

The
KICKASS GUIDE

to

WELL-BEING

and

LONGER LIFE

for

OVER-50 MALES

and other health-neglecting dummies

Barry Rosenberg

author of **WOMEN I LOVE (A Travel Yarn)**



**First thing I do
upon rolling
out of bed
each morning
is hang.**

The world's most profitable industry? Health. Oh, not good health. Bad health. Nor just physical unwellness. Mental, emotional and spiritual bad health actually accounts for more dollars than does bodily breakdown. Can the human species really be so fragile? That we're living longer than any past generation might seem to refute this. Except longer is not healthier. Face the fact: human longevity is a boon to bad health enterprise.

Who, then, is primarily responsible for the problem? The greedy pharmaceutical mafia? Processed pseudo-food manufacturers? Corporate polluters of our land and waterways? Politicians who believe genetically modified rubbish is fine? An acquiescing media? None of the above.

Nope, the real villain here is ... us. Because with all the information on good health readily available at the tap of an iPhone, we steadfastly refuse to take proper care of ourselves. Such is the enigma of our time.

The Kickass Guide offers an alternative. The author, who for years experienced all the symptoms and maladies of poor health, used as prime tool to lever himself out of his private abyss his utter dismay over what had become of a once-healthy mind and body. Following years of pushing himself up the mountain of fitness he discovered – *eureka!* – that life is a hell of a lot more fun being healthy than looking and feeling like crap.

And so will you.

for
Jacinda, Kamala & AO-C

My kind of women

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Any similarities to fictional persons, living or dead, are coincidental and not intended by the author.

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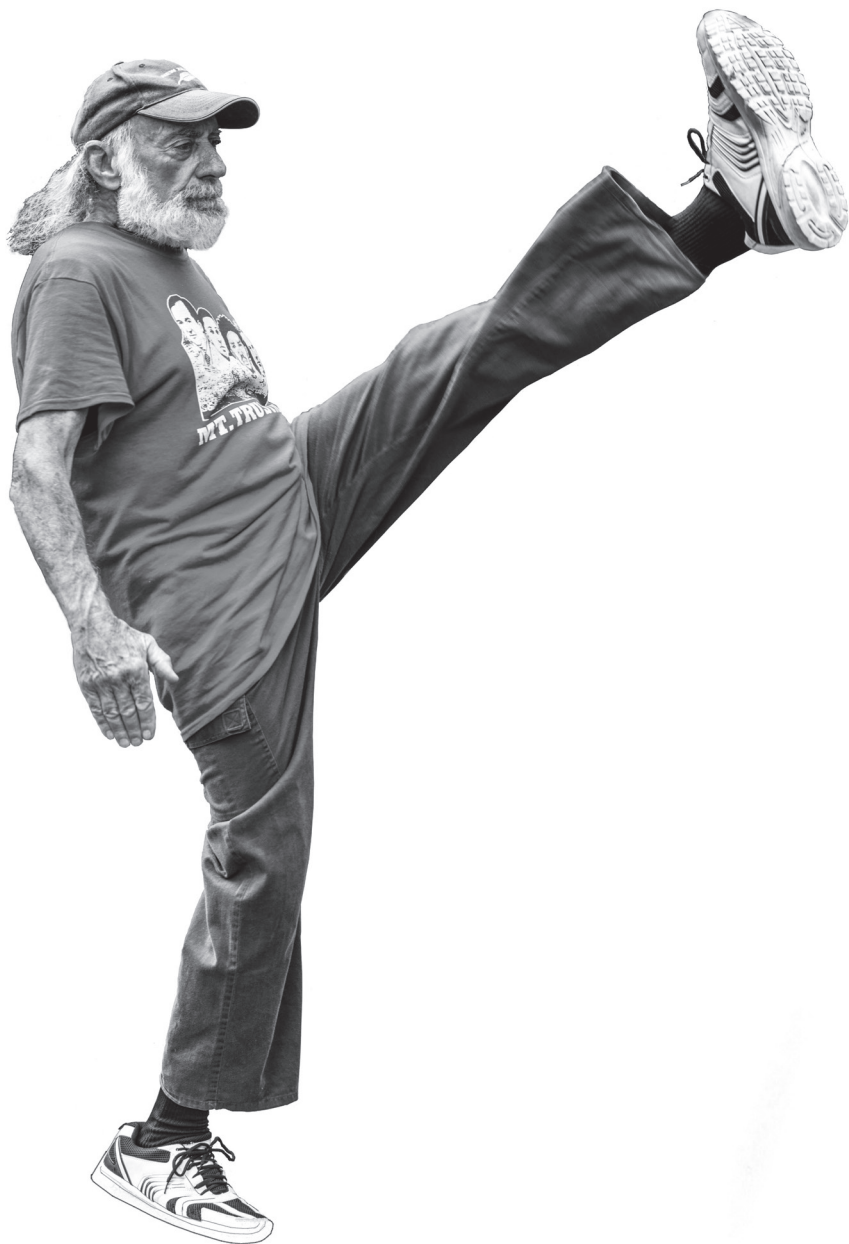
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pre-word

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why kickass

LOOK, I'M NOT ONE of these eighty year olds constructed like a rock-hard silver haired Adonis who races up mountains with huge packs glued to his back, swims two miles daily, cycles twenty-five miles each morning before breakfast then spends a couple hours pumping iron. I may admire such types but for sure am not one.

On the other hand, in a certain dim light I can pass for sixty, have greater vitality than I possessed at forty, am as frisky (and immature) as I was at fourteen. I trek up the Ohope hill into town two or three times a week, do a fair amount of cycling, and backpack annually to far-off lands.

My diet is vegan, I meditate and do twenty minutes of yogic stretches each morning and spend considerable time organic gardening, a glorious avocation arrived at late in life and which I credit for keeping my antique body engine tuned and fossiled mental faculties from going stale.

All this blather is meant to show that, although far from obsessive, I take decent care of myself. In other words, I follow a normal regimen for a fella who enjoys life. Except from keen observation of the human animal, I'm not normal at all.

'Normal' for males over fifty, and several million other souls in the developed world, is crappy diet, lack of even moderate aerobic exercise, dependence on prescribed chemicals for depression and diet, indulgence in harmful addictions – alcohol, tobacco, weed, gambling,

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mind-numbing social media trivia on hand-held gadgets – and, perhaps most alarming, dearth of a true sense of wonder. In other words, normal has come to mean devoid of genuine good health from the neck down and frivolous, debilitating clutter north of there.

Two meaningful terms you may care to know: *potential* and *kinetic*. The first indicates our inherent physical and mental capacities; the latter, how much of this potential is actually being utilized. I reckon that one day science will be able to measure the precise percentage of everyone's *k* over *p*. When that happens I fear the expression 'you're not as dumb as you look' will be tossed out the window.

And the solution to being less than fit? Well, not the trillion dollar worldwide health industry encompassing everything from shiny home treadmills (used diligently for a couple weeks before being abandoned in the shed) to so-called natural remedies (pills are NOT natural, yo!) to outrageously overpriced yoga resorts. The only permanent loss of weight guaranteed by said industry is the extraction of money from your pocket. Why so? Because the nicey-nicey approach simply does not work in the long term. (I shall pause here while you re-read the last sentence.)

Therefore, I am going to take a different tack. I intend to deal with you in the very same manner I applied to myself back when I was seventy pounds heavier, my energy was pancaked, I'd be prone to every cold and flu bug migrating within a hundred mile radius and I spent hours daily sitting on a couch staring mindlessly at a lighted box.

To be specific, I kicked my own ass. Hard. Special Forces drill sergeant hard. On occasion, sadistically hard. And didn't let up despite my own cries of *Enough! Please, enough!* until I was firmly on the path to a better, saner, healthier existence.

What happened, coincidental with changing hemispheres forty years back and inspired by the magnificent landscape in New Zealand, I made a choice. The choice was not merely to stay alive, shuffling and puffing my way through the days and weeks and years that remained; I wanted to be *fully* alive.

This required a reworking of my life ethos. Henceforth, I would refuse to be a victim! I would take charge of my lot! I would be disciplined in this endeavor! Pretty straightforward, right? Good grief, no. The spoiled, pampered little bastard what had been in control of my mind since I first attempted steps rebelled at every turn.

The bastard took me by the hand every single day and led me to indulge in things decidedly devoid of benefit, but which were

readily accepted by my family and friends, my community and, most eagerly of all, my taste buds. More sugar! the bastard would command. More salt! More Philly cheesesteaks! And, oh my, were those buds and I ever compliant disciples.

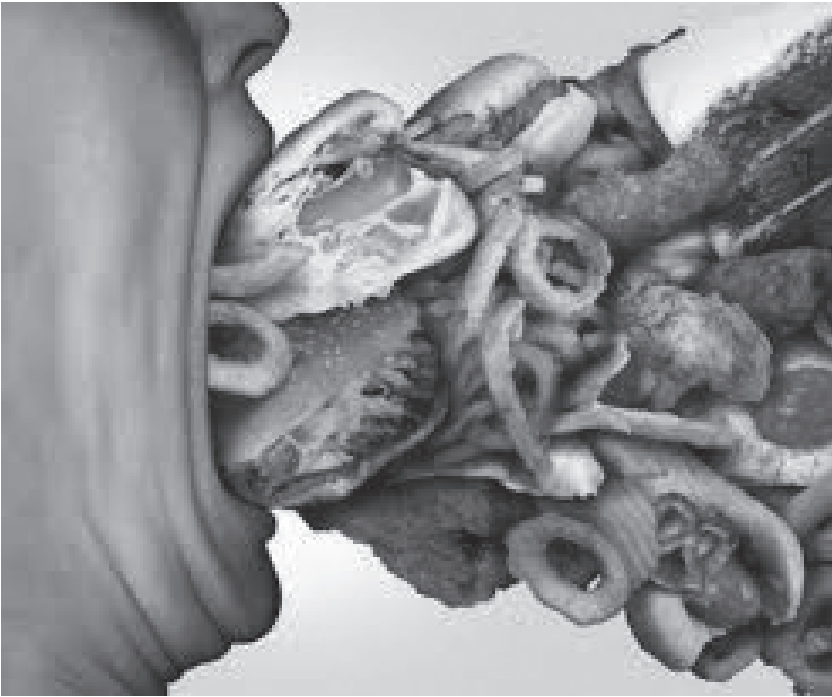
Have I succeeded in knocking the bastard off, de-victimizing myself and taking charge full-time? Let's say, oh, seventy-five percent. Which ain't bad considering what was, but certainly not a number I'm thrilled about. Still do I have fears, arrogance and self-delusions which result in lapses. On top of this, I'm a lifelong depressive. Swapping steadfast denial for an acute awareness of this dysfunction, and applying determination, not medication, certainly has helped. Yet I must constantly fight the bastard. And while it may be a struggle, the results thus far have proved delightfully positive.

Now, if the kickass approach doesn't appeal, herewith is a viable alternative: Go into the kitchen, open the fridge and choose a shelf. Any shelf, doesn't matter. Bend down, open your mouth wide as it'll stretch and place it on the edge. Using both hands, sweep everything on that shelf into your gob. Every single thing: not just the processed, chemicalized yuk you've long misnamed food; as well plastic bags, storage bins, polystyrene wrappings...every last blooming thing on that shelf. Chew well. Swallow.

This act just might provide a clue that yes, absolutely, you eat crap, have always done and unless you take drastic steps will continue to do, not only causing yourself harm, but generously enabling 'health' practitioners (the vast majority of whom consume as much kaka as you) to happily indulge in spanking new electric vehicles and business class overseas holidays.

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body



you eat shit most likely, so does your doctor

From the NY Times 8/27/2019 by Dariush Mozaffarian and Dan Glickman

Americans are sick — much sicker than many realize. More than 100 million adults — almost half the entire adult population — have pre-diabetes or diabetes. Cardiovascular disease afflicts about 122 million people and causes roughly 840,000 deaths each year, or about 2,300 deaths each day. Three in four adults are overweight or obese. More Americans are sick, in other words, than are healthy.

Instead of debating who should pay for all this, no one is asking the far more simple and imperative question: What is making us so sick, and how can we reverse this so we need less health care? The answer is staring us in the face, on average three times a day: our food.

Dariush Mozaffarian is a cardiologist and dean of the Tufts Friedman School of Nutrition Science & Policy. Dan Glickman is a former US secretary of agriculture.

DON'T FOR A MINUTE think I'm here to kick your butt regarding the recent scientific study which claimed if everybody gave up meat, and cut down drastically on dairy, the environment could be cleaned up in a single generation, the world would become a better place for your grandkids, and how damn obdurate you are not being vegan like me.

Nope, no way am I going to kick your butt about our rapidly

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degenerating environment. I'm in my final furlong on this planet, why should I give a crap about your grandkids if you yourself don't? So far as I'm concerned you can assemble every cow and steer on the banks of your country's putrid rivers and command them all to synchronously piddle in the pond.

Ah, but don't think you're going to be let off without a blasting. What I'm going to do now is kick butt about your selfishness, only not in the way you'd likely expect. See, I'm about to give you a blasting for not being selfish enough.

If you were really selfish, you would be focused more on your personal health and well-being, meaning you'd be taking the best care possible of your body. This would entail ascertaining which edibles are actually good for you and which are not, and no longer play victim/slave to the corpos which grow, process and market nutrition-less synthetic garbage passed off as food, and to their toadying elements: the media, advertising propagandists, the pharmaceutical mafia, ass-kissing government agencies and, even, quite often, health providers of various ilk.

Check out the scene: I'm sitting in a café, sipping my soy latte and perusing the morning paper. (I realize neither is particularly of benefit, but rationalize that the potential detriments of my one daily coffee and the brain-numbing trivialities of the local rag nullify one another and thus provide a balance of sorts.)

Enter now six upstanding citizens of my burg. Some minutes later their morning fare is delivered. Each has ordered the standard breakfast: toasted white bread, runny eggs, greasy potatoes, slices of even greasier bacon, slabs of butter, goeey melted cheese, untold amounts of table salt (to which each soul adds more), heaping spoons of white sugar in the accompanying coffee.

Then comes the delivery system's second stage: layers stacked tightly until nothing remains visible of the fork save handle, the entire package then stuffed into gobs stretched wide as hobbit caves until each face resembles a cabbage patch doll. Laboring mastication followed by gulps. No coronary? Right, repeat action.

Without exception, eating habits are the most difficult of life's negative patterns to alter. I found while teaching Alpha Mind Control for several years at universities in the USA and New Zealand the most volatile reaction during the training occurred when discussing the necessity of a healthy body to go with a clearer, focused head.

People really resent being told what to eat. Honestly, who

wants to be preached to about the wellness benefits of organic oat bran, and blackstrap molasses, and unpasteurized apple cider vinegar, and green tea, and ginger, and organic garlic, and turmeric, and leafy greens straight from the garden, and...and... No one, that's who! Therefore I shall totally refrain from doing so. What I shall do instead is kick your butt over what not to eat.

Quick, rally the villagers to fetch their flaming torches and pitchforks!

White sugar. Deadly stuff. Never, never, never. Can be healthfully replaced with coconut sugar, honey (raw if possible), cinnamon and molasses.

Table salt. Just as damaging, especially to your heart and blood pressure. Try instead sea salt, Himalayan pink salt and sea kelp powder.

White bread. Cardboard has more value and probably better taste. As a rule, I eat no bread at all. There's some really tasty fare around, admittedly, but even the least offensive flour (rice, quinoa, sourdough, spelt), if not unhealthful, has little nutritional value. Grain when milled loses most all its goodness; then it's baked, and the high heat kills off whatever good stuff has survived milling. Bread, especially the white stuff, does come with a guarantee, however: enhancement of your girth.

Butter, cheese and eggs. Yes, I'm well aware these items are Western staples dating back to the Magna Carta. But do your ticker a major favor and switch to olive oil (extra virgin only) as substitute for butter. Cheese? Dear me, might as well be bashing god, flag and country. Well, there's vegan cheese if you absolutely must, though you'll need to take out a second mortgage. Sheep and goat feta are okay, though also pricey. And if you're absolutely, menacingly obstinate about giving up your precious yellow peril, for your arteries' sake quit melting the damn stuff as you're creating carcinogens galore. Eggs? Organic, free range, four a week max.

The irate villagers are drawing closer, chanting, 'We want our stodge!!'

Meat. Do you realize the amount of time your brilliantly designed alimentary system takes to process dead animal is the slowest of all ingested foodstuffs? So slow is the passage, red especially, that the meat putrefies inside your body, actually rots, whereas fruit and vegetables, grain and fish do not? So, carnivores, try going vegetarian three, four times a week. Alternatively, upgrade your health insurance policy.

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Preparation. Frying, barbequing and microwaving are the least healthful means of cooking, lightly steaming the best. Or, if you're intent on really good health, raw is the way to go. What, you think raw food is bland? Ain't the food, dummy, it's your lack of imagination preparing it. I concoct a whole range of herbs, spices and home-made dressings which I apply liberally to my straight-from-the-garden salads. Yum!

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Indian momma meets the intrepid food dropper

ONE OF THE MORE INTRIGUING facets of travel is eating. I've been to formal functions in the West where no fewer than a dozen knives, forks and spoons were laid out either side of three different plates. And don't you dare mix up the precise formation of these utensils. (First thing I'd do upon sitting? Start playing spoons on my thigh. Don't think I'm half bad, so why would the waiters all start running over to me? Did they somehow suspect I was considering a similar number with plates?)

Then there's the which-hand-do-you-hold-the-fork game. In America where I grew up, the hand you throw a baseball with has top billing for all events. If I have something on my plate that requires several cuts, I take the knife in right hand, hold down the foodstuff with the fork in my left, cut half dozen edible portions, lay down the knife, switch the fork to my right and dig in. That's the way I learned, that's the manner I'm familiar with. Having moved to an English country in mid-life, this is considered lower-class, wrong. The fork is always in the left hand, you cut with the knife in the right, shovel as much on the fork as it can possibly hold, open the piehole wide as it will stretch and stuff in the whole bloody mess. It is absolutely gross, but it's the way of the land, and on numerous occasions I've endured

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typical British – or colonial – look-down-your-nose comments about Americans being so common that I promise myself the next time, the very next time, my so-common right-handed fork just may get planted in some smirking dolt's eye.

In China, of course, chopsticks are the norm. I can handle sticks pretty well, I just don't hold them the 'proper' way. Instead of lying flat against the web between thumb and forefinger, my sticks stick up. Plus I hold them pretty much in the middle instead of the fat end. My times in China I've observed people holding the food bowl just under the chin and rapid-flicking food into their mouths, accompanied by loud and long sucking sounds that send shivers up my spine. And they make fun of me.

The intelligent and hard working woman who runs my guesthouse in the Ladakhi town of Leh, cares for my twenty-one year old surrogate granddaughter and her fourteen year old sister when they are at home, which is infrequent, and worries about them the rest of the time when they are far off at their respective private educational institutions. She cares as well for the family dog, a fourteen year old character of mixed breed, as well as a number of neighborhood ferals. Momma is also a full-time teacher at a school an hour's drive west, although she has taken off a couple months in order to be home with the family during this period.

Poppa is a physician. He is also a full colonel in the Indian army. He's stationed at a base far from here, where he is administrator of a large staff of medical personnel. I hadn't met him when I was here in 2013, and frankly was a little concerned when prior to my coming the granddaughter wrote that poppa would be home for most of my stay. What would he be like, this full bird colonel/doctor. Would he be barking out orders to us all? My medical/military experience was in the US Air Force fifty-five years ago. I was listed as a medic, but the extent of my medical practice was poking needles in arms and butts of personnel about to depart on overseas duty. The rest of the time my prime function seemed to be falling afoul of by-the-book senior non-coms. I had two stripes, but these were ripped off and sewn back on so many times I thought seriously of attaching them with Velcro.

But poppa had proved to be a regular guy who loves with big heart the three females, all different, who constitute his family. Me he treated like, well, like a grandpa to his elder daughter. When I'm with them all, the family, and ninety percent of that time is at meals, I feel as comfortable as if I were in my own home with those closest

to me. When you consider the basic differences in race, religion, nationality, culture and language (to say nothing of my being a vegan in a household where meat is at the top of the menu every meal), I'd venture that's a fair indication of acceptance.

There is no dining table we all sit around. This, to my experience in several parts of the subcontinent, simply is not the Indian way. Eating is undertaken in a mid-size room off the kitchen. There are a couple of low tables, a small settee, numerous large colorfully covered cushions, a pair of beanbag chairs. Oh, and three huge portraits of the Dalai Lama at various stages of his current incarnation. The younger daughter appears to be the only one with a set position in the room, which is also the place she does her school work. For the rest of us, it's wherever.

I have had enough experience in this country to feel completely normal eating the Indian way: the first three fingers plus thumb of your right hand. You kind of mush everything together in a copper dish with low sides, tear off a hunk of chapatti, wrap it around a clump of food, lean forward until your face is inches from the plate and chuck in the roll of edibles, aiding passage with a light slurping.

With all the positive elements here, I still have two minor dining problems. In typical Indian manner, the lovely momma does not understand the words no more. (Convince me Indian and Jewish mothers don't come from the same seed.) To keep from turning into the Michelin Man during my month here, I needed to be strong. I am not strong.

The second problem is one of my own making. I'm an intrepid food dropper.

I don't think there's been a meal this lifetime I haven't dropped something on myself. And I try so hard not to. I do everything right. I don't put too much on the fork, or spoon, or chopsticks, or in the claw made by my fingers. I make certain all of it is deposited within the proper orifice, then immediately close the gates behind. I chew with mouth closed, never talk while mastication is in process. Often I will finish a meal with the proud understanding that not a single morsel could conceivably have been dropped, then look down and spy a spot or smudge on my shirt or trousers. How did it get there?

I will tuck a napkin into the collar of my shirt. Frequently place a second napkin on my lap. When I am flying, conscious of the cramped space in economy seating and jostling of the aircraft, I'll tuck in the blanket that's provided for warmth, spread it out so every

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last bit of clothing down to my shoes is covered...and still there will emerge a spot, a stain, a blemish on my clothes. How is this possible?

And not only on my apparel. I cannot possibly eat, say, rice without a grain depositing itself in my beard. One grain, no more, as though signature of my digestive artistry. Is it not contrary to the laws of physics that a single grain of rice teleports away from the others and plants itself in my muff? Yet it happens. Constantly. Since I am living with a family who feed me (and feed me, and feed me) three meals daily, approximately eighty percent of which contains rice, I am the prime object of their pleasant and kindly attention. They won't actually say anything, but to enlighten me as to my discretion will fake-brush their own chins as they focus intently on the real grain's presence upon mine. Losing facial detritus without losing face.

I estimate that had I saved every single escaped grain of rice, buckwheat, quinoa, barley and couscous over the half century I've had a beard, I could feed the whole of starving minions...well, wherever it is they're starving these days.

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why I will never go to a(nother) health resort

THE HIPPOCRATES HEALTH Institute was a huge, old, spooky-looking five story mansion in downtown Boston when I stopped off early one 1975 morning en route to a planned peaceful trawl through New England. I had agreed to deliver luggage for a friend from Philadelphia who'd recently become Hippocrates' new manager. I'd never been to a health resort, nor did I care to be now for more than the few minutes required.

I carried several suitcases and a steamer trunk into a large empty lobby with giant green sprouts painted on the walls and replicas of grass eerily creeping up from the baseboard. Not a soul in sight, I stacked the luggage in a corner and made to leave when I heard a sound from the far side of double sliding doors. I stepped over and peered through the narrow vertical slit between them. This is what I saw:

A long table, around which maybe twenty-five people were seated. In front of each rested a glass of green liquid and slice of watermelon. At the head of the table sat my friend Margaret. None of this was in any way odd. What was odd was that every one of these people – male, female, young, old, black, white, brown – every single one was...glowing. Margaret was glowing. Those immediately next to

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her were glowing. The people next to them were glowing. And so on.

Suddenly the doors flew open and twenty-five sets of eyes focused upon me. I was mortified: me, a non-glower. To make matters worse, Margaret stood up, tapped her glass several times with a spoon and introduced me in schoolmarmish manner.

‘Say hello to Barry Rosenberg, everybody!’

‘Hello, Barry Rosenberg!!!’

She dragged me in, sat me down and plunked before me a cut of watermelon and glass of the green stuff, which she identified as juiced melon rind. I ate and drank, working to wipe away thoughts of a huge stack of pancakes doused with maple syrup, four or five slices of jammed cinnamon toast, coffee.

After breakfast – that’s what they called it – Margaret showed me around the house and introduced me to a number of people. Their breaths smelled like freshly mowed lawn. Mine smelled like old gorilla.

Margaret said: Why not stay. I replied: Thank you, no. Margaret said: I can let you have a week’s free residence in return for delivering my luggage. I replied: Um. She moved in close. ‘You need to be here,’ she said softly. ‘Really, you’re all stressed out and look awful.’ Which I knew. Which is why I was about to cruise the old VW bus through New England hoping to chill out. I considered the offer. I wanted my breath to smell like freshly mowed lawn. I wanted to glow.

I stayed.

Workshops were conducted throughout the day. I learned that everything I ate was bad for me, that my combinations of foods were wrong, that I ate too fast, chewed too little, brushed my hair with the wrong kind of bristles, even, god knows, had the wrong sort of posture on the wrong type of toilet. It was testimony to man’s indomitable will to survive that I had remained alive this long.

Scores of trays of spiky green things were situated all around the place. This, I learned, was wheatgrass, the resort’s prime elixir, claiming the most nutrients of any foodstuff on earth. What one did was juice the grass.

‘You don’t just drink it,’ Margaret declared enthusiastically. ‘It’s good everywhere!’ I had no idea what she was on about.

She made me a cocktail. I observed closely as she harvested the grass from a large tray, cutting it close to the soil as possible, then stuffed it into a special juicer, a standard hand grinder which had been hooked up to a small motor. As I held the glass before me, the wheatgrass juice possessed roughly the color and consistency of

Siberian goose plop.

I brought the glass to my lips. The smell was abominable; how could this gunk produce those freshly mowed lawns everybody was exhaling?

I took a tiny sip. My face corkscrewed. Little by little, I forced it all down. Without question, it was the most vile substance that had ever passed my palate.

Lunch was oranges, as many as you wanted. I gobbled down a dozen. Hunger unabated, I considered eating the rinds.

Dinner? Weeds. Swear to Moses. The kind one normally uprooted, dumped into a pile and set fire to. Here they ate them.

Hungry as a starving moose, I heaped my plate with a smorgasbord of bunny grub. In a flash it was gone. I refilled the plate, noting I was by far the fastest eater at the table.

Across from me a young Jesus clone sat staring unblinkingly at no particular thing or place. He had green lines emerging from the corners of his eyes, from his nostrils, from his ears. I hated to think where else might be green. I counted as he chewed. Thirty...forty... fifty... Each mouthful.

I began to chew slowly, but by the fifteenth chomp my mouth no longer was receptacle for solids. Try as I might I could never get past twenty before the alleged food liquefied and dribbled down my throat. Young Jesus, his green-lined mind contemplating galaxies the good ship Enterprise would never reach, munched away steadily, fifty to sixty per.

Following morning I woke feeling unusually relaxed. I grabbed towel and toothbrush, opened the door – and stopped dead in my tracks. In the hall outside my room stood a woman. The woman standing outside my room held in her hand one very large, very round and very naked breast. She was studying it as one might searching a world globe for Uganda. Except she was poking and prodding her round mound as if a not-quite-ripe-enough honeydew.

I cleared my throat. She glanced up and smiled elegantly.

‘Look! Look!’ she called, aiming it towards me. I backed off a step, as though it might spew wheatgrass juice. ‘It’s – it’s – *gone!*’ she exclaimed.

‘Gone.’

‘It was there last night when I went to bed, and now – now it’s gone!’

‘Now gone.’

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‘The tumor. It’s...disappeared!!’

I was about to inquire whether she had the right one. Actually, she HAD the right one, maybe she should’ve had the left one. But before I could ask she dashed off, squealing with delight, the extended pink-eyed beacon guiding her way. Wheatgrass juice? For real?

The same day I began my first-ever fast. I would eat only a breakfast of watermelon and thereafter consume nothing but pure juice or broth or distilled water. Day one was agony, but each day that followed got easier.

‘I know you don’t like the taste of wheatgrass juice,’ Margaret said to me on day four (after exclaiming how much better I looked, and, indeed, I felt). ‘But you can always implant it, you know.’

‘Implant. In the garden?’

‘In the bathroom.’

‘Ah.’

Under Margaret’s watchful eye, I juiced a tumbler of wheatgrass strands. Then I trudged upstairs, entered a long, narrow bathroom, locked the door and poured most of the tumbler into a transparent enema bag hanging from a nail three feet off the floor. As advised, the rest I tipped into an eyeglass, placed the glass snugly to my right eye, tilted back my head – and let out a howl. The stuff burned like hell! Looking in the mirror, I was confronted by a contorted face, one eye standard, the other splotched with dark green goo as though bombarded by a sharpshooting waterfowl. I should have, at this point, realized the consequences of my next act. Right. And I should’ve bought a million shares of Microsoft when it first hit the Dow Jones.

I didn’t bother to remove my jeans, merely dropped them to my ankles. Following instructions, I got down on the floor, forehead touching carpet, knees drawn to chest, afterdeck elevated. Took hold the enema bag’s skinny hose, forced the lubricated tip into position, reached up and released the stopper. Looking at it upside down, I watched the green slop begin ever so slowly to drain out of the bag. For a proper implant, I had been informed, one was to leave the wheatgrass juice in the colon for twenty minutes. I reckoned, first time, fifteen would do. Or ten. Maybe even five.

The juice felt cold as it entered my person. More and more of it snaked inside until finally the bag on the wall hung slack.

And then it happened. And then I knew.

I’ve heard it said that in moments of utmost crisis the mind adopts a whole new attitude. Time is distorted. Thoughts become

crystal clear. From my own personal experience in that bathroom at the Hippocrates Health Institute, I can vouch this is precisely the case.

My brain now issued forth data as though in the form of amplified directive from ship's captain to crew. NOW HEAR THIS STUPID YOU HAVE EXACTLY THREE SECONDS GET THAT THREE SECONDS TO EVACUATE THE AREA BEFORE DETONATION!!!

My immediate actions were outlined before me. I had to pull out the hose, stand and, because the jeans were binding my ankles, hop to the toilet situated across the long narrow bathroom. All in three seconds. I reached back, yanked out the hose with its lubricated tip, stood up.

ONE!

Hopped three steps towards the toilet.

TWO!!

And because the commode was facing me directly, on my next and positively last hop I had to pirouette a hundred-and-eighty-degree turn in mid-air. I now leapt skywards and using my arms as rudders spun a perfect semi-circle, landing square on top the toilet just as a volcano of green slime erupted from my fundament with devastating force.

There was just one tiny problem.

The toilet lid was down.

THREEEEEEE!!!!!!



slow down...fast

FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS I've done three or four fasts annually, ranging from five to ten days. Rarely do I start out with a set duration, rather take it a day at a time. My body lets me know when it's time to quit.

My sort of fast is simple: no solid food. That's it. In the past I've done strictly water for a week and a half, but these days I concentrate on organic soy milk and juices mixed half and half with water. Do I ever cheat? You bet. A spoonful of blackstrap molasses here, a swallow of yoghurt there. I really do make a pig of myself.

First day is the hardest. The mind gremlins, adept at sniffing out a threat to their control of my body, quick rally the troops. I'll go all day without food, no problem. It's the hours before bedtime the buggers gang up and start heaving thought-bombs at me. Not just words and pictures. Smells. Kid you not, I begin to imagine enticing aromas, sometimes from the long distant past. Lamb chops? Mac and cheese? Hey guys, been vegan forty years now, remember? I do believe you have your signals crossed.

Once I crawl into bed and turn out the lights, I'm home free. Mostly. I'll have food dreams, but I'm saved by my laziness in getting out of the sack to make a peanut butter and jam sam (overlooking the fact I haven't had such since I gave up peanuts and sugar just prior to Moses' descent from the mountain). With a full twenty-four hours under my belt, though, I begin to skate. Realizing this, the gremlins

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throw up their scaly hands and let me be.

A question I'm frequently asked is, don't I suffer a lack of energy during this time? Contrary to common belief (or common BS), fasting actually gives you energy since it does away with the standard sense of weariness most of us experience through the act of dining.

The majority of people overeat. For sure I do. I'm not feeding the inner child, as the cliché has it, so much as stuffing the outer idiot. I'm fully aware I'm putting away more grub than I need – more than I want as well. And I know why I do this. With a marked dearth of love as a kid growing up, foodstuffs became a convenient replacement. Food might be a sad substitute for familial affection, but when it's the best on offer...

Conversely, fasting typically equates to punishment. ('Go to your room without dinner!') On top of this, especially to religious types, fasting is synonymous with tales of famine and treacherous want throughout biblical history.

So, yes, I can puff myself up with the knowledge I don't smoke or drink or pop pills or consume dead animals or dairy, hoorah for me. And, really, how terrible might a few extra comestibles be, especially the good, clean organic kind? I'll tell you exactly how terrible – take this simple test: How do you feel directly after eating a fair-size meal: a) like going on a five mile quick walk? Or b) like you want to, yawn, have a brief lie-down, streeetch and rest the eyes for a minute or two. Zzz.

Do I experience any problems fasting? No, but there are inconveniences. Taking in lots of liquid but no solids, I'll need to pee more than I'd like. And although I normally have increased energy during a fast, now and then I'll experience a sudden drop-off. Instead of fighting it, I've learned to simply crash out for a twenty minute power nap. But bigger hassles, you care to call them that, have nothing to do with physiology.

Fasting tends to place a blanket over my emotional defenses. I might become giddily happy for no apparent reason. Nothing wrong with that, but often this is followed up by a period of melancholy. (I've been known to weep at the sight of a beautiful sunset.) I might experience brief stabs of anger, self-pity, remorse...a rollercoaster ride of feelings normally kept under wraps. Denial freaks, take heed.

But if your normal pace of life is fast, your mind racing along with it, around the third day of fasting you'll notice a definite slowing down of both. This will last not only through the rest of your fast, but

quite likely for some days after. Enjoy.

As for why I fast, second-most reason is that my propensity for over-eating has prompted those mischievous gremlins I mentioned to creep into my bedroom at night and tighten all my waistbands. And since ninety-nine percent of apparel at my preferred haberdashers, aka charity shops, are women's gear (us fellas wear our threads till they flake into collections of lint), it makes more sense to drop a few pounds than shame myself by purchasing new, expanded-waistline trousers.

But the prime reason for fasting is that it's the one guaranteed manner of giving the poor overworked digestive track much-needed relief. It's like you're constantly driving twenty-four-wheelers through a car wash designed for Vespas. (Hint: if you absolutely disdain the notion of going totally without solids for a time, give your system a semi-rest by eating one single foodstuff each day so the weary digestive enzymes can sort themselves out. Say, nothing but apples on Monday, carrots on Tuesday, oranges Wednesday, and so on.)

Proper breaking of your culinary abstinence is essential: re-entry needs to be slow and gentle. A bit of stewed fruit or small salad. And don't wolf it down. Chew each mouthful a few dozen times and savor the juices running down your gullet. Gradually up the volume over the next couple days.

Now, if the very notion of fasting sends chills of dread up your spine, what I'm going to say next will make you feel you're sitting naked on an ice floe.

Although certainly not mandatory as an adjunct to the fasting experience, at the conclusion of every fast I have a colonic irrigation. I do *what?!?* Yep. And if you think you don't need such coz you're squeaky clean in that area of your anatomy, regular movements and all that, you just would not believe what is going on in your large intestine. But don't trust me, ask your plumber where the most gunk is in your living quarters' outgoing water system. Answer: at the very last stop, same as in your body, where it adheres to the colon walls, hardens over time and often leads to backup of the entire alimentary process – bung city. Oh, you can count calories, you can suck in your gut, you can take useless laxatives, but it's tough to go with the flow when there's no flow to go.

So a few times a year I book in for a session at my chosen colonic clinic. There's me, lying back in total comfort on a high bed, tube securely in place, warm water going in, warm water coming out,

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all safe and hygienic, and there's her, the therapist, seated alongside massaging my abdomen, both of us staring enraptured at a giant plasma TV screen affixed to the wall showing ghosts of long-ago repasts floating by.

And while I myself don't own a television, from distant memory of when I did I can assure you what we are watching is by no means the crappiest program on TV.

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the seven minute solution

stretching your way to pain-free flexibility

FIRST THING I DO upon rolling out of bed each morning is hang. There I be, in perfect simulation of my long-ago hairy ancestors, hands clasped around a horizontal aluminum rod attached just within my highest possible reach and a few inches removed from the wall. As I dangle several inches off the floor, I can almost hear the upper register of a finely tuned piano as lumbar/sacro vertebrae happily go plink-plink-plink, extending and relaxing from their scrunched-together sleep position. Ten seconds' hang and I begin the hard yards.

I lie or sit on the floor and gently push and prod joints and what passes for muscles until, like my lower back, these eighty-plus year old bits and pieces fully shake off their nocturnal stiffness and gain the flexibility to carry me through another sixteen hours of (hopefully) pain-free existence.

People will faithfully haul their car or truck into the shop for periodic servicing, change of oil and greasing those movable parts, yet won't do the same for the most important vehicle of all. Well, here's your chance to do your body some good.

What follows are groups of seven stretching exercises that take around seven minutes total. Do them slow and easy. Basically, gently push/pull to the point of pain, then continue a bit through the hurt, thus extending the pain point. In this manner, the following

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morning's pain threshold will be pushed back, enabling you to move the body part you're working on further with each passing day's workout. Except for Exercise 7, once in position maintain each pose for twenty seconds.



Exercise 1a. Of importance here is the placement of your arms. Left elbow and forearm are planted on the floor and remain thus throughout. Right leg straight. Place left foot on right knee, right hand on your left knee and gently but firmly push towards the floor. Take it as far as it will go... then a bit further. Hold twenty seconds.



Exercise 1b. Opposite of Ex. 1a: right elbow and forearm on floor throughout, right foot on extended left leg. With the left hand push right knee far as you can. Twenty seconds.



Exercise 2a. Fold your hands around the mid-to-lower part of your shin. Pull the knee slowly towards the chest. When you get the knee as close to your chest as you can, hold for twenty seconds.



Exercise 2b. Same as Ex. 2a, but opposite knee.

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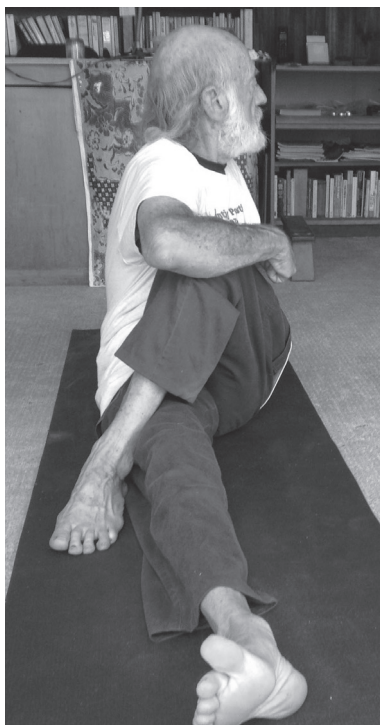
Exercise 2c. Both knees, hold for twenty seconds once in position.



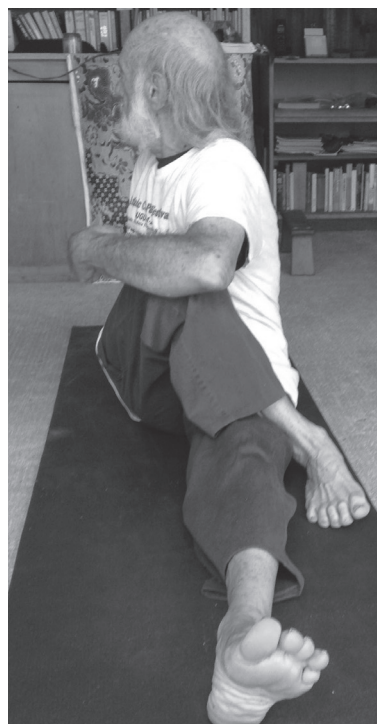
Exercise 3a. With feet flat on floor, bend both knees until they point to the ceiling. Keeping the right elbow and shoulder on the floor, roll slowly onto your left hip, then using your left hand on the right knee, gently pull both legs towards the floor. Hold for twenty seconds.



Exercise 3b. Opposite of 3a. Left shoulder and elbow on floor, roll onto right hip. Right hand on left knee, pull to floor. Twenty seconds.



Exercise 4a. Sitting up. Left hand planted on floor behind your butt (unseen in pic). Left foot flat on floor to the right of right knee. Right elbow wrapped around left knee. (If you find it impossible to extend your arm until the elbow enfolds the knee, simply cup your hand around knee.) Maintaining arm and leg positioning, gently pull the left knee to the right, at the same time twist your torso slowly around to the left. More. Even more. Focus on a spot directly behind you. Hold twenty seconds.



Exercise 4b. Taking it the other way: sitting up, right hand on floor behind you, right foot to the left of left knee, left elbow (or hand) around right knee. Slowly pull the right knee left as you twist to the right. More. More. C'mon, you sissy, MORE! Focus on a spot directly behind you. Twenty seconds.



Exercise 5a. Sitting up, legs crossed, hands on floor to either side. Slowly dip your head until your nose reaches your crossed ankles...or close as you can come. Hold twenty seconds. For those with hair styles similar to mine, you have the bonus option of renting ad space on your pate.



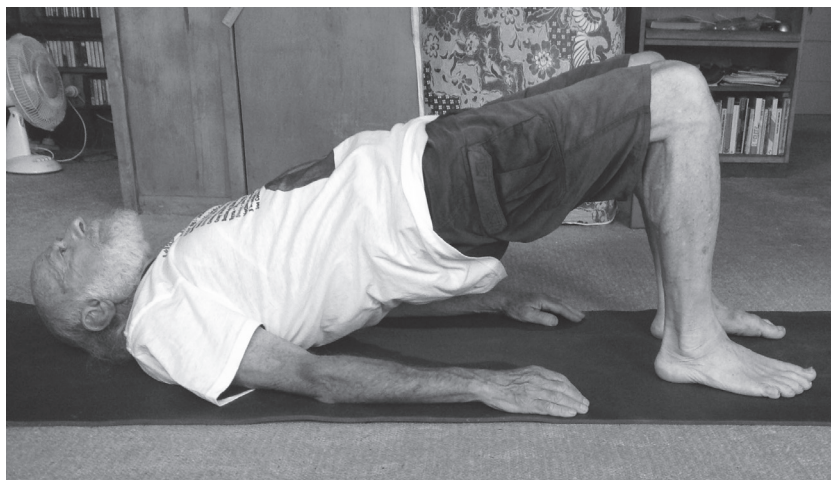
Exercise 5b. Sitting up, legs crossed. Right hand on floor, left hand either on floor or on left knee. Slowly bend your torso down to the right until your nose touches, or comes as close as you can, to the right knee. Hold twenty seconds. Yes, I agree: it helps to have a nose like mine. You people with tiny pug noses, tough tiddles.



Exercise 5c. Same as 5b except you are bending to the left. Nose to left knee or close as possible. Twenty seconds.



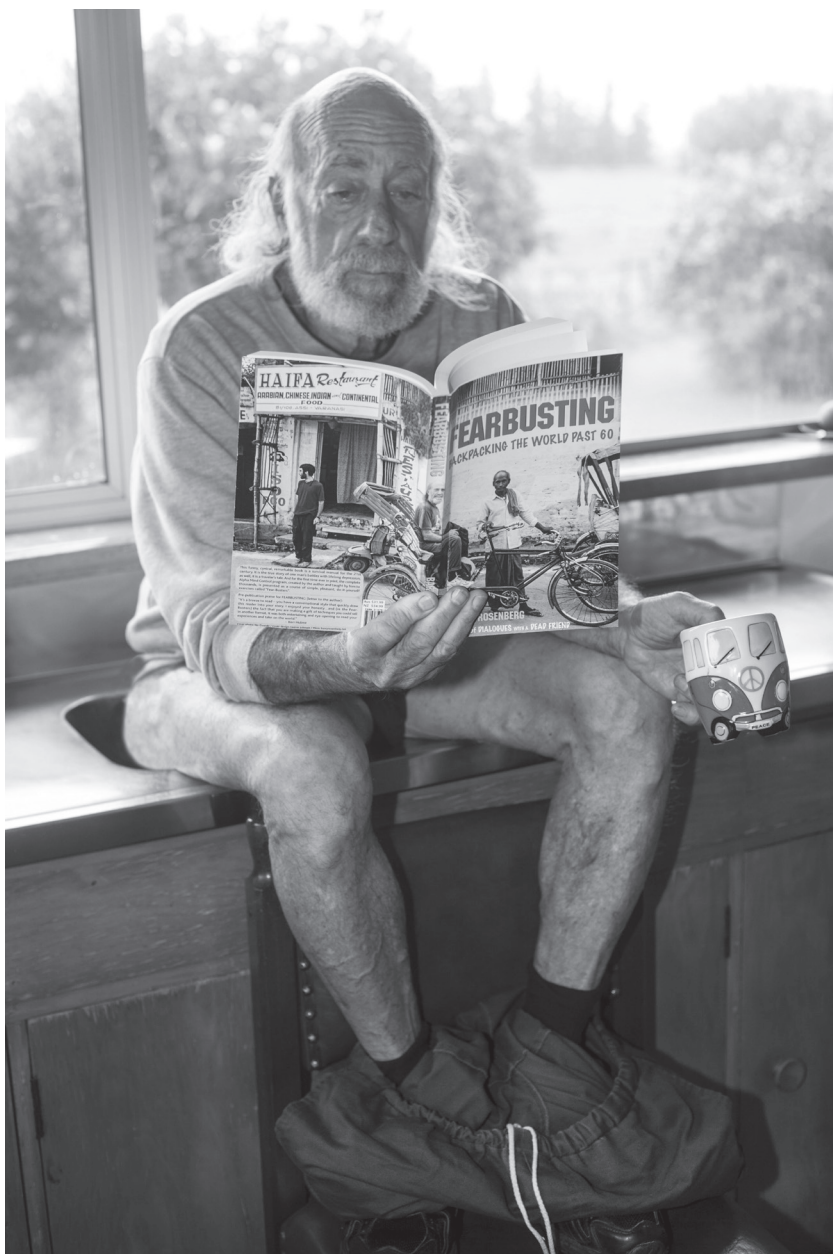
Exercise 6. Sitting up. Knees extended out to the sides, feet bottoms pressed together, heels as close to the groin as possible. Thrust chest and pelvis forward and keep them there, at the same time use both hands to pull the toes upwards and towards you. You are now a butterfly. Flap your knee-wings down towards the floor and up again for twenty seconds. If your knees touch the floor during the downward flap, terrific, but just get close as you can. Me, I can only touch one knee to the floor. (From the pic, can you tell which of my knees refuses to make floor contact?) If during this exercise you find yourself rising off the floor and hovering in mid-air, it just might be time to return to your home planet.



Exercise 7. Flat on your back, arms on floor to the side. Push down with your elbows at the same time thrust your pelvis off the floor high as you can. You have become a bridge. Hold for a two count and back down again. Slowly repeat twenty-five times.

It's important that you take it easy transitioning from horizontal to vertical. I do my stretches alongside a low table. When finished, I roll on my side and, using the table for support, slowly get to my knees, then gradually to my feet. A few deep breaths, and only when absolutely certain I'm not the least bit dizzy do I take my first steps. Suggest you do similar. And have a beautiful day. That's an order.

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let me tell you about my hemorrhoidectomy

WARNING: Contains nudity and scenes of great suffering. Squeamish Factor® = 3.78.
Adult readers should be accompanied by a teenager.

|

‘DEAR GOD, THIS IS the ugliest thing I’ve ever seen!’

That’s my former GP, now retired. Bent over as I was, my back toward him, forearms resting on the examining table, I twisted my head around, peered through the triangle of my upper arm and rib cage. His face, level with my rear deck, was sporting a five star grimace. The doc, sixties, had been practicing his trade thirty-plus years. Had seen it all. Worst of the worst. And here he was presenting me gold for ugly. Should I feel proud?

My hems had been with me, part of me, rarely forgotten, most of my years. Decades now they’d hurt, they’d itched, they’d bled. Every crap was a reminder. And because even at my age then – seventy – my alimentary system was a perfect operating device, I was reminded of their annoying presence three, four times a day. Agony be thy name.

Sure, I’d heard about the op. People who’d had it done reported

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a recovery period of such horror that I let it go. For fifty years I let it go.

‘I’ll schedule you in,’ the doc now was saying, after removing his gloved finger and reporting that my prostate was slightly enlarged but otherwise worry-free. I was about to say can’t we hold off on that (I figured after half a century, what harm could another ten, fifteen years do?) when he resumed his standard GP-ish position from which I had thoughtlessly caused him to vacate, seated before his computer, and began furiously pecking away. Not taking his eyes off the screen of his beloved prime tool of trade, he asked: ‘Private health insurance?’

‘Don’t believe in it.’

He actually stopped typing for a moment, perhaps even considered a look of consternation my way. Professional fortitude kept his eyes glued to the great tool of science before him.

‘Still, from what I know of you, you can afford to go private. I can probably get you in within a couple weeks.’

‘And if I go public?’

‘Two to four months.’

‘Public, then.’

He muttered a word that sounded strangely like he was whispering to his cat.

So I was now in the system. And the system, unlike most of those imbedded within it, never forgets.



I WOKE IN A rectangular centrifuge. Oh, how my world was spinning, spinning. This was a four-bed hospital room, and when I buzzed for the nurse to put a stop to its whirling dervishness, a four-foot tall piranha in uniform swept in. Okay, maybe she was five feet, but as mean as she was mini. And did she ever have a mouth on her. For a moment I had major regrets that I hadn’t gone private. The room did slow down, finally quit its nausea-inducing rotations, so maybe despite all the lip she pulled the plug after all.

The surgeon came by minutes later and reported all had gone well, offering me a small plastic vial with my excised parts neatly enclosed. Gee, thanks, doc. Mantelpiece for sure.

The following six weeks set new Guinness records for most painful known to man. Lots of body parts are operated upon, in most every case the instruction manuals suggest you rest the area for a

significant time. Your fundament orifice? Don't even bother. Not only did I perform the standard three, four evacuations a day, my output during this time actually doubled. The surgeon when I phoned to inquire stated emphatically such conduct was wholly unrelated to his work.

The pain of those expulsions was bad enough, but now when the brain signal came forth that a blast was imminent, I had moments, no more, to find a proper receptacle. Half the time the receptacles were anything but proper. Old guy squatting over a rapidly hand-dug concavity in the sand: what an enticing tourist poster for 'New Zealand's Most Loved Beach'.



THE HIGHLIGHT OF THIS delightful period in my existence came 4.30 one morning. Phone. I maneuvered over to the bedside table, dragging the pillow placed for comfort between my thighs. 'Grnk?' I croaked, thinking if it was a telemarketer I'd track the bastard down wherever on the subcontinent he/she might be and strangle him/her with my bare hands. A familiar female voice screamed out my name.

'Sherry? That you?' The woman who'd been house- and cat-minding while I had spent a few months vagabonding around Asia. Sherry had moved back to her own place when I returned home. 'You okay? What's the matter?'

Frantic: 'I just got a call from a friend in the States. There's been a big earthquake in the Cooks and a huge tsunami is reported coming this way. Get out of there, quick! And for god's sake, don't forget Timothy!'

Entwined in blankets, I rolled out of bed onto the floor. First thing upon finally becoming vertical was to compile a sequential mental list of duties. It was May, damn chilly at 4.30, so I worked into sweatshirt and track pants, pulled on trainers, stuffed my wallet, passport and a few other life's essentials in my pockets, ventured outside. Pitch dark. Now to find the faithful moggy. Who, being a nocturnal prowler, might be anywhere.

I hiss-pissed several minutes, loud as I could while my anxiety-based breathing grew heavier. Thinking: how fast would the tsunami be moving? Thinking: how soon will it get here? I'd heard those things can be hundreds of feet high, and whipping along near mach-one.

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‘TIMOTHY!! HELL ARE YOU!!!’ Which was when I felt something rub against my calves. The big guy was peering up at me, as though saying, Breakfast? This early? Service is finally improving.

Now, Timothy and I had an arrangement. I loved and fed him and paid the vet bills; he tolerated me. Sherry, he absolutely adored, and as yet hadn’t forgiven me for causing her departure by returning home.

I bent down slowly. Had an idea how this would play out. Which it did, exactly. Meaning by the time I grabbed him, carried him in the house and stuffed him into his carrier, then toted it outside as lively as I could manage – which was not lively at all – the dude was howling like a stricken banshee, and I was bleeding from countless deep scratches on various segments of my anatomy.

As I whizzed along the road, working to ignore the screeching from the back seat, I found it curious there were no other vehicles in sight. Nor were there lights on in the houses. Had Sherry been on the sherry, her phone call emanating from an alcohol-driven hallucination?

Up the long hill (how high above sea level was it at the top?) then turn off onto the skinny road overlooking the ocean, and I discovered why there were no cars on the road, no lights in the houses. The string of parked vehicles stretched far as the eye could see through the dim pre-dawn light. I double parked, stepped out and slowly paced down the line. People, kids, pets, chosen belongings packed each vehicle. Car radios blared, every sort of hand-held device imaginable in use, gods of the internet working overtime.

But the party going on wasn’t the main attraction. This fell to the lightening sky, the sparkling sea, mountains off to the east, seven mile beach and adjacent village below. Now, I’m well aware of the beauty of my surroundings, but I can’t remember seeing it from this position at this time of day – nothing short of magnificent.

The tsunami? Yeah, well, it did hit. Six inches high and made it all the way to the high-tide mark.

IV

THE DISTRICT NURSE came round every second day to see how I was doing.

‘You’ve got to clean yourself better,’ she would admonish, gently wiping my bottom before reapplying the makeshift diaper.

'It hurts too much to do any better!' I wailed. Whereupon she suggested that following each 'movement' (I love when medical people use euphemisms: what prevents them from saying crap or dump or even, yes, shit (horrors!) like we all know it is?), I would do well to fill a large basin or tub with hot water and Epsom salts and plunk down my exterior for several minutes.

I searched the manse but couldn't find basin or tub. However, I did have a kitchen sink, and for sure it was large enough and deep enough for the mission. So I'd pull up a chair, stand on the seat and descend into the pleasantly hot salty water. Ahhh.

Which is where I was positioned, trousers around my ankles, book in one hand, cup of herbal tea in the other, enjoying my heavenly bum-spa, when came a knock at the door. Figuring it to be one of my friends, I yelled Come in! a few times. Finally I heard the door open, but nobody appeared in the kitchen.

'Show yourself, whoever you are!' I sang out. And indeed they did. Two female Maori Jehovah Witnesses. I figured they'd most likely drop off their magazines and skedaddle; uh-uh. Indeed, sensing a rare captive audience, and realizing how difficult it is to have people actually sit and listen to their spiel, commenced to give such audience the well rehearsed sermon, omitting neither chapter nor verse, their eyes never leaving mine for the duration.

I'd loved to have been privy to their comments upon leaving, but it'd likely be little more than what they'd been trained to expect here in the lily white burbs: such middleclass self-indulgence meriting barely a raised eyebrow before the good ladies advanced on to the highly-mortgaged dwelling next door.

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drugs are bad for you; the doctors' kind I mean

ME, A HIPPOCRITE? Well, yeah, I guess.

See, it's my reckoning that doctors far too readily prescribe drugs purported to combat conditions like depression, anxiety and overweight, and people are only too eager to pop a pill than personally investigate the root causes of such health problems and work them out using such old-fashioned methods as self-discipline and native good sense. My logic behind this contention is that chemicals rarely 'cure' the conditions in question, rather conveniently stuff them in a mental drawer, and one (or both) of two things frequently happen: 1) you are taken off the drug and the condition and its symptoms return; 2) you stay with the drug and become addicted to, or psychologically dependant on, this unnatural invasion of your body.

At the same time, I believe it is imperative that street drugs not only be decriminalized, but as well legalized under strict government control and regulation. This would include an intelligent and well-serviced scheme of education, counseling and therapy. Addicts no longer would be considered crims, rather patients. If willing, they would undergo professional treatment to get off drugs; those not so willing would be supplied their drugs at minimal cost as well as

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sanitary facilities for safe injection. Here are just a few of the benefits of such a program:

Drugs would be removed from the control of criminal elements.

Since an estimated ninety percent of the cost of dealing with illegal drugs encompasses police/judicial/incarceration, the funds saved through legalization would be applied to programs for treatment and education against drug use.

Cops would be free to do the real police work for which they are trained instead of spending time busting some kid for possession of a joint.

It has been proved in studies the world over that heroin itself (as an example) does not lead to violent criminal behavior. Rather, drug-related crime stems from addicts' desperate need to obtain funds by whatever means necessary to procure their costly fix from criminal sources.

(At this point I should like to make a full confession. I, Barry Rosenberg, do no drugs of any sort, street or physician supplied, unless you count a daily multi-vitamin, a couple salmon oil caps and a magnesium tab. My last toke of weed took place thirty-five years ago, and while I admit to a dozen acid trips (over a four year period) during the hippie era, my final psychedelic excursion took place half a century back. Only times I've used a needle has been to stitch holes in my socks and pry out a splinter. There, I got it off my chest. I'm ever so relieved.)

Now, a couple important words beginning with the letter P. First is the monolithic organization known as Big Pharma (or Pharmac), a conglomerate of huge corporations which spend billions marketing drugs ostensibly for human betterment. As big corporations are wont to do, the initial goal of human betterment sometimes becomes overshadowed by a condition known as human greed. Like other purveyors of legal drugs proven to be less than beneficial to users' health (i.e. tobacco and alcohol), Big Pharma players tend to be highly competitive with one another, and will do, well, most anything to outstrip the other guys. Often they will rush to market happy pills before they are completely tested, use money and influence to quash 'unproven' natural elixirs.

(Stop right here for a moment. Can you imagine your parent/spouse/child diagnosed with an advanced cancerous growth labeled untreatable by existing medication, and, as in the US, being threatened

with imprisonment for whisking her/him off to Mexico to have a go at apricot kernels? Or bat scrotums, or orangutan boogers, or whatever in your desperate situation to preserve the life of that loved one?)

Second letter P is Portugal. Did you know this skinny Iberian state glued to the left of Spain was the first country to legalize all street drugs and treat dopers and addicts with dignity, compassion and professional guidance?

Portugal used to have a humungous druggie problem. They also had one of the most brutal police forces and inhumane judicial condemnations of users. And guess what? It didn't work. Conditions got worse and worse, cost to taxpayers higher and higher. So following years of intelligent investigation and discussion, the government in Lisbon made a gutsy move. They began treating addicts and users not as hoodlums, but as citizens with problems. This was some time back, and to date the new system has performed brilliantly. Addiction to hard drugs has plummeted. Junkies now are considered human beings with fixable hangups, and expenditures on treatment and education come nowhere near the old toss-em-in-the-hoosgow expense. Addicts, present and former, now have clean records, can get (and hold) jobs, are credits to their communities.

Then there is marijuana, a weed. Oh, for Pete's sake, legalize the damn stuff already! Everywhere. Legal or not, people are going to smoke it. Closing our eyes to such hardly makes it disappear. But, but, you are heard to cry, marijuana leads to heroin! Not a shred of evidence; none. Milk, however, obviously is truly dangerous since every single junkie at one time imbibed cow juice.

A number of countries and states, having closely observed Portugal's courageous policy, are tempted. But change is not an easy concept to grasp, especially when it involves opinions embedded in prejudicial concrete. My take is, it all begins with us: common folks, especially those genuinely suffering mental, emotional, psychological anguish over some real-time dilemma.

So cometh now the kickass approach: As one who has taught, and practiced, meditation and Alpha Mind Control for some decades, and experienced grand results, both through student feedback and my own formerly-frazzled self, why not give the natural way of applying the gifts you were born with a shot before running to the doctor for peace in a pill. Just bloody do it!

And while I'm at it, leg reared back, toes all a-tingle: Hey, doc: how about giving a thought to practicing true healing instead of pumping out those computerized scrips every fifteen minutes?



bitter harvest

I

‘THERE’S A TYPE of spider I saw when I was living in the islands. They don’t spin their own webs. What they do is wait until another spider spins one, then hide nearby. When an insect flies into the web the spider rushes in and nicks the prey before the spinner can get to it. Of course, if he gets caught, he’s got a whole heap of trouble from the one who’s done all the work.’

She takes a long drag from the hand-rolled cigarette, stares back out the window to the trees in the distance.

‘Around here there are some two-legged spiders who prefer not to do their own work. They’d rather steal the fruits of others’ labor. But my labor is what feeds my kids and pays my rates. Well, I’m not about to let anyone take from me what’s rightfully mine – not any more I’m not. And if somebody who’s trying to rob what’s mine loses a few fingers, or a hand, or a foot, I won’t feel the slightest bit of remorse.’

THEY PICKED ME UP HITCHING. Some years back this was; I was touring the country with a pack on my back.

Trevor and Beth. He did the driving and the talking. She stared straight ahead with huge blue eyes that seemed to be in a perpetual

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state of semi-bewilderment. Didn't open her mouth for more than an hour.

As we neared their town he offered: 'Come stay at our place a while. We've got plenty of room.'

I leaned forward and tapped her on the shoulder. 'Okay with you?' I brought her back from some far-off orbit. 'Oh,' she said. 'Oh well. I guess it's all right'

Their place was big and old and funky. One large room, a sort of sun lounge, had hundreds of books, good books, as well as a flute lying on the floor.

'Who's the reader?' I asked him. 'And musician?' Beth had disappeared in the car to pick up their kids down the road.

He looked around the room, as though the space might far better be filled with computers and banks of speakers.

'Not me.'

Through dinner the play continued – him raving, her gazing off somewhere. The few times she did begin to speak up, he would finish her thoughts for her. Or correct her. And she would back off.

When the kids were asleep he came into the lounge with a small plastic bag, a packet of cigarette papers, rolled a large number. She, I saw, was uneasy with all this. Trevor lit it, took several loud, gasping inhales, passed it to me. I immediately moved it on to her. As she reached out for the burning cylinder, her eyes momentarily flashed wide.

'You don't smoke?'

'Not anymore.'

'Do you mind, I mean, would it upset you?' I gave her a smile and shrug. Your house, your body. The size of her toke was astounding. She drew in enough smoke to stone half of Nova Scotia.

The following morning after Trevor had gone off to work, Beth and I had our first real conversation. For a mid-twenties young woman from a small town she had a lot cooking between the ears. It just took a shoehorn, a crow bar, to coax it out.

We got on to the topic of dope. Her nervousness the previous evening, she noted, stemmed from their having two sets of friends, dopers and straights, and being this was a highly conservative area they were careful to keep them separate.

'We've only been smoking for a few years. Shortly after we were married some friends of Trevor's turned us on. Then he got a job in the islands and we became part of a large ex-pat community there.'

Everybody was doing something to keep from being bored to death. Grog, mostly, but quite a few smokers. It was all over the place, and so cheap.'

By the time they returned home they were smoking daily. They lived in Auckland for a bit, bought their supply wherever they could. It was, she said, a proper education. Bad deals, bad dope. After one such number, when they were ripped off heavily by a supposedly close friend, Trevor and Beth had themselves a heart-to-heart:

Marijuana was part of their life.

It looked to remain so for years to come.

The city was not conducive to their needs for supply.

Not long after, they moved out of the city, bought a patch and took to growing their own.

I stayed with them a week. My last day she asked did I want to go for a short walk in the bush. We drove a ways, parked and got out. She led me with some uncertainty through the bush for half an hour. Then she stopped.

'See them?'

I looked around slowly. When she saw my frown she smiled and pointed. There. And there. And there. The familiar shape of the evil weed, thigh high, perfectly camouflaged in amongst the native growth.

'This is our second season. Last year we got enough to last us through this year's harvest. Good, eh?'

She attended to the plants with a caring, meticulous devotion. I wondered if they had names.

'The worst part of all this for me was orientation. My sense of direction was hopeless. The first time I came in without Trevor I got lost. It was a warm day and I had on just a T-shirt, shorts and trainers, and I was in here walking around in circles for hours, crying my eyes out, petrified I'd have to spend the cold night. When finally I did find my way out, I was miles up the road. But I'm heaps better now.'

She took a last look at her work before we set off.

'I get a great deal of satisfaction from them. Do you think I'm just being silly?'

A sensitive, intelligent woman who reads good books and plays the flute and has no one to communicate her thoughts with? No, I didn't think she was silly enjoying a form of creative expression that reaches out to others.



'I'D NEVER GROWN ANYTHING before, not even a veggie garden. Now after twelve years I'd match my cannabis growing talents with any in the country.

'I always listen to what other people tell me. It's my conditioning, I guess. Then I get out in the bush and something else speaks to me. Call it woman's intuition or whatever you want, but I don't know how many times I would begin to do something I'd been told, suddenly stop, and start doing it a whole other way.

'Over the twelve years I've developed three different strains of female heads. One has even lost the standard serrated, five-finger leaf appearance – it's more scalloped, and has a sort of iridescent blue color to it. All three are gentle and sweet smoking, and give the most wonderful, pleasant high. Not heavy at all, just...right.

'The way I do it now, I always plant on slopes, north-facing. I terrace the slope, dig individual holes. I put in a handful of lime and two handfuls of Garden Galore, a commercial product that uses a lot of sheep poo. Then a dessert spoon of a substance called crystal rain, which swells and holds water, meaning I can plant in dry places, and some chicken manure, the best of all animal fertilizers. When the seedling is in I'll put some trace element mix on top the soil, then sprinkle sulfate of ammonia about six inches from the plant.

'When they grow to a certain height I'll break the stems without severing them, and lay them flat. This gives a greater yield since all heads will stretch up to the light. As soon as I see the bell-shaped blossoms on the males, usually around the end of January, I'm in there every day pulling the males out before they can pollinate. That way I end up with seedless female flowers, which give both a smoother smoke and strong but gentle high.

'Then I leave the females for another couple of months. Generally early April is when I harvest. I wait till it's desert conditions, very hot and very dry, then cut all the laterals off the stems and stuff them in pillow cases and carry them out. Now comes the tricky part. Or I should say untricky part because all the unnatural ways of drying and curing I've heard about tend to give a harsh smoke. What I do is simply lay everything out flat on a sheet in the sun for five days.

'Storage is important, because even in air-tight plastic bags the dope can turn to compost. What I do is exactly what I used to watch mum do when I was a girl: put it in clean, hot preserving jars, pack it

in tight and seal. Then I can bury them, dig them up a year later and the dope is still fresh. I've never had any go off that way.'



TWO YEARS WENT BY before I visited them again. Trevor had been made redundant and all attempts at finding work were futile. Beth looked considerably older; that is, she now looked her age where before she might've passed for seventeen.

Something else had changed. When she began to talk Trevor still slid in and took over, and she would still back off and give him his space. Until an appropriate moment when she would ease herself into his flow, whereupon the both of them would talk cacophonously for a bit until he sputtered and went silent.

And where before they had been primarily after-dinner-and-the-kids-are-in-bed dopers, there seemed to be a number going throughout the day. Nor did they pass one between them. Each to his – and her – own.

One morning she drove me to the bush, only a different part. She appeared to have her bushcraft skills well together as we penetrated deeply within, following no set trail that I could see. I had no trouble spotting the plants this time. Cages, three of them, made out of black plastic netting and staked into the ground, enclosed a score of healthy plants.

'Possums,' she explained. 'They discovered the plants last year and cleaned us out of more than half before we put the cages in. They're real buggers. They'll climb up on top, try to cave in the netting, and dig up the corners. This season we had to carry everything in after dark and work all night setting up.'

As we walked back out she said, 'There's another problem. Trevor's become paranoid. He won't come in anymore. Ah well, never mind. Once the cages are set up I'd rather be here by myself anyway. I've really come to love the bush, and I love being here with my plants. With him home now, this is where I spend most of my free time.'

As I spent the next few years overseas, we did not get to see each other for a while. She did take to writing, and I enjoyed those wonderfully expressed reports and cartoons. Then one evening – this was five years down the road from our first encounter – she rang up.

'Well,' she sighed, 'add another number to the rising toll of

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solo mums on the DPB.’ She and Trevor had split. More specifically, Beth booted him out. The news came as no shock.

‘For some time I tried to make ends meet on a fortnightly benefit check. Oh my, did I learn what that’s about in a hurry. After paying the mortgage, rates, insurance, power and phone, I had exactly ninety-six dollars a week left. Then the car crapped out and of course things were always going wrong with the house.

‘I tried to get work, anything at all, but there was absolutely nothing to be had out our way. I began borrowing off my parents, but they’re pensioners so how long could I justify doing that? Then one day the penny drops. “What do you do best, Beth?” I asked myself. “What product that you have become so adept at creating has a great demand and very high return?”

‘I worked out the morality part right off. Not a problem. Marijuana is a recreation drug, certainly no more harmful than beer or grog. I wouldn’t be selling on the street, and those I’d have as clients I could trust to pass the dope on only to responsible adults.

‘Legally I was already a felon simply by possessing my own personal supply from one harvest to the next. What did I have to lose?’

IV

I CAME IN FROM a walk one autumn day and there she was. Again, she’d changed markedly. She was thirty-two or thirty-three now, and had an air of confidence I hadn’t seen before. She was dressed in a conservative business outfit, and wearing more makeup and jewelry than I’d known her to. Outside was a white SUV, five years old but still pretty flash.

‘I’m just another career woman,’ she laughed. ‘A sales rep making my deliveries.’

This had been her finest growing season ever, she said. ‘The goddesses Shiva and Sativa have smiled down upon me.’

She went outside to have a smoke – she knew I didn’t like it in the house – and when she returned her talk was of business.

‘I have a whole network now. Some are dear friends, others just acquaintances, but all of them I feel positive about. And all kinds of people, in a number of cities. There’s a doctor who deals only to other doctors, a couple of lawyers, business people, and some unemployed too. What I’ve found, actually, is there’s a lot more trust from my male clients because I’m a woman.’

I asked about the mechanics of the exchange.

‘Easy. All deliveries are made in person. No shipping, no middlemen. And I never take money from them directly. That’s done through the post – to a PO box in a town some distance from home. Plus I give credit to whoever needs it. This is my third year, and I haven’t had a single hitch.’

She did everything on her own, she said, except for the initial construction of the cages.

‘After Trevor left I had help from a local guy who grows his own, but last year I began to get strange vibes from him. So I told him I wasn’t doing it any more, then rang up a few women friends I supply and said, ‘All right, girls, get on your overalls and wellies and come over for a working bee.’ And we girls built us a cage the All Blacks could play in. So the product I have just finished delivering is strictly female dope grown strictly by females.’

Her take for the year, Beth told me, would be close to forty thousand dollars.

‘I’ll finally get all the things in the house fixed, buy the kids the new clothes I’ve been promising them, plus a toy or two for myself. I’ve wanted a decent flute for yonks. Then I plan to drive over to social welfare, walk in and say, ‘Thanks, I no longer need your down-the-nose sneers and paltry handouts.’ I haven’t figured out yet just what I’ll tell them my income’s derived from, but I’ll think of something. I’ll be so happy to be rid of that lot!’

It never happened. When I drove across the island to spend a few days with her last year, she looked terrible. She’d experienced a relationship breakup, had been in hospital twice, and had lost a frightful amount of weight. New lines had formed in her face. She seemed to be smoking more than ever.

‘Well, there I was, abandoned by my lover, a lump on my breast, totaled the car, and learned mum had cancer of the cervix, all in the space of two months. But you know how it is, you search for the ray of sunshine in amongst the gloom.

‘I’d been too sick to visit my garden in nearly a fortnight, and it was just about time to begin pulling out the males before they could pollinate. I got to my spot in the bush and thought, Aw, that’s a bit odd. Have I been away that long I don’t remember where my cages are? Then I saw a single trap with a dead possum in it. That was all that was left of my garden. More than a hundred plants, gone. My cages, gone. Even the possum traps, except for this one, gone. The culmination of twelve years of work.

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‘I just sat down and cried and cried. Had there been a gun handy I most likely would have used it. What made it extra tragic was that those plants were no good to anybody, not really. They couldn’t be replanted, and smoked as they were, so immature, they’d be too harsh to enjoy whatever high they might give.

‘I honestly don’t know whether somebody found it by accident, or a bunch of people purposely conducted a grid search of the entire bush. Hardly matters, does it?’

V

WHEN LAST I SAW her, early this year, Beth had another garden going in another bush in another area. She didn’t offer to take me there, nor did I ask. She did say she had built a number of small cages rather than a single large one because she had done all the work herself and there was no way she could carry large rolls of netting such a distance.

‘There are four P’s involved in the marijuana business,’ she said. ‘Possums, poachers, police and paranoia. I’ve had more than my share of three, thankfully none of the fourth.

‘What strikes me most about all that’s happened is how warped a society is where it’s perfectly fine to get pissed on chemicalized beer that rots your liver but you can buy legally down the pub, but a natural plant is considered so heinous you have to sneak deep into the bush to grow it, then have some bastards rip you off and there’s not a flaming thing you can do about it.’

The number in her hand had reached its nub. She tamped it out in an ashtray, took some paper from the small gold packet, then reached absently into the plastic bag nearby and began to roll herself a fresh one. Dope from someone else’s garden. An inferior product she had to pay for.

‘I’ve set more traps than usual this year,’ she said as she sent a cloud of bluish-grey smoke into the air. ‘Not all of them are meant for possums.’

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running the world, one step at a time

THE PHONE WAS SCREAMING its bells off as I came lumbering up the steps. My head cried forget it, you've just run a dozen miles, let the blasted thing ring itself hoarse, but the legs kept on pumping and I grabbed it just as the caller was about to hang up. A friend, with connections on the European charter flights circuit. Had a seat on a plane to Zurich. Exhausted, covered with sweat now dripping onto the carpet, I tried to piece it out. This was Philadelphia, summer of '78. I had driven east from San Francisco some weeks before to see family and friends and planned in a few days to head back to California.

'It's a hell of a deal,' I heard him say. 'Only thing, you have to be at the airport by five.'

'Today?' I glanced at the clock. Twenty after twelve. 'Impossible, out of the question.' Pause. 'How much?'

'Ninety-nine dollars.'

Following afternoon the same time I was standing with backpack looking out on the Lake of Konstanz, otherwise known as the Bodensee. Never could turn down a bargain.

But the story, the real story, began the summer before. I was not in good shape. Walk half a mile and I'd be winded, my legs shaky. And that was downhill. I was rapidly approaching forty. The big four oh. Mid-life crisis time. Scary.

I climbed into my VW bus one fine day and drove to an athletic field I had previously spotted driving through an African American

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neighborhood. My normal garb already was sweatshirt, track pants and gym shoes, so I simply parked a couple streets away, stepped out and moseyed over to the oval quarter-mile running track.

I huffed and puffed halfway around the track until I realized I just didn't have it to make the full circuit at this pace. I slowed from a jog to a trot, trot to a shuffle. Became a walk. Became nothing as my calves had turned to stone.

A number of teenagers sitting on a rise just off the field began catcalling this middleage dude with long hair and beard. When I flopped down on the ground with a hundred yards to go, the wails and peals of laughter came ringing down on me. Normal times in a normal world, I'd ask one of them to please fetch the VW, toss over the keys. Here? I had little choice but to crawl off the field and along the sidewalk, the kids following me in a torrent of cackles. By the time I got to my vehicle a decision had been made. Like the skinny guy on the beach who got sand kicked in his face by the bigger dude and took to pumping iron as result, I used this humiliating experience to ratchet up my determination: I would get myself in condition.

In little more than a month's time, I was running the eight-mile Nike trail outside Berkeley five, six mornings a week, sprinting the final couple hundred yards. Came winter I moved north to Eugene, Oregon, the runningest town in America, where people are born with waffle-sole feet. By spring I was legging ten to twelve miles most every day and doing a marathon every couple of months. My body had firmed up, my wind was fantastic, even my skin took on a sheen I had never before known. Now, late August, here I was nearly halfway round the world.

First thing I did upon settling into a tiny rented flat in the picturesque town of Rorschach was reach in my pack and pull out the shorts and running shoes; in minutes I was hoofing merrily along the shore of the beautiful Bodensee. Hardly half a mile out, it occurred to me something was, ah, different. In SF and Eugene, even in Philly, a man running is hardly subject for a second glance. Switzerland, a man running, a man with a nearly twelve-inch beard and hair tumbling down his back running, was news. People sitting at lakeside stood to get a better view. Cars tooling along the adjacent road slowed to standstill. Rouge-cheeked old ladies fell into slack-jawed stupor. The ducks waddled out of the water and quacked uproariously. I mean, everybody!

Back at the flat an hour later I peered at myself in the mirror.

I was, by god, truly an anomaly. This is the straightest, staidest of all lands. The Swiss are neatness junkies, worshippers of order, OCD'd to the max. Housewives dress up formal to shop the supermarket. Non-conformity is non-existent.

Took a long hot shower and still felt dirty. Made a concession. Grabbed a pair of shears and tapered the beard to a six-inch stubble, pared the tresses at shoulder length. Forget it. To the Swiss I would always be a freak in underwear.

For a month I continued to attract the stares, the glares, the ogles whenever I ran, but at the same time a very important purpose was being served. In the year ahead I was to encounter peoples who would make the Swiss appear totally unresponsive. This, then, was my training as an around the world runner; without such groundwork surely I never could've contended with the gaping, goggling masses to come.

September I hitched south through the Alps. I had no intention of stopping in Italy, a country I'd toured extensively on prior occasions, rather would travel straight through to the ferry to Greece. Second morning out I opened my eyes just as dawn was breaking. The train was stopped at a station. Outside a sign read Firenze. Suddenly I was wide awake. Firenze – Florence: my favorite city in all humanity. On impulse I grabbed my pack and climbed down off the train. On second impulse I went into the men's and changed into running gear, then stashed my bag. And therein made one of the great discoveries of a lifetime.

The town was gray, soundless, without movement. Even the air, not as yet fouled by auto and industry, was crisp, clean. Down cobblestoned, narrow, winding alleys through the Piazza della Republica, along the brown waters of the river Arno, across the Ponte Vecchio, past the Palazzo Pitti up to the Piazzale Michelangelo, back across the river, the Duomo, Uffizi, through the market place as the first sleepy vendors arrived to set up their stalls – often the only sounds to complement the joys of earliest morning sight and smell being the clop-clop-clopping of my own shoes. Yet by the time I had finished my hour and a half jog, Florence was an entirely different spectacle than at the start: awake, alive. Bellissimo!

Back at the Piazza della Stazione, a quick sponging down in the toilet and change of clothes preceded a hop aboard a train headed south. Behind me, a city's morning traffic was just unfolding. In precisely this manner would I tackle, without map, book or guide, a

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dozen of the world's major cities in the year ahead. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, like running through a town or city while the town or city is not yet awake.

BY THE TIME the ferry docked at the little Greek island of Paros, summer was over and the hordes of tourists had returned home. Still, it was evident the tiny pearl of the Aegean I had discovered some years back had become corrupted beyond repair. For a week I sat at tavernas bitching about the effects of progress until, bored by my own lamentings, I went out for a spin.

For several days I dawn-ran on the main road by the sea. Then one morning I cut up a donkey trail back into the hills. And here, after a mile or more, lay tucked away the Greece I first fell in love with, the laid-back Greece no longer found at water's edge. Where a stop by a tiny farm and the pidgin-Greek greeting of 'Kalee maira! Nehro, parakalo?' produced not only the requested glass of water, pure and cold, but invariably as well a load of juicy grapes, figs and pomegranates, plus the warmth and hospitality of a people with hearts the size of mountains. You might have thought I was Hermes, returned from antiquity with racing-stripe shorts and elastic headband.

Once the border into Turkey is crossed, the tone of Greek conviviality segues abruptly to a pulsating heaviness. And when you cross the Bosphorus, welcome to the wild west of Asia, stretching five thousand miles through magnificently landscaped arid expanse. I befriended two twentysomething Americans encountered at Istanbul's famous Pudding Shop, a male and a female though not a couple, and the three of us spent nearly a month traversing the continent in the male's '71 VW van.

The very presence of a Westerner in these parts, we learned quickly, is apt to attract a crowd. A bearded Western jogger can in minutes generate a minor multitude. And said jogger in the company of a woman jogger, a woman with T-shirt pasted to unbridled Western breasts and abbreviated shorts pouring forth pillars of hot naked Western flesh... So we agreed to curtail our running until we hit a far more laid back India in a few weeks. At least, I thought we'd agreed.

Rural eastern Turkey, aka Deadwood Gulch, c. 1840. Richard, the male, and I were outside the van, squatting before our tiny camping stove, fashioning a decidedly basic breakfast when Sondra, the female, climb out of the vehicle with the familiar tight T and shorts I thought she had retired for the remainder of the journey.

'You're not!' cried Richard.

'You're not!' cried Barry.

'I am!' cried Sondra, a hardline feminist who took no guff from any male alive. And off she went.

We lads watched her moving off, getting smaller and smaller as she hit a bit of a hill then slowly disappeared on the other side. We looked at each other, shrugged and returned our attentions to the pot of boiling muesli. But not for long. For yonder at the bit of a hill, Sondra reappeared, going full tilt. First her head was visible, then top half of her torso, then the rest of her torso, then her legs, then around fifty males who, we later learned, were working at an unseen construction project a few hundred yards along the road. The males were wide-eyed, their tongues hanging out like a pack of Wile E. Coyotes in rut.

We quickly shut down the cooker, tossed everything in the van. Richard ran around to the driver's side, started the engine. I was about to jump in the passenger seat, thought better of it, climbed in the back as the VW roared into life and screeched off, fishtailing down the uneven road. Richard adroitly veered onto the verge and I held on for dear life, feet braced and an arm stretching as far out the open sliding door as I might. As we passed a frantic Sondra, somehow I clasped my hand around her wrist and pulled with all the strength I could muster. But Sondra was no lightweight, and for a few moments I just couldn't get her inside the vehicle. She had reversed her direction, running alongside the van. I screamed for Richard to stop, but the battalion of randy males were nearly upon us, so stop he could not. With one final, everything-I-had yank, somehow I got enough of her inside that her feet no longer were making contact with the ground as Richard barely missed plowing into the hungry horde. One of the men grabbed onto Sondra's foot and a tug of war between him and me ensued. Just as it appeared he would peel her out of the VW, her shoe came off in his hand and he tumbled backwards, away from the vehicle. As we lay entwined on the floor of the bus, both of us struggling to catch breath, the dear soul's first words to me were, 'Look what you've done! These were brand new Reeboks! You have any idea how much they cost!'

That we survived the crushing mass of macho madness was no more a miracle than one bestowed upon me some days later in Iran. It was a chilly early morn in Teheran when I tiptoed out of our shared budget hotel room and out into the street. I really felt cold in tee and shorts, so I crept back into the room and grabbed my down parka, the one makes you look like the Michelin Man. I must have done around

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five miles when I entered a small square in the middle of the city. Was about to move through and out of the square when I came to an abrupt halt. The most extraordinary sight I have ever encountered was blocking my way.

There were women. A lot of women. Thousands of women, no exaggeration. All in black, head to toe. They were marching shoulder to shoulder and rank upon rank into the square emitting that top-volume, high-pitch ululation that sends chills up the spine. This was during the last days of the shah, a distinguished looking figurehead despot fronting for American political and business interests in the country. These women represented a defiant movement against the man, and the country backing him.

I took a step back, another. Yet another before I turned to make a hasty retreat. That's when I saw the only other way out had another force on the move: a phalanx of government tanks, their guns straight out horizontal, pointed directly at the advancing women. And who was the meat(head) in the rapidly closing sandwich? Yep, one soon-to-be squashed-flat Rosenberg.

While the main part of me went into full panic mode, another part performed a curious but decidedly smart move. Without thinking, I quickly peeled off the down parka, which at the time was known worldwide as an American garment, one which at this moment obviously contained within a specimen of the hated foe. As I took backward steps, first in one direction, then the other, I managed to twist the parka into a ball which fit easily in my hand. Now the play was to get the hell out of there. But how? There were no side streets. All the shops were boarded shut in anticipation of the two advancing armies, one, all those long guns sticking out, very symbolically male, the other female, no symbolism necessary. I looked for an alley. There were none. The two elements grew closer, the eerie, deafening sounds of the women ringing in my ears, in my head. What should I do, throw up my hands? Fall on my knees? I danced back and forth, probably because I was worried I might pee myself and wouldn't that be ever so embarrassing before all those women.

And then I saw it.

Not quite an alley, simply a narrow space between two buildings, almost obliterated by weeds and vines. At first I couldn't see myself able to penetrate, but twisting and turning got me through with no more than a few scrapes and scratches on legs and arms. Where it led, this skinny zigzag passage I had no idea, but I doubted

that thousands of ululating women and scores of ugly tanks would consider following me. I took a few steps and then stopped. Why? Because it occurred, as thoughts will at the craziest of times, that I was no more than several feet away from a most historic event. Maybe the whole world wasn't watching, but I could be. What an opportunity for one such as me, a writer! I dithered for some moments. Then two of the prime elements of my being, one being creative curiosity, the other abject fear, collided. Through the narrow aperture I could see the tanks, the many, many women all in black, come together. There was a booming of big guns, whether directly at the women or above their heads in warning, I could not discern. My decision was made.

'How was your run?' Richard and Sondra wondered as I came into the room, my heart pounding, concerned not in the least that they were snuggled together under the blankets.

'Ah, you know. One morning run is like all the rest.'

IT WAS NOT FEAR upon which my inactivity over the next several weeks was based. In neighboring Afghanistan I developed the world-renowned Kabul stool, and for the following moon all running was confined to the exit ramp of my alimentary canal. First solid evidence was not forthcoming until a fortnight into India: so overwhelmed with relief was I that I seriously considered having it bronzed.

Running in India, I found, is a blessing beyond the obvious physical rewards. For here, while certainly less a bodily threat than their kin to the west, the locals present to the visitor a hassle of equally infuriating proportion. In numbers that extend almost beyond comprehension, they come at you unceasingly, indefatigably – hotel hustlers, tourist shop touts, self-mutilated beggars, and, perhaps worst of all, a rising middle class citizenry which sought to acquire anything at all made of that most precious of materials, plastic. But though they are a race of tireless walkers, Indians were rather unaccomplished runners, and even at my gait – a bit of a head-fake here, hip-juke there – and you're past them, free until the next onslaught of human leeches. Trouble is, the oppressive heat and a steady diet of flaming grease made long distances untenable. Until one afternoon, while loping along a skinny road outside the city of Agra, I gained access to an ancient Hindu elixir capable of making marathoners of us all.

Passing a chai (tea) shop, I was beckoned by a group of cheerful young men. In need of a breather I stopped and entered, whereupon

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one of them immediately handed me a drink. Took a sip; another. Taste was pleasantly sweet, refreshing. What is it? I wondered, downing the glass.

‘Banana bang lassi,’ my man replied with this cheek-splitting grin. The others, beaming similarly, head-wagged their approval of my palatability.

No sooner had I finished when another was placed in my hand and, in the interest of replenishing my spent liquids, poured it on down. Wasn’t until after the third such glass it hit me. Banana bang lassi. Lassi is liquid curd, sweetened with jaggery. Banana is banana. Bang is the Indian reference to a medicinal herb known as *cannabis sativa*. I was fried, Jack. An hour later, suddenly remembering my mission, I left my comrades and took again to the road. I ran so effortlessly I could hardly believe my legs were mine. I looked down to check and – oh shit, they weren’t mine! But if these weren’t my legs, whose legs were these coming up out of my shoes? And did whoever’s legs I had on have my legs? Such were the questions of mortal existence I pondered as I ran and ran and ran for the remainder of the afternoon and on into the evening.

I came to a roundabout. If I went left, I would be taking the road back to my hotel. Right was this building called the Taj Mahal. I had been in Agra the best part of a week. I had not paid a visit to the Taj, and had vowed not to. How come? Because I’m a traveler, I am not a tourist! I go where the muse and the winds take me! I do not go to some three-star edifice created by man and flocked to by overseas visitors cramming their heavily itinerized ten days into as many events as they could snap pictures of! Got it?

I aimed for the offshoot road to the left, but for some reason jogged past it, but as well ran past the branch leading to the TM. Again I did this, round and round; a third time. And then, inexplicably, I finally took the path leading to the Taj.

Things are different now, way different. But back then you bought not one, but two tickets at two separate kiosks. Total cost: eighteen cents. (You now need to take out a second mortgage on your home back home. Indians finally caught on that dummy tourists will pay through the nose to selfie themselves in front of a world wonder, and charge a bankroll.)

I was grumbling to myself that this foolishness on my part could be blamed on the banana bang lassi and never in a million years were I straight and sober would I. And that’s where the sentence in

my head stopped dead. Because through an archway now stood the most incredible sight ever. Look, if all the simians at all the laptops could fashion a Shakespearean drama, then in all of human history a Taj Mahal might appear as evidence of humanity's not completely misaligned brain wiring. All I can say is, mortgage your home back home and see it. And if it doesn't strike you as the apogee of human existence, have yourself a few tumblers of bang lassi.

As I stood there under the archway goggling, Indian families bumping into me as they entered past, the sky behind the Taj slowly darkened, which made the TM itself appear to grow whiter. And whiter. Until it became the whitest thing ever...ever.

(I returned twice more before I left Agra. Bang-free both times. It was not quite the same, even on the full moon, which is billed to be a magical experience. Magnificent, but not quite the same. I render no advice on the state of mind one should be of when viewing this sight. Just, as they say, sayin'.)

From India I bused north to Nepal, and it was here I came upon the world's most elaborate long-distance running track. In a land so poor the only cars at the time being either taxis or diplomatic; where ninety-nine percent of international vehicular traffic was either directly into or out of the capital city of Kathmandu; in this wretchedly poor, backward country had one of the Major Powers, in a fit of magnanimous commitment to its underprivileged Third World brother, constructed a four lane ring road around said capital city. At the time it was the only four lane road in Nepal. At its most heavily trafficked sector, at the most heavily trafficked time of day, you might back then count half a dozen vehicles an hour. So far as I know, I hold the course record. To tell you the truth, though, the competition really wasn't all that stiff.

So I ran in Nepal, though not a lot, and later on I ran in Ceylon, which had been renamed Sri Lanka and called such by everybody except the Ceylonese, and here I ran even less, maybe once or twice a week. Sometimes a week would go by I didn't run at all. I knew the reason why too. It's called travel fatigue, and everyone who's been on the road an extended time catches it. You begin asking yourself dumb questions, like what the hell am I doing here? And in Sri Lanka, where mangoes then were three for ten cents and you could get a huge dinner for maybe thrice that, I detected a bubble forming, or re-forming, in the area of my navel. Clearly, it was time to head home and get back on the road.

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In Korea, I had four hours before my connecting flight to L.A. Normally the transient is forced to remain within the airport sanctuary, but I was determined to enter one final stamp in my runner's passport and begged the immigration people into granting me liberty.

It was raining. Which, along with the smog, auto fumes, industrial pollution and overall ugliness of an Americanized Oriental city of mega millions, made the very idea of running through Seoul in mid-afternoon a flat-out insanity. Luckily, I have vast experience living with a madman.

For nearly two hours did I jog, gulping into my aerobic system a cubic ton of assorted toxins. Soaked to the quick, I decided finally to call it a year. Problem: which way's the airport? I asked around. And got directions. Lots of directions. No two alike. Asia. And no matter which way I ran, the damn airport seemed to be getting further and further removed. Check-in time was growing uncomfortably close. It occurred to me that if I missed my flight, a reduced-fare excursion, I just might be hit with a big fat add-on for a regular ticket. Panic. A definite motivating force for accelerated movement, but performs little or no service for the sense of direction. Beaten, I threw in the sponge. And hailed a taxi.

Delivered thus to the finish line, I emerged amongst the throng of impeccably manicured, fashion horse Koreans, far more a sight to be seen than a sightseer. I took a deep breath, straightened my suit, and smartly walked, not ran, to the appropriate check-in counter.

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soul

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talking dirty is good for your soul

MY LAST PARTNER could not say the F word. My last partner died of ovarian cancer. Is there a correlation? Probably not. Still...

This beautiful, super-fit woman, a champion triathlete, was prime product of a highly repressive English culture. Lots of rules. Heaps of things one shouldn't do. Or say. That she hooked up with a Yank Jewboy, offspring of a culture where, like the early 3D movies, everything not nailed down gets thrown at you, might seem enigmatic, but let's dig a little deeper.

The gorgeous Anita subconsciously wanted to break out of her cultural mummification, so chose me as the mate who might help her do so. (For sure I'd never have the cheek to seek out a woman who looked like she just stepped out of a Playboy centerfold.) To her I was a free soul who spoke, wrote and did whatever was on his mind. But no way could I penetrate that stifling upbringing, nor, in truth, did I care to. I loved the woman for who and what she was – though it was often teeth-gnashingly frustrating. I'd bray at her, 'Damn it, woman, just bloody go for it!' Which worked absolute wonders in alleviating her timidity.

To me, her condition was personified by the F word. 'Nobody around, only you and me,' I would plead. 'You love Billy Connolly and

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he uses it all the time. Go on, say it. Place your two front teeth on the lower lip and –' Riiight.

Late one night we went skinny-dipping in the sea just beyond my patch. That is, I went skinny-dipping. Funny old dude with a bod looks like it was assembled out of disparate parts acquired from bins at the recycling station. She, a virtual parody of sculptured womanhood the sight of whose framework made me weak-kneed even after a couple years together, needed to cover up. Sigh.

Following our nocturnal plunge, we stood dripping on the beach, and again I exhorted her to say the forbidden word. 'Yell it out,' I beseeched her. 'After which we'll pretend we're terrorists, wrap towels around our faces and run like hell for the house.' I even offered to provide the fff sound, all she'd have to do was a follow-up uck. Nup.

Of course, it wasn't limited to that word. This single syllable simply was symptomatic of how she lived her life: repression, denial, abnegation.

You might have worked out that sheilas and blokes are somewhat different. Sure, there's been a softening of these differences in recent years. Still, us fellas continue to physiologically accrue our stresses in the general area from neck to mid-chest, females in the lower abdominal/genital region. And nothing – nothing – is more stressful than a lifetime of self-repression, which manifests as layers of ugly until one day the blood cells just throw in the sponge and go berserk. Heart attacks for us males, malignant tumors for the ladies.

Now, historically the British have an awful lot to answer for. Indiscriminately invade a country, set up their own government, steal the natural resources, subjugate the natives. Bad enough, but the very worst number the Brits ever pulled had to do with language.

Back during the days of Queen Vic, the authorities in England imprisoned untold citizens they deemed undesirable. Because there were many who had broken no laws, the Brits created one with sweeping effect. They termed this 'For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge'. Since everybody over the age of, say, ten has some carnal knowledge, a host of people were affected.

In time, the acronym of this highly questionable legislation became a buzzword in the worst sense. Thus the F word, the true definition of which means the act of making love, as well as – good lord! – making babies. Yet over the years it has become an appalling expression, not merely in English, but virtually every language worldwide. People, good people like my beloved Anita, became unable even to state it aloud.

And you know something? I can understand this overwhelming reluctance. The sound, the very vibration, of the word is dark, heavy, foreboding. One thinks immediately of a male, large and brutish, covered with tats. His name might be Buck, or Chuck. Drives a battered old truck. He's stuck, down on his luck, up to his neck in muck. Yuk!

Had the English back then possessed a modicum of art in their hearts, a smidgeon of poetry in their souls, they might easily have avoided generations of verbal oppression simply by substituting a synonym in the law's name.

For *Illegal Carnal Knowledge*.

'Fick' is light, gentle, open...cheerful. Chap's name might be Mick, or Nick, or Rick. He's a good old stick. Doesn't miss a trick. Help you out in a tick.

A dear sweet gran stubs her toe getting out of bed, cries, 'Oh, fuck!' No one bats an eye.

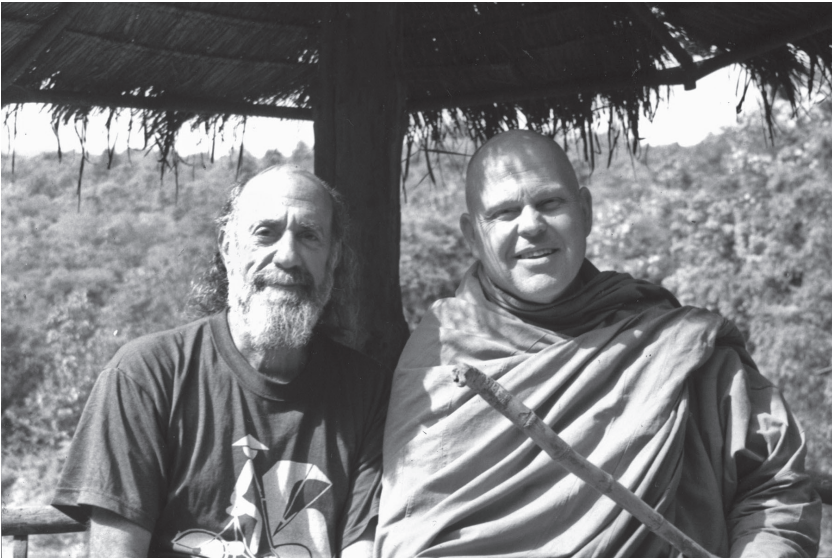
Mom kisses her kiddies at the door. 'Have a fucking good day at school, darlings!' Not a problem.

The PM herself uses it in Parliament. Nobody shrinks back in horror. No bleeps on prime time TV. Priggish editors needn't deplete their supply of silly asterisks.

For sure, it would lift the dark veil of self-repression to feel free to say the word out loud without fear of societal tut-tutting. And possibly, just possibly, such alleviating of rigid self-control might prevent a case or two of the devastatingly awful Big C.

I'll tell you this: ever I'm elected the first Jewish pope, my first papal decree will be encouraging citizens to engage in a little dirty talk. Because it's fucking good for your soul.

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when Buddha wept

sometimes compassion ain't what it used to be

CALL YOURSELF A TRAVELER? Nah, you're not a traveler. Admit it, you're a tourist!

What, leave home without planning every minute of your trip? Choose accommodation by gut feel, or walk cold into an overseas restaurant without checking its star count on Trip Advisor? Yo, why do you think the baby Jesus created smartphones!

Okay, I shall now let you in on the secret of my generally sound state of health. Meditation? Vegan diet? Exercise? Sure, they've all helped. But what has done me the most good is strapping on a medium-size, fifteen pound backpack two, three times a year, then, minimum of planning, shooting off on a journey. Can you do it? Would you? Or do you break out in hives just contemplating the what-ifs? Well, shame on you coz I reckon backpacking the world freestyle is the absolute best thing a person can do for mind, body and spirit.

Quicky quiz: Name the first backpacker on record. Give up? Why, the Buddha of course. Young Siddhartha Gautama left the comforts of home – wealthy loving family, brilliant tutors, security – and hit the road to discover what life was about. And for sure he did just that.

A couple millennia later I, too, abandoned the comforts of home – sofa, TV, junk food – to cut a similar path of discovery. Did

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I succeed? Oh, no question. I discovered bed bugs in Afghanistan, blocked-up crappers in India, apathetic guest house staff, surly border officials and intestinal parasites everywhere. Many a time did I hear myself uttering the Buddha's legendary line: all life is suffering!

But it wasn't always like that, and for this I had the Buddha himself to thank because by the time I first hit Asia there already existed numerous temples and monasteries on the backpackers circuit. These were laid-back oases where you could hang out for a week or six, do some meditation, scoff down primo veg food, and listen to clued-in bald bods called bhikkus and venerables, lamas and rinpoches, talk up the Buddha's choicest words. All on the cheap.

Best thing, to me, was the easy-going camaraderie amongst the 'packers. There was little we didn't share: food, music, dope, stories. And boy, did we ever take to the Buddha. To our way of thinking, he was the sharpest cat ever. (As example: the sharpest whitey ever broke down the mind into three primary components. The Buddha, eighty-five *thousand*.) Even more important to us roadies was his scoring of heart over head: the Buddha's main theme, first, last and always, was... *compassion*.

My most memorable venue during those years was a two-month hang at a Theravada *wat* (i.e. monastery) in the northwest Thailand forest. Memorable for something truly good, and as well for something so ghastly I'd prefer to forget it, but for the life of me I cannot.

The good was meeting my brother-in-heart, a huge German monk a couple years my junior in age but light years senior in wisdom. We hit it off from the get-go. He called me Professor, and I referred to him, simply, as Monk.

The Theravada order exists mainly in the steamy tropics, and long ago adapted their dietary habits accordingly. They eat their biggest meal at midday (all foodstuffs donated by adherents on the monks' morning alms rounds), then consume only liquids until the following morning.

To provide his post-noon liquids a bit more oomph, I went out and bought Monk an electric blender. He quickly thrilled to the new toy, and every evening would create work-of-art smoothies, mixing condensed milk and ice with the fresh tropical fruit plentiful on campus. Reflective of his two hundred eighty pound predilection for food (gluttony as substitute for his Buddhistic vow of celibacy, d'ya think?), as time went on the smoothies became thicker and denser,

until a spoon could stand straight up in the glop. Still, it passed as liquid, because that's the very definition of smoothies, and we enjoyed them every night.

The not-so-terrific experience was instigated by Monk himself. 'Hey, Professor, care to join a group of teenage novices at a dhamma teaching event?' he wondered early one evening as we were forking our drinks. When I tried to extract details, he made like a garden Buddha. Still, always willing to take on new spiritual experiences, I agreed, and an hour later joined ten monklets as we piled into tuk-tuks and clamored off. Curiously, our destination turned out to be a hospital, where we were escorted inside, through corridors and down a dimly-lit staircase into a large, bare, air-conditioned room where we stood around waiting – for what, we had no idea.

Two men in full-bodied aprons and face masks then entered wheeling before them a gurney. On the gurney was a body which, when the sheet was removed, revealed a beautiful young woman. We were informed (in Thai, with English subtitles for my benefit) the woman had recently died of heart failure. There was nary a blemish on her lovely face and body, prompting heartfelt sighs and groans from the robed young bucks around me.

We were instructed to approach and stand alongside a high, narrow table onto which the body now was placed. The next some minutes, we were told, would provide concrete evidence that physical beauty was no more than illusion, underscoring the Buddha's concept of impermanence. Whereupon one of the men flicked on a small electric skilsaw and went to work.

Like tenpins at a bowling alley upon a perfectly placed roll, one after another of the teenage monks began to spin around and collapse to the floor. Before the path of the saw reached the breastbone, only one of the visitors besides myself was still standing, and he was leaning precariously at a forty-five degree angle against a pillar before gradually folding like a beach chair. I suppose only my brief experience as a military medic kept me vertical, and even then it took effort to keep the smoothie from making a comeback.

Yeah, great times, wonderful stories. As the years passed, however, what had been laid back R and R for alternative lifestyle roadies became a fervent quest for instant nirvana by the emerging dot-com set. And somewhere in the transition, compassion began to undergo a serious redefining. Take this brief dialogue with a mid-sixties British woman encountered at a Burmese monastery:

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SHE: In the late '60s I dropped acid to open my mind. Came the '70s, I did est, Lifespring and Rolfing. The '80s it was radical feminism, '90s, intensive therapy. Now I'm a practicing Buddhist.

ME: So you're happy?

SHE: Hell, no! The monks take so damn long handing out their bits of wisdom! Why don't they just bloody get on with it!

Compassion.

The newly-arrived California couple were expounding on their ten day journey to Kathmandu for the purpose of doing a course with 'our lama' (speaking as of a cute furry four-legged). A year before I'd spent a couple months in the mountainous Nepalese hinterland volunteering at a church-mouse poor Tibetan refugee village.

'Airfare and gift to our lama cost us over twenty thousand bucks,' the California man announced proudly, 'but worth every penny!' His wife nodded approvingly. I thought what twenty thou would do in the village: new school, a hospital, housing for dozens of families. Compassion.

On a subsequent visit to Nepal, I was telling a friend of the good old days when I had resided several weeks at the Kopan monastery outside K-du. How we'd all slept on bare wood boards, the temple an ancient marquee with dirt floor, no electricity or flush toilets. 'Take me there!' she pleaded.

On the lovely walk along a winding track, Himalayas in full view, the only sounds bird calls and the wind whistling through the trees, suddenly, no warning, a shiny new SUV comes roaring around the bend, headed directly for us. Horn blaring, no slow-down, no swerve. We just barely leap aside, the vehicle missing us by inches. Within, I glimpse four monks, the driver-monk wearing shades and – was that a *real* Rolex on his wrist?

Present day Kopan? Spanking new temple, all glitter and glitz. Posh vehicles. Satellite dishes. All paid for by Western 'gifts'. Compassion.

My brother-in-heart had been a Theravada monk fifty years, most of these at the previously noted Thai wat. Then he was offered the abbot's post at a monastery created by wealthy late gen X's and early millennials outside Sydney. 'I'm just a monk,' he told them upon acceptance. 'I can teach you the dhamma and how to apply it to your lives. But please understand – I do not come here as some sort of exalted guru.'

To which the gen-X/millenns replied, 'Yes, O exalted guru!'

The grounds were country-club magnificent; the spanking new buildings elegant and glorious. The dialogue between abbot and sangha increasingly strained.

‘What are you doing!’ they cried one day when Monk appeared in coveralls, brandishing a spade.

‘Hard work,’ he laughed. ‘A Catholic priest does it, why not a monk?’

‘But you’re not supposed to do physical labor. We want you to just sit there and look serene!’

My brother-in-heart sighed. ‘I’m only a monk,’ he pleaded for the umpteenth time. ‘No more than that.’

A weekday morning some months along saw a clot of Mercedes, Beamers and the odd Tesla suddenly rolling in from The Smoke. Everyone, it seemed, had been apprised of the unscheduled meeting. Everyone except the abbot. They even tried to bar his entrance, but he wasn’t buying it. So my brother-in-heart sat there, party to his own excoriation.

‘I understand your feelings,’ Monk said finally. ‘I’m not what you wanted, what you expected of me. No problem. I just ask of you one favor. You know I left Thailand behind and have no home there anymore. In fact, I have no home, period. I’m seventy-four years old. I would like to stay on here, in any capacity, until my Australian residence is granted, a month at most, else I will be in violation of my visa and forced to leave the country.’

To which request the born-again Budes put their sum-total compassion on the table:

‘No. Go!’

Fortunately, a small monastery of expat Lao monks nearby heard of my brother-in-heart’s plight and took him in. Through their kindness he was able to gain Aussie residence.

And a tear forms in the eye of history’s first backpacker.

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lonely no more

how a swinger helped me find happiness

WHEN I NOTICED my beautiful four year old cat Timothy having problems urinating, I immediately rushed him to the vet. Following extensive examination, she reported crystals had formed in his bladder, that an immediate op was essential.

‘There’s a very good chance he won’t make it,’ she warned. Further, even were the op successful at clearing out the crystals, she wouldn’t know for another couple of weeks whether he’d survive the trauma.

This was twenty years ago, and it was the not a good time in my life. A recent relationship had gone bust, I was once again living on my own, fragile and miserable, and now my closest friend looked to be leaving me as well.

I dragged myself home. Flopped down in his favorite chair. It was like his life had become my own. Would he make it? Will my boy be coming back to me? I had to know.

A thought struck. Years back, I had dabbled some with a pendulum. All us hippies were into spiritual gimmickry, and the pendulum, along with the i Ching, Tarot cards and astrology, were prime tools. I would hold the pendulum – a US twenty-five cent piece with a hole drilled near an edge through which I’d attached a length of thread – and ask a question. Almost magically, the coin would begin

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to swing, its direction dictating yes or no according to the movements I had previously established. Many of the answers checked out. Some did not. I never knew why.

To ascertain Timothy's status many years later, I found a tiny jade Tiki, attached six inches of thread. Held the other end of the thread between thumb and index finger, the Tiki dangling just above my desk. I established that yes for me – everyone has their own built-in set of directional responses – was a back and forth movement of about two inches; side to side meant no.

I was nervous as I held the thread, so much so my hand shook, necessitating planting my elbow on the desktop to steady the Tiki.

I cleared my mind in order not to influence the device. 'Will Timothy survive the operation?' I asked, tremulously. No movement. I repeated the question subvocally a number of times. Nothing. Then the Tiki began to move, slowly at first, then quicker. Back and forth. My personal Yes. I asked the question a number of ways, including the negative: will he die within the next six months? Every time, the Tiki swung in a direction to his favor...and mine.

I visited him at the vet's every day. They had provided him his own room, an unused office. He wore one of those protective lampshades around his neck to keep him from bothering the area of his tiny penis. I would sit on the floor alongside him and hold up the pendulum. He'd follow the path of the Tiki with his eyes, feebly try to swat it, then peer up at me as if to say, Have you completely lost it, bro?

Timothy survived and lived to the age of sixteen. And I became hooked on the pendulum. To this day, I use it virtually on a daily basis, thus joining the multitude of pendulum junkies worldwide. Its use has taught me untold about myself and the universe I inhabit. What I have learned has not always been to my liking. Often I'll try to fool it by changing a question's wording. The pendulum will have none of it.

The past twenty years I have learned a lot of stuff I had never before thought about. Ask a question, you get an answer, which brings up another question. And so on. This can go on for hours, delving deeper and deeper into the psyche and soul. Mostly, what the pendulum has done is bring me into better focus with myself. For most of my adult life I have lived on my own. Prior to my two decade affair with the pendulum, I was frequently lonely and depressed, convinced I was a loser. No longer.

I now know myself to be a pretty darn good fella; I have gained understanding and equanimity about who I am and my role in the

scheme of things. I am still a loner, yet rarely am I lonely. In the happy chappie stakes I rate myself, oh, eight and a half. A few straight days of winter rain I might drop to an eight. Never lower.

I have come to learn, through investigation and keen observation of the human animal, that loneliness is the number one debilitating malady in the West. It often leads to stress, despondency, substance abuse, physical illness, suicide.

And it's not just solos who are affected. Married people become lonely. People living with family or friends are lonely. To avoid this spiritual plague, people go to pubs, attend parties, play sports, join clubs and churches. And still they are lonely. I know. I've been there.

I believe that, aside from being a bunch of rocks and fireballs, the universe is pure, intelligent energy. I think of this energy as the Universal Bank of Infinite Knowledge and Wisdom. Inside each of us is a local branch. The question is, how do I gain access to my account?

Finding the answer, I reckon, is one of the prime reasons for being. A myriad of paths lead to universal truths. The pendulum happens to be a credible pathway for me.

Living on my own, I haven't got a smartphone, rarely check in with Google and disdain social media. Don't need them. I've got a sweet little swinger on a string.



Arthur Young and the brain wave scale of Oscar Brunler

PEOPLE WHO SHOW an avid interest in ESP and the occult most often are of less developed consciousness than good mechanics and toolmakers.

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis was further along on the human evolutionary scale than Carl Gustav Jung and George Ivanovich Gurdjieff.

The most evolved human being who has lived in the past thousand years was Leonardo da Vinci.

NORMALLY MY BASIC skeptical nature, which scoffs at religious, mystical and spiritual dogma, would reject without second thought a notion as seemingly outlandish as the Brunler brain radiation scale of consciousness detection. Curiously, I find myself a strong adherent of the principle. I not only believe Brunler was on the right track but that his method merits our serious attention.

Actually, my faith in the late Dr. Brunler's system stems from my friendship with the most brilliant person I've ever known. No, he was not from India nor China, rather Philadelphia. His name was Arthur M. Young, and if you have never heard of him be apprised you are member of a very large community. For Arthur, despite my urgings,

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chose to maintain an extremely low profile over his eighty-nine years.

What had he done that's notable? Well, the one thing you may of heard of is the helicopter. Arthur invented it. For sure he wasn't the first who had thought of it (even Leonardo might not have been), but he was the one who made it fly. In 1945 he received the patent on the Bell helicopter, and on every whirly-bird that's flown since did my friend Arthur (and since his death in 1995, his estate) receive a royalty.

Young did not consider himself a scientist, rather an inventor. The difference, he maintained, is that one plays with ideas while the other actually makes things work. Arthur loved to take things apart to see what makes them tick. Witness the two 1932 mint-condition Rolls Royces sitting in the garage of his sumptuous Pennsylvania country estate when I first was invited to his home. At various times Arthur would strip one or the other down to the tiniest bolt and put it back together again. Because he could? Because he was bored?

Arthur Young was born a genius, a darn wealthy one at that. Money, though, never had the meaning for him it holds for others. (The years I knew him I never saw him wear anything but the same pair of rumpled brown trousers and a non-matching brown jacket. On the other hand, his art collection, exhibited quite modestly in his Philadelphia town house, ran into the mega-millions.) If anything, money was a mere vehicle with which he fuelled a boundless curiosity and craving for understanding.

As a lad at Princeton, Young went through the most difficult courses America's brainiest university had to offer before the end of his freshman year. Nothing left on the curriculum to sate his mental appetite, the deans and dons gave him carte blanche. Meaning Arthur created classes and taught them to himself. One such effort was the disproving of Einstein's theory of relativity. With the master himself in residence on the campus, Young, still a teenager, had a go at proving E does not always equal MC -squared. Arthur, it is said, felt he did just that. Einstein, it is said, felt otherwise.

A few years later, bored with matters academic, Young turned to the workshop, rolled up his sleeves and got down to what he enjoyed most – turning ideas into reality through tinkering. He could claim success at most every such venture, but the helicopter nearly proved beyond his scope. Model after model that should have worked didn't. Ideas which looked right on paper simply would not keep the bird aloft for more than a few seconds. Finally, after twenty years, one of Arthur's copters got up and stayed there.

Now, a funny thing happened to Arthur Young on the way to helicopter success: the laborious, arduous, painstaking process very subtly, very gently, elevated him to a completely new and unexpected mind space. He himself was convinced he'd attained a higher level of consciousness.

Heretofore a hard-and-fast technologist, Arthur during the two decades of mental effort focused on making a helicopter hang in the air came to realize, to empirically comprehend, that this universe contained things that can be neither seen nor measured but exist all the same. Consciousness, he believed, was a very real commodity.

Attacking the problem with his usual fervor, Young founded the Institute for the Study of Consciousness in Berkeley, California. His intent was to draw people of science away from their books and laboratories, fuse their individual understandings into a common exploration that would determine once and for all what existence truly is. He was massively unsuccessful, for the hard-core academic communities, threatened by such an outlandish notion, turned deaf ears his way. (More than a few were threatened that just a whisper about consciousness would result in being blackballed by the scientific publishing fraternity.) Look here, helicopters are fine, old man, but consciousness? Ah, sorry. I have a lab full of white rats to look after.

Undaunted, Young personally plugged away. He broke down the barrier that existed in his mind between the scientific and spiritual, noting that both were simply two sides of the very same coin. He investigated everything that came his way. An unfaltering psychic in Madrid? Arthur and his wife hopped a plane to check her out. A rare ancient book discovered in Cairo? He somehow got his hands on it. Classes, workshops, trainings? Attended untold.

He delved into astrology. But not the way most people do. This was a most practical man, remember. Arthur used astrology to play the stock market. Did it for a couple of years. He himself would never admit to it, but a close friend once confided that Young came out of the market with several million more than he had invested. All on advice from the stars.

Through it all he made voluminous notes. That great blender of a brain sifted and sorted ideas and theories derived from sources as seemingly diverse as quantum physics to mythology. Some things that seemed absolutely spot on, grist for the mill of true meaning, after a time had to be discarded as unworthy. Like the helicopter, what looked right on paper most often just wouldn't fly.

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He spent another twenty years developing and honing his theories until finally, two books emerged: *A Reflexive Universe* and *The Geometry of Meaning*. Not surprisingly, they sold poorly. Yet I met a number of people back then, themselves labeled geniuses, who claim Arthur Young had found the answer, had put it all together.

(Curiously, he asked me, of all earth's souls, to rewrite the books for him; or rather, to translate them into words normal people might comprehend. My reply: 'Dear friend, so far as I know, one must be able to understand the original in order to translate into another language.' Arthur, you see, had a higher notion of my basic smarts than is actually the case.)

Young claimed to prove the existence of consciousness and show in the most minute detail how life on planet earth evolves. I shall attempt to explain it here in the simplest terms – in other words, that which I comprehend. (Please understand that I don't go along with everything he said, either because it's against the grain of my thinking or my thinking simply isn't anywhere near the level his was.)

We each begin, he maintained, as a photon of light. At some timeless, space-less point we decide to investigate the physical universe, and the monad that is you, or me, transforms into the very lowest form of matter, a sub-atomic particle. Through eons of time we pass through every realm of the nuclear particle kingdom until we sense we have experienced and digested all there is to be learned, at which point we emerge to the next stage of development, the atom.

There being one hundred eighteen known elements, we go from one atomic structure to another (over a period of millions of years) through the molecular kingdom, the cellular kingdom, vegetable, animal and human kingdoms, learning, always learning. At every level we serve as a world for countless more recently evolved cellular, molecular, atomic and nuclear life forms contained within us. (In turn, we ourselves are hosted by a higher consciousness life form in the world that feeds and fosters us.) When I asked him one time where he believed the human race as a whole stood in its comparative evolution (towards a return to the Light, or 'Godhead'), Arthur replied wryly, 'About the same level as the mollusk in the animal kingdom.' (And this was nearly half a century before the Trumpian kingdom.)

Arthur Young conducted a number of weekend seminars at my Relax for Survival center in Philadelphia during the 1970s. Arthur did not instruct, he prodded; he forced you to think. I attended every one, and except for me the students were always different class to class. Yet

each seminar the reaction was precisely the same: few understood at a conscious level the deep and delicate matters we had discussed for two days. And yet each Sunday afternoon upon the seminar's conclusion, the room would have the silent, glazed-eyed mystical air of a Haight-Ashbury LSD party. He never realized he was doing it, nor did he quite understand when I laid it out for him, but the man got us stoned out of our minds.

OSCAR BRUNLER, A SWEDE, was a practicing physician in London using various kinds of unorthodox methods such as colored light and homeopathy when he heard of the work of a Dr. Bovis in France. Bovis used a 'biometer' to measure the health of various organs of the body. This he was able to do from radiation from the fingertips, each finger corresponding to a different organ system. The radiation of a healthy organ was a hundred biometric units (roughly eight inches) which he was able to measure by having patients slide their fingers along a scale, at the other end of which he swung a pendulum. When the swing was displaced from a straight back and forth to a diagonal pattern, a reading was taken.

Brunler found this method worked and used it for diagnosis. Although the thumb was not used by Bovis, Brunler found it, too, had a radiation, one considerably higher than the fingers. Not knowing how to interpret this, he nonetheless maintained a record of thumb readings, and only when a girl classified as what was then termed an idiot was brought in as a patient, and he found the radiation from her thumb lower than any he had ever previously recorded, did it occur that thumb readings might correspond to consciousness.

The next person to visit him was the newsboy. Brunler confirmed that the radiation from the boy's head and thumb were the same value. What he had been getting from the thumbs of his patients, he deduced, was a measure of the respective consciousnesses.

Brunler noted that a number of major executives had radiation in the 420-440 range. As well, he began to see that certain other 'types' of people tended to record in the same ranges. He then made another remarkable discovery: through articles of clothing, manuscripts and works of art, and primarily through their signatures, people no longer alive could be measured. (Only when two investigators, working independently, came up with the same rating would he accept it.)

Before he died, Brunler conducted literally thousands of readings of persons both living and dead. Here, basically, are his

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conclusions about the scale and his interpretations of the various ranges.

Below 210, he determined, the capacity to read and write is being developed. (The lowest readings Brunler found were among the hill tribes in India, around 180.) From here, physical skill develops rapidly, becoming pronounced at 240. Many bridge players and stockbrokers, both dealing in concrete symbols, were found to fall here.

At 240, those subjects proficient in 'ESP' and the occult, especially of the more sensational type, were observed. In the high 200s did exceptional mechanical and external skills fall. Around ninety-five percent of all persons fall below 300; ninety percent under 240.

Three-ten is a critical point. Brunler termed this the battle with the physical. Here he found drug addicts, alcoholics, sex maniacs and interestingly enough (especially to a certain inventor of the helicopter), test pilots. Once the breakthrough is made, the mind starts to open out. Many mind readers and hypnotists scored 320-330.

Intuition underwent a steady development above 330 to 370, at which point there was a reversal – intuition was repressed and pure reason was stressed and eventually developed until at 390 intuition returned and was integrated with reason.

From 390 to 420, Brunler called the fear range, in which the self is acutely aware of its deficiencies, until at 420, the ego range, will emerges and the whole nature changes again to a self-assertive independence or leadership of others. In other words, between the reason range, where are found the top orthodox professors, defenders of the faith as it were, and the ego realm, the self evolves from a receiver to an originator. The ego range begins to fade at 440 and at 450 the ego is thrust aside and the self rejoices in anonymity.

It became evident to Brunler that the self, which passes through these stages in succession (requiring many lifetimes to do so; Brunler insisted that with rare exception the radiation changed by only a few points during a lifetime), is gradually unfolding new potentialities and powers. Outstanding clairvoyants such as Edgar Cayce and Eileen Garret measured in the 480s, and at the 500 level came great political leaders. The most brilliant writers, poets and playwrights range from 500 to 530, with the most renowned composers in the 530 area and impressionist painters even higher.

Five thirty-eight was another critical number to Brunler. Here

the self must begin to give up the personality which at this stage reaches a culmination. More powers await, but they are no longer centered in glorifying the person. At 575, he said, the personality is given up altogether. Sri Aurobindo (585) wrote a book on relinquishing the personality.

Arthur Young and his wife hoped to carry on Oscar Brunler's efforts after his death, but found the physical work too taxing. Nonetheless, Young staunchly supported the validity of the system, calling Brunler's scale the single-most assessment of human consciousness we had.

Last I saw Arthur, many years ago in Berkeley, he greeted me with childlike excitement. Taking me by the hand he led me to a library in his large house. Here a huge copying book covered most all of a desk. Symbols and signs punctuated the pages. All but dancing in delight, the man who invented the helicopter exclaimed how at long last he had come to proving the accuracy of the Brunler Brain Wave Scale. How?

Through astrology.

ALTHOUGH I PLEADED with Young to determine my Brunler number, he adamantly refused. (A part of me, fearing the worst, was glad he did so.) As well, he wouldn't reveal his own number, which without question he must have measured. He did provide me a list of Brunler measurements of famous folk, most of them long deceased, and many of whom, frankly, I have never heard of. Here's the list. Have fun.

720	Leonardo da Vinci
700	Giorgione
688	Michaelangelo
675	Cheiro (palmist)
660	Titian
660	Blavatsky
657	Frederick the Great
649	Raphael
646	Veronese
640	Francis Bacon
638	Rembrandt
633	Rubens
613	Goya
608	Goethe
598	Napoleon
590	MacCauley

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590	Turner
585	Aurobindo
585	Botticelli
580	Blake
577	Whistler
577	Scarlatti
575	Frederick Marion
575	Walter Russell (Sculptor)
570	Cezanne
568	Annie Besant
567	Tchaikowsky
562	Sir Walter Scott
561	Johann Strauss
555	Rossini
550	Renoir
550	Chopin
550	El Greco
545	Manet
542	Degas
540	Dickens
538	Greta Garbo
538	Wagner
538	Liszt
538	Monet
538	Alice Bailey
535	Hayden
529	Yeats
529	Elizabeth Browning
527	Kipling
526	Rasputin
525	Lawrence Olivier
525	Tennyson
522	Byron
520	Noel Coward
520	Mary Pickford
520	Nehru
520	Stalin
520	Galileo
519	Brahms
518	Bernard Shaw
515	Picasso
514	Rommel
512	Dean Swift
512	George Washington
511	Bismark
511	Longfellow

510	Whitman
510	Queen Elizabeth I
508	Eddington
500	Lenin
500	Emerson
495	Salvador Dali
495	Joe E. Brown
493	Garibaldi
492	F. Roosevelt
492	Madame Curie
492	Duke of Wellington
490	Nicolas Tesla
490	Franco
489	Edgar Allen Poe
485	Woodrow Wilson
484	Arthur Schnabel
482	Chaliapin
482	Edgar Cayce
482	Marconi
477	Herbert Hoover
477	Ghandi
475	Wendell Wilkie
474	Toscanini
474	Myra Hess
473	Tagore
470	Mussolini
470	Thomas Edison
469	Albert Einstein
462	Abraham Lincoln
458	Queen Victoria
456	Charles Darwin
452	T.E. Lawrence
448	H.G. Wells
448	Henry Ford
442	General Montgomery
439	G.K. Chesterton
439	Cardinal Richelieu
434	Ernst Haeckel
429	Samuel Insull
427	Winthrop Rockefeller
427	Savanarola
426	Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
426	Maria de Medici
423	Krishnamurti
422	Duke of Windsor
421	John F. Kennedy

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420	Bertrand Russell
420	Sigmund Freud
418	Clive Bell
407	Walter Winchell
406	Billy Graham
405	Poincare
397	Thomas Lipton
394	Anne Boleyn
391	Jackie Kennedy Onassis
390	Czar Nicholas
385	Gurdjieff
385	Carl Jung
378	Gorki
375	General Chiang Kai Shek
360	Kinsey
338	George Carpentier
308	Carol II of Romania
307	Farouk I

So, was Leonardo the most evolved human being ever? Well, no. Brunler and two of his associates got much higher radiation scale readings on another deceased subject. Problem was that no matter how many times the three investigators checked this particular person's numerical reading, always did it vary from researcher to researcher. In the end Brunler decided not to assign the subject a definite number despite every single reading being in excess of 1000.

What they were measuring was the shroud of Turin.



no talking, no bullshit, just don't forget to breathe

THE THIRD DAY of my workshop was over. Weary from the nine-hour ordeal, I was sitting in the yoga center's dining area, sipping a cup of tea and half-listening to one of my students, seated alongside. It was summer and I wore a T-shirt and shorts, no more. I was only partially conscious of a silky sensation on my bare left foot; it came, it went: an insect most likely, not worthy of attention.

Then the chap on my right stopped raving and sat staring, bubble-eyed, past my knees to the floor. Following his gaze, I peered down.

A woman in her thirties, another member of my class, was on hands and knees, her nose inches from my ankle. She was slowly shaking her head, allowing the ends of her long hair to brush against my foot.

'What the *hell* are you doing!' I cried, yanking back my titillated foot. The woman looked up with glazed eyes, beatific smile.

'You're so *good!*' she whispered huskily. 'Even better than Swami-ji!'

The New Age – boy, can I tell you about the New Age.

I was a pioneer, a frontiersman in the human-potential/personal-development/alternative-therapy movement. For me, it was a

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natural extension of the sex, drugs and R&R days of the late sixties.

In the space of a few years, I saw myself transformed from a bored, straight, suburban, fast-lane PR exec to a bearded freak living on the streets of San Francisco, to a major-league New Age media personality teaching something called Alpha Mind Control to huge halls full of eager seekers. How did I get from one station to another? Don't ask. Shit indeed happens.

I opened a center. Called it the Relax for Survival Foundation. Besides my own thirty-six-hour class, we ran thirty courses a semester, anything from teaching widows how to change spark plugs to the latest self-improvement package.

The whole deal ran on a shoestring – never charged a set fee. A donation. If you can't afford that, bake us a cake (sugar-free, darling), come wash our windows. The idea was to have fun, share the wealth; let's all get high together, just like the headband and peace-sign days.

Except it all turned serious.

Suddenly, I was teacher, organizer, headmaster, financier, newsletter editor. I had my own weekly radio program, appeared on all the local talk shows, plus I was playing nursemaid to any number of well-intentioned misfits who came to the center, ostensibly to help spread the word. What they were really helping was to send me to an early grave.

All of this I somehow survived. My greatest difficulty was my own self-doubt.

I had no background, no tuition, no diploma: what was I doing, teaching people how to better their existence through Alpha Mind Control? Running a center that provided essential life skills?

I must be a phony, a fraud.

I wrote a heartfelt letter to the biggest name in the game: I'll come wash dishes, scrub out the crapper – anything – only please teach me what you know. His response? The multi-national mind-dynamics organization bearing his name sued me for infringement of copyright. (I won).

Still, I went looking. I checked out whatever was happening. Head trip, body trip, dietary trip – if it was there, I sampled it. And here's what I found out: the New Age was a royal ream of elitist cowplop.

Love, Peace, and Sharing definitely were not what the world was into by the mid-seventies. It was Money, Power and Never Give A Sucker An Even Break.

Whenever I challenged the need for those exorbitant fees the New Ageys charged, I was told: 1) in our society, people equate value with price tag; and 2) if you truly want the benefits of our training, you'll find the money to pay for it – never: we're a pack of greedy bastards out for all we can get.

I'd test them. My test was this: how about, instead of giving you this fee, I make a donation in the full amount to Greenpeace (or any bona-fide charity) in your name?

Tried this any number of times. How many said yes? The next will be the first.

And the false cheer promulgated by these New Ageys, like their cheek muscles have seized up in the on position – don't these people ever get sad? Angry? Lonely?

I'm Jewish, right? Jews are not a cheery folk. But we are very familiar with laughter – real laughter. Often, it's been the only thing between us and extinction.

Cheer is fake. Cheer has nothing to do with humor, irony, absurdity, genuine belly laughs. *That's* real.

During a lunch break at a Cheery seminar that I was attending, I put on a Springsteen tape and began to dance. I love to dance solo and The Boss brought out my soul.

Like a flash, one of the *facilitators* (love that word) rushed over and flicked it off, giving me most uncheery glances. In its place, she substituted one of those puke-awful New Age elevator-music tapes the Cheeries are so fond of. Try dancing to that.

THEY WEREN'T ALL cheeries. Some were NASTies: New Age Storm Troopers. These types beat you with psychic rubber hoses for fifty-nine and a half hours, then in the final half-hour told you you're wonderful just the way you are. And, oh my, were the clients ever thrilled, running around claiming that they'd found *It!*

The NASTies had a two-faced approach to your dilemmas. Every single one told me: all you need to change your life is our basic seminar. Finish the basic and along came the squeeze: follow-up courses, 6am breakfast once a week with your fellows, join a team, become part of the family, help with the phone solicitations – and just try to leave the family, once you're in it.

One day, I just had enough of the New Age – or, at least, the American version. I packed a bag, handed over the keys to my center (it folded in six months) and took off for India. Here, for sure, I would

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find the truth. And I did.

The truth was, there was more sham in India than in the Big Apple – gurus, one on every corner. My ashram is holier than yours, my swami more ascended than your swami (he manifests Rolex watches!). The queue of whiteys wound twice around the block: turn in your platinum gold card at the door, grab yourself a uniform, god will be along shortly to assign you your new name.

My cynicism threatened to suffocate me. I continued my travels, but by the time I reached the shores of New Zealand late in 1980, I had neither taught nor sought for a couple of years.

First week there, I met some nice folks. We had us a rave and next thing I know, they've set me up to teach Alpha in someone's living room, ten of them in attendance.

Afterwards, one of them says 'Hey, I have this mate in Nelson' Another: 'My sister in Dunedin would really love. . . '

SIX MONTHS LATER, I'm teaching in a yoga center not far from Auckland, and when the crowds get too big to fit their hall, I move the act to Auckland University. By 1982, hundreds are pouring into every class, fee a donation, all proceeds going to charity.

It was at this point that I told myself a lie. The lie was this: things are different here. The people aren't as desperate, the market's too small and the distance too vast for the New Age Californicators to come all this way to sink in their fangs.

Words of a fool.

One day, a woman showed up at the yoga center. Said she'd just bought the New Zealand franchise of a multi-national mind-dynamics outfit – the same gang of mafiosi who'd sued me in the States. The woman made it clear: shut down my operation, or else. I made it clear: no way. High noon at the New Age corral.

I had then just filed my application for permanent residence. Soon after our meeting, a letter appeared on the desk of the minister of immigration, stating that one Barry Rosenberg was a known major drug supplier in America.

Nice way to eliminate the competition.

Well, forty years later I'm still in NZ, and the franchisee has long moved on to other New Age pastures. But she was the harbinger. By the mid-eighties, coincidental with its most prosperous moment, New Zealand had become dinner for the New Age vultures.

And the packages got slicker, the price tags higher. Auckland's

North Shore might well have had the greatest per-capita assemblage of rebirthing therapists and naturopaths in captivity. Training programs to set up your own clinic in every sort of bodywork imaginable suddenly existed, at fees of mega-thousands. A new disembodied spirit, channeled through some B-grade, overly-made-up Hollywood actress, seemed to appear on the scene weekly.

Around this time a new term was introduced (the New Age was full of new terms, had its own language): networking, meaning a pooling, a sharing of resources. To an ex-hippie, this sounded great – until I began to see evidence of its practical application.

The trouble with talk like this is that *in substance*, much of the New Age has had both value and validity. I know people whose lives have been helped considerably through classes and therapy.

Sure, lots of practitioners are good, honest, down-to-earth healers employing proven techniques. From the feedback I received over twenty-five years of teaching, my own workshops served to eliminate a host of emotional hassles for the thousands who sat in. But the New Age waters were full of sharks and barracudas, so one treaded mindfully.

What, really, was the underlying problem with the New Age? Was it mankind's greed and thirst for power? Uh, well, there's that – but I reckon much of the responsibility lay with the seekers, and by far the overwhelming proportion of the supposed needy are women.

While the fellas are still out bashing each other on the sporting field, women have bought the New Age's glitz and promise. Face it, relationships generally leave a load to be desired. Women – more sensitive, with a far greater capacity to love (and, thus, greater need to be loved), but finding a dearth of interesting, nurturing males – in vast numbers turned to the New Age for salvation.

WEEKEND WORKSHOPS in the West and ashrams in the East are populated heavily with frustrated Caucasian women, not a few of whom harbor a secret (and often not so secret) yearning to personally adopt the Big Daddy at the helm. I know. The woman brushing my foot with her hair, who credited (or accused) me of being better than a previous Big Daddy, while taking me aback momentarily, was not all that surprising.

A friend once asked why I objected so strongly to New Age people, both the sellers and the buyers. My only answer was that the world seemed to be running out of time. Whatever the vehicle of

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helpfulness, there had to be a greater sincerity, far more openness, or this wonderful old globe stood a chance of going down the bucket.

‘Those of us who are teachers must teach more than just our basic curriculum,’ I one day noted to a friend. ‘We need to be spreading understanding about mind, body, diet, environment, global politics – all of it.’

My friend was a tai chi teacher. His response? ‘Well, I don’t have to do all that. Tai chi is the truth, and when people learn my master’s form, they’ll automatically gain full awareness.’

Shortly after this encounter I quit teaching – for good. But I was determined not to let my reaction to New Age avarice and narrowness stop me from looking for ways of bettering myself. I set up criteria that any discipline or teaching had to conform to before I plugged in: 1) no price tag (beyond obvious expenses); 2) no conversion, no deity, no guru; 3) no pressure to do follow-up training; 4) no family, club or team to join; 5) provides a concrete technique for daily practice; and 6) the teacher practices what she or he preaches.

Three years went by without a nibble. And then I found one which answered my criteria.

I’D HEARD ABOUT Vipassana, of course. Though derived from Buddhist teachings, it had evolved as a secular practice, and was presented in half the countries in the developed world. People who have done my workshops, and wanted further meditative study, I would send along to a Vipassana course. They always came back with glowing reports. And the price tag – ‘dana’ (donation) – was right. In fact, upon scrutiny from without, Vipassana appeared to conform to all six of my standards.

I arrived at the retreat center, an hour north of Auckland, late afternoon. A hundred acres of hills, scrub and bush. The facilities were basic at best: a sort of dormitory for women, tent sites for the men; toilets were long-drops, showers outdoors. The meditation hall was a corrugated-iron barn with a wooden floor. No spiritual Fawltly Towers, this. (Note: the center has been greatly upgraded and upmarketed since, this to ‘appeal to business people’. What, bizbods are so OCD they can’t stand a small dose of nature?)

Early evening, those who had assembled were led into the hall and assigned floor positions. The sexes were separated; there were perhaps twenty-five of each. No flowers, incense sticks burning, statues of a chubby, bald, grinning or contemplative chap: no props

at all, actually, just a low, small stage with a few white sheets hung as backdrop. On the stage sat an attractive woman in her thirties. She informed us she wasn't the teacher, rather the assistant teacher. Well, okay.

We sat on small squabs, on meditation benches and with various pillows and cushions, and fidgeted, trying to home in on some sort of comfortable position to take through the ten days to come. Total silence. Our eyes were closed. Waiting.

The AT turned on a tape player: a man chanting. He sounded like a cross between a creaky door and Bela Lugosi gargling Velcro.

This was the now-deceased S.N. Goenka, then teacher and leader of the Vipassana movement. He would instruct us long-distance; the AT did no teaching at all, merely occasional one-to-one counseling.

Through the recorded tuition, we learned a simple breathing technique: focus attention on a triangle of nose and upper lip, breathe normally, and observe as the breath goes in, breath comes out.

At the end of the hour-long session, we were given precepts – thou-shalt-nots. No talking or eye contact, no lying (how did one lie in silence?), no killing (of insects, I supposed), no reading, smoking, alcohol or drugs, no venturing beyond the tight perimeter set out with string around the place – roughly the area of a soccer field – and no sex (with whom? how?). Plus a vow to stay the entire ten days.

The night was cold as I crawled into my sleeping bag a little after nine, and zipped it around me. My roommate, a tall, light-skinned Maori chap, had already done the same. I never got to know his name nor exchange a word or glance with the guy. This was strictly a no-frills journey. Ten days of it. Hoo. The following morning, we were awakened by a gong at four. I stumbled into the barn-hall, found my spot and sat down to watch my breath.

TIME WENT SLOWLY. My back, knees and ankles, as I balanced myself on a small bench six inches off the floor (softened with a pillow), soon became stiff. Stiff became achy, achy became downright painful. At some point before the two hours were up, rigor mortis set in.

When the gong sounded for breakfast, I straightened out my limbs, slowly got up – and my lower back took a bite out of my nerve endings.

I peered around at the others, wanting to know if they felt as miserable as I did.

Voices in my head cried: "Flee!" A lifetime of ailing lumbar/

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sacro vertebrae propelled my mind to the gate. Instead of sending my body running after, I went up and explained my situation to the AT. Communication with the assistant teacher is done in this manner: she sits on the wee stage, you sit on the floor. In the Buddhist tradition, the student never looks down on the teacher.

She ordered a chair brought in for me. I placed it against a wall – the only chair in the hall. (They're used freely these days. Fragile business folk, you know.)

Breakfast was porridge and stewed prunes, toast and an assortment of herbal teas. The dining area was very makeshift, benches for sitting, old doors on wooden horses for tables, stones for a floor. (Don't panic, you corporate types; no longer.) Men and women were separated, bamboo blinds serving as a curtain between us. Through the blinds, I could make out female forms moving around. Very surreal.

Then more sitting, more breathing, more recorded chanting and instruction from Goenka.

I breathed, I observed. Breath in. Breath out.

This is stupid, my mind said. Just do it, my mind said. You could be home on the beach right now, my mind said. This is great discipline, my mind said. For what? my mind said. Well – what if you were in prison, my mind said. Or held hostage by ISIS, my mind said. Will you goddamn idiots please shut up and let me concentrate! my mind said.

I went from bench to chair, to cushions on the floor and back to the bench. I squinted open an eye and noted that everyone else was sitting like a statue. Lunch was at eleven. We had been told that, as part of the strict regimen, this would be our final meal of the day.

I piled the vegetarian food high on my plate, and sat down on the bench to eat. Chap next to me, late twenties, was slurping his food loudly. I felt myself becoming irritated, especially since I couldn't even give him a dirty look.

Afternoon sessions were more of the same. The mind talked, the mind balked.

You're supposed to be watching your breath, my mind said. Get off my case, my mind said. I got to put up with ten days of you schmucks? my mind said.

I DEvised A PLAN. At home, I walk on the beach every morning: five miles – two and a half out, two and a half back. I pass over three streams. I know every house, every partly buried piece of

driftwood. I would divide my beach-run into tenths. Each day, I would walk a segment. If I could stay on that beach, I reasoned, I could stay on the course.

In the evening, a video discourse was presented. Goenka told how Vipassana had been around for thousands of years. It was lost for a while, then revived by the Buddha, who found out about it under his bodhi tree. Some time later, it got lost again in India, but was preserved in Burma, where Goenka was born and lived as a wealthy businessman.

He suffered for years from migraines. The only treatment was morphine, to which he became virtually addicted. When he did a Vipassana course, the migraines disappeared. Goenka soon gave up business and began teaching the techniques near Mumbi.

Word of mouth brought more and more people, he noted. People from all walks of life, of all religions. From Burma and India, Vipassana spread to the West.

Much of the discourse was serious, but every now and again, the man would come up with some brilliantly droll one-liners. Laughter in the hall was a welcome sound amidst the silence.

The days passed: footsteps in the sand. By the end of the third day, I had crossed two streams. I still had not found a comfortable sitting position, but no longer was worried my spine would become freeze-dried and crack in several places.

On the fourth day, the Goenka recording taught the actual Vipassana technique. The breathing exercise, he noted, was simply for focusing the mind, to strengthen concentration.

Just as we had for three days fixed our attention on the triangle of nose and upper lip, with Vipassana we were henceforth to explore the entire surface of the body, bit by bit, beginning with the top of the head. We were simply to concentrate on a part of the body and be aware of the sensations there – just observe, nothing else.

The idea sounded ridiculous, but when I began to focus, I was amazed I could actually detect sensations on the skin – sometimes light and subtle, sometimes more pronounced. In this manner, I covered the body from top to bottom and back up again. Every patch of me had sensations, and I could experience them all.

As the hours and the days passed (I'd already made my turn and was walking home, shining sea now off to my left), I found I could cover the body in larger and larger patches; and, then, not in patches at all but simply as a scan, taking in the sensations of greater chunks of me.

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There was a point, on the seventh day, when suddenly I encountered a period of dread. I mean, absolute *dread*. I saw myself as useless, unloved in this life and unlovable, and all the meditation in the world would do nothing to save me. I wanted to stand up and run out of there, get in my car and drive off – just keep driving. I felt a panic rising, and then, just as suddenly as the dread had appeared, it vanished.

SOMETHING WENT WITH IT. Sitting wasn't uncomfortable any more. I didn't even need the chair. At meal time, instead of scoffing down large quantities of food, as I had been, I fasted. (Fasting during the ten days, we'd been informed, was a no-no. So I didn't tell anybody. I *couldn't* tell anybody, could I?)

The last few days flew by. On the tenth day, we were allowed to talk. A lot of chit-chat ensued, which I had a hard time dealing with. These people had gone through the same remarkable experience I had, and soon as it's over they're right back talking shit! Without a word (or attempting to chat up the more spunky women), I put some money in the dana bowl and walked to my car. Driving through the countryside, I pulled over and stopped for a few minutes. I swear I could make out individual blades of grass in the fields fifty, a hundred feet off.

I won't say that I bought Goenka's trip completely. Having for fifty years practiced and taught a mind control system where the object is to assert positive mindpower to manifest desired change to physical, material and emotional states, I found it difficult to simply observe, without acting upon my sensations. Yet, that brief moment of dread seemed to become unhooked from some deep, unseen cranny, rise up and pass away on its own.

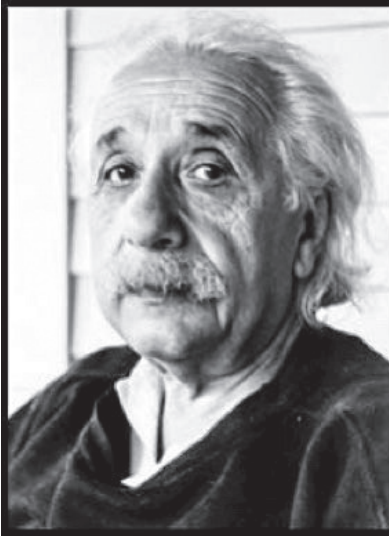
I reckon I gave Vipassana a pretty sound checking-out. It seems to have passed every phase of my test. I'm not a devotee, and I don't perform the two hours' daily meditation, as Goenka recommended. But after decades of experiencing much promise and little satisfaction in my dealings with the New Age, I felt I'd found a vehicle which works if you work at it, and has a basic honesty.

Now, if you Google possible dangers of Vipassana, what comes up are a number of news articles on a Pennsylvania young woman who experienced a difficult time during a course, had to be taken home, continued to have problems, then ten weeks after the retreat committed suicide. The straights and conventional mental health bodies and practitioners had a field day: Don't use scientifically

untested therapies which prompt you to kill yourself, stick to our chemicals which are laboratory proven to keep you alive, safe and in permanent stupor.

Millions of people have gone through Vipassana. One recorded suicide (and two and a half months after leaving the course); still, no question about it, one is too many. So should Vipassana, or any other deep-meditation practice, be banned? I say yes, but only after all the mind-altering drugs, the pharmaceutical companies who churn them out and medical people who prescribe them are made to stand down.

The young woman who took her life had emotional problems. As a lifetime depressive, so did I when I sat in on Vipassana. I would venture a heck of a lot of the millions who've done the course were at least a little barmy, and a heck of a lot way more so. In the end, it's a judgment call. My take is, as always, use your own discretion. Just don't let fear be your deciding factor.



“If people are good only because they fear punishment, and hope for reward, then we are a sorry lot indeed.”

~Albert Einstein

i'm not really an atheist i just don't believe in god

THE SUPER-CHRISTIAN Australian rugby player Israel Folau, who got himself canned from the sport in his country for repugnant outspoken views, listed eight categories of humanity as absolute certainties for eternal fire and brimstone: drunks, homosexuals, adulterers, liars, fornicators, thieves, idolators and atheists.

I must confess having engaged one way or another in just about all of these abhorrent behaviors during my many years.

Drunk? Oh sure, any number of times way back when I was a university student.

Homosexual? Not really, although I did have the hots for this woman who worked out at the gym where I used to train. Had arms the size of beech tree trunks, she did, and for some reason I became smitten. I'd climb onto the cross-trainer next to hers and as I pumped away would grow wooden from images of her wrapping those lovely pillars around me and squeezing to the point of suffocation. A little latent gayness, maybe?

Adulterer? To my knowledge just once, and really, it wasn't my fault. She swore up and down her divorce was final.

Liar? Look, I'm an author. I've written a few novels plus a

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bunch of short stories in which I made everything up: characters, scenes, dialogue. Making it up is lying, right?

Fornicator? Well, my one and only marriage ended before I hit thirty, and I only turned celibate a few weeks ago. (It's a short-term trial, mind.) So okay, you've got me there, big-time.

Thief? Dear me, if cribbing others' pithy one-liners and using them in my books without assigning due credit counts, I'm already a long-term citizen of Hades.

So far as idolatry, I've got in my home and garden any number a small statuettes of the Buddha, Krishna and that lot, gifts from kindly locals during my many journeys to Asia. Do with that what you will.

Now, here's where my problem with Folau's pronouncements really kicks in. I am a devoted Jewish-American Vegan Atheist, to my great pride the sole JAVA in my community, perhaps the whole of my adopted nation of New Zealand. What gets me is that of the quartet of components here, this nutcase singles out what I consider the least noxious, atheist.

Why overlook my ethnicity, of which the fall-on-your-knees-before-me crowd pinched most of our dogma? Until the Muslims booted us down the ladder of Christian contempt, the Jesus mob spent a couple thousand years trying to eradicate us.

Then there's America, their government and corporate head honchos especially. Maybe Folau needs to more closely check out what's been going on over there lately because I reckon those astute darlings are prime pickings for boarding the never-ending down escalator.

Finally, vegan: If anything, those of us who disdain eating your alleged lord's furry and feathered creatures coz we think they're kinda cute and have a right to long, happy lives ought to be fodder for future torrid climes, right?

Now, the term atheist stretches for miles. To begin with, I disdain ists and isms, but face it, you might not like the notion of labeling, say, colors, but how else do you communicate to someone afar the hue of your new living room set? (Just don't lump me in with those bloody agnostics, okay? Fence-sitters. Wusses. Won't take a stand. Marshmallows. Bah.)

I'm frequently asked: What do you people believe in, nothing? You're born, you died, finito?

Actually, I have no clue what 'we people' believe. Rarely discuss it. In fact, very few of my friends identify themselves as such. Were I to suppose, I'd venture most dip in and dip out of 'belief' due

to impossible-to-shake early conditioning. It's claimed – who does such research? – the biggest growing spiritual belief as the world enters decade three of the second millennium is no belief. Which in truth makes me shudder. If atheists become a majority, I'll no longer have cause to be an oppressed minority

So here I be, up to my shin bone in decade nine of my own, and I shall outline my 'beliefs', and try to explain how I've come to accept them. Knowing that, between the time of writing this, and your reading this, no doubt there will be a change or two. At least, I hope so. Biggest fear in all this is becoming stagnant, set in my own mental concrete.

Firm belief: the known universe is composed entirely of energies. All of these energies added together equal what I call Universal Mind. Every living thing is part of this composite energy; not just you and me and those of our species. Nor, as the Buddhists believe, only the animal kingdom on up. (What – fleas but not trees? Yo, Buddha!) Every plant, every rock, every thing.

Reduce matter to the smallest, itty-bittiest sub-atomic particle, and you're not even close to being there. Because matter is just energy with a coat on. Matter is composed of vibrations.

Now, my 'belief' in a nutshell: matter, being a form of energy, cannot be got rid of; it can only be transformed, either into energy or another form of matter. (Hey, don't yell at me, Einstein said it before I came along.)

Inside my body is an energy that's a little piece of the Universal Mind. One share of common stock in the Really Big Corporation. Everybody is born (again) with the stock certificate rolled in a tiny hand. (And who gifts us this one share? We do. Us, ourselves.) What you do with your single share is another story. Yeah, sure, silver spoons in mouths and all that. Until you hear about kids born into super-wealthy families turning into junkies and the poorest kid born to a single mom in a crack house in the worst ghetto becoming a university professor or IT genius.

I'm a firm believer in reincarnation, as do more than half the world's population. (And the odds are strong that if you don't believe, most likely you didn't last time around either.) I have been through past-life therapy, and some of the revelations of whom I used to be are nothing shy of fascinating. Word I get, I've had over one hundred thirty past lives, eighty-some male.

There is such a thing as karma, yes, but not at all what my

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hippie friends used to think. It is not punishment for past sins. (That's pure Christian naughty-or-nice malarkey.) Karma is primarily about experience. What you've done to others, you need to experience yourself. The teacher must be taught. And who, or what, makes you do this? You do. The true you. The essence of you, which hops like a formless cosmic flea from life to life, with necessary rest periods in between to sift through, dwell upon and comprehend the significant lessons learned in the life just concluded.

What gets me is the either-or crowd. Either you believe in gee-oh-dee or you believe strictly in reason. Why? The reason nuts are usually so wound up in left brain jargon, they accept nothing unless proven, or provable, by their own god, Science. Except that science at this juncture in history comes up to no more than anklebone height of the total body of understanding.

Okay, how do I know all this? Here comes the tricky part. In a previous chapter I spoke about the pendulum as a tool of discernment. In that spiel I spoke of this tool as a means of getting inside your own head, pushing aside the junk and clutter strewn all over the interior of the mind and getting to the source, or light, within. I claimed this tool to be a wonderful device to avoid loneliness because if used properly it can put you in touch with your very best friend, your highest self. All true. But ah, it goes much, much further than that.

The pendulum can, potentially, put you in touch with the whole of the universal energy system of which you are a tiny splinter (but a part nonetheless). In other words, you can use it to open an account in the Universal Bank of Infinite Knowledge and Wisdom. Everything that ever was, is and will be is stored in the Bank's vaults; the pendulum is just a key. (Although that's a misnomer as the vaults are never really locked, and its contents are forever accessible to all.)

I won't tell you what I have discovered (nor will I claim the 'source' of this information, be it within my own mind or external to my being). We are all influenced, whether pro or con, by what we read or hear. You think I'm a swell guy, you might well be swayed by my beliefs. I'm a first class ratbag, you'll tend to shoot off the other way. Find out what YOU believe, what you know, by exploring a method such as the pendulum, and delving into the truth you brought into this world (this time), and which is still held with your name on it in the convenient branch office of the Universal Bank, the one located in your head. Or heart.

Discovery is a joy. Beats Google any day.



when Jesus invaded the spiritual community

FOR SURE the alternative community was having its problems.

One of the many back-to-the-basics centers that had come into being in New Zealand in the '70's, this particular community ('commune', like 'hippie' and 'guru' a term turned sour by negative media generalization, is shunned by those involved) perhaps best exemplified the statement serious younger people hope to make then. Several hundred acres of regenerating bush near the sea and far from the madding crowd; no private ownership; constructive social activism; no meat, drugs or booze; a popular acceptance of the principles of Buddhism – in brief, a renunciation of all that was deemed excessive and wrong and a sharing of that which is loving and essential.

A score of adults and a like number of kids made their home here, setting up self-styled dwellings and house trucks, with a communal eating/gathering place which brought them together at least once a day. For a time the community worked and worked well. No one knows exactly when their unified strength began to break down; when they ran out of steam.

So often in my recent travels around the country whenever my predilection for vegetarianism and meditation became known people would say, be sure and stop in at the spiritual community. Upon arrival

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I was immediately taken with the friendliness – a total stranger could right off feel at home here. But home had a curious listlessness to it, an overwhelming sense of fatigue.

I learned that a majority of the original members had gone and the turnover of new faces was high. Moreover, there was little sign of structure. A few maintained the community was undergoing an anarchy phase, but anarchy's just another word for an act not being together.

Until recently, for example, there had been a rotating schedule of house persons. This individual cooked the meals, baked, tidied up the communal compost toilet, made sure the kids got their snacks after school. Each adult served as house person for an entire day, supervising the activities of the kitchen/gathering place, the nucleus of any center, be it called commune, community or kibbutz. Enough adults participated so that no one was called upon more than once very two and a half weeks. The system, I was told, had worked beautifully.

My first week one woman voluntarily prepared two midday meals, another cooked two more. Three days nothing at all took place. The kitchen was often dirty and unlabelled bags of grains, cereals and flour were scattered here and there. The kids returning from school were forced to ransack the larder, small hands dipping into caches of nuts, seeds and raisins.

Other problems abounded. Money, for one. The community was broke and so were most of its citizenry. A couple of the men were employed on a construction project nearby and a few of the women worked at a village store. One solo mother received child support from her ex, yet another was on the benefit. Times were hard.

Energy: nobody seemed to have any to speak of. The two weeks I spent there four separate attempts at a policy meeting failed when no one showed up. A handful practiced tai chi most every day, and this appeared the extent of any real effort at personal growth. Social activism was down to nil.

'I feel burnt out,' one woman told me. 'The past few years in addition to raising a child I've spent almost all my time working against the multi-nationals, the mining, the smelter, discrimination against women and Maori. You use all your wits, your soul, to keep them from building the wall around you and if you're lucky you tear down a brick or two. The way I feel now, they want to give our country away, let them. I'm exhausted.' Many of the others, I gathered, were of similar mind.

On top of this was the season: winter was coming. Winter with its heavy rains, the mud, the cold, the long nights. The gloom.

And yet, none of these things constituted the main problem here. In fact, the particular thing most nagging the spirit of the spiritual community happened to be the biggest problem then facing all communities in New Zealand at that time

It's called relationships.

At the spiritual community there were two true families; that is, two adults and their kids...happily living together. There were two other couples, except the male from one was on occasion coupling with the female of the other – to the distinct lack of appreciation of the more permanent mates.

Another woman was sometimes coupling with a man whose prior woman had lately turned celibate. The first woman's former man occasionally coupled with a different woman except he was still hoping to get back with his original mate, who wanted none of it.

Still another woman had had a mate for some time but now he was hot into a love affair most Kiwi men seemed to affect some time in their lives – with the sea; and while he spent most of his waking time constructing the vessel that would deliver him windswept to his ultimate freedom, his woman suffered their ultimate further separation.

And so it was going at the spiritual community.

I lived with these people for a brief moment in time and I can vouch for their sincerity and integrity. I didn't meet a single person I would even begin to think of as 'promiscuous'. I'd further venture that every person I talked to wanted nothing more than a solitary mate who was loving, lovable and permanent.

Perhaps the greatest hassle is the leaving behind of those paradigms acquired through the tuition of Barbie dolls, rugby and glossy, flesh-colored foldouts when one steps over the societal boundary to the alternative way of life.

Breaking old habits came little easier to those who say I don't and opt for a cabin in the bush than to those who say I do and mortgage a house in the suburbs. If anything, the young people living in rural communities were the pioneers of the time. The New Age was not a matter sprouting mung beans and chanting om so much as acquiring the full understanding of how to live with other human beings in true compassionate harmony. It's the first wee step towards survival on a planet about to render itself to ashes, and without any real set of rules,

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with no guidelines save those of trial and error, experience and pain, these folks were having a go.

Enter the Savior.

Not long before my arrival an organization of Jesus people had petitioned the spiritual community for use of their land to hold a weekend workshop. Ostensibly the workshop was to be geared to the public at large. Perhaps. Jesus people, especially the younger, recently turned-on, had a missionary zeal that daunts the imagination. Besides, they can smell a potential convert like a jungle lion sniffing out a wildebeest. The folk at this community, it was more than obvious, were ripe and ready.

I watched as they drove in with two rented vans and with impressive efficiency set up a pair of rented marquees. They were smiling and cordial and fast to make friends.

‘Hi, I’m John!’ one would claim, rather loudly and with firm handclasp.

‘Hello, I’m Ginny!’

Several appeared to know community people from a time ago.

‘Yes, last time you saw me I had long hair and a beard down to here, eh? Well, that was just my way of searching for identity. The search ended when I found Jesus!’

‘Awr, I used to do yoga and tai chi, y’know, but since I let the Lord into my heart I don’t need those things anymore.’

One man had been a practicing naturopath. ‘Oh,’ he laughed, ‘I was into raw food, no meat, no dairy, all that. But Jesus showed me the way back. After all, he’s provided animals for us to eat, right?’

During the day I observed as the visitors would get close to the residents, and on a one-to-one basis, conduct long, heartfelt talks about the subject most prominent in their lives. A few workshops during the afternoon – lectures, really – were attended by a handful of the curious.

Towards nightfall the Jesus folks prepared a sumptuous feed (meatless), and a circle was formed around a blazing bonfire under a perfect sky. A newcomer, knowing no one, might easily identify the two groups. The residents sat in clusters, women together, men together. The visitors were formed as individual families, woman, man, kids, smiling, happy, holding hands or arms placed around one another.

‘Yeah, Philip and I were into an open relationship sort of thing too,’ I overheard a Jesus woman remark to a resident. ‘He had affairs

and I had some too, but there was always jealousy no matter how understanding we tried to be. Then soon as we turned to Jesus it was obvious we didn't need any others. I mean, really, we're so high all the time!

It was a confession I heard from different people throughout the weekend.

Following the feed, the music began. There were guitars, a flute. All the music revolved around Jesus. A community woman who played a mean fiddle tried to get a jam session going, but without success. The others would let her play alone, then get back into their religious songs when she'd finished. She put the fiddle away.

It was getting late when someone said, 'Hey Sam, how about a story!'

'Yeah! Sam's so good at telling stories.'

Sam tried his best to decline, then, as the circle of people grew quiet, the only sounds now of the crackling fire and a few night birds, he began his tale. He chose the story of the resurrection. It seemed not to fit with the tranquility of the evening, a point Sam himself made note of more than once. Nonetheless he talked on. More and more graphic did the story grow, interspersed with contemporary phrasings ('...so Jesus decided to go for it...')

Sam took half an hour and more; the night seemed to grow colder as he went on. The moment he finished, as though on cue, a guitar began to strum and the Jesus people went into a song about their savior. The song ended and it appeared so too had the festivities, and the community people made ready to break the circle. But no, Sam had more to say. No story now. More a rave. Loudly. More emphatically.

'People, I want to tell you, if you think finding Jesus is easy, well, it isn't. No indeed! Getting to know Jesus is hard work, the hardest work you'll ever...'

Heavier and heavier. Freezing, half asleep, my night was over. I stood up and walked slowly away. I noted I was the only one to do so. Kiwis are ever so polite.

The following day I ran into Sam and we had a nice talk about places on the globe we'd visited in our respective travels. Then he removed from his pocket a black-bound book.

'It's the Book of Hebrews. I'd like you to have it.'

'Well, uh, I appreciate the gesture. But I think it'd sorta be wasted on me.'

'Why? Have you read it? I bet not! Look, take it and read it. It'll

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really blow your mind!

‘Ah, well, thing is, I travel pretty light, know what I mean? Why don’t you put it in the library they have here?’

‘But I want you to have it, man!’

‘Please.’

‘Please!’

And so it went, a comical thrusting of the scriptures back and forth. I prevailed. Sam seemed genuinely hurt. I suppose I should have taken it, then left it in the library. I didn’t mean to hurt the guy’s feelings.

After the entourage had packed up, after the good-bye cuddles, after the rented vans had left the community, I spotted a group of resident women thick in discussion. They seemed unaware of my approach.

‘They’re so bloody close-minded!’

‘I know! Try to tell them anything and they’d quick open their book. “Right here it says...” Always the book!’

‘Right. And when you’d tell them there are other books that have it different they’d say, “But ours is the only truth!” How do you reason with people like that?’

‘And their ideas about women! Back to the kitchen, girls, and pump out those kids!’

‘Yeah!’

Silence.

‘You know, they sure were good-looking couples.’

‘The kids were so happy too, weren’t they?’

‘It was good to see families really close like that.’

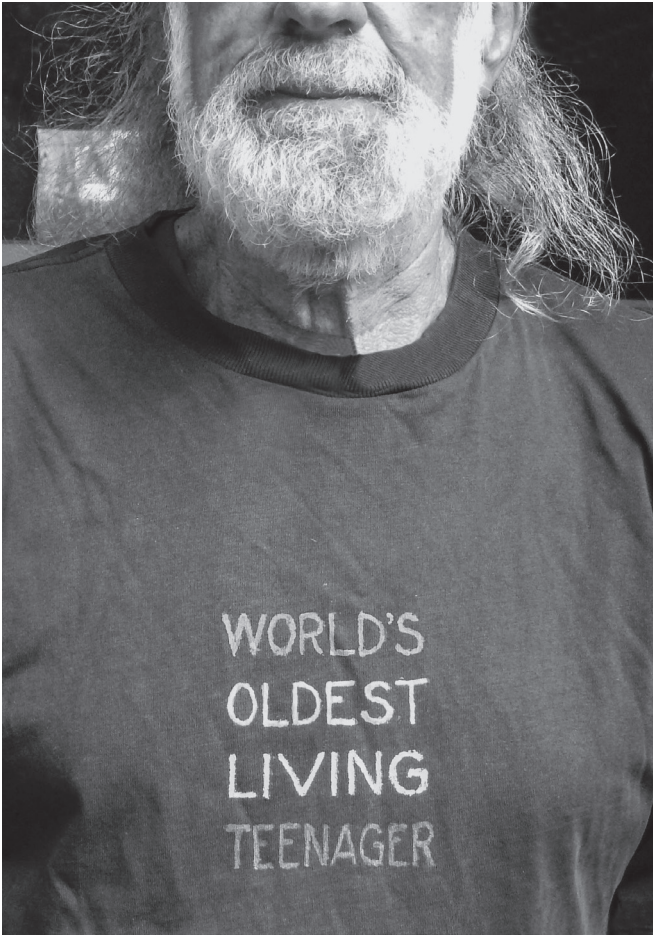
‘Yeah.’

Silence.

‘Y’know,’ said the woman whose man was busy preparing his yacht for the open seas, ‘they invited me to their place. I think maybe next month I’ll go down there. Not that I’m into any of this Jesus stuff, mind. It’s just, well, you know.’

‘Yeah.’

There was a prolonged silence as each of the women from the spiritual community gazed out as if to an unseen evidence.



don't grow old, grow up

'It's not the years in your life that count, it's the life in your years.'

—Abraham Lincoln

I'M QUITE LOOKING forward to growing old, although since I'm only in the early days of my ninth decade, that's a considerable way off.

When I hit seventy, I was told this was the new fifty. So I suppose I'm presently in my new forties. With a minimum of exceptions, however, (fewer teeth, less hair, wonky knees following years of tendon-bashing road running), I'm in equally as fine physical fettle, plus a heck of a lot wiser, at eighty-plus than I was at forty-plus. So I'm always tickled when the media, heads stuck in the last century, refer to a person in their sixties as 'elderly'.

But alas, those of us in the upper register of age numbers all too often buy the lies and scary what-ifs put out by the corporates wanting our gelt and promulgated by their prime butt-kissers, the media. On the other hand, stubborn cuss that I am, I use these two greedy bodies of our society as motivators. Elderly, am I? (Rolls up sleeves, spits on palms.)

At age seventy, I wrote the first of my (to date) seven books. Know who my publisher was? Me. Olden days, there were any number of small mom-and-pop publishing houses where you could sit down with the editor-in-chief and discuss your work. Gone, gobbled up

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by multinational nasties in New York and London. I have a personal policy: I won't deal with anybody I don't like or respect. Have some up-him/herself suit change my words? Tell me what I should or shouldn't put in my story? Feh.

It came to this: what, really, do I want at this stage of my life? Money? Nah, done that. Praise? Been there. What I really wanted – and believe it or not this took some time to piece out – was personal satisfaction. So I learned how to produce my own books: arrange format, design covers, work with a local printer, market the finished product.

And thus I discovered the biggest secret to staving off aging. No, not botox, makeup (face-paint over wrinkles makes me think of the map of downtown Tokyo), cosmetic stink, hair coloring and trendy clothes. (Pre-torn knees, granny? Really?) Rather, the great mystery to remaining young is – ready? – creativity.

Find something formatively artistic which appeals to the senses and sink your teeth in. So, you've never done any craftwork before? No worries. See that piece of driftwood on the beach? From a certain angle it kind of looks like a —. Or mosey around recycling emporia. Anything wink at you? Don't try to make sense; just take it home and begin to play with it.

Ever consider marketing that herbal remedy you've been making for your skin; those sugarless treats you've been baking using only natural vegan products; shopping bags made out of recycled —?

Then there's gardening. Now here's one area of life where you can exert full sense of your creativity. You don't have to plant things in perfectly straight rows like green soldiers on parade, you know. When you work/play in the soil, the opportunities to go crazy are infinite.

Then there's the commodity that's utterly ridiculous, useless and goes totally against the grain of what it purports to be: store-bought greeting cards. When I was in my twenties I worked a couple years for America's then-biggest corporation. Came year's end, everybody in each department sent one another Christmas cards. And people would drape them on string stretched across their offices. Not one of those wastes of paper had the slightest bit of heart of what the 25th of December supposedly meant to those people.

These days, of course, you can buy hand-made cards, which obviously are an upgrade, but for the life of me I don't understand why people simply don't create and fashion their own messages instead of buying off the rack puerile garbage pumped out by the millions

in a heathen country, or worse, a cute and clever animated bit of yecch downloaded off the internet. Ever I get one of those, either for a genuinely meaningful event or some phony commercial 'holy day' (father's day? Valentine's day?), dude, take it that you're immediately relegated to the sin bin of my being.

From my experience, here's how your creative efforts will go: It looks great! It looks like crap. It's the best new idea since macaroni. It's the dumbest idea since the first tadpole swam in from the sea and hoofed it on dry land.

You'll become pleased as punch with it. You'll become frustrated as hell with it. Male, you'll toss it in the bin and stomp off down the local muttering your frustration. Female, you'll rip it to pieces and march wearily over to Marge's and put up with more smartphone pics of her lookalike fat-cheeked great-grandchildren. Halfway to the pub you'll have a bright spark, do a one-eighty and jog back to your project. Something in Marge's lookalike fat-cheeked great-grandkids' pics will trigger an idea and without saying good-by you'll scoot off home and completely start over.

Welcome, dear reader, to the creative process. Where the only thing certain is your mind is so focused on your mission to originate and generate, it just doesn't have time to issue orders to your body to grow old. And speaking of such...

Many years back I was married. My lovely wife was six months my junior. Yet people frequently took me for her father. This was because in my head and heart I was one miserable fella. I worried a lot, suffered anxiety, was apprehensive of the future and ate rubbish. I thought old, I felt old, I damn well was old. Then because I was so unhappy, at age thirty I emigrated to the hippies. These kids, I reckoned, have the right idea how to live.

When flower power turned sour, and the kids scurried back to the suburbs from whence they hailed, I carried on their mode of living simply, eating vegan and exploring myself and my world through meditation, travel and creativity. Not only did these new lifestyle aspects slow down the aging process, I actually began to regain my lost youth.

I realized this a while later while visiting my teenage son, whom I hadn't seen in some years. A few enjoyable hours together at his home, in walks this much older woman. Ignoring me completely, she addressed my son, asking did he remember to do this and that. I remained quiet until there arose a lull in their conversation, whereupon

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I was all set to introduce myself. Then my son said, 'Now look, Mom...'

I sat there stunned. This was my ex-wife! The slim, beautiful young woman who'd been taken for my daughter might now pass for my much older chunky sister. What had happened to her? Actually, nothing. She'd simply done what most people do who lead a conventional middleclass existence. She'd aged.

My ex was a very bright, caring person. But came to diet, to exercise, to meditation, to some manner of creativity, nup. She woke up, got our son off to school, went to work, came home from work, made dinner for the two of them (commonly red meat and packaged, processed pseudo-food popped into the microwave), watched TV. She had no hobbies, no life beyond home and the office.

Look, I get it: life wears you down. A few years back, approaching the seventy-five year mark, I could feel the aging monster creeping up on me. It showed in my face, in my bearing. Reckoning a change in scenery might restore my rapidly abandoning true self, I flew off to the northern Indian state of Ladakh, high up in the Himalayas. Immediately I got whacked with a dose of altitude sickness, which made me feel even more like a relic.

One day, having partially recovered, I went for a long walk. After an hour's huffing and puffing, I came upon a couple alongside a stream. She had set up an easel and was painting the scene before them. Said she had only recently taken up the brush. He sat on the ground nearby, working a chunk of wood, fashioning a figure which might have been a yak. Or maybe it was a yeti. They invited me to join them, broke out a tiny camping stove and jug, made us cups of delicious tea from herbs they'd picked on their tramp.

This was their first time in India. They'd been there five months, traveling the length and breadth of the country on local buses and trains. No set itinerary, no electronic toys, just a much dog-eared secondhand guide book.

In conversation, it was revealed that he was eighty-seven, she eighty-five. Wearing glows of contentment, they looked considerably younger. I spent an hour in their company, allowing their sparkling energy to wash over me. They didn't know it, but they were my teachers, imbuing a message I badly needed at that moment: you're still alive, dope, so be ALIVE!

As I write, I've been living in New Zealand coming on forty years. With the possible exception of Bhutan, NZ is without question the most beautiful country of the fifty-plus on whose soil I have stood.

But there's something lacking – a general sense of good health and well-being, especially amongst seniors. As I observe and listen to 'third age' folk around me, often do I pick up evidence of rapid aging: organ malfunction, spinal and tendon contraction, arthritis.

On a positive note, a greater number of older citizens are walking, tramping, cycling, playing tennis, plus attending yoga and pilates classes. For this I applaud them. But you know what these strivers for better health so often do following their walks and classes? Rush to a favorite poison emporium and gobble down white flour/white sugar junk looked upon as treats. (Then periodically head over to a most accommodating Doctor Druggem for a chemical fix to patch up ailing bits.)

'I take so many pills,' a woman several years my junior told me recently, 'I rattle when I move.'

In case you've got the impression here that I have blind faith in my own personal longevity and lasting good health, you totally miss the point of Barry. I'm Jewish. Our bunch look to Murphy for optimism. First thing I do every morning when I wake is place a finger under my nostrils. Warm air? Right, cancel the call to the funeral director. Because I know full well that if my vigilance wanes, should I grow lazy and slacken my personal diet/exercise/meditation/creative regimen, my revered position as world's oldest living teenager can slip away in the blink of an eye.

The Kickass Guide to Well-Being

alpha mind control

The Kickass Guide to Well-Being

before we begin, a brief explanation

ALPHA MIND CONTROL is the name of the course I taught from 1972 to 1997, mostly in the USA, then later in New Zealand upon emigrating to that country in 1980.

I began teaching at the University of Pennsylvania in '72, then in 1977 I created my own center, the Relax for Survival Foundation, and held classes in a number of hired halls in the Philadelphia region.

When I moved to NZ, I primarily used the facilities of Auckland University and a yoga center located in that city's suburbs. As well, I taught Alpha in a number of other countries, including Australia, India, Nepal and Israel.

Several thousand people attended these seminars over the years; tariffs ran from free (at Penn) to donation (at Relax, in New Zealand and further afield). All money received went not to me, rather through me to charities and community services mostly dealing with the environment, needy kids, animal refuges and to individuals in circumstances where funds would be of obvious benefit.

If all this sounds like a bit of boasting, please understand it was more the reverse: I was being provided a rare opportunity to serve, for which (if a devoted atheist can legitimately use the term) I feel blessed.

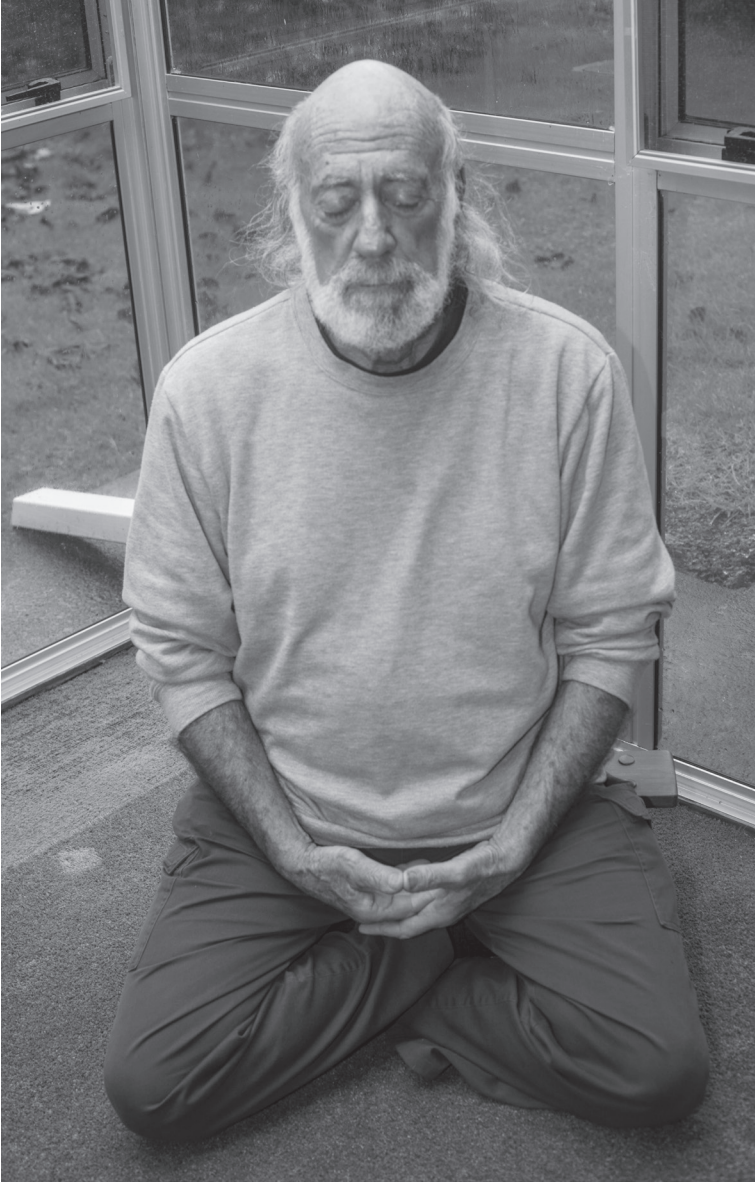
The following chapters pretty much sum up the guts of the course I taught during those years. They are intended as DIY exercises. Read them, try them on, add them to your life. They have worked

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wonders for me, and I'm pretty much a slow learner.

In addition, I have recorded the two prime tools of Alpha Mind Control, those having to do with the course's foundation technique, the 'double screen', and the powerful healing technique, 'chakra cleansing', and uploaded them onto YouTube. Both run slightly more than thirty minutes. To access, simply type into the site's search bar ALPHA BARRY ROSENBERG or CHAKRA BARRY ROSENBERG. Enjoy.

The Kickass Guide to Well-Being



meditation

a simple how-to-do-it instruction for calming and focusing the mind

MEDITATION IS A PRACTICE of quieting the mind that has been in use for thousands of years. Though certainly of spiritual value, it has no religious bias. Today millions the world over practice daily this simple, pleasant self-improvement technique.

During the 1970s meditation was brought to the West in a glossy, mystery-shrouded package. People were conned into paying hundreds, sometimes thousands, of dollars and warned not to reveal their new secrets to anyone.

Then a professor at Harvard Medical School named Herbert Benson wrote a best-selling book entitled *The Relaxation Response* in which he slew the dragon of meditative sham.

After extensive research Benson claimed that meditation is, in fact, a remarkable vehicle not only for permanently alleviating stress and promoting emotional stability, but also for producing a normalization of physiological factors such as blood pressure, circulation and heart and pulse rate. However, he wrote, no one form of meditation corners the market of resultant well-being. In other words, all types of structured meditation work...provided you apply it every single day.

method 1 – the mantra

OUR MINDS ARE CLUTTERED with verbal rubbish. Voices talk to us, nag us and tell us how inferior we are. We reflect on mistakes of the past and apply them to events expected in the future. Meditation says: “Shhh! Be still and be here now!”

Ideally we would empty our heads of every single thought. Since practically speaking this is impossible, meditation does the next best thing. It teaches us to concentrate on one single thing to the passive exclusion of all else.

Example: hold your hand out about twelve inches before you. Focus on it. As you do, you are aware there is a world beyond, above and below your hand. Nonetheless, your hand provides a foreground subject for your concentration while all that lies beyond is background. You know full well walls, ceilings and floor (or sky, trees and ground) exist; simply ignore them best you can by keeping your attention on your hand.

Such is the value of a mantra. By definition, a mantra is a syllable, or series of strung-together syllables, that have no pictorial representation for you. Nonsense words, really.

In ancient times, it was discovered that mantras, when chanted over and over for several minutes, actually change the electro-magnetic force fields both inside our heads and around us. (Warriors, for example, would chant a battle cry before engaging in combat.) A meditation mantra has the quality of creating a more relaxed, healthier mental state when repeated over and over.

The most popular mantra used by meditators around the world is:

Om Mani Padme Hum

This is generally pronounced ohm mah-nee pahd-may hoom, though there are variations. Literally translated, this means ‘the universe is the jewel in the lotus of my heart’. But it is the *vibrational* quality which makes these strung-together six syllables effective as a mantra.

doing it

While there is only one hard-and-fast rule to meditation (sit down, be silent, and do it...daily!), there are a number of sensible suggestions.

Basically, try to make meditation a desired habit. If you do it at the same time and in the same place each day, you create a familiar routine that in time will become an automatic action.

Probably the best time is early morning, for it sets the pace for your entire day. Best place is one that is peaceful and free from disturbance. A pleasant room, the garden or beach: whatever feels right. Those who live in family or crowded arrangements need to inform others to give you space and quiet during this period. A personal tip: at home, I wrap a sheet, or in colder weather a blanket, over my head and around me so that only my nose and just a bit of vision are not sealed off. It's probably no more than a mental thing to so cocoon myself, but it provides a definite sense of separation from the world.

Best not to meditate soon after eating, as a just-fed body makes for a sluggish mind. Nor prior to going to sleep, for meditation, while relaxing, also gives you energy, and you may find it difficult falling asleep after.

Position is important. Two main things to keep in mind: be comfortable and keep your back as straight as possible without holding it rigid. Sitting cross-legged, knees on floor and maybe four to six inches of cushion or bench elevating your bottom, is the preferred position. Sitting in a straight-back chair, feet flat on the floor, is a fine alternative. It's best not to lie down nor sit on a bed as the mind identifies these with sleep.

Having realized time, place and position, you're ready to begin.

Close your eyes and take a few long, slow, deep breaths, visualizing the air coming into, refreshing then leaving the body. Count slowly backwards from ten down to one, picturing the numbers as you recite them. Clear the mind of thoughts best you can and begin to slowly recite the mantra: *om mani padme hum...om mani padme hum...om mani padme hum...* Not too fast, not too slow – by doing it you will find your ideal rhythm.

method II – vitamin O

VITAMIN O IS OXYGEN. Oh, that. Well, if you think it's not as important as, say, checking your Facebook page or sending out that absolutely essential text, try going a minute without...and watch your other concerns quickly pale. A few thousand times each day you take in this most vital resource, and are totally unaware. Your mind, your focus, are elsewhere. On, um, important issues.

Vitamin O therapy simply is this: take time, a few minutes each day, to observe this precious stuff doing its thing. That's all you have to do. Nothing fancy. Just watch your breath. In and out. And what happens while it's in the body. In time you will learn to use breath – Vitamin O – to relax, de-stress, even heal yourself. What follows is a simple, very effective five day plan to Vitamin O therapeutic proficiency.

DAY 1. Focus attention on your nostrils. Take a long, slow, deep breath. 'Watch' the air as it comes in through the nostrils. Then watch the air going out. Keep your full attention on the nostrils. Silently do a breath count: breath in, breath out: 10; second in/out breath: 9; and so on. Breathe slowly and deeply. When you get to 1, reverse the count: in/out: 2... in/out: 3. Until you return to 10. Sound easy? Ha! Are you in for a shock. Coz here's the tricky part of the procedure: if you lose count, find your mind wandering, not focused on the nostrils observing each breath, go back to the beginning and start over.

Don't let the breathing/focusing/counting become automatic. This is not meant to be a mechanical process. Rather a pleasant, feel-good, fully attentive exercise. When you finish a complete set of nineteen (10+9) observed breaths, DAY 1's practice is over. (But please continue breathing.)

DAY 2. Imagine a corridor from your nostrils to the brain. Follow each breath through the nostrils to the brain, and back out again. As you did on DAY 1, count your observed breaths, 10 to 1, then back to 10. Nineteen consecutive long, slow, full, observed breaths. No cheating.

DAY 3. Basically a repeat of DAY 2, with this new twist: picture a beautiful ball of light sitting on the bridge of your nose. Sparkling, glowing, your very favorite color. As you breathe in, imagine light from your tiny sun being swept along with the Vitamin O. Observe air

and light moving from nostrils to brain. The light fills your brain with its positive, powerful, wholesome goodness. When you breathe out, imagine any negativity – unwanted thoughts, anger, anxiety, stress, pain, bad habits – as a dark, ugly gas. Follow the path of this dark gas as it accompanies the breath out. Picture a long funnel some inches from your nose. Direct the gas into this funnel, which leads to the very center of the earth...out of your body and life forever. So – air and light in, relaxing you, healing you; air and dark out, cleansing, purifying you. Once again, count your in/out breaths 10 to 1 and back to 10.

DAY 4. The corridor of air and healing light in, air and dark-rubbish out, lengthens: from nostrils through the brain and down into your heart; then heart to brain to nostrils and into the funnel. The light is washing away all brain-pain, heart-ache; the unwanted dark stuff is being flushed permanently away to the center-of-the-world dump. (Yo – are you really and truly observing each and every breath? Be attentive!)

DAY 5. Extend your imaginary corridor to the center of the abdomen. When you do your focused healing breath, feel as well as see the Vitamin O working for you. Welcome the powerful-yet-gentle light into your body. And sense the body's relief upon exhausting the negative dark gas. Remember, please: you are not a robot. Honor your precious Self by being fully aware of this cleansing/healing/loving work.

AFTER DAY 5. Simply extend the duration of observed in/out breaths. Instead of one set of 10 full breaths, do two sets (10 to 1 and back to 10, then again 10-1-10). Or, if counting becomes a bore, merely time yourself. There's no 'safe' limit to breathing.

VARIATION. Close the right nostril and breathe in through the left. Then close the left and breathe out through the right. Do this for one full set (or for a few minutes if not counting), then switch nostrils for the next period.

SPECIFIC BODY AREAS. If you have pain or localized ill-health, be it anything from tennis elbow to a tumor, treat it with Vitamin O in this manner: breathe air-plus-light from nostrils to brain, then directly to the area in question. See/feel/know the light to be penetrating, healing the problem by breaking down the mass of unnatural dark stuff, then chucking it out of your body with the out-breath...into the funnel

and gone for good. Do this until the area has no more dark, just light and complete absence of pain. Then breathe light around the area for future protection.

FINAL WORD. Your imagination is of utmost importance in this work. It is not only oxygen but as well your power of mind that make Vitamin O therapy happen. Focusing on breath (and the accompanying light and dark) keeps your mind on the now. What has caused you stress and/or ill health is too much concentration on ‘mistakes’ of the past and fears of the future. ‘Now’ is the only time where you can actually create well-being. So work on your future good health by focusing on the most important moment of your life – this one! Each breath is life... life is the sum total of all your breaths.

method III – mantra and vitamin O combined

OKAY, YOU HAVE TWO perfectly good methods of meditation. The mantra historically dates back to the early days of Hinduism. Watching the breath came a little later, and generally is attributed to the Buddha. If you try them both out, quite likely you will find Vitamin O more complex and perhaps somewhat difficult to focus on. Now, some time after the Buddha, like 2600 years later, along came a hippie teaching something called Alpha Mind Control in the renown spiritual mecca of Philadelphia.

Said hippie, who initially had trouble choosing between the two prime meditative methods, realized he preferred *om mani padme hum* because his mind was free to wander now and then rather than being so tightly focused on his breath. (Hippies are like that.) Then one morning during a singular *om mani padme hum*, he made an observation so sparkling that he actually got hung up between mani and padme: his breathing had automatically jumped on the bandwagon, and his in-out breaths were in perfect coordination with his silent recital of the mantra!

He began consciously being aware of harmonizing the one with the other, and for the past half century has been practicing, and teaching, *om mani padme hum* on the full in-breath, *om mani padme hum* on the out-breath, making sure to link breaths together without any break in between. Now, these are long, slow, deep breaths, with the in-breath being active, and the out-breath rather passive, in that the air has to come out anyway, so just let it do so without forcing it out. Easy-peasy.

best 20 minutes of the day

The ideal meditation period for beginners has been found to be twenty minutes. (This is one case where more is not better.) You may meditate as often as you like – so long as each sitting doesn't exceed twenty minutes – although one single period per day is sufficient. Beyond your one formal twenty-minute sit, you can meditate whenever the opportunity arises, even if it's only for a few minutes of what normally would be 'idle' time. (Instagramming? Tweeting? Worrying?)

For the twenty minute sit, have a timepiece nearby and take a peek now and then. You will probably find that after a few sessions your built-in alarm clock will alert you pretty close to the twenty minute mark. NOTE: Do not use an external alarm...this is a terrible way to bring yourself out of a peaceful meditation.

While meditating, don't be upset when thoughts come in. They will, of course; your job is not to be attached to them. Remember, your mantra is your hand in front of your face. Simply focus upon it and let everything else remain in the background. When background sneaks into the foreground, gently put it back in its place and keep on with what you are doing.

If you discover you have stopped reciting, or perhaps even nodded off for a bit, no problem: just return to the mantra until the original twenty minutes are up. If you discover you have stopped breathing for an appreciable time, that's a somewhat bigger problem. Maybe I'll cover it in a later chapter.

At twenty minutes, stop reciting and remain silent for several moments, focusing on your breath. This is when I silently ask the three essential questions of life: 1. Who am I? 2. Why am I here? 3. Where am I going? I ask them one at a time and pause for several moments in between asks. I don't go looking for answers. If one comes, fine; just understand that it applies only to that moment. If no answer comes, this is normal because, you see, asking the questions are more important than any answers which might come.

Gradually open your eyes, readjust to your physical surroundings and slowly rise to your feet. It's important that you do not stand up too quickly. Those with low blood pressure be especially conscious of the change in position and mind state.

did i do it right?

In 1979 I was living in the Indian state of Goa. I was asked by a Catholic priest who had become a dear friend to bring the word (or the four words) to a dozen nuns at a nearby convent. (The irony of a Jewboy from Philly teaching meditation to brown nuns in India was not lost on me.)

After they completed their first-ever meditation, I asked for comments. It was the mother superior herself who, smiling sheepishly, noted quietly that she had done it wrong. Oh?

‘About halfway through,’ she said, ‘I decided I didn’t like the feel of *om mani padme hum*. So I changed it.’

‘To what?’ I wondered.

‘“Thy will be done.”’ Which I thought was brilliant swap for this person.

So yes, of course, give the world’s most popular mantra a chance, but if it really doesn’t work for you, and you become uncomfortable with it, find one that does. Just don’t keep flipping from one to another – it confuses the poor old brain box, okay?

When I first began teaching, I wanted all my friends to do my class at Penn. Some took me up on it, some did not. One longtime pal, name of Danny, one day revealed that he had done the *real* meditation course (at a cost, he claimed, of five hundred dollars). Yeah, sure, I was a bit miffed, but what the heck.

‘What mantra did they give you?’ I wondered.

Danny looked stricken. ‘Oh, I can’t tell you that!’

‘Danny, fer chrissake!’

‘Well they said not to tell anyone. I haven’t even told Sheila (his missus).’

‘Okay, hang on a couple minutes. Don’t go away.’ I closed my eyes, took a few deep breaths, silently counted down from ten to one. I imagined myself entering what I call my alpha temple. Set up a large white screen. Silently I gave the directive to the universe: Danny’s mantra is to appear on the screen.

Maybe half a minute went by, nothing. Then a bunch of tiny black dots began flowing in from the left and landed in no set order on my white screen. They began to move around, slowly forming some sort of pattern. Letters. I took to squinting.

‘I see an S. Yep, definitely an S. N? No, it’s H. SH. Then I. So SHI. A. And I think, it’s hard to make out’ – I was really squinting now

– ‘this time I think N. So, SHIAN.’

I slowly opened my eyes to see my good buddy Danny doing an impersonation of the Holland Tunnel, jaw slung, mouth an O.

‘Ah, it’s – it’s actually SHIAM. But how the hell do you do that?’

I held out my hand, palm up.

‘Five hundred bucks and I’ll tell you, boychik.’

Sometimes you’ll feel like you were orbiting the third moon of Saturn during your med, swear the minutes just flew by. Other times you won’t be able to shut down the stupid voices inside and reckon it took an hour. There are times you’ll feel terrific during and after, other sessions you’ll fidget throughout and afterwards think: What a waste! So, did you do it right? Well, the only way to do it wrong is...not doing it at all.

To make meditation successful is to look upon your practice not as a chore, a bitter pill you must swallow or else, rather as a daily meeting with the Christ or Buddha or god self (or, for atheists, the highest universal energy source) that exists within you.

And please understand that meditation is a slow and natural process; no miracle drug, this, instantly zapping a particular symptom of dis-ease (while leaving untouched the root cause).

lies i tell myself

Whether they learn meditation free from this instruction or pay some exalted guru thousands, understand that most people – way more than half – who begin meditating and are convinced they are realizing a measure of personal success, will quit the practice within a year. Here are the prime lies they tell themselves:

I no longer have the time.

If it really worked everybody would be doing it.

I believe it works for some, but not for me.

I’ll begin again on Monday.

Lies, all lies. There is only one valid reason for discontinuing the practice of meditation: I don’t believe I’m worthy of being calm, healthy and happy. And that, dear reader, is the biggest lie of all.



let there be light lots and lots of light

MY TEACHING CAREER BEGAN as a fluke. I hadn't taught before, had no training to teach, never even addressed a group of more than a half dozen. And there I was, in a packed auditorium at the prestigious University of Pennsylvania, expounding on a subject I had no more than an inkling of understanding.

This was the early 1970s, a time of fashionable interest in matters psychic and spiritual. I'd always believed the mind possessed untapped powers, even before a brief period of experimenting with psychedelics revealed fascinating hidden rooms and vaults in my brain. A bit of research into mindpower techniques and, backed by a barrel of bravado, I strode into the university one fine day, talked up the need for such a course, exaggerated my particulars and filled out a form, included in which was a long, flowery description of what I called Alpha Mind Control.

I figured maybe a dozen students would sign on, hopefully ten or eleven of them rather comely females, so when the school informed me that enrollment for my class was one of the largest in their two hundred year history, I seriously considered applying for work on a merchant steamer headed for Mars.

Tremulously, I entered the assigned auditorium, climbed

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onto a stool, peered out at a few hundred humans, all of whom unquestionably better versed in the subject matter than the teacher, and prepared for the worst. Miraculously, I winged it. Go figure.

My prime intent was to finish the ten week course without turning anybody, myself especially, into a newt, following which the chapter entitled university lecturer would forevermore be filed away in the dusty attic of my bizarre personal history.

Curiously, all went smoothly the first five weeks. Sure, I was faking it, making stuff up as I went along (or so I thought); still, everything appeared to work and no one had yet reported me as an evil sorcerer.

And then something happened which would change my entire life's direction and move me to eventually teach Alpha to thousands of people over the next quarter century.

At the onset of this one evening session, a middle-age woman raised her hand, stood and addressed the class. She told of a friend who that very morning had come visiting with her seven year old daughter. For reasons unknown, a young thug threw a rock, hitting the daughter in the eye and causing extensive damage. The girl was currently a patient at the Wills Eye Hospital, where the diagnosis was not good. An operation was scheduled for the following morning to remove a blood clot, the kid just might lose sight in the eye, and even if she didn't, a long stay of convalescence would be necessary to repair the extensive damage.

The woman in my class now addressed me directly. 'We've been hearing for some weeks about mindpower and doing your guided exercises. Is it possible that our group can perform some sort of absentee healing on this poor child?'

My first thought was, Oh, shit!

My second thought was, I don't really buy into this faith healing malarkey.

My third thought, gazing out at a few hundred ardent stares pointing like snipers' scopes my way, was, Uhh, I guess I better do something. And so I set about using my advanced Alpha Mind Control expertise (aka BS) to concoct a convincing scenario.

I had everybody hold hands and link up the rows. Closed their eyes and spent a couple minutes chanting *om*. (I'd sat in on enough meditation workshops to get this right.) The idea was to both relax and focus three hundred people into what ostensibly is the Alpha brainwave state. Whereupon I directed them to picture the seven year

old – name supplied by the woman in class – as she was at this very moment in the hospital.

‘Imagine yourself filled and surrounded by beautiful healing light. This is positive energy, the universe’s most natural resource. Connect your light with the light of the persons on either side of you, then those either side of them, until there is one great mass of super-powerful healing energy in this room. Now, beam the illuminated force at the girl. Sense the light immediately going to work healing the eye, repairing damage, dissolving the blood clot. Keep at it. Feel her being totally receptive to your efforts. Picture the eye healing itself, and as it does, the girl is feeling better and better, healthy and relaxed and happy about the good you are doing her. Now imagine her tomorrow morning. She wakes feeling at peace, her eye perfectly healed, no pain or discomfort whatsoever, as though nothing bad had ever happened...’

And so on.

How long did I have them do this? Five minutes? Ten? No idea. But it felt pretty good, and when finally I asked them to open their eyes and break contact, there was a damn nice feeling in that auditorium.

By the following evening when I entered the room, I had all but forgotten the previous night’s experience. A few minutes along, the woman came dashing into the crowded hall, virtually jogged halfway down the aisle frantically waving her hands. The room hushed. She told this tale, as reported to her by the girl’s mother:

The previous evening, the mother was in the hospital room with her daughter. Just before eight o’clock (the precise time we were engaged in the healing), the mother felt something ‘spooky’ in the room. Her sedated daughter was fidgeting, eyes rapidly fluttering, and she herself felt so unsettled she had to leave and walk the corridors for several minutes. When she returned, everything felt fine, and the girl was resting peacefully.

Following morning – the mother slept there overnight – a doctor comes in, begins to examine the child’s eye, a curious look on his face. He sprints out of the room, returning with two other doctors, all three hovering around the girl, befuddled. The mother anxiously demands to know the story. The docs look at her in puzzlement. The blood clot, which they’d said could not be dissolved without an op, is gone. Vanished. The eye has overnight healed to an extent that normally would take weeks. The nonplussed medics claim the girl probably will be discharged in a few days.

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As she was relating this tale, gasps and stifled cries were heard in my classroom. People were in tears. Me, I had this goofy grin plastered on my hairy face. Why? Because I was one hundred percent convinced this woman was some sort of crackpot, she was making it all up and I was about to have my head neatly positioned on a pike.

Except every word turned out to be true. Several people in the class, including two who identified themselves as physicians, as well reckoning the yarn was a load, contacted the hospital. Their reports at the following evening's class had a strange effect on me. For sure I was delighted I would not be adding an orange jumpsuit to my wardrobe. But more, I was, well, blown out.

This stuff actually works!

During the following twenty-five years, my classes (at the UoFP, at the center I subsequently founded, then a few years later in New Zealand) performed untold healings, mostly absentee. An awful lot were for people with cancer, many diagnosed as 'terminal'. Did we heal them all? Nope. Half? Nope. But far, far, more than the law of averages might dictate, not only cancer but other major maladies as well.

Early-on, I came to realize not everybody was happy with claims of success my students and I were making. These mainly were the super-religious (only a deity is permitted such work) and closed-minded medicals (only they are). So I devised a tagline for whatever positive results appeared to stem from our efforts: ABC – another beautiful coincidence. Henceforth our goal was to make coincidences happen.

Eight years after first stumbling into psychic healing inculcation, I immigrated to NZ and began conducting courses, first at a yoga centre outside Auckland, then at Auckland University. I taught two four-day seminars a year. During the healing sessions, I would always include as subject the one person I have loved most during this lifetime. Her name is Jessie, and when I moved in with her and her mother in the 1980s, she had, at age eight, the worst case of eczema I had ever encountered.

Her mom and I took Jessie to myriad sorts of recognized healers – dermatologists, homeopaths, acupuncturists, herbal remedy and ayurvedic practitioners – all of whom claimed vast success curing young people of this horrible ailment. Jessie? They tried. They really did. Nothing. Nada. Zilch.

Which is when I got my two-and-three-hundredfold university

groups involved. We would perform the absentee healing on the second Sunday afternoon of my two weekend seminar. By Tuesday, Jessie's skin was smooth and clear as glass. Gone would be not only the unsightly blemishes and full-body rash, but as well the agonizing itching which caused her to constantly scratch and bleed and scab. But freedom from the appalling condition only lasted four to six weeks, at which time the symptoms would gradually reappear. Into her teenage years was this pattern repeated. Now mid-forties, Jessie leads a happy, healthy life, with only sporadic, light recurrences of eczema.

Not nearly so positive an ending involved my second most-loved person. This was the beautiful Anita, my last partner. When she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer fourteen years back, I immediately sent out word to a host of former Alpha students around the world, all of whom agreed to undertake daily healings in her behalf. Six months later, aided by her chosen conventional treatment, Anita was declared free and clear of the big C.

She and I lived together for another year until our basic differences eventually precipitated a breakup. We maintained communication early on, and then I heard nothing more until a phone call a year later from her daughter in England. The cancer had returned and, abetted by complications from the horrid chemotherapy she was on, Anita died.

So you see, mindpower healing sometimes works perfectly, sometimes only temporarily, sometimes apparently not at all, and I cannot for the life of me understand how come. There are instances where the subject appears to be subconsciously blocking the healing energies, but why? So much about the human psyche is beyond current understanding.

But even when Alpha Mind Control does not appear to have effect, nothing adverse can result through this form of healing. (Although one physician did growl at me: 'You're giving them false hope!') No wrongly-prescribed medication, no botched operations. No side effects. As well, power of mind in no way interferes with conventional allopathic treatment. The possibility of good resulting from this mode of healing can only grow as the veil of ignorance is lifted and more is learned about the vast potential workings of the mind.

Coordinated group healing obviously is more effective than solo endeavor: the more being the merrier. Nonetheless, everyone has the gift, all you need do, I'm convinced, is work at developing it.

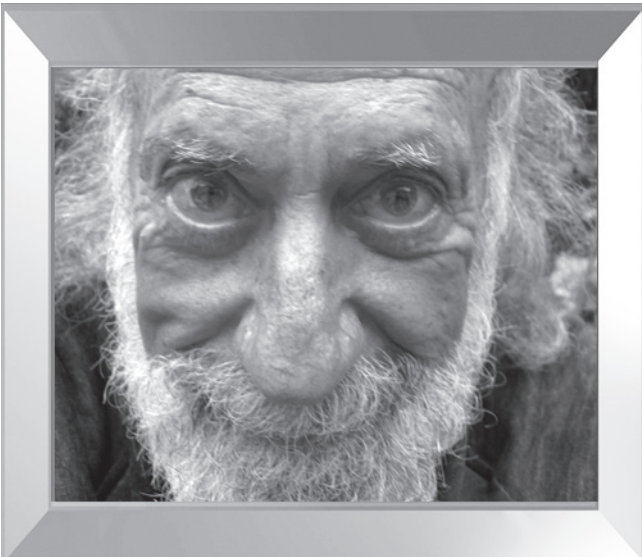
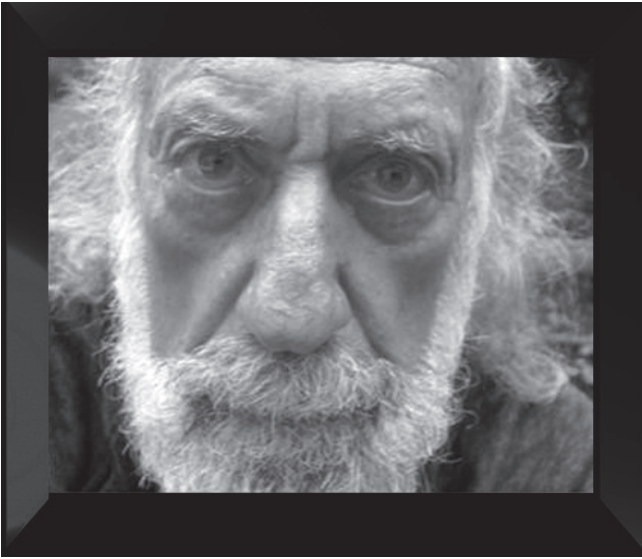
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I no longer teach Alpha Mind Control. However, I have recorded the two most essential guided exercises of the course and uploaded them onto YouTube. Simply by listening to them (the more times, the better), you can create the mind state necessary to effectively perform Alpha healings.

You can actually tune into to these recordings *while you sleep*. (In fact, they likely will be more effective this way as your conscious mind won't be blocking with 'practical' doubt.) Simply type ALPHA BARRY ROSENBERG or CHAKRA BARRY ROSENBERG in the YouTube search bar, download – it's free – and listen.

Only not while driving, parachuting or deep-sea diving, okay?

The Kickass Guide to Well-Being



the amazing double screen technique

MINDPOWER APPLICATION for goal achievement and healing has been around under various labels – including Alpha Mind Control, the class I taught for twenty-five years – since humanity emerged from the caves. It is an integral part of the qualities we are born with: everyone has the capacity. Like tennis, knitting and driving a car, using your mind to create better health and positive situations is merely a matter of learning a proven technique, then practice practice practice.

The brain is a magnificent computer which does not differentiate good from bad, right from wrong, rather does what it has long been instructed to by its programmer – you. Constant negative repetition, mostly subconscious, in thought, word and action has created and reinforced ill-health, ill-wealth and other conditions which have deprived you from being your best.

What I intend here is to describe step by step the basic technique for applying your inherent mental facility to reverse unfavorable situations and achieve desired goals in order to upgrade your life. And while DIY is not quite the same as attending a seminar, it can be learned and put to use effectively. Have a go.

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DOUBLE SCREEN. The bottom line of all Alpha Mind Control work is the double screen technique. The screen is an imaginary blank ‘billboard’ you create in your mind, large, oblong and white. If, the theory goes, you can portray onto this inner screen the image of a goal, any goal large or small, and convince your brain through constant repetition that this goal has *already been achieved*, your mental instrument will get the message and send forth the energies which actually create the goal.

Pre-requisites for maximum benefit of the technique are 1) a relaxed, focused state of mind; 2) a good, sharp mental picture of the achieved goal (if you find this difficult, a strong sense of feeling, imagining, *pretending* the goal’s attainment will do); 3) a positive attitude (no ifs or buts allowed in this game); 4) the certainty that not only is this goal in your highest good, but in the highest good of all (a judgment only you can make).

PREPARATION. Find a comfortable spot, indoors or out, where you won’t be disturbed. Sit or lie down, shut off your gadgets and close your eyes. If you meditate, a minute or two of your meditative method will work. Otherwise, simply take a few long, slow, deep breaths, being aware of the air traveling into, and out of, your nostrils.

Next, picture a large, bold, dark number **3**. State it silently, then let it fade away. Do the same with the number **2**: see it, say it, let go of it. Finally the number **1**. Follow each number with a deep, slow breath. Now, slowly count backwards from ten down to one. Again, say each number to yourself. Breathe deeply. Okay, you’re ready to roll.

NEGATIVE SCREEN. Picture in your mind a large, white screen. Create a frame around the screen. Paint the frame a color that is *negative* to you. Once you have established this color, use it in all future screen work to represent negative. Now picture on the framed screen the present situation, the one you wish to alter or alleviate. (Ex: illness, indigence, unhealthy habit, bad or no job...)

The sole purpose of the negative screen is to enable the brain-computer to identify the condition you no longer wish to possess. Silently state the problem. (Be specific. ‘I’m unhappy’ doesn’t make it. If there are several things you consider wrong in your life, undertake them singly, i.e. you’re broke, drink to excess, your tennis game is crap and psoriasis is driving you loopy. Perform them one at a time in separate double screen imagings.)

Once you have imaged and stated the negative situation, delete the picture, rid of the screen and *never again image this problem*, nor discuss it, nor even think about it. For sure, it won't be easy to cut off the flow of negative thinking. Nonetheless, it can be done with patience and determination.

POSITIVE SCREEN. A new white screen, this time with a frame painted what you consider a *positive* color. (Again, once established always use this same color for positive.) Best you can, picture the *achieved goal*. Don't worry about being 'practical'. Tell yourself a little white lie, which in effect is a time-lie: 'I am thin, healthy and happy'... 'I'm scoring one hundred in this exam'... 'I have a wonderful job'. Then tell yourself a little white truth: 'I deserve it!'

As you view the achieved goal on your screen, silently state, in the *present tense*, then repeat over and over, the 'fact' of your new positive acquisition. Once you have firmly etched the image in your mind – fifteen to twenty seconds should do it – convert the pic to a video, continuing to state the simple definition of your achievement ('I own this beautiful home') as you view the vid of which you are the star. Allow yourself fifteen to twenty seconds of video viewing, then project yourself right into the vid. In other words, no longer separation of you and screen; you are now living your achieved goal. Continue to recite in the present tense the goal's experience as you act out the scenario.

Take stock of yourself: do you look and feel any different having successfully achieved your goal? Don't be afraid of embellishing the scene: bring in friends, relatives, your doctor, whomever and whatever, offering congratulations on your achievement. Perhaps the date this has taken place appears on a calendar, or, if it's a quicky (finding lost keys, getting your car to start), the time of day. Maintain the sense of goal achievement for around five minutes, always imagining yourself in the present, the here and now. Keep in mind this is not a mechanical process, rather a genuine sense of fulfillment.

You may repeat the three-stage exercise as many times a day as you like (entering directly into the positive screen following the very first time on each goal) so long as you are relaxed and maintain a positive attitude.

You can work on others besides yourself, especially for healing purposes (kids, pets and plants respond beautifully), just be mindful the goal you are creating is truly for that being's welfare, not just your own. ('My daughter's boyfriend is a useless plonk, she is finding a better...')

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So, really, how does this stuff work? The key word is repetition. There will come a moment, a precious instant of which you won't even be aware, when your constant present-tense affirmation of a goal finally works its way into the hard drive of your inner computer. The negative mindset you have been holding on to, perhaps for a lifetime, silently shouts, So *that's* what you've been pestering me about! (I call this the *aha!* moment.) At which point the brain buys the white lie and shines its full power on the goal to actually make it happen.

All this sound a mite airy-fairy to you? Well, I'm a tough old bird from the streets of Philadelphia, as un-airy-fairy as they come, and I've been using double screen to inordinate success for nearly fifty years. To give you an idea, herewith are a couple illustrative personal experiences, one which took a considerable time to achieve my goal, the second mere minutes.

Back when I was a fatty, I performed four-a-day double screen weight-losing sessions for three months and didn't shed so much as an ounce. I'd picture/feel myself slim, and suddenly, as though someone had shoved an air hose in me, I would bloat like a balloon. 'No, no!' I'd cry – 'SLIM!!' Oh, what a battle. Still, I trusted in the process and remained pig-headedly determined to have it work for me.

When on the ninety-first day I stepped on the scale and it showed I was down a pound, my first thought was the scale must be broken. What was really broken was my tenacious stranglehold on a lifelong self-image as an unhappy tubby. During the month that followed I lost twenty pounds without any dieting, and over the next six months went from two fifteen pounds to my present one fifty.

Personal experience No. 2. I was tramping with a friend in the bush of northwestern Canada when we came to a long swing bridge a hundred feet over a ravine. I am deathly afraid of heights. Not only do I have acrophobia, anywhere above the third step of a ladder I get hit with the prime ugly hallmark of vertigo: the compulsion to jump and end the agony.

My friend was prancing across the shaky wooden-slat bridge, loudly ribbing the slowpoke behind her. I stepped gingerly onto the bridge, eyes squeezed shut, taking the tiniest steps possible. Having realized my fear, my friend called out, 'Don't look down!' So of course I opened my eyes and looked down. Totally panicked, I desperately had to apply the mental brakes to keep from swan-diving into space to the ravine below.

I suppose I could've yelled over that I would meet my friend back at the car, then retraced my steps several miles to where we'd begun the tramp. But just then an antediluvian, primeval reflex rose up from my cellular level: the only force of nature greater than (and totally disassociated from) brain power. Male ego.

I stepped off the swing bridge and sat on the ground nearby. Shaking. Struggling to catch my breath. My head in explosion mode. I spent some minutes slowing my breathing, counting backwards, focusing my mind. When finally I felt somewhat human, I got into double screen.

Negative screen: Me, a nervous wreck. 'I am scared witless to walk across this bridge.' Positive screen: Picturing/enacting myself confidently stepping across the bridge, smile on my face, reciting: 'I am walking across this swing bridge safely without mishap. I can and am doing this.' Over and over and over.

How long did I sit there imagining this? Felt like an hour but likely no more than a few minutes. Suddenly, no forethought, my eyes popped open. I automatically stood, approached the bridge... and proceeded to walk without hesitation straight across that rickety, flimsy structure until I set foot on solid ground.

It was now that my legs began to shimmy and shake. Nonetheless I stood tall, and cool as a Canadian cucumber, I looked my friend square in her eye.

'Well, what are you waiting for? Let's boogie.'

technique synopsis

Necessary Ingredients:

1. Be relaxed
2. Clear images
3. Positive of achievement
4. Verbalize over and over in present tense
5. Goal is in highest good

Negative Screen:

6. Negative colored frame
7. Present situation image
8. Simple definition
9. Use once per goal achievement only

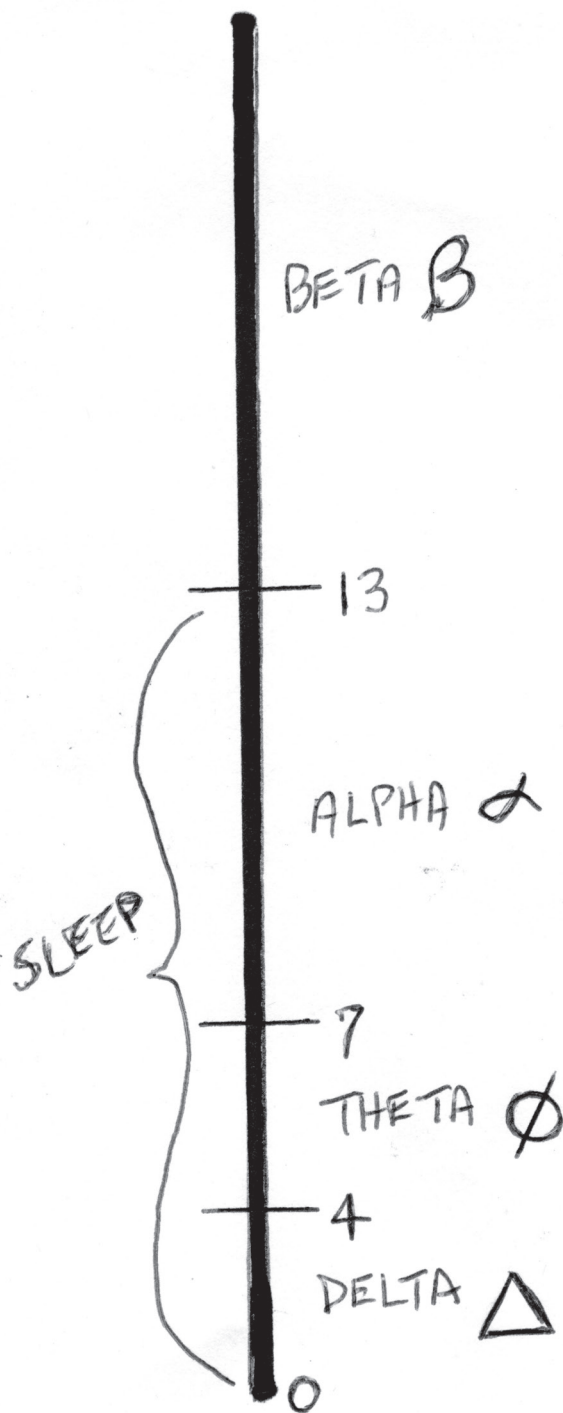
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Positive Screen:

10. Positive colored frame
11. Photo of achieved goal (15-20 sec)
12. Video of achieved goal (15-20 sec)
13. Being there (5 min)
14. Silently repeat statement of achievement (present tense)
15. Often as desired so long as 1-5 in order

General:

16. Keep goals simple
17. Don't be 'practical' or mechanical – FEEL!
18. When not screening, don't focus on goal
19. You deserve it!



to sleep, perchance to dream

SEVERAL YEARS BACK I was guest on a late night Auckland radio program. The way it worked, each evening the host had two specialists in a particular field, and listeners called in with questions. This one night, as a teacher of Alpha Mind Control, I was teamed with an eminent psychiatrist.

A woman caller. Big problem falling asleep – tosses and turns, often for hours, before finally cashing in the chips. She'd begun taking sleeping pills, prescribed by her GP, which put her under in minutes but would leave her groggy and slightly nauseous upon waking, a condition which often lasted through most of her day.

The shrink wisely advised the caller to quit the pills, apologetically adding that he had no real answer for her dilemma. Both then turned to me. Well, yeah, I have a solution, I said, but I had always presented it visually in the classroom, never just orally. Give it a shot, said the host, the psych eagerly nodding his assent.

Closing my eyes, I pictured myself at a blackboard, chalk in hand. Over the next few minutes I described the technique step by step as I illustrated it on the board in my mind. Finished, eyes still closed, I asked whether the caller had grasped my explanation. She claimed she had, was anxious to have a go, thanked me and hung up.

I slowly opened my eyes and returned my visual sense to the radio studio. Alongside me, the host and shrink sat before their microphones, eyes clamped shut, heads bowed, nodding. The psych,

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in fact, was lightly snoring. My first thought: ah, talking the technique works. My second thought: people are listening to the show on their car radios while crossing the Harbour Bridge – *arrgggh!*

QUICKLY NOW, NAME the two worst inventions of all time. All right, put away your Google-regurgitating smartphones, here's the answer: 1) sleeping pills; 2) alarm clocks. One, because not only do they not induce true sleep, they actually rob you of such. Two, they interrupt your slumber at the wrong juncture of your natural sleep cycle, often jolting you awake.

Consider this bit of brain science: Your three pounds of gray matter, composed of trillions of neurons, is a remarkable computer, replete with electronic rhythms and wavelengths. Four of these brain waves run along a scale of cycles per second, known as *hertz*, or *hz*. Basically, zero to four hz is a state of unconsciousness, of which little is known. This wave has been termed *delta*.

Four to seven – *theta* – is a sort of hypnagogic state, which all us hippies used to dabble in way back when we were popping those funny tasting sugar cubes. Seven to thirteen marks the *alpha* state, meditative, calm, at the same time alert and focused. Thirteen and above is *beta*, the wakened state. The higher you register on the beta scale, the more nervous and anxious you very likely are, mind scattered all over the place.

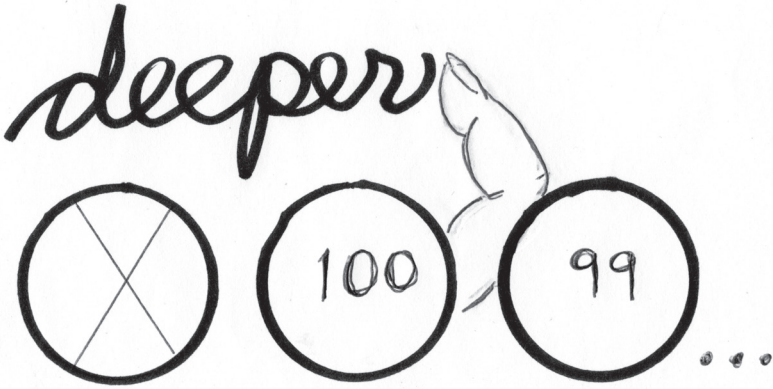
True sleep runs through alpha, theta and delta – thirteen hz down to zero – and back up again, the journey taking around ninety minutes. You dream in alpha. That's when you experience REM, or rapid eye movement. A couple facts you might find of interest.

Fact: REM sleep is as essential to your state of wellbeing as eating and breathing. Fact: So-called 'sleeping pills' muck up your sleep pattern to the point where you skip the alpha state completely, rather plunge directly into delta, or unconsciousness. You would be better off lowering your head and running full-tilt into a wall. At least knocking yourself out through head-banging is organic.

At the other end of your night's repose, unless you're at the conclusion of the hour and a half cycle when your alarm mechanism goes off (and the odds of that are slim), instead of a gentle, natural segue from one state of consciousness to another, you very well may enter your day like a deep-sea diver cannon-shot to the surface.

Which is where Alpha Mind Control comes to the rescue. What follows are simple techniques using your brain's own power to fall asleep and awaken naturally.

the sleep technique



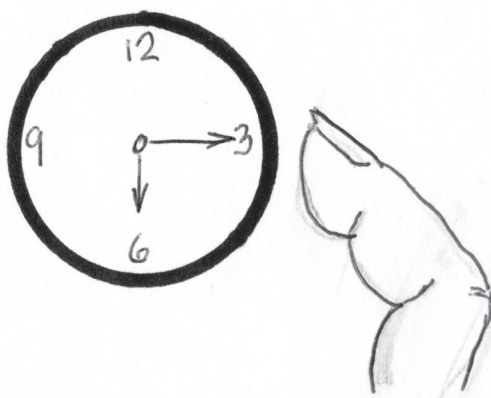
YOU'RE IN BED, pajamas, mud pack on your face, stocking cap firmly in place. Take a few long, slow, deep breaths and gently put aside the day just past, plus any other thoughts. Eyes closed, draw a large, thick, **black circle** on the inner mind-scope with your imaginary finger. Within the circle draw an **X** covering the entire inside of the circle. Outside the circle, right on top, very slowly write, and silently pronounce as you write, the word **Deeper**. The word has lots of loops, so write it exaggeratedly slow, pronouncing it as you follow your finger's movement: **D e e e p e r r**.

Back to the magic circle, erase the X (careful not to wipe out any part of the circle) and slowly write the number **100**, saying it to yourself as you do. Atop the original Deeper, again write, and subvocally pronounce, **Deeeeeeeeperrr**.

Back to the circle, carefully erase 100 and slowly write, and pronounce, **99**. And again, **Deeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeperrr**. Erase the 99 within the circle, and write/pronounce **98**. And **Deeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeperrrrrrr**. Any geniuses reading this who can guess the next step? Yep, just keep going. Unlike Lotto, no prize is awarded for any certain number.

You will notice I do not use the word sleep. The mind gremlins don't want you to sleep, will throw everything at you short of Donald Trump riding a unicorn to keep you from dropping off. 'Deeper' is a pleasant euphemism, one which the nasties will let pass unnoticed and go on with their nightly Sudoku competition.

the wakeup technique



IN BED, JUST prior to sleep, picture a large clock without a glass front, so you are able to touch the clock's hands. Let's say you wish to awaken at 6.15. Set the clock in your mind to the exact time it is **now**. (10.37, for example.) Reach in with your imaginary finger and place it on the end of the minute hand. Begin to slowly turn the minute hand (the hour hand following along), reciting **in the present tense** as you continue to move the hand with your finger: 'I am waking up at 6.15...I am waking up at 6.15...I am waking up at 6.15...' Do this until the clock does indeed read 6.15, at which point you visualize yourself awakening with a big smile and getting out of bed.

This last part is somewhat instrumental. How many students over the years have reported the technique worked perfectly, they awoke at the designated time, turned over and went back to sleep, woke again just past eleven, got sacked for being late and forever after blamed the teacher (me). So the first few occasions you use the technique set an alarm clock at, say, 6.20 as backup until such time your brain computer becomes accustomed to doing it naturally.

The way this works is the technique actually organizes your sleep cycle so that at the moment of 6.15 (or whenever you 'set' it to wake you) you are at the very end of a cycle and waking is natural and peaceful.

Now, here's a question requiring at least two PhDs as well as off-the-charts IQ: if you wish to use both the sleep technique and the wakeup technique, which **MUST** you use first? Take your time.

- | | | | | | |
|----|---|----------|----|---|--------------|
| 1 | A | anchor | 8 | H | heart |
| 2 | B | bicycle | 9 | I | iceberg |
| 3 | C | cat | 10 | J | jockstrap |
| 4 | D | dog | 11 | K | kangaroo |
| 5 | E | elephant | 12 | L | lock |
| 6 | F | fortune | 13 | M | mouse |
| 7 | G | giant | 14 | N | necklace |
| 15 | O | ocean | 21 | U | umbrella |
| 16 | P | prince | 22 | V | victoria |
| 17 | Q | queen | 23 | W | wishing well |
| 18 | R | ring | 24 | X | xray |
| 19 | S | shower | 25 | Y | yo-yo |
| 20 | T | teacup | 26 | Z | zebra |

memories are made of this

I WALKED HALF a mile on the surface of the Danube, then moon-walked back again without getting a single drop of water on my shoes. And they yawned.

I balanced a medicine ball on my nose, then flipped upside down and balanced on my nose while repeatedly kicking the medicine ball up to the ceiling one foot at a time. And they sighed and began fidgeting in their seats.

I sang all the roles of Aida backwards in Swahili and they all got out their smartphones and began checking their Facebook page. (And this was years before smartphones were even invented and fb was but a dream in Zuckerberg's greedy little mind.)

And then I did my memory act and they stood on their chairs, tore their clothes off and cheered wildly for an hour.

Well, not quite. But in the more than a hundred Alpha Mind Control classes I taught over twenty-five years, in every single one this simple display of memory (which, as you shall see, ain't memory at all, rather sleight of mind), the crowd went even crazier than when Tommy hit the stage.

You see those twenty-six A-anchor to Z-zebras on the preceding page? These are known as memory pegs. When I was a kid in grade school, the alphabet was in white lettering on black background atop the blackboards in every classroom. As well, they were divided into four sections, as I have them here: A-G, H-N, O-T and U-Z. Because these

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are so well engraved in my brain, I use them to attach my pegs.

The pegs are of my own choosing. I already knew that, say, L was the twelfth letter of the alphabet, as W was the twenty-third. So when I draped those twenty-six items on the letters, and locked them into my mind, I was set to become the magical mystery man.

Here's what I would do. I would tell the class we were now going to perform a mass psychological profiling. I jotted on the board the numbers 1 to 26 in four blocks as seen on the preceding page. I did not tell them the numbers represented the alphabet, nor did I write down the pegs. Just the numbers. Then I requested they provide me as a group toys they had as kids.

It usually began slowly. What's this goofy bird up to now? they were thinking. Somebody brave would call out a toy. I'd write it down next to the number one. I'd ask for details. Color, say. Maybe some marks, or writing, or (say in the case of dolls) type of clothing. Anything to set it off from others that now were being freely called out. I'd make jokes. 'You had what? You sissy!' Stuff like that.

What I was doing was a bit of stalling. Because as I was writing down the doll, or the red wagon, or the erector set, in my mind, I was placing it on a peg. Rag doll stuck on the anchor, erector set on the handlebars of the bicycle. The cat playing with a puppet.

When I had all twenty-six, I would turn around, sit on a stool and announce: 'Okay, let's play a game. The game is called stump the genius. I, of course, will be the genius. Give me a number, I'll tell you the toy. Or give me a toy, I shall tell you what number it is on the list. Or give me a series, mix and match. For example, how many toys are blue. Or, everything with wheels. Anybody who can stump the genius will be awarded an A for the course (there were no grades, really) plus ten pounds of orangutan poo in a nine pound sack. Ready?'

And boy, did they ever get into it.

In all the classes I taught over a quarter century, not once did I blow a show. (I did, however, do the gig one time without realizing my fly was open. I'd forgotten to zip it up.) Impressive? Oh my, yes. Until I revealed the secret. Sometimes they would feel kind of cheated, they so desperately wanted to believe I was JC reincarnated.

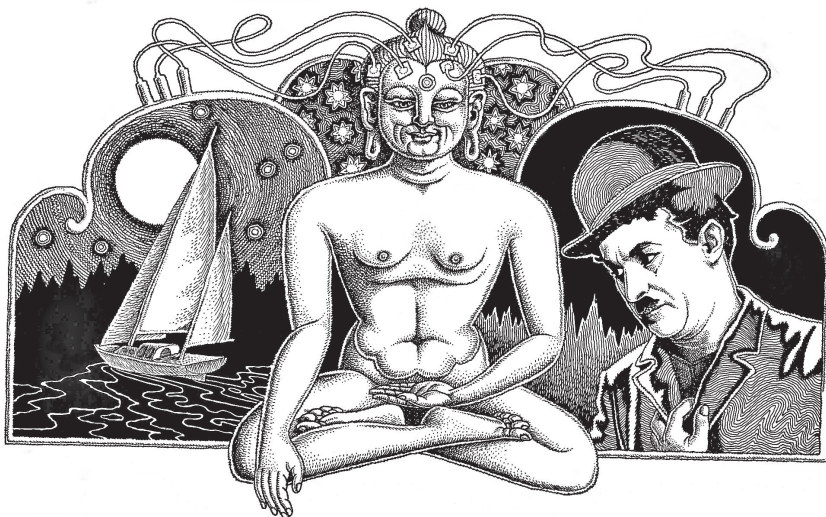
When I did my act before groups of business people, knowing they never had toys to play with, I'd have them provide me twenty-six ten-digit numbers. While I was writing them down, I'd actually be imagining myself inscribing them with a jeweler's engraving tool on the pegs. Then I'd simply go back and read them off.

Fact of the matter is, I have a pathetic memory. Give me two things to recall, I'm fine. Toss in a third, guaranteed one of the original two would fall of the plate. But this isn't memory, not in the dumb way we're taught to memorize. This is simply 'looking' at our memory pegs and reporting what's there.

Understand there's nothing special about my list of pegs, nor even using the alphabet as a prop. I once read about a famous Russian mentalist whose pegs were the shops in the tiny village where he grew up. Given a number of things to remember, he would walk along the market street of said village and paint words on the doors of the shops. Another performer had ten kids. In his mind he'd line them up according to age, each child holding a sign on which was written his given item to recall. (The trick is great not only to wow your audience; as well it serves as a terrific tool for improving your powers of visualization.)

At the end of each performance, I would wipe the board clean, at the same time wiping the list from my mind bank. Who wants to carry around a steamer trunk full of some crazy people's toys, right? If, however, Warren Buffet had been in the group and offered me half a billion to repeat them a year later, this would've caused me no grief, as I would simply index the list before and after the act, providing myself date, place and whatever other indexes I might come up with. A year later I'd retrieve the list and read them off.

Unfortunately, as I charged my many groups only a donation, which attracted mainly paupers and skinflints, I'm now living off a government pension. But, really, why would a superannuated hippie need more?



turning on electroencephalographically

RELAX. I HAD to relax.

I sat as far back in the soft leather armchair as possible and let my muscles go limp. My head nestled comfortably in the chair's high back, the three wires protruding from my scalp fastened securely into the mechanism behind me, I now opened my eyes and looked straight ahead.

The tiny room was dark beyond black. I knew the screen was there before me, but I couldn't see it. Nor did I wish to. I was going to switch on the projector without touching it. I was going to *think* it on. But to do that I had to relax. So I sculptured in my mind a scene: a sailboat floating aimlessly on a mirror-like lake. I locked it in. I relaxed.

A picture flashed on the screen. I ignored it.

The picture persisted – five seconds, ten. I refused to look. But I felt my hold weakening. The real image was pervading my own, taking over. Slowly the still waters disintegrated, the boat vanished. At that precise moment, the screen went black.

The picture – a scene from an old movie showing Charlie Chaplin in troubled thought – returned, went off, returned, oscillating as if the projector were connected to a faulty electrical circuit. I decided to keep it off. Next time it appeared I focused my eyes directly on the screen.

The slide went off. It stayed off.

I repeated the process, willing the picture on and off as I saw

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fit: on by relaxing my concentration, off by directing total attention to the screen. The longer I kept at it, the better I got. Sailboat and lake were no longer necessary. I thought On, the projector went on; Off, it went off.

It was as simple as that.

Earlier, the system had been explained to me by Dr. Thomas Mulholland, a research psychologist who for the previous ten years had been conducting studies in feedback electroencephalography. As I sat in his office on the second floor of the Bedford, Massachusetts Veterans Administration Hospital's perception laboratory, Dr. Mulholland stepped to a wall blackboard and sketched a man's head. He then sketched a screen in front of it, then a box representing an electroencephalograph machine behind it.

Turning to me, he said, 'The most prominent and typical brain rhythm is the one known as the alpha rhythm; it occurs when someone is in a state of relaxed wakefulness. When he becomes alert, however, the rhythm is so drastically reduced it can't be picked up by the electroencephalograph.'

Mulholland then began tracing schematic circuit lines with the chalk. 'What we've done is attach the subject to the EEG, and the EEG to the switch of a slide projector. When the subject is relaxed, voltage from the alpha rhythm activates the switch, and the projector beams a picture on the screen. When he looks at the picture, he becomes alert, the alpha waves diminish, and the switch is turned off.'

He went on to say that the feedback principle is the same as that controlling the working of a thermostat.

'When the temperature of a room falls below a certain point the thermostat turns the furnace on. When the heat from the furnace raises the temperature sufficiently, the thermostat turns the furnace off. Our thermostat is the EEG machine; temperature, the attention level; furnace, the slide projector. When the level of attention is low, the projector goes on. When it's high, the projector goes off. Of course, we can set the switch to work the other way round, too. That is, have the current from the alpha waves turn it off instead of on. In that case, a *high* level of attention would start up the projector.'

At first, Mulholland noted, the subject becomes alert a mere fraction of a second after the picture comes on. His return to a fully relaxed state then takes anywhere from ten to sixty seconds.

'When he has seen the picture before, however, it takes longer for his attention to build up to the point where the decrease in the

alpha rhythm will turn off the switch. And if the picture is dull or bears little significance for the observer, the time lag is even greater. When the picture does go off, his relaxed state quickly returns, bringing it on again. So by simply letting our system run, we can plot a graph measuring each degree of attentiveness.'

The sheer beauty of the system, according to Mulholland, was evidenced when the subject learned to control her own attention level.

'If I've got this straight,' I said, 'merely through the exercise of willpower a person can turn on or off anything that is regulated by a switch.'

'Well, willpower isn't a scientific term. Still, in the general sense that's correct. But we're not by any means limited to working simple switch-on, switch-off machines. For example, one of our subjects was hooked up to a meter. When the alpha rhythm was on, the pointer went left; when off, the pointer went right. Her job was to look at the meter and keep the pointer as near the middle as possible. After some hours at it she was able to do this quite well.'

"How far can you go with this system?"

'That's like asking how far one can travel in space. At this point we've only begun to scratch the surface. The potential sophistication of feedback EEG first occurred to us during the early stages of development, nine to ten years ago. Some people were able to teach themselves to send messages in Morse code.'

'Do you envision any, ah, more practical applications?'

The man nodded. 'Several. For example, a teaching machine, with feedback providing reward for continued viewing, might well improve learning. Also, it might be applied as an attention trainer, both to enhance a student's attentive abilities and to evaluate the effectiveness of various visual aids.

'Medically, this type of system could be used to detect certain types of minute brain damage that conventional EEG methods tend to overlook. It could be used to determine how tranquilizing drugs may affect attention. It might also be used as a method for training people to reduce tension.

'Not long ago, a few of the college students acting as subjects here have, through increased voluntary control over their alpha rhythms, successfully achieved a state of controlled consciousness similar to that obtained in yoga. In other words, they got high. So it may be possible to teach people how to increase their awareness of – and control over – all physiological processes associated with

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a relaxed mental state. Really, practical applications of feedback electroencephalography are limited only by the human imagination.'

I asked whether I might see a laboratory demonstration. He agreed, but a check revealed that none of his usual subjects was available. It was then that, for the sake of an unbridled curiosity, I volunteered my services.

We walked down the hall to the preparation room, where I took a seat in a converted barber's chair. From there I watched with interest as Mulholland and his assistant, name of Eve Goldman, began attaching the necessary wires to my head.

These are silver disk electrodes,' Goldman explained. 'In the past we've used as many as six connections, but three are sufficient.' She pasted two of them to the back of my head and a third, the ground, behind my left ear.

'I should tell you now,' Mulholland said, 'that not everybody is able to produce a recordable alpha. We don't know why, but we draw blanks on approximately eight percent of those we test.'

Me being me, guess where I reckoned I would fall in the percentage brackets.

When the paste had firmed, I left the chair and, holding the loose ends of the three long wires gingerly in my hand, followed the two of them across the hall into the laboratory. Electrical apparatus, packed tightly into a small alcove, bore resemblance to something out of early Karloff.

'Actually, this is all primitive stuff,' Mulholland noted, nodding at the equipment. 'Amplifiers, filters, a relay. The alpha recording from the EEG is boosted to the eight volts necessary to activate the relay. This in turn operates the projector switch.'

'Are all rhythms emitted with the same force?'

Eve Goldman: 'Not at all. Some can barely be picked up on the EEG, while others, well, we have one woman whose alpha is so strong I swear I can almost hear it.'

'There's quite a variance,' Mulholland agreed. 'But strength has no bearing on a person's performance. What counts here is you either have it or you don't.'

Anticipating a letdown – I forever see myself as the original don't-got-it guy – I let loose with a great sigh.

Mulholland led me through the door of a small chamber situated in the lab. The chamber – an audiometric test room – was about eight by ten feet, with the walls, ceiling and floor all painted

black. There was no visible machinery present. I was asked to seat myself on the lone piece of furniture, a large, green leather armchair. On the wall before me was a screen, and to the rear (I twisted around to get a look) a tiny hole surrounded by aluminum foil.

‘Just relax,’ Goldman instructed in a comforting voice. ‘Rest your head back and keep it perfectly still, both feet on the floor. And relax.’ Yeah, right: relax.

She left the chamber, returning momentarily to report that my alpha rhythm was being recorded on the EEG. The news that I had escaped those left-out eight percent was a vast relief.

‘We’ll do some preliminary tests that will show involuntary shifts of alertness,’ Mulholland announced from the open doorway, then closed the door behind him. A few seconds later the light went out. The room was sightless and soundless.

I waited.

A color slide appeared on the screen, a cartoon illustrating the system that had earlier been diagrammed on the blackboard. The picture remained only a moment. Many seconds went by before it reappeared. It went off again and then continued to repeat this pattern – short on, long off – even though I could discern no conscious change in my attentive attitude toward it.

The chamber light went on and Mulholland reentered. ‘What you just experienced was what’s known as negative feedback. Alertness caused the slide to go off; that made you relax, bringing the slide back on. Let’s try it the other way. Now, your being alert will turn on the picture, which will reinforce your alertness, keeping the picture on.’

We did this, and I thought I detected a reversal in the off-on trend of before, the picture now seeming to come on more frequently and stay on longer. In another demonstration of this negative feedback, I was told that on the eleventh flash of light, something different would occur and I should watch for it. I counted as the flashes came and went – quite rapidly. Following the tenth, the off-interval seemed to last forever; at any rate, much longer than any of the others. The eleventh flash, when it appeared, was no different from the others, but in preparing myself for it, Mulholland explained after, my high state of alertness kept the projector off for a much greater period.

‘You’ve just seen how the projector responded to involuntary shifts in your alertness,’ he announced during a subsequent intermission. ‘Would you like to try to control it yourself – voluntarily?’

Oh, hell yes! I took a deep breath, let it out slowly and readied myself.

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Relax. I had to relax.

I sat as far back in the soft leather armchair as possible and let my muscles go limp.

THIS ADVENTURE took place in 1971, and I wrote it up in a small but highly regarded professional magazine called *The Psychiatric Reporter*. It was one of the very first published reports on electro bio-feedback. But of far great importance, to me anyway, is that those hours spent with Tom Mulholland stirred my thinking and pointed me to consider in a new light those LSD journeys I had taken (a dozen over a three year period).

To the younger hippie kids, acid indeed was a tripping vehicle, party in a pill. I was thirty when I popped my initial tab (actually, I snorted powdered psilocybin through a rolled-up US five dollar bill), and, literally, the experience blew my mind. This was because I knew the chemical (or ground-up magic mushroom, in my first experience) was simply a key which opened areas of my mind I had never before touched. I was fascinated and wanted more. Fortunately, I was older, and maybe a bit wiser, than the hippie kids, and began searching around for means to gain entrance without need of a chemical key.

Was it coincidence (we would term such happenings as ‘cosmic’ back then) that just about a year later I walked into a hall at the David Rittenhouse Labs building of the University of Pennsylvania and began teaching Alpha Mind Control to three hundred people?

It was during this period that I heard about an exhibition of electro bio-feedback being held in the ballroom of a New York hotel. When I arrived, I was somewhat disappointed to discover that the prime purpose of the exhibition was not enlightenment so much as sale of bio-feedback instruments.

I spotted one of the leaders in the field, a man I actually had interviewed by telephone while writing a piece on the subject for *Playboy*. I introduced myself, but he either didn’t remember me or just didn’t care. I was just another bod looking for a free ride on his toy.

Before he set me up, one of his bits of information startled me. It was not possible, he claimed, to remain in the alpha state for more than several seconds.

‘You pop in and out,’ he maintained.

I replied that no, that’s wasn’t so, and that I could stay in alpha for as long as I wanted. To which he laughed rather derisively.

‘C’mon, I’ll hook you up and you’ll see for yourself.’

I sat in a chair, squirmed around until I felt comfortable. He attached three scalp electrodes to my bald pate with some kind of adhesive from a tube.

I closed my eyes, took a few long, slow, deep breaths, counted backwards from three to one, then ten to one. I pictured myself, as I had done untold times during these past few years, walking along a narrow corridor until I came to a closed door. Opened the door outward, stepped through to what I call my place of total relaxation. Went for a brief stroll in this wonderful place. (Don't ask where it is; it's very, very private, even in this present age of no-such-thing-as-privacy.) In my mind I sat down on a bench that's always there and began to silently recite my mantra: *om mani padme hum...om mani padme hum...*

All of a sudden I felt something pulling at my scalp – hard. My eyes snapped open in shock. Before me was the esteemed leader in the field of electro bio-feedback, three wires holding scalp electrodes in his fist, shards of dried glue hanging off them. He looked chagrined.

'Oh. Well, how long was I in alpha?' I wondered.

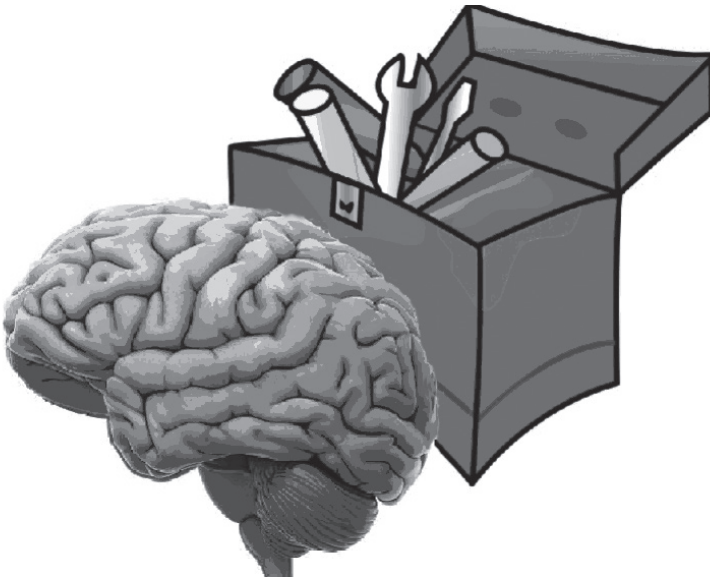
'It doesn't matter,' he snarled. 'Something must be wrong with the blasted machine!'

I had been in alpha twenty-seven minutes. Solid. No popping out.

I didn't buy his machine.

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your brain's toolbox



mud in your (mind's) eye

THE TWENTY IMAGING exercises I conducted during the standard thirty-six hour Alpha Mind Control course served this purpose: they dug the foundation for the new mind mansion you were constructing. Deeper down you dig, the higher up you might build. Granted, reading these pages is not quite the same as sitting in a classroom. (Or, as many students did, curl up on a yoga mat or mattress on the floor and fall soundly asleep the moment I said, 'Now, close your eyes and take a deep...') But nothing is stopping you from gaining full benefit of your brain's numerous inherent tools.

Repetition makes it happen. Following many a repeat cometh the *aha!*. Sometimes an *aha!* – the moment the mind locks in on a program, then begins to send forth the juice to actually make it work – comes quick, sometimes slow. You never know. I've been teaching and using these techniques fifty years at this writing, and I never know. If your outlook is good and positive (and you send a hefty monthly deposit to my Cayman Islands bank account), it doesn't really matter. In this game, the only failure is the failure to try.

There is, I must warn you, a danger with these techniques. Some of them sound too easy, so they're taken as simplistic, beneath the student's intelligence, and so not practiced and never used. (As you might suspect, the types generally most resistant to getting the Alpha message are academics and highly-placed professionals. The know-it-alls who've had right-brainectomies. 'Oh, that,' I heard muttered many

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a time while explaining the workings of a brain tool to a class.)

Take, for example, the ‘negative index key’. In my very first course, autumn term, 1972, University of Pennsylvania, I imparted to the packed hall of students this bit of wisdom:

‘We’re all so accustomed to our own negativity, in thought, word and action, that we’re simply unaware of *can’t* being an integral part of who we are. In order to move on, mind-wise, we need to cut these out, or at least down to a minimum. But they’re so automatic, we’re rarely consciously aware of our use of them.’ And so I asked the class, a group of three hundred people, to come up with a word we could use as a negative index key – instant reminder of a just-thought/spoken/acted upon no-no. Purpose of this word would be to knock on the door of our minds and point out the knee-jerk negativity we have during the last moment incurred. This word, to be truly effective, needs to be shouted out immediately upon any sort of negativity which springs out of our heads or mouths or emotions.

Well, we bandied around words for some minutes without coming to an agreement. A group this large, and varied, finding a word suitable to everyone began to appear impossible. And then a woman, obviously perturbed by our failure to come to a conclusion on something as simple as a word, cried out, ‘MUD!’ Suddenly there was a hush. People were considering it. And then an outcry, as though our side had just won the war. No one, including its author, could say why, but *mud*, whether its meaning, or the sound of that simple syllable, or perhaps just the fact that we had all grown tired of the game and sought to move on, became the official negative index key of Alpha Mind Control. Nearly half a century removed, it still is.

In a later class, a woman related this brief story: she’d had a rough morning. Everything had gone wrong at home, carried through to gridlocked commuting traffic, then the standard crap at the office. Even her lunch, which she’d been looking forward to, was overcooked, far too salty and delivered by a snotty waitperson. Thus she was in foul temper as she sardined her way into a packed elevator to return to her office’s floor. Of a moment, she realized her ongoing negativity, and though a timid soul by nature her frustrations moved her to bellow out a resounding MUD! Whereupon four others in the lift, who didn’t know one another, called out, ‘Hey, you’ve done Rosenberg’s class at Penn!’

And so there’s no brain tool that’s uncool. So don’t be a fool. Be a jewel and use them all. (Okay, yeah, it doesn’t quite rhyme. Had considered ‘or else you’re a ghoul’, but it felt a bit icky.)

toolbox item 1a — the 3 finger technique



IN A RELAXED (i.e. Alpha) state – eyes closed, take a few deep breaths, count back ten to one – place the thumb and first two fingertips of your writing hand together. Tell yourself: ‘Whenever I put my three fingers together in this manner, I go immediately to a light state of relaxation.’ Now take a deep breath and repeat this initial programming of the three finger method. Remember to use present tense, as in all Alpha programming.

Repeat this programming as often as you can. Just prior to and immediately following your daily meditation make for ideal opportunities. But any time will do, really. If you catch yourself thinking, that is, recycling old, worn-out (and probably negative) thoughts, MUD them out, take a few deep breaths, do a bit of counting backwards, and repeat the programming.

The three finger technique is good in situations when you need to keep your eyes open and be attentive to the outside world. Driving the car in traffic, or you’ve been stopped by a traffic cop, or have to deal with your idiot of a boss.

So, what’s special about placing three fingers together? Absolutely nothing. You can program anything to work. Example.

A woman in one of my courses at Penn was a teacher at a ghetto school in North Philadelphia. She had the lowest fifth grade (age ten) in the school. When they sat exams, the kids would become

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extremely nervous. So she taught them some Alpha. Mainly the three finger and as well the technique which follows here.

A few weeks went by, and the principal came around. Her class had shot up, was now the top fifth grade in the school. He demanded to know how this happened.

The teacher hadn't figured on the principal being a left-brain tight-ass. When she explained about Alpha, the principal became apoplectic.

'But that's cheating!' he sputtered. And sent out a memo that henceforth students were to be closely watched during exams. They were NOT to put their three fingers together at any time! (I kid you not here.)

So what this clever teacher did (having had a most amaaazing Alpha Mind Control mentor) was to re-train her kids. Instead of three fingers, she had them place right hand over the heart. Several times a day did she have them program the altered technique. When any authority asked, the kids were primed to say they were silently reciting the Pledge of Allegiance as it made them feel close to god. This god fella must have been pretty shit hot because my friend's class continued to be top fifth grade in the school.

toolbox item 1b — finger across to opposite palm



THIS IS FOR GOING deeper, working with the eyes closed, divorcing one's attention from the external world. Index finger of the normal writing hand pointed across the chest, opposite palm facing the finger. The palm remains stationary, the finger moves slowly across. As it does, say to yourself: 'Whenever I move my finger across to the opposite palm, and write on my palm the word RELAX, (actually do this) I go immediately to a *deep* state of relaxation (or Alpha).'

Again, the main deal here is repetition, repetition. Whenever you have a few minutes to spare. (Hint: make sure you line up your finger with the opposing palm *before* you close your eyes. Saves you the trouble of the finger missing the palm and running halfway to Missouri.)

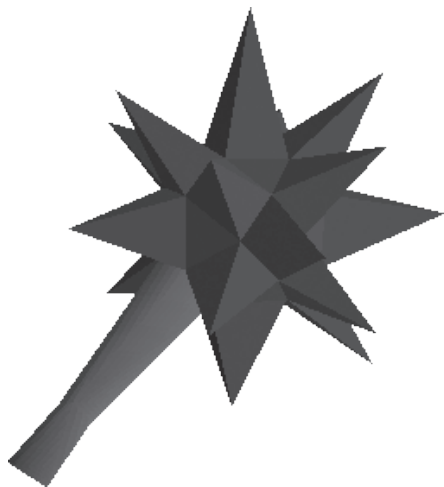
I use this technique before beginning any Alpha level work, especially healing. Again, there's nothing miraculous about crossing your index finger to the other palm and writing RELAX. As with the three finger technique, this is what I have been using myself for turtle's years. You can program putting your knees together and doing the hucklebuck if you want. Just keep in mind that once you start a particular program, keep to that program. Changing it will cause confusion to the overworked mind.

Once I have written RELAX on my left palm, I silently say a brief affirmation: 'Protection, guidance and healing of the highest power is

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mine throughout this exercise.' As a matter of fact, I use 'PGH' several times a day, beginning with climbing aboard my bicycle and wheeling it out into early morning heavy traffic as I join the stream of hi-ho, hi-ho, it's off to work we go folks racing off to the job. And where am I off to? Why, a favorite café for my one daily soy latte and a read of whatever book I'm into at the moment. (You didn't actually think I was off to work, did you? Sheesh.)

toolbox item 2 — headache and pain relief



A FRIEND RECENTLY told me that when he closes his eyes he can't visualize anything. My friend is male and very much left-brained. Way back, upon my initial Alpha class in 1972, another friend, also male and very much left-brained (an accountant, wouldn't you know), had expressed the very same thing. In fact, he didn't know people existed who could visualize things with their eyes closed. (Whereas I didn't then realize there existed people who couldn't.) And yet, my two friends of nearly half a century apart could and did perform Alpha exercises with great success. As well, there have been over the years students blind since birth who have done beautifully carrying out these and other exercises.

My problem in all this is how to direct the non-visualizers using English, the one language of which I have fair fluency. Therefore, I ask those of you who wish to use these toolbox techniques, but are convinced the power of mental imagery has eluded you so far in life, to employ whatever facility that appeals when dummy-me writes, 'close your eyes and picture —'.

So. You have a headache. (Or earache, or your tennis elbow is driving you batty.) After some deep breaths and slowly counting ten to one, thus putting yourself in a modified Alpha state, declare aloud the problem. Just once, then never again. Begin your positive programming by saying to yourself, 'My headache is going away, the

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pain is leaving me.' Over and over. After a while, don't even mention the problem. 'I am feeling better and better with each moment that passes.'

Now, let's picture what's going on in there. You don't have to be practical, as in portraying in your mind's eye an actual brain. In fact, it's been shown to be more beneficial to picture a representation. Your headache, for example, can look like a red, pulsating mace.

As you recite the positive words, picture the pulsating mace gradually turning from red to orange, then to yellow, then green, finally blue. Red is hot, blue is cool. As the colors are changing, the spikes of the mace are receding, the pulsating becoming slower and slower. When red has become a beautiful shade of light blue, it is no longer a mace, simply a ball. All the time you are performing this wee miracle, you are breathing long, slow, deep breaths, filling your lungs and body with new fresh healthful air.

Now say to yourself, 'When I count from one to ten and open my eyes, I shall feel better than I can ever remember feeling.' No more mention of a headache. Then slowly count to ten.

If the headache, or pain, is not completely gone, wait a few minutes and repeat the process. Then surround yourself with light to prevent the negative energy from returning.

Ninety-nine percent of headaches are psychosomatic, the result of stress, duress, pressures of life. Meaning there's no real physical problem. Other forms of bodily pain, however, can signify a physiological imbalance. Be certain you know what the problem is before working to rid of the warning-signal distress.

toolbox item 3 — psychic healing



THE PRECEDING TECHNIQUE can be used on others besides yourself of course. As described in an earlier chapter, my classes used healing methods quite successfully on subjects both present and absent, the latter frequently thousands of miles off. Before you start, here is a steadfast rule to be applied whenever performing healing on others: protect yourself using the light, or whatever device you find helpful. Again, I hear people mutter, ‘Oh, that’ when I bring it up. This is no joke. Every known culture since history first was recorded understood that illness was caused by negative energy, whether they attributed it to monsters, mosquitoes or microbes.

Healing simply is ridding the body (or mind, or spirit) of this negative energy and replacing it with positive, which is the way the body wants to be. You are simply hastening the process using a natural method. Except what happens to the negative energy you have replaced? Where does it go? One place it most definitely should not go is into you, the healer. Protection, therefore, is essential before starting out on your mission. A bubble of light imagined around yourself, along with accompanying positive words in the present tense. Get used to doing this; make it a habit if you wish to perform this essential work, especially on loved ones. (These include animals and plant life, which are easy to work on as they rarely have religious-based doubts relating to the healing process.)

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Whether you are doing Alpha healing on yourself, a subject who's present or an absentee, here is the method I use:

I place my hands around the prime area of negative energy. (Sometimes this requires a bit of educated guesswork. A pain in one part of the body may have its root cause elsewhere.) I never actually touch the healee, be it a part of myself, one who is present with me, or a subject wholly removed whom I mentally picture; simply place my hands as close to the body as possible shy of actual touch.

I visualize the problem as a dark mass or gas. I fill myself with light, then direct the light down my right arm, out of my right hand and into the troubled area. I picture the light beginning to break down the mass or concentration of gas, then have the stream of light gradually carry the dark out of the body into my left hand. I conduct the negative up the left arm as far as my elbow, and no further. I imagine a huge funnel just alongside my left elbow and direct the bad stuff into the funnel, which extends through the floor (several floors if a hi-rise), through the ground to a negative energy dump at the center of the earth, where it is immediately dissipated. The pure light, meanwhile, continues up my left arm to the shoulder, across my chest and back down the right arm. I have thus created a circuit. All this time I am talking, describing the process in the present tense. I encourage the subject to observe the process with me, to feel the negative leaving, getting better and better. (In truth, it is the subject, not you, performing the healing. You are no more than a set of cables attaching the healee to the universal battery)

I continue to focus on the flow of light as it diffuses the dark, observing that less and less of the negative rubbish remains. I do this until all the dark has been removed and the area is filled with nothing but pure healing light. Then I send the light throughout the body, into every nook and cranny therein, and when I feel that's been done, send even more light to form a bubble of protective energy around the subject. In this manner, we are no longer a couple of bodies, rather merging light bubbles, both of us in perfect health.

Is this the only technique you can employ in performing healing work? Of course not. Don't be afraid of using your imagination. Another method I use is to hold my arms out to the side and imagine great globes of healing light in my hands. I bring the globes slowly to, and into, the person, see the light penetrating and permeating the affected area. Then I move my hands slowly away from the body, drawing dark negative energy along with it. Extend my arms far as

they'll go, shake my hands and the dark gas flutters off to never-never land. More globes of light, more insertions, more drawing away the dark. Talking all the while. This is a great technique to use, especially with kids as they will be right there with you. You can ask them: 'Are you feeling better? Is there any dark remaining? Okay, let's get rid of it!' And so on.

How long, how frequently need you do this type of healing? Depends on various factors: the problem, the person, and most significantly, your own energy levels. Beginners may find this sort of work exhausting. Sure, makes sense. Be mindful not to play Florence Nightengale here. You are of little use to others if your energy is flagging, like trying to drive on flat tires.

I shall now share a true experience which took place in one of my earliest classes at the University of Pennsylvania. Amongst the hundreds of students was a rather well-known Philadelphia character, an older woman who lived in a tiny downtown studio apartment with maybe fifteen cats. Get the picture? Everybody knew her as Crazy Rosie. Harmless, but definitely not the full quid.

Came the session I taught the above technique, Rosie suddenly was born again. She no longer was Crazy Rosie; she now became Rosie the Healer.

She would stop people on the street, she would walk into restaurants and encounter people having their dinner. And heal them. Of what? Whatever.

Rosie the Healer lived just across the street from a hospital. In the evenings when she wasn't attending my class, she would enter the hospital, stroll through the corridors, find a room, go in and sit by a patient. And heal them.

The staff all knew her, knew she was a little, ah, eccentric. But going into rooms and healing patients was a no-no, and they soon put a stop to that.

'But I'm Rosie the healer,' she explained to the head nurse.

'Okay, Rosie the Healer,' replied the nurse. 'Only from now on do your healing from out in the hall, okay?'

Well, Rosie knew that healing can be accomplished from a distance as well as face to face, so no problem.

One evening Rosie came into class, raised her hand. I thought, Here it comes.

'Yes, Rosie?' I said, biting the inside of my mouth to keep a straight face.

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‘A funny thing happened last night in the hospital,’ she began. Titters all around. (She had already apprised us of her nightly shenanigans.)

‘I was sitting in the corridor outside this room. There was an old man in the room, and the staff told me he was in a coma. So I sat there imagining myself right next to his bed, sending him positive energy. Oh, so much positive energy it lit up the whole room! Suddenly –’ and here Rosie turned absolutely white ‘– the man opened his eyes and looked right at me! “What are you doing?” he said. Only he used terrible language! I replied that I was Rosie the Healer and I was making him better. He said, “Who the hell asked you to?” Only he used a much worse term than hell.’ By now, the class was in hysterics. ‘He said, “I want you to stop that and get the hell away from me.” He said, “I’ve worked out all my caramel with that bitch of a wife. I’m clean with her now, and all I want is to get the hell away from her forever. Now, piss off!”’

Rosie the Healer gave me this funny look. ‘Barry, what did he mean, he worked out all his *caramel*?’

It was minutes before the class quit the avalanche of laughter and calmed down.

toolbox item 4 — when panic attacks



WE TALK ABOUT being centered, or being on center. Meaning? Well, you're balanced, stable – in harmony. Off-center, therefore, implies the opposite: off-balance, disharmonious. And when you really stray off your center: *panic!*

I believe being centered means you pretty much are living in the moment. Sure, past and future exist, and your thoughts bounce around the tenses, but here and now is where you hang out most of the time. It's when you get stuck in another time zone, when you take the worst of the past and project that as a certainty for your future, that you flip.

When this happens, when you truly run off the rails, can't catch a breath, get the shakes; when the shit hits the fan full-on (and perhaps winds up in your knickers), chances are no amount of meditation is going to help. You're simply too flummoxed to stay in one spot and chant a mantra or observe your breath without horrific thoughts whisking you away.

What, then, to do? Your journey now is to return to your center. To the present moment. A neat trick, I've found (and, aw yeah, you best believe I've been there!), is to grab hold of an analog timepiece with full clock face and a second hand. Focus fully on that revolving second hand. Each time it passes a number, call it out. When it comes full circle, take an exaggerated deep breath. Return to the second hand. Really bear down on its movement: total concentration. Your mind tries to break away, uh-uh. Get back here! Grab a breath every thirty

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seconds. Then fifteen. Ten. Five.

Next, pace off ten steps. Turn around and pace back...slower. Back the other way, even slower. Always ten steps, each time slower than the last. Until steps are being taken in almost pantomimed slowness.

Then focus on the ground. As you begin to move, say to yourself, 'Now I am lifting my right foot. An inch. Two inches. Three. Now I am moving my right foot forward. Forward. Forward. Now I am beginning to lower my right foot. Lower. Lower. Now my right foot makes contact with the ground. First the heel. Now the sole. Full contact. Now I focus on my left foot...'

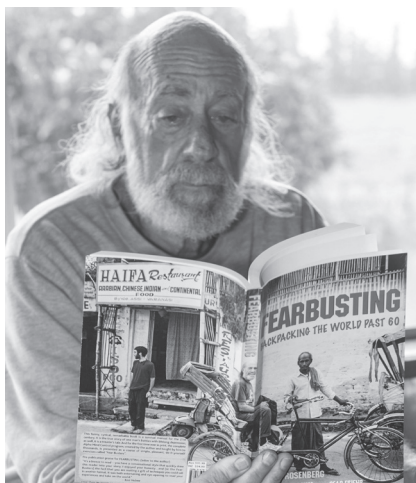
Get your movement, and accompanying announcement, so slow it takes you minutes to cover the ten paces. Continue this, back and forth, full concentration on each increment, until you feel back on center, in the present moment.

How long might this take? Do you really care? The play is to get your mind back. Because that's exactly what has happened. You have a panic attack, you literally lose your mind.

Even when you feel 'normal' again, understand that you're not out of the woods just yet. You've been issued a major warning. Perform the walking meditation, ultra slo-mo, several times a day until absolutely certain you're back on track.

Don't forget to change your knickers.

toolbox item 5 — recall of reading matter



GO DOWN TO ALPHA. How to do this? Let us count the ways. Deep, slow breaths. Counting backward ten to one. Three finger technique. Finger across to opposite palm and write the world *Relax*. How long should this take? A minute? Thirty seconds? No rush, take your time, but Alpha foreplay should be relatively short and sweet.

Tell yourself you are about to read (or listen to, or view the vid) about a certain subject in a certain chapter of a certain book by a certain author on this certain date for some certain purpose. All these certainties are indexes. The more you have, the easier it will be to recall when it's needed.

State that all the information of the book, lecture, vid, etc is being filed away in a readily accessible place in your mind, and you are able to recall it totally at any future time.

Return to your normal waking state, read the book or listen to the lecture or recording, view the video, then immediately return to Alpha and repeat the programming using the present tense: 'I have just read this book by this author...'

When recall time comes around, go down to Alpha, present the case situation, giving as many indexes as possible (or perhaps simply the subject matter) and direct your mind to provide all the knowledge you have stored.

I used this technique when I was freelance writing for some

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of the biggest name magazines in America, and later in New Zealand, especially whenever I did a one-to one interview. I never took notes, never used a recorder. Didn't need them. What I discovered early on was that persons of importance (or who believed themselves thus) often were OCD, were well rehearsed, spoke in complete sentences. They were highly skilled bullshitting interviewers, in other words. My bit was to sit there, kind of slumped in a chair, gaze at the ceiling, peer out the window, then look them square in the eye and hold on my face an expression that cried, Ah, you're sooo full of it, my friend.

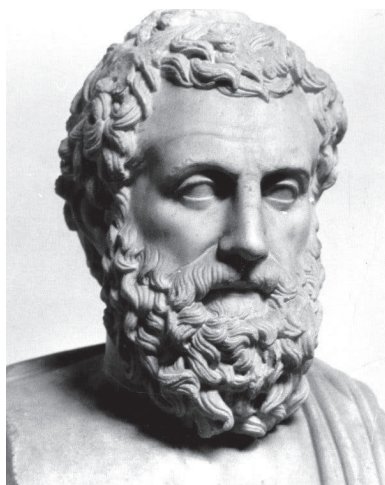
What I was doing was soaking up the ambiance of the situation, not really listening attentively because I was confident that came time to write my piece I could retrieve every word, every pause. In the beginning I was simply strengthening my Alpha powers, but it soon became obvious that I was making these self-important people uncomfortable. And when OCDers become uncomfortable they tend to lose the script. No more complete sentences. No more polished self-awareness. They become human.

I had an interview with one of the highest politicians in America at the time. So slick you could ice skate on his persona. Since I was representing a top magazine, even though I didn't play the part, I was legitimate and not some clown who'd walked in off the street. He asked did I have a recorder working. I merely shook my head. He asked would it be all right for his man Friday (they always have a Friday alongside), to check my daypack. I handed it over, then stood and held out my arms, like, search me if you want.

'How will you remember our conversation (which I could have scripted myself)?' I simply widened my smile and tapped the side of my nose. And the man virtually disassembled, began stuttering, repeating his words. (I didn't like him, enjoyed getting under his skin.)

It took nearly a month before I sat down to write my article. I used the method described. When the magazine article came out, I heard through the journal's editor that the pol insisted I indeed had a recorder hidden somewhere because what I wrote was word for word the dialogue which had been taped on his recorder.

toolbox item 6 — exam taking



WHAT A GAME: you need to pass an exam to get in, pass another to stay in, yet another to get out. Of school, of university, of work, of life. Well, if it's a game (oh, it is!), then play by your own rules, not theirs.

Situation: final exam. You the student have crammed until the wee hours. Coffee and uppers galore. You know the stuff; you're going to blast your way through.

You enter a room full of nervous vibes. But you're cool. They pass out the questions. You take one look and think: oh shit, wrong room. This must be the exam for advanced Swahili. PANIC!!

Nope. That used to be you. No longer. Deep breaths, ten to one count. Three fingers, finger-to-palm. Look at the questions again. Take them one at a time. Say there are twenty. Say you positively know the answers to 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 14, 17 and 19. Answer those eight. Then go back over the other twelve. Say you're somewhat sure about 1, 3, 9, 15 and 20. (At least they're in a language you're familiar with.) Answer them. The other seven may well be in a dialect of Venusian for all you know. Still, thou shalt not sweat.

Go down to Alpha. Picture in your mind an expert or authority on the subject. Could be your teacher. Could be the author of the book you're being tested on. Could be Aristotle. For sure Aristotle would know this stuff. Picture the old boy standing right before you. Smiling. Helpful. He wants you to get top marks.

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'Ari, babe,' you say, like he's your best friend. (And at the moment he damn well is.) 'Here's a question for you.' Present it. *And direct him to give you the best possible answer, at once.*

Whatever Aristotle says, even if it's, 'The big green fox farted flamingoes on Thursday,' return to your normal state and write it down. For sure it makes more sense than whatever you might come up with on your own.

This is the technique the teacher I mentioned earlier taught her 'dumb' kids at the Philadelphia ghetto school. But really, how dumb were they if their response to a new form of learning was so successful?

My classes at the University of Pennsylvania were part of a free school program. Meaning anybody might attend, whether a paid-in-full Penn student or not. Initially, the vast majority of Alpha attendees were not enrolled at the university-proper. But then word got out that this character Rosenberg has got something. (Could it possibly have been that I had taught a technique on how to use Alpha to grow bigger and better marijuana plants?) Suddenly, a number of somewhat glazed-eyed Penn students began attending. (In fact, for the three years I taught there, Alpha Mind Control was the highest-enrollment course at the university.)

The feedback I got from these young people on this exam-taking method was remarkable. 'It's better than cheating!' a dental school student once gleefully remarked.

Here's an add-on: Often teachers, being the lazy buggers teachers tend to be, will tell you to submit some sort of manner by which they can notify you of your exam results. Back in the day, it was a self-addressed postcard. ('What's a postcard, daddy?') These days it's the rectangular gadget superglued to your hand. Do this:

Go down to Alpha and picture yourself getting a text from the university. Actually feel the smartphone, or whatever your gizmo calls itself, in your hand. (This should be no problem as it's always there.) Picture the highest grade you can imagine. Not necessarily what you deserve; deserve schmerve – phooey on deserve. What you *want*. A? A-plus? Multiple plusses?

And remember, please: as with all these toolbox goodies, it ain't magic. It's your own brain, focused on a goal. Like taking the rays of a flashlight (torch) and condensing it down until it's a single beam, a laser. Same flashlight, same energy, but far more efficiently utilized. And always keep in mind it's repetition, repetition, repetition that makes this technique work.

toolbox item 7 – dream state work



A REALLY GOOD TIME to solve annoying problems, especially those you cannot for whatever reason visualize, is when you're unconscious. Rather than whack yourself on the head with a mallet, simply utilize the time you spend sleeping, normally a quarter to a third of your life.

Lying in bed, stocking cap in place, mudpack and pajamas, your mind free of the wakened state just left behind. Do what you know to get into Alpha. Then present the problem and tell yourself that you are *dreaming the solution*, and, most importantly, *you are recalling this dreamt answer upon awakening*.

Dreaming is still a mysterious state. What actually happens in dreams? Where do they come from? Jung did a lot of work on dream symbols, but still we wallow in a great expanse of ignorance. Nonetheless, you can use dreams to your advantage.

(Years back, I was, for a brief period, paid to sleep. (Well, you might say, what's the big deal, aren't most government workers?) The idea was for researchers to record my brain wave states during slumber. I was hooked up to any number of wires, including a round springy-thing that slipped over my John Thomas. Man, did I have some wild dreams during that experience!)

Some people wake in the middle of the night with the answer. Then go back to sleep and when they awaken have completely forgotten the answer. A common sense suggestion if this happens is

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to immediately record the answer you have dreamt, even if it appears to make no sense at the time. Used to do this with pen on a handy pad of paper. ('What's paper, daddy?') Now you have your handy-dandy gizmo, probably already in your hand. Just talk into it.

Personally, I have a peculiar affliction on this one. I don't think I have ever recalled my answer upon awakening, nor even that I had asked the question. I get out of bed, go about my daily routine. Then at 2.27pm, usually when I'm in a crowded place like a café or supermarket, I'll suddenly blurt out loud, 'Lana Turner!' Which is a tad odd in that the question I had been hoping to find the answer to was who played third base for the 1948 Cleveland Indians.

toolbox item 8 — the glass of water technique



BOY, IS THIS ONE ever weird! You've got a really tough nut of a problem, okay? What you do is take a glass of water, or juice, to bed. Sitting up (some people have to be told), slowly sip half the glass, at the same time stating the problem and the *fact* that the solution is coming to you. Place the glass on a bedside table, and first thing upon waking repeat the program while slowly sipping the second half.

The theory here is, your question gets sent out to the center of the universe, where there exists, as every schoolchild knows, the Universal Bank of Infinite Knowledge and Wisdom. The question/problem is processed by the Bank tellers, and the solution sent back to you. The whole deal takes seventy-two hours.

Or any other explanation you care to believe.

My very first class, autumn of '72, a chubby, frizzy-haired lass of eighteen stands up and says her boyfriend is in a rock band. They play a lot of gigs out of town. He tells her he's faithful to her. She wants to find out is this so.

I advise her to try the glass of water technique, thinking she'll most likely never get around to it. I mean, she really wants to know? Really?

That was on a Wednesday evening. The next course session took place the following Monday. The lass comes in wearing a hang-dog face. Her story:

She went home, and about midnight she did the glass of water, repeating it as instructed the following morning. She waits, counting the hours. Saturday night, midnight. Twelve fifteen. Twelve thirty.

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Nothing. Nada.

So she calls her man's hotel. She gets reception, which then somehow plugs her into an *existing phone conversation between her dude and some babe he is hitting on!* They can't hear her, but for sure she can hear them.

And so she got her answer. Coincidence? Sure. But that's what we're here for, right? To make coincidences happen. But sometimes ignorance just might be preferable to coincidence. Just sayin.

toolbox item 9 – the treasure map



YOU'VE GOT SOOO MANY goals, you just don't know where to start, what order of preference to place them in. Relax, camper, the treasure map sounds like the Alpha toolbox item for you.

A bit of paper, or some artists' canvas, or this new fangled thing – what's it called again? – aw yeah, a computer. Draw the goals around the perimeter. A new house. Better job. (Or, like me, no job at all.) Improved health for you and/or a loved one. The perfect mate. Or an imperfect one with scads of money. Shooting par golf against the club pro. Peace on earth. Nah, forget that, this thing does have limits.

A pictorial representation with a tagline of words. Then put a pic of yourself in the center. Place the treasure map someplace you will be sure to see it several times a day. Door of the fridge. Mirror where you look at yourself frequently. As a screen saver on your one-eye monster. The trick is to actually see it and not allow it to become second nature. Actually focus on it, on all the things upon it. Maybe even recite the goals, out loud or subvocally.

These goals can change. Simply tape or glue or cut and paste a replacement when deemed necessary. One chap in a class, a fortysomething biz bod type suffering the pangs of midlife crisis, desired more than anything to beat the young stud pro at his tennis club. Number one goal in his life. It was the very first representation on his map. He would stare at it, glare at it, several times a day. Tell us

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about it in class. One evening he showed up looking a little different.

‘You okay?’ I wondered.

He stood up, looked around, addressed the class, who had been apprised of his penchant. ‘I was looking at it this morning before leaving for the office,’ he announced, more than a bit sheepish. ‘As you know, I thought I wanted this more than anything. If nothing else in life, let me have this. Then this morning, all of a sudden –’ breaks out in great grin – ‘I thought, What the heck am I doing? I’m such a dunce! Who gives a damn! So I replaced the goal with a successful birth of pups for my pregnant lab.’

Fella had had himself a major *aha!* Proof the treasure map works, although at times in mysterious ways.

toolbox item 10 – chakra cleansing



ALTHOUGH THIS IS the Alpha tool which normally would require extensive explanation, I shall make this brief for reasons that will shortly become apparent.

Chakras. Seven non-physical, non-x-ray-able energy centers located in the body, from the crown of the head to the genital area, placed in a straight line about an inch in front of your spinal column. Their existence has been known since well before JC. Meridians flow off these centers running through the body, and form the basis of acupuncture work. (Which is why needles frequently are placed in parts of your anatomy removed from the troubling organ or body part.) Physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and psychic woes create a contamination, or clogging, of your chakras, thus preventing the flow of positive energy through the body and ultimately causing dis-ease. Therefore it is important the chakras are clean and free, and negative energies which have accumulated be removed. Your doctor has pills to make this happen.

(Just kidding. Quite likely, your GP thinks chakra is something to smear on a bagel to go with his morning bacon and eggs.)

The reason I am cutting short the explanation of this absolutely essential toolbox item is this: I have uploaded onto YouTube a thirty-seven minute guided imagery exercise which will do all the work for you. All you have to do is listen, and really, you don't even have to do

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that. You can play the recording while taking a nap, or as you sleep. To download, type CHAKRA BARRY ROSENBERG into the YouTube search bar and my voice, complete with somewhat modified Philadelphia accent, will do the rest. Or you can pay close attention to the step-by-step guiding as it is one of the most beautiful meditations I know. I suggest a listen once a day for the first couple weeks. More if you so desire. (No known side effects.) Taper off – or not – as time passes. A month or so following your initial encounter, use as a weekly refresher. Your friends soon will exclaim how wonderfully squeaky clean your aura appears, and you will be the talk of your café set.

toolbox item 11 – the alpha temple



THE FOUNDATION exercise of Alpha Mind Control is the double screen technique, which is explained several chapters back. In addition, the guided exercise has been recorded and uploaded onto YouTube. I recommend you download it and have a listen. Just type ALPHA BARRY ROSENBERG in the YouTube search bar.

During the guided med, you are introduced to your ideal place of total relaxation. Please understand: this is not a place that has been assigned to you. This is a special environment you yourself create, at a deep Alpha level. It may be a real place where you have been, and which provides a feeling of perfect peace. Or it may be a completely fictitious setting which combines all the attributes your mind associates with total relaxation, personal power and the capacity to do light Alpha level work. If you have yet to listen to the recording, let me tell you that your first double screen experience will take place in the setting the recording guides you to.

There is, moreover, yet another place within your mind, to perform, let us say, more 'serious' Alpha work. It will be an alternative to the more laid back place of relaxation (although there's no reason this setting will not be peaceful as well). I call this your Alpha temple. It is the place of optimum power for you. In it, you can have any tools or materials you may require to perform work here. Since the temple is not included in the double screen recording, you'll have to create

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your temple on your own. Here's how.

Once in Alpha, picture yourself in an elevator (lift) at the tenth floor of some building. No one in there but you. Tell yourself the elevator is going to take you down, floor by floor, safely and comfortably, until you reach the bottom level. As the elevator descends, see the floor numbers registering on a panel (Imagine the feeling of movement as you slowly go downward.) The door opens to a long corridor leading to a closed door. Walk along the corridor until you approach the door, then pause. Tell yourself that on the other side of the door is your Alpha temple, the place of absolute maximum power for your personal and private mindpower application. Then open the door and step through.

Spend some time exploring your new temple. Is it familiar to you, or totally fresh and new? Indoors or outside? There will be furnishings: a special chair that can swivel and rise up or be let down. Nearby is a computer of the future. What can it do? (Actually, anything you wish it to do.) See into the past and future? No problem. Provide answers to questions? Sure. Create images, linear or holographic, of persons or locations? All you need do is present the oral directive. The temple and its toys (bring in as many as you wish) are manifestations of your mind's highest power. Have fun.

Over the years I was teaching the course, I heard untold descriptions of students' temples. Geodesic domes and orbiting space vehicles and underwater palaces and mansions set in treetops. People had shapechanging white leopards and owls that spoke a multitude of languages and benevolent beings from distant galaxies and giant diamonds which issued forth answers to all questions. Me? I had a dingy, damp basement office with low ceiling and dim lighting and lino flooring. My special chair looked straight out of a defunct dentist's office, fabric tears mended with surgical tape. Rusty carpenter's tools. There was a live-in cat. Now, I'm quite fond of cats. Only this one totally ignored me. If I hiss-pissed in attempt to call it over, it would turn away and lift its tail. And so on. Was I jealous upon hearing the descriptions of others' palatial accommodation? What do you think? But I knew why I got what I got. Had I manifested for myself someplace posh and pretty, wonderful gadgets and a ballet dancing swan, me being the lazy bugger I am, I'd never get any work done here.

So I got what I needed, not what I had hoped for. Crap.

Good luck with yours.

toolbox item ∞ — using your imagination



I WAS JUST crawling out of the fetid swamp of a four year long depression when the universe tapped me on the shoulder.

I'd been living in a VW bus with a little dog named Farout, whose attitude to life was the polar opposite to my own. He was happy all the time. And he was my only living friend. Then he got hit by a car, and I had every intention of crawling back to the fetid swamp.

This was in San Francisco, early 1972. Farout survive the hit, but he needed extensive surgery on his hip, and I was dead broke. Fortunately, a close friend happened to be manager of a veterinarian hospital, and she took the lovely wee beastie in, both to the hospital and her heart. Alone, defeated, self-labeled a classic loser, I drove across America back to my native Philadelphia. Not long after, the universe tapped me on the shoulder, and before I knew it I was standing in front of a packed amphitheater teaching a course of which I knew a trifle less than nothing.

Philly, where I was born and spent the first half of my now-eightysomething existence, is a down to earth, feet on the ground, blue collar town. Plus, I was (and am) a confirmed atheist. I won't even venture how I went from swamp man to teacher of one of the most popular mind dynamics-type classes in America. Believe what you will.

Initially, I taught, and believed in, psychic phenomena as the basis of my seminar. Somehow, the god-who-doesn't-exist-only-

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knows, I found that I was remarkably adept at what is termed psychic reading. This entails being given no more than the name, age and city of residence of a person you don't know, have never heard of, and 'reading' just about all there is to know about that individual, including things that individual may not know about themselves. (Undetected cancer, as example.)

I would perform a number of psychic readings during the last twenty minutes of my four-hour-long evening sessions at the University of Pennsylvania. It was like making stuff up (of which I have always been proficient), except that feedback from the person who provided the subject's trio of particulars proved my readings to be a hundred percent spot-on.

A couple hours prior to the conclusion of each thirty-six hour course, I had the class break into small groups, whereupon the students themselves took turns doing these readings. Over the years, their success rate was over ninety percent.

Performing these readings blew everybody out. The large room always reminded me of a Haight-Ashbury acid party when the students returned to their seats for a finale of holding hands and chanting. And I was not the best reader by far. One woman, a dental tech, once did a teeth chart of a subject in Arizona. We sent the chart to the subject's dentist in Tucson. Perfect.

The psychic stuff brought me fame and glory. I was, for a brief period of history, a rock star. And then one day I came to my senses and realized the difference between being a performer and a genuine teacher of a subject I considered ever so valuable. For certain, I enjoyed being famous and glorious, but something very obviously was lacking. It took a time before it hit me that what I wanted was to help people become who they really were, but have been held back by a world full of suffocating systems. And so, with more than a little regret, I chucked out much of the psychic business and focused on the spiritual. One of the better choices I have made this lifetime.

I was teaching not as were most others in the game: either a quasi-religion or as a profitable business. (My classes were free for the first three years. Later, when I left Penn and started my own center with thirty other courses in the 'curriculum', the charge for Alpha was thirty dollars, and if you didn't have that, give what you can, wash our windows, bake me a cake (organic vegan ingredients, please).

What I have learned over the years is the old cliché that you can achieve anything you set your mind to is a truth of sorts. But you

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gotta have the proper attitude, and you gotta have the right tools. And the most important tool in getting the most out of life is...imagination, Now, I ain't very pretty and only a little bit smart. But y'know what I have, big-time? Yup: imagination. When in third grade the teacher, exasperated that I spent most of my class time gazing dreamily out the window, claimed that one day my imagination was going to get the best of me. Boy, did she ever hit the nail.

Wasn't it Einstein who said imagination is more important than knowledge?

I do believe the man was on to something.

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after-word



I HOPE YOU'RE somewhat wiser about matters of personal health after reading this book. Because I'm not after writing it.

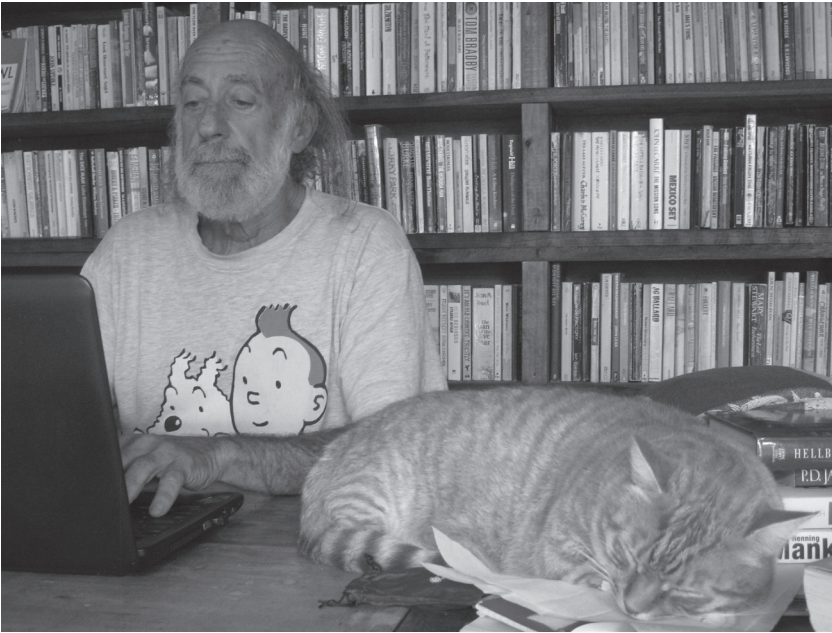
It still perplexes me why people don't take proper care of themselves. I live in the second most beautiful of the fifty-plus countries I have set foot upon (Bhutan is the first, and they don't have a decent-size lake, let alone an ocean). Except for Auckland, the major city here (and a village by international standards), New Zealand has to be the cruisiest land in the world. Beaches galore, hills and mountains and walk- and bicycle-ways all over the place. Yet by and large people are not healthy. And I'm not talking about the lower socio-economic elements. My focus here is on middleclass and up: people with housing, easy access to organic foodstuffs and free or low-expense public medical care, above-the-norm education, liberty and Google for all. So where's the excuse? Isn't any. Makes me feel sad, makes me feel ignorant.

As I wrote wayyy back in the pre-word, I'm far from excessive in physical exercise and spiritual practice. An hour and a half a day participation on average – six percent of my daily existence. No big deal. Yes, I eat well, and why should I not? Why should anyone not? And why do I give a damn that the majority of my fellow citizens neglect even the slightest care of their minds and bodies? Mainly because I continue to hold there's a smidgeon of hope this planet's accelerating plunge to oblivion can be turned around, and it begins with individuals rising off their asses and asserting positive effort in three interconnected areas of investment: personal health, state of the environment, and creativity.

Anyway, I have exhausted herewith most all of my meager acumen plus bits and pieces of my bizarre personal history, hopefully providing a few laughs along the way. If you take to heart and practice just one thing from all the raving and ranting in Kickass and apply it to your personal well-being, hey, terrific. More than one, we're all winners.

Now, run off and play safely, darlings.

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author's final rave

I WAS SITTING at my desk that sunny spring afternoon, rewriting for the umpteenth time a passage of this book. It just didn't want to emerge onto the laptop's screen with the fluency and pace I'd worked out in my head.

Knock at the door. I ignored it. My door is always unlocked and friends know to waltz right in, so must be someone hoping to sell me something.

A second knock. Maybe I needed a break from a work that refused to obey its author's commands. With a sigh, I got up and moved to the door. Nobody there. Peek around the corner, a woman walking away down the path.

'Can I help you?'

The woman turns. Sixties, nice appearance, well dressed, an air of practicable self-confidence. She comes up to me, extends her hand. 'I'm Jacinda's mother-in-law,' she says with warm smile. 'I'd like to buy a copy of your Women I Love book.'

Immediate thought: This has to be the most clever opening line ever from a religious caller. But no. She truly is the mother-in-law of my country's prime minister. She explains.

Recently she was visiting the PM and her own son, a noted fisherman and baby-minder, at their home. A copy of my recently published book, detailing the lives of eleven female members of my heart family, happened to be on a table. The m-i-l sat down, opened the

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book and began to read. Couldn't put it down (her words).

As she was leaving shortly, she asked might she borrow the book. The prime minister claimed she hadn't finished, would let her have it soon as she was done. But mother-in-law (I won't use her name here to protect her privacy) claims to have been captivated by the real-life characters in my tome, didn't care to wait until daughter-in-law, who had one or two more pressing matters on her plate, got round to the final page.

Now, had a close relative of the head of any other UN state cared to purchase from its author a certain book (I eliminate my native nation here as who among that mob of morons can read anything beyond a tweet), no doubt it would have been the third deputy to the fourth secretary delegated to perform the deed. And should the relative herself demand to seek out said author, might you imagine the lineup of black Mercs pulling up outside my patch, the coterie of thick-necked suits with shades and black curly wires poking from their ears pouring out to form a walking scrum around the personage.

New Zealand, Jacinda's momma-in-law rocks on up and raps on the door.

I told the m-i-l I would not sell her a copy, rather make her a present of one. She wouldn't hear of it.

'I've read that all money received from your book sales goes to charity, and I want to contribute.' Whereupon she placed on my desk a bit more than the cover price.

'And, oh, would you mind signing it for me?'

Not only did I scribble my signature within, I felt the experience at the very least called for a personal dedication. But what to write for a person I met for the first time minutes before? What came out was: 'For a Wonderful Mother-in-Law.' Which, okay, a mite tacky, yet I have no doubt is the total truth.

When later I related the episode to a friend, a native-born Kiwi, she laughed. 'Where else but New Zealand could this happen!'

Indeed.

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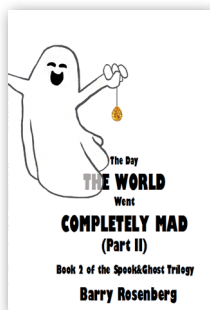
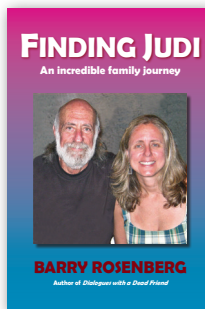
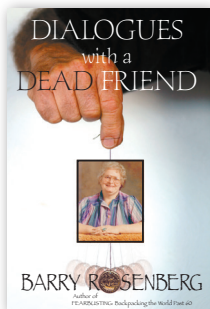
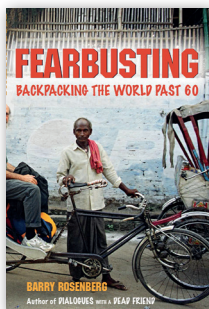
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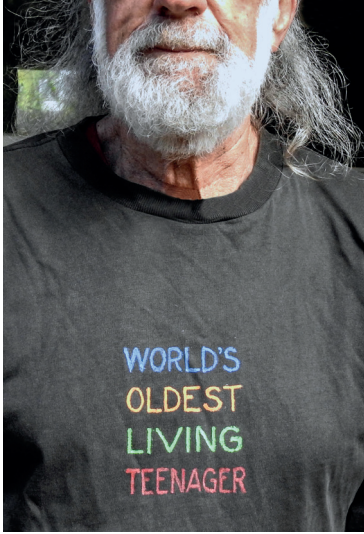
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Books by Barry Rosenberg





I'm quite looking forward to growing old, but since I'm only in my ninth decade that's a considerable way off.

In his 20s, Barry Rosenberg was a successful American freelance magazine writer. Later in his 30s and 40s he taught several thousand people the wonders of Alpha Mind Control, first in the center he created in Philadelphia, then in New Zealand, where he emigrated in 1980. Everything appeared rosy for Rosey.

Until one day in his 50s Rosenberg looked in the mirror and saw the truth. He was fat bordering on obese. He had no energy. Where years back he'd been a marathon runner, now he could barely walk 100 yards without stopping to grab a breath.

Plus he was grumpy. Morose. Excessively negative. He hadn't written in ages. Looked old and worn out. If self-hate were an Olympic event, Rosenberg would surely have copped gold.

He grew angry over what he'd become. Bitterly angry. Furiously angry. Which led to a major decision: time to get my pathetic life in order!

This he did. How? By kicking his own ass. Hard. Delta Force drill sergeant hard. Sadistically hard. It worked. Now in his 80s, Rosenberg can claim to be more fit in body, mind and spirit than in his entire life.

Written with a story-teller's sense of irony, *Kickass* is part commentary on humanity's curious behavior; part DIY instruction (e.g. Alpha Mind Control techniques), part the author's own bizarre experiences as he seeks a healthier life. Together they make for an absolute joy to read.

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