

Pure Mind 2011

The 21tiger guide to letting go, and regaining control of everything.

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Preface

It's one thing to be knowledgeable, and its another to be intelligent. But without the focus, and attention of all the brain's power, what you get is a million scattered ideas, all half decent. Mediocrity, not greatness.

After building our bodies in the last book, PureHealth, we can now consider that amazing computer in our heads, and how we can use it to unlock untapped greatness and solve any problem. Just as the body has evolved over millions of years, the mind has within it aeons of habits and patterns, which, if left unchecked, will lead to chaos, confusion and laziness. Our goal is to focus the mind, and build new habits, to move us forward. Before we can lift a finger, we must begin to see the world around us clearly.

The Hurricane and the Eye of the Mind

You may be skeptical at the very premise of this book: “Why do I need to focus on anything? Why not just go with the flow, let whatever’s natural and automatic, fill up my days? ”

To answer this perfectly natural question, we must consider the origins of the mind, which basically evolved all the multifaceted nuances of personality to support our *reproduction and propagation of the species*. That’s right, pretty much the only reason you have a brain is to promote the growth and support of the human race. Picking up chicks, basically.

But our mind, no matter how brilliant and amazing it is, is largely, *the mind of a chimpanzee*, with many of the hangovers from hundreds of thousands of years ago, from a world, you and I have never been to. If you want to harness that power, you must leave the chimps, and their basic urges, in the dust. It’s possible to do, but like all great accomplishments, requires discipline.

Modern man has largely taken care of the needs, wants and fears of those chimps with technology and science. Nowadays, we are holding ourselves to much higher standards, and thus, must train our monkey minds to be much greater.

The mind is taking in a million different inputs and micro-data points every second-- and that’s just what we can detect with our 5 senses. There’s also a tremendous ‘calculation’ going on at the subconscious level. The subconscious brain is a wondrous fascinating machine: perceiving the subtlest of cues in social interactions. In many ways, the subconscious is more perceptive than the conscious mind, but also works with the conscious mind by slipping ‘notes’ and ‘cheat sheets’ during the daytime (what we consider a ‘gut feeling’ or a ‘hunch’), and more commonly, in dreams.

The rational mind is fascinated with logic, and determination. What do I want? How do I get it? What are the steps? How can I cut steps? How can I save time? It’s methodical and deliberate. It’s solving your math problem. It’s actually just a subset of the true

power of the human mind. The subconscious mind, is always on, always calculating, always feeling, sensing.

But.. calculating what? How much love you feel? The awkwardness between former lovers suddenly bumping into each other at a party? Absolutely.

The subconscious mind is effectively running tons and tons of calculations (body language, voice tonality, speed of speech) and evaluating what is going on in the environment, but it does you no good to know these values, figures or numbers in the same way as, say, doing an arithmetic problem on the Grade 12 Calculus Final Exam. To consciously be aware of these 'calculations' would just be a massive distraction

The subconscious mind is a very powerful tool, but it's subconscious for a very good reason: if you were deliberately calculating and evaluating all the things it sees, senses and feels, you would be so stressed out and overwhelmed with data that, oops, the Tiger/Bear/Wolf just bit your leg off. Maybe that's why some psychologists and psychotherapists believe we evolved to communicate with the subconscious in dreams instead.

Habits

Your two different minds are communicating constantly. The subconscious mind has unlimited power and resources, but swirls in a storm of chaos. The conscious mind has but a fraction of that power, but has the magnificent ability to focus its attention, and tune out distraction. Can you think of examples where either kind of 'intelligence' is useful?

Ego

Why is it, more and more, when we want to describe a person with a negative effect on people, or on his company, or his NBA team, the word Ego is used? What does it even mean? That a person is self-centered? That they're over-confident?

This word *Ego* has found its way into colloquial English to mean, 'someone with a big head', 'arrogant' 'selfish' 'brash' 'over-reactionary.' Though the concept of Ego is related to all these characteristics, it should not be thought of as a curse to be cured, or some monster to be conquered; after all, if Ego was such a bad thing, we would not have created it!

It was believed by famed Psychotherapist Carl Jung that when a child is born, something called the Ego develops in his/her mind very soon after birth, for the purpose of protecting the child and promoting its growth. If a child wasn't 'Egotistical' you might not know when he or she was hungry, or cold, or having trouble sleeping. The Ego takes over the child, as he/she literally has no notion of the outside world, beyond a few warm sensations from its mother and father. Selfish little brat, huh?

It follows that, the Ego should decline over the coming years, as the child, now an adolescent, realizes that being Egotistical and selfish all the time has its disadvantages, namely, it ostracizes him from social groups, which could ultimately lower the chances of him finding lover/mate (the National Geographic terminology helps us to remember that in many ways *we are driven by the same forces that drove our chimp ancestors*). Moreover, as the youth explores the world and discovers just how much there is out there, he should, ideally, begin to feel less like the *center of the Universe*.

But while the ego must be declining, something else is growing, and becoming more of a problem by the time we hit adolescence. When we're young we don't know the rules, so parents, teachers and friends let us know when we've screwed up--what's right and wrong. When we were kids, we didn't really know what was 'right.' Saying a curse word, eating food with your hands, walking too fast, making funny faces, lazy

posture all turned out to be 'wrong'. Pretty soon we had, *we had a very long list of things that were wrong.*

So what did we do with the list? The list that says that picking your nose is rude, and talking back to your parents is intolerable, and long hair is inappropriate for boys, and short hair is improper for girls, is our guide for, not just *being loved by our parents, but accepted by society.* What we do with the list is an amazing thing called projection.

Habits

Can you think of where you might be getting positive energy in your life? Name some people, and some media outlets, or religious groups that might be having a hugely positive effect on you. Here's some key words: bursting with energy, ambitious, tireless, encouraging, happy, fun.

How about some negative effects? Are there any elements, people, groups in your life that seem to always be rude, complaining, pessimistic, and downright mean? Here's some keys to look for: pessimism, dejected, low energy, no goals, cynicism

Love your Shadow, and Walk amongst Angels

Projection is the mind's brilliant way of remaining 'good' and 'lovable' whilst acknowledging that there are certain things which are "unacceptable" like yellow teeth, bad hair, swearing, tattoos, and bad posture. The way the mind deals with it is by attributing these things to someone else! Any part of your personality that you subconsciously put into the Shadow, would be projected onto the people around you.

The only problem: now you're a racist, a bigot, and slightly paranoid that those around you are liars, cheats, and thieves. Taken to the extreme, the most egotistical man would walk the streets paranoid and angry, suspecting every passerby of being a thief, a liar, a thug, and ready to "defend himself" from such demons.

For example, say you have a violent side, and people have told you in your youth to tone it down (e.g.. picking fights in school, overly aggressive in sports, etc). If you're going to suddenly reform into an angel, that aggression has to go somewhere. You may feel that other men (if you're male), especially those from a different ethnicity, are dangerous, and cannot be trusted. In an attempt to be 'good,' the mind pushes all bad traits to others who are distinctly different from yourself. Visibly, someone from another racial background or ethnic group turns out to be a convenient target. Apart from race, we may discriminate by country, or social class. It's common to hear ourselves or others make comments like "Everyone from [City X] is a jerk" or "I think people who [play badminton, drink espresso, write blogs] are the scum of the earth," and when we hear that, it's the Persona (e.g.. the good boy) bashing the Shadow (e.g.. the bad boy). The Persona is saying, "I don't like these traits so I've projected them onto people who play badminton, or work on Wall Street." Yes, in projection lies the root cause of racism, and also has deep implications for war itself.

If you can cut the Shadow down to size, and bring more Shadow traits to the fore, you can cut down on this insane Blogger bashing. The goal here is not to go crazy and delve into the most bizarre impulses, but to get back that *energy*, that's locked up in the Shadow. The relaxed, cool, eccentric man understands and is curious about his dark side, and occasionally expresses it through art, or poetry, and is never afraid to

stand up, and 'selfishly' ask the questions he's burning to have answered. Moreover, if his house is robbed, or his is physically threatened, he needs to channel his Shadow energy to protect them, not be the good boy all the time. Those Shadow traits can be very useful in certain situations, just as the 'good' traits are useful in certain situations.

When you embrace all aspects of your personality, not just those which are acceptable to mainstream culture, you begin to love all of yourself, and project less. What happens when you love yourself, and carry a much lighter Shadow? Suddenly you walk amongst angels. What an amazing difference.

But you may ask, "How exactly do I love my dark side? My violent side? My selfish side? These are pretty bad things, aren't they?" And it all starts with deciding to be good, and to be a man or woman of *principle*, instead of *image*. We're human. We have tendencies and flaws. We have personalities. Trying to hide your flaws leads down the path of Perfectionism. It's not the ambitious attempt to be perfect. But rather the sad and vain attempt to appear perfect. But there is a way out of this mess. It's not being perfect on the outside, but perfect on the inside.

In the traditions of Buddhism, they called it Nirvana, or the Awakening: to be enlightened is to mean you *realize* your own perfection. Illusion means thinking you're only perfect if you have perfect teeth and a six pack, and the coolest cellphone, and the prettiest girlfriend. If you're this critical to yourself, most likely you're critical of *others all the time*.

Both are bad habits and a huge waste of time. The Solution? You don't judge people ever. You just don't. Karma is a bitch. If people smoke they'll be unhealthy, if they drive recklessly, they might get into an accident. Stop trying to be the perfection police.

What I want to do, what's inside me, my life is the number one priority. What other people think of me, is not a priority.

We've mentioned Ego quite a bit in here, and it seems to be the source of problems, tension, resentment, repressed feelings, manipulation, perfectionism. Which begs the question, is the goal here to become Egoless?

There was a time when I thought the best people, my best friends, my nicest friends, were nice because they were devoid of Ego. You know these people, everyone loves them, you go to a bar, and there's one or two guys, that are smiling ear to ear, all night, laughing uproariously, and meet 30 people every time they go out. You scratch your head and wonder what their secret is. I supposed they were without Ego, without inhibition, they didn't care what kind of shirt they were wearing, or if they ever got refused a "Hey what's up, my name's Mike!" or turned down by a pretty girl. In fact, you might say being drunk is a little like Egolessness: you can't be motivated by selfish gain, because half the time you have no idea what you're doing; you do crazy things, and sometimes get into trouble, because you can't plan 5 seconds in the future, let alone 5 days.

But the goal is not to be drunk and out of control. But to have less ego, and in control. We always want to be focusing on those things which we can control and downplaying the importance of things we cannot control (e.g.. the weather, the traffic noise, the outcome of last night's NBA playoff game). Worrying about things you cannot control invariably leads to pain and suffering when, on a whim, that thing does what you don't want it to.

The Egoless man is not deluded, in fact, does not make attempts to recapture the past, or cast the future. Just observes his present surroundings. He doesn't project what the black man is thinking, or the innocent young woman. He just interacts with *reality*.

The point is not to be so recklessly egoless, that you stop thinking about yourself, and even stop caring what others think about you completely, the point is to, like the young infant who cries when he or she is hungry, only engage the ego when you, as an individual, are in need of it. It turns out, that as a full-grown man or woman, at a friends

dinner party, that Ego is needed very little! Whats the opposite: Not Egolessness. But principles.

Habits

The Man with More Ego is a combination of 2 unattractive qualities: his accomplishments are mediocre (his ego gets in the way of his actual growth), and he brags about them (exaggerates them).

The Man with Less Ego is a combination of 2 very attractive qualities: his accomplishments are great (his ego does not inhibit his growth) and he doesn't brag about them. Actually, people around him will tell you about what he's done, because their lives are somewhat empty, and talking about him is a rush.

Principles Versus Outcomes

Dr. Viktor Frankl, the famous 20th century Psychotherapist who famously endured the horrors of Nazi Concentration camps, to publish “Man’s Search for Meaning” noted a particular ennui in the young Americans in the 1960’s. He noted that young people’s lives seemed to serve no purpose, they were often distracting themselves from their boredom with parties, liberal sex and drugs. Although it was a thoroughly passionate generation, and millions took up marches against their governments, it seemed to lack something *inside*. A true *Purpose* in life that pulled them out of bed every morning. Either a hobby, or a business, or some artistic expression--some burning passion in their lives. Sure there was plenty of protests, but you can’t be anti-something and call it love. That’s rage.

To paraphrase Frankl, we are faced with a choice. We can either a) find some purpose in our lives, that will yield money, success, happiness, friendship, and health, or b) spend all our time *chasing* money, success, happiness, friendships and health, to *convince ourselves, and others, that we have a true purpose in our lives*.

Doesn’t that sound like millions of exhausted working men and women, juggling multiple duties, when one alone would do? What they yearn for is Purpose.

Beyond the procreation of the species, we seek further meaning, namely, a reason for being here. If we can’t find one, we are truly depressed, but will continue marching forward, *working feverishly to convince everyone else we have a purpose* (often referred to as a ‘life’).

In the first case (say, you wish to be a great actor), you have one goal, one thing to sink your teeth into and to perfect. *All the other things come along with ease*, if you just get this one thing right. Moreover, you love it, it’s your dream job, so it doesn’t feel like work, it’s a joy.

Habits

Forget all that for a second: if you could name something in your life you are passionate about, could you conceivably build a life around that? Maybe you want to write. Maybe you want to sing. Maybe you want to be the next Indiana Jones. Can you imagine yourself driving towards a purpose (instead of a pay cheque) everyday? Write down what you see.

From Here to There

So how exactly does, say a passion for something as mundane as Ping Pong, or writing Sonnets, lead to a full life of purpose?

Take the aforementioned Indiana Jones, for example. I mean it. This fictional character, to me, seemed to beam with charisma, wit, confidence, leadership, cunning, and fun. But, unlike many present day pickup artists, he didn't have to practice routines, or funny lines (yes, I know it's a movie, humor me here). He didn't have to learn a consistent congruent personality. He was funny and smart because he had one thing in his life he wanted to do more than anything else: uncover and preserve the worlds greatest archeological treasures. You'll notice, in the movie, he's hardly a wealthy man, but had integrity; conversely, the villains often had 10 times the resources he had, but none of the integrity (of course). Indiana was in it to give something great to the world, first as a Professor, and later as an explorer/tomb raider.

You could imitate the look of Harrison Ford, or the passion and purpose of Indy. Which one do you think will take you further? That's what it boils down to.

The Ego wants to be perfect, it only cares about the effect of success and happiness, projecting that out to others and being liked. Attempting and failing to control the effects is how the Ego, and our suffering, thrives. The way to actually get there, is with Principles.

I remember during my early years in High School, I tried so hard to be liked. I would make up stories of cool things I'd done, I would try to lay in the background, not really sticking my neck out--very average. If anyone questioned my motives, or my opinions, I would default to the answer that would preserve my cool, regardless of the truth.

In short, I had no principles. My manipulative behavior was based on expected outcomes; that was the most important thing to me. And you know what? Sometimes I felt like I couldn't do anything right, in social situations. For some reason, whether in

school dances, talking to kids outside of class, on the basketball court, or rugby field, it seemed like I had a target on my back.

A major part of the reason I felt this way is because there seemed to be classmates of mine that had zero problems in this regard: they could say anything they wanted, come in late to class, wear anything they wanted, if they made a mistake, they would always be forgiven, and most of all, they were almost always in a good mood. What was their secret? Even if I'd asked them then, I'm sure they were not consciously aware of our so massively different views of the world.

Now I get it: I could never do 'right', because I based my actions on trying to reach and chase effects. As a result I was perceived as weak, as a pushover. I wasn't a heroic character, I was egotistic. The cool kids could never do wrong because they based their actions on their core principles. Say what you want about their choice of principles: the tough kid who skips class to smoke, actually had principles, and the straight A student was a wreck. The cool kids were perceived as idealists, radicals, and heroes. Not egotistical, but rather inspirational; twisted as it may sound, that's leadership.

They were cool. I tried to appear cool. It's that simple. And that brings us full circle, because Viktor Frankl was effectively saying that when we chase these 'effects' we are bound to fail; *they are moving targets, not actual goals in life*. Take Frankl's advice and find real purpose in life--principles--and those other things will present themselves to you and manifest themselves smoothly and easily.

Habits

Stop holding yourself to such a high standard of outcomes and start holding yourself to a high standard of principles. What Principles do you have, which ones do you wish to have. Write them down, and read them every morning out loud. It will feel weird, and incongruent at first. Keep at it. Reprogramming your mind takes time.

Two Loves

Now you may very well say, “Mike, you can’t just disregard your image entirely! You know just as well as we all do, that High School can be complete hell for those with bad reputations and bad images.” I get it. Trust me. But what I’m talking about is transcending all of that.

Let’s get to the core of the idea, “If I have lots of friends, and I make the Starting 5 of Varsity Basketball, and get a 4.0 GPA...Then what?”

For people who are completely driven by this stuff (as I was)... what is the goal?

I think it’s Love.

“...then people will accept/like/love me.”

Most people understand conditional love... they will love themselves, only if they look good, if they have cool clothes, and a great job, White teeth, great hair, etc. They love a baseball team if they win, but not if they lose 5 straight games. It may be a subconscious understanding, but it’s very common.

And in fact, we value that love, (conditional though it may be) so much that we sacrifice anything to get it. Namely, our values. Throwing our principles out the window at the first sign of resistance or discomfort. Eg. When we lie/steal to get money, that pretty clearly values the *money over the principle of honesty*.

Think about this: how many times have you broken your own values (i wont lie, I wont cheat, I wont manipulate, I wont abuse...) to get money, sex, popularity, etc, which ultimately leads to conditional love. When I first started dropping the L-bomb, you were chuckling, but if you think about it, it sounds like L-O-V-E was really the end goal.

“But Mike, that’s not love, that’s Ego. That’s fame. That’s validation.”

Spare me the semantics. Those three things are all part of the same want and need to be loved. But I don't think we need to break our own promises (our principles) for such petty things. It's counterproductive. It's redundant. Like a dog chasing its own tail. Why?

In a perfect world everyone would have perfect parents, and 100% honest loyal friends. Both parties would give you unconditional love and acceptance all the time. Realistically, the absence of unconditional love in these relationships leads people to look for the conditional variety (they think its the best they can get). Because in search of this kind of love, we often break all the rules (lie, cheat, steal, as they say) to get the job, money, fame, popularity,sex, that ultimately only has value because it approximates the love that we seek.

In my youth I was the picture of Persona: I was funny and smart, I dressed very conservatively, and did anything I could to get people to like me. That even included my parents, bosses, teachers, family friends, etc. But as I grew older, I realized that I would tell 'white lies', or like lying to a friend about the most trivial details in a story. I realized, that in my mind, I could say anything, lie about anything, as long as it didn't directly hurt anyone. The result was, all my accounts and stories made me out to be the most interesting guy in town. In reality, I was just as puzzled as anyone, on how I should talk, dress, eat, think, etc.

Morality never came into the equation. My priorities were being liked and being good. (earn a lot of money, date the prettiest girls), and eventually things like 'Don't break the law' and 'Be nice to your fellow man', but those I never thought twice about. Most people don't need to be told to not steal, etc. But for me, lying was particularly tempting. It makes sense, because if you do something illegal, you go to jail. And then you're destitute, and a bad guy. Lying isn't illegal, so the temptation is huge. One day it dawned on me, like a bolt of lightning, that the reason I was so confused about my own morality was because *I was so desensitized to being an immoral man*. If I wanted have fun and meet lots of women, I rationalized, I would have to lie to them, to cover my tracks. If I wanted to look cool, I would have to lie about an incredible party I went

to on the weekend. It never occurred to me that in my mind I was effectively making 'Looking good and Looking cool' more important than Morality. I was subjugating my Principles for Image. And it was those lack of principles that confounded me as to how to be a better man.

I don't want to be honest because honesty is a path to Nirvana, but because I want to be a principled man with a clear conscience. Being humble and authentic is attractive, being perfect is boring. And when you live by principles you are doing something incredibly powerful: you are putting your conscience in front of other peoples' perception of you on the list of priorities. Meaning you're making your own mental clarity and congruence a top priority.

So I return to the original question: Where do we get unconditional love? From ourselves. Instead of sacrificing our values for conditional love, we love ourselves unconditionally by not sacrificing those values. Again, we love ourselves by not sacrificing our principles.

*The Old Formula,
I can break all the rules, if in the end I'll have a better chance to get money, sex,
and acceptance/love.*

*The New Formula
I can give myself acceptance everyday, and in the end I will always have it, and
because of that, I wont need as much money, sex, popularity and power as the
next guy to feel good. I always feel good. And for some reason all that other stuff
seems to fall into my lap. Cool.*

You love yourself by honoring your own values. You love yourself by living with integrity.

And while you love yourself, know that its not an egotistical love, you're not loving your arm, or your legs, or your perfect smile: you're loving your own spirit and energy.

And if you love yourself, you won't try so hard to make complete strangers laugh at parties (by laughing at your own jokes). You don't need them to like you, and as a result

your real values and real self can take centre stage. And your new friends can actually say, “Oh yeah, that guy/girl is totally....cool.”

Habits

Think about ways you may engaged in this economy of morality. What values do you trade for immediate gratification? Can you imagine yourself having Principles? How would people see you? How would see yourself?

Control

There is a huge gap between the Egomaniac, and the peaceful Zen master: the Egoist man tries to control the world around him, the space around him, the people around him, even the future and the past; he is forever suffering in his ineptitude to control his universe. His pain is not the pain of lack of money, lack of friends, lack of sex, but the lack of control. It's is feeble attempt to control the world around him that is the root of his suffering. He may move to a new city, change his hairstyle, even change his diet; but, if his mindset is always trying to control others, he will be constantly frustrated at his failure.

The Zen Master seeks neither to control the world around him, nor the animals in the nearby brush, nor the weather; he seeks neither to control his friends, nor his enemies. He seeks neither to change his past, nor to strategically steer his future. Because he doesn't strive to control these myriad things, he doesn't toil in the agony of constant failure and inadequacy. What he strives to control, day in, day out, is a single moment: focusing his attention on his breath.

The first time a novice sits down to meditate, the simplistic goal of focusing on the breath might sound boring, and antiquated. Upon closing his eyes, he quickly finds the mind bouncing around, like a small puppy (or a wild dog), easily distracted by thoughts, dreams, fantasies, memories, and plans. Herein lies the agony, the challenge, and the opportunity. If you can focus your attention, on a single second (inhale), and another single second (exhale), and sit comfortably there, not falling asleep, not aching, but just focusing on that instant, you will have conquered the unbeatable Novice's agony, and have opened the door to deeper states of concentration.

Imagine a farm, with huge fields in the back, and fences that go on for miles. There are many animals on the farm, but none so fiery, strong, and raucous as the wild horse you have tied with thick rope to a single wooden beam in the back pen. The thick pole is very strong and deep in the ground. For the first few weeks, the stubborn horse rears and pulls, struggling to free itself from the binds, even attempting to loosen the pole from the earth, but to no avail. Every day, you pass by the pen, and the horse struggles to free itself, but fails. As time passes, you notice the horse jumping in a circle, first in spurts, and then a frantic jog. As

the weeks go by, the jog recedes to a casual circular trot, until finally, the horse walks calmly around the pole, in serene royalty.

In this scenario, the horse is your mind's eye, and you feel it flailing around whenever you sit and attempt to focus on the breath. Not only is your mind receiving information from everywhere, it shifts focus every second, and swings back and forth between the present moment, and a fantasy, then a memory--searching for something meaningful amidst a deep thick haze of distraction. It must plan, it must consider lessons learned in the past; it must listen to a scratching noise coming from another room; it must do a million things at once, striving for perfection, striving for organization, order and control. When this childish wish is abandoned, it can focus its power on something with true potential, the only thing in the entire universe you actually control: this moment.

This is what we're doing when we sit in meditation: focusing on the only thing we can control. Instead of drowning in a sea of ineptitude and frantic splashing in distraction, focus on doing one thing exceptionally well. Refreshing.

Habits

How would you live your life differently if you only thought about the present moment and let the past days, months and years fade in the background? What negatives would there be? Think it all the way through. What positives would there be? Think holistically.

Meditation

When words like Peace and Tranquility are thrown around, they lose their meaning, and we find it hard to connect with them. Imagine being eight years old, sitting at home with your family about to watch your favorite movie. You have no homework to do, and no school the next day. Your mother comes into the room with a huge bowl of buttered popcorn, and your dad hands you an ice cold soda. You can't wait to watch this movie, and for the next 90 minutes, your family is in harmony, and you are totally engrossed in the action, the laughs and the drama onscreen. Try to imagine this scenario, devoid of worry, devoid of anxiety-- warm, safe, and happy. For me, this scenario is almost heavenly. Maybe your dream scenario isn't about movies at all; perhaps it's throwing a football with your brothers/friends on a Summer afternoon. Maybe it's mountain biking down a forest trail.

In this scenario, I had to qualify that there were no obligations (school, homework), and thus no pressure to perform, or anxiety about the future (worrying about things you can't control). Here's the trick: when I was an eight year old sitting down to watch a movie with my family, I needed the movie to be great, the popcorn to be perfect, the soda to be ice cold, and my family members to be in good spirits. I wasn't in a state of enlightenment at all! I just had the perfect conditions to feel great. The other 364 days of the year I had just as high requirements, and most of the time was a total brat!

Now that you're a little older, it's time to take control of your mind, and get the same feeling of security and bliss, without the myriad conditions being met. You'd rather be ecstatic and pumped up all the time, regardless of your environment.

When you are eating, and thinking about eating, you are present. You are in control of everything you wish to control. As long as you are in the moment, the mind is at peace and you are contented. In this case, eating is like breathing. Focusing on one thing you can control. (Nowadays, who sits down and eats dinner and thinks only about eating? No TV. No dinner table banter. No eyes on the clock, rushing out the door. That's rare.)

Everyday has a 24 hour period for you to learn the world, observe your resources, and handle some tasks. At the end of the day you enjoy the moments. That is all. Forget yesterday. Forget tomorrow. Such delusions, fears and projections are fundamentally flawed because they assume your perception and interpretation is flawless, and they even assume the world is static and changeless. In other words, you are guaranteed that your expectations will be wrong, and as such your strategies for happiness will be of *no use to you*. You are then clinging to something that is illusory. This is how we suffer: in an attempt to prepare ourselves for the future, we ignore every single moment, and fumble the 'prediction' too!

The way to endure the constant change is to focus on your principles when making decisions. Focus on today, on this hour, on this minute, and finally, on this breath.

And the more you focus on this moment, the less you experience the change.

The more you focus on your ENTIRE LIFE, the more you suffer, because you are clinging to the past (and pressure to mold the unwritten future). Feeling resentment of mistakes you made in the past, or wrongs toward you. Let it go. Everything changes, and of course your previous enemies change too. Let them. Harboring bitterness towards people you barely knew all those years ago is useless; those people are long gone, they've evolved and changed, leaving their childish antics behind them. They too, like you, have learned from their misdeeds... and become kinder, more enlightened men and women. And with that, let's consider Meditation.

Meditation is the way we practice strengthening the mind's ability to focus. We're not getting smarter when we meditate, but the brain is getting more efficient. If we can turn the noise level down (less distraction) we can direct our energy towards the things in life we're really passionate about. Let's keep the goal firmly in mind here and do this for the right reasons. The goal here is Less Ego. An oversized Ego is distracted and suffers because it tries to control too much of the environment around it. The 'practice' then, of Meditation is twofold:

a) to practice focusing on the breath, and get stronger at focusing on that which you can control, and ignoring that which you cannot. Effectively drawing down the insanity of Egotism will reveal your true self, and allow you to focus on what really matters.

b) to contemplate the nuggets of wisdom which are revealed during meditation. Different people have different 'nuggets' buried in our subconscious. When the nagging distractions fall away, the mind is able to unearth deeper feelings that perhaps you hadn't been aware of up to that point.

These two intertwining elements form a pleasurable habit-pattern: sit, get calm, dig deeper, find a precious memory or idea, polish it, then go back down even deeper for more. This begs the question: "Is it really that satisfying to not have distraction and just meditate all day?" Besides being a radical shift most people in modern society won't ever seriously consider, I see one significant flaw there: by secluding yourself from society, your ability to help other people and give to others would be massively limited. As such, the goal is to remove what distractions we can, and learn to deal with those distractions we can't avoid--and that includes other people.

On the surface, Meditation is basically sitting comfortably, looking down and just breathing. When you actually try it, it turns out to be incredibly challenging: don't think about work, or your girlfriend, or your Term Paper--just breathe.

You will, as everyone does, very quickly know the Wild Horse, that jumped and reared for weeks. Your attention, for all your life, has been the Wild Horse, sometimes participating, but always eager to bolt. Be patient, stay on the path, and you will notice progress, deeper levels of concentration, longer times of sustained focus, all in time.

A word of warning: you should not wish to achieve some kind of mystical enlightenment, where your body vaporizes and you become ether. To be reaching for something outside yourself is exactly the kind of thinking we're trying to get away from.

The state of Nirvana, though often times referred to as a moment of pure ecstasy, and shining light, was the Buddha's way of describing the moment we, as lowly humans, realize the perfection *within ourselves*. To be clear, it is not referring to physical

pleasure of the senses. In seeking to tame the mind and focus its power, an 'Enlightenment' of the mental state would be the moment of realization of the *infinite power of the mind*. In other words, the realization of the infinite capability to problem solve of the Unconscious mind--that which works 24 hours a day, ruminating and pondering the multifaceted problems we eventually solve. Realizing that, the need for outside attachments drops to nothing.

So find a place where you can have privacy for up to 30 minutes per day. You should get a pillow to sit on cross-legged, (or you can sit in a chair) and maintain an erect posture, back straight with your hands either resting on your knees, or folded onto of each other held near your belly button. It should be a new position for you, but not a painful or uncomfortable one. The erect posture is to maximize your breathing. Remember any painful physical sensation will be a distraction; it should be a completely natural feeling.

If I told you to close your eyes and ponder nothingness, it wouldn't be a very useful guide for the novice meditator. As such, new meditators are encouraged to count, and focus on their breath. It sounds strange, but as you may have heard, the brain cannot keep 2 simultaneous thoughts in focus. To 'multitask' the brain has to bounce around from task to task to task, at lightning speed, *but it does not do multiple things at once*. If we can focus on the breath, we take away the brain's ability to slip into fantasy, planning, or any other distractions.

I recommend using your mobile phone or MP3 player to set a timer, start with 5 minutes. It may sound like a long time to sit and do nothing but breathe, but that resistance will soon pass.

First Part - Warm Up

Relax and focus on your breath as normal. Count your breaths with this pattern, in your head:

1, 2, 3, 2, 3, 4, 3, 4, 5..etc.. all the way to 20!

Each breath is one count. It may be challenging at first; it will force you to keep track of where you are in the series and what direction you're going; all of this is to force you to get incredibly focused. If you feel yourself losing count, that's OK. Start again, and feel the deeper levels of focus you can achieve. You will feel yourself 'sinking' into a deeper state of focus, and your breaths slowing.

Second Part - Deep Concentration

Once you hit 20, you should be in a pretty relaxed state... Count back from 20 (19..18..17..16), normally.. and when you hit 1 again, this is the pattern I use to go into deeper concentration:

From 1.. all the way to 15...then back to 2

From 2.. all the way to 14, then back to 3..

From 3.. to 13, .. you can see the gap between the numbers gets smaller and smaller.. Making it more and more important to keep focus. Imagine a basketball bouncing... the first bounce is big, then each subsequent bounce is smaller and smaller.. Feel the intensity as the numbers get closer to each other. Over several sessions, you may feel a wave of deep relaxation wash over you, but don't try to get a 'feeling' just enjoy the simplicity and serenity of the exercise.

Once your count reaches 7..8..9, the series doesn't end, just go backwards and start spreading the numbers apart again.

From 7.. to 9.., back to 6

From 6.. to 10.. back to 5, etc

Most likely your 5 minute timer will go off before you get much further.

Once you get used into the habit of doing this exercise daily, you will reach very deep levels of concentration. I start my day with breathing exercises, before my daily work out. Try to get in the habit of doing it at the same time each day.

Something to avoid: It's very tempting, especially if you sit on a soft chair/couch/bed, to actually fall asleep. To curb this incredibly comfortable problem, the standard Buddhist sitting posture is not to close our eyes, but to look down at the floor. When we first start, its so tempting to shut off everything, close your eyes, no sound, because we want 'sensory deprivation'.. (that's how most people 'get focused') but in time you should be able to meditate, while sitting beside the train tracks, or on the floor of a busy metro station. This is the power and control that we are cultivating. Everyday lowering slightly the requirements for tranquility. I have used the following schedule to gradually increase my meditation time every year.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Minutes</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>5</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>6</i>	<i>30</i>

After 6 years, consider scheduling morning meditation and evening meditation sessions. (e.g.. 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes before bed). If you're ever looking for more time in your day, just wake up earlier.

Habits

A habit of daily meditation may sound bizarre, but remember, the point here is not to turn ourselves into monks, or Buddhists, the point is mental clarity and focus. Meditation is way to focus your mental energy efficiently. Make meditation your daily habit, and find yourself a better, smarter, more creative person in everything you do.

Coming Up With Great Ideas

Living in China, every Westerner has to figure out well in advance what he or she wants to do when Chinese New Year comes, because if it does, and you don't have plans to leave down, you're out of luck: almost all restaurants, stores, and businesses in your city, will be closed. Not surprisingly, your choice of food, and entertainment, takes a huge nosedive. In my early years in China, I would take a trip to some tropical paradise (Thailand or Philippines), but recently, I have grown tired of the CNY tourism frenetic crowds, and considered a 'holiday' without the travel. With a population of 1.5 billion in China, almost everyone goes somewhere for the holiday (to rejoin their parents in their hometown). That means every bus, train, plane, and golf cart in the country is packed to the gills. Lineups abound, and general stress levels skyrocket. Oh and if your parents are living up north in Liaoning or Harbin, you're trudging in the February Snowstorms.

As an alternative, I saw the weeklong celebration as an opportunity to get some reading done. I had an apartment in Shanghai, and the previous year, the fireworks were unbearably loud. If I was going to get anything done, I was going to have to find some peace and quiet...inside the metropolis of Shanghai. But outside the city, in the suburbs, I found a quiet little hotel online and booked a room for a week. I had found my peaceful little nook, in a vast ocean of chaos. The eye of the hurricane, if you will.

In that week, I read a big stack of books ranging from the world history of finance, Japanese Gangsters, to Carl Jung's writings on the nature of magic and miracles (all on 21tiger.com of course). Whatever you're interested in, go grab it. And even if you find yourself halfway through something you don't necessarily agree with, that's okay, it's still thought provoking. And for every minute you're reading something thought provoking, that's one less minute spent letting your brain atrophy in front of the TV.

By the end of the week, you will be amazed at the great new ideas you have. The last 3 days in the hotel, I was bouncing back and forth, between my book and my notepad, jotting down great ideas that seemed to just pop into my head--plans for things I want to do, schemes for how to do it, people I should talk to, new ventures I should

investigate etc. It's an incredibly stimulating time, and the only way you can get that buzz is if you get a block of time and devote it to reading. Once a year is great.

And since I got back, I read an hour a day. Want to know what I'm reading right now? Check out the website.

Habits

It may sound obvious, but reading is the ultimate habit for mental development. Not only because it will make you smarter, and will help your mind to combine various ideas in new and amazing ways, but also because... no one else is doing it.

There are book clubs and really avid readers and AudioBook listeners out there, but nowhere near as many as there should be. The people you see on the street, the people you work with, and the people you meet in parties, will eventually adore you for your fascinating strategies, concepts, anecdotes and stories. If you can't find an hour in the daytime to read, wake up an hour earlier starting tomorrow. Seriously.

Goals

Take out a sheet of paper and think about your goals. Consider your performance at work, and the way you act around people socially. How did you do in school/college? Anything you'd like to improve or get handled? Mentally, you might have trouble getting away from negative thoughts, or maybe you procrastinate, or maybe you just want the will power to read a ton of books every year, right after this one!

Write down 2 super ambitious goals, and add them to the Health goals from the previous book...Stumped? Here's one I wrote, ages ago:

"I live in the present moment. The past teaches me and the future excites me."

Everyday I meditate, right after my post-workout shower. It gives me clarity, and relaxes me making me more productive each day.

Habits

These goals-turned-affirmations are brilliant because you can control them. Notice how strange they feel the first time you say them, and how natural it feels in the coming weeks. Get into the habit of reading these a couple times, after your morning meditation. As the weeks go by, your behavior will change. From time to time, consider the wording and revise it, as your goals evolve.

Closing Words

Upon graduating from University and entering the workforce, you may forget much of the dates, and formulae that you used in school, but you bring with you that keen eye. It is that eye that we wish to sharpen further and further.

Of course, first you have to wipe all the gunk off your lens, that is why I devoted the first part of this book to projection, and ultimately overcoming that through meditation. Once you have the habit of meditation, you can start adding pieces, different colors through which to see the world--all totally valid, all intelligent. The point is to always be getting sharper and sharper-- a clear, peaceful, contemplative eye.

In the next book, **HomeBase 2011** we'll leave the body and start to examine our most basic relationships with others: our family. These are the only people in the world you really truly have our best interests at heart, and we should build those relationships to be unbreakable. Our parents and siblings are our coaches, and our students. And they have generations of wisdom to share. While technology may change by leaps and bounds every decade, the most important things in life haven't changed in millennia.