

August 2023

heartfulness

advancing in love

Tune In to the
Present Moment

DAAJI

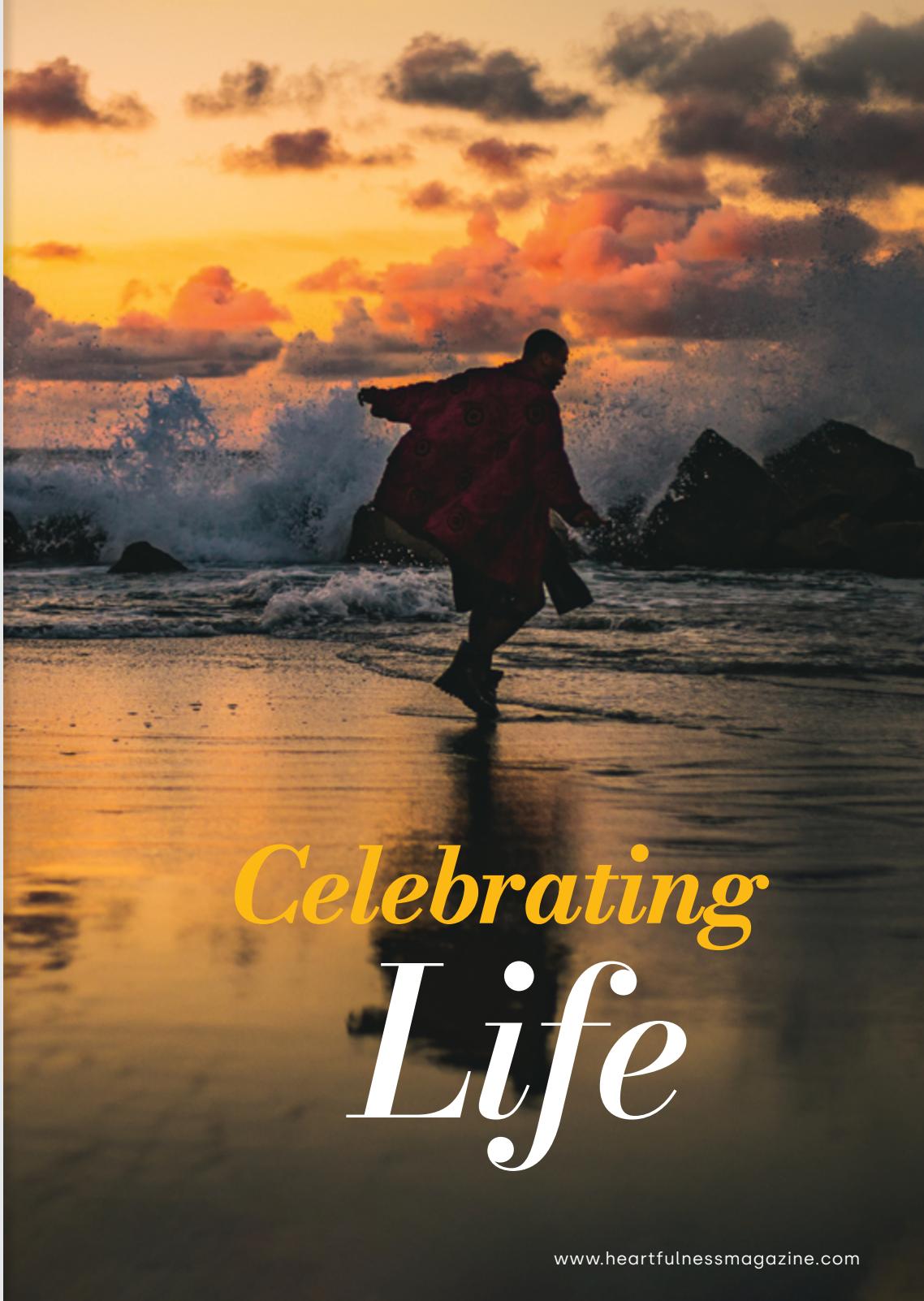
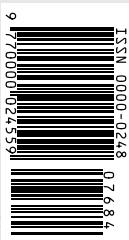
Take the Consumer
Challenge

ELIZABETH DENLEY

Womanifesto
VARSHA NAIR

ChatGPT -
Gamechanger or
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Celebrating
Life

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heartfulness
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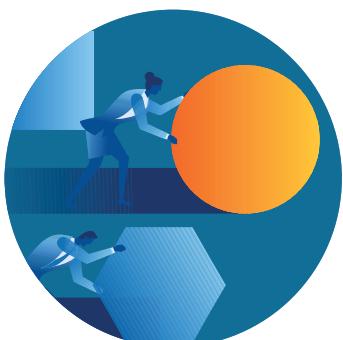
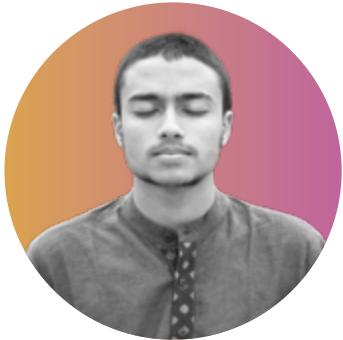
Celebrating Life

Dear readers,

In August, our themes are diverse and life-affirming. Daaji offers practical tips on being in the present, and relaxing our efforts; Ravi Venkatesan asks whether ChatGPT is a gamechanger or hype; Kiffer George Card shows how crucial social connection is to well-being; and Ruby Carmen shares a practical approach to dealing with grief.

Babuji gives us a time-honored natural remedy for insomnia; Kaj Hammargren overcomes addiction and finds purpose through sport and meditation; Ichak Adizes looks at the perils of being too smart; Guy Shahar experiences the benefits of energy healing; Prasad Veluthanar has a recipe for vibrant health; Charles Eisenstein provides three priorities for environmental healing; Elizabeth Denley encourages us to take the consumer challenge and reduce our wants; and Varsha Nair celebrates Womanifesto. It's a rich and inspiring edition that will keep you engaged all month.

Happy reading,
The editors



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BABUJI

Shri Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, affectionately known as Babuji, was a revolutionary spiritual scientist and philosopher. He was the founder of the present-day system of Raja Yoga meditation known as Heartfulness.



DAAJI

Daaji is the Heartfulness Guide. He is an innovator and researcher, equally at home in the fields of spirituality, science, and the evolution of consciousness. He has taken our understanding of human potential to a new level.



VARSHA NAIR

Varsha is an interdisciplinary artist based in Baroda, India. Her works and projects have been exhibited internationally, most recently at Documenta 15, Kassel, in Germany. She is currently co-organizing Womanifesto: Flowing Connections, which will open at the Bangkok Art and Culture Center in September 2023.



CHARLES EISENSTEIN

Charles is a writer, philosopher, speaker and pioneer, who has been exploring the need for society's transformation for some years now. He has focused light on our economic, social and political systems, and the need for us to move from a paradigm of separation to that of interbeing. His work can be found at charleseisenstein.org.



RAVI VENKATESAN

Ravi is an Atlanta-based executive, who currently serves as CEO at Cantaloupe (Nasdaq: CTLP). He is a regular public speaker on Presentation, Negotiation, Empathetic Leadership, Technology, and Wellness. Ravi is also a regular panelist, podcaster, and keynote speaker on leadership topics at events.



ICHAK ADIZES

Dr. Adizes is a leading management expert. He has received 21 honorary doctorates and is the author of 27 books that have been translated into 36 languages. He is recognized as one of the top 30 thought leaders of America.

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RUBY CARMEN

Ruby is a Heartfulness trainer, tutor, mentor, and sometimes writer. She has an M.Ed. in Education and Psychology from the University of Cambridge, and has worked in community and mental health. She is passionate about volunteering, service, meditation, languages, and finding beauty in the world around her.



PRASAD VELUTHANAR

Prasad did his Ayurvedacharya medical degree in Kerala. During his 22 years of professional practice, he has worked in India, Mauritius, Malaysia, Russia, and Egypt. He was the first Indian Ayurvedic doctor to practice and propagate this Indian wisdom in Egypt.



GUY SHAHAR

Guy is an energetic healer who also wrote *Transforming Autism* about how his family enabled their son to transform from a highly autistic toddler to a happy six-year-old, living a full contented life. He proposes a radical inspiring way to understand autism. He is also a Heartfulness trainer.



self-care

Tune In to the Present Moment

DAAJI shares 4 simple practices to tune into the present moment and bring about a joyful, contented lifestyle. Doing these regularly will create sustainable peace.

Dear friends,

Take a moment to review your day so far. Has your mind been busy with thoughts? Were they full of what to do next, or what has happened in the past? Were you rushing from one task to another, feeling overwhelmed? Did you spend hours scrolling on your phone? Were you multitasking while eating, unmindful of the food? Did you take time to breathe and feel your surroundings, aware of that moment of stillness, rejuvenation, joy and gratitude?

As Thích Nhát Hạnh once said, “We are very good at preparing to live, but not very good at living. We know how to sacrifice ten years for a diploma, and we are willing to work very hard to get a job, a car, or a house, and so on. But we have difficulty remembering that we are alive

in the present moment, the only moment there is for us to be alive.”

For many of us, being aware in the present moment is a rare occurrence. So, how can we make it happen more frequently? It takes some effort, but once we practice, it becomes second nature to us.

Here are a few short exercises to help you tune in to the present moment.

Relax

Turn off your phones and other distracting devices, and sit comfortably with eyes closed. Relax your body, from your toes to the top of your head, so that pain and tension melt away. The Heartfulness Relaxation is an ideal method and it takes just a few minutes. You can also find it on the Heartfulness App, which is

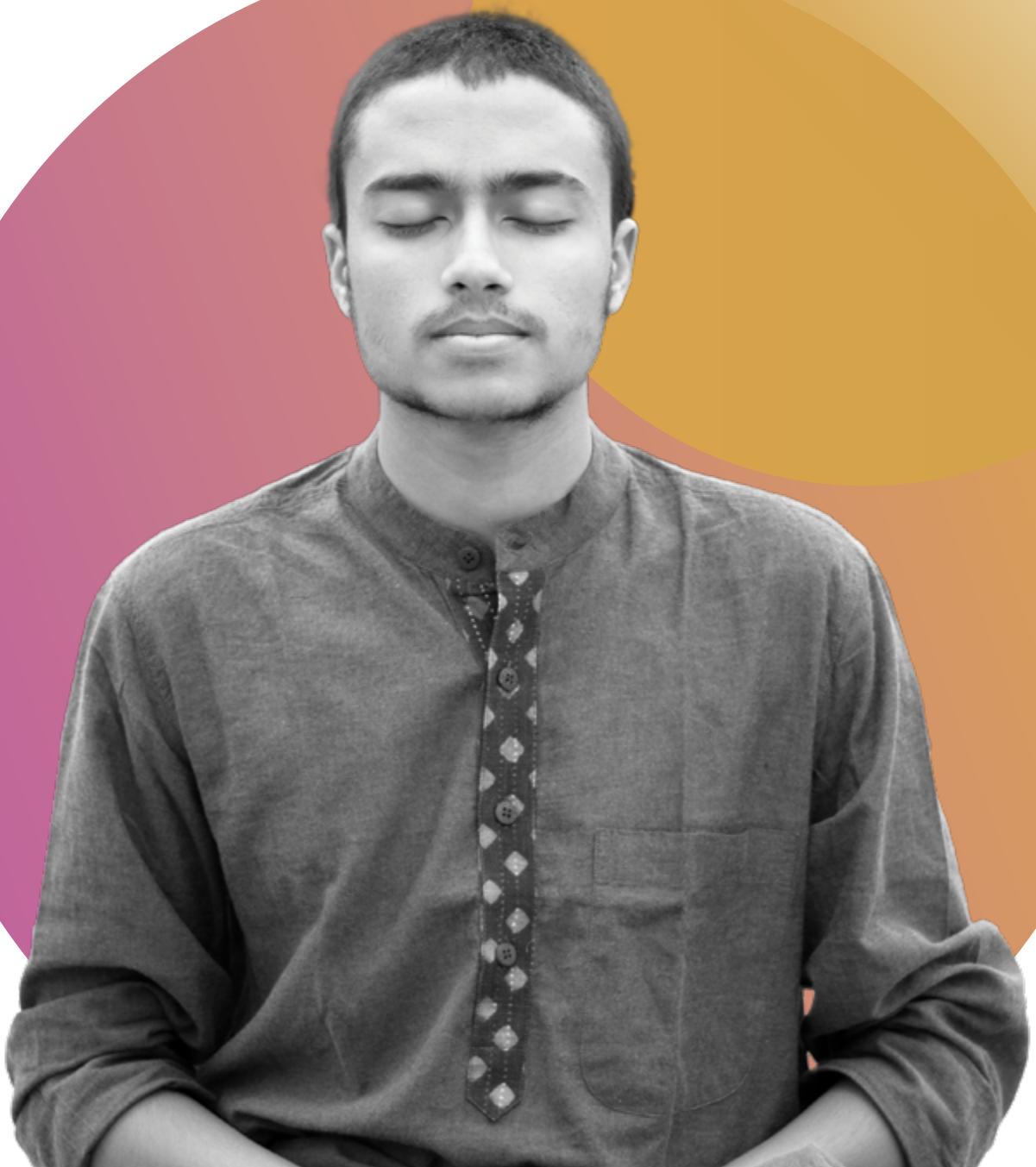
free to download on your phone or iPad.

Breathe

Left nostril breathing is a simple technique that activates your parasympathetic system. It brings clarity and calmness.

- Relax your body and mind
- Close your right nostril with your right thumb
- Slowly inhale through your left nostril and exhale through your left nostril, breathing deep into your abdomen.
- Smile while you breathe
- Repeat 9 more times

Relax your body, from your toes to the top of your head, so that pain and tension melt away.



Eat with awareness

If you eat at your work desk, grab a quick snack while rushing, or eat while texting on your phone, you probably do not really appreciate what you are eating. You're also compromising your digestion by multitasking, as there is not enough blood available for proper digestion. Most traditional societies take time to pray or say grace at the beginning of a meal, allowing us to activate the current

from the Source that is woven into the fabric of Nature, including every atom of the food that has been prepared for us.

So, before eating, have the thought of being happy to eat in constant divine thought whatever you receive, and hold that subtle connection while eating.

The subtle vibrations will filter down into the food and spread throughout your system. This

promotes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Walk meditatively

Before walking, clear your mind, focus on your heart, connect with your meditative state, and walk in that state.

Then, spread that inner state to everything you come across, being aware that everything around you is absorbing peace – including the sky, the oceans, the trees, the people, the wildlife, the buildings – and everything is radiating peace.

Awareness of the present moment creates a sense of being unlike any other. And over time, such a state of awareness cultivates peace. This in turn fosters an expansion of our minds and hearts, which enriches our thoughts and feelings, and enables us to live a life of contentment, compassion and joy.

**Before walking,
clear your mind,
focus on your heart,
connect with your
meditative state,
and walk in that
state.**



Insomnia

BABUJI'S NATURAL REMEDIES

During his lifetime, **BABUJI** shared a wealth of knowledge to his associates about the simple natural remedies that he learned and also discovered during his life in northern India. This month we share a couple of his remedies for insomnia.¹

We all know the importance of a good night's sleep, and these days scientists have done so much research in this field that there is no doubt that sleep hygiene is a vital ingredient of a healthy lifestyle. But not everyone finds it easy to go off to sleep, and we often look for pills and potions to give us a helping hand.

In India, Tulsi or holy basil has long been known to support sleep.

This is because Tulsi relaxes the nerves, tones the central nervous system, and calms the mind. It is also an adaptogen, which means it helps us adapt to stress, and promotes balance and resilience. This in turn supports healthy digestion.

Babuji also taught his associates other subtler methods to help them sleep, and one of these is also shared here.

INGREDIENTS

Tulsi leaves or a Tulsi tea mix. Boiling water.

METHODS

1. Make an infusion of Tulsi leaves in water. Leave it to steep for a few minutes before sipping prior to going to bed at night.
2. While lying in bed, first relax your body, starting with your toes (you can try [Heartfulness Relaxation](#)). Then, make a gentle thought that you are drawing sleep downwards from your eyebrows to your eyelids.

¹ Please note that these remedies are not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Please seek the advice of your physician or qualified health provider. The remedies may be used to complement medical treatment and support recovery.

TALKING WITH MY GRIEF

RUBY CARMEN explores the often repressed emotion of grief, and shares some ways we can accept it, value the meaning behind it, and integrate it into our being as an expression of love.





"Grief, I've learned, is really just love. It's all the love you want to give, but cannot. All that unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat, and in that hollow part of your chest. Grief is just love with no place to go."

—Jamie Anderson

Grief, it seems, is often unsaid, unexpressed, and avoided at all costs, until we are overwhelmed and it looms large and can no longer be denied. Since the pandemic, grief has been an undercurrent, and at times the feeling is palpable. It seems that there is little space for it to be expressed, never mind honored.

Grief is understood as a natural human response to loss, and in particular to loved ones. It covers so many situations, not only death or separation; it can be the loss of a dream or a friendship; it can be a divorce, a miscarriage, unemployment, or even retirement. Needless to say, the pain of the loss can be overpowering, bringing us to our knees, both literally and metaphorically.

From a personal viewpoint, I am able to name a number of life situations that have triggered grief in me that can be felt in the heart and in a way demand to be processed rather than pushed aside until a more convenient moment.

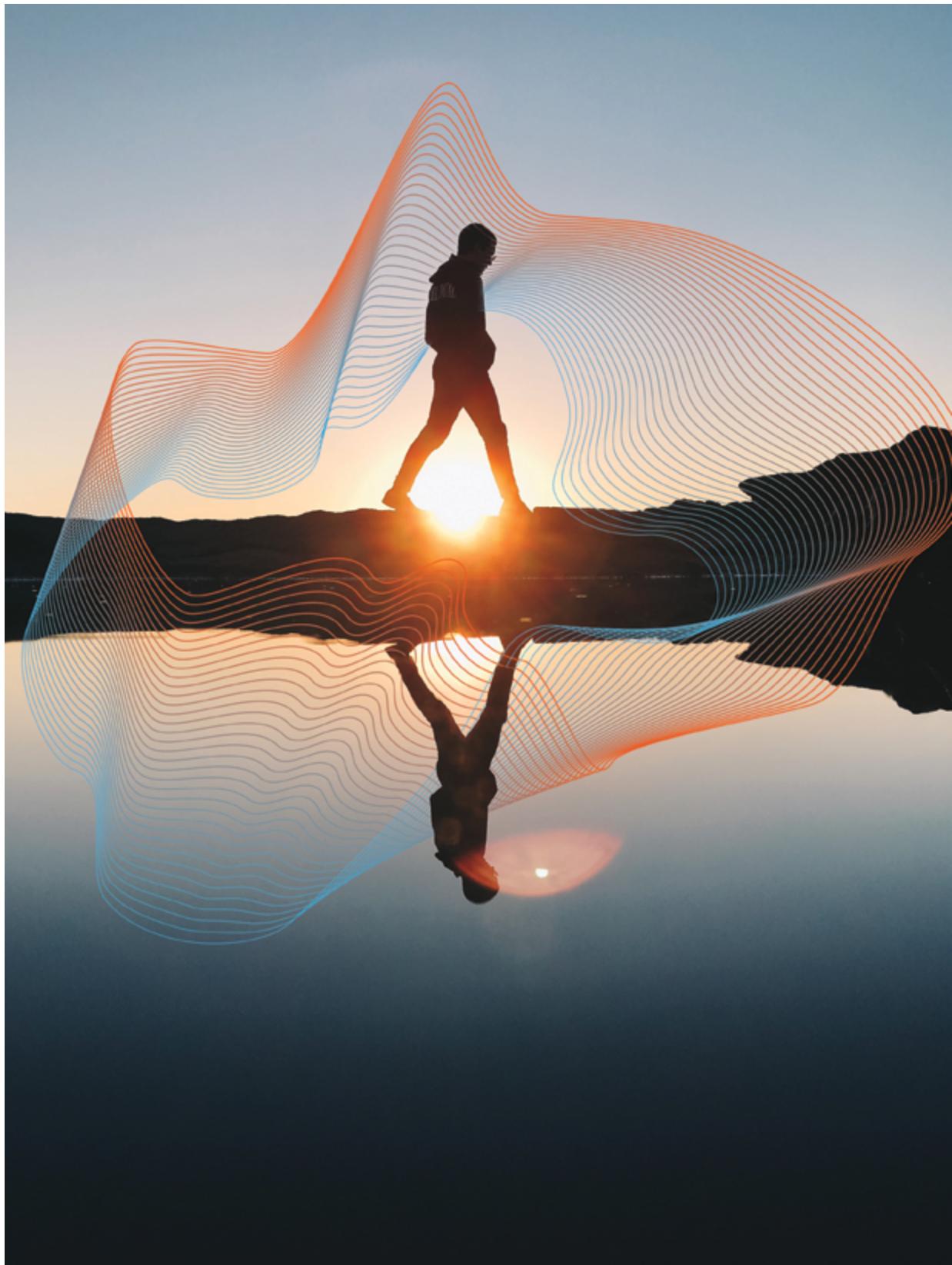
Grief can take the form of a cycle, that is to say denial, anger, depression, bargaining, and acceptance. Not necessarily in a set order, one after the next; it can move in circles, leapfrogging over one element, even a mix of one or more of these elements. These stages were conceptualized by the Swiss-American psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her book *On Death and Dying* (1991). She is considered a pioneer in the West for end-of-life care and near-death studies.

What has become apparent to me personally, and also while witnessing friends and dear ones come to terms with loss, is the impact of religion, spirituality, culture, and societal norms on the form in which grief is permissible. What comes to me is that we could do better. Are our coping mechanisms enough?

Oftentimes, grief is hidden, buried deep in our hearts. It can be like an old wound that remains inside, nameless, formless, and then something in the present touches

Oftentimes, grief is hidden, buried deep in our hearts. It can be like an old wound that remains inside, nameless, formless, and then something in the present touches

SELF-CARE



on it and we are reminded that it is still there, sitting silently, waiting.

One approach that came into my field of consciousness was to “talk” to the grief and, in doing so, recognize that it exists rather than pretending it is not there, that it has been dealt with, processed in whatever way we might explain it away to ourselves. In order to “survive,” our emotions, especially big, heavy ones, get stored away under the category of “I will come back to this later,” or “I can’t deal with this right now, I have a job to do,” and other such rationalizations. In the busy modern world, it seems there is no time or appropriate space to deal with grief or loss.

Talking to grief goes like this:

Me: Oh, it’s you? I thought you had gone.

Grief: No, I am still here, I never left you.

Me: It hurts and I keep thinking that you might go away, and leave me in peace.

Grief: Well, it doesn’t seem to work that way, you know. I am part of you, not separate. In fact, you are holding onto me, not the other way round.

Me: (Laughing) You don’t say. So tell me, grief, what do I do? How can I get through this grief that reappears especially when I least expect it.

Grief: *Get through?*

Me: Yes.

Grief: You know about acceptance?

Me: Yes. Sometimes this acceptance business is hard to actually do. It can happen at a mental or intellectual level, and then all of a sudden, it is so overwhelming and difficult. It needs to be at the level of the heart.

Grief: Your heart, yes, and also self-compassion. To grieve is a natural thing. It tells you that you are human and capable of loving, of love.

Me: So, accepting that I feel grief and that it hurts bad, not to mention giving myself some compassion, can help, right?

Grief: That’s right. It can help release the pain of the loss, and it can dissolve in your tears and in the sharing of your grieving pains.

This is the conversation thus far. Grief need not be an enemy or “avoided like the plague,” as the English expression goes. Instead, at an individual and collective level, we can embrace it and ask how we can allow ourselves to feel grief and grow from it rather than be overwhelmed by it. And we can consider reaching out to empathic elders, dear ones, therapists, counsellors, and support groups wherever there is a safe space to give voice to grief.

Grief need not be an enemy or “avoided like the plague,” as the English expression goes. Instead, at an individual and collective level, we can embrace it and ask how we can allow ourselves to feel grief and grow from it rather than be overwhelmed by it.

Vibrant Health



DR. PRASAD VELUTHANAR describes the roles of the three doshas – the natural elements in our system – in our health and well-being. He also shares what can be done if one or more doshas are out of balance in order to restore health.

 Ayurveda is one of the world's oldest systems of medicine. In Sanskrit, *ayur* means "life," and *veda* means "knowledge;" so it means "knowledge of life." It was developed over 6,000 years ago in India and is still widely practiced all over the world. The main principle behind Ayurveda is that the mind and body are inextricably connected. Ayurveda promotes good health through balancing the body, mind, and spirit as a preventative to having to fight diseases through medicine and treatment.

Ayurveda is based on the premise that we consist of three governing elements of nature – *vata* (air), *pitta* (fire), and *kapha* (earth). Everyone is a unique combination of these elements or *doshas*, containing different proportions of each. The combination dictates our eating habits, sleeping habits, and overall way of living life. Symptoms of mental and physical illness are signals that one or more of the doshas is not in balance.



1. "Healthy" means something different to everyone

We all know the fundamental rules of eating healthy – stick to natural clean foods. Simple, right? So why is there so much debate over diets? Ketogenic, paleo, Whole30, Mediterranean, low-carb, raw, vegan, dairy-free – the options for healthy eating are overwhelming these days. The debate is probably because everyone responds to foods and diets differently, something that Ayurveda discovered thousands of years ago.

If you're working on becoming healthier, eat what's best for *your* body, knowing that something different might work for someone else. Ayurveda tells you to eat according to your *dosha*, or which of your doshas is imbalanced – warm heavy foods balance *vata*; cool refreshing foods balance *pitta*; and lightly cooked or raw foods balance *kapha*.

2. Use six tastes in every meal

Ayurveda recognizes six different tastes: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent. Every fruit, vegetable, grain, nut, etc., has a particular taste, or a combination of tastes. The idea is that each taste has a specific connection with one of the doshas. Here are the foods and their tastes.

Sweet: carbohydrates and natural sugars

Sour: organic acids and fermented foods (probiotics)

Salty: salts (that contain crucial minerals)

Pungent: spicy foods (promote digestion)

Bitter: dark leafy greens and herbs (antiseptic and detoxifying qualities)

Astringent: legumes, raw or dry produce

When you include all these tastes in each meal, it balances the doshas and ensures you're getting all the nutrients your body needs. Biologically speaking, it makes perfect sense, as each taste represents a different set of nutrients our bodies need.

If you're working on becoming healthier, eat what's best for your body, knowing that something different might work for someone else.



3. Focus on how you eat

Digestive problems include Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), indigestion, nausea, stomach pain, weight gain/loss, constipation, diarrhea, and bloating; but they also show up as skin blemishes, hair loss, and sluggishness.

Ayurveda suggests that digestive problems occur because the digestive fire (*agni*) is weak, so igniting it before meals is crucial to improve digestion, e.g. adding spices like cumin or turmeric to meals will help; a teaspoon of fresh ginger with a few drops of lime juice and a pinch of salt before meals can activate the salivary glands to produce the proper amounts of digestive enzymes. Ayurveda focuses on proper digestion, as it recognizes that it's how our bodies absorb nutrients.

So, eat slower, better, and drink ginger tea every single day to keep your digestive system on track!

Ayurveda focuses on proper digestion, as it recognizes that it's how our bodies absorb nutrients.

4. Lifestyle (Vihara)

Daily routine (*Dinacharya*), seasonal routine (*Ritucharya*), and behavioral routine (*Sadvritta*) are measures of an ideal lifestyle in the classic Ayurvedic texts. They promote a long, healthy active life, and provide relief from pain and disease.

Daily routine

I have described the Ayurvedic approach to the daily cycles in depth in "[Living with Nature's Rhythms](#)".

Seasonal routine

In Ayurveda, the year is divided into six seasons, and a detailed dietary regime is prescribed for each season:

In the spring, a bitter, hot, and astringent diet is advised, avoiding salty, sour, and sweet food.

In the summer, due to the heat, a pitta-pacifying cold, liquid, sweet, and oily diet is advised. Excessively hot, spicy, sour, and salty foods are avoided.



In the rainy season, aggravation of vata occurs, so vata-pacifying sweet, sour, and salty food and drinks are preferred. Food should be hot, dry, oily, and easily digestible.

In the autumn, aggravation of pitta occurs. Diets dominant in bitter, sweet, and pungent foods are advised in this season.

In the pre-winter and winter seasons, aggravation of vata occurs due to the cold, dry climate. Hence a vata-pacifying diet of hot, sweet, sour, and salty food, oils and fats is advised.

Whenever possible,
devote your
services to God, to
the wise, and to
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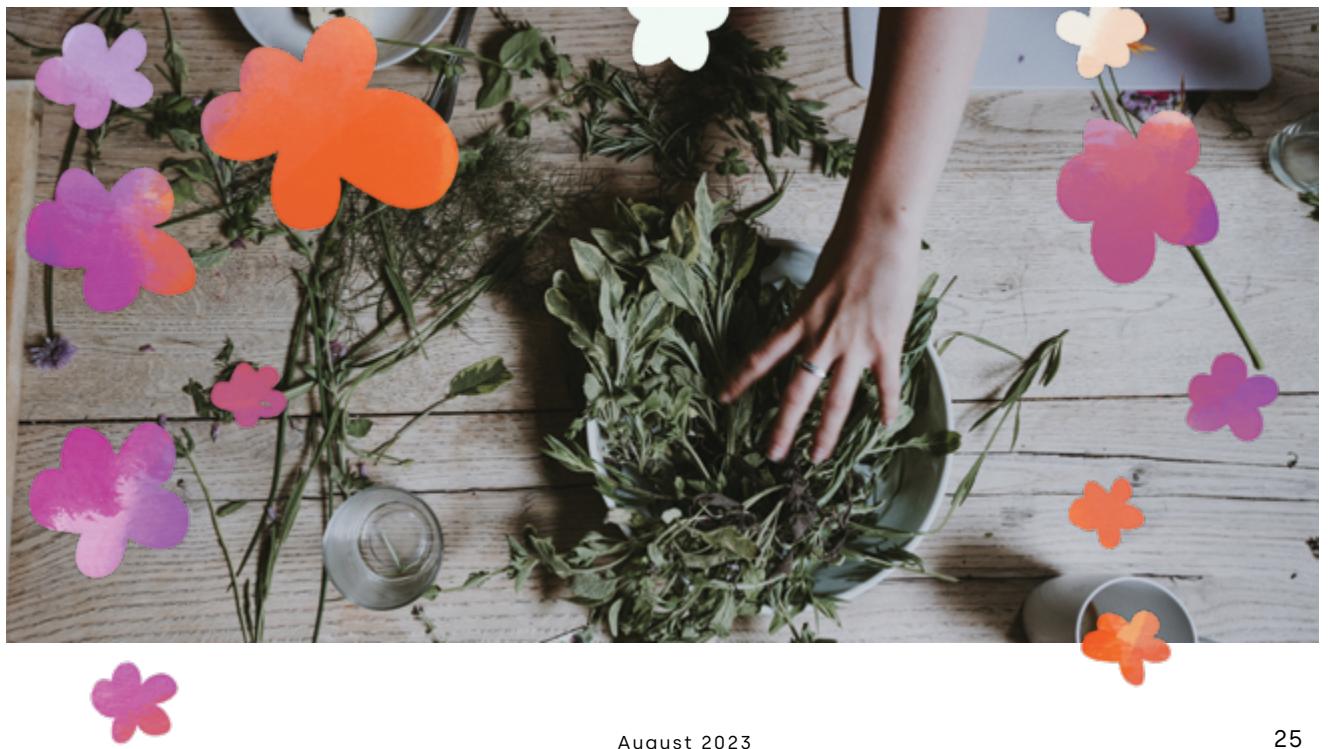


Behavioral routine

Ayurveda prescribes certain guidelines for maintaining a healthy mind that have come from yoga. These principles are applicable to all people at all times and places. Practicing them brings balance and harmony to the mind.

They are:

- ❖ Whenever possible, devote your services to God, to the wise, and to respectable and elderly individuals.
- ❖ Speak the truth.
- ❖ Do not lose your temper.
- ❖ Do not get addicted to sensory pleasures.
- ❖ Do not harm anyone.
- ❖ As far as possible, do not expose yourself to hardship.
- ❖ Try to control your passions.
- ❖ Endeavor to speak pleasant and sweet words.
- ❖ Meditate every day for tranquility of mind.
- ❖ Observe cleanliness in all things.
- ❖ Be patient.
- ❖ Observe self-control.
- ❖ Try to distribute knowledge, good advice, and help to others.
- ❖ Be straightforward and kind.
- ❖ Avoid irregularity in daily activities.
- ❖ Avoid overeating, overdrinking, too much sexual activity, and too much or too little sleep.
- ❖ Behave according to the time and place where you are residing.
- ❖ Act in a courteous and polite manner.
- ❖ Control your sense organs.
- ❖ Make a habit of doing all that is good and avoiding all that is bad.





inspiration

The ability to ask
beautiful questions
– often in very un-
beautiful moments
– is one of the great
disciplines of a human
life. And a beautiful
question starts to shape
your identity as much
by asking it as it does by
having it answered.

DAVID WHYTE



The Art of Relaxed Efforts

In September 2022, **DAAJI** released his latest bestseller, The Wisdom Bridge, and throughout 2023 we are sharing highlights from the various chapters to give you a taste of the wisdom the book offers. This month the excerpt is from chapter 10 on Principle 5: Early Childhood Is the Foundation.



Relaxed Efforts Go a Long Way

Saint Kabir wrote a couplet that goes like this:

*Dheere dheere re mana,
dheere sub kucch hoye
Mali seenche so ghara,
ritu aaye phal hoye*

*Slow down, dear mind, slow down. Everything happens in its own time.
The gardener may pour a hundred buckets of water, but only when the season is right will the trees yield fruit.*

In a few words, Saint Kabir shares the wisdom behind doing things at the right time and waiting patiently for the results.

Parents know about doing things at the right time. And even if they don't, they can read about it and learn. But waiting for the results is an attitude one needs to develop. Especially in today's world of FOMO (fear of missing out) and instant gratification, waiting can be a tough exercise.

What do we mean by waiting? In its real sense, waiting means allowing a process that has

begun to complete without interfering. Just as we sow a seed and then wait. We put the potatoes on to boil, and then we wait. We teach children good habits, and then we wait. We offer a prayer, and then we wait. If you analyze it, life is nothing but waiting interspersed with moments or bursts of activity. Waiting takes up a large part of our life and not activity. Waiting comes from the faith that actions done well will yield the right results. It is waiting that is the art.

As parents, there is hardly anything more important to you than the well-being of your children. So, you do everything you can to help your children succeed. All the sleepless nights and ferrying your children from one activity to another is to prepare them for their life ahead.

I commend the efforts parents put in these days in raising their children. I do have a suggestion. Once in a while, *relax. Do less.* You are already starved for time, don't try to squeeze more into your day. Less is more. One advice new parents often get from parents with grown-up children is, "Spend as much time as you can with your little ones.

"It goes by too fast." They are right.

If you need to drop something to get more time with your child, then do it. If you both enjoy cuddling and poring over a book together more than the piano class or the taekwondo training, go ahead and do that. If you feel like taking the day off and going for a picnic with the children, then do that. Our fondest memories are usually of childhood. There is no need to rush children through their childhood. Don't force your children to grow up fast. Your son is being clingy and wants to spend more time with you? Great, spend time with him. Your daughter doesn't feel like reading the story book on her own? No problem, read it to her. Let them take their time.

Each child is unique. Some learn math fast, while others create wonderful art. Some love helping in the kitchen, while others like to spend time running around the park. Children's minds are like flower buds. Do not force them to bloom. Be patient, be present, and be loving.

Children's minds are like flower buds. Do not force them to bloom. Be patient, be present, and be loving.

Patiently wait for your child to bloom, in the same way a flower blooms on its own.

Children's minds are like flower buds. They should not be forced open. Do not push them too much.

development cycles of a child. Educating ourselves on the best practices of parenting is helpful. This happens organically in a family with elders around. If that's not the case, reading and learning about parenting is helpful. A group of parents getting together once every few months, *specifically* to share notes and ideas on parenting, will also help.

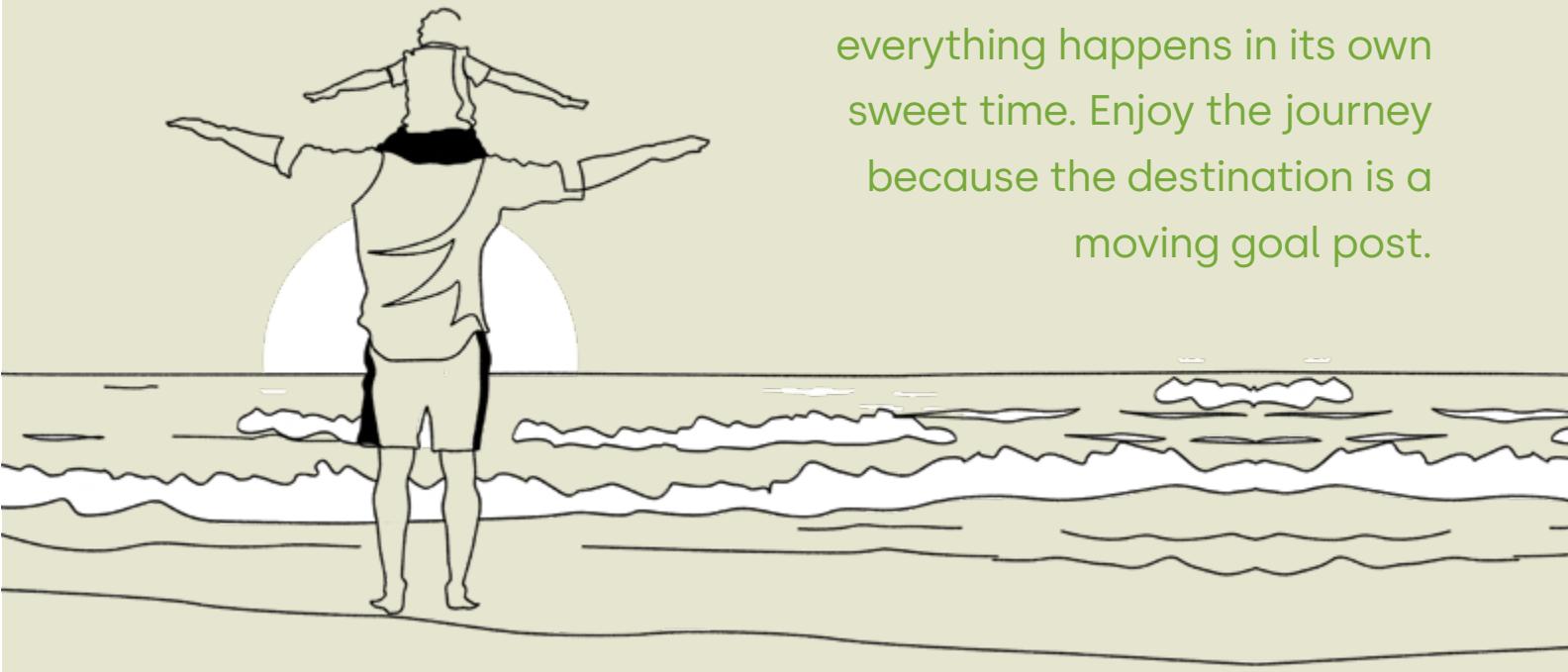
Keep listening

Knowing what to do and what not to do equips you better on the parenting journey. Gaining knowledge is an important step. Most of us know a lot more about the global economy or the statistics of the last ball game than we know about the

What helps the most is listening to your child. Listening will teach many things that are otherwise lost in the noise of life. The tantrums of your child, the meltdowns, the loving hugs, the shyness, the mischief are all opportunities to listen to the unsaid feelings of your child's



Learn to wait and understand that everything happens in its own sweet time. Enjoy the journey because the destination is a moving goal post.



heart. Keep listening with your eyes and ears, and your heart will speak its guidance more clearly.

While our life circumstances can be unique, a common factor that unites all parents is a perennial dearth of time. So, be kind to yourself. Learn to wait and understand that everything happens in its own sweet time. Enjoy the journey because the destination is a moving goal post.

Daily Dilemma

Q: My child seems to lack confidence. She hesitates in asking the teacher about her doubts and even when I remind her, she doesn't. What to do?

Daaji: Some children are shy. It's part of their make-up. Parents often remember their own so-called shortcomings and are over cautious about such tendencies in their children.

Please introspect and see if that's what is happening in your case. Also, positive suggestions and indirect advice work well over time. Be patient and keep me posted on how things come along.

From Chapter 10 of *The Wisdom Bridge*.¹

To be continued.

Illustrations by ARATI SHEDDE

¹ Patel, K.D., 2022. *The Wisdom Bridge: Nine Principles to a Life that Echoes in the Hearts of Your Loved Ones*. Penguin, India.

Finding Purpose



KAJ HAMMARGREN is an athlete who turned his life around from a very dark place in his twenties to serving others and bringing joy, all through a spiritual awakening and the practice of meditation. His story is an inspiring one!

shouldn't be able to run, not even walk, and especially not pole vault. In fact, I shouldn't be alive at all.

I was born in Copenhagen in 1964 and I was good at sport. I became one of the biggest talents in Denmark in the pole vault. But I also struggled with alcohol, and those two things didn't match at all. Alcohol became my master for some years, and it almost ended my life in a traffic accident at the age of 27. I wanted to die.

But then I had a spiritual awakening, and meditation became central to my life. I have practiced Heartfulness meditation for more than 20 years.

At the age of 51, I was asked to start jumping again, just for fun, at my old club. That's eight years ago. The first few years I had fun, competing for the club with all my old friends. But last

year, my weight was more than 100 kg and I decided to lose 15 kgs, start training two to three times a week, and participate in the world championships 2023 in Gothenburg. I also decided to have surgery on my right knee, so I could jump without pain.

It's easy to lose weight. I only eat what is necessary most days during the week, and some days I fast until the evening. I ask myself, "Is it necessary to eat this?" and then I don't. One or two days a week I eat normally. I lost 13 kgs the first year, so I was close to the optimal weight for my height. I think previously I was attached to eating too much, and not always the right stuff. Of course, I did not eat well every day, but many days I did. And I became grateful for being able do it, including fasting for more than 16 hours a day.

But what about other attachments? Am I attached to becoming the world champion in pole vaulting? Well, I'm not, but I *am* interested in experiencing what happens when I meditate and pole vault. So that's what I've been doing. It's not only important to jump, but it's even more important *how* I participate. Babaji mentioned that we need to be of service, so I'm trying to be helpful to everyone who is jumping. In fact I pray in the

morning, "How can I be useful?" and I ask God what His plan is for me.

As a result, I am not afraid during competitions, and I'm more relaxed and focused. Also, I don't waste energy being afraid, envying others, so a lot of good stuff happens, especially making new friends.

I recently participated in the Championship of the Nordic Countries and won. I also made several new friends, but during the competition I noticed a man running on the track who was dying. I followed him, then shouted and waved my hands to the officials, and called for an ambulance. Quickly a doctor came running with a heart starter, but I saw the man's blue face and instantly knew he was dying. I sat down with my head in my hands and started to pray for his life. After a while I looked up, and he was awake and sitting on the track.

My goal is to participate in the World Championships in 2025. But I also know that life is meant to be joyful, and it's important for me to find out what God's plan is for me. I do not want to only reach for gold for myself, and I don't need to be the best. I do, however, need to reach out for the best way of living a spiritual life.



Earlier, I would have been satisfied with my current achievements. And fear was part of jumping, limiting my progress: fear of winning, failing, what others thought of me, etc. I was attached to the goal of being the best, so that people would think I was a good man. It was a big dream, an illusion.

Now I have a spiritual goal, to live right here, right now, in constant remembrance of His presence in everything I do. Whether I win or lose, my life is fulfilled while doing it – I have experienced it in all my affairs. It is experiencing life on another level.

Workplace

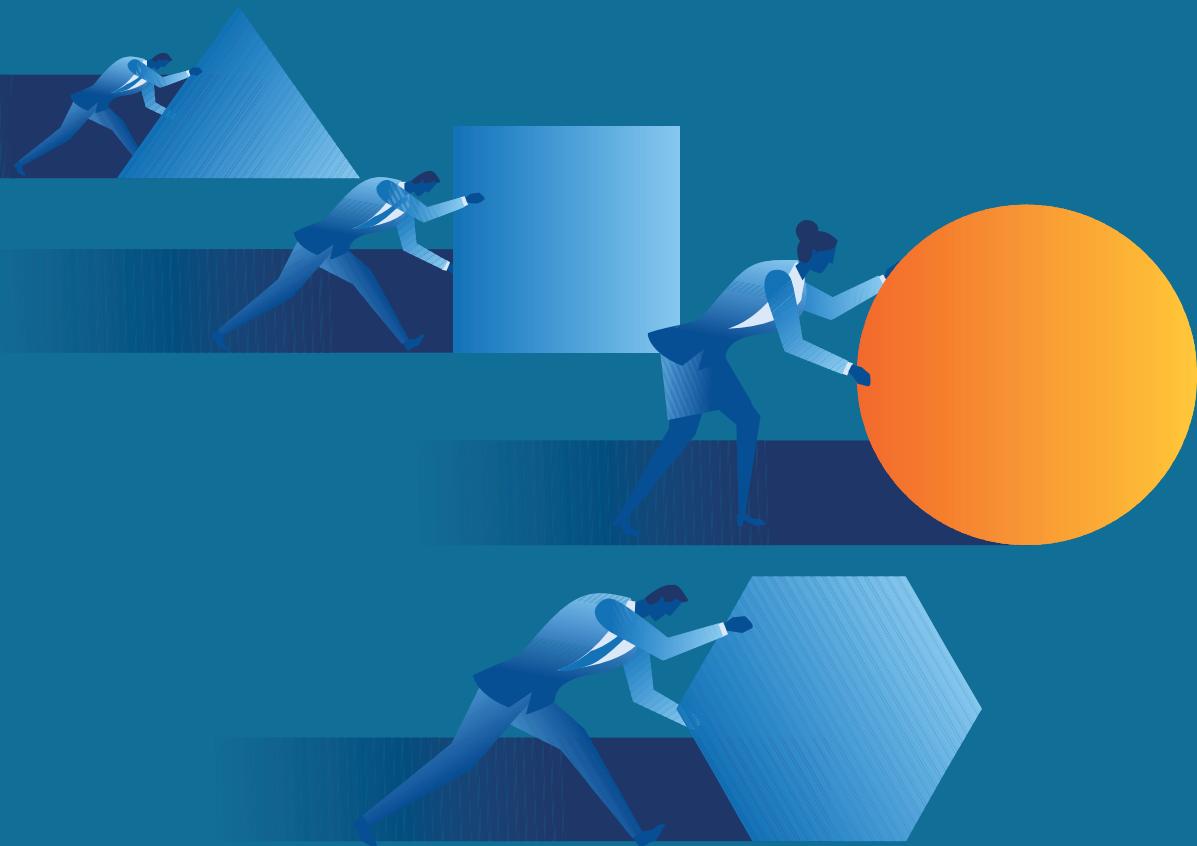
The ability to shift from reacting against the past to leaning into and presencing an emerging future is probably the single most important leadership capacity today.

C. OTTO SCHARMER



The Perils of Being “*Too Smart*”

DR. ICHAK ADIZES challenges the notion that smarter is always better. What is able to surface when we move beyond the intellect?





fascinating Sephardic expression states, “It’s not good to be ‘too smart’.” One might question this sentiment; after all, it seems to contradict conventional wisdom, doesn’t it? The standard assumption is: the smarter the better.

But let’s think about how we process information. A profound relationship exists between the brain and the heart. The more we employ our mental faculties, the less we tap into our emotional ones, erroneously believing that employing the brain is sufficient to arrive at the best decision. So, if a person is extremely smart, they are likely to be utilizing primarily their brain, which can hinder their heart’s engagement.

Not all decisions can be made based solely on tangible information that the brain can analyze. “Too smart” individuals might not harness their intuition. They might over-intellectualize risks and fail to sense the nuances of a situation, fail to discern

right from wrong from a values standpoint. Truly distinguishing right from wrong calls for something more than cerebral cognition. One must feel the situation and judge the merits of the choices in front of them. That is where the heart speaks.

Sometimes, it’s crucial to momentarily suspend thinking and listen to the heart about what truly makes sense. I have solved some of my most complex problems during meditation. When the meditation was over, I had an answer.

In meditation, you stop thinking or getting attached to thoughts. You just calm your mind, which enables the heart to open. And ideas, judgments that the brain did not process, emerge.

I recently came across a newspaper article about a robotic police officer in San Francisco with lethal capabilities. This robot, leveraging artificial intelligence, assesses threats and decides whether lethal force is necessary. It’s a machine that processes information more

rapidly than a human ever could. To me, that’s being “too smart.” But where is the heart in all this? There is no intuition, no judgment beyond pure intellectual analysis. Imagine the potential for erroneous lethal decisions.

Making decisions involves more than just processing information. To handle uncertainty and risk, it takes more than logical thinking. When all information processing has been exhausted, the last source of uncertainty and risk needs to be addressed. One must pause, and intuition, judgment, and experience play a role. For that, it is not enough to just be smart. One needs to be wise, for which listening to the heart is indispensable.

Just thinking and feeling,

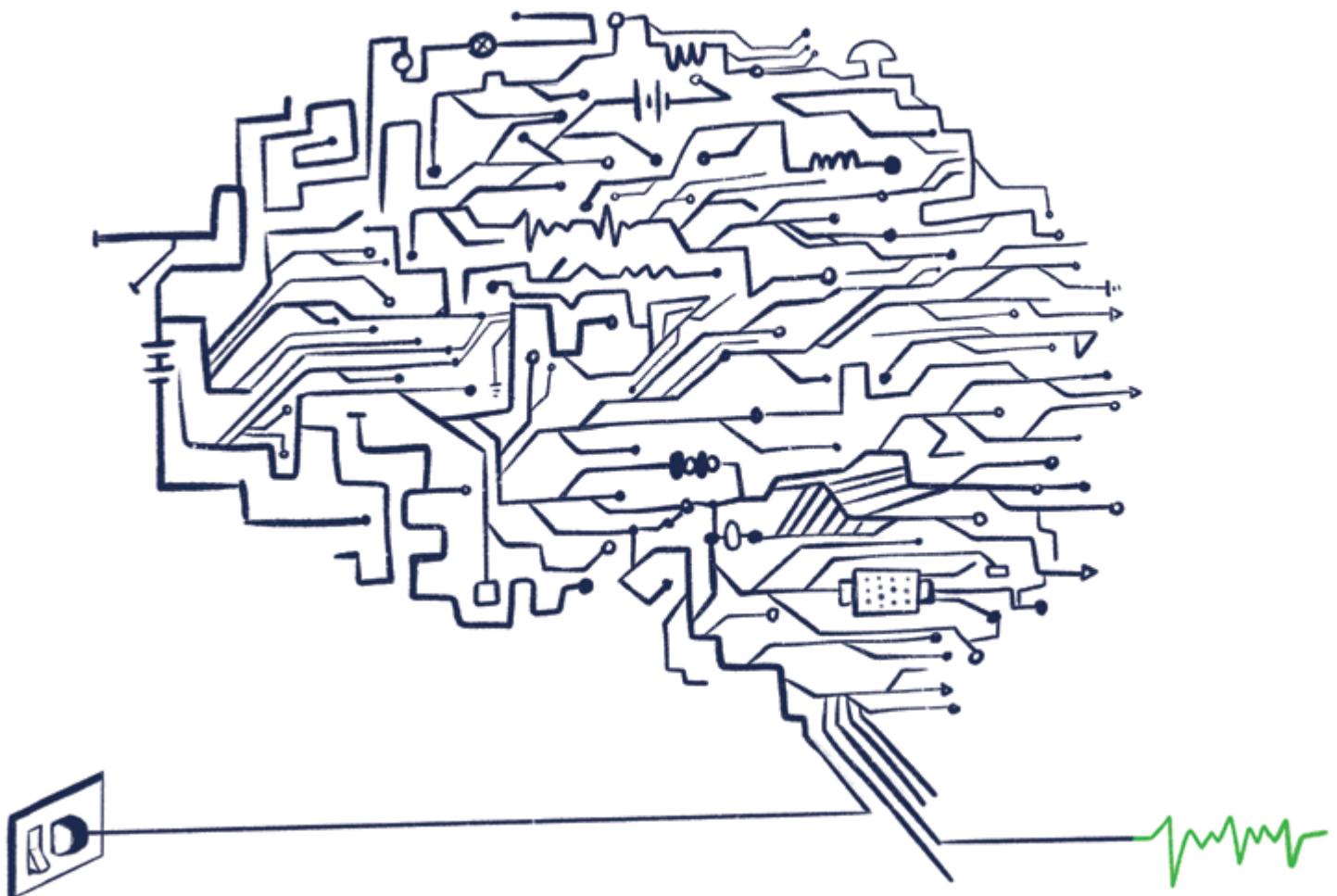
Ichak K. Adizes

ichak@adizes.com

<https://www.ichakadizes.com/post/the-perils-of-being-too-smart>

ChatGPT

Gamechanger or Hype?



RAVI VENKATESAN takes us on a journey through the world of Artificial Intelligence, charting its history and developments, and also exploring where we are headed.

Part of my job as the CEO of a technology company is to keep track of trends and technologies that could be incredibly transformational. This knowledge is critical to formulate strategies for our business. To use a hockey analogy from Wayne Gretzky, it is to “stake to where the puck is going.”

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is definitely a major trend today and has probably had more historical cycles of being sold as transformational and not living up to its promise than any technology in the last century. It all started with early neural networks in the 1940s and 50s that looked to make a computer mimic a human brain and its mental functions. In other words, the endeavor was to construct an electronic brain. The benchmark for success was established by Alan Turing in a

1950 landmark paper with what is now popularly known as the Turing test. In simple terms, if you interact (perhaps chat) with a computer, but are unable to tell the difference between this experience and chatting with a real human being, then the electronic brain has passed the Turing test.

So, what is AI? The fundamental building block of AI, or an “electronic brain,” is a neural network that mimics the kinds of neural networks our brains have, and in essence has a “learning mechanism.” I remember writing neural networks in languages like Prolog and C as a student. The fundamental difference between this type of computer program and other purely computational programs or software, was the aspect of being able to learn, potentially predict, and come to conclusions.

There was a lot of hype at that time about how AI would change the world and dominate fields as diverse as predicting the weather, to picking winning stocks, to automating architecture and design for buildings. However, very little of this came to pass. Funding dried up when people realized that too much expensive computing power was needed and the economics just did not work out.

The next generation of AI came in the late nineties when IBM developed Deep Blue, which beat the reigning world champion Garry Kasparov at chess. In 2005, a Stanford robot drove autonomously for 131 miles in the desert. These developments revived interest and funding again. So far, AI still needed very large-scale computing power and bespoke computing equipment –



translation, a lot of money. This generation of AI can be called purpose-built AI. It was still in the domain of large companies or governments.

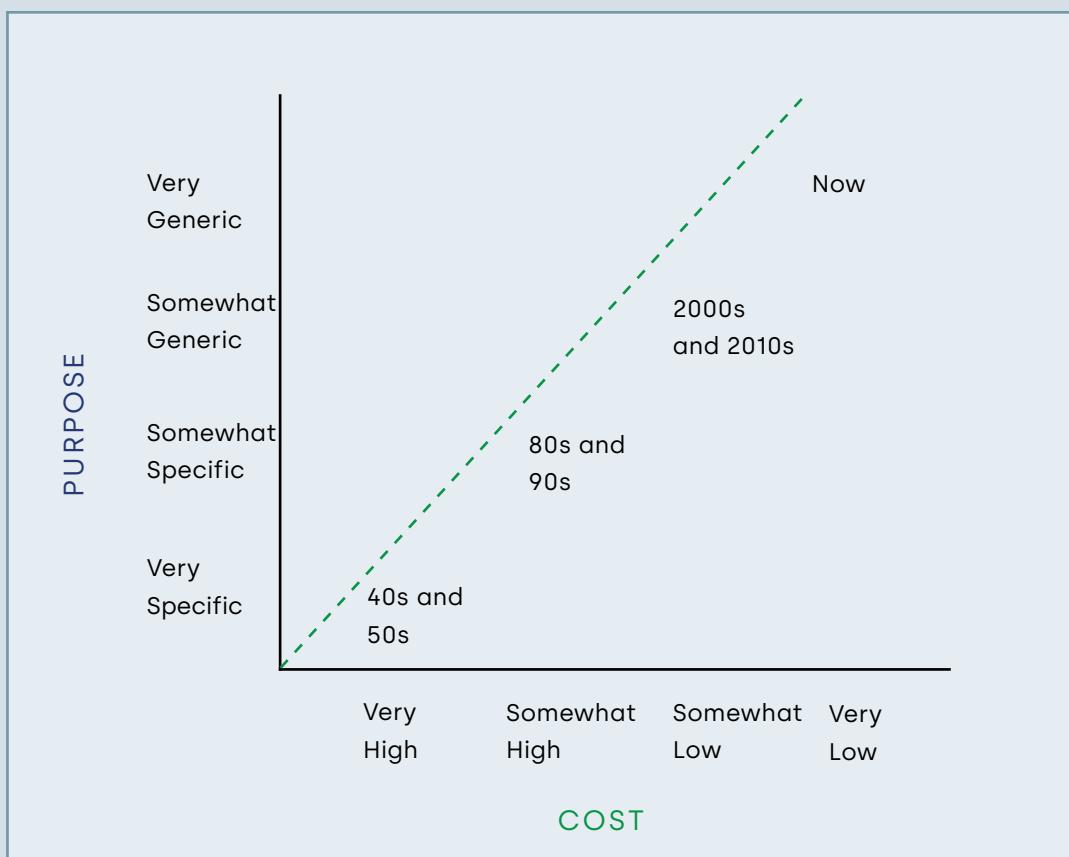
The next big move was Google's DeepMind, which beat the reigning world champion at the GO game, much more complex than chess, and used "deep learning" techniques such as deep neural networks. This generation of AI can be called "deep learning general AI."

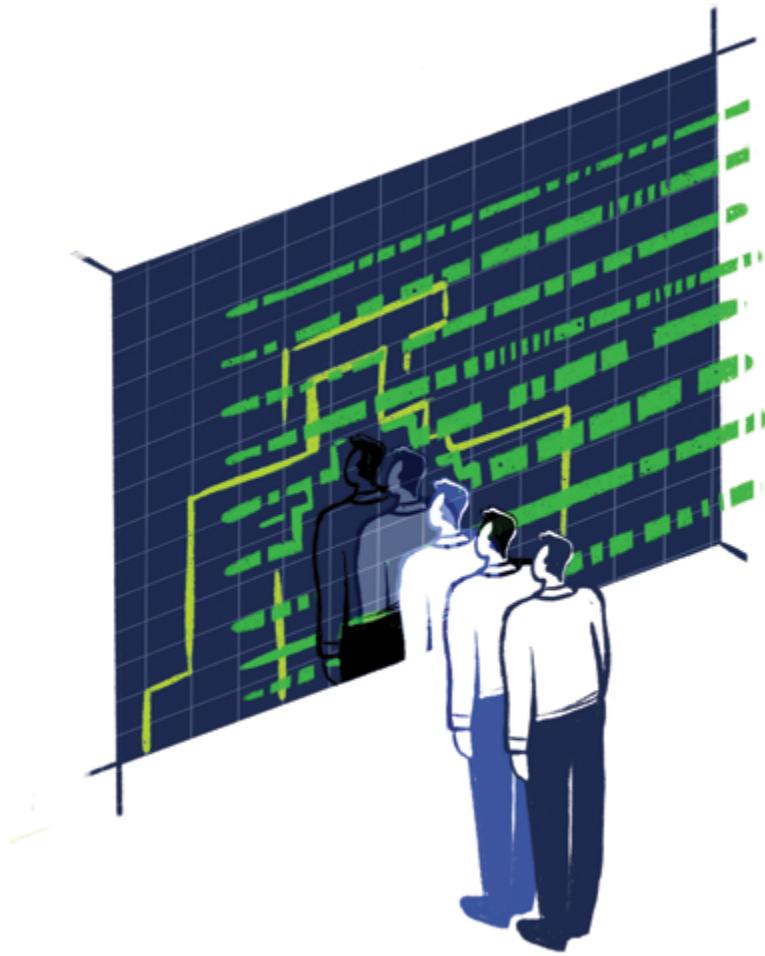
The current generation of AI, with ChatGPT as a prominent example, is way more general purpose or multi-purpose and

is called generative AI. It has the quality of not just arriving upon a result but also explaining the derivation of the result. It is thus far the closest to human intelligence that AI has reached. **Carrying out a conversation with ChatGPT feels like talking to a very intelligent and articulate human being.** With computing costs continuously decreasing, and "big data sets" to train the AI becoming more easily available, the improvement in AI with ChatGPT has been accelerated.

To summarize these generations, look at the graph below that plots Purpose and Cost:

So, is the promise of AI finally being delivered? It is safe to say that AI has finally reached a point where many applications have become economically feasible and hence will scale. Autonomous driving, facial recognition, improved customer service by scanning knowledge bases and using chatbots, authoring marketing content, writing code for software programs, etc., are some of the applications that ChatGPT is already doing successfully. It is the only technology that has been adopted by 100 million users in just two months after launch.





However, ChatGPT still does not conclusively pass the Turing test, so there is still a long way to go. A bigger question, often raised, is if AI is conscious. To answer this, let's look at the various mental functions of a human being:

1. **Intellect** – this is where logic and reason live. Prior to ChatGPT, AI had already developed logic, now reason has been incorporated as well.
2. **Ego** – this is the sense of self, and while it can be programmed artificially, the way it develops in a human

being has not been mimicked in AI.

3. **Mind** – this is broader than just the brain, it includes the ability to process inputs from multiple senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell) and also from internal sources (contemplation and thoughts). It includes the ability to imagine and create. AI is starting to mimic some of these functions. ChatGPT is the first AI that also “hallucinates” and can undertake creative processes such as authoring a poem,

creating music, etc. However, the evolution of this aspect is at a very rudimentary stage.

4. **Consciousness** – what forms the base for everything else in a human being's mental functions can be described as consciousness. There are various levels of consciousness based on the sophistication of the being – humans, plants, or even stones, all have consciousness but of different levels. In that sense AI does have consciousness, but it is of a different kind than human beings. It is based on the programming and inputs provided to the AI and can of course evolve over time.

In summary, there have been multiple generations of AI going from very specific to very generic, and very expensive to very inexpensive. ChatGPT has been a giant leap from prior generations, and in some ways is democratizing the access to this technology by making it available to millions of regular people. AI has still not passed the Turing test and is not yet close to replicating all of our human mental functions, however the technology will continue to evolve, creating both opportunities and threats for the human experience.



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MARSHALL B.
ROSENBERG

7 Tips that Show How Crucial Social Connection Is to Well-being

Could public health guidelines help stop loneliness? **KIFFER GEORGE CARD** shares both research and his perspective on how we can address the pandemic of loneliness. He advocates coming together in a whole-of-society response, which means addressing the very problem he is seeking to solve.

United States Surgeon General Vivek Murthy recently called loneliness an epidemic, and issued a public health advisory on the healing effects of social connection and community.

The report warned of the considerable adverse effects of loneliness and social isolation – comparing it to other leading risk factors for premature death such as smoking, obesity, elevated blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Loneliness and social isolation can be harmful

In my work as a social and behavioral epidemiologist, I have studied how social and community connectedness shapes health

outcomes, ranging from HIV to substance use.

For example, my colleagues and I have previously shown that social isolation is associated with a 48 percent increase in odds for premature death, and that lonely people have 71 percent higher odds of reporting fair or poor health.

Other researchers have also documented the havoc that loneliness wreaks on individuals, showing that lonely and isolated people have poorer immune function, experience higher levels of inflammation, and are at greater risk for heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

While everybody's vulnerability to loneliness and social isolation differs, we all need social connection. Perhaps just as importantly, Harvard research from the longest-running cohort study ever conducted suggests that warm social relationships are the most important predictor of happiness across the life course. In other words, people who are disconnected lead sicker, sadder, and shorter lives.

Public health guidelines

In response to this epidemic of loneliness, my team at the Canadian Alliance for Social Connection and Health has engaged experts from across Canada and globally to develop



the world's first public health guidelines for social connection.

Similar to the [nutrition](#), [exercise](#) and [alcohol use](#) guidelines promoted by many national governments, social connection guidelines have the potential to improve our health and happiness by helping us all prioritize social connections in our daily lives. They can also raise awareness among healthcare providers and policymakers to ensure these experts are taking actions consistent with the latest evidence highlighting the importance of social health.

Promising guidelines for better social health

Regardless of levels of introversion or extroversion, insufficient

social connection is associated with poorer well-being. While everybody's vulnerability to loneliness and social isolation differs, we all need social connection. Yet, people generally [underestimate the benefits of connecting with others](#) and overestimate the costs, which include the emotional labor and mental energy needed to manage relationships and your self-presentation.

[Regardless of levels](#) of introversion or extroversion, insufficient social connection is associated with poorer well-being. This is because social connection is a biological imperative. We evolved in [close-knit communities](#). For ancient humans, social exclusion was a death sentence. Loneliness is our body's way of [keeping us](#)

[connected](#), but sometimes [we get trapped by it](#).

Public health guidelines can help raise awareness of the importance of social connection and provide us with a road map for better social health. But what should these guidelines look like?

This is exactly what [my team has set out to understand](#) as part of a multi-phased, mixed-method study funded by and conducted in partnership with the Canadian government. So far, we have identified a few promising approaches that each of us can act on right now:



1. Make sure to have three to five close friendships to call on when you're in need.

Research has shown that individuals who have at least three to five close friends experience the lowest levels of loneliness, anxiety, depression and a range of other adverse health outcomes. Having too many friends can sacrifice

quality for quantity. Having too few can leave you alone in a time of need.

2. Get one to three hours of social interaction per day.

That's between seven and 21 hours of social time per week – far more than the average of 34 minutes of socializing most of us get each

day. This value aligns with the approximate 24 hours per week that tribal and pastoral societies have historically enjoyed. While this may seem like a daunting jump in social hours for some, social interactions can include a wide variety of activities: chit chat with your barista, a phone call to a friend, conversation over dinner.

3. Prioritize spending time with those closest to you.

We've found that individuals need to socialize with both "strong" and "weak" ties, but that the balance of your social energy should be spent on close friends and family with whom you have warm relationships. This is because close relationships fulfil our most important relational needs: to feel loved, acknowledged and validated. Building these strong ties takes time.

4. Diversity in your social network is important too.

So-called "weak ties" – those you don't have a close relationship with – also matter. In fact, studies have shown that talking to neighbors can build a sense of community; making friends at work can reduce job stress; and even talking to strangers can create a sense of safety and provide a meaningful source of connection. Different

relationships provide different types of support.

5. Recognize the risks of living alone.

People who live alone are at increased risk of loneliness and studies have shown that living alone, particularly for men, is hazardous to your health. That means that if you live alone, prioritizing social relationships may be especially important to you.

6. Reach out to old friends and don't be afraid to make new ones.

Keeping and maintaining relationships can be hard – especially in today's fast-paced world. Renewing old friendships can be an easy way to keep your social calendar full, but keeping a healthy level of engagement with new people will make sure your friendship well doesn't run dry.

7. Don't forget the importance of solitude.

Just as time with others is important, it's also important to have time alone. It is perfectly good, and even healthy, to spend time alone. We call this "solitude." In fact, for some, time with others may even exacerbate feelings of loneliness. Time alone provides an opportunity to restore your

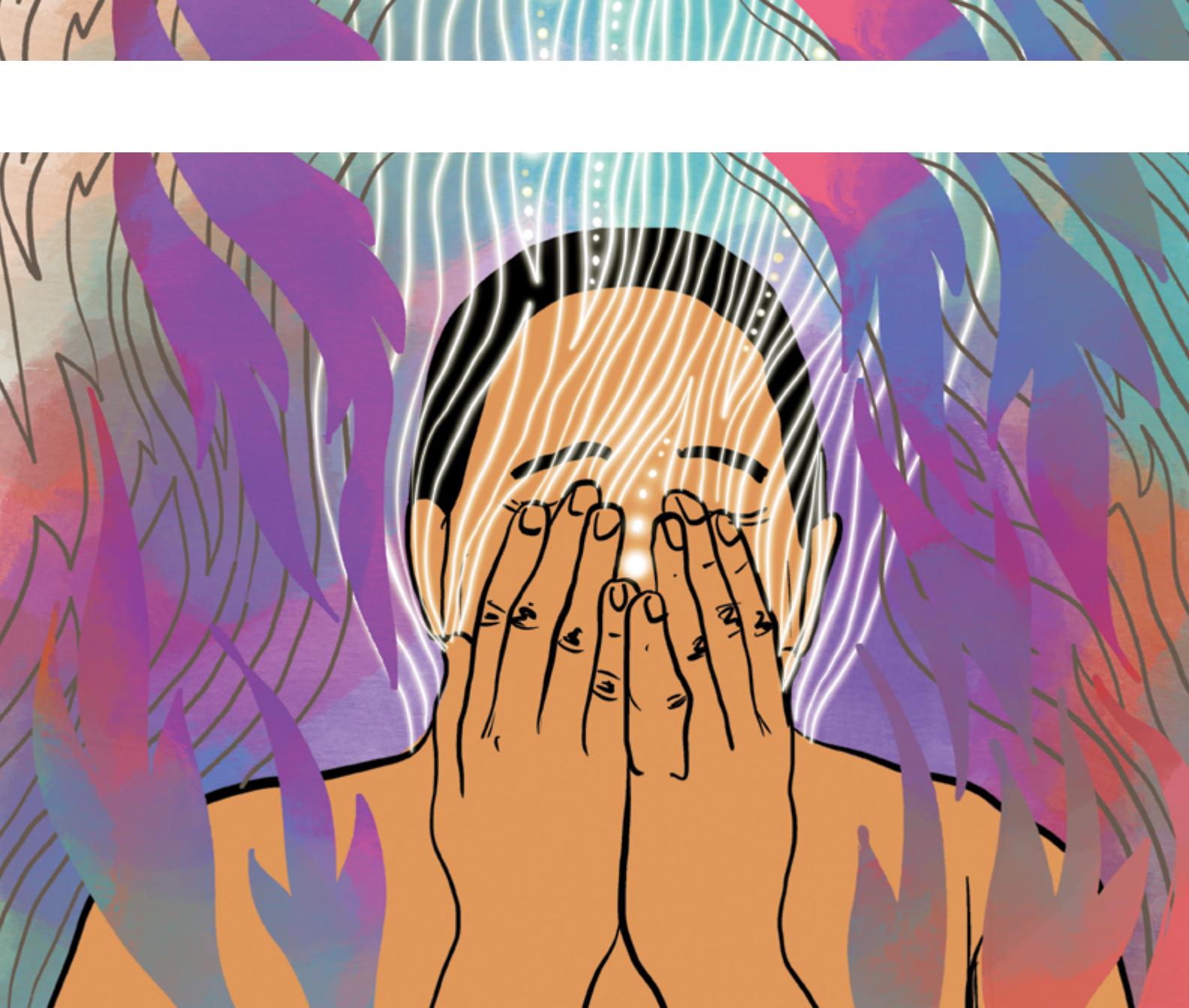
social reserves and meet your own personal needs.

Following these and other strategies can improve your health and well-being. However, addressing loneliness, like many of the big problems we face today, will require a whole-of-society response. Public health guidelines for social connection can provide the foundation for such an approach.

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Illustrations by ARATI SHEDDE





Energy Healing

GUY SHAHAR embarked on a career in energy healing with little understanding of what it entailed, after experiencing Dr. Bradley Nelson's method, The Emotion Code. The results spoke for themselves. After becoming certified as a healer, Guy is now watching with wonder how the method is unfolding and evolving, and how he is growing through the process.

I never gave energy healing any serious consideration until after my first visit to Kanha Shanti Vanam Ashram in 2020. The idea of sitting in a room and being able to heal another person in another town or on another continent seemed interesting but fantastical to me.

A few years before that, I'd had a health breakdown following a long difficult situation at work. I was housebound for 3 months, and one of the things I'd been doing was receiving online energy healing with a practitioner. I didn't really know what it was or how it worked, but I figured it was worth a try.

It was during one session after that visit to Kanha that I heard a voice in my own head saying, "You should do this!" I almost dismissed it because energy healing was so far from anything I ever thought I'd do, or would be able to do.

The Emotion Code

But having heard the voice, I couldn't ignore it. So I half-heartedly looked up the method I'd been receiving, The Emotion Code. It is based on the idea of releasing "trapped emotions" that come up at various points in our lives but are not fully processed. Perhaps it is because we are too overwhelmed or triggered at the time, and instead repress them, so they lodge as excess and disruptive energy in our system, and lead to all sorts of physical and mental issues.

I discovered that it was actually a very simple method, and very easy to do, but required an ability that I didn't think I had – "muscle-testing" to obtain clear yes or no answers from the subconscious mind of the person being treated.

The man who created The Emotion Code, Dr. Bradley Nelson, has written a book of the same name which guides

people how to do it. It includes a chapter on how to muscle test. I had zero confidence that a written chapter in a book would enable me to learn this important new skill, but I picked up a copy and by the end of the chapter, doing the exercises he suggested, I was surprised to get some reasonably clear answers.

So I persisted with learning the method, using it on myself and my family, without any expectation of results. None came until one day when I was suffering from severe back pain and inflammation, and my wife suggested I try The Emotion Code to help. I wasn't hopeful but had nothing to lose, so I went upstairs and released a number of trapped emotions. By the time I had finished, I was surprised to find that the pain had halved, and it continued to diminish as the day went on. When I told my wife, she took a look at my back and exclaimed that the inflammation had also gone down. That was the first time I genuinely felt there was something in energy healing.

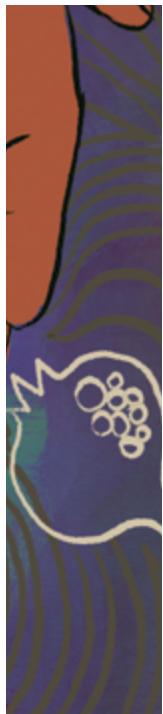
I had similar results when working with others in need. People's pains disappeared in front of my eyes on Zoom calls. People who'd been depressed started smiling with an inner joy they'd not felt for ages. Children's issues started to be resolved when we worked on them through their parents. Even pets showed dramatic improvement. And each time, it was me who was more surprised than the other person, as if I couldn't quite believe the results that were happening.

I had the good fortune to record an interview with Dr. Nelson recently, where he said that he shared the same surprise at good results, even after many years of practicing his own system. When asked how his approach brings about changes, he just shrugs and says, "I just work here."

My surprise at the results was a little ironic, however, because I'd been a Heartfulness trainer for nearly 20 years, and I was used to sitting at home giving meditation sessions to people far away, which I had no doubt were effective. But for some reason the idea of working in the same way to bring about more material health benefits hadn't occurred to me.

I was starting to field calls from people who'd been referred to me by friends and family, and I realized I needed to start doing this professionally. So I got certified in The Emotion Code, and then in a vastly expanded version of it known as The Body Code, and then launched a company, Heartful Healing.

Perhaps it is because we are too overwhelmed or triggered at the time, and instead repress them, so they lodge as excess and disruptive energy in our system, and lead to all sorts of physical and mental issues.



How does energy healing work?

One of the questions I'm often asked is how energy healing actually works, and I'm no closer to having an answer. But having reflected on it, there are now 3 steps I always take at the start of a session:

1. Connect to a Higher Power

Make a deep connection to a higher power, whatever that means to you. Dr. Nelson advocates this. As a Heartfulness practitioner, this is an easy step: I bring my attention to the constant inner presence in the heart that we're gifted when we meditate with Heartfulness regularly and sincerely. It becomes an ever-present and vital part of our existence. That way, I'm not dependent of my own ultra-limited capabilities.

2. Connect with the client

I focus my attention on them so that the answers I get from muscle testing reflect their own responses. I do this with as much love and prayerfulness for their well-being as possible.



I bring my attention to the constant inner presence in the heart that we're gifted when we meditate with Heartfulness regularly and sincerely.

3. Positive intention

Together with the client, we set a positive intention for the results of the work. This is really important, as dwelling on problems actually exacerbates them. As the old saying goes, “Where attention goes, energy flows.” I invite them to put their attention on the positive outcome that they want, rather than the current negative situation they don’t.

For example, if they can’t sleep, we don’t focus on “I want to be free of these sleeping problems,” but rather, they picture themselves waking up happy and refreshed in the morning, full of positive energy. They connect with how that will feel, and experience joy and gratitude as if they have it now. If they do this while the work is going on, it is especially powerful. The more they keep this changed perspective through their daily lives, the better.

Then the session begins. We identify the imbalances in the person’s system which need to be released, and use a simple technique to release them. But I can’t help feeling that this and other healing methods are a little superfluous, as the essentials of the work are established in those initial 3 steps.



*“Where attention
goes, energy flows.”*



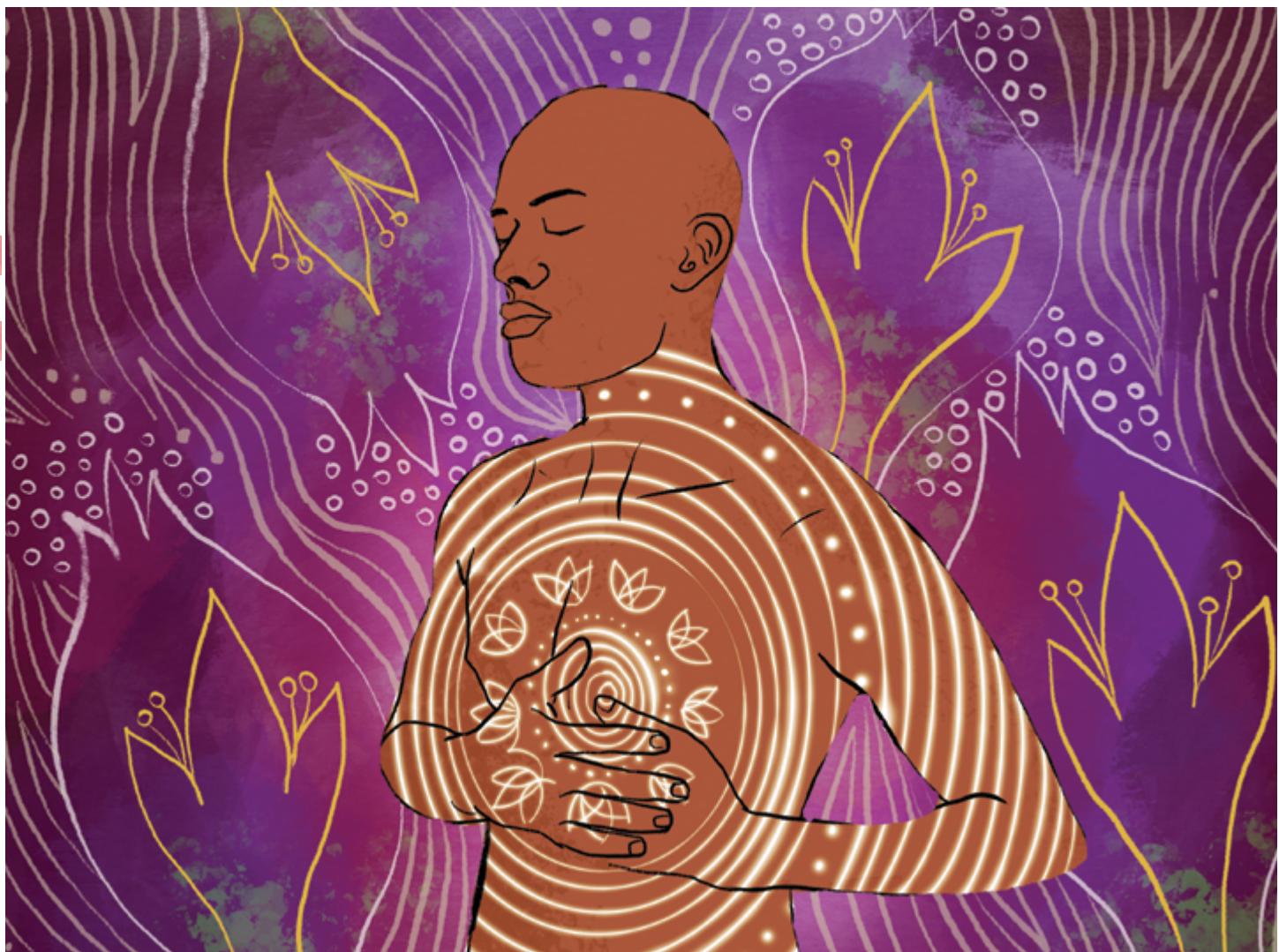
It uses the release technique to release or rebalance whatever needs it, to bring the result they want.

Those 3 steps are a sort of prayer for a particular manifestation, and perhaps it is the ultimate destination of any healer to end up in a place where the healing occurs through prayer alone.

I've started to move in this direction with some more pioneering clients, using a method I call "Accelerated Healing," which bypasses the need to identify each individual imbalance. It uses the release

technique to release or rebalance whatever needs it, to bring the result they want. I find the results to be at least as effective as an established modality. It's a step in the direction of where I suspect healing will ultimately take me.

Illustrations by JASMEE MUDGAL

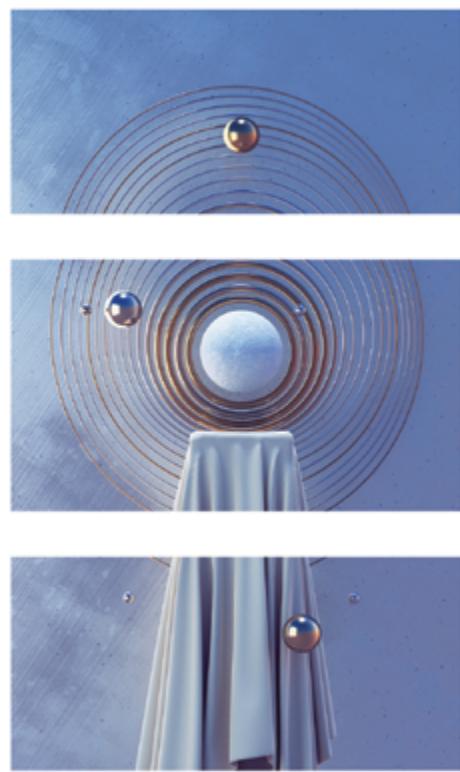




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Life waxes and wanes imperceptibly,
It does not stay long.
The leaf that has once fallen
Does not return to the branch.
Behold the Ocean of Transmigration

MIRABAI

THREE PRIORITIES FOR

Environmental Healing



CHARLES EISENSTEIN challenges our current understanding of environmental sustainability, and asks us to reconsider our approaches and practices to environmentalism. In part 1, he dared us to realize that environmentalism will only work once we become nature lovers. In part 2, he focuses on the way forward, offering ways to heal the environment and ourselves.



It is not lost. There is in fact a way to “save the world.” I put it in quotes, because ultimately the choice we face is not about our survival, it is about what kind of world we choose to live in. One vibrant with life? Or a gigantic strip mine/waste dump/parking lot? So let us say there is a way to regenerate a world vibrant with life. The way is to enact a reverence for life in all its forms. This translates to three priorities for environmentalist attention and funding.

Priority 1: Protect Ecosystems

The first recalls traditional conservationism. We must absolutely protect any remaining intact ecosystems from development, whether it is for oil and gas, minerals, lumber, ranching, suburbs, dam reservoirs, industrial-scale fishing, or biofuels. The few remaining intact organs of Gaia are its reservoirs of biodiversity and its memory of health. Note well that to “protect” does not usually mean to fence off and keep humans away. In fact, right human participation can enhance the health of ecosystems when those humans have intimate understanding and reverence for the places where they live.

Priority 2: Regeneration

The second priority is regeneration, the restoring of life to places where it has been depleted. Regenerative farming and ranching, agroforestry, marine preserves, beaver reintroduction, salmon reintroduction, dam removal, and water retention landscapes are just some of the ways to revitalize the organs of the Earth and bring them back online to stabilize the climate.

Priority 3: Detoxification

The third priority is detoxification. I suspect a lot of forest death (it isn't just oaks) and insect collapse (in most places at least 80% of insects have disappeared) is due to the ubiquity of herbicides, pesticides, toxic waste, and other pollutants in the environment. It shocked me when I learned that vast areas of forest in the eastern United States are routinely sprayed to "control" pest insects. Dioxins, PFAs, antibiotics, pharmaceutical residues, and agriculture chemicals contaminate every ecosystem on Earth, every animal, every cell. They are detectable even in Antarctica.

Add to these the aerial spraying of aluminum and other particles in geoengineering experiments, causing elevated levels of aluminum in places remote from any industrial source. And let's not forget the little-recognized impact of electromagnetic pollution, light pollution, and noise pollution on ecosystems. All of the above harm the Earth on the tissue level, further weakening her already compromised organs.

In fact, right human participation can enhance the health of ecosystems when those humans have intimate understanding and reverence for the places where they live.





The ecological crisis and the spiritual crisis that we call "mental health" share a common source: denial of the Earth as a living being worthy of love, worthy of service.

The soul of the environmental movement

I do not worry that our system is not sustainable. I worry that it is. I am afraid that we can continue to lay waste to the living Earth indefinitely, ending up on a concrete world, so chronically ill physically and mentally that we must incorporate technological assistance into our very brains and bodies.

I am afraid we will compensate for the lost connection to a living world with a burgeoning array of virtual substitutes, digital realities, and online adventures, tragically seeking something that we come to forget we ever had. Do you remember how loud the frogs were? Do you remember flocks of birds extending from horizon to horizon? Do you remember the clouds of fireflies that lit up the nights of my father's youth? I am afraid we will forget we ever lived in such wealth and make do instead with Mario Cart.

We are already far down this path to a concrete world, and far down the path of learning to cope with it. American doctors write every year around 120 million prescriptions for SSRIs, 118 million prescriptions for Adderall, Ritalin, and other ADHD medications, and 120 million for benzodiazepines (I got those numbers by consulting the oracle, I mean ChatGPT). That's more than one psychiatric drug prescription per capita! No wonder people have never been happier.

The inner desolation mirrors the outer. The ecological crisis and the spiritual crisis that we call "mental health" share a common source: denial of the Earth as a living being worthy of love, worthy of service. The conservationist draws from a well of truth: that the purpose of a human being is to participate in the flourishing of life. To serve with. Sundered from that purpose, we

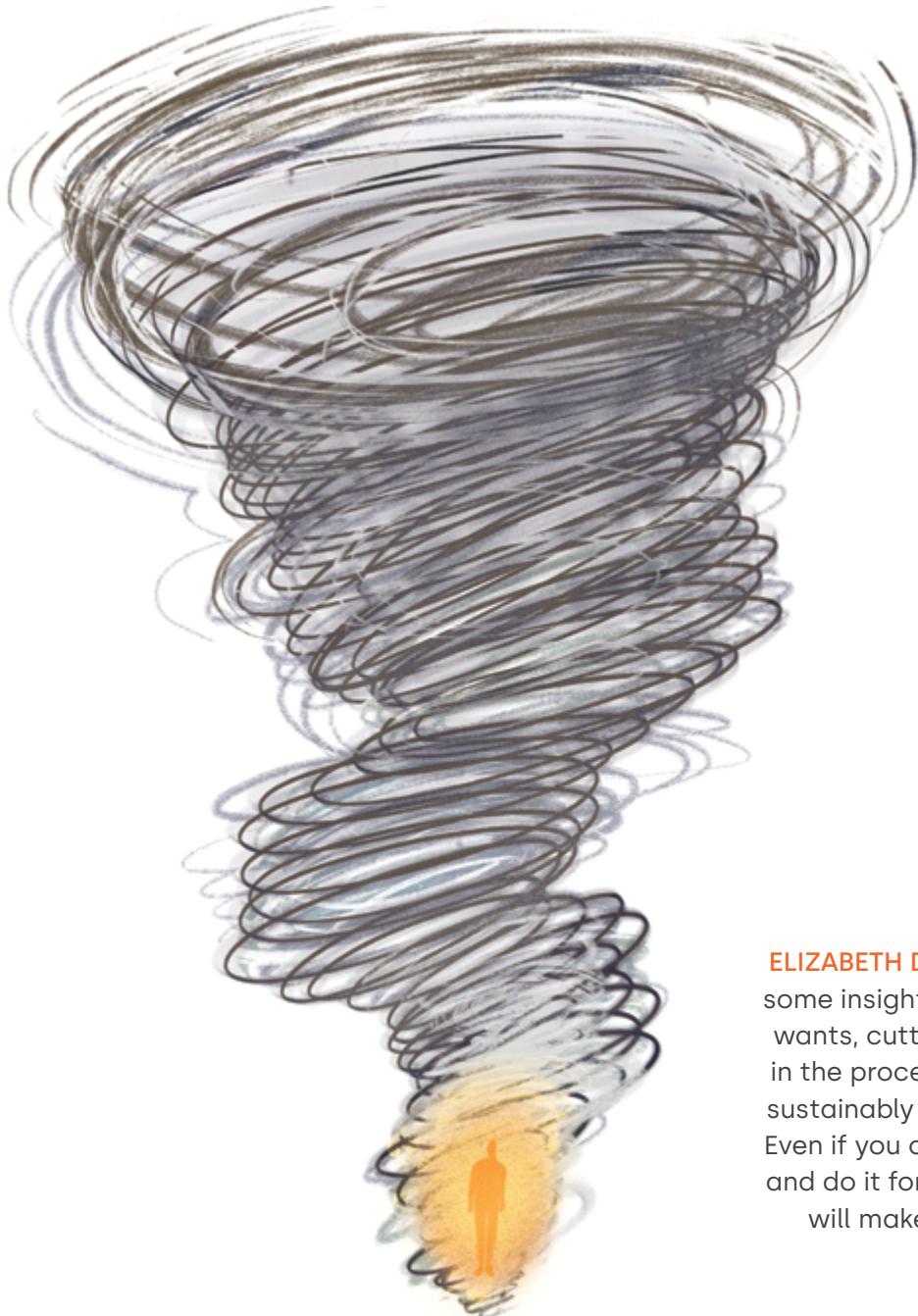
inevitably become sick. That inner sickness, that soul sickness, reflects the outer sickness of ecosystems. Could there ultimately be any doubt that the global climate reflects the social climate, the political climate, the economic climate, and the psychic climate?

The three priorities I listed above are no mere technical tweaks to the project of engineering Earth. They occur naturally to anyone who beholds Earth as a living being with a complex physiology. Beholding Earth as a being, a magnificent being, a gorgeous being, a sacred being, we fall ever deeper in love. Here is where to find again the soul of the environmental movement and fulfill its destiny to transform civilization.

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Take the Consumer **CHALLENGE**



ELIZABETH DENLEY shares some insights on reducing wants, cutting costs, and in the process living more sustainably on the planet. Even if you choose one tip and do it for a month, you will make a difference!

For most of us, the cost of living is going up month by month, and it is not matched by an increase in our incomes. We are being squeezed, and while that is challenging, it is also forcing us to live more creatively and more sustainably on less! We can no longer justify the consumerist throw-away culture, even though all the advertising we see thrives on selling us the latest and most trendy goods. Our current economy is built that way, and it will take a bigger shift in consciousness to transition to a truly sustainable and regenerative way of living.

When I first started meditating, over three decades ago, one principle that jumped out of the Heartfulness literature was, “Do not purchase a new thing if you can manage to carry on with your old belongings.” I soon learned that it is a fundamental principle of yoga – reduce your wants.

Since then, I have personally experienced one of the great side benefits of meditating – meditation reduces your wants. How? Let’s wind back a step.



Our current economy is built that way, and it will take a bigger shift in consciousness to transition to a truly sustainable and regenerative way of living.



Why do we want things?

Wants play into our need to belong. If all your friends ride bicycles, you will want a bicycle. If your neighbors all wear a certain brand of jeans, or cook with a brand of rice cooker, you will be tempted to buy that brand. If someone says something is good, it is natural to be curious about it. We are social learners, and that has many survival benefits. But it also leaves us open to suggestion from advertisers, and sees us succumbing to peer pressure, and that is not so healthy.

Wants also play into our wish to feel happy and avoid pain – our likes and dislikes. Likes and dislikes drive so many of our choices, even leading to addiction and other avoidance behaviors when we are struggling. The media tells us to be happy, healthy, successful, beautiful, intelligent, and the list goes on. What happens when we fail, when we are sad, lonely, ill, or when we don't feel beautiful? We don't like those painful feelings, so we try to avoid them and fill our lives with external distractions and pleasures. The truth is that the world we live in is full of dualities – with health comes illness, with pleasure comes pain, with happiness comes sadness, with good comes bad. It's unavoidable. So best is to face life as it is and come up with simple solutions to reduce wants and wishes.

Here are a few that have served me well:

Inner tips

It is how we respond to the ups and downs that determines how well we navigate life, and that's where Heartfulness helps.

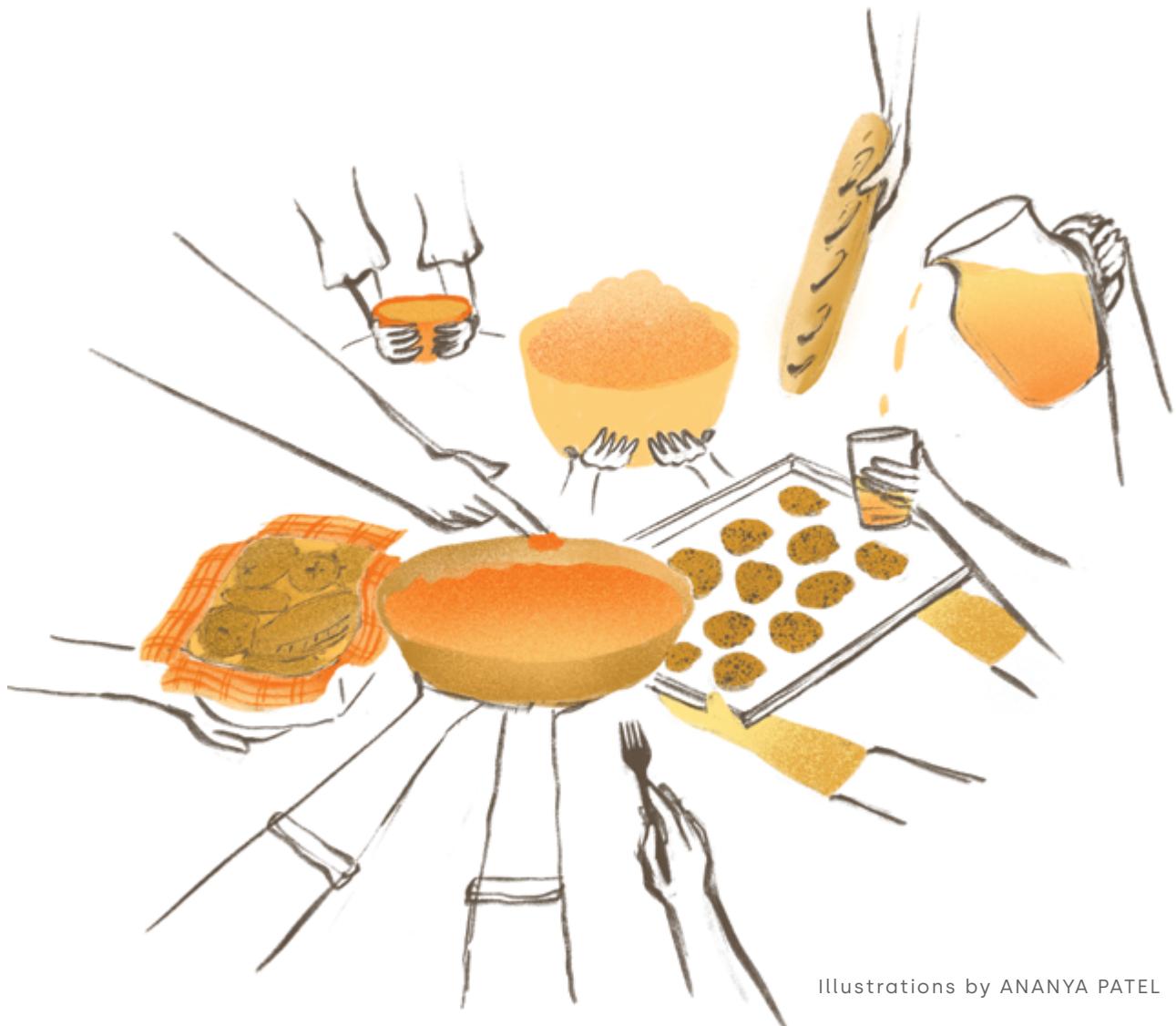
- In Heartfulness Meditation, we learn to dive deeper into the center of our being, where the ups and downs don't affect us; like the eye of a tornado, it's perfectly still.
- In the Heartfulness Cleaning, we remove the complexities and heaviness in our system, so we don't hold emotional entanglements and sources of angst. Each new day is a fresh start where we feel content within ourselves, with fewer wants.
- In the Heartfulness Prayer, we build our resilience and self-mastery, so that our inner life is stable and not so easily swayed by outside pulls and pushes.
- These three simple daily practices provide a natural antidote to the lure of wants.

Outer tips

- Take the contentment challenge! Don't buy any non-essential items for a month.
- Make a list of what you are grateful for every week, and let it replace your list of wants.
- When shopping for food, take your own shopping bags, stick to a prepared list, buy in season, eat vegetarian, ditch the takeaway, and buy generic rather than branded.

The truth is that the world we live in is full of dualities – with health comes illness, with pleasure comes pain, with happiness comes sadness, with good comes bad. It's unavoidable. So best is to face life as it is and come up with simple solutions to reduce wants and wishes.

- Slow-cooked meals like casseroles, stews, and soups are economical, and can be stored easily in the fridge and freezer. They also use up whatever vegetables you have at home.
- Share food with neighbors, friends, and extended family. A good potluck meal is usually fun and very cost effective. Or prevent food spoilage by getting together and preserving foods, e.g., pickles, sauerkraut, passata, stewed fruits, and dried herbs.
- Grow some of your own food, even if it is as simple as herbs on your kitchen windowsill. Let your children plant the seeds and take care of the plants as they grow, and they will also learn some valuable skills.
- Learn from your grandparents. What did they do during tough times to exist with less?
- Declutter – eliminate unnecessary things from your life!



Illustrations by ANANYA PATEL



Creativity

Creativity arises
out of the state
of thoughtless
presence in which
you are much more
awake than when
you are engrossed
in thinking.

ECKHART TOLLE



Womanifesto

The Womanifesto collective came together in Bangkok in the late 1990s to fulfill the need for an inclusive, creative and open-ended art platform for artists from Southeast Asia. It was primarily set up as an independent project run by women, and is now a globally recognized entity, involving multiple art forms and artists from all over the world. One of the coordinators, **VARSHA NAIR**, shares her experience of this movement and its evolution with **VANESSA PATEL**.

Q: The Womanifesto collective has members who are artists, poets, writers, and activists, with the outcome based on shared experiences and dialogue exchanges. So, has it been more about the gathering and feeling of community that it has engendered rather than the creative work produced?

VN: Yes, absolutely. Always, we have brought what we would like to present, to exhibit, to talk about – it was never curated. It was not only about the artwork, but about

what led to that artwork and how we arrived at that point. It has also been very much about the ethos of caring for and supporting each other. For the second event, one artist was short of money and everyone pitched in to support her.

With funding for projects from sponsors, we have retained our autonomy for decision-making, e.g., how big their logo is on posters and catalogues, and where it is placed. These are important decisions that came out of our

conversations about running Womanifesto.

We don't ask our members to register; no one has to pay money to belong. We don't exclude people. If somebody reaches out to us with interest, we engage with them and invite them if there is an exhibition coming up. Also, we don't limit ourselves to exhibitions; we have diverse ways of engagement.

Our first project was on a farm, involving the local community; the

second was a very big exhibition in a public park. We didn't want to be based in the center and limit our output to having exhibitions only.

Q: How often did you gather for these collaborative events?

VN: Every two years. As artists we are also the organizers, and we have our own lives. After an event, there's a lot of follow up. Then you need another year to realize another event.

We want to involve as many women artists, and also have a cross-generational approach, because that's the other thing about the art world – age discrimination, especially for women.

Q: How is Womanifesto different from other artists' platforms?

VN: In the mainstream art world, there's a way of looking at things top down. Whenever there is a big show with a lot of funding, the big names in the art world are invited to participate, and then they reach out to minor players, almost as fillers to complete the curation. The funders have a stake in it, and the curator has to keep them happy, so it all becomes a big game.

Womanifesto is the opposite; it is inclusive and representative. We invite men into thematic projects to talk about human issues and to listen, because in the art world it's a known reality that we're always talking from the male perspective. So, one idea is proper representation.

Q: Apart from gender, in what other ways does Womanifesto encourage representation?

VN: In our second event, we had artists from Japan, Indonesia, Singapore, Croatia, America, and many other places. And we are open to the idea of anyone organizing projects under the Womanifesto banner and adhering to what it stands for. Suppose you have an idea of doing a workshop in Indonesia, you could involve us in the organization and set it up however you wish.

We want to involve as many women artists, and also have a cross-generational approach, because that's the other thing about the art world – age discrimination, especially for women. What we emphasize is conversations with elders. They are the ones who have lived through many experiences and gained wisdom and knowledge. That's where the interest is; that's where the real conversations can happen. And we now set up projects that are pointedly cross-generational. We soon realized that we didn't want to just do exhibitions, and that we enjoyed the gathering of women artists.

We have tried to look at everything through a different lens; for example, in a residency, do we have to produce and display work at the end of it? Can we have a workshop without a "work" to take away from it? That was the idea behind the 2001 workshop on the farm: even though it was a workshop, we didn't have to make work. It was inter-generational, we were going away on a picnic, all living together, cooking, eating, and spending time together. And this brought about a lot of exchange, sorrow, and fun.

The focus was on conversation, exchange, and working with children on an educational program. All the artists came up with workshop models that we





could run with children from the age of 7 up to senior students from a local technical college. At the end we had an open day, which was a great celebration with local music and lots of food.

Everybody from the surrounding villages was involved; we put contemporary artists with local traditional craftspeople and artisans, who were making fishing baskets, mats, woven cloth – everything that they still continue to use in their day-to-day life.

These were agrarian communities and there's a real rhythm to their existence. During the rice planting season, everybody is in the fields. Once the rice is planted, and they're waiting for it to grow, the weaving and the dyeing of yarn happens.

We hosted everything on the farm so that the community members would come to the farm every day and show us how they made various things, talk about it, spend the day with us, and food would be cooked for everybody.

Q: So they shared the arts and crafts of their everyday life – not necessarily something to hang on the wall or display.

VN: Exactly, it's an integral part of their life.

We also talked about new forms. For example, they were interested to see an artist make a fishing basket with a slightly different look. Already the object is faultless in that it's been used to track fish for centuries, and it works very

well. But the exchange, another level of creativity, awakened both sides. In many ways it was the artists who learned more – we gained knowledge of materials, the locality, the skills, and how to scout things out.

For example, one of the artists running a workshop asked the kids to lead her through the farm, which had a little creek running through it, a forested area, and rice fields. In the forested area, she asked them, "Show me what you know about the plants growing here: which are good, for cooking, for eating, and why?" She wanted to determine how much of that traditional knowledge was being handed down. They were asked, "What has your grandmother told you?" "What has your grandfather

Everybody from the surrounding villages was involved; we put contemporary artists with local traditional craftspeople and artisans, who were making fishing baskets, mats, woven cloth – everything that they still continue to use in their day-to-day life.

It reinforced the richness of the rural environment and honored our codependence with Nature. There is immeasurable wealth in community living and the handing down of the tiniest of details.

told you?" "Has your mom told you anything?" There was an emphasis on keeping that knowledge at the forefront, because the gaze is so much turned towards cities for employment.

It reinforced the richness of the rural environment and honored our codependence with Nature. There is immeasurable wealth in community living and the handing down of the tiniest of details. One girl said, "If you touch that flower, don't put the finger to your mouth or it will make you sick." From childhood, she'd been made aware of all of those little things.

We're planning a similar workshop in a couple of months, which will be included in the next exhibition later this year.

Q: Is that to celebrate any particular milestone of Womanifesto?

VN: We started in 1997, which was a milestone already because we did it against many odds and with a lack of funding. We have managed to sustain this format over the years with some core members who were there from the beginning. In terms of organization, we did everything inhouse, from write-ups to accounting. We've always had other artists joining, and doing projects that involved a lot of artists.

One recent project was a publication, *Procreation Postcreation*, which went out as an open call globally for artists to participate. We had an amazing response with people from Mongolia to St. Vincent and the Grenadine Islands sending us their work. The idea was that you procreate, and then what happens after you've created? Those are very widely interpreted in many ways. One response was from a man who had recently become a grandfather, writing about his experience of being in a hospital waiting for his daughter to give birth. Another person documented children's textiles. We had really diverse contributions. In this way we've set up projects to bring in new people.

Womanifesto is very agile. We frequently change format, and we tend not to decide on the next project while one project is coming to an end. It's never preconceived. One is a stepping-stone to the next. We went from a community-based workshop, to a publication, to a web-based project, to establishing a residency in the same community where we did the workshop.

Our next project, the workshop residency, is a bit more thematic. We're concentrating on ceramics and earthenware pottery, because it's close to a UNESCO World Heritage site called Ban Chiang.

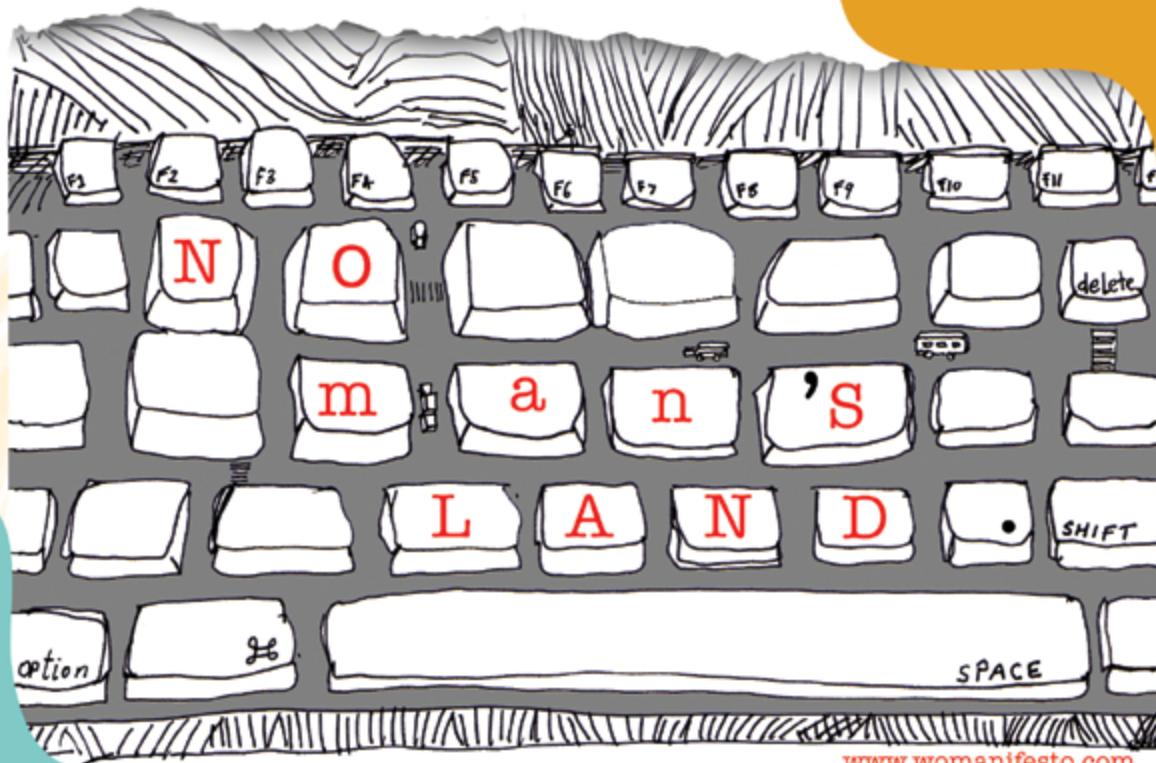


Their pottery is well known and valued, and there's still a community of mostly women potters. So we'll probably only bring in four or five outside artists, and mainly invite potters from the local community. We don't differentiate between those who've been brought in as contemporary artists and those from the local community. We are all partners.

Q: Recently, Womanifesto had its work included in the Asia Art Archives in Hong Kong, which is a huge deal. How significant is this for the collective?

VN: We don't always realize how valuable it is to gather our material, our documentation. While working with the archive, I've realized that every single bit of paper created from 1997 onward is so valuable. It was a fantastic process to archive it, and we did it mostly during the pandemic lockdown. At Womanifesto, we've always had to talk about ourselves, so as not to become invisible, and this has helped us do just that. These days, you cannot talk about art in Southeast Asia without mentioning Womanifesto.

We don't differentiate between those who've been brought in as contemporary artists and those from the local community. We are all partners.





We've kept meticulous records, and beautiful photo albums with hand-stitched covers that are works of art in themselves, lovingly put together. We have every slide, every negative, every project proposal, every application for funding – we've kept it all. Already there are researchers who've reached out, for example, the Cooper Gallery at the University of Dundee. We were part of a project called the Ignorant Art School, which is looking at artists engaging in alternative modes of education.

Q: So the next big thing for Womanifesto is the exhibition coming up in September at the Bangkok Art and Culture Center.

VN: Yes, and simultaneously there is an online anthology of Womanifesto, called the *Womanifesto Way*. Now there is a recognition of our "way," which is to be hospitable, caring, open, engaged in community conversations, and with the capacity to be agile.

This anthology project was spearheaded by the Power Institute at the University of Sydney. And in the meantime, we were approached by the Bangkok Art and Cultural Center to showcase Womanifesto in what they call their Master Series of exhibitions. It's a massive project.

There was a hiatus for 10 years, from 2008 to 2018, because of various personal challenges for the team members. Early on we had decided that we would not push ourselves beyond our limits

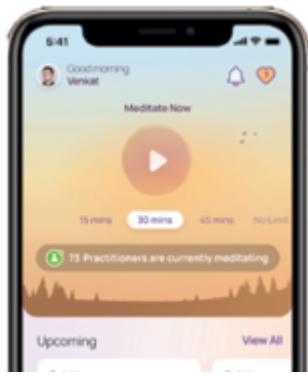




to ignore all the other things that we needed to take care of in life. And ironically, just when things started to revive, and we planned a physical gathering, we were hit by Covid. During that time, we came up with the idea of the Digital Courtyard, where a team of artists from multiple locations had small gatherings. We met over Zoom from Bangkok to Baroda,

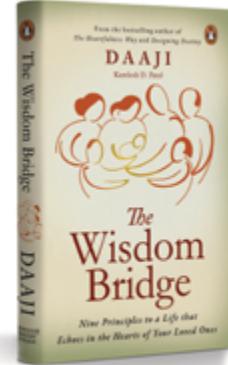
Berlin, Sydney, Basel, and London. And we realized what it meant to have this connection during the lockdown, to be able to gather and to be able to exchange our stories.

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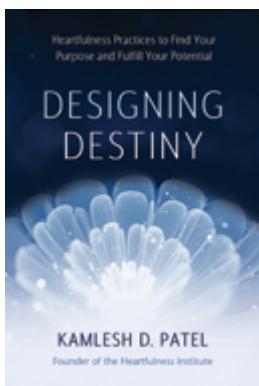
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