

The Power of Now Book Notes

Chapter One: You Are Not Your Mind

If you cannot feel your emotions, if you are cut off from them, you will eventually experience them on a purely physical level, as a physical problem or symptom.

Chapter Two: Consciousness: The Way Out of Pain

Summarizing the process: focus attention on the feeling inside you. Know that it is the pain-body. Accept that it is there. Don't think about it— don't let the feeling turn into thinking. Don't judge or analyze. Don't make an identity for yourself out of it. Stay present, and continue to be the observer of what is happening inside you. Become aware not only of the emotional pain but also of "the one who observes," the silent watcher. This is the power of the Now, the power of your own conscious presence. Then see what happens.

As long as the egoic mind is running your life, you cannot truly be at ease; you cannot be at peace or fulfilled except for brief intervals when you obtained what you wanted, when a craving has just been fulfilled. Since the ego is a derived sense of self; it needs to identify with external things. It needs to be both defended and fed constantly. The most common ego identifications have to do with possessions, the work you do, social status and recognition, knowledge and education, physical appearance, special abilities, relationships, personal and family history, belief systems, and often also political, nationalistic, racial, religious, and other collective identifications.

Chapter 3: Moving Deeply Into the Now

Here is the key: End the delusion of time. Time and mind are inseparable. Remove time from the mind and it stops— unless you choose to use it.

To be identified with your mind is to be trapped in time: the compulsion to live almost exclusively through memory and anticipation. This creates an endless preoccupation with past and future and an unwillingness to honor and acknowledge the present moment and allow it to be. The compulsion arises because the past gives you an identity and the future holds the promise of salvation, of fulfillment in whatever form. Both are illusions.

Until you have dealt with the basic problem-making dysfunction of the mind— its attachment to past and future and denial of the Now— problems are actually interchangeable. If all your problems or perceived causes of suffering or unhappiness were miraculously removed for you today, but you had not become more present, more conscious, you would soon find yourself with a similar set of problems or causes of suffering, like a shadow that follows you wherever you go. Ultimately, there is only one problem: the time-bound mind itself.

The Joy of Being

To alert you that you have allowed yourself to be taken over by psychological time, you can use a simple criterion. Ask yourself: Is there joy, ease, and lightness in what I am doing? If there isn't then time is covering up the present moment, and life is perceived as a burden or a struggle.

See if you can give much more attention to the doing than to the result that you want to achieve through it. Give your fullest attention to whatever the movement presents. This implies that you also completely accept what is, because you cannot give your full attention to something and at the same time resist it.

So do not be concerned with the fruit of your action— just give attention to the action itself. The fruit will come of its own accord. This is a powerful spiritual practice.

As far as your life situation is concerned, there may be things to be attained or acquired. That's the world of form, of gain or loss. Yet on a deeper level you are already complete, and when you realize that, there is a playful, joyous energy behind what you do. Being free of psychological time, you no longer pursue your goals with grim determination, driven by fear, anger, discontent, or the need to become someone. Nor will you remain inactive through fear of failure, which to the ego is loss of self. When your deeper sense of self is derived from Being, when you are free of "becoming" as a psychological need, neither your happiness nor your sense of self depends on the outcome, and so there is freedom from fear.

Chapter Four: Mind Strategies for Avoiding the Now

To be free of time is to be free of the psychological need of past for your identity and future for your fulfillment.

Anything unconscious dissolves when you shine the light of consciousness on it.

Die to the past every moment. You don't need it. Only refer to it when it is absolutely relevant to the present. Feel the power of this moment and the fullness of Being. Feel your presence.

Are you a habitual "waiter"? How much of your life do you spend waiting? What I call "small-scale waiting" is waiting in line at the post office, in a traffic jam, at the airport, or waiting for someone to arrive, to finish work, and so on. "Large-scale waiting" is waiting for the next vacation, for a better job, for the children to grow up, for a truly meaningful relationship, for success, to make money, to be important, to become enlightened. It is not uncommon for people to spend their whole life waiting to start living.

There is nothing wrong with striving to improve your life situation. You can improve your life situation, but you cannot improve your life. Life is primary. Life is your deepest inner Being. It is already whole, complete, perfect.

Give up waiting as a state of mind. When you catch yourself slipping into waiting... snap out of it. Come into the present moment. Just be, and enjoy being. If you are present, there is never any need for you to wait for anything.

The Inner Purpose of Your Life's Journey

Your life's journey has an outer purpose and an inner purpose. The outer purpose is to arrive at your goal or destination, to accomplish what you set out to do, to achieve this or that, which, of course, implies future. But if your destination, or the steps you are going to take in the future, take up so much of your attention that they become more important to you than the step you are taking now, then you completely miss the journey's inner purpose, which has nothing to do with *where* you are going or *what* you are doing, but everything to do with *how*.

When you have seen the limitations of your outer purpose, you give up your unrealistic expectation that it should make you happy, and you make it subservient to your inner purpose.

Chapter 5: The State of Presence

In a sense, the state of presence could be compared to waiting,

Something could happen at any moment, and if you are not absolutely awake, absolutely still, you will miss it. This is the kind of waiting Jesus talks about. In that state, all your attention is in the Now.

Group work can be helpful for intensifying the light of your presence. A group of people coming together in a state of presence generates a collective energy field of great intensity. IT not only raises the degree of presence of each member of the group but also helps to free the collective human consciousness from its current state of mind dominance. This will make the state of presence increasingly more accessible to individuals.

Chapter 6: The Inner Body

To become conscious of Being, you need to reclaim consciousness from the mind.

A very effective way of doing this is simply to take the focus of your attention away from thinking and direct it into the body, where Being can be felt in the first instance as the invisible energy field that gives life to what you perceive as the physical body.

Transformation is through the body, not away from it. This is why no true master has ever advocated fighting or leaving the body, although their mind-based followers often have.

Sermon on the Body

Do not turn your attention elsewhere in your search for the Truth, for it is nowhere else to be found but within your body.

Have Deep Roots Within

The key is to be in a permanent connectedness with your inner body– to feel it at all times. This will rapidly deepen and transform your life. The more consciousness you direct into the inner body, the higher its vibrational frequency becomes.

At this higher energy level, negativity cannot affect you anymore, and you tend to attract new circumstances that reflect this higher frequency.

If you keep your attention in the body as much as possible, you will be anchored in the Now.

Feel your whole body from within, as a single field of energy. It is almost as if you were listening or reading with your whole body. Let this be your practice in the days and weeks to come.

Do not give all your attention away to the mind and the external world. By all means focus on what you are doing, but feel the inner body at the same time whenever possible. Stay rooted within. Then observe how this changes your state of consciousness and the quality of what you are doing.

Whenever you are waiting, wherever it may be, use that time to feel the inner body.

The art of inner-body awareness will develop into a completely new way of living, a state of permanent connectedness with Being, and will add a depth to your life that you have never known before.

Before You Enter the Body, Forgive

Place your attention on feeling the emotion, and check whether your mind is holding on to a grievance pattern such as blame, self-pity, or resentment that is feeding the emotion. If that is the case, it means that you haven't forgiven. Non-forgiveness is often toward another person or yourself, but it may just as well be toward any situation or condition– past, present, or future– that your mind refuses to accept.

Forgiveness is to offer no resistance to life– to allow life to live through you. The alternatives are pain and suffering, a greatly restricted flow of life energy, and in many cases physical disease.

When you are unoccupied for a few minutes, and especially last thing at night before going to sleep and first thing in the morning before getting up, “flood” your body with consciousness. Close your eyes, lie flat on your back. Choose different parts of your body to focus your attention on briefly at first: hands, feet, arms, legs, abdomen, chest, head, and so on. Feel the life energy inside those parts as intensely as you can. Stay with each part for fifteen seconds or so. Then let your attention run through the body like a wave a few times, from feet to head and back again. This need only take a minute or so. After that, feel the inner body in its totality, as a single field of energy. Hold that feeling for a few minutes.

Creative Use of Mind

If you need to use your mind for a specific purpose, use it in conjunction with your inner body. Only if you are able to be conscious without thought can you use your mind creatively, and the easiest way to enter that state is through your body. Whenever an answer, a solution, or a creative idea is needed, stop thinking for a moment by focusing attention on your inner energy field. Become aware of the stillness. When you resume thinking, it will be fresh and creative. In any thought activity, make it a habit to go back and forth every few minutes or so between thinking and an inner kind of listening, an inner stillness. We could say: don't just think with your head, think with your whole body.

The Art of Listening

When listening to another person, don't just listen with your mind, listen with your whole body. Feel the energy field of your inner body as you listen.

You cannot feel someone else's Being except through your own. This is the beginning of the realization of oneness, which is love.

Chapter 7: Portals Into the Unmanifested

By going deeply into the body, you have transcended the body.

Let your spiritual practice be this: As you go about your life, don't give 100% of your attention to the external world and to your mind. Keep some within.

Feel the inner body when engaged in everyday activities, especially when engaged in relationships or when you are relating with nature. Feel the stillness deep inside it. Keep the portal open. It is quite possible to be conscious of the Unmanifested throughout your life. You feel it as a deep sense of peace somewhere in the background, a stillness that never leaves you, no matter what happens out here.

Surrender— the letting go of mental-emotional resistance to what is— also becomes a portal into the Unmanifested.

You cannot think and be aware of space— or of silence, for that matter. By becoming aware of the empty space around you, you simultaneously become aware of the space of no-mind, of pure consciousness: the Unmanifested. This is how the contemplation of space can become a portal for you.

Chapter 8: Enlightened Relationships

Sexual union is more than a fleeting glimpse of wholeness, an instant of bliss. As long as it is unconsciously sought as a means of salvation, you are seeking the end of duality on the level of

form, where it cannot be found. You are given a tantalizing glimpse of heaven, but you are not allowed to dwell there, and find yourself again in a separate body.

For love to flourish, the light of your presence needs to be strong enough so that you no longer get taken over by the thinker or the pain-body and mistake them for who you are.

The greatest catalyst for change in a relationship is complete acceptance of your partner as he or she is, without needing to judge or change them in any way. That immediately takes you beyond ego. All mind games and all addictive clinging are then over.

As a general rule, the major obstacle for men tends to be the thinking mind, and the major obstacle for women the pain-body, although in certain individual cases the opposite may be true, and in others the two factors may be equal.

Chapter 9: Beyond Happiness and Unhappiness There is Peace

This “allowing to be” takes you beyond the mind with its resistance patterns that create the positive-negative polarities. It is an essential aspect of forgiveness. Forgiveness of the present is even more important than forgiveness of the past. If you forgive every moment—allow it to be as it is—then there will be no accumulation of resentment that needs to be forgiven at some later time.

The compulsion to do, and the tendency to derive your sense of self-worth and identity from external factors such as achievement, is an inevitable illusion as long as you are identified with the mind.

As long as a condition is judged as “good” by your mind, whether it be a relationship, a possession, a social role, a place, or your physical body, the mind attaches itself to it and identifies with it. It makes you happy, makes you feel good about yourself, and it may become part of who you are or think you are.

To offer no resistance to life is to be in a state of grace, ease, and lightness. This state is then no longer dependent upon things being in a certain way, good or bad. It seems almost paradoxical, yet when your inner dependency on form is gone, the general conditions of your life, the outer forms, tend to improve greatly. Things, people, or conditions that you thought you needed for your happiness now come to you with no struggle or effort on your part, and you are free to enjoy and appreciate them.

Whenever you feel negativity arising within you, whether caused by an external factor, a thought, or even nothing in particular that you are aware of, look on it as a voice saying “Attention. Here and Now. Wake up.” Even the slightest irritation is significant and needs to be acknowledged and looked at; otherwise, there will be a cumulative buildup of unobserved reactions.

Suddenly, there is the penetrating sound of a car alarm across the street. Irritation arises. What is the purpose of the irritation? None whatsoever. Why did you create it? You didn't. The mind did. It was totally automatic, totally unconscious. Why did the mind create it? Because it holds the unconscious belief that its resistance, which you experience as negativity or unhappiness in some form, will somehow dissolve the undesirable condition. This, of course, is a delusion. The resistance that it creates, the irritation or anger in this case, is far more disturbing than the original cause that it is attempting to dissolve.

Don't look for peace. Don't look for any other state than the one you are in now; otherwise, you will set up inner conflict and unconscious resistance. Forgive yourself for not being at peace. The moment you completely accept your non-peace, your non-peace becomes transmuted into peace. Anything you accept fully will get you there, will take you into peace. This is the miracle of surrender.

You teach through being, through demonstrating the peace of God. You become the "light of the world," an emanation of pure consciousness, and so you eliminate suffering on the level of cause. You eliminate unconsciousness from the world.

Chapter 10: The Meaning Of Surrender

Not only your psychological form but also your physical form— your body— becomes hard and rigid through resistance. Tension arises in different parts of the body, and the body as a whole contracts. The free flow of life energy through the body, which is essential for its healthy functioning, is greatly restricted. Bodywork and certain forms of physical therapy can be helpful in restoring this flow, but unless you practice surrender in your everyday life, those things can only give temporary symptom relief since the cause— the resistance pattern— has not been dissolved.

Surrender reconnects you with the source-energy of Being, and if your doing is infused with Being, it becomes a joyful celebration of life energy that takes you more deeply into the Now.

If your overall situation is unsatisfactory or unpleasant, *separate out this instant* and surrender to what is.

Ask yourself, "Is there anything I can do to change the situation, improve it, or remove myself from it?" If so, you take appropriate action. Focus not on the one hundred things that you will or may have to do at some future time but on the one thing that you can do now.

As you surrender, direct your attention inward to check if there is any trace of resistance left inside you. Be very alert when you do so; otherwise, a pocket of resistance may continue to hide in some dark corner in the form of a thought or an unacknowledged emotion.

When you are ill or disabled, do not feel that you have failed in some way, do not feel guilty. Do not blame life for treating you unfairly, but do not blame yourself either. All that is resistance.

Anything “bad” that happens in your life— use it for enlightenment.

Whenever any kind of disaster strikes, or something goes seriously “wrong”— illness, disability, loss of home or fortune or of a socially defined identity, breakup of a close relationship, death or suffering of a loved one, or your own impending death— know that there is another side to it, that you are just one step away from something incredible: a complete alchemical transmutation of the base metal of pain and suffering into gold. That one step is called surrender.

If you are one of the many people who have an issue with their parents, if you still harbor resentment about something they did or did not do, then you still believe that they had a choice— that they could have acted differently. It always *looks* as if people had a choice, but that is an illusion.