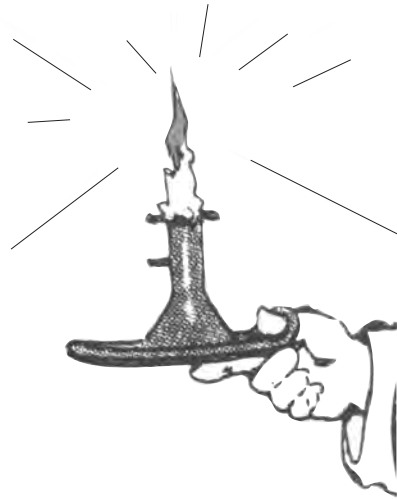


Core Stories

*Wise Tales, True Challenges, and
Inspiring Biographies from Around the World*



Frank Marrero, M.A.T.



Once upon a time stories carried great power. Once upon a time, stories helped transform us all, and they served our children with sober depth and real meaning. Then stories suffered the fate of millennial familiarity and fell into common superficiality.

Core Stories rediscovers and re-presents wise tales from around the world that reveal universal values: Learning to Focus, True Happiness, Self-Knowing, the Arts of Breath and Feeling, and the Joy of Community.

Core Stories recovers what stories are supposed to be: captivating, challenging, fun, and wise; these stories are literally inviting, and serve a perfect pattern for a truly rich life.

Imagine a set of sage stories that children will enjoy and remember. Look no further. **Core** is never far away.

Core Stories is the companion volume for kids and parents to the teacher's curriculum *Big Philosophy for Little Kids* — an affective and effective writing curriculum for upper elementary education. However, this volume stands alone for children to read by themselves or to be guided by caring adults. It is patterned after ancient educational systems for teaching emotional potency to the children of cultural leaders. Herein, we build five principles of character and emotional fluency:

- * **the ability to focus and the wisdom of failure**
- * **the difference between temporary and long-term happiness**
- * **the need and usefulness of self-knowledge**
- * **the inspirational play of breath and feeling**
- * **service heroes and the joy of community.**

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CORE STORIES

is the companion volume to the Teacher's Curriculum:

Big Philosophy for Little Kids

An Affective Curriculum While Learning to Write

Core Stories stands alone as well, intended for children and parents.

For My Beloved



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Frank Marrero, Sybil's son

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for more information

please see www.frankmarrero.com or
www.amazon.com/author/FrankMarrero

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Welcome to the Core Stories

Core Stories is the companion volume of multi-cultural stories to the language arts course, *Big Philosophy for Little Kids* — a highly successful writing curriculum that also teaches character strengths to elementary age children. However, this volume stands alone for children to read by themselves or to be guided by caring adults. This collection of stories and curriculum are patterned after ancient educational systems for teaching emotional potency to the children of cultural leaders. Twenty-five years in development, tested in inner-city California public schools, *Big Philosophy* has received superlative praise from children, parents, teachers, and scholars. Modern in its understanding, ancient in its sources, these stories and *Big Philosophy for Little Kids* sow the seeds of wisdom.

While this course may address many adult issues, it is for the children. They love learning wisdom in their own terms and developing meaningful character strengths. Parallel myths, legends, and stories from around the world emphasize and re-emphasize a theme again and again. This multicultural confirmation crystallizes the current theme from a variety of viewpoints and with each culture's distinct flavor. *Core Stories* give the children a world of wisdom.

With the *Core Stories* are parent guides suggesting positive uses of the story with your child(ren). This course of study directly empowers the children — as it transmits a rich heritage of wisdom. After the stories and myths have been engaged, the jewel that remains is a common, trans-mythic language about life's dearest and most compelling principles. [Adult instructions are in this size font. Children's stories are slightly bigger.]

The matter of affective education is so *emotional* that it is especially important that we clarify the character issues that strengthen our children's emotional intelligence. Social values such as respect, trustworthiness, caring, civility, and service are of obvious importance. But it is worth noting that these social and moral codes of conduct are built upon (and empowered by) personal strengths. In this course of affective appreciations, social values are found at the end in "Service Heroes". This interpersonal finale completes the personal building blocks. Thus, *Core Stories* serve:

- * **the ability to focus and the wisdom of failure,**
- * **the difference between short-term and long-term happiness,**
- * **the need and usefulness of self-knowledge and restraint,**
- * **the inspirational play of breath and feeling,**
- * **service heroes and the joy of community.**

Growing attention. Brief and lasting happiness. The value of self-awareness. Inspiration. The joy of service. You find one (or all) of these themes in almost every story and moral you hear. On the basis of wisdom rather than behavior modification, our social values naturally flourish. Plant these seeds, cultivate these themes until they are harvested in true understanding, and we will gift the generations.



My Children

Ella Balancing



Salem and I
waterfall worshipping

Effort is its own reward.

We are here to do.

And through doing to learn;
and through learning to know;
and through knowing
to experience wonder;
and through wonder to attain wisdom;
and through wisdom to find simplicity;
and through simplicity to give attention;
and through attention to see
what needs to be done.

— Ben Hei

The Core Stories: Attention!

Introduction: The Task of Concentration and The Wisdom of Failure

The Stories of:

American: *Wilma Rudolph*

American: *Glenn Cunningham*

American: *Helen Keller*

Hellenic: *Daedalus and Icarus*

Minoan: *Bull Leaping*

African: *The Thirsty Bird*

Asian: *Sleeping on Brushwood*

Judaic: *The Mighty Atom*

Personal/Cultural History

Nature Games

Parent Guides

Proverbs & Saws & Supplemental Services

The Task of Concentration & The Wisdom of Failure

The *Core Stories* (and *Big Philosophy for Little Kids*) begin with lessons on attention. The task of improving attention anchors the child as well as their lessons. This strengthened attention provides a firm foundation for the rest of life and grounds the child in self-generated improvement.

When attention itself becomes a distinct subject (not the background), children naturally participate in their own growth. While studying and learning the challenge of attention, naturally a primary focus is perseverance, but everyone tends to forget that persistence is preceded by failure. To emphasize persistence alone belittles the difficulty of the task and weakens one's resolve. Persistence is only one half of the reality of accomplishment. A proper relationship to frustration and failure is also required and is to be emphasized along with excellent attention for success. To embrace both these positive and negative aspects of attention stabilizes one's growth in a full-rounded reality. Give encouragement and guidance in concentrating, persistence, and excellence, but also share extensively about the difficulty of losing, falling, and failing. Let us not rob our children of the night.

To focus and to persist are fundamental requirements in every human undertaking. We must explicitly guide and challenge our children to focus and persist. However, to persist with growing strength, we must forgive ourselves of our failures—and come to rest—before or as we try again. Otherwise we are trapped in the wasteful moods of reaction. By acceptance and rest, we are able to respond (response-ability) in the moment, rather than wasting energy re-acting to a past event. Therefore the other great component of the theme of attention is rest. To increase the capacity of attention, we must not only exercise our focus, not only persevere in that focus, we must learn also to rest, re-laxing the tension in attention. This stillness, acceptance, laxity or rest is a crucial component of attention—and, let your children know, sometimes very difficult.

Trying, persistence, falling short, and acceptance. Again and again and again.

Let us invite our children into a great process; let them know that this challenge of attention is a lifetime challenge, a muscle that they will forever attend to, not something they are going to get right or wrong. Because children tend to see in black-and-white, explicitly let them know it is a process; there is no endless failure or unending winning, only growing slowly or urgently. We can grow to a clear, stable focus.

The real-life stories of Wilma Rudolph, Glenn Cunningham, and The Mighty Atom not only illustrate the exercise of attention, they also describe the process of a full recovery. Everyone, at some time, has a recovery in front of them.

In other stories you engage with your child, always highlight the characters' relation to frustration and failure. Tell the story of when Michael Jordon got cut from the basketball team in high school. Or Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King Jr. in prison, or The Little Engine That Could, etc. Consistently emphasize the theme of frustration and temporary failure, how it makes you feel, how failure makes you want to quit; and then emphasize the proper relation to frustration and failure.

Always lead your children into a process of growth, not only good or only bad. A proper relation to failure makes persistence distinct and strong. This inclusion on failure and frustration sets the stage for growing attention and the rewards of persistence.

Do not preach, but guide and praise, share your admiration of people who persisted, tell them your favorite stories, and reveal your own process. This interplay of failure, patience, attention, persistence, acceptance, and healing can be most easily clarified by hearing the story of another.

American: Wilma Rudolph's Secret

This is an inspiring story about an African American woman overcoming severe physical handicaps, emotional difficulties, and social barriers.

Wilma Rudolph was born in the small country town of Clarksville, just outside of Nashville, Tennessee, in 1940. She was the 20th of 22 children, and due to a fall by her mother, was born at home, two months premature, tiny and weak. Medical care was out of the question for her poor family, and was mainly available to educated whites. The closest hospital for blacks was 40 miles away in Nashville. Wilma Rudolph was not expected to live.



Wilma's mother took care of her anyway, gave Wilma all her love and affection. But Wilma was so tiny and fragile she got every cold and sickness that came through town. Her mother gave her home remedies and put her under piles of blankets to sweat out the bad stuff. That worked on the measles, mumps and chicken pox; she lived through all of those—even when other kids around her died. At age four, she came down with double pneumonia and then scarlet fever. Once again, she should have died. Then the worst thing of all happened, she got the awful crippling disease: polio.

Polio bent and paralyzed her legs and the doctors told her that she would never walk again. (Imagine that you are a tiny kid who has been sick almost all of your life, and the doctors tell you that you will never walk again.) Wilma was crushed with sorrow and despair. But her mother had another notion—that they would defy the odds. Wilma later recalled, “The doctors told me I would never walk, but my mother told me I would, so I believed in my mother.”

Wilma's mother carried her twice a week to Meharry Medical College 40 miles away in Nashville. Wilma recalled, “Always a greyhound bus, always the same route, and always the people who were black sat in the back.” Once at the hospital, they massaged and moved her legs. She tried to help too, even though the sessions

were very painful. Soon her mother learned how to do everything and gave her physical therapy at home. While other kids her age started school, Wilma was left home, her useless leg strapped into a heavy metal brace. In some ways this was her hardest battle; being alone, not being able to play with any of her friends. Wilma wrote in her autobiography, “Being left behind had a terrible effect. I was so lonely, and I felt rejected. I would close my eyes, and just drift off into a sinking feeling, going down, down, down. I cried a lot.”

During this time Clarksville's only African American doctor would come and visit her, free of charge. Dr. Coleman was a bridge over troubled waters for her at this time. Wilma recalled, “He would come by the house every so often to check up on me; I remember him well, he was such a beautiful man. He was so kind and nice, and never pressured the poor black people for money. He would say, ‘Wilma, everything is gonna turn out all right. You just fight this thing, you understand?’”

At night Wilma's mom would come home after a long day at work, and after she cooked dinner for her family of two dozen, she would devote herself to serving Wilma, even though she was as tired as tired can be. She would massage and move Wilma's legs and tell her it was gonna be fine someday.

Wilma's therapy hurt a lot, but the hurt was kinda good; at least there was some life in her legs. But Wilma still felt like a sick little kid and still seemed to get every flu or cold that came along. She was almost always sick. One day however, when she was starting to come down with a sore throat, she got mad. Instead of collapsing and submitting to another infirmary, she screamed to herself, “Life cannot be about being sick all the time. Enough! No more taking everything that comes along, no more drifting off, no more wondering. Enough is enough!”

And what do you think began to happen? Wilma Rudolph began to fight, she would stand up to her sorrow, stand up to feeling sorry for herself, fight through the pain in her legs, try harder even if it hurt, and she began to develop her inner spirit, build her attention, and strengthen her focus.

But she got only a little better. She tried and tried with all her might, day after day, week after week, month after month—with no progress. She tried with all her attention, but every day she failed. Another day's hope had become the daily failure. Even still, she learned to accept her reality and her necessity, and so rested fully at day's end, because she gave her best.

Sometimes she wanted to quit, but didn't. Other times she did quit, but later began again. For years she kept up her courage and persistence, even though there was little improvement.

When she finally did get to go to school on braces and crutches she was not brave or even excited, but frightened. "I had been alone so much of my life that I was terrified of my own peer group. I knew I was poor, moneywise that is, and I knew my clothes were made by my mother and not bought in some fancy store."

Wilma wanted more than anything in the world to be accepted by her classmates. But they made fun of her braces and crutches and she was crushed again. She had been a failure everyday, dreaming of the day she would get to go to school. Now at school she felt like a failure again. She wanted to do something that none of her classmates would do so that she would be great and then her classmates would have to like her.

She worked extra hard at getting her legs stronger. For months there was no improvement, but Wilma did not give up. After another year, only the slightest improvement and her extra effort did not even seem to be helping. She still walked with crutches and a leg brace. But she didn't give up. Another whole year went by and again the most frustrating tiny improvement, but it was improvement. Wilma didn't give up. Another year went by and finally she could stand without her leg brace and take a step or two. But she would fall every time and it always hurt. Even then she wouldn't give up.

Finally, just before her tenth birthday, came the day she had been waiting for. She dressed in her Sunday best clothes and went to church. She waited until

everybody else went in and sat down. When she got to the front door, she took off her braces and walked all the way down the aisle. Every eye was on her, everyone was so proud of her, every heart wished her the best.

Wilma was so happy she felt like she had exploded. She could feel the spirit of happiness rejuvenating her poor little body. Even her fragile and sickly legs could be transformed. Everyday she practiced walking without her brace, like a baby learning to walk. And slowly, like a baby, it took her two more years before her next goal was reached: she could walk all day without falling and she took off her brace forever. She sent it back to the hospital with a note of thanks and suggested that another kid could now use it.

Wilma Rudolph had fulfilled her dream of proving her mother right and the doctors wrong. But more importantly she had learned how to persist through failure and frustration. Her attention was great, her focus sharp, and now, after eight years of constant struggle and metal imprisonment, she was whole and ordinary, healthy and happy. Suddenly Wilma realized she had learned something more than her peers: she set her spirit and strong focus to the extra-ordinary.

Entering the seventh grade, Wilma took up basketball and tried out for the team. Even though she was the weakest kid, she had one advantage: when Coach Gray asked the kids for long and hard practices, Wilma could outlast everyone else. Not because she was the strongest, but only because she was the most determined. She made the team.

Wilma continued to work harder than her teammates, and even practiced for hours after the team practice had finished, but did not get to play in real games except for the last couple of minutes if her team was far ahead or far behind. Wilma wanted to be a starter.

And the next year was the same, Wilma warmed the bench. But instead of quitting, she practiced harder than ever. Her persistence earned her the nickname ‘Skeeter’, slang for mosquito. Even still she only warmed the bench. “I used to sit

there on the bench and dream about someday becoming a star for the team, but the coach didn't seem to know I was alive."

Finally, after two long frustrating years, she confronted Coach Gray: she wanted a spot on the starting team. The coach listened but said nothing. But when game time came Wilma got the nod and her spirit electrified the whole team. They played with such spirit they trounced the other team.

News of Wilma's play spread through the town. People came in droves to see the little girl who had only recently shed her braces play in competition. And Wilma was not just a popular starter, she quickly became a star, racking up points, and inspiring her whole team.

Wilma Rudolph's spirit took their team to the state championships, where they had to first play another strong team. Undaunted, Wilma tossed in 26 points to lead her team to another triumph. The next team was a weaker team and Wilma and her crew thought they would beat them easily. They dreamed they were going to win the whole thing and go on to be the Cinderellas of basketball. They did not bring their usual focus and attention to the game and the weaker team beat them.

Wilma was devastated. They had not been defeated by hardship, but by themselves. Wilma vowed that she would focus not only when it was hard, but also when it looked like it was easy too. Thinking too much of herself had brought defeat upon her. Obsessed with losing or winning consumes your attention and then you don't have enough left over for actually focusing! Wilma vowed to strengthen her attention even more, beyond winning or losing. Her only concern would be her attention, with giving it everything, giving when she wanted to let up, giving more and more; competing only with herself, on focusing now, on trying harder or trying again—winning or not. Her resolve let her also rest fully and deeply when she was not giving her attention. She vowed not be depressed by losing nor be big-headed by winning, but to stay focused only on doing her best, resting in dedication.

Continuing to strengthen her attention muscle beyond losing and winning, Wilma had learned a great secret.

“Winning is great, sure, but if you are going to do something in life, the secret is learning how to lose. Nobody goes undefeated all the time. If you can pick yourself up after a defeat, and go on to win again, you can be a champion.”

Wilma was recruited by a college track coach named Ed Temple to take up running. She brought the same attention and dedication to running that she had to basketball. The little disabled girl had grown into a runner!

Wilma learned the hard way, (that is by losing!) the skills of her new sport. And when she had learned those skills from Coach Temple, she took off like a bullet.

Within a year she was the youngest person on the US Olympic team! Only four years earlier she was wearing braces! Now the little girl from the country town of Clarksville, Tennessee travelled to the other side of the world to compete for the United States in the 1956 Australian Olympics. She was sixteen, six foot tall (182 cm), and only weighed 90 pounds (41kg). But, for the first time in her life, Wilma Rudolph felt like no one cared if the color of her skin was dark. She was just another competitor, another spirited champion amongst spirited champions. Spirit cares not for the color or size or gender, but only for trying and shining and caring.

Wilma did not make any of the cuts she needed to compete in the championship races in Australia, but her team did make the relay race. She felt failure again, but now it only strengthened her resolve. Wilma's performance made the difference in the relay race, and they captured a bronze medal. She was proud and amazed and very happy.

When her mom and dad greeted her at the airport in Nashville with roses, everything was complete. Now Wilma had a new determination. She would be back in the next Olympics.

In 1960, four years later, Wilma made the Olympic team again and went to Rome to go for the gold. In her first two events, she not only took the golds, she also set new world records. In her final race, she



Wilma with her parents



Wilma wins the relay race

was the last leg of the relay, and by the time the baton came to her, her team was behind. Worst still, she almost bobbled the baton which would have disqualified her. But Wilma quickly caught her attention just in time and took off like lightning, running faster than any woman had ever, ever run before. At the end, she put on a spectacular burst of speed and bolted ahead of her

competitors. The crowds went crazy for her.

“The feeling of accomplishment welled up inside me . . . three Olympic gold medals. I knew that was something nobody could ever take away from me, ever. After the band played the ‘Star-Spangled Banner,’ I was mobbed. People were literally jumping all over me, pushing microphones into my face, pounding my back. I had to be rescued by the American officials.”



Wilma with her three gold medals

Now Wilma Rudolph was a world hero; the little disabled girl had shown them! She had proven to everyone how spirit and determination had transformed dead flesh into light. Requests poured in for her company. Pope John XXIII received her and then Wilma and her team traveled to visit the leaders of Europe. When they returned to New York, Wilma

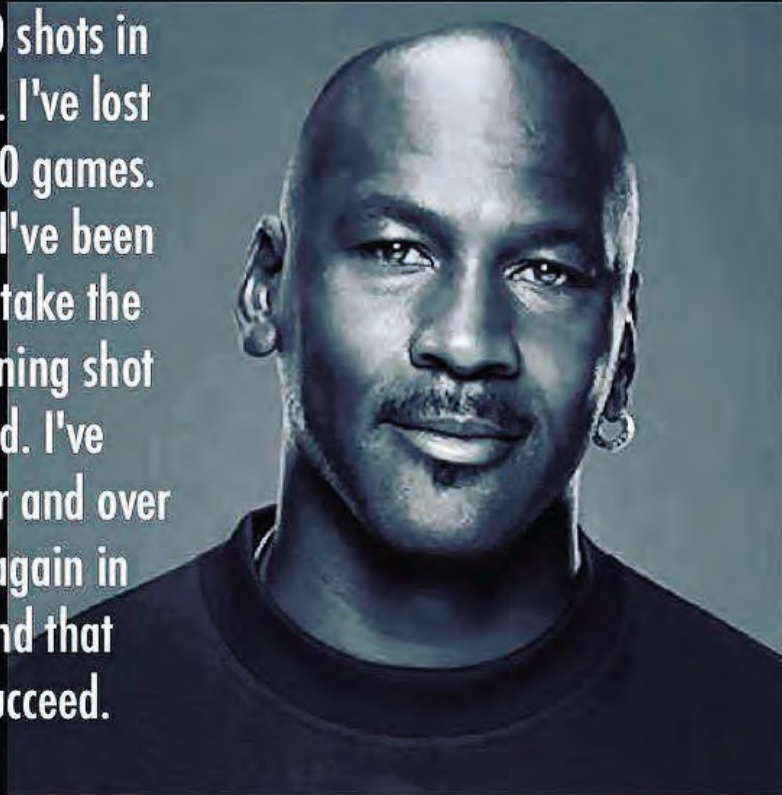
was mobbed. One fan even tore her shoes off of her feet; the entire country was delirious with her accomplishment.

When she finally got back to Nashville, another immense crowd welcomed her. “Everybody was there—mayors of cities, the state governor, judges, tv stations, marching bands, scores of reporters and photographers.” A police motorcade escorted her to Clarksville for her victory party. Thousands of people lined the highway waving at her. Banners hung across the streets and when she arrived in Clarksville, the entire town, black and white, turned out to greet her. And all because Wilma had insisted it be so: “It was actually the first integrated event in the history of the town. So was the banquet they gave for me that night; it was the very first time in Clarksville’s history that blacks and whites had gathered under the same roof for the same event.”

The spirit of giving creates a great celebration, and sees through all color to a kinder light.

Wilma died suddenly of brain cancer in 1994, but her spirit will always shine.

I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.



- Michael Jordan -

American: Glenn Cunningham's Full Recovery

When I was 9, I read this story in a Weekly Reader and was inspired.

Glenn Cunningham was a poor farm boy growing up in Kansas, a likeable kid who smiled a lot. His family didn't have enough money to buy their school books, but that didn't stop them. They knew school was extremely important so Glenn and his siblings took the job of lighting the school stove every morning, before anyone else got there. Glenn was proud that this job earned him his school books.



*The Cunningham kids
Floyd left and little Glenn in front*

In the evening, a man would leave wood and kerosene at the school, and in the early morning Glenn and his brother Flyod would arrive and build the fire. They would start by taking a bucket and small shovel and cleaning the ashes out from the day before. They would throw the ashes on the school garden for fertilizer. Next, Floyd or Glenn would skillfully stack the logs in the stove and pour a couple of capfuls of kerosene on them. They would place the lid back on the stove, and open the side door. Rolling up a piece of paper like a long match and lighting the very end of it, they could bend down and safely start the fire in the stove box from afar. Closing the stove box door then caused air to rush in the vents and feed the fire. Soon, the fire was roaring and the school house was warm when the others arrived.

But on February 9th, 1917, there was a mistake: kerosene wasn't left, it was gasoline. Kerosene burns slowly but gasoline explodes. When Floyd bent down to light the fire, the whole thing blew up and caught everything on fire, including Glenn's legs. The explosion broke his legs too. The school burned down but miraculously the boys survived because their sister dragged them out.

They rushed Glenn and his brother to the hospital. Both were in pain, but

Glenn's legs were burned black. He was crying in unending pain and so scared that he thought he was going crazy. Deep inside, he seemed to just hold on and pray. At the hospital, they put Glenn to sleep and operated on him.

When Glenn woke up, he couldn't feel his legs anymore. He was completely wrapped up in bandages, still in pain, and couldn't move. Dr. Fergusen told him that five of his toes, two on one foot and three on the other, had been so burned that they had no other choice but to cut them off. They warned that if infection set in, they would have to cut both of his legs completely off. The doctor also told him he would probably never walk again. Floyd had broken ribs and some bad burns, but soon went home.

Glenn felt very sad and he cried a lot. But soon the painful days went away as his legs went all numb. He couldn't feel or move them. At first he was still sad, but slowly he got used to being alive again, just not being able to walk. From his chair, he could still smile with his family and his food still tasted real good. Life could have a fullness in it, even though something really bad had happened.

Then, a few months later, Glenn noticed that if he put all of his attention on it, he could feel one of the toes that was left. If he tried with all his might, he could just barely move it! He was excited! All afternoon he focused on his toe, moving it when he could. The next day too, he went into an inward world, inside his toe, and concentrated all of his attention on wiggling his toe again. And again. And again. He would get very tired, but persisted through the discomfort. For weeks, he couldn't wiggle any other toes, but he kept on trying. After a while, he started wiggling another one, then a month later two more, then all of his remaining toes!

Next, Glenn wanted to move his whole foot but no matter how hard he tried, he failed. For a time it looked like maybe just his toes were going to revive, because the rest of his legs and feet were still asleep. But his persistence finally woke his feet up! For weeks Glenn practiced tensing his muscles in his toes, feet, then his legs. At first, it would kind of hurt to squeeze a new muscle, but it felt good too.

Then one day, trembling and holding on to a table like a baby, Glenn stood up for the first time since his accident. He called out to his mom to see and she smiled even though he soon collapsed.

Glenn wanted to walk, but when he tried, he fell down. He had been so happy when he first stood up, but now he felt like crying. But instead of collapsing, he remembered all of the times he had tried to move just his toe or foot, and realized that he could feel happy with the progress he was making. He let go of his sorrow and made a promise to himself to never give up improving. No matter how many times he fell down, he just brushed himself off and tried again. Within a month, he walked to the barn!

The doctors thought Glenn's recovery was like a miracle and were very happy for him. But they noticed that his legs were still a little crooked from the explosion. They suggested that if he could start running, it might help to straighten them out. But they didn't have to tell Glenn that! He was already trying. Soon Glenn ran everywhere!

The town folk knew that Glenn was supposed to never walk again, so when people saw him, they smiled and often called, "Run boy, run!" In a backwards way, it was true what the doctors had said long ago, he never would walk again!

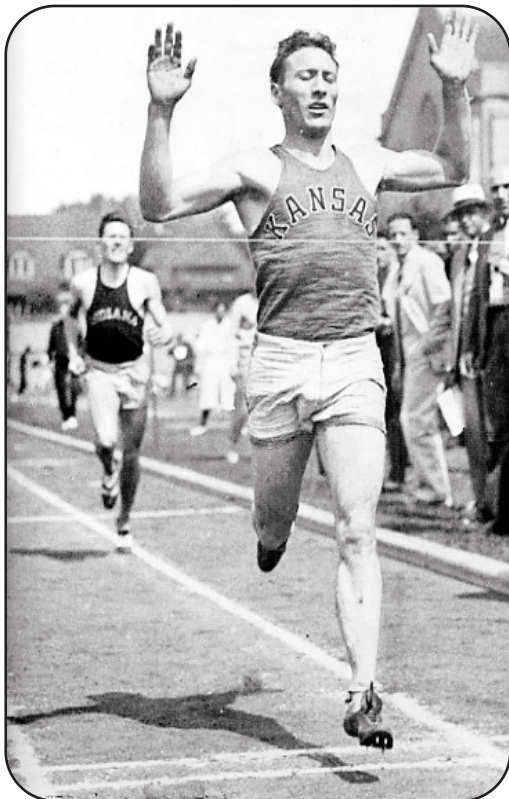
Glenn began to enter running races. At first he lost, but then he remembered the promise he made to himself and just kept on trying. The hardest times were when he would lose, because at first he would feel unhappy and didn't want to try anymore. But he noticed that when he was moody, he didn't have as much energy for running. So he learned to just smile and breathe and let go of the bad feeling. It was OK to fail, he would just start again and be happy. This was his biggest lesson.

Just four years after the fire, his persistence began to reward him. He started winning! And he kept on getting faster and faster. No one had ever seen anything like it, he was like the wind, flying everywhere. He became the fastest young

runner anyone had ever seen. The people of his little town all chipped in together and sent him to the Junior American Olympics, but there were older, faster runners there and Glenn lost all the races he entered. But now his failures only inspired him further. He worked harder than ever. Everyone believed in him, so the next year they raised money and sent him again. This time he did not fail. He won many of the events he entered and set a new junior world record!

In college, Glenn continued to grow and became even faster. He entered the Olympics for adults and broke the world record, even though another runner passed him at the finish line. Even after that he kept working on improving.

At the time, the world record for running a mile was 4:09. Some people predicted that



someday man would run a four minute mile. Others said it was impossible,

that no one could ever run even close to a four minute mile. Then Glenn Cunningham shattered the world speed record by running a mile in 4:04.4. He may have failed to break the four-minute mile, but for a moment, he became the fastest person in the history of the whole world; a great hero had risen from the little boy who was supposed to never walk again.



Parent Guide

*For the Stories of Wilma Rudolph, Glenn Cunningham,
and The Mighty Atom*

As your child engages these stories, it is easy and natural to refer to them again and again. As adults, we need to recognize our own anxiety for our child to be the best, and not harp on them. It is better to encourage a theme (like attention) fifty times a year than fifty times a week. We must also remember not to be “talking heads” to our children: engage them whole-bodily when possible. Challenge them to gymnastics or dance or music or balancing of any kind. Play your favorite attention-requiring games with them. Balance a book on your head, etc. If this kind of engagement is not your strong suit, please look over the One Pointed One Minute game in the Teacher’s Curriculum in *Big Philosophy for Little Kids*.

Over time, read with your children all of these Attention Stories. (Thereafter you can refer to these themes in many stories.) Have them do art of their favorite part from the story in their quiet time. When your children are the appropriate age, have them read these stories to you.

Tell your child about things you did that took all of your attention. (E.g. Educational degree, sports, arts, difficulties.) Mirroring the stories, tell them how you felt when:

- you failed;
- you decided to persist;
- you experienced the difficulty of persistence;
- your pride of giving attention, and the deep satisfaction of accomplishment.

Likewise, give your child opportunities to talk about their actions and persistence.

When you are relaying a story about something you did, include the theme of paying attention (or poor attention) in your speech. Gently weave it into your ordinary conversations. Your own commitment to continual growth will be your child’s best tool in theirs.

Use two ideas, your “Attention Muscle” and the “Mountain of Attention”, as you create images for your child’s imagination. Help them develop their “attention muscle” *over time* (like all muscles). To support this long-term process, tell them everytime they pay attention or focus, they are adding a spoonful or cup of attention to their own personal mound. Over time they build their own mound, and eventually, if they keep it up, a great “mountain of attention”. Praise their effort in building both. Let them know they are involved in a great process.

When you watch entertainment together, *occasionally* point out the quality of attention in the main characters. Vocalize your appreciation (yes you!) of the great attention required for athletics, dance, music, feats, etc. Likewise, point out how one does not exercise their attention muscle when watching entertainment. Instead of strenthening your attention, entertainment is more like a massage. Now, it’s good to learn to take it easy, but relaxing too much won’t make

you strong. You build attention strength by holding rather than being held; We need healthy amounts of both!

Have your children pick the programs/entertainment they want to see and mutually agree on how much screen is good. And most importantly, encourage non-TV forms of individual and family entertainment that are more fun, more challenging, and more work for you!

In my classes, my students recite Wilma's Secret for small prizes.

“Winning is great, sure, but if you are going to do something in life, the secret is learning how to lose. Nobody goes undefeated all the time. If you can pick yourself up after a defeat, and go on to win again, you can be a champion.”

I have always found recitation to be an excellent way to develop attention skills — which, of course, helps in their schoolwork.

Give your children regular challenges and rewards.

Most of the rewards in the *freedom<—>responsibility dynamic* should be intrinsic, rather than extrinsic. That is, give freedoms for responsibility, avoid the ‘buying their childhood’ syndrome. Tie freedoms with responsibilities creatively. Don’t forget to be gracious. Do not fail to be firm. Grant greater and greater freedom to greater and greater responsibility—and in specific, age-appropriate terms.

**I find “attention muscle” to be superior to “brain muscle” (which some people use) for the following reason: “Brain muscle” does not discriminate between the sensation of knowledge and the work of concentration. By isolating the capacity of concentration, independent of knowledge, guidance in paying attention is more effective.*



Build a “Mountain of Attention”,



“Attention Muscle”

ATTENTION!

Hellenic: Daedalus and Icarus

The story of Daedalus and Icarus is a classic Hellenic myth, used here to illustrate the difference between evenness and impulsiveness. “Daedalus” literally means ‘even-handedness’ and was a common surname for carpenters and artisans. THIS STORY IS ALSO to be used in the theme of “Self-Knowledge”.

Once upon a time, on the island of Crete, a great King named Minos wanted a magnificent garden around his palace. He sent for the famous craftsman Daedalus to design and construct the gardens. Daedalus came with his son, Icarus, who was learning from his father about craftsmanship. He could already handle his dad’s tools well, but Icarus was still learning patience.

Daedalus decided to build the gardens in a labyrinth—which is a puzzle that you try to find your way through. When the gardens were complete, King Minos loved them, for most people lost their way trying to walk through the maze. He even imprisoned his enemies there because they would spend their whole life trying to find their way out.



Once, Daedalus helped one of King Minos' foes get free from the labyrinth, so the King put Daedalus and his son under arrest. They were not allowed to board any ships in his harbor, and to swim to the next island would be too far. They would have to stay, or so the King thought. But the renowned craftsman Daedalus was not dismayed. He began building two sets of huge wings, one for himself and one for his son, Icarus.

Once Daedalus had constructed the lightweight frames for their arms, he and his son gathered feathers to put on the wings. Carefully gluing all the feathers on the wings with wax, they worked every second of the day, and soon they were ready.

He warned his son, “Fly evenly and steadily like the eagle, and don’t fly too high, or the sun will melt the wax.” Then they put on their giant wings and began



to fly! Daedalus and his son glided over the ocean like birds, happy and free.

Even though Daedalus reminded Icarus to be focused and careful, the boy soon became so excited that he started zooming around crazily and wildly. Sure enough, Icarus forgot what his father had told

him and finally zoomed so high that the sun melted the wax on his wings, the feathers fell off, and he plummeted into the ocean.



ATTENTION!

Mediterranean: Bull-Leaping

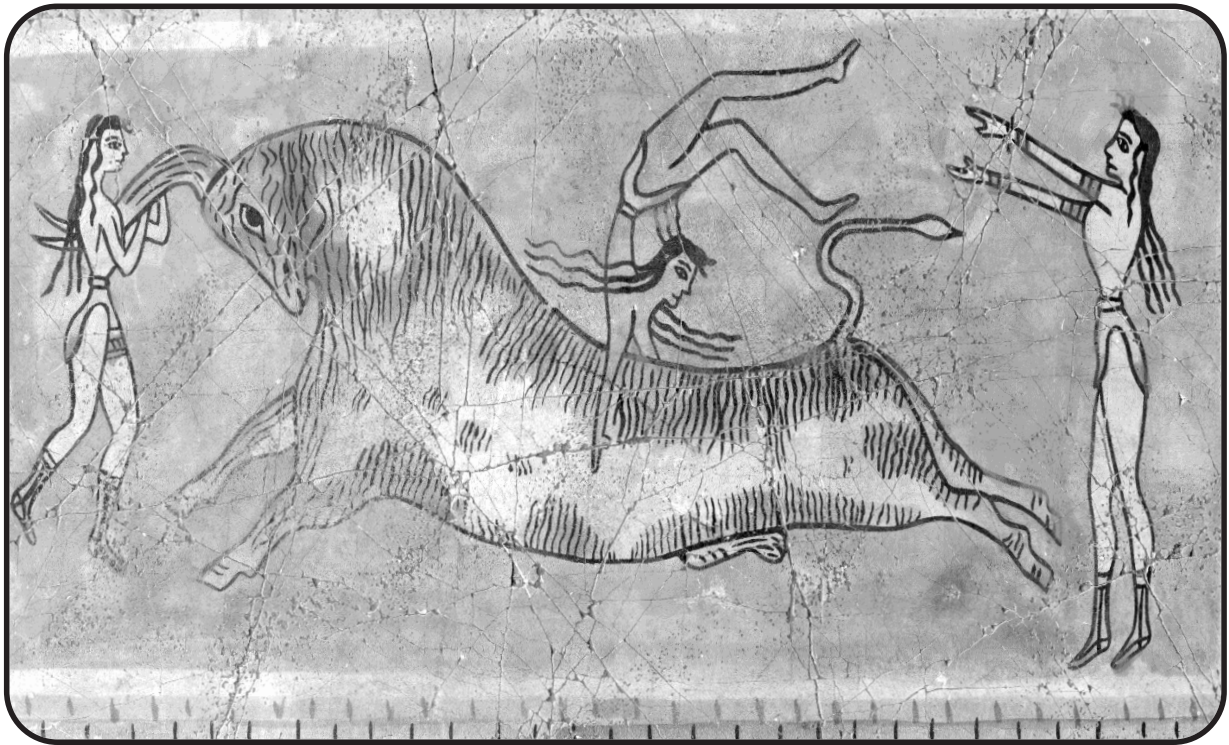
Bull-leaping was a feature of the Minoan civilization, wherein the male and female leapers demonstrated perfect, yet relaxed, attention.

Thirty-five centuries ago, from the island of Crete, a magnificent culture spread art, eloquence, and peace throughout the Mediterranean. Their merchant ships sailed through the straits of Gibraltar, around the bulge of Africa, looking for gold; or north to the isles of Stonehenge, to purchase tin. Theirs was the first culture to give equal power to both men and women. Even their throne room had two chairs.

The Minoans engaged a telling ceremony with the bull and his horns. A bull was forced into an arena and into that same ground slipped a young man or woman. The youngster had no weapons, no armor, and yet was expected to conquer the bull with only perfect attention and perfect relaxation. He or she would stare directly into the bull's eye and walk slowly toward it. Any ripple of fear or fragmenting of attention would cause the bull to charge the contestant and chase him or her out of the arena. But if the contestant looked into the bull's eye with calmness and perfect attention, breathing away the ripples of fear, he or she would eventually be able to slowly walk directly up to the bull.

There, directly in front of the bull, the contestant would completely rest and take a full breath. Everyone watched in complete suspense for if the bull sensed any fear and proceeded to charge, death could come to the contestant most easily.

After the exciting, full-breathed pause at the top of the mountain of attention, the contestant suddenly reached up, grabbed the horns of the bull, and leapt as hard as he or she could. As the surprised bull threw his head up, it flung the contestant all the way over the bull. The audience now roared with approval and bestowed glory upon the contestant. She or he had made the great demonstration and had shown to everyone that it takes great focus and strength of attention to touch the horns of a bull. Think about this story the next time you hear the phrase, “bull's eye”!



Bull Leaping 1-2-3



ATTENTION!

Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right.
—Henry Ford

Give me a place to stand and I will move the earth.
—Archimedes

Make haste slowly.
—proverb

I'm going slow because I'm in a hurry.
—Spanish proverb

Success is the ability to go from failure to failure without the loss of enthusiasm.
—Winston Churchill

Character consists of what you do on the third and fourth tries.
—James A Michener, *Chesapeake*

The man who is slothful in his work is brother to the man who is destructive.
—Proverbs 18:9

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.
—Native American and Chinese

Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going.
—Jim Ryun

Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races one after another.
—Walter Elliot

The weak have wishes, the strong have will.
—Chinese Proverb

Parent Guide

Attention has many qualities: intense, relaxed, even, impulsive, blurry, scattered, focused. We emphasize not only the quantity or giving of attention for our children, but also the *quality* of attention, and how their attention works. Of course we encourage them to fly with their feeling, energy, and attention, like Daedalus — but remember: if that flight is not conscious and even, disaster will surely befall them, like Icarus. Let us not repress our children, but guide them with the observation that in most accidents, someone was behaving like Icarus and not like Daedalus. The solution to crashes is not inactivity but conscious *even-handedness*. Tell them about the proverb, “Make haste slowly.” Fly, but fly more evenly! In ancient Hellas, “Dadedalus” was the common surname for a craftsperson, like Smith, and is easily translated as “even-handedness”. “Icaurus”, on the other hand, means *unconsciously* “following” the impulse.

Use the story of “Bull’s Leaping” to underscore the entire lesson of focus, concentration and excellent attention. Bull’s Eye! also shows another quality of attention: relaxed attention (as opposed to gripping, concentrative attention). Sometimes you need extreme concentration, sometimes you need even-handedness, sometimes you need to hold your attention simply, and sometimes you need to relax. (Later, in the Nature Games we will introduce relaxing attention altogether, but first let’s grow it.) Relaxed, simple attention is one of the features in building attention.

Comments you make about characters in stories is one of the great ways to reinforce these themes. Children learn from parents not only explicitly but implicitly — that is, more learning is gathered from what you do, not as much from what you say. Back up every direct, verbal guidance with implicit guidance. Demonstration is obvious, preaching not so much.

In India, children are taught one particular feature of learning attention: “sila”— roughly equivalent to the evenhandedness of Daedalus. Sila is a Pali term connoting, “conduct, behavior, habit.” Through the lesson of “sila”, children can be taught to have a feeling relationship, rather than just a vital relationship to life. The calmness of Daedalus or balance of sila empowers this feeling-relatedness. If you think this restfulness-capacity is important, you are in good company. Children should explicitly hear from you about how growing attention and strengthening focus is grounded in restfulness.

Sila, or equanimity, is fundamental to the practice of children. The daily life of children should be altogether conducive to balance, ease, relaxation, and freedom from all the arbitrary, mechanical patterning that tends to develop when children are allowed to live sheerly on the basis of exploiting their vitality.

Thus, sila, or equanimity, is fundamental ...to the process of releasing energy and attention from the self-bond and of enjoying the state of equanimity, or natural control over the outgoing automaticities of energy and attention.

—Avatara Adi Da



My Balanced Daughter Ella

African: The Thirsty Bird

This is a common African myth on persistence.

Bird was thirsty but no water could be found. Drought was everywhere. She would have to go near the humans. But the people guarded their water and kept it in large pots with small mouths.

Bird saw an unguarded pot and carefully flew to it. Bird was very glad. She looked into the pitcher and saw the most beautiful sight: fresh water. She stuck her beak down to drink, but the neck of the pot was too small, she couldn't fit her head down it!

Bird was very frustrated. She would try to turn the pot over, but it was very big at the bottom and too heavy. She would push very hard with her head, but no matter how hard she tried, her beak stopped just short of the water!

Bird was overwhelmed with thirst and frustration. Suddenly, she had an idea. Bird flew nearby and got a pebble. She dropped it in the water. Why do you think she did this? Because the pebble made the water level rise.

Bird tried to drink again, but the water hadn't risen high enough to reach it with her beak. Bird flew nearby and got another pebble, and another and another. She finally got her first sip. But a man came and took a drink himself! Now bird would have to start all over again.

Bird flew and flew and flew. She knew she would have to make many trips and was glad that she had at least had one sip. But after all this great work, her thirst grew large.



ATTENTION!

Soon thereafter, she was able to take another sip of the sweetest sensation, fresh water to a thirsty throat.

Suddenly, many people came and scared bird away. She almost cried as they came. She thought they would drink all the water. She watched in agony as they stayed and talked. But no one drank the water. Just as suddenly as they appeared, they left again.

Bird brought one more pebble with her as she returned to the jug. Kerplunk! The splashing water bathed her face as she immersed her beak and drank deeply.

Discipline is remembering your goal.

—proverb

Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal.

—E. Joseph Cossman

The path was worn and slippery. My foot slipped from under me, knocking the other out of the way, but I recovered and said to myself, “It’s a slip and not a fall.”

—Abraham Lincoln, after losing a senate race.

Asian: Sleeping on Brushwood

*This story was given to me by Jaia Childers,
co-author of The White Haired Girl.
It is the classic Chinese story depicting persistence.*

Go Jian was Emperor of Yua Kingdom in the Spring-Autumn period in China (770 BCE to 476 BCE). His army had been defeated by the army of the Emperor of Wu Kingdom, and Go Jian and his people were taken captive as slaves. Emperor Go Jian was fiercely determined to liberate his people and drive out the army of the Wu Kingdom. The Wu Kingdom, however, maintained their control by fierce power and oppressive ways. The people were very unhappy. The Wu Kingdom would have to be undone.

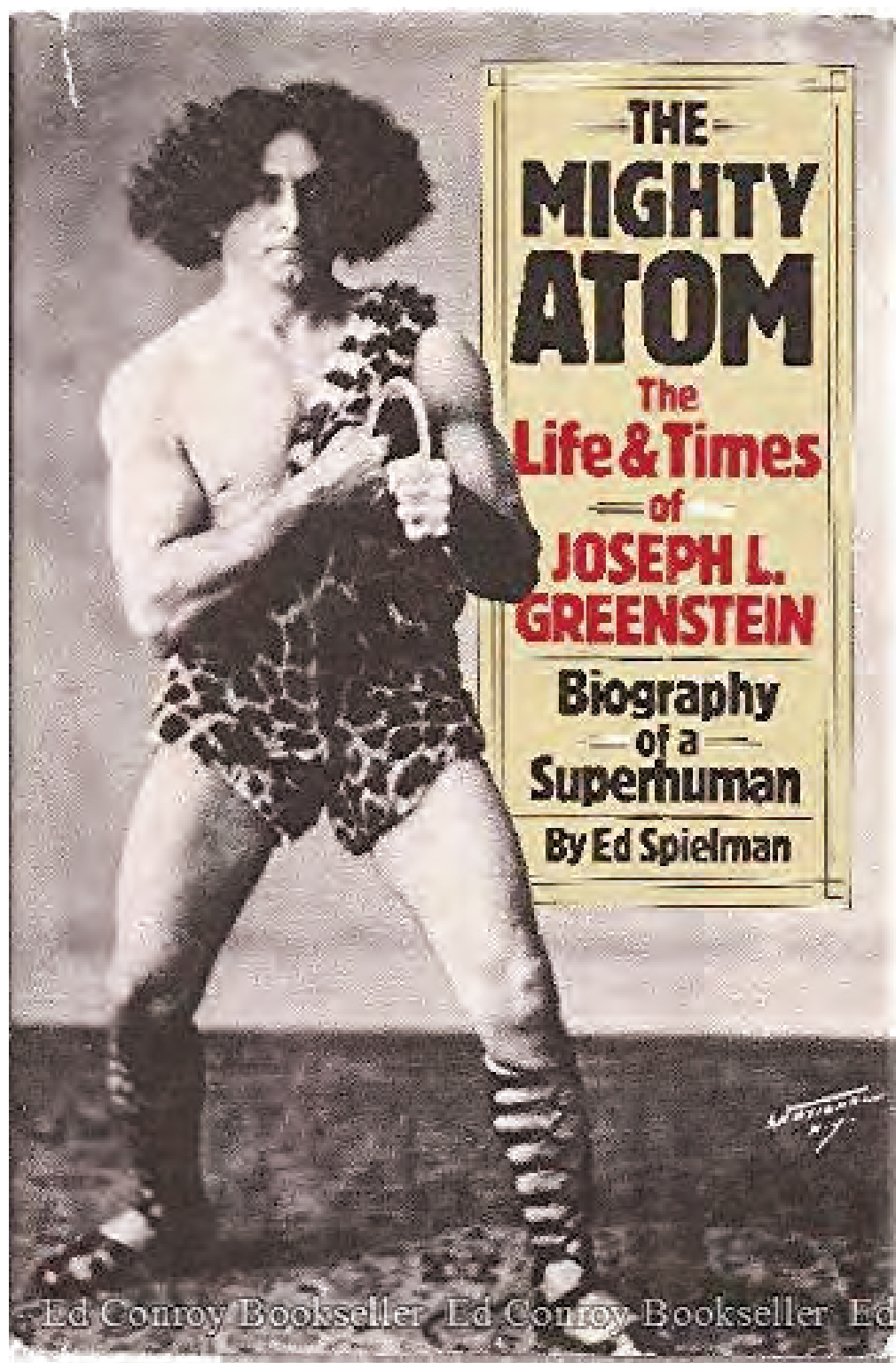
To overthrow the Wu Kingdom, Go Jian would have to forge a white-hot intent. To steel himself to the purpose, and so as not to forget even for a moment his people's bitter plight, he kept a piece of bitter gall hanging from the ceiling. He would taste it at night before going to sleep on a bed of firewood, and also taste the bitterness before performing any task—to remind him to be absolutely focused.

After years of planning, focusing, preparing, and strategizing in captivity, Emperor Go Jian led a rebellion that overthrew the Kingdom of Wu, freed his people, and sweetly recovered his Kingdom at last.

This is the origin of the Chinese saying, “Wo shin chang dan,” “Lying on firewood, tasting bitter gall.” This phrase means unbending intent, absolute determination and clarity toward a goal. It also connotes using one's humiliation or defeat as fuel to victory.

卧薪尝胆

Wo shin chang dan



Judaic: The Mighty Atom

Adapted with permission from Ed Spielman

On July 15, 1893, a woman named Chaya Greenstein, six months pregnant and terribly poor, fell on the streets of Suwalk, Poland, and went into premature labor. She soon gave birth to a tiny boy, weighing only three and a half pounds and drawing just the tiniest whisper of a breath. He was not expected to live.

But surprisingly, the teeny baby held on to life and breath. After a full week had passed, he was named Yosselle Leib, and attracted local attention as a medical miracle.

Yosselle's childhood was terrible. His family was the poorest in the town, and could only afford rags for clothes and rags for shoes, even in the bitter winter months. They often ate old, discarded bread as their only meal of the day or had to pick through food left in the fields after harvest. When Yosselle was just five, his asthmatic father died, and life went from hard to bitter.

Worst of all, Yosselle was a weak, sickly child, with constant asthma like his father and a pale complexion—though each year he hung on to life, his eyes seemingly growing bluer. When Yosselle turned 14, he was still terribly feeble and gasping for breath, so Mrs. Greenstein took him to the doctors. They examined poor Yosselle then concluded there was nothing they could do. They told Mrs. Greenstein that Yosselle probably wouldn't see his 18th birthday.

Yosselle was crushed even more, and his sickly body felt defeated. He didn't know what to do, and was afraid he would get even more sick, lose his breath, and die.

Later that very day, fragile Yosselle was standing in front of a poster for the circus that had come to town. The main attraction was "Champion Volanko", strongman extraordinaire. In stark contrast to Yosselle's life of weakness, he noticed the vibrance of Champion Volanko's health. Yosselle decided he would try to get a glimpse of the strongman and went to the circus grounds.

As he approached the big tent, Yoselle was beaten by other circus boys because he was Jewish, but was suddenly saved by none other than Volanko himself.

Yoselle was grateful and amazed by Volanko's rescue, and was soon having tea with his hero. Yoselle was amazed to discover that Volanko was no ordinary strongman, he was a wise man as well. Volanko immediately noticed how fragile and sickly his new asthmatic friend was, and when Yoselle kept coughing, Volanko inquired, "You're seeing a doctor?"

"Three of them, this very day," Yoselle replied.

"And what did they say?"

"They said I'm going to die," the sad Yoselle responded bravely.

"Ha! What do they really know about health?", the champion scoffed, then proudly confessed, "I was once more sickly than you!"

"No!" Yoselle cried in disbelief.

"Is this the face of a liar?" Volanko asked radiantly, then asserted, "The greatest athletes have grown from the weak and infirm." He paused and let his proclamation sink in, then challenged Yoselle, "Do you want to die?"

"No."

"Then don't," the champion said with certainty.

"You could cure me?" the young Yoselle implored.

"No, only you can do that. If you want me to teach you this, go ask permission from your parents."

Yoselle knew his parents would say no. Instead of going home, he hid, then pretended to Volanko that his parents had said yes. Yoselle left home without even saying goodbye.

Yoselle acted as Volanko's aide, in constant service as his hero taught him. Yoselle was rewarded with the wisdom and training of the incomparable Volanko. Every day began an hour before dawn with Volanko first training Yoselle in the art of deep breathing, exercising the abdominal, then upper-chest types of breathing.

“Breath fans the fire of life, without air the fire dies,” Volanko would assert, and coached Yoselle to persist in exercising deep and strong breaths, low in the belly and high in the chest.

“How long do I have to practice this?” a tired Yoselle inquired.

“For the rest of your life,” Champion Volanko emphasized as he himself drew a deep breath.

To further emphasize the importance of the breath, after a month Volanko insisted that they sleep outside every rainless night so that they may counter the cold air through strong breaths and feeling.

Volanko would not allow Yoselle to eat the rich, pasty, or overcooked foods the circus provided. Instead, Volanko himself prepared hearty, dark grain porridges, and made sure that they ate the freshest fruits and vegetables available. To illustrate his point, Volanko pulled out his pocket watch, and flipped open the back so that Yoselle could see the tiny, intricate workings of wheels and springs. Volanko directed Yoselle to marvel at how fine and clean the timepiece functioned, then implored, “Would you throw dirt in here? Of course not! And your body is a million times more refined than this. Don’t put food that is bad for it in it either, just because it tickled your tongue for a minute.”

For weeks Volanko trained Yoselle in good habits, persistence and right breathing. Then, one day as the sun dawned after his hour of breath exercises, Yoselle was challenged by Volanko to raise two large buckets over his head. When Yoselle quickly and proudly accomplished this, Volanko immediately redoubled the challenge, “Now let me see how many times you can do it.”

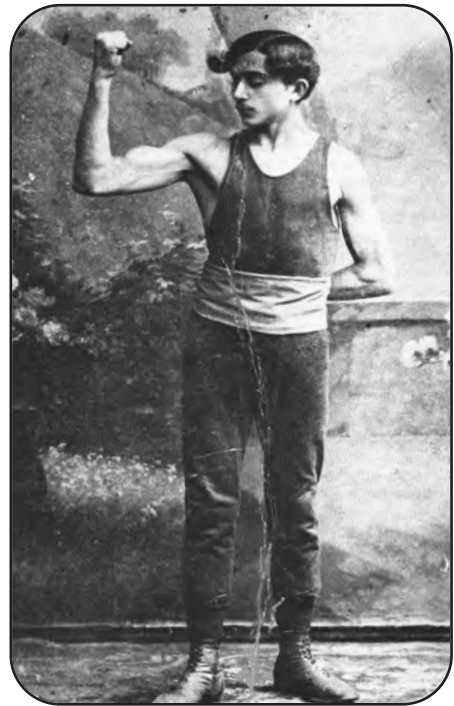
Yoselle struggled to the count of six, but Volanko wouldn’t let him stop, and chided, coached, and encouraged him another four times. Yoselle knew that his champion teacher would never let him do less again.

The next day, however, Volanko put a handful of sand in each bucket, and still another handful of sand the day after. When Yoselle would start to give up Volanko would yell, “Set your mind to it, refuse to be weak, refuse to be sick, refuse to die.”

Volanko was always reminding him to visualize accomplishment, and to visualize persistence in his mind first, saying that the first task in reaching any goal is developing a positive, strong outlook. Volanko taught Yoselle to take on a perspective of small accomplishments, building up to great success over a very long period. “Yoselle, if I had told you to raise the buckets ten times, you probably couldn’t have done it. If you look at the whole job, you’ll be overwhelmed. Instead, do only the small job in front of you. Only think of that first step . . . and then take one more step, one more lift, one more movement. Think no further when you feel overwhelmed or frustrated. Think only of what is in front of your face. Before you know it, you’ll have done it all—without fear or concern. Time will work for you.”

Volanko regularly repeated this saying, “Time will work for you,” and encouraged Yoselle to build a mountain of accomplishment a spoonful at a time. The circus went east to Russia, then south to India and in every city, Volanko would wrestle the region’s strongman and always win the match. With his finger, Volanko would point to his own temple and explain, “Before you begin a task, you must succeed up here. Mind, spirit, action. Decisive mind, hearty spirit, clear action.” Volanko infused Yoselle with these.

Little by little, weeks into months, Yoselle’s cough went away, until he felt good for the first time in his life. Now he thought he was hot stuff and began to strut like a peacock. But Volanko did not want Yoselle to be satisfied with ordinary vitality,



Yoselle had been transformed.

and challenged him to break a string wrapped tightly around his chest—just by inhaling with force. Yoselle thought he had gotten the lesson of strong breaths but even after a half hour of repeated trying, he was not able to break the string.

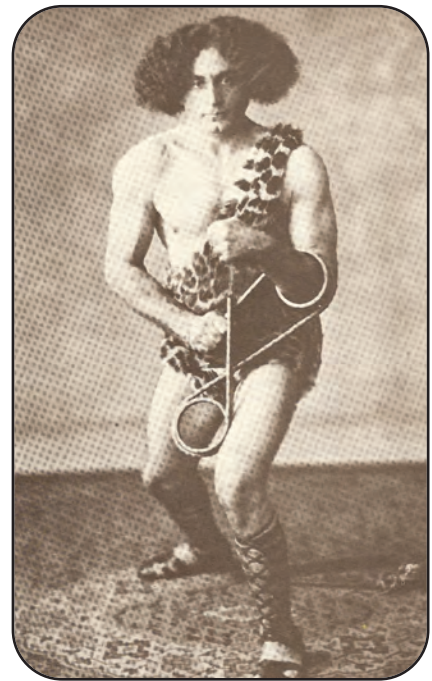
To show Yoselle how far one could go in developing breath strength, Volanko latched a heavy chain around his own chest, then instructed, “Master low and high breathing and you empower the heart, the brain, and all the organs. Terrific bodily power can be drawn from the full breath.” He took in a full abdominal spirit until his stomach looked like he had swallowed a balloon, then shifted the breath to the upper lungs, strained for a moment and the chain snapped as if lightning had struck it. Yoselle was never over-proud again.

From this lesson forward, Volanko spent time everyday training Yoselle in wrestling techniques, in addition to hardening his endurance and mental tenacity. Yoselle became a great wrestler. Volanko’s words became his own thoughts, “Think that you are strong and you are, think that you will be faster and you will be, think you will get up again and you will.”

As the months sped by, the buckets finally became full. Yoselle had been transformed.

He was happily cleaning Volanko’s train car one day when he noticed the star of David, and realized that his teacher was Jewish like himself. Volanko didn’t look Jewish and had pretended to be a Cossack. Volanko was ashamed and confessed, “Yes, I hide my heritage—for no circus would hire me as a Jew. This is where you can be stronger than your teacher, Yoselle. Never betray who you are. Be proud of your past.”

One April day the circus train rolled back into Yoselle’s hometown of Sulvak again and Volanko



Yoselle as
THE MIGHTY ATOM

announced that Yoselle would leave his service. Yoselle had grown strong in body, mind, and spirit.

Yoselle had left home a sickly boy and returned a radiant young man. His mother fainted when she saw him, and when she came to, the Greensteins began a celebration that went on for many days. Yoselle became engaged to a young woman whom he had always fancied and when they turned eighteen, they married. Yoselle knew he had the power to make life change from difficult to celebratory, so he and his new wife immigrated to America.

Yoselle changed his name to Joseph and after a difficult beginning, became the strongest man in America, known as “The Mighty Atom”. Crowds flocked to see the small Hercules (5’4”) perform unbelievable feats of strength. Joseph kept training every part of his body, mind, and spirit until he could bend crow bars with his bare hands, bite nails and chains in two with his teeth and explode chains off his chest.

Even at 82, he could still break chains with his breath and drive spikes through wood using the palm of his hand as a hammer. He had demonstrated his teacher’s proclamation that the greatest athletes often come from the sick and the infirm.



The Mighty Atom's Twelve Rules for Raising Delinquent Children

From The Mighty Atom by Ed Spielman, Viking Press, 1979

1. Begin in infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe that the world owes him a living.
2. When he picks up bad words, laugh at him. This will make him think he is cute. It will also encourage him to pick up cuter phrases that will later blow off the top of your head.
3. Never give him any spiritual training. Wait until he is 21, and then let him decide for himself.
4. Avoid use of the word "wrong." It may develop into a guilt complex. Later, when he is arrested for stealing a car, he can conclude that society is against him and that he is being persecuted.
5. Pick up everything he leaves lying around; books, shoes, clothes. Do everything for him, so that he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility upon others.
6. Let him read any printed matter that he can get his hands on. Be careful that the silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized, but let his mind feast on garbage.
7. Quarrel frequently in the presence of your children. In this way they will not be too shocked when their home is broken up later.
8. Give a child all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as tough as you had them?
9. Satisfy his every craving for food, drink, and comfort. See that every sensual desire is gratified. Denial may lead to harmful frustration.
10. Take his part against neighbors, teachers, policemen. They are all prejudiced against your child.
11. When he gets into real trouble, apologize to yourself by saying, "I could never do anything with him."
12. Prepare for a life of grief. You will be likely to have it.

Hand your child an American dollar bill, showing him/her the eye and the pyramid on the reverse side. Have your child fold the dollar bill so that only the eye and pyramid are framed. Ask them if they would like it in a place in their room where they can see it easily and see that they are building their pyramid of attention. You might even tell them it is the eye of Providence, the blessing that shines after you have laid the foundational blocks of trying, persistence, and rest.



Parents' Personal/Cultural History

This is not a story for you, but rather stories by you: Tell your child some history, let them know, in your own words, how for a long time, people could be bought and sold. Someone that didn't care for you, but was bigger, could tell you what to do. They could take you away from your family, make you work all day for little food and sparse shelter. And worse.

But from time to time, people changed their destiny of slavery and oppression and stood up for freedom and justice. Moses led his people to freedom, the Athenians abolished tyrants and established democracy, the Magna Carta made the kings follow their own laws, the Declaration of Independence established liberty forever, Abraham Lincoln abolished outright slavery; Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma, and Nelson Mandela all led (and are leading) people out of oppression towards the promised land of freedom.

Every history has its stories. Tell them about past leaders and emphasize each case of truly great persistence. Tell them any stories in your own family history about relatives who overcame great hardship.

P.S. Written for children and illustrated brilliantly, I recommend *The Great Trickster* by Molly McGregor. She does more than justice to the **Tibetan** story of Milarepa and the iconic tasks he performed with great attention. In addition, her illustrations are what one would hope for.

Nature Games

The following Nature Games are given for their usefulness to the study and development of attention and rest.

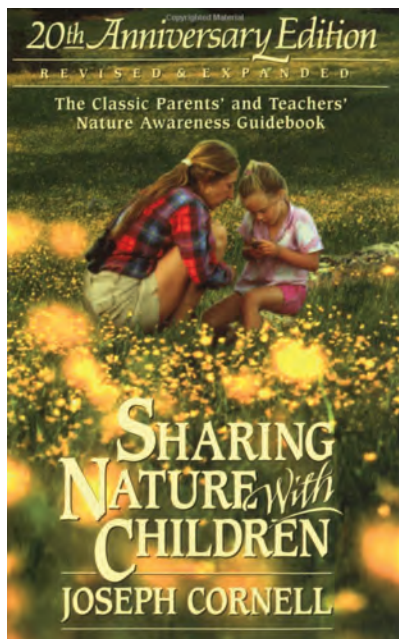
Ten Things

Ages: seven and up.

Materials needed: Note pads and pencils.

Give your children each a note pad and pencil and take them on a nature walk. After walking some distance, have them find a comfortable place where they can sit and write down (e.g. ten) things they saw, ten sounds they heard, ten smells, ten body sensations, and ten feelings they felt. Encourage right-brained reporting as well as left-brained accounting of their experiences. For instance, you might suggest that they write the things they heard in onomatopoeic fashion, after giving them a few examples of how to convert the sounds of nature into language. For example: instead of writing that they heard “the wind”, they might write “whooooossh”. As with many of the other games, the major purpose of this one is to develop and strengthen their capacity for participatory experience. If you can, ask them also to name, recount, or recollect times they perhaps felt the mystery of life, or times the ancients or Indians would call a spirit.

A simpler, non-written exercise can be played by younger children. The children are directed to “see how many things you can hear.” Follow with the other senses, but always start with listening to help them get into a sensitive relationship to what surrounds them—instead of being automatically distracted by their own energy.



I recommend this book whole-heartedly.

Touch a Deer

Ages: four and up.

The adult is the “deer”(at least for the first few times). He or she finds a place in a wooded area or open field to “graze”—by bending down and pretending to be a deer, occupied with munching the foliage. The children (in groups, holding hands) are to sneak up on the deer without the deer hearing them coming or seeing them moving. The object of the game is for the children to cooperate as a group and to get close enough to the deer to touch it. (This game is similar to the classic children’s game “red-light/green-light”.)

The younger children should be given only twenty yards or so to traverse, and over quiet ground (small twigs, leaves, etc). The older children can be given fifty yards, and over “noisier” ground, (according to your art).

At first, the most impulsive group rushes forth. If the grazing deer hears a sound from the approaching children, it looks up, with eyes wide open, hands up behind its ears, palms open and fingers together (imitating the habits and highly sensitive ears of a wild deer). Once the deer hears a sound, it then looks directly at the group(s) making the noise, and if it sees a child move at all, it runs away— around and closer to the calmer, slower children. The children “freeze” in whatever position they are caught in at that moment. This teaches balancing skills and catlike movement as well as evenhandedness. After prancing away to a new “safe” distance from the

moving children, the deer then looks back to see if

the children are still moving. If they are not,

then, after several seconds, the deer

looks away and continues to graze,

and the players can once again

begin to approach quietly.

This game can be played

for an hour or more;

changing groups, groups

size, or as individuals, and

the children may graduate to

being the deer—with adult help

at first.



author as scared deer, 1986

Once a group of children was playing the Deer Game in a Northern California forest when, in

the midst of their self-imposed silence, they heard much noise in the woods nearby. Their teacher alerted them that a deer was probably coming toward them, and this would give them a chance to practice their techniques for real! Indeed, a buck and two does came right upon the group of children, all of whom “froze” and were silently alert. The deer stopped and stared at the kids, ears forward for a full minute, then resumed trotting through the woods. As soon as the deer had gone, the whole group let out a whoop of excitement at their success in freezing still for a real deer!

Leaf Burial

All ages.

This is a classic nature game in which the participants are buried in leaves. Be sure that the area you have chosen is free of poison oak or poison ivy, and that the children are well-dressed for the activity and already relaxed and calm. (You may even join them!) Once you have found a good spot and the children are fairly well covered (except for eyes, nose, and mouth), lead them in a guided meditation according to their age and capacity. Some possibilities for this game are given here:

- 1) Tell your children that, with every breath, they can relax more and more and more. Tell them to see if, when they breathe out, they can relax so much that they feel that their bodies are melting into the Earth and they are becoming the same as the Earth itself. Have them take several deep breaths and, with every relaxing breath, feel how big the Earth is. After a few minutes, ask them to also feel how far the sky goes (“on and on and on”). Read to them poetry you like or recite an appropriate song. And be silent as long as you think is good.
- 2) Suggest to your children to imagine that they have been buried in the Earth like this for years and years and that they really like it because it feels so good. Tell them to imagine all the seasons passing, “with wind and snow and rain and animals and lightning and sunshine and things growing in them and people walking and talking,” and that “you are just the eyes of the world, looking up and enjoying everything.”
- 3) After you have played this game with the children, guide them to feel whatever they want that brings them into the feeling of happiness. Tell them that they don’t have to think about anything but to feel relaxed and feeling happy.

Wandering

Ages six and up.

This ‘graduate’ game is for those children who have benefited significantly from the preceding games, and who have developed a real feeling in their relationship to nature. Tell your children that you want to teach them about a new way to walk in the out-of-doors. Instead of walks on which they are to look for something in particular, they are to walk to notice **everything**. This kind of walk is called “wandering”. In wandering, the main focus is to notice the mystery or beauty or wonder or feeling or life-spirit in everything. The walk is to be slow, silent, full of deep breathing and feeling. It is to be punctuated with periods of just sitting, or even lying on the ground. Let them know it is possible to allow one’s feeling to naturally merge into the feeling of the mystery felt everywhere in nature.

Give your children a large, but safe and defined area to wander in. At first, wander with them so that you can point out ways in which they can slow down and exercise their feeling. They are encouraged to walk alone, at an agreed upon distance from each other. Encourage them to take time to just sit, breathe deeply, and let their eyes be delighted by what is all around them. Let them know that they will be “wandering” for a specific time—as little as ten minutes or as much as sixty minutes. Once you have established the proper tone, sit in your pre-designated spot. When the time is up, ring a bell (or give some other such signal). They are to then walk calmly and silently to a prearranged area and share their experiences and feelings. Do this wandering as often as they can make use of it, to deepen their feeling of unity with life itself.



ATTENTION!

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen
or even touched — they must be felt with the heart.
— Helen Keller

If there is light in the soul,
There will be beauty in the person.
If there is beauty in the person,
There will be harmony in the house.
If there is harmony in the house,
There will be order in the nation.
If there is order in the nation,
There will be peace in the world.
—Chinese Proverb

A loving heart is the truest wisdom.
—Charles Dickens

To know how to choose a path with heart is to learn how to follow intuitive feeling.
Logic can tell you superficially where a path might lead to,
but it cannot judge whether your heart will be in it.
~ Jean Shinoda Bolen

Remember this: very little is needed to make a happy life.
—Marcus Aurelius

Shallow men and women live that they may eat and drink,
whereas the deeper men and women eat and drink that they may live.
—Socrates

The Core Stories: True Happiness

Introduction:

Brief and Long Lasting Happiness

Excitement vs Happiness

High Happy vs Deep Happy

The Stories of:

Hellenic: *King Midas*

Arabic: *Ali's Discovery and the Circle of Unhappiness*

Chinese: *Hedgehog's Changing Sight*

African/Brazilian/Hindi: *The First Lesson*

Judaic: *Rabbi Akiba's "Gam Za Letovah"*

Indian: *Hanuman-ji's Lesson*

Parent Guides

“If you give a pig and a boy everything they want,
you get a good pig and a bad boy.”

—88 year old Tennessee farmer,
when asked what he had learned in life

Brief and Long Lasting Happiness

Excitement vs Happiness or High Happy vs Deep Happy

The distinction between inherent happiness and the happiness that is *caused* forms a central theme in every great religion and philosophical persuasion. It is not the things or the power you get or have that makes you happy, it's what you are and how you value and relate to others, creatures, and things. It has always been noted that happiness is not in things, but in relationship. This distinction between inherent, expressive happiness and caused, acquired happiness forms the foundation of character: Morality itself could be said to be described by this distinction. In simply noticing this difference between sharing happiness and getting excitement, a worthier life is nourished; an unexamined life is truly not worth living. This is values education at its core.

Because inherent happiness is native and is the simplest of all feelings, it doesn't require any form of special knowledge to feel it. Sage counsel has always pointed to a childlike (not childish) awe in real living. Children in their naive state of openness can easily feel this native happiness. Children enjoy the lesson of shared happiness' seniority over acquired glee in a plethora of stories throughout the world. Beginning with the archetypal western tradition, the *Core Stories* consider the ancient story of gold-loving King Midas.

As you may know, Dionysus only reluctantly gave the magic touch to King Midas for taking care of his friend Silenus, who had lost his way and fallen asleep in King Midas' rose garden. And of course, Midas, upon attaining his reward, ran around turning everything to gold, until no other enjoyments remained, not even the natural pleasure of eating, drinking, and smelling the roses. Most poignant of all, he lost his relationship with his daughter. Only gold was the tragedy foretold in Dionysus' reluctance.

When Midas realized that he had wished for a tragedy, he was truly sorry for the real treasure he had lost. On the basis of this turning from acquiring happiness from objects to relational, harmonious appreciation, he washed everything in water from a nearby river, restoring every thing and everyone to their greater-than-gold native state. Realizing that happiness was not cloistered in things but in the open wonder of existence itself, King Midas left his kingdom and went with his daughter to live in a small cabin near a meadow in the woods. By applying the wisdom of this most foundational of all lessons, we know how to locate true happiness.

Developing character deepens with the magnification of the primary feeling at one's core; the open, relational heart in the middle. This core happiness, not to be confused with gleefulness or even a "positive outlook", comprises the deep substance of an intelligent life. Happiness distinct from excitement

widens the door to deep, full character. The stories in this section, combined with our own growth, sensitivity, and confession, guide our children to feel this primary urge to true happiness, and also confirms in them their own emotional durability. They strengthen their ability to feel toward long-lasting happiness in every situation, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. This preference for native, relational happiness is the foundational wise choice of all other wise choices. Parents can find a multitude of stories and sayings addressing this theme in their own spiritual and religious tradition or ethical foundations.

A corollary theme immediately appears: how we feel affects how we see. As we notice happiness and un-happiness and a vast range of emotions, we also notice how our perception of our world is colored by how we feel. We see poorly when we are unhappy and lazy; we see better when we are excited or energetic; we see best when we are happy and engaged. Wisdom about perception itself naturally arises when we give our attention to this primary issue of true and lasting happiness. Think about: What does a tall glass of water look like to someone at a big party or to someone crawling across a dry desert?

It is good and essential to talk about happiness directly, learn about happiness with your children, and demonstrate happiness to them. Let them simply know that happiness does not come from things but is always at one's core, and is magnified in caring relations. The strength of true happiness is not acquired but shared. Such straightforward attention to one's heart provides an inviting avenue to the unthreatened, simple feeling of real joy. Let us share this openness with our children and teach them to share it in ordinary and intelligent ways with the world.



Hellenic: The Story of King Midas

The Story of King Midas is a classic Hellenic myth on the tragedy that is inevitable when true happiness is not noticed.

Midas was once a very rich king who ruled the land of Phrygia. He had everything a king could want. He lived in a huge castle surrounded by rose gardens and all kinds of beautiful and luxurious things. He had all the good food he could eat, and shared his abundant life with his wonderful daughter, Zoe (meaning “Life”).

But Midas thought that his huge pile of gold made him happiest of all. Every day, he would begin to count his gold until he became so excited that he would laugh and laugh and throw the gold up in the air to shower himself with his gold coins. Sometimes he would even lie down and cover himself with golden things, giggle and giggle, and roll around in it like a baby.

Dionysus, the god of celebration, went travelling through Midas’ kingdom. Dionysus had a friend named Silenus who wandered away from his travelling party and fell asleep in Midas’ famous rose garden. Midas, upon recognizing Silenus, took special care of him for eleven days and then returned him safely back to Dionysus. The god, delighted and grateful to see Silenus, said to King Midas, “You have done a great service by taking care of my friend for me that I want to grant you any wish your heart desires.”

In an instant Midas replied, “I wish that everything that I touch would turn to gold!”

Dionysus frowned, “Are you sure that’s what you want?”

“Oh yes,” Midas answered, “gold makes me completely happy!”

“Very well,” Dionysus sighed reluctantly, “starting tomorrow morning, everything you touch will turn into gold.”

The next morning Midas woke up and couldn’t wait to try out his golden touch. Before he got out of bed, he reached over and touched his bedside table and instantly it turned to gold, just as Dionysus had promised. Midas had the golden touch!

“It works, it works!!!” he shouted as he sprang out of bed. He touched the chair, the table, the rug, the door, the fireplace, his bathtub, a picture, and went running like a mad-

man on and on through his palace, touching one thing after another until he was out of breath and hungry, but still elated.

Midas felt all bubbly as he entered his dining hall. He sat down at the breakfast table, leaned over and pulled a rose close to his nose to enjoy its fragrance. But when he touched the flower, its sweet smell poured forth no more. It was now cold metal. “I’ll have to sniff them without touching them from now on!” he thought to himself with disappointment.

Without thinking, he popped a grape into his mouth, but he nearly broke a tooth for the grape had also turned to gold. Very carefully, he tried to eat a muffin, but his teeth only clanked on the now hard bread, once so soft and delicious. “Gold again,” thought Midas. “Oh no! Everything I touch turns to gold. Perhaps...” he said, as he grabbed his wine glass to take a drink, but immediately he began to cough and choke as liquid gold slid down his throat.

Fear suddenly gobbled his joy. At that moment his favorite cat jumped up into his lap, wanting to get stroked and petted, but was instantly turned into a metal statue. Instead of snuggling his fingers into warm purring fur, Midas’ fingers touched only hardness and coldness. He started to cry. “Am I only to feel gold’s coldness for the rest of my life?” he shouted through his tears.

Zoe, hearing her father cry, ran over to comfort him with a hug. He tried to stop her, but accidentally touched her. Instantly before him was only a gold statue of what before had been his joyous daughter. Midas cried and cried and cried.

Finally, he held his arms up and pleaded, “Oh Dionysus, gold is not what I really want after all! I already had all I wanted all along. I just want to be able to hug my daughter again, to hear her laugh, to see her smile, to touch and smell my roses



and pet my cat and share food with my loved ones. Please help me, save me from this golden curse.”

Dionysus, being a very kind god, whispered an answer into Midas’ heart. “You may undo your golden touch and restore those golden statues to life again, but it will cost you all the gold in your kingdom.”

“Anything,” Midas cried, “I want life, not gold.”

“Then go to the river Pactulus and wash your hands at its source. Carry the water back home in jugs and pour it over everything that you’ve changed to gold. That water, along with your changed heart, will restore the liveliness to those things that your greed froze into metal.”

Midas ran to the river and washed his hands, grateful to Dionysus for another chance. He watched in wonder as the gold flowed from his hands into the sand at the bottom of the riverbed. Quickly he filled a jug with water and hurried to his royal palace to pour it over his daughter. He wetted his hand from the jug and petted the cat.



In an instant, the empty silence reawakened into laughter and the music of Zoe’s voice and his cat purring. The sounds filled the rooms and hall of the palace once again. Midas and his daughter hugged and laughed over and over again. Then she helped him bring jugs of Pactulus water back to the palace to pour over every last twig, rose, rock, rug, bed, bread, and grape that still gleamed gold.

Midas rejoiced as the vibrance of life returned to his garden, palace, and heart. He now loved the Brightness of life instead of the luster of gold. To celebrate, he gave away the rest of his money and possessions and moved to a cabin on the edge of the forest. There, having learned life’s most valuable lesson, he and his daughter enjoyed the wonders of the fields and forest, and never forgot where true happiness is found.

Parent Guide: Accentuate the Distinction

Ask:

Was King Midas **truly** happy when he could turn things into gold?

Was he **really** happy when he got his daughter back?

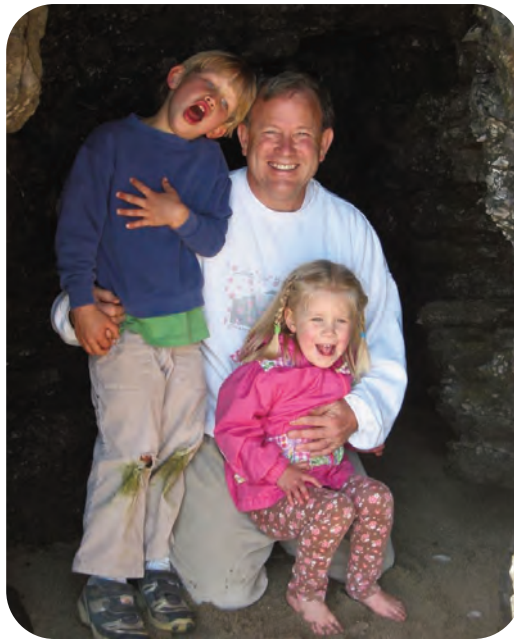
Sharpen the distinction:

Did he **think** he was happy when he first got the golden touch?

Was he **sure** he was happy when he got his daughter back?

You don't need to have a PhD to answer these questions. A four year old can do it. With this kind of accentuation, explain to your child in your own words how the happiness of relationship and sharing is greater than the happiness of things and possessions. Using the following stories, guide them to feel the difference between brief and long-lasting happiness. Develop simple comparisons such as excited <--> truly happy, or 'high happy' and 'deep happy'.

Remember to let them feel **good** about excitement & pleasure; and feel **better** about empathy & love. The nascent mind **tends to see only black and white**: as if brief happiness is bad, and only long-lasting happiness is good. Guide them to feel both freely and intelligently. Blend this theme into the frustrations of ordinary events and the joy of family.



Ask:

Can you feel excited and not happy? Like just eating a sweet for sad consolation.

Can you feel excited and happy at the same time? Like getting something from someone you love.

Is excitement like happiness?

Which is best, stimulation or love?

Can you feel happy without excitement? Just sitting and doing nothing and still feeling really happy?

Is half a piece of cake better than none at all?

Can you feel joy and thirst at the same time?

Can you be happy even if you can't always get what you want?

(Can you, not would you! And yes, play the Rolling Stones song for them.)

Reward their considerations and listening to your guidance with an embrace or with liberties.

Kids can ask tough questions. When they do so, this is your chance to explain the wisdom you have heard and learned about important issues in your own life. Remember: you can't do these lessons wrong, that is, unless you don't do them. Merely your full-hearted-consideration is sufficient to pass wisdom on to our inheritors.

A man does not eat a cookie because he is hungry; a man eats a cookie because he is suffering and needs a small moment of happiness.

A woman does not eat a cookie because she likes sweets; a woman eats a cookie because she is lonely and needs love.

Children do not eat cookies because they are suffering or because they are lonely; children eat cookies because they are hungry and like sweets.

Only happiness and love and sweetness can satisfy a man, a woman, and a child.

— on the side of Unknown Jerome's Cookie Bag

Arabian: Ali's Discovery and the Circle of Unhappiness

As a child, I saw this classic Arabian story as a cartoon one Saturday morning and never forgot it.

Long ago, at the foot of the South Arabian Mountains, a quarry worker named Ali was toiling under the hot sun, cutting stone from the mountain. He was not happy and prayed for a great blessing to relieve him of his suffering. The sweat from his brow ran into his eyes and stung them, but Ali wouldn't stop to wipe his face in fear of the foreman nearby. He knew if he tried to wipe his eyes, the foreman would yell at him, and the lazy were often beaten. Now tears ran with his sweat as he pounded away upon the rock.



Suddenly, the water in his eyes began to shine and he looked down towards a golden glow. He blinked the sweat and tears from his eyes and saw a beautiful golden ring!! He quickly grabbed the golden treasure and slipped it on his finger—before anyone else could notice and take it away from him. He was thrilled! The money he could get from the ring could set him up in his own small business with his wife and son. “I would be happy then and there.” His days of unhappiness under the sun would soon be over.

Fear ran through the poor slave as he heard his foreman yell at him to keep working. What if the foreman saw Ali's discovery? He would steal it. Ali hid his fear and his excitement and pretended to just go back to work. He would hide the ring when the foreman was not looking.

“I wish I were the foreman in the shade of his tent”, he thought as he closed his eyes for a moment, “I would be happy then and there.” But as he opened his eyes he looked out upon the work crew, and he noticed that he was sitting where the foreman had been sitting,

in the shade with sweet drinks. “May the Mystery be praised!” he whispered in amazement, “This is the life!,” he thought, as he sipped his sweet drink.

But Ali’s contentment did not last long as he heard the loud voice of the sultan chastise him. “Foreman! What are you doing? Nothing? Do you think your job is to beat the workers while you taunt them with your stupid comforts? Give all these men a break, and make sure they have water and rest! If I catch you being mean to these men again, you will join them and I’ll find a new foreman!”

“Yes Sire, of course Sire,” Ali bowed to the sultan and signalled for the men to cease work and take water. Ali’s contentment had not lasted long, but as he motioned for the men to come and have a drink of water, he saw the ring still on his finger.

“Hmmm,” he thought, “I wonder . . . I wish I were the sultan on the way to his palace. I would be happy then and there,” and schazaam! Suddenly, Ali was peering out from the sultan’s caravan, surrounded with servants and dressed in the finest clothes. Ali was excited. He looked down at his magic ring and knew he could have anything he wished for.

Ali the sultan was carried back to his palace. He called for the finest delicacies and desserts, he called for the finest entertainment, he surrounded himself with maidens and servants. He forgot about the poor workers whose quarry was making him richer and richer. Ali stepped out onto one of his many verandas overlooking his oasis in the desert and gloated about his good fortune. “No one is more powerful than me,” he thought proudly to himself.

The sun beat down upon the land and the sultan’s palace and Ali began to sweat. He turned to retreat into the cool confines of his palace to be fanned and pampered and he suddenly thought, “I wish I were the sun, high in the sky! I would be happy then and there, for nothing would be more powerful than



me!” He blinked his eyes and schazaam! Suddenly he was looking down upon the whole world!

“I am the sun!!!” Ali exclaimed, “Nothing is more powerful than me.” He began to shine and shine, and shine harder and harder, showing everything his power. Men and women began to wail at the sun’s heat, the rivers and streams and lakes began to dry up, even the oasis began to wilt. “I am powerful!!” Ali delighted in his strength.

But as the waters of the earth evaporated, mighty clouds soon filled the sky. Ali radiated with all his might, but to no avail. No sunlight could get through. “The clouds are even more powerful than the sun!” Ali thought, “I wish I were the clouds, filling the sky, I’d be happy then and there.”

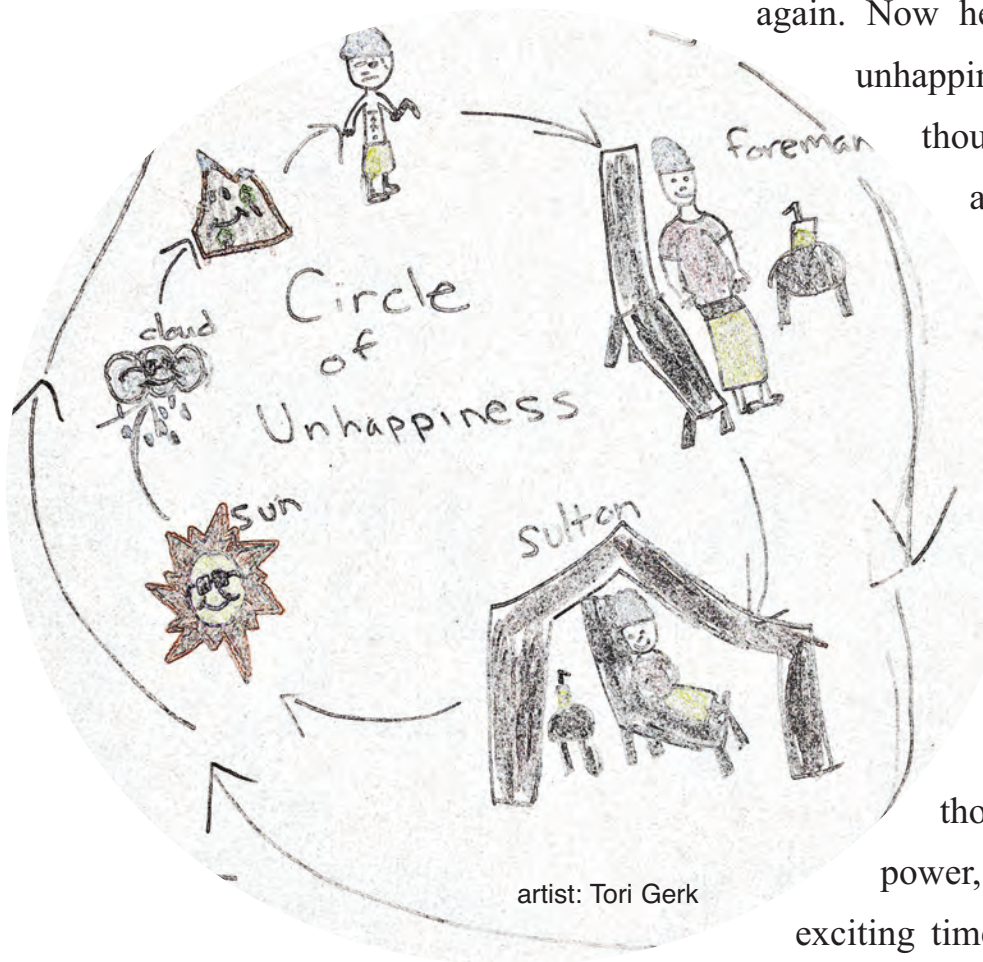
Schazaam! Ali was the clouds! “I am more powerful than the sun, more powerful than the sultan, more powerful than anything! Let the world feel my power!” Ali shouted with the clap of thunder and let loose a mighty rainstorm. Rain fell in torrents across the land, and soon a great flood filled every valley. People ran for their lives and prayed for the rain to cease.

Ali did not hear their pleas, for he was so consumed with himself. Instead, he blew this way and that, howling and thundering with zeal. Suddenly, however, he was stopped. “What!? What is halting my fun? What is more powerful than a raging storm?”

Ali looked to see that a great mountain had stopped the clouds and no matter how hard he tried, he could not move the mountain nor get around it. Frustrated and unhappy, Ali called out, “I wish I were the mountain, I’d be happy then and there, ruling the clouds. Nothing would be more powerful than me.”

Schazaam! Ali was the mountain! He felt his great stillness. He enjoyed the view of centuries, and thought he was the most powerful force of all. But then he heard and felt an irritating chink, chink, chink. He looked down and saw the stone cutters, slowly, but surely, taking the mountain down.

“Ah! It seems that the stone cutter is the most powerful force of all. Then and there, I would be happy if I were the stone cutter,” and schazzam! Ali was the stone cutter once



again. Now he felt the circle of his unhappiness, how he always thought happiness was in another, fantastic place, then, over there, and again then and there. Feeling this error, Ali felt to the happiness that is only found in the middle of your heart, always. Happiness is simple, natural, Ali thought, not in things or power, or in wishing for another exciting time or place. Here dawns upon us, Ali smiled, naturally feeling and

breathing the heart's radiance.

Ali could feel how happiness is the most powerful feeling of all, the deep happiness found at his core. He looked at his ring again and realized that even though he could be anything, go anywhere, or be anyone, he felt no need. He was completely happy here, resting in his deep heart, now.

With a smile, Ali took his ring off and dropped it down a deep crack in the earth. He needed nothing now. His unhappiness under the sun was indeed over. Now his happiness under the sun and stars began.

"Get back to work!" the old foreman screamed and cracked his whip at Ali. Ali smiled and felt sorry for the unhappy foreman. Suddenly, the sultan surprised the foreman once again and fired him on the spot. The sultan saw that Ali was not afraid nor glad that the

foreman had been fired. “Why have you no revenge in your heart in seeing this petty foreman thrown down?” the sultan called out to Ali.

“I am happy. Why would I let revenge take the place of happiness? My heart has no room for pettiness,” Ali answered the sultan.

The sultan’s own heart was chastened and gladdened and he made Ali the new foreman. Ali treated his team with kindness, gave them regular breaks and water. He forbade them to work in the midday sun and instead fed them well. Soon Ali’s team produced more stone than all the others. And Ali shared his happiness with his wife and family and they all grew in happiness. The sultan soon made him governor. Ali’s happiness made him the best governor in all of Arabia and soon he was the sultan’s right hand man. The sultan trusted Ali more than anyone else and loved to be near this happy man. And when the sultan was dying he bequeathed his kingdom to the happiest man in the land, Ali.

But all the while Ali was already happy. He hadn’t been made happy by being the foreman, hadn’t been made happy by being pronounced the governor or even the sultan. For Ali had deeply learned the difference between getting happiness and sharing happiness.



Parent Guide

Talk to your children about how real happiness is not something you can get, but something you express; it grows from the heart, and is not acquired by the body or mind. You can notice happiness with the mind and the body, but it is not lasting.

Let them know how you feel and how you understand this wisdom.

Share with them favorite simple passages from your own readings that remind you of this universal theme.

I say: Go outside into the field, nature and the sun, go out and find the mystery in yourself and in God. Think of the beauty that again and again expresses itself with you and outside of you and be happy.

— Anne Frank

"The power and capacity of learning is already in the soul. Just as the eye was unable to turn from darkness to light without the whole body, only by the movement of the whole soul can the mind be turned from the world of becoming into that unchanging reality of being. By degrees, we learn to endure the sight of reality, mere being, and of the brightest reality, supreme being, or in other words, what is Good."

—Socrates

Asian: The Hedgehog's Changing Sight

I elaborated upon this classic Chinese story to re-emphasize the corollary about growing happiness: your perception changes according to how you feel—and when you are happy, your perception is most real.

A hedgehog lost his favorite digging spade and was very unhappy. He suspected the big hedgehog who lived next door had stolen it. His neighbor looked like he stole it, he acted like he stole it, he sounded like he stole it, he even smelled like he stole it. He was afraid his neighbor would steal something else.

But then hedgehog found his spade. Suddenly his neighbor didn't look like he stole it, didn't act like he stole it, didn't sound like he stole it, he even smelled nice again.

This puzzled hedgehog. He told his story to Panda. Panda said “Yes, I have learned that how I feel affects how I see and think. If I am hungry, bamboo looks like food; if I am full, I see its beauty.”

Hedgehog told his story and the story of the panda to the old farmer. The farmer said, “Yes, I have learned to be grateful for what I do have, it's no sense being unhappy for what I do not have. If I only have millet left to eat I am not sad, but glad to have something to eat. And if it is harvest, and bounty surrounds me, I am grateful to have something to eat. And so my world is always full.”

Hedgehog told his story, the panda's story and the farmer's story to a travelling musician. The musician jumped with glee and began to sing,



“Don’t put everything down,
just so you can feel big,
it is the world that is big,
it is the life that is grand;

Let us love and not hate;
whatever we have,
and whatever we see,
let our eyes delight the world,
let us always truly see.

let our eyes delight the world,
let me carry you home;
we can be always free,
and sing happily;
let us always truly see,
let us always be happy.”



Hedgehog clapped and clapped and clapped. The musician scooped up the hedgehog, skipped and sang all the way to hedgehog’s house. Hedgehog was very, very happy and his neighbor looked like a very good friend.



Parent Guide

Co-create the melody to Hedgehog's song.

From time to time, when you see someone exaggerated in their current obsession, gently point out how their perceptions are colored by their mood and desire.

Give your children examples of how your perception has changed according to how you felt and what surrounds you.

Share with them Maslow's "If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail".

Praise their happy observances and comments. Point out how we see most clearly when we are happy.

humans see the river as water
animals see it as home (fish)
gods see nectar
hungry ghosts see pus and putrid blood
demons see molten lava.

—Tibetan Book of the Dead

Still a man hears what he wants to hear
and disregards the rest.

—Paul Simon

How you look
is not as important as
How you see

African/Brazilian/Hindi: The First Lesson

I have heard this same story from every sector around the world, with almost identical versions in the African, Brazilian, and Hindi cultures.

A great warrior named Jaya-ji fell in love with a beautiful young woman named Annamaya and asked her to marry him. But she spurned his request, stating, “You are brave and strong and appealing to my eye, Jaya-ji, but you lack wisdom. I cannot marry a man who isn’t wise.”

“Then I shall learn wisdom!” declared Jaya-ji.

Jaya-ji travelled until he found a man said to be wise. He approached the sage with vigor and announced, “I have come to learn wisdom.”

The sage was kind to the young man and assented to Jaya-ji’s request, saying, “Come with me, I will give you your first lesson,” and led Jaya-ji down to the river. There, the

sage pushed Jaya-ji’s head underwater and held it there until he was squirming with fear! At last, the wise man let go of his stronghold, and Jaya-ji came up, sputtering and coughing.

“Tell me what you were thinking when your body screamed and squirmed,” demanded the old man.

“Air to breathe!” cried Jaya-ji.

“Are you sure? Did you think instead of how brave you are, or how skilled a hunter you’ve become?”

“No,” said Jaya-ji, “I only thought of air.”

“Well, when you want wisdom as much as you wanted air, you may come back to learn the depth of truth.”



Jaya-ji returned to his village and met with Annamaya.

“Have you learned wisdom?” she asked.

Jaya-ji lowered his head and spoke softly. “No, my beautiful Annamaya. A sage showed me that I want air to breath more than I want wisdom.”

“In that case,” she said, “I will marry you.”

Jaya-ji was confused. “But it will take me many years before I learn wisdom. I’ll be old and ugly, and have weakness in my legs and eyes.”

“Yes, as I will,” said Annamaya with a smile. “But you have shown me that you have understood your overproudness and that you value honesty. Wisdom will come naturally.”



Judaic: Rabbi Akiba's “Gam Za Letovah”

This is a traditional Talmudic-Haggadic wisdom-tale.

Long ago, there lived a rabbi named Akiba, who travelled from place to place teaching happiness and wisdom to the people. His possessions were few, but his happiness was great. His happiness grew everyday as he shared it with his listeners. He never needed anything in order to be happy. He breathed the feeling of the mystery all the time.



One strange night, he wandered into a town with his donkey, rooster, and knapsack to find lodging. He lived without money, living only on the gifts he was given in appreciation of his happiness. But this night, no one recognized him or his happiness and everyone refused him shelter. But Akiba did not need shelter in order to be happy, and so, with every refusal he encountered, he muttered, “Gam Za Letovah”, or “This too, must be for a good purpose.” Akiba lived by faith, not by design.

Relishing sleeping under the starry sky, Akiba pitched camp outside the city walls. He tied up his donkey and caged his rooster, then lay down on his blanket and gazed up at the endless stars. The smell of the evening wind and the freshness of the night sky ran ripples of happiness all through him. He breathed deeply the mystery of living and seemed to melt into everything.

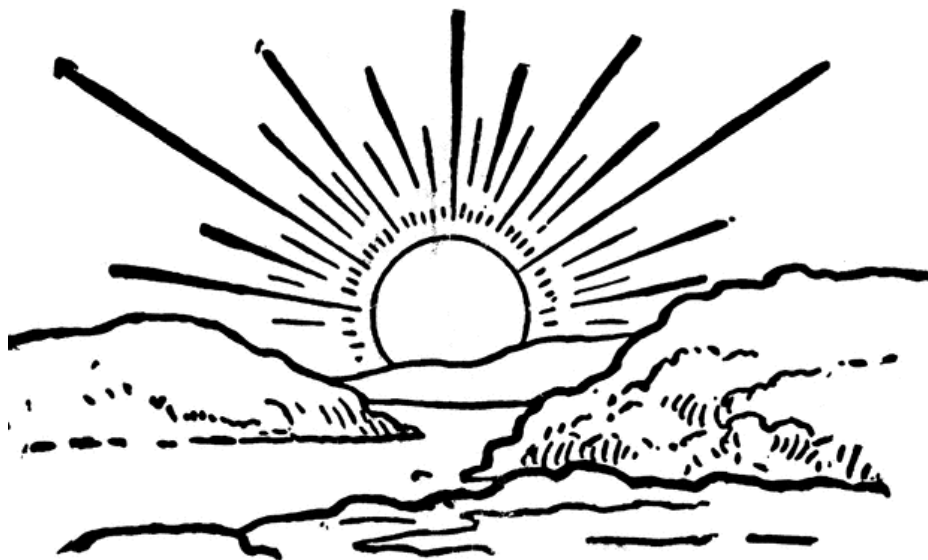
Suddenly, a lion prowling the city walls leaped onto his donkey and killed it! Even as Akiba sadly watched the lion drag his donkey away, his faith was not in question. “Gam Za Letovah” he muttered again, and soon his sorrow relaxed into trust.

As his relaxation deepened, he began to feel a sweet rapture rumble upon him again, but then was suddenly jolted into concern and tense attention again as a cat stole into his rooster’s cage and killed the poor bird!

“Gam Za Letovah” was all he could say and again Akiba contemplated the strangeness of this evening. He let go of his sorrows and fears. He had no shelter, no animals, no money, but he didn’t need anything to notice the awe of life. Like a child hearing a fairy tale, he wondered how the night would all come out, and soon swooned into a greater mystery. As if he had just been kissed asleep by his mother, Akiba’s heart shone into the night. Floating on an ocean of feeling, rising and falling breaths and waves, he felt set free, and fell into a blissful sleep.

Waking with the morning sun, Akiba found out how true his words were. During the night, a band of robbers had broken into the city and had carried all the inhabitants away into captivity. If he had found shelter the night before, it would have been tragic. And the baying of his donkey and the crowing of his rooster did not lead the robbers to him, for their voices had been silenced by the Mystery.

This Mystery moved Akiba often and a new dawn sprang from his heart. Happily he moved to free his brothers and sisters.



Parent Guide

Tell your children stories about times when you were deeply happy. Then ask them to tell you about a time they were happy in their heart.

Share with them your own tales of camping or hiking and noticing the Mystery of life in the great outdoors. Ask them about their tales.

Look up into the starry sky together with your children. Wonder together, appreciate together, praise the feeling of wonder, within and around.

Let your children know that we live within a great, vast, benign, mysterious process, and that we can usually trust It, even when we can't comprehend it — just like Akiba. We have to be smart in this sometimes strange world where everything indeed passes, but our deeper reality is riddled with beauty and grace.

Teach your children the Spanish song, “Que sera sera”. Notice the similarities to “Gam Za Letovah”.



Indian: Hanuman-ji's Lesson

This story is a combination of a traditional Hindu tale, a personal lesson, and a description of Sai Baba of Shirdi, the great sage of nineteenth century India.

There once was a thief named Hanuman-ji, who lived in the town of Shirdi, who thought he could get happiness from stealing. He did not deserve the name of the great monkey god Hanuman, who never forgot the true happiness of the heart. The thief forgot to see and love the wonder that always surrounded him, and looked only to get excited by tricking others. Hanuman-ji's devotion to excitement was really devotion to happiness, only he did not know it.

One beautiful spring day, Hanuman-ji stood at the entrance to the city, watching the parade of valuables passing him by. He didn't see people, only their worth. He weighed everything and everyone for value and cost, deciding what he might steal. Then along came an old man dressed quite simply, carrying a simple staff, yet walking with an uncommon elegance. He must be royalty in disguise! Hanuman-ji heard coins in his pocket and looked to see the man's hand go into his pocket. The strange old man pulled out a coin and rubbed it with his fingers and thumb. The coin glistened in the sunlight and dazzled Hanuman-ji's eyes.

The thief began to follow the simple man, and soon caught up with him. Hanuman-ji pretended to be friendly and the old man pretended to believe him. The old man was wise and knew what the thief wanted, and decided to teach him a lesson.

The thief and sage sat down near the fountain at the village center, and the simple man pulled out his bag of coins and sorted through them until he came to one in particular. Now Hanuman-ji could see that the coins were not made of gold, but of cheap copper, and it wasn't worth spending anymore time with the old man. Hanuman-ji thought that while the old man was looking at his coin, he could excuse himself.

Just as Hanuman-ji started to get up, the simple man asked him, "What is your name?" The old man's eyes were so clear that Hanuman-ji became uncomfortable.



“Hanuman-ji” he answered, looking away, thinking that the old man had not seen his discomfort. Hanuman-ji was nervous, but pretended to be polite by asking, “And yours?”

The happy man did not answer him, but instead looked back at his coin and spoke to it, “Hanuman-ji, so that is your name, I have always wondered.”

Hanuman-ji thought that the old man was a bit weird and stood to leave, “Well, must be going, enjoy your stay here in Shirdi.” He thought the old man was smiling at the coin and would not notice him leaving.

“Why, thank you for not stealing my coins. My treasures shall be yours, but first, ” the happy man smiled and held up his finger as if to give a lesson, “I shall give you what you want in hope that you will want what I want to give you.” Mysteriously he paused, brought his hand and body to rest.

“Huh?” was Hanuman-ji’s only response, because he was too scared to think about it.

The wise one added, “And when you need me, I’ll be sitting right here.” The man pulled out a begging bowl and began to chant the names of life and light.

Hanuman-ji realized how wrong he had been! The old man was neither rich nor royal, but a crazy, holy man! He had no money! And he acted quite strange.

Hanuman-ji hurried back to the city gate. Hopefully, he could befriend another traveler and at least get a meal, for he was getting hungry and it was getting late. But he met no one he thought would feed him or from whom he could steal something, and became hungrier and hungrier. So he sat in the lazy afternoon sun and wondered about the old man and the crazy thing he had said.

The young thief began to rest in the sunlight and, while pondering the riddle of the blissful old man, fell asleep thinking, “you’ll give me what I want, what I want...”

Hanuman-ji imagined saying, “I wish I could have whatever I wanted!” when suddenly a tiny, well-dressed spirit appeared.

The magic being bowed deeply to Hanuman-ji and offered, “I will make you a deal. I will be your devoted servant, I will grant you whatever wish you want, but you must keep me busy. For when you run out of wishes, then you must serve me.”

Hanuman-ji thought he had it made. He had lots and lots of wishes. “Sure thing” he said, and they shook hands.

Hanuman-ji’s personal servant bowed deeply and said, “So what is your first wish?”

“I’m hungry!” Hanuman-ji shouted. “Feed me the finest curries and breads in all of India!” His servant smiled, raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and presto! The finest meal in all the land appeared before him! Hanuman-ji dove in! He gorged on curries and paneers, breads and drinks, flowers and sweets. When he had eaten, his servant bowed deeply and said, “So what is your next wish?”

“Gold! Gold! Gold! A mound of gold coins! Piles and mounds! And fabulous jewels to match!” Hanuman exclaimed.

His servant smiled, raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and presto! Looking like a grand harvest of grains and fruits, riches of gold and jewels ran in long piles across the field. “Whoopie!” Hanuman-ji shouted and jumped onto the piles and rolled around in delight. “Whoopie!” he shouted again and again.

When Hanuman-ji had run himself silly, shouted himself hoarse, and adorned himself heavily, he sat down on a gold stool to take a breath. His servant bowed deeply and said, “So what is your next wish?”

Hanuman-ji was rolling now. “Surround me with smiling friends, with beautiful maidens and fancy entertainment, with delicious food and drink for everyone! Let’s have a grand party! In my palace! And put all my riches in the cellars guarded by soldiers and dragons!” Hanuman-ji shrieked with glee.

His servant smiled, raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and presto! A palace appeared around them, beautiful and magnificent, with revelry and servants everywhere. Maidens

competed to be near him, fellows looked for his glance, entertainers and servants strived to please and delight him. Hanuman-ji lost himself in an endless party.

The next day, Hanuman-ji awoke with great pain. Once again his magic servant bowed deeply before him and inquired, “So what is your next wish?”

“I feel terrible, like I fell into cow dung. Take this pain away,” Hanuman-ji pleaded.

His servant smiled, raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and presto! Hanuman-ji felt fine. The magic servant bowed deeply and said, “So, what is your next wish?”

“Oh, let’s have another party like that!” Hanuman-ji smiled with glee.

His servant smiled, raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and presto! The party raged as before. And again, Hanuman-ji’s pain was taken away the next day and again, another party was thrown. This partying went on for days and days.

After a couple of weeks, Hanuman-ji was surprised. He began to get bored of partying all the time. He felt like he didn’t know enough. So, the next time the magic being bowed deeply and said, “So, what is your next wish?” Hanuman-ji asked to be given all knowledge.

His servant smiled, raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and presto! Hanuman-ji’s head was swimming in knowledge.

The magic servant again bowed deeply and said, “So, what is your next wish?”

“Uh-uh,” Hanuman-ji began to run out of wishes. He thought a thousand thoughts at once and could not decide on any one.

The magic being rose from his deep bow and inquired, “So, has my service ended and has yours begun? Are you done with your wishes?”

Fear overwhelmed Hanuman-ji. He tried to think of something he didn’t have or something that would take the magic being a long time. Hanuman-ji muttered, “Uh, I want a road, a solid gold road, uh, from my palace across the Himalayas, bridged across every river, tunneled under every ocean.” He thought that this would take the magic being a long time.

His servant smiled, raised his hand, snapped his fingers, and presto! The road instantly appeared everywhere!

The magic servant again bowed deeply and said, “So, what is your next wish?”

Hanuman-ji couldn’t think of a good wish and even if he did, he knew it would only hold the deal off for a second. Hanuman-ji realized that the magic being was in fact bad, and that in trying to get what he wanted, he had made a deal with a demon.

The magic being again rose from his deep bow and inquired, “So, is my service ended and has yours begun? Are you done with your wishes?”

Hanuman-ji didn’t know what to do or say or wish for. Terror ran through his heart. Suddenly, he remembered the old man and his coins. Hanuman-ji also remembered the strange things this man had said about getting what you want. Hanuman-ji turned to the demon and said, “I wish to take a walk. I’ll be back at sunset.”

Hanuman-ji raced back to Shirdi and found the happy, simple man. He fell at his feet and cried, “Oh blissful one, I have made a deal with a demon and suddenly realize that all my wishes do not make me happy. Please help me.”

“What is it, then, that you want?” the simple man inquired of the troubled Hanuman-ji.

“I want true happiness, not things,” Hanuman-ji pleaded, then told the open-minded sage about what had happened with the demon.

“You can get excited by getting things and you can get excited by pleasures. You can get excited by power, by knowledge, and by getting what you think you want, but you cannot buy love. You cannot steal a gift, or take heaven by storm. True peace cannot be acquired as part of any deal,” the free one explained wisely.

Hanuman-ji was very confused. How could he get out of his mess? Hanuman-ji begged the sage, “Please help me, I don’t know what to do.”

The wise man smiled. Finally, Hanuman-ji’s pleasures and knowledge and power were nothing compared to happiness and love. “Well, I cannot undo your deal with the demon, but perhaps this will help,” and he handed Hanuman-ji his danda or staff.

“What will this do?” Hanuman-ji was puzzled.

“If you have realized that happiness cannot be gotten magically, that love cannot be bought, then you can live straight, like my danda, and not take all the detours. When you

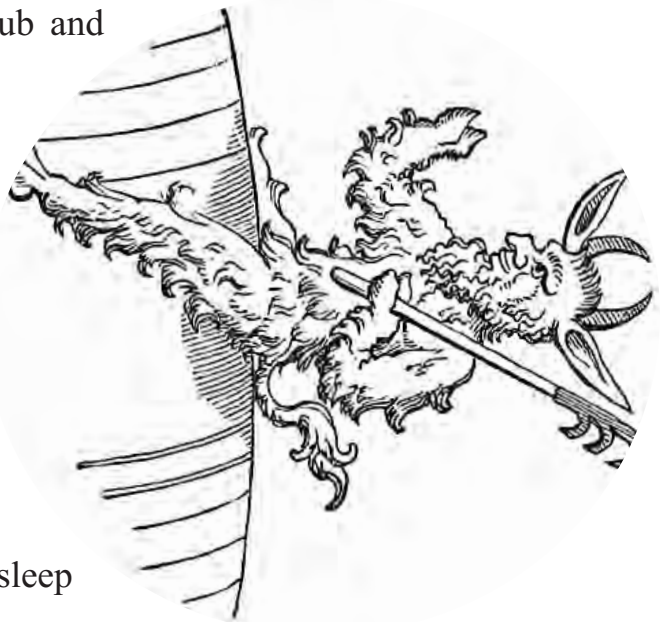
receive love and give love, then you are straight and happy. You cannot buy or get great Happiness. That's the crooked way; the straight way is to give and receive. The deepest Happiness is not in the body or mind, but in your heart."

Hanuman-ji realized that he was hearing the truth and bowed gratefully at the sage's wisdom. His heart sprouted and he knew that he wanted to learn more, but he still did not quite understand how the danda would help him with the demon. He held the staff and began to ask, "But how will this staff help . . ."

The happy man stopped him, "When you get back to the demon, and he bows and asks you for your next wish, take this staff and drive it into the ground with all the force of your heart. Tell him that you want him to climb up and down this danda until you get tired of watching him. Then sit down and contemplate this great lesson of being happy in the heart. When you begin to get bored or unhappy or wish you had something, look up at my staff and be grateful that you have learned that happiness cannot be gotten magically. Then meditate on the real happiness you find in love and in wonder. Persist in happiness, no matter what. Soon, the demon will tire of your happiness and will beseech you to undo the deal. Then bring my staff back to me and I will teach you all the excellences of blissfulness here. In the meantime, I will meditate on you." He took out his coin purse and withdrew a single coin to rub and bless.

Hanuman-ji carried his teacher's danda and felt its straightness and beauty. He did as he was told by the simple sage and before too long, the demon was crying for release. Hanuman-ji's happiness undid his deal with the demon and set him free to learn the ways of the heart.

Suddenly, Hanuman-ji awoke from his sleep and found himself at the gates of the city, beside the



parade of visitors and merchants. He had been awakened to a new life, liberated from the torments of his dream-like selfishness. Hanuman-ji ran to the center of the town and found the simple man, smiling and waiting for him. Hanuman-ji bowed deeply, as his heart was overwhelmed by the loving company of the one already awake.

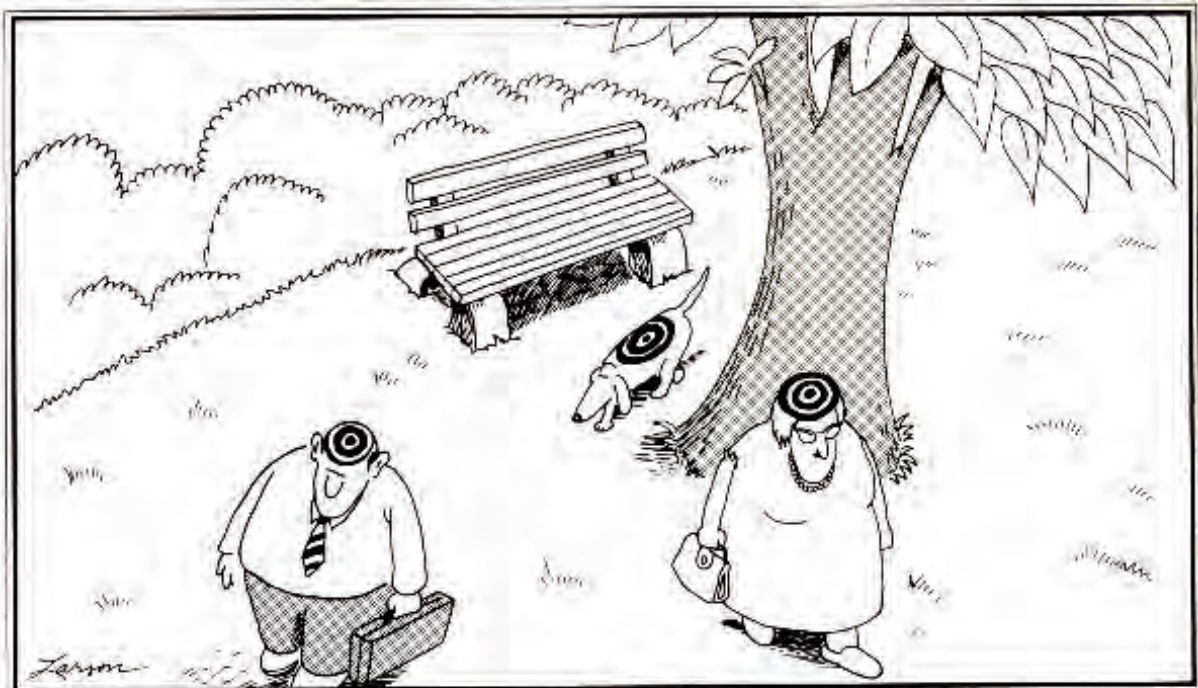


When a pickpocket meets a saint,
all he sees are his pockets.

We see what we have in mind.

Lies, bigger lies, and statistics.

Still a man hears what he wants to hear
and disregards the rest.



How birds see the world

Parent Guide

Talk about how perception changes. Recall Hedgehog's and Hanuman-ji's changing perceptions. Ask your child if a particular thing ever looked totally different at different times. What does a glass of water look like to someone that just had a big party or to someone crawling across a dry desert? Point out how we are always making judgements about what we see. We can perceive our perceptions!

Notice this: How we see is determined by how we feel. Therefore, happiness is the foundation of wisdom.

I exercise happiness with music, like:

Can't Buy Me Love—The Beatles

Can't Get No Satisfaction—The Rolling Stones

Mozart's 23rd piano concerto

Beethoven Symphonies,

Pacobel's Canon

Bach's Fifth Brandenburg

The Awake share a common world,
the asleep turn aside,
each into a world of their own.

—Heraklitos

A human being is a part of the whole,
called by us “Universe”; a part limited in time and space.
He experiences himself, his thought and feeling as something separated from
the rest — a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness.
This delusion is a kind of prison for us,
restricting us to our personal desires
and to affection for a few persons nearest us.
Our task is to free ourselves from this prison.

—Albert Einstein

The Core Stories: Self-Awareness

Introduction: The Need for Self-Knowledge

The Stories of:

Hellenic: *Narcissus*
Daedalus and Icarus
Medusa and Perseus

Asian: *The Land of Torment & Pandas in Paradise*
A Misunderstood Gift
The Magic Axe

Indian: *A Bowl of Rice, Grain by Grain*
Fly or Bee?

Judaic: *Solomon's Ring*

Arabic: *The Ox, the Donkey, and the Farmer*

African: *The Tortoise and the Hare*

Native American: *The Coyote Who Thought He was a Lamb*

Parent Guides

I have one outstanding trait in my character,
which must strike anyone who knows me for any length of time,
and that is my knowledge of myself.

I can watch myself and my actions, just like an outsider.

The Anne of every day I can face entirely without prejudice,
without making excuses for her, and watch what's good and what's bad about her.

This "self-consciousness" haunts me, and every time

I open my mouth I know, as soon as it be spoken,
whether "that ought to have been different" or "that was right as it was."

There are so many things about myself that I condemn: I couldn't begin to name
them all. I understand more and more how true Daddy's words were when he said:
"All children must look after their own upbringing."

Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths,
but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands.

—The Diary of Anne Frank



The Need for Self-Knowledge

We often think that self-knowledge is not for children, that only adults are involved in such weighty matters. We tend to forget that every tragic drama, every lesson of the fairy tale, every moral to the story, is a call to self-knowledge and useful wisdom. Let us remember that self-awareness is an integral part of every stage and every transition. Let us explicitly cultivate self-knowledge, self-reflection, and self-awareness as the foundation to a very strong life, at every stage.

These *Core Stories* and lessons specifically address this issue of self knowledge in two forms, negative and positive. The ‘negative’ form of self-knowledge finds selfishness, self-absorption, Narcissism, and misfortune; in the ‘positive’ form of self-knowledge we find our own truth, and thus can live more authentically. On the ‘negative’ side is tragedy, the tragic fate of self-fascination and confinement to self. On the ‘positive’ side is the good fortune of happy actions. On one hand we recognize the prison of ego-centricity, on the other our truer and wider self freely participates in this wonderful life.

It is important to remember that it is nearly impossible to do these lessons “wrong”; just to begin to distinguish important issues serves the issue itself. Our only mistake is failing to try. For in trying, we incarnate care, and if we care, we will do these lessons beautifully at last.



Hellenic: The Story of Narcissus

Narcissus is the classic archetype depicting self-fascination and self-absorption.

Narcissus, son of the river-god Cephissus, was so extraordinarily beautiful that from the moment he was born, everyone who saw him fell in love with him. Narcissus thought he didn't care if others loved him and didn't think to return the love he was given. He would pass the lovely nymphs that dwelled in his father's rivers without even a glance or "hello," even though the nymphs all loved him. When everything didn't go his way, he got mad and even left home. He acted like he didn't care.

Echo, who was the fairest of the nymphs, also fell in love with Narcissus. Once she had angered the powerful goddess Hera, who then put a curse on Echo so that she could only speak what was spoken to her. Echo wanted to tell Narcissus how much she loved him, but since she couldn't, she followed him everywhere, hiding behind trees and bushes waiting for the chance to speak to him. Then, one day, she had her chance. Narcissus was separated from a group of his friends while playing in the woods when he heard a rustle of some branches. He yelled, "Who's here?"

"Here," she called.

"Then come" said Narcissus.

"Come," she cried.

"Leave your hiding place," said Narcissus, "and we'll play."

"We'll play," she called, leaping happily from behind the tree. She ran to give Narcissus a hug, but he had forgotten how to love and pushed her away. He shouted, "Take your hands off me! I hate hugs and would rather die than let you touch me."

"Touch me," Echo cried after him and continued to secretly follow Narcissus.

One day, Narcissus broke the heart of yet another maiden who prayed to the goddess Nemesis, "If he ever loves anyone, deny him what he loves, just as he has denied everyone else his love!"

Nemesis granted her the prayer. Narcissus soon came to a clear and beautiful pond. He looked down into the water, saw a fascinating face, and was instantly captured.

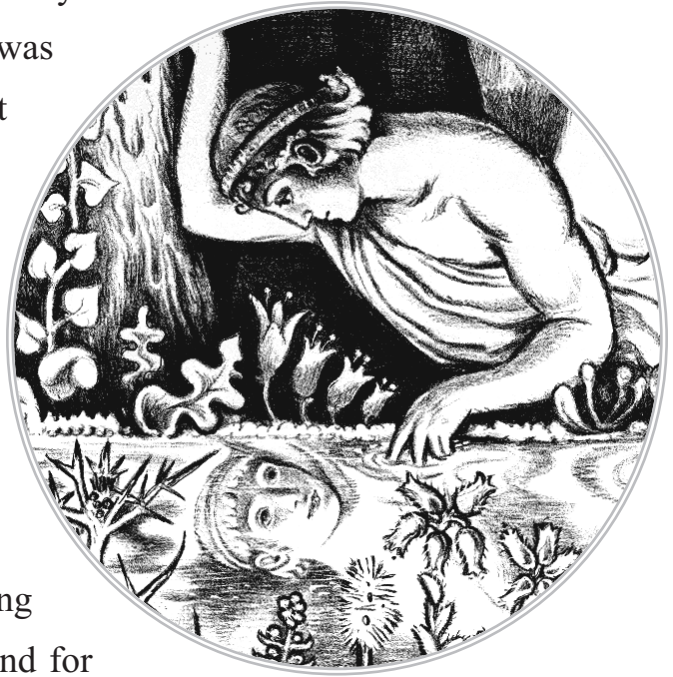
At first Narcissus thought it was a beautiful water spirit and fell in love. He observed from the look in the beautiful creature's eyes that the feeling was mutual.

He reached to touch his beloved but the moment his hand touched the water, the reflection scattered the image and disappeared. As soon as his image in the water returned he called out, “Why do you run away? I love you.” Echo, who was hiding nearby, replied, “I love you.” But Narcissus did not look up, and continued to gaze into his pond as his image reappeared.

Narcissus forgot to eat and began to wither away from loving someone who could not love him in return. Echo continued to stay near him. She kept loving him even though Narcissus was too busy loving himself to even notice. He never left the pond for the rest of his life and never knew it was his own image he was fascinated by. At the last moment, just before he died, he called to his reflection, “Farewell, I love you.”

“Farewell, I love you,” Echo cried.

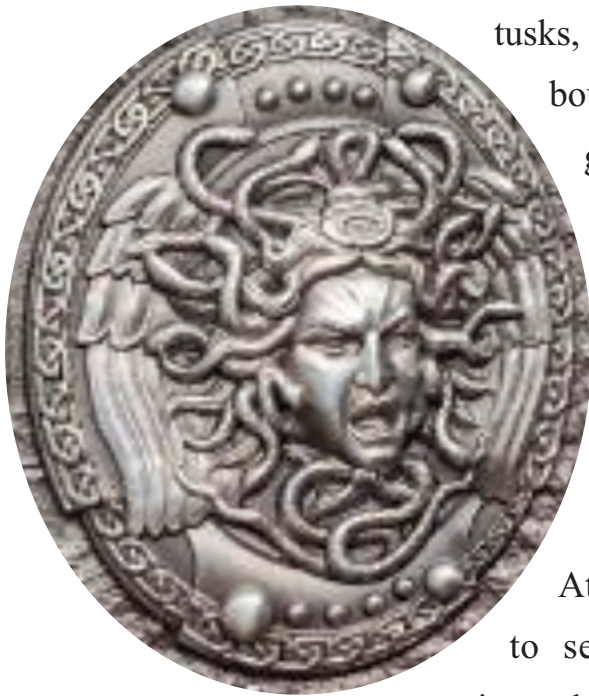
When the nymphs and maidens who had always loved him, gathered around to honor his body with a burial, all they found in his place were downward looking flowers, looking down, which they named after him.



Hellenic: Medusa and Perseus

The story of Medusa and Perseus is a classic Hellenic myth, used here to illustrate the wisdom of seeing through mere appearances. This myth is best suited for older children who can exercise their own reflective strength.

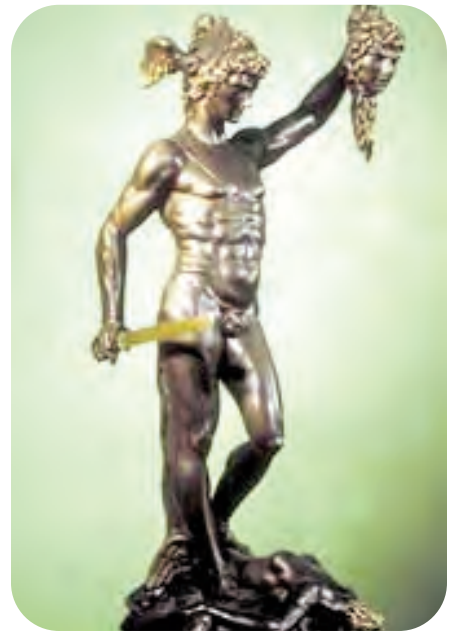
Medusa (lit. ruler or queen) was of such beauty that on her 18th birthday, she claimed rivalry with Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty! The arrogant teen Medusa even made love to Poseidon in a temple dedicated to the virgin Athena. However, Medusa's arrogance and self-fascination brought her a perfect curse: even though she was still beautiful, she appeared hideous, with serpentine hair, boar's tusks, a terrible grin, snub nose, and staring eyes. Flesh-bound men would turn to stone when they merely gazed upon her surface appearance.



Athena, the virgin goddess of craft, skill, and war gave Perseus her breast-plate (*aegis*) and polished shield, and challenged him to cut off Medusa's head. Using a cap of invisibility from the nymphs and winged shoes and a sword from Hermes, Perseus used the reflection in Athena's shiny shield to see Medusa without gazing at her.

Hermes' sharp sword was described as "adamant," indicating the hard insistence required to cut through superficial appearances.

Using the cutting power of free Hermes and the power of reflection given by cunning Athena, Perseus was able to adamantly slice off Medusa's head (and put it in a pouch the nymphs also thoughtfully provided).





From the wound and spouted blood of Medusa's decapitation, the winged horse Pegasus was born, announcing in flight the heart-full freedom that comes when surface beauty is penetrated by strength and deep thought.

For a while, Perseus used Medusa's head as a weapon, turning his enemies to stone, but then he gave it to Athena, who installed Medusa's head on her own breast-plate. Pegasus was cared for by the heart-rich Muses, then helped Bright Zeus himself by retrieving his lightning bolts and thunder!



Asian: The Land of Torment and the Pandas in Paradise

There is a story amongst the pandas, that, after death, all the pandas who had been selfish most of their lives go to the land of Torment. In the land of Torment, there is a huge table, with a large pot of delicious rice in the center. Around the table are chopsticks to reach the rice, but the table is so large that the chopsticks are very, very long. All the pandas sit around the table, pick up a bite of rice, but, because the chopsticks are longer than their arms, they cannot put the rice in their mouths. The pandas grunt and cry and complain all the time.

But the pandas who had learned to share go to Paradise after their life. In the land of Paradise, just like in the land of Torment, there is a huge table, with a large pot of rice in the center. And just like the land of Torment, around the table are very, very long chopsticks to reach the rice. But in Paradise, all the pandas sit around the table, pick up a bite of rice, and feed a friend. Then a friend feeds them back. They laugh and celebrate all the time.



Parent Guide

These stories gather great strength from *both* sides of self-knowledge; observations of selfishness *and* awareness of the authentic voice. The brightness of authenticity is grounded by a sober appreciation of our darker tendency to self-orientation. Again, to only emphasize the light of “self-esteem” is to rob our children of the night.

Key point to accentuate: In many stories about self-knowledge, the story hinges upon the excessive self-orientation of a primary character. **Selfishness provides the basis for most tragedy and misfortune**; point this out again and again whenever you come across it in stories you encounter with your children.

Key point to accentuate: Talk about the effects of a bad disposition as opposed to a harmonious one, and the benefits of developing a positive attitude. From the scientific to the athletic, from “FaceBook platitudes” to high dharma, the interplay of attitude/feeling, experience, and destiny is shouted!

Review the POINT OF VIEW discussion in the previous section.

Discuss the proverbial saw below and how it relates to the lesson on self-knowledge:

“You can catch more flies with honey than vinegar.”

Ask your child(ren) why someone would make the Narcissus-smart phone image below. Confess your own obsessions as well.



Asian: A Misunderstood Gift

A family of rice farmers lived far upstream on the Po River, growing, collecting, or making almost every thing they needed. Every season, however, the husband travelled to the city to sell some of their rice and buy other goods that they could not make.

Just after the new moon, one fine spring evening, the family made a list of things they needed. If they got a good price for their rice, they could afford almost everything on their list, maybe even something special. Their little boy cried for a toy, and the wife asked for a new comb for her long, beautiful hair. The man promised he would try and get a good price for his rice and get them both a gift.

The woman knew that her husband was very forgetful and tried to help him remember, “See the crescent moon, my husband, it is shaped like a comb. When you go to the city, you will see the moon, and when you see the moon, remember my comb.”

The man travelled to the city, but rice was selling so cheaply that he stayed several days to get the best price he could. He was able to buy everything he needed, but had only a tiny bit of money left over. The man thought, “I’m supposed to buy something, but I can’t remember what. Oh, the moon, I’m supposed to look at the moon to remember what to buy.”

The man looked up at the moon but now the moon was no longer a thin crescent, but full and round. He could not remember what he was supposed to buy for his wife. He went into a large shop and asked the shop keeper to help him. The man said, “I’m supposed to buy my son a toy and my beautiful wife a gift, but I haven’t much money and I can’t remember what she wanted. She told me to look at the moon and its shape would remind me what to get.”

The shop keeper looked at the round moon and exclaimed, “I have the perfect gift. It’s a new thing called a mirror. It’s round like the moon, and she can use it while she combs her hair. Your son can pretend that it is a little lake and fold origami boats to play upon it.”

“That must be it!” the man exclaimed, “my wife has long, beautiful hair, and she loves

to comb it. And my son will have a gift too! Please wrap it up for me. Thank you very much.”

When the man got home, he explained to his family that he did not get a very good price for their rice, but he was able to buy a present for them anyway. The woman wanted the gift to be for her and opened the present, but she did not know what it was, for none of them had ever seen such a creation before. She looked into the mirror and saw a beautiful woman, but did not know that it was her. She screamed at her husband, “You call this a gift? You have brought a beautiful woman home with you?” and began to cry. Her mother wanted the gift to be for her, picked up the mirror, and she too yelled at her son-in-law, “You have brought home another old woman to take care of? We can barely feed ourselves!” She joined her daughter in sorrow and disgust. The little boy picked up the mirror, looking to see what could be in the gift for him, and, before his father could explain that it was a lake for his boats, the little boy cried out, “There’s somebody who’s trying to get my rice cake!”

Now the man was very confused and thought nobody loved him, and picked up the mirror to see what spirit was terrorizing his family. He looked into the mirror and saw a desperate man, so he clenched his fist and said, “You can’t scare my family, take that!” and punched the mirror.

The mirror broke into a thousand pieces. Because they had each been selfish, they did not recognize themselves, and so lost a beautiful gift.



Asian: The Magic Axe

Once there was a very happy boy named Chen Peng who lived in the mountains with his family. One day he went out to cut some wood for the cooking fire. But, as he was walking across an old bridge, the axe fell out of his pouch and into the river below! Down at the riverbank, a very nice man shouted up, “Don’t worry, I’ll get it for you!”

The man dove into the river and came up holding a beautiful silver axe. If Chen Peng took the silver axe and sold it, he could buy a hundred axes, and have the wood delivered! But then he would not be happy, for if he lost such a valuable possession, he would cry. Chen Peng valued his happiness more than a hundred axes and called back, “No, that’s not my axe.”

Again the man dove into the river but this time came up holding a giant golden axe. If Chen Peng took the golden axe and sold it, he could buy a hundred axes, and a hundred oxen, and a hundred bales of silk, and more! But then he would not be happy, for if he lost such a valuable possession, he would be angry with himself for a long time. Chen Peng valued his happiness more than any riches and called back, “No, that’s not my axe.”

Again the man dove into the river but this time came up holding Chen Peng’s axe. “Yes, that is my axe. Thank you very, very much.”



The man climbed up the river bank and brought the axe to Chen Peng and said, “Because you are happy and honest, you will find this axe to be magic.”

Chen Peng thought it was magic just to have his axe back. He thanked the man but was puzzled over his encounter. When Chen Peng arrived at the grove to cut wood for his family, he first ate his lunch and enjoyed the sound of the birds in the trees. It was a beautiful day and Chen Peng soon fell asleep. When he awoke, a stack of wood had been magically cut for him. Chen Peng was elated. Now he could find another way to serve his family, if the axe did all the cutting for them!

Chen Peng hurried home with his wood and told the story to his family. They all rejoiced for their good fortune — except for one selfish uncle. He did not think about their good fortune but of the fortune that he might get if he met the man by the river.

The next day, the selfish uncle picked up his axe and went to the bridge over the river. As he was crossing the river, he pretended to drop his axe, exclaiming, “Uh, oh, I dropped my axe.” Down at the riverbank, a very nice man shouted up, “Don’t worry, I’ll get it for you!” The man dove into the river and came up holding his axe.

“Oh no, that’s not my axe. I lost a really nice one,” the uncle lied. Again, the man dove into the river and came up holding a beautiful silver axe.

“Oh no, that’s not my axe. Mine was even nicer,” the uncle lied a second time. And again, the man dove into the river and this time came up holding a giant golden axe.

“That’s it! Oh thank you for helping me,” the uncle lied again and rushed down to the river to get the golden axe from the man.



As the man handed the axe to the uncle, the man said, “Your greed will soon show itself to be foolishness.”

The uncle grabbed the axe, thinking that the man was stupid. He climbed up the river bank and stepped onto the bridge where he could not be seen. “Yippie!” he shrieked and began to jump up and down with excitement—holding the giant golden axe in his hand. But the axe and the jumping were too much for the old bridge and it collapsed! The dishonest uncle plummeted into the river and drowned.



Indian: A Bowl of Rice, Grain by Grain

This is classic Hindi lore.

Near the famous Arunachula mountain in southern India, a mother lost her son to an illness and became sick with sorrow herself. She cried for days and days and could not believe that her little boy was gone. She did not eat and had no energy left for the rest of her life because she was so distraught. Her family began to worry about her and convinced her to go to the wise man who lived by the mountain.

She sobbed as she told the wise man her story and asked if he could take her sorrow away. The wise man said, “Yes, I can help you, but it will cost you a bowl of rice.”

“Oh, yes,” the woman cried full of hope, “That’ll be no problem, I’ll go get you a bowl of rice right away,” and she began to get up.

“Oh no, not just any bowl of rice,” the wise man countered, as he handed her his smallest begging bowl, “You must fill this small bowl with rice, one grain at a time. Go to each house in the village and ask for a single grain of rice. Tell each person you ask why you are gathering rice. When this bowl is full, bring it to me and I will take away your sorrow.”

Gratefully the woman left and began her task. Everybody was happy to help her with a grain of rice and when they heard her story, they shared a story of their own about a lost loved one. She went to many, many homes, and heard many, many stories. Soon, her sorrow was not her own, but shared. And soon the bowl was full and the sorrow she had been feeling no longer overwhelmed her. As she walked back to Arunachula, she felt how sorrow was natural for a time. She let her sadness be OK and rested. Instead of meditating on her sorrow, she counted her blessings, and soon, a natural appreciation sprouted in her heart again. She came upon the wise man, bowed to his great wisdom, and, as she gave him his bowl filled with rice, gratefully uttered, “Thank you.”

Indian: Fly or Bee?

The wise of India suggest that if a person does not attend to true happiness, but foolishly follows every temporary pleasure, then he or she will become like the fly who, in one moment alights on candy and next flies to a pile of dung. But if one attends to what is really true, he becomes like the bee who goes from nectar to nectar.



The wise of India also point out that if one tries to become truly happy by following the path of desire without discipline and without instruction, that one will be successful! However, this path will require more time than it would take to completely erode an elephant-size block of granite that is brushed by a silk handkerchief once a century.



Judaic: Solomon's Ring

Solomon was a great King in ancient Israel, known for his wisdom and personal power. He even called Be'ezlebub, the craftsman of darkness, to his chambers to be taught the great art of deception. Be'ezlebub agreed to give Solomon the secret of deception, but not



so long as he wore the ring of rule, with the wondrous name of the sacred inscribed on the inside. As long as Solomon wore that ring, Be'ezlebub said, he could not impart the secret to the king. Solomon agreed and began to take his ring off, knowing that for a time, he would not be serving as king, and would be only another man thinking about himself.

The instant the ring passed from the tip of Solomon's finger, Be'ezlebub snatched the ring and threw it far into the sea. He then threw Solomon far, far into the sea as well, close to another far away kingdom!

Solomon nearly drowned as he swam for hours and hours until he was picked up by a fishing boat. Because no one would believe he

was a King, he would have to use his ancient knowledge of service to gain their favor. He began to make the finest foods for all the shipmen, and prepared fabulous feasts everyday.

The fishermen took Solomon to the King of their land and asked him to prepare a meal for their royal leader. For three days and nights, Solomon worked in the royal kitchen as he prepared then laid out a feast supreme. The King asked Solomon to enter his service for one year after which he would grant him any favor. Solomon agreed, and asked for a ship to carry him back to his land when his service was complete.

For three hundred and sixty four days, Solomon amazed the King with his energy and service. On the last day, the King asked him to prepare a feast to celebrate their time together. Solomon agreed and asked the fishermen to catch him a fine fish. Luck was with them and soon they snared a gigantic beauty. When Solomon went to cut it open, inside he

found his ring! He slipped it on his finger and presto! He was back at his throne with Be'ezlebub; not a second had past!



“Getting someone to think only of themselves is the most powerful key to deception,”
Be'ezlebub summarized for Solomon.

Arabic: The Donkey, the Ox, & the Farmer

Long ago, in the upper Euphrates valley lived an old and wise farmer. Through his many years he had learned the language of many animals and talked to them as he worked with them all. He had many cattle, a magnificent ox who plowed his fields, many birds who gave him eggs and meat, and he had a donkey who gave him transportation when he needed to go to market.

One spring, after a long day plowing, the ox was selfishly complaining about how hard he worked compared to donkey. “Oh, I work all day and you just eat and drink and sit around. My days are filled with labor and sweat.”

The donkey was not compassionate at all. Instead, his leisure had made him punky, and he hatched a plan for the ox. “I am so smart, I’ve got it all figured out. Except for an occasional trip to the city, my life is a breeze. Let me tell you how to fool the plowman and that old farmer.”

The ox leaned in closer to hear the secrets of the donkey. But, unbeknownst to them both, the farmer was listening as well. “Tomorrow, after a good morning’s work, start to grunt and pant. Drop down on your belly like you are very sick. Even if the plowman beats you to get up, lie there and whine. When he takes off the yoke and leads you back here to the stable, don’t eat. Take a day or two of complete rest.”

Well, the next day, all seemed to go according to plan. The ox faked an illness, got led back to the stalls, and was offered the finest fodder, which he refused. The donkey winked to the ox, boasting that their plan had gone so well. But then the farmer turned the tables on them and said to the plowman, “Hook up the yoke to the donkey and let him plow all day!”

The following day, the farmer decided that the ox was probably still too sick and the donkey should plow another day, then another! The donkey grumbled to himself, “I should have kept my advice to myself,” when another selfish idea struck him. He turned to ox and whispered, “I heard today that the master was planning to take you to the slaughterhouse if you do not recover soon.”

The next morning the ox was wagging his tail and pawing at the ground, ready to go. The farmer hooked up the ox and the donkey and both were put to work thereafter. The ox served gladly, but the selfish donkey was forever unhappy.



Arabic: Kahil Gibran

This is from The Prophet by Kahil Gibran, Knopf Publishers.

And a man said, Speak to us of Self-Knowledge. And he answered, saying:

Your hearts know in silence the secrets of the days and the nights.

But your ears thirst for the sound of your heart's knowledge,

You would know in words that which you have always known in thought...

The hidden well-spring of your soul must rise and run murmuring to the sea;

And the treasure of your infinite depths would be revealed to your eyes...

For those who are stingy
and complacently satiated
and disregard good and right,
will facilitate hardship for them
and their wealth does not profit them when they fall.

— The Prophet Mohammed

African: The Tortoise and The Hare

Most westerners know this fable through Aesop — not realizing that Aesop probably gathered most of his fables from the folklore of the mother continent.

On the edge of the savannah, Hare was bragging about how fast he was. His bragging filled the time and no one could talk to one other. Everybody has stories to tell, but Hare thought only of himself.

Tortoise decided to stick his neck out and challenged him. “I’ll race you.” Tortoise knew that Hare would not be able to say no, and it would be a joke on Hare’s bragging.

Hare laughed and laughed and fell for it. He started strutting, talking ‘bout how cool he was, and how fast he could run. He looked silly and only fooled himself. Tortoise’s joke had worked.

The race began and Hare darted out of sight in no time. Well, like everybody knows, Hare laid down in the sun to rest, thinking so much about himself he forgot the race and fell asleep.

Step by step the Tortoise inched out the course and neared the end. Hare woke up, remembered the race and darted for the finish line. Everybody knows Hare lost the race when Turtle stuck his neck out.

Bragging all the time does no good, sticking your neck out for your friends does.



Native American: The Coyote Who Thought He was a Lamb

Make sure your children are reminded of the Ugly Duckling story as you talk about this tale.

Mama coyote died giving birth. Baby coyote was left in the chaparral alone, cold and hungry. An ewe took pity on coyote pup and let him suckle from her. She had just given birth herself and was full of milk. Coyote soon had lamb brothers and sisters and a Ram step-father and an Ewe step-mother. Coyote was surrounded by sheep and thought he was a sheep too.

Coyote was the fastest of all his brothers and sisters and was very proud of it. No one yelled in defeat and told him he was different. All the sheep were very kind to him and said, "Yes you are the best." But they all gave him a strange smile, which coyote did not understand.

Coyote went to his mother and asked why his siblings and friends smiled at him so strangely. "That's for you to find out and for no one to tell you," she told him. Coyote wondered all the time about the mystery. Then one day, while getting a drink of water, he saw his reflection in the crystal pool and suddenly understood.

That is why coyotes do not eat sheep and prefer rodents and bugs.



Parent Guide: The Positive ‘I am’.

Encouragement is food for growth, wisdom is its guidance. Parents should regularly point out kinds of self-knowing for their children. Point out selfishness in tragic characters they encounter, and likewise point out the mature self-giving of the hero and heroine.

Self-realization is the thematic juxtaposition to selfishness. See them together, light and dark rolled into one strength of self-awareness.

Point out these two themes as you find them in the stories you encounter together.

Praise their kindness.

Praise their accomplishment.

Call them back to relationship from their self-obsession, and praise their choice to relational authenticity and trusting openness.

Use the stories of the Ugly Duckling and The Coyote Who Thought He Was a Lamb as occasions for you to express your interest in self-knowledge. Use these stories to initiate your language with your child about truly growing up.



The single essential ingredient of good manners is a sensitive awareness of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners. If you don't, you don't.

—Emily Post

The smoke of my own breathing
echoes, ripples buzz'd whispers
love-root, silk thread,
my respiration and inspiration,
the beating of my heart,
the passing of blood and air
through my lungs.

— Walt Whitman

Breathing, you invisible poem!
World-space constantly in pure
interchange with out being.
Counterpoise, wherein I rhythmically happen.

— Rainer Maria Rilke

There is one way of breathing
that is shameful and constricted.
Then there's another way:
a breath of love that takes you
all the way to infinity.

— Rumi

The Core Stories: The Inspirational Interplay of Breath & Feeling

Introduction: The Transformation of Psyche

The Stories of:

Hellenic: *Psyche*

African: *The Death of King Zoser*
The Lion's Secret

Indian: *Patanjali's Secrets*

Breathing Exercises for Kids

Parent Guides

Breath and Soul

“Breathe” is rooted in the Proto-Indo-Euro *bhre-* “to burn”, and is related to the Sanskrit, *atman*.

“Breath” in Latin is *spiritus*, root of *inspired*, *expired*, *spirit*. Thus we have: “The spirit of divinity has made me, and the breath of this great power gives me life.” (Job 33:4) [and] “Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:21)

In the Quran, the soul is *ruh*, the breath of divinity. (The root *rwh* for *ruh* means “the blowing of wind”.)

Prana in Sanskrit is breath and also the all-pervading life-force or spirit.

Chi in Chinese is spirit-force and breath.

Psyche and *psychein* are ancient Greek for *soul* and *to breathe*.

Breathing in, I calm the body
Breathing out, I smile
Dwelling in the present moment,
I know this is a wonderful moment!
Breathing in, there is only the present moment,
Breathing out, it is a wonderful moment.

—Thich Nhat Hanh

The Transformation of Psyche

While *psyche* was commonly used as the ancient Greek word for “soul”, what is rarely pointed out is that this word is rooted in *psychein*, “to breathe”. In the Western cultures particularly, we have forgotten this ancient understanding of the intertwining of breath and feeling. Yet every culture has acknowledged this common observation: if you are feeling bad, take a breath or two, it will help; if you are feeling fine, take a breath or few and you will magnify your happiness. To transform feeling, use the breath.

In Hellenic mythology, Psyche was a royal daughter who, on account of her vanity, was severely tested by the goddess of beauty, Aphrodite. After great testing, the princess went beyond the unattainable, and, by virtue of higher “help”, gracefully passed the test of Hades, and was given to the son of beautiful Aphrodite, Eros, the god of love. Psyche was given to love at last.

In marrying the god of love, Psyche became immortal in the Court of Olympia, when Zeus (meaning “Brightness”) gave Psyche a drink of divine ambrosia, setting her feeling eternally free. The ordeal and promise of learning how to feel freely is illuminated in the story of Psyche. The link between “soul” (the feeling-being), breath, and freedom points to a transformation hidden in all of us.

In the same transformative light, the word *psyche* was also commonly used in ancient Hellas to indicate a “butterfly”. This reference to the flying insect implied the caterpillar and cocoon prior to flight. The Princess Psyche, the feeling psyche, the breath *psychein*, and the butterfly are all hinged upon a metamorphosis. *Transformation is the key to psyche*. The feeling breath is the fulcrum of a psychological metamorphosis and becomes the spirited core of the transformative life.

Fortunately, the deep meaning hidden in the intertwining of breath and feeling can be found in direct knowledge and the wisdom of experience. *Use the breath, psychein, to fortify and magnify the feeling, psyche*. Until the psyche can rest in unthreatenedness and can be transformed forever, it must persist in letting go, bit by bit, breath by breath, until there is the metamorphosis. As if beyond gravity, we freely feel, flying in sweetness.

The social importance of the myth of Psyche, however, is psyche-logical. Psychological health is in the free and wise exercise of the feeling psyche. Direct and explicit attentiveness to feeling is a necessity to character and education: the feeling dimension is the actual substance of character development and psychological health. Though the story of Psyche is more pertinent to adults than to children, it nevertheless contains images useful for emotional communication to children. This emotional

wisdom is the primary function of all myths, thus giving the myth of Psyche a paradigm for all myths, the transformation of self.

Direct emotional education has always been recommended in every great culture, but in our society, obsessed with mind, and caught in the separative liability of thought, we have forgotten our totality and think that character is “just going to happen” somehow. Children need occasion and guidance to exercise feeling. Natural expressions such as music, dance, the arts, and athletics serve this process of attention and feeling naturally. Encourage them whole-heartedly.

Anciently, an educated man or woman was described as *musika* (meaning not only the art we call music, but the courting of all the muses and thus all the arts). A *scholia* without *musiki* is not a school, and students not given musical influence will bear a greater burden in life. Cultural forms, like music, art and design infuse our society and provide an inheritance of character. But apart and above these forms, attention to feeling must become more primary than its extensions in human expressions, such as arts and the like. Direct education relative to human emotions can become a rosetta stone to all other creative expressions.

Here, in the direct education about feeling itself, the art and breath of the adult must be mature, for feelings are not something to prattle about. Instead, we must learn and practice the opened-breath speech that “vibrates the chest.” It is through intimate human “confessions” of feeling and the full breath of truthfulness that Psyche (and Dante’s Virgil) were relieved from *Hades* (*a-des*. lit. “not bright, not day; the “unseen or unconscious”). Students need to learn to express their feelings, in speech or writing, in addition to arts of any kind. We learn to let our unconscious be seen.

Just as it is good to exercise the body for strength, likewise it is good and necessary to exercise the psychic, breathing, feeling, and emotional capacity of the individual. The stories in this section are primarily intended for the seven- to twelve-year-old group, for whom the feeling dimension is the focus of attention and development, although most games can be adapted with some success to children of all ages.

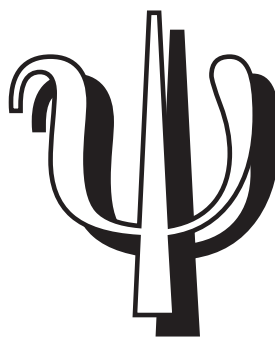
The psychic or feeling capacity of each of us is inherent. It is not a special gift or an acquired skill, but rather it is an aspect of our being that everyone can exercise as an element of our human development. “Psychic” does not imply a “magical” Hollywood-style world of seances, channeling, and crystal ball reading. Rather, by growth in this feeling dimension, we guide our children into a participatory experience, not fully comprehended by the usual “left-brained” scientific view of self and modernity. To incorporate this “psychic,” whole-brain perception into one’s intelligence gives one a fuller appreciation of the world and others, and indeed, this fuller, holistic appreciation is the basis for the higher sciences. Whole-body

intelligence is the primary goal of education, although the emotional and “psychic” dimension has been recently underrated.

Remember that these Psyche-breath games are about *participatory* experience, so encourage the children to come up with variations, other descriptions, and other inferences. Likewise, you will be constantly called upon to participate with your entire feeling, and remain present and *inspired* to guide your children’s attention into breathing, feeling and wonder. This sense of openness is the proper mood by which and in which we guide and follow, strengthening our feeling capacity and spirit.

The Four Meanings of “Psyche”

1. The Princess in the Myth
2. Core feeling, Soul
3. Breath
4. Butterfly



Hellenic: Psyche

This is a host of Psyche stories with the technicalities of the breath added to supplement the theme.

Psyche was a little princess of such remarkable beauty that everyone worshiped her as if she were Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty. Psyche enjoyed being praised so much that she forgot to give credit to Aphrodite, and soon Aphrodite's temples lay neglected. Everyone came to admire the king's daughter instead. This angered the true goddess of beauty, who decided to teach Psyche a lesson.

“How dare they call her beauty divine, when she is only a mortal and will die someday!” fumed Aphrodite, “What foolishness to worship the beauty that rots!!”

Aphrodite, the goddess of immortal beauty, called her winged son Eros, the god of love, to help her with her plan. Eros was famous for shooting divine arrows through the hearts of people and making them fall in love. Aphrodite sent Eros to the city where Psyche lived and told him, “There she is, the woman who is content to steal glory from a goddess. Wait for an ugly man to come near her and then shoot them both. This will avenge her pride!”

But as fate would have it, Eros was also taken by the sight of Psyche. He loved watching her, even though she was confused. When an ugly unhappy servant of the King came by, Eros began to follow his mother's instructions. He selected his most potent love-arrow and inserted it into his bow. He drew the arrow back, but as destiny had it, he pricked his own hand, and the god of Love himself fell madly in love with Psyche.

Even though Psyche was famous for her beauty, no one had ever asked to marry her. Long after her less beautiful sisters had married and moved from home, Psyche still had not found any suitors. Her father, the King, wondered why and went to Delphi to ask the oracle of Apollo for help. He trusted that he would find wisdom in finding a husband for Psyche. As usual, the oracle spoke mysteriously,

“Let Psyche be clad as a corpse in mourning clothes,
set her on a lonely rock to await her destiny.

Her husband shall be no mortal but a winged creature.”

Apollo's commandment was so strange that the King cried. Everyone who heard the news, including Psyche, felt shocked and assumed that she would be married to some sort of dragon! But they knew that they must follow the law or disaster would surely befall them all.

Soon, the day of her funeral-marriage arrived and though Psyche did not fight her destiny, she cried along with the King and Queen, and the whole town. When the procession came to the hilltop outside of town, Psyche hugged her mother and father goodbye. She could feel how she had been full of false pride and how this had angered Aphrodite. She tried to comfort her parents. "Please don't cry anymore or tear your hair with grief. We should have known when everyone called me Aphrodite and I gloated in it that we would stir her anger. Let us accept what the heavens have given. I'm not afraid anymore."

Trembling but resigned, Psyche awaited the fulfillment of the oracle, seated on a solitary rock. Soon everyone left, fearful of the dragon that was to come. Night fell and Psyche passed into sleep.



Suddenly, she felt herself being gently lifted into the arms of the western wind Zephyrus, who carried her to a magnificent palace, surrounded by gardens and filled with flowers. It was in this sweet darkness that she heard a friendly voice speak to her. "All you see is for your enjoyment. Don't be afraid. Come take a bath and have some food. You will have everything you need." In the darkness she could see only the rough outline of someone, even though she often heard the friendly voice that had helped her.

So she explored the palace and found a bath freshly drawn and dinner ready for her. Psyche finally made her way to bed, and as she was on the verge of sleep, a mysterious being joined her in the darkness, explaining that he was the husband for whom she was destined. She could not see his features, but his voice was soft and his conversation full

of tenderness. Before the return of dawn, the strange visitor disappeared, first making Psyche promise to never attempt to see his face.

In spite of the oddness of the adventure, Psyche was not discontented with her new life; in the palace nothing she could desire was lacking except the constant presence of her delightful husband, who came to visit her only during the dark hours of the night.

Her happiness could have continued in this way if her sisters—who were consumed by envy—had not sown the seeds of suspicion in her heart. “If your husband is afraid to let you see his face,” they said, “it is because he must really be some hideous monster.”

At first, Psyche told Eros of her sisters’ suspicions and he charged her with faith, saying, “You must trust me, promise me.” Psyche assured him that she felt his love and did not need to see his form.

But her sisters nagged her so much that one night Psyche, in spite of her promise, rose from the couch that she shared with her husband, secretly lighted a lamp and held it above the mysterious face. Instead of a fearful monster she beheld the most charming person in the world—Eros himself. At the foot of the couch lay his bow and arrows. In her delight Psyche held the lamp nearer in order to study her husband's features more closely. A drop of scalding oil fell on the god's bare shoulder. He was hurt and awakened at once, realizing that Psyche had broken her promise and the faith between them. He flew away without a word, landing momentarily in a tree, calling back, “Am I a



monster or your saviour? Did I seem like a beast to you? My heart is as hurt as my shoulder. You will be sufficiently punished by my absence. I will pray that my mother will not destroy you.” Holding his wound, he set his wings in motion and flew away.

The palace vanished simultaneously, and poor Psyche found herself on a lonely rock again in terrifying solitude. She began to wander the countryside looking for Eros, but he was in Olympia healing his wound. Psyche wanted to die and threw herself into a near-by river, but the waters bore her gently to the opposite bank. From then on she was pursued by Aphrodite's anger and had to pass a series of terrible ordeals. Aphrodite brought Psyche to a room and dumped urns of lentils, poppy seeds, barley, and sesame seeds in a pile on the floor and told Psyche, "You must have all the seeds sorted and back in the right urns by nightfall."

At first, Psyche collapsed and didn't know what to do. But then she took a big breath and with tears in her eyes, she finally began her task, focusing her attention on picking up a single grain at a time. Then, mysteriously, an ant appeared who told her that he and his friends would help. By sunset they had put all the seeds back into their proper urns. Aphrodite fumed and gave her another impossible test. She told Psyche to gather a single cup of water from a high mountain stream guarded by a monster. Again, Psyche was initially dismayed but, once again, took a deep breath and began her journey, trusting that she would succeed. Suddenly, an eagle swooped down, picked up the cup from her with its talons, and flew to the pure and high icy stream. The monster could not touch the eagle as it swooped down and filled the cup.

Aphrodite then gave Psyche the most difficult task of all. She sent Psyche into the Underworld to get a cup of beauty from Persephone, Queen of the Dead. To pass into the underworld without dying was practically impossible.

Guarding the entrance was the three-headed monster dog named Cerberus, but Psyche was so calmed by her breathing that her beauty shone even in the darkness



and so the monstrous Cerebus just sat in awe as she passed by. The cold-hearted ferryman Charon, who takes souls across the river Styx, likewise, was so charmed by Psyche that he too simply served her.

As Psyche descended into Hades, she became angry at Aphrodite for making her do all of these things, and stamped her feet in anger. But she was a princess, and she understood that her royal teacher had taught her to use the royal breaths in any difficult encounter. She noticed how in anger she felt like exploding and all of her feeling wanted to rush *out*. Her royal knowledge of proper breaths taught her how to balance the energy of any bad feeling. So instead of exploding, she thought about how much graceful help she had already received and concentrated on breathing that feeling *in*. With several breaths the anger had dissolved and she was able to resume her journey downwards.

As she continued, she remembered her lost lover and became very sad, thinking that she would never feel loved again. But Psyche's strength came from a great depth and instead of crying, she noticed how she felt collapsed *in* and out of balance. So, to even out the collapsed feeling she breathed *out* very deeply, and told herself that, if she had another chance, she would trust love, instead of doubting it. She knew that she could blow away the clouds of sorrow from the sun of happiness with a few big breaths.

Soon she came to the Court of the Dead and made her request for a cup of beauty to Persephone. Hades glared at Psyche and screamed, "How dare you come into my kingdom alive?" He took up his sword to kill her.

Noticing her feeling was frozen, Psyche breathed evenly and as deeply as she could. She did not run or collapse, even though she trembled. Her faith and deep breaths caused Hades to pause inquisitively and ask her why she had come. Psyche told her story so openly that Persephone felt merciful, and gave her a jar of her own beauty creme.

Climbing back out of the Underworld was tiring and Psyche paused near the entrance back to earth. As she rested she was tempted to try just a touch of the beauty creme herself. She opened the jar and dipped her fingertip into Persephone's creme. Upon touching the magic substance she was overwhelmed and collapsed onto the earth at the portal of the underworld.

Eros, now healed from Psyche's wound, saw her lying unconscious on the ground and flew down to take her in his arms. For even though Psyche had betrayed him, Eros had been the secret voice that had helped her and that had instructed all the creatures and forces to assist and help her. He wiped away the sleep from her face and put it back into the box of beauty creme. He awakened her with a harmless prick from the tip of his arrow, and holding her in his arms he said, "You have almost perished from overmuch curiosity and fascination, but you passed the final test. Be well. Now go to my mother and give her the beauty. Tell her of your love for me and I will provide for all things, each in its right season."

The awakened princess fully embraced the husband of her heart, just as she had promised in the Underworld. Eros flew her skyward to the Court of Olympia to make peace with the goddess of beauty. In the heavenly abode they spoke with Aphrodite, and even Zeus spoke in their behalf.

"O ye Gods, you doubtless know this young god and my son, whom I have nourished with mine own hand. He is now bridled and has learned modesty. He has chosen a maiden that favors him well. Let him embrace Psyche." Then Zeus turned to Aphrodite and said, "And you, my daughter, do not fear any dishonor because Psyche is a mortal, for I will see to it that this marriage is equal and just."

Zeus took a pot of immortality and gave it to Psyche, saying, "Drink deeply that thou are made immortal, and may Eros never depart from you but be thine everlasting husband."

A sumptuous banquet and marriage feast appeared. Eros held his bride and they sat at the uppermost seat together. Dionysus served the drink of nectar, the Hours decked the house with flowers, Apollo's fingers moved freely upon the lyre as the Muses sang sweet harmony, and the Satyr's played the pan-pipes. Thus Psyche was married to Eros and all the stars glistened.

African: The Death of King Zoser

This is a fictionalized account of real personalities, using their cultural mythologies.



The Great King Zoser was dying and so he asked for his friend and vizier, Imhotep, who was also the wisest man in all the world, to come to him. The King had long prepared for his death with prayer, self-reflection, and good works. He built the first great step pyramid, jewel of Africa, designed by Imhotep, to carry him into immortality. Even still, King Zoser was afraid.

When Imhotep stepped into the Royal Chambers, the King praised him, “They call you master magician, master physician, master astronomer, master architect, master builder. They call you Master; I am lucky to call you my friend.”

Imhotep smiled lovingly at his friend and Pharaoh. They grasped each other’s hand in deep friendship and Imhotep kissed the dark skin of his beloved King. Before Imhotep could speak, Zoser continued to praise him, “Even as a child, you loved learning, and now you are the wisest man in all the world. Tell me again, my friend, about the test in the afterlife: the Breath of Life, the Hall of Judgement, and the Feather of Ma’at. I am dying, my heart is sorrowful and I am afraid.” The King asked Imhotep to guide him through his dying process.

Imhotep, ‘he who comes in peace’, looked at his dying friend and held his hand. He thought of his own childhood and how lucky he had been to develop a passion for learning. Imhotep thought of all his studies; his mathematics, his designs, his star charts, his medical mastery, his collection of wise and inspired sayings. And now, none of that mattered more than holding his dying friend’s hand and helping him with a few last

breaths to embrace the harmonic Ma'at. The Ma'at was harmony, felt as balance, well-being, and spirit. Ma'at's patterns of harmony could be seen with the eyes as beauty, heard by the ears as heartfelt tones, felt in the body, breath, and mind as the current of life. Harmonic Ma'at could be seen in numbers, in nature, and in all arts. By feeling the Ma'at of anything, one could feel the truth of anything as well.

"Don't worry, my King," Imhotep assured him, "to die is as natural as living. Long after our pyramid has turned into sand, the royal breaths will carry the wise into the wonderful truth."

The King remembered Imhotep's lessons on Ma'at; he remembered the resonance of all things and beings. Surrendering to the feeling of Ma'at had been his practice everyday.

The tension in the King's body melted away, and a smile broke across his face. "Yes, but let me hear one more time, from your sweet lips, the art of passing through the Hall of Truth."

Imhotep could tell that King Zoser was dying in his arms. He held his king and held back his tears, whispering into his royal ear, "Let go, my brother, let go. Let go of all that you regret doing, let go of all you regret not doing, let go. Let your dying be easy, let go to easy death. Let go with your royal breaths; sigh and let go, let go as you sigh, let go. Breathe deeply and surrender to Ma'at's harmony." Imhotep reassured his royal friend, "Everything is fine, we are happy with you. Breathe deeply and let go, relax and surrender."

Imhotep could feel how his King was following his words, following his heart, following the spirit. Imhotep watched a tear roll down the royal face, revealing a sadness within. "Remember the royal breaths for the clouds of sadness; just blow them away. The Sun Ra, the light inside, is always shining. Smile inwardly as you blow away the clouds of sadness; smile inwardly and breathe the Bright Ra light."

A lightness filled the royal chambers, but as King Zoser began to die, he clutched at Imhotep's hand, and the rising lightness stalled. Imhotep held his King more tightly and guided him beyond. "Breathe evenly, and you can melt the frozen fear." Imhotep was

silent while the King took a long, slow breath. “Breathe deeply and feel the breath of life melting your fears. Breathe evenly and deeply, and feel the breath of life making your heart as light as a feather. Breathe the breath of life and let go to heart-happiness. The presence in the heart is the universal radiance of the eternal being, and the core of everything and everyone, appearing and disappearing in the heart’s wondrous light.”

Zoser breathed deeply until a great happiness consumed him. Imhotep could see that the King had let go and called to him, “Soon you will come to the Hall of Truth, where Annubis, the jackal god of the dead, will weigh your heart against the weight of a feather. It is the Feather of Ma’at. Passing the test of Annubis, one becomes True of Voice, but if you do not, Beby, the destroyer, will devour you. Now that your heart is as light as a feather, you will pass the Hall of Truth into the Life which is eternal. ”

The royal chambers became all bright as the King fell into grateful rapture. Blessedly and blissfully his breathing was set free as it merged into a sudden wind. Imhotep kissed the Pharaoh’s forehead as King Zoser breathed no more.



*Annubis Weighing the Heart of a Soul Against the Feather of Ma’at
Hungry Beby Awaits the Heavy Hearts
Scribe and Attendants Process the Judgement*

African: The Lion's Secret

“**H**ow come I'm not king of the jungle, I'm stronger than lion,” said Elephant.

“You're not fast enough,” said cheetah, who was faster than lion.

“I am the tallest,” said giraffe.

“I can fly and he cannot,” said bird.

“I can dig a tunnel and he cannot,” said mole.

“More fear me,” said snake.

“I can climb better,” said monkey.

“I can sleep longer,” said turtle.

The animals sent bird to find out Lion's secret. The Lion didn't seem to be doing anything. He just sat there and was king of the jungle. Bird did not notice anything special that Lion was doing.

Bird flew back to the others and told the other animals that Lion wasn't doing anything. One by one, all the other animals spied on Lion but didn't see him doing anything particularly special either.

“We need to listen to the father lion's instruction to his cubs,” said Monkey. Bird agreed to spy on Lion again.

So one day as the cubs were playing, they got into a big fight and became very mad at each other. Lion asked the cubs, “How are you breathing? *Remember the balance; Breathe big, again and again.*”

Bird told all the animals about the secret of *remembering the balance* when angry: of breathing big again and again. They all tried it, and they all felt stronger every time they did. “What about being scared,” said mole, who didn't get angry very much.

“If we can scare cubs,” said snake, “we can listen and find out.”

“How do we scare cubs without getting hurt or killed?” asked turtle, who knew he couldn't scare anything or anybody.

All the animals looked at snake, who would be able to scare the cubs and then dash into a hole. Snake selfishly suggested that elephant charge the lion's den then run, even though the elephant might get scratched by Lion.

Elephant agreed and charged the cubs, but did get badly scratched by Lion. Bird flew to the lion's den and listened. Lion asked his cubs, "How are you breathing? Frozen or Free? *Remember the balance*; breathe even and deep, again and again."

Bird told the animals the secret of deep breathing when afraid, again and again. They all tried it, and they all felt stronger every time they did.

Mole was very, very happy. Now he knew how to undo fear. This made him happy all the time. When his brother would steal some of his food, he would be angry, but then he would breathe again and again until he was happy again. When he would run from a hawk or hunter, he would be afraid, but when the danger was past, he would remember to breathe even and deeply again and again until he was resting in his feeling again. Mole was very glad to know how to undo anger and fear. Now Mole knew how to be happy all the time.

The yearly rains began to fall. The animals would each go their own way. Everybody was sad. Turtle said, "How do you get rid of sadness?"

In order to find out they had to go to the cubs again. But no one had any ideas on how to make the cubs sad.

"I know how!" Mole bravely spoke up, and darted into his burrow. He came up with a flower bulb, that had a couple of nibbles taken out of it.

"It's a sleep root. I take a tiny nibble before bedtime," smiled mole.

"Follow me bird!" yelled Mole and ran off with the bulb. Mole found cub's mother out hunting and he yelled to her, "You can't catch me!" and he darted out of sight.

Mole ran across the plain at full speed. But Lioness pounced and caught poor Mole and swallowed him along with the bulb he was carrying in one big mouthful.

Bird was shocked! Mole had been eaten! But to Bird's surprise, soon the lioness fell over asleep! The cubs thought their mother was dead and they cried and cried. Now Bird



understood Mole's plan. Bird watched as Lion held his cubs. Bird waited and waited for Lion to talk. But Lion just held his cubs until all fell asleep.

The next day the lioness is still asleep and as the cubs awake, Lion asked the cubs, "*Remember the balance*; Sorrow is like clouds in front of the sun. Blow them away. Sorrow can be blown away, it may take a thousand breaths, but the sun will be waiting. Breathe big, again and again." The cubs breathed and breathed and breathed. Just when they were starting to feel the balance return, mother lion woke up.

Bird told the animals how Mole had given them the secret of overcoming sorrow. Bird told animals about breathing out, of blowing away the clouds of sorrow. They certainly needed to know this secret because they missed their happy friend and their tears for Mole rained and rained. It indeed took a thousand breaths, but at last they all felt the sun again as they felt how mole had given them a great gift. Anytime they ever felt sad about anything again, they remembered to blow away the clouds, and they always remembered the fearless Mole who had given them the secret.

The next year, the cubs were not cubs anymore. Lion taught them how to rest and see the wonder of life, how to breathe the feeling of the mystery of life, deeper and deeper, again and again. Bit by bit, the lions felt more and more wonderful, as deep and peaceful as their breath. Only then did they too become lion kings, perhaps not the fastest or strongest or tallest or most feared, but the most inspired.



CLASSIC STORIES: BREATHING AND FEELING

Indian: Patanjali's Secrets

Patanjali detailed the classic approach to yoga as we know it, including the art and science of breath intelligence.



About 23 centuries ago in India, lived a schoolteacher and a yoga teacher named Patanjali. He was an educated man who studied the various methods of right living. He even learned the ways of the rishis and yogis, and noticed that all his teachers were speaking about happiness and the supports for happiness; but they all used different descriptions. Some would call the breath a spirit, others called it a tool; and they used many different names for happiness and understanding.

Patanjali noticed that all the stories and skills were more alike than different. He decided to write the techniques and understanding down in a simple way and without all the various stories. He created a field of science from the techniques, instead of using mythologies. He taught as much as he could to the royal children.

Patanjali focused on the breathing techniques for all kinds of feelings, and most especially on happiness. Here is some of the harvest from the study of breath (credit also to Adi Da for many details):

- Always work on the strength of your breath, just taking a bigger breath every now & then for no reason at all.
- When afraid, breathe as evenly and as deeply as you can.
- When angry, breathe inwardly, in the mood of receiving a gift, as well as you can. This is difficult.
- When sad, breathe out as well as you can, blowing away the sadness. Do this over and over again.
- Breathe in the good stuff, breathe out the bad stuff.

- When relaxed, draw upon the fullness-feeling with your in-breath, letting fullness expand; then, as you exhale, radiate happiness throughout your whole body and the world
- When happy, strengthen your breath by circulating happiness with it. Breathe in “Peace”, breathe out “Yes!” Breathe in like receiving a gift, breathe out in aspiration. Breathe in, you are loved, breathe out you love naturally. Breath in Trust; breathe out, so glad. Circulate the spirited feeling throughout your body, then, breath by breath, circulate happiness to your friends and family.
- Use your breath to focus, whether pulling an arrow or a needle.
- To prepare for meditation it is most useful to sit upright and attentive, yet relaxed and calm. After a few calming breaths, find your pulse. Count your own pulse of life until you feel your heart’s rhythm. Breathe slowly and deeply, letting the air fill the belly first. Let your breath be full and let it out slowly. When you feel that you are relaxed and in touch with your happiness, draw upon that happiness, like sipping nectar, all the while breathing in, counting your pulse, until your breath is full. Feel this feeling of fullness for a pulse or two, then let your breath out slowly, as if you are dissolving in space, even while counting your pulse; and at the end, push any extra air out.
- How many pulses is your fullest breath?
- Repeat this exercise again and again. You can even try to gently hold your breath to gather more pulses (but no more than the inbreath number).
- Slow in-breath nectar—holding fullness; out-breath—dissolving. How many pulses? The secret is to work to lengthen the inbreath. Practice this most difficult task for many moons, until you no longer count, and the secrets of stillness will be revealed.
- The breath is always there when you need help.

**Use your breath to focus,
whether pulling an arrow
or a needle.**

Breathing Exercises for Kids by Adi Da

Kids can do breathing exercises too, Sage Adi Da recommends. He tells children to imagine that when they breathe in, they can feel energy coming in through the bottoms of their feet toward the top of the head. When they breathe out, even kids can feel and say, “I can relax”, and then “smile inwardly”. Try it! Breathe in from the bottoms of your feet to the top of your head, then breathe out and whisper, “I can relax”, and silently “smile inwardly.” Also remember to “breathe in the good stuff” and “breathe out any bad stuff.”



The Royal Breaths

**When you're not feeling well or happy,
intentionally strengthen some breaths & you will feel better.**



**When you are SCARED,
your breath is frozen,
so take EVEN & DEEP BREATHS.**

**When you are SAD or bored,
your feeling is collapsed, but you can
eventually BLOW IT AWAY.**





**When you are ANGRY or FRUSTRATED,
your feeling is exploding, but you can
BALANCE anger by BREATHING IN really big,
(and counting your blessings).**

**When you are HAPPY, your feeling is free and you can
ENERGIZE your body by BREATHING and RADIATING
HAPPINESS ALL THROUGH YOU.**

The boat people said that every time their small boats were caught in storms, they knew their lives were in danger. But if one person on the boat could keep calm and not panic, that was a great help for everyone. People would listen to him or her and keep serene, and there was a chance for the boat to survive the danger. Our Earth is like a small boat. Compared with the rest of the cosmos, it is a very small boat, and it is in danger of sinking. We need such a person to inspire us with calm confidence, to tell us what to do. Who is that person? The Mahayana Buddhist sutras tell us that you are that person. If you are yourself, if you are your best, then you are that person. Only with such a person--calm, lucid, aware-- will our situation improve. I wish you good luck. Please be yourself. Please be that person.

— Thich Nhat Hanh

Judaic: The Mighty Atom

Review this story (beginning on p. 35), but instead of focusing on the theme of Attention, experiment with your breath, focusing on the qualitative differences observed in abdominal and chest breathing taught to Yoselle by the Great Yosanko.



Parent Guide: Feelings, Dreaming, and Breathing

Dreams

Ages 7 and up.

Make some time to talk with your child(ren) about any dreams they may have had (best is first thing in the morning). This should be done for all ages, but after the age of six or so particular attention to the dream world becomes another means by which their feeling dimension grows. As they review their dreams, you can remind them of the kind of breath best matched to particular emotions. There are many ways to help them notice their dreams:

- 1) Sharing dreams. Simply talking about dreams and the kind of dreams your child(ren) had is an obvious and effective way to heighten awareness of this dimension. Start by doing this as often as you can for about a month. This regularity of attention to the dream world will heighten their awareness of their dreams. Some children will have trouble remembering their dreams or will tell you that they don't dream. Have those children take a breath before retiring while wanting, "I will remember my dreams when I wake up." Tell them that, although it may take a while, this will help them in remembering their dreams.
- 2) Dream diary. Have your children write about their dreams in a special book. If they design the book themselves, this can add to their interest in the diary. They may wish to add illustrations. Many cultures have given so much energy and attention to their dream world that the two worlds are seen to mutually influence one another. Hmmm....
- 3) Wake up and write. If they are interested, have your children set their alarm for 4:30 a.m. (a time during which they would most likely be dreaming). Instruct them to recall their dreams as soon as they wake up. They should turn on a special light and write down any dream they might be having or can remember in the fullest detail possible on a special pad of paper. After doing this a few times they will likely become accustomed to waking up and writing about their dreams, and they will abandon the crutch of the alarm clock.
- 4) Intend to dream. Have your children choose a dream subject. It could be something fairly ordinary that they would like to do, or a place that they would like to go to (such as grandma's or Disneyland). Alternatively, they can choose to try something that they can't do in the regular waking state (such as flying). First, let them talk about the intentional dream they want to have, and then ask them to visualize the dream and breathe their intention to have it when they go to sleep. Let them know that this can be a very difficult exercise and even lots of adults are not able to do it. Just let them know it is a fun way of experimenting with dreams and dreaming.



*My last hour as a school teacher
with Milagros, miracle indeed.*

Practice Thus:

Breathing in, I know I am breathing in.
Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out.

Breathing in a long breath, I know I am breathing in a long breath. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out a long breath.

Breathing in, I am aware of my whole body.
Breathing out, I am aware of my whole body.

Breathing in, I calm my whole body.
Breathing out, I calm my whole body.

Breathing deeply, I am joyful, happy, and thus aware of my mental formations.

Breathing deeply, I calm my mind.
Breathing deeply, I am aware of the mind itself.

Breathing deeply, in and out, I concentrate on the source of the mind's disturbance.

Breathing in, I observe the impermanent nature of all sympathies; Breathing out, I observe the disappearance of desire.

Breathing in, I observe letting go and the cessation of desire. Breathing out, I cease to disturb the mind.

Using the breath, observe and calm the body, the feelings, and the mind. Without full awareness of breathing, there can be no development of meditative stability and understanding.

—Gotama Shakyamuni

Everybody can be great because everybody can serve.

— Martin Luther King, Jr

The Graduate Course:

Service Heroes and the Joy of Community

The Graduate Course: Service Heroes and the Joy of Community

The foundational four themes help acculturate our children to compassionate excellence, grounded in happiness, depth of self-awareness, and inspired balance. The natural expression of such an empowered and happy person is to share, participating in and creating a community wherein that happiness can be magnified. Indeed, no individual completes the process of empowerment and integration in isolation; community and relations are the field whereby the process of human maturation is completed. Therefore, children must be given access to images of community that calls them to serve in some way and thus grow to their fullest potential as individuals and as citizens of an expanding world. This final theme of community represents a graduate course upon the foundational four.

The lies of this age are that stimulation is happiness, that entertainment is experience, that we should devote ourselves to our own purposes, get as much fun at any cost, and always look out for number one. Aside from the fact that this disposition is shallow and ephemeral, this “illusion of self-culture” does not deliver the happiness it promises, it devalues us into cynicism and boredom, and eventually exhausts us. Worse yet, it supplants any opportunity to relax into natural pleasures, exhausts the earth, and devalues the great joy that comes from giving and creating community.

Fortunately, we have a plethora of men and women who stand happily above the common self-orientation as joyous icons of service and giving; from parents to dedicated visionaries, from schoolteachers to saints we can guide our children to develop a depth of character and go beyond themselves into the joy of community. In this educational task, the inspiration of real heroes can be received, inculcated, and acculturated. Once a depth of character is established, then we can call forth the natural heroism waiting in every soul. “Real heroes, not super-heroes” is our family motto.

Instead of Superman, we can study the magnificent accomplishments of Susan B Anthony or Martin Luther King, Jr; in addition to the Hulk or Spiderman, we can learn about the difficult confrontations and spectacular success of John Muir and Malala Yousafzai; alongside Batman and the X-Men, we have Jane Goodall, Cesar Chavez, Greta Thunberg, and Mahatma Ghandi. Adults can guide children to appreciate heroes in their own community -- Saint Francis is alive and well in San Francisco as Reverend Cecil Williams, as he daily ministers to thousands of less privileged; and so on, down to local great teachers and parents. While many of these stories of service *are* studied by many children, we need to thematically and explicitly highlight the joy of service as the backbone of community and so crystallize for our emerging generations the value of our social fabric.

Social responsibility is built upon the shoulders of response-able individuals. Therefore, we should not administer programs that ask the children to be moralistically “good”, but simply *growing*. These stories provide a language and theater to grow beyond limitations of attention, temporary happiness, selfishness, and emotional imbalances. Clearly growing, one moves beyond outdated complexes and old adaptations. Instead of animating behavior that recalls a past pain (re-acting), those who are “core-wise” are able to recognize the pain, transcend pain-orientation, and respond in the present to the present. (And when he or she fails to practice this, a breath and an inner smile quickly follow.) Responsibility is response ability, and the law and rules follow this truth. We should not train our children to be “good”, righteous, and stressed, but strong and able to respond, with feeling and intelligence, to whatever is presented to them. In this strength, we build strong social fabrics and create community everywhere.

Here the children are asked to do two investigations: pick a famous service hero, like from the list below, with all the dedication of a book report or a standard research paper, AND find a local or cultural hero, that few know about ... yet.

Here’s a starter list of great women and men worth learning about:

Jane Goodall, Saalumara Thimmakka, Rosa Parks, Ben Franklin, Anne Frank, Hua Mulan, John Muir, Malala Yousafzai, Mahatma Ghandi, Maya Angelou, Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Tubman, Mother Teresa, Rani Lakshmibai, Virginia Woolf, Zhang Shi, Cesar Chavez, Susan B Anthony, Nelson Mandella, Sushma Swaraj, Hellen Keller, Socrates, Li Xiaojang, Greta Thunberg, + + + + !



About the Author

For over a quarter century, Frank Marrero taught in the San Francisco Bay area, from inner city public schools to private ashrams, from kindergarten helper to university lecturer. His focus all the while has been in developing curricula to nurture and develop affective strengths (including character education, emotional fluency, moral values, and self-awareness) in addition to academic rigor (focused for 10 year olds). His works have been lauded in superlatives by scholars, educators, parents, and children. He holds a Masters in the Arts of Teaching, and also taught in the Department of Religion and Philosophy at John F. Kennedy University.

Frank is the author of several books: *Lincoln Beachey: The Man Who Owned the Sky*, the definitive biography of the Forgotten Father of Aerobatics; *Recollections of Sokrates*, a novel on the last two months of the sage of Athen's life; *The View from Delphi*, Rhapsodies on the Spiritual Foundations of Western philosophy; *Deep Roots*, Illuminations in Etymology; *The Superpowers of Fasting*, Ancient Wisdom and Medical Miracles, *A Monkey's Tale*, stories in praise of his teacher, Adi Da Samraj, and of course *Big Philosophy for Little Kids*.

Frank is the proud father of two bright adults: Salem and Ella. Frank lives in celebration with his wife Mariëlle van Cann and her remarkable son Sem in The Netherlands.

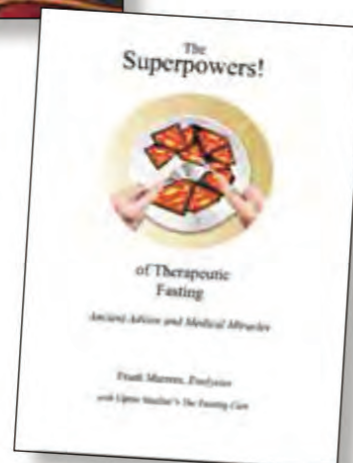
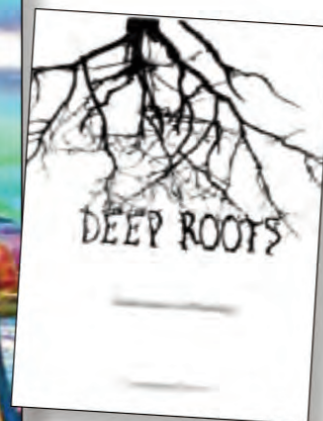
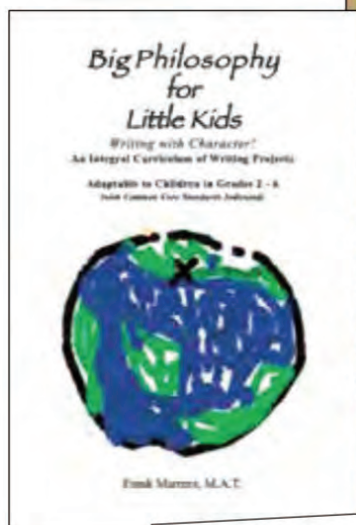
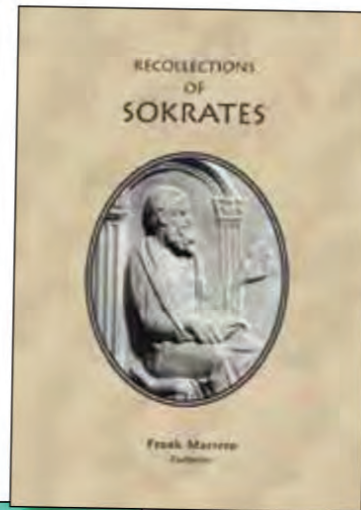
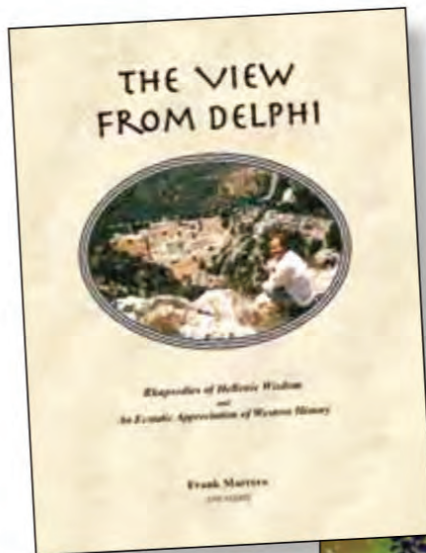
To see all of his writings, please visit www.frankmarrero.com.

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Adi Da Samraj, left
Frank Marrero, right
Wailua River Gorge, Kauai, 1982





ABOUT THE AUTHOR



“Only the Horse Knows”

LINCOLN BEACHEY: THE MAN WHO OWNED THE SKY

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A Biography by Frank Marrero