



**A Newsletter For Prisoners
Based on the Conversations with God Material**

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Change, Change, Change: Full of Do-Do

I've been doing a lot of thinking and reading about change recently. Mostly because I felt the need to make new decisions about my life when my mother passed away last May.

And, as I normally do, I passed these thoughts on to you in this newsletter.

By the way, I received some incredibly moving letters about the change some of you have gone through. You can read a few of those letters in this issue's Mail Bag. Thank you all for sharing.

So I've been thinking a lot about Who I Really Am and how I choose to show up in the world. To help my thinking process, I've read a lot about change, and let me tell you, there is something in the air these days because there is A LOT coming out on this subject from all kinds of sources.

And I'm left a little perplexed, a tiny bit (!) confused. We are given exercises to do, ideas of how to meditate, how to visualize, what to read next, and we are told to go within.

Don't get me wrong, I LOVE books, I have a few favorite authors that I read all the time with a great deal of joy. They inspire me, they boost my spirits, they help connect me to My Spirit, to Source. And, because of that, I am not about to stop reading.

But I am left with some choices to make.

Don't you just hate that???? Don't you wish sometimes that Source would be a little more tyrannical about stuff and just give us one way of doing things??!?!?.

I'm joking, of course (kind of). For I believe that the joy of my journey is very much in the openness of all my choices.

“Don't you wish sometimes that Source would be a little more tyrannical about stuff and just give us one way of doing things??!?!?.”

me to tap more surely into Source? Are there exercises that would help me along the way?

And I got tired just thinking about all these things I should be doing. And I use the word “should” in its very best meaning for me. That is, what is the best thing I can do to get me where I choose to go with the least amount of difficulty, pain and side trips.

I thought about all the suggestions the authors I love so much have written and I felt like I had a very long list of things to do. A lot to do. A lot of do-do.

And I like to stay away from do-do, if you know what I mean. So what now?

I figured that I had read enough about it. I'd done enough looking “out there” for answers. It was time to find my own an-

swers. So I unearthed my beliefs about change.

What do I believe about change?

I believe change is exciting; I believe that when I decide to change, all kinds of wonderful possibilities present themselves. I believe change is a little unnerving, sometimes even frightening, but I cannot imagine my life without it.

So, I love change. What else?

Well, I also love myself just as I am. There is not a lot I would change about who I am. (That's a great feeling by the way, one I hope all of you share). Now, I'm sure you know I don't feel like that all the time, but I do more and more every day. It's great.

So I love change very much but I don't want to change who I am, so what the heck?

And this is when I got my answers: I don't need to change myself. My Self is a grand expression of Divinity. What I choose to change is how I show up in the world, how much of my Divinity I am willing to allow to express Its Self.

Just writing that brings up fear for me. Try and see if doing something similar does the same for you. Decide which part of Divinity you choose to express today and see if you don't start thinking of why you might want to wait until tomorrow before you start really “doing” it.

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Change, Change, Change: Full of Do-Do
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Procrastination sounds pretty good to me right about now. ☺

But I don't like procrastinating. I get on my own nerves when I allow fear to stop me from doing what I choose to do. And I believe in the power of making a choice. It has been extraordinarily—or it may not be so extraordinary at that—creative in my life. Whenever I make a choice, one that makes my heart sing, things start to happen around me. It's quite wonderful.

So what part of Divinity do I choose to show up in my life? I choose to be Powerful, I choose to Make A Difference In The World here and now.

My heart is singing so beautifully right now, I wish you could hear.

So I am Power. I know this is nothing new, I know this Divine Quality was in me all along, I just choose to let it out now.

And guess what? All the do-do that had me so tired after reading all those books, they all were saying the same thing.

Let's see if you have heard this before: You don't need to do anything, just BE!

Sound familiar?

All the great masters and teachers of the world have always told us the same thing: we are Spirit. We are part of it all. We are made of the same stuff, God Stuff.

And here is, in very condensed form what I read and what I believe:

***Choose Who You Want to BE.** This will determine your new perspective when looking out at the world and what happens around you. This new way of perceiving the world and the events of your life will allow you to use the circumstances of your life as occasions to BE what you choose to be. This new perception of your world will change everything for you.*

For those of you who follow what I say I'm going to do, the previous paragraph is my own interpretation of what I saw happen in the very powerful retreat I was in last week-end with Neale D. Walsch about his latest book, When Everything Changes Change Everything

I also want to add something I read in another book, The P'taah Tapes: An Act of Faith, channeled by Jani King. In this book, we hear from P'taah, one of the Star People who gives us this beautiful message: we do not need to change anything about ourselves. We do not need to crush any part of ourselves. All of what is inside us is Divine because it IS. Nothing that is can be other than Divine.

So, in order to be fully what we already are, in order to have that experience, all we need do is embrace all that we are, all that we feel, all that we do. Embrace the fear that seems to haunt us, the fear of being unworthy, the fear of annihilation, the fear of not being/ not having enough. Embrace it, let yourself feel the fear and it will miraculously be transformed—P'taah calls this "transmutation"—into ecstasy.

The only thing that is needed, says P'taah, is to love ourselves, all of ourselves. Then loving each other will be easy.

So I decided to embrace my fear of not being worthy. That part of myself that says, "Who do you think you are to decide to be power, to change the world?". My fear is there so it must be Divine. I choose to feel it, embrace it, love it, accept it.

I am a spiritual being having an incredibly wonderful human experience (a bit of plagiarism from T. De Chardin)

You, my readers, are a major part of what makes my heart sing.

I thank you all for BEing,

Janine

First Thing First

Many of us would like our lives to be better, to "go" better. But that's a tall order, isn't it? Where to start? What to do first?

It can be such a daunting task, we just don't know where to start, so we stay put. We don't know if we would ever be able to change enough of our lives to make it better, so we stay put. What if I can't do it? What if I fail?

Does that seem like something you're doing? It sure describes well what I feel when I get stuck in any situation: I get stuck and I freeze and can't seem to moveat least until I give myself a good kick on thebehind to get me going again.

I'm betting that all of you recognize this feeling of being stuck. This fear of "what would happen if I did this or that?" If I move too fast or not fast enough? Would I gain anything or could I lose something I have now, even if that something doesn't fill me with joy, at least I have it now and I'm used it. As "they" say, better the devil you know.

But is that how we would like to live? Is that what we would like to feel about our lives, about how we are living it, about how we are showing up in it? I seriously doubt it. I know I certainly don't choose to stay stuck in fear. What about you?

So what to do? What can we do that would nevertheless keep us away from all the do-do?

I think the first thing to do is find out about ourselves. Find out what we choose to be here, how we choose to show up. What the next highest version of our Selves will be.

So here are four questions that Mr. Walsch asked of all the Retreat participants at the very beginning of our time together. I am asking all of you who wish to see their lives change to take the time to think about these questions and answer them as best you can. This is not a test. There are no right and wrong answers. This is about you re-creating yourself into your next highest version of who you really are. Here are the questions:

1. Who am I?
2. Where am I?
3. Why am I where I am?
4. What do I intend to do about that?

Let's see where the answers to these questions lead you. They are powerful questions so let your inner voice lead you to your own answers.

*Blessings,
Janine*

From Forgetting Who We Are to Remembering Who We Are

from *The Gift of Change*
by Marianne Williamson

To change our lives for the better, the first thing we have to do is stop projecting our ego-based sub-selves all over the place. Leading with me the depressed, Me the insecure, Me the angry, and Me the frightened is not exactly the psychological equivalent of putting your best foot forward.

Yet these psychic splinters, as it were, are what we *do* lead with until they're subsumed into the grandeur of our true selves. Depression, insecurity, anger, and fear are not eradicated just because we have the right clothes, enough money, or the right credentials. They can be camouflaged, but only temporarily. People will almost telepathically pick up the truth of our deeper feelings and subconsciously reflect them back to us. All of us are involved in this constant interactive process, every moment, no matter what.

The only way we'll have *whole* lives is if we dwell within the *wholeness* of our true selves. And we are whole when we are one with God. The word *holy* refers to our connection to Him, and outside that connection we are dissociated from our own essence. Wouldn't it be weird to be one of Queen Elizabeth's children but somehow not know it? Wouldn't we be missing out on a pretty significant aspect of our identity? Magnify that geometrically in terms of psychological effect, and you have a sense of how bizarre it is that we've forgotten our Father is in heaven.

According to *A Course in Miracles*, what we have is an "authorship" problem. Not recognizing our divine source, we express ourselves as crea-

tions of the world rather than as creations of spirit. The world has imprinted upon our psyches its brokenness and pain. And there is no point in trying to heal that pain until we heal our misplaced sense of heritage. We are not children of the world; we are children of God. We don't have to allow the false input of a weary world to affect us as it does.

Confusion about our divine heritage translates into confusion about ourselves; not understanding who we are or where we come from, we find it hard to understand who we are now or where we are now. And so we lack spiritual stability. In the absence of the sense of a divine creator, the mind assumes that we're our own creator and thus our own God. If God isn't the big cheese, then *I* must be the big cheese! And that thought—that we're it, we're the greatest is not merely narcissism. It's a psychosis that permeates the human condition.

In remembering the truth of where we came from, we become more open to the truth of who we are.

The Great Awakening

In the Bible, it says Adam fell asleep—and nowhere does it say that he woke up. It's as though the human race has been asleep for ages, not metaphorically but in a certain way literally. In our sleep, we have begun to dream. And some of our dreams have turned into nightmares.

Suffering is a nightmare. Addiction is a nightmare. Violence is a nightmare. Starvation is a nightmare. War is a nightmare. And the way we

will change the world from being a place where these things happen to a place where they no longer do is not through what we *do* in a traditional sense, but because we wake up from the living nightmare in which they occur. We have been asleep without knowing it, taking part in a great forgetting—of who we are, what our power is, where we come from, and what we truly need.

But a great awakening is on the horizon, stirring like a new dawn in each of us. It's no accident that enlightened masters are called the "awakened ones." And now a species that has been asleep too long is on the verge of a mass awakening.

Resistance to this awakening, a lure to sleep, the false pleasures of numbness, are all real in our experience, but they are not as powerful as they appear to be. We are one with the Mind that thought us up, and nothing we make up separately has any meaning whatsoever. When we remember we are one with our Source, we'll wake up to our power and our nightmares will disappear.

Ego versus Holiness

One of the exercises in the workbook of *A Course in Miracles* reads, "Love, which created me, is what I am." That statement amounts to a radical and counterintuitive evaluation of our true nature—for if I'm so good, then who is this person who keeps making mistakes, self-sabotaging, and repeating neurotic patterns?

That person is our fear-based ego. The word *ego* here

means what it meant to the ancient Greeks: a small and separate self. When we identify with the ego, it's like looking at a hangnail, and thinking, "That's who I am." the ego is an impostor self, masquerading as who we really are yet in reality the embodiment of our own self-hatred. It is the power of our own minds turned against us, pretending to be our champion yet in reality undermining all our hopes and dreams. The ego is a delusional splinter that has cut itself off from our larger spiritual reality. It sets up a parallel mental kingdom in which it sees itself as different and special, always justified in keeping the rest of the world at bay. Seeing ourselves as separate, we subconsciously attract and interpret circumstances that seem to bear out that belief. That delusional kingdom is hell on earth.

When we remember who we are, when we stand firm in the light of our own true being as children of God, then the ego begins, however gradually, to recede. Darkness cannot stand when we truly embrace the light—when we consciously foster it and devote ourselves to it. That is why recognizing who we are—that we are love, that we are as God created us—is the most important thing we can do in any instant. Love is our spiritual reality, untarnished by anything that has happened in the material world.

When we forget this, thoughts of at least subtle attack and defense become a mental backdrop to our entire existence. The ego is "suspicious at best and vicious at worst." And we should not

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From the Inside

THIS IS IT

Comments often heard on this prison yard are, "I can't wait to get out of here" and "I'll be happy when I'm finally released." Those thoughts are understandable, but a fixation on some future event can rob us of the reality and the richness of the present moment.

Most of us go through life waiting for the next "high"—the next relationship, the next dessert, the next vacation, the next adventure, the next big game, the next pizza, the next movie, the next television show. We look for the next something to look forward to, something to get us through the day. We also often dwell in the past remembering what was and what could have been. In our minds our lives spill from the past into the future. When we conveniently skip over the present moment, we don't experience its value, its relevance.

Much of the time we are about that which will not matter in the least next year, next month, or next week. What do we think is so important? In my earlier life, many things that seemed important have come and gone. Looking back now,

it's hard to imagine what I thought was so significant about those things.

From today's perspective, it seems like I have lived many lifetimes within this one. Looking back from this vantage point, it appears that I was stumbling blindly through life, hardly knowing what I was doing, lacking awareness of the true nature of others and the world around me. Yet, at the time, I considered myself intelligent and perceptive. I even thought I knew what I was doing. How strange—this dichotomy between how we see ourselves at the time and how we see ourselves in retrospect.

Everything comes and goes; everything changes and quickly vanishes. We are not even the same persons we were five years ago, or two years ago. We are not our circumstances; we are not our immediate problems. In a sense it is hard to keep up with what we are except to recognize what is eternal and changeless.

Do we recognize and appreciate the truth of this or are we too preoccupied with temporary changing events? What a

wondrous play of consciousness this life is! If we could truly grasp what is going on now, we would never be bored. There would be a sense of wonder. And as we bend and adapt to the uncertainties of each moment, it will allow us to relax and enjoy the ebb and flow of life.

Everything has been leading up to this. We exist as much in eternity right now as we ever will. The entire creation exists in the moment. This is it!

CTB
Arizona

*Darling T,
As ever, you inspire.
I cannot express the depth of my gratitude for your continuing contributions to this newsletter. You make it ever so much richer.*

Thank you, my friend, for being a part of this work I love so much.

*In loving gratitude,,
Janine*

A Course in Miracles and The Miracles Magazine

Jon Mundy, one of the original people who frequented Helen Schucman, the scribe of *A Course in Miracles*, is now sending [The Miracles Magazine](#) to prisoners.

If you are interested in receiving a free copy of the book or a free subscription to the magazine, please write Joe Wolfe at the address below or write us at *Freedom Inside* and we will forward your information to Joseph who is responsible for the distribution.

*****DONATIONS NEEDED*****

Joseph Wolfe is sending out a request for much needed donations just for the purpose of getting this material sent to prisoners. If you like *A Course in Miracles* along with *The Miracles Magazine* and would like to help, please send donations to the address that follows. (US postage stamps in any denomination would also be gratefully accepted.

*Spirit Light Outreach
Joe Wolfe, The Peace Center
6833 Stanley Avenue,
Berwyn, IL 60402*

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underestimate its vengeance. If we wish a genuine healing of our hearts—not just fixing things, not just bandaging the broken aorta of the spirit—we must question the ego’s most fundamental assumptions. For only when we reject the ego’s account of who we are, can we begin to discover who we *really* are.

And who we really are, is holy.

Our holiness is both the opposite of and the antidote to the ego. It is a state of being in which we have reconnected with our Source, remembering that is fact we never left. We were created by God in a state of holiness, we were born onto the earth in a state of holiness, and we will return to this state upon our death. All of us, however, in between our infancy and death, fall asleep to our true nature and experience the hell of our self-imposed separation from God. Remembering our connection to our Source awakens us and frees us from the nightmares we create. In any Holy Instant, the ego is made null and void.

Holiness is not simply a theological construct, applicable to saints and enlightened masters but not to you and me. Keeping such a concept on a high altar, away from practical application, is simply an ego play to keep it at bay. To say that we are holy is not symbolic; it is to say that we are extensions of the mind of God, and as such, our true nature is divine. When we stop to actually consider that we are children of God—not just children of this world—we begin to realize what spiritual wealth we have inherited. And it is ours to use, to cast out all darkness from ourselves and the world around us.

Through prayer we can work miracles in our lives. We have so much more power than we are using yet—to heal disease, repair relationships, reconcile nations, protect our cities, and transform our world. As long as we think that only “others” are holy, then only “others” will seem to carry miraculous authority. Yet it isn’t true. In fact, all of us are holy, for all of us were created by God. As we open our hearts to Him, and to each other, our minds become conduits of the miraculous. Any and all of us can pray for miracles, and He hears any and all of us when we do.

When we have freed the inner resources of compassion that lie trapped within the maze of the ego mind, there will be an explosion of miracles that completely transforms our selves and our world. We will become reborn in spirit, free to express the creativity and passion that lie within us in a way that we never have before.

Few mortals have even scratched the surface of the potential genius we all possess and will one day realize. The great enlightened masters, from Buddha to Moses to Jesus, attained such alignment with spirit that the world around them was never again the same. They are elder brothers who demonstrated our potential. They showed us what each of us can one day become.

As the mind is permeated by the realization of the awesome power that lies within us, and as we allow ourselves to embrace the principles of higher awareness, the ego in time takes a backseat to higher truth. It cannot stand before a mind that has begun to awaken to its true reality. Eventually,

accumulated spiritual knowledge pays off, and a larger life begins to emerge.

Infinite Possibilities

When I was young I didn’t need a wristwatch, for at any time of day or night, you could ask me what time it was and I could tell you exactly. But something happened in my early twenties: it occurred to me that I should not be able to do that, and that it was weird that I could. And so, almost as soon as I thought that, I no longer could.

What happened to me is what happens to all of us: we are subtly and insidiously convinced that our natural powers do not exist. We become slaves to a worldview in which our human powers are diminished, seen as secondary to the astonishing powers of science, technology, and other false gods of the external planes. Modern progress seems to overrule our souls, leaving us bereft within a meaningless universe. There is no real God here, except the god of endless want.

We are trained, within this world, to see ourselves as the ego defines us. According to the ego’s dictates, we are small and powerless, surrounded by an infinitely gargantuan and powerful universe. We are here but for a minute before we grow old and suffer and die. We are taught to identify with our guilt more than our innocence, and then we feel haunted by mistakes we feel will dominate the rest of our lives; we are taught to blame others more than to forgive them, and then we get stuck in feelings of victimization; we are taught that we are separate from others, and then we fall prey to grandiosity and insensitivity. We are taught that grades,

credentials, past influences, mistakes, marriages, divorces, degrees, résumés, money, parents, children, or houses—whatever label or identity someone wants to stick onto us—are our essence. As a consequence, we forget who we really are.

This forgetfulness is the source of all evil, for it leaves us in personal darkness, confused about our heritage, our power, and our purpose. The mind cannot serve two masters, and when we forget the true one, we falsely bow before the other. When we mentally identify with the realm of the body, we see scarcity and death. When we mentally identify with the realm of the spirit, we see endless love, unlimited possibility, and the oneness of all things.

Look at the spokes on a bicycle wheel. At the rim, each spoke is separated from all the others. At the hub, each spoke is one with all the others. Each of us is like one of those spokes, connected with all others at the center, at our spiritual hub. Knowing ourselves as spirit is to know ourselves as one with each other, which is the esoteric meaning of the line in the Bible that “there is only one begotten Son.” And that is why the Christ Mind, by whatever name we call it, is our salvation. It is a point of divine remembrance, saving us from the mistakes we make when we forget we are one with others. Spiritual renewal is the salvation of the world, because once we realize that what we do to others we are literally doing to ourselves, our thoughts and behavior simply change. To harm others, to refuse compassion, ultimately becomes unthinkable.

MY BEST FRIEND JACK

May 2010

by George M. Roth

as published in *Chicken Soup for the Prisoner's Soul*
Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Tom Lagana (2000)

"A true friend is someone who is there for you when he'd rather be anywhere else".

-Len Wein

If there was anyone less likely to become my mentor, it was Smiling Jack. He was an ex-con who had left decades of drunken turmoil in his wake. Yet, by the time we met, Smiling Jack had transformed his life.

Raised in the mountains of North Carolina, there was little evidence that anything but a difficult future lay in Jack's path. His formal education ended in the third grade. His father and most of his relatives worked in the local sawmill, and it was assumed he would do the same. The only other option was working with the moonshiners. By the time he was a young teen, Jack had discovered the easy money or "running" corn liquor. Unfortunately, he also developed a taste for the bottled lightning and became his own best customer.

One fall evening, in a car filled with corn squeezings, unable to escape the pursuing revenueurs, he was arrested. Sentenced to prison, he spent several years shackled at the ankles, working on a chain gang. Not surprisingly, the days and months of humiliation served only to increase his anger and bitterness at the world.

On his release, determined to escape the boredom of his hometown, he joined the merchant marines. Working aboard cargo ships, he traveled the world. Yet, lost in a haze of whiskey, each port was much the same as the one he'd just left—barrooms and trouble. Eventually the alcohol abuse took its toll and, no longer fit to work, he returned to the familiar mountains of North Carolina. He worked when and where he could, but only long enough to buy another jug of the clear liquid that controlled his life.

A passing carnival hired him as a maintenance mechanic, and so began a drunken tour of small-town America.

Weeks, months and years passed in a blur. Increasingly, he awoke in jail cells with cuts and bruises that he couldn't explain. Eventually fired from the carnival, he found himself in an unfamiliar, small town in Pennsylvania. Odd jobs kept him in liquor for a time. As his

health deteriorated, he became incapable of even the simplest labor.

In the last, deadly stages of alcoholism he collected welfare and had whiskey delivered to his shabby, rented room. When his check was late, drinking after-shave became a reasonable alternative. One evening Jack was found unconscious in an alcohol-induced coma and was rushed to the emergency room.

While in the hospital, doctors convinced him to seek treatment. Having nowhere else to turn, he accepted. That became the turning point in his life. By the time I met Jack, it had been several years since he had "taken" any liquor.

I had screwed up a good career in New York City. In the process, I'd alienated everyone I knew. Overwhelmed by self-pity and depression, for several years I hid in the bottom of a gin bottle, afraid to live but even more terrified to die. For reasons I still don't understand Providence stepped in and, after receiving much-needed help, I started the difficult task of putting my life back together. I moved to a small town to start over. And more than a year later, my career prospects were improving steadily. But emotionally, I was not doing well. That's when I first met Jack.

While I was staring at a lobby office directory for several minutes, a little, round man in blue work clothes waddled toward me. Grinning at my confusion, he pointed me in the right direction.

I hadn't taken more than a few steps when, in a friendly Southern drawl, he called after me, "And by the way, Son, I don't recall when I've last seen a feller look as down in the mouth as you."

Surprised at this personal observation, I turned toward him. With an almost sad, yet sincere expression, this stranger looked me in the eye and said softly, "Son, if nobody's told you they loved you today—I do." With keys jingling, he turned and disappeared through a door into the stairwell.

This warm, smiling janitor touched

my heart. I'd find excuses to visit "his" office building. Sitting in his cluttered, basement office we made small talk. Gradually I came to recognize the priceless experience and wisdom he was giving me. When we walked along Main Street, passing cars honked greetings and shop owners stepped out to say hello. I marveled at the magical effect this once-hopeless man had on people. "Every day is a blessing," he would tell me. "I shoulda been dead a long time ago, but for some reason the good Lord seen fit to give me a second chance—I aim to use it to help folks."

His philosophy for living was simple. "Live a day at a time and do the best you can. Ask the Good Lord to look after you when you wake up, and thank Him before you go to sleep."

I saw him lend money to people, knowing he would probably not be repaid. If someone admired something he owned, more than likely he would make it their gift.

My career came together and I was working again on Madison Avenue. With Jack's support and friendship, my personal life turned around. I met and fell in love with a remarkable woman, and a year after we met, this beautiful lady agreed to become my wife.

On a breezy summer afternoon, I stood at the church altar wearing an ill-fitted tuxedo and comfortable grin. Accompanied by organ music, the love of my life, radiant in her lace wedding gown, slowly made her way down the center aisle.

The priest posed the question, "Who gives this woman away?" For a fleeting moment, the altar glowed as if enveloped by a mist of pastels, and the clean, fresh scent of approaching rain drifted through the church. As I took my bride's hand, we looked into the misty, blue eyes of the one whose love and guidance had made this day possible. My best friend, Jack, smiled at us and proudly responded, "I do."

ReCreating Your Self: A GIFT FOR YOU

Mr. Neale Donald Walsch and the *Conversations With God* Foundation are offering to send you, free of charge, a copy of Mr. Walsch's booklet: *ReCreating Your Self*.

If you would like to receive this gift, please write at the address you can find at the beginning and the end of this newsletter and I will be very happy to send you one.

Happy reading,
Janine

ALLOWING THE DIMINISHMENT OF THE EGO

from *A New Earth*
by Eckhart Tolle

The ego is always on guard against any kind of perceived diminishment. Automatic ego-repair mechanisms come into effect to restore the mental form of "me". When someone blames or criticizes me, that to the ego is a diminishment of self, and it will immediately attempt to repair its diminished sense of self through self-justification, defense, or blaming.

Whether the other person is right or wrong is irrelevant to the ego. It is much more interested in self-preservation than in the truth. This is the preservation of the psychological form of "me". Even such a normal thing as shouting something back when another driver calls you "idiot" is an automatic and unconscious ego-repair mechanism. One of the most common ego-repair mechanisms is anger, which causes a temporary but huge ego inflation. All repair mechanisms make perfect sense to the ego but are actually dysfunctional. Those that are most extreme in their dysfunction are physical violence and self-delusion in the form of grandiose fantasies.

A powerful spiritual practice is consciously to allow the diminishment of the ego when it happens without attempting to restore it. I recommend that you experiment with this from time to time. For example, when someone criticizes you, blames you, or calls you names, instead of immediately retaliating or defending yourself—do nothing. Allow the self-image to remain diminished and become alert to what that feels like deep inside you. For a few seconds, it may feel uncomfortable, as if you had shrunk in size. Then you may sense an inner spaciousness that feels intensely alive. You haven't been diminished at all. In fact, you have expanded. You may then come to an amazing realization: when you are seemingly diminished in some way and remain in absolute nonreaction, not just externally but also internally, you realize that nothing real has been diminished, that through becoming "less", you become more. When you no longer defend or attempt to strengthen the form of yourself, you step out of identification with form, with mental self-image. Through becoming

less (in the ego's perception), you in fact undergo an expansion and make room for Being to come forward. True power, who you are beyond form, can then shine through the apparently weakened form. This is what Jesus means when he says, "Deny yourself" or "Turn the other cheek."

This does not mean, of course, that you invite abuse or turn yourself into a victim of unconscious people. Sometimes a situation may demand that you tell someone to "back off" in no uncertain terms. Without egoic defensiveness, there will be power behind your words, yet no reactive force. If necessary, you can also say no to someone firmly and clearly, and it will be what I call a "high-quality no", that is free of all negativity.

If you are content with being nobody in particular, content not to stand out, you align yourself with the power of the universe. What looks like weakness to the ego is in fact the only true strength. This spiritual truth is diametrically opposed to the values of our contemporary culture

and the way it conditions people to behave.

Instead of trying to be a mountain, teaches the ancient *Tao Te Ching*, "Be the valley of the universe." In this way, you are restored to wholeness and so "all things will come to you."

Similarly, Jesus, in one of his parables, teaches that "When you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'. Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Another aspect of this practice is to refrain from attempting to strengthen the self by showing off, wanting to stand out, be special, make an impression, or demand attention. It may include occasionally refraining from expressing your opinion when everybody is expressing his or hers, and seeing what that feels like.



MY EXPERIENCE WITH CHANGE

In October, I'll be 60 years of age; however, more dramatically, I will have been locked-up for 40 years.

Generally, it hasn't been my place in society's eyes that has changed because jail and various levels of imprisonment is still "prison". Specifically, it's been my perspective/my attitude/my purpose that have changed and continue to do so. There have been many transformations; for example, overcoming the fears and insecurities of living in close contact and affiliations with uncertain, violent, and/or hostile attitudes and behaviors of my fellow prisoners. Then I had to fight the temptation to give in to Being "institutionalized"; for instance, just doing and being what other prisoners are generally doing and being because they have given up on having a purpose and being a better and better person. Prisoners that have given up spend a lot of time talking about our past interests, crime stories, and about imagining doing those same things now and in the future; next, we play different kinds of games and watch television, and complain of prison-work details. All of these activities carry lots of energy and influence; thus, growing and transforming through them is an accomplishment within itself.

Once I was able to experience a lightness within myself—as a result of breaking freer from fear and prisoner-self-hatred—and had extra time and energy to step-out

and think outside the box of imprisonment, I started to devote my time and discipline to gathering knowledge about life, generally. Next, I started studying and paying more attention to myself, other people, and the character of our interactions.

After decades of studying academic, philosophy, and sacred books, and experimenting in applying some of that knowledge, I became increasingly more conscious, more aware of my interconnectedness with other people; it became more apparent to me that I had purpose and significance among the people—no matter where I was living. I felt that I needed to help people in order to really help myself.

The biggest change in my attitude and behavior now—as compared to how they were in the earlier years of my imprisonment—is in the greater amount of thoughts and energies that I choose to put into serving other people. Fortunately, my prison job assignment and my school assignment are the same: food service. I'm a Food Service Specialist; yet, I'm also an apprentice in this Food Service program—studying and practicing methods and techniques in food preparation to become a journeyman in food service. Presently, the prison population is benefiting from my skills in food preparation. My assignments are meaningful and an honor for and from me.

In the earlier portion of my imprisonment, I figured that I would have to serve a lot of time before I would be released—since I was sentenced to two life sentences, plus. So, I settled in for a long stay and chose to adjust to prison life. However, in the last decade of this imprisonment, I've been constantly denied parole, and I've been told that I will not get out alive. Each denial in these latter years have sent me seeking a transformation within. In other words, each time I'm denied Freedom to the outside, I've sought more quality Freedom within.

Presently, more of my focus is in responding to my "here and now" with the attitude of Being prepared for future employment on the outside; yet, I'm choosing to live each day as if this is my final destination on earth—thus living in service to any soul that I interact with in such a way of sharing love, light, insight, acceptance, appreciation, compassion, and prayer.

Those are my present realities and my vision and my purpose. As I strive to be my personal best in these services—which are the by-product of many changes—they are major sources of my Freedom Inside.

Changing in and for the Light

HJ
North Carolina

THOUGHTS ON A PRISON RELEASE

After eleven years in prison, I will be released next year. I'll be facing a world that in many ways has left me behind. Being in prison all these years has caused me to miss weddings, funerals, births, graduations, divorces—all the life events that keep people connected. And not only that, I'll be old, broke, and homeless. That's a little scary, but I know that somehow it will all work out.

Because of this experience, I will be able to help others who are facing the same things. This gives me a depth of understanding and compassion that I could not have oth-

erwise. From a God's eye view there's not a bit of difference between the most highly accomplished human being and the most broken. I am drawn to the broken ones. Working with people who are hungry and need to be fed, who are thirsty and need something to drink, who are in prison and need visitors, or who are naked and need to be clothed—opens up all kinds of things in our lives.

Until our hearts are broken, we're less than complete human beings. If we're not able to recognize other's pain, we're cut off from ourselves. We all have the capacity

to love and to care, but it has to develop and that involves pain. The payoff is our connectedness. There is the painful gouging out of the stone of our hearts, which can ten be filled with kindness.

And so...I'll take these thoughts and life experiences and go forth from here KNOWING that no matter what happens, it will be for a greater good and I'll be a more aware and better person because of it. I'll rest easily in this knowing.

CTB
Arizona



MIRACLES AND GOOD KARMA

(...)

I'll be released soon. There's a new breed of inmate these days. Talk about entitlement issues! I've been approached many times recently by men that expect me to give them something, as though I can afford to leave here empty-handed. All I own is in this cell. I began to defend my "stuff". I nearly got into a fistfight over it. Then, in a sort of temper tantrum I sarcastically gave about \$200 worth of stuff away (my most "precious" stuff—art supplies, air mattress, etc) Did anyone realize or care that I was angry? No.

I sulked...fumed...Then a light came on. Do I really believe as I say I do? I had placed more importance on my pending "freedom" then on my spiritual freedom. I had bound myself to the physical. Seeing this, I instantly changed my perception. I visualized that air mattress as being strong

and comfortable, providing its new owner with many restful hours and pleasant dreams. I saw the art supplies transformed into great works, providing praise, confidence and even income to those that use them.

A miracle! No sooner had I done this when I was given two potential job offers when I get out and four potential residences. Also, those that had never before spoken to me had suddenly become friendly—not asking for anything.

I had performed ritual, rite, prayer, meditation and magic to get my freedom. It seems the God/Goddess granted my wish but only if I kept to my original vow—to serve Him/Her wholeheartedly. When a gentleman got in my face and wanted to fight, it was Papa/ Mama God getting my attention, making me stop and think.

As an added blessing, three attorneys have solicited me to represent me in a case to recover compensation for an injury I incurred many years ago. Their fee? Pro-bono!! My good karma is finally rolling in.

I could tell you also about the completion of my Associates Degree, being tobacco-free for a year now, and other good news, but I think this is enough. I just wanted to say "I love my Beloved Deity! I am pleased with today and happily anticipate tomorrow!

Thanx for listening.
Blessed Be!

JR
New Jersey

SPIRITUAL CHANGE

In your most recent issue you said, "Let's make 2010 about change". I totally agree with you! Change is the key, because it is not God's function to create or un-create the circumstances and conditions of our lives. God created us, in the image and likeness of Him/Herself. We have created the rest. Change is at the root because nothing changes if nothing changes! Furthermore, the mind's possibilities are limited by its concept of its potential. Human potential is broadened or limited by its concept of God. Thus, if God is anything finite (that is, limited), then you have already limited your mind. However, if God is infinite—without limits, without boundaries, without deficits or definition, always "greater than"—you have already expanded your mind to reach for the limits of all things. Such a consciousness of God puts us into the proper filed to grow to our greatest height.

The change that I am experiencing has helped me to understand that spirit (or the activity of the mind) is Electricity.

The Master Engineer has laid the Supreme Circuitry all throughout our Material Being. Our being is not only a super-computer, but also a super-conductor of

electrical spirit. Everybody is producing an electrical current, but the activity of our mind will determine the quality of the frequency and/or the voltage at which our electrical current will flow.

In order to activate the higher living functions of our material super-computer, we must generate a higher voltage or higher frequency of electrical spirit. In order to generate a higher electrical spirit, our mind must be rotating on a higher plane of thinking, we must consume a higher quality and quantity of higher knowledge, while living a life of higher moral virtue.

Spiritual change has helped me to know that if one can obtain spiritual insight by direct experience of the Divine, where does this leave the Church, Temple, Mosque and its "authority"? Is it even necessary? Direct experience is higher than any scriptural teaching. Change has helped me to come to know that our purpose in life is to reclaim, redeem and transcend matter, to spiritualize and transform it, to renounce perpetually anything connected with the principle of power, and thereby to attain union with God, our True Self.

Respectfully yours,
TT
California

P.S. Finding our way back to ourselves is a process, a journey. As we keep at it, chipping away at the false ideas or beliefs, something wonderful begins to happen. Answers begin to flow from within. The Divine begins to live our life as us. A quiet growth in grace and character begins to form and, eventually, we grow out of our challenges because the answers are always within. We are our greatest yet to be, right here, right now! John 14:12 sums it all up for me!

John 14:12

¹²I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

FOR THOSE WHO FIND THEMSELVES FALLING SHORT

The successes and downfalls that you experience
can create who you are,
and the bad experiences
can be learned from
in fact, they are probably
the most poignant and important ones.

Make every day count,
appreciate every moment
and take from it everything you possibly can,
for you may never be able to experience it again.
Set your sights high.
Hold you head up,
because you have every right to.
Tell yourself you are a great individual
and believe in yourself.

For if you don't believe in yourself,
no one else will believe in you.

Success starts with an idea and belongs to those who dare.

LW
Illinois

The Sounds of the Valley Stream are His Voice

The Forms of the Mountains are His Body

The Vast Blue Sky is His Mind

JS
California

I WONDER

I wonder, is there a life after death?
Will my slate be washed clean
or will I have to deal with the filth?

Can I believe and will I receive?
There is so much doubt!
Is this my heaven or is it my hell?
My perceptions tell me neither
or is that deception talking?

No matter the thought,
I have to live for today,
hope my choices make the future better
as each moment dissolves.

DS
Pennsylvania

REFLECTIONS

Single but yet not
Little people I've got
Pity I cannot feel for me
Because it is a waste, you see.

What one does will exist
Memories will always persist
When my body is gone
My spirit will carry on.

Everyone goes through
Heartache of some kind
Unhappiness will be only
A state of mind

Real love is never forgotten
Rest in peace, my loved ones
Inside is where you will always
Remain closest

Silent, 1977
California

I'LL PAINT YOU A RAINBOW

I'll paint you a rainbow to hang on the wall,
to brighten your heart when grey shadows fall.

On a canvas of joy outlasting the years,
with soft brush of sweetness to dry all your tears.

I'll paint you a rainbow with colors of smiles,
that glow with sincerity over the miles.

On a palette of words I will tenderly blend
tones into treasures of sunlight and wind.

I'll paint you a rainbow that reaches so wide,
your sighs and sorrows will vanish inside.

And deep in the center of each different hue,
a memory fashioned especially for you.

So lift up your eyes, for suspended above,
a rainbow designed by the fingers of love.

JS
Florida

Do you have a poem that reflects
the message in Freedom Inside?
If so, send it in, it just may be
chosen for a future

POETRY CORNER

WE ARE ONE WITH THEE

On the altar of silence we lay the flowers of our devotion, O
Lord of Silence. He who humbly twinkles through the stars,
breathes through our breath, circulates through our blood,
talks through our hearts, is the same Spirit who is the light of
lights. He is ours. To Him we give our utmost devotion.

Father, teach us to contact Thee. Teach us to pray with devo-
tion. Teach us to demand Thy presence. Teach us to feel
united with Thee. No more mechanical prayers, no more
empty words, but the humble devotion of our souls we offer
Thee.

With the language of our souls we demand Thy presence, for
Thy presence is our wealth, wisdom, and devotion—Thou art
the essence of everything! And we are Thy children. Take
away the nightmare of evil that engulfs us when we are not
awake in Thee.

Father, we are awake in Thy presence. Thou art the light.
Make us feel Thee and Thy presence in every fiber of our be-
ing, in every wisp of thought.

Father, twinkle Thy light through our thoughts and our beings.
Strengthen us! Make us realize that we are Immortal and teach
us to follow the one highway that leads to Thee. Awaken our
souls! Awaken our hearts, which need to know Thee. Be with
us! We are one with Thee.

By Paramahansa Yogananda
As published in *Self-Realization Fellowship Lesson*

Quotable Quotes on Change

Ghandi: *We must be the change we want to see in the world*

Aldous Huxley: *There's only one corner of the universe you can
be certain of improving, and that is your own self.*

Norman Vincent Peale: *Change yourself and your work will seem
different.*

James Allen: *Men are anxious to improve their circumstances, but
are unwilling to improve themselves; they therefore remain bound.*

Marcus Aurelius: *The universe is change; our life is what our
thoughts make it.*

Albert Camus: *Man is the only creature that refuses to be what he
is.*

Otto Rank: *What we achieve inwardly will change outer reality.*

Douglas Noel Adams: *When you blame others, you give up your
power to change.*



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