

When Our Best IS Our Best

We are creatures of habit.

We are not quick to embrace changes that are imposed on us.

We live in the delusion that we are – or should be - our own masters.

As a result, much of what we perceive as stressful on a day-to-day basis is not specific.

It's more the apprehension of changes we sense that need to be made in our lives.

Slowly, we adapt.

Often painfully, under duress.



Reality check: adapting under duress is not the same as doing our best.

So, we now decide to do our best to make a positive difference for ourselves.

To do that to the best of our ability, we need all the guidance we can access.



Besides remembering that we are not alone, that Soul is urging us to lower the distracting noise in our head so we can hear her whispers a.k.a. our intuition, we could embark in calming practices done from the comfort of home.

A study at the University of Sussex found that reading books is said to lower our stress by 68%.

Presumably, the most soothing genres are neither crime nor horror fiction.

Listening to music lowers our stress by 60%.

It seems that while engaged in these disconnecting activities, we enter a different level of consciousness.



Developing a heart-based meditation practice and learning how to breathe consciously and silently, particularly when we anticipate an imminent constriction in our stomach or chest, are actions that are ours to put in place by ourselves and for ourselves. Here and now.



Each time we breathe with intent, we choose positivism over implosion.

We choose inclusion over exclusion.

We choose a brave new us.

Is it so crazy to think that we have it in us to adjust to almost everything in our lives to make it better?

Better from the inside out.

Reality is, unless we breathe with intent... we are not breathing, we are passively being breathed – until we are breathed our last breath.



Some morning shamanic and Qigong practices begin with bringing peace into the day even before we open our eyes.

Similarly, Judaism prescribes prayers that, ideally, lead to introspection, three times a day, a practice that can be adapted to anyone's belief system.

- The first instance of calming introspection is as we open our eyes in the morning.

It is at that time that we prepare our prep our ego-persona for the day ahead.

- The second instance is around mid-day when our energy begins to wane. Stress and anxiety may have crept in.



Touching base with our inner self allows us to pause and take a moment to reflect.

How coherent have we been so far today?

Where/with whom do we need to be our best before the end of the day?

How to best show up as our best self?



The third instance is in the evening or at bedtime.

Just as we should make time for a full-body relaxation scan once in bed, we can scan the high and lowlights of the day and the emotions and thoughts that arose..

Calmly, we do it. In slow motion, almost.

Just observing, not judging anyone.

In the secular world, the three moments of prayers and checking in could simply be replaced by ... checking in.

Did we reach 50% of our goals for today?

Hi Five! Pat on the back. We enjoy the feeling!

We'll top our personal best tomorrow or sometime in the days ahead.



If moments of the day didn't quite go as intended, we could still go to sleep feeling positive.

Let's agree that today we did the best we could ... today.

Tomorrow is another day.

In the short and long term, these moments of coherent introspection lead to enhanced connections with our ego-persona.

With our higher self, too, and thus with those with whom we interact, near and far, on any given day, whether face-to-face or via a chat platform.



Bottom line: long before our window of opportunity slams shut, we need to finally uncover the strength to imagine the next chain of moments as radically different from the ones that were already in our thoughts, the ones that were robbing us of quality sleep.



Reality check: all that we feel, think, say and do, if mindful, cumulates into something that works like an updated 'credit rating.

At some point, we are eligible for a bonus.

At other times, when our rating has slumped, we need to refrain from whichever activities are mainly responsible for the situation.

If we don't embark on that path willingly and efficiently, our options will become limited - and bank management risks taking matters in their own hands.



Around 700-800 BC, seers and philosophers in India were already discussing the relationship between the soul and the self via the consequences of what we think, say and do.

Hymns 4.4.5-4.4.6 of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad offer an insight into this theory by way of dialogue between a teacher and his students.

'That Self is indeed Brahman, consisting of knowledge, mind, life, sight, hearing, Earth, water, wind, ether, light and no light, desire and no desire, anger and no anger, right or wrong, and all things.

Now as a man is like this or like that, according as he acts and according as he behaves, so will he be: a man of good acts will become good, a man of bad acts, bad.

He becomes pure by pure deeds, bad by bad deeds.

'And here they say that a person consists of desires.

And as is his desire, so is his will; and as is his will, so is his deed; and whatever deed he does, that he will reap.



Overarching question: might we enable ourselves to do our best to discover our shared humanity now that a global karmic choreography of biblical proportions has pushed together three generations, the perfect blend of people of all colours, age, status and genders?



From surviving Baby Boomers, many of whom were literally born out of the devastation of a war or the Gen Zers thought to be, by some standards, the most vulnerable of generations, we're all in the current mess together.

Having said that, let's not forget that it is from the depth of murky rank waters that the beautiful, immaculate flower of the lotus rises – the symbol of enlightenment, self-regeneration and, ultimately, rebirth.



Serious questions #1: no matter what personal, cultural or societal challenges we might be facing, will it be a newfound respect for those we are karmically intended to respect, care about or love that will take us to the next level – separately and together?

Or will it be a fearful contracted mindset that will take us to the next level, alone and divisive, as has been usually the case after periods of trauma?

Simple answer: it will depend on how well we do our best.



In *Meditations on Quixote* published around 1914, José Ortega y Gasset shares a perhaps cryptic, yet very apt, thought. *'I am I plus my surroundings,'* he wrote, *'and if I do not preserve the latter I do not preserve myself.'*



Serious questions #2: regardless of the nature of any crisis faced, will the desire to return to the way things were overshadow the risks to our wellbeing or stifle opportunities to rethink?



Here is what is known so far. Domestic and sexual violence is, as always, on the rise and is becoming more brutal.

Chronic depression, self-harming behaviours and racial harassment are also spiking. So, how to control the urge to vent out anger and alienation and not let them remain existential threats lurking under our roofs, in our streets here, there and everywhere?



Like our parents and their parents before them, we've learned to hide what hurts inside.

And so have our children.

We have created detours and dead-ends.

We have allowed roadblocks and sinkholes to form in the moments underfoot.

As each moment only lasts the space of a breath, a reaction was always triggered in the time it took to inhale and exhale.

And, just like a click on a Free Download button triggers an influx of unsolicited emails, our emotions prompt a similar roll out effect.

That is until we make the hard decision to 'unsubscribe' our thoughts from that list.



Similarly, as we turn our attention to the default mindset that has us grappling for attention, we know it will try to unleash a flurry of urges, cravings and – fabricated fears.

So, we do our best to face What-Is and to soothe it away with something better. Like a chaser swilled immediately after a shot of strong alcohol.



While conscious activists go on challenging the status quo the best they can on numerous fronts, the more dissonance in our emotions, the more discord within our family and throughout the world, the more urgent is a personal shift from within.



There is no such thing as bad or good luck. There is no such thing as bad karma or divine interventions.

The source of all our problems and of all our joys is within us. If we want more of some and less of the others, the solution lies nowhere else but within us.



Looping series of 'what if this' and 'what if that' will be rearing to code again and again inside our neural circuitry.

So, we do our best to regulate our thoughts, emotions, behaviours – and inaction as well.

We learn how to live a balanced life – or perhaps better said, how to balance our lives.



It's not a venture for the faint-hearted. But when we do our best – when we know we've done our best at specific moments, then, we accept that, indeed, we have done our best.

Maybe today, we got trapped in an emotionally-charged conversation with a parent, child, colleague or partner.

Perhaps we didn't handle it as well as we would have liked.

That's OK. Tomorrow is another day.

Tomorrow, our energy will be different. We might do better tomorrow than we did today.

Better – or not as well, depending.

That said, on this day, the moment has passed.

So, we do our best to focus neutrally on the new moment underfoot - the gap between our inhale and our exhale.



Doing our best requires the same degree of attention as that of the soldier searching for land mines.

The smallest amount of pressure can trigger the explosion.

It's essential to keep in mind that doing our best is also as highly variable for us as it is for an athlete in training and for an athlete competing, regardless of their level of fitness.

It's as variable as anyone's honest attempts at maintaining a healthy diet.

Or any resolution, for that matter.



Even when our heart is in it, as the saying goes, so much can derail us, starting with our mood that day, and the status of our wellbeing.

So, our best tomorrow might not be as positive as our best was today, but just as the athlete or the dieter can rally, so can we.

As an aside, we could be grateful to the real soldiers who are currently searching for landmines in Angola or Egypt.



When we know we are 'simply' attempting to do our best, we don't expect any token of appreciation.

A thank-you is not needed because we've done our best for ourselves.

It's quite selfish, really, this business of doing our best.

It's as selfish for us as it is for the competing athletes or the dieters.

They, too, are only doing it for themselves.

But unlike us, warriors for the greater good, they do it to feed the image of themselves held by ... themselves and reflected back at them by adoring fans or encouraging family.

They don't want to disappoint.

We, on the other hand, have only ourselves to disappoint.

And, yes, it's best to not do that because, unlike so many other selfish actions, interestingly, doing our best for ourselves also goes towards the greater good.



The purpose of us, energy beings having a human experience, awakening ourselves to a spiritually evolved awareness is not to change who we are. Instead, it's the

process intended to reveal who we are not. Once we know that, the awesome ones that we are can begin to do our best.



That said, the main reward, as rewards are essential to us, humans, won't be just that we have become a much better version of ourselves over time.

It's not that we have improved the energy, the dynamics inside our homes and within our friendship groups. It's not that we have relinked with those estranged beings who were karmically ours to care for.



Bottom line: the main reward at any point of that journey, after every breakthrough, is that, though we did it guided by our inner strength, by our true self, by Soul or by whichever entity in which we have placed our faith, we enabled ourselves to 'hear' and to follow the guidance. We did it on conscious breath, one conscious thought at a time.



So, are we craving a fresh start? Are we ready to, over time, follow accepted thinking in unprecedented directions? Of course, we are! We always are. Now we do it.

As it is, the year 2020 has not only yielded opportunities to enhance our personal model of being, our modus operandi, it has forced us into opportunities to step out of the privacy shells in which so many of us have dwelt.



Now, before our next exhale, is our time to share and to smile.

It's our time to breathe consciously.

It's our time to fall asleep knowing that, today, we've done something that serves us, something worthwhile for those we are karmically intended to care about or love, whether a friend, a neighbour or a stranger.



We now have the best of intentions, and we are developing the resilience that leads to a heart-based coherence between our emotions, our thoughts and our actions or purposeful inaction, depending.

We develop, maintain and extend this coherence towards neighbours across the street and on the other side of our balconies.

We extend it towards those that cross our path in queues, in parking lots, in buses, cafes and parks.

We maintain it with those our karma – and our free will – have placed under our roofs.

We maintain it with those of our clan.

We mess up - we repair.

We do our best.

We spiral upward and expand.



It's like when we were young, very young, learning to walk: we fell on our bum, we got up. Again, and again. We did our best.

When we couldn't say 'mama' correctly, we tried again.

We persevered.

Eventually, we excelled at many, many things because when we were little, we never gave up.



Reality check: wherever we go - whether separately inside our family units or together with nature and flora and all that has been created on planet Earth - we are pieces in a jigsaw puzzle of cosmic proportion.

We fit perfectly together because we need each other.

Together, we make one perfect whole.



It helps to believe that the only purpose for the creation of the universe was to enable our separate and collective journeys on planet Earth.

We are in the universe -that much is clear.

The universe is in us.

Soul is with us, helping us co-create life as we are intended to know it, as evolved beings of universal energy compressed in a dense body, here and now on planet Earth.

Isn't it empowering to know that we do not walk alone in our adventure beyond what we thought we knew and wanted?



Desires come and go.

One day we desire specific items, a specific person, a specific feeling or a specific station in life.

Others days we dream up other ways to satisfy our desires.

Our ego-persona, our mind, are on a constant search for Happiness.

Should we be so lucky as to have one or more of our desires fulfilled in the fulness of time, there always comes a time when that fulfillment no longer fulfills us.

Often, what we once desired and obtained, becomes the source of disappointment or utter discontentment.

Our desire for something or someone else is again ramped up.

One could say that desire is our driver.

It is, but true happiness, as opposed to brief moments of joy, cannot ever be found in objective experiences.



Now, in the moment underfoot, we have an active desire.

It's driving us to step out of our box.

It's prompting us to show up, open to possibilities and synchronicity that we would have thought as impossible.

Optimally, what we desire is not only for self-benefit.

Aiming for incremental degrees of personal evolution comes with a vision.

It is an energised visualisation of how our efforts will benefit others, near and far.

And so, we do our best to desire what is best.



Finding a healthy balance not only between our own emotional wellbeing and economic activity has often fragmented families.

Now, as always, at a time of crisis, divergent views quickly become personal.

Though the current global crisis, perhaps to be followed by another one even more disruptive, will come to pass, the emotional dynamics we call 'human nature' and the

energy that 'makes the world turn' are not likely to change dramatically.

Not even in the lifetime of our grandchildren.

But then again, as one short explanation of the Torah reminds us in Mishna in Ethics of the Fathers, "We are not expected to complete the task, nor are we exempt from doing what we can."



Bottom line: of course, now is the moment, as is always any moment, to wholeheartedly offer, give and accept support as needed, as offered.

Now is the moment to wait and see how matters unfold.

For now, in the moment underfoot is when we do our best, warriors for the greater good that we are.



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