

Theme for July 2020: *Unchained Spirituality*

FEATURE #1: “Freedom: A Study Course”

By: Ernest Holmes

This month’s offering from our founder, Ernest Holmes, “**Freedom**” (page 70), is excerpted from “The Extension Study course in the Science of Mind.” This four volume accompaniment to the Science of Mind textbook is a must have for any Science of Mind student.

As in the volumes themselves, any page numbers listed in the article correspond to the 1938 edition of “The Science of Mind.”

Holmes begins, *“We might think it strange if someone were to tell us that everything is ours for the asking or taking, that even bondage is the way we are using freedom. And yet if this were not true, we could never be free.”*

1. If you have been a student of Science of Mind for a time, do you understand the idea that bondage is a way of using freedom? What is your understanding of this idea? Are there ways in which you feel yourself to be in bondage, now? Have you had the experience of using your thought to find freedom?

Holmes is clear that we must never pretend that conditions are not unsatisfactory if we are experiencing them as unsatisfactory. We can, however, change conditions through the affirmation of spiritual truth and the realization of right conditions by means of this affirmation.

The principle is One Power, One Presence and One Law. Holmes posits that the realization of this is our assurance. He teaches, *“Keep up your practice ... and you will so completely prove this Principle and your ability to use It that there will never again be a question in your mind as to whether you can change bondage into freedom, fear into faith, sorrow into happiness and lack into abundance.”*

2. Have you already come to the place of certainty in which you need never question your ability to create change? Can you describe your experience of realization and certainty? Do you feel secure enough in your use of spiritual principle to know you can transform any unwanted condition? Have you had more success with some conditions and less with others?

Freedom versus Bondage

Holmes begins to explain, ***“Bondage is an experience. It is not a reality of itself any more than the drawing of a small circle on a blackboard denies the possibility of a larger one. ... As an absolute reality, it has no existence. It is, however, a human experience and an individual experience.”*** The crux of this matter is, as Holmes instructs, ***“Until we realize that we have created our own bondage, we shall not understand how we can be made free.”***

3. How do you understand bondage as an experience, as opposed to a reality? Would you be able to explain this? How is it that you can experience unsatisfactory or unwanted conditions if they are not a reality in themselves? Can you see the role of your thought and your beliefs in your own experience of challenges? Do you see your own problematic experience from the level of cause?

Holmes admonishes us to use care in speaking to others about the unreality of their difficulties. His suggestion (as was Jesus’) is to be sure that we ourselves have become spiritually able to free ourselves and another from bondage before we speak of this.

4. Have you been on the receiving end of someone making the mistake of pointing out either the unreality of your difficulty or suggesting that you are the cause of it? Have you accidentally made this error with another? Have you become spiritually able to free yourself or another, from bondage? Do you know that your own experience of bondage is not the result of the conditions you see, but of the consciousness behind it?

Holmes clarifies, ***“Our glossary defines reality as the truth about anything (page 624), and bondage is the result of an ignorance of Reality. Bondage is the exact opposite of Reality. If we consider that we are living in a spiritual universe governed by mental laws, the way to free ourselves from bondage must be to recognize Reality.”***

We are asked to consider the glossary definition of Realization (page 625). Holmes makes three important points with regard to realization. First, he asserts, *“This realization is of our oneness with God. It is a sense that for every apparent wrong there is an opposite right.”* Second, he posits, *“The act of realization proves that wherever good is recognized, it instantly appears, for good is permanent while evil is temporary.”* His third point states, *“... Since we comprehend the Infinite only to the degree that It expresses through us, we pass from one degree of bondage to a lesser degree as our sense of Reality increases.”*

5. How completely are you able to sense your oneness with God? Do you feel your Divine alignment? Are you able to quickly adjust your thought to awareness of the opposite right, when a wrong appears to you? Do you see good quickly when the opposite of good fills your thought? Do you see your spiritual growth, and therefore your freedom, progressing?

Spiritual mind healing is based on the principle that continually evolving life takes new forms as realization grows. Focusing upon the good, new form objectifies or out-pictures with increasing harmony. Spiritual mind healing and meditations are designed to assist one in greater comprehension and therefore, greater realization.

6. Have you become aware of the evolution of good in your life and experience? Or, contrarily, do you feel stuck in circumstances that seem never to change? If you have difficulty maintaining focus on the good, would you consider reaching out to a practitioner or a minister? Have you learned to use treatment and meditations to suffuse you conscious awareness with good?

Thy Strength is Sufficient (page 542)

**O Spirit of man and God within me, Thy Power is great, and
Thy Knowledge goes beyond the range of human experience.
Thy Wisdom excels that of all else, and beside Thee there is none other.
In Thy Strength do I daily walk and live;
In Thy Presence do I always rest in peace and joy.
Spirit within me and without, Powerful Thou art, and Great;
Wonderful is Thy Might, and Complete is Thy Understanding.**

**I let Thy Mighty Strength flow through me,
And out into all the paths of my human endeavors.
Life from within expresses through me.**

Holmes instructs us in the use of this beautiful meditation: *“Say this over and over to yourself. Try to realize its meaning. See if you do not gradually sense a new realization of the Divine Presence and out of the Spiritual Power generated in this realization, speak your word directly for the physical healing of someone whom you seek to help or for some condition you wish to benefit. Have implicit trust and confidence in the power of your word and you will be certain to be rewarded.”*

7. When Holmes urges us to repeat these words over and over it is to suffuse your consciousness with this truth: Why do you think so many repetitions are required? Have you accepted the process of re-educating or reprogramming the subconscious mind? How many repetitions are enough? How do you know when these words have become your own?

Fear is another area with which people struggle. Holmes address this in the meditation, “As Love Enters, Fear Departs” (page 528). Holmes offers a contemplative way of using the meditation words: *“Let the mind dwell on the idea of love and protection until finally the images of fear dissipate.”*

8. Have you used a contemplative method of meditation — filling the consciousness with the idea of Divine Love or another quality of God — until filled with the glorious feeling and frequency? Do the words immediately evoke a change within you as you hear or read them in a prayer or meditation? Or, is the more contemplative method of feeling into the essence of a Divine quality more effective for you? Do you find yourself responding to words of truth in different ways at different times?

Holmes’ instruction is clear and consistent: *“Speak your word directly, believing. When you are giving treatments, you must believe that what you say is true.”*

The Great Awakening (page 487)

Referencing our theme this month, of unchained spirituality, we are reminded that is it our responsibility to free ourselves by waking to the truth. Holmes asks, ***“What is it that we are to know?”*** He writes, ***“That there is but One Power and but One Presence, One Perfect Law, One Divine Destiny, and, as Jesus said, ‘If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.’”***

To wake to the Truth is to liberate ourselves, spiritually. In Holmes’ words, ***“To abide in the Truth means to trust, to have faith and confidence, to believe and, whenever any doubt arises, to reaffirm this Divine assurance.”***

9. How do you see yourself; are you awake to the Truth? What is your level of trust? Is your level of trust serving you during this challenging time of COVID – 19 and its ramifications? Are you able to reaffirm Divine assurance when doubt arises?

To abide in the Truth, to trust absolutely, it is necessary to live in harmony and know one’s unity with God. Holmes teaches, ***“This unity always existed but we must become conscious of it.”***

Because the Law is entirely affirmative we use our freedom to create bondage when we act in disharmony with God, in disharmony with good. Holmes instructs, ***“The Law is foolproof. The Universe is foolproof. We can count on the Law, absolutely.”***

10. Does knowing that the Law is completely dependable help you to establish your own trust? Do you see your responsibility in being conscious of your Divine unity? Are you clear on how it is you create your own bondage by the misuse of freedom? Have you ever done that? Do you have examples of being in trust and seeing Divine Law work beautifully for you?

May all be blessed to live in complete trust, having unchained our spirituality!

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FEATURE #2: “Let Us Walk With Each Other”

By: Kathy Juline

“**Let Us Walk With Each Other**” by Kathy Juline (page 78), honors the journey of Peace Pilgrim (born Mildred Lisette Norman) and her timeless teachings.

Juline begins with this quote from Ernest Holmes: **“Only peace can enter the gates of Reality and sit at the table of love.”** Juline tells us that Peace Pilgrim’s greatest teaching was peace among people, peace between nations, and inner peace.

Peace Pilgrim, we are told, walked more than 25,000 miles during a span of 28 years. This seems extremely unusual in present day life, but if thought about as an ancient tradition of spiritual practice to which many have been called, it may resonate.

1. How do you understand the Holmes quote with regard to the importance of peace? How do you view the importance of peace in your own daily experience? Do you take note quickly when your inner peace is disturbed? Are you able to use spiritual tools to regain your inner peace?

Through Juline we hear Peace Pilgrim’s story of a powerful wind and dust storm. Offered assistance by a police officer, she declined with the words, **“God is my shield, and I have nothing to fear.”** Juline shares from Peace Pilgrim, **“At that precise moment, the wind died down, the dust settled and the sun broke through the clouds. From then on, I felt spiritually lifted above all hardship.”**

2. What is your response to the walking ministry of Peace Pilgrim? What are your thoughts about the calling to which she dedicated herself; can you imagine it? Have you had a spiritual experience such as Peace Pilgrim described when she spoke her words of faith in the dust storm? Speaking truth with absolute affirmation is what we are taught in Science of Mind: Have you ever had an immediate and dramatic demonstration as Peace Pilgrim did? Have you had a spiritual experience that cemented your faith from that point forward?

“Her basic message,” shares Juline, ***“was both simple and profound: ‘Overcome evil with good, falsehood with truth and hatred with love.’”***

Becoming an Instrument of Peace

Were you surprised to learn that Peace Pilgrim had no formal religious training? Juline tells us that she took in the Golden Rule (“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”) as her spiritual standard.

Juline expounds, ***“As an adult, she prospered in her business career but the problems she observed in the experience of so many people disturbed her. She felt a strong call to alleviate their pain. ‘In desperation and out of a very deep seeking for a meaningful way of life,’ she says, ‘I walked all one night through the woods. I came to a glade and prayed to God, ‘Please use me!’ And a great peace came over me.’”***

3. Were you raised with an understanding of the Golden Rule? Were you raised with formal religious training? How did your childhood instruction influence you? Has suffering caused you to seek God — and meaning — or has the suffering in life caused you to question or turn away from God? Have you had a spiritual experience such as Peace Pilgrim described that filled you with peace or with certainty?

Steps to Inner Peace

For Peace Pilgrim the spiritual experience resulting in great peace was a turning point. She prepared for her pilgrimage by systematically practicing steps to inner peace.

First, she urges us to face life and look further, beneath the surface. Every problem has purpose and contributes to our growth. She recommends we solve these in accordance with the highest view of truth.

Second, Peace Pilgrim suggests living in harmony with universal laws. Among these are that evil must be overcome by good and that only good results in good. She reminds us that we hurt

ourselves spiritually any time we do unloving things. We are to live the good in which we believe.

4. Do you feel that you understand what Peace Pilgrim means in each of these directives? Have you found purpose and growth in the problems of your life? Her second step to peace contains ideas that suggest congruence — living in harmony with spiritual law and with good: Have you dedicated yourself to goodness at this point, or do you struggle with anger? Do you believe any unloving action — or thought — is harmful to you spiritually?

Peace Pilgrim’s third step to peace is to understand that we each have our own special place in the pattern of life. Inner guidance will direct us to our purpose. We are to follow this guidance when we recognize it.

5. Do you feel that there is a special purpose to your life? Are you fulfilling that purpose, today? Where are you with listening to — and with hearing — spiritual guidance? Have you responded to Divine guidance, and if so, what has been the result?

Peace Pilgrim’s fourth step is to purify oneself in body, mind and spirit. Healthy, wholesome foods are necessary and thoughts must be kept positive. Using forgiveness to uplift one’s own energy will improve all outward thoughts and behaviors as we strive to uplift others, always.

6. All five of Peace Pilgrim’s steps to inner peace demand a great deal: Where are you with these? Peace Pilgrim spent fifteen years mastering these in preparation for her walking ministry: Can you imagine or relate to doing this? If you were to customize the items in these five steps to suit you, would you keep and work at all of them? Which of these describe how you live today?

Following the fifteen years of preparing herself with these five steps, Peace Pilgrim experienced a tremendous change in terms of feeling the blessing of meaningful purpose, and in her own spiritual maturation. Does the idea of these changes appeal to you?

Pursuing Her Divine Expression

Juline describes Peace Pilgrim’s shift from vision to action. She writes, ***“She began to teach her message of peace, speaking to large gatherings at universities, colleges, high schools and churches. Along her pilgrimage, she collected signatures on petitions to end the Korean War, establish a U.S. Peace Department and commit to world disarmament, which she presented to officials at the White House and to the United Nations.”*** These are tremendous accomplishments by anyone’s standards.

In terms of counsel given to people on a personal level, Juline explains, ***“Peace Pilgrim taught them to forgive, express gratitude, think positively, praise the opportunities that problems present to grow spiritually, overcome adversity through accessing inner strength and perform acts of kindness toward others.”***

7. Had you heard of Peace Pilgrim previously, either through news of her walking ministry or through her enormous and substantive accomplishments? Is it difficult to imagine the logistics of such accomplishment in view of the walking life style? As you review her advice in personal counsel, how important is each of the items listed? Do you live according to these values?

Juline further offers this list of teachings from Peace Pilgrim:

- Know that every right thing you do — every good word you say, every positive thought you think — has good effect.
- As long as you maintain faith in God, you will be victorious over any situation you face.
- Live in the present and be the best you can be. The future will unfold according to the seed you plant today.
- Speak for peace and know that peace is possible. Be an example for others.
- Love those who are out of harmony and lift them into a higher way. Abandon fear and replace it with faith. Allow love to reign supreme in your heart.

8. Do you believe that the good you do and even the good you think has a positive effect, even if you do not see it? Do you know the power of faith — that it is always victorious? Do you set an intention to live in the present and manage to do it? Do you speak for peace and of peace when there is none to be seen? Are you able to love those who seem at odds with good? Can you turn your thoughts and feelings to those of love, in every circumstance?

Juline shares Peace Pilgrim’s description of how she lived her life: ***“I do my work easily and joyously. I feel beauty all around me, and I see beauty in everyone I meet, for I see God in everything. I recognize my part in the life pattern and I find harmony through gladly and joyously living it. I recognize my oneness with all of humanity and my oneness with God. My happiness overflows in loving and giving toward everyone and everything.”***

9. As students of the Science of Mind, we see that Peace Pilgrim’s description of how she lived reads like the affirmations we use: How would it feel to know you are consistently living the affirmations you speak? What affirmations would represent your perfect life experience? Can you construct an affirmative formula for the perfect life you would choose? Are you currently living according to your own affirmative formula?

Peace Pilgrim unchained her spirituality and unleashed Divine good everywhere she walked. Her words teach us how to unchain our own spirituality and live in the euphoria of pure love and oneness. Juline concurs: ***“Let us, then, expand our awareness and maintain an openness to love, cultivating faith in the perfect life, which is God, oneness, truth. In the world now we are much in need of the spiritual awakening and realization the Peace Pilgrim taught in her courageous and powerful approach. Together we can create this renewal.”***

Through Juline we know that Peace Pilgrim encourages us to make the choice to align with the God that governs nature itself: ***“We have the free will to allow it to govern our life or not. The choice is always ours.”***

May we be blessed in our choice to live in unchained spirituality with every step!

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FEATURE #3: “Live from the Glory of Who You Are”

By: Elliott Robertson

Elliott Robertson urges us to know and to express the Divine truth of ourselves in his article, “Live From the Glory of Who You Are” (page 84).

Realizing Our Divine Nature

Robertson reminds us of Jesus’ words in the beatitudes: *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”* He likens this to Holmes’ idea: *“We must be lifted up, that is, we must realize our Divine nature and relationship to the Truth of God. This relationship is one of complete unity.”*

Robertson asks, *“Could this realization of our divine nature be the key to living from the glory of who we are?”*

1. Realizing our own divine nature begins with understanding the Divine nature of God: Are you clear about your concept of God? Or, do you struggle a bit with your idea of God or with your faith? Do you know yourself as an individuated center of God consciousness, literally made of Divine substance and imbued with all the beautiful Divine qualities? Are you able to feel your unity with God?
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Robertson reminds us of Holmes’ instruction that understanding our unity requires spiritual practice. He shares Holmes’ guidance: *“To daily meditate on the Perfect Life, and to daily embody the Great Ideal, is a royal road to freedom, to that ‘peace which passes understanding’ and is happiness to the soul.”* Robertson continues, *“Take time each day to say, ‘Thank you Cosmos, for your benevolence. Thank you, Highest One, for creating me in your glory, for creating me as a magnifying glass through which your presence and light are expanded.’”*

Robertson suggests this prayer as an example of that which leads one to deep peace, and the unification with God that allows us to be free to live as fully loving and compassionate.

2. As you hear these words of Holmes and of Robertson, do they resonate for you as practices to embrace? What does the idea of meditating on the perfect life conjure for you? How do you feel about the idea of daily embodying the Great Ideal as a practice of unification? How might the suggested gratitude practice solidify unification for you? Do you experience yourself living as fully loving and compassionate now?

Robertson writes, ***“Devote yourself daily to meditating on the love God has for you.”*** He suggests beginning the day in direct communion, welcoming God’s Love.

3. How Divinely loved do you feel? Do you feel God’s love for you fully and deeply? If not, would you consider a daily practice of recognizing Divine Love and welcoming this for yourself? How did you come to know how personally and completely you are loved?

Robertson discusses the storms that can and do rage in each of our lives at times. He recommends, ***“If a storm is raging, then the need to take a moment to establish your awareness in who you are in truth is even greater.”***

4. When we practice daily, know the Truth of God and the truth of ourselves as God’s beloved and treasured creation, we are better prepared for the storms of life: Have you experienced feeling your spirituality uphold you in a stormy time or crisis? Were you able to feel and follow the inward light that Robertson talks about? Has knowing God’s love brought you peace while chaos surrounds?

God Awaits You

Robertson assures, ***“God is in each place in Its totality, waiting for you to turn your gaze ... from problems to Its radiant face.”***

5. Do you often think about God being in all — everywhere — at all times? Robertson says God is “waiting for you to turn your gaze ... to Its radiant face”: What does this mean to you? In the midst of the storm, or even smaller trials, are you able to know that God is right there when your peace is disturbed? Are you able to quickly turn your attention to God?

Robertson instructs that God is asking each of us to take joy in who we are and to celebrate our Sacred, Divine relationship. Further, no matter the current conditions or difficulty ahead, God invites us to take joy in this day and understand its holiness.

Robertson writes, ***“God’s joy is full when you take joy in life and in the glory of your soul. God’s greatest joy is your acceptance of yourself as a creation born of his essence. Say yes to who you are today, and the reverberations will resound throughout the cosmos, blessing all.”***

6. Are you able to take joy in who you are, knowing your own Divine essence? Do you celebrate God, your relationship with God and your own sacred soul? Do you wake up in a state of positive expectancy for the day ahead, or do you sometimes feel dread? Can you allow yourself to say yes to God with a willingness to live in Divine Love?

Robertson asserts, ***“The Benevolent One is steadfastly asking each of us to express the magnificence within without waiting for the outer world to change. Consent to God’s sweet will for you to give way to who you are and hold the world in love. Allow yourself to stand before God saying only, ‘Here I am. Where would you have me go?’”***

7. Here we are told to express our inner magnificence “without waiting for the outer world to change”: Do you have the sense that we are being asked to express our divinity, unconditionally? Is it possible to love God, to love self, and to love life, unconditionally? If your answer is yes, are you living in this state of unconditional love? Can you see the importance of this level of unconditional love?

The concepts and practices of learning Divine love, our own inner divinity, and of living in this love unconditionally, can be found throughout the Science of Mind teachings. Unchaining our spirituality is making ourselves free to experience this pure love, always.

Robertson charges, ***“Let nothing take precedence over being open to the guidance from the Source of all. Let your desire to do as Divine Intelligence would have you do to become the center point around which your life revolves.”***

8. Do you have a spiritual practice of listening to Divine guidance? Have you learned to be sensitive to your own intuition? Do you see your intuition? Do you see your intuition and Divine guidance as one and the same? How do you receive Divine guidance? Do you hear guidance as a thought or a voice? Is guidance a feeling from your heart center? Does it come to you in various ways?

“We were designed to hear God speak, to receive intuitions,” writes Robertson, ***“Even if we have shut down our receptivity over the years, the wiring within us cannot be destroyed.”***

Robertson articulates, ***“We may have lost touch with the trust we brought with us when we were born. Still, this place within our hearts that trusts God in the same way we might trust the sun to rise when it is setting — this place within our hearts is still accessible.”***

9. Are you one who lost a sense of connection with God? Did trauma or tragedy affect or even seem to destroy your trust in God? Are you one who has rebuilt your trust in and love for God? Have you become disconnected from Guidance or from your own intuition? Are you in a position to share your strength of trust in God with another as encouragement?

Robertson asserts, ***“We establish ourselves in our relationship with Source when we begin a steady diet of meditating on the perfect life and on the trustworthiness of the One who sees only light within us.”***

Building a Nest

Telling us how to build a nest, Robertson writes, *“When we show up as we are in our compassionate, divine nature, when we take joy in the light that shines within us, when we thank God for creating us as loving beings with the capacity to let love flow through us, we build a sturdy nest in which our souls may dwell.”*

10. Do you have the sense now, of having built a sturdy nest of absolute security? Do you feel that you are living as one who knows your own divinity — your absolute unity with God? Can you take joy in the light that shines within you, in any circumstance? Do you know the unconditional love that flows through you, always?

Robertson goes on to describe the strength of this nest within the heart center. It is not a place where we do *not* feel pain. It is a place that has been so expanded and strengthened by infinite love and profound trust that we no longer fear pain. We can feel our own pain or the pain of humanity in such a depth of love, we truly know the power of God within us.

So secure in trust that we are without fear, and joyful in the fullness of love, we can awake in our nest. We can live as Robertson suggests: *“Begin each day saying, ‘Thank you for designing me with the capacity to love and be loved.’”*

Blessings to all in our unchained spirituality, living in the fullness of love!

Theme for July 2020: *Unchained Spirituality*

FEATURE #4: “A Life Unencumbered”

By: Molly Kate Brown

The title of this article, “**A Life Unencumbered**” by Molly Kate Brown (page 92), holds promise with regard to our theme of Unchained Spirituality.

Brown offers assurance, “*We’re only ever a breath or two away from releasing the chains that bind us, from living a life that is truly free.*” She shares a basic imperative: “*This freedom requires a more encompassing capacity, a greater breath of perspective and understanding. At its core is a willingness to feel and be with discomfort from a place of neutrality rather than reactivity. It requires us to cultivate the ability to witness and notice dispassionately.*”

1. Do you know why Brown says, “We’re only a breath or two away from releasing the chains that bind us?” Have you done a meditation practice that focuses on the breath? More challenging is learning to have the spaciousness to feel and process difficult emotions with equanimity: Have you worked with a practice like this?
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As Brown describes, it is from the perspective of being an observer of one’s own perceptual experience that frees one.

A foundation of trust is built in this process. Brown describes the strength one builds and more importantly, a deep connection with Source. Further, learning to observe one’s experience generates curiosity about life rather than fear of it. She suggests that through this process, false beliefs and limiting habits of thought are released, allowing one to be free.

2. If you have a meditation practice, does it assist you in learning to observe your experience, rather than react? If you have a practice such as this, have you experienced developing greater strength, greater trust, more curiosity and less fear? If you have enjoyed a practice of this sort for a period of time, are you now enjoying greater freedom, no longer bound by your own reactions? Does a practice like this sound good to you?
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Brown writes, *“The flow of source energy, of life, is dynamic and fluid. Fixed positions and beliefs impede this natural flow.”*

Brown states, *“Allowing is not the same as complacency.”* This is an interesting and important point. Buddhism explains that equanimity — also known as allowing — has the “far enemies” known as repulsion and as craving. Grasping on to what is desired or feeling strong repugnance to that which is unwanted are the obvious enemies of equanimity. But, the “near enemy” is complacency, indifference or apathy.

There is some confusion about this point with regard to meditation. Learning to be an observer of one’s responses does not foster indifference. Equanimity dissolves problematic, habitual responses and frees one to ever more of the source energy that Brown describes.

3. Are you one who has had a concern about becoming apathetic or callous to the suffering of others? Have you known a “spiritual teacher” who seemed to exhibit calm from a place of indifference? Do you see how equanimity might open you to more Divine flow and therefore even greater lovingness within you and outward?

Brown asserts, *“Responding from a place of grounded clarity and guidance is far different from having a negative, knee-jerk reaction that further complicates and binds.”* She further explains that the concepts of “right speech” and “right action” relate to being beneficial to the world and to others.

This undertaking is not easy according to Brown. She shares the words of Gautama Buddha: *“Life is suffering.”* The Buddha is also known to have said, “There is only one thing I teach. That is suffering and its end to reach.” The Buddha fully expected meditation practitioners to learn to become free of suffering.

4. Have you practiced enough meditation to experience some relief from your own reactions to known triggers? Do you feel in control of your speech and your actions, such that you can trust yourself to be “skillful” and not inflict pain on another? Do you think it is possible to be liberated from suffering?

What This Looks Like in Practice

Brown suggests that mindful awareness develops one’s inner guidance. She offers that 25 minutes per day of a mindfulness practice has been proven through functional MRI, to create significant changes in the brain that are known to occur after just an eight week program.

Brown uses the example of breath-awareness mindfulness, but there are many others. The action of bringing one’s thought back to the present moment and the sensations of breathing, free one from the tyranny of thoughts and emotions.

5. Does it excite you to know that science is able to see the benefits of meditation within the brain? Are you surprised that results occur in as quickly as eight weeks? Have you tried a breathing or breath focus meditation technique? Would you like to share your own result with breath focus or any other technique?

Brown explains, ***“During meditation, when you notice your self thinking instead of witnessing sensations within the breath or body, gently redirect you focus without judgement.”***

It is the repetition of gently bringing the focus back that builds the skill and the benefits. Brown writes, ***“This takes vigilance and practice, especially when you experience feelings of fear, anxiety, sadness, anger or other strong energies. To dissipate those emotions is to stop feeding them, which means disengaging awareness or energy.”***

Disengaging the awareness is possible because awareness can only be on one point of attention at a time.

6. Have you tried this enough to prove to yourself that your awareness is single pointed? If you are new to this type of meditation, but have tried it, were you able to gently redirect your attention back to the sensations of your breathing? Were you able to be gentle and loving with yourself, knowing that it is the repetition itself that builds the practice?

Brown explains, ***“Throughout life, we develop mental patterns and beliefs that no longer serve today. Those patterns may be handed down from generation to generation.”*** When one of these

patterns is activated for us — when we become upset — we call it being “triggered”. To then give our attention to these triggered feelings exacerbates and perpetuates a destructive cycle.

When these challenging or even agonizing sensations arise we can ameliorate them through practice, by first allowing the sensations while bringing the awareness back to the intended point of focus, in this case, the sensations of breathing.

Brown shares this quote from the Austrian neurologist and author Victor Frankl: ***“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”***

7. Have you come to an understanding in your spirituality that the “trigger” resides within you — and is never the fault of another? Do you see how meditation is the perfect companion tool for our Science of Mind teachings? Do you see how a vicious cycle can become a virtuous cycle through practice? Are you familiar with Victor Frankl and his life story?

Bravely Enter the Discomfort

Brown informs, ***“When we no longer avoid discomfort, we can allow it to be present and continue to experience the depth, riches and beauty of life’s mysteries.”*** She likens the discomforts to the rain, wind and storms of life and reminds us that sun and rain can occur simultaneously.

Brown explains that we must welcome all emotional experience as we welcome all weather. Our error, she tells us, is in vilifying the difficult emotions. They do not mean that something is wrong; they are part of the rich palette of life experience.

8. Have you been operating under the assumption that anything less than happiness is not properly spiritual? Equanimity is the state of allowing emotion (or anything) to come and go without push or pull: Can equanimity become the spiritual goal? Can the strength within — your inner divinity — become the calm center in any storm for you?

Brown shares her experience with Vipassana which is an insight practice that develops the ability to observe and cultivate one's equanimity and one's wisdom function.

Brown writes, *“Over the years, I came to understand trauma is stored within the nervous system and tissues, right alongside the fear and negativity that come with it. The deeply ingrained mental patterns are filters through which we perceive reality. It takes courage to turn toward the pain, to notice the discomfort in the body that is associated with these filters. The only way to course correct, to be free, is to become aware of that which requires a great deal of neutral observation.”*

It is the allowing of painful or uncomfortable emotion with equanimity that permits the stored trauma and problematic programming to actually heal.

9. Brown offers this mindfulness practice as a path to unchained spirituality: Do you see how and why this practice might liberate you? Do you have a meditation practice in which you allow difficult or challenging emotions to arise? If so, has it made you more comfortable — more peaceful — with emotions that arise for you during the day? Are you less reactive? Are you able to experience love and joy simultaneously with grief and sadness? That simultaneity happens when the heart center has been permitted to expand through ever greater love: Has this happened for you?

Brown introduces us to the West African healing shaman, Malidoma Patrice Some who offers an elevated perspective on the healing that is possible through the release of stored energy. Grief and even mental illness can be the path to healing. Perhaps we can see all the challenges of our world as a path to healing.

May we be blessed with unchained spirituality through mindful healing!

Theme for July 2020: *Unchained Spirituality*

Additional Resources of Interest

Online Edition of Science of Mind Magazine

The online edition of the magazine contains additional content not found in the printed edition. It is available at www.ScienceOfMind.com and is free to current subscribers.

Science of Mind Free Electronic Newsletter

You may find in this e-newsletter additional articles and links to other resources that your Circle may want to explore. To sign up, go to www.ScienceOfMind.com/e-News/.

The Science of Mind Archives

The Archives contain a number of online books, audios and archived editions of Guide for Spiritual Living: Science of Mind magazine, accessible at ScienceOfMindArchives.org/.

Social Media

Check out the following social media sites for forum discussion, current events and inspirational postings that may be of interest to you:

- www.Facebook.com/ScienceOfMindMagazine
- www.Facebook.com/CentersForSpiritualLiving
- [Twitter: @ErnestHolmesSoM](https://twitter.com/ErnestHolmesSoM)

Questions or Feedback

We welcome any questions concerning your Spiritual Living Circles as well as feedback on how we can improve the content of this material and your experience.

Send us an e-mail at Circles@CSL.org