



Stillness

The Peace Within

You imagine a spinning top. Stillness is like a perfectly centered top, spinning so fast it appears motionless. It appears this way not because it isn't moving, but because it's spinning at full speed. Stillness is not the absence or negation of energy, life, or movement. Stillness is dynamic. It is unconflicted movement, life in harmony with itself, skill in action. It can be experienced whenever there is total, uninhibited, unconflicted participation in the moment you are in - when you are wholeheartedly present with whatever you are doing.

For most of us, however, most of the time, our lives do not resemble a perfectly centered top, spinning so fast it appears motionless. Our lives are more like a top in a somewhat wild, erratic, and chaotic spin, we know we're alive because at least we're still spinning, but we are not quite perfectly centered, and we are not spinning anywhere near full speed. We don't have as much energy as we'd like, we are not experiencing as much aliveness as we might, nor are we experiencing the *peace of stillness* or the joy of being.

Stillness, therefore, is a higher energy state than what we're used to. This is because we are rarely wholehearted, or unconflicted, about anything. When you are not wholehearted, when you'd rather be someplace other than where you are, parts of you shut down and begin not to participate. Your energy circulation becomes constricted, and the creative life force is unable to flow through you unimpeded. Your energy flow, the amount of life force flowing through you, begins to diminish. The source of the energy does not diminish, but the amount that flows through you does. This leads to ill health, low energy, lowered vitality, lack of enthusiasm, depression, frustration, unhappiness, and suffering. None of this feels good.

When you are wholehearted about something, however, when you are where you want to be and are participating fully in the moment you are in - sometimes enthusiastic, sometimes mellow - you will experience a new sense of aliveness. You will experience a surge of energy, renewed vigor. This is not because there is actually an increase in energy, but because you are not constricting it quite so much. There is now a better energy flow. There is less conflict, less friction, less not wanting to be where you are, and therefore - for you - there will be the experience of more energy.

This occurs whenever you are not attempting to spin clockwise and counter-clockwise simultaneously. Spinning in opposite directions happens when you act on opposing desires, when you are conflicted about what you are doing, not wholehearted - granted, this is most of the time. Stillness happens when you relax inside and are in harmony with yourself.

This is the point: When you experience yourself in stillness - that is, when you give your undivided attention to experiencing the truth about you - you will experience the conflict-free, calm, dynamic peace of perfectly centered abundant life energy. This exquisite peace deep within you is actually the experience of God, or the harmony of oneness felt within you as you. It's how God is experiencing Himself-Herself now and always. It is the phenomenological feeling-tone of Being, or Existence, and it is the truest thing about who you are. When you experience the peace within you, you will spontaneously undergo a fundamental transformation in the way you think about yourself and how you see the world. Nothing will seem quite the same ever again.

Yoga

Yoga is a way of moving into stillness in order to experience the truth of who you are. It is also a way of learning to

be centered in action so that you always have the clearest perspective on what's happening and are therefore able to respond most appropriately. Yoga is not the only way of doing this, of course, but it is an excellent way. It is an ancient process designed to help you uncover and discover your true nature so you can live daily life with that new awareness.

As you move into the depths of stillness, subtle and powerful changes will become apparent in your life. These will be both profound and entirely welcome. You will become familiar with the creative God Force inside you, the energy at your core. The world will look more beautiful because you're seeing it as it is, without the distorting influence of your conditioning. You will feel different, happy for no apparent reason. It will seem as though you have undergone an important change, a rebirth, as though you've become a new person, and yet you will feel more yourself than ever before.

Moving into stillness in order to experience your true nature is the primary theme of yoga simply because everything about you - every thought, feeling, and emotion, as well as every aspect of your behavior - is predicated on the way you feel about yourself. The way you feel about yourself determines how you think, what you do, and how you interact with the world. It's the basic factor that governs the quality of your life, the degree to which you are interested in living, and the way in which you interpret what's happening.

When your evaluation of self changes, when you feel differently about yourself, everything about you changes: your thoughts, feelings, emotions - every aspect of your behavior. The way you interpret and respond to the events in your life will also change. You will perceive the specific circumstances of your daily life differently because you'll have a new awareness and vantage point. You'll have less fear, fewer worries, more enthusiasm for life, and you will spontaneously become more effective in all you choose to do.

Accordingly, the way you interpret and respond to what happened in your past will also change. You'll look back and say, "Oh, so that's what was really going on!" And now, because you are seeing the situation differently, with a clearer and more mature understanding, you will find yourself able and willing to release old hurts, attitudes, and response patterns that were founded on your earlier limited understanding and that are now no longer appropriate. It feels good to let go of the past and be new in the now.

The way you anticipate and imagine your future will also change. The greater your understanding, the more grand your vision. Your imagination will no longer be distorted by the fears and imagined needs of the ego, but will be grounded in Reality. The future will look bright. You will spontaneously become optimistic about the future well-being of yourself and humanity and everything associated with the earth, sky, and universe: Creation. Therefore, everything about you and your world will change relative to your change in self-image: present, past, and future.

Here is our situation: We are ignorant of our true nature, our real identity. We don't know who we really are. This is because we have never experienced ourselves directly. We have never stayed "home" long enough to experience the truth about ourselves. We were not encouraged to do this. Instead we accepted as true what other people told us about ourselves. And, unfortunately, we were taught by people who, in all likelihood, and through no fault of their own, did not actually know.

For example, when you were a child and your mother praised you for being "good," you defined yourself as "good." You began to think of yourself as a "good" person. When your father scolded you for being "bad," you defined yourself as "bad," and you began to think of yourself as "good" and "bad" at the same time. Other people said other things about you, everyone seemed to have informed opinions, and since you didn't know - you were just a child - you believed them all. There was no reason not to. They seemed to know. Before too long, and not surprisingly, it became very confusing because we were defining ourselves and forming our self-images based on other people's contradictory evaluations of who we are. From very early on, a fundamental conflict was introduced into our psyches revolving around this basic and most important issue: Who am I, really? And because we were not encouraged to find out for ourselves, we believed what other people told us. The result is that we feel guilty, ashamed, embarrassed, and confused about who we are. We feel judged.

If you feel guilty, ashamed, embarrassed, or confused about who you are, if you feel judged, you will invariably have difficulty giving and receiving love. It will not feel natural to you to express love easily. And when you are not giving or receiving love, when the energy of love is not circulating or passing through you easily, you gradually become bitter, you lose your natural sweetness. You unknowingly restrict your primary source of nourishment and therefore become hungry on all levels. You become unhappy or ill. You become unpleasant company. You forget how to love, and you forget how it feels to be loved. And all of this happens, to whatever extent, because guilt makes you feel that you are not worthy of love, that you do not deserve it, that you have none to give, and that in fact you are unlovable.

To some degree, this is the conclusion many of us have unconsciously taken on without further scrutiny. We take it for granted. We believe it's true. We think our guilt is justified and that punishment is our just reward. Our basic belief is, "I deserved the suffering I experienced in my past, and I deserve the suffering I am experiencing now. And the future probably holds a fair bit of suffering and hardship for me also. And then I'll die - and who knows what that's like! It's probably pretty horrible, too. I mean, life's not easy. Let's be realistic here...." And yet, all of this rigamarole is due to a fundamental misperception of Reality. All the guilt, unworthiness, justified suffering, self-hate, unhappiness, and unlovableness, as well as the subsequent inability to give or receive love easily, have come into being because of an inaccurate and incomplete perception of who we really are.

When you experience the truth of who you are, you will not feel guilty, ashamed, embarrassed, or confused. You will experience instead the tremendous relief of clarity - relief because you are not the unworthy, undeserving person you thought you were and because the internal pressure caused by these fundamental misperceptions is finally being released. When this happens, you will experience a healing sense of relief followed by a profoundly soothing inner peace, an even "at-easeness" - a stillness.

Levels of Stillness

There are two levels of stillness. The first level involves learning to relax, become centered, and meditate. The technique involves sitting or lying down and being absolutely still - without reading a book, talking, watching the television, or listening to the radio. It involves deliberately pausing, stopping all physical movement, becoming relaxed, calm, and quiet inside, and just being - consciously being conscious. It's about being centered and still in the moment you are presently in.

For a few minutes, every form of external activity stops. Then, in that physical quietness, you turn your attention inward and focus on yourself. Focus on what it feels like to be you. Experience you. Immerse your conscious awareness in your own unique feeling-tone, the feeling-tone of the Universe expressing Itself as you. Do this deliberately in order to consciously experience the truth of who you are.

LEVEL ONE

The first level of stillness is about being with yourself in order to know yourself. This is accomplished by being wide awake and aware as you deliberately relax into yourself. The idea is to consciously enter into a state wherein you temporarily suspend everything you think you know about who you are, including anything you have ever been taught, and simply be attentive to what's going on right there where you are. You practice being quiet, both physically and mentally, as you pay attention to the sensations in your body, the various thoughts in your mind, and your current experience of being conscious and alive. You practice simple body-mind awareness, being conscious of the moment you are now in, and thereby experience with clarity the energy of you. You consciously experience yourself as you actually are. In this way you open yourself to a new, truer, less distorted experience of you and the world.

When you are able to relax and quietly suspend all your firmly held false ideas and limiting beliefs about who and what you are, only what is true will remain. You will then experience your ever-existing truth for yourself. This is like polishing a mirror - removing the grime - and seeing yourself clearly for the very first time. And though this is not as easy as it sounds, it is also not particularly difficult. Let me clarify something first, however. In order to let go of the false beliefs you have about who and what you are, it is not necessary to know which beliefs are true and

which are false. In fact, you probably don't know, and this is the problem. If you knew, you would not be uncertain about your true identity. If you knew, you would not be experiencing conflict and inner turmoil; you would be experiencing peace. Therefore, let go of them all! Let go of everything you think you know about who you are, and see what's left.

When you let go of everything you think you know about yourself and stay with what's left, when you willingly abandon the contradictory evaluations of who you are and courageously reach deeply into yourself in order to experience yourself directly, you will come upon a new experience of who you are. You will sense the creative energy that is the life of you, and you will then define and think about yourself in a new and expanded way. And since the way you think about and define yourself is central to your perception, behavior, and experience of the world, your world will spontaneously change as your self-concept changes and comes into closer alignment with what's really true.

LEVEL TWO

The second level of stillness involves living your daily life with this new and growing inner certainty of who you really are. In other words, meditation in action. This is not always easy, and it takes a little getting used to, for it means staying in touch with the deepest truth about yourself in the midst of daily life. This involves continually letting go of the judgments, evaluations, and contradictory opinions about yourself that arise in your mind throughout the day and in your relationships with other people. You do this by staying centered in your peace. You thereby learn to be suspicious of any suggestion - from yourself or others - that speaks of your guilt, your unworthiness, or your unlovableness. You learn it is appropriate to disregard any remaining inner self-criticism because in Level One you experienced yourself in a new way: as fundamentally lovable, innocent of all blame, and therefore deserving of every good thing.

Having experienced the truth about yourself in Level One, albeit momentarily, you had an insight - a glimmer of clarity, a moment of experience - about an inner truth that you can't quite ignore. You experienced yourself in a new way and now know your deepest truth, even though you may not yet fully believe it. Part of you knows the truth, but you're not totally convinced, and understandably so. Besides, when you are surrounded by others who are instead convinced of other things, it is doubly difficult to overcome your doubts.

This is similar to what it must have been like for Copernicus when he first suspected that the world was round. He had an insight into the way things are, yet part of him probably still believed the flat-world theory. And because he was surrounded by other flat-world theorists, and because he couldn't yet prove the world was round, it would have been difficult for him to be fully convinced or convincing to others.

The way to experience the truth of who you are (Level One) is by letting go of all your learned preconceptions about yourself and then staying present and open-minded for the experience. The way to stay in touch with your truth (Level Two), and confirm it to yourself over and over until there is absolutely no doubt, is by continuing to do what you did in Level One, but doing it now moment by moment during the day. This means, essentially, letting go of pretense and self-critical judgment and allowing self-acceptance - letting yourself be who you truly are. Again, you do this by staying centered in your peace, for only when you are at peace will you have the clearest perspective. By staying centered in your peace in the midst of daily life, you will validate your new perception of yourself and gradually become fully convinced. As a consequence, you will then be convincing to others.

How to Start

Let's look at two excellent techniques for developing stillness and peace of mind. Both of these use your breathing as the primary focal point and both involve learning how to sit absolutely still. Sitting absolutely still - practicing conscious physical immobility - can teach you how to be in the conflict-free, higher-energy, "stillness" state for more of your daily life. You can learn what it feels like to have all your energy perfectly aligned and in harmony, like the spinning top. You can learn to participate fully in your experience of the now and still be relaxed. You can learn to be perfectly centered. And, of course, the more familiar you are with the feeling and experience of being

centered, the easier it will be to stay that way. And since moving away from your center has been the source of all your suffering, the sooner you notice yourself going off, the better.

The importance of Level One (meditation) as an aid to the stable attainment of Level Two (meditation in action) cannot be overemphasized. The more familiar you are with the feeling-tone of your own centered being when you are "home" and alone, the more obvious it will be when you move away from it, and the easier it will be to find your way back to center in the midst of a busy life.

Counting Backward

In this exercise you will be counting backward from fifty to zero, synchronizing the counting with your breathing. You'll count the even numbers as you exhale and the odd numbers as you inhale.

Sit with your back straight and your eyes closed. If you can sit comfortably on the floor, do so. Otherwise, use a chair. Be comfortable.

Begin by breathing in gently, fully. As you exhale, mentally say "fifty." As you breathe in again, mentally say "forty-nine," exhale "forty-eight," inhale "forty-seven," exhale "forty-six" ... and so on.

Count backward on both the in-breath and the out-breath until you reach "twenty," then count only on exhalations. Silently count "twenty" as you exhale. Then, instead of counting "nineteen" on the in-breath, do nothing, just inhale. With the next exhalation count "nineteen" ... and so on until you reach zero.

When you reach zero, stop counting, but stay aware of the natural flow of breath in exactly the same way as when you were counting. Watch the breath as though you were going to count, but don't count. As you do this, practice sitting absolutely still. But don't hold yourself still. Simply be so relaxed that no movement occurs.

Be very aware of how you feel as you do this--how peaceful, energized, calm. Notice how pleasantly alert you are, how serene, fearless, at ease. Familiarize yourself with this feeling, with the feeling-tone of being centered and at peace, and rest here another two or three minutes. Absorb the stillness. Then prepare yourself, open your eyes, and return. This will take six or seven minutes.

As you do this exercise, breathe normally. Do not do deep breathing or control the breath in any way. This is important. You are learning not to be in control. You are learning to get out of the way. Therefore, rather than controlling the breath, allow it to flow freely in and out at its own natural pace. Yet, stay aware of the breath. Keep track of the numbers. As the breath comes in, count. As the breath goes out, count. And when you reach zero, stay aware of the breath nonverbally. There should be no strain in your breathing as you do this. Keep it soft and easy.

As you count backward, you may be more aware than usual of your mind darting rapidly from one object of attention to another. You may be unusually aware of sounds, physical sensations, or thoughts. You may lose count altogether. None of this matters. All of these things are evidence that the technique is working. You're becoming more aware.

The value of this technique lies in its ability to help you notice where your attention is from moment to moment, what's in your mind, and the contents of your consciousness. The counting is not only a centering device and a way of developing concentration, of training your mind to focus, it also acts as a backdrop on which your thoughts become very apparent.

For now, however, do not do anything with the various thoughts or sensations that arise. Simply be aware of them and continue counting. Gradually become more aware, more quiet within yourself, and increasingly dynamically still. As you immerse yourself in your stillness--and this is something that improves with each attempt--you will experience an unexpected and immensely satisfying sense of contentment and ease. Feel the peace.

Mindfulness of Breathing

Sit on the floor with your back straight and eyes closed. If you are unable to sit on the floor, use a chair. Be comfortable.

Begin with a somewhat deep and gentle inhalation. Hold the air for a moment, then release it slowly in a long, thin exhalation. Do this three times. Then, focus your awareness in your body and feel yourself breathing.

As attentively as you can, note the changing sensations throughout your body that accompany each breath. Tune in to the subtle differences in sensation between the inhalation and exhalation. What does it feel like to inhale? What does it feel like to exhale? How do you know which is happening? And where in your body do you actually feel the breathing taking place? The most obvious sensations will be in your abdomen, chest, or nostrils, but you can feel the movement of breath elsewhere, too. In fact, there may be nowhere in your body that you cannot feel it. Experience what's happening.

Make no attempt to regulate or control your breathing as you do this. Again, practice letting go of control. Allow the breath to flow in and out on its own without your intervention. Some breaths will be deep, some will be shallow. Every breath will be different. All you need to do is be aware. You will experience the unbroken flow of breath when your mind is in an unbroken state, your attention continuous and one-pointed. That is the quality we want to cultivate, undivided attention to the instant of conscious experience you happen to be in.

Sit motionless, experience your whole body breathing, and then ride the breath into the sensation of yourself. Feel you. Experience the feeling-tone of the vibrating energy in your body, the overall sensation of "you." Practice becoming still and familiarize yourself with the actual feeling of stillness and peace.

If you find it difficult to concentrate on the subtle sensations that accompany breathing, say "in" to yourself as you breathe in and "out" as you breathe out. When your attention strays, notice this and then return it to the constantly changing sensations throughout your breathing body.

Be thoroughly relaxed as you practice this technique. Sit tall and be absolutely still. Give yourself your own undivided attention, ride the breath into the feeling-tone of you, and concentrate on that feeling. Immerse yourself in it. Feel you. Do this for five or ten minutes. Do it for a few moments whenever you can. Do it now, if possible. This will prepare you for the next chapter.

Coming Back to Center

Motionless sitting is probably the easiest way of learning to be centered. Being centered, however, does not require that you be physically motionless. You learn to be centered, and you become increasingly familiar with the energetic feeling-tone of stillness through the practice of motionless sitting, and you immerse yourself in it as fully as you can when you can, but you then carry that feeling-tone with you into the motion of your life.

For as many moments of the day as you can, come back to center. Relax into where you are, breathe, and consciously be present in the now. Do this as you are driving, working, in the midst of a conversation - anything, everything - all day long.

And think of it like this: The feeling of stillness is peace, and the feeling of peace is joy. Therefore, come back to center and feel the joy. Do this frequently throughout the day. Come back to center as many moments of the day as you can, and let the joy you feel permeate everything you do.



The Core of Goodness

This is the most important theme in this book. It is also one of the most heartening ideas you might ever hope to be true. Because it is so important, let's go slowly.

As you sit quietly and immerse yourself in the peace and stillness of your own centered being, you will gradually begin to experience yourself in an undistorted manner. You will sink below or rise above your usual sense of self and instead come upon the undistorted, clear conscious experience of Being - your Being. You will experience yourself as the specific conscious expression of an infinitely expressive Consciousness, Mind, Presence, or God. You will thereby intuitively know that you are more than physical and human, that your spiritual existence is guaranteed, immortal, eternal, and true, and that your Original Nature is absolutely good. You'll know that you are creative energy, Spirit, a unique expression of God's infinite Self-Expression, and that at your core is Goodness. This is what you'll experience because, in some mysterious and uncompromising way, this is what we are. We are all made of God Substance, Consciousness, Love.

As you sit in stillness, experiencing the energetic feeling-tone of "you" (Level One), you will invariably begin to feel exquisite inside. You will begin to feel at ease, deeply relaxed, natural, perhaps for the first time in a long time. And as you relax, and as you feel the energy you are made of, you will begin to feel loved. You'll find yourself feeling this way, inevitably, eventually, as you relax inside and allow yourself to become increasingly in touch with the loving goodness that is already in you - and it is already in you because that is how you were built. Love is the all-constituting substance of Being. It's what you are made of. And you did not create yourself.

When you sit quietly and let go of every false self-definition, of everything you think you know about who you are, and then **be** what's left, what remains is the untarnished presence of who you've always been and still really are. This untarnished presence manifests - shines - as pure, clear awareness and unconditional love. When you experience your essence, you will feel this natural lovingness within yourself *without having to do anything!*

When you feel the loving goodness inside yourself as yourself - as who or what you really are, you will acquire new self-appreciation. You will realize there is no basis for being self-critical or self-condemnatory, or for harboring guilt for some known or unknown transgression in the past, and that you have done this until now simply because you have accepted as true certain erroneous ideas about yourself. It's obvious to you now that when you wipe the slate clean and take a look at yourself for yourself, when you experience yourself as you actually are, you encounter a very different you from the "you" you thought you were. It now makes sense to disbelieve what was never true and embrace the new self-appraisal. You are You; God's specific Self-Expression.

You will then no longer think of yourself in self-deprecatory terms, and you will, as a natural consequence, loosen and release every remaining tendril of self-condemnation and self-hate. It will be reasonable to do this, though not always easy. It will no longer feel sane, however, or true or realistic, to be self-critical. And since your behavior has always been a by-product of the way you feel about yourself, you'll notice in yourself an effortless, behavioral change occurring in response to this new self-evaluation. You will become more loving, more understanding, and more truly compassionate naturally. This is a vital stage of personal maturation and is of utmost social value.

Difficulty arises, however, because we are afraid to let go of what we think we know and be what's left. We're reluctant to ease up on the tight sense of control we exercise over ourselves because life is hard enough as it is. We don't want it any harder. "If I stop controlling myself to be one way rather than another, who knows what might happen! If I let go of every pretense and instead be genuine, things might get worse. Who knows what devil might be lurking in my depths?" But it's also beginning to dawn on us that we have blindly believed false and inaccurate

concepts about who we are, and have been ignorant of our true nature until now simply because we have been taught otherwise, and that maybe we're different from how we've thought ourselves to be, and that it's time, now, to experience what's really true once and for all, come what may.

It requires tremendous courage willingly to release all of our firmly held beliefs and face ourselves directly. Courage is required because we don't know what we'll find. We're afraid our worst suspicions will be confirmed, or that we'll uncover aspects of ourselves we'd rather keep concealed. And we may! But underneath it all, or surrounding it all, embracing it all is the creative energy of Consciousness, Identity, or Presence that we *really* are - grounded in love and goodness.

But at first we don't know this. We don't know that goodness is at our core. We don't know that happiness is the natural state, that this is what we'll find. So we feel trepidation. We're suspicious. And we're likely to think all this talk about love and goodness is nothing but, at best, pure fantasy. But, in actuality we're not absolutely certain this *isn't* what we'll find. We don't really know whether it's true or false. We don't really know whether goodness or evil is at our core, or if we are some blurry mixture of the two.

Therefore, we need courageously to desire to know the truth, and then we need to go within and experience ourselves directly. Therefore, *want* to know the truth, once and for all. Want to know *your* truth. Let go of everything you think you know about who you are, suspend every idea you now have about what's true and what isn't, and open your mind to what's actually so - to the living truth of you.

This is the most logical, important, life-affirming thing you can do. You'll be glad you risked experiencing yourself with clarity. But it can be frightening, unnerving, unsettling. However, if loving goodness is both at your core and is the surrounding all-pervading presence of Consciousness that you are - and this is something you will only ever know by experiencing it within yourself as your deepest truth - then the more clearly you experience yourself as you really are, free of any overlay of conditioning and in spite of your fears, the more *love* you will experience. If love is what's in there, then love is what you'll find when you go within. But you won't be convinced of this until you go within. Therefore, take the chance. It's worth the risk. And it's inevitable. You're bound to succeed. You will no longer be so afraid to know what else is true about you, which will further encourage you to relax deeper, trust more fully, and genuinely be yourself without inhibition or pretense.

You will discover and know that love, goodness, and creative consciousness are what constitute your being because you will **experience** these attributes within and as yourself. You will simultaneously realize that you did not put them there because you did not create yourself. You were created by the creative God Force. The inherent creative goodness within you is not a mental construct that you attempt to adopt, not pretense or self-deception, not something you conjure up. It's something you discover. You go in empty-handed, not knowing, and this is what you find. And when you allow yourself wholeheartedly to experience the core feeling-tone of the love that you are, you will spontaneously feel happy. You won't have to lift a finger or change yourself in any way. It's the way you were built. It's what you are. The emotional feeling-tone of love and goodness is happiness.

There will be an overwhelming sense of authenticity about this experience. You will have no doubt about its truth. You will be convinced. You will also realize that it is not egocentric to be appreciative of the creative energy that you are. Nor is it arrogant, presumptuous, or conceited to feel good inside about yourself, or to be happy for no apparent reason, or to acknowledge that you are a perfect creation of the God Force.

You understand instead that it is egotistical and arrogant to believe anything else, for you are not a self-created separate energy. It is not any more narcissistic (in the pejorative sense) to experience self-love or self-appreciation than it is to appreciate a lovely flower or a spectacular sunset. The wonder and beauty of you is not your doing, and appreciation will be the natural response of anyone who realizes this truth. What a relief! You are not who you thought you were. You are the infinite Oneness in specific Self-Expression. How wonderful to be affiliated with the great God Force.

In order to experience the natural joy of Being - in order to be happy! - we do not have to fulfill any conditions that are contrary to our original nature of loving goodness. We especially do not have to be other than the way we are. In

fact, it has been the lifelong attempt to be some way other than our natural being that has made us frustrated and unhappy. And of course! You cannot be anything other than you. Therefore, let yourself be yourself - be you! - and live your truth without inhibition. Discover the truth by letting go of old concepts. Make space for the new. Release every idea you have about who you are, and then be the you that remains. Being you is not a substitute for what you can never be. It is the gracious acceptance of what you have always wanted and have never been without.

Think of it like this: The farther you are from knowing your truth and experiencing the love you are, the unhappier you will be; the closer you are, the happier. Keep it simple. It works like this because goodness *is* at your core and because happiness is the feeling-tone of your original nature. But, really, whether you are "close" or "far," you are always only a thought away. Your original nature is not, in fact, far away from you. It is not elusive. It is not someplace other than where you are, nor is it something you evolve or transform into or earn. It's right here, yours, already.

Become your already-existing naturally happy truth by spending quiet time alone every day to meditate. At least once a day sit down for a few minutes by yourself, stop moving, stop thinking, and just *be*. Deliberately be still. Close your eyes, relax, breathe, be aware, and consciously experience your present moment of conscious awareness. Immerse yourself in your own unique feeling-tone. Feel you. Bask in the exquisite experience of being alive, of conflict-free high-energy peace, and become thoroughly familiar with the core tone of who you are.

This is like dipping cloth into dye. Each dip of the cloth strengthens the cast of the dye and enhances the color. Here, however, you are dipping yourself into you. You are experiencing you. Each time you do so, you become more you; that is, your sense of the authentic you is enriched. Each dip into the silent experience of you washes away more false ideas, which enables the real you to shine forth more clearly to yourself and others. As you do this, something new and very interesting will gradually begin to happen. You'll find yourself becoming more intuitive. Your mind will seem to expand, and your inner voice will start talking to you more clearly, guiding you, telling you what to say, what to think, where to go, what to do with your life. As you will discover, this is the source of right action. I will say more about this later.

Therefore, as you directly experience the living truth of who you are, two wonderful aspects of being become apparent. First, you come upon the core of goodness. This will promote a new, expanded, and truer sense of self. It will give your life new meaning, and you'll find yourself feeling happy for no apparent reason. Of course, there is a reason. Happiness and love is the stuff of which you are made. You can obscure your awareness of it, but you cannot get away from it. You cannot actually change it.

Second, the inner feeling - or inner voice - starts speaking to you with more clarity. Or rather, it's not that the inner voice now speaks with more clarity, but you'll start hearing it more clearly. It will become more obvious to you, and harder to ignore. This internal communication from the deeper regions of Being can become, if you are willing, your new guide to appropriate action in daily life. You will feel good inside about who you are and be increasingly effective in all your actions.

Let's move now into a practice mode with regard to all that has been said so far. We'll continue with three more exercises. These have been specifically designed to help you experience the loving goodness truth inside you.

One of the first things you may notice as you sit in stillness is that your body vibrates or hums. The center of this hum is in the area of your heart and throughout the length of your spine, your core. This is where love vibrates most obviously. The purpose of the next two breathing exercises, then, is to direct your conscious feeling-awareness into the area of your heart and core and thereby increase your sensitivity to the vibratory hum. You'll feel the love vibration inside yourself that will cause you to feel profoundly loved and profoundly safe, and you will thereby spontaneously become more loving - more of a pleasure to be around. This is good for you, and it's good for others! These exercises are worth a few minutes of your undivided attention. Enjoy them.

Heart Breathing

Lie on your back with your eyes closed and palms flat on your chest. Begin by gently breathing in and out, aiming the breath into the chest so that you feel the wishbone at the base of your sternum expanding with each breath. Do this for a minute or two.

Then allow your breathing to flow in and out naturally, effortlessly, without any intervention on your part, and simply station your awareness in the center of your chest at the base of the sternum - where your hands are - and feel what you feel. Feel yourself breathing. As attentively as you can, note the changing sensations in the area of your heart that accompany each breath as it flows in and out.

Breathe in and out of your heart, lie absolutely still, be relaxed, and allow your breathing to flow freely and easily. Make no attempt to regulate your breathing or control it in any way. Some breaths will be deep, others shallow. Every breath will be different. All you do is remain aware of the ever-changing sensations that accompany breathing in the area of your heart.

As you practice this technique, let each breath remind you to stay centered and present in the now. When your attention strays, notice it has done so and then bring it back to the feeling-awareness of the ever-changing sensations in your chest. Do not think about the breath, nor about the meaning of love. Simply experience what's actually there to be experienced. Stay with what's happening. Shift from thinking mode to feeling mode, and experience your unique feeling-tone emanating from your heart center. Be especially on the look out for pleasurable sensations of warmth, expansion, or spaciousness, and notice how the movement of breath seems to fan and increase these sensations. Willingly give your undivided attention to this exercise for ten minutes.

Expanded Heart Breathing

Sit on the floor with your spine straight and eyes closed. If you are unable to sit on the floor, use a chair. Be comfortable. Take a moment to become quiet and prepare yourself.

When you are ready, begin with ten or twenty fairly deep, gentle, continuous breaths, endeavoring to achieve full expansion of your chest and rib cage. Allow the sternum to rise and swell forward as you breathe. Go ahead and exaggerate it, but be very, very gentle.

Then inhale fully, again lifting upward with the sternum and expanding your chest. Hold the breath for a comfortable length of time, somewhere between five and twenty seconds, and as you hold your chest gently open at full expansion, **feel** the sensations in the area of your heart.

Feel the obvious sensations - the physical sensations of stretch and fullness accompanying chest expansion, the feeling of satisfaction, of air-hunger being satiated, and of air-hunger arising again as the seconds go by, your heart beating, your desire to exhale - but feel the deeper, subtler energy as well. Feel the energy of love in the area of your heart as you hold your chest open. Then exhale quietly, releasing the breath at a comfortable pace and relaxing deeply. Do this twelve times.

With this technique you are increasing your sensitivity to the vibratory feeling-tone in the area of your heart. Think of this as a vortex of energy in the vicinity of your physical heart but not your actual physical heart. You will be able to feel this vortex of energy with increasing clarity with practice. Do not attempt to hold the breath as long as you can. Hold the breath only as long as is comfortable. You should still be able to exhale smoothly, quietly, without panic. There should be no strain whatsoever. Exhale when you receive the inner cue to do so and keep the breath soft, strain-free, and peaceful. This is not a contest. It does not matter how long you hold the breath. Use the technique to increase your sensitivity to the inner feeling.

When you have completed the twelve breaths, sit absolutely still for another minute or two and simply be aware of how you feel. Station your awareness in the area of your heart and core and feel what you feel. Stay aware of the changing sensations that accompany breathing in the area of your heart, the sensations throughout your core and body, the space around your body, and especially the overall energetic feeling-tone of you. Willingly let go of everything you think you know about who you are, and allow yourself to experience you with clarity.

Who Am I?

Sit with your spine straight or lie flat on the floor on your back. Close your eyes and take a few moments to become quiet and still. Relax your body and allow yourself to become intimately aware of your breathing. Observe the natural flow of breath in and out of your body.

Then put aside everything you think you know about who you are and ask yourself the question, "Who am I?" Ask the question but *do not answer it*. Instead, **feel** the answer. Feel who you are. Feel the energy of you. Answer not in words but in the direct experience of the energy that you are. When your attention wanders from this very personal self-experiencing and you notice yourself thinking other thoughts, ask yourself, "Who is thinking this? Who is having this thought?" The answer will always be "I am." Then ask yourself again, "But who am I?" Then again immerse yourself in the feeling-tone truth of you.

When you notice yourself suddenly aware of a particular sound or sensation, your attention pulled away from the feeling, ask yourself "Who is hearing this sound? Who is experiencing this sensation?" The answer will always be, "I am." Then again ask, "But who am I?" And again blend with the feeling-tone truth of you. Find out who you are through direct experience. Keep bringing your conscious awareness back into the conscious experience of you in the now.

There is no adequate mental answer to the question. The vibrant silence is the answer. And so, be still and know.

The Royal Practice

In the early days when yoga was first being developed, the primary practice was meditation, or centering. The poses came later as spontaneous expressions of that centered state. In combination these became the "royal practice" because the ancients had found that through the discipline of yoga and quiet sitting they were able to access a new way of knowing and being and thereby become more intuitive and effective in all they were guided to do. This, they discovered, was the most direct way of experiencing firsthand the meaning of God, Guru, and Self.

They also discovered that intuitive revelation happens when one's mind, instead of thinking about other things, is unthinkingly attentive in the Now. The essence of the royal practice, was not one of advanced thinking and coming to intellectual conclusions. It was, and is, the practice of communion and listening.

Happily, one of the most rewarding side effects of yoga practice and meditation is the renewed zest of life you will experience. This happens spontaneously when you simply take the time to sit quietly, relax, and consciously immerse yourself in the feeling of peace. When you go within and expand beyond your usual sense of self - when you "move into stillness" and experience the infinite I AM Presence - you will come alive with the enthusiasm of life. You will sense the creative movement or flow of ceaseless Being and find yourself charged with new energy, new creativity. You will feel moved to move, to express. You will be inspired to action. Your yoga and meditation practices will become even more meaningful and potent, and you'll find yourself practicing with renewed conviction.

Your job will be that of yielding to the flow. Traditionally, this has been called "surrender." It is the active choice for "Thy Will be done." It is the most intelligent, fulfilling thing to do. You surrender your best sense of what to do or not do, and instead trust in the flow of Being. This is when yoga becomes more than practice and practices - and becomes your way of life. Then you realize there is no such thing as practice! Never was. There is only the real thing, ever - and always.