

THE MENTAL LAWS

UNDERSTANDING THE WAY THE MIND WORKS

By Barbara Berger

(Copyright © Barbara Berger 2000/2009)

Contents

Introduction	3
The Mental Laws / the Way the Mind Works	
- The Law of Thoughts Arising	4
- The Law of Witnessing	6
- The Law of Naming	9
- The Law of Cause and Effect	13
- The Law of Emotion	17
- The Law of Focus	21
- The Law of Free Will	26
- The Law of Underlying Beliefs	31
- The Law of Substitution	37
- The Law of Mental Equivalents	40
- The Law of Truth	43

The Mental Laws

This book is a short introduction to what I call the “mental laws”. The mental laws describe the way the mind works. This information can also be called the science of mind because it really is a science, as impersonal as the law of gravity and other physical laws.

In this book, I attempt to map out the mental laws and the way the mind works as simply and as concisely as possible.

I first wrote about the mental laws in response to readers’ questions after the success of my books *The Road to Power / Fast Food for the Soul* (book 1 + 2). So many people were obviously surprised that the simple focus techniques I described in the books were so effective when it came to changing the course of their lives. How could it be? How could these simple focus tools be so effective?

To answer this important question, I began writing about the mental laws (in 2000) in a book I called *Mental Technology / Software for Your Hardware* where I outlined for the first time the basic mental laws that govern the way our minds work.

This book is a revised and updated version of my basic discovery of the mental laws.

Why is this information important?

This information is so important because without this understanding, we can easily become victims of our minds, instead of the masters as the questions from so many of my readers demonstrated to me. But the good news is that when we become aware of the simple, impersonal mechanisms that are governing our minds, we can then begin to use these impersonal forces constructively in our lives. In other words, I came to see that when we become aware of the laws governing these mechanisms, we can learn to harness this power for our own benefit. Just as we need to understand the laws of physical phenomena (for example the laws governing electricity) to use these forces constructively.

I also discovered that once you understand the mental laws and the way the mind works, you understand why you experience life the way you do. And when this happens, you will also see what you can realistically change in your life and what you cannot change. Plus you will also better understand the difference between reality (what is actually happening right now) and your thinking and this discovery will lead you to an ever deepening understanding of who/what you really are.

In short, the information in this book can totally transform your life! So with this in mind, let’s look briefly at the concept of law before we dive into this new, updated presentation of the mental laws.

What is a mental law?

What is a law? A law is an unchanging principle that describes the way phenomena operate. There are laws which describe the way physical phenomena operate and there are laws which describe the way mental phenomena operate. Whether a law is describing physical or mental phenomena, a law is always a description of an impersonal sequence of events which is not dependent on the person or people involved in that sequence of events. In addition, laws can be observed and confirmed by anyone.

The law of gravity is a good example of a physical law. As you know, the law of gravity is impersonal and it is always operating. Because of this law, if you jump off a building, you will immediately fall to the ground. There are no exceptions to this law. It doesn't matter who you are or how much money you have in the bank or how famous you are because the law is impersonal and operates regardless of the situation, time of year, or the people involved. There are no exceptions to the law.

Another important thing about a law is that it is in operation whether you are aware of it or not. In other words, if you jump off a building, you are going to fall and hit the ground whether you know about the law of gravity or not. The law doesn't care if you know about the law or not. The law just operates; it is a blind force of nature.

The same goes for mental laws. They are impersonal and simply describe the way our minds work. Anyway can observe and confirm this information.

So when reading about the mental laws in this book, it is a good idea to remember that laws are invisible principles that describe how phenomena behave and that laws operate automatically. (You can't make them happen or not happen.) Laws are impersonal. (It doesn't matter who you are.) Laws operate equally for all. And finally – laws are scientific. (They can be observed and confirmed by anyone.)

So with this in mind, let's look at the mental laws.

LAW 1: THE LAW OF THOUGHTS ARISING

Thoughts arise and disappear

Thoughts arise and disappear. This is the first law because it describes an impersonal universal phenomenon which is true for everyone. No one knows why or where thoughts come from or what a thought is, but everyone has thoughts. This is the nature of life on this plane.

You can observe and confirm this for yourself. You can test this and see if this is true or not—for you.

Here's what to do.

Look at a white wall

Sit down on a chair and face a white wall. If possible a wall that is completely blank—with no pictures or anything—just a plain white wall. Preferably there should be nothing specific on the wall for you to look at. Now sit down and look at the wall and decide *not to think*. Decide to make your mind blank. Try to do this for two minutes. Just sit there and look at the wall and do not think. Can you do it? Probably not. Why not? Well because thoughts arise. That is what happens. Thoughts just arise. And you can't make this not happen. You can't make your mind go blank for very long because thoughts suddenly appear—and seemingly completely of their own accord. Obviously it wasn't you who made the thoughts come. Especially since you decided when you sat down on the chair that you were just going to sit there and look at the white wall and *not think*. But you couldn't, could you. Why? Because it's just not possible—it's not possible for anyone. And this is not because you were doing anything *wrong*. No not at all. It's because the nature of life on this plane is that thoughts just appear all by themselves. This is the nature of mind. It has nothing to do with us. We are not making thoughts happen.

Thoughts come and go on their own.

That is why this is a law. It happens to everyone. It's an impersonal phenomenon. And it's something you can observe and confirm for yourself.

And it is happening all the time—to everyone—in every waking hour of our lives.

If you watch very carefully, you can even see it happening. If you sit quietly for a while, you can actually see how a thought just arises—and you can look at it for a moment. And then what happens? Well then the thought disappears again. All by itself. You didn't do anything in particular and still the thought just goes back to wherever it came from—wherever that was. And then what happens? Well if you're still sitting quietly and looking at the blank wall—you will notice that another thought arises. Again, all by itself. And all you were doing was just sitting there in the chair, looking at the wall and trying not to think!

So now you know. *Thoughts do arise and disappear*. This is the truth; you have observed it for yourself. You have tested this for yourself and you can see

that this is actually happening for you. You can see that thoughts *do arise* in your mind and that they *do disappear again*. And the interesting thing is that this is going on all the time. Even when you're not sitting and staring at a blank wall. And you're not willing this to happen. In fact you have nothing to do with it at all. The fact that thoughts arise and disappear again is a completely impersonal phenomenon. It just happens. And there's nothing you can do to stop it either.

What about meditation?

But what about meditation you ask? Lots of people meditate and many meditate because they want to calm the mind and stop thinking. But does this happen? Is it possible?

Well in my experience, you can't prevent thoughts from arising. Even people who have meditated for years can't *not think*. It is true though that when you sit and meditate, you do calm down and the thought stream does slow down. But what you also notice is that when you sit and meditate and observe, thoughts still arise and disappear. Maybe at a slower rate, but the thoughts still arise and disappear again. This is something you become very aware of when you meditate. And you can sit and sit and watch them come and go.

And of course as you get more experienced at meditating, things do slow down and yes, you may have less thoughts arising and you may also identify less with them and not get so attached to them anymore. But still thoughts arise. You may not find yourself going off into stories and getting lost there for a while. But still thoughts do come and go. You may also experience so-called "gaps" or spaces in between the thoughts because they come more slowly, but thoughts are still happening. The reality is thoughts continue to arise and disappear again because this is the nature of mind.

So if anyone tells you that meditation is about not-thinking, don't believe them. Try meditating regularly yourself and see what happens.

LAW 2: THE LAW OF WITNESSING

There is a difference between you and your thoughts

There is a difference between you, the one who is having thoughts, and the thoughts themselves. This is another impersonal universal phenomenon and is also true for everyone. Once someone has pointed this out for you, you can observe this and confirm it for yourself. (This is why it's a law; you don't need a Ph. D. to see this...). So yes, you can observe that there is a difference between you and your thoughts. And again you can test this for yourself. So how do you do this?

Back to the white wall

To test this law, go back to your chair facing the white wall. Now sit down again and look at the white wall and just breathe and see what happens. The same thing will happen that happened the last time you sat down on the chair and looked at the white wall—thoughts will arise and disappear. But this time I'd like you to notice something else. I'd like you to notice who or what is watching the thoughts arising and disappearing? Who or what is observing this phenomenon?

Immediately when I ask you this question, you notice that *you* (whatever that is) *are watching the thoughts arise and disappear*. So obviously you cannot be the thoughts that are arising and disappearing—since you are watching them come and go! *You* (whatever that is) are there as the thoughts arise and *you* (whatever that is) are there as the thought disappear again. So there must be a difference between you and the thought since *you* (whatever that is) are still there once a thought has disappeared again. So you cannot be the thoughts that come and go. No, you are something else. You must be the one that is witnessing, watching and observing. You must be the witness, the watcher, the observer. Watch closely what is going on as you sit there looking at the blank wall and you will see that this too is true—that there is a difference between you, the observer of the thoughts, and the thoughts themselves.

Notice you are still there

When you begin to see this, you will see that you (the witness) are always there whether you are thinking "this is a good day", "this is a lousy day", "I have a cold," "I'm feeling wonderful", "I'm depressed," "I'm angry", "I'm tired". It doesn't make any difference what thoughts (and feelings) arise, you are still there. You, the witness, the one in whom the thoughts are arising and disappearing in. You are still there.

This is a very important, fundamental discovery, so please test this for yourself until you are completely convinced that *you* are not your thoughts. Observe and confirm this phenomenon until you can see the difference between the one who is observing (*you*) and the thoughts that come and go.

The key to freedom

This discovery—that *there is a difference between you and your thoughts*—is so important because it is the key to freedom. This basic discovery will open the door to great insights, greater understanding, and in the end—total liberation from whatever is bothering you. So please remember this and think deeply about this law.

Now why do I say this? Well for many reasons, but mainly because most people today are still totally identified with their thoughts. They think *they are their thoughts* and thus they are run by their thoughts—often leading to untold suffering and disastrous consequences. But when you begin to wake up to the nature of reality and realize that there is a difference between *you* and your thoughts—it allows you to step back and examine your thoughts instead of being run by them. And not only does this give you a little space and a little more distance to the things that are happening in your life, this discovery can actually lead to the birth of wisdom! Or you could say this discovery is the birth of wisdom! And the key to freedom! Freedom from the tyranny of your own thoughts and beliefs and freedom from the tyranny of what you perceive to be other people’s thoughts and beliefs! That is why this discovery is truly transformative!

But again—don’t believe me. Just keep on testing the concepts that I present in this book and find out for yourself whether or not they are true. Once you have ascertained for yourself that they are true—they will begin to work their magic in your life.

Reality check: Content versus context

We can call the observer in which thoughts arise *context* because the observer is the field in which thoughts appear and disappear. Thoughts are simply the *content* of the field. Seeing the difference between *context* and *content* is enormously empowering because when you see that the real you is not the *content*—you don’t have to be run by it anymore.

Also seeing the difference between the observer and thoughts means you can shift your focus from identifying with *content* (thoughts) to identifying with *context* (the field of awareness/consciousness in which thoughts are arising). This shift in focus immediately re-contextualizes all events and experiences for you and as a result you are able to see things in the larger perspective. This is the key to understanding the compassion and light-heartedness you notice in wise people.

So what are you?

Once you make this important discovery—that you are not your thoughts but the observer of the thoughts that arise and disappear—the question naturally arises—*who then are you?* Or even better *what are you?*

This is the great existential question isn't it?

So what's the answer?

If you keep looking back at what is observing, you will discover what all the Great Ones throughout human history have discovered—that this *you* that is watching and observing is consciousness itself. As I said before, this is the most basic and fundamental quality of existence. Consciousness we find is the ground and pre-condition for everything we experience in life. Without consciousness, there is no experience.

If you are in doubt about this, ask yourself—are you conscious right now? And the answer is yes. Of course you are, otherwise how could you be reading this book? Consciousness is a prior (before) all human activity. It must be. So consciousness is a precondition to everything—to every experience. Consciousness is the background upon which everything unfolds and takes place. Consciousness is the field of awareness, the Ultimate Reality, the context in which all content (all thoughts, feelings, and sensations) arises and disappears.

Reality check: Who are you?

You can identify with consciousness itself—or with the content of consciousness (your thoughts). Identifying with consciousness itself is the direct route to the Ultimate Reality, the Self.

LAW 3: THE LAW OF NAMING **Thoughts name the world**

As we move along in our study of the way the mind works, we come to the next law which describes how our minds interpret the world around us. Here's what happens.

When we look at the world, we think we see a "this" and a "that" and a "you" and a "me". But in reality, according to modern science, what we regard as the solid physical world is in fact one continuous, unbroken field of energy. According to Quantum Mechanics, these waves of energy become particles or localized space-time events that pop out of the field when there is an observer. Other traditions call this one field, the Absolute, the Ultimate Reality, Rigpa, the Tao, God, Brahman, and so forth (see box).

The non-dual field is reality and in this reality, everything is everything and there is no this or that... until...

Naming

Until we name the field.

Naming is the name of the game we play. Let's see what we do.

When we are born, we have no language. And then our parents teach us.

On the most basic level, we learn to simply name the world—that's how we all begin. Our mother and father teach us to say "tree", "house", "car", "girl", "boy", "man", "woman", "computer", "refrigerator", ice cream, and so forth. This is what the world teaches us.

This past year I have had the privilege of watching my son and his wife teach my little grandson Adam who is two and a half to name the world. It's fascinating to watch. And it makes me wonder—what was his experience of the world before his parents started teaching him to name things? (And what was our experience before our parents taught us to name things?) What did things look like then? Is this why my grandson bumped into things before he learned to name things? Was it because he didn't experience reality as separate things and people? But now he is learning to separate because his parents tell him, "This is a house. This is a car. You are a boy." It's fascinating to watch. Right now he's been calling himself, "the boy"! Fascinating, fascinating. Does that mean he is still regarding himself from the viewpoint of the greater consciousness (the observer) that we all are? I wonder!

But obviously, this naming of the world is a vitally important and very useful tool that allows us to navigate our way through life. And for most of us, it's a completely automatic and innocent process—we do it all the time without thinking about what we are doing. And even after we've grown up, we continue to do this every day of our life, starting every morning. Starting every morning when we wake up—we name the world with our thoughts. Yes, our thoughts name the world. If you watch yourself closely, you can see yourself doing this when you wake up in the morning.

If you don't understand what I mean, have you ever had the experience of waking up and not knowing who you were or where you were? And just for an

instant feeling totally blank? And then you remembered, oh I'm so-and-so and I'm here in bed and that's my husband lying next to me and I've got to get up and go to work... and the whole world comes flooding back in (or so you think – and so it does!). Well that's what I mean, if you look carefully just as you wake up, you will see how you do this every single morning.

But to go back to the levels of naming. As I said, we learn to name the world and the first level of naming is simple nouns—"boy", "house", "car", "chair", "cat", "bread", and so forth.

But that's only the beginning.

On the next level of naming, we put nouns together into sentences and thoughts become more descriptive. We say, "the big house next door", "her new car is blue", "my computer is working again", "the tree over there is so beautiful" and so forth. And again, this is all very well and innocent enough. We name the world and then start telling stories about it.

And then we start to believe our stories. We believe our stories are reality and that this *is* the world.

Realty check: Quantum mechanics

Now we can see how we name the one field of reality that is before us. Quantum mechanics says this is what is actually happening. Science has now proven that observation by a conscious observer is responsible for the collapse of the wave function (Heisenberg principle). In other words, the waves of energy or potential become actual time-space events when they are observed. Phenomenon pops out of the field when we focus our attention on it.

Stories and judgments

But there's more.

On the next level, our stories become more complex and we begin to make judgments. We start telling stories about good and bad, right and wrong. We say "It's not good that he spends so much time in front of the computer", "She shouldn't drive so fast, it's reckless", "The people in the house next door should cut down that tree because it's blocking the sun in my yard", and so forth. We start making value judgments. We say things "should" or "shouldn't" be a certain way. We say things are "good" or "bad". And once we've named "this" or "that", we start comparing "this" and "that" to each other. Everything gets more and more complicated and we believe this *is* the world. But the question is, is this really the world? Is it?

Or is it just our stories?

What happened to the unbroken field of energy that is all of it? Where did it go? Well actually it didn't go anywhere, we just became so engrossed in—and identified with—our thoughts and stories that we lost sight of it—and eventually forgot all about it!

Non-dualism

Non-dualism refers to the Nature of Reality, the one field, the Absolute or Ultimate Reality in which there are no distinctions or dichotomies. The Nature of Reality is One and therefore all dualities are illusions—they are unreal and at best they are simply mental constructions we use for convenience.

Most of the world's greatest spiritual traditions are non-dual. Here are some of the basic concepts or terms you will encounter:

Advaita—from the Hindu tradition—literally means non-duality. Advaita refers to the identity of the Self (Atman) and the Whole (Brahman). Two of the great modern teachers in this tradition are the American psychiatrist David R. Hawkins and the Indian master Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj.

Brahman (from Hinduism) refers to the unchanging, infinite, immanent and transcendent Reality.

Rigpa—from the Tibetan Dzogchen tradition—means our ultimate nature, the ground luminosity, the state of omniscience or enlightenment.

God—from the Christian tradition is also the Absolute and Infinite Reality. God is the one Divine Principle governing all existence.

Zen—a non-dual tradition from the East that seeks to realize the Absolute in all activities by means of experience. Awakening is to be achieved through meditation and the direct, experiential realization of the Nature of Reality.

Tao— a Chinese tradition. In the Tao Te Ching, the Tao or path is described as follows: "The Way that can be described is not the true Way. The Name that can be named is not the constant Name." The Tao is believed to be transcendent and without form and cannot be named or categorized. In other words, the Tao (the Nature of Reality) is basically indefinable. It has to be experienced.

Buddhism— There are many paths and types of Buddhism. The Buddha himself Siddhartha Gautama (commonly known as the Buddha or the Awakened One)

is said to have experienced the Ultimate Reality and then spent the rest of his life trying to translate and teach what he experienced to others.

And now that we have looked at how we name the world and tell stories about it—let's look at what happens when we believe in the stories we are telling about the one field of reality that we are living in. What happens when we believe what we think?

Law 4: THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT
Thought is cause, experience is effect

Our thinking—the thoughts that we entertain—determine our experience of life. This is the great law of life on this plane. In brief, this means that our experience of reality (or this thing called life) is the result of our thoughts about life or reality—and not the result of experiencing reality itself directly.

And again, this is an impersonal, universal law. It has nothing to do with who you are or what you do. It doesn't matter how young or old you are or if you are rich or poor. This law applies to everyone—without exception—which is why it is a law.

This law means:

- Whatever you think, you get to experience.
- Whatever I think, I get to experience.

When you think something is great, you get to experience that. When you think something is terrible, you get to experience that.

Nothing else is going on.

Reality is what it is.

It's our interpretation we get to live. But again, don't believe me. Read on and then test this for yourself.

**We experience what we believe in,
 especially what we believe in with conviction.**

Your first reaction to the above might be "Oh but this is not true. Everyone can see that 'such-and-such' is a terrible thing. It has nothing to do with my thinking!" But you have to look more closely and ask yourself if this is really true. Because you will discover when you look closely, that everything under the sun is interpreted in a multitude of different ways by a multitude of different people. The exact same event is experienced in very different ways by different people. And this applies to our health, finances, relationships, you name it. What is excellent health for one person is a poor condition for the next. A lot of money to one person is almost not enough for the next. A big issue in one person's relationship doesn't matter at all to another. What seems politically correct to one person is completely wrong to another. And it's the same at the workplace. One person experiences working on a certain project with a tight deadline as highly stressful, while another thinks it's just an exciting challenge. One person hates working late and just wants to get home

to the family while another person loves working late because he/she doesn't especially want to go home to the family!

So our experience is always entirely subjective—always—and always based on who we are and what we believe is good or bad for us. There is no neutral, objective definition of a "good" or "bad" event. It all depends on the point of view and the belief systems of the person (people) involved. And our points of view depend on a multitude of things including how we were programmed, our culture, our religion, our background, our sex, our age, and so on.

And even this changes for each individual as they mature and evolve because most people discover over time that what they once perceived and experienced as a "bad" event can turn out to be a "good" event when seen from another perspective. Hence the saying—*a blessing in disguise*.

So please consider this carefully and honestly. If you do, I can assure you that you will discover that all our reactions (yours and mine and everyone else's) in any and every situation are based on the thoughts and beliefs we have about life and our beliefs as to the meaning of these situations and events.

And so we find that in all situations, the basic mechanism is *thought is cause and experience is effect*. This is what is going on—at all times for everyone.

So take a look again and you will see that when something happens, if we think it's good, we feel good about it and we experience it as good. And when something happens and we think it's bad, we then feel bad about it and experience it as bad. And this has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the event itself. The event is just the event. And we discover that in truth, there is no connection whatsoever between an event and our reactions to it. The way we experience events is completely determined by our thoughts about the events.

Thought → experience...

So we discover that everything we experience is the effect of our thinking. And this is *the law of cause and effect* in action. Unfortunately, most people are unaware of this process because they don't know *the law of cause and effect*. And as a result, they don't see it happening. They don't see that an event takes place (something happens) and then they immediately click into their interpretations of the event. It happens so fast that most people don't notice the process. Instead they just think "oh this is bad" and put the so-called blame on the outside event. They don't see the middle step—the way in which our thinking, our interpretation of the event triggers our reaction and our experience.

But the fact is—reality is what it is and the rest is just thoughts in our minds. And our thoughts are not the direct experience itself, but only our interpretation of events. So it's our interpretation we get to live. We tell ourselves stories about events, people, and things and what they mean—and then we get to live it. This is our only experience.

If this is the first time you've met this concept, you will probably find it extremely challenging. And it is—because it's such a radical shift in perspective from everything we've learned and were taught to believe about life. But this doesn't make it any less true, so please observe and confirm this mechanism for yourself and find out if it's true. Because if it is, the consequences are truly amazing and liberating!

Reality check: So what happens if we drop our thoughts about the meaning of what's going on?

First of all is this possible? Can we drop our thoughts about what's going on? And if we can—even for just a few moments—what then do we experience?

Well let's give it a try.

Here's what to do. After you read this, put this book down and take a look at what is going on right now, right where you are. With no thoughts about the meaning of what's going on. Can you do this for just a minute or two? And when you do this, what do you experience?

When I try, the first thing I always notice (when I let go of my thoughts about the meaning of what's going on) is that it suddenly gets very peaceful and quiet. The second thing I notice is that there is only me, here and now. And that's about it. There is this moment with whatever is going on. And I'm just in it or I am just it! For example, this moment right now, just me sitting in front of my computer. Or it could be this moment walking down the street with the sun on my face. Or this moment, drinking a cup of tea. Or brushing my teeth. Or doing the dishes. Or talking to a friend.

That's about it.

Life is right before me.

Plain and simple.

And it's very peaceful.

Interesting isn't it?

To experience the present moment without any interpretations or thoughts about the meaning of what is going on is a very interesting experience. If you can find this space, try to rest there for a moment or two—without judging or forming any opinions about this moment. If you can do this for just a moment, I am quite sure *the law of cause and effect* will make perfect sense to you because you will see that without interpretations, there is just this moment. Without thinking about the past or the future, there is absolutely nothing to compare this moment to. There is only this moment—*this*—exactly as it is—happening now.

Usually we don't see this because we're so busy living our interpretation of what's going on. We are comparing "this" to "that". We think "this is good" or

“that is bad” and then we get to experience “this is good” or “that is bad” instead of the pristine simplicity of this moment.

And well, this is the story of our lives—your life and of my life too. Your experience is your interpretation of what’s going on. My experience is my interpretation of what’s going on.

This is a pretty wild discovery isn’t it? Why? Because when we understand *the law of cause and effect*, it means we have nothing to deal with but our own thoughts. Reality never gives us any problems—it’s our thinking that does! And even though I have been saying this for years in all my books, the ramifications of this discovery are just mind-boggling and continue to be mind-boggling.

So now you know.

If you want to know the truth, there is only one place to look and that’s inside yourself! Because *the law of cause and effect* tells us that all our experiences are internal events.

And that’s life!

So the big question is—who decides what your experience of life is going to be like? Good question right?

This leads us to the next big discovery—that it is our identification with our thoughts that makes us suffer! Another mind-boggling discovery indeed!

Because what in fact makes us suffer?

What can possibly make us suffer?

Only our interpretation of an event can make us suffer.

Only our thoughts can make us suffer.

Nothing else is going on.

Reality check: Arguing with reality is the only suffering

Reality is neither “good” nor “bad”. Reality just is. But all thoughts and actions have consequences. This is the law of cause and effect.

Law 5: THE LAW OF EMOTION
You can't have an emotion without having a thought first

This important law says: *Thought precedes emotion*. Thought is always the cause of emotion. In other words, you can't have an emotion without having a thought first.

This comes as a surprise to many people because once they have heard about the law of cause and effect—*that thought is the cause and experience is effect*—they often ask “but what about emotions”? And they will say things like, “I wasn't thinking anything in particular, I just felt sad (or angry, upset, irritated, depressed, afraid... etc.).”

And the answer is that yes perhaps it *seems* as if these emotions just appeared, but the truth is a thought or a group of thoughts and beliefs always precede every emotion, whatever the emotion is. Because the impersonal and automatic mechanism is *you can't have an emotion without having a thought first*.

Thought comes first.

Thought ALWAYS precedes emotion.

Please consider this carefully and test it for yourself. When you do, you will discover that you cannot be angry without having an angry thought first. It is impossible. Even if you think you are not thinking a specific “angry” thought at the very moment you are feeling angry, you will find if you look closely that you have thoughts and beliefs about the situation, event or person which make you feel angry. If you did not—if you did not have the thought or belief that there is something about the situation or person that is wrong, inappropriate or incorrect in some way—you could simply not feel angry. It would be impossible. The same is true about feeling sad. You cannot be sad without having a sad thought first. It's just not possible, even if you can't consciously put your finger on the so-called specific sad thought, there must be something about the event, situation or person that corresponds to your beliefs about what is sad. The same holds true for feeling loving and kind. You can't feel loving and kind about anything or anyone without having loving and kind thoughts and attitudes first. Again, even if the specific “loving and kind” thought is not apparent, your basic belief system makes you react in this way.

For most people, this realization is a true revelation—especially because so many people seem to be driven by their emotions. To recognize and understand how our thinking triggers our emotions—both in ourselves and in other people—is a major shift in consciousness and a sign that we are waking up to reality. It also means that we are starting to understand the way the mind works and influences our lives.

Understanding that thought precedes emotion also helps us understand the ways in which we are responsible for our own experiences, even though for most of us, the mechanism has been operating automatically and we were not conscious of what was going on. But now we are waking up and we are beginning to see how this law is operating in our lives. With this new

understanding, we can see that we are not victims of outside forces which are beyond our control, but rather that we experience and perhaps suffer from our own unconscious beliefs and programming. This gives us the option of examining our thoughts and choosing to react more wisely in the future.

Reality Check: The mind-emotion-body connection

Let's try experimenting with the mind-emotion-body connection.

To experience this connection, I suggest you sit quietly by yourself for a few moments and try the following. It will only take a minute or two. Begin by closing your eyes and breathing deeply.

- *The Lemon*: Start by envisioning that you are eating a lemon. What happens when you do this? Just the thought of putting a sour lemon into your mouth immediately triggers a physical reaction in your body. Your mouth contracts and you start to salivate. All this happens despite the fact that there is no actual physical lemon. Just the thought of a lemon is enough to trigger a concrete physical reaction in your body.

- *The Scoundrel*: Now take this exercise one step further and think of someone you feel has wronged you terribly. Rehearse for a moment all the wrongs you feel this person has committed against you. What emotions do you feel? What physical symptoms do these thoughts trigger? Increased heart beat? A feeling of heat? Anger? Hatred? Rage? A feeling of tension? A feeling that your whole body is contracting? Observe yourself—your emotions and your body—as you entertain these thoughts.

- *The Angel*: Now think of someone who you know loves you dearly. Someone who has always understood you and supported you. Someone who truly sees all your good sides. What do you feel now? What emotions do these thoughts trigger? And what physical symptoms do these emotions trigger? Do you suddenly feel much calmer? Do you experience a feeling of expansion in your chest—and release in your whole body? Do you feel comfortable, happy and relaxed?

Now you can see that just by entertaining three very different thoughts, you were able to trigger and experience three very different emotional and physical states in yourself. Continue to observe your own and other people's behavior until you understand the true relationship between your thoughts and your emotions and physical sensations.

Order of phenomena

The order in which phenomena occur is always—thoughts first—then the emotional reaction—and then the physical reaction. This is true even though it is usually happening so fast that we don't perceive it.

This is very interesting to contemplate because when we realize that thought is the causative factor behind emotions, we also have an important clue in healing disease. Today much research has been done into the mind-body connection which clearly demonstrates the multitude of ways our thinking is affecting our health. And scientists have now proven that every thought we think creates or triggers a biochemical reaction in our bodies. This is a revolution in our view of the way our bodies work—and why we get sick. With this knowledge, we can contemplate and better understand the deep, long-term value of positive thoughts and intentions because now we know they will create positive emotions which will result in positive changes in our physical bodies as well. Unfortunately, because most people are unaware of this mechanism, many of us are doing the exact opposite—they are dwelling on negative thoughts which trigger negative emotions which in turn create stress in our bodies.

But please don't misunderstand me here. I'm not saying it's your fault if you get sick! That's simply too simplistic a view of what's going on. Obviously no one does that. Rather I am simply pointing out that our new understanding of the mind-body connection tells us that when a person's underlying beliefs and basic thought patterns and attitudes are negative and disharmonious, this can result in emotional distress and perhaps later manifest as physical symptoms and illness.

This also means that armed with this new understanding, we can examine our own thinking patterns and programming and perhaps better understand the ways in which we are creating stress, unhappiness, emotional imbalance and perhaps even physical imbalances in our lives. And we can also understand why it is so important to learn how to identify, investigate, and release our negative emotions, thoughts and beliefs—and replace them with a more positive approach to life. Quite simply because it's good for our emotional and physical health! Yes, peace of mind is good for our health!

The one real emotion: Unconditional love

There is, however, one real emotion that has nothing to do with our thinking—and that's unconditional love. Unconditional love is our true nature and therefore precedes thought. But this type of love—unconditional love—is not what most people mean by love. Most people, when they talk or think about love, mean conditional love—the kind of love that says "if you do what I want you to do, I'll love you". That's the most common kind of love we see. (And I'm not even sure this really is love.) But anyway, most people say they love each other as long as they agree with each other and then when they disagree, they get divorced! Parents seem to love their kids as long as they go to school and behave themselves, but when they drop out and start smoking dope, their parents often don't. So obviously, this type of love is conditional—it depends on the other person's behavior. And it depends on our thoughts and beliefs

about what is good and bad, right and wrong, etc. So it is conditional. It depends on a whole host of factors.

And this (conditional love) has nothing to do with our true nature, which is the vast awareness (or consciousness), the Ultimate Reality, the Truth of Being that we are. And the Truth of Being, the Ultimate Reality *is unconditional love*. Now why do I say that? Well, first all of because the Ultimate Reality is unconditional support. The Ultimate Reality is supporting all of us and all of life without conditions. It just does. Obviously It does or none of us would be here. This One Ultimate Reality—whatever It is—has given us the gift of life (for no reason whatsoever). In other words, this One Life created us and now sustains and maintains us regardless of who or what we are, regardless of what we think, and regardless of how we use this precious gift of life that we've all been given. This One Life, this Ultimate Reality, just supports us. It's like the sun which shines equally on all...

Law 6: THE LAW OF FOCUS

What you focus your attention on grows

This law teaches us that *whatever we focus our attention on grows*.

This is a far-reaching and very empowering discovery. It means we energize whatever we focus our attention on. Our attention "brings to life" out of the vast field of infinite energy or pure potentiality whatever we focus on. This has now been confirmed by Quantum mechanics which has proven that observation by a conscious observer is responsible for the collapse of the wave function (Heisenberg principle) into actual particles in the field of potentiality. In other words, the waves of energy or potential that make up the field of reality that we live and move and breathe in become actual time-space events when they are observed. This is how phenomenon pops out of the field when we focus our attention on it.

The power of attention

Attention, it seems, is the magic wand of creation—at least when it comes to your experiences and mine! So let me ask you—how are you using your power of attention? How are you using this, amazing ability, this priceless gift?

Are you focusing on difficulties, lack, and illness or are you focusing on all the blessings in your life right now? What exactly are you doing? If you want to live a happy life, it's important to take the time to take a good look at exactly what you are doing. Ask yourself—what is the general tone of your thinking? Is it a praiseful song of gratitude from morning to evening for the blessings of life—or is it one long complaint? And what is your experience? If you look carefully (and are honest) you will see that your experience is a perfect reflection of your focus. Always! And again this is because *thought is cause and experience is effect*. So when we look at the power of our thinking in terms of what we focus on, we see it is all about learning to use the power of our attention wisely. This is an extremely important key when it comes to understanding why our lives are like they are. And it's also extremely empowering because we can learn to consciously direct the power of our focus.

So let's look more closely at this phenomenon.

Focusing on this moment

Here's a big one. What is the general drift or tendency of your mental life? Do you spend a lot of time dwelling on the past? Or are you one of those people who is always worrying about the future? And does the thought of the future give you anxiety and sleepless nights? So much so that you fail to actually notice this moment?

Or do you actually notice this moment? Are you mindful enough to actually be able to focus enough on what is happening right now? Are you able to actually experience and enjoy this moment? It's embarrassing but the honest truth is that most of us have a pretty hard time doing this. Most of us spend most of our lives somewhere else (at least in thought)!

And frankly, you might not even be conscious of what you are doing. And if you're not conscious of what you are doing, you might not be aware of the fact that you actually have a choice! You might not realize that you can actually choose what you focus your attention on. But of course to do this, you must first notice what you're actually doing. So you have to start by watching yourself for a while so you become aware of the general drift or tendency of your daily thinking. Once you become aware of this, you can begin to exercise the power of choice and begin to consciously choose what you focus your attention on.

And yes, it sounds simple, but it's not always easy to do—especially in the beginning. And no, there's isn't any magic wand or secret formula that makes this happen all at once and forever. Rather learning to focus the power of your attention is a lifelong project.

But don't despair! Just the fact that you are becoming aware of your thoughts and how you are using the power of focus is a great step forward. Especially if you can see that you are using the power of your attention in a negative way. This awareness means you are beginning to understand the way the mind works and that you are more and more able to see the cause and effect relationship between your thoughts and your experiences. This is crucial if you want to become the master of your focus.

It's also important to realize that choosing our focus is our only freedom. This is where we exercise our free will. (See the next law—The Law of Free Will—for details). So keep noticing what you are doing and keep practicing. Make up your mind to focus on the Highest and Best you can conceive of. And do it again. And again! This is the magic and joy of life. This is the great adventure. So enjoy your adventure and enjoy learning. Amazing things will happen as you become better and better at focusing on the wonder of this moment!

Reality check: Use the gift of attention wisely

If you focus on lack, you will experience lack.

If you focus on the abundance of your life, you will experience abundance.

If you focus on love, you will experience love.

Focus and health

What is your focus when it comes to your health? This is a very interesting and challenging question for most of us. When you're not feeling well, do you focus on every ache and pain—or do you focus on the wonderful strength and healing power of your body and of Life itself? You can see this is a most

important question and crucial choice, especially when we know that whatever we focus our attention on grows.

According to the law of focus, if we feel weak and then focus our attention on feeling weak, we will feel even weaker. Because whatever we focus our attention on grows. And if that is the case, then the reverse must also be true. If we focus on strength—on whatever strength we do have—we will feel stronger. Which means we have an amazing power at our disposal in terms of health and healing—so why not use it?

When you think about it, it's quite fascinating to realize that we have this amazing power at our disposal and we're not using it! How can it be that we're not using this priceless gift? Obviously because most of us don't know about the power of focus! We don't know it exists because nobody taught us how the mind works. So we don't recognize this power or understand what it is and how to use it. Instead we are walking around in a daze, asleep to our true power.

But now you are waking up! So claim your true power and think about the law of focus when you're feeling ill. And use this wonderful power wisely. Watch yourself carefully and see what you are thinking and saying and focusing your attention on. And if you discover that you are sabotaging yourself and your recovery, you can start changing your focus now! It's never too late.

Here's a wonderful affirmation by Florence Shovel Shinn that can help you get on the right track when it comes to your health: *"I praise what strength I have. I give thanks for what health I have. I glory in what life I have and God now gives the increase."*

Thinking positive is closer to the truth.

Focus and challenges

The same holds true for all the many challenges and so-called problems we face in our daily lives. What is the focus of our attention when we face so-called difficulties? Do we focus on the potential in each situation and how everything in life is supporting us or do we focus on the hassle, the inconvenience, and the irritation? When you know about the power of focus, you can see how important your choice is.

So make up your mind that whatever it is, you are going to grow stronger because of it and evolve into a more magnanimous and compassionate person—and watch yourself turn every situation into a true blessing, for yourself and everyone involved!

Context or content?

Another good way of looking at the power of focus is to consider whether you are putting your attention on the larger context (the big perspective) which you can say is the unfolding of this mysterious thing we call life—or if you are focusing on the content, which are your thoughts and emotions concerning every particular little event and situation you meet along your way.

When you realize that there is a difference between the observer (you) and your thoughts, it becomes easier to shift your focus away from the content (which is your thoughts) to the context (which is the vast field of beingness or awareness/consciousness in which all thoughts are arising and which is you). When you shift your focus from content to context, it automatically re-contextualizes the thoughts and experiences you are having at the present moment and puts them into the larger perspective. And with your focus on the big view, you realize that you cannot see the end of all things. You also see that you don't honestly know what is good or bad! (Good or bad again being just relative value judgments or positions which depend on our perspective at a particular moment in time. See box below.) When you see things like this you instantly become more light-hearted and can allow life to unfold with effortless ease!

Reality check: Who knows what is good or bad?

We often think of good and bad, hot and cold, light and dark, right and wrong as opposites. But is this true? Is there an absolute, objective standard of good/bad, hot/cold, light/dark, right/wrong? If we look closely we discover that all dualities are in fact just mental constructions. They are relative concepts—they are all just positions in an infinite range of possible positions.

Let's look at a few examples.

Hot and cold: It's 0C degrees here in Copenhagen right now. Is this hot or cold? Well compared to the temperature in Johannesburg, South Africa where my friend lives, yes it's very cold because the temperature in Johannesburg is +25C right now. But compared to the temperature in Wisconsin where my grandson is at the moment, it is actually warm here in Copenhagen because the temperature in Wisconsin is almost -20C.

Light and dark: It's afternoon and it's a grey, foggy winter day here in Copenhagen. If I compare this to a summer day when the sun is shining brightly, it's actually pretty dark here in Copenhagen right now. But again if I compare this grey, foggy afternoon to the dead of night when there is no moon, well it's actually pretty bright outside right now. So it's really a matter of more or less light.

Good and bad: I have a migraine headache and feel pretty lousy. Compared to a day when I am feeling energetic and full of piss and vinegar, this headache seems bad. But if I compare my condition to the condition of my ex-

husband who just died of terminal liver cancer, my physical condition is actually very good, even with a migraine headache!

Right and wrong: Most of us believe in “right” and “wrong”. For example, it’s “wrong” to lie. But is it always wrong to lie? Yes you say. OK, well let’s say it’s the Second World War and you are hiding a family of Jews in your cellar. One day the Gestapo knocks on your door and asks you if you are hiding Jews in your cellar. If you believe it’s wrong to lie, will you say, “Yes I am.” Or will you lie to save the lives of these people?

And what about our belief that killing someone is “wrong”? What happens if someone is trying to kill your child? Would you kill that person to protect your child and save her life? And would your action be “wrong”? This of course is what we call situational ethics—and courts of law are always faced with this type of question. Judges and juries must take into consideration the situation and motive of a person’s behavior before passing judgment on what is “right” or “wrong”.

The more we consider dualities, the more we can see that there is only one reality and that dualities are relative positions in the larger context.

It’s your choice

So we see that what we focus our attention on grows. You focus your attention on something/someone/some thought and then you get to experience what you focused on.

It is also important to remember that the focus of our attention is always our choice—*always!* We are the choice-makers—always—whether we are conscious of what we are choosing/doing or not. And this leads us to the next law.

Law 7: THE LAW OF FREE WILL

You *can* choose

You are the only thinker in your mind. This is the most wonderful discovery anyone can ever make. It is the key to freedom—the high road. Because when you understand this, you also understand that you *can* become the conscious choice-maker in your life and choose. You *can* become the one who decides.

Most people today are asleep—unaware that they have the ability to choose the focus of their attention. But just because a person is unaware and does not consciously exercise his or her ability to choose the focus of his/her attention, the reality is that in every moment *there is a choice*.

This ability to choose the focus of our attention is our greatest gift. It is the gift of free will. This ability to choose our focus is what makes us free individuals. If this was not the case—if we could not think for ourselves and choose our focus, we would not be free. But we can, because no one else can get into another person's mind and think for them. Please think deeply about it—and you will see how truly amazing this is. Yes it is true that most people are as yet unaware of this fact—and are just following their old unconscious programming without questioning it. And yes it is true that most people are not yet consciously using this power, but the power is there nevertheless.

But you say what about when people are forced to do things against their will? And yes it is also true that people can use force on the outer plane to coerce other people to do or say things, but no one can get into another person's mind and think for them. This is where we are always free. Each person is always free in their own mind. Each person is always the only thinker in their mind.

This is what makes us human beings.

This is what makes human life so precious, because we have the ability to be aware of what we are thinking and we have the ability to choose the focus of our attention—this is something we *can* do. This is what makes us free.

Having free will is our greatest gift and privilege. It is also our greatest challenge!

Why? Because no matter what is happening around you—*no matter what*—no matter what anyone says or does, you and you alone (whether you are aware of what you are doing or not) choose the focus of your attention. No one else can make this choice for you. Only you can do it.

That is why we are the choice-makers.

This choice is our only freedom.

Free will is our only freedom.

And whether we are aware of it or not, we are always exercising this privilege, this freedom because we are always choosing.

So please wake up to the fact that you are choosing right now—and every single minute of every single day (whether you are aware of it or not).

Nothing else is going on.

And nothing is more important—or more wonderful than this!

So contemplate this until you fully understand the significance (and power) of free will. Free will is what we are. Free will is our true nature, our essence. Free will is all we have, and fortunately for us, free will is everything!

When you observe what you are doing with this in mind, you will see that this is true. In every now moment (even if you are not aware of what you are doing) you are choosing the focus of your attention. You are either focusing on this or on that. In every situation, you are making a choice. Either you are focusing on the potential and the goodness of the situation or person before you or you are choosing to focus on the limitations and the negative in the situation or person before you. And it's always like this. From the very smallest, most insignificant events in our lives like standing in line at the supermarket to the so-called big and important events in our personal relationships, careers and on the world stage.

When we understand this, we will also understand why the Wise say it's all about *you*—and it's always all about *you*. Nothing else is going on but your choice of focus.

**You choose your focus and then you get to experience your choice.
It's as simple as that.**

Learning to choose wisely

This is why it is so important to learn to choose wisely!

Because we get to experience all our choices!

So it makes sense to learn to focus our attention wisely. This is what all the great teachers have been telling us throughout the ages—the importance of exercising your free will and choosing wisely.

Learning to choose wisely requires self-discipline. Learning to choose wisely means following your wisdom rather than choosing immediate pleasure. The Wise tell us that even if this is difficult, it is necessary if we wish to evolve on the pathway of life and achieve our highest potential.

Obviously this is no news to any thinking person because everyone knows that success in any field requires self-discipline. Successful people make up their minds, focus on their goals, and are disciplined about reaching them. Just think about the people you admire. How did they become great? The great leaders, the great athletes, the great musicians, the great artists, the great spiritual teachers—how did they achieve what they achieved? They used their free will to choose a course of action and then they focused all their attention

on their goals. They used their free will to spend time learning and practicing their skills!

And what about successful business people? No one is successful in the world of business without exercising a great deal of self-discipline. The same goes for politicians, world leaders, and for good parents, good teachers and good partners. Everyone who succeeds at achieving anything learns to use their free will wisely and to exercise self-discipline.

The same goes for happiness! Even though people may think happiness is a haphazard event, true happiness isn't haphazard. Achieving true happiness requires self-discipline too! Now I am not talking about random or accidental type of happiness that comes from outer events and which depends on other people and circumstances. I am talking about true happiness, the deep inner happiness which is our natural state and which arises in wise people who are living in harmony with this thing called life. The people who experience this deep inner happiness see the Nature of Reality and understand the way the mind works. This kind of happiness is stable and comes from within. It is unconditional because it does not depend on outer circumstances.

For those of us on the path who can see and understand this, realizing this inner state and achieving this kind of happiness requires continual self-discipline. Achieving this goal requires constant study and daily contemplation of this thing called life. Plus using our free will to practice the techniques and focus required to cultivate and nourish this deep inner peace and inner happiness. This is what spiritual practice is all about. And of course what most self-help books and books about personal development and spiritual growth are about. The best books describe practices for self-empowerment and spiritual growth which require study, daily practice and self-discipline.

Most people work with their bodies, but not with their minds.

Daily practice and self-discipline

Here are some examples of the types of practices I am talking—all of which require active use of our free will. The practices described below may seem simple, but anyone who has ever tried any of them knows they require making a conscious choice and then exercising a great deal of self-discipline!

Practicing non-judgment: A good focal point on the spiritual pathway is making the decision to let go of our judgments about people, things and events. This is an excellent practice because we use so much mental energy judging people, things and events all the time and this creates a great deal of inner turbulence. Practicing non-judgment (in other words just letting things unfold without engaging in an inner dialogue about them) quiets the mind and slowly allows a

deep inner stillness to emerge. But practicing non-judgment, even for an hour a day, requires self-discipline. To do this, you must use your free will. You must decide to do this and keep practicing! Day in and day out!

Practicing non-resistance: Another good focal point is to use your free will to decide not to resist whatever is happening in this moment. Even though we may be unaware of it, many of us are often at war with this moment. We are resisting what is happening in our lives right now—and this creates a great deal of stress and anxiety. So what happens when we stop resisting what is happening right now? It's an amazing experience and wonderful spiritual practice. But again, we are so used to resisting what is, that it requires real focus and self-discipline to stop resisting this moment. Make a conscious choice and do this on a regular basis and see how it transforms your life!

Practicing seeing the potential for good in every situation: Here's another good inner practice that requires active use of your free will. Making the choice to see the potential for good in every situation no matter what is going on—to see the highest and best in every person present. To do this requires constant awareness and control of your focus. You have to be aware of what you are thinking, doing and saying in order to do this. You must be mindful and self-conscious enough so when you find yourself dwelling on the negative, you are awake enough to realize that it's time to shift your focus. Again this requires constant vigilance which is why it is a demanding spiritual practice, unless of course you are Forrest Gump!

Practicing no gossip: Here's a wonderful practice I learned at Findhorn, a spiritual community in northern Scotland. This is what they attempt to do. Whenever a member of the community has something to say about another person, instead of talking behind the person's back, the community member must go up to that person and tell the person directly to his or her face what's it is her or she wants to say. In practice, this means that when you are talking to anyone in the community—if you have something to say about another person—they will tell you to go and tell it to that person instead of to them! This is a wonderful practice that requires a great deal of self-discipline! Try this for a few days and find out what a gossip you really are!

This was just a few examples of spiritual practices that require conscious choice and self discipline. Obviously, there are so many excellent practices we can devote ourselves to such as:

- *Practicing mindfulness (being present in this moment)*
- *Practicing compassion*
- *Practicing forgiveness*
- *Practicing service*
- *Practicing meditation*
- *Practicing silence for an hour a day*

The importance of intention

The Great Ones also tell us that intention is everything. Since it is difficult to see the end of all things or to know what is good or bad in the long term for ourselves or for anyone else, the motivation behind our actions should be our guiding light. What is the reason or motive for what you are doing? Is your intention love, kindness and compassion? Do you hope to ease the suffering of your fellow beings with your words and actions? Is your intention to be of service and help people? Or are you only thinking of short-term pleasure, material gain, and what's in it for you? According to the Wise, it is our motivation and intention which determines the karmic consequences of our thoughts and actions. Thus we see the importance of using our free will wisely and the importance of our intention when it comes to making wise choices.

So practice using the information you already have! Follow the wisdom you already have (which is always a lot more than we realize)! Remember what the Great Ones say.

Don't waste your precious time.

Follow your wisdom and not your emotions.

Exercise self-discipline.

Keep practicing and persevere.

Wake up to your true power and choose wisely!

Understanding this can and will change your life!

Reality check: It's your choice

Everything in this book is designed to help you slow down and become more aware of your mental processes and of what you are doing. As we learn to watch our minds and our inner processes, we begin to see the mechanisms that are running our lives. In this connection, as we learn to watch our thoughts arising and disappearing again, we discover that we also have a choice when it comes to attaching to a thought or not. In other words, we start to see that we don't actually have to believe all our thoughts! We can, for example, just watch them arise and disappear again. And we can question their validity. We can watch a thought arising and ask ourselves—is this thought true? Do I want believe this thought? Do I need to believe this thought? Do I want to let my life be run by this thought or belief? This ability to detach from our thoughts and question them is also the power of the choice-maker.

Law 8: THE LAW OF UNDERLYING BELIEFS

Your underlying beliefs determine your experience

Reality is what it is. Life is what it is. But our experience of this thing called life is determined by our thoughts and underlying beliefs about life—whether or not we are conscious of these thoughts and beliefs. And whether or not we are conscious of this mechanism.

And since our basic beliefs about life determine our experience of reality to a far greater degree than most of us realize, it will serve us well to investigate this phenomenon.

Now by underlying beliefs I do not mean our passing fancies, emotions or whims, or our changing, daily ideas and opinions about this and that. No, I mean our most basic underlying view or understanding of "Life". These are the ideas and beliefs that underlie everything we think, say and do. You could also say these are our most basic ideas and beliefs about what life is and the Nature of Reality.

These basic, underlying beliefs are something we learn from early childhood from our parents, society, teachers, the media, our religion and culture. You could say that from the moment we are born, we are programmed by the society we are born into—we learn the belief systems of our family and culture. And we are usually quite unaware or unconscious of the fact that we are being programmed. But this is what happens. We are all innocent children who simply believe what our parents and teachers tell us. Nor do we have a say about the way we are being programmed. This is just the way it is.

No independent individual views

Oh but you say, I'm an intelligent, independent individual with my own independent views on life and reality. And yes, you can say this is true to a certain extent. To a certain extent, each person has his or her own unique spin or version of the Nature of Reality, depending on his personal background, family, education, etc. which does result in different reactions to events and different life experiences, but this is not the whole story. Every individual is also to a greater or lesser extent influenced by their early programming which we usually call our cultural background or heritage.

Here's an example of what I mean. I was born in the US and lived there until I was 20. After traveling the world for some years, I ended up in Denmark where I have been living ever since. Once I settled here in Denmark, I discovered that the Danes have a unique, underlying belief they call the "Jante Law" and this "Jante Law" says "*Don't think you're anyone special or that you're better than us.*" By this, the Danes mean that you shouldn't put yourself forward, be pushy—and worse yet—be boastful about your achievements.

I remember when I first heard this I thought it was a pretty strange law—and it didn't sound very serious or important to me. But slowly over the years, I began to see how this Jante Law influenced almost everything and everyone who lives here in Denmark and also in the other Nordic countries (the Swedes and Norwegians have this belief too). As a result of this cultural code, I started

to realize how much it is frowned upon here in Scandinavia to appear to elevate oneself above one's peers or to claim to be better or smarter than others. This was of course very surprising to me because I grew up in America where we were taught that we should be proud of showing off our achievements.

Understanding the difference between the programming in Scandinavia and the US, made me understand why Danes, for example, consider Americans boastful and bragging when they talk about their achievements. Talking about your achievements is definitely considered a "no, no" in Scandinavia thanks to the Jante Law! In Denmark and Scandinavia (unlike America), modesty rules!

Underlying belief systems

Besides our underlying social and religious programming, we also pick up various life views from our family and the people we hang out with. Here are some more examples of various types of underlying belief systems that people have without usually being aware of them (and most people of course have a combination of several of the types described below):

The Materialist: People with this type of underlying belief system have a materialistic view of the Nature of Reality. They see the world as a purely material or physical phenomenon. "Life" or reality is what they can perceive with their physical senses and nothing more. There is no underlying cause behind this version of reality—life just appeared out of nowhere. Thus there is no order or reason for anything to happen. To people with this view, human life is the same as the life of an insect. There is no rhyme or reason for anything to happen and they often feel that life is totally haphazard. To them, all of life and all experience is just a matter of luck. Some people get squashed for no good reason while others are lucky and live long, happy lives. Who the lucky ones are is completely beyond their control.

The Sufferer: People with this view of "Life" focus their attention on the dualistic nature of experience. Everywhere they look, they see good and evil, darkness and light, love and hate, sickness and health, poverty and wealth, etc. In this view, there is much suffering in life as human beings swing back and forth between the pairs of opposites from which there is no escape. Often people with this view of the Nature of Reality believe that God has orchestrated this scenario. Some even believe that the difficulties they experience are punishment for sins they have committed.

The Fetish Worshipper: This is another spin on the materialistic/dualistic views of "Life" described above. People with this type of basic belief system believe their fate or destiny depends on outside forces, i.e., forces beyond their own control. These forces include concepts or ideas such as heredity, their horoscope (the position of the stars and planets), their sex, their age, their nationality, or their education. Often people with this view then decide to look to other outside forces in an attempt to create balance and harmony in their lives. Thus fetish worshippers give away their power to a wide variety of forces such as other people and/or external objects or phenomena (which is why I call them fetish worshippers). These outside forces or people could be a doctor,

a teacher, the leader of a sect, the position of the planets, crystals and stones, essential oils, pills, the choice of colors, the arrangement of houses and furniture (feng shui), a healer, a psychiatrist, a special diet, medical treatment, alternative treatments, etc. In other words, a fetish worshipper is a person who gives the responsibility for his or her destiny to any outside force, person, regimen, thing or arrangement.

The Mountain Climber: People with this view of "Life" or underlying belief system are basically success-oriented. Whether their orientation tends to be more materialistic or spiritual, they basically believe in their own personal power, worth and ability to succeed. This underlying belief tends to support the view that "Life" is good and that human beings have the ability to create a good life for themselves and their families. This type of belief is usually at least some part of the belief pattern of most successful people in the world of business, sports, the arts and government.

The Believer: People with this view of "Life" usually believe there is some kind of order or meaning to "Life". Often they believe in God or some kind of higher power, which tends to include the assumption that human beings are part of an orderly evolution towards something higher and better. Many believers may believe in reincarnation as the Buddhists and Hindus do, which obviously changes one's whole perspective on this present life. In general, the belief in a higher power is an underlying belief system that influences every aspect of a person's life and circumstances, including the way the person meets the great transition called death.

Universal beliefs

There is an even more basic level of beliefs that are universal. These are the beliefs that are shared by almost everyone. These beliefs seem to be common to the human condition because almost everyone has these beliefs, regardless of their background, culture, religion, age, sex and status.

Again, these are underlying beliefs which we are often unaware of and which have a much greater influence on our choices, actions and experience of life than most of us realize. And unfortunately, these beliefs can wreck havoc on our lives—until we begin to be aware of them and learn to question their validity.

Here are some examples of the universal beliefs that almost everyone has:

Life is dangerous.

Death is dangerous.

There is something wrong with me.

I'm not good enough.

Parents should love their children.

My mother should understand me.

Children should love their parents.

There shouldn't be war in the world.

I need his/her love to be OK.

I need more money.

It's his/her fault.

It's my fault.

I don't belong.

We need to save the world.

There is evil in the world.

My happiness depends on... (someone else or on something else)

I need a partner to be happy.

I did it wrong.

The above are just a few examples of the kind of thoughts or beliefs most people have to a greater or lesser degree.

So how do these universal beliefs affect us?

Let's take an example. Say for example you believe "life is dangerous"... This is one of the universal beliefs most people have (to a greater or lesser degree). You can try to watch yourself and see how many of your choices and how much of your behavior is governed by this belief. Think of all the situations where you would act differently if you didn't believe that "life is dangerous". Think of all the choices you make that reflect this belief. Think of all the precautions you take and all the things you don't dare to do... because you believe "life is dangerous".

So what will happen if you pick up this belief, hold it in your hands, and look it straight in the eye and question it! Who knows what you might find!

Let's give it a try and start with a belief that is closely connected to the belief that "life is dangerous"—it's the belief that "death is dangerous".

Is death dangerous?

The belief that "death is dangerous" is an idea that haunts many of us. So let's consider it. Is death really dangerous? If the answer to this question is yes, where's the proof? Is there any proof that death is dangerous?

The fact that people die, the fact that everyone dies, doesn't actually prove that death is dangerous, does it? All it proves is that death happens. But we don't really know if dying is dangerous at all do we? Because no one has ever come back from the dead and told us, have they? So where's the proof that death is dangerous?

In reality, there's no proof at all. No concrete evidence that death is dangerous. All we can say for sure is that death happens and the rest we don't know. That's reality. That's all we know. So what are we afraid of?

We're afraid of the idea, the thought "death is dangerous". Which leads us back to the thought we started with—the thought that "life is dangerous". It seems to me that these two thoughts are connected because it's pretty hard to believe in one of them without believing in the other! So let's look at "life is dangerous". Do we know if this thought is true? Because if we can't know for sure that death is dangerous, how can we know for sure that life is dangerous? You see how they go together? Because if you are afraid of death, you're probably afraid of life because you think something might happen to you and you could die! But if death isn't dangerous, how can life be dangerous?

It's fun and interesting to play around with thoughts like this and do it slowly as a kind of meditation and see what comes up. Not only do we begin to see how our minds work when we play around like this, but we can also see how we often terrify ourselves with underlying beliefs like this. Because we are unconscious of what we are doing, we make ourselves miserable without even knowing for sure if what we fear is true. This is the power of unquestioned underlying beliefs!

Slowing down the wheels of mind

This is also why learning to slow down the wheels of mind can be so enlightening. Finally, as we slow down, we get a chance to see what we are believing and how these beliefs are affecting our lives. It can be a pretty shocking experience, but also very liberating because this insight allows us to take back our power as the choice-makers in our lives and make better choices instead of being slaves to beliefs that we never questioned.

Reality check: Things just happen

The truth is things just happen. Our experience of events is a result of our beliefs and our interpretation of whether these happenings are good or bad, happy or sad, right or wrong, etc. That is all we are experiencing. Nothing else is going on. (Nothing else can go on.)

This is also why everyone, every single person, is living in his or her own world. At first this might sound strange to you; but once you have digested and understood the ideas in this book, you will understand why this is so. Each one of us lives in our own mental universe.

Collective belief patterns

The law of underlying beliefs also obviously applies to the mindsets of groups and to the collective consciousness of humanity as a whole. By groups I mean family units, tribes, racial and religious groups, regions, states and nations. Groups share certain underlying beliefs or collective stories. In fact, this is what makes them a group! Their common beliefs bring them together and keep them together. Since they share the same underlying beliefs and stories, they exhibit similar behavior patterns and share similar "Life" experiences.

Wars arise when whole groups share similar negative underlying beliefs and stories about other groups such as "My group (family, tribe, religion, country) is better, superior to your group (family, tribe, religion, country)."

Uninvestigated collective beliefs often rule our behavior.

Law 9: THE LAW OF SUBSTITUTION

Change your thinking, change your life

Now that we know that we get to experience whatever we think—especially what we think with conviction—you might be reacting to all this by saying to yourself “yikes, but my thinking is so negative!” I know that is how I reacted when I realized that I could only experience my own thinking and that a lot of my thinking was pretty negative. It was rather terrifying, to say the least.

And then I thought, well I must stop thinking so negatively and think positively! But that (I quickly found out) is easier said than done. The mind doesn't work like that. You can't say to yourself, I am not going to think about something, because well when you say that to yourself you are actually thinking about whatever it is you don't want to think about! It's like me saying to you right now, “Don't think about the Statue of Liberty in the New York harbor.” The moment I say that, what are you thinking about? The Statue of Liberty of course. That's just the way our minds work. But if I say to you, think about chocolate ice cream, what are you thinking about now? Chocolate ice cream, right and not the Statue of Liberty! Your attention shifted didn't it?

And this is what the great law of substitution is all about. It's based on the simple observation that you can't tell yourself to stop thinking about something. Because when you do, you are actually focusing your attention on whatever it is you don't want to think about. And that means even if it's something you don't want to think about—according to the law of focus—you are actually energizing the very thing you don't want to think about by telling yourself to stop thinking about it!

So what can we do about this?

How can we stop thinking negatively?

We can use the great law of substitution. This law tells us *you can only change your thinking by replacing old thoughts and thought patterns with new ones. In other words, by substituting new thoughts for the old ones.*

Mind moves in familiar patterns

This is important to know because we have to keep in mind the fact that our minds have a tendency to move in familiar patterns. If you begin observing the way you think and your thought patterns, you will discover that once your mind starts moving in a certain direction, it just seems to continue in that direction (unless something else pops up and gets your attention). The other thing you will notice is that we all have a tendency to keep thinking the same thoughts over and over again—like broken records. In fact if you watch, you will probably discover that 99% of what you are thinking today is a repetition of what you were thinking yesterday! Yes it's true. But don't believe me—try observing your thoughts for a whole day yourself. How many *completely new thoughts* did you actually think today? Were there any in fact? Which means, of course that if you are used to thinking anxious, critical, fearful, negative thoughts, if you are in the habit of thinking negatively, you will just keep doing

it over and over again. But don't misunderstand me, I don't mean this is something you're doing on purpose. No not at all. Rather it's just a poor mental habit that you probably picked up during childhood. But because you're unaware of what you're doing, you just keep doing it over and over. And this unfortunately means you also get to keep experiencing the consequences of your own negative thinking over and over again too!

But don't despair. Now by understanding the law of substitution, you have the key to changing these poor mental habits into better ones. Once you see what you're doing, you can use this law to change your poor mental habits even if it does take time and effort. Now that you understand the law, every time you catch yourself thinking negatively, you know you can change the drift of your thinking by substituting new thoughts for the old negative ones!

The key is in your hand.

The choice is yours!

Since you are the only thinker in your mind, it's all up to you.

What to do in practice

As I've said before, the first step is recognizing your general mental habits. It's hard to change something if you aren't aware of what you're doing in the first place. So watch yourself carefully until you can see exactly what's going on. And then make up your mind to replace negative thoughts every time they arise with new positive ones. Armed with an understanding of the law of substitution, you now know that you can turn the movement of your thoughts in a new direction by replacing one thought pattern with another thought pattern. It's really very simple once you understand the mechanism. And because this is mechanical law, this is truly the scientific way to deal with any negative thought patterns or conditions in your life. You simply build the opposite thoughts and resulting conditions into your consciousness by substituting one thought pattern with another.

So you can now see that the law of substitution is indeed a very important tool when it comes to being the choice-maker in your life and taking control of your mind. If you understand this mechanism, you have the key to mastering your mind and changing your thought patterns, no matter how negative they may be at the present moment.

An experiment

If you are in doubt as to whether you can change your life by using the law of substitution and changing your thinking, try this experiment.

Decide that for one whole week, you are going to think negatively about everything that happens to you. No matter what, you are going to be critical and find fault with every situation and every person you meet—and you are going to find fault with yourself as well. This means that by using the law of substitution, every time you think something good and positive, you are going to replace the thought with a critical negative thought. Do this for a week and see what happens. See what your life looks and feels like when you do this.

Then take the next week and decide that you are going to think positively and kindly about everything that happens to you. No matter what happens, you are going to see the potential in every situation and every person you meet during this week. This means that by using the law of substitution, every time you have a negative or critical thought about a person or a situation or even about yourself, you will immediately replace it with a good, kind and positive thought. Do this for a week and see what happens. See what your life looks and feels like when you do this.

If a week is too long for you, you can do this experiment for two days instead of two weeks. On the first day, be negative about everything no matter what—and on the second day, be positive about everything no matter what. And see what happens. See what those two days look and feel like... See what your experience is...

For your health

You can also use the great law of substitution to improve your health. When you are sick or feeling low in the loafers, every time you think a negative thought about your body and your health, replace it with a wonderful, positive thought like "my body is a great, powerful healing machine!" Or any other statement or affirmation that feels right to you. So instead of dwelling on what's wrong with you when you're feeling ill, substitute powerful thoughts for any weak, sick thoughts you may be having. Say things to yourself like "my immune system is strong and healthy and is dealing effectively with this situation now".

Law 10: THE LAW OF MENTAL EQUIVALENTS

Like attracts like

The techniques in many of today's popular self-help books and modern mental training programs are based on the law of mental equivalents. This law explains that everything we experience in the outer world is a reflection of the mental equivalents we hold in thought.

When we understand this mechanism, we also understand that we must have the mental equivalent of whatever "Good" we wish to experience in the outer, external plane before we can experience it. Of course this is just another way of saying that *thought is cause and experience is effect*, but it is a very useful and practical way of looking at and understanding this mechanism.

So let's look at little more closely at what this means.

The law of mental equivalents means, for example, that you cannot and will not experience the abundance of life in your life until you have a prosperity consciousness. When you have the mental equivalent of abundance, in other words when you think abundant thoughts and feel abundant, when you see and understand that all the wealth of the world belongs to you, you will experience prosperity in your life whether or not you have money in the bank. Prosperity, like everything else in life, is a state of mind. But of course, we have been brought up to believe the opposite. We have been raised to believe that you can only feel prosperous if you have money in the bank. But look around you. Is that true? Don't you know a lot of people who have money in the bank and don't feel prosperous? So is it true that you can only feel prosperous if you have money in the bank? If you are in doubt, take the time to go inside and find out if this is really true for you. Or is the opposite in fact true? What exactly do you mean by prosperity?

And what about the other areas of your life? What about love? If you want love, can you get it? As we all know, it usually doesn't work like that. In fact, wanting something badly usually pushes it away from us, because the very act of wanting is actually an affirmation that we don't have it! And this holds true for love too. Especially since love is our nature! Interestingly enough, the law of mental equivalents tells us that if we want to experience love in our lives and in our relationships, the best way to do this is to realize the love that is within us and cultivate it! Because everything "out there" is just reflecting back to us what we have "in here". All our experiences in the so-called outer world are merely equivalents or reflections of our inner states of mind or consciousness. So be the love you want to experience. Cultivate a love consciousness!

Be the love you want to experience.

Take a moment and think about this. Of course you want to experience love, but do you have a love consciousness? Or do you see critical people and enemies everywhere you turn? And are you critical yourself? Take a look within and find out. Watch your thinking and see if you are the love you want to experience. Watching like this may come as a shock because we are so often completely unaware of our own thought patterns and underlying beliefs (see Law no. 8, the Law of Underlying Beliefs). We don't see that even though we want love, we are often sending out angry and critical thoughts, which as we now can see, will be reflected back to us. Understanding the mental laws and the mechanisms they describe, will help you unlock the key to your own behavior and experiences.

Like attracts like

Another way of stating this law is: *Like attracts like*. If you don't believe me, start to observe the people around you. Try picking one of your friends for example and then try to ascertain the general climate of your friend's thoughts—his or her state of mind. Is the climate warm and friendly or cold and critical? Is it light-hearted and free or closed and depressed? If you watch closely, you will discover that interestingly enough, people's experiences match their states of mind perfectly. And you will see that angry people often have many experiences to be angry about! Since they have an angry or irritated mindset, angry or irritating things just show up! And the people who are truly kind and loving, what are their experiences? Try thinking of someone who has a truly generous mindset—then look at his or her life experience. Do they match? If you start to notice, you will probably see that people who are generous, loving and kind seem to meet evidence of the loving kindness they embody wherever they go. And this goes for people who have that very special prosperity vibe too. And for people who have that dynamic, healthy, energetic vibe. Can you see how their life experiences match and reflect back their mentalities? It's interesting to watch isn't it?

It's the same for you

Of course it's the same with you. So please watch yourself and find out whether this is true or not. Just notice what happens. On a day when you wake up cross and irritated, doesn't everything just seem to go wrong? And then when you wake up and your energy is high—well what happens then? Watch and see and I guarantee you will soon understand why the Wise say "exaltation is a magnet for all Good". When you know the mechanism, you understand that joy and laughter, elation, exhilaration, rapture, excitement, bliss are states of mind that attract every Good thing in this universe. They must because the universe is just reflecting back what's in here. Nothing else is going on.

If you don't believe this is true, try this experiment. Make a mental note of when Good things happen to you and you will discover they happen when you're

in an elevated state of mind. And extraordinary things happen when you're in a joyful or exalted state of mind—or in love...

Your present experience always reflects your present state of mind.

Mental techniques

Mental techniques such as affirmations and visualization exercises are based on this law. Both techniques aim to break our old negative programming and help us develop new mental patterns and new mental equivalents. By means of constant repetition, we can change the groove of our thinking and begin to entertain new thought patterns. When this happens, events and experiences in the outer world begin reflecting our new thought patterns back to us.

The prayer of gratitude is one of the strongest types of mental affirmations. By giving thanks for all the good you already have in your life, you set in motion the unfolding of wonders and miracles in your life because *like attracts like*. When you know this, it makes life very simple because it means to have a wonderful life your most important task is to keep your mental energy high. And as I said above, high states of mental energy include the praiseful, exalted and grateful states of mind. Nothing else is as important as this.

**Mind can't see things it doesn't believe!
You have to believe it before you can see it!**

Questioning catastrophic thinking

Of course if you discover that the climate of your thinking is dark and negative and that you often are plagued by catastrophic thinking, I suggest you make a dedicated effort to identify your negative thoughts and then to hold them up to the light of truth by questioning them. This is another important way of dissolving our old negative programming and allowing the true goodness that we are to emerge and rule our lives.

Law 11: THE LAW OF TRUTH

No thoughts are true

By contemplating the mental laws, we have now begun to see how the mechanics of creation work. *Thoughts arising, world arising*. This is the core experience, this is the mechanism of this thing we call life. And in this book, I have been trying to slow things down enough (at least conceptually), so that we can catch a glimpse of this mechanism, become aware of it, and see it unfolding. And as we do, we begin to see that as thoughts arise, so does our world.

This is the way of it.

To know exactly what I am talking about, think back to a morning when you woke up a total blank. It happens on occasion so I am sure you have experienced it. You wake up and you know you are awake but there is no thought and no world. You are blank. You can't remember who you are or where you are or even what you are. And then, in a split second, it all comes back to you. The thoughts come tumbling in and your world appears. You are this person, in this bed, with this mate besides you. You have to get up and take a shower and eat breakfast and go to work. And with these thoughts pouring in, your world appears again. This is it. And our entire life experience is like this—only we usually don't notice. We usually don't see it happening because it happens so fast. But this is all that is going on—thought/world appears simultaneously. Before thought, no world, thought arising, world arising.

If you make yourself very, very still and very, very quiet, you may be able to catch a glimpse of this, which is what meditation is about. Just watching, not interfering, not wanting anything in particular, just being aware. Can you see the thoughts as they come and go? Here comes a thought—and then—there it goes again. And then another. And another. Mind bubbling like a well within you, creating a "this" and a "that"—a supermarket, a bicycle, a bus stop, and infinite worlds and stars and experiences... all for your delight and amusement.

The impermanence of it

When we can see this—that thoughts arise and disappear like this—we can also see that thoughts must be impermanent since they come and go. We see that thoughts are like the wind, here, there and then gone again. There is nothing to them. No substance. So they cannot be real. No. They cannot and are not real. Thoughts are not reality. They are, well, just thoughts! And this is how and why we can know that *no thoughts are true*. Or should I say, by observing this we come to understand that no thoughts can be true. It's just the bubbling well of mind. Bubbling. And then a thought comes. And another. And the thought is a mental construct, naming that which cannot be named. The thought is putting a label or labels on the field—on the Absolute or Ultimate Reality in which there are no distinctions or dichotomies. Which is why thoughts—all thoughts—are untrue. Mind bubbles up about "this" or about

“that” and what does this have to do with reality? What does this thought or any other thought have to do with the always stable ground of beingness which is altogether beyond words and altogether present? But of course, until we “get” (understand, grasp) this, we don’t “get” it and we identify with our thoughts and think this is reality. But the truth is—*reality is not what we think*. What we think is just thoughts, concepts, mental constructions we use for convenience at best. But despite the convenience, they are still unreal and therefore untrue.

Reality is not what we think.

You can say all thoughts are just relative positions in the greater whole—but no thought is absolute truth since Absolute truth cannot be told or named. Reality, the real, is beyond all this. Beyond explaining, beyond understanding, beyond our ability to conceptualize. This might sound mystical or mysterious, but this reality is not mystical, mysterious or far-fetched in any way. In fact, it’s right here, right in front of our noses, right now. *It is this. This. This. All of this.*

So let us keep our minds focused on this line of reasoning—until we are clear enough to see that there is reality—and then there are our thoughts. And that these two phenomena are two completely different things. In other words, they are not one and the same. It’s very important to understand this. To understand that Reality is the unmoving, always stable, *this*. And then there are our thoughts, the ever-changing, bubbling well of thoughts arising and disappearing. And we—our so-called individual life experiences—are these thoughts.

Attaching to thought

And now we come to a key observation: *All suffering arises from identifying with (or believing in) thoughts that are not true! All suffering is attachment to thoughts.*

Since we now know that no thoughts are true, we come to see that the root cause of all our suffering is *believing what we think*. *If we didn’t believe what we think, it would be impossible to suffer.*

This is so mind-boggling an observation that I will repeat it... *If we didn’t believe what we think, it would be impossible to suffer.*

How can we know this? Well ask yourself. If you didn’t believe what you think, what would be left?

Without believing our thoughts, all that would be left is *what is*. And that would be reality. And since reality is nothing (no-thing) we can conceptualize,

we cannot in any way label it “good” or “bad”... and without the “good” or “bad” label, how can we suffer?

All suffering is mental and arises when the mind adds the label and then we believe what we think. We say this is “bad”, “wrong” and then we get to live it. You could say that when we believe our thoughts, it is like we are putting an artificial matrix of ideas on top of reality. And you could also say—so what? And yes, that is true—so what... Problems only arise when our matrix (thoughts) and reality don’t fit together. When they don’t match, that’s when we suffer. Because in that moment, when our thoughts don’t match reality, we are resisting reality, we are resisting what is—we are resisting the way things are. And when that happens, we always lose. Because *reality is what it is*. We don’t get a say in this. We don’t have any power over what is. What is, in this moment, already is. It’s already happened. It’s here now, done. And again, it’s not a question of “good” or “bad”, “right” or “wrong”, it’s simply a question of *what is*.

So I repeat... *Resistance to reality is the only suffering. Resistance to this moment is the only suffering.* (Suffering in the past is just a thought in your mind because the past is already over—and suffering in the future is also just a thought in your mind because the future is also just a thought.)

So we suffer when our thoughts (the artificial matrix we superimpose) and reality (this moment) don’t match. We suffer when our thoughts and reality turn out to be two different things. And this is *always* the case.

If you can understand this, really understand this, you can live a happy life, regardless of what is going on in your life, regardless of outer circumstances, regardless of what your body is doing... regardless. This is the secret of the very Wise. They have *seen* reality and they know that *reality is not what they think*. So they don’t believe their thoughts. They don’t believe what they think! They know that *no thoughts are true*.

But even though reality is not something we can conceptualize, reality is something we can *experience directly*.

Why?

Because reality is what we are, what is, right now—beyond explaining—beyond understanding—beyond thought. *It is this. This. This.*

SUMMARY

The Mental Laws

LAW 1:
THE LAW OF THOUGHTS ARISING
Thoughts arise and disappear

LAW 2:
THE LAW OF WITNESSING
There is a difference between you and your thoughts

LAW 3:
THE LAW OF NAMING
Thoughts name the world

Law 4:
THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT
Thought is cause, experience is effect

Law 5:
THE LAW OF EMOTION
You can't have an emotion without having a thought first

Law 6:
THE LAW OF FOCUS
What you focus your attention on grows

Law 7:
THE LAW OF FREE WILL
You *can* choose

Law 8:
THE LAW OF UNDERLYING BELIEFS
Your underlying beliefs determine your experience

Law 9:
THE LAW OF SUBSTITUTION
Change your thinking, change your life

Law 10:
THE LAW OF MENTAL EQUIVALENTS
Like attracts like

Law 11:
THE LAW OF TRUTH
No thoughts are true

Attributes of Mental Laws

Mental laws are like physical laws. They are invisible principles that describe how mental phenomena operate. Mental laws can be observed by everyone.

Mental laws operate automatically.

Mental laws are impersonal.

Mental laws are mechanical.

Mental laws are indifferent to the outcome.

Mental laws have no favorites.

Mental laws operate equally for all.

Mental laws operate with mathematical precision.

Mental laws operate whether you are aware of them or not.