

The background features a soft, light brown or beige color. Overlaid on this is a faint, artistic illustration of a bamboo forest. The bamboo stalks and leaves are rendered in a light, sketchy style. In the upper center, a bright, glowing full moon is visible, partially obscured by the bamboo branches. The overall mood is serene and peaceful.

the  
here & now  
meditation

**A Quick and Effective Way to  
Overcome Suffering**

mimi khuc & thanh - trieu nguyen

# *Table Of Contents*

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>From One Beginner to Another:</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>To The Experienced Practitioner:</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Preface</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Chapter One:</b>	
<b>An Introduction To The Mind</b>	<b>1</b>
The Workings Of The Mind	7
The Mind's Imprecision	7
The Mind's Shoulds And Shouldn'ts	10
The Mind's Endless Past And Future	14
<b>Chapter Two:</b>	
<b>Our Key: The Here &amp; Now Meditation</b>	<b>17</b>
The Purpose of Meditation	18
Basic Here & Now Concepts	18
Using The Here & Now	20
Experiencing The Here & Now	23
Level One: Entering The Stillness	25
Sitting Meditation	26
Sleeping Meditation	27
Signs Of Stillness During Meditation	28
Level Two: Deepening the Stillness	29
Deepening The Stillness	29
Stillness and Body Movements	30
Neutralizing Emotions	31
Level Three: Uniting Mind, Body, and Heart	31
Cultivating The Wisdom Mind	32

Cultivating Compassion	33
Neutralizing Forces of The Past	33
Neutralizing Forces of Past Karma	33
Characteristics of The Here & Now	34
Non-Struggle	35
Stillness Versus Watchful Awareness	35
Time And Effectiveness	35
Simplicity	36
Compatibility	36
Compassion And World Peace	36

### **Chapter Three:**

#### **New Perspectives** 37

The Nagging Mind	40
“Must” And “Should”	40
Wants Or Needs?	42
The Bondage Of Criticism	42
The Past And The Future	43
Judgment	44
Happiness And Suffering	45
Changing Our Significant Other	46
Changing Places	46
Forgiveness	46
Self-Pity	47
Separation And Love	47
The Measure Of Success And Failure	48
Religion Of Origin	49
Mine’s Better Than Yours	49
Is That So?	50
Inter-Relationship	50
Why Are We Here In This Life?	51
1. Faith In The Universe	51
2. Karma	51

3. Roles And Lessons	52
4. What Is This Lesson?	52
Unconditional Love	53
Love Versus Need	54
Experiencing “All Is One”	55
Woman And Child	55
<b>Chapter Four:</b>	
<b>Self-Healing with The Here &amp; Now</b>	58
The Self-Healing Technique	61
Perspectives On Healing	62
<b>Chapter Five:</b>	
<b>Stress Control &amp; Anti-Aging</b>	64
<b>Chapter Six:</b>	
<b>Q &amp; A for Advanced Meditators</b>	69
Too Simple To Actually Be Effective	69
Other Concepts Of “Here” And “Now”	70
The Here & Now Versus “Mindfulness”	71
Here & Now Versus “No Mind” Tradition	72
Sensory Pleasures And Cultivation	72
Beginner Versus Experienced	73
Why Stop Short of Complete Liberation?	74
Is This Method The Best?	75
<b>Chapter Seven:</b>	
<b>Questions And Answers</b>	76
Trying To Achieve Stillness	77
Reduced To A Lower Consciousness?	77

“Wordlessness”	78
Combining With Other Meditations	78
Diminished Senses During Meditation	79
Diminished Breathing	79
Falling Asleep During Meditation	80
Stillness Versus “The Zone”	81
Re-Living An Emotional Event	81
Can We Erase Memories Permanently?	82
Meditate To Express Love And Forgiveness	83
Can We Change Our Own Opinions?	84
Can We Change Our Personality?	84
Dealing With Loneliness	86
Eliminating Envy And Jealousy	86
The Pain Of Another’s Silence	87
That’s It—Period	89
I’m Right. You’re Wrong!	91
Lapses Back To That “Regular” Mind	91
The Arts Of Being Non-Reactive, Being Silent, Listening, And Being At Peace	92
Peace Or Passivity?	94
The Mind And Society	95
The Mind’s Role As “Problem Solver”	95
Injured Pride	96
The Mind And The Act Of Suicide	97
Compassion Versus Empathy	98
What Is “Spiritual Cultivation”?	100
The Right Not To Cultivate	102
Giving This Book To Others	102
Applying These “Lessons”	103
<b>Chapter Eight: Summary</b>	<b>105</b>
Here & Now Mottos	107

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## ***From One Beginner to Another:***

Like most people, I have had my own share of difficulties in life. As I look back, there were times when nothing was turning out right, when every breath seemed to be filled with confusion, desperation, and fear of life's inevitable problems... In my life, my mind has more than once considered that perhaps only death could rescue me from my hopeless pain.

If you can identify with what I just described, then perhaps you will find great comfort from this message. I wish to tell you about a “magic potion.” It was this “magic potion” that rescued me and helped me regain mental stability and physical and emotional well-being. It also provided me refuge in an incredibly peaceful and safe haven. Its ingredients are easy to find and cost practically nothing—mainly because we already have them right within ourselves. It uses a process called the Here & Now Meditation to reveal the true essence within us: inner peace and Stillness. From this, I have found the true joy of living.



From the bottom of my heart, I send to you this message, and hopefully you will be sending others a similar message a few months later. Maybe together, we can make a difference.

A grateful beginner practitioner,

Chau M. Nguyen

## **To The Experienced Practitioner:**

Most meditation disciplines consist of various levels of practice. Usually, the beginning steps teach you how to concentrate on a specific subject or action in order to halt your stream of thoughts. Gradually, on higher levels, you learn to let go of things that confine your mind, body, and spirit. Then as you reach the final goal, both you and the subject of your focus no longer exist—nor does any action, goal, conclusion, expectation, or effort.

At this final stage, there is only complete “Stillness,” the state of absolute detachment, equanimity, and inner peace. Future and past, as well as time and space, are utterly absent. Here, you have transcended suffering. You have been freed even from yourself. You have *become* freedom.

The meditation discipline in this book introduces you to a shortcut directly leading to that Stillness. You get there quickly without having to undergo the different levels of meditation practice. Furthermore, this meditation discipline shows you a way to apply

that profound Stillness to everyday life so you can live freely and peacefully. The Stillness is a place inside of you where there is no longer any violence and suffering, but instead, complete peace, harmony, compassion, and joy—a state of being often associated with the concepts of “heaven,” “nirvana,” and “the Universe.”

Hold this book as if it were an invitation to the most lavish banquet of your life. There, on the dining table, the universe offers you a divine gift: the absolute Stillness from which the universe was miraculously created—a Stillness at the core of both itself and you.

Mimi Khuc & Thanh-Trieu Nguyen

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## *Preface*

Written to help friends who requested emotional and physical healing, this book started out as just a few pages outlining a simple meditation technique. These pages eventually expanded into a small booklet to help people find inner peace, happiness, and harmony in their lives. That booklet was made available free of charge and was also offered as an e-booklet on the internet in five languages: English, French, Spanish, Dutch and Vietnamese. Many English and Vietnamese booklets have also been distributed by various charities and individuals throughout Europe, Canada, United States, and Vietnam with warm reception and success. This book—an expanded form of the original booklet—is in response to our readers' requests for clarification on certain aspects of this meditation practice.

To accommodate the varying needs of our readers while keeping the original short format, we have divided this book into eight small chapters. We recommend that readers read **Chapter One** (Introduction), **Chapter Two** (The Here & Now

Meditation Method), and **Chapter Three** (New Perspectives) as a solid foundation before moving on to other chapters. **Chapters Four through Seven** are independent of each other and may be read according to your specific interests and needs.

**Chapter One:** This introduction explains the general principles about the mechanism of the mind and the nature of human unhappiness.

**Chapter Two:** This section explains conceptual and technical aspects of the Here & Now meditation. The method consists of three levels of practice; however, most people find immediate peace and joy with just Level One. You can experiment with all three levels to see which particular technique will take you to the deepest level of peace.

**Chapter Three:** This section outlines a few new perspectives that are useful in freeing ourselves of unhappiness. Some people may find solutions while reading this section alone without practicing the meditation method offered in the previous chapter. And some others may find that they need to combine these new perspectives with meditation to achieve lasting effects.

**Chapter Four:** This section discusses using the Here & Now meditation to heal. With this method, you can actually watch your pain subside within a few minutes. While the method is very effective, we know that many meditators, especially those whose goal in meditation is a kind of spiritual enlightenment, dislike the idea of using

meditation for healing purposes. This meditation method involves both mind and body, however, so a person may use it effectively with either or both.

**Chapter Five:** This section explains how to use the Here & Now meditation to relax and manage stress, or to slow the aging process.

**Chapter Six:** This section addresses various questions posed by meditation masters from varying disciplines and discusses more advanced concepts and techniques in a comparative manner.

**Chapter Seven:** This is a question and answer section. Topics include technical aspects of the meditation, advanced concepts on the mind, practical applications of the new perspectives, and suggestions for spiritual cultivation and personal transformation. Because of this wide range, readers may find only parts of this section useful at one particular time. We encourage re-reading because we have found that meanings and messages come at their appropriate times—something re-reading often provides new relevance and meaning.

**Chapter Eight:** This is a brief summary of the key points throughout the book along with a few final tips and pointers on finding lasting happiness.



Readers of this book represent many countries and religions—and sometimes even no religion at all. We have attempted to address the needs of all our readers by taking into consideration differences

in customs, traditions, and cultures. To serve the general population, we use only simple terms and concepts about meditation so that we can reach the beginner everywhere. We will not be discussing viewpoints of any particular religion or school of thought. Throughout this book, when we do make comparisons, they will be based solely on one merit—the effectiveness of a method in liberating a person from suffering. No method or belief is more right than another—only more effective or useful with respect to our main goal of ending suffering.

*In this book, the word “mind” refers specifically to the ordinary mind and not the “higher Mind” in Buddhism. This “mind” is the same as the “lower mind” in Theosophy. In English, this word “mind” is written with a lower-case “m,” while higher or universal Mind is written with a capital “M.”*

**A few things to keep in mind while you read:** This book combines Eastern and Western concepts in a way that may ask its more traditional readers from either culture to consider new and different ideas. For all readers, traditional and untraditional, please read with an open heart and a quiet mind—a mind that does not respond to its need to analyze, argue, criticize, or compare with available preconceptions. And please read slowly. The substance of this book resides not only in the written words but also in the silence behind them. This book is meant to be read for both the knowledge obtained through the mind *and* the wisdom found by the heart.

Happy reading.

## Chapter One

### *An Introduction To The Mind \**

The following conversation took place during a counseling session between one of our spiritual counselors and a young woman in her mid-thirties:

**Counselor:** Hi, how may I help you?

**Woman:** Everything is going wrong. I need help. I need a stable job. I also need a better place to stay... Right now, I share a room in someone's basement. I want my family to love me. My husband left me. I need a nice man... a nice husband. My car keeps breaking down...

**Counselor:** What you just said you need, I think is reasonable. I think everyone would want the same... Do you know of anyone who has all these things?

**Woman:** Yes. Some of my friends.

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\* Before beginning this chapter, please be sure to read our Preface to have a better understanding of our goals and the layout of this book.



**Counselor:** And are they happy?

**Woman:** Well...not really.

**Counselor:** Do you think if you had all these things, you would be happy for good?

**Woman:** Maybe... Well, not really... Not for good.

**Counselor:** If you don't mind, I have a personal theory why. I may be wrong but let's just take a look at it. I think we come from a place where we are absolute love and peace. Maybe that's why we always feel needy and lacking now. To cope with this lack, we cling on to the love of our parents, then siblings, then friends, lovers, spouses, children... We keep feeling that lack so we try to fill it with fame, power, status, wealth. Everything works for a little while, but then that feeling of lack comes back. I don't have the magic wand to give you what you were asking, but I can show you how to truly fill that lack. Once we do this, nothing else really matters. You have those things you asked for—fine. You don't have them—that's fine, too. You are at peace with yourself and with the world anyway...

By separating from that place of completeness, we have created a secondary mind that uses words. Our original mind is always wordless and quiet; all perceptions are without interpretation, judgment, analysis, comparison, or deduction. Everything just IS. The secondary mind is what you and I are using right now. It rants endlessly about things that cause unhappiness. Once we learn how to tame that mind, we can return to the state of our original mind. We can transcend that feeling of lack permanently. Would you like to learn how?

## Suffering And Its Accomplice: The Mind

A man walks down the street in a busy section of the city. A crowd jostles him as he tries to make his way around a corner. “*Excuse me!*” he yells with disgust. *Rude, ignorant people.* He picks up the pace, walking more quickly and briskly. *If this crowd makes me late, I’m going to be so angry.* Suddenly, he stumbles. He looks down and realizes he just tripped over a chair left out in front of a cafe. He calls into the store, “Hey, don’t leave your stuff out here for people to trip over!” *Nobody knows how to run a decent business these days.* He shoves the chair out of his way and turns to continue his walk—and runs head-on into a young woman. “Watch where you’re going!” he snaps at her. The woman looks at him with compassionate eyes and shakes her head. She says, “You are suffering so much. I can help you.” He looks at her, confused. “Suffering? Who’s suffering? I’m just *angry.*”



This book aims to show you a way to eliminate suffering. To do this, we must first define what we have labeled as suffering. In Western culture, the word “suffering” is usually linked with traumatic life events, pain, and sadness. Eastern cultures, influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism, often view suffering as a basic building block of life—life *is* suffering. The definition in this book lies somewhere in between. Suffering, of course, refers to emotions such as sadness and pain. In this book, the

definition of suffering broadens to include any emotional state linked with *unhappiness*.

Our complete definition of suffering, then, is as follows:

- **Any emotion that is NOT happiness, love, and joy.** Examples: anger, jealousy, sadness, fear, hurt, anxiety, bitterness, sorrow, grief, vengefulness, hate, contempt, loneliness, etc.
- **Any state of being that is NOT peace, contentment, and harmony.** Examples: violence, neediness, confusion, nervousness, anxiety, withdrawal, denial, lack, devastation, worry, depression, etc.
- **Any action that is NOT of kindness, tolerance, and compassion.** Examples: controlling, judging, criticizing, insulting, attacking, abusing, complaining, nagging, belittling, etc.

Suffering, then, is not only negative emotions and emotional states, but also negative actions since these actions are usually brought about by negative emotions.

With this definition of suffering, it is clear that most of us suffer to some degree. To solve this widespread problem, we first need to ask what causes our suffering. What is *really* causing our unhappiness?

Here are some reasons many of us list. *I am unhappy because:*

- I don't get what I really want or need.
- Someone did something bad to me.
- Someone did not do something they should

do for me.

- Things don't happen the way I would like for them to happen.
- I am in constant fear of losing someone, or something.
- I fail in everything I set out to do.
- There is no meaning to life.
- My health is very poor.
- I lost everyone and everything.
- People in my life can't even uphold a minimum standard of decency.

These all seem like reasonable life situations to cause unhappiness. But there are people who *are* happy even with many of these situations! What is the difference between them and us? The answer: ***The condition of the mind!*** One mind is still and quiet while the other speaks, usually in complaint. Yet, has it ever occurred to you that perhaps you are NOT your mind? When you want peace and quiet, does that mind stop its noisy nagging? Doesn't that mind disregard your wishes most of the time?

The next time you think any of the kinds of thoughts in the above list, try separating yourself from your mind and tell it to "be quiet." Hopefully, it will obey and become quiet or change the subject. If it does obey at first, watch and see how long before it sneaks back to the previous, troublesome subject. It seems that, for many of us, our minds are not completely under our control. If we could control that mind so that it speaks when and what we

want it to, it would no longer speak endlessly about thoughts that cause unhappiness. This book is written for those who have not yet mastered their minds.

The concepts in this book rest upon the awareness of the following two truths:

First, the principle source of almost all emotional misery and mental suffering is the *dysfunction* of a very special and important mechanism of the human being: the mind.

Second, the mind is just one of the many parts of the human being such as the heart, eyes, and nose. This mind cannot be taken as the total self. We are not our minds and our minds are not us. Therefore, we are not the mind's **reactions** or **deductions** that lead to the emotional states of sadness, pain, or anger.

With this understanding, we recognize that identifying ourselves with the chaotic mind or equating the self with negative emotions such as sadness or anger is a mistake that can lead to destructive actions such as suicide, murder, addictions, revenge, etc.

This book will guide us on how to cure this dysfunction and how to recover the high quality functions of our minds such as creativity, inventiveness, and awareness. By the time you finish reading this book, you will be equipped with an understanding of the workings of that mind as well as the skills to deal with it so that you can overcome unhappiness forever.

## The Workings Of The Mind

### The Mind's Imprecision

The first problem with the mind is its imprecision. The “knowledge” of the ordinary mind is “inexact.” Below are three examples of inexact conclusions made by the mind:

**Example #1:** Your eyes see that you have sown a seed. Then, shortly afterwards, your eyes see a tree growing in that place. Your mind then concludes, “I have planted this tree,” and it may jump further to claim, “That tree is mine.” In *actuality*, the eyes saw only two facts: The first is *your hands have placed a seed into the soil*, and the second is *a tree grew in that place*. Knowing only those two facts, the mind then draws the conclusion that the second phenomenon (the tree) is the result of the first one (sowing the seed).

The incorrectness, or inexactness, is that the eye *did not* see other factors involved such as soil, water, air, sunlight, minerals, fertilizers, etc.

However, it would be *equally inexact* to conclude the other way: “This seed was sown by me—*plus*, thanks to the soil, water, sunlight, etc., it grew into a tree.” Why is it still inexact? Because the eyes *actually saw only* the sowing of a seed and the existence of a tree. They saw nothing else! It is the *mind* that pulls out stored knowledge from its memory bank (i.e. soil, water, sunlight...) and applies such knowledge to the phenomenon that the eyes saw (i.e. sowing of a seed and a growing tree). It then draws the conclusion. However it is totally possible

that the tree seen by the eyes could have grown from another seed planted by another person. Or there could be a thousand other factors involved. So, when we see “A” and then “B,” it is not certain that “B” is the consequence of “A.” Hence, the *True mind* is one that knows “A” as “A” and “B” as “B” without further deduction.

**Example #2:** A healer performs healing on a patient. The patient gets well. The mind of the healer concludes, “I have successfully healed this patient.” That mind, however, may be in error because it’s possible that after the treatment given by that healer, the patient also benefits from appropriate nutrition, improved breathing, better mental health, joy, end of a bad karma, etc.—all of which successfully heals the patient. The mind did not receive any of this information. But even if it did, there is always a possibility that it will still draw an erroneous conclusion. Similarly, if a patient does not fully recover or if s/he dies, one cannot conclude that it is the doctor’s fault or that the medicine is ineffective.

**Example #3:** Nine months after a couple has sexual intercourse, a tiny human being is born. The mind concludes, “This little human was made by me and is my offspring. He belongs to me.” The mind draws this conclusion even though it does not know if there may be *other forces and reasons that may bring this being into life.*

In these examples, even if the mind had drawn a *different* conclusion using its stored knowledge, it would most likely still be inaccurate because the mind is always limited in its “knowing.” Using

limited observations, the mind habitually deduces, reasons and fills in the gaps in knowledge with its stored, old “knowledge.”

The above concept applies to both the seen and unseen worlds. When people with paranormal abilities “see” an image of the unseen world and then *the mind* draws a conclusion, the accuracy of the mind in that moment may be questioned. This holds true even for the ability to “see” past lives and previous incarnations because that same mind uses the same process to draw conclusions.

A pure, true, and exact mind receives information without adding or deducing anything; it is one of Stillness. Then, when the need for interpretation and reasoning arises, the True mind performs such tasks in this Stillness without judgment and erroneous deduction—and *at the same time*, the True mind is *aware* that it is reasoning and interpreting. It is also aware that there is always room for *possible inaccuracy*.

Why do we need to use this True mind in all life events? It can help us transcend suffering caused by the misleading processes of the ordinary mind.

In short, whenever the mind draws a “conclusion,” be aware of the process it is using. What are the correct mind processes? They are the processes used when the mind is operating in perfect Stillness. They occur without judgment, criticism, suggestions, or deduction. They are only peaceful observations and perceptions.



## **The Mind's Shoulds And Shouldn'ts**

Problems and suffering worsen when that imprecise mind decides to use its inaccurate knowledge to make judgment. Below are some examples of the mind's thoughts in this process. The thoughts themselves do not cause misery, but when the mind insists on applying them indiscriminately and unreasonably, suffering occurs, often immediately. In these examples, we see how the mind works: It searches its memory bank which has stored everything from what a person hears, sees, and experiences to the mind's established patterns, rules, and expectations. Then it applies old opinions and values to new observations. And if the world around does not comply with its expectations and interpretation, the mind becomes agitated. It may nag or even throw tantrums. If you find similar thoughts repeating in your mind that make you miserable, then this Here & Now meditation method is definitely for you.

In the examples below, we see how the mind can take information from our senses and apply its expectations and judgments to cause us irritation.

~ **Sight:** "I believe we should live in neat, orderly and clean surroundings. When I see clothes on the floor, dirty dishes, dusty furniture, and clutter, I feel very uncomfortable. I don't like messy, untidy people. They should live cleaner, healthier lives."

~ **Hearing:** "I really dislike loud, disturb-

ing noise. I am especially irritated when people make noise carelessly and inconsiderately. I am offended by people who slam doors, drag their feet on the ground, clang dishes loudly against one another, talk loudly on their cell phones, or talk during movies.”

~ **Taste:** “I am very picky when it comes to food. In fact, I would rather go hungry than eat unappetizing meals. I get upset if a dish is not up to my standards in taste and aroma.”

Our mind also makes more sophisticated judgments based on its observations. Some common preconceptions that the mind holds and uses to distort incoming information include preconceptions about relationships, value, roles, and identity.

~ **Value:** “If I wear this outfit, people will laugh at me (for being tacky, having no taste, being poor, etc.), or they will compliment me (for being classy, beautiful, fashionable, etc.). When I look at people and see the way they dress, the cars they drive, the way they carry themselves, etc., I immediately know their worth—what social class they belong to, what type of a people they are.” Here, the mind defines value and meaning through appearance. The mind pays great attention to compliments and criticisms from others. Thus, the mind will be greatly distressed if

there are no available means to provide the proper status symbols for the self or family.

~ **Identity:** “I lost my job and all my money. I am a complete failure.” The above faulty thinking processes of this mind could lead us into believing that we are the direct and sole cause of all life phenomena and things that represent success and failure. It is critical for the mind to understand that we only “participate” and have never really created any “outcome” totally. For example, the mind should only see a fortune as just “a fortune” instead of “a fortune that I’ve created” or “a fortune that I’ve lost.” This correct perception will enable us to overcome the suffering related to success and failure, loss and gain, honor and disgrace, and to liberate ourselves from the ever-binding illusions, “*I am in control of all things in my life,*” and “*I am what I own and what I achieve.*”

~ **Relationships and social roles:** “Although my father (or mother, sibling, friend, spouse, child, niece, nephew, etc.) is related and/or close to me, when I encountered difficulties and needed help, s/he did not help me like s/he should have.” Here, the mind defines family and close relationships as linked with certain responsibilities. If these responsibilities

aren't fulfilled, the mind judges and blames.

“Children should obey and be dutiful to their parents.” “Parents should give love equally, foster and care for their children until they are solidly successful.” The roles of child and parent are heavily linked with certain responsibilities and expectations in the mind. Again, the mind judges, blames, and criticizes if these are not met. If a child does not call or visit his/her parents, the parents may feel upset. In turn, the child may feel guilt and self-hate for not fulfilling this expectation. This expectation can be carried out to extremes without awareness at all. For example, in an actual case we know, a mother expected her daughter to prostitute herself to support the mother's gambling habit.

“In a family, women are responsible for homemaking and the care of their husband and children. Men are responsible for finances, material comfort, and educating the children.” Again, the mind attaches expectations to certain social roles. If a person falls short of his/her expected role, both the person and others around the person will experience the mind's nagging, judging, and blaming.

Relationships are the most troublesome aspect in our lives. New perspectives can help lessen our

problems. For example, we should see our spouse as follows: “This is a human being, who prior to meeting me, has already lived in this world for decades, owns a complete set of personal concepts already misled by his/her own mind, and whose body and soul are completely independent of me.” Has it ever occurred to you that this person may exist in this world for other purposes besides being your spouse? This perspective will help the mind accept and respect others around us; it will no longer require others to give up their *own* “knowledge” and values—misled or not—for *our* misled knowledge.

### **The Mind’s Endless Past And Future**

The mind often doesn’t need observations to keep itself occupied. It has the past and the future to think about. A major source of our suffering comes from the mind’s incessant remembering and reliving, and worrying and fantasizing. We often miss out on the experiences of the present because the mind takes pains and regrets from the past and relives them like a broken record, in spite of our wanting to live in the present moment.

We also live a part of our time in the future by worrying, planning, and fantasizing excessively. We suffer as we worry about when we are getting married, when we will have children, when we will have a certain amount of money, etc. The mind obsesses about these events that are actually from a different time and makes us live them during the present.



In summary, here is how the mind, through dysfunctional processes, creates our suffering.

- It is busily repeating thoughts and experiences from **the past**.
- It immerses in worries, fears, and dreams of **the future**.
- It torments us with its adamant application of **opinions** and **views** created by societies, regardless of reason or logic.
- It judges, analyzes, insults, argues, and builds images and emotions of violence, hatred, jealousy, etc.
- It can bring illness and pain to the physical body through its continuous transmission of damaging, chaotic thoughts to the cells.

When a man mumbles and talks to himself all day, we say he's mentally ill. We fail to notice that all of us also talk to ourselves endlessly all day and all night—except we do it *quietly in our heads*. This is a serious chronic problem, but because everyone is affected, we think it is “normal.” So instead of us being the “owners” who operate and control the mind, in reality, *that mind endlessly runs and controls us*. It urges each and every thought, every word spoken, every action, every emotion that we think, desire, feel, or suffer. As long as we are unable to turn off that mind when necessary, we are not beyond suffering.

It is not our goal here to forget the past or to not plan for the future. Nor is it to have no opinions or viewpoints. The problem with the processes in the above list is that they happen *automatically and habitually*. When we say we want to turn off the mind,

we mean that we want to regain control of its processes. We want to turn off its auto-pilot. The goal then is to be able to have a choice over these very processes and applications—we want to be able to choose when to apply an opinion or prior knowledge, or when to reminisce of the past, or when to build images and emotions within ourselves.

The human mind is not a disaster for mankind. On the contrary—it is an extremely valuable mechanism **IF** we know how to use it. We need to regain control of the mind and liberate ourselves from its damaging habits so we can find lasting happiness. Once we become owners of our own minds, we can cultivate its positive qualities such as creativity and awareness. Once we understand the mind's processes of reasoning and deduction, we can use the mind as a tool to cultivate a higher awareness of ourselves and of others.

*Eliminating suffering requires three things: an understanding of the mind and its habits; a method to tame that mind; and, most importantly, a cultivated awareness of our selves and our relationships with others.* We have already presented an introduction to the mind's processes; in the next chapter, we would like to present a simple method that can be used to cultivate the necessary awareness. This method is only one of countless meditation methods developed in the world—but we have found it to be one of the simplest, easiest to learn, and most effective for our goals. Here, we present it for those who have not yet found a useful tool in their search for lasting happiness.

## Chapter Two:

### *Our Key: The Here & Now Meditation*

Our key to eliminating suffering is a simple technique that enables us to liberate ourselves *by turning off the mind*. This key is especially geared towards inexperienced practitioners of meditation. The Here & Now meditation does not require sitting cross-legged for hours or performing difficult or sophisticated tasks. Nor is this meditation only for monks or serious practitioners. Anyone can practice it easily at any place and any time—even while sitting comfortably in a chair, lying down, standing, walking, or working.

This Here & Now meditation neither requires us to leave the normal life of the material and social world nor expects us to abandon loved ones for solitary contemplation for any length of time. Furthermore, it does not belong to any religion. Anyone can use it.



## **The Purpose of Meditation**

Meditation has been in existence for many thousands of years ever since people learned how to be quiet both in words and in thoughts. This quietness has helped re-energize the body and bring about true and complete rest to the mind.

**Why do people meditate?** To find inner peace? To end mental anguish and suffering? To improve one's heart and behavior? To improve health? To develop wisdom? To realize Truth? To heal? To evolve spiritually? To attain enlightenment? *Whether the goal is as simple as getting rid of mental anguish and physical illnesses or as sophisticated as attaining enlightenment, the meditation method in this book will be the first step towards meeting that goal.*

Within the framework of this book, we shall focus on **eliminating unhappiness for ourselves and on preventing us from hurting others again.** After the true root of unhappiness is dealt with successfully, you will find that true lasting peace and happiness shall be yours to keep.

### **Basic Here & Now Concepts**

The very first goal of many meditations is to quiet, or still, the thinking mind. Normally, if we were to focus your attention on something, our thinking mind would be the one directing this action. This thinking mind leads and directs nearly all of our daily actions and thoughts. Some meditation techniques use **it** to manipulate **itself** into quietness.

Others also resort to “mindful” methods where one uses this thinking mind to stay aware of the senses, thoughts, and actions such as eating, chewing, walking, thinking certain thoughts, etc.

The Here & Now technique is doing something a bit different than the above methods. It does not attempt to “wrestle” with that mind. At the beginner level, the thinking mind is sitting at a designated place, *unthinking* and *unfocused* during meditation. The mind and body get to rest deeply and thus experience profound peace and tranquility. As one becomes more proficient, this state of being will free the mind from its own habits of endless chatter and from the confines of its accumulated opinions, inaccurate interpretations, and inaccurate perceptions. At higher levels, the True mind carries out normal daily activities while constantly keeping an awareness on or connectedness with the inner Stillness. In addition, the method includes a means to continue practice even while you are asleep so that you can reach the subconscious mind. Once these are achieved, the rest of your life experiences can be healthy, happy, and peaceful.

So what exactly is “Here & Now”? It means literally being “**here**” and “**now**.” It results from *keeping the mind where the body is and from the absence of thought while in a heightened state of awareness*. This concept may seem strange because what is a “not-thinking” state of mind? In this state, the mind stands still, unthinking—not darting to the past, jumping to the future, or analyzing and draw-

ing inaccurate conclusions. “Mind” and “body” become **One**, uniting the physical body with its inherent inner Stillness; a state that transcends time and space. It is believed that this union holds many of life’s secrets because people who have mastered it are never again affected by feelings of unhappiness, lack, or chaos.

Simply put, if we can keep our minds quiet when not in use, we are already way ahead of the game. Then, if we can keep our minds quiet *even* when we use it and when we are asleep, we are at a much higher state of mind that can no longer suffer. With this Here & Now method, most people can enjoy great improvement in their emotional and mental well-being within a few days. In fact, you should be able to feel its immediate effects right after your first short session of meditation. You do not even need to believe in the method for it to work. All you have to do is try it and put in sincere effort. You should be able to judge its effectiveness after one week of practice.

For those who are experienced in meditation, Chapter 6 contains more detailed, technical explanation of the meditation, particularly in comparison with other methods.

### **Using The Here & Now**

To summarize from the previous chapter, emotions generally develop in these ways:

- From opinions, feelings, and past interactions stored in the memory bank.

- From interpretations made by the mind through the five physical senses.
- From thoughts of events that have occurred in the past or that may occur in the future.
- From values, beliefs, and expectations applied by the mind to life events and other people.

Here are the ways in which we can address these:

**To stop the mind's automatic use of certain old knowledge, we can be "present" using the Here & Now meditation.** When we find ourselves re-living a certain past painful event or feeling, we need to make ourselves "present" by using the Here & Now method to enter the state of Stillness. This means keeping the mind quiet for at least one minute. Then, afterwards, in that state of inner Stillness, we can *observe* the event or feeling without re-living it. By observing, we have detached ourselves from the emotions involved. This way, we can think of a memory while simultaneously never disconnecting from the present and the present's experiences.

**We can minimize the bind between the mind and the senses by using the Here & Now meditation.** You need to do this if, for example, your eyes see a rose, and then the mind hurriedly darts back to the past and pulls up hurtful images and memories related to a certain rose of the past. Or, if your ears hear a friend explaining about his poverty, and then your mind searches its memory and concludes that the friend may want a loan which then causes your mind to remember the feelings related to a bad loan

of the past. In cases like these, all you need to do is to take a slow, deep breath, enter the inner Stillness using the Here & Now meditation, and listen in that state of being. You will be able to calm down that edgy and overactive mind quickly.

**To stop the mind from living in the past and future, we also need to deal with the mind's control over the imagination.** The mind has a special ability. It can “see” pictures and “hear” sounds without using the senses. It even creates feelings, tastes, and smells by itself and stimulates mental and physical reactions. For example, when the mind imagines a lemon being squeezed into the mouth, saliva glands automatically respond. This special ability, however, is a doubled-edge blade that can bring both sadness and happiness. Our imagination can be creative and innovative causing us to create art and inventions. But it can also paint fantasies from the past or future that cause us suffering.

When we need to interrupt a useless or negative session of the imagination, we can take a slow deep breath and enter into the Here & Now inner Stillness. Once in the Stillness, the mind will immediately stop its imagining process. This technique is especially helpful in preventing the imagination from getting out of control and bringing harm to us or those around us.

**To change the mind's expectations and judgments, we may need to explore new perspectives on life events.** Chapter Three contains examples of new perspectives that can help us culti-

vate awareness and perhaps change the way the mind habitually applies its opinions and expectations to ourselves and the people around us.

### **Experiencing The Here & Now**

The final goal of this meditation technique is for you to be able to *remain in the state of inner Stillness at all times*, whether you are sitting, standing, or walking, and whether you are awake or asleep. However, at the beginning, to reach the initial depth of Stillness, daily sitting meditation may be necessary.

This method is aimed to help us advance through four stages:

**Stage 1:** In this stage, through a conscious effort, we can interrupt the flow of thought during what we call a “sitting meditation.” We can also experience Stillness, inner peace, and the resting and clarity of the mind during meditation.

**Stage 2:** Here, when we are *not* in sitting meditation and while carrying out our normal daily activities, we can experience the presence of Stillness quite frequently. We experience this both naturally and by the conscious effort of meditating for very short periods throughout the day. For example, to integrate the Stillness into our daily experience, one can meditate for just one minute every hour or so.

**Stage 3:** Here, we experience this Stillness as we live our everyday lives and even immediately after pain and suffering arises within us. In this stage, the mind has become quite docile, less chaotic, and more manageable. We are now able to experience

inner peace and Stillness easily and quickly with all real life situations. We are now aware whenever our minds are regaining control and repeating its bad habits, and we are able to step out of that state into Stillness at will.

**Stage 4:** In this fourth stage, we and our minds are in a natural state of **oneness** without signs of struggle or chaos. Here, we live our lives with an ever-present inner peace and connection with that inner Stillness. The mind no longer **automatically** analyzes, judges, reacts, draw conclusions, or nags as it used to do.

It is believed that the most enlightened sages stay in this state of Stillness continually.

**Note for practitioners of other disciplines:**

- **Practitioners of the Chakra System:** When practicing the Here & Now meditation, because the initial goals of the Here & Now method are Stillness and the complete absence of thought, you will need to relax all the muscles on the forehead and around the eyes to avoid concentrating at the eyebrows and forehead, especially at the location of the “Third Eye” chakra, or Chakra 6 to some.
- **Practitioners of energy systems:** People who have worked with energy systems are usually accustomed to feeling energy movements and frequencies, or vibrations, within the body. Or, they may be accustomed to having visions during meditation. The Here & Now meditation is

different from these energy disciplines in that in order to achieve Stillness, you should not have any expectations to “feel” or “see” such things. You should not even expect to achieve Stillness itself because the act of expecting also hinders our experiencing Stillness. Or, if you do experience sensations or visions, please ignore them. The goal is to let go of the mind’s thoughts about all subjects including such experiences.

- **Practitioners of traditional meditations:** Traditional meditations often emphasize complete **wakefulness**. The Here & Now method emphasizes **complete in-action** which includes not struggling to stay alert. In the first stage, the ideal initial depth of meditation is the state of being **half-awake and half-asleep**. It is the point between the two states of being asleep and awake. In the second stage, if you wish to practice some forms of contemplation, just bring yourself back to the normal level of alertness *while still maintaining Stillness*, and then follow the techniques discussed in Level One below.

### **Level One: Entering The Stillness**

**Important:** Please note that the three levels have been designed for the sole purpose of practical training. They do not indicate levels of spiritual achievement, only different applications of the meditation technique. Begin with Level One. Only advance to the next level after mastering the previous techniques. However, do not feel pressure to advance—many people comfortably and effectively



use the first- or second-level techniques even after mastering all three levels. It is up to you to find a comfortable one for yourself.

### **Sitting Meditation**

While we call the daily meditation a “sitting meditation,” remember that this meditation technique may be practiced at any time, any place, and in any posture. Just make sure you are as comfortable and relaxed as possible.

**Step One:** Inhale *slowly* through your nose. As you *slowly* exhale through the mouth, feel as if a wave is sweeping from head to toe to relax your entire body. You can keep your eyes open or closed. If open, they should be gazing but neither focusing nor concentrating on any object.

**Step Two:** Tell the mind, “The body is here,” *knowing* the mind’s arrival at the heart area of your chest.

Let go of yourself and relax with the mind **unthinking** and **unfocused**. Especially relax the muscles around the eyes and forehead whether the eyes are open or closed. Every so often, vaguely know that the mind is sitting quietly at the heart area.

If the mind starts wandering away or thinking, just quietly remind it, “The body is here,” and settle it again at the same location. Then *immediately let go of thoughts and relax your body and mind again*.

Remain in that **unthinking** and **unfocused** state for a minimum of one minute and maximum of 30 minutes. New practitioners should not meditate longer than 30 minutes at first. After about a month, you can go as long as comfortable.

**Step Three:** To end the sitting meditation, take a slow deep breath. As you slowly exhale, open and focus your eyes fully. Stretch your body if desired as you end the session.

*If you wish to continue the session with some other methods of contemplation, then after fully re-focusing, sustain the Stillness while in the normal state of wakefulness. Quietly gaze at or observe the surfacing images and passing thoughts without analyzing or reasoning. This practice can be performed for as long as desired.*

*If your goal in meditation is developing your “higher Mind,” we advise that you work with a teacher who is accomplished in this area to guide you personally. The regular mind can be easily mistaken for the “higher Mind.”*

### **Sleeping Meditation**

At first, we transcend suffering when we reach Stillness *during the sitting meditation*. Next, we integrate this Stillness into our everyday activities. Then, in the sleeping meditation, we attempt to deal with another part of our mind: our subconscious.

For us to no longer suffer even in our dreams, we guide both the subconscious and our thinking mind to dwell in the Stillness even during sleep. This allows us to wake up each day feeling fresh and at peace with ourselves and our world because it prevents the mind from continuing its habits at night.

The technique is as follows: whenever you feel drowsy and are about to fall asleep, tell your thinking mind and your subconscious, “Take refuge in the Stillness during sleep.” Then, let go of all thoughts and muscles, and fall into a peaceful sleep.

### ***Signs Of Stillness During Meditation***

A meditating person in deep Stillness will show the following signs: The body is *not* swaying, the limbs are still, and the head does not nod or move. The person’s face appears peaceful without any tenseness. Breathing becomes extremely light. With Stillness, even in long meditation sessions, limbs and back should have no aches or pains. In addition, perceptions of time and space can be slightly distorted. For example, upon opening the eyes after meditation, a person may inaccurately estimate the length of time under meditation, or a person may feel slightly disoriented. Another indication of Stillness is feeling physically refreshed and mentally peaceful after a meditation session.



The Here & Now meditation may be practiced as often as desired throughout your day. For effectiveness, we suggest that you do at least one long sitting session of 10 to 30 minutes a day accompa-

nied by at least three short one-minute sessions during daily activities. If your mind is very active, often darting to different times and places, we suggest you practice more often and for longer periods. Then when you are ready to fall asleep, whether taking a nap, going to bed, or returning to sleep after waking up during the night, do the sleeping meditation of the Here & Now.

Remember that our main goal is to live in the present, be in full awareness of our mind's processes, be in control of our thoughts, emotions, actions and realities, and maintain Stillness and equanimity through life's tribulations. Thus, after you have learned to achieve Stillness, try to silently keep in touch with it as frequently as possible during the course of your day. Again, frequent one-minute pauses in Stillness throughout your day will be incredibly helpful.

The Level Two technique will help you deepen the state of Stillness during sitting meditation. It also contains exercises to help you integrate the Stillness into your daily life. You should go on to Level Two only after you have practiced Level One well enough that you are able to experience Stillness on command and can sustain it for a reasonable amount of time. Remember that rushing may hinder success.

## **Level Two: Deepening the Stillness And Other Applications**

### **Deepening The Stillness**

If you have been unable to reach a desired depth

of Stillness, use the following technique:

As in Level One, take a slow deep breath, tell the mind, “The body is here,” and enter the Stillness for a few minutes. Stay aware that the mind is at the heart area, and sustain the Stillness for the entire body. Then, slowly open your eyes, gently gaze from side to side without moving your head, and then slowly close your eyes again. Relax and sink deeper into the Stillness.

You can repeat this every 2 minutes. Each time this is done, the state of Stillness will be deepened. We suggest doing this technique a maximum of 3 times per session.

### *Advanced Practice*

Here are exercises you can practice once you’ve mastered entering the Stillness of Level One.

#### **Stillness and Body Movements**

After reaching the Stillness, sustain this state of being and open your eyes. Focus and see normally while knowing that the mind remains still at the heart area. Begin moving different parts of your body slowly while maintaining Stillness. Practice these small movements until you can perform them easily without losing the state of Stillness. You can then try listening to sounds—without the mind reacting, of course. You can also practice standing, walking, working, carrying out chores, etc., *while maintaining this inner Stillness.*

Social interaction is probably the most difficult activity with which to maintain inner Stillness.

However, these are likely the most important activities to master. When we are confronted with negative, painful, or provoking events or people, take a slow deep breath, tell the mind, “The body is here,” relax, and re-enter the Stillness for 30 seconds to 1 minute. Try to be aware of that inner Stillness while interacting with others. It will be easy to maintain if practiced often.

### ***Neutralizing Emotions***

When a thought stirs up certain negative emotions such as hurt, self-pity, or anger—the kind of emotions we do not wish to have—we can immediately neutralize them by re-entering the Stillness for 30 seconds to 1 minute. Practice addressing these kinds of emotions as they occur. You will find it easier as you practice—you may even find that with practice these emotions will arise less frequently.

### ***Level Three: Uniting Mind, Body, and Heart, Past and Present***

**Level One** explained the basic way to quiet the mind and enter Stillness. This technique also opens the heart to compassion and allows self-healing. (See Chapter Four for detailed instructions on self-healing.)

**Level Two** explained how to deepen the state of stillness. It also contained advanced exercises to practice sustaining Stillness during everyday activities and to neutralize negative emotions.

**Level Three** consists of methods of spiritual cultivation using the Here & Now meditation. Please continue reading this section if you feel that further personal transformation is relevant to your goals. If not, please continue to the end of the chapter for more on the Here & Now method in comparison to other meditations.

Below are suggestions on how to develop wisdom, how to achieve profound inner Stillness through the union of body, mind and heart, and how to use remorse, apology, and Stillness to neutralize forces from the past that are related to the *causes* of present suffering and illness.

### ***Cultivating The Wisdom Mind***

During meditation, instead of the heart area, place the mind *on the nose bridge, in between the eyes*. Then relax and enter the Stillness. If you want to contemplate or use the “True Mind” as in many other traditions, you can do as follows: return to the fully awakened and alert state while maintaining inner Stillness with eyes open or closed. Pose your question or subject, and then keep your mind completely *blank and quiet*. It must be totally still and vacant, without any expectation or reasoning. The initial idea or images emerging from this “void” are usually the answers to your questions or subject matter. When you practice this method enough, you will naturally reach original knowledge and wisdom that an ordinary, noisy mind cannot reach.

### **Cultivating Compassion**

This method aligns the mind, body, and heart in Stillness so that we can cultivate compassion along with wisdom. During meditation, do the same as in Level One and Level Two except place the mind at two areas: on the nose bridge saying, “The body is here,” and on the heart area saying, “The *heart* is here.” Maintain this state of Stillness and the complete absence of thought for at least 30 minutes.

### **Neutralizing Forces of The Past**

Because it is difficult to always maintain complete Stillness to prevent the return of old information, it is necessary to have a way to neutralize forces of the past permanently. You can use the above steps under “Uniting Mind, Body, and Heart” to neutralize forces of the past within this lifetime.

### **Neutralizing Forces of Past Karma**

Some people believe that the sources of old information are not necessarily contained within this single lifetime, but rather, from many previous lifetimes. To people who believe in karmic forces and past lives, the “past” is not limited to any particular period; it is *all the time* prior to the present moment. The following technique and instructions are for people who believe in karma and reincarnation and who would like to neutralize these forces in their lives. Please skip this section if it is not relevant to your goals.



To neutralize forces from past lives, it is necessary to view existing suffering (illness, painful relationships, painful events, etc.) as the results of some of our past actions. In such case, one needs to *sincerely feel remorseful*—even though we may not remember or know of those past actions. We then silently apologize to those who may have suffered due to our past intentional or unintentional actions.

In our daily lives, there are times when we suffer from people who, without apparent reason, seem to persistently make life difficult for us, i.e. angrily arguing, fighting, taking our money, damaging our property, etc. To understand this karmically, we assume that some time in the past, we had done the same things to them. At the same time, we put ourselves in their position in that past and open our heart so that we can understand their plight. Then, in deep Stillness, we sincerely regret and silently apologize to them. Immediately afterwards, practice the above Here & Now method (“Uniting the Heart, Body, and Mind”) for at least 30 minutes. The deeper the Stillness and the more complete the silence of the mind, the greater the results. This is one of the most effective methods for neutralizing karmic forces from the past.

### **Characteristics of The Here & Now Meditation**

This Here & Now meditation method has several very important qualities especially in comparison to other meditation methods.

## **Non-Struggle**

While other methods use the mind to restrain itself, the Here & Now meditation avoids struggling with the mind. After the initial direction given to the mind to sit quietly and rest at an appointed location, *the practitioner lets go completely, enters a state of inaction, and stays unfocused, unrestraining and un-contemplative.* This non-struggle is one quality that makes this method very effective in dealing with the noisy mind.

### **Stillness Versus Watchful Awareness**

Not only does the Here & Now meditation emphasize non-struggle, but it also emphasizes Stillness instead of watchful awareness or movement like other methods. Contemplative or “awareness” types of meditation ask their practitioners to “watch” or “be aware” of their thoughts, movement, or breathing. The Here & Now does the opposite—instead of watching the mind or body *in action*, you are vaguely aware of the *profound Stillness* of the mind sitting quietly at a designated place. A practitioner described it as such: “One is looking outwardly; the other [the Here & Now] is looking inwardly.”

### **Time And Effectiveness**

The Here & Now method demands little time and the profound Stillness can usually be reached in a short time. If practiced correctly, one can experience this Stillness within a few days—some have even experienced it within minutes. Practitioners usually can integrate the Stillness into daily life

within a few weeks. These are *very* short times compared to the months or even years that many meditation methods require. And these short times do not compromise the effectiveness of the method—the Stillness that one reaches with this method is *life-changing*.

### **Simplicity**

The Here & Now method is one of the simplest and easiest methods to learn, requiring very little time and education, no expenses, and no instructors. The method is also very easy to teach—once mastered, one can easily show others how to practice the method within moments.

### **Compatibility**

The Here & Now meditation is neutral and complementary—it is compatible with all other spiritual and religious traditions. It is even compatible with a secular, non-religious life. The meditation helps bring about clarity in both mind and spirit, allowing you the freedom to follow any path you choose and often even helping you proceed along those paths. Lasting happiness is a human goal that belongs to no single tradition and to all people everywhere.

### **Compassion And World Peace**

Besides providing inner peace, this Here& Now key also helps us develop compassion and loving-kindness. We can begin to build world peace only after we have developed compassion and achieved inner peace for ourselves.

## *Chapter Three*

### *New Perspectives*

**O**n this chapter, we present perspectives that we feel are useful in alleviating suffering. These stories are not meant to be strict guidelines, rules, or even instructions. Again, the main goal of this book is to help you find paths to lasting happiness. Unless you feel it will help you personally, you do not *need* to change your life perspectives in any way. Because we and many of our practitioners have found some of these stories and ideas helpful, we decided to share them with you and let you choose among them those that resonate with you.

Most of the ideas below deal with the mind, its opinions, and its insistence in applying its views on others. This is because this aspect of the mind can be the most confining part of our lives, causing suffering in the forms of anger, hurt, frustration, outrage, self-righteousness, and more. As we grow up, our minds accumulate opinions, views, and beliefs from our parents and others around us. These

views are not inherently harmful—many of them are good, teaching virtues such as kindness and generosity. What changes these opinions into things harmful to us and others is the mind's insistence that *others must believe as we do and others must behave as we think they should*.

When we interact with people, objects, and situations, we often come upon things that contradict our minds' views of how things should be. Our minds become uncomfortable because that man should be more decent, that woman should be a better mother, my daughter should be respectful, my son should call me. In coming in contact with other beings and objects, our minds immediately analyze and judge using its long-stored opinions, often even demanding the people and situations around us to adjust themselves accordingly. *He shouldn't have been late—he should be more prompt. It wasn't supposed to rain today. There isn't supposed to be traffic at this time.* These thoughts run through our minds constantly, leaving in their wake continual suffering.

So, our first step is to end *in our mind* the demand that others must comply to our minds' points of view, *especially the points that we and the majority of people believe to be good and correct*. Our minds need to understand that if we have the right to have our own opinions, so do others, so long as these opinions do not lead to harm to the community or society. Instead of imposing our opinions on other people and on life situations, we *apply our opinions only to ourselves*. This is a necessary be-

ginning step in the construction of happiness.

The second step is to sort through all our minds' opinions—which now only apply to ourselves—and make decisions about which opinions are useful and which are useless in our path to happiness. We may find that many of these opinions are restrictive even though we no longer apply them to others. These opinions are restrictive *on ourselves*. Find the views that cause you unhappiness, such as certain expectations of yourself, and choose to change them. Once you've identified them, you can begin working on changing them through the Here & Now meditation (see italicized text below).

The following selected perspectives may help you identify views within yourself that you would like to change. Again, these stories have been chosen on one merit: the ability to liberate us from suffering. Thus, any view that still holds us in bondage, that still restricts us, including those well-established in traditional value systems will not be discussed. We will not assert whether something is right or wrong, or good or bad. We offer only what we have found *useful*.

*If you wish to change any of your perspectives or adopt new ones, do the following before meditating the Here & Now: repeat once to yourself the main point of that perspective, **then put it out of your mind**, and immediately enter the Here & Now meditation. The deeper the Stillness, the more effective this method will be.*

## The Nagging Mind

“One day, my mother scolded me unjustly. It hurt me and made me cry. Every time I tell someone about it, I feel hurt again and cry again. In fact, when no one is around for me to tell it to, I remember it and even relive it. I relive the memory, the words and the feelings, and then I end up crying as if it is happening again. After two weeks, I have managed to relive the pain and cry 18 times total! If this thought pattern remains with me, if my mind keeps doing this, who knows how many more times I will hurt and cry—when in reality, my mother scolded me only once.”



In their younger days, her husband had an affair, but afterwards, he regretted it and became a good, faithful, and loving husband. However, her mind kept recalling the old story, and she continued to feel hurt. She would remember the hurt, and she cried all through the forty years of marriage no matter what he did to comfort her. Her mind could not let go of those memories of hurt, and even after his death, it would not relent. Now, the memories of the affair still surface whenever she visits his grave.

### “Must” And “Should”

The words “**must**” and “**should**” may be necessary in life if we want to maintain reasonable peace and order in societies and communities. But what if our mind is burdened with these two words endlessly, day and night? “A husband *must* be

responsible, children *must...*, I *must...*, you *must...*, they *must...*, we *must...*, God *must...*” “You *should* do it this way..., I *should...*, she *should...*”



“In the span of a single day, I purposely counted how many times my mind used the words “**must**” and “**should**,” and discovered the exact extent of how much I still hold myself and others in bondage. I also discovered that these ideas, opinions, and points of view are not truly mine but rather were imposed upon me by my parents and by society. I in turn impose them automatically upon others, especially my offspring. So as I unthinkingly pass on restrictive and useless opinions and views, I may create further bondage for generations.”



A meditation student complains to the master about a friend. “Master, all day he tells me what I “must” and “should” do, and I feel annoyed and frustrated. How do I solve this?” The master answers gently: “Have you noticed how you want to argue or defend yourself to him? Know that his use of words like “must” and “should,” especially when they have the subtle meaning that something is wrong with you, is a form of violence. He is unconsciously attacking you. But your need to defend and explain yourself is *also* a form of violence—it is violence within yourself, within your mind. Your mind attacks and resents him. We can only find true inner peace when we no longer feel that dire need to explain, defend, argue, or even wonder...”



## **Wants Or Needs?**

“When I want something I can’t have or when I want others to do something and my wishes are unmet, I suffer—I feel frustrated, angry, disappointed. My mind complains constantly about these unfulfilled wishes and demands.” If you experience these feelings, then ask yourself this: “Do I *want* it, or do I *need* it?” If the answer seems to be *need*, then ask further: “If I don’t get my wish, does it kill me?” If it actually harms you, *then it is need*. However, if it doesn’t, it is *want*. And if it’s *want*—if you don’t really *need* it—perhaps you would not suffer if you chose to no longer want it.

## **The Bondage Of Criticism**

We feel upset and hurt when someone has a wrong or negative opinion about us, To deal with this, we should understand three things.

1—We feel hurt because *the mind wants to change that person’s opinion about us*. It is this **want** that causes our hurt—not necessarily the opinion itself. And we suffer because of the mind’s need to defend and argue.

2—People form their opinions from their minds’ general background: their mind’s beliefs, values, and standards. And unless it has accumulated new information, it actually would have been difficult for the mind to have formed that opinion *differently*. So it’s pretty safe to conclude that people mean no malice; the mind just could not help it.

3—There is no need to change that opinion. To deal

with our suffering—our anger, hurt, frustration, outrage—we need only to deal with **our mind's need and desire** to change that opinion. Once the mind no longer feels this need, the opinion will no longer bother us.

Also, while criticism from others is hurtful, criticism of ourselves *from our own minds* is likely more traumatic and damaging. The mind can torture us for our entire lives by frequently bringing up the memories of weaknesses and mistakes of the past. We must forgive ourselves and move on so we can live in peace. We need to have compassion for ourselves before we can truly have compassion for others.

Once we have understood the relationship between criticism and the mind, we can use the Here & Now meditation to neutralize our negative emotions. Understanding is done in the mind, but true understanding and *experience* must be done in our hearts where it is *wordless*.

### **The Past And The Future**

“Years ago, I lived in poverty. We had no food. We didn’t eat regularly. Now, we are comfortable and have more than enough food. But I still remember the feeling of hunger and I fear it. Even now, when I sit in front of a lavish meal, I remember when we had no food, and I worry that something might happen in the future—I worry that someday this food won’t be here anymore. I worry so much about those “what if’s” that when I try to eat, the food then tastes like nothing at all.”



“I was willing to sacrifice and put off my own wants to build a future for myself and my family. I worked hard towards my goal. Now, I have achieved that ‘future.’ But I look back and realize that my children’s childhoods have long passed, the youth of my spouse has been lost, and my health is no longer vibrant enough to enjoy an active and passionate family life. The forgotten *present* has long become the past...”



She suffers over something that happened or did not happen in the past. He never stops worrying about something that has not yet happened or that might happen in the future. They seem to have forgotten about living in the present. Perhaps she would no longer suffer if she realizes that she cannot go back into the past to make changes—no matter how much the mind wants to. And he would suffer less if he understands that the act of worrying does not influence or change anything in the future—whether he worries or not, the outcomes will be the same. Worrying does little to influence anything or anyone—*except it may cause suffering to the worrier.*

## Judgment

With our limited minds, we do not—and cannot—fully comprehend the reasons behind things which we perceive as good and bad. Knowing how limited our minds are, perhaps we should hesitate and pause whenever our minds pass judgment so

quickly, easily, and often.



Judgment is the habit of an active mind that imposes its opinions, values, and beliefs on the self and on others. Although morals and ethics are important for social order, many judgments can be a form of violence attacking the people being judged. And the person being judged can also be the self—as long as the ability to pass judgment on others exists, so will the ability to pass judgment on the self. Both these abilities are forms of bondage that lead to suffering. The true mind does not judge—it only observes in silence and peace.



“I tried to live one whole day without allowing the mind to pass any judgments or make any accusations. That’s when I realized that my mind judges and accuses *all day...*”

## **Happiness And Suffering**

A meditation student asks: Why does everyone hurt me and make me suffer—why does no one bring me happiness? The master answers: No one is capable of causing our suffering or bringing us happiness. We are the only ones who are capable of doing such things *to ourselves*. It is not *what happens to us* but rather *how we react* to what happens. Observe your mind and how it reacts.

## **Changing Our Significant Other**

A woman asks her therapist for ways to change her husband to improve their marriage. The therapist sadly replies: "I'm sorry, I don't have this ability. Many of us think that after we marry, we will gradually change our spouses. I don't think I have ever met a person who is truly capable of changing another person. Here, I can only show people how to *change themselves to find inner happiness.*"

## **Changing Places**

"Last night on the news, I watched a man waiting on death row. I knew he committed crimes but as I looked deeply into his numb and staring eyes, I couldn't help wondering: If I were in his place, how would I feel right now?"

## **Forgiveness**

A meditation student asks, "I suffer so much from how others treat me. My loved ones have hurt me, betrayed me, and disappointed me. How do I get rid of my resentment and hatred?" The master answers, "Meditate and forgive all of them." A few days later, the student returns with success: "I have learned forgiveness, master. Thank you." The master answers: "You are not finished yet. Meditate, open your heart, and love them." A week later, the student returns, again with success. But again, the master gives new instructions: "Now, meditate and be appreciative and grateful. Without them and the roles they

played, you would not have had the opportunity for such personal growth.” The student returns again, convinced that the lessons are finished. The student proclaims, “I have learned to appreciate these people for giving me the chance to learn forgiveness!” The master answers: “Then you should go and meditate again. They have *played their roles correctly and well*—why is there even a need for forgiveness?”

### **Self-Pity**

Of all the pain causing thoughts, the self-pitying ones can produce the strongest pain. Justified or not, they can cause us to experience and re-experience pain: “I am so unfortunate. How could that person say such horrible things to me? Why doesn’t that person love me? God is so unfair to me! Everything goes wrong in my life...”

### **Separation And Love**

A person comes into our lives because s/he is meant to come—just as when s/he is leaving, it is meant to be. One of the most painful experiences is when someone we love leaves our lives. Another is when that person does not return our love. But we must realize that the existence of love depends neither on the other’s physical presence nor on the other’s feelings. We do not love people because they are near nor because they love us in return. So why should their absence or lack of love stop us from loving and experiencing the joy of loving? The joy of loving has nothing to do with the pain of

separation. To feel pain from separation is to mis-identify **need** for **love**—we do not suffer because we love; we suffer because we need. Our minds reinforce these needs and demands instead of allowing us to experience the joy of loving.



Relationships never really end. They only change in form. When a person leaves our life, the relationship is not “over.” It only changes from “spouse” to “not-spouse,” or “close friend” to “not close friend.” We are always in some kind of relation to everyone around us. We do not “lose” people—they are always there, existing. What causes suffering is our mind’s desire to have a *specific* kind, or form, of relationship. It does not like changes. This applies even to death—we want that person to “be alive,” a particular state of being and kind of relationship to us. Perhaps it would help to know that even in death, we are still in relation to that person, if not through souls and spirits, then through our memories and the love we shared.

### **The Measure Of Success And Failure**

What do we define as success and failure? When we work hard and achieve security, wealth, family, independence, a career, we think to ourselves, “I am successful—I am Success.” Then when we lose these things, we think, “I have failed—I am Failure.” But the things we use to define success are impermanent, things that come and

go in our lifetime. So why do we make these the measure, the standard, of our *worth*, of our life's successes and failures, and then *suffer* because of this measure?

### **Religion Of Origin**

**Question:** “I was born and raised in a particular religious faith. As an adult, I felt the need to search further, beyond what I felt as the limits of that faith. My family is very upset about this, and I had to move out to ease the pressure for everyone. However, I am still very troubled—I don't feel free from it. What should I do?”

**Answer:** “Sometimes, there is little you can do to change how others feel. However, you can change *your own* emotions and feelings. You can use the Here & Now method to calm the conflicting emotions about your loyalties to your family and your new spiritual path. Furthermore, perhaps your past, your faith of origin, is not a coincidence in the first place. Perhaps there is a reason why you were raised a specific way and also a reason why you choose differently now.

### **Mine's Better Than Yours**

Many practitioners are arguing about the legitimacy of various meditation methods and the spirituality and religious beliefs behind them. They claim theirs to be the best and refuse to accept others' methods and beliefs. Then, someone stands up and asks: “My friends, what in life is *not* spiritual? What in life is not part of something



larger? The universe was created long before what we now call religions. Everything, including spirituality, comes into being at the necessary time and place. None are more “true” than others. Perhaps each is only more appropriate at a certain time and place and for a certain people. We wouldn’t be arguing if we could look beyond the religious historical events and see them as manifestations of *different means to the same end.*”

### **Is That So?**

The following is a summary and translation of a famous Buddhist story about a Japanese Zen monk: One day, a pregnant woman and her family arrive at the temple of a serene monk. The woman points at him and falsely accuses him of being the father of her child. The family yells and curses at him for his “sins.” He listens patiently and then responds: “Is that so?” They leave only to return some months later with the infant to leave in his care. Again, he responds, “Is that so?” and takes the child. A few years later, they return again to apologize to him for their mistake and to take back the child. He calmly responds once again, “Is that so?” as he watches them take the child away.

### **Inter-Relationship**

A meditation student asks a master: “What is the best way to deal with human interaction in my cultivation? Should I seclude myself to avoid all interaction so I can prevent the accumulation of new karma?” The master replies: Sure, you can if

you want. But for some reason, I, personally, keep feeling as if I owe *somebody* something no matter what I do. When I eat my meals, I feel I owe the farmers for their labor. When I turn on the lights, I feel I owe the people who work at the power plant. When I do the laundry, I feel I owe the people who work at soap factories. But, of course, that's just me.

## **Why Are We Here In This Life?**

The following paragraphs portray different views on the meaning of our existence in this life and world. Some of these are similar and can work in tandem with each other while some are contradictory—it is up to you to choose some, if any at all, that are helpful to you.

### **1. Faith In The Universe**

Society and the universe may seem extremely chaotic. However, when we look more closely, what seems like chaos is actually following a kind of a definite order. An individual's life may also seem chaotic and aimless, but with keener perception, one can see wondrous order and arrangement. There exists certain universal forces that are more intelligent than we are, a kind of guiding energy and power that manifests the rhythms of all the ups and downs that will gently lead us to wherever we need to go and to be.

### **2. Karma**

“To believe in karma, the universal law of cause and effect, is to see all relationships and life

events as a part of that larger cycle. So when someone hurts me or causes me loss, instead of suffering, I view it as a payment of an old debt from a previous life. I feel relieved, and my heart is lighter because the debt load has lessened.”

### **3. Roles And Lessons**

“I don’t believe in karma. I believe that this world is a gigantic stage where each person is both an actor and scriptwriter for his/her own role. Before birth, we choose our roles and request others to play important opposing roles such as parents, spouses, children, enemies, loved ones, etc. The main goal on this stage is to ‘experience’ and evolve spiritually; one learns forgiveness, compassion, and unconditional love. One also learns bondage and freedom, suffering and happiness. Therefore, I sincerely thank everyone whether their roles in my life were loving or hateful, good or bad. I also have respect for those who hold lesser and weaker positions in my life such as my children, my younger siblings, my employees, and people with less money, power, beauty, and intelligence, because I know that they certainly are truly not anything *less* than I. They have actually granted me a great privilege by acting in these lesser roles.”

### **4. What Is This Lesson?**

“I believe that all events and relationships in my life are lessons designed to help me evolve spiritually. Therefore, *each time* I face a trauma, challenge, or even success, instead of allowing my mind to blame myself, others, or the universe, I ask

myself: What lesson can I learn from this?”

“I believe that all life experiences are lessons—and the main lesson is to let go of my attachments and, thus, understand the essence of illusion and impermanence in life. For example, if I am excessively concerned with money, especially if I believe it to be the determining factor of my worth, I may experience financial failure and loss, one after another until I let go of my attachment to money. If I am attached to and dependent on emotional relationships with others, especially if I see them as a part of my identity, I may experience many relationship failures and the loss of loved ones. These lessons will keep on repeating until I understand the nature of my attachments. Once the lessons are learned, my specific problems seem to dissipate and my life automatically calms down. I find inner peace and equanimity. I find peace because my life is calm, and my life is calm also because I find inner peace—the relationship is circular.”

### **Unconditional Love**

What is unconditional love? To love unconditionally is to love without condition, without expectation or demand. It is easy to love someone who is perfect. But what of the imperfect? A mother may view her mentally handicapped child as a punishment from higher forces. But perhaps the child is a blessing. Perhaps the child is here to teach the mother *true* unconditional love. Unconditional love is the ability to love a handicapped child who cannot speak pleasant words to us, who has no

social status and achievements of which a parent can be proud.



How does one love a man or woman unconditionally? Loving people unconditionally is loving them totally, *both their “good” and “bad” parts*. It is not loving them *despite* their bad qualities—it is loving them also *because* of those qualities. When we love people unconditionally, we are able to watch them living their lives, being themselves, *without wanting or needing them to change anything*. In fact, we love them without **needing** them to belong to us—we love them regardless of whether they return our love and whether they are with us or in our lives.

### **Love Versus Need**

How do you know when you love someone? We often say, “I know I love her because I can’t live without her. If she left, I would hurt so much.” Or we say, “When I’m not with him, I miss him so much. I always want to be near him.” But these don’t seem to capture the essence of love because *love does not hurt or cause pain*. What causes us pain, what those quotes above are actually describing, is *need*. Need asks, demands, expects. Need constrains and confines. Need hurts. And need is the work of *the mind*. Love does not require certain behaviors or certain feelings. Love *does not require at all*. Love is joyful and liberating—it is freedom for both those who love and those who are loved. Love is the work of the heart.

## **Experiencing “All Is One”**

People often talk about “oneness,” and many say, “All is one.” Many ask how we can go about *experiencing* it. But we as humans cannot describe the “it” experience in words, much less show someone how to reach that experience. The story below is an attempt to describe *one* experience through the language of the mind—and is a pale and pallid comparison to the actual experience. This is not a formula or instructions for you to follow. We hope you find this story helpful in some way on your own path to experiencing the oneness of all that is..

### **Woman And Child**

Most people say she's Woman. Some say she's Child. She thinks she's both. Together “they” often go to the beach. The woman gazes into the deep water, longing for her lost continent of a distant past. The child builds a sand castle and giggles when the wind sneaks up and pecks her on the cheek. Once in awhile, the wind asks softly, “Who are you?” The child laughs. “I am Me, of course. Silly you!”

Then one day, the woman pauses and wonders who she really is. They say clothing does not make a person. So she takes off all her clothes. They say the physical form is not the true identity. So she slowly lets her body dissolve into the air. And after every bit of the physical matter disappears, the layers of her non-physical form fall away too. Then to her surprise, there is nothing but Stillness, wordlessness...

The Child is fascinated. She wiggles a bit and feels herself expanding, expanding, and expanding... She wiggles again and finds herself pervading the entire universe...

Something is very odd, yet so natural here. With her coverings peeled off, all things appear as Stillness and formless just like her. In fact, the "Stillnesses" are one and the same. Either everything is a part of her or she is in everything, or maybe both. As she loses her self, the entire physical universe comes back into being within that Stillness. Now, she is the little ant that is being crushed under someone's shoe. She is the small boy flying a kite. She is the monk preaching to a large group of people. She is the disfigured leper whose pus-filled wounds are being cleaned by an undistinguished nun, and she is also the nun at the same time. She is the man murdering a child, and she is the father grieving over the child's coffin. She is that man who touches a woman... touches her deeply... and then walks off without an explanation. She is also that same woman, fixing her gaze on the horizon at sunset for the next thousand years, silently grieving the loss of a moment of the past. She is the young girl standing at a street corner waiting for customers, and she is also the nun praying for the salvation of the human race. She is all the mountains and rivers, and she is a small stone, deep in meditation for centuries on end. She is all those humans able to roam the different, both seen and unseen, universes... And she is all of those universes...

All the particles of her physical body start to

gather themselves back into a shape... Then come the non-physical layers... The Stillness joins in and, voila, the woman-child appears as before. She wears a flimsy gown and stands on the balcony, being a woman. The blinking stars bear her witness; her body shivers as the wind caresses her skin... She embraces life's passion; her being pervades the universes. Then she puts back on the ordinary clothes of the woman-child. In peace and equanimity, she again finds herself among the worlds of mortals and immortals, knowing that she belongs to them and they her...

She puts on the outfit of a master, pretending to disseminate wisdom to a group of students who she knows are none other than her own self. Though they may or may not be aware of this, she knows they need nothing from her or anyone else. Those who have paranormal power look at her Stillness and say they see gods and goddesses. She smiles lovingly... She knows they only see reflections of their own yearnings and needs. They are a part of her, are they not?

So the woman and child go back to the beach. The woman again gazes into the deep water; the entire marine kingdom comes alive within her. The child again builds a sand castle and laughs when the wind sneaks up and pecks her on the cheek. And again, the wind asks softly, "Who are you?" Without looking up from the sand castle, the child smiles and whispers, "I am You."



## Chapter Four

### *Self-Healing With The Here & Now*

A human being is a combination of both the physical (seen) and metaphysical (unseen). The “seen” aspects are those we can see both with our eyes and with our modern technology. The “unseen” are those aspects we can only perceive through other, non-physical means.

However, there is no definite line dividing these two categories because such division exists only by our own limitations—things are “unseen” only because we are not able to see them *at this time*. The rapid growth in technology in the last century easily shows how the previously “unseen” can quickly become the present “seen.” Here is an example: Twenty-five centuries ago, the Buddha “saw” and declared the existence of countless living beings in a cup of water. At that time, these beings were “unseen,” seeable only through supernatural abilities. But now, with a microscope, these countless beings, or germs, are “seen.”

Thousands of years ago, someone metaphysically “saw” and mapped the energy pathways in the human body. Such knowledge is now the foundation of acupuncture. These pathways are still considered “unseen” today, but it is still entirely possible that some day, our technology will be able to “see” these maps.

Because the human is both its “seen” and “unseen” parts and because the “seen” and “unseen” are not always easily defined or distinguishable, we believe that healing must always address both these aspects in order to heal the human as a whole.

While our brain is physical (seen), our mind is non-physical (unseen). The mind does not solely rest in the brain. Researchers have also found that memories are stored in our cells and organs. People with paranormal abilities “see” our memories in our auras and energy fields. The modern study of hypnosis finds the existence of memories from past lives—and we cannot begin to guess where *those* are stored. Therefore, it would be naïve to insist that one needs healing only in one aspect and not in the other. Alternative healing often dismisses scientific medical knowledge for being “incomplete” while modern medicine scoffs alternative medicine for being “unsupported.” In this book, we advocate the necessity for a holistic healing that encompasses all of what we currently label “seen” and “unseen.” Because the “unseen” is often neglected, in this chapter, we will explain a healing method that addresses “unseen” aspects of the human existence. For the most effective healing, please use the

method below in conjunction with other methods you currently use including traditional allopathic medicine.

In this book, we have maintained that much of our emotional and mental suffering comes from the mind, its habitual use of past information, and its preoccupation with the past and the future. Many spiritual masters also believe that our physical illnesses derive from the past, anticipated future, and other locations. For example, one may still suffer recurring muscle and nerve pain from an old car accident even though the muscles and nerves have been healed. Or, one can surgically remove cancer cells but then find the new cells behaving in the same cancerous way as before. This could happen because we do not use a way to block or sever the path that brings information of past injuries or illness to the new cells. In order to stop the old path of information and prevent such information from reaching the new, healthy cells, we need for our mind and body to reach the state of Stillness where there is no time and space.

The goal is to quiet the mind and enter this Here & Now state where the thinking mind is completely tamed, still, at peace, and in equanimity. Only thirty seconds to five minutes of this “present moment” can restore and rescue many functions within the human body and mind. On the physical level, the act of thinking expends huge amounts of subtle energy, often much more than other functions of the brain and the body. When the mind is quiet, the

body can redirect its energy to healing and helping other cellular functions. This is why people with quiet minds look younger than those who suffer from preoccupied minds.

When body, mind, and heart become aligned in Stillness, the body can begin healing itself. In this union, the mind can be placed at any area of the physical body to induce spontaneous healing.

### **The Self-Healing Technique**

This healing method can ease pain noticeably and immediately by using the state of profound Stillness to induce the body to heal. Because it is the Stillness found in the Here & Now meditation that heals, you may find that the body experiences forms of healing through the regular sitting meditation alone. Without performing healing on themselves intentionally, many people have been healed while only practicing the daily sitting meditation. You can use this healing method, however, to address particular pains and illness for more direct and immediate healing. You can perform this healing method on yourself as often as necessary.

**Step One:** Inhale *slowly* through your nose. As you *slowly* exhale through the mouth, feel as if a wave is sweeping from head to toe to relax your entire body. You can keep your eyes open or closed. If open, they should be gazing but neither focusing nor concentrating on any object.

**Step Two:** Tell the mind, “The body is here,” *knowing* the mind’s arrival at the heart area of your

chest.

Let go of yourself and relax with the mind **unthinking** and **unfocused**. Especially relax the muscles around the eyes and forehead whether the eyes are open or closed. Every so often, vaguely know that the mind is sitting quietly at the heart area.

*You only need to do Step Two for one to two minutes, then go on to Step Three below.*

**Step Three:** Tell the mind, “The body is here,” *knowing* the mind’s arrival at **the body area you are healing**. (If the illness is in whole-body systems such as the circulatory, lymphatic, nervous, etc., then place the mind at the top of the head instead.) Let go of yourself and relax with the mind **unthinking** and **unfocused**. Every so often, vaguely know that the mind is sitting quietly at **the area being healed**.

Remain in that **unthinking** and **unfocused** state for a **minimum of one minute, and longer if the illness is more serious**.

**Step Four:** Take a slow deep breath. As you slowly exhale, open and focus your eyes fully to end the healing session.

## **Perspectives On Healing**

Through our contact with many different healers and spiritual cultivators, we have collected different perspectives on health and healing that you may find useful.

- Traditional western medicine treats symptoms and cures ailments, frequently by entering the body and destroying the illness-causing agents. Alternative, holistic healing tries to use the body's innate ability to deal with illnesses from within. Spiritual healing applies knowledge of the "unseen" to enable the body to heal itself. Different approaches!
- No doctor, healer, or patient can escape eventual death—but to live a healthy life often requires the cooperation of all three.
- A serious ailment may be instantly healed by a doctor or a spiritual healer, but unless we understand and deal with the original cause of the illness—be it karma, the mind, or lifestyle—recurrence will likely occur.
- Some people believe that illnesses are karmic manifestations and should be understood and accepted that way. Some even believe that healers should not meddle with others' lessons and experiences.
- Some people believe that illness—and all other experiences in our lives—are experiences we have for a reason. They are lessons to be learned and experiences to have. Some believe that these experiences are pre-determined by higher beings, and some others believe that they themselves chose their own experiences before incarnating into this life. In this sense, no experience is a waste, and no experience is truly "bad." And thus, health and healing happen at their appointed time and place.

## *Chapter Five*

### *Managing Stress And Slowing The Aging Process*

*A*s many of us know, stress is a major factor in both illness and premature aging. Stress can lower the immune system, be taxing on the body, impede the rejuvenation of cells, and hinder the body's self-healing ability. Recent studies show that many people are turning to meditation to alleviate their stress. The Here & Now meditation is particularly effective at relieving stress—relief can be almost instant. This meditation can also slow the aging process by bringing the body to a state of Stillness that induces the body to heal itself and allows the rejuvenating life force to effectively permeate the entire body and its cells.

The Here & Now meditation is more effective than many other meditation techniques for the main reason that it does not use the mind. Nearly all other techniques require some level of mind concentration

which expends energy. The mind and brain use more electrical and subtle energy than any other functions in our body. The Here & Now method, however, requires you to let go of thoughts, concentration, and even intention. Just one minute in the state of Stillness can release tension throughout the whole being, from the mind to the cellular level.

While this meditation can bring us instant relief from mental and emotional stress, what good is instant relief if we immediately allow stress to build up again afterwards? Thus, it's important that we also meditate regularly throughout your day at designated "stress-relief points." For example, we can set a clock to go off every half-hour or one hour so that we can perform the Here & Now meditation and enter the Stillness for *30 seconds to one minute*. This way, we can prevent stress from building up even at the cellular level. Our energy levels will not drop as they normally do during our day.

The daily sitting meditation of 15 to 30 minutes helps us reach deeper and deeper Stillness, and as we get more efficient, we will find it easier to do the 1-minute meditations throughout the day. The deeper the level of Stillness, the more calm and relaxed our general disposition will be. We will find the things that previously caused us stress much easier to cope with.

There are three components to managing stress and slowing down our body's aging process:

1. The first secret is learning to keep the mind quiet as much as possible. The more we do it, the longer we can keep the aging process under con-



trol. The goal is to help the mind establish its new habit of Stillness, silence, and peace using the Here & Now meditation.

2. The second secret is keeping your life “present”—let go of the mind’s obsession with the past and the future. With the Here & Now method, you have a tool to free yourself from the emotional suffering that occurs when your mind dwells in the unhappy past or worries about the future.
3. The third secret is for you to free yourself from your own opinions and beliefs. By using the Here & Now method, you can become aware of the thoughts that are derived from certain opinions that cause you tension and stress. This way, stress will no longer build up within you again.

**So, follow these tips below to begin managing stress and slowing aging:**

- At least once a day, set aside a minimum of 15 minutes for the Here & Now meditation.
- During the course of your day, at designated times or intervals, remember to take a slow, deep breath, relax, and enter the Here & Now Stillness for at least 30 seconds.
- Each time you are about to fall asleep, take a slow, deep breath, relax, and tell your mind and your subconscious to  *dwell in the Stillness during sleep*.
- Every time negative thoughts or feelings arise, take a slow, deep breath and enter the Stillness

for at least 30 seconds.

The Here & Now meditation was outlined in Chapter 2. We have copied the basic instructions below for your convenience with one minor change—instead of practicing for 1 to 30 minutes, we recommend that you practice the daily sitting meditation for 15 to 30 minutes to relieve stress and undo the physical damage of stress. Remember, you can practice this meditation at any time, at any place, and in any position. Just make sure you are as comfortable and relaxed as possible.

**Step One:** Inhale *slowly* through your nose. As you *slowly* exhale through the mouth, feel as if a wave is sweeping from head to toe to relax your entire body. You can keep your eyes open or closed. If open, they should be gazing but neither focusing nor concentrating on any object.

**Step Two:** Tell the mind, “The body is here,” *knowing* the mind’s arrival at the heart area of your chest.

Let go of yourself and relax with the mind **unthinking** and **unfocused**. Especially relax the muscles around the eyes and forehead whether the eyes are open or closed. Every so often, vaguely know that the mind is sitting quietly at the heart area.

If the mind starts wandering away or thinking, just quietly remind it, “The body is here,” and settle again at the same location. Then *immediately let go of thoughts and relax your body and mind again.*

Remain in that **unthinking** and **unfocused** state for **15 to 30 minutes**. New practitioners should not meditate longer than 30 minutes at first. After about a month, you can go as long as comfortable.

***Step Three:*** To end the sitting meditation, take a slow deep breath. As you slowly exhale, open and focus your eyes fully. Stretch your body if desired as you end the session.

***Don't forget to take pictures of yourself before beginning your anti-aging Here & Now meditation practice, then watch how much younger you will look.***

## *Chapter Six*

### *Questions & Answers*

#### *For Experienced Meditators*

**A**lthough we have written mainly for a beginner audience in meditation, we realize that our readers may encompass a wide range in levels and breadth of experience in meditation. Many of our practitioners have asked questions about the Here & Now meditation, especially in comparison to other meditations. In this chapter, we explore some of these questions for our readers who may be familiar with other traditions.

#### ***Too Simple To Actually Be Effective***

**Q:** The Here & Now method is very simple—perhaps too simple to perform what it claims to do. How can one experience deep Stillness by just telling the mind, “The body is here” and then letting go of thought? Other meditation methods seem to make more logical sense in their steps

**and technique. So how can the Here & Now method work?**

**A:** The Here & Now method aims to transcend the thinking mind. It can therefore be difficult for the thinking mind to grasp what the method is trying to do and how it is doing it. This book cannot be fully understood by the regular thinking mind or through just the reading of these words. At the beginning of the book, we asked that you read this book for the knowledge contained in its words and also for the wisdom experienced in the silence behind the words. There is a silence—and, thus, power—behind the method, too. The Here & Now method is effective because, in its simplicity, it allows us to reconnect to our own inner silence. In addition, unlike many other methods, this one does not ask the mind to perform tasks of concentration. It is this state of “tasklessness” that helps make this method effective for its particular goals.

### ***Other Meditations That Use The Concept Of “Here” And “Now”***

**Q:** There are many other meditation techniques where one concentrates on living in the present and not dwelling in the past or future. How are they different from this Here & Now meditation method?

**A:** Meditations dealing with the concepts of “Here” and “Now” usually guide the mind to concentrate on *actions* taking place at the point in time called “Now” and the particular place called “Here.” While the Here

& Now method in this book also emphasizes the present moment, the ultimate goal is to enter the present so deeply that you reach the state of profound Stillness which *transcends* time and space or the very “here” and “now.” Concentrating on living in the present may help you avoid the forces of the past and the future, but what happens when you are faced with traumatic immediate life events *in the present*—i.e. loneliness, hurtful words or deeds, loss, humiliation, etc.? The state of Stillness from this meditation allows you to feel calm, at peace, and untouched by negative events and life situations. According to many meditation masters, this state of Stillness may be one of the higher achievements in most meditation traditions.

### **The Here & Now Versus “Mindfulness” Tradition**

**Q: What is the difference between the Here & Now meditation and the “Mindfulness” tradition?**

**A:** The “Mindfulness” meditation instructs one to use mind-actions such as concentrating on a single, correct thought, and focusing intensely on one’s actions, body movements, and interactions. The Here & Now, however, instructs the mind to rest in silence and, eventually, Stillness. Thus, the “Mindfulness” meditation uses “action” to quiet the mind while the Here & Now uses “non-action.” These are different approaches oriented toward similar, if not the same, goals.

## **Here & Now Versus “No Mind” Tradition**

**Q: Isn't the Here & Now meditation the same as the “No Mind” tradition?**

**A:** These two meditations are also different approaches to the same goal. The “No Mind” tradition tries to cultivate a state of Stillness while performing actions. You may recognize that the Here & Now does this, too, but at a more advanced level. The Here & Now first guides you to reach that state of Stillness during *inaction* which we think is a necessary first step. This step helps inexperienced practitioners reach a profound depth of Stillness before they begin to practice similarly to the “No Mind” tradition. Stillness experienced from the mind's inaction solidifies a foundation for an easier later practice at more advanced levels. The Here & Now teaches you how to reach the Stillness and then integrate it into your life, step by step.

### **Sensory Pleasures And Cultivation**

**Q: I have been told repeatedly that sensory pleasure is the worst “evil” that can harm the mind of a cultivator. How does the Here & Now deal with this concept and its effects?**

**A:** Many spiritual disciplines view the sense of touch as a particularly difficult obstacle because the mind reacts so strongly to it. The sense of touch not only affects a person emotionally but also physically in terms of health. For example, some studies

documented that infants who received extra caressing and holding had a much lower mortality rate than infants who received only regular medical care. The mind's desire for touch may be a reflection of our more basic desire for survival. However, this basic desire can become a problem if the mind is constantly preoccupied with it. If the mind develops a kind of obsession, we suffer intensely from its torment and extreme feelings of guilt. When we act upon this obsession, we may even hurt others.

If we try to struggle against the mind's attachment to these urges, we may only cause the mind to react negatively. Instead of struggling, we can use the Here & Now meditation to enter the state of Stillness that will calm the mind's fears and urges. With the mind at peace, the senses no longer have to be an obstacle for a cultivator.

### ***Beginner Versus Experienced***

**Q: I have noticed that beginners sometimes fare better with this Here & Now meditation than those who have meditated for years. Why?**

**A:** Some practitioners of other methods are used to focusing their attention so intensely that they often have difficulty doing the "opposite": resting and relaxing the mind. For them, learning the Here & Now method is like breaking an old "habit" and learning a new one. While it may seem difficult at first, however, learning the Here & Now method is very possible for everyone because Stillness is nothing other than our true and original nature hidden



behind endless streams of thoughts.

## **Why Stop Short of Complete Liberation?**

**Q:** In Buddhism, to completely liberate oneself from the cycle of life, death, and rebirth, one must reach “nirvana,” a state that surpasses even happiness and peace. The Here & Now meditation only teaches a person to reach a state of happiness but not beyond that. How is this meditation useful, then, to practitioners who are searching for enlightenment?

**A:** No matter how deep our “Samadhi,” no matter how vast our spiritual knowledge, paranormal abilities and wisdom may be, unless we transcend basic human mental and emotional suffering, we will not be able to attain the kind of enlightenment the Buddha spoke of. That is why we chose to concentrate on the task of taming the mind and eliminating suffering. This is a basic but major hurdle for people on their paths. We also believe that once this is accomplished, the rest will come in time *naturally*. In addition, we believe that Truth can only be experienced or discovered personally. This book does not try to provide the truths themselves—only the means for personal discovery. Once we have mastered this Here & Now method and are able to fully integrate the Stillness into our lives, we are fully equipped to walk any paths including ones that may be considered more advanced than this method. Most likely, we’ll already have a head start on most

other people on our paths.

### **Is This Method The Best?**

**Q: The Buddha said there are 84,000 paths to enlightenment. Why do we need yet another one? Or is this method one of those 84,000? If so, is it the best?**

**A:** Whether this method is among those 84,000 or whether it is something new, in the abstract sense, this method is no better or worse than any other method. All methods are nothing more than means to be used as needed. All of them have been created to serve exactly those who are meant to use them. Methods are tools, and some tools fit some people's hands better than others. We only hope that the information contained herein will help you create your own tool for carving your own path to happiness, peace, and freedom.

## *Chapter Seven*

### *Questions And Answers*

**S**ince the distribution of our first, short edition, we have received many questions asking for clarification and expansion on certain topics. In this chapter, we have included some of these in brief. In some cases, we have combined or re-organized questions to be more concise and clear. The responses to questions related to technical aspects of the Here & Now meditation method are based on the actual experiences of practitioners.

Even though we have tried to avoid discussing spiritual beliefs, we have received quite a few questions on spirituality. These questions indicate common concerns and needs, and thus, we have extended a small part of this book to answer them. We have gathered the responses to these difficult spiritual questions from many spiritual masters throughout the world and have re-organized into the brief answers below. Hence, you might at times

recognize and notice differences among people and traditions in the responses. However, the different backgrounds of these responses do not change our goal—in these questions and answers, our goal and focus remain the same: to eliminate suffering.

### **Who's Doing The Talking?**

**Q:** When practicing the Here & Now, who is telling the mind, “The body is here?”

**A:** Listen attentively to what your mind is currently talking about. Observe where it is running back and forth to. That very “person” who is doing the listening and observing is the person who tells the regular mind, “The body is here.”

### **Trying To Achieve Stillness**

**Q:** During meditation, despite all of my efforts, I can't seem to enter the state of Stillness. My mind is so active. What should I do?

**A:** “Trying hard” to enter the Stillness is also an effort, a struggle. Instead of struggling with the mind, we just *know* that *the universe is Stillness*. Then we can dissolve ourselves into that Stillness that is everywhere. Completely let go of the body and thoughts. Feel the body sinking into that “sea” of Stillness and peace. Or you can meditate with your eyes half open and gazing blankly.

### **Reduced To A Lower Consciousness?**

**Q:** If I am not supposed to think, does this mean I

## **am being reduced to the consciousness of plants or rocks?**

**A:** The mind in Stillness is completely aware, serene, and fully functional. Its “non-thinking” state means that it is unaffected by automatic, habitual, random, and re-active thoughts and emotions. In this state, the mind does not lose its awareness and consciousness—in fact, awareness may even be heightened.

### **“Wordlessness”**

**Q:** The idea of “wordlessness” is difficult to understand. How can we convey ideas without words?

**A:** Wisdom and knowledge usually come into being without words. Even when we are using words to understand something, we often have flashes of knowledge unaccompanied by actual words. As we try to translate these ideas into our spoken or written language, we are most likely falling short of their complete meaning. Although it seems silly to try using words to describe the state of wordlessness, we must do so here to facilitate understanding: in Stillness, or wordlessness, the mind is in a state of childlike innocence which does not name, analyze, or pre-judge. This mind perceives everything as new and as *is*.

### **Combining With Other Meditations**

**Q:** Should we combine the Here & Now with other meditation disciplines?

**A:** There are meditation methods that teach you to pay full attention to all actions by walking gracefully, eating slowly, speaking humbly, using kind words, closing doors gently, etc. These are methods that help keep the mind focused, keep us aware of what we are doing, hence being present. These use outer calmness to induce inner Stillness. The Here & Now method aims directly at inner Stillness which inevitably reduces outer activeness. Because these are very different approaches, we would advise that they be practiced separately even if they seem very similar or having the same goal.

### ***Diminished Senses During Meditation***

**Q:** Why do the bodily senses often seem diminished—or even absent—during this meditation?

**A:** When you enter the state of Stillness, you can become less aware of the body because your mind no longer pays attention to particular sensations. The mind is in a state of awareness of the being as a whole. In this state, time and space can also seem suspended. This is a state of deep restfulness for both the body and mind.

### ***Diminished Breathing***

**Q:** Why does breathing slow down greatly during deep meditation? Is it harmful?

**A:** When the mind and body are in a certain state of rest, the oxygen oscillation in the body is higher than that of the normal non-meditative state. The

body is using oxygen more efficiently than usual. During meditation, oxygen intake can decrease noticeably. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why some yogis can stop breathing for an extraordinary amount of time.

### ***Falling Asleep During Meditation***

**Q:** Many meditation disciplines prohibit falling asleep during meditation. However, the Here & Now meditation advocates complete relaxation of both mind and body which can easily lead to sleeping. In fact, some people find this meditation particularly difficult in which to remain awake and alert. Should we try to avoid falling asleep during meditation?

**A:** The Here & Now meditation purposely leads us to the state between being awake and asleep. This state is a gateway into the subconscious. It's also a gateway into deep Stillness. In the beginning phase of cultivation, the practitioner experiences deep Stillness in this state. Later, the practitioner will experience a much more profound Stillness where the practitioner emerges into an alert and aware state, a state of "pure consciousness." The "drowsy" state is a necessary beginning step. To avoid falling asleep, try meditating after a good rest. Although you want to avoid falling asleep during every meditation, a few lapses are understandable and are not a major problem.

## ***Stillness Versus “The Zone”***

**Q: Is the experience of Stillness in this method similar to the athlete’s experience of “the zone”?**

**A:** The experience of “the zone” occurs when the athlete’s body crosses the limits of the conscious mind and touches the “higher mind,” enabling one to perform extraordinary bodily tasks. The experience of Stillness can also reach this same higher mind, but it is achieved only through the state of complete mind- and self-surrender. Thus, these two approaches are quite different. Once we’ve achieved a Stillness where we tame the ordinary mind and only use it at will and as needed—instead of automatically and indiscriminately—we can learn to reach this higher mind to tap into its potential.

## ***Re-Living An Emotional Event***

**Q: Why is it that even though I am telling the same painful past event to others, sometimes I feel untouched by it, yet at other times I feel as much pain as if I am living the event right there and then? What exactly is my mind doing here?**

**A:** When we are standing as an observer, we talk or think about an event of the past without feeling the past emotions. If we feel the old emotions, we are indeed “re-living” the part being recalled by the mind. In order to step out of this “re-living,” simply take a deep and slow breath and enter into the Stillness of the Here & Now. In this Stillness, we will not “re-live” any part regardless of whatever the



mind is doing. Whether talking about, reconstructing, or retrieving its memories, the mind will not be able to touch our inner peace.

### **Reliving Pain—Can We Erase Memories Permanently?**

**Q: Is there a way to permanently erase emotional pains from our memory so that we would not have to continuously cope with them?**

**A:** Our mind records memories by linking the content of the memory with the emotions we felt at the time, especially if they were strong or negative emotions. This is why when we recall an event of the past, we usually feel the same emotions again. While we can't erase our memories, we can separate them from the negative emotions that have been stored along with them. We also want to “neutralize” these emotions so they no longer evoke painful feelings. Once this is done, whenever the mind sees or recalls past events, we no longer have to “re-live” the associated emotions, too.

**How to separate past emotions from past events:** Enter the Stillness using the Here & Now method and silently instruct the mind to enter its subconscious and separate that emotion from that event. Then, completely let go of all thoughts and re-enter deeply into the Stillness for as long as possible. Next time, recall the particular event. If your mind still recalls the painful emotion to some degree, exercise the method

again until you are completely free from the associated emotion. If you still feel the need to neutralize the emotion itself, see instructions in Chapter Two of this book.

### ***Meditate To Express Love And Forgiveness***

**Q: How can we use the meditation to express love and to forgive others?**

**A:** In order to forgive someone, we would first need to declare our *intention* to ourselves: we are ready to open our heart to forgive. Next, we make this intention known to our subconscious. Since the language of our subconscious is mostly images and feelings, we do this by visualizing *images* of our heart opening up to release the bitterness and anger we have had against the people involved. We visualize and feel these feelings dissolving into the vast nothingness. We feel our heart being light, tender, and peaceful. Then we let go of all thoughts and enter into the Stillness of the Here & Now as deeply as possible.

In order to use this meditation to cultivate or express our love, we use the same process as above, except we would visualize ourselves emitting and feel the feelings of tenderness, care, compassion, tolerance, affection, and peace toward the people involved. Then, remember to *relax, let go of all thoughts*—including the intention, images and thoughts just created—and enter into the Stillness.

## ***Can We Change Our Own Opinions?***

**Q:** There are opinions that we think we should not have but are difficult to change. How do we change an undesirable point of view?

**A:** Changing a physical habit requires the learning of a new desirable habit which takes at least a month to establish. However, changing an opinion of the mind only takes a few minutes:

**How to change an opinion:** Enter the Stillness using the Here & Now method, silently declare that *you have decided* to change a certain opinion, then let go of all thought, and re-enter into the Stillness for as long as possible. You can test your improvement by thinking of a previously contradicting opinion to see whether the mind raises objections. If it still objects to some degree, repeat the above method to gradually quiet the stubborn mind.

## ***Can We Change Our Personality?***

**Q:** Many people believe that our personalities are permanent or very difficult to change. “I’m hot-tempered, and I always require strict propriety. Many people call me fastidious.” Or, “I’m very organized, aggressive, and take-charge—what some may call a Type A personality.” How would a person change certain traits about themselves?

**A:** While society tends to believe that personality is

innate and fixed, some Eastern religions and many Western psychologists and sociologists believe personality is at least partly the result of the knowledge, opinions, images, and habits that the mind has gathered and stored. Some of these religions even argue that the mind has collected this information over the course of many lifetimes. Hence, when we resort to violence in thought, speech, or action, this may be because our minds recorded examples of these during childhood with our parents, with our friends, on T.V., etc. The mind uses information that it has gathered—information that often comes from misinterpretation—and creates thoughts and reactions, which we and others perceive as our permanent, innate personality. It is when we identify the mind as *ourselves* that those stored images, opinions, knowledge, and habits can influence us and become our “personality.”

To change our traits, we must first recognize that we are not *only* our minds. The mind and its patterns are just a small part of us—a part that we can regain control over and change *so that it no longer controls and dictates us*.

**How to change our “personality”:** Enter the Stillness using the Here & Now method. Declare your decision to change your “undesirable” traits. Afterwards, using images and feelings, present the “desirable” traits. Then let go of all thoughts and re-enter the Stillness as deeply as possible. Repeat the above process until you are satisfied with the results.

## **Dealing With Loneliness**

**Q: One of the most difficult emotions to deal with is loneliness. Is there a way to make coping with loneliness easier?**

**A:** The concept of loneliness is closely related to two other concepts: aloneness and emptiness. We usually feel loneliness when we are alone—but not always: we sometimes feel lonely even while in a crowded room. This is because we feel a kind of emptiness. Sometimes, we can be alone but not feel lonely, particularly when we are enjoying a solitary activity like reading a good book or watching a favorite TV show. Loneliness, then, is a *perception* of a situation: It is the mind's perception of how we stand in relation to other people. Many of us fear being alone. This fear is created by the mind, as is the feeling of emptiness and loneliness. We do not need to fear being alone. The state of Stillness quiets the mind and allows us to feel contentment whether we are enjoying the company of others or the company of our selves. It also allows us to realize that our selves are full and never empty.

## **Eliminating Envy And Jealousy**

**Q: Envy and jealousy seem like very natural emotions—but they can also be very ugly and damaging. Should we rid ourselves of these feelings? If so, how?**

**A:** Envy and jealousy come from the mind's perception of ownership, of lack, or of injury to the self. We may be envious because someone else's

career is more successful. In this instance, the mind perceives others' success as its own failure or as injuries to its own ego and self-worth. This misperception hurts both us and those around us. We need to teach the mind to rejoice in the joy and happiness of others by placing our whole being in others' situations and feeling their joyous emotions. We can then enter the Stillness to quiet the mind and allow us to feel more joy for others.

We may also be jealous because we think that a person—or that person's love—belongs to *us*. We often feel this way because the mind perceives a feeling of lack within the self. This lack, or need, makes us search of affection and love desperately. In this search, we may try to appropriate others and their affections by claiming ownership and by demanding from them. To deal with this kind of jealousy, we have to first realize that true love is limitless—it does not demand or constrain, and it is not bound or restrained. Each person has boundless love within the self and boundless love to share with others. To deal with the mind's misperceptions, we need to make the mind realize and experience self-completeness. We can do this through the Stillness because it allows us to realize our own completeness and love within.

### ***The Pain Of Another's Silence***

**Q: In an argument with friends and family members, I often feel the most bothered when the other person is silent, or appears indifferent. This silence can sometimes hurt, frustrate, and**

**anger me even more than bad conversation. Does this have to do with the mind?**

**A:** Think of some past arguments that you've had where you were angry first. There was probably a point in the argument where the other person became angry, too, and then stopped speaking and turned away from you. How did this make you feel? How did you react?

In the example above, you probably gave in and approached the other person. The other person's silence can often be scary because it is a kind of rejection. Our mind fears rejection, so we approach the person. Or, you might have reacted by retaliating with your own silence. Why? Silence is a powerful and often-used weapon in relationships—both consciously and unconsciously. Here, we need to understand what is happening on the level of the mind. When we use silence as a weapon, we are often using it to punish other people, to reject them, to make them speak first, to make them come to us. It is a subtle way to gain control and power during interaction with others. However, remember that this manipulation is a trick *of the mind*. The mind wants control and power because it often feels helpless and needy. *A person using silence as a weapon may not be intentionally doing so—the person may not be able to help it because the mind is in control; it is in autopilot.* The mind feels fear, panic, and neediness and then reacts to comfort itself by trying to draw comfort out of the other person. And either the other person relents or be-

gins another cycle of the power struggle.

Both people involved in this conversation are trapped in this cycle because of their minds and their minds' control over their emotions and actions. *The cycle can only stop when one person stops reacting with the mind.* And one can only stop reacting with the mind when one realizes a Stillness and completeness inside.

There is another kind of silence that can be extremely devastating: the end of an intense relationship without explanation. The human mind has a dire need for explanation when it comes to emotional and pride injuries. It needs and seeks one that comforts and eases the pain. The dead silence at the end of a relationship can cause the mind to react by accusing the other person or by accusing the self. Given enough time to writhe, the mind can eventually proceed to feelings and actions of violence to the self or others. Perhaps we shouldn't focus on *the way* in which a relationship ends but on the fact that it has ended instead. Relationships must end when they are destined to end. *How* a relationship ends is just one of the many possible manifestations of that destined ending at that time. We must ask the mind to let go of its need for explanation and justification so that we can move on and be at peace with our past because, sometimes, we may never get that explanation.

### **That's It—Period**

**Q:** Once I stepped out of a pagoda, I heard a beggar's pleading so I immediately pulled some



money out of my pocket. Then I looked at him. He appeared to be a healthy young man. I was surprised and wondered whether I should give the money to him. Why? Why not? What if I don't? Or if I do, would I be an "enabler"? Would he be laughing at me for being so gullible? My mind kept on wondering... How should I have handled the situation?

**A:** It's not our goal to decipher the philosophical pros and cons of the act of charity; instead, our goal here is to understand and *simplify* the mind. If you instinctually want to give, then just give without a qualm. If not, put the money back into your pocket. Your mind should only know, "I see and hear the begging, and I want to give." That's it—**period**. We halt this mind from *automatically* analyzing, judging, examining, and criticizing. Furthermore, should you decide to give your money to someone, once the money leaves your hands, that's the end of it—**period**. Don't concern your mind with whether or not the money is being used according to your liking. Perhaps we should think of loans in the same way: once things leave our hands—whether it is money or possessions—it should no longer be our minds' concern.

Of course, when we think it is necessary to analyze, judge, examine, or criticize, we can allow the mind to perform these tasks, *but only with inner peace*. If we allow the mind to *habitually* and *automatically* analyze, judge, and criticize, the mind is our master. When the mind is the master, we will find ourselves feeling emotions and reacting accord-

ing to the (mis)interpretations created by this chaotic mind.

### ***I'm Right. You're Wrong!***

**Q: When others impose their opinions on us, how should we handle ourselves?**

**A:** An opinion is nothing but just that—an opinion. It is always the “truth” to the one who states it. This person has the right to believe in this “truth,” though. That much, we must respect. If we do not agree with the opinion, simply avoid debating; such action indicates a possible underlying inner struggle called the “*you are wrong and I am right*” standpoint. True peace is not only avoiding debate externally, but also avoiding it *internally*. Even if you can remain silent outwardly, be careful that your mind is not arguing and saying “I’m right; you’re wrong” all the while.

### ***Lapses Back To That “Regular” Mind***

**Q: With the Here & Now practice, I’ve gained a fair control of my thought process. However, every once in a while, a certain phrase or sight will suddenly invoke a powerful negative thought or emotion. This occurs very quickly, beyond my control. By the time I’m aware of the negative emotion, it is too late because it has already “jumped out.” How should I deal with this?**

**A:** Sometimes, emotions occur much too quickly to catch. Our mind can rapidly call forth certain data

and emotions automatically. When we are caught off guard by sudden negative thoughts or emotions, we should just acknowledge them and comfort ourselves that we at least have the immediate awareness of their presence—which is in fact a big step toward inner peace. Also, these occurrences are reminders that we are still very human; we still have many not-so-saintly qualities. We can learn to be tolerant and patient with ourselves as we grow in this process.

***The Arts Of Being Non-Reactive,  
Being Silent, Listening,  
And Being At Peace***

**Q: What is true listening and true silence? How do we achieve these and true peace?**

**A:** You may read each as separate practices, but they all work together and each practice naturally leads to the others. Each attempts to achieve the same thing: Stillness.

***The art of being non-reactive:*** Most of the time, we are just reacting automatically to what our senses and minds perceive. **Non-reacting** is an intentional choice of actions and inactions. Because the mind has a long-established habit of *reacting*, we need to be aware whenever these reactions take place. Thoughts provoke feelings, and then feelings provoke actions. When the mind is about to manifest thoughts and feelings in a *reacting* manner, we should enter the Stillness to neutralize the mind's habitual reacting.

*The art of being silent* is being able to keep silent both externally and internally. Holding back the spoken words alone is not true silence until the mind's urge to speak ceases. Being silent means that the mind is in a state of **wordlessness** without holding any opinion or concept and without any need to converse. But when is it necessary to be silent? It is necessary when there is a chance that our talking *may cause pain or may NOT bring peace and happiness* to others. We should be silent even when we believe that what we have to say "should" be said because it is "right" and "necessary." This **belief**, which is only our personal opinion, is not necessarily "right" to the person to whom we are talking. We should also evaluate our reasons for wanting to talk: Did the person ask for our advice, or do *we* just have a need to give advice or to lecture? The safest and probably most helpful thing to do is be silent and to listen in Stillness with an open heart.

*The art of listening* is to listen to others attentively and in Stillness: the mind stays fully open without arguing, reacting, analyzing, forming conclusions or seeking solutions. We may silently bless the speaker with peace while listening with full attention. We listen to both the spoken and unspoken messages as well as the silence behind them. This is how we connect with others. When we listen to someone in this way, the compassion, tolerance, and Stillness within us can reach out naturally to neutralize negative emotions within the speaker.

*The art of being at peace:* Some people believe

that the universe's operating principles are inherently complete and flawless, and that we are a part of that perfection. In this larger picture, all options available to us are inherently perfect: humans, events, and things--good, bad and in between—are what they should be in that particular moment of time. From this perspective, one will be able to accept all others and all life situations as they are. If the mind views life from this perspective, it can truly be at peace. This also applies to our inner world. When we look inwardly and discover that there is a need for inner change, we go about changing only what we possibly can, and we need to peacefully accept whatever we cannot change.

### ***Peace Or Passivity?***

**Q: This Here & Now method seems to ask us to be passive in life. Is it asking us to hold in our emotions and hold back our words and actions?**

**A:** This method does not ask you to “bottle up” your emotions or thoughts in any way. It teaches you to regain control of your mind so that it does not automatically react in certain ways to bring about negative emotions, thoughts, and actions. Here & Now practitioners often seem calmer and more reserved—this is not because they are holding back anything or are struggling. This external demeanor is a direct manifestation of inner Stillness.

## ***The Mind And Society***

**Q: Can our inner state of being truly affect our external world, our society?**

**A:** Our thoughts and emotions are a form of energy. This energy radiates from our bodies and reacts with the energies of other beings and bodies around us. When the mind is in Stillness, it does not experience negative thoughts and emotions so it does not emit any negative energy. Instead, the peace of our Stillness emits corresponding peaceful energy. Also, in Stillness, external negativities cannot touch our inner peace, yet, our inner peace touches everything around *us* naturally. When we are *not* in Stillness, surrounding external energies can affect us. This means that we can prevent external chaos from touching our inner world but our inner world naturally affects the outer world. This is why when our mind is troubled, we can seriously compromise the stability of our outer world. If we apply this to world conflict, we realize that if we address conflicts as they arise, we only address “symptoms” of another conflict: the conflict of the individual’s mind. The most logical and necessary way to realize true world peace is to first find peace at the individual level in our own minds. This way, we can at least end our own contributions to the conflict and suffering in the world.

### ***The Mind’s Role As “Problem Solver”***

**Q: The mind’s ability to solve problems quickly is so important—why don’t you want the mind to**

## “solve” problems?

**A:** The mind’s incredible ability to analyze problems and generate strategies and solutions is indeed great and important. However, it is an ability that we want to have fair control over, one that does not cause suffering in others or in ourselves. Often, when our mind *automatically* begins to analyze and problem-solve, it may actually be trying to satisfy its own crave to problem-solve and/or to be a problem-solver. The mind may solicit analysis and solutions without regard to whether the other person even requests or desires such advice. If the mind identifies itself as a problem-solver, we may feel upset if people disagree with us or decline our advice. To gain control over these processes, we can use the Stillness. In it, we can listen attentively and then consider solutions objectively with calmness and composure. In Stillness, the mind is more ready to accept that others may disagree or disregard its opinions and has less need to seek solution automatically.

### **Injured Pride**

**Q:** When someone criticizes me, I feel incredibly hurt. I feel offended, outraged, and defensive. My mind argues constantly, even days after the incident. It defends itself and attacks the critic vengefully and spitefully. Why does the mind react so violently?

**A:** The mind is probably hurt because of one or more of the following reasons:

1. The criticism is not true. The mind felt un-

- justly and violently insulted.
2. The mind was forced to face a blatant truth about itself.
  3. The criticism shattered a life-long treasured self-image and pride.
  4. The mind took the criticism as a brutal attack on the self.

These reactions are automatic responses that have to do with the mind's sense of identity. When the mind feels attacked in any way, it tends to lash out—particularly if its sense of identity is strong. Whenever you are criticized and the mind automatically reacts in this way, you first need to separate yourself from that reaction of the mind by recognizing it as such. If you already notice these reactions as separate from yourself, you've already lessened such sense of identity. You then neutralize the mind's reactions by entering the Stillness. You may need to repeat this process with different situations a few times for the mind to completely let go of these habitual reactions.

### ***The Mind And The Act Of Suicide***

**Q: In the act of suicide, what role does the mind play?**

**A:** Most actions, or reactions, rather, are the end result of a process consisting of thoughts, emotions, and repetition.

1. The mind faces present, real-life situations and then calls forth related images and emotions from past memories.



2. We re-experience past negative emotions and then associate them with the present situation.
3. The mind then repeats these thoughts constantly making us continually experience the resulting negative emotions. This repetition builds on itself until the mind can no longer separate thoughts, emotions, memories, and the present. These all blend together to create the experience of continual suffering and pervasive pain.
4. This experience leads to (re)actions.

A suicidal person is a victim of these processes of the mind.

### ***Compassion Versus Empathy***

**Q: This book promotes the cultivation of compassion. Is compassion the same as empathy?**

**A:** In every day language, we often use “compassion” and “empathy” interchangeably. In fact, we often use both these terms interchangeably with “pity”—a word that can have a slightly negative meaning. In this book, however, we use “compassion” and “empathy” very specifically; and neither refers to pity. First, compassion refers to the intense awareness of another’s suffering and the desire to alleviate that suffering. Empathy, on the other hand, refers to the identification with another’s situations and emotions. While empathy can ultimately lead to compassion, both

are still two very different things. These distinctions may seem small, but on the level of the mind, two very different processes are happening.

Empathy happens in our regular mind. When we are confronted with a situation that requires empathy, our mind finds similar information from our memories and recalls them so that we may re-live those associated emotions from our own past. We are matching our past experiences with others' emotions to attempt to understand their situations. Because this is within our own mind, we are not actually living the other person's situation. We also cannot be sure of our mind's accuracy—the mind may be mistaken in its selection and matching of experiences and emotions. Empathy relies on our mind's (often faulty) judgment.

Compassion happens in the awareness that accompanies Stillness. Our mind is quiet, yet we are in a state of heightened awareness. This awareness allows us to see ourselves as part of the universe, dissolving the boundary between the self and everything else. In this, we are aware of the pain and suffering of everything around us because we are *part* of that everything. In compassion, there is no self or outside object; in empathy, however, there is still both the self and the other. And even though our minds are quiet, still and full of compassion, we still feel emotion: compassion is love on a greater scale.

While developing compassion is more desirable than empathy, we caution that in an attempt to avoid

empathy, you should not avoid emotion all together. Many people, in their cultivation of compassion, fall into the trap of *indifference* because they try intensely to prevent empathy. Empathy and emotion are the natural precursors to awareness and compassion. As you meditate and develop your experience of Stillness, your inclinations towards empathy will naturally decrease and compassion will grow.

### **What Is “Spiritual Cultivation”?**

**Q: This book often refers to “cultivation” on numerous levels. What is spiritual cultivation? Is this meditation method a form of spiritual cultivation?**

**A:** Many eastern religions and cultures have a concept of spiritual cultivation that refers to a person’s decision to become a monk, nun, or clergy person. Recently, in some languages, the term for spiritual cultivation has expanded to include other lifestyles. One can now “cultivate spirituality” from one’s own home or anywhere without taking any formal vows within a specific religion. In this book, we define spiritual cultivation as the attempt to achieve awareness of one’s relation to the universe and of one’s self in regard to suffering. Any undertaking which may help people understand the truth about themselves and overcome suffering is indeed spiritual cultivation. It is not about “walking away” from the external world but rather letting go of our internal attachments. While many leave their ordinary lives to formally dedicate their lives to spirituality, we believe that people can also cultivate

this type of awareness in their regular daily lives.

Some people believe that we are all cultivating whether we know it or not: life *is* cultivation. In this view, some of us are aware of the cultivation while others are not. The only difference is that being aware may make the cultivation slightly easier. And cultivation does not have to involve rigorous meditation or intense solitude—some of the greatest lessons come from our most important relationships. In our relationships with our loved ones and even with mere acquaintances, we can learn wonderful lessons including compassion, kindness, and unconditional love. There is a Vietnamese saying: “the highest cultivation place is the home, the second is the market, and the third is the temple.” If you believe that life itself is cultivation, then all actions—both conscious and unconscious—are a part of the spiritual cultivation of oneself and of others around you; every event and situation inevitably provides an opportunity for someone to learn something in one way or another.

The Here & Now meditation can be a form of spiritual cultivation if you wish to view it so. It certainly fits our broad definition. However, you may define spiritual cultivation differently or you may wish to use the meditation for different purposes in your own life. As long as those purposes include finding happiness for yourself and others, use this meditation as you please in your daily life—with or without any kind of spirituality or cultivation.

## ***The Right Not To Cultivate***

**Q: I am saddened by the fact that many of my friends and family do not care about spiritual cultivation. They are so unhappy and unaware, and I know it could help them—but they remain uninterested and sometimes even resistant. What should I do?**

**A:** If we are entitled to our right to “walk the path,” others are also entitled to their right *not* to do so. When others see no need to cultivate, we should respect their choice. Their choice at the time serves some important purposes. Instead of feeling impatient about bringing good changes in others, we should remind ourselves that the Universe allows infinite room and time for growth and transformation. As for ourselves, if we continue to feel bothered by others’ refusal to listen or if we continue to feel a *need* to change others, perhaps we should pause and reflect inwardly. Do we feel bothered because the mind believes that its own standards are higher and better than others’—and it wants acknowledgement of this? Do we feel this need because the mind disapproves of others’ “shortcomings”? If we re-examine our own reasons and drives, we may—or may not—find attachments within our own minds that we might want to address.

## ***Giving This Book To Others***

**Q: I have found this meditation helpful so I’ve given the booklets to those who seem very un-**

**happy. I am surprised, though, that many people pay little attention to the booklet and have no desire to practice it. This is very frustrating because I know it could help them.**

**A:** If you want to give this book to others, you should first understand that once this book—or any other book—has left your hands, it no longer has anything to do with you. You have done your part. As with the previous question on cultivation, we should not let our minds make us feel bothered because other people do not do as we wish. Also, people may perceive our intentions quite differently than we mean. People may feel that we give them the book because we want to change them or perhaps because we want to demonstrate that we are better, or more advanced. Or, maybe they feel that we expect them to change. And we probably do, especially if they are loved ones. These perceptions may cause resentment or resistance in others. Thus, don't expect approval from others or changes in them. Remember that all things have their own timing.

### ***Applying These “Lessons”***

**Q:** The ideas in this book are easy to understand. But when I examine them closely, they are very difficult “lessons” to practice in daily life. Is it really possible to apply all these ideas and attain lasting peace and happiness?

**A:** We truly believe that anyone and everyone can understand these concepts, apply them, and reach lasting happiness. While applying these concepts

may be difficult at first, it will become easier with patience and a little dedication. This book may have seemed to discuss many different topics and ideas, but its main point—and most important “lesson”—can be summarized in a few points:

First, the mind is only *one* part of us. *We* are not simply the sum of its knowledge, opinions, habits, and misconceptions—we are much more.

Second, this mind is so chaotic that we lose our inner Stillness. This is what causes much of our suffering. If we regain control over the mind, we can use it in a productive way and we can transcend the suffering it causes us. All we need to do is end our misidentification with the mind and re-establish our inner Stillness. Through this, we can stop our minds from hurting ourselves and others, and we can live lives of peace.

## *Chapter Eight*

### *Summary*

*Here* is a summary of the main points of this book along with a few tips on practice.

- ~ The mind is not the self. We are not that mind.
- ~ The senses receive and transfer information to the mind. The mind “perceives” and then interprets the information based on its knowledge and feelings stored in the memory bank. When we misidentify ourselves with the mind and believe we are those feelings and thoughts, we will become sad or happy according to the mind’s directing.
- ~ Suffering is any emotion that is not happiness, any state that is not peace, and any action that does not come from compassion. This includes emotions and actions we don’t normally consider suffering such as anger and vengefulness.
- ~ A state of profound Stillness can interrupt the



mind's control over our emotions and actions. This Stillness is not just a pause in thought—it is a natural silence within us that allows us to be in a state of peace, a state of silent wholeness. In this state, we are untouched by the mind's habits which have created need and expectation. In this state, we can bring peace to the mind and the body thus bringing peace into our lives.

- ~ The Here and Now meditation offers a daily meditation to reach Stillness. To relieve our suffering and the suffering of those around us, we need to be able to bring a part of this Stillness into our daily lives. In whatever you are doing, try to maintain a certain connectedness with that inner Stillness.
- ~ The most practical exercise is to listen and converse in Stillness. This means listening and responding with an absolute absence of the need for analysis, judgment, vindication, and problem-solving. When any of these tasks become necessary, we should perform them purposely and only in Stillness instead of allowing the mind to do them habitually and automatically.
- ~ Making judgment on others comes from a need within us that the mind has created. This need is one of self-reassurance, self-consolation, and self-elevation. And this need drives us to act out in a form of violence that can be very hurtful to those around us. Instead of temporarily patching our wounds by attacking others, we

can permanently realize our wholeness and peace by reaching the state of Stillness so that we no longer hurt others through judgment.

- ~ Stillness is not the opposite of action—it does not mean inaction in life. Living in Stillness means living without an inner struggle with life and the situations we face. Externally, we still live our daily lives and still cope “face-to-face” with our present realities. *Inner stillness does not mean outer motionless.*

### **Here & Now Mottos**

We call the favorite phrases which can be easily applied to the “Here & Now” way of life our “*mottos*,” or sometimes jokingly our “mantras”:

- ~ For those of us who are quick-tempered or tend to nag our spouses and children about trivial things such as being messy in the home, not squeezing the toothpaste from the bottom up, not rinsing the glass after drinking orange juice, etc., this motto can help reduce the nagging and angry reactions: ***“If it isn’t killing anyone, don’t complain!”***
- ~ For those of us whose minds habitually deduce, analyze and judge, we can practice stopping that tendency. The minute the mind receives information from the senses, and before it can jump to an interpretation, stop and tell it, ***“That’s it!”*** or, ***“Period.”***
- ~ For those of us who habitually impose our opinions on others, requiring others to follow

the rules of our beliefs, we should frequently tell ourselves, ***“It’s all right. No big deal!”***

- ~ For those of us whose minds are often preoccupied with complaints, perhaps it would help if we thought to ourselves, ***“It could be worse.”***
- ~ Remember the story about the Japanese Zen monk in Chapter 3? In all his life situations, good and bad, he would calmly comment, “Is that so?” and peacefully move on with life. This monk sets an example for all of us. As we face each situation that life creates for us, perhaps we too should try to calmly comment, ***“Is that so?”*** with a smile on our faces and peace in our hearts.



Thank you for taking your journey with us. We hope you found this book useful in some way. The Here & Now meditation is only one method among many used to establish that sacred inner Stillness. Once you have found Stillness within yourself (with whatever method you prefer), please use it to cultivate deeper understanding and compassion. Only these will create lasting happiness for you individually and for the world as a whole.

***May you and all beings find true peace, joy, and understanding in life.***

A shortened version of this book is available in English, Spanish, French, Dutch, and Vietnamese free of charge on our website. Here, you'll find a text version to print and an e-booklet to download:

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