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cuarto oscuro higiénico
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cuarto oscuro higiénico

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propaganda

alivio, descanso, recuperación

La retirada higiénica del cuarto oscuro significa descansar en un cuarto totalmente oscuro durante días, solo, con comida. ¿Por qué hacerlo?

- alivio instantáneo de la angustia y la sobreestimulación
- Descanso profundo del agotamiento
- recuperación completa de lesiones y enfermedades

Sanación súper-intensifica. La energía, la claridad y la alegría regresan. La salud y la cordura se restauran.

Este completo manual explica por qué funciona un retiro, cómo hacerlo y cómo hacer un cuarto oscuro en casa.

hacia una psicología higiénica

Las tradiciones indígenas y espirituales han utilizado la oscuridad durante milenios. Este es el primer acercamiento a la oscuridad y a la psicología basada en la higiene. No sólo la limpieza, la higiene es la ciencia biológica de la *salud*. Se basa en la naturaleza autoconservadora de la vida y en sus condiciones normales: aire fresco, sueño amplio, comida pura, baño y ejercicio regular, etc. Se aplica a la psique, también un sistema orgánico.

La higiene comenzó a enseñar a la sociedad industrial a apreciar la naturaleza en 1832. A continuación se produjeron mejoras masivas en la salud pública en todo el mundo. La higiene es el enfoque más influyente de la historia en materia de salud.

Un retiro higiénico en la sala oscura proporciona condiciones de descanso profundo. Estos son normales y se extienden temporalmente, como en el ayuno. La psique comienza a curarse a sí misma, incluso del peor trauma. El yo consciente simplemente mantiene las condiciones de esta autocuración *autónoma*, con resultados milagrosos y confiables.

comentario

Las palabras subrayadas son enlaces a recursos externos. Cuando también *están en cursiva*, probablemente se vinculan internamente con otras partes del libro. Su texto suele indicar dónde. En el ebook o en línea, sólo tienes que hacer clic en ellos. También pueden ser títulos de libros descargables.

No necesitas leer todo este libro sólo para hacerte una idea. Lo presento en capas: inmediatamente en breve, luego en detalle.

El libro es un todo integrado, mejor leído de principio a fin, incluyendo el folleto, el prólogo, etc. Cada sección se basa en la última. Cada palabra contribuye a la comprensión.

Ebook: leanpub.com/darkroomretreat ordarkroomretreat.com/ebook Libro en línea.

: leanpub.com/darkroomretreat/read (todo en una página) ordarkroomretreat.com (un capítulo por página).

prólogo

Este libro es el resultado de una larga investigación sobre la causa de la alegría.

A los 15 años, una gran alegría me invadió espontáneamente. Se sentía normal. Desapareció después de tres meses celestiales. Me sentí atrapado por la necesidad de resolver su misterio. Eso eclipsó mis otras preocupaciones.

Después de 21 años de investigación, lo hice. Descubrí la forma en que la naturaleza nos provee para sanar de traumas mayores, el destructor de Joy. Cuatro años de pruebas siguieron, y luego cinco más de refinamiento y documentación.

Brevemente, la alegría es una función de estar vivo, no de esfuerzo. La falta de alegría indica un sistema dañado, no un fracaso moral. Dadas las condiciones de un profundo descanso, este daño se cura por sí solo, y la alegría regresa.

El esfuerzo, la panacea engreída de nuestra vida, da resultados falsos y fugaces. Con la voluntad, uno no puede hacer nada directamente para restaurar la alegría. Uno sólo puede apoyar al organismo para que lo haga de manera autónoma.

Durante 10.000 años, nosotros, la gente civilizada, hemos estado en lo cierto en cuanto a que algo está terriblemente mal en nosotros mismos y que debemos hacer algo al respecto. Pero nos hemos equivocado en qué parte de nosotros mismos debemos hacerlo. Por fin, este libro pone *fin* a la cuestión.

prefacio

Cuando me retiré por primera vez en la oscuridad, lo hice para descansar. Funcionó. Después de 56 horas, me sentí atrapado en todo el sueño que había perdido, verdaderamente despierto por primera vez en décadas. Estaba aturdido.

Dos años después, sucedió lo mismo. Excepto que, inusualmente, también me sentí humillado. Genuinamente tranquilo. *Bien* en mi alma.

Esta sensación de salud psíquica permaneció conmigo durante meses. Pero, ¿cómo, después de una vida de depresión, alienación y ansiedad?

De la higiene, recordé vagamente la naturaleza autocurativa de la vida, y el descanso como la condición primaria de la curación. El inicio de la edad media me demostraba diariamente la naturaleza orgánica de la psique. Una mañana en un sueño, estas pistas se fusionaron en una concepción del *uso relajante de la oscuridad en apoyo de la psique autocurativa*.

Comencé a probar esta idea en más retiros en cuartos oscuros. Como se predijo, los problemas psíquicos letales que me han torturado toda la vida comenzaron a resolverse espontáneamente. En ocho años y 20 retiros, no he visto ninguna señal de un final a este proceso, corto de una recuperación completa de la integridad psíquica.

Ahora me siento seguro de lo que he aprendido: qué pasa en la oscuridad y por qué; cómo retroceder y para qué. Y sólo puedo ir más lejos en esto si comparto este enfoque. Necesita más participación, más recursos y más rapidez.

Hygienic darkroom retreating requires minimal effort and no faith. Darkness is not a void, but a sanctuary. It is not the absence of light, but the presence of the self. It is yours.

ad

Europa, 2018

incorporación

En nuestras ciudades y economías, estamos sobreestimulados y angustiados. Necesitamos ayuda.

Estamos exhaustos. Necesitamos descansar.

Estamos heridos y enfermos. Necesitamos recuperación.

En lo profundo de nuestras almas, luchamos y sufrimos. Necesitamos paz y alegría.

¿Cómo? Por el *cuarto oscuro higiénico retrocediendo*: profundo descanso psíquico en total oscuridad física. Es un método racional para apagar el mundo, con su ruido y sus demandas, y refugiarse en su ser esencial, apoyándolo en la curación por sí mismo. Este libro es un manual completo para entenderlo y hacerlo.

aspectos básicos

cómo funciona

1. La psique, como sistema orgánico, es autocurativa.
2. La condición primaria de la curación es el descanso.
3. El descanso psíquico profundo ocurre en la oscuridad total extendida *como una respuesta fisiológica*

Esto se desarrolla plenamente en *higiene > secreto and psicología > psicología higiénica*. Esencialmente, debido a que el proceso de curación es automático, es infalible. La psique necesita oscuridad para descansar como los pulmones necesitan aire para respirar y los ojos necesitan luz para ver. No conoce ningún sustituto. La curación ocurre involuntariamente cuando las condiciones de descanso son suficientemente proporcionadas.

Este libro describe, explica y muestra cómo proporcionarlos, desde la teoría abstracta hasta la práctica concreta. Lo más importante es que introduce la *actitud higiénica*. El mero hecho de saberlo abre la puerta a la curación superintensificada, es decir, a los milagros. Cuando estés listo, puedes caminar a través de él. El libro también incluye diseños para componentes de cuarto oscuro precisos al milímetro para que incluso los aficionados puedan hacerlos bien.

vocabulario

higiene

1. caring for health by respecting life's self-preserving nature and providing its normal conditions.
2. the biological science of health
3. Higienismo; Higiene Natural

Higiene Natural

la escuela de salud de 185 años que defiende y ejemplifica la higiene

habitual

lo que es biológicamente apropiado (no simplemente usual o promedio)

de la psique

la facultad de la conciencia, incluyendo:

- formas y centros de inteligencia relacionados
 - sensación: físico / movimiento / instintivo
 - percepción: emocional / sentimiento / intuitiva
 - concepción: mental / pensamiento / intelectual
- elementos
 - inconsciente: procesos autónomos que no pueden hacerse conscientes (sin prácticas yóguicas intensas), como la regulación de la división celular o de los niveles de oxígeno en la sangre

- subconsciente: conocimiento automatizado adquirido, que puede hacerse consciente, como conocer palabras o caminar
- Consciente: conciencia ordinaria de vigilia, como cuando se lee este libro o cuando se hace un mandado.
- escamas
 - celdas
 - órganos
 - regímenes
 - el organismo en su conjunto

psíquico

of or relating to the psyche in general (not occult powers).

Por ejemplo, me refiero a la enfermedad psíquica más que a la enfermedad "mental". La psicología no es sólo el estudio de la mente, sino de la psique: toda la facultad de la conciencia humana. Esto incluye aspectos emocionales y físicos no reducibles a lo mental.

salvavidas

a way of life; everything that happens with people in a given group in the course of living.

Una vez usé la palabra cultura para esto. Entonces [John Zerzan](#) me explicó que la cultura es reciente: un aspecto de la civilización. Quería una sola palabra que incluyera todos los enfoques de la existencia humana. Lifeway es un término comprimido común en antropología.

cuarto oscuro

Un cuarto oscuro es un dormitorio, suite o casa que está perfectamente oscuro. Sellar una habitación como ésta a menudo requiere medidas de ventilación adicionales. Un cuarto oscuro puede ser básico o de lujo. Para resumir el punto práctico de este libro, abogo por arreglar la oscuridad básica en tu dormitorio ahora, la oscuridad de lujo en un lugar remoto más tarde.

La oscuridad básica significa perfectamente oscura, bien ventilada, razonablemente tranquila y cómoda. Esto proporciona: oscuridad para el sueño nocturno; un lugar para familiarizarse con la oscuridad extendida a su propio ritmo; y un lugar para sus primeros retiros cortos.

La oscuridad de lujo añade características adicionales, comodidades y espacio. Un cuarto oscuro dedicado se construye en una pequeña casa completamente funcional en una ubicación tranquila. Como todas las casas deben ser pero no lo son, se oscurece perfecta y fácilmente. Más sobre esto en el capítulo de *diseño*

trasfondo

naturaleza

La oscuridad es instintiva. Dormimos en ella por la noche y dormimos en las sombras. Usamos las manos para taparnos los ojos cuando nos abrumamos. Nos refugiamos más tiempo en cuevas y refugios cuando estamos heridos. Nosotros y muchos otros animales siempre lo hemos hecho.

La oscuridad absoluta es natural. Nuestro hábitat natural es la selva tropical. Por la noche su suelo es negro como la boca del lobo.

costumbres

Las tradiciones espirituales han utilizado la oscuridad durante milenios. Tienden a verlo como el ambiente definitivo para la autodisciplina y la adquisición de conocimientos inusuales. Los egipcios y los mayas lo han usado en las pirámides; los cristianos en las catacumbas; los sufíes y los taoístas en las cuevas; los budistas tibetanos en las celdas de los monasterios.

Las tradiciones indígenas hacen lo mismo: El chamanismo amazónico utiliza la oscuridad en la ceremonia de la ayahuasca. Los chamanes galeses y los indios Navajo, Maya y Kogi por igual construyen estructuras

oscuras especiales, manteniendo la oscuridad en alta estima como esencial para el autodescubrimiento.

La ciencia occidental ha estudiado la desestimulación sensorial desde los años 50 para la astronáutica, la salud y el control mental. El Ayurveda, la antigua tradición curativa de la India, utiliza largos períodos de oscuridad para rejuvenecerse. Según [los informes](#), es nada menos que la fuente de la juventud.

Desafortunadamente, la naturaleza parcial o completamente activa de estos enfoques de la retirada del cuarto oscuro los compromete. Esto significa que dependen de una voluntad activa, la facultad que más necesita descansar. La higiene es pasiva, permitiendo que la voluntad angustiada finalmente descanse y se recupere. La higiene depende principalmente de la auto-omnisciencia autónoma, omnipotente e infalible para llevar a cabo el trabajo de curación. Esto elimina el conflicto estructural en el método, prometiendo resultados [ilimitados](#). La higiene seculariza completamente el uso de la oscuridad con el propósito específico de sanar. No hay nada místico, disciplinado o complicado en este enfoque. Es racional, seguro y natural: un milagro fiable.

higiene

La higiene no es sólo la limpieza, como la medicina nos ha hecho creer. La higiene es amplia y profunda, tratando con todas las condiciones de salud. Conocemos la palabra hoy en día debido a una escuela radical de salud natural que se originó en América en 1832 y que ahora se conoce como *Higiene Natural*. Lideró el movimiento mundial de salud natural del siglo XIX. La higiene respeta vigorosamente la naturaleza autoconservadora de la vida. Observa que los organismos mantienen y recuperan la salud en condiciones normales de vida. Por lo tanto, estudia la autopreservación orgánica y cómo proporcionar tales condiciones.

Las condiciones normales de vida incluyen aire fresco, luz solar, comida natural y limpieza al bañarse regularmente. La higiene enseñó al mundo moderno sus enormes beneficios, elevando significativamente los estándares de salud en todo el mundo. Su lema: "La salud a través de una vida saludable". Sólo le ha faltado una psicología y una apreciación del trauma como causa de toda enfermedad; este libro comienza a corregirlo.

La higiene identifica la enfermedad *como* el proceso de curación. La enfermedad es la actividad orgánica normal de auto-reparación, eliminación y re-energización, pero angustiada por condiciones anormales. Por lo tanto, la enfermedad no es una entidad invasora a combatir. Es un proceso beneficioso para apoyar con condiciones y prácticas saludables y para ver como un conjunto de pistas para guiar precisamente este cuidado.

Los fundamentos de la higiene nos ayudan a reconectarnos con nuestro propio sentido común sobre la curación. Nos guían más allá de las suposiciones incorrectas que probablemente tengamos al respecto. Una vez que tenga estos fundamentos absolutos abajo, puede aprender los detalles concretos de un retiro en la sala oscura y acercarse a él con confianza. Además, la higiene proporciona orientación en todos los aspectos de la vida saludable.

pueblo

Mis padres me habían enseñado la importancia de comer bien a través de su interés en la dieta natural. Cuando tenía 9 años, me enfermé y me di cuenta de que era por la comida chatarra que había comido el día anterior. La dieta se convirtió en mi religión durante 30 años.

Natural Hygiene llamó tres veces a la puerta. Una vez en 1989, a través de la segunda esposa de mi padre, un buscador de la verdad entre cuyos fascinantes libros encontré el extático *Fit for Life* de Harvey y Marilyn Diamond. De nuevo en 1992 a través de un gran amigo, Sterling Voss. Me dijo, en la mejor carta que alguien me ha escrito, acerca de *Fasting Can Save Your Life* de Herbert Shelton, el sistematizador de la higiene. Finalmente, en 2001, a través de su amigo y colega, Frederic Patenaude, editor de la revista *Just Eat An Apple* y autor de *The Raw Secrets*. Estos eran sobre la dieta crudivegana.

frederic

Trabajé y fui compañero de casa de [Frederic Patenaude](#) un total de tres años, de 1998 a 2003. Primero en Nature's First Law en California; luego en Tree of Life en Arizona; luego en su nueva oficina en Quebec. Frederic había comenzado en la higiene no con Herbert Shelton, sino estudiando todos los trabajos del maestro francés de higiene, Albert Mosseri, con quien estuvo en contacto durante muchos años. Poco a poco, absorbí la esencia de la perspectiva radical de Natural Hygiene a través de Frederic.

Con esto, quiero decir que lo metió en mi grueso cráneo con sus argumentos tranquilos, implacables y cristalinos. Yo era desafiante pero comprensivo, así que seguí preguntando y él siguió respondiendo. Me llevó tiempo porque empecé bastante perdido en el lío de ideas dietéticas alternativas que flotaban en mi cabeza desde la infancia. Finalmente, algo funcionó y empecé a estudiar higiene por mi cuenta.

En nuestras muchas conversaciones, Frederic mencionó al higienista de Los Ángeles, Bernarr Zovluck, quien aconsejó a la gente que ayunara con los ojos cerrados en una habitación con cortinas. Más tarde, este comentario me ayudaría a conectar la oscuridad con la higiene.

La dedicación y el gran conocimiento de Frederic lo hicieron inamovible donde yo era simplemente terco. Sólo puedo esperar devolver el favor con el trabajo actual. Ilumina ciertos misterios de la dieta que nos frustraban. Por ejemplo, por qué algunas personas pueden seguir comiendo alimentos saludables y otras no (ver *higiene* > *capacidad*). Y el mayor misterio del sufrimiento metafísico que nosotros, como tantos otros, no pudimos resolver con la dieta.

finlandés

La primera vez que oí hablar de la retirada del cuarto oscuro fue en 2004 por mi ex gurú, Purna Steinitz. Un hindú americano, había oído hablar de su uso en el Ayurveda. "Aparentemente, después de unas semanas, uno sale completamente renovado", dijo. La idea me pareció muy extraña. Como higienista en ciernes y atraída por el mundo superior apolíneo de la espiritualidad, pensé que necesitábamos *luz*. Pero como muchas cosas terrenales que dijo Purna, la idea de la renovación en la oscuridad permaneció conmigo.

Un año después, me mudé a una ecoaldeja en Oregon. Me llevé bien con el viejo encargado del mantenimiento del pueblo, un hippie de nacimiento (ya que su padre era un beatnik). Nombre de[Finn Po](. Tipo flaco. Mucha energía. Ingeniosidad a nivel de mago. Lleno de dichos irónicos y optimistas, así como de bromas de buen carácter sobre los problemas de la gente. Bebe su propio pis y vive en una pequeña cúpula geodésica que construyó con basura hace 20 años.

Naturalmente, Finn también tenía un cuarto oscuro.

"¿Cansado de la iluminación?", preguntó. "Intenta el oscurecimiento."

Le dije: "Dios mío, Finn, ¿en serio?".

"Es el camino del futuro. No seas el último en saberlo".

"¿Cómo es?"

Ojos cerrados, brazos alrededor de sí mismo, dijo, "Es un *lujo*."

"¿Cómo lo haces?"

"Ah, vete a la habitación."

Un benévolo Flautista de Hamelín y el mejor de los 60 años de edad, había inspirado a todos los jóvenes de

la aldea a intentar un retiro. Después de escucharle hablar de ello durante todo el invierno, yo también lo hice.

[Wow.](#)

Pero como dice Finn, apenas estaba empezando. Me tomaría dos años más, el shock masivo de dejar a mi gurú, y otro exitoso retiro para comprender la importancia de retirarme en la oscuridad.

andrew

¿Cómo empezó todo esto?

Mis padres están muy lejos. Me enseñaron mucho de lo que sabían: principalmente filosofía (incluyendo una gran dosis de política), salud y diseño. Los adoraba y me lo tomaba todo en serio. Mi intenso hermano mayor también lo hizo, y fue una fuerza tan grande en mi vida como ellos. Como muchas familias, teníamos nuestros problemas. Otras *influencias* y *personas* suavizaron algunas de ellas.

A los 15 años, me sentía malhumorado y alienado. Pero algo de la infancia se agitaba en mí. Un día se cayó frente al televisor y una de las pequeñas personas que vivían en su interior mencionó la importancia de amarse a uno mismo y ser feliz. Fue el momento perfecto. Si mi humor era como el de la Estrella de la Muerte, este consejo era como el torpedo de fotones de Luke Skywalker.

En un momento, me invadió espontáneamente el [éxtasis](#): una alegría sublime al aprehender el universo perfecto y hermoso del que formaba parte. Fue aún más grande que cuando tenía 3 y 4 años. Este sentimiento y perspectiva duró tres meses sólidos. Cuando se desvanecieron, también lo hicieron mis intereses anteriores. Más que nada, quería entender la causa de la alegría. Quería que me lo devolvieras. [Viviendo con una mochila](#), investigué independientemente este misterio durante 21 años, experimentando con filosofía, salud y diseño. Hacia el final de este período, hice mis primeros retiros en el cuarto oscuro. Poco después, a finales de 2008, llegó la respuesta:

Un ligero aumento de la energía vital de la adolescencia había causado una restauración temporal y parcial de mi integridad psíquica dañada, revelando un universo embriagador. Así que un aumento masivo del descanso profundo en la oscuridad causaría una restauración permanente y completa.

Con este avance, mi búsqueda terminó y comenzó la aplicación. Yo y 25 clientes lo hemos intentado. Sus resultados se hicieron eco de los primeros que obtuve. En el curso de mis 20 retiros de 2-7 días, ha ocurrido una notable restauración de mi integridad y función psíquica. El olor de mi cuerpo ha mejorado. Recuperé algo de acceso a mi sexualidad largamente enterrada. De un retiro, me desperté sintiéndome adulta por primera vez en 41 años; este sentimiento no ha cambiado. En retirada, los síntomas de la fibromialgia se disipan. La flexibilidad retorna. Me despierto *sabiendo* cosas que siempre me han desconcertado y sintiéndome resuelto sobre asuntos que me han frustrado durante décadas. El insomnio, el agotamiento y los pensamientos y sentimientos suicidas se evaporan. La claridad, la energía, la relajación e incluso la alegría regresan durante semanas. El funcionamiento básico dura dos meses. Todo esto vino a mí después de pasar años sin ellos.

Además de estas pruebas de apoyo, todavía no ha surgido ningún dato que contradiga la idea básica. El interés por la oscuridad está creciendo en todo el mundo. Un profesor de psicología reconocido internacionalmente con décadas de experiencia como investigador de flotación está totalmente de acuerdo con mi teoría y quiere investigar con mi método exacto. Dondequiera que voy, la gente está tan impresionada como yo por la simple lógica de esta idea y quiere intentar un retiro.

Como dice Finn, ¿qué más puede ir bien?

uso

espectadores

Este libro es para:

- los que aprecian los buenos argumentos y las pruebas razonables de los mismos
- los que sufren de alguna manera -espiritualmente, mentalmente, emocionalmente, físicamente, socialmente, ecológicamente- y que necesitan tener la esperanza de que su sufrimiento es impermanente
- autoexpertos
- los que desean entender por qué la humanidad está en tan mal estado y qué hacer al respecto

La retirada de Darkroom es para cualquier persona a la que tenga sentido y que se sienta movida a hacerlo, ya sea para curarse de una enfermedad aguda o simplemente para ver cómo es. Además de la enfermedad psíquica, muchas enfermedades físicas son psicósomáticas y por lo tanto son susceptibles de autocuración en la oscuridad.

Sin embargo, la oscuridad no es un escape. A veces la enfermedad necesita ser tratada de otras maneras obvias primero. Pero el simple hecho de saber que el cuarto oscuro se está retirando puede ser muy alentador. El conocimiento de los principios de higiene es invaluable para la curación de cualquier enfermedad.

cómo usar este libro

Sobre todo, este libro presenta una idea para su consideración. Por ahora, no se trata de hacerlo. Para hacer algo así, debes querer hacerlo. Para quererlo, debes creer en ello. Para creer, debes saber lo suficiente sobre ello. Así que primero absorbe la idea. La motivación natural viene de la creencia racional, que viene del conocimiento. Invierta su tiempo en conocimiento leyendo cada palabra, de principio a fin. Como dice Finn: "Nada cuesta más de lo que no se paga".

Una vez que esté motivado, use el libro como un manual para hacer oscuridad básica para usted en su propio lugar. Descargue el [archivo zip de la sala oscura](#) para obtener todos los planos de los componentes. O encontrar un centro de retiros. Vea *Prepararse* para los recursos.

La ayuda de otros puede o no puede venir. Tú eres el que has estado esperando. La necesidad de la autosuficiencia se aplica a la oscuridad más que a cualquier otra cosa en la que me haya involucrado. Ha sido difícil para mí recuperarme lo suficiente como para confiar en mí misma, para descubrir lo que me quedaba de ella y que no sabía que tenía. Pero poco a poco, "un poco aquí, un poco allá", la tarea se está cumpliendo.

La plena aplicación de la idea de la retirada higiénica en el cuarto oscuro consiste en hacer retiros de duración creciente alternados con períodos de hacer los cambios radicales en la forma de vida de los que uno se vuelve capaz en la oscuridad. Esto incluye el estudio y la aplicación del resto de la higiene. Continúe hasta que su integridad psíquica y su salud física sean completamente restauradas. *Vive*.

contenido

Los capítulos son en su mayoría prácticos con una dosis de teoría para empezar.

1. higiene: la teoría general que subyace al uso relajante de la oscuridad
2. retiro en el cuarto oscuro: el funcionamiento interno del descanso profundo
3. psicología: la radicalización de la higiene
4. formato: formas de usar la oscuridad en retiros y en la vida diaria
5. protocolo: qué hacer en un retiro
6. preparar: orientación, menú, lista de empaque
7. diseño: especificaciones del cuarto oscuro

8. make: descripciones generales, planos e instrucciones para construir cuartos oscuros
9. aire: ventilar, silenciar y calentar un cuarto oscuro
10. oscuridad: técnicas refinadas de oscurecimiento
11. agua: cocinas y baños simples para cuartos oscuros

Entonces:

- faq: preguntas más frecuentes
- bibliografía e influencias
- reconocimientos, servicios, licencia, biografía

Nota: las palabras subrayadas en el libro en papel son enlaces en los que se puede hacer clic en el [libro electrónico](#) y en línea. Cuando *están en cursiva*, son enlaces cruzados a otros capítulos y secciones del libro. Normalmente, el *texto del enlace* indica el destino del enlace, así: *capítulo > sección > subsección*.

El libro está en línea en leanpub.com/darkroomretreat/read y en mi sitio web, darkroomretreat.com. Allí también se puede leer:

- una serie de [informes de](#) mis retiros
- [ensayos teóricos relacionados en](#) este folleto
- entradas de [blog](#) elaboradas
- [mitos](#) relacionados y
- ensayos, diseños, prosa, poesía y letras de los [últimos 25 años](#).

de código abierto

Gracias por leer. Por favor, copie y distribuya este libro gratuito tanto como quiera. Vea la *licencia* para más opciones.

Si tiene comentarios o correcciones, envíeme un correo electrónico o [abra un número](#) en github. Este es un contenido libre y un proyecto de código abierto contenido en un repositorio de código público. Fork the project, submit a pull request, etc. [Aprenda el](#) control de versiones distribuido.

Si encuentra un error teórico o práctico en el enfoque o una forma de mejorarlo, por favor, hágamelo saber. Estoy feliz de alterar el libro si su propuesta:

- presenta un argumento racional
- sigue siendo conforme a los principios higiénicos
- incluye informes claros de sus propios experimentos reproducibles con el método actual

De la misma manera, estoy abierto a trabajar con ustedes de cualquier manera para desarrollar un cuarto oscuro higiénico que retroceda y hacer avanzar su causa tanto tiempo como ustedes:

- he leído mi libro
- Demostrar comprensión de sus ideas básicas
- He hecho un retiro de acuerdo a mi protocolo y estoy convencido del valor de mi enfoque.
- no son abusivos

Yo continuamente actualizo este libro. Especialmente antes de construir, descargue la última versión del libro y revise las secciones relevantes para nuevos planes.

socorrer

Únete a la economía de los delfines: Te ayudo, te ayudo, te ayudo, te ayudo, te ayudo...

Además de este libro, puedo ayudarle por correo electrónico, skype, y en persona. Consulte los *servicios* para obtener más detalles.

Usted puede contribuir por medio de:

- escribiéndome con una pregunta o comentario amistoso
- oscurecer su habitación y retirarse de acuerdo con este método
- informando de tu experiencia en línea con fotos y enviándome el enlace
- mejorar el método y los diseños
- mejorar el sitio web
- donando dinero en mi [página web](#); vivo de forma muy sencilla, así que incluso pequeñas cantidades me ayudan
- prestar o ayudarme a alquilar o construir un lugar de retiro *adecuado* durante un mes para que pueda curarme de mi propia psicosis, caracterizada por el agotamiento, la depresión y diversas dolencias físicas.
- hacer algo que no está en la lista anterior, tal vez algo que sólo usted conoce o que podemos desarrollar juntos

Gracias por leer y mis mejores deseos.

Ahora pasemos a la perspectiva de la higiene que restaura la vida y cómo la oscuridad la completa.

1 - higiene

La higiene es un sistema completo de salud y curación basado en la naturaleza autoconservadora de la vida y en la apreciación de sus condiciones normales. Más que una simple limpieza, la higiene es un sistema de atención de la salud de 185 años de antigüedad, integrado a nivel mundial. Apenas lo discutimos porque así es como se hacen las cosas. Casi desconocido en su totalidad, sus detalles sorprenden a los recién llegados como extrañamente familiares.

La higiene proporciona un contexto integral para el uso relajado de la oscuridad en apoyo de la psique autocurativa. La higiene nos permite entender lo que es la oscuridad y cómo relacionarnos con ella con el propósito de la salud.

Lo cual es el punto. Somos organismos, así que nuestro propósito es vivir. Para vivir plenamente, necesitamos salud.

¿Cómo es la salud según la higiene?

Health does not consist merely of the absence of symptoms of illness. It is a state of positive well-being that is evidenced by a constant state of euphoria. It is rarely, if ever, experienced by humans today."

"- Herbert Shelton, padre de la higiene moderna¹

La euforia es exactamente el signo de la función perdida hace mucho tiempo que mi rapto adolescente insinuó. Una vez probado, nada más servirá. La cosa es conseguirlo a propósito, no por casualidad. ¿Qué condiciones lo harían posible? Identificar y proporcionar condiciones es el fuerte de la higiene. Esto se logra haciendo observaciones ordinarias de la vida en la naturaleza a lo largo de ciertas líneas.

Así que aprenderemos estas líneas -estos principios- en este capítulo, que relaciona la teoría de la higiene. El capítulo 2, "**Retiro en la sala oscura**", relata su aplicación. Nos dirigimos al territorio inexplorado de la **psicología** higiénica, capítulo 3.

meollo

La higiene es la ciencia de la salud, una rama de la biología. Aquí está la definición de Webster:

higiene: condiciones y prácticas que favorecen la preservación de la salud

En el uso común, la higiene significa la limpieza vigilante contra los gérmenes y el uso de equipos de seguridad para proteger contra un ambiente hostil. En realidad, la higiene incluye todas las condiciones y prácticas saludables. Es intrépido y relajado. Respeta la resistencia de la vida.

La higiene natural hace todo esto explícito. Identifica la "preservación" con la característica definitoria de la vida de la autopreservación. Además, identifica las "condiciones y prácticas conducentes" a la salud con las condiciones normales de vida. De esta manera, reconoce al organismo que se auto-preserva y busca proporcionarle condiciones normales de vida, tanto en la enfermedad como en la salud. Esto se origina en la observación de la higiene de la salud ubicua en la naturaleza, donde los organismos también se lesionan y enferman, pero sólo existen condiciones normales de vida. Para los humanos, estas condiciones y prácticas, tanto fisiológicas como sociales, incluyen:

- aire, calor, agua, comida, luz y oscuridad, refugio
- descanso, trabajo, equilibrio, ejercicio, limpieza
- familia y amigos, camaradería, afecto, sexo, amor
- libertad, paz, prosperidad, hábitat

El alcance y la organización de esta lista son un tanto arbitrarios. Simplemente ayuda a basar nuestra discusión en la biología, incluyendo la psicobiología y la sociobiología.

reposo

Este libro trata principalmente de la condición de descanso, que es la mitad de la vida. En nuestra vida obsesionada por la acción, la despreciamos y nos resistimos a ella, considerándola una pérdida de tiempo. No sólo el descanso es un fin en sí mismo, otro aspecto igual de la vida, sino que nada más es posible sin él, ni la acción ni la curación.

El descanso es de dos tipos: ordinario y profundo.

El descanso ordinario incluye el sueño nocturno, las siestas y la relajación, alternando con la actividad diaria en la luz. Es para el mantenimiento de la salud.

El descanso profundo significa un retiro prolongado que dura días, semanas e incluso meses. Es para la recuperación de traumas y enfermedades graves, incluyendo el envejecimiento. Se gana de cuatro maneras (en orden ascendente de intensidad):

- silencio
- soledad
- ayuno
- tinieblas

Los beneficios del descanso profundo se acumulan día a día. Si se interrumpe, algunos procesos de curación deben comenzar de nuevo. Demuestra que una buena noche de sueño, incluso varias seguidas, no es suficiente para recuperarse de lo que realmente nos aflige.

trayectoria

La higiene se originó en América una generación después de la Revolución, en el Siglo de las Luces. La

higiene se convirtió en un movimiento de masas en 1832 con las conferencias de Sylvester Graham, fisiólogo y homónimo de la harina de Graham (entera). Dos médicos, Isaac Jennings y Russell Trall, abandonaron la drogadicción, desarrollaron aún más la teoría y la práctica de la higiene, y difundieron ampliamente la higiene con publicaciones, enseñanza y organización. Mary Gove ayudó a llevar la higiene a las mujeres del siglo XIX, cuya creciente independencia era equivalente. Florence Nightingale transmitió sus rudimentos internacionalmente a través de la enfermería (antes de que la medicina cooptara la enfermería). John Tilden impulsó e innovó en higiene después de la muerte prematura de Trall. Herbert Shelton lo revivió y sistematizó para el siglo XX. Lo formalizó como "Higiene Natural" para impresionar a la imaginación y distinguirlo del uso médico restringido.

La higiene lideró el movimiento de la salud natural del siglo XIX, lo que dio lugar a la famosa mejora de la salud pública de entonces. La medicina, financiada a través de los intereses farmacéuticos de Rockefeller, se oponía a la higiene mientras se atribuía el mérito de esto. La medicina hizo la guerra contra los exponentes de la higiene, las instituciones y las enseñanzas completas a través de la propaganda, el cabildeo y el enjuiciamiento, casi destruyendo la higiene. La medicina cubrió sus huellas utilizando el énfasis equivocado de la higiene en la toxemia para reducir la higiene a la idea de la limpieza. Por lo tanto, pocos conocen la verdadera historia.

No obstante, la higiene sigue siendo el enfoque más eficaz e influyente de la salud y la curación en la historia del mundo. Ahora beneficia a casi todas las personas del planeta varias veces al día con el entendimiento de que el aire fresco, el agua pura, el baño y el ejercicio regular y los alimentos nutritivos son, por supuesto, importantes para llevar una vida sana. Con la llegada de una psicología higiénica y el asombroso poder de autocuración del organismo en la oscuridad, la influencia de la higiene aumentará exponencialmente. Así que dejó atrás el nombre especial, Higiene Natural, para recuperar la palabra, higiene, para nuestra tradición.

normativas

Shelton describe la higiene como "el empleo de materiales, agentes e influencias que tienen una relación normal con la vida, en la preservación y restauración de la salud de acuerdo con leyes bien definidas y principios demostrados de la naturaleza".² Estas leyes son el corazón absoluto de la higiene y por lo tanto una gran clave para entenderla. Siguen en la siguiente sección.

La higiene es filosófica. Refleja los conceptos axiomáticos que se encuentran en la metafísica realista. La higiene se basa en el ser, la identidad, la causalidad y la conciencia de la vida. La vida lo es. La vida es lo que es: viva. La vida actúa de acuerdo con su naturaleza: vive. La vida es autoconsciente y volitiva: La vida sabe y elige.

La característica que define la vida es la autopreservación. La vida es una presencia asertiva y una fuerza activa, no una reacción indefensa. Esta es la primera parte de la *Gran Ley de la Vida de la higiene*. Autoconservación significa auto-generarse, auto-mantenerse y auto-sanarse. Estos se obtienen en todos los aspectos de la vida y a todas las escalas, desde las células hasta el organismo en su conjunto. Esto es parte de la *Ley de Orden*.

La *Gran Ley* implica otras leyes. La *Ley de Acción* establece que sólo el organismo realiza la acción vital, incluyendo la curación. Así que sólo el organismo puede curar al organismo y, de nuevo, a todas las escalas: incluso una célula debe curarse a sí misma; otra no puede. La *Ley del Poder* establece que la energía empleada para realizar la acción reside sólo en el organismo, no en nada externo a él.

Por lo tanto, ningún medicamento, hierba o alimento; ninguna condición o práctica; ningún tratamiento, persona o dispositivo cura. Por lo tanto, no hay curas. Intentar curar el cuerpo desde el exterior daña aún más o drena su poder de curarse a sí mismo, enmascarando su enfermedad intacta y retrasando su curación, sea cual sea el beneficio que pueda aparecer a corto plazo. Este es un ejemplo de la intrigante *Ley del Doble Efecto*. Otras leyes los complementan.

Aquí están todos, la dosis más fuerte de higienismo que se puede conseguir.

leyes de la vida

1. **La Gran Ley de la Vida:** Cada célula viviente del cuerpo organizado está dotada de un instinto de autopreservación, sostenido por una fuerza inherente al organismo llamada "fuerza vital" o "fuerza vital". El éxito de cada organismo vivo, sea simple o complejo, es directamente proporcional a la cantidad de su fuerza vital e inversamente proporcional al grado de su actividad.
2. **La ley del orden:** El organismo vivo es completamente autoconstruido, auto-mantenido, auto-dirigido, auto-reparador, auto-defensor y auto-sanador.
3. **La Ley de Acción:** Cuando la acción ocurre en el organismo vivo, como resultado de influencias extrañas, la acción debe ser atribuida a la cosa viva, que tiene el poder de la acción, y no a cualquier cosa sin vida, cuya característica principal es la inercia.
4. **La Ley del Poder:** El poder empleado, y consecuentemente gastado, en cualquier acción vital o medicinal es poder vital, es decir, poder desde dentro y no desde fuera.
5. **La Ley de Distribución:** La distribución del poder del cuerpo es proporcional a la importancia y las necesidades de los diversos órganos y tejidos del cuerpo.
6. **La Ley de Conservación:** Cuando la abstinencia nutritiva se ve afectada, las reservas del organismo vivo se conservan y economizan: las estructuras vivientes se autolizan en el orden inverso de su utilidad, mientras que las sustancias tóxicas se eliminan. Esta Ley se refiere al ayuno; se aplica también a la inanición. También llamada *La Ley de Autólisis*.
7. **La Ley de Limitación:** Cuando y dondequiera que el gasto del poder vital ha avanzado tanto que es inminente un agotamiento fatal, se pone freno al gasto innecesario del poder; y el organismo se rebela contra el uso ulterior, incluso de un estimulante acostumbrado.
8. **Ley de Economía Especial:** Un organismo en condiciones favorables almacena el exceso de energía vital, materiales por encima de los gastos corrientes, como un "fondo de reserva" para ser empleado en tiempos de necesidad especial.
9. **La Ley de la Acomodación Vital:** La respuesta del organismo vital a los estímulos externos es instintiva, basada en un instinto autoconservador que se adapta o acomoda a cualquier influencia que no pueda destruir o controlar.
10. **La Ley del Doble Efecto:** El efecto secundario sobre un organismo vivo de cualquier acto, hábito, indulgencia o agente es exactamente lo contrario e igual al efecto primario.
11. **La Ley de Compensación "La Ley de Reposo":** Siempre que la acción en el cuerpo ha gastado la sustancia y la energía disponible del cuerpo, se induce el descanso para reponer la sustancia y la energía del cuerpo. También llamada *La Ley de Reposición*.
12. **La Ley de Eliminación Selectiva:** Todas las sustancias nocivas que, por cualquier medio, ganan admisión en un organismo vivo son contrarrestadas, neutralizadas y eliminadas tan completamente como el suministro de energía de los nervios del cuerpo lo permita y por cualquier medio y a través de cualquier canal que produzca la menor cantidad de daño a la estructura viva.
13. **La Ley de Utilización:** Los elementos y materiales normales de la vida son todo lo que el organismo vivo es capaz de utilizar constructivamente, ya sea sano o enfermo. Ninguna sustancia o proceso que no sea un factor-elemento normal en fisiología puede tener valor en la estructura del organismo vivo; y lo que es inutilizable en un estado de salud, es igualmente inutilizable en un estado de enfermedad.
14. **La Ley de Selección de Calidad:** Cuando la calidad del nutrimento que recibe el organismo vivo es más alta que la del tejido vivo actual, el organismo descarta las células de menor grado para hacer lugar a la apropiación de los materiales superiores en tejidos nuevos y sanos.
15. **La Ley del Mínimo:** El desarrollo de los organismos vivos está regulado por el suministro del elemento o factor menos abundantemente proporcionado o utilizado. El elemento o factor de la oferta más escasa determina el grado de desarrollo.
16. **La Ley de Desarrollo:** El desarrollo de todo o parte del organismo vivo se mide en proporción directa a la cantidad de fuerzas vitales y materiales nutritivos que se le dirigen y se le aplican.

Considérate iniciado en la higiene.

ejemplares

Ya sea bien o mal, el papel consciente (volitivo) de uno es descubrir y proporcionar las condiciones normales de vida en la proporción apropiada. Los procesos autónomos del organismo omnisciente, omnipotente e infalible manejan el resto. La higiene describe sistemáticamente cómo sucede esto con estas leyes lógicamente interrelacionadas. Todos se derivan de simples observaciones que todos pueden hacer. Es ciencia para todos, madura para la autoexperimentación.

Una droga, por ejemplo, es un veneno por definición. Esta es la razón por la que las drogas están legalmente controladas. Un organismo no se relaciona con el veneno, sino que lo neutraliza y expulsa rápidamente, lesionándose en el proceso (efectos secundarios). Por el contrario, un organismo asimila los alimentos en su propia estructura.

Ayunar cuando se está enfermo es una extensión instintiva del tiempo entre comidas. En esta pausa, el cuerpo puede descansar de la mayoría de los procesos metabólicos, reparar tejidos, eliminar toxinas y desechos almacenados en profundidad y reponerse con nutrientes y energía hasta el último rincón de cada célula. Así que el ayuno es parte de la higiene natural. Como el ayuno permite el descanso fisiológico, la retirada del cuarto oscuro permite el descanso psíquico profundo.

Una de las ideas más sorprendentes de la higiene se refiere a las enfermedades. En la enfermedad, los síntomas que observamos no afligen al cuerpo, sino que son precisamente la forma en que el cuerpo se está curando a sí mismo y dando señales para su cuidado. La enfermedad no es hostil. No invade desde fuera, como en la teoría de los gérmenes. Es el cuerpo en acción. El dolor significa que los tejidos dañados y su reparación. La infección e inflamación después de los primeros auxilios significa neutralización y eliminación de toxinas internas. Las secreciones desagradables -vómitos, diarrea, sudoración extra, erupciones cutáneas, mal aliento, orina oscura- son la eliminación de las toxinas acumuladas y de los desechos a través de cada órgano.

La pérdida de apetito conserva la energía del inmenso esfuerzo de la digestión. El dolor, las náuseas, la debilidad y el agotamiento inmovilizan el organismo, permitiendo que se utilice toda la fuerza vital para la curación. Cada una de ellas es una virtud biológica. No se debe temer ni reprimir a nadie. Todos deben ser vistos como victorias vitales en las que se puede confiar, observados para continuar corrigiendo las malas condiciones y apoyados, no combatidos. Todos ocurren de la manera más eficiente posible con el propósito de restaurar la salud. La enfermedad es nuestra amiga.

En la relación entre alimento y energía nerviosa se encuentra otro ejemplo de relaciones vitales. Los alimentos no dan energía directamente al cuerpo. Los alimentos necesitan energía nerviosa, química y muscular para comer y digerir. De lo contrario, podríamos comer para restaurar nuestro vigor, incluso cuando tenemos sueño. Los alimentos proporcionan azúcar, que reabastece todo, desde el movimiento de los músculos grandes hasta el pensamiento y el funcionamiento de las células. Parte de este reabastecimiento de combustible puede ocurrir en cuestión de segundos después de comer alimentos de fácil digestión como la fruta. Pero el cuerpo sólo transforma el azúcar en potencial eléctrico de reserva de los nervios durante el sueño. Sólo repara y elimina las toxinas de los tejidos completamente mientras no se utilizan.

Así que de nuevo vemos que ninguna fuerza externa tiene poder para actuar de por vida, sólo la vida misma. La vida es el hacedor. La higiene nos ayuda a redirigir hacia el *yo autónomo* la vasta atención que ponemos en nuestro camino hacia el *yo volitivo*. La voluntad juega un papel crítico pero pequeño en todo el proceso de la vida. Ahora, la higiene puede ofrecer oscuridad como un medio para cuidar del ser autónomo en su sistema primario.

El yo profundo no resolverá todos los problemas de uno en el retiro de la sala oscura. Pero tendrá la

oportunidad de recuperar la capacidad perdida. Recapitado, uno puede entonces hacer los cambios radicales en la forma de vida necesarios para manejar los problemas que le quedan. See protocol > *post-treat*.

cilindrada

He mencionado la capacidad en varias ocasiones. Es la idea integradora de todo este libro. Es tan importante que he formulado una nueva ley de higiene al respecto.

Ley de la Capacidad Vital: La *capacidad determina la función*. La capacidad es el grado de integridad estructural de un organismo. La función es el nivel de capacidad física, emocional y mental para vivir. La forma en que uno es determina lo que hace y *de lo que se beneficia*. De nuevo, como en la Gran Ley de la Vida, la Ley de la Capacidad Vital expresa el concepto axiomático de identidad y su corolario, la causalidad.

La estructura es el marco psicofísico de la vida, sosteniendo un organismo, manteniéndolo unido. Como la vida, la capacidad es una unión de ser y conciencia, el patrón vital de un organismo a toda escala. Es la fuerza vital en una forma particular. Sin embargo, no puede reducirse, por ejemplo, a la conciencia, al sistema nervioso, al esqueleto o miofascia, o al ADN. Cualquiera de ellos puede representar más claramente su presencia o ausencia en un momento dado.

Capacidad es sinónimo de constitución, dotación, tipo, herencia, existencias y potencial. También aparece en coloquialismos. Tienes: eso en ti, lo que se necesita, los medios, lo correcto, el tacto, el factor X. Tiene un talento innato. Al igual que éstos, se asume convencionalmente que la capacidad es estática; de hecho, es dinámica y cambia constantemente.

Dos influencias afectan significativamente a la capacidad: el reposo profundo (positivo) y el trauma mayor (negativo). El descanso profundo, como el organismo mismo, es físico y psíquico. El ayuno proporciona principalmente descanso físico; el cuarto oscuro se retira, principalmente el descanso psíquico. Estos pueden utilizarse juntos o por separado, dependiendo de la capacidad. La capacidad se experimenta como una sensación de facilidad para hacer algo.

Contrariamente a la opinión común, las condiciones normales de vida diaria afectan la capacidad de forma insignificante. Así como el esfuerzo, la voluntad y la disciplina. Cualquier ganancia que uno haga por ellos más allá de su capacidad es menor, por muy impresionantes que parezcan, y se pierden fácilmente.

Del mismo modo, la disciplina heroica y el superesfuerzo (hacer algo el doble o el doble de rápido) tienen el notable pero aún insignificante efecto negativo de convertir a la gente en idiotas raros. Ejemplos comunes incluyen la religiosidad acerca de Dios, la política, el trabajo y la comida. Afortunadamente, esta condición desaparece con suficiente descanso.

El beneficio se deriva de condiciones normales y los esfuerzos no pueden exceder la capacidad de uno para ello. Cuando se daña la capacidad (como prácticamente todos los humanos ahora), el yo inconsciente previene un daño mayor por el aumento de la energía de los niveles normales de placer, alegría, satisfacción y éxito. A menudo llamamos a los resultados de este mecanismo de salvamento de vidas "autosabotaje" o "malos hábitos". Pero podemos entenderlo mejor como un síntoma de enfermedad. Así, como higienistas, buscamos entenderlo y apoyarlo, no combatirlo como los moralistas.

Lo mismo ocurre con los medios más obvios de autoprotección, como la resistencia y la terquedad.

Imagine un dispositivo eléctrico dañado. Simplemente pasando una cantidad regular de energía a través de él no lo reparará y puede causar más daños a los circuitos. Es mejor detenerlo inmediatamente, apagarlo, desconectarlo, desconectarlo y llevarlo a un mecánico para que lo repare.

De la misma manera, la capacidad de uno para el descanso ordinario determina cuánto de él disfrutará. Una buena noche de sueño comienza un proceso de curación profunda que puede tomar días o semanas para completarse. Una buena noche de sueño implica quietud y conduce a la re-energización y claridad. Estos tienden a irritar la capacidad dañada. Es como volver a romper un hueso mal colocado. El organismo lo acepta si la nueva energía alimenta la reparación completa. Pero si la luz y la actividad interrumpen el proceso por la mañana, entonces, desde la perspectiva integral de la capacidad, es mejor no empezar en absoluto.

Si, por falta de tiempo, seguridad o comprensión, no hemos cumplido con todas las condiciones de curación, entonces inconscientemente, se nos impedirá dormir hasta que podamos dormir *realmente*. El insomnio típicamente resulta. Al igual que con el resto del funcionamiento, sólo en el descanso profundo el organismo restaura su capacidad para el descanso ordinario.

Este análisis se aplica a todo lo que intentamos que repetidamente falla y nos frustra.

Como seguir una buena dieta. Uno empieza a comer bien. La congestión desaparece. Dormir se vuelve fácil y delicioso. La claridad, la motivación y la alegría regresan. Eventualmente, el nivel de energía alcanza un tono de fiebre y algo se rompe. Con la indiferencia de un verdugo, se inhalan tres trozos de tarta rancia que, pocos días antes, era obviamente horripilante.

El insoportable nivel de energía en la emoción real tiene el mismo efecto en muchos de nosotros. O en conocer a una personalidad magnífica. O en tener una oportunidad única en la vida. El arte de la asfixia surge de la nada. "¡Chico, es hora de una maratón de películas de toda la noche! ¿Dónde está el helado?" Para evitar más daños a la capacidad, el yo autónomo hace lo que sea necesario para frenar el entusiasmo.

Así, podemos ver cómo moralizar sobre las opciones, hábitos, compromiso, etc., es ineficaz porque es irrelevante. No somos criaturas de hábitos. Somos criaturas con capacidad. En cualquier momento, hacemos todo lo que podemos. Ya sea por voluntad propia o automática, cada pensamiento, cada sentimiento, cada acción es una expresión máxima de la propia capacidad. En el momento en que la capacidad sube o baja, también funciona. La vida no puede hacer otra cosa.

Los beneficios genuinos obtenidos por los esfuerzos normales simplemente se dan cuenta de la propia capacidad. Por eso se sienten divertidos. Cuando las emergencias o las oportunidades inusuales requieren un esfuerzo adicional, el cuerpo suministra adrenalina para ello. Pero nos equivocamos al seguir ejerciendo un esfuerzo adicional durante un período prolongado de tiempo para cualquier propósito, por no hablar de la alucinante tarea de restaurar la capacidad humana original. La voluntad no lo logra. Sólo el poder involuntario que nos dio la vida en primer lugar puede hacerlo. Este poder no puede ser manipulado, sólo provisto.

Como la Gran Ley de la Vida, la Ley de la Capacidad Vital integra varias Leyes higiénicas de la Vida existentes. Los proyecta bajo una luz diferente. Contiene elementos de las Leyes de Compensación, Distribución, el Mínimo y otras. Tiene muchas implicaciones. Si, como yo, se apodera de tu perspectiva, te darás cuenta de que algunos de tus esfuerzos habituales son inútiles. Usted puede sentir su atención liberada para enfocarse en lo que realmente puede lograr.

Al igual que el cuarto oscuro que se retira a sí mismo, levanté la idea de la capacidad de la enseñanza espiritual esotérica, y la resitué en la higiene. Ahora está en armonía con la naturaleza, universalmente accesible y más útil por orden de magnitud.

falsa capacidad

El mundo equipa a sus criaturas con todo lo que necesitamos para vivir plenamente. Esto parece ser unas 50 veces más de lo que necesitamos para sobrevivir. Lo cual es bueno porque perdimos mucha capacidad debido

al trauma cataclísmico. Pero incluso este enorme margen resulta insuficiente. En nuestro estado de emergencia y angustia permanente, una sola crisis importante nos abruma a la mayoría de nosotros.

Compensamos la capacidad normal dañada mediante la creación de *capacidad falsa*. Con un esfuerzo constante, alcanzamos sustancia e ímpetu como personalidades, incluso algo de poder personal. Obtenemos conocimiento, fuerza, habilidades, carácter. Vencemos a nuestros competidores, logramos la independencia, ganamos respeto. Ganamos un poco de estabilidad, reservas, resiliencia. Es un trabajo duro, pero si eres una buena persona, lo haces. Si eres perezoso y no luchas, sólo obtienes lo que te mereces. (¿Suena familiar?)

La capacidad falsa no sólo es difícil de construir, sino también de mantener. Es ineficiente y da resultados parciales. Así como el organismo restaura la capacidad normal en la oscuridad, elimina la falsa capacidad tan pronto como sea posible.

La falsa capacidad existe cerca de la superficie de la personalidad, donde la usamos. La capacidad normal se restablece de abajo hacia arriba. Esto ocurre rápidamente en la oscuridad, lentamente en la vida normal. Así que nos retiramos lo suficiente para que llegue a la superficie antes de que se pierda demasiada capacidad falsa. Entonces puede reemplazar la falsa capacidad de manera práctica.

Con una capacidad falsa van los trucos de supervivencia que sostenía. El ego se preocupa por la supervivencia. El organismo se preocupa por la función y la eficiencia general. La capacidad falsa es especializada. La capacidad normal es generalizada y se adapta a una variedad de situaciones. Es natural, pero cuesta un poco acostumbrarse después de toda una vida de fingirlo.

Esta idea contradice nuestra perspectiva perversamente moralizada. Qué chocante es descubrir que años de duro trabajo sobre uno mismo logran poco comparado con no hacer casi nada durante unas pocas semanas en la oscuridad; que nuestros esfuerzos nos hacen fingir; que nuestro orgullo por ellos nos mantiene atascados.

Esta es la lección más dura que he aprendido sobre la oscuridad. Con cada nuevo avance que tenía en la oscuridad, experimentaba la correspondiente pérdida de función. Me confundió durante años y empezó a asustarme. Las habilidades con las que contaba, que siempre había tenido, desaparecieron de repente. El proceso parecía que estaba fallando.

Hacer más de unos cuantos retiros cortos causó el problema. La capacidad falsa se descompone demasiado antes de que el organismo pueda restaurar su capacidad normal hasta el punto de ser de utilidad inmediata. Es otra razón más para avanzar a un retiro medio una vez que entiendas los rudimentos del proceso en los primeros 2-3 retiros cortos. Discuto esto más en [formato](#).

integración de leyes

Dieciséis leyes es un número demasiado grande para que la mente las pueda aprehender a la vez. Así que con el tiempo, otras integraciones surgirán o algunas leyes serán reconocidas como primarias para otras. De tres a cinco "Grandes Leyes", con las otras como corolarios o subleyes, pondrán la higiene al alcance de todos.

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Esta es la teoría de la higiene en lo que respecta a nuestro tema. Veamos con más precisión lo que significa en la práctica.

[Nota del editor: este capítulo se estaba alargando así que lo dividí en tres: higiene, retiro en el cuarto oscuro, psicología]

2 - retiro en cuarto oscuro

Cualquier teoría se aplica a ideas más específicas y finalmente a la acción. Ahora examinaremos los **elementos** de la retirada higiénica de los cuartos oscuros. Las **distinciones** entre higiene y otros enfoques contribuyen a la comprensión. Algunos **mecánicos** le siguen.

factores

Aquí hago observaciones naturales de la psique y la oscuridad; muestro cómo se aplica la higiene a ellos; y revelo el secreto de por qué exactamente funciona el cuarto oscuro higiénico en retroceso.

de la psique

Shelton revisa las ideas higiénicas sobre la psique: "Graham señaló que los 'instintos vitales' se comportaban como si estuvieran dirigidos por la inteligencia. Tilden sostenía que la fisiología es 'psicología organizada'".³ Y aquí está la visión no sentimental de Shelton: "Las funciones conscientes del cuerpo sirven principalmente para proteger y proveer las necesidades de las funciones subconscientes."⁴ Esto significa que la conciencia no es un fin en sí misma. Tiene una función biológica. La higiene considera que la conciencia es principalmente autónoma (inconsciente), y secundariamente volitiva (consciente).

Además, la psique es el sistema *primario* en el organismo humano. "La conciencia -para los organismos vivos que la poseen- es el medio básico de supervivencia", como dijo la filósofa Ayn Rand en su *meta-ética*.⁵ La psique coordina todos los demás sistemas. Lo hace consciente, subconsciente e inconscientemente. La psique es difusa en todo el organismo, funcionando a todas las escalas, monitoreando y armonizando autónomamente cada uno de los sextillos (1.000.000.000.000.000.000.000.000) de procesos orgánicos por segundo (trillones de células X mil millones de procesos por célula). Lo que afecta a la psique para bien o para mal, afecta también al resto del organismo.

Eso es mucho trabajo. Como cualquier otro sistema orgánico, la psique necesita un período de descanso y recuperación. Como su aparato sensorial es reflexivo, la piel siente automáticamente lo que entra en contacto con él, la nariz huele, los ojos ven, la desestimulación sensorial es necesaria para el descanso psíquico. Piensa en las veces que has dormido mejor. Además de sentirse a gusto, su refugio probablemente era especialmente oscuro, bien ventilado y silencioso. Si bien las circunstancias exactas en ese momento no pueden reproducirse, estos elementos críticos sí pueden serlo.

tinieblas

Los seres humanos son criaturas diurnas, naturalmente despiertos durante el día y dormidos durante la noche. Este ciclo fisiológico es crítico para la función psíquica. La vida moderna reemplaza los extremos naturales del sol y las estrellas con el gris implacable de la luz artificial y las gafas de sol. Reemplaza los patrones naturales de sueño con turnos de noche y fiestas posteriores. Esta crudeza, junto con otros cien delitos civilizados, ha empujado a la enfermedad psíquica a proporciones epidémicas. En pocas palabras, nuestra forma de vida es brutal, dañina y disfuncional.

La angustia moderna (sobrecarga sensorial, exceso de trabajo, soledad, desnutrición, etc.) requiere que cientos de millones de personas consuman drogas psicoactivas sólo para funcionar. A la mayoría no les gusta esta dependencia, que causa más angustia. Atrapados en un círculo vicioso, se preguntan impotentes si las cosas cambiarán alguna vez.

Mientras que muchos factores contribuyen a la angustia, la retirada higiénica de la sala oscura proporciona una *abertura*: una forma sencilla de comenzar a revertir todos ellos a la vez. Primero, los detiene inofensivamente. En segundo lugar, proporciona al ser una oportunidad de recuperarse de ellos naturalmente, es decir, por sí mismo. Autónomicamente. Sin drogas, sin terapia, sin expertos. *Autocuración desatada*.

Por lo tanto, contrariamente a los cuentos de hadas, la religión y los anuncios de bombillas, la oscuridad es algo bueno. La oscuridad, como la luz, es una condición natural de la vida. Necesitamos que la naturaleza nos lo proporcione en su totalidad -10 horas al día- para poder descansar adecuadamente.

En situaciones de crisis, necesitamos un largo período de oscuridad para descansar y recuperarnos. El cuarto oscuro en retirada es para la psique lo que el ayuno es para el cuerpo:

- alivio del procesamiento sensorial
- tiempo para recuperarse completamente de una lesión, agotamiento y toxemia
- el reconocimiento tardío de exactamente qué parte de quién está llevando a cabo la recuperación

El instinto en circunstancias extremas nos da una pista gráfica de la necesidad básica de la oscuridad: cuando una persona está agobiada psíquicamente, se agacha y se cubre los ojos, refugiándose en la soledad si es posible. Deprimida, histérica o conmocionada por la violencia, todo su ser grita: "¡Dame refugio!

Un cuarto oscuro es ese refugio. Buscados durante mucho tiempo, pero ante nuestros ojos, no podíamos ver la oscuridad. Estaba oscurecida por sí misma, por nuestra obsesión apolínea por la luz, el pensamiento y la acción, y por el miedo medieval. Ahora finalmente podemos hundirnos en la oscuridad, la inconsciencia y descansar, y recuperar nuestro ser perdido.

revisión de la higiene

Habiendo encontrado refugio -un contexto- para la oscuridad misma en la higiene, podemos entender mejor por qué el cuarto oscuro en retroceso funciona.

Primero, volvamos sobre nuestros pasos un momento y analicemos la astuta definición de higiene de Webster: *condiciones y prácticas conducentes a la preservación de la salud.*

- La higiene proviene de Hygieia, la diosa griega de la salud.
- "las" condiciones y prácticas" se refieren a las condiciones normales de vida, los factores ambientales e instintivos que la naturaleza siempre ha proporcionado y que hacen posible la vida, incluida la curación
- Medios propicios:
 - hacer que sea fácil, posible o probable que algo suceda o exista
 - que tienden a promover o ayudar
 - contributivo a
- La preservación se refiere a la preservación de un organismo de sí mismo
- La salud se refiere a la de un organismo

Por lo tanto, las condiciones normales ayudan al organismo a preservar su propia salud. Higiene significa autopreservación a través de la provisión de las condiciones normales de vida. Todo este significado se esconde dentro de la definición del diccionario. La Higiene Natural, como abanderada de toda la tradición de la higiene, la hace explícita.

Ahora podemos elaborar sobre la autopreservación. Eso:

- es la característica definitoria de todos los organismos
- ocurre en todas las escalas: células, órganos, sistemas y el organismo en su conjunto
- se compone de auto-generación, auto-mantenimiento y auto-sanación

Autocuración:

- requiere más trabajo, tiempo y energía que el automantenimiento, pero menos que la autogeneración

- incluye:
 - reparación de daños
 - eliminación de toxinas, exógenas y endógenas
 - revitalización del tejido

Conscientemente, proporcionamos las condiciones de vida. Inconscientemente, los usamos en la asombrosa cantidad y variedad de procesos de auto-preservación de la vida.

El inconsciente lo es:

- la parte oculta de la conciencia. Es omnipresente en el ser, un aspecto integral de cada célula, órgano, sistema y el organismo como un todo.
- la mayor parte de la conciencia, coordinando millones de acciones por segundo en cada uno de los 10 billones de células
- omnisciente, omnipotente e infalible: omnisciente, omnipotente e incapaz de equivocarse.
- esperando la oportunidad de arreglar lo que está roto

El cuarto oscuro higiénico que se retira es esa oportunidad.

secretas

Por fin estamos preparados para comprender el secreto de por qué funciona la retirada higiénica de los cuartos oscuros. Hay tres razones: fisiología, actitud y medio ambiente

1. Fisiología

1. Ritmos circadianos: El sistema circadiano gobierna nuestro ciclo de vigilia y sueño de 24 horas. Este sistema está controlado por el [núcleo](#) suprachiasmático. Este pequeño órgano descansa sobre el quiasma, la intersección de los nervios ópticos que vienen directamente de los ojos. El núcleo detecta la luz de presencia o ausencia instantáneamente, antes de que las imágenes que lleva lleguen a la corteza visual del cerebro.

En la medida en que es oscuro, el núcleo suprachiasmático da, por ejemplo, su famosa instrucción a la glándula pineal para secretar [melatonina](#) en el torrente sanguíneo. Esta hormona nos hace dormir, soñar y perder el apetito. En una oscuridad absolutamente extendida, la glándula pineal *inunda* el cuerpo con melatonina, intensificando estos procesos de descanso.

La melatonina es sólo una de muchas hormonas, señales nerviosas y procesos que facilitan el descanso profundo y el sueño necesario para recuperarse y asimilar los beneficios de la vida despierta.

2. Desestimulación

- Procesamiento sensorial: conservamos el esfuerzo y la energía significativos del procesamiento sensorial. La vista requiere el doble de procesamiento que todos los demás sentidos combinados. La oscuridad elimina la visión y minimiza otras sensaciones.
- Calma: sin el alimento abstracto de los datos visuales, la mente abstracta se ralentiza.
 - ocurren menos pensamientos
 - pensar se hace más difícil
 - el pensamiento se vuelve *menos interesante* (!)
 - dirigir la atención con tranquilidad se vuelve *mucho* más fácil. (Ver *protocolo > atención*)

Las sensaciones concretas que quedan tienden a alimentar el centro de sentimiento de la inteligencia. Externamente libre de distracciones, el sentido interno del tacto se agudiza en sus [muchos aspectos](#). La intuición y el instinto, los aspectos suprimidos de la conciencia en la civilización se reactivan así. Equilibran la carga psíquica, haciéndola más eficiente, ahorrando energía y actividad interna.

2. Actitud: la actitud pasiva de la higiene hacia la curación alinea las partes conscientes e inconscientes del ser. Permite la paz interna y la cooperación necesarias para que ocurra una sanación superintensificada (milagros). Al principio, sólo es necesario conocer esta actitud. La creencia viene después.
3. Entorno: un retiro proporciona no sólo oscuridad, sino también todas las condiciones para un descanso profundo:
 1. seguridad, confort, silencio, soledad y *tiempo*
 2. aire fresco, calor y comida natural

El enfoque científico contemporáneo a la retirada de los cuartos oscuros se llama *cámara REST* (Restricted Environmental Stimulation Technique). Como su nombre indica, y de acuerdo con el materialismo científico, tiende a reducir un retroceso y sus efectos a la desestimulación: ausencia de las imposiciones sensoriales habituales. Pero el organismo no experimenta la oscuridad, por ejemplo, como la ausencia de luz, como un hecho negativo; sino más bien, como un hecho positivo, como la presencia de algo que el organismo activo toma y utiliza.

En términos de experimentar un profundo descanso y la milagrosa curación que resulta, un retiro higiénico en la sala oscura es la tormenta perfecta.

diferencias

No todos los retiros en los cuartos oscuros son iguales. Durante eones en todo el mundo, la gente de todas las formas de vida y tradiciones espirituales y culturales se ha retirado en la oscuridad. Pero existen diferencias sutiles con efectos profundos entre el enfoque higiénico y la mayoría de los demás. Explicaré estas diferencias y su importancia en el uso de la oscuridad por su cuenta.

punto de vista

La civilización nos ha enseñado bien: de varias maneras, todos hemos llegado a creer que de alguna manera, algún día, finalmente *haríamos* algo con respecto a nuestro dilema. Nos sentimos animados por la perspectiva de hacer algo consciente y directamente. Nos inscribimos con entusiasmo en talleres, nos sometemos a tratamientos, emprendemos disciplinas y experimentamos con sustancias psicoactivas exóticas. Mientras tanto, el omnisciente yo autonómico se pudre en una fila de desempleados.

No existe una forma agradable de decirlo: esto es pura egomanía. Es un acto. Es una pretensión de entusiasmo y competencia para encubrir el doloroso daño psíquico, la pérdida de sí mismo, la impotencia e incluso el impulso de la abnegación total por medio del suicidio. Bajo circunstancias normales, no abandonaremos este acto. No podemos. Sería demasiado doloroso y aterrador. Necesitamos un lugar realmente seguro para hacerlo. La naturaleza lo provee en la oscuridad.

Incluso si no estuviéramos completamente indefensos en nuestra amnesia y negación postraumática, la higiene demuestra que no podemos curar intencionadamente las heridas de todos modos. Esto puede parecer desalentador. Pero es fructífera, porque puede provocar una respuesta lo suficientemente fuerte de la conciencia como para detener nuestros esfuerzos inútiles, notar el todopoderoso organismo autocurativo y, finalmente, proveer para ello.

Desidentificados patológicamente de la vida, somos impotentes. Tropezamos enfermamente, sin embargo,

presumimos de controlar el gran orden de la vida en lugar de servirla. Es hora de afrontar los hechos. No vamos a manejar nuestro dilema. A medida que nos imaginamos a nosotros mismos -sólo la parte consciente y volitiva de nosotros mismos- no vamos a lograrlo ni vamos a tener nada que ver con ello. No vamos a averiguarlo. Estamos en condiciones de ser atados.

Lo mejor que podemos hacer es admitir plenamente nuestra impotencia y rendirnos a la única fuerza que podría desatar el nudo. Es el nudo gordiano. Pero hay que desatar el nudo, volver a usar la preciosa cuerda. Alejandro no lo manejó adecuadamente abriéndolo con su espada, y nosotros tampoco lo haremos con nuestras intrigas, esfuerzo o habilidad. Sólo los zarcillos silenciosos y lentos de la vasta inteligencia autónoma del organismo pueden desatar tal enredo. Pero necesita nuestro reconocimiento, nuestra comisión para hacer el trabajo. Debemos apoyar conscientemente al inconsciente. La integridad es el fin, así que la integridad también debe ser el medio.

El énfasis pasivo de la higiene en el descanso y la curación es muy importante porque define la *actitud* apropiada hacia la retirada. Al ayunar aprendí que la forma en que uno se acerca a un retiro tiene un gran efecto en lo que sucede en él. La mente se vuelve extremadamente poderosa cuando está descansando y purificando. Si la actitud de uno es realmente apoyar pasivamente las fuerzas curativas omnipotentes del organismo en hacer todo, el efecto de esta unidad interna será mucho mayor que si uno tiene la actitud de hacedor conflictiva de un practicante.

No conozco a nadie que haya entrado explícitamente en la oscuridad con la perspectiva higiénica, con el único propósito de simplemente proporcionar las condiciones de vida al organismo autocurativo. Ya que el organismo es lo único que lo cura, este es mucho más poderoso de lo que cualquier otro enfoque puede ser. Mientras que las historias de sanación milagrosa en la oscuridad siguen llegando hasta mí, sospecho que palidecerán en comparación con lo que la perspectiva higiénica hará posible. La actitud afecta la recuperación.

El esfuerzo principal es de apoyo: mantener las condiciones de curación. No es una tarea difícil. Quédate en el cuarto oscuro. Acuéstese lo más que pueda. Come. Ejercicio. Báñese. Eliminar. Medita si es así de conmovido. Recuéstate de nuevo. Piensa cuando sea necesario. Mire fijamente a la parte posterior de sus párpados, sienta su aliento y pulso, y deje que el sueño venga.

Lo hará de todos modos. La oscuridad lo asegura. Cualquier persona con una corriente sanguínea inundada de melatonina es inducida a dormir. Y duerme profundamente. En mis retiros, a menudo me he sentido positivamente noqueado. Los sueños son menos o más vívidos. En 48 horas es posible ponerse al día con todo el sueño que se ha perdido. (Ver la primera de mis *cuatro experiencias de oscuridad*). No estoy hablando metafóricamente. Es imposible creer hasta que sucede.

Encuentro que incluso la más mínima luz distrae demasiado, es demasiado estimulante. Estoy en guardia. No puedo relajarme. No puedo quedarme con lo que siento. No puedo "sólo estar con él". No puedo sentirme a mí mismo. Lo he intentado y he fallado toda mi vida. Sólo he encontrado consuelo en la oscuridad.

Para mí, es como caer por una trampa. Al final de mi segundo retiro exitoso, sentí que me esperaban cinco o seis puertas trampa más, lo que me tomaría un total de dos semanas de oscuridad para caer a través de ellas. Entonces vería el otro lado de mi lucha personal, mi dilema de toda la vida. Todavía espero mi oportunidad.

Hubo momentos en los que sentí que me estaba arrastrando por la piel. Así que todo el asunto fue muy agradable y muy desagradable por turnos. Pero no es peor que por lo que estoy pasando. Es simplemente acelerado, concentrado y sin distracción. Y hay una buena posibilidad de no revivir nunca más el horror.

realización

Un efecto muy agradable de esta actitud de descanso se hace más evidente cuanto más tiempo dura el retiro:

una sensación de satisfacción. Es como si todos los esfuerzos inútiles del pasado se redimieran y su objetivo se realizara finalmente. A medida que se recuperan las partes perdidas del ser, la satisfacción de simplemente estar vivo regresa.

Cuando se agota, levantarse para orinar puede parecer una tarea. En la oscuridad, este sentimiento de imposición puede intensificarse al principio. Pero entonces, imperceptiblemente, vuelve a la satisfacción. Para mí, por ejemplo, hacer ejercicio se convirtió en algo divertido después de tres días. Sentía lo frustrada que había estado en mi inactividad.

La frustración es uno de los muchos efectos del daño psíquico. Por definición, nos incapacita. Ya no podemos hacer ciertas cosas normales. El organismo genera miedo a la actividad para evitar que lo intentemos, que fallezcamos y que nos hagamos daño aún peor.

Pero seguimos deseando estas actividades. La frustración es el conflicto entre el deseo, el miedo y la discapacidad. El organismo gasta así una tremenda cantidad de energía para mantenernos a salvo en nuestra incapacidad. La recapacitación elimina la causa del miedo, permite la realización del deseo y libera energía vital para otras tareas. La auto-recuperación acelera y profundiza, y con ello, la satisfacción de vivir.

no

Hay tres cosas que el uso higiénico de la oscuridad no es.

1. No es una disciplina espiritual como la meditación. La disciplina es el ejercicio consistente de la voluntad. La voluntad es la parte más delicada, consumidora de energía y, debido a la atrofia, ineficaz de la psique. La psique es el sistema que más necesita descanso. Así que la disciplina se pone en movimiento y toma la energía de la curación de las facultades de las que depende, mientras que da el menor beneficio posible por el tiempo, la energía y el esfuerzo invertidos. Produce resultados impresionantes sólo por nuestros abismales estándares. Impide el cumplimiento de la máxima prioridad: la recuperación total de la psique de sus daños catastróficos.

La meditación espiritual, como toda práctica espiritual, implica *un superesfuerzo para forzar el acceso a las reservas de energía sutil para alimentar la transformación artificial*. El enfoque higiénico implica exactamente lo contrario: *descanso profundo para acumular energía para la auto-restauración natural*. En reposo, el yo consciente no intenta nada para aliviar el sufrimiento. Sólo proporciona condiciones de curación al ser inconsciente y autónomo, cuyo trabajo es curar al organismo.

La disciplina comienza aceptando como real, como natural, la aparición de un conflicto interno intrínseco: el pecado original. A continuación, se lucha "contra la naturaleza" (como dijo Gurdjieff), combatiendo los hábitos con prácticas para lograr un ideal. La higiene comienza con una suposición de armonía natural, de no contradicción y una explicación lógica de la enfermedad. Esto naturalmente motiva a uno a cumplir fácilmente su objetivo, que es saludable en la realidad.

Por último, la disciplina crea peligros y obstáculos artificiales al retener parcialmente el control voluntario del proceso. Luego esparce el temor de retirarse sin los preparativos necesarios guiados por expertos de la tradición. Es una ilusión autocumplida, si no una verdadera estafa.

2. No es terapia. La terapia se realiza *a* un organismo pasivo desde el exterior. El terapeuta, la terapia y las sustancias terapéuticas son los principales actores de una sesión terapéutica, no el organismo en sí. Aunque depende de la reacción del organismo al tratamiento, la terapia considera que el organismo es incapaz de iniciar un movimiento hacia la salud. No ve ese movimiento en la propia enfermedad.

En un retiro en un cuarto oscuro, la oscuridad no hace nada. Al igual que el aire o el agua,

simplemente presenta una oportunidad para que el organismo que se auto-preserva persiga mejor su tendencia incesante hacia la integridad. El actor principal es la vida, no sus condiciones ni ningún tratamiento.

3. No es un viaje psicodélico: experimentar conscientemente fenómenos normalmente inconscientes usando condiciones anormales como privación del sueño o químicos, naturales o artificiales.

Estos tres enfoques comparten el vano intento de acabar con el sufrimiento sometiendo al inconsciente a la acción consciente, como si la mera atención, el análisis o el reacondicionamiento pudieran arreglar el inconsciente. Intentan mejorar intencionadamente lo que consideran un yo inconsciente inerte, incluso resistente, como si fuera incapaz o no estuviera dispuesto a hacerlo. Desafortunadamente, esta actitud es ignorantemente coercitiva hacia el yo consciente lesionado y desalentadora hacia el yo autónomo omnipotente. Se trata de una tiranía internalizada que, como era de esperar, va acompañada de una fuga de cerebros trinacional.

Por el contrario, el uso higiénico de las tinieblas es pasivo con respecto a la voluntad. El yo consciente sólo juega un papel de apoyo. El yo autónomo inconsciente es el actor principal. Cero conflictos. Máxima eficiencia. Resultado perfecto.

De una forma u otra, el éxito de la retirada requiere la cooperación de una inteligencia y un poder supremos que dirigirán el proceso. En las tradiciones espirituales, esto significa que la práctica espiritual madura de uno se combina con la guía en persona de un maestro realizado bajo la bendita influencia de un auténtico linaje al servicio de Dios. (Y buena suerte arreglando todo eso.) Afortunadamente, la esencia de todo eso es en realidad el simple reconocimiento del yo autónomo. Este es el enfoque higiénico. No se trata de estatuas con hojas de oro o rituales exóticos, pero tiene la virtud de ser barato, rápido y fácil de recordar cuando se apagan las luces y ya no se puede leer.

mecanismo

viveres

La atención a la dieta y a la nutrición siempre ha sido una parte importante de Natural Hygiene. Debido a la disminución de la actividad, el estrés y el apetito, la oscuridad presenta una oportunidad milagrosa para:

- comer bien
- interrumpir la relación de desnutrición, disociación y toxicidad con los alimentos que la mayoría de nosotros padecemos
- experimentar claramente los propios pensamientos, sentimientos y sensaciones

Es por eso que sirvo y recomiendo sólo fruta fresca y verduras a los participantes del retiro. Esta es la dieta frugívora, común a todos los primates antropoides como nosotros. Siendo perfectamente apropiados para la anatomía y fisiología humana, estos alimentos sólo nos nutren a nosotros. No nos medicarán. No estimulan ni intoxican el sistema, ni sobrecargan la digestión, ni suprimen el sentimiento o la memoria.

Para más información sobre la dieta frugívora, recomiendo [The 80/10/10 Diet](#) por el Dr. Douglas Graham. Es higienista profesional, frugívoro de 30 años, ex atleta olímpico y entrenador de atletas profesionales. Además, vea algunos videos de [Loren Lockman](#), otro maestro higienista y frugívoro de 30 años, aparentemente enviado desde el futuro para mostrarnos cómo comer y relacionarnos con la comida.

Si la perspectiva de comer sólo frutas y verduras le impide por completo retroceder, entonces planee comer tan simple y naturalmente como usted sabe hacerlo. Siéntase libre de escribirme con sus limitaciones; estoy feliz de ayudarle a evitar las toxinas que a menudo se consideran saludables. Invertir la enfermedad y el sufrimiento es un proceso con su propia lógica. La oscuridad es un punto de partida. Entonces es un paso a la vez.

Tenga en cuenta que el hecho de que la dieta frugívora consista en todos los alimentos crudos no la convierte en la "dieta de alimentos crudos". El frugivorismo tiene un rico conjunto de criterios sobre la comida: tiempo, cantidad, proporción, combinación, estación, fuente, *sentimiento*, etc. Es una descripción biológica, no una ideología como el frutarianismo o el veganismo. El foodismo crudo es una ideología. Sólo tiene un criterio: que los alimentos no se calienten demasiado. De lo contrario, todo vale! Le falta profundidad y seriedad. Es fanatismo reductor, no una relación completa con la comida. Recomiendo encarecidamente que no se abuse de la comida cruda y de los cuasi cultos que crecen a su alrededor.

confección

Como no se puede hacer nada directamente en un retiro para causar curación, prepararse para ello consiste en proporcionar sus condiciones simples:

- lea el resto de este libro
 - aprender la idea de la actitud higiénica (pasiva) hacia la curación. No hay necesidad de creerlo antes de ver su verdad por ti mismo en la oscuridad.
 - asimilar mis descubrimientos y evitar mis muchos errores
- *diseñar y hacer* un cuarto oscuro (1 mes)
- aprender lo suficiente sobre comer frugívoro para sentirse satisfecho (1 mes para leer y aplicar el libro de Graham)
- programar un retiro
- organizar el apoyo. Esto es importante por razones mecánicas y psíquicas. Ver *protocolo > soporte*
- obtener alimentos

Una preparación más profunda que esa se hace de la misma manera que se prepara durante semanas en la tracción en una cama de hospital después de un accidente automovilístico desastroso. Es decir, es demasiado tarde. Ya estás preparado.

3 - psicología

A falta de una psicología, la higiene no podía penetrar en ciertas profundidades de la experiencia humana ni tratar ciertos temas, a saber, el trauma. El trauma no ocurre todos los días. Está fuera de nuestro control. El cambio de hábitos lo afecta poco. Sólo golpea. De repente, incapacita sistemas enteros, distorsionando su carácter y comportamiento más allá del reconocimiento. El trauma es la fuerza más influyente en nuestras vidas, además de la vida misma. La higiene era inútil. Todo lo que podía hacer era pasar la pelota a los médicos o a los sacerdotes. Esto subordinó la higiene a la medicina y a la religión durante más de un siglo.

Esta limitación desaparece con dos cambios:

- el reconocimiento del trauma como la raíz de toda enfermedad
- el descubrimiento de la oscuridad como el medio esencial que la naturaleza nos proporciona para sanar del trauma

La higiene se convierte en un sistema completo de salud capaz de tratar todas las enfermedades que las personas enfrentan, tanto físicas como psíquicas. Ya nadie tiene que soportar los costos y fracasos perennes de la medicina y otros sistemas semicientíficos arraigados en la doctrina mística del pecado original y la práctica del exorcismo.

Al sanar de un trauma, no sólo terminamos con la disfunción y el sufrimiento. Podemos prevenir la repetición inconsciente del trauma a través de desastres comunes como accidentes automovilísticos, rupturas familiares y enfermedades psicosomáticas. Es así de simple.

La medicina sólo puede lidiar con el trauma después del hecho. Sus trucos para tratarla nos impresionan, y respetamos la voluntad de los médicos de intentarlo. Aunque si la medicina es ciencia, podría explicar, predecir y prevenir un trauma mayor. Pero mira toda la atención que pone en el tratamiento. Representa una declaración de incomprensión y de impotencia para eliminar la causa de nuestros desastres recurrentes.

Todos somos momentos de alivio, días de descanso, semanas de sanación y meses de recuperación total de diez milenios de problemas abismales, fracasos y sufrimientos. La causa de la alegría -un organismo restaurado a la plenitud- está al alcance de la mano.

A salvo en el submarino de nuestro nuevo entendimiento, nos adentraremos en las profundidades del uso higiénico de la oscuridad. Comenzaremos revisando y criticando el marco existente de la higiene para entender la enfermedad: su **patología** incisiva. Luego iremos más allá en discusiones francas sobre el **trauma**, la **psicosis** y sus causas sociales y naturales más profundas (**cataclismo**). Terminaremos con un esbozo de una nueva e **higiénica psicología**, que promete liberar el poder de la higiene y sacar a la humanidad de su estado debilitado.

patología

La patología es el estudio de la enfermedad: sus síntomas, causas y naturaleza. La patología guía nuestra respuesta a la enfermedad. Toda escuela de salud tiene una patología generalizada, una teoría de la enfermedad. Muchas escuelas reciben su nombre por sus patologías porque están básicamente orientadas a la enfermedad: homeopatía (*homeo*: igual), naturopatía, osteopatía (*osteo*: osteo), alopatía/medicina (*alopatía*: otra). En higiene, la patología es un subsistema que llamamos ortopatía (*orto*: correcto).

La doctrina del pecado original dice que la vida es inherentemente corrupta e impotente. Por consiguiente, la alopatía considera que la enfermedad es natural e inevitable. No importa que un organismo intacto sea sano; que la vida lógicamente implique salud; que la enfermedad lógicamente dependa de la salud; que la naturaleza requiera salud; que sin ella, obviamente nos dirigimos hacia el abismo; que la salud casi universal en el resto de la naturaleza contradice la idea de la pecaminosidad de la vida. La alopatía sólo duplica sus afirmaciones místicas del excepcionalismo humano mientras pretende ser racional y científica. Mientras tanto, considera la salud como un golpe de suerte inexplicable. "Tienes una buena constitución", dicen los médicos, como si esa fuera una explicación útil. Pero no ven nada realmente malo cuando la gente se enferma. La medicina no es un fracaso abyecto. Así es como es la vida.

Esta es la razón por la que los médicos pasan por alto las causas. A menudo hablan en tautología, sustituyendo la explicación por la diagnósis. Por ejemplo, "tus intestinos no funcionan porque tienes la enfermedad de Crohn", como si el nombre fuera una primaria irreductible, sin que quede nada que investigar. Es la vida expresando su naturaleza débil y morbosa. Podrían dignarse a buscar otro nivel de causalidad para explicar la enfermedad. Pero esto va en contra de sus premisas. Por lo general, pasan directamente a la sintomatología y el tratamiento, con la teoría de los gérmenes de la enfermedad en la mano.

La teoría de los gérmenes de la enfermedad dice que los invasores microscópicos causan enfermedades. Somos víctimas de la infección. El organismo está indefenso. El médico es capaz y debe luchar, superar y erradicar los gérmenes con medicamentos, tratamiento y cirugía. Esto es lo que quise decir con exorcismo. El problema es que los gérmenes no siempre resultan en la enfermedad asociada con ellos, y no siempre están presentes en ellos. Demasiado para la teoría de los gérmenes.

Por otro lado, un patrón distinto de factores vitales, historia y estilo de vida puede ser detectado en aquellos que sufren y uno muy diferente en aquellos que no sufren. Las diferencias revelan las causas decisivas y su carácter ordinario. En respuesta, la medicina continuamente mueve los postes de la meta inventando nuevos diagnósticos. La lógica no se aplica a la guerra santa. La gente se cansa de este desbaratamiento. Sólo quieren estar bien para poder seguir con sus vidas. Dejaron a los médicos, se pusieron a trabajar por su cuenta y esperaron lo mejor. Los medicamentos son asombrosamente dañinos, por lo que a menudo funcionan mejor.

La visión racional y benévola del higienista de la enfermedad lo mantiene fresco como un pepino. No reacciona. Él observa. Estudia. La enfermedad es una función normal de un organismo en malas condiciones, no una entidad extranjera para atacar y expulsar. La higiene hace necesario el tiempo para corregir los desequilibrios de la alopatía por alcoholismo con una etiología cuidadosa (estudio de las causas).

Esto revela las malas condiciones y las formas ordinarias de corregirlas. De hecho, un cliente cuidadoso de un higienista es realmente un estudiante y pronto aprende a cuidar de sí mismo, de su familia y de sus vecinos. Es un servicio de salud de código abierto. Viral, por así decirlo.

En la década de 1930, con un siglo de arte previo para trabajar, el higienista Dr. John Tilden formuló las siete etapas de todas las enfermedades crónicas. Cada etapa describe lo que sucede a medida que nuestro nivel de energía disminuye cada vez más. Tenga en cuenta que una persona enferma puede bajar los escalones y enfermarse, o subir y recuperarse. Es una simple causa y efecto. La higiene demuestra en teoría y demuestra repetidamente en la práctica la reversibilidad de la tendencia.

Tenemos que agradecer a [Victoria Bidwell](#), una incansable higienista contemporánea, por el siguiente resumen convincente del [análisis](#) de la enfermedad [de Tilden](#), originalmente de su trabajo, *The Health Seekers Yearbook*.

siete estadios de la enfermedad

1. Enervación: La energía nerviosa está tan reducida o agotada que todas las funciones corporales normales están muy deterioradas, especialmente la eliminación de venenos endógenos y exógenos. La Primera Etapa comienza así el proceso progresivo y crónico de "Tolerancia a la Toxemia" que continúa a través de todas las siguientes etapas. El Sufridor Tóxico no siente su "yo normal". Se siente estimulado o deprimido por la sobrecarga venenosa.
2. Toxemia: La energía nerviosa es demasiado baja para eliminar los desechos metabólicos y los venenos ingeridos. Estas sustancias tóxicas comienzan a saturar primero el torrente sanguíneo y los fluidos linfáticos y luego las propias células. El Sufridor Tóxico se siente desmesuradamente cansado, desgastado y "fuera de sí".
3. Irritación: La acumulación de tóxicos en la sangre, la linfa y los tejidos continúa. Las células/tejidos donde se produce la acumulación se irritan por la naturaleza tóxica de los residuos, lo que resulta en una inflamación de bajo grado. El Sufridor Tóxico puede sentirse exhausto, mareado, irritable, con comezón, incluso irracional y hostil. Durante estas 3 primeras etapas, si El Sufridor Tóxico consulta a un médico sobre la razón de su baja energía e irritabilidad, el médico le dice: "No hay nada malo contigo. Estos síntomas están todos en tu cabeza". ¡Estás perfectamente sano!"
4. Inflamación: La inflamación crónica de bajo grado de la Etapa Tres está llevando a la muerte de las células. Un área u órgano donde se han acumulado sustancias tóxicas se inflama completamente. El Sufridor Tóxico experimenta dolor real, junto con síntomas patológicos en este punto. Con la aparición de estos síntomas, el médico puede finalmente dar un nombre a la queja del Sufridor. Tradicionalmente, los científicos médicos han nombrado a muchas de las 20.000 enfermedades claramente diferentes según el lugar donde las toxinas se han acumulado y precipitado sus síntomas. Una vez que el conjunto de síntomas es convenientemente nombrado, el médico puede prescribir mecánicamente el "antídoto" desde la Referencia de Escritorio de su Médico o desde su repertorio médico/farmacéutico memorizado. Por lo tanto, los médicos de cabecera comienzan a drogarse y a recibir tratamiento en esta etapa.
5. Ulceración: Los tejidos se destruyen. El cuerpo se ulcera, formando una salida para la acumulación de veneno. El Sufridor Tóxico experimenta una multiplicación y empeoramiento de los síntomas mientras el dolor se intensifica. Los médicos de cabecera suelen seguir drogándose y a menudo comienzan con cirugía y otras formas de tratamiento más radicales y cuestionables en esta etapa.
6. Induración: El endurecimiento es el resultado de una inflamación crónica de larga duración con brotes de inflamación aguda intercalados. La inflamación crónica causa un deterioro o una lentitud de la circulación: y debido a que algunas células sucumben, son reemplazadas por tejido cicatricial. Esta es

la forma en que perdemos las células buenas y de funcionamiento normal - por la inflamación crónica y la muerte de las células. Las toxinas pueden o no estar encapsuladas en un tumor, saco, wen o pólipo. El Sufridor Tóxico soporta aún más dolor físico, el cual es intensificado por la angustia emocional de darse cuenta de que sólo está empeorando, a pesar de sus serios, obedientes e incluso heroicos intentos de recuperarse. Los médicos de cabecera continúan con el tratamiento farmacológico y quirúrgico y todas las demás modalidades que se estimen oportunas, tanto convencionales como experimentales. ("Induración" significa "endurecimiento" o "cicatrización" de los tejidos).

7. Fundición (cáncer): La integridad celular es destruida por su desorganización y/o proliferación cancerosa. Los tejidos, órganos y sistemas completos pierden su capacidad para funcionar normalmente. Los cambios bioquímicos y morfológicos debidos al depósito de toxinas endógenas y exógenas provocan degeneraciones y muerte a nivel celular. El Sufriente Tóxico es "un desastre patológico": está en su lecho de muerte. Los médicos de cabecera declaran en este momento: "Ya no hay esperanza. Te queda mucho más tiempo de vida. Tienes que prepararte en consecuencia." La falla de los órganos vitales eventualmente resulta en la muerte.

comentarios

El análisis de Tilden muestra la estrecha relación entre la enervación y la toxemia como las dos causas más obvias de toda enfermedad. De hecho, juegan un papel muy importante en la sintomatología actual. Explica el éxito de la higiene durante dos siglos al apoyar la recuperación de innumerables personas cuyos casos la alopatía se había declarado desesperada con sólo acostarlas con mucha agua y aire fresco, y no envenenarlas con drogas.

Si después pudieran dejar las ultra toxinas del café, té, tabaco, reducir la actividad y el estrés, aumentar el descanso, ayunar a veces, alejarse de las áreas contaminadas, aprender a comer mejor, hacer ejercicio, entonces se curarían. Ocurre todos los días sin la fanfarria de los medios de comunicación.

Pero para muchos, hacer todo eso es un gran **si**. Si no hacen los cambios necesarios en el estilo de vida, la higiene no puede ayudarlos. Regresan a la medicina o a alguna otra alternativa. Algunos tienen suerte. El resto encuentra maneras de hacer frente a la semi-recuperación o perecer en silencio.

Observamos el énfasis del texto en la toxemia: impureza interna. Esto caracteriza tanto el carácter puritano de la higiene como el enfoque de Tilden. Es la medicina box canyon atrapada en la higiene al reducirla a la limpieza. Su patología ha tenido un eslabón perdido en el trauma, socavando el estatus y el éxito de la higiene. Los primeros higienistas no entendían la importancia del trauma y no podían lidiar con él. Lo veían como algo que no estaba relacionado con el tema más importante de las enfermedades crónicas, como mera mecánica que es mejor dejar en manos de los cirujanos. La higiene, sin saberlo, dio a la alopatía un poder mítico al entregarle el imperativo del trauma.

La mayoría de los médicos higiénicos empiezan como alópatas. La fascinación por la cirugía parece difícil de quitar. Hace que la gente parezca poderosa en la escala de la naturaleza. Afirma el miedo de la civilización a la naturaleza y al cuerpo. Refuerza el sentimiento inconsciente de impotencia infantil después de un trauma. Con sus pequeñas espadas, los médicos adquieren el estatus de dioses para enfrentarse al dragón del trauma, la fuente de todo el dolor, el depósito de todo el poder.

En las tres fases de curación, la reparación es previa a la eliminación. El organismo se limpia a sí mismo mientras se repara. Las reparaciones siempre causan un desorden y deben ser limpiadas después. De la misma manera, el organismo reenergiza el tejido a medida que se repara y limpia a sí mismo, cargándose completamente sólo cuando se restaura la integridad. El trauma debe venir antes que la enervación y la toxemia en la patología.

Parecemos atrapados en un extraño sueño, medio despiertos y prolongados. Pero en lugar de forzarnos a

despertar con tratamiento, sustancias o disciplina, la retirada higiénica del cuarto oscuro nos permite dormir. La higiene siempre ha sido una especie de judo fisiológico, no resistiendo sino utilizando la fuerza de la enfermedad para lograr la resolución. Es tranquilo, comprensivo, eficaz. En lugar de esperar a que el trauma se repita en nuestras vidas, podemos adoptar el enfoque pacífico y seguro de la higiene para resolverlo de una vez por todas.

trauma

En el transcurso de los días solos en un cuarto oscuro, los problemas psíquicos del pasado de uno inevitablemente salen a la superficie. Los pensamientos, sentimientos, sensaciones y recuerdos enterrados del trauma a veces se vuelven conscientes a medida que la psique se repara a sí misma. Este no es el tormento de revivir sin fin el pasado, sino parte de la recuperación final del mismo.

¿Por qué están estas cosas tan profundamente enterradas?

El trauma causa las primeras cuatro etapas de la enfermedad inmediatamente. El organismo entra en acción con el choque y la repentina demanda de energía, nutrientes, circulación y hormonas para controlar el dolor y la conciencia. Mientras tanto, la incapacidad y el mal funcionamiento de la bola de nieve.

La conciencia se contrae con el trauma. Se retira del mundo y de las funciones superiores como la reflexión y la razón para estabilizar las funciones críticas. La conciencia del evento doloroso en sí mismo es innecesaria, a menudo perturbando el proceso. Así, el trauma se manifiesta como amnesia y negación: la incapacidad de recordar y admitir.

Muchas películas tienen una premisa amnésica, el protagonista está herido, no puede recordar su antigua vida, y tiene una nueva aventura. Pocos de nosotros tenemos experiencia personal con alguien así. ¿Por qué estas películas siguen atrayendo a multitudes? Es porque todos sufrimos una especie de amnesia y nos reconocemos en estas historias.

De hecho, nuestra amnesia se llama amnesia infantil. ¿Quién recuerda su nacimiento o su primer año? Más concretamente, ¿quién querría hacerlo? La gente e incluso los "científicos" generalmente creen que la memoria no llega tan lejos. Pero los indígenas y las personas civilizadas menos traumatizadas demuestran rutinariamente algo más, contando casualmente los detalles de salir del útero, reunirse con sus padres afuera y encontrarse con el mundo que los rodea por primera vez.

La negación no es un fracaso moral. Es el éxito inconsciente. El trauma devastador generalmente ocurre en la infancia. Desborda la frágil estructura de la conciencia de un bebé. La negación bloquea las funciones básicas, previniendo que el trauma destruya la integridad psíquica. De lo contrario, causaría la muerte, como sucede con el síndrome de muerte súbita del lactante. Escapar con autismo o ceguera, por ejemplo, es mejor que morir. La negación se mantiene biológicamente hasta que la psique sana lo suficiente para dar testimonio del horror de lo que se negó.

En la oscuridad, el daño comienza a sanar. La negación comienza a elevarse y los eventos traumáticos son recordados o reconocidos. A medida que se recupera la capacidad general de sentir, los congelados vuelven a aparecer. Llega la perspicacia. El organismo afronta este proceso, a veces intenso, con mucho cuidado. El hecho de que esté sucediendo prueba que usted tiene la capacidad de manejarlo.

Ganar confianza en esta capacidad toma un poco de tiempo. En *protocolo > malestar*, describo algunas formas en las que aprendí a moderar la memoria intensa y a sentirme en la oscuridad mientras tanto. En una serie de *informes*, he registrado mis experiencias en la oscuridad de comenzar a sanar de un trauma mayor.

¿Qué trauma? Me refiero a la brutalidad rutinaria de nuestra forma de vida, que afecta a casi todo el mundo desde antes de nacer. Me refiero no sólo a las cosas malas que condenamos, sino a las atrocidades comunes

que aceptamos por error. Me refiero a nuestras muchas ofensas a la naturaleza, como si no hubiera resuelto ya cada detalle de una existencia feliz desde el principio de los tiempos.

Voy a enumerar ejemplos comunes de la plaga de violencia educada a la que me refiero. Uno de mis editores, un hombre sabio y cariñoso, me ha advertido que perderé lectores al hacerlo. No veo forma de evitarlo. Espero que puedas soportarlo.

- concepción no intencional y embarazo ambivalente
- intrusos en el parto (médico, matrona, sacerdote, etc.)
- Fallo en el apego posparto (por separación física, agotamiento e indisponibilidad emocional).
- vacunación, circuncisión
- leche de fórmula, chupetes, enfermería pública ilegal
- no ser sostenido, no dormir, no ser maldecido y no usar pañales
- padres ausentes, fáciles de convencer, asfixiantes, abusivos y negligentes
- niñeras y guarderías
- cunas, corralitos, cochecitos (los peores diseños de todos los tiempos, que cristalizan la alienación en el sistema nervioso de miles de millones).
- televisión, computadoras, juegos (la tecnología de la pantalla no sólo causa atrofia, sino también daño de por vida a la facultad imaginativa cuando se usa mucho en las fases críticas del desarrollo.⁷)
- alimentos industriales (incluida la recolección sin madurar, la agricultura química, la modificación genética y la irradiación)
- y finalmente, el último clavo tan grande que astilla el ataúd: *la escuela*.

La violencia del trabajo, del ejército, del hospital, de la calle y de la prisión es evidente. Lo que quiero decir es que cosas igual de malas le están sucediendo a la gente con milésimas de fuerza para soportarlos.

Exactamente de lo que *te* maltrató, puede que ya tengas alguna idea. Te invito a que lo averigües con seguridad en la oscuridad, donde tienes una oportunidad real de recuperarte de una vez por todas. Entre los retiros, los psicólogos de profundidad que se mencionan a continuación también pueden ayudar a proporcionar palabras para lo que usted está pasando.

Por fin, que nos entre en la cabeza: ningún adulto puede ser maltratado día tras día durante años sin que le afecte. ¿Qué tan peor es para un bebé? No somos indestructibles. Somos vulnerables a las lesiones. Esto no es un defecto. Es la naturaleza condicional de la existencia orgánica la que define la vida y hace posible nuestra espectacular adaptabilidad y el éxtasis resultante.

El fracaso personal no es consecuencia de la debilidad o la cobardía. Indica un mal funcionamiento psicofísico debido a un daño profundo. No fue culpa nuestra, sino el resultado de un desastre. No somos débiles ni malos. Estamos heridos. No necesitamos trabajar más duro. Necesitamos tiempo para descansar para poder sanar. Deberíamos tomar un permiso masivo y encontrar lugares cómodos para el colapso.

El daño causado por un trauma psíquico grave es real. Es profundo. Persiste a través de generaciones hasta que se cura.⁸ Mientras tanto, interrumpe todo lo demás en nuestras vidas: la memoria, la fiabilidad, la conciencia, el equilibrio, la digestión, el sueño, la circulación, la motivación, la claridad, etc. Todo. El creciente desastre nos motiva a tomárnoslo en serio. Podemos curarnos de ello. Sólo necesitamos condiciones básicas y decentes para hacerlo.

Por último, el trauma psíquico inconsciente a menudo se expresa somáticamente: como una enfermedad física. Si usted está físicamente enfermo, puede encontrar heridas psíquicas debajo de su condición, heridas de sorprendente intensidad. Estas heridas son puertas. Al otro lado de ellos se encuentran caminos inesperados de regreso a la salud física.

Hasta ahora, los higienistas han considerado las causas principales de la enfermedad como la enervación, una

reducción excesiva de la vitalidad y la toxemia, una intoxicación general, principalmente a causa de los desechos internos, pero también de los alimentos y los venenos del medio ambiente. Estos, han afirmado los higienistas, provienen de malos hábitos.

¿Pero de dónde vinieron los malos hábitos? ¿Por qué una criatura sana se dedicaría a algo menos que a lo que es perfectamente adecuado sin causa, de la nada y de manera persistente? No tiene sentido. A la luz de la impresionante influencia del trauma, es obviamente una explicación deficiente.

Mucho de esto viene directamente de la psicología profunda moderna: Wilhelm Reich, Jean Liedloff, Frederick Leboyer, Arthur Janov, Alice Miller, Alexander Lowen, Joseph Chilton Pearce. Al describir la rutina de la brutalidad civilizada, tomaron posiciones heroicas por la humanidad. Sólo que no imaginaban que la psique pudiera repararse sin terapia.

Basta decir que no soy un materialista científico. Esta pintoresca filosofía sostiene que los humanos son tan especiales que la naturaleza nos ha eximido de sus leyes; y que cualquier cosa generada a través de la ciencia (y por la civilización misma) es inherentemente buena. Encuentra excelentes elaboraciones del humor en esta idea en *Ishmael* de Daniel Quinn y la crítica del cientificismo de Rupert Sheldrake.

El organismo humano es resistente en algunos aspectos y vulnerable en otros. La oscuridad proporciona a nuestros yoes autónomos la oportunidad de hacer un uso saludable de estas cualidades, corrigiendo los errores insondables.

psicosis

Llamamos locas a las personas y a las situaciones todo el tiempo. Pero, ¿y si nuestro coloquialismo fuera clínicamente correcto? ¿Y si fuera precisamente lo que nos pasa a nosotros, y hemos estado en lo cierto todo este tiempo?

Los sabios a lo largo de la historia han observado en nosotros, las personas civilizadas, un patrón de *psicosis funcional masiva*. Misa significa universal. Funcional significa ser capaz de sobrevivir el tiempo suficiente para criar a los niños hasta que sean reproducibles. En términos generales, psicosis significa enfermedad psíquica: trauma, agotamiento, toxificación -absorción de ideas, actitudes, emociones y comportamiento venenosos- y la disfunción resultante en el pensamiento, los sentimientos y las inteligencias en movimiento. La disfunción conduce al fracaso y al descontento tanto físico como emocional e intelectual. Ciertamente, la enfermedad, la infelicidad y la confusión (o el dogmatismo) caracterizan a la gente civilizada. Una disfunción crónica tan completa es el principal signo de nuestra psicosis.

En pocas palabras, psicosis significa la incapacidad de distinguir la realidad de la fantasía. Nuestra fantasía particular es que la astilla de realidad de la que somos conscientes constituye la totalidad de la realidad. Cualquier cosa que no encaje en nuestra visión del mundo de los sellos postales es ignorada o aplastada. No podemos evitarlo. Es la patología inevitable del trauma psíquico mayor masivo.

La astilla consiste en la parte más grosera de la realidad. Los científicos lo llaman espaciotiempo: tres dimensiones maniobrables del espacio, con una dimensión de tiempo, el presente, bloqueado en movimiento hacia adelante. Siendo groseramente sensible, el espaciotiempo es especialmente susceptible a la intelección y a la manipulación mecánica. Así es nuestra hipermental e industrial forma de vida. Hacemos hincapié en el pensamiento a expensas del sentimiento y, en menor medida, de la acción, que hacemos que las máquinas hagan por nosotros. El control obsesivo de esta astilla nos permite a suficientes de nosotros sobrevivir a cada generación para imaginar que lo estamos haciendo lo mejor posible.

Algunos de nosotros, sin embargo, lo encontramos ilusorio. Hemos experimentado la alegría. Y por otro lado, no podemos evitar ver las pruebas generalizadas de psicosis masiva:

- guerras justas contra los inocentes
- controles en nombre de la libertad
- pobreza en medio de una riqueza alucinante
- el trabajo inútil y el cansancio de la recreación
- desnutrición sobrealimentación
- confundiendo filosofía y religión sin alma
- tarjeta de presentación de la alienación-civilización
- depresión masiva, ansiedad, esquizofrenia
- enfermedades del estilo de vida (cáncer, diabetes, enfermedades cardiovasculares)
- educación estupefaciente
- asquerosa atención médica

Podría continuar, pero sin duda, podría ampliar la lista usted mismo. Quizás has llorado por la desesperada locura del mundo. Quizás has llorado sobre los tuyos.

Normalmente, llamar a algo loco detiene la consideración y la conversación. Después de todo, "no puedes arreglar la locura". Entonces, ¿de qué sirve pensar o hablar de ello? ¿Es una locura, o es sólo la naturaleza humana, como hemos asumido durante mucho tiempo? Eso es lo que la religión dice, y por lo tanto se vuelve impotente porque nada vence a la naturaleza. La psicología convencional no ha logrado arreglar nuestra locura, y la escuela después de la escuela se rinde a la narcosis de la psiquiatría, la versión médica del pecado original/es el mito de la naturaleza humana. La psicosis masiva es el elefante más grande de nuestra habitación.

Me permito, estamos realmente locos. No lo fuimos siempre. Pero algo salió terriblemente mal y aquí estamos. Felizmente, estamos vivos, por lo tanto, autocurativos. Así que de alguna manera podemos recuperarnos.

¿Qué recuperaríamos? Sentido común, memoria y honestidad. Alegría y empatía. Fuerza y vigor. Sólo para empezar. Pero nos espera mucho más. Cuando los centros de inteligencia de pensamiento, sentimiento y movimiento funcionen de nuevo, y en armonía entre sí, la vida mejorará en un grado irreconocible.

Me refiero al compromiso con el otro plano básico de la realidad. Debido a que refleja el espacio tiempo, algunos científicos de vanguardia lo llaman espacio de tiempo: tres dimensiones de tiempo -pasado, presente, futuro- y espacio fijado a un lugar a la vez.⁹ Los indios Kogi lo llaman el *aluna*. Los aborígenes australianos lo llaman tiempo de ensueño. Tienen acceso a ella a voluntad para la vida diaria. Así es como pueden seguir a alguien 100 millas a través del desierto un año después con sólo un trozo de su ropa. O salir y encontrarse con un ciervo escaso en medio de la nada para traerlo de vuelta para comer.

El tiempo del sueño se percibe principalmente a través del centro de los sentimientos de la inteligencia, no de los sentidos. Es intuición. Con integridad psíquica, puede ser tan precisa como los ojos ayudados por un microscopio, pero a grandes distancias.

El centro del sentimiento, siendo más frágil que el sensorio y menos agresivo que el intelecto, raramente funciona bien entre nosotros los civilizados. Así que para los materialistas científicos, el tiempo de sueño no existe. Lo descartan de plano a pesar de milenios de pruebas. Que incluso la mayoría de la gente civilizada tiene. Me refiero a experiencias extrañas que se quedan en la mente de uno, inexplicables durante décadas como archivos X personales. Si hablas de estas cosas en ambientes convencionales, otros te llamarán loco. Pero si descansas en la oscuridad el tiempo suficiente, el acceso a ella promete regresar permanentemente.

No me detendré en algo que debas ver por ti mismo, como lo harás en la oscuridad. Pero este lado vasto y rico de la vida que en gran medida echamos de menos debe dejar de pasar desapercibido en psicología e higiene. Es estúpido y vergonzoso. A la academia le gusta ignorar los otros dos grandes cuerpos de conocimiento humano: el espiritual y el indígena. No lo haremos.

Me imagino que actualmente estamos funcionando al 2% de su capacidad. En otras palabras, las cosas con nosotros son tan malas como pueden llegar a serlo mientras nos permiten reproducirnos. Para embellecer la idea, al 1%, estás institucionalizado, 0%, muerto. 3%, un héroe local. 4%, algo famoso. 5%, una estrella nacional. 10%, un genio. 20%, un santo. 30-40%, un mesías.

Las personas más grandes de nuestra historia tuvieron que bajar su nivel de funcionamiento de un normal 90-100% sólo para que pudiéramos soportar su presencia, de otro modo abrumadora. Pero, ¿qué dijo cada uno de ellos, de una forma u otra? *Todo esto y más haréis*. Esta es nuestra tarea. Y la primera persona que resucita de entre los muertos es uno mismo.

Si la visión higiénica de la salud y la cordura es el cerebro de mi método, y el cuarto oscuro en retroceso es el instinto -la acción-, entonces el testimonio de la psicosis funcional masiva es su corazón roto. Mi ensayo en línea, *Psicosis*, lo graba pura y enérgicamente.

cataclismo

La patología es el estudio de la enfermedad, especialmente su etiología: la cadena de causa y efecto que conduce a los síntomas.

Hygiene is radical because it deals unflinchingly in first causes. It begins by observing that health is the normal state of organisms under normal conditions. Life itself started out in integrity and health. Nature cannot generate a diseased species. Disease only occurs when something goes wrong with conditions, when harmful ones are present and beneficial ones are absent or in poor proportion.

This gives hygiene a rational standard for evaluating conditions proposed as beneficial. Hygiene asks, what normal relationship to life does this condition have? Did its absence cause the disease in the first place? If not, then its presence won't correct matters and we can dismiss the proposal.

In the case of using darkness to heal from psychic illness, well, once upon a time, we *were* deprived the shelter we instinctively sought in order to heal from whatever traumatized us. We got hurt but got no chance to heal. Resting in a darkroom finally addresses this little-noticed intermediate cause of ongoing suffering and illness.

Why were we deprived? One way or another, our parents, our source of shelter, were also the source of our trauma. Busy inflicting one, they could not provide the other. It is the terrible truth we all know and spend most of our lives avoiding.

Of course, they suffered similar trauma at the hands of their parents. It rendered most of them incapable of providing us such shelter and compelled their inhumanity toward us. They denied us rest just as they denied their own need for rest, just as their parents conditioned them to, just as their parents were equally traumatized, denied, and conditioned, going back 400 generations. On this level, everyone is innocent.

However, everyone exists on many levels, not just such abstract ones. On a concrete level, all parents remain responsible for what they did and did not to children in their care. Only by viewing parents as responsible can we be responsible parents ourselves. The double burden is too much. Those who shield their parents from justice, even privately, inevitably unload the injustice they suffered upon their own children.

Major trauma injures, shocks, and disorients everyone concerned. One gets lost in the slow-motion nightmare of its infliction. Who deals the wound and who sustains it? Who was helpless and who was at fault? Of course grown-ups start it with kids. But kids feel it is their fault. Lines blur and before they know it, people have become their parents and the cycle begins again.

How did the snowball of trauma begin?

Sane people do not hurt their children. Nature does not generate diseased species. Humanity had to have started off alright. The self-correcting instinct of healthy animals is too strong to violate merely by will or persist in by accident. Life pulls us back onto the right track no less than other animals—when we're healthy.

The trauma had to have originated externally. It had to be *huge* to knock so many of us so far off course and disable us so badly we couldn't begin returning for so long. Major trauma to an individual or one group would not be enough to do this. Individuals would be helped back to health. Groups would be aided by neighbors as with disaster trauma. We must think bigger.

A global cataclysm in our distant past must have started it. It wrecked everything in one stroke for entire continents of people, so that there was no one left to help. Perhaps it was multiple supervolcanos. The flood. A pole-shift that swept continents with earthquakes and tsunamis. A comet strike. An alien invasion. Whatever it was, the result was *cataclysmic trauma*.

Cataclysmic trauma is comprehensive. It kills most people and nearly all elders, who would best manage things, and injures most of the rest. Neighbors cannot help. Nearly everyone in the whole world is in the same straits. Infrastructure is lost: shelter, food, water, habitat. The landscape shifts, becomes dangerous. Climate itself changes. The basis for a way of life is wiped out.

Going into caves to rest and heal is common among undomesticated people and animals. But even if someone left knows to do it and the cave remains accessible, too many people need it for longer than it is comfortable. The infrastructure is gone. People have no chance to heal. They only have what is inside them. The young tend to survive, but they are less psychically established, with less wisdom to temper the damage. Life, which had been abundant, pleasant, and easy, becomes a grim battle to survive.

Psychic trauma causes psychic malfunction. Mass psychosis begins.

In this barren hell, where can people find comfort? In each others' arms, of course. Voluntary birth control, common among indigenous people, is lost with many other subtle capacities. Babies start coming at especially inconvenient times in unexpected numbers. Cataclysmic trauma starts its terrible transmission through the generations.

It changes forms but keeps its intensity. Technology compensates for lost capacity. Society rearranges itself into civilization to absorb the cosmic blow and find slightly less harmful ways to deal it back. As horrible as it frequently gets, still it is the best we can do. Despite all, life keeps generating seekers to find its secret. Clue by clue, it is assembled over hundreds of generations. At last, the truth dawns.

What if we are the butt of a cosmic joke?

If so, then our wars, big and small, are pointless. No one started it. No one need be punished. Everyone is essentially innocent, thus free to walk away from the conflict and heal.

Trauma is natural. Trying to prevent all of it is futile. Hope lies in having a way to recover from it.[10](#)

hygienic psychology

In light of the essence of hygiene, *conditional self-preservation*; the restful use of darkness; and the cataclysmic origin of disease, a hygienic psychology can now be outlined:

1. As organisms, we start out healthy, happy, and harmonious
2. Global cataclysm Early major psychic trauma from civilization's routine brutality leaves us damaged, malfunctioning, and suffering.
3. The psyche, as an organic system, is self-healing, provided the proper conditions.

4. The primary condition of healing is *rest* due to the homeostasis, stillness, and accumulation of vital energy it makes possible.
5. Profound psychic rest occurs physiologically in an extended period in absolutely dark environment.
6. Therefore, by retreating in darkness, we gain relief, rest, and restoration to health, happiness, and harmony.

Hygiene upholds basic findings of psychology from several traditions. Hygiene merely shrugs at psychology's conscious over-involvement in the unconscious. The unconscious is competent to fix itself if minimally supported by the conscious. The conscious is otherwise helpless. We are correct in believing we have a problem and need to do something about it. We have been disastrously incorrect about which part of the self has to do it.[11](#)

fasting

Focusing on deep psychic rest in absolute darkness is new in hygiene. Until now, it has focused on the profound physiological rest of fasting due to its naive pathology. Fasting has been hygiene's ultimate means of dealing with serious illness. At most, hygiene recommends keeping curtains and eyes closed during fasts because it reduces the significant work of sensory processing of vision[12](#). A darkroom retreat embodies this principle fully while providing the energy and, frankly, the psychic security of food until the underlying psychic system necessary for fasting comfortably has repaired itself.

In other words, the psychic system is more fundamental than the digestive and eliminative systems. Darkroom retreating is thus more urgently needed than fasting in most cases.

Furthermore, darkroom retreating is inherently much safer to do alone. In darkness, awareness of internal sensations and their meanings becomes clear and fine-grained. This integrity and knowledge intensifies motivation to learn hygiene. Fasting requires basic psychic integrity, self-knowledge, and a comprehensive grasp of hygiene in general and fasting in particular. Thus hygienic darkroom retreating will open the door to unsupervised long fasts on a wide scale.

Professional hygienic fasting supervisors attempt to substitute themselves for these prerequisites of fasting or teach them in the usual slow, incomplete way. Consequently, only hundreds of people fast per year in a remotely proper way, not the billions who need to. Hygienic darkroom retreating recontextualizes the work of fasting supervisors. Retreating in darkness themselves, they will regain the capacity to operate at a global scale, not just with the lucky few.

miracle

As in fasting, one hardly knows in darkness what the organism is doing at its deepest levels. Occasionally there is a chance to consciously participate in the process. Or to find out *why* things have gone wrong if it is important to change ideas and behavior related to it. At mostly one feels discomfort or a strange subterranean rumbling.

But one always knows the result: restoration of function—recovery of the lost self—usually accompanied by feelings of contentedness, presence, and euphoria. Darkroom retreating reveals the marvelous self-healing power of the organism under proper conditions. But for those who have suffered and failed for years with other approaches, the process is nothing less than miraculous. As with the rest of hygiene, time in darkness shows that if one wants a miracle, one need only provide its conditions.

And then? Healed from trauma, one will no longer be compelled to repeat it. One will absorb and redeem its history and consequences. As with the rest of hygiene, hygienic psychology's bad news is much worse, and its good news is far better than anyone dreamed.

conclusion

The emergence of a hygienic psychology; the identification of trauma at the root of all illness; and darkness's greater importance than fasting for resting and healing have massive implications for hygiene's pathology and destiny, and humanity's as well. Hygiene has said illness originates with enervation (low energy) and toxemia. Trauma explains how these conditions themselves originate. And in coming to terms with trauma, hygiene can finally meet and obsolete allopathy (Western medicine) in its stronghold. I discuss these implications further in *hygiene notes*.

I am only saying enough here to give you a solid basis for beginning to do hygienic darkroom retreats. If you like what happens, further study is natural. For a thorough introduction to hygiene's principles, practices, and intriguing history, read Shelton's *The Science and Fine Art of Natural Hygiene*.

4 - format

We can use darkness in different formats for different reasons. Here, I describe the formats in which I have experienced deep rest and observed positive results in my energy level, psychic state, and general well-being.

I recommend you do them in the following order. First make darkness in your own home for sleeping, then for short retreats (mini-retreats of 11–16 hours and regular retreats of 4–8 days). After becoming familiar with extended darkness at home, a dedicated public darkroom works better for medium-length retreats (2-8 weeks). Furthermore, your experience at home might inspire you to build such a darkroom yourself. Interest is growing and the world needs more than the few dozens that exist.

In general, the longer a retreat, the better its conditions must be. This means more silence, space, comfort, and support. A 4-day retreat can be pulled off in a minimalist manner nearly anywhere, but even an 8-day retreat requires upgrading. This will prove one of the most important things that happens in your life. It deserves serious attention.

sleep

tonight

Start like this:

Put dark, dense sheet material over your bedroom windows and doors to get relief *tonight* from most outdoor ambient light.

- tack or tape up
 - blankets, sleeping bags, dark bedsheets or extra curtains
 - black plastic, carpet, or cardboard
 - or prop up plywood, old doors, or big table tops
 - use whatever you have
- extend corners of flexible materials as far past door on either side as possible
- turn off or cover any devices in your room that produce light
- make sure you have plenty of fresh air, even if it lets in a little light
- block some of it with a sleeping mask from an airline or travel store; a loose winter hat pulled down, or a dark t-shirt draped over your eyes

We all know how it feels to sleep a lot after too many short nights: we feel sluggish afterward. Some people call this getting too much sleep, a physiological impossibility. They just do not know how tired people can get and still not get fired from their jobs. In fact, we are tapping into the first layer of a backlog of lost sleep.

Feeling groggy is the first phase of catching up. This can take days. Reversing sleep deprivation is like withdrawing from strong drug. Like me, you may need a retreat to get to the other side of it without backsliding.

In the meantime, this format helps us remember just how important darkness is. When you decide you want perfect darkness for sleeping nightly, make *blackout blinds*, a *silencer* and *lightproof vents* so your room is dark, quiet, airy, *and* easily reopened to light during the day.

nightly

We require total darkness to sleep well. No one is an exception to this. You may be able to fall asleep despite the street light right outside your bedroom, but only at the expense of overall function (see the *Law of Vital Accommodation*). The circadian system has not changed one iota since industrialization. It never gets used to anything. If light intrudes on your sleep, it will signal the circadian system to make your sleep less deep and restful, whether you know it or like it or not. It's like what many clients told me after their retreats: "I had no idea how tired I was."

From simply darkening his bedroom, a friend reported to me a huge difference in the quality of sleep he and his mate experienced, as well as a return of vivid dreams. I have experienced the same thing whenever I have been able to darken the room I sleep in. As a rule, the darker the room, the better the sleep. 100% darkness is 1000% better than 99.9% darkness. Extinguishing that last bit of light leaves the mind nothing to hang onto, giving new meaning to "falling asleep". See for yourself.

It is best to go to sleep early, from 18:00 to 22:00 at the absolute latest. Then one naturally awakens about 4 hours later for 1-3 hours. At this hour, one is freshly rested, yet the promise of sleep lies ahead. The world outside is quieter; children are asleep; the mind runs more slowly; and inhibitions are slightly relaxed.

Thus sex can be especially gratifying. Many consider it an auspicious hour for meditation or prayer. Use a candle or other dim, warm lighting. Avoiding the cold blue tint of some LEDs, which signals the circadian system to awaken. Light exercise, light reading, and light snacking (on fruit) are fine, too. And perhaps a menial chore or two. But avoid more serious work. It stimulates too much waking thought and distracts from getting back to sleep when tired again.

Usually sleep goes 3-4 more hours. It is deliciously renewing. A nap in the early afternoon, as short as 20 minutes, will refresh you yet again. That is, if you can stand feeling this good.

Before widespread public lighting, this was a common sleeping pattern. It's called biphasic or [segmented sleep](#). It is natural and retreating strongly resets it. If it happens to you, don't consider it strange, but a normal part of human life recovered.

Many aspects of modern life seem increasingly out of control. Blackout blinds offer the unique thrill of reclaiming control over one of the most basic functions of existence: sleeping and waking. Neither the sun nor streetlighting nor scheduling accidents determine anymore when you wake up. You do, and only when you are good and ready.

retreat

short

Short retreats span from 14 hours to 8 days. You can at least begin at home.

mini-retreat

Note: I do not recommend mini-retreats for everyone, just if you feel strongly called to it and find yourself able to do it without cutting corners and endangering yourself. I cannot do them properly, so I don't try

anymore. I just include it because I saw it was possible and I can imagine there are people whose capacity and circumstances make it appropriate.

A mini-retreat allows you to dip your toe into retreating while keeping your usual schedule. It includes the two primary phases of a retreat: sleeping long and deeply, and being awake by yourself without distraction for some hours in the middle of the night.

It is the same as sleeping nightly in darkness except you:

- turn off lights by 20:00*
- maintain darkness whether or not you wake up in the middle of the night
- get 1-2 extra sleeps in the morning
- stay in darkness 12–16 hours*

A mini-retreat helps maintain restedness between 4- and 8-day retreats. Some benefits of retreating fade and at different rates. To extend them and smooth the transition to the moment of needing to retreat again, do a mini-retreat once a week between regular retreats.

CAUTION: Do *not* start a mini-retreat after 20:00, nor stay in longer than 16 hours. In me, these induced mild shock and very negative feelings and thoughts that took a 4-day retreat to recover from.

In retreat, the organism strongly resets natural biological rhythms. Namely, going to sleep whenever tired, especially at nightfall. If you can't start your mini-retreat on time, postpone it till you can. Starting regular retreats an hour or two late is less than ideal, but it still works because the organism has time to compensate. This is not the case with mini-retreating.

The human organism in darkness seems to go through a 2–3 day cycle with a point of no return after 16–18 hours. So either exit before going past this point or complete the cycle. Otherwise you may experience very negative consequences. It's like jumping out of a Ferriss wheel after it has gone too far up. Read my blog post, [how not to retreat](#), for a longer explanation.

Biological rhythms are very powerful and apparently cannot be messed with in this way. So, better safe than sorry, at least until you have retreated enough to feel confident about experimenting with mini-retreats.

4-day retreat

Once your darkening and ventilating measures are working smoothly for nightly use and mini-retreats, you can easily add the remaining elements of a darkroom for a regular retreat. If you retreat at a center, you can begin with an 8-day retreat.

Everyone interested in a 4-day retreat can try one. Though not guaranteed, it is possible to catch up on all the sleep one ever lost in this much time. The amount of deep sleep that can be had in such a short amount of time is impossible to conceive beforehand and hard to believe even after experiencing it. While most effects fade after a few weeks, you can regain hope and register a memory of feeling very good. You can start learning how to be in darkness. Your supporter can start to learn how to be around a retreat. You will get a clearer idea about how and when to do future retreats.

Timing of regular retreats is a bit more flexible than mini-retreats. Plan to turn off lights between 18:00 and 20:00. If something comes up and you are a little late, it's ok. But if you start after 22:00 due to scheduling, insomnia, anxiety, or addiction, add an extra day and night of darkness to your retreat. This, by the way, is how to begin seriously interrupting these illnesses. The effect of such a short retreat will likely be

temporarily. But at least you'll glimpse the light at the end of the tunnel.

In accordance with the natural diurnal cycle, go into darkness in the evening and come out in the morning. Just stay in extra days in between. This makes the dark part of a retreat 2.5 days (60 hours). Avoid checking the time. Use a cellphone alarm set to a specific day to know when the retreat is over.

Besides sleeping as much as possible, eating, eliminating, and bathing, what does one do in darkness without work, people, or media? Light exercise and restful placement of attention. I explain more about the latter in *protocol > attention*.

Afterward, slowly re-adjust to light. You did not just watch a matinee in a dark cinema, but spent days in total darkness. Sudden exposure to daylight would be a painful and unnecessary shock. Spend a minimum of 15 minutes gradually relighting the room by opening the door and window panels a few millimeters at a time.

CAUTION: I got caught in a whirlpool made of a several 4-day retreats that was increasingly difficult to break out of. I lost too much [false capacity](#) before restored normal capacity could compensate. Avoid this mistake. If you do one, just do **one** 4-day retreat, absolutely no more than three, then steam ahead with arrangements for an 8-day retreat._

transition

It takes time to properly readjust to light and ordinary life. So a period of unstressed transition back to it is *just as important as darkness itself*. For every three days of darkness, plan at least 24 hours of identical conditions except with sunlight and walks during the daylight.

Hormones need time to readjust to light. The sense of balance can also be affected. Retreating has often felt like a chemical process, with a feeling of sleepiness or coolness flooding through my brain or hands. And it takes time to reflect on what just happened, to begin integrating the changes, extra energy, and value of the retreat.

So spend the transition quietly. First, uncover at least one window. Take a slow walk or two and sunbathe outside. Visit with no one. Take a nap, covering the windows for it if you like. Then cover the windows between 18:00 and 20:00 and spend the whole night again in darkness.

After your last sleep, slowly uncover the windows. Consider your retreat finished by noon at the latest.

Ease back into your regular life. I mean avoid non-routine activities the first week. You will likely continue to notice effects from the retreat. Due to their dreamlike intensity, I call this the aftermath. See *protocol > post-retreat*.

If your location has no running water, it's no problem. For this short of a period, it is unnecessary. See *water* for a short list of requirements.

8-day retreat

If you have built your own darkroom, do an 8-day retreat once you and your support team have each done a 4-day retreat. If retreating at an established darkroom, you can begin with an 8-day retreat. The organism's response to darkness is cumulative; the healing process deepens every day. Eight days is twice as beneficial as four.

Many of my early clients felt like they were just beginning to get somewhere when their 4-day retreat ended. And some were either so wound up or so rested to begin with that 48 hours was not enough for them to get anywhere, whether with their exhaustion or their inner struggle. So I upgraded my darkroom to handle 8-day retreats for first-timers. Sure enough, they did fine and expressed greater satisfaction with their retreats than

4-day retreatants. Scheduling a first retreat of 8 days ensures a breakthrough of some kind is made. (And I can imagine in some very crystallized cases, longer still will be necessary. Strong defenses and controls must dissolve enough to begin making progress back to health.)

An 8-day retreat has all the elements of a 4-day retreat, plus:

- a support team of at least two people. At least one person should be nearby all the time. This creates psychic shielding for the retreatant.
- after physical restedness is reached in the first cycle, a major psychic issue can arise and be resolved in the second
- a second day of transition at the end
- a fully functional bathing facility for emotional as well as physical reasons. For remote locations, see plans for a *portable indoor shower*.

medium

A medium retreat lasts up to 2 months (including 15 transition days). By all accounts, the process goes really deep. My sense is that the core of one's personal dilemma, the cause of the worst of one's suffering, can heal in a medium retreat. Plenty of problems will remain. But this should be enough to clear a big space inside and restore capacity sufficiently to finally handle them afterward. (At least, that's the basket I've put all my eggs in.)

It's best to get away from all accustomed influences and associations to minimize internal obstacles. Now that you know what you're doing in darkness, it's worth paying extra for this. Take a trip at least a couple hours away. Fly to a darkroom on another continent if necessary. Or rent a fully functioning small house in an unpolluted place and darken it yourself, arranging for maintenance and support.

The darkroom needn't be fancy, but it must work in every way without compromise of function. Someone else, a maintenance person, should have the responsibility of keeping it that way. There's nothing like mechanical issues to ruin a retreat.

Yet another person, a supporter, should be available all the time to make sure you have food, basic comforts, someone to talk to for a few minutes if really necessary. By the time you decide to do it, you will know you are doing one of the most important things in your entire life. Prepare accordingly.

Use the last day or two of your transition to start handling your affairs again: checking messages and accounts, making travel arrangements, etc.

The benefit of short retreats is impressive but shallow and short-lived. Doing a lot of them does not equal doing a few long ones. The law of diminishing returns combines with the frustration of glimpsed but unrealized potential to make sour punch. Boldly escalate from a couple short retreats to a medium one.

Personally, I have been stuck in a rut of short retreats. My goal is to retreat for 20 days (including 5 transition days). In 2008, in my second successful retreat, I had a hunch: in 2 weeks of darkness I will heal from my psychic trauma at the core. This will enable me to put the rest of my life back together afterward. I do not know exactly how long others would have to retreat to reach the same point. One guy I know has been considering this for awhile got a hunch he would need 3 weeks of darkness. I expect it's a pattern. It makes sense that people come to know what they need the more they get of it.

long

A long retreat lasts three months to a year. I have heard several reports of retreats like this. All had results we would consider miraculous but which are well within the capacity of the human organism. The organism made itself under difficult circumstances. Under ideal circumstances, it is certainly able to remake itself.

Perhaps better than new.

[Stories persist](#) of astonishing physical healing occurring in Ayurvedic darkroom retreats lasting 3-12 months: recovering lost hair and eyesight; growing new teeth; and even recovering youth itself. It seems worth looking into.

warning

There are four harmful and dangerous ways to retreat in darkness. I learned about them the hard way. The only possible point to what I endured was so I could warn you of these little gateways to hell. I sincerely wish for you to avoid such suffering.

Fortunately, it is easy to avoid it once you know. I will just list them here and point you to longer discussions of them elsewhere in the book.

Just say no to:

1. Mini-retreating behind schedule. See [mini-retreat*](#) section above.
2. Ending a retreat without transition days. See *4-day retreat* above and *protocol > post-retreat*.
3. Doing multiple 4-day retreats rather than quickly advancing to 8-day, medium, and long retreats. Very serious no-no, folks. Again, see *4-day retreat* above and *hygiene > false capacity*, where I have understated the matter because it cannot be overstated.
4. Poor support:
 - insufficient support
 - hostile support or hostile people in the same house. Say no to abusive relationships.
5. I know I said four dangerous ways, but maybe there are more. And worse. Why find out? What is the penalty for following the guidelines? Stick to the tried and true. Err conservatively. Be reckless about some other part of your life. The most amazing thing you ever do is bound to have rough edges if handled incorrectly. Don't pet pigs backwards, either.

Ok, now you know, so you are safe. Back to the many wonders of hygienic darkroom retreating.

future

I would like to find the simplest way health, including sanity, can be fully restored in one shot. Like perfect healing of a broken bone. To this end, I would like to see hygienic retreat centers worldwide with facilities and support for:

- medium and long darkroom retreats
- fasts (a la Albert Mosseri's groundbreaking [method](#))
- physical retraining
- training in healthy lifeway, including both lifestyle and livelihood
- open source research and development of the above
- a village residence for staff, family, friends, and guests, where all this gets applied and tested in real life

In 3-16 months, one would be:

- restored to full function and vitality
- prepared to maintain it in daily life
- prepared to deal with the residue of the past

For a few years, I focused on designing and building public darkrooms. Then came a few more years of

making and helping individuals make private darkrooms at home. As a consultant, I am also available to help:

- operators of public dedicated darkrooms for medium retreats
- those with existing centers wishing to include hygienic darkroom retreating in their programs
- developers of such hygienic retreat centers as I just described

Those who support hygienic darkroom retreating are eligible for my future network, through which I can refer clients to you. Write me for more info.

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It may take a few generations of healthy living to fully restore our health and realize our potential as human beings. But we can make huge strides in our lifetimes, getting most of the way back.

Now that we have examined different formats of the restful use of darkness for different circumstances and purposes, let's look ahead to more of what happens in a retreat and exactly how to conduct it.

5 - protocol

How to be and what to do once in darkness is simple. It's a lot like having a guest. Provide what is necessary for function and comfort, then stay out of the way.

As with the rest of hygiene, the practice of darkroom retreating consistently follows the theory. In hygiene, our purpose is to serve life. Life's needs are our priorities. This makes our task in darkness simple and clear: maintain the conditions of rest. This leaves the autonomic self free to return the whole being to health and function as quickly as possible. The autonomic self does most of the work, all the complicated parts, and indicates to the volitional self how to help.

Darkroom retreating is nothing less than recovery of the lost self. In darkness, you will begin to reunite with yourself, as if a peg-legged sailor awoke one day to find his leg starting to grow back. The more that happens, the more you become your own guide. This chapter helps you navigate your first retreats and remains as a map.

Hygienic darkroom retreating is new, and I am new at it. The final authority in hygiene is life itself. Consider these notes from the field and an invitation to explore an idea whose time has come.

mechanics

logistics

I describe the overall process of retreating in *format*, especially the 4-day and 8-day retreat sections. Here are the details.

- food
 - the day your retreat begins, eat the same way you will in darkness: just fruit and greens or as simply as you can
 - finish eating for the day by 18:00
- retreating
 - in your bedroom:
 - neutralize it: cover or store everything unnecessary to the retreat
 - clean it thoroughly
 - pad sharp corners and protrusions
 - at a center

- arrive at 18:00
- your supporter will:
 - show you to your room, pointing out where food will be delivered and any special features
 - find out particular things you need
 - talk to you a little bit about the retreat, reiterating the basic ideas of rest and self-healing
- as you unpack and settle in, memorize the room. Close your eyes and practice moving around and finding things
- set two alarms on a cellphone
 - between 10:00 and 12:00 the first day you will uncover the windows. On transition days, you can open the room before noon, as early as 06:00, as long as you feel fully rested.
 - between 06:00 and 12:00 the morning your retreat will end, depending on your schedule.
 - turn cellphone off or put it in flight mode to stop calls and minimize electromagnetic radiation
- lights out
 - how to do everything in a totally dark room: slowly!
 - *Important:* when bending down or rising, hold your hands together, out in front of yourself at chest height so you don't hit your head. Practice this a few times in light with eyes closed, near something you will touch with your hands
 - put food scraps in bucket provided inside the room
 - things slowly go out of place in darkness. If you would like the bed remade, lost shoes found, etc, just let your supporter know.
 - If you discover a light leak, immediately look away and get something to cover it with. See *prepare > bring* for materials to do this with. Let your supporter know so leak can be plugged.
 - Use scratch paper and pen to write notes to your supporter. Put them in the agreed-upon spot for messages.
 - Avoid all media during your retreat: text, music, photos, video.
 - Avoid all company as well: family, friends, etc, unless
 - you are a parent and your child needs to be with you
 - perhaps if your retreat is longer than two weeks (I don't know yet)
- transition day(s)
 - take walks, lie in the sun on the grass, go barefoot,
 - take naps, re-covering windows if you like
 - maintain solitude
 - write about your retreat
 - cover windows again between 18:00 and 20:00
 - maintain darkness until morning
- last morning
 - finish writing about your retreat
 - pack and exit room by 13:00

water and exercise

I make sure I do two things in darkness:

- drink water: the body uses water for virtually all its processes. Detection of dehydration is strangely harder in darkness. Each day, drink about 1 liter for every 20 kg you weigh. Get enough bottles to hold that much. Keep them by your bed. Fill and drink them down every day. Simple.

With all its extra energy, the body is reopening old wounds. It needs water to repair, clean, and revive these tissues. It is shaking toxins loose and needs water to wash them out. It soaks the nerves in water to keep them cool. This makes time in darkness emotionally smoother.

- exercise: exercise helps one get to sleep, avoid bed soreness, feel less restless and irritable, retard muscle atrophy, and, interestingly, maintain the psychophysical “space” in which healing occurs. Even three minutes a day makes the difference between a pleasant retreat and constant discomfort. After the first couple days, I find I want to exercise more and more. It becomes a game: how many pushups can I do? I have rarely felt such motivation as an adult. It came as a very pleasant surprise.

food

Eat meals rather than snacks. When you are hungry, focus on eating until you feel full and satisfied. The human alimentary tract processes food in batches, not continuously. A constant stream of food (often eaten in boredom) disrupts and distresses digestion, thus sleep, attention, and healing.

You will probably need 25-50% less food, by calories, than usual. I recommend keeping it to fresh, raw, ripe fruit and leafy greens to maximize nutrition, elimination, and psychic agility. Keep food in a cooler with a block of ice. Eat as much as you like. It is likely that your appetite will be diminished due to extra [melatonin](#) in the blood (a reason we do not get hungry when we sleep). This was especially noticeable in my first retreat.

As much as 10% of your food, by mass, can be tender leafy greens like leaf lettuce (not iceberg) and baby spinach. Celery, too. This is the equivalent of 1 large head or bunch of greens per day total.

A minimum of 90% of your food, by mass, should be seeded fruit, sweet and non-sweet (like tomatoes, bell peppers, cucumbers). So salads can be sweet (greens mixed with sweet fruit) and savory (greens mixed with non-sweet fruit).

Our need for fat is tiny and easily met with the above food types. Fat is very complex and difficult to digest. Too much interferes with resting and healing. So eliminate oils and minimize fatty foods. Forego nuts and seeds altogether. One small to medium avocado during a 4-day retreat in a savory salad is very pleasant.

Most of what you consume in fruit and leafy greens is water. So you must eat 3-5 times more volume for the same sense of fullness and satisfaction. Eating this much, like 5 apples instead of one or half a watermelon instead of a slice, can take getting used to. Practice it before the retreat.

For more about food, see:

- *darkroom retreat* > *food and prepare* > *menu*
- *The 80/10/10 Diet* by Dr Douglas Graham, and [Loren Lockman's videos](#).

fasting

I strongly believe in fasting. It is a cornerstone of hygiene. But I believe in keeping these two processes separate until regaining significant capacity. They seem to have opposite metabolic requirements. At first, healing in darkness is more psychical in nature, in fasting more physical. The activity of one supports the inactivity and resting of the other.

I have tried both at the same time and it is very good but intense. I look forward to more, but for now, I am taking one at a time. I recommend the same to you till you receive a strong clear signal from your organism. I recommend Shelton's books on it, *Fasting Can Save Your Life* and *The Science and Fine Art of Fasting* and Albert Mosseri's *Fasting: Nature's Best Remedy*.

conservation

Here are ways to conserve energy for healing:

- talk only if necessary. Chatting drains energy.

- learn to write in darkness so you can communicate with a supporter and take notes on your experience. Use a notebook. Turn the page after writing or whenever you are in doubt about having turned it. Use your non-writing hand to cover the last line and guide your pen.
- for a more concentrated experience, do a silent retreat
- if you usually talk to yourself, catch yourself and stop
- at first, my clients and I felt like leaving the facility quickly upon exiting the darkroom and throwing ourselves back into ordinary life. This was due to an unaccustomed increase in energy level and well-being. We had a sharpened sense of anticipation about our lives, feeling more in our bodies and ready to conquer the world. But rather than immediately re-enter regular life and probably end up blowing off this extra energy, it is better to recirculate it, absorb it, stabilize it.

So now the retreat continues after darkness with windows uncovered and doors opened during the day one day for every 2-3 darkened days. This gives time to re-orient to light and gravity. Take a walk, lie in the grass, look at nature, and reflect on what has happened. See *format* and, in my blog, [post-retreat protocol](#) for more about this.

support

Support should be passive. This means

My ideas of support have evolved since my first retreat. Once a day, Finn brought me food and talked to me a few minutes. I, then my clients generally liked having such active support for our first retreats. We found it reassuring to say a few words to someone each day.

For my first clients, I did more of each, sometimes too much. I thought of myself as a facilitator. Then a client wanted to communicate with notes and clapping in response to my questions. One clap meant no; two, yes; three, repeat the question. His retreat was up to him and he knew it. He just wanted logistical support and the passive psychic support of my simply being around.

I liked this a lot. It eased my worries and helped me trust in life more. Rather than a facilitator, I started thinking of myself as a supporter. I later tried retreating without support and much preferred the solitude and lack of interruption.

However, that was only a 4-day retreat, and I was in a small village of friends. For 8-day retreats, I have found that having someone nearby, on call, is critical. A retreatant is in a kind of womb. Supporters are like parents. They go about their regular lives, but remain available and create constant psychic shielding for the retreatant. Weird forces exist in the world. We need to rest from them, too. A little team of supporters makes this possible.

A retreatant can get a supporter's attention from inside the darkroom with an operable flag or a bell at the end of a cord. A fully charged cellphone or walkie-talkie works in case of emergency.

Here are the attributes of good support:

- supporter's duties and qualifications:
 - has read this book, understanding the basic ideas of hygiene; expertise is not required
 - has retreated or will soon. No neutral or tacitly negative supporters!
 - is reliable; and has a modicum of common sense
 - brings food and checks for notes or says hello according to an agreed schedule (noon works well). Saying hello can happen once a day, once in the middle of the retreat, or not at all
 - stays nearby and keeps the retreatant in the back of his mind while going about daily life.
 - has back-up support, at least one other person.
- design

- a supporter can deliver food and talk to the retreatant in a normal voice without opening the darkroom's door
- a supporter can enter the darkroom without letting in light. Or, the retreatant covers her eyes till the door is shut again
- a retreatant can call the supporter without leaving the room or being exposed to light
- see *design* and *make* chapters for ways to do these

attitude

Besides a darkroom, food, and support, a hygienic retreat requires a fourth critical ingredient: knowledge of the hygienic attitude. You don't have to believe it. Just take it in with you to consider, test, and use when the opportunity arises. It is not something to impose on yourself, to make yourself do, but to recognize in the moment and respond to. It's a chance to let go and let life catch you. In some way, you already know how to do this. These words can help you feel more confident about it.

purpose

- The purpose of a darkroom retreat is to rest deeply. This enables the organism, especially the psyche, to heal itself of the major psychophysical trauma sustained in civilization that causes all suffering, including physical disease.
- Your principal task is to sleep. Benefits of the deep sleep possible in darkness compound each day. Deep sleep enables the organism to accumulate tremendous vital energy. This energy is necessary to heal deep psychophysical injuries that lie way beyond the reach of will, surgery, or practice.
- Consider any spiritual, personal developmental, or therapeutic purpose to which you might put this retreat as part of what you are retreating from. Really: feel free to let it all go in here. Whatever is valid will happen by itself, much better than you imagined it would. If somehow you can't let it go, it's ok. Sometimes the ability to let go must be recovered, too, as well as confidence in the autonomic self to handle what you let go of.
- Likewise, the autonomic functions of the organism will deal with most of what we often regard as our moral responsibilities. Darkroom retreating is not primarily an active process (like spiritual practice). It is primarily a passive process as regards the will, requiring minimal effort on your part. It is like waiting in a hospital bed to heal.

Thus, you do not need to make yourself meditate, pray, chant, introspect, think hard, figure out your life, etc. Neither stop yourself from any of these *if you feel moved to do so*. Yes, you actually get to consider your feelings, impulses, thoughts, and needs in darkness. Everything in your being plays a part in life. Anything could be an important cue. Every movement of the organism ultimately has health as its aim. Listen, wait, receive.

- It is quite possible to have a goal for a retreat and make progress with it. I did this several times. But now I know it was out of lack of confidence in my autonomic self. My aims were security objects. This kind of purposefulness interferes with the organism's priorities, which cannot be improved upon. Life always knows what is actually most important, millisecond by millisecond. My [most effective retreat](#) happened when I felt sure it would not work and I gave up on any aim I might have had. I only continued out of sheer logic: my own arguments still seemed airtight and unavoidable, so I stuck with the plan. Then I witnessed a marvel of self-healing.
- This process is as foolproof as possible. Given the conditions of rest—most of which are built into the room itself—you will heal.
- The organism is the principal actor. Your job is to support its self-healing process through stillness and conserving energy, including the energy expended by attention. (More about attention later.)

expectations

- You will get a distinct break from your regular life. It's best to consider anything more a bonus.

While I and some others I supported have experienced amazing occurrences in darkness, I cannot guarantee you will experience them.

- Your results are up to your whole self, 99.99% of which operates below the level of conscious awareness, beyond your direct control.

I do guarantee that your being will do exactly what is most necessary and not require more of you than you can handle. Perfect, complete knowledge of everything about you and absolute power to act on this knowledge are the autonomic self's great gifts for you.

- As when wandering the streets of a foreign city, keep your wits about you. Neither your supporter nor your autonomic self will relieve you of the normal task of watching over your own life. You remain responsible for yourself.
- If nothing happens, conditions were not met sufficiently. Analyze the points of failure and try again. Several of my early retreats failed because of light leaks, poor air quality, noise, a bad bed, time shortage, and other stressors. While darkness is natural, one still has to learn to arrange and use it. I'm still learning.

attention

What do you do in a retreat?

As I've said many times, you rest. But how, exactly? Half the day, you're lying around awake with nothing to do.

The answer has to do with attention. While the autonomic self heals, the volitional self focuses attention. We have no choice about having attention. We sort of have a choice about where to focus it.

I say sort of because this power varies with capacity. This takes time to recover. Meanwhile, sometimes attention wanders like an untethered goat. Sometimes it dashes off madly. Sometimes it gently returns seeking direction.

Attention is different than the mind. Attention can be on the mind: its actions, thoughts, and memories. It can also be on feeling, sensation, and movement.

Don't fight the goat of attention. It is an injured animal that must remain free. Direct it when possible. When it wanders, you track and observe it a little while, then direct it. When it dashes, you hang on for dear life or, in critical moments, take it firmly in hand and direct it. When it returns, you direct it. You direct it because your purpose is to rest and certain objects of attention are more restful than others. You direct it when you can, as your capacity to do so returns.

I know three places and ways to restfully direct attention:

1. mentally on thoughts, above and behind the head, a couple minutes at a time
2. visually on darkness, in front of the eyes, for 5-10 minutes at a time
3. palpably and audibly on bodily rhythms, for hours at a time:
 - on breathing, in the belly
 - on the pulse, anywhere and eventually in the heart
 - on swallowing
 - on blinking

These are all good places for attention. It just depends on what *resting* requires in any given moment. For example, avoiding thinking about something that demands it in the moment will be agitating, not restful. Remember the purpose of rest, and you will learn when and where to move your attention.

Conscious placement of attention on the self, on some aspect of consciousness is usually called meditation. (Gurdjieff, in his usual precision, called it self-remembrance). Thus darkroom retreating sounds like meditation to many people. Meditation is usually a discipline. This is true only when time is set aside just for it, when it is the main process. The moment this effort stops, so does the main process.

In darkness, meditation serves the retreat. One retreats not for meditation but rest. Healing is the main process. Meditation can help sometimes, but healing goes on anyway because it is an autonomic process running in the background of willed activity. Further, a retreat provides so many conditions of rest and so little to do, one tends to rest more.

- Thinking is sometimes critically important. When you have presence of mind and a pressing issue arises, think it through logically, steadily making rational connections until resolving it. This doesn't happen much or take long, and we all know how thinking too much can drive a person crazy. Fortunately, thinking is not the only option.
- You can also look directly at darkness itself, making it an object of attention. We are usually taught to think of darkness as nothing or as a background for something lit. Focusing on darkness for awhile as an external fact, eyes open or closed, helps calm the mind. It can be unexpectedly absorbing.

Try it right now for a minute or two. Put your palms over your eyes. Slightly overlap them above the nose to seal out light. Look at the backs of your eyelids like you are looking a couple meters away. Do this for a few minutes. Shapes and colors and spots might move around for awhile, then slowly clear away. Focus on the slowest dark patches, sometimes in front of, sometimes behind the imagery. You are withdrawing all your senses back inside your head.

You can also do this in the middle of a regular day to rapidly collect yourself, to feel centered and in your body again. It is restful for the eyes. It is actually an old practice from hygiene called "palming".

I used to do it for hours, even days. This was way too much. You can read the trouble I got into for this in my [6-day retreat](#). Increasingly clear images of a subjective nature play on the "screen" of darkness. In other words, the images are coming from the mind. At first, I found this fascinating. Then it became torturous and nightmarish. At first, it seemed meaningless. Now I think it reflects what is repressed or denied in oneself. But this is nothing to indulge or dismiss. The unconscious will tell us what we need to know of it.

In a retreat, focus on darkness like this for just 5-10 minutes, concentrating on it a moment to steady yourself. Then...

- Move attention into your gut to feel the movement of breathing. This is always safe, a shelter from the storm sometimes raging in the mind. I can calmly hang out there for hours while lying down, palpating the motion of breathing. Just the in-and-out of my belly where natural breathing occurs (not in the chest).
- Then put attention on the pulse, sometimes feeling for it in the heart. From sensation to feeling is not very far. I heard from [Arnaud Desjardins](#), a great master of Advaita, that eventually, one can put attention in the heart as pure feeling.
- Swallowing and blinking provide further variety to the show. The tongue normally rests against the roof of the mouth. Of course, if you are congested and must breathe through your mouth, this is impossible.
- Many have reported occasionally seeing unusual lights and images. These have a highly real, objective quality. It is bracing, awesome, compelling. Vaulted ceilings often figure into this scenery, sometimes low, dark, and grey or brown; sometimes high, airy, lit, and colored. Some consider these hallucinations. Darkness impresses me as a waking portal to the dreamworld, also called [dreamtime](#) or [timespace](#).

experience

Reports of retreatants reveal patterns of experience. Resting in darkness affects the foundations of life.

time

Many of us in darkness have experienced a strange compulsion to know what time it is. It feels like an addictive craving, even mild panic, though obviously absurd. Darkness gives the best possible opportunity to withdraw from it by avoiding finding out.

I often feel late, short on time, rushed, like I'm running behind. Yet, at the end of a retreat, in which days passed without accomplishing regular tasks, I always feel luxuriously ahead of schedule. So I view the late feeling as a symptom of exhaustion and asynchrony: time disorientation.

The civilized sense of time is very close to the heart of our psychosis. The indigenous report a very different experience of time. They feel *in* time, on time, in synchrony with the flow of events. Where we mostly measure time cardinally, with specific dates and hours, they mostly measured it ordinally: before, after, earlier, later.

In darkness, you may feel a shift from the strange relationship with time we consider so normal.

sex

One way or another, sexuality makes its presence known in darkness. If it has been repressed, it stirs, like an animal escaping captivity. If it has run wild, it calms down.

Sexuality lies close to the base of organic existence and its power. We all come from sex, we renew ourselves in it throughout life, and we make more life with it. We exude it in everything we do through the gender polarities of masculinity and femininity. It expresses one's self-esteem and confidence. Sexuality amplifies life's colossal power. Thus civilization's centralizers of power, the state and religion, whether sacred or secular, rabidly suppress sexuality. Violence and the need for artificial controls result.

Over several retreats, and one in particular, I felt my sexuality begin to return to me. Shut out for a long time, it finally found a way back in. An unfamiliar feeling of self-satisfaction accompanied it, taking a place next to my accustomed longing. I have related more of the initial, liberating effects of retreating on my sexuality in my [reports](#) online.

Before his retreat, one of my clients tried to lure his giggling girlfriend into darkness for "conjugal visits". This was funny. But I recommend hanging in there alone. In darkness, this secret joy is just for the retreatant. The point is to recover sexual power. Sexually powerful people have what they need. They don't seek it from others.

Traumatized sexuality relates directly to feelings of shame, fear, and guilt; and to rebelliousness and one's sense of purpose. The healing of sexuality leads to recovery of self-esteem and feelings of security and confidence. Darkness will definitely help many people heal from the nightmare of repression and violence that has beset our lifeway for thousands of years. Soon, I hope, an end will come to this madness once and for all.

power

As an organism, one has a basic power: to live. It enables one to survive, to take shelter, find water and food, handle emergencies, defend oneself, maintain one's place in the world, and provide for others. Power is an ability and the energy to exercise it. It combines the concepts of capacity and vitality.

Power manifests in every movement, thought, and feeling. Fitness, magnetism, relaxedness, and humor all

signify the power to live. Money represents it externally. A powerful person controls his own life in ordinary ways and adapts easily to circumstance. Peace, freedom, prosperity, and joy characterize powerful people and societies alike.

Everyone alive has power to some degree. Those without it are dead. While it has immediate social effects, it is primarily personal. It is not power over others. Real power grows from within, not out of the barrel of a gun.

Like any capacity, trauma significantly damages personal power. The routine brutality of civilization pushes people to the brink of powerlessness. Power becomes the motive of nearly all activity. Power turns to aggression. A drama unfolds. Some people become control freaks, power-lusters, and abusers. Others become perennial victims or rescuers. Roles suddenly reverse. Fear, violence, and evil touch everyone. War, repression, poverty, slavery, epidemics, and corruption all signify a collective lack of power.

At profound rest in darkness, power is restored. These symptoms of mass psychopathology disappear. One begins to feel and act virtuously without trying or even thinking of it. Life works again on a personal scale.

On a social scale, such power is irresistible by conventional force. Martin Luther King, Jr and Mohandas Gandhi showed this. From their words and my glimpses in darkness, their demonstrations pale before the potential of a fully restored human being. Our distressed world, kings and peasants alike, awaits such people. Once the dam breaks, 10,000 years of suffering will wash away overnight. This is what I saw. This is my prayer.

difficulty

discomfort

An uncomfortable period usually occurs somewhere in the middle of the retreat, lasting minutes to hours. It's like a bout of pain while convalescing in a hospital. But now it is the soul that heals.

You might feel tense, like crawling in your skin. You might curl up and cry. It's perfectly natural. You have provided the organism a chance to work something out, and it is doing so.

- if lack of movement slowly contributed to discomfort, exercise will instantly help
- call your supporter if you need company
- try the techniques in the phobia section
- sensation functions as a brake on the process. If red light does not help, try music. If you still can't stand it, use natural light. Apply it by slowly uncovering the window or opening the door as much and long as needed. Start with eyes closed and turned away from the light. Open your eyes, but do not look into the light directly. If this is insufficient, step outside. When you feel calm again, go back into darkness again.

In some case, retreating can feel unbearably difficult. It is perfectly alright to not resume darkness at this time. Darkness is natural, but reacquaintance can take time and must not be rushed. Perhaps reflection on your experience will show why you could not proceed. Perhaps something unexpected will change and you can try again later. Perhaps something else is more important for your life now. There is no rush.

phobias

Those with phobias related to darkness (eg, superstition, claustrophobia, fear of the dark) can still retreat using these techniques:

- red light: Keep a red LED light next to your bed (pure red light gives no signal to the pineal gland to wake you up). If anxiety or panic become too great, turn on the light till you feel better.

- microretreat: retreat for five seconds. Then take a break in red light till you feel ready for the next microretreat. Gradually increase the length of the micro-retreats and decrease the breaks. Do this for 15 minutes. The next night, go 30 minutes, etc.
- companion: retreat with another person inside or near the darkroom till you feel ok alone
- reason: go over the facts of your situation in your mind. What evidence do you have for what you fear? You can learn to recognize and dismiss arbitrary (baseless) ideas.*

I had a client from a superstitious culture who was raised to fear the dark. But the idea of resting in darkness appealed to her common sense. She stayed in darkness for a whole night for the first time in her life at my darkroom. Afterward, she said that when her fear of monsters or ghosts came, she simply reasoned her way through it.

She remembered closing and locking the door, then checking under the bed and table and finding nothing before blowing out the candle. The door had not opened since then, so nothing could have gotten in. She deduced there could be no threat. She calmed down and went back to sleep. That night, her fantastic fear yielded to reason four times.

When she awoke in the morning, she felt ecstatic from staying all night in absolute darkness and overcoming her fear of it. Her rationality strengthened, and she used it to strengthen her relationship to reality and her feeling of safety. Allied with her autonomic self, the tide gently turned on her phobia.

In any case, try. If these methods fail, perhaps you will come up with your own in the moment of crisis. An idea will occur to you. You will feel something or have an impulse. Act on it. Darkroom retreating isn't all just lying around. These brief calls for heroism are part of the minimal effort the retreat requires of everyone at some point.

*I was raised with many superstitions. I found pp155-170 of *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* by Leonard Peikoff extremely helpful in dealing with the conscious part of them. He explains how to identify *arbitrary* ideas: those for which there is no evidence. He explains the necessity of dismissing them.

severe psychosis

As I have said, I view our entire society and virtually everyone in it as psychotic. This includes me, you, our "leaders", the lady down the block, doctors. Everyone. We are functionally psychotic, surviving long enough in our dysfunction and pain to reproduce. We thus exist on a continuum of psychosis ranging from the temporarily shocked, to the functional, to the disabled, to the severely psychotic.

Merely this change in perspective from our current presumptions can aid the situation greatly. Lots of little ridiculous things we currently do can be exposed as such and stopped.

I have not worked with severe psychotics—who would be identified simply as psychotic by conventional psychology. But I think that we can handle even these cases by ourselves. By this, I mean without the use of the professional system or experts, just with the care of friends and family. That said, if an expert can behave normally, simply providing wisdom and care unobtrusively like anyone else would, without any sense of superiority, that's great. Some experts actually know something. There's no reason for their knowledge to go to waste unless it would do more harm than good on balance.

I think severely psychotic people will be most helped at first by the influence and love of others who have recovered their own sanity in darkness. Most severely psychotic people are especially sensitive to our society's constant barrage of stupidity and hatred, especially from those who are supposed to care about them. If that reverses, most cases of severe psychosis will disappear in weeks. Let us first put our attention on ourselves. It's sort of like using an oxygen mask in an airplane: use it yourself first, then on those in your care. To continue the metaphor, please consider the plane we're on to be already depressurized, undergoing

severe turbulence, and with its masks dangling down.

But I can imagine the direct use of darkness in extreme cases to excellent effect. It must be done with great care and attention to conditions, and with understanding and consent. Darkness causes great harm in those it is forced upon, and I unqualifiedly condemn this cruel and despotic use of darkness. I believe it will often require more gradual application and more support.

Begin by removing any light the person has not asked for or replacing it with red light if he finds it agreeable. The more access the person has to reason and the more he trusts his caregivers, the easier it will be to normalize his sleeping environment. Scheduling pressure can be removed. I mean all those therapeutic activities that are supposed to help people but just distress them or help them pass the time while on debilitating medication. Allow the person to sleep more. Provide more fresh, raw fruits and leafy green vegetables, fresh air, sunlight, pure non-fluoridated water, contact with plants and earth, grounding sheets, etc.

Lots of little changes like this can quickly de-escalate severe psychosis to mere disabled psychosis or even functional psychosis. From there, a person could manage the rest of the way to sanity himself.

aftermath

post-retreat

The effects of a retreat continue afterward, sometimes with an intensity greater than the retreat's. It can feel like a storm sometimes. So I call it the aftermath. This is another phase of exploration, metamorphosis, and insight. It can last from a few days to several weeks. The transition days of a retreat reduce its length and intensity to tolerable levels.

CAUTION: Do not attempt a retreat without transition days, no matter how desperate and short on time you may be. Storms are endurable. Hell may not be.

For about a week after your retreat, plan only usual things: job, school, family. This most quickly returns you to functional stability, minimizes exposure to disturbance, and maximizes your chance of absorbing the value of the retreat. Stay in when you might go out. The party will still be there in a week. Be subdued. Keep to yourself. Whose life is it anyway?

How the aftermath goes depends on one's personality. I'm not the stablest oil rig in the Gulf, so it fairly tosses me around. It usually begins with a calm, solid feeling of deep restedness from the retreat. Then a tension builds to a crisis over a few days. I can feel as bad as the worst moments of my retreat. Then an insight or discovery comes that shows the way to the next period of my life.

This insight is often accompanied by the return of will and focus. Suddenly, I know exactly what to do, how to do it, and have the energy and strength to make it happen. It's very fun, especially after months of listlessness.

I know less about this part of my clients' retreats than the dark part. From what I saw and heard, their aftermaths varied greatly in character. Sometimes they matched the drama of mine, sometimes they were smooth sailing. Remember where you just were and keep your eyes peeled.

recapacitation

Regarding some aspects of our own lives, we all know better. I mean things we think we should do for ourselves which, strangely, we do not. Moralism says it is because we will not. Hygiene says it is because we cannot. Stop a moment and consider the relief this idea brings.

Darkroom retreating provides the conditions in which the organism restores one's capacity for both self-care and its benefits. This is recapacitation. The intensity of a retreat mostly fades, but restored capacity remains. A broken leg, once healed, doesn't spontaneously become broken again.

The full application of the **idea** behind hygienic darkroom retreating consists of **doing retreats of increasing length alternated with periods of radical lifeway change until health is fully restored**. "Health through healthful living," as we hygienists like to say.

You already know some changes you would like to make. Now you can make some of them. Those you do not know, you will, in darkness, become capable of discovering, learning, and applying. Resources and opportunities that were right under your nose, on the tip of your tongue, out of the corner of your eye suddenly become visible, compelling, accessible. Having restored a lost part of yourself, *how* you are changes. You notice and attract different things. Once you see you can walk through the front door of a bakery and get whatever you like, you will stop begging crumbs out its back door.

summary

I have tried to impress you with the idea that you are not the main actor in darkness. But in truth, a part of you is. It is the part we are taught to ignore, deny, and disown: the autonomic self. In darkness, we cease to identify so closely with the conscious self. And it is revealed as the servant of the autonomic self. This corrects the conventional relationship, which mistakenly attempts to harness the unfailing processes of life to the desperate agenda of a crippled will we view as our sole identity.

In ordinary life, you must arrange certain conditions to live. You must keep your wits about you. You are accountable for your own experience. These basic facts not only persist in the darkroom, they become especially clear. In darkness, it is your job to maintain certain conditions of the retreat.

Your non-expert, non-mind-reading, non-therapist supporter (if you have one) will be on the outside helping you do that. She will be maintaining the darkroom, bringing food, perhaps finding your lost shoes. Like any decent person would, she will talk to you for a few minutes if you need. It's your retreat. If something is not working, say so.

On your last transition day, write a description of what happened while it is fresh in your memory. Finalize it with insights from your aftermath. Share it online if you like and please send me a link. I have found these reports very useful in improving the darkroom, understanding the process, and learning to explain it to people. More writers and readers of reports will help spread hygienic darkroom retreating and advance its theory and practice.

6 - prepare

The following registration form, menu, and list of things to bring help one prepare for a retreat. Whether retreating at home or at a center, I suggest you read it and fill out the questionnaire to help you prepare mentally for the retreat. Likewise, give it to those whose retreats you support.

Marion Abbott amassed a [long list of centers](#) at her new blog about darkroom retreating. She also [mapped them](#). Most are spiritual or therapeutic centers, but some will support a hygienic retreat if you know what to ask for and what you are doing. More centers appear each year.

register

Follow instructions carefully.

general

1. Finish reading this book. Quiz later.
2. Select dates for your retreat from the calendar below. Retreats begin at 18:00 and end at 12:00 four or eight mornings later. For example, a 4-day retreat that begins on Monday evening would end on Friday morning.
3. Respond by *email* to the questionnaire below. Responses of one or two sentences per question are sufficient.
4. Send deposit by cryptocurrency, PayPal, credit card, or inquire for other methods
5. Bring things listed below

terms

- Price: (European example) €40 + €80/day (eg, 4-day retreat=€360)
 - charge 20% more than you might
 - the people who can pay, will
 - negotiate with the rest
 - use the extra to subsidize worthy people with little money. Find out what they are good at and have them do something for you.
- Discounts:
 - Local, student, or friend: 20%
 - Local and student or friend: 40%
 - Offers of 40% + remainder in trade gladly considered
 - No one serious turned away for lack of funds
- Reserve dates with a 50% deposit. Balance due on arrival.
- Cancellation fees (% of *total* price):
 - 30+ days before retreat: 5%
 - 7+ days before retreat: 25% (half the deposit)
 - 1-29 days if someone else can take your spot: 10%

[placeholder for google calendar]

questionnaire

1. Name:
2. Email address:
3. Phone:
4. Address:
5. Age:
6. Emergency contact name, email, and phone:
7. Retreat length: ___ days
8. Retreat starting date _____ +/- ___ days (for absolute date, put 0)
alternate: _____ +/- ___ days
9. How did you first hear about darkroom retreating?
10. How did you first hear about this darkroom?
11. Why would you like to retreat?
12. What will you be doing the week before the retreat? (It should not be especially exhausting or intense for you)
13. How does the menu sound to you?
14. Would you like to maintain silence during your retreat?

15. Quiz:
1. What is the hygienic purpose of retreating?
 2. What heals you in darkness? c. What does this imply about what to do with your will and attention?
 3. Where is a good place to put your attention if you feel crazy or tormented by thoughts or imagery?
 4. How much does the air you breathe weigh compared to the food you eat, and what does that imply about the importance of fresh air?
 5. How much does a silent location matter for a successful retreat?
16. What fears or concerns do you have that might interfere with your retreat? (fear of the dark, claustrophobia, superstition, etc)? How will you handle them? What support might you need?
17. Assuming I am correct that practically everyone is [psychotic](#) how do you feel darkness might significantly affect you, for better or worse?
18. Is there anything else you would like to add?

menu

summary

- 3L pure water per day
- frugivorous menu
 - fruit: whole, raw, ripe, in season, well-washed, ample for eating anytime
 - tender leafy greens: romaine, escarole, young spinach
 - green salad: sweet or savory, large, properly combined, served at midday or evening
 - treats: 1 smoothie per 4 days, 1/2 avocado or 15 olives per 2 days in salads
 - no: ferments (eg, vinegar), onions, garlic, ginger, spices, salt, juice, oil, dried food, nuts or seeds

guide

Most of the time, just eat plain fruit. - eat one fruit until you lose your taste for it - if still hungry, switch to another - eat from the most watery (melons) to the least (bananas, dates)

Some days, have a yummy recipe:

- sweet green salads (midday or evenings)
 - melon
 - 1 head romaine, chopped
 - 2 L watermelon, chopped (only combine one kind of melon with one green, otherwise stomach ache)
 - banana
 - 1/2 head romaine, chopped
 - 3 ribs celery, finely chopped
 - 4 bananas, ripe
 - 1 L strawberries or blueberries or chopped nectarines
 - citrus
 - 1 head romaine, chopped
 - 5 sprigs parsley
 - 3 oranges, peeled, sectioned, cut in half
 - 2 apples, chopped
 - 2 slices pineapple, chopped
- savory salads (evenings)
 - tomato
 - 1 head romaine, chopped

- 3 ribs celery, finely chopped
- 1dL rocket lettuce
- 1 orange, chopped very finely (into pulp)
- 5dL tomato, chopped
- 1/2 avocado or 1dL olives
- dry
 - 1 head romaine, chopped
 - 10 sprigs parsley or cilantro
 - 1 orange, chopped very finely
 - 2 red bell pepper, chopped finely
 - 2dL mushrooms OR zucchini, chopped

Come up with your own based on above patterns. No more than 6 ingredients per recipe. The trick with savory salads (and all combined food, really) is to make sure the 8 main flavors/textures are present in varying proportions:

bitter, sweet, sour, salty, savory, spicy, crunchy, fatty

- bitter: tender greens like romaine and young spinach, mild culinary herbs like parsley, cilantro. Also celery
- sweet: fruit!
- sour: orange, grapefruit, pineapple, berries
- salty: celery, tomatoes (especially dried)
- savory: tomatoes, olives (rinse off oil)
- spicy: hot, but just a hint, barely enough to notice. Spicy greens are best, like rocket, arugula, mustard, cilantro
- crunchy: lots of things
- fatty
 - tricky because it is surprisingly easy to overeat fat
 - with sufficient chewing, oiliness of lettuce is usually enough
 - eat only one kind of fatty food at a time
 - eat a small quantity once per 2-4 days: 1/2 avocado, 15 olives
 - stick mostly to fruits, avocado and olives (rinse off oil). Eat nuts or seeds only 1-2 times/month
 - eat no more than 10% of your daily calories from fat. 5-6% is best. Look up calories for a week to learn this at fitday.com.

no: - ferments, like vinegar (the second stage of fermentation beyond alcohol and even more toxic. It's a digestive disaster.) - onions, garlic, ginger - spices or salt - fractured foods like juice, oil, dried food - nuts, seeds

These imbalance, overload, or destroy digestive chemistry, bacteria, and enzymes. The good things you hear about vinegar, garlic, and ginger are hype.

If you would like to know more about this menu before trying it, see:

- *darkroom-retreat > food and protocol > food*
- Dr Douglas Graham's masterful *The 80/10/10 Diet*
- [Loren Lockman's videos](#)

If you somehow cannot eat this way, eat as simply and naturally as you know how. For suggestions, write me with your limitations.

bring

- Yes:
 - bedsheets and pillow (if retreating at a center and need these provided, let supporter know ahead of time)
 - pajamas and loose clothes
 - sweater
 - slippers
 - water bottles, 3-4L worth
 - clock (unlit analog or red LCD)
 - cellphone
 - red LED light
 - materials and tools for plugging any light leaks you discover during your retreat
 - black electrical tape, 1 roll
 - black polar fleece, 50cm x 20cm
 - scissors
 - table knife
 - bamboo skewer
 - toiletries and personal items
 - prescription medication
- Optional
 - special food (please tell supporter about it)
 - simple exercise equipment for body-weight exercise, eg, yoga mat or push-up handle bars. No free weights or elastic or bowed equipment.
- No:
 - cigarettes
 - electronic devices that make sound, light, vibration, or smell: computers, audio players, watches, clocks, vaporizers, oils, massage devices, etc
 - If you must bring any of these things, unless critical for your health, turn them off and store them during the retreat or ask to store them with your supporter.
 - contraband, psychedelics, alcohol: disallowed on the premises

7 - design

An echo of the ancient cataclysm that caused our mass major trauma, civilization assaults human psychobiology. It makes war zones of our habitats. It triggers a constant state of emergency. Most succumb. Many conform. Some take up arms.

We design.

normal

Hygiene uses only normal conditions. A darkroom is merely what all shelter should be: easily darkened. With the advent of street lamps and large unshuttered windows, darkening bedrooms has become critical to survival. Everyone's bedroom should be a darkroom, at least for nightly sleep. It is normal, just rare...for now.

How is total darkness normal for sleep and healing? The original human habitat is tropical forest, whose dense canopy makes the forest floor pitch black at night. While we can sleep in light if necessary, it compromises the quality of sleep. No biological adaptation to it has occurred, only *vital accommodation* (development of tolerance) at the expense of overall function.

We also have darkness at any time by covering eyes with hands. When traumatized, we do this reflexively along with seeking safety, shelter, and solitude.

The civilized obsession with building expresses the impulse to self-healing on a social scale. Knowing this, we can voluntarize the activity. We can direct it explicitly toward its implicit goal: to provide the conditions of profound rest. We can define and meet its specifications.

start

Start in your own bedroom. You already know you can sleep there, what problems need mitigation, where things are and how they work. You already paid for it and you need access to darkness every night anyway. If it is truly not worth darkening or unsuitable for short retreats, it is unsuitable for living. I strongly suggest you make arrangements to move.

In the meantime, if you wish to darken a room elsewhere, then sleep there three nights beforehand. See if anything about it might disturb you which you cannot practically change: noise, odors or poor ventilation, atmosphere. Mind your senses, feelings, and state of mind. Will you be comfortable there? Do you actually sleep? Will darkening and ventilating it be a reasonable effort? If so, great. If not, conserve your initiative and keep looking.

types

There are private and public darkrooms.

A private darkroom is built to basic specifications in your bedroom. It is for nightly use and short retreats up to 8 days. Basic specifications are: security, reasonable quietness, perfect darkness, ample ventilation, and comfort, plus any others in the list below that you can manage. See *basic* comments for clarification. For budget building tips, see *format* and the *make* chapters, *make*, *air*, *darkness*, and *water*, or write me after reading them.

A public dedicated darkroom is built to full specifications below in a small house in a quiet location. It is for all kinds of people for retreats of any length, mostly medium (up to two months) and long (up to a year). It requires all the specifications below except *ideal* ones. The house should be fully functional to begin with. This means it has automated heating, mechanical ventilation, running hot water, and electricity.

standards

All my retreats have succeeded or failed primarily because of how well the darkroom itself worked. Do not tolerate stale air, frequent or extended noise, light leaks, dangers, discomforts, poor food, etc. At some point, stress becomes distress and destroys a retreat. Handle whatever possible problem crosses your mind rather than thinking you can endure it. Listen to your body and soul.

You should be able to turn off the light and let go of external concerns as much as materially arrangeable. The stress of healing is enough to bear. A retreat is not an imposition. You naturally want to do it because you are rationally convinced it is good. It is not for disciplines or practices, but rest and recuperation. It is not effort, but relief; not penance or strife, but sanctuary from the punishment and strife of our lifeway.

A successful retreat depends on several factors including facility, attitude, preparation, protocol, and support. The facility is usually the biggest piece of the puzzle. Good design builds many conditions of success into the room, making retreats practically foolproof. The better the darkroom, the more effective your retreat will be. There is no penalty for doing things correctly.

But maybe you cannot do everything correctly. Certainly, you will do your best, which you can improve upon later. If we could already do everything correctly, we would have no need of retreats. Just be honest with yourself about whether your best is good enough for now. This is a real chance to stop suffering quite so much. Don't cut corners if you can help it. This principle applies to everything in the list below.

I welcome everyone's improvements to these specifications judged by the objective standards of reason, good (life-supporting) design, and hygiene.

facility

- exterior
 - secure
 - safe location
 - keys only with retreatant and supporter
 - supporter on call 24/7 with cellphone, intercom, or bell
 - quiet
 - on a quiet street
 - away from machines
 - sound-insulated to a normal degree
 - silent machines inside (hum and harmonic-free)
 - *basic*: quiet enough for your comfort, perhaps with some use of earplugs
 - soledad
 - separate, unoccupied building (see noise section below)
 - small: 0-4 bedrooms, 12-70m²
 - *basic*:
 - 6m² minimum
 - be alone in the apartment or house during retreat
 - electromagnetically neutral
 - natural materials: earth, plants, stone (no metal structure)
 - earthed wiring (important in unearthed Sweden and Albania)
 - single outlet where power enters room or building, opposite bed
 - [earthing](#) bedsheet
 - *basic*: unplug and turn off as much electricity in and around the room as possible at the breaker, switch, and appliance. For example, if a heater is needed, turn off power to the darkroom and run an extension cord from another room. This gets power out of the walls and brings it into the room at only one point, away from the bed.
- interior
 - dark
 - perfectly dark: not a haze, glimmer, or pinprick of light anywhere
 - easily darkened windows
 - lightlock
 - lightproof double doors
 - enough space between them for a person and food deliveries
 - for communication, a lightproof vent in inner door, small and closable
 - lightproof bag for cellphone. It can have a red window made of the translucent plastic used in stage lighting ("gels")
 - candles and lighter for before the retreat and transition days.
 - *basic*: perfectly dark bedroom, bathroom, and blindfold and mostly dark hallways and kitchen
 - well-ventilated
 - in cold climates, a [Heat Recovery Ventilator](#), either with fiwihex core ([Fresh-R](#)) or Mitsubishi Lossnay core ([Renewaire](#)) (or other high-tech paper core)
 - airflow: passive or from silent fans with silencers
 - manually adjustable airflow (possibly with smart controls)
 - *basic*: somehow, get plenty of fresh air into the room without cold drafts. See [air > warmth](#).
 - warm
 - super-insulated to Passive House standards to eliminate heating if possible

- otherwise:
 - thermostat inside room
 - fueling outside room
 - non-electric heat if possible
 - otherwise, low-intensity, centralized, EM-shielded electric heat
- *basic*: somehow, be comfortable in and out of bed.
- restful
 - bed
 - double or long single size
 - mattress: layers of new foam padding, flame-retardant free, of varying firmness for adjustable softness, aired out regularly
 - polyester/non-toxic mattress cover
 - polyester/non-toxic-fill comforters
 - polyester/non-toxic-fill pillow
 - 100% natural fiber sheet and duvet
 - sofa
 - chairs
 - hammock
 - inversion swing
 - rugs
 - hard, warm floor
 - dining table and chair
 - *basic*: at least a bed, rug, padded chair, and table
- bathroom
 - existing bathroom
 - or portable fixtures in *water* chapter:
 - composting toilet
 - tub with shower
 - sink
 - greywater drainage
 - *basic*: For 8-day retreats and longer, a darkened bathroom is necessary. Walking to it outside the darkroom is fine with a blindfold, dark cloths, and extra curtains on windows. Bathing is as important for emotional and intellectual reasons as physical ones. But for a 4-day retreat, a bathroom is not critical. Minimum requirements in primitive conditions is a blindfold, bottled water (for both washing and drinking), a washcloth or sponge for a sponge bath, a towel, and a composting (bucket) toilet.
- cold food storage
 - silent (unmotorized or isolated)
 - unmotorized uses cold from the ground, block ice, ventilation, or electronic circuit
 - *private*: cooler with block ice or blindfold to get to refrigerator in kitchen
- safe
 - no unpadded or uncovered protrusions, sharp corners, or edges
 - no low ceilings or doorways
 - *for long retreats*: small and round (see roundness section below):
 - 3-6m inside diameter, 8-28m²
 - minimum wall height: 195cm
 - ceiling peak: 240+cm
- shelf for personal storage
- space for simple exercise

quiet

Silence is critical to retreating. I was in denial about this for years. It is proving even more difficult than

ventilation. An unacceptable noise level is more common than air pollution and less controllable.

Others inevitably make noise. Even if not, you will know someone is there, able to hear you. Like me, you may need to scream and cry in darkness. It's nobody's business. The process is strictly for oneself. A darkroom minimizes the influence of others and consideration needed for and from them. This gives the autonomic self the maximum support to perform its awesome task. Contact with people during a retreat should be brief and intentional, not incidental.

A clear exception is if you are a parent of a child who still needs your presence. The child can be with you in darkness as long as you both like. I have never facilitated such a retreat, but I definitely would. Nothing is more important to sanity, happiness, and avoidance of retraumatization of new generations than [filial attachment](#). If you find your capacity for attachment wanting, you will likely begin to recover it.

The weirdest thing that happened to me with regards to noise from other people was in an apartment building in [December 2011](#). I kept waking up exhausted from hundreds of short, meaningless dreams. After days of this, I realized in a fury that I was dreaming the mind chatter of others in the building. I stopped the retreat. I'm rarely "psychic"; this never happened to me before. But I am a canary in a coalmine. When something goes wrong, I notice.

Yet two years later, in December, 2013, I successfully retreated in another apartment building. I believe this was due to three factors: The building was fairly quiet. I was less fragile than before. And my sympathetic, wise, older host had a strong, benevolent presence and stayed in the apartment like a guardian while I retreated. I was very lucky.

As always, I had the darkroom to myself. I had tested my comfort in the apartment beforehand, finding I could sleep and dream easily enough. During my retreat, I could feel others' presence in the building, but their thoughts did not invade my dreams like before. I got the deep rest I needed. I would not have done a long retreat there, but the short one I did nearly saved my life. It bought me two more months of internal stability to work on this book. And it revealed a widely available setting for short retreats.

The worst noise comes from the relentless grinding of machines: stereos, traffic, ventilation and refrigeration equipment on buildings, and construction. It seems fine at first but soon becomes intolerable, like a drill to the skull. Fortunately, a *silencer* is amazingly effective at neutralizing external noise.

Then, the larger the building and the more electrical wiring and steel framing and reinforcement it has, the more it disturbs electromagnetically. Finally, there is high-frequency wireless radiation, that planet-size microwave oven we now live inside of. Fortunately, it exponentially decreases in intensity with distance from the source. At least you can turn off all wireless devices under your power. Long term, you can move or install shielding.

One can become so vulnerable in profound rest that the wrong setting can become harmful. Make sure you feel comfortable in a large or occupied building and confident you will be ok when retreating there. If the influence of the building undermines the restfulness of the retreat too much, stop the retreat and try again elsewhere. Make extra preparations to doubly protect yourself from distress on your transition days: no shopping, visitors, media, or travel. Following my weird retreat in 2011, I was not thinking straight. I moved to an even less restful location a day after exiting the darkroom. This proved even more harmful than the poor location. Post-retreat planning is critical. See *protocol > post-retreat*.

round

Note: roundness is not important for short retreats. Plan a round darkroom for the future, both for shelter and for medium and long retreats.

An experiment: go into a round building and observe how you feel. Compare it to how you feel in square ones.

Born to designers and craftspeople, I've run this sort of experiment since childhood, using myself as my instrument. Here are my conclusions.

Round buildings feel sheltering. They shield occupants from subtle energy, physical and psychical. Energy flows around or through them because their roundness does not resist or trap it. Small round spaces feel cozy, not suffocating. One can easily relax inside. One has just what one needs.

Human consciousness expects roundness in its environment. Nature is a symphony of curves: circles, ellipses, parabolas, catenaries, spirals, cones, and spheres. Curvature arises from and gives rise to innumerable straight-edged shapes at visible and microscopic scales: mostly triangles, pentagons, and hexagons; tetrahedrons, octahedrons, dodecahedrons and icosahedrons; and their stellations and combinations. As Buckminster Fuller demonstrated in his *Synergetics* (see [A Fuller Explanation](#)), nature's coordinate system is tetrahedral, not cubic (Cartesian). Four-dimensional, not three. All these shapes are inherently compelling, familiar, and alive to us.

By contrast, a square building feels imprisoning. By nature, the right angle stops movement: of things, people, and energy. This stagnation saps and poisons occupants over the long term. Even turning at right angles while walking is militaristic and jarring. We compensate by making square (rectilinear or orthogonal) buildings larger than necessary to push corners away. We soften and round them out by filling their corners with stuff. Ever dissatisfied, we remodel. When that fails, we move, perhaps destroying a family or business in the process. Eventually, the only thing to do about such a toxic building is demolish it, or unconsciously arrange for it to burn down or even get bombed. Behind the apparent irrationality of war, crime, and carelessness lies a biological imperative to break free.

Due to gravity, single right angles of linear structures, like trees and stalactites, abound in nature. But not squares and cubes. Squares are inherently weak and inefficient. They collapse without diagonal support (triangulation) and require more edge for the same amount of area as circles. They mate poorly with the curved universe. A few minerals have cubic crystals, like salt. Not much else.

Orthogonal construction breeds decadence, disease, and violence. Rectilinearity is the geometry of slavery: Romans built on grids because they are easily policed. It is a military-economic strategy widely copied to the current day. Black Elk, a Plains Indian accustomed to tipis, observed the demoralizing effect of log cabins on his people on reservations. He decided, "It is a bad way to live, for there can be no power in a square."

How tiresome to find we live in voluntary prisons. What is to be done?

The problem solves itself. We simply turn our prisons into escape pods. After all, we do need to stop moving around. We are sick. We are slaves. We need to rest, to recover ourselves, to reset our relationship to the world. Conscious of the immobilizing influence of these boxes, these cells, we can turn it to our advantage. We use it to stop. But not halfway, like beasts pacing restlessly in a cage. We stop fully, more and faster than anyone expected, without the slightest concession to the demand to constantly be busy. We can even say this is what our buildings were always for.

So rectilinear buildings are not just acceptable, but perfectly suitable for short retreats. We begin to remedy them by an art of placement: feng shui, vastuveda, wabi sabi, or [ordo](#). This may render them suitable for medium-length retreats. If not, and certainly for long retreats and public darkrooms, we replace, vacate, and dismantle them. We burn or bury their materials or purify them through re-use in round buildings.

A good building for the long-term is curved, round, or has five or more sides of equal length joined at equal angles. Rectangular walls are fine. So are right angles where floors meet walls. But not where walls meet

ceilings or each other, as in orthogonal floor plans.

Happily, a handful of elegant, cheap, quick, [round shelter designs](#) are available for new buildings. It turns out that orthogonal construction is not simpler or easier. It's merely a frame of mind.

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Now, let's learn to actually make escape vehicles out of prison cells. The next chapter gives detailed instructions and computer-drawn plans for your very own darkroom.

8 - make

“The time for half-measures and talk is over.”

– Maximus in *Gladiator*

Just the ideas in this book can bring relief and hope. But 99% of their value lies in their application. This requires a darkroom. Since darkrooms are uncommon, these last four chapters explain how to build darkrooms, usually inside existing buildings.

This chapter provides basic information that applies to all components of a darkroom. The next three chapters provide blueprints and instructions for components related to three elements: air, darkness, water. They are vents, silencers, seals, blinds, and kitchen and bathroom fixtures. Designs are low-cost, low-tech, and work off-grid.

A darkroom is a real thing you see and touch, make, use, and offer others. It is not a metaphor. It takes a knowledge, imagination, design, measurement, plans, materials, craftsmanship, construction, testing, and improvement.

These are normal human activities everyone can do to some degree and get help with the rest. If you can walk down stairs without falling, hit a plate when you aim food at it, hold a pencil, cognize sentences, tell light from dark, and feel a breeze, you are mechanically sufficient to begin. As Jack Nuckols, an engineer and my grand-elder, once told me when my time came, “Become a craftsman.” Perhaps your time has come.

I suggest that, your first time through these chapters, you read everything in this one but just the prose parts of the last three. Save the lists of instructions for when it comes time to build. They make dense reading. Eventually, they'll be replaced with graphical assembly instructions like IKEA's. For now, slog through with me.

All components rely on the basic instructions in the following sections: **metric**, **tools**, **plans**, and **fabrication**. Each component has special instructions and design constraints in its own section in later chapters:

[9 air](#)

[10 darkness](#)

[11 water](#)

After improvising darkness to sleep in *tonight*, the *instant sleeping mask* probably comes next. Thus initiated, you can begin your training as a darkroom-building ninja. You will become invisible to everyone. And you won't be able to see anything, either. Haha.

If you need more specific advice for darkening your space, I provide *design consultation*. Yes, guiding people by word and picture on a chat application toward a completed darkroom and successful retreat actually works, and I have done it. Likewise, feel free to use these *open-source* designs and my consultation to darken other people's spaces as a service for money. See *license* for my liberal terms.

metric

I give all measurements in metric, mostly millimeters. Are you used to inches, pounds, and gallons? Get a handle on the brain-descrambling metric system in a split-minute:

1. understand that, with metric, you will simply be counting to 10 and multiplying by 10 like normal. You will not, thank god, be wrangling fractions and multiple conversion factors as in the imperial system.
 - basic metric conversions:
 - length: 1m=100cm=1000mm (meter, centimeter, millimeter)
 - volume: 1L=10dL=1000mL (liter, deciliter, milliliter)
 - mass: 1kg=10hg=1000g (kilogram, hectagram, gram. Mass is like weight. But it uses a balance, not a spring scale, so it does not depend on Earth's gravity. Build a darkroom in space!)
 - cool intra-conversions:
 - 1L=10cm x 10cm x 10cm (1000cm³)
 - 1L water=1kg
 - thus, 1mL water=1cm³=1g
 - brilliant! simple! humane!
2. use these imperial near-equivalents to practice the metric system, visualize my descriptions, and make estimations. Not for precise conversions or large quantities. (*My favorites):
 - length
 - *25mm = 1" (inch)
 - *100mm = 4"
 - 30cm = 1' (foot)
 - 1m = 1 yard & 4"
 - 3m = 10'
 - area
 - 1m² = 11'²
 - 4' x 8' sheet = 120cm x 240cm (~3m²)
 - the genius √2-based A1-A8 paper size system
 - volume
 - *4L = 1 gallon
 - 1.7cmh = 1cfm (cubic meter/hour; cubic feet/minute of air)
 - mass
 - 28g = 1 oz
 - *1kg = 2 lb

tools

Making components requires some or all of these tools:

1. table or desk
2. measure
 1. Note: before purchase, test tools for accuracy, which can vary between identical tools, even of good brands. Instructions below.
 2. metric ruler, 30cm, clear plastic. If reproducing plans by hand rather than printing them, then get an [Inkra ruler](#). For its effortless marking precision, I recommend it for making anything at

all ever. It's the greatest hand tool I have ever used.

3. meter stick, steel with engraved marks
 1. put marked edges of two sticks together so 40cm mark of one meets 60cm mark of other
 2. push ends of both against a wall and check how well marks line up
 3. repeat with other sticks till you find a match
 4. buy one of them
4. metric measuring tape, 5m
 1. use a tape whose case length is easily and accurately added to the figure on the tape itself. Some measuring tapes are designed to give highly accurate internal measurements, eg, between sills
 2. hook tape on end of meter stick and compare marks for accuracy of external measurement
 3. push end of meter stick against a wall, put tape on top of meter stick, and compare marks for accuracy of internal measurement
3. mark
 1. 0.5mm mechanical pencil
 2. ballpoint pen, black or blue ink
 3. black marker
 4. straight pin with colored plastic head or masking tape handle
 5. magnifying glass (even a tiny plastic one works, like the one in a Swiss Army knife)
4. crease, score, cut
 1. straight edge 200mm longer than your longest piece will be. 1-2mm-thick steel is best. An aluminum door or window frame member also works well. A board less than 12mm thick with a perfectly straight edge (check it!) is fine.
 2. table knife: use back of tip for creasing
 3. razor knife with new blade: use for scoring and cutting. To score is to cut halfway through thickness of material with razor knife so it remains one piece and folds very easily
 4. scissors for both paper and fabric
5. join
 1. masking tape
 2. wood glue, unthickened, any grade
 3. glue syringe, 20-50mL for precise, efficient gluing
 1. available at:
 - as kitchenware along with 2-3mm stainless needles
 - pharmacies. Also get a 2mm x 40-50mm needle. Perhaps cut off the tip. If unavailable, use a cartridge from ballpoint pen, the fat (4-5mm) tapering type. Clean it out and trim it down to point in taper that fits over nipple of syringe
 - woodworking shops, with needles
 2. remove needle and plunger. Cover nipple with finger and fill from back, leaving 10mm unfilled. Replace plunger barely. Point nipple upward and uncover it. Wait for air bubble to rise to top. Then push plunger in till air is cleared from syringe. Replace needle and use.
6. for [roller blind](#):
 1. drill
 2. screwdriver
 3. gluing clamp (for roller blind)
 1. 2 straight, flat 35 x 90 boards, non-rounded edges
 2. 1.5x as long as long edge of paper sheets
 3. every 300mm, 8mm holes, an 8x80mm bolt, 2 washers, and a wingnut holding boards together
 4. hack saw (for roller blind), even just a hack saw blade is enough. Cover teeth at one end with tape as a handle so you can cut on the pull stroke

plans

I have drawn the plans on a computer for precision, clarity, and ease of modification. However, at first, they can be baffling to look at.

1. Use the **key** to understand the symbols and marks
2. Compare drawings to photos.
3. Read the instructions through a couple times in the days before making begins.
4. Then *follow the instructions*, one step at a time, and you ought to end up with the intended component.

Understanding often comes through action. If this does not work, write me and I'll try to sort out the confusion and maybe improve the instructions and drawings for others, too.

A drawing has one or two *views*, depending on the best way to communicate its information:

- *plan*: from above, two dimensional (2D). Default view if unlabeled.
- *elevation*: from the side (2D)
- *section*: a cutaway or slice of the object showing all parts when assembled (2D)
- *perspective*: from a non-right-angled point of view to capture more sides (3D)
- *exploded*: all parts separated but in correct order and linear relation (3D)

For example, the [helix vent](#) has plan views of its flat parts and one section view showing how parts are assembled. The [toilet frame](#) has both plan and elevation views, while the [shower](#) has an exploded view.

All plans can be reused except [sleeping mask](#) plan, which is destroyed as you make it. So make as many prints of it as masks you intend to make.

Images in this book are only for reference and hand-reproduction. They are reduced to fit book pages. Thus they are neither full-scale nor in proportion to each other. If reading on a screen while online, you can zoom in. Click each image to open the corresponding full-size plan as an individual PDF.

1. download all plans at once with the darkroom retreat [zip file](#). Extract (decompress) the file. Contents:
 - plans: a complete set of PDF plans
 - all photos below plus extras from website
 - SVG source files of plans for modifying them, originally drawn in [Inkscape](#). Use v0.92.3.
 - I would love it if someone made
 - 3D versions of these drawings with Sketchup
 - assembly instructions for the components like IKEA
2. print
 - large format
 - large format printing is cheap, extremely accurate, and much faster and easier than desktop printing. Most print shops, including Staples and Office Depot, now offer large format printing.
 - email your files to print shop or take them on a USB flash drive
 - paper
 1. specify cheapest option
 2. if print shop has 300gsm acid-free black paper on a roll for large format printing, print the helix vent's channels and walls directly onto it. Yes, black ink on black paper is visible enough to work with.
 - have files printed in actual size, with no scaling. Before paying, check measurements with ruler or measuring tape. Distortion should not exceed 1mm over a 250mm span.

After resigning myself to 2mm distortion per 250mm with desktop printers, I was shocked to find *no* distortion with large format printing. But then it made sense because architects, engineers, and builders depend on this service for their blueprints.

- desktop
 - only do this if you are absolutely broke or can't find a large format printing service on your desert island. Desktop printing of plans takes a lot of time and yields imperfect results.
 - print
 1. open file with Adobe Reader (not Adobe Professional)
 2. in print dialogue, select: "Poster"; Tile Scale: 100%; Overlap: 1.0in; Cut marks: yes; Labels: yes
 3. use A4, letter, or legal size, possibly A3
 4. Distortion over 250mm span should not exceed 1mm.
 5. after printing one file, check measurements against ruler to 1mm tolerance.
 - join sheets
 1. cut a small wedge out of overlapping cut mark to align it with matching cut mark on sheet below
 2. align cut marks at perimeter of plan first, then the one(s) in the middle.
 3. use masking tape to join sheets
- by hand
 1. ruler and magnifying glass
 1. get large white paper to make a reusable pattern with. Don't measure directly on materials.
 2. to keep drawing orthogonal, use some combination of graph paper, drafting table, and extra careful measurement and marking. An [Incra ruler](#) will help a lot with this.
 3. use magnifying glass to see small words and numbers in the book
 4. plans are as symmetrical and uniform as possible. If two similar-looking areas of a plan look the same size, they are. So from measurements given in plans, infer the rest. There is some redundancy so you don't have to figure out everything and can double-check essential measurements with arithmetic.
 5. use grey-numbered cumulative measurements in plan to quickly mark lines
- trace
 1. trace directly from a flat screen monitor
 2. zoom image till stated measurements match a ruler both horizontally and vertically
 3. tape paper to the screen
 4. mark ends, corners, and intersections of lines precisely and lines just well enough to know what you are looking at later
 5. you will have to overlap multiple sheets of paper for most plans, as with a desktop printer. On each new piece of paper, repeat the last set of marks from the previous so you know where to overlap and tape the sheets together.

3. key

Here is a key to the computer-drafted plans. Find further explanation of symbols, especially dash-dotted lines, in **fabricate** section below.



fabricate

These instructions apply to all components, or as indicated. Read special instructions for each component in its respective section afterward.

1. prepare plans

1. for fabric parts ([sleeping mask](#), [roller blind seals](#))
 1. using ruler and razor knife, cut out parts at outlines (except roller blind seals: cut around group of 8 seals)
 2. cut out tape holes on dash-dotted lines
 3. skip to step “3. make parts” (about two pages below)
2. customize [roller blind plans](#)
 1. cut out parts, leaving as much paper around them as possible
 2. measure variables (h , w , t) and derive measurements for parts. Write measurements on parts next to variables.
 3. cut lines running through stretch arrows
3. customize [threshold vent](#)
 1. using straight edge and razor knife, cut vertical lines running through shrink arrows in grey areas
 2. shrink left and right sections (push them inward, overlapping center section) until cut edges match center section's top and bottom mm marks equal to h
 3. draw vertical lines through mm marks in corners of plan equal to h
 4. cut horizontal line running through center shrink arrow
 5. shrink top and bottom sections until cut edges match center section's left and right mm marks equal to t
 6. adjust point C (at both left and right):
 - downwardly so its distance from point D equals $t/2$
 - horizontally so it lies on new vertical line
 7. cut vertical line running through center stretch arrow
2. transfer plans to material
 1. tape plans to materials
 1. [helix vent shell](#): align plan diagonally to corrugations (or edges or folds) of cardboard
 2. where necessary, cut out small wedges from outlines of plans to align them with edges of materials. With some roller blind frame parts, dash-dotted extensions of outlines aid in this step.
 3. parts with stretch arrows
 - tape one half to edge of material
 - using derived measurements and tape measure, mark material where opposite edge of part should be and tape it there
 4. lay out other plans on materials and tape opposite corners
 2. put three layers (10mm+) of scrap cardboard on work surface
 3. transfer plan to material
 1. poke straight pin through - all lines close to ends - centers of holes
 2. in cardboard - poke all the way through dotted lines - poke just the surface layer through dashed lines
 3. use magnifying glass for ease of marking and geeky precision thrills
 4. remove plan from material
 5. mark holes in material (from: with)
 1. dashed lines: circles (asterisk where indicated)
 2. dotted lines: triangles (asterisk where indicated)
 3. solid lines: squares
 4. dash-dotted lines: question mark
 5. holes: double-circle
 6. mark marked hole
 1. draw short lines from circles, triangles, and squares in the same direction as lines in plan
 2. circles & triangles: add asterisk where indicated
 3. copy joint labels (A, B, C, etc)
3. make parts:

1. keep scrap cardboard on work surface
2. fabric parts (sleeping mask, roller blind seals)
 1. tape plans to fleece over tape holes
 2. roller blind locking seals: cut 8mm slits through plan with razor knife
 3. cut parts exactly around plan outline with scissors
 4. leave plans taped to sleeping mask side seals
 5. remove plans from other parts
 6. repeat steps 1-4 to make
 - 2 sleeping mask center seals
 - 4 sleeping mask covers. For the 4th cover, use optional cotton fabric, add 20mm on side for seam allowance, and leave plan taped to fabric.
 - 4 roller blind locking seals
 7. skip remaining steps 2-4 and resume special instructions
3. cardboard shell of helix vent
 1. trim excess cardboard around pattern but don't cut its edges yet
 2. lightly crease between circled holes with back of table knife tip, avoiding breaking the surface of cardboard
 3. press straight edge into creases to deepen them
 4. turn cardboard over and repeat steps 2 & 3 with triangled holes
 5. cut between squared holes
 6. fold cardboard at creases, bending it well past 90°
4. paper parts
 1. holes with asterisks - triangled pairs, score front, fold backward - circled pairs, score back, fold forward
 1. circled and triangled holes
 - crease front side with back of table knife tip
 - fold at creases forward
 - then, fold triangled creases backward
 2. squared holes: cut with razor knife
 3. double-circled holes - to diameter indicated in plan - use a pointed dowel of appropriate diameter - spin it with your fingers or a power drill as you gently push it into hole
5. voila

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Now that we've covered the basics that apply to all darkroom components, let's look at those in the air, silence, and warmth department.

9 - air

Ventilating a darkroom is trickier than darkening it. After all, now its windows and doors are sealed! So we'll look at ventilation first and darkness in the next chapter.

Even trickier is making it quiet. With noise, we are usually at the mercy of our neighbors whereas we could buy an air purifier if necessary. Ventilation most affects the silence of a darkroom. It also affects temperature. Let's examine each condition and see how they work together in a mechanical system.

ventilation

Below, I will give design constraints and describe various systems of ventilation. But I will first address its physiological importance.

breathe

I have observed a shocking number of people who seem oblivious to their own need for fresh air. Even though everyone knows we die within minutes without air, the importance of constant fresh air has somehow escaped many. I can only attribute this negligence to mass psychosis, my explanation for other appalling features of civilized life. At the risk of insulting your intelligence, I am bound to address this fact of life, though it is one of the most basic, most obvious ones of all.

Fresh air is always important. It is a normal condition of life and, along with warmth and safety, one of our most urgent necessities. Every second of our lives, pentillions of organic processes occur, and virtually all of them require oxygen. It is the most important nutrient we consume. We can live days without water and weeks without food. Not so, air.

Just like food, air becomes a part of one's organism with every breath. This affects quality of life to a very great degree. Though it weighs little, the amount of air you breathe weighs twice as much as the food you eat. In a darkroom, you have little to do all day besides breathe. So if you haven't usually paid attention to air quality, you will likely notice it in darkness.

Whether you do or not, poor air quality cancels most benefits of a retreat. Intermittently airing the room out *does not work*. I mean opening the door a couple times a day with eyes covered. Put this approach out of your mind. This is darkness, not the dark ages. Whatever it takes, always provide yourself with continuous fresh air and especially in darkness.

This means either:

1. following the instructions below
2. hiring an HVAC contractor to clean, repair, replace, or install ventilation in your home
3. moving somewhere the ventilation system just works (like the tropics or a new house in northern Europe)
4. using [oxygen producing plants](#)
5. a combination of these

Somehow, it must be done. Forget darkness a moment. We have no more urgent concern in life than arranging to breathe fresh air continuously and comfortably. Not freezing to death and keeping safe from injury present only rare exceptions to this rule. Keeping it foremost in your thinking about darkroom design construction will help ensure a successful retreat.

constraints

- provides plenty of fresh air
- absolutely lightproof
- silent: hum and harmonics from fan and exterior noises extinguished
- comfortable temperature: no undesired cold drafts
- economical: ie, no wasted heat to the outdoors. This is more involved and a lower priority than retreating itself, so don't get stuck on it. It requires a heat recovery ventilator (HRV). Besides significantly lowering heating costs, an HRV improves air quality and comfort in nearly all climates. More about it below.

system

Somehow, fresh air has to get into the darkroom and stale air has to get out, without letting in noise or light.

In the terms of the HVAC industry (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning), the fresh air vent is the *supply* and the stale air vent is the *return*.

Sometimes, supply and return vents exist in the same room. This is the fanciest version of *balanced* mechanical ventilation. If your place has it, thank your lucky stars. Just make sure it runs continuously. Unless your room is huge, intermittent is not good enough.

More commonly, balanced systems put supplies in bedrooms and living rooms, and returns in kitchens and bathrooms. This means air escapes a bedroom around the door. Unless the space outside the door is totally dark, this calls for a *threshold* lightproof vent (plans below).

Balanced systems are rare. More common are negative pressure systems: bedroom and living room windows act as passive supplies and bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans as active returns. In this case, a lightproof multi-purpose *helix* vent, built into a window blind, is the supply. Or a silencer if noise surrounds your dwelling. A threshold vent is the return, letting stale air escape the bedroom to the exhaust fan.

Rooms with totally passive ventilation rely on open windows, exterior vents, and infiltration through cracks (that will get sealed against light). Such rooms will need helix vents in blinds at different heights to take advantage of convection. But they probably call for a fan and a silencer, maybe ducting.

By closely observing buildings I have discovered some simple ways to ventilate them. Sometimes rooms have lightproof and sound-dampened holes built into them in unexpected places:

- unused holes for pipes, wires, chimneys, and ventilation.
- behind a cupboard or inside a closet
- a removable panel or piece of trim that could be temporarily replaced with a panel with a hole in it.

For example, I once found a cosmetically damaged door in the garbage at a building supply store exactly the same size as my darkroom's door. So I stored the original door and cut holes in the damaged door for ventilation.

Another darkroom had no ventilation or suitable holes anywhere. Except it had no door. So we built a frame inside the doorway with a narrow door on one side and a narrower panel on the other. We cut holes in the panel for ventilation ducts. We fixed the frame in the existing doorway with metal straps screwed into old hinge holes. So we left no trace when dismantling the darkroom.

Similarly, we hung 7m of ducting that ran through three rooms; attached a silencer to it; made three window panels; and imperfectly covered five more windows with only one new screw hole in the entire rented house. And that hole was invisible behind a loose piece of trim. "Leave no trace" is a fun game that often improves design.

Sewage pipes drain downward but are ventilated upward. Once, friends and I replaced a flush toilet with a composting toilet. The exposed drain pipe, being oversize and in a single-story house, wasn't subject to backflow. So it proved a perfect exhaust duct for a case fan at floor level. Imagination conquers all obstacles (and renews itself in darkness).

lightproof

Here are further design constraints, photos, plans, and instructions for making and installing lightproof vents.

constraints

(helix vent specifications in parentheses / helix sr version){threshold vent specifications in curly braces}:

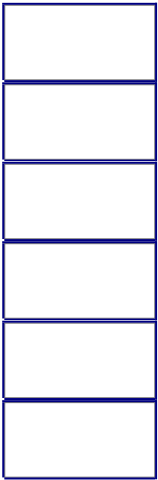
- durable (protective cardboard shell or inside silencer){subject to damage by kicking but easily rebuilt and can be made of sheet metal or shielded with cardboard or thin wooden boards}

- thin enough to fit between blind and window (80mm) or door and threshold {adjustable}
- cross-sectional area $>75\text{cm}^2$ (90cm^2){ $60\text{--}120\text{cm}^2$ }
- fully traps light, sending light around at least 5 corners (7 corners / 5 corners){6 corners}
- short airway (240mm / in-silencer version, 160){140mm}
- minimal size (87 x 220 x 216 / in-silencer version 87 x 148 x 260){fits under door, sticks out 20mm each side and up 60mm}
- easy to make (so-so){yes}
- elegant (yes: simple compact form, uses common materials, zig-zag-shaped passage accommodates natural helical movement of air){yes}
- cheap (\$4 in materials, 2-hour assembly time){\$2 in materials, 1-hour assembly time}

helix vent



This photo is of the old helix vent. The new one is shorter, narrower, thicker. At the edge opening, the cardboard has a lip and the core has flaps.



I call it a helix vent because of how air actually moves through it: like a corkscrew. It might look like air would zigzag through like light. But air is a fluid like water and takes the path of least resistance. Which is to maintain the same curved trajectory by *helixing* through. Because the helix is the natural form of fluids in motion under any circumstance, this minimizes friction within the airstream as well.

The helix vent can go anywhere. Flaps of either its edge or face opening poke through a slot and get taped or glued down to the other side.

- blind: attach it to the back of a blind and crack the window behind it.
- door: cut slot(s) in it and use helix vent instead of a threshold vent.
- wall (leading outside or to another room): attach vent to a flat cardboard box and attach box to the wall over the vent. Vent can be either supply or return
- silencer
 - outside: with shell, attached at face opening
 - inside: without shell, attached at face or edge. I also made a second “s” version (s for short, straight, silencer). It is simpler, more efficient, higher capacity that attaches at the edge. It has fewer light-stopping corners and no shell, so it is only for installing inside the silencer or other enclosure with two or more corners. S version drawings in next section.

If your darkroom's ventilation is passive, put vents both low and high in room to enable convection. This works better the greater the inside and outside temperature difference; the greater the vertical distance between vents; and the more vents.

Do you need a more compact vent? I used the 3-4-5 triangle ratio in the channels, so it can be shrunk to make a narrower, shorter air passage. Do you wish to manufacture vents? A set of simple wooden or sheet metal templates and jigs can speed production tremendously while keeping equipment and investment to a minimum. Start in your garage.

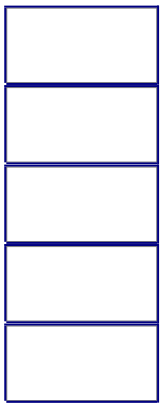
Materials are simple and non-toxic: heavy black acid-free paper, cardboard, fabric, and wood glue. Look in art or office supply shops for the paper. North Americans, use this paper weight and size [conversion chart](#). If large sheets are unavailable, glue small sheets together between folds in plan. Wood glue has high tack and quick drying time, easing assembly. School glue will work, too.

Read through instructions once while studying plans.

1. materials (see plans for quantities)
 1. paper (for channels and walls)
 - black, acid-free bond, coverstock
 - available at art supply, stationery, and book shops. In Europe, common posterboard is often acid-free.
 - two posterboard-size sheets (500 x 650 minimum) per vent
 - weights
 - channel: 120–300gsm
 - wall: 180–400gsm
 - total: 350–600gsm
 2. cardboard, single layer, 3–4.2mm thick (for shell, unnecessary inside silencer)
 3. fabric: polar fleece, black, medium weight (for seal. Quality check: 10 layers of it in a stack should measure 30-35mm high)
2. follow instructions in [air > fabricate](#)
3. sub-assembly
 1. attach wall channels to walls
 - referring to assembly and key, get a clear idea of how parts go together
 - glue channel and wall joints in alphabetical order between question marked holes. Channels lie between dash-dotted lines.
 - glue narrow part of flaps to top and bottom of walls. Wide part should fold slightly upward
 - position middle channels against upwardly angled flaps of wall channels and glue in place
 2. glue joints of shell together with shell seals
4. assemble core
 1. put inner and outer wall sub-assemblies together and glue outer top and bottom over inner top and bottom. Note how V-shaped cut-outs in inner wall butt up against middle channel of outer wall.
 2. glue 20mm wide flaps of outer wall to inner wall
5. shell
 1. when using shell, put core inside and attach fleece seal with glue. This is a 20mm wide double-layer strip of fleece that goes around the flaps of the face opening. Three sides of the seal attach to the shell flaps. The fourth side goes across the core. Double-layers overlap at corners.
 2. when not in use, store core inside shell, taping up flap by edge opening. Cover exposed part of core with scrap piece of cardboard to protect core from being crushed.
6. installation

1. determine vent location - in blind, panel, or silencer - whether it will attach at edge or face opening - shell is unnecessary when installed inside silencer or other enclosure
 - vent should not touch window handles, locks, or frame
2. mark slot with slot plan
 - the slot plan spaces slot correctly on most blinds and panels - face opening, 50 x 216, on blinds, panels, or outside silencer, with shell - edge opening, 63 x 216, inside silencer or other enclosure, without shell
3. cut out slot
4. position vent over slot and fit vent flaps through it
5. when attaching to soft window covering like fabric, plastic sheeting, or cardboard, pull long flap snug, use back of table knife tip to crease the outside of it right where it passes through slot
6. fold flap at crease and tape it to cover. Tape is removable for vent reuse in another configuration later if you like. Only glue it in place if you are certain of not moving it for years.
7. repeat with other long flap, then with short flaps
8. attach shell to cover with tape, glue, or screws going through cover, into wooden braces if cover is soft
9. cover shell with foil and/or white paper to minimize warping by sun

helix-s



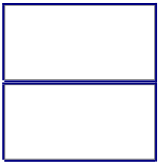
Follow helix vent instructions above, adapting as necessary.

threshold vent

A bedroom door often has a gap at the bottom—the threshold—for ventilation. In mechanically ventilated dwellings, this gap allows air to flow out of the bedroom toward the dwelling's return vent (or perhaps just a window). The threshold vent lets air out but no light in. Its design adapts to door thickness, the height of the gap between bottom of door and threshold, width of door, and width of vent necessary for sufficient airflow. It works if gap is 15-33mm.

If greater than 33mm, add cardboard or wood to the bottom of the door or build up threshold with boards. Or modify the design. If less than 15mm, you can trim the bottom of the door. Otherwise, or if bottom of door fits into a stepped threshold, this vent will not work. Somehow, air has to get out of the room without letting in light.

Block light that reaches the door from the outside as much as possible. For example, make a [removable partition](#) in the hallway, which can also darken the path between darkroom and bathroom. It's a wooden frame a little wider than the hallway so it wedges in at an angle, with a fleece seal around the frame, filled with black plastic sheeting with helix vents as needed.



1. materials

- paper, acid-free, 400-600gsm bond or coverstock (empty cereal and frozen pizza boxes work, too)
- muslin fabric, black
- fleece fabric, black

2. follow instructions in [air > fabricate](#)

3. blacken inside of ends (grey area) with marker

4. cut fabric to cover:

- area of bottom of door surrounded by vent + 30mm above each side ($180-2_{h_} \times w$)
- threshold ($t+40 \times \text{width of threshold}+40$)
- inside of vent except ends ($t+200 \times w+5$; area between corners p, q, r, s)
- underside of vent + 10mm all the way around ($t+60 \times w+20$)

5. attach fabric

- with tape to door and threshold
- with glue to vent

6. fold up ends to make a box-like structure, as in threshold perspective drawing

7. tape flaps to outside of vent body (this can be undone later to store vent flat)

8. tape vent to door at the triangular flaps

9. fill in gaps on each side of vent with fleece baffle, as in drawing. Fleece measurement formula: $20+2h+t/2 \times \text{width of gap}+10$. Use 2 layers. Horizontal edge of fleece should be 10mm above bottom of door. If it drags out of position, weight it with a stick inside, half the thickness of the door. It is 5mm extra wide on each side to seal against the vent and the door jam. Cut away any fleece that interferes with door seal (see below).

soundproofing

principles

Noise is another form of pollution a darkroom must provide shelter from. Noise comes from outside from machines, traffic—including big boats and airplanes—construction, music, fireworks, and talking and playing people. It comes from inside from other people in adjoining spaces, machines—refrigerators, fans, water pipes and pumps—music. At some point, noise defeats the retreat. It must be attenuated somehow, even in remote locations.

The four principles of soundproofing are clear and widely understood:

1. mass: heavy materials absorb low-frequency (bass) sounds
2. absorption: fine fibers absorb high frequencies and prevent echoing in air cavities
3. dampening: using rubbery material to dampen vibration in resonant materials like metal, wood, masonry, glass
4. decoupling: disconnect structures and airspaces to prevent transmission of sound vibration from source to receiver

[Soundproofing tutorials](#) abound online.

These principles apply to ventilation as well. Dampening and decoupling figure in fan mounting, and mass

and absorption in silencer design. The silencer eliminates most noise, including from the fan.

Fans make noise directly and indirectly. Small fans have little hum to start with, but they run at high speed, so they develop a hum and harmonics. Bigger fans start with more of a hum but they run more slowly for the same air output, so they develop less noise overall. Avoid amplifying these vibrations by using the fan mount, below.

Even the quietest fan makes noise because of the friction of air itself against the fan blades, housing, ducting, and vents. Because of air friction, fully silencing a ventilation system requires a silencer of some type.

silencer

A silencer is an expanded duct section lined with insulation. Its greater volume depressurizes the airstream. This transforms low-frequency sound into high-frequency sound. High-frequencies vibrate the fine fibers lining the silencer, transforming the sound into heat. Genius!

You can make or buy duct silencers.

- my double-turn box design is below, \$2-\$10 depending on your material salvaging skills.
- [DIY straight tube design](#)
- [acoustic ducting](#), at least 3m with 2-3 bends
- [silencer for sound booths](#). With dark insulation and enough bends, this eliminates the need for a lightproof vent.
- manufactured silencers are made of metal and super durable materials and cost \$100-200.

In the past year, I built two box silencers into window recesses. They were simpler and much more effective than I hoped. They swallowed up sound. One of two window panes formed one face of the box. The window recess in the thick wall provided the 4 sides. Boards formed the box's outer face against the inside of security bars, about 20cm from the glass. I bought shredded fabric insulation to line it. See *darkness > window > hard panel* section for more about adapting the design below.

Thanks to Richard Nöjd of Skattungbyn, Sweden, for finding these cool solutions. Silencers and acoustic ducting are standard industrial components, making buildings quiet worldwide.



The plan is straightforward. It is just a wooden box with two baffles (internal half walls). The resulting zig-zag channel has a hole at each end. Each hole has 4 possible locations: faces, side, or end. Cut a circle for ducting or fan, a slot for a helix vent. The fan mount adapts to all 4 locations.

The box is lined with porous non-toxic insulation. Pillow filling, quilt batting, cellulose, clean wool, shredded fabric, wood fiber could all work. Note, the shredded fabric and wood fiber I've tried had faint smells that I disliked. I feel hesitant to use acoustic foam because I don't know what chemicals are in it. Fiberglass and rockwool are unpleasant to work with and fiberglass often smells of chemicals. Closed cell foam like styrofoam, polyisocyanurate boards, camping pads, etc, is not porous so will not work.

Discarded furniture is made of melamine, an excellent material for silencer boxes. It is particle board with plastic veneer, usually 15 or 19mm thick. Marine plywood uses non-toxic glue. Otherwise, avoid plywood or line with aluminum foil.

Use a table saw to cut the 8 pieces so they come out square. Or have a carpenter do it for you, including the holes. Just take the drawing with you, modified for your needs. The carpenter probably has some extra melamine laying around to sell you cheap. To screw pieces together, first drill pilot holes so edges don't break. I always drill pilot holes in wood less than 30mm wide for this reason.

To insulate, make square tubes of metal screen covered in porous fabric to form the channel. Stuff insulation around it and close the box. Or cut and glue sheet insulation in place. Roughen the plastic surface first with sandpaper so the glue sticks.

machines

fan

Use a case fan, also known as a squirrel cage fan. Specifications:

- DC (direct current)
- 12V (volts)
- 120–360mm diameter
- 600–1200RPM (revolutions per minute)
- maximum 20dB (decibels)
- 70-200cmh (cubic meters per hour) or 40-120cfm (cubic feet per minute)

120mm is the most common size, salvageable from a desktop computer tower, \$1 at thrift stores or flea markets, or \$2–20 at a computer or electronics store. Once you have experimented a bit, Noctua makes the best and quietest fans available, of 120, 140, and 200mm diameter, and as low as 7dB. Rexflo offers a [360mm jumbo fan](#). Avoid AC (alternating current) fans due to their penetrating hum (more on noise below).

Power it from the grid with an AC/DC universal adapter with pole switching and variable voltage for speed control (\$5 at variety stores). Off grid, use car or household batteries or a solar power system. To control speed, use a 12V DC/DC car adapter from eBay. Attach one fan wire at each end of the pack. No fan movement? Switch the +/- poles on the adapter or switch the positive and negative wires.

More about an [ideal fan](#), below.

fan mount



This mounting design totally dampens vibration from the fan. The silencer then absorbs the fan's airborne noise. It is inspired by studio microphones and tensegrity structures. The resulting module fits over any hole in the silencer.

The design is fairly self-explanatory:

- description
 - a fan held in mid-air by a web of 4 concentric rings of rubber sprung by 4 sticks in the web's middle, hung on screw posts anchored in a wood base
 - modular, fitting on or in silencer in any configuration
- materials
 - base: 20 x 240 x 240 (center hole, 120 diameter). I suggest having a carpenter cut this for you to get a precisely round hole.

- case fan: 120mm
- screws: 4@5 x 50 machine + 8 nuts, 16 washers
- wood sticks: 4@3 x 10 x 154
- rubber: (from bicycle inner tube) 4 strips, 1.5–2 thick, 15 wide. Lengths: 1@500, 2@660, 1@820
- tie: wire, twist ties, zip ties, staples, or string
- base-fan gap: 0.5–1
- assembly
 - overlap ends of each rubber strip into rings by 20mm and stapled once at first, 4 times after getting the lengths right. They should be barely stretched, just taut enough to suspend the fan.
 - ties: connect each ring to the next
 - trim rubber to 12mm width at screws
 - align fan directly over the hole in base. Gravity may pull it to one side or another. Tug on webbing to reposition it.
 - adjust base-fan gap with nuts and washers and tugging webbing.
 - screw base onto silencer over a hole in any position
 - keep wires clear of outer 3 rings to prevent them from transmitting vibration.

power

In my first major darkroom in Guatemala, I had no electricity. I survived on foraged fruit and meals with my friends, Josh and Nadia, and would spend my last quetzal (worth \$0.12) on darkroom building materials. At first, to create a draft, I actually made lamps that burned cooking oil inside a lightproof chimney. It was a messy, unreliable, and labor-intensive process no one should ever repeat. But it worked long enough for my brain to make the leap to the 20th century and remember the existence of batteries.

AA batteries made a quick and dirty solution. One night requires 4-8 batteries, alkaline or rechargeable. Connect them in series: positive end of one to negative end of the next. Each battery is 1.5V, so 4 batteries=6V. Some fans need 7V or 9V to start, thus 5 or 6 batteries. Increase fan speed by adding batteries to the pack, up to 8. Increase pack life by using bigger batteries or another series in parallel (fan wires contacting ends of both series).

I was isolated and just learning. This simple discovery encouraged me after weeks of the absurdity of oil lamp-driven convective ventilation. However, changing batteries every day also quickly got to be a pain. So I bit the bullet and got a proper solar power system for less than \$100:

- solar panel: 12V. Size depends on location: 10W in Guatemala, 40W in rainy Oregon winter. (\$10–\$100 on eBay)
- charge controller: 12V, 4 or 6-pole (\$35 on eBay)
- battery: 12V 7A, lead acid (\$30 at a motorcycle shop)
- wire, 20 AWG, enough to connect everything (\$0–10 from your shed, a dumpster, yard sale, or hardware store).

Once built, maintain by wiping dust off panel once a week. What a luxury! Of course, if you have reliable wind or hydro power, that's great.

warmth

For heat, I often use a portable oil-filled heater. It is silent and can be positioned by a window or vent to warm incoming cold fresh air. Before buying, check that its indicator lights are easy to cover (not glowing from the interior through multiple cracks) and that it doesn't rattle or hum. Old or cheap ones often do.

If you live in a cold place, I highly recommend buying and installing a [Heat Recovery Ventilator](#) (HRV) for both health and economy. It conducts heat from return air to supply air while keeping airstreams separate

using an exchanging core and fans.

Fine wire heat exchange (fiwihex) technology is my favorite. It is 15x more efficient than conventional plate exchangers. Fiwihex cores have been available for \$150 from [Viking House](#) and [Vision4Energy](#) and possibly [Fresh-R](#). These companies' *Breathing Windows* embody an intriguing design for a complete ventilation system. But I lived with one for six months and found it too loud due to its small, high-RPM fans with integrated motors and no silencing. Thus my thinking about silent fans (more below).

The most interesting plate exchangers use the Mitsubishi *Lossnay* core, found in Energy Recovery Ventilators such as [Renewaire's](#). Made of high-tech paper, the Lossnay recovers heated water vapor as well as heat from air. Lossnay's principle has DIY-potential, using 25m² of non-siliconized parchment paper ("sandwich paper" in supermarkets). I have conceived a design for it. Please write me for details.

fan idea

A heat recovery ventilator requires two fans. The only trouble with case fans is that they are axial fans. These do not efficiently generate enough pressure to overcome the resistance in ventilation systems (long pipes, heat exchanging cores, filters, convoluted vents). But centrifugal fans can. These are pricey, starting around \$50, and usually AC powered, so they hum. DC or EC (Electronically Commutated) centrifugal fans cost even more.

It would be nice to have cheap, quiet fans for this: large, low RPM [homemade centrifugal fans](#) with DC motors *outside* the airstream in a separate, soundproofed case. In late 2016, I prototyped a 50cm diameter fan from wood, cardboard, paper, and steel (photos upon request). The AC motor I salvaged from a discarded fan taught me the hard way about AC hum. The rubber inner tube motor mount and foam driveshaft did not fully decouple and dampen it. And air friction in the fan across the blades caused a surprising amount of noise. Each airstream would require a silencer. But this design ought to totally eliminate fan noise while producing high volume. The fan's parts could be metal or plastic and lasercut according to an open-source, electronic plan file.

purity

In some cases, an air purifier becomes necessary. If your house is near a factory, busy roads, in a smoggy city, or near a smelly restaurant or neighbor, get one. The main types I have heard of are HEPA filtering, ionizing, and ozonating purifiers. I have never used one and it requires more research, but it could be integrated with your ventilation system. For example, I have seen ionizing units small enough to fit inside the silencer. If air quality at your home is bad enough, consider moving. There's lots of space left in the countryside and it doesn't have to be costly or complicated.

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That's it for ventilation, silence, power, heat, and purification. On to lightproofing doors and windows.

10 - darkness

There is darkness, and then there is *darkness*. We're going for the second kind: perfect and absolute. There is a million-percent difference between 99% and 100% dark. Then the mind has nothing left to hold onto, no reason to resist. Finally it can let go, fall into the well of itself, and be renewed.

Though often easier to deal with than ventilation, light is relentless. It sneaks sideways through a single layer of clear plastic tape; through heavy fabric; around multiple, darkened corners; and at joints and edges of everything. After suffering many defeats at its hands, I have developed equally formidable means of eliminating it. I will now bestow them upon you so that you, too, can become a Conan the Barbarian of lightproofing.

Generally, to darken a space,

1. use dense inherently lightproof sheet material in 1-2 layers to cover area
2. use soft black fabric to seal edges
3. outer surfaces exposed to sun should be reflective: white or silver
4. in vents, channel light around 6 dark-surfaced corners

Usually, using fewer layers means:

- easier, more reliable operation
- better function
- neater appearance
- greater need for precision

If improvising for [tonight](#): use many layers. With each layer, block as much light as close to the source as possible. First, block 99% the light. Then 99% of what's left. Then the last 0.01% is easier to address or ignore. Close any curtains in rooms or hallways outside a darkroom's door. Where possible, prevent direct sunlight from hitting your darkening measures with shade.

Edges are tricky. Black polar fleece is the best thing I have found for sealing edges. It's like a sponge for light. It is widely available, cheap, and forgiving. A knit fabric, its edges require no hem. Just cut and attach with school glue or tape.

We will start with the simplest and most portable design, which darkens the small space immediately around the eyes: the sleeping mask.

sleeping mask



The quickest way to obtain a large measure of darkness wherever you are is to cover your eyes with a good sleeping mask. No mask is comfortable for long periods while blocking all light and staying in place. And our skin has enough light-receptors for it to wake us up. So it doesn't replace a darkroom. But it is cheap, quick, accessible, discreet, and very effective for immediately improving sleep. It is a good first step toward the profound rest darkness makes possible.

I have not tried every mask on the market. But so far, none has satisfied my requirements. So I designed one that works well. The strap design is very effective and would improve most existing masks. Instant and standard versions described below.

constraints

- blocks all light
 - through the mask
 - at its edges
- comfortable for many hours
- stays in place during sleep and gentle activity
- cheap and simple to make
- easily replaced elastic (I guess skin and hair oils degrade it quickly)

Some measurements in the drawing are marked with a tilde (~). This means they are adjustable. I have not developed a fitting system yet. So make one mask according to drawing. Then adapt it according to its comfortability and light-blocking ability on your face. The drawing is of the mask that fits me. I have a not-unusual face for a thin man of mostly Northern European heritage.

instant



Put this one together in a few minutes. It's the mask below with no seals. Combined with a mostly darkened room, it blocks 95% of light and lets me sleep in and nap.

The black fabric is 100% cotton jersey from a T-shirt, 250mm x 440. Fold it in 4 layers. Staple it along its length. The 4 strap anchors are either 3mm holes poked through with a ballpoint pen tip, elastic going through them then knotted, or 2 staples each. Knot where comfortable, endknots (overhand or figure-8) on one end, two half-hitches or slip knots on the other. A slipknot in each end of the vertical elastic piece that tightens around the horizontal straps.

standard

1. materials

- soft black knit fabric: polar fleece, cotton jersey, or other natural smooth fiber. Cotton is cooler than fleece, which can feel scratchy, too. Use a knit if possible, but a soft, loose weave could work. Then add a 40mm to width and length as a seam allowance to fold underneath when sewing it to other cover pieces. A colored piece of cloth on the outside makes finding the mask in the light a lot easier.
- elastic, 5mm, white, which helps to find the mask
- cord, 3mm polyester or nylon, white
- thread

2. follow instructions in [air > fabricate](#)

3. attach side seals to cover

- put cotton cover with plan still attached on 2-3 layers of cardboard
- each side seal has a 7mm wide flap divided by 5mm cut in middle and a small circle on dashed stitch line. Two side seals=4 divisions.
 1. align one division at a time to grey marks on cover
 2. tape in place
 3. sew on stitch line of plan to or from small circle
 4. tear plan in middle to bend seal
 5. repeat for other three divisions
 6. remove all paper from fabric

4. attach center seals

- fold center seals in half the long way and fit them between side seals, making everything symmetrical and even
- pin center seals to cover through their folds
- sew (maybe hand sew) center seals to cover

5. bind seals

- hand-sew seals together through sideways stitchline
- pull thread with minimal force, leaving seam neither loose nor tight.
- the stitchline is a little distant—7mm—from the zigzagging edges of the seals. This allows the seals to hold each other up to fill in the gaps on each side of the nose. Yet the unbound edges of the seals can fan out to more gently make contact with the face.

6. sew cover
 - stack all cover pieces, matching up edges evenly
 - fold seam allowance of cotton cover under and pin in place to other cover pieces
 - sew around edge of cover to join all pieces
7. prepare straps
 - cut elastic
 1. 2 pieces 500mm long
 2. 1 piece 250mm long
 - cut cord, 4 pieces 30mm long
 - melt all ends with flame to prevent fraying
 - tie figure-8 knots in ends of elastic
8. attach straps
 - fold cord in half, making a loop. Sew loop to front of mask at points **x** and **z** so loops stick out over corners from cover 1mm and cord ends are pointed toward center of cover
 - tie one end of a 500mm piece to a loop at point **x** with a slip knot
 - tie other end at other point **x** with taut line hitch
 - repeat steps 2 & 3 with other 500mm piece at points **y**
 - tie 250mm piece to 500mm pieces at points **z** with slip knots
 - the taut line hitch, when tight, slides on the part of the strap it is tied to, then locks in place, creating a strap of adjustable length. Adjust straps for comfort. Bottom strap should go around neck, top strap should go high around back of head.

This is a new design. I feel there is an easier way to do it, but this works for now.

door seal



Black polar fleece makes darkening a door easy and quick. Use masking tape at first. Tack edge of fleece in position with 10mm pieces of masking tape every 400mm. Then put a continuous strip of tape over the edge. Once you get the hang of it and know where you want the fleece to stay, use glue where possible (glue removal described below).

1. sides and top: affix 50-70mm wide strips of black fabric to door jam with masking tape or white school glue. When closing, door should catch middle of fabric, pulling and bending it around one edge of the door and fill the gap between the door and jam.
2. latch and hinges: make perpendicular cuts in edges of fleece to accommodate these
3. bottom: where no threshold vent is necessary, make a fleece baffle the width of the door. See threshold vent perspective drawing for baffle design. It is a half-tube of black fleece fabric that hangs from the bottom of the door on each side and touches the threshold or floor underneath. Tape a 100mm wide strip of black fabric to the threshold or floor under the closed door. Black fabric against black fabric makes a good light seal. Partially darken space beyond door with curtains or partitions to ensure darkness in the darkroom.
4. if light still leaks in the sides or top, affix a second strip to door, as in drawing
5. to remove glued-on fabric, wet it. This will dissolve the glue and the strips will peel off easily after a few minutes. As this happens, use a wet rag to wipe off glue residue before it dries again.

If door has a window, use one of the methods below to cover it.

blinds

To darken windows, use one of the five methods I have come up with—rollerblind, velcro, panel, plastic, and

foil—or have blackout blinds custom made with side rails for 10-100x the money. Or invent something else.

constraints

- perfectly darkening
- quickly and easily operated so it actually gets used
- good-looking
- discreet: looks like a blind or curtain from the outside (not a secret cannabis-growing operation)
- accommodates lightproof vent
- window or trickle vent can be open behind it
- holds its shape over time in different temperatures and humidities
- durable
- of common, cheap materials
- reasonably easy to make
- easily uninstalled
- leaves few marks or holes

intro

Blackout blind fabric is plastic-coated to seal tiny holes in the weave. Like anything, fabric quality varies greatly. Light still leaks through the surface of some fabric. Here is how to test it.

Use a high-power flashlight too bright to look directly into, like a big Mag-Lite or tactical flashlight. Get a sample of fabric big enough to cover the flashlight's lens twice. Test the flashlight to make sure it works. Tightly tape one layer of fabric over the lens with lightproof tape, then another. Put it by your bed. Quickly darken your sleeping room as well as possible with blankets, cardboard, foil, etc, and go to sleep. After waking, before looking directly at any light sources, point the flashlight at your eyes and turn it on for a few seconds. You should see no light. Turn off flashlight to prevent burning. If you see light, the fabric is unacceptable. Remove one layer of fabric. If you now see light, then use two layers of that fabric. If you still see no light, you have found excellent blackout fabric you can use in one layer. Please let me know the brand. Blackout fabric that works perfectly in one layer is rare.

If buying a complete rollerblind, buy from an established local blind shop that cannot easily escape dissatisfied customers. Do not buy on the internet, regardless of price, guarantees, or reviews on (fake) review sites. (Yes, I learned this the hard way). Buy only well-known, internationally distributed brands (which generally cause the least complaints). Get a guarantee of absolute lightproofness of the entire installation. Tell them you will be testing it with high-tech equipment. That is, with human eyes that have had three days to adjust to darkness.

Some fabric has toxic PVC (polyvinyl chloride) coatings. Get full disclosure of material content. The specifications of one product I looked at stretched to three pages. But still, under “coating”, the manufacturer divulged merely one word: “polymer”. This is another word for plastic. This could have meant PVC, so I did not buy it. It's too bad. Later I found out they use the industry standard, acrylic foam.

Search for PVC-free blackout blinds and blackout fabric. A handful of companies make blinds for traveling (especially with children). Some sell the fabric they use by the meter.

Below, I describe four methods to make blinds: roller, velcro, plastic, and foil. The rollerblind is most recognizable. For ease of fabrication and low cost, it has borders of heavy paper instead of aluminum or wood. It operates easily and looks good. It works with or without a vent. Making it takes patience and precision (difficulty level: 3 out of 5). The velcro blind is easier to make (difficulty: 2), almost as easy to operate, good looking if unconventional, but harder to remove. Plastic cover can be reused, even traveled with. It is the easiest and quickest method. Foil cover is for one-time use, easiest to get materials for, very cheap, quick, only a little tricky to make, and its PVC tape is toxic. So only use if really pinched for time,

money, or material availability.

If your room's air supply comes through your window, attach a lightproof vent to blind near the top. Attach it to the outside of the blind if there is space for it. Test position of vent before cutting a slot for it to make sure it clears the window frame and handles. If your supply and return air pass through your window, use two lightproof vents, one near the top and one near the bottom of a blind.

Some casement windows leave no space for a blind or vent because they are flush with the wall and open inwardly on hinges. In this case, either:

1. build a deep-set frame around window to attach blind to
2. sew a velcro blind into the shape of a box so it attaches to the wall but then sticks out enough to allow the window to open behind it and contain a [helix vent](#).
3. remove window temporarily and replace it with a solid panel of wood of the same size with a slot cut in it for vent. See hard panel section below.

I will list the methods from quickest and cheapest to slowest and most expensive (in terms of both money and time).

lesson

Now for a quick lesson on window types and anatomy.

- types:
 - fixed
 - opening
 - sliding
 - horizontal
 - double hung (vertical)
 - casement (hinged)
- anatomy, from center of window to wall:
 - pane: the glass itself
 - frame: holds pane
 - sash: holds frame, which closes against it. Often same as frame in non-opening windows.
 - sill: holds sash; it's the surface where you put plants, candles, etc, but also corresponding sides and top
 - recess: entire opening in wall where window is. Often same as sill. For roller blind, measure sill where it meets wall or trim
 - trim: sometimes surrounds recess. It's on wall where it meets sill. If trim has a gently curved surface, bend roller blind rails to fit it. But do not attach blind to convoluted trim.
 - wall

foil

disposable

This consists of foil taped over windows. It does not meet several of the criteria above. I put it first because most people have it now or can get it cheaply in minutes at the corner store. And use it for darkness tonight.

This only works on non-opening windows, where you don't need a vent. It helps if no light leaks through any joints of windows. Otherwise they can be sealed with tape or mitigated with dark curtain.

Foil only works one time. When it bends, it cracks and creates light leaks you can't see till the middle of a retreat. Bummer. But it works in a pinch if you are careful.

The trick is to unroll foil directly onto the glass and cut it in place. This prevents bending and cracking. Do not attempt to unroll and tear it from the box, away from the window, then apply it.

Do not tape foil to the frame, suspended in midair away from the window. It will rattle as air pressure changes near the window. Annoying.

1. materials:

- aluminum foil, heavy duty if possible (the wide stuff for grilling)
- electrical tape (19mm black vinyl), gaffer's tape, black masking tape
- scissors
- pizza cutter

2. assemble

- with scissors, cut several 2cm pieces of tape and hang them within reach of the window (keep scissors handy)
- starting 1cm from top left of window pane, unroll foil downward 10cm. Lightly tape foil at top with small piece of tape.
- unroll foil to bottom and cut 3cm longer than the pane with sharp scissors
- unstick tape at top and reposition foil so edges extend 1cm past pane
- tape right side of foil to glass with 2cm pieces of tape every 40-50cm
- press foil into corners of pane, folding edges onto frame
- tape top, bottom, and left sides of foil in place with 2cm pieces of tape
- repeat steps 2–7 but on right side of pane, then in the middle of pane
- tape full length of foil seams, where sheets overlap. As you pull out a length of tape, it will stretch. Let it relax before applying it.
- tape foil to frame
- tack dark blankets over window to catch any leaks

reusable

Use this method to quickly reduce light where absolute lightproofness is not required or practical. For example, an unsealed bedroom door is almost dark enough for nightly sleep, except morning sun comes through a small curtainless hallway window. Or during travel.

Using white school glue (PVA), attach foil to cardboard or black posterboard. Once dry, wedge board in place, prop up with a chair, or hang with 1-2 pieces of tape.

plastic

This method consists of taping thick black plastic over windows. This is my main method for quickly darkening rooms for one-time use. I roll up the plastic for use elsewhere.

1. materials (test whatever you use for absolute lightproofness)

- 1 layer: extra-thick black polyethylene or EPDM rubber for pond lining or construction
- 2-3 layers
 - common construction sheeting, black polyethylene, .2mm thick, found at building supply houses in rolls or off a roll by the meter
 - farmer's plastic/agricultural plastic/"light deprivation" tarp used in greenhouses, one side white, the other black or white with thin layer of black sandwiched between
- several layers: large black garbage bags

2. assembly

- **Important:** First, cover inside of windows with white paper or fabric. Dual or triple-pane windows can be damaged or even explode if simply sealed with black plastic! Black plastic also attracts attention.
- measure and cut plastic to extend 100mm beyond window recess and any trim in case light

and air leak between the window and wall. Or, if all joints and seals are perfect, and the window will not open during rest, cut plastic to almost cover frame.

- tape plastic to wall (or frame). Use 25mm black masking tape: Intertape PF3 or PB1, Shurtape T106. It is effective, cheap, sticks and conforms well to irregular wall surfaces, yet comes off easily without residue (unless you leave it up a long time). Not perfectly lightproof, it works with the plastic. Local art and professional lighting supply stores carry it. If it is not sticky enough on your surfaces, use photographic masking tape or black kraft paper tape. These are thicker (more lightproof), stronger, stickier, and more expensive. Look for ProGaff (formerly Permacel) 743, Shurtape 724 or 743, and 3M 235.
- avoid electrical tape and most duct and gaffer's tape. They are made of soft vinyl and especially obnoxious adhesives and are thus extremely toxic in their manufacture, handling, use, and disposal. One exception I know is Shurtape PC 657, a polyethylene coated gaffer's tape. Do research; the devil is in the details.
- if the room gets too hot from direct sun, then before taping up the black plastic, cut a piece of cardboard the same size as the recess. Tape or glue aluminum foil to one side of it. Leave 15mm spaces between the strips of foil to allow moisture to pass through. Set the cardboard in recess, foil facing outward. In really hot areas, cover windows with foil from the outside or get exterior blinds, shutters, or awnings.
- if it is a cold room, face the foil inwardly to reflect heat back in.

hard panel

I mentioned this at the end of the intro above regarding casement windows. I have been making these more and more because of their soundproofing and lightproofing qualities and the wide availability of discarded furniture for free material. Unlike glass, it allows you to cut a hole to easily attach a duct or vent. Use it just for retreats or make it permanent if you have extra opening windows.

It can form the face of a custom silencer that is built into the window recess. The silencer design is very simple. Study it and adapt it to the size of your window. Using a panel for one face is usually easier than building a standard silencer and then still having to fix it to the window somehow. See *air > silencer*.

Remove the window by its hinges. Carefully trace its outline onto the board you will use, or paper or cardboard if handles or hinges make that awkward. It should have 3mm space around it. Tracing is better than measuring because it also accommodates non-square angles that windows tend to have over time. Cut out the panel and make sure it fits in the frame. Attach fleece to edge so it bends over one corner and makes contact with frame on two surfaces all the way around.


You will stretch a cord or wire over the panel from one side of the frame to the other. Then put a block of wood between cord and panel to keep panel pressed in place. But first, see where the vent or silencer will go so it clears the frame, a screen, and the window recess.

Measure and mark a hole in the panel for the vent or silencer. Cut it out with a jig saw. Or drill holes in the corners with a 4mm bit. For each hole, drill two more 8mm away. Then drill between them along the line at various angles until you cut a slot big enough for a hack saw blade or keyhole saw.

Attach a handle to the panel so you can lift it in and out. Just a 30 x 30 x 30 block of wood screwed to the board is enough.

velcro

Note: the plan view in this drawing shows just the top left corner of the blind and how the various materials

come together. 

I am still testing this design. At first, I cut the fabric from an IKEA Tupplar blackout blind and attached it to a window frame with adhesive velcro (hook & loop). This was the prototype. It only took an hour and it almost worked! Problems:

- light leaks sideways through the hook and loop of 25mm-wide black velcro!
- fabric is not perfectly lightproof in one layer
- plastic coating on fabric (especially black)
 - scratches easily, creating light leaks
 - peels off easily with adhesive of velcro or tape
- stress on ends of velcro cause it to lose adhesion, peeling off fabric or frame
- sealing black fabric over multi-pane windows destroys their vacuum seal with oven-level temperatures
- black fabric can overheat room

Thus, these (untested) improvements should make it work.

1. materials

1. fabric

- white IKEA Tupplar blackout blind
- 2 layers, coated sides facing each other

2. velcro

- 25mm wide with a thick seal of black polar fleece just inside the velcro
- 50mm wide (I have not tested this; I just know 25mm is almost enough to stop all light)
- designs for both widths, each in two positions, are included in plan

2. extra tools:

1. wooden cooking spoon or other smooth, rounded piece of plastic or wood, at least 50mm long

2. board

- 10-20mm thick, 10-40cm wide, 200–300cm long,
- clean, smooth, straight, flat

3. choose position

1. window recess

- attach blind here when:
 - attaching lightproof vent to blind and keeping window open
 - window frame is not big enough to hold velcro
 - light leaks around frame, sash, sill, or trim
- cut first piece 55 wider and higher than recess for velcro-seal, 75mm wider for velcro-wide

2. window frame

- attach blind here when window
 - opens but will never open during darkness
 - has a perfect light seal
 - has a frame at least 45mm wide
- cut first piece of fabric 7mm narrower and shorter than exposed part of frame
- cut second piece 40mm wider and 40mm higher than first piece

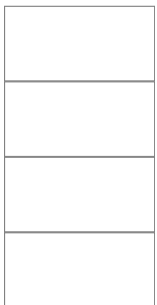
4. assembly

1. affix hook (scratchy) side of velcro to frame or wall all the way around the window

- outside of velcro is 60mm from edge of glass or recess
- extend vertical strips 10-30mm beyond horizontal strips
- affix one side, then top and bottom, then other side, ends of horizontal pieces jammed against edges of vertical pieces
- cut four, 10mm strips of loop (fuzzy) side of velcro and mate them to ends of vertical hook

2. mate the loop to the hook, sides first, leaving the paper adhesive cover on
 - horizontal strips should overlap vertical strips
 - vertical strips should extend 90mm past horizontal strips and 30mm past edge of fabric
 - go around velcro and press it hard into wall to improve seal of hook to frame/wall
3. join mylar to blackout fabric
 - cut mylar or white fabric for style 1 the size of the glass pane; for style 2, the size of the recess
 - glue mylar or white fabric on uncoated fabric side of blackout fabric with textile glue or spray adhesive, leaving 10mm gap between edge of mylar and where velcro will be
4. join decorative fabric to blackout fabric
 - wrap decorative fabric 20mm around the edge of the blackout fabric
 - attach it to the back with textile or hot glue or by sewing
5. join fabric to velcro
 - tape corners of fabric over the velcro so fabric extends 30mm past velcro
 - undo the masking tape at the bottom corners
 - get under fabric, lifting it away from velcro
 - remove paper adhesive cover from top horizontal velcro
 - carefully lower fabric onto it and press hard to make good seal between velcro and fabric
 - repeat with bottom horizontal velcro
 - remove paper from a side strip of velcro and seal fabric to it
 - fold ends of vertical velcro 40mm from end, 20mm from edge of fabric, sticking it back on itself and overlapping the fabric 20mm
 - staple the ends through the fabric twice
 - repeat on other side
6. secure velcro adhesive: press smooth plastic tool strongly into velcro all the way around the blind to ensure total adhesion
7. if using a black seal with 25mm velcro:
 - grabbing a velcro tab at corner of blind, carefully remove it from wall
 - study the section view of the seal in the plan. Make seal: a thick folded roll resembling the drawing, 10mm wide, 5mm thick. Hold roll together with a tiny amount of glue. Put it under board while it dries.
 - to attach seal to wall, attach seal flap to hook of velcro or glue thick black fabric strip just inside the velcro all the way around. It must be twice as thick as both sides of velcro combined
 - put blind back on wall
8. Voila!

roller blind

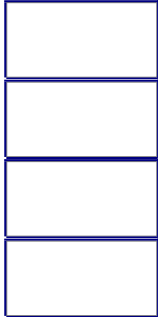


This design takes considerable time. I've built it only once. The price of manufactured fully sealed blackout roller blinds annoyed me so much, I wanted to see if it could be done for a tenth the price.

- the blind mounts on wall. The design can be adapted to mount on the ceiling or top-sill. If you need

this, DIY or write me.

- use key to decipher plans
- measure window on all four sides. Windows are rarely identical or perfectly perpendicular
- *h* (italicized): height of recess, measured between T and B sills. Measure both sides.
- *w* (italicized): width of window recess, measured between the side sills. *w* changes slightly top to bottom. Measure top for cassette, bottom for rail B or footer, and 170mm up from bottom sill for joint. *w* of blind itself should be narrowest of 3 measurements.



- materials
 - white IKEA Tupplur blackout blind, enough for double layers (don't get black; the coating seems to be thinner and actually leaks more light)
 - black fleece (*locking seals* and *chain seals* may not be necessary. Try without them first.)
 - paper
 - acid-free
 - ~300gsm bond or coverstock
 - either black or any color with 100–120gsm black paper lining (lining not in design)
 - wood
 - braces: 35-50W x 6-12D (plans are for 37 x 7mm; adjust as necessary)
 - bar: w-10L x 30W x 6-10D
 - board: w+130L + 44H x 8-12D
 - cardboard, single layer, 4.2mm thick
 - caulk: cheap, semi-adhesive, and dark stuff that you can easily cut through and scrape off when removing blind without damaging it
- cassette
 - choose left or right chain
 - the *block* pattern on parts page lays on a block of wood, 50 x 37 x 19
 - spacers are made of credit cards or similar ~1mm thick material. Make more or less as necessary
- roller blind
 - to cut: roll it neatly, measure and mark where cut will be, wrap a piece of paper around so edge lines up with mark and tape in place, cut through layers of blind fabric with razor knife all the way around
 - chain: to get it through board
 - cut it and overlap and splice it back together with sewing thread (for blinds shorter than chain, where splice needn't pass through chain anchor. Chains can also be lengthened with cord; just position chain in gear of chain bracket so blind stops rolling up and down before cord enters gear.)
 - or cut board from each hole to edge of board
 - use bottom chain anchor as usual.
 - mount on wall with caulking and blocks
- frame

- cut frame patterns in half horizontally through the zigzag arrow
- stretch them apart to match window size as defined by w and h .
- for frame pieces longer than paper
 - butt pieces of heavy paper together (put edge to edge, not overlapped)
 - join with 20mm wide strip of 120gsm paper and glue
 - then mark/crease/score/cut
- gluing
 - when gluing footer or joint, glue paper to brace/bar first, then glue other folds
 - glue one set of folds at a time, 2-3 sets in each rail/joint/footer
 - use smallest amount of glue possible (test to see how much is sufficient)
 - immediately clamp pieces
 - when you glue final fold of rails, you must put something non-stickable between the layers, against 9mm spacers, to prevent 40mm wide areas from sticking together.
- joint
 - SW=spacer wood. Dimensions when installed ($H \times W \times D$) $w \times \text{bar } D+1 \times \sim 4$
 - SC=spacer cardboard: one layer or maybe two layers joined with tiny dots of glue
 - $SW+SC=10$
 - black line between SW and bar is layer of black paper glued to SW
- mount rails with caulk on corner of sill and wall/trim
- panel
 - carefully transfer hole & slot marks from plan to fabric & braces
 - cut slot and attach vent to panel
 - glue braces L & R to back of panel
 - screw braces T & B to front of panel into holes of braces L & R with 5mm wood screws
 - drill 4mm middle holes through brace T and vent shell flaps
 - remove brace T
 - slip panel into rails. Shove it in with 50mm wide paper strips
 - re-attach brace T, 4mm machine screws from front in middle holes with washers and nuts at the back
- panel alternative for short, wide windows
 - put vent in a tall narrow panel at one side of window. Put a 60-80mm wide vertical frame member into the window recess 305mm from the side closest to your bed. Make a $365W \times h+60\text{mm}$ wood panel. Cut vertical slot in it for vent. Install vent. Point edge opening toward window recess. Screw panel to wall and frame piece with 20mm strip of black fleece as a gasket.

Uncovered edge of vertical frame member holds rails for roller blind that covers remaining part of window. To keep blind in place when wind blows too strong, stick pushpins through rails and blind every 200-300mm. Always use same holes.

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That's darkness. Now for managing water and waste in a darkroom.

11 - water

If you have a bathroom and kitchen you can easily darken and get to, at least with a blindfold, great. If not, make the quick, cheap, portable fixtures below. If basic versions are too punk rock for you, try the upgrades. You can incrementally improve them as you find out for yourself the value of retreating.

sink

basic

- table
- rectangular plastic basin, like a restaurant bus tub
- 30cm-tall stand for bottle behind basin
- 10 or 20L bottle with valve-cap on stand
- drinking water (if separate from wash water): in 20L bottle with valve-cap
- waste (water and food): two, 20L buckets with lids

upgrade

- salvaged sink set in a counter-height table
- drains directly into waste bucket
- upgrade again by adding a drain tube to outside.

toilet

basic

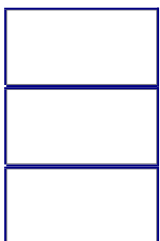
It's a 20L bucket with a toilet seat on top. No kidding.

- put 2 liters of sawdust in the bottom
- put 15 liters more sawdust in another bucket by the toilet
- with a scoop, put a 0.5L of sawdust in toilet after each use
- place toilet away from bed and close to return vent
- dispose of in a covered compost pile:
 - include food scraps
 - alternate with layers of carbonaceous material like leaves, straw, sawdust
 - let it sit for a year before use
 - cover with dirt and plenty of carbonaceous material
- replace toilet paper with water to ensure cleanliness and prevent abrasion and infection
 - fill a plastic soda bottle with water
 - loosen the lid slightly
 - hold upside down, with lid against lower back
 - squeeze to get a small stream of water that runs straight down crack over anus
 - wet fingers of other hand in stream and wash anus

upgrade

A 20L bucket sits inside a box with a hole in the top. The return duct attaches to a hole in the side of the box. So all air exits the room through the toilet, containing all odor. Bucket also collects pee, so empty it every 3-5 days. Making a vented urinal or a toilet that separates pee from poop is possible, too.

Dimensions: 35cmH x 60W x 60D



- top
 - platform made of 15–20 tongue and groove boards or 12–20 plywood
 - front and back boards, ~24 x 36, go under platform to fit on top of front and back frame pieces and between frame legs
 - hole is at least 20mm smaller than bucket opening all the way around
 - attach toilet seat to top
 - reinforcer only for tongue and groove boards, directly behind toilet seat mounts
- frame
 - made of 24 x 36 lumber
 - joint is extra strong, non-planar joint (see gridbeam.com)
 - black dots indicate heads of screws. Always drill pilot holes for screws.
 - adjust leg height to allow a 15mm space between top of bucket and underside of toilet top
- liner
 - made of thick plastic sheeting (0.006" or 0.02mm)
 - folds into an open box
 - resulting triangular gussets in corners **A** fold against outside of liner
 - liner fits inside frame
 - top edges fold over horizontal frame pieces and get thumbtacked in place on outside
 - toilet bucket goes inside air and waterproof plastic liner
 - cut hole **B** for return duct
 - 30mm smaller than return duct to stretch and fit over it snugly
 - so duct is 50–100mm off floor and next to a frame leg (attach a bracket to support duct if necessary)
 - fold nearest gusset away from hole
 - hole **B** in plan is just an example: 70mm diameter hole for 100mm diameter duct

bath

basic

A washcloth or sponge for a sponge bath

upgrade

- on waterproof floor (or covered with large plastic sheet) make a 2m diameter border of towels or bedsheets and sit in the middle
- put shower water in two 1.5L soda bottles with loose lids or nearly closed drinking spout lids
- hold a bottle above yourself with one hand and wash with the other
- wipe up water with towel or sheet

deluxe



It's a simple shower which collapses for storage, requiring no pipes and little water. Parts from top to bottom:

- hook (in ceiling, 50mm)
- bucket or bottle (4-8L, hangs from hook by handle)
- siphon tube (polyethylene, 4mm ID x 50cm, bent near its middle with heat to hook over rim of container)
- 4 cords (hung from hook, tied to curtain rod)
- curtain rod (black polyethylene irrigation tubing, 30mm OD, circular, 120cm diameter, dowel inside ends for smooth joint)
- curtain (polyester, with 15cm sleeve for rod (as shown) or grommets and rings, 5cm bottom hem with

small river rocks inside to weigh it down)

- x=holes in curtain for cords to tie around curtain rod
- large tub (90L+, from garden supply store, catches everything at the bottom. Could also be a large, deep tray or pan.)

Solar water heating method: use clear 4-8L drinking water bottles with rectangles of black plastic sheeting inside to act as elements. Have supporter give it to you when hot. Or, with dark clothing and sleeping mask on tight, grab it from a sunny spot.

Adjust water temperature with cold water to suit yourself. When ready to bathe, suck on the tube to start the siphon action. Water flows for eight minutes. Not bad. Dump used water into a 20L bucket with a lid for later disposal.

Adjust shower length and water flow with different size containers and tubes. Make sure hook can hold the weight.

conclusion

That's the state of my art of low-cost DIY darkroom design and construction. Check back for the latest developments. If you design something simpler, faster, cheaper, more effective, more elegant, or just different, please let me know. See *introduction* > *open-source*.

Thank you for reading my book. I hope it helps you feel joy.

faq

mechanics

- *Where can I go to retreat?*

If you can, I recommend making darkness happen first in your own home for sleeping, then for a 4-day retreat, maybe 8. Once you've learned the ropes, make another darkroom in the countryside or go to a public darkroom for a medium retreat (3-8 weeks). There are 50 of them worldwide and counting. Most are spiritual and therapeutic centers. I think most will support hygienic retreats if you ask and know what you are doing.

- *Do you eat in a retreat?*

Yes. Food and water are always available. I recommend fresh fruit and tender leafy green vegetables, in accordance with the frugivorous nature of human anatomy and physiology.

- *How many people retreat at once?*

One. The point of this retreat is to rest, heal, and recover oneself. There is nothing more stimulating and distracting than other people.

- *How do you do things in darkness?*

Very slowly. And after becoming familiar with the room and making memorable places for your belongings before turning out the lights.

- *Could you just retreat with a sleeping mask?*

No. The skin has enough light receptors to awaken you from sleep. Masks do not stay in place, so

they leak light. They are not comfortable for extended use. And you still need a properly ventilated room, minimally furnished to eliminate dangers, distractions, and associations.

Sleeping masks are good for travel, naps, and sleeping until your bedroom can be darkened. Also, for walking through a semi-lit space between a darkroom and a bathroom in dwellings where this is necessary.

- *Is it like meditation?*

In essence, no. On the surface, the two processes have some similarities. Each involves less physical activity. Attention gravitates from the world to oneself. But what goes on inside oneself radically differs.

Meditation is active, ie, the will drives the process. Willed activity is the primary process that goes on. The purpose of meditation is to make the unconscious conscious, or to compel the conscious to submit to the unconscious. It is a quiet internal war.

Darkroom retreating is passive, ie, the unconscious drives the process. Unconscious activity is the primary process that goes on. Willed activity is secondary, The will is servant. The purpose of retreating is to rest so the being can restore itself to wholeness naturally. It is peaceful.

These subtly different drivers and purposes have massive effects on one's experience and results. As extraordinary as the process and results of meditation and spiritual practice can be, they still pale before the power of the autonomic self.

concerns

- *Wouldn't you go crazy staying in darkness that long?*

No. You would only go crazy in darkness from being *forced* or trapped there, as in prison or a mining accident. A retreat is a choice based on reason. The door is always unlocked. Supporters are at hand. The room is comfortable.

- *Do you get bored?*

Yes. It is a very good sign. Sometimes your autonomic self works on something so damaged, painful, and draining that the psyche has had to completely shut off feeling to it. It becomes an internal black hole. Boredom means you are approaching it and that recovery of a lost part of yourself is imminent.

- *Four days is a long time to do nothing.*

You may not remember, but you are incredibly interesting. You will rediscover this when you finally have enough time in the right place to do next to nothing. Everyone is a little worried about this at first. After days of delicious sleep, few wish to leave after so little time.

Something tells me you've never tried it due to prejudice. I mean that civilization has taught us all that will is the only useful driver of activity in the being. But without autonomic activity, we would be poisoned to death by our own internal waste in seconds. Still, we are told if we are not busy, then we are bad. Only doing things by wilful effort is respectable. Nevermind that when it comes to restoring psychic integrity (every animal's greatest value), the will is helpless and the autonomic self is infinitely intelligent, capable, and graceful.

If you mean it sounds pointless or dreadful, in fact a retreat usually begins with a sense of relief.

Discomfort may come. But then you make contact with your autonomic self again, and this is extremely meaningful and enjoyable.

objections

- *I could never do a darkroom retreat.*

At the moment, your doing a retreat is out of the question. You cannot do it if you don't want to, and you cannot want to if you don't know about it enough to believe in it. So forget about doing it. The only thing that matters is, does it interest you enough to learn more about it? If so, then I happen to know a good book on the subject.

- *Isn't total darkness unnatural? Shouldn't we be exposed to stars and moon at night?*

No. First, our natural habitat is tropical forest. Its dense canopy makes the forest floor is perfectly dark at night. Even when sleeping in the open, the amount of light from stars and moon is surprisingly little compared to artificial light.

Second, covering our eyes, seeking solitude, and taking cover when traumatized—shocked, exhausted, or emotionally overwhelmed—is a reflex. We have to be conditioned out of it by force. Taking extended shelter like a darkroom retreat merely supports this reflex when the trauma is great enough to require it.

Shelter is an instinct that intensifies with trauma. Large uncovered windows came only very recently to popular architecture. Traditional shelter, civilized and indigenous, is dark or easily darkenable.

Our obsession with building—the principle activity of civilization for 10,000 years—indicates a people in search of extreme sanctuary to self-heal from cataclysmic trauma. When we get especially frustrated, we even have wars to destroy buildings and build new ones. Nothing could be more natural to us in our damaged state than total darkness.

- *Extended darkness could be good for some people, but there are many ways people can heal their pain. Nothing works for everyone.*

This would mean that:

- the deep healing necessary in cases of major trauma can occur without profound rest
- profound rest can occur in semi-darkness and other compromised conditions
- or psychic trauma is not the primary cause of metaphysical suffering
- or the human organism has no specific needs for recovering from such pain, despite its specific—and universal—need of rest for recovery in all other cases. As well as its specific need of air for breathing, light for seeing, food for eating, etc.
- the many other ways alluded to all make sense and work

The evidence indicates otherwise. Relativism makes fashionable philosophy but poor physiology.

bibliography and influences

- indigency vs industry
 - Jim Woods at Herrett Museum, Twin Falls
 - *Magical Child Matures*, [Joseph Chilton Pearce](#)
 - *The Songlines*, Bruce Chatwin
 - *The Continuum Concept*, [Jean Liedloff](#)

- *Ishmael*, [Daniel Quinn](#)
- *Where White Men Fear to Tread*, [Russel Means](#)
- *Prosper Waukon*, Winnebago entrepreneur
- *Running on Emptiness: The Pathology of Civilization*, [John Zerzan](#)
- philosophical and spiritual traditions
 - my parents, John and LouAnn
 - *Atlas Shrugged*, etc, Ayn Rand, preceptor
 - [Tantric Hinduism](#) with guru, [Purna Steinitz](#)
 - *In Search of the Miraculous*, Ouspensky (Gurdjieff's basic teachings)
 - radical orthodox Christianity with DeWaynn Rogers (late legal counsel, enigma, and possibly Teacher of the Age)
 - animism from nature, books (above), elders (scoutmaster Jack Asher; godfather and mentor, [John Boyer](#)), extended family, and friends
- health
 - my parents
 - initiated into Natural Hygiene by [Frederic Patenaude](#)
 - [The Science and Fine Art of Natural Hygiene](#), Herbert Shelton
 - *The 80/10/10 Diet*, [Dr Douglas Graham](#)
 - *Introduction to Human Technology* and *Human Technology*, William Arthur Evans (thanks to friend, Sterling Voss, for finding this rare work)
- design and art
 - my parents and brother, [Paul](#)
 - grandelder and grandmaster craftsman and engineer, [Jack Nuckols](#)
 - childhood teacher, Steve Parks (Horizons School, Twin Falls)
 - accompanist and mentor, [Willettta Warberg](#)
 - *The Dark is Rising*, Susan Cooper
 - *The Natural House*, Frank Lloyd Wright
 - *Selected Poems*, Robert Bly
 - *BuckyWorks*, Jay Baldwin (about Buckminster Fuller)
- experiences
 - 1 week of humane society at Sawtooth Methodist Church Camp, Idaho, Joanie Williamson, director, 1985
 - 3 months enraptured, Idaho, 1987
 - 23 days fasting in California desert, 1991
 - 1 week at Rainbow National Gathering, Idaho, 2001
 - 60-hour darkroom retreat supported by elder, [Finn Po](#), Oregon, 2006
 - 10 days in audience of Advaita grandmaster, [Arnaud Desjardins](#), Montana, 2007
 - 8 seconds in dreamtime with elder, [Adrian Wolfe](#), Oregon, 2008
 - 18 months with the Maya at Lake Atitlan, Guatemala, 2011
 - 2 months of life-altering sex, Sweden, 2012

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end

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Acknowledgments in books usually bore me. This one I cannot reread without weeping. Onward, then, till the task is complete.

license

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services

I do everything related to hygienic darkroom retreating: study, experiment, write, speak, consult, design, build.

writing

- Get my ebook from [leanpub](#)
- Quote and excerpt anything in my book and website. Credit me and tell me where it will show up and I will also acknowledge and link to you on my website.
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speaking

Invite me to edify your audience.

(My minimalist expenses + something that fits your budget.)

consulting

Get my advice on darkroom retreating, building darkrooms, and issues arising thereof.

(€15/hr. First couple emails are free if you have read my book.)

I will respond in detail, by email or skype, to all your questions and concerns about:

- how, where, and why to set up a darkroom
- how to organize a retreat with or without a supporter
- how to deal with specific issues you have about retreating itself

My responses will be based on my experience. Over the past ten years, I have:

- done 25 retreats from 2-6 days long
- facilitated 25 retreats for others
- designed and built 15 working darkrooms, operating three of them
- written 150,000 words about darkroom retreating for web, email, and print
- given 14 public talks

design-build

Have me design and build your darkroom in an existing building or from scratch.

(€15/hr + materials, travel, and shelter)

bio

Born 1971, Twin Falls, Idaho. For 21 years, I traveled America while searching for the cause of joy. I independently studied philosophy, health, and design, testing my findings by living outside, doing odd jobs, playing music, and building alternative shelter.

In 2008, my quest culminated in *the darkness conjecture*, a concept of the restful use of darkness in support of the self-healing psyche. I spent the years since proving the concept; designing and building darkrooms and supporting retreats in Guatemala, Sweden, Norway, and Spain; giving lectures and consulting for readers; and documenting my work at darkroomretreat.com. Now I am preparing to fully apply it in a 20-day retreat in order to heal from my own psychophysical illness.

contact

website: darkroomretreat.com

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voicemail: 541.210.8470 (in the US)

Please read *services* beforehand

Notes

1TC Fry, *The Life Science Health System*, a paraphrase of original quote by Herbert Shelton in *Natural*

Hygiene: Man's Pristine Way of Life↵

2Herbert Shelton, *The Science and Fine Art of Natural Hygiene*, back cover↵

3Herbert Shelton, *The Science and Fine Art of Natural Hygiene*, p 35↵

4Ibid, p 139↵

5Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, p18, "The Objectivist Ethics"↵

6Wherever doctors have gone on strike, life expectancy increases overnight by 9 years and falls again when the strike ends, and a hundred other amusing facts about medicine. See Dr Robert S Mendelsohn, *Confessions of a Medical Heretic*. See also [Medical Myths](#)↵

7Joseph Chilton Pearce, *Evolution's End*↵

8This provides the unconscious motivation for the current over-fascination with genetics, a negligible and corrupt quasi-science shot through with distrust of life and mechanistic control-freakishness.↵

9David Wilcock, [Enigma 2012](#)↵

10This echoes one of Gurdjieff's main points that a proper psychology and method of living will enable people to deal with life's inevitable *shocks*. See Ouspensky's incomparable spiritual text, *In Search of the Miraculous*.↵

11Psychologists Michael Meade and James Hillman say it all with the title of their 1993 book, *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy—And the World's Getting Worse*.↵

12Hygienist, [Bernarr Zovlucky](#)↵

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