



Self Transcendence

A Study Guide

Hayward Michael Fox, Ph.D.

SELF TRANSCENDENCE

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DEDICATION

To Cynthia, who mindfully conveys the present, and our children Julia, Heather and Larry, their children and their children's children, who lovingly convey the future. Remember I Love you with all my heart, all of my soul, and all of my might.

Zeyde, 1997

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* The Blue Sky exercise was drawn from *Time Space Knowledge* by Tarthang Tulku, Dharma Press.

PREFACE

I have been studying and practicing psychology for more than thirty years. During this time, I have investigated contemporary theories of personality, had in-depth interviews with thousands of people, studied cosmology and learned from contemplative insights. This book is an effort to integrate this knowledge into a liberating vision of ourselves.

This book is a self study guide—a study we can do ourselves and a study *of* ourselves. A thorough study of ourselves is called for because we have prematurely defined ourselves. This premature definition is incomplete, narrowing our experiences, limiting our freedom and our ability to respond fully to our life circumstances.

Our usual self definitions-- our self-concepts, our personality patterns, our roles in life and our emotional experiences-- have all contributed to define and limit our sense of ourselves and to restrict our knowledge of what is possible in our lives.

We have habitually operated from practiced and automatic ways of thinking, acting and feeling. These habitual patterns are the adaptations of our youth. Over time, we have come to define our reality from these early life experiences and to define ourselves by the adaptations we have made to these early experiences.

This book is a guide, intended to liberate us from premature and incomplete definitions of ourselves and to free us from the compelling patterns of thought, action and feelings of our youth.

Using this guide, we can come to be less determined by past conditioning and more able to operate from an intention which lies in the realm of freedom and choice.

**We can come to experience ourselves
in a more open and free manner,
exercising more conscious choice and influence
in our own lives.**

INTRODUCTION

The instructional material presented here takes three forms:

1) The text of the book offers an opportunity for theoretical and philosophical knowledge. *It is recommended that the text be read slowly as though deliberately spoken out-loud.* This pace allows time to consider the implications of the ideas.

2) The written exercises offer an opportunity for self observation and recording. In addition they offer a more personalized understanding of the material as it is examined in light of our own lives.

3) The meditative practices are an opportunity for experiential knowing. These practices can be done repeatedly to offer a direct, first-hand experience that carries the material to a deeply-felt level of understanding.

This book is a guide to self transcendence. We have become entranced by our daily sensory experiences and thoughts. This trance has made us insensitive to a fundamental and ever-present field of Awareness out of which all experience arises.

Our usual self definitions (roles, self concepts, emotional states, and personalities) are merely limited vantage points of this all inclusive field of Awareness. *Our awakening occurs as we appreciate Awareness to be the source and essence of ourselves and all we experience.*

Through reading this guide and doing the exercises, we can systematically explore all of our limiting self definitions and patterns. We can come to recognize and identify with the Awareness that is primary to all experience, inherently creative, expressive and free.

In this identity, we are free to assume any vantage point, have more knowledge, and practice more conscious choice and influence in our lives.

**The content of what we know
reflects the vantage point
we have assumed.**

CHAPTER 1: VANTAGE POINT

We are always assuming a psychological vantage point from which to know. These psychological vantage points include our attitudes, beliefs, roles, personalities, self concepts and emotional states.

It is from our vantage points that we know the world, and it is from our vantage points that we know ourselves.

We define “ourselves” by the vantage points we assume, and we define “reality” as what we characteristically know from our vantage points. For example, from the emotional vantage point of fear, we know the world as dangerous and know ourselves as vulnerable. From the emotional vantage point of grief, we see life as lacking meaning and purpose and experience ourselves as missing someone or something essential to our happiness. From the emotional vantage point of anger, we view the world as invading our personal space or blocking us from getting what we want, and see ourselves as hurt or wronged.

Over time our most practiced vantage points become automatic.

Without volition, practiced vantage points are assumed and our usual way of knowing, both ourselves and our circumstances, come into focus. When our vantage points are narrow, we experience ourselves as fixed and our reality as frozen in certain routine ways. While this provides predictability, it also deadens us to our sense of aliveness. Over time, we stop thinking, seeing and feeling. Instead we live out the life predetermined by the vantage points we have assumed.

Every vantage point we assume both allows for and limits the range of possible experience.

The content of what we know and do not know is reflective of the vantage point we have assumed. Like blinders, vantage points direct what we see and do not see.

For example, the emotional vantage point of fear allows the perception of danger and limits the experience of safety and comfort. The emotional vantage point of depression allows only despair and limits the experience of hope.

Our vantage point influences not only the current moment, vantage point also influences our remembered past and our anticipated future.

We think we are looking into our past and into our future, when we are actually looking into a mirror reflecting our current vantage point. For example, when we are depressed we have many unhappy memories, and the future we imagine is miserable and hopeless. When we are in love, however, we see the future as promising and anticipate living happily ever after.

Our vantage points are psycho-physical and therefore of the mind and body.

For example, in the emotional vantage point of anger our mind perceives that the other person is wrong or bad. Our thinking is narrow, seeing only one way and not allowing any other point of view. Physically, our muscles assume a tightened stance, our organs and glands are constricted. The chemistry of this constriction surges through our bodies. Our actions are driven by this tightly contracted state of knowing and feeling. In contrast, we can observe ourselves in love. In love, our hearts and minds are more open. We see more possibility. The world seems a beautiful place, and the future is full of promise. Our bodies are relaxed, and the chemistry of this state is invigorating and pleasurable. Our actions express tenderness, care and concern.

Frequently, we are unaware that a vantage point has been assumed.

We are blind to the impact that the vantage point has upon our perception of ourselves and upon the perception of our reality. We believe we are seeing “things as they are” instead of recognizing that we are seeing a reflection of our pre-existing beliefs, attitudes, roles and emotional states.

Clearly the vantage point we assume has a significant impact on every aspect of our experience -- present, past and future. We speak from vantage point, hear from vantage point, think from vantage point, feel from vantage point and act from vantage point.

In confusing *ourselves* with practiced vantage points, we limit our views, our knowledge, our feelings and our actions to whatever the vantage point allows. Our inherent freedom is dimmed and the fullness of our possibility is lost.

PRACTICE ONE: ASSUMING VANTAGE POINT

Commentary: This practice is designed to demonstrate the relationship between our physical position and what is seen.

Part One: Assuming View Point in Physical Space

Select a large room to explore. Physically move around the room and note how it appears from various locations. Actually pause in different locations and study what is seen from different view points. How does the room look from each corner? How does the room appear when we are on our knees? What do we see if we view the room when lying on the floor looking straight up? Note how the room appears the same whenever returning to a view point previously assumed.

Journal a brief description of the room from these different view points. Become fully aware of the relationship between what is seen and the physical view point assumed.

Recognize how any one view point is merely how the room appears from that view point. Appreciate that in reality the room is all view points.

Consider the possibility of seeing the room from more than one point of view at the same time. Consider the room as always being all of the view points simultaneously. Consider how revealing and how limiting any one view point is.

Journal any useful insights and associations. What does this practice bring to mind?

Part Two: Assuming Psychological Vantage Point

Now consider a range of psychological vantage points. How would this room appear if we were trapped in it? How would this room seem if we were exhausted and had to move all of the furniture? How would this room seem if we were depressed and had to always be alone in it?

Does the room appear differently as we move into these differing attitudinal vantage points? Note carefully the relationship between our psychological state or vantage point and our perception of the room.

Journal any useful insights and associations. Are there examples of our assuming vantage points that obviously affect our daily lives? What is our vantage point on our jobs, our families, our futures?

Reflection: We tend to be so outwardly focused that we are unaware that what we see “out there” is related to our vantage point. It appears that vantage point allows a specific range of experience.

In the first part of the practice, we examine how what we see is affected by our physical position. In the second part of the practice, we examine how our attitude or psychological vantage point affects what we see.

We frequently explain, even justify our attitude or mood by pointing to situations or circumstances of our lives. It commonly seems that the attitude or mood we have is created by the situation in which we find ourselves.

Consider the possibility, however, that our attitude or mood might be a psychological vantage point from which we view and experience.

This practice invites us to consider how the vantage point we assume allows our perception of ourselves and of the events in our lives.

Thoughts
Actions
Perceptions
Emotions
Sensations

**The experience of any vantage point
is known through its TAPES.**

CHAPTER 2 TAPES: THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR LIVES

Our experience takes form as Thoughts, Actions, Perceptions, Emotions and Sensations. These aspects of experience form the TAPES of the vantage point.

TAPES are perpetuating loops that sustain vantage point. For example, examine our own position of fear. Our TAPES organize the experience as follows: We have the thought “I am going to get hurt” or the thought “something terrible is going to happen.” We take the action of avoiding or hiding from whatever is feared. Our perception of ourselves is that we are vulnerable. Our perception of our situation is that it is dangerous. Our emotions are anxious, and in more constricted vantage points we experience terror. The physical sensations are of tense muscles, knotted stomach and pounding heart.

As another example, we can look to our vantage point of depression and see the TAPES of this experience. In depression we have negative thoughts that we “can not do it,” that we are “overwhelmed” that we “can not go on.” We take the action of withdrawal. We isolate ourselves and may seclude ourselves drawing the drapes, not answering the phone and perhaps not getting out of bed. Our perception of the world is dull and monochromatic, without interest and without hope. Our perception of ourselves is that we have no value or worth and worse that we are bad or evil. Our emotions are of darkness and despair combined with a pervasive agitation, fear and hopelessness. The physical sensations are heaviness of heart, and a hollow empty void in our gut. The TAPES of this position are so gripping and so convincingly real that we may see suicide as the only way out.

Note how congruent the aspects of our experience can be. Our thought supports the action, which reinforces the perception, which perpetuates the emotions, which are experienced as sensations. It is no wonder we are convinced that we are only a certain way and that our world is only as perceived. Our ordinary experience informs us of such.

Our experience, however, is merely the TAPES of the vantage point. When we are unaware that we are assuming a vantage point and experiencing the TAPES of the position, we erroneously believe that our world is only as perceived and ourselves are only as experienced. What is a vantage point is misperceived as a defining reality and thus unchangeable.

PRACTICE TWO: RECOGNIZING TAPES

Commentary: This practice is designed to help us recognize all of our experiences as being comprised of thoughts, actions, perceptions emotions, and sensations. It can be useful to discern the elements that create the experience of ourselves and our reality.

Part One: Identifying Thoughts

Sit quietly and simply attend to thoughts that occur.

Thoughts can present themselves as words or pictures.

Sit quietly. Simply notice and label the experience of “thoughts” as they occur.

Do not get involved with the *content* of thought. Just sit as if on a riverbank watching the stream of thoughts flow by. Acknowledge the stream as “thoughts” no matter what their content.

Do this practice five minutes daily for three days. This will give you some practice identifying thoughts. Regardless of how convincing or compelling the content may be, they are still thoughts.

While doing this formal practice five minutes a day, casually begin to notice thoughts at other times throughout the day.

Note thoughts as often as you can. This can be fleeting recognition of thoughts as they occur.

There is no need to change thoughts; merely recognize the experience as *thoughts*.

Reader's Notes:

Part Two: Identifying Actions

In this part of the practice we develop the ability to notice or witness our actions and behaviors. This is a practice of simply noting our actions as if watching ourselves without criticism or judgment.

We can do this every morning as we enact our morning routine of getting out of bed, going to the bath room, bathing, dressing and having breakfast.

Witness these actions of morning routine for three days.

On these days, casually notice action or behavior throughout the day, whenever it spontaneously occurs to you to do so.

Part Three: Identifying Perceptions

In this part of the practice we train ourselves to notice perceptions. Perceptions are interpretations or meanings that we assign to ourselves and to our world. Perceptions are global impressions of “the way things are” and “the way I am.”

As soon as we assume vantage point a perception of ourselves and of our circumstance immediately springs into focus. This occurs all of the time but may be easier to identify in new relationships or novel places.

Go to a new place or meet a new person. Notice the perception of others. How do they seem? How are you seeing yourself in this situation? Do you *fit*? Are you *better than, equal to* or *less than people you see*? How do you imagine you are seen by the other person? Go some place different or meet someone new daily for three consecutive days.

These mental and emotional interpretations are perceptions of ourselves and circumstances. They are always being formed in our daily lives. Having noted perceptions of yourself in novel situations, now practice identifying perception of yourself and your circumstance in a more familiar routine.

Is there a way in which our daily perception keeps the experience routine?

Reader's Notes:

Part Four: Identifying Emotions

In this part of the practice we train ourselves to recognize our emotions. This can be done by asking ourselves how we feel about what is currently happening. We can also recognize feelings associated with our remembered past and our anticipated future. Label feelings as they occur: happy, sad, apprehensive, scared, angry, loving, joyful.

For three days sit quietly and observe emotions as they form for five minutes. Note and record these feelings. Where in the body are these various emotions experienced?

Attend briefly to emotions that occur throughout the day. Ask yourself how you are feeling now. This can be noted and recorded in a journal.

Part Five: Identifying Sensations

In this part of the practice we develop the ability to notice physical sensations in the muscles (tightening, twitching, aching, cramping) and organs (churning, tensing, palpitating) as well as noting the activation of our receptive senses: hearing, tasting, touching, smelling, seeing.

For five minutes on three consecutive days sit quietly and note sensations as they occur. For example if a sound occurs you would label this “hearing”. If you needed to scratch you would label that sensation *itching*. If your leg muscle tenses label this *tightening*.

Throughout the day keep a soft focus on and be able to label them as sensations as they occur.

Reader's Notes:

Part Six: Identifying Aspects of Experience As They Spontaneously Occur

Having identified the aspects of our experience, one aspect at a time over a period of days, now we can train ourselves to recognize these experiences as they arise in our ordinary experience. Instead of focusing on any one aspect of experience as we have done earlier in this practice, merely notice the elements of the TAPES as they spontaneously occur.

Sit quietly and attend to all experiences as they arise.

As each experience occurs identify it as thought, action, perception, emotion, or sensation.

Is there any experience that does not fit one of these categories: Thoughts, Actions, Perceptions, Emotions, Sensations?

Reflection: It is by being able to “step away” and to observe the formation of experience that we are able to recognize experience as the TAPES of a vantage point.

As our experience is appreciated as the TAPES of the vantage point, we can free ourselves from the belief that what we think, perceive and feel is an immutable reality.

Reader's Notes:

**We have spent a lifetime establishing and
protecting the position of ourselves as
separate.**

CHAPTER 3: SEPARATENESS AS A VANTAGE POINT

Shortly after birth, we assume a vantage point, a position that perceives a world as separate from ourselves. We experience ourselves as very small and vulnerable and the world as very large and powerful. During these early times we are quite helpless and dependent. We suffer when we are neglected, and we die when we are abandoned.

The memory of this vulnerable experience is never forgotten. We carry with us this sense of fragility, and we spend a lifetime protecting the separate sense of ourselves.

Fear, the earliest defensive position we assume, is designed to protect us from recurrent injury. When we are hurt, we close ourselves, isolate and withdraw. This position of avoidance has survival value and can protect us from re-injury. We quickly learn to fear and to avoid danger. The fear of fire once burned, and the fear of a person once hit are familiar examples.

Anger becomes our second defensive position. The position of anger keeps others at a distance and protects the fear and hurt that lie inside us. Anger (the position of fight) like fear (the position of flight) has survival value, when we are in immediate danger.

While these positions have survival value for us when danger is present, the habit of fear and anger in the absence of danger serves to separate, alienate, and isolate us. We disconnect from others in these protective positions.

While always protecting the separate sense of ourselves, we also long for a sense of connection and a sense of belonging. A tension is created between our experienced need to be safe from harm and our yearning to connect, to feel a part of something more than ourselves.

It seems from our defensive, separate vantage points of fear and anger that to know intimacy and connection we must risk the hurt of rejection. Even as adults, the memory trace of our vulnerable infancy leaves us fearing we could die from rejection and subsequent abandonment. From our protective position, it feels that to know intimacy we have to forego our protective position of separateness.

We become armored and insulated, safe but trapped in our defensive position. The positions that had been our protection can become our prison. The sense of separateness rekindles a deep yearning to intimately connect.

As we close ourselves in these defensive positions, the experience of sadness and loneliness naturally form.

As we close ourselves, we close our hearts. Our closed, protected hearts experience no love. To our closed, separate selves the source of love is seen as remote, in someone else: a parent, would-be lover, or spouse. We think they have the love we need.

We develop positions and patterns to try to get love from the person who we perceive as the source. We assume a compliant position, agreeing with what we think they want. We express patterns designed to appease and to please. We demand the love we say we deserve, but we secretly fear ourselves unworthy.

We get hurt when feeling unloved. In our position of defensive anger, we blame others for not giving us love. In our position of depression, we blame ourselves for not being worthy of love.

We are unaware that the defensive, contracted position of our own heart is a position of separation, a state of unlove. We do not know that our closed, defensive position is what separates us from the more open positions of connection, intimacy and love. We are bereft not from love's scarcity, but from our own defensive, separate vantage point.

It is our habitual vantage point of fear and anger that perpetuates our sense of separateness. The positions of fear and anger that we have assumed for so long are frequently disconnected from our original hurt. We are protecting ourselves from someone or something that has long ago ceased to harm us.

We have become familiar with practiced positions of fear and anger. The associated sense of separateness is so common that we identify this frightened, closed way of acting and feeling as who we are. We have lost sight of the recognition that these TAPES are not who we are, but merely what we know from a vantage point we have assumed.

PRACTICE THREE: OPENING TO SAFETY

Commentary: This practice is designed to relax and open defensive and contracted positions of the body, mind and heart.

Sit quietly and focus on breath. Breathe as if allowing breath to enter the very central core of yourself.

When exhaling, breathe out as if allowing breath to exude from the center of your body out through all the pores of your skin.

Continue to breathe into the core of the physical body, relaxing and opening on the exhale.

From this more open position ask, “am I safe now?”

If you are safe now, allow yourself to relax into the safety that is here now.

Every exhale is a sigh of relief.

Open the constrictive positions of anger, fear, and hurt with breath.

Breathe into the central core of yourself and then exhale out through constrictions of these positions.

Every breath is an opening.

Breathe into the constrictive positions of body, mind and heart.

Allow breath to open the contracted muscles, the tightness of the stomach, the armor of the heart and the narrowness of mind.

On the exhalation, relax and open the constrictive positions of anger, fear, and hurt.

Locate the experience of anger. Breathe into anger and then release its confining edges by exhaling out through it.

As anger relaxes, note that inside anger is a space that contains fear. Breathe into this space. Breathe into fear so that you can release its confining edges by exhaling out through it.

Allow breath to open and release the constriction of fear.

As fear is relaxed, observe how inside fear is a space that contains hurt. Breathe into this position of hurt. Allow breath to open the contractions of hurt by exhaling out through it.

Recognize how inside hurt is the small opening of vulnerability. Breathe into this position and open vulnerability.

Experience how inside vulnerability, at the very core, lies an open fullness. This is the open fullness of our being.

Reflections: Knowing whether or not we are safe is of primary importance. We do not, however, usually assess our current safety. Instead, we operate from the habitual position of vulnerability, hurt, fear and anger.

As we recognize safety, we can open the constrictions of our defensive positions. More open positions allow the experiences of more calm, more love, more joy and more compassion.

The sense of ourselves as frightened, isolated and estranged falls away as we relax the tightness of our position and a greater sense of connective intimacy naturally emerges.

**Personality can be a frozen pattern of defense.
What had been a protection
can become a prison.**

CHAPTER 4: PERSONALITY AS A PRACTICED PATTERN OF PROTECTION

Once the vantage point of separateness is assumed, we refine the vantage point in an effort to avoid experiences of pain and to seek experiences of pleasure.

We avoid punishment, both physical and emotional pain, and we seek rewards of love, acceptance and approval. This pattern of avoidance and seeking shapes our personality.

For examples, we may have developed a quiet and withdrawn personality so as not to receive attention. This pattern may have helped us avoid punishment in a critical environment and perhaps even won us praise for “being seen and not heard.” Perhaps, when we were small, things were so dangerous or unpredictable that a pattern of distrust and suspicion were adaptive. Maybe we learned that being aggressive proved the best protection and that striking out kept us from being hurt. The avoidance of punishment is a strong motivation. Patterned TAPES that served this purpose soon become reflexive and automatic.

Likewise in order to be rewarded, we developed many patterned TAPES. Perhaps we assumed the personality of the clown in order to avoid the experience of our own pain and to win the attention of others. Or we might have enacted the pattern of an out-going achiever so as to receive praise. Maybe we assumed the personality as a compliant people-pleaser to makes others happy and thereby receive the rewards of their liking us.

These personality patterns have become so practiced they are automatic. Over time we define ourselves by the patterns we have assumed and our reality by the experiences of these patterns and vantage points. When we define ourselves by these TAPES, we limit the range of our experience and the fullness of our expression.

Having defined ourselves in a particular way, we begin to defend our limited way of knowing and behaving as though we were defending ourselves. We fight to defend our position as though we were fighting for our survival, when actually we are merely fighting to maintain our limitations.

**Roles can best serve us as resources,
not as definitions.**

CHAPTER 5: ROLES AS RESOURCES NOT AS DEFINITIONS

We assume vantage points through our roles. We assume a role in the family as mother, father, son or daughter. We assume roles defined by our work; doctor, lawyer, administrator, teacher, or nurse. We assume roles in our relationships; dominant, passive, caretaker, critic, or appeaser.

All of these roles contain TAPES that express patterned thoughts, actions, perceptions, emotions and sensations. These patterns are inherent in the role and serve a useful function to inform us of social and interpersonal customs.

Instead of letting our roles define us, however, we can use the roles as resources.

We can draw upon the information and options they contain.

For example, there are specific patterns inherent in the role of host and patterns inherent in the role of guest. As we assume a role of host we have access to the information and guidelines of the role. We know what is expected of us in the role of host and what is expected of us in the role of guest.

Roles can seem frightening, something bigger than ourselves, something we feel not prepared to assume. The role of parenthood, for example, may seem larger than ourselves when initially assumed.

Over time, as we practice the role and become familiar with the inherent patterns and defined rules of conduct, the role may begin to feel smaller than we are, perhaps limiting and confining. For example, we come to realize we are more than a parent and need additional roles or vantage points from which to operate and express ourselves.

There are times when a role can limit or confine our optimum functioning. For example, when our role as parent gets in the way of relating to our children. A stand off may occur as we relate to our teenagers from a rigid parental role thus forcing an equally stereotyped adolescent role reaction.

At times, it may be more useful to be people with our children and relate to them as people. This does not mean we forget all the informative TAPES in the parental role about caring for, protecting, and setting limits for our children. It means we can step out of the role-defined positions of parent-

child and relate in a more personal, emotionally disclosing manner, when it appears that such a shift can be useful.

Not only do we assume roles in our family, we also assume characteristic *styles* of relating. For example, in our parent-child relationship, the child can assume the role of compliant child or rebellious child. In our husband-wife relationship, the husband can assume an authoritarian role and the wife can assume a compliant role. Or the wife might assume a controlling role and the husband might be passive and submissive.

The option of stepping out of a role is not available if we have come to define ourselves as the role. However, as we recognize roles as vantage points, and the patterns of these roles as TAPES, roles can become options -- a way of relating that can serve rather than enslave.

**Self concept is an idea,
not an identity.**

CHAPTER 6: SELF CONCEPT IS AN IDEA ABOUT OURSELVES

We know ourselves a certain way. We have basic ideas or assumptions about ourselves, about our value and about our worth. These ideas or assumptions are relatively fixed positions and give us a sense of limited identity, of being a certain way and not being some other way.

The concept we have of ourselves is developed early in our lives. This self concept is built from childhood perceptions of how we believed we were seen and valued by our parents (or other caretakers). Over time we adopt what we believed to be our parents point of view of ourselves. We come to think of ourselves as we believed we were known by our parents

As young children we were very self centered. We attributed the emotional states and actions of those around us to mean something about ourselves, something about our significance, value or worth. It never occurred to us that the people in our lives could have been as they were long before we were born.

If father was always angry or violent, for example, we thought it was our fault and that we were bad. If mother was depressed and nothing made her happy, we thought there was something wrong with us. We thought we were not good enough, smart enough, pretty enough or handsome enough to make her happy.

Sometimes we did not have to imagine how we were seen, sometimes parents told us. We were told we were “daddy’s little girl” or that we were “no good and would never amount to anything.” Early repeated messages about the kind of person we were (or were not) defined a vantage point, a way of knowing ourselves.

Over time we assume our parents’ vantage point and say the things to ourselves that we heard our parents say. These words and ideas about ourselves have become our self concepts.

These memories from the past have become separated from their historic roots and have become current vantage points and therefore lived realities.

Clearly, defining ourselves from such a vantage point must be a limited and distorted view of ourselves. To begin to free ourselves from the limiting vantage point of self concept, it is useful to remember that our self concepts are ideas. Our ideas about ourselves are just that --ideas, not to be confused with ourselves.

**We think we are seeing the world “out there”
when we are merely seeing a reflection
of the emotional position
we are assuming.**

CHAPTER 7: EMOTIONAL STATES AS FILTERS

Emotional states are vantage points from which we know, positions from which we experience ourselves and from which we view the world. Every emotional state has an inherent sense of ourselves as the “knower” and a perception of the world as known.

Ourselves as knowing subjects and the world as “known” object mutually define each other. For example, when we are impatient we see a world filled with *incompetent fools* and the perception of a world filled with *incompetent fools* justifies and reinforces our impatient vantage point.

Similarly, we can recall that when we are frightened we perceive a dangerous world, and the perception of a dangerous world instills fear in us. This is not to say that there isn't any harm in the world, rather that someone or something is perceived as dangerous only from the vantage point of fear.

If we were walking in the woods and chanced upon a bear, we might be frightened, unless we were hunters looking for a bear in which case we might feel elated. In either case, we might be hurt by the bear, but we would perceive the bear as dangerous only if we had an element of fear.

We think we are seeing the world “out there” when we are merely seeing a reflection of the emotional vantage point we are assuming. When we define ourselves as a particular emotional position, a freeze occurs and we become trapped as being “a certain way” in a world that permits “no options”. As we define ourselves, we define our world; and as we define our world, we define ourselves.

Depression, we might recall, illustrates a state or vantage point that characteristically is inhabited by a sense of ourselves as worthless and a view of the world as critical.

The thoughts we have and the actions we take are all influenced by the emotional vantage point we assume. In constricted positions of resentment, fear and despair, our thoughts and actions are quite different than when we are in more open vantage points of calm, peace and love.

It is useful to recognize that just as we developed a premature identification with practiced patterns of personality, roles and self concept, we also develop a limited definition of ourselves when we define ourselves as a familiar emotional state.

**Our ability to change our Vantage point
of the past
changes our relationship
with remembered events
and the meaning they hold for our lives.**

CHAPTER 8: VANTAGE POINTS CONTAIN REMEMBERED PAST AND ANTICIPATED FUTURE

Not only is our perception of the current event colored by our vantage point, so is our memory of our past and our anticipation of our future.

For example, when we are depressed we have many unhappy memories. So prevalent is this phenomena that we may believe that the unhappy past causes the current depression.

If, however, we begin to think of vantage point as containing the remembered past and the anticipated future, then it is possible to consider that the current emotional state contains unhappy memories. The depressed state and the unhappy memories coexist, neither one causing the other, merely appearing together in the vantage point.

Likewise, the future we anticipate is also related to our current vantage point. When our current state is unhappy, we imagine a miserable future, or worse, no future at all. In contrast, however, when we are in love, we see the future as promising and anticipate living happily ever-after.

We are no longer conditioned by our past, nor is our future determined, as we recognize the remembered past and the anticipated future to be contained within a vantage point we can change.

Our ability to change our vantage point changes our relationship with remembered events and the meaning they hold for our lives.

The ability to assume and change vantage point demonstrates our inherent freedom.

**We can have some say so
by what we say
is so.**

CHAPTER 9: JUDGMENTS, ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS AS VANTAGE POINTS

Frequently, we are mentally commenting or taking a vantage point on what is happening around us. These vantage points take the form of judgments, attitudes and opinions. This mental commentary gives meaning to ourselves and to the events of our lives.

For example, when someone leaves us by death or divorce, we immediately assume a mental attitude about the event, thus giving the event meaning as it relates to ourselves. “It is not fair. I can’t go on without her. This is terrible. It is my fault.” are some commentaries we can give such an event. “I am free at last. At least he is no longer suffering. I celebrate her life. The relationship was dysfunctional anyway,” are some other judgments we can make.

These judgments, attitudes and opinions occur so rapidly that we are usually unable to tell the difference between the event and our mental vantage point of the event.

In the above example, the *event* is the death or the divorce. The *meaning* we give the event through our judgments, attitudes and opinions is the vantage point we assume. It is our vantage point that becomes our lived experience. We live out the meaning or the significance that we have given an event.

We cannot exercise the freedom of choosing the meaning of an event if we confuse our thoughts *about* an event with the event itself.

When we confuse our thoughts about an event with the event itself, we lose the freedom that comes with our ability to change vantage point and thus change meaning.

As we change our meaning or vantage point regarding an event, we change the effect of the event on us. In this way we can have some “say so” about how an event affects us by what we say is so about the event.

**We experience our thoughts as reality,
instead of recognizing that in reality
they are thoughts.**

CHAPTER 10: PAST FLASHBACKS AND WORRIES OF THE FUTURE: HOW TO FREE OURSELVES

Memories of the past or anticipation of the future can be experienced as vivid and absorbing experiences. We can become lost in the TAPES of the experience and for a time be unaware that we are having a thought about the past or a thought about what we imagine the future to be.

It is as if we had fallen asleep and entered a dream. While asleep we are unaware that we are dreaming; it all seems so real. If we had a dream that we were drowning, our body not knowing we are safe in bed, reacts as though we were in danger. Our breathing becomes short, our heart palpitates and adrenaline surges through our system.

It is only upon awakening and discovering that we were dreaming that we can begin to calm down. We escape the emotional impact and the physical stress of the dream, not by going back to sleep and swimming harder, but by awakening and recognizing that we were having a dream.

The same is true of the thoughts that present themselves as memories of the past and the thoughts that present themselves as imaginations about the future. We are released from their absorbing effect as we awaken and recognize that we are having a thought about our past or a thought about our imagined future.

Our thoughts all have a tremendous effect on our actions, perceptions, emotions and sensations. What we think runs our lives, because we experience our thoughts as reality instead of recognizing that in reality they are thoughts.

We have thousands of thoughts every day. Every thought has an associated thought and associated feelings. We get carried along by this train of thoughts and associated feelings. We are unaware that we have boarded a train or that the train of associated thoughts and feelings are taking us somewhere. We are thus unable to select which thoughts might carry us where we want to go.

As we learn to recognize memories of the past and worries of the future to be merely thoughts, these thoughts lose their grip on us. We can learn to shift attention away from the thoughts and free ourselves from the emotional reactivity that accompanies these thoughts.

PRACTICE FOUR: ATTENTION

Commentary: This practice is designed to help develop attention and to give us a position from which we can view thoughts.

Part One: THE SPOTLIGHT OF ATTENTION

Sit quietly and attend to breathing. Count “one” when breathing in and count “two” when breathing out.

Consider attention to be a spotlight. Attention can be moved about.

Attend to the right foot... Now shift the light of that attention to the left knee... Now pay attention to the right shoulder... Finally attend to the left ear.

Note how attention can be shifted and focused.

Now attend to thoughts... As thoughts form, spot them briefly and then return the spotlight of attention to breathing and counting “one-two.”

Do not attempt to force thoughts out or keep thoughts from entering. Merely notice the appearance of thoughts and return the spotlight of attention to the next breath, the next count.

Allow breath and counting to “anchor” attention, providing a resting place for attention.

While counting and breathing thoughts will occur. Spot these thoughts as they arise and gently return attention back to breathing and counting.

Consider your mind to be a hollow tube; thoughts that enter one end will pass out the other end if unattended.

Always return attention to the next breath, the next count.

Reflection: We are able to learn to shift attention off any thought and onto breathing and counting. This can be useful as it can keep us from getting” lost in thought” or keep thoughts from” running away with us.”

Usually, we focus on the content of thought. We can become so absorbed with the content of the thought that we lose the recognition that we are having a *thought*.

Part Two: THOUGHTS AS THE OBJECTS OF ATTENTION

Commentary: This practice is designed to observe thoughts. Usually our thoughts are an instrument of knowing. It is usually through thoughts that we perceive and know. In this practice, however, thoughts become the *objects* of our attention.

Attend to breathing and counting. Let this attention to breathing be like a platform from which to watch or witness passing thoughts.

It is as if breath were a platform from which to observe the passing trains of thought.

Notice the movement of these thoughts as they pass. Notice how one thought follows the other.

Notice how sometimes there is a space between thoughts and sometimes there seems to be no space at all.

Notice how some thoughts have a gravity or pull. Observe how sometimes attention gets pulled onto a train of thought.

Notice how every thought goes somewhere. Once attention boards the train it carries attention where that thought leads.

Notice that once attention enters the train of thought, the ability to recognize thought as merely thought is lost.

See how it is that only by getting off the train, by returning attention to the next breath, that the experience can be identified as a passing thought.

Reflection: We are able to shine the light of attention on thoughts, allowing us to observe thought from a “once removed” vantage point. From this position we are able to “step away” from thought’s entrancing conviction and recognize thoughts as just thoughts.

From this place, we can consider using thoughts as tools to serve our intention. We can examine thoughts and employ the thoughts that are useful, instead of allowing every passing thought to rule us.

**We suffer,
not from the situations and circumstances of our lives,
but rather from our reactions.**

CHAPTER 11: REACTIVE PATTERNS ARE DETERMINED

Over time, our most practiced vantage points and patterns have come to be our automatic ways of thinking, acting, perceiving and emoting. So automatic are these patterns that they are like knee-jerk reflexes.

When we define ourselves by our automatically assumed vantage point and the patterned TAPES of these vantage points, we limit ourselves to a reactive state, a state in which we re-enact vantage points and patterns established earlier in our lives. These reflexive reactions are conditioned and determined by our past experiences.

Personality pattern, roles, emotional states, as well as fixed ideas and beliefs all may have been useful at an earlier time, otherwise they would have never been maintained. However, the situations and circumstances of our lives change. What was useful to us at an earlier time may not serve us well today.

For example, during our childhood it may have been useful for us to react to conflict by withdrawing. This may have served a protective function in a family where there was much fighting and to be invisible assured some degree of safety. However, to define ourselves as essentially shy, confuses ourselves with a vantage point and pattern we have assumed.

Perhaps we learned that the emotional state of anger was the best defense and that keeping people at a distance with our own aggression was the safest way to be. This defensive vantage point, while useful when in danger, needlessly distances and alienates us when danger is not present

Perhaps we learned that being compliant got us recognition and avoided punishment, or that striving for achievements won us some of the love, acceptance and approval for which we so hungered. This pattern, while perhaps useful in our family of origin, may exhaust and deplete us as adults.

So practiced are these vantage points and patterns that we do them automatically, without conscious choice.

When we think we are the vantage point we have assumed, there is no freedom, there is no choice. We are habits happening, motivated by memories and driven by practiced, automatic ways of behaving. It is as if

we were wound up long ago and pointed in a direction. We follow this pointing as if we were in some automated trance.

During our most stressful situation our most automatic, most practiced patterns come to the fore. These patterns are the TAPES that we have been practicing a long time and therefore represent some of our earliest actions.

The irony of our reactions is that during our most difficult and stressful situations, when we and others would best be served by our most mature response, we react in our most practiced and thus most regressed manner.

It may initially seem that we suffer from the situations and circumstances of our lives. Closer examination however, reveals that we suffer from our reaction. This is because our reactions are re-enactments of patterns that are not adaptive and therein lies our suffering.

**We can relax our vantage point,
and allow ourselves to be less reactive
and more responsive.**

CHAPTER 12: RESPONSES ARE CHOSEN

We can stop reacting on “automatic pilot” and become more volitional in our response. We can thus move from habitual reactivity to chosen response.

While reactions are automatic--reflexively elicited by the perceived situation or circumstance--responses are chosen and consciously offered to the situation or circumstance.

Usually we tend to focus on how the circumstances of our lives affect us. As we become less reactive and more responsive, however we start attending to how we can influence life.

When we respond, we operate out of the fullness of who we are. Response comes from a larger sense of ourselves. A more full awareness allows an appreciation of the bigger picture and is therefore more connective and harmonizing.

As we recognize ourselves to be that which *assumes* vantage point, we are able to liberate our identity from usual automatic vantage points and practiced patterns. We are able to *open* to vantage points that allow desired differences.

Everything we do makes a difference. Our ability to respond gives us an opportunity to intend the difference we want to make.

Our ability to open our habitual vantage point and to relax our practiced reactive patterns enables us freedom to operate from more awareness, love and compassion. More useful, lasting solutions naturally arise.

CHAPTER 13: THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION

If we are not defined by our customary vantage points and patterns, then what does define us?

If we do not identify ourselves with our customary vantage points and practiced, automatic patterns of thought, action and feeling, then what do we identify with?

If we are not defined by our sense of separateness, our roles, our personality, our self-concept, our judgments, attitudes and opinions, then by what are we defined?

If all of the above are merely vantage points and patterns that we assume, then *what are we that we can assume these vantage points?*

**We are the Awareness
that assumes vantage point**

CHAPTER 14: WE ARE THE AWARENESS THAT IS THE SOURCE OF VANTAGE POINT

If we can look carefully at any vantage point, we will see that central to every experience is Awareness. While different vantage points reveal differing thoughts, attitudes and feelings, Awareness is always present at the heart of vantage point. Awareness is the “light of knowing” inherent in all experience.

A liberating shift occurs as we come to define ourselves, not as our characteristic vantage point, but as the Awareness that assumes a vantage point.

We may have been reluctant to “give up” vantage points when we defined ourselves by them. We mistakenly believed that giving up our vantage point was giving up ourselves. However, recognizing ourselves as “the Awareness that is the *source* of vantage point” decreases our attachment to any one vantage point and therefore increases our expressive freedom.

As we come to recognize ourselves as “the Awareness that sources and assumes vantage point,” expanded possibilities are immediately present. No longer defined by any vantage point, we can open any limiting view and allow room for more knowledge and clarity. We can see the bigger picture and appreciate the interconnectedness of all things. Our responses are informed by a greater knowing and better serve ourselves and others.

More open vantage points experience deeper connections between ourselves and others. A greater sense of belonging is ours, with love, compassion and harmony arising more naturally.

**The Vantage point that Awareness provides
is expanded as we relax the notion that
Awareness is our personal possession.**

CHAPTER 15: AWARENESS

Awareness is the primary ground or matrix of all experience. Prior to vantage point, position and pattern, Awareness is always here as an open possibility.

Inside ourselves, at the very core, Awareness is ever present. Prior to the formation of personality and role, Awareness is potential itself.

All thoughts, sensations, feelings and attitudes are vantage points of this all allowing and enabling Awareness.

Awareness is a transcendent dimension that manifests in our daily lives as our ordinary knowing.

Awareness is the source and essence of all experience. All experience arises out of Awareness much like waves arise from the ocean.

All experiences are patterns and vantage points of Awareness itself, just as ocean currents are essentially movements of the ocean.

Awareness allows, organizes and provides the entire realm of our knowing selves and the appearances of our lives.

To better appreciate the enormous possibility of Awareness, it is useful to relax the notion that Awareness is our personal possession.

It can be freeing to imagine “an open field of Awareness” The field of Awareness is vast, for it coexists infinitely with all of space and eternally with all of time.

This spacious Awareness is omniscient, for Awareness is found in all acts of knowing. Awareness is omnipresent, for Awareness is ever present prior to all experience.

The Awareness that is the source and essence of our realm is the source and essence of ourselves.

To appreciate ourselves as Awareness liberates us from our premature and limiting definitions, freeing us to know and act from the wholeness we are.

PRACTICE FIVE: AWARENESS AS GROUND

Part 1: Awareness as field

Comment: This practice is designed to enable an appreciation of Awareness as ground or matrix out of which experience arises.

Close your eyes and imagine a vast cloth of enlivened fibers, every fiber a knowing thread.

All the vantage points and experiences of our lives arise from this cloth of Awareness.

Gathered tufts of this essential fabric structure and shape our more constricted patterns of thinking, acting, perceiving, emoting and sensing.

In our contracted condition, we experience ourselves as disconnected. We peer out to see other separate tufts.

Note how such a vantage point ignores that all tufts are of the same cloth.

Relax position and vantage point.

Merge more completely with the fullness of the cloth that supports us.

Reflection: A fuller, more open vantage point appreciates connection and intimacy as our nature. The intimacy and connection we seek is always already our condition as we relax our position as separate. We are all of the same cloth.

Part 2: Awareness as point

Imagine yourself as a knowing point in the whole cloth of Awareness. Experience this separate vantage point. Note the distance that separates you from other points. Experience yourself as figure separate from ground.

Now, allow separation and distance to collapse. Merge with the cloth that is our essential fiber. Imagine your self to be the whole cloth. Dissolve separateness and become the field.

Again, identify yourself as a knowing point.

Again, become the entire cloth.

Hold both images at the same time. Be the knowing point and the spacious field.

Reflection: The vast cloth of knowing fibers is constantly giving rise to ourselves and all of the appearances of our lives just as the motion of the ocean gives rise to waves and currents. What does the wave know of itself when it recognizes itself as the ocean?

CHAPTER 16: OPENING TO OUR FULLNESS

If our essence is an enlivened Awareness, how can we open more fully the constricted patterns and tendencies of our lives?

We open our vantage point where we stand. In any given moment, Awareness can remind us that a vantage point is being assumed. In this knowledge we can recognize all thoughts, actions, perceptions and emotions to be related to this vantage point. We can recognize the effect of this vantage point on ourselves, our relationships and our situation.

Our usual and customary vantage points tend to be more constricted than is useful. If our current vantage point is painful and does not appear to serve us or our circumstance, we can remember that as Awareness we can relax or open the vantage point.

We can accomplish this by relaxing our constricted vantage point and identifying with a larger Awareness. This can be done by breathing into the “center or core experience” of the vantage point we are assuming. Having breathed to our center, we can then exhale imagining we can breathe out through our pores. In this manner we “dilate at the core” and “relax the edges” thus opening the position from the inside out.

We can relax the vantage points of roles, emotions, attitudes, judgments and self- concepts if these vantage points do not serve the intention we have for ourselves or our circumstances. When we open our vantage point there is less friction and less defensiveness. When we operate from more open vantage points, we can experience and offer more peace, joy, love, harmony, and compassion.

More open positions provide a fuller space from which to know and act. As we relax or open our contracted vantage points and the constricted patterns they contain, we find that within these positions lie a fuller Awareness and more dynamic ways of being.

It is as if the small contains the large. As we open or unfurl, we discover that every vantage point contains a greater fullness and that all vantage points contain a greater fullness. The more open our vantage point the more access we have to the aliveness contained within the position.

PRACTICE SIX: OPENING POSITION WITH BLUE SKY

Commentary: This practice is designed to open constrictions of the body, mind and heart. Our most constricted positions are frequently our most reactive states.

Part One: The Body Structure

Imagine being safely and securely positioned on the top of a mountain or high hill. From this viewpoint the openness of the blue sky is clearly visible.

Just gaze at the sky. Relax mental concentration completely. Attend to the presence of the sky--blue sky in front, blue sky above, blue sky behind and blue sky to each side.

Appreciate the blue sky as a dome of openness.

Gently breathe this blue space in through the nose and mouth simultaneously as if breathing through one large opening.

Breathe in smooth, relaxed breaths.

Draw this blue sky up into the head. Allow the open blue sky to enter the brain, infusing the brain with the presence of open blue space.

Breathe blue sky into the nose, mouth, throat and lungs.

Breathe blue sky into the heart. Allow the gentle presence of sky to open the heart, softening first and then opening the heart completely to the sustaining presence of this blue open space.

Breathe blue sky into the stomach and intestines.

Draw this open blue sky into all organs, tissues and fluids.

Breathe blue, open space into the blood stream, infusing this current with the breath of sky.

Breathe blue sky into every cell.

When exhaling, breathe out through the nose and mouth. Simply allow breath to merge with sky, every breath returns to sky.

Appreciate the commingling of sky, breath and body-- sky becomes breath, breath becomes body, body becomes breath, breath merges with sky.

When exhaling, breathe out as if exhaling through every pore of the skin. Breathe out through the skin in front, in back and to each side.

Every inhalation an infusion of blue sky, every exhalation a merging with the vast openness of sky.

Breathe blue sky from all directions.

Breathe sky from in front of you, behind you, and from each side, as though you are a vortex drawing sky through you.

When exhaling, breathe out in all directions through every pore of your skin.

* See Acknowledgements -- page 6

Part Two: Psychological Structure

Just as we breathe into the physical structure of the body, now we can breathe blue space into psychological structures.

Breathe sky into thoughts, judgments, attitudes and feelings.

Simply notice these structuring tendencies of mind and allow the spacious presence of sky to gently open these psychological positions.

Release all mental structures and ideas to the space of the sky.

Breathe into the mental structures of time. Breathe into the remembered past and into the anticipated future.

Allow all memories, present experiences and all anticipations to open to the unifying and liberating presence of blue sky.

Breathe into the 'here' that you "occupy" and the experience that is "currently" occurring.

Reflection: We can breathe blue sky into all vantage points, opening our constrictive tendencies, liberating our frozen vantage points, patterns and limited ways of knowing.

**Intentionality is a guiding light or principle
by which we can pilot our life.**

CHAPTER 17: INTENTIONALITY - FINDING OUR NORTH STAR

If we are always knowing from a vantage point, and if all we see and experience is relative to the vantage point, how can we take action with any degree of confidence that the action we take is the right action? How do we know what serves us and what is useful? By what do we guide ourselves?

The story is told of two groups of islanders. When sailing one group of islanders navigated by the passing clouds and became lost at sea. The other group navigated by the clear fixed point of the north star and were able to find their way to sea and home again.

We have all known what it is like to be lost at sea. When we allow the passing cloud of every fleeting thought, perception, emotion and sensation to dictate what we know and how we act, we are without clear direction or consistent guidance. When we orient by the TAPES of the past we become lost going around in circles.

When we look beyond passing clouds however, there is something outside the prevailing TAPES that can serve as guidance. The fixed point that we can use to set our compass is “intentionality.”

Intentionality is a guiding light or principle around which we orient. Intentionality is established out of open Awareness.

To initially identify intentionality, our north star, it is useful to position in a calm safe harbor. To do this we position in a state of physical calm and mental clarity. The vantage point of calm-clarity is a more open setting of Awareness. In calm clarity we can identify a guiding light or principle by which we can orient our lives and give them meaning.

From the stillness of this harbor an intentionality outside the prevailing TAPES can reveal itself to us. Through a calm clarity we can come to know of intentionality and embrace intentionality as a guiding principle.

Intentionality can inform our thoughts, actions, perceptions, emotions and sensations. In this manner, we can interrupt our reactive vantage points and patterns, bringing intentionality to bear on whatever we choose to attend.

Instead of being reflexively reactive to circumstances or situations, we can bring intentionality to focus. In so doing we can bring the benefit of what we have to offer to situations and circumstances.

PRACTICE SEVEN: CALM CLARITY

Commentary: This practice is designed to open our vantage point to a physical state of calm and a mental state of clarity.

Attend to breathing. Notice how the air is cooler on the “in” breath and warmer on the “out” breath.

While breathing in, breathe this cool breath up into the head, as if directing this breath right up into the brain.

Recall what it is like to breathe in a mentholated fragrance, how it opens our sinuses and head. While breathing the coolness of breath up into the head, recall this mentholated fragrance and allow the mind to become open and clear.

On the inhale of this cool mentholated breath, think the words “clear mind.” Actually speak internally these words and hear them spoken “clear mind.”

Picture the brain as if it were a three dimensional orb or sphere of clear, radiant, shimmering light.

Intensify the clarity of this light and its brilliance as you breathe up into it.

While exhaling, note that this breath is warmer.

Exhale as if the body were a hollow tube and you could breathe down, the full length of the body and out your feet.

Feel the warm, calm, relaxing presence of this breath as it moves down the body, enabling you to feel quiet, peaceful, and still.

While breathing down the body and out the feet, feel the harmonizing quality of clear, warm light moving down your body.

Allow this warm, calming light to enter the heart.

Open the heart and receive the peaceful presence of this light.

Continue to exhale down the body. Allow this gentle light to permeate the stomach, filling you with a sweet, satisfying, nourishing calm.

Breathe this clear light all the way out the soles of the feet. Exhale down into the earth as if rooting.

Warm the feet with the soft stirring of this light.

When exhaling down the body, think the words “calm body.” Actually internally speak and hear the words “calm body.”

Say the words with feeling. Empower the words with the expression or emotions of peaceful calm.

As you breathe in, direct the coolness of breath up into your head, remember the fragrance and opening quality of menthol, picture the brain as clear light and say internally “clear mind.”

While exhaling, move the warmth of the exhalation down the body, allowing the body to become quiet, peaceful, poised, still and balanced.

Feel the peaceful presence of light in the heart and allow a soothing sweetness to nourish, satisfy and calm the stomach.

Speak the words internally and hear the words “calm body.”

Do this practice every morning for twenty minutes to become accomplished in opening to this clear, calm vantage point.

Reflections: The bodily states of calm-peacefulness and the mental state of alert-clarity are less constricted or contracted vantage points from which to know and from which to act. The state of calm-clarity is a more open setting of Awareness.

By assuming a vantage point of calm-clarity we can come to know intentionality. Instead of our reactive patterns, we can bring this intentionality to bear on the situation and circumstances of our lives.

CHAPTER 18: EMPOWERING INTENTIONALITY WITH BREATH

Awareness as ground allows and enables all possible vantage points and patterns. Having opened to the position of calm-clarity that Awareness allows, we can use this more open, clear vantage point to reflect upon ourselves, our lives, our meaning, our purpose.

What qualities do we want to make known in the world through us? How do we want to devote our breath, the vital energy of our lives?

These orienting questions give direction to our thoughts, actions, perceptions, emotions and senses. Instead of being driven by the TAPES of our earlier lives, thoughts, actions, perceptions and emotions can come to serve intentionality.

If our personality, our role, our idea, or our mood is not serving intentionality, we can open our vantage point to better serve. This can be done because we are no longer defined and therefore limited by these vantage points.

As Awareness we are free to assume any and all vantage points. We are free to choose what qualities we want to express in the world. We can open or relax our more constrictive tendencies and respond in fuller more harmonizing ways.

The self-centered, self-referencing tendency of our common vantage points can open to a new way of knowing, a broader view that reveals an interconnected reality; a reality in which the unified, unbroken wholeness of Awareness is revealed as our primary condition.

Awareness offers freedom, and to identify with Awareness liberates us from our narrow self definitions, providing an opportunity to express what we know to be of true value. This deeper or core value becomes the orienting light of intentionality.

Peace, harmony, love, joy and compassion can become more frequent expressions as we identify with Awareness and utilize breath to open vantage points and patterns to our fullest expressions.

CONCLUSION

In this guide we have systematically explored our common ways of defining and experiencing ourselves. We have examined the sense of ourselves as separate. We have explored the formation and maintenance of our personality. We have examined ourselves as defined by our interpersonal and occupational roles. We have seen how emotional states affect the definitions of ourselves and our perceptions of our lives. We have investigated how self concept is formed and how it limits the definition and experience of ourselves.

We have discovered that the usual definitions of ourselves are vantage points or positions from which to know. We have seen how every position or vantage point contains the experience or TAPES of the vantage point. The thoughts, actions, perceptions, emotions and sensations we experience are all part of the vantage point we have assumed.

Finally, we have come to redefine ourselves, not as our usual vantage points, but as the Awareness that is the source and essence of all vantage points and all the phenomenon of our lives.

All emotions, thoughts, perceptions, meanings and experiences arise from Awareness and are forms of Awareness itself.

Recognizing ourselves as “the Awareness that is the source of vantage point” frees us from the limitations inherent in the vantage point we have assumed. We no longer need to protect and defend our limited vantage points as though we were defending ourselves.

Realizing that we are “the Awareness that assumes vantage point and reveals pattern” we are immediately free to assume more open, adaptive and harmonizing vantage points.

As Awareness, we are able to assume vantage points that reveal an unbroken wholeness. We are able to know directly that we are never separate from the Awareness that is our source and essence.

As Awareness, we have come to realize our true and authentic nature. In this knowledge, we can begin to open more fully to the infinite, creative possibility we are.

As we know and act from a fuller sense of ourselves, our families, communities and world will experience the direct benefit of this knowledge.

GLOSSARY

Awareness: 1. The primary ground or matrix that gives rise to all experience, all that is knowing and all that is known. 2. The “light of knowing” coexistent with eternal space and infinite time, present as this very moment. 3. The knowing, prior to and inherent within, all vantage points.

Intentionality: 1. Highest purpose or meaning. 2. Life purpose revealed in a state of physical calm and mental clarity. 3. Guiding light or principle.

TAPES: 1. The experience of the vantage point. 2. An acronym for the thoughts, actions, perceptions, emotions, and sensations inherent in the vantage point.

Transcendence: 1. The act of recognizing vantage points and TAPES as possibilities and not definitions. 2. To separate one’s sense of self from vantage points and TAPES and to identify with the larger ground that allows for all experience. 3. To not be defined or limited by vantage points and TAPES.

Vantage point: 1. A perspective assumed by Awareness. 2. In our ordinary experience, a position of mind and body from which the world and its circumstances are viewed, interpreted and experienced. 3. A position from which meaning is perceived and action taken.