

# The Modern-Day Buddha

10 Techniques to Cultivate Awareness  
and Understanding in a Busy World



Noah James Hittner

Life is not the illusion.

The illusion is that the magic in life has disappeared.

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and Understanding in a Busy World

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ISBN-13: 978-1460935835 (Hard Copy)

ISBN-10: 1460935837 (Hard Copy)

ISBN-13: 978-0-615-46585-2 (E-Book)

ISBN-10: 0615465854 (E-Book)

Cover artwork by Erni Vales

Cover text and arrangement by Jeff Strand

Author photo appearing on page 76 and back cover by Ron Regan

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## **DEDICATION**

In a life, on a world, during a time like this...I would proudly and humbly like to dedicate this to all of us.

In particular, I would like to dedicate this to Jennifer for helping me to get clear about what I'm doing here.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this to my mom, Joy. She has spent hours upon hours reading my material and offering feedback. Honestly, I couldn't have done it without her. Love you, Mom.

## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

This is not a book about Buddhism.

In fact, in the interest of complete disclosure, my knowledge of the history of the Buddha's life is rudimentary at best. And so, within the context of this little book Buddha is referenced here in a completely *figurative* sense. I chose the name 'Buddha' because I believe that the metaphor for sovereignty and wholesomeness which the name represents is fairly well understood by the general masses.

That said, this book is for anyone (Buddhist or otherwise) who curiously, innocently, or desperately searches for a more honest, self-empowered way to approach their life. Thank you for picking it up. I hope you enjoy it and find it useful.

-Noah

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# **INTRODUCTION**

## **What Lies Beyond?**

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*“If you saw everyone you encountered as family, and every experience you had as valuable...just how might your life be different?”*

---

Most of us are at least somewhat familiar with the name Buddha. It is a name which represents a legendary figurehead who taught personal freedom and sovereignty hundreds of years B.C. As easy as these teachings are to find and study, relatively speaking, it could be suggested that there is very little evidence of them in the popular culture. I have wondered why that is.

Perhaps it is because this kind of wisdom came from a simpler time, before the infinite distractions of our modern, high-tech, politically-charged, commercially-driven world. Perhaps it is also because we've been taught for so long that these distractions, whether they be our mortgages or our politics, are far more important than how we are feeling on a moment-to-moment basis.

Perhaps. Yet, I suspect that these kinds of distractions have always been present. I suspect that only the specific way in which they have manifested into our lives has

changed relative to whatever era in which we find ourselves. So where does that leave us?

If our history is anything to judge by, it appears as if we as a species will always have available to us an endless host of reasons for why we feel unable to experience a deeper sense of meaning or purpose in our lives. And through these reasons we are justified in choosing behaviors that perpetuate more of those same kinds of reasons. You see, it's a cycle.

Now, there's nothing inherently wrong with the cycle—nothing at all. In becoming aware of the cycle I, personally, was led straight to the parts of life that I value the most. I suspect to a certain degree a similar relationship might be true for you and this book. And so, the question becomes: What do we do and where do we turn when we begin to experience the perception of 'futility' in that cycle?

I wrote this book in response to that question. Now, I cannot answer that question for you any better than you could answer it for me. Yet, I wrote this book just the same! I wrote it because, even though I cannot tell you what the meaning of life is (especially the meaning of *your* life), I can at least offer a template of experience and

the possibility for inspiration.

You may find yourself identifying with much or little of what you're about to read. Regardless, I believe that we are all simply observing and contributing to life from different locations upon the very same path. As far as I'm concerned, we are all Modern-Day Buddhas, truly. It is with that in mind that I propose that the techniques in the following pages need not be implemented out of some sense of obligation in order that we might one day arrive at a preset destination known as 'better,' or 'enlightened,' or even to 'save the world' for that matter. But rather, we might take action simply in order to discover for ourselves...*what lies beyond.*

What lies beyond the preconceived notions and assumptions that we've formed as a result of our history? What lies beyond saying and doing the same old thing that we've *always* said and done? What lies beyond everything we always *knew* to be true? What lies beyond all of that? These techniques were written as one possible way to explore that very question.

What *is* a Modern-Day Buddha? Well, the short answer is that we all are. Now, what does that 'look' like?

Perhaps a Modern-Day Buddha (MDB) is someone who has taken interest in becoming more and more aware of herself and her life in a holistic sense. Perhaps she is becoming more and more aware of what and how she is thinking and feeling moment-to-moment. Perhaps she is becoming increasingly aware of the choices that she makes and the consequences which follow; and she is learning to assume responsibility for them with an air of grace that—by default—seems to dissolve her tendency to operate through a sense of shame and/or guilt.

Perhaps a MDB is someone who has begun to accept that he is simply not in control of everything around him. Perhaps he has begun to understand that he cannot control his every thought, his every feeling, or his every circumstance. Perhaps a MDB has discovered a certain amount of freedom through his understanding that life is not necessarily meant to be controlled in the first place. While, at the same time, he also understands that this discovery does not necessarily imply a relinquishment of his sense of personal responsibility. Rather, he has begun to foresee and experience a balance between the two—control and surrender—as they create the dance of life.

Perhaps the more aware of her life that a MDB

becomes—intellectually, emotionally, physically, and spiritually—the more she seems to understand that this moment-to-moment awareness is really *all that there is*. Perhaps she begins to notice that her life seems to be enriched in some unspeakable way as she becomes more and more aware of what she is doing, saying, thinking, and experiencing on all levels.

Perhaps a MDB understands that his developing awareness represents the movement toward his growing ability to see what is before him more clearly, to perceive and participate in life in a sovereign manner, increasingly more and more free of any historical indictment of his past. Perhaps he has stumbled upon this profound understanding: *His sovereignty comes from his growing desire and willingness to become utterly honest with himself first and foremost. Thus, his level or degree of awareness can only equal his level or degree of self-honesty*. Perhaps he is learning to create the reality of his life independent of the old programming that no longer serves him in what he perceives as an honest or wholesome way.

Every technique contained in these pages comes from my own experiences out in the world. Whether in

professional or personal circles, these techniques have served as wonderful tools (survival tools in some cases!), that have offered countless opportunities for me to expand my awareness and better understand the connection between the choices I've made and the consequences that followed.

Consider it for a moment. If you saw everyone you encountered as family, and every experience you had as valuable...just how might your life be different? Let's find out, together.

Finally, I believe that we are always teaching one another in every moment. That said, as you read through and experiment with these techniques, I invite you to go to: [www.TheModernDayBuddha.com](http://www.TheModernDayBuddha.com) and offer feedback in regards to your experience. Please, teach me.

# **TECHNIQUE 1**

## Pause

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*“It is very likely that once you give yourself this little private moment, you may feel no need to respond whatsoever because you feel it through-and-through: This has nothing to do with you, and there is no need to extinguish your energy on their fire.”*

---

One afternoon, on a lunch break, a Modern-Day Buddha was walking down a busy sidewalk enjoying the sunshine. Arriving at a small park, he sat down on a bench and was joined seconds later by a friend who happened to be passing by. In an obviously upset state, she sat down and began to explain how awfully her week had been going. The MDB asked her what had happened. The friend explained that yesterday at work, in front of many of her colleagues, a coworker had unjustly criticized a project she had been working on for quite some time. As a result, an argument ensued and she felt humiliated.

“I give great care and attention in all that I do, and for someone to attack me like that as if they don’t recognize me; well, that’s what hurt the most.”

“I understand that, of course. And that is why I think

that your coworker's actions had nothing to do with you.”  
replied the MDB.

“Well, how can that be?” she responded, with a slight irritation in her voice. “It was my project after all. I'd been working on it for months!”

“I'll prove it to you,” he said confidently. “What was your reaction throughout the course of the remainder of the day yesterday?”

“Well, it ruined the rest of my day, and I wound up yelling at my boyfriend...last night...at dinner,” she trailed off.

The MDB waited a moment before responding. He saw the gears beginning to turn in her mind.

“Did your boyfriend have anything to do with why you yelled at him?” he asked.

“No,” she whispered, her head half-bowed, a quarter-smile coming over her face.

He continued, “This may sound strange; but, our ability to communicate to others in a sovereign, compassionate way, independent of our own dramas, is the sole responsibility of each of us to learn and practice. I do not think that we ever express criticism or aggression toward others for any reasons other than our own. Our

unhappiness—as well as our happiness—simply cannot belong to someone else. It is not their responsibility. It is ours and ours alone.”

~ ~ ~ ~

The first technique to cultivate awareness and understanding is one of life’s great ironies because it is so elementary, so utterly basic; and yet, it is perhaps one of the most difficult things in the world to do. It is also one of the most profoundly impactful techniques when implemented.

It is very simple: Just *pause*.

In the most heated moments when your temper, and the violence it is prepared to unleash seems justified, and the heat in your mind feels like it could hard-boil your brain if you don’t defend your point of view by telling someone off...just pause.

It could be a coworker who is being overly critical of your work, a total stranger who just cut you off on the freeway (adding a honk and a single-fingered gesture), a spouse who is picking a fight for reasons unknown to you, or a sibling who is looking for someone to blame. No matter what, just pause. Literally, hit your pause button and step out for a moment. Allow them to have

their rant. Allow them to execute their violence (assuming you are not in any immediate danger, of course). Allow them to have it all to themselves.

How is this possible you might ask? How can I allow someone to walk all over me? Simple. It's because they're not walking on you at all—not at all. Criticism and intimidation are never truly about the subject at which they are aimed. They are nothing more than the expression of sincere, internal conflict. It's that simple.

Think about it. Think about the most unhappy and unfulfilling periods of your life. How did you behave out in the world during these times? How much more frequently did you find yourself in aggressive confrontations? What percentage of them did you instigate?

And so, the point of the pause is to give yourself a moment to recall this little nugget of wisdom so that you don't have to add your own version of gasoline to the fire already burning in the other person's belly. It affords you the opportunity to understand that you don't have to internalize or ingest what this person is saying or doing. You just don't have to take it personally because it's not about you, and it never was—no matter how convincing

the other person's argument is.

This is not suggesting by any means that you should repress or deny what you're feeling when someone scares or hurts you. It is simply a suggestion to wait until your perspective is not quite so affected or clouded by the storm. It is a suggestion to wait to speak until you are more clear and capable of seeing the truth. It is very likely that once you give yourself this little private moment, you may feel no need to respond whatsoever because you feel it through and through: *This has nothing to do with you, and there is no need to extinguish your energy on their fire.* Yep, it's that simple.

Again, will this be difficult? Well, speaking from experience, if there is room in your life for practicing this kind of technique, it probably won't be easy, at least not at first. (No worries, you'll get plenty of chances!) But, once you start to really feel how freeing it is when you stop accepting other people's perceptions of you, you will become a believer; and everything will begin to change.

#### APPLICATION:

1. The next time you find yourself faced with extreme criticism or belittlement and your instinct is to expend

your energy lashing out...just pause.

2. Remind yourself that this person's actions are NOT about you. Their internal conflict is theirs and theirs alone. You simply do not need to extinguish your energy on their fire.
3. If your response is expected in the altercation, challenge yourself to wait until #2 above has fully sunken into your heart and mind (see what lies beyond), and you are able to see the truth more clearly.

## **TECHNIQUE 2**

### Have the Conversation

---

*“...where we find tension in our lives dwells a conversation that is begging to be had.”*

---

There was once a Modern-Day Buddha who managed a corporate health club. On one particular morning, after finishing her workout, she was sitting in the cafeteria eating her breakfast when one of the club trainers approached and asked if he could talk to her about a problem he was having with one of his clients. She warmly agreed.

“I’m not sure what to do,” the young trainer said, discouraged. “You see, I’ve got this issue with one of my clients that is really conflicting me.”

“How so?” the MDB asked.

“Well, she has asked me to help her regain the balance and flexibility that she has lost due to years of competitive sports injuries, some of which were major traumas. And, to be honest with you, I don’t feel like I’m even qualified to work with her because of those past injuries!”

“I see; and did you speak with your client about

that?”

“No, but that’s not even the half of it. The thing is, when we get together for training sessions, I prescribe the gentle types of exercises that are meant specifically to help her regain the function she wants; but, when she’s exercising on her own she beats herself up with her old regimen, and I feel like it reverses any progress we make, or stalemates it at best!”

“Sure. And did you mention that to her?”

“No, and here’s the topper, she is also a doctor who just happens to be more credentialed and experienced in exercise science than I am; which, to be honest with you, is really intimidating. I mean, sometimes I wonder why she even wants to train with me!”

“Of course,” said the MDB, now with a quarter smile on her face, “and have you ever brought that up, even if only in jest?”

“No, I’m worried that if I question her, I’ll be insulting her, or worse, I’ll humiliate myself.”

“And how long has this been on your mind?”

“Weeks!” the young trainer shot out reflexively. “Weeks,” he sighed.

“And how has it affected your relationship with your

client?” the MDB inquired.

“Honestly, I’m beginning to resent her, and the crazy thing is she’s done nothing wrong! She doesn’t even know how I feel!”

“Do you suppose the stress you’ve gone through as a result of keeping this all to yourself is more painful than simply having a sincerely honest conversation with your client—this person that has committed and entrusted a certain degree of her health and wellbeing to you?”

The young trainer’s eyes went off in thought. A few moments later, a small smile began to form on his lips.

“Of course not,” he said, now chuckling at himself under his breath.

“I cannot tell you how to approach your client,” said the MDB, “but I can offer this: There is no end to the assumptions, the speculation, and the excuses that the mind can generate. That kind of worrisome thought is an abyss, and it is bottomless. It will not stop until you decide to stop it. It has been my experience that the tension we so often create around any single relationship is often one simple, heartfelt conversation away from being resolved. It might even be suggested that where we find tension in our lives dwells a conversation that is

begging to be had.”

~ ~ ~ ~

The second technique to cultivate awareness and understanding is very similar to the first in that it is very basic and fundamental in theory. Naturally, the practice can be an entirely different story.

Simply put: *Have the conversation.*

You know the one. It’s the one you’ve been putting off, the ‘unhad’ conversation that sits in your belly or your chest, or the back of your mind, keeping you awake at night. Yes, have *that* conversation. Have it today. Have it tonight after work. Pick up your cell phone and have it right now. Do it, and feel your load lighten, your shoulders relax, your head, heart, and stomach calm. They will.

The thought of doing this may make you weak in the knees, maybe even nauseous. The good news is that that’s how you know which conversation to have—it makes you feel like crap to consider doing it. If that’s the case for you, keep this in mind: There is definitely one thing that can make it worse...*not* having the conversation.

The difficulty of this technique lies in being willing to

be deeply honest, deeply humble, or, perhaps more accurately stated, *deeply vulnerable* in the presence of another, and then, to communicate from that place. But here's more good news: When we are willing to show our soft underside, our tender belly, to another person...it disarms everyone.

Think back to a moment in your life when somebody, anybody, came to you completely vulnerable, totally exposed, and completely honest. What was your reaction? Did you find that you simply couldn't turn away? Did you find yourself filled with the desire to be there, to understand? Couldn't you just tell that it was the real thing? That's what this technique is all about.

It's amazing what we can tolerate in terms of stress and pain. Most of the time we never know how intense it is, until we finally crack, have the conversation, and suddenly feel as if we've lost fifty pounds off of our back. That feeling is one you will not forget, and you will likely find yourself having the conversation sooner and sooner; and then, everything will begin to change.

### APPLICATION:

1. Decide who in your life you need to talk to; ask your

body, ask your pain.

2. Locate and connect with your sense of vulnerability and humility surrounding what you need to discuss.
3. Have the conversation from that place of humility and vulnerability, and do your best to stay there no matter what the other person's reaction is.

## **TECHNIQUE 3**

### Create and Extract the Value

---

*“When you find value, you automatically remove any possible reason to feel resentful because the value you found means that there was indeed an equal exchange... The value gives meaning and purpose to the crisis in question—period.”*

---

One evening a Modern-Day Buddha was having dinner with a friend. This was a very outgoing friend who ran several successful businesses, philanthropic organizations, and charities. He had dedicated his life to being of service to others, especially to homeless and orphaned children. Yet, on this night, something was bothering this man, and when the time was right the MDB inquired.

"I'm frustrated," the friend replied, "because, despite how amazing my life is, I still have some residual anger left inside of me. This anger, I know for a fact, is preventing me from opening up further to others and to life itself."

"Why are you angry?"

"When I was just a young boy," the friend began, "my father left my mother, and I didn't see him for almost

twenty years. We reconciled shortly before he passed away about twelve years ago now. But there is still some ancient resentment inside of me that jumps out of my chest every time I see a child in a similar situation."

A moment passed before the MDB asked quietly, "How do you feel about your work?"

"I love my work. It fuels my life. In fact, it is not work to me. It is my calling."

"What part of your many responsibilities do you love most?"

"Oh, there's no question, it's the children," he said with a grand smile. Realizing what he'd said, he suddenly froze, staring out of the dining room window at the first of the night's stars. "It's the children," he repeated quietly.

"Is it possible that your circumstances with your father, painful as they may have been and still may be, played an important role in your success?"

His friend sighed slowly as he continued to gaze out of the window. The MDB reached across the dinner table to touch his friend's hand. "Is it possible that the joys you've known were powered—at least in part—by the sorrows you've experienced?"

"I think so," his friend said, nodding subtly, "I'm sure of it."

"So he was your teacher, then?"

"Yes, he was."

"And some of his teachings were, and perhaps still are, difficult?"

"Yes...they are."

~ ~ ~ ~

The third technique to cultivate awareness and understanding is different than the first two in that it requires a bit of imagination and a strong desire to simply move beyond the pain of the past—recent or distant.

It's quite simple: *Create and extract the value...* from everything.

Now, it's not difficult to perceive value from an experience that we enjoyed or overtly desired. So, ultimately, what we're talking about here is all of the stuff that we don't enjoy. We're talking about the areas of our lives where we were hurt and are very likely still hurting. No matter how painful, no matter how justified you are in feeling hurt and resentful—find the value.

When giving a title to this technique, I almost called it, '*Remove the Rationale for Resentment*,' because that's

what we're talking about here. If you were able to detach from the scars that represent your oldest hurts, what you might find is nothing more than the areas of your life where you likely feel that you were not given a particular amount of value from another, where the exchange between you and the subject of your pain was not 'equal,' so to speak. Yes, that might be an overly simplistic way of looking at something like abuse, abandonment, or harassment; but again, try to—if only for a moment—remove your personal investment from the situation and temporarily look at it from outside of the current 'injured' version of yourself.

You see, it's a very simple formula: When you find value, you automatically remove any possible reason to feel resentful because the value you found means that there was indeed an equal exchange (of energy, time, love, knowledge, experience, or whatever you prefer to call it). The value gives meaning and purpose to the crisis in question—period. Essentially, you no longer see yourself as a victim, nor the perpetrator as a villain because you have found value in the experience no matter how painful it was. Make sense?

Now, you might be wondering how in the world can

you find value or meaning in a situation that is/was rude, unjust, corrupt, and perhaps even violent or abusive. It's simple: Make it up. *Look into your heart and use your imagination to intentionally decide what you have learned from the challenge. Locate specifically how that challenge has caused you to grow and evolve as a person.* Because it has, beyond a shadow of a doubt, it has. Look at where you are right now and ask yourself, "How did I get here? Could it have been any other way?"

It seems that our teachers come in every shape and form, wearing many masks, playing many roles. It is easy to lose sight of what they helped to inspire from us in the midst of our own historical pain. Yet, our pain makes this fact no less true: *Through our time spent with them, they helped to provide the contrasting experiences we needed to drive us forward toward this very spot, this very moment.* They play a pivotal role in our lives.

The primary difficulty with this technique is buying into what it ultimately suggests: All things have happened, are happening, and will happen in perfect order. This is, without doubt, a tall order for any of us to subscribe to.

But, think back to a time when you did this

reflexively without even thinking about it. Think back to a time when you were hurt, perhaps deeply, perhaps not, and you simply decided that what you learned was far more valuable than the hurt was painful. Now, apply that same idea to the garbage that keeps you pinned to the floor—out of reach of your dreams. Decide, just decide, that there was value there. Make it up if you have to. What you decide will be true. And when you do, everything will begin to change.

APPLICATION:

1. Notice when unresolved feelings of some past/current challenge flare up inside of you, causing you to feel like a victim.
2. In a show of naked honesty, create and extract the value from that challenge. What was it about that challenge that has caused you to grow and evolve?
3. From that point on, refer to that challenge as a blessing; continually remind yourself of its value.

## **TECHNIQUE 4**

### Be Selfish

---

*“Essentially, your selfishness is nothing more than your sense of purpose working to liberate itself from your routine of obligations. I say...set it free.”*

---

One beautiful Saturday morning, a Modern-Day Buddha and her sister were taking a walk around a small lake in town. Her sister was explaining how unhappy and resentful she'd been feeling lately.

“The people in my life are acting so selfishly lately. It's really beginning to get to me!”

“How so?” asked the MDB.

“Well, I feel like I never have a moment to myself.

“Do you have an example?”

“Tons!” her sister replied. “For example, yesterday I could not wait to be off work so that I could just go home and sit down by myself and relax for the night. Then, my friend called and asked if I would go out on the town with her. When I tried to say no, she laid some massive guilt trip on me about not spending time with her anymore. And, being as I have been keeping to myself a bit lately, I figured I'd do the right thing and go hang out with her.”

“And did you have a good time?” the MDB said with a curious smile.

“Absolutely not! As the night went on, I found myself becoming more and more resentful of my friend because she was getting what she wanted and I wasn’t. She picked up on my attitude almost immediately and we had an argument right in the middle of a bar. I guess I just really, really wanted my ‘me-time,’ you know?”

“Of course,” the MDB chuckled a bit.

“What’s so funny?” her sister asked.

“So, in doing ‘the right thing’ you actually created more drama for yourself than if you’d simply decided to be ‘selfish’ and tell her no?”

“Yikes. I guess so,” her sister shrugged, “how ironic.”

“Honestly, Sis, what I have found to be true for my life is that anything I do out of a sense of obligation has a much lower probability of mutual benefit because that very same obligation—regardless of what it is—represents an experience that is the opposite of the one that I feel drawn to have in that moment. Now, I am certainly not suggesting to you that you never again do a friend a favor. I’m only suggesting that there’s absolutely nothing wrong with filling your own cup before you try

to fill someone else's.”

~ ~ ~ ~

The fourth technique to cultivate awareness and understanding may very likely go against the grain of what our society and many of its moral ambassadors have taught us since the beginning.

It is a simple mandate: *Be selfish.*

Yes, very simple. But, again, not necessarily easy, as the word itself—selfish—has an automated, historically-negative context attached to it. We've been taught that 'good' people are not selfish. But, maybe there's more to it than that. Think about this—really think about it. Is it even possible for any of us to be selfless servants in the lives of others if we ourselves do not feel whole or fulfilled?

As the MDB mentions in the anecdote above, in this context, our obligations represent the things we feel we *must* do in spite of everything we truly want to do. And so, the question surfaces: If you are continually bound and take action through this sense of obligation, using it as a reason to deny your own fundamental sense of desire, what result can you realistically expect other than frustration and resentment?

I am proposing that your sense of selfishness is very important in order to maintain your own sense of fulfillment and worthiness. It is through your selfishness that you act to give life to your sense of purpose—to your calling.

Think of it this way: Your ability to be a happy, productive creator out in the world is directly linked with the priority that you make of yourself. Essentially, your selfishness is nothing more than your sense of purpose working to liberate itself from your routine of obligations. I say...set it free.

From this perspective, your own unique form of selfishness could quite literally look like anything. It may or may not mean reaching out to others; it may or may not mean focusing your energy solely on yourself. In the moment, maybe it simply means taking a nap, or watching a movie, or doing absolutely *nothing at all*. None of it is wrong; all of it is perfect. Regardless, if you've been denying yourself even these selfish little moments, your life will let you know via the degree of resentment or hostility you happen to feel on a regular basis.

The difficulty with this technique is the guilt that may

be felt when we finally decide to be selfish. You might be wondering how in the world you can justify taking some selfish ‘you-time’ with so many responsibilities at work, with a spouse and kids, with your friends or peer groups, or whatever it may be. Well, again, it’s simple, but not necessarily easy: Your selfishness will, by default, make you a more complete boss, a more complete coworker, a more complete parent, a more complete spouse, a more complete friend, a more complete group leader—whatever. Why? Because you yourself will feel more complete as a whole, and everything you do will come from that place.

Think back to a time when you really poured your heart and soul into something that truly inspired you. How liberating was that for you? That’s all that selfishness means: *Giving yourself the time to sort out what makes you come alive, and then, doing it.* (We’ll discuss what makes you come alive in Technique 5.)

What it boils down to is that you are truly the one that matters most here. Your happiness—which I would loosely define as: *The degree to which you are able to perpetually express your sense of purpose without restriction or obligation*—is intimately linked with your

ability to be selfish. It is your ability to be selfish that allows you to choose to participate in the kinds of experiences that overflow your cup so that you can then serve others out of your own innate desire—rather than out of that confining sense of obligation. And when that happens, everything begins to change.

APPLICATION:

1. Make note the next time you're feeling resentful over a decision you made.
2. Be honest and ask yourself if it might be possible that you're feeling this way, not because of the actions of someone else, but because you simply did not express yourself completely in the moment.
3. If so, decide what action would better serve you, explain if necessary, and go be selfish.

## **TECHNIQUE 5**

### Do Your Art

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*“Your art is what takes away your fear of not having or being enough in the world.”*

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Just before dusk, a Modern-Day Buddha was playing his guitar on the beach outside his home while watching the sun set. It was a beautiful evening on the Pacific coast, and there was a young man taking a casual stroll down the beach toward him. As the young man was about to pass behind, he stopped and watched in wonder at this man, at least two decades his elder, who was so obviously happy just to be sitting there playing his guitar. After a moment, he decided that he had to know his secret.

“Excuse me sir,” the young man said as he strolled curiously around to where the MDB could see him. “I’m sorry to bother you, but I just had to talk to you.”

“It’s no bother at all. What can I do for you?”

“Well, this is going to sound so random, but I was watching and listening to you as I was walking up the beach, and you just seem so happy, so amazingly content with your world, so much so that I actually interrupted you, a total stranger, to bring it up!”

“Well thank you, young man. I guess that sounds about right.”

“So how do you do it? I mean, I’m only twenty-three, I just graduated from college. I’m supposed to be moving into the prime of my life, and yet I already feel myself being pulled in a thousand directions, and I’m unsure if any of them are leading to the happy, joyful place you are clearly in right now.”

“Well, my boy, to be honest and fair, things weren’t always as they are now,” the MDB said with a small grin. “I was very much at my wit’s end not so long ago, much like you’ve described.”

“So what made the difference?”

“Simple,” he said with a crisp, confident tone, “I found my art.”

“Your art? What does that mean?”

“Well, once I’d finally had enough of the hustle and bustle of my obligations, I decided to start putting time aside, on a regular basis, to do the things that I absolutely loved, the things that filled me up inside. As time went on, lo and behold, opportunities began to surface which made it possible for me to transition into doing my art as often as I pleased.”

“That’s it?” the young man spat out, slightly dazed and bedazzled.

“That’s it. Now, I’m not going to make it sound as if it all came together without any struggle. Because, without a doubt, it took a leap of faith for me to trust that doing only what I love would provide for me. But, it has, and then some.”

“So how can I find my art?”

“The formula is no different for you than it was for me. Begin today, right this moment, to intentionally do the things you love on a regular basis. Give yourself this gift, and over time your art will surface. It must.”

“Why ‘must’ it?”

“Because it is why you are.”

~ ~ ~ ~

The fifth technique to cultivate awareness and understanding goes hand-in-hand with your ability to be selfish. This technique is about taking action for the sole intention of fulfilling your own unique sense of purpose.

The action is simple: *Do your art.*

I know what you may be thinking: “*But I am not an artist!*” And I have a response to that—yes, you are. We all are.

‘Artist’ is just another word for ‘creator,’ and we are all creators. Consider that the life you are living consists of a constant stream of creation due to the choices you make and the consequences which you experience. The choice to speak or not speak, do or not do, work or not work, participate or not participate, etc., these are all acts of creation because they are all followed by some form of consequence—a result. Therefore, as life is creation and creation is art, everyone is an artist because life *is* art.

You need not be a painter or a musician, a poet or a novelist. These are just a few of the conventional ideas of what an artist might look like. You need only place your attention onto *what* and *how* you enjoy creating the most.

There are no limitations to what art can mean—none whatsoever. For example, I recently met a woman who is an artist in the form of a saleswoman. She described her journey through the world of selling as more or less her spiritual mechanism; it was crucial to her sense of fulfillment. She is a true artist—in sales no less!

‘Art’ is just another term for ‘purpose.’ We all have something that beckons us onward. We all have a reason, or series of reasons, for being here and participating in the life process. It makes sense then, that our lives

become infinitely more complicated and stressful (perhaps even downright hostile), when we spend days, weeks, months, years, and lifetimes ‘switched-off’ to our sense of purpose. We might even begin to notice that our vices begin to take hold of us as a basic coping mechanism. We can become addicted to our vices because they distract our attention away from the pain and frustration we feel by denying the artist within. Inevitably, however, the pain overcomes us, and we *must* consider our art.

As mentioned in Technique 4, once your sense of selfishness has liberated itself, the next step is discovering and doing your art. So, how do you know what your art is? How do you know when you’re ‘doing’ it? It’s simple really...

- Your art is what makes you come alive inside; it literally *nourishes* your body and soul as you are doing it!
- Your art can make you jump out of bed in the morning!
- Your art is what you find yourself daydreaming about when you are doing other things that are, well, *not*

your art!

- Your art is what you yearn to share with other people!
- Your art is what seems to make time stand still while you're doing it!
- Your art is everything you would do if you were never concerned with money!
- Simply stated, your art is what takes away your fear of not having or being enough in this world.

Does your art have to be what you are doing full-time? Of course not. If you currently have any hobbies that you are fairly passionate about, you probably already know what your art is. In fact, that's the point; it doesn't *have* to be anything in particular. Your art literally represents the antithesis of your obligations, lightening your load rather than adding to it.

The difficult thing with this technique is the inevitable leap taken if and when you really decide to dive fully into your art. This is truly a leap of faith because, in doing so, you are quite literally placing your faith in the idea that what you love will provide you with everything you need to continue. But, if and when you do this, everything will begin to change.

APPLICATION:

1. Note the next time you participate in an activity that, in all honesty, feels like nothing more than a distraction or a vice.
2. Ask yourself: If money (and all of the other obligations I have), were not an issue, would I still be doing this? What would I then feel free to do instead?
3. Begin to selfishly schedule regular increments of time into your day to do what you LOVE, to do your art.

## **TECHNIQUE 6**

### **Feed Your Body-Vehicle**

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*“The point is to simply begin to understand that you are a holistic being, living a holistic life – a life that is here to support you rather than obligate you. Once you begin to understand this, over time, the idea of doing a thing like ‘intentionally eating for value’ shifts from the obligatory to the innate...”*

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Sitting in the company cafeteria one afternoon a Modern-Day Buddha was enjoying a wholesome lunch that she had prepared at home as she always did. She was eventually joined by a coworker who, in a rush, had gotten take-out from a place down the street. Noticing the MDB’s home-packed lunch the coworker inquired.

“I don’t know how you find the time to make that stuff!” she said out of breath.

“Oh, I didn’t always. At some point in time, I guess it just became important enough.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, it was my experience that, the more and more I ate out of convenience, the more I began to notice that the convenience was extremely short lived. What I gained on the front-end was exponentially lost on the back-end.”

“How so?”

“Basically what it boiled down to was that I was saving a bit of time in the morning by not having to prepare my lunch—sure. But, the consequences of eating less wholesome foods were spilling over into the remainder of my day. Ironically, those few minutes that I was gaining in the morning were costing me hours later on due to a general decrease in my energy, stamina, and overall mood. I simply could not stay as focused or productive whether it was at work, at home, whatever.”

“So what tipped you off that you should make a change with your nutrition of all things?” asked the coworker.

“Well, I guess I simply decided to be honest with myself. I had to first decide what it was that I wanted for my life. And, what I eventually decided was that I wanted to create and extract as much value as I could. I wanted to feel empowered, energized, and fully responsible for my day-to-day experience. All in all, I realized that I wanted a more wholesome life. Following that decision, it occurred to me to fuel my body-vehicle in more of a wholesome manner—in a manner that more closely mimicked the life that I decided I wanted.”

“OK, but what about tastes, or cravings, or the simple pleasure of eating whatever you want?” her coworker interjected. “Don’t you miss a bit of junk food here and there?”

“That’s a question I hear all the time,” the MDB chuckled. “From my experience, my cravings only surface when I have not made value the priority, when wholeness is not present. It is truly not a matter of ‘missing’ or ‘craving.’ It is a matter of choosing the value, feeling the freedom it offers, and then following that. The wonderful thing is that, in light of this freedom, there becomes nothing to crave.”

~ ~ ~ ~

The sixth technique to cultivate awareness and understanding may surprise you. It is one that asks you to intentionally acknowledge your body as valuable.

There’s no simpler technique than this: *Feed your body-vehicle.*

This is an amazingly effective technique. Ironically, the body and its needs can easily become a forgotten player in the quest to a fulfilling life experience. We are holistic beings. Every element of life—physical to nonphysical—plays a role in one’s growing ability to live

in a free and inspired manner.

Simply consider that the experiences you have with your physical body can and do clearly trigger nonphysical thoughts and emotions. The opposite is also true as your nonphysical thoughts and emotions also have a direct effect on your physicality which, often times, you can feel. The one involves the other in all moments. It seems as though there is no real separation between the two as there is no clear, tangible way to distinguish them from one another.

This implies that there is great value in acknowledging the body-vehicle. For example, it is not a stretch to think back to the last time you were overly hungry or depleted. How difficult was it to stay focused on whatever it was that you were doing? How did it affect the quality of your state of mind? How about your level of patience and compassion? How about your emotions?

To be completely transparent with you, this has been one of the most profound techniques that I have used—and continue to use, for this simple reason: *When my body's needs are met, I am then free to focus all of my attention on whatever is currently in front of me. I am*

*free to be present. I am free to be an artist.*

Just as you are learning to be more selectively selfish with your time and your art, the same applies with your body. Just as you are learning to invest your time and energy into experiences that offer you the highest degree of value, the same is true for your body. There are foods which have more value to offer than others. It's just that simple.

In my years as a certified nutrition and exercise professional, I discovered, as you may have, that there are many theories and strategies on the topic of nutrition. Let me assure you now that this short, little book will not even attempt to join them.

However, I will propose this: You and your physical being represent a dynamic, living wholeness. In understanding this, does it not make sense to mimic this wholeness in our food choices? To relate this back to the idea of value; the more living, whole, and unprocessed a food is, the greater the total amount of value there is available for your body to extract. There will be a greater potential for your body to function with a high level of energy, free of disease and pain. It really is that simple.

For years now, I've been consuming a diet rich in as

many unprocessed, unrefined, raw, whole foods as I possibly can. The increase that I have experienced in my overall wellbeing is truly beyond my capacity to fully describe.

A challenge with this technique can sometimes be the fear or sense of repression you might feel at the possibility of not being able to enjoy the foods you've come to love. Yet, I can assure you, that is not the agenda here. The point is to simply begin to understand that you are a holistic being, living a holistic life—a life that is here to support you rather than obligate you. Once you begin to understand this, over time, the idea of doing a thing like 'intentionally eating for value' shifts from the obligatory to the innate, and everything begins to change.

### APPLICATION:

1. For the next couple of days, after eating, monitor how you are affected physically, mentally, and emotionally; notice 'who' you become. If you tend to skip meals, try eating instead, and monitor as mentioned.
2. If you tend to suffer after eating or skipping meals, and your energy generally becomes erratic or

lethargic, consider choosing foods with greater overall value, foods that are generally unprocessed, whole, organic, and raw.

3. Remember: Through your eating, you are simply creating yet another avenue to extract more value from your life.

## **TECHNIQUE 7**

### Move Your Body-Vehicle

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*“...there is no better friend or ally in life than a body that is free and capable to carry one to all the places she needs to go, and perform all the tasks he asks it to perform on-the-spot without the fear or hesitation of pain and disease.”*

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After class one morning, a Modern-Day Buddha was coming out of a yoga studio when she heard a voice call out from behind her.

“I’ve got to know what motivates you!”

The MDB turned around to see one of the newer members of the studio walking toward her.

Smiling she continued, “I’m sorry, I don’t mean to trouble you, but I overheard you telling one of the other new members that you come to class nearly every day; and if you can’t make it, you exercise at home. I’ve just got to know what your secret is!”

“Oh, it’s no trouble at all. But I should start by telling you that my answer to your question is not a typical one.”

“Great! Because I feel like I’ve heard it all before!” the stranger replied.

“Well, to be honest with you, first and foremost, I

only do what is fun for me. That’s probably the biggest ‘secret’ to my consistency. More importantly, I’ve noticed that when I use my body regularly, all of its parts remain functional and free. Now, by no coincidence, the more free I feel physically, the more free I feel in my heart and mind, and the freer I feel in life in general.”

“Kind of like maintaining your car so that it can keep offering you the freedom to travel wherever you need to go?” the stranger interrupted enthusiastically.

“Exactly like that,” the MDB smiled and nodded.

“Wow. I guess I never looked at it that way.”

“Neither did I until not so long ago. Now, as far as I am concerned, there is no better friend or ally in life than a body that is free and capable to carry one to all the places she needs to go, and perform all the tasks he asks it to perform on-the-spot without the fear or hesitation of pain and disease. In fact—and I realize that this may seem like an exaggeration—I feel as though, through the power of nothing more than my own body, I can travel to wherever I want no matter how far. That’s my perception of this body of mine. And let me tell you, my dear...that’s freedom.”

~ ~ ~ ~

The seventh technique to cultivate awareness and understanding, once again, asks that you to give a nod to your physicality. It asks that you use your body, that you put it into motion.

The terms are simple: *Move your body-vehicle* and you will feel better—guaranteed.

My doctor once told me that, generally speaking, the feeling of anxiety comes from nutrients asking to be utilized as fuel (i.e. go get some exercise!). He also explained that everyone is a bit different in this capacity. Some will do better with more activity, and some will do better with less. He determined that I would feel best with a fair amount. I was not surprised by this information as I have been exercising regularly since the fourth grade.

There really is no mystery behind the concept. Simply take a look at your body. You have your brain and your vital organ region that are both hooked up to these four giant levers—your arms and legs! What does this suggest? Your body was quite literally **built for movement!** That said, it's probably no surprise that the movement you make serves many other purposes that are every bit as vital as burning calories. Movement also helps to keep scum from growing on the pond, so to

speaking, by pumping all of the different fluids throughout your body so that energy can be generated, and the garbage can be removed. This, in turn, keeps the body limber, strong, and vital.

Think about that for a second.

Would you agree that, generally speaking, the more free and unencumbered you feel to do what you love with your life—the happier you become? Would you also agree that, as discussed in the previous technique, the physical and non-physical aspects of yourself intimately and directly affect one another? Are you seeing the relationship here? Is it a stretch to then suggest that when you move your body regularly—keeping it free and unencumbered—you are more likely to lead a more free and inspired life?

So what qualifies as exercise? What we are talking about here is any kind of movement that: 1) is something you find fun, and; 2) challenges you to a certain degree though you still enjoy doing it.

What this means is that not everyone needs to go and pump iron, or sweat it out in the gym (unless you love doing that, of course; I know I certainly do!). It simply means to move your body in ways that support your sense

of purpose, in ways that encourage you to feel more alive. Play sports, take the stairs, do yoga, walk around the park, sing your heart out, plant a garden, go for a hike, do some deep breathing, or park at the far end of the lot.

At my last job, I was required to sit at a computer for up to 11 hours a day. So, during our two breaks, a friend and I would walk a total of nearly two miles almost every day. Sometimes we would even toss a football back-and-forth as we walked our laps around the parking lot.

The point is to just use your body. Have fun with it. After all, that's what it was designed and built for! If you create the time to regularly love your body in this way, it will love you back; and then, everything will begin to change.

### APPLICATION:

1. For the next couple of days, make a note of how you generally feel and function during the longer periods of physical inactivity that occur within your daily/weekly routine. How is your energy and zest for your day during these periods?
2. Experiment with some form of movement. Go for a quick walk, do a few stretches, or toss a ball around

in the parking lot at work (away from the cars, of course).

3. If you notice an improvement in your general sense of energy and focus, understand that this is your body helping you. Consider selfishly scheduling regular periods of movement into your daily/weekly schedule. (*Pencil in your playtime!*)

## **TECHNIQUE 8**

### Grab a Piece of Nature

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*“Maybe this means sitting beside a trickling stream, listening to the water as it churns and bubbles, watching it flow over and around the rocks unimpeded and always willing to compromise and change direction at a moment’s notice.”*

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One afternoon, a Modern-Day Buddha was taking a hike with his young niece who was visiting from the city. He had moved out to the countryside only a year ago, and this was their first visit in some time.

“We all miss you,” she said holding her uncle’s hand. “How come you moved out here?”

After thinking for a minute or two, he began, “My dear, at some point in time I discovered that I had fallen under the assumption that my life was only about the day-to-day tasks and routines that I’d placed around myself. All of the hustle and bustle had become so real that I’d forgotten about the rest of my life, the rest of the world in fact. I’d forgotten to simply stop and look around, and notice all of the subtly amazing processes of life that were happening right in front of me constantly.”

“Like what?” the little girl asked with a serious look.

Her uncle stared off toward the horizon as he began, “I’d forgotten how to see the river as I drove past it every day on my way to work. I’d forgotten how to see the stars at night. I’d forgotten how to take pleasure in the smile and fortune of friends and loved ones. And more than that, I’d forgotten that I’d forgotten. Does that make sense?”

“I think it does.” She paused and thought for a moment. “But how did you remember that you’d forgotten?”

“Great question!” the MDB smiled. “Years ago, I went to visit a friend of mine who lived on a farm far out in the countryside, not unlike this place. One afternoon I took a long walk out onto his land. Eventually, I laid down in the middle of a hayfield that seemed to go on forever. I remember that it was so quiet that I began hearing things I’d never heard before. I began to remember parts of myself. I began to recall what it was that I truly valued about my life. I remember the slight breeze across my face and the way the air smelled as the clouds shape-shifted gracefully above me. In that moment, it dawned on me that life in that place was so simple because it was *allowed* to be that way, and no

matter how complicated my life was, the proof that it could be otherwise was right there in that field. It startled me at first. It was almost as if there were large beautiful parts of life that had been hiding around a corner, and they suddenly jumped out and said boo! Well, needless to say, things would never quite be the same for me ever again.”

His little niece stopped and looked up. “So the land helps you feel happy, Uncle?”

“It sure does sweetheart.”

“Then I’m glad you’re here.”

~ ~ ~ ~

The eighth technique to cultivate awareness and understanding encourages you to reconnect with the natural world from whence you came.

There is nothing simpler or more primal: *Grab a piece of nature.*

She is one of our greatest teachers, Mother Nature. If you take the time to watch her, she will give you a demonstration of life flowing without ambition, without taking anything personally. She simply responds to her circumstances and keeps moving to no end. There is more to learn from her than we could possibly imagine.

If you watch, she will teach you that all things are equal in value. Maybe this means taking a walk in the park, watching the birds and listening to their song—really listening to the dialog and realizing that there’s an entire community there! There are families, going about their days, just like you.

She will teach you about the full extent of your responsibility. Maybe this means watching the squirrel on the boulevard outside of your house as it performs all of the tasks squirrels do, rain or shine, with incredible enthusiasm and zest, and without complaint or self-pity.

She will teach you humility. Maybe this means gazing at a tall tree in wonderment, imagining what it could share with you about the events it has witnessed and the wisdom it has gained.

She will teach you to let go. Maybe this means sitting beside a trickling stream, listening to the water as it churns and bubbles, watching it flow over and around the rocks unimpeded and always willing to compromise and change direction at a moment’s notice.

She will teach you acceptance. Perhaps this simply means leaning forward in your chair to stare at that small piece of blue sky just outside of your office window,

watching the soft clouds shifting freely, changing their shape and appearance, changing what they are without hesitation or resistance, without fear of whatever shape they must take next.

Use whatever you have available to you, a tree, a patch of lawn, a piece of sky. It is there to show you what life can be for you, to inspire you through its ever-flowing simplicity. It is there to demonstrate what harmony can look like and how effortless life can be. And if you watch, really watch, everything will begin to change.

### APPLICATION:

1. Step outside, or gaze out of your window and locate a piece of the natural world—no matter how small or seemingly insignificant.
2. Spend a moment alone with it. Become its student.
3. Notice the infinite relationships and how freely everything moves. Notice how one tiny thing can affect everything else, especially you.

## **TECHNIQUE 9**

### Find Silence

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*“This is the safest place you can be because nothing that has happened in the past matters in the silence, nor does anything that ‘must’ happen in the future. In that silent place, the only thing that matters is that you are there.”*

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There was once a Modern-Day Buddha who taught as a college professor. She could be spotted regularly around midday, seated alone on the same campus bench. A student of hers noticed this week after week. One day, that student decided to approach her teacher.

“So...are you meditating?” she asked.

The MDB turned to greet her visitor. “Oh, well, hello there. I suppose you could call it that; but to be honest, it’s really nothing more than silence on purpose.”

“That sounds interesting. On purpose for what?”

“Well, as I’m sure you’ve experienced, life can get very busy. For me, when things get too loud for too long, I can feel myself adapting in ways to *cope* rather than to *thrive*. When that happens, I notice that I quite naturally become more defensive, more short-sighted, and far more easily distracted away from the sense of purpose and meaning in my life. Often, this has happened without me

even being aware of it, requiring some sort of crisis to coerce me back into paying attention.”

“Like a fight with someone you care about?”

“Exactly.”

“Funny, that happened to me yesterday. I got so fed up with classes, studying, papers, midterms, and working a job on top of it all, that I snapped at my mom on the phone.” She took a deep breath, “So how does sitting on this bench help with all of that?”

“It’s pretty simple, actually. My quiet time allows all of the noise to fade all on its own leaving me better able to relocate the wholesome, centered parts of my life, the parts that encourage me to live my life rather than merely survive it.”

~ ~ ~ ~

The ninth technique to cultivate awareness and understanding recommends that we intentionally find some quiet time for ourselves.

It is a simple suggestion: *Find silence.*

Pure, uninterrupted silence can be very calming, very rejuvenating. It can help you to find your center. In fact, I tend to believe that finding our own unique version of silence is foundational to our personal freedom and peace

of mind. Yet, ironically, there is no agenda behind this technique other than to simply *be in the silence*, to surround yourself in it.

Yes, this technique can certainly be challenged by kids, jobs, living arrangements, and an entire host of other factors. Close your windows and your doors if you must. Grab a piece of nature. Sit down and be still with nothing more than the sound of your own breath to accompany you.

If your immediate environment is simply not compatible for this silence, then you may have to create it for yourself. Let your body be your guide. Meaning: Be still. Close your eyes. Breathe. If you can be still enough, you will find your silence. Anywhere that you call upon it, there it is.

This is the safest place you can be because nothing that has happened in the past matters in the silence, nor does anything that ‘must’ happen in the future. In that silent place, the only thing that matters is that you are there.

Listen to the silence, really listen. Let it penetrate you, saturating every part of you. Through osmosis the noise and chaos will begin to leave your body, and you

will begin to relax. Your body and mind will begin to lighten. Perspective will return, and you will recognize yourself again. Only, something will be different. Because you have given yourself this space and time to see both sides of the coin, you will now have a greater sense of vision and awareness. You will have a greater ability so see the noise coming from a distance, and then allow it to become silent once more. But, perhaps most importantly, you will have a greater ability to relate to others and what they are going through, especially when they try to attack you with their noise.

Every single one of these techniques has the potential to inspire this kind of wholesome silence, to lead you to it. So don't be surprised if and when you find these moments of silence occurring more frequently as time goes on. For, as you do, you will also likely notice that everything is beginning to change.

#### APPLICATION:

1. Notice the next time that the noise and activity around you has you wishing that you could be alone.
2. Find the quietest space available. (I've used this technique in restroom stalls at work—no joke.) If

there is no quiet place for you to go, simply close your eyes and be as still as possible.

3. Listen to the silence. Take relaxing breaths. Remain there for as long as you can.

## **TECHNIQUE 10**

### Remember the One Reason for Everything

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*“What this reason proves, over and over again, is that the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ are equal in value because the contrast which they provide creates the curiosity and the motivation for each of us to discover what lies beyond the lives we’ve built to this point.”*

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A Modern-Day Buddha once applied for a promotion within his company. He was well qualified for this promotion in both years of experience and skill level. Many of his friends and coworkers thought he was a lock. But when the decision was made, he was turned down. After a day or two, one of his coworkers approached him after work while walking to his car.

“I have to tell you,” he began, “you have taken this so much better than I could have. I mean, if it were me, I’m not sure I could’ve come back to work.”

The MDB smiled. “Well, don’t be too impressed. I’ve learned the hard way to remind myself that I simply don’t have control over everything; and just because an experience might be disappointing, it in no way, shape, or form means that I have wasted any time or failed in some capacity.”

“So what do you think it means?”

The MDB paused and thought for a bit. “That I do not yet fully understand or appreciate the circumstances at hand...and that’s okay.”

His coworker interjected, “Wow. Well, that’s all well and good, but does that mean you just sit back and put up with all of the garbage and never do anything about the circumstances you’re in, no matter how miserable they are?”

“No, no, of course not,” the MDB chuckled and smiled again. “Please don’t misunderstand, I am far from immune to being upset or feeling hurt or rejected. I absolutely wanted that promotion. That said, just consider it for a moment. If you somehow understood—fully—that everything that happened, even the most miserable experiences, occurred in order to guide you to the next best version of yourself—if you *really* knew that—do you think that you would still see those ‘negative’ experiences in the same light? Do you think that you would still be fixated on the garbage? To put it another way, did I really get shorted by getting passed up for that promotion? Or is there simply a different opportunity waiting for me?”

~ ~ ~ ~

The tenth and final technique to cultivate awareness and understanding may sound a bit esoteric; but, I can assure you that it is not. Its intention is only to revive a faith in the fundamental wisdom that you have inside of you, the wisdom we all have.

Simply stated: *Remember the one reason for everything.*

Without a doubt, it is so easy to lose sight of the bigger picture amidst the countless details of modern-day life. Distracted by our bills, our jobs, and our relationships it is easy to forget the big reason, the big ‘why’ of our existence.

Yes, I am proposing that there is one reason for everything. There is one almighty reason for the ups and the downs, the beauty and the ugliness, the success and the failure, the pleasure and the pain. The kicker is that it’s not a secret—you’ve known or suspected it all along:

***Everything happens in order to foster your own unique growth and evolution as a member of the family of life.***

This is huge news because it is this reason and this

reason alone that grants you permission to *find out*, and *be*, just exactly who you are—no matter what that translates into!

This reason and this reason alone makes room for absolutely every possibility you could ever imagine for your life!

This reason and this reason alone means that every experience you've had, as well as every experience you will have, is entirely perfect beyond any measurable capacity!

This reason and this reason alone makes the possibility of failure obsolete because it gives great value to every experience!

Think about it, you are here to learn. You are also here to teach. You are here to observe. You are also here to take action. And all of it, absolutely all of it, happens in order to foster your own, unique growth and evolution as a member of the family of life. What this reason proves, over and over again, is that the 'good' and the 'bad' are equal in value because the contrast which they provide creates the curiosity and the motivation for each of us to discover what lies beyond the lives we've built to this point.

What you might discover along the way is that you are a part of something very big. You may begin to understand that being a member of the family of life means that everyone around you is part of your process, no matter what role they play. You may begin to understand that everyone and every experience is simultaneously your student and your teacher. Simply put, we are all in this together. We are a family. When this notion of family begins to cross your mind, you will never see anything the same again, and everything will begin to change.

APPLICATION:

1. The next time that you get disappointed or hurt, remind yourself of the one reason for everything; discover your forgiveness.
2. The next time that you're feeling indifferent or confused, remind yourself of the one reason for everything; discover your acceptance.
3. The next time that you get exactly what you want, remind yourself of the one reason for everything; discover your humility.

# **GONGLUSION**

## Take a Deep Breath and Smile

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*“...whether it is one of the ten techniques laid out here, or one of your own, choosing a technique is the whole point. The choice itself is a demonstration to your life that you now intend to inspire and empower yourself. It is a way of confirming that you are no longer a victim of any circumstance because you have responded in an intentional, wholesome manner to create your own experience.”*

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Your life is your guide. It always has been. It will tell you which technique(s) to employ. For example: In a foul mood and just happen to notice that you're also hungry? *Feed your body-vehicle.* Your spouse just snapped at you for no logical reason? *Pause.* Uncomfortable with the assignment your supervisor gave you at work? *Have the conversation.*

Eventually, you may notice that one tends to flow into the other. Once you *pause*, you may find it useful to *have the conversation* later on; which, in turn, allows you to *create and extract the value* from the situation. Or, you might notice that the more you are able to *be selfish*, the more time you have to *do your art*, not to mention *move your body-vehicle!* And, let's be honest here, while you

*grab a piece of nature, you'll likely find silence; and, in doing so, subtly remember the one reason for everything.*

You'll probably even come up with a few techniques of your own (if you haven't already). And let's face it, whether it is one of the ten techniques laid out here, or one of your own, choosing a technique is the whole point. The choice itself is a demonstration to your life that you now intend to inspire and empower yourself. It is a way of confirming that you are no longer a victim of any circumstance because you have responded in an intentional, wholesome manner to create your own experience.

The picture that I ultimately want to paint here is this: As ironic as this may sound, these techniques need not become another obligation to an already busy life. They are not necessarily meant to produce a better version of you that eventually comes to fruition at some mysterious time and place out in the future. They are simply but a few different ways of interacting with this moment—right now. And, in my opinion, this is profoundly important because there is absolutely nothing wrong with the state of life—right now. There are, however, options other than the current reality that we can consider. There

are infinite other directions that we can travel if we so choose.

For me, this means making the choices that cultivate my sense of sovereignty as well as cultivating the understanding that I am not wrong in the moments that I choose to forfeit that sovereignty. Because, more than anything, it means moving toward an ever-maturing ability to see the truth about myself, nothing more, and nothing less. And, between you and me, we are all on this path—whether we know it or not.

So, *take a deep breath and smile...* and know it.

## **AN INVITATION**

Thank you for giving so much of your time and energy to this little book. I am hoping that you have found something of real value in these pages. I would like to take one more opportunity to invite you to visit me at: [www.TheModernDayBuddha.com](http://www.TheModernDayBuddha.com). By clicking on ‘Contact Noah’ you will be able to ask questions, offer any general feedback regarding your experiences with these techniques; and, if you feel compelled, you will also be able to offer your own “**11<sup>th</sup> Technique,**” an original technique that came straight from your life that you wish to share with others.

Finally, on the following page is *A Pledge*. This little document is not only a reminder that you are responsible for the entirety of your life, but also that it’s perfectly OK when you forget! If inspired, I invite you to copy, print or tear it out, sign it, date it, and place it wherever it suites you best. Above all, it is my hope that it reminds you that right now, in this moment...all is as it should be.

## A PLEDGE



*From this moment forward, in my own unique way, I intend to take full responsibility for the manner in which my life unfolds; which simply means that:*

- *I will do my best to notice that I—and I alone—choose to navigate my life exactly as it unfolds before me in every moment.*
- *I will do my best to notice when I blame and criticize others for the way I choose to navigate my own life.*
- *I will do my best to notice when I blame and criticize myself for the way I choose to navigate my own life.*

*I make this commitment not to obligate myself into becoming an idealized or fictitiously altruistic version of me, but simply in order to become more aware of who I really am, and to flower and cultivate my sense of sovereignty and personal freedom—whatever that might look like. In making this commitment, I am recognizing that every experience in my life has value, and is truly what I make of it.*

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*(Signature)*

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*(Date)*



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**



**Noah James Hittner** writes with naked honesty about the process of human consciousness and the quest for personal freedom. After years of continuing self-observation into his own process of choice and consequence, Noah now approaches his written work, as well as his life, with self-honesty as his first intention and his top priority. It is with this intention in mind that he aims to connect with the lives of as many people as possible in an inspiring and empowering way.

Born in Minnesota and raised in Wisconsin near a small town on the Mississippi River, Noah has had several professions in health and fitness, landscaping, insurance, and others. Currently, he resides back home in Wisconsin where he makes music, writes, and travels often.

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## **NOAH'S BOOKS**

In recognizing that not everyone has money available for luxuries such as books, all of my books are available as **free PDF downloads**. For those who can afford payment, I offer both **Hardcopy and E-Book versions for purchase**. All versions of each of my books can be found at: [www.NoahJamesHittner.com](http://www.NoahJamesHittner.com). From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for your interest in my work.

### **Other books by Noah James Hittner:**

- *Beyond Victim and Villain—33 discussions about life to become reacquainted with our vulnerability and reveal our oneness* ([www.BeyondVictimandVillain.com](http://www.BeyondVictimandVillain.com))
- *Something to Give Back—The Chronology of Awakening* ([www.SomethingtoGiveBack.com](http://www.SomethingtoGiveBack.com))

## "...disarming."

-Topher M

**The Modern-Day Buddha** is a handy reference guide which offers ten short and impactful techniques that anyone can use on-the-spot to provide a quick, wholesome, and inspiring way to travel through their day-to-day life experience.

### A few highlights from **The Modern-Day Buddha**:

- Criticism and intimidation are never truly about the subject at which they are aimed. They are nothing more than the expression of sincere, internal conflict. (Technique 1: Pause)
- When you find value, [within pain or crisis] you automatically remove any possible reason to feel resentful because the value you found means that there was indeed an equal exchange...The value gives meaning and purpose to the crisis in question—period. (Technique 3: Create and Extract the Value)
- Just as you are learning to invest your time and energy into experiences that offer you the highest degree of value, the same is true for your body. There are foods which have more value to offer than others. It's just that simple. (Technique 6: Feed Your Body-Vehicle)



**Noah James Hittner** writes with naked honesty about the process of human consciousness and the quest for personal freedom. He approaches his written work, as well as his life, with self-honesty as his first intention and his top priority. It is with this intention in mind that he aims to connect with the lives of as many people as possible in an inspiring and empowering way.

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