

Creativity & Personal Mastery (CPM) Manifesto

A program that will profoundly change every aspect of your life

Srikumar Rao, The Rao Institute



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Manifesto

In ancient India sacred texts began with a clear description of whom it was meant for, what it was all about, what the benefits were and how these came about.

It strikes me that this is an equally admirable approach today.

Who this is for:

Since we are all stuck in the human predicament this is a program that can benefit all persons.

A program for successful individuals who are ready to make a quantum leap in every area of their life.

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Who this is for:

These are:

i) **Entrepreneurs** who would like to take their business not just to the next level but many levels beyond that. They want to make a ‘dent in the universe’ and leave a lasting impact on the world.

Many of these are **professional service providers** – physicians, attorneys, surgeons, accountants, financial advisers, architects, software engineers, executive recruiters, consultants and suchlike.

ii) **Senior executives** who are open minded and often function entrepreneurially within their organizations. They are creative and find ways to get the results they want.

The persons I am looking for have a spiritual bent and they would like to infuse this into every part of their life. They would like to lead lives of extraordinary impact and leave the world a better place in tangible ways.

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More on who this is for:

Do you have a nagging sense that time is slipping by and you have accomplished only a fraction of what you are capable?

- Is there an undercurrent of stress in your life? This is sometimes weak and sometimes strong but it is always there under the surface.
- Do you worry about what others are thinking of you?
- Are there days you feel that nobody, but nobody, truly understands you?
- Do you feel stuck in some area of your life... as if you are trying to swim through molasses?
- Would you like to have deeper, meaningful connections with others? To have conversations that leave you nourished and energized and with a sense of kinship?
- Would you like to inspire others? To help them unearth talents they never knew they had and reach heights they could not have dreamt about?
- Think of a time in your life when you exerted a little effort and the payoff was quick and immense. Remember how you felt. Would you like such experiences to be a routine, normal part of your life?



More on who this is for:

Would you like to recapture the light-hearted joy of your younger days when stepping into puddles was pure bliss and a nickel was better than a dime because it was bigger?

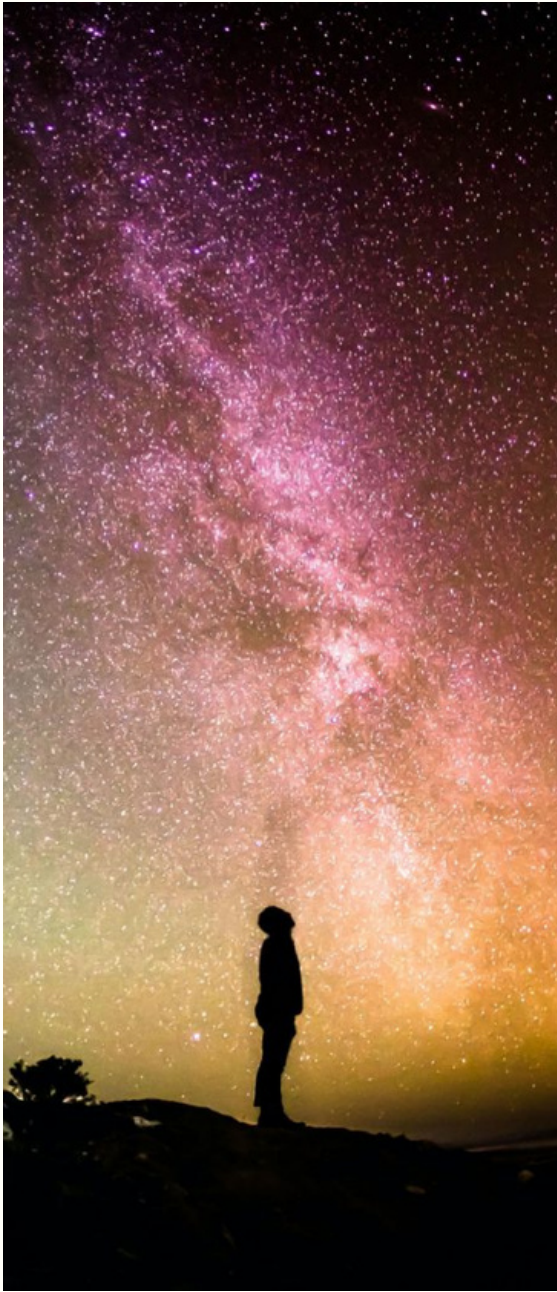
- Are you troubled by ethical conflicts in the workplace or in your personal life?
- Is life zipping by on fast forward while you struggle to maintain balance?
- Do you have regrets – about what could have been or should have been or would have been?

If you answered ‘yes’ to any of these questions you should seriously consider applying for the Creativity and Personal Mastery Program (CPM).

If you answered ‘yes’ to three or more of them, you are exactly the kind of person I am looking for. You will do yourself a grave disservice if you do not investigate this program seriously.

If you apply and are accepted, it will transform your life for the better in a manner that you cannot even conceive of.





What is it all about?

What do you REALLY want from life?

Quite possibly you have never asked yourself this or pondered it seriously.

I have asked this question of thousands of persons on five continents. And the answers fit into a few well-defined categories.

Quite likely, your responses will also fit into these. They include financial abundance, great relationships, excellent health, relaxing leisure time, good friends, fame and acclaim, a feeling that you matter, power, control over your circumstances and so on.

And you believe with conviction that this is what you want.

But what you really want from life is to feel radiantly alive and full of joy. You want love and enthusiasm and a sense of purpose. You want to feel good. You want your heart to soar.

And you believe that you will feel this way when you 'get' the items on your 'want' list.

You believe that 'security' will come from financial abundance, that material things will confer joy, that varied experiences and travel will make you feel cheerful, that a loving partner will help fulfill you.

Not so! Not so! Not so!

A story ...

Abd-ar-Rahman III was the emir of Cordova and crowned himself Caliph in 929CE. Cordova became a major intellectual center during his reign with more than seventy libraries. It was the largest European city of its era at a time when Paris and London were merely dirty villages.

He built massive monuments like the Medinat al Zahra palace and the La Mezquita great mosque. He won great victories on the battlefield and forged powerful alliances. He ruminated on life before his death and penned these famous lines that live on after him:

"I have now reigned above fifty years in victory or peace; beloved by my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches and honors, power and pleasure, have waited on my call, nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation, I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot: they amount to Fourteen: – O man! Place not thy confidence in this present world!"

CPM is all about helping you find many more days of pure and genuine happiness in your life. And you will find success in great measure as well.





What will you get?

CPM will help you improve relationships with your bosses and colleagues, spouse and children, customers and friends. It will make you resilient to the point that very little, if anything will ever faze you again. You will lightly brush off reverses that others would consider traumatic and you, yourself, may have considered so before the program.

You will become more effective and efficient and accomplish more than you ever thought possible.

Stress will decrease markedly in your life and perhaps even vanish. Wonderful people will appear in your life and many will become long-lasting friends.

You will inspire those who come across you and help them unearth talents they never knew they had and reach heights they could not have dreamed about. Without ever consciously wanting to, you will become an inspiring leader.

You will barely recognize the person you were before you began the CPM program and, more importantly, you will not want to.

CPM can do all this and more for you.

And, before you ask, No, it will not cure cancer.



A true story ...

She had a magnetic aura, an indefinable something that emanated from her and drew others into her orbit will-nilly.

A throng of well-dressed men surrounded her. They brought her hors d'oeuvres and replenished her drink. If there had been a puddle and she expressed a desire to cross it, they would have fought to be the first to lay their jacket across it.

I looked at her surreptitiously and it almost seemed as if she did the same. I caught her looking fixedly in my direction. I turned around to see who she was looking at but couldn't spot him. Or her.

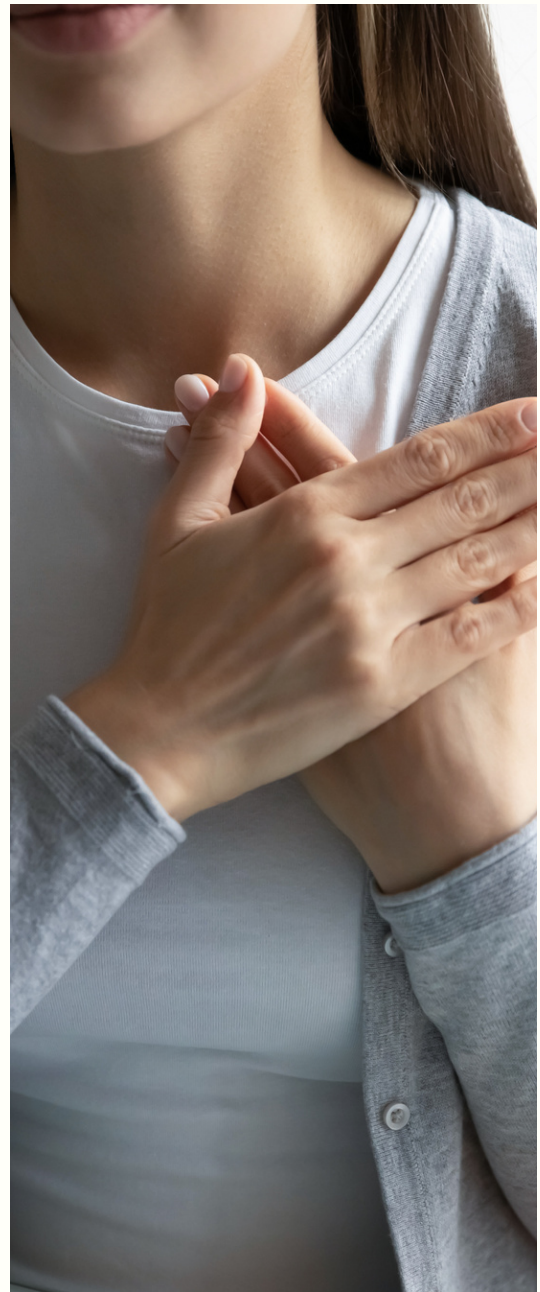
It was one of those noisome Holiday parties where people go to network. Everyone who spoke to me had a weather eye open for someone more important they could be cultivating. A couple had left in mid-sentence with no apology.

I had enough. It was a corporate event so there was no host to take leave of. I headed to the exit.

Abruptly she broke free of her admirers and intercepted me. She grabbed me by the arm and deftly maneuvered me into a private space between a potted plant and a serving table.

“Thank you so much for all that you have done for me,” she whispered.

“You are most gracious,” I said, puzzled, “But I fear you have mistaken me for someone else.”



A true story ...

“No mistake,” she said, her eyes twinkling. “You have had a greater impact on my life than anyone except my parents. I am so, so grateful.”

How do you tell an attractive, self-assured lady that she would be well-advised to place herself in the care of a competent psychologist? I was grappling with this when she relented.

“I’m Olga,” she said. “Torsen’s wife.” Suddenly I understood. Torsen was a rising star when he took my capstone program a few years ago. His marriage was on the rocks at the time. His wife’s divorce lawyer had already contacted him.

“Torsen...” I said hesitantly. “Are you...?”

She knew what I meant. “Things are great between us. He is the most wonderful man in the world.” She patted her middle gently. “We are expecting our third this coming Fall.”

“And Ralph?” I queried? Ralph was his boss at the time. He disliked him with a passion and the cordial mask he forced himself to put on had given him an ulcer.

“Ralph is now the CEO. The two of them are almost best friends. In fact, that is the reason Torsen isn’t here today. Ralph asked him to take charge of a major problem the company is having in Singapore. He has already indicated that he thinks Torsen would be an excellent successor.”

“And how are things at home?” I queried. Torsen’s inability to leave his work at the office was a major stressor in their relationship.





“You wouldn’t believe how much he has changed,” she said. “He turns off his smartphone at 8.00 p.m. He reads to the kids. He remembers their birthdays and comes to the school play.”

She looked up at me and there were tears in her eyes. “Thank you so much for turning my life around,” she said. “I have been meaning to tell you this for ever so long.”

She leaned forward and kissed me on both cheeks. And then she was gone leaving behind a whiff of expensive fragrance.



Dozens of persons like Olga have thanked me over the years for improving their lives. They have not worked with me. In most cases it is their spouses and significant others who have. In some cases it has been their siblings, children or business colleagues.

This is what I do. This is my calling, my life-work, my absolute passion.

I help qualified individuals bring about a quantum leap in their life. Every aspect of life. Your professional life. Your personal life. Your spiritual life. Your civic life.

There is a catch – you have to apply and be accepted and this is by no means a sure thing.

An important question:

We lead our lives of quiet desperation and move from day to day jerked about like marionettes in the hands of an inept puppeteer.

We are elated one day and in despair the next. We move from task to task, from endeavor to endeavor, and seldom question why we have constructed our life such that the treadmill we are on is always increasing in speed. We even challenge the notion that we constructed it – we believe that this ‘happened’ due to forces beyond our control and we are blameless for the quagmire in which we are stuck.

We are searching, always searching, for that missing ingredient that will make us complete. And we strive mightily to re-arrange the world to suit our fickle and changing minds.

And prodding us on this relentless quest is that howling, shrieking demon of our mind that will not let us be for even a second.

We do not look behind to question why we live the way we do because we know that close on our heels doth a frightful fiend tread.

Answer this question:

In the past twenty-four hours how often have you thought about your left little finger?

That is easy. You have not thought about that digit at all.

And this is as it should be.

When it is functioning normally your little finger does what it needs to and does not draw attention to itself.





Now contrast that to your desperately sick mind that is constantly, constantly, constantly, seeking your attention and refusing to let you be. No needy child that continually grasps your sleeve with sticky fingers has a patch on it.

"Today was such a waste. I barely got half my to-do items scratched off my list."

"What did Sam mean by that remark? He is behaving so strangely. Sometimes I just don't understand what he really wants. Maybe it's time to let him go."

"But he is the only one who really understands the new software package we installed. Perhaps I should put up with him till I can train someone else."

I wonder what Julie thinks of me now. She said I would never amount to anything when she turned down my proposal. My company is bigger than her dad's. Bet she's feeling small – especially since her husband has still not found a job.

Today is the final episode of The Time Traveler. Just like Megan to have arranged a meeting of her damn book club this evening. Sometimes I wonder if I should have married her. Maybe I should have tried harder with Julie.

Have a meeting with Greg tomorrow. I just don't like him. He makes me feel so inadequate. He's thin and has six-pack abs and does the triathlon and his company has doubled in size in the last eight months. How does he do it? His uncle is a senator and I bet he's steering business his way.

I wonder if we can have a quiet weekend at home or Megan will drag me to some opera again. God, how I hate the opera.

I need to exercise more. Who has the time? And, with the new restructuring underway, my hours will be longer than ever. I hate this job, If the economy wasn't so bad I'd quit and find another.

But I am really talented. Maybe I should just resign. Won't take me that long to find a better position.



We suffer daily and die the death of a thousand cuts as our oh-so-strong and utterly uncontrollable mind drags us on journeys that we would rather not take.

We grapple with our ‘problem of the day’ and rarely recognize that solving it will not make us whole – it will merely lead us to the next problem. This incessant chatterbox frequently takes both sides of an issue and teeters back and forth leading us to totter in exhaustion.

This program will help you begin to reclaim your life.

The company we keep:

Here is another question:

What one action can you take that will significantly increase the probability that you will succeed in any venture you undertake?

This action will help you if you want to lose weight, become a millionaire, be happy, solve MENSA puzzles, improve your tennis and play the guitar better.

Give up?

The answer is simple. Hang around people who are already where you want to be. Spend significant time with them.

If you want to be a better chess player, socialize with the club champion and runner up.

Thousands of years ago, the Buddha knew the value of like-minded company and stressed the importance of Sangha, the tribe of persons on the path with you.

More recently, Napoleon Hill enunciated the importance of the Mastermind Group. When you surround yourself with successful people, you tend to absorb their attitudes and odds increase tremendously that you will succeed more than you would have otherwise.



The company we keep:

Belgian chemist Ernest Solvay made a fortune by inventing the ammonia-soda process for manufacturing soda ash and the Solvay Process is still in use.

He used a portion of his wealth to organize conferences called the Solvay Congress where the most noted scientists of the day could come together and freely exchange ideas. Those were the days when travel was difficult and expensive and, but for his efforts, many of these great minds may never have met.

The Fifth Solvay Congress held in October 1927 is widely believed to be the greatest ever gathering of scientific titans and included Einstein, Bohr and Heisenberg.

Seventeen of the 29 attendees eventually won the Nobel Prize and Marie Curie won it twice.



SOLVAY CONFERENCE 1927

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A. PICARD	E. HENRIOT	P. EHRENFEST	Ed. HERSEN	Th. DE DONDER	E. SCHRÖDINGER	E. VERSCHAFFELT	W. PAULI	W. HEISENBERG	R.H FOWLER	L. BRILLOUIN
P. DESYE	M. KNUDSEN	W.L. BRAGG	H.A. KRAMERS	P.A.M. DIRAC	A.H. COMPTON	L. de BROGLIE	M. BORN	N. BOHR		
I. LANGMUIR	M. PLANCK	Mme CURIE	H.A. LORENTZ	A. EINSTEIN	P. LANGEVIN	Ch.E. GUYE	C.T.R. WILSON	O.W. RICHARDSON		

Absents : Sir W.H. BRAGG, H. DESLANDRES et E. VAN AUBEL



It is not easy for us to find persons with whom we can seriously discuss the kinds of topics raised in this syllabus. It is rare for you to run into someone who is dedicated to personal growth and spiritual development even as he – or she – pursues extraordinary professional success.

This is why Creativity and Personal Mastery has an alumni association and alums come from all over the world to attend the annual retreats. Members support each other in myriad ways and there have been innumerable associations including more than 20 life partnerships.

I had the notion of a community from the very beginning when I was writing the first draft of this syllabus and this idea is a core of the program. You will benefit greatly by traveling with like-minded souls in your journey and you will bond with many more who have taken it before you and after you.

Margaret Mead observed, *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”*

CPM has a global alumni association whose members support one another.

The CPM community is a great starting point for you to connect with individuals with whom you can collaborate to leave your collective footprints on the sands of time.

The drive to accomplish and win big:

We are, each of us, a speck of dust on a clod of earth whirling around in the middle of nowhere. One day we will make the great transition and all that we have so painfully accumulated will be stripped from us in an instant.

We forget this as we get absorbed in the drama we create and strive mightily to achieve ends with little thought as to whether they are worth the toil.

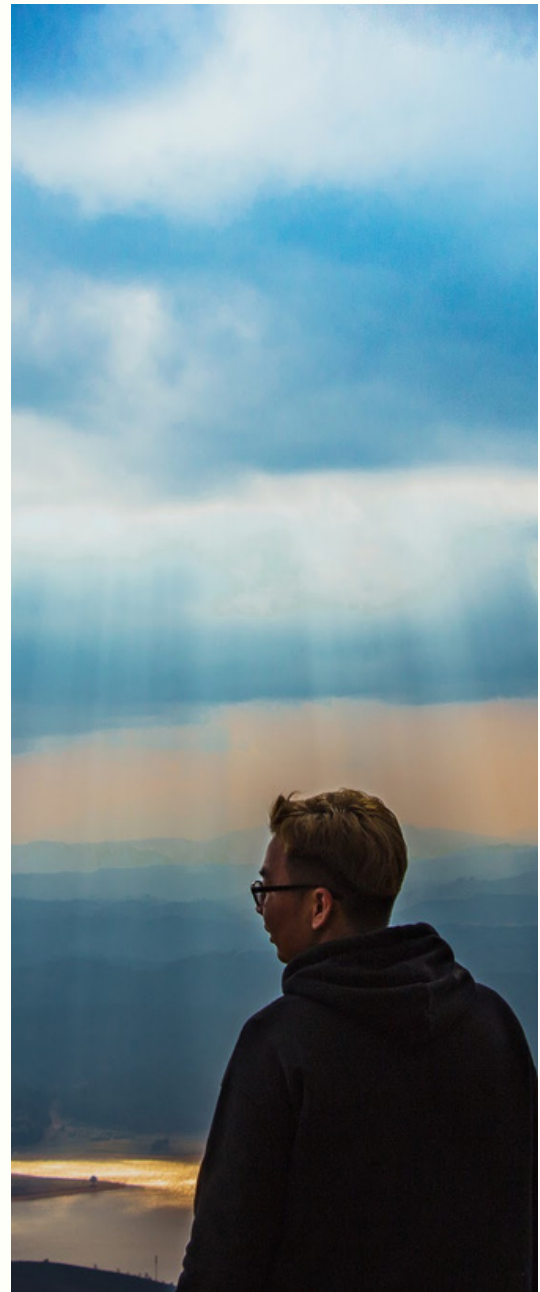
Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay, Might stop a hole to keep the wind away. – Shakespeare

The days come and go. Summer fades into Fall that morphs into Winter that gives way to Spring and back to Summer. Again and again we see this happening. As Longfellow observed, our hearts, though stout and brave, still like muffled drums are beating funeral marches to the grave.

He was a holy man, and his eyes were so bright with transcendent knowledge that none of the guards dared stop him or lay a hand on him.

He made his way to the durbar room of the sultan's palace and pounded the floor with his staff. "Who is the owner of this caravansary (inn)?" he demanded. "Bring him here at once."

Various ministers came and then the vizier, but the holy man impatiently shooed them off. Again he demanded to see the owner.



At length, intrigued by the strangeness of the event, the sultan himself appeared in his royal robes.

“Are you the owner of this caravansary?” the old man queried. “I seek shelter for the night and will leave in the morning.”

“Gladly will my men provide for you this night,” said the sultan amusedly. “But know that you have entered the royal palace. This is no caravansary.”

The sage squinted. He came closer and peered at the sultan’s face.

“I recognize you,” he exclaimed. “I was here three decades ago, and you gave me accommodation then.”

“That was my father,” said the sultan. “He is no more. May his soul rest in peace.”

“I came two decades before that also,” remembered the mystic, “And sojourned for the night. Was it then your father who made me welcome?”

“That was my grandfather,” replied the sultan. “My father assumed the throne when his father crossed the great divide.”

“And this place where people tarry for a while and then leave,” thundered the seer. “Do you still say it is not a caravansary?”





How do we reconcile our drive to achieve with the knowledge that we are finite and death will find us all too soon?

How do we find the peace and serenity of an enlightened sage while we are ensnared in the coils of striving for money and power and fame?

The two can indeed be reconciled and a big chunk of this program is devoted to showing you how to retain your calm, on how to “...face Triumph and Disaster and treat those two imposters the same.”

Presence! The factor that determines how big you will ‘succeed’:

Persons who take this program tend to be successful. Many are entrepreneurs and senior executives. As described in the last section, they want tranquility but they also have a strong, almost overriding, desire to succeed in conventional terms.

And the good news is that you can indeed scale mountains that you could never have imagined climbing. You can do this because you will develop ‘presence’ as you go through the program.

This is an account from an applicant for the program when it was a course at a top business school:

I cannot tell you how excited I am at the thought of being able to take Creativity and Personal Mastery. I spent all day yesterday ignoring my assignments and reading the syllabus. And then I read it again. And again.

My husband came home early and he was in a foul mood – angry and dejected and fearful. He had just been laid off.

Normally I would have been freaked out. We have young children and expenses run heavy.

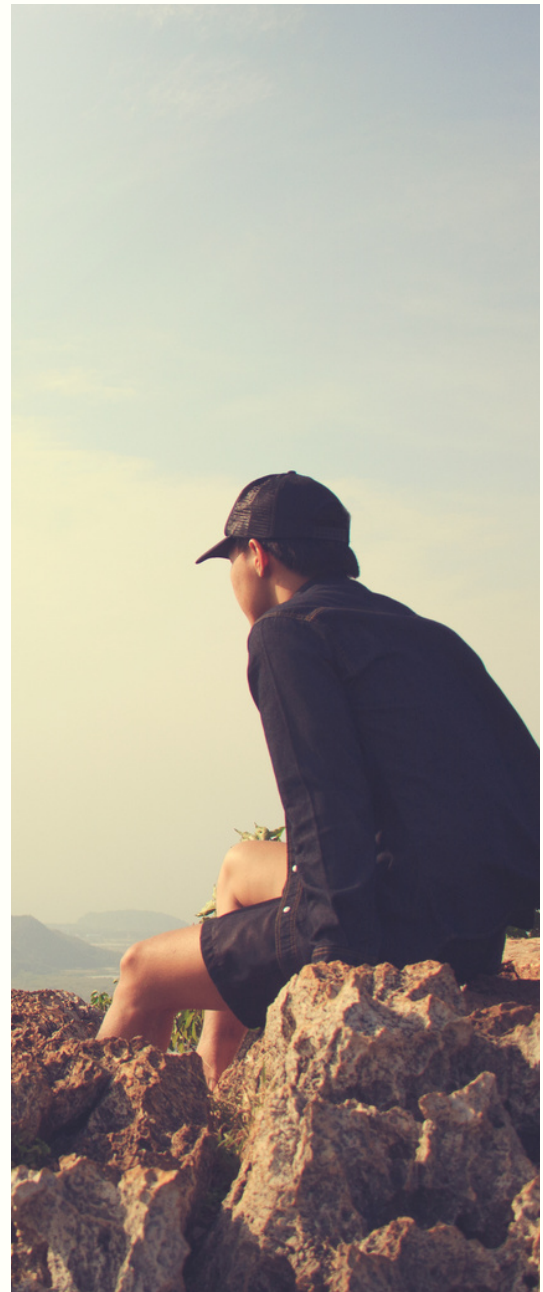
But yesterday I was calm. We sat down and discussed what had happened. I talked about the vision of the ideal life you lay out in your syllabus and whether he now had an opportunity to set out on a more fulfilling path.

“Where the hell did you get such ideas?” he asked me quizzically.

He relaxed as the anger drained from him. An idea struck him and he called a couple of his business contacts. Both were interested and wanted to meet with him.

Somehow I know that one of these or something similar will work out. He is enthusiastic now and looking forward and literally bounded out of bed this morning to make more calls and explore possibilities.

Thank you so much, Professor Rao. I have not even taken your course and it has already changed my life.



In today's complex society, whether you are an entrepreneur or an executive, your success will depend on the efforts of others. You will be better able to enlist such cooperation if you can develop 'presence'.

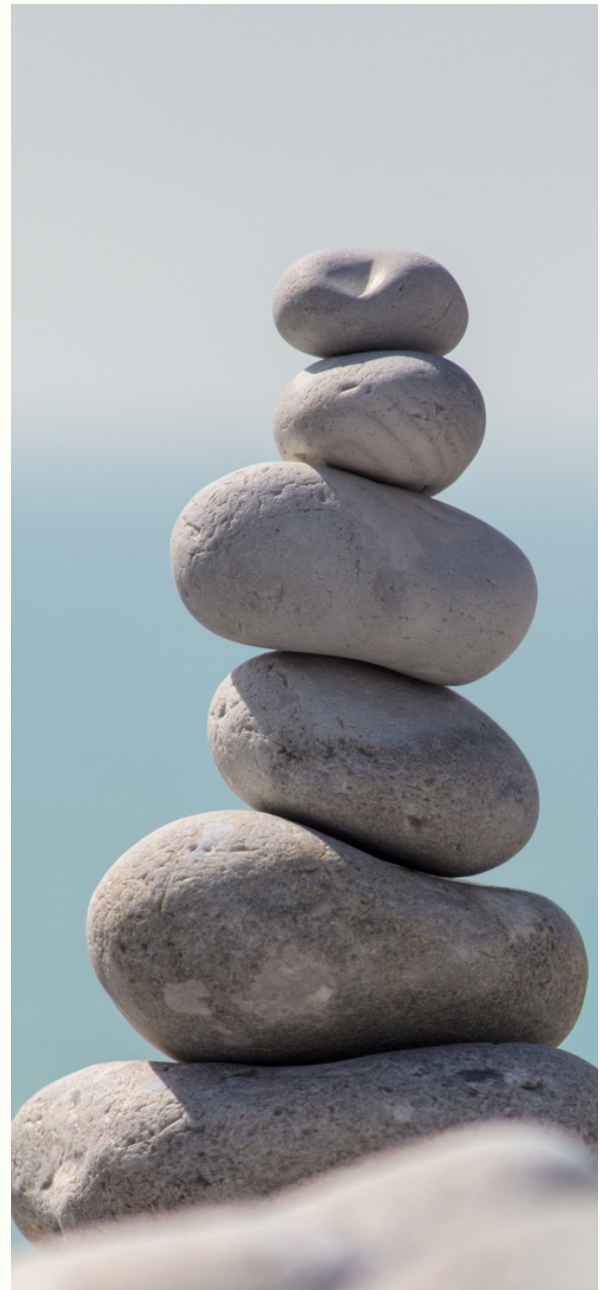
Presence is that indefinable quality that leads others to believe you, trust you, follow you and listen to you with respect.

It gains you supporters and vanquishes opponents. It gives you gravitas.

You do not develop presence by wishing it. It happens organically when you are personally anchored in a worldview that radiates itself in your tone of voice, in your mannerisms and in all manner of subtle clues that you are always dropping.

The deep changes that occur naturally as you go through Creativity and Personal Mastery automatically enhance your presence.

And this has a profound payoff in your personal and professional life.





More on the objectives of this program ...

This program will have a profound impact on your life – while you take it and decades beyond.

If it does not, then we will both have failed. I am not speaking egotistically as the instructor. What I am saying is that we will discuss fearsomely important “meaning of life” issues from the point of view of immediate personal relevance.

Such discussions can greatly clarify your thinking and help you align your values and belief-systems with what you do on a day-by-day basis. In fact, this is what the program is designed to do. It is also designed to get you started on custom building your ideal life.

Consider this vision:

You wake up in the morning suffused with an ineffable feeling of joy, a deep sense of well being. You go to work, to a job you love so much that you would pay for the privilege of doing it. You labor intently but are so focused that time flies by unnoticed.

At the end of the day you are invigorated, brimming with more energy than when you started. You have a penetrating awareness of the course you are charting, a clear knowledge of your place in the scheme of the universe. Your work feeds this, is congruent with it and brings great contentment and peace.



You face obstacles, big ones and small ones, perhaps more than your fair share of them. You understand very clearly that their purpose is to test your mettle, to bring out the best in you even as the abrasive whetting stone serves to finely hone the knife. So you plow on indomitably, sure of what you want to achieve and yet unconcerned about results.

At times it seems as if you are riding on the crest of a powerful tidal wave, as if the universe itself is helping you, working with you and through you.

Locked doors open mysteriously. Incredibly fortuitous coincidences occur. You accomplish prodigious feats, feats you would never have imagined yourself capable of.

Yet it would have been perfectly okay if you had not accomplished them. You accept accolades gracefully but are not swayed by them because you march to the beat of your own drummer.

Your personal life is intensely fulfilling. You are active in a variety of civic, charitable and political causes and successful in all of them. Your spouse is perfectly compatible with you, a true helpmate in every sense of the word. You beget progeny and your offspring bring great satisfaction.

You have a sense of trusteeship towards them and intuit what Gibran articulated:

"Your children are not your children.

*They are the sons and daughters of life's longing
for itself.*

They come through you, not from you.

*And though they are with you, they belong not to
you.*

*You may give them your love but not your
thoughts,*

For they have their own thoughts.

*You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.*

*You may strive to be like them, but strive not to
make them like you.*

*For life goes not backward nor tarries with
yesterday. You are the bows from which your
children as living arrows are sent forth.*

*The archer sees the mark upon the path of the
infinite, and he bends you with his might that the
arrows may go swift and far.*

*Let your bending in the archer's hand be for
gladness;*

*For even as he loves the arrow that flies, so he
loves the bow that is stable."*



So it goes on year after year, each day more perfect than the one before.

Your gratitude is so intense that at times it is like a physical ache. Your heart nearly bursts as you thank the universe.

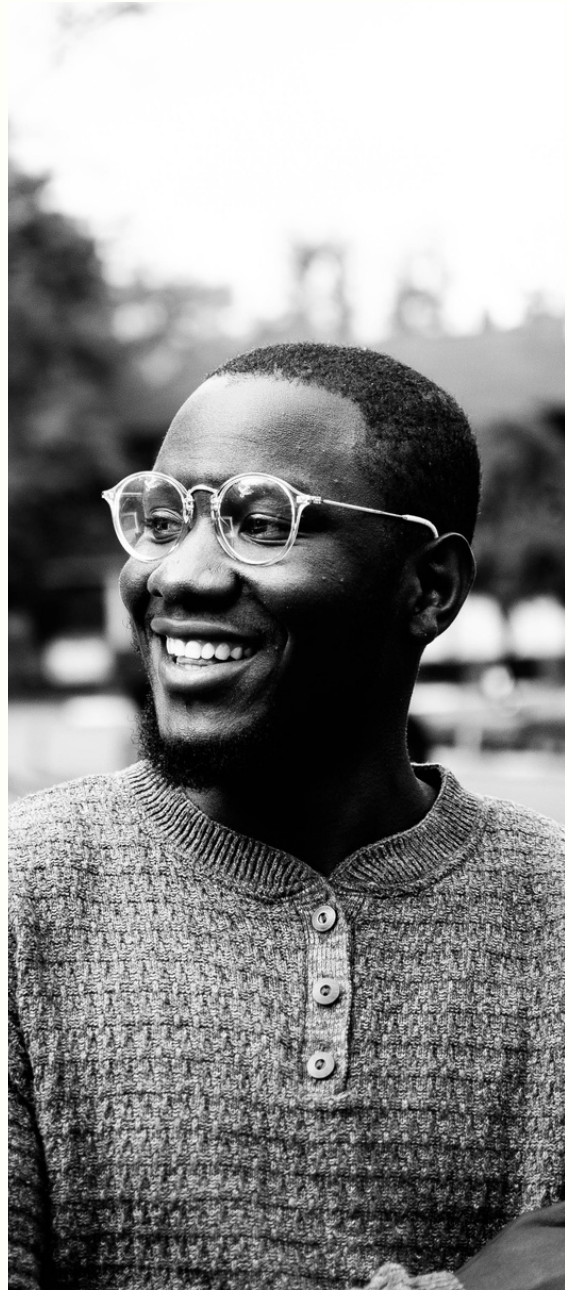
What have you done to deserve such good fortune? And when the time comes for you to depart, you do so joyfully and in peace, achieving identification with the Cosmic Principle, that incredible merging which has been called many things by many peoples but is ultimately indescribable, far beyond the feeble capabilities of language.

A life such as described above is your birthright. You have to reach out and claim it. Will you succeed? I do not know. I do know that the first step towards getting there is recognizing that you want to get there.

It is very important that you desperately want to reach the goal. It is equally important that you not particularly care whether you do or not. If this sounds like a paradox to you, you are correct.

It is.

Remember that all paradoxes are resolved as you reach higher levels of understanding, even the ultimate paradox of all – that which we call life.





He was a desperate seeker and he banged on the door of the master. "I want to be enlightened," he gasped, "If I stay as your disciple, how long will it take?"

The master surveyed the young man. He had a strong physique and the inner restlessness that drove him was almost palpable. A good candidate. "Ten years," said the master.

The youth wilted as if struck with an ax. For a few minutes he stood with head bowed, then he looked up. "If I work night and day," he asked fiercely, "If I do without sleep and do twice what your other disciples do, then how long will it take for me to become enlightened?"

"Twenty years," said the master calmly.

So perplexed was the youth and so earnest his demeanor that the sage relented and explained, "When you have one eye so firmly fixed on the goal, you have but one eye left to find the way."

Your life is a creation. It is a work of art no less than the paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel or the giant statue of Gomateshwara at Sravanabelgola. You are the artist.

How does all this happen?

All works of art first come into being in the mind of the craftsman. This program is an invitation to you to explore and define what you want to create.

Most persons believe that you have to climb the ladder of success a rung at a time. That upward mobility is slow and progress incremental.

This is untrue. You can leapfrog levels and reach a higher level of achievement in short order. And you can do this again. And again.

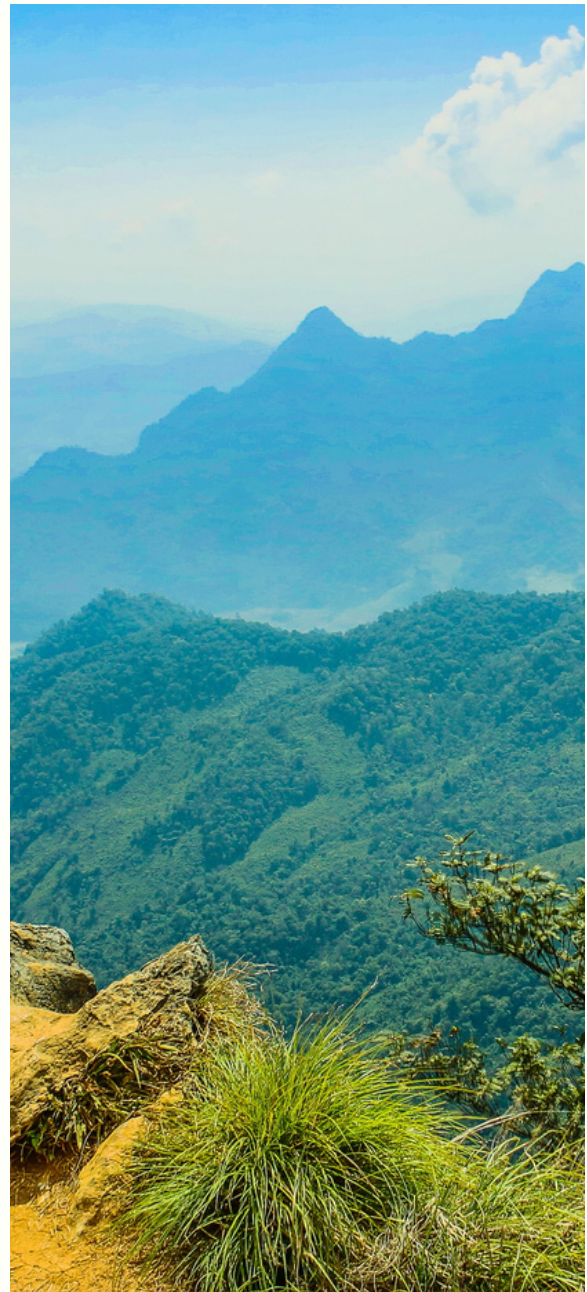
You cannot do this by “working harder.”

You cannot do this by “working smarter.”

You cannot do this by “managing your time better.”

The only way you can pull this off is by radically changing the way in which you view the world.

You achieve a quantum leap by dramatically changing your approach to life and the way your react to your circumstances.



You need a paradigm shift. I help qualified individuals, and qualification is tough, engineer such a shift in their lives.

To illustrate the power of a paradigm shift consider this ancient parable:

The abbot of a once famous Buddhist monastery that had fallen into decline was deeply troubled. Monks were lax in their practice, novices were leaving and lay supporters deserting to other centers.

He traveled far to a sage and recounted his tale of woe, of how much he desired to transform his monastery to the flourishing haven it had been in days of yore. The sage looked him in the eye and said, "The reason your monastery has languished is that the Buddha is living among you in disguise, and you have not honored Him."

The abbot hurried back, his mind in turmoil. The Selfless One was at his monastery! Who could He be? Brother Hua?...No, he was full of sloth. Brother Po?...No, he was too dull.

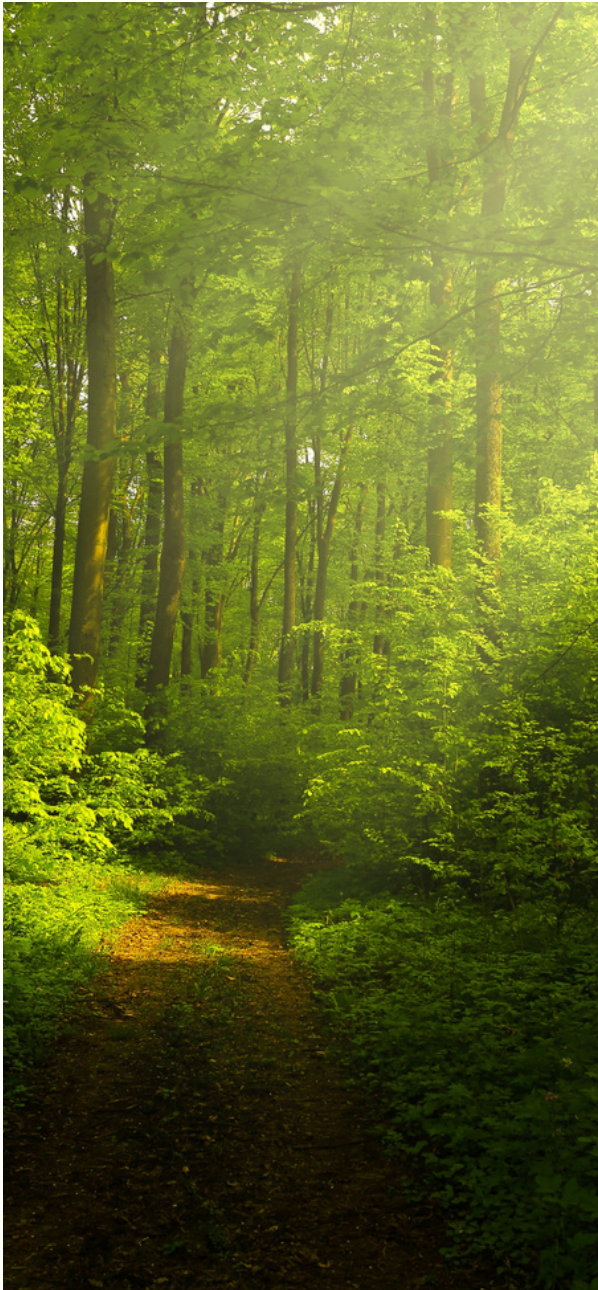
But then the Tathagata was in disguise. What better disguise than sloth or dullwittedness?

He called his monks to him and revealed the sage's words. They, too, were taken aback and looked at each other with suspicion and awe. Which one of them was the Chosen One? The disguise was perfect.

Not knowing who He was they took to treating everyone with the respect due to a Buddha. Their faces started shining with an inner radiance that attracted novices and then lay supporters.

In no time at all the monastery far surpassed its previous glory.





When you change the way you think, the universe changes to conform to the new person you have become.

Is this for real?

One of the sad by-products of Internet publishing and unregulated spam is that extreme hyperbole has become endemic. Countless charlatans from vendors of penis-enlargement devices to peddlers of “make big money working at home for two hours a week” programs offer you instant Nirvana and promise to make you beautiful and wealthy and young at the same time.

Caution is advisable, nay mandatory.

So, can any program perform as described? If yes, then can it have such an effect on YOU given your unique circumstances? Finally, even if tempted to take the plunge, how can you guard against being taken for a sucker?

These are all good questions. Let me give you the context and data you need to make an informed decision.

How life is evolving:

We, in the industrialized West and the affluent sections of other countries, have life better than ever before in many ways. We eat – or can if we want to! – better food, can access superior health-care, live in larger homes, take fancier vacations and travel further to do so and have electronic gizmos that would have been classified as miracles a scant ten years ago.

Our cars are safer, our lawns are greener and lusher and our career options are plentiful. In fact, a goodly chunk of us work in occupations that did not even exist two decades ago.

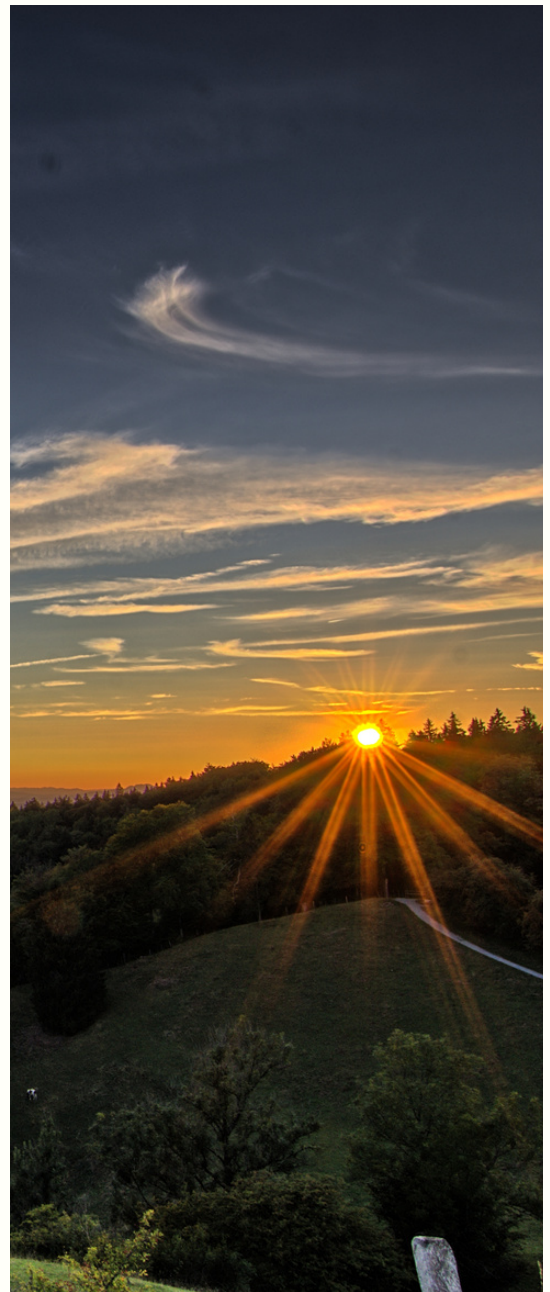
There is a large fly in this comfortable ointment. Our mental landscape is ever more inhospitable. We are more estranged from each other with quickie texts and social media messages replacing honest to goodness conversation.

We eat mindlessly and too much and futilely combat obesity with bouts of workouts and starvation. Our insecurities rise as others much younger achieve the success we crave. Our relationships with spouse and children are shakier and our close friendships are fewer.

And underlying this all is anxiety in a steady vibration that never goes away.

We are scared about our jobs, our future, our health, the economy and the state of the world. We are more obsessive-compulsive and over a greater number of things.

The picture is desolate.



Try this simple experiment. Really try it to understand how serious the situation is. Sit down in a comfortable armchair, place your feet firmly on the ground and for half an hour...do nothing! No sexual fantasies, no making and reviewing to-do lists, no TV or Internet or books or magazines. No music or phone calls or Sudoku or crossword puzzles. Just sit down and observe the meanderings of your mind.

Odds are good that you will be blown over by the gale that erupts. Most persons cannot even manage five minutes, let alone a half hour.

How free are you, really, if you cannot even sit quietly by yourself for thirty minutes?





A superior operating system:

Nearly three thousand years ago the Buddha said:

*We are what we think.
All that we are arises with our thoughts.
With our thoughts we make the world.
Speak or act with an impure mind
And trouble will follow you
As the wheel follows the ox that draws the cart.*

*We are what we think.
All that we are arises with our thoughts.
With our thoughts we make the world.
Speak or act with a pure mind
And happiness will follow you
As your shadow, unbreakable.*

*How can a troubled mind
Understand the way?*

*Your worst enemy cannot harm you
As much as your own thoughts,
unguarded.*

*But once mastered,
No one can help you as much,
Not even your father or your mother.*

– Dhammapada The Buddha



Let go of what no longer serves you:

You are successful. Others certainly think so and you can easily list many who would swap places with you in a heartbeat. You know that you have shortcomings — your spouse points these out to you with some regularity! — but you also know what you are good at, what your strengths are. That is why you achieved the success you have.

Right? Maybe, maybe not!

Have you ever considered that perhaps your worldview is not serving you well? That perhaps you would have done even better and risen much higher if you discarded some of your cherished beliefs about ‘this is the way the world works?’

Consider yourself as a moon rocket. The first stage ignites and takes it to a tremendous height. This is a necessary part of the journey.

But then the fuel runs out. This is the time to jettison the first stage and ignite the second. If you persist in holding on to it, its weight will pull you down inexorably.

Your belief systems are exactly like that. You may have succeeded because of them. You may have succeeded in spite of them. No matter. They have served their purpose and brought you to where you are.

If you want to reach your full potential, you will have to see the world differently.

You have to dump your first stage.

It is not easy to recognize that you have to change in order to progress. It is even tougher to understand what is holding you back so you can release it.

This program will help you on both fronts.

Background:

For many years I taught a course called “Creativity and Personal Mastery” at Columbia Business School.

It was designed to help MBA students discover their passion and show them how to live deeply fulfilling lives. Word got around and soon students from Law, International and Public Affairs, Journalism and other schools were applying in droves.

It was always heavily oversubscribed.

Then I started hearing from alumni and from persons unaffiliated with the university. They wanted to know if the course was offered elsewhere or if they could ‘sit in’ on classes.

The course migrated to London Business School, the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University and the Haas School of Business at the University of California at Berkeley.



I now offer it privately in New York, London and San Francisco and executives with many years of experience as well as entrepreneurs and driven, successful people are drawn to it. Other cities may join this list soon. Stay tuned!

More on what it is all about:

The thesis of this program is simple.

Life is short. And uncertain. It is like a drop of water skittering around on a lotus leaf.

You never know when it will drop off the edge and disappear. So each day is far too precious to waste. And each day that you are not radiantly alive and brimming with cheer is a day wasted.

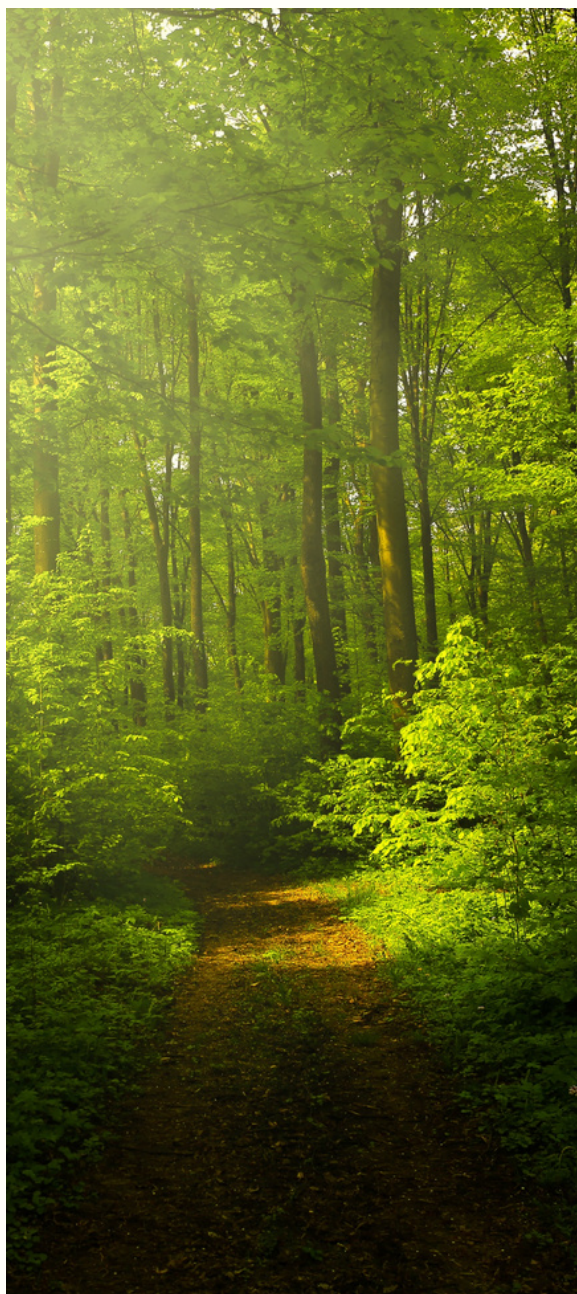
Stop right now and evaluate your life. YOUR LIFE. As it is right now. Are you, by and large and daily variations aside, happier now than you have ever been? Do you have the inner conviction that you are on the path that is just right for you, the one that is transparently leading you to fulfillment in many dimensions – in your career, in relationships, in spiritual development?

If the answer is, NO, ask yourself **why not?**

The first step to getting there is to refuse to accept anything less.

This program is designed to be that first step for you.





More on the benefits?

Innumerable participants have attested to the life-changing nature of this approach. To hear from them in their own words go to the testimonials page of my website.

Be aware that while practically everyone has benefited to some extent, not everyone has had similar epiphanies and later sections of this document will address this.

I expect this program to have a profound impact on your life. It will have such an impact if you are 'ready' and totally dedicate yourself to it. **Do not apply to take this program before you have read the entire syllabus.**

Is this right for me?

This is a tough one. Only you can answer it. The proviso in the previous section was not added as a clever mechanism to get me off the hook for over promising. It just happens to be the way it is.

The program can indeed turn your life around in myriad, marvelous ways, but only if you are 'ready' and if you put in the effort.

Here is a good heuristic for judging if you are 'ready'. Read the entire syllabus carefully. If you are not so strongly drawn to it that you would disrupt your life considerably to take this program, don't take it. This topic is also dealt with in greater detail later.

The program has four principal objectives:

- 1) To expose you to a wide variety of techniques and exercises that have been found to be helpful in sparking the creative process; to help you select those that best fit your personality and apply them to many different business and personal situations.
- 2) To help you discover your "purpose in life", the grand design that gives meaning to all of your activities; to help you find that to which you can enthusiastically devote the rest of your life. When you are moved by deep inner conviction is when you have the greatest opportunity to sway others, in short to become a "leader".
- 3) To show you how you can mobilize resources to reach your goals most efficiently.

There is a non-linear relationship between "work" and "results".

Immense exertion can produce little outcome and, at other times, a little effort can yield a huge payoff. If you have an open mind you can learn to create serendipitous opportunities.





4) To enable you to find and achieve the balance in life that is right for you. Stress levels are rising in our society across all ages and occupations. It little profits you to achieve any goal if you are a nervous wreck during or after.

There are always tradeoffs between accomplishments and price paid but they are not necessarily obvious. It is important to learn how to strive mightily while remaining serene.

Though they seem to be disparate, these objectives are really strongly related. There is a substantial body of evidence indicating that people tend to be more creative when working on projects that interest them, and most creative when passionately immersed in their endeavors.

Setting Expectations:

It would be naive of you to expect that all these objectives will be met during the time we have together.

Creativity research encompasses a vast and growing field. Your purpose in life tends to change as you grow and evolve. It is frequently a mystery and many, perhaps the vast majority, never find out.

This program will serve to start – or spur – you on a journey of discovery that will take many years.



You will, of necessity, be alone on this adventure. Please note that I said alone, not lonely.

Creating serendipitous opportunities, when you have learned the technique, will give you a powerful tool that can help you in myriad ways. To use it you will have to alter your belief structure about “how things work”.

Odds are that you do have this capacity already. If not, you probably would not have read so far. Your notion of balance keeps changing along with your life situation, as well as your evolving views on what your purpose in life is.

The first objective will be largely met. You will work indefinitely on the second. The analytical and intuitive exercises that you learn and practice will give you many “aha!” experiences that should provide both direction and encouragement.

The third is unpredictable. Some of you will be able to accomplish it immediately; others will have to work on it for a long time before it suddenly falls into place.

You will certainly make some headway with the fourth objective. This will be relatively easy if the quote that follows makes sense to you, somewhat more difficult if it does not.

“Don’t aim at success – the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue ... as the unintended side-effect of one’s personal dedication to a course greater than oneself.” – Viktor Frankl

The social context:

There is little question that we are living in a time of acute change. As always, in such cusps of evolution, the world around us seems to have gone crazy.

Government has all but broken down in many parts of the globe and its institutions are not held in high regard here. There is breakdown of social order, growing inequality of wealth and opportunity, a seemingly permanent and increasingly disliked underclass and a degradation of standards in fields ranging from education to popular entertainment.

There is anxiety about the future, seeds of generation conflict, widespread environmental despoliation and growing polarization of society. Technology has, in many instances, accelerated and exacerbated these trends.

On the flip side, there is still a thriving global economy, an increased ability to meet the basic needs of most of humanity, a dynamic international business community and a growing realization that radical surgery needs to be performed on the existing order of things. Shifts of consciousness can occur with startling rapidity in these days of electronic communication.

I take it for granted that you would like to do your bit, and perhaps a little extra, to leave the world a better place than when you entered it. If you do not, this program is assuredly not for you.

Change will have to happen at three levels before the “new era”, whatever it is, arrives:





i) Individual attitudinal change: We will have to recognize that we do not function in isolation, that we have an impact on society and are, in turn, impacted by it. Personal aggrandizement at the expense of everyone else is counterproductive. Boesky is not the ideal. Chief Seattle articulated this in a letter to President Franklin Pierce in 1855. There is now controversy about authorship and date but the ideas are very much germane.

“Humankind has not woven the web of life...we are but a part of it. Whatever we do to the web we do to ourselves. All things are bound together...all things connect. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls also the children of the earth.”
— Chief Seattle

ii) Organizational structural change: The world has altered greatly in the last few decades but our institutions - business, government, religious and societal - have remained antiquated. The old command-and-control hierarchies are totally unsuited to the present era of instant multilevel communication with employees seeking personal growth and autonomy.

Re-engineering and similar strategies are but band-aids incapable of coping with severed arteries. Many smaller firms are experimenting with radically different ways of internal organization and, out of the existing chaos, the butterfly will emerge. The form and color are, as yet, unknown.



iii) Societal value change: As long as material accumulation remains the index of success, we will have excess. Consumption will continue as the measure of well being and some combination of investment bankers, attorneys and accountants will ingeniously devise ever more convoluted instruments, which may or may not help the organizations on which they are foisted but will certainly ensure them very comfortable early retirement.

Too many of our athletes, politicians and business leaders are poor role models but we have spawned them as a society.

Better leaders will only emerge when we change what we honor.

When, for example, a teacher who builds a championship chess team from given-up-for-lost ghetto kids is celebrated more than a drug-ingesting pugilist. There are indeed signs that a backlash has begun, but they are inchoate and diffuse.

This program is designed to get you thinking about all three types of changes.

1) To some extent, #1 is under your control and will probably start happening as you move through the course, complete the exercises and interact with your colleagues. Some day, you will likely reach a position of authority and can then experiment with

2) The experiment is more likely to be beneficial if you start refining your ideas now. If you reach a station of great prominence, and I hope you do, you might well make a contribution to

3) which will also be affected collectively by the actions of all of the persons you influence. Think of it as the spreading ripples from a stone tossed in a pond, with the ripples growing stronger instead of attenuating.

Who should take this program:

You should take this program if:

- you sometimes wonder what you would like to do with your life or whether the educational or career path that you are on is right for you;
- you are troubled by ethical conflicts in the workplace and in personal life;
- you have a nagging sense that there is a great deal that you have to accomplish and that, somehow, you are not living up to even a fraction of your potential;
- you have a curious mind and enjoy being challenged by radical ideas and have even come up with a few of your own or would like to;
- you are comfortable with ambiguity and are willing to make the effort required to “know thyself”.

This manifesto is replete with quotations and parables. If you feel intuitively drawn towards most of them, you will probably benefit from taking this program.

Expect that this will be the most meaningful program you will ever take or, at the very least, be open to the possibility.



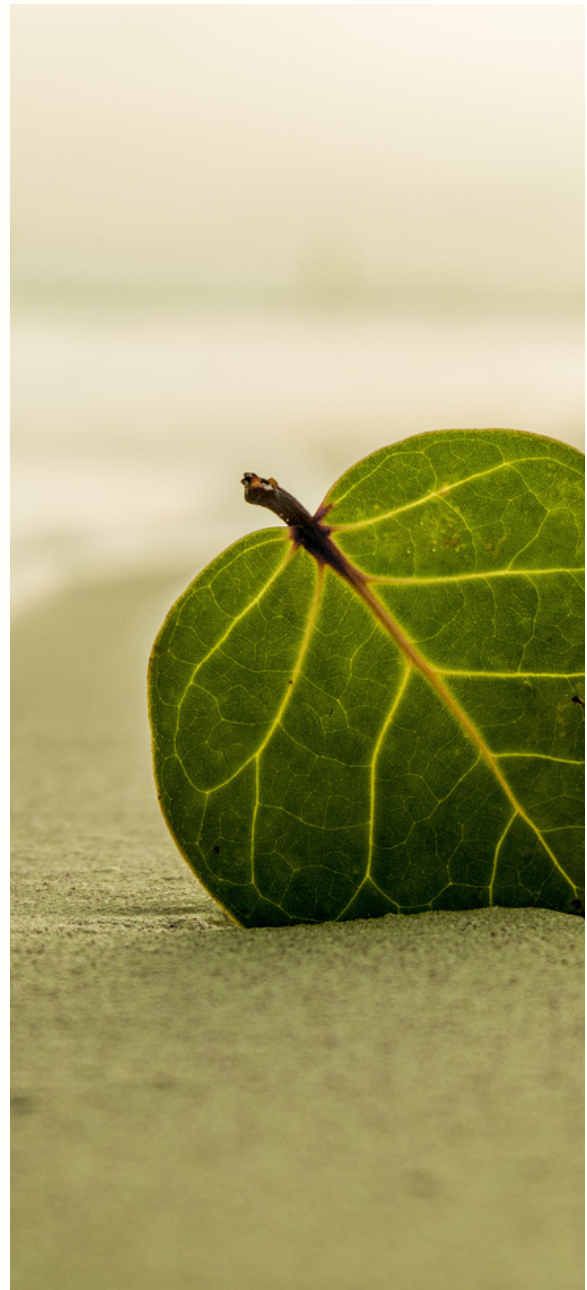
Who should *not* take this program:

You should ***not*** take this program if:

- you cannot tolerate ambiguity and live in a black and white world with few shades of gray;
- you become upset if your beliefs are challenged and you are called upon to justify them;
- you are uncomfortable examining values and cultural systems different from your own;
- you are unshakably confident that you know exactly what you want to be and how to get there.

If you cannot maintain an open mind when confronted with seemingly strange ideas, you are unlikely to benefit much from this program.

Read this syllabus carefully, especially the quotes, parables and descriptions of exercises. If you are not intuitively drawn towards most of them, do not take this program. It could be an enormous waste of time for you.





Participant Attitude

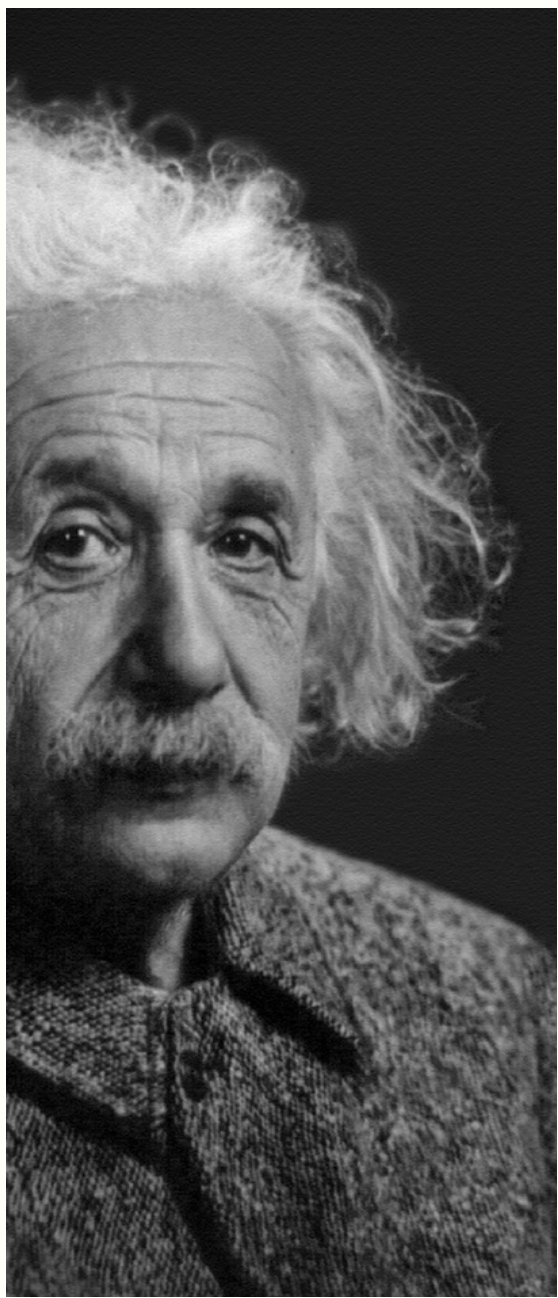
One of the strengths of modern education is that it instills the habit of questioning everything. This has led to great scientific advancement and to the breakdown of many pillars of 'knowledge' from the notion of a flat earth to Newtonian concepts of time and space. But such attitudes can also lead to the rejection of valid concepts that are ambiguous.

You will be exposed some quite radical ideas in our sessions. DO NOT attempt to 'prove' them false by searching vigorously for counter examples. Accept them with an open mind and see if they work for you. If they do not, discard them. If they do, continue working with them and refining them so they have maximum useful impact on you and your personal situation. Judging them before trying them is a waste of your energy and could deprive you of tools that are extremely valuable. Leave your preconceptions at home. If you are unable to do this, then you should probably not take this program.

This work is a passion and a calling for me. I will pull out all stops to make sure that you can begin finding answers to the questions that are of import to you.

I need your help. Your unreserved help.

This is not my program. This is our program. A program that is different each time it is offered, because the persons who take it are different.



Participant Attitude

I need you to take responsibility for ensuring that it is maximally useful. If something is not working, let me know immediately. If something is especially powerful, do likewise. If you have thoughts on what could make it better, express them. I may not be able to implement all suggestions and will use instructor prerogative in some cases, but welcome such involvement.

In my view you have an obligation to yourself as well as to others who are taking the program with you. If there is anything that you can do to make it better for someone else, do so. If it is something I need to do, let me know. If you wish your contribution to be confidential, that's fine. Just let me know.

Here is a powerful quote that summarizes my approach:

"The significant problems we face today cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them." Albert Einstein

This program is an exercise to collectively raise the level of our thinking.

Learning outcomes and still more on who *should* and should not take the program:

Does the subject matter of this program call to you so strongly that you would walk ten miles in tight boots to attend each session? Are you ready to crawl on bare knees over broken glass to explore these issues with a group of your peers who are similarly motivated?

If the answer is 'yes', you will assuredly have a profoundly transformative experience that will change your life for the better in unimaginable ways.

Here are some that have been reported:

- depression being replaced with deep-seated optimism and joy;
- warm relations developing with estranged parent; changes in career path in line with innate interest and passion;
- astonishing turnabout in job-interviewing skills – rejection changing to near 100% call backs;
- unbelievable, almost miraculous, 'coincidences' from tough professors easily agreeing to changes in dissertation topics;



- uncompromising employers agreeing to flexible job arrangements;
- profound reconnection with spirituality and newfound ability to infuse it into all aspects of life with no inherent contradiction;
- extra-ordinary increase in effectiveness – three to four times as much accomplished with less strain and effort;
- clarity about personal values and how to shape jobs, relationships and other activities so they are in conformity.

If the answer is ‘no’, ask yourself further questions. Can I engender the motivation, the commitment, to give this program my very best shot?

Will I work hard enough that I will not ‘let down’ others who are taking the program and who expect the same degree of involvement from me?

If the answer to these is ‘yes’, you will probably benefit greatly from taking this program.

If the answer is ‘no’, do yourself, and others, a favor and exit now.





Outrageous and impossible demands:

The funny thing about life is that it always encroaches.

The more you let it encroach, the more it accommodates you. You WILL run into conflicts when you take this program: Work related deadlines; 'Important' projects that suddenly pop up; personal situations that eat up time; peers, employers and family members who make demands; long decided travel and vacation plans; etc.

I expect you to resolve most of these conflicts in favor of this program and the exercises and assignments you are given. Excellent if you can resolve all of them in this way.

One participant who took the program years ago reminisced, *"I never really did the XXXXX exercise. I felt I didn't have a choice. I had to finish a work project and my group members were angry at my dawdling."*

He continued, *"I did it on my own a few months ago and got such amazing insights that I am still quivering. It has definitely changed my life. I kick myself for delaying it by three years. The ironic part is that I don't even remember what that other project was all about or who was with me on it."*

This, by the way, is a fairly typical reaction from alumni.

Please understand that I am not making these demands because of an inherently sadistic streak that I am unable to satisfy elsewhere. I am merely trying to ensure that you get maximum returns from the investment you are making in this program.

The ONLY reason this program works is because it is about YOU. What do YOU want to create? What kind of life do YOU want to lead? What do happiness and success mean to YOU?

No one can give you the answers. You have to discover them on your own.

It will be much easier if you make a whole-hearted emotional and psychic commitment. Submerge yourself in this program for the duration and give it your very, very best shot.

It is quite unlikely that you will soon be in a situation again where so many well-intentioned peers are grappling with these enormously important life issues at the same time.

Our society, as presently organized, does not accord too many forums for such exploration. Do make the most of this opportunity.

If you register for this program it is an excellent idea to lessen your workload elsewhere in any way you can.

Offload as much as you can on your peers and direct reports and eschew added responsibility for the duration. Tell your drinking buddies that you will be unavailable for a few months. Reassure your spouse of your undying love but explain that you really need to do this for both of you. Give away your TV. Pack the kids off to relatives if this is an option. You get the picture!





Managing expectations – what will you get out of this program?

A good friend of mine is the chairman and principal founder of a rapidly growing multi-billion dollar technology company. His credo is “underpromise and overdeliver” and that is exactly what he has incorporated into the culture of his organization.

One major customer reported that what really made them raving fans of the company is that they received high quality business process recommendations for gratis even as the technology fixes were being put into place.

Good advice. Relatively easy to follow when there is a fair consensus on what was promised and what was delivered. But what if there is no such consensus? There have been students who have said something like, “Professor Rao, I really got a great deal out this program and I have noticed many, many changes in my life. However, they have not been momentous and I don’t classify them as life-changing. I feel somewhat let down when I think of the syllabus.”

There have also been students who have said something like.

“Professor Rao, I got more value out of this program than any other I have taken in my life. It, by itself, was worth the entire cost of my graduate education and the loan I am groaning under. Thank you ever so much.”

And, of course, everywhere in between.

A story ...

The king was celebrating his sixtieth birthday and so joyous was he that he made an unusual proclamation. Each of his subjects could enter the royal palace and take any single item of his choosing.

The seamstress entered the anteroom and stood in awe of the furniture and the magnificent tapestries. She saw a bolt of the finest silk waiting to be made into a curtain and grasped it eagerly. It became hers.

The cabinetmaker wandered the rooms marveling at the strange objects and the luxury of appointments. He espied a pile of ivory tusks and another of mother of pearl and promptly gathered them unto him. "What beautiful cabinets I can now make," he thought as he hurried out congratulating himself for making off with two items instead of one.

The jeweler scoured the palace, examined and ignored the various treasure rooms and ornaments in the queens' quarters. At last he found what he was looking for. In the middle of the royal diadem was the most magnificent jewel in the entire land. He grabbed it with feverish fingers and rushed out thinking, "When I sell this I will be wealthy beyond belief. My children's children will live a life of ease because of my cleverness today."

The wise man too searched high and low and finally approached the king. "What! Still empty-handed?" exclaimed the king jovially. "Come with me. Here is a magnificent diamond. It is even better than the one the jeweler made off with. It would have rested on my diadem, but you can have it."



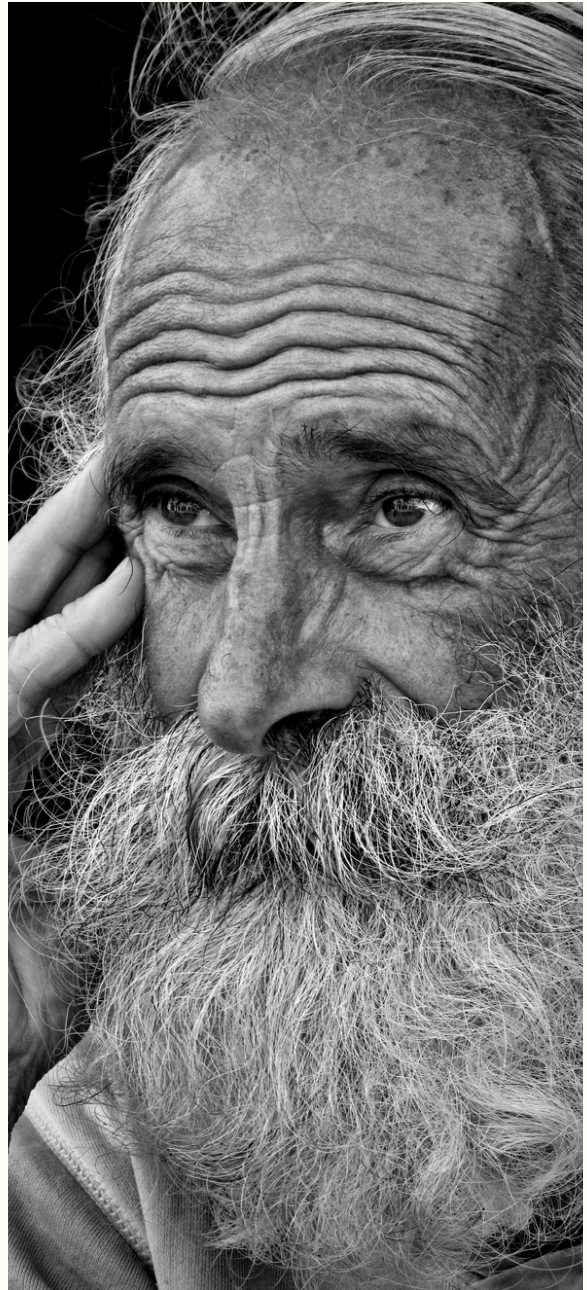
A story (continued)

But the wise man would not take it. “What, then, do you want?” asked the king puzzled and alarmed. A deep suspicion was growing in him. “Give me the philosopher’s stone that I know you possess,” said the wise man. “Give me that which will give me freedom from want and liberate me forever.”

The king’s face fell. “It was the one item I did not wish to lose,” he lamented. “I was so sure that no one would ask for it.” But he was true to his word and the wise man made his obeisance and left with it.

And the king, to his great joy, discovered that the wisdom conferred by the stone did not require its presence. He prayed that the wise man would, in turn, bequeath it to a deserving other and he to another and so on.

This did, indeed, happen and no country ever had more wise men to counsel it in good times and bad.





What are YOU going to be as you enter the palace? That, more than anything else, will determine what you will bring out. The exercises, assignments and ideas in this program can truly, and completely, turn your life around. They can impact every aspect of your existence – your career, your relationships, your financial well-being, your health, your spiritual development.

This is not an egotistical claim. I freely admit that none of the ideas are my creation. They have been articulated and refined by persons of infinite wisdom, giants who strode this earth in different times and who belonged to different traditions. My modest contribution is that I have presented them in clothing acceptable to persons steeped in modern education. If your effort is sincere, the changes will happen. Change cannot but happen.

The cynical, or the astute, or the cynical and astute among you will spot that I have just given myself an out. Thoughts like the following may already have arisen, “What a neat racket! The guy promises the moon and when he does not deliver it becomes my fault. Cool! I must remember to use this one myself.”

If such trains of thought persistently arise in you, it is a good indication that you should not take this program. That is just the way it is.

You put in the best effort you are capable of, and the results will appear as inexorably as the wheel of the cart follows the ox.

The onus is on both of us but more so on you.



Workload:

This is the toughest program you will ever take. This is the easiest program you will ever take. (I always did admire the way Dickens got rolling in Tale of Two Cities!)

This program is unique in that the work you do for the course is done while you are doing what you regularly do. This is why very busy executives, including CEOs of major firms, have been able to take it while continuing with their other duties.

That said, you will be spending much time contemplating your world-view and whether this is one you want to hold on to.

Participants are thrilled at the discoveries they make and many suspend discretionary activity so that they can focus on the exercises for this program.



Assignments and exercises:

You will be assigned a series of total immersion exercises that I call as-ifs, a term derived from “as if”. Each lasts for about a week and it may sometimes be possible for you to work on two simultaneously.

One as-if, for example, may require you to treat every single person you meet as if it was his or her last day on earth. This means everybody from your instructor through your team-mates on work projects to the vendor who sells you your newspaper and candy. Carefully observe your behavior and feelings and note how they differ from what they would otherwise have been. Do you feel that the other person’s behavior is different also? How? Record your observations.

I guarantee that you will be amazed at how difficult it is to do justice to an as-if and at how many times you “forget”. To help things along I suggest you get an alarm device that beeps at half-hour intervals to remind you to get back into the as-if.

Other as-ifs might require you to perform every activity as if it was perfectly enjoyable or observe yourself non-judgmentally as if you were an invisible entity suspended a foot above your head.

Though simple to describe, as-ifs are very difficult to follow and can lead to profound changes. I hope that you will repeatedly experience a “paradigm shift”, a startling insight that results from viewing the same situation from a different perspective. With practice you can make such an insight a permanent part of your being rather than a transitory flash.

You will also learn breathing exercises, visualizations and meditation and discuss case studies of their application by the United States Special Forces, medical researchers, sports trainers and, I almost forgot, business consultants.

You are expected to report conscientiously on all exercises and assignments.



Privacy Issues

You will derive the greatest benefit from this program if you are scrupulously honest in all your assignments. However, you will also be dealing with personal issues, many of them sensitive and quite possibly painful. If you are sure that you would like to take the program but are still troubled about privacy matters, speak to me personally and we will work to resolve your concern.

Please note that some of your assignments will be distributed to others. You will always be explicitly told about such distribution in advance.

Sessions

Each session is highly interactive and you are expected to participate with vim and vigor. Your experiences, and those of your colleagues, as you wrestle with your asifs will be discussed. Topics will sometimes be assigned in advance but, more frequently, will arise spontaneously from the group. Guest speakers may occasionally share their insights with you.

Be prepared to wrestle with Zen koans and quantum physical maps of reality as you struggle to understand what all this has to do with business or your personal situation. You will eventually find the relevance. Trust me on this one.

We will spend much time examining perceptions and how they affect and are affected by our belief systems. The mental models we carry around with us – often without even realizing that they are models – define and create the “reality” we experience. Remember that we only observe what we have been trained to observe.

A story ...

Little Tommy came home from his first pool party and he was being quizzed by his father.

“How many kids were there?” asked his father.

“About a dozen,” said Tommy who couldn’t count any higher.

“And how many were girls?” “How would I know? Nobody was wearing any clothes,” replied Tommy.

Remember also that what we observe reveals more about us than about reality.

Patrick was penniless when he came to America. He joined a sweatshop and learnt tailoring. He worked hard and soon opened his own shop. He was ambitious and he put in long hours and in a few years his chain of upscale men’s clothing stores made him a multimillionaire. He finally took a vacation to Europe and held court to admiring relatives when he came back.

“And when we went to Rome I had a private audience with the Pope,” he announced grandly.

There was a collective sigh as the audience tried to assimilate this momentous news.

“Yep,” Patrick continued, savoring the situation, “There was just the two of us in this huge office.”

There was more silence. Finally an aunt ventured, “Well Patrick, how was he?” “Size 38 long,” said Patrick promptly, “But he’s tough to outfit because his trousers are size 42.”





Networking

Contacts are important. Every upwardly mobile professional knows this. Politicians know it better than anyone else. Experienced stockbrokers get signing bonuses because they can bring a book of business. Lawyers and lobbyists get hired because of the thickness of their rolodexes. There are books, programs and seminars on how to network better.

I have always had a problem with the notion that you should cultivate a person based on his - or her - position and the help that you might potentially receive some time in the future. Apart from the ethical and personal honesty issues involved, consider the enormous amount of time expended in the pursuit of such contacts - the after hours socializing, the parties and formal affairs, the joining of business, civic and community organizations to meet the “right” people, and so on.

Suppose it were possible to set up a system whereby you did not have to build a network. Anytime you needed help, a person would appear who had precisely the knowledge and/or resources you required.

You can learn to function in this way (go back and read objective #3 for this program).

There are many prerequisites, the most important being that whatever you are trying to accomplish brings material and spiritual good to a larger community.

Another condition is that you learn how to let go. You have to relinquish the ego driven need to be “in control”, the feeling – always false in reality – that you are the orchestrator of events.

When you have the right mixture of passion for what you want to accomplish, detachment and acceptance of whatever actually happens, you will be amazed at how locked doors mysteriously swing open. You will find the cavalry showing up to rescue you every time you are beleaguered.

“As you proceed, golden opportunities will be strewn across your path, and the power and judgment to properly utilize them will spring up within you. Genial friends will come unbidden to you; sympathetic souls will be drawn to you as the needle is to the magnet; and books and all outward aids that you require will come to you unsought.” – James Allen

You will learn a different method of networking. One that is immensely powerful and in harmony with your values.



Quite a few participants have been blown away by the simplicity of the method and the ease with which they have been able to forge strong connections with those they approached. Some of these were well known public figures and normally unreachable. It may take you a while to tweak this method till it starts working for you, but you will find the exercise eminently useful.

Till you learn to function as above, you will have another resource. The nature of this program is such that you will form very deep bonds with your classmates. You will know many of them far more intimately than you know most friends or relatives. You will be able to call on them years hence, and they will be receptive to you because of your common shared experience.

Alumni of this program have formed a community. They gather in groups, small and large, and keep the spirit alive. Join this community and be active in it.



Leadership

Leadership is the new fad in our global economy. Innumerable “experts” are pontificating on the character of leaders and how to become one. Bestsellers identify corporate titans as champions worthy of emulation and reveal their secret – until now – techniques. Military figures from Attila the Hun through Napoleon to Colin Powell are being scrutinized for the same reason. It is a burgeoning cottage industry that is rapidly outgrowing its cottage.

The reality is that we have very few leaders in any of our major institutions. We don’t have them in education, or government, or business, or unions, or not-for-profits.

We have a large number of people in positions of hierarchical authority. They wield great financial and social power, often unwisely. They can certainly impact your life for good or ill. But they are not leaders. They care not if you achieve your potential and you matter little to them except as a means of helping achieve their objectives.

They neither have overarching visions nor the intuitive knowledge of how this translates into the next step nor the manifest life-force that wins dedicated converts to their vision.

What they do have is a small coterie of followers who have hitched their stars to them in a calculated bet that this is a route to personal advancement.





True self-interest teaches selflessness. Heaven and earth endure because they are not simply selfish but exist on behalf of all creation. The wise leader, knowing this, keeps egocentricity in check and by doing so becomes even more effective.

Enlightened leadership is service, not selfishness.

The leader grows more and lasts longer by placing the well-being of all above the well-being of self alone.

The paradox is that by being selfless, the leader enhances self.

– John Heider

There are many reasons for this unsatisfactory state of affairs.

Our competitive system rewards naked aggression.

Our consumption-oriented society equates success with accumulation of material wealth.

Our fragmented worldview perceives leadership as something that can be learnt, as a technique that can be deployed.

Leadership is a state of being, not a skill.

Leadership

This is why great leaders have come in all stripes. Their styles have been autocratic and democratic, gentle and brusque, unhurried or frenetically active.

Studying these styles will profit you nothing. What will help you is reflection on their deeper qualities.

If this reflection produces changes in what you are, then you may be able to use some of their methods with success.

The wise leader's ability does not rest on techniques or gimmicks or set exercises. The method of awareness-of-process applies to all people and all situations.

The leader's personal state of consciousness creates a climate of openness. Center and ground give the leader stability, flexibility and endurance. Because the leader sees clearly, the leader can shed light on others.

— John Heider

I have little sympathy for managers who lament that it is impossible to “motivate” workers and who primarily tinker with various forms of incentives and punishments. Such “motivation” is okay – maybe – if we are talking about animals in a behavioral psychology laboratory.

It is demeaning when applied to human beings.



Your function as a manager is to figure out what is demotivating your employees and getting rid of it. This is not semantic hairsplitting. It is a completely different philosophical approach and it has some pretty startling implications, which we will explore.

We will discuss leadership in some depth. The goal is to help you refine your own ideas and define what you are. When you reach your position of authority, this will help make you an authentic leader, not an insipid imitator.

There is a soul to an army as well as the individual man, and no general can accomplish the full work of his army unless he commands the soul of his men, as well as their bodies and legs. – William Tecumseh Sherman

This is equally true of any other organization.

The way you command the soul of your people is by working on yourself. By 'being' a beacon.

"It's good for business"

My desk is piled high with books that tout various types of good behavior. Treat the customer right so he/she will keep coming back.

Look after your employees so they will treat the customer right and keep him/her coming back.

Behave with integrity because – surprise, surprise! – if you do so your stock price will surely go up.





Leadership

Every single one of these tomes finds it necessary to justify the behavior by pointing out that if you do this the company will benefit in terms of revenues, profits, share appreciation or some similar metric.

They make convoluted chains of frequently twisted logic to substantiate their claims and give examples that are far from convincing.

But they labor on nevertheless and the authors are held up as apostles of new and responsible thinking.

What a sorry pass we have come to when natural decent behavior has to be 'justified' in terms of some other benefit.

What happens if behaving without integrity can get you growth and unparalleled profit? This is frequently the case in many developing countries with weak legal structures. Do you then jettison integrity?

In my book you treat the customer right because that is the proper thing to do. You treat your employees well because that is how you like to be treated. You behave with integrity because that is an expression of who and what you are.

These are the givens. You DO NOT have to justify or explain or rationalize any of it.

In fact, if you attempt to link your values with external measures like profit you cheapen them and you discredit your actions.



"We are not here merely to earn a living and to create value for our shareholders. We are here to enrich the world and make it a finer place to live. We will impoverish ourselves if we fail to do so."

– Woodrow Wilson

We have systematically turned over our commercial enterprises to persons of overweening greed who use untested economic and behavioral models to justify actions that would otherwise be considered rapacious. It is high time we called a halt to this.

The good news is that there are dozens and dozens of enterprises started by individuals who are profoundly dissatisfied with ruthlessly exploitative business tactics.

They are linking up with social activists to create a new, more humane business paradigm. It remains to be seen whether this will emerge as a new consensus. You are encouraged to join the revolt.

Your Job with a capital "J"

There are hundreds of thousands of companies out there and thousands of different ways – and combinations of ways – in which you can earn a living or accumulate wealth. I am puzzled – nay amazed! – that so many persons restrict their sights to either large well known companies or smaller ones that they know through personal contacts.

Why is the rest of the cornucopia so ignored? Why? Why? Can you relate to this account from a student who took my program while at Columbia Business School?

A story ...

I had just been offered an investment banking job with a very prestigious firm at a salary that was one of the highest offered to anyone in my graduating class at Columbia Business School. This was my third offer and it came after four grueling rounds of meetings. I thrived on interviews. I aced exams and I aced interviews.

The Exec VP was only 35 and clearly on his way to the top. He was also a Columbia B-School grad and he made it very clear that he wanted me as a part of his core team, the team that would set the future direction for the entire operation. We got along like a house on fire. Not just a regular blaze but a 6-alarm conflagration. He told me the job was mine and that it would take a couple of weeks to get the paperwork straightened out. He was supposed to take me out to dinner but he begged out because he had a ton of work to do and he didn't really need any more time with me. So he turned me over to a junior member of his team.

She was a Wharton MBA and really, really pretty. Classic model looks and very bright to boot. Under other circumstances I would have tried to date her. She didn't know I had the job but her instinct told her that I was a rival. The gamesmanship began immediately.

I didn't ask any questions but she proceeded to position herself higher on the hierarchy by telling me what my job responsibilities would be. I played it cool. She was in a cubicle and I knew she would have a heart attack when she found out that I had negotiated an office for myself. A tiny one, true, but still an office with four walls and a door that I could close.



A story ...

We went out for dinner and it was all cat and mouse. Majors are fluid at Columbia and I could position myself as a marketing major as readily as a finance one. She was a hardcore finance junkie and forthwith started to show me that I knew nothing about the field. I had four years of work experience and knew how to play that game. I pulled out advanced mathematical techniques from my undergrad Physics major days and proceeded to speculate on their applicability to esoteric niches in finance. She retreated immediately. Stalemate.

She looked at me with new respect and I could almost hear her brain whirring as she tried to figure out how she could gain an edge. I recognized resignedly that she would never give up. She would keep coming and coming and coming. She was also a part of the EVP's team and he had made it very clear that he expected us to get along.

I suddenly realized that the very fact he had mentioned it indicated that he expected a problem. I didn't think I would have difficulty fending her off but caught myself speculating on how the dynamics would change if an amorous interest developed with the EVP. I had seen others derailed by office romances.





It was almost 10 p.m. and we returned to the office. It was no longer a hive of activity but there were still people around. I grabbed my briefcase. She let me know that she would put in a couple of hours of work and then be back by 7.30 a.m. the next day. She dripped saccharine as she bid me good night at the elevator and urged me to call her if I had any questions or if she could help me in any way.

As I went down the elevator a silent, totally involuntary scream came out from the depths of my being. It was frightening in its intensity and echoed forth from every fiber, every pore. "I don't want to do this." I couldn't have been more stunned if you had hit me behind the ear with a sock full of wet sand.

One of my other offers was from a top consulting firm and the other from a well-known investment bank. Both were equally unattractive. The pay was good. Financial success was assured if I played the game with a modicum of competence. I had no doubt that I could do that and then some. I had been doing some variation of it for most of my life. But my soul shriveled at the thought of long hours of bondage, of deadening grunt work, of the things I loved that I would have to give up, of the lack of flexibility.

None of my classmates could understand. Those who had been turned down by the firms that sought me thought I was arrogant and spoiled. Those who had received offers from firms of comparable prestige were a trifle envious because I got more upfront money but wanted to welcome me into a self-congratulatory elite group. There was no one I could talk to about my dilemma. Even my family thought that I had it made, that there was no problem. It was the most depressing time of my life.

So what should work be like and how can you find fulfillment in something that takes up so vast a proportion of your life and time?

On Work ...

Part of it, of course, is the attitude you bring to it. Here is as beautiful a description of this as you are likely to find:

Then a ploughman said, "Speak to us of Work."

And he answered, saying:

You work that you may keep pace with the earth and the soul of the earth.

For to be idle is to become a stranger unto the seasons, and to step out of life's procession, that marches in majesty and proud submission towards the infinite.

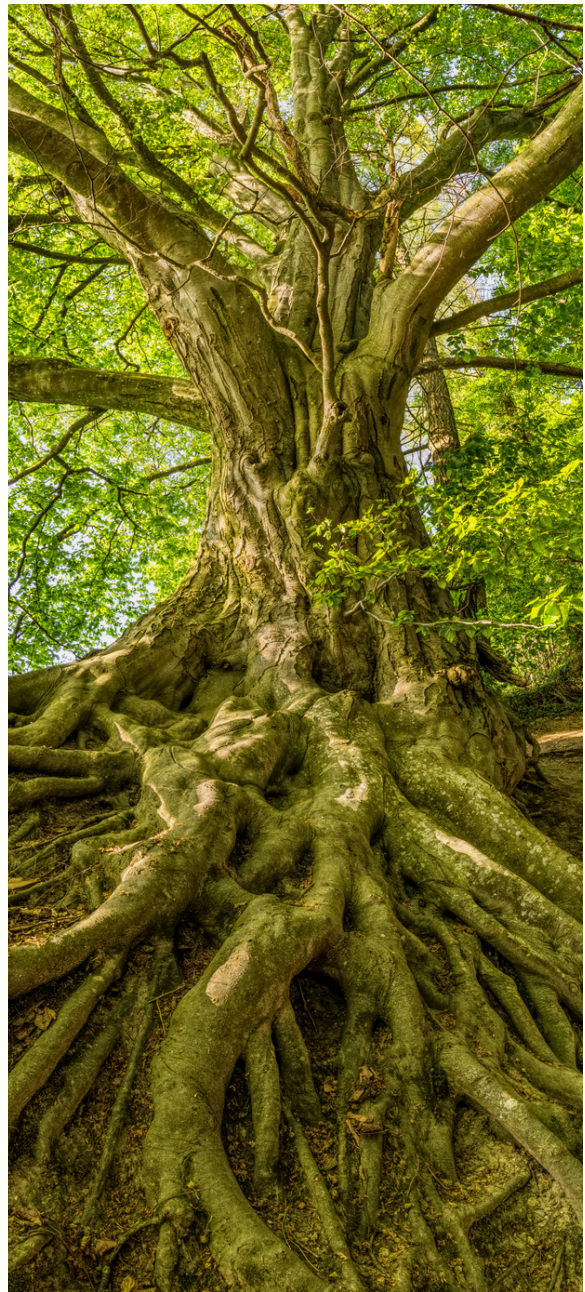
When you work, you are a flute through whose heart the whispering of the hours turns to music.

Which of you would be a reed, dumb and silent, when all else sings together in unison? Always you have been told that work is a curse and labor a misfortune.

But I say to you that when you work you fulfill a part of earth's furthest dream, assigned to you when that dream was born,

And in keeping yourself with labor you are in truth loving life,

And to love life through labor is to be intimate with life's inmost secret.



On Work ...

But if you in your pain call birth an affliction and the support of the flesh a curse written upon your brow, then I answer that naught but the sweat of your brow shall wash away that which is written.

You have been told also life is darkness, and in your weariness you echo what was said by the weary.

And I say that life is indeed darkness save when there is urge,

And all urge is blind save when there is knowledge,

And all knowledge is vain save when there is work,

And all work is empty save when there is love;

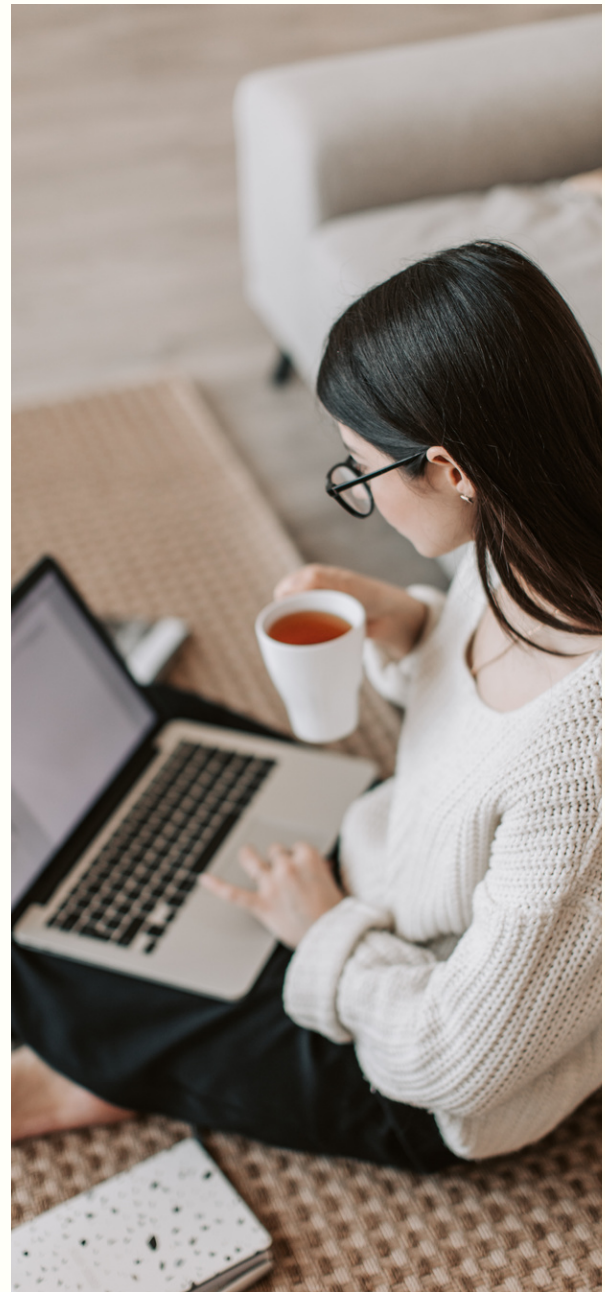
And when you work with love you bind yourself to yourself, and to one another, and to God.

And what is it to work with love?

It is to weave the cloth with threads drawn from your heart, even as if your beloved were to wear that cloth.

It is to build a house with affection, even as if your beloved were to dwell in that house.

It is to sow seeds with tenderness and reap the harvest with joy, even as if your beloved were to eat the fruit.





It is to charge all things you fashion with a breath of your own spirit,

And to know that all the blessed dead are standing about you and watching.

Often have I heard you say, as if speaking in sleep, "he who works in marble, and finds the shape of his own soul in the stone, is a nobler than he who ploughs the soil.

And he who seizes the rainbow to lay it on a cloth in the likeness of man, is more than he who makes the sandals for our feet."

But I say, not in sleep but in the over-wakefulness of noontide, that the wind speaks not more sweetly to the giant oaks than to the least of all the blades of grass;

And he alone is great who turns the voice of the wind into a song made sweeter by his own loving.

Work is love made visible.

And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy.

For if you bake bread with indifference, you bake a bitter bread that feeds but half man's hunger.

And if you grudge the crushing of the grapes, your grudge distils a poison in the wine.

And if you sing though as angels, and love not the singing, you muffle man's ears to the voices of the day and the voices of the night.

– Kahlil Gibran



On Work ...

And another part is the environment in which you are. The culture of the organization, the nature of the tasks, the values of your colleagues and the intent of the enterprise all play a part in whether your job is drudgery or breathtakingly fulfilling. This environment can be shaped and you can play a part shaping this. Obviously, the higher up you are hierarchically, the easier it is for you to make an impact and the greater that impact will be.

However, the linkage is complex. For the environment also shapes you. And if you wait too long to reach a 'position of power' so you can begin making changes, you may well find that the person who wanted to make those changes is no longer there.

Can you retain ideals that are under constant, daily assault? We will spend time discussing this.

There are always tradeoffs to be made, but some may be unnecessary. Many accept that long hours come with the territory. That years of 'paying dues' must precede 'arriving' at some exalted status. That drudgery is a part of the package.

Challenge all these assumptions. They exist only as constraints in your mind. Look at broad horizons. This program will force you to identify and define what your ideal job is and how it fits into your ideal life. More accurately, it will start you on the process.

It may take years or decades before you arrive, but the sooner you start, the greater the fulfillment you will find.



On Work ...

Until one is committed, there is always hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and endless plans: That the moment one commits oneself, then providence moves, too.

All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamed would come his way.

Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it! Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it and the work will be completed. — Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



The higher your aims and vaster your desires, the more energy you will have for their fulfillment. Desire the good of all and the universe will work with you. But if you want your own pleasure, you must earn it the hard way. Before desiring, deserve. — Nisargadatta Maharaj

Freedom

As a country and a society we are obsessed with freedom. We have codified laws that guarantee us freedom of speech and worship and assembly. We wrangle endlessly about other “freedoms” such as the right to bear arms. But we define “freedom” too narrowly.

We equate freedom with the elimination of restrictions on our behavior. In our relentless pursuit of this goal we are reordering society, smashing traditions and taboos alike. Sexual preoccupation is reaching new highs as is acceptance of its flaunting. Illegal drugs are more powerful and chemically complex. Our popular entertainment constantly stretches and snaps boundaries of taste and propriety. We have become marvelously adept at titillating our jaded senses.

There is another type of “freedom” that we have not achieved and are not even pursuing.

We are still prey to the ruthless harpies of desire that constantly spur us into action, ignite avarice and overweening ambition and goad us into activities that consume all available time and more.

We are driven by our demons, all of us – takeover titan and LBO artist, corporate chieftain and newly minted MBA, serial killer and confidence trickster, presidential candidate and congressional intern. The talons of our addictions shred our minds and wreck repose. Some, like cocaine, we declare illegal and expend vast resources to counteract. Others, like workaholism, we applaud and reward. Still others, like hypochondria and gambling, we barely acknowledge.

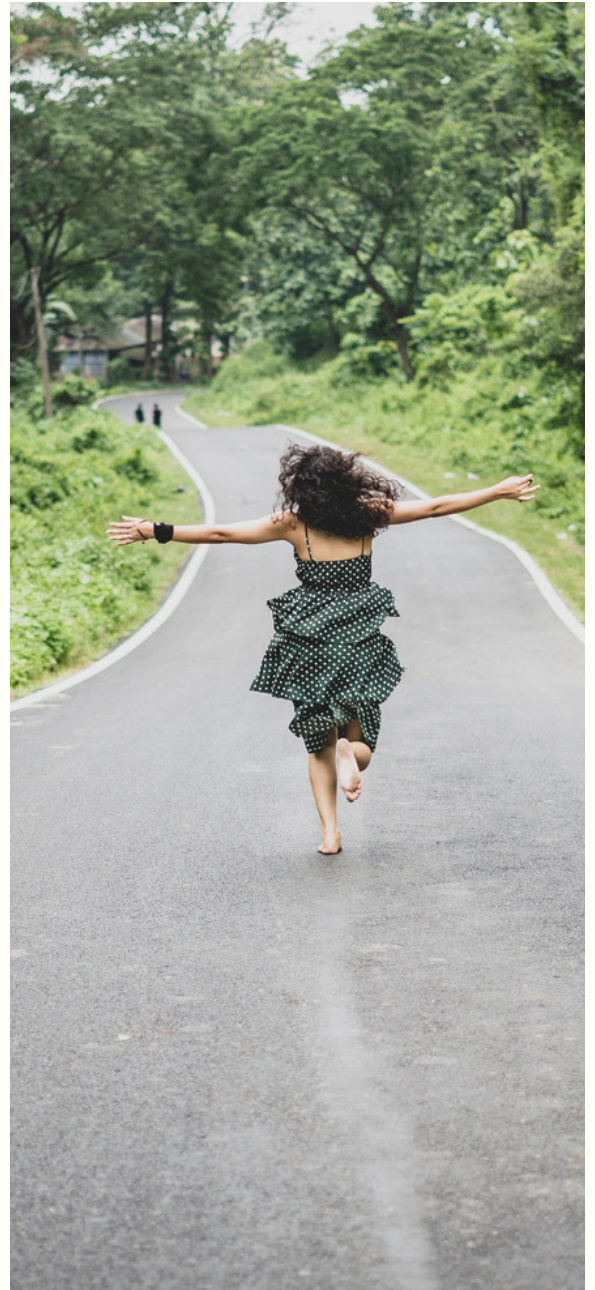


Freedom

Like it or not, we are all in the fierce grip of our restless minds, being blown hither and thither like a tumbleweed in a hurricane, expending our psychic energies in emotional roller-coasters that we are helpless to stop and unable to leave. This, too, is a prison and in our saner moments we want out.

*I never saw a man who looked
With such a twistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every wandering cloud that trailed
Its raveled fleeces by.
Oscar Wilde*

We give to others the power to determine our happiness and tranquility and do not even recognize that we have done so.





Freedom

He was a respected sage, a teacher of many generations of students. No one could match him in knowledge of philosophy and the sacred texts. He lived simply with his family in the remote countryside. One of his students, who had achieved great fame and renown in the court of the king, came to visit him. As he paid his respects he noted the threadbare clothes of his teacher and the sparse larder.

“Revered Sir,” he said, overcome with emotion, “Please come with me to the capital. The king will shower you with wealth because there is no one to match you in wisdom. All you have to do is praise His Majesty and you will no longer have to subsist on lentils.”

Tears rolled down the old preceptor’s face. “My son,” said the sage, “Is this all you have learnt in the years you spent with me? Do you not see that if you would learn to subsist on lentils, you would not have to praise His Majesty?”

It need not be so. There is an alternative to the maelstroms in our mind that we both cultivate and fear. This alternative permits us to be far more efficient and composed. It greatly increases the probability of “success” in any endeavor and cushions us mightily against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

There is a catch. We have to be willing to live in a different mental world, adopt a different outlook on life.

Freedom

Don Juan – Carlos Castaneda’s mysterious Yaqui warrior – summarizes the viewpoint of a “man of knowledge”:

A man of knowledge chooses a path with heart and follows it; and then he looks and rejoices and laughs; and then he sees and knows.

He knows that his life will be over altogether too soon; he knows that he, as well as everybody else, is not going anywhere; he knows, because he sees that nothing is more important than anything else.

In other words, a man of knowledge has no honor, no dignity, no family, no name, no country, but only life to be lived, and under these circumstances his only tie to his fellow men is his controlled folly.

Thus a man of knowledge endeavors, and sweats, and puffs, and if one looks at him he is just like any ordinary man, except that the folly of his life is under control.

Nothing being more important than anything else, a man of knowledge chooses any act, and acts it out as if it matters to him.

His controlled folly makes him say that what he does matters and makes him act as if it did, and yet he knows that it doesn’t; so when he fulfills his acts he retreats in peace, and whether his acts were good or bad, or worked or didn’t, is in no way part of his concern.



Happiness

We seek it here, we seek it there, we've learnt to seek it everywhere like Frenchmen after the Scarlet Pimpernel. And yet this chimera eludes us with the facile grace of a chamois disappearing in craggy mountain heights. All of our activities – our pursuit of fame and fortune, our quest for meaningful relationships, our drive to build or change things – are directed searches for this ephemeral state. We get there, but we can never heave a lasting sigh of relief because we leave before we are ready to.

What is 'happiness'? Can it be a permanent member of our household rather than an itinerant visitor like Tagore's Kabuliwallah?

We will spend much time discussing this. Here is something for you to ponder and react to:





Happiness

"Recall the kind of feeling you have when someone praises you, when you are approved, accepted, applauded. And contrast that with the kind of feeling that arises within you when you look at the sunset or a sunrise, or Nature in general or when you read a book or watch a movie that you thoroughly enjoy.

Get a taste of this feeling and contrast it with the first, namely, the one that was generated within you when you were praised. Understand that the first type of feeling comes from self-glorification, self-promotion. It is a worldly feeling. The second comes from self-fulfillment. It is a soul feeling.

Here is another contrast: Recall the kind of feeling you have when you succeed, when you have made it, when you get to the top, when you win a game or bet or argument. And contrast it with the kind of feeling you get when you really enjoy the job you are doing, you are absorbed in, the action you are currently engaged in. And once again notice the qualitative difference between the worldly feeling and the soul feeling.

Yet another contrast: Remember what you felt like when you had power, you were the boss, people looked up to you, took orders from you; or when you were popular. And contrast that worldly feeling with the feeling of intimacy, companionship – the times you thoroughly enjoyed yourself in the company of a friend or with a group in which there was fun and laughter.



Happiness

Having done this, attempt to understand the true nature of worldly feelings, namely, the feelings of self-promotion, self-glorification. They are not natural, they were invented by your society to make you productive and to make you controllable. These feelings do not produce the nourishment and happiness that is produced when one contemplates Nature or enjoys the company of one's friends or one's work. They were meant to produce thrills, excitement and emptiness.

Then observe yourself over the course of a day or a week and think how many actions of yours are performed, how many activities engaged in that are uncontaminated by the desires for these thrills, these excitements that only produce emptiness, the desire for attention, approval, fame, popularity, success or power. And take a look at the people around you. Is there a single one of them who has not become addicted to these worldly feelings? A single one who is not controlled by them, hungers for them, spends every minute of his/her waking life consciously or unconsciously seeking them? When you see this you will understand how people attempt to gain the world and, in the process, lose their soul.

And here is a parable of life for you to ponder on: A group of tourists sit in a bus that is passing through gorgeously beautiful country; lakes and mountains and green fields and rivers. But the shades of the bus are pulled down. They do not have the slightest idea of what lies beyond the windows of the bus. And all the time of their journey is spent in squabbling over who will have the seat of honor in the bus, who will be applauded, who will be well considered. And so they remain till the journey's end."

Anthony DeMello



The quest for 'more'

One of the most pervasive myths of our society is that 'more' will make us 'happier'. Too few even recognize that this is a myth. Powerful institutions, such as the advertising industry, parade it as fact. Our entire economy is geared to fostering consumption and the more, the better.

Our measures of societal well-being – such as per capita consumption – enshrine this notion. In fact, for most of us, our entire lives are a treadmill of effort to acquire 'more' – more money, bigger house, more attractive spouse, more power, more fame, more control, more cars and more luxurious cars, more vacation homes, more exclusive and more expensive trinkets. More of anything and everything.

Sometimes the 'more' is subtle. More refined and aesthetic pleasures to titillate us. More indulging of ego driven philanthropic urges. More of the 'finer things of life' like friendship, love, freedom and leisure. More, more always more. So intricately complex is our ability to play this game that some of us even want 'more' simplicity, 'more' renunciation. A few of us go to the hilarious end and want 'more' asceticism.

It is this quest for more that drives us into all of the unfortunate predicaments in which we find ourselves.



The quest for 'more'

Where seekest thou? That freedom, friends, this world

*Nor that can give. In books and temples vain
Thy search. Thine only is the hand that holds
The rope that drags thee on. Then cease lament,
Let go thy hold, Sannyasin bold! Say, Om tat sat,
Om!*

– Swami Vivekananda

Recognize that there is no problem in seeking more or wanting more or enjoying more. The problem lies in believing that any of this will bring us ‘more’ happiness.

The causative link is spurious but, oh, how firmly we believe in it!

Time for another instructive parable. Here goes.

He was a powerful monarch and presided over a prosperous kingdom. Art and science flourished and there was literature and theater and wholesome entertainment. His ministers were wise and dedicated. His wives were many and beautiful. His offspring were brilliant and dutiful. His army was powerful enough to keep all enemies at bay. He had leisure enough to pursue any field of learning and a mind keen enough to make rapid progress. There was nothing of this world he did not have.

Yet he knew that there was something missing. Serenity eluded him and his sleep was troubled. He eagerly sought out wise men who could possibly cure his malaise. One day he learnt of a sage in a distant town, a man of the greatest wisdom and accomplishment. He hurried thither to meet him.

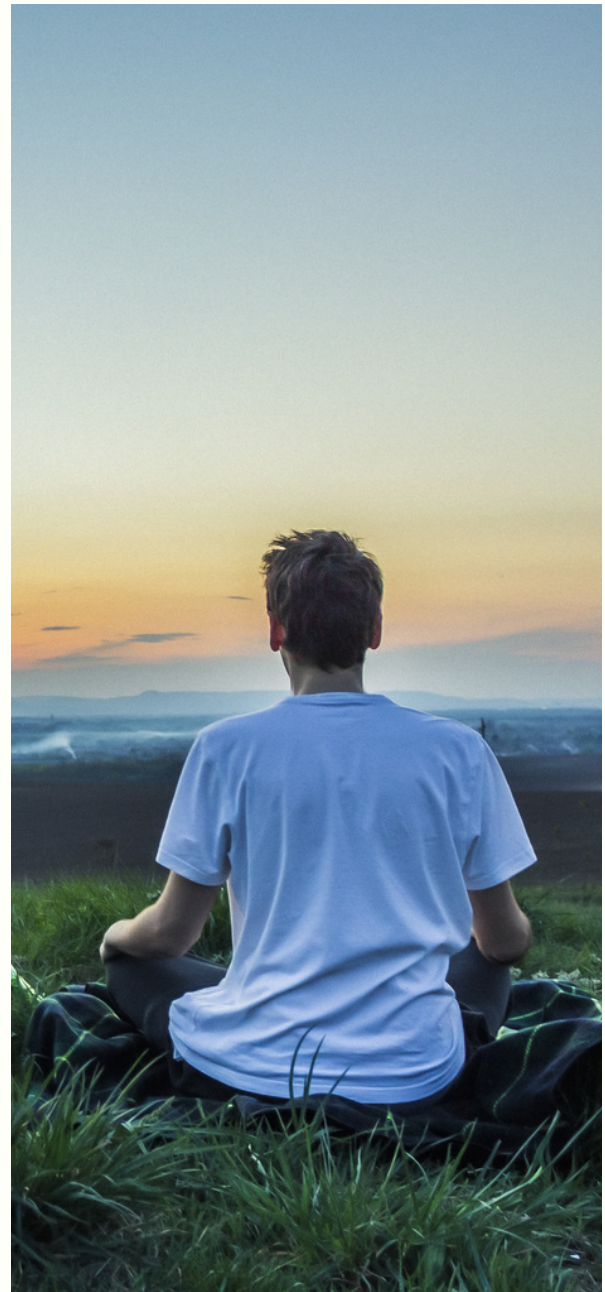
The mystic was emaciated and unwashed. His locks were unkempt and he was barely clothed. But his eyes shone with an unnatural light and the king somehow knew that he was in the presence of greatness.

“Tell me, Sir,” asked the king anxiously, “Are you truly happy?”

“Of course I am, my son.” He replied. “How could I not be?”

And the king knew it was true and he earnestly asked for instruction.

The sage agreed, but the conditions he set were severe. For ten years he was to have the rule of the kingdom and the palace. If his slightest action was questioned, he would leave immediately. The emperor agreed and the wise man took up his abode in the palace.

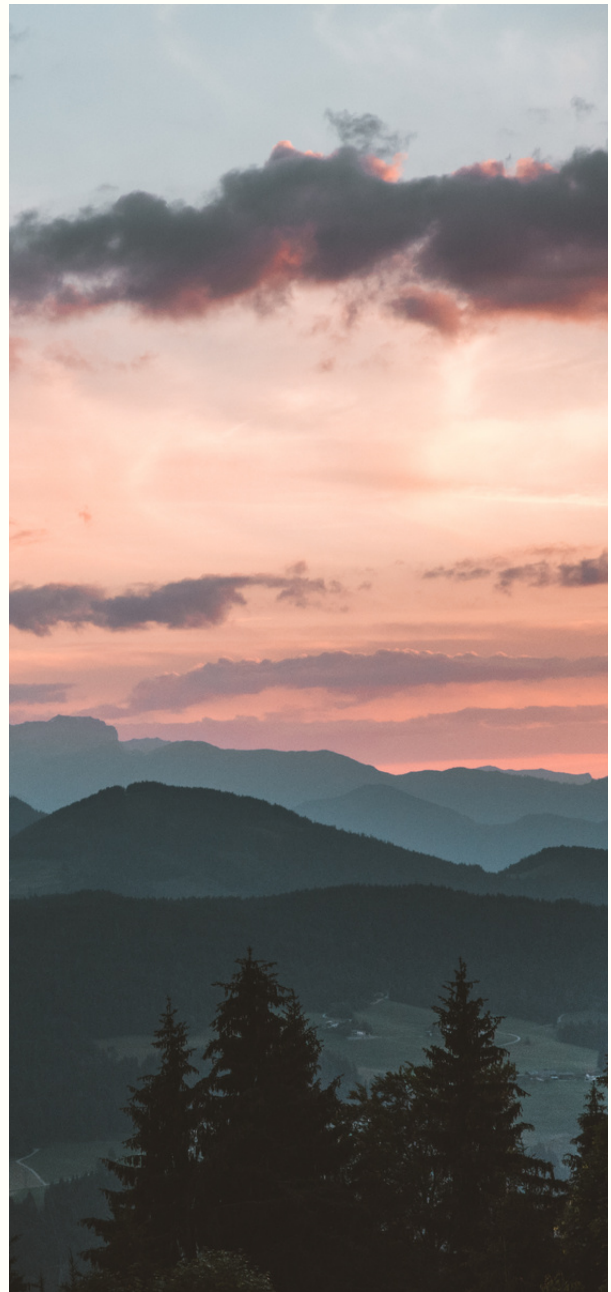


He immediately started living a life of unbridled indulgence and luxury. Barbers and masseuses tended to him, the finest tailors clothed him, jugglers and clowns entertained him and he had sculptors create massive statues of himself all over the kingdom.

The emperor was taken aback by this transformation, but he kept his word and instructed his staff to obey the sage. They grumbled loudly and felt that the king had taken leave of his senses, but grudgingly they obeyed. Every evening, for one hour, the king received instruction and the wise man seemed different at these sessions. His words carried the ring of truth and the ruler learned much about statecraft and about philosophy.

At other times he despaired and regretted his impulsive invitation. The intruder discovered tobacco and puffed like a chimney. He was introduced to intoxicants and imbibed freely. He made boundless use of the ruler's harem and the king shuddered and turned his head.

The breaking point came some months later when the king was with his favorite concubine and the sage asked him to begone so he could indulge himself. Red-faced with wrath the sovereign berated him and asked him to look at what he had become, how low he had fallen. "There is no difference between you and me," he asserted. "How could I have possibly thought that you had anything to teach me."





"I was wondering when you would erupt," said the sage amusedly. "I will leave now because you broke your word. You are wrong. There is an enormous difference between us and until you understand this difference, you will suffer as you always have."

"What difference?" the king shouted. "You indulge yourself just as I do and seek enjoyment more than I ever did."

"Your word was weak," said the philosopher calmly, "So I will leave. But you are a good man and your intentions were honorable, so I will teach you this difference as a parting gift. But I cannot do it here at the palace. You must come with me alone, for two weeks."

So the two set out and traveled far and the king kept pressing for answers and the sage smiled enigmatically. At length they reached the border and the mystic kept going. The king stopped even though the other pressed him to follow.

"It is not safe," protested the emperor. "I have to hurry back. There are affairs of state to tend to and much to do. I regret that I indulged you again. Tell me the difference and begone."

“That is the difference, my son,” said the sage as he discarded his raiment. “I was in the lap of luxury and I leave with no regrets, not a moment’s sorrow. The time for such enjoyment is past. Like all things it comes and it goes and I accept this fully with total equanimity.”

“You, on the other hand,” he continued, “Are so stuck with being an emperor that you are prepared to forgo your own quest. This is the tragedy. What you seek is within your grasp, but you can only reach it if you let go of what you are claspng so tightly to your bosom. I understand this. You do not. That is the difference between us and it is a mighty chasm.”

“Return to your palace. Rule wisely, my son, and I pray that some day you, too, will discover this truth for yourself.”

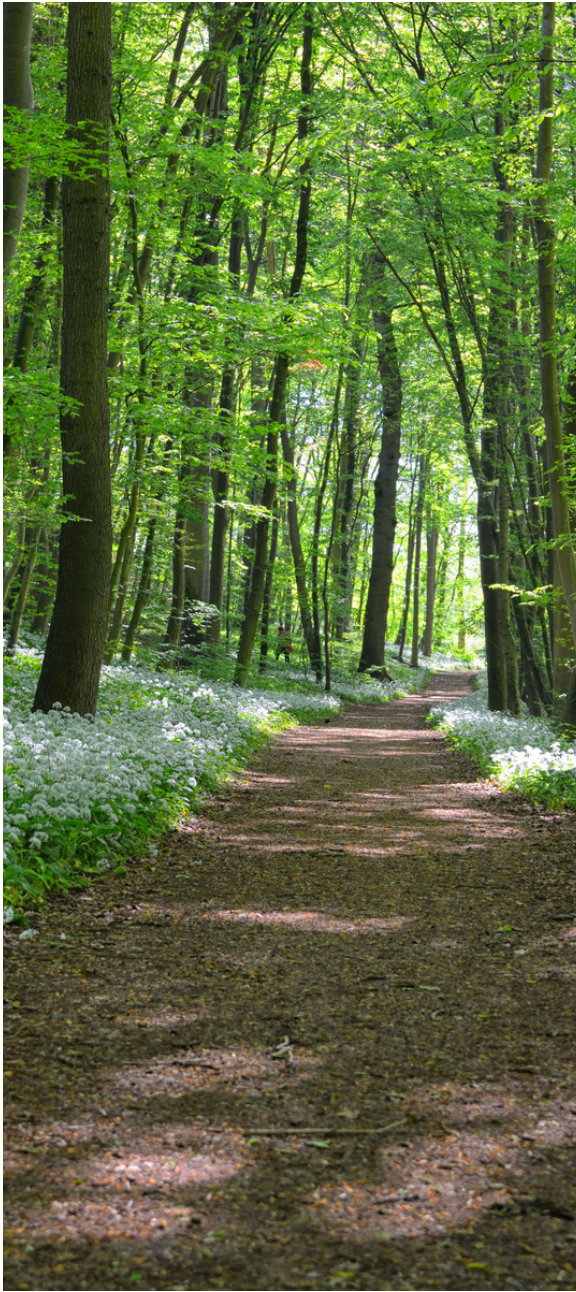
The scales fell from the king’s eyes and he remembered their evening sessions and how much he learnt. He earnestly begged for forgiveness and entreated the other to return.

“No, my son,” said the sage firmly. “If I return now you will forever doubt whether I was a master gamesman or a true master. There is no more I have to teach you. Go back to your kingdom.”

He turned and strode off. He did not look back.

The king returned to his palace and resumed his rule. He pondered on the sage’s words and reflected on his teachings. And suddenly, one day, he understood.





Thoughts on the nature of work and about life:

You will spend half your waking hours at work, maybe much more. It would be a shame if so much time was spent on just a job. Here is a sampling of views on the nature and meaning of work and about life. Some of them should resonate deeply within you. If none do, then this program may not be appropriate for you.

“Labore ut orare--To work is to pray.”

“What you receive depends on what you give. The workman gives the toil of his arm, his energy, his movement; for this the craft gives him a notion of the resistance of the material and its manner of reaction. The artisan gives the craft his love; and to him the craft responds by making him one with his work. But the craftsman gives the craft his passionate research into the laws of nature which govern it; and the craft teaches him Wisdom.” – deLubicz

“The spider dances her web without knowing that there are flies who will get caught in it. The fly, dancing nonchalantly on a sunbeam, gets caught in the net without knowing what lies in store. But through both of them ‘It’ dances, and inside and outside are united in this dance. So, too, the archer hits the target without having aimed – more I cannot say.” – Herrigel



Thoughts on the nature of work and about life:

“But he learned more from the river than Vasudeva could teach him. He learned from it continually. Above all he learned from it how to listen with a still heart, with a waiting, open soul, without passion, without desire, without judgment, without opinions.” – Hesse

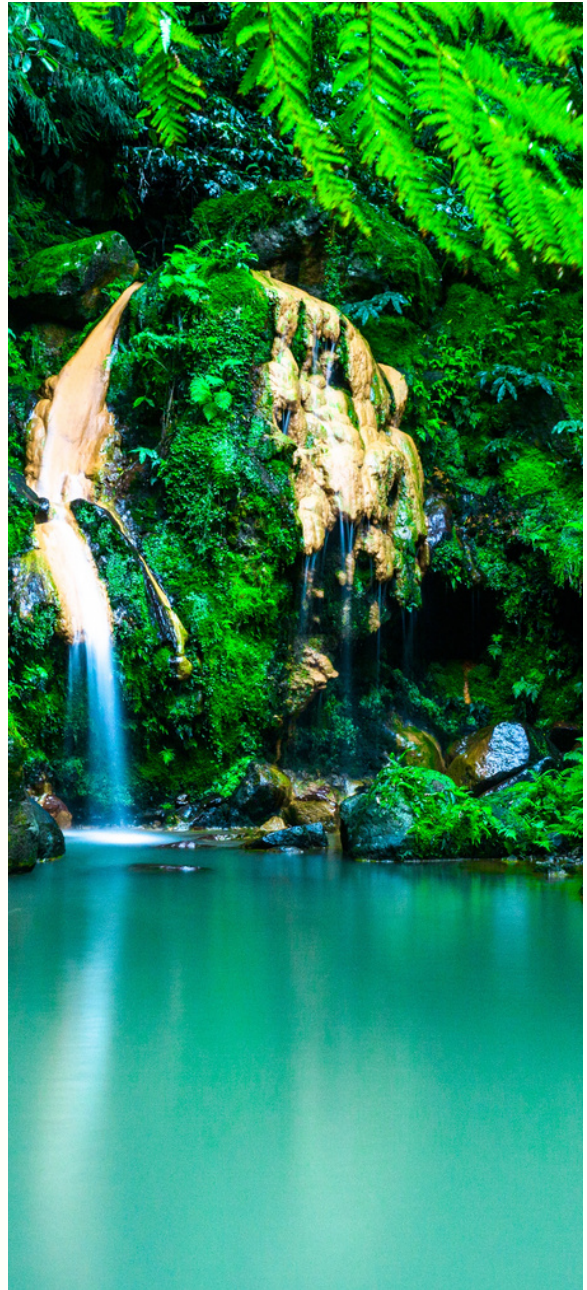
“Live, as it were, in trust. All that is in you, all that you are, is only loaned to you. Make use of it according to the will of Him who lends it, but never regard it for a moment as your own.” – Francois Fenelon

“There is nothing better for a man than that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor.” – Ecclesiastes

“What you are now is the result of what you were. What you will be tomorrow will be the result of what you are now. The consequences of an evil mind will follow you like the cart follows the ox that pulls it. The consequences of a purified mind will follow you like your own shadow. No one can do more for you than your own purified mind – no parent, no relative, no friend, no one. A well-disciplined mind brings happiness.” – The Dhammapada

“Most men would feel insulted if it were proposed to employ them in throwing stones over a wall, and then in throwing them back, merely that they might earn their wages. But many are no more worthily employed now.” “The true husbandman will cease from anxiety, as the squirrels manifest no concern whether the woods will bear chestnuts this year or not, and finish his labor with every day, relinquishing all claim to the produce of his fields, and sacrificing in his mind not only his first but last fruits also.” – Henry David Thoreau

People are often careless about the thoughts they give rise to, assuming that once they forget about a thought, that thought is finished. This is not true. Once you give rise to a thought, it keeps functioning, and eventually its consequences return to you. – Daehaeng Kun Sunim



“Caring about our work, liking it, even loving it, seems strange when we see work only as a way to make a living.

But when we see work as a way to deepen and enrich all of our experience, each one of us can find this caring within our hearts, and awaken it in those around us, using every aspect of our work to learn and grow...

Every kind of work can be a pleasure. Even simple household tasks can be an opportunity to exercise and expand our caring, our effectiveness, our responsiveness.

As we respond with caring and vision to all work, we develop our capacity to respond fully to all of life. Every action generates positive energy which can be shared with others. These qualities of caring and responsiveness are the greatest gift we can offer.” – Tarthang Tulku

“Therefore, without attachment, constantly perform whatever actions are needed. He who works in this spirit attains the highest end.”

“Whose works are all free from the molding of desire, whose actions are burned up by the fire of wisdom, him the wise have called a sage. Having abandoned attachment to the fruit of action, always content, nowhere seeking refuge, he is not doing anything, although doing actions.” – Bhagavad Gita





"When you follow your bliss...doors will open where you would not have thought there would be doors, and where there wouldn't be a door for anyone else.

I don't believe people are looking for the meaning of life, as much as they are looking for the experience of being alive.

Life is without meaning. You bring the meaning to it. The meaning of life is whatever you ascribe it to be. Being alive is the meaning.

What each must seek in his life never was on land or sea. It is something out of his own unique potentiality for experience, something that never has been and never could have been experienced by anyone else."

— Joseph Campbell

"We are all, always, building foundations, either good or bad, solid or hollow, firm or frail. Every act is a hammer stroke. One coral insect appears to be of infinitesimal importance. But in time one such insect laid on another can wreck the staunchest ship that ever sailed the sea. Our hourly thoughts and acts, each in itself apparently of no moment, in time build our foundations and erect thereon our life's structure." — B. C. Forbes

"Ch'ing, the chief carpenter, was carving wood into a stand for musical instruments. When finished, the work appeared to those who saw it as though of supernatural execution; and the Prince of Lu asked him, saying, 'What mystery is there in your art?'



‘No mystery, Your Highness,’ replied Ch’ing. ‘And yet there is something. When I am about to make such a stand, I guard against any diminution of my vital power. I first reduce my mind to absolute quiescence. Three days in this condition, and I become oblivious of any reward to be gained. Five days, and I become oblivious of any fame to be acquired. Seven days, and I become oblivious of my four limbs and my physical frame.

Then, with no thought of the Court present in my mind, my skill becomes concentrated, and all disturbing elements from without are gone.

I enter some mountain forest, I search for a suitable tree. It contains the form required, which is afterwards elaborated. I see the stand in my mind’s eye, and then set to work. Beyond that there is nothing. I bring my own native capacity into relation with that of the wood. What was suspected to be of supernatural execution in my work was due solely to this.’”

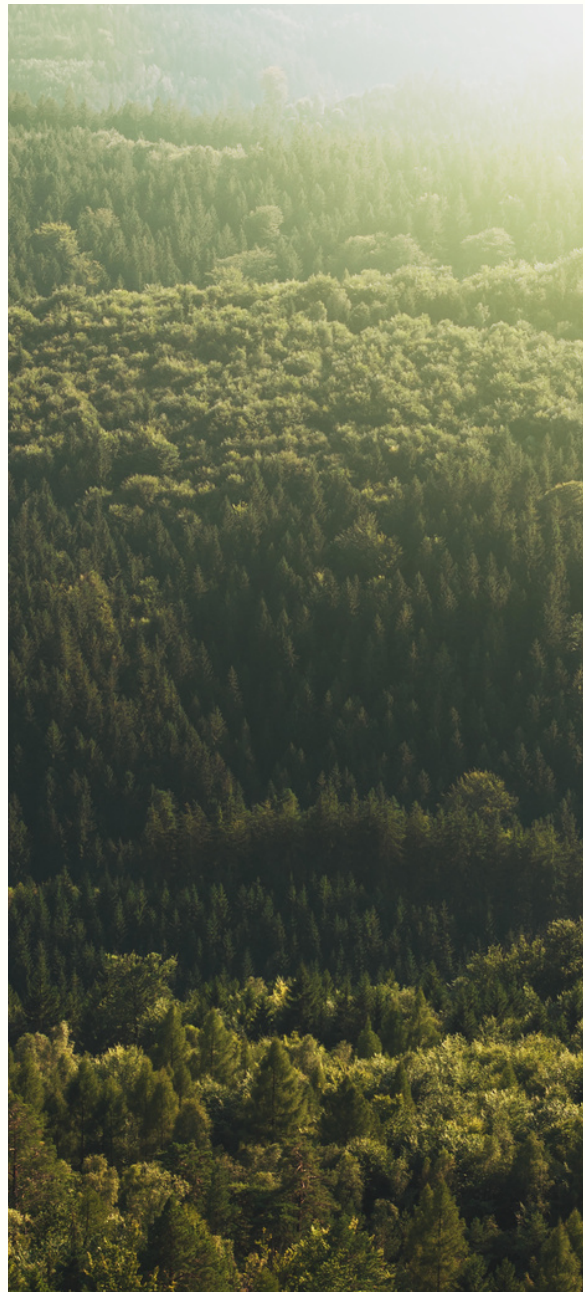
— Chuang Tzu

You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.
— Buckminster Fuller

"Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on Earth should that mean that it is not real?" – Albus Dumbledore, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – J. K. Rowling

"The Buddha, in his wisdom, made 'right livelihood' one of the steps to enlightenment. If we do not pitch our discussion that high, we have failed to give work its true dimension, and we will settle for far too little – perhaps for no more than a living wage. Responsible work is an embodiment of love, and love is the only discipline that will serve in shaping the personality, the only discipline that makes the mind whole and constant for a lifetime of effort.

There hovers about a true vocation that paradox of all significant self-knowledge – our capacity to find ourselves by losing ourselves. We lose ourselves in our love of the task before us and, in that moment, we learn an identity that lives both within and beyond us." – Theodore Roszak



Nine requisites for a contented life:

Health enough to make work a pleasure.

Wealth enough to support your needs.

Strength enough to battle with difficulties and overcome them.

Grace enough to confess your sins and forsake them.

Patience enough to toil till some good is accomplished.

Charity enough to see some good in your neighbor.

Love enough to move you to be useful and helpful to others.

Faith enough to make real the things of God.

Hope enough to remove all anxious fears concerning the future. — Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

“Your work should be an area of great passion. Most of the time right livelihood means we get up and look forward to the day with the same excitement that we feel on vacations.” — Michael Phillips

Thy lot or portion of life is seeking after thee; therefore be at rest from seeking after it. — Ali Ibn-Ali-Talib





A human being is part of the whole, called by us the Universe; a part limited by time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical illusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task is to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living beings and all of nature. – Albert Einstein

“This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before being thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.” – George Bernard Shaw

“Blessed is he who has found his work. Let him ask for no other blessedness.” “Our main business is not to see what lies dimly in the distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.” – Carlyle

“Do little things in an extraordinary way; be the best one in your line. You must not let your life run in the ordinary way; do something that nobody else has done, something that will dazzle the world. Show that God’s creative principle works in you. Never mind the past. Though your errors be as deep as the ocean, the soul itself cannot be swallowed up by them. Have the unflinching determination to move on your path unhampered by limiting thoughts of past errors.” – Paramahansa Yogananda



I learned this, at least, by my experiment; That if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. — Henry David Thoreau

“How can the mind which has itself created the world accept it as unreal? That is the significance of the comparison made between the world of the waking state and the dream world. Both are creations of the mind and so long as the mind is engrossed in either, it finds itself unable to deny their reality. It cannot deny the reality of the dream world while it is dreaming and it cannot deny the reality of the waking world while it is awake.

If, on the contrary, you withdraw your mind completely from the world and turn it within and abide there, that is if you keep awake always to the Self which is the sub-stratum of all experiences, you will find the world of which you are now aware is just as unreal as the world in which you lived your dreams.” — Ramana Maharshi

*All that I possess and use
Is like the fleeting vision of a dream.
It fades into the realms of memory;
And fading, will be seen no more.
Shantideva*

*Think of something that you love to do for itself,
whether it succeeds or not, whether you are praised
for it or not, whether you are loved and rewarded
for it or not, whether people know about it and are
grateful to you for it or not. How many activities
can you count in your life that you engage in simply
because they delight in and grip your soul? Find
them out, cultivate them, for they are your passport
to freedom and love.
— Anthony DeMello*

*You do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting
at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply
wait, be quiet still and solitary. The world will freely
offer itself to you to be unmasked, it has no choice, it
will roll in ecstasy at your feet. — Franz Kafka*

*“The Master in the art of living makes little
distinction between his work and his play, his labor
and his leisure, his mind and his body, his education
and his recreation, his love and his religion. He
hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his
vision of excellence in whatever he does, leaving
others to decide whether he is working or playing. To
him he is always doing both.” — Zen Buddhist Text*



“Many people are surprised to learn that in 27 years at UCLA, I never once talked about winning. Instead I would tell my players before the games, ‘

When its over, I want your head up. And there’s only one way for your head to be up, and that’s for you to know, not me, that you gave the best effort of which you are capable.

If you do that, then the score really doesn’t matter, although I have a feeling that if you do that, the score will be to your liking.’ I honestly, deeply believe that in not stressing winning as such, we won more than we would have if we had stressed outscoring opponents.” – John Wooden

What is work? What is beyond work? Even some seers see this not aright. I will teach thee the truth of pure work, and this truth will make thee free...All actions take place in time by the interweaving of the forces of Nature; but the person lost in selfish delusion thinks that he himself is the actor. – Bhagavad Gita

