

“I Don’t Dwell!”

Rediscovering life after disease and suffering.

– Sam Shelley

2013

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May all beings be happy.

May all beings be free.

May all beings know unconditional love.

Introduction

This book is the result of my family and friends wanting to know how I transformed myself. Over the course of eighteen months, I went from a person with very severe health issues to no health issues.

When the request was made to write a book, I had no idea what transpired or the exact steps I took. It was a mystery. Some call the healing a miracle and perhaps it was to a degree. Writing gave me clarity on how the transformation occurred.

Growing up as an introvert and being an only child without strong parenting left me to sort out things on my own. I was hit by a car when I was six which completely altered my outlook on life, and then after I recovered my parents decided to move to a new town. Making new friends and a new school was traumatic. My parents never realized the difficulties that I encountered only noticing that I was sickly. I would do anything I could to stay home. I suffered an anxiety attack when I was fairly young; the world was too much for me. Anxiety became a way of life and would persist at all times; this was before pediatric psychiatry. Once the anxiety got so bad, I lost 25% of my body weight in three months.

I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder when I was in my early twenties. I suffered severe mood swings that required hospitalization a few times with suicidal thoughts. The manic side of me developed a god like character at times and the mild, timid, person would disappear. My thoughts left me being a real life Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

After some time, I found the best doctor in the area for bipolar who prescribed medicine which provided stability that I was lacking. Then life decided that it was time for another challenge.

When I was 37 years old, I had the worst migraine of my life. I was a frequent migraine sufferer with three or four of them a month; this one felt different than my typical migraine. This particular migraine sent me to the ER for treatment. They examined for a stroke which was negative. I saw my neurologist who ordered an MRI as I was beginning to show signs of a serious medical issue. Walking was becoming a challenge; my gait was severely affected.

The MRI revealed possible multiple sclerosis (MS), which resulted in being admitted to the hospital. I was fast deteriorating with additional symptoms daily. They did further testing and confirmed MS. MS is the number one cause of disability among young adults ages 20 to 40.

The multiple sclerosis left me disabled requiring a use of a cane on occasion and numerous other problems such as heat intolerance, gait and balance issues, vision

issues, bladder issues, and reduced coordination on the left side of my body. Life was a real challenge with bipolar and MS. I had to take thirteen medications a day to live a somewhat normal life. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired but had no idea what to do.

I used to dwell on my health issues, and how difficult life was for me and what the future was going to look like as a disabled person. I was creating an elaborate story in my head that I later discovered that wasn't true. It was an illusion that I was creating.

I discovered this illusion through a process of self-exploration which revealed some deep insights about life. These insights led to practices that were restorative to my health.

Today bipolar and MS are not present and the need to take the thirteen medications a day is a thing of the past. No longer needing a cane or medication, life has returned to normal.

Today, "I don't dwell." I've completely let go of the past and no longer worry or fear what the future may hold. After letting go of the past the suffering stopped, and a new sense of freedom was unleashed.

I share my deep insights about my discoveries. I do not write pages and pages of details on specific concepts. As I have found this to be more of a distraction than useful. I prefer simplicity over complexity. I write enough to help you move forward in your own goals or desires.

By the end of the book and with some practice on your part you will have a new sense of freedom. If you only read the book and do no practice, you will learn some concepts but make no strides forward in achieving your own personal freedom and life will continue to cause suffering.

Wishing you much success in your journey through life may it be happy and free.

Chapter 1

Growing up: The never satisfied years.

Growing up as an only child, I remember being very shy. I would frequently hide behind my parents when I was very young, and can still remember how easily things terrified me. I can still remember this vividly; an older cousin dressed up as Santa Claus had come to visit one Christmas Eve. I remember being freaked out, hiding behind my parents. They had to explain that it was my cousin Jimmy to calm me down. If I heard noises outside while trying to sleep I would run into my parents' bedroom.

I had a few neighborhood friends and since both my parents came from very large families I had a lot of cousins. At the core though, I was deeply introverted and enjoyed time alone.

Life changed for me at the age of six. When I arrived home from school after the last day of school, I heard the ice cream truck with the familiar music they play. I would do what must kids do, beg the folks for money and run after the truck. After getting my ice cream and starting to cross the street. I noticed a van was speeding down the road, I could not move it was like I was a deer in headlights (there probably wasn't anything I could do, I was in the middle of the road with a high speed vehicle approaching) and the van ran over me. I do not remember all the details; it's a faint memory today. The van hit me on the left side of the body; I suffered a broken hip, a compound fracture of the left elbow and suffered head trauma. I was knocked unconscious. I remember waking up briefly as I was going into surgery, seeing lots of people, loud noises and bright lights.

The next morning I remember waking up with a lot of wires and stuff attached to me. I found out later when I was an adult that there was only a 50/50 chance that I would survive that night. I spent the next several months in the hospital and ended up in a body cast for several months. Rehab took a long time as I had to relearn how to walk. The only physical reminder that I have today is that one leg is slightly shorter than the other leg.

Due to the injuries I missed most of the following school year and would have to repeat a grade. During this time, my folks decided to move to a new neighborhood. When I was to resume school, it would be a new school and classmates along with new neighborhood kids. Internally, the move was more traumatic than being hit by the van. I was deeply introverted and meeting new people was not something I enjoyed. I remember a lot of stress and anxieties. I saw the world as a very harsh place.

As a young boy my mom at the time made me to go to church. When I was young I did not care as, I did not have an opinion and eagerly followed along. As I grew older, I did not like going to church, and it made me upset since a cousin close to my age didn't have to go. Also, my father did not regularly attend. It seemed like a requirement solely for me which added to my stress. I would rather have slept more or my preference to do something by myself. At the deepest level, the whole idea of god, Jesus and the many beliefs seemed foreign to me.

By age twelve, it was time to leave elementary school and attend middle school. This brought up intense anxiety. I did not like school, and do not remember being friends with any classmates outside of school the first year.

One year the anxiety was so bad during middle school that I lost a quarter of my body weight in three months. The family doctor checked me out and sent me for the gastrointestinal testing. Nothing was found, and he called it nervous colitis (or irritable bowel syndrome). In a little time I settled down, but no attempts were made to find the root cause of the anxiety. I had a lot of mental issues but pediatric psychiatry was in its infancy in the 1970's, there was no help coming for me. I was frequently sick and missed a lot of time in school. My parents did their best, but they didn't know what to do with me. I do not remember any conversations with my parents on how to cope with life. I remember trying to figure out life on my own.

By age 16, it was time for another school, the high school. To ease the anxiety about going to high school, I decided to spend a half day there and I opted to go to the vocational school for a half day. A traditionally academic path didn't sit well with me mentally, and learning electronics seemed like the good fit. I was always curious on how these things worked. I missed little time in high school and vocational school, and do not remember being sickly during this time. I found that learning electronics was enjoyable and that kept me somewhat sane.

I was a nerdy, outcast at the high school and only had a few friends there. Something was changing within my thoughts as I went through the daily motions of school. Some days, I would go from a mild manner and very shy person to someone that would argue with the class over something trivial. Mentally I was unwell, but there was no help. The world continued to be a very harsh place, but I found things to keep me distracted as I tried to figure out life.

I never dated during high school. I was socially awkward around most folks and dating the opposite sex would really be out of my comfort zone. I was happy being alone, and I didn't feel the need to socialize. I had a few friends that I would do activities outside of school, but my primary companion was my dog. Taking him frequently for long walks in the park or teaching him many obedience skills. I would spend 2 to 3

hours each afternoon teaching him tricks. He was the best behaved dog I ever know. I guess it was from all the daily practice.

I started dating a girl after high school. I met someone, and we clicked. Five years later we married and twenty years later we're still together. We've both have had a lot of challenges in life, yet we find common ground and still get along well.

After high school, I decided to get my associates degree in Electronics from a Technical School since a traditional college looked too much for me mentally. I did very well in school and mentally was doing okay for most of it. The one part that became very stressful was what to do after school. Instead of diving head first into the last semester, I took a semester off. I don't remember doing much with my time off. I needed some time to recharge and mentally sort some things out in my head. I had a lot of intense thoughts growing up.

After graduation from school, I began the search for a job. The economy was in decent shape at this time, and there were several possibilities. I opted for a job with a local electronics manufacturer. The job was a lot of fun; I was moving through the company quickly up until I particular point. I made it to the engineering department, and it appeared that there was no place to go for a long time as the next job would have been an engineer and I would need years of experience before taking that role. Being me, I wasn't satisfied and that I was "stuck" in the dead end job after a few years.

After being "stuck," I started applying and interviewing for other jobs, and received an offer from a large fortune 500 company. It was quite the shock to go from a place with 75 workers to one with thousands. I perceived this job to be very boring. In my prior job I was moving through the company quickly learning many different skills. In this new job I would be limited to doing one main task. In the end, I wasn't satisfied with the work. The job was not giving me the intellectual stimulation I needed and became bored.

During this time, I went from reading science fiction books to reading self-help books. These self-help books added to the nightmare of giving me more thoughts on how things should be. I went from being introverted and shy to suddenly driven to join Toastmasters at work because I needed to be a certain extroverted way in my mind.

I was looking for another job after two years. I saw this job posting for sales and marking job. I took a day off from work and checked it out. It was for a book publisher. I would need to work with stores, set up displays and sell books. The only issue was that this was a commission based salary. If I did well, the salary would easily exceed my current salary. So, I quit my safe, secure job. I jumped head first into this new job. I did very well in the beginning, then after a few months I found it to be extremely

stressful. I was always dealing with the store owners or the employees along with the business quotas. This type of job required you to get involved in chit chat and other social activities. I liked being left alone to do my work and with this job that did not exist. I had lots of confusions about my life, primarily from trying to be something I was not. I quit the job without another job lined up. I needed time to recover mentally. I was only in the sales position for six months, but it felt like years.

A friend of a friend referred me to a psychologist as I was depressed. This was my first experience in therapy. I went for a few months, and he noticed that I was still having major issues coping so he referred me to a psychiatrist. The first psychiatrist I saw gave me the diagnosis of major depression and prescribed some medicine. At this time my diet was poor, I wasn't sleeping properly, I had little energy, and I was always unhappy. After a few months, the pills didn't seem to provide much help. I grew impatient and decided to see another psychiatrist. He also called it a depression and prescribed different pills. These pills helped enough that I was able to find another job back into the electronics field. I began to go to a local support group. I along with a few folks there felt the depression diagnosis was incorrect. The suggested that I go see the top bipolar doctor in the city who was a world renowned expert in his field.

I made an appointment with him. The initial appointment lasted 2.5 hours. He asked a lot of questions about my life up to this point. No doctor had this much focus on my mental well-being. He ordered a few tests to make sure there was nothing else going on within my body. These tests came back negative. He came back with a diagnosis of Bipolar I. The bipolar diagnosis was a confirmation that I suffered a chemical imbalance the brain, and would require medications to bring it back into balance. The first thing he did was take me off the antidepressants as they were making me worse at that time.

When I received the diagnosis of Bipolar, I read everything I could about it. Like everything I did at that time, I dove right in. The problem was that I wasn't quite right mentally, and it added to my thoughts. I believed that everything I read would happen to me. In addition he had me fill out a daily book with some question to gauge my well-being. How happy was I? What was my energy like? How much anxiety did I have this day? Etc. I become obsessed with the book, which enforced my beliefs on how I was supposed to behave. If I was not happy and my energy was low, getting out of bed was going to be a challenge that day. I was creating reinforcing thoughts that determined my outlook for the day.

The next few years would be a very dark time in my life. I had two hospital stays for suicidal thoughts. I only came close to actually committing suicide once, I wrote a note and was preparing an overdose of sleeping pills to take then I heard the little voice in

my head that said “call your wife and check yourself into the hospital.” Some sanity came through at this moment.

During this hospital stay, my Aunt and Uncle who were both ministers decided that they needed to pray over me and cast the demons from my head. That didn’t work and just added to my confusion about religion. I didn’t believe it was going to work so it didn’t work. Our thoughts and beliefs are very powerful and I will talk about them in a later chapter.

In addition to the bipolar, I had difficulties with migraines. I was also seeing a neurologist that specializes in the migraines. The migraines were partially to blame for the suicidal thoughts, as I had a migraine at least twice a week and had enough of the pain. At this time there really weren’t medications to get rid of the migraine, they gave you pain killers to mask it. After a few hours the medicine is no longer effective and the pain comes back. It was a vicious cycle.

If I want a reminder of my early life, I only need to watch the movie 12 Monkeys. The movie 12 Monkeys featured Brad Pitt playing a crazy person. My doctor heard from the producer of the movie that Brad wanted to research the role and was looking for people to interview. I was asked by my doctor, and I said yes. I remember at that time I was in a hypomanic state with an elevated mood. I wasn’t that familiar with Brad. There were a few of us that met at the doctor’s office then we headed to a secret location. Brad walked into the room with a stack of 3x5 cards. He said he had some movie lines on the card and wanted to know how we would act out the situation on the card. I remember walking up to him, to show him how I would act in a specific scene. Watching the movie it turned out to be a classic scene for the movie. Brad in the psych ward was fairly close to me at this time. I didn’t tell the wife the specific scene where I gave input. When we watched the movie together, she said that was you in the psych ward. It was interesting to see how the outside world perceived my inner world of chaos.

Over the next few years, I participated in a few clinical studies, and I felt like a guinea pig at times although deep in my heart it felt as if I was helping someone in the future by being one of the firsts with a particular medicine. There wasn’t a lot of medicine at this time in the early 1990’s, and most of the medications prescribed were “off-label,” which meant that the drug was not approved for a particular condition. In the end, it took almost five years to get the combination of medications accurate. I had a sense of stability without the constantly changing moods.

Looking back I had all the classical symptoms of bipolar; overeating, insomnia, fatigue, loss of interest in hobbies that were once enjoyed, irritability, anxiety, grandiose notions, inappropriate social behavior, racing thoughts, inappropriate

happiness and poor judgment.

It took five years to get the correct combination of medication. I took this combination of pills for another ten plus years. I was fairly stable with no additional hospital stays. Once in a while a small temporary change was made, usually due to insomnia. I did have a sleep study done, and nothing out of the ordinary was found. What usually kept me awake were the racing thoughts in my head usually from an event that happened earlier that day. This is one thing that I still remember clearly, the intensity of thoughts with a bipolar brain.

Chapter 2

Life's curveball

Around the tenth year of mental stability, life decided to throw me a curveball.

One day at work, I started with the most severe migraine I have ever experienced. My typical migraine was sometimes led by an aura, but usually a sign that one was coming is that I would start craving food or I would become sensitive to light and noise. On this day, I felt the head pain arriving then my vision was starting to get a little blurry, and I had a little tingling down my arm (sensory aura). I called my neurologist and he said it was probably a migraine and that he would call my pharmacy for a medication for me to take. My wife and I were concerned since this wasn't a normal migraine for me since I had other symptoms that weren't normal for me. The ER doctor ended up taking a CT scan to look for a stroke. I had some neurological symptoms; numbness on the left side, confusion and severe headache. He found nothing wrong and referred me back to my neurologist. I spoke to the neurologist again and he told me to get taking the pain killer he prescribed on Friday, and he would see me on Monday if it persisted. My typical migraine would go away within an hour or two with medication. This migraine lasted throughout the entire weekend.

When I saw him on Monday the migraine finally cleared, but he ordered an MRI. I also noticed that day that my walking was affected. I got the MRI the next day and the doctor didn't like what he read in the report and said that I would need to be admitted to the hospital for a few days. There was something very wrong with my gait; walking was nearly impossible. When I saw him again later that the week he told me the report showed a demyelinating disease. This is a disease that impacts the nervous system in which the myelin sheath around the nerves is damaged. The sheath around the nerves is necessary for sending signals to the various parts of the body. This causes impairments to the senses, movement and cognition along with any other body functions in which nerves are involved.

I was very scared when I heard that news; I had no idea what demyelinating diseases were at the time and how that was going to impact my overall well-being. In his office they did a spinal tap, and then I was admitted to the hospital and transferred to a room. The plan was that I would stay in the hospital for three days for intravenous steroids, and they would do some additional testing.

After three days, I was released from the hospital and still had some walking difficulties. A few days after I was home, I was starting to have a lot of other issues. My vision was poor, and the left side of the body had a tingling sensation. I called the doctor and he ordered me to the ER. I was admitted to the hospital again. At this time, they were

calling it possible multiple sclerosis (MS). MS is a disease that is determined through a process of elimination. There is no single test that can be used for the confirmation of this disease. While in the hospital, the results of my spinal tap came in, and it showed oligoclonal bands (protein that grows in the spinal fluid). These bands show up in 90% of MS cases. Other tests included measuring brain response time to external stimulus and the MRI. With these three results, I was given the official diagnosis of MS at age 37. Mentally I was a wreck after the diagnosis, the long term mental stability I had disappeared. I didn't know how to process this information which caused a significant amount of anxiety about the future. I had the following symptoms; I couldn't walk without help; my balance was non-existent, I couldn't see properly since my left eye was jumping around, and my right eye was blurry, my left side was completely numb, I was retaining urine, and had swallowing difficulties.

I was in the hospital for another week before being transferred to a rehab facility. I spent about two weeks in rehab, regaining my strength, learning how to get around with a walker, and other daily tasks that were necessary to live. I was facing a new reality and wasn't looking forward to the life ahead. I asked for a psychiatrist consult when I was in rehab since I was having some trouble coping. A few adjustments were made to my medications, it would take time to regain the mental stability I had.

When I was released from rehab and went home, I could feel the stress diminish somewhat. However the new reality sunk in when I got home and things were not handicap accessible they were in the rehab facility. I was very depressed knowing that I was now a burden to my wife for most tasks. I was doing well enough that I could take care of myself when it came to feeding and basic hygiene. I could no longer help with house hold chores and getting outside was impossible by myself. There were steps outside, along with an uneven sidewalk and other things you do not notice when you are able to walk around without assistance. Plus I could not see properly; my depth perception was poor, and I still had severe vision issues.

I received a lot of home care; nurses, physical therapy and occupational therapy. I was making slow, gradual improvements. One new item I had to learn was to give myself a daily injection for the MS. There isn't a cure for MS, but this was to prevent a relapse. What I understood of this disease was that it was relapsing and remitting in my case even though I only had one incident thus far. This meant that the symptoms remit or diminish to a new normal baseline and relapse or worsen, the prior symptoms would come back and maybe a new symptom would appear. I was told the medication takes about six months to become effective if it did work. For the next six months, I would receive a monthly dose of IV steroids. The new medicine for MS prevented relapses in forty percent of the patients.

After being home for a month, my symptoms flared up one morning. I couldn't stand; my balance got dramatically worse overnight, and my eye was jumping around more than usual. I called the doc, and he wanted to see me right away to consider admitting me back in the hospital for several days. When he did see me again, he did elect to admit me back in the hospital for three days. On each day, I would get a dose of IV steroids; this settled things done enough to return home.

After a few months rehab ended and I was able to get around with a cane, my eye sight improved back to normal and the tingling on the left side was gone. However, I was physically weak. Prior to the MS, I was going to a local gym on an infrequent basis. When I received medical clearance, I went back to the gym on a regular routine in order to regain my strength. When I started back at the gym, I enlisted the help of a personal training. In the beginning, it was slow, and difficult. After three months, at the gym things were going fairly well. My balance remained poor; perhaps this was a new "normal."

I didn't drive for several months as my eye sight was poor. But when I did drive it became quite apparent that the mind seemed to process information much slower, going over 25 mph was a bit overwhelming as my reactions were slower. The gym was only a mile away, so getting there wasn't an issue. However, I had serious doubts about work being 40 miles away. My MS symptoms lessened as time went by. Eventually I was able to drive. Although I could not drive more than an hour or so, before my eyes would get too tired and general fatigue would develop.

I was on long term disability from work, and unsure if I would ever return, but I was determined to recover. After 6 months, I made it back on a part time basis for a few months. I needed time during the week to rest as the fatigue was an issue. I was able to get around work with a cane. Over time, I needed the cane less and less, but did have an occasional bad day or two where I needed to use the cane full time.

To summarize my health problem by the time I was 45 I was dealing with migraines, bipolar disorder, psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis, and multiple sclerosis. I did not talk about the psoriasis or the psoriatic arthritis since it's not that important to the overall story.

To function in the world required a large medical team; neurologist, urologist, psychiatrist, rheumatologist, dermatologist and an optometrist. Thirteen daily medications, one weekly medication, and three medications that I would take when needed.

As time went on I read more and more about my health issues and medications. I was a walking encyclopedia of knowledge. This just added to my intense thoughts about how things were going to be for me in the future. I had a tendency to believe everything

that I read; I adopted them as my own beliefs. This turned out to be a very limiting behavior that I will talk about later.

Seven years has gone by with the MS diagnosis, twenty years from the initial bipolar diagnosis, and twenty plus years of migraine. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. But what could I do?

Chapter 3

Exploration

We never know how our experiences will shape our future. I never imagined that the story below would result in radical changes.

I was fascinated with ghost stories and the paranormal, subjects that I could not explain or fully believe. I had some odd experiences as a child but never gave it much thought. Since I was a nervous child and easily frightened, it could have been anything.

However, as an adult I often found myself watching shows on these subjects. It was a TV show and everything could be rigged to provide entertainment. I started to follow a few people related to the paranormal on Facebook and Twitter then one day someone posted information about a ghost hunt that was in Philadelphia. The place was about an hour away from my house; it was at Fort Mifflin. This could be a chance to see a paranormal location for myself and see if it was real. But I had serious doubts whether I could do it; MS limited me from doing many things. I decided to go with a caveat that I would only stay for an hour due to the late hour and the issues I was having with fatigue among other things, then leave and check into a local hotel.

I wanted to make the most of it for the hour I would be there. I did some research and discovered the casemates had the most paranormal activity. Casemates are vaulted chambers in a fortress. One of these casemates was used to house 200 Confederate prisoners during the Civil War. A total of four men were executed at the Fort, one being a Union soldier convicted of desertion and who tried to lead an escape attempt of the Confederate prisoners.

When I arrived at the Fort everyone was meeting on the inside courtyard. It was a warm and clear night. Due to my heat intolerance I was wearing my cooling vest, which would last about 90 minutes at this temperature in the 80's. I was taking photos and looking around the large open courtyard. I have one photo with something odd in it that I cannot fully explain; to this day it still remains a mystery.

We broke into small groups, and I joined up with a group going to the casemates first.

Upon arrival at the casemates the area felt different, I cannot explain it except that it felt heavy. I sat on a bench on the bed. Several times I felt overcome by a strong sense of dread and had a feeling that someone was sitting next to me that was not part of the physical world. I mentioned that to the group, and I was asked if I were sensitive, I told them I did not know and that is the first time I was asked. Then a few folks wanted to perform a flash light experiment, you take several flash lights that twist to turn on and off. You set them up with the flash lights being turned off but make them easy to turn back on with a light touch. Then someone would ask the ghosts to turn on a particular flash light, and it did go on. It went back and forth with different flashlights based on instructions. That was beyond explanation; it was intelligent as it was following the instructions.

I went briefly to another area to see if it felt any different than the casemates. The air felt much lighter. I sat in the area for a little while, and nothing happened, and the feeling of the room did not change as it did in the casemates. It was very quiet and still.

I managed to get through 90 minutes of the event with no ill effects. I was quite tired though. I was glad that the hotel room was only a five minute drive away.

This event made me into a believer. But I didn't understand the world of spirits or ghosts. Why are they still here? Who is here? What keeps them here? I had a lot of questions but no answers.

I decided to read a book from a medium (those that speak to dead people) and maybe this will shed light onto the Fort Mifflin experience. Reading the book didn't answer many of the questions I had. Instead, it focused more on her life and her work with law enforcement. Again, it raised more questions than answers. There must be something I can do to gain an understand ghosts or spirits.

Then I read another book about channeling. This started to answer some of the questions I had about spirits and the "other" side. It talked a lot about energy, and something about raising your vibration to enable you to talk to spirits. This book also

talked about meditation, first time I read about it, this sounded interesting and would be something I would have to try. According to this book, you will need to achieve a level of balance and harmony between your emotional, mental, and physical bodies to channel. In addition, the book mentioned that I could gain this balance when I was rested, feeling stable, confident, grounded, calm, and life is working for you.

This is going to be a challenge for me as life is not going well with bipolar and MS. One thing I did not have was internal peace. With the bipolar, I had intense thoughts about everything; I had a million ideas and was very self-critical. If I were calm, it did not last long. How am I going to achieve this balance? This would be necessary to proceed with the other exercises. The meditation steps they recommend; picking a time when I would not be disturbed, create a soothing environment with calming and gentle music, and wear comfortable clothes. It sounded simple; perhaps I could try this and see what happens.

I purchased a Zen relaxation CD. I didn't really know what Zen was at this time; I just had an image in my head of Zen monks meditating. I knew that I would not be able to sit for long and do nothing so I found a track that was six minutes long and would sit quietly listening to it daily for a few weeks. This was the perfect amount of time in the beginning. It took some time for my mind to accept that there is nothing to do for six minutes; initially thoughts were abundant during this time about something that happened early in the day or what I need to do after sitting here "wasting" my time. During the "quiet" time it was hardly quiet, the mind was busy. On an occasion, I would try to do the other exercises in the channeling book, but failed since I hadn't reached this harmony and balance that was spoken about.

After a month or two, it became a little easier to not to pay attention to the thoughts that arose during this time. Although the mind seemed busier afterwards catching up on the thoughts that were missed. By the second month of sitting I added another track in my meditation for a total of 12 minutes or so. The mind was growing a little quieter as time passed. Maybe it was possible to achieve the peace. Meditation was becoming enjoyable and a habit by this time of doing it for several months.

I then proceeded with the other exercises in the channeling book, and I purchased guided meditations that went along with the book. The guided meditations were a nice distraction as it gave me something to do. It had a lot of visualizations and took you into a fantasy or you could say an alternate to this reality. I would find myself alternating between the relaxation music and the guided meditations.

What is interesting about the mind is that in a guided meditation, it really is an alternate reality as the mind cannot tell the difference. For example, I do not like heights. I could easily close my eyes and imagine that I am standing on the edge of a very tall building. My body will react like I am really there, my heart rate will increase; my breath will change, and my palms will get sweaty. Guided meditations can be like that but not nearly as dramatic unless you really allow the thoughts to take you over.

In addition to the meditations that they listed that had some exercises to help with channeling. One exercise that they had you perform was to detect the difference in energy between a crystal and a plant. After a few tries I could feel the difference; it was fascinating. I wanted to learn more about this energy that I felt. I later read about quantum physics it explained that everything is energy and that everything vibrates. Basically, the human body is a collection of trillions of cells, made up of trillions of molecules, made of trillions of atoms, made up of quantum particles which are electrical in nature.

I would get through all of the channeling exercises in the book but wasn't good at it. I would need a lot more practice to become a channel. Some of the exercises didn't seem to work for me. The goal for some of them was to meet your spirit guides. Spirit guides were entities on the "other" side that helped you through life. I never met any guides but tried numerous times. It all comes down to beliefs. I suspect I had some beliefs stating they didn't exist, so they didn't align with my perspective and never become true.

I wanted to learn more about channeling and after looking around I saw a local group devoted to the study of metaphysics that met monthly. Metaphysics includes all sorts of subjects that are beyond the five senses. It's great for someone that loves to study

as the possible subjects seem endless. The meeting started with a group mediation session. This was my first experience with a group meditation; it was an enjoyable experience. I would continue meeting with the group studying various things as they had a different topic of the month. I continued my meditation practice on my own, and it was starting to bring about some inner peace as my thoughts would quiet down during this time, but the mind was quite active when not in a meditation.

A friend recommended journaling after meditation. I never heard or read about journaling; it primarily consisted of writing down my thoughts and experiences after mediation. Just write whatever is on your mind without filtering, emptying out my thoughts onto paper never to read it again as it was just “ego dumping”. I found it refreshing to get my thoughts onto paper. Traditionally the ego was defined as self-esteem. Today, I call the ego the sum of all mental activity; thoughts, beliefs, judgments, and opinions.

While journaling something strange was happening, thoughts that seemed beyond me where coming through the paper. Oh, is this channeling? The book talked about verbal channeling not written. Needless to say, I was puzzled about the information that was coming through. Am I connecting to a higher intelligence or is this my imagination gone wild? Looking back at the journals today, I can see clearly the deeper intelligence that arose. However, on some days I can see where a guided mediation created a fantasy situation that I described earlier, that came through in my writings. Or in some cases I can see where it was a challenging day and my mind was still trying to sort it out.

Here are some snippets from early journal entries that were beyond me at this time.

“True guidance is within; don’t allow others to generate false beliefs.”

“Humanity takes life for granted and does not take the time to notice the beauty in all things. All things are beautiful; it is the minds perception that causes a distortion.”

“Trust in one self is difficult when the ego stands in the way.”

“Man thrives when thought is not upon thy self, but on ways to help another.”

“Think before you speak, are you speaking from a source of love and compassion or is the ego casting judgments?”

“Let nothing in life surprise you, if something unexpected shows up, step back and look at it for what it is – without the ego casting basis.”

“Your egoic mind will tether you to the Earth, let go of the ego and free yourself to experience the bliss of life.”

There were pages and pages on the ways of the ego and how it shapes our perception of the world. In addition to the ego, I wrote a lot about love, compassion, and kindness.

As this information was coming through it didn't really sink in, it was just nice sounding comments at this time. I was too identified with my thoughts to realize the power of the words, and it kept repeating the information until it registered. Plus I never took the time to read and analyze my journal to see what was being written. At this time, I still was under the impression that it was just dumping obsessive thoughts from the busy mind. I was on auto-pilot going through life, never looking too deeply into what was really going on within the mind. Just looking at the outside world and reacting at whatever was happening out there.

The intelligence I was tapping into was clearly telling me not to pay attention to my thoughts, since these thoughts are distorting the way things are. I was creating my own reality. And I later realized this is true for everyone. Everyone creates their own unique reality based on thoughts generated from the ego.

I do not know what this intelligence was. Was it God? An angel? A spiritual master? Or was it simply the divine truth that we are all born with that we cannot see until we are ready for this truth? I really did not know what to call it at the time.

At this time, about two months, I was about to sit for 20 minutes or so, and the mind was fairly quiet except for the initial few minutes into settling the mind. But the mind went busy into thinking once out of meditation. As the Buddha taught, “The mind is as

restless as a monkey.”

I would meditate for 10-15 minutes in the morning, then journal for a little while before work. Later in the evening I would sit again for 15-20 minutes. This practice was quickly settling the mind down when I was not in mediation and moving through my usual routine. I didn’t nearly have as many thoughts in my head than when I began a mediation practice.

Mediating doesn’t need to be a complicated process. You only need to sit still and be quiet. I will talk later about more formal meditation techniques, but at this time I only knew to sit in a comfortable position, relax, and be quiet.

After three months of mediation something, magical happened. I was coming out of meditation I picked up my journal and I was getting ready to write, and I heard “perfect spirit.” I quickly had a realization “Ah-ha! That’s it! I’m not my body or my thoughts and at my core the spirit is perfect. “ Then a deep knowing came about that I cannot explain that “All is well.”

The above experience is known as a Satori or self-realization. I do not know that at this time.

Chapter 4

All is Well

The realization that “All is well,” produced the first of many significant shifts within me.

I had a new sense of peace that I didn’t have before. All sense of fear and anxiety about my health was gone in an instant.

Living with bipolar and multiple sclerosis was a life of fear. Those diseases always left you wondering what else is going to go wrong. And I going to be able to walk and take care of myself, will I end up in the hospital or will today be the day that I’m stuck in bed. I was always thinking about the past and how I was going to function in the future. I was stuck in the mental chatter of thoughts.

That day I was no longer in the past or future. I was in this moment. The intense thoughts from my bipolar mind seemed to disappear, and now I was only left with a few random thoughts.

A note of caution, I am not a medical professional, and this may not be the best course of action for you. Look within and follow your own intuition. Intuition is that instant gut reaction to a situation. It is your deep wisdom that is within you.

That night I had a strong feeling that I no longer needed medication. I was taking thirteen different daily medications, plus another three medications to take as needed. I had to take medications to wake up and get me through the day. Then I had pills at the end of the day to make me sleep. It was a wild daily cycle of pill taking to survive the day.

I began to taper one of my medications that evening by a little bit. I took this dosage for two weeks and noticed no changes. Then I would reduce it again for two weeks and noticed no change. I had no sense of fear that something was going to go wrong about my health that would lead to a return to the hospital. I saw my psychiatrist at this time, and he gave me quite the reaction about reducing my medicine. That didn’t deter me at all or install a sense of fear that something was going to go wrong. I just knew that

this was the course of action I was to follow; a strong feeling that “all is well” persisted.

That was the last day I saw the psychiatrist, who was my bipolar specialist. I no longer felt the need to see him. I felt his energy was not supportive of my need to reduce medication. The doctor knew my history and was concerned. It’s hard to explain, I simply knew beyond any doubt that “all was well.”

I would continue to reduce this medicine gradually over the next few weeks until it was a minimal dosage then I would stop taking it. After stopping this medicine, I noticed the mind was a little clearer, and I had no changes in my emotional state.

I then followed my inner wisdom on the next medication to decrease. Then I proceeded to reduce the medication as I did the first one, slowly. Again I did not notice any changes, and the drug taper went smoothly.

I often talk about my inner wisdom. That is the sense of intuition that we all have with in us. The key is to determine what is coming from the thinking mind and one that comes from a deeper place within. You can usually pick this up when it’s an instant gut reaction, as opposed to sitting around thinking about a problem. After the self-realization, described at the end of chapter two, I was in this moment and no longer dwelling on my thoughts about the past or a possible future. My daily meditation practice kept nurturing this inner peace that arose from within.

I recommend a meditation practice to everyone. Everyone would benefit in they were able to get some distance away from their thoughts. Getting separation from thoughts will lead to inner peace. Normally we believe that we are the thoughts that arise in the mind. I will talk about this in detail on my chapter on thoughts.

I would proceed on this course of action for the medicine reduction for about a year. The course of action was to reduce the medicine slowly and pay attention to see if there are reactions in the body or mind. I did notice a few issues with two drugs in particular when tapering off of them.

I was taking a medication for sleep for nearly 20 years. My body did not know how to

fall asleep without medicine. I would have to learn to how fall asleep naturally. It was rough in the beginning of this process and spent many sleepless nights. Sometimes I wouldn't sleep for a day or two, then pass out from exhaustion the next night. This pattern would continue for the next several weeks. Within a few weeks, the body learned to sleep without medicine. Interestingly enough, one of my triggers for bipolar (mania) and migraine was lack of sleep. I had no migraines during this time and no manic periods. The deep sense of "all is well," carried my through this process.

Another medication that was causing issues was eliminating a sedative. This would be the only case of asking a doctor for advice in getting off a medication. My body was addicted to this medicine after taking it for over a decade. I was able to reduce on my own to a particular point, to about one sixteenth of my regular dosage. If I skipped this very low dose, my body would go through withdrawal symptoms. It was called "Benzo withdrawal." I had classic symptoms. I couldn't sleep, was sweating a lot and would get a terrible headache. With the doctor's advice, we came up with a strategy to get off this medicine. This medicine took the longest of all medications to get off of.

When it came time to get off the injectable medication for the multiple sclerosis, I paused a bit and thought about it and did not default to my inner wisdom. This was the only medicine that caused a paused in reduction strategy. I lost this moment and went into a bit of fear that I would have a relapse. This medicine was to reduce the frequency of replaces from multiple sclerosis, since taking the medicine I never had a relapse. However, the "universe" had another plan and gave me a push to get off the medicine. I say the "universe" since I cannot think of another was to describe it. I would rarely get a reaction from the medicine, but when I did it wasn't pleasant. The reaction that I feared most was a rapid heartbeat after injection for about 30 minutes. Over seven years of taking this medicine that happened twice. Within a period a two weeks, I had the rapid heartbeat reaction several times. I got the message loud and clear that I was to stop this medicine, after all "all is well." I knew inside that I must follow this advice, and stop dwelling in thoughts.

Dwelling in thoughts will only cause fear to arise. I can see now that I dropped out of

the present moment and went into my imaginative mind of a future and a possible relapse if I did this act of stopping the medicine. However, life was always giving you what you need at that time to make a change. For me, that was almost continuous adverse reactions to this MS medicine.

I stopped the medicine after the last reaction. Gave my neurologist a quick call to let him know what I was going to try and the reason being that latest set of reactions. He was okay with it. I paid close attention to the body looking for signs of a problem, but they never came. At the time of this writing, I have been off the medicine for well over a year with no relapse or ill effects.

Besides prescribed medications, I also had the insight or knowing that I needed to change a few other things.

I was drinking a few glasses of ice tea daily and loved chocolate and would have that daily. I needed to get off the caffeine and increase my water intake. Getting off of all caffeine was difficult. When I stopped cold turkey, I had a constant headache for nearly a week. But like everything else I survived, and came out feeling better without a living with caffeine and chocolate. I now drink water 99% percent of the time and do not miss ice tea or chocolate.

I will talk about this later, but part of the inner knowing was to stop watching the news and the political news channels that I was so addicted to. It added to the mental noise of life, and it sapped energy from my being.

The whole clearing process took a little over a year. The mental fog was gone. I had a new sense of clarity that I never know. I had a greater sense of awareness. The past no longer held a grip on me, and I didn't worry about the future.

I also noticed that in my meditation practice that I could sit longer, and there was a greater sense of peace. At times outside of meditation, the mind would produce a few random thoughts but usually was quiet or still. The busy thinking mind from the past until the day of realization onward, shifted to a much quieter state.

As a mentioned that life gives you what you need at this time. Within a few days on the first “ah-ha” moment I received some old photographs of myself when I was a child. I was looking at them and was noticing how much the body has change over time. It was a confirmation and another “ah-ha” moment. While looking at the changing body images, I asked myself, “where is Sam?” I could see my feet or hands and they were not named “Sam.” No matter where I looked on the body there was nothing that you could say that was “Sam.” Then it made sense, “Sam” is the perceiver of the senses or the one who looks through the eyes, or the one who hears through the ears. The “I” was the witness or observer to the five senses.

I saw that the body was a vehicle to carry the spirit or soul around. I have heard the following phrase numerous times, but it never fully made sense to me. “We are spiritual beings having a human experience.” Not the other way around. We are not humans having a spiritual experience. For example, the foot doesn’t have enough intelligence to look for a spiritual experience. It only knows to be a foot, and act like a foot. If you chop off the foot, the essence of the person does not change.

I saw clearly in the past mindset that I thought I was the body and the mind. Never considered that I was only spirit, and body/mind are tools that allow us to experience a human body. The mind is simply a tool that allows us to solve challenges. Usually the mind causes many other difficulties from numerous thoughts that are generated. I will talk about the mind and thoughts in a later chapter.

To confirmation the realization that I’m not the body, I only need to look at cell replacement. We are composed of trillions of cells. Ninety-eight percent of our cells are replaced every three years. Our body is ever changing. Just a few cells have a long life span. Where would the spirit go if the cells are replaced? No place, it’s always there in this vehicle we call a body. The next thought when the body dies, what happens to the soul? We’ll discuss this later.

My body and mind suffered a lot of trauma from the multiple sclerosis and bipolar. The

body wasn't doing a very good job in carrying my soul around. And the mind was busy with generating false thoughts. Now it was time to put my concentration onto that task.

Chapter 5

Recovery

The recovery process actually began a few months after my realization that “all is well.” You will note that I repeat this phrase often, and it’s on purpose. It may take a long time to register, as the mind is busy generating thoughts and creating a story. I call this busy mind activity, “story telling.” We end up telling ourselves the same thing over and over again, leaving us stuck thinking that we are whatever limiting opinion we place upon ourselves. My stories of the past; I’m disabled, I have bipolar, I have MS, Why should I be happy, I’m a nerd, etc. Scientists have determined that we have 60,000 thoughts a day. Out of those thoughts 98% are the same as the previous day. It is in our inherent nature to repeat thoughts.

Below is the MS story. This story was nothing but repeated thoughts that I told myself daily making it my reality.

I was going to a gym prior to the MS. I would lift weights and do cardio exercises. I enjoyed working out, but it wasn’t a consistent schedule. I would go when I felt like it. After the MS diagnosis then I began to go a consistent basis. I began working out with a trainer to setup a workout program for recovery.

From the MS, I no longer had the strength I once had and couldn’t do certain cardio exercises beyond a short amount of time. I had a severe problem with muscle spasms and fatigue. These spasms would grow worse over time. Initially, I could do an elliptical machine. Then one day it was too much, eventually the only thing I was capable of doing was light bike riding or walking the tread mill. Even on those machines I could only do at a set speed for a short amount of time or the muscle spasms would start. I would frequently leave the gym hobbling since my legs were so tight from the exercising.

I noticed that if I overheated I was left very fatigued. After 15 minutes of exercise, I was

done and needed to cool down. I learned about cooling vests for MS. A cooling vest is a vest with frozen blocks to keep the core temperature down. With MS, the heat is a significant deterrent. It causes fatigue, and your symptoms to worsen. The MS symptoms faced at the gym from overheating were muscle spasms, headaches and urine retention resulting in the need to catheterize. I would need to wear this cooling vest to work out or suffer.

I also wore a cooling vest outside when the temperature was above seventy. Seventy seemed to be the tipping point of overheating and required a lot of life adjustments. I would frequently leave places like restaurants if they were too warm, I refused to wear a cooling vest to eat. If the temperature was above ninety degrees I would not go outside, this was the temperature that triggered severe, debilitating headaches.

A friend was telling me to do yoga. I couldn't foresee myself doing that and came up with a lot of excuses why it wasn't for me. Including; if I couldn't wear my vest then I would overheat, poor balance, and not flexible enough. I was great at telling myself self-limiting ideas. In fact, I really knew nothing much about it. I was creating my own reality in regards to yoga based on my mental projections or story.

After a few months of meditating, I was getting the internal nudge to go try a yoga class at the gym. I decided to try a Hatha yoga class at the gym. I didn't realize at the time there were different forms of asana practice, which is the posture portion of yoga. I managed to get through the first class without a vest, and I stayed near a wall for balance. I didn't really know what to make of it. I went to another class or two at the gym. What I did like about the class was the fact that there was no weight lifting. No weight lifting meant that my muscles didn't spasm.

The "universe" decided to intervene again. I was driving to work, and there is a yoga studio that I have been passing by for a long time, I never paid much attention to it. On one particular day, I looked over at the studio while going by it and a knowing came about that this place that would become my future studio where I would practice yoga. Later that day I went onto a computer and looked them up. On Saturday, I went to a class. The instructor Rae Ann was friendly and helpful. This would be a Yin yoga

practice. I didn't know what that was, but it didn't really matter, by this time I had complete trust in my inner guidance as the "universe" has proven to me that "all is well" and went with the flow of this guidance. I would come back that Monday for a regular Vinyasa Flow class. A Yin practice is slow, meditative practice while Vinyasa Flow is very active.

The practice at the studio felt much different than the gym. At the gym, it was very crowded, and the instructor pays virtually no attention to you. This place felt like home, even though it was an experience of only two classes. I followed my inner guidance and quit the traditional gym the next day and signed up for an unlimited class card at this studio.

At this dedicated yoga studio, the class was smaller and the instructors assisted you with getting into the proper posture. They also did a little centering exercise and chanting. Chanting in Sanskrit was a new experience, it was nice. Sanskrit is the ancient language of India. The centering exercise seemed like a mini meditation since it only lasted two or three minutes.

At first yoga was a real challenge as my balance was very poor. By the use of props and supports I was able to get into the postures. Another challenge was the class length; an average class was ninety minutes, and there would be no wearing of a cooling vest. Interestingly enough heat wasn't an issue although I was quite sore after a few classes. I was obviously working muscles that haven't seen any activity for a long time.

One thing that I quickly learned was staying in the present moment as this required a lot of focus. If I didn't pay attention I would fall over or lose my balance. I saw when the thinking mind started to chatter it would pull me out of the present moment and the sense of falling would put a stop to it for a moment; then the mind chatter would begin again, and the falling sensation would occur. It was a loop that would require some practice for it to stop. Eventually, the mind grew quiet.

Another item that was repeated regularly during yoga practice from the instructors was

not to compare yourself to others or your prior practices. You might have been able to do this posture yesterday but not today, and that is fine. It is your practice. The ability to get into postures will vary from day to day due to; the foods we eat, the amount of sleep you got the night before, your stress level, the list is endless. I discovered that the comparison was useless mind chatter that was pulling me out of this moment. The key to any practice is to stay with this moment as that is the only thing that is here.

After a few months of yoga asana practice, flexibility and range of motion were slowly but steadily improving practice. The biggest impact I noticed after a few months was greater balance which eliminated the need completely for a cane.

Initially I only thought of yoga as exercise; it turned out to be much more than that. The yogic philosophy delivered from the instructors was helping me to live a more balanced lifestyle and ways to keep present as we move through life. I thought that yoga would only help with MS and the home meditation practice I had was only helping with the bipolar. It turned out that yoga was helping in all aspects of life, and the same was true for meditation.

Another thing that became apparent practicing yoga, I was becoming more tolerant of heat. I could practice in the heat and have no ill effects from the MS. This didn't happen right away, the first summer of practice I did not go to the studio, I would practice at home. I still believed the story telling that I could not tolerate heat. By the second summer of practice, the story teller in my head lost its power over me.

By the second summer of practice, I was completely tolerant of heat. There was a day where it was 85 F degrees out, and the air conditioner wasn't available. I survived with no horrible effects.

By this time, I was no longer wearing my cooling vest when the temperature went above seventy. I did a test when it reached 100 degree outside, and stood in the sun for 10 minutes. Then I went inside and evaluated I how did, not based of the story telling but looking for actual facts. I did not have a headache; my muscles were not in spasms; I was not retaining urine, and I was not fatigued. I had a slight tingling in my left foot,

which wasn't a surprise since the MS causes nerve damage; after a few moments of cooling down that went away. I no longer had fear about going into places that are above 70 degrees. The cooling vest has been retired.

I did not miss the traditional gym, looking back I see it as too harsh for a body raved by MS. The weight lifting was a deterrent, since I had a tendency to lift too many weights and that caused muscle spasms. The cardio machines were too much for my legs since that would also cause muscle spasms. Most exercises at the gym was causing too much heat, the fact that I needed to wear a cooling vest to exercise should have been a warning sign. With yoga, I was getting a full and complete workout with the asana practice and my body was thankful. With the other aspects of yoga, I was learning to live a more balanced life style and staying in the moment.

Chapter 6

The fire within

About a month after a meditation practice I was noticing that I was experiencing something different. I was beginning to see and feel the body in a way that I never knew existed. This was the energy body, or the subtle physical body.

I began to investigate what was going on in the body and the energy within the body. As I discussed previously at our smallest sub-atomic level, we are nothing but energy. Usually we are unaware of it, like our beating heart. It's there, but until we focus our attention onto it's not apparent.

Our human body is full of life energy. This energy flows through energy centers called chakras. Going through these chakras is Prana or Chi. Prana is a Sanskrit word that translates to "life force." Chi is the Chinese word that translates to "universal energy." This is the energy that runs through our body, and all living things.

We have seven major chakras from the base of the spine to the crown of the head. There are over 100 minor chakras throughout the body.

Here is a simple way to experience this Prana energy. Close your eyes and focus your attention on your hands. Imagine reaching out with your mind. Place your attention on your hands without physically touching them. You will feel a sensation of heat or a tingling sensation in your hands. It may take a few minutes but keep your focus on your hands. The hands are the easiest place to detect this energy, but you can do with this with any part of the body.

When I first experienced this energy in meditation I was surprised and I did not know what it was. I was seeing flashes of light. When the charkas are opening up and releasing energy it can be seen as light flashes. Other sensations can occur when energy is moving through the body; tingling, heat, dizziness, light headedness, nausea and headache. When our chakras are blocked, this energy is not flowing smoothly through the chakra which can cause disease and illness. This is the concept in

acupuncture. The skin is punctured with needles which releases the Chi through the meridians (energy channels) in the body.

Once again I had a knowing that I needed to release the energy that was stuck or blocked. This would be done through a meditation process called chakra clearing or balancing.

I tried a few guided meditations that focused on balancing the chakras. In the end I found one that seemed to reach out to me, it felt that the universe said, “Here do this one. “

It was named a Kundalini meditation. I did some research on the Kundalini, and it sounded powerful. Kundalini is Sanskrit that translates to coiled serpent. It lies dormant in most human beings. It is a very power force of energy that lies at the base of the spine. While researching the Kundalini the writings specifically talked about the dangers of awakening this force called a Kundalini Awakening. Some of the dangers include psychosis, irritable bowel syndrome, insomnia, intense heat or cold, headaches and assorted pains throughout the body. The Kundalini Awakening could last from 6 months to 5 years. Although the warnings and length of time seemed dire, none of this was a detriment. The deep knowing that “all is well” persisted.

The meditation I found was made in Sanskrit with various chants. It had a few words in English to help guide you along to focus your attention to a specific chakra. It would spend four minutes on each main chakra visualizing a particular color light going through them while in the background chant there was a specific sound that was the same frequency as the chakra. This was to activate the chakra and allow the energy to flow through it.

This meditation required traditional meditation techniques. Sitting on the ground in the cross-legged position, the posture would have to in proper upright alignment of head, neck and trunk, the hands on the knees and proper slow deep breaths through the nose. Proper meditation techniques are needed when working with our energy body.

After several months, the Kundalini Awakened completely. When it was awakened it

was a wild experience that is hard to describe. I would get very hot; it felt like the energy of the Sun was pouring through me. My feet felt as they were buzzing with electricity, flashes of light through my vision when the eye lids were closed, and tremendous head pressure. I also become very sensitive to energy of other people, their aura. For example, if I was at the yoga studio getting setup for a class which involved sitting quietly on the mat with my eyes closed waiting for class to begin. The studio had the main practice space and a small waiting room. If someone entered the waiting room, I knew from their energy that it was a certain person. Everyone had their own unique energy signature.

Meditation during this time was very challenging. Whenever I would sit still and close my eyes, it felt as if the sun were descending within the body. Often I had to disconnect my feet from the ground to help with the energy going through them. I had tremendous energy circulating in the body at all times during this period.

Sleeping was near impossible; the sun within came out at this time. I would sweat a lot at night. I was usually exhausted the next morning until I had a realization. I would wake up in the middle of the night and look at the clock then start thinking how exhausted I was going to be in the morning. These thoughts became my reality. I was exhausted the next morning. When I stopped looking at the clock and stopped dwelling on the fact that I wasn't sleeping then I was no longer tired in the morning. I may have only gotten four or five hours of sleep for the past several days, but I no longer had the mindset that I was exhausted. I had the new mindset that the "universe" is giving me the exact amount of sleep I needed.

The Kundalini Awakening process was going on for about a year. By this time, it was quite noticeable of all the physical and mental changes to my health. This was an intense purification process for the charkas and energy body. I was eliminating whatever was causing the diseases within my body. It felt as if the body were being aggressively rewired.

I had many "odd" experiences when going through this process. Some in particular were paranormal experiences. For example, if I went to turn on the TV sometimes it

would just shut off. I would turn it on again; it would shut off again. I dropped into meditation to see if there was any inner guidance that would arise. I got the insights to ground my energy and tell whatever it was to leave. To ground me energy, I did a little visualization exercise where I imagined tree roots growing into the ground from my feet and then watched my energy dissipate into the ground. This is a great little practice that I still use today when I feel I have an excessive amount of energy. Then I told the spirit that was turning off the TV to leave. They did, and everything was back to normal. It would happen again the next day and I would go through this process again and that worked. This went on every day for a while. If I just told “them” to leave it would not work. I needed to ground my energy daily and the spirit was reminding me. The universe was again providing help. During this time there was never a sense of fear. Fear seemed to disappear from my view of the world.

Spirit is nothing but energy. It became clear to my earlier questions about my paranormal experience at Ft Mifflin. After the body fails away our energy remains.

At this time, I heard Buddhist Monk Thich Nhat Hanh talking about this, and he described it nicely. “It’s like the cloud in the sky. When the cloud is no longer in the sky, it hasn’t died. The cloud is continued in other forms like rain or snow or ice. Our nature is the nature of no birth and no death. It is impossible for a cloud to pass from being into nonbeing. And that is true with a beloved person. They have not died. They have continued in many new forms, and you can look deeply and recognize them in you and around you.”

I had some other interesting experiences while in meditation, the smell flowers or cigarettes that would just appear. Or the house would become very noisy for no apparent reason. Once when the house was noisy then I asked in my mind, for them to make a unique sound that I could not confuse with the house setting. A few seconds later about three feet to my right, I heard a very loud snapping sound. I opened my eyes and could see there was nothing to cause it. I was not afraid, all I did in that moment was to thank them for the sound and send them love and compassion then the house became quiet. I later discovered that while, in meditation, you are falling into

your formless state of energy as the sensation of the body drifts away. Energy attracts energy, like a moth to a flame. I was a magnet for the energy that was drifting around. Mediums pick up this energy.

One day I was doing a yoga practice. I was in an inversion posture that is with my feet in the air. I then felt this shaking energy coming from the middle of my back which slowly moved all the way through the back and out the feet that were skywards. It was a sensation that I haven't felt the past year of this awakening process.

After practice I felt "different." I still cannot accurately place into words the experience that I felt. I just felt lighter and that my perception of awareness was dramatically changed.

The next morning was shocking. I woke up and started to look around and I was merged with everything. Looking at the table, yep there I am. The lamp, yep there I am. The door, yep there I am. Anything and everything I felt as I was one with. The sense of self was gone. "Sam" was nowhere to be found. It was very disorienting for the next several days while the complete loss of identity remained. After a few days a slight sense of self returned then I could see myself again as separate from the whole but my perception of the world was changed forever. I would never see the world the same again. The illusion of separation was gone. I had the experience of oneness and knew that was the true reality.

There is a saying that I've read about but did not understand fully until this merging experience. To die before you die. This is to lose the self-identity and know that you are a part of the entire connected universe.

Jesus said "you are the light of the world." After my experience all things are the light of the world, there isn't a place where there is no light. The light is only blocked by our thoughts of separation. It's important to remember that our identity is based on our thoughts and believing those thoughts are true. The only thing that is real is our essence or spirit (our light). Some may refer to the light as awareness, consciousness, universe, or god. I never saw god as a separate being, but a part of

each and every one of us. We are all connected in this universal consciousness. We are all one yet we are unique. We all have this same universal energy but also share a type of individual consciousness, in other words I cannot tap into your individual thoughts that you are experiencing. The divine created us individually for us to experience life through different experiences. If we all had the same experiences life wouldn't need to exist.

Chapter 7

Thoughts

First we need to examine where it all began for us.

When you look at a baby and peer into their eyes, you can sense the profound innocence. Notice that when you look at their eyes you are peering directly at their soul. A baby is a pure soul lacking ego, beliefs, opinions, and judgments. I know in the past I never considered a baby a soul when I was growing up, I just saw them as a little human. In fact, I saw everyone as human. Not as a human being. The human part is our flesh; the being is our spirit or soul. We have two dimensions to us.

When a baby sees something for the first time it looks to their parents to see how to respond and it will learn this behavior. This is how the baby learns, by looking at others to learn how to interrupt or react to the situation. It is developing a set of behaviors. This behavior becomes a conditioned response or program.

For example, if your parents have a tarantula as a pet and they are not scared of it and reacts positively to this pet. You will grow up liking tarantulas. On the other hand, if your parents take you to a pet store or zoo and you see tarantulas and your parents have a negative response. You will grow up with a dislike of tarantulas and may even develop a fear of them if their reaction were strong enough.

From this viewpoint a set of beliefs, opinions, and judgments are being conditioned or programmed into this child. These behavior patterns will not change unless something significant happens to change to the programming. This is the placidity of the brain; the programming is not permanent and can be changed when effort is made to do so.

Everything that this child experiences from birth to an adult will shape their ego. The ego contains the beliefs, opinions, judgments and fears. This is a sum of all things that will determine how this person will move through life. What's interesting to notice is the sense of innocence you sensed when they were a baby will be gone as the ego begins to take over. Their innocence as a soul is shifted to the background as the ego will be the primary function. A child talking back to their parents is an example of the ego taking over. Parents are shocked when this happens; they begin to wonder what happened to their baby. As adults, we only think in terms of the ego. The ego is

defining us and is in full control.

From the ego, we have a story of who we think we are. I am male. I am a Caucasian. I work a full-time job. I have a degree. I am married. Etc. It's just a story, this is not who we really are at the core. These are only experiences of life. I am experiencing life as a white married male who works a full-time job.

With the placidity of the brain, there are tools that allow access direct access to this programming we have learned. Meditation and compilation are the tools to change the programming. This is also where meditation can also become a hindrance to freeing us from the programming, if the type of meditation that you are doing is adding additional beliefs. I see a lot of guided meditations that add beliefs. Also, emotionally charged music is not good for meditations as it will usually cause a prior belief to come forward and become reinforced. I prefer silence as nothing is added, and it is easier to observe the thoughts that arise.

In the mind is really chatting away and you are needing help then use a guided meditation that is neutral. I recommend meditations that specifically state mindfulness meditation.

As I mentioned earlier, we have over sixty thousand thoughts a day. A majority of these thoughts, around 98%, are the same as the day before. We only have about 1200 new thoughts a day. What Einstein once said makes sense. "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." Yet as humans, we do this all the time as we are not taught how to generate new thoughts. Usually we are stuck with our repeated thoughts.

We can generate new thoughts by becoming still and not allow an immediate reaction. Today if an issue arises I stop, pause and take a breath and often a solution will arise. It may not be immediate, and it may take days or weeks but a new thought will occur.

Many of these daily repeating thoughts are self-critical in nature. "I am fat. I am ugly. I am worthless. I should kill myself." This is not who we are but merely a story that we have created.

When I was growing up I was often in a state of intense, self-critical thoughts about my life. I composed an elaborate story of life in my head that wasn't true; it was a complete fabrication of fiction. I was completely wrapped up in the story of myself. I was never taught that the thoughts in my head weren't true. In fact, I never took notice that it was repeated thoughts. Adding to the fiction was the opinions of others that I took as fact. Oh you're fat, you're a nerd, and you're a (fill in the blank). I created a

very painful story with bipolar and MS. I was creating my own hell on Earth with my thoughts.

By my late teens and as an adult I was obsessed with watching the news or political commentary. If I were home, the TV was usually on and I had CNN or MSNBC on all day. I would start my day by reading the news. I was addicted to knowing what was going on in the world, even though it had very little impact to no impact on my welfare. From this, I had some very strong opinions and beliefs about everything. Also, most of the news is negative in nature which just adds to the fears in the mind. Then one day I had the intuition to stop watching or reading the news. That made a huge difference in my life. Usually the news affected my mood. I was often in a sad or fearful mood from the news. I would dwell on the situation at times. This would cause unnecessary stress or fears.

I am very sensitive and didn't realize how much of a trigger this was to me. No one said, "Stop, this is affecting you!" Not even the mental health professionals talked about it. There is a lot of power behind thoughts directed at you from others through news or other media. Notice how effective some TV commercials are in convincing buy a product you really do not need. Often we do not realize it as it matches up with earlier established beliefs and opinions established in your ego. These beliefs are usually from other people or media that we adopt as our own. Especially the people that are most prevalent in your life like your parents, siblings and relatives.

We are unaware how deep these outsiders are impacting our conditioning and beliefs. It becomes a normal mode of operation. We have become robots on autopilot.

After stopping this full time exposure to the news and other media, this gave me some much needed mental space. I see very little news today, if something important happens I will hear about it. Usually there is nothing I can do about the situation; the only thing I do is to send my brothers and sisters love and compassion.

The brain was created as a perpetual motion, non-stop, thinking machine without an off switch! It's hard to break free from it! This is what meditation allows, giving you space

to observe your inner world which will distance you from thoughts.

If you notice that your thoughts are on overdrive, stop and take a breath. Give yourself space. Watch the breath coming in and out your nose. That will stop the thoughts as your focus is on your breath. As I mentioned earlier, meditation does need to be complicated; sit still and be quiet. There are other mindfulness practices that I recommend that I will discuss a little later.

The truth of the situation is that reality is neutral. It is our thoughts that make it otherwise.

For example, if you see someone wearing a bright orange sweater that really stands out. The mind will immediately begin to chatter. The mind is forming opinions and judgments, not only about the sweater but about the type of person that would wear that color of the sweater. We will file those thoughts away in our memory, and if someone gives us a bright orange sweater those thoughts will come forth and we will immediately add to the opinions and judgments about that sweater and the person who gave it to us. I see this as a form of insanity, but this is normally how the mind functions. The fact remains that it's just an orange sweater neither good nor bad until we determine it to be so. I did this for many years, until I stopped believing the thoughts in my head.

All of these thoughts in our head shape our view of the world by creating various beliefs that are usually false.

Chapter 8

Beliefs

The subject of beliefs is interesting. I do not talk about a lot of stuff I studied in metaphysics as it was just adding to my beliefs. Beliefs are things that you believe exist where there is no proof otherwise it would be a fact. Part of my ongoing practice is the removal of all beliefs.

Very early on I studied Angels. I think it was the first metaphysics meeting topic that was discussed when I first attended that group. I wasn't a religious person, so I had no idea what to make of it. But I studied it since it sounded interesting and began to read some books. They talked about seeing Angels and sometimes you will see them as lights. Well, I was just starting a meditation practice and I would sometimes see lights. I immediately put those experiences together that I was seeing Angels, and it became a belief that I was seeing them as lights. As I gained knowledge, I saw that this is a common result when the charkas are opening up. I was able to remove that belief and establish something that many people know as a fact.

One day I came across someone that does psychic readings. I was talking to her about my journaling, and she said "oh, I'm getting that you're channeling a spiritual master." I then began to believe that I indeed was channeling something outside myself. Much later I began to realize that I was tapping into my own inner wisdom that is contained within all of us. At our core of our being we are all connected to the universal consciousness, source or divine. We are life; there is no separation. There is no such thing as "my life" or "your life." "My" and "your" are merely words to allow us to communicate. These words indicate that we are separate when that is not true. We are one.

Channeling was another belief that went away. When I had more knowledge of the situation I let the belief dissolve. We are merely talking to ourselves, it is all one.

There are many beliefs that we have that we do not know we have. From our upbringing, we learned many things that we adopted which became a belief which

turned into a programmed condition or behavior. It is very easy for others to transfer their beliefs onto us. When the ego gains control, we have become part of the collective unconsciousness. These humans are in a sleepy dream like state, going with the flow of unconsciousness.

When I got sick as a child, I went to the doctors and often I received medications. From this, I learned that if I were sick the doctor fixes you. Also to get over an illness we need medicine. As an adult, I gave up the responsibility of my health; it wasn't my issue it was someone else's issue to fix. If I were sick, the doctor would fix me. The doctor would give me medicine to help heal me. By the time, I was in my forties the doctors did not fix me, and I was on a thirteen medications that didn't restore my health.

Eventually, I figured out that I was responsible for my own health and that I was just following an old behavior that didn't serve me. I learned to trust my inner guidance or intuition on health matters and everything else. The key to life is to trust in self above anyone else. Don't give up your responsibility to your body and mind.

I later read what the medical community calls this restored health; spontaneous remission or healing. That is an unexpected improvement or cure from a disease that appears to be progressing in severity. This happened from a profound shift of identity as I stopped believing the mind chatter and all the different beliefs. When I dropped the story of "Sam," I healed.

Looking within to see what beliefs I have today is an ongoing practice. This is the practice of inquiry and contemplation. You can think of inquiry and contemplation as an active mediation practice. In an inquiry practice, you examine your various thoughts and ask yourself if that is true. When you begin to question your thoughts to determine the truth then many beliefs become revealed. In the contemplation practice, you ask yourself a big question with no easy answer and sit with it until something arises. You may sit with a question over a period of weeks. The universe has no concept of time so be patient. It happens when it happens. Some big questions are; who am I? What is the purpose of life?

Often we believe that we are lacking in some regard as we start comparing ourselves against someone else. “Oh, look how skinny they are. “ Thus you become “fat!” “Oh, they are so much smarter than me” Thus you become “dumb!” We need to pay attention to these thoughts and how destructive they become. It’s all an illusion, the ego likes to maintain control over you. The ego’s job is to create the illusion of separation. We you start comparing yourself against another stop and notice what are taking place in the mind chatter or thoughts. Pause and take a deep breath and bring yourself back to this moment.

In addition to comparison, we judge everything we see. Normally we have a deep opinion about everything by the time we reach an adult. We are stuck in a constant mind chatter of thoughts or our story. The key is to have great compassion for yourself and everyone you meet. As Jesus said; “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

We are in a dream state, not knowing that we are controlled by the thoughts and beliefs structures that we have acquired through life. This becomes a program, and many folks move through life as a robot on autopilot. Next time you have an encounter with someone watch them. Are they aware of everything that is going on or do they seem robotic?

I no longer judge any one. I do not know their story. I remember when I was in a state of mania with bipolar, road rage was not uncommon. The little things about their driving would cause great upset. For example, if they were driving what I perceived to be too slow I would tail gate them and flash my lights at them. I was in a hurry to get places. Today, I do not know what is going on with them; are they tired, having a bad day and distracted, afraid of driving a particular speed, etc.

Today I am in no rush; I will get there when I get there. Until then, I will enjoy the drive. No matter what I do, I cannot change the person driving in front of me. It is how it is. Not accepting their driving would cause suffering and road rage. This also comes back to being in the present moment, content with what is.

We each have our own story. There is no need to get involved with someone else's story unless it directly impacts you. Getting involved in someone else's story isn't your business and often leads to an addictive behavior of comparison. This will only lead to suffering or dissatisfaction with your perception of life.

As the French philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson once said; "The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend."

He is pointing out the mind has a set of conditions that it believes to be true and only will see things that align with this perception. If things are not aligned with our perspective, it becomes "wrong." It becomes vital to release the egoic mind and discover that which is true.

Many folks suffer addictions from the mind conditioning from life experiences. Not necessarily from drugs and alcohol, which are usually used to escape from the situations that life is presenting them. There are numerous other addictions. Celebrity, news, television, social media, the list is endless. These addictions give the mind something to do. This doing leads the mind to develop additional programming. This will enforce their belief structure.

Stop doing what you are doing, check to see if you are on autopilot and have become a robot. Then look inside to see why you are doing this action, does it make sense for the moment or are you stuck? Getting the egoic mind under control takes a lot of practice. I heard someone once say that if you practice anything for 10,000 hours you will become good at it. So, have patience with yourself. You are doing to best you can at this moment given your past conditioning.

Chapter 9

This moment - the NOW.

There is only this moment or the Now. The past is long gone, and the future isn't here.

When I began my journey, I was never fully in this moment. I was caught up in thoughts. Those thoughts often lead me into the past, dwelling on living with bipolar, multiple sclerosis, something that happened the day before, etc. Or the thoughts would be imagining or projecting a future, especially with regards to living life with a disability and how I was going to get worse. I really was creating an illusionary hell on Earth for myself. All my projections of the future were false; I never imagined a disability free future, and I was always creating a negative future.

The only time I can say when I was truly present were in situations I had to react instantly without dwelling in thought. For example, while driving down the road and an animal appears before you and you slam on the brakes. At that instant, you are fully in this moment. Then after a few seconds you would be quickly come out of this moment as the mind would begin to chatter about what if scenarios. Would I get injured? Would I have killed that animal? How much damage would have my car received?

Most people I see today are in a sleepy dream like state, you can see that they are not fully here. You can see they are dwelling in thought which is taking them out of this moment. For example, someone is walking around while reading their latest text message or email on their phone -- they aren't in this moment. The body is walking around on autopilot in this moment, but the mind is elsewhere while reading. In the past I have driven some place and have no memory how I got there, I was in a trance state which is very common as we go into our usual autopilot mode. While in the trance state usually the mind is chatting about something not relevant to what you are doing at the time. The subconscious takes over the task, and the consciousness is in dream land.

When we practice mindfulness activities we learn to be here now and remove the usual autopilot nature. One way that we enforce the autopilot mindset state is to embark on

multi-tasking. Society tries to demand that we do more than one thing at a time.

Some folks insist that they can multitask, however, science has proven that the brain is not a parallel processor it can only do one thing at a time. By multi-tasking, we are fooling ourselves when we are, in fact, just switching tasks rapidly. It's not very efficient and when I have tried that, I become very tired as the brain uses a lot more energy to function. I discovered I have more energy with a quiet mind.

Typically when I was walking around work before this journey I wouldn't notice my surroundings. I was focused on the result, getting to someone's office or getting a glass of water. That moment was a means to an end. I was guilty in the past of always doing something with the end goal in mind; I would barely pay attention to my surroundings. If I were in the moment, there would be a greater sense of awareness of my surroundings.

If you are washing dishes take note on all aspects of this task, do not think about the end goal of a clean dish. If you are washing a glass ask yourself these questions; what is the weight of the glass, is the glass hot or cold, what is the color of the glass, what is the texture of the glass, what is the scent of the dishwashing soap. Also, are there bubbles from the soap if so notice them. If you become bored of mundane tasks that are a clue that you are not fully in this moment. Boredom happens when thought takes over, telling you that you should be doing something else. You have not fully appreciated what life is offering you to experience. With practice, you will learn to be fully in the moment and you will notice less mental chatter.

Get out in nature and observe objects like a flower is another way to practice being in this moment. Don't call the flower a name such as an American Beauty (rose), since that is based on some prior thought concept. Act like it is your first time seeing this flower. Observe its color, its shape, the texture of the leaves and stem, and the scent. Completely be with the flower. The world becomes richer and the colors are more vivid when the thoughts subside.

The Bhagavad Gita, the ancient text of India, states this "You have a right to perform

your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action.” In each moment, we have to perform the “right action” and not focus on the end goal or the fruits of action. I say, “right action” since most people perform an “action” based on some prior conditioned behavior. Right action reveals itself to you when you are living as your true self without basis of the ego with all of its conditioning. Everything becomes enjoyable when you are in this moment; autopilot is turned off, and you have a new appreciation for all things no matter how mundane you may have considered them in the past. You will discover with being here fully that the labels “mundane” or “boring” will drop from your vocabulary. This will not happen overnight; it takes practice.

Before the journey, I would immediately react to the situation. This reaction was based on some prior experience; this was a programmed response. We are an overactive society. For example, if we see an indicator of a new email, we will stop everything and read the email. If the phone rings, we will rush to pick. These become the most important thing in the world regardless of anything else we are doing. The reactive mind pulls us out of this moment. I now pause before I act to stay in this moment.

It’s also import to note that this moment or the NOW is a constant stream such as NNNNOOOOWWW. Some people think as “this moment” as a fixed point in time when it is always moving forward. Remember this; Always more forward, never backwards and never into a future that isn’t here. You will be content.

One item that got me into this moment fully was meditation. When you close your eyes, the outside world disappears. Then you are left with your thoughts and external noises. Those external noises were easy for me to ignore most of the time, unless the sound triggered a thought. Most thoughts had an intense power over me they pulled me out of this moment and into my illusion of past or future. It took a lot of practice not attaching to the thoughts that would arise, once I allowed them to pass by without attaching a new sense of peace arose as I was no longer consumed by thought.

Imagine your brain as a clear sky, and imagine thoughts are clouds. Observe these clouds passing by in the sky without being fixated on a single cloud. Notice how the clouds move and fade away on their own without any interaction on our part.

Some people try to stop thoughts in meditation; however that's a thought trying to stop a thought. It doesn't work. Thoughts will arise no matter what, after time with the practice of not attaching to them the mind will grow quiet. The ego may chime in with a random thought or two, notice them but do not attach or cling to them.

I did not understand this moment and mind chatter when I first began yoga. I always considered it exercise, and it was much more than that. It brought me into the present moment, eliminated judging and comparing myself to others. When I was first starting out my balance was poor and if I didn't stay in the moment and instead paid more attention to my mind chatter then yoga I would lose my balance and feel like I was about to fall over. That sensation of falling would snap me back into this moment. When I noticed that I was comparing or judging myself with regards to how well I was able to get into a particular posture I was not in this moment. Mind chatter is a clue that you are not fully in this moment; a quiet or still mind is a sign that you are fully here.

When you notice the mind begin to chatter, take a conscious breath. When you inhale, watch the inhale completely, notice the lungs filling with air and the chest rising. Before you exhale, pause a moment and place your attention into the gap of stillness. When you exhale, watch the exhale completely; notice the air moving out of your chest and the chest falling. If you do this practice these routines several times a day you will notice great improvements with being in the moment.

I have found that the most important point to being in this moment is to allow everything to be as it is. Reality is accepting things are they are in this moment. Suffering occurs when you resist this moment, wanting it to be something different than what it is.

When you are here, fully in this moment you are content, and there is no wanting of anything. Life is unfolding just at is it. When you are content, you are happier. When we are happier, we have become a more compassionate human being.

Dissatisfaction of this moment occurs when we do not see things as they are; instead we are projecting our thoughts and ideas onto it (our story). Notice if you start complaining or get frustrated about a situation, you have lost this moment. The mind

chatter is pulling you into the past. Remember that reality is neutral and our thoughts make it otherwise.

When you are in this moment, you are content and no longer are in a wanting state. You realize that you have enough then you stop pursuing your wants.

There is a difference between wanting and needing. We all have basic needs for our survival and these are different from our wants. We all have a need for food, water, and shelter. When we want something it is coming from the ego that, we are lacking. These wants are endless. The mind wants a bigger house, a more luxuries car, and dining at upscale restaurants. The mind is continuously generating thought that you are lacking. This is the egos way to maintain control over you, never satisfied with what you have currently. When you realize that your needs are met you are fulfilled and content.

I see many folks continue to pursue spiritual goals since they are not fully here and the ego tells them they are lacking in some regard. They are discontent with what is at this time. Discontent only leads to suffering. After the knowing that “all is well,” I still had the feeling that I was lacking in some way. This is why I pursued some of the metaphysics topics. I am here and have stopped that pursuit.

In the end, there is nothing to know; only the mind wants to know. Knowledge is useful to function in the world. However, when knowledge becomes a part of your story it becomes a distraction. These distractions add to our story. The more involved your story becomes the harder it becomes to drop the story of self.

Chapter 10

Suffering is the ultimate teacher.

Without the suffering from my various diseases, I would not have the freedom from the mind that I have today, and it's no longer a part of my story. Before I use to run away from the suffering by taking medications to mask away any symptoms or pain.

When we resist the suffering, it becomes worse. As they say, what you resist persists. The suffering becomes part of your story. Instead, we must learn to face the suffering head on and not run away from it. Running away is resistance causing you to fall out of this moment. When we surrender to what is, we discover that we are free.

Imagine for a moment that you are in a lot of pain and all you attention is solely focused on this pain. This becomes a reinforcing thought, and if you notice the pain becomes more intense. The pain of this moment becomes a story, and we keep adding to the story by dwelling on the thoughts that we have pain. The way I got out of this story was to drop the label "pain."

This is my practice that I use when pain arises. While sitting quietly, drop that word "pain" and begin to examine the sensations. Does it throb, is it hot or warm, does it tingle, etc. Then give it space, imagine breathing into this sensation. You may have to sit with it for a few minutes, keep breathing into this area and do not call it anything. When we allow the suffering to be as it is, without resisting the suffering stops as the story drops away. There still may be some "pain" but it no longer controls you.

Life always gives us various experiences to help with freeing ourselves from our story. When I was suffering from bipolar, I wasn't facing it head on. I was always running away from it. I was giving my disease to the doctors to solve. A few times I wanted to take the easy way out by the various plots in my mind to kill myself. The universe or life saw that I was running away from my health issues so it would give me something else to experience. The experiences helped to free myself from my story.

I gave myself multiple sclerosis at the age of thirty-seven. Yes, I gave myself this

disease no one else or thing was to blame. MS is an autoimmune disease where the body is attacking itself. I did not have any compassion and love for myself. When living with a mental illness, the self-hate is very strong. All my running from the disease and negative mind chatter manifested this disease.

Our being is very powerful, more powerful than you could ever imagine. Yet, we run and do not take responsibility for our own life. We are always looking for the easy way out of our story. I have found that we are trapped in our story, trying to make the story better. We need to step out of our story by surrendering to this moment as it is.

Whatever life gives you accept it then face it head on. When you do not accept it, you are in denial of this moment. You may not want to hear that you have a serious disease, accept it anyway. Accept the disease, not the projected outcome. The outcome or prognosis is not something you have to accept; that is based on someone else's experience. We each have our own experience and we have an infinite amount of power. Accepting the disease is not easy, but it's necessary to achieve freedom. Freedom is the ultimate result, when you are at peace in any situation you can see what you really are which is a perfect spirit within this vehicle we call a human body.

I am not completely against medication; there are some situations where it is needed. I've met a transplant patient; they obviously need medication to prevent the body from attacking the transplanted organ. The body sees this new organ as a foreign invader and medicine is needed to prevent the rejection of the organ.

I would urge you to look at the medicine you are ingesting to see what benefit it is providing. Why are you taking this medication? That could be something to sit with and see if anything arises with your inner wisdom. I received a knowing that it wasn't needed; maybe your body will say it is needed. Maybe you will get the insight that you need this medication for now until you take steps toward rehabilitation of the body through therapy, exercise or yoga. We all have different needs to keep our vehicle in good mechanical shape.

Look at your suffering; can you see the reason behind the issue? What are your

thoughts on the suffering? Are you giving it power over your being? What does it give you in return?

You may find that sitting quietly with the suffering will reveal some answers. Just sit and observe your suffering, watch your thoughts that are arising from the suffering. Can you see the root cause?

When I was a very sick boy my suffering provided an escape from school. I saw it as beneficial, so it stuck around and later turned into a bipolar disorder. Of course, I was too young to understand what I was doing. Have great compassion for yourself, you have been fooled by the mind and it isn't your fault. It took over four decades for me to discover the truth. It is never too late to discover your own truth.

Life is full of chaos because of our perception of the world. This perception is distorted from the various life experiences that we have been through.

I later realized why I no longer had the desire to heal people through Reiki. Reiki is a form of energy healing that I was taught. It isn't that important to know all the details for this story. I was taking away the suffering, and as such I was denying them the ultimate teacher; suffering. I had compassion for those that suffer, but I know what needs to be done for their freedom. Often, after a person was healed suffering would return when they would turn back into their story, I was not giving them a chance to face the situation that caused suffering. I was only adding to their story that they needed a healer to solve their health issue. I can better serve humanity by pointing out how they are trapped in their story. This is the goal of the spiritual teacher, to point the way to reveal the truth of their being.

We must learn to stand on our own and be responsible for our health and wellbeing.

Some people depend on doctors, priests, parents, etc. to help ease their suffering or remove their suffering. These will ultimately not work as you are ignoring the lesson that life is presenting to you. It may work in the short term, but it will come back.

Maybe not as this particular item that caused your initial suffering but the next lesson that life has to offer may be more intense. This was the case for me going from bipolar to MS.

Remember that all is well regardless of the situation. Our being is a “perfect spirit”, and our view of ourselves is the cause for any suffering that we are experiencing. Any limitations you place on yourself will hold you back, and you will never be truly free. You will become stuck in the mind chatter and suffer.

When we change our view of the world, a great shift of perception happens and you are free.

Chapter 11

Life today is rather ordinary without a story.

I do not consider myself special. I'm you, and you are me. We are all equal. How can this be? At our core, we are consciousness connected to the universal consciousness; the exterior body is only a mask and illusion. What is inside is the only true reality. The exterior world is solely based upon our perception.

On a recent trip to the city, I saw a homeless man sitting on the sidewalk holding a little sign asking for money with a cup in front of him. Before my discovery of my true self, I would pass them by ignoring their pleas for money. I did not see them as an equal. This time after knowing my true self, I stopped and spoke to him and gave them some money. I already had my return ticket home for the train; any money in my wallet was not needed. I gave him a few dollars and spoke to him. It was a wonderful experience to treat him as an equal and with respect. Their face was so happy when I acknowledged him. He mentioned that I was the first person to talk to him in some time. Life is providing him this experience of being a beggar. There is something for him to learn, until then he is stuck in his story. Perhaps, they are here to teach us a life lesson of compassion and respect. When you treat people kindly coming from your heart, they usually respond in a positive way. Some of the homeless through are in the midst of a painful story in their mind, and they are deeply suffering. The best way one can help them is to listen to them without judgment and by being fully present with them.

When you do not have a story there is a deep peace within and the mind is quiet. It is a great freedom to see life at it is. Whatever happens around you does not affect this inner peace, all is well.

One item that has not been mentioned in the book is the terms for this freedom of inner peace. I did not know these terms when I began my journey which was good or it would have become a goal and something to achieve. This freedom is called awakening or enlightenment. Awakening is letting go of all the mental activity that

composed our story of us and discovering our core being. That being is; our spirit, soul, consciousness, the inner stillness, presence, grace, life, divine, the universe, Buddha nature, Christ Consciousness, Tao or whatever name you wish to place on it. Awakening is not easy to accomplish but with patience and completely surrendering to this moment as it is then it will happen in due time. You cannot force awakening to happen; you would be creating a story for yourself that you supposed to be awakened. Awakening comes about on its own when we start dropping our story. With an awakening, you can have one awakening after another as more truths are realized. The awakening goes deeper and deeper as time moves on. You can think of it as peeling back the layers like an onion. This is self-awareness Awakening.

There are other types of awakening such as Kundalini Awakening, and Heart Awakening. I spoke about Kundalini Awakening in the chapter The Fire Within which talked about my experience of Kundalini. I have a talked little about the Heart Awakening. This happened for me when I saw that I was one with everything. In this type of awakening, you develop unconditional love and compassion that you never felt before. After a heart awakening, you no longer judge or compare yourself to another as that creates separation. There is no reason to judge since you know that you are one with them.

During the awakening process one must be completely honest with ourselves, are we fooling or tricking ourselves into believing that we have achieved an awakening or has it become just an egoic state of mind? Have we let go of it all; beliefs, opinions, comparisons, judgments? Through the process of self-inquiry that I talked about earlier you can resolve any of the issues that linger. There are some that awakened then get stuck in their story again. It can go back and forth for a while, with patience and practice you will free yourself. You have to do this for yourself; no one can do it for you. Do not expect someone to carry you to enlightenment, your just fooling yourself.

Even after awakening you may have some opinions, but you are no longer attached to them and can let them go easily as they no longer define you. Buddha calls this the Middle Way. The Middle Way is not attaching or clinging to thoughts and ideas.

Clinging creates a story. A similar concept taught by Jesus, when he mentioned being in the world, not of the world.

I see enlightenment as the end of awakening stages as there is no place deeper to go; you are at the end of the journey. At the end of the journey, you are completely free or liberated. You are a realized or enlightened being.

The ego loves to grasp and cling onto the mind chatter; it must uphold the illusion of separation. Today I view everything as an experience. It is neither good nor bad. It is neither right nor wrong. It is, as it is. Life is constantly giving us an experience to awaken out of the dream state. And every moment is perfect just the way it is. If it isn't then we have a story attached to it.

Part of my ongoing practice is to notice any clinging to the thoughts. The addiction to thoughts is very strong. If I notice the clinging to thoughts, I'll pause and take a breath to become aware of this moment again. When you are attached to thoughts, you are not in this moment but elsewhere.

I suffered from many, many, addictions. Addicted to; thoughts, celebrity, media, news, possessions, it was an endless list. Celebrity was thinking that someone was more important than me, not an equal. Media and news are the television programs and newspapers. They keep the mind busy which usually resulted in some additional beliefs especially fears that someone or something was out to get me. Possessions trying to keep up with the neighbors and friends with stuff I didn't need. This really becomes apparent as a bipolar when the credit cards get maxed out.

Before the awakening, I considered myself a combination of mind, body, and spirit. There was no separation between these areas, if any thought arose then that is true for me even though it may be factually false. This leads to a distorted perception, and I was not seeing things as they were. I was denying myself from seeing the true reality. When I had separation of the body/mind and spirit a new world opened up and a major shift of perception took place. I began to see things as they were and understood what was real.

Even though I have a new perception of the world, I still live a somewhat ordinary life. I've been married for over twenty years; own a home, work full-time. Part of my daily practice is staying mindful of everything that is happening now. In addition, I go to three or four yoga classes a week and I sit in meditation daily. For the mediation, I average twenty minutes a day, but I sit in silence with no timer set and only open my eyes when I felt that I sat enough. Some days could be five minutes, and sometimes an hour, an hour happens when I had a lot of mind activities at work solving the daily challenges. The mind needs time to settle.

After my satori experience at the end of Chapter 2 I began to look for answers. I was still focused on metaphysics topics but spent some time reading spiritual topics. I never had a guru that I followed around; I am my own Guru.

I quickly learned that I had to be cautious of any spiritual teacher that showed signs of an ego intact. There are some teachers with the ego still in control that can assist to a certain point, but cannot help you become awakened as they are still clinging to the false self in some aspect. For example, it could be someone that works with Angels. They are unable to let go completely. If you ask them for help in a certain situation, they will tell you the Angel to call upon. They have lost their identity. They have a habit of delegating authority over to something else. They are unaware of the power within us and continue to rely on a belief system that they cannot go it alone.

We all have a habit of giving our authority over to someone else. Part of the awakening is a deep knowing of your true inner power. I talked about this in the chapter, The Fire Within. We all possess this deep energy reserve within us. We merely do not remember that we have this power. When we are born, our energy (spirit) comes from the universe, yet we do not remember the face we had before we were born. Most likely we have been here before as our energy cannot be destroyed, we are merely coming and going into different bodies. I am sure that the energy that animated the bodies of Jesus or Buddha has returned in someone else that lived life completely unaware of the body they previously inhabited. Could you imagine their ego if they knew who they were in the past? In fact, you can search the internet and find people that claim to be them!

I have had glimpses of my prior lives after my awakening, interesting but there is nothing that I can do with that information in this moment. If I dwell on the past lives, it will become just another belief that serves no purpose in staying present.

Reincarnation is an interesting subject and several religions believe in reincarnation. I'm not going to talk any more about this as there are many books available on this topic. Be warned, it has the potential to add to your story.

Before I use to take all thoughts of another person and add them to my story. If people said I was a nerd, then nerd became a part of my story. Whatever mean things they said I took to heart; this left me with very poor self-esteem. Today, I don't take anything personality. I realize now that there are seeing me and the world through their story. Their story includes various life experiences that shaped their mind and ego. They now have a conditioned way of thinking, and if I do not align with their story then I become "wrong" to them. This is the way the mind keeps us separate. Every one of us has a different perception of the world which is not factually accurate.

When we allow people to shape our story, we are not being true to ourselves. We are allowing them to add and change our conditioned mind. We must stand back, and claim our true power that we all possess. No one is special, at the core of our being we are the same. We only wear a different costume and have a different function in life (teacher, doctor, janitor, etc.).

I do not take anything too seriously as this too shall pass. The world is impermanent, everything you see before you that is alive will be dead in one hundred years. Our energy will go on, but the body fades away. Life is about living in this moment and accepting each moment as it is.

After all I have been through. I now know that I know nothing. I may know intellectual concepts, but deep wisdom is not mine. It is part of the universal knowledge. This knowledge arises when we place our egoic mind aside. From this stillness, wisdom arises.

Chapter 12

Conclusion

My results may not be typical as I have not run into anyone else that has recovered from a physical disability without traditional medicine and awakened out of their story. It may be very rare; I don't know. The one thing that you can guarantee for yourself is to wake up out of your story and claim your inner peace. From this inner peace, a new freedom arrives, and you can truly appreciate all aspects of life. You will discover that your body is merely a vehicle to allow you to have various experiences. It might be a broken down vehicle with many issues, but it does not change who you are at the core. It may remain a broken down vehicle no matter what you do to heal it. Everyone can awaken.

If anything should come your way health wise. Accept it as it is, but do not agree and accept the long term outcome. Remember the suffering occurs when you do not accept it as it is, it will only add your own story on how it should be. Allow any health concern to be as it is, but do not call it anything by labeling it. As the labeling it, will give it power. Feel the sensations that the health concern causes notice them. Focus all your attention on them, give the sensations space and they will lose their power over you.

There are numerous tools that the universe has provided us, try all of them and keep only the ones that make sense to you. It is you own unique experience that you call life. Find a practice routine that works for you, realize your own power. Do not turn it over to someone else.

Use mediation and discover that your thoughts are creating a story. This story is not true; it is based on some prior conditioning of your mind. Use self-inquiry to uncover any hidden beliefs and programming. Use contemplation to reveal the answers to big life questions. Use mindfulness practices to stay in this moment. Use yoga and discover for yourself if it offers you any benefit for staying present in the now and adding in your wellness.

There are many other practices that you can use to stay connected to this moment. Use could use walking, dancing, playing a musical instrument, painting, and the list is endless. Whatever it is, give it your full focus and attention. Be mindful of any thoughts arise and watch for mental commenting that is judging or comparing which pull you out of this moment. For example, today while playing Mozart on the violin you felt you did a better job with allowing the violin to express the emotions of the piece than the day before which you felt was flat. Take notice to that thought then come back to this moment. You're playing is a practice. This is the practice to stay aware to what is. Any unease is a sign that you aren't here.

Notice emotions; anger, rage, frustration, irritation, grief. Take notice, this may lead you to an awakening experience. Give it you full attention. Feel it fully, do not resist it. There is a term called "spiritual bypassing." This is when you think you are too spiritual to be sad, angry, etc., and ignore that emotion and create a false sense of happiness. As I mentioned before life is always presenting an opportunity to awaken.

Anyone you meet is holding a mirror up to you. Whatever you see in that mirror is a reflection of you. For example, if you meet someone and they make you angry notice it. You will see that you will not know anger unless you are angry.

If you ignore this lesson, it will keep coming back until you learn from it. So, if you are going to be angry, embrace that anger and see what it has taught you. Eventually you will develop an appreciation for each moment, and a sense of joy will become prevalent. Until then embrace whatever emotions you have and allow them to become your teacher.

Grief is probably the most profound teacher of them all. We have a tendency to push it aside and "be strong for the family." This is a bad idea; you do not want the grief to linger. It will pull you into deep states of despair and depression. Regardless of how difficult it is we must face it at some point. This is one of those emotions that do not go away easily, and may grow more powerful the longer it sticks around.

Have compassion yourself. Our past beliefs and non-stop thinking have been very self-

critical. It will take time to remove the story, have patience. Time does not exist in the universe. And remember you are the universe, it cannot exist without you and you cannot exist without it. Everything is one. Drop anything that does not unite you, that which causes you to see another as separate.

Remember our being is simply the awareness that experiences. Who is it that; hears, sees, tastes, touch, and smell?

Rediscover life, and the beauty in all things. You are love.

Namaste. I bow to the divine that lights in me, and I bow to the divine that lights in you.

Contact

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