

Words to Run By

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Table of Contents

<i>Your Own Backyard</i>	<i>Non-self Grasping</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Boycott Boycott Boycott</i>	<i>Follow Your True Nature</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Love and Compassion</i>	<i>Us Them</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Non-Attachment</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Meditate</i>	<i>Alone</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Fear</i>	<i>Read</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Express Yourself</i>	<i>Listen</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Observe Nature</i>	<i>Buddha Nature</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Times Running Out</i>	<i>The Process</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Initiate</i>	<i>Two Worlds</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Laugh at the World</i>	<i>Suffering</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Accept those Around You</i>	<i>Moderation</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Find Your Purpose</i>	<i>Believe in the Mystical Side</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Rule Number One</i>	<i>The Ripple that Takes Root</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Feel your Roots</i>	<i>Do Windows</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>The Power of Suggestion</i>	<i>Inertia</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Locking Yourself Up</i>	<i>Dichotomy Dichotomy</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Take Risks</i>	<i>Natural Cycles</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>That Entertainment ?</i>	<i>Thank God It's Monday</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Don't Get Too Comy</i>	<i>Ask Questions</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Emotions</i>	<i>View the World from New Eyes</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Have Some Fun</i>	<i>Internal vs External Rules</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Why Compare ?</i>	<i>Sensitivity</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Short Term vs Long Term</i>	<i>It's not Rocket Science</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>You can't Do it by Yourself</i>	<i>Diversity</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>The Power of the Subconscious</i>	<i>The Gift, the Choice</i>	<i>26</i>

Your Own Back Yard

Everything you need to live a full life is already inside you, waiting to be realized and awakened. The knowledge, strength and infinite wisdom of nature resides in all life. You need to destroy the obstacles that stand in the way of liberating this force that is inside us all. Don't delude yourself by thinking that your physical surroundings are inhibiting you from attaining your full potential.

The grass is said to be greener on the other side, but upon arrival we find that we have carried our psychological baggage with us. Some run from place to place seeking that which is already inside them.

Find out who you are before you try to be someone else. Take a close look at what's outside your door before you abandon your home for a seemingly better place.

Non-self Grasping

Give up the quest for your own happiness, suffering comes to those who strive too hard to find happiness. Wish others to be happy, for happiness comes to those who lose their own selfish interests.

Observe your mind and the power of ego as it holds the reins to your world view. If you can separate yourself from the somewhat illusory reality the mind creates you can go below the surface of the melodrama of day to day existence. Quite often we are trapped into following patterns of behavior that we repeat without ever knowing the reason why. When the grid is broken and strong attachment to self interest is allowed to dissolve we find that a different frame of mind takes place. The majority of our suffering comes from self inflicted conflict, the result of not getting the things we have tricked ourselves into thinking we need to be happy.

Boycott Boycott Boycott

Blow up your TV set, don't go to movies that advocate violence, use your car once or twice a week, don't buy anything you don't need, don't buy anything that perpetuates the illusion created by the Hollywood Street mentality. How you smell, what you wear, the car you drive, does NOT determine who you really are. Hollywood and big business have created an instrument that feeds off the primordial instincts genetically programmed into man. Once used for survival of the species, now manipulated into a costly form of entertainment.

The power of suggestion from our environment is very strong, if we saturate ourselves with violence we become violent. Hollywood will not take responsibility for its action, and claims its only giving the public what they want, but so is the pusher. Boycott TV and movies for a couple months then go back and watch a movie and react naturally to the violence like a vegetarian would to a hamburger - with disgust and nausea. Boycott NOW.

EXCEPT

Follow Your True Nature

To find out who you really are is a task that takes an entire life time to accomplish. To find this out, we must go very deeply inside ourselves. We must be like scientists, using the information gathered from life to unravel the mystery of our existence. It takes a tremendous amount of energy and commitment to continue the search, and if you give up someone else will decide for you. The need to conform often leads us off the trail to finding ourselves. We are constantly bombarded by outside influences from society. Our friends, family and business associates wish for us to fit into the image they have created of us.

That's why it is so difficult to become the person you have discovered. To have the courage to be yourself is of great importance. All the knowledge of self discovery is wasted if it cannot be implemented. Have the energy to find yourself and the strength to be yourself.

Love and Compassion

The word love is often used without any regard to its true meaning because love can be defined so many ways. Look very seriously at what love is and try to cultivate it in your life. Love and compassion go hand and hand, the manifestation of nature's strongest and highest energy. Love is unconditional, if you love only when love is returned, than that is not love at all, but nothing more than a business agreement in disguise.

Love is the extension of one's self to nurture another's growth (or your own). we tend to pick and choose the object of our affection based upon cultural conditioning and self gratification. True love extends to all life and creation, as Jesus said we must learn to love our enemies. This is the hardest, most self-effacing task we will ever face as humans.

Contrary to popular belief - love is not something you fall into, it takes hard work to develop true love. Love exists in your head and your heart, find out what love is and cultivate it in your life.

Us | Them

TOLERANCE

Simple concepts are often met with great resistance, one such idea is that we are all "us". Men (and woman) are all made of the same things fundamentally, and at a certain level all life is connected. This may be hard to except, especially if we are only looking at the surface. Boundaries created by race, religion, and nationalism have created conflict and violence for humanity since the dawn of time. The us against them mentality can be very dangerous and if left unchecked will lead to war and destruction.

This doesn't mean we should all strive to be the same, on the contrary, we all need to know our roots and grow into our own unique true nature.

We have no valid cause to feel superior over anyone or thing because of where we live, or what religion we practice, or what we do for a living, or who we are. Life is diverse and at the same time homogeneous, feel the link.

Non-Attachment

We all become attached to things in life, and when we lose that which we cling to, it causes much misery and suffering. Much time and energy is wasted by desiring the things that we think we need in order to be happy. The fear of losing the possessions that we cherish further dissipates energy and happiness. By loosening the dependency to external things we open ourselves to the freedom and vitality of life.

We become attached not only to physical objects but concepts and ideals as well. As a ^{CAN} result we become stagnant and closed minded. Intense emotions such as fear, anger and jealousy arise from attachment. You may feel that these emotions make us human, but if you look deeply you will find that they often cause suffering and immobilize us from acting.

Non-attachment must be practiced with compassion so we don't become withdrawn from the human condition, which brings us to this paradox - true love is without attachment.

Service

Help someone for no reason or obligation and without expecting anything in return. Through out the ages man has sought an answer and purpose to the mystery of life. The secret to happiness and life is service - to help and care for each other while we are together on this planet.

Help is needed at all levels, it can be calculated or spontaneous, spoken or physical. Remove a rock from the road, give money to the homeless, volunteer your time. Quite often we only help with clearly defined motives, acting out of conditioning or to relieve guilt. Try helping without a motive, but as an act of compassion, an offering to the benefit of all sentient beings.

Don't be disappointed or expect to change the world overnight. It's more important to love the process, rather than the results of the process. Why help? Find out for yourself!

Meditate

It has been said that the fundamental nature of mind is empty - like a cloudless, blue, infinite, morning sky. From this "nothingness" all thoughts and concepts are manifested. The practice of meditation returns us to the true nature of mind.

REQUIRES SUPPORT

There are many different techniques that can be followed, but all of them accomplish the same task, a quieting of the mind. Find a quiet place to go to and sit comfortably with your back straight. Relax your body and follow your breath as it draws in and out, like the waves in the ocean. Set aside all outside thoughts, fix your attention on your heart, use the power of suggestion to relax. Feel the sensation of peace and magnetic energy as it envelops your body.

Find a place in your home and your mind where you can go to relax and meditate. Stop the world for a few moments, reside in your heart, concentrate on your breath and feel god within you.

Alone

Set some time aside each day to be alone, do something by yourself. Don't be afraid to be alone and don't worry about what people will think. Its important to step back and be by yourself for awhile.

This is a necessity for anyone who is trying to find their inner self. I'm not suggesting that we need to find a cave somewhere to hide in, but just a place to go to where we can be in solitude, preferably a natural setting, like the forest or by flowing water. If this is impractical then any place will do, if you go to lunch everyday with the same people, try going by yourself for a change.

The world takes on a different perspective when you're alone. If you're not accustomed to being alone, at first maybe you will feel self-conscious or bored, but give it a chance, you might just discover something you have been missing.

VERY
GOOD

Fear

Fear is an obstacle to realizing your highest potential and will inhibit your spiritual growth.

To reach your full potential and find fulfillment in life we need motivation and energy to carry out our plans. There is no better motivation than love, because if we really love what we are doing things will fall into place naturally. If you love your job the work will be easy and enjoyable.

To reach your full potential and find happiness we need a clear mind to properly pursue our endeavors. We have to be able to utilize our intelligence and apply it in a logical fashion.

Where there is fear there is no love.

Where there is fear there is no intelligence.

Analyze your motives, are you acting out of love - or fear ??

INSTRUCTIONS

EN?

Read

Set aside some time each day for reading. Find something to read that is not just for entertainment, but will help you along the path to self realization and spiritual growth. This is definitely one of the greatest joys in life - all the knowledge and wisdom man has found is basically at your finger tips. All you have to do is have the initiative to get started, reading for the most part is free. Go to the library or start a book exchange program with your friends, read and pass the book on.

Reading is a basic function in life, like eating, sleeping or breathing, make it a part of your life. All it takes is a few minutes a day, try substituting television with a good book.

Reading like eating should not be rushed, savor each word and understand what you are reading, don't move on to the next topic until you have comprehended the first.

Express yourself

It's important to listen to what's inside yourself and know how to communicate it to others. Communication doesn't always have to be in the form of words. Paint a picture, mold something from clay, write a song or poem. Maybe just write down a thought that has been in your mind for a while. Don't worry about whether or not it is good or bad, because these are subjective terms. Just let it flow out without judging the quality, if it comes from within you it will be of great value, not in terms of money or prestige, but value from the knowledge of self discovery.

Like many of the other activities found in these cards this is a natural human function, try to practice it daily, if only for a few moments.

Don't be afraid to find what's inside yourself, let it come out without labeling it good or bad - feel the joy that comes from creating something !

Listen



ME

Listening is an art form that needs to be practiced and cultivated in order to be effective. Listening is not the mere physical action of hearing words. True listening requires clearing the mind of all conflicting thoughts and opinions so you are free to hear. Which means the listener must not carry the past memories and biases formed by the mind from prior experiences. It has been said that we only hear what we choose to hear. Try to listen with total self abandonment by placing yourself in the other position.

Take the time and energy needed to be aware of what people are really saying, without being judgmental or reactive.

An important element of love is the ability to listen, they go hand in hand. In order to love we must first learn to listen. Observe yourself when you listen to others, are you really listening ?

Observe Nature

Our separation from nature seems almost natural if we don't think about it. Technology has given much to society, but at the same time has taken much away. Technology can be a great tool if applied correctly, but can also lead to dependency if we don't understand and try to control the direction of it's application in our lives. Modern society is advancing quite rapidly in a technical sense, but appears to be declining spiritually. Part of the reason for this is that we have lost our connection with nature.

We go from the house, to the car, to the office and never set foot outside if it's too cold or raining. We mow the lawn with power mowers and squirt insecticide on ants. This seems like the right thing to do, because everyone else is doing the same, safety in numbers, safety in conformity. Stop and take some time to see the folly of our ways.

Breathe deeply the air, feel the rain, set under a tree, brave the cold, observe an ant building his nest, learn all you can from nature - before it's too late.

Buddha Nature

What we need and we need it bad - is hope. Hope to give us a reason for living, motivation to keep on the path toward spiritual development, when the world around us seems to be falling into the depths of hate and violence.

The concept that God is within all life, every person, animal and plant, is termed Buddha Nature. Everyone has inherent goodness within them, although it may be masked by ignorance or not fully developed. This is a hard thing to believe in when you look around and see what's happening in the world today. God is in everyone, it depends on how you look, use this truth as your motivation to keep a positive attitude when dealing with people.

→ HOLY SPIRIT

It's true some people live very negatively without any respect for life, willfully harming others, destroying our planet, taking that which is not theirs, the hate doesn't seem to end. Endeavor to despise the action, not the individual performing it, seek out and nurture the God in all life.

Times Running Out

Although the universe is infinite and timeless, life exists at a certain level in time. All things that can be measured in time will some day run out of time. Time is your most valuable commodity, so use it wisely.

Most people don't like to think about death and seem to think their lives are immortal. Spend some time thinking about death from a positive perspective. How would you utilize your time if you knew you only had a month to live? You probably wouldn't waste too much time. If you can't visualize this try spending some time with hospice or someone you know who is dying, it might change your life. The point here is not to become worried or obsessed with your death, but to use it constructively.

Our time here is limited, so be aware of the value in every moment.

RUSH
RUSH
RUSH →

The Process

THE ASSUMPTION AGAIN

Be happy in what you do, absorb yourself in the process, let your actions flow without being distracted by the outcome. Let your motivation be love for what you are doing, not the desire for reward or accomplishment.

It seems all too easy to be caught up anticipating the end result of our actions as opposed to the actual process. We see this in all aspects of life - we go to work for a pay check; school for a diploma. It's true we all need to eat and have a warm place to stay, sometimes that requires doing things we don't care for. The need for security is deeply rooted inside us since birth. Take a risk and find out what you like to do, choose to do something based on the process and let the end result fall into place. If you love what you do it won't require discipline - simply because you enjoy what you are doing.

Depend on something outside you and you will lose something within. Follow someone else and you will forget how to listen to yourself.

Initiate

All the best laid plans are meaningless and wasted if they are not put into action. Sometimes it is necessary to go into action and just do what you know needs to be done.

Many different factors can act to immobilize us from taking action. Fear of the unknown, lack of energy, obsession with perfection, are the most common inhibitors. Fear will always be there if you don't face it, action will dissipate it. Energy is created through action and will increase with action. Nothing will ever be completely perfect, so make a decision to act after weighing the details, and assume responsibility for your action.

Inertia can work for you or against you, if you're not in motion you will tend to stay that way, if you are in action you will tend to keep moving. Initiate something, it's not important if it's great or small, call a friend, say hi to a stranger, ask for help, join a club or start a project, just do it.

A

Two Worlds

As you go in the opposite direction of discrimination, you find at a lower level a more fundamental way of categorizing your mind. Mind divided between the conscious, rational side and the subconscious, intuitive side.

The conscious side needs to be in control and is responsible for all ideas, words and technical creations, anything that can be thought of in the waking state. For most of us this is our total reality, we only believe what we can perceive through the five senses.

The other component of mind is operating a lower level, beneath the discriminating consciousness - where all life and creation are connected. This is where all the individual egos are integrated into one cosmic consciousness, perfect and infinite as the universe.

→ SUPPORT

Loosen the reins of your rational mind to find the channel to the other world, feel it beyond words, trust in it.

Laugh at the world

As we grow older sometimes we 'unlearn' things that were once a natural part of our life. Watch children at play and notice the silliness and laughter. That's what being young is all about, why lose it when we mature? It's true that life commands us to be serious about the many obstacles and burdens we encounter on the path. There is a lighter side to just about any circumstance if we know how to look. The energy created from laughter is positive and strong, it can change the direction of events.

Don't become so self important that you can't laugh at yourself and the world, it's that humble silliness that can keep your blood pressure down and your spirit high. Sometimes we are taught to feel guilty when we laugh, but think about it, laughter expresses as much compassion and heart as the more serious emotions do, and heals as well. Lighten up while you still can.

A

RUSH

Suffering

If there is a God, why does he allow suffering? This is one of the most difficult questions to answer. First we must find out what suffering is, the different forms both physical and mental, imposed by the environment and self imposed. Basically suffering is our reaction to nature drawing attention to a problem that needs to be corrected. Suffering can't be stopped through aversion, it must be dealt with head on. Look below the surface to find the message sent to you from nature. The knowledge gained from suffering can be utilized to acquire an understanding of who you are. Sometimes we repeat the same mistakes that cause suffering or willfully put ourselves into unhealthy environments, when we do this we choose not to listen to the message and perpetuate our own distress.

Welcome suffering as a challenge and message from nature to help you resolve conflict along your spiritual path.

Accept Those Around You

This message deals with the unconditional nature of love. The message is simple - we must learn to accept everyone regardless of the circumstance, morale differences, or cultural divergence. This is an easy concept to understand but a hard one to apply. How can you accept someone who willfully tries to harm you or others? The key element here is to accept, which does not mean you have to agree with or condone negative action.

It's not always possible to understand why people are what they are. We are the result of a complex mixture of spirit, biology and environment.

Make a conscious effort to knock down the walls of judgment and image we create of others, acceptance will help reduce the extreme reactionary emotions and allow you to tap into the bliss and unity of life.

A

Moderation

EXCEPT

It's important not to take more than you really need. The world seems to supply an inexhaustible amount of energy and wealth, but in reality physical resources are finite. So touch the world lightly, don't waste anything regardless of the implied value or size. You may think that it's OK to squander resources, especially if they're abundant, but when multiplied by the billions of people on the planet the result is astonishing.

The concept of moderation goes beyond physical resources and can be applied to personal resources as well. Conservation of emotional and sexual energy is a key element to maintaining spiritual growth. The point is not to be obsessed with frugality but to find balance and harmony.

Find Your Purpose

Why are we here and for what purpose? There is no absolute, all encompassing answer to the question of purpose, no one can tell you, nor can you read it in some ancient sacred text. Life does have purpose, make it your quest to find one.

The road to purpose is full of dead ends and detours, a roller coaster of doubt and revelation, trial and errors. You might feel trapped in a world of suffering and pain, helplessly caught in a struggle for material gain. Go beyond rebellion and conformity, shatter nihilism, and if your resolution is strong, after time you will arrive.

When you come to purpose you will find a new significance to life, bringing vitality and completeness. Purpose is something you feel, when it's present you will definitely know it, not necessarily in your head, but deep within the fiber of your being.

A

Believe in The Mystical Side of Life

A technically oriented culture such as the one we live in has a way of dictating what we believe and how reality is defined. Science, based on it's current level of discovery, tells us what we can believe and what we can't. For the most part we accept this without question. Does it make our lives easier living in a world where everything is explained and defined by some external authority? What is lost?

Science has not found all the answers to questions about the universe we live in and will not study what it can't measure. The world is a mysterious place. Do some exploring on your own. Open a channel to the universe, create a ritual, investigate the paranormal, howl at the moon, gaze at a candle in a dark forest.

Recapture the awe of creation and wonder of life by reuniting yourself with the brotherhood of nature found in the animals, mountains and stars.

Rule Number One

First you must believe in and nurture yourself before you can help anyone else. It's not selfish to devote time and energy to yourself. You must make your body and mind strong so you have the vital energy needed to carry out your purpose in life. Don't ever feel guilty about making this commitment to yourself.

You must protect yourself physically and psychologically. If this means that you must become inaccessible then so be it. Sometimes it's necessary to say no. When you're ready to help you will know it. When you're not, don't be ashamed to retreat into solitude and self introspection.

Your life is sacred and your body is a temple, so don't abuse it and don't let anyone abuse you.

A

The Ripple that takes Root

VERY GOOD

When a pebble is thrown into a still pond, ripples rise up and radiate from the center. In a short time the ripples subside and the water is still again. Reactionary emotions are like the ripples on the water, they rise and fall. A friend might say something to cause anger, or we might see something that frightens us. After the matter that sparked the emotion is removed, we return to calm.

But this is not always the case. The mind doesn't always want to let go. We relive the situation or conflict over and over again inside our head. If we feel anger, we justify it by convincing ourselves that we were right. When we are frightened we project our fears into the future and see them reoccurring, which in time can create deep rooted insecurities.

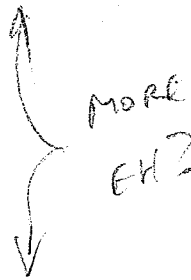
Observe yourself in your relationships with others and the world around you. Go deeply into your emotions and let them go without approving or condemning.

Feel Your Roots

Some people believe we choose our families and the place where we are born. We come into this world at a particular time and place with purpose and choice. It's important to know your history and feel the roots that connect you to your community, town, or city.

You are the product of an eternity of physical and spiritual evolution. Every cell in your body contains its own identity and memory, passed on to you from those that came before you. Get in touch with your history. Feel your ancient fins; find out who your great grandfather was; explore the past era of your town by observing the architecture; talk to the elderly who lived through the changes in your neighborhood.

Use the knowledge gained from your past as a tool to understanding who you are today. Conversely, don't use personal history as an excuse for imposing limits on who you might become tomorrow.



Do Windows

Some how we have mislead ourselves into thinking that certain tasks are below us. We take pride in the fact that we no longer "do windows", as if our self worth is dependent on the type of work we perform.

Simple repetitive routine tasks (like washing the dishes, sweeping the floor, or planting a garden) can be a form of meditation. After a stressful experience you can find relief in doing labor with your hands and body. Don't let your mind block the flow and joy of the task by displacing your attention to extraneous thoughts. Envelop yourself in the current time and space, and after a short time you will feel the anxiety slip away. An added benefit from replacing machine with muscle is reduced complexity and enhanced health from exercise.

It feels good to get your hands dirty. Get to know the peace and bliss that comes from completing simple work.

The Power of Suggestion

A most powerful force found in nature and mind is suggestion. Suggestion takes on many forms and comes at various levels. We receive suggestions from the environment; suggestions from our senses; there are verbal suggestions; mental and physical suggestions.

We have the power to create suggestions and submit them as a means of controlling and shaping reality. Auto suggestion is the vehicle by which thought effects change in our lives. If we give weak suggestion, the result will be weak; if we give strong positive suggestion, the result will be strong and positive.

The concept is simple, unfortunately the ego based component of mind doesn't buy in, it reacts with skepticism. Ego wants to believe only what it sees first. Use the power of suggestion to control your reality.

L
FREUD?

Inertia

A

The term inertia is used in Physics. An object at rest (not moving) tends to stay at rest. An object in motion tends to stay in motion and in the same direction, unless acted upon by some outside force.

The rational behind this simple theorem can be applied to human behavior as well. Inactivity and procrastination tends to lead to more inactivity and procrastination. Some consider sloth the most deadliest of sins.

As soon as we commit to action we have inertia working for us, instead of against us. We tend to keep moving and acting as we flow with the energy of motion. New doors are opened, and opportunities arrive to those who utilize the positive force of action !

The choice is yours. Does inertia work for you, or against you ?

Locking Yourself Up

Ego can be defined as the part of mind that creates the awareness of self and recognizes the separateness of the individual. To be separate is to be vulnerable, so we have the need for defense, which comes in the form of walls - both physical and mental. We stay at home because the streets are not safe. We hold back what we really say and feel because we want to be liked and accepted.

Defense mechanisms have a purpose and will always be a part of the way the mind functions. That doesn't mean we are helpless to control them.

The first step is to be aware of the wall building process, determine how and why it happens. From there we can make a conscious effort to control it. Decide not to be a prisoner of your home. Let your voice be heard without regard to how it will be received. Let your heart be the judge, be strong in your convictions. Spend some time with people who are not inhibited by the way the you dress or the sound of your voice.

Dichotomy Dichotomy

Certain things come in pairs. Thoughts tend to come one by one. The mind operates like a computer in some respects, it processes one task at a time, then moves on to the next. We tend to think of one concept at a time, that's human nature. Unfortunately this fragmentation can be somewhat ineffectual when dealing with the diversity and complexity of life.

Therefore it is sometimes necessary to keep in mind that certain key topics presented here should be taken in combination with "companion subjects". For example non- attachment by itself can lead to distance, and withdrawal from the world around you. That's why it is necessary to keep compassion and love together with non- attachment, to keep the balance.

Many other groupings come to mind, some act as opposites to each, polarity is the basis for existence. It's OK to be a little selfish, but we must balance that with service and charity to others.

Take Risks

We all need to feel safe and secure. The need for security can become so strong that it keeps us from doing the things we need to do in order to grow. Sometimes it's necessary to take a calculated risk and put your fears aside for the moment. Life is never completely secure, no matter how many locks you put on your door or how much money you save. Take a chance, climb a mountain, invest your money, talk to a stranger or go on a blind date.

Taking the first step is always the hardest, once you get absorbed in action you will find your fears have magically faded away. Let the voice inside guide you.

Find the median between risk and security. Too much security leads to stagnation, while too much risk taking can be dangerous. Find the middle road and go after your dreams.

A

Natural Cycles

Cycles, like waves rise and fall all around us. Nature is in constant motion following cycles that never fail. Our bodies have their own internal cycles - physical, mental and emotional. The sun rises and sets, the seasons change, the stock market crashes and booms.

Observe the cycles around you, be aware of the different cycles and the effect they have on you. Identify and chart the ones that exert the most influence in your life. Do you have more creative energy in the morning and lose energy in the afternoon? Try adjusting your schedule to take advantage of the swings, maybe you could get the heavy tasks done in morning and save the repetitive ones for after lunch.

Play the cycles creatively through observation and experimenting with the results. Don't use the cycles as a crutch or to justify inactivity. Instead of saying "I'm a night person so I'll sleep away the morning" replace it with "I'm a night person but I need to rise to the challenge of making my mornings more constructive".

That's Entertainment ?

EXCEPT

It takes a strong commitment to reserve and find the time necessary for spiritual growth. We never seem to have enough time - or is that just an excuse for not utilizing the time we have more constructively?

A recent study revealed the top three ways we spend our leisure time. The number one activity is watching television, followed by shopping and lastly - going out to eat. All passive forms of entertainment that really don't give much return for the time invested. The time we spend watching television is astounding for a culture that has so little time. It's an easy habit to fall into and a hard one to break.

Try replacing some of the passive forms of entertainment with more rewarding interactive ones. You can have fun and grow mentally and spiritually at the same time. There's a whole world of activities to be explored outside the tube, so give up the "remote" control and try being "in" control !

Thank God It's Monday

Are you programmed into a pattern of thinking that leaves you down and depressed on Mondays and living just for the arrival of the weekend ? It seems to be a common affliction with so many people - a way of life for some. But life is too short to waste away any moment. You may hate your job for a variety of reasons and feel powerless to affect change. It's a real and sometimes cold world and we all have to do things that we really don't want to. But you can change, only if you believe you can first.

Start by getting rid of that mind set that lives for Fridays. Deprogram yourself by utilizing the power of positive suggestion. If you can't find a job you enjoy doing than try changing the way you view the one you have. Create challenges and mental gymnastics to take away some of the drudgery on the job.

Wake up Monday and shout "Thank God it's Monday" and while you're at it - thank God that your alive ! Stand in awe and marvel at the mystery of life, feel the rapture of living in the moment.

Don't Get too Comfy

A friend once told me that his goal was to stay a little cold, tired and hungry. At the time I thought it was a rather odd objective considering that most people seem to strive in the opposite direction. As a society we tend to live off the wealth (and technology) of those who came before us.

When firearms were introduced to the Eskimos they soon lost the ability to hunt with the primitive weapons they had perfected over many generations. For a short time the Eskimo could shoot more than he could eat. Unfortunately when the guns were taken away they faced mass starvation.

It took a few years before I could understand my friend's objective, but it seems to me that maybe he was afraid of "shooting more than he could eat". But one thing is for sure - he'll be ready if the rug gets pulled out from under his feet, will you ?

Ask Questions

The first step to finding an answer is to ask a question, in fact part of the answer lies in the question and how it is formulated. Comprehension and understanding is gained through effective questioning. We know this as children but sometimes lose the ability to ask questions as we grow older. We are afraid to ask because we expose ourselves and our limitations. Open up and take the risk, the stagnation resulting from being a closed system is a much greater impediment to your well being than the manner in which you are perceived by your peers.

Generate curiosity. Why are we here ? What is your purpose ? Some questions may never be answered. Keep looking, an unanswered question fires the imagination and fuels the mind with energy needed to extend boundaries and expand horizons.

Question authority, question your motives, question nature - our nature is to be inquisitive.

Emotions

An important part of being human involves experiencing a wide range of emotions. We have categorized emotions into two broad classes, the so called negative ones, such as anger, jealousy and fear and the positive emotions, like compassion and love. As a healthy individual we need to maintain a balanced and diverse spectrum of emotional responses. To achieve this balance we need to exercise control and dispel the myth that we are powerless victims of our emotional disposition.

The premise is simple, the way we emote is the result of the way we think, we can control the way we think, therefore we can control the way we emote. The control comes in at the root level where emotions are created, not after they have been generated.

The point is not to deny or suppress your emotions, but to nurture the ones that contribute to your well being and spiritual growth.

View the World From New Eyes

Knowledge of past events tend to shape the way we view the people and world around us. This is no surprise when you think about it, but the process is so automatic that we don't really notice it happening. Memory stores the record of personal history on every individual we know, when we see that person we bring up that record and all the conclusions made regarding that person, we might like them or dislike them, think they are too ambitious, too lazy and so on.

A conclusion denotes the end in that we have already cast our vote and the ballots are closed, memory is a dead thing, gone, past. Why should we use this process of using something dead to define the living? Can we erase personal history when we relate to the people in our lives?

We may not be able to forget personal history (nor should we) but we can choose when we remember and how we view people. Practice viewing people like you would the ocean or sky, with awe for infinity and change.

Have some Fun

Happiness can be thought of as the by product of spiritual|mental growth. This process of growing is difficult and involves a lot of hard work. Self examination, disciple, deferred gratification, positive thinking, confronting suffering, frugality, it doesn't sound like too much fun, but that's the paradox of happiness.

There are no short cuts to happiness, but that doesn't mean you have to be a puritan, remember to have some fun. The mind and body both need rest to be healthy. When you consciously stop working there are other parts of the mind that still continue to work, this is referred to as 'non-doing'.

Step back for a while and forget it all, be spontaneous, lighten up ! Its OK to have fun !

Internal Vs External Rules

From birth we are bombarded by rules and laws from the world outside. Codes of behavior sanctioned from mom and dad; the government, nature, and religion. The external rules are laid on the table where they are digested by the individual to form ethics - internal rules.

Some truths we may accept without question, particularly if they are handed down from a respected authority, such as the church or a highly revered philosopher.

It has been said that "truth is a land that has no paths", meaning you can't follow a preset course - you must blaze your own trail. Its much easier to blindly accept dogma than it is to labor in the task of discovering truth in a constantly changing world. Study the scriptures, listen to your parents but decide for yourself what the truth is.

Why Compare ?

A lot of frustration can be avoided by not focusing on the differences between individuals. We tend to compare and draw hasty conclusions based on how we feel we should be and not on how we actually are. We come up with labels and find that we are too fat, too old, too dumb and so on. The process of comparison is obviously a very selective one. On the surface we see someone who has something we don't and conclude we need to be more like them in order to be happy. Most of the time we undermine our self worth by comparing, or if we liken ourselves to someone "below" us we falsely inflate it.

Is there really any value to these conclusions ? Why do we need to constantly compare ? How do we decide who the object of our comparison is ? Search yourself within and try to find answers to these questions. this will help you "deprogram" the compare routine. Observe yourself the next time you get caught up comparing and remember that everything is relative and we are all at different points along the path.

Sensitivity

The senses receive impressions or stimuli from the world outside and carry the impulses to the brain. To be sensitive is to be aware - to see, to hear, to taste, to smell, to feel subtle messages, whispers from the world around us.

By saturating the senses or by exposure to intensified stimulus we can lose sensitivity. Loud noises can diminish hearing, spicy food can dull the taste buds. When sensitivity is diminished so is our ability to discern our environment. practice sensitivity by touching the world lightly.

When we become preoccupied with past events or worry about the future we displace ourselves from the here and now. Others live in a state of "auto pilot" following the same route day after day never taking the time to listen to the world around them. Exercise awareness by observing and living in the moment. Are you aware of subtle changes in your environment ? By quieting the mind and directing awareness we kindle sensitivity.

Short Term Vs Long Term

Many traditional values have survived the test of time and hold a place within modern culture. One such principle is the act of delaying reward or deferring gratification, part of the so called Protestant work ethic. The tendency to desire fast results, short cut taking, eating the icing before the cake, are all derivatives of preoccupation with the quick payoff as opposed to the process itself.

Cultural influences and advances in technology have imparted us with this desire for instant gratification. We want less work and more reward. In the technical arena this is possible and even desirable (to a degree) but on the psychological side there are no short cuts to spiritual/mental growth. Natural law implies that the work coming out is equal to the work put in, minus that which is lost from the degree of efficiency in the system/process. You can speed things up by becoming more efficient, not by eliminating steps or taking short cuts.

It's Not Rocket Science

A common misconception leads us to believe that it takes an above average intellect to understand the wisdom and psychology necessary for spiritual growth and the fulfillment of the "God potential" locked inside us. The mysteries of Metaphysics and the Yamas of Yoga are available to a select few - not true!

The real obstacle is not one of complexity and understanding, rather one of selection and application. To select the particular piece of wisdom that will be right for you requires self knowledge of where you are on the path. The best wisdom is wasted if we are not ready for it. The second part, application, implies the will to transform it from a thought or concept to being a 'part' of you, which takes energy and sacrifice.

So once again we are reminded that "its not aptitude but attitude that determines our altitude".

You Can't Do it by Yourself

The path you're on is a lonely one, decisions are ultimately made alone, finding true nature involves listening and trusting the voice inside while the pressure exerted by our peers becomes less significant. As we become less reactive emotionally it may seem as though we lose part of what makes us 'human'. We see the folly of our ways and the activities that once sustained and entertained us now seem unimportant. Now is not the time to retreat into the monastery, cave or mountains, we learn about ourselves by the relationships we develop with others. There is something of value to be shared and learned from everyone, regardless of their social standing.

As we grow into a life dedicated to service and helping we must not forget how to ask for help for ourselves. To seek help is a humbling experience, don't be too proud to ask for help.

Diversity

One of the keys to leading a balanced life lies in knowing and exploring the many different options and paths that are waiting to be discovered. The world contains an endless supply of diversity at all levels, and each level has corresponding sub-levels that branch out like the tributaries in a stream. Diversity is synonymous with complexity, the more we learn the more we can identify what we don't know and label new areas to explore.

Quite frequently we find ourselves caught in the same channel and lose sight of the infinite array of alternatives surrounding us. Sometimes it helps just to try new things at random, through the process of elimination we can find the areas that truly add value to our lives.

The exploration of diversity adds meaning to life and extends us to reach new heights. As each new door opens we find multiple doors to be found on the other side.

The Power of the Subconscious Mind

Not a lot is known about the nature and capacity of the subconscious mind. We do know that it is responsible for maintaining and regulating the various involuntary functions of the body. The expansive unrecognized potential of the subconscious mind can be, with some conscious effort, more fully utilized.

The batch mode of computer processing usually runs at night in a background region using data accumulated during the day, when the task is complete the results appear magically back to the surface. The subconscious mind is said to work in a similar fashion, we submit a question or problem by dwelling on it consciously for a interval of time, after which we shift our thoughts to something else. At this time the task goes to a background area of mind, which is a form of 'non- doing' because we are not aware of the process taking place. After a while the answer presents itself at the surface - to the conscious part of the mind. Experiment with this process - the subconscious mind is perfect in a biological sense and provides the link to nature and god.

The Gift, the Choice and Dependent Origination

When presented with a gift we have a choice to make regarding how we will use it. If we choose wisely we can benefit from the gift or if we act foolishly we can waste it. Some gifts are more important than others, but none are as important as the gift of life. The choices we make now will determine the course of events that transpire in the future, like a chain reaction where each event is related to the event before it.

A poorly made decision at the beginning of the cycle will dramatically effect the outcome, for example, one night I decided to watch TV instead of reading a book. A commercial comes on that leads me to believe I would be more happy if I had a red sports car. I imagined owning the car and enjoying the sensation of driving and the attention of my friends. So I purchase the car and go into debt and have to take on a second job. As result of working two jobs I no longer have time to pursue my interest in philosophy, and so on. Each moment we are presented with an opportunity and a decision to make regarding how we will utilize the Gift.