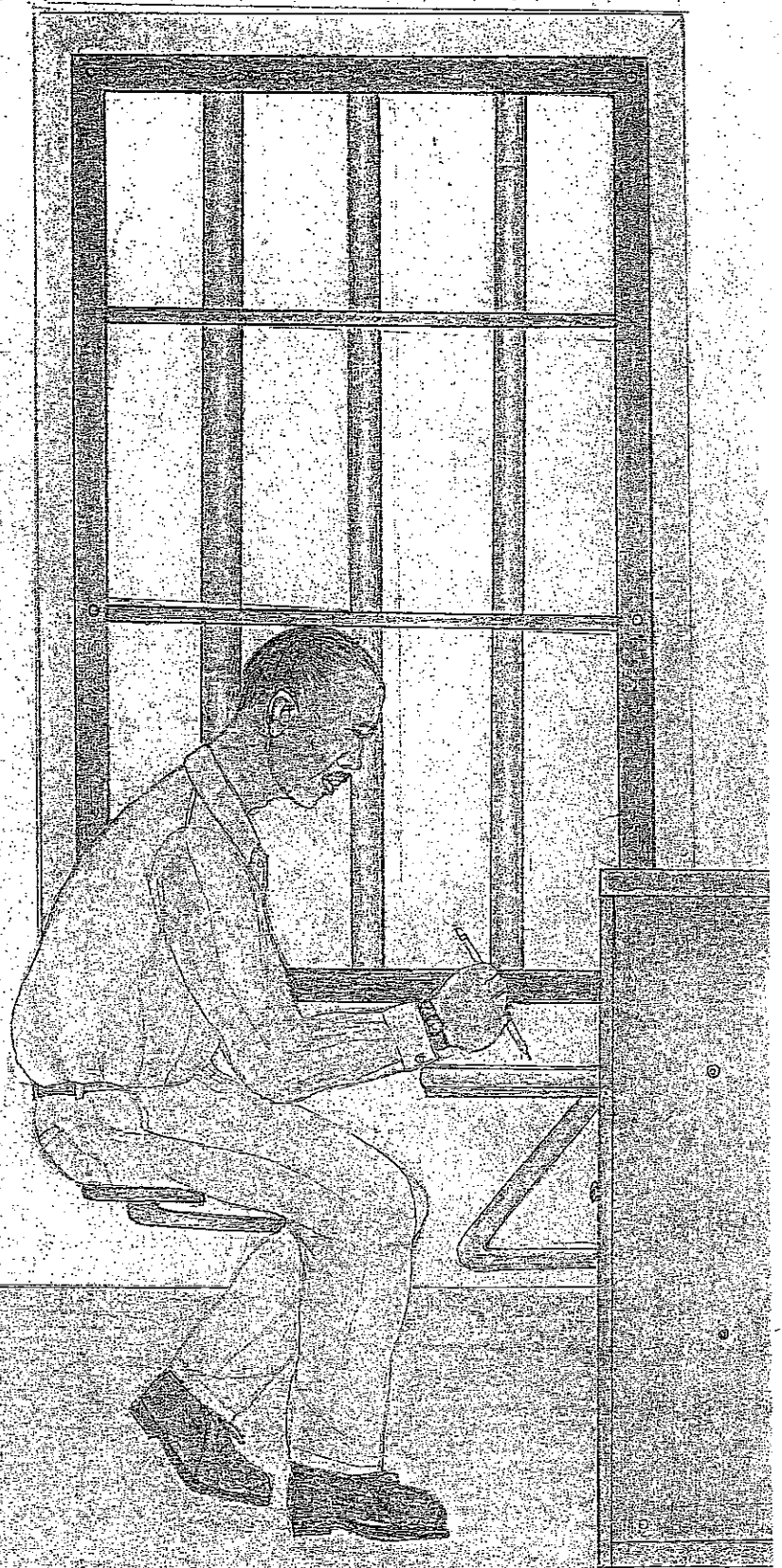


# Wisdom

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"Within"

Ernesto Cole

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# INTRODUCTION

The purpose, of "Wisdom From Within" is to add practicality to the Recidawareness (recidivism awareness) workshop, which is geared to teach us how to develop and increase mind-fitness for a benign cause, the use of its direct power for our benefit and society's, and to better conditions in our lives and around us. The course also focuses on how to reduce the struggles of re-entry and help the participants realize the different levels of anxieties and distortions that create the chase for passions.

We all need a successful re-integration to society and this is why the workshop focuses on the guide for self-discovery, improvement, balances related to the physical character, surroundings, social relation, and culture. The workshop also recognizes that we are all different and have different ways of understanding and absorbing information thus, the reason for this booklet.

Before you begin reading this material, I would like to recommend two mental shifts that will greatly enhance the value you receive from it. First, do not "look" at this material as a book, in a sense that it is something to read once and put it on a shelf. You may choose to read it completely through once for a sense of the whole, but this material is designed to be a companion in the continual process of change and growth. It is not written in an "organized" fashion; since situations in life do not occur in an organized way; but in a manner, that as you read it, it will oblige you to reflect and become more aware. As you progress through deeper levels of reflections, you can go back time and again to the essays and other material and expand your knowledge, skill, and desire.

Second, I suggest you shift your position of involvement in this material from role of learner to that of teacher. Take an inside-out approach and read with the purpose in mind of sharing or discussing what you

learn with someone else, preferably within two days after you learn it. If you approach this material in such manner, you will not only remember what you read, but your perspective will be expanded, your understanding deepened, and your motivation to apply the material increased.

Additionally, you may notice the title **"Wisdom From Within"** and an incarcerated individual writing from a prison cell and think you're going home soon and thus **this material** does not apply to you. Activating events and situations happen in life **whether incarcerate or not therefore, the material** herein applies to any human with a conscience. Furthermore, **the word within is quoted solely to reflect on the fact that the material in this booklet comes from within the writer's heart and soul via prison\_ nothing more nothing less.**

Please enjoy and benefit from its content.

Thank you very much for your time and God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

# QUESTIONS

1- WHY ARE YOU ATTENDING THIS PROGRAM?

2-WHERE DO YOU PLAN TO GO FROM HERE?

3- WHAT IS GOING WELL?

4- WHERE CAN YOU IMPROVE?

5- HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

6- HOW CAN YOU HELP US?

7- IF YOU WERE YOUR OWN MENTOR, WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST FOR YOURSELF?

## GREETINGS. BLESSINGS. LOVE.

Dear friends, life has brought us together at this moment for a great purpose: positive change. Individually and collectively, we stand at a crossroads, in a state of transition between what has been and what could be. The choices we make in thought, word, and action create an immeasurable ripple effect, influencing everyone and everything around us. In any given moment, we are either choosing consciously (meaning we are aware of our decisions) or we are thinking unconsciously (that is, without awareness). Conscious choices affirm life, unaware choices destroy it. These choices are the seed from which we shape our world. Thus, here we are.

You may be holding these pages right now for the same reason I wrote them: because we know it is time. It is time to ascend to the next level, individually and collectively, so that we can consciously create a harmonious, prosperous, and sustainable future while honoring each one's uniqueness. We each have an important role to play. To authentically support others on their path and fulfill our destiny, it is essential to elevate pure thinking, evolve our language, and live with awareness of how our presence influences the whole of existence.'

Please allow me to share a bit about my life and what has inspired me to write these pages so that your credence will be forthcoming. My name is Ernesto Cole Jr. and I was born in Col on, Panama many years ago to the most loving, caring, and God-loving woman I've known.

I was sent to Boston, Massachusetts to live with my Daddy – God rest his soul – and acquire a better education. During those years, my confusion, negativity, and peer pressures were so disruptive that I was sent back to Panama by my Daddy. While back home, my unconscious choices were very destroying to all

around me that even psychiatric intervention was sought after for me by my dear mother. Eventually, I migrated back to the U.S.A. and by continuing to make very bad choices, here I am serving two life sentences and more. Many of you may think, "If that's the case, what can he do or say to help me?" Well gentlemen, that's exactly the point, due to my experiences and errors of the past, you will get a true example of what the power of positive thinking and change can do for you in every sense of the word.

In this Recidivism Awareness workshop, you will embark on a journey of a deeper understanding of who you are and why you are here. All you must do is stay COMMITTED (emphasis intended) and the rest will come to you, deal? In the meantime, allow me to introduce you to something I've come across in my readings that has helped me stay deeply committed to my purpose in life of being content and happy with myself, others, surroundings, and serving all I can. It is what I call "the 10 secrets to a beautiful and purposeful life," and those topics will be touched during this wonderful and insightful workshop.

**Secret 1** – The world is what you think it is. You are creating your experience of the world moment by moment. The secret is that we each live in our own separate reality. This isn't some kind of an esoteric theory, but a physiological fact. Our brains filter information through, the five senses, then make representations of that information inside our minds. We then experience these representations, first as thoughts and then as emotions. But as we represent the information in our minds, certain bits of the data are inevitably deleted, distorted, and generalized. And since we all delete, distort, and generalize that information slightly differently, we all have slightly (or sometimes completely) different perceptions of what is going on around us.

In other words, the way we think determines what we see, hear, and feel, regardless of what's actually going on around us in the world. Or, to put it slightly differently, there's what happens, and there's what we think about what happens.

And what makes this important is that the lion's share of our decisions, feelings, and actions in life will be based on our thoughts, not the objective facts.

**Secret 2** – Well-being is not the fruit of something you do; it is the essence of who you are. There's nothing you need to change, do, be, or have in order to be happy. The reason why this understanding of the source of well-being is so significant is that so much of our energy and time is squandered in pursuing goals and projects and financial incentives and relationships that we believe will "make" us happy. And so much of the stress and strain we experience in our lives is brought on by our misguided attempt to make ourselves feel better by having, doing, or achieving the right things. Simply put, what we attribute our good feelings to will determine what we do and where we go to get more of them.

**Secret 3** – There's nowhere for you to go you're just here. This thought could be disturbing at first to people who feel that "the next big thing" is continually just around the corner. But if they sit with it, most feel their shoulders begin to relax as their experience of the present moment deepens.

Of course, just because there's nowhere to get to doesn't mean you'll no longer travel, just that you'll no longer do so in order to get somewhere that's better than right where your sitting now. It doesn't mean that you can't upgrade your car, your job, your finances, or even your relationship. It just means that if you do, it will be because you want to, not because you think you have to or should.

**Secret 4** – What you decide will never impact your life as much as how you handle the consequences of that decision. In other words, marrying the wrong person is just a mistake; staying married to them for the next 25 years and being -miserable about it is a bad decision.

Choosing one job over another might be a mistake; giving up on your career and spending the rest of your life pining over what might have been is a bad decision.

Getting tipsy and embarrassing yourself in front of that hottie from the office might be a mistake; letting it define you as a loser, a drunk, or someone not fit for human society would be a bad decision.

**Secret 5** – Every emotion you experience is a direct response to a thought, not to the world around you. The more clearly you see that your emotions are always reactions to your thoughts, not to the world, the easier it is to simply feel them and let them go. And the gift of that insight is that you stop needing to

change the world in order to change the way you feel. Therefore, there's no such thing as a "bad day." Your day doesn't create your mood; your mood creates your day.

**Secret 6** – No matter what seems to be going on in your life, you don't have to do anything. Everything you do (or don't do) is a choice. Given that, why would anyone ever choose to do anything they didn't want to do? Two reasons: 1) Because they think it's necessary in order to get or-maintain something that they want. 2) In order to live up to an idea of how they're supposed to be in the world. In other words, we do what we do (and-don't do what we don't do) either because we want to, because we think it's a prerequisite for getting something else that we want (in other words because we "have" to), or because we think it will make us into the kind of person we're supposed to be (i.e., because we "should").

In a nutshell: Being overwhelmed is just a thought. No matter what seems to be going on in your life, you don't have to do anything. Everything you do (or don't do) is a choice. When in doubt, slow down. Clarity, structure, and boldness underpin every time management system in the world.

**Secret 7** – You create other people by how you listen to them. Now, obviously this is not meant literally. But in the same way that we'll almost always see what we're looking for, we'll nearly always hear what we're listening for. This creates a self-fulfilling prophesy within our relationships. If I'm listening for my lover, I'm *sure* to hear her. If I'm listening for a harriidan of a wife, I'll hear her too. Listen for your loving son and he's bound to respond; listen for that irresponsible young man and sure enough, he's there. This works because our relationships with other people happen almost entirely in our heads. Remember that when you think about people, you aren't actually thinking about the *real* them, you're thinking about a representation of them in your mind, like an icon on a computer. You're actually re-creating them in your mind; and you're deleting, distorting, and generalizing some of their characteristics as you do so.

**Secret 8** – You can ask anyone for anything when you make it okay for them to say "no." Your ability to not take the word no personally, no matter how dramatically that "no" may be delivered, is the key to success, not (by definition) because people will always say yes, but because it won't be emotionally

devastating to you if they don't. The more comfortable you get with the word no, the less likely you are to get caught up in a sort of "post-traumatic stress disorder" of the mind, walking on eggshells and becoming more and more afraid to ask for what you want.

**Secret 9** – Financial security doesn't come from the amount of money you currently have; it comes from your ability to get more of it whenever you want. Master the art of serving others and you will secure your financial future. The fact is, money and wood (and metal and pork bellies) are just commodities. The difference between them is that you buy wood with money and you "buy" money with service. In this since, money is just a measure of the difference you're making in the world, If you1 re not making any difference, it will be difficult to make any money.

**Secret 10** – There is never a good reason not to hope. The dictionary defines hope as "a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen" and "as grounds for believing that something good may happen."

False hope, then, doesn't have to do with my feeling of expectation and desire for my relationships to be successful, my business to make money, and my body to be healthy, but with my grounds for believing that these things are possible.

If I ask you to believe in yourself and your dream because I have a "secret" knowledge of the future that reveals that as long as you do X, Y, and Z, you'll ultimately succeed, that is unfortunately false grounds for hope, I have no such knowledge. However, if I ask you to believe in. yourself and your dreams because there are, hundreds if not thousands of stories of people who have succeeded in spite of the evidence, that is indeed grounds for legitimate hope, regardless of how things ultimately turn out.

## CONCLUSION

As you begin to gain insight into these secrets for yourself, your life will begin to transform. *Results* will matter less than ever, and you'll find yourself producing them even more consistently. Your fears and stresses will fall away as you recognize that the capacity to create the life you want to live has been inside

you right from the very beginning. You may even find that your biggest problem is that you have no more big problems.

As your life gets better and better, it will begin to have a positive impact on the people around you and transform their lives, too. Even if your *job description* isn't part of the helping profession, people will just feel more relaxed in themselves when they're with you. They'll find themselves creating more effortless success in their lives and producing results far beyond their expectations. There's nothing you need to do to make this happen, it's the natural result of resting in your innate well-being and evolving your understanding of how people are creating their experience of whatever it is they're expecting.

Happiness and a meaningful life come from making differences. But this is the most important rule to follow: always make the differences you can make, not the differences you would prefer to make but can't. That being said, allow me to conclude with what I've learned and experienced by sharing it with you from the depth of my heart: You have wisdom inside you – listen for it and give it voice. You have a light inside you – feel its glow and let it shine. You have the power to speak and act and make things manifest in the world, let your wisdom and light guide you as you do.

With lots of love and thanks.

Ernesto Cole

# THE MAGIC OF STORYTELLING

Storytelling is an ancient art with the power to heal, teach, and give cause for reflection. Elders and wise ones share stories with their young, contemporaries, and tribes to carry on tradition and awaken understanding. I enjoy storytelling, both sharing and hearing and thus; the reason for the following:

## THE LION AND THE FOX

A man was walking through the woods outside his home one day when he came across a hungry, fox who seemed to be at death's door. Because he was a kind man, he thought to bring it some food, but before he could go back to his home, he heard a fearsome roar and hid behind a tree. In seconds, a mountain lion appeared, dragging the carcass of its freshly caught prey. The lion ate its fill and then wandered off, leaving the remains for the grateful fox.

The man was overwhelmed by this example of an abundant and benevolent universe and decided that he wouldn't return to his home or his job. Instead of working hard to provide for himself, he would follow the example of the fox and allow the universe to provide for him.

Needless to say, the fox wandered off, and as days turned to weeks, the man himself was hungry and at death's door. Despite his best efforts to retain his faith, he was becoming desperate. In a rare moment of inner quiet, he heard the still, small voice of his own wisdom: "Why have you sought to emulate the fox instead of the lion?"

With that, the man returned home and ate his fill.

## LOVE COMES FIRST

A woman came out of her house and saw 3 old men with long white beards sitting in her front yard. She did not recognize them. She said "I don't think I know you, but you must be hungry. Please come in and have something to eat." "Is the man of the house home?" they asked. "No", she replied.

"He's out." "Then we cannot come in," they replied.

In the evening when her husband came home, she told him what had happened. "Go tell them I am home and invite them in!" The woman went out and invited the men in. "We do not go into a House together," they replied. "Why is that?" she asked. One of the old men explained: "His name is Wealth," he said pointing to one of his friends, and said pointing to another one, "He is Success, and I am Love." Then he added, "Now go in and discuss with your husband which one of us you want in your home.

The woman went in and told her husband what was said.

Her husband was overjoyed. "How nice!!" he said. "Since that is the case, let us invite Wealth. Let him come and fill our home with wealth!" His wife disagreed. "My dear, why don't we invite Success?" Their daughter-in-law was listening from the other corner of the house. She jumped in with her own suggestion: "Would it not be better to invite Love? Our home will then be filled with love!"

"Let us heed our daughter-in-law's advice," said the husband to his wife. "Go out and invite Love to be our guest." The woman went out and asked the 3 old men, "Which one of you has Love? Please come in and be our guest." Love got up and started walking toward the house. The other two also got up and followed him. Surprised, the lady asked Wealth and Success: "I only invited Love, Why are you coming in?" The old men replied together: "If you had invited Wealth or Success, the other two of us would've stayed out, but since you invited Love, wherever He goes, we go with him. Wherever there is Love, there is also Wealth and Success!!!!"

## THE WATERBEARER

A water bearer in China had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water.

At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream.

"I am ashamed of myself, and because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house. "

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaws, and I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walked back, you've watered them.

For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house."

Moral: Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all cracked pots.

But it's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives together so very interesting and rewarding. You've just got to take each person for what they are, and look for the good in them. Blessings to all my crackpot friends.

## THROWING STARFISH

A man was walking along the beach after a storm when he came across an old woman throwing starfish that had washed up on shore back into the sea.

When he asked her what she was doing, she said she'd always wanted to make a difference and had decided that today was a' good day to begin.

The man looked from her to the thousands of starfish that lay dying along the coastline and said, "For every starfish you throw back into the ocean, three more wash up onto the shore! How can you possibly be making a difference?"

The woman looked thoughtful for a moment; then she picked up another starfish and threw it back into the sea.

She smiled. "Made a difference to that one."

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## AN OLD SIOUX LEGEND

In ancient times, the Creator wanted to hide something from the humans until they were ready to see it. He gathered all the other creatures of creation to ask for their advice.

The eagle said, "Give it to me and I will take it to the highest mountain in all the land," but the Creator said, "No, one day they will conquer the mountain and find it."

The salmon said, "Leave it with me and I will hide it at the very bottom of the ocean," but the Creator said, "No, for humans are explorers at heart, and one day they will go there, too. "

The Buffalo said, "I will take it and bury it in the very heart of the great plains," but the Creator said, "No, for one day even the skin of the earth will be ripped open, and they will find it there."

The creatures of creation were stumped, but then an old blind mole spoke up. "Why don't you put it inside them that's the very last place they'll look."

The Creator said, "It is done."

## THE GENERAL AND THE CEO

A four-star general was taking a tour of the company that had been hired by the military to complete a major defense contract.

Despite the CEO's assurance that this particular project would be completed on time, the general felt that the CEO's team was not 100 percent committed to getting the job done.

He argued that they should remain at work and do "whatever it takes" to succeed, even if it meant working much longer hours, taking extra time away from home and family, and putting themselves under additional personal pressure and stress. He told the CEO that understanding personnel management was like eating bacon and eggs for breakfast: the chicken was "involved"; the pig was "committed."

The contractor smiled and said, "Well, that's true, General, but the pig is dead, and the chicken is still producing eggs. I want my people to stay 'involved'."

The general backed down, and the project was completed on time.

## WHY DOES A BIRD SING?

A teacher who had received much acclaim for his insights and discourses into the nature of the universe was asked by one of his students what difference he hoped to make in the world through his teaching.

After a few moments' thought, the teacher replied that he had no such hopes. "Those who can truly hear what I have to say don't really need me to say it, those who can't hear could listen until I was hoarse and could no longer speak without changing in the slightest."

The student was confused.

"But if you can't make a difference with your ideas, why do you teach at all?"

The teacher smiled.

"Why does a bird sing?"

## THE YOUNG SAMURAI

A young samurai warrior stood respectfully before the aged Zen master and said, "Master, teach me about Heaven and Hell." The master snapped his head up in disgust and said, "Teach you about Heaven and Hell? Why, I doubt that you could even learn to keep your own sword from rusting! You ignorant fool! How dare you suppose that you could understand anything I might have to say?"

The old man went on and on, becoming even more insulting, while the young swordsman's surprise turned first to confusion and then to hot anger rising by the moment. Master or no master, who can insult a Samurai and live?

At last, with teeth clenched and blood nearly boiling in fury, the warrior blindly drew his sword and prepared to end the old man's sharp tongue and life all in one furious stroke.

But at that very moment the master looked straight into his eyes and said gently, "That's Hell."

Even at the peak of his rage, the Samurai realized that the master had indeed, given him the teaching he had asked for.

He had hounded him into a living Hell, driven by uncontrolled anger and ego.

The young man, deeply humbled, sheathed his sword and bowed low in awe to this great spiritual teacher. Looking up into the master's ancient, smiling face, he felt more love and compassion than he had ever felt in all his life and at that point the master raised his index finger and said kindly, "And that's Heaven."

## DON'T BREAK THE ELASTIC

In April, Maya Angelou was interviewed by Oprah on her 70+ birthday.

Maya really is a marvel who has led quite an interesting and exciting life.

Oprah asked her what she thought of growing older. And, there on television, she said it was "exciting."

Regarding body changes, she said there were many, occurring every day, like her breasts. They seem to be in a race to see which one will reach her waist first. The audience laughed so hard they cried. She is such a simple and honest woman, with so much wisdom in her words.

"I've learned that no matter what happens, or how bad it seems today, life does go on, and it will be better tomorrow."

I've learned that you can tell a lot about a person by the way he/she handles these three things: a rainy day, lost luggage, and tangled Christmas tree lights.

I've learned that regardless of your relationship with your parents, you'll miss them when they're gone from your life.

I've learned that making a "living" is not the same thing as making a "life."

I've learned that life sometimes gives you a second chance.

I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands; you need to be able to throw something back.

I've learned that whenever I decide something with an open heart, I usually make the right decision.

I've learned that even when I have pains, I don't have to be one.

I've learned that every day you should reach out and touch someone. People love a warm hug, or just a friendly pat on the back.

I've learned that I still have a lot to learn.

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

A young man learns what's most important in life from the guy next door.

It had been some time since Jack had seen the old man. College, girls, career, and life itself got in the way.

In fact, Jack moved clear across the country in pursuit of his dreams. There, in the rush of his busy life, Jack had little time to think about the past and often no time to spend with his wife and son... He was working on his future, and nothing could stop him.

Over the phone, his mother told him, "Mr. Belser died last night. The funeral is Wednesday." Memories flashed through his mind like an old newsreel as he sat quietly remembering his childhood days.

"Jack, did you hear me?"

"Oh, sorry, Mom. Yes, I heard you... It's been so long since I thought of him. I'm sorry, but I honestly thought he died years ago," Jack said.

"Well, he didn't forget you. Every time I saw him he'd ask how you were doing. He'd reminisce about the many days you spent over 'his side of the fence,' as he put it," Mom told him.

"I loved that old house he lived in," Jack said.

"You know, Jack, after your father died, Mr. Belser stepped in to make sure you had a man's influence in your life," she said.

"He's the one who taught me carpentry," he said. "I wouldn't be in this business if it weren't for him. He spent a lot of time teaching me things he thought were important... Mom, I'll be there for the funeral," Jack said.

As busy as he was, he kept his word... Jack caught the next flight to his hometown. Mr. Belser's funeral was small and uneventful. He had no children of his own, and most of his relatives had passed away.

The night before he had to return home, Jack and his Mom stopped by to see the old house next door one

more time.

Standing in the doorway, Jack paused for a moment. It was like crossing over into another dimension, a leap through space and time. The house was exactly as he remembered. Every step held memories. Every picture, every piece of furniture... Jack stopped suddenly.

"What's wrong, Jack?" his Mom asked.

"The box is gone," he said.

"What box?" Mom asked.

"There was a small gold box that he kept locked on top of his desk. I must have asked him a thousand times what was inside. All he'd ever tell me was 'the thing I value most,'" Jack said.

It was gone. Everything about the house was exactly how Jack remembered it, except for the box. He figured someone from the Belser family had taken it.

"Now I'll never know what was so valuable to him," Jack said. "I'll better get some sleep. I have an early flight home, Mom."

It had been about two weeks since Mr. Belser died. Returning home from work one-day Jack discovered a note in his mailbox. "Signature required on a package. No one at home. Please stop by the main post office within the next three days, the note read.

Early the next day Jack retrieved the package. The small box was old and looked like it had been mailed a hundred years ago. The handwriting was difficult to read, but the return address caught his attention. "Mr. Harold Belser," it read.

Jack took the box out to his car and ripped open the package.

There inside was the gold box and an envelope. Jack's hands shook as he read the note inside.

"Upon my death, please forward this box and its content to Jack Bennett. It's the thing I valued most in my life." A small key was taped to the letter. His heart racing, as tears filling his eyes, Jack carefully unlocked

the box... There inside he found a beautiful gold pocket watch...

Running his fingers slowly over the finely etched casing, he unlatched the cover... Inside he found these words engraved, "Jack, Thanks for your time! Harold Belser."

"The thing he valued most was... my time."

Jack held the watch for a few minutes, then called his office and cleared his appointments for the next two days. "Why?" Janet, his assistant asked.

"I need some time to spend with my son," he said.

"Oh, by the way, Janet, thanks for your time!"

Think about this. You may not realize it, but it's 100% true.

1. At least 2 people in this world love you so much they would die for you.
2. At least 15 people in this world love you in some way.
3. A smile from you can bring happiness to anyone, even if they don't like you.
4. Every night, SOMEONE thinks about you before they go to sleep.
5. You mean the world to someone.
6. If not for you, someone may not be living.
7. You are special and unique.
8. When you think you have no chance of getting what you want, you probably won't get it, but if you trust God to do what's best, and wait on His time, sooner or later, you will get it or something better.
9. When you make the biggest mistake ever, something good can still come from it.
10. When you think the world has turned its back on you, take a look: you most likely turned your back on the world.

11. Someone that you don't even know exists loves you.
12. Always remember the compliments you received. Forget the rude remarks.
13. Always tell someone how you feel about them; you will feel much better when they know and you'll both be happy.
14. If you have a great friend, take the time to let them know that they are great.

Send this letter to all the people you care about, if you do so, you will certainly brighten someone's day and might change their perspective of life...for the better.

To everyone I send this to, "Thanks for your time"

## **EVERY PLACE CAN BE A HOLY PLACE**

We are behind walls. For a while, we are being punished for our actions. However, we should understand that the place where we are living right now could be made into a perfect place. We came here with all our sins and faults but when we leave we could be free of all faults. We could be pure.

In India there are holy rivers, and it is said that if you take a bath in them you become free of sins. In the same way your jail could also be a holy place.

You must have heard of Mahatma Gandhi. After being a militant and then fighting against injustice and for freedom, was put in prison and there he learned the teachings of peace and nonviolence and came out of prison as a great being who freed India without using weapons.

There was another great leader called Lokmanya Tilak who was also imprisoned for writing articles and "instigating" people against the government to "break" the law, and to disturb the "peace". He was sentenced to a year and a half of rigorous imprisonment and came out a much more enlightened and greater force to be contented with.

The Great yogi Aurobindo became enlightened practicing yoga, reading the Bhagavad Gita (one of the most sacred yoga scriptures), and meditating while being in total solitary confinement when he was in jail.

The composer of the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna, was an incarnation of God, and he was born in prison before having to be smuggled out and not be killed by the ruling leader at the time.

And let us not forget the great Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela, who served over two decades in prison while refusing to be released with the condition of compromising his principles and determination.

Therefore, in order to practice spiritual pursuits, people look for a place that appears like a prison, a place where nobody comes and where nobody will bother them, however, they don't call themselves prisoners.

They call themselves lovers of solitude. If we think very carefully, we will realize that by leading us to prison, God has given us an opportunity to think of ourselves and to remember Him. In prison we could

lead a disciplined life. We get our food on time. We go to bed on time. We get our clothes on time. And even while living in a jail we can pursue spiritual practice; we can meditate, we can think of our Inner Self. Hence, let's not belittle a jail and, make the best of it.

Everything depends on our attitude. If we change our attitude toward a place, then no matter where we are, that place could become heaven for us. If we have full faith in God, then every place, every moment, and every event of our life will begin to feel sublime. Please, contemplate about this next story.

Once there was a great prime minister in India who had this kind of understanding. If a parent said to him, "My son has died," he would say, "Good. Whatever God does is for the best." If a woman said to him, "My husband died," he would say, "Good. Whatever God does is for the best." People reacted violently against him. They thought he was crazy and were constantly hatching plots to remove him from power.

One day the king was being shaved by his barber and happened to doze off. While cutting the king's nails, the barber accidentally cut off the tip of his finger. The prime minister's enemies thought that this was a wonderful opportunity to teach him a lesson. They rushed to him and said, "Prime minister, the barber has cut off the king's finger." The prime minister said, "Good. Whatever God does is for the best." The prime minister's enemies went to the king and told him what the prime minister had said. The king called the prime minister into his presence and said, "You fool. You have been eating my food and living on my money, and now you have the nerve to say that it's a good thing my finger was cut off?" He ordered his men to put the prime minister in jail and to give him only dry bread to eat. "Now you'll see whether what God does is for the best," he said.

The prime minister sat locked up in his cell and calmly remembered God's name. He wasn't upset, and when people would go to visit him and ask him "How are you?" he would say, "Very good. God has put me here and it is good for me."

A few days later, the king went off to the forest to hunt. On his way he met a gang of bandits whose leader was a worshiper of the Goddess Kali. The bandit leader needed to sacrifice an important person to the

Goddess, so he kidnapped the king and dragged him to the temple as a sacrificial offering. The bandits examined the king thoroughly to see if his body was whole, because only one whose body is perfect can be sacrificed to the Goddess. As they examined him, they noticed that the tip of his finger was cut and said, "His body is impure. He is not worthy of the Goddess."

So the king was released. Immediately he realized that if his finger had not been cut he would have lost his head. He remembered that the prime minister had said, "Whatever God does is for the best," and recognize that he had been right.

The king returned to his capital and had the prime minister released from his cell, when the prime minister came before him, he told him what had happened and then asked, "It was good for me that my finger was cut, but how was it good for you to have been locked inside this cell, living on dry crumbs?"

The prime minister replied, "Your majesty, if you had not locked me in this cell, I would have gone hunting with you, and the bandits would have grabbed me. They released you because your finger was cut, but they would have sacrificed me because my body is whole. Whatever God does is for the best."

If that could be our attitude in prison, then prison would be like heaven, not like hell. Our experience of the world depends on our understanding. Because of our narrow understanding we must be experiencing a lot of pain, but we should realize that it is not only we who are experiencing this pain. We may think that only we are prisoners, but other people are also prisoners. We are in a small prison, but others are in the big prison outside. When will they be released?

All this people are bound by their own narrow understanding and by the noose of their Karma, the consequences of what they've done. A wealthy person is bound by the noose of his wealth. A poor person is bound by the noose of his poverty. An office holder is bound by the pride of his office. A great leader is bound by the noose of his own leadership, and a person in authority is bound by the noose of his own authority. Everyone who lives in this world is a prisoner. What about the policemen and guards who are here with us? Of course, they don't think that they are prisoners, but what do they experience? What

about the jailer who has power over us? Is he happy? We are all in the same place. So let's change our understanding. Think that you are a yogi and that you are pursuing your sadhana (inner peace) in this particular place and at this particular moment. Immediately you will experience great joy.

We may have made many mistakes. Because we are between these walls, we remember them. People who are outside also make mistakes, but since they don't consider themselves prisoners they forget them. The difference lies in our understanding. Our entire mental condition is based on the understanding that we are prisoners, and because of that understanding, painful thoughts arise and we keep burning within. If we change your understanding, we will be free in a minute. If we develop love for God, then even while living in a prison we could be like a priest.

Become absorbed in the thought of Consciousness, the thought of God, just as now you are absorbed in the thought of being a prisoner. Sit quietly with great peace. Try to know yourself and waves of joy will arise inside you. Experience Consciousness above you, below you, behind you. Inside, there is great divinity. Just as a person absorbed in deep sleep doesn't experience pleasure or pain, only great peace, so: one who is absorbed in meditation does not experience the pleasures or pain of the outer world. He experiences only the bliss of heaven.,

It is with great respect and great love that I welcome you all with my heart. I don't say this out of sympathy with you because you are in jail. I say this with the understanding that the God who is in me is also in you. If you direct your attention within, you will discover Him and be transformed.

ERNESTO COLE

## MISCELLANEOUS:

### MAXIMS TO LIVE BY

1. YOU WILL ALWAYS TEND TO SEE WHATEVER IT IS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR. YOUR THOUGHTS CREATE YOUR REALITY.
2. DEEP INSIDE WE ALL WANT TO LOVE, AND BE LOVED, TO CARE AND BE CARED FOR, AND LIVE HAPPY... THAT IS OUR ESSENCE.
3. MANY OF US SPEND SO LONG PRETENDING TO BE WHATEVER IT IS THAT WE'RE PRETENDING TO BE, THAT WE LOSE FOCUS OF OUR TRUE SELVES... THE MORE ENERGY WE PUT INTO DEVELOPING THAT MASK. THE MORE CONVINCED WE BECOME OF IT.
4. WELL-BEING IS NOT THE FRUIT OF SOMETHING YOU DO, IT IS THE ESSENCE OF WHO YOU ARE. THERE'S NOTHING YOU NEED TO CHANGE, DO, BE, OR HAVE IN ORDER TO BE HAPPY.
5. MY ACTIONS ARE MY ONLY TRUE BELONGINGS. I CANNOT ESCAPE THE CONSEQUENCES OF MY ACTIONS MY ACTIONS ARE THE GROUNDS UPON WHICH I STAND.
6. FINANCIAL SECURITY DOESN'T COME FROM THE AMOUNT OF MONEY YOU CURRENTLY HAVE; IT COMES FROM YOUR ABILITY TO GET MORE OF IT WHENEVER YOU WANT.
7. MASTER THE ART OF SERVING OTHERS AND YOU WILL SERVICE YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE. IN THIS SENSE, MONEY IS JUST A MEASURE OF THE DIFFERENCE YOU'RE MAKING IN THE WORLD.

8. THE PROBLEM CANNOT BE SOLVED WITH THE SAME LEVEL OF THINKING THAT CREATED IT.
9. YOUR THOUGHTS HAVE NO POWER, IT IS ONLY WHEN YOU INVEST YOUR ENERGY AND CONSCIOUSNESS INTO THEM THAT THEY BEGIN TO BECOME REAL.
10. LIFE BEGETS LIFE, ENERGY BEGETS ENERGY, IT IS BY SPENDING ONESELF THAT ONE BECOMES RICH.
11. YOU DON'T GET WHAT YOU DESERVE IN LIFE, YOU GET WHAT YOU NEGOTIATE.
12. ANYWHERE THERE'S A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE TO BE MADE, THERE'S MONEY TO BE MADE. IF YOU CAN'T (OR WON'T) MAKE A DIFFERENCE, YOU'RE UNLIKELY TO MAKE VERY MUCH MONEY.'
13. THERE ARE THREE ESSENTIAL MOTIVATIONS FOR ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING WE DO: DESPERATION (I HAVE TO), RATIONALIZATION (I SHOULD), AND INSPIRATION (I WANT TO)
14. I HAVE MY OWN VERSION OF AN OPTIMIST: IF I CAN'T MAKE IT THROUGH ONE DOOR, I'LL GO THROUGH ANOTHER DOOR OR I'LL MAKE A DOOR. SOMETHING TERRIFIC WILL COME NO MATTER HOW DARK THE PRESENT.
15. THE PEOPLE WHO ARE CRAZY ENOUGH TO THINK THEY CAN CHANGE THE WORLD, ARE THE ONES WHO DO.
16. SOMETIMES WE STARE SO LONG AT A DOOR THAT IS CLOSING, THAT WE SEE TOO LATE THE ONE THAT IS OPEN.
17. WHATEVER HAS OR HASN'T HAPPENED TO YOU IS IN THE PAST. THE PAST DOES NOT EQUAL THE FUTURE, WHAT MATTERS MOST RIGHT NOW IS YOUR PRESENT-MOMENT ENERGY. YOU CAN DIRECT YOUR FOCUS AND LANGUAGE TO CREATE AN AMAZING LIFE.
18. COURAGE ISN'T THE ABSENCE OF FEAR, BUT THE WILLINGNESS TO PROCEED IN THE FACE

OF IT.

19. THERE IS NO DISGUISE WHICH CAN HIDE LOVE FOR LONG WHERE IT EXISTS', OR  
SIMULATE IT WHERE IT DOES NOT.
20. COWARD, ONE WHO IN A PERILOUS EMERGENCY THINKS WITH HIS LEGS.
21. FOOLS ARE WITHOUT NUMBERS.
22. TO PROFIT FROM GOOD ADVICE REQUIRES AS MUCH WISDOM AS TO GIVE IT.
23. MEASURE NOT MEN BY SUNDAYS, WITHOUT REGARDING WHAT THEY DID ALL THE WEEK  
BEFORE.
24. WHEN WE ASK FOR ADVISE, WE ARE USUALLY LOOKING FOR AN ACCOMPLICE.
25. A GOOD WORD IS AN EASY OBLIGATION, BUT NOT TO SPEAK ILL, REQUIRES ONLY OUR  
SILENCE, WHICH COSTS US NOTHING.
26. TRY TO LEAVE THE EARTH A BETTER PLACE THAN WHEN YOU ARRIVED.
27. QUESTION: DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE DEATH RATE AROUND HERE IS? ANSWER: ONE PER  
PERSON.
28. THERE ARE NEVER ENOUGH "I LOVE YOU."
29. 'TIS BETTER THAN A MAN'S OWN WORDS, THAT ANOTHER MAN'S WORD SHOULD PRAISE  
HIM.
30. A WARNING GIVEN BY AN EXPERIENCED PERSON TO SOMEONE WILLING TO LISTEN, IS  
MORE VALUABLE THAN. JEWELRY MADE OF THE FINEST GOLD.
31. WHILE IT IS WISE TO LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE, IT IS WISER TO LEARN FROM THE  
EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS.
32. THERE'S NOT ENOUGH TIME IN THIS LIFE TO LEARN BY TRIAL AND ERROR THEREFORE,

WE MUST LEARN FROM THE LIFE LESSONS AND EXPERIENCES OF ONE ANOTHER.

33. IF YOU HAVE A BOWL OF MURKY WATER AND WANTED TO MAKE IT CLEAR, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

*Cleverness Is not wisdom.*

*Every man is a damn fool 4 at least 5 minutes every day; wisdom consists in  
not exceeding the limit.*

*Common sense in an uncommon degree is what the world calls wisdom.*

*Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your  
goal.*

*It's not what u look at that matters, it's what u c.*

*When written in Chinese, the word "crisis" is composed of 2 characters; One  
represents danger and the other represents opportunity.*

*Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and  
leave a trail.*

*A prudent question is 1 half of wisdom.*

*The only true wisdom is in knowing u know nothing.*

*A wise man is superior to any insults which can be put upon him, and the  
best reply to unseemly behavior is patience and moderation.*

*Wisdom is the reward u get 4 a lifetime of listening when you'd have  
preferred 2 talk.*

*It is a common experience that a problem difficult at night is resolved in the*

*morning after the committee of sleep has worked on it.*

*Better b wise by the misfortunes of others than by ur own.*

*If u believe the doctors, nothing is wholesome; if u believe the theologians,  
nothing is innocent; if u believe the military, nothing is safe.*

*Life is traveling 2 the. edge of knowledge, then taking a leap.*

*The wisdom of the wise is an uncommon degree of common sense.*

*Virtues r acquired through endeavor, which rests wholly upon yourself.*

*Wisdom outweighs any wealth.*

*Honesty is the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter in the book of wisdom.*

*The art of being wise is the art of knowing what 2 overlook.*

*From the errors of others, a wise man corrects his own.*

*It is the neglect of timely repair that makes rebuilding necessary.*

*The future has arrived, it's just not evenly distributed yet.*

*The truest wisdom is a resolute determination.*

*Wisdom is knowing what to do next, virtue is doing it.*

## HEAD KEEPER UPPERS

Don't let life discourage you. Everyone who got where he is had to begin where he was.

When you stop striving to get better, you get worse.

You only fail when you never try.

Whatever your lot in life, build something on it.

The only limitations we have are those we acknowledge. Life is a feast, don't starve yourself.

Don't plan to fail by failing to plan.

Measure twice, cut once.

Focus on making things better, not bigger.

Live your life in exclamation, not an explanation.

Don't be something, be someone.

As you go through life, never try to prove yourself... Improve yourself.

By the work, one knows the workman.

When the chips are down, yell BINGO!!

When life hands you lemons.... make lemonade.

Make a home in your heart for the truth and the truth will bring you home.

None are so empty as those that are full of themselves.

## THE LIST

|                                       |                             |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| The most destructive habit:           | <i>Worry</i>                |
| The greatest Joy:                     | <i>Giving</i>               |
| The greatest loss:                    | <i>Loss of self-respect</i> |
| The most satisfying work:             | <i>Helping others</i>       |
| The ugliest personality trait:        | <i>Selfishness</i>          |
| The most endangered species:          | <i>Dedicated leaders</i>    |
| Our greatest natural resources:       | <i>Our youth</i>            |
| The greatest "shot in the arm":       | <i>Encouragement</i>        |
| The greatest problem to overcome:     | <i>Fear</i>                 |
| The most effective sleeping pill:     | <i>Peace of mind</i>        |
| The most crippling failure disease:   | <i>Excuses</i>              |
| The most powerful force in life:      | <i>Love</i>                 |
| The most dangerous pariah:            | <i>A gossip</i>             |
| The world's most incredible computer: | <i>The brain</i>            |
| The worst thing to be without:        | <i>Hope</i>                 |
| The deadliest weapon:                 | <i>The tongue</i>           |
| The two most power-filled words:      | <i>"I Can"</i>              |
| The greatest asset:                   | <i>Faith</i>                |
| The most worthless emotion:           | <i>Self-pity</i>            |

The most beautiful attire: ***SMILE!***

The most prized possession: ***Integrity***

The most powerful channel of communication: ***Prayer***

The most contagious spirit: ***Enthusiasm***

## ATTITUDE

1. It is the attitude at the beginning of a task which more than anything else will affect its successful outcome or failure.
2. It is our attitude towards life which will determine life's attitude towards us.
3. We are interdependent and will not succeed without others. Therefore our attitude toward them will determine their attitude towards us.
4. Before a person can achieve the type of life he wants he must first become that type of individual. He must think, act, walk, talk, and conduct himself in all his affairs just as the person he wishes to become.
5. The higher you go in any organization the better the attitudes you will find.
6. Your mind can only hold one thought at a time and since you cannot gain anything from negative thoughts hold only successful positive thoughts and discard the rest.
7. The deepest craving of any human being is to feel important and appreciated. Give this to them and they will return it to you.
8. Part of a good attitude is to look for the best in new ideas and to look for the good ideas everywhere.
9. Don't waste your time broadcasting personal problems, negative thoughts can't help you and they won't help others.
10. Don't talk about your health unless it's good unless you are talking to your Doctor!
11. Radiate the attitude of well-being and confidence, like one who knows where he is going, and good things will happen to you straight away.
12. For the next 30 days treat everybody you come into contact with as the most important person in

the world.

"It's not what happens to me in life, it's how I react to it."

## GET INVOLVED ANYWAY

People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered; Love them anyway.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies; Succeed anyway.

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow; Do good anyway.

Honest and frankness make you vulnerable; Be honest and frank anyway.

People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs; Fight for some underdogs anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed over night; Build anyway.

People really need help, but they may attack you if you help them; Help people anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and you will get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you have anyway.

And then remember, someday every loose end will be tied up, every good will be noted, every book will be balanced. You will get what you have given, even more.

## THE SCULPTOR'S ATTITUDE

I woke up early today, excited over all I get to do before the clock strikes midnight. I have responsibilities to fulfill today that are important. My job is to choose what kind of day I am going to have.

Today I can complain because the weather is rainy or... I can be thankful that the grass is getting watered for free.

Today I can feel sad that I don't have more money or... I can be glad that my finances encourage me to plan my purchases wisely and guide me away from waste.

Today I can grumble about my health or... I can rejoice that I am alive.

Today I can lament overall that my parents didn't give me when I was growing up or... I can feel grateful that they allowed me to be born.

Today I can cry because the roses have thorns or... I can celebrate that thorns have roses.

Today I can mourn my lack of friends or... I can excitedly embark upon a quest to discover new relationships.

Today I can whine because I have to go to work or... I can shout for joy because I have a job to do.

Today I can complain because I have to go to school or... Eagerly open my mind and fill it with rich new tidbits of knowledge.

Today I can murmur dejectedly because I have to do housework or... I can feel honored because the Lord has provided shelter for my mind, body and soul.

Today stretches ahead of me, waiting to be shaped. And here I am, the sculptor who gets to do the shaping. What today will be like is up to me. I get to choose what kind of day I will have!

HAVE A GREAT DAY... unless you have other plans.

## ESSAYS

### EMOTIONS

Greetings gentlemen, when I first met Mr. Francisco Crespo a couple of months ago, he had recently arrived at this facility and was speaking about this workshop project. I immediately felt his positive vibrations and informed him that, although I was not short on my sentence and thus not eligible, I would definitely like to participate and try to benefit from it therefore, here I am.

Now, aside from benefiting from this workshop, I would also like to contribute to it by sharing an experience that has changed my life considerably for the better and, God willing, you may also benefit from it.

My name is Ernesto Cole and I was born in Colon, Panama; raised in Boston, Massachusetts, and have lived in Washington, D.C., several boroughs in the city of New York, and Miami, Florida.

When I was much younger, about 22 or 23, and back in Panama, I was a very troubled kid. I say troubled because I was indeed a true menace to society and many neighbors labeled me just plain evil. But I vehemently refute that assertion and side with my then psychiatrist's diagnosis of me of simply being a confused and traumatized young boy craving love, attention, acceptance, and understanding.

Anyway, allow me not to stray from the topic at hand and return to the purpose of me standing here before you. Once I was having a conversation with a very wise, older man who was not blood related to me, but who I loved dearly and considered a father, may God bless his soul. While in our conversation, I

called over a guy I knew of about my age and asked him to go buy me a pack of cigarettes. When he returned with my cigarettes, he had opened the pack and was smoking one of them without my permission.

I asked him who the fuck (please excuse my language) gave him permission to smoke a cigarette and he answered: "What the fuck, you think I'm going to go buy you cigarettes and not take one for myself?" I immediately punched him in the chin and knocked him down. My "father" just as soon grabbed me by the shoulders and threw me against the wall while saying:

"What is wrong with you, huh? Why would you hit that boy?"

And I said to him: "What do you mean? Didn't you hear how he spoke to me? He disrespected me and made me mad"

My friend responded very surprised at me: "He made you mad?" "Yeah, the damn fool made me mad!" I reiterated.

"Well then," he responded, "if he could make you mad, he could also make you happy, not so?" I was confused by what he had just said and told him I did not know what he meant. So he said it again this way: "If that so-called fool, as you just referred to him, could make you mad, he could also make you happy and thus control your emotions.... And you have the audacity to call yourself a man?" And just walked away from me leaving me more confused and thoughtful.

I'm not going to go into details of what happened in my life subsequently, but I do wish I had paid more attention and adherence to those wise words and I'm sure I would not be standing here right now."

Anyway brethren, I know now exactly what my now late "father" was trying to tell me. "Son, allow no one or anything to alter your mood and demeanor in a negative way. Be a true man by simply always controlling your, emotions. It may be easier said than done, but the more you practice doing so with positive thoughts, words, and actions; the easier and fruitful it becomes."

Thank you very much for your attention comrades!

Ernesto Cole

## **PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!!!**

On a page of this manual I came across a particular query that has had me thinking and thus, the reason for this essay; since I tend to think better when writing. The question in mention is: Have you ever asked yourself what is your purpose? Well, the reason this question has affected me so much is because as a foolish youngster, I was quick to respond to it and say proudly that my purpose in life was to be a "thug" till death do me part. And since I did not plan on living very long, it seemed very simple and true to me at the time.

Fortunately, that is no longer my purpose and I have now committed myself on a 180 degree turn around and can now much more proudly and unequivocally say that my new purpose in life is to be at peace and content with myself, others, and surroundings.

Those that know me from the past may say: "he's just saying that now because he's in prison serving a couple of life sentences and more, and has no other choice." Well, to those naysayers I simply respond that that is not the case; since prison is an ideal place to continue being a "thug" since one is surrounded by so many, if not the majority so yes, I do have a choice. Not only that, but from the moment I was arrested, I had the option to continue being a "thug," get a sweet deal but chose not to. Additionally, during my incarceration the temptations have been many, since vices like drugs, alcohol, gambling, and opportunities to commit immoral and delinquent acts are plentiful hence, I thank God for helping me make the right choices and not allowing me to succumb and fall deeper in disgrace. Now, with the aforementioned being clarified, allow me to manifest how I plan to achieve my new purpose.

When this re-entry course began, I recited a very personal essay about an experience I had many years ago that finally caught up with me and transformed my life considerably for the better. In that essay I alluded to how I allowed another person's action affect and dictate my emotions in a negative way, and how a very wise, older friend, whom I have 'since considered a father figure, God bless his soul, gave me

one of the best, if not the best, advice I've ever received.

In essence this is what he advised me: "Son, under no circumstance allow anything or anyone to affect your emotions in a negative way. Once you allow that you cease control of your emotions and could no longer consider yourself a true man."

Sure enough, due to my immaturity, ignorance, foolish pride, and ego, I chose not to understand him, did not adhere to his advice, and refused to follow through. Luckily for me, through very harsh occurrences (which were mostly brought about by my ego and foolish pride), many personal experiences, and not so personal experiences, I believe I have found my purpose in life to live at peace and content with myself, others, and surroundings. I credit this accomplishment by seeing and treating life as a game or sporting event. Yes gentlemen, I now see life as a game and my goal is to not only win, but also to enjoy the journey to the fullest.

Allow me now to explain my analogy between life and a game and how I plan to win. As a kid growing up and participating in various organized sporting events, I was always encouraged and obligated by the coaches to practice, practice, practice, and in that way, make myself a better athlete. If the sport were basketball, I had to practice my ball handling, passing, shooting, free throws, lay ups, and so forth. If it were baseball, I had to train in batting, catching, throwing, sliding, and other things. If it were soccer, I definitely had to exercise in dribbling to get past defenders, passing and receiving the ball, positioning and anticipating where the ball was going, my heading the ball, and an array of other things to better myself and be successful in the competition.

Now that you most likely get where I'm coming from, in my game of life I encourage and discipline myself to do the same: practice, practice, practice. I practice the things I feel will help me succeed and accomplish my purpose in life by doing the following: I meditate and reflect alone with frequency because it is in true solitude that I really identify and find myself. I try my best to always think, speak, and act positively; practice the ancient discipline of yoga along with its eight different branches to help keep me grounded

and firm in my purpose. I try to read good, entertaining fictional and non-fictional books, and when a self-help book falls into my lap, I devour its contents as well. I challenge my mind constantly by doing very challenging numbered puzzles (sudokus); try my best to stay away from gossip and if it finds me, I treat it positively and minimally. I try to socialize only with positive individuals and when a negative one appears in my path, I run like hell! :-)) I do my best not to tell lies, and if it's necessary for one, I prefer to keep my mouth shut. I try to keep myself, thoughts, and few belongings as organized and compartmentalized as possible; if I have something pending, I follow my dear mother's advice and do it immediately without procrastination, and if there's nothing I can do about it, I do exactly that: nothing. And when I say nothing, I mean not even worry about it. I exercise my body in a very intense manner and in doing so, prepare my heart to utilize its oxygen much more efficiently so that my resting heart rate becomes lower and can deal with pumping my blood more adequately and in this manner, deal much better with stress. When things do not go my way, I do not take it personal and accept the fact that it could always have been worse to soften the impact. I try to never jump to conclusions or make assumptions, since in the past I was wrong most of the times, if not always. If there is anything I can do for someone less fortunate than I, I do so without thinking it twice. I try dearly to be very understanding, respectful, and considerate of others; procure not to engage in arguments or heated discussions, since they rarely, if ever, conduce to anything positive. If for some reason I come across something that does not belong to me, I return it immediately. And if it is a borrowed item, try to take better care of it than if it were my own.

I also try to always be appreciative and truly say "thank you" for any assistance I receive, no matter how small and I also make it my duty to never, ever give a bad advice, no matter how tempting.

Dear comrades, although there may be other practices I engage in to reach and accomplish my purpose in life, they seem to have escaped my thoughts for now. But I could not end this section without saying last but never least: a day does not go by without me getting on my knees and thanking the Lord for all my blessings and asking Him for more. Something that those who know me from the past would find extremely difficult to believe, but that is truly the case.

At this moment my dear friends, please do not misinterpret-the aforementioned and think that through such practices I aim to be perfect; never that. But it does imply that when I do "mess up," I can be humble enough to accept it, learn from it, make amends and therefore, reduce my errors and live a much better and purposeful life.

After this very personal account on how I practice to win in my game of life, I would like to conclude that my aim is not to garner sympathy, praise, nor even your scorn, but simply to encourage all of the participants that have already taken the first step by enrolling in this beautiful course to continue making the necessary changes in ourselves and become much better men, simple as that.

P.S. If in the future I run across any of you and am not following through on these practices, please call it to my attention; it will be dearly appreciated.

Thank you very much for your attention and God bless.

Ernesto Cole.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

Well gentlemen, this re-entry Workshop (recidivism awareness) has come to an end for us; since we must now allow entrance for others to attend this wonderful program and benefit from it as we've all had. But I cannot allow us to depart without emphasizing and encouraging us to, aside from utilizing the lessons learned here, adopt and follow a code of conduct and behavior so that our lives may truly be happy and fruitful. Some of us may ask ourselves: "How the hell could that be done?" Well comrades, this is how I've been taught and through experience learned how to do it.

I simply promise myself on a regular to do the following: I will be strong enough so that nothing or no one can disrupt my peace of mind. I will try to always think, speak, and act positive. I will do my best to always make family and friends feel their true value. I will be optimistic and look at the bright side of things, and when life's occurrences make things dark; I will simply turn the lights back on. I will think only for best, do my best, and expect the best. I will make myself happy by not allowing my life to be dependent upon things I cannot control and thus, avoid disappointment and pain. I will be as enthusiastic and content about the success of others as about my own. I will forget the mistakes of the past and focus, not only on the present but, on my greater achievements of the future. I will be cheerful and keep a happy face by giving all I meet a smile. I will focus intently on my progress and improvement so that criticizing others becomes null to me. I will be too faithful to worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble. I will continue to entertain myself with good books and not only fictional ones, but also non-fictional and self-helping ones written by pundits who can encourage and teach me. I will continue exercising my body and mind on a regular to keep them as sharp as possible and in good shape. I will refrain from poisoning my body with vices and will continue helping others every chance I get, even if they have been "bad" in the past.

And although there are many other positive things we may add to our conduct, allow me once again to encourage us all to pray for guidance, blessings, and give true gratitude for all we have each and every

day.

With all the aforementioned my friends, always remember that we can preach a much better sermon with our actions than with our lips.

Good luck and God bless!

Ernesto Cole.

## **Questions & Answers**

### **Questions:**

1. When you mention the gambling, drugs and alcohol, have you ever engaged in those things and if so, how did you manage to stop doing them?
2. What did your "father" mean by that?
3. How do you meditate and what does it do for you?
4. How do you accomplish practicing those things you say and is it difficult?
5. When you speak about thinking positively and the rest, how does that work for you? Because I sometimes try it and things still do not happen as I wish.
6. What advice would you give us and promise to follow faithfully as well?
7. Do you have a mantra or words of wisdom you live by?
8. How do you deal and handle stress?
9. What do you do when having a bad day?
10. When you say you practice yoga and its eight different branches, what do you mean by that? Isn't Yoga just meditating and doing postures for flexibility?

### **Answers:**

1. Yes, unfortunately I was a die hard gambler to the point where my life was put at risk; drugs became a major source of income after I decided to "promise" myself to stop being a drug fiend, stop gambling, and cease consuming other vices such as cigarettes and alcohol. Unsuitably, I did not "promise" myself to stop using drugs for profit when I had the chance, but definitely did so when incarcerated.

2. What he meant by his comment was very simple: be a true man and allow nothing or no one to alter your mood or behavior for negative because once you allow that, you cease control of yourself and emotions... be the actor and not the reactor and do what you wish to do as opposed to doing what others want.
3. There are many styles of meditation, but I practice the Hatha Yoga style in hopes of mastering my muscles and breath. I simply start off by sitting comfortably and erect, or in the Lotus pose and focus on my breath and diaphragm. I inhale deeply and allow my diaphragm to come down, pause, exhale deeply while allowing my diaphragm to rise and thus expelling all the air from my lungs. As thoughts enter my mind, I simply ignore them, refocus on my breathing, sometimes even count my breaths and allow the thoughts to dispel. I continue doing so and before I realize it, 10, 15, 20, 30 minutes have elapsed, and I then feel as if the weight of the world has been removed from my shoulders and am ready to confront the challenges that life offers me.
4. I accomplish those practices by making them habits and thus, my sub-conscious aligns with said habits to the point where it becomes almost natural. Sure enough, at the beginning it was not easy, and I did err more often than now. But when I do err or falter, I immediately accept responsibility, make the necessary amends, and move on, learning and hoping not to err in that way again. Therefore no, it is not difficult at all once you commit.
5. It works "for me because I try to do so constantly and not just as you mentioned: "sometimes." Additionally, I make it a habit when not so positive thoughts enter my mind (since it is practically impossible to avoid them), I simply refuse to "focus" on them. Some people may say: "Yeah, but things still don't happen the way I wish and when I wish. " To those I reply: "True that and I used to feel and think -the same way, until I realized that I was wrong and all I had to do was continue to think, speak, and act positive, have faith in the Almighty and allow Him to work His magic, simple as that."

6. Aside from allowing nothing or no one to alter your mood and behavior in a negative way, keep your word to yourself and others. But most importantly to yourself; since we create our reality through our language both inwardly and outwardly.
7. Happiness and being content above all. By that I mean to accept life as is, make the best of it and lessen expectations and in doing so avoid unneeded deceptions.
8. Unfortunately, stress is a fact of life, and thus it is how we deal with it that will determine consequences. I try my best to strengthen my body and mind through exercises and meditation, make it a habit to keep my thoughts pure, speak as immaculately as possible, and deal with stressful situations as best I can and in doing so the effects of stress become much less lasting, less negative, and much more bearable.
9. I really do not discriminate between good and bad days. I begin every day with my prayers and gratefulness to life and in that way "prepare" myself for what the day offers me and do the best of it.
10. Like I've said, Yoga is a discipline composed of eight branches and I will try my best to explain the little I know of them.

The first two branches deal mostly with rules of conduct and ethical disciplines:

- Number one is Abstinences. Abstaining from killing, falsehood, theft, incontinence, and greediness. Or in other words: non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-covetousness.
- The second is Observances – purity, contentment, austerity, study, and resignation to Isvara. In other words: purity means both bodily and moral purification. Contentment is cultivation of calmness and equanimity of mind." Austerity refers to the strength of character and to resolute pursuit of Yoga's goal of union with Self. Study includes reading the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the most highly regarded literature of Yoga and deep reflection on what is read. Resignation to Isvara is resignation to God or whatever title you wish to give the Absolute.

- The third branch of Yoga are the Asanas (postures). They are geared to be steady and easy. In some forms of Yoga (Raja) they are the seated meditative postures, whereas in other forms of Yoga (Hatha) the whole organism receives attention from a wide variety of posturing; improving suppleness and flexibility, toning the nervous system and the glands, purifying the blood stream and firming and strengthening the muscles. In my style of Yoga (Power), these benefits are gained in a shorter but more intense manner.
- The fourth branch of Yoga is Breath Control (Pranayama). This being accomplished by cutting off the course of inspiration and expiration of the breath. This should not be taken literally. Suspension of breathing is part of Pranayama and the arousal of Kundalini energy, but as far as meditation is concerned what is required is reducing the breathing to such smoothness and quietness that it is made as unobtrusive as the immobile and "invisible" body. Thinking should also be pointed out. Breathing (Prana) is the life force and the connecting link between matter and mind.
- The fifth branch is Sense Withdrawal (Pratyahara). Pratyahara is the imitating by the senses of the thinking principle by withdrawing themselves from their objects. There follows the greatest mastery over the senses the adept in Yoga gives him/herself up to "withdrawal" and stops the traffic of the senses with their objects (word, sight, etc.) to which they are invariably attached. He/she then make the senses work for their consciousness and the ever-agitated senses are controlled. No Yogi can achieve the aim of Yoga without controlling the senses. Sense withdrawal is the initial process of turning the attention inwards.
- The sixth branch is Concentration (Dharnas). This has to do with the fixing of the mind on something. Whatever the object chosen, the beam of attention should finally be held unwavering. If the mind wanders from the attention, it should be gently brought back, coaxed rather than dragged.

- Branch number seven is Contemplation (Dhyana). This is the unity of the mind with concentration. It is the entire fixing of the mind on the object thought of to the point of making one with it. In fact the mind should, at the time, be conscious only of itself and the object.
- The last branch of Yoga is Self-realization (Samadhi). Samadhi is when conscious only of the object, as if unconscious of itself. In the advanced stage of Samadhi, the meditator, the thing being meditate upon, and the process of meditation are merged and become one, and unconsciousness is fully integrated.

# MORE MISCELLANEOUS

## "A WORD"

A word could cause discord.

A word could ruin a life.

A bitter word could create hate.

A brutal word could hit and kill.

A nice word could soften the path.

A timely word could save effort.

A happy word could brighten the day.

A word with love and affection could bless.

A tender word could lift many hopes.

A balanced word could bring us peace.

A discreet word could make us wise.

An opportune word in front of a misfortune will force us to keep ahead. A word could give us a lot and  
could take away all.

A word that is the one we need to hug one another.

That word is Love among all human beings of the universe!!!

**"THE BEST"**

Good is to have leftovers.

And better is to have the needed.

Good is to enjoy life.

And better yet to know it.

Good is to be helped.

And better to triumph alone.

Good is to know how to speak.

And better to know to keep quiet.

Good is the right company.

But it's better to be alone.

Good is to live without having to work.

But better is to have it.

Good is to be applauded.

But better is for your flaws to be pointed. Good is to be free.

But better is the "enslavement" of the honest man. Good is to become big.

But better yet to remain a child.

Good is to be loved.

**BUT IS BETTER FOR YOU TO LOVE!!!**

## WHICH IS?

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DAY? TODAY.

THE EASIEST THING? TO ERR.

THE BIGGEST INFLUENCE? MOTHER.

THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE? FEAR.

THE BIGGEST ERROR? ABANDON ONESELF.

THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL? EGOTISM.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DISTRACTION? TO WORK.

YOUR GREATEST CREATION? CHILDREN.

THE WORST DEFEAT? DISCOURAGEMENT.

THE FIRST NEED? COMMUNICATION.

WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPIEST? TO HELP OTHERS.

GREATEST MYSTERY? DEATH.

WORST DEFEAT? BAD MOOD.

MOST DANGEROUS PERSON? ENVIOUS ONE.

THE BADDEST FEELING? RESENTMENT.

MOST BEAUTIFUL GIFT? FORGIVENESS.

THE MOST VITAL? HOME.

THE FASTEST ROUTE? THE CORRECT ONE.

THE MOST PLEASANT SENSATION? INNER PEACE.

THE MOST EFFECTIVE SHIELD?      A SMILE.

THE BEST REMEDY?    OPTIMISM.

THE BIGGEST SATISFACTION?      AN ACCOMPLISHED DUTY.

THE STRONGEST FORCE IN THE WORLD?      FAITH.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF ALL?      LOVE.

## **"FORMULA TO HAPPINESS"**

Love, being happy is reduced to this.

Love without being afraid of exceeding yourself.

Love until your feet hurts.

Love even though everything else invites you not to.

Love everyday as if you are never to love again.

Love and be so happy that without showing it, it shows.

Love even if you're not loved.

Love whom no one loves and everyone hates.

Love in any language, every being.

Love more those who love least.

Love until your heart smiles: :-)

Love even though you think you're getting nowhere. God is able to make something out of nothing.

Love until they say you're crazy.

Love black Monday, Tuesday the 13th, Ash Wednesday, any Thursday, sour Friday, wonderful Saturday  
because only so will you also love Sunday of Resurrection.

Love because you may lose it all, but no one will ever be able to stop you from loving.

Love, and when you can no more, even when your heart is bleeding for your brother/sister, do

not doubt it: continue to love!

Love who has nothing and no one will give him/her anything.

Love in the certainty that someone already loves you and will love you like you will never understand;

UNTIL INFINITY!!!

## **"DO NOT WAIT"**

Do not wait to be good, or to give what you have, nor to right an injustice.

Do not wait for the opportunity to realize a noble act; look for it.

Do not wait for the offended; go to him/her.

Do not wait to forgive your enemy; go to him/her now.

Do not wait for others to do you justice; do it in your conscious.

Do not wait for tomorrow to understand how vain the corporal flattery and the love for material things is;

do it now!!!

## THE ART OF BEING HAPPY

Happiness is the destiny of the human being.

But remember: "It is not the happiness in living, but in knowing how to live." The human being has the inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness.

With everything, accept your limits, because happiness is in limitation. "Every human being searches for happiness and this without exception." Because of this, keep in mind: "happiness consists principally in loving what is." "Happiness comes from within, it is up to us. There's no one that could not cultivate a disposition to being happy if he/her wishes to do so.

To find it, look well. And look within. Because the problem is that "frequently some of us look for happiness like when we're looking for the eyeglasses when we have them right above our noses."

I've noticed that each person's as happy as he/she wishes to be. In conclusion and deep down, happiness is nothing more than the continuous effort to create happiness.

If you are not well, look for someone worse off than you and help him/her. You will both get better.

It is true: "We only make our happiness in being concerned with others' happiness."

Even to make our way towards happiness, always take the longest route. '

It is insisted: "there's no comparable satisfaction to that of making others happy." Life is like a dice game.

If they don't fall the way we wanted, we must have the art to take the best advantage of how they fell.

And more so: happiness and misfortune ordinarily turn to those beings who are already so.

To see without envy the fortune of others and with satisfaction common happiness, is to enjoy being blessed.

That is why, be good: "kindness towards everyone excusing their faults, is the philosophical Rock of happiness.

It's a shame that we have created men that act like machines and machines that act like men.

Remember: "Pleasure is a mental state; happiness is a prolonged, cheerful state of mind, and more so:

We are happy in the exact measure in which we know to forget."

## Love is?????

*Being happy for the other person when they are happy,*

*Being sad for the other person when they are sad.*

*Being together in good times and Being together in Bad times...*

*Love is the source of strength.*

*Being honest with the yourself at all times.*

*Being honest with the other person at all times.*

*Telling, listening, respecting the truth and never pretending....*

*Love is the source of reality.*

*An understanding that is so complete that you feel as if you are a part of the other person.*

*Accepting the other person the way they are,*

*Not trying to change them to be someone else...*

*Love is a source of unity.*

*The freedom to pursue your own desires*

*While sharing your experiences with the other person.*

*The growth of one individual alongside of,*

*And together with the growth of another individual.*

*Love is the source of success.*

*The excitement of planning things together*

*The excitement of doing things together.*

*Love is the source of the future.*

*Giving and taking in a daily situation*

*Being patient with each other's needs and desires...*

*Love is the source of sharing.*

### **Life is Too Short**

Life is too short to wake up with regrets. So love the people who treat you right. Forget about the ones who don't. Believe everything happens for a reason. If you get a second chance, grab it with both hands. If it changes your life, let it. Nobody said life would be easy, they just promised it would be worth it.

Friends are like balloons; once you let them go, you might not get them back. Sometimes we get so busy with our own lives and problems that we may not even notice that we've let them fly away. Sometimes we are so caught up in who's right and who's wrong that we forget what's right and wrong. Sometimes we just don't realize what real friendship means until it is too late. I don't want to let that happen, so I'm going to tie you to my heart, so I never lose you.

One thing you can give and still keep... is your word.

The happiness of your life depends on the quality of your thoughts.

**"LOVE YOURSELF AND LOVE"**

DO YOU WANT TO HELP? HELP YOURSELF FIRST.

ONLY THE LOVED ONES LOVE.

ONLY THE FREE LIBERATE.

ONLY THE ONES THAT ARE AT PEACE WITH THEMSELVES ARE FOUNTAIN OF PEACE.

THOSE WHO SUFFER, MAKE OTHERS SUFFER.

THOSE WHO ARE FAILURES NEED TO SEE OTHERS FAIL.

THOSE WHO ARE HURT, SOW VIOLENCE.

THOSE WITH CONFLICTS, CREATE CONFLICTS AROUND THEM!!!

## **"Life"**

**MAY YOUR LIFE BE FULL OF:**

- **ENTHUSIASM SO YOU MAY SEE AHEAD.**
- **HAPPINESS TO KEEP YOU JOYFUL.**
- **PROBLEMS TO KEEP YOU STRONG.**
- **GRIEF TO KEEP YOU HUMAN**
- **HOPE TO KEEP YOU HAPPY.**
- **FAILURES TO KEEP YOU HUMBLE.**
- **TRIUMPH TO KEEP YOU EAGER.**
- **WEALTH TO SATISFY YOUR NEEDS.**
- **FAITH TO BANISH DEPRESSION.**
- **DECISION TO MAKE EVERY DAY BETTER THAN YESTERDAY!!!**

# Success

To laugh often and much. To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children. to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty. To find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you lived.

This is to have succeeded.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

**TODAY I PROMISE:**

To be so strong, that nothing or no one could disturb the peace of my spirit.

To speak of health, progress and happiness to everyone I meet.

To make my friends feel that there's something great in them.

To see everything on the noble and beautiful side, making my optimism sincere.

To think of the best and hope only for the best.

To have as much enthusiasm for the success of others as for mine.

To forget the errors of the past and fight for the greater realizations of the future.

To always carry a happy face and have a smile for everyone.

To employ so much time in my improvement that I will not have time to criticize  
others.

To be big in grief, noble in anger, strong towards fear so that my happiness will not  
be afraid to the presence of pain.

## **PEACE**

**PEACE IT DOES NOT MEAN TO BE IN A PLACE WHERE THERE IS NO  
NOISE, TROUBLE OR HARD WORK.**

**IT MEANS TO BE IN THE MIDST OF THOSE THINGS AND STILL BE  
CALM IN YOUR HEART...**

## **"I ASKED GOD"**

I asked God to be the first in line, but He placed me in the back so that I would have patience and know  
humility.

I asked God to be the center of the world, and He taught me that vanity sets me apart from the center of  
anything.

I asked God for fame and glory, but He gave me simplicity and comprehension so that my ego would not  
hurt others.

I asked God for a fast car, but He gave me a firm step through the right path so that I would not crash my  
feelings.

I asked God for a mansion, but he gave me a small home full of tenderness and love.

I asked God for lots of money so that I can have many friends, but He gave me something better; He  
offered me His friendship, not for money... but for my sincerity.

I asked God for good health, so I can conquer my wishes, but He gave me sickness so that once I  
experienced it, I would conquer patience and a dream or two and believe more in Him, so my ego would  
not get the best of me.

I asked God for handsomeness however, He gave me sensibility and spiritual beauty so that I would not  
feel better than others.

I asked God to always make me happy, yet He made me know sadness so that I can understand that life is  
not only composed of beautiful things and have compassion for others.

I asked God for a strong character, but He gave me a soft heart and a gentle character so that I can love and  
help others.

I asked God to never let me cry, however He made me shed a tear from my heart by feeling impotent when

I could not help a loved one and express loving words and show how much I loved them.

I asked God for a very attractive woman to satisfy my ego and cravings...He gave me you to show me LOVE  
and satisfy my NEEDS!!!

I asked God to allow me to have the world at my feet, but He made me realize that it is better to have  
friends in my heart.

Because of all this My Lord, do not give me all I ask for...only what up to this day you have given me!!!

THANK YOU!!!

## **I Asked God**

I asked for strength and God gave me difficulties to make me strong

I asked for wisdom and God gave me problems to solve

I asked for prosperity and God gave me brawn and brain to work

I asked for courage and God gave me dangers to overcome

I asked for patience God placed me in situations where I was forced to wait

I asked for love and God gave me troubled people to help

I asked for favors and God gave me opportunities I received nothing I wanted I received everything I  
needed

**My Prayer Has Been Answered.**

I asked God for a flower, he gave me a bouquet

I asked God for a minute, he gave me a day

I asked God for true love, he gave me that too

I asked for an angel and he gave me you.

I asked God for strength that I might achieve.

I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.

I asked for health that I might do greater things.

I was given infirmity that I might do better things.

I asked for riches that I might be happy.

I was given poverty that I might be wise.

I asked for power that I might have the praise of men.

I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things that I might enjoy life.

I was given life that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I hoped for. Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered. I am, among all men, most richly blessed.

*The Prayer of an Unknown Confederate Soldier*

## MORE ESSAYS

### Acceptance

Dear Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

The reason I opened with this prayer is because of its meaning and the fact that I was reading an excellent book afforded to me by a dear friend and it resonated so vividly with one of my many values that I decided to share with the class. Therefore, with no further delay, here's what it alluded to and what I understand by it; if you truly want your life to flow and change for the better, you need to accept and appreciate everything that shows up for you, even and especially the things you can't control, don't want, and positively abhor!

Sounds contrary, right? Well, maybe a little counter-intuitive, I agree. Still, let me share a very important secret with you, based on my own experience and that of so many I have read from and about. If you can implement this aspect-of accepting and appreciating what you have into your life, even if other changes prove too challenging, you will dramatically enhance the quality of your life.

Allow me to explain; letting go of resistance and getting into acceptance is a way of allowing the flow in your life. Mastering the art of acceptance doesn't just make you feel better in a bad or challenging situation – it really does. The deeper truth is that everything that happens to you has potential to open you to even more joy and happiness, especially the seemingly bad things in your life. You have no doubt

already had experience of a twist of fate for the worst that turned out to be for the better. Perhaps you were made redundant and with the changes in law, your sentence is shorter. Be aware now that wasn't an exception. IT IS THE RULE! Shifting your perspective so that you want and accept what you have, even the so-called negative aspects, will pay dear dividends in your life.

The trick is in stepping back and identifying the lesson in whatever has happened and allowing yourself to change, grow and evolve. You cannot do that without letting go of resistance and getting into acceptance. Beyond that then, if you come to believe that everything has a positive intention for you, then you move in a state of being appreciative of all that happens, because you trust and hope that "silver lining" is there to be found, and it will be worth more than all the heartache. Trust and Hope are key factors here, because it might indeed take some time before you can see how the lesson plays out for the positive.

Are there exceptions to this? The really painful events of life, like the death of a loved one, don't have silver linings. Even so, you can allow the process of grieving and coming to acceptance to change you in healthy and positive ways. You may come to appreciate and value your life and relationships more, knowing that every moment is precious.

So a key to flowing and enjoying life is wanting and accepting what you already have, for the love of it, or the deeper gift, know that by doing this it opens up the potential to create more, or different, or better. And when it feels impossible to want what has happened, know that by accepting it, you can allow yourself to grow and evolve.

Wherever you are right now is perfect, even when it is not!

And if that scrambles your brain, that's key as well. Take a moment now to reflect on that statement and begin to feel how it may be true to you.

Thank you dearly and God bless!

Ernesto Cole

## AMATEURS AND PROFESSIONALS

Not too long ago I read a book that focused greatly on how to find, and maintain, ways to be -happy and content in life; and came across something that echoed loudly within me to the point that I saw it in others as well that I decided to share it with you. Therefore, if this resonates with you as well, please take heed.

Some of us specialize and devote all our energy to a particular activity, aiming to reach almost professional levels of performance in it. We even tend to look down and criticize anyone who is not as skillful and devoted to our specialty. While those others prefer to dabble in a variety of activities, taking much enjoyment as possible from each without necessarily becoming an "expert" in any one of them.

There are two words whose meaning reflect our somewhat warped attitudes toward levels of commitment to physical or mental activities. These are the terms amateur and dilettante. Nowadays these labels are slightly derogatory. An amateur or a dilettante is someone not quite up to par, a person not taken very seriously, one whose performance falls short of professional standards. But originally, "amateur" from the Latin verb amare, "to love," referred to a person who loved what he/she was doing. Similarly, a "dilettante," from the Latin delectare, "to find delight in," was someone who enjoyed a given activity. The earliest meanings of these words therefore, drew attention to experiences rather than accomplishments. They described, the subjective rewards individuals gained from doing things, instead of focusing on how well they were achieving. Nothing illustrates as clearly our changing attitudes toward the value of experience as the fate of these two words. There was a time when it was admirable to be an amateur poet or a dilettante scientist, because it meant that the quality of life, could be improved by engaging in such activities. But increasingly the emphasis has been to value behavior over subjective states; what is admired is success, achievement, the quality of performance rather than quality of experience. Consequently, it has become embarrassing to be called a dilettante, even though to be a dilettante is to achieve what counts most the enjoyment one's actions provide.

It is true that the sort of dilettantish learning encouraged can be undermined even more readily than professional scholarship, if learners lose sight of the goal that motivates them. Laypersons with an ax to grind sometimes turn to pseudo-science to advance their interests and often their efforts are almost indistinguishable from those of intrinsically motivated amateurs.

An interest in the history of ethnic origins, for instance, can become easily perverted into a search for proof of one's own superiority over members of other groups. The Nazi movement in Germany turned to anthropology, history, anatomy, language, biology, and philosophy, and concocted from them its theory of Aryan racial supremacy. Professional scholars were also caught up in this dubious enterprise, but it was inspired by amateurs, amid the rules by which it was played belonged to its politics, not science.

Soviet biology was set back a generation when the authorities decided to apply the rules of communist ideology' to growing corn, instead of following experimental evidences, Lysenko's ideas about how grains planted in a cold climate would grow more hardy, and produce even harder progeny, sounded good to the layperson, especially within the context of Leninist dogma. Unfortunately the ways of politics and the ways of corn are not always the same. And Lysenko's efforts culminated in decades of hunger.

The bad connotations the terms amateur and dilettante have earned for themselves over the years are due largely to the blurring of the distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic goals. An amateur who pretends to know as much as a professional is probably wrong, and up to some mischief. The point of becoming an amateur scientist is not to compete with professionals on their own turf, but to use symbolic discipline to extend mental skills, and to create order in consciousness. On that level, amateur scholarship can hold its own, and can be even-more effective than its professional counterpart. But the moment that amateurs lose sight of this goal, and use knowledge mainly to bolster their egos or to achieve a material advantage, then they become caricatures for the scholar. Without training in the discipline of skepticism and reciprocal criticism that underlies the scientific method, laypersons who venture into the fields of knowledge with prejudiced goals can become more ruthless, more egregiously unconcerned with truth, than even the most corrupt scholar.

Therefore dear friends, let's return to the origin of doing whatever it is we decided to do simply for the love of it, for the enjoyment we derive from it, and not because we're seeking praise, fame, or anything material; but because we consider ourselves true amateurs/dilettantes.

Thank you very much for your attention and God bless.

ERNESTO COLE.

## RELATIONSHIPS

Greetings gentlemen.

After being around for a while in this environment and others, I must admit that after falling victim/culprit to this flaw, I owe you guys the wisdom and experience learned from it and set the "record" straight and hopefully you will reflect on it for the better of you and your relationships. Additionally, having recently read a great book that touched expertly on this topic, I took it as a sign to share it with you.

Every single one of us, without exception, has a relationship with either our parents, progeny, siblings, significant others, co-workers, supervisors, friends, and so forth, right? Yet, no matter how pleasant some are, it can be very tiresome, draining, unfulfilling, or simply very miserable when they break down. And unfortunately, this can occur anywhere and to anyone, are you with me?

Therefore, we must realize, or accept, that we cannot (or should not) change other people. All we can (or should?) do is change ourselves, don't you think? Secondly, when something someone does seems annoying, the annoyance is not in the thing being done, but in our response to the thing or action. In relationships the most usual problem is when our egos are "hurt." We become annoyed/upset at the "homeboy," the officer, the co-inmate, or whomever because their attitude is such that it diminishes the importance our ego has attached to ourselves. We get annoyed at decisions/actions because they do not go exactly the way we (our ego) would want them to go.

Someone makes impertinent remarks, or even loses his/her temper, and we retaliate (again the retaliation depends on the extent to which the ego feels threatened). The message, then, is that generally annoyance (or the loss of our positive demeanor) in any relationship results from a feeling of the ego being threatened where the threat is felt certainly at both the subconscious and conscious level.

Consequently, even when the ego does not feel overtly threatened, human relationships can be improved

here and there by deliberately going out of our way to be kind, loving, and helpful to others, or simply just listening and talking to them in a friendly way no matter how threatening or uncooperative they may appear. This simply means maintaining a happy and loving disposition within ourselves no matter how others react. This partly comes from self-confidence, but it also comes from feeling relaxed; since relaxation brings with it contentment. Relaxation and annoyance are opposites. You cannot be relaxed' and annoyed or angry at the same time.

Hence, the more you practice being relaxed at all times and in all situations, the more content you will be.

Sure enough, I could continue this "conversation" and attempt to bless you with the way I practice to keep myself relaxed at all times, but will conclude with telling you. that I am around and-at your disposal if you're interested in this little secret, deal? :-)

Much love and as always, God bless!

ERNESTO COLE

## CHANGE

Good evening gentlemen and God bless.

Change, wow! Just imagine living a life without changes. Not the changes that may be considered commendable, like: working the same career your entire adult life, staying married to your significant other till death, do you part, or even living your entire life in the same community you were born in. Those are changes to be honored, not regretted or derided.

Nor am I talking about other changes like the style of clothes we wear, the types of music we listen to, the television shows we watch, or even the social and political views 'we hold. Going through life and never changing our tastes, opinions, and everyday preferences; even if we're the most stubborn person in the world, it is unthinkable because our environment does not allow it. The world changes and we must change with it if we wish to survive, and also because it is much easier to just go with the flow, not so?

Yet, there's one aspect of our lives where "WE" wear a changelessness badge of honor. I'm talking about our interpersonal and criminal behavior and our resistance to changing how we treat other people and our community by engaging in crimes and criminal attitudes.

Most of us would mock a restaurant that never changes its menu, the girl that never changes her clothing or hair style, or even the car company that never had a new style of vehicle, would we not? But we are not so reproachful or mocking with ourselves, why not? -We take foolish pride in prolonging some behaviors as long as possible, in spite of the consequences, with no regards for who is harmed.-.

When we prolong negative behavior, we are leading a changeless life in the most hazardous way. We must make a change for the better.

Therefore, I challenge each and every one of us to think about one positive change that we will not regret later on and start from there. It could be anything, however modest, but different from what we've always done and would continue doing forever; then do it!

Thank you all and may kindness be forever in your hearts!

ERNESTO COLE

## READ, READ & READ SOME MORE

I had been thinking and asking myself: "Why do you enjoy reading and what could you do to encourage others to read as well? Since it appears that so many of the guys you're trying so dearly to reach don't seem to enjoy or even like to read?"

I thought, reflected, contemplated, and even continued writing and handing out heart-felt essays full of facts, wisdom, and personal experiences when it comes to me. And boom, then it hit me: "just write an essay telling others the reasons why you enjoy reading and its many benefits and share it, duhh!"

But unfortunately, after coming up with such creative idea, I was kind of in a bind because I do not consider myself a savvy enough writer to convince others to read. Then I said to myself: "You know what, P? Sometimes you could really be a conflicting individual. Just do the necessary research, put your heart and soul into it, and you know good and well that through your positive intentions it will reap dear effects, don't you think?" Therefore gentlemen, the reason for the title and the following...

The number one reason I read is simply because I am a bit of an insomniac and cannot see myself going to sleep without at least a half hour of reading. After that, it could be because through reading (which I consider the number one foundation to learning), I find and receive so much knowledge, advice, inspirations, and even wonderful/moral messages that I ' could not count the benefits afforded to me. Additionally, when I absorb myself in a good read, my well-being skyrockets to the point where I can practically "transport" myself to another place and time, sounds crazy but it's true. Another reason I enjoy reading so much is simply because (although I rarely participate and keep my opinions personal most of the times) when certain topics arise and are discussed, I could analyze the information, rate the litigants, and become aware of their inaccuracies, misinformation, veracity or assertions. Consequently, when I am questioned, or my opinion is requested (and if I wish to elaborate, of course), I could confidently express myself. And although I will now give you guys the "scholarly" 10 reasons why you should read, I cannot help but tell you that aside from the aforementioned, reading not only helps me stay humble, it also helps

me reduce my arrogance and foolish pride as I read about so many savants, true leaders, charismatic faithful, historical figures, and the awe-inspiring aspects of nature and the universe...

## READING ENTERTAINS THE HELL OUT OF ME!

And now according to a search engine, and me of course, here are 10 excellent reasons why you should read:

### 1. To Develop Your Verbal Abilities.

Although it doesn't always make you a better communicator, those who read tend to have a more varied range of words to express how they feel and to get their point across. This increases exponentially with the more volumes you consume, giving you a higher level of vocabulary to use in everyday life.

### 2. Improves Your Focus and Concentration.

Unlike blog post and news articles, sitting-down with a book takes long periods of focus and concentration, which at first is hard to do. Being, fully engaged in a book involves closing off the outside world and immersing' yourself into the text, which over time will strengthen your attention span.

### 3. Readers Enjoy The Arts and Improve The World.

A study done by the NEA explains that people who read for pleasure are many times more likely than those who do not visit museums and attend concerts, and almost three times as likely to perform volunteer and charity work. Readers are active participants in the world around them, and that engagement is critical to individual and social well-being.

### 4. It Improves Your Imagination.

You are only limited by what you can imagine, and the worlds described in books, as well as other peoples' views and opinions, will help you expand your understanding of what is possible. By reading a written description of an event or a place, your mind is responsible for creating that image in your head, instead of having the image placed in front of you when you watch television.

### 5. Reading Makes You Smarter.

Books offer an outstanding wealth of learning and at a much cheaper price than taking a course. Reading

gives you a chance to consume huge amounts of research in a relatively short amount of time. Anne E. Cunningham and Keith E. Stanovich's "What Reading Does for the Mind" also noted that heavy readers tend to display greater knowledge of how things work and who or what people were. Books at home have been strongly linked to academic achievement.

#### 6. It Makes You Interesting And Attractive.

This goes hand in hand with reading to become smarter? Having a library of information that you have picked up from non-fiction reading will come in handy in any academic or scholarly conversation. You will be able to hold your own and add to the conversation instead of having to make excuses and leave. You will be able to engage a wider variety of people in conversation and in turn improve your knowledge and conversation skills.

#### 7. It Reduces Stress.

A study by consultancy firm Mindlab International at the University of Sussex showed that reading reduces stress. Subjects only needed to read, silently, for six minutes to slow down the heart rate and ease tension in the muscles. In fact it got subjects to stress levels lower than before they started.

#### 8. It Improves Your Memory.

In her book *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*, Maryanne Wolf explains that "Typically, when you read, you have more time to think. Reading gives you a unique pause button for comprehension and insight. By and large, with oral language "when you watch a film or listen to a tape, you don't press pause." The benefits of this increased activity keeps your memory sharp and your learning capability nimble.

#### 9. To Discover and Create Yourself (or in some of our cases, re-create ourselves).

In his book *How to Read and Why*, Harold Bloom says that we should read slowly, with love, openness, and with our inner ear cocked. He explains we should read to increase our wit and imagination, our sense of intimacy in short, our entire consciousness and also to heal our pain. "Until you become yourself what

benefit could you be to others?" With the endless amount of perspectives and lives we can read about, books can give us an opportunity to have experiences that we haven't had the opportunity to, and still allow us to learn the skills they entail. Books are a fast track to creating yourself.

#### 10. For Entertainment.

All the benefits of reading mentioned so far are a bonus result of the most important benefit of reading; Its entertainment value. If it were not for the entertainment value, reading would be a chore, but it needn't be. Reading is not only fun, but it has all the added benefits that we have discussed so far. Much more enthralling than watching a movie or a TV show (although they have many benefits as well), a good book can keep us amused while developing our life skills.

So there you have it gentlemen, if you will not take it from me and my reasons as to why I enjoy reading, at least you can take heed to the opinions of these professionals and give reading a chance in your lives, deal?

Again, thank you for reading this and may the benefits of reading make a better you.

Lots of affection and God bless!

ERNESTO COLE

## **READ, READ, AND RE-READ!!!**

Dear friends, I came across a certain read and since I had recently written an essay about the importance and benefits of reading, I felt this was a must to share with you.

In the process of going from principle to principle and page to page on this booklet, certain things will be repeated or considered from different angles. There is a reason for this reiteration. The more a truth is repeated or considered, the more it sinks in. We tend to understand it on a deeper level each time we read it.

A tremendous obstacle on the path is the mind's thinking it already knows what it is reading or hearing, it can be good to develop the habit of always hearing what, is new, regardless of how "familiar" it might seem to the mind.

There is nothing original about the Truth. It hasn't been recently invented. Many of us came across the teachings a long time ago, in some form or another, not so? Yet "knowing" it and actually developing the capacity to LIVE it are different levels of understanding.

The longer a person knows something without applying it, the harder it is to apply. Once the mind thinks it knows something, it becomes rigid regarding that subject. This makes it difficult to learn or experience anything new.

Regardless of what we have understood before, the way to advance most quickly will be to understand everything in a completely new way. A teaching becomes dead for us once we can't see anything new in it. Anything we already know can be understood on a more subtle level than before. With regard to the Truth, there is no limit to how often we can understand it for the first time.

For this reason we must be willing to welcome repetition. It is a very powerful method. It would be wonderful if the facilitators of this program could teach us the Truth once and for all and we would never forget it or lose it again, would it not? Unfortunately, that is not how it works in most cases, if any at all.

We must be reminded of the same things over and over in new and original ways that the mind doesn't readily recognize so that it will take heed and apply it again.

As with the different principles of this booklet, there are various levels, of discipline that may be employed. But the primary discipline of this course is to read the material, its principles, stories, and lessons frequently. It does no good to toss the booklet to the side with the idea that we've already read some of them.

I've had many approach me and question me of the meaning of certain principles and essays. And although I do not mind and welcome it, the meaning of each principle and moral to the stories is right there. All we have to do is read, read, and re-read them and before we know it, BAMM! We see it clearly and then ask ourselves: "Wow, how did I not see it before?"

Either way, the most complete discipline regarding this course is to read the imparted material fully, consciously, and patiently.

I know it may be normal to resist the idea of reading again something we've already read; but each new reading will reveal teachings that may not of have been noticed before. Over the years, people have expressed absolute amazement at what they have found in an old reading, I know I have; have you not?

Gentlemen, by understanding the same things in new ways, our knowledge evolves. If we reach a point where hearing it again is boring, we are unable to progress further. Seeing what is new is an essential element of fully understanding anything. If we are unable to do this, the mind becomes crystallized at a certain level of understanding.

It is also good to develop the habit of practicing what is mentioned, suggested, or implied in the booklet. If we immediately apply it, it becomes part of the strong foundation we are building within ourselves.

Through doing certain things, we become capable of doing certain other things. In this way this program becomes a step-by-step process, although we go about it at our own rate. If we develop the habit of just reading the principles and then forgetting about them, we will not get all that is available from this

beautiful program.

It is easy to read something and think, "That's nice." I wish my family and friends understood that. It is a very common tendency to feel the problem with everyone else is that they don't understand what we have just heard about or read.

In the near future we will discuss ways in which we can actually help others. For now, we need to understand that we need lots of help ourselves.

Thank you very much and as always, God bless!

ERNESTO COLE

## Changes

Hello gentlemen and with dear respect and love I welcome you all. After this last lock-down I had lots of time to meditate, read, and reflect about many things, but most importantly about how I can apportion some wisdom to this beautiful and noble workshop so that its efforts will not be in vain for any of us and then I thought to myself: "well, you do enjoy writing because it puts you in a good mood and it exalts your well-being so, why not write something helpful and read it to the class." Therefore beloveds, here is the following:

The teachings and intentions of this re-entry workshop are quite simple; to help us all. All we must do is commit to its information, acknowledge it, and put it to good use and will undoubtedly reap dear benefits. Sure enough, our minds can be a complicated thing. Most of our lives our minds have complicated things through its own misunderstandings and false premises. This may have come about through our environments and the way we've been conditioned-and thus, our ego structure has become somewhat complex. It is not enough for our minds to accept that our essence is love and happiness. It is more interesting if a lot of complex things have to be explained and understood for the mind to take pride in new discoveries. Although this workshop is basically about making us aware of recidivist attitudes, the object of the course is such that the mind can participate in it fully. Because if our minds are "entertained" long enough and taken out of its comfort zone, subtle processes that require time and continuity can take place. By doing the lessons and reading, reading, reading the manual and its addendum, our minds are kept occupied enough to provide this continuity and therefore, breakthroughs can occur.

In a sense, this workshop is an unfolding of ever expanding perspectives until finally we attain the perspective that is all-inclusive and accepting. Many of us suffer from certain "beliefs" that must be disputed and softened for our minds to be free. We must be flexible enough to flow with what is now, otherwise further growth will be very difficult, if possible.

To succeed in this workshop, we're not required to "believe in" something (but ourselves) or even "agreeing with" anything (just the results). There's nothing to accept on blind faith. The validity of all this lies in our own experiences, our inner process. We don't have to take anyone's word for anything. The facilitators are not asking us to believe anything. It is our awareness/consciousness that will actually happen to us. There is no dogma here, the only way we can truly benefit from the arduous work everyone has put into all of this is to put it into positive practice. We must develop a vision and an awareness of that which we may be presently to but unaware of.

The majority of us are absolute beginners of the path of growth and awareness and may not have the slightest idea of what is being discussed here. All that is okay. Even if we feel that certain terms aren't sufficiently defined, soon enough they will become part of our vocabulary. The important thing for now is that we have committed ourselves to this endeavor and therefore, put the lessons and what we learn 'to practice, very simple, no?

This re-entry workshop is for us to tune in and rid ourselves of the negative ego, become aware, and to understand, how to apply its teachings to all the practical aspects of our daily lives. If we do this, we will see how our practices free us from the negative aspects and lead us to live a more fruitful existence.

Yes gentlemen, I can attest that making changes may prove challenging, since bad habits are hard to break. But if we commit to becoming a better person, I can assure us dear benefits and successes. Just take a long view and accept that we may experience setbacks when attempting change. Here are some guidelines I've come across in my readings to bear in mind when we anticipate the challenges ahead.

1. Remember that change requires committed effort and can cost more than we think but shaping the life we want is worth the investment, so think about the resources, specially of our time and what we will put into our "change" program.
2. Let's choose methods that are right for us, not the latest "get rich and happy quick" theory.  
And if something we try doesn't work, let's be prepared to reflect on the reasons and try

something different.

3. Realize that willpower may at times be overrated. Most people cannot sustain will power in the face of temptation. So let's avoid actions, no matter how small, that jeopardize our goals.
4. Accept the fact that we almost certainly don't make it a promise to commit to developing our awareness of ourselves so that we can replace habits and behaviors that are destructive with ones that are creative and productive.
5. Promise to never accept second best for yourself when it comes to you.
6. Promise to seek to learn from all your experiences and actions.

"We change the world not by what we say or do, but as a consequence of what we become."

"Happiness is a habit, not a destination."

Please absorb. Good luck, and God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## FINDING YOURSELF

Meditation offers the ultimate opportunity to clear and calm your mind, bringing your consciousness to the present, allowing you to move purposely toward your vision. Meditation creates fertile soil in the mind for positive seeds of action to flourish. Each of us is inherently capable of realizing enlightened states of consciousness in our lifetime. Everything you see reflected during meditation grows within you individually and influences our collective consciousness. Meditation is the act of polishing the mirror that is a reflection of your life. It opens the heart, quiets the mind, and creates the space to listen with deeper care to the guidance of your divine inner compass.

There are many ways to access enlightenment. Different methods suit different personalities. This is great news, because it means we each have the freedom to select the techniques that resonate most within us! Traditional practices of the East tend to favor quiet contemplation and silent meditation. In the West the dominant culture and environment has been more active. For many in the West, it has been easier to access stillness through action.

Silence supports you in accessing stillness, but you do not need silence to be still. Silence is the absence of noise, whereas stillness is a state of being. Both silence and stillness are intertwined. But you can tune into the silence that is the backdrop from which all noise emerges.

It is not important which technique you use to slip into the infinite space beyond thought. Different people access stillness in different ways. Whether you sit in silent meditation or mindfully engage in purposeful action without attachment, what is important is that you discover a method that works for you and consistently practice it. That having been expressed, I encourage us all to meditate and find our true essence.

Thank you all and God bless!

ERIESTO COLE

## LEADERSHIP

After searching for the word "leader" in the dictionary and finding this definition:

n. A Person or thing that leads or a person followed by others.

I knew there was much more that the dictionary was not telling me and thus, I continued searching because If I were to stick to that definition, that would have made me a leader in the past and believe me when I tell you: "I was definitely not a leader, but less worthy of one."

In my continued research, I came up with the following and this gave me much more joy. to contemplate and share with you.

What is leadership, anyway?

Such a simple question, and yet it continues to vex popular consultants and lay people alike. Some famous individuals have defined leadership as follows: "The only definition of a leader is someone who has followers." (Peter Drucker, modern business thinker) Really? This instance of tautology is so simplistic as to be dangerous. A young criminal has a criminal enterprise of many men. He commands them through a subordinate, never exposing himself. By default those men follow "orders." Is the young thug a leader? Commander in the criminal world, maybe. Leader? Not to me.

Another definition: "Leader is the capacity to translate a vision into reality." (Warren Bennis). Ok, every year a new style of brand of cars is made and one has a vision of one brand that materializes and purchases it. Does that make you' a leader? A consumer yes, but to me, not a leader.

Mr. Donald Trump very recently stated about the state of the U.S.: "I alone could fix this." Wow! Proud, arrogant, extremely assertive, and callous. Definitely not a leader. Not in my opinion.

Mr. Bill Gates once said: "As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others." This definition includes "others" and empowerment is a good thing. But to what end? I've seen

many "empowered others" and believe have done so myself; from females to vengeful "thugs" who then had to flee from the law. Mr. Gate's definition lacks the part about a positive goal or vision.

Mr. John Maxwell once said: "Leadership is influence, nothing more nothing less!" Well, I appreciate being succinct and straight to the point, but this reduction is too much. A robber has a gun and "influence" over his victims. A manager has the power to fire team members, which provides a lot of "influence" over his employees. But does this make a robber or the manager a leader? I do not think so because Mr. Maxwell's definition omits the source of the influence.

Therefore, comrades, this is my humble and assertive definition of leadership: A process of social influence which maximizes the efforts of others towards the achievement of a positive goal... leadership stems from social influence, not authority or power. It requires others, and that implies they are not "robots."

Additionally, leadership, to me, has nothing to do with seniority or one's position in a company or organization. Too many speak about a company's leadership when referring to the senior most executives in the organization. They are just that, senior executives. To me, leadership doesn't happen when you reach a certain title or pay grade. Hopefully you find it there and use it morally.

But I stress the fact that one does not need a title to lead because one can be a leader in one's place of worship, one's neighborhood, one's family, and even in prison once one has accepted, repented, corrected, and amended his/her ways. All without a title and/or authority.

Again, thank you very much and God bless!

EENESTO COLE

## LOVE, HUMILITY & HOPE

Well gentlemen, first allow me to greet you and then ask you all a very simple question, by a show of hands: how many of you believe in love? And I'm not speaking about the sexual kind, but the kind that has to do with affection, fondness, attachment, devotion, enjoyment, and best wishes for somebody.

Wow! Seems as the great majority, if not all, right? Ok then, seems that it is safe to say that every adjective I used to define love is positive, not so? Not only that, but if you believe in love you must also believe in positivity, am I correct? Good. That having been said, my idea of love is to always maintain a positive frame of mind and thus, love all regardless of race, ethnicity, creed, gender, and beliefs. Excuse me for now and I will return to love.

Humility. Humility to me is not to ever think of myself less than anybody else but to stay away from the extremes when it comes to sentiments like pride and arrogance and therefore, be as modest and balanced as I can be about my attributes; and recognize those of others since we all have them, simple as that.

Now to hope. Hope to me, in my very humble opinion, is a must and actually more important than life itself therefore, only lose hope after you die... never, ever before!

Thank you very much and I humbly but with dear conviction Love you all and wish you the very best.

God bless!

### **"I HAVE A DREAM" by Dr. KING**

After reading "I Have a Dream" by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I must admit that he has my true respect and honor to the point where I can truly say that he has been and still is one of my dear heroes. I say so because as a child born in another country, in a small community, and in a racially mixed family (my mother being of Indian, white, and African descent; married and having children with a white Hispanic with Indian trace as well, then re-marrying and birthing me with a man of African descent), I had no idea what racial discrimination or separation was.

In the early 70s, I was brought by my father to live in Boston, Mass. at the age of approximately eight, or nine and the racism I experienced shocked me tremendously; since I was "forced" to attend all white schools by my father supposedly for a better education. During that hectic time for me, a book titled "Roots" by Alex Haley was published and I was also "forced" by my father to read it. In hindsight, I thanked my father dearly because through that book I became aware of the injustices committed against Africans and people of color and their descent here in America. Additionally, that book made me much more aware of my history and what I was considered and viewed as here in this country, and the world as well.

Either way, the reason I consider Dr. King my hero from the first time I heard the "I Have a Dream" speech, is because I already knew of the injustices, trials, tribulations, conspiracies, and even death-threats against him and his entire family. Yet and despite it all and knowing he was a "marked" man, he never wavered, faltered, or back down and relent (which by many would have been the expected thing to do) Amazingly, he never even resorted to violence in actions nor words which is so evident in his speeches. On the contrary, he urged his followers not to condescend to "wrongful deeds" or "drink from the cup of bitterness and hatred." So yes, even though Dr. King was later assassinated, his words are prophetic ("I am happy to join with you today in what will go down as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of this nation"), his legacy unsurpassed, and his impact in the fight against racial equality

unrivaled.

Therefore, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I Ernesto Cole posthumously extend to you my total/true admiration, love, and respect. May God bless you and keep you forever in His glory!

ERNESTO COLE

## MORE STORYTELLING

### "THE OLD MAN"

An old man used to spend his days sitting on a bench on the square that was located at the entrance of town. He was very much loved by his neighbors and would always answer all questions with much wisdom to whomever asked.

One day a young man approached and asked him: "Hello sir, I just arrive in town; could you please tell me how are the folks here?"

"Hello son, where do you come from?"

"From a faraway town, sir."

"Tell me, how are the folks over there?"

"They are selfish, envious, bad, and thieves; that is why I left that place and am looking for better neighbors."

"I'm sorry to tell you, dear friend, but the inhabitants of this town are just like the ones in your town."

The young man said his farewells and continued his travel.

The next day another young man approached the old man and asked the exact same question: "I just arrived in town, could you please tell me how are folks in this town?"

"How are folks in the town you come from?" The old man asked him.

"They are good, generous, hospitable, honest, and hardworking; I had so many friends that it has cost me to have to separate from them."

"The folk in this town are also like that," the old man answered him.

"Thank you very much for your assistance sir, I will stay and live with you all."

Another man that used to hang out by the square happened to witness both encounters and when the second young man had left, he approached the old man and asked him: "How could you give two answers completely different if the two young men asked you the same question?"

"In reality, it is all inside of us. Whoever has not found anything good in his/her past, will not find it here either. Instead, those that have friends in their towns of origin, will also find friends here because people will receive that which they are willing to give to others. All that is good and beautiful in life that you need, is inside of you. Just simply let it (out, share it with others., and when you least expect it, it will come back to you."

### **"THE NATURE OF THE 'SNAKE'"**

A man noticed a snake was dying in a burning bush and decided to save it, but when he tried to lift it out of the burning bush, the snake bit him. His reaction due to the pain forced him to let the snake go and fall back into the bush where it continued to burn. The man attempted once again to get the snake out, and again the snake bit him. Another man that was close by and saw what was happening came closer and said to him: "Excuse me sir, but how stubborn could you be? Don't you understand that every time you try to get that snake out of the fire, it will bite you?"

The man responded: "The nature of the snake is to bite and that will not change mine, which is to SERVE & HELP."

Then, with the help of a long piece of iron, the man was able to get the snake out of the burning bush and save its life.

Do not CHANGE your nature if someone does you WRONG, do not lose your ESSENCE; simply take precautions.

Some individuals look for happiness.... OTHERS CREATE IT!

## THE COOKIE THIEF

A young lady was early for her flight back home from the holidays and decided to get something to eat while awaiting her flight.

The smell of recently baked cookies trapped her attention and she bought herself a bag full of cookies to eat while killing time.

Since the airport was full of passengers, a gentleman that seemed nice made space for her, so she may sit. She thanked him and took the space next to him. After a few minutes, she reached down and grabbed a cookie from the bag.

For her surprise, the "gentleman" did the same and grabbed a cookie for himself.

Shocked by his petulant behavior, she decided to be the bigger person and say nothing. Looking around to see if anyone had noticed, she took a second cookie from the bag determined to enjoy it. But just before she had finished her next bite, the "gentleman" again reached the bag and took another cookie for himself. Even though she did little to disguise her disgust, she was still shocked and silent by the audacity of his action.

The cookie "theft" continued for the next minutes as if it were a tennis match. First, she would reach the bag, then the stranger would do the same until there was only one cookie left in the bag.

"Surely, he would not take the last cookie," she thought. "He would not do it. Or would he?"

But as soon as she had that thought, the man reached to the bottom of the bag and came out with the last delicious cookie.

For her amazement, the man smiled at her while breaking the cookie in half; giving her the bigger half and at the same time got up to dispose of the bag and without a doubt look for another unsuspecting young lady of whom to take advantage of.

Right at that time, her flight was announced. While she got up to get in line, still shaking from anger and fury by the actions of the stranger, she noticed to her surprise and consternation, a bag full of cookies on the floor exactly where she had placed them.

## Mahatma Ghandi

When Gandhi was studying Law in London, England, a professor by the name of Peters had very ill will towards him but the student, although very humble, never bowed down to him during their many encounters.

One-day Professor Peters was having lunch in a full cafeteria with not much space -open, when student Gandhi came with his tray and sat down next to him. The professor, very arrogantly, said to him: "Young Gandhi, you do not understand! A pig and a bird never sit together and eat!" To which Gandhi respectfully responded: "Sorry sir, you eat in peace and I shall fly away," while getting up and looking for elsewhere to sit.

Mr. Peters, very upset by the "insult" decided to have his revenge during the next examination, but the student responded brilliantly to all the questions. Then, the Professor made the following inquiry:

"Gandhi, you're walking down the road and come across a bag full of money and wisdom inside, but could only have one or the other; which of the two would you choose?" Gandhi, without thinking it twice responded: "Of course I would take the money, professor!"

The professor, smiling says to him: "I, in your place, would take the wisdom, don't you think that would be best?" To which Gandhi responded: "Well sir, each one of us would take what he does not have." Professor

Peters very angrily wrote on Gandhi's examination paper: "IDIOT" and handed it back to the student. Gandhi accepted the paper and sat down.

After a few minutes he approached the professor and said: "Professor Peters, you have signed my exam paper, but did not give a grade..."

## The Squeezed Orange

I was preparing to give a conference and decided to take an orange to the stage as a proposition to my audience. I started a conversation with a bright youngster that was seated in the first row and said to him: "If I were to squeeze this orange as hard as I could, what would come out? He looked at me as if I were crazy and said: "Juice, of course! Do you think apple juice could come out? No! (he was laughing). And grapefruit juice?"

"Neither!" he exclaimed.

"What would come out of it?"

"Orange juice, obviously!" he said a little more frustrated. "Why? why when I squeeze an orange, orange juice comes out?" I asked once again.

"Well, it is an orange and that's what's inside of it." He answered very convincingly.

I consented with a nod and said to him: "Correct. Let's pretend that this orange is not an orange and instead, it is you and someone is squeezing you, puts the pressure on you and says something you do not like, offends you, and out of you comes anger, hate, bitterness, fear. Why does that come out?"

The answer the young man gave was: "Because that is what's inside of me."

Gentlemen, this is one of life's greatest lessons. What comes out of you when life squeezes you? When someone causes you pain or offends you? If anger, pain, and fear come out of you, that is what's inside of you. It doesn't matter who makes the contradiction. If it's one of your parents, your sibling, your offspring, your boss, your "homeboy," or even your enemy. If someone says or does something you do not like, whatever comes out of you is what you possess inside; and whatever it is that's inside of you depends on you... it is your choice! When someone pressures you and love comes out, it is because you have allowed love in your insides, no ifs, ands, or butts!

Today there's an orange for you and for me. Now it is our chance to reflect what's inside of you and me,  
"because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks!"

Jesus Christ was "squeezed" and only forgiveness, blood of love, and compassion for us was emanated  
from His lips. He gave us a vivid example that even though He was insulted, lashed repeatedly, humiliated,  
and treated worst then a criminal, only love came out of Him!

Let's try to fill-up with free LOVE and live each day following in His example.

The word of God is life when we guard it in our hearts!

Thank you very much and God bless!

## ESSAY:

### 10 SECRET TIPS OF ELITE CHANGERS

1. **Developing Commitment** – Wanting to make positive changes is very different from doing what it takes to make those changes. The majority of us (if not -all) want to succeed in this endeavor as is evident by enrolling in this captivating program therefore, I could positively assume we are willing and committed to make the necessary sacrifices, become ego aware with hard work, and dedicate lots of our time and conscious energy to succeed. That is why only a few are successful at the elite level. Success must go beyond status quo. The commitment is what's going to help us constantly deliver results. This fortitude of character and strength of will is a quality that could be acquired by us all and become elite in our endeavor of change to help us overcome obstacles and beat the odds. We can generate true commitment through small changes setting achievable and practical goals one after another.
2. **Visualization** – Our actions follow our thoughts. This speaks not only to the power of positive thinking and self-belief, but also to the power of visualizing our success. Studies have shown (and are still showing) that visualization produces the same muscle action as physical activity the brain gets trained for activity through mental processes. In many studies, those who use visualization alone improve their skill almost as much as those actually practicing the skill; amazing, don't you think? Many elite athletes use visualization to help them develop, and solidify skills and practice their routines before a big event. Likewise, we can use visualization to help us achieve our goals of

not allowing the "ego" to decide on our behalf. When practicing visualization, sit or lie in a comfortable position in a place with little or no distractions. Engage as many of your senses as you can, making an image as vivid as possible. See yourself not just achieving your goal of dominating your ego/negative thought, but enjoying the feeling. Adding just five to ten minutes of daily visualization can help us achieve tremendous progress. Successful people have a tendency to see their future and then live it to existence.

3. Working With Fear – Everyone experiences fear. What will set us apart is our ability to feel that emotion but work toward our goal regardless. We will not succumb to the inner critic, entertain limiting beliefs, nor negative individuals. Fear will be a challenge for us not a threat or defeat and defeat merely an opportunity for learning we may fall/fail at times but will refuse to stay down. In order for us to succeed we must take the risk of seeming "soft" and to take this risk we must embrace fear and failure. But guess what? Our desire to succeed will be greater than our fears. Let's not over analyze what we're doing, let's just immerse ourselves in the process and "JUST DO IT!"

There are many methods of working with fear and embracing failure. One such method is asking ourselves: "so what?" What happens if I fail/fall and look "soft?" The reality is never as scary as our imagination suggests, and it's likely that if we did fail/fall, we will learn from it, become stronger, evolve, grow, and do it 'better next time around. Additionally, if we did "fail/fall," our loved ones (nor ourselves) are not going to laugh at us for attempting the right thing. Life will go on and we will have other chances. If we do not make our goals of losing "X" amount of pounds by "Y" time, the world will not end and we can continue to make progress, right? Fear is a "false evidence appearing real," and when learning to recognize when fear is trying to keep us small, we will be able to acknowledge it and respectfully continue working toward our goals.

4. Affirmation and Personal Belief – If you let it, doubt can destroy your intentions. We act in accordance with our own self-image, so is paramount for committed change seekers to believe in

their own ability and right to succeed. It is very common in interviews to hear Olympians and world-class athletes talk with assurance about their ability to win. When you fail to believe in yourself, you create limits to your success. **YOU MUST BELIEVE TO ACHIEVE!** Using positive affirmations is an excellent way to work toward self-confidence, self-belief, and owning your deserving happiness and success. Try to replace your negative self-talk and criticisms with believable positive statements. You can also try creating a mantra you can say to yourself every morning and evenings and in times of doubt. I believe that any successful person, including the elite athletes and performers, must dedicate the time and energy to work through limiting beliefs. If you want to achieve the goal of becoming a much more positive individual, you may need to do the same. In addition to plausible positive affirmations and mantras, a journalizing practice can be very helpful.

5. **Cultivate Focus** – Committed to chance individuals are highly focused on their goals and do not allow for distractions. Most things come secondary to their goal, purpose, and intent that they create a lifestyle and support system to further their achievement. They have a positive one-track mind and is focused solely on becoming the best person they can be.

With endless possibilities and opportunities available to us in this environment and all the daily distractions, it can be easy to lose focus on what matters most to us. Let's take the time to reflect and clarify exactly what it is we desire, what we will need to succeed, the action steps we will need to take, what we may need from others, and what (or who) we will need to give up. In order to succeed. Clarity creates focus, which breeds success.

6. **Look For Support** – I find it hard to believe of or encounter a committed changer without the help/support of a mentor/coach. Looking and finding one is the next step to an elite level of change. A mentor/coach will provide you with direction, advice, and a clear intelligently constructed behavior program. Mentors/coaches are able to watch and follow your behavior and provide feedback you are unable to provide for yourself. When you are feeling unmotivated or

down and most of us tend to at times, a mentor/coach is there to keep us accountable. Here in Edgefield are many programs with facilitators that would be more than happy to supply you with assistance. I can personally vouch for the staff in the Psychology Department, the chapel, and many facilitators of those programs.

7. **Practice What You Preach** – It is fairly easy to speak nicely and positive, but success comes from the practice, practice, practice aspect of your words. Whether you dislike putting your ego in check, seeming "soft," or feeling "disrespected," you must practice what you preach and put a positive perspective on any and all situation that arises if you truly wish to succeed in becoming an elite changer. Remember, there is what happens and there is what perspective we put on it. We always have a choice and it is up to us (and not the situations or ego) to make it, feel me?
8. **Always Keep Learning** - Let today's mistakes be tomorrow's progress. Committed changers are always developing and honing their skills. The more they know and understand their mentalities, bodies, and egos; the better positive perspective they can give a situation and be much more likely to succeed. Therefore, let's read books of self-help and ways to better ourselves every chance we get. If our financial situation is a little tight, the Psychology Dept., and chapel are full of books and videos that can make your time worthwhile in visiting those departments.
9. **Hone Your Nutrition and Activity Game** - Committed Changers know the necessity of a healthy body for the proper function of the mind thus, they assure themselves of a balanced nutrition filled with lots of the most vital nutrient available, water, and an active lifestyle. Most importantly, proper nutrition is paramount to the success of a healthy endeavor and to succeed as a committed changer, it should not be overlooked. Combine the aspect of a balanced nutrition coupled with clean water and an active lifestyle and you're bound to experience successful results in that respect.
10. **Create Goal Supportive Habits** - Habits are said to be things we do without thought, right? If it is

so, the more we can convert to a healthy nutrition and fitness, the controlling/taming of the ego, the clean/respectful usage of speech and thought, the good intentions, and the demonstration of gratitude for the simplest of things, the less willpower we shall require in the future to stay positive and do right.

For the committed changer, following these aforementioned practices of healthy nutrition, working on skill development, visualization... all become a habit over long periods of practice and is then logged into their subconscious, and consequently, do not spend time or energy thinking about doing the right thing; IT IS A GIVEN!

In conclusion comrades, while not all of us may make it to the elite level of changing (or may even want to), we can still benefit dearly from incorporating the practices of those who have.... If only to become beneficiaries of the much alluded to and acclaimed "LAW OF ATTRACTION!"

Success is a wonderful journey gentlemen, not a destination or goal!

Thank you dearly for your time/attention and as always,

God bless!

ERNESTO COLE

## FAREWELL

### CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations! Yes gentlemen, allow me to congratulate you because if you got to this last page, I could positively assume that you have read, absorbed, and reflected on the preceding essays, stories, prayers, and maxims, right? And if for whatever reason you have gotten to this point without having done so, I beg you to go back and do so; why? Simply because I put my heart, soul, experience, knowledge, and best intentions behind this booklet to detract you from the foolish and negative mentality I once had and thus, exclude you from making the same mistakes I have made and avoid the punishment of incarceration, you with me?

Now, I know that with all these new changes in law (Johnson, Beckles, Sanchez-Fernandez, Mathis, etc., etc.) many of you are about to go back to free society so please, allow me to give you some very sound advice I inspired myself with from the Fair Shake Reentry packet and it's coming from the depths of my heart therefore, please accept and reflect on them.

Going back home could be both exciting and intimidating! Our attitude may be that it should be right back to normal resettling, resuming the same old routines, and getting back to our old relationships, not so? Unfortunately, reality says differently. As a matter of fact, reality says much more than just differently, so please consider the following.

The **first** thing I will advise you is to log on to [www.fairshake.net](http://www.fairshake.net) and join the Fair Shake community. If

you're still here and won't leave for a little bit, you could always add *outreach@fairshake.net* and interact with this Fair Shake community, you will be surprised on how much information and assistance that reentry resource center can provide you with, deal?

**Second:** mentally prepare yourself for the adjustment process. Be prepared for anything... sure enough, do not expect the negative; simply prepare yourself to act as positively as you can for the possibility of rejection, depression, anger, betrayal, and disappointment and for things to be not as you may have expected them.

**Third:** give yourself, a chance to ease into transition; allow yourself the space and time needed to get used to your new environment. Don't worry if it takes you a little while to get used to certain things again. Just take the necessary time to reflect positively on your surroundings.

**Fourth:** understand that the familiar will seem different; you have changed, home has changed, people, places, and behaviors will now be seen from a new perspective.

**Fifth:** expect to do some catching up with wardrobe, certain trends, language, and much more.

**Sixth:** reserve judgments. Reserve all judgments of others, especially the negative ones. Just as you'd prefer not being judged, do not do it and resist the impulse to make hasty decisions.

**Seven:** prepare for mood swings. It may be possible to feel hype one moment and defeated the next. While that may be acceptable, keep your head up, a positive attitude, and a smile on your face.

**Eight:** take time for reflection and self-scrutiny. Your most valid and valuable analysis of an event is more likely to take place after thinking carefully and clearly about it. Consider your true values and determine how you can live within them.

**Nine:** respond to inquiries thoughtfully, carefully, and truthfully. Prepare to greet surprise questions with a calm, thoughtful, and sincere approach. If you find yourself being overly defensive or aggressive, take a deep breath, or two, and relax.

**Ten:** other than the Fair Shake community, seek any support network. Do not isolate yourself. You are not alone and there are those who really want to help you succeed. Look and you shall find them.

**Eleven:** become a volunteer. A great way to connect to your community, build references, and network with people and possibilities is to SERVE them.

**Twelve:** notice how you could live and do without vices here, keep up the stupendous job and continue doing your best when it comes to that.

Additionally, while preparing for the upcoming challenges, there is a possibility that you will have to prove yourself over, and over, and over... do so. People may make many assumptions about who you are now, do not worry about that, simply follow your conscience. People may be very different than when you left... make the necessary adaptations to relate to them. People may expect a lot from you... it's okay, just do your best at all times. The way you hoped things would be may be different from the way they are, but accepting and going with the flow that is in line with your values/principles and relaxing will be worth it.

Well gentlemen, it has truly been a joy to know you and be able, to impart and share with you a little bit of my experience/wisdom, and I pray to the Absolute the best of guidance and blessings for each and every one of you.

Thank you dearly for your time and attention and again, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## MORE ESSAYS

### RELIGION/SPIRITUALITY

Religion. n. 1) the believe in a super human controlling power, esp. in a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship. 2) the expression of this worship. 3) a particular system of faith and worship....

Spirituality. adj. & n. 1) of or concerning the spirit a s opposed to matter. 2) concerned with sacred or religious things. 3) (of the mind, etc.) refined; sensitive. 4) concerned with the spirit, etc., not with external reality...

I open with these definitions because as a foolish youngster, I would do and see others do very immoral things, especially those who claimed being (or representing) very religious and spiritual. I was then arrested for breaking the laws and being overly immoral. During the beginning of my arrest and being subjected to many, many months of complete solitary confinement (my crimes and behavior were labeled and considered heinous), I started to question, not only my religion but, many religions as well. Luckily, after being privy to various books, the bible, different readings, and magazines, I came up with a particular reading that resonated so vividly within me that my perspective of religion/spirituality was obliged and empowered to make me a much better person and human-being for the sake and well-being of myself, loved ones, friends, acquaintances, humanity,

What is religion? How can we practice it? Can we obtain peace and salvation through religion? Can religion unite humanity instead of divide us? These are the questions that piled up in my mind.

All "great" religions have evolved from internal experiences of wise men. The truths realized by these wise men were handed down through generations by the clairvoyants/prophets and at some point in each tradition, people collected and preserved the teachings in written form. These wise men, prophets, and spiritual leaders, the founders of religion, were disinterested and candid. Even though all religions were founded in the name of God, they were gradually converted in institutions, and institutions by their nature require a growing number of partisans for their future existence. Therefore, in time the true teachings of the founders were lost and only the teachings of their myopic/short sighted followers remained. This is why the Orient religion was reduced to the faith and close-minded belief of Hinduism, Brahmanism, and Jainism. Practical Christianity also disappeared to-be replaced by "churchism."

A religion that discriminates against those that do not adhere to it and condemns their way of life does not deserve to be called religion. Such called religions make their followers dependent on priests, temples, idols, blind faith and dogmas. Such crutches do not lead to God nor to the fundamental truth. Religious dogmas tie the believers to a narrow view of life; such teachings inculcate fear in the hearts of the crowd and create divisions in human society.

Today the world lives in fear. As long as the preachers, police, and armed forces have to guard the morality of humans society cannot be considered civilized. There are no prophets found anywhere, nor do we find leaders that promote true happiness for individuals or better yet, for humanity. Many preach Buddhism, but few yield before the wishes of violence. Many preach Christianity, but few practice love. Many preach Islam, but few recognize universal brotherhood. Many claim to be Hindus, but few realize divinity in all.

So my question then becomes, can religion offer a positive solution to the issues of today? We are living in an era of materialism. Material riches harden the heart and cause pride, making us forget our real, true selves. Scientists have conquered the skies and atom but, unfortunately, we have not realized the mystery of our ME. We've traveled to the moon and explored space, but we have not conquered our sworn enemy, the mind. True religion can help us find ourselves. By true religion, I mean the discipline to evolve with

perception to our true nature and express this perception in our everyday lives. True religion is a manifestation of the eternal brightness of our being. Religious practice is the practice of goodness, justice, truth, love, and purity. Uninterested services purify the heart and leave it open to divine light.

So if you want to practice religion, make someone in anguish happy. Take the pain away with your good and loving words. Smile and make someone else smile. Be a boat for those who want to reach the other shore, the shore of happiness and no fear. Developments in technology and communications have made the world smaller when people from different ethnicities have to co-exist. Therefore, to accomplish peace and harmony the religions of the world must transcend their narrow views of life.

TRUE RELIGION IS ONE BECAUSE GOD IS ONLY ONE, but there are many ways of practice and expression. Individual temperaments and traditional, historical and geographical backgrounds are different, therefore the need for different religions. But guess what? THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF ALL RELIGIONS ARE UNIVERSAL – THE GOOD OF HUMANITY IS THE MAIN GOAL.

Through ignorance, people identify religion by their means of adoration, prayers, and ritual activities. These methods gradually lead to habits and dogmas; the religion is replaced by rigidity, superstition, and close-mindedness. What difference does it make if we wear a rosary necklace or a star of David on our necks? Or if we practice prayers in Indian, Arabic, or English? Each religion is as good as the other. Truth is not Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, or Islamic. Truth is an eternal homogeneous substance that could alone liberate humanity.

GOD IS THE GOAL OF EVERY RELIGION, nevertheless religions are different. Is one religion accepted by God while another one is not? Does God prefer one's religious method of behavior as opposed to another? The answer is an emphatic NO! The differences are created by religious organizations. This, organizational attitude forces people to separate from one another.

Eventually, differences are created among members of the same religious organizations and thus, they divide and create different sects. Such attitude is anti-religious and compromises the purity and dignity of

a tradition. People must cross the sectarian obstacles that separate and break the chains of fanaticism and dogmatism. And only so can religion serve the purpose of modern humanity. Do not allow personal prejudices, forces, conventions, or opinions of fanatics and sectarians to tie you to a narrow view of religion. One must be able to differentiate the essential from the non-essential in religion through the power of pure reasoning and discrimination.

If any group follows its functions and duties truly, honestly, and disinterestedly with much devotion, I call that being religious. If science, art, technology, or any other entity contributes something towards the progress of humanity, they are following religion in its true sense. But this progress must have its goal the well-being of humanity. True religion asks of all entities of intelligence to work towards this progress disinterestedly. Therefore, true religion is progressive; it is not an obstacle in any face of life. Today we need a religion to guide humanity to accomplish peace and happiness. Such religion would qualify to be the religion of us all and would help Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and Jews all the same. That religion will be a well of peace, love, and eternal truth.

In essence (and in my personal opinion), to follow any religion one should be good to all without discriminating.

Give a helping hand to those in need, and if they have been "bad" in the past; give them a helping hand just the same. One should be good to one's friends, associates, family, and even enemies and offer them true generosity and sincerity and ultimately; God will at all times be by one's side regardless of one's religion!

Thank you sincerely and as always, God bless

ERNESTO COLE

## IDENTITY IS DESTINY

I am a participant of the re-entry resource center named Fair Shake and hope you all become members of that community as well. If interested, just inquire and I will be more than happy to provide you with their information.

On approximately Wed. January 1, 2017, I was presented with a writing from Mr. Tom Asacker and was requested to give my thoughts on the same thus here they are, but first allow me to share the writing with you.

"Identity is Destiny" by Tom Asacker.

Three simple words. Identity is destiny. An executive mouthed them to me after a talk. He meant it as both undeniable and auspicious. "Our organization's identity is its unique advantage." He probably believed the same to be true of individuals. I see it quite differently.

Like him, I see the statement as self-evident. But it is not an empowering aphorism. Especially in times of rapid change. It is a cautionary adage. Because what is identity? Identity is a story. An invented narrative that connects our past to our future. A linear mental model of our group. Especially relative to how we appear to others. Whether it is our family, friends, company, or industry. Identity is a collective construct. Built around socially consequential qualities and beliefs. The illusion that identity is destiny is really quite strange. Consider psychological and sociological studies. People think they tell you who we are and what we should expect. The same is true personality and brand assessments. But what they really describe are how we've been conditioned.

It is like studying polluted water. And then telling us how to swim in it. It is based on what we've become. Not on what we should be or could be. And that is a shame. Because we are living in turbulent times. A dynamic world of possibility. One that requires fresh thinking and bold action, and for that, we need to kill our comforting stories. Go back to the source. And purify our minds. The choice is yours (and mine).

Either we break free of our manufactured identities; And be-a lively force for change in the world. Or we stay in our stories and stick to our knitting. The former will bring us exciting lives. Ones driven by our unique essence. And filled with spirited and meaningful action. And the other will bring us more of the same. And comfortable sweaters. Which we will most likely need. In the cold, barren future of irrelevance.

Well gentlemen, after reading the aforementioned, I agree with Mr. Asacker wholeheartedly and this is why. First permit me to give the definitions of identity and destiny according to the Oxford dictionary.

Identity – n. 1) a. the quality or condition of being a specified person or thing, bind individuality; personality. 2) identification or the result of it. 3) the state of being the same in substance, nature, qualities, etc...

Destiny – n. 1) a. fate, b. this regarded as a power. 2) what is destined to happen to a particular person, etc...

Now that we are clear on their definitions I can give my thoughts on Mr. Asacker's writings. We all have an identity because we have the quality or condition of being a person. We are either male, female, transgender, and so forth. We also fall into either being ectomorphs, endomorphs, or mesomorphs.

Additionally, we are all individuals and have our own personalities, whether it is learned or innate but, that does not define destiny one bit. In my humble opinion, destiny is much better defined by how we choose to handle and accept the situations that life presents us with.

The aphorism identity is destiny is nothing but that, a pithy comment with no real value or veracity. It would be like saying that because our forefathers may have erred in the past, we have no choice and our destiny/fate/karma is to be held accountable for their actions through no fault of our own. Sure enough, there may be some sort of blueprint according to karmic principles, but it is in our power and options to change such blueprint and shape our own destiny through the power of our volition's and the will of God, simple as that.

Therefore Mr. Asacker, I will adhere to your implication of breaking free of my manufactured identity and

be a force of. change in this world, and reap the fruits of a purposeful, meaningful, and accepting existence so that my destiny and the will of God will be a wonderful and exciting journey till the day I cease to exist in this world.

Thank you dearly and may God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## WORDS

A young Samurai warrior stood respectfully before the Zen master and said: "Master, teach me about Heaven and Hell." The master snapped his head up in disgust and said: "Teach you about Heaven and Hell?! Why, I doubt that you could even learn to keep your own sword from rusting! You ignorant fool! How, dare you suppose that you could understand anything I might have to say?"

The old man went on and on, becoming even more insulting, while the young swordsman's surprise turned first to confusion and then to hot anger, rising by the moment. Master or no master, who can insult a Samurai and live?

At last, with teeth clenched and blood nearly boiling in fury, the warrior blindly drew his sword and prepared to end the old man's sharp tongue and life all in one furious stroke. But at that very moment the master looked straight into his eyes and said gently: "That's Hell."

Even at the peak of his rage, the Samurai realized that the master had indeed given him the teaching he had asked for. He had hounded him into a living Hell, driven by uncontrolled anger and EGO.

The young man, deeply HUMBLed, sheathed his sword and bowed low in awe to this great SPIRITUAL teacher. Looking up into the master's ancient, smiling face, he felt more love and compassion than he had ever felt in all his life and at that point the master raised his index finger and said kindly, "And that's Heaven."

Although I could have titled this essay "Heaven and Hell," I chose "Words" for the following reasons.

We all experience the power of words, but few recognize that power or understand it. We may hear something bad about ourselves, be insulted or criticized, and feel really bad, right? Or we may get complimented for doing something well, and feel really good, not so? Therefore, it is safe to say that our sentiments are defined by the words we consider (if we let them) and have the power to make us angry or depressed, and can also uplift us. Please correct me if you feel I'm wrong.

For as much, we have to learn to free ourselves from the power that words can have over us, and since we can be affected by the words we focus on; we must learn to discriminate before we consider them, don't you think?

Although "some" of us consider ourselves so sophisticated regarding many things because we claim to have read and read many books, we could be, incredibly naive regarding many, many things, including the words and ideas we readily accept and impart.

Yet, when we truly understand the power of words, however, we learn to discern what has the potential to bring us and others down. We can be (if we choose to) selective about what we allow to influence us and others, understanding the, power of words is one of the most important things in life. If we refuse to consider the power of words, then we consciously give them the power to control/manipulate/hurt us and others in ways we could never imagine!

I've had the experience of having been told "bad" words at times, and although, thank God, I've not focused on them negatively; when speaking of them in hindsight, the speakers of such words have justified themselves by claiming "tough" love. I see it differently... as an excuse not to allow and show TRUE love when the opportunity presented itself.

Respected and beloved comrades, please take heed and as always, God bless!

ERNESTO COLE

## SUCCESS

Success. n. 1) the accomplishment of an aim; a favorable outcome. 2) the attainment of wealth, fame, or position. 3) a thing or person that turns out well.

After reading this definition in the dictionary of the word success, I find it to be rather an ambiguous word. Success with respect to the outside? Or to oneself? And if it's with respect to the outside, then what do you evaluate it with? Very often outside success is irrelevant, wrong, and misplaced (been there done that). So how can one speak about it? Eventually, you may think: "I'm successful because people speak about some aspects of my work." But that is an external judgment. And I haven't the slightest idea as to how to value that judgment. Success is not one of my motives any longer, because success stands in contrast to failure, no? But no worthwhile effort in one's life is either a success or failure therefore, what do we mean by success? You take a problem and you solve it. Well, you solve it and in a limited sense it is a success, then what? It may have been a trivial problem and thus, a judgment about success is something I no longer consider being too serious about in any sense whatsoever.

Additionally, I tell myself, if it is a source of satisfaction. Achieving something that one thinks is important without a consciousness or motivation; it seems to me that life would be rather dull and purposeless, and I no longer wish to attempt that kind of life. That kind of life of complete leisure, say of having absolutely nothing to do that one felt was worth doing, that strikes me as a rather desperate situation to be in.

In consequence, and again comrades, let's make success a lifelong and interesting journey rather than a simple goal, deal?

Again, thank you dearly for your time and God bless!

ERNESTO COLE

## MY HERO

In my life I have met, heard of, and read of many individuals which I truly admire and look up to the point of considering many of them, not only true heroes but, my personal heroes.

Topping the list of these individuals is my dear mother for her loving, caring, compassionate, and God loving ways. Followed closely by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for his relentless and positive pursuit of equality for all men.

President Nelson Mandela for an also implacable and uncompromising pursuance of freedom and parity for the people in South Africa. Mahatma Gandhi for engaging in a similar chase and being triumphant in India; Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner, Sigourney Weaver, Frederick Douglas, and many other for being unremitting in their abolitionist race. Booker T. Washington, Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Jackie Robinson, Jesse Owens, Rosa Parks, and many more; yet there is a particular little girl that truly touched me to the core and obliged me to continue my path, toward happiness, peace of mind, and subjective well-being. At the time of me seeing and hearing of this girl, she was only 15 years old and had gone through one of the most harrowing/unimaginable acts of violence and impropriety a person should ever endure.

Please allow me to explain. Of all my personal heroes I just alluded to, they did and accomplished their heroic feats at an adult and mature age, and although no credit could be rested from any them, this little girl was just a teenager when she endured and acted so heroically in a particular situation life presented her with when the majority of adults, if not all, would have abhorred to the fullest such situation and not know how to react; yet she accepted it and dealt with it with the grace, nobility, courage, and fortitude of a seasoned and accomplished idol.

Sure enough, my alluded to heroes have all dealt with grace, nobility, courage, and fortitude, and even risked their lives (some were killed) in their purpose yet, for some reason none were able to impact me the way this little girl did; not even my dear and beloved mother despite her relentless and loving

attempts.

Her name is Cassidy Stay and permit me to tell you the part of her story that truly touched me and I was thus, blessed with and empowered/motivated to be the most loving, caring, moral, sincere, understanding, accepting, happy, and content individual I can be.

On the afternoon of July 9, 2014 in Spring, Texas, Cassidy Stay was home alone. Her estranged uncle-in-law, Ronald Lee Haskell, dressed as a FedEx employee came to her door asking for her parents. Not recognizing him, she told him her parents weren't home. Haskell left, but returned a short time later and told Cassidy he was her ex-uncle. When she tried to close the door on him, he forced his way inside, tied her up, and made her lie face-down. He did the same to her four brothers and sisters and her parents when they returned to the house. Haskell then shot all seven in the head "execution style" when they refused to tell him where his ex-wife was. He then fled the scene taking the family's car.

Five of the victims died at the scene, while one child died shortly after arriving at the hospital. The lone survivor, the 15-year-old girl who initially answered the door was able to identify the suspect, telling police that he was planning on going after other family members; her grandparents because he believed that is where his ex-wife must be hiding.

Cassidy survived being shot by raising her hand, the bullet grazed her head and finger causing a skull fracture and damaging the tip of her finger, then she "played dead."

Using Cassidy's information, police confronted Haskell at a second home, a chase ensued where Haskell communicated with police via a cellphone while holding a pistol to his head. After about three hours, of negotiating, Haskell surrendered without further incident.

The slain victims included Cassidy's 39-year-old father, Stephen Stay; Her 33-year-old mother, Katie Stay; and her four brothers and sisters; Bryan, 13, Emily, 9, Rebecca, 7; and Zachary, 4. Cassidy, despite her injuries, was able to phone police via 911 and inform them that Haskell was planning to attack her grandparents next.

On July 11, 2014 at approximately 6:30am, I was standing watching CNN when breaking news of Cassidy's release from the hospital was being broadcast and a reporter asked her about the traumatizing and tormenting ordeal she had just experienced, and this was her response: "Happiness can be found even in the darkest times, if one only remembers to turn on the light. I know that my mom, dad, Bryan, Emily, Becca, and Zach are in a much better place and that I'll be able to see them again one day. Stay strong."

Wow, after hearing Cassidy's response so soon after experiencing such traumatizing and unimaginable calamity, I took a step back looking for a chair because I almost fell after hearing such noble, gracious, and courageous reaction. And I say so because, and although Cassidy had experienced such misfortune through no fault of her own, she showed no bitterness, or anger towards life nor her ex-uncle. Yet, many of the individuals in this environment (myself included) are constantly complaining and bickering about our situations despite consciously and knowingly being as immoral as can be.

Therefore, and although by the time Cassidy experienced what she did I had already embarked on a more moral and positive journey of accepting and doing the best with my life, I want to thank Cassidy for enforcing/fostering the key to happiness and well-being in me... You do not know me, Cassidy, and I know for a fact that you would never approve of my past ways (because neither do I), but please allow me the opportunity to praise your ways, thank you, and consider you my beautiful, precious, courageous, and noblest of heroes!

Thank you tremendously and God bless!

ERNESTO COLE

## PESSIMISM VS. OPTIMISM

After sustaining an interesting conversation with a dear friend on the difference between pessimism and optimism, and his belief that the benefits of being a pessimist may outweigh those of being an optimist; I vehemently disagreed and felt somewhat compelled/obliged to reflect and write on it; and since this topic would take dear insight, I felt it deserved much contemplation.

He claimed that at times it is more beneficial to look at the pessimist/negative side of things so that one may prepare for and alter the outcome. My response was simply that such outlook may be good for him, but due to my experience and transition, I rather not look at it that way nor waste energy in such "maneuver;" but instead maintain my optimistic ways and when, and if the negative does occur, I will simply deal with it the best and as positive as I can and while not "wasting" energy preparing for who knows what; I am now sufficiently strong enough to deal with whatever setback.

He, not very satisfied or convinced with my assertion, told me about a study that confirmed his view and would make me privy to it and thus, the main reason for this essay so that you will be privy to it as well and make your own opinion.

In the study ("The Positive Psychology of Negative Thinking" by Julie Norem & Edward Chang) they claim the following:

"As the positive psychology movement gains momentum both within psychology and the broader culture, it becomes increasingly important to ensure that the complexity of individual personality and psychological processes do not get lost in a 'one size fits all' approach to improving human functioning. In this article we consider some of the ways that the costs and benefits of different kinds of optimism and pessimism may vary across different individuals, situations, and cultural contexts. We use defensive pessimism research to illustrate that there are times when pessimism and negative thinking are indeed positive psychology, as they lead to better performance and personal growth. We also consider the ways

in which dominant American culture – and research in psychology – may underestimate some of the cost of optimism.

Additionally (I'm only quoting relevant parts due to length), there is substantive evidence that optimism, in its many forms, is related to better outcomes (e.g., coping, satisfaction, well-being) measured in a variety of ways across a variety of contexts.

This evidence makes it extremely tempting to conclude that optimism is always to be desired over pessimism, and further that as researchers, educators, policy consultants, therapists, and parents we should do everything we can to promote optimal conclusion, not coincidentally, supported by much of American popular culture. This long positivity zeitgeist (popular belief) means that it's especially important that we clarify for ourselves, and for those who might be consumers of our work, the ways in which our theories and research present a picture that is more complicated and more useful than "optimism is good" and "pessimism is bad."

They continued defining their purpose for this research and admitted that it was simply illustrative and not comprehensive (covering all aspects or nearly all of this complex issue). A quick sampling of the kinds of optimism makes clear that there is a daunting array to constructs.

Distinctions among these constructs are more than semantic (relating to meaning in language) because different constructs have different associated consequences and implications.... Defensive pessimism, is linked to more positive outcomes than dispositional (tendency towards) pessimism, and both naive and unrealistic optimism are linked to more negative outcomes than dispositional optimism.

Different types of optimism and pessimism also vary in both the extent to which and the circumstances under which they are potentially changeable. At one extreme it has been argued that attributional (refer to) style is learned and that maladaptive attributional patterns can be readily changed in therapeutic and educational contexts. In contrast, there is little therapeutically reason to suspect, and no empirical evidence to suggest, that dispositional optimism and pessimism are malleable.

One of the explicit goals of positive psychology is to apply psychological knowledge to the betterment of individuals and society.... One of the biggest gaps in optimism and pessimism research and one which is central to the questions of change concerns the intrapsychic context of optimism and pessimism. For example, optimism is correlated positively with extraversion, self-confidence, self-esteem, repression, self-deception, and positive affect; and negatively with anxiety, neuroticism, self-consciousness, and a host of other variables.

In one of few published attempts to disentangle the effects of dispositional optimism and unrealistic optimism, showed in two different studies that dispositional optimism and unrealistic optimism interacted to predict coronary heart disease (CHD) related outcomes. In the first study, optimism alone was unrelated to exercise over time while unrealistic optimism was related to decreased exercise over time. Those participants who were high on both optimism and unrealistic optimism showed the largest decreases in exercise over time while those who were high in optimism and low in unrealistic optimism showed greatest increases. A similar pattern was found in a second study, when the outcome variable was knowledge of CHD prevention after classroom instruction. In both studies, unrealistic optimism and dispositional optimism were positively correlated with each other. This study makes clear that (A) the distinctions among different kinds of optimism and pessimism are consequential, (B) all optimism is not equally beneficial. (C) we know very little about interactions among different types of optimism and pessimism or how changing one kind of optimism (or pessimism or negative thinking) will change another.

### **Rethinking Affect as an Outcome**

Particular life outcomes also do not occur in a vacuum. Not surprisingly, in a cultural context that highly values individualism, the vast majority of research on optimism and pessimism focused on individual outcomes, and especially on outcomes related to positive affect and satisfaction. The most ubiquitous (extremely common) findings across optimism and pessimism research are those relating optimism of many sorts to more positive effects. Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, research on more objective

outcomes such as task performance reveal much less reliable links across optimism constructs.

Affect is conceptually tricky as an outcome variable, however. For example, several recent lines of research converge to suggest that predisposition to experience positive and negative affect are genetically influenced and have distinct biological substrates. This does not mean, of course, that those tendencies cannot be changed through experience or influenced by positive or negative thinking. It does suggest, however, that when one compares effective and other outcomes across individuals, it is important to remember that outcomes need to be evaluated relative to where people start. Finding a definite starting point in the relationship between affect and expectation is difficult...

### **Defensive Pessimism: Using Negative Thinking**

Defensive pessimism refers to a strategy anxious individuals may use to pursue important goals. These individuals set unrealistically low expectations and then devote considerable energy to mentally playing through or reflecting on all the possible outcomes they can imagine for a given situation.

Research has typically contrasted defensive pessimism strategic optimism. The latter refers to a strategy whereby individuals set optimistic expectations for their own performance and actively avoid extensive reflection. In addition to avoiding reflection prior to a task, strategic optimist typically employ the kinds of self-serving optimistic illusions researchers Taylor and Brown describe.

Generally, research has shown that defensive pessimist perform as well as strategic optimist, and that both groups show performance decrements and increased anxiety when prevented from using their preferred strategies. For example, Professors Norem and Illingworth found that, on both an arithmetic task in a laboratory experiment and when pursuing their personal goals in "real life," defensive pessimists did best when they thought through possible negative outcomes. Strategic optimists, in contrast, did best when they avoided reflecting on possible negative outcomes and significantly worse when they did reflect. Similarly, Spencer and Norton found that defensive pessimists performed best on a dart throwing task when they engaged in coping imagery (imagining what could go wrong) and significantly worse when

they engaged in relaxation imagery. The opposite pattern was obtained for strategic optimists.

Across a variety of settings, participants, and tasks, this research shows that when defensive pessimists and strategic optimists are left alone to use their strategies, they do equivalently well. Both groups also are vulnerable to disruptions that interfere with their strategies, but what disrupts one group's performance facilitates the other group's performance.

Beyond performance outcomes, however, this same research also has shown that strategic optimists tend to be more satisfied and in a better mood than defensive pessimists. From those results, one might conclude that strategic optimism is clearly better than defensive pessimism, even if defensive pessimists often perform well.

### **Positive Negativity**

In other words, despite considerable evidence that dispositional pessimism can have debilitating motivational effects, defensive pessimism has a different and positive function: It helps anxious people manage their anxiety so that it does not interfere with their performance. Its meaning and consequences are only seen when considered in conjunction with the problem that anxiety poses for individuals motivated to pursue performance goals. Defensive pessimists perform better when they are allowed to maintain their low expectations and to reflect on negative possibilities before a task: their performance is impaired (and they feel more anxious) if that reflective process is disrupted by positive thinking and optimistic expectations or curtailed by positive mood.

Anxious people who use defensive pessimism, in other words, do better than anxious people who do not. Defensive pessimists work through their anxiety on their way toward their goals rather than focusing on increasing their immediate happiness or satisfaction: They remind us that feeling good is not always the highest priority.

### **The Cost of Optimism?**

Somewhat less obviously, research contrasting defensive pessimists with strategic optimists also

illustrates that the strategic optimists are susceptible to derailment of their positive approach. Reflecting about possible outcomes impairs their performance. This is less a general indictment of their strategy after all, they usually do quite well than a hint about some of the potential costs of optimistic strategies and the vulnerabilities of those who use them. Situations or contexts that require review of alternative possible outcomes (e.g., "trouble-shooting to diagnose potential problems) or involve negative outcomes that need to be acknowledged so that they can be prepared for may not mesh well with strategic optimism...

Optimism and positive thinking can derail us if they lead us to ignore or discount important cues and warnings. Given the self-serving function of optimists biases, strategic optimists should be motivated to preserve their positive self-images and positive outlooks, and thus potentially resistant to negative feedback might be informative. Indeed, in one study it was found that strategic optimists remembered feedback about a social performance as significantly more positive than it actually was, and also thought they had less need to improve their performance than observers perceived they did.

In many everyday life contexts, the mild positive biases reinforced by optimistic attributional styles may be so motivating of effective action that they compensate for the potential problems that could result from avoidance or distortion of negative feedback. If, for example, a strategic optimist perceives that a neighbor has a more positive impression of him than is the case, the optimist's likely response would be reciprocation: We tend to like those whom we think like us. If the optimist likes his neighbor (whom he believes likes him) and then behaves in a consistently friendly way to that neighbor, the neighbor is relatively likely to reciprocate in turn. Even if the neighbor's actual evaluation of the optimist never becomes quite as positive as the optimist's perception (or as the optimist's self-evaluation), it may well be positive enough to form the foundation for a mutually beneficial friendship.

### **Positive Psychology and Negative Thinking**

None of this is to suggest that the benefits of positive thinking and optimism are not both real and

substantial in many cases. We just want to suggest that the kinds of research and arguments we have reviewed emphasize that the positive psychology needs to include more than positive thinking and optimism. It should reflect the diversity of ways in which people achieve a diverse array of positive outcomes, including interpersonal and social outcomes. In studying how people achieve positive outcomes, we need to go beyond positive affect and personal satisfaction. We also need to look beyond what people have achieved at a given point in time to what they are working on achieving over time and what they accomplish relative to where they start.

The problem with any general Zeitgeist is the extent to which it may blind us to the questions we are neglecting to ask and the answers we do not want to see. The challenge for positive psychology as it works to better the human condition is to remember that there is no one human condition. We live under many conditions, across our own life span, across different situations, in interactions with different people in our lives, and across a multitude of economic, social, environmental, and political circumstances. As we study how people make positive progress in their lives, we need to take care not to let the power of any one pathway keep us from seeing the alternative routes individuals devise toward their goals. Humans excel at adaptation to varied circumstances using varied means; it will take all of our collective insight to understand our own resourcefulness.

After reading and quoting for your benefit the study made by Professors Julie Norem and Edward Chang so that you may have and form your personal opinion on the matter, I will now give you a sentiment I share by paraphrasing a creative novelist's take on the matter. His name is Robertson Davies and was once interviewed by Professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, former chair of the Department of Psychology at the University of Chicago and much acclaimed author of the national bestsellers *"Flow," "The Evolving Self,"* and *"Creativity, The Psychology of Discovery and Invention."* Allow me to add that Professor Csikszentmihalyi, like your humble servant, found Mr. Davies' sentiment truly resonating as well.

"Pessimism is a very easy way out when you're considering what life really is because pessimism is a short view of a life. If you look at what is happening around us today and what has happened just since

you were born, you can't help but feel that life is a terrible complexity of problems and illness of one sort or another. But if you look back a few thousand years, you realize that we have advanced fantastically from the day when the first amoeba crawled out of the slime and made an adventure on land. If you take a long view, I don't see how you can be pessimistic about the future of man or the future of the world. You can take a short view and think that everything is a mess, that life is a cheat and a deceit, and of course you feel miserable. And I become very much amused by some of my colleagues, particularly in the study of literature, who say the pessimistic, the tragic view, is the only true key to life which I think is just self-indulgent nonsense. It's very much easier to be tragic than it is to be comic. I have known people to embrace the tragic view of life, and it is a cop-out. They simply feel rotten about everything, and that is terribly easy. And if you try to see things a little more evenly, it's surprising what complexities of comedy and ambiguity and irony appear in it. And that, I think, is what is vital to a novelist. Just writing tragic novels is rather easy."

Mr. Davies' critique applies more broadly, and not just to the literary field. It is equally easy to explain creativity in a way that only exposes, debunks, reduces, deconstructs, and rationalizes what creative persons do, while ignoring the genuine joy and fulfillment their life contains. But to blind us to the most important message we can learn from creative people: how to find purpose and enjoyment in the chaos of existence.

And now to add to Mr. Davies' sentiment, I will say that having lived my younger days as a pessimist and constituting a true menace to society due to my pessimist outlook on life, and now evolving/growing to a much more optimistic stance; the subjective well-being afforded to me is incomparable to the point where just remembering my previous pessimism, lack of happiness and well-being is a waking nightmare.

Therefore, I humbly advice my fellow readers to favor the benefits of optimism regardless of the so called "costs;" since the "Law of Attraction" will surely compensate such fees!

My account/advice is in no way an indictment on the pessimist (since I am a true believer of "to each

his/her own" and accept all regardless of opinion and behavior), but my personal take and experience on the matter; nothing more, nothing less.

Thank you dearly for your time and attention on such complex topic and as always, God bless!

ERNESTO COLE

## KARMA

After having been informed by our facilitator that today we're going to touch the topic of karma and not wanting to just give you, and rely on, my perspective, I decided to do some research and provide you with a more professional perspective and therefore, the following.

Karma is the executed "deed," "work," "action," or "act," and it is also the "object," the "intent." Pundits explain karma by contrasting it with another Sanskrit word: kriya. The word kriya is the activity along with the steps and effort in action, while karma is the executed action as a consequence of that activity, as well as the intention of the actor behind the executed action or a planned action. A good action creates good karma, as does good intent. A bad action creates bad karma, as does bad intent.

Karma also refers to a conceptual principle that originated in India, often descriptively called the principle of karma, sometimes as the karma theory or the law of karma. In the context of theory, karma is complex and difficult to define. Different schools of ideologists derive different definitions for the karma concept from ancient Indian texts; their definition is some combination of casualty that may be ethical or non-ethical; ethicization, that is good or bad actions have consequences; and rebirth. Other ideologists include the definition of karma theory that which explains the present circumstances of an individual with reference to his or her actions in past these actions may be those in a person's current life, or, in some schools of Indian traditions, possibly actions in their past lives; furthermore, the consequences may result in current life, or a person's future lives. The law of karma operates independent of any deity or any process of divine judgment.

Difficulty in arriving at a definition of karma arises because of the diversity of views among the schools of Hinduism; some, for example, consider karma and rebirth linked and simultaneously essential, some consider karma but not rebirth essential, and a few discuss and conclude karma and rebirth be flawed fiction. Buddhism and Jainism have their own karma precepts.

Thus karma has not one, but multiple definitions and different meanings. It is a concept whose meaning, importance, and scope varies between Hinduism, Jainism, and other traditions that originated in India, and various schools in each of these traditions. Some claim that, furthermore, there is an ongoing debate regarding whether karma is a theory, a model, a paradigm, a metaphor, or a metaphysical stance.

Well gentlemen, I could continue quoting this very long research on such complex and debated term, but the main concepts are here discussed so that you may have a basic knowledge of the principles of karma and thus, make and give your own opinion.

Thank you all dearly for your time, attention, and as always, God bless!

ERNESTO COLE

## THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU

I briefly met the creator of this program in the latter part of 2015. On the second occasion, he was having a conversation with the same friend that had introduced us and the topic was his intent to facilitate the re-entry program here in Edgefield. I listened, felt his noble and positive intentions, and my interest was piqued. When he informed me that the program was intended for individuals ready for release to prepare them for free society, I let him know my position and thus my ineligibility. We continued speaking and agreed that if something could be done for my participation it would be and consequently, here I am.

In the first course of the program, I was delighted and participated wholeheartedly. I also wrote 3 essays (*Emotions, Practice, Practice, Practice*, and *Code of Conduct*) in Spanish and English. By doing so, I not only found my purpose in life but an addition to it; to serve all I can selflessly.

Anyway, allow me not to stray from the purpose of this reflection and stay on point. After the conclusion of the first course, its creator invited me to co-facilitate the second course in both the Spanish and English classes. I truly felt honored, trusted, and obliged to do so.

While in the second course, I found myself deep in thought and composing an essay when a co-inmate who wanted to play chess asked me what I was doing. I informed him, and he responded: "Why are you wasting your time, energy, and even finances for those guys when half of them only care for the certificate. My response was: "Wow! You really think so?" And he said: "Of course I do, I've been around long enough and have lots of experience in this 'shit.' More than half those guys only care for the certificate." I looked at him deeply in his eyes and my initial response was to tell him that I was probably more than a decade older than him and thus much more experienced. But I thought better of it and said: "You know what, slim? Your negativity just made my resolve even more potent and inspiring! Here I am composing this essay thinking, 'If I reach/inspire one or two for the better, my purpose will be accomplished; and if I reach no one, that will be their loss and not mine because I truly am enjoying what I'm doing. Then you

come with your pessimism and tell me "that from your 'lots' of experience in this 'shit' only half, if that many, could be reached, right? Well then, thank you very much because you have just inferred that I am a successful individual, not so? Therefore, thank you very much because I had never thought of it that way in the past. He looked at me as if I were crazy and left without another word.

That having been said, thanks to each and every one of you for your time, making me feel as a successful individual, and may God bless you always!

ERNESTO COLE

### About Wisdom From 'Within'

Wisdom From "Within" is the product of a beautiful reentry program I attended in Edgefield Correctional Institution called Recidawareness. It is a program designed to prepare incarcerated individuals for society and help them avoid the pitfalls of recidivism and thus return to prison.

While attending this workshop, I became enamored with it and decided to contribute to it by showing my appreciation in being allowed to participate despite not being eligible (the program is designed for individuals short on their sentence by at least 18 months and I am a lifer). In assisting the program, I decided to write inspiring essays that made the participants reflect, become more conscious, and more practical about the lessons imparted in the workshop.

I started with my first essay called *Emotions*. I followed it with *Practice, Practice, Practice*; and concluded the first session of my participation with Code of Conduct.

While the program was on hiatus, many ex-participants were curious about my cited essays and approached me with question therefore, I composed *Questions and Answers*.

When the second session of the program was about to commence, its creator asked if I would be interested in co-facilitating it with him and others. I was truly honored, accepted his request, and prepared an addendum with other information I was privy to, followed consciously and felt it would be noble to share with my co-inmates. That material which consists of *Greetings, The Magic of Storytelling, Thank You For Your Time, Every Place Can be a Holy Place, This Story is About You*, and other miscellaneous material are all in the first part of the table of contents right before the alluded essays and then continue on later pages.

While on the second session of the program, I noted excessive pride and arrogance in part of some of the participants as well as facilitators and thus composed *Acceptance, Amateurs and Professionals, Relationships, and Change*.

I must admit that I would go through great lengths to acquire an alpha smart (device loaned to the population to type with by the Institution) and paper to type and print the information, but did not see much, enthusiasm on the part of the participants to read and for that reason decided to compose an essay on the importance of reading and thus, *Read, Read, Read and Read Some more* followed by *Read, Read, and Re-read*.

The program continued its flow and I continued with my inspirational and practical writings of *Changes, Finding Yourself, Leadership, Love, Humility, and Hope, and I Have a Dream by Dr. King*. I also added more material I came across in my readings and they are all under *More Storytelling*.

As the second session of Recidawareness was ending, I decided to conclude this phase of my participation with *10 Secret Tips of Elite Changers, Congratulations, and Thank you, Thank You, Thank You* as a farewell to the participants.

Right after the conclusion of the second session of the program, I was involved in a terrible misunderstanding with a new correction officer in the Institution, was placed in the segregated section of the Institution (SHU), and then released after approximately 25 days.

Once released from the special housing unit (SHU), I continued with my passion of writing and imparting my little bit of wisdom by composing *Religion/Spirituality, Identity is Destiny, Words, Success, My Hero, Pessimism vs Optimism, Karma, included Thank You, Thank You, Thank You* (which I had been composed but did not get a chance to read it to the participants), and *Change is Easy*.

While composing and sharing alluded essays selflessly, many friends and co-inmates would constantly request my writings and would also encourage me to continue writing. They even suggested I write a book and share my knowledge and experiences. The suggestions were so many and emphatic, that after reflecting on them and also being informed about the availability of the blogging technique (which I had no idea of, since I have been incarcerated long before blogging was a technique), I decided to humbly give voice to my bit of wisdom and consequently, this blogging site.

ocean. When she went down to the docks, a handsome young sailor noticed her tears, took pity on her, and said, "Look, you've got a lot to live for. I'm off to Europe in the morning, and if you'd like, I can stow you on my ship. I'll take good care of you and bring you food every day." Moving closer, he slipped his arm around her shoulder and added, "I'll keep you happy, and you'll keep me happy." The girl nodded yes, after all, what did she have to lose? That night, the sailor brought her aboard and hid her in a lifeboat. From then on, every night he brought her three sandwiches and a piece of fruit, and they made passionate love until dawn. Three weeks later, during a routine search, she was discovered by the captain. "What are you doing here?" The captain asked. She got up off the ground and explained, "I have an arrangement with one of the sailors. He's taking me to Europe, and he's screwing me." The captain looked at her, "He sure is lady, this is the Staten Island ferry."

A boy is at school and he hears the older kids talking about pussy and their bitch. The boy confused by this goes to his mother. "Mom," the boy asks, "what's a pussy?" The mother being startled by this thinks quickly and finds the closest dictionary and opens it up to a picture of a cat and says, "Son, that's a pussy." The son then asks, "What's a bitch?"

The mother again thinking quickly opens to a picture of a dog and says, "son, this is a bitch." The son walks away still confused, and sees his father watching television. The son walks up to his father and says, "Dad, what's a pussy?" The father doesn't want to miss the baseball game, so he quickly whips out his Penthouse magazine to the centerfold, grabs a marker and draws a circle around the vagina and says, "Son, this is a pussy." The son, now starting to understand what the older boys were talking about asks, "Then, what is a bitch?" The dad replies, "That's everything outside the circle."

One Christmas Eve, Santa Claus comes down the chimney and is startled by a beautiful 19-year-old blonde. She said, "Santa, will you stay with me?" Santa replied, "Ho, ho, ho, gotta go, gotta go, gotta deliver these toys to good girls and boys." So she took off her night gown, wearing only a bra and panties she asked, "Santa, now will you stay with me?" "Ho, ho, ho, gotta go, gotta go, gotta deliver these toys to good girls and boys." She takes off everything and says, "Santa, now will you stay with me?" Santa replies,

"Gotta stay, gotta stay, can't get up the chimney with my dick this way!"

A woman and her little boy were walking through a park in New York and they pass two squirrels having sex. The little boy asks his mom, "Mommy, mommy, what are they doing?" The mom responded, "They are making a sandwich." Then they pass two dogs having sex and the little boy again asks what they are doing. His mother again replied they were making a sandwich. A couple of days later the little boy walks in on his mother and father and. said, "mommy, daddy, you must be making a sandwich because mommy has mayonnaise all over her mouth."

This guy wakes up out of deep sleep and feeling real horny nudges his wife awake and asks, "why don't we get it on, eh?" She replies, "I have an appointment at the gynecologist tomorrow and you know I don't like to make love the night before." So the husband agrees and rolled back and started to go back to sleep. A few minutes later, he nudges his wife again and asks, "You don't by any chance have a dentist's appointment tomorrow, do you?"

## **"THINGS WE ASKS OURSELVES"**

Who was the first person to look at a cow and say, "I think I'll squeeze these dangly things here and drink whatever comes out?"

Why do toasters always have a setting that burns the toast to a horrible crisp which no descent human being would eat?

Why is there light in the fridge and not in the freezer?

If Jimmy cracks corn and nobody cares, why is there a song about it?

Can a hearse carrying a corpse drive in the carpool lane?

If the professor in Gilligan's island can make a radio out of coconut, why can't he fix a hole in a boat?

Why do people point to their wrist when asking for time, but don't point to their crotch when they ask where the bathroom is?

Why does your OB-GYN leave the room when you get undressed if he is going to look up there anyway?

Why does Goofy stand erect and Pluto remains on all fours? They are both dogs!

What do you call male ballerinas?

Why are trix only for kids?

If Willie E. Coyote had enough money to buy all that acme stuff, why didn't he just buy dinner?

Why does the person that handles your money called a broker?

If quizzes are quizzical, what are tests?

If corn oil is made out of com, and vegetable oil from vegetable, then what is baby oil made from?

If a man is talking in the forest and woman is there to hear him, is he still wrong?

If electricity comes from electrons, does morality come from morons?

Is Disney World the only people trap operated by a mouse?

Why do the Alphabet song and Twinkle Twinkle Little Star have the same tune?

Do illiterate people get the full effect of the Alphabet soup?

Why do they call it asteroid when it's outside the hemisphere, but call it hemorrhoid when it's in your ass?

Did you ever notice that when you blow in a dog's face he gets mad at you, but when you take him on a car ride, he sticks his face out the window?

The complaint: Ms. B. Haven,

I, the Big Johnson, hereby request a raise in salary for the following reasons: I do physical labor. I work at great depths. I plunge head first into everything I do. I do not get weekends or public holidays off. I work in a damp environment. I work in a dark workplace that has poor ventilation. I work in high temperatures. My work exposes me to contagious diseases.

The response: Dear Mr. B. Johnson,

After assessing your request, and considering the arguments you have raised, the administration rejects your request for the following reasons: you do not work 8 hours straight. You fall asleep after brief periods. You do not always follow the orders of the management team. You do not stay in your designated area and are often seen visiting other locations. You must be stimulated in order to start working. You leave the workplace rather messy at the end of your shift. You don't always observe necessary safety regulations, such as wearing the correct protective clothing. You will retire well before you're 65. You are unable to work double shift. You sometimes leave your designated work area before you have completed the assigned task. And if that were not all, you have been seen constantly entering and exiting the workplace carrying two suspicious looking bags.

Sincerely,

The Management,

ERNESTO COLE

## "LOVE"

Love – n & v.

\*n. 1) deep affection or fondness. 2) sexual passion. 3) sexual relations. 4) a beloved one; a sweetheart (often as a form of address). 5) a person of whom one is fond. 6) affectionate greetings (give him my love). 7) (often love) a representation of Cupid. 8) (in some games) no score; nil.

\*v. tr. 1) (also absol.) feel love or deep fondness for. 2) delight in; admire; greatly cherish. 3) colloq. like very much (loves books). 4) (foil, by verbal noun, or to + infin.) be inclined; esp. as a habit; greatly enjoy (children love dressing up)

\* fall in love (often foil, by with) develop a great (esp. sexual) love (for). For love, for pleasure not profit. For the love of, for the sake of. In love (often foil, by with) deeply enamored (of) not for the love of money. Colloq. not in any circumstances. Out of love, no longer in love.

The reason I decided to commence this essay with the definition of the word love, is first to show its many definitions, its dual description of noun and verb, and also because I recently read a very interesting book by the noted and acclaimed educator/professor, Mr. Stephen R. Covey. In his book he touched the topic on the definition of love according to his point of view, and it resonated so vividly in me that it brought back memories of a not too distant conversation I had with a dear, younger "brother" of mine.

Sure enough, our words and style are very different (he's an expert at this and I'm but an amateur), but the substance of the advice very identical.

My brother was confiding in me about an extra-marital affair in which he got involved in because he felt the love he had for his wife was no longer there. So I asked him: "What do you mean by that? That you no longer love her?" He responded that he did because she has always been faithful, stood by his side firmly for the last 25+ years, and is the mother of his two handsome boys; but the feeling of the earlier days were no longer there, yet with the other woman it was and was considering moving in with her after divorcing

his wife.

To that I responded: "Well blood, if you really consider the definition of love (which you claim you still have for her) and continue serving her like she does you, sacrificing for her, listening to her, empathizing for her, appreciating her, affirming her, respecting her, understanding her, and last but not least, allowing her to do her "thing" the way she sees fit; that loving feeling will come right back. Love is something you do and the feeling simply a product and fruit of that, or those, actions. Blood, give it a try and I'm sure the stress you're feeling now due to the pressing bills and other material wants will ease and you will overcome this phase of your life.

He assured me he would take my advice under dear consideration and would keep me posted. This was approximately three years ago and thank God, he is back at home with his wife and his two handsome and promising boys.

Don't get me wrong or misinterpret this story by thinking I made the decision for him or even saved his marriage. I simply feel very good about the advice I gave him because in the past, I'm certain I did not have the wisdom and positive frame of mind to give him said advice and on the contrary, would have influenced him for the negative... something I had a custom of doing frequently.

Again, thank you dearly for your time/attention and God bless.

ERHESTO COLE

## "RELATIONSHIPS #2"

Not long ago I wrote an essay titled *Relationships*. But after my continued readings, I came across another book that, not only did it have a similar resonating perspective but it, went a bit deeper into the topic therefore, please read on.

Some people say that you have to like/love yourself before you can like/love others. I believe that idea has merit, but if you do not know yourself, if you don't control yourself, if you don't have mastery of yourself, it's very hard to like/love yourself, except in some short term, psych-up, superficial way.

Real self-respect comes from dominion over self, from true independence. Independence is an achievement. Interdependence is a choice only independent people can make. Unless we are willing to achieve real independence, it's foolish to try to develop human relations skills. We might try. We might even have some degree of success when the sun is shining. But when the difficult times come – and they will – we won't have the foundation to keep things together.

The most important ingredient we put into a relationship is not what we say or what we do, but what we are. And if our words and actions come from superficial human relations techniques rather than from our own inner core, others will sense that duplicity. We simply won't be able to create and sustain the foundation necessary for effective interdependence.

The techniques and skills that really make a difference in human interaction are the ones that almost naturally flow from a truly independent character... inside ourselves, our circle of influence, our own character. As we become independent, proactive, centered in correct principles, value driven and able to organize and execute around the priorities in our life with integrity, we can then choose to become interdependent, capable of building rich, enduring, highly productive relationships with others.

We look at the terrain ahead, we see that we're entering a whole new dimension. Interdependence opens up worlds of possibilities for deep, rich, meaningful associations, for geometrically increased productivity,

for serving, for contributing, for learning, for growing. But it is also where we feel the greatest pain, the greatest frustration, the greatest roadblocks to happiness and success. And we're very aware of that pain because it is acute.

We can live for years with the chronic pain of our lack of vision, leadership, or management in our personal lives. We feel vaguely uneasy and uncomfortable and occasionally take steps to ease the pain, at least for a time. Because the pain is chronic, we get used to it, we learn to live with it.

But when we have problems in our relationships, we're very aware of the acute pain. It's often intense, and we want it to go away.

That's when we try to treat the symptoms with quick fixes and techniques, the band aids of our personality ethic. We don't understand that the acute pain is an outgrowth of the deeper, chronic problem. And until we stop treating the symptoms and focus on the problem, our efforts will only bring counterproductive results. We will only be successful in obscuring the chronic pain even more.

Now as we think of how to make our relationships more effective, let's look at this very powerful metaphor.

We all know what a financial bank account is. We make deposits and build a reserve from which we can then make withdrawals. Well, an Emotional Bank Account that describes the amount of trust that's been built up in a relationship, is the feeling of safeness you have with another human being.

If I make deposits into an Emotional Bank Account with you through courtesy, kindness, honesty, and keeping my commitments to you, I build up a reserve. Your trust toward me becomes higher, and I can call upon that trust many times if I need to. I can even make mistakes and that trust level, that emotional reserve, will compensate for it. My communication may not be clear, but you'll get my meaning anyway. You won't make me an "offender for a word." When the trust is high, communication is easy, instant, and effective.

But if I have a habit of showing discourtesy, disrespect, ingratitude, cutting you off, overreacting, ignoring

you, becoming arbitrary, betraying your trust, threatening you, or playing little god in your life, eventually my Emotional Bank Account is overdrawn. The trust level gets very low. Then what flexibility do I have?

None, I'm walking on mine fields. I have to be very careful of everything I say. I measure every word, it's tension city, memo haven. It's protecting my backside, politicking. Many organizations are filled with it. Many families, many marriages, many relationships.

If a large reserve of trust is not sustained by continuing deposits, a relationship will deteriorate. Instead of rich, spontaneous understanding and communication, the situation becomes one of accommodation, where two people simply attempt to get along, to tolerate each other for appearances sake. The relationship may further deteriorate to one of hostility and defensiveness. Or it may even end up in an evident warfare.

But if we do our best to maintain that relationship "wealthy" by constant deposits into that Emotional Bank Account, it will definitely be the total opposite of the aforementioned.

I know it could be difficult not to get impatient (been there many times). But I also know that it takes strength of character to be proactive and positive to nurture a relationship and not "pull the flowers to see how the roots are coming."

Additionally, there really is no quick fix for a deteriorated relationship. But to build and repair a relationship only takes time, commitment, sincerity, and true love, you with me?

Again, thank you dearly for your time and God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

**"WORDS #2"**

Greetings gentlemen.

Many years ago, I had a job in a penitentiary education department as a GED instructor. While in that capacity, a younger comrade was interested in obtaining his GED; but was a bit reluctant because he did not want to appear "dumb" nor "soft" in front of his "crew." I encouraged him to make the attempt and would use my free time to assist him whenever possible. After much prodding and motivating, I finally convinced him and although he was no longer mandatory by the courts to obtain his GED (he had an exemption due to having completed the hours), I managed to convince the supervisor of education to place him in my class.

One day as I was conducting an algebra lesson, I asked a simple and general question to the class. My friend, thinking he had the correct answer, excitedly blurted it out. Unfortunately, the answer was wrong. Another individual (cannot refer to him as a student because he refused to participate in class) started laughing loudly and insultingly while making fun of the student who tried to answer the question. I, as the instructor, regained order in the classroom; but the look of shame, despair, and defeat on my friend's face has never left my mind. Not even the fact that I commended him for his attempt, sincerely defended him, and said he deserved applause for trying very hard to improve himself as opposed to being ridiculed brought him back to the classroom.

I reminisce on this story simply to demonstrate again how words so innocent and powerless while standing in a dictionary could be used for both good and evil in the mouth of a person therefore, please read on:

Quite simply, what you say is the single biggest factor that determines

At an age when communication

time low.

We never know the circumstances of other people's lives. If we pause to consider how much pain others might be in, we would never speak ill to anyone.

If you say as many kind words as you can in the course of a day, you will nurture everyone around you and be much loved.

If you find yourself about to say something cruel, remember that the words you say in a fit of anger will last a lifetime.

When we refrain from speaking cruelly, those around us benefit and our self-esteem also skyrockets because we feel better about ourselves. All it takes is determination to make speaking kind words a habit.

Often, in an effort to help someone, we say things that are cruel. Un-asked-for advice is better left unsaid.

Reckless words pierce like a sword.

Cruelty from people closest to us stings the most.

Words have the power to take a life. If you think of your mouth as a deadly weapon, you will be much more careful.

It takes your enemy and your friend, working together, to hurt you to the heart; the one to slander you and the one to get you the news.

We all want others to give us the benefit of the doubt, but we often find it difficult to do so for them.

Do not repeat anything you will not sign your name on.

Whoever gossips to you will gossip about you.

Our urge to bond is strong, but let the bond be real.

We all have a deep longing to be close to one another; we simply don't realize that it is our own mouth that sabotages our happiness.

Talking comes by nature, silence by wisdom.

Feeling justified in speaking badly of others does not make it right.

The things most people want to know about are usually none of their business.

The tongue weighs practically nothing, but so few people can hold it.

A gossip is one who talks to you about others; a bore is one who talks to you about himself; and a brilliant conversationalist is one who talks to you about yourself.

Bite your tongue before you gossip; your tongue may hurt a little, but your friends won't.

Speak sweetly, so if you have to eat your words, they won't taste so bad.

You are a proud owner of a set of ears, use them at your own discretion.

Awareness is half the battle. Once you recognize the power of words, you are well on your way to speaking words that uplift rather than tear down.

It's better to remain silent and thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt.

That old stand-by "counting to ten when you are angry," really works. Once said, harsh words can never be taken back, so make it a priority to control your anger.

Don't judge, solve.

A broken bone can heal, but the wound a word opens can fester forever.

We always want people to understand us and put themselves in our shoes. How about doing it for others?

Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people.

The uplifting aspect of words cannot be underestimated. "Most highly successful people will tell you that someone special encouraged them with words.

The secret of fulfilling social and business life is being surrounded by people you trust.

Our society values humor over trust. But actually, trust is far more important for healthy relationships and happiness.

A judicious silence is always better than truth spoken without charity.

Being kind when it is hardest is the mark of a great person.

Appreciative words are the most powerful force for good on earth.

A word of encouragement doesn't cost a dime, but it could sustain someone for a lifetime.

Kindness is often mistaken for weakness. But remember that kind people have far superior relationships.

And they have the pleasure of living with themselves every day.

The temptation of bad-mouthing someone that has hurt us is great. But the rewards for refraining are even greater.

The long-term benefits of not speaking decoratively about others cannot be underestimated.

We never know the impact of our words. Kindness in the face of anger can produce miracles.

The next time you feel angry, stop and think about how an extraordinary person would act, then give it a try!

With the aforementioned, please allow me to conclude with some maxims of wisdom:

They conquer who believe they can.

Do the thing you fear, and death is certain.

Gentlemen, never take counsel of your fears.

Be bold, and mighty forces will come to your aid.

Think defeat and you're bound to feel defeated.

Attitude is more important than fact.

For some people there's no success, only different ways to lose.

All I can do is point and hope you see.

Thank you dearly and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## **"IS CANCER PREVENTABLE?"**

After reading a health magazine and it alluding to changes having to be made to avoid the dangers of cancer, I just knew I had to write about it and share it with the class; since I'm a strong advocate for positive changes to grow and evolve mentally as individuals, I must also stress the need of caring for the vehicle/temple in which the mind resides.

We have the means to prevent almost half the cancer deaths and 20-40% of incidence in the U.S. under our own belt, says a team of Harvard University researchers. With the onslaught of environmental carcinogens, solar radiation, fungal toxins, and other attackers of cell health, their message appears to be that healthy living could provide the defenses against some of these marauders.

So what is a healthy lifestyle: it involves exercise and refraining from vices such as smoking, drinking alcoholic or unhealthy beverages, and overeating, according to the doctors writing in the JAMA Oncology.

The study comes after a different study, published last year, found that the majority of cancers were caused by random mutations in DNA and suggested that therefore, these cases were unpreventable.

Yes, some cancers are unpreventable, but evidence has shown that only 5-10% of all cancer cells can be attributed to genetic defects whereas the remaining 90-95% have their roots in the environment and lifestyle.

Drs. Mingyang Song, research fellow, epidemiology, Massachusetts General Hospital, and Edward Giovannucci, associate professor of medicine, Harvard Medical School say the following: "The evidence provides 'strong support' for the argument that a large proportion of cancers are due to environmental factors and can be prevented by lifestyle modification."

Song and Giovannucci, using data from 136,000 men and women enrolled in either the Nurse's Health Study or the Health Professionals Follow-up Study, defined healthy living strictly and implicated smoking and alcohol as two big cancer agents. Obesity influenced risk as well. High risk groups were 25-33% more

predisposed to get cancer and 44-48% more likely to die from cancer.

The healthy lifestyle could prevent up to 70% of cancers, the article says. In an accompanying editorial, Graham Colditz, MD and Siobhan Sutcliffe, public health researchers, at Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, wrote: "As a society, we need to avoid procrastination induced by thoughts that chance drives all cancer risk or that new medical discoveries are needed to make major gains against cancer. Instead we must embrace the opportunity to reduce our collective cancer toll by implementing effective prevention strategies and changing the way we live."

Yet, simultaneously the fact that we can gird ourselves against cancer should not excuse industrial polluters from poisoning our tissues with unsafe chemicals therefore, we must be vigilant and do all we can, if anything, about it. Even if researchers are correct, half of all cancers still would occur especially Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, brain, prostate, testicular, ovarian, breast, uterine, bladder and colon malignancies and continue to decimate lives, indicating that to win the war instead of a large battle will take more than diet alone therefore, let's make sure we get regular medical check-ups and follow the doctor's advice each time we can, are you with me?

Here are some interesting facts about cancer I feel we all should keep in mind: 1.685 million cases were reported in the U.S. in 2016. 595,690 cancer deaths have been reported in the U.S. 5.3 million cancer deaths have been report worldwide.

Some cancer prevention must dos:

1. Smoking cessation
2. No alcohol
3. Calorie restriction
4. Exercise
5. Increased intake of fruits and vegetables

6. Avoidance of direct sunlight
7. Minimal meat, especially cured consumption
8. Use of whole grains
9. Regular check-ups.

Thank you very much for your attention and as always, God bless!

ERNESTO COLE

## "EGO"

Greetings Gentlemen.

I have a friend, whom I love dearly, appreciate tremendously, have learned lots from and about, and is constantly referring to the ego and citing his perception of it to me. Although I, somewhat, agree with and accept his point of view, I have a very differing/contrasting point of view. Fortunately, during my readings I came across a much more resonating perspective of the ego and will thus now paraphrase and interject it with some of my perceptions so that those privy with this essay may formulate their own point of reference. Yet, before I submerge you into the intricacies of the ego, allow me the following.

The mind, of course, has its own opinions about what's going on, and the ego has its own reactions to all that appears to happen thus, even as you read this essay and others in this booklet, you may have a myriad of opinions about and reactions to what you read. You may agree or disagree with the ideas still, something is going to happen beyond the level of mental activity.

Sure, it may take some time with the various readings herein this booklet and program to realize that these writings do not take place on an intellectual level alone. To be sure, in this booklet there is plenty of entertainment/food for the mind, plenty to swallow and think about (which is my sole purpose), but the inner process happens on a deeper level.

Your perspective of things is being expanded through grace, your main connection with the words is that through making the effort to read what is written, you are agreeing to participate in the process.

This booklet is a certain form or vehicle that I've, humbly and servingly, chosen to compose to give you a way to participate in your self-discovery and happiness no matter the circumstances. You are encouraged to read it at your own pace and on your own level, at a place and time that is convenient for you.

The ideal approach to this booklet is to read some of it daily, share your readings and discuss it with others to expand your perspective and in such manner broaden your horizons, but wait a minute, I said

this essay was about the ego and here I am getting off track; my apologies. :-)

A person who knows himself sees himself in others and feels as though everyone is his secret friend. No one is really a stranger to him, because he knows how each person is on the inside. In a sense, he sees everyone as his beloved, even though there may be very little relationship between them.

There is a realm of existence that is composed of personalities. Ordinarily, however, we see personalities as being who people are, and we relate to and feel about them accordingly. Some personalities awe us, some intimidate us, some make us feel uncomfortable, some entertain us, others attract us, still others repel us, and so forth.

A person who finds himself and begins to perceive the Truth can gradually see beyond this realm of personalities. Although he may see what the personalities are doing, he doesn't give them any importance. He no longer reacts to personalities, he no longer dislikes them, and he is no longer entranced by them. Another's personality becomes irrelevant to him. He sees that personality is not who a person is, but simply an outer vehicle (mask) through which the inner self expresses in this world of form. A person with such vision goes beyond the personality, and sees and relates to the same inner self in all.

Ordinarily, we think we are a person, and that our particular personality somehow has something to do with who we are. We think we've done such and such, that we've done some bad things and some good things, that we've made mistakes and wrong decisions and suffered certain consequences from all that, and so and so. We think certain things happen to us, that since these things happen to us they must be important, and since they're important, we should take them seriously....

All this is what we refer to as the ego. Basically, the ego is that which identifies itself with being this particular person, with all its traits and characteristics, including faults, flaws, and limitations. Whatever goes on regarding this individual, the ego appropriates it to itself, saying: "This is me!" The ego feels bad or good. It feels happy or depressed. It could be angry one minute and elated the next. The ego has opinions about everything imaginable. It likes some things and dislikes other things. The ego judges

others and itself, as though it knows best, what is right and wrong. And of course, the ego always thinks it is right, always thinks it sees everything from the correct perspective. In fact, the ego feels that just because it thinks something, it must be true. For this reason, arrogance, pride, and the feeling of self-importance also come with the realm of the ego.

It takes a long time to see and understand the ego for what it is, and especially to recognize the ego and what it is doing at the moment it is doing it. Right now we may have a certain understanding of the ego, and it might be considerably broader than our understanding of it before we began this course and reading this booklet. Still, a year from now we may look back and see that our present understanding of the ego may have been quite primitive. The freer we are from the ego, the more obvious it becomes to us.

Our perspective expands as the ego diminishes. When the ego is quite solid and in control of things, everything is seen and understood from its perspective. As we humble ourselves and accept others, the ego begins to shrink, our perspective broadens and deepens. The same things that were understood before can be perceived in a new way once the ego has shrunk just a little bit. Even our correct understanding of the ego is dependent on our freedom from it.

Becoming free from the ego is a gradual process. It cannot happen overnight. If we were suddenly stripped of our ego, we might panic. It might be very disorienting so, in most cases, it must be a gradual process. Otherwise, the realization that we are not who we thought we were could be overwhelming. Over a period of time, certain things happen to us and we go through certain experiences that are like peeling off layer after layer of the ego. But such experiences are all under our control, we are the only ones that could commit ourselves to said process. Therefore my dear friend, and the rest of us that feel this essay resonating, let us take heed, dear? :-)

Again, thank you tremendously for your time and as always, God bless!

ERNESTO COLE

## **"SILENCE"**

Greetings. Today Wednesday as I was lying down in the corpse position having a wonderful meditation moment and awaiting the usual Wednesday inspection that is customary here in Edgefield FCI, a younger and very admired friend came by the cell, knocked on the door, I signaled him in, and welcomed him as well. I asked him how he was doing and he said he was "bored." I was going to suggest a couple of things he could engage himself in, but thought better of it; since I realized he was just looking for some of my time therefore, I afforded him such.

I graciously and humbly gave him my time and as we were having a very constructive and positive conversation, the topic of being in silent contemplation/meditation came about.

I gave him my paradigm of the benefits of being in, accepting, and making it a habit of seeking silence and meditating. He seemed very much in accordance with my theory, but a slight confused with how to make that a habit. They, then, announced the imminence of inspection, he thanked me for my time, and then proceeded to his cell. As the inspection was being conducted, I, as usual, grabbed a book I had been reading and to my surprise; the page I started reading said the following.

It is important to eliminate from conversations all negative ideas, for they tend to produce tension and annoyance inwardly. For example, when you are with a group of people at lunch, do not comment that the ("terrorists will soon destroy the country.") In the first place, terrorists are not going to destroy the country, and by so asserting you create a depressing reaction in the minds of others. It undoubtedly affects digestion adversely. The depressing remark colors the attitude of all present, and everyone goes away with a perhaps slight but definite feeling of annoyance. They also carry away with them a mild but definite feeling that something is wrong with everything. There are times when we must face these harsh questions and deal with them objectively and vigorously, and no one has more contempt for terrorists than I have, but as a general thing to have peace of mind, fill your personal and group conversations with

positive, happy, optimistic, satisfying expressions.

The words we speak have a direct and definite effect upon our thoughts. Thoughts create words, for words are the vehicles of ideas. But words also affect thoughts and help to condition if not to create attitudes. In fact, what often passes for thinking starts with talk. Therefore if the average conversation is scrutinized and disciplined to be sure that it contains peaceful expressions, the result will be peaceful ideas and ultimately, therefore, a peaceful mind.

Another effective technique in developing a peaceful mind is daily practice of silence. Everyone should insist on not less than a quarter of an hour of absolute quiet every twenty-four hours (I personally suggest starting with just five minutes until one becomes more adept). Go alone into the quietest place available to you and sit or lie down for such period of time and practice the art of silence. Do not talk to anyone. Do not write. Do not read. Think as little as possible. Throw your mind into neutral. Conceive of your mind as quiescent, inactive. This will not be easy at first because thoughts are stirring up your mind, but practice will increase your efficiency. Conceive of your mind as the surface of a body of water and see how nearly quiet you can make it, so that there is not a ripple. When you have attained a quiescent state, then begin to listen for the deeper sounds of harmony and beauty and of God that are to be found in the essence of silence.

Americans unfortunately are not skilled in this practice, which is a pity, for as Thomas Carlyle said, "Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves." This generation of Americans has missed something that our forefathers knew, and which helped to condition their character and that is the silence of the great forest or of the far-reaching plains.

Perhaps our lack of inner peace is due to some extent to the effect of noise upon the nervous system of modern people. Scientific experiments show that noise in the place where we work, live, or sleep reduces efficiency to a noticeable degree. Contrary to popular belief, it is doubtful if we ever completely adjust our physical, mental, or nervous mechanisms of noise. No matter how familiar a repeated sound becomes, it

never passes unheard by the subconscious. Automobile horns, the roar of airplanes, and other strident noises actually result in physical activity during sleep. Impulses transmitted to and through the nerves by these sounds cause muscular movements which detract from real rest. If the reaction is sufficiently severe, it partakes of the nature of shock.

On the contrary, silence is a healing, soothing, healthy practice. Starr Daily, a famous reformed criminal once said, "No man or woman of my acquaintance who knows how to practice silence and does it has ever been sick to my knowledge. I have noticed that my own afflictions come on me when I do not balance expression with relaxation." Starr Daily closely associates silence with spiritual healing. The sense of rest that results from a practice of complete silence is a therapy of utmost value...

I will now print this essay for my dear friend and allow him the choice of heeding its very "silent" but powerful message.

Thank you all very much for your attention and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## "BAD DAY"

Greetings gentlemen and women all around the world. As Mother's Day approaches and the thought of my precious mother along with the thought of my lovely wife and beautiful mothers of my children, I could not help but to dedicate a heartfelt essay from an Expository writing I've had with me for many years; yet, never disposed of it because of its very dear and extremely profound meaning.

Additionally, after witnessing via the phone and visitation many of my co-recluses disrespect and demean their women, I beg of you to take this exposition into dear account and give your women the true value and respect they truly deserve. And for those of you who have refused to do the aforementioned, keep up the good work because you will be rewarded in due time, if not already, deal?

Today is a bad day. I wish I could say that I've never had one before, but bad days consume my life. I have no escape from them.

Today is a day I wonder. Where is the support for us sisters in the struggle? When a man asks a woman to wait for him while he's in prison, does he realize what an incredible, emotional sacrifice that is? Does he realize that yes, we're in the struggle too?

When I made this choice to do this bid with my man, I didn't know that it would mean to consciously hand over the control and happiness of my life not to my man, but to an institution. From the very beginning, my man told me I had the Dower in the relationship? That I should take the lead because I was the one who was free.

How am I free? What power do I have? I buy my clothes according to what is "acceptable" for visits. At any time I can go where my heart desires, but my heart's desire is trapped within that prison compound. So where am I going? I stalk the mailman and won't leave the house until he comes; waiting for a white envelope with familiar handwriting that has taken the place of hugs and kisses. I check the phone several times a day to make sure it's working, waiting to hear it ring and see "unavailable" appear on the caller ID,

a sight that has taken the place of the sound of my doorbell or his car horn. I set my watch to the clocks in the prison. I schedule my bedtime around "COUNT."

No, I don't have any power. The phone company has the power. The mailman has the power. Corrlinks has the power. Father Time has the power. The prison and the guards, they have all the power. Today I feel helpless and out of control. Today is surely a bad day and yes, I am struggling too....

Today like most bad days that pass, I see a little bit of my life that has slipped away; another memory not made, another dream that hasn't come true. One more day my family is separated. One more day I am without a real home. I am so often standing in the line between sanity and insanity. I have to keep telling myself, "he's real, this is real, our love is real, and the end will come." Today when he called I had to fight the urge to beg him to come home to me. "Please come home, if you really loved me, you would find a way." Today I blame him for keeping us apart. Today I am so very angry with him. Today is definitely a bad day and yes, I am struggling too...

A good day can turn bad in a blink of an eye, a tick of the clock or a beat of my heart. I am on an emotional roller coaster that changes its course without warning or consideration for my mental state. It never asks my permission...attacks of depression, despair, confusion and frustrations hit me and consume me from the bottom of my feet to the top of my head and every crevice of my body in between. Some days I just want to curl up in bed and sleep. Sleep the years away. Some bad days I can't even sleep or even eat.

Sometimes I even have to make my heart beat and lungs take in oxygen. Suicide is never a thought, but dying of loneliness is always, a possibility. Today I have no answers that make sense for the thousands of questions running through my head. My mind is cluttered with doubts and confusion and this makes my heart heavy with guilt and shame. How can I question the only real joy in my life? There are so many people who are lonely, without love and passion in their lives, so as difficult as this ordeal is; I know that what he and I share is the most precious of all gifts.

But today I can't remember all the unconditional love, support, and non-judgment that my man has

bestowed upon me. Today I can't remember all that. My man is the only one who truly understands and accepts me, the good and the bad.... Today I can't remember all the passion that my man has brought out of me. Today I can't remember that the sound of his voice can bring me to orgasm. Today I can't remember that he plays no games, tells no lies, and wears our love like a badge of honor. Today is obviously a bad day and yes, I am struggling too...

While I wouldn't change one second, erase one tear, or forget one heartache, I can truly understand why any woman would choose not to wait. The reality is that I am in prison too... I am also doing this time and the only thing I am guilty of is loving my man. For every one of us that stands by our men, that can endure the bad days and savor the good, there are many that can't. Many just don't even try. To the men whose women have chosen to move on, I feel your pain but, you must always remember that there are always two sides to every story. Your women might not always tell what's in their hearts, but if you listen hard enough you can hear them. You can hear their confusion and their fear pleading with you to understand, to forgive, to accept and to remember.... **NOT EVERY WOMAN IS STRONG ENOUGH TO ENDURE THE BAD DAYS THE STRUGGLE BRINGS!**

To all of you men who know, have, or has had a woman in your life, please communicate with them and wish them a Happy/Blessed Mother's Day for eternity and beyond, deal?

Thank you dearly and many, many blessings.

ERNESTO COLE

## "MORE LAUGHTER"

A woman was in bed with her lover when she heard her husband opening the front door. "Hurry!" She said. "Stand in the corner." She quickly rubbed baby oil all over him and then dusted him with talcum powder. "Don't move until I tell you to." She whispered, "just pretend you're a statue."

"What's this, honey?" The husband inquired as he entered the room. "Oh, it's just statue," she replied nonchalantly. "The Smiths bought one for their bedroom. I liked it so much, I got one for us too."

No more was said about the statue, not even later that night when they went to sleep. Around two in the morning the husband got out of bed, went to the kitchen and returned a while later with a sandwich and a glass of milk. "Here," he said to the statue. "Eat something, I stood like an idiot at The Smiths' for three days and nobody offered me as much as a glass of water."

A man walks onto a bar one night. He goes up to the bar and asks for a beer. "Certainly, sir, that'll be one cent."

"One cent?" Exclaims the guy. The barman replies, "Yes." So the guy glances over the menu and he asks, "Could I have a nice juicy T-bone steak with chips, peas, and a fried egg?" "Certainly, sir", replies the bartender, "but that comes to real money."

"How much money?" inquires the guy. "Four cents," he replies. "Four cents!?" Exclaims the guy. "Where's the guy that owns this place." "Upstairs with my wife." The guy says, "What's he doing with your wife?" The bartender replies, "Same as I'm doing to his business."

Jake was dying. His wife, Becky, was maintaining a candlelight vigil by his side. She held his fragile hand, tears running down her face. Her praying roused him from his slumber. He looked up and his pale lips began to move slightly. My darling Becky, "he whispered." "Hush my love," she said. "Rest. Shhh, don't talk." He was insistent. "Becky," he said in his tired voice, "I have something I must confess to you."

"There's nothing to confess," replied the weeping Becky. "Everything's all right, go to sleep." "No, no. I

must die in peace, Becky. I.... I slept with your sister, your best friend, her best friend, and your mother!"

"I know," Becky whispered softly. "That's why I poisoned you. "

## **"MAD WIFE DISEASE"**

A guy was sitting quietly reading his paper when his wife walked up behind him and whacked him on the head with a frying pan. "What was that for?" He asked. "That's for the piece of paper in your pants pocket with the name Mary Lou written on it," she replied. "Two weeks ago, when I went to the races, Mary Lou was the name of one of the horses I bet on," he replied. "Oh, honey, I'm sorry," she said. "I should have known there was a good explanation." Three days later he was watching a ballgame on TV when she walked up and hit him on the head again, this time knocking him out cold. When he came to, he asked, "What the hell was that for?" She replied, "Your horse called". DID I SAY THAT?

This is a great example of "did I say that out loud?" This happened at Harvard University in October of last year. In a biology class, the professor was discussing the high glucose levels found in semen which gives the sperm all the energy for the journey. A female freshman raised her hand and asked: "If I understand you correctly, you're saying there is a lot of glucose, as in sugar, in semen?"

"That's correct," responded the professor, going to add statistical info. Raising her hand again, she asked, "Then why doesn't it taste sweet?"

After a stunned silence, the whole class burst out laughing. The poor girl's face turned bright red, and as she realized exactly what she had inadvertently said (or rather implied), she picked up her books without a word and walked out of class, never to return. However, as she was going out the door, the professor's reply was classic. Totally straight-faced he answered her question. "It doesn't taste sweet because the taste buds for sweetness are on the tip of your tongue and not the back of your throat. Have a good day."

## **"DEATH ROW"**

There was a German, an American, and a Pollock on death row. The Warden gave them a choice of three ways to die. 1) was to be shot. 2) was to be hung. 3) was to be injected with the A.I.D.S. virus.

So the German said, "Shoot me right in the head." {Boom, he was dead instantly}. Then the American said, "Just hang me." (Snap, he was dead). The Pollock said, "Give me some of that AIDS stuff." They gave him his first shot and he fell down laughing, the guards looked at each other and wondered what was wrong with this guy. Then the Pollock said give me another of those shots, so the guards did. Now he was laughing so hard he almost was peeing his pants. So finally the Warden said, "What the hell is wrong with you?" The Pollock replied, "You guys are so stupid, I'm wearing a condom."

"\$500.00"

A woman was walking down the street when she was approached by a man. The man said, "I must have you right now! I'll drop 500 dollars on the ground at your feet and in the time it takes for you to pick it up I can have my way with you from behind!"

The woman thought it over and told the man to wait a minute.

She called her girlfriend on her cell phone and told her about the man's proposition. Her girlfriend said, "When he drops the \$500.00 I'm sure you could pick it up and run before he gets his pants down. Call me back and tell me what happened." An hour and a half later the lady called her girlfriend back. "What happened?" The girlfriend asked. The mother f\*\*\*er had \$500.00 in quarters!"

## "EBONICS STRIKES AGAIN"

Once again Leroy was asked to do a simple homework assignment. Still befuddled by the whole school thing. Leroy is a trooper. He was given another set of vocabulary to use in sentences. Here's what he handed in.

HOTEL – My momma said that she was gonna tell her friend Sharon nothing else, because that HOTEL everything she hears.

HONOR ROLL – We was playing bidwiz on the stoop the other day, man I was HONOROLL.

PLANET – I know this dude who got arrested cause he got him some seed to grow weed and he PLANET in the backyard.

DISMAY – I went for a blood test, the doctor pulled out a big needle. He said DISMAY hurt a little.

OMELETTE – I should punch you dead in the eye for what you just said, but OMELETTE this one go this time.

STAIRWAY – Getting high is stupid. It just makes you STAIRWAY into space.

MOBILE – I went to the store to buy some food. I was short on cash and I told my man gimme one MOBILE.

DEFENSE – I saw this dude running from the cops, but he hopped DEFENSE and got away.

AFRO – I got so mad at my girl AFRO a lamp at her.

AFTERMATH – I don't feel like being at school today so AFTERMATH I'm out.

LOCKET – I slammed the door so hard I LOCKET.

DOMINEERING – My girl's birthday was yesterday. I got her a DOMINEERING.

KENYA – I needed money to the subway, so I asked a stranger KENYA spare some change.

DERANGE – Is where da deer and antelope play.

DATA – At my basketball game, I scored thirty points. My coach said, DATA boy.

BEWARE – I asked the man at the unemployment office, "Is this BEWARE I get a job?"

DIMENSION – I be tall, dark, handsome, and not DIMENSION smart, (Ha! )

COATROOM – The judge said, "One more outburst like that you'll be thrown out de COATROOM."

DECIDE – My boy fronting like he love his girl but everybody know he got a couple of chicks on DECIDE.

### **"COP"**

On Christmas morning a cop is sitting at a traffic light, and next to him is a kid on a shiny new bike. The cop says to the kid, "Nice bike you got there. Did Santa bring that to you?" The kid says, "Yeah." The cop says, "Well, next time tell Santa to put a tail-light on that bike." The cop proceeds to issue the kid a \$20.00 bicycle safety violation ticket. The kid takes the ticket and before he rides off says, "By the way, that's a nice horse you got there. Did Santa bring that to you?" Humoring the kid, the cop says, "Yeah, he sure did." The kid then says, "Well, next year tell Santa to put the dick under the horse instead of on top."

### **"THE WHOLE STORY"**

Little Jimmy sees his Daddy's car passing the playground and go into the woods. Curious, he follows the car and sees Daddy and Aunt Jane in a "Passionate Embrace." Little Jimmy finds this so exciting and can barely contain himself as he runs home and starts to tell his mother. "Mommy, I was at the playground and I saw Daddy's car go into the woods with Aunt Jane. I went back to look and he was giving Aunt Jane a big kiss, then he helped her take off her skirt, then Aunt Jane helped Daddy take his pants off, then Aunt Jane laid down on the seat, then Daddy..." At this point, Mommy cut him off and said, "Jimmy, this is such an interesting story suppose you save the rest of it for supper time. I want to see the look on Daddy's face when you tell it tonight." At the dinner table, Mommy asks Little Jimmy to tell his story. Jimmy starts his story, describing the car into the woods, the undressing laying down on the seat, and Jimmy said, "Then Daddy and Aunt Jane... started doing the same thing Mommy and uncle Bill used to do when Daddy was in the army."

Moral of the story: sometimes you need to listen to the whole story before you interrupt!

## **"SEX SANDALS"**

This married couple was on holiday in Jamaica. They were touring around the marketplace looking at the goods and such, when they passed this small sandal shop. From inside they heard the shopkeeper with a Jamaican accent say, "You foreigners! Come in, come into my humble shop."

The married couple walked in. The Jamaican said to them, "I ave some special sandals I think you would be interested in.

Dey make you wild at sex.

Well, the wife was really interested in buying the sandals after what the man claimed, but her husband felt he really didn't need them, being the sex God he was. The husband asked the man, "How could sandals make you into a sex freak?"

The Jamaican replied, "Try dem on, man."

Well, the husband, after some badgering from his wife, finally gave in and tried them on. As soon as he slipped them onto his feet, he got this wild look in his eyes, something his wife hadn't seen in many years!

In the blink of an eye, the husband grabbed the Jamaican, bent him violently over a table, yanked down his pants, ripped down his own pants, and grabbed a firm hold of the Jamaican's thighs.

The Jamaican then began screaming: "YOU GOT DEM ON THE WRONG FEET!"

## **"WIFE BEHIND THE WHEELS"**

A married couple is driving along a highway doing a steady 60 miles per hour. The wife is behind the wheel. Her husband suddenly looks across at her and speaks in a clear voice, "I know we've been married for twenty years, but I want a divorce."

The wife says nothing. Keeps looking at the road ahead but slowly increases her speed to 65 mph. The husband speaks again. "I don't want you to try and talk me out of it." He says, "Because I've been having an affair with your best friend and she's a far better lover than you are."

Again the wife stays quiet, but grips the steering wheel more tightly and slowly increases the speed to 75mph. He pushes his luck. "I want the house," he says insistently.

Up to 80. "I want the car, too," he continues.

85mph. "And," he says, "I'll have the bank accounts, all the credit cards and the boat!"

The car slowly starts veering towards a massive concrete bridge. This makes him nervous, so he asks her, "Isn't there anything you want?"

The wife responds in a quiet and controlled voice. "No, I've got everything I need," she says. "Oh, really," he inquires, "So what have you got?"

Just before they slam into the wall at 85mph, the wife turns to him and smiles. "The airbag."

Moral of the story: Women are crazy! Don't mess with them!

## **"HEAVEN AND DUCKS"**

Three women die together in an accident and go to heaven. When they get there, St. Peter says, "We only have one rule here in heaven: don't step on the ducks!"

So they enter heaven, and sure enough, there are ducks all over the place. It is almost impossible not to step on a duck, and although they try their best to avoid them, the first woman accidentally steps on one.

Along comes St. Peter with the ugliest man she ever saw. St. Peter chains them together and says, "Your punishment for stepping on a duck is to spend eternity chained to this ugly man!"

The next day, the second accidentally steps on a duck and along comes St. Peter, who doesn't miss a thing. With him another extremely ugly man. He chains them together with the same admonishment as for the first woman.

The third woman has observed all this and, not wanting to be chained for all eternity to an ugly man, is very, very careful where she steps. She manages to go months without stepping on any ducks, but one day St. Peter comes to her with the most handsome man she has ever laid eyes on... very tall, long eyelashes, muscular, and thin.

St. Peter chains them together without saying a word. The happy woman says, "I wonder what I did to deserve being chained to you for all eternity?"

The guy says, "I don't know about you, but I stepped on a duck!"

## "SHAMUS AND MURPHY"

Shamus and Murphy fancied a pint or two but didn't have a lot of money. Between them, they could only raise the staggering sum of one pound. Murphy said, "Hang on, I have an idea." He went next door to the butcher's shop and came out with one large sausage. Shamus said, "Are you crazy? Now we don't have any money left at all!"

Murphy replied, "Don't worry, just follow me." He went into the pub where he immediately ordered two pints of Guinness and two glasses of Jameson Whiskey.

Shamus said, "Now you've lost it. Do you know how much trouble we will be in? We haven't got any money!"

Murphy replied with a smile, "Don't worry, I have a plan, cheers!" They downed their drinks. Murphy said, "Ok, I'll stick the sausage through my zipper and you go on your knees and put it in your mouth."

The barman noticed them, went berserk, and threw them out.

They continued this pub after pub, getting more drunk all for free. At the tenth pub Shamus said, "Murphy, I don't think I can do any more of this. I'm drunk and me knees are killing me I "

Murphy said, "How do you think I feel? I lost the sausage in the third pub."

Dear readers, I plan to continue writing and inspiring all those who afford me their time and the possibility of doing so is present. With the aforementioned, I will also assure you that my writings and reflections will always be as accurate as possible, very positive, true, and from the depths of my heart.

Thank you dearly for your time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## ADDITIONAL ESSAYS

### APOLOGY

Greetings gentlemen.

Apology, such a simple word but with so much meaning and power when used sincerely that I truly feel it should be used much more frequently in all types of environments; if not for the fact that it has the power to "heal" any wrongdoing, at least for the wealth of benefits it could conjure. Yes comrades, that word could really make you wealthy when you use it sincerely and under the following circumstance.

Let's say you have a relationship and let's look at such relationship like a bank account, ok? Now, as a party of that relationship, you offend or do something that truly hurts the other party. That could be considered a big withdrawal, follow me? The other party expresses his/her feelings and whether or not you feel the other party deserved it, you could clearly see the hurt you caused that person, are you with me? Now my question is, did you mean to hurt that individual? If not, then you feel regret, right? Because if you did mean to hurt him/her, what makes you better or gives you the right? Could it be because you feel you're above that individual?

What I'm simply trying to express is the following: when we make such withdrawals from the "Emotional Bank Account" of another individual, it is our duty to make a deposit and bring such account back in the "black." Or simply put, we must apologize and do it sincerely. Not by making it hypothetical: "if I offended you..." or equivocal: "I forgive you for what you did..." Or even not truly obvious: "are we good?" No,

gentlemen, great deposits into someone else's Emotional Bank Account must come in the form of true repentance: "I was wrong for the way I treated you..." "that was unkind of me..." "I showed you no respect nor consideration..." "I gave you no dignity/empathy, and for that I'm deeply sorry..." "I jumped to conclusions and embarrassed you with no right to do so..." "even though I wanted to make a point, I should have known better, I apologize."

There are a myriad of ways to sincerely apologize and show regret, but whichever way we choose or prefer, it takes a great deal of character strength to do so and out of one's heart rather than out of pity or even necessity. A person must possess him/herself and have a deep sense of security in fundamental principles and values in order to genuinely apologize.

People with little internal security can't do it. It makes them too vulnerable. They feel it makes them appear "weak and soft," and fear how others may look at them or even fear they may be taken advantage of their "weakness." Their security is based on the opinions of others and worry about others' thoughts of them. In addition, they usually feel justified in what they did or said. They rationalize their own wrong in the name of the other person's wrong, and if they do apologize at all, it is superficial.

With the aforementioned, allow me to conclude with the following wisdom: "If you're going to bow, bow low." "Pay the uttermost farthing (penny)." "It is the weak who are cruel. Gentleness can only be expected from the strong."

Thank you dearly and as always, God bless

ERNESTO COLE

## **Beware, Identity Theft Alert**

After sustaining interesting conversations via Trulincs with a dear friend and advocate for the plight of the incarcerated, Mrs. Sue Kastensen, founder of the Fair Shake Reentry Center, I was asked if there was any information I could provide for the concerned individuals that are about to be released on how to avoid identity theft. Something that has become dangerously common with the technological advances of today. I had to admit that I was somewhat ignorant on the subject, but had read a book titled "Future Crimes" by Marc Goodman and would quote him on the matter.

Mr. Goodman was appointed futurist-in-residence with the FBI, has worked as a senior advisor for the Interpol, and served as a street police officer. He is the founder of Future Crimes Institute and the Chair for Policy, Law, and Ethics of Silicon Valley's Singularity University, he continues to investigate the intriguing and often terrifying intersection of science and security, uncovering nascent threats and combating the darker sides of technology. Therefore, and with no further delay, on the appendix of his book you will find the following:

### **Everything's Connected, Everyone's Vulnerable:**

#### **Here's What You Can Do About It**

Throughout this book, we have investigated the looming technological threats faced by society and explored a variety of ways to systemically reduce these risks. The UPDATE Protocol, described below, provides some practical everyday tips you can use to protect yourself, your business, and your loved ones from today's most common technological dangers. Follow these simple steps (the digital equivalent of locking the front door to your home and not leaving your car keys in the ignition), and you can avoid more than 85 percent of the digital threats that pervade our lives daily.

## **Update Frequently**

Modern software programs are riddled with bugs. Hackers and others use these vulnerabilities to break into your computer and other devices, steal your money, and cause general havoc. Avoid these problems by automatically updating your operating system software, computer programs, and apps. Pay particularly close attention to browsers, plug-ins, media players, Flash, and Adobe Acrobat favorite targets of bad guys trying to rip you off. Failing to update automatically leaves your devices wide open to attack via problems that can be avoided if you simply update your software.

## **Passwords**

Passwords should be long (think twenty digits or more) and contain upper and lowercase letters, as well as symbols and spaces. Though we've all heard it a million times, the strength of a password is one of the key factors in protecting your accounts, and passwords should be changed often. You should absolutely not use the same password for several different sites. Doing so means once hackers get access to your login credentials, they can use them across multiple domains, from your social media network to your bank account. Memorizing long, unique passwords for every account and Web site in your life, however, is of course more than the human mind can manage. Fortunately, there are a bevy of password "wallets" or managers that can make this process relatively painless. Criminals have been known to create their own password wallets in an effort to trick you into giving up your digital crown jewels. Thus use only well-known and established companies such as I Password, Last Pass, Key-Pass, and Dashlane, most of which work across your computer, smart phone, and tablet. In addition, many services such as Google, iCloud, Dropbox, Evernote, PayPal, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter offer two-factor authentication, which involves sending you a separate onetime password every time you log on, usually via an SMS message or app directly to your mobile phone. Using two-factor authentication means that even if your password is compromised, it cannot be used without the second authentication factor (physical access to your mobile

device itself).

## **Download**

Download software only from official sites (such as Apple's App Store or directly from a company's own verified Web site). Be highly skeptical of unofficial app stores and third-party sites hosting "free" software. In addition, avoid pirated media and software widely available on peer-to-peer networks, which frequently contain malware and viruses settings in both.

Windows and the Mac operating systems can help you "white list" so that only approved software from identified vendors is allowed to run on your machine. While doing so will not guarantee software safety, it can greatly reduce the risk of infection. Pay close attention to apps and their permissions. They are "free" for a reason and you're paying with your privacy. If a flashlight app tells you it needs access to your location and contacts, run the other way.

## **Administrator**

Administrator accounts should be used with care. Both Windows and Apple allow users to set account privileges, with administrators having highest privileges. While you will need an administrator account on your computer, it should not be your default account for everyday work and online browsing. Instead, create a standard to do the majority of your work and for day-to-day use. When you are logged in under administrative privileges and accidentally click on an infected file or download a virus, the malware has full privileges to execute and infect machine. If you are logged in as a general user and the same thing happens, often the virus, Trojan, or worm will require your specific permission to execute, giving you a warning sign that there is a problem. Always run your computer as a non-admin user unless absolutely necessary to carry out a particular task, such as a known update from a trusted source you are conscientiously installing. The act of turning off your computer while you sleep will automatically reduce

your threat profile by one-third because thieves cannot reach out and touch your machine when it's not in use and connected to the Internet. In addition, turn-off services and connections on your smart phone when you aren't using them. Keeping Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, NFC, and cellular hot spots on at all times provides additional avenues for attack, which thieves can use to hack your phone, spread malware, and steal data. Also, keeping Wi-Fi on allows retailers and advertisers to persistently track you through your physical world, further encroaching on your privacy. Only turn these services on when you need them.

## **Encrypt**

Encrypt your digital life, protecting your data both locally while at rest and when in transit across the Web. Both Windows and Mac include free programs for full hard-disk encryption (BitLocker and FileVault, respectively). Encrypting your hard drive means others cannot read its contents if it's lost or stolen. You should also encrypt your Internet traffic by using a virtual private network (VPN), particularly when using a public Wi-Fi network such as those at airports, universities, conferences, and coffee shops--frequent targets for hackers and thieves. Your phone, too, should be encrypted, because today's mobile devices can have as much personal information as our laptops, if not more. Always use a password on your mobile phone, and consider enabling bio-metric security, such as Apple's. Touch ID fingerprint technology,. Using a password in the latest version of iOS and Android not only ensures nobody else can access your phone and its data in your absence but also provides full encryption on the device, adding another layer of privacy and security.

## **Additional Safety Tips**

If you faithfully follow the UPDATE Protocol above, you can avoid more than 85 percent of threats. To further secure yourself, follow these tips.

1. Use common sense with all your e-mail. As a general rule of thumb, be wary of any request to

click on a link or open an attachment sent to you--even when it looks as though it came from somebody you know. Criminals are expert at tricking the general public with irresistible headlines, such as "click here" to see the shocking photographs of some naked movie star. Phishing attacks only work because unsuspecting individuals click on files and links that look realistic or enticing but contain a malicious payload that will infect your machine. When in doubt, check with the individual who purportedly sent you the e-mail to verify it came from him or her (don't reply to the e-mail itself). And, no, the Prince of Nigeria is not reaching out to you personally with a viable way to get rich quick.

2. USB drives are one of the most common ways to spread malware and other computer viruses (the Department of Defense has even banned their use). Generally speaking, do not accept a thumb drive from a stranger (or even a person you know well) or plug one into your machine without first scanning for viruses, Disable 'auto run' on your computer to ensure that any viruses do not automatically execute, thereby infecting your computer. The same advice applies to external USB hard drives and even smart phones that do not belong to you.
3. Back up your data frequently. You can back them up onto an external hard drive using built-in operating system tools such as Mac's Time Machine or Windows Backup. You can also use cloud providers such as Carbonite, Backblaze, and SpiderOak. When you utilize cloud providers, it is wise to encrypt the data before uploading them for an extra measure of protection. In addition, you should always have multiple backups of your data. Keep one or more physical drives for backup, and ensure that at least one of them is stored offsite so that in time of disaster, fire, or break-in a backup of your data will be stored in a safe and secure location.
4. Cover up. Unfortunately, It is easy for hackers, criminals, and spies to get access to all the Internet connected cameras in your life, whether on your computer, smart phone, or tablets. When the camera is not in use, cover the lens up. A simple post-it note, or piece of tape will do

and will provide cheap protection from unwanted prying eyes.

5. Sensitive browsing, such as banking or shopping, should only be done on a device that belongs to you and on a network you trust. Whether it's a friend's phone, a public computer, or a cafe's free Wi-Fi, your data could be copied or stolen. Be particularly wary of computers in common or high trafficked areas such as airport lounges, favorite targets of criminals who plant malware and keystroke loggers in areas where business people congregate.
6. Think before you share on social networks. Criminals, ranging from stalkers to burglars, routinely monitor social media for information. Posting travel itineraries can let burglars know that you will be away from home for two weeks on vacation – an invitation for trouble.
7. Use your operating system's built-in software firewall, available in both Windows and Mac, to block unwanted incoming connections to your machine, and enable "stealth mode" to make it more difficult for hackers and automated crime bots to find you online.

NOTE: Both the threats and the tools to protect yourself online change frequently. For additional guidance, visit [www.futurecrimes.com](http://www.futurecrimes.com).

Please take heed, protect yourself, be smart, and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## Change Is Easy

Hello gentlemen and please, do not take the title of this essay literally nor think for an instant that yours truly feels this way. The reason I used such title is because as I was attending a re-entry class designed to assist its participants to grow, evolve, and become much more aware of their actions and thus avoid recidivism, one of its facilitators made such assertion and then went on defending it with a rhetorical example about how once coming to prison individuals adapt by making changes and therefore, it should be easy to do the same once released and not fall back into a criminal mentality.

When I heard his reasoning (or should I say unreasoning), I thought to myself: "wrong message to impart to anybody because if that were the case, the majority of individuals (if not all) would be perfect, don't you think?

My point of view on this topic is as follows. As a very menacing child and having brushes with the law since being a teenager, then as an adult being tried, convicted, sentenced to two life sentences plus without the possibility of parole, and having been incarcerated for the last 18 years; there came a time when I finally decided and made the COMMITMENT (emphasis intended) to make the changes necessary to grow and evolve as a better human being.

The major reason I chose to make changes and better choices was, not because I was incarcerated but, because I finally became aware of how I had hurt the woman I love with all my heart and soul – my mother.

Yet, even though I had made such commitment, I still found it extremely difficult to break away from the bad habits that had been instilled in me by my environment for so long. I even consulted several doctors in psychology (and still do), wise individuals, loved ones, and many others yet, not one has ever told me or even implied that my endeavor was an easy one. On the contrary, the consensus was to take it slow, be progressive about it by staying committed and in the right path regardless of what happens, and when I

did err (which would be very likely and expected), simply accept it, make the necessary and sincere amends, learn from it, and consequently grow and evolve by becoming wiser, stronger, and more resilient on my commitment.

Since I was truly determined to become a better man, I followed these advice but yet, I was still erring with frequency. Then something like an epiphany came to mind and said: "Well Ernesto, if you're so determined to make the changes needed to be a better person, why don't you just promise yourself and your loving mother that you will do everything in your power to do so; since you have never made it a habit to make a promise you do not intend to keep." And BOOM! Gentlemen, that is exactly what I needed and therefore, embraced that revelation and have made it my priority to follow through on it.

And guess what gentlemen? I still find myself erring at times, but with much less frequency and thus, I feel very, very blessed and content with myself.

Now, this is just simply my humble paradigm on change and following I will give you one of many of professionals on the matter. The glitter of positive growth and evolution, the massive appeal, is that there is some quick and easy way to achieve quality of life (If I can do it so can you) personal effectiveness and rich, deep relationships with other people and society without going through the natural process of work and growth that makes it possible is a process without substance. It's like the "get rich quick" scheme promising "wealth without work." And it might even appear to succeed, but the flaws remain.

In the words of noted observer and professor, Erich Fromm: "Today we come across an individual who behaves like an automaton, who does not know or understand himself, and the only person that he knows is the person that he is supposed to be, whose meaningless chatter has replaced communicative speech, whose synthetic smile has replaced genuine laughter, and whose sense of dull despair has taken the place of genuine pain. Two statements may be said concerning this individual. One is that he suffers from defects of spontaneity and individuality which may seem to be incurable. At the same time it may be said of him he does not differ essentially from the millions of the rest of us who walk upon this earth."

That being noted, in all of life, there are sequential stages of growth and development. A child learns to turn over, to sit up, to crawl, and then walk and run. Each step is important and each one takes time. No step can be skipped. Additionally, our character, basically, is a result of our habits. The maxim goes: "Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character, sow a character, reap a destiny."

Habits are powerful factors in our lives. Because they are consistent, often unconscious patterns, they constantly, daily, express our character and provide our effectiveness... or ineffectiveness.

The great educator, Horace Mann, once said: "Habits are like a cable. We weave a strand of it every day and soon it cannot be broken." I personally do not agree with the latter part of Mr. Mann's expression. I know for a fact that such cable could be broken. Been there done that and have witnessed, and know of many who have broken the cable of bad habits. I also know for a fact that habits can be learned and unlearned, even if it takes dear time and commitment, but it could be done. But I also know that it is not a quick fix nor an easy endeavor. It involves a process and a tremendous COMMITMENT.

So there you have it gentlemen, I could go on and on about the intricacies of change, but I'm sure you now understand where I'm coming from, right? :-)

Thank you tremendously for your attention and as usual, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## Communication

Wow! As I was reading a very good book based on making or should I say helping individuals on achieving more effective relationships through certain habits, I came across something I try to practice faithfully and preach constantly... the art of communication. And since the author of said book seems much more articulate than I; I will thus use his words and interject them with some of mine in an attempt to further such message, cool?

Right now you are reading this essay I've written, right? Well, reading and writing are both forms of communication. So are speaking and listening. In fact, these are the four basic types of communication. Now think of all the hours we spend doing at least one of them. The ability to do them well is absolutely critical to being effective in communicating and influencing others for the better, of course.

Communication is the most important skill in life. We spend most of our waking hours communicating. But let's consider the following: we've spent years learning how to read and write, years learning how to speak properly. But what about listening? What training or education have we had that enables us to listen so that we really understand another human being from his/her own frame of reference or perspective? I've dealt with lots of very well-educated individuals yet, their listening skill is incredibly poor and at times simply non-existent.

If we really want to interact effectively with someone, to influence them, your spouse, child, co-worker, supervisor, friend... we must first understand them or at least make the attempt. But we cannot do so by just speaking. Most people, if they sense you're using some kind of speaking technique will sense duplicity, manipulation, or what I term "verbal jiu jet su." They will wonder why you're doing it, what are your motives, and will not feel safe enough to "open up" to you.

The real key to influence others for the better is through example, our actual conduct. The example flows naturally out of our character or the kind of person we truly are. And to do this, we must understand the

individual we seek to influence. And to do so we must first listen, then understand them, and subsequently make ourselves understood and have the influence we seek to impart.

Most of us do not listen with the intent to understand, we listen with the sole intent to reply and have the "spotlight" shining on us. We are either speaking or preparing to speak. We're filtering everything through our own model, "reading" our opinions to others. If we have a problem with someone, a family member, an authority figure, a co-worker the attitude is, "that person just doesn't understand."

That's the case with so many of us. We're filled with our own rightness and pride. We want to be understood and our conversations tend to become effective monologues, and we never really understand what's going on with the other person.

When another person speaks, we're usually "listening" at one of four levels. We may be ignoring the person, not listening at all. We may practice pretending, "yeah, uh-huh., right " We may act like selective listeners hearing only certain parts of the conversation. Or we may even practice attentive listening, paying attention and focusing on the words being said. But very few of us practice the fifth level, empathetic (from empathy) listening.

When I say empathetic listening, I'm not referring to the techniques of "active" or "reflective" listening, which basically involves mimicking what another person says. That kind of listening is skill based, truncated from character and relationships, and often insults those "listened" to in such way.

Again, when I say empathetic listening, I mean listening with the intent to understand. Seeking first to understand, to truly understand. It is an entire different mental shift. Empathetic listening gets inside another person's frame of reference. You look out through it. You see the world the way they see it. You understand how they feel and what they may be going through.

Empathetic listening involves much more than registering, reflecting, or even understanding the words that are being said. Communications experts estimate, in fact, that only 10 percent of our communication is represented by the -words we say. Another 30 percent is represented by our sounds, and 60 percent by

our body language. In empathetic listening, you listen with your ears, but also, and more importantly, listen with your eyes and your heart. You listen for feeling, for meaning. You listen for behavior. You sense, you intuit, you feel. It is powerful because it gives you accurate data to consider.

When you listen with empathy to another person, you give that person psychological respect. And after that vital need is met, you can then focus on influencing or problem solving. Therefore beloved comrades, that psychological respect, which is the fruit of truly listening, impacts communication in ways you cannot imagine in every area of life... let's give it a try, deal?

ERNESTO COLE

## Four Dimensions of Renewal

I've written about half a dozen of different essays based on practical ways to make changes *Practice, Practice, Practice, Code of Conduct, Change, Changes, 10 Secret Tips of Elite Changers, Change is Easy...* but now I will embark on a way that by focusing on only four particular dimensions of focus, we may be able to cover many different ways to attack and conquer the changes we wish to make to help us evolve and grow into better individuals.

I not too long ago read a fabulous book by Mr. Stephen Covey and I believe it hit the nail square on the head with such insightful commentary on how just certain habits could help us tremendously. And although different words or terms may be used by different savants on the subject, it is all based on the same truth and worthy of repeating, deal?

1. The Physical Dimension involves caring effectively for our physical body eating the right kinds of foods, getting sufficient rest and relaxation, and exercising on a regular and consistent basis. Exercise is something most of us don't do because it is not urgent, and we may feel no need for it, despite general recommendations by health experts. We may also think we don't have enough time to exercise. What a distorted point of view! When actually we should think we don't have time not to. We're talking about three to six hours a week or a minimum of 30 minutes a day every other day. That hardly seems an inordinate amount of time considering the tremendous benefit in terms of the impact on the other 162 – 165 hours of the week. And if we compare the numbers of exercise time to the amount of time we sit in front of the television, there is absolutely no comparison to be observed.

Consider the following: if we exercise three to six hours a week, that amounts to 1.8% to 3.6% of our weekly time and if we do it for 30 minutes a day every other day, that is less than one percent of our weekly time. Yet, if we were to contemplate the amount of time we spend watching television (28 to 42

hours of more) weekly, that activity – or should I say inactivity – amounts to 16.6% to 25% of our weekly time, gentlemen. That is an eye opener, don't you think? Additionally, we don't even need any equipment (as is the excuse of many of us) because our bodies present us with all we need to exercise and stay in very good shape. All we truly need is the commitment, research, and mental fortitude to make it happen.

2. The Mental Dimension. Most of our mental development and study discipline comes through formal education, but as soon as we leave the external discipline of school, many of us let our minds atrophy. We don't do any more serious reading, we don't explore new subjects in any real depth outside our action fields, we don't think analytically, we don't write, at least not critically or in any way that tests our ability to express ourselves in distilled, clear, and concise language. Instead we celebrate the television and other frugal ways of entertainment.

It is said that most homes watch television 35-45 hours a week. That is as much time as many people put into their jobs, more than most put into school. It is the most powerful socializing influence there is. And when, we watch, we're subject to all the values that are being taught through it. That can powerfully influence us in very subtle and imperceptible ways.

Wisdom in watching television requires effective self-management, which enables us to discriminate and to select informing, inspiring, and entertaining programs which best serve and express our purpose and values.

I'm grateful for television and for the many high quality educational and entertainment programs. They enrich our lives and contribute meaningfully to our purposes and goals. But there are many programs that simply waste our time and many that influence us in negative ways if we let them.

Continuing education, continually honing and expanding the mind is a vital mental renewal. Sometimes that involves the amount of time we sit in front of the television, there is a lot of time that is wasted.

our center, our commitment to our value system. It is a very private area of life and a supremely important one. It draws upon the sources that inspire and uplifts us and ties us to the timeless truths of all humanity. And we all do it differently.

I find spiritual renewal in daily prayers, reading, writing, and meditation because they represent my value system. As I read, write, pray, and meditate, I feel renewed, strengthened, centered, blessed, and recommitted to serve. Immersion in great literature or great music can also provide a similar renewal of the spirit for some. There are others who find it in the way they communicate with nature or even their peers. Such conduct becomes its own blessing on the external discipline of the classroom or systematized study programs; more often it does not. Proactive people can figure out many, many ways to educate themselves.

It is extremely valuable to train the mind to stand apart and examine its own program. There's no better way to expand and inform our minds on a regular basis than to get into the habit of reading good books. We can get into the best minds that are now or have ever been in the world. "The person that can read but does not, is no better off than the person who cannot.

Writing is another way to sharpen the mind. Keeping a journal of your thoughts, experiences, insights, and learnings promotes mental clarity, exactness, and context. Writing good letters communicating on the deeper level of thoughts, feelings, and ideas rather than on a shallow, superficial level of events also affects our ability to think clearly, to reason accurately, and to be understood effectively.

4. The Social/Emotional Dimension. While the physical, spiritual, and mental dimensions are closely related to habits of being proactive, beginning with the end in mind, and putting first things first centered on the principles of personal vision, leadership, and management, the Social/Emotional Dimension focuses on the habits of thinking positive, seeking first to understand then be understood, and synergizing centered on the principles of interpersonal leadership, empathetic communication, and creative cooperation.

The Social/Emotional Dimensions of our lives are tied together because our emotional life is primarily exclusively, developed out of and manifested in relationships with others. Renewing our Social/Emotional Dimensions does not take time in the same sense that renewing the other dimensions does. We can do it in our normal everyday interactions with other people. But it definitely requires exercise. We may have to push ourselves because many of us have not achieved the level of self-conquering and skills of public-conquering necessary for the just mentioned habits to come naturally to us in all interactions.

Suppose we're in a key relationship. You might be my boss, my subordinate, my friend, my co-worker, my "home-boy," etc., etc. Anyone with whom I need to interact. Now we must communicate and work together for the greater good, to accomplish a purpose or solve a problem. But we see things differently. You see the young lady, and I see the old woman.

So I practice the habit of thinking positive and come to you and say: "I can see that we're approaching this situation differently. Why don't we communicate until we find a solution we both feel good about? Would you be willing to do that?" Once you say "yes," then I practice the habit of "seek first to understand... then to be understood" and I submit to listening to you first. Instead of listening with intent to reply, I listen wholeheartedly in order to deeply understand your point of view. When I can explain your point of view as well as you can, then I focus on communicating my point of view so that you can understand it as well.

Based on the commitment to find a solution we both feel good about and a deep understanding of each other's point of view, we synergize. We work together to produce alternative solutions to our problem that we both recognize are better than the ones either of us had proposed initially. Success in the habits of thinking positive, listening emphatically, and synergizing is not a matter of intellect, it's primarily a matter of emotion. It's highly related to our sense of personal security.

If our personal security comes from sources within ourselves, then we have the strength to practice the habits that bring about public victories. But if we are emotionally insecure even though we may be intellectually very advanced, practicing the last three cited habits with people who think differently on

jugular issues of life can be terribly threatening.

X Where does intrinsic security come from? It doesn't come from what other people\*think of us or how they treat us. It doesn't come from the scripts they've handed us. It doesn't come from our circumstances or our position.

It comes from within. It comes from accurate paradigms and correct principles deep in our own mind and heart. It comes from inside-out congruence, from living a life of integrity in which our daily habits reflect our deepest values.

I believe a life of integrity is the most fundamental source of personal worth. I do not agree with the popular success literature that says that self-esteem is primarily a matter of mind set, of attitude that you can psych yourself into peace of mind.

Peace of mind comes when your life is in harmony with your true principles and values and in no other way.

There is also the intrinsic security that comes as a result of effective interdependent living. There is security in knowing that positive solutions do exist, that life is not always "either/or," that there are almost always mutually beneficial third alternatives. There is security in knowing that you can step out of your own frame of reference without giving it up, that you can really, deeply understand another human being. There is security that comes when you authentically, creatively, and cooperatively interact with other people in a meaningful way. One important source is your work, when you see yourself in a contributive and creative mode, really making a difference. Another source is anonymous service, no one knows it, and no one necessarily ever will. And that's not the concern; the concern is blessing the lives of other people. Influence, not recognition, becomes the motive.

Viktor Frankl focused on the need for meaning and purpose in our lives, something that transcends our own lives and taps the best energies within us. The late Dr. Hans Selye, in his monumental research on stress, basically says that a long, healthy, and happy life is the result of making contributions, of having

meaningful projects that are personally exciting and contribute to and bless the lives of others. His ethic was "earn thy neighbor's love."

In the words of George Bernard Shaw, "This is the true joy in life that being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one. That being a force of nature, instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die. For the harder I work the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me. It's sort of a splendid torch which I've got to hold up for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

N. Eldon Tanner has said, "Service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this earth." And there are many ways to serve. Whether or not we belong to a church or service organization or have a job that provides meaningful service opportunities, not a day goes by that we can't at least serve one other human being by making deposits of unconditional love.

So there you have it gentlemen, following these few but very powerful dimensional aspects of changing, we could really, really make a difference and influence all we can and surround us for the better.

Thank you dearly for your time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## LAUGHTER

As an adolescent, I recall hearing several times older and wiser individuals that laughter was a positive and healing substance for the soul. Me, being young, wild, hyperactive, and foolish, had no idea what they meant by that and attributed their comments (as I normally did then) to them just being old, senile, and out of touch with reality.

After growing and evolving to what I thought of them in the past, I now truly regret what I opined of them and will thus pay sincere homage to their wisdom and will go a little further to their belief of the healing properties of laughter by exposing some funny jokes that are bound to make you laugh and if they don't; laugh still for the sake of your soul and mine, deal? : -)

A man and his wife go to their honeymoon hotel for their 25th anniversary. As the couple reflected on that magical evening 25 years ago, the wife asked the husband, "When you saw my naked body in front of you, what was going through your mind?" The husband replied, "All I wanted to do was fuck your brains out and suck your tits dry." Then, as the wife undressed, she asked, "What are you thinking now?" He replied, "it looks as if I did a pretty good job."

As an airplane is about to crash, a female passenger jumps up frantically and announces, "If I'm going to die, I want to die feeling like a woman." A man stands up, removes his shirt and says, "Here, iron this!"

One morning a woman was walking out her front door when she notices a strange man at the bottom of her garden. "You're a goblin," she says, "I caught you and you owe me three wishes!" So the goblin replies, "Ok, you caught me fair and square, what's your first wish?" The woman stops and thinks for a second, "I want a huge mansion to live in."

Goblin replies, "Ok, you've got it." Woman again thinks it over, "My second wish is a Mercedes." "Ok, you've got that too." "My last wish is a million dollars!" The goblin then says "okay, you've got it. But to make your wishes come true, you have to have sex with me all night." "Okay then, if that's what it takes..."

Next morning the little man wakes the woman up. "Tell me," he says, "how old are you?" "I'm 27," she replies. "Fuck me," says the man, "27 and you still believe in goblins?"

The newlyweds are in their honeymoon room and the groom decides to let the bride know where she stands right from the start of the marriage. He proceeds to take off his trousers and throw them at her. He says, "Put those on." The bride replies, "I can't wear your trousers." He replies, "And don't forget that! I will always wear the pants in the family!" The bride takes off her panties and throws them at him with the same request, "try these on." He replies, "I can't get into your panties!" "And you never will if you don't change your attitude."

What's the difference between a pick pocket and a peeping tom? A pick pocket snatches your watch and a peeping tom watches your snatch.

How are women and tornadoes alike? They both moan when they come, and take the house when they leave.

There was an elderly man who wanted to make his wife pregnant. So, he went to the doctor to have a sperm count done. The doctor told him to take a specimen cup home, fill it, and bring it back the next day. The elderly man came back the next day and the specimen cup was empty and the lid was on it. Doctor: "What was the problem?" Elderly man: "Well, I tried with my right hand...nothing. So I tried with my left hand...nothing. My wife tried with her right hand...nothing. Her left hand...nothing. Her mouth...nothing. Then my wife's friend tried. Right hand, left hand, mouth...still nothing. Doctor: "Wait a minute. You mean your wife's friend too?!" Elderly man: "Yeah, and we still couldn't get the lid off of the specimen cup."

Grammar: the difference between knowing your shit and knowing you're shit.

A guy walks into a sperm donor bank wearing a ski mask and holding a gun. He goes up to the nurse and demands her to open the sperm bank vault. She says: "But sir, it's just a sperm bank." "I don't care, open it now!" he replies. So she opens the door to the vault and inside are all the sperm samples. The guy says, "Take one of those samples and drink it!" She looks at him, "But, they are sperm samples!" "DO IT!" So the

nurse sucks it back. "That one there, drink that one as well." So the nurse drinks that one as well. Finally, after four samples the man takes off the mask and says, "See honey it's not that hard."

There are four kinds of sex:

HOUSE SEX – When you are newly married and have sex all over the house in every room.

BEDROOM SEX – After you've been married for a while you only have sex in the bedroom.

HALL SEX – After you've been married for many, many years you pass each other in the hall and say, "FUCK YOU!"

COURTROOM SEX – When your wife and her lawyer fuck you in the divorce court in front of many people for every penny you've got.

This beautiful woman one day walks into a doctor's office and the doctor is bowled over by how stunningly awesome she is. All the professionalism goes right out the window.... He tells her to take her pants off, she does, and he starts rubbing her thighs. "Do you know what I'm doing?" asks the doctor. "Yes, checking for abnormalities," she replies. He tells her to take off her shirt and bra. She takes them off. The doctor begins rubbing her breast and asks, "Do you know what I'm doing now?" She replies, "Yes, checking for cancer." Finally, he tells her to take off her panties, lays her on the table, gets on top of her, and starts having sex with her. He says to her, "Do you know what I'm doing now?" She replies, "Yes, getting herpes that's why I'm here!"

This couple were in bed getting busy when the girl places the guys hand onto her pussy. "Put your finger in me..." she asks him. So he does without hesitation, and she starts moaning. "Put two fingers in...", she says. So in goes another one. She's really starting to get worked up when she says, "Put your whole hand in!" So the guy's like, "okay!" So she has his entire hand in when she says moaning aloud, "Put both hands inside of me!" So the guy puts both of his hands in "Now clap your hands..." commands the girl. "I can't," says the guy. The girl looks at him and says, "See? I told you. I had a tight pussy! " What did the hurricane say to the coconut palm tree? "Hold on to your nuts, this is no ordinary blow job!"

A dog, a cat, and a penis are sitting around a camp fire one night. The dog says, "my life sucks, my master makes me do my business in a fire hydrant!" The cat says, "I don't think so, my master makes me do my business in a box of cat litter." The penis outraged says, "At least your master doesn't put a bag over your head and makes you do push-ups until you throw up!"

A man and a woman started to have sex in the middle of a dark forest. After about 15 minutes of it, the man finally gets up and says, "Damn, I wish I had a flashlight!" The woman says, "Me too, you've been eating grass for the past ten minutes!"

A couple just got married and the night of their honeymoon before passionate love, the wife tells the husband, "Please be gentle, I'm still a virgin." The husband being shocked replied, "How's this possible? You've been married three times before." The wife responds, "Well, my first husband was a gynecologist and all he wanted to do was look at it. My second husband was a psychiatrist and all he wanted to do was talk about it. Finally, my third husband was a stamp collector and all he wanted to do was... oh, I miss him!"

A young and beautiful girl tells her new boyfriend, "Wanna hear a joke about my pussy? Never mind, you won't get it."

On their first night together, a newlywed couple go to change. The new bride comes out of the bathroom showered and wearing a beautiful robe. The proud husband says, "My dear we are married now, you can open your robe. The beautiful young woman opens her robe, and he is astonished, "Oh, oh, aaahhh," he exclaims, "my God you are so beautiful, let me take your picture." Puzzled she asks, "My picture?" He answers,

"Yes my dear, so I can carry your beauty next to my heart forever." She smiles, and he takes the picture, and then he heads to the bathroom to shower. He comes out wearing his robe and the new wife asks, "Why do you wear a robe? We are married now." At that, the man opens his robe and she exclaims, "Oh, oh, oh, my. Let me get a picture." He beams with pride and asks why, and she answers, "so I can get it

enlarged! "

John just graduated from clinical psychology and opens his first office. After some successful advertising, he is astounded to have nearly 30 people wanting to be in group therapy. John decides to rent a big hall and invite the entire group. To break the ice and get the therapy started, John decides to ask by show of hands how often the attendees had sex.

He first asks by a show of hands of all the people who had sex almost every night. A modest number of hands were raised.

He then asks, how many had sex once a week? This time a larger number of hands were raised. John then asks how many had sex once or twice a month? Again a few hands were raised. After John polled his group several more times, he noticed one guy sitting off to the side with this huge beaming grin on his face. John noticed, that the guy never raised his hand, so he asked him how often he had sex. The guy said, "Once a year!"

To John's dismay, he responds, "Why are you so happy getting sex only, once a year?" The grinning guy responds, "Tonight, is the night!

Why do men get their ideas in bed? Because they are plugged into a genius.

Three guys go to a ski lodge and there aren't enough rooms, so they have to share a bed. In the middle of the night, the guy on the right wakes up and says, "I had this wild, vivid dream of getting a hand job!" The guy on the left wakes up and unbelievably he's had the same dream, too. Then the guy in the middle wakes up and says, "That's funny, I dreamed I was skiing!"

One-day Mr. Smith, the president of a large corporation, called his vice-president, Dave, into his office and said, "We're making some cutbacks, so either Jack or Barbara will have to be laid off." Dave looked at Mr. Smith

and said, "Barbara is my best worker, but Jack has a wife and three kids. I don't know whom to fire." The next morning Dave waited for his employees to arrive. Barbara was the first to come in, so Dave said,

"Barbara, I've got a problem. You see, I've got to lay you or Jack off and I don't know what to do." Barbara replied, "you'd better jack off, I've got a headache."

What kind of bees produce milk? Boobies.

A blind man interviews for a job as a quality controller at the local wood mill. The manager calls the blind man into his office and asks him how he expected to do this job since he was blind. The blind man replied he would do it by smell. The manager decides to test him and places a piece of wood in front of him. The manager asks, "What is it without touching it?" The blind man replies, "That's a good piece of fir." "Correct, says the manager. now try this one." "That's a bad piece of willow," says the blind man. "Correct, answers the manager. With that, the manager decides to play a trick on the blind man. He gets his secretary to lift her dress and put her crotch in the blind man's face. "I'm confused," says the blind man, can you turn it around?" The secretary turns around and puts her ass in his face. The blind man says, "Oh, you're trying to fool me! But I know exactly what kind of wood that is. It's the shit house door off a tuna boat!"

For his birthday Little Patrick asked for a 10-speed bicycle. His father said, "Son, we'd give you one, but the mortgage on the house is \$80,000.00 and your mother just lost her job...there's no way we could afford it." The next day the father saw Little Patrick heading out the front door with a suitcase. So he asked, "Son, where are you going?" Little Patrick told him, "I was walking past your bedroom last night and heard you tell mom you were pulling out. Then I heard her tell you to wait because she was coming with you. And I'm damned if I'm staying here by myself with an \$80,000.00 mortgage and no fucking bike!"

A construction worker on the 5th floor of a building needed a hand saw. So he spots another worker on the ground floor and yells down to him, but he can't hear him. So the worker on the 5th floor tries sign language. He pointed to his eye meaning "I," pointed to his knee meaning "need," and moved his hand back and forth in a hand saw motion. The man on the ground floor nods his head, pulls down his pants, whips out his chop and starts masturbating. The worker on the 5th floor gets pissed off, runs down to the ground

and says, "What the fuck is your problem?! I said I needed a hand saw!" The other guy says, "I knew that! I was just trying to tell you I'm coming!"

One day an at home wife is alone and the doorbell rings. She opens it to a guy. "Hi, is Tony home?" The wife replies, "No, he went to the store, but you can wait here if you want." So they sit down and after a while of silence the friend says, "You know Sara, you have the greatest breasts I have ever seen. I'd give you \$100.00 just to see one." Sara thinks about it for second and figures, what the hell a hundred bucks! She opens her robe and shows one to him for a few seconds. He promptly thanks her and throws a hundred bucks on the table. They sit there a while longer and the guy then says, "That was amazing, I've got to see both of them. I'll give you another \$100.00 if I could just see them both together." Sara, amazed by the offer sits and thinks a bit about it and thinks, heck, why not? So she opens her robe and gives Chris a nice long chance to cop a look. A while later Tony arrives back home from the store. The wife goes up to him, "You know, your friend Chris came over." Tony thinks about it for a second and says, "Well, did he give you the 200 bucks he owes me?"

What is the difference between snowmen and snow-women? Snowballs.

A kindergarten teacher one day is trying to explain to her class the definition of the word "definitely" to them. To make sure the students have a good understanding of the word, she asks them to use it in a sentence. The first student raised his hand and said, "The sky is definitely blue." The teacher said, "Well, that isn't entirely correct, because sometimes it's gray and cloudy." Another student says, "Grass is definitely green." The teacher again replies, "If grass doesn't get enough water it turns brown, so that isn't really correct either." Another student raises his hand and asks the teacher, "Do pants have lumps?" The teacher looked at him and said, "No... but that isn't really a question you want to ask in class discussion." So the student replies, "Then I definitely shit my pants."

Wife: "I dreamt they were auctioning off dicks. The big one went for ten dollars and the thick ones went for a thousand dollars." Husband: "how about the ones like mine?" Wife: "Those they gave away."

Husband: "I had a dream too...I dreamt they were auctioning off cunts. The pretty ones went for a thousand dollars, and the little tight ones went for two thousand." Wife: "And how much the ones like mine?" Husband: "That's where they held the auction."

The queen of England was visiting one of Canada's top hospitals, and during her tour of the floors she passed a room where a male patient was masturbating. "Oh my God!", said the Queen. "That's disgraceful, what's the meaning of this?" The doctor leading the tour explains, "I'm sorry your ladyship, this man has a very serious condition where the testicles rapidly fill with semen. If he doesn't do that five times a day, they would explode, and he would most likely die instantly." "Oh, I'm sorry," said the Queen. On the next floor they passed a room where a young nurse was giving a patient a blow job. "Oh my God," said the Queen, "What's happening in there?" The doctor replied, "Same problem, better health plan."

What would happen if you cut off your left side? You would be all right.

A little boy and his grandfather are raking leaves in the yard. The little boy sees an earthworm trying to get back into its hole. He says, "Grandpa, I bet I can put that worm back in that hole." The grandfather replies, "I'll bet you five dollars you can't. It's too wiggly and limp to put back in that little hole." The little boy runs into the house and comes back out with a can of hair spray. He sprays the worm until its straight and stiff as a board. The boy then proceeds to put the worm back into the hole. The grandfather hands the little boy five dollars, grabs the hair spray and turns into the house. Thirty minutes later the grandfather comes back out, hands the boy another five dollars. The little boy says, "Grandpa, you already gave me five dollars." The grandfather replies, "That's from your Grandma."

Dirty Little Matt is sitting in the back of math class, obviously not paying attention, when the teacher calls his name. "Yeah teach?" he replies. "If there are three ducks on a fence and you shoot one of them with a shotgun, how many are left?" asks the teacher. Matt answers, "Well, teach, if I shoot one of them with a shotgun, the loud noise is gonna make them all fly off." "No, Matt, there will be two left if you shoot one with a shotgun, but I like the way you were thinking," the teacher responds. "Well, teach, I've got a

question for you... There are 3 women that came out of an ice-cream parlor, one is biting on her ice-cream cone, one is licking it and one is sucking on it. Which one is married?" The teacher, a little taken back by the question answers, "Well uh, gee Matt. I guess the one that's sucking on the ice cream." Matt replies, "No teach, the one that has the ring on her finger, but I like the way you're thinking!"

What is the difference between ooooooh and aaaaah?

About 3 inches.

A woman puts an ad in the newspaper that looks like this.... "Looking for a man with these qualifications: "Won't beat me nor run away from me and is great in bed." She got lots of phone calls replying to her ad but met someone perfect at her door one day. The man she met said, "Hi, I'm Bob. I have no arms, so I won't beat you up and no legs, so I won't run away." So the lady says, "What makes you think you're great in bed?" Bob replies, "I rang the doorbell, didn't I?"

Three sisters wanted to get married, but their parents couldn't afford it so they had-all of them married on the same day. They also couldn't afford to go on a honeymoon so they all stayed in the same house with their hubbies. That night the mother got up because she couldn't sleep. When she went past her oldest daughter's room she heard screaming. Then she went to her second daughter's room and she heard laughing.

Then she went of her youngest daughter's room and she couldn't hear anything. The next morning when the men left the mother asked her oldest daughter, "Why were you screaming last night?" The daughter replied, "Mom, you always told me if something hurt I should just scream." "That's true." She looked at her second daughter. "Why were you laughing so much last night?" The daughter replied, "Mom, you always said that if something tickled you should laugh." "That's also true." Then the mother looked at her youngest daughter. "Why was it so quiet in your room last night?" The youngest daughter replied, "mom, you always told me I should never talk with my mouth full."

A depressed young woman was so desperate that she decided to end her life by throwing herself into the

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# "SIDDHAH YOGA"

The Western definition of the word yoga is as follows:

n. a Hindu system of philosophic meditation and ascetism, a part of which includes performing specific bodily postures.

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The reason I point out this definition is because, although it has some merit, it leaves a lot of unsaid relevant information to contemplate about and thus, please note a more relevant and descriptive description of yoga according to the Hindu precept; originators of said discipline. Yoga- union; mystical Absorption. Atman (the Self) and Brahman (the Absolute) known as One; literally, to joke, to join, one of six schools of Indian philosophy.

After defining the word yoga, I'd like to manifest the following. After my mentoring/induction into such insightful discipline over 16 years ago, and then practicing and educating myself about it; I have read about and practiced many different styles such as Hatha Yoga (yoga of bodily control), Raja Yoga (yoga of mental mastery), Jnana Yoga (yoga of Self knowledge), Abhyasa Yoga (yoga of steady effort), Atman Yoga (yoga of Self), Dhyana Yoga (yoga of meditation), Karma Yoga (yoga of action), Bhakti Yoga (yoga of devotion), Buddhi Yoga (yoga of wisdom), and many other styles yet, I had never read or heard of Siddha Yoga (yoga of perfection; of experience of unity-consciousness uninterrupted) until arriving here in Edgefield, FCI and then having it mentioned to me by a dear friend and student, Mr. Carlton, approximately a year ago.

When he told me about it, I was intrigued because I

considered myself pretty much versed in the many different styles of yoga and if there were a particular style I'd never read about or practiced, I would definitely like to experience it. Surely enough, he provided me with their address (Syda . Foundation Prison Project, P. O. Box 99140, Emeryville,

California 94662), I wrote them a succinct note expressing my desire to receive their lessons, they promptly responded, and ever since I have been receiving two monthly lessons; which I eagerly read and have become very inspired to write about.

Yes gentlemen, many of the lessons I have read from the Syda Yoga Foundation are so resonating and inspiring that it is, not only a pleasure for me to write about but, compelling to share their information so that those who wish to make positive changes could benefit as well from what I've been benefiting from at absolutely no cost but the single stamp I use to send my reorder which is already prepared by them, and my commitment and desire to be "assaulted" with so much truth and insight.

A recent lesson was so reverberating with my new found conduct, preaching, and principles yet, much more articulate that I feel obliged to share it with you.

In one of my many essays (Practice, Practice, Practice) I speak about a formula to living a happy and content life by allowing nothing or no one to disrupt my peace of mind or demeanor for the negative and thus, live content with myself, others, and my surroundings. Well, in this particular lesson the author speaks about the essential aspect of Sadhana (the spiritual discipline or path, physical and mental practice on the spiritual path) is being able to remain

in an undisturbed state no matter what happens to or around us. Then continues on by saying how after completing two full pages of the writings pertaining to the subject, something happened to the computer and everything was lost. A great deal of energy is required to write two pages of a lesson and thus, felt very disappointed followed by a flash of outrage: "Oh, the unfairness of it all! All that wasted writing time and energy." Then remembering: "Hey, what were you writing about, after all? What about all that stuff about maintaining our best state no matter what happens? Could I talk the talk but not walk the walk? Shouldn't I be actually living what I write about?"

"This also gave me the opportunity to examine this concept of wasted time, wasted effort, wasted energy. When I was writing those pages I felt totally content. Did that contentment depend on 'getting work done' on 'accomplishing something,' on 'having something to show for it'? Was the fact that the work disappeared reason enough for my contentment to disappear as well? NO, true contentment is undisturbed and never fluctuates. We are the ones who superimpose our own limited, habitual thoughts and beliefs over the existing contentment, causing us to lose awareness of our true nature.

"Gurumayi (the head of the Siddah Yoga lineage and dear follower of its doctrines) says that the important thing is to love our work, to love what we do each and every moment, and to focus on the fruits or results of our actions. The highest service, the highest Seva (selfless service) is offering all our actions, all our work, all our 'time' and 'energy' to God. We do this without expecting benefit of any

nature for ourselves. As long as we hope for some subtle reward- respect, appreciation, upgrading in social stature- our action is not pure.

"If we act purely, without thought of personal gain, then should the fruits of our work disappear, there is no attachment, no disappointment, no outrage, no feeling of the injustice of it all. We simply step into the next moment and bring our highest state along with us, unruffled. Each present moment is an opportunity for a new beginning. Yet we must consciously recognize and appreciate this opportunity in order to make use of it.

"We create our own perception and experience from moment to moment. We have done this all our lives, and we are doing this right now. All our problems and difficulties exist because we create and maintain them through our belief in them. The ego, of course, incessantly blames everything on others, or on circumstances, or 'bad luck,' or 'unfairness'- however it prefers to think about it.

"By 'our highest state,' I don't necessarily mean the Highest State- that might be a little too much to reasonably expect at this point. It is simply that sometimes we feel that we are in a relatively good state- we feel we are at our best- and this is what we can bring onto each moment and every situation. We can always make the effort to be the best we can be. We give it our best shot, and that's all we can do.

"On the other hand, it is also important to remain content with whatever is, with whatever comes unsought. Sometimes we find that we are not in such a good state. We don't need to complicate and compound this by feeling guilty

about it, and then angry at ourselves for feeling guilty, and then humiliated because of the anger at feeling guilty, and so on.

"We make the effort to be in our own highest state and, simultaneously, to be content with the way we are already in. These are not contradictory to each other. The spiritual discipline or path (Sadhana) is a delicate balance of diverse energies that ultimately blend into one- since all are various forms of the one supreme energy, the Shatki (spiritual power) that manifests and activates the cosmos. The cosmos depends on order and balance. This order and balance must also be established in our own consciousness. Balance is extremely important. It's important to avoid any extreme way of thinking. Resist the impulse to go from one extreme to another..."

Yes gentlemen, I could continue to "assault" you with much more insights and truths provided in the lessons of the Siddah Yoga Foundation Prison Project, but you now have the ways and means to contact them personally at no cost in English or Spanish and therefore, I implore you to do so if not for your own sake, at least for the sake of those of us who truly love you.

And now using one of Siddah Yoga's farewell I say: I humbly extend my love to you, as well as my gratitude for sharing this course with me.

ERNESTO COLE

## "REASONS #2"

Not long ago, I composed a very personal essay- privy only to those involved and very close to me- in which I was involved in a non-ill intentioned yet very embarrassing for all involved. In said essay, I mentioned that after being sanctioned by the DHO (disciplinary hearing officer), my friend and staff representative seemed a bit upset about the ruling and I humbly informed him of my acceptance of it and that he should be as well; since things of this nature happen for a reason.

Sure enough, I soon figured out the reason for being involved in such incident and by accepting it, it has helped me tremendously because I have since then reassessed my relationships, value much more those who showed me true love, and no longer make a priority of whom consider me simply an "option" for their purpose.

Either way, I have very recently been involved in another situation- although not embarrassing at all:-) that I truly feel had an equally profound and resounding REASON. But for the reader, I must first tell you a little about a very negative and foolish belief I'd harbored since I could remember.

As a child having been born in a truly marginalized and criminally prone environment, it was instilled in me by my infamous mentors that there was a clear separation between "US vs THEM." Them being authority figures. I was then removed by my father to a more abundant and much less criminally prone environment yet, my instilled belief was never destroyed and

on the contrary, it was made much more potent by my daddy's extreme authoritarian figure and physical abuse.

I was then returned to the environment that gave me birth, clung to it like a glove on a hand, and thus became as criminally minded as I could be. With the ill gotten profits of my ways, I returned to the U.S.A., cemented a criminal enterprise, eventually got arrested, and then sentenced to two consecutive life sentences-plus without the possibility of parole.

While doing the time given, not only did I strengthen my belief of "US vs THEM" mentality, I advocated strongly in its favor regardless of the consequences.

Now that the reader has an idea of my ancient belief, allow me to continue with the REASON for this composition. Approximately two weeks before this last Mother's Day, I came across a very meaningful and beautiful dedication for all women that I had for many years yet, because of my foolish belief of "US vs THEM" and thus being somewhat anti-social, had not made good use of it. But now that I have come to question that belief and am making "baby steps" progression to eliminate it, I decided to do something unheard of the previous me. I decided to type this dedication, translate it to Spanish so that all my Spanish speaking friends/comrades/loved ones could benefit from it as well, make hundreds of copies despite the difficulties, find the name of each and every woman here in Edgefield FCI, and make sure each one of them (from the Warden to the most novice correctional female officer) received it in an envelope with their names typed on it.

With the assistance of one of the best federal correctional counselors I've ever met, the plan was to place said envelopes anonymously in the in-boxes the institution provides for their postal mail. Unfortunately, due to ethics rules and policies the counselor was prohibited from such maneuver. Very disappointed- because he knew and appreciated the hard work I'd put into such operation- he informed me of the policy and that it would have to be up to me to get it done; since he could not do what I had requested of him.

I accepted the situation, thought positively about it, and against my will but for the nobility of my intentions, I approached the Warden for the first time ever to try to convince her of an exception. After doing so, she reiterated the ethics rule/policy that hampered my intentions; however, she told me that if I truly wanted to accomplish my goal, I would have to do exactly what I did with her: hand it to each woman personally. When she told me that, I was taken aback because I thought to myself: "I can't do that because aside from being shy, I am very reluctant to "socialize" with "THEM" unless it is utterly necessary." I took a deep breath and asked her: "Ma'am, are you telling me that if I truly wish to accomplish said purpose, you're giving me permission to do so personally as I've just done with you?" She responded: "Yes sir, either that or not at all." I thanked her for her time and attention and bade my farewell.

Initially, my thought was to let it be and allow my noble intention not to materialize. But then I thought to myself: "What was the reason you started this project" Was it to get praise, recognition, material gain; or simply to raise

these women's self-esteem, put a smile on their faces, and show them that there are many, many of us who truly value them?" Once I realized my true intention, I put my silly/foolish belief aside and have been handing out said dedication (which is attached) and having the time of my incarcerated life. Not even having been awarded the MVP of the soccer playing community in the previous penitentiary I was in compares to the sense of fulfillment this endeavor has given me.

Therefore, I presently feel that the REASON for the events occurring the way they have were simply to have me question such mentioned belief and discard it with no remorse whatsoever.

Thank you all very much and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

WHY DO WOMEN CRY?

A little boy asked his mother, "Why are you crying?"

"Because I'm a woman," she told him.

"I don't understand," he said. His Mom just hugged him and said, "And you never will."

Later the little boy asked his father, "Why does mother seem to cry for no reason?"

"All women cry for no reason," was all his dad could say.

The little boy grew up and became a man, still wondering why women cry.

Finally he put a call to God. When God got on the phone, he asked, "God, why do women cry so easily?"

God said:

"When I made the woman she had to be special.

I made her shoulders strong enough to carry the weight of the world, yet gentle enough to give comfort.

I gave her an inner strength to endure childbirth and the rejection that many times comes from her children.

I gave her a hardness that allows her to keep going when everyone else gives up, and take care of her family through sickness and fatigue without complaining.

I gave her sensitivity to love her children under any and all circumstances, even when her child has hurt her very badly.

I gave her strength to carry her husband through his faults and fashioned her from his ribs to protect his heart.

I gave her wisdom to know that a good husband never hurts his wife, but sometimes tests her strength and her resolve to stand beside him unfalteringly.

And finally, I gave her a tear to shed. This is hers exclusively to use whenever it is needed."

"You see my son," said God, "the beauty of a woman is not in the clothes she wears, the figure that she carries or the way she combs her hair.

The beauty of a woman must be seen in her eyes, because that is the doorway to her heart- the place where love resides."

HAVE A HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY AND MANY, MANY BLESSINGS  
TODAY AND ALWAYS!

"SELF-CONFIDENCE, PEACE, HAPPINESS"

After attending a recent Recidawareness (recidivism awareness) class and hearing its sponsor and facilitators speak about the importance of self-confidence, peace within, happiness, positive thinking, and the difference between right and wrong; some of the information I have come about through my research, reading, and practice came to mind; and thus, decided to write a composition based on my many reads and make some very practical suggestions on such matters.

Lack of self-confidence apparently is one of the great problems besetting people today. In a university study a survey was made of six hundred students in psychology courses. They were asked to state their most difficult personal problem. Seventy five percent listed lack of confidence; therefore, it can safely be assumed that the same large proportion is true in that of the population generally, and when it comes down to the incarcerated and downtrodden larger, no? Everywhere you encounter people who are inwardly afraid, who shrink from life, who suffer from a deep sense of inadequacy and insecurity, who doubt their own powers deep within. They mistrust their ability to meet responsibilities or to grasp opportunities. They are always beset by the vague and sinister fear that something is not going to be quite right. They do not believe that they have it in them to be what they want to be, and so they try to make themselves content with something less than which they are capable. Thousands upon thousands go crawling through life on their hands and knees, defeated and afraid. And in most cases such

frustration of power is unnecessary.

The blows of life, the accumulation of difficulties, the multiplication of problems tend to sap energy and leave you spent and discouraged. In such condition the true status of your power is often obscured, and a person yields to discouragement that is not justified by the facts. It is essential to reappraise your personality assets. When done in altitude of reasonableness, this evaluation will convince you that you are less defeated than you think you are.

For example, a much younger friend than I (could actually be my son) consulted me. He was in a deep despondency and felt that doing Yoga and ICE in my classes would help. He said he was "through" and did not feel he could do this time. "What do you mean you're through?" I asked. "Well, my wife this and that. My mother doesn't understand and is upset with me cause she claims I am misbehaving while doing this time. I don't have any money..."

Naturally, I felt sympathy, but it was evident that his main trouble was the fact that the dark shadows of hopelessness had clogged his mind and discolored his outlook, distorting it tremendously and leaving him without force.

"Listen," I said, "suppose we think about how blessed you truly are and how far from being 'through' you are, can we?" "There's no use," he sighed, "I'm through and there's nothing I can do." I said, "Let's just try it anyway, cool?" Then I asked him, "How much time do you have left to do?" "About six more years," he said. How old are you?" "26," he responded. "Do you have kids?" "Yes, two beautiful little girls." "Do you love your wife?" "Yes I do, very much so." "Do

you feel your wife loves you as well and why?" "Yes, she does. We've been together since she was a teenager, I took her virginity, she still accepts and longs for my calls and also does for me whatever I ask of her within reason yet, I feel she's lonely and will eventually find someone to fill that emptiness and that I cannot condone because of my principles." I ignored the latter part of that statement and asked him, "Where are you from?" "Right here, the U.S." "You watch the news and see the state of other countries, do you believe the U.S. is still the land of opportunities?" "Yes, of course!" "Do you have friends and family that care about you?" "Of course, I have my mother, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grand-parents, and lots of friends that I care about as well." "Are you in good health and physical shape?" "Of course, if not there's no way I could stand the intensity of your workouts, 'don't you think'?" I ignored his inquiry and continued, "Do you believe in God, Jehovah, Allah, the Absolute...?" "Of course I do, I don't think I would have gotten this far if not for Him." He assured me.

"Now," I said, "let's see all the assets and blessings you have going for you."

"1- as opposed to many, you have only six years left on your sentence.

"2- again, as opposed to many, you are only 26 years old and still have the precious gift of youth.

"3- you have two lovely and beautiful daughters who need and want their Daddy.

"4- you have and love your wife, she loves you, and needs the man that made her a woman by her side to help her

raise those little girls and assist her with everything else as you always have and will.

"5- you live in the U.S.A., the land of liberty and so many opportunities...

"6- you have your loving mother, siblings, relatives, and friends who hold you in esteem.

"7- you are in great physical health as is evident by being able to withstand my classes.

"8- you believe in God and are certain that you've gotten this far because of Him." I reiterated this list and was able to prove to him that he had much more than so many and told him: "Think about these things. It seems to me that you have some dear assets and things to be thankful for, no? Additionally, you and no one else can create your happiness so if you'd like to be happy, the sooner you start that mission, the better, cool?"

He grinned ashamedly: "I guess I didn't think about those things. I never thought of it that way, things aren't as bad as I thought they were. Maybe I should think more positively and ignore those nasty thoughts that come to mind, huh?" Well, he got it and accepted reality. But he did so only after his perspectives and mental attitude changed.

This incident illustrates a profound truth which is expressed in a very important statement made by a famous psychiatrist, Dr. Karl Menninger. He said, "Attitudes are more important than facts. Any fact facing us, however difficult, even seemingly hopeless, is not so important as our attitude toward that fact. How you think about a fact may defeat you before you ever do anything about it. You permit a fact to

overwhelm you mentally before you start to deal with it actually. On the other hand, a confident and optimistic thought pattern can modify or overcome the fact altogether...."

On how to accomplish a peaceful mind and thus, peace within, I wrote a very inspiring essay titled "Silence" which I already gave you all a copy of. If I have not done so, you're very welcome to it or you may also find it on page 234 of my "Wisdom From Within" booklet. But to the "Silence" essay I'd like to add a hypothetical scenario: If a loved one (parent, child, family member, spouse, friend, an acquaintance...) needed some of your time daily to be at peace and content, how much time would you be willing to afford them? How much quiet and reflecting time are you willing to give yourself for the same results and benefit?

For the benefit of happiness and positive thinking, I will paraphrase the writing of a doctor and spiritual healer, Mr. Norman Vincent Peale.

Stop fuming and fretting. The word fume means to boil up, to blow off, to emit vapor, to be agitated, to be distraught, to seethe. The word fret is equally descriptive. It is reminiscent of a sick child in the night, a petulant half cry, half whine. It ceases only to begin again. It has an irritating, annoying, penetrating quality. To fret is a childish term, but describes the emotional reaction to many adults.

A first step is to reduce your pace or at least the tempo of your pace. We do not realize how accelerated the rate of our lives has become, or the speed at which we are

driving ourselves. Many people are destroying their physical bodies by this pace, but what is even more tragic, they are tearing their minds and souls to shreds as well. It is impossible for a person to live a quiet existence physically and yet maintain a high tempo emotionally. Even an invalid can live at too high a pace from that standpoint. The character of our thoughts determines pace. When the mind goes rushing on pell-mell from one feverish attitude to another it becomes feverish and the result is a state bordering on petulance. The pace of modern life must be reduced if we are not to suffer profoundly from debilitating overstimulation and super-excitement. This overstimulation produces toxic poisons in the body and creates emotional illness. It produces fatigue and a sense of frustrations that we fume and fret about everything from our personal troubles to the state of the nation and the world. If the effects of this disquiet is so pronounced physically, what must its effect be on that deep inner essence of the personality known as the soul?

It is impossible to have peace of soul if the pace is so feverishly accelerated. The Absolute will not go that fast. He will not endeavor to keep up with you. He says in effect, "Go ahead if you must with this foolish pace and when you are wore out I will offer my healing. But I can make your life so rich if you will slow down now and live and move and have your being in me." God moves imperturbably, slowly, and with perfect organization.

Slow down, for whatever you really want will be there when you get there if you work toward it without stress, without pressing. If, proceeding under God's guidance and in

His smooth unhurried tempo, it is not there, then it was not supposed to be there. If you miss it, perhaps you should have missed it.

At least once a day, deliberately stop whatever you are doing for five or ten minutes and practice serenity/silence, as you get more adept and increase your quiet time you will truly appreciate the results/benefits.

And as far as the difference between right and wrong? Well, we all know there are unlawful things and lawful things. Yet, what may be right for me may not be right for you and vice-versa; therefore, this is a more subjective topic than a truly objective one. However, I will observe that there have been times when I don't necessarily feel that what I'm about to do is wrong, but the sensation of my body, my gut feeling, my intuition tell me differently and thus, I simply follow them.

Again beloved, thank you dearly for your time/attention and as always, God bless you.

ERNESTO COLE

DON'T WORRY, HAVE FAITH, BE HAPPY

After sustaining a very positive and productive conversation with our program sponsor and its founder, all three of us had slightly different perspectives yet, very supporting views on the video that was about to be presented to the class- The Secret.

This video/book has very compelling and interesting truths in it and thus, the reason for the title of this composition.

At the beginning of this wonderful and mind changing program, I composed an essay titled "Practice, Practice, Practice" which I consider my constitution and where I alluded to my adoring mother giving me one of the best, if not best, advice I've ever received. She said to me: "Negrito (my affectionate nickname meaning Little Black Boy) if there is ever something you need to do about anything, do so immediately, do not procrastinate or leave it for later because you may forget yet, if there's nothing you can do about it, do exactly that; nothing. And by that I mean don't even worry about it." Sure enough, at the time I was very young and foolish, had no idea what my loving mother was trying to tell me and therefore, did not adhere and inquire on how to go about not worrying about things.

Fortunately, through much reading and experience I have come about some well tested methods that could truly help those privy to this composition. I will first cite a suggested method from an excellent book I once read and will then reveal a personal one that has worked wonders for me.

In this particular positive thinking book, its renowned author and spiritual healer, Dr. Vincent Peale, says the following: "You do not need to be a victim of worry. Worry is simply an unhealthy and destructive mental habit. You acquired it. And because you can change any habit and any acquired attitude, you can cast worry away from your mind.

"Why should we take the worry problem this seriously? An eminent psychiatrist, Dr. Smiley Branton states the following: 'Anxiety is the great modern plague.'

"A famous psychologist asserts that, 'Fear is the most disintegrating enemy of human personality.' And a prominent physician declares that 'Worry is the most subtle and destructive of all human diseases.' And yet another physician tells us that thousands of people are ill because of 'dammed up anxiety.'

"We are also told that worry is not infrequently a factor in arthritis. Physicians claim that the causes of this prevalent disease, at least some of them, are nearly always present in arthritic cases; financial disaster, frustration, tension, apprehension, loneliness, grief, long-held ill will, and habitual worry."

Mr. Peale continues to expand on the dis-benefits of worry and then gives a practical procedure that he claims will help eliminate abnormal worry from your existence.

"Practice emptying your mind daily. This should be done preferably at night before going to bed to avoid retention by the consciousness of worries while you sleep.

"This process of mind drainage is important in overcoming worry, for fear thoughts, unless drained off, can clog the mind and impede the flow of mental and spiritual power. To drain them, utilize a process of creative imagination. Conceive of yourself of actually emptying your mind of all anxiety and fear. Picture all worry thoughts as flowing out as you would let water flow from a basin by removing the stopper. Repeat the following affirmation during this visualization: 'With God's help I am now emptying my mind of all anxiety, all fear, all sense of insecurity.' Repeat this slowly five times, meanwhile holding a mental

picture of your mind as being emptied of these concepts. Then thank God for thus freeing you from fear. Then go to sleep.

"In starting the curative process the foregoing method should be utilized in mid-morning and mid-afternoon as well as at bedtime. Go into some quiet place for five minutes for this purpose. Faithfully perform this process and you will soon note beneficial results."

Although I applaud, commend, and recommend Mr. Peale's method, I have practiced a particular method that has worked wonders/miracles for me to distance me from such hideous malady as worry. I simply practice silence/prana meditation daily. I practice this method first thing in the morning because unlike Mr. Peale's method in which he recommends before going to bed, I read myself to sleep, wake up early, pray and begin my day in God's protection.

To practice this method, once I get myself prepared by doing my habitual cleansing and nutrition, I find a quiet and dark place (my cell), either sit or lie down, close my eyes, and focus on nothing but my breathing. Sure enough, the savants assure us that approximately 70 thousand thoughts assault us daily and thus, they are unavoidable; but guess what? We possess the ability to focus (or not) on each one of them; therefore, when I realize I'm thinking, I simply focus on my deep inhale, exhale by assuring that my diaphragm is going up and down. I continue focusing in that manner and also my senses and when am assaulted by another thought, I do the same to the point of even counting my deep and controlled inhales/exhales. I started this practice many years ago after being introduced to the beautiful discipline of Yoga and at the time could only do said practice for a minute or two. Now that I've become more adept, I could do it for hours or as long as I wish. In doing so (meditating) and also affording myself some "me" time to just reflect and converse with "Self" over what has recently been, what is, and what I desire. I not only make myself worry free with such method, but have made myself truly accepting, terribly happy, and very content.

Now, many of you may ask, "Ok, but what does that have to do with the video/book 'The Secret'?" Well gentlemen, the Secret is only a secret if you do not practice it; since the concept of having faith and believing in the Lord, Allah, the Universe... is proclaimed over and over and over in the most read book of all times; the bible.

Therefore, 'The Secret' is simply an extremely valuable Truth/suggestion that has been handed down through generations since the beginning of time. It is simply that our whimsical, capricious, and egotistical mind has a tendency to think it knows it all and thus, has rejected such valuable and undeniable Secret/Truth. But if we were to think positively, speak in such manner, and have faith in the Almighty, Absolute, God, Allah, Jehovah, the Universe or whatever/whomever we choose to believe in, put it all into practice, practice, practice and allow the will of the Greatest to take its place, we should be much more conscious and accepting of the blessings afforded to us; very simple, I think.

Additionally, part of the science in learning 'The Secret' is, if not lived it is not understood. Practice, practice, practice breaks that boundary; bringing desired contentment.

Thank you dearly for your time/attention and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

"GIVE AND TAKE"

As a child growing up in a truly marginal community and environment, I did not have a problem nor felt shame towards asking or even begging for the things I needed or wanted; nor also being truly sharing with others with the little I had. The needed things were certainly always provided for, but the wanted ones were not. I, therefore, developed a tendency to "take" them either way and then having to run like hell to keep them.

Then in my pre-adolescent years, I was removed from such environment to a much more fluent and abundant one. In said environment and community the needed things were in dear abundance, but the wanted ones were dearly monitored and restricted to the point where if I decided to "take" them, I would be punished severely.

Time passed, I became a young adult, was against my will placed in an environment where the needed things were always provided for yet, the wanted ones were extremely absent to the point where to get them the price was very high and risks were grave. Additionally, those who had the wanted things and offered them to you always had an ulterior and nefarious motive. I saw these conducts so frequently that it became my purpose to accept nothing gratuitously from any one, regardless of their benign motives and intentions and thus negating part of my true nature; that to give and receive.

Many years have transpired since then and although I have never lost my tendency to be a giver, I still retained the trauma of past years and not be opened to receive or accept from others to the point of seeing the obvious disappointment in their eyes, body language, and words.

After committing myself to being a much better individual than before, I have resolved to be a little more accepting of the gifts, compliments, and other wanted things afforded to me; while still maintaining and even increasing my giving ways because I truly believe that is the way it should be...sharing with others. Still, I did not know how to formulate this perspective into words until coming across a fabulous article in

a yoga magazine I have been subscribing to for the last 16+ years and read entirely every time I receive it; since it has so many wonderful, insightful, and wise articles that provoke lots of reflexions. The article in mention- "The Yoga of Give & Take" states the following.

Practicing the art of accepting a gift- be it a material item or something less tangible like a compliment, a favor, or a piece of wisdom- can help us live, and give, with more meaning. By Sally Kempton.

My generous mother could never accept a gift. On Christmases and birthdays, my brothers and I would each offer her something we thought she'd like- a sweater, a piece of jewelry, a certificate for a massage. She'd say, "Thank you," of course. But she'd put the sweater in the bottom drawer, bag the jewelry, and never call the massage therapist. The same thing happened when we tried to tell her something nice about herself. "Oh, come on," she'd say. "That's too much." We used to tease her about how she always had to be the giver. But we also found it frustrating, because we couldn't express our affection for her in ways that she would accept.

I thought about this recently after a friend I'll call Dylan busted me for not accepting a compliment. He had called to tell me how much he appreciated something I'd done. Without thinking, I answered, "Oh, it wasn't a big deal. Anyone would have done that." Dylan went quiet for a minute. Then he said, "Do you realize you just rejected my compliment?"

"No, I didn't," I protested. "I just told the truth. What I did really wasn't a big deal."

"Maybe not to you, but it was to me," he replied. "I was trying to tell you something nice. You basically didn't receive it."

His words stopped me cold. I had just exhibited my own version of my mother's behavior, turning aside a loved one's offering out of false modesty or a kind of reverse pride. And this got me started on what turned out to be a long contemplation on the nuances of receiving. What I finally realized is this: Most of us have never learned how to fully take a gift.

We know about gratitude, of course. We make gratitude lists and write thank you notes to friends, teachers, and others who have helped or inspired us. But even when we're expressing gratitude, we often haven't fully received, taken in, and assimilated the gift we've been given. Receiving is a yoga in itself- one that demands a high degree of sensitivity, awareness, and even skillfulness. For one thing, we need to recognize that we're being given a gift- whether it's a birthday present, a compliment, a teaching, a helpful piece of feedback, a genuine service, a loving gesture, or a blessing from the invisible realms. Second, we need to cultivate enough stillness and openness to take it in. Third, we need to appreciate it, to value it, or, at the very least, to value the giver's intention. And fourth, we need to feel that we deserve it- that the gift is neither too much, too little, nor out of line with who we are. In fact, the word "receive" comes from the Latin *recipere*, which means "to take back." This implies that what we receive is already ours in the sense that we do, indeed, deserve it; that it completes something within us; or simply that we've attracted it by the nature of our being.

Of course, one reason we may feel resistant to receiving a gift is that it isn't "meant" for us. Not everyone's energy is a match for ours, and some gifts come with so many strings and expectations attached that they resemble bribes. So, as you practice learning how to receive, begin by looking at the meaning behind any feelings of resistance. Sometimes they are messages from your discerning Self telling you that it isn't wise to accept the offering. For example, Linda, a popular yoga teacher I know, gets lots of offers for bodywork from her students. Much of the time, the energy behind the offering is ambiguous- sometimes the student wants to get closer to her or wants to give her something in return for her teaching. She's learned to listen to her inner "no" when offering makes her feel uncomfortable, and to politely decline.

But if the gift is appropriate- and genuine- then the question becomes "Can you take it in?" Because, of course, it doesn't matter how many favors and gifts you receive from other people and the universe. What really matters is how much you can really

receive and assimilate. Think about it: When your digestive system won't assimilate food, you don't receive nourishment, no matter how you eat or how many supplements you take. In the same way, when you can't (or won't) receive the love and support that a real gift represents, you never quite feel nourished by life. And there's an obvious corollary: If you can't fully receive love and support from other people, you'll probably have a hard time receiving the subtle help being offered to you by the cosmos itself.

### THE FAILED EXCHANGE

An extreme example of the consequences of not receiving a gift is described in the Puranas, the sacred mythology texts of India. Durvasa, a particularly irascible sage, finds a garland that he recognizes as the material embodiment of auspiciousness itself. But when he offers it to Indra, the king of the gods, Indra carelessly takes the garland and flings it over the head of his elephant. Durvasa is insulted by Indra's inability to receive the offering that he declares that, henceforth, good fortune will depart from Indra's worlds. And, voila, Indra's worlds turn dim and gray. Things come out all right in the end, of course, but not without some superhuman effort on the part of gods and titans.

Durvasa isn't just being touchy: His reaction points to a truth about the way the cosmos works. When we aren't able to receive a genuine and heartfelt gift, we subtly upset the cosmic balance. One of the core Vedic understandings is that life is based on exchange, the dynamic interaction of giving and receiving. In the classic yoga text the Bhagavad Gita, the interdependence between human beings, the natural world, and the invisible world of spirit is captured in the image of the cosmic sacrifice. In the sacrifice, the earth receives the gift of rain, and crops begin to grow. Moisture evaporates from the earth and is received by the atmosphere. Similarly, as humans, we receive gifts of food, shelter, knowledge, and many other forms of support from the earth, from our parents and ancestors, from the accumulated wisdom and technology of our culture, and from fellow humans. We carry these gifts in our genes, and they themselves carry unspoken obligations-- most often through

all the ways we "pay it forward," helping others materially or energetically by sharing our own gifts, skills, and support.

But if others don't receive our offerings, there's no exchange. That means we can't give our gifts, or, on a deeper level, repay our implicit obligations. Any teacher knows that without a receptive student, she can't really teach. A friend can't share intimacy with you if you're not able to be present for it. Even a philanthropist needs an appropriate receiver for his wealth. Whatever gift you want to give is essentially fruitless when it's not fully received; it's like a seed that doesn't germinate and sprout- something you can sense, even on a very subtle level. You might wonder if there was something wrong with the gift. You might feel frustrated or hurt, like my friend Dylan did when I rejected his compliment. If you're energetically sensitive, you will feel the person's hesitancy or resistance to receiving as a wall, a block in the flow between you and that person.

#### WHY CAN'T WE RECEIVE?

There are many reasons we don't fully receive gifts, favors, and compliments- ranging from feelings of guilt or insecurity ("I don't deserve it"), to a sense of entitlement ("I deserve it, so what's the big deal?"), to a fear that we don't have the wherewithal to reciprocate, to a sneaking suspicion that the gift has hidden obligations. Another reason we don't receive help is that, on a subconscious level, it can make us feel inferior. Our culture tells us that a giver is in the power position, while the receiver is making a tacit confession of neediness. Even when we're truly in need, our ego will often resist the discomfort of fully receiving a gift.

One of our biggest problems with receiving has to do with what I call the holes in our bucket. If you try to hold water in a container with holes in it, the water will leak out. In the same way, when we feel chronically needy or deprived, or when we don't take care of what we already have, it can be hard to hold onto or feel happy about the new gifts we are being given. We might want desperately to feel loved, to be offered a thoughtful gift, or to receive a helping hand, but the love and help

that come our way never feel like enough- or the right kind of- love. Someone praises us for being smart, and we wonder why she doesn't appreciate our good looks. A lover gives us a book, and we wonder why he didn't realize that we instead wanted a sweater.

So, what can we do to become better receivers? There are a few core practices that can help us fully receive, take in, and assimilate whatever gifts our loved ones- and the universe- are offering.

### CULTIVATE PRESENCE

When you're feeling rushed, distracted, or preoccupied, you are much less capable of fully receiving a gift. So when someone offers you something- a kind word, a present, a favor- begin by noticing your state of mind. If you're feeling distracted, resistant, or disconnected from them, try a quick, simple yogic practice that can help you bring your energies into the present moment. First, take a deep breath meeting your inner body. Another way to cultivate presence is to work with these Five Recognitions of Perfection. The practice is very simple. You say to yourself: This is the perfect time. Right now. This is the perfect place. Right here. This is the perfect person. This is the perfect gift. I am the perfect person to receive it. The first three thoughts will help you fully enter the present moment. The last two will help you create an internal environment that will help you hold the gift with sincere appreciation.

### AVOID JUDGMENT

Often, when someone offers us a gift, our mind judges, evaluates, and summarily approves or rejects it even before we've taken it in. This is what Indra did with the garland. It's what my friend Ellen did recently when her boyfriend came over on her birthday and washed the dishes in her sink. To him, it was a loving offering. Her reaction was, "Thanks, and you should be doing this every time I cook for you instead of always expecting me to cook and wash the dishes." To which he replied, "I would, but you're so compulsive about having the dishes clean

five minutes after the meal that you don't give me a chance!" And then, to their dismay, the couple launched into a 30-minute argument instead of celebrating Ellen's birthday.

When you're being given a gift that doesn't feel like a perfect fit, resist the urge to think about what kind of offering you would have preferred and reject the impulse to make a "You never know what I really want" move. Instead, consider that the giver might have had a loving intention- no matter how inapt his or her gift seems.

### SEE THE GIFT AS A MESSAGE

When I lived with my guru, he would often give us little gifts that we received with great excitement, because we recognized that they were filled with his blessings. Sometimes the gifts were absurd: He once gave me a gigantic pair of blue, foam-filled nylon apres-ski booties with yellow cloth soles. Not only did the booties look ridiculous, but they were also miles too big. (And besides, it was high summer!) But it didn't occur to me to wonder why he'd given me something so silly because I saw that his gift was imbued with his unique spiritual energy. Though I didn't exactly walk around wearing them, I do still have the booties, and they always remind me of his kindness.

Try this practice when your friends and family give you presents during the holidays. Take a moment to feel the inherent holiness in the giver. You might consider the ways in which the giver- your friend, your child, your partner, or your parent- is actually a teacher for you, a kind guru. These insights will help you look at the gift he or she is giving in a new way, as *prasad*- traditionally, a food offering made to a deity during a temple ritual and then shared among others present, but often defined as anything offered to a holy being- which is filled with the energy of blessing. Then notice how different the exchange feels.

### CONSCIOUSLY OPEN YOURSELF

We said earlier in this article that being receptive is a spiritual practice- a kind of yoga. This understanding is

especially important when the gift you are wanting to receive is wisdom, love, or help from another person or from the subtle world. Sometimes, just reminding yourself to open up to whatever form love takes will let you receive not just the affection that other people are offering you, but also the actual grace that comes with it- the beneficial energy that pours through the universe.

One way to practice this level of receptivity is to take a moment- right now or at any other time- to breathe in and imagine that you are taking in subtle energy, tenderness, and grace from the universe. Or imagine that your heart is open like a funnel, so that love and energy can pour into it from the atmosphere. Rather than trying to draw in that energy, simply hold your heart open and allow it to enter as it will.

#### EVERYDAY OFFERINGS

The power of these simple but highly effective practices is that over time they will seep into your being. By improving your ability to fully receive, you will begin to notice how many gifts are being offered to you at every moment. The wind in the trees, a stranger's smile, the wagging tail of a dog will all feel like personal offerings of affection- gifts of beauty and wisdom. Whatever you give back becomes part of that same dance, the dance of giving and receiving, in which we're all one another's partners.

Again gentlemen, thank you dearly for your attention/time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## CRACK A SMILE

As a yoga follower and practitioner for the last 16 years plus, and as a certified personal trainer for even longer, when instructing the participants of the class while engaging in very intense/challenging routines and seeing the frown, sweat, and grunting on their faces; I make sure to assert, "Put a smile on your faces, it helps relieve the discomfort tremendously." Sure enough, they tend to follow my advice and confess the difference. While that statement has been proven factual and I can also, not only attest to it but, prove its accuracy, I found an article on a yoga magazine I have been subscribing for over three quarters of a score and devour monthly due to its very inspirational and full of wisdom articles. On this particular article titled "Crack A Smile," it affirms the following.

Most of us think of asanas as poses that involve the precise placement of limbs, spine, head, and torso. What we don't typically consider in the practice is our faces, or how one simple exercise- the smile- can be highly effective off the mat. "Smiling is one of the most powerful things you can do for personal transformation," says Mirka Kraftsow, co-founder of the American Viniyoga Institute. "Choose to smile and bring the same awareness to your smile that you would any other pose. Even if you're not feeling particularly happy, this practice will pick you up because the brain doesn't know the difference between a spontaneous smile and an intentional one." Several studies back up Kraftsow's advice, with research citing an expression-emotion feedback loop that produces feelings of calm and pleasure when triggered by a smile. "Try it, and notice how you begin to cultivate friendliness toward everyone around you," says Kraftsow. "You'll begin to notice all the sources of happiness that surround you, even on your worst days," She says.

Thank you very much as always and God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## JUDGMENT

After attending a Basic Cognitive Skills class with Dr. Garber where the topic of discussion was situations, thoughts/emotions, and consequences; an interesting situation happened to me. I was in a program area very close to the education department when the one o'clock programs to housing units move was announced. I and several others headed to the education department. As we were about to enter it, a staff member prohibited us claiming it was a programs to housing move thus, we weren't allowed entry until the housing to programs move was announced. While some of the others became frustrated, beligerent, and even insulting, I adopted my new learned demeanor: I smiled, stepped to the side, and awaited the imminent move feeling as calm and composed as ever.

Not even two minutes after said officer locked us out, another much more professional, intelligent, and approachable (at least in my perspective of him) officer opened the door to let another inmate out. When he saw us standing there and inquiring the reason why, he invited us in. As I was waiting outside the education technician's office to check out a typewriter, the officer that had just a couple of minutes ago locked us out saw me and exclaimed: "I guess you found your way in anyway, huh?" I was tempted to respond with a "smart" remark, but thought better of it and simply ignored him and did not afford him my time...something I value dearly and afford it only to those I feel are worthy of it; and by that I mean even animals, plants, things, or anyone who wants it.

I believe my attitude was rational, but I now JUDGE said officer as truly petty, foolish, and unprofessional; and such judgment will now determine how I relate to said officer. Am I wrong for this? Should I just ignore the incident and "chalk" it up to maybe the officer having a bad day- something tragic or traumatic may have occurred to him, was reprimanded by a supervisor...- and put it out of my mind? Or maybe even excuse him for his unprofessional/provoking demeanor and continue approaching him with the respect, regards, and benefit of the doubt.

I feel we all deserve? What would you do? Your thoughts and comments on this matter will be dearly appreciated.

Thank you sincerely and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

7/10/17

## CLARIFICATION

Today was another very interesting and fruitful day. On 7/7/17 I wrote an essay titled "Judgment," which is about an incident that occurred between several inmates, myself, and an education staff member. In said composition, after describing the occurrences, I mentioned how I had thus JUDGED the officer as petty, foolish, and unprofessional. But then realizing my impropriety asked, "Am I wrong for this?" And then went on hypothesizing as to what may have led to his attitude that particular day.

Today July 10th, 2017, I was back in the education department translating into Spanish a very long and wise essay titled "Give And Take." Once I was done translating, proof-reading, and typing the essay and with no further plans, I decided to approach and converse with said officer. No, I'm incorrect about that. I simply reminded the officer about our encounter, told him I had written about it, and if he didn't mind, would like him to read it and give me his take once he did. Since the back to the housing units move had been announced, he said he'd read it after the move. I expressed my gratitude for his time and told him I'd await his opinion.

I returned to get my belongings and as I was about to leave the education department, he invited me in his office, offered me a seat, and we had a very, very pleasant and clarifying conversation; making me feel truly content for having approached him and thus clarifying my earlier judgment of him. So yes. I was definitely wrong for having judged him in our first encounter, since there was a legitimate and understandable reason for his demeanor and action that day. And yes. I still judge him now, but as a well-mannered, intelligent, approachable, and professional educator.

So for those privy to this exposition, let us not judge but comprehend, accept, and always do our best; since the only thing that can trump a fact is our ATTITUDE.

Thank you very much and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## STRESS

In this booklet I've written about the benefit of breathing to reduce/overcome stress (Practice, Practice, Practice) and also on how I deal with stress through meditation (Questions and Answers). I've also written about the proper way of breathing and thus truly benefit from it. Unfortunately, in the other book I wrote (ICE/Power Yoga) extensively on how to breathe and thus have a more fruitful existence both physically and mentally, it has not been afforded to most of you because it is mostly a physical fitness book and it was not intended to this recidivism awareness class. However, many have approached me claiming and giving "power" to the stress in their lives, family included. I even composed a dear essay for my eldest son so that, coupled with meditation and the art of silence, his breathing could be much more efficient and he may then deal much better and drug free with stress.

After composing and sending my son said information, I came across an article in a great magazine I subscribe to (OnFitness) which happened to have a very similar message I side with and circulate among my loved ones and those interested. And although I do not totally agree with the author of said article (Mr. Gabriel Bates), I will cite his writing for the benefit of the readers, but also point where I have a minor disagreement with and why.

## BREATHE TO LOSE WEIGHT

by Gabriel Bates

Most of us understand that a healthy diet and exercise are vitally important to effective weight loss. However, it's possible that despite the best efforts in dieting and exercise, high levels of stress may be preventing weight loss.

It may come as a surprise to find out that, in addition to all the other problems stress brings, it may also be preventing the bodily systems from working properly and not allowing the metabolism to burn fat. Luckily, we understand how stress affects the body. There are a couple of simple things we can do to reverse the problem and get on the right track.

There are two systems that control the internal functioning

of the body: the parasympathetic nervous system and the sympathetic nervous system. The parasympathetic nervous system is concerned with resting and digestion. When you are relaxed, this allows your blood pressure to decrease, slows the heartbeat and facilitates your digestive process.

The sympathetic nervous system, on the other hand, is concerned primarily with the fight-or-flight response within your body. The fight-or-flight is an important stimulus that is triggered when you are startled or surprised. At these times, blood pressure increases, your heart beats faster and your digestive process slows down.

The adrenal glands enlarge and begin to secrete large quantities of adrenal cortical hormones. These hormones suppress inflammatory responses and mobilize the body's energy reserves. It's like putting the body on red alert. The body diverts all of its resources toward survival. Your body's natural healing mechanisms are scaled back because healing diverts energy that is needed for immediate use. With the immune system suppressed, the glycogen stores in the liver and muscle tissue are mobilized to raise the blood sugar level while digestion is slowed.

Cortisol is a hormone that is produced in the adrenal cortex. Cortisol plays an important role in regulating blood sugar, managing energy production, dealing with inflammation and maintaining the immune system. Too little cortisol can cause chronic fatigue, exhaustion and Addison's disease, a disease of the endocrine system.

Too much cortisol may, in fact, cause weight gain. Since its role is to provide energy to the body, cortisol can cause an increase in appetite, which may lead to overeating. In addition, elevated cortisol levels have been found to cause fat to be deposited in the abdominal region. Other problems of excessive cortisol include immune system failure, accelerated aging and stomach ulcers.

During the fight-or-flight response of the sympathetic nervous system, cortisol levels are elevated as a reaction to the stress of the situation. It is very important to understand that the adrenal glands of the body are not concerned with the type of stress that triggers the release of cortisol. Any kind

of stress will do. It can be physical, environmental, chemical or psychological. The origin of the stress is irrelevant; the human brain is simply hardwired to protect the body from whatever threatens it.

Here is where the big problem lies

The fight-or-flight response worked very well in the distant past when humans were dealing with creatures that wanted to eat us for dinner. But as the human race has ascended to the top of the food chain, those dangers have eased. Unfortunately, the fast pace of life and the frenetic energy that modern society calls for keeps all of us in a state of constant stimulation. The stress that this creates as we battle traffic jams, stand in line at the post office, and watch rapidly flickering images on TV produces the same physiological responses as having to run for your life.

The sympathetic nervous system kicks in and cortisol is released. Since those stimuli don't stop or go away, the body is left with chronically high levels of cortisol for long periods of time. If you're dealing with stress on a daily basis, it is quite probable that your sympathetic nervous system is in a constant state of stimulation.

Most of us today realize that stress is a principal cause of many of the health problems in our society. Even Western medicine seems finally ready to agree. And while there are many different causes of this stress, the technological advances of the global economy and the intensity with which our leisure hours are filled (i.e., sports, TV and movies, specially) crowd in on us, creating an environment that feels the stress.

"Stress related" has become the new buzzword. We have stress-related diseases, stress-related illness and stress-related behavior. What's next? Stress-related stress? Soon, I'm sure we will see a new medication on the market guaranteed to solve absolutely all our "stress-related" problems- or your money back!

The best way to deal with stress is to change behavior patterns and alter the situations we put ourselves in. The interesting thing about stress is that it feeds on itself. A little

bit of stress could quickly become a serious dysfunction if allowed to take hold. Stress can also be generated by taking on too much responsibility, which demands high-speed efficiency and productivity. Simply put, the amount of stuff you are working on exceeds the actual time and effort you need to put into it. As you fall further behind, the more anxiety you generate.

### Teach yourself proper breathing

There is hope, however. If you're aware of the causes of your stress, you can take positive steps toward reducing the influence it has on you. We all know that the hardest thing to do is relax when we're in the grip of stress. However, if we can start with something as basic as breathing, we create an opportunity to gather and pull things together and deal with the stress effectively.

Proper breathing is one of the most important and often overlooked tools that is available to deal with stress. Most people simply never learned to breathe properly. As a result, they breathe in very shallow gasps, using only the top part of their lungs. Sadly, this brings in only enough oxygen to keep the body functioning at a minimum level. This is woefully inadequate.

When we breathe in, we take in oxygen, which is converted to energy. This energy is distributed throughout the body via the circulatory system. Shallow breathing does not provide enough oxygen and energy for the body to meet the demands of a high-pressure lifestyle most of us live. Effective breathing begins in the abdomen. It's done expanding your belly as you breathe in, and contracting it as you breathe out. It simply allows you to take a deeper breath, bringing in more oxygen and energy.

Teaching yourself this simple method will have an immediate impact. Once you grasp the concept, practice can take place at any time, in bed before you get up, in the traffic jam on your way to work, or sitting at your desk during the day. It takes a short time and very little effort, yet the benefits are enormous.

Natural, conscious, deep breathing creates a harmonious

rhythm within your body, reducing stress and strain on the muscles of the heart and slowing down the heartbeat. The rhythmic expansion and contraction of the muscles used in breathing help with the circulation of blood through the body, which improves muscle elasticity. In addition, the deep rhythmic expansion and contraction of the diaphragm and muscles around the lungs not only enhance their strength but massage the body's internal organs.

Learning to breathe properly is very simple. Lie down on your back and place your hands on your abdomen.

Practice breathing by expanding your abdominal muscles outward as you inhale.

You should hold your breath for a moment and then contract your abdominal muscles as you exhale. At first you may have a little difficulty with this, but you'll get the hang of it without too much trouble.

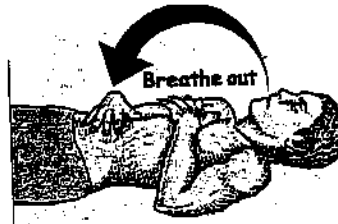
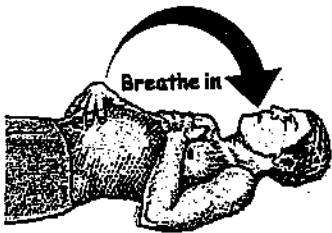
Once you have the basic idea, stand up and go through some simple breathing exercises by raising and lowering your arms while breathing with your abdomen. Insert a few moments of breathing exercises at regular intervals before, during and after your training sessions. Regular practice of conscious breathing can help manage stress levels and ease the sympathetic nervous system's domination.

Learning to breathe better can bring dramatic results in a relatively short time. You'll experience noticeable results as breathing becomes a tool for dealing with stress in your life. Paying attention to breathing stimulates self-awareness, and you'll begin to notice how your body is feeling and reacting to the way you're living and the lifestyle choices you're making. Breathing literally allows you to start tuning into yourself.

It may seem overly simplistic. But it's often the simplest of things that can make the biggest difference. By understanding that deep, relaxed breathing stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which decreases blood pressure, slows the heartbeat and allows the digestive process to function properly, anyone can begin to get their life under control.

As your system relaxes, your adrenal glands regulate the

amount of cortisol that is being secreted. In this manner, by simply learning to breath and relax, you can release tension and even be able to lose the weight you want. Of course, breathing is just one part of an overall healthy lifestyle. Negative lifestyle choices such as smoking, poor diet and lack of exercise need to be addressed in order to fully experience the benefits of this practice. However, understanding effective breathing techniques will give you a tool for stress relief and weight loss that will bring immediate results.



Well Mr. Bates, my commendation and applause for a very well written and excellent article. Especially your comments on "stress-related" causes and your question as to what's next? Stress related stress? Very succinct and eye-opening. However, since the OnFitness magazine where your article appeared is mostly geared towards professional personal trainers and not to laymen, I would like to make it a bit more clear and understanding for us. Starting with the title: "Breathe to lose weight." While those of us familiar with physical training may comprehend your meaning, the layman may take it literal and believe such thing is possible, which is not because if that were the case the obesity problem would be easily overcome and thus, I would change the title to: "Breathe properly to overcome many of life's issues and enjoy it to the max."

Second and more importantly, when you say that we can teach ourselves how to breathe. Well Sir, breathing is the essence of life and it is innate in us and thus, we were born knowing how to breathe. If we look at a newborn, their diaphragm/stomach goes up and down making sure the oxygen inhaled is effectively used. Unfortunately, once the environment has its influence on us, we tend to overlook and take for granted the proper way of breathing and allow it to become shallow. Luckily for us, since the correct way of breathing is essential, it is fairly easy to regain it as opposed to relearn it.

And although I could also expand on how breathing correctly coupled with meditating or even just reflecting in a dark/quiet place for some time ( a couple of minutes daily and then increasing it as you become more adept) could allow us to find our supreme/amazing/extraordinary SELF, I will conclude this evening article with thanking Mr. Bates and commending him with such inspiring exposition. I extend my respect and regards for his wisdom.

And to all others privy to this essay, thank you very much for your time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## PROCRASTINATION

After citing one of the best advice my dear mother has given me being: to do anything I had pending as soon as possible without procrastinating and if there's nothing I could about it, do exactly that; nothing. Not even worry about it. I have come to follow such wise advice with my heart and soul yet, in my relationships- criminal, loving, social, supportive...- I've come across an array of procrastinators to the point of even "firing" them from their posts, erroneously thinking their procrastinating was willingly as opposed to a condition.

Now after reading and having the perspectives of known and acclaimed doctors and psychologists, I have come to understand and accept this condition much better. However, in hopes of assisting those of us who tend to procrastinate and may have some undue rationalizations for doing so and then suffering the consequences of subsequent worry, I will cite a writing by PH.D. holder, Albert Ellis and ED. D. William J. Knaus to make us more aware and hopefully, gradually desist such behavior.

### Answering Some Common Rationalization About Procrastinating

Because people make up so many different kinds of rationalizations to help themselves deny that they needlessly delay or to pretend that the needlessness of the delay really doesn't exist and that they have good reasons for postponing important things, we present here some of these rationalizations along with answers you can use to help yourself uproot and abandon them.

1. Rationalization: "I find it easier to do this task when I have to do it under pressure. So I will postpone it until the pressure builds up and then I can do it with ease."

Rebuttal: The task may seem easier when you have to do it under pressure, but usually you will find it harder under those conditions. For you then have to rush to complete it, cannot assemble all the relevant materials to help you do it well, have little time to look it over and review it, and often have to polish it off in a relatively unfinished, glossed-over

manner. The "pressure," moreover, doesn't make you finish the task in the final analysis- you still do. You tell yourself, when you feel this pressure, "I really have to finish the task now." But you could tell yourself, long before such pressure mounts, "I'd really better finish the task now," and get just as good results. You defer the conditions of doing the job as necessitating pressure. You really could do it under lots of other conditions- if you choose to do so.

2. Rationalization: "I don't know how to do the job properly. I'll wait until I know how before I do it."

Rebuttal: BS! If you do know how to do the job- which you probably do- you have no legitimate reason for waiting. If you don't know how to do it properly, move your butt and find out how! Even if you don't know how to do it at all, you probably will learn much better by starting to do it than by sitting around and goofing.

3. Rationalization: "I hesitate to do this thing because I really don't want to do it."

Rebuttal: More BS! Your wanting to do the thing or not, once you have promised yourself and others to do it, has little relevancy. The less you want to do it, the quicker you'd better do it, as long as you have promised it. Then at least you'll have it out of the way! You probably mean by, "I really don't want to do it," "I shouldn't have to do it." Well, you really don't have to do it, in any absolute sense of that term. But since you contracted to do it, and presumably did so for your own good, you had better stop the nonsense and just do it. And it would seem nice if you really didn't have to do it at all and still could have the good results of doing it. But how likely does that seem? Highly unlikely! So you'd dammed well better do it, whether or not you really "want" to.

4. Rationalization: "The world won't come to an end if I put this project off, so it really doesn't matter if I delay it."

Rebuttal: Quite right. The world probably won't come to an end if you put this project off, but that doesn't mean it doesn't matter if you do. Just because something doesn't rate as all-important doesn't mean that it has no importance at all.

This project probably does have some real, though no sacred, importance to you and others allied with you. Do it for its importance, its value, then, and not for its all-importance or holiness. Don't go from one foolish extreme to the other!

5. Rationalization: "I'll find this project easier to do when I feel in the mood. So I'll wait for that time, and do it then."

Rebuttal: It seems possible that a time will come when you'll feel in the mood to do this project, and that you'll then find it easier to do. Possible, but highly unlikely! The chances remain that (1) this time may never come; (2) it may come after the usefulness of doing this project has passed; (3) even if it comes in a reasonable period of time, the advantages accrued from waiting hardly will equal the advantages or ease you will get from doing it now; (4) if you work on the project now, when it doesn't seem easy, you will overcome your inertia and it then will prove much easier than if you wait for ease to come naturally.

6. Rationalization: "I did it at the last minute once and it worked out well, so why not do it the same way again?"

Rebuttal: For several reasons: (1) Did it really work out well last time, or did you just get by without a disaster occurring? (2) Even if it did work out fairly well last time, wouldn't it have worked out better if you had not procrastinated? (3) Assuming that you had good results last time, even though you procrastinated, how about the extra pain, trouble, and tension you brought on yourself by delaying? Did your good results make these worthwhile?

7. Rationalization: "If I do this term paper at the last minute instead of right away, I won't have to spend too much time on it and will save myself a great deal of work and effort."

Rebuttal: Rot! The only time you probably will save by doing it at the last minute will get saved because you go at it in a rush and do it sloppily. If you did it well, or even adequately, it would take you no more time to do it at the beginning of the term than at the last minute. Even if you do save some time by doing it at the last minute rush, you spend lots of time worrying up to that point; you later tend to worry about

how poorly you did because of rushing at the end; and you hardly enjoy any of the time you save before, during, or after doing the paper at the last moment.

8. Rationalization: "If I do this task right now, instead of putting it off till next week, I may never get the opportunity again to enjoy the encounter that I can enjoy tonight."

Rebuttal: False! You certainly may capitalize on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity by doing something tonight and procrastinating on a task you have promised yourself to do. But you most likely will not. Many similar opportunities probably will present themselves after you have finished this task- and you will then have better conditions under which to take advantage of them. Quite likely, too, you will ruin many good opportunities for pleasure by procrastinating- for you will still have to work on your task long past the time when you otherwise would have completed it and will have to refuse opportunities that then come up. Moreover, as responsible people see you as an inveterate procrastinator they probably will reduce rather than augment the opportunities they throw your way.

9. Rationalization: "I would have gotten around to doing this sooner, but circumstances beyond my control prevented me from doing so."

Rebuttal: They did? More likely than not, you prevented yourself from doing so- perhaps even invented or exacerbated certain circumstances that could then claim prevented you. Moreover, the more you procrastinate the more conditions likely will arise to interfere with your doing something. If you want to control or get around such interfering circumstances, do your task as quickly as possible.

10. Rationalization: "I've worked at this project for such a long time that I've lost all desire to do it."

Rebuttal: Quite right! Had you gotten to the project promptly and finished it, your desire to work at it probably would have persisted long enough. But because you kept putting it off and doing it in dribs and drabs, you have lost most of your interest in it. Besides, when you say you've lost your original desire to do it, you really mean, "Because I view the

project as so hard and keep delaying it- thus making it still harder- I therefore have lost most of my original desire to do it." If you stop the nonsense, get down to finishing the project quickly, and know that you will complete it in a reasonable period of time, your original zest may return!

11. Rationalization: "No one really cares whether I finish this task or not, so I may just as well keep putting it off."

Rebuttal: How do you know no one cares whether or not you complete it? Several people may care very much, but you may push their concern out of mind so that you more easily can continue your delaying tactics. And even if no one really does care whether or not you complete it- so what? You took on the project because you presumably wanted to do it or get the results of having it done. If others don't care about your doing it, that remains their business. Why must anyone care, anyway? How does it help you to depend on other people's caring instead of on what you would like to do for yourself in life?

### Summary

When you won't honestly face your procrastinating and try to erect defenses against it, you may resort to self-deceptions, such as the mañana and contingent mañanas attitudes. These kinds of rationalizations work because of their assumend promisory nature. You decide to perform a task sometime in the future, so that you don't have to worry about it today. Actually, you decide only to put it off- not to fail to preform it at all.

By rationalizing and using other forms of escape from facing up to difficult problems, you usually add new difficulties. The incomplete task remains, and you waste energy inventing and maintaining your excuses for not doing them. Also, you often nag yourself for your delaying and your rationalizing.

I can continue citing other perspectives (Main Causes of Procrastination, A Rational Approach to Overcoming Procrastination, The Instant Solution Myth, Overcoming "Legitimate" Reasons for Procrastination...) of these experts, but since length, clarity, and succinctness is of the essence for me; allow me to conclude with some very powerful questions posed by other experts on the subject: What is one activity that you KNOW if

you did superbly well and consistently would have significant positive results in your personal life?

What's one activity that you KNOW if you did superbly well and consistently would have significant positive results in your professional or work life?

If you KNOW these things would have such a significant difference, why are you not doing them now?

As you ponder these questions, thank you dearly for your time/attention and God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## MORE MAXIMS TO LIVE BY

Your message is your lifestyle, and your ways and actions your language; together they are you!

Do it over and over and over again until it becomes part of who you are.

Love, a la humility, cannot be hidden for long where it exists; nor could it be faked where it does not.

The science is to never change, but for the betterment of humanity.

Part of the science in learning is, "if not lived, not understood," compassion breaks that boundary; giving harmony.

To make an honest connection with your reality, is the beginning of true freedom. Be great by being true.

Hope is my dear friend, charity my sister, and my mother is known to move mountains with her faith.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Happiness can be found in the darkest of places, if one just remembers to turn on the light.

Foolish pride is known to be the nemesis of the gods, humility its servant.

My aim is to be the most loving, sincere, accepting, happy, and affectionate individual I can be.

It's a shame not to defend your physical, but a greater shame not to defend your mental.

Much cannot be accomplished in the pursuit of spiritual advancement, let alone that of material gains, without labor. Learn! Work!

If it's true love, it never really ends. It changes, it grows deeper, more profound, it morphs into different manifestations, but it's always there. True love lasts through time and space and distance.

We are not just what we eat, do, or think. We are what we believe.

The real war is between the living & the dead, so stay alive & let the truly dead bury their kind.

Essence to a supreme mind is clear understanding of Self & God.

Passing negative vibes from oneself to another stems partially from not knowing your sickness. Heal thy Self. Heal the world.

Want to understand others? Understand thyself first.

People seem not to see that their opinion of the world is also a confession of character.

One of the best ways to educate our heart is to look at our interaction with others, because our relationships with them are fundamentally a reflection of our relationship with ourselves.

Petty things become unimportant when people are impassioned about a purpose higher than self.

We do not invent our mission, we detect it. It's within us waiting to be realized.

Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life, everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is unique as his specific opportunity to implement it.

Every human being has work to do, duties to perform, influence to exert, which are peculiarly his, and which no conscience but his own can teach.

We have to turn inwards, to look into ourselves; look into this container which is our soul; look and listen to it. Until you have listened in to that thing which is dreaming through you, in other words- answered the knock on the door in the dark, you will not be able to lift this moment in time in which we are imprisoned, back into the level where the great act of creation is going on.

For as long as you live, keep learning how to live.

Wish not to garner sympathy or praise with your positivity; but to reach and influence your fellow human being.

Like attracts like thus, look within.

Timeless principles to consider: Integrity, moderation, self-discipline, fidelity, responsibility...honesty.

Timeless values to consider as well: Love, family, time, people, your word.

Anything less than a conscious commitment to the important is an unconscious commitment to the unimportant.

Doing more things faster is no substitute for doing the right things.

Where there is no gardener, there is no garden.

It's easy to say "no!" when there's a deeper "yes!" burning inside.

Balance isn't either/or; it's and.

You can want to do the right thing, and you can even want to do it for the right reasons. But if you don't apply the right principles, you can still hit a wall.

Priority is a function of context.

Quality of life is what happens in the space between stimulus and response.

Difference is the beginning of synergy.

Anytime you think the problem is "out there" that thought is the problem.

We know not of the future. and cannot plan for it much. But we can hold our spirits and our bodies so pure and high, we may cherish such thoughts and such ideals, and dream such dreams of lofty purpose, that we can determine and know what manner of men we will be whenever and wherever the hour strikes that calls to noble action.... No man becomes suddenly different from his habit and cherished thought.

## ATTENTION

Today I attended Dr. Garber's class (Basic Cognitive Skills) and along with the topic of the ABC's (activating events, beliefs, consequences), the topic of paying (or not) attention to our thoughts (beliefs) came up. Understanding that the majority of us fail to pay close attention to our thoughts and maybe the reason for attending her class and learn ways to better our behavior and thus have better consequences, I asked her what suggestions she may reveal to us and assist us in doing so- pay attention to our thoughts.

She manifested that an incremental practice of thinking about past events and writing plus reading them out may help. I dearly appreciated her response because those are things I do constantly and am truly content and satisfied with the results yet; I do more than just those and since the other things I do have helped me tremendously, I thought it conducive to share it with the class in hopes of helping someone else.

Approximately a year and a half ago, I composed a very personal essay titled "Practice, Practice, Practice." In said essay (which I consider my constitution), I mention how I aim to make my purpose in life to be content and at peace with myself, others, and surroundings and since it is pretty lengthy, I will simply paraphrase the portion that deals with that. And for those of you who would like to read the whole exposition, just say the word and I will make it my priority to provide you with a copy, deal?

After the aforementioned, this is how I incrementally have practiced paying close attention to my thoughts (beliefs) and consequently live a much more peaceful existence with minimal negative consequences.

I meditate and reflect alone with frequency because it is in true solitude that I really identify and find myself. I try my best to always think, speak, and act positively; practice the ancient discipline of yoga along with its eight different branches to help keep me grounded and firm in my purpose. I try to read good, entertaining fictional and non-fictional books, and when a self-help book falls in my lap, I devour its contents as well. I challenge my mind constantly by also doing

very challenging numbered puzzles (sudokus); try my best to stay away from gossip and if it finds me, I treat it positively and minimally. I try to socialize only with positive individuals and when a negative one appears in my path, I run like hell:-) I do my best not to tell lies and if it's necessary for one, I prefer to keep my mouth shut. I try to keep myself, thoughts, and few belongings as organized and compartmentalized as possible; if I have something pending, I follow my dear mother's advice and do it immediately without procrastinating, and if there's nothing I could do about it, I do exactly that: nothing. And when I say nothing, I mean not even worry about it. I exercise my body in a very intense manner and in doing so, prepare my heart to utilize its oxygen much more efficiently so that my resting heart rate becomes lower and can deal with pumping my blood more adequately and in this manner, deal much better with stress. When things do not go my way, I do not take it personal and accept the fact that it could always have been worse to soften the impact. I try to never jump to conclusions or make assumptions, since in the past I was wrong most of the times, if not always. If there is anything I could do for someone less fortunate than I, I do so without thinking it twice. I try dearly to be understanding, respectful, and considerate of others; procure not to engage in arguments or heated discussions, since they rarely, if ever, conduce to anything positive. If for some reason I come across something that does not belong to me, I return it immediately. And if it is a borrowed item, try to take better care of it than if it were my own.

Additionally, I try to always be appreciative and truly say "thank you" for any assistance I receive, no matter how small and make it my duty to never, ever give a bad advice, no matter how tempting.

Dear comrades, although there may be other practices I engage in to reach and accomplish my purpose in life, they seem to have escaped my thoughts for now. But I could not end this section without saying last but never least: a day does not go by without me getting on my knees and thanking the Lord for all my blessings and asking Him for more. Something that those who know me from the past would find extremely difficult to

believe, but that is truly the case.

At this moment my dear friends, please do not misinterpret the aforementioned and think that through such practices I aim to be perfect; never that. But it does imply that when I do "mess up," I can be humble enough to accept it, learn from it, make amends and therefore, reduce my errors and live a much better and purposeful life.

After this very personal account on how I practice to win in my game of life, I would like to conclude that my aim is not to garner sympathy, praise, nor even your scorn, but simply to encourage all of the participants that have already taken the first step in enrolling in this beautiful class to continue making the necessary changes in ourselves and become much better individuals, simple as that.

P.S. If in the future I run across any of you and am not following through on these practices, please call it to my attention; it will be dearly appreciated.

Thank you very much for your attention and God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## PATIENCE vs IMPATIENCE/IRRATIONALITY/FRUSTRATION

Today was a truly interesting day where I, again, experienced the power of patience against one of its greatest foe; impatience/irrationality/frustration.

Please allow me to explain. I normally "plan" my day accordingly and try to make it to the Education Dept. by the one o'clock controlled movement. Today was my commissary shopping day and the unit in which I reside has scheduled to eat last. Not only that, they were serving chicken in mainline and it was sure to be slow and late. I went to mainline, got my piece of chicken, but did not necessarily enjoy it as much; since I tend to eat very slowly, but this time due to wanting to make it to the commissary, I ate it hurriedly. Once I finished my lunch, I headed to the commissary. I made it one step away from the door when a commissary officer stopped me and informed me that I had to go around (approximately 150 yards). I tried to reason with him by informing him that mainline had been closed for more than 10 minutes and the main purpose of the "going around" was to avoid guys wanting to double up and repeat in mainline. His response was adamant and non-negotiable. Knowing his rank of subordinate and he simply following "orders" literally and no use of common sense, I conceded and proceeded to "go all the way around."

I arrived at the commissary about 3-4 minutes after to find the door locked and the aforementioned officer having a heated argument with another inmate he had also instructed to go around. That inmate was truly irate claiming he had already turned in his shopping list and should be called any minute. The officer was unmoved and reiterated his stance. Said inmate became even more irate and hurled profanities at the officer that the fact that he was not sanctioned with a 300 series incident report for insolence to a staff member was truly fortunate.

After said inmate hurled his insults, he then approached a supervisor that was standing close by to plead his case. Once the officer saw me witness his interaction with said inmate, he very upset now, told me that the commissary was closed. I

looked him very intently in the eyes and told him: "Sir, I ~~has~~ actually standing right here ~~when~~ u instructed me to 'go all the ~~way~~ around,' remember?" To that he responded: "The commissary is closed because it is ~~crowded~~ and you must return on the next move." By this time, more than a handful of inmates had gathered around ~~wanting~~ to also go shopping and ~~there~~ also very frustrated and demonstrating it.

I simply slipped to the side and focused on the initial inmate ~~who~~ ~~has~~ pleading his case ~~with~~ the supervisor. And although I gave him very slim chances of succeeding, he surely did. Then, ~~while~~ the supervisor instructed the officer to ~~allow~~ the inmate in, simultaneously and luckily for the rest of us, the Compound Officer announced a move to the housing units. I then approached the entry to the commissary and requested entry. The officer, very upset at me and the rest of us for not "obeying" his direct order to return on the next move shouted: "The commissary is closed due to ~~overcrowding~~ and no one else ~~will~~ be ~~allowed~~ in till the next move!" I, very calmly and ~~with~~ a smile on my face told him: "Sir, the compound officer just announced a move to the housing units and I'm very certain that there are many locked inside that have already shopped and are eager to vacate the premises." Distrusting my comment, he inquired ~~with~~ the compound officer ~~whom~~ then confirmed my statement. Under those circumstances, he then unlocked the door, let the shoppers out, and ~~allowed~~ us in.

Sure enough, the ~~power~~/virtue of patience is not ~~always~~ so immediately obvious and ~~rewarding~~, but I have never been involved in a situation ~~where~~ the use of my patience ~~has~~ not ~~rewarded~~, in time. Yet; I've been in many, many ~~where~~ my impatience has ~~caused~~ me dear regret, my present situation included.

Thank you very much, please take heed, and as ~~always~~, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## VALUES &amp; PRINCIPLES

After having some somewhat productive conversations and "lending" my ear to dear friends and peers about values, I have had one or two claim that their main value is love, yet; I've witnessed them not show that love when needed and on the contrary judge and condemn others. I've heard others claim their "word" as their main value, yet; claim to forget when in debt or even gossip or ridicule at the expense of others. Heard many claim their family at the top of their list when it came to values yet spend the funds received by their loved ones to engage in vices, gambling, and even purchase unnecessary and non-nutritious items from the commissary (i.e., sodas, candy, the latest shoe...), while also entering in "affairs" while in this place.

Surprisingly and to my amazement, I've even heard a couple claim their health at the top of their priorities and it is the reason why they refuse to eat pork or red meat, yet seat in front of the television for hours a day and when suggested to join a physical exercise program or even become more active on their own, they "proudly" claim not to have time for all the sweating and risk of injury.

I witness these perspectives about values, accept them as their choices, do not comment or engage in discussions about them, and simply learn from them as to what not to embrace. Very fortunately, in one of my readings I came across an excellent exposition that could not be more resonating with my perspectives about values and principles and thus the reason for this essay so that those reached by it may reflect on, ponder on, contemplate, and maybe question their values for the better.

Many of us feel just because we value something, achieving it will enhance our quality of life. We think, "I'll be happy and fulfilled when I make more money... when I get recognition for my talent... when I acquire an expensive home or a new car... when I get my college degree."

But the focus on values is one of the major illusions of the ordinary individual. It's content without context. It has envisioning success, setting goals, climbing ladders without understanding the true principles these efforts must be based

on to be effective. It essentially says, "First things are your priorities. You decide what you value and go after it in an effective way." This can lead to arrogance- to thinking we are a law unto ourselves, and to looking at other people as "things" or as resources to help us accomplish what we want to do.

Values will not bring quality of life results... unless we VALUE PRINCIPLES. A vital part of conscious individuals is the humility to realize that there are priorities that are independent of our values. Quality of life is a function of the extent to which we make these priorities our focus and become empowered to actually put them first in our lives. It's the humility to recognize that quality of life is not "me," it is "us"- that we live in an interdependent reality of abundance and potential that can only be realized when we interact with others in a fully authentic, synergistic way.

All the wishing and even all the work in the world, if not based on valid principles, will not produce quality-of-life results. It's not enough to dream. It's not enough to try. It's not enough to set goals or climb ladders. It's not enough to value. The effort has to be based on practical realities that produce the result. Only then can we dream, set goals, and work to achieve them with confidence.

I'm not talking about practices. In the midst of complexity, we tend to seek security in practices- specific, prescribed ways of doing things. We focus on methods instead of results. "Just tell me what to do. Give me the steps." We may get positive results with a particular practice in one situation, but if we try to use the same practice in other situations for which a practice has not been prescribed, we often feel lost and incompetent.

Arnold Toynbee, the great historian, said that all of history can be written in a simple little formula- challenge, response. The challenge is created by the environment, and then the individual, the institution, the society comes up with a response. Then there's another challenge, another response. The formula is constantly being repeated.

The problem is that these responses become codified. They

get set in cement. They become part of the very way we think and the way we perform. They may be good procedures, good practices. But when faced with a new challenge the old practices no longer apply. They become obsolete. We're out in the wilderness trying to navigate with a road map.

Our segmented mechanistic society keeps us in a constantly changing kaleidoscope, so we cling to practices and structures and systems for some sense of predictability in our lives. And, little by little, challenge rubs them out. That's the demise of people and institutions- even of families where parents can't accommodate the reality of their children facing different kinds of challenges than they faced when they were growing up.

The power of principle is that they're universal, timeless truths. If we understand and live our lives based on principles, we can quickly adapt; we can apply them anywhere. By teaching our children principles instead of practices, or teach them the principles behind the practices, we better prepare them to handle the unknown challenges of the future. To understand the application may be to meet the challenges of the moment, but to understand the principle is to meet the challenge of the moment more effectively and to be empowered to meet a thousand challenges of the future as well.

I'm not talking about "religion" either. Because principles deal with meaning and truth, some people tend to associate what I'm saying about principles with their own positive or negative experience with religious organizations or theology. As I've dealt with different cultures, I've had people express appreciation for my "renewal of the Christian ethic" or for "reminding us of the teachings of Buddha" or for giving them messages that are "so close to Indian philosophy." On the other hand, a fellow do a double take when they hear these perspectives because they feel it "smacks of religion," and to them, the term "religion" has institutional overtones that are not necessarily positive. At the other end of the spectrum, there are some who wonder if these perspectives about principle-centeredness is humanistic and appears to leave out God altogether.

Again, what I'm talking about is not religion. I'm not dealing

With issues such as salvation, life after death, or even the source of these principles. I do believe these are important issues for each individual to address. But these issues are beyond the scope of this essay. I'm not dealing with why true principles exist, where they came from, or how they came to be. I'm simply dealing with the fact that they're there and they govern the quality of our lives. And while we do find evidence of these principles in the sacred writings of every major religion, facets of them have come from the minds, pens, and spoken words of philosophers, scientists, kings, peasants, and saints throughout the world and throughout history.

These principles are sometimes called different names as they get translated through different value systems. As Emerson said of the principle of benevolence. "For all things proceed out of this same spirit, which is differently named love, justice, temperance, in its different applications, just as the ocean receives different names on the several shores which it washes." The fundamental principles are there, and recognized though sometimes by different names- in all major civilizations throughout time.

So I'm not talking about values, practices, or religion. What I'm talking about are the principles (moderation, self-discipline, responsibility, conscience, fidelity, trustworthiness, trust, love, proactivity, empathy, courage, compassion, kindness, consideration...) upon which quality of life is based. These principles deal with things that, in the long run, will create happiness and quality-of-life results. They include principles such as service and reciprocity. They deal with the process of growth and change. They include the laws that govern effective fulfillment of basic human needs and capacities.

In previous essays I have, and in subsequent ones I will continue to present principles that are essential to cultivating a quality life. But my overall objective is not to be comprehensive nor to encyclopedic about principles, since I do not consider myself expert or savvy enough. It is simply my wish to reach my loved ones, peers, and readers to affirm the effectiveness of an approach to life that is based on the continual search for and effort to live suitably with these timeless, empowering

truths.

Again, thank you dearly for your time, attention, and as  
always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## PEACE/HAPPINESS

I've written extensively on ways and habits we may adopt to live a happy and peaceful existence in this booklet. Yet, while still taking ample time to read, get a piece of the minds of savvy and experienced individuals, and ultimately continuing to learn how to live; I continue to come across very valuable practices- backed up with timeless principles- to share with my loved ones, peers, and all that are reached by my writings. Now I will try to expand on a couple of practices that are certain to be hindrances to being at peace and happy.

Two of the most deadly roadblocks to the aforementioned are discouragement and pride.

## DISCOURAGEMENT

Discouragement is literally dis-courage-ment- a lack of courage. Discouragement is the antithesis of everything I've been talking about. It comes as a result of building our lives on illusion instead of principle, of facing the consequences of climbing ladders against the wrong walls. It comes when we're tired, out of shape, or in debt, when we have broken relationships, when we're not growing, when we have no sense of meaning or purpose in life. It comes when we have no vision, when we live with imbalance, when we fail to achieve our goals. It comes when we get lost in the urgent, limited perspective of the day, when we fail to act with integrity in the moment of choice. It comes when our thinking is competitive and scarce, when win-lose interactions fill our lives and our environment with backbiting, politicking, and comparative thinking.

Discouragement is being lost in the woods without a compass or an accurate map. It's discovering that many of the maps people hand us lead us farther away from where we really want to go.

Courage, on the other hand, comes as a result of knowing there are principles, of fulfilling our needs and capacities in a balanced way, of having clear vision, balance between roles, the ability to set and achieve meaningful goals, the perspective to transcend the urgency of the moment, the character and competence to act with integrity in the moment of choice, the abundance mentality to function effectively and synergistically

in the interdependent reality. Courage comes from the heart, and being in touch with the heart creates hope.

Wherever we are, the best way to develop courage is to set a goal and achieve it, make a promise and keep it. No matter how small the goal or promise, this one act will begin to build our confidence that we can act with integrity in the moment of choice. It may be a matter of just getting up in the morning- putting "mind over mattress"- or of subordinating taste to nutrition, even for a day. But as we begin to make and keep promises to ourselves and others, we take the first steps on a path that leads to confidence, growth, and peace.

### PRIDE

An even greater stumbling block, and the biggest danger to our effort to become principle-centered, is pride. Although we often use the word to describe deep pleasure or high satisfaction toward something or someone- we may take pride in excellent work or be proud of a son or daughter who does something well- pride also describes one of the most destructive paradigms in life.

We can more easily understand this negative dimension when we think of the word "prideful." A prideful person is essentially competitive in nature, constantly seeking to elevate himself or herself above others. In the words of C.S. Lewis: Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man.... It is the comparison that makes you proud; the pleasure of being above the rest.

Consider the impact of pride in fulfilling our fundamental needs and capacities.

- ° Pride in living means people are not so much concerned with whether their income meets their needs, as they are that their income is more than someone else's. They're always comparing their appearance- their hair, their clothing, their physique- to that of others.
- ° Pride in loving comes when people measure their worth by the number and prestige of the friends they think they have, or the amount of praise they receive from others.

- ° Pride in learning is not so much in what people know, but in whether they have the degrees, the highest status.
- ° Pride in leaving a legacy is not finding meaning in giving, but in giving more than others, in receiving recognition for giving.

Pride is the ultimate emotional parasite. There is no deep joy, no satisfaction, no peace in it because there's always the possibility that someone else is better-looking or has more money, more friends, a bigger house, or a newer car.

Pride is insidious because it pollutes meaning and purpose. It dulls, ignores, and even dethrones conscience. As C.S. Lewis observed, "Pride is a spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense." It eventually leads to hate, envy, and war.

Prideful people get their security from how far up the ladder they are compared to others, rather than whether or not their ladder is leaning against the right wall. They feel worthwhile when they see people beneath them. The reward, the focus, is being ahead... even if it means being ahead in the wrong things.

And as well as from the top looking down, there's a pride that comes from the bottom looking up. In the words of former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and religious leader Ezra Taft Benson:

Most of us consider pride to be a sin of those on the top, such as the rich and the learned, looking down at the rest of us. There is, however, a far more common ailment among us- and that is pride from the bottom looking up. It is manifest in so many ways, such as fault-finding, gossiping, backbiting, murmuring, living beyond our means, envying, coveting, withholding gratitude and praise that might lift another, and being unforgiving and jealous.

Pride is the essence of the scarcity mentality. It's devastating to peace. It creates a false integrity of alignment with extrinsic things. And consider the cost! How much time and energy is spent worrying over who has the most, does the most, looks the best, lives in the best part of town, has the largest office,

makes more money, does more work, is of the most value? When the cry of competition is louder than the whisper of conscience, what's the impact in terms of really putting priorities in our lives?

The antidote for the poison of pride is humility- the humility to realize that we're not an island, that the quality of our lives is inseparably connected to the quality of the lives of others, that meaning is not in consuming and competing, but in contributing. We are not larks into ourselves, and the more we begin to value principles and people, the greater will be our peace and happiness.

Thank you very much for your time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## HUMILITY

As I mentioned in a previous essay (Values & Principles) that I would continue to present how principles affirm and add to quality of life; although I did not cite humility as a dear principle of mine, it was for a reason. The reason is that as ~~I must speak about how out of acceptance that principles exist~~ and that we're only effective to the degree to which we discover and live in harmony with them- comes the sense of humility. Many savants and doctors of psychology are quick to say that we are in control of our lives; I feel they have some merit. But also feel more strongly that principles and the way we conform to them are truly the controllers of our lives. Once we do so, we cease trying to be a law unto ourselves. We cultivate attitudes of teachability, habits of continual learning. We become involved in an ongoing quest to understand and live in harmony with the Laws of Life. We don't get caught up in the arrogance of values that blinds us to self-awareness and conscience. Our security is not based on the illusion of comparative thinking- I'm better looking, I have more money, I have a better job, a bigger house, a faster car, or I work harder than someone else. Nor do we feel insecure if we're not as good looking or have less money, job, house, or prestige than someone else. It's irrelevant. Our security comes from our own integrity to true principles.

When we fail or make a mistake or hit a principle head-on, we say, "What can I learn from this?" We come to the principle to be taught by it. And as we learn where we went wrong in accordance with that principle, we can turn weaknesses into strengths. We confront behaviors with truth in a way that represents confidence in the truth and recognition of our ability to learn and change.

Humility is the mother of all virtues. It makes us a vessel, a vehicle, an agent instead of "the source" or the principal. It unleashes all other learning, all growth and process. With the humility that comes from being principle-centered, we're empowered to learn from the past, hope for the future, and act with confidence in the present. This confidence is an assurance,

based on the Law of Nature evidence- across the globe, throughout history, and in our own lives- that if we act based on principles; it will produce quality-of-life results.

Again gentlemen, thank you dearly for your time and attention and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## AS WE THINK, SO WE ARE

Sometime ago in my quest to become a better person and fulfill a promise I made to myself and dear mother (that I will no longer willingly cause her more pain by my actions), I prayed and read and read and read. Luckily for me in a very profound reading, (As A Man Thinketh), I found so many indisputable truths that it was nearly impossible for me not to take heed and thus; with the sole intention of assisting those that are in that same path...here is the following.

The saying : "As a man think in his heart, so is he", not only embraces our whole being, but it is so complete that it reaches out to every condition and circumstances of our life. We are literally what we think, our character/attitude being the complete sum of all our thoughts.

Just like a plant springs from, and could not be without, the seed, so do the acts of us springs from the hidden seeds of our thoughts, and could not have appeared without them. This applies equally to those acts called "spontaneous" and "unpremeditated" as those which are deliberately executed.

Act is the bloom of thought, and joy and pain, its fruits; therefore, we gain the sweet and bitter fruit of our own tillage.

A good and noble character is not a thing of luck or coincidence, but a natural result of a continual effort in correct thinking, the effort of a long-cherished association with well intentioned thought. A mean and dishonorable character, by the same process, is the result of the continued harboring of crawling thoughts.

We make or unmake ourselves; through our thoughts we forge the weapons by which we destroy ourselves; we also have the tools with which to build the character

of joy and strength and peace. Between the extremes of Divine Perfection and Beast are all the grades of character which man is the maker and master.

As beings of Power, Intelligence and Love, and the masters of our thoughts; we hold the key to every situation and contain within ourselves the transforming and regenerative means by which to make ourselves what we want.

We are always the master, even in our weakest and most abandoned state, we have the choice to direct our energies and intelligence to fashion our thoughts to fruitful issues.

Only by much searching and digging are gold and diamonds obtained, and we can find every truth connected with our being, if we dig deeply into the mine of our soul. If we seek ourselves, we shall find us. But only by patience, practice and taking advantage of the many opportunities can we enter into such powerful knowledge.

Our minds could be thought of us as a garden. It could be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild with weeds. It could be tended by weeding out all the wrong, useless, and impure thoughts and cultivated toward perfection of its fruits. Or the before mentioned weeds could be given liberty to grow and take over the garden, it is our choice to make.

Circumstance does not make us; it simply reveals us to ourselves. Conditions do not exist as descending into vice and its attendant sufferings unless we incline to them, or rise into virtue and true happiness without the continued sowing of virtuous aspirations, and we; therefore, are the masters and makers of ourselves.

We do not attract that which we want, but what we are. Our whims and ambitions are usually impeded, but our innermost thoughts and desires are fed with their own food, be it foul or clean. We are shackled by ourselves. Thought and actions

are the jailers of Fate- they imprison. They are also the angels of Freedom- they liberate. It is not what we wish and pray for do we get, but that what we justly earn. Our wishes and prayers are only gratified and answered when they are in harmony with our thoughts and actions.

In light of this truth, what, then, is the meaning of "fighting against circumstances"? It means we are continually complaining about an effect while at the same time nourishing and preserving the cause in our heart.

We are anxious to improve our consequences, but unwilling to improve ourselves; therefore, we stay down. If we do not shy away from self-crucifixion we shall never accomplish that where our heart is truly set. This is as simple and true as it gets.

I can continue with cases and examples of lived and witnessed experiences to illustrate that we are the cause (though nearly always unconsciously) of our circumstances, but will conclude with the following: Good thoughts and actions can never produce bad results; Bad thoughts and actions can never produce good results.

Please take heed, thank you sincerely for your time, think well, be well, and as always, God bless.

Ernesto Cole

## ACCEPTANCE #2

When I decided to compose this booklet, I had read an excellent book that resonated loudly because I was constantly witnessing many of my peers not accepting the losses and unfavorable circumstances in their lives and thus; appearing and being quite bitter. After writing an essay (Acceptance), I had quite a few approach me and inquire about its true meaning and purpose; especially the comments about letting go of resistance and that whatever place I am in right now (prison) is perfect, even when it is not.

I would afford them my time and little bit of wisdom acquired over half a century of my existence and try to ease their confusion for the better. Very fortunately, however, in my constant reading and wish to continue learning, I came across another writing that could not be echoed by my sentiments more closely.

Not everybody who experiences great loss and unfavorable situations experiences or is willing to experience the concept of acceptance; and that is truly unfortunate. Some immediately create a strong mental image or thought form in which they see themselves as a victim, whether it be of circumstances, other people, an unjust fate, or even God. This thought form and the emotion it creates, such as anger, resentment, self-pity, and so on, they strongly identify with, and it immediately takes the place of all the other identifications that have collapsed through the loss. In other words, the ego quickly finds a new form. The fact that this new form is a deeply unhappy one doesn't concern the ego too much, as long as it has an identity, good or bad. In fact, this new ego will be more contracted, more rigid and impenetrable than the old one.

Whenever a tragic loss or unfavorable situation occurs, we either resist or yield. Some people become bitter or deeply resentful; others become compassionate, wise, and loving. Yielding means inner acceptance of what is. You are open to life. Resistance is inner contraction, a hardening of the shell of the ego. You are closed. Whatever action you take in a state of inner resistance (which could also be called negativity) will create more resistance, and the universe will not be on your side, life will not be helpful. If the shutters are closed, the sunlight cannot come in. When you yield internally, when you surrender, when you accept even the things and circumstances you positively abhor, a new dimension of consciousness opens up. If action is possible or necessary, your action will be in alignment with the whole and supported by creative intelligence, the unconditioned consciousness which in a state of inner openness you become one with. Circumstances and people become helpful, cooperative. Coincidences happen. If no action is possible, you rest in the peace and inner stillness that comes with surrender/acceptance. You rest in the will of God.

Thank you dearly and blessings.

ERNESTO COLE

9/20/17

### CONFLICT RESOLUTIONING

After attending a Conflict Resolutioning class yesterday, I must admit it was a truly interesting session and I applaud the facilitators, sponsor (Couns. Robertson), and the guest (Dr. Garber) for making it available for those of us willing to participate and benefit from it.

The first topic of discussion was the difference and impact of an inmate facilitator and that of an administrative/depart-mental facilitator. The consensus was that they both have dear benefits and although I give a slight preference to the inmate facilitating because of the existing bond and certainty that he feels and experiences exactly what I do; I, too, agree with the consensus. And based on my preference, allow me to expound. The administrative facilitator may have much more access to and experience on the philosophical aspect of conflict resolutioning. The inmate facilitator, on the other hand, has the more powerful and profound advantage: bond and practice. And to quote a very beautiful expert on the topic (Hala Khouri). "A few years ago, I was asked to offer counseling and information on trauma to a group of gang interventionists, all former gang members who had struggled with addiction, violence, and incarceration. Their life experience was completely foreign to me. I grew up in an upper-middle class, white community where people who struggled with drugs were sent to rehab, not thrown in jail. Most people in my community had stable jobs and felt protected by law enforcement, not targeted by them. So before starting counseling or offering self-care techniques, I knew I needed to listen more than I spoke. Their stories of resilience, perseverance, pain, forgiveness, and faith were incredible. But I never would have heard them if I'd positioned myself as an outside expert.

"I often refer to a quote from Lilla Watson, an Aboriginal elder and social-justice activist in Australia: 'If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, let us work together.'"

Another topic of discussion was the confronting of aggression with aggression. Again, the consensus by the audience was that when aggression was displayed one should meet it head on. I, having been a willing participant of what I "PERCEIVED" (emphasis intended) as aggression and meeting it with such, completely disagree because that tantamounts to two wrongs making things right and I feel that is a very irrational approach.

Surely enough and by this I do not mean, of course, that one should invite abuse or turn oneself into a victim of unconscious people. Sometimes a situation may demand that you tell someone to "back off" in no uncertain terms, without egotistic defensiveness, there will be power behind your words, yet no reactive force. If necessary, you can also say no to someone firmly and clearly, and it will be what I call a "high-quality no" that is free of all negativity. I have even used a sincere smile to diffuse the obvious aggression... believe it or not.

Ultimately, I questioned the meaning of disrespect to the general audience, since it was constantly brought up as a cause of conflict. The responses were somewhat vacillant because like my affirmation was: disrespect is what you make of it and not what the other person intends it to be, very simple, I feel and thus; my secret to the Conflict Resolutioning participants: "Allow no one or anything to disrupt or alter your peace of mind for the worse, even if it appears justifiable to do so."

Thank you very much for your time and many blessings.

ERNESTO COLE

## CARRYING THE PAST

The inability or rather unwillingness of the human mind to let go of the past is beautifully illustrated in the story of two Zen monks, Tanzan and Ekido, who were walking along a country road that had become extremely muddy after heavy rains. Near a village, they came upon a young woman who was trying to cross the road, but the mud was so deep it would have ruined the silk kimono she was wearing. Tanzan at once picked her up and carried her to the other side.

The monks walked on in silence. Five hours later, as they were approaching the lodging temple, Ekido couldn't restrain himself any longer. "Why did you carry that girl across the road?" he asked. "We monks are not supposed to do things like that."

"I put that girl down hours ago," said Tanzan. "Are you still carrying her?"

Now imagine what life would be like for someone who lived like Ekido all the time, unable or unwilling to let go internally of situations, accumulating more and more "stuff" inside, and you get a sense of what life is like for the majority of people in our planet. What a heavy burden of past they carry around with them in their minds.

The past lives in you as memories, but memories in themselves are not a problem. In fact, it is through memory that we learn from the past and from our mistakes. It is only when memories, that is to say, thoughts about the past, take you over completely that they turn into a burden, turn problematic, and become part of your sense of self. Your personality, which is conditioned by the past, then becomes your prison. Your memories are invested with a sense of self, and your story becomes who you perceive ~~yourself~~ to be. This "little me" is an illusion that obscures your true identity as timeless and formless Presence.

Your story, however, consists not only of mental but also of emotional memory- old emotion that is being revived continuously. As in the case of the monk who carried the burden of his resentment for five hours by feeding it with his thoughts,

most people carry a large amount of unnecessary baggage, both mental and emotional, throughout their lives. They limit themselves through grievances, regret, hostility, guilt. Their emotional thinking has become their self, and so they hang on to the old emotions because it strengthens their identity.

Because of the human tendency to perpetuate old emotion, almost everyone carries in his or her energy field an accumulation of old emotional pain, which I call "the pain-body."

We can, however, stop adding to the pain-body that we already have. We can learn to break the habit of accumulating and perpetuating old emotion by flapping our wings, metaphorically speaking, and refrain from mentally dwelling on the past, regardless of whether something happened yesterday or thirty years ago. We can learn not to keep situations or events alive in our minds, but to return our attention continuously to the pristine, timeless present moment rather than be caught up in mental movie -making. Our very Presence then becomes our identity, rather than our thoughts and emotions.

Nothing ever happened in the past that can prevent you from being present now; and if the past cannot prevent you from being present now, what power does it have?

## MAYBE

Thinking isolates a situation or event and calls it good or bad, as if it had a separate existence. Through excessive reliance on thinking, reality becomes fragmented. This fragmentation is an illusion, but it seems very real while we are trapped in it. And yet the universe is an indivisible whole in which all things are interconnected, in which nothing exists in isolation.

The deeper interconnectedness of all things and events implies that the mental labels of "good" and "bad" are ultimately illusory. They always imply a limited perspective and so are true only relatively and temporarily. This is illustrated in the story of a wise man who won an expensive car in a lottery. His family and friends were very happy for him and came to celebrate. "Isn't it great!" they said. "You are so lucky." The man smiled and said, "Maybe." For a few weeks he enjoyed driving the car. Then one day a drunken driver crashed into his new car at an intersection and he ended up in the hospital, with multiple injuries. His family and friends came to see him and said, "That was really unfortunate." Again the man smiled and said, "Maybe." While he was still in the hospital, one night there was a landslide and his house fell into the sea. Again his friends came the next day and said, "Weren't you lucky to have been here in the hospital." Again he said, "Maybe."

The wise man's "maybe" signifies a refusal to judge anything that happens. Instead of judging what is, he accepts it and so enters into conscious alignment with the higher order. He knows that often it is impossible for the mind to understand what place or purpose a seemingly random event has in the tapestry of the whole. But there are no random events, nor are there events or things that exist by and for themselves, in isolation. The atoms that make up your body were once forged inside stars, and the causes of even the smallest event are virtually infinite and connected with the whole in incomprehensible ways. If you wanted to trace back the cause of any event, you would have to go back all the way to the beginning of creation. The cosmos

is not chaotic. The very word cosmos means order. But this is not an order the human mind can ever comprehend, although it can sometimes glimpse it.

## NOT MINDING WHAT HAPPENS

J. Krishnamurti, the great Indian philosopher and spiritual teacher, spoke and traveled almost continuously all over the world for more than fifty years attempting to convey through words- which are content- that which is beyond words, beyond content. At one of his talks in the latter part of his life, he surprised the audience by asking, "Do you want to know my secret?" Everyone became very alert. Many people in the audience had been coming to listen to him for twenty or thirty years and still failed to grasp the essence of his teaching. Finally, after all these years, the master would give them the key to understanding. "This is my secret," he said. "I don't mind what happens."

He did not elaborate, and so I suspect most of his audience were even more perplexed than before. The implication of this simple statement, however, are profound.

When I don't mind what happens, what does that imply? It implies that internally I am in alignment with what happens. "What happens," of course, refers to the suchness of this moment, which always already is as it is. It refers to content, the form that this moment- the only moment there ever is- takes. To be in alignment with what is means to be in a relationship of inner nonresistance with what happens. It means not to label it mentally as good or bad, but to let it be. Does this mean you can no longer take action to bring about change in your life? On the contrary. When the basis for your actions is inner alignment with the present moment, your actions become empowered by the intelligence of Life itself.

## IS THAT SO?

The Zen Master Hakuin lived in a town in Japan. He was held in high regard and many people came to him for spiritual teaching. Then it happened that the teenage daughter of his next door neighbor became pregnant. When being questioned by her angry and scolding parents as to the identity of the father, she finally told them that he was Hakuin, the Zen Master. In great anger the parents rushed over to Hakuin and told him with much shouting and accusing that their daughter had confessed that he was the father. All he replied was, "Is that so?"

News of the scandal spread throughout the town and beyond. The Master lost his reputation. This did not trouble him. Nobody came to see him anymore. He remained unmoved. When the child was born, the parents brought the baby to Hakuin. "You are the father, so you look after him." The Master took loving care of the child. A year later, the mother remorsefully confessed to her parents that the real father of the child was the young man who worked at the butcher shop. In great distress they went to see Hakuin to apologize and ask for forgiveness. "We are really sorry. We have come to take the baby back. Our daughter confessed that you are not the father." "Is that so?" is all he would say as he handed the baby over to them.

The Master responds to falsehood and truth, bad news and good news, in exactly the same way: "Is that so?" He allows the form of the moment, good or bad, to be as it is and so does not become a participant in human drama. To him there is only the moment, and this moment is as it is. Events are not personalized. He is nobody's victim. He is so completely at one with what happens that what happens has no power over him anymore. Only if you resist what happens are you at the mercy of what happens, and the world will determine your happiness and unhappiness.

The baby is looked after with loving care. Bad turns into good through the power of nonresistance. Always responding to what the present moment requires, he lets go of the baby when it is time to do so.

Imagine briefly how the ego would have reacted during the various stages of the unfolding of these events.

## THIS, TOO, WILL PASS

According to an ancient Sufi story, there lived a king in some Middle Eastern land who was continuously torn between happiness and despondency. The slightest thing would cause him great upset or provoke an intense reaction, and his happiness would quickly turn into disappointment and despair. A time came when the king finally got tired of himself and of life, and began to seek a way out. He sent for a wise man who lived in his kingdom and who was reputed to be enlightened. When the wise man came, the king said to him, "I want to be like you. Can you give me something that will bring balance, serenity, and wisdom into my life? I will pay any price you ask."

The wise man said, "I may be able to help you. but the price is so great that your entire kingdom would not be sufficient payment for it. Therefore it will be a gift to you if you honor it." The king gave assurances, and the wise man left.

A few weeks later, he returned and handed the king a box carved in jade. The king opened the box and found a simple gold ring inside. Some letters were inscribed on the ring. The inscription read: This, too, will pass. "What is the meaning of this?" asked the king. The wise man said, "Wear this ring always. Whatever happens, before you call it good or bad, touch this ring and read the inscription. That way; you will always be at peace."

This, too, will pass. What is it about these simple words that makes them so powerful? Looking at it superficially, it would seem while those words may provide some comfort in a bad situation, they would also diminish the enjoyment of the good things in life. "Don't be too happy, because it won't last." This seems to be what they are saying when applied in a situation that is perceived as good.

The full import of these words becomes clear when we consider them in the context of two other stories that we encountered earlier. The story of the Zen Master whose only response was always "Is that so?" Shows the good that comes through non-resistance to events, that is to say, being at one with what happens. The story of the man whose laconic "Maybe" illustrates the wisdom of nonjudgment, and the story of the ring points to the fact of impermanence which, when recognized, leads to nonattachment. Nonresistance, nonjudgment, and nonattachment are the three aspects of true freedom and enlightened living.

Those words inscribed on the ring are not telling you that you should not enjoy the good in your life, nor are they merely meant to provide some comfort in times of suffering. They have a deeper purpose: to make you aware of the fleetingness of every situation, which is due to the transience of all forms, your attachment to them lessens, and you disidentify from them to some extent. Being detached does not mean that you cannot enjoy it more. Once you see and accept the transience of all things and the inevitability of change, you can enjoy the pleasures of the world while they

last without fear of loss or anxiety about the future. When you are detached, you gain a higher vantage point from which to view the events in your life instead of being trapped inside them. You become like an astronaut who sees the planet Earth surrounded by the vastness of space and realizes a paradoxical truth: The earth is precious and at the same time insignificant. The recognition that This, too, will pass brings detachment and with detachment another dimension comes into your life--inner space. Through detachment, as well as nonjudgment and inner nonresistance, you gain access to that dimension.

When you are no longer totally identified with forms, consciousness--who you are--becomes freed from its imprisonment in form. This freedom is the arising of inner space. It comes as a stillness, a subtle peace deep within you, even in the face of something seemingly bad. This, too, will pass. Suddenly, there is space around the event. There is also space around the emotional highs and lows, even around pain. And above all, there is space between your thoughts. And from that space emanates a peace that is not "of this world," because this world is form, and the peace is space. This is the peace of God.

Now you can enjoy and honor things of this world without giving them an importance and significance they don't have. You can participate in the dance of creation and be active without attachment to outcome and without placing unreasonable demands upon the world: Fulfill me, make me happy, make me feel safe, tell me who I am. The world cannot give you those things, and when you no longer have such expectations, all self-created suffering comes to an end. All such suffering is due to an overvaluation of form and an unawareness of the dimension of inner space. When that dimension is present in your life, you can enjoy things, experiences, and the pleasures of the senses without losing yourself in them, without inner attachment to them, that is to say, without becoming addicted to the world.

The words This, too, will pass are pointers toward reality. In pointing to the impermanence of all forms, by implication, they are also pointing to the eternal. Only the eternal in you can recognize the impermanent as impermanent.

When the dimension of space is lost or rather not known, the things of the world assume an absolute importance, a seriousness and heaviness that in truth they do not have. When the world is not viewed from the perspective of the formless, it becomes a threatening place, and ultimately a place of despair. The Old Testament prophet must have felt this when he wrote, "All things are full of weariness. A man cannot utter it."

## CONSCIOUSNESS

A Zen Master was walking in silence with one of his disciples along a mountain trail. When they came to an ancient cedar tree, they sat down under it for a simple meal of some rice and vegetables. After the meal, the disciple, a young monk who had not yet found the key to the mystery of Zen, broke the silence by asking the Master, "Master, how do I enter Zen?"

He was, of course, inquiring how to enter the state of consciousness which is Zen.

The Master remained silent. Almost five minutes passed while the disciple anxiously waited for an answer. He was about to ask another question when the Master suddenly spoke. "Do you hear the sound of that mountain stream?"

The disciple had not been aware of any mountain stream. He had been too busy thinking about the meaning of Zen. Now he began to listen for the sound, his noisy mind subsided. At first he heard nothing. Then his thinking gave way to heightened alertness, and suddenly he did hear the hardly perceptible murmur of a small stream in the far distance.

"Yes, I can hear it now," he said.

The Master raised his finger and, with a look in his eyes that in some way was both fierce and gentle, said, "Enter Zen from there."

The disciple was stunned. It was his first satori- a flash of enlightenment. He knew what Zen was without knowing what it was that he knew!

They continued on their journey in silence. The disciple was amazed at the aliveness of the world around him. He experienced everything as if for the first time. Gradually, however, he started thinking again. The alert stillness became covered up again by mental noise, and before long he had another question. "Master," he said, "I have been thinking. What would you have said if I hadn't been able to hear the mountain stream?" The Master stopped, looked at him, raised his finger and said, "Enter Zen from there."

## EGO #2

Sometime ago, I wrote about the ego and how to control it one must first recognize it or become conscious of it. After my continued readings, I've found another author with an identical perspective; simply expressed in different ways and since I am an advocate in repeating the truth as many times as necessary to instill it in my subconscious and anyone else I can; therefore, read on.

An essential part of the awakening is the recognition of the unawakened you, the ego as it thinks, speaks, and acts, as well as the recognition of the collectively conditioned mental processes (beliefs) that perpetuate the unawakened state. That is why my intention is now to point out aspects of the ego and show how they operate in the individual as well as the collective. The reasons for this is that unless we know the mechanics behind the workings of the ego, we will not recognize it, and will be tricked into identifying with it again and again. Taking over us as an imposter trying to be us. Another reason is that the act of recognition itself is one of the ways in which we can become awakened. Once it is recognized, we realize that we do not need to fight it. We cannot fight against it and win, just as we cannot fight against darkness. Accepting it, not resisting it, however, is all that is necessary.

If we look deeply into humanity's ancient religions and spiritual traditions, we will find that underneath the many surface differences there are core insights that most of them agree on. One is that most of us have a strong element of dysfunction or even madness. Another aspect of the collective dysfunction of the human mind is the unprecedented violence we are inflicting on other life forms and the planet itself- the destruction of oxygen-producing forests and other plant and animal life; ill treatment of animals in factory farms; the poisoning of rivers, oceans, and air.

It is important to realize, however, that this madness, fear, greed and the desire for power is not just the dysfunction meant to expound on. A number of spiritual teachings tell us to let go of fear and desire. But those spiritual practices are usually unsuccessful. They do not go to the root of the dysfunction. Trying to become a good person is commendable and right to do..., yet it is an endeavor we cannot ultimately succeed in unless there is a shift in consciousness/ego. We do not become good by trying to be good, but by finding the goodness already in us... by finding our Selves and allowing that goodness to emerge. But it will only emerge in fundamental changes in our state of consciousness... the ego.

Greed, selfishness, exploitation, cruelty, and violence are still pervasive. When we don't recognize them as individual and collective manifestations of an underlying dysfunction or mental illness, we fall into the error of personalizing them.

We construct a conceptual identity for an individual or group. When we confuse the ego that we perceive in others with their identity, it is the work of our own ego that uses this misperception to strengthen itself through being right and therefore superior and through reacting with condemnation, indignation, and often anger against the perceived enemy.

The particular egotistic patterns that we react to most strongly in others and misperceive as their identity tend to be the same patterns that are also in us, but are unable or unwilling to detect within ourselves. Anything that we resent and react to in another is also in us. But it is no more than a form of ego, and as such, it is completely impersonal. It has nothing to do with who you are. Only if we mistake it for who we are can observing it within ourselves be threatening to our sense of self.

In certain cases, we may need to protect ourselves or someone else from being harmed by another, but beware of making it your mission to "eradicate evil," as you are likely to turn into the very thing you are fighting against. Fighting unconsciousness, will draw you into unconsciousness yourself. Unconsciousness, dysfunctional egotistic behavior, can never be defeated by attacking it. Even if you defeat the opponent, the unconsciousness will simply have moved into you, or the opponent will appear in a new disguise. Whatever you fight, you strengthen, and what you resists, persists.

With the aforementioned, dear friends, let us recognize the ego for what it is: a collective dysfunction, the insanity of the human mind. Once we do that, we no longer misperceive it as somebody's identity. Once we see it for what it is, it becomes much easier to remain nonreactive toward it. We do not take it personal anymore. We do not complain, blame, accuse, or make it wrong. Nobody is wrong. It is the ego in someone, that's all. Compassion arises when we recognize that all are suffering from some sickness of the mind, some more acutely than others. We do not fuel the drama anymore that is part of all egotistic relationships. What is fuel? Reactivity. The ego thrives on it.

Thank you all sincerely for your time and God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## EGO #3

Your sense of who you are determines what you perceive  
 as your needs and what matters to you in life- and whatever matters to you will have the power to upset and disturb you. You can use this as a criterion to find out how deeply you know yourself. What matters to you is not necessarily what you say or believe, but what your action and reactions reveal as important and serious to you. So you may want to ask yourself the question: What are the things that upset and disturb me? If small things have the power to disturb you, then who you think you are is exactly that: small. That will be your unconscious belief. What are the small things? Ultimately all things are small things because all things are transient.

You might say, "I know I am an immortal spirit." Or even, "I am above all things." And, "I am tired of this crazy world, and peace is all I want."- Until you are encountered with bad news: Your significant other leaves you because she feels lonely and can no longer bear with the "struggle" of your situation; your Case Manager denies you a transfer closer to home; a "shake-down" is conducted and your brand new extra pair of shoes and "battery-pack" are considered contraband and are confiscated; you had been waiting on the phone and somebody "cuts" ahead of you; someone tells you something inappropriate and you feel disrespected; you go to the commissary and find out the Trust Fund has taken all your money because of your FRP (financial responsibility program) dues.... Suddenly there is a surge of anger, of anxiety. A harshness comes into your voice; "I can't take any more of this." You accuse and blame, attack, defend, or justify yourself, and it's all happening on autopilot. Something is obviously much more important to you now than the inner peace that a moment ago you said was all you wanted, and you're not an immortal spirit or above all things anymore either. The significant other, the money, the disrespect, the loss or threat of loss are more important. To whom? To the immortal spirit and above all things that you said you are? No, to me. The small me that seeks security or fulfillment in things that are tran-

sient and gets anxious or angry because it fails to find it. Well, at least now you know who you really think you are.

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If peace is really what you want, then you will choose peace. If peace mattered to you more than anything else and if you truly knew yourself to be spirit and above things rather than a little me, you would remain nonreactive and absolutely alert when confronted with challenging people or situations. You would immediately accept the situation and thus become one with it rather than separate yourself from it. Then out of alertness would come a response. Who you are (consciousness), not who you think you are (a small me), would be responding. It would be powerful and effective and would make no person or situation into an enemy.

The world always makes sure that you cannot fool yourself for long about who you really think you are by showing you what truly matters to you. How you react to people and situations, especially when challenges arise, is the best indicator of how deeply you know yourself.

The more limited, the more narrowly egotistic the view of yourself, the more you will see, focus on, and react to the egotistic limitations, the unconsciousness in others. Their "faults" or what you perceive as their faults become to you their identity. This means you will see only the ego in them and thus strengthen the ego in yourself. Instead of looking "through" the ego in others, you are looking "at" the ego. Who is looking at the ego? The ego in you.

Very unconscious people experience their own ego through its reflection in others. When you realize that what you react to in others is also in you (and sometimes only in you), you begin to become aware of your own ego. At that stage, you may also realize that you were doing to others what you thought others were doing to you. You cease seeing yourself as a victim.

You are not the ego, so when you become aware of the ego in you, it does not mean you know who you are- it means you know who you are not. But it is through knowing who you are not that the greatest obstacle to truly knowing yourself is removed.

Nobody can tell you who you are. It would just be another concept, so it would not change you. Who you are requires no belief. In fact, every belief is an obstacle. It does not even require your realization, who you are does not shine forth into this world. It remains in the unmanifested which is, of course, your true home. You are then like an apparently poor person who does not know he has a bank account with \$100 million in it and so his wealth remains an unexpressed potential.

Again, thank you dearly for your time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

The most important, the primordial relationship in your life is your relationship with the Now, or rather with whatever form the Now takes, that is to say, what is or what happens. If your relationship with the Now is dysfunctional, that dysfunction will be reflected in every relationship and every situation you encounter. The ego could be defined simply in this way: a dysfunctional relationship with the present moment. It is at this moment that you can decide what kind of relationship you want to have with the present moment.

Once you have reached a certain level of consciousness, (and if you are reading this, you almost certainly have), you are able to decide what kind of relationship you want to have with the present moment. Do I want the present moment to be my friend or my enemy? The present moment is inseparable from my life, so you are really deciding what kind of a relationship you want to have with life. Once you have decided you want the present moment to be your friend, it is up to you to make the first move: Become friendly toward it, welcome it no matter what disguise it comes in, and soon you will see the results. Life becomes friendly towards you; people become helpful, circumstances cooperative. One decision changes your entire reality. But one decision you have to make again and again- until it becomes natural to live in such way.

The decision to make the present moment into your friend is the end of the ego. The ego can never be in alignment with the present moment, which is to say, aligned with life, since its very nature compels it to ignore, resist, or devalue the Now. Time is what the ego lives on. The stronger the ego, the more time takes over your life. Almost every thought you think is then concerned with past or future, and your sense of self depends on the past for your identity and the future for its fulfillment. Fear, anxiety, expectation, regret, guilt, anger are the dysfunctions of the time-bound state of consciousness.

There are three ways in which the ego will treat the present moment: as a means to an end, as an obstacle, or as an enemy.

Let us look at them in turn, so that when this pattern operates in you, you can recognize it and- decide again.

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To the ego, the present moment is, at best, only useful as a means to an end. It gets you to some future moment that is considered more important, even though the future never comes except as the present moment and therefore never more than a thought in your head. In other words, you are never fully here because you are always busy trying to get elsewhere.

When this pattern becomes more pronounced, and this is very common, the present moment is regarded and treated as if it were an obstacle to be overcome. This is where impatience, frustration, and stress arise, and in our culture, it is many people's everyday reality, their normal state. Life, which is now, is seen as a "problem," and you come to inhabit a world of problems that all need to be solved before you can be happy, fulfilled, or really start living- or so you think. The problem is: For every problem that is solved, another one pops up. As long as the present moment is seen as an obstacle, there can be no end to problems. "I'll be whatever you want me to be," says Life or the Now. "I'll treat you the way you treat me. If you see me as a problem, I will be a problem to you. If you treat me as an obstacle, I will be an obstacle."

At worst, and this is also very common, the present moment is treated as if it were an enemy. When you hate what you are doing, complain about your surroundings, curse things that are happening or have happened, or when your internal dialogue consists of shoulds and shouldn'ts, of blaming and accusing, then you are arguing with what is, arguing with that which is always already the case. You are making life into an enemy and Life says, "War is what you want, and war is what you get." External reality, which already reflects back to you your inner state, is then experienced as hostile.

A vital question to ask yourself frequently is: What is my relationship with the present moments? Then become alert to find the answer. Am I treating the Now as no more than a means to an end? Do I see it as an obstacle? Am I making it into an enemy? Since the present moment is all you ever have,

since Life is inseparable from the Now, what the question really means is: What is my relationship with Life? This question is ~~an excellent way of unmasking the ego in you and bringing you~~ into the state of Presence. Although the question doesn't embody the absolute truth (ultimately, I and the present moment are one), it is a useful pointer in the right direction. Ask yourself it often until you don't need it anymore.

How do you go beyond a dysfunctional relationship with the present moment? The most important thing is to see it in yourself, in your thoughts and actions. In the moment of seeing, of noticing that your relationship with the Now is dysfunctional, you are present. The seeing is the arising Presence. The moment you see dysfunction, it begins to dissolve. Some people laugh out loud when they see this. With the seeing comes the power of choice- the choice of saying yes to the Now, of making it into your friend.

Thank you dearly for your time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## STRESS #2

After having recently read an essay titled "stress" to the class and expounding on the benefits of proper breathing to reduce/eliminate such "malady," again, in my constant readings I came across an article that truly resonates and reinforces the proven fact I tried to convey to the class; therefore, please read the following, reflect on it, and make your choice.

Discover inner space by creating gaps in the stream of thinking. Without those gaps, your thinking becomes repetitive, uninspired, devoid of any creative spark, which is how it still is for most people. You don't need to be concerned with the duration of those gaps. A few seconds is good enough. Gradually, they will lengthen by themselves, without any effort on your part. More important than their length is to bring them in frequently so that your daily activities and your stream of thinking become interspersed with space.

As a Yoga and physical fitness instructor, I've had many much younger students impressed with my conditioning and have asked me, "Wow, how did you get to that level?" I've replied, "Aside from practicing consistently, more importantly I've learned to focus, be conscious of, and master my breathing, that simple."

Being aware of your breathing takes attention away from thinking and creates space. It is one way of generating consciousness. Although the fullness of consciousness is already there as unmanifested, we are here to bring consciousness into this dimension.

Be aware of your breathing. Notice the sensation of the breath. Feel the air moving in and out of your body. Notice how first the abdomen and then the chest expand and contract slightly with the in- and outbreath. One conscious breath is enough to make some space where before there was the uninterrupted succession of one thought after another. One conscious breath (two or three or four... would be even better), taken many times a day, is an excellent way of bringing space into your life. Even if you meditated on your breathing for two hours

or more, which some people do, one breath is all you ever need to be aware of, indeed ever can be aware of. The rest is memory or anticipation, which is to say, thought. Breathing isn't really something that you do but something that you witness as it happens. Breathing happens by itself. The intel within the body is doing it. All you have to do is watch it happening. There is no strain of effort involved. Also, notice the brief cessation of the breath, particularly the still point at the end of the outbreath, before you start breathing in again.

Many people's breath is unnaturally shallow. The more you are aware of your breath, the more its natural depth will reestablish itself.

because breath has no form as such, it has since ancient times been equated with spirit- the formless one Life. "God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living creature." The German word for breathing- atmen- is derived from the ancient Indian (Sanskrit) word Atman, meaning the indwelling divine spirit or God within.

The fact that breath has no form is one of the reasons why breath awareness is an extremely effective way of bringing space onto your life, of generating consciousness. It is an excellent meditation object precisely because it is not an object, has no shape or form. The other reason is that the breath is one of the most subtle and seemingly insignificant phenomena, the "least thing" that according to Nietzsche makes up the "best happiness." Whether or not you practice breath awareness as an actual formal meditation is up to you. Formal meditation, however, is no substitute for bringing space into everyday life.

Being aware of your breath forces you into the present moment- the key to all inner transformation. Whenever you are conscious of the breath, you are absolutely present. You may also notice that you cannot think and be aware of your breathing. Conscious breathing stops your mind. But far from being in a trance or half asleep, you are fully awake and highly alert. You are not falling below thinking, but rising above it. And if you look more closely, you will find that those two

things- coming fully into the present moment and ceasing thinking  
without loss of consciousness - are actually one and the same:  
the arising of space consciousness.

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Again, thank you dearly for your time and as always, God  
bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## RELIGION/SPIRITUALITY #2

A long time ago I composed an essay titled Religion/Spirituality and placed it in this booklet. Not long ago, I read a book so very full of inspirational and wisdom filled pages with a sub-chapter titled Spirituality And Religion. The message was so very similar and resonating that I felt inclined to share it with you. Please enjoy.

## SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

What is the role of the established religions in the arising of the new consciousness? Many people are already aware of the difference between spirituality and religion. They realize that having a belief system- a set of thoughts that you regard as the absolute truth- does not make you spiritual no matter what the nature of those beliefs is. In fact, the more you make your thoughts (beliefs) into your identity, the more cut off you are from the spiritual dimension within yourself. Many "religious" people are stuck at that level. They equate truth with thought, and as they are completely identified with thought (their mind), they claim to be in sole possession of the truth in an unconscious attempt to protect their identity. They don't realize the limitations of thought. Unless you believe (think) exactly as they do, you are wrong in their eyes, and in the not-too-distant past, they would have justified in killing you for that. And some still do, even now.

The new spirituality, the transformation of consciousness, is arising to a large extent outside of the structures of the

existing institutionalized religions. There were always pockets of spirituality even in mind-dominated religions, although the institutionalized hierarchies felt threatened by them and often tried to suppress them. A large-scale opening of spirituality outside of the religious structures in an entirely new development. In the past, this would have been inconceivable, especially in the West, the most mind dominated of all cultures, where the Christian church had a virtual franchise on spirituality. You couldn't just stand up and give a spiritual talk or publish a spiritual book unless you were sanctioned by the church, and if you were not, they would quickly silence you. But now, even within certain churches and religions, there are signs of change. It is heartwarming, and one is grateful for even the slightest signs of openness, such as Pope John Paul II visiting a mosque as well as a synagogue.

Partly as a result of the spiritual teachings that have arisen outside the established religions, but also due to an influx of the ancient Eastern wisdom teachings, a growing number of followers of traditional religions are able to let go of identification with form, dogma, and rigid belief systems and discover the original depth that is hidden within their own spiritual tradition at the same time as they discover the depth within themselves. They realize that how "spiritual" you are has nothing to do with what you believe but everything to do with your state of consciousness. This, in turn, determines how you act in the world and interact with others.

Those unable to look beyond form become even more deeply

entrenched in their beliefs, that is to say, in their mind.

~~We are witnessing not only an unprecedented influx of conscious-~~  
ness at this time but also an entrenchment and intensification of the ego. Some religious institutions will be open to the new consciousness; others will harden their man-made structures through which the collective ego will defend itself and "fight-back." Some churches, sects, cults, or religious movements are basically collective egotistic entities, as rigidly identified with their mental position as the followers of any political ideology that is closed to any alternative interpretation of reality.

But the ego is destined to dissolve, and all its ossified structures, whether they be religious or other institutions, corporations, or governments, will desintegrate from within, no matter how deeply entrenched they appear to be. The most rigid structures, the most impervious to change, will collapse first. This has already happened in the case of Soviet Communism. How deeply entrenched, how solid and monolithic it appeared, and yet within a few years, it disintegrated from within. No one foresaw this. All were taken by surprise. There are many more surprises in store for us.

Thank you dearly for your time and many, many blessings.

ERNESTO COLE

## PRANA

It is so amazing that last Tuesday I gave a slight Presentation in the Conflict Resolution Program conveying the importance of proper breathing and how it could help in lessening/eliminating the effects of stress. That same day during mail call, I received my lessons from the Siddah Yoga Meditation Team- of which I am a member- that was actually honoring Baba's (founder of Siddah Yoga) passing and focusing on the importance of the breath. The very first page said the following:

"The mind and the breathing are intimately connected, for it is the movement of prana (life force) that creates the countless universes that arise and subside in the mind. When the breath is uneven, the mind becomes disturbed, and the sense of duality arises. As the breath becomes even, the mind automatically becomes still. Ordinary people often breath rapidly, and their outgoing breath is expelled for a long distance. This indicates an outgoing mind.

"As the mantra goes deeper, the breathing slows, and the outgoing breath becomes shorter. The incoming and outgoing breaths become even, and as this happens, the mind and senses turn inward, toward the Self. The purpose of all the pranayama (breathing exercises) that hatha yogis perform is to balance the duration of inhalation and exhalation, because this balance quiets the mind and brings the awareness of equality."

Immediately after that, Gurumayi (the heiress to the Siddah Yoga Team), on the day after her birthday gave a rendition to the breath titled "The Benevolent Companion." In it she said:

It is the invisible force.

It is not bound, it is always free.

It is not seen, but it can be felt.

It is neither long nor short.

It is neither big nor small.

It neither sleeps nor wakes. It is the unearthed treasure.

It never leaves you.

It works tirelessly, but it is never tired.

It is your sentinel, your protector.

It is impartial.

It is accommodating.

It is forgiving.

It is the soothing balm.

It is the energizing power.

Who encompasses all these incredible qualities? This is the million dollar question!

For the answer, you don't need to look too far. It's the one who is whispering to you, ever so lovingly, that you are alive. It is your own breath. Your own PRANA!

Gentlemen, please take heed, breath properly, take advantage of your life force, thank you dearly, and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## FAREWELL

Well dear friends, this lovely and inspirational course has come to an end for the majority of us, and I would like to congratulate each and every single one of you for having committed yourselves to embark on this journey of change for the better of you, your fellow beings, and surroundings... congratulations gentlemen, you deserve it. Yet; what now? What do we do and where do we go from here? Where do we find well intended influence and assistance? Who do we go to for encouragement and mentoring? Who do we seek out to listen to us in an empathic manner and communicate with?... Many questions, huh?

While I may not have the answers to them all and there may be someone most of us could turn to, I will try to suggest someone I believe in because he has always been there for me ever since I embarked on this journey.... Myself.

Yes gentlemen, although I have sought help from many others, the most important individual for me in this challenging endeavor has been Myself.

I simply promise him on a regular basis the following: I will be strong enough so that no one or anything can disrupt my peace of mind. I will try to always think, speak, and act positively. I will do my best to always make family and friends feel their true value. I will be optimistic and look at the bright side of things, and when life's occurrences make things dark; I will simply turn the lights back on. I will think only for best, do my best, and expect the best of me. I will make myself happy by not allowing my life to be dependent upon things I cannot control and thus, avoid disappointment and pain. I will be as enthusiastic and content about the success of others as about my own. I will forget the mistakes of the past and focus, not only on the present but, on my greater achievements of the future. I will be cheerful and keep a happy face by giving all I meet a smile. I will focus intently on my progress and improvement so that criticizing others becomes null to me. I will be too faithful to worry, too noble for anger, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble. I will continue to

entertain myself with good books, not only fictional but also non-fictional and self-helping ones written by pundits who can encourage and teach me. I will continue exercising my body and mind on a regular to keep them as sharp as possible and in good shape. I will refrain from poisoning my body with vices and will continue helping others every chance I get, even if they have been "bad" in the past.

And although there may be other things I promise Myself so that my conduct and life result fruitful, I cannot conclude this farewell without promising Myself that I will always pray for guidance, serenity, wisdom, blessings, and gratitude for all I have each and every day.

Thank you all very much for your time, and commitment and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## MY PHYSICAL SELF

After embarking on a journey of positive change and spending lots of time contemplating, reflecting, meditating, and simply just focusing on my breathing in a dark and quiet space, I managed to find out who I was not, humble myself, and thus, have a very good idea of who I truly am. While doing all this and being inspired by the practice of yoga (which I consider the perfect discipline) and educating myself as best I could on its many benefits, I also came across the holistic approach used by the natives of India called Ayurveda. Through this method and my experience on physical training and body types, I also became inspired to know my physical Self as well and the aspects and differences of the three body types- ectomorph, mesomorph, endomorph- therefore, for those interested, please read on.

By knowing your body type (dasha), likes, and limitations, you may become a more balanced, vital, and overall happy person. Through Ayurveda it is believed that the healer is within ourselves. We can manage our health by managing our inputs and our lifestyles. That and the four inputs of Ayurveda- food, water intake, breathing, and perception- will definitely make life pleasant. The first three inputs are self-explanatory, but perception deals with how you perceive. In other words, what is your outlook on life? What is your relationship with it? By fine tuning these inputs, you can alter your physical, mental, and emotional state.

In Ayurveda there are three body types known as dashas: vata (ectomorph), pitta (mesomorph), kapha (endomorph). Most people are a combination of two dashas, but one typically dominates. There are several ways to determine your body type. The

most accurate is through a detailed history and physical assessment done by an Ayurvedic practitioner. The less accurate way is to take a quiz that will provide extensive insight into your principal dasha.

#### Vata/Ectomorph

People of this body type tend to be the slenderest of the three body types. Physically, ectomorphs are thin with prominent bony structures and often find it difficult to gain weight. They feel cold frequently and often have dry skin and hair.

Mentally, ectomorphs learn fast but also forget fast. They enjoy change and are known to be very creative. Emotionally, they are excitable and enthusiastic, but can become easily anxious.

When an ectomorph is out of balance, they can have poor digestion with frequent bloating and constipation. They can easily develop insomnia and fatigue. In the Fall and Winter seasons, they tend toward dry nasal passages and are prone to catching colds.

An ectomorph diet should consist of warm, cooked, soupy foods, cooked cereals; nuts; cooked vegetables and hot milk. They should avoid dry, crunchy foods, carbonated beverages and cold/raw vegetables.

#### Pitta/Mesomorph

If you are a mesomorph, you most likely have a medium build with good muscle tone. Mesomorphs tend to always feel warm and, because of this, have a reddish complexion. They can also experience premature graying hair or balding. Mesomorphs enjoy high energy levels and have strong digestive systems (basically they can eat almost anything).

Mesomorphs are extremely intelligent, focused and ambitious. Emotionally they are passionate about life, are often perfectionists, and can become easily irritated.

When a mesomorph is out of balance, they can experience excessive anger, suffer from inflammatory conditions (such as headaches and rashes), and encounter digestive problems (such as acid reflux, diarrhea, and ulcers). Their perfectionist ways also can push them to be over-stressed workaholics.

The diet of a mesomorph should consist of sweet, juicy fruits (such as mangos and melons) and lots of cooling vegetables with high water content (such as cucumbers, kale, and lettuce). Mesomorphs should avoid hot spices, alcohol, coffee, vinegar, and acidic foods like citrus and tomatoes.

#### KAPHA/ENDOMORPH

Endomorphs are typically the largest of body types. Physically, they usually have wide hips and shoulders; thick wavy hair and good stamina.

In regards to mental capacity, endomorphs are usually slower to learn but have excellent memories. Emotionally they tend to be very loyal, stable, and reliable.

When off balance, an endomorph can experience sinus congestion, poor circulation, and sluggish digestion. Therefore, endomorphs are susceptible to obesity. Because of this tendency, exercise is critical to keep this body type in balance. An endomorph body needs to get up and move!

From a dietary standpoint, an endomorph should reduce oils, fats, sweets, and salts as much as possible. They should focus on cooking with lots of spices and eat a large amount of vegetables and high-fiber foods (such as legumes).

## MY BODY TYPE

Although I never had the luxury of visiting an Ayurvedic practitioner, through my family history, physical fitness knowledge and experience, and symptoms along with a lot of the aforementioned contemplation, reflection, and meditation, I have come to the conclusion of being a combination of ectomorph and mesomorph; with ectomorph being the dominant. Additionally by knowing my strengths and weaknesses, I have learned and found ways to make my existence much more pleasant than if I had not known my Self and body type. For instance, since I am prone to catch colds fairly easy, I practice daily cleansing along with ablutions- sticking my cleansed fingers down my throat and massaging my epiglottis and tongue, sniffing warm water and rinsing my nasal passage, and opening both eyes wide and flushing them with warm water- and washing my hands frequently. As far as feeling cold frequently? Yes, that is very true of me and thus, I dress very warmly, keep my head covered, and make it a habit of drinking hot, herbal tea with warm milk. For the dry skin and hair I simply counter that with a bit of lotion after every shower. Yes, I do learn quickly and am very forgetful therefore, I note things down, keep a journal, do not procrastinate, and have also mastered the technique of remembering names and things with relating it with something common after repeating it several times. I do enjoy change and am constantly looking for and am willing to learn for the better (unlike in the past my desire to learn was for the materialistic gains and immoral purposes). It is also true about me that I can become overly excited and anxious, therefore; I have learned many techniques backed with principles (such as practicing the ancient art of yoga with

all its different aspects- meditation, breathing exercises, serenity, non-harming...) that have made my anxiousness and excitability imperceptible.

My poor digestive aspect I have overcome easily by practicing intestinal strengthening and massages along with breathing and yoga postures such as the garland, knees to the ears, ankle behind the head, and many twists and sidebends. For my insomnia, I read frequently (especially before going to bed), practice inversions (such as headstands, tripods, forward bends...), and exercise constantly and intensely to make it much more bearable. As far as the fatigue factor? Well, through my constant and intense way of exercising fatigue is not something I'm familiar with. Additionally, as far as having mesomorphic tendencies of being at times overly ambitious, a perfectionist, and easily irritated; by finding yoga I have managed to keep those weaknesses in check and overcome them with ease.

When it comes to diet, since I am incarcerated and do not have many options I consume lots of nuts, enjoy warm milk, warm cereals such as oatmeal mixed with other cereals, do not drink carbonated beverages, but do indulge from time to time (or whenever I get the chance) with raw carrots. Something I find to be sort of a delicacy in this environment.

Well my dear readers, with the aforementioned, I encourage you to inquire, look into, contemplate, and sit back to find out your body type and in such way do what may be necessary to improve and become an all around much better you.

Thank you sincerely for your time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## JUST READ!

In this booklet I've written much about the need for and benefits of reading (Read, Read, Read, and Read Some More, and Read, Read, and Re-read), and in my continued readings came across a very short but succinct writing on the benefit of such action.

Those that read are benefited as much from what they learn as they do from the joy obtained. But, even more so, they exercise their minds and when they do, they feel very satisfied of investing their time wisely.

Additionally, what would you prefer to be? A person with an always shortening attention span or someone with an attention span always increasing? A person with access to books of a second or third grade level, which would have been considered trash a couple of decades ago, or a person with access to the work of the greatest minds that have existed? A person that has perpetual access to the same things and type of individuals, or a person with access to a quantity of options that expand with an infinity of imagination? A person that will not be able to remember a story ten minutes after reading it or a person that can keep a story for life?

What would you rather be: A person that usually spends his/her time in front of a television or a person that invests it reading and learning for the better?

Reading compromises the mind. As we read, we exercise our minds and imagination, and this leads to our happiness the same way that thinking positively does. It has been studied and reported that frequent readers have an eight percent more of possibilities to express daily satisfaction. Think about this and take heed, my dear readers.

Again, thank you dearly for your reading time and God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## WHO AM I?

After going through life in an egotistic state of mind and thinking I was the "baddest," most clever, daring, calculating, and willing to put my life on the line for the vile materials and most trivial things in life, there came a time in total solitude (solitary confinement) that I realized that that individual was not me. Sure enough, whether my environment or traumatic experiences had much to do with it, I am not certain nor do I care to expound on at this time. But I knew for a fact that what the prosecution, testifying witnesses, and news media were reporting was not me. Yes, it took me a long time and many, many years, months, weeks, days, hours, and minutes of contemplation, meditation, and prayers to finally answer this question: Who am I?

I am and have been many things, play and have played many roles, and although I am not happy about all the pain and hurt I've caused others and am truly regretful, I am grateful for those experiences because it has committed me to be the being I am today... a humble servant whose mission is now to act in ways that brings out the best in me and others- especially when it might seem to be justifiable to act otherwise. To be humble, to pray and show gratitude daily, to continue learning to live by finding myself, to treat all with kindness and respect, to value all, to be driven by my values and principles, to experience life's passion with the child's love I once had, to experience a position of respect and knowledge, to utilize that position to help others, and finally to live with a grin on my face and a sparkle in my eye.

Thank you sincerely for your time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

Hello everyone, as a yoga practitioner and advocate for the last 16+ years, I've had many individuals approach me and ask me questions about it because they are also interested in starting the practice (some even refer to me as Yoga Man:-) I humbly try to relate to them my little bit of knowledge and experience on the matter, but since half the time they catch me while I'm engaged on something else and can't dedicate them my total undivided attention and the time is usually constricted, I've made the decision to write a sort of yoga for beginners essay. I know I've already written about this subject before, but not in such a practical way therefore, I truly hope that once you read this, you will find it useful and inspirational.

One of the greatest things I enjoy about yoga is that it could be practiced anywhere and with no equipment whatsoever, just your mind, body, and soul (attention). And of course, bring your breath along and focus intently on it- witness it.

Yoga is a mental, physical, and spiritual practice that originated in India over 5,000 years ago. Yoga is said to mean to yoke/union. That yoking or union may be interpreted in many ways: union between your body and mind; with the breath as the uniter. Union between yourself and surroundings. Union between yourself and a higher power (be it God, Allah, Jehovah, the Universe, or however you conceive of a higher power). Union between the contracting and extending of the postures. Historically, yoga was much more of a mental practice focusing on meditation, breathing exercises, and moral conduct, but here in the West it has become more of a physical practice focusing on physical stretches called "asanas" that relax the body in order to quiet the mind and make it easier to become more conscious and aware of our thoughts. I, personally, feel that the main purpose of yoga is to help us understand the parts of our nature alongside the many fluctuations of our mind. It helps us know ourselves,

soul, and consciousness so adeptly that we can always have a palpable grasp of who we are. To prepare us to receive whatever life, the Absolute, or the universe presents us with.

Through the consistent practice of yoga, along with its other aspects- meditation, pranayama (breathing exercises), abstinence from falsehood, theft, greediness...- we become more aware and conscious of the Present. Which once that is accomplished, we realize that there is only Now. What we call the past is nothing but present memory. The future is but fantasy and commentary, that is, present memory recycled and rearranged. In accepting this, we cease to believe that there is some other time or place to be. We then accept that Now is the "time" to be awake and free. It is the only time we can be honest, kind, wise, or compassionate. Now is the only time we can ever love, be happy or at peace.

As many have expressed to me that they'd like to practice yoga but are Christians, Muslims, etc., etc. To them I respond, "Yoga is a secular practice. However, many of the ideas of yoga can work very well with religious practice and thus, strengthen your religion."

Additionally, when I've had prospective participants inquire as to what they can gain from yoga. I simply state, "I cannot tell you exactly what it will do for you, but through my consistent practice this is what it has done for me: aside from numerous health benefits, including extremely reduced stress and physical and mental flexibility, the stretching helps me release built up muscle tension, improved blood flow, improved oxygenation, and restoration of my whole system." Furthermore, as I've mentioned before, by learning to be "Present" or "in the moment" yoga has taught me that I have control of my emotions and that nothing or no one can alter them unless I give them/it that power... and I choose not to. It has taught me that so much of the stress and worry that I used to carry with me came from things that happened in the past or fear of something in the future and would thus, ignore the Present. Now by being focused on the Now, those negative patterns disappear and am provided with a huge amount of stress relief that I don't even recognize it any longer, thank God and of course, yoga. I could continue stating so many other benefits, but will halt here to suggest

some postures you may want to practice and begin experiencing the positive power of yoga.

First you may want to meditate for about five minutes then increase it slightly as you become more adept. You may sit cross-legged. If you feel uncomfortable, you may lie down or just sit with your legs straight out or even in a chair with feet planted on the ground and your back straight. Close your eyes, or relax with your gaze fixed on one point or even with your eyes half closed and focused on the tip of your nose. Take a few deep breaths, breathing down to your abdomen. You may place a hand on your stomach to make sure that when you inhale it moves out, then pause, exhale and contract your stomach back towards your spine. When thoughts assault you, simply continue focusing on your breaths to the point of even counting them and allowing the thoughts to disappear. The purpose of this is to help you calm your mind by suspending your thoughts even briefly. Since thoughts are constantly keeping the mind wandering about the past and future, taking us away from the Present state of being. Focusing on the breath can bring the focus back to the Present.

All of the following poses should be held anywhere from 30 seconds to a minute, unless specified. Remember also to keep the focus on your breath as much as possible. If the pose requires movement, I suggest you inhale on the negative part of the movement and exhale on the positive. Let's start with the Seated Staff pose. Sit on the floor with your legs extended out in front of you. Flex your feet. Roll your shoulders back so you are not slouching. If you have tight hamstrings and feel uncomfortable, sit on a blanket or something soft several inches high. If it's still uncomfortable or difficult to sit up straight, practice with your back against the wall. If you have a lower back injury, do not practice this pose.

The Seated Forward Bend. Start in the Seated Staff pose. Push your chest slightly forward and bend from your hip joints while keeping your back straight. Reach towards your feet. If your hands do not touch your feet, let them rest on your legs. Do not force yourself to touch your feet or grab your toes. Simply focus on your breathing and relax. Then try to reach a little farther; eventually by challenging yourself you will gain more range of motion and will enjoy the accomplishment.

But you must commit and become consistent to garner such benefit. Again, if you feel uncomfortable, you can always sit on a blanket or higher surface. If suffering from a back injury, please do not practice this pose.

The Seated Twist. Again, start with the Seated Staff pose. Bend your left knee and place the foot on the floor. Lengthen your spine (no slouching). Brace your stomach, rotate your torso to your left, place your left hand back on the ground, and your right elbow on the outside of your left knee. Gently turn your head to your left and try gazing over your shoulder. Then repeat on the other side.

Standing Side Bend. Stand with your feet together and arms at your sides. If it's too hard to balance, stand with feet about six inches apart. Bring your arms to the sides and up overhead. Face your palms to each other and interlace your fingers while pointing your index fingers to the sky. Straighten your arms without locking the elbows. Press your left hip to the right as far as you safely can and extend your arms as far out in the opposite direction. Keep your feet firmly grounded and remember to focus on your breathing. Do the exact thing on the opposite side.

Warrior 1. Stand with legs three to four feet apart, turning right foot out 90 degrees and left foot in slightly. Square your hips towards your right foot and your arms overhead. With palms facing one another, interlace your fingers with the index fingers facing the sky. Bend your right knee about 90 degrees, keeping knee directly over your ankle. Do not bend knee past your toes, as this can cause strain on your knee. Gaze at your fingertips for the allotted time and repeat with the other leg.

For this last pose and considered one of the most important poses in yoga, you may want to afford it no less than five minutes. The Corpse pose. Lie on your back and relax your arms by your sides, with your legs outstretched. If your lower back is tight, bend your knees or place a blanket or pillows underneath your knees. Close your eyes. Relax all body muscles. Allow your mind to relax and simply focus on your breathing. As thoughts come about, simply do ignore them and continue focusing on your breathing. Again, you may even count them if you wish.

The purpose of this pose is to recover the spent energy, relax your body, mind, and teach you to become present in the Now.

Again everyone, thank you dearly for your time, commitment to yourself and yoga, and may the benefits of this dear practice be forever in your favor. Blessings!

ERNESTO COLE

## RATIONAL SELF-ANALYSIS

Well gentlemen, as we've learned that it is extremely important to consider our thinking, we've also learned the connection between our thought and actions. We've also learned how to rationally counsel ourselves to better manage our thoughts,

feelings, and behaviors. Learned how to apply the five rules for Rational Thinking (Are my thoughts based on objective reality or facts? Are they helping protect my life and health? Are they helping me achieve short and long term goals? Are they keeping me out of conflicts? Are they leading me to feel how I want without negative and self-defeating behaviors?) And practiced techniques like camera checks and Rational Challenges to help us meet our goal or Rational Thinking; we will now put them into action and apply RSA: Rational Self-Analysis.

By using RSA's we can ensure our consequences and experiences to be much more positive and fulfilling. But like any other thing we wish to be better at, it will take practice to master it. And to practice RSA, it is very important to challenge, question, and dispute the beliefs we've harbored for so many years. Yet, many of you may ask, "How can I do that?" Well gentlemen, there are many proven methods that have been spoken and recommended by acclaimed doctors and I will focus on just a couple of them; since they have worked wonders for me and hopefully they will do the same for you.

One of them involves writing down your experience after an activating event and reflecting on how you could have acted more rationally. If writing it down proves unlikely, you could always use a technique I call "me time" to just think, reflect, and contemplate on past activating events and on ways you could and will do better in the future all while simply focusing on your calm and serene breathing. When you take a deep inhale, allow your stomach to puff out (diaphragm comes down), pause, take a deep exhale and allow your stomach to contract (diaphragm rises). I will not go into how and why this very simple technique works because the length of this essay is essential, but I can assure you that this very simple technique has extremely positive

effects on eliminating stress and irrational behaviors...all it takes is dear and committed practice.

Again gentlemen, RSA's is an extremely good habit to adopt and develop for positive consequences and thus, a much more pleasant and fulfilling existence, but you must do your part if it is to have the short-term and long-term consequences you wish for.

Thank you all very much and Blessings.

ERNESTO COLE

## SEARCH FOR MEANING

In this booklet I've written much about the need of having a purpose in one's life and have in one of the essays (Practice, Practice, Practice) detailed how I try to stay true and focused in my purpose; despite the negative perspectives of so many that surround me. However, after reading an extremely powerful and resounding book by the late doctor and Holocaust survivor-Viktor E. Frankl, "Man's Search For Meaning"; I have taken it upon myself to paraphrase his writing so that those in this position (prison) and elsewhere may be inspired to read it as well and maybe, look for a meaning/purpose in their lives.

But before I paraphrase Dr. Frankl, please allow me to tell you the little I have been informed about him. Born in 1905, as a teenager he was fascinated by philosophy, experimental psychology, and psychoanalysis. To supplement his high school classes, he attended adult-education classes and began a correspondence with Sigmund Freud that led Freud to submit a manuscript of Frankl's to the International Journal of Psychoanalysis. The article was accepted and later published that same year. At age 16, Frankl attended an adult-education workshop on philosophy. The instructor, recognizing Frankl's precocious intellect, invited him to give a lecture on the meaning of life. Frankl told the audience that "It is we who must answer the question that life asks of us, and these questions we correspond only by being responsible for our existence." This belief became the cornerstone of Frankl's life and professional identity.

Under the influence of Freud's ideas, Frankl decided while still in high school to become a psychiatrist. Inspired by a fellow student who told him he had a gift for helping others, Frankl had begun to realize that he had talent not only for diagnosing psychological problems, but also for discovering what motivates people.

Frankl's first counseling job was entirely his own- he founded Vienna's first private youth counseling program and worked with troubled youths from 1930 to 1937. He worked as a psychiatrist at the University Clinic in Vienna, caring for suicidal patients. He sought to help his patients find a way

to make their lives meaningful even in the face of depression or mental illness. By 1939 he was head of the department of neurology at Rothschild Hospital, the only Jewish hospital in Vienna.

In the early years of World War II, Frankl's work at Rothschild gave him and his family some degree of protection from threat of deportation. When the hospital was closed by the Nationalist Socialist government, however, Frankl realized that they were at grave risk of being sent to a concentration camp. In 1942 the American Consulate in Vienna informed him that he was eligible for a U.S. immigration visa. Although an escape from Austria would have enabled him to continue his book on Logotherapy, he decided to let his visa lapse; he felt he should stay in Vienna for the sake of his aging parents. In 1942, Frankl and his family were arrested and deported. Frankl spent the next three years at four different concentration camps.

Now to the many passages and ideas that have the power to change a person's life and inspire the reading of one of the best and most read books: "Man's Search for Meaning." This is first a book about survival. Like so many Jews who thought themselves secure in the 1930's, Frankl was cast into the Nazi network of concentration camps. Miraculously, he survived. But his account in this book is less about his travails, what he suffered and lost, then it is about the sources of his strength to survive. Several times in the course of the book, Frankl approvingly quotes the words of Nietzsche: "He who has a Why to live for can bear almost any How." He describes poignantly those prisoners who gave up on life, who had lost all hope for the future and were inevitably the first to die. They died less from lack of food or medicine than from lack of hope, lack of something to live for. By contrast, Frankl kept himself alive and kept hope alive by summoning up thoughts of his wife and the prospect of seeing her again, and by dreaming at one point of lecturing after the war about the psychological lessons to be learned from the camp experience. Clearly, many prisoners who desperately wanted to live did die, some from disease, some in crematoria. But Frankl's concern is less with the question of why most died than it is with the question of why anyone survived.

Terrible as it was, his experience in the camps reinforced what was already one of his key ideas: Life is not primarily a quest for pleasure, as Freud believed, or a quest for power, as Alfred Adler thought, but a quest for meaning in his or her life. Frankl saw these possible sources for meaning in work (doing something significant), in love (caring for another person), and in courage during difficult times. Suffering in and of itself is meaningless, we give our suffering meaning by the way in which we respond to it. At one point he writes that a person "May remain brave, dignified and unselfish, or in the bitter fight for self-preservation he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal." He concedes that only a few prisoners of the Nazis were able to do the former, "but even one such example is sufficient proof that man's inner strength may rise him above his outward fate."

Now to conclude this section, allow me to cite one of Mr. Frankl's most enduring insight. One that I call on often in my own life and the prison environment that surrounds me. "Forces beyond your control can take away everything you possess except one thing, your freedom to choose how you will respond to the situation. You cannot control what happens to you in life, but you can always control what you will feel and do about what happens to you."

Another of the many insightful passages of this book is the following: "Don't aim at success- the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the un-intended side-effect of one's dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one's surrender to a person other than oneself. Happiness must happen, and the same holds for success: you have to let it happen by not caring about it."

And in another passage attributed to Dr. Dostoevski's statement that flatly defines man as a being who can get used to anything, Mr. Frankl would reply; "Yes a man can get used to anything, but do not ask us how..."

Once while enduring the arduous trek to the work site, Frankl's wife came to mind and he reflected this, "A thought

transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth- that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love. I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved in a position of utter desolation, when man cannot express himself in positive action, when his only achievement may consist in enduring his suffering in the right way- in such a position man can, through loving contemplation of the image he carries of his beloved, achieve fulfillment. For the first time I was able to understand the meaning of the words, "The angels are lost in perpetual contemplation of an infinite glory."

The next passage confirms and reinforces one of Mr. Frankl's enduring insights. "In attempting this psychological presentation and psychopathological explanation of the typical characteristics of a concentration camp inmate, I may give the impression that the human being is completely and unavoidably influenced by his surroundings. (In this case the surroundings being the unique structure of camp life, which forced the prisoner to conform his conduct to a certain set pattern.) But what about human liberty? Is there no spiritual freedom in regard to behavior and reaction to any given surroundings? Is that theory true which would have us believe that man is no more than a product of many conditional and environmental factors- be they of biological, psychological or sociological nature? Is man but an accidental product of these? Most important, do the prisoners' reactions to the singular world of the concentration camp prove that man cannot escape the influences of his surroundings? Does man have no choice of action in the face of such circumstances?

"We answer these questions from experience as well as on principle. The experiences of camp life show that man does have a choice of action. There were enough examples, often of heroic nature, which proved that apathy could be overcome, irritability suppressed. Man can preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom, of independence of mind, even in such terrible conditions of psychic and physical stress.

"We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: The last of the human freedoms- to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's way and refuse to become the plaything of circumstance, renouncing freedom and dignity to become molded into the form of the typical inmate."

Another very poignant passage that awoke my sentiments truly was the following where Dr. Frankl had to search deeply for his inner strength to persevere. "I remember a personal experience. Almost in pain from pain (I had terrible sores on my feet from wearing torn shoes), I limped a few kilometers with our long column of men from the camp to our worksite. Very cold bitter winds struck us. I kept thinking of the endless little problems of our miserable life. What would there be to eat tonight? If a piece of sausage came as an extra ration, should I exchange it for a piece of bread? Should I trade my last cigarette, which was left from a bonus I received a fortnight ago, for a bowl of soup? How could I get a piece of wire to replace the fragment which served as one of my shoelaces? Would I get to our worksite in time to join my usual working party or would I have to join another, which might have a brutal foreman? What could I do to get on good terms with the capo, who could help me to obtain work in camp instead of undertaking this horribly long daily march?

"I became disgusted with the state of affairs which compelled me, daily, hourly, to think of only such trivial things. I forced my thoughts to turn to another subject. Suddenly I saw myself standing on the platform of a well-lit, warm and pleasant lecture room. In front of me sat an attentive audience on comfortable upholstered seats. I was giving a lecture on the psychology of the concentration camp! All that oppressed me at that moment became objective, seen and described from the remote viewpoint of science. By this method I succeeded somehow in rising above the situation, above the sufferings of the moment, and I observed them as if they were already the past. Both I and my troubles became the object of an interesting psychoscientific study under-

taken by myself. What does Spinoza say in his ethics? 'Emotion, which is suffering, ceases to be suffering as soon as we form a clear and precise picture of it.'

Another truly interesting and thoughtful passage in Dr. Frankl's book is the following. "I remember two cases of would be suicide, which bore a striking similarity to each other. Both men had talked of their intentions to commit suicide. Both used the typical argument- they had nothing to expect from life. In both cases it was a question of them to realize that life was still expecting something from them; something in the future was expected of them. We found that, in fact, that for the one it was his child whom he adored and who was waiting for him in a foreign country. For the other it was a thing, not a person. This man was a scientist and had written a series of books which still needed to be finished. His work could not be done by anyone else, any more than any person could ever take the place of the father in his child's affection.

"This uniqueness and singleness which distinguishes each individual and gives a meaning to his existence has a bearing on creative work as much as it does on human love. When the impossibility of replacing a person is realized, it allows the responsibility which a man has for his existence and its continuance to appear in all its magnitude. A man who becomes conscious of the responsibility he bears toward a human being who affectionately waits for him, or to an unfinished work, will never be able to throw away his life. He knows the "Why" for his existence, and will be able to bear any "How."

There was a day in the life of the prisoners that a theft of a few pounds of potatoes were stolen from the storage by a semi-starved individual. Once it was discovered and the 2,500 other prisoners refused to give up the "thief" (since he could have been hung to death for such action), it was sanctioned that they would all fast for a day. To make matters worse, while the irritated prisoners lay about in their huts, the lights went out. Tempers flared, but the senior block warden improvised a talk about how many comrades had died in the last few days either of sickness or of suicide. But he also mentioned what may have been the real reason for their deaths: giving up hope. He then pointed to Frankl to give advice on how to help future

victims from reaching this extreme state. Although cold, hungry, irritable, tired and not in the mood; this is what he said.

"Each one of us asks ourselves what irreplaceable losses we had suffered up to then. I speculated that for most of us the losses really had been few. Whoever was still alive had reason to hope. Health, family, happiness, professional abilities, fortune, position in society- all these were things that could be achieved again or restored. After all, we still had our bones intact. Whatever we had gone through could still be an asset to us in the future. Then I quoted Nietzsche: 'That which does not kill me, makes me stronger.'

"Then I spoke about the future. I said that to the impartial the future must seem hopeless. I agreed that each of us could guess for himself how small were his chances of survival. I told them that although there was still no typhus epidemic in the camp, I estimated my own chances at about one in twenty. But I also told them that, in spite of this, I had no intention of losing hope and giving up. For no man knew what the future would bring, much less the next hour. Even if we could not expect any sensational military events in the next few days, who knows better than we, with our experience of camps, how great chances sometimes opened up, quite suddenly, at least for the individual. For instance, one might be attached unexpectedly to a special group with exceptionally good working conditions- for this was the kind of thing which constituted the 'luck' of the prisoner.

"But I did not only talk of the future and the veil which was drawn over it. I also mentioned the past; all its joys, and how its light shone even in the present darkness. Again I quoted a poet- 'What you have experienced, no power on earth can take from you.' Not only your experiences, but all we have done, whatever great thoughts we may have had, and all we have suffered, all this is not lost, though it is past; we have brought it into being. Having been also a kind being, and perhaps the surest kind.

"Then I spoke of the many opportunities of giving life a meaning. I told my comrades (who lay motionless, although occasionally a sigh could be heard) that human life, under any circumstances, never ceases to have a meaning, and that this infinite meaning of life includes suffering and dying, privation and death. I asked the poor creatures who listened to me attentively

vely in the darkness of the hut to face up to the seriousness of our position. They must not lose hope but should keep their courage in the certainty that the hopelessness of our struggle did not detract from its dignity and its meaning. I said that someone looks on each of us in difficult hours- a friend, a wife, somebody alive or dead, or a God- and he would not expect us to disappoint him. He would hope to find us suffering proudly- not miserably- knowing how to die.

"And finally I spoke of our sacrifice, which had meaning in every case. It was the nature of this sacrifice that should appear to be pointless in the normal world, the world of material success. But in reality our sacrifice did have a meaning. Those of us who had any religious faith, I said frankly, could understand without difficulty. I told them of a comrade who on his arrival in camp had tried to make a pact with heaven that his suffering and death should save the human being he loved from a painful end. For this man, suffering and death were meaningful; his was a sacrifice of the deepest significance. He did not want to die for nothing. None of us wanted that.

"The purpose of my words was to find a full meaning in our life, then and there, in that hut and in that practically hopeless situation. I saw that my efforts had been successful. When the electricity bulb flared up again, I saw the miserable figures of my friends limping toward me to thank me with tears in their eyes. But I have to confess here that only rarely had I the inner strength to make contact with my companions in suffering and that I must have missed many opportunities for doing so."

To me this is a very poignant and thought provoking passage; especially the part where there is always someone or something that looks at us and does not expect disappointment. Mr. Frankl then continues in his elaboration with the following: "It is apparent that the mere knowledge that a man was either a camp guard or a prisoner tells us almost nothing. Human kindness can be found in all groups, even those which as a whole it would be easy to condemn. The boundaries between groups overlapped and we must not try to simplify matters by saying that these men were angels and those were devils. Certainly, it was a considerable achievement for a guard or foreman to be kind to the

prisoners in spite of all the camp's influences, and, on the other hand, the baseness of a prisoner who treated his own companion badly was exceptionally contemptible. Obviously the prisoners found the lack of character in such men especially upsetting, while they were profoundly moved by the smallest kindness received from any of the guards. I remember how one day a foreman secretly gave me a piece of bread which I knew he must have saved from his breakfast ration. It was far more than the small piece of bread which moved me to tears at the time. It was the human "something" which this man also gave to me- the word and look which accompanied the gift."

I could continue citing life changing passages from Mr. Frankl's "A Man's Search For Meaning", but will halt here and allow the reader's desire and curiosity to prevail. However, I feel compelled to- despite this book having countless inspiring passages- make a mention of the one passage I found most noble and divinely karmic.

In the early years of the war, Mr. Frankl was a successful, married, and renown individual to the point that the American Consulate in Vienna offered him a visa to leave the country and conclude his writing on logotherapy; yet, for the sake of his aging parents he refused and allowed the visa to lapse! That, to me, is the action of a very valiant and true loving son. May the Lord keep him in His glory always!

Thank you all for your time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## QUOTES AND MAXIMS GALORE

- \*- Nothing in the world has power over you until you allow it to exercise such power.
- \*- There is never iustification for unkindness.
- \*- Spirituality without compassion is just another mind game.
- \*- A positive attitude enables a person to endure suffering and disappointment as well as enhance eniovmnt and satisfaction.
- \*- A negative attitude intensifies pain and deepens disappointment: it undermines and diminishes pleasure, happiness, and satisfaction, it may even lead to depression or physical illness.
- \*- Life is 10% what happens to me and 90% of how I reacted to it.
- \*- Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That's why it's called the present.
- \*- A goal without a plan is just a wish.
- \*- Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life.
- \*- A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.
- \*- Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value.
- \*- A true teacher has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others.
- \*- Lead me, follow me, or get out of my way.
- \*- Trying to please everyone is a formula for failure.
- \*- It's not the years in your life that counts, it's the life in your years.
- \*- That which does not kill me makes me stronger.
- \*- What you have experienced, no power on earth can take from you.
- \*- In difficult times, someone looks to us- a friend, a wife, a progeny, somebody alive or dead, or a God- and they would not expect us to disappoint them. They would expect to find us suffering proudly- not miserably- knowing how to die.
- \*- Nothing has power over the Self until the Self becomes a fool and loses independence.
- \*- Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars.

- \*- The mind is everything. What you think you become.
- \*- Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment.
- \*- The two most important days in your life are the day you were born and the day you find out why.
- \*- There's only one way to avoid criticism: do nothing, say nothing, and be nothing.
- \*- Change your thoughts and you change your world.
- \*- You are not defined by your past. You are prepared by your past.
- \*- What you do has a far greater impact than what you say.
- \*- A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.
- \*- We become what we think about.
- \*- No one is really taught by another; each of us has to teach himself. The teacher offers only suggestion, which arouses the internal teacher, who helps us to understand things. Then things will be made clear to us by our own power of perception and thought, and we shall realize them in our own souls.
- \*- The more one forgets himself by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love- the more human he is and more he actualizes himself.
- \*- What is called self-actualization is not an attainable aim at all, for the simple reason that the more one would strive for it, the more he would miss it.
- \*- Self-actualization is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence.
- \*- Three ways to discover the meaning of life; 1-by creating work or doing a deed. 2-by experiencing something or encountering someone. 3-by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering.
- \*- All that really belongs to us is time; even he who has nothing else has that.
- \*- An unexamined life is not worth living.
- \*- Believe you can and you're halfway there.
- \*- Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment.
- \*- Either you run the day or the day runs you.
- \*- Everything you've ever wanted is on the other side of fear.
- \*- Every strike brings you closer to the next home run.
- \*- Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions.

- \*- Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a stroke of luck.
- \*- If you look at what you have in life, you'll always have more.
- \*- If you look at what you don't have in life, you'll never have enough.
- \*- In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock.
- \*- It's better to do the right thing slowly than the wrong thing quickly.
- \*- Nothing is a waste of time if you use the experience wisely.
- \*- Money, I can only gain or lose. But time I can only lose. So I must spend it carefully.
- \*- Leadership is the art to get someone to do something because he wants to do it.
- \*- The supreme quality of leadership is integrity.
- \*- Obstacles are those frightful things you see when your eyes come off your goal.
- \*- The best revenge is a massive success.
- \*- Until tough is linked with purpose there is no intelligent accomplishment.
- \*- Vision without action is a daydream.
- \*- Praise and blame are a yogi's foes. Do not try to spread your fame.
- \*- Conceal your merits as you conceal your wealth. Your defects are obstacles; let them be criticized.
- \*- It does not matter if the world knows your defeats, but virtues are better concealed.
- \*- Love and do what you will.
- \*- He who has a Why to live for can bear almost any How.
- \*- When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left and could say, I used everything that you gave me.
- \*- You may be disappointed if you fail, but you are doomed if you don't try.
- \*- Everything has beauty, but not everyone can see.
- \*- Change is the law of life. And those that look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.

- \*- I attribute my success to this: I never gave or took any excuse.
- \*- In a day, when you don't come across any problem- you can be sure that you are traveling in a wrong path.
- \*- It is absurd that a man should rule others, who cannot rule himself.
- \*- It is never too late to be who you might have been.
- \*- Life is full of obstacle illusions.
- \*- Never let yesterday use up today.
- \*- What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?
- \*- First keep the peace with yourself, then you can also bring peace to others.
- \*- People think love is an emotion. Love is a good sense.
- \*- Live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had already acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now!
- \*- Patience creates confidence, decisiveness and a rational outlook, which eventually leads to success. Impatience breeds anxiety, fear, discouragement, and failure.
- \*- Nothing happens until something moves.
- \*- Remember that no one could make you feel inferior without your consent.
- \*- There are no shortcuts to any place worth going.
- \*- Time is a great teacher, but unfortunately it kills all its pupils.
- \*- You can't change the past, but you can ruin the present by worrying about the future.
- \*- If people believe in themselves, it's amazing what they can accomplish.
- \*- Time will take your money, but money won't buy time.
- \*- Work like there is someone working 24 hours a day to take it away from you.
- \*- This too shall pass.
- \*- The surest way to be late is to have plenty of time.
- \*- The last of the human freedoms- to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.
- \*- There's only one thing that I dread: not to be worthy of my sufferings.

- \*- What you have experienced, no power on earth could take from you.
- \*- Only the curious will learn and only the resolute overcome the obstacles to learning.
- \*- We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us.
- \*- Wear your learning like a watch, in a private pocket; and do not pull it out and strike it, merely to show off.
- \*- The most important function of education at any level is to develop the personality of the individual and the significance of his/her life to himself/herself and others.
- \*- Never feel guilty about having warm human feelings toward anyone.
- \*- Our emotions are a yo-yo's: sometimes they're up, sometimes they're down. Yo-yo's are fun to play with, but who is holding the string? (You must be more than the string- be it the string of your heart, or the string of the yo-yo).
- \*- You are entirely your own- although the entire world will happily participate with you.
- \*- The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is comprehensible.
- \*- There is more of nothing than something, even in things that appear to have more of something than nothing.
- \*- The only good is knowledge, and the only evil is ignorance.
- \*- Successful people are good because they've come to wisdom by learning from failure.
- \*- Be wiser than other people, if you can, but do not tell them so.
- \*- A boy becomes an adult three years before his parents think he does, and about two years after he thinks he does.
- \*- Pick battles big enough to matter, small enough to win.
- \*- Let us, then, be upon doing, with a heart for any fate; still achieving, still perusing. Learn to labor and to wait.
- \*- If you do not wish to be prone to anger, do not feed the habit; give it nothing which may tend to its increase. At first, keep quiet and count the days when you're not angry.
- \*- When you make a mistake, admit to it. If you don't, you only make matters worse.
- \*- When we see a person of a contrary character; we should turn inwards and examine ourselves.

- \*- In the darkest hour the soul is replenished and given strength to continue and endure.
- \*- The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked, it has no choice, it will roll in ecstasy at your feet.
- \*- Imagination is more important than knowledge.
- \*- A problem is a chance for you to do your best.
- \*- Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes.
- \*- Never give up your right to be wrong, because then you will lose the ability to learn new things and move forward in your life.
- \*- Confronting your fears and allowing yourself the right to be human can, paradoxically, make you a far happier and more productive person.
- \*- Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to understanding ourselves.
- \*- Everyone has talent. What is rare is the courage to follow talent to the dark place where it leads.
- \*- Death is a friend of ours; and that he/she is not ready to entertain him is not at home.
- \*- The purpose of life is a life of purpose.
- \*- The greatest pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do.
- \*- The great aim in education is not knowledge but action.
- \*- Most people can do extraordinary things if they have the confidence or take the risks.
- \*- Nobody, as long as he/she moves about among the chaotic currents of life, is without trouble.
- \*- Victory belongs to the most persevering.
- \*- Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. Security does not exist in nature.
- \*- A coward dies a hundred deaths, a brave man/woman dies only once.... But then, once is enough, isn't it?
- \*- Health is the state about which medicine has nothing to say.
- \*- I don't have a warm personal enemy left. They're all died off.  
I miss them terribly because they helped define me.

"THE POWER OF NOW"

After writing extensively and continuously in reference to the benefits and "awakening" of meditation (Practice, Practice, Practice; Questions and Answers; Acceptance; Finding Yourself; Religion/Spirituality #1-#2; Silence...) and reflecting in silence I've come across a truly inspiring writing by a notable and impressive spiritual teacher, Mr. Eckhart Tolle. In his book by the same name as the title of this essay, Mr. Eckhart explains in a much more succinct, extensive, precise, and convincing manner on how "surrendering" to the Now may and will cause the much talked about and sought after enlightenment.

Additionally, the format of his book is not a common one because it uses a question and answer strategy and in that way placate and prove to the ignorant, skeptic, and naysayer that such power does exist. And by yours truly being a testament to such fact, I decided that Mr. Eckhart's wisdom deserves and is worthy of praise; therefore, the reason for the following. Yet, since the length and clarity of my essays are of essence, I will simply note the more resonant, to me, questions, shorten his responses with very few- if any- interjections because the lector may find common sentiments in my previous writings and in this manner the lector may be inspired into acquiring such profound and truly inspiring lecture.

The first inquiry Mr. Eckhart responds to is:  
Enlightenment- What is that?

To answer this question, Mr. Eckhart cites the parable of the beggar who is sitting, for as long as he can remember,

atop a box that to his ignorance is filled with gold but begs a stranger for some spare change. I am not going to recite the parable but will provide you with Mr. Eckhart's answer: I am that stranger who has nothing to give you and who is telling you to look inside. Not inside the box, but somewhere even closer; inside yourself.

BUT I'M NOT A BEGGAR, YOU MAY SAY.

Those who have not found their true wealth, which is the radiant joy of Being and the deep unshakeable peace that comes with it, are beggars, even if they have great material wealth....

The word enlightenment conjures up the idea of some superhuman accomplishment, and the ego likes to keep it that way, but it is simply your natural state of Felt oneness with Being....

The Buddha's simple definition of enlightenment being the end of suffering.

WHAT IS THE GREATEST OBSTACLE TO EXPERIENCING THIS REALITY?

Identification/Attachment with your mind, which causes thought to become compulsive. Not to be able to stop thinking is a dreadful affliction, but we don't realize this because almost everybody is suffering from it, so it's considered normal....

The mind is a superb instrument if used correctly. Used wrongly, however, it becomes very destructive. To put it more accurately, it is not so much that you use your mind wrongly-

you usually don't use it at all. It uses you.

I DON'T QUITE AGREE. IT'S TRUE THAT I DO A LOT OF AIMLESS THINKING, LIKE MOST PEOPLE, BUT I CAN STILL CHOSE TO USE MY MIND TO ACCOMPLISH THINGS, AND I DO THAT ALL THE TIME.

Just because you can do a crossword puzzle or build an atom bomb doesn't mean that you use your mind. Just as dogs love to chew bones, the mind loves to get its teeth into problems. That's why it does crossword puzzles and builds atom bombs. You have no interest in either. Let me ask you this: Can you free your mind whenever you want to? Have you found the "off" button?

YOU MEAN STOP THINKING ALTOGETHER? NO, I CAN'T, EXCEPT FOR A MOMENT OR TWO.

Then the mind is using you. You are unconsciously identified/attached with it, so you don't even know that you are its slave....

The moment you start watching "the thinker" a higher level of consciousness becomes activated.

WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU MEAN BY "WATCHING THE THINKER"?

....Pay particular attention to any repetitive thought patterns. Listen to your thoughts. Be there as a witness. Be impartial. Do not judge or condemn what you hear. You will soon realize the sense of your own presence. It is not a thought. It arises from beyond the mind. So when you listen to a thought, you are aware not only of the thought but also of yourself as the witness of the thought. A new dimension of

consciousness has come in. As you listen to the thought, you feel a conscious presence- your deeper Self....

.....You have probably come across "mad" people in the streets incessantly talking or muttering to themselves. Well, that's not much different from what you and all other "normal" people do, except that you don't do it out loud. The voice comments, speculates, judges, compares, complains, likes, dislikes, and so on. The voice isn't necessarily relevant to the situation you find yourself in at the time, it may be reviving the recent or distant past or rehearsing or imagining possible future situations. Here it often imagines things going wrong and negative outcomes; this is called worry....

The good thing is that you can free yourself from your mind. This is the only liberation. You can take the step right Now. Start listening to the voice in your head as often as you can. Pay particular attention to any repetitive thought pattern....

Instead of "watching the thinker" you can also create a gap in the mind stream supply by directing the focus of your attention into the Now. Just become intensely conscious of the present moment.- I do so by focusing on my deep diaphragmatic breathing or my heart beat- This is a deeply satisfying thing to do. In this way, you draw consciousness away from activity and create a gap of no mind in which you are highly alert and aware but not thinking. This is the essence of meditation...

Once you have understood the basic principle of being present as the watcher of what happens inside you- and you "understand" it by experiencing it- you have at your disposal

the most potent transformation tool....

WHEN YOU SAY BEING, ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT GOD? IF YOU ARE, THEN WHY DON'T YOU SAY IT?

This particular inquiry is truly resonating to me because I have thought and written much about it and Mr. Eckhart's rendition has dearly strengthened my perspective and thus, here is part of his reply.

The word God has become empty of meaning through thousands of years of misuse. I use it sometimes, but I do so sparingly. By misuse, I mean that people who have never even glimpsed the realm of the sacred, the infinite vastness behind that word, use it with great conviction, as if they knew what they are talking about. Or they argue against it, as if they knew what they are denying. This misuse gives rise to absurd beliefs, assertions, and egoic delusions, such as "my God or our God is the only true God and your God is false." Or Nietzsche's famous statement "God is dead".....

Neither the word God nor Being or any other word can define or explain the ineffable reality behind the word, so the only important question is whether the word is a help or a hindrance in enabling you to experience THAT to which it points.

The word Being explains nothing, but nor does the word God. Being, however, has the advantage that it is an open concept. It does not reduce the infinite invisible to a finite entity. It is impossible to form a mental image of it. Nobody can claim exclusive possession of Being. It is your very essence....

I DON'T SEE HOW I CAN BE HERE NOW. AS IT HAPPENS, I AM EXTREMELY UNHAPPY WITH MY LIFE AT THE MOMENT. THIS IS A FACT, AND I WOULD BE DELUDING MYSELF IF I TRIED TO CONVINCE MYSELF THAT ALL IS WELL WHEN IT ISN'T. TO ME, THE PRESENT MOMENT IS VERY UNHAPPY; IT IS NOT LIBERATING AT ALL, WHAT KEEPS ME GOING IS THE HOPE OR POSSIBILITY OF SOMETHING IMPROVING IN THE FUTURE.

You think that your attention is in the present moment when actually it's taken up completely by time. You cannot be unhappy and truly present in the Now.

What you refer to as your "life" should more accurately be called your "life situation." It is psychological time: past and future. Certain things in the past didn't go the way you wanted. You are still resisting what happened in the past, and now you are still resisting what is. Hope is what keeps you going, but hope keeps you focused in the future, and this continued focus perpetuates your denial of the Now and therefore your unhappiness.

IT IS TRUE THAT MY PRESENT LIFE SITUATION IS THE RESULT OF THINGS THAT HAPPENED IN THE PAST, BUT IT IS STILL MY PRESENT SITUATION, AND BEING STUCK IN IT IS WHAT MAKES ME UNHAPPY.

Forget about your life situation for a while and pay attention to your life.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

Life situation exists in time.

Your life is Now.

Your life situation is mind-stuff.

Your life is real....

HOW DO YOU DROP NEGATIVITY AS YOU SUGGEST?

By dropping it. How do you drop a piece of hot coal that you are holding in your hand? How do you drop some heavy and useless baggage that you are carrying? By recognizing that you don't want to suffer the pain or carry the burden any more, then letting go of it....

CAN YOU GIVE SOME MORE EXAMPLES OF ORDINARY UNCONSCIOUSNESS?

See if you can catch yourself complaining, in either speech or thought, about a situation you find yourself in, what other people do or say, your surroundings, your life situation, even the weather. To complain is always non-acceptance of what is. It invariably carries an unconscious negative charge. When you complain, you make yourself a victim. When you speak out, you are in your power. So change the situation by taking action or by speaking out if necessary or possible, leave the situation, or accept it. All else is Madness....

The Past Cannot Survive in your Presence.

YOU MENTIONED THAT THINKING OR TALKING ABOUT THE PAST UNNECESSARILY IS ONE WAY IN WHICH WE AVOID THE PRESENT. BUT APART FROM THE PAST THAT WE REMEMBER AND PERHAPS IDENTIFY WITH, ISN'T THERE ANOTHER LEVEL OF PAST WITHIN US THAT IS MUCH

MORE DEEP-SEATED? I AM TALKING ABOUT THE UNCONSCIOUS PAST THAT CONDITIONS OUR LIVES, ESPECIALLY THROUGH EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES. AND THEN THERE IS OUR CULTURAL CONDITIONING WHICH HAS TO DO WITH WHERE WE LIVE GEOGRAPHICALLY AND THE HISTORICAL TIME PERIOD IN WHICH WE LIVE. ALL THESE THINGS DETERMINE HOW WE SEE THE WORLD, HOW WE LIVE OUR LIVES. HOW COULD WE BECOME CONSCIOUS OF ALL THAT OR GET RID OF IT? HOW LONG WOULD THAT TAKE? AND EVEN IF WE DID, WHAT WOULD THERE BE LEFT?

What happens when illusion ends?

There is no need to investigate the unconscious past in you except as it manifest at this moment as a thought, an emotion, a desire, a reaction, or an external event that happens to you. Whatever you need to know about the unconscious past in you, the challenges of the present will bring it out. If you drive into the past, it will become a bottomless pit....

WHAT IS THE POWER OF NOW?

None other than the power of your presence, your unconsciousness liberated from thought forms.

So deal with the past on the level of the present. The more attention you give the past, the more you energize it. Don't misunderstand: Attention is essential, but not to the past as past. Give attention to the present, give attention to your behavior, your reactions, moods, thoughts, emotions, fears, and desires as they occur in the present. There's the past in you. If you can be present enough to watch all these things, not critically or analytically but non-judgmentally, then you are dealing with the past and dissolving it through

the power of your presence. You cannot find yourself by going into the past, you find yourself by coming into the present.

YOU KEEP TALKING ABOUT THE STATE OF PRESENCE AS THE KEY. I THINK I UNDERSTAND IT INTELLECTUALLY, BUT I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE EVER TRULY EXPERIENCED IT. I WONDER- IS IT WHAT I THINK IT IS, OR IS IT SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT?

It is not what you think it is! You cannot think about presence, and the mind can't understand it. Understanding presence is being present.

Try a little experiment. Close your eyes and say to yourself: "I wonder what my next thought is going to be?" Then become very alert and wait for the next thought. Be like a cat watching a mouse hole. What thought is going to come out of the mouse hole? Try it now.

Well?

I had to wait quite a long time before a thought came in.

Exactly. As long as you are in a state of intense presence, you are free of thought. You are still, yet highly alert....

#### Strengthening the Immune System

Another benefit of this practice in the physical realm is a great strengthening of the immune system, which occurs when you inhabit the body. The more consciousness you bring into the body, the stronger the immune system becomes. It is as if every cell awakens and rejoices. The body loves your attention. It is also a potent form of self-healing. Most

illnesses creep in when you are not present in the body. If the master is not present in the house, all kinds of shady characters will take up residence there. When you inhabit your body, it will be hard for unwanted guests to enter.

It is not only your physical immune system that becomes strengthened, your psychic immune system is greatly enhanced as well. The latter protects you from the negative mental-emotional force fields of others, which are highly contagious. Inhabiting the body protects you by not putting up a shield, but by raising the frequency vibration of your total energy field, so that anything that vibrates at a lower frequency, such as fear, anger, depression, and so on, now exists in what is virtually a different order of reality. It doesn't enter your field of consciousness anymore, or if it does you don't need to offer any resistance to it because it passes right through you. Please just don't accept or reject what I am saying, put it to the test....

I CAN FEEL THE ENERGY INSIDE MY BODY, ESPECIALLY IN MY ARMS AND LEGS, BUT I DON'T SEEM TO BE ABLE TO GO MORE DEEPLY, AS YOU SUGGESTED EARLIER.

Make it into a meditation. It shouldn't take long. Ten to fifteen minutes of clock time should be sufficient. Make sure first that there are no distractions. Sit on a chair, but don't lean back. Keep the spine erect. Doing so will help you stay alert. Alternatively, choose your own favorite position for meditation.

Once the body is relaxed. Close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths. Feel yourself breathing into the lower abdomen,

as it were. Observe how it expands and contracts slightly with each in and out breath. Then become aware of the entire inner energy field of your body. Don't think about it. Feel it....

I SUPPOSE THAT IT TAKES TWO TO MAKE A RELATIONSHIP INTO A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE AS YOU SUGGEST. FOR EXAMPLE, MY PARTNER IS STILL ACTING OUT HIS OLD PATTERNS OF JEALOUSY AND CONTROL. I HAVE POINTED THIS OUT MANY TIMES, BUT HE IS UNABLE TO SEE IT.

How many people does it take to make your life into a spiritual practice? Never mind if your partner will not cooperate. Sanity- Consciousness- can only come into this world through you. You do not need to wait for the world to become sane, or for somebody else to become conscious, before you can be enlightened. You may wait forever. Do not accuse each other of being unconscious. The moment you start to argue, you have identified with a mental position and are now defending not only that position but also your sense of Self. The ego is in charge. You have become unconscious....

IS IT TRUE THAT YOU NEED TO HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH YOURSELF BEFORE YOU CAN HAVE A FULFILLING RELATIONSHIP WITH ANOTHER PERSON?

If you cannot be at ease with yourself when you are alone, you will seek a relationship to cover up your unease. You can be sure that the unease will then reappear in some other form within the relationship and you will probably hold your partner responsible for it.

All you really need to do is accept the moment fully. You

are at ease in the here and Now and at ease with yourself.

But do you need to have a relationship with yourself at all? Why can't you just be yourself? When you have a relationship with yourself, you have split yourself into two: "I" and "myself," subject and object. That mind-created duality is the root cause of all unnecessary complexity, of all problems and conflict in your life. In the state of enlightenment, you are yourself- "You" and "yourself" merge into one. You do not judge yourself, you do not feel sorry for yourself, you are not proud of yourself, you do not love yourself, you do not hate yourself, and so on. The split caused by self-reflective consciousness is healed, its curse removed. There is no "self" that you need to protect, defend, or feed anymore. When you are enlightened, there is one relationship that you no longer have: the relationship with yourself. Once you have given that up, all your relationships will be love relationships.

IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAPPINESS AND INNER PEACE?

Yes. Happiness depends on conditions being perceived as positive. Inner peace does not.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO ATTRACT ONLY POSITIVE CONDITIONS INTO OUR LIFE? IF OUR ATTITUDE AND OUR THINKING ARE ALWAYS POSITIVE, WE WOULD MANIFEST ONLY POSITIVE EVENTS AND SITUATIONS, WOULDN'T WE?

Do you truly know what is positive and what is negative? Do you have a total picture? There have been many for whom

limitation, failure, loss, illness, or pain in whatever form turned out to be their greatest teacher. It taught them to let go of false self-images and superficial ego-dictated goals and desires. It gave them depth, humility, and compassion. It made them more real.

Whenever anything negative happens to you, there is a deep lesson concealed within it, although you may not see it at the time. Even a brief illness or an accident can show you what is real and unreal in your life, what ultimately matters and what doesn't.

Seen from a higher perspective, conditions are always positive. To be more precise: they are never positive or negative. They are as they are. And when you live in complete acceptance of what is- which is the only sane way to live- there is no "good" or "bad" in your life anymore....

THIS SOUNDS TO ME LIKE DENIAL AND SELF-DECEPTION.  
WHEN SOMETHING DREADFUL HAPPENS TO ME OR SOMEONE CLOSE TO ME-  
ACCIDENT, ILLNESS, PAIN OF SOME KIND, OR DEATH- I CAN PRETEND  
THAT IT ISN'T BAD, BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT IT IS BAD, SO WHY  
DENY IT?

You are not pretending anything, you are allowing it to be as it is. This "allowing it to be" takes you beyond the mind with its resistance patterns that create the positive-negative polarities. It is an essential aspect of forgiveness. Forgiveness of the present is ever more important than forgiveness of the past. If you forgive every moment- allow it to be as it is- then there will be no accumulation of resentment that needs to be forgiven at a later time.

AGAIN, WHAT IS THE GREATEST OBSTACLE TO EXPERIENCING THIS REALITY?

And again, identification/attachment with your mind, which causes you to become compulsive. Not to be able to stop thinking is a dreadful affliction, but we do not realize this because almost everybody is suffering from it, so it is considered normal.

This incessant mental noise prevents you from finding that realm of inner stillness that is inseparable from Being....

The philosopher Descartes believed he had found the most fundamental truth when he made his famous statement: "I think, therefore I am." He had in fact given expression to the most basic errors: to equate thinking with Being and identify it with thinking. The compulsive thinker, which means almost everyone, lives in a state of separation, in an insanely complex world of continuous problems and conflict, a world that reflects the ever increasing fragmentation of the mind. Enlightenment is a state of wholeness, of being "at one" and therefore at peace....

THE PRESENT MOMENT IS SOMETIMES UNACCEPTABLE, UNPLEASANT, OR AWFUL.

It is as it is. Observe how the mind labels it and how this labeling process, this continuous sitting in judgment, creates pain and unhappiness. By watching the mechanics of the mind, you step out of its resistance patterns and you can then allow the present moment to be. This will give you a taste of

the inner freedom from external conditions, the state of true inner peace. Then see what happens, and take action if necessary or possible.

Accept- then act. Whatever the present moment contains, accept it as if you had chosen it. Always work with it, not against it. Make it your friend and ally, not your enemy. This will miraculously transform your whole life.

AREN'T PAST AND FUTURE JUST AS REAL, SOMETIMES EVEN MORE REAL THEN THE PRESENT? AFTER ALL, THE PAST DETERMINES WHO YOU ARE, AS WELL AS HOW WE PERCEIVE AND BEHAVE IN THE PRESENT. AND OUR FUTURE GOALS DETERMINE WHICH ACTIONS WE TAKE IN THE PRESENT.

You haven't yet grasped the essence of what I'm saying because you are trying to understand it mentally. The mind cannot understand this. Only you can. Please just listen.

Have you ever experienced, thought, or felt anything outside the Now? Do you think you ever will? Is it possible for anything to happen outside the Now? The answer is obvious, is it not?

Nothing ever happened in the past, it happened in the Now.

Nothing will ever happen in the future, it will happen in the Now.

What you think of the past is a memory trace, stored in the mind, of a former Now. When you remember the past, you activate a memory trace- and you do so Now. The future is an imagined Now, a projection of the mind. When the future comes, it comes as the Now. When you think about the future, you do

it Now. Past and future obviously have no reality of their own. Their reality is "borrowed" from the Now.

The essence of what I'm saying here cannot be understood by the mind. The moment you grasp it, there is a shift in consciousness from the mind to Being, from time to presence. Suddenly everything feels alive, radiates energy, emanates Being.

#### Letting go of Psychological Time

Learn to use time in the practical aspects of your life- we may call this "clock time"- but immediately return to the present moment awareness when those practical matters have been dealt with. That way there's no build up of "psychological time", which is identification with the past and continuous compulsive projection into the future.

Clock time is not just making an appointment or planning a trip. It includes learning from the past so that we don't repeat the same mistakes over and over. Setting goals and working toward them. Predicting the future by means of patterns and laws, physical, mathematical, and so on. Learned from the past and taking appropriate action on the basis of our predictions.

But even here, within the sphere of practical living, where we cannot do without reference to past and future, the present moment remains the essential factor. Any lesson from the past becomes relevant and is applied Now. Any planning as well as working toward achieving a particular goal is done Now....

Remember that we are not talking about happiness here. For example, when a loved one has died, or you feel your own death approaching, you cannot be happy. It is impossible. But you can be at peace. There may be sadness and tears, but provided that you have relinquished resistance, underneath the sadness you will feel a deep serenity, a stillness, a sacred presence. This is the emanation of Being, this inner peace, the good that has no opposite.

WHAT IF IT IS A SITUATION THAT I CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT? HOW CAN I ALLOW IT TO BE AND CHANGE IT AT THE SAME TIME?

Do what you have to do. In the meantime, accept what is. Since mind and resistance are synonymous, acceptance immediately frees you from mind dominance and thus reconnects you with Being. As a result, the usual ego motivations for "doing"- fear, greed, control, defending, or feeding the false sense of self- will cease to operate. An intelligence much greater than the mind is now in charge, and so a different quality of consciousness will flow into your doing.

"Accept whatever comes to you woven in the pattern of your destiny, for what could more aptly fit your needs?"

This was written two thousand years ago by Marcus Aurelius, one of those exceedingly rare humans who possessed worldly power as well as wisdom....

HOW DO WE STOP NEGATIVITY FROM ARISING, AND HOW DO WE GET RID OF IT ONCE IT IS THERE?

As I said, you stop it from arising by being fully

present. But don't become discouraged. There are as yet few people on the planet who can sustain a state of continuous presence, although some are getting close to it. Soon, I believe, there will be many more.

Whenever you notice that some form of negativity has arisen within you, look at it not as a failure, but as a helpful signal that is telling you: "Wake up. Get out of your mind. Be Present".....

YOU MENTIONED "SURRENDER" A FEW TIMES. I DON'T LIKE THAT IDEA. IT SOUNDS SOMEWHAT FATALISTIC. IF WE ALWAYS ACCEPT THE WAY THINGS ARE, WE ARE NOT GOING TO MAKE ANY EFFORT TO IMPROVE THEM. IT SEEMS TO ME WHAT PROGRESS IS ALL ABOUT, BUT IN OUR PERSONAL LIVES AND COLLECTIVELY, IS NOT TO ACCEPT THE LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT BUT TO STRIVE TO GO BEYOND THEM AND CREATE SOMETHING BETTER. IF WE HADN'T DONE THIS, WE WOULD STILL BE LIVING IN CAVES. HOW DO YOU RECONCILE SURRENDER WITH CHANGING THINGS AND GETTING THINGS DONE?

To some people, surrender may have negative connotations, implying defeat, giving up, failing to rise to the challenges of life, becoming lethargic, and so on. True surrender, however, is something entirely different. It does not mean to passively put up with whatever situation you find yourself in and to do nothing about it. Nor does it mean to cease making plans or initiating positive action.

Surrender is the simple but profound wisdom of yielding to rather than opposing the flow of life. The only place where you can experience the flow of life is the Now, so to surrender is to accept the present moment unconditionally and

without reservation. It is to relinquish inner resistance to what is. Inner resistance is to say "no" to what is, through mental judgment and emotional negativity.....

I AM IN A SITUATION AT WORK THAT IS UNPLEASANT. I HAVE TRIED TO SURRENDER TO IT, BUT FIND IT IMPOSSIBLE. A LOT OF RESISTANCE KEEPS COMING UP.

If you cannot surrender, take action immediately. Speak up or do something to bring about a change in the situation or remove yourself from it. Take responsibility for your life. Do not pollute your beautiful, radiant, inner Being nor the Earth with negativity. Do not give unhappiness in any form whatsoever inside you.

If you cannot take action, for example if you are in prison, then you have two choices left: resistance or surrender. Bondage or inner freedom from external conditions. Suffering or inner peace....

WHAT ABOUT ALL THOSE PEOPLE WHO, IT SEEMS ACTUALLY WANT TO SUFFER? I HAVE A FRIEND WHOSE PARTNER IS PHYSICALLY ABUSIVE TOWARD HER, AND HER PREVIOUS RELATIONSHIP WAS A SIMILAR KIND. WHY DOES SHE CHOSE SUCH MEN, AND WHY IS SHE REFUSING TO GET OUT OF THAT SITUATION NOW? WHY DO SO MANY PEOPLE ACTUALLY CHOSE PAIN?

I know the word choose is a favorite New Age term, but it isn't entirely accurate in this context. It is misleading to say someone "chose" a dysfunctional relationship or any other negative situation in his or her life. Choice implies consciousness- a high degree of consciousness. Without it you

have no choice. Choice begins the moment you disidentify from the mind and its conditioned patterns, the moment you become present. Until you reach that point, you are unconscious, spiritually speaking. This means that you are compelled to think, feel, and act in certain ways according to the conditioning of your mind. That is why Jesus said: "Forgive them, for they do not know what they do." This is not related to intelligence in the conventional sense of the word. I have met many highly intelligent and educated people who were also completely unconscious....

SO THAT MEANS NOBODY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT THEY DO? I DON'T LIKE THAT IDEA.

If you are run by your mind, although you have no choice you will suffer the consequences of your unconsciousness, and you will create further suffering. You will bear the burden of fear, conflict, problems, and pain. The suffering thus created will eventually force you out of your unconscious state.

WHAT YOU SAY ABOUT CHOICE ALSO APPLIES TO FORGIVENESS, I SUPPOSE. YOU NEED TO BE FULLY CONSCIOUS AND SURRENDER BEFORE YOU CAN FORGIVE.

"Forgiveness" is a term that has been in use for two thousand years, but most people have a very limited view of what it means. You cannot truly forgive yourself or others as long as you derive sense of Self from the past. Only through accessing the power of the Now, which is your own power, can there be forgiveness. This renders the past powerless, and you realize deeply that nothing you ever did or that was ever done

to you could touch even in the slightest the radiant essence of who you are. The whole concept of forgiveness then becomes unnecessary.

#### AND HOW DO I GET TO THAT POINT OF REALIZATION?

When you surrender to what is and so become fully present, the past ceases to have any power. You do not need it anymore. Presence is the key. The Now is the key.

#### HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN I HAVE SURRENDERED?

When you no longer have to ask the question.

As the lector may have noticed, the previous writing was taken literally from Mr. Tolle's book "The power of Now" with very few, if any, interjections or comments from yours truly as it is my custom to add my perspective for emphasis. The reason for veering from my custom is because almost everything, and more, that has been transcribed here is already available in this Wisdom From "Whithin" booklet. It is just a matter of the lector reading and re-reading said transcripts and thus, truly find and learn how to free him/herself from the previous individual that may have been a captive of so many social beliefs and false conditionings to the detriment of sincerely Being free to surrender- as I have- to the Now/Present/Life.

Please take heed, enjoy, and as always, God bless!

ERNESTO COLE

## YOGA

Hello gentlemen and please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Ernesto Cole, but am better known in the compound as Panama.

I have been invited here by our DTS (drug treatment specialist), Mrs. Johnson to speak to you guys and tell you the little bit I know about the practice of yoga and its many benefits. Now, to be honest with you, I'm not the type to tell others what to do or not to do. I simply watch and measure my ways and in so doing, try to influence others for the positive. Yet, when Mrs. Johnson approached me with her suggestion I thought to myself: "Well P., somebody took it upon himself to introduce you to yoga, you then committed yourself to it, and look at how the practice was able to transform you in ways you'd never imagined." So after said monologue and having written much about the practice (Questions and Answers, Silence, Finding Yourself, Yoga 101...), I decided to go ahead and serve Mrs. Johnson's noble purpose and my peers here at Edgefield, FCI by speaking/writing the little bit I may know about yoga and its dear benefits.

Firstly, I am not an expert but an amateur that truly enjoys/loves doing/practicing yoga. And although I have no statistical evidence, I am through personal and not so personal experience convinced that when you start practicing yoga and meditation, you invite and receive major changes into your life. Why? Well, because those changes start from within; where the real you resides. Maybe your practice alters

the way you define your personal integrity, maybe it unleashes a deep longing in your heart or shows you truths you've been hiding from yourself. Maybe it will give you the courage to question certain entrenched beliefs or who knows, maybe it will do for you what it did for me and make you much more loving and accepting of what is.

Whatever the case may be, those inner shifts seep into your external life and make you question the way you do things and nudge you to live life a little more differently. You may even notice that your practice has triggered a mysterious process of karmic acceleration. In other words, having a yoga practice tends to speed up the way your relationships and life scenarios play out. So instead of "hanging out" and being peer pressured into negative or unfruitful behavior, you may simply prefer contemplating in silence and enjoying the relationship you have with life, that simple.

Attached are some writings I've put together with the intent of influencing all I can of such dear and transforming practice and hopefully you, too, may reap the benefits of it.

Sincerely and with noble intent yours truly, ERNESTO  
COLE.

## ATTITUDE #2

After writing much about emotions and attitudes and how it is the only thing, in my humble opinion, that could trump any fact, and in that way try to influence all of those who my writings may reach and those around me in this prison environment- whom I with much frequency hear and observe with such pessimistic and negative attitudes- I came across an article (which, by the way, was handed to me by a dear friend who shares my sentiments when it comes to always trying to display a positive attitude) in a local newspaper by columnist, Carol Round that truly caught my attention and I found it imperative to include it in this booklet for the benefit and benign influence of its readers.

## ARE YOU CONTROLLING YOUR ATTITUDE?

A Matter of Faith

by Carol Round

"This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Psalm 118:24 (ESV)

When I saw the following post on a friend's Facebook page, I had to share it with my readers:

A famous writer was in his study and compiled the following list:

1. Last year my gallbladder was removed. I was in bed for a long time.

2. The same year I reached the age of 60 and had to

leave my favorite job. I spent 30 years with this publishing company.

3. The same year my father died.

4. The same year my son failed his medical exam because he had a car accident. He was hospitalized with a cast on his leg for several days. The destruction of the car was a second loss.

His concluding statement: "Alas! It was a bad year!"

When the writer's wife entered the room, she found her husband looking dejected and sad. She read what he had written, left the room, and came back with another piece of paper. The husband read her version of his account of the year's events:

1. Last year I finally got rid of my gallbladder which had given me many years of pain.

2. I turned 60 with sound health and retired from my job. Now I can utilize my time to write with more focus and peace.

3. The same year my father died at the age of 95 without depending on anyone, without any critical conditions, and met his Creator.

4. The same year, God blessed my son with life. My car was destroyed, but my son was alive and without permanent disability.

She concluded: This year was an immense blessing.

The moral? It's not happiness that makes us grateful, but gratefulness that makes us happy. There is always, always something for which to be thankful. Our attitude is everything and the one thing we can control.

In a recent "Our Daily Bread" devotional, the author shared the story of Dr. Virginia Connally.

In 1940, at the age of 27, she braved opposition and criticism to become the first physician in Abilene, Texas. A few months before her 100th birthday in 2012, the Texas Medical Association presented her with its Distinguished Service Award, the highest honor a Texas physician can receive.

Between 1940 and 2012, Dr. Connally embraced a passion for sharing the gospel message globally. During her many medical mission trips, she lived a life of service to God and to others - one day at a time.

Her pastor, Phil Christopher, said: "Every day for her is a gift."

In a letter to her pastor, Dr. Connally wrote, "Every tour, trip, effort, I wonder if this will be my last and ultimate? Only God knows. And this is enough."

What if we quit focusing on yesterday's disappointments and tomorrow's uncertainties and focused on God's unmatched gift of today? Wouldn't our attitudes change?

When we embrace each day as a gift from God, we can't help but have a positive attitude and beautiful day.

Please comrades and for the love of who you believe in, take heed and enjoy life.

Thank you dearly for your time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## LOVE #2

After writing much about love, its dual definition of verb and noun, and also about the action of doing for others and thus feeling its benefit, I'm compelled to admit and speak about it not being just something we give or do; it is also a substance we need, since without it life can be such a barren and desolate experience- if anything at all.

Yes, my dear friends. How desperately we need to be loved and to love as well. It is said that when Jesus Christ said (and I believe it convincingly) that man does not live by bread alone. He spoke of a deep hunger. The hunger He spoke of was not the hunger related to the body and its need for food. Nor was it the hunger for material things that tend to make us greedy and unconscious. No, beloved, He spoke of a hunger that emanates from deep down in the very depths of our Being. He spoke of a need as vital as the air we breath and the water we drink. He spoke of a hunger for love.

He spoke of something you and I must have. Love is being happy for others and being sad for them when they are sad. We must have it simply because our spirit feeds upon it. It is the source of our strength; the source of our reality, unity, success, and our sharing. Therefore, we must have it because without it we become weak, faint, unconscious, and destructive. Without love our self-esteem tends to weaken and be the cause of so many different maladies. Without it our courage even tends to falter. Without it looking confidently at the world becomes difficult, if possible at all. We even tend to look for it within ourselves and feed upon our own

egos, and little by little destroy ourselves and those around us.

Yet, with it we are truly creative. With it we can easily sacrifice and care for others. With it we march tirelessly. With it we can be sincerely loving, caring, respectful, appreciative, humble, grateful, affirmative, empathic, generous, and last but never least... accepting of others and all that is.

With the before mentioned, my dear comrades, let us practice the art of love if not for our own sake; at least for the sake of those that have, do, and will always love us, deal?

Thank you all dearly for your time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## ATTITUDE #3

Again and back with reading and my interjections from the wise and spiritual teachings of Siddah Yoga and Gurumayi Chidvilasananda.

Dear readers, greetings and hopefully this essay finds you at a happy time in your life and in comfortable circumstances. Of course, whether it is a comfortable situation or not is up to the way life unfolds and thus, whether comfortable or not, your attitude is completely under your control and will determine how you accept and feel. You may not be able to control what happens to you but you can, if you will, control your attitude, which contains great power.

Our attitude, beloveds, determines our experience. In the same set of circumstances, a person with a good attitude will feel good and a person with a bad attitude will feel bad. Therefore, we can determine how we feel and what our experience of anything will be. Believe it or not- and we can prove the truth of it to ourselves simply by applying the principle- we can determine beforehand how any experience will affect us.

Cheerfulness is not a personality trait we are born with or not born with. It is a spiritual quality. As we go deeper within our own Self, we naturally become more cheerful. It is one of the ways that we can get some idea of how spiritually developed we might be. Cheerfulness is close to the Self. Simply by trying to maintain a cheerful attitude, especially when it is difficult to do so, we are naturally

pulled much closer to the Self.

A primary reason we practice being spiritual is for happiness, for contentment, and for freedom. Knowing this Truth makes life fun and enjoyable. Ignoring this Truth leads us to run around looking for something that hopefully will be fun. We may find something that lasts a little while, then we have to run around again until we find something else. In between are vast stretches of boredom and unpleasanties.

When we begin actually to experience what is meant by knowing the Self, a secret smile begins to dawn inside of us. Suddenly we see that everything can be fun, that the vast stretches of boredom and unpleasanties were simply a state of mind, a certain attitude manifested objectively. In other words, whatever is unenjoyable is often our own creation and our own delusion.

But of course, dear friends, you are not expected to believe anything simply because it is written here, or anywhere else, for that matter. It is simply better to apply the principles in our own life and see/feel the truth for ourselves, don't you think? Some of these ideas may seem a bit farfetched- yet they might be true. But we'll never know for sure until we apply the principles in our everyday life, that simple.

When we are ignorant of the Truth, we see only the projections of our mind/ego- which means that all the horrible thoughts we think will seem to be true for us. Seeing our own mental creations as the truth, we develop a somber attitude toward life. With this attitude, much of life becomes unenjoyable. We think we hate something because of what it is.

We don't realize that it appears the way it does because of our hatred for it. Almost all of the unpleasantnesses of life can be traced to our own negative emotions, which we habitually blame on others and fail to take responsibility for.

My dear friends, we live in a society where everyone has its own beliefs about life and the world, their own ethics and morality, and even their own sense of propriety. Yet, we can look back in history and see that other civilizations obviously did not understand some of the most basic facts about this world, even things that small children today take for granted. And we feel that everything worth knowing is known today. We don't realize, however, that we still live in an ignorant society, that we are influenced by mass superstitions, that we live in very narrow and restricted ways because of previous conditioning.

We deal with all these ideas about what is right and wrong, what is good and bad, what is spiritual and worldly, and on and on. Some things fill us with so much pride, while other things fill us with so much guilt. We go through so many emotional fluctuations because of the ways we've been programmed to think. Very few people trust themselves enough to act and speak spontaneously. As children we were often put down or ridiculed when we attempted to freely express ourselves.

Therefore with the aforementioned, comrades, why not seek in silence to find our true Self and thus put in question so many conditioned beliefs and feel and experience the Truth that will give us the attitude of contentment, happiness, and

comfort? Unless, of course, we have something more appropriate to do, deal?

Thank you all dearly for your time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## MIND/HEALTH

Years ago when I made the promise to my dear mother of becoming a better person and embarking on a spiritual path, I continued reading many self-help books written by spiritual teachers and experts on the subject. Additionally, I sought assistance from wise individuals, friends, and even psychologists.

It then came a time where what I learned was able to manifest itself through my writings. Yet, although I am far from an expert on the workings and intricacies of the mind, I have become convinced that it can be a wonderful instrument, but also a big hindrance if not used properly and have expressed so in many of the essays I've written with interjections into some of the best books written on the matter.

However, after communicating with many individuals who've had access to said essays about different topics, I've noticed over and over again the manifestations of worry, negative thoughts, attitudes, emotions, and expressions. Then, after making them aware of their unnecessary worry, negative thoughts, and speech; they would admit to it but claim it not to be a "big deal". Some would apologize/regret it and claim they will do better.

Normally, I would simply accept their "cop-out"/excuse, wish them the best, and be on my way. Unfortunately, I've noticed this attitude in a couple of extremely loved individuals- by yours truly- that I have decided to be a bit more "blunt" and point out the flirting with disaster consequences of allowing the mind/ego to have its way with worrying, negative thoughts, speech and

ultimately, actions.

Being positive and following spiritual practices is a process of purification. And although we may embark on such path using "baby steps", it must be done not only for our sake, but for the sake of humanity, those that love us, and those that we love as well. What we must seek to liberate ourselves from are negative thoughts, mental impurities, and untrue beliefs. Most of us notice only the physical impurities like headaches, pains, and the likes. But, ultimately, these are probably the least significant. Why? Simply because the physical body is primarily a reflection on what is happening on more subtle levels. When our mind is clear of negative thoughts and our emotions are free, the body often reflects our state with radiant health and productive action. However, When the mind is filled with negative thoughts (although not wanted but allowed to pester) or stagnant, when the emotions are in a state of agitation or constriction, all the physical and psychological diseases known to mankind manifest as a result.

Yes, my dear friends. To reduce the risk of a heart attack, stroke, cancer, toxic liver, diseased kidneys, and other diseases that plague our modern world, we must take care of our body and keep it in good shape; but much more importantly, we must keep the mind and emotions clear, positive, and pure.

This will enable us to do whatever is necessary to care for the body properly. If our mind, attitude, or emotions are not radiantly healthy, not only do we lack the strength and will to care for the body properly, but we actually live

in a way that causes harm to it. Most physical addictions, for example, are ordinarily considered to belong to the body, but in fact, before they manifest physically, they exist as afflictions of the mind and emotions.

Mental and emotional impurities have a major effect on the quality of our life. Therefore, they are the most important to purify. Those impurities are contained within the subtle body and are reflected physically in the way we live and the choices we make.

Mental and emotional impurities make up the ego and are ultimately all that bind or limit us and thus, they are vitally important to recognize, understand, and limit/eliminate.

You may say to yourself: "Easier said than done," right? And yes, you may be correct in that assumption and I must confess that I've been there and know the challenge. Yet, I must also confess that although the change/challenge may not be easy, it is a MUST if we aspire to live a more positive, healthy, and enlightened existence.

There are many ways (I guess?) of limiting/eliminating the aforementioned mental impurities and negativity from our existence. But I truly believe (in my humble opinion and experience, of course)- and recommend- that the only and best way to accomplish domination of the mind/ego/negative thoughts/mental impurities is through the practice of silence/meditation. I practice silence/meditation by going to a quiet and dark place (or cover my eyes), sit comfortably with my spine erect to stay alert; FOCUS (emphasis intended) on the abundant energy in my whole body and my deep

diaphragmatic breathing allowing my stomach to inflate as I inhale, pause, then allow it to deflate completely as I exhale allowing my diaphragm to "crush" my lungs and expel all the air from it and at the same time staying totally present in the moment and experience.

Sure enough, thoughts come to mind yet, I do not focus on them and continue focusing on my diaphragmatic breathing to the point of even slowly counting my in-out breaths and thus, allow the thought to dispel. When I started this practice years ago, doing so for only a couple of minutes proved truly challenging. But through dear determination, commitment, and practice, I've become so adept that I can practice it with ease now and am very certain that you can as well.

In conclusion, please allow me to paraphrase a dear spiritual teacher and guru (Gurumayi Chidvilasananda).

"As you think, so you become", is a saying that is very true. The mind gets carried away by so many things, so we have to watch our minds all the time. If you think the world is a family of God, then you experience the fruits of that understanding. If you think the world is just a world, then you experience the fruits of that understanding.

"The vrittis are the thoughts of the mind. We have one vritti after another, one thought after another. Our lives exist according to our thoughts. We have a good thought, we feel good. We have a bad thought, we feel bad. We have no thought, we feel still. Our lives are ruled by our thoughts."

Now to a very personal maxim of mine: "Think well, speak well, act well, and only positive consequences shall

ensue. Yet, think negative, speak negative, act negative and likewise, only negative consequences shall ensue. The choice is yours."

Thank you sincerely for your time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## ASANA, PRANAYAMA, MEDITATION

In my daily dealings with friends in this prison environment and also communicating with loved ones on the outside, I frequently see and hear about the hurried pace in which they are living their lives to the point of me suggesting they'd "slow down" just a bit because such hurried pace of living could amount to havoc not only in their lives but more importantly, their minds. Since, in their ways I could get a vivid reminder of how I used to be before embarking on my spiritual journey, accepting life as it came, and living it "one day at a time."

Fortunately, after writing about the flaws of living life at such a hurried pace and "flirting" with grave consequences, I've come across an article in the Yoga Journal magazine (which I've been subscribing to for the last 16+ years because of its truly wise and inspirational articles) that gives a "bunch" of ways in which one can practice yoga asanas (body postures), pranayama (breathing techniques), and meditation; and with such practices learn to slow down, appreciate, and live life in a more content and graceful manner. Which I can sincerely testify to.

Now, for the sake of length, I will not cite all the studies and research done to support each suggestion to add credibility and will simply note them down with the hope that those privy to this essay may take heed and try to practice the aforementioned techniques for their sake and the sake of those that truly love them. Please enjoy.

Taking time to slow down and care for yourself sets off a cascade of positive effects in your mind and body. The

ultimate self-care test may well be the practice of asanas, pranayama, and meditation if used as committed techniques to truly assist us in living a much better, happy, and graceful life. Therefore, here are a good number of proven, positive effects on the use of asanas, pranayama, and meditation.

1-Boost immunity- Although you should still wash your hands and follow other standard precautions to avoid the cold or flu, yogic breathing practices (pranayama) may boost your immunity against these common ailments.

2-Reduce chronic inflammation- pranayama also lowers long-term inflammation. When you have an infection or virus, your immune system releases proteins that are harmful. Pranayama has been proven to lower them.

3-Gain more self control- Active meditation affects brain regions that play a role in self control and executive function.

4-Improve social and speaking skills- Meditation also activates regions of the brain involved in speech.

5- Better manage stress- Doing asanas has been proven to help cope with stress through the release of the stress hormone cortisol and learning to deal with it.

6-Enhances working memory- Another way yoga improves your mind set and decision-making is simply by keeping your brain sharp.

7-Lowers blood pressure- As your body gets better at managing stress thanks to your yoga practice, this may lead to lower blood pressure, as preliminary studies suggest.

8-Improves motor function and balance- Active meditation and doing asanas can help you move better.

9-Boost mood and confidence- Studies done have also found that practicing asanas was linked to increases in positive feelings and self-compassion.

10-Better overall brain health- In addition to improving your working memory, yoga may also keep your brain functioning at its best in the long term.

11-Change gene activity- Yoga may even have a beneficial effect on the expression of your genes, reversing the "molecular signature" of chronic stress.

12-Increase relaxation- Yoga helps manage stress, but, of course, rough days still happen. Pranayama is the perfect antidote when feeling high-strung. Slow, steady pranayama induces what we refer to as the relaxation response- a state of rest that decreases heart rate.

13-Support fertility- In addition to busting stress, mind-body practices such as yoga have been shown to lower anxiety and may help women conceive.

14-Build bones (even as you age)- Asanas are good for you skeleton.

15-Improve body image- Practicing yoga can help you become more body positive and avoid the loop o constantly berating yourself over perceived flaws.

16-Slow aging- A combination of asanas, pranayama, and meditation may help you live longer and age gracefully.

17-Increase pain tolerance- Yoga practitioners are better at managing pain than those who don't practice.

18-Strengthen muscles- Whether you're looking to build or preserve muscles, asanas can help.

And in addition to practicing asanas, pranayama, and

meditation, these other feel-good practices are worth adding to your repertoire and enjoy a much more healthy and graceful existence.

1-Aroma therapy- Certain essential oils, such as bergamot, lavender, and linalool have properties similar to opioid pain medication.

2-Massage- Time on the massage table might do some good on a cellular level. A single session may boost immunity by increasing your blood cells.

3-Get outdoors- A 15-minute walk is all it takes to boost concentration and reduce fatigue and other research has found that spending time in nature reduces rumination and improves well-being.

4-Visualization- Closing your eyes for 5-10 minutes and taking an imaginary vacation is "the fastest way I know to reduce anxiety." Says Martin Rossman, MD, author of Guided Imagery for Self-Healing. "Take a couple of abdominal/diaphragmatic breaths, then imagine yourself in a beautiful place and notice what you see, hear, smell, feel, and taste," he says. Imagery reduces cortisol and blood pressure, and athletes use it to strengthen the mind-body connection. "When you imagine something in your body, it has a tendency to happen," Rossman says.

5-Sauna- Spending 30 minutes in the sauna may reduce blood pressure and boost heart health. "Sauna bathing is like exercise for the arteries," says author Jar Antero Laukkanen, MD, PHD. "It increases body temperature and improves blood flow and blood-vessel function, which will contribute to lower blood pressure.

In conclusion, many of you may say:

"These benefits sound very nice, but how do I practice these things?" Well, my dear friends, if you are here in Edgefield, FCI, I practice these techniques every single day, but instruct them three times a week (Mon., Fri., Sun.) and if you cannot make it to the class I will gladly assist you if you "catch" me around and ask. Now, for those of you on the outside that are reading this essay, there are many mentions of these techniques all through it. Additionally, with so much technology around you could simply just Google these techniques and I'm very certain a good amount of information will appear. The bottom line is for you to commit yourself and enjoy a much more peaceful and graceful existence through the practice of these proven techniques.

Once again, thank you sincerely for your time and attention and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## RELIGION/SPIRITUALITY #3

Many years ago while in constant reflection and under much stress (was facing several life sentences and was kept under complete solitary confinement), I composed an essay which I titled Religion/Spirituality. I titled it so because at the time of so much thinking and reflection, I began to question not only my personal religion but other religions as well. Now after so many years (almost 20) I have come across a book that speaks about a religion I mentioned in my previous essay and it validates and puts so much emphasis on my writing that I felt obliged to quote it. The name of the book in mention is "What Buddhists Believe" and is written by Ven. K. Sri Dhammananda. Please enjoy and reflect on it.

## Man and Religion

Man developed religion in order to satisfy his desire to understand the life within him and the world outside him. The earliest religions had animistic origins, and they arose out of man's fear of the unknown and his desire to placate the forces which he thought inhabited inanimate objects. Over time these religions underwent changes, being shaped by geographical, historical, socio-economic, political, and intellectual environment existing at the time.

Many of these religions have become organized and are flourishing to this day, backed by a strong following of devotees. Many people are drawn to organized religions because of the pomp and ceremony, while there are some who prefer to practice their own personal religion, inwardly venerating their religious teachers and applying moral principles in

their daily life. Because of the importance of practice, every religion claims to be a way of life, not merely a faith. In view of their various origins and path of development which religions undergo, it is hardly surprising that the religions of man should differ in their approach, the understanding and interpretation of their followers, their goal and how it can be achieved, and their concept of reward and punishment for deeds performed.

In terms of approach, religious practices may be based on faith, fear, rationality or harmlessness. Faith forms the basis of many religious practices which were developed to overcome man's fear and to meet his needs. A religion of miraculous or mystical powers exploits that fear which arises from ignorance and makes promises of material gain based on greed. A religion of devotion is based on emotion and the fear of the supernatural which, it is so believed, can be appeased through rites and rituals. A religion of faith is based on the desire for gaining confidence in the face of the uncertainty of human life and destiny.

Some religious practices grew as a result of the development of man's knowledge, experience and wisdom. The rational approach had been adopted in this case, incorporating the principles of human value and natural or universal laws. It is based on humanism and consecrates on the cultivation of humane qualities. A religion of cause and effect or karma is based on the principle of self-help and assumes that the individual alone is responsible for his own happiness and suffering as well as salvation. A religion of wisdom is based on the application of reason and seeks to understand life and

the reality of worldly conditions through analytical knowledge.

Harmlessness and goodwill are common elements found in religion. A religion of peace is based on the principle of causing no harm to oneself as well as others, and its followers are to cultivate a harmonious, liberal and peaceful life. A religion of goodwill or loving-kindness is based on the sacrifice and service for the welfare and happiness of others.

Religions differ according to the understanding capacity of their followers and the interpretations which religious authorities give to the religious doctrines and practices. In some religions, authorities have a strong say in enforcing religious laws and moral codes, while in others they only provide advice on the need and the way to follow these codes. Every religion will offer reasons to explain the existing human problems and inequalities and the way to remedy the situation. By way of explanation, some religions claim that man has to face these problems because he is on trial in this world. When such an explanation is given, another may ask, "For what purpose? How can man be judged on the basis of just one life when human beings generally differ in their experiences of physical, intellectual, social, economic and environmental factors and conditions?"

Every Religion has its own concept of what is regarded to be the goal of spiritual life. For some religions, eternal life in heaven or paradise with the Lord is the final goal. For some the ultimate aim in life is the union of universal consciousness, because it is believed that life is a unit of

consciousness and it must return to the same original consciousness. Some religions believe that the ending of suffering or repeated birth and death is the final goal. For others, even heavenly bliss or union with Brahma (creator) is secondary to the uncertainty of existence, no matter, whatever form it takes. And there are even some who believe that the present life itself is more than enough to experience the aim of life.

To attain the desired goal every religion offers a method. Some religions ask their followers to surrender to God or depend on God for everything. Others call for stringent asceticism as the means of purging oneself of all evil through self mortification. Some others recommend the performance of animal sacrifices and many kinds of rites and rituals as well as the recital of mantras for their purification to gain the final goal. There is yet another which upholds diverse methods and devotions, intellectual realization of truth, and concentration of the mind through meditation.

Each religion has a different concept of punishment for evil deeds. According to some religions, man is doomed forever by God for his transgressions in this life. Some others say that action and reaction (cause and effect) operate due to natural laws and the effect of a deed willingly be experienced for a certain period. Some religions maintain that this life is only one of so many, and a person will always have a chance to reform himself in stages until he finally evolves to attain the goal of Supreme Bliss.

Given such a variety of approaches, interpretations and goals of different religions adopted by mankind, it is

useful for people not to hold dogmatic views about their religion but to be open to and tolerant of other religious views.

The Buddha said: "One must not accept my teachings from reverence, but first try them as gold is tried by fire."

After emphasizing the importance of maintaining an open mind towards religious doctrines, it is useful to remember that a religion should be practiced for the welfare, freedom, and happiness of all living beings. That is, religious principles should be used positively to improve the quality of life of all beings. Yet today, humankind is corrupted and has gone astray from basic religious principles. Immoral and evil practices have become common among many people, and religious-minded people experience difficulties trying to maintain certain religious principles in modern life. At the same time, the standard of basic religious principles is also lowered to pander to the demands of polluted and selfish minds. Man should not violate universal moral codes to suit his own greed or indulgence; rather man should try to adjust himself according to these codes taught by religion. Religious precepts have been introduced by enlightened religious teachers who have realized the noble way of life which leads to peace and happiness. Those who violate these precepts transgress the universal laws, which, according to Buddhism will bring bad effects through the working of moral causation.

This does not mean, on the other hand, that a person should slavishly follow what is found in his religion, regardless of its applicability to modern times. Religious

laws and precepts should enable people to lead a meaningful life, and are not to be used to bind them to archaic practices and superstitious rituals and beliefs. A person who upholds the basic religious principles should give credit to human intelligence and live respectably with human dignity. There must be some changes in our religious activities to correspond to our education and the nature of our changing society, without at the same time sacrificing the noble universal principles. But it is recognized that making changes to any religious practices is always difficult because many conservative people are opposed to changes, even if they are for the better. Such conservative views are like a stagnant pool of water, while fresh ideas are like the waterfall where the water is constantly being renewed and is, therefore, usable.

To be continued and again, thank you dearly for your time/attention and God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## RELIGION/SPIRITUALITY #4

## Distortion of Religion

Despite the value of religion in moral upliftment, it is also true that religion is a fertile soil for the development of superstitions and devotional hypocrisy, wrapped under the cloak of religiosity. Many people use religion to escape from the realities of life and put on the garb of religion and religious symbols. They may even pray very often in places of worship, yet they are not sincerely religious minded and have not understood what religion stands for. When a religion has been debased by ignorance, greed for power and selfishness, people quickly point an accusing finger and say that religion is irrational. But "Religion" (the ritualistic external practice of any teaching) must be distinguished from the teaching itself. Before one criticizes, one must study the original teachings of the founder and see if there is anything intrinsically wrong with it.

Religion advises people to do good and be good, but they are not interested in acting thus. Instead they prefer to cling to the other practices which have not real religious values. Had they tried to culture their minds by eradicating jealousy, pride, cruelty and selfishness, at least they would have found the correct way to practice religion. Unfortunately, they develop jealousy, pride, cruelty and selfishness instead of eradicating them. Many people pretend to be religious, but commit the greatest atrocities in the name of religion. They fight, discriminate and create unrest for the sake of religion, losing sight of its lofty purpose. From the increase in the performance of various so-called

religious activities, we may get the impression that religion is progressing, but the opposite is really the case since very little mental purity and understanding are actually being practiced.

Practicing a religion is nothing more than the development of one's inner awareness, goodwill and understanding. Problems would have to be faced squarely by relying on one's spiritual strength. Running away from one's problems in the name of spiritualism is not courageous, much less to be regarded as spiritual. Under today's chaotic conditions, men and women are rapidly sliding downhill to their own destruction. The irony is that they imagine they are progressing towards a glorious civilization that is yet to be realized.

In the midst of this confusion, imaginary and plastic religious concepts are propagated to create more temptation and confusion in man's mind. Religion is being misused for personal gain and power. Certain immoral practices, such as free sex, have been encouraged by some irresponsible religious groups to introduce their religion among youths. By arousing lustful feelings, these groups hope to seduce boys and girls into following their religion. Today religion has degenerated into a cheap commodity in the religious market giving scant regard to moral values and what they stand for. Some missionaries claim that the practice of morals, ethics and precepts are not important as long as a person has faith and prays to God, which is believed to be sufficient to grant salvation. Having witnessed how some religious authorities have misled and blindfolded their followers in Europe, Karl

Marx made a caustic remark: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feelings of a heartless world, just as it is the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people."

Man needs a religion not for the reason of giving him a dream for his next life or providing him with some dogmatic ideas to follow, in such a way that he surrenders his human intelligence and becomes a nuisance to his fellow beings. A religion should be a reliable and reasonable method for people to live "here and now" as cultured, understanding beings, while setting a good example for others to follow. Many religions turn man's thoughts away from himself towards a supreme being, but Buddhism directs man's search for peace inwards in the potentialities that lie hidden within himself. "Dhamma" (meaning, to hold on) is not something a person searches outside himself, because in the final analysis, man is Dhamma and Dhamma is man. Therefore, true religion, which is Dhamma, is not something outside us that we acquire, but the cultivation and realization of wisdom, compassion and purity that we develop within ourselves.

#### Which is the Proper Religion?

It is very difficult for a man to find out why there are so many different religions, and which religion is the true one. Followers of every religion are trying to show the superiority of their religion. Diversity has created more uniformity, but in matters of religion, men look upon each other with jealousy, hatred and disdain. The most respected religious practices in one religion are deemed ridiculous to others. To introduce their divine and peaceful messages some

people have resorted to weapons and wars. Have they not polluted the good name of religion? It seems that certain religions are responsible for dividing instead of uniting mankind.

Therefore, and to conclude this essay with a personal observation. Let's simply weigh with an unbiased mind the religion that obliges us to carry love within and serve our fellow beings without regards for material gain and have the noble purpose live a moral and uplifting existence, that simple.

Thank you dearly for your time and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

"FAREWELL TO MY ADORED MOTHER"

Adored mother, the day that I most feared due to my weakness has arrived. However, after your grand-kids, Shelby Elizabeth and Ernesto Francisco, came to visit me and give me their heartfelt condolences; they informed me of their plan to go to Panama to be present at your funeral and if I'd like to send a eulogy to be read. But since I could at times be very lazy my response was no.

Yet, after pondering the subject I had to admit that after making you cry and suffer so much by my very inappropriate actions in a way that no child should have their mother suffer; writing a farewell letter to the lady that gave me life, raised me, adored me, and tolerated me for so long despite hurting her constantly; writing her a farewell letter is very little to ask for. But before writing you said farewell letter, mother, please allow me to beg your forgiveness and express my dearest regrets for my sins that hurt you so much while alive.

Therefore, Mrs. Elizabeth, yes, I've cried your departure like a baby- and am even now while composing this farewell missive

I continue to cry for you. But you with much humility and love towards God and everyone who knew you, taught me to accept the will of the Almighty with much valor, honor, and dignity. So with what you taught me through your words and actions, I now promise you that it will be so. In that way when you continue caring and watching over me from Heaven along with the other angels, you could proudly say to them: "That is my Negrale and although it took him quite sometime to learn and accept what I

always instilled in him with my words and actions what it means to accept the will of God.... He has accomplished it."

Thank you mother, thank you for your love, your affection, for your lessons and I pray that Father God keep you for ever in His glory.

Stay strong and we shall be reunited when the Lord decides. Blessings.

With much love and sincerity, Ernesto Francisco Cole.

POWER YOGA

I name this routine Power Yoga simply because, while it does have most conventional yoga poses, they are combined and done in a more intense way than when done conventionally. Additionally, while I will begin it with the customary Sun Salutations, I'd like to stress and emphasize the focus on the deep diaphragmatic breathing. Meaning that as you inhale, your diaphragm descends and pushes your stomach out and when you exhale the diaphragm ascends and pulls your stomach in towards your spine, crushes your lungs, and expels all the stale air out. Therefore, I suggest you make it a habit to inhale while at a pause and exhale as you are beginning the movement and in such way take advantage of the suppleness of the muscles, maintain a flow, and take dear advantage of breathing properly and in some kind breathing rhythm.

I also suggest that when practicing this routine, you focus solely on it and try to avoid unnecessary distractions such as having cell phones, televisions, other electronic devices, or anything that may prove distracting too close by. Let's call these next 30-60 minutes our just "ME" time, deal?

Let us now begin with the practice. It would be best if you dressed comfortably with loose clothing or if in the privacy of your home, you may dress minimally. Try using a mat that proves non-slippery and sturdy then stand with both feet together, legs active and toes spread but turned slightly in, and your spine long and tall. Some call this pose the Mountain. I do not. I call this pose the Standing Tall Pose. Inhale, raise both arms as high as you can, and gaze at your

thumbs. This is what I call the Mountain Pose.

Exhale, fold forward (Forward Bend Pose) and take your chest towards your knees as you keep your legs straight.

Inhale and lengthen your spine square with your hips and gaze straight ahead or to the horizon. Then bend your knees, place your hands on the mat and either step or jump back as you keep your body fully extended with your stomach pulled in towards your spine. This is known as the Plank Pose. From this pose lower about half way down while still gazing straight ahead. This pose is the Four Limb Staff Pose because the only body parts that should be touching the mat are your toes and hands.

As you inhale, straighten your arms, roll your tops of your feet (insteps) onto the mat, engage your legs, and lift your chest high and out while gazing at the ceiling or sky. This pose is known as the Upward Facing Dog or simply the Up Dog. Then as you exhale, raise your hips, place the soles of your feet on the mat, lengthen your spine through the top of your head and try gazing at your navel. This pose is called the Downward Facing Dog or simply the Down Dog.

As you inhale, press your left heel on the mat, step your right foot forward, and place it between your hands into a 90 degree angle. Raise both hands over your head with arms straight and palms touching. Gaze at your thumbs. This is the Warrior 1 pose and this sequence should be done in one inhale, but if it's too much of a strain, you may take an extra breath.

Exhale, place your hands back on the mat, thrust your right leg back and into a Plank Pose, lower into a Four Limb Staff

then on an inhalation place your insteps on the mat, straighten your arms, lift your chest, and gaze at the ceiling back to the Up Dog Pose.

Exhale, raise your hips back into a Down Dog Pose.

Inhale, and now press your right heel on the mat, step your left foot forward between your hands back to a 90 degree angle, raise your hands over your head with arms straight until hands are touching, and gaze at your thumbs. Again, try this sequence in one breath but if you must; you may take an additional breath.

Exhale as you place your hands back on the mat to the Plank Pose, then lower into the Four Limb Staff, roll the tops of your feet (insteps), straighten your arms, gaze at the sky, and resume the Up Dog.

Stay focused on your breathing as you move from one movement to the next while doing this routine and in such manner practice the Vinyasa Yoga flow.

Exhale, raise your hips into the Down Dog, gaze at your navel, and hold this pose for about five deep diaphragmatic breaths.

Inhale, either walk or jump your feet forward, and with your legs straight lengthen your spine square with your hips, gaze at the horizon or an object in front of you, bend your knees slightly, stand tall, and raise your hands with palms touching back to the Mountain Pose.

This entire sequence is known as the Sun Salutation B and it is an excellent way to warm up and prepare the body and mind for the succeeding routine. This sequence could be done several times before the actual routine, it could be done just

once, or none at all. The choice is yours and it is what you'd like to make of it. Yoga is what you want it to do for you and thus, you may implement it and modify it as you see fit and to your liking and benefit. The preceding and following sequences are simply the suggestions of yours truly.

Now that you are warmed up and prepared we can begin with the following sequences. Bear in mind, however, that the amount of deep breaths that you take while in each particular pose has much to do with the intensity of these sequences. I recommend three deep breaths for now, but you could do less or more depending on your level of conditioning and suppleness; it is up to you.

Stand tall at the front end of your mat, focus, take an inhale and raise both hands into the Mountain Pose with palms touching. Bring both palms to your chest with your elbows raised and hold for a couple of deep breaths. This pose is called Namaste and no, it is not a prayer pose. It is a greeting pose performed customarily in the East and it means: The Supreme in me recognizes the Supreme in you.

Take an inhale and on the exhale step your right leg as far back as you can and place your toes on the mat, bend your left leg while keeping your knee perpendicular to the mat. Meaning, keep your knee directly above your ankle without allowing the knee to go past your toes. Place your hands straddling your left leg and hold this Runner's Stretch Pose for the allotted several deep (3) breaths.

Inhale, and on an exhale place both your right knee and instep on the mat, lean back and straighten your back as if standing tall with your shoulder blades coming slightly closer together

and expanding your chest and raise both arms high above your head interlacing your fingers. Gather your balance, bend your back and neck, and gaze at your thumbs. This pose is known as the Crescent Pose. Hold for several breaths.

Inhale, exhale and lean forward, place your right hand on the mat and your left hand bring it under your left leg from the inside of your knee and place it on the mat as well. Take a deep inhale and on an exhale bring your head to your left ankle or as far down as you can. This pose is the Deep Lunge Pose. Hold it for several breaths.

Inhale, bring your left hand out, your left knee back next to your right leg, your sitting bones (buttocks) to your heels, arms extended, and your head to the mat. This is the Extended Child's Pose and it serves as a very relaxing pose. Hold it for several breaths.

Inhale, bring your chest forward and place it on the mat, press your insteps, thighs, and pelvis on the mat while at the same time bending your lower back and neck as deeply as possible. This is the Cobra Pose and should be held for the allotted several deep breaths.

Inhale and on an exhalation bring your chest down, raise your hips as high as you can, place your heels as close to the mat as you can, extend your spine through your head and hold the Down Dog.

Inhale, raise your right leg and on an exhalation bring it between your hands, place your knees perpendicular at 90 degrees and perform the Runner's Stretch on your left leg. Hold for several breaths, bring your left knee and instep to the mat, bring your back upright, raise your arms and

interlace your fingertips, arch your back and neck, focus on your thumbs, and hold this Crescent Pose for several deep breaths.

Inhale, lean forward, place your left hand on the mat, bring your right hand from the inside and place it under your right knee, and perform the Deep Lunge on this side.

Inhale, and on an exhalation bring your right hand out from under your knee, your right knee is brought and placed next to your left knee, your hands extended, your buttocks are placed on your heels and your head is rested on the mat.

After holding the Extended Child's Pose for several breaths, bring your chest forward to the mat, perform the Cobra Pose, hold it, bring your chest back down, raise your hips and perform the Down Dog, hold it as well for the allotted breaths.

Inhale and on an exhale bend your knees and either jump forward or walk your feet forward into what I call a Tribal Squat Pose or simply a deep squat. Inhale and on an exhale straighten your knees, stand tall, and go back to a Mountain, then a Namaste. Hold for several breaths and do the exact sequence one more time.

I will now introduce you to the Warrior sequence for a stronger and more supple foundation. From the Namaste, step your right leg as far back into the Runner's Stretch, hold for several breaths, place your right sole on the mat with the arch in a straight line from your left heel to it. With your left leg bent 90 degrees, raise your back straight (shoulder blades slightly pressed together and chest expanded), raise your hands high above your head, interlace your fingers, keep

your hips squared to your front knee and stomach facing it, and slowly arch your neck and focus on your thumbs. This is the Warrior 1 and should be held for the allotted several breaths.

Inhale, bring your arms down, turn your hips and put the left side of your torso in line to your front knee with your stomach now facing away from your knee, raise and extend both arms shoulder height and in opposite directions while keeping the left knee bent and your right sole firmly on the mat and your gaze on your front fingertips. This is known as the Warrior 2 and should be held for the allotted several breaths.

Inhale and on an exhalation raise your left hand as high as you can, place your right hand on your right back thigh, slide that hand down to your right knee, keep your gaze on your left fingertips and hold what is known as the Extended Warrior for several breaths.

Inhale and on an exhalation bring your left hand down and behind your back, your right hand as well, then interlace your fingertips, raise them behind your back and bow down as low as you can while your left leg is still bent 90 degrees and your right leg is extended and right sole is firmly on the mat. This is known as the Humble Warrior and should be held for several breaths.

Inhale, release the fingertips, bring both hands forward and to the mat, step your left leg back into a Plank, lower into a Four Limb Staff, raise your chest high with your toes on the mat into a variation of the Up Dog.

Inhale, raise your hips, get into the Down Dog, raise your

right leg, and on an exhalation either swing it or walk it forward placing it between your hands and going back to the Runner's Stretch. Hold it for several breaths, place your left sole firmly on the mat, keep your right knee bent, raise your back straight, lift both arms and interlace your fingertips, arch your neck, and focus on your thumbs while performing the Warrior 1 with your other leg. Hold for several breaths. Inhale, perform the Warrior 2, the Extended Warrior, the Humble Warrior, the Plank, the Four Limb Staff, the variation of the Up Dog, the Down Dog, and make sure to hold each of these poses for the amount of breaths you've been holding them for this sequence (3).

You've just completed the Warrior sequence but in my opinion it is not complete if the Warrior III is not included; therefore, please enjoy it.

Stand tall, inhale, bring your hands up with palms touching into the Mountain Pose.

Exhale, bring palms down to your chest into the Namaste.

Exhale, bend at your hip forward and keep your back extended while also extending your hands straight ahead into the horizon, bend your knees slightly, focus on an object ahead of you or at your thumbs, raise your right leg, extend your left leg straight, and keep your right leg active and in a straight line with your extended back. Hold for several breaths, bring your right leg down, bend both knees slightly, and then stand tall back into a Mountain Pose. Bring your palms down to your chest into the Namaste, take a deep inhale and on an exhale perform the Warrior III with the left leg.

Once the Warrior sequence is completed, you may go

into the Extended Child's Pose, relax for several breaths or as many as you'd like before engaging in another standing sequence called the Triangle routine.

Stand tall in the middle of the mat, inhale, raise hands above your head into the Mountain, exhale, bring palms firmly pressed together into the Namaste, step your right leg back about three to four feet with both heels on the mat and toes pointing straight ahead. Inhale and on an exhalation bend at your hips and bring your head to the your left knee while keeping your legs straight and active and your hands straddling your front leg and keeping you supported. Hold for several deep diaphragmatic breaths. Some call this pose the Extended Side Pose, yet I prefer to address it as the Pyramid Pose.

On an exhalation, turn your right foot out 90 degrees, place your left hand right next to your left foot, extend your right hand high above, brace your stomach (try to always brace your stomach before twisting and in such way protect your lower back), and twist maintaining your gaze on your right thumb. This is the Triangle Pose and should be held for the allotted amount of breaths.

Inhale and on an exhalation extend your right arm to the front of your body keeping it in line with your right ear. This is the Extended Triangle Pose.

Hold for several breaths and on an exhalation, try placing your right hand on the outside of your left foot, raise your left arm high, again brace your stomach and twist while gazing at your left arm. This is the Revolve Triangle. Hold for several breaths, bring your left hand back to the mat and next

to your left foot, bend your left leg 90 degrees, raise your right arm, brace your stomach, twist and gaze at your right thumb. This is the Side Angle and hold it for several breaths as well.

On an exhalation, extend your right arm straight ahead and in line with your right ear, and hold this Extended Side Angle Pose for several deep breaths.

On an exhalation, bend your right arm, place that elbow on the outside of your front left knee with palm facing up, place your left palm atop your right palm and hold the Reverse Side Angle for several breaths. On an exhalation, extend both arms (the right arm down and the left arm up) and hold for several breaths as well. This pose is known as the Extended Side Angle.

Exhale, swing both arms around to the front of your body, bring your left hand under your legs, place it on your hip or buttock, swing your right arm back and try to grasp your left fingers while straightening your shoulders and gazing at an object in front of you or the tip of your nose. This pose is known as the Bound Side Angle. Hold it for several breaths.

Exhale, release your fingers, keep your left arm under your leg and place it on the mat next to your outer left ankle. Place your right arm on the mat, take a deep inhalation and on the exhalation bring your forehead down as close to your inner left ankle or mat. This is the Deep Lunge and you'd also want to hold it for several deep breaths.

After beginning this triangle sequence starting with your right leg back in the Pyramid Pose and ending it

with the Deep Lunge, on an exhalation pull your left arm from under your left leg and place it next to your inner left foot, bring your right leg forward and with both legs bent rise into a Standing Tall Pose, inhale, raise your arms into the Mountain Pose, exhale into the Namaste Pose, hold there for several breaths, and on an exhalation now take your left leg back three to four feet apart and perform the exact same poses you just performed when you had your right leg back.

This last triangle sequence is truly challenging and like all other sequences and poses should be done with much caution, care, and at a moderate pace until you are better adept and supple through committed practice before increasing its intensity.

After doing the preceding standing sequences and challenging your foundation and balance, I will now introduce you to some seated poses that will challenge your hips along with your core and other body parts and thus put you on a path to more flexibility, strength, endurance, resistance, looseness, etc., etc.

This next sequence is called the Pigeon series. Stand tall, inhale, and raise your arms into the Mountain pose. Exhale deeply and on an exhalation come into the Namaste. Hold for several breaths, stay focused on the deep breathing and squat deeply. This pose I refer to as the Tribal Squat. Place your hands firmly on the mat and on either side of your knees then thrust or walk your right leg back and adopt the Runner's Stretch Pose. Hold for several breaths then place your right knee and instep firmly on the mat. Now very gently bring your left sitting bone (butt) to the mat and fold your left leg 90

degrees. Allow your hands to serve as support on the mat and on either side of your knee while bringing your chest to rest on top of your folded left leg. This is known as the Pigeon Pose. Hold it for several deep breaths.

With your hands pressed on the mat raise your chest, draw your shoulder blades together and spread your chest open while gazing at an object in front of you or at the tip of your nose while focusing intently on your breathing. This is a variation of the Pigeon Pose and we will call it the Pigeon Pose II.

Hold it for several deep breaths making sure that your back thigh, knee, and instep are firmly on the mat and your left sitting bone is firmly on the mat as well.

Exhale and extend your left leg forward as much as you can and without assisting it with your hands. Simply extend it on its own. Then bring your chest as close as you can to your extended left leg, and hold it for several breaths. This is another variation of the Pigeon and we shall call this one Pigeon Pose III.

Exhale, bend your left leg and bring the heel to your groin, place your hands extended on either side of your left knee, press them on the mat, bring your shoulder blades together, push your chest out, gaze at the ceiling, activate your back leg, and hold for several breaths. Let's call this pose Pigeon IV.

Exhale, extend your right arm back, bend your right leg, grab your right foot, and pull it towards your right sitting bone as deeply as you comfortably can. Hold it for several breaths and while this is a preparation for the King Pigeon, let's call it the Pigeon V.

Exhale and now try to place the crook of your elbow and support your toes while having your right fingers facing the ceiling. Take a deep inhalation and on an exhalation swing your left hand back and grasp your right fingers. Gaze at the ceiling or tip of your nose and hold this pose for several breaths. This Pose is known here in the West as the King Pigeon Pose, I learned it many years ago as the Mermaid Pose. Release the Mermaid, bend your left leg to 90 degrees again, swing your right leg around and place it on top of your bent left leg, and while extending your chest and bringing your shoulder blades together lean forward and hold for several breaths making certain that both sitting bones are firmly grounded. I named this pose the Tamed Pigeon Pose.

Once you have accomplished this truly challenging pose, go into the Extended Child's Pose and take a well deserved amount of deep breaths, become relaxed and once you feel up to it, do the exact same sequence on the opposite leg.

Once this next sequence of the Pigeon is completed and you have taken another well deserved amount of deep breaths in the Extended Child's Pose, we shall continue with another sequence that I've titled Thread The Needle and Cradle The Baby. However, please keep in mind that many of this poses are very challenging, especially for those new to it; yet, simply do your best by challenging yourself in an intelligent and compassionate way. By that I mean that if you cannot do the poses exactly as described here, simply do the modifications necessary, stay calm and focused on your breathing, and as you become more adept in time and through practice you may

accomplish the pose as described herein. But even if you do not ever accomplish a particular pose, simply enjoy the journey and experience while being content at your attempts, deal?

Sit on the mat with your legs extended and active with the backs of your knees as close to the mat as possible, your shoulder blades slightly pulled back and together, and your chest slightly pushed forward as if you're sitting tall to avoid your lower back from rounding. This is known as the Seated Staff Pose. If seated in this position is not very comfortable for your back, you may grab a thick blanket, bend it several inches high, place it under your sitting bones and that should make you feel more comfortable and at ease.

Let's begin with Cradle The Baby first. Inhale and as you exhale, bend your right leg bringing it towards your chest, grab your toes with your right hand, spread your left hand wide, and on an exhalation swing it towards your right foot and hug it tightly. Hold for several breaths. Relax the hug, now grab your right toes with your left hand, bring your right arm under your right calf, take a deep inhale, and on an exhale try to place your right calf over your right shoulder and hold for several breaths. On a deep exhalation bring your right hand to the mat slightly pushing your right thigh back and at the same time raise/pull your left toes as high as you may. Hold this position for several breaths, tuck your chin into your upper chest/neck, and on a deep exhalation try to place your right foot atop your head and behind your neck. Hold for several breaths and then try to lean forward towards your left knee, hold for several more breaths and remove your

foot from behind your neck. This sequence is the transition of Cradle The Baby into the Foot Behind The Neck Pose. After accomplishing this sequence, take a couple of deep relaxing breaths while in the Extended Child's Pose and then do the exact same thing with the left leg.

Once the previous sequence/transition is completed, adopt the Seated Staff Pose again, place your left ankle just above your right knee, bend your right leg, slide your left hand through the "hole" made by your left leg and place your left hand on your right knee. Then place your right hand on your right knee as well, inhale deeply, and on an exhalation pull your right, bent leg deeply towards your chest. If you lose your balance and fall back, do not worry and simply continue to pull for several deep breaths. Release, extend both legs, place your right foot just above your left knee, and Thread The Needle on this leg now. Hold for several breaths as well and then let's continue.

This next sequence is called the Bound Angle Pose, yet I learned it as The Cobbler Pose or the Butterfly Pose and it is an excellent hip opening pose. Sit in the Seated Staff Pose, focus on your breathing- as you always should when practicing yoga poses- bring the soles of your feet together, grab them with your hands, inhale deeply and on an exhale try to separate your knees and place them as close to the mat as possible, sit tall and lean forward bringing your head towards your bound soles. Hold this position for several breaths, place your hands or forearms on each knee, take a deep exhale, push your knees down and simultaneously raise your chest back to sitting tall, and pull your stomach in towards your spine.

Hold for several breaths, hug your knees tightly, then roll back and forth several times to relax your lower back.

After doing the Bound Angle Pose/The Cobbler/The Butterfly and then hugging your knees tightly and rolling back and forth, do this sequence two more times before continuing to these next poses.

Once you have completed this last sequence, grab your big toe with your index and middle finger of each hand, make sure that your sitting bones are firmly and stable on the mat, lean back slightly, inhale deeply, and on an exhale spread your legs as wide as you can. This is a variation of the Sleeping Angle Pose, but I gave it a more "catchy" name: The Welcome Home Pose:-) Hold it for several breaths, bring your heels together without allowing them to touch the mat, and then extend both legs high and forward to continue with this variation and hold for several breaths as well.

Once the previous poses have been accomplished, release the toes but keep your legs up high, extend your hands alongside your body with palms facing down, and hold for several breaths. This is the Boat Pose.

Let's now do a sequence designed to assist and empower the lower back while at the same time stretching the legs. This is the Supine Hand To Big Toe Poses.

Lie down, place your left hand on top of your left thigh, bend your right leg, grab the big toe with your right index and middle fingers, extend your leg up as high as you may, and hold it for several breaths.

Exhale, bend the right leg, then extend it out to your right without allowing the leg or foot to touch the floor. Hold for

the allotted several breaths.

Exhale, bend your right leg and bring it towards your body, release the big toe and now grab it with your left index and middle fingers. Extend your right hand placed on the floor, gaze at it, and extend your right leg as far to your left side as possible without allowing it to drop to the floor or losing the gaze of your right hand. Hold this position for several breaths.

On an Exhalation place your entire back on the mat, hug your knee tightly to your stomach for several breaths, then either grab your shin, ankle, toes, or the sole of your right leg- whichever is more challenging and reachable for you. Once you grab the highest portion possible, maintain your left leg active with the back of the knee as close to the mat as possible, pull your right leg towards your head and hold for several breaths.

Release, place your right leg on the mat, place your right hand on top of your right thigh, and do the exact same thing you just did with your right leg on your left leg.

Now, I titled this composition Power Yoga because it is designed to be truly challenging and beneficial for both your body and mind.

Therefore, I will now add several exercises that you may use throughout the sequences to truly make it challenging and sweating.

The following is an exercise known in the yoga community as the Kamikaze (suicide in Japanese). Start with the Down Dog Pose, imagine a three feet high fence in front of you, take a deep inhale, and on an exhale bend your arms,

bring your head under the "fence", extend your arms, ~~push out~~ your chest, bend your neck and look up to the ceiling, inhale and on a deep exhalation, bend your arms again, bring your head under the "fence" and back to the Down Dog Pose. You may do this pose one, two, three or as many times as you'd like to gauge and challenge yourself.

Another intense exercise you may do to challenge and make this routine truly powerful is one called: The Cork Screw Push Up. Again, adopt the Down Dog with the only difference that your legs are close together and touching. Now bend your legs, "throw" both knees to one side of your body, bend your arms and lower your chest close to the floor, while in that position "throw" your knees to the other side of your body, and extend your arms back to the starting position. This exercise, just like the previous one could and should be used to make this routine more challenging and powerful as well.

This next exercise is the Kundalini sequence of squats and is also extremely intense and powerful. Start with the deepest squat you can accomplish (The Tribal Squat), place both hands on the mat, inhale and on an exhalation extend your legs without your hands losing contact with the mat, inhale and on another exhalation return to the deep squat, and do the exact same thing once more. These two particular squats that you just did are known as the Kundalini Squats. When you return to the deep squat again, place your palms together (mudra seal) in front of your chest, inhale and on an exhalation extend your legs only  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way up. Do not extend your legs completely. Inhale and on an exhalation return to the deep squat and do it once again.

These two squats are known as the Tension Squats; reason why  
 one does not fully extend the legs and thus keeps constant  
 tension on them. Once you do two tension squats, return to the  
 deepest squat you can accomplish, place both hands on the mat,  
 take a deep inhale and on an exhalation jump as high as you  
 can and bend your knees on the landing; squat deeply and do it  
 once more. These last two squats are known as the Superman  
 Squats.  
 Again, these last sequences (Kamikaze, Cork Screw Push  
 Ups, and the Kundalini, Tension, and Superman squats) are  
 very, very challenging and you must really gauge and challenge  
 your conditioning and level of performance by deciding how to  
 implement them on your routine. The choice is yours on how  
 intense and powerful you wish to make YOUR routine.  
 Now, there are many, many more poses and stretching  
 exercises available, but I believe that if you implement these  
 and stay committed to them, you will definitely become much  
 more supple, stronger, resistant, coordinated, balanced,  
 powerful... and able to then accomplish your daily living  
 activities with much more ease and confidence. Nevertheless, I  
 cannot conclude this composition without advising you to  
 perform what the yoga savants call the most important pose in  
 yoga: The Corpse Pose. It is called such because all you must  
 do is stop fighting gravity, lie down on the mat, legs and  
 arms relaxing, your chin lower than your forehead to allow  
 your neck to stretch out while being completely relaxed, focus  
 intently on your deep diaphragmatic breathing, and as your  
 mind starts to wander with thoughts, simply do not focus on  
 them, continue focusing on your breathing and thus allowing

the thought do dispel. Do this Corpse Pose for at least five minutes, rise, give yourself a well deserved congratulation for the time and effort you've just dedicated to yourself for your own well-being, and continue enjoying life to the fullest.

Thank your dearly for your time and commitment and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## ACCEPTANCE #3

With Doctor and Spiritual Teacher Deepak Chopra's kind permission, I'd like to recite one of his many philosophies that I find truly resonating and sincere.

Today I will accept myself, just as I am. I will

reaffirm that I'm a beautiful person, just as I am.

Today I will accept myself, just as I am. I will

reaffirm that I'm a wonderful person, just as I am.

Today I will accept myself, just as I am. I will love

myself, just as I am.

Today I will say to the Infinite Divine Being, the

mystery that we call God: Thank you God for making me, just as

I am.

Knowing this I will see the world, just as it is. I

will accept the world, just as it is. And in the clarity of

that awareness I will feel peace, harmony, laughter, and

love.

Thank you dearly for your time and as always, God

bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## RULES TO LIVE BY

- 1- The importance of an orderly mind.
- 2- Stay focused on the task at hand.
- 3- Don't draw attention to yourself.
- 4- ~~If you think you're done, you may have just begun.~~

- 5- Don't be overly trusting.
- 6- Remain alert at all times to the reality of the present because all we have is right now.
- 7- Don't confuse good luck with a good plan.
- 8- Always be prepared to improvise.

- 9- Watch, look, and listen, or you won't know what you're missing.
- 10- Don't just react to a situation that takes you by surprise. Respond.

- 11- Trust your instincts.

- 12- Let the other guy do the talking.

- 13- You only get one chance to make a first impression.

- 14- Ask all questions in the order of their importance.

- 15- Be quick, but don't hurry.

- 16- Always look people in the eye. Give them a handshake

- they'll remember.

- 17- Start each day by saying it's good to be alive. Even if

- you don't feel it, saying it- out loud- makes it more likely

- that you will.

- 18- If #17 doesn't work, count your blessings.

- 19- When everything goes wrong, treat disaster as a way to

- wake up.

- 20- There must always be a relationship between evidence and

- conclusion.

- 21- Fortune favors the bold.
- 22- Whenever your head is too full of noise, make a list.
- 23- When there's trouble, think fast and act decisively.
- 24- You can't change anything if you can't change your mind.
- ~~25- What you're told to believe isn't important: It's what you~~
- choose to believe. It's not the ink and paper that matter, but the hand that holds the pen,
- 26- Once is an anomaly. Twice is a coincidence. Three times is a pattern. And as we know...
- 27- There's no such thing as a coincidence.
- 28- Let people underestimate you. That way they'll never know what you're capable of.
- 29- You could also think of coincidence as synchronicity.
- 30- Sometimes the only way to deal with a bully is to hit first. Hard.
- 31- It's not a bad thing, sometimes, if they think you're crazy.
- 32- Even the slightest advantage can mean the difference between life and death. Never give it away.
- 33- Act as if you're in charge, and people will believe you.
- 34- Trying times are not the times to stop trying.
- 35- Never make excuses.
- 36- Sleep when you're sleepy. Cats take naps so they're always ready for anything.
- 37- The bravest thing is not always the bravest thing.
- 38- If strangers know what you're feeling, you give them the advantage.
- 39- Out of control anger will get you.
- 40- Never start a fight unless you can finish it. Fast.

41- When all else fails, just breathe.

42- In times of chaos, stick to routine. Build order one step

at a time.

43- The only thing you can't afford to lose is hope.

~~44- To break the ice, always compliment a man's hometown.~~

45- And always sympathize with his hometown's football team.

46- If you can't be on time, be early.

47- If you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail.

48- Giving up is easy. Finishing is hard.

49- If you want to know what's going on in a small town, hang

around the barbershop.

50- Facing the truth is a lot easier, in the long run, than

lying to yourself.

51- Sometimes you find out more when you ask questions to

which you already know the answer.

52- If you don't like the answer you get, you shouldn't have

asked the question.

53- If you want something done the right way, do it yourself.

54- If you don't want people to notice you, act like you

belong there and look busy.

55- The best way to lie is to include part of the truth.

56- The dumbest guy in a room is the first one who tells you

how smart he is.

57- Try to never sign a legal document that hasn't been signed

by a lawyer who works for you.

58- When you're in trouble, emphasize your strengths.

59- When in a new place, act like you've been there before.

60- Learn the difference between tactics and strategy.

61- 99 percent of the things you worry about never happen.

Does that mean worrying works or that it's a complete waste of time and energy? You decide.

62- When you need to make a quick decision, don't let what you can't do interfere with what you can.

~~63- When you gain the advantage, press it to the limit.~~

64- There's a reason the classics are classics: they're

classic.

65- Don't make another's pain a source of your happiness.

66- Go easy on the hard sell. Persuasion is the art of making

others believe it was their idea.

67- Never take more than you need.

68- Without a life of the mind, you'll live a mindless life.

69- Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean that sorry is

better than safe.

70- Never be nervous when talking to a beautiful girl. Just

pretend she's a person, too.

71- Men want company. Women want empathy.

72- Always listen to the person with the whistle.

73- There is not- nor should there be- any limit to what a guy

will go through in order to impress the right girl.

74- If you want people to tell you more, say less. Open your

eyes and ears, and close your mouth.

75- Regarding eyewear and underwear: always travel with

backups.

76- Don't watch your life like it's a movie that's happening

to someone else. It's happening to you. It's happening right

now.

77- Stay alive.

78- If you really want to keep a secret, don't tell anybody.

- 79- You can't live your life two days at a time.
- 80- If you have to hide your true feelings from your friends, they're not your friends.
- 81- If any task you undertake requires you to "die trying,"
- 
- You might want to reconsider your plans.
- 82- Healing takes you longer than you think. The biggest scars you carry aren't the ones you can see.
- 83- Sometimes in order to get completely sane, you have to go a little crazy.
- 84- Do the right thing, always, and risk the consequences.
- 85- Take care of the minutes, and the hours will take care of themselves.
- 86- When visiting a foreign land, it is always wise to observe and abide by the customs of the local culture. Unless they're trying to eat you.
- 87- In the face of overwhelming odds, do one smart thing at a time.
- 88- Read books to get smarter. Read people to become wiser.
- 89- Being brave means being afraid and going ahead with it anyway.
- 90- An open door is either a greeting or a trap. Best to decide which before you enter.
- 91- When you reach the end of your rope, don't hang around.
- 92- Keep your friends close. Keep your enemies in a bag at the bottom of the river.
- 93- All you need is love. And some friends you can trust. And a little luck doesn't hurt either.
- 94- Don't ever give up on anybody.
- 95- It is our rarest possession, more precious than any

treasure from nature, God, or man. It cannot be bought, sold, traded, or stolen. You only have so much of it, and you never know when it will run out, so you mustn't waste it or just let it pass or, heaven forbid, ever try to kill it. It is time.

---

Spend your time wisely. For you can master this one simple and elusive skill, my friend, you will fully and truly be alive.

## MEDITATION

Good day everyone and may the play of your lives find you in beautiful circumstances and truly joyous.

I have written and spoken much about how the practice

of yoga and meditation has truly benefited me and how it may

do so as well for all who incorporate it into their lives! To the point of getting many inquiries by individuals as to what it may do for them if they were to commit themselves to such practice. I normally try to impart the most prudent and objective advice possible by emphasizing commitment and the need to be constant, because although it is a truly

transforming practice, it is something only the individual can do to obtain the benefits for his or herself. And in such way then serve and make a positive difference to all and everything that surrounds him or her.

Now in my constant reading, I have come across a reading (Be a Lamp Upon Yourself) that echoes my sentiments as far as meditation is concerned and I feel obliged to share it with you by quoting and interjecting it with my personal knowledge and experience.

Meditation is a mental development or Mind cultivation. Through such practice one's mind and one's whole life grows spiritually- as one's consciousness becomes more and more developed. One becomes increasingly aware of oneself, of others, of one's environment, and ultimately of reality itself. This increased awareness helps us deal with every day life situations with greater calm and insight.

Meditation as experienced and taught by many has two aspects: Calmness (or concentration) and Insight (or wisdom).

Therefore, as the mind becomes more and more calm, and one's

consciousness gets more and more clear, one begins to get

"flashes" of insight into the true nature of things - giving

rise to wisdom. As calmness and insight go hand in hand,

meditation then provides one with attaining both great

calmness and great insight.

Many friends have asked me or implied: "What can

meditation do for me and how can I practice it?" I simply

advise them to make it a daily habit of going to a quiet

(preferably dark) space for a short time, (5-15 min), close

their eyes, and just FOCUS (emphasis intended) on their

diaphragmatic breathing (breathing meditation). As thoughts

arise and the mind begins to wander, gently continue to focus

on the in and out breath and allow the thoughts to dispel. It

is obvious that the mind will continue to wander, yet as one

becomes more adept at focusing on the breath (or an object),

the passing of minutes will increase and thus one becomes much

more comfortable and adept with such practice.

By building up this good habit of the mind in

meditation, our behavior in our daily life gradually changes.

As our anger and unconsciousness decreases, we are able then

to make better decisions and thus become less dissatisfied and

restless. Although the benefits of meditation can be

experienced in the moment, we should always try to have a

broader and more encompassing motivation to meditate than just

for our own present happiness. We can generate the motivation

to meditate in order to grow, evolve, become better beings,

and in such manner serve humanity.

Consequently, it is extremely beneficial to have a

regular meditation practice; even if only for a short time each day. Many have expressed to me: "I have a job and have many other things that demand my time. I just don't have time to meditate." Although I understand and accept their

"reasoning," I feel compelled to debunk such. Because if

meditation is so helpful to us (which it truly is), we should make time for it. Even if we do not choose to meditate, it is very important to keep some quiet time for ourselves each day - a time when we can sit and reflect upon what we do and why, or to simply learn about and get to truly know and love

ourselves.

I've expressed to so many how important it is to learn to love ourselves and be happy in solitude to the point of

being asked if it is wrong to have friends or company. To this I simply state: "It is very good to have many friends; yet

it's much better to be alone." Additionally, we always have

time to nourish our bodies; we rarely, if ever, skip a meal

because we see it as important. Likewise, we should reserve

time to nourish our minds as well because it too is very

important to "feed" and rest the mind from constant thoughts

and wandering. After all, it is our mind that controls our

body and not the other way around, not so?

Again every one, thank you dearly for your time, God

bless, and I pray you take heed to this truly transforming

practice.

Ernesto Cole

In my almost two decades of incarceration and greeting certain friends and acquaintances with: "Good morning, how are you?" I've received responses such as: "I'm 'locked-up,' what do you think?" "Tired of this f\*\*king shit!" and "Just barely hanging on," among many others.

Sure enough, all of the responses aren't so filled with negativity and ill attitudes. Some individuals happen to be quite pleasant and positive despite their circumstances and I truly commend and applaud them for that. Yet this essay is not really intended for those rich in attitude and heart- although they may surely strengthen their demeanor (as I have) with these resonating truths- but for those who seem to find it difficult to accept their conditions and thus prefer to remain bitter while their attitudes seem to confirm it.

For the most recent part of your truly's life, I have been a very happy and content individual with a good and positive and mental attitude. I say for the most recent part of my life because it took me many, many years to understand the importance of finding the true peace of mind, happiness, and contentment I was destined for by life and thus truly feel I can elaborate on its benefits.

In my humble opinion, this knowledge and the benefits it affords are the true definition of success. And since in my constant readings I've come across a beautiful book (Positive Charges- Alexander Lockheart) that deals purely with golden attitude kernels, I find it a pleasure and joy to share it with those who still harbor the debilitating and injurious malady that I was once also a culprit of. So with Mr.

ATTITUDE #4

Lockheart's kind permission, please read, take heed, and profit from the following.

#### Attitude Is Everything

Attitude is the way you think. Your attitude is something other people can actually see. They can hear it in your voice, see it in the way you move, and feel it when they are with you. Your attitude expresses itself on everything you do, all the time, wherever you are. Positive attitudes always invite positive results. Negative attitudes always invite negative results. Attitude makes a difference in everything you do for your entire life, every hour of every day. What you get out of each thing you do will equal the attitude you have when you do it.

Anything that you do with a positive attitude will work FOR you. Anything that you do with a negative attitude will work AGAINST you. If you have a positive attitude, you will look for ways to solve the problems that you can solve, and will let go of the things over which you have no control. You can develop a positive attitude by emphasizing the good, by being though-minded, and by refusing defeat.

#### Anonymous

Choose your friends carefully. A negative attitude is very contagious and can rub off on you little by little without your knowledge.

Humans can, by their thoughts and acts of will, considerably influence their feelings, health, and even their chemistry. This is the truth behind the effectiveness of positive thinking.

Donald Meyer

Begin each day with a personal outlook that will open doors, welcome opportunity, and bring serenity. Your attitude determines your ability to experience success and happiness.

A Positive Mental attitude urges you to:

- Seek the truth.
- Take constructive action.
- Strive to achieve the highest ideals you can conceive, consistent with good physical and mental health.
- Live intelligently in your society.
- Abstain from that which will cause unnecessary injury.

- Start from where you are and go to where you want to be regardless of what you are or what you have been.

Napoleon Hill

By building and maintaining a positive mental

attitude, you can achieve results you never dreamed were

possible.

Whether a glass is half full or half empty depends on the attitude of the person looking at it.

It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult

undertaking which, more than anything else, will determine its

successful outcome.

William James

People can alter their lives by altering their

attitudes.

Let us think positively and remember that the

Robert H. Schuller

good news when you change your attitude!

The good news is that the bad news can be turned into

John H. Miller

brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life.

Your living is determined not so much by what life

situation.

Attitude is the mind's paint brush. It can color any

Attitudes are much more important than aptitudes.

Charles Swindoll

are in charge of our attitudes.

to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you... we  
too great for me. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens

high, no valley too deep, no dream too extreme, no challenge  
my hope. When my attitudes are right, there's no barrier too  
or cripples my progress. It alone fuels my fire or assaults  
Attitude is that 'single string' that keeps me going

circumstances, or my position.

pain, what other people think of me or say about me, my  
education, my bankroll, my successes or failures, fame or  
choice of attitude. It is more important than my past, my -  
significant decision I can make on a day-to-day basis is my  
This may shock you, but I believe the single most

You are the sole master of your attitude.

Our life is a reflection of our attitudes.

thoughts.  
to survive and thrive, to overpower an entire army of negative  
It takes but one positive thought, when given a chance

Og Mandino

minds or permit others to establish for us.  
Our only limitations are those which we set up in our  
Attitudes are contagious. Is yours worth catching?  
of life.  
A positive attitude is not a destination. It is a way

Napoleon Hill

all that makes life worth living.  
A negative attitude repels people and will rob you of  
attract the good and the beautiful.  
attitude for each specific occasion. It has the power to  
A positive mental attitude is the right mental  
you may become a negaholic.  
Don't become addicted to and dependent on negativism;

Zig Ziglar

on the face of the earth.  
Hardening of the attitudes is the most deadly disease  
world.  
Attitude is the window through which you must see the  
in oneself and in one's true potential.  
maintained each day through optimism, enthusiasm, and a belief  
A positive attitude is a state of mind which is  
misfortunes hardest to bear are those which rarely happen.

When we have accepted the worst, we have nothing more to lose. And that automatically means we have everything to gain.

Dale Carnegie

Your morning thoughts may determine your conduct for the day. Optimistic thoughts will make your day bright and productive, while pessimistic thinking will make it dull and wasteful.

Face each day cheerfully, smilingly, and courageously; and it will naturally follow that your work will be a real pleasure, and progress will be a delightful accomplishment.

William M. Peck

Remember: A positive attitude produces a positive perception and changes the situation for the better. We are all born with a positive mental attitude. We LEARN to be negative.

Positive thinking is the hope that you can move mountains. Positive believing is the same hope, but with a reason for believing you can do it.

Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you can do. Attitude determines how well you do it.

Lou Holtz

Conquer the negative; explore the positive.

Your own mental attitude is the one thing you possess over which you alone have complete control.

If you want to live positively, you start by learning to love POSITIVELY.

Robert H. Schuller

Plant positive thoughts in you mind and expect a

harvest of great possibilities.

A friend of mine has a great attitude: When something

doesn't go his way, instead of crying over spilt milk, he just milks another cow!

Your success, health, happiness, and wealth can be

attributed to the choice of attitude.

BE POSITIVE; then pass it on.

Plenty of people miss their share of happiness, not

because they never found it, but because they didn't stop to

enjoy it.

W. Feather

A positive attitude is an inside job.

Any fact facing us is not as important as our attitude

toward it, for that determines our success or failure.

Norman Vincent Peale

There is no danger of developing eyestrain from

looking on the bright side of things.

A positive mental attitude combined with definiteness

of purpose is the starting point of all worthwhile

achievement.

Napoleon Hill

to-day basis is the choice of your attitude.  
The most significant decision you can make on a day-  
Make a positive attitude your daily habit.

Ziggy Ziglar

will.  
will let you do everything better than a negative attitude  
A positive attitude won't let you do anything. But it  
positive, and you'll acquire the things you want.  
Take control of your mental attitude; keep it  
thoughts.  
Positive attitudes create a chain reaction of positive

that can whip you.  
It isn't defeat, but your mental attitude toward it,  
enduring success.  
positive, pleasing mental attitude, which is essential for  
Going the extra mile leads to the development of a  
Attitude is a habit of thought.

W. Clement Stone

positive or negative.  
difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is  
There is little difference in people... the little  
The positive mind has extra solving power.  
Positive attitudes create positive people.  
you think.  
One way to change your attitude is to change the way

fertilized with constant repetition.  
Thoughts, positive or negative, grow stronger when

your attitude determines your attitude.  
When you realize that the worst that can happen is  
that you may have to face a disappointment, then you will be  
transformed from a doubter to a believer, from a negative  
thinker to a POSITIVE THINKER.  
When you maintain a positive attitude, the problems of  
your world tend to bow before you.  
A positive attitude is like a fire; Unless you  
continue to fuel, it goes out.  
A positive attitude attracts happiness.  
A negative attitude repels happiness.  
Attitude is a little thing that makes a BIG  
difference.

If you want to see the rainbow, you have to be willing  
to put up with a little rain.  
You can't always control the circumstances in life,  
but you can control your attitude toward those circumstances.  
Nothing great was ever achieved without a positive  
mental attitude.  
In an organization, doing is causing people to have a  
productivity that makes everything happen on time and  
profitably. The attitude of doing comes from the leader's  
attitude.

Phillip B. Crosby

themselves, but in our attitude toward them.

Stuart Gilbert

Positive attitudes can work miracles.

I think it is absolutely essential that you have a

positive mental attitude in every aspect of life and that you

start early.

Patrick O'Malley

A positive thinker does not refuse to recognize the

negative; he refuses to dwell on it.

A positive thinker learns to knock the "it" off the

"can't."

A positive attitude is the one characteristic that all

successful people have in common.

With a good attitude, we can turn negative experiences

into positive lessons.

Be a positive thinker, not an IF thinker.

Attitude is the first quality that marks a successful

person. If a person has a positive attitude and is a positive

thinker who likes challenges and difficult situations, then

half of their success is achieved.

On the other hand, if a person is a negative thinker

who is narrow-minded and refuses to accept new ideas and has a

defeatist attitude, they haven't got a chance.

Lowell Peacock

The outer conditions of a person's life will always be

found to reflect their inner beliefs.

James Allen

The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings, by changing the inner attitude of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.

W. W. Ziege

Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goals; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.

A positive mind finds a way it can be done.  
A negative mind looks for all the ways it can't be done.

Robert H. Schuller

You can think negatively or positively. If you are a positive thinker, you will base your decisions on faith rather than fear.

Anonymous

Our attitude toward the world around us depends upon stimulus to action, and the incentive to achievement. Our attitude can be the anchor of the soul, the what we are ourselves: If we are selfish, we will be suspicious of others. If we are of a generous nature, we will be likely to be more trustful. If we are quite honest with ourselves, we won't always be anticipating deceit in others. If we are inclined to be fair, we won't feel that we are being cheated. In a sense, looking at the people around you is like looking in the mirror. You see a reflection of yourself.

William James

Personal deficiencies might be termed negative qualities and include unreliability, failure to cooperate, laziness, untidiness, trouble making, interference, and dishonesty.

Positive qualities would include willingness,

cheerfulness, courtesy, honesty, neatness, reliability, and

temperance.

Many fail in their work because they are unable to

overcome one personal deficiency. Check up on yourself. Don't

be afraid to put yourself under a microscope.

Eliminate your negative qualities. Develop your

positive ones. You can't win with the check mark in the wrong

place.

W. Winette

Research has demonstrated that a positive attitude can strengthen the immune system, ward off illness, help fight disease, and influence healing and recovery from long-term illness.

Developing a positive mental attitude will help you

create a positive life.

Real optimism sees the negatives but accentuates the

positive.

William Arthur Ward

The attitudes of your friends are like the buttons on an elevator. They will either take you up or they will take

you down.

A positive attitude is like a bank account. You can't continually draw on it without making deposits.

Wolf J. Rinke

The word "attitude" has taken on a new, more restrictive meaning, usually with the connection of "bad attitude" as in "I sense in you an attitude" or "The meeting was charged with an attitude."

Expanding the word into its older, more useful meaning of a general show of one's disposition, I think that we can explore the concept of attitude in a fruitful way. Attitude is the first face we show to the outside world. It can be physical, as in "body language." If my whole body is leaning toward the door, it shows clearly how much I want out of a boring or upsetting circumstance. Again, in some mysterious way our inner attitude radiates a meaning easily read.

Our attitudes betray our most secret thoughts and emotions. No matter how we try to hide them, they leak out somehow and display us with all the gross openness of an anatomical chart. Sometimes if we look at them carefully enough, they can reveal things about us that we ourselves were not aware of. We can make our attitudes an important tool of self-knowledge. It's a face we may or may not like, but it's one that's always with us. And yes, when we know our attitudes, we can change them.

Edward J. Levin, S. J.

A positive mental attitude not only helps you visualize what you want to be, it helps you become it.

What is an attitude?

It is the 'advance man' of our true selves.

Its roots are inward, but its fruit is outward,

It is our best friend or our worst enemy.

It is more honest and more consistent than our words.

It is an outward look based on past experiences.

It is a thing which draws people to us or repels

them.

It is never content until it is expressed.

It is the librarian of our past.

It is the speaker of our present.

It is the prophet of our future.

John Maxwell

The pleasure you get from your life is equal to the

attitude you put into it.

The Optimist Creed

Promise Yourself-

- To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace

of mind.

- To talk health, happiness, and prosperity to every

person you meet.

- To make your friends feel that there is something in

them.

- To look at the sunny side of everything and make

your optimism come true.

- To think only the best, to work only for the best,

Few of us realize the tremendous amount of influence that our thoughts and inner monologue have on helping us in life or preventing us from succeeding in life. The thoughts

Positive thinking is how you THINK about a problem.  
Enthusiasm is how you FEEL about a problem. The two together determine what you DO about a problem.

Wall Street Journal  
April 1984

A bad attitude is the worst thing that can happen to a group of people. It's infectious.

Things are for us only what we hold them to be. Which is to say that our attitude toward things is more likely in the long run to be more important than the things themselves.

The Optimist Clubs of America

trouble.

strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of

- To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too

that you have no time to criticize others.

- To give so much time to the improvement of yourself

greater achievements of the future.

- To forget the mistakes of the past and press on the

others as you are about your own.

- To be just as enthusiastic about the success of

and expect only the best.

that occupy our minds, and what we say when we talk to ourselves (our self-talk) become our reality if dwelled upon or repeated often enough. Our mind believes what we tell it most. So it's important to teach ourselves to think and talk with a positive dialogue.

One of the most powerful ways to build a more positive, winning attitude is through the continuous use of positive affirmations. The use of positive affirmations (autosuggestion) means developing a habit of replacing negative messages with positive reinforcements. As these positive messages become part of your subconscious, they will soon be brought into your reality.

Again, think positive, speak positive, act positive, and as always, God bless.

Ernesto Cole

## A MOLTITUDE OF RULES TO LIVE BY

## AND INFLUENCE OTHERS

- Be disciplined in all you do.
- Focus on your successes and learn from your failures.
- Do not judge, condemn, or complain.
- Trust your hopes, not your fears.
- Honestly motivate others.
- Go the extra mile at your job.
- Listen with empathy.
- Develop high values.
- Look at the challenges in life as stepping stones.
- If you want respect, have self-respect.
- Act, don't react.
- Smile, it really works.
- Start today and put your ideas into action.
- Finish what you start.
- Remember that a person's name is the most important sound in any language.
- Learn to laugh at yourself.
- Be consistent.
- Determine what success means to you. Then, put your thoughts in writing.
- The best way to get out of an argument is to avoid it.
- Believe in yourself and what you're doing.
- Be respectful of another's perspective, never say, "You're wrong."
- Change the thoughts you hold in your mind, and change your life.
- Be decisive.

- Don't try to win arguments.
- If you're wrong, admit it quickly and emphatically.
- Always find the best in people.
- If you make up your mind you can't, you'll always be right.
- Remember that we first make our habits, and then our habits make us.
- Speak and write using positive words.
- Be friendly and accepting.
- Your future will be what you mentally picture it to be.
- Keep learning new things every day of your life.
- Let others do most of the talking.
- Step outside your comfort zone.
- Resist the temptation to judge others.
- Set aside time every day to reflect.
- Be willing to accept occasional small setbacks.
- Happiness doesn't depend on what you have; it depends on how you FEEL about what you have.
- Let others take credit.
- Sincerely try to see things in the other person's point of view.
- Learn to act immediately upon a decision.
- Keep your promises.
- Make your mistakes. Learn from them. Move on.
- What happens in you is much more important than what happens to you.
- Learn to be a good listener.
- Take control of your attitude. Don't let someone else control it for you.
- Learn to improvise.

- Keep your mind filled with thoughts of happiness, hope, peace, and courage.
- Set aside time every day for solitude and reflection.
- Make choices between being reactive and being creative.
- Do more for the world than the world does for you.
- Be thankful for each day. Count your blessings instead of your problems.
- Think before acting.
- Learn to accept criticism without resentment.
- Eliminate envy from your life.
- Remember that your dreams of the future are better than the history of the past.
- Appeal to noble motives.
- Show praise and honest appreciation to any improvement.
- If you don't know, say so.
- Inspire others by your positive example.
- Be forgiving toward others.
- Realize that the biggest risk in life is to do nothing.
- Believe that if it's meant to be, it's up to me.
- Replace negative habit with two positive habits.
- Learn to manage your time more effectively. Discipline yourself and eliminate procrastination.
- When calling attention to mistakes, do so indirectly.
- Search for ways in which it can be done instead of looking for reasons it can't be done.
- Learn how to manage your time more effectively. Discipline yourself and eliminate procrastination.
- Pursue life with a positive attitude.
- Be compassionate.

- Never condemn in others that which you see and know is in yourself.
- Be aware of the thoughts that occupy your mind. Keep them positive.
- Invest in yourself. That's where you'll receive the best interest.
- Seek out mentors and colleagues who will help you live your dreams.
- Recognize that your attitude is your most priceless possession.
- Control your temper.
- Rise early. Work late. Strike gold.
- Listen to others and learn from them.
- Help yourself by helping others.
- Keep an open mind.
- Make amends with enemies.
- Let your body language convey positive things about you.
- Always get a good night sleep.
- Relinquish all excuses from your life.
- Treat yourself as if you are the most important asset you will ever own.
- Respect other people's opinion, even if they differ from yours.
- Use your material gains in ways that will benefit others.
- Avoid jumping to conclusions until you have all the facts.
- Define your purpose in life. Write it down.
- Don't major in minor things.
- Choose to love and be loved.
- Set aside a period of quietness each day.

- Think only the best; work only for best; expect only the best.
- Listen for truth and speak the truth.
- Admit to your errors before criticizing others.
- Ask questions instead of ordering.
- Do not demand, rather suggest.
- Take charge of your thoughts instead of allowing them to control you.
- Live in the present.
- Increase your spiritual understanding.
- Keep improving your vocabulary.
- Be willing to admit when you've been wrong.
- Avoid listening to gossip.
- Learn not to dramatize the challenge you may be faced with.
- Never judge a day by the weather.
- Remember that you become what you think about.
- Take control of your life. Don't allow circumstances to control you.
- It's not where you are, it's where you go.
- Be honest with yourself.
- Manage your negativity.
- Adjust your attitude to accept things as they come if you cannot change or avoid them.
- The way you see life will largely determine what you get out of it.
- Avoid arguments.
- Remember that practice makes you BETTER.
- Do things for the right reasons.
- Listen to motivational speeches; read books on self-help;

- and attend seminars that will assist you in developing yourself.
- When feeling overwhelmed, remember to take things one at a time- one day at a time.
- Implement small changes today, and the result will be extraordinary tomorrow.
- Be grateful, not critical.
- Belief that miracles can happen.
- Remember that self-improvement is a life-long process.
- Be polite, courteous, and understanding when dealing with people.
- Learn to react positively to negative situations.
- Express the emotion of happiness instead of misery.
- Cultivate good habits to weed out bad habits.
- Develop a sincere desire for the things you want in life.
- Keep your body in peak physical condition. Physical fitness assures mental fitness.
- Maintain a healthy diet.
- Show understanding, sympathy, and a sincere interest in what others say.
- Be willing to pay your dues.
- Don't be NOSY.
- Make your attitudes your allies.
- Never say never.
- Avoid negative thinkers.
- The measure of success is living your life in your own way.
- Stop magnifying your problems.
- Eliminate your prejudices.
- List the areas in your life in which you would like to

- become more disciplined.
- Quit complaining.
- Prepare to compromise.
- Practice hope.
- Show affection.
- Be a problem solver, not a problem maker.
- If you think you can or you think you can't, you're right.
- Hold your posture as if you're wearing a crown.
- Develop persistence.
- Never worship material things.
- Don't just love what you do, but become what you do.
- Give compliments.
- Trust your instincts.
- Seek out positive, winning role models.
- Remember to say, "Thank you."
- Be flexible.
- Live life rather than letting life live you.
- Don't conform to the norm.
- completely relax your body, part by part.
- Build a radiant, cheerful, and optimistic personality.
- Write down your thoughts on a regular basis.
- Be the master of your moods.
- Never give others the responsibility of your happiness.
- Don't let the negativity of others pull you down.
- Practice patience.
- Keep it simple.
- Never compare yourself with other people nor your achievements with theirs; instead, make your comparisons only with yourself.

- Always affirm to yourself that there is a solution to any problem and that you can find it.
- Appreciate life. It gives you the chance to love and to work and to play and to look at the stars.
- Let others save face.
- Use encouragement, make the fault seem easy to correct.
- Make others happy about doing what you suggest.
- Do not try to change others, rather influence them with your actions.
- Practice the art of appreciation.
- Train your mind to see and accept opportunity.
- Stay focused.
- Don't nurse a grudge.
- Eliminate fear-- False Evidence Appearing Real.
- Practice what you preach.
- Remember, we tend to get what we expect.
- Think confidently be acting confidently.
- Don't be egotistical.
- Surround yourself with positive, supportive, quality people.
- Learn not to brag.
- Plan your day.
- Keep a journal or diary to track your progress, and review your goals.
- Respond positively to negative feedback.
- Remember, every problem has a limited life span.
- Walk your talk.
- Master your emotions; don't let them master you.
- Respect others.

- Forgive yourself for past mistakes.
- Know when to say no.
- No rule of success will work if you don't.
- You can always turn setbacks into comebacks with a positive attitude.
- Smile, it takes only 13 muscles. A frown takes 112.
- Organize yourself.
- Be rational.
- Avoid dependence on drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Follow your heart.
- Tell your friends that you appreciate them.
- When you can't solve a problem, manage it.
- Always try to be fair.
- Ability x Effort = Results.
- Know your limits.
- Never take life for granted.
- Don't worry about tomorrow.
- Take time to relax.
- Do your best with what you have.
- Positive anything is better than negative nothing.
- Never underestimate the repellent power of a negative attitude.
- Begin getting in the habit of DOING IT NOW.
- Cultivate a good sense of humor.
- Beware of negative thinking experts.
- Make a strong commitment to reach your full potential as a human being.
- Use common sense.
- Act positively, and you will become positive.

- Never verbalize a negative emotion.
- Read books on self-improvement, and start building your mental library.
- Don't be afraid of sentiment.
- Today, do something specific that will demonstrate your determination to change yourself and your life for the better.
- Start early each day.
- Work towards progress, not perfection.
- Keep secrets secret.
- Avoid being cold, cruel, and calculating.
- Always be on time.
- Learn not to equate money with success.
- Approach everyone you meet with a sincere smile, friendliness, and a positive attitude.
- Be considerate.
- Accept change as inevitable.
- Know thyself.
- Learn from your past, but don't live there.
- Be flexible.
- Give a helping hand and support to someone who is faced with a challenge of feeling down and out.
- Develop attitudes that will get you what you want.
- Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative.
- Think about what you can do for others, not what they can do for you.
- Transform positive thinking into positive action.
- Transcend old beliefs and limitations.
- Spend at least 30 minutes a day reading something that is

positive and inspirational.

- Expect the best from yourself and others.
- Banish loneliness and depression.
- You never can enhance the skills of your outer world until you enhance the skills of your inner world.
- As a man thinks within himself, so is he.
- Make habits work for you, not against you.
- Avoid making the same mistake twice.
- Build your reputation and values for honesty, integrity, and passion.
- Stay busy.
- Give and give when it isn't expected.
- Remember, if you want to change your life, you have to

#### CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

- Treat others as you want them to treat you.
- One final word about criticism- don't.
- Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact.
- Insist on respect. If you give it, you will receive it.
- Give something away daily- a hug, compliment, gift, etc...
- Reread these rules and principles to live by.

Thank you dearly for your time and as always, God  
bless.

## LOVE #3

Sometime ago I composed a personal essay titled Love and its dual definition of verb and noun, emphasizing its verb aspect. Sometime later and while attending a very inspiring and beneficial psychology class (Criminal Thinking), the class facilitator, Dr. Anderson, was speaking about the difference between wanted objects and needed ones in life. While noting such differences, he then inquired whether love was a need or a want. The consensus in the class was a bit ambivalent, yet I very emphatically affirmed that love was a dear need and subsequently wrote another essay titled Love #2 stating my perspective on the need for love.

Now, after receiving my monthly lessons from the the Syda Yoga Meditation course (course that focuses intently on the spiritual path and love for one another) that I have been a member of for the last couple of years and which I recommend dearly to anyone who wishes to make changes in his or her life for the better of humanity, the lesson focused on the subject of love. Consequently, since I found it so dearly resonating, powerful, and inspiring, I have decided to quote its content with very few interjections on my part since there's really not much more I need to say for you dear and appreciated readers to grasp the importance of love.

"When love is absent, life seems dry, empty, boring, unfulfilling, and without true value or purpose. There is constant restlessness, a frustrating search for something that apparently doesn't exist. The importance of love is so simple, so obvious, yet few people understand love as it is.

"It is amazing that doctors and psychologists do not

stress to their patients the healing power of love. The psychiatrist especially needs to understand the essential nature of love and its power to repair the psyche and the soul. children should learn the profundity of love in grade school; however, nothing in our educational system on any level addresses the basic need to discover and experience the innate love hidden deep within us.

"Instead, our society romanticizes love, compartmentalizes it in a neat little niche confined to specific and limited perspectives. We grow up understanding love for our parents and children, for our friends and relatives, for lovers, even for certain objects or activities or experiences. Yet none of these in themselves are pure love. They are manifestations of love, but each 'kind' of love is a modification of pure love.

"True love is much simpler. Love is, as Baba (the founder of the Syda Meditation course) put it, THE SECRET SENSATION OF THE SELF. It is the primary feeling we feel inside ourselves when we are in touch with the Truth of our own Being- when we experience ourselves as we truly are. Love is not a mere 'feeling,' yet there is no other word in our language that is more precise for capturing the experience of love. Love is an inner smile, a lighthearted sense of joy and well-being, the sense that our life is truly going well and all is right with the world. Once our inner love arises, we experience supreme contentment and supreme fulfillment. With love alive in the heart, life becomes truly fun.

"A person who experiences inner love naturally approaches the details of life with certain lightness. Love is

not solemn. Love twinkles through the eyes and the aura of one who experiences it. Love is life's highest joy.

"A person who experiences love lives in a different universe from the person who does not. Take two cellmates serving the same sentence in prison (personal observation). Outwardly, living and going through the same experiences, their lives might seem very similar. Yet if one experiences love and the other doesn't, it will be a simple matter to know which is which- one will emanate a cheerfulness and sense of completeness that the other is restlessly searching for.

"When we understand and experience pure love together, we experience love within ourselves and in each other. True love is the consciousness of unity. Baba once said: When you and I experience that we are one, love arises between us. In pure love there are no expectations or conditions.

"Even if we are together for a few moments, even if we exchange only a brief glance, pure love can be shared. In the space of love, even a fleeting moment can offer the experience of oneness. When this happens, there is an experience of no 'other' being present. It is like being alone together.

"We are often looking for what would make us happy. We might be searching for love, or for 'someone' to share love with. We try so many different things in our quest for meaning in life. We wear ourselves out trying to make enough money, to be a success in our career, thinking things will make us happy. We initiate relationships with so many different people, thinking someone else, the 'right other person,' is the secret to contentment.

"We try so many different things, and yet it never

occurs to us that the key to the most divine contentment is our own inner love. We should be taught this in the first grade. Indeed, the principle is so simple that even a four-year-old can understand it quite easily. The only thing complicated about love is our own misunderstanding of it.

"This inner love is not merely an idea or theory. It exists in the present moment and we can experience it simply by awakening to an AWARENESS of it."

Again, dear readers, please heed the importance of loving ourselves and others so that the dearest of benefits of life could then be experienced, deal?:-)

Thank you very much for your time and attention and as always, God bless.

Ernesto Cole

## POWER

Good day everyone, and may the play of your lives be truly experiencing the best of circumstances.

There are times when for some reason it comes to mind how in the past I had a tendency and power to force, coerce, fool, and even obligate others to do my will; no matter- and usually often enough- how improper, uncivil, and law breaking it was.

Yet, and although I have learned to forgive myself for such delinquent behavior, those memories serve for me to accept my past, repent, learn from them, make the necessary amends, and move forward trying to continue to make myself a better individual.

Consequently, while reading a very enlightening book by Dr. Scott Peck (A World Waiting to be Born), I came across several paragraphs that spoke about the title of this essay and it was so vividly resonating, that I had to put the book down to think and write about it for the benefit of my dear audience.

As it is my M.O. and with Dr. Peck's kind permission, I will paraphrase his writing while at the same time interject such quotes with my personal perspectives and in such way attempt to give the readers a vivid and lived account of the difference between political and spiritual power. Please enjoy.

"There are two kinds of power: political and spiritual.

"Political power is the power to influence others through coercion. It is the power to hire and fire, to punish,

to imprison, even to kill. Or to threaten such things. Political power has nothing to do with wisdom or benevolence. It does not reside in a person or the person's character. It resides solely in money or position. This is why it is often referred to as temporal power, because these things are temporary. They can be stripped away overnight, just as I've seen many be stripped from it by a stroke, mental illness, and even incarceration.

"Spiritual power, on the other hand, is the power to influence others through one's own being- by example, by kindness, by humor, by wisdom, and by love. It is exercised at least as often by the poor as the wealthy, by the lowly as the high and mighty. Indeed, its hallmark is humility. The more spiritually powerful people become, the more aware they are that their power is a gift from God and has little, if anything, to do with their achieveness- that is not theirs, but God's power acting through them. And usually they are surprised by the extent of their influence for the good.

"Spiritual power is invariably civil. Political power may be exercised with civility or it may be exercised with the greatest incivility.

"People have an unfortunate tendency to think of political power and spiritual power as opposites. The reasons for this tendency are not hard to understand. Political power is achieved by ambition; spiritual power is not achieved at all; indeed, it often requires of its practitioner the renunciation of ambition. Political power has everything to do with control. Spiritual power has much to do with surrendering control. Political power is a matter of externals and

spiritual power a matter of what is within. Political power enormously tempts its possessor to lose touch with her or his humanity and thereby forsake the path of spiritual power. It is no accident, therefore, that there is something of a tradition within certain religions that political power is best avoided.

"But this is simplistic, black and white, either/or thinking, which like all simplistic thinking can get us into trouble. Are we to leave the governance of our organizations and institutions to the spiritually infantile? At what cost to society? Would not the most spiritually powerful people be the ones most likely to handle political power gracefully- to exercise such power without succumbing to its temptations, its corrupting influences? And how could someone grow into the further reaches of spiritual power without the experience of political power to learn from?"

So indeed, my dear friends, I can honestly concord and suggest Dr. Peck's truly wise assertions; because I can truly consider myself an example of his explanation of such differentiation and can now feel the difference of surrendering such political power and adopting instead the benefits of spiritual power.

Please take heed to this wonderful writing and be a beneficiary of such power.

Thank you all dearly for your time, attention, and as always, God bless.

Ernesto Cole

## ALWAYS

Esteemed reader, greetings.

Since recognizing the power of the way we use our words, I try my best to always speak and write as impeccable and positive as possible and thus, the reason for this essay.

Several years ago as I was standing before a television in the unit I was housed in, a good friend and I greeted one another and he inquired if I was "ok"? I simply and truly responded: "Always." He accepted my response and continued on his way. Just then another individual that had witnessed my response, negatively and rudely asked what I meant by being always ok?

I responded to him that that is exactly how I always feel, not just ok but truly happy. He immediately went into a barrage of comments stating, mainly, that: "If he was not happy there's no way in hell that I could be happy." Referring, I guess, to the fact that I'm serving two life sentences plus without the possibility of parole and he isn't. Very unperturbed, I allowed him to finish his egotistical and loud comments before expressing my true sorrows for him feeling that way, putting a sincere smile on my face, and walking away.

Sure enough, I could have afforded him my time and perspective on the matter to assist his frame of thought. Yet, and since it is not my priority to help those I wish but only those I can, I left him in his own "world" and out of mine.

Presently, I was reading a lesson from the Syda Yoga Meditation Course of which I've, fortunately, been a member

for the last couple of years and it has a lesson that I wish to share with anyone who may have my alluded acquaintance's frame of mind. This particular lesson is a little long but extremely powerful; therefore, I will present only part of it and interject it to make it shorter yet still maintain its main message: The power of our thoughts.

"Once again, I hope you have been positive and cheerful during the last two weeks. If you have been sincerely striving to maintain this state since we first mentioned it, you may have discovered that it becomes easier through consistent practice, just like everything else. If you persist with efforts to remain positive and cheerful, you will develop much inner power and strength, and your reward will be your own happiness and peace of mind.

"When you develop the 'happiness and joy' habit, instead of the 'worry and sorrow' habit, you will find it to be your most cherished asset. When you discipline your mind to see the good in things, to see the highest in other people and in yourself, and to know that only what is good for you will follow, then you have tuned in to the power that governs this entire universe. Nothing can compare with the contentment of a person who has brought his own mind under control.

"Do not think that it's difficult or that it will take a long time to change your mental habits. It is actually very simple; it's just a matter of being persistent. Many people never bother to try, and many of those who begin will not remember to persist. However, if one is persistent and steady, one can make positive thinking a habit. It's just as easy to think a pleasant thought as it is to think an unpleasant

thought. They require the same amount of mental energy. It's just that most of us have been conditioned to think negatively. It's an old habit and seems perfectly normal. Yet it is possible to erase the old conditioning and create positive tendencies instead....

"If we practice sustaining thoughts that feel good, while immediately dropping any thought that feels bad without so much as even bothering to consider it, our lives will be completely transformed. A person who thinks pleasant thoughts does not live in the same world as a person who thinks unpleasant thoughts.

"For this reason, two people can be in the same place at the same time, exposed to the same conditions and circumstances, but because of their different states of mind, one will experience happiness while the other experiences unhappiness. Everything depends on the state of our mind, which in turn depends on our habitual and predominant mental attitude, which is determined by what we think."

In the hopes that you have captured the message, I will stop the Syda lesson writing here and provide you with a practice I've learned and developed to assist my mind into becoming more still and positive.

Aside from trying to always behave as spiritually as I can, I practice every day the "art" of Silence (meditation) for at least 15 minutes. I look for a dark, quite, and tranquil place, cover my eyes with a knit cap or something of the sort, sit or lie comfortably, and focus on my breathing and my diaphragm going up as I exhale and down as I inhale to the point that my mind could not afford to think because my

focus is entirely on my breath.

Yes, there are many times that the mind's (ego) persistence begins to wander. But as soon as I witness it, I return my focus to my breath to the point of even counting my exhales and inhales as one while allowing my diaphragm to rise and fall with each exhale and inhale. By practicing this method of silence (meditation), when I am confronted with the varying circumstances that life presents us with, I have now the choice and practice of deciding whether I want to follow or not follow the thought that comes to mind and have reduced the errors I was used to making by impulsively reacting to negative thoughts.

Additionally, I know that with the hurried schedule of our lives it may be easier said than done to practice such art. However, if we truly desire that our lives be more fruitful and peaceful, we must put forth the practice and commit ourselves to it. One does not have to start by devoting 15 minutes or more (as yours truly). Three, five, seven minutes a day will also prove sufficient as a start and as you become more adept at such practice you may then increase the time and be recipient of a much more pleasant, fruitful, and peaceful existence, very simple, no?:-)

Again, thank you dearly for your time, attention, practice, and as always, God bless.

Ernesto Cole

## Just Listen!

Sometime ago while attending some RPP (reentry preparation program) classes and observing its facilitators take enormous amounts of time speaking and even "battleing" for the "limelight," I composed an essay titled "Communication" to, in a way, influence them on becoming a bit more conscious on how to assist the participants by involving them more, hear from them, try to side with them by attempting to put themselves in their shoes, and in such way then try to influence them for the better. Whether my attempts were accomplished or not, I could not say. Yet the attempt, I feel, was worthwhile, nonetheless.

I now came across a very well written and excellent book by Dr. Scott Peck titled "A World Waiting To Be Born". In said book, the doctor relates personal and true story in which he cites how the person he least expected influenced him to make the right and a very important decision by simply listening to him.

Consequently, and since Dr. Peck is an author with such exemplary and articulate way of presenting the importance of listening and being civil, I will simply quote the story for the benefit of those of us who have at times committed the mistake of speaking instead of listening to those that seek our perspective. Please enjoy.

"At the age of fifteen, in the middle of my junior year, I quit Exeter, one of the most highly regarded preparatory schools in the nation. As I look back on that turning point in my life, I am amazed at the grace that gave me the courage to do it. Not only was I dropping out of a

prestigious prep school against my parents' wishes, but I was walking away from a golden WASP track that had all been laid out for me. Hardly aware that it was what I was doing, I was taking my first giant step out of my entire culture. That culture of "the establishment" was what one was supposed to aspire to, and I was throwing it away. And where was I to go? I was forging into the total unknown. I was so terrified I thought I should seek the advice of some of Exeter's faculty before finalizing such a dreadful decision, but which of the faculty?

The first candidate who came to mind was my advisor. He had barely spoken to me for two and a half years, but he was reputedly kindly. A second obvious candidate was the crusty old dean of the school, known to be beloved to thousands of alumni. But I thought that three was a good round number, and the third choice was more difficult. I finally hit upon Mr. Lynch, my math teacher, a somewhat younger man. I chose him not because we had any relationship or because he seemed to be a particularly warm sort of person--indeed, I found him a rather cold, mathematical kind of fish--but because he had a reputation for being the faculty genius. He'd been involved with some kind of high-level mathematics with the Manhattan Project, and I thought I should check out what I was considering with a "genius."

I went first to my kindly advisor. He let me talk for about two minutes and then gently broke in. "It's true that you're underachieving here at Exeter, Scotty, but not so seriously that you won't be able to graduate. It would be preferable for you to graduate from a superior school like

Exeter with lesser grades than from a lesser school with better grades. It would also look bad on your record for you to switch horses in midstream. Besides, I'm sure your parents would be quite upset, so why don't you just go along and do the best you can?"

Next I went to the crusty old dean. He let me speak for thirty seconds. "Exeter is the best school in the world," he harrumphed. "Damn fool thing you're thinking of doing. Now you just pull yourself up by the bootstraps, young man!"

Feeling worse and worse, I went to see Mr. Lynch. He let me talk myself out. It took about five minutes. Then he said he didn't yet understand, and asked if I would talk some more about Exeter, about my family, about God (he actually gave me permission to talk about God!)--about anything that came into my head. So I rambled on for another ten minutes--fifteen minutes in all, which was pretty good for a depressed, inarticulate, fifteen-year-old. When I was done, he inquired whether I would mind if he asked me some questions. Thriving on this adult attention, I replied. "Of course not," and he queried me about many different things for the next half-hour.

Finally, after forty-five minutes in all, this supposedly cold fish sat back on his chair with a painted expression on his face and said, "I'm sorry. I can't help you. I don't have any advice to give you. You know," he continued, "it's impossible for one person to ever completely put himself in another person's shoes. But insofar as I can put myself in your shoes--and I'm glad I'm not there--I don't know what I would do if I were you. So, you see, I don't know how to

advise you. I'm sorry that I've been unable to help."

It is just possible that that man saved my life, and that I'm able to be sitting here writing this today because of Mr. Lynch. For when I entered his office that morning over forty years ago, I was close to suicidal, and when I left I felt as if a thousand pounds had been taken off my back. Because if a genius didn't know what to do, then it was all right for me not to know what to do. And if I was considering a move that seemed so insane in the world's terms, and a genius couldn't tell me that it was clearly, obviously demented, well then maybe, just maybe, it was something God was calling me to.

So it was that that man, who didn't have any answers of quick formulas, who didn't know what I should do and was willing to be empty, who was the one that provided the help I needed. It was that man who listened to me, who gave me his time, who tried to put himself in my shoes, who extended himself and sacrificed himself for me, who loved me. And it was that man who healed me. It was an extraordinary act of civility."

This is a truly enlightening story and for that, I commend you dearly, Dr. Scott Peck. Thank you sincerely for your for such insight and I hope the readers of this essay can take heed to such a wonderful and inspiring story.

Again, thank you all for your time, attention, and may God bless.

Ernesto Cole

## Relationship/Life

In this booklet I've written two essays about relationships (Relationship #1, Relationship #2) and the importance of having good and growing ones with every one we encounter. In Relationship #1, I stress the point on the importance of abstaining from trying to change others because this could very easily turn a relationship draining, tiresome, and unfulfilling. On the contrary, since we do not have the power to do so, we should employ such power to change ourselves. by doing so-- and only by doing so-- I believe, we could then possibly influence them. Additionally, in this manner we do not allow the complex ego structure to take control.

In Relationship #2, I emphasized the importance of loving ourselves and in such manner then love others. Yet, to truly love ourselves we must first overcome the importance of truly knowing ourselves and not in a superficial psyched-up way, but in a more practical and enduring way of being and maintaining a relaxed demeanor; since it is truly impossible to be relaxed and annoyed at the same time.

Now after participating and facilitating certain RPP (reentry preparation programs) courses, I've been encountered with some inquiries-- which I try my best to candidly reply to-- one being a very thoughtful and honorable one about relationships.

The question came about while I was speaking about the importance of having and maintaining a fruitful relationship, not only with our loved ones but all others in our environment. I was asked by a younger and esteemed friend:

"Who do you feel should we have, or try to have, our most loving and fruitful relationship with?"

Honestly, the inquiry caught me a bit off guard because it was something I never really thought about of in such way. Then I thought for a couple of seconds because I was about to say the person who's had the most loving influence in me; my mother. But I could not say that because my dear mother had just recently passed away. And although I cried her like a baby when it occurred-- since for some reason I was under the impression that I would have her till death do me part-- because she constituted my greatest relationship, she was no longer with me.

Consequently, having the questioner looking at me and waiting for my response, I was going to say, God. But not knowing the extent of his faith I thought better of it and said, "Life".

The questioner said: "Life? What do you mean Life? Life is not a person."

But when he said that, I put a sincere smile on my face because I then realized that by giving him such response I was on to something and discovered who, whom, or what I should strive to have the best relationship with.

Thus, this is what I said to him: "Indeed, I honestly feel that my dearest and most loving and reliable relationship should be with Life itself. Why? Well, first of all, and unlike any other relationship, Life will not leave you stranded, It will not get sick, It will not die on you, It will not disappear, It will not go away. Therefore, if I treat Life like my most loving family member, like my most loving

friend and when things do not go my way I do not complain to It, do not question It, do not get frustrated, annoyed, or ungrateful with It but simply accept It for what It is and on the contrary; thank It for things not having been worse and respect the fact that Life is an entity which should not be taken for granted. Once we adopt such attitude, I can certainly state that Life will become our most loving family member/friend and will then be obliged to reciprocate the loving relationship we demonstrate towards It, that simple.

However, if we have the tendency and mis-conditioning of taking Life for granted, complaining because It is not doing things our way, getting frustrated, annoyed, or ungrateful because we wanted more or better and when we wanted it; then I am quite certain that Life will continue to give us reasons to continue feeling the latter descriptions. Very simple, thoughtful, and insightful, don't you think?

Again, thank you dearly for your time, attention, and as always; God bless.

Ernesto Cole.

## Perfection?

After reading a truly inspirational and influential book by Dr. Scott Peck (A World Waiting to be Born)-- so inspirational, in fact, that this is my third essay (Power, Just Listen) inspired by said book.

Yet, before I give my and the Dr.'s perception on the title of this essay, please allow me to cite several examples and circumstances I've experienced and thus, the resonating quality of this book.

As a Yoga practitioner and "instructor" for many years under incarceration, I've encountered other practitioners (or should I say "would be practitioners") seeking perfection in the poses; much so that when that so called perfect pose seems elusive they become DIS-EASED (emphasis and hyphenation intended) and give up on such dear and beneficial practice and discipline. To those that remain and do not become DIS-EASED and show more persistency, I simply instruct: "It is not perfection that one should be striving for in this discipline. Simply commitment, progression, evolution, and eventually that contentment and satisfaction will make itself present."

I am also a Certified Physical Trainer and have had the pleasure and joy of training many younger participants than I. Many of whom, noticing my older appearance, feel that there is no way they will not be able to ease through the program. Unfortunately, once it becomes evident that the program is not as easy as first assumed, but truly intense and challenging, they, too, show DIS-EASE and discontinue their training. To those that remain and show resiliency, I confide the following: "One does not lose or gain physical

conditioning in one day. Therefore, one must simply show commitment, accept and endure the beneficial discomfort and sure enough your sought after conditioning will present itself soon enough.

Additionally, I have facilitated several RPP (reentry preparation programs) where the participants go seeking ways to change and improve their behavior. However, due to the idiosyncrasy and uncertain ways of correctional institutional life, many drop out of such programs citing all sorts of excuses. Again, to those that show commitment and persistency to better themselves, I comment the following: "If you truly wish to make yourselves better individuals, make it a habit to allow nothing or no one to disrupt your noble intentions and peace of mind in a negative way. If so happens, simply take a deep breath, regain your composure, accept the fact that it is what it is, and make the BEST of it; just don't give up.

Now to the example that Dr. Peck eluded to that inspired this essay. As a psychiatrist and therapist, Dr. Peck was once tending to a very attractive 35 year-old patient who may have been, for a woman her age and height, about eight pounds overweight. (Something yours truly does not really agree or adhere to because, who's to say what the "ideal" weight is or should be based on sex and height? Either way, back to the topic at hand.) The preceding evening, the patient had eaten an ice cream sundae for dessert. Now she was lamenting such fact. "How could I have been so stupid? After only six days I broke my diet! Now I have to start all over again. I hate myself for being so undisciplined. An ice cream sundae, for Christ sake! Butterscotch sauce, thick, gooey. I

mean, I couldn't have chosen anything that had more calories. One of these days I'll..."

As she went on and on, the doctor found himself drifting off slightly, thinking how typical she was of a large category of women whom he found sexually appealing, yet spent endless amount of energy obsessing about their weight, even about the most minor deviation in it. Which is something I personally have had to contend with, since it has been and still is an issue with my significant other.

The doctor asked himself what could be going on with them? So in midst of that wondering, he suddenly interrupted her, blurting out, "What makes you think that God doesn't have to diet?"

She looked at him as if he'd gone crazy. "Why'd you say that?" She asked.

Mr. Peck scratched his head, replying, "I don't know." But he had to think about why he'd said it, and as he did, he realized that he was on to something. He realized that his patient was laboring under a fantasy that if she read enough diet books or discovered just the right diet or received enough psychotherapy, then she would achieve a state where she could either eat all she wanted without gaining an ounce or else whenever she did gain that ounce, be able instantly and effortlessly to lose it. A strange fantasy, come to think of it.

"Maybe God puts on five pounds," I explained to her. "And then He has to take them off. Only he doesn't make a big deal out of it, which is perhaps why He's God."

That is how Dr. Peck claims to have stumbled onto

process theology. I call it simply being accepting and doing the best of anything without complaining. Sure enough, when an error is made (which is fairly easy to do), learn from it, make the necessary amends, and continue living, growing, and evolving.

Doctor Peck then continues by expressing his theory which resonates dearly with me and thus, the main objective of this essay.

"The illusion that this patient labored under was a static notion of perfection. It is a very common but very destructive notion that perfection is an unchanging state. It is so common because it is so purely logical. If something is perfect and it changes, it can only become imperfect. But if something is truly perfect, it cannot, by definition, become imperfect. Hence perfection must be unchanging. And so we think, "God is as God was and always will be.

"But it's not the way I think anymore. It is also hardly what the Bible suggests. And increasingly, it's not what theologians are becoming to think. Thank God! If there is anything that characterizes life, it is change. As already been mentioned, what most distinguishes the animate from the inanimate is "irritability." Something that's animate moves when you poke at it. It doesn't just sit there. It's alive. It goes this and that way. It grows, it decays, it gets reborn. It changes. All life is in process. And since I choose to have a living God, I believe that my God is also in process, learning, growing, and perhaps even laughing and dancing."

So why do I quote Dr. Peck and compose this essay?

Simply because I, too, believe that the concept of being

accepting and not dwell on the static notion of perfection is so critically important for us all.

We are all in process, and the healthier we are, the more in process we will be. The more vibrant, the more lively we are, the more we will be changing.

For these same reasons, an ideal state will not be stable or static. It will be evolving. It should not be thought of as a condition that we reach, because no sooner will we reach it than we will move on. It will not be a condition without suffering, without the stress and strain that inherently accompany change or development. Rather it will be an individual moving with maximal vitality toward maximal vitality.

Therefore, and in summary, this ideal state of contentment will only be impossible to obtain and experience if we continue to hold on to the traditional and conditioned vision of perfection.

Again, thank you dearly for your time, attention, and as always, God bless.

Ernesto Cole

## Meditation 101

Dear Readers, greetings. In this booklet I've written much about Yoga and the benefits of meditation (Questions & Answers, Finding Yourself, Silence, Yoga, Yoga 101, Meditation...), yet for some reason I've never gone in full detail on how to assist beginners in the beautiful and enlightening practice of meditation. Reason why many of my peers that are interested in the practice have asked me how best would it be for them to go about it because they seem to have a difficult time doing it and, most of all, staying committed to it. When I return the inquiry as to how is it that they are going about it, the consensus has been that they cannot stop their minds from wandering and thinking about many different things, the "displeasure" of sitting down doing "nothing", and even complaining about the perceived body aches and pains that the postures entail. Consequently, following is the description of how I go about it with the hopes of giving some beginners a clearer insight on meditation and a much more pleasant and enriching experience.

There are a myriad of ways to meditate and I will not attempt to go into detail. However, please allow me to try to clear a certain misconception about meditation here in the Western part of the globe. Here we define meditation as reflections and contemplation. In the East where the practice of Yoga and meditation originated thousands of years ago, the practice is more intended on stilling the mind along with its many thoughts; slowing down of reflections and in such way purify the mind and "tame" the ego somewhat.

Having made that point clear, I practice it first

thing in the morning before dawn when all is still very peaceful, quiet, and dark still. I either sit cross-legged on the floor with my back erect (some people prefer to do it with their backs on the wall and a folded blanket about three inches off the floor for more comfort), sit on a chair with my feet on the floor (or even my ankles crossed), my hands on my thighs with my thumb and index fingers touching to symbolize the closeness from within, and my back straight, or even lie down, place my hands on the side of my body, cross them on my chest, or intertwine my fingers on my stomach to feel my diaphragm go up and down as I inhale and exhale. I then close my eyes and cover them further by lowering my knit cap over them and have a full sense of total darkness. As I do this, I immediately begin to just witness my breathing. I do not try to control it, simply allow my inhales; pause, exhales; pause to follow their course.

Once I start in such manner, after a little while, my breathing becomes complacent and serene, my heart beat "reveals" its presence, and I can now guide my breathing in any way I choose. As this is happening, the thoughts assault me yet I do not focus or concentrate on them nor allow them to "frustrate" me, as some of my peers have confessed. On the contrary, I very lovingly, gently, and compassionately return my focus and concentration to my inhales; pause, exhales; pause, the sound of my heart beats, and even the sweet sound and calming sensation of my breathing. When the thoughts are persistent (as they and the ego could be), I, too, become persistent on my focus and concentration obliging the thoughts to dispel like a cloud of smoke. Many meditators chant, repeat

a mantra such as OM, or have other means of focus and concentration. I am in prison and share a 12 feet by 8 feet cell with another (sometimes two) individual; therefore, chanting and mantra repeating would be inconsiderate of me. But the sound of my heart beats and breathing prove to be just as effective for a means of focus and concentration.

Additionally, depending on the amount of time (five, ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty, forty... minutes) I am meditating on, a certain body part may become uncomfortable. All I do is, while maintaining my focus on my breathing and heart beats, very, very gently accommodate said body part and continue with my concentration to the point where I even count my inhale, pause, exhale, pause as one and so and so. In this method of what I call breathing meditation, I may count up to 100, 200, 300, 400.... I've never done it, but one may even gently rise, take a couple of steps and return to the breathing meditation.

Like I've mention previously, there are many forms of meditation and I must admit, I've tried many over the years. However, I suggest to my peers that they should stick to one particular method and not change them constantly and in doing so allow their meditation practice to be more regular and consistent. Some savants on the subject suggest doing two sittings a day. I do not make such recommendation for beginners because I recall how difficult it was for me to sit still for just a couple of minutes every so often in trying to still my mind. Therefore, I recommend just one sitting daily, preferably in the quiet of the morning and if that's not possible, doing it at night before bed time could also prove

very efficient. Then as one becomes more adept, the practice could be done two or more times a day.

Whenever or however one decides to meditate, make it a priority to be loving, gentle, and compassionate with yourself. In this manner you train the mind to stay on point, focus, and concentrate on your purpose for meditation; to become serene, purify the mind, and find your Self. Consequently, if the mind wishes to go to a particular thought and you try to "force" it in a different direction, it may revolt. Therefore, in a loving and gentle manner simply return to witness your breathing, heart beats, and your counting. If you lose count, no problem whatsoever, just start over again from one. Once you adopt this method of surrendering, the mind will not feel challenged and will thus allow the particular thought to dispel. Persevere in this manner as thoughts continue to assault you and before you realize it, five, ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty, forty... minutes have elapsed and you have successfully completed your first session of meditation practice and could now continue experimenting and practicing it to your heart's content. I cannot and will not try to tell you the experiences you will encounter; we are all individuals and thus experience things differently. However, I will be a bit audacious here and assure you that the practice of meditation will not provide you with negative experiences.

Again, my dear readers, this is simply the way I've become adept at meditation practice over many years of practice and through trial and error. You may have read or may read in the future of other methods and perspectives; yet more importantly, the key to obtaining the jewels of meditation is

through practice, practice, practice... simple as that.

Thank you dearly for your time, attention, commitment,  
and as always God bless!

Ernesto Cole

## Congratulations #2

Sometime ago when I had composed about 130 pages of this Wisdom From Within booklet, I wrote an essay titled "Congratulations". The purpose of said essay was to congratulate and thank the class participants for submerging themselves in the writings and thus expose themselves to influential "stabs" of insight.

However, since that time this ~~booklet~~ has grown to more than 500 pages with so many more essays, maxims, stories, jokes, prayers... to be applicable wherever and however it is suitable in the life of the reader. Indeed, I've quoted and repeated many much more insightful, articulate, and professional authors who have much more experience and knowledge than I. Yet, their truthful and enriching perspectives are so resonating in me that I feel that sharing it with the readers of this booklet is a noble and heart felt duty. Yes, my knowledge and experiences have also contributed to the essays herein and I could also assure you that the messages intended come from the depths of my heart, from my life, and from my sincere sentiments.

Additionally, if the things herein suggested and implied were not possible for me, I would not recommend you do them. We could always be healthy, happy, and even blissful if we put our minds and sincere efforts into it. Of this I have no doubt and have become convinced of. Nothing or no one can disrupt your peace of mind if you keep and make use of these teachings in your life and refrain from shortcuts. Of course, do not expect miracles either. The key to this is to transform your life and if you have committed to such, my heart felt

congratulations are sincerely extended.

Will power is at times over rated; therefore, I suggest you stay away from the things and the ones that will disturb you. You know who and what they are. All our actions stem from our minds. Consequently, it is our mind that is the creation of our troubles. So if that's the case, we can train our mind and use it for our higher advantage--that is why it was given to us. We can achieve this by practicing love, empathy, tolerance, compassion... anywhere and everywhere. Ultimately, we will find peace wherever. We do not even need to be articulate and talk about it; just do it, live it. And by doing so we are sure to find that Self, realize that peace, joy, love, and light that the pundits speak so much about. Which are nothing but different names for the same experience.

In this booklet I've provided you with so much insight that you may need for a happy, healthy, harmonious, peaceful, and successful life which leads to final liberation and the end of suffering. It is up to you to grasp the tools here given and apply them to good use.

Again, my sole purpose is to influence you to be selfless, loving, and conscious. Your life can be a beautiful instrument for humanity to enjoy no matter where you are. You can also retain the God that is already in you in the form of peace, love, and joy. And when you share with the aforementioned you expose to that light not only yourself, but others as well. Allow others to see something beautiful in you, something genuine in you. Allow the Divine to be born in you. That is my wish and prayer, allow it to begin with you,

then let it spread to your family, your community, your country, and ultimately to the world.

My dear Readers, if by any chance I have offended or hurt your feelings by these writings, I am truly sorry and beg your pardon; doing so has never been my intention. However, I am still human, new at this and thus, subject to err by my over-anxiousness to reach you. Nevertheless, I have much confidence in us to aspire spiritual behavior and become that new hope. Sure enough, there will still be other ignorant and confused individuals who desire to do and cause harm to others-- been there, done that, and it would be false to hope otherwise as the world is a mixture of good and bad-- but the spiritual majority will surely overcome and in that I have total confidence.

Thank you dearly for your time, attention, and may we all experience perfect health, peace, prosperity, and bliss.

Ernesto Cole

Patience vs. Impatience/irrationality/Frustration #2

Virtue- n. 1- Moral excellence, goodness. 2- A particular form of this (patience is a virtue)...

Moral- adj. & n. 1- a. Concerned with goodness or badness of human character or behavior, or with the distinction between right and wrong. b. Concerned with accepted rules and standards of human behavior. 2- a. Conforming to acceptable standards of general conduct...

Patience- n. 1- Calm endurance of hardship, provocation, pain, delay, etc. 2- Tolerant perseverance or forbearance. 3- The capacity for calm self-possessed waiting.

#### Synonyms

Virtue- n. [Moral excellence]- Ideal, morality, ethicality, goodness, righteousness, ethical conduct, respectability, rectitude, honor, honesty, candor, merit, kindness, consideration, faithfulness, generosity, trustworthiness...

Moral- [Good or right conduct or character]- Ethical, principled, virtuous, righteous, good, right, upright, honorable, trustworthy, conscientious, scrupulous, respectable, proper, truthful, decent, just, honest, showing integrity, noble, exemplary...

Dear Readers, greetings..

The purpose for the above definitions and synonyms is simply to give you a better and more profound understanding of the meaning of this essay. Some time ago I composed an essay titled "Patience vs. impatience/irrationality/Frustration." Yet although I find such essay self-explanatory and

compelling, it pales in comparison to the following experiences I've encountered and was successful for following such a virtue as patience is. I was quite reluctant at first to mention this first experience because it is not my wish to make it appear as if I'm gloating or trying to take credit for its outcome because many individuals had a role in it. However, I give all the praise and glory to God and am grateful simply for being used as His instrument in such seemingly impossible endeavor.

Approximately two years ago (month of September, 2017) an older acquaintance suffered a stroke and was also diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. While his malady was being ignored by most and getting worse, I noticed it and did my noble and persistent best to serve him; with the permission and support of the administration and staff, of course.

Several months after managing to move from the housing unit I resided in to the unit he resided in and then becoming his cell mate, I embarked on a mission to request a compassionate release on his behalf; since he was 73 years old and his maladies were incurable and progressive.

I filed the compassionate release with the permission and knowledge of the Warden of the institution and continued serving him as best I could and in a very patient manner; being that the obstacles and challenges presented would be too lengthy to recall, I will therefore not mention them.

After more than 16 months of me filing said request and countless fruitless approaches to the administration as to the status of the request, I was informed that it had been denied. When my now friend and medical companion was made

aware by me of it, he understandably became upset to the point of claiming that my "infinite" patience was the culprit for the denial. I respectfully and humbly responded that that could not be the case because patience is a kin to a virtue and such behavior could not and will not bear negativity; therefore, please allow me the opportunity to appeal the denial.

The denial was presented to the same judge whom had sentenced him to a life sentence without the possibility of parole. When the judge reviewed the appeal and noted the 16 months gap of wait before the denial was rendered, he called an immediate hearing of the representing parties and this is what he said: "I have in my hands a compassionate release request filed more than 16 months prior to its denial. This indicates the Government had more than sufficient time to state their case and subsequent denial. It was not done so and I am now obligated to grant the petitioner of this request an immediate release. This hearing is now adjourned."

I will not go into the incredible and positive occurrences for my friend after said hearing, nor will I expound on the countless forbearance and show of patience I had to exhibit. But as you can see, the judge based his obligation and decision on the amount of time (more than 16 months) that my dear friend had to endure and then be denied. Solid proof that patience is a virtue and the practice of such cannot and will not bear negativity.

This second incident, although not as impressive nor lengthy as the first one, is worthy of mention, nonetheless, for the sake of showing patience's virtue.

On or about August 7 of 2019 (just five days after my Colombian and medical companion and friend was TAKEN [emphasis intended] to his daughter's house in a 10 and a half hour drive from the institution) three incidents occurred in the same morning which provoked an immediate lock-down of the institution to ensure the safety of all here present.

During the lock-down, a "shake-down" (search for contraband) to the likes I've never before witnessed in my score of incarceration. I, being a prolific bilingual writer and reader had, according to the administration, way too much material and property; therefore, it was all confiscated with the intention of either disposing of it or sending it home. The complying staff that were supervising the shake-down were even kind enough to say to me: "So sorry, Mr. Cole, we feel your pain in having to dispose of so much." I, as has become my custom, patiently complied with them and even showed gratitude for their professionalism and sentiments.

Immediately after the lock-down was terminated, I positively and respectfully approached an administrator (the captain) and humbly stated my case and request to have at least my most cherished writings returned; as they are my best means of communicating with and influencing my peers for the better. The administrator was very reluctant to heed said request because doing so would surely force him to do the same for the rest. He, nonetheless, did give me hope by stating he'd have to speak to another administrator (the doctor in charge of the psychology department) to confirm and verify my claims.

Again, I thanked him and awaited his subsequent

investigation. Sure enough, he being so occupied and being accosted from all angles by the inmate population looking to recover their confiscated items to no avail, he had forgotten all about me and my request. I, therefore, respectfully reminded him while begging his forgiveness for my insistence and audacity. When I did remind him, he thanked me for my patience and approached the psychology administrator whom must have given him a positive impression of me because when I approached him again, he did not say he was going to concede my request; but did not say he was not either.

More than four months transpired since the confiscation and while confiscated items were being disposed of and returned home, I continued being patient and hopeful. Indeed, I was summoned to the R&D department, when I arrived I was then told that I had not been called. I inquired further, found the officer that had in fact called for me and was told to return the following week. When I did so, the same officer told me to return in the next three days at 9 a.m. sharp. As opposed to showing displeasure and frustration for being subjected to what we inmates refer to as the "spinning," I put a smile on my face and told the officer that I shall do my best to return as indicated while thanking her for her time.

That morning came by and as opposed to going to the recreation department to practice and teach the Yoga class, I headed to where I was told to be present and see about the confiscated property. The officer in charge showed tremendous professionalism, asked me to select and separate all my legal work (which was all I was supposed to receive) and prepare the

rest to either be sent home, donated, or destroyed. I very much concerned with and against having to send so much non-legal yet personal and written material home, very candidly, respectfully, and humbly stated my position and even informed him of my request to the administrator who happened to be the captain and his supervisor. He assured me he had not spoken to nor heard from the his captain concerning any request--so what I was saying was all irrelevant to him. However, after browsing through the property, noting the writings and finding them noble and positively intentioned plus influential, he allowed me to keep the totality of the property, something I still find incredible!

The moral to the aforementioned? Patience (tolerance, forbearance, ethical conduct, candor, goodness...) is a virtue, which is moral excellence and adhering to such principle one can never go wrong; no ifs, ands, or buts!

Thank you kindly for your time, please take heed, and may God bless!

Ernesto Cole

## MEDITATION/SILENCE

It is now Tuesday, April 7, 2020. The seventh day of the lockdown here in Edgefield Federal Correctional Institution due to the Corona Virus that has attacked humanity and is claiming lives dramatically worldwide.

As I sit alone in my cell contemplating life and its many situations, I say to myself: "How long will this last? How many of my family and loved ones, if any, will be affected by it? Hopefully, none." And on and on my mind continues to wonder about COVID-19 and many other things that could become worrisome. Thankfully, I have been practicing a very effective and wonderful discipline I discovered many years ago and has served me amazingly. It is called meditation and I simply refer to it as Silence. Through this precious practice, I could allow the wandering thoughts to dispel by simply focusing on my breath until the more pleasant thoughts appear. Once they take place, they are what I focus on to the point of even smiling through such result.

The dubious may think this sounds good and all, but simply have a life to live and have no time for meditation or practicing the forgotten art of silence. I rebut such thoughts and attitudes and this is why.

We as humans have a unique and superior power over the rest of the animals in the world. We have the ability to think and evaluate the past, plan for the future, and focus on the present. Indeed, this unfortunately has a bittersweet ability because it comes at an emotional cost if we allow it (the regrets for past deeds and worry of future plans). Which result in not appreciating and allowing the power of the Present to slip by us.

Allow me to explain myself. I am extremely far from being a doctor or expert on the matter of the mind. However, through my readings, I've read so much about research that shows that the more time one spends mind-wandering (not being in the Present), the less happy one is likely to be. Fortunately, through practicing

meditation - silence, for those who prefer the term and may be intimidated by the reference to yoga - for 10-20 minutes a day can truly help develop present moment awareness.

Again, recent studies and advances in neuroimaging and neurochemistry now allow experts to see the measurable brain changes that result from meditation and lead to improved cognition and mood. Therefore, experts can now actually see the long term effects of practicing this wondrous discipline that has been around for thousands of years.

Just as physical exercises develop our muscles, practicing meditation strengthens - purifies - our minds, which helps prevent atrophy, plus functional and cognitive decline. In addition, practicing meditation like I've mentioned earlier for as little as 10-20 minutes a day seems to slow the natural reduction of brain tissue that comes with aging and improves cognition and memory. Our gray matter increases, improving focus, problem-solving, and emotional control.

Consequently, esteemed readers, please allow me to assure you that meditation literally changes - transforms - your mindset. It is also effective as a medication for depression, anxiety, trauma, chronic pain, cancer, heart disease, and so much more. Better yet, it can prevent a host of maladies before they even occur. It could even cultivate the neurobiology of optimal health and resilience. Hence, the reason this wonderful discipline has stood the test of time and there has been an exponential growth of practitioners here in the western part of the world is very simple: MEDITATION WORKS!

As always, thank you for your time, attention, and God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## Authenticity

First there was my birth.

Then my first breath.

A force of life that translated me into actions. And since I am only one, this translation is truly unique.

Thus, if I were not to take advantage of it, I would not exist via the manner intended and would be lost.

My life was not given to be lost nor was it up to me to determine such.

Therefore, how good it is, how valuable it is, or how it compares to other translations is not necessarily of importance to me any longer.

What is important to me now is to keep my translation clear with open mindfulness.

I am not even overly concerned with myself or what I do any longer.

I simply stay open and directly aware to the urges that motivate me.

By keeping the channels open my artistry and creativity shall gain my satisfaction and will forever make me an authentic creation and more alive than the inauthentic ones.

Thank you kindly for your time, attention, and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## School of Life

School of life, I was enrolled to your care without any effort nor understanding the reason why or even having a purpose. Yet, in your many classrooms I found many ways and puzzles that taught me much and at the same time, nothing at all.

Time passed me by and I enjoyed many sunny and bright days. I also endured countless dark nights with no moons. Since, as opposed to adhering to your positivity and kindness, I succumbed to your negativity and wickedness. Your myths and beliefs had such alluring effect on me that I truly thought I was on the right track.

However, your administration censored and sanctioned me for my negative actions and misdeeds without having assisted me in understanding your many conundrums. Nevertheless, through some sort of divine intervention I discovered the jewel of practicing the forgotten art of silence. Then, and only then, I was able to stop questioning You and instead questioned the myths and beliefs of my classmates and your teachers. By doing so, I finally found my Self, accepted You as the Almighty and blessing Force You are and became the kind and authentic individual You intended me to be. Thank you immensely and know that Your lessons are sincerely appreciated.

To the readers, thank you dearly for your time, attention, and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE

## ACCEPTANCE #4

As you can see by the title of this essay, I've written much about the concept of being accepting to life. However, it is my pleasure to continue writing about it as I continue to meet individuals who are constantly clashing with the circumstances that life presents them with simply because they refuse to master the art of such life flowing concept, and I also believe that repetition in spiritual concepts truly helps us all. Additionally, when I've had some dear friends approach me while seeking advice or my perspective on a particular subject or circumstance - after listening attentively and with much empathy - I have noticed that the main culprit to their confusion and dismay is the lack of acceptance and thus their inability to attune or have a flowing existence. Therefore, with the hopes of assisting them with sound advice, the following are excerpts I've been blessed and inspired with from constant readings.

There is an irrefutable power in the universe that I consider perfect and almighty. Some call it God, Jehovah, Allah, Buddha, Jesus and so forth. But whatever we've been conditioned to call such power, we must understand that it is impossible to make this power do anything we want it to do. We cannot by sheer force of will bend this power to suit our wants and needs. We are not greater than such power. We cannot either stop or start this power in its creating, for it is much greater than us and it moves according to spiritual law. We cannot make plans with all determination and ferociousness we can muster and expect that we are creating in our experience anything other than belligerence and opposition. We must accept, not demand. We cannot will anything.

Now, please do not misunderstand me. This does not mean or imply a doctrine of resignation. On the contrary, it simply means that it is not our will that does the creating; it is the power greater than us. This power creates what we believe and manifests to us what we are prepared to accept.

Nonetheless, let us be sure to understand this: All our will towards our plans will avail us nothing, for that is the wrong use of spiritual law. Our plans will be created in our experience only if we realize that there is an abundance of it and we accept it. In other words, we do not demand success, we do not force success with the idea that there's not enough to go around and we do not have enough of it. We accept success; there's a great abundance of it around us and we know that. Therein lies the true use of spiritual will. For the force of our will against such power must inevitably set up the same thing in our experience so that we see opposition instead of cooperation.

Expect and accept. Know and experience. Be positive and thankful. For the great laws of attraction and creation are laws of attunement and never divulge their secrets to those who kick the door with force.

At our arrival to life, we were completely accepting with open arms to all that came to us. Only the conditioning by adults in our God-like young minds set us up for lack and limitations. For as children accepting all as a natural course of events depends completely on all good being directed to them because of their desire to accept. Know and accept, these are the secrets of all prayer and meditation.

Now, we should understand that even though with positive thought, the entire responsibility need not rest with us. The power that creates is the power that knows; and it is possible, with perfect attunement, to achieve in each condition of or lives a situation of guidance.

We cannot achieve attunement or guidance when we are consciously forcing our will. The very idea of our will being imposed upon that of God's is indefensible from any kind of view. When we have mastered the art of acceptance, when we maintain that faith, we will also be provided with answers to our questions. This is guidance. It is not achieved by any effort of will. It is achieved by confidence in the power greater than us. It is

achieved by complete acceptance in the power of God.

Dear Lord, please grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Thank you all for your time, attention, and as always, God bless.

ERNESTO COLE