and Cambridge, he codeveloped Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) which clinical trials have shown to be as effective as medication and therapy for depression. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), working on behalf the National Health Service, now recommends MBCT as a primary treatment for depression.



Dr. Danny Penman is a mindfulness teacher and bestselling author. He is co-author, with Professor Mark Williams of Oxford University, of the acclaimed Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World. This book is credited with popularising mindfulness and is now prescribed across the UK's National Health Service for such conditions as anxiety, stress, depression and chronic pain. In 2014, he won the British Medical Association's Best Book (Popular Medicine) Award for Mindfulness for Health: A Practical Guide to Relieving Pain, Reducing Stress and

<u>Restoring Wellbeing</u> (co-written with Vidyamala Burch). His journalism has appeared in the *Daily Mail*, New Scientist, The Independent, The Guardian, and The Daily Telegraph.

MEDITATION AT SWEET SPRINGS

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I leave the world and my worries, walk the wood-mulch trail that shifts to sand. Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh

said we're just one step from the kingdom of heaven. I say his mantra: Oui, Oui, Oui, Merci, Merci, Merci.

Yes to Morro Rock, our small Gibraltar across the bay. Thanks to eucalyptus trees where migrant monarchs dangle—hanging

one from another like beads on a string.

A kingfisher calls and circles her pond.

At the bridge I inhale rain-fresh air

and note mallards, heads tucked. A snowy egret lands, fans herself, then folds her wings and steps into the pond. Perfect stillness.

Time stretches. My mind quiets.

The egret ignores her wind-ruffled feathers.

Focused, she waits for food to near.

Her pointed beak strikes, catches a fish.

And me?

I got what I came for

ABOUT THE AUTHOR -



Jeanie Greensfelder is a retired psychologist. She served as the San Luis Obispo County poet laureate for 2 years in 2017 and 2018. A volunteer at Hospice of San Luis Obispo, CA, she does bereavement counseling. Her books are <u>Biting The Apple</u>, <u>Marriage and Other Leaps of Faith</u>, and <u>I Got What I Came For</u>. Her poem, "First Love," was featured on Garrison Keillor's Writers' Almanac. Other poems are at American Life in Poetry, in anthologies, and in journals. She seeks to understand herself and others on this shared journey, filled, as Joseph Campbell wrote, with sorrowful

joys and joyful sorrows. View more poems at jeaniegreensfelder.com.

REGREENING THE EARTH

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From A Future We Can Love: How We Can Reverse the Climate Crisis with the Power of Our Hearts and Minds by Susan Bauer-Wu © 2023 by the Mind & Life Institute. Reprinted in arrangement with Shambhala Publications, Inc. Boulder, CO. www.shambhala.com

Introduction

We may not want to talk about it, but lately we would have to go out of our way to avoid seeing that our planet is facing something more dangerous than we humans have ever collectively seen, recorded, or experienced. While extreme weather events aren't new, the accelerating pattern and severity of them are alarming. The news of weather-associated disasters is coming at me so fast that I have begun to expect them somewhere in the world each week, if not each day. The constant drip, drip, drip of terrible headlines can begin to feel normal, or at least numbing. I watch the news, but I don't really "see" it. I hear about a mudslide or a fire that destroys a town and I shake my head, yet the suffering feels too great to bear, so I turn away. It isn't that I don't care but that I feel helpless to do anything. Or I did, until the people you will meet in this book helped me see that I am actually connected to all of it, that there are already people doing something about it and I can join them.

Perhaps the climate crisis feels like something that happens to "other people," far away. Maybe it seems it is something that will happen in the future, giving us time to change. Or perhaps we fear

that if we allow ourselves to feel the suffering of the world, we will despair or be paralyzed. How would we get out of bed in the morning if we actually felt the loss and pain of what we're doing to one another, to countless nonhuman beings, and to the planet, even though we now know better? Perhaps we think or pray someone else will take care of it, step in at the last minute with a technological miracle or ride in on a white horse in such charismatic style that suddenly everyone gets on board. Charismatic leaders and technological innovations can help, but they alone can't save us.



Many of us do what we can and what we're encouraged to do individually -—recycling, supporting pro-environment candidates, installing solar panels or buying an electric car if we can afford it. Then we're confused and disheartened when we hear, often from well-meaning people, that our individual choices don't matter. We carry on recycling and eschewing plastic straws, but the truth of our climate emergency still haunts us. We feel puny compared to rising oceans and melting polar ice caps. But it's simply not the case that the inadequacy of individual effort means that our best option is quiescent resignation. Uncomfortable though it may be, we need to learn to talk to one another about the climate crisis.

Regreening the Earth

"It is extremely important," the Dalai Lama says, "to plant new trees and protect the ones already growing around you." One thing about being the Dalai Lama, I think, is you can bring your weight to a simple statement like that and make it sound freshly momentous. In December 1990 at Sarnath, the place in northern India where the Buddha gave his first teachings and the first Buddhist community was founded, the Dalai Lama gave a speech and handed out fruit tree seeds.

"Since I too have a responsibility in this matter," he said, meaning to protect the environment and "to see that the present and future generations of mankind can make use of refreshing shade and fruits of trees, I bought these seeds of fruit-bearing trees with part of my Nobel Peace Prize money to be distributed now, to people representing different regions (all the continents of the world are represented here)." The Dalai Lama said the seeds were apricot, walnut, papaya, guava, and many other kinds of trees suitable for different geographical conditions, and that they had been blessed. Still, "experts in respective places should be consulted on their planting and care and, thus, you all should see my sincere aspiration is fulfilled."



Where, I wondered when I read this speech, are these trees? If the seed recipients planted them soon after and they survived, they have been growing for more than thirty years. If the Dalai Lama gave you a blessed seed for a fruit tree, wouldn't you track it? Wouldn't you draw it or paint it, if you have the ability, or take photographs or record it in some way? Wouldn't you want to tell its story? Share it on social media (once that came along)? I put out a call but didn't hear back. If you're one of the people who got one of these seeds and you're reading this, will you please tell me? At any rate, thirty-two years later, it's spring as I'm writing this, each chapter so far marked by the trees outside through their progression from bare branches to buds, blossoms, and increasing amounts of green. I'm trying to do them justice.

The climate scientist George Woodwell sums up the solution to the climate crisis when he says we must "make a transition away from fossil fuels and into a new green Earth. And it really does," he emphasizes, in line with the Dalai Lama's promotion of tree planting, "require a green Earth." So, let's talk about regreening.

"I grew up in the countryside," Wangari Maathai says. She is talking about the central highlands of Kenya. "And as a small young girl there was a huge tree that was near our homestead, and next to our tree was a stream." Wangari's voice is warm, rich, and deep like good soil on a summer morning, and she has a way of landing on important words for emphasis that gives her speech an irresistible rhythm. "My mother told me," Wangari continues, "'Do not collect the firewood from the fig tree by the stream.' I said, 'Why?' And she said, 'Because that tree is a tree of God.'



"I didn't know what she was talking about, but I would run there and collect water for my mother. Wangari died in 2011, but I'm watching film footage of her activism and old interviews, and I'm spellbound. That voice. "The stream actually came out of the ground, gushing up from the belly of the Earth. Now sometimes there would be thousands upon thousands of frog eggs," she remembers. "They're in black, they are brown, they are white, they're beautiful. I didn't know they were frog eggs. I would just see these beads, and I would put my little hands underneath and try to lift them in the belief that I could put them around my neck and decorate myself. And I would spend hours trying to lift them up. Here I am, and I am so small and I am playing with frog eggs and tadpoles! Between the fig tree and the stream it was beautiful," Wangari pauses. "I guess it was a tree of God."

Wangari says it was not until she went to college that she made the connection between the tree and the stream—the rain caught by the forest canopy's millions of leaves, dripping to the ground, percolating through soil that is held in place, no matter how hard it rains, by a blanket of fallen leaves; soaking down underground where it feeds water reservoirs that follow root systems and push back up through weak places in the earth where they emerge above ground again as streams. When Wangari came back after college, in the 1960s, to the land where she grew up, she says, "I discover now the place of God was in a church. A stone building had been put up. That's where God was. So this tree no longer called for the respect, it no longer inspired awe, it no longer was protected. They had cut it. And sure enough, the stream had also disappeared. And if the stream dies, the frog eggs, the tadpoles, the frogs and everything else that lived in those waters disappears. And we can no longer go there and fetch the water."

Wangari is the first woman in East Africa to have earned a doctoral degree, in biological sciences. In the seventies, teaching at the University of Nairobi, her research took her into the field where she saw deforestation, loss of soil, and the disappearance of streams. Rural women told her they didn't have firewood to cook their food and they didn't have enough water. Recognizing these were symptoms of bigger problems, "That's what gave me an idea, why not plant trees?" The women she was talking to said they would, but they didn't know how. "And that started the whole story of let's learn how to plant trees."



Wangari's whole story has a whole story before it, too. It goes back to colonialism in East Africa, starting in the late nineteenth century, when the British cleared forests to make way for their settlement and agriculture, cash crops like coffee and tea. Later, in the 1950s, they tore down more forests looking for the independence fighters—the Kenyan Land and Freedom Army (or "Mau Mau," as the British called them)—who hid there; and building camps to confine anyone they suspected of aiding or abetting the rebels. Unfortunately, deforestation continued under the new governments after Kenyan independence in 1963. So Wangari founded the Green Belt Movement, in 1977, starting with a few rural women learning to gather seeds from surviving native trees around them, cultivating them in nurseries, and showing one another what they were doing until thousands of women in villages around Kenya were working to reforest their land. Green Belt gave them a small amount of money for every tree that survived, but the women were learning and could see for themselves the many benefits of planting trees.

"The movement started as a tree planting campaign," says Wangari, "that's how we enter into communities. But it is a little more than just the planting of trees." She's being modest, clearly, because she explains that by "a little" she means, "it's planting of ideas, it's giving people a reason why they should stand for their rights, it's giving them reasons why they should protect their environmental rights; and giving them reason why they should protect their women's rights." Green Belt gave civic and environmental seminars around the country to educate and empower people with knowledge about sustainable foodways, nutrition, democracy, self-advocacy and peaceful protest, conflict resolution, and yes, planting trees.

Wangari and her fellow activists were beaten, surveilled, many of them tortured as political prisoners for standing up to Kenya's second president, Daniel arap Moi, whose dictatorial government ruled for twenty-four years. "One of the tactics that the government uses is to make people fear authority," Wangari says. "When the women started, nobody was bothering them because nobody took them seriously. You know, who takes women seriously? Then sometime in the course of the years the government realized that we were organizing women, so they started interfering with our organizing, and they demanded you have to have a license, you cannot meet—they harassed women a lot."

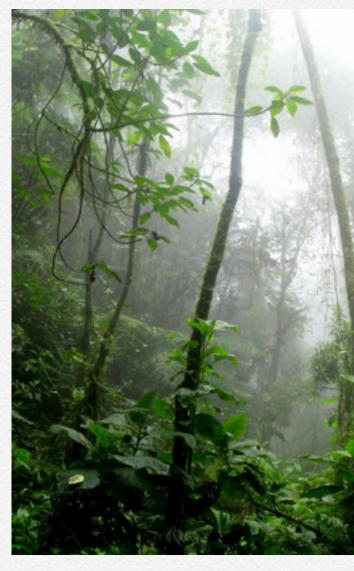


Wangari says the example of "one little woman" (Wangari) successfully stopping one of President Moi's development projects (one that must have been close to his heart since it included a four-story statue of himself) inspired people to believe that the government could change. In 2002, after a year of protests that started when the Moi government planned to log Karura Forest in Nairobi and grew to a nationwide uprising demanding democratic reforms, development of Karura forestland halted and the Kenyan people finally defeated Moi in an election—and sent Wangari to Parliament with 98 percent of the vote. In 2004, she received a Nobel Peace Prize for her work toppling a dictator and teaching people to plant trees. In Kenya, so far, the Green Belt Movement has planted over fifty-one million trees.

Another story of regreening that I love is happening in more than one place in the world, rainforest places. Local people whose economic circumstances might have, or once did, drive them to poach lumber from protected forests are instead trained and paid to guard those forests—the trees as well as the animals that coexist in these ecosystems. Francesco Lastrucci, an Italian writer and photographer, tells the Cambodian version beautifully. Owing to the presence of the Khmer Rouge, for decades, in the Cardamom Mountains and the violence and land mines that they brought there, a vast expanse of rain forest was left mostly untouched. But since the conflict abated and the land mines were removed, some people have been plundering the forest's

resources while others race to save the forest before it's destroyed. Wildlife Alliance, Francesco says, "prioritizes round-the-clock law enforcement and collaboration with local authorities, ultimately providing hands-on protection to around three million acres" of rain forest. At the same time, Wildlife Alliance works to create job alternatives for locals through education, reforestation, and wildlife rehabilitation.

From his base camp in the village of Chi Phat, a three-hour bus ride from Phnom Penh, Francesco observes Wildlife Alliance's effects. As recently as the early aughts, most people in the area took part in illegal logging and poaching or slash-and-burn farming for a living. Now they have transitioned to better options, since better options exist. Farmers have learned more sustainable ways to farm; people have regenerated forestland by rebuilding the soil and planting indigenous tree species—Francesco reports 840,000 trees and counting. The area has become a wildlife tourism destination, employing many locals as they turn homes into guesthouses, for



example, and serve tourists as guides. And poachers, with their intimate knowledge of the land, have been recruited and equipped as protective rangers, armed and patrolling the area "on foot, by motorbike, by boat and by air." While the financial attraction of large-scale development and illegal trades is still a threat, according to Francesco, "with an ever-increasing number of locals working alongside the conservationists, saving the forest is no longer a lost cause."

I'm particularly moved by his account of spending time with Soeun, the caretaker of the release station for the area's rehabilitated wildlife, who used to participate in the illegal animal trade. "I went on several walks with Soeun," Francesco says. "A kind and composed man, he introduced me

to the animals as if they were members of his family—one by one, and with profound grace and care."

I thank Francesco for his reporting and the New York Times for publishing this story. It's easy to lose sight, amid the usual terrifying climate headlines, of a whole world of good news. I want to sing it from my rooftop: climate awareness has a bright side in that it lets us access the stories of millions of people doing good all over the world.

Pessimism is Not an Option

Today, we humans have no excuse for not knowing about the climate crisis. Study after study by scientists, as well as the dramatic weather-related changes we are witnessing more and more—extensive flooding, drought, heat waves, and powerful hurricanes-have laid it bare for us. They tell us that we are facing a future where the very survival of humanity is threatened if we do not act immediately. Now, when we are presented with such a stark existential threat, and when we appreciate the enormity of the task ahead to counter it, quite naturally we might feel afraid and even overwhelmed. This fear can lead us either to pessimism and loss of hope or it could equally lead to greater determination and commitment to doing whatever we can. Personally I have never been drawn to pessimism as it is a form of defeatism—it means giving up before trying. In the face of climate crisis, I don't think we have the luxury of giving up. We owe to future generations, and to ourselves as well, the knowledge that at least we tried.



So, how can we maintain optimism even as we become more aware and educate ourselves? Here are a few things I do to steady and uplift myself:

Find a way to adopt a wider perspective. Sometimes our sense of overwhelm and powerlessness comes from having too close-up a view of the problem. However, when we situate the problem within a larger context, say, in the case of climate, we can see that the very forces—

interdependence, causation, and dynamic effect—that create the negative spiral toward global warming, can help create a virtuous cycle once we begin to make positive changes.

Take inspiration and encouragement from past successes. If we pay attention, we will find many local and global stories where human efforts have made a real difference, be it regreening, developing clean energy, reducing our use of plastic, et cetera. Reflecting upon these successes can lift our hope and give us more determination.

Steadfastly maintain our hope and courage. Finding hope and maintaining it is crucial if we are to have any success in meeting our individual and collective challenges. Hope allows us to envision a better future, and it brings with it a positive energy, which is crucial for our motivation. With hope we can have the courage to care and the courage to act. In any case, giving up is not an option we have with respect to the climate crisis. Do not lose hope in humanity. Although we humans are the ones that have created today's climate crisis, we must find a way out, to save the planet we share with so many other species. The trend toward stricter environmental regulations, greater willingness to come together in collective forums such as international climate summits, technological innovations toward green energy, and growing recognition for the critical challenges of population growth and lower consumption—all of these give me hope.

In any case, the fact remains that if there is going to be any solution to the problem of climate change, it's humans who must come up with it. No other species can. Bringing these aspects to my mind helps me to maintain my hope, courage, and commitment to be part of the solution we all seek.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR -



SUSAN BAUER-WU is an organizational leader, clinical scientist, and mindfulness teacher whose lifework has been dedicated to alleviating suffering and fostering well-being through contemplative wisdom. She is the president of the Mind & Life Institute and previously was the Kluge professor of contemplative end-of-life care at the University of Virginia. She is an avid gardener and hiker who is nourished by trees and animals and awed by our reciprocal connection with nature. She is deeply committed to the care of our planet and to policies and personal

actions that will ensure a future we can love for our children and grandchildren. She lives in Charlottesville, Virginia, and is the author of <u>Leaves Falling Gently</u> and <u>A Future We Can Love</u>. For more information, please visit mindandlife.org.

YOUR AMAZING ORIGINAL MIND

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<u>Controlling Mental Chaos: Harnessing the Power of the Creative Mind</u>, by Jaime A. Pineda, Ph.D. Reprinted with permission from Rowman & Littlefield.

Living in peaceful unity seems like an ideal because who has not occasionally strayed from that to experience worries, anxiety, uninhibited thoughts, overwhelming feelings, and seeing no way out of difficult circumstances? When the effects of these life experiences persist and change our mood, rational deliberation, and behavior, they disrupt the normal flow, joy, and unity of life. They obscure its wonder. While the pressures of life exacerbate such difficulties, over millennia, many have recognized that the root of the problem is our fearful and uncontrolled mind, one centered on ego-based rumination.

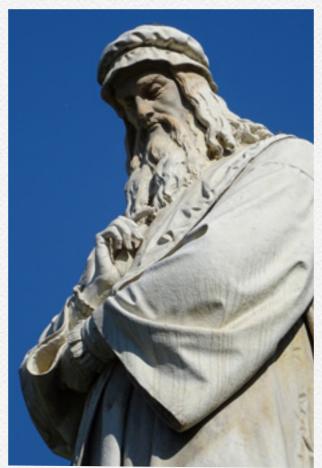


Yet, your mind as a child was Original Mind, an active, adaptable, energetic, curious, creative mind; one unencumbered by problems, with an attitude of openness, eagerness, and lack of preconceptions. While you may no longer identify with such a mind, you have not lost this treasure completely, and it is possible to recover it. This is the journey you are starting.

Leonardo was illegitimate, gay, left-handed, a bit of a heretic, and a misfit. He lived in Florence, Italy, which in the late 1400s was a very progressive and wealthy city. As a boy, he had no formal education but received instruction at home in reading, writing, Latin, geometry, and mathematics. Leonardo spent most of his childhood outdoors. Because of his lack of formal schooling, many contemporaries overlooked or ignored his later scientific contributions. Everyone, however, recognized his astounding powers of observation even in childhood; his unusual talent for making connections between unique areas of interest; a skeptical mind with a readiness to challenge dogma and contemporary beliefs; and a preternatural ability to appreciate and imagine the future.

Today, we know Leonardo da Vinci as the epitome of the creative Renaissance man. We consider him a painter, artist, engineer, architect, scientist, inventor, cartographer, anatomist, botanist, and writer. His active imagination conceptualized the tank, the helicopter, the flying machine, the parachute, and the self-powered vehicle. He was a man ahead of his time and many of his visionary inventions became real only centuries later.

Much of this reality is mixed with mythology since
Leonardo created an endless succession of untested
contraptions, unpublished studies, and unfinished
artworks. His uncontested genius, however, rests on
several personality attributes. Foremost among these
was curiosity, his defining trait. It seemed everything
interested Leonardo. We consider him the ultimate
expression of an intuitive, unencumbered Original Mind.



How to Cultivate an Unencumbered Mind: Encourage Curiosity

Being like Leonardo da Vinci means encouraging your curiosity—about everything. This curiosity, however, has no other goal than the pleasure of knowing. The answer is its own satisfaction.

How do you cultivate this? For starters, ask "Why?" questions. Ask "Why not?" questions. Challenge your beliefs and assumptions.

The Mind at Birth

Modern science is converging with Buddhist thought on the special nature of Original Mind, the mind at birth. Both perspectives recognize that this mind is an extraordinary living entity. They agree it can produce wondrous accomplishments when unencumbered, as exemplified by Leonardo da Vinci, and that we are all recipients of this amazing gift.

Over the past few decades, developmental psychologists have created new and better ways to study how and what newborns know. The general conclusion is that babies know much more than most of us realize, and science is only now discovering this wealth of skills. In 1890, a mere 133 years ago, science luminary and founder of American Psychology, William James concluded erroneously that infants experience a "blooming, buzzing confusion." We now know better. Accounts during the last decade by scientists, developmental psychologists, and science reporters tell an unfamiliar story. Their accounts, based on the recounting of controlled scientific studies, describe the amazing skills newborns display.



A few months after birth, babies show an unusual grasp of the basic rules of the physical world. They intuitively understand that unsupported objects will fall, an important principle of gravity. More interesting is that before three months, babies lack a sense of object permanence. At that age, an object that is no longer visible ceases to exist, and young minds assume its location is in several places at a time.

Experiments using "Peekaboo" games show that newborns assume that a hidden or unobserved object can be anywhere. Most adults do not realize or understand that this notion is a fundamental principle of quantum physics. The newborn's intuition for the theoretical basis of modern physics is accidental or remarkable. Seth Lloyd, an expert on quantum computing and professor of mechanical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, claims newborns are the only people alive who intuitively understand quantum mechanics. Unfortunately, we lose that intuition early on, chiefly because that specific knowledge is unnecessary for us to live in the normal Newtonian (and not quantum) environment.

Along with the unusual physical skills you lose because they become unnecessary in your environment, you learn an extraordinary number of new cognitive skills because of the needs that arise. Many of these cognitive skills appear early in development, between four to six months of age. Babies, for example, detect differences in facial expressions, reacting to sadness, anger, joy, interest, and excitement. These varying facial expressions result from the forty-three muscles in the face and the infinite combination of how these muscles activate to produce unique expressions. As an infant, you analyze this combinatorial explosion with amazing accuracy—a computational accomplishment that is remarkable.



Based on these early aptitudes and competencies, newborns respond and adapt to their environment and interact with life in remarkable, exquisite, and creative ways, discarding irrelevant behaviors and building upon socially and intellectually relevant ones. They enter the world with an exceptional mind chock-full of talent and potential. Shodo Harada Roshi describes this as "a mind that is unencumbered, without shape, form, or color, with nothing in it whatsoever, no dualism, no separation, and accepting everything as one unified whole."

Overcoming the Odds

On the night of December 8, 1995, Jean-Dominique Bauby had a stroke and went into a coma. Bauby was the fashion editor-in-chief of French Elle, a magazine considered the ultimate insider's guide to Paris chic. He was a forty-four-year-old man known and loved for his wit, flair, and impassioned approach to life. He was also the father of two young children. Bauby awakened from the coma twenty days after the stroke, aware of his surroundings, but unable to move, except for turning his head. He soon realized that only his left eye was functional, allowing him to see and, by blinking, to make clear to others that his mind remained unimpaired. A darkness engulfed his once wide-open vista of life, with the most minuscule of openings still accessible to him. Bauby hoped against hope to regain abilities, like the ability to communicate.

Throughout the course of the first year following the stroke, Bauby consulted with many medical specialists, yet the strangeness and permanency of his situation took a while to sink in. During the twenty weeks after arriving at the hospital, Bauby lost sixty pounds. He could eat only through a tube connected to his stomach, and therefore his taste of food had become only a memory. After a time, he knew he had been the victim of the rarest of strokes to the brainstem. This region of the brain is continuous with the spinal cord, and the stroke left him immobilized in a condition known as "locked-in syndrome." The condition meant that Bauby could only move the muscles controlling his eyes (and only the left eye, at that). But despite this paralysis, his intellect, imagination, memories, and spirit remained intact.



A year after the stroke, Bauby found himself in room 119 at the Maritime Hospital at Berck-sur-Mer in Pas-de-Calais in northern France, waiting for an emissary from his publisher. With the help of a speech therapist, Bauby had opened a larger window into his alternative world. He had discovered how to express himself in the richest detail as he communicated with others. Sandrine, his therapist, developed a simple communication code. The method involved having visitors read the French alphabet slowly and repeatedly to him, with the letters ordered from the most common to the least. When Bauby heard the letter he wanted, he blinked his left eye so readers could write it down. In this way, slowly and methodically, he communicated. In no time, he was writing daily messages, letters to friends and family, and composing a book describing his unusual condition. The story took ten months to write, with Bauby working four hours a day along with several

readers. The effort required about 200,000 blinks, with an average word taking two minutes to complete. A year after the stroke, Bauby waited for the literary agent who would help publish his extraordinary achievement.

In the book, <u>The Diving Bell and the Butterfly</u>, Bauby described himself as trapped in his body. He compared this trapped feeling to being inside an old-fashioned deep-sea diving outfit with a brass helmet, called a scaphandre in French. In contrast, his friends saw his spirit, still alive, comparable to a "butterfly."

Adapting to Circumstances

When Original Mind, the mind at birth, is unencumbered and allowed to flourish, the outcome is a Leonardo da Vinci. When encumbered by tragedy, as reflected in Jean-Dominique Bauby's story, the mind can still work to overcome its extraordinary circumstances. These very human stories show how the mind adapts to significantly different circumstances.

That the mind and the brain adapt and change with experience goes back to William James. In 1890, he conceived of the nervous systems as "endowed with a very extraordinary plasticity." Plasticity, or neuroplasticity, is the brain's remarkable ability to change and adapt its physical nature because of experience. This ability means that seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, feeling, and thinking affect the brain's hardware in significant ways. Brain activity itself creates changes in the wiring of the circuits, the actual anatomy that connects sensory experience to emotions and actions. Thus, just like water takes the shape of the container we pour it into, a developing brain will take the shape dictated by the environment in which it



lives. It assumes the richness or poverty of stimulation that the environment provides. An enriched environment in which music, laughter, conversation, love, toys, and other people interact will produce a healthy, curious, energetic, da Vinci-type brain. An impoverished environment where many of these things are absent will not.

Modern dogma, therefore, views the brain as possessing a remarkable ability to rewire and reorganize pathways, producing changes in the connections between functionally distinct areas.

An adaptive brain creates new connections that did not exist before, loses connections no longer needed, and sometimes produces new cells. In older adults who have suffered massive strokes, the brain can recover and regain function by rewiring itself. This neuroplasticity suggests that the brain remains malleable throughout life and that the mental abilities you are born with do not limit function—an important feature in shaping your identity. Reminding ourselves that limits on this malleability exist is important, since the brain's plasticity is not infinite, just extraordinarily malleable. Attempts to learn unfamiliar languages, for example, become more difficult for an adult than for a child, and recovery from a stroke is sometimes only a partial recovery.

Many factors in the internal and external environment affect neuroplasticity. Age and genetics play a role, as does the interaction with the world. Because of the sheer volume of information that you learn and remember as you age, the increased processing load leads to a natural reduction in overall plasticity. Thus, a younger brain is more plastic than an older brain. But aging does not mean that the brain loses the ability to change and adapt. Older brains still keep the ability to learn new skills, or languages, into advanced old age, although not as quickly or efficiently as before. The reduction in ability may result from the larger volume of information accumulated.

How to Cultivate an Unencumbered Mind: Nurture Creativity

Intuition is the secret ingredient in creativity. However, you must be intentional about strengthening this ability. Start with a creative endeavor and set your intention. For example, if you are a writer, you might aim to come up with fresh story ideas.

Still your mind, relax, and become attentive to inspiration. Focus on thoughts that arise. If a particular thought captures your imagination, turn the thought over in your mind. What is this thought telling you? To what other thoughts does it lead to? Let your mind guide you down the path of inspiration. Try not to control the outcome, simply be open to whatever comes up.

Creative Living

The extraordinary yet normal unfolding of the mind that starts in infancy, carries into adolescence, and continues into adulthood is the essence of creative living. I define creative living as unencumbered being and doing. The process is not a fixed state of mind, but an attitude and actions arising from those attitudes in response to living. Creative living does not end in infancy or

childhood, but continues throughout our lifetime. The interactive unfolding of nature and nurture becomes playtime with the world of things, and flourishes in the creativity, love, and meaning that fills our being. Creative living defines the core of who we are when living a natural and authentic life. It does not apply just to the arts or any particular outcomes. Without a nimble, curious, Original Mind, normal development, and normal enjoyment of life become problematic. When development is unsuccessful or incomplete, and circumstances encumber the mind, the outcomes are dissatisfying. They impede aspects of creative living. But like the story of Jean-Dominique Bauby, we can still overcome even extreme circumstances.

This book presents a story based on scientific and personal evidence of the uncontrolled mind and Original Mind as two sides of the same brain dynamics. Comparable to identical twins who grow up in unique environments, they share the same genetics. The uncontrolled mind is, in fact, Original Mind. The former simply focuses on the past and future, while the latter is more at home in the present moment. Dwelling on the past and future occasionally gets the mind snagged in that mode and becomes dysfunctional. This dysfunction causes havoc when unmanaged and chronic. The solution is not to get rid of this mind, but to use self-parenting approaches and present-moment centering to place its functioning in the proper context. Training and guiding the obsessive mind back to its original state is possible—to deal with the challenges of living in-themoment.

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He is the editor of Mirror Neurons and author of Controlling Mental
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Impulse: The Evolution and Neuroscience of What Brings Us Together.

SKILLFUL MEANS

<u>Your Skillful Means</u>, sponsored by the Wellspring Institute, is designed to be a comprehensive resource for people interested in personal growth, overcoming inner obstacles, being helpful to others, and expanding consciousness. It includes instructions in everything from common psychological tools for dealing with negative self talk, to physical exercises for opening the body and clearing the mind, to meditation techniques for clarifying inner experience and connecting to deeper aspects of awareness, and much more.

Autogenic Training

PURPOSE/EFFECTS

Autogenic training teaches the body to respond to visualizations or verbal commands that lead it to relax. This relaxation promotes stress relief. It can be used either in or after stressful situations for immediate relief, or be part of a self-care regimen to avoid the ramifications of chronic stress. The six different exercises, when mastered, have measurable effects on the body and mind, helping with anxiety, chronic pain, insomnia, asthma, gastrointestinal problems, ulcers, and high blood pressure.

METHOD

Summary

Learn to relax and calm your muscles, heart, breath, stomach, and head.

Long Version

Autogenic training takes about three months to learn
because of the extreme discipline required for the
technique to be effective. DO NOT try to skip ahead to the end; you'll only cheat yourself.

1. Start alone in a quiet place. Wear comfortable, loose clothing. You may want to begin by lying on the floor for the first session.

Perspectives on Self-Care

Be careful with all self-help methods (including those presented in this Bulletin), which are no substitute for working with a licensed healthcare practitioner. People vary, and what works for someone else may not be a good fit for you. When you try something, start slowly and carefully, and stop immediately if it feels bad or makes things worse.

- 2. Warm up with a breathing exercise, exhaling for twice as many counts as you inhale. Start by inhaling for one count and exhaling for two, then inhaling for two and exhaling for four, all the way up to inhaling for six and exhaling for twelve. Then reverse, going back down until you once again come to one count in, two counts out.
- 3. **Heaviness practice:** Begin with your right arm if you are right-handed, your left arm if you are left-handed. Breath deeply and evenly and repeat the following formula silently to yourself:
- My right arm is getting limp and heavy. (6-8x)
- My right arm is getting heavier and heavier. (6-8x)
- My right arm is completely heavy. (6-8x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)

Do this two or three times a day for three days. Then, two or three times a day for the next three days, begin with the warm-up breathing exercise and repeat the same formula as above but this time with your left arm (or your right if you are left-handed). Repeat this the next three day cycle but with both arms. The next three, your right leg (left if you're left-handed), then your left leg (right if you're left-handed), then both legs, and the final set of three days, both your arms and your legs. This will end up being 2-3 exercises a day for three days, with seven exercises in all, meaning 21 days will have passed by the end of the heaviness practice. At the end of this practice period, the final routine you learned (both arms and legs) will be what you use from now on.

- 4. **Warmth practice:** Start with the same warm-up breathing exercise and then do the both-arms-and-legs heaviness routine. This will relax your muscles. Next, you will breathe deeply and evenly and repeat the following formula silently to yourself (again, begin with your left arm if you are left-handed):
- My right arm is getting limp and warm. (6-8x)
- My right arm is getting warmer and warmer. (6-8x)
- My right arm is completely warm. (6-8x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)

The warmth practice cycle will follow the model of the heaviness practice cycle, going through the limbs in the same way on the same schedule of 21 days. Remember always to begin with the warm-up breathing exercise and then the final iteration of the heaviness routine. The final warmth practice, you will say:

Both my arms and my legs are getting limp and heavy and warm. (6-8x)

- Both my arms and my legs are getting heavier and warmer. (6-8x)
- Both my arms and my legs are completely heavy and warm. (6-8x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)

This routine will be what you use from now on, fusing both the heaviness and warmth practices. Do the breathing exercises and then this final heavy/warm routine two or three times a day for a week.

- 5. **Calm heart practice:** Start with the warm-up breathing exercise. Next, with deep and even breaths repeat the following formula silently to yourself:
- Both my arms and my legs are getting limp and heavy and warm. (1-2x)
- Both my arms and my legs are getting heavier and warmer. (1-2x)
- Both my arms and my legs are completely heavy and warm. (1-2x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)
- My chest feels warm and pleasant. (6-8x)
- My heartbeat is calm and steady. (6-8x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)

Practice this routine two or three times a day for two weeks. After this, you will have achieved a calm heart and will be able to drop the line "My chest is warm and pleasant," as you will see in the next exercise.

- 6. **Breathing practice:** Start with the warm-up breathing exercise. Next, with deep and even breaths repeat the following formula silently to yourself:
- Both my arms and my legs are getting limp and heavy and warm. (1-2x)
- Both my arms and my legs are getting heavier and warmer. (1-2x)
- Both my arms and my legs are completely heavy and warm. (1-2x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)
- My heartbeat is calm and steady. (1-2x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)
- My breathing is supremely calm. (6-8x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)
 - Practice this routine two or three times a day for two weeks. By this time, you will probably notice real results, but stick with the training through the final two exercises.
- 7. **Warm stomach practice:** Start with the warm-up breathing exercise. Next, with deep and even breaths repeat the following formula silently to yourself:

- Both my arms and my legs are getting limp and heavy and warm. (1-2x)
- Both my arms and my legs are getting heavier and warmer. (1-2x)
- Both my arms and my legs are completely heavy and warm. (1-2x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)
- My heartbeat is calm and steady. (1-2x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)
- My breathing is supremely calm. (1-2x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)
- My stomach is getting soft and warm. (6-8x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)

Practice this routine two or three times a day for two weeks.

- 8. **Cool forehead practice:** Start with the warm-up breathing exercise. Next, with deep and even breaths repeat the following formula silently to yourself:
- Both my arms and my legs are getting limp and heavy and warm. (1-2x)
- Both my arms and my legs are getting heavier and warmer. (1-2x)
- Both my arms and my legs are completely heavy and warm. (1-2x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)
- My heartbeat is calm and steady. (1-2x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)
- My breathing is supremely calm. (1-2x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)
- My stomach is getting soft and warm. (1-2x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)
- My forehead is cool. (6-8x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1x)

Practice this routine two or three times a day for two weeks.

- 9. **Final formula:** At this point, three months later, you should be adept at AT. The final formula will be a condensed version of the one you learned. You should continue to do it at least once a day, if not more, for optimum results. The final formula is as follows:
- My arms and my legs are heavy and warm. (1-2x)
- My heartbeat and breathing are calm and steady. (1-2x)
- My stomach is soft and warm. (1-2x)
- My forehead is cool. (1-2x)
- I feel supremely calm. (1-2x)

HISTORY

Autosuggestion and self-hypnosis techniques have been a part of the self-help movement since

its inception through people like Émile Coué. German psychologist Johannes Schultz worked with

self-hypnosis techniques in the 1920s and 1930s, and began developing the concept of autogenic

training, publishing his first book on AT in 1932. Since then, psychologists have thoroughly tested

the technique and established it as one of the most powerful relaxation skills available.

CAUTIONS

Because AT can affect blood pressure, consult with a doctor before doing AT if you have a serious

illness like diabetes or heart disease, and do not attempt to use it to regulate severe mental illness.

If you have problems with learning AT on your own but are still interested in its possible benefits,

consider seeking out a certified AT instructor who can help you.

NOTES

Autogenic training is similar to Progressive Relaxation in many ways; some people suggest learning

PR first and then moving to autogenics.

SEE ALSO

Activating the Parasympathetic Wing of Your Nervous System

Affirmations

Progressive Relaxation

Self-Hypnosis

EXTERNAL LINKS

Autogenics

Fare Well

May you and all beings be happy, loving, and wise.

The Wellspring Institute

For Neuroscience and Contemplative Wisdom

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