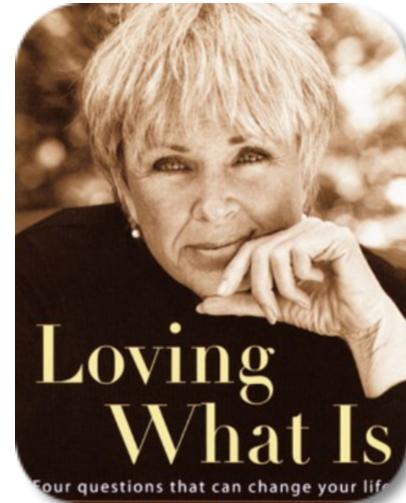


Loving What Is

Four questions that can change your life (a summary by Pat Evert)

- Introduction

When we believe our thoughts instead of what is really true for us, we experience the kinds of emotional distress that we call suffering. Suffering is a natural alarm, warning us that we're attaching to a thought; when we don't listen, we come to accept this suffering as an inevitable part of life. It's not. The self-questioning she discovered uses a different, less-known capacity of the mind to find a way out of its self-made trap. Many describe how, without any conscious intention, the mind notices each stressful thought and undoes it before it can cause any suffering. **Their internal argument with reality has disappeared, and they find that what remains is love** —love for themselves, for other people, and for whatever life brings.



- A Few Basic Principles

What I love about The Work is that it allows you to go inside and find your own happiness, to experience what already exists within you, unchanging, immovable, ever-present, ever-waiting. No teacher is necessary. You are the teacher you've been waiting for. **You are the one who can end your own suffering.**

Noticing When Your Thoughts Argue with Reality; **The only time we suffer is when we believe a thought that argues with what is.** When I argue with reality, I lose—but only 100 percent of the time. I am a lover of what is, not because I'm a spiritual person, but because it hurts when I argue with reality.

Staying in Your Own Business; I can find only three kinds of business in the universe: mine, yours, and God's. For me, the word God means "reality." Reality is God, because it rules. Anything that's out of my control, your control, and everyone else's control—I call that God's business. **Every time in my life that I had felt hurt or lonely, I had been in someone else's business.** Being mentally in your business keeps me from being present in my own. I am separate from myself, wondering why my life doesn't work. To think that I know what's best for anyone else is to be out of my business. Even in the name of love, it is pure arrogance, and the result is tension, anxiety, and fear. Do I know what's right for me? That is my only business. Let me work with that before I try to solve your problems for you. The next time you're feeling stress, ask yourself whose business you're in mentally, and you may burst out laughing!

Meeting Your Thoughts with Understanding; **A thought is harmless unless we believe it.** It's not our thoughts, but the attachment to our thoughts, that causes suffering. Attaching to a thought means believing that it's true, without inquiring. A belief is a thought that we've been attaching to, often for years. Thoughts appear like that, and through inquiry we can make friends with them. Would you argue with a raindrop? Raindrops aren't personal, and neither are thoughts. Once a painful concept is met with understanding, the next time it appears you may find it interesting.

Becoming Aware of Your Stories; Stories are the untested, uninvestigated theories that tell us what all these things mean. We don't even realize that they're just theories. **When you're operating on uninvestigated theories** of what's going on and you aren't even aware of it, **you're in what I call "the dream."** Often the dream becomes troubling; sometimes it even turns into a nightmare.

Looking for the Thought Behind the Suffering; I have never experienced a stressful feeling that wasn't caused by attaching to an untrue thought. Behind every uncomfortable feeling, there's a thought that isn't true for us. "The wind shouldn't be blowing." "My husband should agree with me." We have a thought that argues with reality, then we have a stressful feeling, and then we act on that feeling, creating more stress for ourselves. An overwhelming feeling is like a compassionate alarm clock that says, "You're caught in the dream." Depression, pain, and fear are gifts that say, "Sweetheart, take a look at what you're thinking right now. **Investigating an untrue thought will always lead you back to who you really are.** It hurts to believe you're other than who you are, to live any story other than happiness.

To inquire or to investigate is to put a thought or a story up against the four questions and the turnarounds. Above all else, inquiry is about realizing that all the answers we ever need are always available inside us. Inquiry is more than a technique: **It brings to life, from deep within us, an innate aspect of our being.** When practiced for a while, inquiry takes on its own life within you. It appears whenever thoughts appear, as their balance and mate. This internal partnership leaves you free to live as a kind, fluid, fearless, amused listener, a student of yourself, and a friend who can be trusted not to resent, criticize, or hold a grudge.

- The Great Undoing

The first step in The Work is to identify the thoughts that are causing your stress and to write them down. Write your judgments down, just the way you think them. When you do The Work, you see who you are by seeing who you think other people are. Eventually you come to see that everything outside you is a reflection of your own thinking. You are the storyteller, the projector of all stories, and the world is the projected image of your thoughts. What The Work gives us is a way to change the projector—mind—rather than the projected. When you realize that **every stressful moment you experience is a gift that points you to your own freedom, life becomes very kind.** The ego will write like a maniac. When you put the story on paper and write it just the way the mind is telling it, with all your suffering and frustration and rage and sadness, then you can take a look at what is swirling around inside you.

Inquiry: The Four Questions and the Turnarounds

- 1. Is it true?**
- 2. Can you absolutely know that it's true?**
- 3. How do you react, what happens, when you believe that thought?**
- 4. Who would you be without the thought? and Turn the thought around.**

Find at least three specific, genuine examples of how this turnaround is as true as or truer than your original statement. **It's about discovering alternatives that can bring you peace.** You may find, as many people have, that it doesn't seem to have any effect now, but you have already shifted in ways you can't feel yet. The Work can be very subtle and profound.

- Entering the Dialogues

You are the teacher and healer you've been waiting for. This book is designed to help you do The Work by yourself. It's not necessary to work with a facilitator, learn how to question yourself. Sometimes I also ask two subsidiary questions: "Can you see a reason to drop that thought?" and "Can you find one stress-free reason to keep the thought?" We think we are doing The Work on people, but actually **we're working on our thoughts about people.** The Work allows you to go inside and experience the peace that already exists within you. That peace is unchanging, immovable, and ever-present. The Work takes you there.

- Doing The Work on Couples and Family Life

My experience is that the teachers we need most are the people we're living with now. Our spouses, parents, and children are the clearest masters we could hope for. Again and again, they will show us the truth we don't want to see, until we see it. Inquiry was alive inside me, and every thought I had was met by a wordless questioning. **They will point us to our freedom every time.**

I Want My Son to Talk to Me - We don't have to wait for our children to change before we can be happy. We may even come to discover that the very situation we dislike is what we've been looking for—the entrance into ourselves. Nothing is happening but your story. And yet you believe that it's their action or non-action that causes your emotions. You're deluding yourself with your own uninvestigated thoughts, in their name, bouncing off walls—happy, sad, happy, sad. "It's their fault I'm happy, it's their fault I'm sad." This is confusion. This Work is the end of the world as we understand it to be. And it's the opening to reality, as it really is, in all its beauty. What is already true is much better without any plan of mine. My life is so simple, now that I no longer rule the world in my mind. And my children and friends are very grateful. All war belongs on paper. Inquiry takes me to the answers inside. My children are always right. My friends are always right. And I get to realize it or suffer. All of it. I am everything they say I am. And anything I feel I need to defend keeps me from full realization. This "stop blaming" thing is for you to live. **This will keep you very busy, and out of his business.** And that's where life begins. It begins from where you are now, not from

where he is. You use him for your happiness. But he's not going for it. He's a brilliant teacher. We all live with the perfect teacher. **Just a little confusion here and there, nothing serious.** Turn it around. If you still feel pain, you can realize that your Work's not done. And he is the master. He will continue to reject you until you understand. You are responsible for not rejecting him or yourself. Take it to inquiry and give yourself your freedom. Pain is the signal that you're confused, that you're in a lie. You are the solution to your problem—your apparent problem.

My Husband's Affair - The thoughts that used to send us into deep depression—these same thoughts, once understood, send us into laughter. This is the power of inquiry. It makes sense that **no one else can cause you pain. That's your job.** The truth is that you want to hurt him. You're the projector of it all, the storyteller of it all. If I think that someone else is causing my problem, I'm insane. It's just been a misunderstanding. Your misunderstanding. Not theirs. Not ever, not even a little. Your happiness is your responsibility. This is very good news. **No one can make you happy but you.** Maybe because you think it's his job to love you and make you happy when you don't know how to yourself. "I can't do it—you do it." The pain shows you what's left to investigate. It shows you what's blocking you from the awareness of love. That's what pain is for.

The Baby Shouldn't Scream - For years you've been arguing with reality, and you've always lost. The effect of that has been stress, frustration, and depression. I see that I'm expecting him to do more than what I'm actually doing. So again we find that it's not his behavior that depresses you. That's not possible. It has to be **your own mental behavior that depresses you.**

I Need My Family's Approval - It's not easy to find your own way when you believe that you need love, approval, appreciation, or anything from your family. **When the truth is seen, there's nothing you can do to make the lie true for you again.** I want me to accept myself as I learn my own truth in this life. Reality is always kinder than the stories we tell about it.

- Deepening Inquiry

There is nowhere you can travel where inquiry won't safely hold you. The Work always brings us back to who we really are. At some point, you may notice that you're meeting every thought, feeling, person, and situation as a friend. What's the reality of this situation? Just your way of mentally arguing with what is. It doesn't do you any good, and it doesn't change the other person; its only effect is to cause you stress. Reality, for me, is what is true. The truth is whatever is in front of you, whatever is really happening. In reality, there is no such thing as a "should" or a "shouldn't." These are only thoughts that we impose onto reality. We can see reality as it is, and this leaves us free to act efficiently, clearly, and sanely. Asking "What's the reality of it?" can help bring the mind out of its story, back into the real world. Whose business are you in when you're thinking the thought that you've written? **When you think that someone or something other than yourself needs to change, you're mentally out of your business.** The world is always as it should be, whether I oppose it or not.

Your nature is truth, and when you oppose it, you don't feel like yourself. Stress never feels as natural as peace does. I love question 3. Once you answer it for yourself, once you see the cause and effect of a thought, all your suffering begins to unravel. It's important to realize that **inquiry is about noticing, not about dropping the thought**. That is not possible. If you think that I'm asking you to drop the thought, hear this: I am not! Inquiry is not about getting rid of thoughts; it's about realizing what's true for you, through awareness and unconditional self-love. Once you see the truth, the thought lets go of you, not the other way around. How would your life be different in the same situation without this thought? Without our stories, we are not only able to act clearly and fearlessly; we are also a friend, a listener. We are people living happy lives. We are appreciation and gratitude that have become as natural as breath itself. Happiness is the natural state for someone who knows that there's nothing to know and that we already have everything we need, right here now. The goal of inquiry is to bring us back to our right mind, so **we can realize for ourselves that we live in paradise and haven't even noticed**. The part where you take what you have written about others and see if it is as true or truer when it applies to you. The point is to find the turnarounds that set you free from the nightmare you're innocently attached to. Now list three examples in your life where the turnarounds are true. The power of the turnaround lies in the discovery that everything you think you see on the outside is really a projection of your own mind. When you see how you have been preaching to others, go back and make amends, and let them know how difficult it is for you to do what you wanted them to do. I found myself on equal ground with the people I had judged. I saw that my philosophy wasn't so easy for any of us to live. I saw that we're all doing the best we can. This is how a lifetime of humility begins. Now you list as many of your lies as you can remember and report them to that person, never in any way mentioning his lies to you. His lies are his business. You are doing this for your own freedom. Humility is the true resting place. Make amends to yourself by making amends to others. Honest, non-manipulative reporting, coupled with living amends, brings real intimacy to otherwise impossible relationships.

These turnarounds are about embracing all of life, just as it is. Saying—and meaning—“ I am willing to...” creates open mindedness, creativity, and flexibility. Any resistance you may have is softened. You will probably have this thought again, and you may feel the resulting stress and depression. Look forward to these feelings; they're reminders that it's time to wake yourself up. Turnarounds: I am willing to be ignored by Paul again. I look forward to being ignored by Paul again. No one can hurt me—that's my job.

- Doing The Work on Work and Money

If you live with the uninvestigated thought “I need my money to be safe and secure,” you're living in a hopeless state of mind. Who would you be without the thought “I need my money to be safe”? You might be a lot easier to be with. You might even begin to notice the laws of generosity, the laws of letting money go out fearlessly and come back fearlessly. You don't ever need more money than you have. There is nothing we can do that doesn't help the planet.

Uncle Ralph and His Stock Tips

Mind doesn't shift until it does, and when it does shift, it's right on time, not one second too late or too soon. People are just like seeds waiting to sprout. We can't be pushed ahead of our own understanding. And I can tell you that when you let go of one thing, everything falls like dominoes, because concepts are what we are working with—theories that have never been investigated. These concepts may appear again, and this is good news, when you know what to do with them. **These people that we're close to will give us everything we need, so that we can realize ourselves and be free of the lie.** Your uncle knows exactly what to say, because he's you, giving you back to yourself. But you say, "Go away, I don't want to hear it." And you say it mostly in your mind. Because you think that if you got honest with him about it, he might not give you affection or validation. He knows the things about you that you haven't wanted to look at yet. Your uncle can give you material that's invaluable, if you really want to know the truth. Your uncle is really God in disguise as an uncle. He's giving you everything you need for your freedom.

- Doing The Work on Self-Judgments, Afraid of Life

Many of us judge ourselves as relentlessly as a plastic toy playing its recording, telling ourselves over and over what we are and what we're not. **Once investigated, these self-judgments simply melt away.** Let's consider the self-judgment "I am a failure." Could it be that all along I have lived the life I should have lived and that everything I've done has been what I should have done? When you use the 180-degree turnaround, "I am a failure" becomes "I am not a failure" or "I am a success." Go inside with this turnaround and let it reveal to you how it is as true as or truer than your original statement. Make a list of the ways in which you are a success. Bring those truths out of the darkness. Without the thought "I am a failure," aren't you perfectly fine? It's the thought that is painful, not your life. There isn't anything serious to worry about, ever. This isn't a serious thing. If self-realization didn't make things lighter, who would want it? You're free. What I'm learning from you is that your parents have never been the problem. **It's your thinking about them that is your problem**, your uninvestigated belief about what they think or don't think. **No one else can be your problem.** I like to say that no one can hurt me—that's my job. It leaves you in a position to stop blaming others and to look to yourself for your own freedom, not to them or anyone else. When I argue with reality, I lose—but only 100 percent of the time.

- Doing The Work with Children

What I learned from you is that it's not the monster that you're afraid of, it's the thought. This is such good news. Whenever I'm frightened, I know that I'm just frightened of a thought.

- Doing The Work on Underlying Beliefs

Underlying beliefs are broader, more general versions of our stories. They're like religions that we unconsciously live. The present is not as good as the future. I'd be happy if I had my way. It's possible to waste time. Life is unfair. It's possible to miss out on something. They show exactly

how you think you would improve reality if you had your way, and how bad reality could look if your fears came true. To watch it all collapse—to discover that those painful beliefs that we've carried around for years are not true for us, that we've never needed them at all—is an incredibly freeing experience. This is wonderful material for inquiry. Maybe my life shouldn't have a purpose other than what it is. That feels odd, yet it somehow rings truer. Could it be that my life as it's already lived is the purpose? That seems a lot less stressful.

She Was Supposed to Make Me Happy - If you believe that your happiness depends on someone else, that belief will undermine all your relationships, including your relationship with yourself. Happiness may look entirely different from the way you imagine it. I'm angry at Deborah because she told me the night before she left that I repulse her. It's not my business. Is she supposed to stop being repulsed because of the soul-mate mythology I have going? No, **I don't accept me for who I am, nor do I accept her for who she is.** Uninvestigated stories often leave chaos and resentment and hatred within our own families. Until we investigate, nothing else is possible. I'm angry at myself for being self-righteous, for **thinking that she should be the way I want her to be.** I want to be grateful for life as it is; to stay out of her business and experience the power of that. **I want to see how thoughtful, considerate and loving I am, how thoughtful, considerate and loving she is.** I love her with all your heart. I need to love myself as I am, warts and all. I haven't been loving myself that way, but I'm starting to. A wart is... God. It is reality. I've been feeling so needy, needing her. I've been wanting a phony her that doesn't exist other than in my myth. There is nothing you can do to keep me from loving you. I'm willing to be abused. Because it's what happens. And if it still hurts... Then I've got more work to do, because I am arguing with the truth, with reality. Life is a very nice place to be, once you understand it. Nothing ever goes wrong in life. Life is heaven, except for our attachment to a story that we haven't investigated. What is is. I am not running this show. She comes, and you tell a story, and the effect is that you get to be a martyr. Or she comes, and you tell the story of how you're grateful, and you get to be a happy guy. You are the effect of your story, that's all.

I Need to Make a Decision - When you become a lover of what is, there are no more decisions to make. In my life, I just wait and watch. I know that the decision will be made in its own time, so I let go of when, where, and how. When a thought appears such as "Do the dishes" and you don't do them, notice how an internal war breaks out. Even though it's just another story, and when you follow the direction of the voice, that story ends. **We are really alive when we live as simply as that—open, waiting, trusting, and loving to do what appears in front of us now.**

Who would you be without the thought "My future depends on the money I have invested in the market"? My future does not depend on the money I have invested in the stock market. I would be much happier. I'd be more relaxed. I'd be more fun to be around. The only future you want is peace and happiness. Rich or poor—who cares, when we're secure in our happiness? This is **true freedom: a mind that is no longer deceived by itself.** So the very

thing you seek keeps you from the awareness of what you already have. **We're either attaching to the nightmare or we're investigating it.** And you're going to witness the internal story that is to meet it with understanding, the way a loving mother would meet her child. I don't make decisions. I don't bother with them, because I know they'll be made for me right on time. My job is to be happy and wait. Decisions are easy. It's the story you tell about them that isn't easy. Maybe things are just moving right along, without our help. That's my insanity, the need to control. Thinking and living this way, is in direct opposition to reality, and it's fatal. It feels like stress, because everyone is a lover of what is, no matter what horror story they believe in. I say, let's have peace now, within this apparent chaos. So, how do you react when you believe the thought "I need to make a decision," and the decision doesn't come? Horrible. Just horrible. I'm not asking you to stop thinking that you make decisions. This Work has the gentleness of a flower opening to itself. Be gentle with your beautiful self. This Work is about the end of your suffering. We're just taking a look at possibilities here. Who or what would you be without the thought "I need to make a decision"? I wouldn't be anxious. I wouldn't be becoming more and more insane. I wouldn't feel like I had to isolate myself from people because I was too awful to be around. I don't need to make decisions. If you act, the worst that can happen is a story. If you don't act, the worst that can happen is a story. It makes its own decisions. Your thinking is irrational. I'm not asking you to drop it. For those of you new to The Work, you can't drop it. You may think you can, and then the thought reappears and brings the same fear with it that it did before.

This is about realization, not about changing anything. The world is as you perceive it to be. For me, clarity is a word for beauty. It's what I am. And when I'm clear, I see only beauty. Nothing else is possible. I am mind perceiving my thoughts, and everything unfolds from that, as if it were a new solar system pouring itself out in its delight. If I'm not clear, then I'm going to project all my craziness out onto the world, as the world, and I'll perceive a crazy world and think that it is the problem. We've been working on the projected image for thousands of years and not on the projector. That's why life seems to be chaotic. It's chaos telling chaos how to live differently, and never noticing that it has always lived that way and that we have been going about it backward, absolutely backward. So you don't drop your thoughts of chaos and suffering out there in the apparent world. You can't drop them, because you didn't make them in the first place. But when you meet your thoughts with understanding, the world changes. It has to change, because the projector of the entire world is you.

Decisions shouldn't be so difficult or frightening. When you're trying to make them ahead of their time, it's hopeless, as you said. Just follow your passion. Do what you love. Inquire, and have a happy life while you're doing it. I look forward to panicking over money in the stock market. Yes, because that will put me back into The Work. That's the purpose of stress. It's a friend. It's an alarm clock, built in to let you know that it's time to do The Work. You've simply lost the awareness that you're free. So you investigate, and you return to what you are. I don't let go of my concepts—I meet them with understanding. Then they let go of me.

- Doing The Work on Any Thought or Situation

There is no thought or situation that you can't put up against inquiry. **Every thought, every person, every apparent problem is here for the sake of your freedom.** When you experience anything as separate or unacceptable, inquiry can bring you back to the peace you felt before you believed that thought. Everything in the world is for: your self-realization. Judge it, investigate it, turn it around, and set yourself free. It's good that you experience anger, fear, or sadness. **Sit down, identify the story, and do The Work.** Until you can see everything in the world as a friend, your Work is not done. You come to see that every perceived problem appearing "out there" is really nothing more than a misperception within your own thinking.

When the story is hard to find:

- 1) Emotion, write out the fact.
- 2) Want, what would make it perfect for you?
- 3) Should, what should or shouldn't so and so do?
- 4) Need, what do you need for your sense of comfort and security?
- 5) Judge, mercilessly evaluate the person or situation.
- 6) Never again, what you hope to never experience again.

Now underline all the statements that have the highest emotional charge, and do The Work on them, one by one.

- Doing The Work on the Body and Addictions

The body is never our problem. **Our problem is always a thought that we innocently believe.** The Work deals with our thinking, not with the object that we think we're addicted to. There is no such thing as an addiction to an object; there is only an attachment to the uninvestigated concept arising in the moment. But here's addiction: A concept arises that says I should or I shouldn't smoke, I believe it, and I move from the reality of the present moment. If you think that alcohol makes you sick or confused or angry, then when you drink it, it's as if you're drinking your own disease. You're meeting alcohol where it is, and it does exactly what you know it will do. So we investigate the thinking, not in order to stop drinking, but simply to end any confusion about what alcohol will do. And if you believe that you really want to keep drinking, just notice what it does to you. There's no pity in it. There's no victim in it. And eventually there's no fun in it—only a hangover. My body can never be a problem if my thinking is healthy.

An Unhealthy Heart? - This is a very old religion. **If I think my body should be different from what it is now, I'm out of my business.** I'm out of my mind! Take a look at your beliefs about it, put them on paper, inquire, and turn them around. Is it true that your heart is diseased and weak? Can you really know that it's true? How do you react when you believe the thought that your heart is diseased and weak? As long as you see your heart as the problem and look outside your own mind for solutions, you can't know anything but fear. Who or what would you be if you never had the thought that your heart is diseased and

weak? How do you react when you believe the thought that your heart isn't normal for you and needs to be healed? I think about it all the time. I think about dying, and I scare myself. I try to consider all the medical options and natural healing options, and I get really confused. I'm desperate to figure it out, and I can't. Who or what would you be without the story "I want my heart to be healed completely"? I would just be living my life. I wouldn't be so afraid. And I wouldn't be so focused on the future, on dying. When you have some understanding of your thoughts through inquiry, then you can call 911 consciously, without fear or panic. Give up on your heart. Turn that over to your doctor. Work with your thinking. That's where it will count. Your heart will love you for it. Continue with the turnaround. I look forward to giving up on my heart. I look forward to letting my heart cease to function. I look forward to letting it preclude me from living a normal life. Sounds like freedom to me. Follow your doctor's advice and watch what happens from a sane and loving position. Eventually, you may come to know that your body is not your business.

My Daughter's Addiction - I have worked with hundreds of alcoholics, and I've always found that they were drunk with their thinking before they were drunk with their drinking. Through inquiry, I learned to become very quiet around her, around everyone. I learned how to be a listener. And inquiry instantly brought me back to reality. **To have a way to see beyond the illusion of suffering is the greatest gift.** Ultimately, you may discover that going outside yourself in order to gain anything is painful.

Who would you be, in the presence of your daughter, without the thought "Her drug addiction is killing her"? I'd be more relaxed, and I'd be more myself, and less mean to her, less reactive. And who would I be without this story? I would be totally there for her, loving her with all my heart, as long as she lasts. Fear is what we experience when we're attached to the nightmare. **My thinking is... killing me. It's killing our relationship.** She's dying of a drug overdose, and you're dying of a thinking overdose. She could last a lot longer than you. My thinking addiction is endangering my life. She is my drug addiction it's endangering my life. **I'm addicted to mentally running her life. She's my drug.** My drug addiction is ruining her life. Who would you be, living your life, without this thought? With the thought, suffering; without the thought, no suffering and you'd be a better mother. Your daughter has nothing to do with your pain. This Work is about 100 percent forgiveness, because that's what you want. That's what you are. Isn't it funny how we're the last place we look? Always trying to change the projected rather than clear the projector. I'm afraid of my thinking because it changes my personality, and then I can't see myself or her. Parents call me and say, "My child's a drug addict, she's in trouble," and they don't see that they're the ones in trouble. I'm angry at my drug addiction because then I'm afraid of myself and her. How do you react, how do you treat her, when you think that thought? I get angry, volatile, aggressive, and I shut her out. She's my dearest child, and I treat her like an enemy. That's the power of uninvestigated thinking. But if you investigate that thought (I'm afraid of her), the nightmare disappears. **Everything happens for me, not to me.**

- Making Friends with the Worst That Can Happen

I have helped people do The Work on rape, war in Vietnam and Bosnia, torture, internment in Nazi concentration camps, the death of a child, and the prolonged pain of illnesses like cancer. Many of us think that it's not humanly possible to accept extreme experiences like these, much less meet them with unconditional love. But not only is that possible, it's our true nature.

Nothing terrible has ever happened except in our thinking. Reality is always good, even in situations that seem like nightmares. When I say that the worst that can happen is a belief, I am being literal.

Afraid of Death - I love to use inquiry to walk people through the thing they fear most, the worst that could possibly happen. **You close your eyes every night, and you go to sleep.** People look forward to sleeping. **That's all death is. That's as bad as it gets**, except for your belief system that says there's something else. We think that we're afraid of the death of our body, though what we're really afraid of is the death of our identity. But through inquiry, as we understand that death is just a concept and that our identity is a concept too, we come to realize who we are. This is the end of fear. Totally away from God. Fire and darkness in this big, black hell-hole forever. I want to ask you, can you absolutely know that that's true? No, I can't. Who or what would you be without this story? You've already been living the worst that could happen - imagination without investigation. Lost in hell. No way out. What would you be in your life without this story "I can't accept death"? Turn it around. **I can accept death. Everyone can. Everyone does.** Dying is everything they were looking for in life. Their delusion of being in charge is over. When there's no choice, there's no fear. And in that, there is peace. They realize that they're home and that they've never left. It's terrifying to think you could lose control, even though the truth is that you never had it in the first place. That's the death of fantasy and the birth of reality. "Death is painful"—turn it around. My thinking is painful. The turnaround, I'm willing to experience the fear of death again. And you're never given more pain than you can handle. You never, ever get more than you can take. That's a promise. Death experiences are just mental experiences. **And when people die, it's so wonderful that they never come back to tell you.**

Bombs Are Falling - I put these two people together for an exercise. The Worksheets they had written out were judgments on the enemy soldiers in World War II, from opposite sides. Can you find a stress-free reason to keep the story that you needed your mother, you needed your father, you needed a house, you needed food? So I can feel like a victim. That's very stressful. And stress is the only effect of this old, old story, which isn't even true. It's only our story that keeps us from knowing that **we always have everything we need**. Can you turn your statement around? I don't like my thinking about war because it has brought me a lot of fear and terror. Turn it around. My inner conflicts should be resolved in a peaceful way. My thinking destroys a lot of my human life and wastes huge amounts of my own material resources. Reality rules, whether we're aware of it or not. The story is how you keep yourself from experiencing peace right now. This story is your gift. When you can experience it without fear, then your Work is done. If only in your thinking. The bombs aren't coming

from out there; they can only come from inside you. **I look forward to the worst that can happen, only because it shows me what I haven't yet met with understanding.** I know the power of truth.

Mom Didn't Stop the Incest - Through the four questions and the turnarounds, they come to see what no one but they can realize for themselves: that **their present pain is self-inflicted.** **And** as they watch this realization unfold, **they begin to set themselves free.**

Yes. She had the courage to stand up and say, "This abuse is going on." And my mother just sat there, while my sister was being beaten. But my prayer—if I had one—would be: "God, spare me from seeking love, approval, or appreciation. Amen." In your innocence, how could you have known another way? If you had known another way, wouldn't you have gone for it? So where's the guilt in that? **We're all looking for love, in our confusion, until we find our way back to the realization that love is what we already are.** That's all. We're looking for what we already have. Little eight-year-olds, little forty-and fifty-and eighty-year-olds. We're guilty of seeking love, that's all. Always looking for what we already have. It's a very painful search. He abused me—turn it around. I abused me? The nine-year old you lived that for your education now, today. There is no greater teacher for you than she is. She's the one who has lived through what you need to know now. We're just getting a taste of this beautiful little girl who would live that way for the sake of your freedom today. After it happened... I could basically get anything I wanted from him. Of the two positions, which role would be the more painful for you, his role or yours? A man who would penetrate a little eight-or nine-year-old, or the eight-or nine-year-old? Which would be the more painful position for you to live? If you had to choose one, I would think his. I am angry at my mother because she allowed me to be abused by my stepfather and never did anything to stop it even though she knew it was going on. Turn it around. I am angry at myself because I allowed me to be abused by my stepfather and never did anything to stop it. You know that song "Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places"? How did it feel to give hell to this mother you love so much? I hated myself for it. After you've been doing inquiry for a while, if you have the thought "She doesn't love me," you just get the immediate turnaround with a smile: "Oh, I'm not loving myself in this moment." "She doesn't care about me": "Oh, I'm not caring about myself in the moment I think that thought." Feel it! I want me to admit I was wrong and to apologize to me. I should love myself and know that I love me. Wow! **I understand now. It has nothing to do with her! Nothing! It's all me! It's all me!**

I'm Angry at Sam for Dying - Many of us aren't ready to see things another way yet, and that's as it should be. I feel tired and sad, and I feel separate. That's how it feels to argue with what is. It's very stressful. You should stick around and mentally stay out of his business. Sam should not stick around. He's gone in the way that you knew him. Reality rules. It doesn't wait for our vote, our permission, or our opinion —have you noticed? And because I'm no longer insane, I don't argue with it. Arguing with it feels unkind inside me. **Just to notice what is, is love.** If I let him go, I'd have what I wanted. Thinking I need him now keeps me from having what I've been wanting ever since he died. Turn it around, I need myself back. And another

turnaround? I don't need Sam back. I need to know that I'm totally fine and at peace, with or without Sam's body here. **Whatever happens, that's what's needed. There is no mistake in nature.** Look how painful it is to have a story that won't embrace such beauty, such perfection. **Through self-inquiry, we see that only love remains. Without an uninvestigated story, there's only the perfection of life appearing as itself.** We love our old-time religion, even though it doesn't work. We devote ourselves to it day in and day out, in every culture of the world. So who would you be without the story? I'd love being where I am, rather than living in the past.

Terrorism in New York City - After 9/11/2001 people like Emily were frightening themselves with their uninvestigated thoughts, and after they found the terrorist inside them, they could return to their families, to their normal lives, in peace. **A teacher of fear can't bring peace on earth.** We have been trying to do it that way for thousands of years. The person who turns inner violence around, the person who finds peace inside and lives it, is the one who teaches what true peace is. We are waiting for just one teacher. You're the one.

Does this thought bring stress or peace into your life? Definitely stress. The only terrorist on the subway in that moment is you terrifying yourself with your thoughts. I find that so often self-realization leaves us only with laughter. Where you are right now might be the safest place in the world. We just don't know. There's nothing you can do. That's humility. For me, that's a sweet thing. "I need a contingency plan"—turn it around. I don't need a contingency plan. Feel it. Can you see how that could be just as true? How it could be even truer? And then what happens when you hate? I'm stuck. I can't get past it, and it's consuming. And you have to find a way of defending that position. You have to prove that you're right about your hatred. That it's valid and worthwhile. That's what it's like when we're attached to a concept. And that concept is "You are evil, and I'll die to take you out." It's for the good of the world. I am evil, ignorant, successful, and powerful? My thoughts are like locusts. I want me to stop my terrorizing thoughts. So reality and the story never match; reality's always kinder.

- Questions and Answers

I'm glad when they tell me that these answers are helpful, but I know that the truly helpful answers are the ones they find by themselves.

Q: *I feel overwhelmed by the number of judgments I have. How could I ever possibly have time to investigate all my beliefs?* A: Don't worry about undoing all of them. Just investigate the belief that's causing you stress now. There is never more than one. Undo that one. I was the vessel that they could appear in and finally be met with unconditional love. **I treated them as what they were: visiting friends.**

Q: *What does it mean if I keep needing to do The Work on the same thing over and over again?* A: It doesn't matter how often you need to do it. **You're either attaching to the nightmare or investigating it.** There's no other choice. The issue may come back a dozen times, a hundred times.

Q: *I've done The Work many times on the same judgment, and I don't think it's working.* A: "You've done The Work many times"—is that true? Could it be that if the answer you think

you're looking for doesn't appear, you simply block anything else? Are you frightened of the answer that might be underneath what you think you know? Is it possible that there's another answer within you that could be as true or truer? **Do you really want to know the truth?**

Q: There are thoughts that I feel I shouldn't be thinking—nasty, perverted, and even violent thoughts. Can The Work help me to stop having these thoughts? A: Now turn it around—you should think them! Doesn't that feel a bit lighter, a bit more honest? Mind wants its freedom, not a strait-jacket. When the thoughts come, they aren't meeting an enemy who is opposing them. I can't meet you as an enemy and not feel separate, from you and from myself. So how could I meet a thought within me as an enemy and not feel separate? **When I learned to meet my thinking as a friend, I noticed that I could meet every human as a friend.** What could you say that hasn't already appeared within me as a thought? The end of the war with myself and my thinking is the end of the war with you. It's so simple.

Q: My answer to "Can I absolutely know that it's true?" is always "No." Is there anything we can know for certain? A: No. Experience is just perception. **From the moment we attach to a thought, it becomes our religion**, and we keep attempting to prove that it's valid. The harder we try to prove what we can't know is true, the more we experience depression and disappointment. How do you see yourself? That's the important question. "Don't be spiritual—be honest instead." Love is action, and in my experience, reality is always kind. God, as I use that word, is another name for what is. **I always know God's intention: It's exactly what is in every moment.** I don't have to question it anymore. If you keep doing The Work, you will see more and more clearly what you are without a future or a past. All I know is that if it hurts, investigate. For me, the experience is everything, and that's what inquiry reveals. I discover my preferences by noticing what it is that I'm doing. Whatever I'm doing: That's my preference. Investigate all the beliefs that cause you suffering. If the dream is a happy one, who would want to wake up? And if your dreams aren't happy, welcome to The Work. There is only one problem, ever; your uninvestigated story in the moment.

- The Work in Your Life

Inquiry naturally gives rise to action that is clear, kind, and fearless. The Work is about noticing our thoughts, not about changing them. When you work with the thinking, the doing naturally follows. **When you think that people should be kind to you, the reverse is true:** You should be kind to them and to yourself. Your judgments about others become your prescription for how to live. When you turn them around, you see what will bring you happiness. Rather than being other-realized, you can be self-realized. **Instead of looking to us for your fulfillment, you can find it in yourself.** There is no peace in the world until you find peace within yourself in this moment. Live these turnarounds, if you want to be free. Those who stay in The Work for a while discover that inquiry is not serious and that investigating a painful thought just turns it into laughter. **I love that I'm free to walk in the world without fear, sadness, or anger,** ready to meet anything or anyone, in any place, at any time, with arms and heart wide open. Life will show me what I haven't undone yet. I look forward to it.