

Stillness

A guide to finding your inner peace (a summary by Pat Evert)

• Introduction

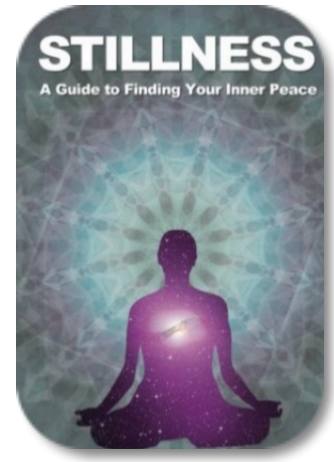
We do not have to wait until we die, until we find our significant other, until we have enough money, or until we have our desired lifestyle, to experience peace. We can experience peace right here and now; all we have to do is realize who we are at our deepest level. We are divine expressions of the whole of existence—the entire universe is expressing itself through our being.

Emptying Your Mind - Let go of the thoughts that take away your joy, and learn to see reality from a new perspective.

Cultural Conditioning - Our worldviews, beliefs, and states of mind are a reflection of our experiences and our cultural conditioning. Our minds like to label things, give them names, and organize them. Though we fail to realize that in doing this, we separate things, when in reality nothing is separate.

Realizing the Connection Between Everything - The universe is too vast and complex to be defined by words, and the harder we try to describe it, the more we separate ourselves from our experience. Life is something that has to be lived, not explained. The majority of our thoughts only take us away from experiencing the present moment. They cannot understand the moment as it exists, they can only create mental images of the moment, and give us a false perception of what this moment is. To experience things as they exist, we have to let go of our thoughts and our need to define everything, and understand that life cannot be defined, only lived. For example, when we give a name to a tree, we separate the tree from everything that the tree is a part of. We separate the tree from the soil, the soil from the rock, the rock from the earth, etc. failing to acknowledge that all of these things exist together. Nothing in nature exists as a separate individual, apart from its environment. Our definitions of life always fall short of the life that we are experiencing. We are not separate from the universe; we are the universe. Our feeling of separation comes from a lack of understanding our true nature. We have identified ourselves with the ego—a mental image created by the mind. The truth of our being is so vast and incomprehensible that it cannot be conceived by thought or defined by language, it can only be experienced as it exists in this moment.

Understanding Our True Nature - You are the awareness that is perceiving these words and turning them into thoughts—the awareness that creates the world with every



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act of observation. Without this awareness, there would be no reality, no perception, no thoughts, and no world. This awareness is the real you that is unchanging, formless, and eternal. As consciousness is not an object, it is a subjective experience; it is the essence of who we are. Consciousness is not something brought about by physical matter, contrary to what most people believe. Consciousness is what creates physical matter. There can be no matter without consciousness. Physical matter is nothing but an illusion that operates in relation to our sensory perception. We are creating this world together. The source of consciousness within you is the very same source of consciousness that exists within me.

When we lose touch with the present moment, and our awareness is lost in thoughts of tomorrow or memories of yesterday, we begin to lose touch with ourselves. The longer we are lost in thought, the less we feel secure in who we are. In order to return to ourselves, we have to return our awareness back to the present moment. Our failure to let go of the past and live in the present is the only reason that we ever feel sad, miserable, or depressed. Our attachment to our past experiences makes us feel as if we are victims of the world, that we don't belong. The present moment is something that we can never escape, and in its attempt to escape it, the mind has created a false sense of identity—one that it can know, understand and feel safe with. This illusory identity is known as "the ego." The ego is not who we are, it is who we think we are. When we think of our name, our image, our history, and our life experiences as who we are, we become associated with an idea of ourselves, a mental image that is not at all who we really are at our core.

The Ego - The ego is our self-image; it is not our true self. It is an illusion created by the mind— the idea of an "I" that feels and exists separately from the rest of the Universe. Our true nature is awareness. It is being. It is not something that we can make up, it is not something that changes according to our different moods and opinions. It just is. The ego is neither good nor bad. It is just an association that the mind has made between consciousness and the body. It is an illusion, meaning it only has as much power as we give to it. Identification with the ego makes us bound to the ego and produces our feelings of fear and insecurity. **The ego's biggest fear is the present moment.** This is why so many people fear being alone. They can't stand the thought of being in the present moment without something or someone to help them escape it. The ego fears its own demise, it will turn away from any questions that may reveal the truth about its illusory existence.

When we can see that an individual is a product of the collective, we develop compassion for them. When someone commits a crime, it is a reflection of the environment they were raised in. We are all responsible for the society that we have produced. It is this universal consciousness which creates all things, and animates itself through all things in order to experience and know itself better. Our consciousness is the same omnipresent substance that exists in and as all things, yet all things exist under different conditions and therefore have a different conscious experience based on their unique perspective. Each time an individual awakens to their true nature,

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consciousness is coming to a greater understanding of itself. Our purpose here is to experience, live, create, and grow together, all so we can come to a better understanding of who we are—the one universal consciousness. Of course this is only an attempt to put this experience into words.

A New Perspective On Religion - Religion is a very touchy subject for most people. This sense of discomfort has a root cause; it is born out of uncertainty. We only fear things because we don't understand them, because we try to escape them. So to no longer live in fear, we must face our fears.

“Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature. And that is because, in the last analysis, we ourselves are a part of the mystery that we are trying to solve.” ~ Max Planck, Theoretical Physicist.

To have an open mind, we have to be able to look at reality, without clinging to any thoughts or beliefs about what we think reality is. **“God” can be defined as “the one universal consciousness of all that exists.”** We can feel the presence of this cosmic energy within us, but only when the mind is still. In other words, **the mind cannot know God.** Only this awareness can know God, and can know itself as God. Though this presence of God can only be felt when the mind is silent, when we are in a state of total stillness. Only then can we connect to the source of our being, and when we are connected to our source, we are at peace. To connect with this feeling yourself, you have to be willing to leave behind the mind and its need to define everything with logic, reason, and thought. You have to surrender your “self” and experience the true nature of God that exists within you, darkness within darkness. In other words, to truly understand, we have to accept that we simply cannot understand. God is something that exists within us, yet it is still beyond the boundary of sensory perceptions and feelings. **It is not something that we can reach; it is something we already are**—the very essence of life itself. There is no correct view of the Universe, and no way we could know the totality of all that exists with our limited perspectives of life. The true reality of Nature, or shall we say “God,” is unknowable, unnamable, and eternal. All we are is the result of what we have thought. God is not confined to a form. God is formless—it is the essence of life itself flowing through us, and existing as us. If we are to ever have lasting peace in our lives, we have to let go of the ego's need for control and the mind's desire to know everything, and surrender to “God” or the natural flow of the Universe. We have to stop trying to figure out the world and simply start experiencing the world. To have faith in something requires letting go of our imagined control and trusting the course that Nature will take.

“The attitude of faith is to let go, and become open to truth, whatever it might turn out to be.” ~ Alan Watts.

Your suffering is not really yours, it belongs to your ego, and you are not your ego. We have to learn to stop identifying with these things that are not us. We are not our body; we merely exist within a body. We can use this body to experience the world and

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achieve things in the world, but we are not the body. We have to be willing to give up our accumulated knowledge of what we think the world is, and experience the present moment, without trying to understand it, explain it, judge it, criticize it, compare it to what we know, or see it as something happening apart from ourselves. God is the ever present reality that exists beyond the limited knowledge of our thinking mind. **The only way we can know God is by leaving behind all of our knowledge of what we think God is.**

Life in the Moment, Eternal Life - Our self-consciousness and anxiety are produced by our addiction to thought, and our refusal to silence our mind and bring our awareness back into this moment. Only when we are absorbed in our experience do we feel free to just be. We begin to see ourselves as a part of all that exists, realizing and understanding the importance of our unique existence. By surrendering our “self” to Nature, we are giving up our idea of existing apart from Nature and we begin existing as Nature in each moment. This is the meaning of eternal life. Forgive the past, accept the past, and let go of your emotional hold on the past. Leaving behind all of our knowledge of what life is, letting go of our beliefs, and surrendering ourselves and our attention to the present moment, without trying to define it, compare it, judge it, criticize it, or understand it.

The Spirit of Love, Fear and Love - Love is our natural state of being. It is the sensation we feel when we realize our connection with Nature—when we see ourselves in another person, and understand that that person is us.

“To love is to recognize yourself in another.” ~ Eckhart Tolle.

Feel deeply your inseparable nature with all of existence, and be grateful for the experience that it provides you.

“All things share the same breath –the beast, the tree, the man –the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports.” ~ Chief Seattle.

It is because of our failure to see our oneness with existence that the ego is produced. It is born out of fear, which is an illusion created by a lack of understanding. The idea of a separate “I” is an illusion produced by fear, and it is the only reason we ever feel any separation from our loving connection to all things. Love is energy; it is powerful, accepting, and immense. **Learn to love all beings, especially those that hurt you or cause you pain, as they are the ones that need love the most.** Love is a connection you have to feel with your heart, not something you can think with your brain. We have become so addicted to thought that we have identified ourselves with our thoughts and our fear of the unknown, and in doing so we have lost the connection to our true selves and no longer feel the loving sensation that this feeling provides.

Resistance - Clinging to the past will always make us feel pain, because resistance to accepting things as they are now is what creates our pain. When we face the fact that

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we are our experience and we feel the pain and fear and go into it, it usually begins to cease, or at least becomes much more tolerable. But so long as “I” is resisting the moment, pain and suffering will always be produced.

I’m The Cause of Suffering, The Pleasure-Pain Principle - Our suffering is produced by our resistance to Life. Everything in the Universe is constantly changing. When we resist this change—when we cling to the things that are changing or expect them to change differently— we suffer. We “pursue” happiness because we think it comes from outside of ourselves. If we do not give ourselves time to feel our emotions, they will be repressed and they will begin to control our experience subconsciously. We have to accept them, feel them, and release them so that we can be free of them. Clinging to certain forms, whether they be physical or mental, will always lead to suffering, and the only way to be free of this suffering is to accept the new reality, silence our thoughts, and bring our awareness back into the experience of the present moment. If you suffer from anxiety, tension, unease, stress, or worry it is because you are too focused on the future. If you suffer from guilt, regret, grievance, sadness, depression, hatred, or bitterness, it is because you are too attached to the past. When your attention is fully focused on being aware in the present moment, you experience peace. We can think about our loss, our memories of the past, our worries about the future, and they will not cause us much suffering. But the longer we dwell on these thoughts, the heavier they get, and the more stressed, tensed, and weak we feel. You begin to realize that there is absolutely “nothing” preventing you from being at peace except for your own negative thoughts and attachments.

“You need nothing to be happy, but you need something to be sad.” ~ Mooji.

Desire is a form of resistance that is perhaps the most destructive. They become destructive when the idea of attaining them takes us away from being content with our life in the present moment. We think that we won’t be happy until we have the thing that we desire, failing to see that it is this desire that is making us unhappy. Happiness exists within us, and will only come to us when we become grateful for what we have, and content with the life we live. This is how we heal all emotional wounds—by feeling into them, not by trying to escape them with pleasure. If you continually avoid feeling your emotions, you will never be healed. Seeking for fulfillment from pleasure always produces pain; the two are inseparable.

Stillness, Turning Your Attention Inward - Stillness is being. It is the state of awareness that exists when the mind is completely still—when there are no thoughts to disturb the peaceful space that exists within us. To allow ourselves to experience the present moment, we must realize that it cannot be understood by logic or thought. We must be willing to leave behind the mind’s need for security and understanding, and take a leap into the unknown. The thinking mind always resists the present moment because it cannot function in the present moment; it can only dwell on the past or anticipate the future. Living in the present moment silences the thinking mind; the two cannot coexist.

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The reason we quiet our thoughts is so that we can allow our true nature to present itself— which can only happen when the thinking mind is still. The practice is to be free of thought so that your thoughts no longer control you. Then you can choose which thoughts you want to think and act on, rather than being driven by the mind and its impulses. We can only be in touch with this source in a state of total stillness. **To take our accumulated knowledge as actual fact is absurd; everything we know is only a matter of perspective.** This is your experience, and you should never believe anything to be absolutely true. To keep an open mind at all times; more importantly, to discover things for yourself and determine the truth from your own point of view.

What any desire essentially aims at is a state of non-desire. We seek to reach fulfillment, to no longer demand anything, to be completely satisfied and content. What we fail to understand is that contentment is a state of being, and any state of being already exists within us and does not require anything outside of ourselves to attain.

When people do not understand their true being, their minds begin to view their environment as hostile. They become victims of the world rather than peaceful inhabitants. We must be willing to give up the idea of a separate “I” or “me” and all of our self-pity and personal problems. We must return our awareness to the present moment. “Do you want to know what my secret is? I don’t mind what happens.”

Meaning that he does not resist what happens, and he is not attached to any outcome or expectation. He allows whatever happens to happen, without resistance. Simply because he has realized the truth that he has no control over anything in the Universe except for himself and his own inner state of being. It is best to make sure that you are fully at peace and at ease, before you try to help anyone else be at peace or at ease.

Mindfulness - The key to inner peace is to first realize that you have very little control over what happens “out there” and to shift your focus onto controlling what is happening “in here” – your thoughts, perceptions, and emotions. No circumstances can cause you to suffer unless you allow them to. It is your reaction to circumstances that produces your suffering. The goal of meditation is simply to quiet your mind and bring your awareness fully into the present moment. The goal of meditation is not to suppress our thoughts or force them to stop. The goal is also not to escape or transcend reality like many people attempt to do. Rather, the goal is to become more aware of reality, to be one with reality, and realize that we are reality. In this silence change takes place of its own accord, the problem is resolved and duality ends. Meditation allows us to create a gap between ourselves and our thoughts. We will clearly be able to witness our thoughts and emotions without being controlled by them. In meditation, we are not trying to obtain anything, or achieve some goal. We are simply witnessing our ego, our thoughts, mental images, and conditioned ways of thinking, so that we may become aware of them, and become capable of transforming them. Though enlightenment is not a state of trance, but rather a state of consciousness in which you can carry on your daily affairs with full attention and awareness. Oddly enough, the greatest realization that most have on this path comes when they stop seeking outside of themselves for peace and realize that what they were seeking was within them all along. Life’s greatest treasure is us. All we have to do is realize this, and we are immediately overcome with joy. The very act of being is the most profound and satisfying thing there is. People are living in their minds and not in this moment. We can eliminate our views of separation,

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realize our oneness, and live as this unique expression of life right here and now, though we must reprogram our minds in order to be in touch with this reality. The practice we participate in to reprogram our minds, to realize our true nature, and relieve ourselves of this illusory perception of life, is the practice of meditation. We cannot know this experience; we can only live it, appreciate it and be it. As soon as you give up trying to control, explain, or figure out life, it all the sudden becomes perfectly understood. **The goal of meditation is to free ourselves from the accumulated knowledge of the mind, so that we may experience each moment as new**, rather than interpreting the new as something that is already known. It is to free ourselves from our habitual thoughts, and become more aware of our true nature and our experience.

“The perfect man employs his mind as a mirror. It grasps nothing, it refuses nothing. It receives but does not keep.” ~ Chuang-Tzu

Meditation

“Remember, you don’t meditate to get anything, but to get rid of things. We do it, not with desire, but with letting go. If you want anything, you won’t find it. But when your heart is ready, peace will come looking for you.” ~ Arjahn Chah

- Get comfortable and not distracted by your body position • Breath in and out, deep and relaxed
- Center your gaze behind the middle of your brow
- Avoid straining or becoming tense in any way
- Let it breathe you, breathe from the belly, not the chest
- Attention is brought back into the moment
- Observe the thoughts that occur in your mind
- Keep the energy of your awareness focused behind the brow • Observe whether the thoughts are really your thinking
- Do not mentally label each sensation - name, judge or categorize
- Observe the nature of your mind
- Do not be attached to any of them
- Practice sitting in this state of silent awareness for 15 minutes a day

In meditation we allow whatever arises; we do not resist anything, we simply sit and observe. We are not discriminating this sound from that sound, this thought from that thought, or this sensation from that sensation. We are allowing all things to be, seeing everything as an integral part of this vast realm of experience. We are simply being. The ego works day and night to maintain our mental illusions, always struggling to keep the illusions alive and in order. All we have to do to see the truth is stop creating our mental illusions. This is done by stopping, and observing. We stop creating the mental images, and we observe the mental images that appear out of habit. Awareness itself is the truth. By realizing our true nature, the attachment to the ego ceases. We can then choose the thoughts we think, or whether we can let go of our thoughts and just let things be as they are. Free yourself of your mind's control, resulting in depression and anxiety. Then realize the peace and freedom that comes from being our natural selves in each moment of our lives. The goal is to be able to witness the nature of our

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thoughts, without allowing our thoughts to take us away from our state of calm breathing, and silent awareness. Sometimes a thought will enter your mind and take your attention away from the present moment. When you realize you were distracted by a thought, simply return your awareness to the center of calm, natural breathing and stillness. Then the larger this gap becomes between you and your thoughts, and the less power your thoughts will have over you, and the less frequent they will be. We don't judge the thoughts, we don't attach any emotion or identification to them. We just watch them, and realize that we are not them.

Our knowledge of nature is not real knowledge; it is superficial knowledge. It has not come from experience, experiencing life without thinking about it. We die to the past each moment so that we may live freely and peacefully in the present. **Enjoy life, but don't take it seriously.** Have fun with this experience. Life is not some operation to be taken seriously. Life is a celebration, a dance; it is playful, joyous, and fun. Your mind will finally be free, and you will be able to see deeply that all things coexist together—all things are one.

“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right-doing, there is a field. I'll meet you there. When the soul lies down in that grass, the world is too full to talk about. Ideas, language, even the phrase “each other” doesn't make any sense.” ~ Rumi

A sharp mind without expansion causes tension, anger and frustration. An expanded consciousness without sharpness can lead to lack of action and lack of progress. The balance of a sharp mind and an expanded consciousness brings perfection.

“I'm simply saying that there is a way to be sane. I'm saying that you can get rid of all this insanity created by the past in you. Just by being a simple witness of your thought processes. It is simply sitting silently, witnessing the thoughts, passing before you. Just witnessing, not interfering not even judging, because the moment you judge you have lost the pure witness. The moment you say “this is good, this is bad,” you have already jumped onto the thought process. It takes a little time to create a gap between the witness and the mind. Once the gap is there, you are in for a great surprise, that you are not the mind, that you are the witness, a watcher. And this process of watching is the very alchemy of real religion. Because as you become more and more deeply rooted in witnessing, thoughts start disappearing. You are, but the mind is utterly empty. That's the moment of enlightenment. That is the moment that you become for the first time an unconditioned, sane, really free human being.” ~ Osho

Healing Habit Energies Cellular Memories - Our conditioned mind still has many habitual behaviors that are unwholesome. These often unconscious habits are what Buddhists call our “habit energies”—the energies that push us to do what we do not want to do and say what we do not want to say. We have been identified with the ego for most of our lives, and it still controls a major part of how we think and act—that is, until we are capable of making our experience conscious, rather than acting out unconsciously. This information helps us understand that there may be energies stored

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within our cellular memories that carry with them encoded behaviors that we unconsciously act out. **If we can bring these energies into our awareness, they will no longer be able to unconsciously govern our lives.** Just as avoiding pain results in more pain, and trying to escape fear creates more fear, refusing to be conscious of our negative habits or “dark-side energies” will only allow them to unconsciously govern our lives and effect those around us. In order to heal these unwholesome habit energies, we have to look into their origins, and become aware of their existence, so that we can embrace them, and then transform them.

Shining the Light of Awareness On Our Inner Darkness - We will not heal our darkness by judging it, hating it, or being ashamed of it. We heal it by bringing it into the light—into our love, our awareness. Make peace with your past so you can be at peace in the present. Forgive yourself for ever harming anyone, whether you did so knowingly or unknowingly. Forgive others for ever harming you, whether they did so knowingly or unknowingly. Get out of your head and bring your attention into this moment. Appreciate life, experience life, have fun with life, and be life. Our inner child is our true self, the awareness that does not judge, criticize, oppose or condemn; it just lives, and experiences, calmly and freely. We can reconnect with our inner child and live as joyously as we did as children. **The key to participating in this practice effectively is awareness—being completely present and accepting the emotions that arise.** It may take a few attempts until you are able to stop resisting the emotions, but with time and awareness your emotional wounds will heal. We will no longer be bound by our past or ruled by the limits we have previously set for ourselves.

Inner Peace

“Inner peace begins the moment you choose not to allow another person or event to control your emotions.” ~ Pema Chodron

A thought is only as powerful as you allow it to be. **The moment you allow yourself to agree with a thought, that thought becomes your reality.** If you do not agree with it, it has no power over you. People’s opinions, judgments, or unkind words will only cause you pain if you are dependent on their approval for your own sense of self-worth. Do not get upset with people or situations. Both are powerless without your reaction. Allow things to happen naturally, in whatever way they like. The only thing we truly need to remain focused on is our own inner state of being. **Stop relying on other’s opinions for validation.** As long as we demand to be approved by others, we will forever be victims to their judgment. Acknowledge when your thoughts are judgmental, spiteful, fearful, or disharmonic in any way and smile to those thoughts. Thank them for giving you the opportunity to heal yourself. You have to feel this space within you, how it is easily disrupted by the energies around you, and how you can control your emotional state by staying centered in your awareness and remembering to return your attention to your breath. Bring your awareness back into this moment. Be the gardener of your mind. Choose to plant seeds of love, peace, and joy. Dig up the weeds that have been planted in the past. Don’t let your environment influence you into planting seeds that you don’t want to grow in your mind’s garden. If we are aware of the stillness within us,

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we can observe how our thoughts and emotions arise from this stillness, and return to this stillness. When life seems stressful, and your environment seems chaotic, pause to take a few deep breaths, turn your attention inward, and connect to the source of stillness within your being. If you are capable of accomplishing this, you will not be overwhelmed by any circumstances, and you will be able to address any situation with calmness, strength, and ease.

“Within yourself is a stillness, a sanctuary to which you can return at any time and be yourself.” ~ Herman Hess

In many indigenous cultures throughout the world, eating food is known as a spiritual practice— as it should be, since everything you put into your body builds your cells, mends your bones, influences your mood, and literally becomes you. Diet, physical posture, mental and emotional diet are important as well. The things that we allow to enter our minds—the videos we watch, the conversations we have, the people we interact with, the thoughts that we think—have a huge influence over our mental health. We can strengthen our connection with ourselves by strengthening our connection with nature. All living things exist in tune with nature—it seems that humans are the only species that doesn’t, as well as being the only species capable of producing suffering on a mass scale.

Another thing that most animals appear to have in common is their seemingly well-understood acceptance of death. Some people are so afraid of death that they allow their fears to prevent them from fully experiencing life. Death is nothing to fear, and neither is life. Yet, so many people live their lives both afraid of experience and afraid of death. Everything in the physical universe is subject to the Law of Impermanence. Death is inevitable. It is not something our fears can escape; it is something that our hearts must embrace. Nothing ever really dies, it just changes form. Without death, there would be no birth, and the Universe would not be able to maintain such a delicate balance. Energy is neither created, nor destroyed; and spiritually our consciousness has always and will always exist. The only fear we have is of the ego, of the individual “I” coming to an end, and it is because we have identified ourselves as the ego, rather than as the one universal consciousness, which is our true self. Life is happening so fast that our only way to live peacefully is to flow with it, dwell deeply in each moment, and appreciate it. Don’t ruin your experience with fears or anticipations of tomorrow, or with regrets or clinging to memories of yesterday. **If you want to really be at peace, you have to stop worrying about what others think of you, and focus more on how you feel about yourself.** Just be you! If people don’t accept you, that’s fine! They don’t have to. Do not be so focused on the outside world, do not worry what others are doing or what others think of you. Don’t compare yourself to others. Everything that is born, must die—must return to nothingness, and from nothingness all things arise. Only humans move about frantically in confusion, and the separation caused by this pace of life is apparent in the destruction that it produces. I encourage you to ask yourself, “What is the rush?” Relax and enjoy each moment as it occurs.

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Compassion - We are, each of us, capable of relieving the suffering of another without joining in or being overwhelmed by that suffering. True compassion is when you are able to see another's suffering as your own—when you are able to see yourself in the eyes of another being. The consciousness that exists in me is the same consciousness that exists in you. Your pain is my pain. If you suffer, I suffer. The same consciousness that exists in us, exists in all things—every animal, plant, cell, and mineral. Right now the world is full of suffering, a lot more than we should have ever allowed. Though it has reached a drastic point, it is still capable of being healed. We still have the strength and the compassion to make a difference. Only in modern western civilization is it acceptable to slaughter billions of animals for the sake of appetite. The standard American diet includes meat with every meal, and as the main course to each meal.

“Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.” ~ Chief Seattle

The biggest threat to the world is our own behavior. Humans are the biggest cause of suffering worldwide. We have the choice to either prevent planetary suffering, or contribute to it. The only hope we have of bringing peace to the outer world is by bringing peace to our inner worlds, and inspiring others to do so as well. We have two options, self-destruction or world unification—fear or love; we must decide. Our existence is not purely material. We are the awareness within, eternally present, unbounded by the laws of the physical world.