

# The Wise Brain Bulletin

News and Tools for Happiness, Love, and Wisdom

Volume 3, 3 (3/31/09)

*Featured Article:*

## Spinning On Uncertain Ground (Or, some thoughts around creative connectedness amidst our uncertain economic climate)

© by Sophia Isajiw and Lisa Kaftori

*"Creativity is the encounter of the intensively conscious human being with his or her world."*

~ Rollo May



**Young Girl Spinning**

Video stills from *Spinning On Uncertain Ground* © Isajiw & Kaftori

A young girl spins happily in the sand on the shore of the Pacific Ocean, her little being transformed into a joy energy vortex. On the other side of the world, a Sufi dervish whirls passionately into the velvet darkness of night, white skirt twirling, one hand reaching gracefully toward heaven, the other pointing confidently toward touchstone earth. The dervish spins as if compelling the universe to continue turning; his ritual dance, a powerful prayer of praise and gratitude, seems bent simultaneously on transcendence and equilibrium.

Why do children spin and dervishes whirl? Why does a perfect pirouette take our breath away?

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#### **Power of Intention**

by Rick Hanson, PhD.

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Why do we feel an irresistible urge to spin when we're joyful? Is there a neurological connection to this physical activity that somehow approaches the sublime?

Children, in their inherent wisdom, love to somersault and swing, or to spin and twirl on merry-go-rounds. Studies show that there are many significant connections between the cerebellum, the part of the brain responsible for motor development, and the upper regions of the brain that control attention, focus, reason and logic – in other words, the regions that produce significant thinking. According to Joan Lessen-Firestone<sup>1</sup>, physical activities like spinning around, playing on carousels, teeter-totters and swings encourage important early brain development via the inner ear and its vestibular system—the sensory mechanism in the inner ear that detects movement of the head and helps to control balance. Children growing up without this regular movement experience weaker connections and their thinking processes and ability to focus suffer.

## Spinning into Connection

Because spinning relies on vestibular stimulation, our neurological responses allow us to experience a feeling of limitless connection both within and without the self as a result.

### 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.

The Bulletin is offered freely, and you are welcome to share it with others. Past issues are archived at [www.WiseBrain.org](http://www.WiseBrain.org).

Rick Hanson, PhD and Richard Mendius, MD edit the Bulletin, and it's designed and laid out by Brad Reynolds at [BradleyYes@aol.com](mailto:BradleyYes@aol.com).

To subscribe, please contact Rick at [drhh@comcast.net](mailto:drhh@comcast.net).

Like a dervish, the child spinning on the beach may whirl because she experiences fully open awareness of our limitless connection to everything in the universe, or an 'absolute unity of being' to use an older term from philosophy.

The term "dervish" itself literally means "doorway" and is thought to be an entrance from the material world into the spiritual world. The Sufi spinning ceremony is a progression: from self-transformation as a union with God, to the death of the ego, and a return to life as a servant of all creation. The right hand of the dervish opens to the skies in prayer, ready to receive divine beneficence, and the left hand is turned towards the earth in a gesture of bestowal, the dervish becoming a point of contact through which divine blessings can flow to earth.<sup>2</sup>

David O'Reilly, in his article *The Bliss Machine*<sup>3</sup> explains the neurological studies of such religious rituals as follows:

According to D'Aquili and Newberg, religious rituals and practices stimulate the two major subsystems of the autonomic systems. The ergotropic system is the body's fight-or-flight nervous system. In moments of stress, it raises the heart rate, blood pressure and respiration, and hastens endocrine to the muscles, among other activities. The other system, the trophotropic, can be understood as the system of calm. It reduces the heart rate, slows respiration, and regulates cell growth, digestion, relaxation and sleep.

D'Aquili and Newberg propose that certain religious practices can so stimulate the body's calm system or its flight system that activity in the related brain circuit starts to 'reverberate,' while simultaneously shutting down ever more of the other system. Depending on whether the ritual is fast (as in the spinning dance of Sufi whirling dervishes) or slow, as in Zen meditation, different parts of the brain are activated, perceived by the mind as a higher state of consciousness.

In states of very high activity around one circuit, they say, there can be a 'spillover,' such

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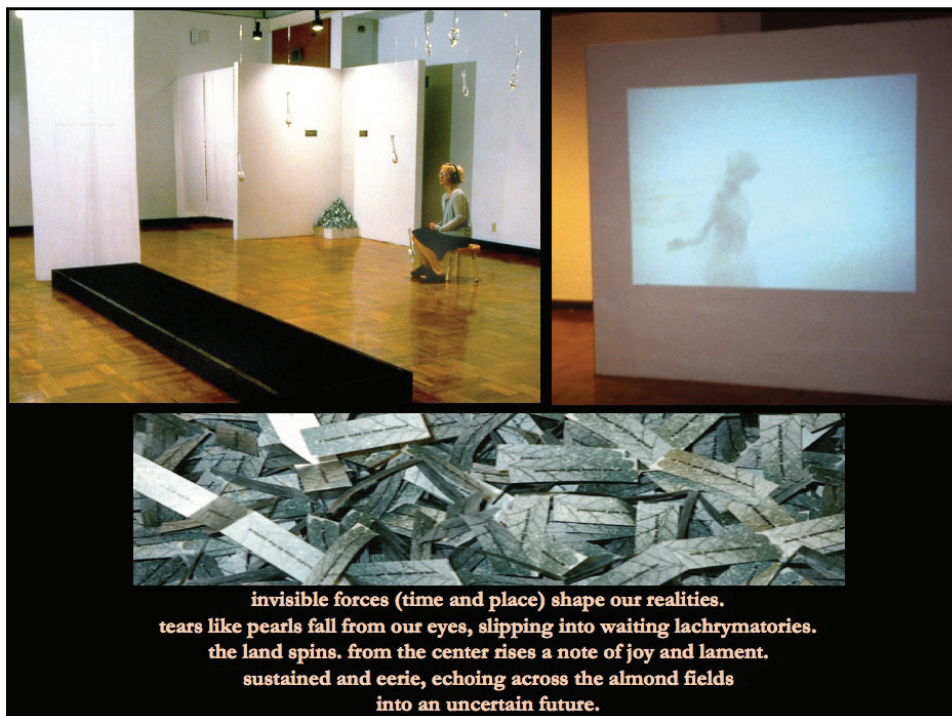
that the dormant system activates and goes ‘on line’ simultaneously with the other. Although rare, this dual state can lead to a sense of ‘tremendous release of energy’ that may feel like ‘oceanic bliss’ or absorption into the object of contemplation. And extreme cases of both systems being activated can induce brain activities perceived by the mind as the ‘Absolute Unity of Being.’

And he goes on to state that a mystic in this state will experience either a divine being (God) or a cosmic void (nirvana). Dervishes believe and acknowledge that everything in the universe is spinning in this energy.

In Sanskrit, the word “chakra” translates to mean “wheel of spinning light.” The seven body chakras are believed to be spinning vortices of

energy in our bodies that connect us physically, emotionally, and spiritually to a universal field of energy. The speed of the chakra spin is a key to vibrant health according to the Five Tibetan Rites of Rejuvenation.<sup>4</sup> The Five Rites speed up the spinning of the chakras, coordinate their spin so they are in complete harmony, distribute pure prana energy to the endocrine system and to all organs and processes in the body.

We know from science that all things in the universe are in a constant state of spinning: subatomic particles, solar systems, and even the Milky Way galaxy. The particles in our bodies, and those around them, spin. The universe manifests energy in a spiral, and so as we spin, we harmonize with the core of this universal energy. Spinning can thus change one’s mood on the mental, physical, psychological and spiritual levels.



***Spinning On Uncertain Ground***, site-specific, multimedia installation © Isajiw & Kaftori  
Installation details: trough of earth with 12 footprints, lachrymatories, cloth panel embroidered with text: **gather your tears into my bottle**, viewer sitting on milking stool, listening to audio, video projection of woman spinning on beach, poetic fortune “leaves”...

## Spinning Creatively

Eight years ago, we collaborated to create a multimedia art installation entitled: *Spinning On Uncertain Ground*, which was very much about how opposites can be held together on their continuums through spinning, a

seemingly unbalanced activity that requires great balance to maintain. Among elements in the larger whole of this installation were two videos. The first, a video projection of a little girl in a white dress spinning on a beach, in front of ocean waves.

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The video is bleached slightly of its color and the timing is slowed. Viewers watch her spinning gracefully, then losing balance, then finding her center again. The other was of a mature woman spinning slowly and gracefully, over and over, a dancer on a beach. This video is also bleached of its colors and slowed, so that the woman seems like she may be from another time, another world, another space, perhaps a divinity or a daemon. Her spins are more controlled, more consciously aware.

Central to *Spinning On Uncertain Ground* was an exploration of the journey to individual and collective joy, especially during times of uncertainty. The exhibition focused on our innate ability to spin away burdens, doctrines, and circumstances that separate us from each other and from nature, in order to find spiritual and emotional middle paths, to fully connect. *Spinning On Uncertain Ground* used the metaphor of spinning to posit the idea that coming together to spin the significant narratives of our historic and contemporary burdens creates the understanding and the expansiveness necessary for shifts of awareness and new perceptions of self and the world to form. In *Spinning On Uncertain Ground* individuals and communities were encouraged to spin literally and metaphorically in order to find equilibrium and well being during tentative times.

The innocent joyful spinning of a young girl, the hyperconscious state of dervish dancers whirling around their physical access, and the compassion and spaciousness of individuals and communities who transcend differences by coming together to witness one another's cultural narratives, all experience spinning as an active meditation that centers the mind and the body and heightens conscious awareness.

In terms of neurology, the *movement* embodied by physical, psychological and metaphoric acts of spinning and other forms of meditation reward us emotionally, physiologically, and spiritually. Neuroscientists such as Mark Waldman and Dr. Andrew Newberg have shown that meditation, prayer and spiritual practices alter the brain to improve memory and reduce anxiety, depression and anger.<sup>5</sup>

To spin *well* you have to become very centered and connected. Thus chaos and control are united – by grounding, by centering, by being in the present moment, by consciousness. Spinning is a form of active meditation that, within a few short minutes, helps center the body and mind and creates a connection between inner self and outer world.

*A secret turning in us makes the universe turn. Head unaware of feet, and feet head. Neither cares. They keep turning. ~ Rumi*



*Spinning On Uncertain Ground*, site-specific, multimedia installation © Isajiw & Kaftori  
Installation details: electronic fortune cookie, lachrymatories with pearls, cloth panel embroidered with text:  
*gather your tears into my bottle. Our invisible longings and desires exist inside the visible...*

# Spinning On Uncertain Ground

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## Acknowledgements:

The site-specific multimedia installation, *Spinning On Uncertain Ground*, was created by Sophia Isajiw and Lisa Kaftori, in collaboration, for the University Art Gallery, California State University, Stanislaus, in 2000. Lisa and Sophia wish to thank Aiyana Sky Powell for spinning in, "Young Girl Spinning." Special thanks to filmmaker Robin Bisio and to dancer Cybil Gilbertson for 30 beautiful seconds from the film "Reign of Dreams."

## Endnotes:

1. [www.mi-aimh.msu.edu/publications/JoanFirestone.pdf](http://www.mi-aimh.msu.edu/publications/JoanFirestone.pdf)
  2. [http://www.lesartsturcs.com/lessons/whirling\\_dervish.php](http://www.lesartsturcs.com/lessons/whirling_dervish.php)
  3. David O'Reilly, "The Bliss Machine," *Science and Religion*, (Science Saturday February 28, 1998)  
[http://scienceandreligion.com/b\\_myst\\_1.html](http://scienceandreligion.com/b_myst_1.html)
  4. for an in-depth discussion on The Five Tibetan Rites see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five\\_Tibetan\\_Rites](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Tibetan_Rites)
  5. <http://www.wildmind.org/tag/neuroscience>
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## Author's Bios

**Lisa Kaftori, M.F.A.,** is an internationally exhibited, award-winning conceptual artist, and social sculptor. She creates site-specific installation, performance and ecological art, based on extensive interdisciplinary research and collaboration.



© Dorrie Powell

Lisa has lectured and performed at the National Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution and at universities and symposia around the world. She is co-founder, with artist Joan Giroux, of Compassionate Action Enterprises, an artist collaborative that promotes art geared toward social, political, environmental and cultural activism.

Lisa is a dedicated TM and Raja yoga practitioner. Originally from Southern California, she currently lives in Israel.

**Sophia Isajiw, M.F.A.,** is an award-winning interdisciplinary visual artist whose work and research emphasize interconnective installations and social action performances.



She is the Founder of the Velvet Antler Studio for Print Media at the international Banff Centre for the Arts, an art gallery Director, Curator, arts writer, Public Arts Commissioner, Assistant Professor of Fine Art, and accomplished Reiki practitioner.

She has taught at the California Institute of the Arts, the California State University, the University of Toronto, the University of Windsor and has lectured across Canada and the US. You can learn more about her work at: [www.ccca.ca](http://www.ccca.ca) or <http://www.artreview.com/profile/SophiaIsajiw>

# The Power of Intention

© By Rick Hanson, Ph.D., 2009

*Every day, think as you wake up: Today I am fortunate to have woken up.  
I am alive, I have a precious human life. I am not going to waste it. ~ The Dalai Lama*

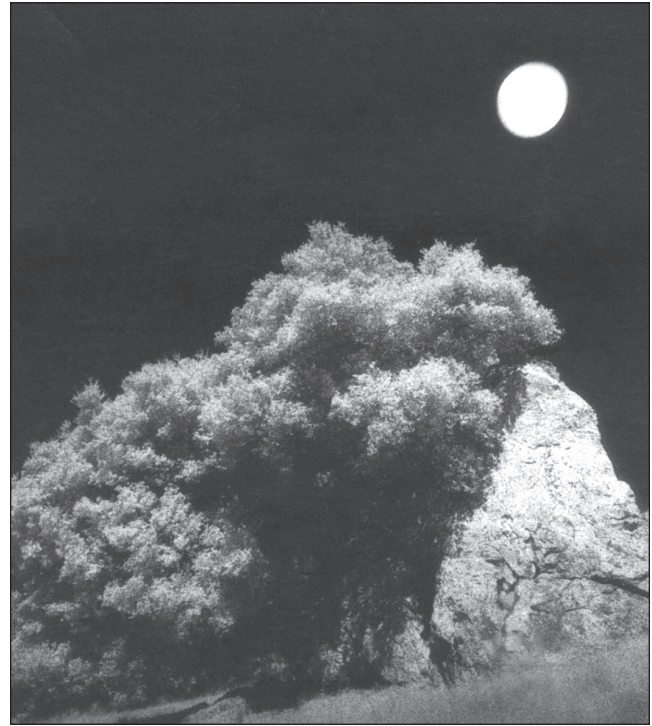
To make the most of your life, to nourish the causes of happiness for yourself and others, it takes strength, clear intentions, and persistent effort. This essay explores how to establish powerful intentions and sustain the commitment to see them come true.

## Setting Clear Intentions

As humans evolved, stacking one floor above another on the neuroaxis in the brain, our horizons expanded. We gradually extended the time between stimulus and response, and the space between our own actions and their outermost ripples. The wider your view, the wiser your intentions. So it's good to ask yourself: *How wide is my view?* It's natural to spend most of your time focusing on what's right in front of you, but every so often it's worth considering questions like these:

- What good and bad effects will my lifestyle today have on me 20 years from now?
- What do I do that helps and harms my planet?
- How do my love and my anger affect others?
- What could be the long-term results of intensifying my psychological growth and spiritual practices?

And how *high* is your aim? One time at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, my spiritual “home base,” my friend and teacher, Sylvia Boorstein, silenced a room full of several hundred people when she asked a simple question: *What about enlightenment?* She went on to point out that the Buddha, like all the great teachers, always encouraged people toward the most complete



**Spirit Rock**, Woodacre, CA

realization possible. Whether or not you connect with the notion of enlightenment or related ideas like union with God, each one of us has a sense deep down of the ultimate possibilities of a human life. If you haven't taken those possibilities seriously and gone after them, why not start now? Is there truly a good reason not to?

Personally, I've never heard a good reason. But like just about everyone, I keep forgetting this and losing my way in the sheer busyness of life. Further, the lower floors of the neuroaxis naturally pull us toward aims that are immediate and concrete—not because the brainstem, hypothalamus, and limbic system are base or sinful, but simply because they are more primitive in an evolutionary sense. Then your horizons shrink to the next few months and the small circle around you.



## Skillful Intending

**M**uch as you can see farther from an upstairs window, the uppermost layer of your brain is key to creating and pursuing the widest, highest, and wisest aims. So in this article I'll emphasize using the prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) to do just that, starting with these general considerations about how to be skillful at intending.

### *Seeing Clearly*

Intentions are effective when they are grounded in reality, in what is really true. Here are some things that will help:

- Cultivate *wanting* to know the facts of your inner and outer worlds. Take in the rewards of seeing clearly, like feeling safer.
- Slow down. Give your cortex time to understand what is actually happening, what led up to it, and what an appropriate response would be.
- Stay mindful of the big picture. In the larger mosaic of a situation, notice if you're focusing on one tile out of a hundred.

- Pay attention to intention itself. It determines the full consequences of your thoughts, words, and deeds.

### *Non-harming*

This is a central principle in ethics, morality, and virtue. Fundamentally, it's enlightened self-interest. Since we're all connected together, not harming others decreases the harms that would come back to hurt you. Similarly, not harming yourself reduces harms to others.

### *Do's and Don't's*

Intentions can be positive (do) or negative (don't). Positive statements are more informative, because they spotlight the bullseye rather than just tell you what to avoid hitting. But negative statements are more powerful, since they draw on the intense, "lower floor" withdrawal and freeze circuitry of the brain. That's why they're used so often.

For your own intentions, it's natural to use both forms. The positive one breathes inspiration and life into moral conduct; for example, "be generous" is a joyful balance to "do not steal." And sometimes it's necessary to have a very clear NO sign in front of certain actions, like being very clear that you just never lie to your mate, no matter what.

*When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do, sir?*

*~ John Maynard Keynes*

- Notice how limbic and brainstem processes tilt cortical ones, and vice versa. For example, the brain uses feedback from "in here"—particularly your autonomic nervous system, muscles, heart, and gut—to form beliefs that are often mistaken about what is happening "out there." Or see how an anxious temperament inflates threats, or a glum mood downplays opportunities. Use this awareness to challenge your appraisals and judgments: is a situation truly a 7 on the zero-to-ten Ugh scale, or more like a 2? As Oscar Wilde once wrote: The worst things in my life never actually happened to me.

## The View from the Porch

**N**ow, to expand the horizons of your intentions, here's one of my all-time favorite exercises.

Relax, and take a few breaths. Settle as deeply as you can into a feeling of calm and well-being.

Imagine that you are sitting comfortably somewhere many years from now. Your health and your mind are intact. You are in your 90's or older, toward the end of your lifespan, sitting on a porch in a comfortable chair, with a beautiful view down a long valley below. There may be

other people around, or maybe not, however you like.

Sitting there in your chair, you feel really good, really contented. Then you start reflecting back upon the life you've had, from the vantage point of a comfortable old age.

Looking back from the porch, what are you happy about? Consider different parts of your life, such as friends and family, work and career, good times and bad, personal and spiritual development, creativity, health, self-expression, and service.

Keep restoring the perspective of looking back from the porch, from a comfortable old age.

What are some of the things you feel grateful for?

What has been really important in your life?

What are you glad that you stood for?

What do you wish you had done differently?

What have been the central guiding values and principles of your life?

What qualities or aspects of your life make you glad that you have lived, and at peace with your life ending some day?

Looking back, what would you say to a younger version of yourself? Such as the age you are today.

Take a few moments to let all this sink in. You might like to write down some of your reflections.

\* \* \*

A simple exercise, but for most people, quite a powerful one. Humans have a unique ability to do mental time travel, to use the simulation capabilities of the prefrontal cortex to visit the lived past and the imagined future in vivid

detail. By visualizing a future and then turning around to look back at the past – some of which is actually still to come for you!—the exercise tricks and dislocates the brain's time traveling functions, sometimes jarring open a fresh clarity about those things that matter most.



### ***Identify Your Purposes in Life***

Looking back from “the porch,” can you see any overarching purposes that sum up the things that are most important to you in this life? Perhaps love, or joy, or discovery, or service, or spiritual realization. Or? Is there one fundamental purpose in your life that is your highest and best aim, your guiding star?

Explicit, consciously held life purposes are a useful corrective to your brain's tendency to scan continually for opportunities and threats. That keeps drawing your attention and actions toward short-term and local possibilities, thus narrowing your horizons. And because it is rooted in the lower floors of the neuroaxis, the carrots and sticks it identifies are usually simple, even primal.

So, to keep your eyes on the big prize, how about writing down your life purpose(s)? This could seem daunting, but you can change it later. Pushing yourself to get something down on paper, even if it's not exactly right, can break any logjams. Go for it! What will bring the highest happiness, the greatest peace to your life?

Try on the feeling of different words. Find ones that evoke an *experience* of the state of being you want as the basis of your life. Positive, present-tense language works best. For example, instead of *I will find love*, how about *There is love in my*



*life* or *I am love*. The positive words stimulate the approach networks of your brain, compensating for their relative weakness compared to the survival-focused avoidance circuitry. And regarding your purpose as a present reality tells your brain that this is the new normal, rather than something implicitly always out there in the distance—out of reach.

Find imagery as well for your purposes, such as collages made out of pictures and headlines, from magazines, that are combined however you like, neatly or slap dash. You can make a collage on notepaper, but I find it's more fun to use a 2' x 3' posterboard. In my office at home, three collages hang on the wall, and when I glance at them, they touch my heart and nudge my mind in the right direction. You could also just find a single picture that says everything to you and keep it where you can see it every day, like in your appointment book or on your car's dashboard.

As your purposes clarify, try to feel them in your body, and imagine them sinking down the neuroaxis, becoming increasingly embedded at deeper and deeper levels. Bring them to mind from time to time, and see how that changes your day. Perhaps weave a regular renewal of commitment to your life's purposes into your meditation or other spiritual practices. Purpose is effective if it is *felt*, kept in awareness, and taken seriously: holding it in front of your mind like a rider holding a carrot in front of a horse.



## Clarify Your Major Priorities

Your fundamental *purposes* in life are supported by major *priorities*, which are fulfilled through specific *commitments* (see just below). When your purposes, priorities, and commitments all line up together toward positive ends, that creates a virtuous, effective, and happy life.

To clarify your true priorities, write a list of the major areas of your life. Like Health, Spirituality, Love, Pleasure, Marriage, Childrearing, Career, Creative Expression, and Finances. Create categories that mean something to you, and you can have as many as you like.

Next, consider how important each area or aim is to you. Bring to mind the view from the porch, looking back from old age: what will you want your priorities to have been? Open up to the longings in your heart: what are they saying to you?

Then, make a new list of the major areas or aims of your life, this time in order of greatest priority. Number them, with #1 being the most important. Sorry, no ties are allowed! Ask yourself: *If I could have just one of those priorities fulfilled, which would it be?* Then take that one off the list, and repeat the question with the remaining priorities, and so on.

When you have your numbered priority list, ask yourself if you are being true to it. Are you allocating resources such as time and attention consistent with your real priorities? Most of us put a lot of effort into things that don't actually have much pay-off while giving short shrift to things that do. As you reflect, it's common to feel some discomfort, and if that's the case, use it to motivate yourself to live truer to your priorities. You're drawing on cortical capabilities—especially those mediated by the anterior cingulate (ACC)—to resolve conflicts among priorities and get all levels of the neuroaxis pointed in the same direction.

What would a typical day be like if you really lived according to your highest priorities?

Whenever you think about living that way, pay attention to the rewards you'd experience and let them sink in, gradually inclining your brain and your mind toward them.

Living in greater alignment with your highest priorities probably means a few small but significant changes. What could you do, realistically, starting today to live more in that way? And how could you start nudging your life so that a year from now, it is as congruent as possible with your most heartfelt priorities?

### **Make Specific Commitments**

Now let's translate your purposes and priorities into specific commitments. (You could also regard these as agreements with yourself or precepts.) The lower levels of the neuroaxis don't process abstractions, so giving them concrete instructions mobilizes them most effectively.

Get a piece of paper and put the #1 priority area of your life at the top of it as a heading. Then list specific do's and don't's beneath it that will nourish it for real, bringing benefits that are both immediate and grow over time. For example, if your top priority is loving relationships, you could consider committing to things like:

*Never speak or act out of anger with my children*  
*Say at least one kind thing each day to my partner*  
*Don't let Bob/Mary/whoever get to me*  
*Have friends over for dinner once a month*  
*Include a compassion practice my daily meditation*

Each of these moves you toward a priority and is a natural expression of that priority; each one is both a means to an end and an end in itself. Start by regarding the do's and don't's as tentative, up for consideration (pencil is good for this), but by the end, make a genuine commitment to what-

ever remains on your list. Then repeat this for each of the other priorities, going through them in order (so the next one is #2). Keep imagining what your life would be like if you actually did what was on your list, focusing on the rewards that would come—happiness, a clear conscience, a peaceful marriage, progress toward important ambitions, spiritual growth—and soaking them in.

Notice any resistance to pinning yourself down. While it's certainly true that you will pursue your intentions in many ways outside of these commitments, it's also very useful to tap the executive, conflict-resolving powers of the cortex to direct the bustling brain and thus regulate the unruly mind. Also, to borrow a theme from Buddhism, think of these commitments not as commandments it would be a sin to violate but as "trainings" you undertake to purify your mind and heart. They're skillful means, not edicts from on high. Take your commitments seriously, but don't get so worried about breaching them that you don't make them in the first place. A little wiggle room encourages conscientiousness.

When you're done, look over your lists. Get a sense of the benefits to you and others of actually living your life this way. Have the experience of those benefits sink in.

Recall the view from the porch, and imagine that you—as that older, future you—are reflecting on what happened in your life when you started living each day according to the lists you just made. Looking backwards from that future point in time, imagine how your life changed for the better, including in specific areas, such as your career, family, health, or spirituality.

Then see if you are willing to commit to this plan for your life in a serious, real way. If not, so be it, but if yes, GREAT.

### **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.

# Words of Wisdom

## Modern Science and Ancient Wisdom

*There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.*

~ Albert Einstein

*Great questioning, great enlightenment; little questioning, little enlightenment; no questioning, no enlightenment.*

~ Dogen

*That empirical attitude is embedded within Buddhism just as it is within science. A famous word that the Buddha used of the dharma was ehipassiko, sometimes translated as “come and see for yourself”—inviting one’s own inspection. This is really the message of science, also.*

~ Guy Armstrong

*When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do, sir?*

~ John Maynard Keynes

*Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood.*

~ Marie Curie

*The history of science is rich in the example of the fruitfulness of bringing two sets of techniques, two sets of ideas, developed in separate contexts for the pursuit of new truth, into touch with one another.*

~ J. Robert Oppenheimer

*If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs, it would be Buddhism.*

~ Albert Einstein

*Those who dwell, as scientists or laymen, among the beauties and mysteries of the earth, are never alone or weary of life.*

~ Rachel Carson

*If there is no stillness, there is no silence.*

*If there is no silence, there is no insight.*

*If there is no insight, there is no clarity.*

Ven. Tenzin Priyadarshi

*Logic takes you from A to B. Imagination takes you everywhere.*

~ Albert Einstein

*Positive emotions are worth cultivating, not just as end states in themselves but also as a means to achieving psychological growth and improved well-being over time.*

~ Barbara L. Frederickson

*My advice to you is not to inquire why or whither, but just to enjoy your ice cream while it’s on your plate.*

~ Thornton Wilder

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### San Rafael Meditation Group

Open to beginners and experienced practitioners, we meet on Wednesday evenings at the A Sante day spa in downtown San Rafael at the corner of Brooks and 3rd. “Early-bird” meditation starts at 6:45 with formal instruction at 7:00; meditation ends at 7:30, followed by a brief break, and then a dharma talk and discussion, ending at 8:30. It is led by Rick Hanson, and for more information, check out [www.WiseBrain.org/sanrafaelmeditation.html](http://www.WiseBrain.org/sanrafaelmeditation.html). Newcomers are always welcome!





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# Offerings

Rick Hanson, PhD, and Rick Mendius, MD

1. Sounds True offers *Meditations for Happiness* by Rick Hanson, Ph.D. It's 3 CD's worth of talks and brain-savvy exercises for increasing your happiness, with an emphasis on experiential practices and practical tools. It is offered as an inexpensive download to your computer, where you can listen to it or burn it to CD's or transfer it to an iPod.

This program truly turned out to be pretty great, and here's a comment about it from the author, Annie Spiegelman:

*On his new "Meditations for Happiness" program, benevolent Rick Hanson guides me to sit down and face my inner critic – and then actually see it as a form and shrink it. Being a Master Gardener, I see the critic as a gnome who tiptoes into my brain when no one is looking, with those tiny pointy shoes, and makes me doubt myself. I shrink him down to the size of a snail and toss him out. He knows nothing. The shoes are a dead giveaway.*

Here's the link to this program at Sounds True: <http://shop.soundstrue.com/shop.soundstrue.com/SelectProd.do;jsessionid=AA644B8B2BA5A2526E297913DE0434AD?prodId=1715&manufacturer=Soundstrue&category=Exploring%20the%20Psyche&name=Meditations%20for%20Happiness>

2. Rick also has a chapter, "7 Facts about the Brain That Incline the Mind to Joy," in *Measuring the Immeasurable* – which is chock full of essays from luminaries like James Austin, MD, Larry Dossey, MD, Daniel Goleman, PhD, Candace Pert, PhD, Marilyn Schlitz, PhD, Dan Siegel, MD, Charles Tart, PhD, and Cassandra Vieten, PhD. Check it out at <http://www.amazon.com/Measuring-Immeasurable-Scientific-Case-Spirituality/dp/1591796547>.

3. At Spirit Rock, in 2009, these daylongs with Rick Hanson and Rick Mendius are scheduled:

- **Equanimity**, on Sunday, May 17. Equanimity is the key to freedom from emotional reactions, and to cutting the chain of craving and clinging that leads to suffering. This workshop will also address the neuropsychology of difficult emotions, as well as trauma, and neurologically-informed methods for dealing with those.
- **The Neurodharma of Love**, on Saturday, May 23. The emphasis will be on relationships in general and love in the broadest sense, integrating deep teachings on compassion and lovingkindness with a clear-eyed understanding of how we evolved to be caring toward "us" and often wary and aggressive toward "them."

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## *offerings continued...*

- **Resting in Emptiness: The Evolution of Awareness and the Transcendence of the Self**, on Saturday, November 7. This workshop will address the thorny and fundamental question of . . . “me, myself, and I.” The self – with its tendencies to grasp after possessions and take things personally – is perhaps the premier engine of suffering. We’ll explore the evolution of the apparent self in the animal kingdom, and the ways in which the self is real and is also not real at all, coming to rest more and more in the underlying spacious awareness in which self appears and disappears.

- **The Hard Things That Open the Mind and Heart: Practicing with Difficult Conditions**, led with James Baraz, on Sunday, December 13. This is for people grappling with difficult conditions – both internal and external – and for caregivers and friends who support those individuals. These include challenges with the body, mind, and life circumstances. We’ll cover Buddhist perspectives and practices for difficult conditions; lovingkindness for oneself and for any being who suffers; brain-savvy ways to strengthen your capacity to be with the hard stuff; and methods from the intersection of the dharma and neuroscience for lifting mood and cultivating joy.

4. Also at Spirit Rock, Fred Luskin, Ph.D. and Rick Hanson, Ph.D. will offer a daylong benefit on Sunday, August 23 on **“Forgiveness and Assertiveness.”** These two subjects, which are often seen as at odds with each other, actually support each other. This workshop will cover how we form grievances, healthy forgiveness, and healthy assertiveness. Dr. Luskin is a world-renowned expert on forgiveness, and we will get into the nitty-gritty of how to work through difficult issues with others.

*Also in 2009, there are these additional offerings:*

5. At the Awakening to Mindfulness conference in San Diego, April 2 – 4, the presenters include Marsha Linehan, Tara Brach, Steven Hayes, Jack Kornfield, and Rick Hanson. 18 continuing education credits are available, and it should be an incredible program. Rick will be presenting two workshops on Friday, April 3: “The Self-Transforming Brain” and “Taking in the Good.” See [www.facesconferences.com](http://www.facesconferences.com) for more information.

6. At the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, in Barre, MA, on, April 11, Drs. Hanson and Mendius will be offering “Neuro-Dharma: Mindfulness and the Shaping of the Brain.” See [http://bcbs.dharma.org/Pages/course\\_detail.lasso?~KeyValue=58&~Token.Action=&image=1](http://bcbs.dharma.org/Pages/course_detail.lasso?~KeyValue=58&~Token.Action=&image=1) for more information.

7. At Kripalu Center, in Massachusetts, April 12 – 14, Drs. Hanson and Mendius are teaching a workshop on “The Intimate Brain: Exploring the Neural Circuits of Happiness, Love, and Non-Dual Awareness.” See [www.kripalu.org/program/view/IB91/the\\_intimate\\_brain\\_exploring\\_the\\_neural\\_circuits](http://www.kripalu.org/program/view/IB91/the_intimate_brain_exploring_the_neural_circuits) for more information.

8. At New York Insight Meditation Center, on April 19, Rick Hanson will be presenting “The Neurodharma of Love.” See <http://nyimc.org/index.php/site/eventcalendar> for more information.

9. At James Baraz’s wonderful **Awakening Joy** course, April 21 and 22, Rick will be a guest speaker. His subject will be how the brain constructs suffering in order to help you survive – and how understanding the mechanisms of that process suggests ways to suffer less.

10. At the Insight Meditation Community of Washington, DC, on June 13, Rick Hanson and Tara Brach will present **“The Neurodharma of Love.”** See [www.imcw.org/non-residential-retreats](http://www.imcw.org/non-residential-retreats) for more information.

11. At the 15th Annual Counseling Skills Conference in Las Vegas, September 11, Rick will offer a keynote address on **“The Science of Mindfulness.”**

12. With the Dharma Zephyr Insight Meditation Community in Nevada, Rick will be leading a two day workshop September 12 and 13 on using brain-savvy methods to steady the mind, quiet it, bring it to singleness, and concentrate it, following the road map of the Buddha. See [www.nevadadharma.net/zephyr.html](http://www.nevadadharma.net/zephyr.html) for more information.

13. Through R. Cassidy Seminars, Rick will be teaching continuing education workshops to mental health professionals in Los Angeles and San Diego (September 25 & 26), in Portland and Seattle (November 13 & 14). The workshops will focus on translating neuroscience research, informed by contemplative practice, into tools and skills that therapists can offer their clients. See [www.ceuregistration.com](http://www.ceuregistration.com) for more information.

14. At the University of East London, the conference on **Mindfulness and Well-Being: From Spirituality to Cognitive Neuroscience** will be held on November 20 and 21. Rick will be giving several talks and a workshop. Contact Dr. Patrizia Collard at [drcollard@stressminus.co.uk](mailto:drcollard@stressminus.co.uk) for more information.



***The Wellspring Institute for  
Neuroscience and Contemplative Wisdom***

The Institute is a 501c3 non-profit corporation, and it publishes the Wise Brain Bulletin. The Wellspring Institute gathers, organizes, and freely offers information and methods – supported by brain science and the contemplative disciplines – for greater happiness, love, effectiveness, and wisdom. For more information about the Institute, please go to [www.WiseBrain.org](http://www.WiseBrain.org).

***Fare Well***

***~ May you and all beings be happy, loving, and wise ~***