

## Uncommon Happiness: Beyond The Limits Of Therapy

### The Inspiration For This Article

I recently heard a statement from Freud and a statement from Mark Epstein (a psychiatrist) that inspired the beginning of this article. It's the ongoing work by people who work with my teacher and who attend the Thursday group that gives the inspiration for the remainder of this article.

### Common Unhappiness

Our survival is more dependent on learning from trauma more than learning from joy. Through evolution the brain has been trained to remember more of the events that are traumatic. Our brain/mind puts more emphasis on past trauma than on past joy.

Freud said that the best therapy can provide is to bring a person from hysteric misery (or any other very disturbed state) to common unhappiness.

### Common Unhappiness and Uncommon Happiness

Freud began the scale of unhappiness with hysterical misery going all the way to common unhappiness. At the high functioning end of common unhappiness are people who say that life is good, *but*. But I want this different. But I want that different. But I want this person different. But I want myself different. There is a knowing that life is good, *but* there is something more that would make life even better.

Uncommon happiness is knowing that we have a good life including, and even embracing, the 10,000 sorrows that comes with being alive.<sup>1</sup> *Uncommon happiness is living in awe of the wonder of Life that embraces 10,000 sorrows and 10,000 joys.*<sup>2</sup>

Everyone in the Thursday group is living with the intention of living a life of uncommon happiness. For most people in the group, there is quite a way to go before they're uncommonly happy (living in awe) and that's okay. They've been through a lot and they're still carrying the stress of many events and of many, many thoughts.

### Understanding Without Relief

Mark Epstein, a psychiatrist raised Jewish who is now Buddhist, said that “therapy often leads to understanding without relief.” I’ve witnessed this understanding without relief in myself and in many people. A person will know so much about their divorce, the loss of a loved one or some other trauma/sorrow, *and they’ll still be suffering the dulling effect (not feeling relief) from the event.* This dulling can happen in event after event after event throughout a person’s life with most people becoming, to different degrees, burdened by the many sorrows that have happened.

### Beyond Therapy

I’ve gone to therapists that have been helpful. I’ve read many books that have been helpful. I’ve talked with friends and this too has helped. My life was pretty darn good, but I felt I didn’t have the relief, the feeling of ease, that I somehow knew was available. It was only when I met my teacher that he presented me with a way to go from this underlying feeling of unhappiness, of feeling incomplete, to a way of living that brings ever increasing joy and ease.

We can go beyond this stopping point of therapy where a person has the understanding without relief. I’ve seen many people shed heavy layers of past events in the work with my teacher and in the Thursday meetings. This work goes beyond therapy.

### Some Instructions Of This Work

When I first began working with Charles (my teacher) I thought that what he was saying was too simple. He also claimed a universality to this work; that this work can help anybody that applies these simple practices. I now have no doubt of the help that comes from doing these practices.

I’ll list most of the simple practices that Charles gave that can take a person beyond the limited help that therapy often provides.

### Relax and Breathe

Relax involves both our body and our mind. Our body’s relaxation is enhanced when we breathe into our belly, and also when we scan our body for tensions and help the tight muscles relax.

Relaxing our mind is better said as relaxing while our mind is tense with thoughts that produce uncomfortable emotions, increased body tension and a more shallow breathing pattern. If there's something that is threatening our life or putting us in peril, then the mind has every reason to stress us ..... and it's very good for us to feel that stress from our mind and to respond to it.

*When our mind stresses us over something that is not vitally important to our survival in the moment, then we may want to consider that our mind is overreacting. Do you want to listen to and believe a mind that is overreacting? Each of us has experienced when our mind gets out of its stressed state that the mind is much clearer and more true. So why listen to our mind when it's stressed? It's simply a bad habit that we've acquired.*

By deepening our breathing into our belly, by relaxing muscle tension in our body and by not listening to a stressed mind, we can help quicken the mind out of its stressed state. A calm mind always does better than a stressed mind.

### Get Out Of Our Own Way

Charles has said to me, a number of times, "Phil, you just need to get out of your own way." There is a deep well of love and wisdom in each of us. When we have unfettered access to this deep well, we have the best opportunity to live a life of love, compassion, ease and Grace. When we're in the way of accessing this ever-present deep well, then we're in our own way. We can get out of our own way by practicing the simple practices that are in this section of the article.

### Drop Into Your Heart

The phrase 'drop into your heart' is a favorite saying of Charles. By heart, Charles is referring to our compassionate heart that doesn't have duality (love and hate) and doesn't have the stress of our emotional heart. Our compassionate heart is directly connected to the deep wisdom within.

Drop is a word that is very appropriate. If we're holding onto a suitcase, all we need to do is to relax for the suitcase to drop. For the suitcase to drop, we don't do anything to the suitcase. Relaxing our hand for the suitcase to drop is similar to relaxing our mind when our mind and our emotions are overly active. We don't do anything to our mind or to our emotions, except relax, for the thoughts or for the emotional feelings to also drop. Dropping into our compassionate heart is similar to dropping a suitcase. We don't do anything to our heart. We simply (it's simple, though it's not always easy) relax and fall into the naturalness of our heart.

*Our body is naturally relaxed. Our breathing is naturally relaxed and involves our belly moving as we breathe. Our mind is naturally relaxed.* By coming back to our natural life, we're getting out of the way, and without effort, we'll drop into our heart.

### Writing

Charles has said many times that he acts as an external bridge to help connect us to the deep well of love, peace, compassion and wisdom that is within; to connect us to who we really are. As we access our True Self more and more, we're building a bridge that'll take us more quickly from our superficial self to our True Self. As time goes on and as we access our deep wisdom and compassion more and more, there comes a time when Charles and others won't be needed as an the external bridge for us to quickly fall into our heart. Our internal bridge will be sufficiently built where we'll have access 24/7 to our compassionate heart.<sup>3</sup>

Writing, journaling, has been a way for people to connect more to what is inside them. Writing, in the way that Charles taught me, is a powerful way to build our internal bridge.<sup>4</sup> A previous article [Processing Writing and Writing Spirit's Messages](#) discusses that there are two types of writing that we can do.

The first type of writing is to write down what is going on inside of us; in our mind and what we're emotionally feeling. I call this type of writing 'processing writing.' The second type of writing is to receive from the deep well within; for our inner wisdom to speak to us.

Writing puts words on paper. Writing is physical. In this second type of writing where guidance comes from deep within, writing brings what's deep inside to come out physically on paper. This brings what's deep inside through our body; not just remaining as thoughts in our mind.

By our inner wisdom and compassion coming through our body and into the world (onto a piece of paper), the depth coming up involves both our mind (receiving the guidance in words) and our body (writing the words). This dual involvement grounds and deepens the pathway for our True Self to talk to us; building more of our internal bridge each time we write. As we utilize this pathway of writing, it's like any other path that is used again and again, the path becomes well worn and easier to travel.

Being in a calm, centered, surrendered and accepting state helps what is deep within to come through in writing. Three practices were listed before this section on writing. Each of the three practices of relax and breathe, get out of our way, and drop into our heart opens the path for writing.

*Writing is the one activity that most people are hesitant with and slow in developing. Why? Because writing requires us to be in a place of receptivity for the writing to come through. Most people have spent a lifetime of listening to their mind, of living with many body tensions, of breathing shallow, and of being in the way for this depth to come to the surface. This is why writing is usually slow to develop.*

It's hard for most people to be their natural self (relaxed and filled with Grace). When we're in this natural state, it's easy for our inner wisdom and compassion to speak to us through writing.

I understand the difficulty that a person can experience when opening to this type of writing. I remember when I'd sit in meditation for over thirty minutes, then take a pen in hand and nothing would come through. Or when three or four sentences would come out, and these sentences felt flat; like they didn't have much life in them. I stayed with writing. After about two years, writing began to flow more freely. I could feel the depth. Now I write every day. It's a lifeline for me; so sweet and the guidance also corrects me when I'm off course.

Because writing doesn't come easy for most people and because, in the beginning, the rewards of writing are not plenty, most people tend to not set aside much time for writing. The majority of the people in the Thursday group write less than four times a week. The majority of the people have been in the group for one and a half to two years.

I understand that, for most people, it takes time for the wisdom and love to flow through writing. This is why I don't push people in the group to write more, though I do speak of good that comes from writing. *Writing comes through an increasing desire to live in awe; to connect to, and to learn from, the deep source of wisdom and compassion within each of us.*

### Come To Group Meetings

On our own, we accomplish less than when we work with others. Coming to meetings accelerates our growth.

## Understanding Without Relief Revisited

I was talking to a PhD psychologist this week about the limits that therapy has. He took Mark Epstein's remark (therapy often leads to understanding without relief) a step further. He said that people in therapy can have understanding without transformation. Transform means 'to change into another substance.'

The 10,000/many sorrows can be transformed; changed into something else rather than continuing to be sorrow or to be a deepening dullness. Paramahansa Yogananda said: "No one wants sorrow or suffering; yet without sorrow and suffering we wouldn't learn compassion."

How can we have understanding with relief, with transformation, taking us past the usual boundary of where therapy takes us? How can we live in uncommon happiness? How can we live in awe?

## Density and Light

One of the sayings of the Thursday group is: density is density is density. It doesn't matter if it's physical density (body tension), emotional density (fear, anger, lust, greed, envy, hate) or mental density (ongoing stress-producing thoughts). Every type of density blocks Light. (Light means our natural love, joy, compassion and wisdom). Stated again, *density blocks our natural love, joy, compassion and wisdom from coming up and being active in all of the moments of our life.*

To live in awe is to live permeable and vulnerable; to live where the depths of our inner joy, compassion, love and wisdom come through all the way up to our personality and to our immediate experience. Light is present in every experience. Light is present when a loved one dies and when sorrow is great. Light is present when we're late for a meeting and traffic is slow. Light is present when we're hungry and feel irritable. Light is ever present. The densities that we carry block Light from being more fully present.

By releasing the physical, emotional and mental densities, we go beyond what remains in the person who goes to therapy. Yoga, massage and exercise can release some of the physical density. We use hands-on help in the group to further release physical density in the body.

Breathing and relaxing helps release all three densities (physical, emotional and mental). Breathing and relaxing are ways to 'get out of our own way.' Dropping into our heart, dropping deeper into the depth of ourselves helps create a pathway for Light to more tangibly touch us.

Writing directly brings the depth of Light through us into the physical world. Our inner wisdom is the highest wisdom that we'll ever experience. It's like having a master ever-present, ever-ready to guide us.

Charles asks the question: "Why wouldn't you use writing?" The answer that I've found to Charles' question of why people don't write more is primarily for three reasons. One reason that people don't write more is that writing is new to them and, for most people in the beginning, writing is not easy to do. The second reason that people don't write more is that density blocks Light. The physical, emotional and mental densities, just by being there, block the Light within from coming up through writing. The third reason is that a receptivity is needed for writing and most people's densities noticeably dull their receptivity. This receptivity is a non-effort; it's getting out of the way so that our inner well of compassion, love and wisdom comes through in the writing.

Writing, in the beginning, is not natural for most people. Over time writing becomes as natural as our own voice. There is no effort in using our voice. Writing also can become a natural non-effort.

### **Every Density Is Sustained By Energy**

*Every physical, emotional and mental density is sustained by energy. Relaxing is key.*

### **Releasing Already Acquired Density and Acquiring Less New Density**

The past densities that people in the group have been carrying are reducing. This lessening of physical, emotional and mental density gives a great sense of relief; just as taking off a heavy backpack would give relief from its weight being removed. So much is unwound by simply being relaxed and present.

People in the group are also becoming better at not acquiring new physical, emotional and mental densities. This is done primarily by relaxing whenever they would otherwise be tense. Physically relaxing their muscles when they notice tension and by breathing in a natural way (into their belly). Mentally relaxing their mind by not listening to it when

its in a stressed state. They know their mind is trying to solve something bothersome but the mind is agitated and it can't do a good job of helping them in the moment.

Emotionally relaxing by gently being with their emotions when the emotions are in an agitated state. They know that if they can 'get out of the way'/relax, then the wisdom and compassion deep within can come to the surface to aid in a crisis-feeling time.

The people in the group are getting better at releasing old densities and not acquiring as much new density in their daily lives. This combination lightens them up; where Light is more prominent; where their True Self is more prominent.

### **Living Uncommonly Happy**

Before Charles, I struggled. I meditated for years. I was aware of my breathing and I breathed in a more relaxed way (into my belly). I followed (in an imperfect way) a moral way to live. I felt all of the emotions from joy to desperation. For years, I'd done work with two different groups. I was moving along in life. I was grateful, *but* (there's that but again) I lived with the 'common unhappiness' feeling. Now my life is very different; living with much more ease, Grace and love.

Uncommon happiness is about living as who we truly are; as love, peace, compassion, wisdom and joy. Uncommon happiness is available to everyone. This happiness is uncommon because the densities in us need to become more permeable to Light; they need to breakup and release.

Releasing the densities first involves being aware of them, then gently staying with the uncomfortableness (uncomfortableness is a part of every density) while they dissipate. The physical, emotional and mental densities will break up and release when they're no longer being fed with the energy that they need in order to be sustained.<sup>5</sup>

May all beings live in freedom.

### **Footnotes:**

1 The Buddha said that we'll experience 10,000 sorrows and 10,000 joys. 10,000 is used to indicate the same as saying a person will experience many joys and many sorrows. 10,000 was not meant to be the exact number of sorrows and joys a person experiences in their life.

- 2 One definition of awe is having an overwhelming feeling of reverence produced by that which is grand, sublime.
- 3 Meditation also is a great aid in building our internal bridge to our compassionate heart.
- 4 I was trained by Charles not to do processing writing. He said that God-Spirit already knew everything inside of me, so there is no need for me to write about things that God already knows.  
I was taught that writing is to receive guidance. I could ask questions and that all of the questions wouldn't be answered. There is no right answer to a wrong question and the best timing of receiving an answer may not be when the question is written.  
Processing writing has its value. I was trained not to do processing writing. Others trained by Charles were told to do both processing writing and writing the guidance from God-Spirit-Consciousness.
- 5 Two recent articles address how not to feed the physical, emotional and mental densities. These articles are [Back Doors, Our Work and Mercy](#) and [Caterpillar and Butterfly](#).