



Spirituality Simplified

An Ideal Starting Point for Those New to the Spiritual Path

A Handy Reference Guide for Experienced Seekers

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Published by:

SpiritSimple Enterprises L.L.C.
P.O. Box 6973
Villa Park, IL 60181

First Edition: 2003

First Printing: Advance Special Issue printed in December 2002 as *Spirituality Made Simple* by The Wordsmith's Anvil, 5114 Balcones Woods Drive, #307, Austin, TX 78759 [www.wordsmithsanvil.com]

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Published by arrangement with the author.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2003096573

ISBN 0-9744841-0-5

Printed in the United States of America.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

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7: Abundance

*When you sleep on the ground,
With the stars in your face,
You can feel the full length
of the beauty and grace.⁷⁴*

DAN FOGELBERG
"THE WILD PLACES"

The principle of *Abundance* is grounded in the concept that the Universe itself is an ever-expanding energy field of unlimited potentiality. Just a glance at our solar system alone reveals the existence of thousands if not millions of stars, yet astronomers agree that what our most powerful telescopes can see represents just a tiny portion of the Universe as a whole. Both astronomers and quantum physicists alike also concur that the Universe as we know it is likewise involved in a constant process of expansion.

ABUNDANCE AS A NATURAL STATE

Just as abundance is the natural state of the entire Universe, so it is for our beloved planet Earth as well. If you merely take a moment to expand your awareness, and truly take *notice* of the incredible abundance that characterizes both the Earth and all the heavens that surround it, you literally cannot help being awed by it all. In that regard, consider this passage from Stuart Wilde:

*Make a point of noticing the plum tree full of fruit,
gaze at fields of wheat, meditate on the endless rows of
vegetables at the supermarket, and accept the warmth of the
sun as it rises each morning. Also, engage your childlike self,
with awe, in the abundance of stars in the night sky.
Each of these are signposts of the Universe-at-Large reminding
you that you have the gift of life—that your journey
takes place on a planet that is blessed and chock full of
everything that you're ever going to need.⁷⁵*

⁷⁴ Daniel Fogelberg, Copyright © 1990 by EMI April Music Inc./Hickory Grove Music (ASCAP) (All rights reserved. Used by permission.) From the CD *Wild Places*, (CBS Records and manufactured by Epic Records. 1990).

⁷⁵ Stuart Wilde, *The Little Money Bible*, (Carlsbad, California: Hay House, Inc., 1998) p. 7

This, of course, runs contrary to the conventional thinking about the Earth's alleged 'limited' resources, but this age-old view misses one very key point — that with the God-Force, there cannot possibly be any limitations. According to Richard and Mary-Alice Jafolla in *The Quest*:

The old belief was that there is not enough abundance to go around, and so we thought if you get yours, I lose mine. If I get some abundance, I have to deprive you of yours, I lose mine. We have believed that people are constantly waiting out there to take our good from us. We thought that there is only so much substance in this world, and therefore it can be used up. The human race has had it all wrong. We have to re-educate ourselves so that we firmly realize that God's source of good is unlimited. God, by nature, is a creative process, always capable of, (and desirous of) bringing new and more into our lives.⁷⁶

The Truth of Abundance

So there is indeed always enough for each of us, and there will invariably be ample resources on this planet too, simply because with God all things are possible. For example, while it is undeniable that only so much oil can be extracted from the Earth, it is also true that as extensions of the mind of God, human beings have the unlimited potential to uncover alternative energy sources, as well as to devise new, more efficient ways of using the oil and other fuels that are still available. The same goes for any other of the Earth's so-called 'scarce' resources.

Most people find it challenging to accept this principle, because based on all of the poverty and alleged shortages that exist in the world; it truly 'appears' that scarcity is our natural state. As everyone knows however, appearances can be very deceiving, for what lies

⁷⁶ Richard and Mary-Alice Jafolla, *The Quest, A Journey of Spiritual Rediscovery*, op. cit., p. 335

behind all of the supposed insufficiency in the world is actually a *scarcity consciousness* that is both shared and promoted by a preponderance of people in the world.

Abundance, Money, and Conditioning

If you doubt this, reflect for a moment on your own thoughts regarding abundance; money in particular. Provided you are like most people, regardless of how much money you may have, you still have concerns about your financial future, and these concerns are primarily based upon your *conditioning* not necessarily on your own personal experience. By conditioning, I mean the beliefs that were handed down to you by your parents or other relatives, along with the programming that you were exposed to by the culture at large.

Let's take a closer look at some of the most common beliefs that many of us received from both our well-meaning relatives and our society/culture:

- “*You better get yours before someone gets theirs, because there is only so much to go around.*”
- “*Money is the root of all evil.*”
- “*You must struggle to make a living in our competitive world.*”
- “*Rich people will find it very difficult to enter the gates of heaven.*”

The above list could obviously be expanded, but my intent here is merely to provide some fitting examples of the negative ideas regarding abundance (and money), to which people are commonly exposed. When you pause to consider just how widespread these ideas and beliefs actually are, it really is not surprising that a consciousness of lack becomes prevalent for the vast majority of the population.

If you question that these collectively held beliefs are at the foundation of much of the poverty in the industrialized world, page back to Chapter 3 and read the section titled “*Thoughts are the Currency of Creation.*” As discussed elsewhere in this book, whatever we focus on (or believe with feeling) expands in our individual consciousness, and if millions of people think and *feel* that scarcity is the natural

state of the Universe, then that becomes, in effect, *their* reality, regardless of evidence to the contrary.

What is really unfortunate, as this next passage from Dr. Wayne Dyer illustrates, is that people are simply unaware that at some level that they themselves are responsible for whatever lack they are experiencing in their lives:

If we dwell on scarcity, we are putting energy into what we do not have, and this continues to be our experience of life. The theme of so many people's life story is "I simply do not have enough," or "How can I believe in abundance when my children don't have all the clothes that they need?" or "I would be a lot happier if I had ____." People believe they live a life of lack because they are unlucky, instead of recognizing that their belief system is rooted in scarcity thinking.⁷⁷

It really is a very basic principle — as an extension of the mind of God (see Chapter 3: Who Are You?) you have enormous creative power, and as such you need to be very careful about what it is you choose to believe. So, if you are not experiencing all of the abundance you desire in your life, recognize this moment that somewhere along the line you adopted beliefs that have caused you to literally push it away from yourself. Once you come to acknowledge this fact, you can then move forward to carefully examine exactly what you have accepted as *your* truth about abundance. From there you can proceed to systematically refute, and then eventually drop any beliefs that are rooted in scarcity.

From my own experience, this process can be a challenging one primarily because our beliefs about abundance, and money in particular, tend to be very deeply embedded within our subconscious minds.

⁷⁷ Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, *You'll See It When You Believe It*, (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, 1989) p. 123

In my case, because I was raised by an incredibly frugal father and a mother who always appeared to be concerned about money, it has been a formidable task for me to leave behind some aspects of the conditioning they provided. Even as I write this chapter, I still continue to grapple with some old money issues on a day-to-day basis.

What I have found to be valuable however, is maintaining an attitude of compassion and patience with myself as I continue to progress through the process of healing these longstanding abundance issues. During the past ten years, there have been times when I have made excellent progress, while at other times it almost appeared as if I were going backwards.

The good news to report is that spiritual growth principles have been invaluable to me in my efforts to leave behind non-empowering beliefs regarding abundance, and I am very confident that you can benefit from them as well. In particular, I have made it a practice to apply four suggestions made by many authors of books related to personal and spiritual growth, and have been highly satisfied with the results. All four of these suggestions, as well as my own experiences in applying them, are discussed in the next several pages.

GRATITUDE

The first of these suggestions: to be *grateful* for what we already have in our lives, is a common theme across many spiritual growth books. When you stop and think about it, the fact is that the vast majority of us have much for which to be thankful – we just tend to be oblivious to it.

For example, as mentioned in Chapter 3, most people never give a second thought to the myriad of activities that are occurring within their bodies every second they are alive. Additionally, those of us living in first-world countries rarely, if ever, feel grateful for such things as electricity, indoor plumbing, relatively safe drinking water, and much, much more. Instead, most of us tend to focus on what is missing in our lives, and ignore all of the blessings we already have. In the United States especially, people take so much for granted.

This is truly amazing; in view of the fact that even our nation's poorest people have a higher standard of living than most of the population in developing countries.

Expressing Gratitude to Attract Greater Abundance

As you begin to acknowledge your gratitude for what you already have, you actually open up the door for even greater abundance to come into your life. Since I was exposed to this concept personally, it has been my daily practice to make my best efforts to be grateful for everything that I have or experience in my life.

Each day upon waking, I have developed the habit of saying prayers of gratitude, and throughout the day, I likewise do my best to remember to be grateful for any number of things. For example, when I arrive at a solution to a challenging problem, or experience a thought that provides a timely insight, or even see a flock of geese fly by in full formation, I close my eyes for a second or two and silently (and sometimes *verbally*) express my gratitude for it.

Moreover, each time I receive a check in the mail from one of my clients, I make sure to say thank you for the arrival of that payment. At the end of each day, just as I'm dozing off to sleep, I also make certain to say a prayer of gratitude for everything that I experienced that day (both good and bad), and for the greatest gift of all, *life itself!*

*For every moment of joy
Every hour of fear
For every winding road that brought me here
For every breath, for every day of living
This is my Thanksgiving.⁷⁸*

DON HENLEY
"MY THANKSGIVING"

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Once I adopted an *attitude of gratitude*, much like Mr. Henley describes, I can genuinely say that things began to flow to me more easily than at any other time in my life. It was almost as if the Universe sensed the sincerity of my appreciation, and in exchange began to give me even more for which to be grateful.

The reason that we do experience even greater abundance as a result of expressing heartfelt gratitude, connects back to a fundamental principle we discussed in Chapter 3: Whatever we focus on expands in our consciousness.

If you are not oriented toward gratitude, and are instead concentrating your powerful thought and feeling energies on the scarcity in your life, then just what do you think you will be attracting into your life? The answer unfortunately, is more scarcity. So, start right now to genuinely express gratitude on a daily basis, and over time I believe you will indeed experience greater abundance in your life.

GIVING

A second valuable suggestion regarding abundance, as this next quotation illustrates, is related to the importance of giving:

The key to prosperity is the realization that prosperity doesn't come by getting more. It comes by giving more.

The law of prosperity is actually 180 degrees from what most of us have been taught. We prosper not by concentrating on what we are getting but by emphasizing what we are giving.

There is simply no way to circumvent this law, and it may take a quantum shift in your thinking to bring yourself around to the truth.⁷⁹

If you are like most people, you have probably heard something very similar on more than one occasion, namely the old cliché “as

⁷⁹ Richard and Mary-Alice Jafolla, *The Quest, A Journey of Spiritual Rediscovery*, op. cit., p. 335

you give, so shall you receive.” This familiar adage has traditionally been interpreted along religious rather than purely spiritual lines. It was commonly thought that an individual who was more giving in nature would in turn receive greater favor from God. While on the surface this may appear to be the case, the truth is the God-Force is not really sitting up there keeping score of your giving practices. Instead, the relationship between giving and receiving ties back to the principles of *Cause and Effect* and *Oneness* that were discussed in previous chapters.

The Principle of “Cause & Effect” and Giving

Remember that every cause you initiate leads to an effect. So, when you give from the heart, you set energy into motion that must in turn find its way back to you in some form. I say in *some* form, because there is no telling how or when the effect may show up.

For example, let’s say you donate a sum of money to a cause that has inspired you in some way; this does not necessarily mean that you will receive the same amount or more in return. The positive energy you extended may instead come back to you as a new business or career opportunity that appears seemingly out of nowhere, or it may manifest for you as improved or continued good health, or as a breakthrough in a troubled relationship, etc.

Now you might say that this is not always true, as there are many instances in which people give but do not seem to receive anything positive in return. In some cases this may *appear* to be an accurate appraisal. However, more often than not, if you were able to look deeper into the motivation behind the giving, you would probably discover that their *intent* wasn’t quite as pure as one may have originally thought.

Specifically, when the giving is done with the objective of receiving something in return, or because the person feels like they have no other choice but to give, then the underlying motivation behind it is rooted in scarcity. Since the Universe always knows what our real

intentions are (i.e., our true *feelings*), it is not surprising then that people who give from this frame of mind do not receive anything in return.

The Principle of “Oneness” and Giving

The principle of *Oneness* relates to ‘giving’ in a very fundamental way. Namely, that if we are all part of the same unified field of energy, then by definition, anything that we give to another in a heartfelt way, we effectively give to ourselves as well. In that regard, consider this passage from Arnold Patent:

*There is a principle underlying the concept of giving
and receiving which further encourages giving freely to others.
The principle is that we only give to ourselves. . . .
Giving energy to another person
does not deplete our own supply.⁸⁰*

This concept can take some time to embrace, as your senses are only capable of perceiving a world of matter instead of the pure creative energy of which that matter is composed. When you give something away of a material nature, you immediately conclude that you have lost something, for the basic reason that you are no longer are in possession of it. At the level of pure energy however, what you have done was to conduct an *energy transaction* with the field of pure potentiality. In other words, you have *sown* something into an energy field of which you are a part, so you must likewise *reap* something in return.

Giving from Obligation

Prior to discovering the spiritual path more than a decade ago, virtually the only time I ever donated money was to the Catholic Church as part of the parish’s regular tithing program. In truth, I

⁸⁰ Arnold Patent, *You Can Have It All*, op. cit., p. 65–66

never really understood why I was doing it other than that it was part of my duty as a parishioner. The problem with giving under those circumstances was that the energy of it was not really positive; the primary motivation behind it was one of obligation rather than a heartfelt gesture. In a sense, I participated in this behavior because it was easier than dealing with the guilty feelings that would arise from not supporting the church.

As I evolved in my spiritual growth however, I came to a different understanding about the concepts of giving and/or tithing. I was very strongly affected by the words of Fr. Anthony DeMello, when he commented on his *Wake Up to Life* tape series, “that just about the worst kind of gift you can give is one that is given so that *you don't have a bad feeling.*”

When I first heard this, it was as if a proverbial light went off in my head, simply because it made so much sense to me. How can giving be a positive experience when the underlying motivation for it is a feeling of obligation or guilt? Obviously, it cannot, yet in our world it is very common for people to give solely from that motive.

With that new awareness in place, I established two new standards for donating money to charitable institutions. First, I would no longer give in response to a feeling of obligation. Second, I would only give to causes that applied no less than 90 percent of their total receipts to actually providing services to the intended recipients. With these standards in mind, I then made a commitment to work towards overcoming my longstanding scarcity mentality, by disciplining myself to consistently allocate a portion of my income to causes that met the latter standard.

As a self-employed person, with income that always varies, at first it was a bit of an adjustment to donate money during the leaner times. Early on in the process however, I heard a speech by Dr. Wayne Dyer in which he said that if a person could not bring themselves to give when they had little, then they would never be able to give even when they had a lot. So, no matter how little I earned in a

given month, each time I received a payment from a client, it became common practice for me to earmark part of those funds toward donation to selected charities.

In addition, I carried this abundant attitude into other areas of life, as I made it a practice to become more generous in meritorious tipping, and also adopted a different perspective about cash donations, by learning to follow my first instinct rather than my second. Specifically, in the past when someone who was collecting for a specific cause approached me in public, I would ignore my first instinct, which was usually to give paper currency, and instead I'd reach in my pocket to see if there was some loose change available.

Now, if it *feels* right to donate, I just go ahead and give the dollar or two in paper currency that is in my pocket, rather than digging around for coins. When we choose to follow this initial instinct instead of our fear-based intellect, what we are effectively doing is demonstrating to the Universe (i.e., the God-Force) and our subconscious minds, that we have confidence in the universal principle of abundance.

Before leaving the subject of *giving*, I also feel it is important to acknowledge that giving really shouldn't be done for the express purpose of reducing one's taxable income. When you give *just* to qualify for a tax deduction, it is obvious that the energy behind that giving is rooted in scarcity thinking, since you are clearly looking to get something for yourself as well.

On the other hand, if you happen to truly believe in a cause, and it provides you with a tax benefit as well, then of course, that is wonderful. In a similar vein, the fact that making a gift to a particular cause would not be considered tax-deductible should by no means preclude you from donating, if you *feel* like it is the right thing to do.

SPENDING

The third suggestion related to the principle of abundance is to recognize the importance of *spending* money. Deepak Chopra emphasizes this point very clearly in this passage from his best-

selling book, *Creating Affluence*:

Money is like blood, it must flow. Hoarding and holding on to it causes sludging. In order to grow, it must flow. Otherwise it gets blocked and like clotted blood, it can only cause damage. Money is life energy that we exchange and use as a result of the service we provide to the Universe. And in order to keep it coming to us, we must keep it circulating.⁸¹

The concept of money itself will be discussed in some detail later in this chapter, but for our purposes here, I would first like to elaborate a bit on the above quotation. It should *not* be construed to mean that one should spend money indiscriminately by racking up credit card bills and/or exhausting savings accounts. Rather, I believe what Dr. Chopra is essentially saying, is that it is necessary for us to learn to spend money in day-to-day life, without a nagging fear about having enough of it in the future.

Acting Abundantly

Whether it's something as simple as ordering a more expensive entrée at a restaurant, or perhaps buying the optional air conditioning on a new car, by spending money when you *feel* like doing so, you are once again sending a message to the Universe that you are confident that there will always be enough for you. It is much like what was discussed in the previous section about giving, only this time it applies to what you give to *yourself*. To be clear, it is *not* about going into debt by over-spending, but rather putting aside the fear of the future and purchasing some things (i.e., goods, travel, services, etc.) that will bring you some joy or satisfaction in the *present moment*.

⁸¹ Deepak Chopra, *Creating Affluence*, op. cit., p. 49; Excerpted from *Creating Affluence* by Deepak Chopra © 1993. Used with permission from New World Library, Novato, CA 94949, www.newworldlibrary.com

Soon after reading *Creating Affluence* back in 1993, I began to put Dr. Chopra's advice into practice as a matter of course. It was demanding at first, as the scarcity programs that were circling around in my head were very deeply embedded, but over time I found it less difficult to spend money without experiencing the same level of anxiety as I had in the past. Interestingly, once I adopted this practice, along with regularly expressing gratitude and giving of myself financially, there has always been more than enough new business revenue for me to offset whatever cash outflows occur.

This is not to imply that by taking up these practices, you will never again experience any issues regarding abundance, because even as I write this I consistently do. The point is that by taking steps, even small ones, we demonstrate that confidence referenced above, and in the process, open the door for even more abundance to arrive.

In order to make this point even stronger, I will now share with you a personal story about a time back in the summer of 2000, when I chose to really put this 'spending' concept to the test. At that time, I made the decision to follow my heart and invest in a dream I had; to spend an entire summer on a Greek island called Alonnisos. My wife and I originally visited there in 1997, at the invitation of her mom and stepfather. They have had a vacation home there since the early 1980s. We returned to Alonnisos again in 1998, and it was during that trip that the inspiration to spend an extended amount of time on the island initially occurred to me.

Throughout the balance of that year and beyond, the same idea just kept popping into my mind, and then one day in June of 1999, a very heartfelt discussion with a friend of mine motivated me to drop the fear and proceed forward. Pursuing this dream however, would require a rather substantial financial commitment, as obviously it would be necessary for us to pay for housing and living expenses in both Greece and back at home as well. Thankfully, my wife agreed to support this dream, and during the fall of 1999 we began making our plans to spend four months in Greece the following summer.

We left during the latter part of May 2000, and returned in late September, with the total cost of the trip being several thousand dollars. Fortunately, with the support of the God-Force and my own hard work, I had earned enough in the months prior to departure to pay for nearly forty percent of it, but that still meant we had to withdraw a rather sizable amount of money from our savings account. This was by no means a small sum to us, as it wouldn't be to most people.

Leaving the U.S. for a four-month period also meant that neither of us would be earning any income, and for me in particular it would require that I put my six year-old freelance writing business on hold. The risk was obvious: my clients would go elsewhere to fulfill their needs, and perhaps by the time I returned home there might no longer be any customers to serve.

Interestingly, (and this is the key point of the story) within five days after returning from the trip I was contacted by three of my clients. By the time eleven weeks had elapsed, I was able to earn *more than two times* the amount of money we had removed from our savings account. To say I felt incredibly blessed by all of this would be an understatement, but the truth is that throughout the entire trip, I never once doubted that things would work out one way or another.

It is now very clear to me that my willingness to invest in this dream did in fact demonstrate to the Universe that I truly felt confident about my financial future, and the result was that even more abundance flowed to me upon my return. This, combined with the fact that the four-month sabbatical allowed me to write more than four chapters of this book, made the trip a complete success.

While perhaps you are not currently in a position to take off and leave the country for four months, the moral of the story is still the same. When you make the decision to invest in anything that you *feel* strongly about having or doing, no matter how inexpensive or costly, you are showing your faith that the Universe will in turn provide you with opportunities to experience even greater abundance.

DOING WHAT YOU LOVE

*Someplace inside you
A river is waiting to flow,
Will you let it go?*⁸²

DAN FOGELBERG

"MAN IN THE MIRROR"

The fourth suggestion I'd like to share with you regarding abundance—the importance of *doing what you love*—is one that is embraced by virtually all of this era's most prominent personal and spiritual growth authors. The adage "do what you love and the money will follow" is very commonly known, but just why is this so? In response to this question, reflect upon the following passage from Arnold Patent:

*When you choose to make doing what you love the core experience of your life, you move into alignment with the Universe. Immediately, the infinite supply of energy is available to you. You feel the aliveness that comes from having the unlimited energy of the Universe flow through you. This aliveness influences the energy signals you emit, and the people and circumstances that will support the continuation of your feeling of aliveness are attracted to you.*⁸³

Effortless Accomplishment

Stop for a moment and think about something that you really love to do. Now get in touch with the feelings that you normally experience while doing this activity. Assuming you were able to identify such a pursuit, it is likely that you would typically experience at least three distinct feelings—a feeling of joy or bliss, a feeling of being in

⁸² Dan Fogelberg, Copyright © 1975 by Hickory Grove Music (ASCAP) (All rights reserved. Used by permission.) From the album *Captured Angel*, (CBS Records and manufactured by Epic Records/CBS Inc. 1975).

⁸³ Arnold Patent, *You Can Have It All*, op. cit., p. 49–50

the flow, (a.k.a. *effortless accomplishment*), and a feeling of time literally standing still as you instinctively stay focused in the present moment. As the preceding passage from Mr. Patent infers, these feelings arise because you are effectively tapping into the energy of your Higher Self, or to put it another way, you are allowing the limitless 'I' to express itself instead of the fearful, self-conscious 'me'.

These times are very magical, because they give you an opportunity to step outside of your active conscious mind and truly become a channel for the Divine. It really is an exhilarating feeling, because you are not really thinking about what you're doing, but rather you are *feeling* it. In my case, I always experience such sensations whenever I am presented with the chance to deliver a presentation to a live audience. There is nothing else in the world that I love doing more. It really is an amazing experience, as the words flow from me without any overt conscious effort on my part. By the time it's all over, I am actually hard pressed to explain the origin of the information that I shared.

The reality is that you, as well as every other person in the world, have unique, innate skills that crave to be expressed. While you may doubt this to be true, remember that the God-Force literally threw away the blueprint when you were created, so there is no one in this entire world who can express themselves in exactly the same way. Others might argue that there was no way that anyone would pay them for doing what they love, or that there aren't enough opportunities available in their area of interest. In response to that, consider this next quotation from Dr. Wayne Dyer:

There is no scarcity of opportunity to make a living at what you love, there is only scarcity of resolve to make it happen. Whatever you love doing more than anything else has built within it an opportunity to make a living at it, even though you may not believe it. Your fears of doing what you truly love are based on a belief that you are going to go broke and be unable to pay your bills

*and meet your family responsibilities. Not so! . . .
If you have always paid your bills, why would you suddenly
become the kind of person who does not?*⁸⁴

As mentioned earlier, once you do make the decision to do what you love to do, you move into right alignment with the Universe. This in turn, opens the door for all kinds of new energies and opportunities to migrate towards you. The reason is simple, as you do what you love, you emit a positive energy that will attract the necessary people and circumstances to assist you on your path. As for concerns about meeting your financial obligations, Dyer is right. If you have always been a responsible person, why all of a sudden would you become irresponsible? I have certainly found this to be true. Once I made the commitment to doing the work I love (i.e., inspirational writing and speaking), seemingly out of nowhere people began to show up to help me, and opportunities to earn money arrived unexpectedly as well.

The Risk of Not Doing What You Love

If you are still unconvinced regarding this concept of doing what you love, then take a closer look at just what you are accomplishing by spending your time doing work you dislike, just to pay the bills. By remaining in this type of situation, what you are effectively doing is focusing your powerful thought and feeling energy on something that you clearly don't like, and the ultimate result will be your attraction of more of the same. On the contrary, if you use that energy to vividly picture yourself spending time doing what you really love – and remain focused on that picture – you very well might find yourself doing it one day.

Putting Love Into Your Existing Work

If you are a person that simply cannot envision yourself feeling comfortable about leaving a so-called secure position to do what you

⁸⁴ Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, *You'll See It When You Believe It*, op. cit., p. 147

love, then it is truly critical for you to develop a different attitude regarding your existing employment. For example, consider using the following affirmation each day prior to heading off to work: “*I do what I love, and I love what I do.*”

When I initially heard this recommendation during a live presentation given by Dr. Wayne Dyer, it sounded a bit too simplistic to me, but based on my own experience in applying it over time, I can genuinely say that when it is used with an open mind, it can really help to improve the circumstances of one’s existing employment.

In my case, I used that affirmation to reframe my work as a freelance technical writer, by recognizing that this work not only provided me with the opportunity to earn a reasonable income, but also gave me a forum to practice being ‘inspirational’ (when appropriate) to any individual whose path I came across. In a sense, what I set my intent to do was to put as much love into my work as possible, and to address each project with an attitude of service, as well as true compassion for the person for whom I was writing. Additionally, I made a point to always express gratitude for whatever work ‘showed up’, for that assignment was a blessing that assisted me in meeting my financial obligations.

Interestingly, soon after I put this approach into practice two things occurred. First, my business began to grow, and second, the work itself became somewhat more enjoyable for me. Now, if you apply a similar approach to your current work, there is no guarantee that you will experience the same results, but I am confident that you will, at a minimum, notice an improvement in your work environment, simply because you’ve chosen to bring a more positive energy to the situation. From there, who knows what could happen? You just may wind up attracting someone into your life who can assist you in moving into more satisfying work.

MONEY

Any discussion regarding the principle of abundance would be incomplete without spending some time in addressing the subject of

money, though my purpose here is not to provide a complete discourse on the topic. There are scores of books that focus on doing exactly that. Instead, my intention is to clearly define what money is, as well as what it is not, and also to clear up some of the common misconceptions that people have regarding it.

As stated earlier in the section on *spending*, money is simply a medium of exchange, and yet if you queried the average person, many would choose to define money as abundance itself. The fact is however, that abundance is much more than money alone. Abundance is the pure potentiality of the God-Force itself, the gift of life and of nature with all of its diversity and splendor, the blessings of perfect health and satisfying relationships, the joyful feeling associated with having a purpose in life.

This and even more is what abundance is really all about, and while money plays a part in it, it is by no means the symbol of abundance. There are – no doubt – millions of people who have significant sums of money, and still perceive themselves as lacking in one way or another. This is not to suggest that money is not important, for in modern society it certainly is. What *is* necessary for you to learn, however is to keep money in perspective by recognizing it as simply one aspect of what comprises an abundant life.

Limiting Beliefs About Money

Besides putting money in the proper perspective, you also need to complete an inventory of just what it is that you do believe about money. Strangely enough, while money is one of the most talked about and sought after commodities in the world, the truth is that the majority of us have been taught some very negative things about money. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is very common to hear phrases such as, “money is the root of all evil” and “filthy rich,” not only as we are growing up but into adulthood as well.

While beliefs of this nature do not serve anyone in any way, people often find them hard to leave behind completely, primarily because they were learned very early in life. If you are a person that

still carries even remnants of such beliefs, what you need to do first is identify them, then begin to systematically dispute them, and finally, make your best efforts to replace them with those of a more empowering nature.

In my experience, an effective technique that can be used for disputing unwanted beliefs is based on a type of psychotherapy espoused by the Institute for Rational-Emotive Therapy (RET) based in New York. As a matter of background, I was originally introduced to RET during the latter part of 1990, and over time had great success in applying it towards some very limiting beliefs I carried regarding both love relationships and money.

RET recommends the technique of applying a scientific method by using reason, logic and facts to counter ‘irrational’ beliefs. For example, once you identify a limiting belief, you first write it down on a piece of paper, and then below that write down the following questions:

- *Is this belief realistic and factual?*
- *Is this belief logical?*
- *Is this belief flexible and non-rigid?*
- *Can this belief be falsified?*
- *Does this belief ensure that I will get good, happy results by continuing to hold it?*

The next step is to respond to those questions using a thoughtful, rational approach. For instance, let’s say that the unwanted or irrational belief that we want to challenge is “money is the root of all evil.” In response to question one, we could say this belief is not realistic because it is far too general in nature, and it is by no means factual because we could identify a number of so-called evil things, events, or people that have no relationship to money.

For example, consider a person that verbally abuses a spouse about his or her physical appearance. That could certainly qualify as ‘evil’ behavior, yet it’s difficult, at best, to demonstrate any direct correla-

tion existing between money itself and the acting out of such behavior. Or, if money is truly at the root of all evil in the world, then how do you explain all of the good that charitable organizations accomplish with the donations they receive?

I could go on with more arguments to dispute this belief, but I will make the assumption at this point that you have gotten a good feel for how RET works from a conceptual point of view. Naturally, you would apply this same approach in answering the other questions.

The act itself – writing down arguments to dispute unwanted and/or limiting beliefs – sends a strong message of reprogramming to your subconscious mind. To further reinforce that message, you can also record your responses on tape with *feeling*, and then listen to them in your car or on a cassette player as you are going to sleep at night. Repetition is critical, since it clearly played a pivotal role in anchoring the limiting beliefs into your consciousness in the first place.

This is just one of several techniques for disputing irrational beliefs that are available within RET. For complete details regarding this very practical approach to psychotherapy, check out either of these two books by the founder of RET, Dr. Albert Ellis: *A New Guide to Rational Living*, or *How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything*.

Adopting More Empowering Money Beliefs

As you move through the process of liberating yourself from the limiting beliefs you have about money, you will of course need to replace them with new, more empowering ones. Obviously it is up to you to identify exactly what beliefs to embrace, but I do have some general suggestions for you. First, there is absolutely nothing wrong with adopting a belief like, “I love money, and money loves me” or something similar. As long as you are clear that at the most fundamental level, what you really love is the additional *freedom* that will emerge when you open up to allow more money to flow into your life.

Second, to assist you in building your new inventory of beliefs

about money, take the time to read a selection of spiritual growth books that have a focus on money and/or abundance. There are a number of such works available at most major, full-line bookstores. I personally recommend two books by Stuart Wilde: *The Little Money Bible*, and *The Trick to Money is Having Some*.

Another excellent book in this category is *Abundance and Right Livelihood*, which is the text of a stimulating workshop conducted by *Conversations with God* author Neale Donald Walsch. As you invest the time to peruse the bookstore, you may, of course, uncover other titles that appeal to you even more.

Third, make it a practice to write and then regularly use affirmations that reinforce the new beliefs you are seeking to hardwire into your consciousness, so to speak. As mentioned in Chapter 2, affirmations can be very valuable tools for conscious change, providing, of course, that you have acquired a clear understanding of how best to use them. In this regard, I highly recommend an informative ‘how-to’ book on this subject by Stuart Wilde that is quite simply called, *Affirmations*.

Soon after reading that book in 1997, I initiated a regular ritual of saying affirmations as part of my own spiritual practice (e.g., “I always have more money coming into my household than going out.”), and that ritual continues to this day. Over this timeframe, I have discovered that affirmations truly do work, but their value is not always quickly discernible, as it can take some time for the effort to fully bear fruit. In addition, at times the result that ultimately manifests isn’t exactly what we originally envisioned, but nonetheless provides the essence of what we desired. Finally, I have also noticed that the effects of applying them tend to emerge in a very gradual and somewhat subtle fashion. So the key is to simply stay with the practice and remain patient, for as an old saying goes, *infinite patience produces immediate results*.

My fourth and final suggestion is that whatever new beliefs about money you choose to embrace, seek to remember that from your

soul's perspective, the overriding purpose for having money is to use it to buy 'life experiences'.

*You spend your whole life
just pilin' it up there,
You've got stacks and stacks and stacks
Then, Gabriel comes and taps you on the shoulder,
But you don't see no hearses with luggage racks.⁸⁵*

DON HENLEY

"GIMME WHAT YOU GOT"

As the above song lyric clearly indicates, whenever you do depart this earth, neither your money nor any of your possessions will go with you. Interestingly though, while most all of us are intellectually aware of this, many people throughout the world, and particularly in Western society, remain intent upon accumulating as much money and stuff as they possibly can. This is not to suggest that there is anything wrong with spending money, for as we learned earlier in this chapter, the act of spending itself can serve to demonstrate confidence in our abundance.

The problem that arises when accumulation itself is the goal is that not only do we become inordinately focused on collecting money and material goods, but we then also take it a step further by putting an enormous amount of energy into doing whatever is necessary to *hold on* to what we have. When you compare this typical 'adult' behavior to how we behaved as very young children, you can see that we have virtually lost the ability to truly enjoy something for its very essence — the *experience* or *feeling* it provides us.

If you doubt this to be true, just take a few moments to observe a very young child (i.e., one to two years old) at play in a playpen full

⁸⁵ Don Henley, Stan Lynch and John Corey, Copyright © 1988 Cass County Music/Matanzas Music (ASCAP) (All rights reserved. Used by permission.) From the CD *The End of the Innocence*, (The David Geffen Company, manufactured exclusively by Warner Bros. Records, Inc., a Time Warner Company. 1988).

of toys. Unlike adults, that child will fully experience the toy, and then typically move on to the next toy without a concern about what happens to the first toy. This is because part of a child's natural instinct is to experience as much of life as he or she can, and also to remain unattached to things. However, as that child grows up he or she learns from so-called 'wise' adults, as well as some of his or her own worldly experiences, that it's not really the feeling that is important, but rather that possession of the item itself matters more.

Money Buys 'Experiences'

As this excerpt from Stuart Wilde's book *Infinite Self* emphasizes, as souls inhabiting bodies (and not the other way around), it is indeed essential that we come to the realization that the value in money derives from the 'experiences' it allows us to purchase:

The whole function of money is not to have it; its function is to use it. The main reason for generating money is to buy experiences. You want to get to the end of your life with zilch in the bank, and look back and say, "My God, look at this huge pile of experiences," because none of your memories are ever lost. Everything you've done is in your eternal memory somewhere.⁸⁶

Once we adopt this attitude about money, what we effectively do is put ourselves in a position to add valuable *experiential mileage* to our souls. While some might contend that you can always pick up any missed experiences in some future lifetime, consider this very simple and obvious truth: *you will never again be the personality you are now*. As such, you should make every effort to live your life to the fullest, and experience all that you possibly can during this incarnation.

It was this concept of buying experiences that played a key role in the decision to invest in our four-month trip to Greece, described earlier in this chapter. Now, nearly three years after our return, I can

⁸⁶ Stuart Wilde, *Infinite Self*, (Carlsbad, California: Hay House, Inc., 1996) p. 129-130

say with complete confidence that it was one of the best investments I have ever made. It provided us with the opportunity to experience a totally different world than we had ever known. Based on the success of that trip, we have already discussed other travel adventures we would like to experience, and intend to follow through on those as well.

As mentioned earlier, obviously not everyone is in a position to take a four-month sabbatical to Europe or elsewhere. However, it is not necessary to spend thousands of dollars to purchase an experience. For example, you could do something as simple as going to a local spa for your first massage, or perhaps have dinner at the most exclusive restaurant in town. You could also take a course in something like scuba diving, or maybe even skydiving. There are numerous other examples that could be listed here, but the key point is that it is important to use money to experience as much of life as you can, and not primarily for acquiring material goods.

As we conclude this discussion about the principle of abundance, I will leave you with one of my favorite passages regarding this subject that appears in Stuart Wilde's *The Little Money Bible*:

*It isn't hard to see the abundance of our planet.
You only have to look at the fruit trees in the fall,
the lushness of life. We know that money is not rare
and that abundance is natural. Buckminster Fuller calculated
that if all the wealth of the world was divided equally
among its citizens, each and every one of us would be a millionaire.
It's natural, therefore, for everybody to be
abundant—our natural state is "rich."⁸⁷*

Your natural state is indeed one of abundance, so if you are not currently experiencing all of the abundance that you desire, recognize that having it requires you to first be *willing* to accept that it is always available; second, that you must take undertake some

⁸⁷ Stuart Wilde, *The Little Money Bible*, op. cit., p. 2

effort to tap into it; and third, that you must truly be open to receive it.

SUMMING IT ALL UP

The principle of *abundance* is based on the premise that the Universe itself is a continually expanding energy field of limitless potentiality. Just as abundance is the natural state of the aggregate Universe, so it is for the Earth as well.

While this runs contrary to the images of poverty and alleged shortages in the world, behind all of this supposed scarcity is a collective consciousness of lack shared by the majority of people. Underlying this consciousness is an assortment of negative beliefs handed down over generations by our parents, relatives and the culture at large.

What is really unfortunate is that people tend to accept such beliefs without question. In doing so, they unknowingly use their innate creative power as extensions of the mind of God to actually create scarcity in their lives via behaviors based on those beliefs. Once you come to understand this, you can then move forward to refute your scarcity-based beliefs and replace them with those of an abundant nature.

The application of spiritual growth principles can definitely assist you in this process of leaving behind non-empowering beliefs regarding abundance. Within this chapter in particular we discussed four valuable suggestions made by a number of prominent authors of personal growth works. The first of these suggestions is to be *grateful* for what you already have in your life instead of focusing on what you don't have. As you begin to express your gratitude for all that you currently have, you effectively open the door for even greater abundance to manifest in your life.

The key is to make the expression of gratitude a daily ritual for you, remembering to be thankful upon awakening, throughout the day, and just prior to falling asleep as well. The point is, to become

more conscious of the various blessings that you receive each day, rather than simply taking them for granted.

The second suggestion, related to abundance, is to recognize the importance of the act of *giving* itself. As we give, so shall we receive, but this age-old adage does not mean the God-Force keeps score of how much you give in order to identify the amount you should receive in return. The relationship between giving and receiving actually ties back to the principles of *Cause and Effect* and *Oneness* that were discussed in earlier chapters.

Every cause that you initiate leads to an effect; therefore when you give you set energy into motion that must find its way back to you in one form or another. The key determinant of what returns, is the intent that was behind the original act of giving. If it was truly a sincere gift, then one cannot help but receive something positive in return.

Oneness relates to ‘giving and receiving’ in a very basic way. If we are all part of the same energy field, then by definition anything that we give to another – in a heartfelt way – we actually give to ourselves as well.

In this chapter, we also learned that perhaps the worst kind of gift you can give is one that is given so “you don’t have a bad feeling.” Giving cannot be a positive experience when the underlying motivation for it is a feeling of obligation or guilt. That is why it’s necessary to set standards for yourself with respect to all of your giving practices, and this includes establishing guidelines for donating money to charitable institutions. Once you have done this, it is also essential to discipline yourself to give as a matter of routine.

The third suggestion regarding the principle of abundance is to recognize that it is important for you to actually *spend* money. This does not mean that you should use money recklessly by piling up debt and depleting savings, but rather that it is necessary for you to learn to use money, without the fear of not having enough of it in the future.

Remember, whenever you make the decision to invest in anything that you feel strongly about having or doing, no matter how inexpensive or costly, you are showing your faith that the Universe will in turn provide you with opportunities to experience even greater abundance.

Finally, the fourth suggestion related to the principle of abundance is to understand how critical it is for you to be *doing what you love*. As you do, you effectively tap into the energy of your Higher Self, and in the process allow your limitless 'I' to fully express itself rather than your fearful, self-conscious 'me'. When you are doing something you love, you step outside of your active conscious mind because you are not really thinking about what you're doing, but rather you are 'feeling' it.

Every person in this world does indeed have unique, innate skills that literally crave to be expressed. If you don't believe this is true, remember that the God-Force has never made two people exactly alike. If you feel that there is no way anyone would pay you for doing whatever it is that you love, or that there is limited opportunity in that particular field, think again.

When you make the choice to do what you love, you move into right alignment with the Universe, which consequently allows you to draw to yourself all sorts of new positive energies and opportunities. Nonetheless, if you cannot picture yourself leaving behind the elusive safety of your existing profession, then it is crucial for you to at least develop a more positive attitude regarding it.

This chapter also touched upon the subject of money, stressing the necessity of coming to the understanding that, at its most fundamental level, money is simply another form of energy; it is not by any means abundance itself. So, while money is undoubtedly a vital commodity in modern society, you need to keep it in perspective by acknowledging that it is merely one aspect of that which makes up an abundant life.

It is also important for you to take an inventory of your existing

beliefs about money, for if you are like the average person, somewhere within your subconscious mind are negative beliefs that do not serve you in your efforts to achieve financial independence. It is therefore necessary that you first identify those beliefs, then begin to methodically dispute them, and finally make your best efforts to replace them with beliefs that are positive in nature.

This chapter likewise discussed a technique for disputing unwanted beliefs that is based on a type of psychotherapy called Rational-Emotive Therapy (RET). This technique calls for a scientific approach using reason, logic, and facts to counter 'irrational' beliefs.

Once you begin to liberate yourself from limiting beliefs about money, naturally you will need to replace them with more empowering alternatives. In that regard, it is a good idea to take the time to read a selection of spiritual growth books that have a focus on money or the principle of abundance. In addition, the regular use of affirmations helps to firmly implant new beliefs within your subconscious mind.

Whatever new beliefs about money you choose to adopt, make best efforts to remember that from your soul's point of view, the primary purpose for having money is to buy life experiences, as opposed to just collecting material goods.

Related Reading

Stuart Wilde, *The Little Money Bible*: Chapter 1

Richard & Mary-Alice Jafolla, *The Quest, A Journey of Spiritual Rediscovery*: Chapter 37

Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, *You'll See It When You Believe It*: Chapter 4

Arnold Patent, *You Can Have It All*: Giving and Receiving; Abundance

Deepak Chopra, *Creating Affluence*: Chapter 2

Stuart Wilde, *Infinite Self*: Step 15

Let's move on to Chapter 8 where the principle of Non-attachment is discussed in detail.

9: Forgiveness

*There are people in your life,
Who've come and gone,
they've let you down,
You know they've hurt your pride,
You better put it all behind you,
because life goes on,
You keep carrying that anger,
It will eat you up inside.⁹⁹*

DON HENLEY

"THE HEART OF THE MATTER"

The term *forgiveness* is familiar to virtually all people, yet it is very likely that few truly understand its real meaning. Most individuals tend to regard forgiveness as being a truly magnanimous gesture on *their* part: one that is undertaken on behalf of the other person.

Moreover, those individuals who, as rule practice forgiveness in their lives, tend to be viewed as upstanding human beings of great moral or spiritual fiber. While some folks may merit such lofty praise, the startling truth is that at its most fundamental level, forgiveness is more a *selfish* act than a noble one.

Now it wouldn't surprise me if you are somewhat shocked by the preceding statement, as it clearly runs contrary to conventional teaching on this topic. So for clarification purposes, it should be noted that the word 'selfish' when used in this context does not have a negative meaning. Extending forgiveness to someone is selfish in the sense that it is actually more beneficial to the person doing the forgiving, than it is to the person being forgiven.

The reason for this is quite simple—a sincere act of forgiveness

⁹⁹ Mike Campbell, Don Henley and J.D. Souther, Copyright © 1989 Cass County Music/Wild Gator Music/Ice Age Music (ASCAP) (All rights reserved. Used by permission.) From the CD *The End of the Innocence*, (The David Geffen Company, manufactured exclusively by Warner Bros. Records, Inc., a Time Warner Company. 1988).

allows us to release negative energy (i.e., excessive levels of adrenaline, other stress hormones) that can literally become toxic to the cells within our bodies. This next passage from *Discover the Power Within You* by Eric Butterworth supports this very point:

*Actually, forgiveness is the simplest way
to lighten our burdens. The man who forgives
is no more saintly than one who insists upon keeping clean.
In reality, the act of forgiveness constitutes
a mental bath—letting go of something
that can only poison us within.¹⁰⁰*

Whenever we are unwilling to forgive, what we are doing is wasting a portion of our valuable present moment energy on something that no longer exists, except within the confines of our own mind. As we learned in Chapter 5, this backward ‘time-traveling’ is not the least bit empowering, for by drawing our attention from the ‘now’ it prohibits us from actually healing these outstanding issues and moving forward in life.

Within Western culture, it has only been of late that the medical establishment has begun to acknowledge that a connection does actually exist between the mind (and emotions) and a person’s physical health. In Eastern tradition this connection has been an accepted truth for centuries. Among modern day personal/spiritual growth authors, Deepak Chopra has done an excellent job of bridging this gap between Eastern and Western medicine. This excerpt from his book *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind* is just one example of many that substantiate the impact that state of mind has on physical health:

*Although the image of the body as mindless machine
continues to dominate mainstream Western medicine,
there is unquestionable evidence to the contrary.
Death rates from cancer and heart disease are*

¹⁰⁰ Eric Butterworth, *Discover the Power Within You*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1968) p. 154

*provably higher among people in psychological distress,
and lower among people who have a strong sense of
purpose and well-being.*¹⁰¹

Holding on to resentments (i.e., not forgiving) is also a form of psychological distress, for it is obviously a mental process rather than a physical one. Yet as you persist in clinging to your hurts by refusing to forgive, what you are actually doing is unconsciously storing negative energy within your body that may ultimately develop into some form of illness.

While some may doubt this, remember from Chapter 3 that every thought or feeling has within it the potential to manifest in some physical form. Unfortunately, because of the time it normally takes for the symptoms of a disease to develop, the vast majority of people have no clue that their own habitual negative thinking and feeling (or emotional) patterns may be at the foundation of their illness.

Some of the most compelling work in this area can be found in the writings of Louise Hay, an inspiring woman who literally healed herself of life-threatening cancer. Ms. Hay's *You Can Heal Your Life* is truly a classic book about the mind-body connection as it relates to physical health. Its basic premise is that human beings unconsciously create the 'illnesses' in their bodies, and that diseases originate from a state of unforgiving. As the following passage illustrates, Louise Hay makes it very clear that the key to healing is, in fact, forgiving:

*We need to choose to release the past and forgive everyone,
ourselves included. We may not know how to forgive;
but the very fact we say we are willing to forgive
begins the healing process. It is imperative for our own
healing that "we" release the past and forgive everyone.*¹⁰²

So, if forgiveness does have such a positive effect on both emotion-

¹⁰¹ Deepak Chopra, *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*, op. cit., p. 20

¹⁰² Louise Hay, *You Can Heal Your Life*, (Carson, CA: Hay House, Inc., 1984) p. 13

al and physical health, why is that most people have difficulty practicing it? One reason is that many continue to cling to old admonitions such as, ‘an eye for an eye’ or similar teachings. A second, and perhaps more prevalent reason is that by forgiving, one appears to *condone* whatever inappropriate behavior occurred.

As for the former reason, if you are a person that maintains ‘an eye for an eye’ philosophy, you might want to give some serious thought to this powerful Chinese proverb: “The one who pursues revenge should dig two graves.” With respect to the latter reason, consider this insight from the best-selling author Caroline Myss:

*Forgiving does not mean saying that what happened to you doesn't matter, or that it is all right for someone to have violated you. It simply means releasing the negative feelings you have about that event and the person or persons involved.*¹⁰³

When you do opt to forgive a person or persons that have harmed you, or one or more of your loved ones in some way, you are by no means condoning what they did – not at all. What you *are* demonstrating by practicing forgiveness is that you will not allow your psyche and/or your body to be poisoned by the negative energy associated with holding on to resentments or grudges.

Another reason that people are reluctant to forgive is the misconception that practicing forgiveness requires them to actually communicate that sentiment on either a face-to-face or written basis. In a similar vein, there is also the mistaken belief that forgiving someone implies that the forgiver is willing to personally associate with that individual. From my experience, there is no absolute requirement that you must have any personal interaction with the person you are choosing to forgive, nor does forgiving someone mean that you are obliged to ‘hang out’ with that person.

¹⁰³ Caroline Myss, Ph. D., *Why People Don't Heal and How They Can*, (New York, NY: Harmony Books, 1997) p. 18

Instead of personal confrontation, you can extend your feelings of forgiveness using a prayer-based technique (one such method is discussed later in this chapter), or something similar, and in the process achieve the same beneficial results as if you had handled it personally. On the other hand, if you do feel a compelling desire to handle a given matter on a personal level, then I strongly recommend that before doing so you reflect upon this additional insight from Caroline Myss:

Should you need to contact anyone for a closure discussion, make sure that you are not carrying the message of blame as a private agenda. If you are, you are not genuinely ready to let go and move on. Should you need to share your closure thoughts in a letter to the person, do so, but again, make sure your intention is to retrieve your spirit from yesterday, not to send yet another message of anger.¹⁰⁴

IS ANYTHING UNFORGIVABLE?

There are probably millions of people who would say that the act of forgiving is nearly impossible in some circumstances, particularly when it comes to the perpetrators of heinous and/or violent crimes. While this position is of course very understandable, the fact is there is really nothing that cannot be forgiven, particularly when you fully comprehend that forgiving is about letting go of the toxic thoughts and emotions within *you*.

Without question, it is very difficult to forgive someone who has done something truly atrocious, yet holding on to judgment and anger can only bring greater discomfort. It may take a long time for a person to truly embrace forgiveness under such circumstances, but if one sincerely works at it long enough, they will eventually succeed in doing so. It is a matter of coming to the awareness that

¹⁰⁴ Caroline Myss, Ph. D., *Anatomy of the Spirit*, (New York, NY: Harmony Books, 1996) p. 216

forgiveness is really the only sensible option, for choosing the opposite course (i.e., holding on to resentment) carries with it the prospect of continued emotional suffering, and someday perhaps even severe physical pain as well.

Most everyone has seen the news media relate stories about people affected by violent crime who decide to visit a prison to forgive the person(s) responsible. These individuals are often portrayed as possessing almost a saint-like quality. The segments also tend to imply that what these folks did was well beyond what the average person could do. Yet as this passage from Dr. Joseph Murphy illustrates, every single one of us has the innate potential to behave in the exact same way, for the simple reason that forgiveness is as much a fundamental instinct for us as it is for the life force itself:

*Life forgives you when you cut your finger.
The subconscious intelligence within you sets about immediately
to repair it. New cells build bridges over the cut. . . .
Life holds no grudges against you,
and it is always forgiving you.¹⁰⁵*

Since all of us are individualized aspects of that life force (see Chapter 6, *Oneness*), we do indeed share its instinctive nature to forgive; it is simply a matter of learning to allow that higher aspect of ourselves to shine through the darkness caused by our conditioning. Granted, it can take a lot of practice on our part to learn to allow that natural instinct to express itself, but the potential payoffs (i.e., greater peace of mind, improved relationships, better health) are well worth the effort.

MY EXPERIENCE WITH FORGIVENESS

Prior to reaching my mid-thirties, I had no interest whatsoever in practicing forgiveness. Holding on to resentment and grudges was a

¹⁰⁵ Dr. Joseph Murphy, *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind*, op. cit., p. 181

way of life for me. Whenever any person did something to ‘hurt’ me I couldn’t imagine just letting it go and moving on. There were even times I went as far as choosing to inflict some form of ‘payback’ just to let them know how lousy it felt. As I think back on that time of my life, I am almost amazed that I could have behaved in such destructive and heartless ways.

As with all major transformations that take place in a person’s life, there is usually a watershed event, or a turning point if you will, that causes them to look at something in a totally different way. In my case, the attitude I held about forgiveness was altered more than a decade ago when I read the final chapter of Dr. Wayne Dyer’s book *You’ll See It When You Believe It*. Fittingly titled “Forgiveness,” that chapter contained incredibly valuable and practical information to which I had never previously been exposed.

Today, some twelve years later, I still consider the material within that chapter to be the best I have ever read on this subject, and I strongly recommend it to anyone on the path of spiritual growth. There are in my view, a number of thought-provoking passages in that chapter, but the following one is perhaps most responsible for the significant change that occurred in my attitude about forgiveness:

Follow this logic. Someone has harmed you in some way in your past. You feel hurt and angry, and that anger ultimately turns to hatred. This is your hatred. You own it. It is you and you are it. The hatred is all thought, and is with you wherever you go. You have given someone permission not only to hurt you once, but to continue controlling your inner life. The hatred infects your life while the other person is still on his or her path doing exactly what he or she knows how to do, independent of your current miserable state.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, *You’ll See It When You Believe It*, op. cit., p. 251 - 252

As soon as I read those words, it was immediately obvious to me that Dyer was right. By holding on to resentment and bitterness, the only person I was hurting was myself, because whoever I felt hurt me had already moved on while I remained stuck in the past. It also occurred to me just how much energy I was wasting by hanging on to old hurts, so from that moment on I made the decision to work at dropping all of that old 'baggage'. Moreover, I made a promise to myself to no longer allow new feelings of anger or resentment to gain any sort of foothold in my consciousness.

As fate would have it, this shift in attitude would really prove beneficial a few years down the road when I was a partner in a small business that ultimately failed. For the sake of simplicity, let's just say that near the end of the company's life, the relationships that existed among the partners were not the least bit harmonious. What once could have been a great success, disappointingly never materialized. The end result was that fingers of blame were being pointed in all directions, and an overall feeling of mistrust was prevalent among all parties concerned.

Despite my intention to steer clear of resentment, I too, found myself beset by feelings of blame, anger and frustration. It was a very tough situation for everyone involved, and it became even more difficult after the doors were officially closed for the final time. That was because various legal issues related to the dissolution of the business eventually arose, and they would come to affect every partner involved. When the first set of such issues emerged, I was still dealing with nagging feelings of anger about what had occurred, and the net result was that I incurred a series of very expensive legal fees.

Thankfully, in the middle of that first round of legal activity I finally came to my senses, remembering all I had learned in Dyer's chapter about forgiveness. At that point I realized it was *my* responsibility to remove any lingering anger or resentment I had toward anyone involved in that venture. As I thought more about it, I just knew there had to be a spiritual solution for this problem; some

technique I could apply to assist me in clearing out all of the negative feelings I was carrying around.

So I contacted a friend who had also been on the path of spiritual growth for some time, and she recommended that I add a forgiveness exercise to the 'quiet-time' that I was accustomed to taking on a daily basis. I was also encouraged to vividly picture each of my so-called adversaries, look them in the eye, and sincerely say, "I forgive you, and wish you nothing but peace." Recognizing the importance of leaving all of this negativity behind, I took to this exercise with fervent dedication, making it a part of my daily spiritual practice as prescribed.

Each day I completed the exercise with as much sincere *feeling* as I could, and by the time six months had elapsed, I can truthfully say I did not have a single ounce of animosity toward anyone involved in the situation. This did not mean that I wanted to see them, talk with them, or have anything at all to do with them ever again. It simply meant that I had left behind all of the negative feelings about them.

While I undertook this approach to the situation, I knew that others who were involved weren't addressing the matter in anywhere near the same way. That however, was not my concern. I simply went about living my life and had no interest whatsoever in participating in any additional conflict or negativity. Although there were still open issues to be resolved, from my perspective the matter was finished; I had in effect, already moved on. Interestingly, much later it came to my attention that a second round of legal activity had commenced, and strangely enough every single partner involved was required to participate - everyone that is, *except me*.

You might argue that it was merely a positive twist of fate, others that it was the result of human error, but they would never convince me that anything other than the sincere practice of forgiveness was responsible for what had occurred.

A HELPFUL FORGIVENESS PRAYER

During the past several years, I have had occasion to read a number of excellent spiritual growth books, and in one in particular I discovered a forgiveness prayer that both others and I have found to be very helpful. This prayer, which is printed directly below, comes from a very captivating book called *Awaken to the Healer Within*:

*From the Divine Love that flows within my Being,
I now call forth {insert name} to stand before me as
I stand before you—in Love. I ask now that you forgive me
as I forgive you. I embrace you in Love, and I thank you
for the lessons that we have shared, but I now choose
to release to the Light all bonds between us
except those of unconditional love.
I bid you to go in Peace. So be it!¹⁰⁷*

When said with sincerity, this can be a very powerful prayer, one that I have seen work miracles in a person's life. For example, a very dear friend of mine – a truly wonderful person who had, unfortunately, been physically and emotionally abused throughout his childhood, successfully used it. As he grew into adulthood, the effect of this treatment manifested as problems with substance abuse, and an overall orientation toward over-indulgent behavior. As might be expected, his relationship with his parents was rooted in judgment and negativity, and although both his mother and father clearly knew that they played a part in his dysfunction, neither was capable of accepting any responsibility for it.

During the latter part of the 1990s, this gentleman made the decision to work at overcoming his addictions, and some time after that he recognized the importance of addressing the longstanding issues with his parents as well. One day during one of our frequent

¹⁰⁷ Rich Work w/Ann Marie Groth, *Awaken to the Healer Within*, (Mosinee, WI: Asini Publishing, 1995) p. 168–169

discussions, the subject of his parents came up again, so I took the opportunity to suggest that he begin using the aforementioned prayer every morning just as he awoke. My rationale was simple: he could never truly be free of all that stored negative emotion until he undertook the effort to forgive them. Surprisingly, he agreed with me fully, and promised to begin working with the prayer as suggested.

He worked with it for several months, and as time passed, little by little the chasm that existed between him and his parents narrowed. Today, several years later, the relationship between them is better than he ever thought it could be when he first embarked on this path of forgiveness. These results plainly demonstrate the power of this forgiveness prayer. If you find that you are truly willing to fully let go of a past hurt, then I strongly recommend that you apply it in your life as well.

THEY “KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO”

As you undertake the effort to practice forgiveness in your life, it is also appropriate to take into consideration the words of Jesus as he neared his death, “Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do.” Although this statement is familiar to many, I believe that most individuals would believe instead that those who harmed them were actually *well aware* of what they were doing.

From my experiences on this path, I’ve come to believe that a person who does harm to another is simply doing what they know how to do at the time given the level of their awareness of spiritual principles, nothing more, nothing less. While it can be difficult to adopt this perspective when an individual does something that is really mean or hurtful, if you got down to the heart of the matter, you would find they were merely doing the best they could in that moment to deal with *their own* life’s issues and fears.

Think about it for a moment, and you realize that it is true; people (including you) are generally so focused on themselves and their own personal drama that they tend to be oblivious to what anyone else is going through at the time. That’s why it is important for you

not to take things personally, for people will be what people will be, and the underlying cause of their behavior actually has nothing to do with you. In that regard, consider this passage from a marvelous book called *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz:

*Personal importance, or taking things personally,
is the maximum expression of selfishness
because we make the assumption that everything is about “me.”
Nothing other people do is because of you.
It is because of themselves.
All people live in their own dream, in their own mind;
they are in a completely different world than the one we live in.
When we take something personally, we make the assumption
that they know what is in our world, and we try
to impose our world on their world. Even when a situation
seems so personal, even if others insult you directly,
it has nothing to do with you.¹⁰⁸*

When you can truly embrace this perspective, you will come to understand exactly what Jesus meant by “they know not what they do,” and you’ll also put yourself in a position where no one can ever really hurt you again. If you have any doubt that the latter can be true, then I strongly suggest that you read Ruiz’s entire book, and pay particular attention to Chapter 3, “The Second Agreement: Don’t Take Anything Personally.”

FORGIVING YOURSELF

Many of us human beings have the tendency to be much harder on ourselves than we are on anyone else. We commonly feel remorseful about things we have said or done in the past, and at times those feelings become so intense that we actually begin to condemn ourselves. From my perspective, most of the guilt and the feelings of self-condemnation we experience are a complete waste of

¹⁰⁸ Don Miguel Ruiz, *The Four Agreements*, (San Rafael, CA: Amber-Allen Publishing, 1997) p. 48–49

energy, for what's done is truly done. The act of going back and repeatedly reliving the experience merely serves to take you out of the present moment, which as we learned in Chapter 5, is the only time that really exists in the first place.

The solution is therefore very simple: Learn to *forgive yourself* just as you forgive others, for you too were merely doing the best you knew how to do at that particular time. Equally as important, you need to develop the understanding that whatever did occur needed to happen for you to become the person you are today.

Easier said than done you might say, as self-forgiveness is not always a simple task, especially in the case of acts that caused significant pain or distress to other people. Nevertheless, if you aren't willing to release all of the resentment you feel toward yourself, how can you expect to be forgiven by whomever it is that you harmed? Moreover, without self-forgiveness, you simply cannot move forward in your spiritual growth, nor can you hope to succeed in your personal healing efforts.

To assist you in this process of forgiving yourself, I highly recommend the use of the following prayer, which I came across a few years ago. It is one that has always been of great value to me in my own efforts to release myself from past mistakes:

*Spirit of the living God within, my precious holy Self,
I totally and completely forgive myself for every thought,
feeling, word, deed of the past. I release everything to you,
all of my self-condemnation, all of my guilt, and all of my fear,
and I close the door on all that was yesterday.
As I forgive myself I know that I am forgiving all,
for I am everyone, and everyone is me,
and through the cleansing action of forgiveness
we are all wonderfully free.¹⁰⁹*

¹⁰⁹ John Randolph Price, *The Angels Within Us*, (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1993) p. 29

By saying this prayer each day with sincerity, I assure you that it will become increasingly easy for you to accept and approve of yourself, regardless of your past errors. So give it a try, my friend; what have you got to lose but some negative energy that can only harm you as you move forward in your life?

FORGIVENESS AND BLAME

As you continue along the path of spiritual growth, it is inevitable that you arrive at the point where you come to accept a simple but profound truth about forgiveness—that in order to forgive, you must first have assigned blame. Put another way, there is only a need to practice forgiveness when you fail to comprehend that at some level you are responsible for everything that you experience in life.

Coming to such a sophisticated level of awareness doesn't necessarily happen overnight. It is obvious that some really lousy things regularly happen to people who clearly would not have deliberately chosen to experience them. Yet as we learned in Chapter 4, literally everything that happens to us does originate from a cause that we *ourselves* put into motion through the energy signals (i.e., conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings) we are always emitting.

What is unfortunate though, is that once again people are simply not conscious of all of the signals they are giving off, nor are most aware that they always have a choice as to how they process the behavior of others. The majority of human beings have trouble accepting the idea that they are actually responsible for the people, things and circumstances that show up in their lives. If you are a part of that majority, and happen to believe that the negative conditions you encounter are primarily the fault of *others*, then you need to understand that by assigning blame you are not in any way helping yourself.

When you blame other people, you effectively put both your feelings and your state-of-mind at the mercy of someone else's behavior (e.g., I'll be happy or satisfied when they apologize, or start or stop

doing X or Y or Z, etc.). The better approach is for you to accept full responsibility for your life, adopting instead the perspective that it was *you* who attracted this negative person or situation to yourself so that you might learn a valuable lesson. It is from this position of personal power that true-life changes can occur.

To close this discussion about the principle of forgiveness, I will leave you with this additional thought-provoking passage from *Excuse Me, Your Life Is Waiting* by Lynn Grabhorn:

*[True] forgiveness is about no longer holding onto or stewing over
(focusing on) the thing that got us all riled up to begin with.
And that holds true whether it happened five minutes
or fifty years ago. Why? Because unless we let it go,
we'll keep getting more of it, that's why.
If we hold on to it, it's in our vibration.
And if it's in our vibration, we're either going to attract it,
or something similar in vibration. Over and over.¹¹⁰*

Ms. Grabhorn is correct, when you do make the choice *not* to forgive, you simply wind up storing negative energy within your consciousness, and that energy only serves to attract more of the same types of people and situations that brought pain or negativity to you in the first place. That is why it's so critical that you learn to forgive the past and completely let it go, for it *is* indeed already gone.

SUMMING IT ALL UP

The principle of forgiveness is a familiar but typically misunderstood concept, as most people tend to view it as a truly noble gesture on the part of the person doing the forgiving. The act of forgiving is actually a very selfish gesture, in that it provides you with the valuable opportunity to release toxic, negative feelings. Forgiveness essentially allows you to lighten your emotional burdens, and draws

¹¹⁰ Lynn Grabhorn, *Excuse Me, Your Life Is Waiting* op. cit., p. 212

your attention out of the past and into the present.

Forgiveness not only helps you to become healthier emotionally, it also has a positive impact on your physical health. Medical studies have confirmed that death rates from certain illnesses are higher among people in psychological distress. Holding on to resentment is just such a form of distress, because it puts you into a position where you are inadvertently storing negative energy in the very cells of your body—energy that can ultimately manifest itself as some type of illness.

While forgiveness does have a positive effect on both emotional and physical health, many people still find it very difficult to practice it. Some have this difficulty because they were conditioned to accept the Old Testament “eye-for-an-eye” mentality, others, because they believe that forgiving means condoning whatever inappropriate behavior occurred. The truth is that forgiveness does not mean that what occurred was in any way acceptable, it merely means releasing the negative feelings you have regarding the matter.

Although many believe that practicing forgiveness is nearly impossible in some instances, there is nothing that cannot be forgiven once you come to understand that forgiving is all about letting go of the toxic thoughts and emotions within *you*.

Though the media tends to almost deify individuals who choose to forgive the perpetrator of a violent act for instance, all of us have the potential to act in the same way. Just as the life force itself forgives you every time you hurt yourself, as an individual aspect of that Divine consciousness you too have within you the same potential to be forgiving.

When you hold on to resentment, the only person you are really hurting is yourself. This is because typically the one who ‘hurt’ you has already left the matter behind while you remain mired in the past. There is a spiritual solution to this problem, and that is to make it a daily practice to call that person into your consciousness, and extend forgiveness to them until all of your feelings of resentment dissolve. To assist you in this process, a helpful forgiveness

prayer was provided in the text of this chapter.

This chapter also pointed out the importance of remembering the words of Jesus as he neared his death: “Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do.” While many may feel that people are aware of what they are doing, the reality is that all individuals are simply doing the best they know how to do at any particular time, given the level of their awareness of spiritual principles.

People are usually so focused on their own life that they are, for the most part, unaware of what anyone else is experiencing at the time. For this reason, it is vital that you learn not to take things personally, for other people live in their own dream, in their own mind, and therefore are in a completely different world than the one in which you live.

In addition to forgiving others, it is crucial that you learn to forgive yourself as well. No matter how poorly you may have behaved, whatever you have done in the past is over, and simply put, you would not be the person you are today without that experience. Like everyone else, you were simply doing the best you knew how to do at the time, so release any feelings of self-condemnation. To assist you in this process, a helpful prayer for self-forgiveness was provided in the text of this chapter.

As you proceed in your spiritual growth, you will eventually reach the point where you come to understand a simple but powerful truth about forgiveness—that in order to forgive, you must have first assigned blame. Once you do accept that at some level you do attract (or create) everything that you experience in your life, there is no longer any need to forgive anyone.

Reaching this level of awareness takes time, of course, for some nasty things can happen to you that you certainly would not have consciously chosen. Yet we know from Chapter 4 that the real reason you experience negative ‘surprises’ in your life is that you are not always conscious of the signals (i.e., thoughts, feelings) you are sending out into the world.

If you are unable to accept this premise, then understand that whenever you blame, you only weaken yourself. Why? Because you put yourself into a position where both your feelings and your state-of-mind are always at the mercy of someone else's behavior.

It is therefore far better to accept complete responsibility for your life, and acknowledge that whatever circumstances you encounter contain within them a valuable lesson that you most definitely need to learn.

Related Reading

Eric Butterworth, *Discover the Power Within You*: Chapter 12

Deepak Chopra, *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*: Part One

Louise Hay, *You Can Heal Your Life*: Chapter 1

Caroline Myss, *Why People Don't Heal and How They Can*: Chapter 1

Caroline Myss, *Anatomy of the Spirit*: Chapter 4

Dr. Joseph Murphy, *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind*: Chapter 17

Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, *You'll See It When You Believe It*: Chapter 7

Don Miguel Ruiz, *The Four Agreements*: Chapter 3

Lynn Grabhorn, *Excuse Me, Your Life Is Waiting*: Chapter Nine

This ends our discussion about spiritual principles. The next and final chapter of *Spirituality Simplified*, which is called "The Path of Spiritual Growth," features an assortment of information designed to help you in your efforts to grow spiritually, including a discussion about a group of self-help techniques that I have found to be very valuable in my own spiritual development.